

Middle Kingdoms Adventure & Trading Co. Presents

# THE FORT OF DARKNESS



WHITE  
STAR  
COMPATIBLE

Middle Kingdoms Adventure & Trading Co. Presents

# **HEART OF DARKNESS**

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY

**Frank Turfler, Jr.**

EMMA FISHER'S DIARY WRITTEN BY

**Emma Gray**

EDITOR

**Tim Snider**

SPECIAL THANKS TO

**Eric Lamoureaux, Victor Diaz,  
Joshua DeSanto, Shane Ward,  
Jason Lutes, and James Spahn**



© 2016 Middle Kingdoms Adventure & Trading Company







“divers” to retrieve any of the cargo or guns from the ship. A second solar storm in that year made attempts at salvage even more difficult by scattering the wreckage of the ship still further; the *Esparto* was never located and so its whereabouts fell into legend.

Mal is looking to hire a salvage crew to investigate, but because of the threat of government intervention, competitors, and pirates, it is important that the entire operation is kept off the books and secret.

The Great Barrier Asteroid field is dangerous to maneuver through and littered with large and small asteroids as well as the debris of spacecraft.

The *Esparto* is not where it is supposed to be. Although some minor bits of the *Esparto* can be found in the asteroid field and there are other minor signs of its presence, the actual ship is nowhere to be found. Instead, the PCs find a very old but intact luxury cruise liner, the *Mara Irons*.

An aged and abandoned ship, the luxury liner seemingly has been adrift for several decades. This was a once impressive luxury ship with a very wealthy



### **MAL FISHER**

AC 12; HP 24; BHB +3; FAT 1;  
DMG 1-6; SAVE 9

STR 13, INT 10, WIS 17, DEX  
15, CON 12, CHA 16

#### **SILVER TONGUE:**

BY SPEAKING TO A SINGLE  
TARGET FOR ONE (1) ROUND. IF  
THE TARGET FAILS A SAVING  
THROW THEY ARE CONSIDERED TO  
BE UNDER THE EFFECTS OF A  
CHARM PERSON MEDITATION. —

passenger list. The Captain's log gives no details about the ship's disappearance, but as the PCs work their way deeper into the bowels of the ship, the gruesome mystery of what happened to the crew and passengers is eerily revealed.

From the moment the salvage crew boards the *Mara Irons*, strange things begin to happen. Faint whispers are heard, and people and moving shapes are seen but disappear in the blink of an eye. The ship has treasure to salvage, but as the salvage crew goes deeper into the ship, strange and dangerous things begin to happen. Doors that were once open

close and lock, and sometimes they disappear entirely as the ship itself tries to force the PCs to the Cargo Bay of the ship where the Heart of Darkness waits to trap them in cryo-chambers so it can feed off their life force.

The treasure hunter, Mal Fisher, who hired this salvage crew is indentured to the entity possessing the ship and must provide living sacrifices to pay for his freedom and the freedom of his bride



.....  
55 55 55 55 55 55 55 55 55 55



## Places, Plot Points, and NPCs

**Mal Fisher** - Mal and his love were newlyweds on the maiden voyage of the Mara Irons when the ship was seized by the entity now inhabiting it. Mal was able to strike a deal with the entity, and he must provide fresh souls for his master to feed on in order to buy his own freedom and the freedom of his bride. Mal is currently posing as the Captain of the light freighter, the *Bella LeGosi*. He claims to know the whereabouts of *The Lady of Esparto* and is looking to hire a salvage crew. Although he once was a good man, he is also a weak-willed man, and his love for his own life and that of his bride's exposes his own fear of death and loss. He is willing to murder and damn others to satisfy his own selfish desires.

**Emma Fisher** - Preserved in a state of suspended animation, Emma Fisher has been spared the fate of the rest of the passengers of the Mara Irons. Originally her life was part of the bargain her husband made with the Entity, but over time the Entity has grown fond of Emma and unlike the others that it consumes to sustain its insatiable hunger, it prefers to keep her alive and unharmed—like

a favored pet. It is possible that Emma may live apart from the Entity, but she is virtuous and would feel the guilt of all those souls for the rest of her life.



**Emma Fisher's Diary** - The diary contains, among other things, an account of the time leading up to disappearance of the Mara Irons and holds clues as to what happened on the ship before she was placed in hyper-sleep.

**Ghost Twins** - Whether these identical twins are ghosts, a glitch in the ship's holographic simulation system, or something more bizarre, one is helpful and always tells the truth while the other is evil and always lies. They are dressed identically except for the color of a ribbon, a scarf, or some small minor item of clothing.



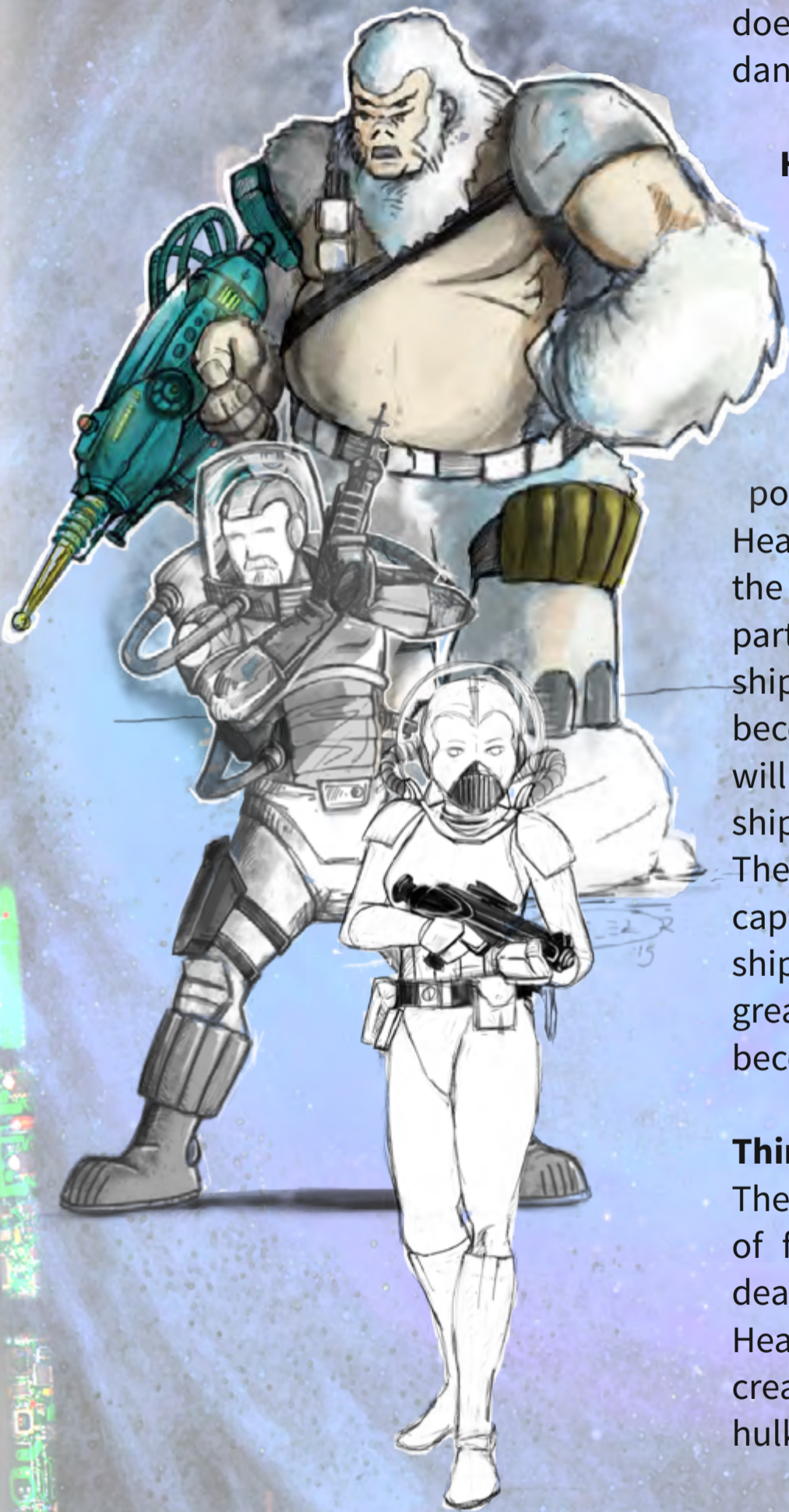
**The Law** - Salvaging is illegal without the proper permits—which the group does not have—so there is always the danger that the law will show up.

**Hostile Competitors, Slavers, and Pirates** - There is always going to be someone else who's interested in the same thing you are, and they're not going to give it up freely.

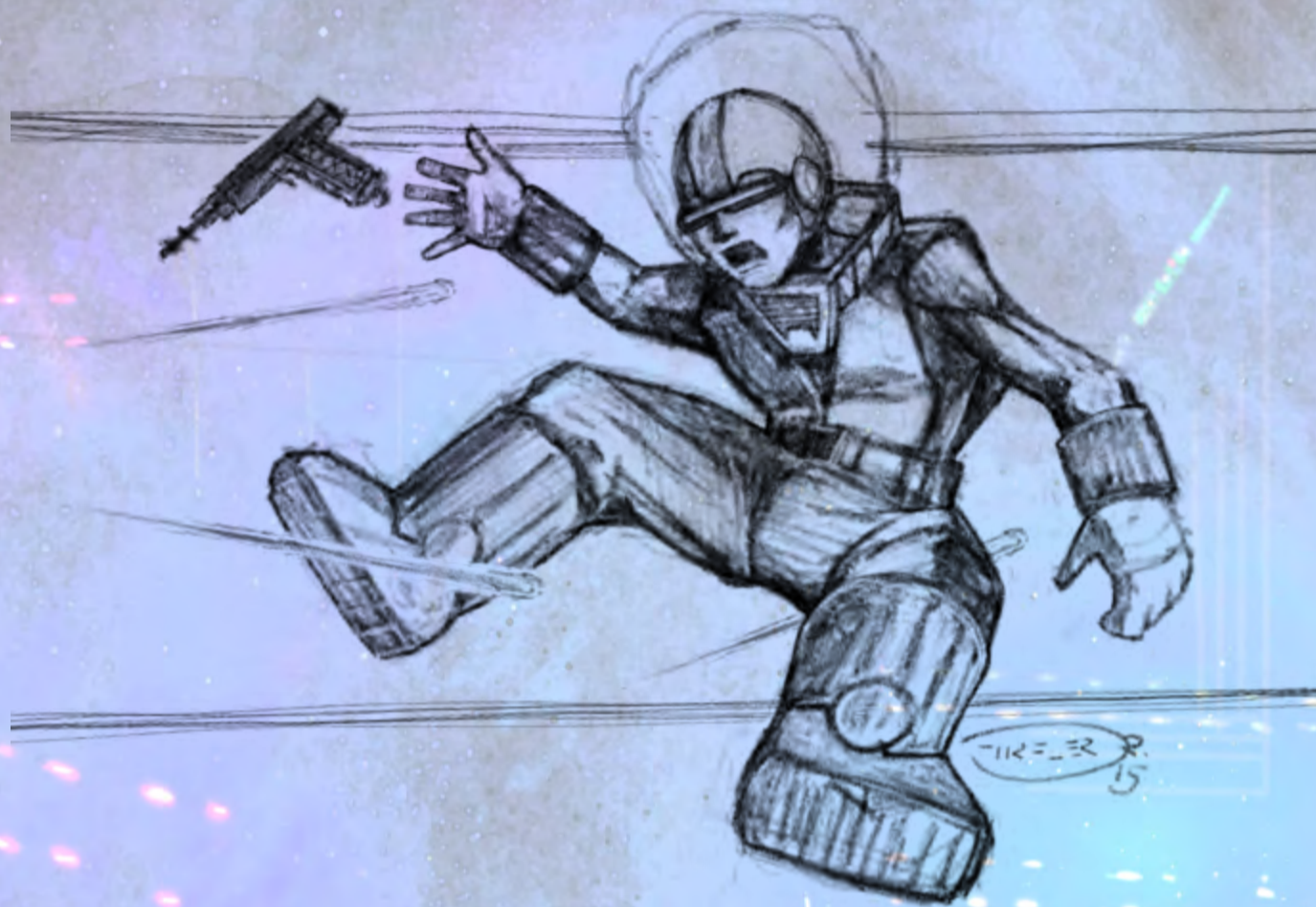
**The *Mara Irons*** - The ship is alive, possessed by a powerful entity, The Heart of Darkness, who has taken over the ship's A.I. It has the ability to animate parts of the ship. The deeper into the ship the characters move, the harder it becomes to get off of the ship. The entity will try to lure the PCs deeper into the ship's bowels and trap the characters. The more living creatures that die or are captured on the ship, the greater the ship's power becomes and, as such, the greater Mal's strength and power becomes.

### **Things That Go Bump In The Night**

The *Mara Irons* is host to all manner of foul things—from the animated dead that act as the long arms of the Heart of Darkness, to the deep space creatures who now call the drifting hulk home.



# Zero Gravity and Life Support



## Optional Rules For Zero Gravity

While both the Bella LeGosi and the Mara Irons have artificial gravity generators, the generators are not always working on the Mara Irons, and they do not work outside of either ship.

These are optional rules for use in zero-gravity situations. Feel free to alter them or use your own. The rules are written for the PCs, but may be applied to NPCs, monsters, and possibly objects such as unpowered spacecraft, satellites, asteroids, space junk, etc.

In most space opera-style games, gravity is almost always assumed, but gravity may not always be available in deep space, or on ships and space stations that are damaged or derelict. Disorientation and momentum are the two main factors that affect PCs in zero gravity. Objects will travel farther and faster, and the physical effects of zero gravity on PCs are disorientation and increased strength. A PC in zero gravity receives a -4 penalty to Dexterity and gains +4 bonus to Strength.

PCs who push off from a stationary object such as a wall can travel at twice their normal rate of movement. This can be combined with an attack in an attempt to shield bash an opponent for 1d6 points of damage. A miss results in 1d6 points of damage to the PC, and they must make a saving throw or become disoriented.

When acted upon by another force such as an attack, recoil from a weapon, from swinging a weapon, trying to throw an object, etc., a PC must make a saving throw or they will begin to spin out of control and become disoriented.

If a PC becomes disoriented, they must make a Dexterity check to regain control or continue to spin out of control until stopped by another means or until a successful Dexterity check is made.

If a PC is disoriented for more than 2 turns, they must make a saving throw against nausea.

Collision with another object while out of control and traveling faster than normal speed causes 1d6 points of damage.

A PC who spins out of control outside of a ship who does not have a manned maneuvering unit or who is not tethered to the ship will become disoriented while they continue to travel away from the spacecraft at their current rate of movement unless a successful save is made on their next turn. If they fail a second saving throw, they will be lost to space permanently unless they are rescued.

Zero gravity can also affect objects. If an object slips out of a PC's grasp, a Dexterity check is required to regain control of the object, or the object will float away from the PC until it is intercepted or stopped by another object. If the object is knocked from the PC's grasp, the object travels away from PC at a rate equal to twice the Strength of the PC or NPC that knocked the object free unless a successful Dexterity check is made or it is stopped by some other means.

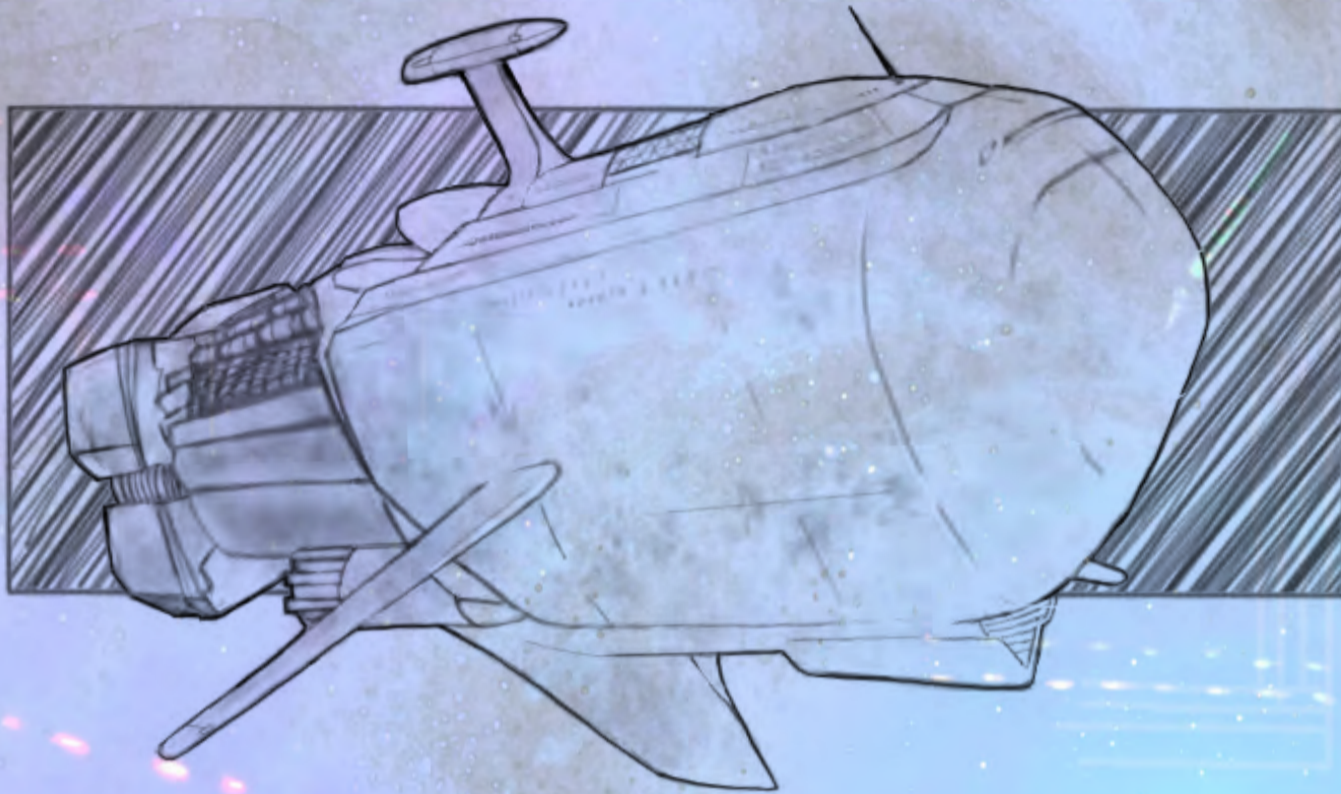
### **Life Support Systems**

Unless the life support generators on the Mara Irons are activated, there is not enough breathable atmosphere for the PCs, and breathing apparatus is required.

## Area 1



# The Great Barrier Asteroid Field and the Mara Irons



### Player Introduction

Mal Fisher, the Captain of the light freighter *Bella LeGosi*, claims to know the whereabouts of *The Lady of Esparto* and is looking to hire a salvage crew. He wants to keep everything off the books as he is operating without the required paperwork. He has chosen not to apply for a salvage license for fear that a treasure as great as *The Lady of Esparto* will attract too much unwanted attention, increasing the likelihood of claim jumpers, pirates, and crooked authorities looking for an easy buck.

He is offering a substantial amount of money and a percentage of the treasure for the completion of the job, but because he has been double-crossed before, the money will be held locally at Hemingway Station until they return with the treasure of the *Esparto* intact.



## Connections

A full-day journey from the Seven Sisters Beacon, A day-and-a-half journey to Hemingway Station, *The Mara Irons*

## Elements

Deep space; cold and silent.

Asteroids large and small are constantly moving, grinding against each other, slamming into one another, rotating, and smashing each other into smaller bits.

Light from the distant star is routinely blocked by larger asteroids, casting everything behind it in a shadow and often in complete darkness.

An antique cruise ship, now ravaged with time, floating adrift in the disarray of the asteroid field.

The deteriorating metal of the *Mara Irons* is full of dents and some holes from years of abuse while drifting in the Great Barrier Asteroid Field.

## Details

This ship the PCs find is not the *Lady of Esparto* but the *Mara Irons*. It is obvious that this derelict ship, although obviously an antique, was quite an expensive passenger cruise liner in its day. The ship itself could be treasure alone, not to mention what valuables might still be on board. Mal has purposely misled the PCs in order to capture them and deliver them to the Heart of Darkness, which has taken over the ship. Mal will refuse under all circumstances to board the *Mara Irons*, but secretly once the PCs are all on board, he will pilot his ship to the docking bay nearest the cargo hold where he will secretly join his sleeping wife in the sick bay to guard her.

Where *Lady of Esparto* should be written, the name of the ship reads *Mara Irons*.

Any attempt to open the airlock door has a 1 on 1d6 chance of success, however Pilots succeed on a 1-2 on 1d6 and Mechanical Robots can automatically open the door—of course, the door can always be blasted open with explosives.

## Discoveries

The airlock door hasn't been opened in years.

All the hatches of The Mara Irons are sealed from the inside.

None of the life pods have been jettisoned.

Energy sensors show signs of life on board the Mara Irons.

## GM Inspiration

The shadow of an enormous asteroid casts everything in complete darkness for 3d6 minutes.

Local authorities approach you, and they request to see salvage permits.

**The Law** (x6): **AC:** 5 [16],  
**HD:** 1+1, **Attacks:** Blaster (1d6),  
**Saving Throw:** 18 or lower,  
**Move:** 12, **HDE/XP:** 1/15

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

When approaching the *Mara Irons*, several spacecraft-sized asteroids collide, causing one of them to break into many smaller asteroids which creates an obstacle course between Mal Fisher's freighter, the *Bella LeGosi*, and the *Mara Irons*.

Several larger asteroids are on a collision course with the PC's ship.

Pirates attack the PCs.

**Pirates** (x4): **AC:** 7 [12], **HD:** 1,  
**Attacks:** weapon (1d6),  
**Move:** 12, **HDE/XP:** 1/15

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



## Details

A map hangs inside the dark and eerily quiet room. The only things keeping it from wafting through the room are two rusted magnets that somehow have managed to stay on the wall. Below the map is a table full of dusty buttons; the labels have rubbed off some of them, making it very difficult to decipher which buttons did certain actions. Blank computer screens cover one of the walls, and the only thing lighting the small space is one lone light that blinks off and on, signaling the loss of power. Loose papers and maps are floating about the weightless room almost as if they had been rummaged through already. But no one has stepped aboard the *Mara Irons* in years, right?

## Discoveries

The map is a valuable antique from the wreckage of the *Esparto*.

Someone else has been here recently.

All Shuttle Bay data is inaccessible as if the Shuttle Bay doesn't exist.

There is enough power in the

reserve batteries to power the ship's computer for 15 minutes.

The solar cells can be positioned to allow enough power to run the ship's systems including life support and the artificial gravity.

## GM Inspirations

All power is instantly lost when the ship is in the shadow of an asteroid for 3d6 minutes and returns when the shadow passes. During the blackouts, lights, life support systems, and artificial gravity are turned off.

Too much tampering with the ship's computer will fry the main circuits, erasing all data and shutting down all of the ship's systems.

An elevator malfunctions and travels at high speed; the sudden stop causes damage to the elevator compartment as well as anyone in the compartment who must save or take 1d6 damage.



# Area 3 : Lido Deck

## Connections

Elevator to navigation deck.

## Elements

A great glass observatory covers the entire deck.

The entire deck looks as if it has been flooded.

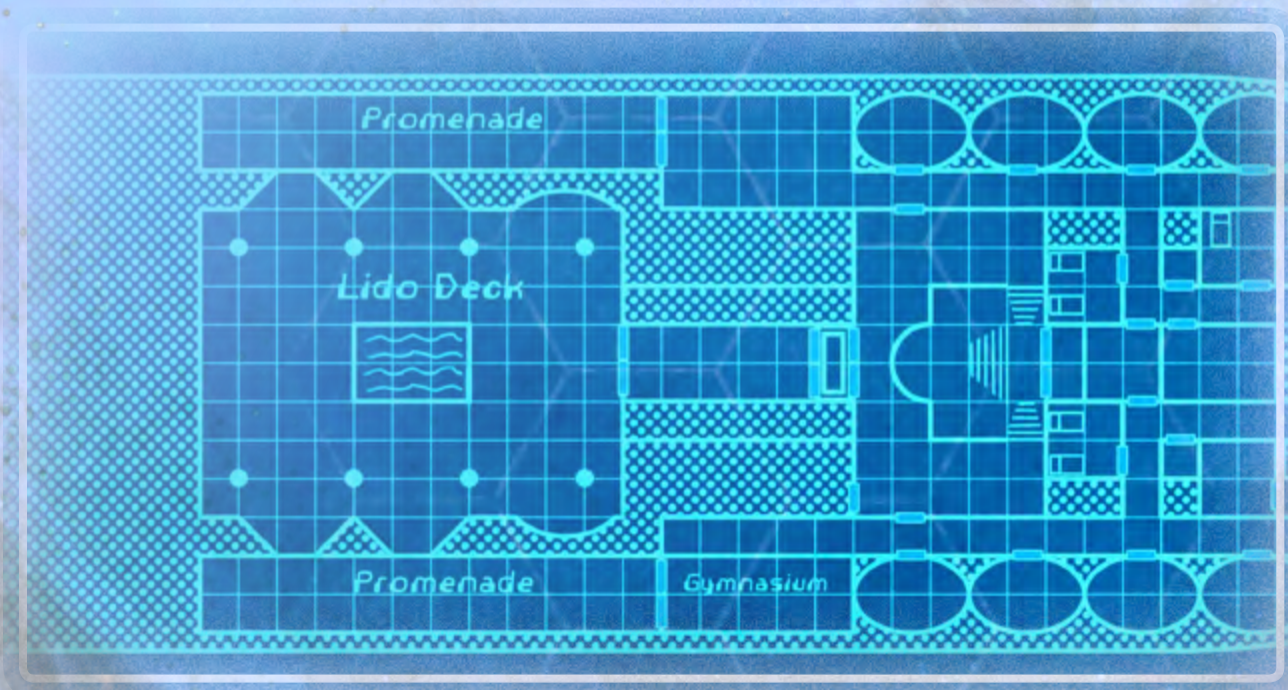
Lounge chairs, tables, dead potted plants, and other debris lie haphazardly about the room.

Ornate metal columns surround what was the pool.

The only light is what is reflected in from the nearby asteroids, space debris, and the stars.

## Details

The door leading to the Lido Deck is locked and sealed shut; the lock has been damaged. When a piece of space debris or a small asteroid collided with the glass roof, it punctured a hole, triggering the safety mechanism that sealed off the Lido Deck to prevent depressurization of the rest of the ship. The door will have to be forced open or the lock repaired. If opened, there won't be any immediate risk of depressurization since a skate currently covers the hole.



Clinging to the ceiling and dark niches are 7 skates.

**Skate:**

Skates are very difficult to see against the black vacuum of space; their skin is black with iridescent spots mimicking stars. They have a poison sting that they use to defend themselves when danger comes near. The sting's poison causes paralysis for 3d6 turns. A successful saving throw avoids all effects from the poison.

**Skate (x7): HD 1; AC: 7[12];**

**Attacks:** 1 sting (1d3 + poison);

**Move (Fly 10); Save 17; HDE/XP:** 1/15; **Special:** non-lethal poison.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

**Discoveries**

You notice one or more skates are attached to the ceiling.

You notice that one skate attached to the ceiling is covering a hole in the glass. The skates must have

used the hole to enter the Lido Deck while the artificial atmosphere was not working.

**GM Inspirations**

All power is instantly lost when the ship is in the shadow of an asteroid for 3d6 minutes and returns when the shadow passes. During the blackouts, lights, life support systems, and artificial gravity are turned off.

On a failed roll, one of the Twins appears from out of the shadows; there is a 50% chance that it is the truthful twin or liar twin.

If the room has atmosphere, and the skate covering the crack moves away from it, a vacuum is created as well as a huge expansion of the crack. Anyone or anything that is not anchored to the deck must save or immediately be sucked out to space through the gap.

All of the atmosphere is sucked out into the vacuum of space.

The doors automatically shut and seal and lock when the loss of atmosphere is sensed.



## Discoveries

You find a mutant vermin swarm nest made of ship components, refuse, and a few small valuables they have collected from the ship, as well as dozens of vermin eggs.

You hear a man's voice echoing through the ducts. It sounds as though he is singing softly to someone.

## GM Inspirations

You feel breathing on your neck.

The temperature immediately drops to below freezing.

Children's laughter can be heard echoing through the cavernous network of ducts.

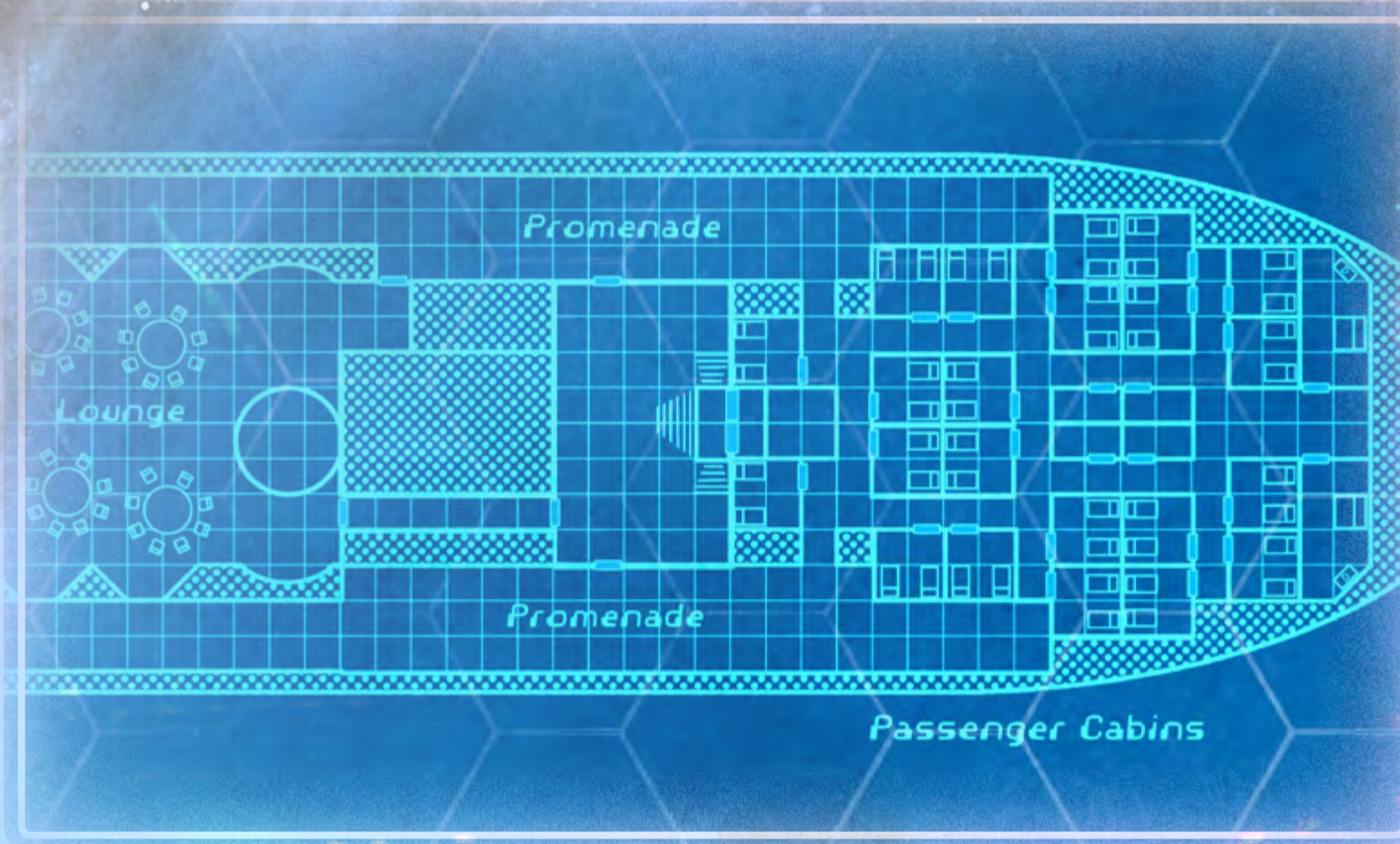
You become constricted and trapped in a narrow section of ductwork.

You become lost in the maze of ductwork.

The ductwork collapses under your weight, you fall—Save or take 1d4 damage.

You are attacked by a Mutant Vermin Swarm.

# Area 5 : Main Deck



## Main deck locations

Main Lobby and passenger entry, Lounge and aquarium

## Connections

Elevator to other decks—navigation deck, cabin deck, and the boat deck.

Freight elevator to cargo hold and Shuttle Bay.

Main lobby and airlock to the outside.

## Elements

Narrow passages cluttered with debris and water.

Exposed electrical wires.

Low light, flickering lights, moving shadows.

The aquarium is sealed and filled with a viscous, murky, and nearly opaque brown-green liquid.

.....  
书在丹沢七 07 4丹沢水沢55

## Details

Inside the aquarium is a shadow creature. Shadow creatures are made of negative space; they are some horrible other thing from the gaps between dimensions. They become temporarily attached to creatures of this world when they phase in or out of hyperspace. Shadow creatures are dark and resemble shadows or sometimes smoke. They are immune to sleep and charm. They lure their victims by psychically projecting objects of their desire onto the shadows surrounding the creature. Their chill touch bites into its opponent with a successful hit, and they will attempt to envelop their prey in order to digest them in the negative space.

Shadow creatures are almost invisible in shadowy places and are 40% likely to disappear from sight after attacking. In bright light, however, their movement rate is reduced to 9 and they immediately lose 1d6 hit points. The psychic scream of a shadow creature causes panic in anyone failing a saving throw, causing anyone affected to drop everything and run for 3d6 turns.

The shadow creature will attempt to lure PCs to the aquarium and then attack.

**Shadow Creature: HD: 3; AC: 6[13]; Attack** 1 bite (1d6+1); **Move:** 18; **Save:** 14; **HDE/XP:** 5/240; **Special:** psychic scream, concealment in shadow.

1.

## Discoveries

Something shiny and valuable is in the aquarium—ask, What do you think you see? Describe it.

The liquid appears to be moving in the aquarium—ask, Why do you think that is?

You find a part of Emma Fisher's diary.

Unopened bottles of spirits, beer, wine and champagne.

Sealed food containers.

## GM Inspirations

Music from a bygone era begins playing through the sound system in the lounge, although there is no band or instruments, and the ship's com system is not operational.

The food and drinks are poisoned; ingesting them causes hallucinations for 3d6 rounds causing the PC to believe that anyone in the room is a vile distorted creature intent on attacking.

The glass of the tank cracks causing an explosion of glass and water.

The shadow creature attacks the PCs.





Unless a successful save is made to break free of the Live Wire's strangling grasp, the victim will suffer 1d3 points of nonlethal damage per every round following the attack due to constriction. Once the victim is incapacitated, the Live Wire begins moving the body, passing it from wire to wire inside the walls of the ship, to the Shuttle Bay at a rate of 12' per round.

**Live Wire: HD: 2; AC: 6[13];  
Attack: 4 constriction (1d3);  
Move: 0; Save: 16; HDE/XP: 2/30;  
Special: Constriction**

When the Entity took control of the Mara Irons, not everyone survived. However, their corpses became useful tools of the Heart of Darkness. Infecting the corpses with a bioelectric virus, the Heart of Darkness has given the corpses undead life and a single impulse: to bring all lifeforms to it. When disturbed, they will attempt to subdue the PCs and drag them further into the heart of the ship to the Shuttle Bay and the Heart of Darkness.

**Bioelectric Animated Dead:  
HD: 2; AC: 8[11];  
Attack: 1 strike (1d6); Move: 6;  
Save: 16; HDE/XP: 2/30;  
Special: Immune to sleep or charm, nonlethal attacks**

## Discoveries

Some valuables such as jewelry and small hand weapons can be found, but most of the real valuables have been relocated to the cargo hold.

Pages from Emma Fisher's diary.

## GM Inspirations

Children's laughter can be heard echoing through the halls.

The ship drifts into the shadow of an asteroid causing it to lose all power for 3d6 minutes.

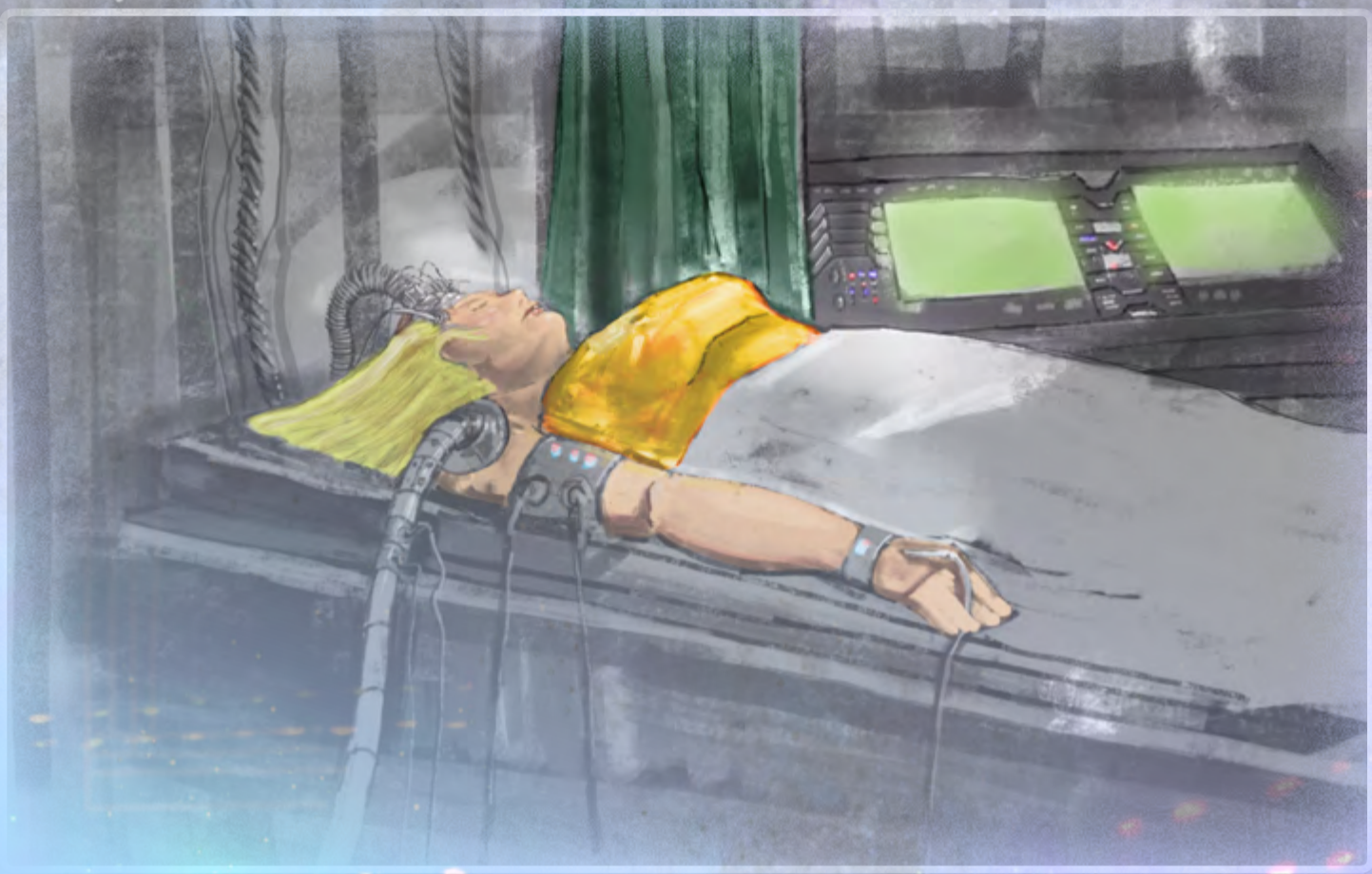
PCs become lost in the maze of crypt-like rooms and hallways as the ship rearranges itself to push them further into the heart of the ship to the Shuttle Bay and the Heart of Darkness.

On a failed roll, one of the Twins appears from out of the shadows. There is a 50% chance that it is the truthful twin or liar twin.

You are attacked by a Live Wire.

You disturb 4-6 Bioelectric Animated Dead.

# Area 7 : Sick Bay



## Connections

Cabin Deck

## Elements

The temperature is cool, and the room is quiet, neat, and clean.

Filled with the sound of computer fans, monitor alerts, and respirators.

The room has a peace and tranquility about it.

Dimly lit by the soft glow of machines, monitors, and soft room lights.

A woman lies on a hospital bed attached to monitors and life support machines.

There is a single chair beside the hospital bed.

.....  
书在丹沢七 07 4丹沢水沢55

## Details

This is the sanctuary of Emma Fisher, and Mal Fisher will try at all costs to prevent anyone from entering the Sick Bay—even it means revealing his true nature.

The Sick bay is doubly sealed, having its own airlock.

Antigravity and power work even if the ship loses power.

If Emma is disconnected from the ship, the Heart of Darkness will retaliate by immediately shutting down all of the ship's systems.

## Discoveries

The woman in the sick bay is being held in suspended animation.

The woman is Mal Fisher's bride, Emma Fisher, who has been laying in suspended animation for more than one hundred years.

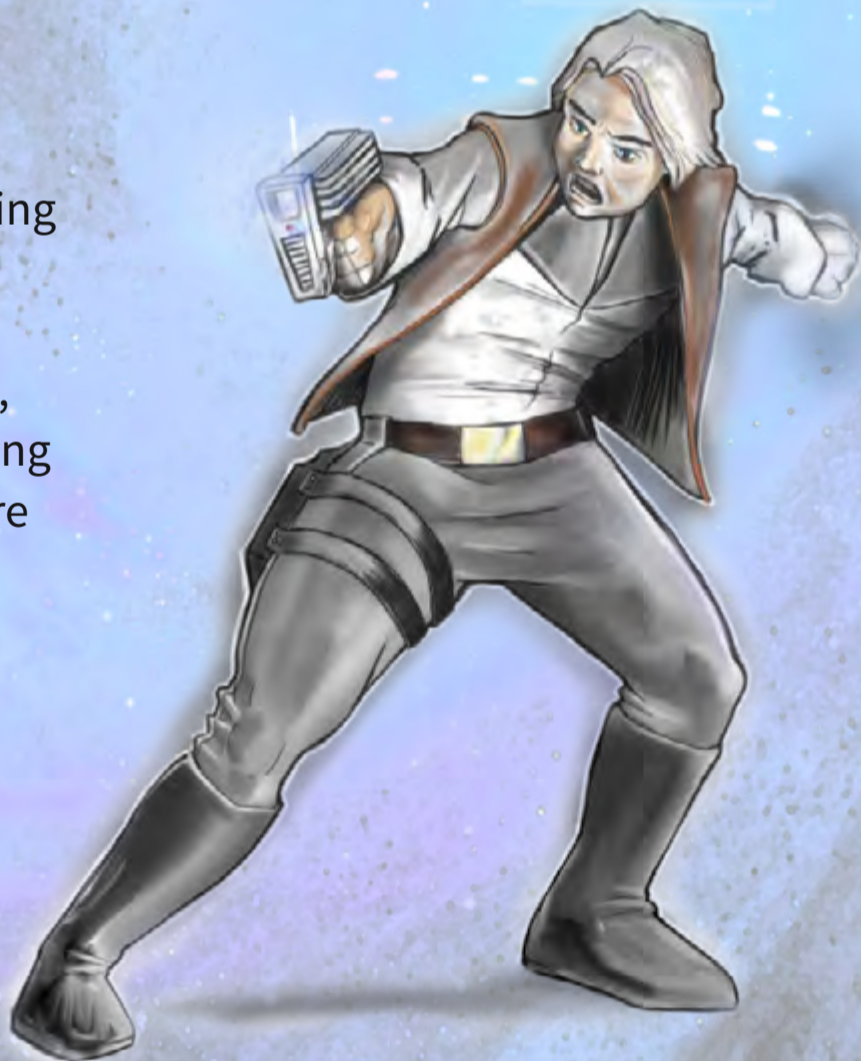
Emma can be revived if she is detached from the machines.

## GM Inspirations

Too much tampering with the systems will fry the main circuits and alert the Heart of Darkness that will then retaliate by immediately shutting down all of the ship's systems.

If detached from the machines, Emma begins to age rapidly.

When Emma is detached from the machines, all the ship's systems begin to shut down causing a complete loss in all power and gravity.





**The Heart of Darkness:** The Heart of Darkness is a bioelectric phage-like creature 20-40 ft in diameter. It attacks by means of its 40-80-ft-long tentacles. The Heart of Darkness leaches energy from its victims and therefore it needs them alive. Unless its defeat is imminent, it will only seek to subdue its foes and seal them in a cryo-chamber. If death is imminent, the Heart of Darkness will try to preserve its own life first and foremost. It may tear a hole in the ship and flee. It does not need atmosphere and can hibernate for eons in the vacuum of space.

**Motive:** Survive and reproduce. The Heart of Darkness reproduces by “infecting” living organic life forms with a bioelectric virus. The virus is transmitted by contact with a mature Heart of Darkness creature. It then roots itself to the creature’s heart and expands from within, eventually consuming the host at full maturity.

Symptoms of the virus include the appearance of electronic-looking scales on the skin of the host that spreads from the initial infection site and may also include erratic abnormal behavior as the virus begins to take control of the host’s mind.

Each tentacle causes 2d6 damage. If The Heart of Darkness makes its saving throw against any magic/mystic attack, it stores the energy in the form of 1 hit point per spell level, to a maximum equal to the Heart of Darkness' hit dice. In addition to tentacle attacks, the Heart of Darkness can discharge 1 to 4 dark energy charges with the following effects:

All spell-casters or mystics within 50ft suffer intense mental distress for 1d3 rounds per charge, making it impossible to cast spells during this time.

All creatures within 10 ft of the Heart of Darkness suffer -1 to Wisdom per charge expended for 1d2 turns.

**Heart of Darkness: HD: 7; AC: 4[15]; Attacks:** up to 8 tentacles (2d6 + paralysis); **Move:** fly 9; **Save:** 12; **HDE/XP:** 7/800  
**Special** Discharge dark energy, paralysis.

1.



# Area 9 : Shuttle Bay

## Connections

Elevator to the Cargo Hold, Deep space and the asteroid field

## Elements

The slow rhythmic sound of a heart beating is loud; its low frequencies reverberate through your whole being.

The Bella LeGosi is docked here.

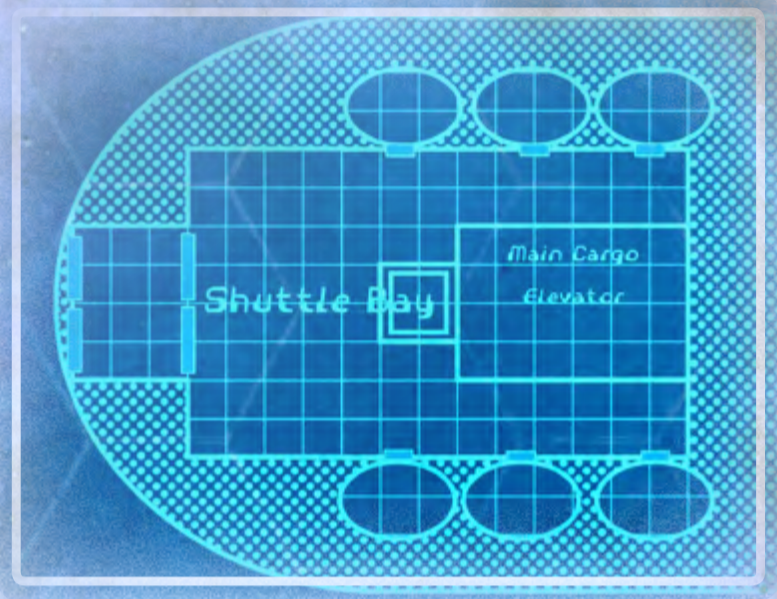
The discarded remains of some the ship's life pods.

## Discoveries.

You find a switch and timer connected to explosives in the Cargo Hold.

## Details

Mal has been preparing to rescue his wife and destroy the Heart of Darkness by blowing up the Mara Irons. Using the PCs as diversion for the Heart of Darkness, Mal will try to move his wife onto the Bella LeGosi and start the timer for the explosives.



## GM Inspirations

The ship drifts into the shadow of an asteroid causing it to loose all power for 3d6 minutes.

An alarm sounds.

The timer on the explosives in the Cargo Hold counts down.

## Epilogue

If the PCs escape having defeated Mal Fisher and/or destroying the Mara Irons, when they return to Hemingway Station or some other port of call, in a crowd somewhere they overhear a young woman introduce herself to some people, Hi, I'm Mara Irons. Where are you looking to charter a ship to?

## Appendix A : Emma Fisher's Diary

### DAY ONE

WELL, TODAY WAS THE FIRST DAY OF BEING MRS. EMMA FISHER. JUST THE THOUGHT OF MY NEW NAME MADE MY STOMACH FLUTTER WITH EXCITEMENT.

MAL HAD SURPRISED ME WITH A TRIP ABOARD THE NEWEST LUXURY CRUISE LINER TO SAIL THROUGH SPACE-- THE MARA IRONS. THE MOMENT WE BOARDED THE SHIP, I KNEW THAT MAL MUST HAVE SPENT A FORTUNE TO GET US HERE. WE HAD ENTERED INTO A SORT OF GRAND ROOM WHERE CHANDELIERS HUNG AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY, SENDING DAZZLING LIGHTS DANCING THROUGHOUT THE SPACE. TWO IMMACULATE MARBLE STAIRCASES SPIRALED UPWARD; THE COOL METAL RAILINGS WERE INTRICATELY DESIGNED WITH FLOWERS THAT ASCENDED TO THE OTHER FLOORS ON THE SHIP. SOFT MUSIC PLAYED AROUND US, FILLING THE ROOM WITH EVEN MORE OF A LAVISH VIBE THAN THERE ALREADY WAS.

SHORTLY AFTER ALL OF THE PASSENGERS HAD BEEN BOARDED AND CHECKED IN, WE WERE ALL SWEEPED AWAY FROM THE GRAND ENTRANCE AND INTO A SMALLER ROOM THAT WAS FILLED WITH SEATS. IT REMINDED ME MUCH LIKE A SORT OF AIRPLANE--IF AIRPLANES HAD CHANDELIERS AND A VIEW OF THE PLANETS AND STARS. WE WERE ALL ASSIGNED A SEAT AND SOON WERE BUCKLED IN AS THE MARA IRONS SHIFTED INTO HYPERSPACE.

IT WAS MY FIRST EXPERIENCE BEING PULLED THROUGH SPACE AT UNGODLY SPEEDS, AND NAUSEA SOON CAME OVER ME. I HAD GRIPPED MAL'S ARM TIGHTLY DURING THE SHORT TIME IT TOOK THE SHIP TO ACCELERATE, AND I HADN'T EVEN REALIZED IT WAS OVER UNTIL MAL'S LAUGHTER BESIDE ME CAUSED ME TO OPEN MY EYES.

MAL HAD SUGGESTED GETTING A BITE TO EAT BEFORE WE FOUND OUR ROOM--JUST LIKE HIM TO ALWAYS BE THINKING ABOUT FOOD--BUT I COULDN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT EATING WITHOUT WANTING TO THROW UP. SO WE DECIDED ON TAKING A WALK TO EXPLORE THE SHIP INSTEAD.



WE WALKED DOWN A LARGE HALL--EVEN THE HALLS ON THIS SHIP WERE EXTRAVAGANT. THE PLUSH BLUE CARPETING SUCKED THE HEELS OF MY SHOES INTO IT AS WE MADE OUR WAY TO ANOTHER LARGE ROOM. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CIRCULAR ROOM SAT A LARGE AQUARIUM THAT REACHED FROM FLOOR TO CEILING. THE TROPICAL FISH SWAM IN CIRCLES INSIDE THE TUBE-LIKE FISHBOWL. I HAD WALKED OVER AND PRESSED MY HAND AGAINST THE COOL GLASS AND WATCHED THE WATER IN AWE. IT WAS INCREDIBLE.

MAL HAD COME BESIDE ME, WATCHING ME INSTEAD OF THE FISH. I FELT A SMALL BLUSH CREEP INTO MY CHEEKS. I TURNED TOWARDS HIM, SMILING. HE BRUSHED A STRAND OF MY PALE HAIR AWAY FROM MY FACE; HIS HAND LINGERED ON MY CHEEK. SO ARE YOU, HE TOLD ME AND THEN PRESSED A SMALL KISS ONTO MY FOREHEAD.

I TURNED MY REDDENED FACE BACK TO THE EXQUISITE AQUARIUM. I HAD NOTICED SOMETHING LINGERING ON THE BOTTOM OF THE TANK, ALMOST LIKE A SHADOW, BUT NOTHING WAS THERE THAT WOULD HAVE CAUSED IT. I STUDIED THE DARK SILHOUETTE FOR A WHILE BEFORE MAL PULLED ME BACK TO REALITY. HE HAD ASKED ME IF I WAS READY TO SEE MORE OF THE SHIP--AND I WAS, BUT SOMETHING KEPT ME STANDING THERE.

THERE WAS SOMETHING STRANGELY EERIE ABOUT THE SHADOW. I COULDN'T REALLY EXPLAIN IT, I JUST FELT... EMPTY. LIKE A DARKNESS WAS FILLING ME. BUT THAT WOULD BE CRAZY. THE ONLY THING WAS, THAT WASN'T THE STRANGEST PART. AS MAL TOOK MY HAND IN HIS AND BEGAN PULLING ME AWAY FROM THE AQUARIUM, I COULDN'T HELP BUT GLANCE BACK ONE LAST TIME. IT WAS ONLY THEN THAT I REALIZED THAT ALL THE FISH WERE NOW GONE.

I MEAN, I SUPPOSE THEY COULD HAVE JUST BEEN HIDING BEHIND THE CORAL. BUT THERE HAD BEEN SO MANY OF THEM WHEN WE FIRST WALKED INTO THE ROOM. HOW HAD THEY ALL DISAPPEARED? I MUST JUST BE SLEEP DEPRIVED FROM PLANNING A WEDDING AND A HONEYMOON. OR PERHAPS IT WAS THE POST-WEDDING JITTERS GETTING THE BEST OF ME. I MEAN, IT WAS MY HONEYMOON. WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

## DAY TWO

UNFORTUNATELY, THE SPACE SICKNESS STILL HAS ITS GRIPS IN ME AND MY NAUSEA SPELLS ARE JUST GETTING WORSE. MAL SUGGESTED THAT WE HEAD TO THE LIDO DECK TODAY AND RELAX BY THE POOL SINCE I WASN'T REALLY FEELING UP FOR MUCH ELSE OTHER THAN LOUNGING AROUND.

I HAD DRESSED ACCORDINGLY, WEARING MY MOST GLAMOROUS BLUE SWIMSUIT WITH A SHIMMERING WHITE COVER-UP OVER TOP. I FELT LIKE I ALMOST FIT IN WITH ALL THE OTHER FANCY DRESSED PASSENGERS. ALMOST.

MAL AND I WALKED TO THE LIDO DECK, MY BREATH CATCHING AS WE ENTERED. WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN METAL WALLS THAT PROTECTED US FROM THE HORRORS OF SPACE WERE GLASS. IT WAS AS IF I HAD WALKED OUT OF THE SAFETY OF THE SHIP AND STRAIGHT OUT INTO SPACE. THE CEILING, THE WALLS, IT WAS GLASS WINDOWS. DARKNESS SURROUNDED US, WITH THE OCCASIONAL GLOW OF A STAR, AND THE ONLY THING TO LIGHT THE ROOM WERE THE SMALL LIGHTS INSIDE AND AROUND THE POOL. THE FEW GLIMPSES OF STARS TWINKLED AGAINST THE SMALL RIPPLES OF WATER IN THE SWIMMING POOL.

WE HAD WALKED OVER TO A GROUP OF LOUNGE CHAIRS THAT HAD BEEN RECENTLY VACATED. WE SETTLED INTO THE COMFY CUSHIONS, SINKING INTO THEM. I WATCHED THE DARK SKY ABOVE ME, WONDERING IN AWE AT THE BEAUTY. FOR JUST A MOMENT I COULD HAVE SWORN I SAW SOMETHING MOVE ON THE CEILING. BUT IT WAS PROBABLY JUST THE SHIP PASSING BY A METEOR FIELD.

I WAS STILL UNSETTLED ABOUT SEEING THAT SHADOW IN THE FISH TANK YESTERDAY AND I COULDN'T SEEM TO SHAKE THE FEELING OF UNEASE.

I HAD CLOSED MY EYES FOR A MOMENT BEFORE MAL STARTED TALKING. I WASN'T REALLY PAYING TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT HE HAD BEEN

SAYING, INSTEAD I WATCHED THESE TWO GIRLS PLAY BY THE POOL. THEY WERE JUST KIDS, THEY COULDN'T HAVE BEEN OLDER THAN TWELVE. THEY LOOKED IDENTICAL--TWINS. BOTH OF THE GIRLS HAD LONG CHESTNUT-COLORED HAIR HELD BACK BY A RIBBON. THEY BOTH WORE THE SAME SWIMSUIT, AND I WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TELL THEM APART IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE COLOR OF THEIR RIBBONS. ONE WORE A WHITE RIBBON, WHILE THE OTHER WORE RED.

I DON'T KNOW WHY I FOUND THEM SO INTRIGUING. MAYBE IT WAS JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE TWINS. OR MAYBE IT WAS THE WAY THAT ONE OF THEM GRINNED UP TO THEIR EYES WHILE THE OTHER SCOWLED. THEY LOOKED SO ALIKE ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT I COULD TELL JUST FROM WATCHING THEM THAT THEY WERE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

THE FEELING OF WANTING TO VOMIT BROUGHT ME BACK TO REALITY. I HAD QUICKLY EXCUSED MYSELF AS I WENT TO FIND THE NEAREST BATHROOM. I FOUND IT ODD THAT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WALKING DOWN THE MASSIVE HALLWAY. I HAD WONDERED WHERE EVERYONE WAS. IT WAS STILL A FEW HOURS AWAY FROM DINNER TIME WHICH MADE ME CURIOUS IF THERE WAS SOME EVENT THAT WE HAD MISSED.

THE HALLWAY SEEMED NEVER-ENDING AND I COULDN'T FIND A RESTROOM ANYWHERE. A DARK SHADOW HAD FILLED THE CORNER OF MY VISION. I HAD TURNED AROUND EXPECTING TO FIND MAL BEHIND ME, BUT NO ONE WAS THERE. I HAD CONTINUED DOWN THE HALL SOME MORE BEFORE ACCEPTING THE FACT THAT THERE WAS DEFINITELY NOT A BATHROOM DOWN THIS WAY.

I HAD TURNED ON MY HEEL AND ALMOST RAN INTO SOMEONE. ONE OF THE TWIN GIRLS HAD BEEN BEHIND ME. I QUICKLY APOLOGIZED TO HER, AND SHE HAD GIVEN ME A SMALL SMILE. SHE HAD BEEN BY HERSELF, WHICH I FOUND STRANGE, BUT EITHER WAY I JUST NEEDED TO FIND A TOILET. I HAD DECIDED TO JUST WALK ALL THE WAY BACK TO MY ROOM AND USE THAT BATHROOM. THAT WAY I COULD FRESHEN UP WHILE I WAS THERE.



## DAY THREE

THERE'S NOT TOO MUCH TO WRITE ABOUT TODAY. THIS MORNING WHEN WE WOKE AN ALARM WENT OFF AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE MARA IRONS VOICE CAME IN THROUGH THE SPEAKERS IN OUR STATEROOM. WE HAD BEEN SHIFTED OUT OF HYPERSPACE DURING THE NIGHT DUE TO A SEVERE SOLAR STORM AND ALL PASSENGERS WERE TO STAY INSIDE OF THEIR ROOMS.

I FELT RESTLESS MOST OF THE DAY. I STILL KEPT SEEING THOSE ODD SHADOWS HERE AND THERE, BUT I KEPT TELLING MYSELF IT WAS JUST THE LIGHTS PLAYING TRICKS ON MY EYES. IT WASN'T UNTIL AFTER THEY HAD BROUGHT US DINNER THAT EVENING THAT I STARTED HEARING MY HEARTBEAT LOUDLY IN MY EARS. I TRIED MY BEST TO JUST PUSH IT OFF AS PART OF THE SPACE SICKNESS THAT I'VE BEEN EXPERIENCING, BUT SOON ENOUGH IT BECAME UNBEARABLE.

I CRIED MOST OF THE NIGHT, WISHING THAT THE NOISE WOULD GO AWAY ALREADY. I COULD TELL THAT MAL WAS AT A LOSS ON WHAT TO DO, AND I FELT TERRIBLE THAT THIS WAS HOW WE WERE SPENDING OUR HONEYMOON. FINALLY, MAL INSISTED ON HAVING THE NURSE THAT WAS ON DUTY COME TO THE ROOM AND SEE IF THERE WAS ANYTHING THEY COULD DO FOR ME. I TRIED TO PROTEST BUT THE BEATING IN MY EARS WAS TOO MUCH TO BEAR, AND EVENTUALLY MAL'S PERSISTENCE WON OUT.

THE NURSE GAVE ME SOME PAIN MEDICINE AND TOLD ME TO DRINK MORE WATER. SHE SAID THAT IT WAS PROBABLY JUST MY BODY'S REACTION TO THE SHIP BEING THROWN OUT OF HYPERSPACE SO SUDDENLY. ESPECIALLY SINCE I ALREADY DIDN'T SEEM TO BE REACTING WELL TO BEING ON THE SHIP--WITH THE NAUSEA AND ALL.

AFTER I TOOK THE MEDICINE, THE BEATING NOISE SEEMED TO QUIET DOWN A BIT, ALLOWING ME TO DRIFT OFF INTO SLEEP.

## DAY SIX

SOMETHING IS VERY WRONG.

THE SHIP HAS BEEN RATTLING AROUND IN SPACE, METEORS HAVE BEEN HITTING THE EXTERIOR OF THE SHIP, AND THEY'VE ALREADY CLOSED DOWN THE LIDO DECK DUE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A LARGE JAGGED ROCK BREAKING THROUGH THE GLASS WINDOWS. WE'RE SLOWLY LOSING POWER AND THE LIGHTS KEEP FLICKERING.

I'M SCARED, AND I CAN TELL MAL IS TOO, EVEN THOUGH I KNOW HE'S TRYING TO PUT ON A BRAVE FRONT. THERE'S A COLDNESS THAT'S WASHING THROUGH THE SHIP, AND I CAN TELL IT'S NOT JUST FROM THE POWER GOING OUT. SOMETHING IS HERE. SOMETHING BAD. I FEEL LIKE I'M STUCK IN A NIGHTMARE AND I'M JUST WAITING TO WAKE UP.

SEVERAL PASSENGERS HAVE BEEN REPORTED MISSING, WHILE OTHERS HAVE BEEN INJURED DUE TO THE HITS THAT THE SHIP TOOK. THERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN CREEPING DOWN THE HALLS--A SHADOW... A DARKNESS. I ALMOST FEEL AS IF I'M THE ONLY ONE THAT SEES IT. I HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING ABOUT IT. I DON'T WANT ANYONE TO THINK I'M GOING CRAZY. ESPECIALLY NOT MAL.

MAL WON'T LET ME LEAVE OUR ROOM. NOT THAT I WANT TO ANYWAY. EVERY NOISE I HEAR SENDS FEAR DOWN MY SPINE. MAL LEAVES THE ROOM TWICE A DAY. ONCE IN THE MORNING AND THEN AGAIN IN THE EVENING. HE TELLS ME NOT TO OPEN THE DOOR AND IF FOR SOME REASON HE DOESN'T COME BACK NOT TO GO SEARCHING FOR HIM. WHY WOULDN'T HE COME BACK? AND HOW DO PEOPLE EVEN GO MISSING ON A SHIP?

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON OR WHERE WE ARE. THERE HAS BEEN NO RESPONSE FROM THE CAPTAIN IN OVER 24 HOURS. WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHAT HAPPENS IF THE POWER GOES OUT? WILL WE MAKE IT OFF THIS SHIP? OR IS THIS HOW WE DIE?

## OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royaltyfree, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or coadaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

## 15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc. System Reference Document Copyright 2000-2003, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, Andy Collins, David Noonan, Rich Redman, Bruce R. Cordell, John D. Rateliff, Thomas Reid, James Wyatt, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson. Swords & Wizardry Core Rules, Copyright 2008, Matthew J. Finch Swords & Wizardry WhiteBox Rules by Marv Breig, copyright 2008- 2011 Matthew J. Finch. White Star: White Box Science Fiction Roleplaying, Copyright 2015 Barrel Rider Games; Author James M. Spahn, Heart of Darkness, Copyright 2016 Middle Kingdoms Adventure and Trading Co.; Author Frank L. Turfler, Jr.

.....  
书在丹沢七 07 4丹沢水沢55