

## Episode 4 “What’s Cooking in McBride’s Stew?”

### An adventure for FASA’s Star Trek: The Role Playing Game

#### Gamemaster Preface

The Rychian Empire has discovered a method to transverse the dimensional barrier into our universe. Unfortunately, the physical property of their matter does not maintain permanent cohesion in this dimension with a one way transport. They require a second device on this side to allow their invasion force to come through. In the first stage of the invasion, they sent a small vessel through with a unit that contains the brainwave patterns of a pre-staging assault force. Their hope is that a civilization of an appropriate technology level will attempt to retrieve the vessel, and discover the unit. Their arrogant assertion is that their superior minds will easily overcome the hapless passers by. Once in their control, the invaders will begin dismantling the saucer and using other indigenous resources to begin construction of the dimension portal.

The Essex, while on patrol, is struck by a large a large subspace shockwave followed by weak and sporadic energy readings from a nearby nebula. The Tarsis Nebula, commonly known as "McBride's Stew", lies just within the Federation border, roughly 12 days from Federation Starbase 12.

A saving roll for the Science Officer, Starship Sensors at -40 to detect the wave before it hits. Helmsman rolls against Starship Helm Op -40 if Science Officer failed roll, -20 if successful. If the Helmsman succeeds, then no Superstructure damage is taken. If the Helmsman fails, then the ship takes 1D10/2 points of damage. Roll against the damage chart for results. The entire bridge crew will need to make rolls against their DEX scores or suffer 2D10 of temporary damage. As the ship continues toward the nebula, crewmembers with PSI <40 will begin experiencing headaches. Gamemaster should be careful not to over emphasize the link between the headaches and the PSI score. The Chief Medical Officer can easily dispense with the headaches in 3-hour intervals, although these efforts will be useless once the party reaches the planetoid. I leave it to Gamemaster discretion whether to have the headaches interfere with player performance.

The Tarsis Nebula is a relatively unremarkable area of space, explored by several Federation ships and probes over the years. In time, astronomers speculate, the nebula will condense into a star cluster. The last survey of the nebula, done a year ago by an independent research vessel Alexandria, reported several small planetoids caught deep in the nebula.

The energy readings have no known pattern, and appear to be coming from deep within the nebula. The Essex can trace the energy readings through the nebula (with rolls against Starship Sensors to maintain contact, failure results in starting over. A total of six successive rolls before the Essex finds the planetoid.).

The planetoid is class D, and large enough to maintain a breathable atmosphere. The surface is rocky with no change in its surface features. Shipboard scans cannot pinpoint the exact source of the energy readings because of interference from the nebula. A landing party will be required to obtain any more information.

Transporting down to the surface of the planetoid requires a Transporter Op skill of 40+ and a successful roll at a -10 penalty. The interference does not inhibit shuttling down to the surface. The radiation levels do not warrant the need for any protection. Gamemaster’s discretion whether to make the character’s make saving rolls vs. DEX to drop into the crater. Also the distance to the saucer is up to the GM. If AP’s are being used, consult ST:RPG for rules governing terrain and AP cost.

The energy readings come from a craft lying at the center of a large crater close to a nearby mountain range. The craft is roughly 21 meters long, and disk-like in shape. The center of the disk has a depression with a translucent dome. No surface activity indicating that the craft is operational. The exterior has an odd texture- solid, though when touched, the material spreads in a concentric circular pattern, similar to a still liquid when touched. The radiation is not coming from the exterior of the vessel.

**Tricorder scans of the exterior of the vessel will vary based on the users' skill levels.**

**Small Eq Sys Op score  $\leq 40$**

- The ship's exterior hull does not register with any known Federation material.
- The hull is considerably dense. Hand weapons are not able to damage it.
- The energy readings seem to originate from the center of the vessel.
- The energy is on a high frequency that allows it to pass freely through solid objects, including the alien ship hull.

**Small Eq Sys Op score  $> 40$**

- The ship's hull has a molecular structure that does not follow the understood laws of physics. The hull seems to be breaking down on an atomic level.
- Some parts of the ship's hull do not register on tricorder readings, suggesting the material may be in a spatial discontinuity.

Further investigation of the outer hull reveals what appears to be a hatch. Near the left side of the hatch is a circular impression with a central appendage, possibly a door handle. Rotating the handle right or left will cause the door to slide open. A loud hissing sound accompanies the open hatch as the atmospheric pressures equalize.

A scan of the interior atmosphere reveals that although the gases are unfamiliar, they pose no threat to humanoid physiology. The pressure inside the vessel is considerably less than that of the planetoid, so, the rushing in of the planetoid's atmosphere will provide an adequate supply of breathable air for the landing party.

Inside the door reveals a darkened room with a second door a few feet beyond. Apparently, this is an airlock. The second door has a similar door handle. This door leads to the actual ship interior.

A dim light illuminates the open-air room. The airlock opens to a central catwalk that encircles the perimeter of the room and bridges out to center of the saucer, where a column of machinery stretches from top to bottom. The source of the illumination seems to be coming from the base of the column. The illumination is a bit too dim to make out any details on the walls or ceiling. The lower level is almost completely darkened.

**Other information based on character skill levels**

**Small Equip Sys Op  $< 40$**

- All the equipment though powered, does not seem to be operational.
- The purpose of the equipment cannot be determined from the scans.
- Portable units are providing power to the individual systems, though the energy is unknown to Federation science.
- The energy readings detected by the Essex seem to stem from the central column.

**Small Equip Sys Op  $> 40$**

- Operator can configure tricorder to coordinate alien molecular structures to isolate possible life forms. A roll versus skill, if successful, will indicate two possible life form readings, both on the lower level, one near the base of the column, another several meters from the first.
- The entire alien structure is decaying as the molecular bond is weakening. Shipboard systems are required to estimate accurate rate of decay.

- Another energy signature is detected on the lower level.

Starship Engineering 40+

- The central column is obviously the central power system, although the power source is unknown and/or non-existent. It is also the main source of propulsion, whatever that may be. It will take longer than the scope of this adventure to determine the properties behind the drive, or even getting it off the ground.
- Skill level in Starship Engineering /10 plus 1D10 hours to adapt Federation portable power supply to shipboard systems.

Computer Tech 40+ or Electronics Tech 40+

- The shipboard systems seem to be undamaged and may reveal useful information once power is restored.

The machinery seems to be functional, as demonstrated by the sporadic blinking lights. The catwalk that leads to the center of the saucer reveals a platform with a set of controls attached to an arm rail. The platform is obviously a lift system to the lower level of the saucer.

On the lower level, at the base of the central column, appears to be a control station, comprising of a console, an attached chair and a sole occupant. The occupant doesn't react as the landing party approaches. Seated is a figure roughly six feet in height, wearing a tightly fitting black body suit, with hoses and wires running up and through, leading to the headgear. The helmet completely encapsulates the head, the face shield tinted, completely obscuring the individual's features. With little effort, it is possible to remove the helmet, revealing a humanoid looking head, with two sunken eyes, two short slits where the nose would be, protruding fang-like teeth, and an eerie dark yellow skin tone. This being is apparently dead. The device he was monitoring does not appear to be functioning.

The second being sits in front of a much larger console, undoubtedly the ship's main flight controls. He has a similar environmental suit as his companion, and is just as deceased. The equipment he is monitoring appears to be undamaged, though unpowered, except for a small device encased in a clear receptacle, mounted into the floor. Lights on the device are blinking at regular intervals, but the device itself gives no indication to its purpose.

### **Gamemaster Notes:**

#### **Proceeding from Here**

The device mounted on the floor is a containment vessel for the brainwave patterns of hundreds of aliens (I call them Rychians, you can call them whatever you like...). The intent is to invade the minds of their intended victims until the repository of minds is empty (roughly 500... about the crew compliment of a Constitution class ship... what a coincidence). Their mission is to use the remains of the saucer and whatever equipment they find to build a dimensional portal to allow other ships and equipment to pass through, and begin a systematic invasion of this dimension.

Any character in the saucer with a PSI score less than 40 needs to make an immediate saving roll to keep from being taken over by the alien device. For those who fail, the GM has a couple of options: Either plays the character henceforth as an NPC, or includes the player and allows him/her to play out being part of the alien invasion force. When I played the scenario, out of convenience, all NPC landing party members failed their saving rolls. The device on the ground has a range of around 15m at this low power level.

If a character becomes assimilated, he/she will try not to raise suspicion immediately and will go about the adventure normally. The first stage of the plan will be to unbolt the device from the saucer and attempt to bring it on board the ship to use the ship's power to amplify the unit's psionic transmitter.

Once on board, the abducted characters will hook up the device as soon as possible. Once completed, the same characters will try to abduct other members of the crew by showing them the device: "I've made a new discovery...", "It's doing something funny...", etc. Although the range of the device only doubles, the intensity of the device actually makes resisting the device more difficult, a -20 penalty against their PSI score. The more well placed the victim is in the chain of command, the easier it will be to take control of vital areas of the ship.

How these invaders take control of the ship should be left to the discretion of the player characters (if they're playing up being controlled by the aliens) or the GM playing NPC's. The various methods of taking over a ship are too numerous to describe each situation and outcome. As it played out for our group, the Science Officer (one of the abducted) had one of the other abducted landing party members return to the ship for 'other equipment' and secured the transporter room. He then beamed the entire party up to the ship,

phaser in hand, and held the command staff hostage. From there, the Science Officer was able to use the ship's intruder defense system to subdue the rest of the ship while they began hooking up the device and creating collars. Again, there are many ways to take over a starship, be creative. Note that the abducted crew retains their knowledge about the ship.

Once a firm control of the ship has been taken, those who have not been abducted will be rounded up and detained while amplification collars are constructed for each remaining crewman. These collars are individually attuned to the user and circumvent the need for a PSI saving roll.

### **Ending the Game**

Sadly, I cannot offer an encompassing end to this particular scenario. Because of the number of ways the story can take, there's no way to account for all the potential outcomes. Be mindful to let the players create their own solutions. Don't be afraid to stretch the limitations of reality or Star Trek canon for the sake of a good idea (or a bad one...). The ending for my particular scenario involved the remaining command crew escaping detention, stealing some collars, and mounting an assault on the bridge. It involved a lot of complex planning and skill rolls, it also included an assault of the auxiliary bridge and implementation of fire suppression systems and random encounters and corridor firefights. The best advice I can offer is be very flexible and keep deck plans handy (if available).

If Starfleet becomes notified, they'll send an Anton class cruiser, The USS Bechtold, to recover the alien vessel and study any equipment. Be wary that some players may try to hold on to some of the alien technology for themselves.

I used the results of the game as a springboard for other adventures. I was tempted to use it as a centerpiece for a campaign, but, decided against it, and never went into detail with the Rychians.

If anyone has any additional ideas, backgrounds, questions or comments about this adventure, feel free to E-mail me at: [ufc465537@yahoo.com](mailto:ufc465537@yahoo.com).



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