THE STARS ARE ALSO ⊕ FIRE

A Cthulhu Rising adventure by John Ossoway Winter 2004

GMs BACKGROUND:
Cthugha's Spawn…
This adventure continues the story arc involving the escape of Aphoom-Zhah, son of Cthugha, from his prison in the Gamma Leporis star system.

The physical form of the being that is Aphoom-Zhah, is still imprisoned in an alternate dimension, prevented escaping to our reality by the Elder Bonds of the temple on CS402 in the Gamma Leporis system. Part of its life force is currently possessing the mind of Psi Corps colonel Richards.

Using Richards as a conduit for it's psychic energies, and with the help of an alien, extra-terrene race known as the Xert, Aphoom-Zhah has taken control of the crew of a spaceship, the Cook, and travelled to the Fomalhaut Star System, home of it's father, the Great Old One Cthugha.

Aphoom-Zhah hopes to discover a means of freeing his physical being from it's extra-dimensional prison on CS402.

In my own campaign, a player character ran a psychic called Jake McCulloch, whom became the host for Aphoom-Zhah in CRM03 The Dig. I make references to McCulloch throughout the adventure, so you may need to change this to fit your own campaign.

PLAYERS BACKGROUND:
Six Months After Aricebo…
The story opens 6 months since the events on Aricebo (and therefore 3 months since the adventure 'Frozen Assets' in the Arcturus star system). The PCs spacecraft, the Frigate 'Rommel' has just arrived at the edge of the Fomalhaut star system. At this point, the ship's computer will spring into action, waking it's passengers from their cryo-sleep.

The Psychic PC has been away from the company for the six months since the incident on Aricebo. He returned to the company in conjunction with the PCs platoon shipping out of Arcturus on board the Rommel.

After the marines have showered, dressed and eaten, they will assemble in the briefing room to get the low-down on why they had to ship out at such short notice, and where the hell they are. Only one section from the PCs platoon is on board the Rommel, along with their platoon commander and their android EXO, Chen.

MISSION BRIEFING
What exactly are we doing out here, Lt?
Colonel Van Owen will lead the briefing. He will march into the briefing room as an NPC shouts "STAND TO - OFFICER ON DECK!" at which point everyone is expected to snap to attention. He is joined by several others – Captain Severin Miles, Dr Goodbody, and either the Psychic PC or Jake McCulloch as an NPC.

Van Owen will commence with the briefing:

"At ease soldiers. Sorry we didn't have time to brief you before we left New Tarnapol, but time is critical to this mission.

We have just entered the Fomalhaut star system. The star Fomalhaut is prone to unpredictable solar flares. The resulting intense stellar radiation that bathes the planets orbiting the star has prevented the system being colonised. The only life present is the staff of the Motokatsu-Kyono Combine solar observatory orbiting the 2nd planet, who number 18.

Your unit has been chosen to aid in the securing of a rogue starship, the Cook, and the capture of an alien intelligence that is believed to be on board. Designated Entity 402, this creature is ancient and unlike anything we have yet encountered, possessing psychic powers the like of which are beyond anything PsiCorps has to offer. It has possessed the body of PsiCorps Lt Colonel Richards, and has somehow neutralised the crew.

You are tasked with disabling the Cook, boarding her and securing the vessel. To achieve this we will use the Rommel's neutral particle beam gun, disabling the Cook's electronics and instrumentation.

It must be assumed that the crew of the Cook are either prisoners or under the control of Entity 402. In the event of the crew being hostile, use of lethal force will be authorised by your OC. The only exception to this order is that Lt Col Richards *must*

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be captured alive.

If Richards is not onboard the Cook, it must be assumed he is on the Motokatsu-Kyono Solar Observatory. If this proves to be the case, you will immediately proceed to board the space station, securing it causing minimum collateral damage to crewmembers and equipment.

I don't have to explain to you that both the solar observatory and the Cook are multi-million E$ pieces of technology, so don't go blowing them up, you get me?"

The Colonel will now take questions, and refer any concerning the nature of the alien entity to Dr Goodbody, who will say the following:

"We have theorised that while Entity 402 can possess any sentient creature, it cannot act, or project any of its significant mind powers. For this it needs the mind of someone trained to project their thoughts, a member of Psi Corps for example. The host then acts as an amplifier from where Entity 402 can project its psychic power.

Entity 402 jumped into the mind of McCulloch in a similar manner during the search and rescue mission your platoon was involved in one year ago in the Gamma Leporis star system [**adventure CR03 'The Dig']**, and did the same with PsiCorps Lt Col Richards 6 months ago on Aricebo. Once in this host body, Entity 402 somehow teleported Richard's to an orbiting spacecraft, where it neutralised the crew, and took control of the ship.

To prevent Entity 402 using it's teleportation abilities to compromise this ship or it's crew before we can get into position, the Rommel will deploy an electromagnetic field array. This field, while disrupting all but short-range communications will prevent the projection of any psychic abilities either out of or onto this space vessel.

We have developed a drug that we call a '*Neural Inhibitor*' - it blocks certain pathways in the brain thus rendering a Telepath unable to use his/her mind powers. The plan is to render the host unconscious and inject him with the neural inhibitor. This should imprison Entity 402 within the host's mind, and allow you to transport him back to the Rommel, where we will put him into cryosleep for safe transportation.

A word of warning: If the host is killed, Entity 402 will escape and be free to choose another host. Should this happen, the Telepath McCulloch has undergone training to allow him to *see* the location of the creature's psychic aura.

To offer you all some protection against any psychic attacks, you will all be wearing HALOs – artificial psychic shields."

RECON
Checking out the lay of the land
If the PCs request a preliminary sitrep, give them handouts detailing the Rommel (2), Cook (3), Fomalhaut (4) and the Motokatsu-Kyono Solar Observatory (5).

Long range sensors show that the Cook is currently at anchor 10km from the space station orbiting Fomalhaut II. They also pick up a narrow band distress beacon broadcasting on an emergency frequency – it is coming from the 3rd planet, a Uranus-like gas giant designated Fomalhaut III.

Currently the *Rommel* is positioned out beyond Fomalhaut III. At full thrust, the Rommel could reach Fomalhaut III in 56 minutes, Fomalhaut II in 18 hours.

DEFENCE AGAINST THE UNKNOWN:
Weapons and Countermeasures
The Rommel is equipped with the following offensive and defensive systems, the first of which can be used to disable the Cook if they manage to get in close enough:

800 Megavolt Turboalternator-Powered Neutral Particle Beam:

The 800 MeV Weapons are the primary beam weapons of the ICM Frigates. They fire into the starships forward 'cone', each capable of disabling a target's electronics and instrumentation at ranges up to 100km. Sufficient deuterium tanking exists for up to 230 seconds of firing. One hit to another ship will cause 8d6 damage but the ship won't be damaged. Instead, if "destroyed", all electrical systems shut down, rendering the ship dead. No weapons can fire. Emergency batteries on board escape pods still allow them to be ejected. The engineer of the victim ship can attempt to restore the systems every minute with a –5% penalty each successive attempt. The systems will not come back themselves for another 2D6 hours. If the damage received is less than the HAP of the craft…the ship is untouched.
ROF: 3x bursts /MR; **Damage**: 8d6; **Effective Range**: 100km; **Ammo**: Sufficient deuterium tanking exists for up to 230 seconds of firing (20 MR); **Fail**: 96.

Electromagnetic Field Generator:
In addition to this weapon system, the Rommel has an electromagnetic field generator, which generates a low-frequency electromagnetic field around the ship. Projection of psychic abilities across this field is impossible. Unfortunately, this field also prevents a ship using all but short range communications devices.

Power for the shield is diverted from the main F-Drive reactor, preventing the vessel using it's interstellar drive while the field is being projected.

Polyaniline shielding on board the Rommel protects electrical devices from this field for up to 24 hours constant usage.

DISTRESS BEACON
A portent of things to come
The source of the distress beacon is a type 322 Emergency Escape Vehicle. The EEV-332 is a small escape craft which is capable of carrying up to 6 passengers. It is 13.2 meters long with a hexagonal configuration.

18 minutes from rendezvous with the EEV, it will begin to hail the ship via its onboard beacon. Its current status is flashed to the Rommel:

Status: Nominal
Origin: The Motokatsu-Kyono Space
                 Observatory 'Daedalus'
Passengers: James Ichiro, pilot contracted
                 to Motokatsu-Kyono. Alive.

The EEV has been caught in the gravity well of the gas giant while attempting an approach to one of the planet's moons, and its current orbit is decaying. In 84 minutes the EEV will enter the stormy blue upper atmosphere of Fomalhaut III.

Your players may have their own ideas of how to rescue the EEV, but if not, Chen the android NPC will suggest the following:

1. Bring the EEV on board
The android can attempt to manoeuvre the Rommel into close enough range to be able to use its magnetic grappling gun. The gun has a maximum range of 500m. If they attempt this, the EEV can be brought into the Rommel's hangar bay.

2. EVA
The PCs could attempt an EVA, boarding the EEV via a spacewalk. To get in close enough, they could either manoeuvre the Rommel in close enough, or take one of their dropships.

INSIDE THE EEV
A shock to the system
James Ichiro is the only occupant of the EEV, and he is completely insane. When Lt Col Richards/Aphoom-Zhah came onboard the observatory and started killing people, Ichiro attempted to kill him. Unfortunately for Ichiro, Richards/Aphoom-Zhah somehow *knew* his intentions. Casting 'Eye of Daoloth', Richards/Aphoom-Zhah forced Ichiro to receive a vision of the dimension inhabited by Daoloth, the *Render of the Veils*.

The experience drove Ichiro to insanity. Fleeing raving, down the corridors of the Daedalus, he managed to find his way to one of the EEVs on the habitation level. A difficult task, considering he had clawed his own eyes out!

The PCs will find Ichiro cowering behind the hypersleep capsules. Looking upon his bloody, ruined face is an unnerving sight. A 1/1d4+1 SAN roll must be made.

Ichiro can offer no useful information. He will tremble, and cower, muttering cryptic phrases like:

> "C-can you see it? Can you see them? Ah-the angles."
>
> "I have looked upon the Render on the Veils. I can still see it"

APPROACHING FOMALHAUT II
The tension mounts…
The Cook is hanging in space 10km from the space station, silhouetted against the lifeless brown orb of Fomalhaut II, which in turn is silhouetted against the bright blue of the star Fomalhaut. The ship has power, but any attempts to hail her will be unanswered. The situation is the same for the space station.

The PCs will be able to scan the Cook's computer systems, but not actually access any of the ship's systems. As a result they are able to find out that the ship arrived here 36 hours ago and it has life support. There is no way of scanning for lifeforms.

THE FINAL APPROACH
Incoming!
If the PCs ship closes to within 100km, the Cook will acquire a target lock on the Rommel. The Rommel's sensors will detect this, and the general quarters alarm will sound.

Run the combat between the Rommel and the Cook. The Cook will fire both its ASAT missiles, both non-nuclear. The Rommel will

continue to close, firing its 800MeV neutral particle beam gun, relying on its laser batteries to destroy the incoming missiles once they close to within 30km.

All things being well, the Rommel should be able to take out the incoming missiles and in return succeed in crippling the Cook with its particle beam gun.

It is now up to the PCs how they want to proceed. Whether they choose to board the Cook first, split into teams and board both, or board the station first, Richards/Aphoom-Zhah will know that they are coming. It's hard to miss a Colonial Marine frigate!

The PCs android, Chen, will point out that tactically, securing the Cook first is the best course of action. After all, with no ship, Richards has nowhere to run…

SECURING THE COOK
Boarding Party Part 1
Deciding how to deal with securing the Cook is up to the PCs.

If the Cook was successfully disabled by the Rommel, it will currently be hanging in space, just over 10km from the space station, drifting slightly at a rate of 11kph.

The particle beam strike has temporarily shut down its main power grid, rendering the ship dead. No weapons can fire. Emergency batteries on board escape pods still allow them to be ejected.

If asked for an analysis, Chen will theorise that if there is still a competent engineer on board the Cook (s)he will currently be attempting to restore power. If they succeed, the Cook could power up any time. If they fail, it could be another 2 to 12 hours before the systems come back on themselves (2d6).

Whichever way the PCs choose to gain entrance to the Cook, it is certain that its occupants will be prepared to repel boarders.

If the PCs require further prompting about how to go about boarding the cook, Chen will offer the following options as suggestions:

1. Direct Docking
Risky, as the mindstate of the Cook's crew is unknown, direct docking involves manoeuvring the Rommel in close enough to extend a docking umbilical from one airlock to another.

The docking umbilical is attached to the other ship via magnetic clamps, and has a maximum range of 100m. Inside, there is a safety line to which the PCs can attach their spacesuits should they so desire. For damage purposes, the umbilical has 8AP and can take 8HP damage before being ruptured.

The Cook has two airlocks – a main airlock at the front of the ship, giving access to B-Deck, and a ventral airlock which gives access to C-Deck.

If the PCs attempt direct docking, when they are halfway across, a space suited figure will emerge at the Cook's airlock door, and fire a CO_2 gun into the umbilical tube. The CO_2 gun has a high explosive grenade attached to its magnetic clamp. The grenade is high explosive, dealing 3d6 damage. There is no way the lead PC can get out of the way, though they can try to get a shot off at the attacker. Normal Zero-G Combat rules apply. All PCs behind the lead PC must make an EVA roll or the force of the explosion will cause them to tumble helplessly back towards the Rommel.

If the docking umbilical is ruptured, there is a chance that the safety line will be cut, and one of the PCs be blown out into space by the explosion.

2. EVA
Apart from having to pressurise their combat armour, don thruster packs and EVA across at least 100m of space, this is the safest way to board the Cook. PCs using this method have the option of attempting entry via one of the two airlocks, or (if they think of it – Chen won't prompt this suggestion herself) gaining entry via one of the shuttle bays. In fact shuttle bay 2 is currently empty (the shuttle is on board the space station).

There may be a welcoming party waiting for them beyond whichever airlock they choose, but until then they are quite safe. The Cook's airlocks are magnetically locked with an isolated emergency power supply which is not affected by the electrical systems failure. A competent ComTech and run a bypass and cycle the airlock system with an *Electronics Security* check.

ONBOARD THE COOK:

Look familiar?

Call it laziness if you like, but I am using deck plans from a certain spaceship called the *Nostromo* to represent the deck plans of the Pathfinder ship Cook. The Cook is a relatively small spacecraft, when compared with the prime movers of the CMC fleet like the Rommel. See handout (3) for full details and deck plans.

Concerning the Crew:

The crew on board the Cook are no longer what they once were – all those still alive are now hosts for Xert – hideous extra-planar creatures summoned by Aphoom-Zhah.

The Cook had a crew of 7 (1x Captain, 1x android EXO, 3x Comtechs, 1x Medtech, 1x Engineer) on board and was also carrying a small contingent of MiliSci troopers, as well as several passengers. Their current status is as follows:

Captain Williams: Williams was killed by Lt Col Richards the moment he arrived back on board possessed by Aphoom-Zhah. His corpse was deposited in the cryosleep vault (4).

Executive Officer Fisher: The android Fisher was discovered and deactivated (shot in the back of the head at close range) shortly after the ship activated its star drive and fled Kappa Reticuli. Before this happened Fisher was able to encrypt the firing codes for the nuclear weapons carried by the Cook. The PCs could find Fisher and possibly reactivate him to get information. Fisher's ruined body lies in one of the forward maintenance bays on C-Deck.

Comtech Carrick: Carrick was killed with Fisher when they were discovered disabling the nuclear warheads. His corpse is with Fisher's.

Comtech Nash: Nash is currently a host for one of the Xert. He is on the space station with Richards/Aphoom-Zhah.

Comtech Shinobi: Shinobi is currently a host for one of the Xert. She is currently still on board the Cook, and will be ordered to kill all intruders.

Medtech Steranko: Steranko is currently a host for one of the Xert. He is currently still on board the Cook, and will be ordered to kill all intruders.

Engineer Jones: Jones is currently a host for one of the Xert. He is currently on board the space station.

Lt Col Richards: Richards is the host for Aphoom-Zhah's mind. He is onboard the space station and will be detailed later.

Captain Givens: Commander of the MiliSci security team assigned to Richards for his mission to Aricebo 6 months ago, she is host for one of the Xert. Onboard the Cook and ordered to kill all intruders.

1st Squad: All of 1st Squad, a MiliSci security team assigned to Richards are hosts for Xert. 2x onboard Cook, 2x onboard station.

Quigley, PsiCorps: Being a telepath with a mind capable of supporting Aphoom-Zhah, Quigley has been spared the horror of becoming a Host, and is apparently a prisoner, a 'backup host' should Richard's body be irreparably damaged. Quigley is onboard the space station. In fact Quigley is a member of the Nestarian Cult of Cthugha, and has replaced Oliver Black (the PsiCorps operative from '*CR03 The Dig*') as the prime agent in the Cult's attempts to free first Aphoom-Zhah, then Cthugha himself, from their Elder Bonds. But more of this later…

Hugh Steigerwold: ICA representative who was hitching a ride to Kappa Reticuli. Steigerwold is now a host for one of the Xert. He is currently still on board the Cook, and will be ordered to kill all intruders.

Entry Formalities:

Airlocks on board the Cook have a self-contained power supply in the event of a total power failure. As soon as they cycle the airlock, they will become aware that their communications with the Rommel are being jammed in some manner.

Whichever airlock the PCs decide to use to board the Cook, they will have a welcoming party waiting for them. The two MiliSci troopers will have taken up positions in cover, and will be ready to defend the ship. They will be in spacesuits and will fight to the death if necessary. See end of this adventure for statistics.

THE XERT PROBLEM

How can the Xert be dealt with?

See the NPC Statistics section for full details about running the Xert. Needless to say, with

their ability to detect lifeforms at ranges up to 300m, they will know the PCs are coming, and be in position by the time they arrive.

Xert cannot be harmed by most weapons the PCs will be carrying, though their hosts can be destroyed. In this case, the Xert will either attempt to repair the body, or escape and find another host.

If the PCs are wearing artificial psychic shields, the Xert may have trouble acquiring a new host body.

Xert can be contained within powerful electro-magnetic fields (hence they cannot board the Rommel while it projects it's protective field), and can be driven off using Shock Rifles - a weapon developed for taking down dangerous prisoners without causing serious permanent damage.

The Keeper is encouraged to stage an event to give PCs a clue to how electro-magnetic fields affect the Xert. The actions of Steigerwold in the Cook's reactor room (21) may provide a clue – the fusion reaction is contained in a huge magnetic field. If the PCs fail to think of this, perhaps Chen can lend a hand.

Xert are susceptible to mind powers of Psychics.

PATHFINDER SHIP COOK: A-DECK
Conventions:
All corridors and rooms are lit with emergency lighting. All non essential ship systems are non-functional. Corridors are 2m wide as standard.

1. Bridge:
10mx8m, the Bridge is quite cramped, with stations for 3 crewmembers (captain, exo, comtech). A viewport looks out over the ship's nose. At present the systems on the bridge are shutdown, save for emergency communi-cations (shipboard and sublight only), manual manoeuvring thruster controls, life support readouts etc.
Occupants: Comtech Shinobi is here. Shinobi is possessed by a Xert, and armed with a flamethrower, which she won't hesitate to use, even if it results in the bridge being damaged. See end of this adventure for statistics.

2. CPU Access:
The in-flight systems onboard the Lima are all controlled by the central "Matriarch" processor, a 36 Terabyte, carbon-60 based core

mainframe. At any time, combat or navigational decisions made by the ship can be overridden by the commanding officer.

A 10.0 Terabyte backup mainframe comes on line in an event of a CPU failure, and a third tier of automatics is also capable of sustaining an autonomic functions should the backup fail as well.

The CPU room is accessible only by retina identification, although in case of emergencies, this can be overridden by an 8 digit security code. To defeat the lock, a *Computer (Security)* check is required, at –15%.
At present, the CPU is down, the third tier of automatics is currently providing the ship with emergency life support and limited systems.
Occupants: The CPU Core is empty.

3. Galley
10mx10m room dominated by a circular table in the centre. This is where the crew eat when not in hypersleep. There is an autochef.
Occupants: None.

4. Cryosleep Vault:
Octagonal chamber 10m across. There are 21 cryopods in here, arranged around the walls (3 to a walls, excluding the wall containing the exit). There is a central CPU terminal which can be used to access medical status of each passenger.
Occupants: The corpse of Captain Fisher is here. Air conditioning has been efficient at removing the smell of the rotting remains.

5. Personnel Lockers & Hygiene:
Showers, toilers, crew lockers containing personal effects, spare clothing etc.
Occupants: None.

6. Upper Landing Claw Chamber:
Large, dark chamber. Contains the retracted forward landing claw. Lots of chains and dark shadows to scare PCs.
Occupants: None.

7. Medical:
Contains an autodoc (AI body scanner), infirmary beds with emergency equipment sufficient for minor operations and emergency medical procedures. Patients are usually stabilised here then put into cryosleep until the ship can reach a colony / base with hospital facilities.
Occupants: Steranko, the medtech is here. He is a host for a Xert, and is armed. He is hidden behind on of the infirmary beds, and has placed a tank of liquid oxygen next to the

entrance. If an intruder enters into Medical, he will shoot the tank. The tank will explode with the force of a high explosive grenade, dealing 2d6+6 damage to all in a 3m radius of the blast. See end of this adventure for statistics.

Search: Any medical equipment available in an Advanced Medical Kit can be found in Medical.

8. Lift:
Square lift, 3m2. It currently has no power. To gain access to the lower decks, PCs will have to use the access-shafts.
Occupants: None.

PATHFINDER SHIP COOK: B-DECK

9. Docking Umbilical:
The docking umbilical can extend to a maximum of 25m. Universal docking clamps can dock with any United Earth built space station and most other spacecraft also.

10. Main Airlock:
The forward airlock allows access to/from the Cook via the nose of the ship. A 4 digit PIN is required by crew to cycle the airlock. This can be overridden by a competent Comtech.
Search: The airlock contains 3x emergency vacc suits plus emergency equipment such as medkits, CO_2 gun, suit patches etc.
Occupants: None.

11. Lift:
Square lift, 3m2. It currently has no power. To gain access to the lower decks, PCs will have to use the access-shafts.
Occupants: None.

12a/b. Instrumentation Bays:
These are small control booths from where the crew of the Cook can monitor FTL communications, plot F-Space co-ordinates etc.
Occupants: None.

13. Shuttle Bay:
The Cook has 2x dedicated shuttle bays, each large enough to accommodate a small shuttle craft or a military dropship. Currently the starboard shuttle bay is empty. Access to each shuttle bay is via an airlock.
Occupants: None.

14. Upper Landing Claw Chamber:
Large, dark chamber. Contains the retracted forward landing claw. Lots of chains and dark shadows to scare PCs.
Occupants: None.

15. Ventral Airlock / Lift Complex:
An airlock leads to a lift that runs down the forward landing claw (when lowered) to give access to the ground should the Cook be required to make a landing.
Occupants: None.

PATHFINDER SHIP COOK: C-DECK

16. Maintenance Bays:
Series of chambers at the front of the ship, giving access to ships life support systems, plus the nuclear warheads carried by the Cook.
Occupants: In one of the octagonal maintenance bays, lies the corpse of Comtech Carrick. Closer examination reveals that he appears to died of fright. Elsewhere in the maintenance section are the remains of Fisher, the Android EXO on the Cook. His ruined body lies in the top left maintenance bay, shot through the head. There are several racks in here – the sort used to store heavy ordinance. All the racks are empty.

Fisher:
A *Special Electronics* check can enable a comtech to bring Fisher back on line. Fisher's voice will sound distorted and occasionally it disintegrates into electronic noise, but he will be able to tell the PCs that he came down here to secure the nuclear warheads that the Cook was carrying, but obviously he failed. The Cook carried 4x 25 kiloton tactical nukes.

17. Lift:
Square lift, 3m2. It currently has no power. To gain access to the lower decks, PCs will have to use the access-shafts.
Occupants: None.

18. Maintenance Garage:
Large gothic looking chamber filled with machinery.
Occupants: Captain Givens is in here, hiding. She is accompanied by 2x Dimensional Shamblers. See end of this adventure for statistics.

19. Upper Landing Claw Chamber:
Large, dark chamber. Contains the retracted forward landing claw. Lots of chains and dark shadows to scare PCs.
Occupants: None.

20. Airlock / Lift:
Accessible from (15)
Occupants: None.

21. Engineering:
Reactor control room for the Cook's manoeuvre and interstellar drive. Large gothic looking chamber filled with machinery. Lots of steam and the like.
Occupants: Hugh Steigerwold, the ICA officer. He is a host for a Xert, but the magnetic fields in the reactor core are disorientating his alien master. When the PCs arrive, they will see Steigerwold staggering around the room, holding an M29, bumping into the walls and into machinery.

MEANWHILE, ON THE SPACE STATION:
What is Aphoom-Zhah up to?
Upon losing contact with his minions onboard the Cook, Richards / Aphoom-Zhah will immediately put plans into action to delay the PCs until he can fire the probe with the nuke on board into Fomalhaut, triggering a massive solar flare. This, coupled with a ritual, will awaken Cthugha. After Aphoom-Zhah has done this, he intends to shift bodies to Quigley, and attempt to escape.

If you feel the PCs are taking too long in securing the space station, the probe will be fired before they reach the Sungun controls. See (23) for what happens in this event.

Concerning Leanna Quigley:
PsiCorps Officer Leanna Quigley is a member of the Nestarian cult of Cthugha, who are attempting to free Aphoom-Zhah from his prison on CS-402. Quigley has arranged an 'alternate' return trip to Gamma Leporis: ERC funded space pirates…

If scanned by another telepath, Quigley will attempt to shield Aphoom-Zhah's aura and escape the station, hoping to take over the crew of the Rommel. Quigley should be spotted by the PCs Telepath, and quickly subdued before Aphoom-Zhah can use her to summon Xert / do other nasty things to the crew.

SECURING THE SPACE STATION:
Boarding Party Part 2
Once the Cook is secured, the PCs still have to secure the space station. Van Owen has been unable to obtain schematics for the space station in time for the mission.

The PCs can either fly a dropship into one of the shuttle bays, or manoeuvre a shuttle/the Rommel in close enough to perform an EVA. There are 2x cargo locks and 4x airlocks on the space station. The 2x cargo locks are obvious. They are locked and can only be opened / closed from the station. There is an airlock on each cargo lock, allowing maintenance crews access to the exterior of the docking ring. These are locked, but can be hacked and cycled if the PCs isolate the circuits and introduce their own power supply. A third airlock can be found at the top of the station, leading into hydroponics (guarded). The last airlock is on the engineering / maintenance level.

SPACE STATION: LEVEL 1
Command and control; Hydroponics; FTL communications array

1. FTL Mast:
Extending over 200m from the top of the station is the FTL communications array.

2. Hydroponics:
The hydroponics section lies under an armoured plexiglass dome. 60m across and 30m at its apex. Experiments into growing genetically engineered plant life under a blue sun are underway here. The dome is filled with lush vegetation, towering ears of mutated corn and potato crops sway gently in the cycling air, next to tree saplings and other plants. Crates containing bio-food for the plants, spare parts for the hydroponics system etc are stacked in various places.
Occupants: 3x of the scientific staff, 1x pilot and 1x technical crewmember are imprisoned here. They are guarded by one of the station's security guards, now a host for a Xert. The guard wears combat armour and carries an M29.

If rescued, the prisoners will be very happy to see Colonial Marines. One of them, Alexander Mbeki, a geneticist, will tell the PCs what he knows:

> "We suspected nothing. An ICM vessel turned up two days ago, its captain saying that they were investigating pirate activity reported in proximity to the star system. Professor Kogama assured the marines that all was okay, but they insisted on sending over a team to check for themselves.
>
> Next thing you know they're taking over the place, shooting anyone who doesn't cooperate. They were here for a reason – their leader – a man calling himself 'Richards', took Kogama down to the sungun labs. The rest of us were imprisoned here. They've visited us

twice. Each time to take someone away – first it was Erikson (scientist) and then Jameson (tech). We've not seen them since."

If questioned further, Mbeki can tell the PCs about the sungun (see 23 for details), about how many there are on board (although the PCs should have a crew manifest anyways), how many he saw with Richards: a few marines, a psicorps officer, a couple of techs.

3. Airlock:
This airlock leads into hydroponics (2). Inside is some emergency equipment (vacc suits, medkits, spare oxygen tanks etc).
Occupants: None.

4. Station Exterior:
The top of the space station is shaped like a shallow cone, with the FTL array (1) at its apex. Various bits of instrumentation jut out from the surface.
Occupants: None.

5. Airlock:
This airlock leads from the SE elevator into the station control room. It is armoured, and requires a keycard (carried by some station staff like Mbeki) to enter. Inside is some emergency equipment (vacc suits, medkits, spare oxygen tanks etc).
Occupants: None.

6. Control Room:
60m across, dome shaped, with a 2m sunken area 40m across in its centre. Armoured shutters can be raised to show panoramic view of space. In the sunken area is a ring of control consoles, all blinking and showing various data readouts. A lift in the centre of the room leads up to an observation blister, and a lift at the SE end of the room leads down into the CPU core (keycode to enter of *Electronics Security* roll). In the W wall is an entrance to an emergency escape pod.
Occupants: One of the station techs is in here, a host for a Xert. She is with Comtech Nash, from the Cook. Both are armed – Nash with an M29, the tech with a pistol. See the end of this adventure for statistics.

Search: From here, station systems such as life support, Cargo locks, power core etc can be accessed and manipulated. Examples of what the PCs may do follow:

Life Support:
If the PCs want to kill life support, it is on a deck by deck basis, and requires a *Computer Security* check. It will take several hours before air/heat on affected decks will drop to dangerous levels. This won't bother Richards and his followers, who are all in pressurized Armour. The PCs may end up killing Professor Kogama, which won't go down well with Motokatsu-Kyono or the ICA.

Cargo Locks:
The two main cargo locks can be secured from here, with a *Computer Security* check. This will prevent launch cycles from being automatically engaged if a ship attempt to take off from the station. The cargo locks can still be cycled manually from the cargo lock, however.

Sun Gun:
The mass driver can usually be controlled from the control room. Someone has rerouted all controls to the Sun Gun labs. A comtech will need at least an hour to break through the security blocks setup to regain control of the mass driver systems. A *Special Computer Security* check is required. For each extra 30 minutes beyond an hour that a PC declares he/she is spending, a +10% modifier is conferred.

Power Core:
Shutting down the power core is silly, and apart from shutting down most systems onboard, will cause the station to become unstable, and eventually fall out of its orbit.

Doors:
Power to doors can be killed from here, but all doors can be opened manually at source (except for outer airlock doors).

Lifts:
Power to lifts can be killed from here, but all lifts have access ladders.

Cameras:
Several areas of the space station are viewable from the Control room via a network of security cameras. A *Computer Operation* check is needed to figure out how to access the system. There are cameras in the following locations:

i. **External cameras** (various places): the external cameras can be moved via a joystick to view either the hull of the station or out into space.
ii. **Medlab**: Cameras in medlab show several bloody corpses lying on the floor.
iii. **Infirmary / Cryosleep**: Empty.
iv. **Mass Driver array**: No cameras are working on LVL3.

v. **Cargo Bays**: No cameras are working on LVL3.
vi. **Engineering**: Nothing to see.

7. Life Pod:

The space station carried 5x type 322 Emergency Escape Vehicles. The EEV-332 is a small escape craft which is capable of carrying up to 6 passengers. It is 13.2 meters long with a hexagonal configuration.
Occupants: None.

SPACE STATION: LEVEL 2
Accommodation; CPU Core; Data Library; Medlab; Recreation

8. Staff / Crew Quarters:

As the staff and crew of the space observatory spend months onboard the station, their personal quarters are quite large. Each is approximately 20m square (with a taper towards the centre of the station) and contains a small office area, sleeping area, wall portal and chairs, storage space, clothing etc.
Occupants: None.
Search: There is nothing of interest in the staff/crew quarters. There are personal effects of 18 people spending long periods in a remote research facility.

9. Common Area:

Wedge shaped chamber. Widest end looks out into the observation ring. Narrowest end is where the NE central station lift is accessed. Comfortable chairs, a minibar, wall portals etc.
Occupants: None.

10. Observation Ring:

10m wide and 10m tall gallery that runs around the entire second level of the station. Its outer wall contains huge viewports that look out into space – an impressive view. The glass is armoured, but armoured shutters can be lowered over the viewports also. They can be controlled from one of four points, also the location of emergency bulkheads. Halfway between each bulkhead, is located a lifepod.
Occupants: None.
Search: The SW lifepod has been activated and is no longer present. There are bloody footprints leading to the closed hatch from the SW lift.

11. Galley:

10m x 20m room. Two long tables, shelves containing plastic plates and metal cutlery. An autochef in one wall can be loaded with pre-packaged meals from storage cabinets in one

wall. There is also a drinks dispenser (water, juice, coffee).
Occupants: None.

12. Medlab:

Decent medical facilities, the medlab is equipped for all but the most difficult operations. There are plenty of medical supplies here.
Occupants: Medlab is empty, but on the floor lie several corpses. Five in all, wrapped in bloody white sheets.
Search: Searching the corpses reveals 3x scientists, and 2x security guards. The scientists have all been shot in the back of the head. The security guards are full of bullet holes.

13. Infirmary:

Contains an autodoc (like in Alien, only more advanced), and 3x beds.
Occupants: None.

14. CPU Core:

Accessible only via one of two armoured doors, one from the Control Room (6) above, and the other from the Data Library (16). The doors have 12 AP and require a security card to access. An *Electronics Security* check is required to open either door without correct card.

The CPU Core is a "Matriarch" 22.1 Terabyte intelligent mainframe which monitors all of the stations autonomic functions. A 12.0 Terabyte backup mainframe comes on line in an event of a CPU failure, and a third tier of automatics is also capable of sustaining essential station functions should the backup fail as well. The space station is currently running an experimental OS – Matriarch 13, with a M12 backup system in case of OS failure.

To access the CPU without proper access codes (Prof Kogama has them) requires a *Special Computer Security* check after an hour of hacking. For each extra 30 minutes beyond an hour that a PC declares he/she is spending, a +10% modifier is conferred.
Occupants: None.

15. Lockers and Hygiene:

As well as containing the NW/SW station lifts, these open areas contain showering facilities and lockers for personal effects.
Occupants: None.

16. Data Library / Meeting Room:

Large room, accessible from the Common Area (9) and the Infirmary (13). There is a

circular table, with in-built computer consoles at each of the 12 seating points. The station science team and crew hold meetings here to discuss station matters and ongoing progress of the various experiments being carried out onboard. The main SE lift is accessible from here.
Occupants: None.

SPACE STATION: LEVEL 3
Mass Driver ('Sun Gun'); Labs; Shuttle Bays; Cargo Loading / Unloading.

17a/b. Cargo Locks 1 + 2
Level 3 of the space station has three distinct 'arms' extending from its circular structure. If the Mass Driver is considered to be 12 O'clock, the two cargo locks extend from the station at 4 O'clock and 8 O'clock.

Each Cargo Lock extends 40m from the space station, and is 40m wide and 20m high. The huge airlocks are armoured, and are practically impervious to small arms. It would take shipboard weapons or planted explosives to breach them.

Launch cycles are automatically engaged if a ship attempt to take off from the station, opening the inner doors. As a safety feature on all airlock designs, both inner and outer doors cannot be opened simultaneously. If power is lost, the cargo locks can still be cycled manually from a control panel near the inner doors.

Next to each cargo lock is a small personnel airlock. Inside is some emergency equipment (vacc suits, medkits, spare oxygen tanks etc).
Occupants: None.

18. Cargo Bay 1:
Huge chamber, taking up approximately one quarter of the entire level. Longest walls are 70m in length, and the ceiling towers to a height of 20m.

In the centre of the chamber sits a military class shuttle craft, with the UEAF (United Earth Armed Forces) emblem, and the designation '*Cook-01*'. The boarding ramp at the rear is down, and it looks prepped for a quick takeoff.
Occupants: Engineer Jones, from the Cook, is onboard the shuttle. When the PCs arrive, he has just completed rigging a hidden bomb, which can be detonated by remote control up to a distance of 10km. Richards has the detonator. The bomb isn't enough to penetrate a military ship's armoured hull, but should it go

off inside a cargo bay, it could cause serious damage. It is an added 'security measure' of Richards', and could prove disastrous should the shuttle be used by the PCs at the end of the adventure. Use the same stats for Comtech Nash (6) for Jones.
Spot Hidden: The SW station lift is accessible from here. Large armoured bulkheads are marked 'MACHINE SHOP' and 'CARGO BAY 2'.

19. Cargo Bay 2:
A mirror image of (18), Cargo Bay 2 contains the station shuttle craft, a civilian design, about the size of the Narcissus from the film Alien. There are also stacks of storage crates around the walls, containing station supplies (coolant for life support, food, scientific equipment, machine parts etc).
Occupants: None.
Spot Hidden: The SE station lift is accessible from here. Large armoured bulkheads are marked 'STORAGE' and 'CARGO BAY 1'.

20. Machine Shop:
Large, irregularly shaped chamber, much of which is filled with machinery and parts for assembling solar probes. There is a small cargo truck designed for carting completed probes into the Mass Driver Loading Bay (23) for programming and loading into the Sun Gun.
Occupants: None.
Spot Hidden: The NW station lift is accessible from here. Large armoured bulkheads are marked 'MASS DRIVER LOADING BAY' and 'CARGO BAY 1'. There is also a small door.

21. Office:
Unremarkable office. Desk, chair, computer console, star charts on walls.
Occupants: None.

22. Sun Gun Laboratory 1:
Long, curved room filled with banks of computer screens. From here, the science team can monitor a solar probe's progress, and examine data that it sends back to the station on its journey into the star.
Occupants: One of the station techs is in here, with one of the science team – Kelly (female, mid 40s). Both are hosts for Xert. They will not initially notice PCs unless they burst into the room, as they are intently watching data on star activity. The tech is armed with an assault rifle. Kelly is unarmed and unarmoured. See the end of this adventure for statistics.

23. Mass Driver Loading Bay / Controls:
Large chamber, dominated at its N end by the huge bulk of the mass driver that extends out

into space 90m from the surface of the space station. In front of the mass driver is a loading area and control booth. In the loading area are 6x solar probes, 3 of which have been converted to carry one each of the 4 tac nuke warheads from the Cook. If the PCs haven't taken too long to arrive, the first probe is being loaded into the Sun Gun, ready for launch.
Occupants: Richards/Aphoom-Zhah is here, accompanied by Quigley and Professor Kogama, head of the science team on board the station. They are guarded by the 2 remaining MiliSci troopers (both hosts for Xert). For full details of how this encounter plays out, go directly to 'ENDGAME 1' at the end of the adventure.
Spot Hidden: A quick *Spot Hidden* check will reveal the various entrances and exits from the Sun Gun chamber. A Special result will reveal the probe being loaded into the Sun Gun.

The Sun Gun controls are contained within an armoured booth (which is where Richards/ Aphoom-Zhah, Quigley and Kogama are). Richards has had the controls locked out, so that only he can access them. A *Computer Security* check at –15% can bypass the security, and access the controls. Each attempt takes 10 minutes. Allow 3x tries maximum before the Sun Gun fires. For full details what happens should the probe be fired, go directly to 'ENDGAME 1' at the end of the adventure.

Solar Probes:
Part of the mission of the science team onboard the station is to research the unusual solar activity present in Fomalhaut, to see whether it is possible to genetically engineer crops to grow in such conditions, and whether the energy given off in the flares can be harnessed in some way.

Aside from the station's state of the art sensor arrays, the team also fire probes into Fomalhaut, which perform scientific analysis and beam back data before being destroyed.

The Solar Probes resemble torpedoes, about 2m long. Constructed of diffusion-bonded metal matrix composites, the probes are designed to penetrate deep into a star before the intense heat can destroy it.

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24. Sun Gun Laboratory 2:
Mirror image of (22).
Occupants: None.

25. Storage Vault:
Cavernous chamber, stacked with crates of equipment and supplies for the station.
Occupants: None.

SPACE STATION: LEVEL 4
Engineering; Atmospheric Scrubbers; Life Support; Reactor Control.

26. Reactor Controls A:
Control room for the stations power plant. The station's power core is a Miyagi M-15 5.8 Terawatt fusion reactor. The fusion process is a deuterium/tritium reaction that can fuse the fuel elements in a containment chamber using conversion lasers. The He4 by-product of the reaction is kept separately and is vented at regular intervals. The power is drawn off of the reactor by a closed-cycle liquid potassium cooling system. Running off into a induction torus which can use the intense magnetic field created by the superheated potassium to generate electric power.
Occupants: None.
Search: The 4th tac nuke from the Cook is here, its conventional explosive detonator rigged to the reactor's main power coupling (that draws of power from the core). Disarming the bomb will require a *Demolitions* check. Failure will activate tamper-guards, arming the nuclear warhead with a 10 minute delay. To disarm it now will require 3 minutes and another *Demolitions* check. After 3 tries, it is too late to disarm it. Richards has the detonator.

27. Life Support:
Lots of computer terminals and blinking control panels in here.
Occupants: None.

28. Coolant Storage:
Racks of coolant tanks line the walls in here. The coolant is used by the stations atmospheric scrubbers.
Occupants: None.

29. Reactor Controls B:
Identical to (26) except no nuke in here.
Occupants: None.

ENDGAME 1:
Showdown at the Sun Gun
As soon as any marines appear in the Sun Gun chamber (23), Richards/Aphoom-Zhah will push Quigley and inside the control booth, where he will strike her across the face, and tie her up. He will then emerge with Kogama as a hostage. Quigley is under orders to be prepared to receive Aphoom-Zhah should

anything happen to his current host body (i.e. Richards). Richards/Aphoom-Zhah will then order the two Xert/MiliSci marines to fire at the PCs (grenades) as he tries to make his escape. See the end of this adventure for statistics. Because of the magnetic field created by the Sun Gun, the Xert will not be able to rise from the corpses to attack the PCs.

If The Sun Gun Fires:
If the PCs fail to stop the Sun Gun from firing the probe into Fomalhaut, their only option is to get the Rommel to try and take it out before it gets to it's target.

The Rommel will have to use its ASAT missiles. It has 4x such missiles. It's battle computer will be at -25% due to solar radiation interference from Fomalhaut, and a further -15% if it keeps the electromagnetic field array active.

Solar Flare:
Should the solar probe reach Fomalhaut, it will explode deep within the star, awakening Cthugha from his cosmic slumbers. This awakening will immediately trigger a huge coronal mass ejection (and extreme type of solar flare), the resulting blast sending billions of tonnes of superhot gas into space, directly at Fomalhaut II.

Travelling at the speed of light, the initial radiation from the solar flare, including X-rays, will reach Fomalhaut II in minutes. Shielding on spaceships and stations will provide some protection against this radiation. The same cannot be said for anyone caught outside in space.

The charged particles of the flare, will expand into space like a growing cloud, reaching Fomalhaut II in approximately 13 minutes.

If the PCs are still around, they will not be able to outrun the flare. The cloud of high-speed protons, packing more than 100 million electron volts (100 MeV) of energy, will disrupt electrical systems, tripping power grids and destroying circuitry. The Rommel will be potentially crippled (Keepers discretion).

Such is the power of the solar flare, some of the ionizing radiation will penetrate even the toughest shielding. Anyone caught in a spacesuit outside will receive a lethal dose of radiation. Inside a shuttle or dropship will result in a POT15 dose of radiation. On board one of the spaceships will result in a dose of POT10.

On board the space station will result in a POT5 dose.

Roll PCs CON vs Radiation POT and check the following table:

Result:	Effect:
Fumble	PC receives fatal dose. Terrible burns and bleeding result in painful death in 2d4 hours.
Failure	PC receives potentially fatal dose. Subtract POT from CON. If PC is still alive, they should be placed in cryosleep and taken to a medical facility ASAP. POT in weeks will restore all but 1d3 CON.
Success	PC loses 1d6 CON, regained at 1/week. Symptoms of radiation sickness include vomiting, fatigue, low blood counts. These symptoms might persist for days.
Special Success	PC loses 1d3 CON but only has mild radiation sickness.
Critical Success	PC loses 1 CON, but is otherwise unharmed.

Regardless of whether the PCs manage to survive this first solar flare, there are more on the way. With Cthugha now awake, Fomalhaut will become even more unstable than before, and the star system will be reguarly ravaged by lethal solar storms. The Motokatsu-Kyono solar observatory is abandoned, and the star system quarantined by the ICA.

The Bomb In The Reactor Control Room:
If the conventional bomb detonates, it will disable the reactor cooling system, resulting in the station's fusion reactor going critical in 30 minutes, causing a meltdown, and a thermonuclear explosion of approximately 20 megatons nominal yield. The meltdown can be averted provided the cooling systems are brought back online at least 20 minutes after shutdown. After this, it is too late to prevent the reactor meltdown. To bring the coolant systems back on line requires a *Special Electronics* check, which will take 10 minutes. This will enable the PC to re-route cooling via life support. Life support will begin to fail, but at least the meltdown will have been averted.

The Bomb on the Cook's Shuttle:
If the PCs use the shuttle in Cargo Bay 1 (18) to return to the Rommel, they will inadvertently bring onboard a high explosive device, which Quigley will activate as soon as she manages to get a moment alone.

The Rommel is an armoured military vessel, but an explosion within one of the cargo holds will more than likely cause an explosive decompression. Anyone in the cargo hold when the bomb detonates will be killed. In addition to a systems failure, which will take several hours to fix, the Rommel's Realspace drive will be damaged, meaning that the ship cannot manoeuvre to a safe distance out of the star system to activate its F-Drive.

ENDGAME 2:
A Final Twist?
If the Rommel ends up crippled (see Endgame 1), Chen will report that short range sensors have picked up an unknown ship out near the third planet (the gas giant), headed this way. As it approaches, it launches more ships. The fighter craft (2 of them) will take up positions just out of range of the Rommels weapons, and an audio transmission will demand the release of one Leanna Quigley, or they will be destroyed.

The ships belong to Nestarian-funded pirates, paid to transport Quigley / Aphoom-Zhah to the Outer Rim Territories.

I have left fleshing out the encounter with the pirates completely in the hands of individual Keepers. How this scenario plays out depends on how your PCs have played the adventure so far. Some possibilities are outlined below. It is up to you to expand upon them.

Note: the Pirates wouldn't dare attack a fully functional ICM frigate – a crippled on is fair game, however…

Give in to pirates? Never!
If Van Owen is still alive, he will balk at giving in to pirates, and refuse. If the PCs wish to relieve him of his command, they can do, but they will have to fight both Van Owen and Captain Miles.

Making a fight of it
If they decide to fight, the pirates will launch long range missiles before closing in. If the Rommel's point defence systems are still working, let the PCs roll for them (75% minus whatever modifier you see fit). Each fighter has 4x ASAT missiles (smaller than the type on board the Rommel, but still packing quite a punch).

The ASATs do 6d6 damage, but require a Special attack roll to penetrate the Rommel's armour. That is not their intention. They are aiming for the Rommel's weapon systems. Each hit will destroy one of its point defence turrets. Once the Rommel's weapons are out of commission, the pirate mothership will close in.

The mothership is a converted corvette, with a weapons profile similar to the Cook.

Repel Boarders!
Should the pirates end up boarding the Rommel, they are at *least* a platoon in strength, and are equipped as detailed at the end of this adventure.

ENDGAME 3:
Who's Left? Sound Off!
Depending on how the PCs performed, there are several possible outcomes to this adventure. Some are listed below:

1. Total Success
If the PCs manage to capture Aphoom-Zhah, uncover Quigley as a mole, save Prof Kogama's life and prevent the destruction of the space station, it will be citations all round. Van Owen will be very happy with the results, and promise the PCs a hefty bonus and a month's R&R in the Core Systems, Sol if he can arrange it! Upon their return, they will find that they have been seconded to the ICM Special Operations Arm. Allow the PCs a SAN reward of 2d6. There may also be some promotions handed out.

2. Partial Success:
If the PCs manage to capture Aphoom-Zhah, but are unable to prevent the death of Prof Kogama, or allow Quigley to escape, Van Owen will be disappointed, as Motokatsu-Kyono are going to demand a full investigation. The PCs will get some leave, but just a fortnight off duty on Andersen. Upon their return, they will find that they have been reassigned to the ICM Special Operations Arm. Allow the PCs a SAN reward of 1d8.

3. Partial Failure:
If the PCs capture Aphoom-Zhah, but cause serious collateral damage (the death of most of the space station staff for example) or the destruction of the space station or the Cook, they will suffer the consequences. Motokatsu-Kyono will petition the ICA for a full investigation into the events leading up to the events at Fomalhaut. Nevertheless, Van Owen has his prize, and the PCs should avoid any charges. The incident will be blamed on space pirates. Upon their return, they will find that

they have been reassigned to the ICM Special Operations Arm.

4. Total Failure:

If the adventure ends with the PCs failing to capture Aphoom-Zhah, Quigley escaping, and the space station / Rommel / Cook being damaged or destroyed, it will be blamed on space pirates (no witnesses). However, Van Owen will be most displeased with the PCs performance. They will be debriefed and dispatched back to their base (Fort Apoch on Andersen colony in the Wolf 359 star system, although GMs can feel free to change this to suit their campaign).

Upon arriving at Andersen after over a month and a half in cryosleep onboard a CMC transport ship 'Cutty Sark', the PCs will be issued new orders – they have been reassigned from their company – to the 72 Herculis star system, on the edge of the Herculis Cluster.

THE HERCULIS CLUSTER
Shipping Out to the Front Line:

This is a sector of space with a high concentration of resource-rich and habitable star systems in close proximity to each other, approximately 25 light years from Sol. The Herculis Cluster had been a relatively autonomous zone ever since EnerTek, the company that funded the majority of the region's colonisation projects, declared

bankruptcy in 2246. EnerTek subsequently collapsed in a scandal involving billions of EuroDollars in losses, corporate power abuse and attempted blackmail of ICC officials.

With EnerTek's assets frozen during ensuing investigation, the Herculis Cluster was allowed a degree regional autonomy by the ICA to self-govern, a decision that is now probably regretted in the corridors of power on Earth.

EnerTek's colonial assets were acquired by the Hallidor Corporation in 2254. Many people believe that it was this megacorporations over eagerness to gain access to the abundant natural resources in the Herculis Cluster that fanned the flames of sedition and indirectly brought about the Colonial Wars.

THE END

NPC STATISTICS:

Colonel Luther Van Owen
Military Sciences Division Special Projects Officer

Van Owen is the ranking military officer, and as such has veto on any decisions made by the PCs platoon OC. As far as Van Owen is concerned, the PCs are expendable, the prime objective of the mission is the capture of Entity 402 and its safe transit to the MiliSci labs on Pandora.

STR:	14	Move: 3		RL:	1/5
CON:	14	HP: 14		LL:	1/5
SIZ:	13	Dex SR: 3		AB:	4/5
INT:	16			CH:	4/6
POW:	13			RA:	1/4
DEX:	11			LA:	1/4
APP:	11			HD:	0/5
EDU:	16				

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Pistol	3/9	45	1d10
Punch	7	40	1d3+1d4

Armour: 1pt clothing usually, with a flak vest.

Captain Severin Miles
Aide to Van Owen

A nasty bully of a man, Cpt Miles is everything a lackey should be. He will follow Van Owen's orders no matter what they involve. Will go in with the PCs.

STR:	14	Move: 3		RL:	1/5
CON:	14	HP: 14		LL:	1/5
SIZ:	13	Dex SR: 3		AB:	4/5
INT:	16			CH:	4/6
POW:	13			RA:	1/4
DEX:	11			LA:	1/4
APP:	13			HD:	0/5
EDU:	15				

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Pistol	3/9	45	1d10
M29 TAR	3/9	55	2d6
Unarmed	3/9	60	2d3+1d4

Armour: If going in with the troops, he will wear armour identical to the PCs.

Doctor Jane Goodbody
Xeno-archeologist and daughter of the eminent scientist John Goodbody.

After the incident on CS402 (Celestial Satellite 402), Goodbody has been working for Mili-Sci. She doesn't much like Van Owen or his methods.

STR:	11	Move: 3		RL:	1/4
CON:	14	HP: 12		LL:	1/4
SIZ:	10	Dex SR: 3		AB:	1/4
INT:	16			CH:	1/5
POW:	13			RA:	1/3
DEX:	11			LA:	1/3
APP:	14			HD:	0/4
EDU:	19				

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Pistol	3/9	30	1d10
Punch	7	40	1d3

Armour: 1pt clothing usually.

Chen
ICM android assigned to duty with the PCs platoon.

Chen resembles a Chinese woman of about 35 years of age. Like all military androids, Chen is programmed to be calm, sympathetic and affable, but ultimately quite boring.

STR:	16	Move: 4		RL:	1/4
CON:	14	HP: 13		LL:	1/4
SIZ:	12	Dex SR: 1		AB:	1/4
INT:	16			CH:	1/5
POW:	n/a			RA:	1/3
DEX:	20			LA:	1/3
APP:	14			HD:	0/4
EDU:	18				

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Grapple	5	60	special

Armour: 1pt clothing usually.

Skills: 1x Expert skill at 90%; 5x specialist skills at 75%; 5x secondary skills at 50%. EDUx10% to distribute amongst 5x tertiary skills.

Jake McCulloch
The key to finding Entity 402.

Jake McCulloch should be used as an NPC, if the party have either not played CRM03 The Dig, or that adventure did not end with a psychic player character becoming the host for Aphoom-Zhah.

STR:	16	Move: 4		RL:	1/4
CON:	14	HP: 13		LL:	1/4
SIZ:	12	Dex SR: 1		AB:	1/4
INT:	16			CH:	1/5
POW:	n/a			RA:	1/3
DEX:	20			LA:	1/3
APP:	14			HD:	0/4
EDU:	18				

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Pistol	3/9	45	1d10
M29 TAR	3/9	55	2d6
Unarmed	3/9	60	2d3+1d4

Armour: 1pt clothing usually.

Note: See CRM06 Appendix A - PC Handouts for details on McCulloch's dealings with Aphoom-Zhah.

Telepathic Powers:
Telepathy P9: 71%
Mass Psychic Assault; Assault; Shield; Probe; Read Surface Thoughts; Project Thoughts.

Possessed MiliSci Troopers

STR: 14	Move: 3		RL:8/5
CON: 15	HP: 13		LL: 8/5
SIZ: 12			AB: 8/5
INT: n/a*			CH: 8/6
POW: n/a*			RA: 8/4
DEX: 14			LA: 8/4
APP: 10			HD: 8/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Assault Rifle	3/6/10	75	2d6
Grenade	4	75	3d6
Knife	7	70	1d4+2+1d6
Fist	7	75	2d3+1d6

Armour::
Combat armour (8AP).

*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of the Xert

Notes:
If their helmets are removed, the PCs will get a shock to see that the bodies resemble are grey and withered, as if their very life energy had been drained (0/1d8). 1d4 rounds after the death of the host, the Xert will rise from the corpses – a "writhing, green mist rises from the mouth an nose of the corpse, a mist lit from within by an unnatural

light, a glutted swarm of corpse-fed fireflies dancing like the fire of St. Elmo" (SAN 1/1d6) – and attack the nearest lifeform. See stats for full details.

The Xert:
Lesser Independent Race

The species known as the 'Xert' resemble a writhing, green mist lit from within by an unnatural light, a glutted swarm of corpse-fed fireflies dancing like the fire of St. Elmo. In this extraterrene form, the Xert have the ability to shift in-between extra-dimensional regions beyond normal space-time, enabling them to travel through solid objects.

SIZ: equal to POW
INT: 4d6
POW: 2d6*
DEX: 2d6+12
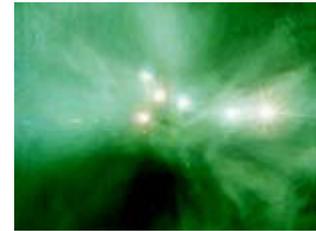
HP: n/a
Move: 10
DEX SR: 2

base amount, which the increases as a Xert feeds

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Feed	2	85	1d6+special[1]
Mental attack	2	100	1d6mp/SAN

Armour:
They are impervious to normal weapons in their natural form.

Notes:
1. Xert can detect the presence of lifeforms at a range of approximately 300m

2. A Xert can possess and feed off a victim by making a successful attack (Dodge roll to avoid), followed by 3 successive MP vs. MP rolls, during which the victim and host are unable to do anything else. A possessed human loses 1d3-1 INT/day until they are nothing more than a mindless husk, and will begin to decay.

3. If their host is destroyed, the Xert will shift out of phase, making it impervious to normal weapons. The only way to render them harmless is to immobilize, but not destroy, the host body. Xert cannot simply 'leap' out of a still-living host - it is a process that takes time and energy. Of course, if a host is 'killed', the Xert emerges within 1d3MR.

4. Xert can repair a host body by expending MP. Each MP expended takes 1MR to take effect and heals 1HP in each location.

SAN: 1/1d6

Comtech Shinobi
Host for Xert. Japanese woman aged 26

STR: 14	Move: 3	RL:1/4
CON: 13	HP: 12	LL: 1/4
SIZ: 10		AB: 5/4
INT: n/a*		CH: 5/5
POW: n/a*		RA: 1/3
DEX: 16		LA: 1/3
APP: 11		HD: 0/4

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Flamethrower	2/5/9	60	3d4/rd
Knife	7	40	1d4+2
Fist	7	35	1d3

Armour::
Personal Body Armour (4AP) and 1AP clothing.

*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of the Xert

Notes:
Shinobi looks corpse-like, with sunken cheeks and pale skin. If killed, 1d4 rounds after death, the Xert will rise from the corpse - (SAN 0/1d4) – and attack the nearest lifeform. See stats for full details.

Captain Givens, Possessed MiliSci officer

STR: 14	Move: 3	RL:8/5
CON: 15	HP: 13	LL: 8/5
SIZ: 12		AB: 8/5
INT: n/a*		CH: 8/6
POW: n/a*		RA: 8/4
DEX: 14		LA: 8/4
APP: 12		HD: 8/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Assault Rifle	3/6/10	75	2d6
Grenade	4	75	3d6
Knife	7	70	1d4+2+1d6
Fist	7	75	2d3+1d6

Armour::
Combat armour (8AP).

*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of the Xert

Notes:
Givens looks corpse-like, with sunken cheeks and pale skin. If killed, 1d4 rounds after death, the Xert will rise from the corpse (SAN 0/1d4) – and attack the nearest lifeform. See stats for full details.

Medtech Steranko
Host for Xert. American man aged 34

STR: 13	Move: 3	RL:1/5
CON: 14	HP: 14	LL: 1/5
SIZ: 14		AB: 5/5
INT: n/a*		CH: 5/6
POW: n/a*		RA: 1/4
DEX: 16		LA: 1/4
APP: 10		HD: 0/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Assault Rifle	2/5/9	55	2d6
Knife	7	40	1d4+2
Fist	7	45	1d3

Armour::
Personal Body Armour (4AP) and 1AP clothing.

*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of the Xert

Notes:
Steranko looks corpse-like, with sunken cheeks and pale skin. If killed, 1d4 rounds after death, the Xert will rise from the corpse – a "writhing, green mist rises from the mouth an nose of the corpse, a mist lit from within by an unnatural light, a glutted swarm of corpse-fed fireflies dancing like the fire of St. Elmo" (SAN 0/1d4) – and attack the nearest lifeform. See stats for full details.

Dimensional Shamblers (x2)
The murderously malign

STR: 19	Move: 3	RL:3/5
CON: 17	HP: 18	LL: 3/5
SIZ: 19		AB: 3/5
INT: 07		CH: 3/6
POW: 11		RA: 3/4
DEX: 11		LA: 3/4
		HD: 3/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Claw (x2)	4	45	1d8+1d6

Armour::
3AP hide.

Notes:
Blasphemous creatures, not wholly ape, not wholly insect, Dimensional Shamblers can attempt to Grapple (50%) and teleport their victim. For game rules, this will be into deep space, 100+1d100km from the Cook.
SAN: 0/1d10.

Comtech Nash / Station Tech
Hosts for Xert.

STR: 10	Move: 3	RL:1/5
CON: 11	HP: 14	LL: 1/5
SIZ: 12		AB: 5/5
INT: n/a*		CH: 5/6
POW: n/a*		RA: 1/4
DEX: 12		LA: 1/4
APP: 14		HD: 0/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Assault Rifle	2/5/9	45	2d6
Fist	7	35	1d3

Armour::
Personal Body Armour (4AP) and 1AP clothing.

*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of the Xert

Notes:
Steigerwold looks corpse-like, with sunken cheeks and pale skin. If killed, 1d4 rounds after death, the Xert will rise from the corpse – (SAN 0/1d4) – and attack the nearest lifeform. See stats for full details.

Station tech / Scientist Kelly
Hosts for Xert.

STR: 10	Move: 3	RL:1/5
CON: 11	HP: 14	LL: 1/5
SIZ: 12		AB: 5/5
INT: n/a*		CH: 5/6
POW: n/a*		RA: 1/4
DEX: 12		LA: 1/4
APP: 12		HD: 0/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Assault Rifle	2/5/9	45	2d6
Fist	7	35	1d3

Armour::
Personal Body Armour (4AP) and 1AP clothing.

*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of the Xert

Notes:
Both look corpse-like, with sunken cheeks and pale skin. If killed, 1d4 rounds after death, the Xert will rise from the corpse – (SAN 0/1d4) – and attack the nearest lifeform. See stats for full details.

Fire Vampires – The Flame Feeders (x2d6)
Lesser Servitor Race.

STR: n/a	Move: 11	Body: 4
CON: 07	HP: 4	
SIZ: 01		
INT: 11		
POW: 14		
DEX: 19		

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Touch	2	85	2d6 heat shock

The heat shock attack is matched first against a PCs armour – if it is more than the AP, that location is destroyed, and the victim must match their CON vs. the heat shock damage roll. Failure means the full damage is taken. Success means only half damage. This attack also drains 1d10 MP.

Armour:
Most material weapons have no effect. Fire extinguishers do 1d6 damage. Fire suppression system (if activated) will deal 1d6 damage per round also. Allow a PC a *Luck* roll – success means they see a fire extinguisher attacked to a nearby wall or piece of equipment.

Richards / Aphoom-Zhah
Host for the Spawn of Cthugha

STR: 11	Move: 3	RL:8/5
CON: 14	HP: 14	LL: 8/5
SIZ: 14	DEX SR: 3	AB: 8/5
INT: 20*		CH: 8/6
POW: 24*		RA: 8/4
DEX: 14		LA: 8/4
APP: 12		HD: 8/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Gauss Rifle	3/6/10	75	2d6+4
Grenade	4	75	2d6+6
Knife	7	70	1d4+2+1d4
Fist	7	75	2d3+1d4

Armour::
Combat armour (8AP).

*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of Aphoom-Zhah.

Notes:
Aphoom-Zhah will summon Fire Vampires to his aid, (he has already disabled the rooms fire suppression system for this eventuality), then attempt to escape with Professor Kogama as a hostage (whom he is quite prepared to kill). He will telepathically assault any who get too close.

Aphoom-Zhah has several contingency plans in place. If Richards' body is incapacitated, or if it looks like he is to be captured, Aphoom-Zhah will immediately transfer to Quigley, burrowing deep and out of site, after activating the timer on the self destruct in the reactor room.

Eye of Daoloth: Acts like a powerful Mindblast spell, robbing the victim of 10 SAN and causing temporary insanity for 10x1d20 hours. MP vs MP. If a victim resists, they lose 1d10 SAN instead, and temporary insanity lasts for 10x1d10 hours.

Quigley / Aphoom-Zhah
Host for the Spawn of Cthugha

STR: 11	Move: 3	RL:8/5
CON: 12	HP: 12	LL: 8/5
SIZ: 12	DEX SR: 2	AB: 8/5
INT: 20* (16)		CH: 8/6
POW: 24* (17)		RA: 8/4
DEX: 16		LA: 8/4
APP: 16		HD: 8/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Assault Rifle	2/5/9	55	2d6
Grenade	3	75	2d6+6
Knife	7	70	1d4+2+1d4
Fist	7	75	2d3+1d4

Armour::
Combat armour (8AP).

*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of Aphoom-Zhah. Quigley's' stats are in brackets.

Notes:
After contacting Cthugha, it was always Aphoom-Zhah's intention to leave Richards' mind. Quigley's fellow cultists have arranged for her to be picked up by Capellan pirates, hired at great expense to transport Quigley from Fomalhaut to the Outer Rim Territories.

Quigley will pretend that she was spared the fate of the others on board the Cook because she was a telepath, being an excellent 'back-up' for Richards.

If discovered, she will use her *Mass Psychic Assault* ability to stun anyone present, then make a dash for either an escape pod or a shuttle.

Telepathic Powers:
Telepathy P9: 76%
Mass Psychic Assault; Assault; Shield; Probe; Read Surface Thoughts; Project Thoughts.

Space Pirates

STR: 14	Move: 3	RL:8/5
CON: 15	HP: 13	LL: 8/5
SIZ: 12		AB: 8/5
INT: 11		CH: 8/6
POW: 10		RA: 8/4
DEX: 14		LA: 8/4
APP: 10		HD: 8/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Assault Rifle	3/6/10	65	2d6
Shotgun	3/8	65	3d6/1d6
Grenade	4	55	2d6+6
Cutlass	6	50	1d8+1+1d4
Fist	7	45	1d3+1d4

Armour::
Combat armour (8AP).

Notes:
The space pirates are a bloodthirsty lot, but not suicidal. Should the fight go against them, they will surrender. Most are armed with shotguns or assault rifles, though vary this as you see fit. Perhaps they have flamethrowers or energy weapons?

ICA Officer Steigerwold
Host for Xert. European male, aged 38

STR: 10	Move: 3	RL:1/5
CON: 11	HP: 14	LL: 1/5
SIZ: 12		AB: 5/5
INT: n/a*		CH: 5/6
POW: n/a*		RA: 1/4
DEX: 12		LA: 1/4
APP: 14		HD: 0/5

Attacks:	SR	A%	DAM
Assault Rifle	2/5/9	35	2d6
Fist	7	35	1d3

Armour::
Personal Body Armour (4AP) and 1AP clothing.
*The host's INT/POW is the replaced by that of the Xert

Notes:
Steigerwold looks corpse-like, with sunken cheeks and pale skin. If killed, 1d4 rounds after death, the Xert will rise from the corpse (SAN 0/1d4) – and attack the nearest lifeform. See stats for full details.