

THE ICE OF PAULET 7

by Noah Lloyd and Matt Ryan

INTRODUCTION

Paulet 7 is a frozen wasteland. Outside the survival domes where humanity ekes out existence, we wear O2 masks to keep from feeling like we're walking along the top of Everest—the name of some mountain we dreamed up long ago. We landed here a hundred years ago for the rich mineral veins, drilling deep beneath the planet's ice crust to reach the mantle, an incredibly hot layer of molten elements that we source both for heat and the elements that we sell through the spaceways—routes that trading vessels travel, passing Paulet 7 once every three years. The ice shafts—with straight, 28 km drops—sing in the frequent high winds like the pan pipes of a malevolent god. We have no way to get off-planet, just the traders who arrive every three years; our own vessel we dismantled, and used her parts to build our new... home.

KEEPER BACKGROUND

The colony has dug too far, grown too hungry for the wealth of Paulet 7, and something has heard their digging. The **Dholes** sleep beneath the ice, beneath the crust, in the furnace of Paulet's mantle. All they need now is a catastrophe, a call to a forgotten self... The scenario begins as the Paulet 7 colony is concluding its offloading of mineral resources harvested over the past three years. The trading merchant *Union Star*, five stories of colossal bulk, all engines and holding bays, towers over the colony's survival domes. She has a skeleton complement of 16, just enough to crew the vessel and load/unload its vast cargos. As the colony finishes the final phases of loading, ask what the characters are doing. Several have access to mechs—bipedal machines used for all kinds of labor, from construction to defense—which they can use to load multi-ton bins of mineral deposits onto the *Union Star*. Other characters might be involved in logistics, overseeing the entire process. Allow the players a certain degree of autonomy here in developing their role within the colony, let them aid you in the worldbuilding.

BEGINNING THE SCENARIO

The deep shafts of Paulet 7 seem to be singing extra loudly today, and the harvesters that hang over them like massive oil rigs sway in the terrible winds that whip across the planet with no land masses to halt them. **Natural World**, **Survival**, and **Know** rolls all tell the investigators that the *Union Star* needs to take off—*now*.

As the *Union Star* lifts the first thirty or forty feet into the air, a violent crosswind catches it, sending it spinning and its maneuvering thrusters firing, colliding into the nearest of the harvester rigs. The pair explodes, sending a heatwave through the colony and shrapnel flying, ripping open several of the domes (**Dodge** or take 1 damage). The wreckage of the *Union Star* straddles the shaft, its fore and aft sections only barely preventing it from tumbling down the full 28 km, along with all the colony's profits and the *Star's* surviving crew, if any.

The investigators' mechs are tiny compared to the *Union Star*, but still might be used creatively, peeling away hull panels to create new entrances, etc. Inside the *Star*, the passageways are cramped, some of them flooding with coolant (toxic? perhaps). One of the *Star's* three cargo bays remains intact, though with its contents absolutely haphazard. In the crew kitchen, one of the bosuns has been cut in half by an emergency depressurization door (**SAN** 0/1D4), and a merchant marine has been crushed by a refrigerator that broke from its bolts. Cargo Bay 3 no longer exists—scraped away by the impact, some of its contents strewn across the ice field. Cargo Bay 2, however, on the *Star's* underside, has been rent open, its contents spilling down into the shaft. Examining the tear (made difficult since the floor slants precipitously toward the gap) requires either successive **Strength** checks or ingenuity to rig a safety harness. Characters inside the *Union Star* (not in their mechs) can make **Listen** rolls to hear a plaintive crying from a storage locker, still shut, hanging directly over the gash and the shaft itself. Inside is **Maybelle Pearson**, a stowaway on the *Star* trying to escape the colony. Maybelle is nine years old and terrified; once the investigators hear her (or if they don't) the hinges on the locker door give way and she falls out, catching the door handle and holding on for dear life. The investigators must make five successive rolls (aligning with whatever plan they put into place) to save her before she falls to her death. Allow one final Extreme **DEX** check to try and catch her while she's falling. If Maybelle survives, she describes a terrible wormlike thing the size of her mommy's mech that ripped into the vessel and killed several of the men inside the cargo bay. Examining with mechs, use **Pilot** rolls to climb down the shaft, etc. With **Science (Metallurgy)**, the tear has obviously been made by something incredibly sharp *and* superheated. **Spot Hidden** (Bonus die if the characters aren't in their mechs) notices a tunnel just large enough for a mech to crawl through in the wall of the shaft. The tunnel collapses in on itself after about 100 meters.

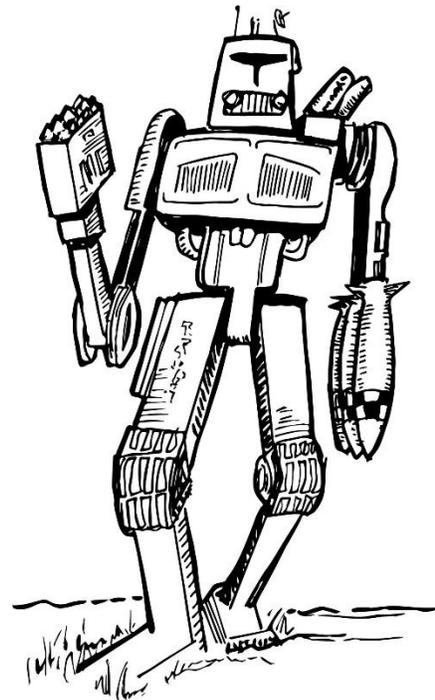
TIME PASSES

Several days pass. Let the players narrate what their characters do as life settles, somewhat, back to normal. Interstellar communication takes years, and another trader won't pass through for another three years. What is life like in the colony? What kinds of daily tasks must be met? How does Maybelle get on with her family now, or how does her family react to her death?

On the third day, a rumbling beneath the ice awakens everyone in the colony. A **Dhole** emerges to consume one of the survival domes, and sends a dozen colonists screaming into the dusk of morning; several of them run out onto the plains and freeze to death in the next few hours. From here on, it's up to the investigators to stop the Dholes who, now awakened, will hunt the colony to extinction if not stopped. Their mechs give them a chance to survive, but only just.

After taking more than 100 damage, the Dhole submerges through what looks almost identical to the shafts dug by the colonists. Whether following this line back to its source, or via another path along the mining shafts, the pilots eventually arrive at a horrific sight: three Dholes (one of them wounded) in a great, superheated cavern, lavishing together in a disgusting ball like mating snakes. It's unlikely that the investigators can take on all three in direct combat, but perhaps can bury them...

Rules for Mechs: Each pilot has the **Mech Combat** and **Pilot (Mech)** skills. If they have a generic combat skill (like **Fighting (Brawl)**, **Firearms**, etc.) they can declare they're using that skill in addition to **Combat** when fighting in their Mechs; success in their more specialized skill grants them a Bonus die on their roll. Similarly, a specialization (and successful roll) in **Dodge** or **Climb** would apply a Bonus die to **Pilot (Mech)** under proper circumstances. Mech HP are a separate pool from Investigator HP; extreme successes on attack rolls always do 1D10 damage, through armor, to the opponent's pilot.



Reckoning of the Dead Character Sheet

Name: _____

Occupation: _____ Age: _____

Characteristics

STR DEX INT HP

CON APP POW MP

SIZ EDU Luck Sanity

Skills

_____	<input type="text"/>	_____	<input type="text"/>
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Background & Equipment

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