

Thrown Stones

Suggested Era of Play: The Next Generation era

Suggested Spotlight Role: Conn and Engineering Officers

Synopsis

The Barzan II wormhole's Barzan end, still stable near the Barzan homeworld, expels a swath of colliding asteroids, rubble, electrokinetically charged particulates, and detritus from somewhere in the Delta Quadrant during one of its periods of activity, striking and destroying the Chysalian science vessel studying this side of the wormhole. The player's starship originally receives the Chysalian distress call, rescues Chysalian escape pods from within the colliding asteroids, and thereafter receive an urgent call from Barzan II itself: multiple asteroids of varying sizes are now on an intercept course with Barzan II's orbit, and will begin striking the planet in three days to disastrous results. Unfortunately, even solving that problem becomes more complicated by an unexpected First Contact with aliens from the Delta Quadrant—and their prisoners.

Opening Log Entry

We've received a distress call from a Chysalian Science vessel studying the still-stable Barzan end of the Barzan II wormhole. Long range sensors are showing what appears to be an electrokinetic event of some kind, though the source is unclear. We haven't been able to re-establish contact with the Chysalian ship.

Major Beats

- **One Rescue, Followed by Imminent Disaster**—The ship warps to the Barzan only to have to immediately dodge dozens of large asteroids, deal with sensor-and transporter-scattering gallicite particulates, all having come through the Barzan wormhole from somewhere else in the galaxy (the Delta Quadrant), and creating an ongoing electrokinetic effect among the metal-rich asteroids. They'll need quick and precise flying to recover the Chysalian escape pods before they're destroyed by the various impacts of asteroids or electrokinetic discharges. Once the rescue is accomplished, a distress call from Barzan II alerts the ship that many of the asteroids are on an intercept course toward Barzan II itself. As the only ship within range to destroy, deflect, course-correct, or otherwise deal with these asteroids, the crew must come up with plans to deal with the problem. While the smallest asteroids can be destroyed and the courses of some of the medium-sized rocks can be adjusted with a tractor beam and careful physics, two are too large for either solution, and need to be dealt with sooner, rather than later, to avoid devastating impacts on Barzan II. The most likely solution is to set up fusion engines on the surface of the asteroids to adjust their course.
- **A New Problem**—Unfortunately, when the crew attempt to put their plan into play, sensors reveal a damaged structure on the surface of the largest asteroid, with a half-dozen survivors and what appears to be some sort of partial excavation of the interior of the asteroid itself. Rescue parties must first navigate first contact with battered and injured survivors on the surface station (who believe they've been attacked), and then learn the half-dozen injured on the surface station aren't the only lifesigns on the asteroid: there are

roughly three hundred humanoids deep within the gallicite-rich asteroid itself, and their life support is failing. The survivors on the station dismiss any action to help the three hundred others, however, revealing the asteroid is a prison, and the lifesigns belong to prisoners.

- **No Crime, Only Punishment**—The jailers aren't lying, but they aren't telling the whole truth: the prisoners aren't violent criminals, they're telepaths (the majority of them Brenari), and this is a detention centre is run by the xenophobic anti-telepathic Devore Imperium, of which the guards are lower-ranked members. The wormhole's erratic other terminus means the crew has no way to return the jailers—or their prisoners—to their homes in the Delta Quadrant, so the players will need to come up with a solution for the telepathic prisoners (evacuation, or stabilizing life support), the large asteroid's trajectory (the hollowed out sections of the asteroid used as a jail change the physics involved, as well as make using a fusion engine to course-correct more dangerous if it over-stresses the rock's structure), and perhaps even the displaced Devore jailers (who will not react well to telepathic crew and whole-heartedly believe it's right to imprison telepaths).

Minor Beats

Barzan II is a resource-poor planet and the gallicite-heavy asteroids offer potentially useful mining, and if the players put those asteroids into a stable orbit rather than destroying or flinging them away from Barzan II, it could be a major help to the Barzan people. Telepathic crew might pick up on the thoughts of the prisoners, even through the telepathic dampening cells of the detention centre. Course-correcting the largest two asteroids has to be done before it's too late, and should be an Extended Task with "ticking clock" pressure for the crew, every moment spent dealing with the Devore jailers and helping or evacuating the Brenari prisoners should eat into that time.

Key Non-Player Characters

The telepathic prisoners could be represented using any Betazoid NPCs, while Devore Officers and one Devore Mindhunter are listed in the Delta Quadrant Sourcebook. Chrysalian survivors can be any scientist based NPC. Consider making Chrysalians a telepathic race if no crew members are telepaths, to up the conflict with the Devore jailers in a Sickbay scene when both are present and being treated and the Devore realize there are telepaths in their midst.

Conclusion

Once the science and engineering officers have dealt with the asteroids, things will turn to the diplomatic. Do the players help the Brenari prisoners negotiate refugee status with the Federation? What happens to the Devore jailers? Technically, Starfleet has no official jurisdiction over the Devore, their jail, or the Brenari, though since the crew were invited by the Barzan II's request for help they do have some latitude, and jailing the Brenari on the basis of their inborn telepathic powers goes against everything the Federation stands for.

Adding this Mission to Your Campaign

Any planet could be threatened by an unstable wormhole at any time, so dropping this adventure into any other time period or location is as simple as sensors picking up the formation of a wormhole with one end in a dense asteroid belt and the other close enough to a planet to

threaten it with multiple devastating impacts. You could even add a ticking-clock element for getting the Devore home before the wormhole collapses.