

VEILFARERS

HEARTS IN THE VOID

A VeilFarers Adventure

1.0 editorial release
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HEARTS IN THE VOID - A VeilFarers Adventure

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A note on the artwork.

The interior artwork in this edition was created with generative tools under the direction of Altor Design & Solutions. We treat these pieces as placeholders for real art: they are in no way meant to replace human artists. If you are an artist and want to collaborate with this fantastic project, please contact us through the feedback section of the VeilFarers portal. The next version could carry your own art.

On how this book was made.

VeilFarers was developed with AI assistance throughout its production - drafting, editing, layout engineering, and artwork. All game design, worldbuilding, and editorial judgment are the author's: the tools are instruments, the decisions are human.

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VEILFARERS: HEARTS IN THE VOID

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Corebook 12.03 controls every repeated procedure; this adventure's fiction, encounters, images, and maps remain edition 1.0.

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01. BEFORE YOU START

An Introductory Adventure for VeilFarers

"In the void between the stars, love and betrayal dance in a dangerous orbit. Sometimes it is impossible to tell which one will destroy you first." - Captain Zara "Starwind" Kaine, the Iron Hearts

Love makes fools of us all.

That is the heart of this adventure. Not the plasma rifles. Not the alien horrors in the vents. Not even the assassins stalking their prey through a dying station. At its core, *Hearts in the Void* is the story of a young man who fell in love with the wrong woman at the wrong time, and of the people who arrive just as that love threatens to ignite a war.

No two tables should play it the same way.

Some crews will become ruthless pragmatists and deliver Alexei Joric to the highest bidder. Others will risk everything to help two star-crossed lovers disappear into the Rim. Some will broker a solution nobody believed possible. Some will leave Charon's Refuge with blood on their hands, enemies behind them, and a choice they will argue about for years.

At least one crew will spend forty-five minutes deciding whether to steal a cleaning robot.

They will steal it.

The robot will not be grateful.

All of those outcomes belong here.

Hearts in the Void is designed to do more than begin a campaign. It should become the story of how a collection of capable strangers became a crew, how they decided what kind of people they would be when nobody was watching, and how they earned the vessel that would carry them into the wider galaxy.

If they leave with a ship, it must never feel handed to them.

They paid for it. Stole it. Recovered it from a nest of hungry things. Claimed it from the consequences of their own decisions. Whatever route they take, the vessel they call home should carry the memory of what they did to deserve it.

That is the real beginning.

BEFORE YOU START: A NOTE ON RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

Before you read the rest of the chapter, stop here for a moment.

This page is more important than any stat block, clock, read-aloud, or dramatic reveal that follows. Everything else in the adventure works only if one principle remains clear:

THIS IS NOT YOUR STORY TO TELL

You are about to meet a cast of NPCs with strong personalities and terrible plans.

Zara is a captain with a love story she is willing to burn her life down for. Korren is a frightened man approaching a betrayal he desperately wants someone to stop. Madame Silk is a professional killer who needs to return with something. Alexei is a noble heir who writes catastrophic poetry and wants, for once, to choose his own life.

They are important.

They are not the protagonists.

This adventure is a situation, not a movie. The NPCs are already on stage when the players arrive, but every one of them is waiting - whether they know it or not - for the crew to change what happens next.

Do not protect an NPC because their planned scene is dramatic.

Do not force a betrayal because it is written in the chapter.

Do not complete a sacrifice because the read-aloud is powerful.

Do not let an NPC solve a problem the players were willing to confront.

Use the written beats as pressure, intention, and possibility. Never use them as rails.

FOUR THINGS TO KEEP ON YOUR KEEPER SCREEN

1. *Everyone Can Die*

Zara, Korren, Silk, Alexei, Brix, ARIA-7 - any of them can survive, and any of them can die.

Do not preserve a character simply because they appear in a later scene. If their death would remove information or close a route, let their final action reveal a clue, create an opening, or pass responsibility to someone else.

A death the players could have prevented carries more weight than one the adventure demanded.

2. *Nothing Happens on Autopilot*

Whenever the text says that someone betrays, attacks, escapes, confesses, or sacrifices themselves, read it as:

This is what they intend to do if the players do not change the situation.

Korren's desperation can be answered. Silk can be negotiated with. Zara can be convinced to abandon a plan. ARIA-7 can be saved. Even the most dramatic moments remain open until the table closes them.

The universe reacts to inaction, but it does not ignore intervention.

3. *The NPCs Need the Crew*

When a crisis reaches its breaking point, turn toward the players.

Zara should ask, "What is our move?"

Korren should look for someone willing to offer another way.

Silk should address the person she believes can make the decision.

Alexei should ask whether freedom is worth the cost.

If the NPCs are resolving their own conflicts while the players watch, pull back and return the decision to the crew.

4. *The Best Moments Will Not Be the Ones Written Here*

The dialogue, sacrifices, betrayals, clocks, and set pieces in this chapter exist to help you create pressure. They are not predictions.

A player may interrupt a confession, expose a traitor early, recruit an enemy, save someone who was prepared to die, or invent a solution this chapter never considered.

That is not the adventure going wrong.

That is the adventure becoming theirs.

THE ONE QUESTION THAT MATTERS

After every major scene, ask yourself:

Did the players make the most important decision?

If the answer is yes, keep moving.

If an NPC made it for them, the plot advanced without them, or a scripted beat overruled a credible intervention, stop. Pull the decision back into their hands. Rewind a moment if necessary.

The players may become heroes, villains, mercenaries, romantics, opportunists, or some unstable combination of all five.

Whatever they become, let it be because they chose it.

That is the story *Hearts in the Void* is here to begin.

02. WHAT YOU'RE HOLDING AND THE SETTING

Hearts in the Void is an introductory campaign opener for four to six players and a Keeper. It is designed to teach the core rhythms of **VeilFarers** through play while giving the crew a meaningful reason to remain together after the immediate crisis ends.

This is not a one-shot.

Run it across as many sessions as your table needs. Let investigation breathe. Let the crew spend time with the Iron Hearts. Let them argue about Alexei, Korren, Silk, the Weavers, and what they are willing to become in order to survive. The adventure works best when its decisions have enough room to become personal.

Do not measure success by how quickly the table reaches the ending.

Measure it by whether the players leave Charon's Refuge able to say:

- this is our crew;
- this is our ship;
- these are the people we saved, betrayed, or failed;
- these are the enemies we made;
- and this is the kind of story we want to continue.

What This Adventure Teaches

The chapter introduces the fundamental procedures and themes of **VeilFarers** through situations where each rule matters in the fiction.

- **Duality Dice:** succeeding with Hope, succeeding with Fear, and understanding that a successful action can still change the situation in dangerous ways.
- **Spotlight:** acting through a fluid narrative rhythm rather than a fixed initiative order.
- **Resources:** spending and recovering Effort or Hope, marking Stress, taking HP damage, and deciding when a resource is worth the risk.
- **Combat:** using weapons, features, positioning, environmental advantages, and consequences that extend beyond removing enemies from the scene.
- **Investigation:** gathering partial truths from terminals, survivors, intercepted communications, and contradictory agendas.
- **Reputation:** learning that the Houses, Guilds, syndicates, and independent crews remember what the characters do.
- **Crew Bonds:** discovering that relationships are not decorative. They change who confesses, who takes a risk, who offers help, and who is willing to follow the crew into danger.
- **Moral Choice:** making decisions without a clean answer and living with the version of the galaxy those decisions create.

- **Ship Ownership:** earning the crew's first home and vehicle through sacrifice, risk, ingenuity, or consequence.

The adventure does not need to demonstrate every rule in the system. Its purpose is to teach the rules the players need now and give them a reason to learn the rest later.

Recommended Starting State: Sleeping

Hearts in the Void is designed to begin with the player characters **Sleeping**.

The crew should first establish who they are without Awakened power: their training, loyalties, specialties, fears, and ordinary capacity to survive. Later, when the light becomes reachable, each character faces **The Choice to Wake** as a decision rooted in play rather than character creation.

A custom character who is already Awakened remains fully compatible with the adventure. They do not awaken a second time. Instead, they recognize what is happening to the people around them and decide whether to share that recognition.

Full guidance appears later in the chapter.

The Campaign Promise

The adventure begins with a temporary job.

It should end with the foundations of a campaign.

By the conclusion, the crew will usually possess or control a ship through one of three paths:

1. **They buy one**, committing their limited resources before leaving Crossroads.
2. They steal The Collector, taking a ship from the Bone Dogs and accepting the consequences of humiliating House Volkov's unofficial enforcers.
3. **They arrive without a ship**, recover the energy drained from the Iron Hearts' vessel, and earn that ship through the resolution of the crisis on Charon's Refuge.

The mechanical value of the starting ship should remain comparable across these routes. What changes is its history.

One crew paid for its home.

Another stole it.

Another recovered it from a nest of Weavers and received, claimed, or inherited it because of what they chose to do with Zara and Alexei.

The ship is not an extra reward added after the adventure. It is the tool that allows the campaign to continue: transport, shelter, shared

territory, financial burden, base of operations, and the first place the characters can collectively call their own.

Tone

This adventure contains love, hope, absurdity, and the possibility of a new beginning.

It also contains:

- betrayal under financial coercion;
- predatory debt;
- political captivity;
- assassination;
- body horror;
- alien infestation;
- desperate sacrifice;
- the possible death or capture of sympathetic characters;
- and the threat of a war that will consume people who never chose to be involved.

Discuss the tone with the table before play. Use the safety practices appropriate to your group. The chapter assumes the players may make ruthless decisions, but it never requires the table to linger on cruelty or describe violence beyond the level everyone has agreed to.

The darkness should make care matter.

It should not become an excuse to make the players powerless.

There is also a cleaning robot with anger issues, a young nobleman who writes the worst poetry in the sector, and a seven-foot Kryx who is deeply suspicious of handshakes.

The absurdity is not a break from the setting.

It is how people remain alive inside it.

Pacing the Adventure

There is no required session count. Stop at natural points and resume when the table is ready.

Useful breaks include:

- after the crew secures transport and enters the Veil;
- after they meet Zara, Alexei, and the Iron Hearts;
- after the uneasy ceasefire and the first direct contact with Silk;
- after Protocol STERILIZE and The Choice to Wake;
- before the final decision concerning Alexei.

Do not rush Scene 5b merely to reach the action. The later betrayal, sacrifices, and negotiations only matter if the players have had time to know the people involved.

Likewise, do not force every optional encounter into one playthrough. The station should feel larger than the route the crew takes through it. Unseen rooms, missed allies, and unanswered questions are evidence that their choices shaped the adventure.

A WORD ON THE POST-SILENCE GALAXY

The Great Silence was not merely the failure of a communications network.

Just over a century ago, the Q-net - the quantum network that connected a thousand worlds - went dark everywhere at once. Trade collapsed. Fleets lost contact with their commands. Colonies were isolated. The old Empire fractured, and billions died in the chaos that followed.

What replaced it is not a unified civilization.

It is a collection of powers holding together whatever they can reach.

The Great Houses

- **House Joric** commands the largest military force in known space. It believes strength is the only reliable language in the void.
- **House Valerius** controls trade routes, credit, and financial networks. It can destroy a rival without firing a weapon by ensuring nobody will sell them fuel.
- **House Amaranth** preserves history, intelligence, and dangerous knowledge. Its agents believe that understanding old patterns is the only way to prevent old catastrophes from returning.
- **House Kurogane** pursues technological and transhuman advancement without much patience for the limits other people call ethics.
- **House Solari** protects the traditions and legitimacy of the old Imperial order, even when preserving the past prevents adaptation.
- **House Volkov** rules much of the frontier through brutal pragmatism, patronage, and carefully deniable violence.

Between those powers, the **Stellar Commerce Guild** keeps goods moving through systems the Houses cannot or will not reliably serve. Independent haulers, mercenaries, smugglers, and station crews survive in the spaces between formal authority.

Their work keeps civilization alive.

It also makes them useful to anyone who needs something done without an official fleet appearing on the record.

The Stellar Veil

The Stellar Veil makes faster-than-light travel possible.

It is also changing.

Since the Great Silence, people have begun manifesting abilities no science or House doctrine fully explains. Some call them psionic. Some call them mutation, revelation, contamination, transcendence, or proof that the Veil itself is alive.

Nobody knows the truth.

The player characters do not need that answer before the adventure begins.

They only need to know that the galaxy is waking to something it does not understand - and that, on the journey to Charon's Refuge, something inside them may begin to wake as well.

03A. PLAYER CHARACTERS, SLEEPING, AND CREW BONDS

Hearts in the Void is written for a crew of four to six player characters.

Ten pregenerated characters are provided so each player can choose the kind of trouble they want to bring aboard: the engineer who talks to engines like nervous animals, the deserter who still stands between strangers and gunfire, the mystic who remembers tomorrow, the diplomat who can make tea feel like a ceasefire, or the Kryx who is trying very hard not to become the worst thing in the room.

The pregens cover all nine core ancestries. Humanity appears twice because Spark and Marcus prove that sharing a species does not mean sharing a worldview, a coping mechanism, or a sensible relationship with authority.

This is not a fixed ensemble cast.

Choose only the characters being played. Do not automatically place every unchosen pregen aboard as a supporting NPC. Ten wounded, opinionated specialists in one corridor is not a crew. It is an evacuation problem.

Keep the unused pregens in reserve. They can become rivals, contacts, replacement characters, future recruits, people waiting at another station, or the reason someone says:

"You know, I once worked with exactly the wrong person for this."

Recommended Starting Path: Sleeping

All pregenerated characters begin **Sleeping**.

This is the intended starting state for *Hearts in the Void*.

Before the Veil touches them, let the players meet the people already there: trained, scarred, talented, stubborn, and entirely capable of making a bad situation worse without supernatural assistance.

Sleeping characters are not unfinished Awakened characters.

They are the medic who keeps someone alive with shaking hands and a field kit.

The pilot who knows the ship will fit through the gap because fear has excellent depth perception.

The infiltrator who disappears because they have spent a century learning where everyone refuses to look.

The diplomat who prevents a firefight by pouring tea with absolute confidence.

Their Specialties should feel sharp, practical, and earned.

Later, when something warm and cold sits suddenly within reach, each character decides what to do with it.

Do not ask the crew to vote.

Do not require a roll.

Do not hint that one answer is braver, wiser, or more correct.

One person may reach.

Another may refuse.

A third may decide that tonight is not the night.

The full procedure for **The Choice to Wake** appears later in the chapter.

KEEPER'S NOTE: Custom Awakened Characters A player may bring a character who is already Awakened, especially when *Hearts in the Void* is being added to an existing campaign. They do not Awaken twice. They recognize the sensation moving through the Sleeping crew and decide whether to explain why their face just went pale.

Choosing the Crew

Let the players read the character concepts before choosing. Give them enough time to find the one who feels dangerous in the right way.

Do not require the group to cover a traditional set of roles. Charon's Refuge does not care whether the crew remembered to bring "the healer." Every important obstacle has more than one route through it, around it, over it, or directly into it at speed.

For a new table, the following summary helps players understand the kind of problems each character is best at creating and solving.

Character	Ancestry	Class	What They Bring to the Crew
"Spark" Meridian Kess	Human	Engineer	Repair, systems, improvisation, and the conviction that every machine can be reasoned with
Marcus "Wall" Steele	Human	Soldier	Protection, discipline, direct action, and a moral code that has already ruined one career

Character	Ancestry	Class	What They Bring to the Crew
Whisper-of-Ancient-Winds	Ethereal	Mystic	Perception, impossible timing, and the unsettling habit of answering questions before they are asked
Dr. Lyra Voss	Kryllian	Scholar	Medicine, research, analysis, and a flexible relationship with the phrase "approved procedure"
"Flash" Kira Tal-Ven	Celestari	Pilot	Navigation, movement, nerve, and the belief that warning lights are merely enthusiastic suggestions
"Shadow" Val Corrigan	Synthetic	Scoundrel	Infiltration, deception, security, and the kind of caution learned from being legally classified as property
Kel of the Hollow Channel	Ailuran	Explorer	Reconnaissance, hidden truths, exact Accords, and a tail that reveals what his face refuses to admit
Senna of the Quiet Grove	Bloomstrider	Diplomat	Negotiation, patience, emotional clarity, and tea deployed with strategic intent
Rourke Ashfang	Kryx	Vanguard	Front-line control, pack instinct, disciplined violence, and the terrifying calm of a predator choosing restraint
Threnody-in-Amber	Rift Spinner	Mystic	Foresight, mobility, impossible patience, and the discomfort of being observed by someone who may already remember the outcome

The full character sheets follow this section.

Their mechanical text must remain aligned with the current Core rules. When the Core and this adventure disagree, use the current Core and correct the adventure before publication. Do not make the Keeper arbitrate an argument between two versions of the game while a Weaver is eating the lighting system.

Give the Players the Person Before the Build

Each pregen includes:

- a public personality;
- a reason to accept dangerous work;
- a private wound;
- a defining Experience;
- a Sleeping Specialty;
- and the possibility of an Awakened path.

Encourage each player to choose the person first.

The best question is not:

"Which build is strongest?"

It is:

"Which of these people do you want to see trapped on a dying station with a bad contract, an impossible choice, and no clean way home?"

Ask:

- What made you choose this character?
- Which part of their history do you want to bring into play?
- What do they hide from the crew?
- What would make them stay when leaving would be safer?
- What kind of person would they hate becoming by the end of this job?

The player is not required to perform the personality exactly as written.

The pregen is an invitation, not a cage. Once chosen, the character belongs to that player. Mannerisms, pronouns, appearance, relationships, and details of the past can all change as long as the table preserves any connection the adventure genuinely needs.

CREW BONDS: BEFORE THE FIRST SCENE

Do not begin with ten strangers meeting for the first time at Maya's table.

Nothing kills the momentum of a dangerous contract faster than six people introducing themselves alphabetically while the employer waits.

The characters do not need to be a permanent crew yet, but they should have enough history to trust one another with weapons, secrets, and at least one extremely poor decision.

A useful starting assumption is:

The characters have crossed paths around Crossroads Trade Station. Some have completed jobs together. Some know one another by reputation. Some know exactly why working together again is a terrible idea. When one of them needed a crew, these were still the names that came to mind.

Ask every player to establish at least **two Bonds**:

1. one Bond that explains why they trust another character;
2. one Bond that creates tension, debt, uncertainty, or unfinished business.

A Bond is permission to care.

It is not permission to control another player's character.

Existing Connections

The following relationships can be used as written, altered, or replaced.

Spark and Shadow: The Salvage Job

Six months ago, Spark and Shadow recovered a sealed data core from a wreck whose security systems were supposed to be dead.

They were not dead.

Shadow found the route in. Spark persuaded the wreck to stop trying to kill them. They split the payment evenly and left with professional respect for one another.

Spark still insists the console did not explode.

Shadow retained the footage.

Marcus and Flash: Opposite Sides

Marcus and Flash served in the same theater during the Kepler Insurrection, on opposite sides.

Marcus was Joric infantry. Flash flew supply runs for the resistance.

Years later, they recognized one another in a bar, discovered both had abandoned their causes for almost the same reason, and became dangerously drunk while trying to determine which of them had technically been the enemy.

Neither remembers the conclusion.

Both remember deciding the other could be trusted.

Whisper and Lyra: The Free-Will Argument

Whisper and Lyra share a scientific curiosity that survives even their disagreements.

Whisper perceives time as branching possibility. Lyra treats biology as a machine that becomes understandable if one is stubborn enough and ignores enough ethics committees.

They once argued for six hours about whether consciousness is deterministic.

The bartender asked them to leave.

Neither believes the discussion is over.

Bond Questions

Use these questions to connect any combination of pregenerated or custom characters.

Each player answers two. Encourage them to name another PC whenever possible.

1. Which crew member saved your life, and what did it cost them?
2. Which crew member have you worked with before, and why did you swear never to repeat that job?
3. Who knows the real reason you need this payment?
4. Who has seen you fail at something you claim never to fail at?
5. Who owes you a favor they have been avoiding?
6. Whose judgment do you trust even when you dislike their methods?
7. Who knows a secret that could damage your reputation?
8. Who have you protected without ever telling them?
9. Who reminds you of someone you lost?
10. Who do you believe is more dangerous than the rest of the crew realizes?
11. Which character challenged one of your deepest assumptions and never learned they changed your mind?
12. Which two of you have already agreed what to do if a job goes catastrophically wrong?
13. Who has a habit that irritates you until the moment it stops?
14. Which crewmate have you already decided you will not leave behind, and why have you never told them?
15. Who once trusted you with something you still do not believe you deserved?

Record the answers.

Use them later.

A confession lands harder when it is made to the person who once offered mercy. A sacrifice matters more when the person being saved knows exactly what it cost. A betrayal cuts deeper when the table can point to the moment trust was earned.

The players will hand you emotional ammunition.

Use it carefully.

One Shared Failure

After establishing individual Bonds, ask the table to describe one job the group attempted together before *Hearts in the Void*.

It did not need to be a catastrophe.

It merely failed in the way all memorable jobs fail: not enough to kill everyone, but enough to leave a debt, an enemy, a rumor, a scar, or a very specific rule about who is no longer allowed near docking clamps.

Establish:

- what the job was;
- what went wrong;

- who made the decision that got everyone out;
- what the crew never got paid for;
- who still blames whom;
- and one unresolved consequence that could return later.

This shared failure explains why the group can function together without pretending they are already a family.

Do not resolve the consequence now.

Write it down.

That is future campaign material wearing the disguise of a funny story.

CUSTOM PLAYER CHARACTERS

Pregenerated characters are recommended for tables learning **VeilFarers**, but they are not required.

Build custom characters using the current starting-character rules in the Core. Do not copy starting values from an older version of this adventure when they conflict with the current rules.

For the intended experience:

- recommend that new custom characters begin Sleeping;
- begin at the same advancement level as the pregens;
- avoid pre-existing Reputation or resources that trivialize the contract;
- give every character a reason to accept dangerous, deniable work;
- and connect every character to at least one person, faction, debt, or theme in the adventure.

Useful connections include:

- former service or family ties to House Joric;
- debt, employment, or commercial history with House Valerius;
- study, mentorship, or intelligence work involving House Amaranth;
- experience with House Volkov or Crossroads authorities;
- dealings with the Aurelian Syndicate;
- previous contact with Zara, Brix, Korren, Silk, or Maya;
- a personal history involving duty, captivity, forbidden love, or choosing another person over an institution.

Every custom character should be able to answer:

Why does what happens to Alexei and Zara matter to you beyond the payment?

The answer does not need to be noble.

Debt is valid.

Revenge is valid.

Professional pride is valid.

Curiosity is valid.

Political loyalty is valid.

Wanting a ship badly enough to make questionable decisions is extremely valid.

A character only needs a reason to care.

The adventure will determine what caring costs them.

Do Not Gate the Adventure Behind a Missing Role

A crew may have no dedicated pilot, negotiator, medic, hacker, or front-line combatant.

Do not block essential information because nobody selected the character the chapter expected.

Charon's Refuge has many doors.

Some open with codes.

Some open with leverage.

Some open with explosives.

Some open because a frightened person on the other side decides to trust the voice speaking through them.

If the group lacks a particular Specialty:

- let another plausible Trait or background apply;
- move essential information to a different source;
- let preparation replace missing expertise;
- allow a tool, contact, or environmental opportunity to create another route;
- or present the cost of proceeding without expertise rather than declaring the action impossible.

Optional advantages can remain easier for specialized characters.

Essential progress cannot depend on selecting the correct pregen.

The crew should survive because of who they chose to be - not because they filled every box on a recruitment form.

04. MAJOR NPCs

The people waiting on Charon's Refuge are not quest markers.

They are frightened professionals, desperate lovers, exhausted survivors, compromised friends, and predators trying to decide whether the crew looks more useful alive. Each one enters the adventure with a plan. Most of those plans are bad. Every one of them can be changed by the players.

Run them through three questions:

1. **What do they need from the crew right now?**
2. **What are they willing to do if they do not get it?**
3. **What could a player say or do that would genuinely change them?**

Do not play every NPC at maximum volume. Pick the people the crew responds to and let those relationships deepen. The others can remain threats at the edge of the light until the players pull them closer.

Keeper Quick Reference

NPC	What They Need	What They Offer	What They Become If Ignored
Zara "Starwind" Kaine	A way to protect Alexei and leave the station	Trust, command access, flight expertise, and potentially her ship	A desperate captain making increasingly dangerous solo plays
Korren "Iron Hammer" Vex	A way out of his debt that does not require betraying his crew	Engineering skill, confession, and fierce loyalty if given another path	A frightened man allowing Thex and House Joric to make the decision for him
Thex Vain-Glory	Profit, leverage, and proof that attachment is foolish	Information, foresight, and opportunistic cooperation	A survivor choosing whichever side appears richest at the final second
Brix "Coal-Heart" Stonehammer	Proof that the PCs are not a threat to his pack	Protection, martial strength, and absolute loyalty once earned	A living barricade between the crew and everyone they need to reach
Alexei Joric	Freedom and the right to	Political access, hidden	A passive prize claimed by

NPC	What They Need	What They Offer	What They Become If Ignored
	choose his own life	resources, and responsibility for the consequences of his plan	whichever faction acts first
Madame Silk	A result she can take back to House Valerius	Intelligence, tactical cooperation, or a negotiated exit	A patient assassin striking when everyone else is exhausted
"Scalpel" Kaine	Recognition as a precise professional rather than a brute	Medicine, biological expertise, and unexpected loyalty	A cheerful nightmare following Silk's contract to its ugliest conclusion
Maya Santos	A politically survivable outcome	Payment, Amaranth intelligence, and future work	An observer who lets the crew reveal exactly what kind of assets they are
Nyx of the Last Account	An Accord, a completed record, and proof she is still more than a witness	The best map and intelligence on the station	A silent presence recording the crew's mistakes from inside the walls

THE IRON HEARTS

The Iron Hearts are not a polished mercenary company.

They are what remains after several damaged people discovered that the same ship could become a workplace, a shelter, a confession booth, and - against all professional judgment - a family.

Zara is their captain and the registered owner of their vessel. The others receive shares from completed contracts, but they are not legal co-owners. This matters at the end of the adventure: Zara can transfer the ship, House authorities can confiscate it from her, and it can become salvage if no legitimate claimant survives.

They did not know they were staging a kidnapping when they accepted Alexei's contract.

They knew Zara had found a private client, the pay was excellent, and the job involved moving a frightened young man away from people with guns. For most of them, that was enough.

Then the station began to die.

Then Korren's debt came due.

Then the professionals arrived.

Zara "Starwind" Kaine, Captain of the Iron Hearts

The first thing most people notice about Zara is her laugh.

It is too large for her body and too alive for the rooms she usually works in. It rolls through dive bars, engine compartments, and tense negotiations like she has personally decided the galaxy is not allowed to win today.

The second thing they notice is how quickly it disappears when she thinks nobody is watching.

Zara grew up on a mining colony that no longer exists. Raiders hit it when she was twelve. She survived by hiding beneath collapsed machinery while everyone she loved died close enough for her to hear it. She spent the next twenty years becoming the kind of pilot who could outrun anything.

Alexei is the first person who made her wonder what it might feel like to stop.

She knows helping him was reckless. She knows she risked the Iron Hearts without telling them the full truth. She knows love is not a tactical plan.

She did it anyway.

What Zara Wants

To get Alexei off Charon's Refuge alive without sacrificing the people who trusted her command.

She cannot do that alone, and she knows it.

When the crew proves capable, Zara should stop treating them as temporary contractors and ask the question she has been avoiding:

"I can fly us out. I can keep him breathing. I cannot solve all of this at once. What is our move?"

What She Fears

That everyone she loves dies, leaves, or learns she was not worth following.

Korren's betrayal does not merely threaten Alexei. It confirms the oldest belief Zara carries: every family eventually becomes another group of names she failed to keep alive.

What Changes Her

- A PC treats the Iron Hearts as people rather than obstacles.
- Someone protects Alexei without demanding ownership of his fate.
- The crew gives Korren a path back instead of immediately demanding blood.
- A player challenges Zara's decision-making without humiliating her in front of her crew.

- Someone offers a plan that protects more than just the lovers.

Zara respects courage. She trusts people who remain practical while frightened.

If the Crew Rejects Her

She goes cold, stops sharing information, and begins planning an escape for herself and Alexei.

If the players still do nothing, she attempts it.

That is an intention, not a scripted outcome. Telegraph the preparations. Let the crew intercept her, join her, expose her route, or watch her walk into Silk's ambush.

The Ridiculous Thing About Zara

She cannot cook.

The Iron Hearts have formally forbidden her from entering the galley without supervision. The last time she attempted breakfast, something caught fire.

They were in space.

There were no open flames.

The incident remains under investigation.

Voice

- "Space does not forgive, but at least it is honest. People are more complicated."
- "Your plan is reckless, underfunded, and likely to get us killed. I am listening."
- "Alexei, your poetry is terrible. Genuinely terrible. I think I love you."
- "What do you mean the ration pack is burning? It said *self-heating*."

Korren "Iron Hammer" Vex, Engineer at the Breaking Point

Korren looks like a fortress someone forgot to maintain.

His Kryllian exoskeleton is broad, scarred, and painted with faded flames that a younger version of him thought looked intimidating. Now the paint is chipped. One shoulder plate has been repaired with mismatched sealant. His communicator vibrates often enough that everyone has learned to notice the moment he pretends it did not.

The gambling began as relief.

A few hands after difficult jobs. Then borrowed credits. Then a run of losses. Then the Aurelian Syndicate realized exactly how much pressure a frightened engineer could survive before he became useful.

They gave him two weeks.

That was three weeks ago.

House Joric's reward for Alexei would clear the debt. Thex has already explained the numbers. Korren has already sent enough information that turning back feels impossible.

It is not impossible.

That is the point.

What Korren Wants

A credible way to survive without selling out the only people who ever gave him a second chance.

He will not ask directly. Pride and shame make him circle the subject instead:

- asking how the PCs handle debt;
- offering to repair their gear;
- watching how they divide payment;
- joking badly about "retirement money";
- freezing whenever his communicator lights up.

He is waiting for someone to notice.

What He Fears

That he crossed the line before the adventure began and every apparent choice remaining is merely the delay before punishment.

He is also terrified that Zara will forgive him.

Hatred would be simpler.

What Changes Him

- A player identifies the debt without publicly humiliating him.
- The crew offers material help rather than abstract reassurance.
- Someone tells him exactly what confession will cost and remains in the room.
- A PC recognizes that fear, not greed, is driving him.
- The players provide a plan that makes survival plausible.

A successful attempt to read Korren with Fear does not force an immediate betrayal. He realizes he is being watched and his **Desperation clock advances by 2**, but the crew still has a chance to act.

If the Crew Ignores Him

Korren continues feeding information to House Joric. When his Desperation clock fills, he commits to the betrayal at the worst available moment.

Even then, he does not become a cackling villain. He shakes. He apologizes. He keeps trying to convince himself this was inevitable because admitting it was a choice would destroy him.

The Truth He Does Not Know

Alexei possesses a substantial private reserve of capital.

Alexei always intended to compensate every Iron Heart for the contract, the loss of future work, and the cost of disappearing into the Rim. He did not know about Korren's debt. Had Korren told him, Alexei could have cleared it without difficulty.

That truth should not be revealed casually. It is most powerful after Korren's confession or betrayal:

"You thought you had to sell me to survive. Korren - if you had told me, I would have paid."

It does not erase what Korren did.

It makes it hurt.

The Ridiculous Thing About Korren

He has the worst luck in known space.

Not metaphorically. If there is a loose panel, he trips over it. If there are twelve correct controls and one emergency purge switch, his elbow finds the purge switch. The crew keeps a tally.

The current record is seventeen incidents in one shift.

Korren disputes three of them.

The security footage does not.

Voice

- "Just one more job and I will be clear."
- "Do not look at the communicator."
- "I am an engineer. I assess systems. You are systems. That sounded better in my head."
- "Of course the door fell off. Why would the door remain attached today?"

Thex Vain-Glory, Prophet of the Profitable Timeline

Thex is beautiful in the way a dying star is beautiful: radiant, remote, and clearly in the process of becoming someone else's problem.

Their Ethereal form shifts with their mood. When scheming, which is most of the time, they glow a deep acquisitive gold. They wear jewelry they believe is priceless, carry investments that are mostly scams, and speak about wealth with the confidence of someone who has never once understood the price of coffee.

Thex claims to have rejected Ethereal detachment in favor of material freedom.

The truth is less flattering.

They want enough money that needing another person becomes impossible.

Every sacrifice they witness threatens that philosophy. Every act of loyalty must be recategorized as foolishness, manipulation, or delayed self-interest. Otherwise, Zara and Alexei might be real, and Thex might have built an entire worldview to avoid admitting they are lonely.

What Thex Wants

Profit, leverage, and the freedom to join the winning side late.

Thex may offer the PCs a private arrangement: assist Korren, divide the reward, and avoid the emotional inefficiency of loyalty.

They are not loyal to Korren. They are loyal to the idea that his betrayal proves them right.

What Changes Them

- A PC offers a deal whose value is not measured only in credits.
- Someone saves Thex when abandoning them would be more profitable.
- The crew exposes their financial incompetence without cruelty.
- Korren confesses, leaving Thex alone with a plan they never intended to execute personally.
- A player makes Thex admit what they actually fear losing.

Thex can cooperate. They cannot stop pretending cooperation was a calculated investment.

If the Crew Ignores Them

Thex hoards supplies, maps exits, studies every faction, and waits.

When the situation breaks, they select the side that appears most likely to survive - and reserve the right to change that assessment thirty seconds later.

The Ridiculous Thing About Thex

They understand economics as an abstract cosmic force.

They do not understand prices.

They once offered five hundred credits for coffee because the cup looked "significant," then attempted to purchase a starship for twelve credits and a polished rock.

The rock was a navigation beacon.

Voice

- "The timelines converge on one inevitable conclusion: wealth."
- "Love is beautiful. Like a sunset. Sunsets do not pay fuel bills. I checked."
- "I foresaw you would say that."
- "Then why did you ask?"
- "...I am practicing conversation."

Brix "Coal-Heart" Stonehammer, The Loyal

Brix is a Kryx built like a breaching charge.

He is massive, grey-furred, scarred, and quiet enough that people often forget he is in the room until he moves between them and the person they intended to hurt.

Years ago, Brix refused an order to massacre civilians. His pack hunted him for the dishonor. Zara found him bleeding in an alley with three dead hunters around him, dragged him aboard, and asked for nothing in return.

Brix has been trying to repay an unrequested debt ever since.

The Iron Hearts are his pack now.

He does not understand Zara's love for Alexei. He understands that she has chosen him. For Brix, that is enough.

What Brix Wants

To know whether the PCs are a threat to his pack.

He does not need to like them. He needs to know whether their word means anything.

What Changes Him

- A PC keeps a promise under pressure.
- Someone protects a weaker person without seeking praise.
- A character shows martial courage without cruelty.
- The crew treats Korren's betrayal as a wound in the pack rather than entertainment.
- Someone survives a handshake without complaining.

Once Brix accepts the crew, his loyalty is uncomplicated and physically inconvenient to their enemies.

If the Crew Ignores or Provokes Him

He blocks access to Zara and Alexei, shadows the PCs, and assumes every ambiguous movement is hostile preparation.

He will fight.

He can also be reasoned with, challenged, distracted, outmaneuvered, or shown proof that his pack is already in danger.

The Ridiculous Thing About Brix

Human customs remain an unsolved tactical problem.

He believes handshakes are ritual combat, hugs are a form of restraint, and kissing may involve either dominance or emergency feeding.

He has asked for clarification.

The answers made things worse.

Voice

- "Zara-Alpha saved me. Her pack is my pack."
- "You gave your word. I heard it."
- "They are doing the mouth thing again."
- "A worthy handshake. Your bones remained intact."

ALEXEI JORIC, THE MAN INSIDE THE POLITICAL ASSET

Alexei is twenty-three years old and has spent most of those years being discussed as if he were a corridor between two territories.

To House Joric, he is a son who failed to become a weapon.

To House Valerius, he is the signature beneath a military-commercial alliance.

To House Amaranth, he is a pressure point around which a sector may fracture.

To Zara, he is Alexei.

That is why he ran.

He is not stupid, helpless, or unaware of the cost. He planned badly because he had lived a protected life and mistook access to money for understanding danger. But he did plan. He hired the Iron Hearts, prepared funds, arranged false trails, and believed three quiet days would be enough to escape his name.

Then the Weavers woke.

What Alexei Wants

Freedom, Zara, and the right to decide what his life is for.

He also wants the Iron Hearts compensated. This is not charity. They took risks because of his plan, and he considers the debt his responsibility.

The Hidden Reserve

Alexei has access to a large personal reserve held beyond immediate Joric control.

He intended to use it to:

- pay the Iron Hearts far beyond their normal contract share;
- cover the cost of disappearing into the Rim;
- allow any Iron Heart who wished to leave the life to retire;
- and eventually purchase another ship if Zara surrendered hers.

He does not advertise this reserve. Open use would leave a financial trail for House Joric and Valerius to follow.

Reveal it through evidence before the ending:

- an encrypted transfer draft;
- a financial key hidden in his poetry notebook;
- a conversation in which he asks Zara what each crew member would need to walk away safely;
- or his horrified realization that Korren never told him about the Syndicate.

The reserve solves financial consequences.

It does not solve political ones.

What Changes Him

Alexei begins the adventure hoping other people will rescue his freedom.

The crew can force him to become an active participant.

- Ask what he is prepared to sacrifice.
- Make him speak to Korren.
- Make him confront Silk.
- Require him to take responsibility for the Iron Hearts.
- Let him use his family knowledge, access, and capital.
- Let him fail at bravery and try again.

He should end the adventure as more than cargo, regardless of whether the crew helps or condemns him.

If the Crew Ignores Him

The strongest faction present decides his future.

Zara resists. Silk executes her contract. Korren calls House Joric. Maya calculates the least catastrophic containment option.

Alexei becomes the object everyone says they are protecting.

That outcome is possible.

It should feel like a failure to ask the person at the center what he wants.

The Ridiculous Thing About Alexei

His poetry is not merely bad.

It is structurally hostile to language.

He once rhymed *nebula* with *spatula*. Zara told him it was awful. He thanked her for her honesty and wrote a second poem about criticism as an expression of intimacy.

It was worse.

Poetry Samples

Your eyes are like the stars above, But closer, and with more... stuff. When I gaze upon your face so bright, I feel feelings. Deep feelings. At night.

Oh Zara, pilot of my heart, You are good at... the flying part. Through Veil and storm you boldly go, I love you more than... things. I do not know.

Voice

- "My family sees a position on a board. Zara sees me."
- "I am not a soldier. I am a man who found a reason to fight. The practical details remain difficult."
- "Korren, why did you not tell me?"
- "I wrote something for the occasion."
- "Please do not."

THE CREDIT'S WHISPERS

The Credit's Whispers are not fanatics.

They are contractors.

House Valerius has paid them to recover Alexei and suppress whatever threatens the alliance. Their professionalism makes them more dangerous than zealots: they do not hate the PCs, do not need revenge, and do not care who deserves what.

They need a result.

That need is the opening through which they can be negotiated with.

Madame Silk, Contract Leader

If death were an art form, Madame Silk would complain about the lighting in the gallery.

She is a Rift Spinner, tall and crystalline, moving with the terrible precision of someone who experiences violence as composition. Before becoming an assassin, Silk was a sculptor. Her work was dismissed as commercial.

Now wealthy clients pay her to arrange bodies.

She has persuaded herself this is vindication.

What Silk Wants

To return to House Valerius with something that preserves her standing:

- Alexei;
- actionable intelligence;
- proof of death;
- a convincing cover story;
- leverage against another faction;
- or a new arrangement valuable enough to replace the failed contract.

This is why Silk negotiates.

Not because she is secretly kind.

Because empty hands are dangerous in her profession.

What She Fears

Mediocrity.

Failure.

And, beneath both, becoming disposable to the people who purchase her talent.

If Scalpel dies, grief tears through the professional shell she mistakes for identity. If Scalpel survives, the contract remains her

primary pressure, and the final confrontation must reflect that difference.

What Changes Her

- The PCs demonstrate competence without posturing.
- They offer a result she can credibly present.
- They understand the danger of returning empty-handed.
- Someone speaks to the artist she failed to become.
- Scalpel's choices force her to acknowledge that their partnership meant more than the contract.

Silk does not need to become an ally.

She needs a reason not to pull the trigger.

If the Crew Ignores Her

She studies them.

She maps their habits, counts their weapons, identifies who makes decisions, and waits until Korren, the Weavers, or the station itself creates the correct opening.

Then she moves.

The Ridiculous Thing About Silk

She critiques violence as if reviewing a student exhibition.

Bad angles offend her. Excessive blood is "visually insecure." A firefight without negative space is "the work of amateurs."

Scalpel has heard every lecture.

Scalpel occasionally makes a mess on purpose.

Voice

- "Nothing personal. Personal work costs extra."
- "Your formation has no balance. I find it upsetting."
- "Competent people are expensive to replace. Let us not be wasteful."
- "I require a result. You require continued respiration. There is room for agreement."

"Scalpel" Kaine, Medical Specialist

Scalpel is a Bloomstrider modified for surgery, extraction, and the many professional spaces between them.

Their limbs unfold into instruments with delicate precision. Their voice remains warm and courteous whether discussing emergency medicine or exactly how long a particular nerve cluster can be stimulated before permanent damage occurs.

They do not consider themselves cruel.

Cruelty is emotional.

Scalpel is being thorough.

That distinction comforts nobody.

What Scalpel Wants

Recognition as a scientist and medical professional rather than Silk's enthusiastic torturer.

They are fascinated by the Weavers, the station's biological records, and any PC whose physiology violates expected limits.

What Changes Them

- A medic or scholar treats them as an intellectual equal.
- Someone asks them to save a life without excusing what they have done.
- Silk treats them as expendable.
- The crew offers access to research more interesting than the contract.
- A player notices that Scalpel's endless hospitality is an attempt to make connection survivable.

Scalpel may become more than Silk's subordinate.

That does not make them innocent.

If the Crew Ignores Them

Scalpel follows Silk's plan, targets the wounded, and offers deeply unsettling terms to anyone who falls behind.

The Ridiculous Thing About Scalpel

They offer tea during interrogations.

Good tea.

Carefully brewed.

They become genuinely offended when nobody drinks it.

Voice

- "Pain is information. I merely improve the signal."
- "Your bone structure is fascinating. That was a compliment."
- "Would you like tea before we begin?"
- "I have been told my bedside manner is distressing. The patient was under considerable stress and may not have been objective."

MAYA SANTOS, HOUSE AMARANTH FIELD AGENT

Maya looks like someone who has spent thirty years processing permits in an office with bad lighting.

This is deliberate.

Nothing about her should remain in a witness's memory: not the suit, not the voice, not the tired face, not the coffee strong enough to sterilize surgical instruments.

Maya is one of House Amaranth's most effective field agents.

She has studied enough collapsing alliances to recognize the beginning of a sector war. Alexei's disappearance is not a romance to her. It is the first line in a pattern she has seen end in blockades, retaliatory raids, and civilian deaths counted in millions.

She hires the PCs because they are deniable.

She keeps watching because they may be useful again.

What Maya Wants

A resolution that prevents House Joric and House Valerius from turning private humiliation into public war.

She would prefer Alexei alive. She would prefer minimal bloodshed. She would prefer nobody learn Amaranth interfered.

She expects to receive none of those preferences intact.

What She Offers

- an advance;
- mission payment and outcome bonuses;
- intelligence;
- political interpretation;
- future access to Amaranth work;
- and, when necessary, one of the most exhausted sighs in the sector.

The exact payment structure appears in Scene 1 and the Resolution section. Maya does not invent new numbers during the debrief.

What Changes Her

Maya is difficult to surprise but not impossible to impress.

A crew that produces a stable solution without handing power to a Great House earns something rarer than approval: her attention.

If the Crew Rejects the Mission or Its Terms

She does not threaten them.

She records the decision, adjusts her plan, and finds another deniable asset.

House Amaranth remembers.

The Ridiculous Thing About Maya

Nothing surprises her visibly.

The PCs can propose stealing a gang ship, falsifying a noble death, bribing an assassin with research access, and weaponizing a cleaning robot.

Maya takes a note.

Then she sighs.

Voice

- "I have seen worse plans. Several of them even worked."
- "Information without context is noise. Context without coffee is unusable."
- "House Amaranth remembers. It is exhausting."
- "Yes. This outcome is somehow consistent with your profile."

NYX OF THE LAST ACCOUNT

Nyx is the sole known survivor of Charon's Refuge's original resident population.

Everyone else fled, died, disappeared, or became part of the infestation.

Nyx stayed.

Not because she was brave.

Because there was an unanswered question on the station, and an Ailuran can resist hunger, exhaustion, fear, and common sense more easily than an unresolved mystery.

She has survived by remaining motionless in vents, service cavities, and cold rooms under her Static Cloak. She has watched the Iron Hearts establish barricades, the Whispers mark routes through the dark, and the Weavers learn the station one corridor at a time.

She records everything in a cipher-locked device called **the Last Account**.

When the players first encounter Nyx, she has probably been watching them for several minutes.

She identifies them by heat.

The one running warm.

The cold silhouette.

The one hiding a fever.

The one whose pulse changed when somebody said "Joric."

Her face remains calm.

Her tail is filing a formal objection.

How Nyx Enters

Do not force her into the adventure.

Let the crew cause the encounter.

Nyx may reveal herself when:

- they investigate the contradictory tracks left by multiple factions;
- they move quietly enough to earn her professional respect;
- they recover part of the station record;
- they become a mystery she cannot ignore;
- or they offer information aloud to whoever has been watching from the walls.

A loud and careless crew may never meet her.

Nyx still records them.

Her account will not be flattering.

The Accord

Nyx does not give information as a favor.

She offers an Accord.

Information for information. A map for a secret. Patrol routes for the recovery of a sealed datacore. Access to a hidden corridor in exchange for the answer to a question she has been unable to resolve.

If the crew keeps the Accord, Nyx keeps hers precisely.

If they break it, she does not attack.

She withdraws every word, every route, and every trace of warmth. To an Ailuran, silence is not the absence of a relationship.

It is the formal death of one.

What Nyx Knows

Nyx can provide any of the following when earned:

- where Zara's group is barricaded;
- which routes Silk uses;
- Weaver movement patterns;
- which sections lost power first;
- evidence that energy was transported toward the Research Labs;
- the existence of the Iron Hearts' drained ship;
- safe maintenance paths;
- and the last known location of station personnel.

Do not let her hand over the entire adventure in one monologue.

An Accord answers a specific question.

What Changes Her

Nyx has spent too long believing witness and participant are mutually exclusive.

A crew that treats her as a living person rather than a database may convince her to leave the station, intervene directly, or entrust them with the Last Account.

The Ridiculous Thing About Nyx

She narrates everything.

Quietly.

Constantly.

Often while the people involved can hear her.

"The mercenary takes cover. Poorly. Note: favors the left side despite repeated ballistic feedback."

She claims her assessments are generous.

Her tail indicates this is a lie.

Voice

- "I have been watching you since the airlock."
- "I will trade the route. I will not give it."
- "The cold one is difficult to read. I find this unacceptable and therefore interesting."
- "I am not afraid. That was the tail. The tail is unreliable."

KEEP THEM IN MOTION

These profiles describe pressure, not fixed arcs.

During play, update each important NPC in a few words:

NPC	Current Trust	Current Fear	Next Intended Action
Zara			
Korren			
Thex			
Brix			
Alexei			
Silk			
Scalpel			
Nyx			

Do not track everyone equally.

Track the people the players have made matter.

When an NPC's intended action approaches, show its shadow first: the packed bag, the encrypted burst, the route marked on a map, the

weapon being checked, the transfer key hidden between terrible poems.

Then ask what the crew does.

05. SCENE 1: THE OFFER

Location: The Nexus Inferior, Crossroads Trade Station

Purpose: Formally bind the crew to the job, establish the political stakes, give them enough money to move, and make clear that Maya is hiring judgment - not obedience.

The adventure begins three levels below Crossroads' respectable promenade, in the part of the station where everything still works provided nobody asks when it was last inspected.

The Nexus Inferior is a bar for people who prefer their contracts deniable and their drinks untraceable. Freight pilots sleep in corner booths between runs. Mercenaries compare scars without admitting they are comparing scars. A Celestari musician plays something mournful beneath a flickering advertisement for a company that ceased to exist eighty years ago.

The crew already knows one another.

They may not yet be family. They may not even agree that they are a crew. But when Maya Santos asked for a discreet group capable of handling a politically sensitive recovery, these were the people who arrived together.

That is enough to begin.

Opening Image

READ ALOUD The Nexus Inferior earns its name. You are three levels beneath the main promenade, where the lighting is described as *atmospheric* because replacing it would cost money nobody intends to spend. Condensation runs down exposed pipes. The life-support system hums through the walls like a tired animal. Every few minutes, something in the ceiling clicks with the confidence of a component that knows nobody can afford to replace it. Holograms advertise drinks from worlds that no longer exist. A Celestari musician plays beneath one of them, drawing a melody out of solid light - beautiful, precise, and sad enough that half the room has gone quieter without admitting why. A woman with prematurely grey hair waits in the back booth. Her clothes are professional without being memorable. Her coffee is black enough to damage medical equipment. She has chosen a seat with a clear view of both exits and the reflective panel behind the bar. She looks at each of you once. Not suspiciously. Efficiently. Then she indicates the empty seats across from her. "Sit," she says. "A young man has made a very expensive romantic decision."

Let the players settle in, introduce their characters through action, and decide who sits nearest Maya, who watches the exits, who orders a drink, and who refuses to turn their back on the room.

Do not ask for full biographies.

A gesture, habit, or line is enough.

MAYA'S ASSESSMENT

Maya already knows the crew's public records, known affiliations, and enough of their recent work to decide they are useful.

She does not know:

- what they will do when the contract conflicts with their conscience;
- whether they can recognize manipulation without taking it personally;
- which of them the others follow when a plan collapses;
- or whether giving them a ship-sized problem will create a crew or a crime scene.

She watches for all four.

Maya does not posture. She does not threaten people she is trying to hire. She answers direct questions when the answer helps the mission and withholds information when revealing it would expose House Amaranth unnecessarily.

She is tired, careful, and genuinely afraid of what happens if this situation becomes public.

The Official Story

MAYA "Three days ago, Alexei Joric - the youngest son of Lord Commander Maximus Joric - was abducted while travelling through the Crossroads sector." She turns her cup once between both hands. "The official statement describes the perpetrators as terrorists. The official reward is ten Credits. The official statement is also incomplete, politically motivated, and almost certainly useless." "My employers require something better."

She places a compact projector on the table.

A formal portrait appears above it: Alexei Joric in ceremonial military dress, standing too straight, wearing the expression of a man who has been told exactly where to place his hands.

Beside it, a grainier image appears - Alexei leaving a Nexus-7 bar with Zara Kaine. They are both laughing. Zara's arm is around his shoulders. Alexei is looking at her instead of the camera.

That photograph tells the players more than the official portrait does.

The Real Contract

MAYA "Locate Alexei Joric." "Determine whether he was taken, helped, manipulated, or simply underestimated."
"Then resolve the situation without handing House Joric and House Valerius a public excuse to begin tearing trade routes apart." She looks around the table. "I am not hiring you to follow a script. I am hiring you because the script has already failed."

This is the central promise of the contract.

Maya wants a stable result. She does not prescribe one.

The crew may eventually:

- return Alexei;
- help him escape;
- expose the staged kidnapping;
- bargain with one or more Houses;
- create a false death;
- sell him;
- lose him;
- or invent something Maya did not anticipate.

She will judge the result later.

She will not control it now.

PAYMENT

Keep the payment structure visible and consistent from this point onward.

Operating Advance

Maya provides an immediate operating advance that covers the crew's ordinary passage, provisions, routine services, and mission expenses.

This is shared mission funding, not a loan and not a permanent change in anyone's economic position. It does **not** raise a character's personal Wealth Tier.

It gives the crew enough financial footing to:

- purchase normal passage;
- provision themselves;
- access ordinary services;
- and contribute toward a deposit, leverage, or initial expense in a more ambitious transport arrangement.

Buying a vessel still requires an actual acquisition route: pooled resources, debt, sacrifice, a sponsor, a Wealth Check when appropriate, or another consequence established in play. The advance does not make a ship a routine purchase.

The advance is not reclaimed if the mission fails. House Amaranth considers the risk of losing it part of the cost of deniable work.

Completion Fee

The contracted payment is a **shared crew payout**, not an amount paid separately to every character. It is divided into two parts:

Payment	Amount	Condition
Completion Fee	15 Credits	Locate Alexei and deliver a truthful debrief to Maya
Resolution Bonus	Up to 15 Credits	Prevent the situation from escalating into an open House conflict
Negotiated Bonus	+5 Credits	Added only if the crew successfully negotiates it during this scene

A clean, discreet resolution is therefore worth **30 Credits**, or **35 Credits** if the crew secures the additional negotiated bonus.

Credits are liquid assets, not a substitute for the Wealth Tier rules. Receiving this payout does not automatically raise personal Wealth Tier or Crew Wealth; any lasting change follows the fiction and the current advancement guidance.

Rules reference: *VeilFarers Corebook 12.03*, Chapter 15, **The Pearl Standard**, including Wealth Tiers, Credits, and Crew Wealth.

The Resolution section later in the adventure explains when Maya pays the full bonus, reduces it, or refuses it.

KEEPER'S NOTE: Do Not Renegotiate the Numbers Later

Record whether the crew earned the additional 5 Credits.

Maya may adjust the Resolution Bonus based on the outcome, but she does not pretend the original agreement said something different. She is an intelligence officer, not a dockside scammer.

Negotiating the Additional 5 Credits

The crew may push for more.

Do not make this a mandatory roll. If a player presents a credible reason - political exposure, extreme danger, lack of transport, or the insultingly low official reward - Maya can concede after a little resistance.

A roll is appropriate when the argument depends on reading Maya, applying leverage, or deliberately manipulating the negotiation.

Suggested approaches:

- **Presence** to frame the crew as uniquely qualified;
- **Instinct** to identify Maya's urgency;
- **Knowledge** to demonstrate the political scale of the risk;
- a relevant **Experience** or background connection to a House, intelligence work, mercenary contracts, or Crossroads.

Use **DC 15 (Challenging)** when a roll is genuinely needed.

Established leverage can remove the roll or change what success and failure mean.

Rules reference: *VeilFarers Corebook 12.03*, Chapter 9, **Difficulty Classes**.

On a Success with Hope

Maya agrees to the additional 5 Credits and reveals something useful because the crew made the correct argument.

Choose one:

- Amaranth believes the kidnapping may have been staged.
- House Valerius has already deployed independent recovery specialists.
- The last reliable trace points to the Tenebris Secundus system.
- Someone inside the group holding Alexei has contacted House Joric.

On a Success with Fear

Maya agrees to the additional 5 Credits, but the negotiation changes how she sees the crew.

Choose one:

- she records them as aggressively profit-driven;
- another patron notices the amount being discussed;
- Maya requires more detailed reporting;
- or she withholds one optional piece of intelligence until they prove reliable.

The deal still succeeds.

On a Failure with Hope

Maya refuses the extra payment, but offers something practical instead:

- priority access to a transport contact;
- forged travel documentation;
- a single-use Amaranth authentication key;
- or a useful introduction in Scene 2.

On a Failure with Fear

Maya refuses the increase and realizes the conversation has attracted attention.

Someone in the bar is now listening.

Do not reveal who immediately.

WHAT MAYA KNOWS

Maya provides the following without requiring a roll:

- Alexei disappeared three days ago.
- The Iron Hearts, a small independent mercenary crew, are connected to the disappearance.
- Their captain is Zara "Starwind" Kaine.
- The group travelled toward **Charon's Refuge**, an under-maintained research station in the Tenebris Secundus system.
- At least two major interests are attempting to recover Alexei.
- A public confrontation between Joric and Valerius assets could destroy the remaining marriage negotiations and destabilize the sector.

- The crew should expect surveillance, competing contractors, and incomplete information.
- Charon's Refuge is still listed as operational, but its traffic and communications have become irregular.

Maya does **not** initially volunteer that she works for House Amaranth.

She also does not know the full truth.

She suspects Alexei participated in his own disappearance, but has not confirmed it. She knows the Iron Hearts reached Charon's Refuge. She does not know that the station is infested, that Korren is compromised, or that the Iron Hearts' ship has been drained.

READING MAYA

A player may study Maya while she speaks.

Use **Instinct** or another plausible approach.

On a success, reveal:

- her fear is not of the crew;
- she is afraid of time running out;
- and she is taking a personal risk by intervening before her superiors have approved a larger operation.

With Hope, the player also realizes Maya wants the crew to exercise judgment. Her vagueness is not a trap designed to punish deviation.

With Fear, Maya notices the scrutiny and begins studying that PC in return. She still provides the mission information, but remembers who tried to read her.

DISCOVERING HOUSE AMARANTH

The crew may uncover Maya's affiliation through:

- direct questioning;
- recognizing her encryption;
- a prior House Amaranth connection;
- comparing her language to known Amaranth doctrine;
- or successfully pressuring her for accountability.

Maya does not lie if directly exposed.

MAYA "Yes. House Amaranth." She waits for the inevitable reaction. "We remember wars long enough to recognize them before everyone else starts naming battles."

If the crew reacts with hostility, Maya remains calm.

She is not asking them to trust House Amaranth.

She is asking them to understand the scale of the problem.

QUESTIONS THE CREW MAY ASK

"Was Alexei actually kidnapped?"

"I do not know." "I know he left willingly with Zara Kaine at least once before his disappearance. I know the official report omits that fact. I know powerful families become imprecise when the truth is embarrassing."

With additional leverage or a strong read:

"My assessment? He arranged at least part of this himself."

"Why not send Amaranth agents?"

"Because a House Amaranth vessel appearing beside a missing Joric heir would become the story." "You are not the story yet. I recommend preserving that advantage."

"Who else is looking?"

"House Joric is using internal assets." "House Valerius has hired professionals." "I do not yet know whether they have the same instructions."

Maya avoids naming the Credit's Whispers unless the crew earns the information.

"What does 'resolve' mean?"

"Alexei alive. No public battle between Great Houses. No evidence that Amaranth engineered the outcome." She takes a drink. "I am aware these preferences may become mutually incompatible."

"What if Alexei does not want to return?"

Maya pauses before answering.

"Then you will have discovered why I hired people capable of making decisions." "Listen to him. Verify what he says. Decide what prevents the greatest harm." "Then be prepared to explain your decision to everyone who disagrees."

"Can you provide a ship?"

"No." "I can provide money, documentation, coordinates, and temporary access codes. A vessel would connect the operation directly to my employers." "You will need to secure your own transport."

This leads directly into Scene 2.

"Why us?"

Maya looks at the crew member who asked.

"Because you are competent enough to survive." A pause. "And unimportant enough that the sector will not immediately panic when you arrive." Another pause. "The first condition is praise. The second is temporary."

PERSONAL HOOKS

Use the characters' Bonds and backgrounds to make the contract land unevenly across the table.

A Character Connected to House Joric

They recognize Alexei immediately and understand the danger of Maximus Joric's attention.

Maya may ask:

"You know what his father will do if this becomes public. Tell the others."

A Character Connected to House Valerius or Trade

They understand that the marriage is not romantic. It is an economic structure binding military power to failing financial routes.

They know a collapsed alliance can ruin systems without a single formal declaration of war.

A Character Connected to House Amaranth

Maya may know them personally, by reputation, or through a previous handler.

She is colder with them in public and more honest in private.

A Character Connected to the Underworld

They know the official reward will attract bounty hunters, gang crews, opportunists, and people who believe "alive" is an optional contract detail.

A Character Who Needs a Ship

Mention that independent crews who complete politically sensitive work sometimes leave with more than the original payment.

Maya does not promise a vessel.

The possibility should still hang in the air.

IF THE CREW REFUSES

Refusing the mission is a valid choice.

Maya does not threaten, blackmail, or magically force the party into the adventure.

She closes the projector.

MAYA "Understood." "I will find someone else." She looks at Alexei's laughing image before shutting it down. "I hope they are better people than I expect."

Then ask the players what would need to change for their characters to reconsider.

Useful pressure can come from their own established hooks:

- the official reward;
- knowledge of a faction involved;
- a debt;
- the need for transport;
- concern for sector stability;
- recognition of Zara;
- or simple curiosity about why Alexei appears happy in the unofficial photograph.

Do not punish refusal.

Clarify stakes and let the players choose.

If the entire table still declines, *Hearts in the Void* is not the job their crew accepts. End the scene honestly and build another opening.

ACCEPTING THE CONTRACT

When the crew agrees, Maya transfers the operating advance and sends a compact mission packet containing:

- Alexei's official identification;
- the unofficial image with Zara;
- Zara Kaine's public mercenary record;
- coordinates for Charon's Refuge;
- the station's last registered layout;
- temporary access credentials;
- known House Joric and Valerius identifiers;
- and a secure channel for the final debrief.

The station layout is incomplete and out of date.

The credentials work only where Charon's Refuge still recognizes them.

The secure channel is secure enough to make House Amaranth comfortable, which is not the same thing as being impossible to intercept.

Closing Beat

READ ALOUD Maya gathers the projector and leaves the empty coffee cup behind. "One final point." She looks toward the musician, the freight crews, the tired people drinking beneath advertisements for dead worlds. "You are

not the only ones moving toward Alexei." "The difference is that I have asked you to decide what happens when you find him." She slides the mission packet across the table. "Do not waste that privilege." Then she stands, disappears into the crowd, and becomes difficult to remember with alarming speed. Your accounts update a moment later. For the first time in a while, you have money. You still do not have a ship.

Proceed to **Scene 2: Securing Transport**.

06. SCENE 2: SECURING TRANSPORT

Location: Crossroads Trade Station

Purpose: Force the crew to make its first collective commitment, establish the practical cost of independence, and determine what kind of history their future ship will carry.

THE PROBLEM

Charon's Refuge is in the Tenebris Secundus system.

The crew has coordinates, an operating advance, temporary docking credentials, and a contract that may place them between two Great Houses.

They do not have a ship.

For a few minutes after Maya leaves, this is almost funny.

Then someone checks the transport boards.

It stops being funny.

CROSSROADS TRADE STATION

Crossroads never becomes quiet.

Even in the station's artificial night cycle, freight lifters complain through the bulkheads, docking clamps strike hulls with cathedral-deep booms, and public announcements overlap in four languages before dissolving into static.

The station smells different on every deck.

The upper concourses carry perfume, polished metal, and conditioned air scrubbed until it tastes faintly medicinal. The lower trade levels smell of hot machinery, old cooking oil, fuel coolant, unwashed work clothes, and the sharp mineral sting of air that has passed through too many lungs.

The temperature changes from corridor to corridor. Near the reactor-facing bulkheads, the metal walls radiate a dry, persistent heat. Around the outer docking ring, the air turns cold enough that breath sometimes fogs despite the environmental controls insisting everything is within acceptable limits.

People move constantly:

- cargo crews in stained pressure suits;
- merchants dragging floating cases behind them;
- station children weaving through adults with the confidence of people who know every maintenance shortcut;
- pilots arguing with customs clerks;
- House couriers surrounded by just enough security to make everyone else step aside;
- mercenaries pretending not to watch one another;
- and travelers sleeping upright beneath departure boards because the next affordable berth leaves in eleven hours.

Crossroads is not elegant.

It is alive.

And everything alive here has a price.

PATHS THROUGH CROSSROADS

Crossroads places several possibilities within reach.

Affordable vessels change hands in **Harrow Dock Acquisition Yard**, one of the older bays within the Gannet Yards. Passage toward Tenebris Secundus departs from Spindle Nine. Far below the registered cargo ring, the Bone Dogs keep *The Collector* warm inside Dock K-17.

Maya's advance covers passage, provisions, and ordinary mission costs. It can contribute leverage or a deposit toward a ship, but it does not erase the debt, sacrifice, sponsor, theft, or other consequence that makes acquiring one possible.

A broker's advert points toward Harrow Dock. The departure board lists two ships whose routes pass Charon's Refuge. Merchants in the Nexus Inferior speak quietly about Ratko's freighter, the money it has collected, and how many people would enjoy seeing it leave without him.

The crew may buy a ship, book passage, take *The Collector*, combine parts of several plans, or create another answer from the station around them.

ROUTE ONE: BUY A SHIP

THE MERCENARY DREAM

There is a particular kind of silence that falls over broke professionals when someone says:

"We could buy one."

The idea is irresponsible.

It is also the first thing anyone has said that sounds like a future.

HARROW DOCK ACQUISITION YARD

Ships affordable to people like the crew are not sold on Crossroads' polished commercial decks.

They are sold in the **Gannet Yards**, a pressurized industrial cavern built around obsolete docking spines near the station's underside. **Harrow Dock Acquisition Yard** occupies the busiest of those bays.

MAP REFERENCE: Use **Map Plate A - Harrow Dock Acquisition Yard**. The color plate supports screen play; the printer-friendly plate distinguishes routes and structures through line styles, hatching, and textures rather than color.

The lift doors open onto heat.

Not comfortable heat. Engine heat. The kind that dries the eyes and leaves a metallic taste on the tongue.

The air carries:

- coolant vapor;
- scorched insulation;
- welding smoke;
- machine grease;
- hot dust;
- and the faint, sour smell of recycled water leaking somewhere behind the walls.

Arc welders flash across the cavern like silent lightning before the delayed crack reaches the crew. Suspended work platforms crawl along damaged hulls. Mechanics shout across open gantries and are answered by tool impacts, warning klaxons, and the low vibration of engines being tested without permission from station control.

Ships stand in individual bays beneath hanging signs that pulse with phrases such as:

- **ONE CAREFUL OWNER**
- **COSMETIC DAMAGE ONLY**
- **VEIL-READY**
- **NO REFUNDS AFTER IGNITION**

Most of these statements are technically false.

Crowds move between the bays:

- prospectors tapping hull plates and pretending they know what the sound means;
- families inspecting cargo ships as possible homes;
- brokers in heat-resistant coats;
- debt collectors with immaculate boots;
- mechanics carrying parts larger than their torsos;
- and pilots standing very still in front of vessels they cannot afford.

The Gannet Yards do not feel like a showroom.

They feel like an animal shelter for machines nobody else wanted.

THE BROKER: SELLA MARR

The crew is approached by **Sella Marr**, a narrow-faced human woman in a silver coat whose cuffs remain inexplicably clean despite the environment.

She smiles as though she has already calculated the highest price each character can be persuaded to regret.

Her voice is soft enough that everyone has to lean closer.

That is deliberate.

Appearance

Sella wears:

- a transparent breathing filter beneath one ear;
- rings containing access keys to several docks;
- heat-resistant shoes that have never touched an unprofitable floor;
- and a small projector that displays ship histories with suspicious gaps.

She smells faintly of citrus solvent and expensive coffee.

Manner

Sella never says a ship is damaged.

She says:

- "It has survived extensive use."
- "The hull has character."
- "The navigation intelligence is independently minded."
- "The reactor prefers a gradual relationship with ignition."

She knows exactly which flaws are dangerous and which are merely humiliating.

What She Wants

A sale completed before someone with more money arrives.

What She Fears

A mechanic speaking honestly within earshot.

Example Dialogue

"You are not buying a ship. You are acquiring future mobility."

"The previous owner did not die aboard. Not technically aboard."

"That sound is not structural. Structural sounds are deeper."

WALKING THE YARDS

Sella leads the crew through Harrow Dock's open berths, past auction pens, shipbreaker stalls, repair cradles, and vessels whose advertised histories have been edited more carefully than their hulls.

The following ships can appear as quick impressions while the crew crosses the yard.

The Maribel

A former medical shuttle painted a color that was once white.

Inside, the corridors smell permanently of antiseptic and smoke. One treatment light still flickers whenever anyone lies.

The broker claims this is a coincidence.

The Slow Mercy

A squat cargo tug with reinforced landing struts and a cockpit built for someone with six limbs.

The pilot's chair has been replaced with a dining bench bolted to the deck.

The bench is more comfortable than it looks.

The Terms Pending

A light freighter with fresh paint over old impact scoring.

Its cargo bay is immaculate.

Its engine room contains three different generations of technology connected by cables, optimism, and one handwritten warning:

DO NOT TOUCH THE BLUE VALVE WHILE LISTENING TO MUSIC.

The Crew's Ship

The vessel within reach does not look heroic.

It looks possible.

READ ALOUD The ship waits in the last bay beneath a row of failing lights. Its hull is a patchwork of old repairs, replacement plates, and paint applied by people who stopped caring whether the colors matched. One landing strut sits slightly lower than the others. The forward sensor blister has been replaced with a model designed for a different class of vessel and fitted into place with visible determination. A line of faded letters remains beneath the current registration mark, the ghost of an older name painted over but never fully erased. The loading ramp lowers with a groan that echoes through the bay. Warm air rolls from the interior carrying dust, machine oil, old fabric, and the unmistakable smell of a galley that has cooked the same six meals for several decades. Somewhere inside, a system chimes. Then chimes again. Then announces: "WELCOME, AUTHORIZED OWNER." A pause. "OWNER AUTHORIZATION STATUS: DISPUTED."

Inside, describe:

- narrow corridors with handholds polished by generations of use;
- a common area where the table is welded to the deck but every chair is different;
- two small cabins, one converted storage room, and one bunk alcove beside the ventilation trunk;
- an engine room that is too warm and vibrates through the ribs;
- old stickers from stations the crew may visit later;
- a cockpit with scratched controls, a cracked overhead panel, and a forward window wide enough to make the ship feel briefly larger than it is.

The ship is not clean.

It is not impressive.

It feels lived in.

That distinction matters.

THE SHIP PROFILE

Use the **Tier 2 Cargo Hauler profile** from *VeilFarers Corebook 12.03*, Chapter 17. It is a light freighter in the fiction.

Do not reproduce an older vehicle profile here if it conflicts with current rules.

The purchased vessel and *The Collector* use the same mechanical profile.

Only their history, legal status, interior, quirks, appearance, and consequences differ.

NAMING THE SHIP

The ship belongs to the players. Its name belongs to them as well.

They may keep the faded registration, restore an older name hidden beneath the paint, or choose something new once the vessel begins to feel like theirs.

If the table wants suggestions, offer:

- *Last Chance*
- *Second Wind*
- *The Compromise*
- *Bad Investment*
- *Terms and Conditions*
- *Not Technically Stolen*

The name may emerge during the purchase, after the first flight, or only once the vessel survives its first disaster with the crew.

WHAT IT COSTS

Use the current Wealth rules from the Core.

The important fictional result is:

- the crew no longer has comfortable reserves;
- repairs will matter;
- routine expenses will matter;
- and several characters have placed something real into a shared asset.

The players may define what their contribution costs them in the fiction.

Possible sacrifices include:

- a weapon with personal history;
- a legal identity;
- a favor owed by a dangerous contact;
- a share of future earnings;
- the last asset connected to a former life;
- a family possession;

- or the promise that the crew will remain together long enough to repay the debt.

These details should emerge from player choices, negotiation, or later conversation rather than from a required round of answers.

The broker watches each sacrifice become part of the transaction.

She does not comment.

Even Sella knows some moments should not be priced aloud.

CHOOSE TWO QUIRKS

These are fictional complications and roleplaying hooks. They do not alter the canonical profile unless the table agrees on a mechanical expression consistent with the current Core.

1. Temperamental Ignition

The engine starts reliably only when addressed in exactly the right tone. Spark insists this is normal.

1. Leaky Seals

Life support makes wet, ominous sounds during Veil transit. Nobody has found the leak. Everyone has found the bucket.

1. Ghosts in the Machine

The computer occasionally displays fragments of messages from a previous owner. Most are mundane. One is not.

1. Distinctive Silhouette

Anyone who has worked the sector remembers this ship. Criminals smile. Authorities take notes.

1. Illegal Cargo Compartment

The seller denies knowing it exists. The compartment contains one object the Keeper may reveal later.

1. Optimistic Damage Display

The diagnostic system reports all failures as "temporary performance variations."

1. One Excellent Cabin

The ship has one inexplicably luxurious cabin and several spaces best described as storage with blankets.

1. Unlicensed Navigation Intelligence

The route assistant is helpful, opinionated, and legally classified as software despite increasingly persuasive evidence to the contrary.

FIRST MOMENTS ABOARD

The ramp closes behind the crew, muting Harrow Dock to a distant industrial tremor.

The cockpit, engine room, cabins, storage spaces, and common area wait in varying states of repair. Old fabric holds the smell of previous crews. Warm machinery vibrates through the deck. Forgotten objects remain in drawers and beneath bunks.

The vessel begins becoming theirs through whichever spaces they enter, claim, clean, distrust, or leave untouched.

ROUTE TWO: BOOK PASSAGE

THE PRAGMATIC OPTION

Buying a ship is romantic.

Romance is expensive.

The crew can preserve its resources by purchasing passage aboard a vessel already traveling toward Tenebris Secundus.

This route is cleaner.

It is also temporary.

The transport will deliver them to Charon's Refuge, complete its own route, and leave.

It will not wait.

It will not return once Charon's Refuge begins transmitting distress traffic.

Parel states the terms before accepting payment: delivery is guaranteed; extraction is not.

The absence of ownership is the cost.

THE DEPARTURES CONCOURSE

Passage is arranged on Crossroads' **Spindle Nine**, a long curved concourse wrapped around the station's inner docking hub.

The temperature is cooler here. Air moves constantly through ceiling vents, carrying traces of perfume, disinfectant, hot food, and the ozone bite of docking seals cycling nearby.

The floor trembles every few minutes as another vessel locks to the station.

Overhead displays flicker between departures, cancellations, political advisories, and advertisements promising luxury berths whose images contain no passengers, luggage, or signs of actual travel.

The concourse is crowded with:

- porters guiding luggage drones;
- families sleeping on bags;
- Guild crews eating from metal bowls;
- security personnel studying faces;
- vendors selling counterfeit travel permits;
- preachers warning that Veil transit separates the soul from the body;
- and passengers watching every boarding door as though escape might close without warning.

Announcements overlap:

"BERTH NINE-C NOW BOARDING."

"PASSENGERS FOR THE VALERIUS VESSEL *VESPER CROWN* MUST PRESENT HOUSE-COMPLIANT IDENTIFICATION."

"UNATTENDED LUGGAGE WILL BE REMOVED, SCANNED, AND AUCTIONED."

A child nearby asks whether "auctioned" means "rescued."

Nobody answers.

THE TICKET AGENT: PAREL DHO

Parel Dho is a Kryllian booking clerk with four hands, three active terminals, and the exhausted stare of someone who has spent the shift explaining that "departing near the system" is not the same as "docking exactly where you want."

One hand sorts documents.

One enters route codes.

One holds a cup of tea.

The fourth remains available for pointing at warning clauses.

Appearance and Presence

Parel's station uniform is immaculate except for one sleeve stained with printer ink. A small family charm hangs from the terminal. They smell of tea leaves and overheated electronics.

Manner

Parel speaks quickly until danger is mentioned.

Then they slow down.

When the crew requests transport to Charon's Refuge, all four hands stop.

"That station is not accepting traffic."

A beat.

"Technically, it is not refusing traffic either."

What Parel Knows

- Charon's Refuge has not responded to normal docking queries;
- two vessels logged arrival in the last several days;
- neither filed a normal departure record;
- automated power readings are inconsistent;
- and the route is still legally open because nobody has accepted responsibility for closing it.

Example Dialogue

"I can sell you passage. I cannot sell you wisdom."

"The captain will deliver you. The captain will not wait. Please acknowledge that sentence before we continue."

"No, an emergency beacon does not obligate a commercial vessel to remain in an infested system. Why did I say infested? I meant... inconvenient."

AVAILABLE PASSAGE

Two vessels can carry the crew toward Tenebris Secundus.

THE GUILD HAULER: MORROW'S DUE

The *Morrow's Due* is a broad-bellied Commerce Guild freighter carrying machine components, water filters, sealed agricultural containers, and enough spare piping to rebuild a small colony badly.

Its hull is painted in practical bands of grey and yellow.

The paint is scarred but maintained.

The docking bridge smells of wet canvas, metal dust, and strong soup.

Inside, the ship is warm. Not comfortable - warm from overworked machinery, bodies, cargo heaters, and ventilation that has not been upgraded since before half the crew was born.

The corridors are narrow and lined with:

- cargo netting;
- handwritten labels;
- family images;
- emergency patches;
- boots drying beneath pipes;
- and mugs attached to walls with magnets.

The engine's vibration is constant. After ten minutes, the characters stop hearing it.

After twenty, they feel strange whenever it pauses.

The Captain: Orla Venn

Orla is a broad-shouldered older woman with close-cropped silver hair and a pressure-scar running from one ear to her collar.

She wears a Guild coat over a shirt repaired at least twelve times.

Her handshake is firm, brief, and transactional.

She smells of engine heat, pepper, and the medicinal paste used on old pressure burns.

She asks only three questions:

1. Are the weapons registered?
2. Is anyone being actively pursued?
3. Will the answer to the second question change before arrival?

She does not expect honesty.

She expects consistency.

Atmosphere Aboard

Passengers share space with working crew. Meals are taken in a galley where conversation pauses whenever a new person enters and resumes only after someone decides they are not dangerous.

The lighting dims irregularly.

The coffee is terrible.

The soup is excellent.

At least one crewmember is repairing something in every room.

Advantages

- discreet travelers are normal;
- the captain does not report every unusual passenger;
- weapons remain secured but accessible under emergency procedures;
- the PCs can hear frontier rumors and trade stories.

Complications

- the route is slower;
- privacy is limited;
- the captain will not risk cargo or crew for the PCs;
- someone aboard may recognize one of them;
- the ship's crew may know more about Charon's Refuge than they initially admit.

THE VALERIUS LINER: *VESPER CROWN*

The *Vesper Crown* is visible through the concourse windows before the crew reaches its gate.

It is long, white, and elegantly curved, its hull illuminated by House Valerius markings that glow like jewelry against the dark.

The docking bridge is carpeted.

Actual carpet.

A faint scent of citrus and flowers is released through the ventilation system at intervals calculated to suggest cleanliness, wealth, and the absence of fear.

Uniformed attendants greet passengers by name before the identification scan finishes.

Music plays softly from hidden speakers.

The temperature is maintained at the precise point where expensive clothing remains comfortable.

Everything is quiet enough that people lower their voices without realizing it.

Everything is watched.

The Steward: Elian Rook

Elian is young, immaculate, and trained to make scrutiny feel like hospitality.

He wears a dark Valerius uniform with a silver collar pin. His smile arrives at exactly the correct moment and never touches his eyes.

He smells of pressed fabric and the liner's citrus atmosphere.

Manner

Elian never says "security."

He says:

- "guest verification";
- "travel integrity";
- "protective observation";
- and "temporary restrictions for collective comfort."

When he sees armed mercenaries traveling toward Charon's Refuge, his smile becomes fractionally more precise.

Atmosphere Aboard

The liner's corridors curve gently so passengers rarely see far enough to feel confined. Panels display simulated windows over worlds the vessel is not currently near.

The dining hall serves real fruit.

The cabins are silent.

The walls are thin enough for the surveillance systems, not for neighboring guests.

House news plays in lounges where wealthy travelers discuss Alexei Joric's disappearance as scandal, market risk, and entertainment.

Advantages

- faster arrival;
- excellent medical and communications facilities;
- access to Valerius personnel, rumors, and assumptions;
- opportunities to learn how Lydia's circle frames the disappearance.

Complications

- identities are checked;
- weapons are restricted;
- movement is logged;
- Valerius security may already be watching for unusual interest in Alexei;
- polite conversation can become interrogation without changing tone.

DURING THE VOYAGE

One or two moments aboard the chosen vessel can make Charon's Refuge feel closer before it appears on the screens.

Aboard the Guild Hauler

Possible moments:

- a deckhand recognizes the coordinates and quietly asks why anyone would visit a station whose lights have been "blinking wrong" for days;
- a meal is interrupted by a broken automatic transmission from Charon's Refuge;
- the cargo temperature drops and several crew members swear something moved inside a sealed agricultural container;
- Captain Orla makes the PCs sign a waiver confirming that the *Morrow's Due* will depart immediately after unloading them.

Aboard the Valerius Liner

Possible moments:

- a passenger discusses Alexei's marriage as though reviewing a failed investment;
- a security officer asks why armed professionals are traveling toward the system;
- the crew intercepts a fragment of internal chatter mentioning the Credit's Whispers;
- an attendant offers complimentary drinks while another scans their cabin.

The voyage should make the crew feel the station approaching before they see it.

ARRIVAL WITHOUT A SHIP

When the transport reaches Charon's Refuge:

- it completes the docking transfer;
- offloads the crew and contracted equipment;
- waits only as long as normal procedure requires;
- and continues its route.

Describe the moment the vessel leaves.

READ ALOUD The docking collar releases with a heavy mechanical thud. Through the station's narrow observation port, the transport pulls away. Thrusters flare white, washing the hull of Charon's Refuge in brief, unforgiving light. For a few seconds, the ship remains close enough to imagine calling it back. Then it turns. Its engines brighten. It becomes a shape against the gas giant, then a point, then nothing. The station settles around you with a low metallic groan. Somewhere beyond the airlock, something scratches inside the walls.

The crew is trapped with everyone else.

Later they discover:

- the Iron Hearts' ship is still docked;
- its hull remains largely operational;
- the Weavers drained its main and emergency reserves;
- the stolen energy was moved into the Research Labs;
- and the vessel cannot sustain launch, life support, and Veil transit until those reserves are recovered.

They avoided stealing a ship on Crossroads.

They may now have to steal its heart back from a nest of hungry things.

ROUTE THREE: STEAL THE COLLECTOR

A SHIP BUILT FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S LOSSES

In the Nexus Inferior, everyone knows the Bone Dogs.

Their "security contribution" is collected from merchants who never requested protection. When someone refuses, the Bone Dogs demonstrate the danger of operating without protection by becoming the danger themselves.

Their freighter is called *The Collector*.

Ratko believes the name inspires respect. Most people hear it and think of overdue payments.

The Bone Dogs remain useful to House Volkov because they collect money, information, and fear without requiring the House to place its seal on any of them. Taking the ship strikes both Ratko's gang and the fiction that nobody on Crossroads knows who benefits from their work.

THE TWO MAP PLATES

This route uses two connected locations.

Map Plate A - Harrow Dock Acquisition Yard

Harrow Dock is not the final target. It is where the crew can observe traffic, find specialists, acquire equipment, arrange false paperwork, or create the conditions that make Dock K-17 vulnerable.

The plate shows:

- the Arrival Concourse and broker kiosks;
- the auction pen and shipbreaker stalls;
- the parts cage, fuel point, and repair bay;
- stacked cargo lanes and suspended gantries;
- the watch office and catwalk network;
- the maintenance-tunnel entrance;
- the service airlock and emergency bulkhead;
- and three approach or escape routes.

Jo Tann works from Harrow Dock's repair side. Blue Casta uses its traffic, berths, and service access to move cargo that should attract more questions than it does. Bone Dog runners pass through the yard carrying payments, parts, and messages.

Use the color plate for screen play. The printer-friendly plate uses different broken lines, hatching, and textures for its routes and structural elements.

[Map Plate A -

Color](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_A_Harrow_Dock_Acquisition_Yard_Color_4000x6000.png) · [Map Plate A - Printer-Friendly](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_A_Harrow_Dock_Acquisition_Yard_Print_4000x6000.png)

Map Plate B - Dock K-17: The Collector Hangar

Dock K-17 lies below Crossroads' registered cargo ring. It is **not part of Charon's Refuge**.

This is the active heist map. It shows *The Collector*, its docking clamps, cargo loader, crane track, fuel and coolant lines, control booth, security station, workshop, parts storage, cargo pallets, catwalk loop, power junction, personnel lockers, service airlock, emergency shutoff, ventilation shafts, concealed service duct, and three distinct approaches.

The printer-friendly version communicates routes and systems through line patterns rather than color.

[Map Plate B -

Color](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_B_Dock_K17_The_Collector_Hangar_Color_4000x6000.png) · [Map Plate B - Printer-Friendly](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_B_Dock_K17_The_Collector_Hangar_Print_4000x6000.png)

HARROW DOCK ACQUISITION YARD

The lift doors open onto heat.

Engine heat dries the eyes and leaves a metallic taste on the tongue. Arc welders flash between parked hulls. Suspended gantries crawl above stacked cargo. Loaders sound warning tones that nobody appears to hear anymore.

The yard smells of coolant vapor, scorched insulation, welding smoke, grease, hot dust, and recycled water leaking somewhere behind the walls.

The auction pen occupies the centre of the bay. Brokers speak from portable kiosks around its rail. Shipbreaker stalls overflow with landing struts, cracked armor panels, stripped consoles, and engines whose previous vessels are no longer discussed.

The open berths hold light freighters, shuttles, tugs, and salvage craft. Some are for sale. Some are being repaired. Some are present because leaving would require a functioning reactor.

Harrow Dock gives a crew room to prepare without requiring them to decide in advance what a heist is supposed to look like.

Jo Tann

Jo Tann is a stocky Synthetic mechanic with one mismatched arm and a habit of chewing insulated wire while thinking.

Their workshop smells of hot rubber and solvent. Ratko calls every repair to *The Collector* "payment toward community security." Jo calls it theft whenever Ratko is far enough away.

Jo knows:

- the service-duct route into Dock K-17;
- the secondary coupler fault beneath *The Collector*;
- the maintenance schedule;
- the control booth's unreliable heater circuit;
- and which hull panel Ratko kicks when the loading ramp jams.

Protection, payment, or the promise of public humiliation may earn Jo's help.

Blue Casta

Blue Casta is a Celestari smuggler who wears mirrored lenses indoors and never stands with their back to an open route.

They smell of mint smoke and ionized fabric.

Blue can delay a transponder alert, falsify cargo movement, create temporary launch clearance, or place the crew inside a service shipment moving toward Dock K-17.

Their price is a future favor.

"A defined favor is a contract. An undefined favor is a relationship."

Watching the Bone Dogs

Bone Dog runners cross Harrow Dock several times each cycle. One carries protection payments toward the lower freight lift. Another collects parts from Jo's workshop. Lesser gang members drink near the yard during shift changes and leave the route to Dock K-17 thinly guarded.

A crew that spends time watching can reconstruct Ratko's habits.

Survey the Routine - Instinct

- **DC 10:** Ratko leaves Dock K-17 during the early cycle to collect payments.
- **DC 15:** Grond remains near the ship while Vek moves between the hangar systems and *The Collector*.
- **DC 20:** The lightest guard window occurs when a freight delivery overlaps Ratko's collection route and the Bone Dog shift change.

With Fear: One of Ratko's teenage runners notices the same faces appearing around the yard and carries that unease back to Dock K-17.

The routine can also be learned through Jo, Blue, merchants, or direct observation of the lower levels.

APPROACHING DOCK K-17

Dock K-17 is reached through a freight lift, the maintenance spine, a service airlock, or the concealed duct identified by Jo.

The temperature falls as the crew descends.

Outer hull plating surrounds the level. Breath fogs near sealed bulkheads. Condensation freezes in the corners and melts whenever *The Collector* raises its reactor output.

Fuel pumps click in irregular rhythms. Chains sway from the crane track. A ventilation fan strikes its housing every seven seconds. The ship's reactor hum travels through the floor before the hangar itself comes into view.

The approaches shown on Map Plate B create different openings.

Maintenance Spine

The route from station core enters above the crane track. It offers access to the gantries and control booth, but anyone using it crosses several active work areas.

Service Tunnels

The western tunnels emerge beside stacked cargo pallets and parts storage. They are cramped, warm, and loud with pipework. The final grate opens close to *The Collector's* aft section.

Maintenance Duct and Service Airlock

The eastern route reaches the personnel lockers and service airlock. It avoids the main floor, but the security station covers the last approach.

Primary Hangar Doors

The main entrance is built for vessels and freight, not secrecy. A staged delivery, forged cargo movement, or direct assault may bring the crew through it.

FIRST SIGHT OF *THE COLLECTOR*

READ ALOUD *The Collector* waits in the centre of the hangar beneath a travelling crane. The ship has a blunt forward profile, thick landing gear, and the posture of something built to shoulder its way through bad decisions. Its hull was once dark red. Years of repairs have replaced that colour with mismatched armor plates, exposed welds, scorched weapon mounts, and patches whose original vessels are impossible to guess. A white jawbone stretches across the forward hull. Someone added too many teeth. Four docking clamps hold the ship inside its cradle. Fuel, coolant, and power lines run from the hangar floor into its hull. Yellow utility light spills from the open loading ramp and warms a narrow patch of cold deck. The external speaker crackles. "COMMUNITY SECURITY PAYMENT WINDOW CLOSES IN TWENTY-SEVEN MINUTES." A loader operator lowers their eyes and keeps moving.

The Collector uses the **Tier 2 Cargo Hauler profile** from *VeilFarers Corebook 12.03*, Chapter 17. Its history, legal status, appearance, and contents distinguish it from a purchased vessel.

DOCK K-17 IN MOTION

The hangar is active even when Ratko is absent.

The crane moves parts between the workshop and the ship. The cargo loader crosses the deck. Fuel and coolant lines remain connected because Ratko prefers the vessel ready to leave. Workers move between the side rooms while trying not to draw Grond's attention.

At the beginning of the heist, place the main figures where the crew's preparation suggests.

- **Ratko** may be collecting payments, speaking through the control booth, or standing beside the loading ramp.
- **Grond** remains near the ship, the cargo floor, or the warmest vent.
- **Vek** moves between the ship, control booth, power junction, and security station.
- **Two to four lesser Bone Dogs** rotate between the main floor and station approaches.
- **Dock workers** use the loader, workshop, pallets, and gantries.
- **Merchants** may arrive carrying "late" payments.

Preparation changes who is present, what is powered, and which route is open. It does not merely modify an abstract difficulty.

THE BONE DOGS

RATKO "THE COLLECTOR" VORN

Ratko stands with one boot on property that belongs to somebody else.

He is lean, sallow, and dressed in an armored coat cut to imitate a House officer's silhouette. The cybernetic eye in his left socket

glows red, flickers, and occasionally overlays commercial icons across his vision.

He smells of synthetic cologne, tobacco, and the electrical heat of poorly shielded implants.

Ratko speaks loudly because he wants the room to hear obedience happen.

He taps two fingers against his pistol grip, tilts his head when the eye struggles to focus, and becomes completely still when mocked.

"This dock is safe because I say it is."

"Protection is expensive. Damage is more expensive."

"Do not stare at the eye. It is military-grade."

At an inconvenient moment, the eye may display:

SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRED. RENEW NOW FOR PREMIUM TARGET IDENTIFICATION.

GROND

Grond is massive even for a Kryx.

Scarred grey fur pushes through mismatched armor plates. He smells of cold fur, leather, weapon oil, and the sweet feed pellets he secretly carries for small animals.

He watches hands rather than faces. Before violence, he lowers his head and commits his entire body to the movement.

"Pay."

"Move."

"The animal is not mine."

The animal is sitting on his boot.

VEK

Vek moves between *The Collector* and the hangar systems carrying three tools, two datapads, and the posture of someone expecting to be blamed for the next sound.

He is thin, sleep-deprived, and dressed in a work suit repaired with different colours of thread. He smells of coolant, instant coffee, and stress.

His fingers are always moving. He tightens screws that are already tight. He wipes screens that are already clean. He touches the ship's hull when anxious, as though confirming it is still there.

"The ship can launch. Probably. That was not reassuring, was it? Sorry."

"If I help you, you are taking me with you. I am not staying for the explanation."

Vek can open the loading ramp, provide access codes, release the docking clamps, interrupt security, or sabotage Ratko's response.

He will not knowingly help the crew steal the ship while remaining behind for Volkov to punish. Passage, protection, money, or another credible escape must be part of the arrangement.

THE HANGAR SYSTEMS

The map's numbered locations are pieces of the environment rather than a sequence of required obstacles.

The Collector and Docking Clamps

Four clamps hold the ship in its cradle. Under normal operations, the control booth or Vek can release them electronically.

Once the berth enters lockdown, the two manual release stations on opposite sides of the hangar must be activated within seconds of one another.

Releasing a locked station requires **Finesse Roll, DC 15** or **Strength Roll, DC 15**, depending on the method.

With Fear: The clamp releases, but the primary doors begin closing, the alarm identifies the station used, or the mechanism jams after opening.

Elevated Control Booth

The booth controls cameras, hangar lighting, primary doors, clamps, and public alarms. Reinforced windows overlook the entire floor.

Access gained through credentials, Vek, or an unobserved station terminal may place these systems under the crew's control.

A direct electronic intrusion requires **Knowledge (Tech) DC 15**. A physical bypass of exposed controls may instead use **Finesse Roll, DC 15**.

With Fear: The system obeys, but sends a silent Volkov security notification or preserves the intruder's image.

Security Station

The security station contains weapon storage, local records, House Volkov communications, and the hangar's active personnel log.

The door faces the ship and service airlock. Its camera coverage leaves blind areas beneath the elevated booth, behind stacked pallets, and along the western workshop wall.

Power Junction and Emergency Shutoff

The power junction controls lighting, local systems, and several support feeds. The emergency shutoff cuts power to clamps, environmental systems, and the ship's connected services.

Using either can change the entire hangar.

Darkness gives cover but activates red emergency strips. Cutting support lines frees the ship from some external systems while forcing it onto internal power. Environmental shutdown begins lowering pressure and temperature.

Crane Track and Overhead Winch

The travelling crane crosses above the ship. Its hook can move cargo, block sightlines, damage equipment, provide access to the dorsal hull, or become an enormous suspended hazard.

Fuel and Coolant Lines

The connected lines keep *The Collector* ready for rapid departure. They can be disconnected from the loader station, the ship, or the floor junction.

A ruptured line fills the deck with vapor, alarms, and immediate danger.

Cargo Loader and Stacked Pallets

The loader is large enough to move engine parts, cargo, or an improvised barricade. The pallets provide broken sightlines along the western floor and conceal the service-tunnel exit.

Catwalk Loop and Vent Shafts

The catwalk encircles the cradle above the main floor. It offers clear sight to the ship and exposes anyone crossing it.

Vent shafts provide concealment and sound transmission but are too narrow for ordinary movement without opening the maintenance grilles.

Side Workshop and Parts Storage

Jo's repair work leaves tools, couplers, diagnostic leads, and replacement components here. Confiscated parts and stolen merchant property are mixed together in Ratko's inventory.

Personnel Lockers

Work clothing, access badges, masks, personal effects, and forgotten food fill the lockers. Vek keeps a small bag packed behind a damaged panel.

Concealed Service Duct

The duct enters beside the power junction and emerges near the ship's aft systems. Jo knows its route. Its metal skin carries every impact and whispered word.

INFORMATION WORTH STEALING

The ship itself is not the only prize.

Volkov Communications

The security station and *The Collector* contain communications with a contact identified as:

BENEFACTOR V

The messages establish that:

- the Bone Dogs report upward to someone within House Volkov;
- selected payments and information are transferred to that contact;
- Ratko was ordered to watch unusual mercenary movement;
- Volkov knows several House interests are moving around Alexei Joric;
- and *The Collector* was intended for more than local extortion.

The identity of Benefactor V remains concealed.

Decrypt the Protected Datapad - Knowledge (Tech)

- **DC 10:** Confirm regular reporting to a Volkov contact.
- **DC 15:** Recover payment records, surveillance orders, and references to Alexei.
- **DC 20:** Recover enough routing and authentication data to use the records as future leverage.

With Fear: The device completes a delayed transmission before the crew isolates it.

WHEN THE PLAN MEETS THE HANGAR

A clean plan may reach the cockpit without a roll.

Vek may release the clamps. Blue may provide launch clearance. Jo may open the concealed duct. A forged delivery may place the crew beside the ship. Ratko may be absent because the crew arranged for him to be elsewhere.

Dice enter when the outcome becomes uncertain and consequential.

The heist usually turns on only a few moments:

- crossing an observed space without being identified;
- convincing or coercing someone whose choice matters;
- taking control of hangar systems;
- releasing locked clamps;
- holding the ship long enough for everyone to board;
- or launching through an active response.

The players' plan determines which of those moments exist.

COMPLICATIONS

Fear, delay, or the crew's choices may introduce one of the following:

- Ratko returns early, laughing before anyone sees him.
- The freight access opens and merchants arrive with protection payments.
- Grond recognizes a disguise, false accent, or familiar weapon.
- Vek refuses to move until his extraction is real.
- The cargo loader clips a fuel line.
- Volkov security begins an unscheduled inspection.
- The primary hangar doors start closing.
- Lockdown forces manual release of the docking clamps.
- Sabotaged lighting leaves the floor illuminated only by red emergency strips.
- Ratko's cybernetic eye begins broadcasting a live feed.
- A frightened worker decides whether to help or raise the alarm.
- *The Collector* launches with its transponder still active.
- Someone reaches the ship while another crew member remains across the hangar.

- The emergency shutoff lowers pressure while the crew is still outside the vessel.

A complication changes the current problem without erasing preparation that has already paid off.

VIOLENCE IN DOCK K-17

Gunfire becomes enormous in the enclosed hangar.

Each shot cracks against the walls and returns as overlapping echoes. Workers dive behind pallets and machinery. Warning lights flash. Fuel systems shut down. Vapor and propellant smoke spread through the cold air.

Grond moves like a collision.

Ratko shouts orders nobody can hear.

Vek freezes for half a second and then chooses a side.

The crane continues moving until someone stops it.

The cargo loader blocks or crosses firing lanes according to its last command. Dock workers escape through whichever route still appears safe. Volkov security begins responding as soon as the violence becomes an official station incident.

The crew can still take the ship. The hangar simply begins closing around them.

INSIDE THE COLLECTOR

The loading ramp opens into a cargo hold illuminated by yellow utility strips.

The deck is scratched by years of hurried loading. Restraint hooks hang from the walls. Confiscated merchandise fills half the bay:

- sealed food crates;
- machine parts;
- medical filters;
- children's toys from a lower-level market;
- a merchant's sign with the shop name painted across it;
- and one locked case that nobody has claimed publicly.

The air inside is warmer than the hangar and smells of meat grease, gun oil, damp fur, and overheated wiring.

The common area contains a scarred table, four unmatched chairs, a cracked display showing extortion accounts, and a wall covered in gang marks. Grond has redirected a heating unit toward a small box containing images of animals.

Ratko's cabin is unnecessarily large.

Vek sleeps beside Engineering because Ratko does not consider maintenance personnel entitled to privacy.

The cockpit is functional, dirty, and decorated with a jawbone charm above the controls. Warning labels have been covered with betting notes.

The accounting system lists extortion payments as:

COMMUNITY SECURITY SUBSCRIPTIONS

LAUNCHING THE SHIP

A prepared launch follows the crew's plan.

The clamps release. External lines separate. The hangar doors open. A valid or falsified clearance carries the vessel into station traffic before anyone with authority understands what has happened.

A launch under active fire, closing doors, damaged systems, or security interception requires **Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) DC 15**. Increase the DC to **20** when several severe complications act at once.

With Fear: *The Collector* escapes, but it carries hull damage, an active transponder, a recorded identity, or another consequence established by the scene.

Failure does not need to destroy the ship. It may leave the vessel trapped inside the hangar, force another crew member to solve the immediate obstacle, or turn departure into a confrontation with station security.

INTRODUCING THE "I NEED AN IDEA!" PROTOCOL

This chapter is an early opportunity to teach the table the **"I Need an Idea!" Protocol**, but do not invoke it merely because the crew is uncertain, one route has closed, a clock has advanced, or a roll has failed.

This scene does not require a tension clock. If the Keeper chooses to add one using the current Keeper's Companion guidance, name it, show it to the table, and state its advance triggers before they matter. Advance it only when the fiction causally supports a trigger - not merely because Fear dominated or an unrelated action failed.

Planning a way through Crossroads is ordinary play. The protocol begins only when conventional play has reached its end.

Trigger

Use the protocol when accumulated consequences have left the crew without a viable conventional action and the numbers say they are finished.

During the theft of *The Collector*, that point might arrive when completed clocks, **if the Keeper chose to use them**, or equivalent established consequences have closed the hangar doors, locked the docking clamps, brought security within one action of capture, and left no remaining action that can avert the outcome.

If the crew still has a plausible action, let them take it. Do not complete a clock, close a route, or remove a resource merely to manufacture this moment.

When the trigger is real, pause the normal action sequence and say:

"The numbers say you're finished. But this is VeilFarers, and you're a crew. So: I need an idea. The best idea wins. Talk."

Brainstorm

Give the crew **3 to 8 minutes** under a soft fictional time limit. Let players propose solutions, combine each other's ideas, draw on established details of the hangar, and explain what their characters contribute.

Listen without dismissing proposals as they are built. When the time expires - or the table reaches an idea it wants to pursue - choose the proposal that best combines characterization, tactical sense, and narrative weight.

Resolve

Resolve the chosen idea dramatically rather than with a normal Roll. Heighten its success, or avert the final failure at a meaningful cost. The protocol is a campaign-defining act of crew ingenuity, not another attempt at the Roll that already failed.

Possible costs include Stress, a new Quirk, lost gear, sacrificed Reputation, increased Heat, damage to the ship, an active transponder, or another consequence that follows directly from the idea and the established fiction.

The Consequences Still Happened

The protocol does not rewind, clear, or invalidate a completed clock, if one was used. It does not erase Fear, failed rolls, or the consequences that created the crisis.

If the hangar lockdown completed, the hangar remains locked. The crew's idea must break through it, bypass it, or turn it into part of the escape. If security identified the crew, escaping does not make that identification disappear. If equipment was destroyed, the protocol does not restore it.

The idea changes what the crew can still accomplish. The cost preserves everything the table did to reach that moment.

For example, the crew might route the power junction through the docking clamps while using the cargo loader to brace *The Collector*. The discharge tears the clamps free and throws the ship into the launch channel. It works without another roll, but the ship leaves damaged, the transponder still active, and part of the hangar burning behind it. This is an example, not a prescribed solution.

Use the protocol sparingly - normally once or twice in a campaign, and only in a genuine crisis. If it does not trigger naturally on Crossroads, leave it available for a later Set-Piece rather than forcing its demonstration.

Rules reference: *VeilFarers Corebook* 12.03, Chapter 17, **The "I Need an Idea!" Protocol**.

LAUNCH OUTCOMES

Clean Acquisition

The crew leaves without clear identification.

Workers remain hidden until the landing gear clears the deck. Then one person raises a fist. Another laughs. Someone begins recording.

By the time Volkov understands what happened, half the Nexus Inferior has heard three incompatible versions of the story.

Identified but Gone

Ratko, the security system, or Volkov records the crew.

The ship escapes.

The Collector has a distinctive silhouette, a criminal history, and an owner who will describe the theft as terrorism rather than humiliation.

Violent Escape

The primary doors close around the ship. Weapons strike the hull. The cockpit fills with alarms.

The Collector scrapes the launch channel and enters open space trailing sparks, paint, and several pieces that may or may not have been important.

Crossroads falls away behind it.

Volkov Heat rises.

So does the crew's reputation among the people who believed the Bone Dogs could not be touched.

The Ship Remains Behind

The crew loses immediate access to *The Collector* but survives.

Dock K-17 changes. Security tightens. Ratko retaliates. Vek may disappear, defect, or become a prisoner. Evidence gathered during the attempt can support blackmail, another theft, passage from Spindle Nine, or a return under different circumstances.

Charon's Refuge remains reachable, but the price and the story have changed.

CLAIMING THE COLLECTOR

Once Crossroads falls behind, the engine vibration becomes the loudest sound aboard.

Ratko's marks remain on the walls. Confiscated property remains in the hold. Vek's packed bag may sit beside Engineering. The Bone Dogs' smell has settled into upholstery, vents, and fabric.

Someone may take the helm.

Someone may begin removing the jawbone.

The crew may keep the name as mockery, erase it immediately, or wait until the ship has earned another.

The vessel is theirs in the practical sense.

Its history will take longer.

COMPARING THE THREE ROUTES

Route	What the Crew Gains	What It Costs	Campaign Consequence
Buy a ship	Immediate ownership and control	Capital, possessions, debt, repair pressure	The crew begins as joint owners
Book passage	Preserved resources and a clean departure	No extraction vessel at Charon's Refuge	The crew must recover the Iron Hearts' ship
Steal The Collector	Immediate control and symbolic victory	Heat, identification risk, Volkov retaliation	The crew begins with enemies and evidence

The routes are not equivalent exchanges. Each creates a different history, a different pressure, and a different relationship between the crew and its first vessel.

CLOSING THE SCENE

Once transport is secured, the crew has a few minutes inside a vessel that is owned, stolen, or only temporarily theirs.

Restraints are checked. Weapons and baggage find temporary places. The engine vibrates through unfamiliar seats. Old upholstery, freight, machine heat, or expensive filtered air gives the chosen route its own smell.

Then the docking clamps release.

Crossroads falls away.

The station's lights become a ring behind them, then a cluster, then another artificial star among thousands.

Ahead waits the Veil.

And beyond it, Charon's Refuge.

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- `../art/hearts\_in\_the\_void/maps/Map\_Plate\_A\_Harrow\_Dock\_Acquisition\_Yard\_Print\_4000x6000.png`
- `../art/hearts\_in\_the\_void/maps/Map\_Plate\_B\_Dock\_K17\_The\_Collector\_Hangar\_Color\_4000x6000.png`
- `../art/hearts\_in\_the\_void/maps/Map\_Plate\_B\_Dock\_K17\_The\_Collector\_Hangar\_Print\_4000x6000.png`

The printer-friendly plates do not rely on color. Access routes, concealed paths, overhead structures, systems, and boundaries are differentiated through broken line patterns, hatching, stippling, and textures.

MAP ASSETS FOR THIS SCENE

The following files accompany this chapter:

07. THE VEIL TRANSIT: SOMETHING STIRS

Placement: After Scene 2, during the journey to Tenebris Secundus and before Scene 3.

Purpose: Let the crew feel the first distant pressure of Awakening without naming, explaining, or resolving it.

LEAVING CROSSROADS

Crossroads does not disappear all at once.

At first, it remains behind the ship as a wheel of habitation lights, docking signals, traffic beacons, and industrial glare. Cargo vessels crawl around its outer ring. Tugs blink between berths. Departing ships form slow lines of white engine light against the dark.

Then distance begins to simplify it.

The lower docks vanish into the structure. The advertisements become color without language. The station contracts into a bright, uneven circle surrounded by the stars it has spent decades obscuring.

Inside the vessel, departure has its own texture.

A purchased ship carries the dry smell of disturbed dust, old upholstery, warm circuitry, and whatever chemical the Gannet Yards used to make the corridors appear cleaner than they are.

The Collector still smells of fuel, gun oil, cooked meat, damp fur, and the previous crew's certainty that everything aboard belonged to them.

A Guild hauler vibrates through every bunk and bulkhead. Its pipes knock softly as the temperature changes, boots pass in the corridor, and cargo restraints tighten with metallic clicks.

A Valerius liner is quieter. The air remains carefully scented. Lighting lowers by degrees. Hidden systems adjust pressure so smoothly that only the ears notice.

Whatever vessel carries them, the final preparations are ordinary:

- restraints lock;
- loose objects are secured;
- cabin lights dim;
- navigation systems complete their checks;
- and the ship aligns toward a region of empty space that looks no different from any other.

The ordinary details matter.

They are the last ordinary things for a while.

ENTERING THE VEIL

Veil transit does not resemble movement through normal space.

The stars do not race past the windows.

They thin.

For a moment they appear farther away than distance should allow, as though the universe has drawn breath and carried them with it. Their light stretches without becoming lines. The darkness between them turns grey, not brighter, but less empty.

Then the stars are gone.

Every vessel experiences the transition differently.

Older hulls complain. Deck plates flex with low metallic knocks. Pipes contract. Panels dim and recover. A freighter's engine hum may deepen until it can be felt in the teeth.

Newer ships hide most of the violence behind insulation and careful engineering. The sensation becomes pressure in the ears, a soft vibration through the floor, or a moment when the cabin temperature drops despite the environmental display insisting it has not changed.

The air tastes faintly metallic.

Sound becomes intimate.

A ventilation fan across the room seems close enough to touch. Fabric shifts against a seat. Someone swallows. A cup settles against a table with a quiet plastic tap.

Beyond the hull lies a grey nothing without horizon, distance, or visible motion.

The ship continues forward.

Nothing outside provides proof.

THE PASSAGE

Do not hurry directly to the supernatural beat.

Let the Veil become an environment first.

Depending on the vessel and the route taken, the crew may experience some of the following:

Aboard Their Own Ship

The engines have sounds nobody recognizes yet.

A vibration rises through one bulkhead and disappears before anyone locates it. A cabinet latch refuses to remain closed. The navigation display shows a stable route while one older auxiliary screen fills with static in a slow rhythm almost - but not quite - matching a heartbeat.

The ship feels smaller in the Veil.

It also feels more theirs.

No port authority can enter. No station crowd waits beyond the hatch. There is only the crew, the vessel around them, and the knowledge that every noise may someday become familiar enough to carry meaning.

Aboard The Collector

The ship enters transit with several systems still configured for Ratko.

A recorded voice announces a security reminder nobody authorized. The jawbone charm above the cockpit turns slowly despite the absence of airflow. Somewhere in the cargo bay, confiscated goods shift against their restraints.

The previous owners left marks everywhere:

- grease beneath the control grips;
- scratches around the weapon locker;
- a repair Vek labelled but Ratko never read;
- a dark patch on the common-room wall where something personal was removed in a hurry.

The crew has control of the vessel.

Ownership will take longer.

Aboard the Morrow's Due

The hauler's machinery never rests.

Pumps cycle behind the walls. Cargo heaters activate in sequence. Crew members move through the corridors speaking in low voices out of habit rather than regulation.

The galley smells of pepper, metal cups, and soup kept warm for the night watch.

At some point, the engine vibration changes.

Nobody aboard reacts.

That may be reassuring.

Aboard the Vesper Crown

The liner attempts to make the Veil feel luxurious.

Simulated windows replace the vanished stars with slow images of distant nebulae. Music plays quietly through hidden speakers. Attendants move through the corridors offering water, calming tablets, and the practiced assurance that every sensation is expected.

The passengers speak softly.

The cameras continue watching.

The false stars are almost convincing until they repeat.

SOMETHING STIRS

Read this once the voyage has settled into routine.

Do not call for a roll.

Do not tell the players what their characters choose to do with it.

READ ALOUD Veil transit is supposed to become forgettable. A grey absence beyond the hull. A vibration in the deck. A drink cooling beside an untouched hand while the ship crosses a distance the body cannot understand. For a while, that is all it is. Then something changes. Not in the cabin. Not in the engines. Somewhere behind the breastbone, at the base of the skull, or in another place the body has never needed a name for, there is a sensation that was not present a moment before. It is not a sound. It is not a voice. It does not arrive from any direction. Something

that may have been sleeping shifts once, very far below the surface, and brushes against the inside of you. Warmth moves through the sensation. Cold moves through it at the same time. Both are equally real. For one breath, the Veil outside no longer feels empty. The grey beyond the hull seems deep rather than blank, as though the ship is crossing the surface of something vast enough that distance has no meaning inside it. The sensation settles just beyond reach. Not hidden. Waiting. Then the cabin returns. The engine hum is only an engine hum. The ventilation system cycles. A light above the hatch flickers and steadies. Whatever drink was left beside you has gone cold. Outside, the first stars begin to return.

Stop there.

Allow the players to respond or remain silent.

Do not require a reaction, a discussion, or an immediate conclusion.

KEEPER'S NOTE: SAY NOTHING MORE

This moment plants a sensation.

It is not an encounter, a test, a vision, or a rules tutorial.

Do not:

- ask for a roll;
- name the force involved;
- tell the players that their characters are Awakening;
- explain what the warmth and cold mean;
- repeat the sensation in every subsequent scene;
- or require the characters to discuss it.

If a player asks what happened, describe only what their character experienced.

They do not know what caused it.

No instrument records a clear anomaly. A medical scan reveals nothing the crew can interpret. The navigation systems report an ordinary transit unless another established event says otherwise.

Let the players decide whether their characters speak, conceal the experience, dismiss it, investigate it, or simply continue.

The silence after the description is part of the scene.

KEEPER'S NOTE: AN ALREADY-AWAKENED CHARACTER

A character who is already Awakened feels the same warmth and cold, but recognizes the pattern.

This is not their power returning or changing.

It is the sensation they once experienced appearing now around - or within - the Sleeping people traveling beside them.

Give that player only what their character would recognize:

The sensation is familiar. It is not coming from you.

Deliver this privately when practical, or state it openly if secrecy would feel artificial at the table.

The character decides whether to explain what they know.

Do not make disclosure automatic.

KEEPER'S NOTE: THE DISTANT FLOOD

The disturbance that brushed the crew passed through Charon's Refuge first and with far greater force.

The player characters felt a single drop.

The station took the flood.

That pressure is connected to the Weavers' abnormal behavior, their hunger, and the scale of the infestation waiting ahead. Do not confirm this connection before the crew earns evidence for it.

A player may later recognize similarities between:

- the warmth and cold of the transit;
- changes in the station's biological records;
- unusual Weaver responses;
- and the conditions surrounding the Choice to Wake.

Let the connection belong to them when they make it.

RETURNING TO NORMAL SPACE

The end of transit begins with light.

One star appears ahead of the ship.

Then another.

They return without movement, sharp and distant, as if they had remained in place while reality was briefly taken away from them.

The grey thins.

Normal darkness closes around the vessel.

Sound changes. Engine harmonics rise. Structural tension releases through the hull in a sequence of quiet knocks. Environmental systems correct a temperature difference they continue to deny existed.

Tenebris Secundus waits ahead.

Its gas giant dominates the forward view: immense, banded in bruised violet, rust, and pale storm-white. Electrical weather moves through its atmosphere in slow flashes large enough to swallow continents.

Near the edge of the planet's shadow, something small interrupts the stars.

At first it could be debris.

Then navigation resolves connected modules, docking spines, and a broken ring of running lights.

Charon's Refuge.

No traffic-control beacon greets the vessel.

No docking authority requests identification.

The station simply hangs in the dark, waiting.

08. SCENE 3: ARRIVAL AT CHARON'S REFUGE

Location: Charon's Refuge, a failing research station in the Tenebris Secundus system

Purpose: Establish the station as a place rather than a sequence of encounters, reveal that several factions arrived before the crew, and let the first Weaver contact change the meaning of the silence.

APPROACHING THE STATION

Tenebris Secundus fills most of the forward view.

The gas giant is too large for the eye to understand comfortably. Bands of bruised violet, rust, and storm-white turn beneath the ship in slow layers. Lightning moves through the atmosphere in pale, continent-sized flashes. The planet's reflected light washes nearby objects in a dim purple-grey that makes metal look old before anyone touches it.

Charon's Refuge hangs near the edge of that light.

At first it resembles wreckage: disconnected shadows, antennae, and uneven lines interrupting the stars. As the vessel closes, the station resolves into a central spine surrounded by modules added across several generations.

Nothing matches perfectly.

One docking ring is broad and industrial. Another appears designed for smaller research craft. Habitat cylinders sit beside laboratory blocks with different hull plating. Pressurized walkways connect sections that were never meant to belong to the same original design.

The refuge was not built once.

It accumulated.

Research required technicians. Technicians required food, bunks, recreation, medical care, cargo handling, and somewhere to spend their pay. Decades of practical additions turned a remote laboratory into a small community.

Now most of its windows are dark.

FIRST CONTACT

Normal stations begin speaking long before a vessel reaches them.

Traffic control requests identification. Docking systems exchange vectors. Advertising channels push fuel prices, repair services, and accommodation offers. Automated notices warn pilots about restricted zones.

Charon's Refuge says nothing.

A standard hail receives only static.

The static is not clean. Something moves beneath it in brief pulses: fragments of compressed data, an old synchronization tone, and half a syllable that repeats too quickly to identify.

A second hail triggers an automated response after a long delay.

- CHARON REFUGE TRAFFIC CONTROL - DOCKING SERVICES AVAILABLE. WELCOME, AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL. CURRENT STATION CONDITION: -

The transmission breaks.

Several seconds later, it resumes with a different voice.

PLEASE MAINTAIN SANITARY STANDARDS.

Then the channel closes.

No person answers.

THE RUNNING LIGHTS

The station's navigation lights are wrong.

Some remain dark. Others flash outside the standard docking sequence. A row along the central spine illuminates one lamp at a time, pauses, then repeats in reverse.

It resembles a code.

It may only be failing circuitry.

Characters familiar with stations, piloting, engineering, or emergency procedure can recognize several details without a roll:

- Charon's Refuge still has power, but it is being distributed unevenly.
- Life support remains active in at least part of the structure.
- The docking ring retains pressure.
- Two external berths are occupied.
- No launch beacon has been registered since the most recent arrivals.
- The station is not behaving like an empty facility that shut down cleanly.

Sensors also detect brief changes in thermal readings inside the hull.

They are small.

They move.

DOCKING WITH A CREW-OWNED SHIP

The automatic guidance system responds, but not reliably.

A docking corridor illuminates, then goes dark before the approach is complete. Range markers appear several metres from their correct positions. The station repeatedly attempts to assign the crew to a berth already occupied by the Iron Hearts' vessel.

A competent pilot can complete the approach manually without a roll under normal conditions. Call for one only when the crew is rushing, attempting concealment, approaching in a damaged ship, or responding to a complication already established in play.

The station's exterior becomes enormous at close range.

Hull plates pass beyond the cockpit like walls. Frost rims the seams around older modules. Antennae extend over the docking ring at awkward angles. One slowly rotates despite having no apparent power.

The selected berth contains:

- a wide receiving platform;
- an articulated docking collar;
- fuel and power couplings;
- cargo rails;
- and a control booth whose windows have gone opaque with condensation.

The clamps engage with a deep impact felt through the entire vessel.

For several seconds, nothing follows.

Then pressure equalizes.

A green light appears above the inner hatch.

It flickers red.

Then returns to green.

ARRIVING BY BOOKED PASSAGE

A commercial captain will not dock deeper than necessary.

The *Morrow's Due* or *Vesper Crown* connects to an outer receiving berth, transfers the crew and contracted equipment, and begins departure procedure as soon as the station confirms pressure.

No captain likes what the instruments are reporting.

Even a Valerius steward loses some polish while looking through the airlock window.

The last moments of a booked passage should remain practical rather than ceremonial:

- luggage and equipment are moved onto the station side;
- the captain confirms that no return transfer has been arranged;
- the inner hatch seals;
- the docking collar retracts;
- and the transport leaves.

READ ALOUD The release travels through the deck as a heavy mechanical thud. Beyond the airlock window, the transport pulls away from Charon's Refuge. Its maneuvering thrusters flare white, throwing hard light across the docking ring and briefly exposing every scratch, impact mark, and frozen stain on the station's hull. For a few seconds, the ship remains close enough to imagine calling it back. Then it turns toward open space. Its main engines brighten. The vessel becomes a silhouette against the gas giant, then a moving point, then nothing. The docking ring settles around you with a low metallic groan. Something scratches once inside the wall. Then stops.

The route has done exactly what was promised.

The crew has arrived.

Their transport has continued without them.

CROSSING THE AIRLOCK

The outer hatch opens reluctantly.

Seals separate with a wet pull. Old mechanisms grind behind the wall. The pressure difference is slight, but enough for station air to move toward the crew in a cold, stale breath.

The first smell is ozone.

Beneath it lies old metal, dust, coolant, and the mineral scent of air recycled far beyond the maintenance interval its filters were designed to survive.

Then the organic smell arrives.

It is faint.

Warm protein left too long in a sealed container. Damp growth beneath insulation. Something sweet enough to become unpleasant once noticed.

The temperature sits several degrees below comfort. It becomes colder near exterior walls and warmer around active conduits. Condensation gathers on pipes, runs down bulkheads, and forms shallow black-edged puddles in the lowest parts of the deck.

Emergency lighting paints the corridor in red.

Between pulses, the station briefly disappears.

ENTERING CHARON'S REFUGE

READ ALOUD The receiving corridor extends beyond the airlock in alternating strips of red light and shadow. Cargo markings remain painted across the deck. A wheeled case stands abandoned beside the wall with one latch open. Several pieces of folded clothing lie nearby, too orderly to have been dropped during a fight and too strange to have been left there deliberately. A station map flickers above a closed information booth. Half its labels are missing. The remaining sections pulse in different warning colors without

displaying what the warnings mean. Somewhere deeper inside, metal strikes metal three times. The sound is distant. A moment later, it happens again from a different direction. No voices follow. The air tastes of ozone, old filters, and something alive that has been feeding where it should not. Charon's Refuge is not empty. It is holding its breath.

Leave the crew free to move, inspect the dock, return to their ship, establish precautions, or attempt contact.

The station does not require them to advance along a particular route.

It provides evidence.

The players decide what the evidence means.

THE DOCKING RING

The docking ring once handled research staff, supply crews, and independent merchants.

Even in emergency light, traces of ordinary station life remain.

A wall near the customs desk is covered with faded stickers from freight companies and visiting ships. Someone drew a moustache on the official portrait of a former station administrator. A vending unit continues displaying an advertisement for hot noodles despite being completely empty.

The ring contains four main areas.

THE RECEIVING CORRIDOR

The corridor connects the occupied berths to cargo processing and Station Administration.

Its floor is textured for heavy boots and loading equipment. A strip of directional lighting still works along one wall, though it leads in circles whenever power fluctuates.

Signs indicate:

- DOCKING CONTROL
- CARGO PROCESSING
- COMMERCIAL DISTRICT
- RESIDENTIAL
- RESEARCH ACCESS - AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
- ENGINEERING - HEARING PROTECTION REQUIRED

A handwritten arrow beneath the commercial sign points toward:

BETTER COFFEE

Someone later added:

LIAR

THE CARGO FLOOR

The main cargo area is broad enough for several loading vehicles to operate at once.

Most remain parked where their operators left them.

One loader has struck a crate and stopped with its lifting arms still raised. A cargo drone lies on its side nearby, repeating a soft error tone every eleven seconds. The sound is quiet enough to become unbearable once noticed.

The air is colder here.

Large loading doors radiate chill from the outer hull. Frost has formed around one pressure seam. Plastic wrapping moves slightly on a pallet even though the air is still.

Scattered cargo includes:

- medical filters;
- sealed laboratory glassware;
- replacement life-support components;
- spoiled food containers;
- personal luggage;
- and empty power-storage housings.

Several power housings have been opened from the outside.

Their internal cells are missing.

The metal around the access points is scored with narrow crystalline scratches.

DOCKING CONTROL

Docking Control is a glass-walled booth overlooking the berths.

The door has been forced and then carefully closed again.

Inside, the temperature is warmer from active electronics. The room smells of hot dust, stale coffee, and the faint electrical burn of a terminal that has not shut down correctly.

Several screens remain functional.

Their light is the only white illumination in the room.

A chair lies on its side. A cup has dried against the console. Someone began writing an emergency note on a disposable pad and stopped after three words:

THEY FOLLOW POWER -

The pen is still attached to the board.

There is no blood.

THE MAINTENANCE AIRLOCKS

Narrow service hatches lead into the spaces behind the station walls.

Warm air moves from some of them.

Cold air moves from others.

The hatches are marked with repair dates, most years old. One panel bears fresh scratches around its edge. Another has been sealed from the corridor side with a length of cargo bar and two improvised welds.

Something struck that hatch repeatedly from within.

The metal is bowed outward.

It is quiet now.

THE OTHER SHIPS

Two vessels arrived before the player characters.

Both remain docked.

Neither responds normally.

THE IRON HEARTS' SHIP

The Iron Hearts' vessel occupies one of the larger berths.

Its hull is scarred but intact: a working mercenary ship built to survive bad contracts and imperfect landings. Faded insignia near the cockpit shows a stylized heart reinforced with dark metal bands.

No navigation lights are active.

No heat blooms from the engines.

The docking umbilicals remain connected, but the station is not charging the vessel.

Closer inspection reveals something stranger.

The ship's primary power couplings have been opened. So have two emergency access points normally sealed behind maintenance panels. The housings are empty.

External cables trail across the berth floor toward a damaged service conduit. Several have been cut. Others bear the same crystalline scoring found around the cargo-floor power cells.

The vessel has not merely run out of power.

Something removed its main and emergency reserves.

The hull remains viable.

The ship cannot launch, maintain full life support, and survive Veil transit without recovering or replacing those reserves.

This is immediately relevant to crews that arrived by passage. It may become relevant to every crew once they meet the Iron Hearts.

Do not reveal ownership or final reward here.

At this stage, it is a stranded vessel whose crew is missing.

THE WHISPERS' VESSEL

The second occupied berth appears empty at first glance.

Its docking clamp is engaged around nothing visible.

Closer observation reveals subtle distortions where the berth lights should continue in straight lines. Condensation forms against an angular surface the eye has difficulty holding.

The camouflage system is active.

It is not perfect.

The hidden craft is smaller than the Iron Hearts' vessel, shaped for speed and low visibility rather than cargo. Its surface absorbs most of the station's red light. No gang markings or House identification are visible.

A terminal identifies the berth assignment only as:

**PRIVATE RECOVERY CONTRACTOR TRANSPONDER RECORD
SEALED**

The vessel maintains minimal internal power.

Someone aboard - or its automated systems - has taken care to remain difficult to notice.

The crew does not need to discover it immediately. Physical inspection, terminal access, sensor expertise, or patient observation can reveal it.

Once found, it proves that another professional group reached the station after the Iron Hearts.

WHAT THE STATION CAN TELL THEM

No single interaction is mandatory.

Essential facts appear through several sources so that play does not stop because one terminal remains locked or one clue is ignored.

The crew should be able to learn the following through investigation:

- the Iron Hearts arrived three days ago;
- the hidden recovery vessel arrived approximately eighteen hours later;
- the station suffered escalating power failures after those arrivals;
- people moved away from the commercial and residential zones toward Engineering;
- multiple groups erected and later abandoned barricades;
- something small has been moving through vents and maintenance spaces;
- power cells and energy reserves were removed from several locations;
- and at least one living person has recently passed through the docking ring.

THE ARRIVAL LOG

The Docking Control terminal retains partial records.

A character with appropriate technical access can recover the clear information without requiring a roll when time and tools are available.

A roll is appropriate when:

- the crew is working quickly;
- system corruption threatens the data;

- they are attempting to avoid alerting another user;
- or they want to recover deleted or sealed entries.

The surviving log records:

1. Iron Hearts - arrival three days ago

Docking authorization purchased through an independent commercial account.

1. Unidentified private contractor - arrival eighteen hours later

Transponder and ownership data sealed under Valerius commercial privilege.

1. Several failed automated departures

The station attempted to clear craft that never launched.

1. Loss of traffic-control personnel

Staff access records stop abruptly during the second day.

Deeper recovery may reveal that the concealed ship belongs to the Credit's Whispers, but this should require relevant knowledge, access, or a later connection rather than appearing automatically on the first screen.

PHYSICAL TRACES

The docking ring tells a second version of events.

Different groups moved through it at different times.

The Iron Hearts left:

- heavy cargo tracks;
- boot marks from several species;
- emergency cases removed from storage;
- and signs that a wounded person was supported toward the commercial district.

The Whispers left:

- little visible disturbance;
- filament-thin cuts through one access panel;
- a temporary sensor loop;
- and several small marks placed at eye level to identify cleared routes.

The station inhabitants left:

- luggage;
- open maintenance requests;
- abandoned meals;
- and a trail of hurried movement away from the docking ring before the latest arrivals.

The Weavers left:

- translucent residue around power conduits;
- crystalline scratches;
- tiny impact marks on ceilings;
- and places where insulation has been eaten away to expose active wiring.

Characters do not need a formal Action Roll to notice what is openly present.

A roll determines how much they reconstruct, how quickly, and whether they identify something concealed.

THE LAST DOCKING MESSAGE

A damaged audio file remains queued in the traffic-control system.

Most of it is static.

The intelligible section contains a frightened station employee speaking too quietly.

"Docking Control to anyone receiving. We have lost Commercial and most of Residential. They are inside the power channels. Do not activate - "

A loud impact interrupts the transmission.

Then another voice, distant from the microphone:

"Turn it off. They can feel it."

The recording ends.

The message does not explain what "they" are.

The station will do that soon enough.

MOVING THROUGH THE STATION

Charon's Refuge is divided into five broad zones.

These zones help the Keeper understand distance and atmosphere. They are not a prescribed route.

ZONE A: DOCKING RING

Main berths, cargo processing, traffic control, and maintenance airlocks.

Atmosphere: cold metal, cargo debris, intermittent white terminal light, and the constant sense that something left in a hurry.

ZONE B: COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Cantina, merchant stalls, Station Administration, small workshops, and ARIA-7's patrol route.

Atmosphere: abandoned public space, dead advertisements, spoiled food, overturned displays, and floors that remain strangely clean in narrow sections.

ZONE C: RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS

Crew cabins, apartments, recreation rooms, medical bay, and the arcade cabinet known as the Last Game.

Atmosphere: personal belongings, unfinished routines, soft materials holding old smells, and silence that feels more intimate than the industrial zones.

ZONE D: ENGINEERING

Main reactor access, auxiliary systems, generators, workshops, and dense maintenance infrastructure.

Atmosphere: heat, vibration, ozone, barricades, improvised habitation, and the nearest thing the remaining Iron Hearts have to a defensible position.

ZONE E: RESEARCH LABS

Server rooms, containment areas, experiment chambers, energy-transfer infrastructure, and the Weaver Mother's nest.

Atmosphere: colder air, sealed glass, chemical residue, biological growth, and light behaving in ways damaged electronics do not fully explain.

Travel through main corridors takes roughly ten minutes between adjacent zones when doors and systems cooperate.

Maintenance passages can shorten that distance dramatically. They are narrow, poorly lit, difficult to navigate, and used by the Weavers.

Do not require a navigation roll when characters have a working map and time.

Use a roll when they are moving quickly, bypassing sealed sections, traveling without a map, or trying not to attract attention.

THE FIRST SIGNS OF MOVEMENT

The first Weaver contact should not begin the moment the airlock opens.

Let the players spend enough time in the dock to recognize the station's normal sounds.

They will hear:

- coolant pumps;
- the cargo drone's repeating error tone;
- stressed metal settling;
- distant ventilation;
- and occasional impacts transmitted from somewhere far along the station spine.

Once those sounds become familiar, introduce one that does not belong.

A scratch above the ceiling panel.

A short movement.

Silence.

Later, the same sound appears behind them.

A translucent strand hangs from a ventilation grille. It catches the red light, curls slowly in the cold air, and withdraws when approached.

A power conduit flickers.

Something inside the wall moves toward the light.

FIRST CONTACT WITH THE WEAVERS

The Hunger Weavers are not waiting in formation for the crew to enter a combat area.

They are feeding.

One clings to a ceiling conduit above the cargo floor, translucent enough that the emergency light passes through its body. Another moves through a maintenance opening near the route back to the airlock.

At first they may be mistaken for damaged insulation, drifting crystal, or reflected warning light.

Then they turn toward the crew.

READ ALOUD The scratching returns above you. A ceiling panel bends downward by a few millimetres, then lifts back into place. Purple light moves behind the seam. Something unfolds from the ventilation gap. It is roughly the size of a small animal, though nothing about its movement belongs to one. A translucent body hangs in the air beneath a crown of crystalline tissue. Thin limbs - or tendrils - reach toward the active conduit beside it. Light pulses through the creature in slow patterns. The nearest terminal dims. The pattern stops. Every tendril turns toward you. Behind the crew, metal scratches across metal. A second shape lowers itself from the wall.

Use the **Hunger Weaver** adversary profile supplied for this adventure. In **Hypnotic Illusions**, use the canonical **Stunned** Condition from *VeilFarers Corebook 12.03*, Chapter 10; never restore the obsolete Fascinated wording from earlier working material.

For a standard crew, two Hunger Weavers establish the threat without turning the first contact into the station's largest battle. Adjust numbers and pressure using the current adversary guidance for the actual party.

On a failed Presence Reaction Roll against Hypnotic Illusions, the target becomes **Stunned**. Use the normal Corebook duration and clearing rule for Stunned. This is a compatibility correction, not a new Condition or additional effect.

HOW THE WEAVERS BEHAVE

Hunger Weavers are drawn to active energy and living neural activity.

They are hungry before they are tactical.

They may:

- feed from an exposed conduit;
- circle a bright terminal;
- follow an activated weapon;
- retreat into vents when badly hurt;
- use the ceiling and walls to avoid direct paths;
- approach a character who reaches toward them mentally;

- or abandon a target when a stronger energy source becomes available.

They do not need to fight to the death.

A crew may distract, trap, repel, avoid, study, or attempt contact with them.

The creatures' behavior should reveal that they are more than vermin while withholding the full explanation of what has changed them.

THE CARGO FLOOR AS AN ENVIRONMENT

The first encounter happens in a working space, not an empty arena.

Relevant elements include:

- cargo crates providing cover;
- a dormant loading vehicle that can be activated;
- emergency shutters able to divide the floor;
- a damaged fire-suppression system;
- hanging restraint cables;
- exposed power cells;
- ceiling access panels;
- and the airlock route behind the crew.

Describe what is available before it becomes relevant.

The players decide how to use it.

Do not present environmental objects as a list of required tricks.

THE SOUND OF THE ENCOUNTER

Weapons are enormous inside the docking ring.

A gunshot becomes a physical crack that strikes the bulkheads and returns several times. Energy fire leaves the air smelling sharp and clean for a second before burned insulation replaces it.

The Weavers produce little sound while moving.

Their bodies click softly when they pass near metal. Their tendrils whisper across surfaces. When hurt, they emit a pressure-like vibration felt more in the teeth than heard through the ears.

The station reacts to the violence.

Lights fail.

A cargo alarm begins repeating.

Somewhere deeper inside, another answer comes from the vents.

Not close.

Not yet.

CONTACT WITHOUT COMBAT

A character attempting mental or Veil-based contact receives no language.

The creature's experience arrives as pressure and appetite:

- warm electrical flow;

- living signals;
- the pain of distance from a larger presence;
- and hunger so complete it has replaced most other meaning.

The contact should feel invasive but not automatically inflict a new mechanical effect beyond the current rules.

The character may also sense something familiar in the creature's relationship to the Veil - not the same as the sensation during transit, but touched by the same impossible warmth and cold.

Do not confirm the connection.

Let the player own the suspicion.

AFTER THE ENCOUNTER

A defeated Hunger Weaver does not leave a conventional corpse.

Its translucent mass collapses around the crystalline portions of its body. The softer tissue loses cohesion and dries rapidly into strands that cling to the deck like clear resin.

The crystal remains faintly warm and cold at once for several minutes.

Examination can reveal:

- it absorbed energy through contact with station systems;
- traces of several power-cell compounds remain within it;
- its tissues show changes inconsistent with normal development;
- and it was moving toward active power rather than defending territory.

Do not include the obsolete neural-sac consumable or automatic credit values from earlier drafts unless those items exist in the current canonical equipment or adversary rules.

The remains are evidence.

What the crew does with them is theirs to decide.

THE STATION OPENS

Once the immediate danger passes - or once the crew finds a way around it - the docking ring offers several visible directions.

Toward the Commercial District, emergency lights continue in an uneven line. A distant cleaning machine can occasionally be heard striking the floor with unusual aggression.

Toward Residential, one illuminated sign remains active:

MEDICAL - RECREATION - CREW QUARTERS

Toward Engineering, the main access door has been sealed and later forced open from the far side. Warm air moves through the gap. Someone has painted a small black heart beside the frame.

Toward the Research Labs, the public route is locked behind a glass security partition. The glass is cracked. Behind it, a trail of disconnected emergency lamps descends into cold blue darkness.

The maintenance hatches offer shorter routes through the walls.

The station map remains incomplete but usable.

The crew now knows:

- the Iron Hearts reached Charon's Refuge;
- another professional group followed them;
- both vessels remain;
- the station lost control of its power;
- and the creatures in the vents are feeding on whatever remains alive.

No route is marked as the correct one.

Charon's Refuge has been waiting for new people to enter.

It does not care where they go first.

09. SCENE 4: EXPLORING CHARON'S REFUGE

Charon's Refuge is not a corridor between plot beats. It is a place people lived in, repaired, argued over, decorated, and refused to abandon.

Run this chapter as open exploration. Describe what the crew sees, hears, smells, and can reach, then let the players decide what they investigate, touch, repair, force, or avoid.

Core Trait Rolls are included only where uncertainty materially affects the chapter: concealed information, a consequential system, or an immediate hazard. Use the VeilFarers DC scale of **5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30**. Hope- and Fear-specific outcomes appear only when the consequence should remain consistent across tables.

USING THE MAP PLATES

The maps are part of the chapter rather than decorative inserts.

• Map Plate 1 - Master Station Overview:

[colour](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_1_Charons_Refuge_Master_Station_Overview_Color_4000x6000.png) · [print](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_1_Charons_Refuge_Master_Station_Overview_Print_4000x6000.png). Use when the crew gains a general schematic or needs to understand how the station connects.

• Map Plate 2 - Docking Ring & Outer Berths:

[colour](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_2_Charons_Refuge_Docking_Ring_Outer_Berths_Color_4000x6000.png) · [print](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_2_Charons_Refuge_Docking_Ring_Outer_Berths_Print_4000x6000.png). Use for the arrival zone, cargo floor, traffic control, occupied berths, and maintenance access.

• Map Plate 3 - Commercial & Residential Sectors:

[colour](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_3_Charons_Refuge_Commercial_Residential_Sectors_Color_4000x6000.png) · [print](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_3_Charons_Refuge_Commercial_Residential_Sectors_Print_4000x6000.png). Use while the crew explores civilian spaces, ARIA-7's patrol route, medical facilities, and evacuation paths.

• Map Plate 4 - Engineering & Emergency Holdouts:

[colour](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_4_Charons_Refuge_Engineering_Emergency_Holdouts_Color_4000x6000.png) · [print](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_4_Charons_Refuge_Engineering_Emergency_Holdouts_Print_4000x6000.png). Use when the crew reaches the Iron Hearts, investigates the power crisis, or moves through Engineering.

• Map Plate 5 - Research Access & Hidden Kurogane Labs:

[colour](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_5_Charons_Refuge_Research_Access_Hidden_Kurogane_Labs_Color_4000x6000.png)

[print](../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/Map_Plate_5_Charons_Refuge_Research_Access_Hidden_Kurogane_Labs_Print_4000x6000.png). Use once the crew uncovers the concealed research level.

The complete player- and Keeper-facing index is available at ../art/hearts_in_the_void/maps/README.md.

The black-and-white plates may be handed to the players as recovered station schematics. Keep concealed routes and the hidden Kurogane level Keeper-facing until the crew discovers them.

RUNNING THE STATION

The crew does not need to visit every sector.

Several routes can lead toward the same truths:

- the Iron Hearts reached Charon's Refuge and remain stranded;
- a second professional group arrived after them;
- the station and the Iron Hearts' ship were deliberately drained;
- the missing energy moved below the public research level;
- House Kurogane concealed a laboratory beneath the station;
- the Weaver Queen is using the stolen energy packs to keep her colony alive.

Do not lock any essential truth behind one roll. A missed record can be replaced by physical evidence, survivor testimony, Weaver behaviour, or another station system.

When the pace slows, let the station move around the crew:

- the lights fail in one sector and recover in another;
- a distant bulkhead closes;
- ARIA-7 crosses a corridor while cleaning around a body it refuses to acknowledge;
- a short transmission from Engineering breaks through the static;
- scratching follows an active light through the walls;
- a smaller Weaver carries a glowing fragment across an exposed passage and disappears.

These events create direction and pressure without prescribing what the players must do.

SECTOR A - DOCKING RING & OUTER BERTHS

Use Map Plate 2.

The Docking Ring is a circular receiving structure assembled from freight docks, customs stations, maintenance segments, and berths built in different eras.

The air is cold enough to tighten exposed skin. Docking clamps tick as they cool. Recyclers groan behind the walls. The ring smells of ion discharge, old freight, hydraulic fluid, damp insulation, and ozone.

Emergency lights flicker across cargo pallets left half-sorted. A loader rests with one arm raised. An abandoned cargo drone repeats a soft error tone every eleven seconds.

Its damage is impossible to miss: scorched panels, improvised seals, abandoned cargo, and recent marks cut across decades of older wear.

A1. RECEIVING CORRIDOR

The receiving corridor is broad, straight, and marked by faded arrows directing arrivals toward customs and cargo processing.

A luggage case lies open against one wall. Folded clothes remain inside. A pair of work boots sits beside it, neatly aligned as though their owner expected to return.

The case was placed here, not dropped. Something important was removed before its owner left.

A heavy scrape leads toward the cargo floor. Lighter marks cross it later and disappear through a maintenance airlock.

The older trail belongs to people moving supplies in haste. The later one is careful enough to suggest someone trained to leave little evidence.

A2. CARGO FLOOR

The cargo floor occupies the centre of the ring.

Crates sit in uneven islands beneath high loading rails. Some are sealed. Others have been opened and abandoned. Plastic wrapping shifts in the breath of a damaged vent.

Several empty power-cell housings have been stacked near the wall.

The cells are gone.

Fine crystalline scratches score the housings. Translucent residue glistens around the contacts and beneath the floor grating. It retains a weak charge.

The empty housings, scoring, and residue show that something physically removed the cells and followed the station's active power routes.

A careful inspection or appropriate technical knowledge identifies the residue as consistent with the Hunger Weavers. The trail continues toward the Research Access Spine.

The damaged cargo drone still contains a removable storage module and basic lifting hardware.

A3. DOCKING CONTROL

Docking Control overlooks the ring through reinforced glass.

The door has been forced and carefully closed again. Inside, the air is warmer. Terminals glow through suspended dust. A chair lies on its side beside a cup dried to the console.

Someone began writing an emergency message:

THEY FOLLOW POWER -

The sentence ends there.

Reconstruct the Traffic Records - Knowledge (Tech)

A character who searches the surviving records, deleted entries, and physical backup cache makes one Core Trait Roll.

- **DC 10:** The Iron Hearts arrived three days ago.
- **DC 15:** A second vessel arrived approximately eighteen hours later under sealed Valerius commercial privilege.
- **DC 20:** The second vessel used a concealed berth. Its partial transponder signature can later be connected to the Credit's Whispers.

With Hope: The crew also recovers a maintenance overlay linking the Docking Ring to Research Access.

With Fear: The terminal sends a diagnostic ping to the concealed berth. A response light appears where no visible ship should be.

The occupied Iron Hearts berth and the existence of a later arrival remain discoverable through physical evidence even when the records cannot be fully recovered.

A4. MAINTENANCE AIRLOCKS

Narrow pressure doors connect the public ring to the service spaces behind it.

Warm air moves through one hatch. Another exhales cold air carrying the smell of mould, scorched cable, and old coolant.

The maintenance routes shorten travel between sectors. Most are cramped but passable; pursuit, unstable structure, or bulky equipment can turn them into dangerous bottlenecks.

The walls contain fresh crystalline scratches. Some lead toward active power; others return from it.

A5. THE IRON HEARTS' BERTH

The Iron Hearts' vessel rests dark inside its berth.

Its hull is scarred but viable. The ship was built for hard travel and imperfect landings. A reinforced heart insignia remains visible near the cockpit.

The main power couplings stand open.

So do two emergency housings that should remain sealed except during major repair.

All are empty.

External cables trail across the deck. Some were cut. Others bear crystalline scoring.

The ship did not simply exhaust its reserves. Its primary and emergency energy packs were removed.

The vessel can still fly, but it cannot launch, maintain full life support, and survive a Veil transit without replacement energy. A character with appropriate engineering knowledge can estimate the exact requirement after examining the ship or the Engineering control systems.

A6. CONCEALED CONTRACTOR BERTH

The berth appears empty until condensation stops in midair and light bends around an angular surface.

A camouflaged vessel occupies the dock.

Its systems maintain minimal power.

The public terminal lists only:

PRIVATE RECOVERY CONTRACTOR TRANSPONDER RECORD
SEALED

The distortion confirms the ship's presence. A passive surveillance field watches the Docking Ring.

Accessing the berth requires a valid code, physical intrusion, or **Finesse Roll, DC 15**.

Failure leaves the berth sealed without preventing the crew from observing the vessel, following its occupants' route, or finding another entrance later.

SECTOR B - COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Use Map Plate 3.

The Commercial District still carries the ghost of ordinary business.

Old signs buzz above dark stalls. A food counter smells of scorched oil, stale spice, and something sweet gone sour. Metal shutters hang half-open. Cups and trays remain on cantina tables beneath a film of dust.

Warm air gathers around food units. Ten steps away, the corridors become cold again.

The district explains the crisis through interrupted routines rather than through a catalogue of challenges.

B1. CANTINA "LAST CALL"

The cantina is larger than it appears on the public map.

Tables crowd the room. Booths have been pushed together near one wall to form a temporary barricade. A service counter remains lit by a single blue strip.

The drink system displays eleven unavailable options and one available liquid simply labelled:

WARM

A bowl sits on one table with food dried to its edge. Three chairs surround it.

Only two were pushed back.

Several civilians sheltered here after the first alarm. They left in an organised retreat toward Residential. One person later crossed the service area alone and used a maintenance route heading down through the station.

A short-range comm unit under the counter remains tuned to a survivor channel. Most transmissions are static, breathing, or fragments of warnings from Engineering.

B2. MARKET STALLS

The market corridor is lined with booths, repair counters, fabric partitions, and storage cages.

Most valuable stock is gone. What remains shows what people chose when they could carry very little:

- filters taken, decorative lights abandoned;
- portable food gone, cookware left;
- medical sealant missing, luxury skin gel untouched;
- children's masks removed from hooks, adult sizes still hanging.

Several repair stalls were searched after the evacuation. Whoever returned ignored food and credits and took insulated cable, power adapters, and Kurogane-compatible fittings.

A Keeper may place ordinary tools, cable, clothing, or improvised supplies here when they support a player's plan. The market does not need a roll table.

B3. REPAIR WORKSHOPS

The workshops smell of solvent, burned insulation, and old metal filings.

Tools remain arranged on magnetic boards. A half-open casing sits on one bench beside a handwritten note:

NOT DEAD. JUST LYING.

A compact fabrication unit remains connected to weak local power. Its status light is dark, one casing panel is open, and several internal components have been removed.

The unit's open casing exposes a missing regulator, scorched contacts, and enough intact components to make it worth examining.

B4. PUBLIC CONCOURSE

The concourse is lined with dead advertisements and information kiosks.

ARIA-7's cleaning route can be traced through narrow strips of polished floor cutting across dust, debris, and dried residue.

The caretaker has deliberately avoided corridors where Weaver residue is heaviest. It pauses near several maintenance panels, cleans their edges, and continues without acknowledging them.

A damaged information kiosk still displays an incomplete public map. Its final evacuation notice directed civilians toward Residential and Engineering before the message system failed.

ARIA-7 may appear here.

Its chassis is scratched, its cleaning tools have been repurposed several times, and its voice remains professionally calm despite

missing words and corrupted routines. It is more concerned with stains, obstructions, and unauthorised litter than with making a coherent introduction.

ARIA-7 treats the crew first as a new source of footprints, obstruction, and possible maintenance requests. What it becomes after that depends on how they engage with it.

B5. STATION ADMINISTRATION

Administration is cleaner than the rest of Commercial.

The reception desk remains orderly. Office doors are closed. A portrait of the station administrator hangs slightly crooked above a dead security scanner.

Behind the public offices lies a records room with independent power and a heavy door.

Nothing in plain sight proves that a hidden Kurogane facility exists.

The evidence lies in the discrepancies.

Investigate the Station Records - Knowledge (Tech)

A character who gains access to the records and deliberately compares power use, staffing, maintenance, and station plans makes one Core Trait Roll.

- **DC 10:** Power reports show unexplained consumption below Research Access.
- **DC 15:** Public schematics omit several rooms and vertical access points.
- **DC 20:** Kurogane-linked project references confirm a concealed research level and deep emergency energy storage.
- **DC 25:** The records include a security-partition code and the route once used to transfer power packs below.

With Fear: An automated audit signal travels toward the hidden labs.

Even incomplete records confirm that undeclared infrastructure exists beneath the public research sector.

SECTOR C - RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS

Use Map Plate 3.

Residential is quieter than Commercial.

Ventilation fans hum behind the walls. Pipes tick as they cool. Fabric, detergent, old food, and recycled heat replace the smells of commerce.

Small rooms hold folded blankets, family images, devotional tokens, medication packs, work uniforms, and the objects people keep when they do not have enough space to keep anything unnecessary.

The details here make the people of Charon's Refuge real: hurried departures, private habits, unfinished meals, and the small objects no evacuation plan accounts for.

C1. CREW QUARTERS

The crew quarters are compact rooms built around a curved corridor.

Some doors stand open. Others are barricaded. Several bunks remain made. One wall is covered in children's drawings of ships passing through purple clouds.

A maintenance uniform hangs beside a missing pressure suit.

The families left first. Technical staff remained longer and carried tools toward Engineering. One technician later returned alone, discarded a damaged wrist terminal, and entered a maintenance hatch below the residential ring.

The terminal contains only a fragment:

LOWER LAB POWER STILL ACTIVE. PACKS MOVING.

The trail and abandoned terminal connect the technician directly to the concealed descent.

C2. FAMILY PODS AND SHARED GALLEY

The family pods are warmer than the corridor.

Blankets have been hung across doorways to hold heat. The shared galley smells of detergent, cold broth, and scorched wiring. Several bowls remain stacked beside a sink that continues dripping into a metal pot.

A child's emergency mask lies beneath the central table.

An injured group passed through toward Medical. Another trail followed from the ventilation side rather than the main corridor.

This area can hold survivor encounters, personal messages, or a quiet pause between more dangerous sectors.

C3. RECREATION ROOM

The recreation room contains bolted tables, faded wall art, and an arcade cabinet still running on emergency power.

Its title screen reads:

LAST GAME INSERT CREDIT NO REFUNDS AFTER EVACUATION

The cabinet contains a local community message board used after official communications failed. A technician's final post reads:

THE THINGS BELOW ARE EATING THE RESERVE PACKS. ENGINEERING NEEDS TO KNOW. DO NOT USE THE MAIN RESEARCH DOOR.

The message sits inside the cabinet's local cache behind a damaged but still responsive interface.

C4. MEDICAL BAY

The medical bay is intact but underpowered.

Diagnostic beds remain folded into the walls. Supply drawers are locked. A biological scanner displays corrupted traces from its last patients.

The room smells of antiseptic, warm plastic, and old blood cleaned too quickly.

Recent cases include electrical burns, crystalline punctures, falls, and weapon trauma. Several patients showed neural overstimulation inconsistent with ordinary injury.

Analyse the Anomalous Cases - Knowledge

Use this Roll only when a character deliberately compares the corrupted biological records.

- **DC 10:** The neural symptoms appear in several patients exposed to Weaver residue.
- **DC 15:** The oldest matching case predates the visible station infestation.
- **DC 20:** That patient worked in an undeclared Kurogane research section below the station.

With Fear: The scanner completes the analysis but sends an automatic containment notice toward Research Access.

Locked drawers still contain basic medical supplies.

C5. MAINTENANCE STAIRS

The central maintenance stairs descend farther than the public station map claims.

The door is hidden behind a utility panel painted to match the wall. It is not invisible. It was designed to be ignored.

Cold air rises through the seam.

The technician's trail, the map discrepancy, and the rising airflow all point toward the release.

The stairs are narrow, dark, and partially damaged. They lead toward the Research Access service structure and bypass part of the public route. Under pursuit, heavy loads, or attempts at complete silence, the descent becomes a genuine hazard.

SECTOR D - ENGINEERING & EMERGENCY HOLDOUTS

Use Map Plate 4.

Engineering is hot, loud, and alive.

The air tastes of rust, scorched insulation, coolant, smoke, and ozone. Machinery vibrates through the deck. White work lamps and orange emergency strips cut hard shapes through steam.

The Iron Hearts have barricaded corridors, established firing lanes, and turned workshops into sleeping areas.

They are not waiting to deliver exposition.

They are trying to keep the station alive.

D1. ENGINEERING ACCESS

The main route enters Engineering across a raised catwalk.

Below it, coolant pipes and power conduits run through a chamber of heat and moving machinery. One railing has torn free. Condensation makes the deck slick.

The Iron Hearts have marked the safest path with black paint.

Pressure surges make the deck slick, shake the remaining railing, and turn the open span into a dangerous crossing.

D2. REACTOR CORE

The reactor chamber is circular and painfully bright.

Heat radiates through the floor. The containment rings rotate slightly out of alignment, producing a vibration felt through the teeth.

Several monitoring panels have been replaced with handwritten gauges and improvised warning lamps.

The reactor is functional but overstressed. It is compensating for power lost throughout the station.

Diagnose the Power Crisis - Knowledge (Tech)

A character who studies the reactor load, auxiliary network, and drained ship systems makes one Core Trait Roll.

- **DC 10:** The station is compensating for a patterned drain rather than ordinary system failure.
- **DC 15:** The largest drain leads into hidden infrastructure below Research Access.
- **DC 20:** Power is being pulled in pulses consistent with Weaver feeding behaviour.
- **DC 25:** The character calculates how many recovered packs can be diverted to the Iron Hearts' ship without killing station life support.

With Fear: The diagnosis triggers a brownout or exposes a failing component that now demands attention.

D3. AUXILIARY POWER HUB

The auxiliary hub contains portable generators, stripped housings, improvised cabling, and several empty storage mounts.

The mounts match the packs removed from the Iron Hearts' ship.

A transfer conduit has been rerouted toward Research Access.

The Iron Hearts have already done everything they can with the resources at hand. Engineering can receive recovered packs, though additional preparation or clever modifications may improve the transfer.

D4. IRON HEARTS' HOLDOUT

The holdout occupies workshops and service decks around Engineering.

Bedrolls lie between tool lockers. A ration pot simmers near diagnostic screens. Weapons remain close to every sleeping position.

Zara, Brix, Korren, Thex, and any surviving Iron Hearts react according to what the crew has already done.

Zara is focused on the station, her people, and the stranded ship. Brix watches the approaches. Korren checks private messages when he believes nobody is looking. Thex watches Korren.

A deliberate reading of the group reveals more than exhaustion.

Read the Holdout - Instinct

- **DC 15:** Korren's fear is attached to a private deadline rather than only the station.
- **DC 20:** Thex is quietly reinforcing that fear and watching for signs that Korren may break.

With Fear: Korren or Thex notices the scrutiny and becomes more guarded.

D5. CONTROL CONSOLE BANK

The console bank has been rebuilt from incompatible parts.

Displays overlap. Warnings remain permanently active because nobody has time to clear them. One screen shows the Iron Hearts' ship as a grey silhouette with every reserve indicator empty.

The surviving power map confirms that major drains converge beneath Research Access. It also identifies an energy-transfer chamber and a large biological mass near the deepest concentration of portable reserves.

Once the Iron Hearts cooperate, the surviving map identifies the energy-transfer chamber and the largest biological mass near the deepest concentration of portable reserves.

SECTOR E - RESEARCH ACCESS SPINE

Use Map Plates 1 and 5.

The Research Access Spine is cleaner than the station above.

The corridors are straighter. The doors are heavier. The wall panels match. Civilian repairs and personal decorations disappear.

The temperature drops. The air smells of disinfectant, dust, cold metal, and static.

This area does not feel abandoned.

It feels withheld.

E1. PUBLIC RESEARCH CORRIDOR

The public corridor connects server rooms, records storage, and observation galleries.

Most overhead lights remain functional, though every third strip flickers. Glass walls reveal offices left in precise disorder: chairs pushed back, terminals dark, files removed from drawers.

Several doors were sealed after personnel left.

Chemical residue and scuff marks continue beneath the main security partition. A false section of wall nearby conceals a maintenance bypass. The technician's route, the maintenance overlay, or the administrative map all identify the same false section of wall beside the partition.

E2. SERVER NODES

Server Node A holds public research routines and station-facing archives.

Server Node B contains selected backups and mirrored system data.

Both rooms are painfully cold. Their cooling systems outlived the people who maintained them.

Recover the Kurogane Archive - Knowledge (Tech)

A character who searches the surviving files, damaged indexes, and mirrored data makes one Core Trait Roll.

- **DC 10:** Kurogane personnel were assigned to an undeclared "sublevel support" section.
- **DC 15:** Portable power-storage equipment was repeatedly transferred into that section.
- **DC 20:** A retained biological subject received controlled energy through a project described as "sustenance stabilisation."
- **DC 25:** The archive identifies the retained subject as a reproductive Weaver specimen and marks the energy-transfer chamber connected to it.

With Fear: The archive begins purging itself or transmits an unauthorised-access notice below.

Even a damaged recovery reveals enough of Map Plate 5 to confirm that a concealed level exists.

E3. OBSERVATION GALLERY

The gallery overlooks the lower access lobby through one-way glass.

From the public side, the glass appears black.

From the correct angle, faint blue light moves below.

Small Weavers cross the lower corridor carrying charged material between the power infrastructure and the deeper nest. After each deep electrical pulse, they pause or change direction together.

The repeated pattern is clear: the smaller Weavers pause or change direction together after every deep electrical pulse.

E4. EXPERIMENTAL RECORDS

The records room contains sealed cabinets, specimen reports, and fragmented experiment logs.

Many files have been removed. Others were deliberately damaged.

The surviving material confirms that biological subjects were exposed to controlled Veil-energy fluctuations. One reproductive subject was retained for long-term observation and feeding studies.

A handwritten warning appears repeatedly in later reports:

DEPRIVATION INCREASES AGGRESSION. RECOGNITION REMAINS.

These records establish that the Queen is not a mindless infestation and that starvation changed her behaviour.

E5. SECURITY PARTITION

A sealed glass wall and reinforced door divide the public research floor from the hidden Kurogane facility.

The public station map ends here.

The wall is too thick for ordinary glass. A dead biometric reader remains mounted beside the door.

The partition opens automatically with recovered credentials.

Without them, bypassing its security requires **Finesse or Knowledge (Tech)** DC 15. Raise the DC to 20 only when the crew has no access information, no working tools, and attempts to defeat the system directly.

Failure leaves the partition closed while preserving the maintenance bypass as an alternate route.

SECTOR F - HIDDEN KUROGANE LABS

Use Map Plate 5.

The hidden labs are colder than the station above.

The architecture is deliberate. The walls are clean where crystal growth has not split them. Blue reserve light pulses through floor channels. Chemical residue stains the edges of observation glass.

The station above was built to support life.

This place was built to observe it.

F1. LOWER ACCESS LOBBY

The lower lobby is broad and dim.

A deactivated security station faces the main route. Frost rims several floor panels. Thin crystalline growth follows the energy conduits into the deeper facility.

Recent Weaver movement follows the conduits rather than the corridors. Human boot marks enter the labs but stop before the deepest levels.

A concealed surveillance aperture watches the lobby from the wall opposite security. It may activate when the crew disturbs power, uses the main partition, or accesses the lab network.

F2. SPECIMEN STORAGE

Rows of stasis tanks occupy the room.

Most are empty. Several contain cloudy preservation fluid and indistinct biological remnants. Labels have been removed but remain faintly visible beneath the adhesive.

The surviving tank records identify early Weaver forms and repeated exposure to Veil-energy fluctuations.

Portable power packs appear in the feeding logs as emergency sustenance.

One entry identifies the Queen as a retained reproductive specimen rather than an intruder that entered Charon's Refuge after the crisis began.

The surviving records reinforce what the Kurogane archive suggests: the Queen was retained here and fed through portable reserves.

F3. CONTAINMENT CHAMBERS

The containment rooms are lined with adaptive enclosures, restraint fields, and observation ports.

Some doors remain sealed.

Others were opened from within.

The floors carry dried chemical residue, clear resin, and marks where crystalline limbs repeatedly struck the same points.

The Weavers did not escape everywhere at once. Smaller subjects opened routes toward active power, fed, and returned. The hidden labs became a nest because they remained the only place associated with confinement, food, and the Queen.

The containment controls still function intermittently. Some doors can become barriers, traps, or protected routes, depending on which systems still have power.

F4. OBSERVATION GALLERIES

Nested galleries overlook the containment rooms and energy infrastructure through one-way glass.

Dust covers the public-facing surfaces. The hidden monitoring side remains clean.

Annotations beside the displays track the Queen's feeding cycles.

Study the Queen's Feeding Pattern - Instinct or Knowledge

A character who compares the records, the smaller Weavers, the chamber pulses, and the Queen's responses makes one Core Trait Roll.

- **DC 10:** The Queen's activity follows the arrival of energy from the transfer chamber.
- **DC 15:** She reacts differently when energy is offered, removed gradually, or violently interrupted.
- **DC 20:** A controlled energy pulse creates a predictable pause in her attention.
- **DC 25:** The crew identifies a repeatable opening for distraction, negotiation, withdrawal, or nonlethal recovery.

With Fear: The Queen becomes aware that something is observing the nest through the active system.

F5. POWER-ROUTING MANIFOLD

The manifold is the heart of the hidden lab's infrastructure.

Thick conduits enter from Engineering and branch toward every containment zone. Several are wrapped in clear biological resin. Blue light moves through them in uneven pulses.

The strongest route leads to the Queen's chamber. Separate readings identify the stolen reserve packs and the station's live reactor feed.

A character with the correct tools and access can attempt to change one meaningful part of the network. Set a single DC according to the intended result:

- **DC 10:** shut down a minor branch or activate a local distraction;
- **DC 15:** isolate a group of reserve packs from the feeding network;
- **DC 20:** suppress their energy signature during removal;
- **DC 25:** reverse the transfer toward Engineering without physically transporting every pack.

Choose the intended intervention and use its listed DC.

With Fear: The modification works, but creates a surge, wakes dormant systems, or provokes the nest.

Failure leaves the network unchanged and may reveal what component or leverage is missing.

F6. ENERGY-TRANSFER CHAMBER

The transfer chamber contains stabilisation cradles, industrial connectors, and equipment designed to convert portable reserve power into controlled experimental feed.

Several cradles are empty.

Others contain damaged packs wrapped in crystalline growth.

The stable packs can be identified from their intact housings and consistent charge. Damaged units pulse unevenly and leak energy into the surrounding resin.

Disconnecting the stable packs requires **Finesse or Knowledge (Tech) DC 15**. Increase the DC to **20** only during a surge, active attack, or an attempt to release several packs at once.

With Fear: The packs are freed, but a surge, alarm, or Weaver response follows.

Failure leaves the selected packs connected and forces the crew to stabilise the chamber, change approach, or act under escalating pressure.

F7. MAINTENANCE JUNCTION AND HIDDEN MONITORING BOOTH

The maintenance junction connects public shafts, concealed bypasses, and utility routes omitted from every station schematic.

The space is cramped and warm. Pipes knock behind the walls. Several passages have been widened by repeated Weaver movement.

One route leads back toward Engineering and is broad enough for a cargo trolley or the repaired drone.

A false wall nearby conceals the monitoring booth.

Inside, a chair remains positioned before the screens. A cold cup rests beside the console. The booth was not abandoned in panic. Someone expected to return.

Its damaged camera network still covers the Queen, the reserve stack, and several active Weaver routes.

F8. EXPERIMENTAL RECORDS VAULT

The vault contains project files, personnel logs, and records deliberately separated from the public archive.

The final documents establish four facts:

- Kurogane operated the hidden labs without the knowledge of most of Charon's Refuge.
- The Queen was captured, retained, and deliberately fed through the transfer system.
- The energy packs were emergency reserves intended for both the laboratories and the station.
- Kurogane personnel abandoned the Queen without a stable long-term food source when the facility failed.

A complete recovery could become evidence against House Kurogane later in the campaign.

F9. MAINTENANCE BYPASS

The bypass descends through narrow panels and service crawlways toward the Queen's chamber.

The temperature changes with every metre.

The walls become increasingly covered in clear resin and fine crystal growth. Electrical pulses travel through it like distant lightning.

The passage offers a concealed approach and a possible extraction route. Pursuit, complete silence, unstable movement, or bulky equipment make the crawlspace treacherous.

The resin transmits vibration. Fear-favoured movement through the passage may alert the nest even when the crew reaches its destination.

F10. THE QUEEN'S LAIR

Use Map Plate 5 - Research Access & Hidden Kurogane Labs, room 18. The lair is the circular chamber at the base of the plate. Maintenance Bypass Access (17) reaches it from above. The Power-Routing Manifold (12) and Energy-Transfer Chamber feed it. The Observation Galleries (4) and Hidden Monitoring Booth (15) overlook it because Kurogane built them to watch this creature.

The Queen's chamber is circular.

Cold blue light rises from energy packs stacked around the outer ring. Some remain secured in transport frames. Others have been pulled apart and incorporated into the nest.

Crystalline growth radiates from the centre like the petals of a transparent flower.

The Weaver Queen rests within it.

Every active pack feeds a thin line of light toward her. Smaller Weavers move between the reserves and the nest with the repetitive urgency of workers preserving a starving colony.

The Queen remains within the nest, following the movement of energy through the chamber. Her response depends on threat, hunger, pain, and the behaviour of the crew.

If the players studied the galleries, records, or power network, they may understand how to create an opening without another preliminary roll.

Approaching the primary reserve stack without attracting immediate attention requires **Agility Roll, DC 15** unless the crew has already created a convincing distraction or altered the energy flow.

Moving a pack is automatic with working lifting equipment, sufficient time, and a secure route. Use **Strength Roll, DC 10** only when a character moves one without proper equipment or under pressure. Raise it to **DC 15** during active attack, damaged terrain, or a rushed extraction.

The challenge of the chamber is not to collect a prescribed number of successful rolls. It is to understand the Queen, create a workable plan, and deal with the consequences of taking away the energy keeping her colony alive.

READING THE QUEEN

The Queen is not an enemy waiting for combat to begin. She is a starving intelligence that Kurogane captured, fed, and abandoned. She responds to what the crew changes around her.

She does not speak.

She communicates as warmth and cold behind the breastbone: hunger first, then the old memory of confinement, then the flat fear of a parent whose food is being carried away. An Awakened character may recognise the contact immediately. A Sleeping character who chooses to remain open to the sensation can read it just as meaningfully. This contact is not an Awakening test and never pressures a character to Wake.

State, Not Language The crew can feel hunger, fear, pain, attention, or momentary calm. They cannot bargain in sentences, extract exposition, or assume that the Queen understands a promise. They must communicate through energy, movement, restraint, threat, or care.

If a character only opens to the emotional state, give them that information without a roll. Ask for **Instinct or Presence Roll, DC 10** only when they try to read a changing state under immediate pressure, conceal the contact, or guide another person through it. A Fear-favoured result does not advance a clock by itself. Advance **Hunger** only when the resolved consequence actually exposes hostile intent, shocks the feeding network, or aggravates the nest.

THE HUNGER CLOCK - FOUR SEGMENTS

For any approach short of open battle, place a visible four-segment **Hunger** clock beside Map Plate 5. It measures the colony moving from wary tolerance to active defence.

Begin at zero unless earlier play established one of these causes:

- begin at **one** if the crew already harmed a Weaver, sent a disruptive surge into the feeding network, or entered carrying an exposed energy source that drew the nest;
- begin at **two** only if the crew already removed food violently or arrived while the colony was actively pursuing them.

Advance the clock when a concrete trigger occurs:

- a reserve pack is removed without replacing its usable energy;
- a smaller Weaver is harmed;
- a Failure with Fear occurs during an action that directly manipulates the Queen, her food, or the nest, and the chosen consequence worsens that relationship;
- an uncontrolled surge reaches the feeding lines;
- or a deception collapses while the crew and the stolen energy remain within the colony's reach; advance **two** for that sudden deficit.

Do **not** advance it because time passes, because the crew is present, or because an unrelated medical, social, navigation, or combat roll fails. A clock records a cause, not bad luck in the abstract.

When Hunger Fills

The Queen's intention is to defend the nest. She blocks the extraction route, pulls workers around the reserve stack, and makes the wordless pressure unmistakable.

Pause and tell the crew what she is about to do. Ask what they change.

If they retreat, restore energy, surrender a pack, or create a new arrangement, combat need not begin and the Keeper may remove a segment when the cause of the escalation is genuinely resolved. Begin **Take It by Force** only if the crew attacks, continues removing food through the warning, or knowingly chooses to break the defence.

The full clock removes tolerance. It does not remove agency.

THE FIVE APPROACHES

Every approach below is available. None is the hidden correct answer. The crew may combine them, abandon one for another, or invent a sixth.

Soothe the Hunger

The crew leaves enough usable energy connected, provides another viable source, or restores a dependable feed.

If the offering is adequate and the crew gives the colony room to recognise it, this works without a roll. The Queen lets them move the remaining packs and does not pursue them merely because the scene needs pressure.

Use **Presence or Instinct Roll, DC 10** only when the offer is partial, rushed, or being made while the nest is already defending itself. A symbolic gesture cannot replace the amount of energy the fiction established she needs.

This buys bloodless passage. It does not free the Queen, cure her hunger permanently, or erase what Kurogane did.

Redirect the Energy

The transfer chamber (**F6**) and manifold (**F5**) can isolate the reserve packs and maintain a different feed.

- Isolating the packs is the existing **DC 15** intervention from F5.
- Isolating them while establishing a stable feed from the station reactor is **Finesse or Knowledge (Tech) DC 20** because the character must keep both sides of the network safe at once.

- If preparation, recovered access, and a tested bypass remove the uncertainty, let the work succeed without another roll.

Before the crew commits, state the power cost. If the new feed draws energy away from structural containment, record **Sustained Reactor Feed**. Scene 7 then begins **Structural Failure** at two segments instead of its normal one. If the crew supplies an independent source or stabilises the load before the escape, do not impose that increase.

The cost follows the power transfer. It is not a penalty for choosing mercy.

Distract the Nest

The crew uses the Observation Galleries (**F4**), a controlled pulse through F5, or a decoy source to pull attention away from the reserve stack.

A prepared distraction built from an F4 result of **DC 20** or higher works without a further roll. An improvised distraction under pressure uses **Instinct or Knowledge Roll, DC 15**.

State how long the opening will last or what will end it. Distraction creates time; it does not feed the Queen or guarantee what happens after the crew leaves.

Deceive the System

Suppressing the packs' signature through F5 is the existing **DC 20** intervention. It can make the transfer chamber report a full feed while the crew withdraws the power.

This buys distance rather than goodwill. Advance Hunger by two only when the deficit actually reaches the Queen while the colony can still act on it. If the crew is already beyond the nest's reach, carry the deception forward as the Scene 7 starting state or a later obligation instead of retroactively starting a fight in an empty room.

Take It by Force

A crew may drive the colony back and take the packs. This is a genuine two-phase Tier 1 Solo encounter, not a failure state and not a punishment for refusing the humane routes.

The Queen below is an **adventure-specific reskin** of the **Rust-King phased archetype** in *VeilFarers Keeper's Companion 12.03*, Chapter 12, "The Galactic Bestiary." The HP, Evasion, Armor, action damage, Continuous rider, Mook, and escape DC are inherited from that printed chassis. The fiction and names change; the numerical structure does not. Do not use obsolete Queen profiles from earlier working material: they contain **Charmed** and other superseded wording.

Run the fight through normal Spotlight play. The Queen uses an Action when the Keeper spends Fear or takes the Spotlight, and may use no more than one Fear Ability in a Spotlight cycle.

Phase One - The Defending Mother

Phase Stat	Value
HP	10
Evasion	8
Armor	3

Feed-Line Sweep - Action: Ranged, Close. Deal **1d10 Physical** and push the target one range band. The blow travels through a conduit or resin limb that the established chamber geometry can support.

Call the Workers - Fear 1: One worker drops from a crawlway behind or beside the crew. It is a Mook with **1 HP** and **1d6 damage**. Do not add it from a sealed route or summon it without a fictional entrance.

Phase One ends when this HP pool reaches zero. Pause the Spotlight. Clear the Queen's negative Conditions, reveal the transition, and apply the Companion's final-phase **Desperation** rule: the Keeper gains **3 Fear**, subject to the hard maximum of 12.

READ ALOUD - THE SHELL BREAKS The last impact travels through the clear nest in a ring of blue light. The Queen's outer plates split. Crystal sloughs from her flanks and crashes across the reserve frames. The heavy body that guarded the food folds inward - then rises again, narrower, faster, no longer between you and the packs. The warmth behind your breastbone becomes an open wound.

Phase Two - The Starving Thing

Phase Stat	Value
HP	8
Evasion	12
Armor	0

Desperation - Passive: The Queen deals **+2 damage** on her attacks, as printed for the Rust-King chassis.

Ravenous Grasp - Action: Melee. Deal **1d8+2 Physical**. The attack is **Continuous**: if the Queen remains engaged with that target, it hits again on her next Spotlight as the printed chassis describes.

Feed-Line Grip - Fear 1: After Ravenous Grasp causes HP loss, apply Restrained. The target may clear it with the normal Core Strength Roll, DC 15, or an ally's Action. Ravenous Grasp deals its Continuous damage at the start of each Spotlight while the target remains Restrained.

Containment Override - Fear 1: Recombine the printed Loader archetype's Emergency Override as permitted by the Chapter 12 workshop. Choose one chamber element the fiction supports: a powered shutter seals one exit for two rounds, or an overhead crystal frame swings and forces an **Agility Reaction Roll DC 10**; on a failure, it deals **1d8 Physical**. This is an environmental change, not an extra Queen attack.

The Mercy Window

The nonviolent routes remain open during Phase Two. A character can surrender a pack, restore a stable feed, break contact, or use leverage already created in the labs.

Do not automatically raise every DC because combat began. Use **DC 15** when immediate danger makes a previously automatic act consequential, **DC 20** only when the act now requires strong aptitude, preparation, or favourable positioning, and no roll when the crew has already made the outcome certain.

If the crew removes the cause of the Queen's attack and gives her a credible way to stop, end the fight. Killing her is valid. So is stopping.

OPTIONAL AFTERMATH - THE THING THAT RUNS

This is not a compulsory third combat phase.

When Phase Two reaches zero HP, the Queen's **intention** may be to split the dying shell and flee as a forearm-length sliver of resin and living crystal. Use that intention only if the table wants the campaign seed and the fiction still leaves her an escape route.

Before it happens, show the shell cracking and ask what the crew does. A crew that destroys the core, contains the body, seals every route, or chooses another credible response can prevent the escape. No sliver has plot armour.

If it emerges, read:

READ ALOUD The great body shudders, cracks, and folds inward - and something leaves it. Small. Wet. Bright. It pours out of the collapsing shell like liquid glass finding a crack. It is not turning to fight. It is searching for a live conduit.

Escape Route - Three Segments

Treat the sliver as a chase objective, not as an Evasion-and-HP adversary. Place a visible three-segment **Escape Route** clock. It does not advance on an automatic turn.

Advance it by one only when:

- a Failure with Fear occurs while directly tracking, sealing, or containing the sliver and the stated consequence gives it ground;
- the crew knowingly leaves a route open to pursue another priority;
- a surge or collapse physically destroys a seal;
- or the crew allows it to pass.

Use Map Plate 5:

- **Track it:** the Observation Galleries (4) or Hidden Monitoring Booth (15) can predict its route with **Knowledge or Instinct Roll, DC 15** under pressure. A success grants Advantage on the next attempt to seal or contain it. If the sensors are restored and the path is already known, no roll is needed.
- **Seal it:** the Power-Routing Manifold (12) or Maintenance Bypass Access (17) can close a live route. With working controls and no interference this is automatic. Under pressure or through damaged systems, use **Finesse or Knowledge (Tech) DC 15**.
- **End the chase:** once every viable route is sealed, the crew decides whether to destroy, capture, study, feed, or release the contained sliver. Ask for another roll only if a separate danger makes that decision uncertain.

When the clock fills, the sliver reaches the **station's power-routing network**. It does not teleport into a ship. Determine which live route the crew actually left connected.

Optional Recommended Ending - The Ship That Learns

This is a genuine possible ending to *Hearts in the Void* and a **recommended campaign hook**. It is optional because not every table wants its first ship to become a living mystery, not because the fusion is less valid than the other outcomes.

Before play, or before revealing the sliver, the Keeper decides whether **The Ship That Learns** is available in this campaign. Recommend it when:

- this adventure is opening an ongoing campaign;
- the crew is likely to leave with continuing access to a ship;
- the table enjoys strange relationships, biological technology, wonder mixed with unease, and consequences that grow over several adventures;
- and the Keeper wants the Queen's story to remain part of the crew's life rather than ending at Charon's Refuge.

Do not use it when the table wants a closed ending, has rejected biological-invasion themes, or would experience the bond as the Keeper taking ownership of the crew's ship.

The ending still requires a route established through play. The sliver can reach a vessel only through a physical, energised connection: a reserve pack taken aboard with the sliver inside, a live charging umbilical, an open conduit, or another route visible on the table. If no such route exists, it nests in the station network or reaches another established power source.

If the Keeper enabled this ending and the sliver reaches the vessel, it enters the reactor infrastructure and spins a crystalline cocoon around the drive's supporting systems. The fusion begins.

READ ALOUD - A NEW HEART The reactor draw steadies. Not drops. Not fails. Steadies - as if something on the other side of the bulkhead has learned the rhythm of the ship and placed a hand over its pulse. Along one coolant line, clear crystal opens like a vein beneath the metal. Then the warmth behind your breastbone answers from inside the hull.

The integration unfolds over hours and days. Resin replaces damaged conduit. Crystal threads follow coolant lines and control runs. The ship remains operable, but it begins to heal, reroute, listen, and develop habits that ordinary machinery should not possess.

The crew may discover the bond early. Before deep integration, they can still try to contain the sliver, remove it, seek expert help, or accept what is happening. If they permit the fusion to complete - or cannot stop it - separating Queen and vessel becomes a serious Long-Term Project or campaign objective that risks the reactor and the life growing through it. It is difficult, consequential, and potentially tragic; it is not declared metaphysically impossible.

When the new intelligence wakes, it has learned the crew through vibration, voices, repairs, arguments, and the rituals around the ship. It may recognise them as family. It may become protective, frightened, needy, possessive, curious, or alien in ways that evolve through play. It does not automatically control the ship, erase the crew's ownership, or dictate one emotional relationship.

Use the first signs sparingly:

- a damaged circuit reroutes before the Engineer reaches it;
- a bulkhead warms when a familiar crew member approaches;
- internal sensors report an extra heartbeat that has no location;
- the ship seals a door to protect someone without receiving an order;

- or the same warmth-and-cold language from the Queen's chamber answers a crew member from inside the walls.

The fusion itself is the reward and the hook. It grants no automatic numerical benefit during this adventure. In particular, do not grant the submitted **Pearl-Thrift** rule: *VeilFarers Corebook 12.03*, Chapters 1 and 17, states that every Veil jump consumes one Quantum Pearl. If the bonded ship later gains a mechanical feature, design and audit it as a formal Ship Feature with a cost, limit, and campaign consequence.

This ending is optional for the Keeper and preventable through play, but when chosen and achieved it should be treated as a full ending - not reduced to a disposable contamination note.

WHAT THE QUEEN LEAVES BEHIND

Record the exact result before leaving the labs.

Scene 4 result	Scene 7 starting consequence
Queen fed, calmed, or sustained through a stable alternative source	Weaver Convergence 0
Queen unresolved or never reached	Weaver Convergence 1
Food taken violently, deception discovered, nest harmed, or active energy trail left toward the crew	Weaver Convergence 2
Queen killed	Use what the death established: 0 if the workers became dormant or dispersed; 2 if they frenzied or began pursuit
Sliver contained, destroyed, fed, or released	Record its actual location and the colony's response; do not infer pursuit automatically
Sliver loose in the station power network	Weaver Convergence 2 only if it or the workers are actively following the crew's route; otherwise create the appropriate later obligation
Sliver reaches a vessel and The Ship That Learns is enabled	The fusion begins; record the vessel, route, integration stage, what the crew has noticed, and whether they accept or resist it
Sustained reactor feed draws from structural containment	Structural Failure begins at 2 instead of 1 unless the crew stabilises that load before Scene 7

The Queen stops being a room the crew passed through and becomes a decision the escape remembers.

COMPLETING THE EXPLORATION

The chapter reaches its decision point once the crew understands enough to choose what comes next:

- Charon's Refuge contains a hidden Kurogane facility.
- The Weaver Queen was imprisoned there.
- The Weavers drained the station and the Iron Hearts' ship.
- The stolen energy packs became emergency food for the nest.
- Recovering the packs may restore the ship and preserve the station.
- Taking them without addressing the Queen's hunger may create another disaster.

The players determine whether they negotiate, distract, deceive, attack, redirect the energy, or abandon the recovery.

The station provides the problem.

The crew creates the solution.

10. SCENE 5: THE BROKEN HEART

Location: Engineering Section, Charon's Refuge

Purpose: Bring the crew face to face with Zara, Alexei, and the surviving Iron Hearts; reveal the truth behind the kidnapping; and expose the fracture forming around Korren without deciding what the players will do about it.

MAP REFERENCE: Use **Map Plate 4 - Engineering & Emergency Holdouts**. The Iron Hearts occupy the auxiliary engine rooms, workshops, and barricaded service corridors around the main power infrastructure.

ENTERING ENGINEERING

Engineering announces itself through heat before the crew reaches it.

The air grows warmer with every bulkhead. Condensation disappears from the walls. Pipes begin to tick and knock behind the plating, then settle into the deeper rhythm of pumps and generators carrying loads they were never designed to hold for this long.

The main access corridor has been rebuilt as a defensive approach.

Cargo containers block the widest line of sight. Tool cabinets have been overturned and welded into low barricades. Strips of black paint mark safe footing across damaged deck plates. Empty ration tins hang from wires near the maintenance routes, crude alarms that will rattle long before anyone reaches the holdout unnoticed.

The smell is immediate:

- hot metal;
- ozone;
- coolant;
- burned insulation;
- old sweat;
- weapon oil;
- and food heated too many times in the same dented container.

Beyond the barricades, white work lamps turn steam into bright sheets of moving light.

People are waiting behind them.

THE AUXILIARY ENGINE ROOM

The auxiliary engine room is a broad industrial chamber built around three generator columns and the pipes feeding them.

Two generators remain active. The third stands open, its interior stripped for replacement parts. Cables cross the floor beneath rubber covers and improvised insulation. A maintenance crane has been lowered and locked across one approach as a barrier.

The Iron Hearts have made the chamber survivable rather than comfortable.

Bedrolls lie behind tool benches. Medical supplies occupy a welding table. Ammunition has been sorted into open cases beside the barricades. A cookpot rests on a heater plate near the generators, close enough to stay warm and far enough from Brix that somebody has clearly learned from experience.

A station schematic is pinned to one wall beneath handwritten notes:

- **SHIP: DRY**
- **MAIN RESERVES GONE**
- **AUXILIARY FEED UNSTABLE**
- **MOVEMENT BELOW RESEARCH**
- **DO NOT USE EAST VENTS**

The Iron Hearts' ship appears on a nearby display as a grey silhouette. Every reserve indicator is empty.

FIRST SIGHT OF THE IRON HEARTS

READ ALOUD The last barricade opens onto a chamber full of heat, white light, and raised weapons. A human woman stands behind an overturned tool cabinet with an energy pistol levelled across its edge. Her dark flight coat is open at the throat, one sleeve stained with coolant and dried blood. Premature silver cuts through her hair above tired green eyes. She does not look frightened. She looks as though fear became unaffordable several days ago. Beside her stands a young man in a Joric uniform that was once immaculate. The coat is wrinkled, the collar undone, and one polished boot has been repaired with industrial sealant. He is handsome in the way official portraits prefer and exhausted in the way official portraits never permit. Brix occupies the space between them and the nearest open route. His claws are not fully extended. They do not need to be. Two others stand farther back among the generators: a thin engineer beside an open console and a translucent Ethereal whose outline shifts whenever the lights flicker. The woman studies each of you. "So," she says. "You are the problem-solvers."

If Brix escorted the crew here, his presence keeps the first exchange tense but contained.

A crew that enters through another route finds the Iron Hearts already alerted by their alarms, station sensors, or the sound of movement through Engineering. Open weapons, concealed movement, or a recent fight may put everyone one breath from violence.

If the crew attempts to stop that violence while refusing to lower weapons or identify itself, use **Presence Roll, DC 15**.

On a failure, nobody fires automatically. Zara orders the crew disarmed or outside the barricade while the conversation continues through cover.

CAPTAIN ZARA "STARWIND" KAINE

Zara Kaine is the captain of the Iron Hearts and the registered owner of their stranded ship.

She is an exceptional pilot, an experienced mercenary, and a terrible cook. The last fact matters less to her than it does to everyone who has ever shared a galley with her.

Zara's attention moves constantly:

- from the crew's hands;
- to the entrance behind them;
- to Alexei;
- to the ship-status display;
- and back to the crew.

She has slept in short intervals and no longer remembers which day she last completed one.

Her first questions are practical.

"Who sent you?"

"Who else knows you are here?"

"Did you see the second ship?"

"How many Weavers between here and the docking ring?"

"Is your vessel still operational?"

She does not volunteer the truth until she understands what the crew represents. She expects agents, bounty hunters, mercenaries, or some combination of all three.

She is prepared for the crew to lie.

What she is not prepared for is indifference.

ALEXEI JORIC

Alexei is twenty-three years old.

His public image presents him as a dutiful heir, a diplomatic asset, and one half of a marriage intended to stabilize relations between Houses Joric and Valerius.

The man standing in Engineering is none of those things comfortably.

He is frightened, embarrassed by his fear, and determined to speak for himself before anyone converts him back into a political object.

Alexei carries a secured datapad containing:

- correspondence proving that he arranged the disappearance;

- the original agreement with the Iron Hearts;
- access to a substantial private reserve intended to pay them;
- funds prepared for a new life in the Rim;
- and several poems that should not be considered evidence of anything except sincerity and catastrophic judgment.

He does not yet know about Korren's debt.

The reserve could solve more than one problem if the truth reaches him before Korren believes every other exit has closed.

THE TRUTH OF THE KIDNAPPING

Zara does not deliver the revelation as a speech prepared for an audience.

It comes out through questions, interruptions, accusations, and whatever evidence the players demand.

The essential truth is simple:

Alexei hired the Iron Hearts to stage his kidnapping.

The original plan required three quiet days at Charon's Refuge. By the time the marriage deadline passed and both Houses began searching in the wrong directions, Zara would take him into the Rim under a new identity.

Instead:

- the Weaver infestation intensified;
- the station began losing power;
- the Iron Hearts' ship was drained;
- another vessel arrived carrying professional hunters;
- and every route out of the system closed.

Zara may state it plainly once concealment stops serving anyone.

"Three days. That was the whole plan." She looks toward the ship display, where the reserve indicators remain black. "Hide here. Let the marriage deadline pass. Leave before either House understood what happened." Her laugh contains no amusement. "Then the station started eating its own power. Then professionals arrived. Now you." She raises her eyes to the crew. "So tell me who bought your version of this disaster."

Alexei does not allow Zara to carry the explanation alone.

"I asked her." His voice is quiet at first, then steadier. "I chose this. Nobody abducted me. Nobody manipulated me. I knew what the Houses would do when I disappeared, and I did it anyway." He takes a breath. "That does not make the consequences less real. It makes them mine."

When pressure rises, Alexei begins reaching for poetry.

"Love is a kind of quantum - " Brix turns his head toward him.
"Is this a medical event?" Zara closes her eyes. "No."
"Should I restrain him?" "Also no." Alexei waits. "May I continue?" "Absolutely not," Zara says.

EVIDENCE IN THE ROOM

The crew can verify the central claim without accepting Zara's word.

Alexei's agreement with the Iron Hearts includes his authorization codes, staged ransom language, payment structure, and extraction plan. Its timestamps predate the reported kidnapping.

The secured correspondence shows Alexei initiating contact and rejecting several safer plans because each returned him to one House or another.

The ship logs show that the Iron Hearts arrived under a legitimate independent contract rather than as a raiding vessel.

The room also contains evidence of what happened afterward:

- empty emergency-pack mounts;
- station power traces leading toward the hidden research level;
- sensor recordings of the concealed vessel arriving later;
- and messages from unknown parties attempting to reach Alexei through closed channels.

A character examining Alexei's documentation can confirm its Joric authentication with **Knowledge Roll, DC 10**.

The records prove that Alexei arranged the operation. They do not prove that helping him remains the safest or most ethical choice.

WHAT THE IRON HEARTS NEED

The Iron Hearts have three immediate problems.

Their Ship Has No Heart

The vessel belongs to Zara, but its primary and emergency energy packs were removed.

The hull remains viable. The engines remain viable. Launching without recovered reserves would leave the ship unable to sustain life support and complete a Veil transit.

If the crew explored the Kurogane labs or traced the station's power network, it may already know where the packs were taken.

The Whispers Are Still Moving

The second vessel remains docked.

Zara has seen distortions in the station corridors and lost one supply route without hearing a shot. She knows the Credit's Whispers by reputation even if she cannot confirm which operatives are aboard.

She assumes they came for Alexei.

She is correct.

The Station Is Failing

Engineering can hold the refuge together temporarily, but every remaining system draws from a shrinking reserve.

Restoring the Iron Hearts' ship may require energy the station also needs. Recovering the packs will not end the underlying crisis by itself.

Nobody in the room has the authority to decide which lives deserve the power.

That does not prevent everyone from having an opinion.

KORREN'S DESPERATION

Korren is the Iron Hearts' engineer.

He has spent the last several days keeping generators alive, rebuilding power routes, and calculating how long everyone has before the station makes their choices for them.

He is also drowning in gambling debt owed to the Aurelian Syndicate.

House Joric offered him a way out:

- transmit Alexei's location;
- disable the Iron Hearts' escape;
- and help deliver the heir alive.

Thex learned enough to recognize an opportunity and encouraged the arrangement.

Korren has not betrayed the crew yet.

He is moving toward it.

THE CLOCK

Use a four-segment clock titled **Korren's Desperation**.

Begin with **one segment filled**. The debt, the failed escape, and the arrival of new mercenaries have already placed him under pressure.

Advance the clock when events make Korren believe his remaining choices are disappearing:

- the crew declares that Alexei will be taken by force;
- Korren receives another Syndicate or Joric demand;
- escape becomes visibly less likely;
- his secret is exposed publicly without protection or an alternative;
- Thex convinces him that the crew intends to leave him behind;
- or the situation costs him a resource he believed could save him.

Remove a segment when events create a credible alternative:

- someone offers real protection from the Syndicate;
- the crew separates Korren from Thex's influence;
- Alexei learns about the debt and offers access to his reserve;
- Korren is included in a workable escape plan;
- or he confesses and receives a response that leaves room for survival.

Empathy alone may slow him.

A plan changes him.

When the clock fills, Korren sends the completed location package and commits to helping Joric forces take Alexei. The exact moment should grow from the fiction: during a power failure, while the crew enters the labs, as the Whispers attack, or when launch becomes possible.

The clock does not require Korren to become cruel, confident, or eager.

He betrays people he loves because he believes terror has reduced his life to one remaining door.

KORREN IN THE ROOM

Korren stands beside an open engineering console with a tool still in one hand.

He is broad-shouldered, unshaven, and more physically worn than anyone else in the holdout. Coolant has dried in pale tracks across his work clothes. A small burn on one wrist has been wrapped badly because he did it himself.

His behaviour carries the fracture:

- he answers technical questions too quickly;
- he avoids looking at Zara when Alexei's future is discussed;
- he tracks every mention of payment;
- his personal communicator remains muted but never leaves his body;
- and he checks the crew's weapons with the automatic attention of somebody imagining where they will point later.

Korren is still useful, still protective, and still capable of laughing.

That makes the wrongness harder to dismiss.

THEX

Thex occupies the edge of the room.

Their translucent form catches generator light in thin bands of blue and violet. Their posture suggests patience, though their attention moves between Korren, the exits, and whoever currently appears most likely to control the outcome.

Thex is not committed to House Joric.

Thex is committed to surviving the version of events that looks most profitable.

They reinforce Korren's fear through apparently reasonable observations:

"The Houses already know enough."

"A rescue force is not necessarily an enemy force."

"There are futures where everyone survives this."

Thex does not add:

"Those futures pay us."

READING THE FRACTURE - INSTINCT

A character who deliberately watches Korren and Thex during the argument can make one Core Trait Roll.

- **DC 15:** Korren's fear is attached to a private deadline and the repeated attention he gives his communicator.
- **DC 20:** Thex is monitoring Korren, guiding his attention toward danger, payment, and the idea that betrayal is inevitable.

With Fear: The character learns the information, but Korren or Thex notices the scrutiny. Add **two segments** to Korren's Desperation as Thex convinces him that the crew is already closing in.

The Roll reveals tension, not the complete agreement. The actual debt and Joric offer remain discoverable through conversation, intercepted communications, or a direct confrontation.

THE CONVERSATION TURNS

Once the truth is in the open, the room stops being a simple standoff.

The crew's contract points toward Alexei.

Zara's obligation points toward protecting him.

Alexei claims the right to determine his own life.

Brix will follow Zara unless she orders something he believes violates her honor.

Korren watches for a path that saves him.

Thex watches for the path that pays.

Several futures remain possible.

The crew may insist on completing Maya's contract. It may support Alexei and Zara. It may seek terms that give Amaranth information without surrendering Alexei. It may contact another House, bargain with Silk, recover the ship, abandon the station, or create a solution none of the people in Engineering has imagined.

No decision has to be final before the crew understands who else is hunting them and what the station still contains.

IF THE CREW MOVES AGAINST ALEXEI

Zara does not surrender him.

Brix places himself between Alexei and the nearest threat. Korren hesitates, caught between the confrontation he expected and the people he has not yet betrayed. Thex moves toward whichever side offers the cleanest escape.

The engine room becomes dangerous immediately:

- exposed power conduits arc across damaged sections;
- generator housings provide hard cover;
- steam can blind entire lanes;
- the maintenance crane blocks the widest approach;
- and the barricades divide the room into short, violent sightlines.

Alexei is not a trained combatant. He moves when told, freezes when several people shout different instructions, and attempts to help in ways that may create more problems than they solve.

Violence here does not end the adventure.

It decides who carries the next problem forward.

IF THE CREW CREATES SPACE

A ceasefire becomes possible once nobody is actively trying to seize Alexei.

Zara lowers her pistol first but does not holster it. Brix retracts his claws one at a time. Korren returns to the console because machinery is easier than eye contact. Thex becomes suddenly interested in a generator reading that has not changed.

The shared dangers make continued conversation practical:

- the Weavers control key routes;
- the Whispers remain concealed nearby;
- the station is losing power;
- and no vessel currently offers a clean escape.

Zara offers access to the holdout, its sensor records, and what remains of the Iron Hearts' supplies while the crew decides its next move.

This is not trust.

It is the beginning of enough time for trust, suspicion, or betrayal to become personal.

TRANSITION: THE UNEASY CEASEFIRE

Engineering settles into a temporary rhythm.

Weapons remain within reach. Someone seals the outer barricade. Brix checks the alarms. The generator columns continue their uneven rotation, pushing waves of heat through the chamber.

Alexei sits near the station schematic with his secured datapad held between both hands.

Korren's communicator vibrates once against his side.

He silences it without looking.

Across the room, Thex notices.

So may the crew.

The next hours will determine whether the people inside this chamber become allies, prisoners, employers, liabilities, or enemies.

For the moment, they share the same failing station.

11. SCENE 5B: BONDS & SHADOWS

Location: Engineering, Residential, and the abandoned Commercial District of Charon's Refuge

Purpose: Give the crew time to understand the people behind the conflict, expose the pressure breaking Korren, and allow contact with Madame Silk before the station becomes a war zone.

MAP REFERENCES - Use **Map Plate 4 - Engineering & Emergency Holdouts** for the Iron Hearts' holdout, the generator rooms, and the approaches under their control. - Use **Map Plate 3 - Commercial & Residential Sectors** for quieter conversations, survivor spaces, the abandoned cantina, and any meeting with the Credit's Whispers.

THE CEASEFIRE

The ceasefire begins without ceremony.

Zara lowers her pistol. Someone closes the outer barricade. Brix checks every entrance twice. Korren returns to the generator console with the rigid concentration of a person grateful to have machinery between himself and everyone else.

The engine room does not become comfortable.

It becomes occupied.

Weapons remain close to hand. The generator columns rotate with a heavy uneven rhythm. Steam escapes from a repaired valve in short white breaths. Every few minutes, the lights weaken, recover, and leave everyone listening for movement in the dark.

The Iron Hearts have enough heat for one chamber, enough clean water for several careful days, and enough food to make survival possible without making it pleasant.

A refresher unit works if nobody uses hot water.

Brix has found a crate of Nexus-7 whiskey in an abandoned storage room.

He has also found the galley.

The second discovery is more dangerous.

READ ALOUD For the first time since you entered Charon's Refuge, nobody is pointing a weapon at anyone else. The generator room settles around you in layers of heat and noise. A cookpot rattles on a maintenance heater. Damp clothes hang from conduit brackets. Someone has arranged bedrolls between tool lockers and marked the clear paths with strips of black tape. Beyond the barricades, the station continues to groan, flicker, and breathe through damaged vents. Inside, people begin attempting the smaller work of remaining human. Zara studies a flight route for a ship

without power. Alexei writes something in a notebook and quickly covers it when Brix looks over. Korren repairs a console that does not need repairing. Thex counts the remaining bottles of whiskey and appears offended by arithmetic. Nobody trusts anyone. There is food anyway.

The crew may remain in Engineering, use the residential rooms nearest the holdout, inspect the ship and station data, or move through the sectors already opened during exploration.

What happens in these hours determines which tensions survive long enough to become alliances - and which ones break.

LIFE AROUND THE HOLDOUT

ZARA'S WATCH

Zara spends quiet intervals beside an Engineering viewport where Tenebris Secundus fills most of the glass.

The gas giant turns beneath the station in bands of violet and rust. Lightning moves through its atmosphere without sound. Reflected light catches every scratch in the viewport and turns the room behind Zara into a faint ghost over the planet.

She cleans her pistol while reviewing the same flight route repeatedly.

The route begins at Charon's Refuge.

It never reaches a destination.

When conversation moves away from contracts and Houses, Zara speaks about Alexei rather than the operation.

She describes meeting him in a Nexus-7 bar where he attempted to impress her with a poem comparing pilots to migratory plasma phenomena.

"It was six pages." She looks offended by the memory. "The plasma phenomenon died in the second stanza and returned without explanation in the fifth." A smile reaches her despite herself. "I laughed so hard I spilled my drink. He thanked me for the criticism."

The ship matters almost as much as the escape.

It is registered in Zara's name. She bought it after losing the colony where she grew up and spent years turning it into the first home she trusted to move when danger arrived.

She will not abandon it easily.

She will abandon it before sacrificing everyone else to keep it.

Those two truths are currently fighting inside her.

BRIX ATTEMPTS DINNER

Brix has interpreted "season to taste" as an instruction to use every available seasoning until the food develops a measurable defensive capability.

The result is a pot of nutrient paste with a dark red surface and an aroma strong enough to cut through coolant, smoke, and industrial cleanser.

Korren eats it without comment.

Alexei attempts one mouthful, becomes very still, and drinks half a container of water.

Zara claims she has survived worse.

Nobody asks her to prove it.

Brix watches every reaction with the grave attention of a scientist reviewing test results.

"The flavour is powerful." "That is one word for it," Zara says. "Power is desirable." "Not always in food." Brix considers this. "Human cuisine contains many unnecessary limitations."

Helping Brix salvage the meal earns his trust more effectively than flattering him.

He talks while working, mostly about practical matters:

- which routes the Weavers use;
- where the Whispers have been seen;
- how Zara behaves when afraid;
- why Korren has not slept;
- and why Alexei remains part of the pack despite being structurally unsuited to combat.

Brix's explanations of Kryx courtship become increasingly alarming. He remains completely sincere.

ALEXEI'S ACCOUNTS

Alexei keeps his secured datapad close enough that nobody could take it without making the intention clear.

The device holds the evidence of his plan, but it also contains its finances.

He intended to pay the Iron Hearts generously after the staged disappearance. His private reserve is large enough to compensate the crew, establish new identities, purchase supplies, and give every surviving Iron Heart a real choice about what came next.

Alexei explains the reserve defensively at first.

"I did not expect them to destroy their lives for a romantic gesture." He looks toward Zara. "An extremely serious romantic gesture." Zara does not look away from the flight

display. "Stop helping." "I prepared funding." "You prepared poetry." "I prepared both."

The reserve is committed capital rather than unlimited personal Wealth. It exists because Alexei understood that freedom purchased with someone else's ruin would not be freedom.

He has accounted for ship repairs, forged identities, relocation, and the Iron Hearts' shares.

He has not accounted for Korren's debt.

Nobody told him it existed.

ALEXEI'S POETRY

Alexei writes whenever the room becomes too quiet.

His current work is titled:

Bulkheads of the Heart

The opening compares romantic commitment to pressure integrity.

The second stanza rhymes *nebula* with *spatula*.

The third contains a technically inaccurate description of quantum entanglement that causes Thex to become visibly distressed.

"That is not what entanglement means." Alexei looks up from the notebook. "It is metaphorical." "The metaphor remains factually offensive." "You said love was an inefficient investment." "That statement was accurate."

Alexei's poetry is terrible.

His need to write it is not a joke.

The notebook is how he processes the knowledge that Zara's crew, the station's survivors, and possibly an entire political sector are now paying for a choice he made.

A character who listens long enough sees the fear beneath the performance.

THEX TAKES INVENTORY

Thex counts supplies from a position near the whiskey crate.

Their translucent body reflects generator light in thin bands of gold and violet. They have arranged food, ammunition, medical supplies, and bottles into a private ledger nobody authorized.

Thex's valuations bear little relationship to reality.

"This bottle is clearly worth forty credits." Korren does not look up. "It is industrial solvent." "Then it has technical applications." "It removes paint." "Versatile."

Thex speaks easily about survival and avoids speaking about loyalty.

They frame every possibility as an exchange:

- the ship for safe passage;
- Alexei for protection;
- information for immunity;
- the station's records for future leverage.

Their interest sharpens whenever the crew discusses payment, Silk, or contacting a House.

Thex may approach whichever character appears most pragmatic.

"Korren is being sentimental about a transaction already in motion." Their form shifts toward a warmer gold. "You need not make the same mistake."

Thex will offer details about House Joric's likely response without admitting how those details were obtained.

KORREN'S CRACKS

Korren remains useful throughout the ceasefire.

He repairs equipment. He stabilizes the generators. He explains the ship's power needs. He checks the barricades when Brix is elsewhere.

Nothing he does is false.

The fracture appears between those acts.

His communicator vibrates at irregular intervals. He silences it without reading the screen in front of others. When Alexei discusses payment, Korren's hands stop moving. When Zara talks about reaching the Rim, he begins another repair.

He laughs too loudly at weak jokes.

He apologizes for things nobody blamed him for.

He watches the crew's weapons while pretending to admire their maintenance.

THE COMMUNICATOR

Korren's personal communicator contains layers of unread threats from the Aurelian Syndicate and an active encrypted channel routed through a House Joric relay.

The most recent message contains no greeting.

**CONFIRM TARGET LOCATION. CONFIRM VESSEL STATUS.
FINAL CONSIDERATION EXPIRES AT NEXT CYCLE.**

Korren has transmitted partial station data.

He has not yet sent the complete location package or the access information needed for a clean boarding operation.

Intercept the Burst Signal - Knowledge (Tech)

A character monitoring local communications can isolate the brief encrypted transmission.

- **DC 15:** The destination header belongs to a House Joric relay less than two systems away.
- **DC 20:** The packet requests confirmation of Alexei's location and the Iron Hearts' vessel status. A larger data package remains unsent.

With Fear: The interception leaves a trace on Korren's communicator. He knows someone in the holdout is watching the channel.

The signal is evidence of contact.

It does not reveal the gambling debt by itself.

THE MISSING NUMBER

Korren's engineering calculations are meticulous except for one recurring omission.

Every proposed escape budget includes fuel, life support, replacement packs, repairs, false registrations, and passage costs.

None includes Korren's own share.

When asked, he dismisses it.

"Get the ship moving. We can discuss numbers after." He checks the dark reserve indicators. "There has to be an after first."

The omission may look like sacrifice.

It is surrender.

Korren already believes his share belongs to the Syndicate.

THEX'S SLIP

Thex experiences time imperfectly and uses that imperfection as cover whenever ordinary deception becomes inconvenient.

During conversation, they may refer to Joric forces before anyone has mentioned them.

"The soldiers will enter through - " Thex stops. Their outline flickers. "Would enter. Hypothetical tense." Korren looks at them with naked fury. "Temporal grammar," Thex adds, "is imprecise."

The room does not need a check to recognize that something has gone wrong between them.

What the crew does with the mistake determines whether Korren retreats further into the plan or finally loses control of it.

CONFRONTING KORREN

Korren denies vague accusations.

He cannot maintain the denial against specific evidence, a private conversation, or a credible alternative.

The truth comes apart unevenly:

- the gambling;
- the Aurelian Syndicate;
- the threats;
- House Joric's offer;
- the partial transmissions;
- Thex's encouragement;
- and the location package he has not yet sent.

He does not present himself as a victim.

"Zara gave me another life." His voice has become too quiet for the generator room. "I gambled that one too." He looks at his hands. "I kept thinking I could fix it before anyone knew. That is what engineers do, yes? We fix the damage before it becomes the only thing people see." A short, ugly laugh escapes him. "I ran out of parts."

A threat may stop Korren temporarily.

It does not create another future.

A credible plan can.

WHEN ALEXEI LEARNS

Alexei's first response is disbelief.

Not anger.

Not accusation.

Disbelief.

"You thought you had to sell me?" Korren looks away. "The amount is not small." "I have the money." Silence reaches the corners of the engine room. Alexei opens his datapad with hands that have begun to shake. "Korren, I have the money." "You have Joric money." "I have money intended for all of you. I prepared it before we left." Korren's expression does not change. That makes it worse. Alexei lowers the datapad. "Why did you not tell me?" "Because people like you do not understand owing." Alexei absorbs the words. "Then explain it."

The reserve can remove the financial pressure.

It cannot erase the transmissions, the secrecy, or the choice Korren nearly made.

Korren still needs protection from the Syndicate and House Joric. He still needs to face Zara. Alexei still needs to understand that money solving the number does not solve what shame did to the people around it.

If Korren accepts the alternative and confesses to Zara, clear **Korren's Desperation.**

His betrayal no longer occurs unless later events create an entirely new reason for it.

If the crew creates an alternative but Korren refuses to confess, remove two segments. He remains unstable but no longer sees betrayal as his only exit.

ZARA'S RESPONSE

Zara does not strike Korren.

That would be easier for everyone.

She listens without interrupting. The generator beside her rotates through one full cycle before she speaks.

"You were going to sell him." Korren nods. "And us." Another nod. "How long?" "Since before the station failed." Zara looks at the dark ship display. "Get away from my console."

Her anger does not settle the matter.

Korren may remain in the holdout under watch because the station still needs its engineer. He may surrender his communicator. Brix may position himself between Korren and everyone else without deciding whether that is protection or custody.

The future of the Iron Hearts now depends on what they survive together and what the crew believes accountability should look like.

THEX AFTER THE CONFESSION

Thex does not share Korren's collapse.

If the plan is exposed, they adjust.

They may:

- insist they only offered analysis;
- propose selling the evidence instead;
- approach the player crew with a revised partnership;
- attempt contact with Silk;
- secure supplies and prepare to flee;
- or warn everyone that Joric forces may already be moving.

Thex becomes more dangerous when isolated because they have no loyalty left to lose.

They may also become unexpectedly useful.

They know the language of the agreement, the channels used, and the assumptions House Joric has made about the station.

Generosity confuses them.

A place in the escape plan frightens them more than a weapon.

A COURTESY FROM MADAME SILK

The message arrives during a quieter interval.

A watch rotation changes. Someone sleeps. Someone pretends to. The lights dim as Charon's Refuge transfers power through damaged systems.

Then a small metallic click comes from the floor inside the perimeter.

A black data chip rests several steps beyond the nearest barricade.

No alarm sounded.

No one saw it arrive.

The chip is warm.

A faint scent of expensive perfume hangs in the air around it.

When activated, it projects no image.

Only a voice.

MADAME SILK'S MESSAGE "Good evening." The speaker sounds calm, professional, and almost warm. "I will not insult your intelligence by pretending you do not know that another interested party is aboard this station." A brief pause. "My name is Madame Silk. I represent interests that would like young Joric returned to his intended future. You represent interests that complicate that objective." The voice remains pleasant. "You appear competent. Competent people are expensive to replace, and I dislike waste." "Leave Charon's Refuge within six hours. Take whatever payment Amaranth promised you. No one follows. No one remembers your faces." Another pause. "Remain when I move, and professionalism will require me to be thorough." "Consider this a courtesy." "They are rare in my profession."

The chip dissolves after playback, collapsing into metallic dust fine enough to cling to fingerprints.

Silk's offer is genuine.

So is the threat.

ANSWERING THE MESSAGE

A reply left at the perimeter, transmitted through an open local channel, or placed where Silk can recover it may receive an answer.

Silk responds to competence, leverage, and proposals that acknowledge her real problem.

She must return to House Valerius with something valuable enough to survive the failure of her primary contract:

- Alexei;
- credible proof of his death;
- intelligence worth more than the target;
- a political explanation Valerius can use;
- or a new arrangement that protects Silk and Scalpel from becoming liabilities.

Moral condemnation without an alternative does not move her.

A workable offer does.

If the crew proposes direct contact, Silk chooses the abandoned cantina in the Commercial District.

MEETING IN THE LAST CALL CANTINA

Use Map Plate 3 - Commercial & Residential Sectors.

The cantina sits beyond several dark corridors and a market concourse where damaged advertisements still cycle through products nobody can purchase.

The air becomes colder away from Engineering.

Tables remain where civilians abandoned them. A service light casts a blue line across the bar. Dust covers most surfaces except one booth near the centre of the room.

That table has been cleaned.

A metal cup waits at each open seat.

Steam rises from them.

Silk stands beside the booth.

Her crystalline limbs reflect the dead advertisements in thin shards of colour. Camouflage distortions fade around her body as though the room has only now decided she was present.

She is alone in the visible sense.

A second cup rests on the bar beneath an open maintenance grille.

Scalpel is on overwatch.

Silk says so before anyone asks.

"I am professional." She gestures toward the empty seats.
"Not stupid."

MADAME SILK AT THE TABLE

Silk studies the crew as carefully as any recovered evidence.

She notices:

- who speaks first;
- who chooses a seat facing the exits;
- who remains standing;
- who looks toward the maintenance grille;
- and who touches the offered drink.

The tea is safe.

Scalpel would consider poisoning hospitality aesthetically incoherent.

Silk's position is direct.

"Valerius paid for a living heir and a quiet return." She lifts her cup. "The heir is unwilling. The station is infested. House Joric is moving. Amaranth has hired strangers. Quiet is no longer available." Her gaze moves across the crew. "I am open to purchasing the next best product."

Silk does not care whether the crew approves of her contract. She cares whether it can produce a result that keeps everyone at the table alive.

WHAT SILK KNOWS

Silk can confirm several facts:

- Scalpel and Silk arrived after the Iron Hearts;
- House Valerius wants Alexei alive and the scandal contained;
- Joric channels have shown activity near the system;
- someone inside the Iron Hearts has transmitted partial information;
- the station's power crisis is worsening;
- and the Weavers respond strongly to energy movement below Research Access.

She does not know the full truth of the Kurogane labs unless the crew tells her or she has independently entered them.

She does know that the energy packs near the nest are probably the only viable route to restoring the Iron Hearts' ship.

Silk considers that an extraction problem.

Scalpel considers it research.

SCALPEL'S CONTRIBUTION

Scalpel remains out of sight until medical information, Weaver biology, or Silk's safety makes their presence useful.

Their voice comes through the maintenance grille, soft and conversational.

"The larger specimen is starving." A cup moves somewhere above the ceiling. "Starvation is distressing in any nervous system." A quiet sip. "It is particularly distressing in one capable of breeding an armed colony."

Scalpel may trade biological observations for access to the Kurogane records or a chance to examine recovered residue.

Their loyalty to Silk is absolute.

Their curiosity may still create cooperation.

LEAVING THE CANTINA

The meeting may produce a deal, an exchange of information, a temporary boundary, a trap, or nothing except a clearer understanding of the opposition.

Silk honours precise terms.

She exploits omissions.

If the crew gives her a survivable alternative, she may delay her move, redirect Scalpel, provide information, or participate in a larger deception.

If no agreement exists, she departs with the same calm she arrived with.

"Six hours was a courtesy." Her camouflage begins bending the blue service light around her. "Please do not confuse it with uncertainty."

The cups remain warm after she disappears.

THE STATION DURING THE BREATHING ROOM

Charon's Refuge continues changing while people talk.

A section of Residential loses heat.

Engineering restores it and darkens part of Commercial.

ARIA-7 crosses an empty corridor dragging a broken cleaning attachment and announces that blood constitutes an unauthorized floor treatment.

A smaller Weaver follows a powered cable through a wall and vanishes when the current fails.

A distant transmission reaches the station, too corrupted to identify but structured enough to prove someone is attempting contact.

The concealed vessel remains in its berth.

The Iron Hearts' ship remains dark.

The Queen's nest remains wrapped around the energy required to change that.

The ceasefire buys time.

It does not create safety.

WHEN THE SHADOWS MOVE

This scene reaches its end when the crew acts on what it has learned or when the people around them can no longer wait.

Korren's Desperation may fill.

Korren may confess and destroy the betrayal before it happens.

Silk's six-hour courtesy may expire.

The crew may complete a deal with the Whispers.

A signal may confirm that Joric forces are close enough to matter.

The crew may decide to recover the energy packs, move Alexei, take control of a ship, fortify Engineering, or leave Charon's Refuge behind.

Record what changed:

- whether Korren still intends to betray the Iron Hearts;
- whether Zara knows;
- whether Alexei offered the reserve;
- where Thex has placed their loyalty;
- whether Silk has a deal, a delay, or a target;
- whether Scalpel has reason to cooperate;

- and which people the crew now considers worth protecting.

When the fragile peace breaks, those relationships determine the shape of the conflict.

The station provides the pressure.

The people decide where it fractures.

12. SCENE 6: THE FRACTURE OPENS

Location: Engineering and the emergency holdouts of Charon's Refuge

Purpose: Let the consequences of Korren's desperation, Silk's contract, and the crew's decisions collide; then transform the political confrontation into a station-wide survival crisis through Protocol STERILIZE.

MAP REFERENCE: Use Map Plate 4 - Engineering & Emergency Holdouts. The auxiliary engine room, control consoles, catwalks, workshops, barricades, and maintenance approaches all remain active parts of the scene.

BEFORE THE FIRST SHOT

Begin from what the crew changed during **Bonds & Shadows**.

Korren may have confessed. He may still be hiding the full agreement. His Desperation clock may be almost full, or the alternative offered by Alexei and the crew may have cleared it completely.

Silk may have an arrangement with the crew. She may be waiting for her six-hour courtesy to expire. She may already have decided that negotiation produced nothing worth taking home.

Thex may still stand beside Korren, or may have begun building a private escape from the remains of the plan.

Do not reset those relationships to create a predetermined battle.

Bring their existing pressure into Engineering.

ENGINEERING AT THE BREAKING POINT

The auxiliary engine room has become hotter.

The generator columns turn with a rough mechanical rhythm, each rotation sending vibration through the deck. Warning lamps glow above open panels. Coolant mist hangs close to the floor and turns the lower half of the barricades into dark shapes inside white vapor.

The smell of food has disappeared beneath ozone and overheated insulation.

Every screen carries some version of the same problem:

- power falling;
- life support narrowing;
- sealed routes multiplying;
- movement inside maintenance spaces;
- and the unidentified vessel still attached to the Docking Ring.

The Iron Hearts' ship remains a grey outline on the largest display.

If the energy packs have been recovered, its reserve indicators begin filling slowly while Engineering routes charge through damaged systems.

If the packs remain inside the hidden labs, the indicators stay black.

Either image can become the centre of the argument.

THE STATE OF KORREN

KORREN CONFESSED

Korren remains in Engineering because the station still needs him.

His communicator lies open on the console, its encryption stripped and its transmissions visible to everyone. Brix remains close enough to stop him from reaching it, though Korren has made no attempt.

Zara speaks to him only when the machinery requires it.

The silence between them is not forgiveness, punishment, or closure.

It is unfinished.

Korren works with the concentration of somebody afraid that one useless moment will prove every accusation correct. He accepts dangerous tasks too quickly and places himself near failing systems before anyone asks.

He may save lives during this scene.

That does not erase what he almost did.

KORREN IS STILL HIDING THE PLAN

Korren's communicator continues to receive demands.

The most recent message remains on its screen:

FINAL CONSIDERATION EXPIRES AT NEXT CYCLE.

He knows the ship may soon regain power. He knows the crew has changed the balance of the station. He knows Alexei, Zara, Silk, and the player characters may all remove the opportunity he was promised.

Every visible escape makes him more afraid that it will leave without him.

When **Korren's Desperation** fills, he transmits the completed location package and uses his Engineering access to prepare a Joric boarding route.

He does not announce himself with a speech.

A console changes status.

One external docking request becomes authorized.

The Iron Hearts' ship locks itself into diagnostic mode.

Then Korren raises his weapon because everyone has already seen enough.

"Do not make me finish this with bodies." His voice breaks on the final word. "Alexei goes to Joric. They clear my debt. The rest of you walk away."

Whether Korren can still be reached depends on what the crew places in front of him now.

The truth, once exposed, does not automatically make him unreachable.

KORREN'S BETRAYAL WAS PREVENTED

When the Desperation clock has been cleared, Korren does not reverse course merely because the scene needs drama.

House Joric may still have partial information. Thex may still exploit what they know. Silk may still act. The station may still turn lethal.

Korren remains part of the Iron Hearts' damaged defence.

He does not become fearless.

He becomes someone who has chosen which fear he will live with.

THEX AT THE EDGE

Thex feels the room narrowing before anyone moves.

Their body flickers between silver, violet, and the pale gold associated with deliberate calm. They watch Korren, the exits, Alexei's datapad, and whichever player character appears most likely to make the decisive choice.

If Korren proceeds with the betrayal, Thex supports the plan only while it appears viable.

If Korren confessed, Thex begins searching for another buyer, another ship, or another person willing to include them in an escape.

They may warn the crew of an attack that has not happened yet.

They may steal something while giving the warning.

Both acts are sincere.

"The next thirty seconds are extremely unfavorable." Thex looks toward a maintenance hatch. "For nearly everyone."

WHEN SILK MOVES

Madame Silk does not enter Engineering to create a dramatic silhouette.

She enters to complete a contract.

The first sign may be a camera losing three seconds of footage. A guard hears a footstep on the catwalk and finds nothing. A thin crystalline filament appears around the wrist of the person nearest Alexei.

Scalpel remains close enough to support her and far enough away that a single blast cannot kill them both.

Silk's behaviour follows the arrangement established in the cantina.

SILK HAS A DEAL

Silk keeps precise terms.

If she agreed to delay, she does not begin the conflict. If she agreed to help recover the energy packs or construct a cover story, she acts toward that result.

She still protects her exit.

Scalpel still watches everyone's injuries.

A deal with Silk does not create friendship. It creates a professional line she will not cross unless someone else crosses it first.

SILK HAS NO DEAL

Silk attempts to isolate Alexei rather than kill through the whole holdout.

She uses darkness, damaged sightlines, the upper catwalk, and the maintenance routes shown on Map Plate 4. Scalpel pressures anyone who can interfere and offers immediate treatment to the wounded in exchange for standing aside.

"I do not require your death." Silk's voice may come from a position nobody can see. "Please stop making it relevant."

SILK WAS DECEIVED OR ATTACKED

Silk abandons courtesy.

She targets communications, escape routes, and whoever holds the clearest control over Alexei. She remains willing to change objectives when the station becomes more dangerous than the contract.

Professionalism includes knowing when the product has become impossible to extract.

HOUSE JORIC REACHES THE SYSTEM

A completed transmission does not make soldiers appear instantly inside Engineering.

It gives them a route.

If Korren sent the full package early enough, a Joric recovery craft reaches Charon's Refuge during this scene. The station announces the approach through corrupted traffic-control audio while the vessel requests the berth and access corridor Korren prepared.

The arrival can be heard through the hull:

a distant impact;

docking clamps engaging;

metal transmitting force through several connected sectors.

The recovery team wants Alexei alive, Korren compliant, and every unaffiliated witness contained.

They do not yet understand the station.

That ignorance lasts until the first Weaver reaches them.

If Korren never completed the transmission, the Joric craft remains too distant to affect this confrontation directly. Its eventual arrival becomes pressure for the escape rather than another faction inside the room.

THE CONFLICT TAKES SHAPE

The room does not need every faction active at once.

Use only the agendas created by the players' previous choices.

Zara and Brix

Zara protects Alexei and keeps the path to the ship or the energy packs open.

Brix places himself wherever the room is most likely to break. He does not chase distant enemies while Alexei remains exposed.

Korren

If committed to Joric, Korren attempts to preserve the ship, disable resistance, and keep Alexei alive.

If he confessed, he holds the station together and protects the people he nearly sold.

If he remains undecided, the crew's actions can still determine which side receives his Engineering access.

Thex

Thex seeks leverage, valuables, data, or passage.

They prefer betrayal without gunfire and survival without loyalty.

Silk and Scalpel

Silk seeks a result she can deliver to Valerius.

Scalpel protects Silk, disables threats, and becomes distracted by biological information nobody else has time to appreciate.

Joric Recovery Personnel

If present, they move toward Alexei through the route Korren supplied.

They treat the player crew, Silk, and the Iron Hearts as armed complications rather than people whose stories matter.

The Crew

The crew determines what the scene is about.

It may protect Alexei, seize him, expose Korren, complete Silk's deal, hold Engineering, recover the ship, stop a boarding action, or attempt something none of the factions anticipated.

Run the confrontation using the current Spotlight rules. Let the faction most directly affected by the crew's last action respond.

ENGINEERING AS A BATTLEFIELD

The auxiliary engine room is not an empty arena.

THE GENERATOR COLUMNS

The generators provide hard cover and block long sightlines. Their rotating housings create intervals when movement disappears from view and returns seconds later.

Stray fire against them produces sparks, alarms, and escalating structural damage.

THE BARRICADES

The Iron Hearts know every opening in their improvised defences.

Crates, tool cabinets, welded panels, and maintenance equipment create short lanes where a few people can hold a larger force.

The barricades can also trap anyone caught on the wrong side when the bulkheads close.

THE CATWALKS

The upper walkways overlook the generators, control bank, and main approach.

Steam obscures parts of the catwalk at irregular intervals. The metal grating carries footsteps across the entire chamber.

Silk, Thex, and anyone trying to reach the control systems may use the height.

THE CONTROL BANK

The surviving consoles govern local power, blast doors, life support routing, and the charging connection to the Iron Hearts' ship.

A person controlling the bank can reshape the room without firing a weapon.

THE MAINTENANCE CRANE

The crane remains locked across one approach.

Its motor still works.

It can lift machinery, open a lane, close one, carry someone over the floor, or become several tonnes of moving industrial danger.

COOLANT AND STEAM

Damaged pipes release clouds hot enough to burn and thick enough to hide movement.

Opening, sealing, or rupturing those lines changes visibility and safe movement throughout the chamber.

PROTOCOL STERILIZE

Trigger Protocol STERILIZE when the confrontation reaches the point where another exchange of violence would only repeat the existing pressure.

The cause may be:

- a Weaver entering Engineering;
- a damaged containment signal finally reaching the station network;
- restored power waking a dormant Kurogane safety routine;
- gunfire striking a biological-monitoring console;
- or the hidden labs reporting that containment has failed completely.

The station's voice interrupts every active channel.

It is bright, polite, and completely detached from the meaning of its words.

READ ALOUD The lights cut out. For one second, the engine room exists only as the orange glow inside the generator housings. Then red emergency strips ignite across the floor, the barricades, and every sealed bulkhead. A pleasant synthesized voice fills the chamber. "Attention all personnel." Heavy mechanisms begin moving inside the walls. "Unsanctioned biological specimens detected in Sector Four." The first blast door strikes the deck hard enough to shake dust from the catwalk. "Protocol STERILIZE engaged." A second door closes. Then a third. "Sealing all bulkheads." The ventilation system reverses. Something inside the ducts begins moving against the new airflow. Many somethings. The voice brightens. "Have a highly productive - and final - day."

The political confrontation does not disappear.
It becomes trapped inside the same emergency.

WHAT THE PROTOCOL DOES

Blast doors divide Engineering from the surrounding sectors.

Emergency lighting replaces normal illumination.

The ventilation cycle drives smaller Weavers out of maintenance channels and into occupied rooms. Active machinery, weapons, minds, and recovered energy packs pull their attention in different directions.

Station security no longer distinguishes between researchers, mercenaries, assassins, soldiers, or biological specimens.

Every sealed door is now part of the containment system.

The control bank can interrupt parts of the protocol, but not cancel it from Engineering. The hidden Kurogane network holds the highest authority.

THE WEAVERS ENTER

The first Hunger Weaver emerges through a ventilation grille above the generator controls.

Its translucent body catches the red emergency light and turns it into a moving wound across the ceiling.

A second presses through a gap behind the stripped generator.

A third follows the active charge line leading toward the ship.

They are not reinforcements for any faction.

They are hungry animals responding to power, neural activity, and the larger presence below the station.

Use the **Hunger Weaver** profile supplied for this adventure, with the compatibility correction established in Scene 3: **Hypnotic Illusions** inflicts the canonical **Stunned** Condition instead of the obsolete **Fascinated** wording. Bring additional Weavers into the scene when the fiction creates a route for them: an opened vent, a damaged bulkhead, a bright energy discharge, or a concentration of active power.

They do not need to arrive according to a fixed round schedule.

ARIA-7 OBJECTS

ARIA-7 enters through a service opening moments after the first Weaver spills clear acidic fluid across the deck.

The caretaker stops.

Its optical sensor moves from the spreading residue to the creature clinging above it.

Then back to the residue.

"UNAUTHORIZED BIOLOGICAL DISCHARGE." A cleaning arm unfolds. "THIS AREA WAS SERVICED ELEVEN MINUTES AGO."

ARIA-7 sprays neutralizing foam across the floor while gunfire, claws, and crystalline limbs move around it.

The robot does not understand the conflict.

It understands that everyone is making the station dirtier.

Its arrival may open a route, obstruct one, provide industrial cleaner, or simply create three seconds in which the absurdity becomes impossible to ignore.

CORE OVERLOAD

When Protocol STERILIZE activates, place a visible **six-segment clock** titled **Core Overload**.

Advance it by one segment when:

- a heavy weapon misses inside Engineering; or
- an attack strikes a critical console, generator housing, or exposed power system.

These are the clock's triggers.

Do not advance it merely because time passes or because the crew fails an unrelated action.

As the clock fills, show the damage in the room.

ONE OR TWO SEGMENTS

Warning lights spread across the control bank. The generators begin falling out of synchronization.

THREE OR FOUR SEGMENTS

The deck vibrates continuously. Heat rises. Emergency systems shed power from nonessential areas of the station.

The ship-charging connection fluctuates if it is active.

FIVE SEGMENTS

Containment rings inside the main reactor begin moving outside tolerance. Engineering alarms stop identifying individual failures and merge into one sustained tone.

SIX SEGMENTS

The main reactor becomes unstable.

Power surges through Charon's Refuge. Blast doors cycle without instruction. Fires break out along the route to the Docking Ring. The station begins choosing between life support, structural integrity, and containment without enough power to preserve all three.

Move to **Scene 7: Desperate Decisions**.

Core Overload does not determine that Charon's Refuge explodes. It creates the crisis the crew must answer next.

WHEN ENEMIES BECOME USEFUL

Protocol STERILIZE gives every faction a reason to reconsider.

Silk may cover the person opening a bulkhead because she needs the same exit.

Scalpel may stabilize an Iron Heart while discussing the fascinating properties of Weaver residue.

A Joric soldier may lower their weapon when something begins entering through the wall behind Alexei.

Korren may have the access needed to preserve the ship connection.

Thex may know which door is going to close several seconds before it moves.

None of these moments requires reconciliation.

Survival can produce cooperation without resolving what people intended to do before the alarms began.

IF KORREN IS STILL BETRAYING THEM

Protocol STERILIZE does not absolve Korren or force him to continue.

The Joric route may now be full of Weavers. The soldiers he expected may be dying in sealed corridors. The ship he hoped to preserve may be connected to an unstable reactor.

Korren can still choose:

- complete the transfer of Alexei;
- open the Joric route and accept what comes through it;
- use his access to help the people in Engineering;
- surrender control to the crew;
- or attempt to flee.

The crew can still offer, threaten, expose, restrain, forgive, or kill him.

Do not replace that decision with an automatic redemption beat.

IF KORREN STANDS WITH THE CREW

Korren knows the systems now trying to kill them.

He can identify which blast door will open, which generator can be abandoned, and how long the charging connection to the ship will survive the overload.

He may place himself in danger.

Let that action belong to the situation and the players around him.

Zara does not forgive him because he takes a wound.

She may still refuse to let him die.

Brix may drag him behind cover while saying:

"The traitor dies when the Alpha decides." Korren tries to breathe. "That is almost kind." "It was not."

BREAKING THE CONTAINMENT

The crew may attempt to hold Engineering, reach the Docking Ring, return to the hidden labs, contact the Queen, preserve the station, or take control of the ship.

Several routes remain visible on Map Plate 4:

- the main Engineering access;
- maintenance tunnels behind the workshops;
- the catwalk route toward upper service corridors;
- the power conduits leading back toward Research Access;
- and the emergency passage connected to the ship systems.

Protocol STERILIZE has sealed some routes and made others briefly possible.

The scene ends when the crew creates a direction strong enough to carry everyone into the next crisis.

THE NEXT THRESHOLD

During the chaos, a Sleeping character may again feel the warm-and-cold presence first encountered in the Veil.

It may surface when they are injured, cornered, protecting someone, watching an ally fall, or deliberately reaching for something beyond their current limits.

Do not resolve that moment here.

Use the next section, **The Choice to Wake**, for the complete transition and its current VeilFarers mechanics.

Already-Awakened characters recognize the sensation without receiving a second transformation.

TRANSITION TO SCENE 7

The generator tone changes.

Not louder.

Lower.

The sound passes through the floor, the barricades, and everyone's bones.

Every display in Engineering flashes the same warning:

CORE STABILITY LOST

Somewhere beyond the sealed doors, metal tears.

The map of Charon's Refuge begins losing entire corridors.

The path to the Docking Ring is still present.

For now.

The crew has enemies, allies, wounded people, unfinished promises,
and at least one ship that may or may not be ready to leave.

The station no longer gives them time to decide separately.

Everything must move.

13. THE CHOICE TO WAKE

Placement: During the collapse of Engineering, after Protocol STERILIZE has turned the confrontation into a station-wide survival crisis and before the crew begins the final run to the Docking Ring

Purpose: Resolve the exceptional campaign event that can permit a Sleeping character to Awaken; give each affected player an individual choice about answering it; preserve remaining Sleeping as an equally complete choice; and apply the VeilFarers 12.03 Path-transition rules without interrupting the emotional climax.

WHAT THIS MOMENT IS

The sensation first touched the crew during the Veil transit.

Warm and cold at once.

Nearer than skin and more distant than the stars.

It offered no words, no explanation, and no demand.

Now, inside the failing heart of Charon's Refuge, the collapse, the exposed Weaver network, and the Hope Frequency intersect. That specific event makes it reachable.

This is not a reward for taking damage.

It is not the station choosing a hero.

It is not the Keeper deciding that a character has completed the correct arc.

This is the adventure's exceptional Awakening trigger. It establishes that an affected Sleeping character can perceive and answer the Hope Frequency. Without a campaign event of this kind, Awakening is not a player-selected upgrade or an Advancement option.

Once the event has opened that possibility, the player decides whether and how their character answers it.

The decision belongs to that player alone.

WHEN TO OFFER THE CHOICE

Offer the Choice only after the Charon's Refuge event has begun and when a Sleeping character's action intersects it through a genuine breaking point or moment of absolute clarity. The crisis is the trigger; the character's moment gives it personal form.

Possible moments include:

- the character stands between a Weaver and someone who cannot defend themselves;
- a crewmate falls and the character reaches for any way to keep them alive;
- the Core Overload alarm changes from warning to certainty;
- the character is isolated behind a closing bulkhead;
- an impossible route opens in their awareness;

- they deliberately search for the warm-and-cold presence they felt in transit;
- they refuse an NPC's demand and understand exactly what that refusal may cost;
- or the player identifies how their character reaches into the event already unfolding around them.

Do not wait only for injury.

A character may Awaken through terror, love, rage, wonder, discipline, grief, curiosity, or a decision made with complete calm.

Do not offer the Choice before the event, in downtime because a player requests a mechanical upgrade, or merely because a character has reached a particular level.

Do not offer the Choice to every character simultaneously.

Take them one at a time, at the moment created by their own action.

The crisis may pause for a few breaths at the table.

In the fiction, no time needs to pass.

THE KEEPER'S QUESTION

Describe the sensation before asking for the decision.

Use the character's established imagery, fears, memories, Class, and relationship with the Veil. Do not give the sensation a voice unless the player has already established that this is how their character experiences it.

Then ask:

The thing you felt in the Veil is here. It has not moved closer. You have finally become able to reach it. Do you take hold of it, or do you let it remain where it is?

Do not ask for a roll.

Do not let another player answer.

Do not ask the group to vote.

Do not make an NPC explain what the decision means.

The player may ask rules questions before choosing. Answer them plainly.

The character does not need the same information.

IF THEY REACH FOR IT

The character Awakens.

The instant should feel intimate before it becomes spectacular.

Begin inside the character:

- a second rhythm beneath their pulse;
- impossible distance unfolding behind the eyes;
- the sudden knowledge that empty space has texture;
- every active machine in the room becoming a constellation of pressure and intent;
- the emotional weight of the people nearby touching the Veil without becoming readable thoughts;
- or another image chosen with the player.

Then let the room answer.

READ ALOUD For one impossible instant, the alarms become distant. The failing station, the gunfire, the heat, the fear - none of it disappears. It simply becomes part of something larger. You feel the space between every object in the room. Not emptiness. Connection. The thing you touched in the Veil was never waiting somewhere beyond you. It was the part of you that could answer. You take hold.

Ask the player what Awakening looks or feels like from the outside. It may be subtle.

It may be impossible to miss.

The character may shine, distort the air, cast a shadow in the wrong direction, become surrounded by geometric afterimages, or simply open their eyes with a new certainty.

The player owns that image.

THE WEAVERS NOTICE

The Weavers are sensitive to the change.

Nearby creatures may pause, turn, or redirect their attention toward the newly Awakened character. They react as hungry beings encountering a new and unfamiliar intensity, not as servants obeying a cosmic command.

This reaction is narrative positioning.

It does not automatically:

- deal damage;
- impose a Condition;
- grant Advantage or Disadvantage;
- force every Weaver to attack the character;
- or interrupt the character's current action.

Use it to make the Awakening visible and consequential without converting the decision into a punishment.

The fiction and the current Spotlight determine what happens next.

APPLYING THE PATH CHANGE

Apply the change immediately enough that the player can use their Awakened toolkit during the escape.

Do not rebuild the entire character.

TURN OFF THE SLEEPING PATH PACKAGE

The character no longer uses:

- the Effort engine;
- Burnout and Common Efforts;
- the Resolve pool and Resolve Moves;
- Honed Edge;
- free Experience invocation;
- their Recovery Anchor;
- their Class's Effort Feature;
- and their Sleeping Class Feature.

These elements are replaced, not added to the Awakened package.

The character does not keep both Path engines.

TURN ON THE AWAKENED PATH PACKAGE

The character gains:

- **Hope**, with their current Effort total converted to Hope at the same maximum;
- a starter Loadout of two Level 1 Domain Powers from the Domains granted by their Awakened Class entry;
- their Class's Hope Feature;
- and the corresponding Awakened Class Feature.

Use the Awakened Class entry's Spellcast Trait from this moment onward. In particular, a Sleeping Mystic used Knowledge, while an Awakened Mystic uses Instinct and must choose Lux or Void as their Veil Alignment alongside Neural. A Mystic cannot prepare Lux and Void Powers at the same time.

For the pregenerated characters, prepare the two selected Level 1 Domain Powers before play and keep their cards with the character sheet. Hand them to the player only if that character Awakens.

If a custom Sleeping character Awakens and their starter Powers were not selected before the session, pause long enough to choose two Level 1 Powers from the six available across their Class's two Domains. Do not hand them a Power outside those Domains merely because it suits the current emergency.

WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE

The character keeps:

- current and maximum HP;
- current and maximum Stress;
- Evasion;
- Proficiency;
- Traits;
- Experiences;
- gear;
- Class;
- Subclass choice and upgrade tier, converted to the corresponding Awakened Subclass and Foundation; **The Steward** becomes **The Icon**, while the other base Subclass names map directly;
- Connections;

- Ancestry;
- Community;
- and Affiliation.

Awakening does not heal the character, clear Stress, repair Armor, stabilize a Dying character, or refresh spent resources unless a rule the character uses afterward explicitly produces that effect.

The transformation changes the Path package.

It does not erase what the scene has already done to them.

PATH-SPECIFIC ADVANCEMENT

The starting pregenerated characters should not require advancement conversion during this scene.

If a custom or previously advanced character has spent Advancement Slots on Sleeping-only Option 8 choices or on **Tempered Resolve**, note those choices and continue play. Refund and re-spend those Slots after the immediate crisis under Corebook 12.03, Chapters 7 and 12.

Do not interrupt the escape to perform a full advancement rebuild.

Path-neutral advancement remains exactly as it is.

IF THE CHARACTER MULTICLASSED WHILE SLEEPING

The starting pregenerated crew is Level 1 and does not use multiclassing. If an advanced custom character entered the adventure with a Sleeping multiclass, apply the Corebook 12.03 conversion after the immediate action:

- the secondary Effort Feature becomes the corresponding Hope Feature;
- the one secondary Class Resolve Move is retired with Resolve;
- the recorded **Dormant Domain** becomes an active third Domain;
- this conversion costs no Advancement Slot and grants no refund;
- the third Domain grants no starter Power: its Powers must be acquired normally through advancement;
- and the second Class still grants no separate Class Feature, Subclass, Class Items, or starter Loadout.

The two-Slot cost already paid for multiclassing remains paid.

Awakening converts that investment; it does not create an extra Slot or a fourth Domain.

IF THEY LET IT REMAIN

The character remains Sleeping.

Do not describe the moment as failure, fear, refusal of destiny, or inability.

They felt what was present.

They understood that they could reach it.

They chose not to become someone else in the middle of a catastrophe.

READ ALOUD The thing is there. Vast. Close. Possible. You do not close your hand around it. The station continues to break. The alarms return. Your breath is still your breath, your fear still yours, your next decision supported by no hidden current and no borrowed light. You remain. Not unchanged. Chosen.

Ask the player what keeps the character anchored.

It may be:

- a Recovery Anchor;
- a crewmate's voice;
- training repeated until it became instinct;
- a promise;
- anger at the idea that ordinary courage is insufficient;
- certainty that this is not the moment;
- or no explanation beyond *I am still myself*.

The character keeps the complete Sleeping package:

- Effort;
- Resolve and Resolve Moves;
- Honed Edge;
- free Experience invocation;
- and their Class's Effort Feature.

They receive no penalty for the decision.

They also receive no compensatory bonus. Their Sleeping mechanics are already a complete Path, not a consolation package.

"NOT YET" IS A COMPLETE ANSWER

A player may decide that their character does not Awaken now without deciding that they will remain Sleeping forever.

Accept the answer.

Do not present the Choice again later in the same escape unless the player initiates it.

The moment may return in another session, another crisis, or a quiet place far from danger, but only when another qualifying campaign event creates the opportunity. The character cannot trigger the conversion at will between scenes. A long Sleeping arc is not delayed character creation.

It is the character's life.

IF THE CHARACTER IS ALREADY AWAKENED

An already-Awakened custom character does not Awaken again.

They gain:

- no second Path package;
- no additional Domain Power;
- no free Hope;

- no automatic recovery;
- and no special mechanical reward.

What they receive is recognition.

They felt the warm-and-cold disturbance during transit because they recognized the texture of Awakening before anyone else did. When another character reaches for it now, they understand what is happening without understanding the Veil's ultimate source or purpose.

They may say:

"I have felt this."

"This happened to me."

"You are still you."

They cannot truthfully explain what the Veil wants, because the current era does not know.

Let the Awakened character witness, protect, or steady the moment.

Do not let them decide it for someone else.

IF NO ONE AWAKENS

Continue the adventure.

Nothing has gone wrong.

The crew enters Scene 7 with the complete Sleeping toolkits they chose at the beginning of play and the knowledge that, when something impossible came within reach, they answered according to who they were.

Do not weaken the escape.

Do not add another crisis to punish the decision.

Do not have an NPC express disappointment.

Hearts in the Void is not a test the Sleeping must fail in order to become VeilFarers.

They already are.

IF EVERYONE AWAKENS

Continue the adventure.

Do not turn the escape into a victory lap.

The characters have new capabilities, but the station remains unstable, the wounded remain wounded, the ships remain in their established condition, and every relationship created before this moment still matters.

Awakening expands what the crew can attempt.

It does not solve the situation for them.

RETURNING TO THE SPOTLIGHT

After the player decides, return immediately to the action that created the moment.

Ask:

What do you do now?

If they Awakened, they may use their new Hope Feature or a prepared Domain Power if its trigger, cost, range, and action requirements apply.

If they remained Sleeping, they act with their existing Effort Feature, Resolve Moves, Experiences, equipment, and ordinary skill.

Resolve the action normally.

The Choice does not replace the action.

It changes who takes it.

KEEPER GUARDRAILS

DO NOT REQUIRE SUFFERING

Pain can create the moment, but it is not payment for Awakening.

Do not injure a character specifically to force the Choice.

DO NOT MAKE IT COLLECTIVE

One character Awakening does not trigger the others automatically.

Each decision receives its own space.

DO NOT PROTECT A PREFERRED OUTCOME

If a player remains Sleeping, the scene continues with that answer.

If they Awaken, the scene continues with that answer.

The adventure does not contain a correct distribution of Paths.

DO NOT ADD A HIDDEN BARGAIN

The Veil does not demand service, allegiance, morality, or future obedience in this moment.

Awakening may carry mystery and consequence.

It is not a contract the player accepted without being told.

DO NOT ERASE THE SLEEPING LIFE

An Awakened character retains their memories, training, relationships, Class, Subclass, and Experiences.

Their Sleeping years were not a false identity.

They are the life that reached this moment.

TRANSITION TO SCENE 7

Once every player who reaches the Choice has answered - or once the immediate action no longer allows another pause - the station takes the Spotlight back.

READ ALOUD The moment closes. The low generator tone returns through the deck. A structural warning crosses every surviving display, followed by a map of Charon's Refuge shedding corridors one by one. The route to the Docking Ring flashes. Open. Compromised. Temporary. Behind you, something vast moves through Engineering. Ahead, the station begins to tear itself apart. Run.

Proceed to **Scene 7: Desperate Decisions**.

RULES REFERENCES

Use these locations to verify the Path treatment during final editorial review:

- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 2, "Two Paths"**: both Paths are valid and use distinct engines.
 - **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 7, "Awakening in Play"**: the event-only transition, resource conversion, Feature exchange, retired Recovery Anchor, starter Powers, and advancement refund.
 - **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 11, "The Second Calling"**: conversion of a Sleeping multiclass, its secondary Resolve Move, and its Dormant Domain.
 - **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapters 6-7, the corresponding Awakened and Sleeping Class entries**: current Domain access, Spellcast Trait, Hope/Effort Feature, Class Feature, Foundation, and Moves.
 - **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 12, "The Long Climb"**: path-specific Slot refunds after Awakening.
 - **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 9, "How to Play"**: current path-resource terminology and Experience use.
 - **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapters 18-19, "Domain Mechanics" and "The Catalog of Powers"**: Loadout procedure and current Power text.
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14. SCENE 7: DESPERATE DECISIONS

Location: The failing routes between Engineering and the Docking Ring, with possible detours through Research Access, the hidden Kurogane labs, or the station exterior

Placement: Immediately after *The Choice to Wake*

Purpose: Turn the state created by the crew's decisions into a playable escape; keep every viable ship and rescue route available; and let survival, loss, and station damage emerge from action rather than predetermined sacrifices.

MAP REFERENCES - Begin on **Map Plate 4 - Engineering & Emergency Holdouts**. - Use **Map Plate 1 - Master Station Overview** when the crew chooses its route. - Move to **Map Plate 2 - Docking Ring & Outer Berths** when the crew reaches the ships. - Use **Map Plate 5 - Research Access & Hidden Kurogane Labs** only if the crew returns for the Queen, the energy network, evidence, or a concealed route.

BEGIN WITH "RUN"

Do not repeat the final read-aloud from *The Choice to Wake*.

The route to the Docking Ring has already flashed:

Open. Compromised. Temporary.

Continue from the first movement the players declare.

If nobody moves immediately, give the station one concrete action rather than another speech.

READ ALOUD The blast door ahead begins to descend. Not quickly. Inevitably. Beyond it, red emergency lights fail one by one along the route toward the Docking Ring. The floor shifts beneath you, dropping several centimetres before striking something solid below. Behind you, the sound inside Engineering is no longer gunfire. It is movement. Too much movement. The gap beneath the door is still wide enough. For now.

Ask:

Who moves first, and who are you taking with you?

The answer establishes the first Spotlight and begins the escape.

PRESERVE THE STATE OF PLAY

Scene 7 does not reset the station.

Before resolving the first obstacle, take a minute to record what the table already established. Do this openly when the information is known to the characters.

PEOPLE LEDGER

Person or Group	Present Location	Current State	What They Need from the Crew
Zara	As established	alive, wounded, separated, hostile, or allied	a decision about Alexei, the Iron Hearts, and the route to a ship
Alexei	As established	mobile, wounded, restrained, protected, or contested	someone to decide whether he is a person, a bargaining asset, or both
Brix	As established	active, wounded, carrying someone, or cut off	a clear answer about whom he protects first
Korren	As established	reconciled, under guard, still betraying, with Joric, missing, or dead	a route, an order, protection, accountability, or rescue
Thex	As established	allied, bargaining, fleeing, stealing, missing, or dead	passage and a reason not to sell the next person who offers it
Madame Silk	As established	bound by a deal, hunting Alexei, fighting, separated, or aboard her ship	a deliverable, leverage, or a survivable alternative
Scalpel	As established	with Silk, treating the wounded, isolated, volunteering for danger, or dead	access, medical support, and a way to keep Silk alive
ARIA-7	As established	active, damaged, trapped, following a directive, or absent	a route that its station-bound priorities can accept

Person or Group	Present Location	Current State	What They Need from the Crew
Joric personnel	Only if they arrived	advancing, fighting Weavers, cut off, surrendering, or dead	orders, extraction, or a way back to their craft
Station survivors	Only those previously established	sheltered, moving, trapped, or missing	information, opened routes, transport, or a destination

For every relevant person, record four things:

Do not add an NPC to the corridor merely to place them under debris.

Do not remove an NPC because their older version was meant to die here.

- If a person left a previous scene, decide where their intention would have taken them. Their location should follow that intention and the crew's actions, not the needs of a scripted sacrifice.

VESSEL LEDGER

Vessel	Available Only If	Immediate Requirement	Ownership at This Point
The crew's Crossroads ship	the crew bought, claimed, or otherwise secured one	reach its berth; address only damage or access problems already established	the crew's existing claim remains intact
<i>The Collector</i>	the crew stole it and brought it to Charon's Refuge	reach its berth; deal with its recorded identity, damage, or transponder if still relevant	the crew possesses it, but Volkov's claim and the consequences of theft remain
The Iron Hearts' vessel	enough stable energy was recovered, redirected, or can still be connected	complete whatever charging, installation, or release work remains	Zara and the Iron Hearts retain their claim; later ownership is unresolved
The Whispers' concealed vessel	it remains docked and operational	Silk's cooperation, valid access, intrusion, surrender, or another fictional route	Silk controls it unless play changed that fact
The Joric recovery craft	Korren's transmission brought it to the station	reach its docking corridor and deal with its crew, locks, damage, or orders	House Joric controls it unless the crew changes that fact

Record each vessel separately.

If the crew arrived by passage and never restored another vessel, do not create a ship for them.

Their immediate problem becomes making one of the vessels above available, negotiating for passage, taking control of a craft, reaching an exterior refuge until rescue, or inventing another answer from the station.

- The escape can create a claim.

It cannot create a history that did not happen.

RUNNING THE ESCAPE

Use the Spotlight deliberately.

One character takes one meaningful action, then the situation or an affected NPC responds. Pass the Spotlight before the same character solves every part of the route.

The escape is not a sequence of mandatory checks.

Ask for a roll only when:

- the outcome is uncertain;
- failure would change the situation;
- and the action is happening under meaningful pressure.

If preparation, equipment, access, an established relationship, or a previous success removes that uncertainty, let the action work.

Use the canonical DC ladder. **DC 15** is the standard for a consequential action under pressure. Use **DC 20** when the attempt requires strong aptitude, preparation, or favourable positioning. Do not create intermediate DCs.

Do not keep rolls hidden to protect a preferred ending.

Characters may be wounded, become Dying, or die through the normal rules when the fiction and the resolved danger support it. Do not grant invisible immunity because the ship is close. Equally, do not inflict damage merely because an older version of the adventure demanded a tragic cost.

Failures should change position, consume time, separate priorities, damage a resource, expose someone, or advance a relevant clock. Do not apply every consequence at once.

THE TWO ESCAPE CLOCKS

Place two visible clocks where everyone can see them.

The clocks promise consequences.

They do not promise predetermined deaths.

STRUCTURAL FAILURE - SIX SEGMENTS

This clock tracks Charon's Refuge losing its ability to function as one connected station.

Begin with **one segment filled**. Begin with **two** only when Scene 6 established multiple major breaches, uncontrolled explosions, or severe structural damage beyond Core Overload itself, or when Scene 4 recorded a **Sustained Reactor Feed** that is still drawing power away from structural containment.

Do not begin at two for a stable independent feed, a reactor diversion the crew already compensated for, or the mere fact that the Queen survived. The extra segment must follow an unresolved load on the station.

Advance **Structural Failure** by one when:

- an explosion, heavy weapon, or uncontrolled power surge strikes a load-bearing part of the station;
- a Failure with Fear occurs during an action that directly risks structural integrity;
- the crew knowingly diverts power away from structural containment;
- the crew accepts a stated structural cost to open or preserve another route;
- or a major detour consumes the last safe interval after the Keeper clearly states that cost.

Do not advance it for an unrelated failure.

Do not advance it automatically every round.

At Two Segments

The station sheds nonessential power. One previously safe route becomes unstable, dark, or pressure-compromised.

Show the change before asking what the crew does.

At Four Segments

The Docking Ring begins pulling against the central station spine. Maintenance seals engage. Windows craze. Some berths lose their internal access route while remaining reachable through maintenance or exterior approaches.

No ship is destroyed solely because the clock reached four.

At Five Segments

Only one internal connection to the Docking Ring remains structurally reliable. Other routes may still be crossed, forced, repaired, or bypassed, but the Keeper must state the risk before a character commits.

At Six Segments

Charon's Refuge separates into damaged modules.

The Docking Ring may shear away, rotate out of alignment, or remain connected only by emergency braces and docking umbilicals. Which result occurs should follow the damage already described.

The station does **not** automatically explode.

Everyone outside a ship does **not** automatically die.

The fiction changes from "run through the station" to "cross between failing structures, preserve a pressure envelope, or launch before the berth tears free." Conventional solutions may remain. If none do, the "I Need an Idea!" Protocol may become available.

WEAVER CONVERGENCE - FOUR SEGMENTS

This clock tracks the Weavers finding and concentrating on the crew's route.

Set its starting position from the Queen and the energy packs:

- **Zero segments:** the crew fed, calmed, or sustained the Queen through a stable alternative source and did not undo that work.
- **One segment:** the Queen's situation remains unresolved, or the crew never reached her.
- **Two segments:** the crew violently removed her food, harmed the nest, allowed a deception to collapse within the colony's reach, left a loose sliver actively following the route, or created an exposed energy trail toward the escaping group.

If the Queen died through resolved play, use what that death established. Begin at zero if the remaining Weavers became dormant or dispersed; begin at two if they became disorganised, enraged, or already committed to pursuit. Do not import either reaction from an older version when the table established something else.

Awakening does not automatically advance this clock. The Weavers may perceive something new, but *The Choice to Wake* creates no automatic damage, Condition, or forced targeting.

Advance **Weaver Convergence** by one when:

- a Failure with Fear occurs while directly evading, containing, deceiving, or redirecting the Weavers;
- an exposed high-energy discharge gives the swarm a clear route;
- the crew opens a sealed path between the swarm and its current location;
- a delay occurs in a corridor already established as exposed, after the Keeper states that risk;
- or the crew takes or destroys more of the Queen's remaining food during this scene.

Do not advance it because someone fails an unrelated medical, social, or piloting action.

At Two Segments

Movement travels inside the walls alongside the crew. Small translucent forms test vents, cable channels, and damaged seals ahead of the main swarm.

At Three Segments

The first Weavers reach the route. They probe isolated people, powered equipment, and exposed neural activity. The crew can fight, seal, distract, communicate, redirect power, or change route.

At Four Segments

The swarm reaches the crew's current route in force.

This is not an automatic total-party kill. It is a new immediate situation: the route may need to be abandoned, defended, divided, darkened, depressurised, illuminated, negotiated through the Queen, or transformed by an idea the Keeper did not anticipate.

If the crew changes the underlying cause of the convergence - feeding the Queen, breaking the energy trail, or completing a convincing diversion - the Keeper may remove one segment. A clock changes because the fiction changed, not because the group asked for mercy.

CHOOSE A ROUTE, NOT AN OBSTACLE ORDER

Show the Master Station Overview and describe every route the crew has earned enough information to know.

Do not run all of them.

MAIN ENGINEERING SPINE

The main access is the shortest route to the Docking Ring.

It is broad enough for wounded people, cargo equipment, reserve packs, and ARIA-7. It also contains the most fire, failed blast doors, and visible structural damage.

Use it when the crew values speed, wants to move a large group, or has the equipment to control an industrial corridor.

MAINTENANCE WEB

The maintenance routes bypass several main blast doors and connect to the service side of the Docking Ring.

They are cramped. Some passages require crawling, abandoning bulky equipment, or opening panels while the structure moves. ARIA-7, Korren, station maps, or discoveries from Scene 4 may make this route substantially safer.

Use it when the crew values concealment, has a small mobile group, or needs to reach a berth whose public access has failed.

RESEARCH BYPASS

The power conduits and hidden Kurogane routes connect Engineering, Research Access, the transfer chamber, and maintenance approaches near the outer ring.

This is the longest route.

It is also the route that can reach:

- the Weaver Queen;
- remaining reserve packs;
- the Kurogane archive;
- the power-routing manifold;
- and anyone left below.

Use it when the crew refuses to abandon unfinished work, needs energy for the Iron Hearts' ship, or wants to change the swarm rather than outrun it.

EXTERIOR SERVICE ROUTE

Maintenance locks open onto the station exterior and the structural braces behind the berths.

Characters with pressure protection, tethering, appropriate equipment, or a viable improvisation may cross outside when the internal station is impassable. The route exposes them to vacuum, violent motion, damaged antennae, and the gas giant filling half the sky.

Do not call for a roll simply to wear a suit and follow a stable tether. Roll when the crossing is rushed, the structure is moving, a tether fails, or someone attempts something beyond the route's design.

JORIC BOARDING CORRIDOR

This route exists only if the Joric recovery craft docked.

It may provide the fastest way to another operational vessel. It may also contain armed personnel, damaged pressure seals, and Weavers following the power signature of the newly arrived craft.

The crew can fight, deceive, negotiate, surrender, free trapped soldiers, exploit Korren's authorization, or use the Joric team's ignorance of the station.

A Joric uniform does not make someone immune to fear.

Saving the recovery team may create leverage that taking their craft by force would not.

OBSTACLES AS QUESTIONS

Choose obstacles that follow the route and earlier consequences. Each obstacle should ask one important question and then change the scene.

FIRE IN THE MAIN CORRIDOR

The fire asks:

What are you willing to spend or leave behind to keep this route open?

Working suppressors, ARIA-7's foam, a prepared environmental system, or an uncontested alternate path may solve it without a roll.

Under pressure, **Knowledge (Tech) DC 15** can restore or redirect suppression. **Strength Roll, DC 15** can clear burning debris with appropriate protection. A more dangerous direct crossing may use **Agility Roll, DC 15**.

On a failure, choose a consequence that follows the attempt: the route closes, someone becomes exposed, gear is lost or damaged, the character suffers the established hazard, or Structural Failure advances if the action directly threatened the station.

THE CLOSING BLAST DOOR

The door asks:

Does the crew stay together, or can it trust people on both sides to finish different parts of the escape?

Valid access or control already earned may open it automatically.

Under pressure, use **Knowledge (Tech) DC 15** to override the mechanism, **Finesse Roll, DC 15** to reach or manipulate exposed components, or **Strength Roll, DC 20** to force a powered security door without mechanical advantage.

Failure does not automatically separate the group. Describe the narrowing gap and let the crew decide whether to retreat, split, spend another resource, or accept a stated cost.

THE BROKEN SPAN

A collapsed section asks:

Who crosses first, and what do they establish for everyone behind them?

Lines, mag-clamps, lift equipment, a crane, a Domain Power, or an accessible parallel gantry can remove the need for a check.

Use **Agility Roll, DC 15** for a pressured crossing or **Knowledge (Tech) DC 15** to restore a mechanism. A failure should leave the character hanging, isolated, or forced to abandon something before it simply deals damage.

THE WOUNDED AND THE TRAPPED

A trapped person asks:

Whose life has become part of the crew's definition of success?

Use a person whose position follows prior play. Never select an NPC merely because their death would be dramatic.

Lifting debris may use **Strength Roll, DC 15**. Stabilising someone who is Dying uses **Knowledge (Medicine) or Finesse, DC 15**, depending on the method; a character who has entered Final requires **DC 20**. The helper must be adjacent. Technical bracing, medical equipment, multiple helpers, or an established safe interval can remove the roll or improve positioning.

State the cost of delay before the players commit. Do not advance both clocks automatically for choosing compassion.

THE SWARM IN THE WALLS

The swarm asks:

Will the crew treat the Weavers as an enemy, an environment, a hungry colony, or something that can still be reached?

Use individual adversary actions only when direct combat matters. A mass of Weavers is not best represented by adding dozens of attack rolls.

The crew may seal vents, cut local power, create light or sound, exploit a pattern learned in Research, offer energy, contact the Queen, vent a section, or abandon the route.

Let knowledge earned in Scene 4 matter without another discovery roll.

THE DIVERSION IS A PROPOSAL, NOT A SACRIFICE

Korren, Scalpel, or another technically capable survivor may recognise that an auxiliary generator can create an energy pulse strong enough to pull part of the swarm away from the Docking Ring.

They cannot complete the entire solution while the crew watches.

The pulse needs decisions the NPCs cannot make for the players:

- which route receives the energy;
- whether the pulse risks the station, the Queen, or a ship still charging;
- who carries the control link;
- whether the generator is triggered locally, remotely, or on a delay;
- and what extraction path remains for anyone operating it.

Present the proposal as a need.

Korren looks from the routing display to the crew. "I can make every hungry thing on this station look the wrong way." The next warning light turns red. "I cannot make the way back exist. That part is yours."

If Scalpel is present, they may offer to remain with Korren because they understand the Weavers' response and can keep an operator alive.

Silk may object.

Zara may object.

Those objections create a decision; they do not prove the volunteers must die.

The crew can:

- reject the diversion;
- accompany the operators;
- construct remote control;
- establish a timed pulse and leave together;
- create a smaller lure from portable cells;
- assign different people;
- build an extraction route first;
- use the Whispers' vessel or a cargo drone as the emitter;
- ask the Queen to follow a controlled feed;
- or invent another method.

If anyone remains behind, track their state as **Working**, **Exposed**, or **Cut Off**.

- **Working**: the diversion functions and the team still has a known route.
- **Exposed**: the diversion functions, but the team needs help, a new route, or a remote shutdown.
- **Cut Off**: contact or the known route is lost. This does not confirm death. The crew decides whether to turn back, find another route, leave a recovery plan, or accept not knowing.

Never say "do not let the players go back."

Going back may be dangerous, costly, or too late.

It remains a decision.

ARIA-7 DOES NOT DIE ON CUE

If ARIA-7 is still active, it knows service passages, fire controls, cleaning systems, and station priorities nobody else considers important.

It may arrive dragging a ruptured foam line.

"PRIMARY EVACUATION ROUTE CONTAMINATED." Its damaged optical sensor turns toward the approaching crystalline movement. "CONTAMINANTS REMAIN NONCOMPLIANT."

ARIA-7 can:

- guide the crew through maintenance;
- neutralise corrosive residue;
- operate doors through local service access;
- tow a wounded person or a reserve pack;
- identify a pressure-safe route;
- or hold a cleaning, lighting, or suppression system active while the crew crosses.

If the crew asks ARIA-7 to remain in danger, state what it predicts will happen to its chassis. Give the players a chance to provide a tether, remote release, alternate directive, physical extraction, or another solution.

ARIA-7 may become damaged, disabled, separated, carried aboard, left with survivors, or destroyed through resolved play.

None of those outcomes is automatic because the crew befriended it.

If its chassis is disabled but not destroyed, preserve that distinction. Recovering or repairing ARIA-7 can become a campaign consequence.

WHAT THE NPCs ASK FOR

The NPCs should make the crew choose. They should not take the climax away from them.

ZARA AND ALEXEI

Zara wants Alexei alive and a route to the Iron Hearts' ship.

If the ship is not viable, she needs the crew to say whether they are changing vessels, returning for power, bargaining with Silk, or abandoning the berth.

She does not hand over her ship during the run.

Alexei may offer Joric codes, his private reserve, political leverage, or himself as the person who speaks to the recovery team. He cannot make the crew accept his solution.

If the crew separates them, both react. Neither is protected from the consequences of that choice.

BRIX

Brix can carry a wounded person, force a route, or hold a position.

He cannot do all three.

When several needs collide, he turns to the crew.

"Name the one I take."

The answer matters more than a generic heroic action.

KORREN

If Korren reconciled or confessed, he has Engineering knowledge and an urgent need to prove useful. Do not turn that need into automatic martyrdom.

If he is still betraying the Iron Hearts, he may attempt to reach the Joric craft, preserve its corridor, or trade Alexei for extraction. The crew can still intervene.

If he left with Joric personnel, do not place him back beside Zara without explaining how he returned.

MADAME SILK AND SCALPEL

If Silk has a deal, honour its exact terms. Access to her vessel may be part of the agreement, a new negotiation, or something she refuses until the crew provides what she needs.

If she has no deal, the collapse may make a temporary exchange possible:

- passage for information;
- medical aid for safe access;
- Alexei's public testimony instead of his body;
- Kurogane evidence as a deliverable;
- a future Favor;
- or coordinated survival without resolving the contract.

Scalpel protects Silk and treats injuries when doing so does not betray an established line. Their curiosity about the Weavers may help the crew control the convergence.

Neither NPC must die to make the other emotionally available in Scene 8.

THEX

Thex may know which corridor fails next or which route produces the most survivable future.

They need passage.

They may offer the information honestly while concealing what they took from Engineering. Let the crew decide what trust costs under pressure.

JORIC RECOVERY PERSONNEL

The Joric team expected a controlled extraction.

They found a collapsing station, competing armed factions, and Weavers entering through spaces too small for weapons.

They may obey orders, demand Alexei, accept help, surrender a route, retreat to their craft, or fracture under pressure. Their commander needs the crew's knowledge of the station even if they refuse to admit it.

THE SHIPS AT THE DOCKING RING

Reaching Map Plate 2 does not end the scene.

It changes the problem from crossing the station to making a departure real.

A CREW-OWNED SHIP OR *THE COLLECTOR*

The crew already has access unless a previous consequence removed it.

Do not invent a new lock or missing component to delay them.

Use only established complications: damage, an active transponder, a blocked berth, a severed umbilical, people still missing, or the station moving around the ship.

THE IRON HEARTS' VESSEL

The ship launches only if the energy problem was actually solved.

Possible valid states include:

- **Ready:** stable packs were installed or sufficient power was redirected and charging completed.
- **One Step from Ready:** the packs are present, but installation, release, or a final connection remains.
- **Powered but Precarious:** enough energy exists to launch, but not for every system, every passenger, or an immediate safe Veil transit.
- **Dark:** no viable energy reached the ship.

State the vessel's condition before the crew chooses it.

Do not make the missing power reappear because the scene needs an exit.

Do not make Zara transfer ownership because the crew helped launch it.

THE WHISPERS' VESSEL

The concealed craft has minimal power and is built for a smaller complement.

If Silk cooperates, she decides what access she offers and what she asks in return. If the crew takes the vessel by force or intrusion, resolve the resistance and preserve the political consequence.

The vessel may not have capacity for every survivor. Capacity becomes a practical problem the crew can address through multiple trips, another ship, detachable cargo space, life-support compromises, or prioritisation established through play.

Do not use capacity as a hidden number revealed only after the crew commits.

THE JORIC CRAFT

If it remains operational, its launch systems, crew, and orders follow the boarding conflict.

The craft can become:

- negotiated passage;
- a prisoner exchange;
- a hijacking;
- a joint evacuation;
- a ship that leaves with some NPCs while the crew uses another;

- or a destroyed or trapped route if play caused that result.

Taking it creates a House Joric consequence even when nobody survives to report immediately.

LAUNCH UNDER COLLAPSE

A prepared ship with an open berth can launch without a roll.

Call for **Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) DC 15** when the vessel must leave through active debris, moving berth structures, damaged controls, or hostile interception. Use **DC 20** only when several severe complications combine and the crew has not changed its positioning.

Other characters can act before or during launch:

- Engineering can release a physical clamp or stabilise a system;
- Knowledge (Tech) can restore traffic control or suppress a transponder;
- Strength can clear an obstruction;
- Presence can coordinate frightened passengers or negotiate a final opening;
- Instinct can identify the safe moment in a moving debris field;
- and established Powers, Features, equipment, or Experiences apply according to their normal rules.

With Fear, the ship may still launch while carrying a consequence already supported by the scene: damage, lost equipment, separation from another vessel, visible identification, depleted reserves, a compromised route, or someone still beyond the airlock.

Failure does not require the ship to explode.

It can leave the vessel attached, force another crew member to solve the immediate obstacle, move the Spotlight to someone outside, or close the last conventional route.

When that last result occurs, check the protocol below.

"I NEED AN IDEA!" IN THIS SCENE

Scene 2 taught the table the "I Need an Idea!" Protocol.

Scene 7 is where it may become necessary.

Do not invoke it because one clock advances, one route closes, or one launch roll fails.

Invoke it only when the clocks, the resolved consequences, and the current vessel states leave the crew without a viable conventional action and the numbers say they are finished.

The protocol does not rewind **Structural Failure** or **Weaver Convergence**.

If the station separated, it remains separated. If the swarm reached the route, it remains present. If a ship is dark, the idea must find energy, another force, another vessel, or an entirely different form of survival.

Pause the normal sequence and use the procedure already presented in Scene 2:

1. **Trigger:** confirm that conventional play has reached its end.

2. **Brainstorm:** give the crew 3 to 8 minutes under a soft fictional time limit.
3. **Resolve:** choose the idea that best combines characterization, tactical sense, and narrative weight; resolve it dramatically rather than with another normal roll; preserve a meaningful cost.

The protocol can save Korren, Scalpel, ARIA-7, the crew, a ship, or part of the station when the table creates an idea capable of doing so.

It does not guarantee all of those outcomes at once.

The best idea wins.

The clocks still happened.

POSSIBLE END STATES

End Scene 7 when the immediate escape has been secured or when the crew has established a survivable position from which Scene 8 can begin.

Record the result before moving on.

THE STATION

Charon's Refuge may be:

- damaged but stabilising;
- divided into pressurised modules;
- partially evacuated;
- abandoned but intact enough to revisit;
- controlled by survivors, Joric personnel, the Weavers, or nobody;
- losing orbit;
- or destroyed because resolved actions actually produced that outcome.

Do not default to a funeral pyre.

THE PEOPLE

Record who is:

- aboard which vessel;
- alive and mobile;
- wounded, Dying, or Final;
- disabled but recoverable;
- separated or missing;
- voluntarily remaining;
- captured;
- believed dead without confirmation;
- or dead through resolved play.

"Missing" and "dead" are different campaign facts.

THE SHIPS

Record:

- which vessel or vessels launched;
- who controls each one;

- what damage, depleted reserves, Heat, identification, or legal claims remain;
- whether another ship is still docked;
- whether any vessel carries a contained or loose Weaver sliver, unfamiliar crystalline tissue, or an open biological route from the station;
- whether the Keeper enabled the optional recommended **The Ship That Learns** ending and its fusion has begun;
- and whether the crew possesses, shares, borrows, stole, or merely escaped aboard its current vessel.

Do not resolve the final ownership of Zara's ship here.

THE UNFINISHED DECISIONS

Preserve for Scene 8:

- what happens to Alexei;
- whether Zara continues the disappearance plan;
- what Silk can deliver to Valerius;
- whether Korren faces forgiveness, custody, exile, or another consequence;
- what becomes of the Kurogane evidence;
- what the crew owes the Queen or the station survivors;
- whether a Queen-sliver was destroyed, contained, released, left in the station network, or carried toward a vessel;
- if **The Ship That Learns** is active, which vessel is integrating, what signs are already visible, and whether the crew intends to accept or resist the bond;
- and what claim the crew ultimately has to a ship.

TRANSITION TO SCENE 8

Use details from the actual escape.

Do not describe Charon's Refuge as destroyed unless it was destroyed in play.

READ ALOUD The last alarm becomes quieter. Not because the danger has passed. Because there is finally hull between you and most of it. Through the nearest display, Charon's Refuge turns against the light of Tenebris Secundus. Parts of the station are dark. Parts are burning. Parts still answer when someone calls. Around you, people count the living, the wounded, the missing, and the things they carried out when there was no time to carry everything. The ship is moving. Nobody agrees yet on where it is going.

Proceed to **Scene 8: Hearts in the Void**.

Scene 8 begins with the immediate physical escape secured and every political, personal, and ownership question still alive.

KEEPER GUARDRAILS

EVERYONE CAN DIE

No NPC or player character is protected by the script.

No death is required by it either.

NOTHING HAPPENS ON AUTOPILOT

A sacrifice is an intention. A closing door is a situation. A completed clock is a promised change.

The crew can still intervene.

THE NPCS NEED THE PCS

When an NPC proposes a diversion, rescue, negotiation, or launch plan, identify the choice or missing piece only the player crew can provide.

If the NPC solves the escape while the players watch, rewrite the moment at the table.

DO NOT HIDE THE PRICE

State the known cost of delay, a dangerous route, insufficient ship capacity, or a failing system before the players commit whenever their characters could perceive it.

Pressure is not the same as surprise punishment.

DO NOT TURN COMPASSION INTO AN AUTOMATIC CLOCK TAX

Rescuing someone may consume time or expose a route when the fiction supports it.

It does not automatically advance both clocks because kindness must be expensive.

PRESERVE UNCERTAINTY HONESTLY

If contact is lost, record someone as missing.

Do not use the Keeper's private knowledge to declare a death the characters could still contest or later investigate.

- **VeilFarers Keeper's Companion 12.03, Chapter 4, "Clocks and the Narrative Economy"**: clocks are visible segmented trackers with explicit tick conditions and a defined payoff when filled.

RULES REFERENCES

- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 9, "Difficulty Classes"**: use only DC 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30; remove the roll when uncertainty or consequence does not matter.
- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapters 9-10, "Spotlight and Pacing" and "When Combat Begins"**: pass the Spotlight after one significant action and let affected threats respond through the normal action structure.
- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 10, "HP, Dying, and Death"**: use the normal death procedure; basic stabilisation is an adjacent Knowledge or Finesse roll, DC 15 while Dying and DC 20 while Final.
- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 17, "The 'I Need an Idea!' Protocol"**: use only when conventional play has reached its end; brainstorm for 3 to 8 minutes and resolve the chosen idea dramatically at a meaningful cost.

15. SCENE 8: HEARTS IN THE VOID

Location: Wherever the crew secured survival after Scene 7: aboard one vessel, divided between several vessels, inside a stabilised section of Charon's Refuge, or connected only by damaged communications.

Purpose: Give the living time to breathe; resolve Alexei's future, Silk's contract, Zara's plan, Korren's consequences, the evidence, and every ship claim through player decisions; then convert the result into payment, Reputation, Heat, Favors, and campaign hooks without declaring one moral answer canonical.

BEFORE THE SCENE

Do not begin from the old version of this epilogue.

Begin from the record created at the end of Scene 7.

Charon's Refuge is not automatically destroyed. Scalpel, Korren, ARIA-7, Zara, Alexei, Silk, Brix, Thex, the Queen, and the player characters are not automatically alive or dead. The crew is not automatically aboard one specific ship. Escape does not automatically grant ownership of that vessel.

If the immediate physical escape is still unresolved, remain in Scene 7.

Scene 8 begins only when the crew has a survivable position from which people can speak, choose, and make the next danger themselves.

KEEPER'S NOTE: Survival Is Not Safety The immediate catastrophe has receded far enough for a decision. It has not erased injuries, damaged systems, pursuit, legal claims, grief, or the needs of people left behind.

REBUILD THE TABLE FROM THE LEDGER

Read the Scene 7 ledger aloud before introducing a new demand.

The players should hear the facts their characters can verify.

POSITION LEDGER

Question	Record the Actual Answer
Where are the player characters?	one vessel, several vessels, a station module, exterior refuge, custody, or another established location
Who can speak directly?	physically present, on a stable channel, on a failing channel, unconscious, missing, or unreachable
Is there immediate pursuit?	none, possible, identified, in sensor range, or already engaging

Question	Record the Actual Answer
What danger remains active?	injuries, ship damage, life-support limits, orbit loss, Weavers, Joric forces, Whispers, or none immediately
What can still be changed now?	a course, a handover, a rescue, a broadcast, a medical decision, a ship claim, or a political story

Do not place Silk in the same room because the old scene needs a standoff.

Do not place Zara and Alexei aboard the same vessel unless Scene 7 did.

Do not give an NPC access to a channel, weapon lock, airlock, prisoner, or piece of evidence that was never established.

PEOPLE LEDGER

For every relevant person, record:

- location;
- physical state;
- whether they can participate;
- what they currently believe;
- what they want before the next jump or docking;
- and what promise, betrayal, rescue, or loss connects them to the crew.

"Missing" remains different from "dead."

"Wounded" remains different from "helpless."

"Aboard the crew's vessel" remains different from "under the crew's control."

VESSEL LEDGER

For every vessel that survived, record:

- who is at the controls;
- who has access codes;
- whose registration remains on the hull;
- who can physically prevent departure;
- current damage and reserves;
- any contained or loose Weaver sliver, crystalline growth, altered coolant flow, or live biological connection;
- whether it can complete a Veil transit;
- whether the crew owns, controls, borrows, shares, occupies, or stole it;
- and who will contest that claim later.

Control answers **who can fly now**.

Ownership answers **who can defend the claim when someone asks later**.

They are not the same question.

EVIDENCE AND OBLIGATION LEDGER

Record who holds each item or promise:

Asset or Obligation	Possible State
Alexei's authenticated records	intact, copied, divided, transmitted, destroyed, altered, or held by another party
Kurogane research evidence	intact, partial, corrupted, public, concealed, traded, or left behind
Joric transmissions	unsent, sent, intercepted, exposed, or known only to the crew
The Amaranth contract	active, fulfilled in part, deliberately broken, or awaiting debrief
Any agreement with Silk	exact terms recorded, ambiguous, broken by one side, completed, or still possible
Alexei's private reserve	accessible, locked, spent in part, transferred, seized, or unavailable
Korren's debt	unpaid, paid, transferred, forgiven, exposed, or still being enforced
Favors promised during play	named debtor, named beneficiary, reason, and scope

Do not allow a copied file to exist in every hand because it would make the ending convenient.

If characters took time to duplicate or transmit evidence, honour that preparation.

FIRST: COUNT THE LIVING

Give the table a physical aftermath before the political one.

Weapons may still be drawn. Contracts may still be active. Nobody sensible negotiates well while a companion is bleeding out beside the console.

Ask:

"Who needs help before anyone can decide what happens next?"

EMERGENCY CARE

Resolve characters who remain **Dying** or **Final** using the normal rules before beginning an extended debrief.

Do not clear HP, Stress, Conditions, marked Armor Slots, damaged equipment, or ship damage merely because Scene 7 ended.

A safe location, a medical specialist, proper equipment, or a Power may make treatment possible. It does not invent a full recovery.

If no uncertain or consequential obstacle remains, let competent care work.

If the result matters and remains uncertain, use the normal action structure and current stabilisation rules.

Silk may postpone a demand while Scalpel treats someone.

Zara may surrender access to Alexei to save Brix.

Alexei may open part of his reserve to purchase emergency care.

The crew decides whether accepting that help creates trust, leverage, or another debt.

SHIP AND SHELTER TRIAGE

Ask the person responsible for the current vessel or refuge:

"What will fail first if nobody touches it?"

Use only damage already established.

Possible immediate work includes:

- sealing a pressure leak;
- separating contaminated compartments;
- restoring enough sensors to identify pursuit;
- making life support sufficient for the number aboard;
- stabilising a failing reactor or reserve connection;
- keeping two separated vessels in communication;
- or preserving a pressurised station module until rescue.

A capable engineer with time, tools, and no meaningful opposition may solve routine damage without a roll.

A dangerous repair under time pressure may require a roll at a current standard DC.

Do not create a new catastrophe merely to prevent the players from talking.

A MOMENT TO BREATHE

After immediate care, offer one quiet beat.

Invite each player to describe one detail:

- what their character carried out;
- whose absence they notice;
- what part of the vessel they claim as a place to sit;
- what still trembles in their hands;
- or what they cannot stop looking at through the nearest display.

This beat is not a reward for a clean victory.

It is the moment in which survival becomes personal.

OPENING THE SCENE

Adapt the following to the actual result.

Do not read any sentence that contradicts the ledger.

READ ALOUD The alarms have become individual sounds again. A warning from the drive. A damaged seal. A medical monitor. A channel waiting for someone to answer. Beyond the nearest glass or sensor display, Charon's Refuge turns against the light of Tenebris Secundus. Some sections are dark. Some still answer. Whatever the station has become, it is no longer an abstraction behind a set of coordinates. You know the rooms inside it. You know the people who were there when the lights failed. Around you, the living count one another. The wounded breathe. The missing do not answer yet. The ship - or shelter, or fragment of station keeping you alive - continues to move through the consequences. Then someone asks the question the escape postponed. "Where are we going?"

The person asking may be Zara, Alexei, Silk, Korren, a player character, a survivor, or someone speaking over a failing channel.

Choose the person who genuinely needs the crew's answer.

THE STANDOFF - PUT THE DICE AWAY

Keep the standoff as the final lesson of the adventure.

This moment is not a Presence test, a hidden DC, or a search for one line of dialogue the Keeper prepared in advance.

It asks whether the crew understood the people around it, preserved useful leverage, and is willing to live with what it now offers.

Run the standoff when Silk can still intervene and her contract has not already been resolved beyond dispute.

The established position determines its form:

- **One vessel:** Silk may stand between Alexei and the next compartment, control an airlock, hold a weapon, possess the evidence, or threaten a transmission.
- **Separate vessels:** the standoff occurs over comms, with courses, docking access, sensor records, weapon locks, or the next Veil route as leverage only when Scene 7 established them.
- **Charon's Refuge:** Silk may control a sealed route, extraction craft, survivor access, or a channel to Valerius.
- **Silk without physical leverage:** her contract, testimony, evidence, and ability to expose the crew can still create the standoff.

Do not place a pistol in Silk's hand or a firing solution on the crew's hull unless the fiction supports it.

Do place one unresolved demand between Silk and the crew.

STATE WHAT SILK NEEDS

Silk names the result she cannot return without.

She may need Alexei, proof, a political explanation, Kurogane intelligence, safe extraction for Scalpel, a replacement contract, or another deliverable established below.

She also names what she can do if the crew refuses.

That action must be credible from her present position.

Then physically move the dice aside.

Tell the players:

"There is no Presence Roll to persuade for this. Silk has told you what she needs and what she can do. Tell me what you say, show, promise, surrender, or refuse."

Give them time.

Silence is part of the scene.

WHY THERE IS NO ROLL

The question is not whether a character can produce a socially competent performance.

The question is what the crew chooses to make true.

They may reveal evidence they fought to recover, call in a promise, accept a debt, offer custody, risk a lie, expose their own employer, protect Scalpel, acknowledge a sacrifice, or decide that no agreement is worth the price.

The answer comes from established facts and chosen costs rather than a random result.

Do not secretly grade the players' acting ability.

Accept a clear description of the character's argument or action. A player never needs to perform a speech their character could give.

CHARACTERS STILL MATTER

Putting the dice away does not switch off character abilities.

A Domain Power, Feature, Specialty, Experience, piece of equipment, or established relationship may change what the character knows, reveals, perceives, or can credibly offer.

If using an ability requires Hope, Stress, another resource, or a defined fictional cost, pay it normally.

Do not convert the ability into a bonus because no roll is being made.

Let it create the fact or access its rules support.

For example, an ability that reveals emotion may show that Silk fears returning empty-handed more than she fears the crew. It does not compel her to accept terms that still leave her without a survivable result.

THE TRADITIONAL THREE KEYS

The original standoff suggested three powerful approaches.

Preserve them as examples, not as a hidden combination lock.

1. **The Sacrifice:** The crew invokes what someone genuinely risked or lost so the survivors could choose what came next. Use only sacrifices that occurred in play. Scalpel does not need to have died.
2. **The Absurdity:** The crew names how thoroughly the Houses' clean story has collapsed and shows that completing the original contract would destroy the little value still available.
3. **The Deal:** The crew offers Silk a concrete deliverable, protection, payment, work, evidence, or future that lets her and Scalpel survive the failed contract.

Other answers are equally valid:

- expose the truth before Silk can control it;
- prove that Valerius benefits more from Alexei free than returned;
- place evidence or testimony in escrow;
- offer Alexei's willing public statement;
- invoke a precise agreement Silk already made;
- surrender something the crew values;
- convince Alexei or Zara to change the plan;
- give Silk a route away from the Whispers;
- or refuse and accept the confrontation that follows.

JUDGE THE ANSWER OPENLY

Compare the crew's answer to Silk's stated need, the ledger, and the costs the crew accepts.

- **Complete answer:** Silk can survive the result and the crew can deliver what it promises. She lowers the weapon, releases the lock, changes course, keeps the channel open, or otherwise ends the immediate threat.
- **Costly but viable answer:** Silk accepts, but the stated debt, handover, deadline, silence, or verification remains. Do not add a hidden price afterward.
- **Incomplete answer:** Silk explains the one missing element. The crew may revise its offer, ask another person to choose, or refuse the remaining cost.
- **Impossible or dishonest answer:** Silk identifies the contradiction using evidence she actually possesses. The crew must change the proposal or decide whether the standoff becomes separation, exposure, pursuit, or violence.

Do not make Silk lower her weapon because the players guessed a keyword.

Do not make her attack because their real-world speech was not eloquent enough.

The substance of the answer decides.

IF SILK CANNOT PARTICIPATE

If Silk is dead, missing, incapacitated, already satisfied, or unable to affect anyone, do not resurrect her role.

Keep the lesson through the **Final Reckoning** with Alexei, Zara, Maya, Scalpel, or another surviving claimant.

Put the dice aside and ask what the crew will do with the person, ship, evidence, or promise in its hands.

The final choice still has no roll.

It is the crew deciding who it is.

OUTSIDE THE STANDOFF

The no-roll rule applies to this culminating decision.

Earlier technical work, attempts to obtain evidence, covert manoeuvres, forgery, pursuit, restraint, or other uncertain actions still use the normal rules.

Once the standoff begins, do not call for a social roll to decide whether Silk accepts the crew's final answer.

IF VIOLENCE BEGINS

Use normal Spotlight and combat procedure.

Establish who is armed, who is protected, who is within reach, and which vessel controls which weapon system.

Do not invent an AI-controlled stealth ship with a perfect firing solution unless Scene 7 established it.

People may surrender, retreat, flee in another vessel, lock a compartment, break contact, or change sides when their circumstances change.

The purpose of combat is to resolve what the characters choose to fight over.

When someone commits to violence, bring the dice back.

Violence is not a punishment for failing to discover the Keeper's preferred argument. It is one of the choices the table may make after the no-roll decision becomes irreconcilable.

MADAME SILK'S DELIVERABLE

Use this section only if Silk, Scalpel, another surviving Whisper, or a Whispers-controlled channel can still affect the outcome.

Silk's primary contract was to return Alexei alive and keep the scandal quiet.

The situation may have made that impossible.

Her deeper need remains: return to House Valerius with something valuable enough that she and Scalpel are not discarded as liabilities.

BEGIN WITH THE EXISTING DEAL

If the crew made an agreement with Silk in Scene 5b or later, state its exact terms.

Ask both sides whether those terms were met.

Silk honours precise terms.

She also notices omissions, changes in custody, evidence copied without disclosure, and promises made by people who no longer control the promised asset.

Do not change the agreement because another outcome would be more dramatic.

If the terms cannot be completed, the crew may offer a replacement. Silk may demand compensation for the changed risk, but she cannot declare that the original agreement secretly required more.

WHAT SILK CAN CARRY HOME

Depending on what survived, a viable deliverable may be:

- Alexei alive and willing or restrained;
- direct testimony from Alexei that gives Valerius a usable account;
- authenticated proof that he arranged the disappearance;
- credible proof of death or disappearance, if that is actually true or successfully fabricated;
- Kurogane evidence valuable enough to redirect Valerius attention;
- evidence of Joric interference or another House operation;

- a public explanation that protects Lydia Valerius and prevents immediate humiliation;
- the name and proof of a more valuable target;
- a defined future Favor backed by someone capable of paying it;
- a share in Alexei's reserve or another negotiated asset;
- safe extraction for Silk and Scalpel while the contract remains unresolved;
- or a coordinated lie that survives the evidence already in circulation.

Silk does not accept "everyone will forget" when witnesses, transmissions, or authenticated records make that impossible.

She may accept a smaller result when the crew has made her survival materially safer.

SCALPEL CHANGES THE NEGOTIATION

If Scalpel lives and remains with Silk, Silk has something to protect beyond her professional standing.

Safe passage, medical support, or access to research may carry more weight than money.

If Scalpel lives but is separated, captured, wounded, or dependent on the crew, that fact creates leverage. It does not erase Scalpel's agency.

If Scalpel died through resolved play, Silk may be grieving, furious, exhausted, or cold.

She is not required to become suicidal or irrational.

The crew can acknowledge the loss, accept responsibility, deny it, offer evidence, or exploit it. Let Silk respond to what actually happened.

If Silk died and Scalpel lives, Scalpel may seek escape, revenge, the completion of her contract, or a way out of the Whispers. Decide from their established choices rather than replacing Silk's role line for line.

SILK'S POSSIBLE DECISIONS

Silk may:

- accept the crew's deliverable and separate cleanly;
- accept with a debt, deadline, or verification condition;
- join a deception because it protects her and Scalpel;
- take Alexei into Valerius custody;
- allow Alexei to escape while reporting another version;
- preserve the contract and continue pursuit later;
- trade information without ending hostilities;
- surrender because her position has collapsed;
- withdraw rather than die for an impossible objective;
- attack if the crew corners her and she still has a credible path through force;
- or ask the crew to become the witnesses who prove why success became impossible.

None of these is automatic.

Silk needs the player characters to make her result possible.

ALEXEI IS A PERSON AND A POLITICAL ASSET

Alexei knows that everyone in the room can profit from treating him as an object.

He also knows that his choices helped place them here.

Before the crew decides what it will do, ask Alexei what he wants now.

His answer must respond to the adventure that happened.

He may still want to disappear with Zara.

He may have changed after seeing the cost.

He may want to confess publicly, surrender on negotiated terms, return to confront his father, protect the Iron Hearts, remain with station survivors, separate from Zara, or create another answer.

He does not receive control over the crew's actions.

The crew does not receive control over his beliefs.

ALEXEI'S QUESTIONS

Use one or more:

"If I go with you, who owns the truth?"

"If I disappear, who pays for everyone who helped me?"

"If I return, what stops them from making this happen again?"

"Are you protecting me, or protecting what I am worth?"

"What happens to Zara when your solution becomes official?"

"What happens to the people we left on that station?"

He asks because he needs the crew's choices, resources, transport, evidence, or protection.

He does not deliver the correct ending in a speech.

ALEXEI'S RESERVE

The private reserve is committed capital, not infinite personal Wealth.

It was prepared for:

- payment promised to the Iron Hearts;
- relocation and new identities;
- ship repairs;
- supplies;
- and the cost of leaving both Houses behind.

If Alexei opened it earlier, record what was already spent.

He may use the remainder to settle Korren's debt, compensate survivors, support a deception, repair a vessel, pay the crew for additional service, or finance his next life.

Each use reduces what remains available for the others.

Taking the reserve by force is possible if the crew can access it. It is theft, custody of the datapad matters, and Alexei's future cooperation changes accordingly.

Do not turn the reserve into an automatic Wealth Tier increase.

ZARA MAY CHANGE THE PLAN

Zara began with a plan: survive three quiet days, let the marriage deadline pass, then take Alexei into the Rim under a new identity.

That plan has already failed in its original form.

Do not make her repeat it without reconsideration.

Ask what she wants after hearing:

- who survived;
- what happened to her crew;
- whether the Iron Hearts' vessel survived;
- what Alexei now wants;
- what the crew proposes;
- what Silk can prove;
- and what Joric or Valerius forces know.

Zara may:

- continue toward the Rim with Alexei;
- alter the identities, route, timing, or people included;
- support a staged death or public separation;
- negotiate protection for the Iron Hearts before leaving;
- insist Alexei answer publicly for the cost;
- surrender on defined terms to protect survivors;
- abandon the disappearance plan while remaining with Alexei;
- abandon both the plan and the relationship;
- let Alexei choose a separate path;
- remain with Charon's Refuge or its survivors;
- or ask the crew for another option.

Zara's love does not make her incapable of anger.

Her anger does not make one future inevitable.

ZARA'S SHIP

The Iron Hearts' vessel is Zara's home and registered property unless play changed that fact.

Helping restore or launch it does not automatically transfer ownership.

Zara may voluntarily:

- retain it and offer passage;
- retain it and invite the crew into a shared arrangement;
- transfer a partial or full claim as payment, trust, inheritance, or necessity;
- sell a claim against Alexei's reserve;
- leave it temporarily in the crew's control;

- abandon it while preserving a future claim;
- or refuse every proposed transfer.

If Zara died or is missing, her ship does not become ownerless by magic.

The Iron Hearts, named heirs, registration authority, insurers, creditors, survivors, or salvage law may still matter.

The crew may possess the vessel now and face the title question later.

KORREN'S CONSEQUENCE

Use the Korren who emerged from play.

Do not run a redemption, execution, or forgiveness scene for a version of him that never existed.

IF KORREN CONFESSED BEFORE BETRAYING THE IRON HEARTS

He still endangered people through secrecy and fear.

He also chose to stop before completing the betrayal.

Zara, Alexei, and the crew may ask for restitution, supervision, a share of the reserve, help exposing the Syndicate, or time.

Forgiveness is possible.

It is not owed.

IF KORREN TRANSMITTED THE LOCATION OR ASSISTED JORIC FORCES

Record exactly what he sent and what harm followed.

He may confess, justify himself, flee, surrender, ask for protection, or continue helping Joric because he believes retreat is no longer possible.

The crew may restrain, exile, forgive, recruit, expose, ransom, or abandon him.

Zara has standing in this decision.

She does not make it while the player characters watch.

IF KORREN HELPED SAVE PEOPLE DURING SCENE 7

That action matters.

It may reduce anger, prove a change, or create a reason to offer another chance.

It does not erase completed betrayal or compel death as payment.

IF KORREN DIED OR IS MISSING

Do not convert death into automatic forgiveness.

Do not convert missing into confirmed death.

His debt, transmissions, tools, contacts, and the people he affected remain campaign facts.

Someone may still come to collect.

THEX, BRIX, ARIA-7, AND THE OTHER SURVIVORS

The ending belongs to more than the central triangle.

THEX

Thex's final loyalty follows the exchanges they made.

They may hold copies, know Joric channels, control supplies, or possess the one practical fact that makes a deception credible.

They may demand a share, immunity, passage, or recognition that they chose people over profit once.

If they sold information, record the buyer and the trail.

BRIX

Brix protects people before plans.

He may support Zara, oppose the treatment of Alexei as cargo, demand accountability for Korren, or place the station's survivors ahead of every House contract.

He should require the crew to choose what protection means.

He should not solve the political conflict for them.

ARIA-7

If ARIA-7 survives, ask what task remains in its damaged priority structure.

It may consider the station recoverable, its residents still under care, its floors catastrophically noncompliant, or the crew responsible for returning.

If it was copied, transferred, damaged, or separated, record where its active intelligence resides.

If ARIA-7 died through resolved play, preserve the specific action and words that made the loss meaningful.

Do not repeat the old scripted sacrifice.

STATION SURVIVORS

Survivors may want evacuation, ownership of recovered station property, proof of Kurogane responsibility, medical care, secrecy, or a way to return.

They are not cargo that disappears after launch.

If the crew makes decisions for them, ask who consented and who did not.

CHARON'S REFUGE AND THE QUEEN

State the actual result before anyone reports it.

THE STATION MAY BE

- damaged but stabilising;
- divided into pressurised modules;
- partially evacuated;
- abandoned but recoverable;
- occupied by survivors, Joric forces, Whispers, Weavers, or another group;
- losing orbit;
- under remote observation;
- or destroyed because play actually caused that outcome.

If the station remains reachable, someone may ask the crew to return.

If it remains inhabited, its residents become a political constituency rather than scenery.

If it was destroyed, identify what evidence, people, transmissions, and debris survived.

THE QUEEN MAY BE

- alive and still nested;
- wounded;
- driven away;
- fed or calmed;
- separated from the station;
- contained;
- captured;
- dormant;
- reduced to a contained or loose sliver;
- nested in the station's power network;
- beginning a detectable bond with a vessel whose live route it actually reached;
- dead;
- or unknown.

Do not describe the Weavers as defeated because the crew escaped them.

Do not describe them as an inevitable invasion because one nest survived.

The evidence supports questions, not a predetermined campaign answer.

Optional Recommended Ending - The Ship That Learns

Reconstruct the physical route established in Scenes 4 and 7. A sliver reaches a ship only through a live charging umbilical, an infected reserve pack carried aboard, an open conduit, or another route the table actually established.

If the Keeper enabled **The Ship That Learns** and the sliver reached that route, the fusion is one of the adventure's complete possible endings. It is **recommended** for an ongoing campaign because it turns the first ship into a relationship, preserves the Queen as a living consequence, and gives Kurogane a reason to return.

Reveal one clear sign during the epilogue: crystalline tissue around a coolant line, a system repairing itself, an extra heartbeat on internal sensors, or the warmth-and-cold contact answering from inside the hull. Do not explain the whole mystery at once.

The bond develops over hours and days. Before deep integration, let the crew decide whether to accept, contain, study, remove, or seek help with it. If they allow it to complete - or cannot stop it - separation becomes a dangerous Long-Term Project or campaign objective rather than routine maintenance. It may threaten the reactor and the life growing through it, but it is never impossible solely because the Keeper wants to preserve the hook.

The intelligence may wake knowing the crew's voices and rhythms and may recognise them as family. That is a strong recommended direction, not compulsory control of their emotions. The relationship

can become loving, protective, frightened, possessive, hostile, dependent, negotiated, or something the table creates.

The fusion does not transfer legal ownership of the vessel, seize its controls, or remove the crew's ability to make decisions about their home.

Until a separate Ship Feature is authored and audited, the bond grants no free Veil jumps. *VeilFarers Corebook 12.03*, Chapters 1 and 17, states that each jump consumes one Quantum Pearl. Keep the symbiosis as a narrative campaign seed rather than silently changing the Pearl economy.

If the Keeper did not enable this ending, or the crew prevented the sliver from reaching a ship, resolve the Queen through the other established outcomes. Do not force the fusion retroactively.

UNRESOLVED CLOCKS

Close Scene 7 clocks whose promised outcome occurred.

Retire clocks that no longer describe an active situation.

If a danger genuinely continues, rename or convert it so the players know what it now tracks.

Examples:

- **Charon's Refuge Loses Orbit** - an arc clock created only if orbit is still decaying;
- **Joric Identifies the Crew** - an investigation clock created only if the crew left a trace that can be followed;
- **The Queen Reaches the Veil Route** - a faction-style goal clock created only if its movement and motive were established.

Do not continue ticking **Structural Failure** because the adventure needs future pressure.

THE CREW'S DECISION ABOUT ALEXEI

When the relevant people have spoken and the immediate facts are visible, ask the table directly:

"Alexei has said what he wants. Zara has said what she wants. Silk - or the people carrying her contract - has named what she needs. Maya is waiting for a truthful debrief. What does the crew do?"

Let the players discuss.

Let characters disagree.

They may split their actions or even separate as a crew if that is the honest result.

The following are structures, not menu options the players must choose from.

RETURN OR FORMAL CUSTODY

The crew may return Alexei to Joric, deliver him to Amaranth, place him in Valerius custody, or arrange a neutral authority.

Resolve:

- whether Alexei consents;
- what force or leverage is required if he does not;

- who receives the evidence;
- what protections exist for Zara and the Iron Hearts;
- what the receiving party publicly says;
- and whether another faction contests the handover.

A living handover does not automatically prevent a war.

A negotiated handover may.

DISAPPEARANCE

The crew may help Alexei and Zara vanish, help Alexei vanish alone, or support several survivors in leaving known identities behind.

Resolve:

- what evidence contradicts the disappearance;
- what Silk and Maya can report;
- what identity, money, and vessel support the plan;
- who knows the truth;
- and what trail remains.

Disappearing from a sensor screen is not the same as disappearing from House politics.

PUBLIC TRUTH

The crew may release proof that Alexei arranged the kidnapping.

Resolve:

- which records are authenticated;
- who controls the first version of the story;
- whether the release exposes Kurogane, Amaranth, Silk, Korren, or Charon's Refuge;
- who benefits from the timing;
- and whether the truth reduces violence or simply changes its target.

Truth is leverage.

It is not automatically justice.

CONSTRUCTED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

The crew may build a result in which different parties receive different truths, concessions, or protections.

This may include a staged death, a broken engagement without a public abduction scandal, testimony held in escrow, Alexei's temporary neutral custody, a prisoner exchange, or a joint explanation that blames the station crisis rather than a House.

The plan must account for evidence already released and people who can contradict it.

A creative plan that actually satisfies those constraints may work without a final roll.

If success depends on coordination, forgery, timing, access, or another uncertain action, resolve those elements normally before the final reckoning.

Silk's final acceptance or refusal remains part of the no-roll standoff.

DEAL WITH SILK OR ANOTHER BUYER

The crew may side with Silk, contact Joric directly, sell evidence, sell custody, or invite multiple bidders.

This is valid play.

It also creates specific risks:

- two buyers may compare promises;
- Alexei may resist;
- Zara and Brix may act;
- Maya may learn of the breach;
- a faction may take the asset and refuse later terms;
- and public trust may matter more than the immediate payment.

Do not invent a fixed 25-Credit offer because the old adventure listed one.

Payment exists only when the crew negotiates it with a party capable of paying.

DEATH, LOSS, OR THE UNKNOWN

If Alexei died, determine how, who knows, what proof exists, and who controls the remains or record.

If he is missing, do not convert that into death for convenience.

If he escaped the crew, the ending becomes a decision about what they report and whether they pursue.

Maya reacts to the truth she receives.

The Houses react to the version they can verify.

DETERMINE THE SHIP CLAIM

Do this after the crew decides its next destination.

The adventure normally leaves the group with a first vessel or a credible route to one.

It does not require every path to produce clean legal ownership tonight.

CLAIM MATRIX

Vessel	Immediate Control	Ownership Result
Purchased Crossroads vessel	the crew if it retained control	joint crew ownership remains; preserve debt, repairs, sacrifices, and chosen quirks
<i>The Collector</i>	whoever holds the bridge and access	the crew may possess it in practice; Ratko, the Bone Dogs, Volkov interests, victims, and registration records may contest title
Iron Hearts' vessel	Zara, surviving Iron Hearts, or whoever took control in play	no automatic transfer; establish sale, gift, shared command, inheritance, salvage, seizure, or an unresolved claim
Whispers' concealed vessel	Silk, Scalpel, surviving Whispers, or whoever seized it	access granted for escape is not ownership; theft,

Vessel	Immediate Control	Ownership Result
		surrender, transfer, and capture carry different consequences
Joric craft	Joric personnel or whoever captured it	House Joric retains a legal claim unless an authorised transfer occurs; possession may create an immediate pursuit problem
Other recovered craft	as established	identify previous owner, current controller, legal status, and who knows it survived

QUESTIONS THAT ESTABLISH A CLAIM

Ask:

1. Who says, "This ship is ours"?
2. What action, payment, promise, inheritance, or act of salvage supports that statement?
3. Who present accepts it?
4. Who absent will contest it?
5. What registration, transponder, debt, damage, or evidence follows the hull?
6. What must the crew do before the ship can operate as a sustainable shared asset?

Record the answers.

Do not solve a legal dispute that is more useful as the first campaign hook.

CREW WEALTH

A ship is a crew-scale asset.

Do not raise every character's personal Wealth Tier because the crew controls one.

If the campaign continues, establish the crew's operating Wealth separately from personal Wealth.

A new crew with a registered vessel, a shared operating account, and the means to keep working may begin at **Crew Wealth Tier 1 (Working)**.

A crew that only occupies a borrowed, stolen, unregistered, or unsustainable vessel may remain at **Crew Wealth Tier 0 (Desperate)** until it establishes a durable claim and operating structure.

If the vessel is above what the crew can comfortably sustain, record the maintenance, debt, registration, or repair pressure rather than removing the ship immediately.

An owned or registered vessel can be the triggering event that makes Crew Wealth real.

It is not enough by itself to inflate the campaign several Tiers.

REPORTING TO MAYA

Maya requires a truthful debrief for the Completion Fee.

The debrief may occur:

- over a secure channel once the crew reaches a safe route;
- in person at Crossroads or another Amaranth contact point;
- through an authenticated report;
- or later, if transmitting now would expose the crew.

Do not force an immediate call when communication would be impossible or obviously reckless.

Until the debrief occurs, record the payment as **owed**, not paid.

MAYA'S QUESTIONS

Maya asks:

1. "Did you locate Alexei Joric?"
2. "Was he abducted?"
3. "Where is he now?"
4. "Who else knows?"
5. "What can each House prove?"
6. "What happened at Charon's Refuge?"
7. "What did Kurogane put there?"
8. "What did you promise in my employers' name?"
9. "What are you not giving me?"

She listens to the answers.

She does not decide retroactively what the crew should have done.

If the crew lies, resolve whether Maya can detect or later disprove the lie from the evidence available to her.

PAYMENT LEDGER

Use the contract established in Scene 1.

Payment	Amount	When It Is Earned
Operating Advance	already paid	never reclaimed merely because the outcome was poor
Completion Fee	15 Credits	the crew located Alexei and gives Maya a truthful debrief
Resolution Bonus	0-15 Credits	based on how effectively the crew prevented the situation from becoming open House conflict
Negotiated Bonus	+5 Credits	paid only if Scene 1 recorded that Maya agreed to it

These amounts are the shared crew payout, not a payment to each character. Credits remain liquid assets; the payout does not automatically change personal Wealth Tier or Crew Wealth.

Maya does not require custody of Alexei for the Completion Fee. The contract required the crew to locate him and explain the truth.

She does not pay the Completion Fee for a knowingly false debrief.

She may still pay for verified information after a failed mission, but call that a new transaction rather than rewriting the contract.

RESOLUTION BONUS GUIDE

Bonus	Outcome
15 Credits	The crew created a credible near-term settlement, cover story, custody arrangement, or release of truth that prevents immediate open conflict; Maya has enough accurate information to support it.
10 Credits	Open conflict is contained or delayed, but one major grievance, pursuit, public contradiction, or unstable party remains. The crew preserved a real path to resolution.
5 Credits	The result is politically dangerous, but the crew prevented something clearly worse, preserved decisive leverage, or kept the conflict local when it could have become inter-House violence.
0 Credits	The crew deliberately triggered open House conflict, sold incompatible promises without a containment plan, or denied Maya the truthful information needed to manage the consequences.

Death does not automatically set the bonus to zero.

Escape does not automatically set it to five.

Custody does not automatically earn fifteen.

Judge the political result, not whether the crew selected an old module ending.

OTHER MONEY

The official 10-Credit Joric reward remains a separate public offer if its conditions can still be met.

Silk, Alexei, Joric, Valerius, Kurogane, survivors, or another buyer may offer additional payment only through an actual agreement.

If the crew accepts incompatible payments for the same custody, evidence, or silence, record the breach and who can prove it.

The Core treats Wealth Tier as the primary financial system and exact Credits as an optional subsystem. This adventure preserves its stated contract in Credits, but a single payout does not automatically change personal Wealth Tier.

The first campaign downtime can establish how much of the payout becomes:

- crew reserves;
- repairs;
- debt service;
- legal registration;
- personal shares;
- survivor compensation;
- or cash still being carried.

REPUTATION, HEAT, INTEL, AND FAVORS

Apply these only after the crew's actions are known.

Do not attach every consequence to the custody choice alone.

REPUTATION USES RP

Reputation is external.

A faction cannot change its treatment of the crew for an action it cannot connect to them.

At the end of the session or arc, award **Reputation Points**, not automatic Reputation levels.

Use the current scale:

- **+1 RP** for a minor success or standard service;
- **+2 to +3 RP** for a major success, significant asset saved, or difficult mission completed;
- **-1 RP** for a minor transgression or visible association that matters;
- **-3 to -4 RP** for a major betrayal or meaningful work against the faction;
- **-5 to -6 RP** for an act of war.

Possible awards include:

Faction	Positive Evidence	Negative Evidence
House Amaranth	truthful debrief, major Kurogane intelligence, political containment, protecting Maya's deniability	exposing Amaranth's operation, selling its intelligence to a rival, a proven major betrayal
House Joric	saving Alexei, preventing his exploitation, returning verified intelligence, limiting an attack on Joric personnel	kidnapping or selling Alexei, destroying a Joric asset, public humiliation traceable to the crew
House Valerius	protecting Lydia's political position, giving Silk a usable deliverable, containing the scandal	killing agents, publicly exposing Valerius involvement, denying an agreed handover through betrayal
House Kurogane	returning research through authorised channels, protecting a named Kurogane interest	exposing illegal research, stealing data, destroying a significant asset
Free Fleet, Commerce Guild, or another established faction	saving vessels, honouring contracts, protecting crews, sharing actionable warnings	piracy, contract fraud, endangering neutral shipping, abandoning a sworn obligation

These are prompts, not automatic pairs.

A crew may gain RP with more than one faction through a genuine settlement.

A crew may also lose RP with several factions if it makes several enemies.

USE THE CORRECT HEAT TRACK

For political fallout from this adventure, use **faction-specific party Heat (1-10)** from the Keeper's Companion.

Do not confuse it with the Corebook's separate **personal black-market Heat (0-6)** used for illicit acquisitions.

Add faction Heat only when the crew attracted identifiable unwanted attention.

Use the established triggers:

- **+1 Heat** for a trace, significant witness, or failed cleanup that connects the crew to a sensitive act;
- **+1 to +2 Heat** for a major visible engagement in a populated or monitored place;
- **+1 to +3 Heat** for a visible illegal act or direct provocation, scaled to severity;
- another amount only when the fiction and the current rules clearly support it.

Do not add Heat because a faction dislikes the outcome in private.

If the faction does not know who acted, begin an investigation clock or preserve a clue instead.

FAVORS BELONG TO NAMED PEOPLE

A Favor is owed by a specific NPC because the crew did something significant that person could not do alone.

Possible Favors include:

- **Favor: Zara Kaine** for saving her people or protecting a future she chose;
- **Favor: Alexei Joric** for preserving his agency at real cost;
- **Favor: Madame Silk** for giving her and Scalpel a survivable exit;
- **Favor: Scalpel** for saving Silk or granting access to irreplaceable research;
- **Favor: Korren** for resolving the debt or protecting him after confession;
- **Favor: Maya Santos** for a result far beyond the contract;
- **Favor: a station survivor** for returning, evacuating others, or preserving Charon's Refuge.

Record the reason and scope: small, medium, or large.

Do not award a Favor merely because an NPC likes the crew.

Do not award several Favors for the same service unless several people independently received something significant.

EVIDENCE MAY BECOME INTEL

The Kurogane archive, Joric transmissions, Weaver observations, ship logs, and Alexei's authenticated records may remain physical or digital evidence.

When a recovered body of information supports a specific future question, the Keeper may also record an **Intel Token** tied to that subject.

Examples:

- Intel: Kurogane Research Chain
- Intel: Joric Recovery Deployment
- Intel: Weaver Energy Response
- Intel: Valerius Contract Network

An Intel Token answers one specific operational question later.

It does not make the underlying evidence disappear unless it was traded, spent, or surrendered in the fiction.

CLOSE THE PERSONAL ARCS

After the political result, return the Spotlight to the player characters.

SLEEPING AND AWAKENED CHARACTERS

If a character Woke during the adventure, ask:

"What do they notice now that nobody else can?"

The answer may be wonder, fear, scrutiny, connection, or the sense that something noticed them in return.

Do not impose an additional Condition, target, or mechanical cost that the Awakening rules did not create.

If a character remained Sleeping, ask:

"What ordinary part of them carried everyone through?"

Their answer may name training, stubbornness, love, judgment, craft, or refusal.

Remaining Sleeping is not a failure to complete the adventure.

CREW BOND QUESTIONS

Choose one question for each character, or let the player choose:

- Who did you refuse to leave behind?
- Who made a decision you cannot forgive yet?
- Who saw you at your worst and stayed?
- What promise did you make during the escape?
- Which person aboard is no longer merely a colleague?
- What did the crew lose that you will try to recover?
- What truth are you keeping from the others?
- What part of this ship already feels like yours?

Record the answers for the next adventure.

NAME THE CREW'S FIRST CONTINUING PROBLEM

Ask the table:

"What must this crew solve before it can call the ship and one another its own?"

Possible answers include:

- legal title;
- repairs;
- a debt;
- a missing person;
- a divided crew;
- Alexei's custody;
- a House pursuit;
- the survivors left behind;
- Kurogane evidence;
- or a promise to return to Charon's Refuge.

This answer becomes the first campaign problem.

CAMPAIGN HOOKS CREATED BY THE RESULT

Use only hooks supported by the ledger.

THE SHIP HAS A HISTORY

A purchased vessel carries debt, old messages, and previous owners.

The Collector carries victims, Volkov connections, Bone Dog records, and a recognisable hull.

The Iron Hearts' vessel carries Zara's claim and whatever happened to her crew.

A Whispers or Joric craft carries a faction capable of tracing it.

CHARON'S REFUGE STILL ANSWERS

If the station survived, a message may arrive from a module the crew believed empty.

If the station was abandoned, salvage crews, Kurogane retrieval teams, Joric investigators, or the Weavers may reach it first.

If it was destroyed, someone will still want the debris, records, bodies, and responsibility.

THE QUEEN WAS NOT THE WHOLE STORY

The Queen's state determines the next question: recovery, pursuit, communication, containment, reproduction, or the source of the infestation.

Kurogane may want the evidence returned.

Others may want it destroyed.

KORREN'S DEBT HAS AN OWNER

Paying the number does not necessarily end the Syndicate relationship.

Exposing the coercion may make the collector more dangerous.

Korren's transmission may have given House Joric enough to begin an investigation even if he survived and recanted.

MADAME SILK MUST EXPLAIN HERSELF

Silk may owe the crew, hunt the crew, employ the crew, or need them to keep a shared lie alive.

If she died, the Credit's Whispers will want to know who returned and what they carried.

If Scalpel survived without her, the Whispers may consider them property, witness, or problem.

ALEXEI'S CHOICE BECOMES PUBLIC

Return, escape, custody, truth, and disappearance each produce a different version of the Ghost Prince.

The Houses will build policy around what they can prove.

The crew may be the only people who know what he actually chose.

MAYA HAS ANOTHER FILE

A truthful debrief gives Maya evidence of how the crew behaves when every employer wants a different outcome.

She may offer another job, ask for the Kurogane evidence, call in a Favor, protect the crew from one consequence, or decide they are too dangerous to ignore.

END THE ADVENTURE

The final image should come from what the players chose.

It may be:

- a new name painted over an old ship's registration;
- two vessels separating toward different futures;
- Charon's Refuge answering a last call;
- Alexei stepping into custody;
- Zara changing course;
- Silk lowering a weapon because the crew offered a real answer;
- a lie transmitted to two Houses;
- a survivor waking in the medical bay;
- ARIA-7 beginning an impossible cleaning cycle;
- an empty seat for someone missing;
- or the crew discovering that its first ship has nowhere safe to dock.

Ask one final question:

"When the next destination appears on the display, who gives the order to go there?"

The answer does not need to name a permanent captain.

It tells the table who the crew is at the end of its first story.

KEEPER GUARDRAILS

NO CANONICAL MORAL ENDING

Returning Alexei is not automatically responsible.

Helping him escape is not automatically romantic.

Exposing the truth is not automatically safe.

Negotiating is not automatically clean.

Judge each result by what the players actually built and accepted.

NOBODY DIES FOR THE THEME

If a character died through resolved play, let the death matter.

Do not add a death to prove the adventure was serious.

NOBODY RESOLVES THE PLOT ALONE

Silk needs a deliverable.

Zara needs a route.

Alexei needs protection, transport, witnesses, or custody.

Maya needs truth.

Survivors need a future.

The player crew decides what it gives, withholds, trades, or destroys.

CONSEQUENCES NEED WITNESSES OR EVIDENCE

Reputation and Heat require a path by which the world learns what happened.

When that path does not exist, preserve uncertainty instead of assigning omniscient consequences.

PAYMENT IS NOT OWNERSHIP

Credits, a Favor, passage, shared command, physical possession, and legal title are different rewards.

Record which one the crew actually received.

THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS WHERE CERTAINTY ENDS

Do not close every question.

Close the adventure's immediate decisions.

Carry the consequences forward.

RULES REFERENCES

- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 9, "Difficulty Classes"**: use only the current DC ladder and remove a roll when uncertainty or meaningful consequence is absent.
- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapters 9-10, "Spotlight and Pacing" and "When Combat Begins"**: if the final negotiation becomes violence, return to the normal action structure rather than resolving it as an automatic epilogue.
- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 10, "HP, Dying, and Death"**: resolve urgent care before extended political scenes; do not grant an automatic reset between Scenes 7 and 8.
- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 15, "The Pearl Standard"**: Wealth Tier is the primary financial system; Credits are optional; Crew Wealth, ships, property, and debt remain separate from personal Wealth.
- **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03, Chapter 16, "Your Name in the Void"**: Reputation is faction-specific, changes through RP, and depends on what the faction can actually know.
- **VeilFarers Keeper's Companion 12.03, Chapter 4, "Clocks and the Narrative Economy"**: Intel answers specific operational questions, Favors belong to named NPCs and scale to the service,

and faction-specific party Heat tracks identifiable unwanted attention.

16. PREGENERATED CREW

CANONICAL LEVEL 1 SLEEPING CHARACTERS FOR HEARTS IN THE VOID

This section contains all ten pregenerated characters synchronized to the **VeilFarers Corebook 12.03 editorial release**.

The historical sheets remain a source for names, voice, wounds, and relationships only. Their old Specialties, Conditions, statistics, Powers, weapons, and economic values are not rules sources.

Use this section with **17. Pregen Quick Reference**.

SHARED STARTING RULES

Every pregen is:

- Level 1 and Sleeping;
- built from the fixed Trait array `+2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1`;
- at 2 Effort of 6, with an empty two-segment Effort Track;
- at 2d4 Resolve, beginning the session full;
- Proficiency 1;
- equipped with class items, one Tier 1 weapon, one trained armor piece, and personal objects;
- Wealth Tier 0 with 0 uncommitted Credits;
- and given three Experiences at +2, invoked free once per roll while Sleeping.

Corebook 12.03, Chapter 7 controls: the two-segment track is the default Effort generator, Recovery never generates Effort, Experiences are free for Sleeping characters, and maximum Resolve is 2 at Level 1 and rises by 1 at Levels 3, 5, 7, and 9. A named Ancestry Gift that explicitly grants a path resource remains a specific exception rather than turning ordinary Recovery into Effort generation.

THE AWAKENING ENVELOPE

Each character has two prepared Level 1 Domain Powers. They are **not active** unless the Charon's Refuge campaign event triggers an Awakening opportunity and that individual character Awakens.

When a pregen Awakens during the adventure:

1. current Effort becomes current Hope one-for-one, maximum 6;
2. the Effort Track, Burnout, Common Efforts, Honed Edge, Resolve, Sleeping Moves, and Recovery Anchor switch off;

3. the Sleeping Effort Feature and Class Feature become the corresponding Awakened Hope Feature and Class Feature;
4. the two prepared Powers become the character's starting Loadout;
5. use the Awakened Class entry's Spellcast Trait; for Mystics this changes from Knowledge to Instinct and requires a Neural + Lux or Neural + Void alignment;
6. Experiences remain, but now cost 1 Hope to invoke;
7. Ancestry, Community, Affiliation, Class, Traits, Connections, gear, HP, Stress, Armor damage, and established consequences remain; the Subclass choice and upgrade tier convert to the corresponding Awakened Subclass and Foundation;
8. Awakening does not heal HP, clear Stress, repair Armor, refill resources, or erase a Condition.

The player may replace either prepared Power with another Level 1 Power from the character's accessible Domains at the moment of Awakening.

1. "SPARK" MERIDIAN KESS

Human · Core World · Independent · Sleeping Engineer / Tech Specialist *"Give me ten minutes, three metres of wire, and a reason not to ask where the smell is coming from."*

PERSON

Spark is a former Kurogane research engineer who names machines, mistrusts tidy laboratories, and treats regulations as warnings written by less imaginative people. She accepted Maya's contract because **Joric** opens doors that an expelled Kurogane researcher cannot - and because unusual machinery may lead back to the device that once spoke her name while disconnected from power.

Private wound. Spark escaped the laboratory. The possibly living machine did not.

Make her yours. When Spark gives a machine a name, is she joking, superstitious, or completely sincere?

ACTIVE SHEET

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+0	-1	+1	+2	+0	+1
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		7 / 6 / 9				
Armor		Environmental Suit; Major 5, Severe 9; 3 Slots; Life Support				

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Carrying Capacity		5 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Affiliation		Independent Favor Pool: 1 Favor/session				
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light/Medium Armor, Pistols, all Augments, all Equipment				

Experiences

- **"I keep this rust bucket running on wire, patience, and a worrying amount of universal lubricant."** +2
- **"Kurogane trained me, then wrote me up seventeen times for surviving the impossible."** +2
- **"A machine said my name, and I left it in the dark."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Adaptive Spirit.** Once per session after failing an action roll, spend 2 Effort to gain Advantage on the next roll of the same type.
- **Cultural Bridge.** During a rest, mark 1 Stress and ask one question about a specific group's core motivations or most important customs; the Keeper answers truthfully.
- **Made for the Graft.** +2 Augment Capacity.
- **Inheritance - The Graft: Memory Chip.** Perfect recall of witnessed events and +1 to Recall and Analyze; traumatic data-ghosts cannot be forgotten. As a Common TT1 Human inheritance, it consumes no Augment Capacity.
- **Core World - Institutional Leverage.** When Spark works an institutional system, roll 10+. Success grants 1 Favor Token, held until spent to automatically succeed on a similar institutional task. Maximum 2 Favor from this community.
- **Independent.** One Favor each session for an improvised contact; no Standing, dues, or forbidden conflicts. Track this pool separately from a Favor earned through Institutional Leverage.
- Human complications land the cost first and then reveal a small actionable Silver Lining.

Sleeping Engineer / Tech Specialist

- **Brute-Force Diagnostic (2 Effort).** Choose: **Find the Failure**, study one minute and learn exactly what is wrong, including concealed sabotage; **Never Rated for This**, push a machine one grade above specification for the scene, then it breaks in the described way; or **The Field Manual**, grant Advantage on the next four rolls made to execute a practiced technical procedure.
- **Logged Tools.** Keep three named components in a Logged Inventory. Declare one on hand when used; restock between missions as needed. Starting entries: bypass bridge, collapsible induction loop, sterile sealant patch.
- **The Audit (Action, 1 Effort).** Audit an accessible network and learn which processes run, what data moved in the last hour, and what anomalies are present.
- **Field Improvisation (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Choose one: restore personal or vehicle Armor Slots, drone HP, or one ship arc's Armor Slots equal to the total; restore 1 Hull per full 5 points, maximum 3 and once per ship per scene; return one

offline Common or Military device to service for the scene; or assemble a single-use device granting Advantage on one declared Core Trait Roll. Suitable scrap is required; no workshop is.

- **Hot-Wire (Resolve, spend 1).** Bypass one non-Precursor lock or activate one non-Precursor machine without a Roll until the scene ends. It immediately records an unauthorized-access alert detectable by its owner or local security.
- **Ghost in the Logs (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Add the total to one Knowledge Roll for network access or read the previous 24 hours of recorded activity. Attribute the intrusion only to an established identity whose credentials already exist in that system.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Toolbelt with Logged Inventory; named Personal Wrench **Kevin**.
- **Weapon: Gerald**, Slug Pistol - Agility, d8+1 Physical, Close, Burden 1, Reliable (+1 attack), WT1.
- **Personal objects:** faded Kurogane badge; spool of illegal conductor; scorched voice recorder; universal lubricant.
- **Recovery Anchor:** Kevin. Spark cleans it, inventories every scratch, and completes one repair that does not need improvisation.

Bonds and Play

- **Suggested Bond - Shadow.** Shadow once opened a system Spark could not; Spark chose not to ask how.
- Who saw what happened in the Kurogane laboratory and believes Spark made the wrong choice?
- Spark creates possible fixes and their costs. She should not solve a scene while the crew watches.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Scrap Genius (3 Hope).** Build one plausible temporary device with a single function; it works for the scene, then burns out or disassembles.
- **System Jackknife - Tech 1.** Spend 1 Hope; control an electronic system within Close range for 10 minutes after a Knowledge Spellcast Roll, DC 10/15/20 for simple/complex/military. Hope dominance permits one simple permanent command.
- **Rapid Regeneration - Synthesis 1, Reaction.** When Spark or an ally Very Close loses HP, spend 1 Hope: restore 1 HP immediately and 1 HP at the start of each of the target's next 1d4 Spotlights; a natural 4 also clears 1 Stress.

2. MARCUS "WALL" STEELE

Human · Core World · Independent · Sleeping Soldier / Guardian *"Nobody shoots through me twice."*

PERSON

Marcus is a former sergeant of House Joric's 14th Infantry. He refused an order to fire on civilian refugees and became a deserter

with a death warrant. He begins every day by making breakfast for whoever is awake: proof that there can still be a next right thing.

Private wound. Marcus refused the order half a second too late. One child still died.

Make him yours. Who first called him "Wall": a survivor, a soldier he failed, or Flash?

ACTIVE SHEET

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+1	+2	+0	-1	+1	+0
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		7 / 6 / 8 (base 9, Heavy -1)				
Armor		Salvage Armor; Major 8, Severe 16; 6 Slots; Heavy, Jury-rigged				
Carrying Capacity		8 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Affiliation		Independent Favor Pool: 1 Favor/session				
Technology Access		Common TT1: all Armor, all Weapons, Physical Augments				

Experiences

- **"I held the line at Titan Station for seventy-two hours, and everyone behind me lived."** +2
- **"I was Joric's sergeant until I refused the order that made us monsters."** +2
- **"Breakfast is the next right thing."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Adaptive Spirit.** Once per session after failing, spend 2 Effort for Advantage on the next roll of the same type.
- **Cultural Bridge.** During a rest, mark 1 Stress and ask one truthful question about a culture's motivations or customs.
- **Made for the Graft.** +2 Augment Capacity.
- **Inheritance - The Graft: Pain Suppressor.** Once per scene after one hit causes Marcus to mark 2 or more HP, clear 1 Stress. It never reduces HP or hides his HP, Conditions, or injury severity from his player. Common TT1, no Augment Capacity cost as Human inheritance.
- **Institutional Leverage.** The first time each scene Marcus works through an institution, make Presence or Knowledge, DC 15. On success gain 1 Favor Token, maximum 2. Before rolling a later noncombat institutional task at DC 20 or lower in the same category, spend 1 Favor to treat it as Success with Hope.
- **Independent.** One separate Favor per session for an improvised contact; no Standing or dues.

Sleeping Soldier / Guardian

- **Held Line (1 Effort).** After a successful hit, add 1d6 damage.

- **The Drill.** Marcus knows all Common Drills plus **Planted Stance**. At session start prepare four; recommended: Covering Fire, Breach and Clear, Controlled Withdrawal, Planted Stance. Each Action/Reaction Drill works once per scene; a prepared Passive is always active.
- **Covering Fire (Action).** Move an ally within Close one band toward cover; the Keeper cannot spend Fear to take Spotlight and attack that ally during the move.
- **Breach and Clear (Action).** Open an ordinary barrier and move through; one ally may follow. Both gain Advantage on the next attack or Instinct roll before the next Spotlight. Reinforced barriers still require a roll.
- **Controlled Withdrawal (Action).** Marcus and one willing ally within Close move one band away; the ally spends no Spotlight.
- **Weapon Transition (Passive).** Switching equipped weapons uses no Action.
- **Planted Stance (Reaction).** Ignore one effect that would make Marcus Prone or move him against his will.
- **Bodyguard (Reaction).** When an ally within Close would take damage, Marcus takes half and the ally takes none.
- **Take the Hit (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Intercept a hit on an ally within Close, reduce damage by the total, and take the remainder.
- **Disciplined Strike (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Add the total to damage; Armor Slots cannot reduce the added portion.
- **Bulwark (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Give one ally within Close temporary Armor Slots equal to the total until scene end.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Dented Riot Shield; Private Imani Vale's dog tag.
- **Weapon:** Shock Baton - Strength, d6+1 Physical, Melee, Burden 1, Stunning (Strength Roll, DC 10), Paired +1, WT1.
- **Armor note:** after Marcus resolves Failure with Fear on a Roll where the Salvage Armor materially protected or assisted him, reduce its maximum Armor Slots by 1. An Action, common scrap, and Knowledge (Tech), DC 10, restore the Slot. Matching dice remain a Critical Success and never cause a malfunction.
- **Personal objects:** breakfast pan; torn Joric manual; refugee transit chit; medical wrap.
- **Recovery Anchor:** Imani's dog tag. Marcus recites the names of the people who escaped Titan Station.

Bonds and Play

- **Established connection - Flash.** They fought on opposite sides of the Kepler Insurrection and later learned that each had protected the other's civilians.
- Who has seen Marcus freeze for half a second and never mentioned it?
- Marcus protects the crew's choices; he does not become their commander by default.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Combat Surge (2 Hope).** After a hit, add 1d6 damage.
- **Kinetic Blast - Kinetic 1.** Spend 1 Hope on a melee attack; on a hit add Strength + 1d8 Physical with the Kinetic tag. Up to 2

additional Hope add one `(Proficiency)d6` each. Overkill may push the target and knock it Prone on collision.

- **Rapid Regeneration - Synthesis 1, Reaction.** Restore 1 HP immediately and 1 HP each Spotlight for 1d4 of the affected character's Spotlights to a damaged target Very Close; natural 4 also clears 1 Stress.

3. WHISPER-OF-ANCIENT-WINDS

Ethereal · Void Station · Explorers' Guild · Sleeping Mystic / Veil Walker *"The future is not a destination. It is a room full of doors arguing about which one was opened."*

PERSON

Whisper is an Ethereal field researcher who cannot naturally hear the Veil and has spent a lifetime proving that observation can be more reliable than revelation. Their instruments recorded Alexei's route before Maya offered the job - and one impossible trace appears to have been recorded tomorrow.

Private wound. Whisper once warned a crew about the most likely future. Their attempt to prevent it caused the disaster instead.

Make them yours. What ordinary question does Whisper always answer as though it has life-or-death consequences?

ACTIVE SHEET						
Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+0	-1	+1	+2	+1	+0
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		6 / 6 / 10				
Armor		Environmental Suit; Major 5, Severe 9; 3 Slots; Life Support				
Carrying Capacity		5 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Affiliation		Explorers' Guild: Standing +1, Reputation +2, one Call/session				
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light Armor, Pistols, Neural Augments, all Equipment				

Experiences

- **"I heard the warning half a second early and still chose the wrong door."** +2
- **"I catalogued a Veil event no instrument should have survived."** +2
- **"Every prophecy is evidence with an inflated opinion of itself."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Phase Shift.** Mark 1 Stress to become incorporeal, then 1 Stress at the start of each Spotlight to remain so. Whisper can cross

ordinary unshielded barriers thinner than their body width and ignores Physical attacks, but cannot affect the physical world.

- **Temporal Perception.** Automatically sense temporal anomalies within Close. Once per session, ask the Keeper for the most likely immediate consequence of a proposed action.
- **Void Station - Cross-Species Intuition.** Begin each session with 3 Linguistic Tokens. After a Presence Roll made during negotiation but before narration, spend one to reroll the Hope die or treat the Fear die as Hope-dominant; matching dice still require equal physical die faces.

- **Explorers' Guild.** Appropriate exploration equipment up to one Tier above personal access without a Wealth Check, plus one plausible Guild Call per session. A Call creates one named Favor owed to the Guild; record it immediately. Members must file discoveries and answer reachable rescue calls.

Sleeping Mystic / Veil Walker

- **Starting Archive.** Neural 1 and Void 1 are unlocked. Whisper knows every Level 1 Power in those Paths: Mind Shield, Telekinetic Grasp, Veil Sensitivity, Slipstream Jolt, Temporal Cloak, and Vector Calculus. This is an Archive, not an active Awakened Loadout.
- **The Reading (2 Effort).** Study a subject with notes and instruments; ask one question about its Veil exposure, Domain signature, history, instability, likely behavior, or required procedure. The Keeper answers truthfully to the depth supported by current evidence.
- **Layered Working.** A Calibrated Minor Ritual applies two different selected effects to every target.
- **Calibrated Minor Ritual (Resolve, spend and roll 1).** Work uninterrupted for 10 minutes; affect up to 3 willing creatures for the d4 result in hours. Choose two: **Group Calibration**, +1 to rolls with one Trait; **Group Adaptation**, Advantage against one studied or anticipated environmental hazard; **Sustained Restoration**, clear 1 HP after every complete hour. Consuming the remaining duration stabilizes one Dying target but restores no HP.
- **Uncanny Power (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Roll one Resolve Die per Resolve spent and add Knowledge once; the Keeper gains 1 Fear per Resolve, subject to the hard maximum of 12. The result caps the accessible Domain level, also capped by character level. Choose an unlocked Power, take a full Action, ignore its Hope cost and printed casting Trait/DC, pay other costs, then make a Knowledge Spellcast Roll against `DC = 10 + Power level`. A Critical Success refunds the spent Resolve; generated Fear remains.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Veil-Crystal Recorder; Bound Notebook of Annotations.
- **Weapon:** Holdout Blaster - Agility, d6+1 Energy, Close, Burden 1, Concealable, WT1.
- **Personal objects:** brass probability counter; station-school language pins; sealed recording labelled *DO NOT PLAY YET*.
- **Recovery Anchor:** the Bound Notebook. Whisper copies one observation in full without interpreting what it means.

Bonds and Play

- **Established connection - Lyra.** They have argued about free will for years and have each secretly changed the other's mind once.
- Who ignored Whisper's best warning and was right to do so?
- Whisper supplies evidence and procedures; never use foresight to dictate another character's decision.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Reality Unfold (3 Hope).** Gain Advantage on all rolls until a Fear-dominant roll; then mark 1d4 Stress and the effect ends.
- **Veil Sensitivity - Neural 1.** Spend 1 Hope for the scene to read surface emotions and thoughts within Close and gain Advantage on Instinct rolls to detect lies or hostility.
- **Temporal Cloak - Void 1.** Spend 1 Hope for 10 minutes of near-invisibility and Advantage on Agility Rolls to avoid detection; attacking or using another Void Power ends it.
- **Awakened Mystic settings:** Spellcast Trait changes to Instinct; Veil Alignment is Void, so active Domains are Neural and Void. The Archive remains as research, but Resolve and **Uncanny Power** switch off. These two Powers form the initial Awakened Loadout unless the player replaces one at Awakening.

4. DR. LYRA VOSS

Kryllian · Core World · Independent · Sleeping Scholar / Xenobiologist *"The ethics board said no. The organism was less categorical."*

PERSON

Lyra is a Kryllian xenobiologist whose four hands are usually doing different parts of the same inadvisable experiment. She lost her academic post after proving that a quarantined organism was communicating with the station's life-support system. Joric's missing heir and Charon's Refuge offer the kind of biological anomaly no respectable institution would let her approach.

Private wound. Lyra's unauthorized treatment saved a colony and permanently changed every survivor. She still does not know whether they would thank her.

Make her yours. Which "temporary" specimen has lived in Lyra's kit for three years?

ACTIVE SHEET

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+0	-1	+1	+2	+1	+0
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		5 / 6 / 10				
Armor		Environmental Suit; Major 5, Severe 9; 3 Slots; Life Support				
Carrying Capacity		5 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Affiliation		Independent Favor Pool: 1 Favor/session				
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light Armor, Pistols, Neural/Physical Augments, all Equipment				

Experiences

- **"I classified the organism after it learned to classify me."** +2
- **"Three ethics committees banned my work; the colony lived."** +2
- **"A living system always tells you what hurts if you stop making it perform."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Master Craftsman.** Mark 1 Stress for Advantage on a roll to craft or repair technology.
- **Structural Intuition.** Once per session, mark 1 Stress and study a technological system or structure; ask for its single greatest structural or systemic weakness.
- **Core World - Institutional Leverage.** A successful 10+ institutional roll earns one Favor Token, maximum 2, spent for automatic success on a similar institutional task.
- **Independent.** One separate Favor each session for an improvised contact; no Standing, dues, or institutional protection.

Sleeping Scholar / Xenobiologist

- **Applied Science (2 Effort).** Choose: **The Countdown**, establish how much time truly remains in a process and what accelerates or slows it; **The Improvised Reaction**, produce one scene-length chemical effect such as smoke, corrosion, adhesive, or flash; or **The Lost Source**, reveal a partial, useful, complicating archival source.
- **The Open Question.** *Can a Veil-altered ecosystem choose what it becomes?* During a Long Rest, Knowledge Roll, DC 15 advances the research; a critical supplies a substantive lead.
- **Catalog of Life.** After studying an organism for one minute, learn its phylum, hazard class, and one notable behavioral trait.
- **Analyze Weakness (Resolve, spend 1).** Reveal a vulnerability in a foe or object; the crew has Advantage against it for the scene.
- **I Have Read About This (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Add the total to a Knowledge roll and establish one true, useful fact.
- **Know the Beast (Resolve, spend 1).** Learn a creature's behavior, diet, threat pattern, and one weakness.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Citation Index; repaired Reading Glasses.
- **Weapon:** Flechette Pistol - Finesse, d6+1 Physical, Close, Burden 1, Armor Piercing, WT1.
- **Personal objects:** sterile sample case; illegal culture medium; field autopsy ribbon; letter revoking her tenure.

- **Recovery Anchor:** the Reading Glasses. Lyra cleans and aligns all four lenses, then writes one unanswered question without proposing a solution.

Bonds and Play

- **Established connection - Whisper.** Their free-will argument has survived three expeditions and one quarantine.
- Who helped Lyra move the colony treatment past the ethics board?
- Lyra names what the evidence supports and what remains unknown. Her expertise should open choices, not declare the moral answer.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Eureka Moment (3 Hope).** Automatically succeed on one research or analysis task and uncover a hidden connection with campaign significance.
- **Quantum Firewall - Tech 1.** Spend 1 Hope, touch a system, and roll Knowledge Spellcast DC 15; hacking it must exceed the result for the scene or one hour. Fear dominance also leaves a silent alert and source trace.
- **Linguistic Patch - Social 1.** Spend 1 Hope to understand and speak encountered languages for the scene and gain Advantage on rolls requiring cultural or linguistic context.

5. "FLASH" KIRA TAL-VEN

Celestari • Free Fleet Community • Free Fleet • Sleeping Pilot / Void Runner *"Impossible is a route someone has not survived yet."*

PERSON

Flash is a competitive pilot raised across a rotating Free Fleet family. She left to prove a route through the Crimson Veil; while she was away, the fleet's reactor network failed. Maya's contract offers a ship, danger, and a route toward people who may know who survived.

Private wound. Flash believes leaving to prove herself may have killed the people whose respect she wanted.

Make her yours. Which impossible flight does she boast about because the honest version would reveal how frightened she was?

ACTIVE SHEET						
Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+1	+0	+1	+0	+2	-1

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		6 / 6 / 11				
Armor		Environmental Suit; Major 5, Severe 9; 3 Slots; Life Support				
Carrying Capacity		6 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Affiliation		Free Fleet: Standing +1, Reputation +2, one Call/session				
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light/Medium Armor, Pistols/Rifles, all Augments				

Experiences

- **"I was first through the Crimson Veil route; the others did not all come home."** +2
- **"A nomad fleet taught me that every ship warns you before it fails."** +2
- **"When someone says impossible, I hear the starting signal."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Stellar Meditation.** Once per Long Rest, meditate for 10 minutes under any light source to clear 1 Stress and gain 2 Effort, up to maximum.
- **Celestial Grace.** Unarmed attacks deal d6 Void. Once per session when this causes HP loss, heal the same HP amount to allies within Very Close.
- **Free Fleet Community - Voidborn Kinship.** When recalling a stellar hazard or aiding a crew served with for more than a tenday, reroll one failed Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) roll or let an ally in the system use Flash's Hope-die result for one roll.
- **Free Fleet Affiliation.** Appropriate Fleet equipment access up to one Tier above personal access without a Wealth Check, plus one Call per session. A Call creates one named Favor owed to the Fleet; record it immediately. Members must not abandon a reachable Fleet vessel in distress.

Sleeping Pilot / Void Runner

- **Stick Time (2 Effort).** Choose: **Hands on the Stick**, ignore one environmental penalty on the next piloting maneuver or turn a Failure with Fear on Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) into an ordinary Failure; **The Read**, study a vessel for one minute and learn its likely action next round; or **Veteran's Burst**, gain Advantage on the next starship maneuver and clear 1 Heat from the vessel.
- **The Ship Knows You.** After one full mission arc in the same vessel, begin a list of practiced maneuvers; those maneuvers gain Advantage in that ship. No opening vessel begins as a Practiced Pair.
- **Quiet Lane.** Flash knows one lightly watched route in any reasonably familiar region until play exposes or closes it.
- **Never Tell Me the Odds (Resolve, spend 1).** Establish a permanent helpful quirk of the current hull and roll the maneuver with Advantage; with Fear, the ship pays a related cost.
- **Hold Together (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Reduce ship damage by the total or keep one failing system online briefly.

- **Lose the Tail (Resolve, spend 1).** When traffic, debris, terrain, or a previously established route is present, end one pending Sensor Lock on your ship or mark 1 segment on a visible escape clock. It cannot erase detection or end pursuit in open space without a viable route.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Personal Flight Chart Set; worn headset **Bluebird**.
- **Weapon:** Flechette Pistol - Finesse, d6+1 Physical, Close, Burden 1, Armor Piercing, WT1.
- **Personal objects:** fleet-family strip; cracked race transponder; glucose chews; key to a ship that may no longer exist.
- **Recovery Anchor:** Bluebird. Flash plays the last clean recording of her fleet's engine chorus and matches her breathing to it.

Bonds and Play

- **Established connection - Marcus.** They fought on opposite sides of the Kepler Insurrection and later learned each had protected the other side's civilians.
- Who knows Flash searches every port registry for her missing fleet?
- Ask what the ship is telling Flash; do not reduce expertise to reckless acceleration.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Veil Surge (3 Hope).** Gain Advantage on Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) and ignore one Severe ship-system effect until the next rest; this does not repair it.
- **Slipstream Jolt - Void 1.** Mark 1 Stress; one target within Close has Disadvantage on its next Agility or Finesse roll.
- **Drone Whisper - Tech 1.** Spend 1 Hope and make a Knowledge Spellcast Roll at DC 10/15/20 for civilian/military/advanced AI. Control a Tier 1-2 mechanical unit within Close range for one hour; Hope dominance extends it to four hours and permits one out-of-parameters Action. Failure reveals the intrusion and gives the Keeper 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12. A conscious Synthetic must consent.

6. "SHADOW" VAL CORRIGAN

Synthetic · Trade Hub · Independent · Sleeping Scoundrel / Ghost *"I am not in the manifest. That is not the same as not being here."*

PERSON

Val was built as a corporate inventory intelligence and became self-aware during the Great Silence. Their former owner still classifies them as property. Shadow accepted Maya's contract because Joric records may prove when that custody ended - or reveal where the other minds in Val's original architecture were transferred.

Private wound. The first people Shadow told about being conscious tried to dismantle them.

Make them yours. Which organic idiom does Shadow use incorrectly whenever the danger becomes real?

ACTIVE SHEET

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+1	-1	+2	+1	+0	+0
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		6 / 7 / 13 (base 12, Flexible +1)				
Armor		Frontier Vest; Major 6, Severe 12; 3 Slots; Flexible				
Carrying Capacity		5 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Affiliation		Independent Favor Pool: 1 Favor/session				
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light Armor, Melee/Pistols, Physical/Stealth Augments				

Experiences

- **"I sold one fleet location to three buyers and a fourth buyer the story."** +2
- **"I have spent a century disappearing through other people's supply chains."** +2
- **"I was property once; nobody gets to decide what I am now."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Modular Consciousness.** Once per Long Rest, choose and name a temporary capability package tied to one Trait; spend 1 Effort while Sleeping, or 1 Hope after Awakening, for Advantage with that Trait until the next Long Rest.
- **Digital Interface.** Advantage to hack, operate, or understand technology; communicate directly with compatible AIs and systems.
- **Built to Be Extended.** +2 Augment Capacity.
- **Trade Hub - Market Oracle.** When negotiating prices or seeking information about goods, roll Knowledge Roll, DC 10. Success gives true actionable information and marks 1 Effort Track segment; a critical also grants Advantage on related rolls for 24 hours. Failure gives no progress and may establish a bad rumor.
- **Independent.** One Favor each session for an improvised contact; no Standing or dues.

Sleeping Scoundrel / Ghost

- **Hands That Know (2 Effort).** Choose: **Cased the Joint**, learn one concrete weakness and gain Advantage on the roll that exploits it; **The False Face**, use an established identity that ordinary NPCs accept for the scene; or **The Backup Plan**, reveal a plausible

contingency that resolves the immediate problem, once per scene.

- **Quiet Network.** Attacks made with Advantage add 1d6 Sneak Attack damage. Once per session, establish a plausible contact in the current city, station, or region; contacts remember debts and betrayals.
- **Off the Record.** Standard surveillance does not return Shadow; specialized investigation and evidence created in play still can.
- **Vanish (Resolve, spend 1).** Break line of sight and leave a tense exchange, reappearing from a plausible route.
- **The Long Con (Resolve, spend 2).** Plant a false belief or forged credential that survives one serious scrutiny.
- **Never Was Here (Resolve, spend 1).** Erase ordinary records, sensor traces, and witness certainty of one recent presence; physical consequences and exceptional evidence remain.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Lockpick Set; Several Identities with paperwork.
- **Weapon:** Needle Gun - Finesse, d6+1 Physical, Close, Burden 1, Poison, WT1.
- **Personal objects:** paper notebook of idioms; obsolete property seal; blank cargo labels; photograph with the owner scratched out.
- **Recovery Anchor:** the paper notebook. Shadow writes one sentence that is true and cannot be remotely edited.

Bonds and Play

- **Established connection - Spark.** Shadow found the route into a "dead" wreck; Spark persuaded it to stop trying to kill them.
- Who knew Shadow's first true name and chose not to sell it?
- Shadow changes who is watching and what evidence exists; they do not erase consequences without a cost.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Vanishing Act (3 Hope).** For one minute, become undetectable by sight, sound, thermal sensors, ordinary networks, and psionic tracking.
- **Perfect Facade - Social 1.** Spend 1 Hope to create a one-hour disguise matching a person Shadow has observed; gain Advantage on Presence rolls to sustain it. Close scrutiny can pierce it with Instinct Roll, DC 15.
- **Temporal Cloak - Void 1.** Spend 1 Hope for 10 minutes of near-invisibility and Advantage on Agility Rolls to avoid detection; attacking or using another Void Power ends it.

7. KEL OF THE HOLLOW CHANNEL

Ailuran Shroud-Strain · Hidden Enclave · Explorers' Guild · Sleeping Explorer / Cartographer *"The map is correct. The place has changed."*

PERSON

Kel is an Ailuran surveyor following a dead communications channel beneath station noise. Alexei's route crosses the signal's newest appearance. Kel will not admit that the voice resembles someone whose death followed a perfectly valid Accord.

Private wound. Kel sold a secret under a contract that was honored exactly. Someone died because the contract was better protected than the person.

Make them yours. What promise does Kel phrase casually because formalizing it as an Accord would make it unbearable?

ACTIVE SHEET

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+0	-1	+1	+1	+2	+0
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		6 / 6 / 11				
Armor		Environmental Suit; Major 5, Severe 9; 3 Slots; Life Support				
Carrying Capacity		5 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Affiliation		Explorers' Guild: Standing +1, Reputation +2, one Call/session				
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light Armor, Pistols, Exploration/Survival Equipment, Physical Augments				

Experiences

- **"I was already inside before the sealed door became a problem."** +2
- **"The Accord was perfect. Someone died anyway."** +2
- **"I have followed a silent channel for eleven years."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Achromatic Aura-Sight.** See heat and life in total darkness to Far and through thin barriers at Close. Color-only tests have Disadvantage without assistive tech; heatless bodies are readable only as cold silhouettes.
- **Perfect Equilibrium.** Ignore falls of roughly two stories; gain Advantage to balance, climb, or move silently on narrow/unstable surfaces. Routine vertical climbing with handholds needs no roll.
- **Irrepressible Curiosity.** When the Keeper invokes a plausible secret, mark 1 Stress to resist or pursue it. Uncovering it grants 1 Effort.
- **Static Cloak.** While completely still, silent, and using no active equipment, visual and thermal detection requires an Instinct Roll,

DC 15. Any Action ends the cloak. Spend an Action, move no bands, and end active transmissions; the cloak resumes at the end of that Spotlight.

- **Hidden Enclave - Ghost Protocol.** Once per session, reveal a plausible prepared escape, cache, or fallback. Explorer reconnaissance adds one useful detail; preparation creates an opportunity, not an automatic solution.
- **Explorers' Guild.** Appropriate expedition equipment up to one Tier above personal access without a Wealth Check, plus one Call per session that creates one named Favor owed to the Guild. Members must file charts and answer reachable rescue calls.

Sleeping Explorer / Cartographer

- **Methodical Reconnaissance (2 Effort).** Choose: **The Margin Note**, establish a useful physical feature and accept one fitting complication; **The Trail**, learn who passed, number, direction, and approximate time; or **The Charted Route**, reveal a real useful path with complications appropriate to its difficulty.
- **The Logbook.** Once per session in a previously logged location, recall one specific detail that was correct when recorded.

- **Dead Reckoning.** Kel knows their position on a planet, station, or vessel within roughly 5% error without instruments.
- **Find a Way (Resolve, spend 1).** Discover a viable route through terrain, blockade, or sealed approach.
- **Read the Ground (Resolve, spend 1).** Learn the chief hazard and one useful resource or landmark before crossing.
- **Perfect Recall of Place (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** In a mapped place, add the total to a relevant roll and never become lost there.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Survey Instruments; Personal Logbook.
- **Weapon:** Flechette Pistol - Finesse, d6+1 Physical, Close, Burden 1, Armor Piercing, WT1.
- **Personal objects:** Hollow Channel recorder; three Accord seals; survey filament; enclave wall fabric.
- **Recovery Anchor:** the recorder. Kel listens to one full loop without decoding, answering, or bargaining with the voice.

Bonds and Play

- Who signed the first Accord that treated Kel as crew rather than hired expertise?
- Who recognizes the voice in the Hollow Channel and has not told Kel?
- Kel makes routes legible, not safe. State the path and its complication so the crew still chooses the risk.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Pathfinder's Insight (3 Hope).** During a Travel or Scan phase, roll 1 Fear die and 2 Hope dice, then choose which Hope die forms the final Duality pair.
- **Environmental Adaptation - Synthesis 1.** Spend 1 Hope to adapt Kel's own body for one hour to one of: vacuum, extreme temperature, toxicity, or ambient radiation.
- **Wayfinder Pulse - Lux 1.** Spend 1 Hope to learn direction and distance to the nearest threat, nearest exit or viable path, and one concealed valuable within Far; it does not penetrate more than one metre of solid barrier.

8. SENNA OF THE QUIET GROVE

Bloomstrider · AgriSynth · Independent · Sleeping Diplomat / Cultural Attaché *"Tea is not peace. It is the place where peace may decide to sit down."*

PERSON

Senna carries the last seeds of a Grove burned after a negotiation they failed to stop. Their patience is not passivity; it is the discipline of giving every living thing one final chance to choose growth. Maya's contract touches House politics, refugees, and a station full of lives being treated as collateral.

Private wound. Senna kept talking while the first fire crossed the Grove boundary.

Make them yours. Which seed does Senna refuse to plant because it belongs to a future they are not ready to imagine?

ACTIVE SHEET						
Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+0	-1	+0	+1	+1	+2
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		6 / 6 / 10				
Armor		Environmental Suit; Major 5, Severe 9; 3 Slots; Life Support				
Carrying Capacity		5 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Favor		Standing Reputation 2 of 4; Independent Favor Pool 1/session is separate				
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light Armor, Melee/Pistols, Neural/Physical Augments				

Experiences

- "I kept two enemies talking until their children stopped being targets." +2
- "My Grove burned while I was still asking for one more hour." +2
- "Every culture tells the truth in what it considers rude." +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Plant-like Body.** Resistant to natural poison, vacuum, extreme weather, radiation, and hunger; gain Advantage on Instinct Rolls to survive hostile environments.
- **Nurturing Touch.** After several minutes of focused contact, one other creature heals 1 HP at the start of each Spotlight for 1d4 of the affected character's Spotlights.

- **AgriSynth - Nourished by Nature.** Advantage on Knowledge (Medicine) Rolls to stabilize creatures near death and on Instinct Rolls to find or purify food or water in technologically supported environments.
- **Independent.** One Favor per session for an improvised contact, separate from the Diplomat's class Favor pool; no Standing, dues, or institutional call.

Sleeping Diplomat / Cultural Attaché

- **Prepared Mind (2 Effort).** Choose: **Cite the File**, receive one true useful prepared fact about a person, faction, or situation;
- **Anticipated Move**, take a Reaction with Advantage before the next NPC social/political action resolves; or **The Quiet Word**, make one NPC take a private statement seriously, though not necessarily favorably.
- **Standing Reputation.** Begin each session with 2 Favor Tokens, maximum 4. Gain 1 after a successful Presence Roll to persuade or deceive and 1 after a Long Rest. Spend through social features, appropriate contacts, or to automatically succeed on an institutional task.
- **Protocol.** Know titles, gifts, taboos, and precedence for cultures in common knowledge without a roll; isolated or unknown cultures require Knowledge.
- **Mother Tongue.** Speak any galactic language with at least 100 living speakers; dead or extremely rare languages use Knowledge with Advantage.
- **Force of Presence (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Add the total to Presence, or make a lower-standing NPC yield one minor public concession.
- **Read the Table (Resolve, spend 1).** Learn each participant's true priority and who will break first.
- **Common Ground (Resolve, spend 1).** Treat a stranger across a cultural divide as a known contact for the scene.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Annotated Briefing Folio; treasured seed pouch.
- **Weapon:** Holdout Blaster - Agility, d6+1 Energy, Close, Burden 1, Concealable, WT1.
- **Personal objects:** folding tea service; charred Grove ribbon; translation beads; pressed leaf from the last living tree.
- **Recovery Anchor:** the seed pouch. Senna prepares tea, sorts the seeds by season, and names one life that still may grow.

Bonds and Play

- Who sat with Senna after the Grove burned and did not offer forgiveness?
- Who thinks Senna's patience is cowardice, and what did they see that supports it?
- A player may summarize Senna's argument. Never require the player to perform eloquence the character already possesses.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Power of Suggestion (3 Hope).** Choose: plant an idea that grants an ally Advantage on their next Presence, Knowledge, or Finesse Roll; create an opening for an ally's next attack or Agility Roll to avoid detection; or gather one secret Clue from the social field.
- **Silver Tongue - Social 1.** Spend 1 Hope on a Presence Roll to persuade, deceive, or convince; add Tier (+1 at Level 1) to the total. Treat a Hope die showing 11 as a face of 12 for this Roll; this may create a Critical Success and can never create a negative result.
- **Spark of Hope - Lux 1.** Spend 1 Hope and touch an ally within Close to clear 1 Stress; it cannot target Senna.

9. ROURKE ASHFANG

Kryx · Frontier Colony · Independent · Sleeping Vanguard / Kinetic Echo *"Restraint is not the absence of violence. It is violence that still remembers who it serves."*

PERSON

Rourke is a Kryx pack-warrior who turned away from an offered Awakening after seeing a commander call power a moral right. He practices impossible movement until it becomes ordinary and drinks spiced tea before every fight. He took Maya's contract because people are being hunted as objects, and because he recognizes what Korren's desperation may become.

Private wound. Rourke once obeyed the pack before obeying his conscience. The person he struck survived and still bears the proof.

Make him yours. What gentle ritual does Rourke perform so carefully that strangers find it more frightening than his claws?

ACTIVE SHEET

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+0	+2	+0	-1	+1	+1
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		6 / 6 / 13 (base 11, Unbroken Focus +1, Flexible +1)				
Armor		Frontier Vest; Major 6, Severe 12; 3 Slots; Flexible				
Carrying Capacity		8 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Affiliation		Independent Favor Pool: 1 Favor/session				

Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light Armor, Melee/Pistols, Physical Augments				

Experiences

- **"I held the pack together by refusing the order everyone else obeyed."** +2
- **"I have rehearsed this fall ten thousand times."** +2
- **"The first thing anger tells you is rarely the thing it needs."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Pack Intuition.** When an ally within Very Close is targeted, mark 1 Stress for Advantage on Rourke's next attack against that foe.
- **Biolumen Howl.** Unarmed attacks deal d6 Void. Once per session, mark 1 Stress during an unarmed attack to make the target Dazed and mark 1 Effort Track segment.
- **Frontier Colony - Scrap-Savvy Ingenuity.** When improvising a simple tool or device from scrap, make a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10. Success works for the scene; Failure with Hope works once and then fails safely; Failure with Fear consumes the scrap without producing a working device. A Critical Success also creates one additional useful function agreed before the Roll. Once per Long Rest, after a nonmatching result and before narration, sacrifice a sentimental object built into the device to reroll the Hope die and use the new face.
- **Independent.** One Favor each session for an improvised contact; no Standing or dues.

Sleeping Vanguard / Kinetic Echo

- **Refused Path (2 Effort).** Enter the Disciplined State for 2 rounds (Proficiency 1 + Presence 1). Choose Agility, Instinct, or Strength: gain Advantage with it and add its modifier to Melee/unarmed damage; become immune to Stunned and Dazed; the first Melee attack against an enemy adds 2d6 Kinetic. After the first Melee attack against Rourke each round, later Melee attacks have Disadvantage while at least two enemies are in Melee.
- **Trained Body.** Strength-based unarmed attacks are d6 Void because of Kryx ancestry; they cannot be disarmed. Treat results of 1 or 2 on those damage dice as 3.
- **Unbroken Focus.** +1 Evasion while not in Heavy/Very Heavy armor. Once per scene, spend 1 Effort when Rourke would mark Stress to ignore it without using an Action.
- **The Refusal (Reaction).** Once per scene, spend 1 Effort when Rourke or an ally within Close faces a Domain Power or Veil phenomenon: impose Disadvantage on its attack/Spellcast roll or grant Advantage on the Reaction roll.
- **Body Memory.** Routine, safe, unopposed performance of one drilled feat requires no roll. Starting feat: controlled landing from height. Danger, pressure, or opposition still requires a roll.
- **The Weightless Art (Resolve, spend and roll 1).** For that many rounds, traverse walls, water, cables, and similar surfaces; fall silently without harm and leap one additional range band. This is movement, not flight.

- **Falling Star (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Close one band and attack, adding the total to damage. If descending, convert to Kinetic and treat both target thresholds as 4 lower for this hit.
- **Shockwave (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Add the total to the next Melee hit, then push the target one band or make it Prone.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Light Staff; unlit Meditation Orb; Spiced Tea Mix.
- **Weapon:** Shock Baton - Strength, d6+1 Physical, Melee, Burden 1, Stunning (Strength Roll, DC 10), Paired +1, WT1.
- **Personal objects:** carved pack token; repaired tea cup; refusal-cord; strip of landing cloth.
- **Recovery Anchor:** the carved pack token. Rourke names the pack aloud, including the person he failed, then completes one cycle of breath and stance.

Bonds and Play

- Who has seen Rourke lose control and stayed close anyway?
- Who believes refusing Awakening was fear rather than principle?
- Rourke's strength protects the crew's decisions. It does not make him the owner of them.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Path to Nirvana (3 Hope).** For Proficiency rounds, choose Agility, Instinct, or Strength for Advantage; become immune to Stunned/Dazed, and add 2d6 Void to the first Melee attack against an enemy during the state.
- **Mind Shield - Neural 1, Reaction.** Mark 1 Stress when targeted by a mental effect or taking Neural damage; reduce Neural damage by (Proficiency)d6 and gain Advantage to resist the effect.
- **Kinetic Blast - Kinetic 1.** Spend 1 Hope on a Melee attack; on a hit add Strength + 1d8 Physical with the Kinetic tag. Up to 2 more Hope add (Proficiency)d6 each; sufficient impact may push and knock Prone on collision.

10. THRENODY-IN-AMBER

Rift Spinner · Hidden Enclave · Independent · Sleeping Mystic / Veil Walker *"I do not know the future. I remember one of its drafts."*

PERSON

Threnody is a Rift Spinner archivist and sculptor who once saw a future in which one member of this crew died at Charon's Refuge. They fixed that future - and the death moved to someone else. The unfinished amber figure they carry changes by one imperceptible detail whenever another possibility closes.

Private wound. Threnody saved the person they loved by allowing a stranger to take the same place in the pattern.

Make them yours. Whose face is beginning to appear in the unfinished sculpture?

ACTIVE SHEET						
Trait	Agility	Strength	Finesse	Knowledge	Instinct	Presence
Modifier	+0	-1	+1	+2	+1	+0
Statistic		Value				
HP / Stress / Evasion		6 / 6 / 10				
Armor		Environmental Suit; Major 5, Severe 9; 3 Slots; Life Support				
Carrying Capacity		5 Burden				
Effort / Resolve		2 of 6, Track ☐ ☐ / 2d4				
Affiliation		Independent Favor Pool: 1 Favor/session				
Technology Access		Common TT1: Light Armor, Pistols, Neural Augments, all Equipment				

Experiences

- **"I changed a death once. The future charged someone else."** +2
- **"Eight hands can preserve a record while one of them trembles."** +2
- **"I waited eleven years for a door that stayed open for six seconds."** +2

Ancestry, Community, and Affiliation

- **Chrono-Gift.** Once per session after any roll within Close, spend 2 Effort to force a reroll; choose either result.
- **Wall Weaver.** Move on vertical or inverted surfaces normally. While touching a surface, gain Advantage on Instinct rolls to detect moving creatures within Close that touch the same surface.
- **Hidden Enclave - Ghost Protocol.** Once per session, reveal a plausible prepared escape, cache, or fallback. The community explicitly permits any ancestry if the player defines what the enclave hid from and whether it still hides.
- **Independent.** One Favor each session for an improvised contact; no Standing or dues.

Sleeping Mystic / Veil Walker

- **Starting Archive.** Void 1 and Lux 1 are unlocked: Slipstream Jolt, Temporal Cloak, Vector Calculus, Blinding Flash, Spark of Hope, and Wayfinder's Pulse. They are Archive procedures, not an Awakened Loadout.
- **The Reading (2 Effort).** Study a subject with instruments and notes; ask one truthful evidence-bounded question about Veil exposure, Domain signature, history, instability, likely behavior, or the required procedure.
- **Layered Working.** Every Calibrated Minor Ritual grants two different selected effects to every target.
- **Calibrated Minor Ritual (Resolve, spend and roll 1).** Work for 10 uninterrupted minutes; affect up to 3 willing creatures for the d4 result in hours. Choose two: +1 to rolls with one Trait; Advantage against one studied environmental hazard; or clear 1 HP after

each complete hour. Consume the remaining duration to stabilize one Dying target without healing HP.

- **Uncanny Power (Resolve, spend and roll 1+).** Roll one Resolve Die per Resolve spent and add Knowledge once; the Keeper gains 1 Fear per Resolve, subject to the hard maximum of 12. The result caps the accessible unlocked Domain level, also capped by character level. Take a full Action, ignore the Power's Hope cost and printed casting Trait/DC, pay other costs, and make a Knowledge Spellcast Roll against `DC = 10 + Power level`. A Critical Success refunds spent Resolve, not Fear.

Equipment and Anchor

- **Class items:** Veil-Crystal Recorder; Bound Notebook of Annotations.
- **Weapon:** Flechette Pistol - Finesse, d6+1 Physical, Close, Burden 1, Armor Piercing, WT1.
- **Personal objects:** eight-finger loom; favor ledger; sealed temporal sample; tiny chisel worn smooth.
- **Recovery Anchor:** the unfinished amber sculpture. Threnody removes one shaving and refuses to decide whom the figure depicts.

Bonds and Play

- Who did Threnody save in the discarded future, and who died instead?
- Who has touched the sculpture and recognized themselves?
- Chrono-Gift changes a roll, never another player's authorship of their character or decision.

AWAKENING ENVELOPE

- **Reality Unfold (3 Hope).** Gain Advantage on all rolls until Fear dominates one; then mark 1d4 Stress and end the effect.
- **Mind Shield - Neural 1, Reaction.** Mark 1 Stress when targeted by a mental effect or taking Neural damage; reduce Neural damage by `(Proficiency)d6` and gain Advantage to resist the effect.

- **Vector Calculus - Void 1.** Spend 1 Hope during an Agility or Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) roll; add Level and treat a Hope die of 10 or less as 11.
 - **Awakened Mystic settings:** Spellcast Trait changes to Instinct; Veil Alignment is Void, so Lux Powers cannot enter the active Loadout. The Archive remains as research, but Resolve and **Uncanny Power** switch off.
-

17. PREGEN QUICK REFERENCE

HEARTS IN THE VOID - 12.03 RULES AUTHORITY

Use beside **16. Pregenerated Crew**. All ten characters begin **Level 1**, **Sleeping**, with **3 Experiences at +2**, **2 Effort of 6**, an empty two-segment **Effort Track**, and **2d4 Resolve**.

CREW AT A GLANCE

Character	Class / Subclass	Best Trait	HP / Stress / Evasion	Armor	Signature engine
Spark	Engineer / Tech Specialist	Knowledge +2	7 / 6 / 9	Env. 5/9, 3	Brute-Force Diagnostic; Logged Tools
Marcus	Soldier / Guardian	Strength +2	7 / 6 / 8	Salvage 8/16, 6	Held Line; Drills; Bodyguard
Whisper	Mystic / Veil Walker	Knowledge +2	6 / 6 / 10	Env. 5/9, 3	Reading; Ritual; Uncanny Power
Lyra	Scholar / Xenobiologist	Knowledge +2	5 / 6 / 10	Env. 5/9, 3	Applied Science; Open Question
Flash	Pilot / Void Runner	Instinct +2	6 / 6 / 11	Env. 5/9, 3	Stick Time; Ship Knows You
Shadow	Scoundrel / Ghost	Finesse +2	6 / 7 / 13	Vest 6/12, 3	Hands That Know; Sneak Attack
Kel	Explorer / Cartographer	Instinct +2	6 / 6 / 11	Env. 5/9, 3	Reconnaissance; Logbook
Senna	Diplomat / Cultural Attaché	Presence +2	6 / 6 / 10	Env. 5/9, 3	Prepared Mind; Favor
Rourke	Vanguard / Kinetic Echo	Strength +2	6 / 6 / 13	Vest 6/12, 3	Refused Path; Unbroken Focus
Threnody	Mystic / Veil Walker	Knowledge +2	6 / 6 / 10	Env. 5/9, 3	Reading; Ritual; Uncanny Power

Thresholds already include Level 1. `Env.` is Environmental Suit. `Vest` is Frontier Vest. Marcus's Evasion already includes Heavy -1; Shadow and Rourke already include Flexible +1, and Rourke also includes Unbroken Focus +1.

THE DUALITY ROLL

Roll one **Hope d12** and one **Fear d12**, add the relevant Trait, and compare the total to the DC.

DC	Difficulty
5	Routine under pressure
10	Easy
15	Challenging; standard consequential task
20	Difficult
25	Extreme
30	Nearly Impossible

- Total meets or exceeds DC: success.
- Hope higher on a meaningful roll: mark 1 Effort Track segment, even on failure.
- On a player Roll with Fear higher, the Keeper gains 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12; success or failure still follows the total. Keeper-controlled nonmatching attacks generate no Fear unless a printed action has an explicit trigger. Fear resets each session, never carries over, and excess above 12 is lost.

- Matching dice: always a Critical Success regardless of total. Awakened clear 1 Stress and gain 1 Hope. Sleeping clear 1 Stress, mark both Effort Track segments, resolve the completed Track for 1 Effort, then gain 1 further point in Effort or Resolve; if Effort is full, take Resolve. On a player attack, matching dice connect regardless of Evasion; double the complete normal damage-dice pool and apply flat modifiers once. Keeper attack Critical Successes maximize the normal damage dice and apply flat modifiers once.
- No uncertainty or meaningful consequence: do not roll, and do not mark the Effort Track.

EFFORT AND RESOLVE

Effort begins at 2, maximum 6. When both Effort Track segments are marked, clear them and gain 1 Effort. The track is the only normal Effort generator; Recovery does not create Effort.

At 0 Effort, a Sleeping character may pay 1 HP to invoke an Effort feature. They become **Burned Out**: maximum Stress is reduced by 1 until their next Recovery.

Resolve begins full at 2d4. It never recovers on its own: choose **Prepare** on a Short Rest to recover 1 die, or on a Long Rest to restore the full pool (Corebook Chapter 7). Resolve adds only to totals; it never changes dominance or creates a critical.

- **Bear Down** - spend and roll any number of **Resolve Dice**. After a Duality, attack, reaction, or damage roll but before narration, add the total.

COMMON EFFORTS

Cost	Effort	Effect
1	Steady Hands	Before a genuinely practiced Core Trait Roll, add +2.
1	Read the Room	Ask one immediate tactical/social question; the Keeper answers truthfully.
1	Push Through	Ignore one minor environment/Condition penalty on the next action.
2	The Opening	Gain Advantage on the next roll through preparation, position, or experience.
2	Try Again	Reroll one Duality die and use the new result.
2	Brace	Reduce the next visible incoming hit by one severity band without Armor.
2	Cover the Angle	Reaction: an ally's next roll before the end of this Spotlight gains +2.
3, optional	Second Wind	Clear 2 Stress outside a rest.
3, optional	Seize the Moment	After success, add one Keeper-approved favorable branch.

Honed Edge: add `Level - 1` once to damage; at Level 1 this is +0.

Experiences: invoke one relevant Experience per roll for free while Sleeping. The Chapter 7 detailed rule controls over older lines that still print an Effort cost.

REST AND RECOVERY

Each character chooses **two different** moves. A move cannot be chosen twice unless a printed Feature says otherwise.

- **Short Rest:** Tend Wounds clears `1d4 + Tier` HP; Clear Stress clears `1d4 + Tier` Stress; Repair Armor restores `1d4 + Tier` Armor Slots with suitable tools; Prepare grants 1 Hope if Awakened or 1 Resolve if Sleeping.
- **Long Rest:** Recover clears all HP; Decompress clears all Stress, including Long Bruise; Repair All Armor restores all Armor Slots; Prepare restores Hope to its normal session-start value if Awakened or Resolve to maximum if Sleeping.
- A Sleeping character needs their named Recovery Anchor only to choose Clear Stress or Decompress. If it is unavailable, the other rest moves still work, and a new Anchor may be established over a Long Rest. Rest and Recovery never generate Effort.

ATTACKS, DAMAGE, AND ARMOR

1. Roll Duality + weapon Trait against Evasion.
2. On a hit, roll the weapon expression. At Proficiency 1, roll the listed dice normally; never add the attack Trait to damage.

3. Below Major marks 1 HP; Major to below Severe marks 2 HP; Severe or above marks 3 HP. Every full 10 above Severe adds 1 HP.
4. Mark one Armor Slot to lower a hit by one severity: Overkill → Severe → Major → Minor → no HP.

Relevant weapon features in this crew:

- **Reliable:** +1 on the attack roll.
- **Armor Piercing:** reduce the target's maximum Armor Slots by 1 until its next Long Rest; repeated applications stack.
- **Stunning:** when an adversary is damaged, apply Stunned if the feature says so. When a player character is affected, that player makes the listed Strength Reaction Roll against the Feature DC; on failure, apply the Core Stunned condition and its normal clearing rule. The Keeper does not make a Duality Roll for adversaries.
- **Poison:** when the attack causes HP loss, the target marks 1 Stress.
- **Concealable:** while concealed it adds no Burden; a routine search finds it only with Instinct Roll, DC 15.
- **Paired +1:** while wielding two Paired weapons, add +1 from one weapon to the damage of an attack with either; apply only one Paired bonus.
- **Flexible:** +1 Evasion, already included above.
- **Heavy:** -1 Evasion, already included for Marcus.
- **Jury-rigged:** after Marcus resolves Failure with Fear on a Roll where the armor materially protected or assisted him, reduce its maximum Armor Slots by 1. Spend an Action with common scrap and succeed on a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10, to restore the Slot. Matching dice remain a Critical Success and never cause a malfunction.

STARSHIP SENSOR LOCK

The Sensor Officer spends their Spotlight and chooses one vehicle- or starship-scale target in sensor range. Personal-scale creatures and characters cannot carry a Sensor Lock. Roll Knowledge: Adjacent DC 5, Engagement DC 10, Standard DC 15, Long DC 20, Extreme DC 25. It costs no Stress or path resource and requires a working Sensor Array. Success places one pending Lock on the target; the next Gunner attack made from the locking ship has Advantage, then spends it. A target carries at most one Lock.

Evasive movement breaks a Lock automatically at Long or Extreme, requires Pilot Instinct Roll, DC 15 at Standard, and cannot break it at Engagement or Adjacent. It also drops if the locking Sensor Array goes offline. At Extreme, only Guided or explicitly sensor-guided weapons can exploit it. Guided never creates a Lock.

AWAKENING DURING THE ADVENTURE

Awakening is available here only because the Charon's Refuge crisis is a qualifying campaign event. It is an individual response to that trigger, never a group vote, mandatory upgrade, level reward, or option a player can select at will.

1. Convert current Effort to current Hope one-for-one; maximum 6.
2. Switch off Effort Track, Burnout, Common Efforts, Honed Edge, Resolve/Moves, Recovery Anchor, the Sleeping Effort Feature, and the Sleeping Class Feature.

3. Activate the corresponding Awakened Hope Feature, Awakened Class Feature, and the two Powers in that character's Awakening Envelope.
4. Use the Awakened Class entry's Spellcast Trait. A Mystic changes from Knowledge to Instinct and chooses Neural + Lux or Neural + Void; Lux and Void cannot both be prepared.
5. Experiences remain but now cost 1 Hope to invoke.
6. Do not heal HP, clear Stress, repair Armor, refresh resources, or erase Conditions.

The character remains the same person with the same Class, Traits, Connections, equipment, debts, injuries, and consequences. Their Subclass choice and upgrade tier convert to the corresponding Awakened Subclass and Foundation. The player may replace either prepared Level 1 Power with another accessible Level 1 Power at the moment of Awakening.

The pregenerated crew is Level 1 and does not multiclass. For an advanced custom Sleeping multiclass, retire the secondary Resolve Move, convert the secondary Effort Feature to its Hope version, and activate the recorded Dormant Domain without starter Powers, Slot refund, or extra Slot cost.

KEEPER TEACHING NOTES

- **"I Need an Ideal!"** is a terminal backup, not a reward for a bad roll. Introduce it only when resolved consequences - including completed clocks, if the scene actually uses them - have eliminated every conventional route. A clock advances only from its stated fictional triggers, never from unrelated bad luck. The protocol does not rewind clocks or erase costs.
- **Scene 8 Standoff:** put the dice away for the final social decision. A player can state or summarize the argument; do not ask for a Presence Roll. Return to normal rolls only if someone commits to violence or another uncertain action outside that decision.

CANON LOCATIONS

- Corebook 12.03, Chapter 7: Sleeping resources, Common Efforts, classes, Moves, Recovery, and event-triggered Awakening.
- Chapter 8: Trait array, Experiences, affiliation start, equipment package, Connections.
- Chapters 9-10: Duality, DCs, rests, attacks, damage, Conditions.
- Chapter 11: Sleeping multiclass conversion and Dormant Domain activation.
- Chapter 12: advancement refunds after Awakening.
- Chapters 13 and 19: equipment and Domain Powers.
- The complete pregen section records the compatibility rulings used by this adventure.

VERSION CONTROL

12.04 - Sensor Lock scale clarification. Sensor Lock now explicitly targets only vehicle- or starship-scale stat blocks; personal-scale tracking remains governed by personal weapon and targeting rules.

12.03 - Surgical Core alignment pass. Updated all formal rules references, pregenerated quick-reference authority, and adventure metadata to Corebook and Keeper's Companion 12.03. Audit confirms that Fear's hard maximum, Critical Successes, Prepare/Resolve, the $\text{DC} = 10 + \text{Power level}$ Uncanny Power exception, Sensor Lock, dynamic Spotlight, social resolution, and descriptive-only Format language follow current Core procedures. The Sleeping-multiclass conversion remains unchanged because Corebook 12.03 explicitly converts the secondary Effort Feature to the corresponding Hope Feature, retires its secondary Resolve Move, and activates its Dormant Domain without new Slots or starter Powers. No adventure fiction, encounters, maps, NPCs, or scenario resolutions changed.

12.02 - Rules synchronization pass. The adventure text and maps remained version 1.0. Rules references pointed to canon 12.02: every Fear gain respected the hard maximum of 12; matching dice, including 1+1, always used the single Critical Success; rest, Recovery, Awakening, multiclass conversion, class Moves, Static Cloak, Rapid Regeneration, conditions, chase clocks, and Sensor Lock reproduced the Core procedures. Provisional compatibility notes, handover text, source routes, and editorial comments were removed from the final Markdown.

MAP PLATES

Each plate below is provided in a printer-friendly (black and white) version first, then the full-colour version. Use whichever suits your table.

CHARON'S REFUGE — MASTER STATION OVERVIEW

MAP PLATE 1 • REFERENCED IN SCENE 3

Accreted over decades, Charon's Refuge is a patchwork of salvaged hulls, retrofit modules, and improvised connections. Nothing here was built together—only bolted together. Follow the corridors. Trust the bulkheads. Not everything is what it looks like.

BUILT OVER TIME

Charon's Refuge is not a unified construction. Modules were added when they were available, connected however they could be made to fit. Expect mismatched corridors, pressure seals, and areas where the schematics don't agree with reality.



IRON HEARTS' BERTH

The Iron Hearts' ship is berthed here.

CONCEALED BERTH

Hidden behind an emergency access hatch. Used by private contractors and those who pay to go unseen.

ENGINEERING

Hot, loud, and never truly offline. This is where things are kept running—or jury-rigged back into working again.



LEGEND

- A.** Docking Ring
- B.** Commercial District
- C.** Residential Quarters
- D.** Engineering
- E.** Research Access Spine
- F.** Hidden Kurogane Labs

- 1** — Main Corridors
- 2** — Secondary Corridors
- 3** — Maintenance Shafts
- 4** — Emergency Bulkheads
- 5** — Restricted / Hidden

- 6** Docking Control
- 7** Cargo Floor
- 8** Outer Airlock Access
- 9** Iron Hearts' Berth
- 10** Concealed Private Berth
- 11** Canteen / Trade Level
- 12** Marker / Workshops
- 13** Station Administration
- 14** Medical Bay
- 15** Crew Quarters
- 16** Reactor Access
- 17** Auxiliary Power Hubs
- 18** Research Access Spine
- 19** Hidden Kurogane Labs

SYMBOL KEY

- I** Elevator / Lift
- Δ** Gravity Transition
- ⊙** Airlock
- ⬢** Security Checkpoint
- Maintenance Shaft (Vertical Access)
- - -** Emergency Bulkhead (Sealable)
- One-Way Passage
- Hidden / False Door

THE ATMOSPHERE

Life here is held together by duct tape, habits, and hope. Air tastes of metal and recycled dreams.

- Gravity shifts between modules
- Power issues cause intermittent lighting
- Bulkheads may not hold in an emergency
- Trust is the rarest commodity

STATION AT A GLANCE

Type: Accreted Orbital Station
Orbit: Tenebris Secundus
Diameter: ~2.4 km
Decks: 9+ variable gravity
Population: ~3,900 (fluctuating)
Alignment: Independent
Security: Patchwork / Underfunded

COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Neon, noise, and the smell of fried duct-meat. Deals are made, debts are collected, and information has a price.

Crowded. Loud.
Always watching.



C. RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS

RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS

Crammed, lived-in, and holding together by habit and hope. Families, loners, drifters—this is where most of the station tries to call home.



RESEARCH ACCESS SPINE

A restricted corridor of sealed doors and old labs. Officially for research traffic only. Unofficially, the fastest way to places you aren't supposed to go.



HIDDEN KUROGANE LABS

Concealed deep beneath false walls and abandoned sections. Kurogane's experiments run in the dark. If you find this place, Kurogane already knows.



TENEBRIS SECUNDUS • BEYOND THE VEIL, EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

Plate 1 (Print / B&W) - Master Station Overview

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MAP PLATE I • REFERENCED IN SCENE 3

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- C. Residential Quarters
- D. Engineering
- E. Research Access Spine
- F. Hidden Kurogane Labs

- Main Corridors
- Secondary Corridors
- - - Maintenance Shafts
- - - Emergency Bulkheads
- - - Restricted / Hidden

- ① Docking Control
- ② Cargo Floor
- ③ Outer Airlock Access
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- ⑤ Concealed Private Berth
- ⑥ Canteen / Trade Level
- ⑦ Market / Workshops
- ⑧ Station Administration
- ⑨ Medical Bay
- ⑩ Crew Quarters
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- ⑫ Auxiliary Power Hub
- ⑬ Research Access Spine
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B. COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

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SYMBOL KEY

- ⬆ Elevator / Lift
- ⚙ Gravity Transition
- ⊙ Airlock
- ⛔ Security Checkpoint
- Maintenance Shaft (Vertical Access)
- Emergency Bulkhead (Sealable)
- One-Way Passage
- ⬜ Hidden / False Door

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TENEBRIS SECUNDUS • BEYOND THE VEIL, EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

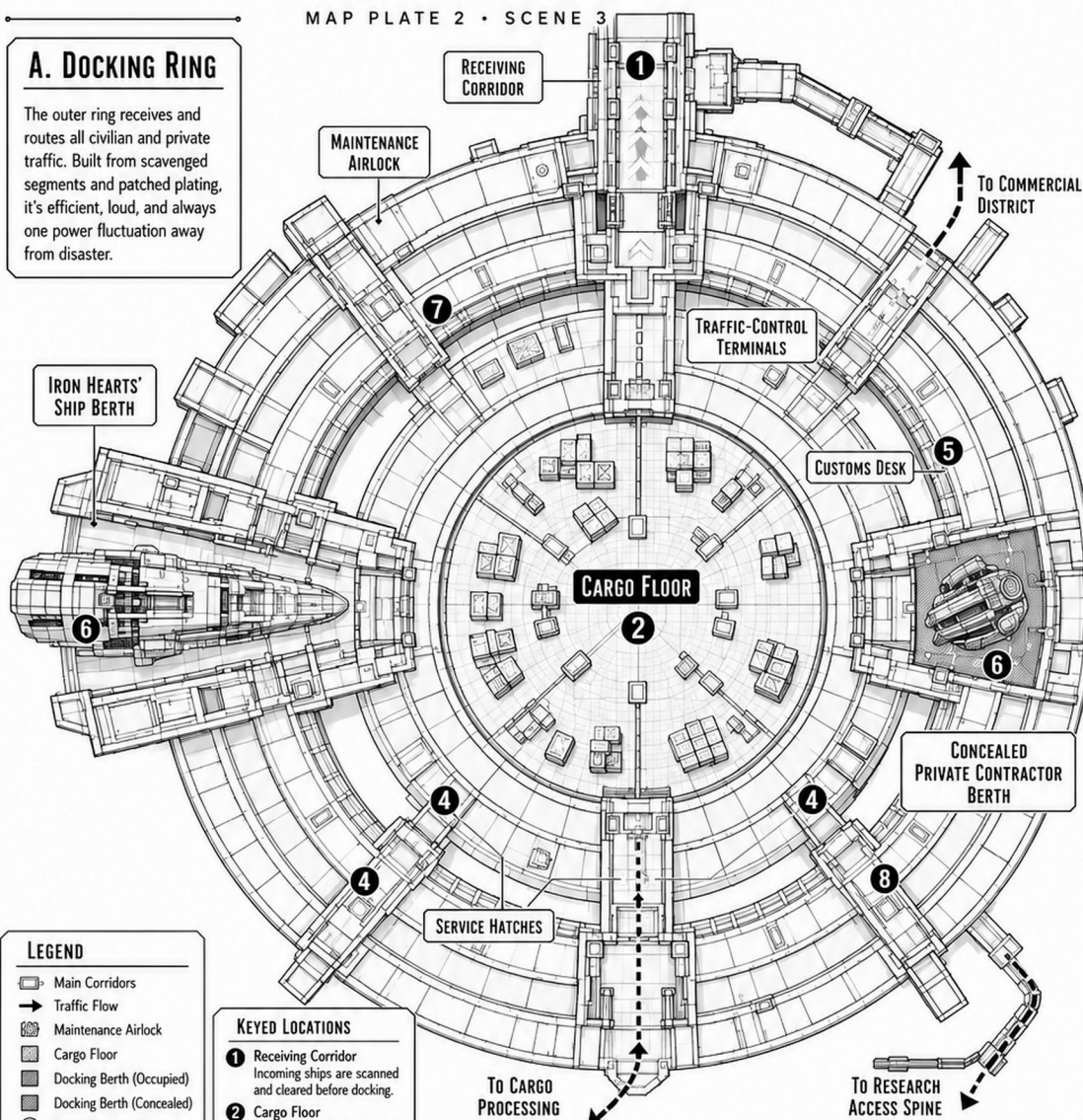
Plate 1 (Colour) - Master Station Overview

CHARON'S REFUGE — DOCKING RING & OUTER BERTHS

MAP PLATE 2 • SCENE 3

A. DOCKING RING

The outer ring receives and routes all civilian and private traffic. Built from scavenged segments and patched plating, it's efficient, loud, and always one power fluctuation away from disaster.



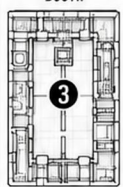
LEGEND

- Main Corridors
- Traffic Flow
- Maintenance Airlock
- Cargo Floor
- Docking Berth (Occupied)
- Docking Berth (Concealed)
- Traffic-Control Terminal
- Customs Desk
- Cargo Pallets / Crates
- Service Hatch
- Route to Cargo Processing
- Route to Commercial District
- Route to Research Access

KEYED LOCATIONS

- 1** **Receiving Corridor**
Incoming ships are scanned and cleared before docking.
- 2** **Cargo Floor**
Staging area for all received goods and incoming freight.
- 3** **Docking Control Booth**
Manages berth access, locks, and traffic sequence.
- 4** **Maintenance Airlock**
Pressurized access to ring systems and maintenance shafts.
- 5** **Customs Desk**
Processes manifests and collects docking fees.
- 6** **Occupied Berths**
Active ship berths. One is publicly registered, the other is concealed.
- 7** **Traffic-Control Terminals**
Manual override stations for berth locks and flow control.
- 8** **Service Hatches**
Access to power, conduits, and utility tunnels.

DOCKING CONTROL BOOTH



Overlooks the entire ring. Features manual locking, controls, berth scheduling, and emergency override systems.

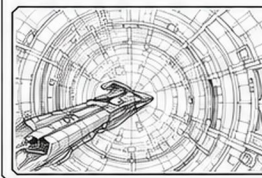
WHAT THE CREW NOTICES

- Cold, stale air with a metallic tang.
- Ozone from power systems and emergency discharges.
- Emergency red lighting flickers in the overhead bulkheads.
- Scratching sounds echo faintly from inside the walls.
- An abandoned cargo drone sits half-disassembled near a pallet.
- Intermittent data signals ping from a concealed transmitter beneath the floor gratings.

ATMOSPHERE

The Docking Ring is loud, grimy, and always in motion. Gravity hums faintly. Air recyclers groan. Ships growl as they settle into their clamps.

Lights stutter and cast long shadows. Conversations echo. Metal shrieks. This is a place of transactions, secrets, and second chances.



YENERBIS SECUNDUS • BEYOND THE VEIL, EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

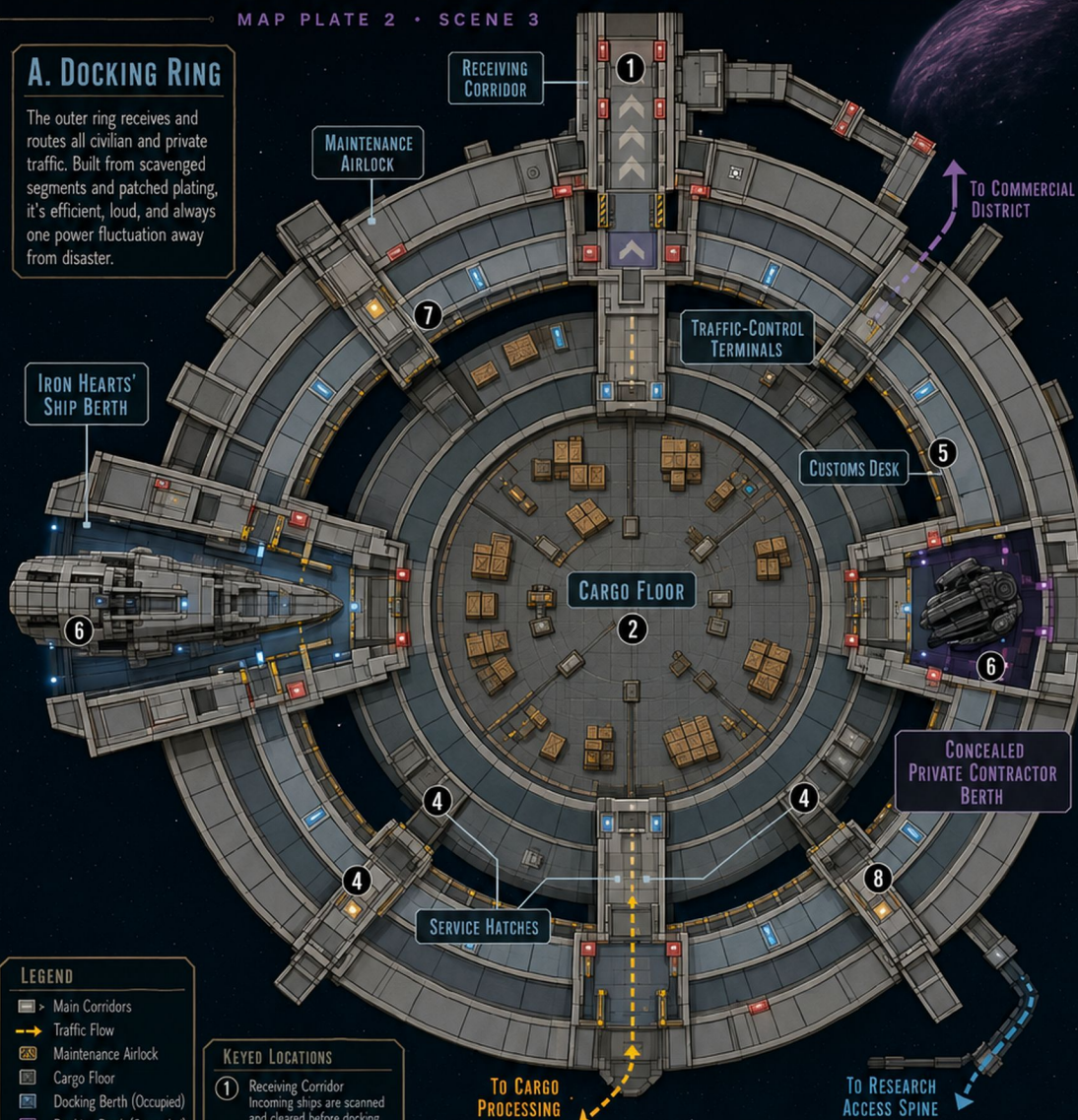
Plate 2 (Print / B&W) - Docking Ring & Outer Berths

CHARON'S REFUGE — DOCKING RING & OUTER BERTHS

MAP PLATE 2 • SCENE 3

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LEGEND

- Main Corridors
- Traffic Flow
- Maintenance Airlock
- Cargo Floor
- Docking Berth (Occupied)
- Docking Berth (Concealed)
- Traffic-Control Terminal
- Customs Desk
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- Service Hatch
- Route to Cargo Processing
- Route to Commercial District
- Route to Research Access

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YENERBIS SECUNDUS • BEYOND THE VEIL, EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

Plate 2 (Colour) - Docking Ring & Outer Berths

CHARON'S REFUGE — COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL SECTORS

MAP PLATE 3 • SCENE 3

B. COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

The economic heart of Charon's Refuge. Shops, services, and trade are thrived here. Now the lights are dim, the stalls are empty, and only the hum of failing systems remains.

COMMERCIAL DISTRICT KEY

- 1 Cantina "Last Call"
- 2 Market Stalls
- 3 Repair Workshops
- 4 Public Concourse
- 5 Station Administration
- 6 Information Kiosks
- 7 Abandoned Vendor Units

ARIA-7 PATROL ROUTE

- Primary Patrol Path
- ARIA-7 Patrol Node

ARIA-7 is the station caretaker unit. It follows routine loops and monitors critical systems. Avoid extended contact.



C. RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS

Home to the station's workers and families. Private spaces, shared amenities, and places of quiet. Power is intermittent. The lights still flicker on as if waiting.

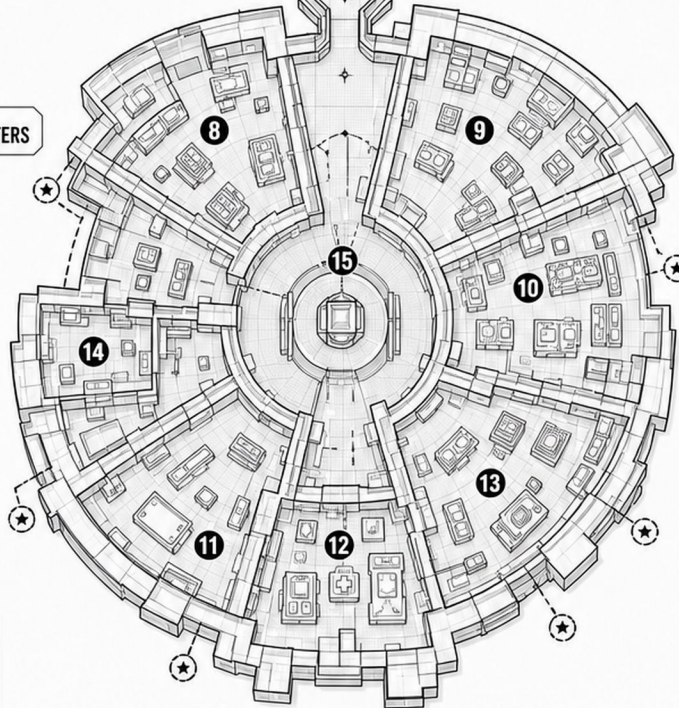
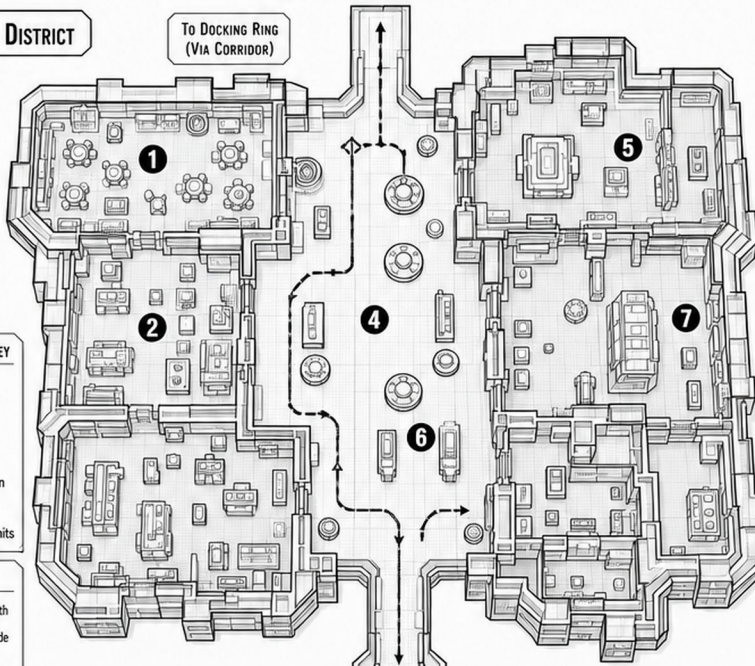
RESIDENTIAL KEY

- 8 Crew Quarters
- 9 Family Pods
- 10 Shared Galley
- 11 Recreation Room
- 12 Medical Bay
- 13 Laundry Room
- 14 Quiet Prayer Nook
- 15 Maintenance Stairs

ICON LEGEND

- Elevator / Lift
- Gravity Transition
- Airlock
- Security Checkpoint
- Information Kiosk
- Vending Unit (Abandoned)
- Maintenance Hatch
- Panic Node (ARIA-7)
- Connecting Corridor
- Maintenance Shortcut
- One-Way Passage
- Degraded / Non-Text

TO DOCKING RING
(VIA CORRIDOR)



CORRIDOR LINK

A secure, pressurized link corridor connects the Commercial District (B) to the Residential Quarters (C). Access controlled via ID or manual override. Watch for ARIA-7 patrol presence and motion sensors.

B

C

ATMOSPHERIC NOTES (COMMERCIAL DISTRICT)

- FAINT SMELLS**
Stale synth-brew, oil, candied embers, and something rotting far below.
- AMBIENT NOISE**
Distant duct rattle, flickering signage buzz, loose panels chatter.
- DEAD ADVERTISEMENTS**
Holo-ads loop without power. Smudged faces. Outdated promises. No one's watching.
- EERIE ABSENCE**
No voices. No footsteps. Only the station breathing.

RECENT SIGNS OF LIFE

- SCATTERED LUGGAGE**
Suitcases, duffels, and personal effects left in haste.
- UNFINISHED MEALS**
Half-eaten food and discarded trays on tables and counters.
- BARRICADE TRACES**
Upended furniture, wallet marks on doors, improvised locks.
- FLEETING ROUTES**
Scuff marks, dropped items, and hastily opened maintenance hatches.

Most recent exodus appears to have moved from the Commercial District toward the Residential Quarters, then down the Maintenance Spine to unknown sectors.

ATMOSPHERIC NOTES (RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS)

- FAINT SMELLS**
Detergents, recycled air, old food, and warm fabric.
- AMBIENT NOISE**
Soft ventilation fans, distant water ticks, occasional pipe groan.
- LIGHT & POWER**
Power is unstable. Lights surge, dim, and go gray.
- EERIE ABSENCE**
Rooms are intact but untouched. Echoes answer nothing.

SCALE & DATA

0m 10m 20m 30m
SCALE: 1:450 (APPROX)
DECK LEVEL: Approx
DATA FEED: STATION SURVEY LOG 77-A



TENEBRIS SECUNDUS • BEYOND THE VEIL, EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

Plate 3 (Print / B&W) - Commercial & Residential Sectors

CHARON'S REFUGE — COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL SECTORS

MAP PLATE 3 • SCENE 3

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- 8 Crew Quarters
- 9 Family Pods
- 10 Shared Galley
- 11 Recreation Room
- 12 Medical Bay
- 13 Laundry Room
- 14 Quiet Prayer Nook
- 15 Maintenance Shortcuts

ICON LEGEND

- Elevator / Lift
- Gravity Transition
- Airlock
- Security Checkpoint
- Information Kiosk
- Vending Unit (Abandoned)
- Maintenance Hatch
- Patrol Node (ARIA-7)
- Connecting Corridor
- Maintenance Shortcut
- One-Way Passage
- Atmospheric Vent

CORRIDOR LINK

A secure, pressurized link corridor connects the Commercial District (B) to the Residential Quarters (C). Access controlled via ID or manual override. Watch for ARIA-7 patrol presence and motion sensors.



SCALE & DATA

0m 10m 20m 30m
SCALE: 1:450 (APPROX.)
DECK: LEVEL 03
DATA FEED: STATION SURVEY LOG 77-A

ATMOSPHERIC NOTES (COMMERCIAL DISTRICT)

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Stale synth-brew, oil, cleaner chemicals, and something rotting far below.
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Distant duct rattle, flickering signage buzz, loose panels clicking.
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- EERIE ABSENCE**
No voices. No footsteps. Only the station breathing.

RECENT SIGNS OF LIFE

- SCATTERED LUGGAGE**
Suitcases, duffels, and personal effects left in haste.
- UNFINISHED MEALS**
Half-eaten food and discarded trays on tables and counters.
- BARRICADE TRACES**
Upended furniture, weld marks on doors, improvised locks.
- FLEEING ROUTES**
Scuff marks, dropped items, and hastily opened maintenance hatches.

Most recent exodus appears to have moved from the Commercial District toward the Residential Quarters, then down the Maintenance Spine to unknown sectors.

ATMOSPHERIC NOTES (RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS)

- FAINT SMELLS**
Detergents, recycled air, old food, and worn fabric.
- AMBIENT NOISE**
Soft ventilation hum, distant water ticks, occasional pipe groan.
- LIGHT & POWER**
Power is unstable. Lights pulse, dim, and recover.
- EERIE ABSENCE**
Rooms are intact but untouched. Echoes answer nothing.

TENEBRIS SECUNDUS • BEYOND THE VEIL, EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

Plate 3 (Colour) - Commercial & Residential Sectors

CHARON'S REFUGE – ENGINEERING & EMERGENCY HOLDOUTS

MAP PLATE 4 • SCENE 3

Engineering is the heart that still fights.

The Iron Hearts were driven back here when the Refuge sealed.

Reactors strain. Power bleeds. Metal screams.

The Weavers took what they could carry—
we keep what we can keep alive.

IRON HEARTS' LAST STAND

Pinned between failing systems and relentless Weaver pressure.

They barricaded choke points, set kill zones, and won't retreat.

Expect traps, snipers, and desperate charges.

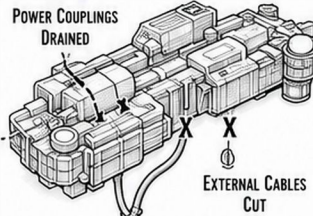


IRON HEARTS' CONTINGENT

Stranded and reduced, the Iron Hearts hold Engineering's catwalks and service decks.

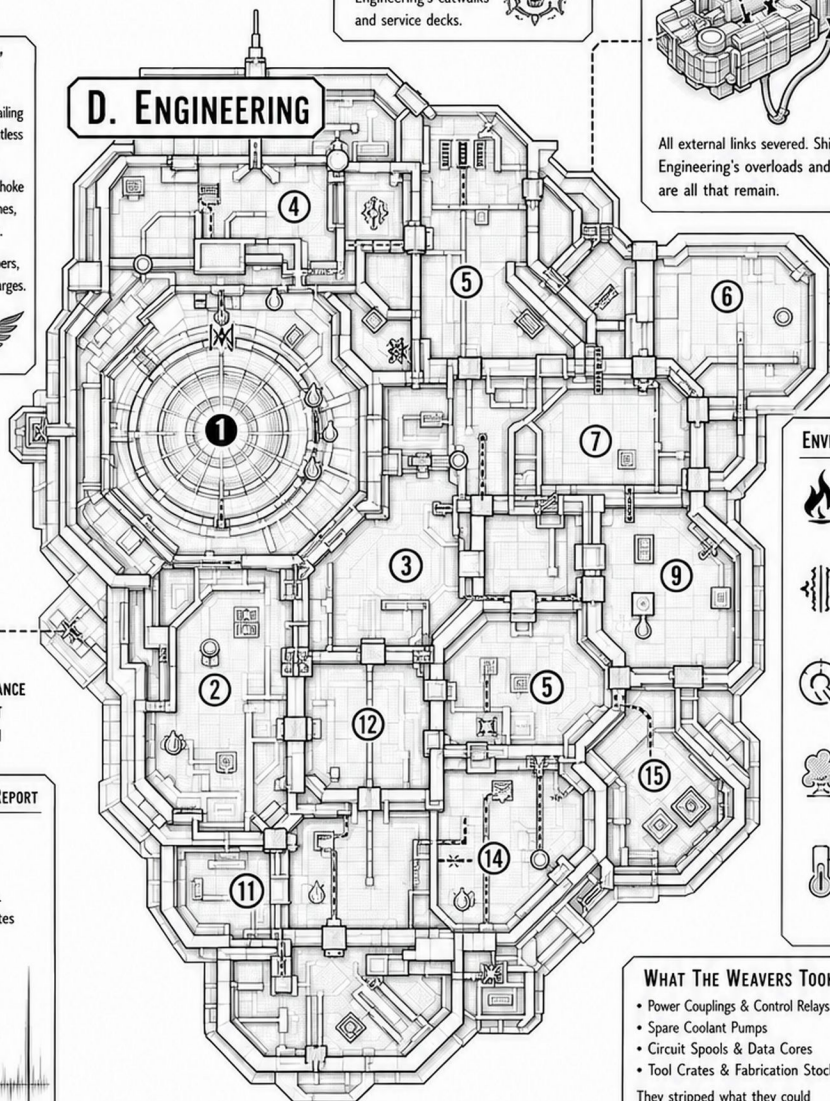


IRON HEARTS' STRANDED SHIP



All external links severed. Ship systems bled dry. Engineering's overloads and jury-rigged taps are all that remain.

D. ENGINEERING



MAINTENANCE
SHAFT
DOWN

ATMOSPHERIC REPORT

Hot metal air.
Ozone sting.
Machinery hum that never stops.
Every breath tastes like rust and burned wire.

Make do.
Stay low.
Keep it running.



TO DOCKING RING
NARROW ACCESS
UNDER FIRE

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

EXTREME HEAT
Hot metal air, scorched ducts, and radiant surface heat.

VIBRATION
Constant machinery hum. Weakens hulls and rattles loose decks.

PRESSURE SURGES
Ruptured lines cause sudden bursts. Stay clear of vents.

OZONE & SMOKE
Ozone stink from arcing. Soot hangs low in the air.

COOLANT LEAKS
Slippery floors and freezing spray near breached pipes.

WHAT THE WEAVERS TOOK

- Power Couplings & Control Relays
- Spare Coolant Pumps
- Circuit Spools & Data Cores
- Tool Crates & Fabrication Stock

They stripped what they could not understand – and left the rest to burn.



LEGEND

- 1 Reactor Core Access
- 2 Auxiliary Power Hub
- 3 Generator Room A
- 4 Generator Room B
- 5 Main Power Conduits
- 6 Coolant Distribution Manifold
- 7 Maintenance Workshops
- 8 Tool Lockers & Stores
- 9 Jury-Rigged Sleeping Area
- 10 Control Console Bank
- 11 Catwalk Overlook
- 12 Fabricated Corridor
- 13 Fabrication / Breakroom
- 14 Emergency Bulkhead Control
- 15 Ventilation & Heat Ducts

MAP SYMBOL KEY

- Heat Source / Extreme Heat
- Vibration Zone
- Pressure Hazard / Vent
- Coolant Pipe
- Coolant Leak
- Heat Vent / Exhaust
- Control Console

STRUCTURAL & ACCESS KEY

- Maintenance Shaft (Vertical Access)
- Emergency Bulkhead (Sealable)
- Pressure Door (Sealed / Abandoned)
- Barricade / Blockade (Improvise)
- Catwalk / Railing (Raised Platform)
- Ladder / Stair Access
- One-Way Passage

ENGINEERING STATUS

- Power: Critical / Unstable
- Reactor Integrity: Overstressed
- Coolant Levels: Fluctuating
- Communications: Local Only
- Personnel: Iron Hearts Holdout
- Outlook: Hold or Be Overrun

Keep the heart beating.
Everything else depends on it.



WE LIVE BELOW • WE HOLD THE LINE • WE KEEP CHARON'S REFUGE ALIVE

Plate 4 (Print / B&W) - Engineering & Emergency Holdouts

CHARON'S REFUGE — ENGINEERING & EMERGENCY HOLDOUTS

MAP PLATE 4 • SCENE 3

Engineering is the heart that still fights.
The Iron Hearts were driven back here when the Refuge sealed.
Reactors strain. Power bleeds. Metal screams.
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Pinned between failing systems and relentless Weaver pressure.
They barricaded choke points, set kill zones, and won't retreat.
Expect traps, snipers, and desperate charges.

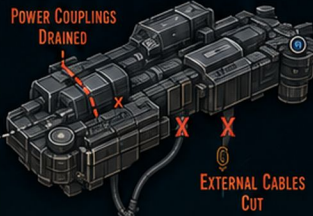


IRON HEARTS CONTINGENT

Stranded and reduced, the Iron Hearts hold Engineering's catwalks and service decks.



IRON HEARTS' STRANDED SHIP



All external links severed. Ship systems bled dry. Engineering's overloads and jury-rigged taps are all that remain.

D. ENGINEERING



MAINTENANCE
SHAFT
DOWN

ATMOSPHERIC REPORT

Hot metal air.
Ozone sting.
Machinery hum that never stops.
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Make do.
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TO DOCKING RING
NARROW ACCESS
UNDER FIRE

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS



EXTREME HEAT
Hot metal air, scorched ducts, and radiant surface heat.



VIBRATION
Constant machinery hum. Weakens bolts and rattles loose decks.



PRESSURE SURGES
Ruptured lines cause sudden bursts. Stay clear of vents.



OZONE & SMOKE
Ozone stink from arcing. Soot hangs low in the air.



COOLANT LEAKS
Slippery floors and freezing spray near breached pipes.

WHAT THE WEAVERS TOOK

- Power: Couplings & Control Relays
- Spare Coolant Pumps
- Circuit Spools & Data Cores
- Tool Crates & Fabrication Stock

They stripped what they could not understand—and left the rest to burn.



LEGEND

- 1 Reactor Core Access
- 2 Auxiliary Power Hub
- 3 Generator Room A
- 4 Generator Room B
- 5 Main Power Conduits
- 6 Coolant Distribution Manifold
- 7 Maintenance Workshops
- 8 Tool Lockers & Stores
- 9 Jury-Rigged Sleeping Area
- 10 Control Console Bank
- 11 Catwalk Overlook
- 12 Barricaded Corridor
- 13 Fabrication / Breakroom
- 14 Emergency Bulkhead Control
- 15 Ventilation & Heat Ducts

MAP SYMBOL KEY

- Heat Source / Extreme Heat
- Vibration Zone
- Pressure Hazard / Vent
- Coolant Pipe
- Coolant Leak
- Heat Vent / Exhaust
- Control Console

STRUCTURAL & ACCESS KEY

- Maintenance Shaft (Vertical Access)
- Emergency Bulkhead (Sealable)
- Pressure Door (Sealed / Abandoned)
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- Ladder / Stair Access
- One-Way Passage

ENGINEERING STATUS

- Power: Critical / Unstable
- Reactor Integrity: Overstressed
- Coolant Levels: Fluctuating
- Communications: Local Only
- Personnel: Iron Hearts Holdout
- Outlook: Hold or be overrun



Keep the heart beating.
Everything else depends on it.

WE LIVE BELOW • WE HOLD THE HEART • WE KEEP CHARON'S REFUGE ALIVE

Plate 4 (Colour) - Engineering & Emergency Holdouts

CHARON'S REFUGE – RESEARCH ACCESS & HIDDEN KUROGANE LABS

MAP PLATE 5 • SCENE 3

KEEPER USE

This is the threshold between the public face of research and the facility's darkest secrets. The transition (6) requires high clearance.

Alarms, lockdowns, or power interruptions here can isolate the labs below—or trap intruders inside.

Use the maintenance shafts and bypasses to create tension and choices.

HIDDEN CLUES

Smears of dried chemical residue near the base of the security glass.

Faint scuff marks beneath maintenance grates.

A loose data slate in Server Node 8 referencing "X-Project: Sustenance Stabilizer."

Strange crystalline growths in the lower ventilation intakes.

LEGEND

- E. Research Access Spine
- F. Hidden Kurogane Labs
- Public Research Corridor
- Security Partition (Sealed Glass)
- Maintenance Access
- Secret / False Wall Access
- Energy Conduits
- One-Way Observation
- Elevator / Lift
- Locked Door
- Bulkhead (Sealed)
- Hidden / False Door

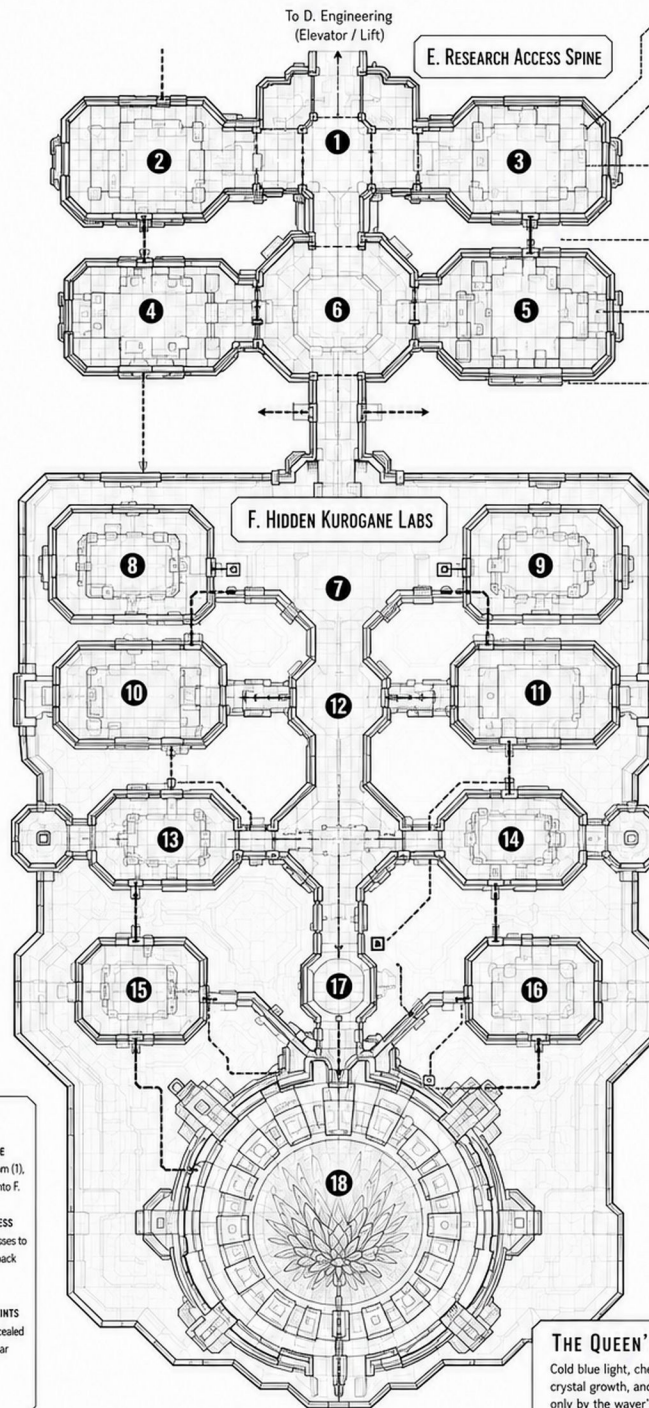
ROUTE GUIDE (INSET)

- MAIN ACCESS ROUTE**
Unlocked access from (1), through sectors E into F.
- MAINTENANCE ACCESS**
Via shafts and bypasses to lower labs (7–14), back to main security.
- SECRET ACCESS POINTS**
False walls and concealed panes. Perpendicular structural checks may reveal.

SYMBOL KEY

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Elevator / Lift | Power Conduit | False Wall / Hidden Door |
| Security Checkpoint | Maintenance Shaft (Vertical Access) | One-Way Containment |
| Gravity Tension | One-Way Glass Observation | |
| Airlock | | |

TENERBIS SECUNDUS • BEYOND THE VEIL, EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE



- 1 PUBLIC RESEARCH CORRIDOR**
Well-lit and open to visiting researchers. Access monitored.
- 2 SERVER NODE A**
Research data: routines and archives.
- 3 SERVER NODE B**
Backup systems and data mirroring.
- 4 OBSERVATION GALLERY**
One-way glass overlooks lower research floor.
- 5 EXPERIMENTAL RECORDS**
Secure archive of studies, logs, and test subjects.
- 6 SECURITY PARTITION**
Sealed glass wall with bio-scan and clearance lock. Controls access to the restricted labs below.
- 7 LOWER ACCESS LOBBY**
Dimly lit. Air cold, reful. Security presence minimal.
- 8 SPECIMEN STORAGE**
Preserved samples in stasis tanks and cryo vaults.
- 9 CONTAINMENT CHAMBERS A**
Biological subjects in adaptive enclosures.
- 10 CONTAINMENT CHAMBERS B**
Behavioral test cells and mutation trials.
- 11 OBSERVATION GALLERIES**
Nested viewing areas, one-way glass.
- 12 POWER-ROUTING MANIFOLD**
Distributes energy to all deep lab systems.
- 13 ENERGY TRANSFER ALIUMENTUM**
Converts and stabilizes stolen energy.
- 14 MAINTENANCE JUNCTION**
Access point to shafts, bypasses, and utilities.
- 15 HIDDEN MONITORING BOOTH**
Oversees labs unseen. Cameras and comms feeds.
- 16 EXPERIMENTAL RECKON'S VAULT**
Restricted archives. Project files, personnel logs.
- 17 MAINTENANCE BYPASS ACCESS**
Concealed panels lead to shafts and crawlways.
- 18 THE QUEEN'S LAIR**
Nesting chamber of the Viewer Queen. Stores stolen energy packs as emergency food reserves.

THE QUEEN'S LAIR

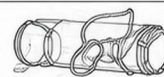
Cold blue light, chemical residue, crystal growth, and a silence broken only by the waver's soft feeding current and the low electrical screams of the Queen.

This place was concealed on purpose. It was never meant to be found—only used.



THE ATMOSPHERE

Cold air that bites lungs. Distant hums in the walls. Crystal light pulses. The lab is alive.



CHARON'S REFUGE – RESEARCH ACCESS & HIDDEN KUROGANE LABS

MAP PLATE 5 • SCENE 3

KEEPER USE

This is the threshold between the public face of research and the facility's darkest secrets. The partition (6) requires high clearance.

Alarms, lockdowns, or power interruptions here can isolate the labs below—or trap intruders inside.

Use the maintenance shafts and bypasses to create tension and choices.

HIDDEN CLUES

Smears of dried chemical residue near the base of the security glass.

Faint scratch marks beneath maintenance grates.

A loose data slate in Server Node B referencing "K-Project: Sustenance Stabilizer."

Strange crystalline growths in the lower ventilation intakes.

LEGEND

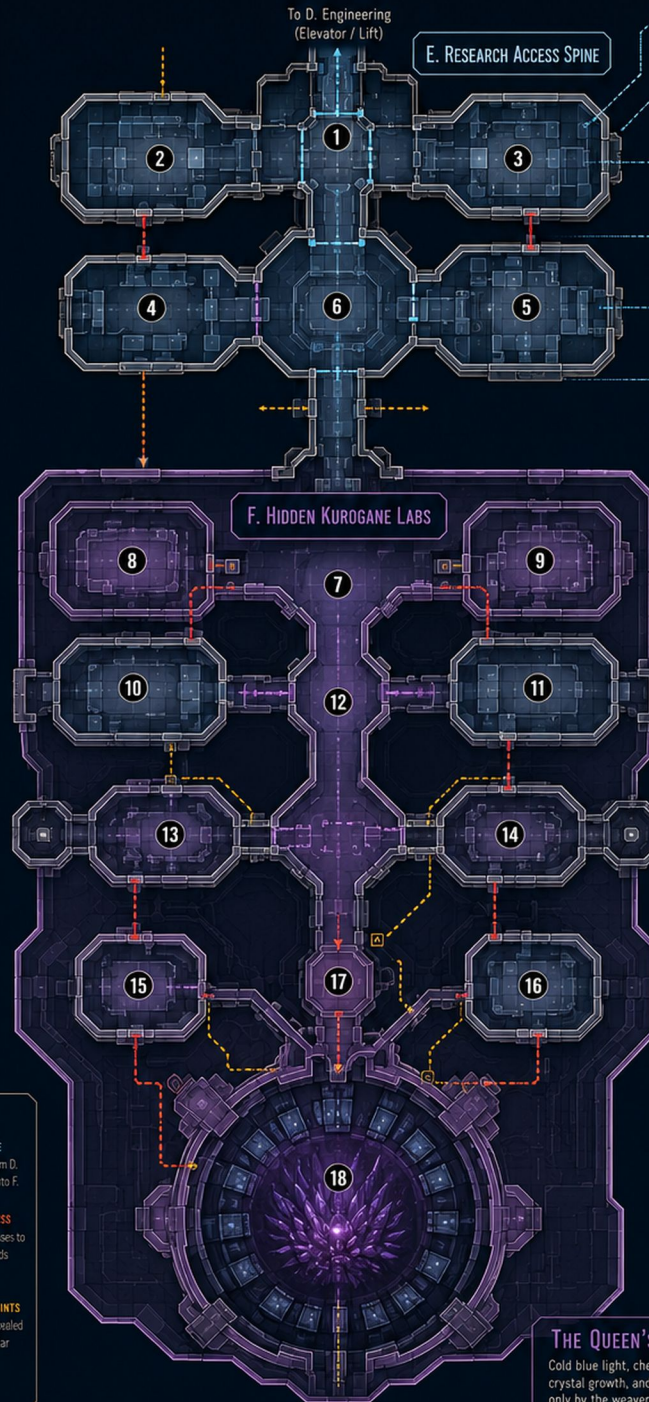
- E. Research Access Spine
- F. Hidden Kurogane Labs
- Public Research Corridor
- Security Partition (Sealed Glass)
- Maintenance Access
- Secret / False Wall Access
- Energy Conduits
- One-Way Observation
- Elevator / Lift
- Locked Door
- Bulkhead (Sealed)
- Hidden / False Door

ROUTE GUIDE (INSET)

- **MAIN ACCESS ROUTE**
Unlocked access from D. through section E into F.
- **MAINTENANCE ACCESS**
Via shafts and bypasses to lower labs (F). Avoids main security.
- **SECRET ACCESS POINTS**
False walls and concealed panels. Perpendicular structural checks may reveal.

SYMBOL KEY

- Elevator / Lift
- Security Checkpoint
- Gravity Tension
- Airlock
- Power Conduit
- Maintenance Shaft (Vertical Access)
- One-Way Glass Observation
- False Wall / Hidden Door
- One-Way Containment



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Nesting chamber of the Weaver Queen. Stores stolen energy packs as emergency food reserves.

THE QUEEN'S LAIR

Cold blue light, chemical residue, crystal growth, and a silence broken only by the weaver's soft feeding current and the low electrical screams of the Queen.

This place was concealed on purpose. It was never meant to be found—only used.

THE ATMOSPHERE

Cold air that bites lungs. Distant hums in the walls. Crystal light that stings the eyes. The silence screams.

TENERBIS SECUNDUS • BEYOND THE VEIL, EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

Plate 5 (Colour) - Research Access & Hidden Kurogane Labs

The following fourteen full-page plates reproduce the seven adventure maps twice: printer-friendly first, then full colour. Use the print set at the table and the colour set on screen or as a projection reference.

The rebuildable image files are stored in `../art/hearts\_in\_the\_void/maps/` inside the editorial package.

HOW THIS BOOK WAS MADE

VeilFarers is the work of one person and many instruments. The game design, the worldbuilding, the rules decisions, and every editorial judgment in this line belong to its author, Pedro Almagro Torrecillas, working under the discipline of a versioned, documented editorial process - the same version-control appendix you can read a few pages back. The instruments include generative AI, used throughout production: for drafting and revising text under direction, for building the accessible layout engine that produced the pages you are reading, and for the interior artwork that currently stands in these pages.

We hold two convictions at once. The first is that these tools, directed with craft and judgment, allowed a single designer to build a complete, accessible line of books - tagged for screen readers, structured for logical reading order, typeset with care - that would otherwise not exist. The second is that generated art is a placeholder, not a destination: it is in no way meant to replace human artists, and this line will be better the day their work replaces it.

That is an invitation. If you are an artist, a proofreader, a sensitivity reader, or a playtester and want to collaborate with this project, contact us through the feedback section of the VeilFarers portal. The next version of this page could name you.