

P • E • N • U • M • B • R • A

A *Trophy Dark* Incursion by Jordan Boschman



This book may be freely reproduced for personal use, in whole or in part. For any purposes other than personal use, see the licensing information below.

All original text content (the description, inspiration, moments, conditions, the various rings, and modifications to the Trophy Dark character sheets) is a product of Jordan Boschman and ATypicalFaux. It is presented here under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) for others to use if they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may not in any way suggest that Jordan Boschman or ATypicalFaux endorses you or your use of this material unless separate approval has been secured. The ATypicalFaux and ATF logos are © Jordan Boschman, all rights reserved. All other included artwork is either reproduced or modified from commercially licensed and/or public domain works and not covered by the Creative Commons license described above.

This work is based on Trophy (trophyrpg.com), product of Jesse Ross and Hedgemaze Press, and licensed for our use under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Trophy is adapted from Cthulhu Dark with permission of Graham Walmsley. Trophy is also based on Blades in the Dark (found at <http://www.bladesinthedark.com/>), product of One Seven Design, developed and authored by John Harper, and licensed for our use under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>). The content used from the Trophy SRD has not been altered except for formatting, setting descriptions, and the removal of the hunt roll and combat roll rules.

Trophy™ is a trademark of Hedgemaze Press. The trademark is © Hedgemaze Press, and is used with permission.

Thank you for supporting my products

If you'd like me to send you free art-less PDFs, exclusive discounts, and news of releases and development updates, join my mailing list at the link below or by scanning the QR code.

bit.ly/atfml



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
How to Play	1
Running an Incursion	2
Risk Roll	3
Ruin Roll	5
Reduction Roll	6
Losing Your Character	6
Setting Considerations	6
Penumbra.....	8
Theme: Recurrence	8
Description	8
Inspiration	9
Conditions	10
Moments	11
Ring 1	12
Ring 2	13
Ring 3	14
Ring 4	15
Ring 5	16

Introduction

A planet poisoned by its people's lifeline. The people's need for just a few more drops of that poison. A remote, dangerous chance to discover a new reserve. As a member of a team of disposable drillers left alone on an asteroid to take that chance, the hope for your home colony that you lost long ago is now dwindling what little hope you reserved for yourself. If you can just find and secure this last energy source, it may let them live a few decades longer, but more importantly, you could earn enough money to leave this place far behind before you have to watch it destroy itself...

Penumbra is an incursion, or a one-session adventure, for the role-playing game *Trophy Dark*, set on a massive asteroid on its millennium-long orbit around a dying colonial planet. Thanks to the license with which that game was released, all the rules you need to play are included in this book. You only need a Game Master (GM), at least one player (preferably two to four), two colors of dice, some pencils, and a character sheet printed off for each player (found at the end of this book). The game should take about three-to-four hours.

It is recommended that the GM read this entire book to learn the rules and become familiar with the setting of the incursion and its progression. For the best experience, the players should not read anything from the incursion itself to avoid spoiling the details for them, but they can read the "How to Play" chapter if they wish to become more familiar with the rules and not rely on the GM to teach them.

How to Play

Following the unraveling of people seeking to fulfill their greed and being enticed toward their own probable demise, *Trophy Dark* is a story-first horror game focused on character arcs, threatening environments, and metaphorical themes. As the characters proceed deeper into the area where the treasures they seek are believed to reside, driven by their desire for material wealth that is not theirs to take, the theme of the incursion is regularly reinforced alongside the onset of their personal descent in an increasingly claustrophobic landscape.

Running an Incursion

Each incursion has a theme, a description, a list of moments, a list of conditions, and a series of rings that mark the progress of the characters as they get closer to their goal. Some incursions, such as this one, include custom character creation options as well to tailor the options available to more fit the setting.

To create a character, choose one option each for the Name, Occupation, Background, and Drive sections on the character sheet. You also choose anywhere from zero to three Rituals, but you must increase your starting Ruin by one for each Ritual you take.

The GM will gradually lead the party of player characters into the incursion's environment and toward the treasures they seek, always mindful of the theme and how to highlight or emphasize it. Starting with Ring 1, the players will have to confront or avoid the threats and handle the temptations in each ring they proceed through on their path to the fifth and final ring.

Dice rolls come into play when player characters attempt risky actions, help each other or take on additional risks in such actions, perform Rituals, or test whether they fall further into the grips of the surrounding environment or escape it. Use the rules listed below for handling these situations. Remember, and ensure the players know from the start, that the party members are not expected to survive, or if they do, they are most likely going to be left radically changed.

This is a game of collaborative storytelling, and as a character-driven game focused on exploring the emerging narrative, players should have significant leeway to provide new details for their characters from their memories, backstories, flashbacks, etc., when it fits the current story beat or theme. The GM is also encouraged to ask questions of the players for them to answer in character to further flesh them out and find their appropriate responses to the strange and horrific things they may witness during the incursion. The info that this reveals is great fodder for future twists and details from the GM that hit the characters in very personal ways.

If the GM ever needs an evocative moment to elicit the incursion's theme or a general sense of unease, they can pick from the list of moments included in the incursion or create one along similar lines for one or more characters to observe or experience. Similarly, when a character's Ruin increases, the GM is encouraged to choose a condition to inflict upon them from the list provided or to create one fitting the incursion's theme. Whether this condition is permanent or not is up to you, but it should remind the player of the consequences that could await their characters for continuing to trespass in this domain.

Risk Roll

When your character attempts a risky task, say what you hope will happen and ask the GM and the other players what could possibly go wrong. Then gather 6-sided dice.

Take one light-colored die if the task is something your character would be able to do because of one of their Skills.

Take another light die for accepting a Devil's Bargain from another player or the GM. Devil's Bargains are described in the following section.

Add a dark-colored die if you are willing to risk your character's mind or body in order to succeed. You must include this die whenever your character performs a Ritual.

Roll the dice. **If your highest die is a:**

- **1–3:** Your character fails, and things get worse. The GM describes how. The GM may also allow your character to succeed, but things will get worse in some other way.
- **4–5:** Your character succeeds, but there's some kind of complication. The GM describes the complication, then you describe how your character succeeds.
- **6:** Your character succeeds. Describe how.

If your highest die is a dark die (or if a dark and light die tied for highest), and the dark die is higher than your current Ruin, add 1 to your Ruin. When you do, work with the GM to describe how the asteroid warps your mind and body.

If you are unhappy with your roll and any dark die in the roll isn't the highest die, you may add a dark die to your dice pool and re-roll them all. You may keep adding a dark die and re-rolling until you're satisfied with your result or until a dark die is the highest die in your roll.

If you are trying to defeat or kill something monstrous, you will fail and likely die. If, instead, you are trying to escape, hide from, or fight past such a monstrosity, make a Risk Roll as normal. In that type of situation, however, you may want to consider using your Risk Roll to perform a Ritual against them.

Devil's Bargains

The GM or any other player can offer you a bonus light die if you accept a Devil's Bargain. Common Devil's Bargains include:

- Your character causes collateral damage or unintended harm.
- Your character gets lost or separated from their companions.
- Your character sacrifices an important item.
- Your character betrays a companion.
- Your character attracts unwanted attention.

The Devil's Bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You make the deal, pay the price, and get the bonus die.

Whether to accept a Devil's Bargain or not is always a free choice. If you don't like one, just reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it). You can always just risk your character's mind or body and take a dark die instead.

Anyone may veto or suggest alterations to a proposed Devil's Bargain, especially if it would also impact their character.

Help Roll

If a player's Risk Roll dice pool includes one dark die, you may offer help to improve their odds of success (either before or after they roll). If they accept your offer, say how you expose yourself to danger and roll one light die. They may include your light die's result when considering their overall success. But if your light die's result matches any of the dark dice in their roll, your own Ruin increases by 1.

You may only suffer a maximum of 1 Ruin when helping on a roll. This is particularly relevant when a player re-rolls a Risk Roll. The helping player doesn't re-roll their light die. However, you still increase your Ruin by 1 if any re-rolled dice show the same number as your light die (provided you haven't increased Ruin by 1 already).

More than one player may offer to help, in which case each player rolls their own light die. The helped player can incorporate all of the light dice into their own Risk Roll.

Ruin Roll

Your Ruin shows how much physical and mental harm your character has suffered. It starts at 1.

When your character witnesses or undergoes something disturbing, make a Ruin Roll by rolling one dark die. If you've made a Risk Roll which includes a dark die, and that die is equal to or higher than your highest light die in that roll, your dark die is automatically considered a Ruin Roll.

If you rolled higher than your current Ruin, increase your Ruin by 1 and work with the GM to describe how the asteroid warps your mind and body.

Reduction Roll

When your Ruin reaches 5, you may now reduce it by acting in the interests of the asteroid: destroying treasure, preventing the use of Rituals, or sabotaging the other characters' exit from the asteroid. You should do these acts in a way that does not draw attention to yourself. The more it looks like an accident or simple bad luck, the better.

Each time you act in the asteroid's interest, roll one light die.

If you rolled less than your current Ruin, your betrayal goes unnoticed and you decrease your Ruin by 1. If you rolled higher than or equal to your Ruin, you may still choose to reduce your Ruin by 1, but someone will notice your attempted betrayal.

You may continue reducing your Ruin in this way when your Ruin drops below 5, until you have 1 Ruin.

Losing Your Character

When your Ruin reaches 6, your character is lost. This is an important moment: Everyone focuses on your character's last flashes of lucidity before they run away or turn against their companions.

The GM may allow you to take on a co-GM role, helping describe the terrors of the world—especially any terrors that directly connect to your now-lost character.

Setting Considerations

For many people, the sci-fi setting of Sap miners on an asteroid might call for a few tweaks or additional mechanics, considering that *Trophy Dark* is a game primarily about treasure hunters in a fantasy forest setting. As a means of streamlining the play experience, I don't believe many actual changes to the system are necessary, but the GM may want to keep in mind how this particular setting could necessitate some new considerations during play.

Spacesuits

The primary concern with regard to the game systems is that the characters are occupying spacesuits on an asteroid without breathable air or an atmosphere. With the advanced level of Khefnari spacefaring technology, they should have more than enough oxygen to survive, barring significant catastrophe. But while their spacesuits are quite durable to basic environmental hazards, they can be vulnerable to particularly sharp objects or serious pressure or crushing damage. If a party member's spacesuit is compromised, they should be forced to take regular Risk Rolls at the GM's discretion until it is repaired. If there is a minor fault in their spacesuit's integrity, they roll two light dice for the Risk Roll; if there is a major fault, they roll one light die. This is in addition to any extra dice for matching a skill, taking a Devil's Bargain, or adding a Ruin Die.

Low Gravity

Asteroid BX-319 has approximately 20% of Earth's gravity. This slows down the speed of foot chases, unless capitalizing on the use of some external thrust, and also enables party members to climb without much risk unless a rock face is almost completely sheer. Likewise, fall damage is not as much of a concern, and the GM should consider falls to be roughly 20% as dangerous as on Earth unless landing on something particularly unforgiving.

Equipment

As there is no strict mechanic for tracking equipment in *Trophy Dark*, both players and the GM should be free to state or insinuate what equipment their asteroid-mining character should reasonably have on them at any given time. You don't need to make an exhaustive list, but when such equipment would become relevant, such as for overcoming obstacles or for an improvised weapon, its existence can simply be assumed, within reason, as long as the GM agrees. What is known for certain is that the party has scanners for tracking their destination and estimating the makeup of a given material, electronic signal flares for signaling the support ship when they've secured the pump site, and small-scale drilling equipment for acquiring samples and gaining access to deposits.

Penumbra

Theme: Recurrence

Description

The Sap ran thin. An entire planet built to consume it stood to wither. When the Colony was founded, the leaders couldn't believe their fortune discovering such an abundant, universal power source here on their assigned backwater. Of course, the Khefnari Empire swooped in immediately to secure the resource for themselves, but not before a few Colonial Elders got their incalculable cut and promptly left their duties here for a life among the bustling Centerworlds.

But that was a dozen lifetimes ago. The generations since grew up on Sap and were taught to revere and thank it for powering every light, every engine, every terminal. They probably would have fed it to us if they were slightly less certain about its carcinogenic properties, properties that are shameful to even mention in polite company. Most people chose to ignore the sky getting more gray, the crops getting more brown, and the waters getting more black as long as prosperity and convenience were maintained as the avatars of success.

Now the Regulators are working like mad to keep quiet the fact that the pumps are turning up dry, and sheer panic lies just a single press leak away. As the Khefnari logistics corps were discussing whether to run the Colony to the last drop or preemptively scorch it to avoid the headache of blackouts, famine, and uprisings, an alert from a new monitoring satellite broke them from their deliberations. The massive asteroid BX-319 is returning on its millennium-long orbit. It's a large chunk of an unknown planet previously recognized only for the colorful display its rapid retreat had granted the sky during the landing of the first settler ship here, amid the remnants of a massive group of passing asteroids. Despite it not being seen since, endless folk omens are ascribed to it. With contemporary scanners, however, an unthinkable analysis presents itself: The asteroid's core might be teeming with Sap.

With just a week before BX-319 slingshots back toward the darkness for many more centuries, and with the Regulators' best survey teams already busy scouring the

oldest pump sites for the last hard-to-find pockets of Sap, they're dispatching the V-Dailies, a ragtag team with that perfect mix of expertise and expendability, to confirm the site, set the drills, and establish production. If the team can find a source, the Regulators can react fast enough to establish a supply chain of tanker ships to pull at least a few dozen years' worth of Sap off the rock before it passes beyond the Empire's reach.

You never much liked these fellow roughnecks by your side, but if you can pull this off, you just might be able to retire on the glory of saving the Colony from energy extinction and never have to deal with the rest of these sloggers, or even this backwater planet, again. But if you can't, well, you know just how little the Khefnari are willing to spend to extract some blue-collarers from a piece of rock already set to fling their failure out of the realm of their concern.

Inspiration

There's a feeling of cold emptiness that comes over you when you see an obvious and massive impending danger, and no matter what alarms you raise, you can't seem to even slow the gears responsible for bringing that danger down on the heads of everyone around you. That feeling of dreadful inevitability, the shadow of something gigantic gradually creeping over you, is the main source for the idea behind this incursion. Within the context of the double threat of environmental destruction and the collapse of core energy infrastructure, this adventure tries to explore the emotional space between nihilism, resignation, and selfishness on one hand and, on the other, the tiny chance to influence future generations just enough for them to do things differently.

Hidden deep within the asteroid is evidence of an endless loop of prosperity and pain for an entire planet, a loop that began with the desperate aspirations of a past civilization doomed by their willful ignorance. After having waded through the sorrow, existential crises, and hopelessness of such an equally doomed mission for such an equally doomed planet, the core conflict revolves around whether the players' characters will simply resolve themselves to watching the suffering unfold with a new, intimate understanding of its scale, try a new and unprecedented way of avoiding it, or grab the sliver of an opportunity presented to them to escape the fate of the Colony. The liminal space at the edge of a vast,

bleak darkness can hold untold quantities of misery or, sometimes, maybe, newfound depths of resolve.

Conditions

- ▶ You witness snapshots of the hardest parts of your life on the Colony projected onto the desolate backdrop of the asteroid.
- ▶ You see the Colony planet above you to your left and also to your right.
- ▶ The paste from your nutrient tube tastes like petroleum or hydrocarbons.
- ▶ You occasionally experience both déjà vu and visions of what you and the rest of the party are about to do, but you can't quite tell which is which.
- ▶ The inside edges of your visor accrue a Sap-colored grime as though it's carried by your very exhalations.
- ▶ You see more V-Dailies members walking alongside the party, their visors blackened and suits silent.
- ▶ Sap appears to drip and trail from your extremities, soaking into the asteroid below you.
- ▶ Other party members' voices are heard whispering over the comms about private memories from your past.
- ▶ Any voices over your comms sound like those of your loved ones on the Colony.
- ▶ Everything you say is looped as your voice repeats back to you through your comms, seemingly mocking you.

Moments

- ▶ A field of large, uniformly sized pits lies before the party, evenly spaced and each big enough for a landing module.
- ▶ A faint glow in the outline of what seems like a symbol or glyph flashes in the dust, and it directly reminds the party of a natural formation you visited on the Colony: a forest, a body of water, or a rock formation.
- ▶ A set of empty, outdated spacesuits lies half-buried, slowly being covered in asteroid dust.
- ▶ A torn V-Dailies patch is stuck to a rock pillar with a bit of Sap.
- ▶ A large amount of boot prints in the asteroid dust lead both in the same direction the party is headed and toward the intended landing site.
- ▶ A small group of half a dozen electronic signal flares lies scattered in the dust, dimly blinking to no one.
- ▶ The way forward is obscured by dust particles suspended in space like a thick fog, and anyone crossing it will have to trudge through Sap falling on them like rain.
- ▶ Someone spots a weathered stone figurine in the dirt depicting a many-armed humanoid bowing before a dripping obsidian sphere.
- ▶ A perfectly spherical ball of hardened, congealed Sap sits in a circular path that it has presumably cut into the asteroid dust.
- ▶ The fragments of a cockpit from a Regulators support ship are scattered about a crash site.
- ▶ An old, broken down support structure for a familiar drilling rig, missing much of its essential components, continues to be scraped and eroded by centuries of dust and radiation.
- ▶ Historical news broadcasts about the first discoveries of Sap on the Colony play unprompted over the party's comms.
- ▶ A dark, human-shaped figure stands ahead, but as soon as it's glimpsed, it quickly collapses into a puddle of Sap that freezes solid.

- A jet of gas escapes from the ground in front of the party like a geyser, dispersing glistening, black flakes of frozen Sap which, in the low gravity, flutter around them like confetti.
- The Colony partially eclipses the sun, casting BX-319 into shadow, and radiant fracture lines seem to appear across the surface of the planet's dark side.

Ring 1

TERRORS: As the landing module zooms toward BX-319, the landing site quickly passes by the window, accompanied by warning lights and buzzers. Unsurprisingly, the Regulators' numbers are off. Suddenly, there's a brief burst of kaleidoscopic light from all around, and as the module punches through what seems like an invisible barrier of some kind, its trajectory is shifted and it turns slightly. The angle's wrong as it approaches the surface. The party braces for impact, and with their eyes clenched, they feel the intense shocks and hear the awful sound of crushing metal as they bounce and skid to a stop on the surface. Countless alarms and sirens blare in their helmets, but as they open their eyes, it's the orange glow of a small fire that causes the most panic. Someone's safety harness is jammed.

When they finally escape the half-burnt module, the party is able to retrieve their equipment from the cargo bays on the bottom of the lander, but most of the comms and support systems are destroyed, completely cutting off their contact with the support ship. A handful of electric signal flares remain the party's only means of signaling them, and they only care about finding the product. As the party takes stock, the gray landscape is briefly illuminated by a similar electric flare descending to the dust nearby, flickering and dimming until it burns out.

TEMPTATIONS: Getting their bearings, the party realizes that they're about a day's journey away from the intended landing site, and they'll have to pass through it to head toward where the largest Sap deposit allegedly sits. As they get moving, they notice a bit of glittering on the dark surface of the asteroid. Resting on the jet black stone, they find a metal Sap capsule, the kind used to

fuel common machines and vehicles, far separated from any debris from the lander. It is presumed to have been thrown clear out of their emergency reserves from the crash. Ask each party member how they fell into this line of work or what important thing from the Colony they lost in the lander crash.

Ring 2

TERRORS: It quickly becomes clear that the topography here is not quite what one would expect of an asteroid. Erosion patterns highlight worn-down hills, river valleys, and alluvial plains. Although water obviously flowed here at one time, no water ice can be found. However, the party soon reaches a massive lake of frozen carbon dioxide before them. It would take several days to go around but only a few hours to cross. If they check their bearings at all, they find that this was supposed to be the landing site, which would have resulted in far more disaster. Movement across the lake is slow, as the boots of their spacesuits only provide so much traction on the slick surface. About halfway across, there's an incredible rumbling emanating from the solid ice, and in the darkness below, somehow, a giant black mass can be seen crashing through the frozen gas as it extends throughout the lake. Cracks begin to propagate across the surface of the lake, and as they do, they release several jets of now-heated gas. It won't remain stable for long.

TEMPTATIONS: After the treacherous crossing, the gas emitted from the frozen lake seems to be sucked back into the cracks in the ice, which then immediately refreeze without any evidence of their earlier instability. As the party settles, they see a dark mass in front of them, about half as big as they are. It's jet black and gelatinous in form with an occasional tremor rippling through it. Any attempt to scan it reveals that it is, indeed, pure Sap despite the ripples and the fact that it should be frozen at these temperatures. The blob doesn't appear to move or react to outside stimulus, but there is a brown-black smear on the asteroid's surface coming from underneath it that stretches for a few meters in the direction the party is heading. The stuff is definitely here, somewhere. Ask the party what Sap-tainted water tastes like and what the largest Sap reserve they previously worked on was.

Ring 3

TERRORS: As they move into a vast, flat, and open part of BX-319, one member of the party feels a crunch beneath their boot: bone lightly buried in the asteroid's dust. Removing the first layer of loose sand reveals a now-crushed skull, humanoid but definitely not human, bearing a taller, more elongated facial structure. Pure Sap pours out from where a brain presumably once was. If the party stays and tries to dig up the remains, they find a tall, many-limbed skeleton. Any further digging in the area will lead to the discovery of countless more like it, each with its skull filled with Sap.

The trek across the flat plain is long and eerie. The absence of visible landmarks causes the party to lose track of their progress, and the reach of their lights gradually seems to shrink until they can barely see a meter in front of them. In this condition, they have to rely on their instruments to maintain their heading toward the massive Sap deposit. Eventually, smaller signatures appear in their instrument readings: Each party member themselves is picked up on their devices as a Sap deposit. Ask how the party members met each other. Then ask the party who was really responsible for the Terralli pipeline fire and why.

TEMPTATIONS: The only break from the bleak darkness comes in the form of a dull twinkling far ahead. As the party gets closer, the source is revealed to be a bioluminescent light of a very particular shade of green from the dried corpse of a creature that is immediately recognizable to anyone from the Colony: the verdant river soakfish. This native fish quickly became an interplanetary icon for the pioneer spirit of the Khefnari colonists, taming the unknown wilds. Due to its use as an abundant food source for early settlers and its easily identifiable internal green glow, revealing its organs to the world, it symbolizes the earnestness and transparency of the early Colony. Factory-farmed into endangerment and finally poisoned into extinction by Sap spills, it lives on only in name and the glory its idea brings to the Empire.

For much of the Colony's history, the soakfish's particular glow illuminated rivers, fisheries, kitchens, and restaurants throughout the planet, and scientists could only speculate about how long the process responsible for its

bioluminescence could last, barring the specimen being devoured, of course. The desiccated husk in front of the party, faintly blinking to a long-lost heartbeat, gives it an eerie air of immortal persistence. Ask the party how long it's been since they last saw a wild animal and what person still ties them to the Colony the most.

Ring 4

TERRORS: The darkness the party has been wandering through is split by the dim light of the sun just beneath the asteroid's horizon, illuminating a canyon ahead filled with irregular black pillars. At first, they appear oddly reminiscent of the Elders' Columns, a formation of hoodoos just outside the Colony's capital, but closer inspection reveals them to be coated in a hard, translucent solid, as though they have been crystallized, with what appears to be bark lying hidden beneath the murky facets.

As the party navigates the maze-like columns, they catch glimpses of movement ahead in their lights. Winding around the pillars, they encounter another crew weaving through the formation, presumably Sap smugglers. A few backers rich enough to fund a space-ready crew landing on this rock jump to mind, but their gear looks like a variation on standard Regulator issue. The smugglers wordlessly turn aggressive, their visors pitch black, providing no insight to their identities, but if their spacesuits or helmets are opened in any way, only pure black ooze emerges, gradually deflating the figures to lifeless heaps. If they are examined closely, the party discovers name tags on these space suits with their own names.

TEMPTATIONS: Emerging from this sordid terrain reveals a large streak on the ground, slick and black, coming from the direction of the Sap deposit. After a bit more trekking, the V-Dailies' lights cause a shimmer ahead, reflecting off what seems like a solid curtain of slowly flowing Sap. Through some unknown action, the Sap is pushed up to the top of a cave entrance and falls downward, completely covering the opening, like a sort of waterfall. Along the mouth of the cave, above the flowing Sap, are a series of carved reliefs depicting a sphere that transitions across the images from dripping with liquid, to drying out, to dripping yet again. The scanners confirm that the deposit is below. The shape of

the entrance recalls the greatest tourist trap attraction on the Colony, the Great Maw, a cave where the first bits of Sap were discovered nearly a millennium ago. Ask each party member what cheap trinket or souvenir from the Great Maw they either had or saw around most regularly.

Unavoidably, pushing past the Sap curtain coats the party members in the sticky, oily substance, and their best efforts to clean their visors still leave darkened streaks and smudges around their vision. Downward-facing spears of the stuff drip in slow motion from the ceiling of the cave like stalactites, making pools and small, slow-motion streams in the asteroid dust. The Sap practically breathes in these tunnels, pulsing outward and inward at an unsettlingly familiar rate, periodically bulging off of the party's suits. Any density scans up ahead reveal a mass of thick liquid bigger than most refinery ships. Ask each party member when it was that they truly understood the Colony's environment was poisoned beyond repair and, if there actually were a way to stop it, what that would be.

Ring 5

TERRORS: Below the asteroid's surface, the party loses count of how many Sap-smearred suits they pass littered along the dusty walls of the cavern, some empty and some still carrying the skeletal remains of their past inhabitants, all of which are previously unseen variants on the V-Dailies' design. As they head deeper and the caves open up, the discarded spacesuits are broken up by the familiar remains of damaged landing modules and pieces of drilling equipment. At what should be the drill site, a gigantic void stretches into the depths with numerous deep, open pits of Sap.

In the party's presence, all the Sap begins to churn and boil with a frantic energy before flowing outward and upward against the walls of the cave, rushing over the party's feet. The largest pool of Sap in the center of the cavern begins to drain, revealing a blue-green orb, first suspended in the Sap then floating above it, that seems to gradually increase in size. Before any party member can inspect it, the cavern begins to rumble, and gelatinous black ooze extrudes not from the massive collection of Sap pools but from the rock and dust above, below, and all

around the party. It congeals into separate, distinctly humanoid shapes before each party member: an inky but striking resemblance of the person that most ties them to the Colony, except for their tall height, elongated face, and additional arms. Confirm with each party member whose form the Sap takes before them.

These figures speak to the party members directly through their comms equipment about what they would have been deprived of if not for the Sap and how, in its absence, so many people would never have had a chance to be born, grow old, and die on the Colony. It gives so much life before it takes it away, providing fuel for nearly every essential industry, technology, and body, and it is not the V-Dailies' to take away from anyone. It must be preserved for those that come both after and before. The Sap figures will offer each party member a deal, as per below, but if any of them has any reason to believe a party member intends to damage or extract the Sap or otherwise interfere with the process they oversee, it will pursue them at a funeral's pace, because of the low gravity, but still quicker than they can manage. It will attempt to completely submerge them in the viscous fluid, prying at any gaps, cracks, or cuts in their suit for an entry point with which to flood it, absorbing their soft organic matter and leaving the bones to rattle about within the suit before adding it to its collection.

TEMPTATIONS: It's right there. Enormous quantities of Sap lie right in front of you on the cavern floor, with untold depths beneath. These creatures seem to know what they want. Perhaps if they were just occupied with a prize, yet another spacesuit to fill with yet another portion of themselves, they could be avoided long enough to begin drilling and extraction. The support ship needs only to see the electric flare launched above the asteroid to deploy the pumpline.

But the orb, slowly rotating in place like a beacon of stability, reveals familiar topography, the landscape where various party members grew up. It's a miniature version of the Colony planet, before the spills, the fires, the poisoning, growing larger with every passing second. Anyone inspecting the small planetary orb more closely will discover similarly miniature versions of both BX-319, hovering where one would expect it to be in relation to the

Colony, and an impressively sized spaceship. The ship is not a copy of the party's dropship but of the Colonial Elders' settler ship that established the Khefnari Empire's foothold here a thousand years ago. Despite their size, the small versions of the planet, the asteroid, and the ship are all as heavy and dense as their full-size counterparts, and they continue to grow at a slow but noticeable and steady pace. If left unchecked, they will burst out of BX-319 and, eventually, will simultaneously reach their proper size and place as they complete their transition into reality, simply destroying anything in their way. The smaller asteroid will grow to replace the one the party members currently occupy. The new planet, as pristine as when it was first discovered, will phase into place where the Colony once was.

The Sap figures will present a deal to any party members willing to listen to their captivating whispers. If they give themselves over to it, the Sap will provide not only for them but also for a whole other millennium of settlers, eager to live on and exploit this planet as a colonial outpost once again, happily ignorant of their past and their future. Otherwise, they'll be obliterated with the formation of the new Colony, or if they try to stop it or steal the last of the precious Sap, they will be forcefully assimilated into nothing. Any party members who accept the deal must plunge into one of the Sap pools, allowing themselves to be broken down and reconstituted toward its ends. They will awaken aboard that new settler ship rebuilt by some greater power within the Sap, same as the old ship, side-by-side with the other frontierspeople of the Khefnari Empire that they learned about in school, with a keen affinity for where to locate the substance that will sustain the new colony yet again, 1,000 years before its fated destruction. But that end will come long after they have retired to the Centerworlds with the other Elders on their exorbitant, Sap-stained wealth.

