

STAR TREK™
ADVENTURES

Planet of the Ebon Pearl

By Michael Dismuke

INTRODUCTION

"Planet of the Ebon Pearl " is an adventure for *Star Trek Adventures*. This adventure is meant to be played by a Gamemaster (gamemaster) and 3-6 players, using the pre-generated characters provided.

To run this adventure, the gamemaster needs to be familiar with the adventure itself, the *Star Trek Adventures* playtest rules, and the pre-generated characters.

For this playtest, you will need:

- At least two 20-sided dice (d20) per player, and several d6s to serve as Challenge Dice
- A set of chips or tokens for Determination
- A set of chips or tokens for Threat
- A set of chips or tokens, or some other manner of marker, for group Momentum.
- The pre-generated character sheets, and your selected starship sheet
- The Star Trek Adventures rules

Synopsis

While exploring the Sargon Region the crew stumbles upon a Bronze Age civilization located on a Class M world tucked away deep in the Cordon Nebulae. Interestingly, though most of the civilization is still using metal tools and primarily agricultural in nature, strange dark matter readings are emanating from the top of a dormant volcano on the southernmost continent. The Prime Directive is in full effect as the captain decides to send an away team to explore the source of the dark matter readings.

Upon exploring the mountainous polar region of the southern continent in search of the strange readings, the away team comes across an amphibious race of sentient monopedes who worship a dark orb. Religious artifacts, temples, local art, and music tend to venerate the dark pearl-like orb. Mythological stories speak of the Ebon Spirits that bless their paradisiac world with a calm life, plentiful food, freedom from disease, and eternal peace. As their beliefs espouse, the world is truly a paradise.

The away team must try its best to avoid violating the Prime Directive while uncovering the mystery of the dark matter at the top of the volcano. This mission also stresses how much work goes into clandestinely observing alien cultures.

NOTE: This mission serves as the first in the Continuing Mission Campaign: Supreme Mandate. Even though they will not make an appearance, the alien K'si's technology will be discovered. GMs should make sure that no spoilers are given regarding the actual identity of the K'si. This will be revealed in future modules.

The gamemaster begins this adventure with two points of Threat for every player character in the group.

Rules for the Cordon Nebulae

The **Cordon Nebulae**, also called the Cordons, are a vast number of ribbon-like nebulae that separate the Sargon Region from **The Space Beyond** (as locals call it). Although the nebulae gases appear harmless, ships that travel through the Cordon Nebulae are rumored to be plagued with bad luck, and many have gone mysteriously missing. For that reason, very little is known of The Space Beyond.

Effects of the Cordon Nebulae

Class I Nebulae - The Difficulty of all Tasks is increased by 1 while within the nebulae, and the Complication Range increased by 2 for any use of Computers, Engines, or Weapons within the nebulae.

Avoiding the Cordon Nebulae

The Cordon Nebulae is on average two light-years in width, like a maze-like veil separating the two regions of space. To plot a course through the Cordons that avoids all nebulae entirely is an Extended Task. Failing to achieve a Breakthrough on the Task indicates that the ship entered a nebula inadvertently, and is affected by the effects of the Class I Nebula until the next Breakthrough is achieved.

- The basic **Task** is Difficulty 3 **Reason + Conn Extended Task**, assisted by the **Ship's Sensors + Conn**. This assumes an average Warp Factor of 4.
- Adjust the Difficulty down for each Warp Factor below 4, or up for each Warp Factor above,
- **Interval** = 2 days at Warp 4; adjust for other speeds
- **Complication Range** = 3
- **Work Track** = 10
- **Magnitude** = 3
- **Resistance** = 1



If no attempt is made to avoid the Cordon Nebulae, apply the effects of the Class I Nebulae until the end of the Mission where the crossing was accomplished.

Scene 1: Ichtharys System

When the players are ready to begin, read the following:

CAPTAINS LOG

“Our crew and vessel are continuing our mission to map the Cordon Nebulae. As of this morning, we have dutifully mapped a section of the nebulae. The chemical composition is fairly uniform; approximately 90 percent of the constituent atoms are hydrogen and nearly all the rest are helium, with oxygen, carbon, neon, nitrogen, and the other elements mixed in. There have been intense pockets of gas between the clouds, with a temperature of 10 million K and a density of only 0.001 H+ ion per cubic cm.

Yesterday, our instruments picked up areas more akin to an emission nebula, interstellar matter consisting of ionized hydrogen atoms. There is even a faint region of ionized gas around one of the cooler stars, so I ordered that we move in close to examine this anomaly. Upon doing so, we detected a single planet—a Class M world—tucked away in a safe zone in the Ichtharys System. We have launched a class-1 probe to investigate and are just receiving telemetry now...”

The adventure begins with Players assembled on the bridge to receive more information about the Class M world. If it bears life, the possibility of engaging in a First Contact scenario is exciting; every Starfleet officers' dream. Refer to “Rules for the Cordon Nebulae” above.

Effects of the Cordon Nebulae—*Class I Nebulae - The Difficulty of all Tasks is increased by 1 while within the nebulae, and the Complication Range increased by 2 for any use of Computers, Engines, or Weapons within the nebulae. The difficulties listed below account for these adjustments.*

At this time the Science Officer or another appropriate PC can roll a Sensor Sweep as if the probe is sending information. This is a **Reason + Science** with ship's **Sensors + Science** with a difficulty of 1. If the tasks generate Momentum, the characters can spend points to improve the results of the scan. The information gleaned is based on the amount of Momentum spent.

- **1 point of Momentum:** There are signs of life on the planet and a breathable atmosphere safe for most humanoids. Vast oceans cover the planet. It has a cool climate with inhabited polar regions in the north and south. The energy emissions from the nebulae cast a constant state of daybreak on the planet. It is brightest in the south. *(GM: This will play into why taking a shuttlecraft down is inadvisable.)*
- **2 points of Momentum:** There is no sign of technology. The civilization seems what one would call bronze ages; with tools and structures having metal composition. Most of the population seem clumped together in cities along the frigid oceans. The sentient lifeforms are an amphibious race of sentient monopeds. Their faces resemble that of elongated frogs with bulging eyes and long tongues that they use to snatch food. Their torsos sport two muscular arms which they use to drag their eel-like lower halves along the land when they are not in the water. There does not seem to be male or females—they were no gender-specific clothing—possibly an asexual species. Larger structures seem to resemble temples that jut out of the water all over the planet. All of the temples have one defining feature—a large black pearl-like decoration sits atop all of the structures. There is no signs of modern industry or any evidence of war.
- **3 points of Momentum:** Interestingly, the probe also is picking up a plethora of electromagnetically neutral particles from somewhere on the planet's surface.

The Players should be intrigued by such a strange find on a bronze age world. This is a great opportunity to let the Players decide on a course of action. They may want to make more sensor sweeps with the probe. However, the probe has its limits. A more detailed survey can be made only from the Players' vessel or a shuttlecraft outfitted with planetary survey equipment. This will require them to go into orbit around Ichtharys to make the scans. Allow the Players some time to take any precautions to ensure their ship is not detected by a bright Ichtharysan with a primitive telescope.

Once in orbit, they can roll another **Reason + Science** with ship's **Sensors + Science** with a difficulty of 1. If the tasks generate Momentum, the characters can spend points to improve the results of the scan. The information gleaned is based on the amount of Momentum spent.

- **1 point of Momentum:** The source of the electromagnetically neutral particles is from a volcano in the mountainous polar region of the southern continent. There is a high concentration of population around this volcano; at least one million inhabitants. A coniferous forest surrounds the city replete with towering trees. Large canals are cut into the ice that reach from sea to volcano and interweave along the sparkling city of water and ice. The canals feed water into the city. Some water emanates from hot springs that creates tropical recreational zones where the population seems to gather to enjoy a warmer climate. Large wooden vessels bring in goods, wares, and food from seemingly all over the planet.
- **2 points of Momentum:** Further scans of the volcano's peak reveal non-baryonic matter that bears resemblance to weakly interacting massive particles (WIMPs) like those found in super-massive black holes. In addition, the high level of sterile neutrinos seem to indicate that something composed of dark matter is located on top of the volcano. The repetitive nature of the neutrino fluxes indicated technology of some sort, though further scan will reveal nothing. There are no signs of life at the volcano's peak. The high level of gravitational fluctuation around the volcano's peak prevents transporting and taking a shuttlecraft down risks being seen by this pre-warp civilization.

At this point, the characters can devise a way to research more about this world, that is, unless they chicken out and don't want to risk violating the Prime Directive. Doubtful. So let's move on.

Scene 2: Preparations

Once the ship is in position, read the following:

CAPTAINS LOG, SUPPLEMENTAL

"I have decided to send an away team to the planet with the order to evacuate the moment anyone feels the Prime Directive is about to be breached. However, we cannot allow the dark matter anomaly to go uninvestigated. I could act like this is out of concern for the native population. But, frankly, they seem to be faring alright. Their civilization is booming and at peace it seems. This is a mission of curiosity. Now, my finest officers are preparing to explore this strange, new world..."

The Players need to prepare for an adventure on a planet whose average temperate is 11 °C (52 °F). In addition, the Ichtharysan population are physiologically interesting. How the away team intends to keep a low profile will take some creativity and preparation.

Allow the Players to come up with whatever ideas they want. Depending on the complexity of their ideas, make the preparation take hours, days, or even weeks. There is no rush. This is space exploration. It's their job.

If they need a little help (or if you want to have them really experience the life of an away team), toss out some ideas to them. Below is a Gated Challenge that will really make this adventure more interesting.

- **Researching Ichtharysans.** The away team decides to physiologically modify themselves into replicas of the Ichtharysans so that they can infiltrate the population and culture. This would be a Gated Challenge that would take four days per task.
 - **Transport to Planet with Tricorders to Get Close Range Scan of Inhabitants**—The location of the transport must be away from the main city—perhaps on another continent—near the volcano as the black matter is disrupting transports. The clandestine away team must make a Transporter roll of **Control + Engineering** with ship's **Sensors + Engineering** with a difficulty of 3 to get on and off the planet. Any complications that are rolled should be added to threat pool.

- **Locate Small Group of Inhabitants**—This is a **Daring/Insight + Security** task with a difficulty of 2. Any complications indicate that some inhabitants spot the away team creating a *Rumors of Alien Arrival* complication that could affect future rolls on the surface.
- **Build a Hidden Observation Shelter**—Players must complete a **Reason + Engineering** task with a difficulty of 2 to build a hidden shelter from which to observe the Ichtharysans. Complication could include *Shabby Structure* or *Not-So-Well Camouflaged*.
- **Secretly Scan the Inhabitants**—Players must complete a **Reason + Science/Medicine** task with a difficulty of 3 to obtain a clean scan of Ichtharysan physiology. Any complications rolled can create future complications for the surgeon like *Strange New Species* or *Nervous Surgeon*.
- **Withdraw Team**—Players must hail their ship to effectuate transport. They must roll a **Control + Engineering** with a difficulty of 0. Failure indicates that atmospheric disturbances have prevented the hailing signal from going through. **PENALTY:** The away team must spend another six (6) hours on the planet. Roll a **Daring/Insight + Security** task with a difficulty of 2. Failure meant the away team has been spotted creating or adding +1 to the *Rumors of Alien Arrival* complication that could affect future rolls on the surface. Repeat this task until the away team makes contact with the ship. Complications have a compounding effect.
- **Transport off of Planet**— The crew on the ship must make a Transporter roll of **Control + Engineering** with ship’s **Sensors + Engineering** with a difficulty of 3. Failure means that that atmospheric disturbances prevent transport at this time. Repeat the **PENALTY** as stated above.
- **Surgery.** Once the away team is back on the ship, participants to be transformed into Ichtharysans must be selected. This can be a harrowing experience. Player characters who have the mental fortitude to undergo such an extreme transformation should be selected. This selection process is a Gated Challenge that could occur simultaneously as the “Researching Ichtharysans” challenge.
 - **Interview with Ship’s Counselor**—Any character’s willing to undergo surgery and insertion into the Ichtharysan culture must successfully complete a **Control + Command/Security/Medicine** with a difficulty of 4. Characters with Focuses like First Contact, Xenobiology, Physiology, Psychology, Composure, Alien Cultures, Meditation, Linguistics, Genetics, or other focuses that would give them the mental fortitude to handle the procedure need only complete a difficulty 2 task.
 - **Prepping**—The ship’s medical team must now complete a **Reason + Medicine** task and ship’s **Computers + Medicine** with a difficulty 1 to prep the patients for surgery.
 - **Under the Knife**—The ship’s medical team must now complete a **Daring + Medicine** task along with ship’s **Computers + Medicine** with a difficulty of 3 to complete the surgery on the away team. They must make this roll for each away team member undergoing the surgery.
 - **NOTE:** Any complications rolled during this Gated Challenge can add to Threat or create complications that might surface during the away mission like *Losing Sense of Self*, *Painful Post-Surgery Complications*, or *Panicked, Incoherent Altered Personality*.

Now that the away team has done its extensive research, they need a little training on Ichtharysan culture and habits. Select a crew member or character adept with alien cultures. You may need to activate a support character. They must roll an **Insight + Science** with a difficulty of 2 to instruct the away team on the do’s and don’ts on Ichtharys. Failure indicates four (4) additional days of training are required. Any complications rolled should effect the team’s ability to integrate like *Cultural Inappropriateness* or *Glaringly Awkward*.

Scene 3: Away Team on Ichtharys

It is now time to beam back to the planet, a difficulty 3 task. The away team must integrate themselves into Ichtharysan society, make their way through the capital city, and scale the volcano to arrive at the location of the black matter readings. Since they have to beam in from outside the city perimeter due to the gravimetric fluctuations from the black matter, the away team will need to acquire a boat to take up a canal. This is a Linear Challenge.

The away team will no doubt want to bring equipment with them. The equipment needs to stay out of sight to observe the Prime Directive. Allow the Players to come up with cool ways to hide the equipment, perhaps having travel backpacks or some such. (Remember, the Ichtharysan do not wear clothes.)

Gamemasters' Guidance: Any complications rolled during the Linear Challenge can add to threat or create complications to the mission. Gamemasters should definitely keep Players on their toes. But, do not frustrate them to the point of giving up. Allow them to make cautious progress.

Linear Challenge: Infiltration

- **Acquire Boat**—This is a **Daring + Security** task that is difficulty 2.
- **Plot Course to Capital City**—This is a **Reason + Conn** that is difficulty 3. Using a tricorder will reduce the difficulty by 1.
- **Sail Boat to Capital City**—This is a **Control + Conn** with vessel's **Structure and Conn** set at a difficulty of 2.
- **Integrate into Population**—This should be rolled by each member of the away team after they disembark the boat. It is a **Presence/Daring/Insight + Security/Command** task with a difficulty 2. Religious artifacts, temples, local art, and music tend to venerate the dark pearl-like orb. Mythological stories speak of the Ebon Spirits that bless their paradisiac world with a calm life, plentiful food, freedom from disease, and eternal peace. As their beliefs espouse, the world is truly a paradise
- **Navigate through City Walkways**—Players should make a Reason + Conn with a difficulty 2 task. Using a tricorder will reduce the difficulty by 1. However, using a tricorder in the city is dangerous if you are spotted. *Each time a tricorder is used within city limits, add one to threat.*
- **Scale Dormant Volcano**—Players must now exit the city and start scaling the volcano with a **Fitness + Security** task with a difficulty of 2. Failure could indicate injuries, which will appear as Complications.

This journey provides the opportunity for the away team to observe a pre-warp alien civilization up close. Religious artifacts, temples, local art, and music tend to venerate the dark pearl-like orb. Mythological stories speak of the Ebon Spirits that bless their paradisiac world with a calm life, plentiful food, freedom from disease, and eternal peace. As their beliefs espouse, the world is truly a paradise.

This is one of the most exciting parts of being a member of Starfleet. GMs should make an effort to create a sense of awe, curiosity, wonder, and possibly fear as the futuristic spies infiltrate this alien world. Get creative creating the panoramic picture of a strange world and new civilization!

Strike fear in the hearts of the away team if they are discovered and captured, perhaps having their equipment confiscated. Will a security team from their vessel be required to effect a rescue and extraction, thereby ending the mission before it can be successfully completed?

Need to throw a little action into this scene? How about a chance encounter with a carnivorous flying squid or a pack of mountain dwelling *joktools*? As GM, feel free to create any of these threats. Just describe them as you wish and use the generic stats posted to the right to give them attributes. Sometimes Players just want to let loose with their phasers.

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL	03	FITNESS	08	PRESENCE	06
DARING	04	INSIGHT	04	REASON	03

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND	-	SECURITY	-	SCIENCE	-
CONN	-	ENGINEERING	-	MEDICINE	-

STRESS: 8 **RESISTANCE: 0**

ATTACKS:

- Claw (Melee, 2A, 1H)

Sail Boat

Made of wood with cloth sails these vessels are incapable of stealthy maneuvering. They resemble Viking longboats and are built more for speed to facilitate oceanic travel. These boats commonly have compasses that assist with plotting courses.

Systems

Communication	Computers	Engines	Sensors	Structure	Weapons
0	0	0	0	2	0

Departments

Command	Conn	Engineering	Security	Science	Medicine
0	3	0	0	0	0

Power: 0 Scale: 1

Shields: 0 Resistance: 0

Scene 4: Top of the Volcano

Once the Players have passed Scene 3, read the following:

The arduous climb up the side of the dormant volcano took nearly half-a-day. The away team had to get used to their new bodies in addition to scaling rocky obstacles. It has been challenging. But looking back on the lovely, sparkling capital city gives the team a sense of satisfaction.

They are tired but know that time is of the essence. They are less than 100 meters from the target location. Out of sight from the native population, the away team can now safely employ the advanced equipment they are so comfortable using.

Before any other tasks, the members of the away team must make individual **Fitness + Security** tasks with a difficulty 2. Failure means that the Player character receives the *Tired from Long Trek* complication.

The Players can now make a **Reason + Engineering** task with a difficulty of 1 to scan for the exact location of the dark matter emanations. If for any reason the team no longer has their equipment, roll a **Command/Insight + Conn** task with a difficulty of 3 to locate the source of the readings. Once successful, read the following:

The away team move forward over the sharp, black volcanic rocks. They go over the lip of the volcano and peer down into the crater. That is when they see the dark matter orb. It is six meters round. It sits like a giant pearl held in a symmetrical metal claw that serves as its base. The metal claw sits in a large metal rectangle that stands a meter off of the ground. A computer access system is housed on one side of the large metal rectangle. This technology does not seem ancient. Nor does it seem native to this world. The away team's proximity to the orb's strange energies cut off communication with their ship.



The Players can now scan the device for more information. They may make **Reason + Engineering/Science** tasks with a difficulty of 2 to determine the device's function.

Gamemasters' Guidance: *Don't tell the players, but failure activates a security counter measure that sends a communication alert to the unknown recipient and increases the difficulty of the next action by 1. This effect can compound until the team is locked out from accessing the computer.*

If the tasks generate Momentum, the characters can spend points to improve the results of the scan. The information gleaned is based on the amount of Momentum spent.

- **1 point of Momentum:** The rectangle structure is part power source, part energy regulator. It is recycling sterile neutrinos for the purpose of keeping the orb of dark matter stable.
- **2 points of Momentum:** The dark matter orb is sending out varying gravimetric pulses. The computer is recording the pulses and relaying information into space. The transmission into space was not detected before because the molecule-thick dark matter beam is targeted to a specific location in space way beyond the range of the tricorder scans.
- **3 points of Momentum:** The tricorder's universal translator can be used to decipher the language on the computer screen. The computer is collecting global atmospheric information and tracking communications coming in from temples all over the globe. The vocalized prayers of the population are collected and, using an advanced data correlation program, are compiled into data packages that are transmitted into space based on a priority algorithm.

If the players try to access the computer, a security access window will appear that asks for a password. It will be a **Daring + Security** task with a difficulty of 4 to successfully infiltrate the computer system. The Players should be warned that failure or even success could lead to unknown consequences, as the source to which the prayers are being transmitted is unknown.

Success means that they learn the name of the computer's builders, the K'si. They claim to hold dominion over this and many other planets within the Great Cloud, a reference to the Corbon Nebulae. They are warp-capable and seem to have many of their sciences based on being able to manipulate dark matter.

After the Players have completed their research, the adventure is over. The GM can determine whether to extend the mission by having them have to go back down the volcano and traveling to a spot where transports can occur. Or the GM can assume they make it out, perhaps ending the mission in the briefing room where the mystery is left looming, a cliffhanger for the next adventure in the Sargon Region.

Gamemasters' Guidance: *This is where the Players need to make a decision on how to move forward. The decisions they make here will affect their First Contact with the K'si, a race of aliens who follow the Supreme Mandate that allows them to subjugate "lesser" worlds posing as gods to their populations. Any attempts to hack, alter, or send a message with the transmitter in the volcano will meet with no response from the K'si. This module is connected with follow-up campaigns where the Players will learn about the K'si. The K'si are unaware that other warp-capable civilizations exist, as the Corbon Nebulae surrounds their star-spanning civilization and has prevented them from making significant long range scans. They have warp capabilities, though limited compared to Federation standards. As such, they would meet with great suspicion any transmissions coming from Ichtharys.*

Ichtharysan Citizen

Traits: Amphibious; Long Powerful Tail

Attributes

Control	Daring	Fitness	Insight	Presence	Reason
7	6	9	8	8	8

Disciplines

Command	Conn	Engineering	Security	Science	Medicine
0	3	1	0	1	1

Combat

Stress: 9

Resistance: 0

Resolution

This mission might not be action-packed. However, it will set the stage for how the Federation first interacts with the K'si. It will also give Players a sense of what life is like in Starfleet on clandestine missions of observation and discovery.

Players that decide to stay on the ship during the away mission can have fun delving into their characters' side stories or building relationships with other crewmen.