
TRAVELLER

SECRETS OF THE ANCIENTS

IN THE EMPEROR'S NAME

'This place does not exist. The Imperium rules the space between worlds, not the worlds themselves, and so this station does not belong to any world or noble. You have fallen between the cracks. While you are here, you do not exist.

And because you do not exist, we can do what we want with you.'

– Interrogator #3, *The Gash Imperial Prison Hulk*

The Death of Grandfather is the eighth adventure in the *Secrets of the Ancients* campaign. If you are a player, **stop reading now**. If you are a Referee, then you should first read **Section 0: Secrets of Secrets** to get an overview of the campaign. In **Section 7: The Death of Grandfather**, the characters escaped Grandfather's pocket dimension after Yaskoydray's death, leaving SEVEN trapped in a collapsing universe. The last thing they remember is tumbling through the exit portal...

Adventure Synopsis

The characters discover they have been captured by Imperial Intelligence and are being held on 'the Gash', an orbital prison hulk above Pixie. There, they are interrogated by Arisa of Imperial Intelligence, who they last encountered back on Alell in **Section 2: Homecoming**. She demands they reveal what they know about the Ancient vessel that destroyed Gand Holcass and the *Alahir*.

The characters need to either escape the prison hulk, or convince Arisa to trust them and that the threat to the Imperium is real.

IMPERIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Imperium rules the space between worlds, not the worlds themselves. It is a loose association of 11,000 worlds, and while each domain and sector has its own fleets and military apparatuses, there are few institutions that encompass the whole Imperium.

One of these empire-spanning organisations is the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. The IISS maintains the vital X-Boat network linking the furthest fringes of the Imperium to the core worlds, its scouts survey unexplored planets and gather scientific data on Imperial worlds, and it deals with client states and species on the border of Imperial space. The Intelligence branch is one small part of the IISS that correlates and analyses the data gathered by thousands of scouts... and one even smaller part of that branch is the Scout's espionage division.

Eleven thousand worlds in the Imperium, and only a tiny handful of agents to guard them all. The Espionage Division are the secret watchers of the Imperium, on guard against threats that might destabilise the third great empire of Humaniti. The Scouts, and especially the Espionage Division, see information from across the whole of Charted Space, and they can dimly discern the movement of greater powers. The invisible war of the Ancients, a war fought through proxies, pawns and secret agents, affects the Imperium in a million subtle ways.

Even within the Espionage Division, few believe in the theories about *active* Ancient conspiracies. **Gand Holcass**, who died at Boughene, was convinced that the Ancients continue to exert influence over the present great powers of the galaxy, but only a handful of others share this conviction. Other Espionage agents agree there is something *else* out there, but blame the strange events on Zhodani meddling, on Hiver manipulation, on internal treachery or on another unidentified great power... but no-one has ever found solid proof of a conspiracy.

Until now.

Now, they have got the player characters.

Arisa

Note to the Referee: The description below assumes that Arisa encountered the player characters on Alell, but failed to infiltrate the group. If she travelled with the player characters for a time, her attitude to them may have changed. If she died during the adventure, then replace her with another Imperial

agent named Orcio. In the extremely unlikely event that Arisa infiltrated the player characters and stayed with them through all their strange adventures in Grandfather's pocket universe, then she too was captured by Imperial Intelligence when she emerged through the Boughene portal and is held as a prisoner on board the Gash.

History: Arisa Thalber comes from a tiny, insignificant agricultural world in distant Delphi Sector. Bored with a life bounded by a planetary horizon, she volunteered for the scouts and was given a battered, balky scoutship and a mandate to probe the pocket kingdoms of the Hinterworlds and Leonidae. Her excellent reports – and the fact she had survived such a perilous mission – brought her to the attention of the Espionage Branch. She was recruited as an Imperial agent and was seen as a rising star within the organisation.

Then she fell until the control of Gand Holcess. Thanks to family connections and his own distinguished record of service, Holcess possessed considerable influence within the Scouts, but he was obsessed by his theories about the Ancients and was seen as an eccentric, even an unstable influence within the organisation. Holcess convinced Arisa that his theories about Ancient meddling in Imperial affairs were valid, and that the Spinward Marches were the epicentre of Ancient activity.

During her time in the Marches, Arisa came to agree with some of Holcess's beliefs. She is convinced that the "long-vanished" Ancients are still active in some form, but does not believe they are necessarily interested in Humaniti. Rather, she suspects that the Third Imperium exists in the shadow of vast powers who barely notice Humaniti, unless Holcess who was of the opinion that the Ancients are deliberately meddling in human affairs. (Both are wrong; neither suspected that the remaining Ancients are fighting a shadow war across Charted Space.)

Following the events on Alell, when Holcess and the *Alahir* set off in pursuit of the player characters on board the *Star Hunter*, Arisa remained behind on the jungle world to further investigate Vlen Backett's affairs. She remained in touch with Holcess via X-boat as the *Alahir* hunted the characters across Regina subsector. The last message she received from him stated that they had pinned the *Star Hunter* down in the atmosphere of the Boughene gas giant and she should stand by for further instructions.

Then, silence.

Taking matters into her own hands, Arisa commandeered a scout ship and travelled to Boughene. She searched the gas giant, and found only more mysteries. There was debris matching the *Alahir*, but she was unable to identify the energy weapon used

to destroy the ship. Holcess's last transmission to the Boughene Scout base was equally cryptic and was strangely distorted as if jammed – but no known technology allows a meson burst transmitter to be jammed. Searching the upper atmosphere of Boughene, Arisa found a severely damaged ship (either the *Star Hunter*, or an antique Droyne rocket, depending on how the characters escaped the pocket universe). The crew of the ship (the player characters) were all in temporary comas caused by the rough transit through the portal. Arisa took them prisoner and brought them to the Gash.

Appearance: She has close-cropped hair and relatively unremarkable features. She can make herself look pretty or striking, but her role as a spy means she usually tries to fade into the background. For this interrogation, she wears a black jumpsuit with the logo of the IISS but no other markings.

Personality: Arisa is a chameleon. She has learned to alter her demeanour to fit with any situation; initially, she presents herself as a detached, cold inquisitor. Beneath this facade, she wants to know what happened to Holcess. Over the course of the scenario, depending on the actions of the player character, she becomes either terrified of the threat posed by active, malicious Ancients, or convinced that the player characters are lunatics who blundered into an Ancient site and are concealing the truth from the Imperium.

- She is a highly competent spy, who enjoys the challenging nature of her work. She hates boredom; better to be running from Zhodani border guards and dodging laser blasts than to be trapped behind a desk in some dull office.
- Never hesitate, always act. Doing something is always better than doing nothing.
- Betray as little emotion as possible in your voice – be cold and professional. However, move around, gesture and pace to burn off nervous energy.

Goals:

- Find out what happened to Gand Holcess and the *Alahir*.
- Learn what the characters know about the Ancients.

Arisa

STR 7 DEX 9 END 7 INT 9 EDU 11 SOC 8

Admin 0, Advocate 1, Astrogation 1, Carouse 1, Comms 0, Computers 2, Deception 2, Diplomat 1, Engineer 0, Gunner (turret) 1, Gun Combat (pistol) 2, Investigate 2, Mechanic 1, Medic 0, Navigation 2, Persuade 0, Pilot (starship) 1, Recon 1, Sensors 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1
Body Pistol (3D6-3), Concealed Tailored Vacc Suit (8)

Malik haut-Tarvel

haut-Tarvel is an expert from the Imperial Ministry of Technology; his field of expertise is the Ancients, especially their technology. He is a Homogenous Declinist (see the Library Data in **Section 1: Bodysnatchers**) who believes there was a single Ancient race that slowly collapsed over millennia. He (correctly) surmises that the Droyne and Chirper species who are endemic to Charted Space were originally seeded by the Ancients. His role here is to determine the size of the characters' find, and to work out if they need to be eliminated to preserve the secrets of the Ancients.

History: As his title suggests, haut-Tarvel comes of noble stock. His family are unimaginably wealthy, owning whole *worlds* in the Core Sectors. With the galaxy at his feet, haut-Tarvel chose to dedicate himself to archaeology and the study of the Ancients. He considers himself to be a refined, academic archaeologist – why go grubbing around in the mud looking for ruins and relics, when you can just read the accounts and records made by the great archaeologists of yore. The old masters covered the ground much more thoroughly than he could ever hope to – the true science of archaeology is consulting the records, weighing theories against each other, and coming up with new hypotheses based on the established evidence. As far as haut-Tarvel is concerned, the question of the Ancients is very close to being settled. There is already plenty of Ancient archaeology to examine, so why bother looking for more? Given a choice, he would prefer to spend his time reading and debating.

However, even wealthy nobles like haut-Tarvel must do their duty to the Iridium Throne. There may be a wealth of Ancient archaeology to be studied and classified, but the Imperium has an interest in the Ancients beyond the purely scientific. Ancient relics like Black Globes are of vital importance to the Imperial Navy. Haut-Tarvel's aunt Mari is an admiral; she had him assigned to the Ministry of Technology so he could review newly-discovered Ancient relics for their military potential. (haut-Tarvel is too self-obsessed to realise, but his aunt Mari had her reasons for planting a reliable family member in the Ministry. Mari has designs on the Imperial Throne, and possessing a unique Ancient weapon could be the leverage she needs to unseat Strephon. Half the great ruling families have similar ambitions.)

Reluctantly, haut-Tarvel accepted his new posting in the Ministry. As the Spinward Marches are generally believed to be the former seat of the Ancient empire, he travelled on board one of the family's six luxury cruisers to this 'barbaric, uncultured frontier'. He normally resides on Regina, where he is a fixture at University soirees and social functions. He likes to sneer at other archaeologists, and use his family and naval connections to hint at secret knowledge and access to restricted information. Notably, he knows Professor Ujinka and her assistant Juni Volsang. He made a clumsy pass at Volsang two years ago, and considers Ujinka to be a misguided Catastrophist. He met Vlen

Backett once, long ago, and found the man to be an uncouth trader who dabbled in archaeology.

Haut-Tarvel's role in this scenario is partly as comic relief, and partly as an antagonist for the characters to overcome. He is the least dangerous of the three interrogators, and the characters may be able to use him as a hostage or pawn.

Appearance: haut-Tarvel is pale with light brown hair flecked with gold. He bears a distinct resemblance to Emperor Strephon – he is related to the royal family through his mother's side – and wears fine suits of Vegan transilk and a chestful of medals, noble titles and awards.

Personality: "Insufferable" more or less sums haut-Tarvel up. He is a spoiled brat who happens to have the backing of his massively influential family, the Imperial Navy and the Ministry of Technology. He is convinced of his own innate superiority. haut-Tarvel believes all civilisations go through an inevitable cycle of revolution, expansion, consolidation, stratification, ossification and finally decline, and that the Imperium is moving through ossification towards decline. This justifies his appalling arrogance and spoiled behaviour – he is, he argues, a product of his time. The whole Imperium is about to slide down a long slope into decay and anarchy, just as the Ancients did millennia ago.

- Be as snooty and effete as possible.
- Lecture the characters on your eccentric theories; condescend to them if they disagree.
- Always protect your own reputation.
- Remember – you are always right. If the evidence contradicts you, then someone is plotting against you and tampering with it.



- Therefore, he believes that the player characters are somewhere on a continuum from 'deranged madmen' to 'idiot buffoons who have no idea about history' to 'liars who are trying to discredit his theories'. He cannot even conceive of the concept that they are telling the truth. They must be lying. He will try to divide the player characters, and play them against each other until they admit they are lying to him.
- Have a wine glass in hand; sip from it and gesture with it.

Goals:

- Analyse the characters' accounts and discoveries to determine their military significance.
- Make sure your cherished theories about the Ancients' slow decline into extinction are vindicated. Pick holes in any account of living Ancients or a war between different Ancients.
- Save your own skin.

haut-Tarvel

STR 6 DEX 7 END 7 INT 7 EDU 11 SOC 12

Admin 2, Advocate 1, Animals 0, Art (pretentious) 2, Carouse 1, Computers 0, Deception 1, Diplomat 2, Drive 0, Gambler 1, Investigate 2, Language 3, Melee (blade) 2, Physical Sciences 0, Recon 1, Remote Operations 2, Seafarer 0, Sensors 2, Social Sciences (archaeology) 3, Survival 0, Vacc Suit 0
Rapier (1d6+4)

Galen

The other two interrogators assigned to the player characters' case are powerful and influential people: Arisa is a secret operative of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service and haut-Tarvel is a noble with connections to the navy and the Ministry of Technology. Their word carries great weight; they can draw on the resources of mighty organisations, and hold considerable sway over policy.

Galen is something else entirely. He does not officially exist – there are no records of his name in the registry of any world. He holds no title or military rank; he is not on any Imperial payroll or in receipt of any official gift or bequest. In effect, he is a private citizen of the stars, but he holds an Imperial Warrant. Documents such as the one in Galen's possession are extraordinarily rare, as they permit the bearer to act in the Emperor's name and to use the Emperor's authority. With a warrant, the bearer can cut through bureaucracy and make on-the-spot decisions without having to wait for authorisation from the government. Most warrants are limited in scope, granted to expedite matters in cases of disaster or war where the normal machinery of government has collapsed. Galen's warrant simply states that he acts for the Emperor 'in matters of state security'. In effect, he is a troubleshooter-at-large for the Imperium; he and the few others like him have the duty of protecting the Imperium against 'destabilising forces'.



Galen is also a powerful psion. Although the Imperium suppresses the use of psionics in general and bans the establishments of Psionics Institutes, there are two secret schools where psionics are studied for the good of the state. Galen comes from one of these institutions, on distant Terra, where he learned to probe the minds of criminals and traitors.

His role here is to ascertain whether or not the characters are telling the truth, and to eliminate the threat of these supposed 'living Ancients' if possible. The Imperium has endured for a thousand years, and it is built on the remnants of two even older empires of Humanity – no alien force can be allowed to threaten human hegemony over the stars.

Appearance: Galen is a middle-aged man with iron-grey hair and sad eyes. He wears a rumpled business suit and carries a leather satchel slung over one shoulder. He appears friendly in a distracted, distant way; he has the air of a man who is perpetually disappointed with the universe. A close examination of his skin reveals the presence of hundreds of fine scars, almost invisible thanks to repeated cell-regeneration therapies. Some of these scars are plainly the result of cybernetic modification or plastic surgery, but others are marks left by blades and weapons fire.

Personality: Galen is a committed servant of the Imperium, trained from a young age to preserve the status quo. His personality is akin to that of a honed and polished scalpel – he does what is necessary to deal with the situation at hand. He is a sociopath with psionic empathy, so he can sense the emotions of others without sharing them himself.

- Pretend to care about the player characters, but have no more regard for them than an entomologist has for the insects pinned in a case.

- Disbelieve nothing; seem to accept the wildest stories and ask the characters for more details. Soak up information like a sponge.
- Blink slowly and deliberate, as if you have to remind yourself to do so.
- Cow the player characters by using your superlative unarmed combat skills to humiliate them.

Galen

STR 10 DEX 14 END 10 INT 10 EDU 10 SOC 10 PSI 15

Admin 1, Advocate 2, Athletics (co-ordination) 2, Astrogation 1, Awareness 3, Battle Dress 1, Computers 3, Deception 1, Diplomat 1, Gun Combat (pistols) 4, Heavy Weapons 2, Investigate 4, Jack of All Trades 3, Leadership 2, Mechanic 1, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 2, Melee (unarmed) 4, Navigation 1, Persuade 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Recon 3, Sensors 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Survival 2, Tactics (ground) 2, Telepathy 4, Telekinesis 3, Vacc Suit 2, Zero-G 2

Psi-interface Gauss Pistol (3d6), Cloth (5) or Tailored Vacc Suit (8), Enhanced Vision, Neural Comm (TL14), Special Psi-Drugs

The Kinunir

The prison hulk *Gaesh* originally appeared in *The Kinunir* (GDW, 1979). Access to that book is useful, but not vital to running this section of *Secrets of the Ancients*. The *Kinunir* supplement goes into greater detail about that class of ship, and presents four adventures on different vessels, including an attempt to break *into* the *Gash*.

Adventure 2: Prison Planet, in either its GDW incarnation or the 2009 retread by Mongoose Publishing can also be useful. The *Gash* is a much more civil prison than the one described in that product, but the information on guard schedules and escape techniques may be relevant.

THE GASH

When it was built back in 1087, the ship was the Imperial Battle Cruiser *Gaesh*, registry number 95278. She was the 17th ship of the *Kinunir* class to be built, and the third and last to be completed at the General Shipyards at Regina. All four of the hulls constructed at the General yards suffered significant problems – the fourth ship, the *Adda Dubsar*, was scrapped before it was ever launched. *Gaesh* showed problems right out of the gate. Its misaligned jump grid meant it never managed to reach Jump 3, its reactors were unstable and could not produce enough power to run both the manoeuvre drive and the weapons.

All the *Kinunir* ships were designed to carry Ancient defensive screens called Black Globes; a cache of such devices was discovered at Knorbes. While these globes offer virtually

invincible defence against energy weapons, the globes proved difficult to integrate into human ships. All the *Kinunir* -class vessels suffered problems that could be attributed to the globes; when coupled with the shoddy workmanship of the General yards, it was a recipe for disaster.

When the *Gaesh* proved unfit for service, it was decommissioned in 1098 and placed in a polar orbit above Pixie. She was stripped of her weapons, her drives, her main reactors and her precious Black Globe, and turned into a floating prison hulk. The decommissioning process was done hastily and brutally. The *Gaesh* was unceremoniously gutted, acquiring the nickname of ‘The Gash’ in the process.

Today, the *Gash* is an ugly, broken place to be. Most of the corridors were stripped of almost all salvageable material; the floor is a metal grille, the walls are covered with exposed piping, wiring and the scars where components were removed, and only one in four lights remains. The gravity still works, but most of the gravity plates were stripped, so the remaining plates must pull triple duty. There is a constant whine just within the range of hearing, and the gravity is ‘lumpy’, varying between 0.8 and 1.2g even within the same room. Migraines and nausea are common among crew and prisoners.

The ship is a wedge-shaped hull with a large dorsal superstructure. She is divided into five decks, designated A through E.

Security Systems: Security on board the *Gash* is comparatively light, as there is no easy way off the ship. Unlike a planet-bound prison, where an inmate might jump a fence and run off into the wilderness, this prison is surrounded by the most effective containment system ever – hard vacuum.

There are security cameras in all corridors, connected to the security station on B Deck. These cameras are monitored at all times, but the guards are not always attentive. Roll 6+ for the guards to notice suspicious activity on a monitor, applying the character’s Stealth or Deception skill as a -DM. If the guards notice, a guard patrol arrives in 1-6 minutes.

All of the cells are wired with hidden microphones; the guards can eavesdrop on any conversations within the cells that they wish to hear.

A Deck

The topmost deck is located beneath the dorsal fin. On other *Kinunir* -class vessels, this deck contains the ship’s small craft, like air/rafts, marine orbital drop capsules and a grav-APC shuttle bay, but these vehicles were removed from the *Gaesh*. Most of this deck is given over to storage now; crates of freeze-dried food, water, toiletries and other supplies are stacked in the cavernous wounds that were once hangars. At the stern of

the deck is a sealed airlock; on the forward port side is the one functional system on this deck, the ship's garbage desiccation and disposal system. Inmates are rarely permitted on this deck, except for trusted prisoners who are permitted to work on the garbage disposal or collect cargo from the storage bays.

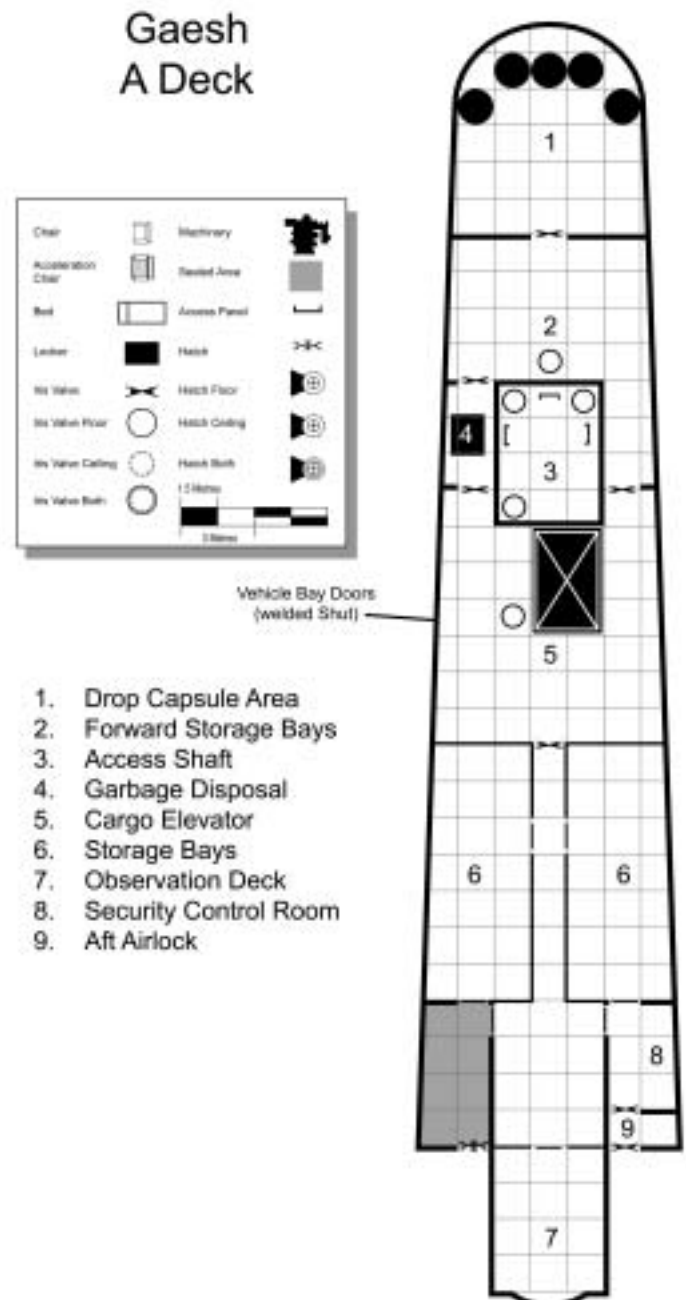
Notable features:

- **Garbage Disposal:** The garbage disposal system works by exposing waste to vacuum, freeze-drying it and sucking out the air, then compressing it into a cube and launching it into the atmosphere of the planet below so it can burn up. The garbage disposal system can be used as an exit from the ship, but opening the access hatch sounds an alarm on B deck. The would-be escapist must also disable the garbage crusher or be squished into a small cube inside the airlock.
- **Storage Bays:** There is little useful equipment in the storage bays; the guards are careful to keep tools and weapons well away from the prisoners.
- **Cargo Elevator:** The elevator that links the decks still works, but it is very slow and makes a loud grinding noise when in operation. The crew prefer to use the inter-deck ladders and iris hatches when moving from deck to deck; the cargo elevator is only used for moving cargo.
- **Observation Deck:** The aft observation deck was once dominated by the huge window that gave a panoramic view of space behind the ship, and was used for official functions and meetings by the senior crew. In battle, huge armour plates swung into position over the window, protecting this weak spot from attack. When the *Gaesh* was decommissioned, the armour plates were locked in position, and then both the external plating and the internal window was removed, leaving the locking mechanism and a thin layer of hull plating to contain the ship's atmosphere. Overriding the locking mechanism would result in a sudden and complete depressurisation of A Deck; the lower decks might also be affected if the ship's iris hatches do not seal themselves promptly. The characters can use this as a distraction or an escape route.
- **Vehicle Airlocks:** These airlocks have been welded shut and cannot be opened.
- **Drop Capsule Tubes:** Once, the ship would invert itself and launch marines through these tubes. The capsule tubes are still mostly in working order, but the end of each tube has been sealed with a welded cap.
- **Aft Airlock:** The aft airlock still functions, but activating it sounds an alarm on B Deck.
- **Security Control Room:** This room has been stripped of furnishings and equipment, but most of the internal wiring is still intact. With the right tools and a Difficult (-2) Engineering (electronics) roll, it is possible to switch off the alarms or override any iris hatch or airlock on A Deck.

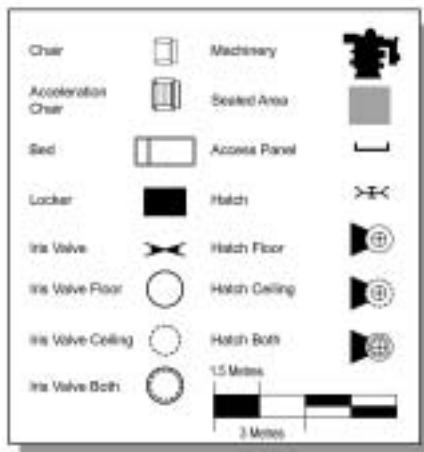
B Deck

B Deck was once officer country and the ship's bridge. It is shaped like a horseshoe, wrapped around the fuel tanks. The middle section of the horseshoe formerly contained the bridge, computer room, administration and sensor operations, as well as the ship's galley and officer's mess; the two 'arms' contained officer quarters.

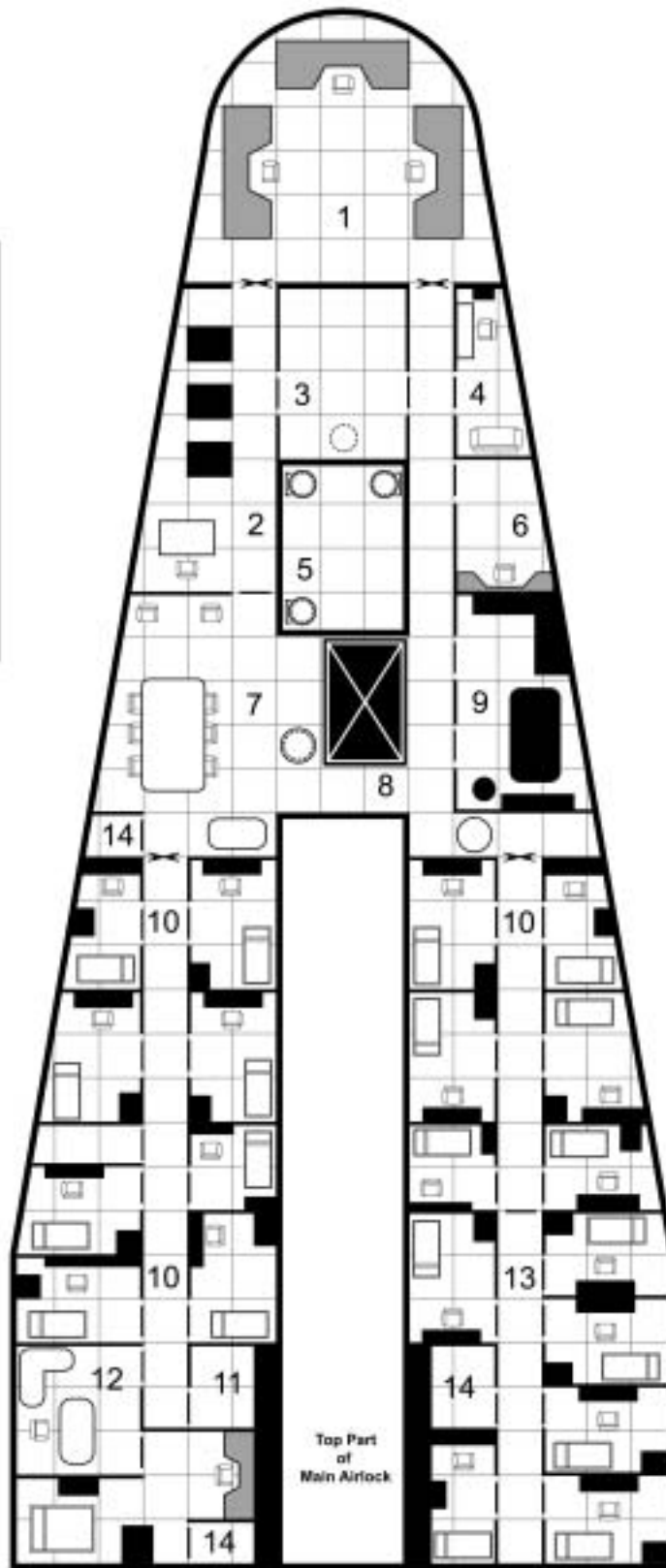
The computers and control consoles from the forward section were removed when the ship was decommissioned. The computer room is now used for storage. The administration section and the galley are still in use. The bridge has been refitted for use as a monitoring section; computer screens display the video feed from the security cameras throughout A, B and C decks.



Gaesh B Deck



1. Observation Room
2. Office
3. Storage
4. Guard Ready Room
5. Access Shaft
6. Communications
7. Ward Room
8. Cargo Elevator
9. Galley
10. Guard Staterooms
11. Store Room
12. Warden's Quarters
13. Guest Staterooms
14. Fresher



The officer's quarters are now used as accommodation for the ship's guards. The Gash has a crew complement of 20 – some fourteen guards and 6 specialist staff (see *Crew*, below). The ship has plenty of room, so all the guards have their own stateroom. Unlike the rest of the ship, most of the fittings on B deck were retained during the decommissioning process, so life on board the Gash is surprisingly comfortable for the crew.

Notable Features:

- **Observation Room:** The former bridge. From here, the crew can watch video feeds and listen to the bugs in the prison cells. In an emergency, all iris hatches and bulkhead doors in the ship can be closed from this room.
- **Communications Room:** The ship's communications hub, used to signal other vessels. While the Gash is a secret facility, many of the ships in the Pixie system know about it. If the Gash does not send an automatic 'all's well' signal to the Pixie naval base every 8 hours, a security team is automatically dispatched to investigate.
- **Galley:** The ship's galley prepares food for both crew and prisoners. There is little difference between the meals served for the prisoners and those given to the warden himself.
- **Warden's Quarters:** Warden Hauberk's rooms were formerly the captain's cabin and the first officer's cabin – she had an internal door installed to give himself more living space.
- **Storeroom:** This room is adjacent to the warden's quarters, and contains items confiscated from the prisoners, including the player characters' equipment and the Ancient Suppression device possessed by Gaius Labre (see sidebar). It is locked using an electronic combination lock – only the warden knows the code. Overriding the lock is a Very Difficult (-4) Intelligence + Engineering (electronics) check.
- **Guest Quarters:** Six rooms are allocated as 'guest quarters' for special investigators, medical staff, technicians and other irregular visitors. Arisa, haut Tarvel and Galen are all assigned quarters in this section.
- **Guard Ready Room:** At least two armed guards are stationed here at any time, ready to respond to any alarms or problems.

C Deck

C Deck was the heart of the ship when in use, containing the ship's main drives, weapon banks and crew quarters. This section was stripped of everything valuable when the ship was gutted, turning it into a maze of twisting narrow corridors that end in empty rooms or dead ends where a sheet of metal has been welded across the passageway to block off a section that has been torn out. The prison cells are in this deck; most of the

Ancient Suppression Device

This gadget is a small featureless brass rod. However, when closely examined, several warm spots can be found along the rod's length. Pressing these sections in the correct order activates the rod, causing it to project a cone-shaped field that suppresses electronic devices. The rod's range and intensity can be adjusted by varying pressure on two of the control sections, but they are inversely related – increasing the range reduces the intensity by a proportional amount, as per the table below. The two values in bold may total at most 5.

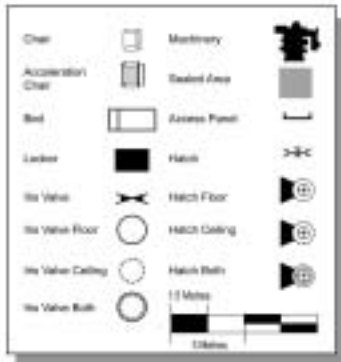
Range Options	Intensity Options
1: 1 metre cone	4: Suppresses bioelectric activity; acts like a stunner on human subjects
2: 10 metre cone	3: Disrupts simple electric devices (lights, heaters, TL6 or less)
3: 100 metre cone	2: Disrupts complex electronic devices (computers, microelectronics etc, TL8 or less)
4: 1000 metre cone	1: Disrupts super-sensitive electronic devices (NAS Detectors, high-tech computers, high-TL devices)

For example, setting it to a 100 metre cone means it can only suppress complex and supersensitive devices.

cells were formerly crew quarters, but troublesome prisoners may be placed in solitary confinement in the ship's old brig.

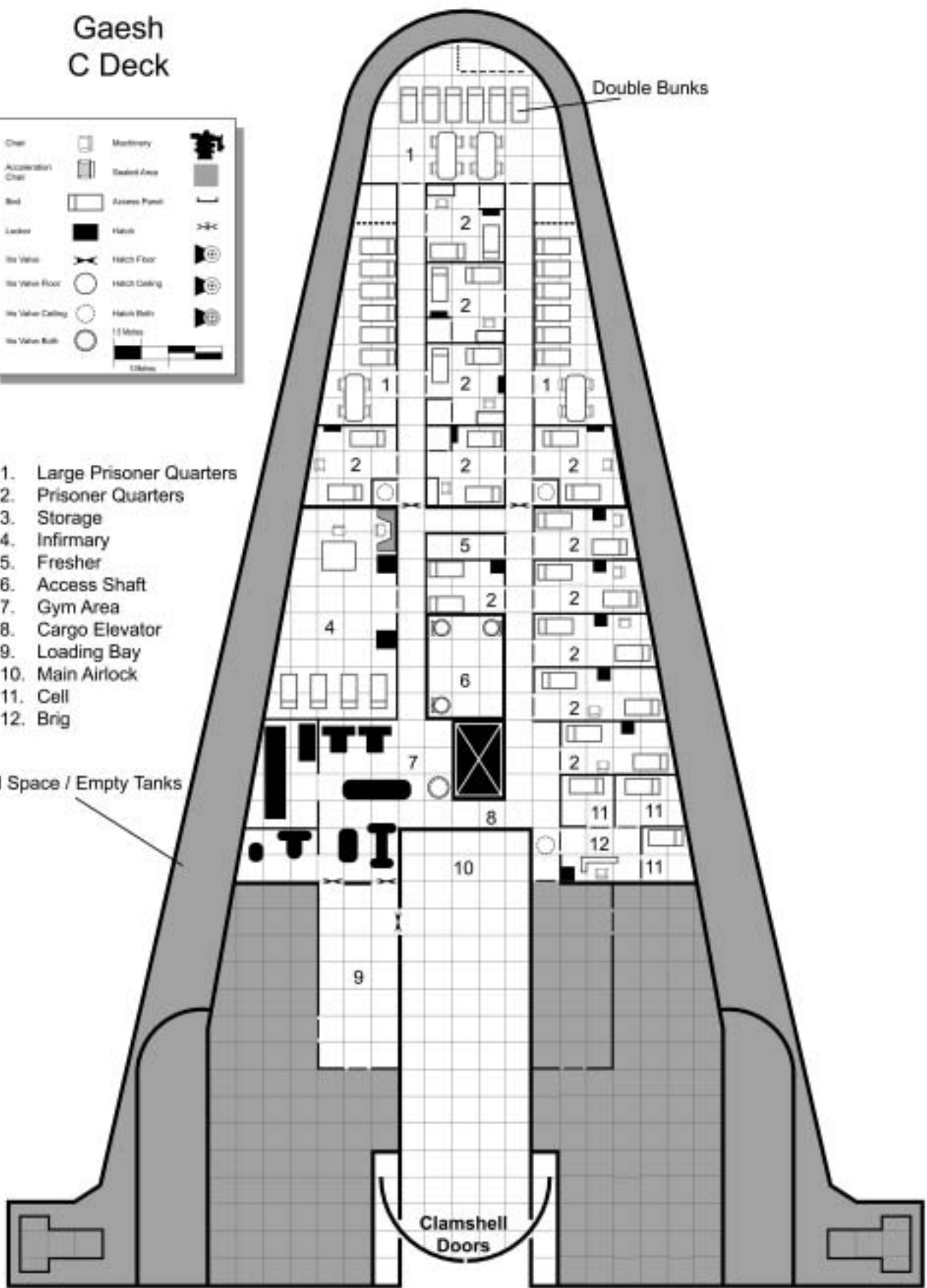
- **Prisoner Quarters:** Cells on board the Gash are spartan but not actively tortuous. Most prisoners share a room with another inmate. Each room contains two bunks, a sink and a small foldout table. In some rooms, there is a display screen for watching videos – a heavily restricted library of entertainment programs is available from the ship's computer.
- **Large Quarters:** Some of the cells were originally larger barracks used by the ship's marine squads. The player characters are placed in one of these shared cells, in the hope they will talk amongst themselves and their conversations can be recorded by the guards. Each of the larger cells contains bunk beds for 12 people, a shower and bathroom facilities (concealed behind a plastic screen), a table and chairs, and a display screen.
- **Brig:** The ship's brig was the only room on this whole deck left unchanged in the decommissioning process. The brig consists of three cells and a guard's post, which is manned at all times if there is a prisoner in solitary confinement.
- **Sickbay:** While several of the guards are treated in basic first aid, the prison lacks a doctor. There is a high-quality autodoc in the sickbay, but if a prisoner

Gaesh C Deck



1. Large Prisoner Quarters
2. Prisoner Quarters
3. Storage
4. Infirmary
5. Fresher
6. Access Shaft
7. Gym Area
8. Cargo Elevator
9. Loading Bay
10. Main Airlock
11. Cell
12. Brig

Void Space / Empty Tanks



Cell Security

Each prison cell has a range of security measures:

- **Obvious Security Camera:** There is a large security camera mounted in or outside each cell. This camera is a big, chunky, low-TL holocamera. The camera monitors the central area of each cell, so the characters can avoid the camera's gaze by clustering in the corners or hiding behind bunks. The cameras were deliberately placed to encourage this – it herds the characters into the area monitored by the concealed cameras and microphones.
- **Concealed Security Camera:** Each cell includes at least two hidden cameras. These are high-tech spying devices, virtually invisible to the naked eye. These cameras are concealed in display screens, light fittings, wall screws and so on. Finding a concealed camera requires a Very Difficult (-4) Intelligence + Investigate roll. Again, these cameras are monitored from B Deck; roll 6+ to see if suspicious activity is noticed by the guards, applying the character's lowest Deception or Stealth as a -DM.
- **Microphone:** Each cell includes at least three voice-activated microphones. These microphones are extremely hard to detect (Formidable (-6) Intelligence + Investigate to find). Any conversations in the cell not masked by other noise are detected and recorded. The computer algorithms that analyse the recordings are smart enough to strip out repetitive noise, so classic tricks like running a shower will not prevent the characters from being spied on. The only way to defeat the microphones is to use unexpected noises like shouting, which will attract the attention of the guards anyway. The microphones are capable of detecting keywords and alerting the guards. The keyword list is customised for each prisoner – initially, for the characters, the keywords include 'Ancients, Alahir, Holcess, Zhodani, Ine Givar, Vlen Beckett, Ven Yasha'.
- **Cell Walls & Ventilation Ducts:** The walls are made of metal and all access panels are welded shut, as are the entrances to the vent ducts. There is no easy way to creep out of the cell.
- **Cell Door:** The cell doors are magnetically locked. To open a cell, a guard must call the observation post on B Deck and request that the door be opened. Forcing the door requires a Strength + Athletics roll at a -8DM.

needs medical care beyond the robot's capacity, a naval doctor is flown in from the naval base.

- **Gym:** The ship has a well-equipped gym with treadmills, weights machines, exercise bikes and even a fencing piste (for imprisoned nobles).
- **Drive Rooms:** The ship's manoeuvre drives and jump drives were formerly housed here. These rooms are now sealed off from the rest of the ship and open to space. The *Gaesh's* only remaining drives are eight low-powered attitude thrusters attached to the exterior hull. These thrusters allow the ship to change position and maintain its orbit, but are not powerful enough to move it at speed.
- **Pinnacle Dock:** The *Kinunir*-class vessels all carried a pinnacle; the one belonging to the *Gaesh* was sold off when the ship was decommissioned. The pinnacle dock is now the main airlock for the prison; new inmates and supplies are brought on board via this large docking bay.

D Deck

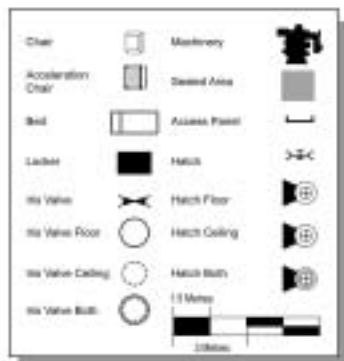
On an active *Kinunir*, D deck is the primary weapons deck, containing the ship's missile and particle beam turrets as well as more crew quarters. These weapons have obviously been removed from the *Gaesh*, as have the ship's landing legs – the *Gaesh* is no longer rated for atmospheric re-entry, so the whole leg armature was removed along with the particle beams. The original intent was for the crew quarters to be converted to more prison cells, but the prison population never rose to its anticipated levels, so D Deck remains uninhabited and largely unused.

The one time it is used is for interrogations. The former Day Room, once the main crew lounge, has been converted into an interview room for interrogation of the player characters. This lounge has been stripped of all furnishings other than a table, some chairs, and a large chair that is connected to a lie detector and other sensor equipment.

E Deck

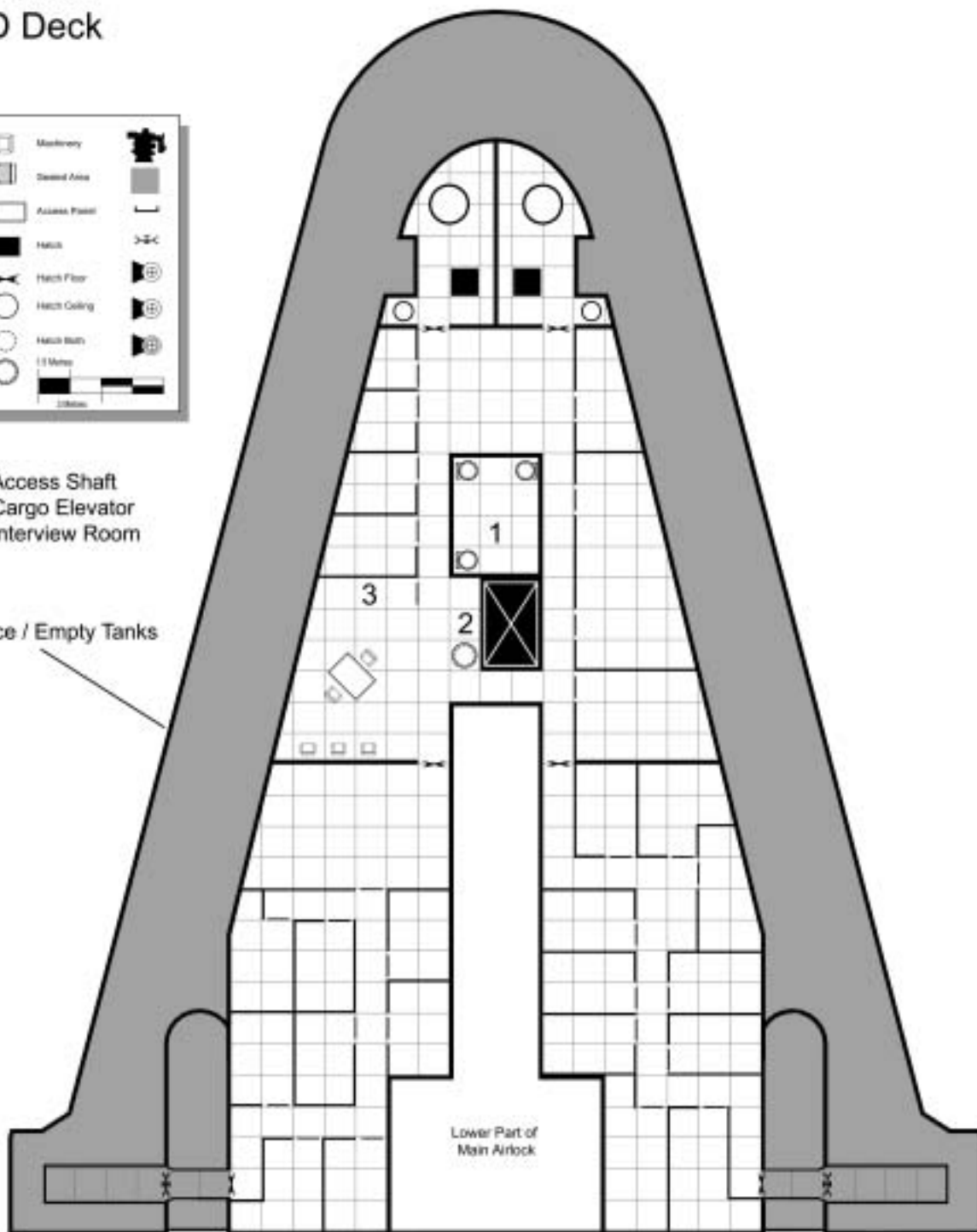
This deck once contained the ship's cargo bays, magazines, fuel tanks and machine shops. The whole deck has been sealed off, the lift and iris hatches no longer function, and parts of the deck are open to vacuum. Even in the areas that still have pressure and oxygen, the temperature is well below freezing.

Gaesh D Deck

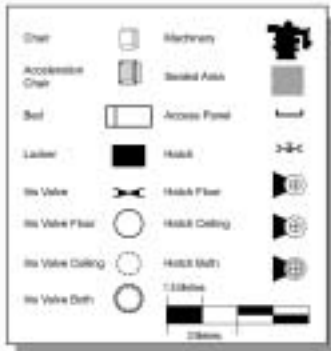


1. Access Shaft
2. Cargo Elevator
3. Interview Room

Void Space / Empty Tanks

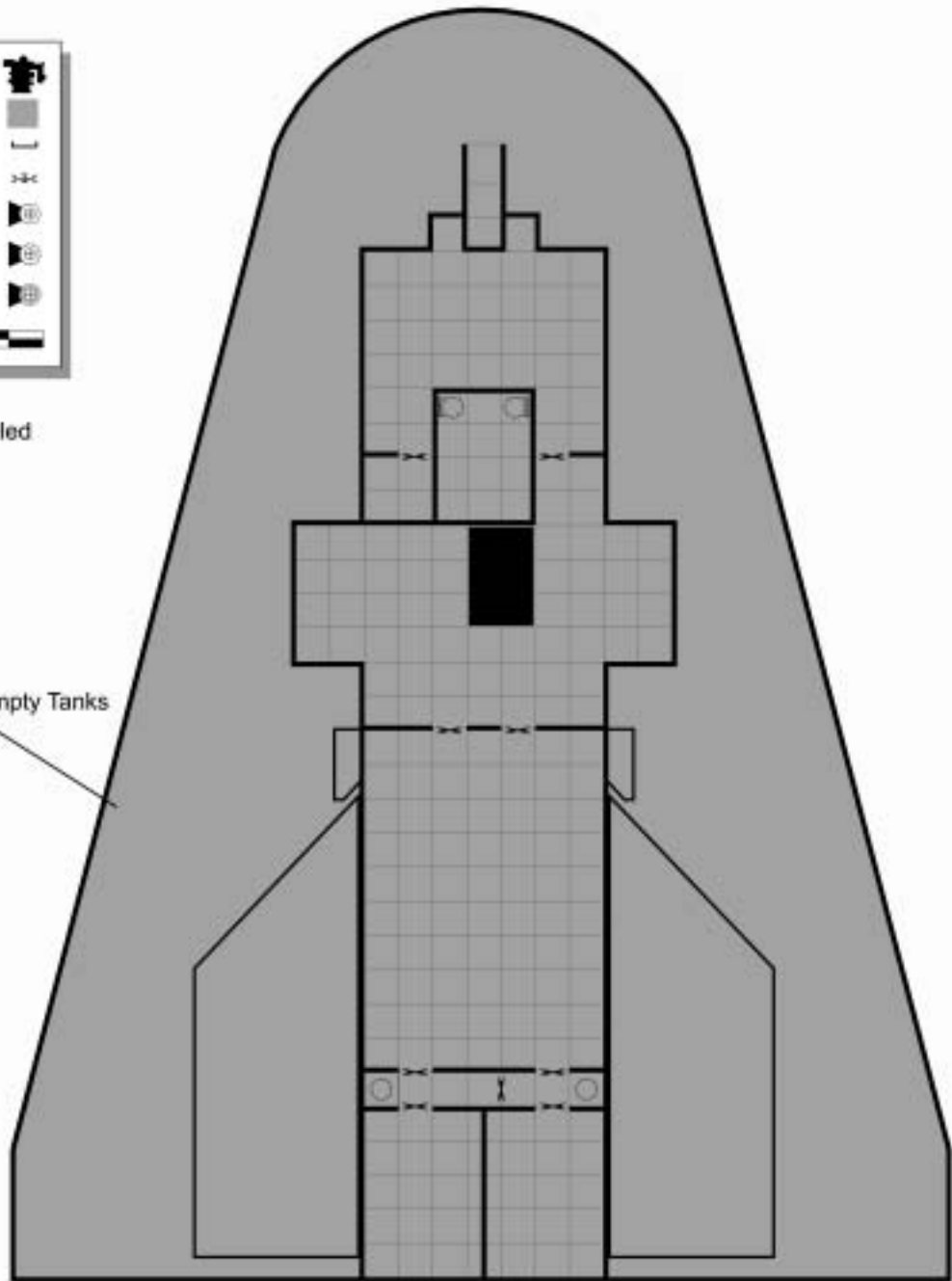


Gaesh E Deck



All of E Deck is Sealed

Void Space / Empty Tanks



CREW OF THE GAESH

There are twenty permanent personnel on the *Gash* – six senior staff and 14 guards.

The guards are naval staff, recruited from the nearby base. They are under orders not to interact with the prisoners in any way outside of normal operations. All the guards wear helmets and black armoured suits when on duty on C Deck. They never beat or mistreat the prisoners; the *Gash* has been host to nobles, dignitaries, scientists and other political prisoners in the past, so all inmates are treated with respect.

The guards are armed with stunners, body pistols and cutlasses. Their armour contains a short-term oxygen supply and automatic vacuum seals, so they function as void suits in emergencies. At any time, there are at least one or two guards on station in the observation room on B Deck, two in the ready room on B Deck, one in the Brig control room on C Deck, and another 1d6-2 throughout the rest of the ship. There will also be 1d6-2 awake but off duty, and the rest are sleeping.

Generic Guard Stats

STR 8 DEX 5 END 8 INT 7 EDU 7 SOC 6

Admin 0, Advocate 0, Comms 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Gun Combat (energy pistol) 1, Investigate 0, Mechanic 1, Medic 0, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Pilot 0, Sensors 0, Space Sciences 0, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1
Body Pistol (3D6-3), Cutlass (2d6+4), Stunner (3d6), Vacc Suit (6)

Warden Hawberk

Being head warden of a political prison requires a delicate balancing act. Today's disgraced noble might be tomorrow's planetary count, as political fortunes wax and wane. Hawberk carefully maintains his distance from the prisoners. She keeps them healthy, safe and *contained*. She has managed to tread the line so far. She is a nervous, cautious woman who avoids confrontation whenever possible. She secretly harbours political ambitions of her own, and has been squirreling away useful nuggets of information picked up by the hidden microphones.

- Hawberk may help the Player Characters if she believes it is in her best interest.
- She has access to the prison computer, so she is the first person to be alerted if the microphones pick up interesting conversations between the player characters.

Playing Hawberk:

- Play Hawberk as a fat, nervous spider. Her fear is delicately balanced against her ambition. She wrings her hands, hunches her shoulders and looks around before speaking. She is always absurdly polite and respectful, even when dealing with prisoners.

STR 7 DEX 6 END 5 INT 8 EDU 8 SOC 8

Admin 2, Advocate 1, Astrogation 2, Broker 0, Carouse 0, Comms 0, Computers 0, Diplomat 2, Leadership 1, Sensors 2, Steward 2, Streetwise 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1

Chief Guard Falkrik

Falkrik is an ex-naval officer. A skirmish with Aslan *ihatei* left him crippled and half-dead. His crew managed to jam him into a low berth and freeze him in time, which kept him alive as the ship limped home to Pax Rulin. Falkrik's injuries were extensive enough that not even the best naval doctors could restore him to full health, and while he could return to duty, he would never get a front-line position again. He was assigned to the *Gaesh* as it was seen as an easy position.

Falkrik has the disconcerting habit of treating the prison hulk as though it is still a functional ship of the line. He berates the guards for leaving hatches open, for failing to run maintenance checks on disabled systems like the fuel lines, and for any other breach of naval discipline. No-one is quite sure if Falkrik still hopes to convince the admiralty he is fit for service on board a starship, or if his injuries have unbalanced his mind, or if he's just a stickler for discipline who takes his frustration out on the guards.

- Falkrik despises civilians, especially nobles who do not 'pull their weight' in service to the Imperium.
- He gets on well with other naval personnel, especially those who have had their careers cut short.
- His cybernetic limbs and skull implants make him look like a lurching cyborg monster, and the synthetic flesh that covers his scorched bones is slightly too pink and plasticky to look normal. His cybernetic servos whir slightly as he moves.
- If the characters try to escape the station by force, then Falkrik will be their main opposition. If they try to talk their way off, they may be able to convince the naval officer he is helping avert a threat to the whole Imperium.

Playing Falkrik:

- Move with a limp. Bark orders. Be irritated with everything.

STR 4 DEX 6 END 6 INT 9 EDU 6 SOC 6

Advocate 1, Astrogation 2, Battle Dress 1, Comms 1, Computers 0, Engineer (power) 2, Engineer (M-Drive) 2, Flyer 0, Gambler 0, Gunner (turret) 2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigate 1, Jack of All Trades 1, Leadership 2, Mechanic 2, Medic 0, Melee (blade) 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Space Sciences 0, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 2
Cybernetic arm, cybernetic legs

Admin Clerk Poad

Poad could have turned up at the Gash as a prisoner, or as staff. He was a clerk over at the Pixie naval base, but there were certain irregularities about purchasing orders that went through his desk. Nothing was ever proved, but many suspected that Poad was skimming money off the top. The navy transferred him to the Gash.

Poad finds the prison intensely boring. He knows that the navy does not trust him, and that he will never be given another assignment or allowed to leave – at least, not without having his memories chemically scrubbed. He has tried to curry favour with Warden Hawberk by suggesting they use the information from prisoners to advance the warden's political ambitions, but so far, Hawberk has resisted. Poad entertains himself by sneaking down to C deck and talking to prisoners in the hopes of picking up some useful gossip.

- Poad is an ambitious little toad. He has given up on his naval career; if the characters bribe him with promises of vast wealth or Ancient technology, he may help them escape.
- He is terrified of Galen; he is the only person on the Gash who can even guess who Galen is and what he represents.

Playing Poad:

- When playing Poad, lick your lips and be slightly smarmy and odious.

STR 7 DEX 9 END 7 INT 9 EDU 11 SOC 8

Admin 2, Advocate 1, Broker 1, Carouse 1, Comms 3, Computers 2, Deception 1, Engineer (electronics) 1, Persuade 2, Pilot 0, Sensors 1, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 0

Commo Clerk Sampson

The prison's communications clerk is a deep cover Zhodani agent; her real name is Zenj. Her entire surface personality is a psionic construct. Her memories, her thoughts, her entire self was engineered to pass Imperial scrutiny, while the real Zenj lurks beneath the surface, manifesting only in dreams or when triggered by circumstances. She is a sleeper agent, created by the Consulate at a young age and smuggled into the Imperium. She has been a spy since she was five years old.

Zenj's sleeper personality may be triggered if she learns the characters know about the Ancients. The Zhodani Consulate have much greater interest in the Ancients than the Imperium. While the Third Imperium primarily views the Ancients as a historical curiosity or a source of useful technology to be salvaged, the Zhodani consider the Ancients to be the architects of their civilisation and have launched long-range core expeditions based on recovered Ancient data.

- Zenj's surface personality, Kaila Sampson, is that of a blandly professional and unremarkable naval officer with a talent for communications operations. She is competent enough to get promoted, but not so skilled as to get noticed. She is best described as 'reliable'.
- Zenj herself is a fervent Zhodani believer, who considers the whole Imperium to be a realm of sick, violent children.
- Zenj is prepared to help the characters if she learns they had dealings with the Ancients.

Playing Sampson:

- Be polite and efficient.
- Keep your head down, avoid making eye contact.

Playing Zenj:

- Speak and move quickly, as if you are trying to cram as much activity as you can into the shortest time.
- Put on a Zhodani accent (Russian will do as an 80s-evil-empire analogue).

Sampson

STR 8 DEX 9 END 8 INT 6 EDU 7 SOC 7

Admin 1, Comms 2, Computers 1, Engineer 0, Remote Operations 1, Sensors 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1

Zenj

STR 8 DEX 9 END 8 INT 10 EDU 10 SOC 2

Admin 1, Astrogation 2, Comms 2, Computers 3, Deception 2, Drive 0, Engineer (j-drive) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigate 2, Jack of All Trades 2, Mechanic 0, Medic 0, Melee (unarmed) 2, Pilot 0, Recon 2, Remote Operations 1, Sensors 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Survival 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1

Guard Chaon

Chaon is the one of the two guards assigned to watch over the characters. He is a young, fresh-faced naval recruit; this is his first tour of duty. He is impressionable and eager to please. Warden Hawberk has instructed all the guards to ensure the prisoners are kept happy and comfortable, and Chaon has taken these instructions overly literally – he can be convinced to bend the rules of the prison for the characters.

Playing Chaon:

- Salute everyone.
- Bounce on the soles of your feet with enthusiasm. Snap out responses like a cadet responding to a drill sergeant.

STR 10 DEX 7 END 8 INT 5 EDU 5 SOC 4

Admin 0, Advocate 0, Astrogation 1, Comms 1, Computers 0, Engineer 0, Gun Combat 0, Investigate 0, Mechanic 1, Medic 0, Melee (blade) 1, Pilot 1, Space Sciences 0, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 0

Body Pistol (3D6-3), Cutlass (2d6+4), Stunner (3d6), Vacc Suit (6)

Guard Shairu

Shairu's a veteran marine, on temporary attachment to the *Gaesh* while she waits for her real assignment, a heavy cruiser, to return to Pixie after a long patrol of the Zhodani border. She just wants to get through this assignment without any trouble, and as far as she is concerned, 'trouble' involves escape attempts. She instantly spots the player characters as potential troublemakers and resolves to keep a close eye on them.

Normally, she and Chief Guard Falkrik would be close allies, but he is consumed by jealousy of her career, and the two have clashed in the past. They argue frequently over petty matters – she considers him to a washed-up martinet, he thinks she is sloppy and undisciplined.

Playing Shairu:

- Be suspicious of everything. Never trust the player characters.
- Keep your stunner ready at all times.
- Watch the player characters for tricks.

STR 6 DEX 7 END 8 INT 9 EDU 6 SOC 7

Athletics 0, Battle Dress 2, Carouse 0, Comms 1, Computers 0, Drive 0, Engineer 0, Explosives 1, Gambler 1, Gunner 0, Gun Combat (energy pistol) 2, Heavy Weapons (support) 1, Investigate 0, Leadership 0, Mechanic 0, Medic 0, Melee (blade) 2, Navigation 1, Pilot 0, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 2

Body Pistol (3D6-3), Cutlass (2d6+4), Stunner (3d6), Vacc Suit (6)

OTHER PRISONERS

The prisoner population on the *Gaesh* varies considerably. Few of the prisoners are here for long – they are either transferred to a conventional prison facility, or released. However, two prisoners are serving life sentences on the *Gaesh*, and are officially 'detained at the Emperor's pleasure'.

The guards permit prisoners to communicate with each other, for the benefit of the hidden microphones.

Baronet Vulis

The former ruler of a district of Violante, a world in Aramis subsector, Vulis was an infamous tyrant who was hated by his subjects. He was overthrown by a revolution and begged the Imperium for shelter under the terms of the ancient treaty signed by his ancestor when his world joined the Imperium. His request was granted – the seal of the Imperium is sacrosanct – but as punishment for his crimes, he was sent to the Gash to live out the rest of his life. His prison is kept secret for his own

protection, as there are thousands of people on Violante who still want Vulis dead.

Vulis has come to accept that he will never leave the Gash alive, so he spends his time reading and composing poetry. It is uniformly dreadful. He is an excellent guide to the prison hulk, as he knows all the regular staff and the basic layout of the ship; if the characters befriend him, he can give them a capsule description of their new home.

He shares a cell with Ruatair.

Playing Vulis:

- Vulis has nothing left but his pride and his art. Quote terrible poetry at the players.
- Be unexpectedly paranoid – these strangers could be assassins from Violante.
- Demand that they address you by your proper title.

STR 4 DEX 7 END 5 INT 7 EDU 9 SOC 10

Admin 2, Advocate 1, Animals 0, Art 0, Carouse 3, Comms 1, Computers 0, Deception 2, Diplomat 1, Flyer 1, Gambler 2, Persuade 0, Streetwise 2, Zero-G 0

Captain Ruatair

A former captain in the planetary navy of Denoam, Ruatair turned pirate and attacked merchant shipping within the independent state of the Federation of Arden. The Imperium hunted him down and arrested him, but allies in the planetary naval managed to arrange for a stay of execution. Ruatair will be held in the Gash until his fate is decided. He knows that an appointment with the gallows – or the firing squad, or the airlock, depending on which of his many accusers finally gets custody of him – awaits, and he is desperate to escape.

He has sympathisers within the navy at the Pixie Naval Base, who pass messages via a bribed guard to let him know about supply runs and prisoner transfers. If the characters befriend him and agree to help him escape, he can let them know when ships are arriving at the Pinnacle Dock on C Deck.

He shares a cell with Baronet Vulis.

Playing Rutair:

- Pepper your dialogue with naval terminology and phrases.
- Pace like a trapped beast; rant about how you were betrayed and misled, and how you thought you had a Letter of Marque permitting your attacks, how it is politics, all politics, that has lead to your downfall.

STR 7 DEX 9 END 7 INT 9 EDU 11 SOC 8

Admin 1, Astrogation 2, Battle Dress 0, Comms 1, Computers 1, Diplomat 2, Engineer (jump) 2, Engineer (power) 2, Flyer

0, Gambler 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 2, Leadership 2, Mechanic 1, Pilot 0, Sensors 2, Space Sciences 0, Tactics (naval) 2, Vacc Suit 2, Zero-G 2

Thoic Abshur

Thoic is a journalist and a writer for newsfeeds and journals on Regina. She specialises in military analysis and new technologies. Ironically, it was her series of reports on the lacklustre performance of the *Kinunir* class that dragged that debacle into the public eye and led to the cancellation of the four final vessels in the original production run of 24 ships. She also correctly speculated that the *Kinunir* was being used as a testbed for a new defence system, the Ancient-derived Black Globes, although she was unable to discover the nature or provenance of this new technology.

Six months ago, Abshur wrote a speculative essay on the old Longbow (Long Baseline Observation Window) project, an experiment in the 800s that linked a network of sensor platforms to replicate a sensor dish some 42,000,000,000 metres across, which permitted the Imperium to observe objects up to 1,500 parsecs away. The original Longbow was used to observe Zhodani traffic in the galactic core; Abshur speculated that a second Longbow array could use the newer jump-6 couriers and cutting-edge computing to create an even more powerful telescope. Unwittingly, Abshur had stumbled upon one of the Imperium's most closely-guarded secrets – there is indeed a Longbow-2 project underway.

The Imperial authorities assumed someone must have leaked this ultra-secure military secret to the journalist, so Abshur was arrested and detained until she revealed her source. The article was suppressed and will never see publication. While Abshur claims she has no insider knowledge of Longbow-2, the security services are unconvinced of her innocence, so she is being detained 'at the Emperor's pleasure' – without trial and without any limits on the length of her incarceration.

As an expert in the intelligence community, Abshur can fill the characters in on the relationship between the IISS, the Ministry of Technology, the Ministry of Justice and the Imperial throne; she can tell them about the military significance of the Ancient technology and their likely fate.

Abshur has a cell to herself.

Playing Thoic Abshur:

- Abshur hopes that the Imperium will eventually see sense and agree she was just immensely, horribly unlucky and release her. Until then, she is careful to keep out of trouble.
- At the same time, she is cursed with curiosity. If the characters hint they know something about the Ancients, she will be unable to resist finding out more.

- Play her as a cynical journalist; she is dying for a cigarette, but such items are banned on board the *Gaesh*.

STR 4 DEX 5 END 4 INT 9 EDU 7 SOC 7

Admin 0, Advocate 2, Art (writing) 3, Broker 1, Carouse 2, Comms 2, Computers 1, Deception 2, Diplomat 1, Drive 0, Flyer 0, Gambler 0, Investigate 3, Persuade 2, Recon 0, Sensors 2, Social Sciences 0, Space Sciences 0, Streetwise 2

Evan haut-Uishir

haut-Uishir is the fourth son of the Count of Bellion; he is also the serial killer called the Laughing Man, responsible for the deaths of sixteen women and the maiming of six others. When the police finally identified the eccentric young noble as the killer, the Count arranged for his son to be taken off world and incarcerated in the Gash. As far as the population of New Rome know, popular young Evan is off on the Grand Tour of the core worlds.

Unlike the rest of the prisoners, who are not deemed dangerous and are permitted to use the gym and other facilities on the prison hulk, Evan is kept locked up in solitary confinement. Furthermore, he has been fitted with a shock collar that incapacitates him if he steps outside his cell without a guard present to override the collar with a special control wand. Disabling the collar requires a Very Difficult (-4) Intelligence + Mechanic check.

Evan is charming and charismatic. He is an adept liar, who claims he had a double made to protect him against assassins, but the jealous double had him imprisoned here and took his place. If the characters can help him escape, he can reclaim his true identity and reward them greatly. If the characters do release Evan, he goes on a rampage through the prison. The young noble has considerable cybernetic and genetic augmentation, making him more than a match for most of the guards.

Unsurprisingly, Evan has a cell to himself.

Playing Evan:

- Smile all the time.
- Use elements from the player characters' personalities and backstories to make Evan seem more sympathetic and convincing – if one of the characters has a grudge against the Imperium, then Evan changes his story so that his double conspired with corrupt Imperial officials.

STR 10 DEX 10 END 10 INT 8 EDU 9 SOC 12

Admin 1, Advocate 2, Animals 0, Athletics (strength) 2, Art 0, Carouse 2, Comms 0, Deception 2, Diplomat 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat 0, Melee (knife) 3, Persuade 2, Recon 1, Stealth 3, Steward 1, Streetwise 2, Zero-G 2

Taek, Yalin & Osvok

These three are smugglers and drug-dealers, captured by the Imperial navy and temporarily held on the *Gash* until sentencing. They have no idea about Imperial politics, the Ancients, spies or anything else – they are just thugs who got caught.

Their role in the scenario is as comic relief and muscle – if the characters go for the escape attempt option, then recruiting Taek, Yalin and Osvok gives them extra cannon fodder.

Playing the Smugglers:

- Taek fancies himself as the smart one; rub your goatee and come up with 'clever' plans.
- Yalin's the fat one; he's always stuffing his face.
- Osvok's the tough guy; growl at everyone and speak in a throaty, gruff voice.

STR 8 DEX 5 END 6 INT 4 EDU 4 SOC 3

Broker 0, Carouse 1, Drive 0, Engineer, Explosives 0, Gun Combat (slug pistols) 1, Melee (brawling) 1, Stealth 0

Gaius Labre

The characters have met Gaius Labre before – all the way back on Regina, in *Section 1: Bodysnatchers*. He is one of Ven Yosha's men, and was assigned to the mission of assassinating Professor Ujinka. He was captured by Imperial Intelligence on Regina, and brought to the *Gash* for questioning. The Ancient artefact he used to shut down Ujinka's security system was confiscated, and is now being held in the storeroom on B Deck (see page XX).

Labre was a two-credit thug and assassin, who has no idea about Ancients, Imperial Intelligence or pan-galactic conspiracies. His eccentric criminal boss sent him to bump off some wrinkled old academic, the job went wrong, and suddenly Labre's on a prison hulk with no trial and no hope of release. For months, he has turned the events over and over in his mind, and come to the conclusion that the player characters are to blame. He thinks the characters were Zhodani agents or Ine Givar or some other big bad enemies of the state, and that Imperial Intelligence mistook Labre for the characters. The player characters ruined his life, and he has dreamed of revenge for months.

Playing Labre:

- Go into a frenzied paroxysm of rage when you see the player characters for the first time.
- Do whatever you can to get to the player characters. If you cannot reach them physically, get under their skin emotionally and make their lives hell.
- Snarl and growl like a trapped beast.

Gaius Labre

STR 9 DEX 6 END 9 INT 5 EDU 6 SOC 3

Gun Combat (handgun) 2, Melee (Brawl) 1, Recon 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1

Physical Characteristic Augmentation (Strength +1, Endurance +1)

Prison Routine

Life on board the *Gash* follows a strict routine. Each day, the prisoners are served breakfast in their cells by a guard. They are then given a two-hour session in the gym, followed by a four hour period of rest and reading during which lunch is served. In the afternoon, there is another session in the gym before dinner. Trusted prisoners are permitted to perform other light duties, like collecting supplies from A Deck or performing basic maintenance under the supervision of a guard. The ratio of guards to prisoners means that the characters are under virtually constant supervision.

Traffic

A supply shuttle visits the prison every three days, bringing fresh water and food. These supplies are unloaded at the pinnace dock and must be carried up to the storerooms on A Deck by hand, using a mix of guard and prisoner labour.

Prisoner transfers happen more rarely; when a prisoner shuttle arrives, all current inmates are ordered to return to their cells.

There is a scout training base at Pixie; scout ships from that base often dock at the prison hulk during exercises and training missions. For example, when one scout is skimming from the gas giant below, another scout might adopt a high guard position over the gravity well.

The Pixie System

The *Gaesh* is in a geostationary orbit over the north pole of the Pixie system gas giant. This region is under a traffic exclusion order – vessels coming within 10,000 kilometres of the prison hulk are automatically photographed and warned to change course.

The mainworld, Pixie (A100103-D) is a small vacuum world inhabited by miners. The major settlement surrounds the huge, busy starport and naval base. The base is defended by another *Kinunir*-class cruiser as well as small scout ships.

Referee Advice

This adventure is designed to be a low-key breathing space between the weird chase and bizarre alien environments within Grandfather's pocket universe, and the final battle with SEVEN to come in the next two adventures. There are three main plotlines that can be explored.

Firstly, the characters can try to convince Arisa to trust and help them. This is primarily a matter for roleplaying.

Alternatively, the characters can break out of the prison hulk. This requires learning more about the Gash, finding a way off the prison, and either stealing a ship or reclaiming their own vessel.

The third plot progresses in parallel to the other two – the psionic copy of Grandfather grows in strength throughout the game. Over the course of this section, the players need to learn that

- One of the party has become host to a copy of Grandfather.
- SEVEN is still trapped within the collapsing pocket dimension.
- SEVEN will be resurrected by his Family Archive if he dies within the pocket dimension – the only way to defeat the renegade Ancient is to destroy the Family Archive before it escapes.
- Grandfather managed to extract the location of the Family Archive from SEVEN's mind before Grandfather was killed.

Grandfather's Host

During this adventure, the psionic copy of Grandfather becomes more active. There are three handouts at the end of this scenario – give these to the player at appropriate intervals. Each handout gives the character added skills and abilities. These are temporary powers, which will leave the character at the end of *Secrets of the Ancients*.

While the player is reading each handout, the host player character becomes a temporary NPC. The Referee should use this opportunity for Grandfather to 'explore' his new form. The character behaves in a bizarre manner during these periods – disassembling equipment, obsessively examining his extremities, trying to fly, babbling in Droyne, casually answering impossible questions and so on.

If Grandfather's Host is in extreme danger, or if you need a *deus ex machina* to get the characters out of a fix, Grandfather can exert himself. The psionic copy has an effective Intelligence and Education of 15 each (+3DM), a Psionic Strength of 12 (+2), and all relevant skills at 6.

1. WELCOME BACK

You are still alive.

It comes as a shock. The last thing you remember with any clarity was falling through the second portal above the Droyne world. After that, there's a confusing, blurred set of memories – marines in battle dress, an oxygen mask being pressed into your face, the smell of antiseptic, muffled voices, and then, over and over, the sickening lurch of jump!

You come back to full consciousness on board a cramped shuttle. Your legs and arms are manacled to the chair. There is an external viewport, through which you can see a huge gas giant turning slowly beneath you. Armed guards walk up and down the narrow aisle, checking on each of you.

The shuttle approach a battered, broken ship that must be a wreck or a prison hulk. As the shuttle manoeuvres to line itself up with an aft docking port, you catch a glimpse of the Imperial Sunburst emblazoned on the ship's hull.

The shuttle docks and an airlock hisses open. The guards unclip your manacles and lead you off the shuttle. The prison hulk smells of sweat and recycled air. 'Welcome to the Gash' grunts one of the guards. 'You don't exist here.'

You Don't Exist Here

Arisa meets the characters as they leave the shuttle. (Obviously, if Arisa died earlier in the campaign, replace her with Orcio.) She explains their situation:

- The characters are being detained at the pleasure of the Emperor. They will remain here on the *Gaesh* until future notice.
- They will be questioned on their activities since the death of Vlen Backett on Regina. Attempts to deceive or conceal information from the interrogators will not be tolerated.
- If the characters co-operate with her, there is every chance they will be granted a pardon and walk free from the Gash.
- Assuming the characters are not violent or argumentative, they will be permitted to share a large cell and given basic liberties while incarcerated. If they are... difficult, then their time on board the *Gaesh* will not be so pleasant.

This is an excellent time to give the first of the three handouts to Grandfather's Host. While Grandfather is in control of the character's body, he looks around in surprise and confusion, and mutters under his breath in Oynprith.

Arisa escorts the characters to their communal cell.

Equipment, Ships & Other Matters

The characters have been stripped of all equipment, and have nothing except clothing and footwear. Bags, each containing a towel and other toiletries, are left on the bunks for the new prisoners. Any equipment that the characters brought out of the pocket universe is now being stored in the storeroom on B deck.

If the characters left the pocket universe on the Droyne rocket, then it was abandoned and burned up in the atmosphere of Boughene. However, if they escaped on the *Star Hunter*, then it is now in orbit five kilometres away from the *Gaesh*.

Life in Prison

The characters have several hours to discuss their predicament, meet the other prisoners in the gym or recreation area, and explore C Deck under the watchful eye of the guards. Remember, their conversations are being eavesdropped on by the hidden microphones; the guards *want* the characters to talk and give away their secrets. The interrogations start the next morning.

2. INTERROGATION

In these scenes, the three interrogators – Arisa, haut Tarvel and Galen – attempt to learn what the characters know about the Ancients. These scenes are critical to the character's chances of convincing Arisa to aid them – see 4: *Convincing Arisa* for more details.

There are three phases to the interrogation. Firstly, Arisa and haut Tarvel interrogate the characters as a group. Secondly, the characters are split up and interrogated individually. Thirdly, if the interrogators are still not satisfied, Galen telepathically probes each of the characters.

For each interrogation session, the characters are marched down to the interrogation room on D Deck. There are two guards present during each interrogation, as well as the interrogators. Unless otherwise noted, the interrogations are watched through the cameras and monitored via microphone.

Review of Events

In this interrogation, Arisa and haut Tarvel meet with all the characters. Haut-Tarvel does most of the talking; he demands that the characters describe everything that happened since they received the message about Vlen Backett's death.

Specific questions asked by the interrogators might be:

- How do the characters know Vlen Backett?
- Have they had any contact with the Zhodani?
- What happened at Professor Ujinka's house on Regina?
- How did they find the Ancient vessel at Boughene?
- What happened on Boughene?
- What happened in the pocket universe?
- What do the Ancients want?
- How active are the Ancients in the modern universe?
- What was Vlen Backett?

Throw in other questions as needed – Arisa is mostly interested in the relationship between the Ancients and Humaniti, while haut Tarvel's questions concentrate on the Ancients themselves and their civilisation. At this stage, though, just focus on the facts. Use the interrogators to remind the players of elements they may have forgotten from earlier adventures.

If the characters ask why they are being detained, haut Tarvel sniffs and informs them that they are being held at the Emperor's

pleasure until their loyalty to the Imperium is confirmed, and a full account of the events at Regina, Alell, Boughene and the pocket universe has been determined. They may be freed if the interrogators are 'satisfied with their answers'.

Once you have run through all of the characters' experience to date in this adventure, the interview ends. Move onto the first few *Events in the Prison* (page XX), then run *Divide and Conquer* as appropriate.

Divide & Conquer

In this series of interrogations, the characters are split up. Each player character is brought down alone to the interrogation room, where they meet one of the three interrogators. Each of the interrogators has their own agenda in the interrogations. Pick the player characters who will have the most interesting interactions with the various NPCs – a character who always argues with authority figures should be paired with haut Tarvel, a character who is willing to betray the others might work well with Galen and so on.

Arisa: The scout's sole aim is finding out the truth. She asks the characters about their interactions with Vlen Backett, Gand Holcess, and the Ancients. She wants to know if the Ancients are a threat to the Imperium, and if so, do the characters have a way to deal with the threat? Keep an eye on *Convincing Arisa* during these scenes, as this is the best opportunity for the characters to gain her trust.

haut Tarvel: The arrogant noble's goal is to prove his pet theories about the Ancients to be correct, and to expose the player characters as liars. He tries to pick holes in their account of their adventures and demands they agree that the Ancients are composed of multiple different species and that figures like 'Grandfather' or 'Seven' are just myths.

Galen: The sinister interrogator wants to divide the players and expose weaknesses within the group. His ultimate goal is to find the truth, and he believes the best way to do this is to sow dissent. He will use his telepathic powers on any non-psionic characters to pick up secrets from the characters' minds, and use these secrets against them. Play on existing tensions within the group – if two player characters do not trust each other, then have Galen question each of them and hint that if one of them turns on the rest of the group, Galen will intercede to protect his informant.

He also tries to identify which of the characters is host to Grandfather.

Mind-Probe!

If the characters are still imprisoned by the time you have questioned all of them individually, then Galen moves to more direct methods. There are two ways to proceed with this.

If any of the player characters has expressed doubt or fear about Grandfather's host, then Galen picks the character who has shown the most concern about the Ancients. He brings that character down to the interrogation room and offers to make a deal. His interrogation and mind-probes of the player characters have convinced him that both SEVEN and Grandfather are a threat to the Imperium. Grandfather seems bent on defeating SEVEN – but what happens when SEVEN is dealt with? The Imperium cannot tolerate the existence of a living Ancient. The Third Imperium of Humanity is like a delicately balanced star system, with the various power groups – the fleets, the dukes, the megacorporations – orbiting around the Iridium Throne. Grandfather would perturb the social order like a black hole plunging through the system.

Galen wants to use Grandfather. He instructs the player character to help Grandfather put his plan to defeat SEVEN into action. Galen will arrange for the player characters to be allowed 'escape' from the prison, and the player character should then stick close to Grandfather and help the Ancient – until SEVEN is finally dealt with. At that moment of triumph, Grandfather will be distracted and vulnerable. The player character should take that chance to kill Grandfather.

If the player character manages to assassinate the last of the Ancients, if the player character kills Grandfather, then Galen promises he will be rewarded beyond his wildest dreams.

The player character must make the decision on the spot. If he agrees to kill Grandfather when the opportunity arises (in *Section 10: Grandfather lies*), then Galen has him escorted back to the cell – see *Escaping the Prison*, below. If he refuses, then Galen has the character placed in solitary confinement and moves onto the second option.

The second option is killing Grandfather here and now. Galen orders Grandfather's host brought downstairs to the Interrogation Room on D Deck, where Galen awaits. Sitting on the table in front of the inquisitor is a gauss pistol.

Unless the player acts immediately, Galen shoots the host through the brain with a gauss needle, killing both the player character and Grandfather. To survive, the player needs to do something – either letting Grandfather's personality come to the fore and wielding his psionic powers or fighting back against Galen. If Grandfather dies here, the campaign is at an end – the other player characters will be executed or transferred to another Imperial prison from which there is no escape.

The most likely turn of events, if the characters come to this scene, is that Grandfather blows Galen through a bulkhead with a telekinetic punch, and the game turns into an escape attempt, with or without Arisa's aid.

3. Events on the Prison

Run these events as circumstances demand in roughly the order below. Assume that one event happens every 6d6 hours on board the prison hulk.

Brownout: The *Gaesh* has had problems since it was launched, especially in its power distribution subsystem. These problems reoccur periodically, in the form of brownouts. During a brownout, roll 1d6 on the table below to determine which subsystem fails.

Prison Brawl

All prisoners are allowed some time in the ship's gym each day. Gaius Labre takes advantage of this time to start a brawl with the characters. While working out with some weights, he flings one of the dumbbells at Guard Chaon, stunning him. Labre then goes after the characters with murderous intent.

Processing

One of the characters is brought up to B Deck by the guards. There is a minor irregularity in one of the character's personal records that has be resolved. This is a minor bureaucratic problem, easily resolved, but it gives the character a chance to see B Deck and encounter Warden Hawberk and Commo Clerk Sampson, who reviews the case.

BROWNOUT TABLE

Roll	Effects
1	All the lights on the deck go out, apart from a few emergency lights.
2	Gravity on the deck fails. The characters are now in freefall.
3	Sensor grid fails. The microphones and cameras no longer function. Guards are scrambled from B Deck; they arrive in 1d6 minutes to restore order.
4	Magnetic door locks fail. The cell doors are still locked, but can be overpowered with a Very Difficult (-4) Strength test.
5	System blowout. The power fluctuations cause a relay to overload and explode. Anyone standing near the relay suffers 2d6 damage; the smoke and fumes mean that any prisoners in nearby cells must be evacuated to another section of the deck.
6	Roll again twice and apply both results.

Galen arrives

A Jump-6 courier arrives in system and heads straight for the Gash. A passenger transfers to the station by shuttle, while the courier skims hydrogen from the gas giant below and jumps out again. The lone passenger is met at the C Deck dock by the Warden and the guards, but instead of heading up to B Deck, Galen insists on first seeing the player characters. He stands outside their cell, not saying anything, but just watches them for a few moments in complete silence, as if weighing them up.

Supply Run

The regular supply shuttle from the Pixie naval base arrives at the hulk. The cargo from the shuttle must be unloaded, and it is customary for some of the better-behaved prisoners to help with this. Pick two or three player characters who have not made a nuisance of themselves; they are made to carry heavy loads up to A Deck, but get a better idea of the layout of the prison hulk as they do so.

Sick Guard

Guard Chaon (page XX) falls sick while on duty outside the characters' cell. A successful Medic roll suggests that he is suffering from 'Pixie dust', a bacterial infection of the lining of the lungs endemic to the recycled air on Pixie. The guard sways back and forth, has trouble breathing, and finally collapses. There is a brief interval between Chaon's black-out and the other guards arriving that the characters can take advantage of.

Arresting Sampson

Using his telepathic abilities, Galen is able to identify Sampson as a Zhodani spy. He arrests her and has her thrown into a prison cell. Questioning Zenj (Sampson's Zhodani sleeper-self) gets the characters more information about the prison. Zenj may even accompany the characters once they escape the prison, offering them sanctuary in the Consulate once they deal with Grandfather.

4. CONVINCING ARISA

If the characters can convince Arisa of their good intentions, she can help them escape the prison hulk. Bringing Arisa around requires more than just a few Persuade checks, although you should call for rolls every so often as the characters talk with her. It also takes roleplaying and making the right arguments. Below is a checklist of items the player characters need to bring up during their interrogations. If the players mention an item, check it off the list.

The characters...

- Are not insane []
- Are not plotting against the Imperium []
- Are not working for the Ancients []
- Are innocent victims of circumstances []
- Are competent and capable individuals []

Gand Holcass...

- Followed the characters to Boughene []
- Was killed by SEVEN []

SEVEN

- Is responsible for billions of deaths []
- Such as the extinction of life on Beck's World []
- Is trapped in the pocket universe []
- But will soon escape []
- The characters have a means of dealing with SEVEN []

The Prison

- The characters will be executed or indefinitely imprisoned []
- haut Tarvel is an idiot who is only interested in his own theories, and is not really listening to the evidence []
- Galen is a dangerous psion []
- Arisa is their only hope of survival []

If the characters make the majority of the listed arguments, then Arisa agrees to aid them by covering for their escape. See *Escape*, below.

Imperial Backing!

If the characters are able to convince both Arisa and Galen to aid them, then there is no need for an escape attempt. Instead, the characters are officially freed and given a scout ship. All their equipment is returned to them, and Galen gives the characters his Imperial Warrant to speed them on their way.

5. ESCAPING THE GASH

The easiest way to escape the Gash is to have inside help. If Arisa or Galen or another NPC is helping the characters, they can provide assistance like:

- Disabling security cameras or cell magnetic locks.
- Sneaking weapons to the characters during interrogation sessions.
- Sneaking the Ancient technology damper used by Gaius Labre down to the characters.
- Letting the characters know about visits by other ships.
- Arranging for a scout ship to visit the prison hulk at just the right time.
- Ordering guards to stand down or directing guards to the wrong place on board.
- Sabotaging security systems.

If the characters do have help, their escape attempt should go much more smoothly.

Escaping the Gash is a difficult prospect. The characters need to break out of their prison cells, deal with the guards and then find a jump-capable ship.

Breaking Out

The optimum time to break out is when the characters are already outside their cells, such as during a gym break, when helping move cargo or when coming back from an interrogation. Remember, there are guards present at all times, so the characters need to either arrange a distraction or be able to overpower at least two armed guards without being shot. The guards use their stunners first in any fight before switching to lethal force.

As soon as the alarm is raised, more guards arrive from B Deck within 1-6 minutes for a minor incident (brawl between one prisoner and a guard) or 1-3 minutes for a more serious incident.

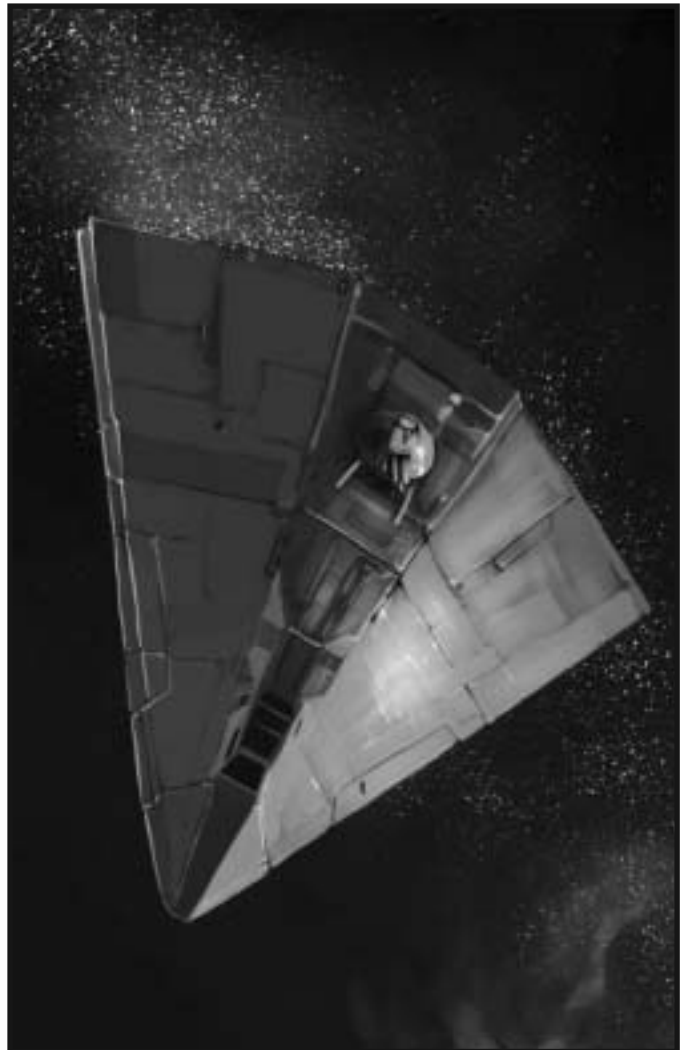
Another possibility is for Grandfather to use his psionic or technological skills to help the characters escape. If possible, dissuade the players from relying on Grandfather too much – he is not omnipotent, nor is he wholly in control of his host. Any intercession by Grandfather should be mirrored by weird behaviour or injuries to the host. The human brain is not designed to carry the telepathic mind-imprint of a mutant super-Droyne; the more Grandfather does through his host, the more damage he does to the host's brain.

Stealing a Ship

If the *Star Hunter* survived the pocket universe, then it is floating in orbit some five kilometres away from the prison hulk. The characters can cross this distance by jumping off the prison hulk and floating across to the scout ship, using telekinesis or manoeuvring jets to adjust their course.

If the characters do not have their own ship, they need to steal one. Scout ships call to the prison hulk during training missions; alternatively, if the characters manage to seize the bridge, they can send out a distress call. The prisoner and supply shuttles are not jump-capable, but could be used to get the characters to the *Pixie* base where they can steal a ship from the orbital yards there.

Once the characters have a jump-capable ship, they can set off in pursuit of SEVEN and *Section 9: The Dark Gate*.



6. GRANDFATHER'S DREAMS

DREAM 1

Your head blazes with pain, and you lose all feeling in your limbs. You feel like your body is too big, too watery. Your back itches... and then your vision dims and you lose consciousness.

You find yourself looking at a complex equation, and you understand it. It describes a universe, a space pinched off by science – and it is both impossibly advanced and childlike in its simplicity. The universe contains three stars. Trapped in the centre of this universe, thrashing like a fly in a spider's web, is a familiar but horrific shape. The robot body of the Ancient SEVEN is trapped in the pocket universe you fled... you made... your head burns.

The universe is shrinking. Rate of collapse uneven; estimated time to singularity is less than three months. You dream of SEVEN being annihilated as the walls of reality crush it to nothingness...

Increase your Intelligence by 1, and gain any three Science or Engineering skills.

DREAM 2

The strange pain overtakes you again, and you black out.

This time, it is like the telepathic flashbacks you experienced in Grandfather's realm. You feel like images are spooling out into your brain.

You saw SEVEN die in the pocket universe. You saw the ancient cybernetic monstrosity be completely and utterly destroyed... and yet you know that somewhere, machines are resurrecting it. A Family Archive, that is what it is called. The instant SEVEN was destroyed... will be destroyed... a telepathic signal activates the Archive. SEVEN's machine body is rebuilt, its personality reactivated from backups.

And then the nightmare begins.

SEVEN's wrath is no longer counterbalanced by the threat of other Ancients. The galaxy belongs to the monster machine. You see bizarre ships in the skies over Regina, over Rhylanor, over Capitol. The alien ships rain down destruction like the thunderbolts of a jealous and judgemental god. Humaniti is wiped out by the child of its benefactor...

If SEVEN is destroyed in Grandfather's pocket universe, a new version of SEVEN will be built by its Family Archive...

... and if SEVEN lives, the galaxy dies.

Increase your Intelligence by 1, and gain any three Science or Engineering skills.

If you already have a Psionic Strength, increase it by 4 and gain any three Psionic disciplines. If you do not have a Psionic Strength, roll 2d6+4 to determine your Psionic Strength and gain any three Psionic disciplines.

DREAM 3

In this vision, you are back in the pocket universe, on Grandfather's space station.

SEVEN looms above you, terrible and invincible. The space station fires a beam of shimmering nameless energy, but there is no effect on the dark metal star-god...

... or is there? In the vision, you travel along the beam, your consciousness encoded in a pattern of erupting anti-mesons. You are suddenly *inside* SEVEN, inside the machine mind. It is a nightmare place, a hallucinatory realm of cold hatred, of overwhelming loathing for all other life. SEVEN dreams of a universe where all other living beings are subservient to *it*, to never-ending conquest. It dreams of a galaxy of self-replicating warships, all enslaved to *its mind*. A host of warships, quadrillions strong, hurl themselves across the void to conquer other galaxies, tear holes in reality and slip sideways to parallel universes... always conquering, always growing, immortal, invincible, divine... an infinite of universes where there is nothing but subservience to the one true god, SEVEN...

You flit through the machine's fever-dreams in search of your prize. As SEVEN's weapons incinerate Grandfather cell by cell, the machine god roars with pleasure, and it ripples through this psychic landscape like a red tsunami of bloody joy. A memory, a single closely-guarded memory exposed only in SEVEN's moment of triumph over Grandfather. You dart in and steal it.

A world. A garden world, Earth-like, shimmering oceans, green forests. Atmosphere composition includes an unusually high amount of neon. Gas giant, three moons, one of which is a captured iceball. Vargr, enslaving a minor race of amphibious sea-slugs. Uthe sector, only a short distance. Deep beneath the crust, a hidden fortress. SEVEN's base. SEVEN's family archive.

Find that world. Find it before SEVEN escapes the pocket universe.

**Increase your Intelligence by 1, and gain Astrogation, Engineering (jump) and Pilot (Spacecraft).
Reduce your Endurance by 2.**