

To Face The Darkness Your Heart Must Be Pure

Fathomless Campaign Episode 4

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Introduction

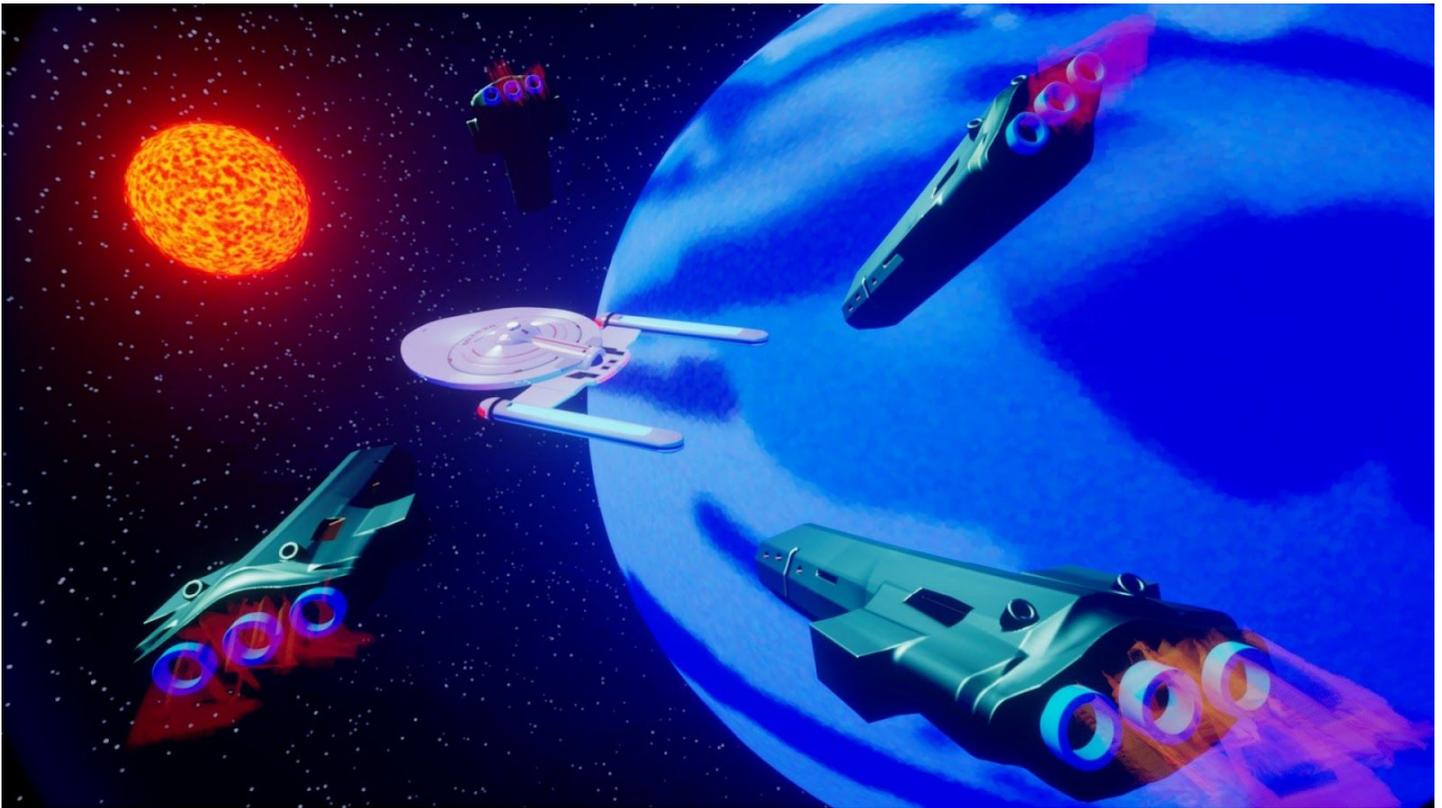
To Face The Darkness Your Heart Must Be Pure is a mission for a Gamemaster (GM) and 3-6 players. The pre-generated characters may be used, but the players can just as well create their own characters. To run this adventure, the GM should be familiar with the mission itself, as well as the **Star Trek Adventures** roleplaying rules.

To play, you will need the following:

- 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 a starship sheet
- The **Star Trek Adventures** core rulebook

Synopsis

Starfleet Command has deployed the players' ship to the Undabussius system, within the Enigma zone. Aboard they have two representatives from the Cavna, and a clear directive has been issued: to gather as much Microdinium as possible. The players will need to take bold decisions, or risk coming home without enough to satisfy the Cavna representatives.



The crew must confront Pirates, handle cryptic matter contaminations, and as the adventure progresses they have to show compassion or leave people to an uncertain fate. All while the mysterious Fathomless are silently observing from a distance.

Any player can use mission directives on as their own values (Core rules p. 87). The following mission directives are in play:

- Gather Microdinium before Undabussius is lost
- Uphold Federation code of conduct

The GM begins the mission with **2 Threat** per player character.

Cryptic Matter

As laid out in the Campaign Guide, cryptic matter will severely affect any ships not prepared to handle it. As your crew have had some minor experience, the **Phenomenon Severity** should have decreased by 1 and give the Enigma zone a rating of **Class IV**. Affected systems are **Engines, Sensors, Shields, Structure and Transporters**.

Gm and players will have to modify all relevant tasks in the episode depending on the current rating.

The Cavna Representatives

From the Cavna, there are two members aboard the player vessel. The Deepbound, Pale-Orange-Circles is a medical specialist who will be in charge of handling the Microdinium and securing it for the trip home. The Drywalker, Translucent-Blue-Ribbons is the equivalent to a military advisor with tactical knowledge about the facility and Undabussius system.

They are mainly observers but will provide background and specific knowledge to the player characters. With the exception of Scene 4, they are not expected to perform any Tasks and will not be fully fleshed out with Attributes and Disciplines.

More can be read about Cavna in general in the Settings bible.

Microdinium

Microdinium is a crystalline compound used as a vascular pressure enhancer by the Cavna to counteract hypotension while spacefaring. It is naturally produced in deep sea creatures on their home planet that travel between pressure zones in search for food, and can be harvested from a secreted mucus without harm to the creatures. Neither the Cavna or the Federation have succeeded growing it in labs, and replicators cannot achieve the proper quantum level crystalline fidelity.

Normally, their home planet can provide enough for the needy, but with a mass evacuation scenario becoming more probable they will need to stack up.

Undabussius

Undabussius is a L-class Oceanic world with a breathable atmosphere. It's orbiting a red dwarf at a close distance and is therefore tidal locked, and gamma radiation is prohibiting long durations of stay. Light is a red-tinted eternal twilight on the star-facing side and the facility is placed near the sub-stellar point where local temperature is tropical. The nominal gravity is 1.4 G. There are a few barren rocky planets further out in the system, but they have no names. The star is referred to just as "Undabussius motherstar".

The colony on Undabussius was founded just a few years ago and has fully automated underwater gathering probes. On the surface is a floating storage and maintenance facility with two landing pads for shuttlecraft. It has shielding but no defensive weaponry, and only a small habitat space. It can be compared to a 20th century oil platform in many aspects.

Scene 1: Arrival

A Mission of Some Importance

Once everyone is ready, hand a copy of the following to the Player playing the Captain to read aloud:

Captain's Log: *We are on our way to the Undabussius deep sea colony under high warp. The colony is small but important as it is the Cavna's main supply of Microdinium which will be needed in case of a mass evacuation of their home planet. Starfleet Command estimates we will have 12 hours to safely complete the mission upon arrival. Our scientists believe that the magnetosphere of the Undabussius mother stars will protect us for a time, and keep the outer layers of the nebula – The Enigma zone – back, much like a dam.*

The Cavna representatives can provide the players with any of the information about the Undabussius system in the synopsis part, including the knowledge that there is a strong magnetosphere present. You can either roleplay this, or just hand them the information depending on your playstyle.

The first task is to figure out how the magnetosphere is a good thing for the players with a **Reason + Science** task against a **Difficulty of 2**, assisted by the ship's **Sensors + Science**. At a successful task, explain the following:

Luckily for the crew, the magnetosphere of the Undabussius star system will keep the worst effects at bay for some time, but at the same time it affects many of the same ship systems. Transporters and shields are affected with the full rating, for all other systems the rating is treated as three levels lower – much improved odds.

GM Guidance: *Players should feel the mission is hard, but not impossible. They might also try to create some advantages – as a GM you have the last say, but they should not be allowed to compensate for transporters for more than a single use each scene. The goal is to keep them at the planet long enough for things to go south.*

As this scene is mostly to set up the adventure, do not linger and move on to the next scene when players have a grasp of what's expected of them.

Orbital Object(s)

Captain's Log, supplemental: *As we are approaching Undabussius, we are picking up something on long range sensors, and we are entering orbit under yellow alert. The*

Cavna have declared this part of the sector as a no-fly zone, so we are not sure what to expect.

As the players enter the Undabussius system, they can do a sensor sweep of the system with a **Reason + Security or Science** task of **Difficulty 0** – it matters little if the tactical officer or science officer makes the scan. On a successful task, they pick up two “unknown metallic objects” in orbit of Undabussius of approximately size 3. They can use any momentum gained to ask questions and get more details, see the NPC section for information on the (pirate) ships. GM should note that the two objects are identical, and maneuvers in unison on any touching questions.

If they fail this task they still see two blips on the sensors, but can get no further information. They need to enter orbit to be able to scan through the interference.

When they take standard orbit, the ship raises shields preventing any detailed scans, unless the players get creative. As soon as they come within close range, one of the ships will send a one-way message to them:

“Federation vessel, this system is now under the control of Captain Shilkas. You will leave immediately. You have one hour to comply.”

The ship will not repeat any hails, but players can learn without a task that the ships are communicating and keeping a tactical formation against the player ship.

GM Guidance: *There is only one ship, the other is just a sensor echo. Only on a Momentum spend to ask specifically about this will the players learn the truth.*

Gathering Intel

To scan either ship is a **Reason + Science or Security** task against a **Difficulty of 1**, assisted by the ship's **Sensors + Science** to gain any new knowledge, but be sure to inform them that they have three units of microdinium aboard (enough to mark off three boxes in the Extended Task later).

A similar task is needed to scan the surface but Difficulty is reduced to 0. On a success players learn that there are two medium sized shuttles taking up all landing spaces available at the facility. Momentum can be spent to find out they are currently empty of cargo

Any information about the facility is provided willingly by Pale-Orange-Circles and Translucent-Blue-Ribbons, represented as a **Reason + Security** task of **Difficulty 0**.

Scene 2: Handling the Intruders

It is impossible to tell how every group will handle the intruders, but here are some options. Remind the players that they have a time limit on their shenanigans, but allow them to discuss how to proceed outside mission time.

GM Guidance: *Shilkas is not aboard this ship. Commander Hushurdz will play along if characters address him as Shilkas. Hushurdz is a sly criminal, which anyone can learn from a database. Finding out his identity should reflect as an **Advantage**, but how this is done is left to the GM. Use the ship's stats for any opposed Tasks.*

Hushurdz will lie to convince player characters they have many ships close by if they ask about "where the other ship went".

1: Scare Tactics

This is a gated challenge with two separate tasks. First, a warning shot (treat it like a normal attack but declared as intentionally missing) using a normal attack task, followed by an intimidating speech with **Presence + Security, Difficulty 2**. If successful the Pirates will offer half the cargo, but will grudgingly give up all if players insist. Failing any task, Pirates are unimpressed and a "forceful action" is needed to convince them.

GM Guidance: *This is the quick and dirty solution, consuming little mission time unless the crew forms a landing party to infiltrate the facility. In that case, the GM will have to improvise.*

2: Diplomacy

This is an opposed task of **Presence + Command** difficulty 2, but the real challenge is to get the other party to listen. Any message indicating that player characters are willing to compensate fairly will be a door opener, or spending determination to "make it so". The player characters are treated as the "active" part, and outcomes are as follows:

- Player characters succeed, Pirates fail: All Microdinium is transferred as part of the deal.
- Player characters fail, Pirates succeed: No Microdinium is transferred.
- Both parties fail: Negotiations collapse. Players must try something else.
- Both parties succeed: see Core rules p. 82. Players negotiate 1 unit of Microdinium, plus one per momentum generated above what the Pirates generated.

GM Guidance: *This path is the most "Starfleet way" and therefore most rewarding. Award any "spotlight" characters with one determination for upholding Federation code of conduct if they succeed without complications or threats.*

3: Cunning

This option covers any other ideas players might have. Execution could take anything from "no time at all" up to a few hours, and could potentially blow up in their faces provoking a battle. The field is open to player suggestions, so let them brainstorm ideas, but here are some suggestions if they grind to a halt:

- Work with the Cavna to devise a ruse to make pirates think the Microdinium is useless.
- Create false sensor readings and trick Pirates into fleeing and dumping the cargo
- Board their ship and do something bold. Using shuttles (or rocket boots, climb the grapples line etc).

The GM has last say on how long it will take to execute any plan, and what failure and complications this will trigger.

GM Guidance: *Treat any plan as a Gated challenge. Ideally, ask two or three tasks depending on complexity. If the solution is non-violent, award **2 Momentum** upon successful completion. Failure means they are exposed, if this happens they are reduced to combat.*

Plan B: Combat

Only if the players provoke a fight will there be combat. The vessel *should* be inferior to the players making it an easy challenge. This should be such a sure outcome that the GM could opt to just simply apply 6▲ of damage to players shielding and let the pirates limp away with bruised egos.

When either pirate ship is recused to 0 shields or suffer a single system breach, they will withdraw leaving the microdinium behind.

GM Guidance: *In case of combat, the GM will gain two extra threat and one unit of Microdinium is lost.*

Scene 3: The mission

Let's Get To It Then

Captain's Log, Supplemental—With the problem of our uninvited guests handled we are ready to proceed loading the Microdinium. As there is still heavy interference on transporters, I suspect we need to use shuttles unless someone makes a breakthrough worthy of the engineers at the Daystrom Institute.

Loading the Microdinium is a Timed Extended Gated Challenge where the players will think they have around 11 hours to complete the mission. In total, 5 breakthroughs must be scored to fill up the cargo bays. If players retrieved Microdinium from the Pirates this is applied to the work track before they start.

Ask if players want to create any advantageous traits (Core rules, p. 76). You may allow them to create an Advantage that allows one free die re-roll for one Task, for one stage of the overall endeavor. Let them brainstorm for a few minutes, but keep the game from stagnating. They could do something like pick out crew members with “high gravity tolerance” or prep shuttles for “atmospheric operations”.

GM Guidance: For time reference, this part takes place roughly between +1 and + 5 hours. At first, it might look repetitive, but spend some Threat to complicate things if players do “too well” on the challenge.

Gathering the Microdinium

Ask the players to take different mission ops using their main or supporting characters, each handling one operational Task. They will now do several gated challenges as an Extended Task. Pilots must land, Duty Officers lead the work and the “grunts” will do the heavy lifting before shuttles go back up again. A whole trip takes 2 hours and uses every shuttle available.

GM Guidance: To keep this from getting repetitive and time consuming GM can opt to say that every task **except one per Gated Task** is successfully performed without any dice rolls, and this Task will be the bottleneck to make or break it.

The separate Tasks are as follows:

1. First, the flight operation manager roll **Control + Conn Difficulty 3** with complication range 2.
2. Second, duty officers roll **Daring + Command Difficulty 2** with complication range 3.
3. Third, docker crews roll **Fitness + Security Difficulty 2** with complication range 3.
4. Lastly, the flight operation manager rolls **Daring + Conn Difficulty 4** with complication range 4.

The Extended Task part has a Work Track of 16, Magnitude of 5, Resistance of 1 and time interval of 1 hour. In short, a normal run takes 2 hours, a failed run 3 and a “perfect” run 1. Complications add +2 resistance each, but this is reset between Tasks. Players can always Succeed at a Cost, losing 1 work hour.

EXTENDED TASK

DIFFICULTY above	MAGNITUDE 05	RESISTANCE 01
WORK TRACK 16	TIME INTERVAL	1 hour

GM Guidance: Skilled players could fill the work track in 2-3 hours and this would cut the adventure very short. If they

start to shorten the mission time by adding threat, spend gained Threat on raising Resistance so they don't advance too quickly. The goal is not to make players feel they stand still, only that it will be a close call in the mission window and that taking stupid risks will not pay off in the long run.

Around halfway through the mission, let any player or NPC manning sensors pick up that their way out has been cut off.

Captain's Log, Supplemental: About ten minutes ago, sensors picked up several ships closing in. We cannot yet hail or make a detailed scan, but we suspect they are of the same origin as the earlier encountered one. This time we are outnumbered – possibly outgunned so I'm as yet uncertain how to proceed given the new circumstances. Pale-Orange-Circles and Translucent-Blue-Ribbons is urging us to quicken the pace, but odds are becoming less favourable by the minute. With luck, we'll have all shuttle crews aboard before the fleet arrives, but they have still cut off our safe way out of here.

The Pirate Fleet has returned with numbers. Unknown to all, the core of the planet has been affected by w-particles and the magnetosphere will soon collapse. As of now, the Pirates are closing from the only “safe” direction so when players detect them it's already too late to run.

Scene 4: Please, Hurry Up!

During this scene Pale-Orange-Circles will be busy securing the cargo bays, but Translucent-Blue-Ribbons will be present at the bridge overlooking the operations. When the pirate fleet is detected, there might be enough time to complete the Extended Task. Translucent-Blue-Ribbons will behave differently depending on the status. If players have made at least two breakthroughs, they will be positive.

If there's been **no breakthroughs**, Translucent-Blue-Ribbons will insist to hurry up and take bigger risks. If no breakthrough is achieved on the next mission Task, he will constantly bother the bridge crew with nervous questions and unproductive suggestions on how to speed up work. The trait “backseat driver” will come into play, and Translucent-Blue-Ribbons must be dealt with, taking focus away from the “real” mission. As long as the trait is in play, the captain may not assist on any tasks before resolving this social challenge.

For the challenge, Translucent-Blue-Ribbons is now treated as an adversary and will use the Threat pool. Translucent-Blue-Ribbons and the Captain will engage in a Contested Social Task using **Presence + Command Difficulty 2**, and the captain may receive assistance from one other player using **Insight + Command**. No more than one character may assist in this task, and that character will also be too busy to assist anyone else or perform any other duties. To resolve the situation, players must achieve more successes than Translucent-Blue-Ribbons does in a single Task. They can retry the challenge any number of times, but every attempt hinders the active players from assisting or performing mission Tasks.

There is also the possibility of spending Determination to “make it so” and resolve the situation without further Tasks, or simply order guards to escort him off the bridge.

GM Guidance: For time reference, this part takes place roughly between +5 and + 8 hours. This scene should be treated as optional, so if you are short for time – skip it.

Scene 5: Newton's Third Law of Motion

I Don't Think it Will be as Easy This Time

The small Pirate fleet arrives with shields up and weapons primed. Their opinion of the players will depend on how they were treated earlier on. Until now, communications have not been working, or hails were ignored. Interference makes this unclear even on a successful analysis Task.

The fleet positions themselves at medium range, taking partial cover behind a small moon. How they proceed will depend on how they were treated earlier. Players will probably try to scare off or talk sense into the Pirates, but if they choose to fight, see "Battlestations" below.

GM Guidance: For time reference, this scene takes place roughly around +8 hours. There are 3 pirate vessels, and the GM can spend threat to add more.

- **If players flexed their muscles:** Pirates know they are strong and will defend themselves. They will make threats to use deadly force and lock weapons on every ship and shuttle not theirs.

"In the name of Shilkas, hand over your ship or we will open fire!"

- **If they made a deal:** Pirates want to get the same deal or better for the whole clan.

"We all have our families aboard. Don't force us to have to steal from you what we need to survive when we can make a deal instead" (greatly exaggerated).

- **If they used cunning:** Pirates will be expecting more "cowardly trickery" and reply with the same coin.

"What you did not expect, Captain, is for us to place a bomb among the cargo, and we are ready to detonate it, unless you hand your ship over to us. You have one minute to decide (Lie)."

Play out the encounter as a combination of role-playing and dice rolls. If players make a good argument, award them with lower difficulty or extra dice. Then let them do a single opposed **Presence + Command** of **Difficulty 3** Task. If both sides fail, jump to "Battlestations" immediately. On any other outcome, talks will continue (for 4 rounds before being interrupted by the shockwave).

Battlestations

Battle will break out if players choose to attack, or if diplomacy goes south. After a maximum of 4 rounds, they are interrupted by the shockwave.

The Shockwave

Explain that several new alarms start going off in the middle of talking (or fighting). Slip a note to any player manning the science station, or read it out yourself as a NPC:

"Sir, there's... there's something closing in. Fast, from all sides. Sensors cannot... oh no, the Heliosphere of Undabussius motherstar is collapsing! All decks, brace for impact!"

A sharp witted player may remember that engines will be affected first from previous adventures, and can initiate an emergency shutdown of all power systems with a **Daring + Engineering Difficulty 1** Task. If successful, this creates the advantage "It's not as bad as it seems" for the next scene.

Then the cryptic matter shockwave hits.

Consoles short out, lights go dark and the whole ship is forcefully tilted. Everyone is flung around as internal dampeners go offline. Several pirate ships explode into a million pieces before sensors go dark and static fills the main viewer...

GM Guidance: Every main system receives one breach above any previous battle damage, and for every 3 Threat spent the GM can apply another one. For a challenging endgame, 2 or 3 systems should become "damaged" or "disabled". It's a lot like the scene from Voyager's first episode after being displaced by the Caretakers' array. But play nice and do not break their Warp Core.

Scene 6: "1 Hour Until Structural Collapse"

All Decks, Report In

The players are now stranded in the Enigma Zone, and they have around one hour before their ship is busted beyond repair. To escape they need warp capability.

During their repairs, they will also discover some pirates survived and must decide to risk their own safety to rescue them, or leave them to their destiny.

Captain's Log, Supplemental—Captains log, supplemental. We are still (barely) in one piece, but that wave struck us before we had the chance to get strapped in. I'm waiting on reports from senior officers and have gathered the bridge crew that's still standing to discuss options. One thing is for sure – we need to get out of here before the cryptic matter dissolves us completely.

Emergency lighting is coming on, and all decks are a mess with sporadic discharges of power relays, blinking workstations and several crew members lie injured. Almost all primary and secondary systems are offline, but life support and emergency power is stable. The Mircodinium cargo is intact, for now.

GM Guidance: *This scene should not kill the pace of the game session as this is the final stretch of the episode. Option A is for any GM wanting to make this into a two-parter. Option B is a “shortcut” to the resolution.*

Scene 6A: Grab Your Dice

Inform the players most systems are down, and they barely have time to make emergency repairs. In one hour the ship will be beyond saving. They need warp speed – ASAP.

GM Guidance: *As long as the advantage “It’s not as bad as it seems” is in play, the players can spend momentum to retry an unsuccessful Task again without any negative consequences. They still spend the time of the failed Task. The computer will regularly voice time remaining as the crew advances on their Tasks.*

Bridge Crew Specific Tasks

There are a number of Tasks for the senior staff to perform. See the “Positions and specific Tasks” in the Core Rules, p. 221 and forward for deeper descriptions.

- The Commanding officer(s) could use the “Rally” and/or “Create Advantage” Tasks to build momentum and/or facilitate other Tasks.
- The ships’ navigator could perform a “Chart Hazard” Task to counteract taking more damage.
- Communication officers can perform a “Damage Report” Task to facilitate repairs.
- System operation managers can deploy “Damage Control” teams with a Task to restore disabled systems to operations.
- CMO can perform a “Casualty Report”, see below (not covered by Core rules).

GM Guidance: *What is this “NPC roll” I keep bringing up? This works much like “NPCs and starship operations” described in Core rules p. 225 if players wish to dispatch NPCs instead of performing the Tasks.*

CMO: Casualty Report

The CMO of a starship calls all decks to prioritize aid where it’s most needed. Before this is done, the crew is in disorder as people struggle to transport injured to the sickbay, provide first aid or busy performing search and rescue operations.

Managing the injured crew is treated as an Extended **Insight or Control + Medicine** Task, and is calculated like this: **Difficulty** equals the severity category of the event (Core rules, p. 154), but presence of an EMH would lower the difficulty by one at GMs discretion. **Magnitude** equals Crew support score minus Medical department score, but always at least 1. The GM rolls a number of Challenge Dice equal to Crew Support, the sum plus Crew Support base score equals **Work track** for the Extended Task.

Time interval is 5 minutes. At the end of every time interval, the GM rolls one challenge dice for every Magnitude left on the Task plus one per complication rolled. For every effect scored, a crewmember was fatally injured and did not survive.

EXTENDED TASK

DIFFICULTY above

MAGNITUDE above

RESISTANCE 00

WORK TRACK above

TIME INTERVAL

5 minutes

GM Guidance: *As example, the U.S.S. Thunderchild is struck by a “Cryptic matter shockwave, severity III”. It’s crew support is 5, and it’s medical department score is 3. This gives a Difficulty of 3, Magnitude of 2 and GM rolls a sum of 4, this gives a total Work Track of 9. Statistic projection: all injured crew will be cared for within 10 minutes, one fatality is expected.*

“NPC roll” is roll “severity category” plus “crew support” minus “medical department” number of challenge dice once per scene and treat every effect as a fatality.

GM Guidance: *As above this will be $3 + 5 - 3 = 5$. Two effects are scored. Sadly, two crew members didn’t make it.*

Engineering Ops: Damage Report

As soon as anyone performs a “Damage report” they learn the following information, on top of the normal advantages:

- **Shuttlebay doors damaged:** shuttles could launch, but not land. Repair Task **Difficulty 2** and Time interval **15 minutes**.
NPC roll: use ships’ **Structure + Engineering**. On failure, shuttle operations are partially restored but every shuttle landing consumes 1 Power.
- **Personal transporters shunted:** not possible to transport living matter on or off the ship. Repair Task Difficulty and time interval
NPC roll: use ships’ **Computers + Science**. On failure, transport is limited to one object per Task.
- **Tractor Beam emitters burnt out:** the tractor beam can be routed through the main deflector (but then any complications on maneuvers will trigger breaches). Repair Task **Difficulty 1** and time interval 10 minutes.
NPC roll: use ships’ **Structure + Security**. On failure, the patching will be unstable and fail if a complication is rolled on any ship Task, regardless if it’s assisted by the ship or not.
- **Any other secondary systems:** Treat systems not being an integral part of any main system (like holodecks, replicators, or astrometrics) as broken but “patchable” with a normal **Ability + Discipline** Task of **Difficulty 2** and a Time interval of **15 minutes**.
NPC roll: use a logical **System + Department** combination. On failure, assign a limiting trait.

Getting Main Power Back Online

To get the ship moving beyond the system and out of harm's way, both the main power and the warp core must be brought back online. This can be done in any order, but no engineering tasks except bringing the core itself online can get assists from the ship's engines before the Core is back online. When the core is online, half the Power (rounded up) will become available.

Any complications scored adds 5 minutes each, regardless of Task performed.

- Main power grid is offline: 2 Power available and the "Restore Power" Task is impossible. Repair Task **Difficulty 2** and time interval 15 minutes. NPC roll: use ships' **Engines + Engineering**. On failure, main power is partly back online – the "restore power" Task is now possible but maximum Power is reduced by 3 until properly repaired.
- Bringing warp core online is a 3-step Gated Task assisted by the ship's **Engines + Engineering**. Every Task consumes 10 minutes and can't succeed at a cost – if failed, the process must be started from scratch. First, a **Reason + Engineering Difficulty 2** Task to pressurize the coolant system is needed. Second, a **Insight + Engineering Difficulty 1** Task to adjust the dilithium crystal alignment must be performed. Lastly, a **Control + Engineering Difficulty 3** Task to stabilize the M/AM reaction at nominal levels must succeed.
- It is also possible to jump-start it in only 10 minutes with an **unassisted Daring + Engineering Difficulty 4** Task. Failure means the core must be ejected as it is going critical.

NPC roll for all above: use ships' **Engines + Engineering** score, **Difficulty 2**. On failure, the core is ejected and explodes.

Science Ops: Sensor Sweep

- With an **Insight or Reason + Science Task Difficulty 1**, they see the Nebula closing faster than calculated. They have about one hour to get main power online and escape.
- There is no safe way to get more Microdinium off the planet any longer as the atmosphere is now saturated with interference from cryptic matter and this can be learned without a Task.
- On an **Insight or Reason + Security Task Difficulty 1** they learn that one pirate ship is still intact, located at close range, but seems to be inoperable. They also pick up the distress call even if they do not succeed at this Task.

The Distress Call

As soon as anyone interacts with sensors or subspace radio, the distress call is picked up without a task.

Captain's Log, Supplemental: *The situation has quickly become more complicated, as we have received a distress call from one of our previous aggressors. I've gathered my senior staff to come up with options, but we must not forget about getting out of here before the Nebula swallows us all.*

The following can be learned about the shipwreck from close distance. If players go to point blank range, lower the difficulty by 1.

- **Reason + Conn Difficulty 1:** Impulse engines could take them there in 5 minutes spending 2 Power, but using thrusters would take several hours.
- **Reason + Engineering Difficulty 1:** Their ship appears to be without power except for the emergency beacon, not even life support. Momentum spends: They vented all the drive plasma, traces of this can still be seen surrounding their ship and the Warp core is inactive.
- **Control + Science Difficulty 2:** There are around 25 life signs aboard the ship.

The Rescue...?

There are three solid options to handle rescue, but players could come up with something unique. Be ready for anything!

- **Tractor Beam.** Warp Core needs to be online for players to have enough power to escape the system, and the tractor beam must be functional. These Tasks are covered above, so the main question is: can they get the job done in time?
- **Evacuate.** There might be too few shuttlecraft available to take on survivors – this could be an interesting role-playing challenge, and GM should resolve it without dice rolls if that fits your crew. If not, it is a **Presence + Command Task Difficulty 4** to stop the survivors from commandeering the shuttles to escape. If players fail, around 25 survivors start fighting the players and each other for a place in a shuttle.
- **Repair.** The repairs are simple enough since the ship is robust and the engineer released the drive plasma and saved it from exploding. The problem is that they need antimatter to restart the core and get anything done, as there is not even emergency power. If players bring fuel, no other Tasks are needed.

GM Guidance: "Captain, a moment please?"

If the player CO chooses to ignore the distress call and no player voices any objections, a bridge crew NPC will ask to talk in private. They will state that this action taken will be noted in the logs as a violation of Starfleet protocol, signed by several witnesses among the crew.

If the orders stand, several more crew members will later voice that they can't serve under such a cold commander, and request a transfer as soon as possible.

Scene 6B: Drama

Inform the players most systems are down, and they barely have time to make emergency repairs. In one hour the ship will be beyond saving. They need warp speed – ASAP.

GM Guidance: *As long as the advantage “It’s not as bad as it seems” is in play, the players can spend one momentum to re-roll any single die on the Tasks they perform.*

Let every player describe how they help out in the aftermath, and let them roll for a single Task against a common Timed Extended Task. This represents the general state of the ship, and their combined efforts to fix what’s broken. The Extended Task has no set combination of attributes and disciplines as it is up to the players to motivate how they contribute. All slack is picked up by NPCs in the crew.

They must find their inner miracle worker, but if they all start fixing the holodecks and coffee makers set a high difficulty as these actions do not contribute unless players know exactly what they’re doing. Half of the Tasks, rounding up, should have a difficulty as the **current Phenomenon Severity**. Magnitude equals number of players, and work track equals 5 plus 3 for every player.

Let players all roll for their tasks in any order they pick. Anyone failing the Task can succeed at a cost – they will be occupied with this activity the whole hour. Anyone succeeding can make another attempt if they do not have enough breakthroughs.

As a last resort, players can spend three Momentum or one Determination, provided that a Value applies, to make a last desperate attempt to succeed.

GM Guidance: *Focus on the roleplaying aspect, but remind them there is limited time. The aim for this scene is to feel like the end scene of **Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan** when Spock decides that the needs of the many outweighs the needs of the few and enters the irradiated chamber.*

The Distress Call

As soon as they get the first breakthrough, they receive a distress call from a disabled pirate ship.

Captain’s Log, Supplemental—The situation has quickly become more complicated, as we have received a distress call from one of our previous aggressors. I’ve gathered my senior staff to come up with options, but we must not forget about getting out of here before the Nebula swallows us all.

If players wish to mount a rescue mission, let them describe how they plan to go ahead. Remind them that most systems are still offline, so there are no easy ways to handle this. If they wish to mount a rescue, **the Extended Task will be reset** and they need to make new rolls now focusing on how to rescue the survivors.

They still need to complete the task in the time remaining to escape, and any characters that failed tasks can abort them to assist, but only to assist other characters.

GM Guidance: “Captain, a moment please?”

If the player CO chooses to ignore the distress call and no player voices any objections, a bridge crew NPC will ask to talk in private. They will state that this action taken will be noted in the logs as a violation of Starfleet protocol, signed by several witnesses among the crew.

If the orders stand, several more crew members will later voice that they can’t serve under such a cold commander, and request a transfer as soon as possible.

Resolution

Regardless of option picked, as soon as the warp core is back online the players can leave the system. Just before they do, sensors will pick up an unknown ship emerging from the Nebula.

It seems that cryptic matter does not affect the ship in the same way as the players’ ship. Allow them a final Task of scanning it if they want to. On a success they get just enough information to possibly identify the ship later. In case the Pirate vessel is left behind (with or without survivors), it is towed away to an uncertain fate.

GM Guidance: *This is a scout ship from one of the **Fathomless** factions, the **Mindful**. More can be read about them in the “Campaign Guide” and they will play a role in later episodes.*

*The crew suspects that the vessel might have newly formed **Fathomless** aboard, but as soon as they discover they do not, the pirates are released. This happens between adventures, and can later be learned from peaceful communications with the **Mindful**.*

End Credits

Episode 4 ends with the player ship jumping to warp, as the whole of the system is swallowed by the nebula.

In case players did not manage to escape, the cryptic matter dissolves the hull and bulkheads to the point of it breaking into pieces that is swallowed by the nebula. Perhaps the players will emerge as **Fathomless**, perhaps they are lost forever...

Changes

If characters have many setbacks and complications in the last scene they most likely barely manage to get out in time. Their ship gains the trait “Partly dissolved” until they have a proper spacedock service. They are limited in speed to Warp 4 and all repairs to Structure are at +1 Difficulty.

GM Guidance: *Through hardship comes understanding. If players either suffered greatly from, or actively tried to gain knowledge about **Cryptic Matter** in this episode they should be rewarded with a general broadened understanding, lowering the **Phenomenon Severity** by one.*

The decision is left to the GM to judge this, or if they gain “half a point” to be combined with future knowledge.

For Reputation, these influences will be added on top of those from the Core rules, p. 141.

- If players manage to get over 2 breakthroughs in the Microdinium challenge, the mission counts as a success. Less, and the Cavna will be hard pressed for resources to mass evacuate. Every breakthrough over 2 will therefore count as **one positive influence**.
- If the player captain orders guards to escort B off the bridge in scene 4, it counts as **one negative influence**.
- If players do not even try to save the Pirate survivors, this counts as **two negative influences**.
- If players save all the Pirate survivors, it counts as **one positive influence**.

Stat Blocks

NPCs

Pale-Orange-Circles

Knowledge only gets lighter the more you carry

BACKGROUND: As a medical expert, there is nothing Pale-Orange-Circles does not know about Microdinium or Cavna physiology. For a Deepbound, space travel is physically taxing and most of the time Pale-Orange-Circles will be resting in a pressurized water tank. He will never complain, but it is clear to anyone he can't be expected to physically be involved unless absolutely necessary. He will always be happy to talk over the intercom to any player character seeking contact, and can provide insight into the Cavna psychology, physiology, history etcetera.

Translucent-Blue-Ribbons (Major NPC)

Nothing will come between me and my mission

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL 10	FITNESS 11	PRESENCE 11
DARING 11	INSIGHT 09	REASON 08

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND 03	SECURITY 03	SCIENCE 00
CONN 01	ENGINEERING 00	MEDICINE 02

STRESS: 14 RESISTANCE: 0

WEAPONS:

- **Tentacle grappling:** Melee, 4▲, Knockdown, Size 1H

SPECIAL RULES:

- **Amphibian; Camouflage; Field of Vision; Tactile Telepathy**

BACKGROUND: The mission is everything to Translucent-Blue-Ribbons. She carries the burden of being a warrior in a war with no enemy to fight and no victory in sight. She still finds it hard to trust the Federation officers, as she is not used to anyone helping without an ulterior motive. As a result of this, she will constantly demand explanations about the how and why as the player characters take actions. If it was up to her, she would rather take command herself, and she'll always make her opinion heard to the player characters.

Captain Shilkas (Major NPC)

I will not be disrespected!

ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL 10	FITNESS 08	PRESENCE 11
DARING 08	INSIGHT 11	REASON 09

DISCIPLINES

COMMAND 03	SECURITY 01	SCIENCE 00
CONN 02	ENGINEERING 00	MEDICINE 01

STRESS: 9 RESISTANCE: 0

BACKGROUND: Shilkas is tired of being under the boot of "mightier captains" and tries to make a name for himself. He will gladly risk other lives than his own to gain the upper hand, but would rather ask you to join him than fight him. He's open to making a good deal, if presented with one. He and his crew are a mix of any lawless inclined species of your chosen setting, see Core rules p. 310 and forward.

Ships

Pirate scout ship

SYSTEMS

COMMS 08	ENGINES 08	STRUCTURE 08
COMPUTERS 07	SENSORS 09	WEAPONS 09

DEPARTMENTS

COMMAND 00	SECURITY 01	SCIENCE 00
CONN 01	ENGINEERING 01	MEDICINE 00

POWER: 13 SCALE: 3

SHIELDS: 9 RESISTANCE: 3

CREW: Somewhat Talented (Attribute 9, Discipline 3)

ATTACKS:

- **Plasma Cannon:** Energy, Range Close, 3▲, Persistent 1

SPECIAL RULES:

- **Redundant Systems:** Engines: see Core rules p. 256
- BACKGROUND:** Often used by independent traders, privateers and smugglers, these ships are not fancy but will get the job done.

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