

# A Dish Served Cold

## Fathomless Campaign Episode 10

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“Ah Kirk, my old friend. Do you know the Klingon proverb that tells us revenge is a dish that is best served cold? It is very cold in space.” — *Khan Noonien Singh*

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## Introduction

*A Dish Served Cold* is meant to be played by a Gamemaster (GM) and 3-8 players using the pre-generated characters. To run this adventure, the GM should be familiar with the adventure 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

After braving the extreme conditions of the cryptic matter nebula to discover a normal matter star system hidden within, the crew discovers its true purpose as a region where the Reshaped have activated a secret series of events designed to capture and Oscura.

During their exploration of the nebula, the crew uncovered a super weapon designed to create a coronal mass ejection that would extinguish all life in an inhabited normal matter system. At the same time, dozens of satellites that were hidden in spatial folds appeared in orbit around the planet and used W-Particles to trap an Oscuran and pull it into 4d space.

Once the Oscuran was captured, the Reshaped revealed themselves as the masterminds of these events, determined to find out the Oscurans have been experimenting on them while also using them to create a pocket of cryptic matter, which would allow them to explore normal space.

When this adventure begins, the Oscuran has already taken its vengeance out on a number of Fathomless vessels. The Starfleet vessel comes to the rescue of the survivors. In one case in particular, radiation from the engine core is preventing them from beaming survivors out, so they need to take a shuttle, putting themselves at risk.

Tracing the trajectory of the Oscuran, they see that it is headed straight for the Cavna home world. The Oscuran is so far removed from the normal universe that it does not comprehend that the Cavna and the Fathomless are not the same beings. Unfortunately, the Oscuran is too far out ahead for them to catch up with it, even at maximum warp. The Fathomless tell them about a relic that might be able to help: a space catapult that was built by an unknown alien species centuries ago. The characters will need to go to it and restore it to working condition. Once the device is operational, they set it to propel them to the Cavna home world, and they arrive just ahead of the Oscuran.

When it arrives, the Oscuran begins attacking the Cavna vessels near the homeworld. They request assistance from the Starfleet vessel. During this time, the vessel can try to defend them by taking aggressive action, or they can try to take more peaceful measures. All the while, they work on a way to communicate with the Oscuran. Once they do so, they have to roleplay the diplomacy, but the ultimate goal is to get it to understand that it has been experimenting upon intelligent, advanced beings, that attacking the Cavna does not bring vengeance upon the Fathomless, and that it should stand down and stop experimenting on creatures that wind up in the nebula.

## Directives

In addition to the Prime Directive, the Directives for this mission are:

- Aid the Fathomless survivors following the Oscuran attack.
- Protect the Cavna homeworld.
- Establish communication with the Oscuran and attempt to end the conflict peacefully.

# Scene 1: Aftermath

Start this adventure with 3 Threat per player, as it is the dangerous campaign finale. Make it as exciting as possible for the players.

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

**Captain's Log:** The Reshaped attempt to capture an Oscuran has led to tragic results as the being has taken its vengeance out upon several Fathomless vessels, most of which had nothing to do with the aggressive act. There's little we can do but render assistance to the disabled vessels. At this point, we still have no idea why the Oscurans experiment on the Reshaped, nor do we know if it is even possible to establish communication with the being in order to bring this conflict to a peaceful conclusion.

There are a total of six Fathomless ships that have been severely damaged by the Oscuran as it traveled out of the nebula. These ships are all in critical condition with life support offline, engines that no longer function, or other damaged systems that cannot be repaired with the resources they have available. While the Fathomless are capable of restoring these ships themselves over time, they lack the resources to mount a proper rescue of all the affected ship's crews before a large number of lives would be lost. The ships are of various sizes and crew compliments. In most cases, the crew can simply be beamed to the character's ship, however, there are a few situations that prove more difficult.

These ships belong mostly to the Fathomless in general, and not the Reshaped faction in particular. This is indicative of a basic lack of understanding of the 4-D universe on the part of the Oscuran.

Depending on the size of the character's ship, they may quickly find themselves overrun with Fathomless crewmembers. They can modify cargo bays to act as emergency housing, convert lounges, and assign empty crew quarters to hold the Fathomless for the short term. For their part, the Fathomless are grateful for the assistance and are respectful guests. The Fathomless are able to help the science crew import the correct amount of cryptic matter into these spaces to make them livable. Characters need to wear EV suits to enter these areas of the ship.

In short order following their arrival aboard the ship, the Fathomless choose a representative in the form of Dintel (an honorific roughly translating to Council Member) S'Tarra. Aboard the starship she had been assigned to, she acted as a liaison between the command crew and the non-commissioned maintenance workers. As such, she is uniquely suited to represent the needs of the Fathomless in a diplomatic manner that most Federation officers appreciate. Any requests made of the Fathomless aboard, either pertaining to their living conditions or their mission, must pass through her first, and she has the power to reject any requests without further consultations with her people.

The following specific rescue missions can be run in any order. Unlike the other three ships, none of these can be handled by simply beaming survivors to the character's ship.

## Core Breach on the *Rentagna*

The *Rentagna* is a mid-size Fathomless transport that is primarily designed to haul passengers from one location to another. When the character's starship nears them, a scan indicates that the reactor core is in danger of going critical. Should the reactor blow, not only would the Fathomless vessel be destroyed with all hands lost, but the shock wave would cause severe damage to the character's ship, even if shields are up. Making matters worse, the Oscuran hit the ship's engineering section hard, killing their chief engineer, and the hull breach rendering the remainder of that department unconscious.

When the characters arrive at the ship, they find their communication systems operational, though the vessel's captain is panicked. He is more than happy to allow Starfleet officers aboard his ship in an attempt to head off the impending disaster. When the characters arrive, they find that reactor containment is below twenty percent and the safety mechanisms that would allow them to eject the core into space is offline.

Players may roll **Daring + Engineering at Difficulty 3**. If successful, they gain the first point of information below, and may spend 1 Momentum to further Obtain Information:

- The containment controls and the reactor itself are damaged. This will make it especially difficult to interface with the reactor.
- Beaming aboard the ship is safe, though the Engineering section is exposed to the vacuum of space and requires characters to wear EV suits.

Stopping the reactor core from breaching requires an **Extended Task** that has a Difficulty of 2, a Work track of 10, a Magnitude of 3, and a Resistance of 1. Characters must succeed at **Control** or **Daring + Engineering** to restore the function of the controls and safely turn off the reactor. But they only have 3 minutes before the core breaches.

### EXTENDED TASK

**DIFFICULTY 02**

**MAGNITUDE 03**

**RESISTANCE 01**

**WORK TRACK 10**

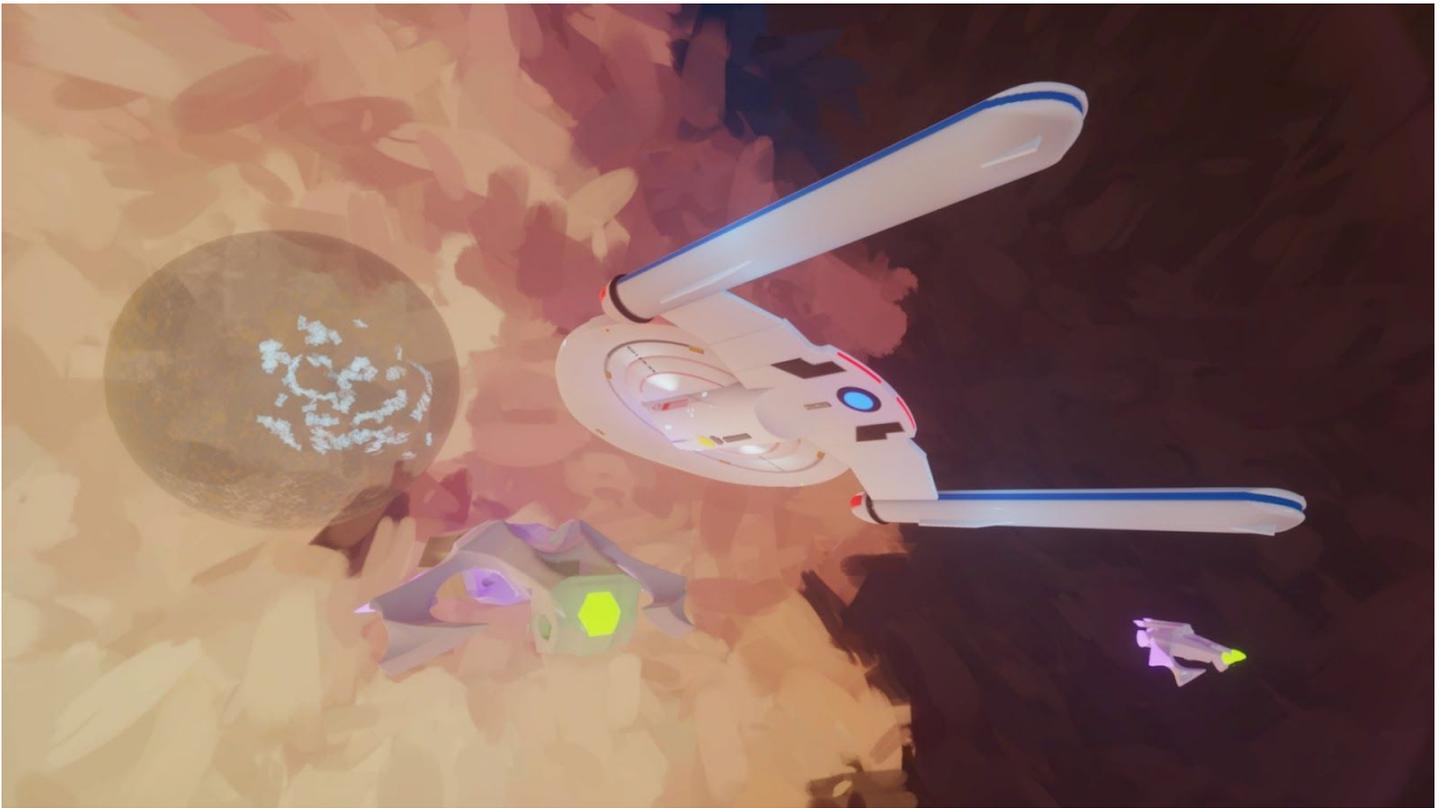
**TIME INTERVAL**

**1 minute**

If successful, the ship is still adrift, but it is not a danger to any other nearby ships. There are 137 crewmembers aboard the ship. If the characters fail the Extended Task, the core breaches, resulting in a massive explosion and a shockwave in an area effect that deals 5▲ of damage to ships in Close range. Allow them a chance to get to an escape pod (use the stats for a standard shuttle), but the escape pod will be damaged by the explosion.

## *Rot'Anjer* Partially Phased

Damage to the *Rot'Anjer* has caused the ship to be infused with an unusual mixture of normal and cryptic matter, resulting in the ship itself becoming partially phased. While this situation is stable for the short-term due to the current mixture of gasses and cryptic matter in the surrounding nebula, once the ship moves into an area where the mixture or cryptic matter and nebula gasses are balanced differently, the ship is doomed to explode after all of its critical systems fail.



Sensors indicate that the ship exists equally in normal space and subspace. Its communication equipment is operating fully in subspace, so contacting them is impossible. In order to bring the ship back into space that is “normal” for the nebula, the characters must create an artificial gateway bridging subspace and normal space. Figuring this out requires a **Difficulty 3 Reason + Science** Task, and may be assisted by the ship’s **Computers + Science**. Setting up the artificial gateway is best achieved by channeling a tachyon surge through the deflector dish in front of the Fathomless vessel. This will take 30 minutes. Once they do so, the ship once again exists in regular space, and 85 crew members can be beamed aboard.

## Radiation Leak on the T’Karva

The *T’Karva* is a medium sized military vessel with 256 crewmembers surviving. These are biological followers of the Fathomless who have not been converted, and thus remain susceptible to physical harm. The ship’s propulsion system was severely damaged by the Oscuran attack, causing the ship to become flooded with radiation. The crew was forced to withdraw to the central portion of the ship in a large safe area protected by shielding and heavy bulkheads. Because of these conditions, beaming out the survivors would be completely impossible.

Despite the inability of the transporters to beam the survivors out of the ship, sensors can clearly detect all of the life signs, as well as the radiation.

The only way to save the survivors of the *T’Karva* is to take one or more smaller craft over to the ship, dock with it, and then cut their way through the hull and the closed bulkheads to the central chambers with plasma torches.

To prepare enough radiation inoculations for the ship’s crew, before they leave for the ship, the crew must succeed at a

**Difficulty 3 Daring + Medicine** Task, assisted by the ship’s **Communications + Medicine**. They may Succeed at Cost, but gain a Disadvantage of *Not Enough For Everyone*. See below for consequences.

The number of bulkheads that need to be bypassed is up to the GMs discretion, but in order to keep the game both challenging and interesting, it should be no less than three and no more than seven. Cutting safely through each bulkhead requires a successful **Difficulty 2 Daring + Engineering** Task. Failure results in a structural collapse around the character performing the cutting, causing 3▲ of damage. In addition to this, the GM may spend one Threat, causing either a collapse, or the discharge of her choice of energy from cutting through the wrong section of the ship. Either of these situations also result in 3▲ of damage.

Once the characters arrive at the central portion of the ship where the survivors are hiding, the survivors are exposed to high doses of radiation. If the characters had prepared with enough Hyronaline inoculations, they may now administer the inoculations. If they had Succeeded at Cost and gained the Disadvantage *Not Enough For Everyone*, they must now succeed at a **Difficulty 3 Daring + Medicine**, assisted by **Daring + Command**, to organize an evacuation that saves everyone. For each Complication rolled, 1d20 crew members die. If the Task fails, 3d20 of the crew die. In any case, the survivors can be escorted to the shuttles and taken back to the character’s ship.

## Scene 2: Space Catapult

Once all the survivors from the Fathomless ships have been saved, the characters are free to turn their attention to the Oscuran. Unfortunately, it was not content to turn its ire upon those who had drawn it out into normal space. Instead, it is now moving at full speed toward the Cavna homeworld. At this point in time, its motivations remain unknown. What is known

is that judging by the damage it was able to do to the Fathomless ships, it has the potential to deal devastating damage to the Cavna.

With the amount of time the characters had to spend saving the crews of the Fathomless, there is now no way for them to catch up to the Oscuran before it reaches the Cavna homeworld. S'Tarra suggests that the characters Task out a nearby artifact in the nebula that was discovered a few decades ago. Their scientists studied it and came to the conclusion that it is what remains of a space catapult. This technology uses a graviton surge to launch a spacecraft through null space, allowing it to emerge at predetermined coordinates, and it makes this trip much faster than any other known forms of travel (with the possible exception of slipstream, which remains unknown to the Federation until after the *U.S.S. Voyager* returns from the Delta Quadrant in 2387). Due to the fact that the Unfathomable cannot survive outside of the nebula, they never attempted to activate it, though the journals on it suggest that it was in relatively good shape. S'Tarra reasons that this is the only likely way that the characters might be able to reach the Cavna homeworld before the Oscuran arrives.

## Approaching the Space Catapult

When the characters near the catapult, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

As you approach the space catapult, the screen reveals what looks like a small space station attached to a rectangular framework with cylindrical emitters placed at even intervals along it. It appears to be completely powered down, and a thick coat of dust covers all of the exterior surfaces.

In order to use the space catapult, the characters need to enter the station, power it up, and activate the graviton generator. Once this is accomplished, they can program in any destination within twenty-five light years and the catapult delivers them to that location within an hour.

Entering the station is accomplished easily enough. The characters can either beam over, or they can go over in a shuttlecraft. If they choose the latter, they need to find a safe place to land and then set up an umbilicus to the airlock. This requires a **Difficulty 2 Control + Conn** Task to land the craft safely, and then a **Difficulty 2 Control** or **Daring + Engineering** Task to establish the umbilicus.

Once they have entered the station, they find no signs of whoever originally built it. There are no bodies of deceased residents, no personal belongings. There aren't even any traces of alien DNA left behind. It is as though whoever built it wanted there to be no traces left over for others to find.

Restoring power to the station requires the characters to replace the main capacitor, as well as the dilithium crystals in the reactor chamber. This requires an Extended Task with a Difficulty of 3, a Work Track of 14, a Magnitude of 3, and a Resistance of 2. Characters must succeed at **Control + Engineering** to replace the capacitor and turn on the reactor.

### EXTENDED TASK

**DIFFICULTY 03**

**MAGNITUDE 02**

**RESISTANCE 02**

**WORK TRACK 14**

**TIME INTERVAL**

**30 minutes**

Once the reactor is activated, the station computers and life support systems kick on. When this happens, the characters may make a **Reason + Engineering** Task with a **Difficulty** of 2 to access the main computers. Doing so gives them the ability to turn on the graviton generator. In addition to this, it also grants them access to the station logs, and it awakens the security automatons, which immediately move to attack (see stats under NPCs at the end of the adventure). There is one security automaton per character. When they attack, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The power to the station is restored. As this happens, the lights come on and you hear the sound of long-inactive machinery kick on as they begin filtering the air and providing heat to the station. But that's not all you hear. There are things moving toward you... mechanical things that are metallic and walk on four legs, much like a dog. It has a solid enough looking body, but instead of a head, it has a tiny sensor array, as well as two-side mounted cylinders that have a menacing look to them, much like vehicle-mounted disruptors.

If this encounter proved easy for the characters, have another group of automatons attack them before they leave the station.

Once the characters have dealt with the security automatons, they may look for clues in the computer system indicating who might have built the space catapult (**Reason + Science or Engineering**, Difficulty 2). Simply searching through the available material reveals the following:

- This station was constructed roughly 1,500 years ago by a humanoid alien race calling itself the Dra'ilm.
- The station was created so that Dra'ilm refugees could escape the oncoming Magna Oscura Nebula.
- This race (its DNA, its name, and its appearance) has never been catalogued by the Federation.

The characters may spend one Momentum each to learn the following:

- The Dra'ilm were able to launch twelve spacecraft using the catapult. Their destination was deep in the Shackleton Expanse (possibly beyond). Everyone else from that world was caught up in the Nebula, and likely either perished or became the Unfathomed.
- After heading for the Shackleton Expanse, the station received a subspace communication indicating that the Dra'ilm had encountered a hostile species and that they were looking for a place to hide. There were no further communications from them after that and the station went offline two and a half years later.

With the power restored and the graviton generator active, the characters can set a course to the Cavna's homeworld from here, or they can transfer station control to the ship's computers. In either case, to set a course, they must succeed at a **Difficulty 3 Control + Science** Task to program the catapult correctly.

## Scene 3: Making Contact

The Oscuran is not far behind when the characters arrive at the Cavna's homeworld. When it arrives, it begins attacking their planetary defenses, as well as any other ships that happen to be in the planet's orbit. The Cavna are essentially

sitting ducks and not up to the challenge of defending against the Oscuran, so it is not necessary to run a massive space combat to run this scene. Ultimately, the role of the characters is to attempt to protect the Cavna, and to communicate with the Oscuran in an effort to end its hostile actions without being forced to destroy it.

Before proceeding, read the following or pass it to the player acting as the ship's captain:

**Captain's Log**— We have repaired the space catapult and sent ourselves hurtling through null space toward the Cavna homeworld, which is most likely about to be attacked by the Oscuran. We still know nothing about the Oscurans motives... why they reshape beings and perform experiments on them. Nor do we even know how to communicate with these creatures. With luck, they can be reasoned with, but first we must protect the Cavna from its wrath.

## Protecting the Cavna

The easiest way for the characters to protect the starships and stations native to this world is to distract the Oscuran when it moves to attack the Cavna. Unlike the Cavna and the Reshaped, Federation vessels pose a threat to the spacefaring creature. The strong shields protect them when the Cavna attacks, and both phasers and photon torpedoes are capable of causing real injury. Attacking draws the creature off the attack.

Federation officers must keep in mind that it is their duty as explorers, and conscientious members of the galaxy to not kill indiscriminately. Their starship might be able to end this creature's life, but doing so without attempting to communicate with it would be counter to Starfleet's mission. To that end, the characters should try using non-lethal attacks against it.

## Communicating with the Oscuran

One of the keys to communicating with the Oscuran is understanding its very alien point of view. The Oscurans created the nebula as a means of exploring four-dimensional space. They did this by shunting cryptic matter into this universe, and they control its movement. As an enormous spaceborne creature, it doesn't even have a clear understanding of the differences between one humanoid shaped alien and another. They are, to them, like different species within the same animal family. The Oscuran is not unlike a person who has been stung by a wasp, so it is now angry toward all wasps, hornets, and bees, even though the one that actually hurt it is already dead.

The Oscuran looks at starships as nothing more than interesting tools, much the way people view New Caledonian Crows, which fashion sticks into hooked tools to extract grubs from small holes in wood. They don't believe that humanoid aliens are truly sentient, because they have never been able to communicate with them. If communication is established with them and they learn that the experimentation they have been doing is not wanted, and in fact harms the creatures on a profound level, they are willing to listen.

The Oscuran communicates through subspace vibrations. Characters can detect this by making a successful **Reason + Science** Task, assisted by the ship's **Sensors + Science**,

against a **Difficulty** of **3**. Once they have established its mode of communication, the universal translator does the rest, though it must monitor the Oscuran for an additional five minutes (5 rounds), during which time the creature continues to engage in combat with the character's ship and the Cavna.

During the five rounds, the Oscuran will attack the Cavna planet unless the player's ship imposes itself between the planet and the Oscuran. If that happens, the Oscuran will attack the starship, which must withstand its assault until communication is established.

Once communication is established, the Oscuran is at first puzzled, trying to understand who is speaking to it, not fully understanding that these miniscule and insignificant creatures are capable of this manner of thought and complexity. In short order, it does realize who and how it is being communicated with. From there, its mode of speech is highly based on concept and symbol as opposed to straightforward communication. For example, rather than address humanoids by species, of simply "you," it refers to them as "upright walking carbon life forms." For this reason, conveying to them that the creatures it has been modifying are equal to it may prove to be a difficult concept.

Once the characters have made contact with the Oscuran, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The massive space-borne creature on the viewscreen breaks off from its current trajectory and turns to face the fore of your starship. It emits a hail using the same subspace vibration you programmed the ship to emit to establish communication with the creature. Upon answering the hail, the viewscreen shifts and you see what appears to be a pulsing enormous red gem behind what looks like wavering distortion and blurriness on the screen. "Upright walking carbon life forms, Your utterance is heard. Elucidate your context."

Despite the odd word choices, the Oscuran is asking for the characters to explain themselves. Everything about them, from the appearance they project to their word choice is unintentionally enigmatic, and is the result of their separation from this reality. Whichever player is taking the lead in trying to reason with it should be encouraged to carefully choose what she is saying. Provided that she does an adequate job making an attempt to plead the case of the Cavna, she must then succeed at a **Control** or **Presence + Command** Task with a **Difficulty** of **4**. Obviously this is a difficult roll, and characters should spend Momentum, receive aid from one other character, and take any other steps to increase their odds of success. Likewise, the Gamemaster should use Threat to increase the Difficulty, as this is the most important Task remaining.

If the Task is successful, the Oscuran realizes that it has underestimated the level of complexity and the value of the beings it has been changing into Fathomless. It uses the Fathomless as dimensional anchors, but it leaves the shells of those beings behind because instead of pulling the Oscurans toward 4D space, it pulls the Fathomless to their universe. The Oscuran makes it clear that it changes the form of those caught in the nebula and conducts experiments upon them so that they might use them as a means to vicariously explore four-dimensional space. It apologizes for the things it and its kind have done, and it promises to ban such experimentation. The Oscuran then leaves the Cavna homeworld and heads back to the nebula.

If the Task fails, the Oscuran looks at the attempt to communicate as a neat trick performed by a lower life form. It then continues its attack on the Cavna. The characters may make another attempt to persuade it, but the Task is now

**Difficulty 5.** If the second Task fails then the Oscuran cannot be reasoned with, and the characters can either choose to engage it with the intent to destroy it, or allow it to decimate the Cavna.

## Concluding the Adventure and Campaign

Assuming that the characters successfully communicate with the Oscuran and stop its attack against the Cavna, it conveys what it has learned to its fellow Oscurans. Days later, a humanoid ambassador that was crafted from one of the Reshaped appears. The ambassador's name is A'actu, and is genderless. It has a more direct manner of speaking, which the Oscuran learned after studying its interactions with the characters. A'actu has a direct mental link with the Oscurans, so any diplomatic requests are considered and addressed immediately and accurately.

With the situation defused, at least for the time being, there is still the matter of the nebula, which will swallow the Cavna homeworld. When this occurs, the Oscurans will create a bubble around it protecting it from the cryptic matter, and the natural forces that change anyone caught within it without appropriate shielding. At this point, the Cavna and the Fathomless will need to be able to coexist within proximity to one another. There will be diplomatic matters to attend to, and they might even find themselves in conflict with one another due to competition for limited resources within the nebula. The characters may be called in again to help broker treaties or intervene in conflicts. The characters may even be able to persuade them to work together for their common good.

## Stat Blocks

### Security Automatons (Notable NPCs)

#### ATTRIBUTES

CONTROL 08	FITNESS 09	PRESENCE 07
DARING 09	INSIGHT 05	REASON 07

#### DISCIPLINES

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

STRESS: 11

RESISTANCE: 1

FOCUSES: Combat Tactics

WEAPONS:

- **Disruptor Beam:** Ranged, 5▲, Intense, Vicious 1, 2H, Debilitating

### Oscuran (Major NPC)

#### ATTRIBUTES

COMMS 06	ENGINES 08	STRUCTURE 14
COMPUTERS 04	SENSORS 08	WEAPONS 10

#### DISCIPLINES

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

SCALE: 4

RESISTANCE: 5

POWER: 8

SHIELDS: 14

WEAPONS:

- **Unarmed Strike:** Melee, 8▲, Size 1H, Knockdown, Nonlethal
- **Cryptic Matter Beam:** Range M, 8▲, Piercing 3, Vicious 1

This is the default Scale 4 Oscuran. If you anticipate a more challenging finale, use the Colossal Oscuran stats in the Campaign Guide. Oscurans are entities without normal space-time limits, so may grow in size without second thought. This could be a scary surprise for the players.