

Chapter Three: The Strange Secret of Dr. Quisling

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Inspired by a concept by Bob Wilkins

This adventure picks up where "Slave Ship of Despair" leaves off, though it can easily be adapted to fit independently.

In this adventure, the Scientist and Hydronaut Hybrid archetypes would prove especially useful.

SEQUENCE ZERO: GET READY

0.1 ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The crew land in Calgary (Alberta, Canada - sometimes referred to as the Northern Hydronaut Occupation Zone) with information for the human Resistance fighters. What they don't know is that one of the party members has a doppelganger in the area (Dr. Quisling) whom is a foe of the Resistance. If the PCs can smooth over the tense situation and convince the resistance liaison that they are good guys, the resistance will ask the PCs to use their unique position to help sabotage a local hydronaut operation. Rebels apprehended by the hydronauts are pitted against the horrific moon-beast in the gladiator arena.

0.2 PREPARATION

The ZM must decide ahead of time which PC will be the doppelganger of Dr Quisling. In a best-case scenario, one of the players will have chosen the Scientist or Captain archetype. Really, anyone who is human and a SpaceCorp officer will do nicely. If none of the characters are human, there is a problem, but not insurmountable - the adventure will simply be a bit more surreal.

ZMs who change the city from Calgary to another city of their choice should not have any problems. For authenticity you may want to find an actual lake nearby your city to replace Ghost Lake.

0.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The crew of SSZ has a data tape that holds information on Project: Smokescreen, a plan being developed by agents of HUMAN (Human Underground Movement Action Network) on Mars (although that origin is not entirely clear in the tape's information). Project: Smokescreen is a device that scrambles hydronaut scanners. The tape came with instructions to take it to Lefty Wainwright at the Lucky Canuck Grill in Calgary (or the location of your choice).

Give the following text to the players as a handout:

It's the third day of my journey and while I realize the importance of my mission I can't help feeling that I won't be coming back from it. Dutch used to tell me that he thought every mission was a suicide mission and that the important thing was never to let your men know you thought this way.

This time it's different. It isn't just the fact that the fate of the resistance and hence the entire species hangs in the balance. I've been there before and I've always come back, always won, but it's always cost me. Last time it was Angela, the time before it was an entire ship of good men. Sometimes I wonder if it was worth the price. If it ever is.

Still this time it's different, there's no backup, no companions, no SpaceCorp rocketships ready to pull my ass back from a re-entry plunge. I wish it was so, but I won't lose another friend or shipmate again. So here I am crammed into the smuggling hold of a Pirate vessel. Outside I can hear the frogs cracking open crate after crate. They know I'm here. Why else would they be scouring the belt for this ship, at this time? I can't believe we trusted Captain Malcolm. I can't believe I

trusted him.

Now there's barely enough time to scrawl this note and hide the package before they find me. With luck I can make a break for an escape pod or something. I've been in tighter scrapes than this and a bit of spaceman's luck has always got me through before. But I can't shake the feeling this time is different.

If you've found this it means I didn't make it. If you value Earth take the package to the Lucky Canuck Grill in the ruins of Calgary, Alberta and ask for Lefty Wainwright. You'll need the secret pass phrase which I have coded below. Don't forget it because he won't ask twice and he WILL gun you down where you stand if you flub it. Good luck!

BSFZPVIVNBO

You may want to review the section on the underground resistance in the Spaceship Zero rulebook, pp 105-107.

SEQUENCE ONE: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

1.0 TOUCHDOWN

It's important to note that no matter where the PCs go, they'll want to keep Spaceship Zero out of sight when they're not using it. How they go about this is entirely up to the players. They've got all of a devastated Calgary and surrounding area to work with (there are not a lot of trees in the area). They may find the shell of an old building or even some especially fat empty grain silos that could house the ship.

ZM AID: Maps of Calgary can be found online at
<http://www.tourismcalgary.com/travel/maps.html>

And here's a pretty cool map of the

University of Calgary.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/map/map_big.html

If the PCs don't attempt to hide the ship, members of the resistance will seek them out immediately and try to convince them to get the ship out of sight before hydronauts arrive. The easiest way to accomplish this is via a radio transmission from a local cadre of resistance members using a known SpaceCorp frequency reserved for dire emergencies. Resistance members and always use code names.

The actual resistance headquarters are at an old SpaceCorp air strip and radar station northwest of the city, although the PCs will not be privy to this information for some time.

Strolling about in SpaceCorp uniforms may not be the wisest course of action, as anyone who makes a Streetwise skill check will know, unless the PCs *wish* to draw attention to themselves.

1.1 FINDING THE LUCKY CANUCK GRILL

Once the crew has decided where to land and what, if anything, to do with the ship, they will have to try to locate the Lucky Canuck Grill. Asking directions of the locals will require a successful Persuade skill check (Bargain, Charm, or Intimidate) with the following modifiers:

Hybrid in the party -30 to Charm or Bargain Slave Girl in the party +20

Party is all human (or with only cats & dogs) +20

Other circumstance modifiers can be added as the ZM sees fit. The skill check can be attempted as many times as there are humans to approach in the street. Blundered skill checks result in misinformation. If Dr Quisling's doppelganger is with the party, and the locals who are being questioned recognize him as Dr. Quisling, they will either appear panicked and be of no help, or they will try to remain unphased and deliberately give incorrect directions. A successful Psychology or Streetwise skill check will uncover a misdirection ploy on the part of the locals.

Obviously not every single human in town

knows Dr. Quisling. Many Calgarians not affiliated with SNAFFU (Secret North American Freedom Fighters Union) would just as soon kill the PCs and take their stuff as help them. Poor diplomacy in this regard may result in Action Time! Keep in mind that a great many of the townsfolk will not want to attack the person they believe is Dr. Quisling. Most Calgarians are cowed and beaten savages who would rather avoid being shot, but there is always one guy with a chip on his shoulder and a pointy rock behind his back. In the unlikely event that a PC is knocked out or captured (or worse, mortally wounded), he may wake up under the care of a SNAFFU agent, though he/she may not know it at first.

Once the PCs have useful directions, they will still have to follow them. There is no abundance of street signs in post-invasion Earth so this can be difficult. Somebody will have to make a successful Navigate: Surface skill check. Naturally anyone who wants to assist can do so, and if the PCs were particularly diplomatic when they asked for directions you may give a +20 bonus. Failing this skill check simply means the party becomes lost and will have to ask for directions again. The closer they are to the Lucky Canuck, the simpler the directions will become (meaning more bonuses will apply the second and third time the party gets directions).

This is a perfect opportunity to introduce a plucky street urchin or humorous 'guide' that you can use as a dynamic element to assist or annoy the PCs.

The Lucky Canuck grill is housed in a three story building with an unremarkable façade. There is no business sign. It is located across from an old waterpark and there is a fire hydrant in front of the building. If you like, call for a Streetwise skill check to find the building, given its unremarkable presence. If everyone in the party is allowed a Streetwise check there shouldn't be a problem identifying the establishment.

1.2 DELIVERING THE PLANS

Lefty Wainwright has been dead for decades. Anyone asking after him will be told this rather matter-of-factly. He was killed by the hydronauts during a routine inspection. The liaison to the resistance now is Lieutenant Hannibal Hogan.

Hannibal Hogan

SNAFFU Liaison & Community Leader

BODY: 160
BRAWN 12
BRAINS 12
BALANCE 10
BRAVADO 14
Move Rate: 24
Initiative Bonus: 0

Skills: Backbone 40, Fisticuffs 40, Endure 40, Heave 35, Listen 50, Persuade Bargain 35, Persuade: Bluff 35, Persuade: Leadership 35, Pilot: Land 50, Psychology 40, See 40, Sneak 40, Streetwise 60, Throw 40, Weapon: Ray Gun 35.

Quirks: Wears a lucky baseball cap of his favourite old world sports team; always chewing on something (tobacco isn't always available); thalassophobic (afraid of the ocean)

Hogan is not the leader of SNAFFU, he is just a contact in the city. The leader of SNAFFU is actually Leonard Dubranski (more info on p107 of the rulebook) but the heroes should not encounter Dubranski until the end of the scenario (Sequence Five).

Upon entering the Lucky Canuck, PCs will be greeted warmly unless the humans see Dr. Quisling's doppelganger. Seeing whom they take to be Quisling with a bunch of SpaceCorp officers doesn't make any sense to SNAFFU members, but they will take advantage of any situation in which they can capture the man/woman they take to be Quisling.

Almost everyone in the bar has a hidden gun. Some have ray guns, others have old world automatic pistols etc. Hogan and company will try to take the entire PC group captive. Give the players an opportunity to be diplomatic. Resistance by violence will quickly result in a good old-fashioned bar fight.

Typical SNAFFU soldier

BODY: 155

BRAWN 11
BRAINS 11
BALANCE 11
BRAVADO 10
Move Rate: 22
Initiative Bonus: 0

Skills: Backbone 35, Fisticuffs 40, Endure 35, Heave 40, Listen 30, Persuade: Bluff 30, Persuade: Leadership 30, Pilot: Land 40, Psychology 30, See 30, Sneak 30, Streetwise 50, Throw 40, Weapon: Ray Gun 30.

If the PCs don't immediately start shooting up the place, each character can make a Persuade: Debate skill check to convince Hogan that the PC isn't the real Dr. Quisling. Time Step Zero for a complex task like a Persuade: Debate skill check in these circumstances is 5 rounds. It's a difficult task, coming out of the blue (-20 modifier) but other characters can assist (+5 for each character with a minimum of 20 in Persuade: Debate. One do-over can be attempted at time step +1 which in this case is 1 minute later. More do-overs can be attempted over time if the characters, and especially Quisling's doppelganger, perform good, honorable deeds during the time they stay with the townsfolk. This includes sharing supplies, offering medical assistance, and the like. In this way, in fact, the PCs can gain the trust of the townsfolk without making any Persuade skill checks.

If you happen to know that all of your PCs suck at Persuade: Debate, another option is to introduce another doppelganger of one of the PCs. This doppelganger could be a trusted friend or ally of Hogan, dead or alive. Once Hogan sees that the doppelganger theory is indisputable, he will be willing to accept Quisling's doppelganger.

If none of these options work, the townsfolk will react unfavorably towards Quisling's doppelganger, and thus the rest of the PCs. If the PCs want to gain their trust, or if they want something else the townsfolk have, they will have to use either diplomacy or brute force. The townsfolk will be both hateful and intimidated by Quisling's

doppelganger, and will be unsure what to do with him. Hogan will want to incarcerate and interrogate him, and possibly the rest of the group if they do not seem trustworthy. If the heroes don't resist, and continue to be diplomatic, eventually the townsfolk will come to their senses. At the very least, they will realize they've made a mistake the next time the real Dr. Quisling shows up. Naturally the "Silver Tongue" perk of a Corporate Executive can get the PCs out of most sticky situations with Hogan and the townsfolk.

Once convinced, he explains that there is a traitorous ex-rebel (Dr. Quisling) who looks just like this one PC, who now works for the hydronauts. He is the hydronaut liaison to the town. The hydronauts tax the people of the city heavily and take their gear, make headcounts every week, etc.

1.3 FLEEING THE SCENE

If the PCs fail diplomacy and have to leave the Lucky Canuck with guns blazing, there are a number of options

1. They may want to scrub the mission and return to SSZ. In this case, other members of SNAFFU may have discovered SSZ and are already probing its secrets. If there were any PCs left in the ship, this can be roleplayed out. The members of SNAFFU will be cautious but will not be hostile towards anyone in the rocketship.
2. They may have other encounters around the city, including the visiting hydronauts. Meanwhile SNAFFU will be exploring the SSZ as above, and may also be trying to track down the party (for good or ill) through the streets of Calgary. SNAFFU members realize that it is hydronauts, not humans, that are the enemy, and won't foolishly try to kill the PCs. They just want to find out what's going on. If the hydronauts discover the PCs and are about to defeat them, you could insert a SNAFFU strike team to rescue them.
3. The PCs may get entangled with a roving gang of street punks, and may have to fight side by side with SNAFFU members to stay alive.

1.4 THE TALE OF DR QUISLING

Dr. Quisling was in charge of (at least part of) a group of scientists in SNAFFU who were/are trying to build the BTL drive in this universe. The project was discovered by the hydronauts, who came in with disintegrators blazing. Many workers were killed. Others, like Quisling, were taken prisoner. Before the hydronauts could confiscate the BTL project, one of the scientists initiated a self-destruct.

Quisling, prisoner of the hydronauts, squealed on what he knew of SNAFFU to keep himself alive and in a position where he could possibly complete his work, whereas his POW compatriots were killed off one by one. Now Quisling works for the hydronauts, under constant surveillance. He has a hydronaut hybrid named Pogo with him at all times, keeping him in line and watching his every move.

Even though Quisling "spilled his guts" to the hydronauts, there was a great deal about SNAFFU that he did not know. Quisling knew little outside of his project department's immediate concerns. He does not know that SNAFFU has a few working rocketships at their disposal. He does not know who is in charge of SNAFFU. His immediate superiors were killed.

Part of his new job is liaison to the human settlement of Calgary. In this fashion, he keeps tabs on Hogan, who is essentially town mayor. Once every two weeks or so Quisling, Pogo, and a squad of hydronaut soldiers meet with Hogan to assess any new developments and to collect tithes in the form of scavenged metals, other valuables, and new human slaves.

To increase drama, make Hogan the son of Quisling's partner or superior officer, with his father killed or captured, and Quisling now keeping Hogan Jr alive partially out of amusement.

Quisling is not entirely remorseless that he's forced to work with the hydronauts. His number one priority is still completing the BTL Drive, but he also bargains for lenience

from the hydronauts towards the townsfolk, in exchange for his co-operation.

Want to drop in another angle? Quisling is in love with one of the scientists working for SNAFFU, Hannah Colby.

Nobody wants Quisling to complete the BTL Drive more than the hydronauts, and Quisling isn't afraid to use what little bargaining leverage he has to get what he can from the aliens. He may be using his position to influence the hydronauts to exercise leniency against his old "friends." Meanwhile his old friends consider him a traitor by even working with the hydronauts in any respect. Tragic, really.

1.5 AN UNWELCOME GUEST or DOUBLE TROUBLE

Having detected an energy spike from Spaceship Zero, the hydronauts will make an impromptu visit to Calgary. Dr Quisling and a squadron of hydronauts will arrive in a dreadnought and two scout saucers shortly after the encounter with SNAFFU members. They will circle the city, but if the PCs have taken the time to power down and hide SSZ, the hydronauts will stop searching and will give Hogan a visit.

Pogo and Quisling will interrogate Hogan briefly, but will not get any information out of him. Quisling then ominously warns "see you on Tuesday", which happens to be the next regularly scheduled visit.

Naturally, after this meeting, Hogan will realize without a doubt that the PC doppelganger of Quisling is not who he originally thought.

Dr. Quisling Traitorous Scientist

You should base as much of Quisling's stats on your PC doppelganger, but he should have the following *minimum* skill scores: Psychology 30, Science: Physics 65, Technical Build & Repair 45, Technical Know-how 45, Persuade: Bluff 40, Streetwise 20.

Pogo

Hydronaut hybrid monitor

BODY: 170
BRAWN 14
BRAINS 12
BALANCE 12
BRAVADO 12

Move Rate:

Initiative Bonus: 0

Skills: Swimming 70, Persuade: Intimidate 60, Heave 40, Endure 40, Jump 40, Listen 30, See 30, Fisticuffs 30, Sneak 30, Hide 30, Throw 30, Weapon: Melee 40, Pilot: Space 40

Quirks:

Pogo has been assigned the thankless task of babysitting Dr. Quisling practically 24 hours a day. Because he can communicate with Quisling and the humans in Calgary, he sometimes mistakes his position of information distribution with a position of authority. Hydronaut soldiers are quick to put him in line when he steps out of it.

1.6 OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Now SNAFFU has the perfect spy for their secret mission: to infiltrate that hydronaut base, retrieve Quislings files, and destroy the base. 50 km West of the city, on a platform in the middle of Ghost Lake, the hydronauts have set up a monitoring station that includes several research laboratories. The PCs will have to get inside and make their way to Quisling's lab and the power generator, both of which are on the third level (the basement). To destroy the base the heroes need to plant a bomb in the generator room.

Let the PCs come up with a plan, presumably involving the old "switcheroo" with Quisling and his PC doppelganger. If they cannot, Hogan will suggest one. At the very least he should be on hand to point out potential pitfalls.

SNAFFU knows the basic layout of the hydronaut outpost, and more info can be extricated from Dr. Quisling if necessary (and if possible). Study the maps of the hydronaut base. How much information you want to give the PCs is up to you. At any

rate, they should feel like they have a good chance of finding Quisling's lab and the power generator. At the very least, SNAFFU knows the location of the twin lifts that go from level 1 to level 3.

Given the knowledge that the PCs have about the BTL drive, they may want to impress upon SNAFFU how it is not so much a new engine as it is a doomsday device. It should probably be destroyed along with any remnants of Quisling's work so that the hydronauts cannot salvage it. Yet SNAFFU still wants to know what Quisling knows, so part of the mission will be to recover as much information from Quisling's computer as possible. Blank data tapes will be made available as necessary, though surely Quisling will have some in his lab.

SNAFFU has some decent equipment at their disposal (atomic rifles, atomic grenades, even a rocket belt or two) but exactly what they are willing to give up to the PCs for this mission is up to you. Any weapons that the PCs want to have access to in the hydronaut base will have to be smuggled in. In addition, SNAFFU has a compliment of special compact mini-bombs just for this operation. They can be disassembled, squirrelled away into various body cavities, bouffant hair dos, or secret pockets, and then reassembled later. These consist of explosive gum, a fuse, and a 5-minute mini egg-timer. Each member of the mission team should be given at least one of these devices. One of these babies going off on the power generator should rupture the thing and cause a massive explosion that will take out a huge chunk of the base and cause the island to sink. They won't be so effective in obliterating a BTL Drive model, so the PCs may have to smuggle some atomic grenades or start some fires to achieve that objective. Assembling a mini-bomb from its component parts requires a Technical Build & Repair or Explosives skill check at two rounds for time step zero (so +10 at five rounds, +20 at 1 minute, +30 at 5 minutes, etc). If the PCs take the time to practice before the mission (as Hogan suggests) they will get an additional +20.

SNAFFU Gumbomb DV100, Matter damage, 1

charge, Skill type: Explosives (if the user makes a successful Explosives skill check when affixing the bomb, he may add the result to the damage value.

1.7 A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

SNAFFU has specialists who can and should accompany the PCs on their mission. Feel free to give these Non-Player Characters more skills if you feel the PC's may be shorthanded in some important areas.

Rex Reagan

SNAFFU Xeno-specialist

BODY: 140

Strength Bonus: 12

Dodge Bonus: 20

Move Rate: 25

Skills: Hide 40, Language & Lore: Hydronaut customs 70, Language & Lore: Hydronaut language 80, Technical Know-how 65, Pilot: Space 60, Pilot: Air 60, First Aid 50, Streetwise: 55.

Quirks: Stutters; unhealthily interested in hydronaut females, xxxxx

Rex Reagan has been studying the hydronauts for years. He can actually understand much of the hydronaut tongue, though of course he cannot speak it. He is also handy with a lot of hydronaut technology, thanks to war-ravaged saucers scavenged over the years. He can pilot a hydronaut saucer.

Quintessa Quicksilver

SNAFFU Crackerjack Pilot

BODY: 160

Strength Bonus: 10

Dodge Bonus: 30

Move Rate: 25

Skills: Disguise 90, Explosives 75, First Aid 50, Hide 75, Navigate: Surface 65, Pilot: Space 80, Pilot: Air 80, Streetwise: 55.

Quirks: Specializes in flying hydronaut saucers; voracious reader; likes to listen to loud music when she is driving/piloting. Quintessa Quicksilver is an ace pilot and mistress of disguise. As a human behind the controls of hydronaut saucers she is unrivaled.

Note to the ZM - don't let Quintessa

outshine a Pilot player character. She is included as a supporting character only if needed.

Dr. Venus Blackbird

SNAFFU Medic

BODY 200

Strength Bonus: 20

Dodge Bonus: 38

Move Rate: 39

Skills: Disguise 30, First Aid 60, Listen 50, Medicine 45, Navigate Surface 50, Science: Biology 50, Science: Chem 25, See 50, Tech Build & Repair 70, Tech Know-how 65, Tracking 70, Climb 38, Fisticuffs 60, Pilot: Space 35, Sneak 60, Throw 60, Weapon: Melee 50, Weapon: Ray Gun 65, Weapon: Tactical 35, Endure 75, Heave 65, Jump 55, Backbone 60, Persuade: Bluff 75, Streetwise 75.

Quirks: Artificial hand; Extremely thorough; Cold bedside manner.

Prior to the mission, Dr Blackbird will give everyone a thorough checkup and if necessary provide first aid.

Hannibal Hogan will *not* accompany the PCs on their mission.

SEQUENCE TWO: THE OLD SWITCHEROO

2.0 PHASE ONE - GET ON BOARD, WE'RE EXPECTING YOU.

It is important to understand how the weekly tithing is executed. Here's a step by step synopsis of a typical tribute meeting.

1. Hogan and company take the tribute, including the slaves to the fountain in the town square.
- 1a. As a ZM, understand that the typical amount of slaves in a given tribute should exceed the amount of human PCs by at least one. That way if all the human PCs want to pose as slaves, there will be no suspicion on the part of the hydronauts as to why there is an unusual amount of

- slaves in a given tribute. So, if you're group consists of five (human) characters, say that the biweekly tribute of slaves is six or seven (often comprised of lawless street punks)
- 1b. Tributes usually include:
 - barrels of chemicals
 - tires
 - salvaged metal
 - food to be served to slaves (usually consisting of dead animals)
 2. A dreadnought carrying Quisling, Pogo, and 4 hydronaut soldiers land in the square.
 3. 2-3 soldiers get out of the dreadnought. One always stays in. Quisling and Pogo follow them.
 4. The hydronauts will search the slaves for contraband.
 5. The hydronauts order the slaves to start loading in the rest of the tribute into the holding bay of the dreadnought. As the loading progresses, the hydronauts perform cursory searches of the equipment being loaded on board. Anything suspect is left in a pile beside the saucer and inspected more thoroughly at the end of the loading process.
 6. The slaves enter the dreadnought, followed by the hydronaut crew & Quisling, and then the saucer leaves.
 7. The dreadnought arrives at the landing pad in the hydronaut outpost and the slaves are ordered to unload the tribute onto a wide platform hover-cart. Pogo (and Quisling) attend in case any special orders need to be translated.
 8. The slaves and hover-cart are led to the supply shed, where they then stack all the booty.
 9. Once all the equipment is packed away to the hydronauts satisfaction (to be picked over and categorized later), the hydronauts lead the slaves to the slave quarters.

If Quisling or Pogo need to discuss anything with Hogan, they usually do so out in the open while the slaves are loading equipment. However, it is not unusual for Pogo and Quisling to go indoors to discuss at length matters of unusual significance.

NON-HUMAN CHARACTERS.

How the hydronauts handle robot characters is up to you. Hogan may offer the idea of "deactivating" the robot and including it in the salvage material for the tithe. It may be that these particular hydronauts haven't seen a SpaceCorp robot before. They may assume that the robot character is an astro-automaton. Probably, as in all things, the hydronauts will shoot first and ask questions later. Once any threat from a robot is neutralized, the hydronauts may want to try to torture and interrogate the robot if they believe it to be an astro-automaton. In any case, they will have Dr. Quisling, and perhaps some other hydronaut scientists, dissect it and provide a report on its origin and abilities.

Cats and monkeys, assuming they're not brandishing weapons or otherwise threatening, will be largely ignored by hydronauts in passing. They don't want animals running around their vessels or outposts freely, but Commandant Zorg has a habit of reprimanding hydronauts who fire their weapons in the compound without a good reason. As such, they will delegate responsibility to a hybrid, who will in turn delegate responsibility to any slaves who are in his good books. A super-intelligent pet may find herself being hunted by a pack of slaves, supervised of course by a hybrid. The slaves will be armed with sticks or nothing at all.

Dogs are a slightly different story, only because of their larger size. If a dog attacks a hydronaut, he will defend himself with the weapons at hand. Unassuming looking dogs may be hunted down by a pack of slaves, as above, or even with a bat-being.

If a hybrid hears an animal talking, he will take it seriously. Whether his full-blood hydronaut superiors take *him* seriously is another matter.

It is also quite possible that the hydronauts could mistake the animals as part of the tithe's foodstuff portion. This could lead to the group being separated, with the animal PCs being sent to the hydronaut kitchens and not for a midnight snack.

SEQUENCE THREE: BOMBS AHOY

3.0 PHASE TWO - MISSION: REALLY FREAKIN' HARD

Once the PCs have hornswoggled themselves onto the dreadnought, they will fly to the hydronaut base on Ghost Lake. The base itself rests on pontoons about a half mile from shore, connected to land by a single flat bridge that allows access by hover cars and ground troops.

Given how far into hydronaut-infested corridors the heroes must go to fulfil their mission parameters, it's unlikely that at least some of the PCs won't be discovered and captured. They may be caught during their infiltration, planting explosives, or attempting to escape from the base. Rogue humans that aren't indoors will be hunted by bat-beings.

Most hydronauts on levels 1 and 2 of the base will be outfitted with personal disintegrators. Designated security personal will have astro-disintegrators with human prods affixed. Some may have noise bombs and net throwers as well, especially in the watchtower. Most hydronauts know better than to fire disintegrators on level 3; there they will gleefully resort to human prods or hand to hand melee.

It will be more fun in the long run if some of the PCs are caught, so don't be too lenient.

Once the heroes are in the hydronaut base, have Rex, Quintessa, and any other NPCs separated from the player characters as soon as possible. That way, you can use them as an ace up your sleeve later - providing relief from tight spots that the PCs have gotten themselves into.

If the PCs cause problems (and that's what they're here for, after all) they will be immediately taken to the gladiator pits. A

special event will be announced and the PCs will only have a half hour or so of down time before they're forced to fight. See "How High the Moon Beast" below.

3.1 THE HYDRONAUT BASE

The interior of this base is typical of hydronaut structures. Corridors and rooms are dank, humid, and hot almost beyond tolerance, with a green mist clinging to the floors. The corridors are shaped from some sort of green, iridescent steel. Riveted to various sections of the corridors, glowing strips of metal provide illumination. Each one is slick with condensation. Corners and crevices that are not subjected to constant use, or haven't been cleaned by human slaves lately, are often variegated with strange slime molds and mosses.

All exterior doors are kept locked. A control disk is required to unlock doors. Use of a hydronaut control disk by a non-hydronaut requires a successful Technical Know-How skill check with a -30 modifier, allow standard retries (see Time Step Chart p20). Once a PC masters a given function of a control disk he does not need to make skill checks to repeat that function.

Opening an unlocked door is as easy as pushing a button beside the door.

Lifts are not enclosed chambers like the elevators we know. They are simply portions of floor that move up or down. It's very easy to fall down an open lift shaft or get your foot shorn off if you're not careful. Using a lift to get to level 3 requires a control disk.

Gladiators and human slaves who work inside the compound (busboys, etc) are usually outfitted with pain collars (p140). Humans found wandering corridors on levels 1 and 2 without a pain collar are highly suspect.

No humans are allowed on level three (except in the gladiator cells of course, or in transit to them) with the exception of Dr Quisling, and he never without a hydronaut/hybrid escort.

On the accompanying maps, the letter E

surrounded by a circle designates a personnel lift. An E inside a square is the larger cargo lift.

Feel free to provide intercom stations, alarm buttons, ventilation grates and suchlike throughout the complex as suited to your needs or those of the players.

TOP LEVEL (LEVEL 1)

AUTOMATED DISINTEGRATOR BATTERIES

three corners of the base have a tower with a disintegrator battery mounted on the top. These weapons (WDV 80; Range 0-150/151-500/501-1500) are manned by a hydronaut worker in the control center. He can set a target for each gun which it will follow automatically (effective Weapon: Tactical skill score of 25) or he can manually operate one battery at a time (Weapon: Tactical skill score of 70)

MAIN GATE

At the end of the pontoon bridge that leads to the floating hydronaut base ends at a gate. Only this gate allows hover cars and ground troops access to the compound. It is always guarded by two hydronaut soldiers.

CARGO ELEVATOR

There is a cargo elevator next to the main gate that allows various large creatures to be moved from the surface down to their pens on level 2.

GARAGE

The garage is filled vehicle parts and sundries. Two cargo doors are the only way in or out of the garage. A ramp leads down to sub level 2 and the landing pad. This building houses three hover cars, including a suped-up deluxe model which is Zorg's personal hover car.

STORAGE BUNKERS

Three storage bunkers are filled with old human tithings.

OSSUARY

This building houses the half-dozen bat-beings that compliment the base. There is often only one hydronaut tending the bat-beings when it's slow, but there are six qualified trainers in the base should their services be required.

When a general alarm is sounded, bat-beings are released to stalk the grounds and scoop up slaves. Every hydronaut on the base makes sure his bat-being whistle is on. If Quisling's doppelganger is with (a suitably fooled) Pogo in the open air during a general alarm, Pogo may escort him inside immediately, or procure an extra whistle. On the other hand, Pogo would probably get a kick out of seeing Quisling swallowed by a bat-being. ZM's choice.

SLAVE PENS

The doors to the slave quarters lead immediately along a sturdy catwalk. An interior portcullis-like gate accesses a ramp that leads down to the living quarters, where the slaves live in their own filth when they're not laboring for their batrachian masters. This area is disaffectionately known as 'the gulch.' The hydronauts can survey the gulch from the safety of the catwalk. The whole outfit is much like the slave quarters of an old tall ship of the ancient world. When the hydronauts feel it's necessary, they remove all the slaves and flood the entire gulch with lake water to rinse away the filth.

If the PCs find themselves stuck in the slave compound, they can at least take advantage of the local medicine girl, Nanette.

Nanette
Tribal healer
BODY: 100
Move Rate: 25
Skills: Backbone 55, Disguise 40, First Aid 70*, Hide 75, Language & Lore: Tribal Culture 80, Language & Lore: Hydronaut customs 30, Medicine 50*, Sneak 65, Wilderness Survival 50

Quirks: Doesn't take no for an answer; Has flashbacks; Wants desperately to see snow.

* because of the poor hygiene and terrible working conditions of the gully, all First Aid and Medicine skill checks suffer a -20 penalty. Sad, I know, but true.

SECURITY POST / WATCHTOWER

Typically two soldiers survey the complex from this simple watchtower. A lift inside goes down to the lower levels.

INTERROGATION ROOM

A typical torture chamber, hydronaut style. When somebody needs to be interrogated, it is usually left to a team of Zorg's favoured purebred hydronaut assistant (Blurg - typical hydronaut soldier p126) and a randomly chosen hybrid. Blurg deals out the pain, the hybrid asks the questions. Each time the painmaster uses a torture device, the character takes 1d10 Body Points damage and must make an Endure or black out for a minute or more (1d10+10 rounds). The painmaster may also make a Persuade: Intimidate roll opposed by the character's Backbone skill to see whether or not the character cracks and answers the question truthfully.

A captive can escape his bonds with a successful Heave or Sleight of Hand skill check, but the result must match or exceed 40.

MEDICAL ROOM

A dumpy hydronaut surgeon known by his two favored human servants as "Thumbs" administers first aid when necessary. This is both his office and his operating room. The humans are well-treated and have become complacent in their lot.

Thumbs, Hydronaut surgeon
First Aid 50 (+20 on hydronauts); Medicine 40

Elijah & Elsa, human assistants
First Aid 50; Medicine 30

CONTROL CENTER

This is the nerve center for the complex. A small team of hydronauts control the exterior gun batteries and monitor the entire base from here. During the daytime there is a 15% chance that Zorg is here at any given moment.

COMMUNICATIONS

From this room, Kaplok the hydronaut communications specialist can contact hydronaut ships far and wide, listen in on infrequent Terran radio signals, pass along orders and information via the public address system, and coordinate internal calls and walkie-talkie signals.

A huge antenna crowns the building.

ARMORY

The armory is full of everything on page 144 of the SSZ rulebook. A wispy, almost bookwormish hybrid named Gill-Mo maintains the weapons and the requisitions.

Gill-Mo, hybrid clerk

Use Hybrid stats on p127 but subtract 20 from all Brawn- and Balance-linked skills.

MID LEVEL (LEVEL 2)

ARENA

Though the arena seating begins at the top level of the compound, the actual battleground is flush with this sublevel. There are three rows of seats around the edge of the arena, thirty feet up from the arena floor. Hybrids always sit in the back row. There are four large doors on the south end of the oval arena, out of which come panthers, bears, and the occasional Moon-Beast. Gladiators come out of chambers beneath the arena floor.

KITCHEN & MESS HALL

Low-caste hydronaut and hybrid chefs staff the kitchen, along with human dishwashers and busboys. At any given time there will be 1d10 +1 hydronauts here. If you roll a 10, it

must be mealtime - roll again and add the result. For every 5 hydronauts there will be 1 hybrid and 1 human slave.

ZORG'S QUARTERS

Zorg's personal quarters are posh compared to those of his underlings. It includes a hot tub and a greenhouse, giving the entire room a tropical feel. Zorg is usually here when he's not in the control room or strolling about the complex.

BARRACKS

The north corner of this level is full of the living quarters of the hydronauts who work here. They are cramped, untidy, and a little sloshy. Most hydronauts don't use them for anything but sleeping, preferring to spend their off-hours in the lounge, in the lake, or tormenting humans from a hovercar or scout saucer.

LOUNGE

When hydronaut workers are provided a moment to relax between shifts, they put their webbed feet up in this lounge. I don't know if hydronauts play card games or read magazines, I'll let you decide that for now.

REFUELING DEPOT

Power from the generator beneath this room is pumped through here to recharge dreadnoughts and smaller hydronaut craft.

LANDING PLATFORM

The landing pad is large enough to accommodate a dreadnought and two scout saucers comfortably. Flight technicians spend their time basking on the pad when they're not working in the garage or refueling depot.

BOTTOM LEVEL (LEVEL 3)

Level 3 is mostly full of labs and work areas, but you can adapt the rooms to suit your needs.

QUISLING'S LAB

This is where Quisling has been working on his BTL-Drive. The room houses a bare-bones prototype of the drive as well as several SpaceCorp computers and a few hydronaut computers as well. In fact, Quisling has been more fascinated with working on compatibility adaptors for Terran and Hydronaut technology, but how far he has gotten along on that project is left to ZM discretion.

COMPUTER ROOM

This barbell-shaped room houses the facility's computer core.

SECURITY STATION

This is the security locus and checkpoint for this floor. There is at least one soldier stationed here at all times.

ENERGY CELL STOREROOM

This room houses shelves upon shelves of the energy cells that power personal weapons and other small hydronaut devices. It is well protected against accidental explosion.

POWER GENERATOR

Catwalks and access tubes crisscross the room that houses the atomic power generator that runs the base. A homely hydronaut named Blix is assigned to monitor and maintain all aspects of this room, even though it rarely requires maintenance. He finds joy in hunting down the occasional space rat with a poker.

GLADIATOR CELLS

Gladiators, unlike the other slaves, have their own chambers underneath the arena. This is merely for convenience of the hydronauts so that they don't have to go into the gulch to fish out specific combatants (these monkey-men all look the same to the hydronauts), but it works out well for the gladiators. The living conditions are slightly better than in the slave compound. There are grates in the floor so

that waste can be flushed into the lake. The bad news is that at the flick of a hydronaut control disk, the ceiling of any number of gladiator chambers slide back, and the floor of the cell raises flush with the floor of the arena.

On either side of the hall that leads to the cells are two exercise rooms. The impassive hydronaut taskmaster Gumbo uses these rooms to size up the abilities of new acquisitions and to ensure current champions don't get chubby on prison food (not likely).

While PCs are in gladiator cells, allow an opportunity for First Aid if necessary. Even the other gladiators have a rudimentary First Aid skill of 30%, and are happy to help the PCs. They know that the next fight is one that won't pit man against man--something in Gumbo's unusually bouncy step.

SEQUENCE FOUR: HOW HIGH THE MOON-BEAST

4.0 FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!

The PCs, and any other gladiators you want to throw into the ring (including, if you wish, an unproductive hybrid that has displeased Zorg once too often), will be forced to fight a horrible bug-eyed monster from another world that the gladiators know only as the moon-beast.

Moon-Beast

Gasp-inducing bug-eyed monster, Large

BRAWN 40

BRAINS 5

BALANCE 12

BRAVADO 11

BODY 300

Strength Bonus: 40

Dodge Bonus: 12

Move Rate: 30

Initiative Bonus: 0

Skills: Fisticuffs (tentacle) 45, Bite 35 WDV 30 (matter) + Strength Bonus, Launch spore-darts 70 WDV 1 (matter), Backbone 30, Climb 60, Endure 40, Heave 50, Listen 10, See 80, Sneak 40, Tracking 30.

Perks & Quirks:

Multiple arms. A moon-beast gets 3 attacks per turn with its tentacles.

Rubber Hide. A moon-beast's flesh is extremely resilient, providing the monster with a Matter Defense Rating of 30.

All-Around Sight. Because of its multiple eyes, a moon-beast can see 360 degrees around it. Rarely will an attacker be allowed a bonus for surprise when a moon-beast is awake and active.

Teeth. The moon-beast's shark-like teeth are a natural weapon with a WDV of 30 plus Strength Bonus. The moon-beast can make a bite attack instead of one of its tentacle attacks, but cannot make more than one bite attack per round.

Spore-darts. As soon as the moon-beast begins combat, it will begin to size up its opponents. It will select the slowest combatant (i.e. the one with the lowest Dodge Bonus) and fire off a volley of spore-darts from glands in its neck. Although a moon-beast's spore-darts have a Weapon Damage Value of only 1, and cannot do more than 30 points of BODY damage, anyone who takes damage from spore-darts becomes infected and must immediately make an Endure check. A victim who fails his check becomes groggy. In a state similar to drunkenness, the victim will begin to feel attracted to the moon-beast, and will calmly move towards it, oblivious to any danger. The moon-beast's natural instincts make it welcome the prey, and try to find somewhere safe to keep him. If the host takes any damage or is otherwise hurt, he will be able to shake himself out of his spore-induced stupor. Either way, the victim is now a nest for the moon-beast's young. Over the course of a few days, blisters will grow all over the infected area. These blisters serve as egg-sacs for the spores embedded in the host's body, where they grow into tiny embryonic moon-beast tadpoles. All the while, the host is reduced to a semi-catatonic state. Once the moon-beast babies grow large enough (about 3-4 days) the tadpoles burst out of the host's body,

causing 4d10 damage. They will then try to eat the host alive, inflicting 4d10 damage per round. Nasty, nasty business. A moon-beast cannot launch spore-darts indefinitely, however. At most they can launch three volleys in a 12 hour period. Once a single victim is infected with the spore-darts, that's usually good enough for the moon-beast -- but not always.

A moon-beast is a terrifying sight to behold, resembling an enormous cross between a caterpillar and an octopus. Four stalked eyes sprout from its head, and its gaping maw is filled with deadly shark-like teeth. Moon-beasts can grow to about twice the size of an elephant. Their color range is typically red, yellow and orange, but rarer purple, green and even the rarest blue or albino moon-beasts have been known. Their hides can sport both stripes and spots.



A moon-beast typically attacks one to two opponents at a time, trying to grapple them with its tentacles. Once a victim is grappled the moon-beast may, on consecutive turns, continue to apply a sleeper hold (see p69 of the SSZ rulebook). The moon-beast may also attempt an 'improve hold' maneuver (p 70) in an attempt to pin its victim. Once a victim is unconscious or has his grappling target score (Heave + Strength Bonus) reduced to 0, he is considered prone and the moon-beast has a +20 to hit with its bite attack.

MOON-BEAST TACTICS

If the moon-beast can secure a host for its young, it will actually want to run off with the prize. Since it is in an enclosed arena, however, this is impossible, so it will merely try to protect the host as it defends itself.

Here's one ZM tactic that can be effective in this situation if you want to impress upon the players how dangerous the situation is: If you've introduced some NPC gladiators to fight alongside the PCs, have the moon-beast attack one of them. Go ahead and make some hidden dice rolls, but no matter what the dice say, describe how the moon-beast wraps a tentacle around the NPC, picks him up, and then bites his head off. This, they will most likely gather, is what they have to look forward to.

Still, as long as the combat with the moon-beast is going smoothly and everyone's enjoying the fight, keep it going. Once the PCs are in serious danger of being killed, it becomes prudent to introduce a new element...

4.1 OUT WITH A BANG

Remember how you separated Rex or Quintessa from the PCs a while ago? Well, if one of the PCs hasn't already successfully planted a bomb, assume that one of the NPCs have, and that it goes off with an earth-shattering KABOOM! Having blown the bottom of the island out, water from the lake shoots into the air like a geyser from the center of the base, and the entire island begins to slowly sink. The massive explosion startles the moon-beast like a cat in a thunderstorm. Zorg starts barking orders and the PCs seem to be the least of the hydronauts' concerns. Damage control has to be assessed, Bat-beings need to be tended, and everything that isn't nailed down needs to be nailed down. It's a perfect time for plucky humans to make an escape attempt.

At your discretion the hydronauts may want to execute the poor moon-beast by disintegrator blasts as an emergency measure.

4.2 CALGARY CAVALRY

Back in town, the higher ups of SNAFFU have been watching the horizon for the kind of explosion that has just happened. It is the signal to bring down the axe on any hydronaut stragglers, and mount a rescue operation for any humans alive in the outpost. SNAFFU launches all of its rocketships to crush what's left of the hydronaut presence. They will certainly make a dramatic rescue if the PCs are left treading water in Ghost Lake.

SEQUENCE FIVE: WILL THE REAL DR QUISLING PLEASE STAND UP

5.1 MEET THE BOSS

Once the PCs are rescued and returned to Calgary, they'll be introduced to Leonard Dubranski, head of SNAFFU. He will show the PCs the cell where Quisling was being held (where applicable). It is open, and Quisling's body is inside, but the top of his head has been sawn off and his brain is missing. Lt. Hogan is AWOL. Nobody knows where he's gone, or if they do they're not admitting it.

Dubranski offers the PCs membership into SNAFFU. If it hasn't already been done, SNAFFU will coat SSZ with a special paint that will help protect it from hydronaut smart bombs. They can also outfit it with atomic coil turrets (one or two, depending on how stingy you feel, or how competent & therefor worthy the PCs came across).

SBR (Smart-Bomb Resistant) Paint. When properly applied (Technical Build & Repair or Perform: Painting skill checks for unseasoned SBR painters), several coats of this special paint (available in many popular colors) makes a craft completely immune to the effects of hydronaut smart

bombs (while its painted hull is intact, of course).

5.2 WINDING DOWN

SNAFFU's resident doctor, Dr. Venus Blackbird, is available to treat any wounds incurred during the mission. In addition, she's very interested in treating any characters that may have been infected with moon-beast spores. Successfully *diagnosing* an infected patient requires 1 hour and a successful Medicine skill check. Successfully *treating* an infected patient requires 3 days and a successful Medicine skill check.

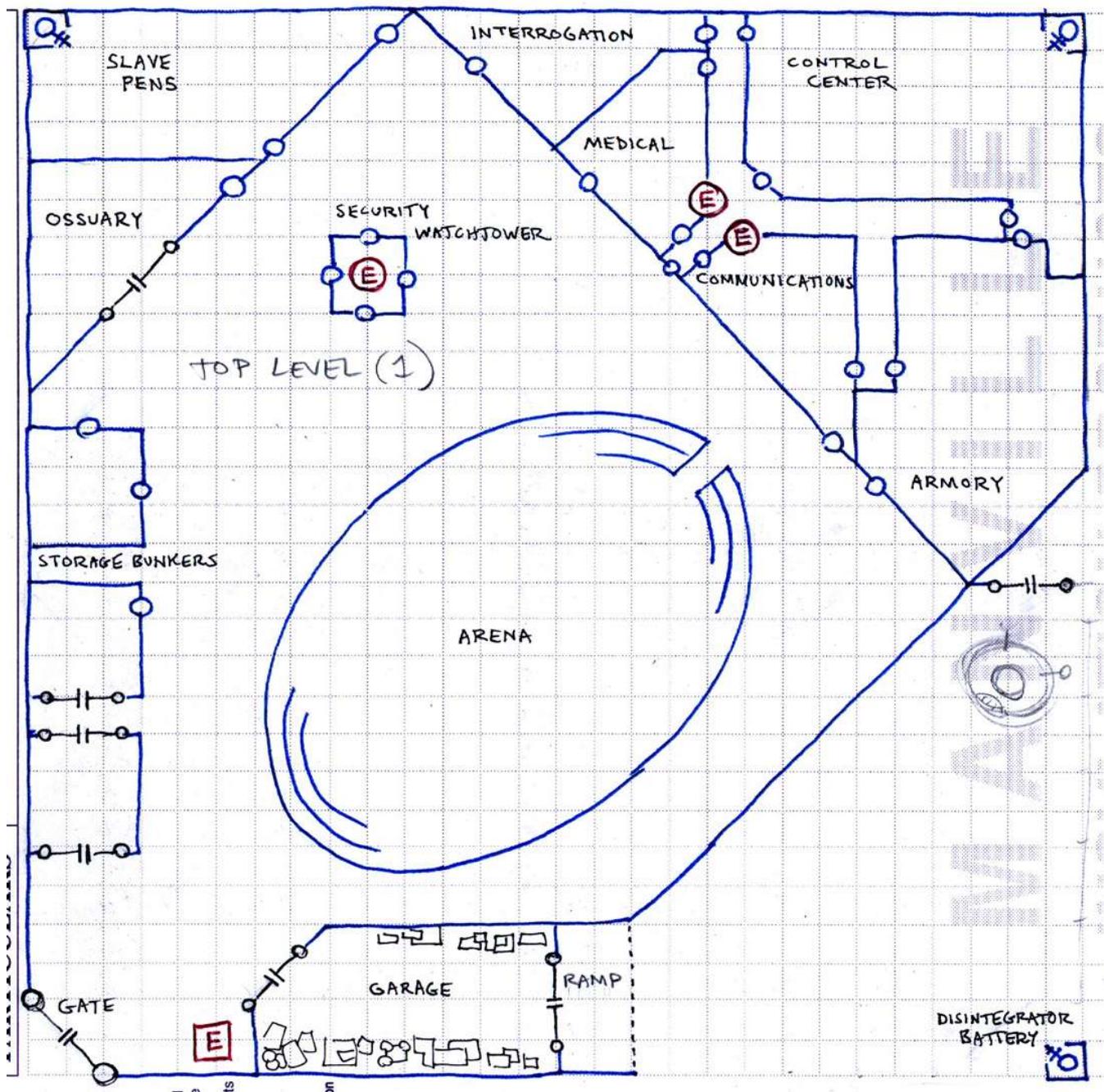
What nobody knows is that Dr. Blackbird is a clone hunter. While she treats the PCs, she will try to surreptitiously scan them to detect if they are clones. Of course all of them have probably been reconstituted at some point, so she already suspects they might be clones.

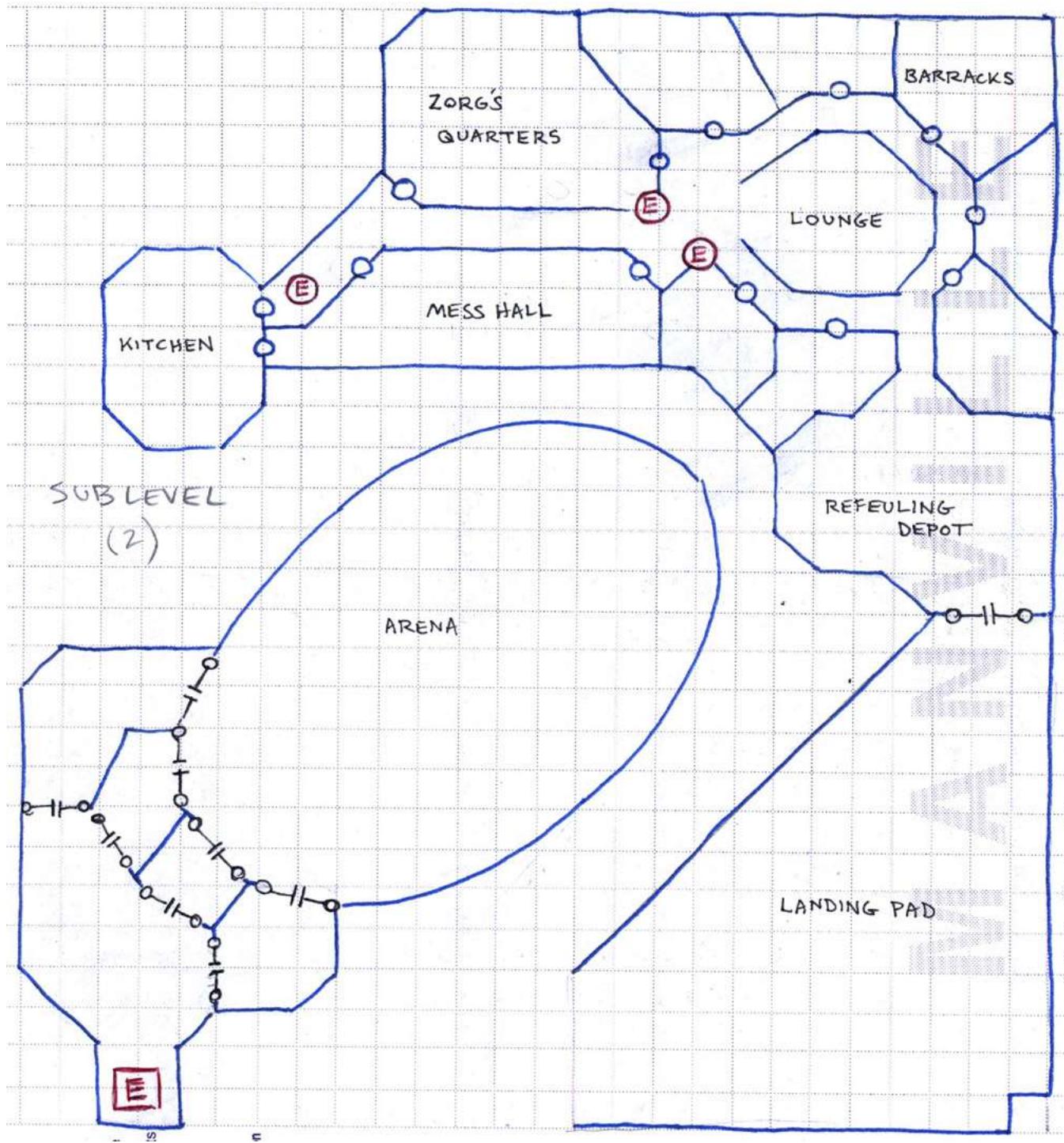
Now would be a good time to decide if any of your PCs are clones. Choose wisely. Perhaps you don't want the player to know that her character is a clone; perhaps it's already been decided when the character was created. If one of the PCs is a clone, it will make Chapter 4 that much more interesting.

5.3 FURTHER ADVENTURES....

A tadpole of the moon-beast, belly full of the flesh of a human or even its own brothers, has managed to stowaway in the equipment or clothing of one of the PCs. Now it grows on board Spaceship Zero, trying to survive and killing the crew one by one a la the film *Alien*.

The darkest night would shine
If you would come to me soon
Until you will, how still my heart
How high the moon
- Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker





BOTTOM LEVEL (3)

