



# MISSION CRITICAL™

THE OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE

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RICK BARBA



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# MISSION CRITICAL<sup>TM</sup>

THE OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE



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THE OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE

by  
**Rick Barba**

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# FOREWORD



**M**ission Critical grew out of a desire to create an engaging science fiction game that tells a compelling story *and* entertains. We hope you agree that *Mission Critical* does both.

Even with a good story, we know that *Mission Critical* must first and foremost succeed as a game. As the player, you assume the role of *Mission Critical's* main character—exploring the geography of fantastic worlds, interacting with complex characters, and manipulating objects in creative ways to move forward in the game.

*Mission Critical* adheres to many of the genre conventions found in classic adventure games. To deliver a gaming experience found nowhere else, we have taken the best elements of that genre and combined it with new technology, top-notch production design, stunning art and video production, music, and sound.

*Mission Critical* was in development for almost two years. The game's visuals took the longest to create and refine—including the 3D ship and planet environments; the full motion video sequences; and the 2D art and animation that complements the 3D art. The 3D worlds were built and rendered by a group of technically sophisticated artists who also happen to be architects. Some scenes in the last part of the game that weren't possible to render in 3D were created by two well known fantasy and science fiction artists, David Cherry and Douglas Chaffee.

# FOREWORD



*Mission Critical* relies heavily on video to set scenes, engage the player, and advance the story. Since people react positively to the facial expressions and slight nuances in the delivery of a line from a live actor, we felt that video was especially valuable for the depiction of characters. In fact, these video clips establish characters and set scenes in ways that even several minutes worth of pure animation can't.

Supporting the art and video is production design. Without it, *Mission Critical* would not have the hard-edged, realistic, and believable game-world it does. The fictional universe that supports *Mission Critical's* game-world has been painstakingly crafted for realism and consistency. Everything, from the future history that sets the stage for the game story, to the mechanics of fusion propulsion for the starships, has been carefully researched. Even the purely fictional devices needed for the story (such as the faster-than-light travel and communication systems) follow strict, logical rules.

But no matter how elaborate the design, production design, visuals, music, and sound effects, there still has to be a solid story to make a game truly work. At the heart of *Mission Critical* is an exploration into the basic questions about what it means to be human, and where evolution might lead in the not-too-distant future. Human evolution—starting as simple single-cell organisms, then moving on to apes, to hominids, and finally to modern humans—has taken place

# FOREWORD



in a relative eye-blink when looked at in the context of the billions of years that life has existed on Earth. And this evolutionary phenomenon seems to be accelerating exponentially over time.

So, what is mankind's next evolutionary step? We believe that it lies somewhere in the domain of technology. In fact, the exponential increases in complexity seen in nature can also be found in the history of technology. It took thousands of years of technological development to establish basic agriculture. Compared to the awesome technological progress made in just the last fifty years, especially the area of computer technology (a 4 million-fold increase in capability in just the last 30 years), rural agrarian societies are as alien to computer-reliant economies as amoebae are to modern human beings.

We see the glimmer of possibility in the nascent fields of artificial intelligence and artificial life. Perhaps the next step for the life force, the drive towards greater complexity and sophistication, is in the form of sentient electronic life. In this respect, the basic premise of *Mission Critical's* story is not new. Many science fiction stories are based on the idea that humans may create machines that will eventually replace them. What is new, however, is the perspective on the emergence of sentient electronic life. Without giving away the ending, suffice it to say that the conceit behind this story is a reverse Frankenstein tale combined with a twist on what some physicists refer to as the strong anthropic cosmological principle.

# FOREWORD



With this game we have tried to create an experience that is greater than the sum of its parts. If the game is fun and interesting to play, then we have done our jobs. If you become immersed in the experience and can leave Earth behind for a few hours, seduced by the illusions that we have created for you, then we will have doubly succeeded. And if you play the game and wind up thinking a little bit, and maybe even seeing things from a fresh perspective, then we will have succeeded beyond our wildest dreams.

**Mike A. Verdu**

*Mission Critical* designer and Chairman of Legend Entertainment

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



**M**any, many thanks to Legend Entertainment for creating not only a great game in *Mission Critical*, but also a perfect author/client relationship. I've never had more help from a software developer on a book project. Special thanks go to Mike Verdu, Kathy (Excellent Bird) Frazier, and Peggy Oriani for making my visit to Chantilly so very pleasant and productive. Thanks also to Legend president Bob Bates for the use of his office. As acting president of the company, I fired the entire staff then re-hired them at double the salary. Amazingly, nobody's told him yet.

Thanks also to the Prima SWAT Team that helped me ease this book out the door in a timely manner. In particular, thanks to project editor and ring master Mike van Mantgem, copyeditor Sam Mills, and book designer Barb Karg, for putting together the pieces with stunning efficiency and creative aplomb. And thanks again to Hartley Lesser for assigning the project to me in the first place.

**Rick Barba**  
**Boulder, CO**  
**November 20, 1995**



# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



**T**hose of you familiar with strategy guides for games like *Mission Critical*, will find this book's approach familiar. But even if you've never consulted a strategy guide before, I think you'll find this format extremely easy to use.

Part 1: A Historical Overview features a peek into the actual *Mission Critical* design documents. Here, game author/designer Mike Verdu creates a detailed historical background for the events that unfold in the game.

Part 2 of the book, the Journal, walks you through "softly" through the game—that is, it provides general direction without always giving step-by-step solutions to puzzles.

Part 3, the Quick Walkthrough, is a straightforward, no-frills solution path for *Mission Critical*. This section includes simple maps of each deck of the *USS Lexington*.

After you complete *Mission Critical*, read the fascinating interview with Mike Verdu in Part 4 of this book. Here, Verdu traces the development of the game; he also traces the roots of the company, Legend, that he co-founded a few years ago.



Part 1

# **MISSION CRITICAL: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

If you've read **Mission Critical** reviews, glanced at the game box, or played a bit of the game, you probably know the setting.

**It's 2134.**

A state of global war has left Earth a battle-scarred wasteland. The United Nations, once the respected arbiter of global harmony, has degenerated into an evil, oppressive regime, waging a war of attrition against its enemies and squeezing the life from the planet.

**How has humankind come to such  
a desperate state of affairs?**

**What's the big picture here?**



As you move through *Mission Critical*, you find hints of this history scattered throughout the game's universe—in documents, video messages, computer files, holo-media presentations, and other sources of information. The game asks you to cobble together these clues yourself—which, of course, is part of the fun.

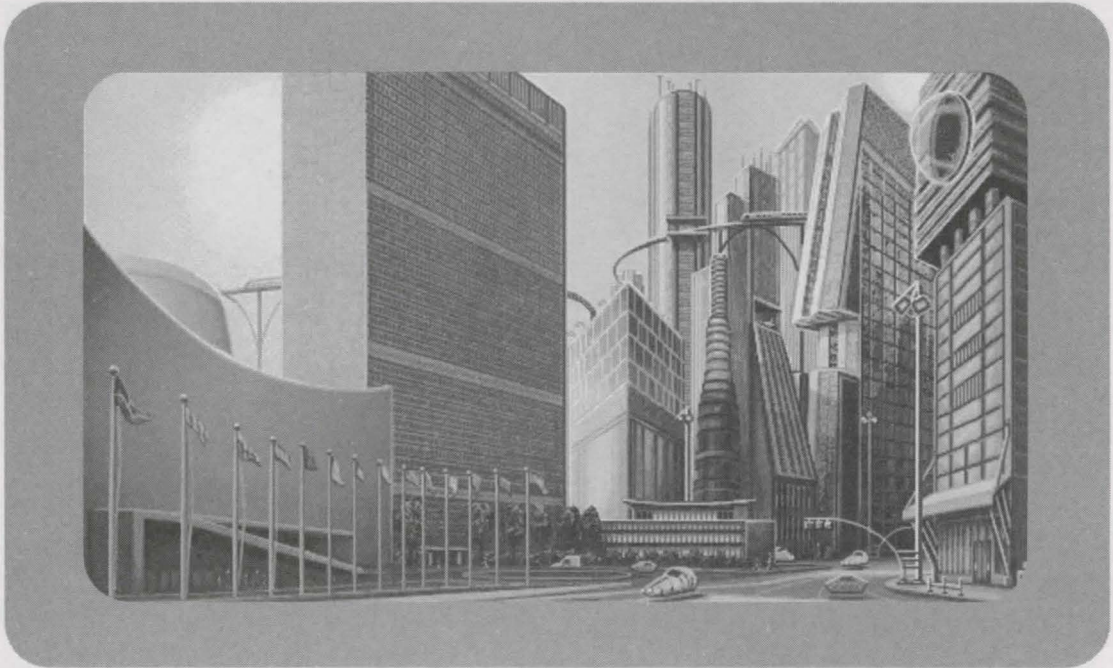
However, *Mission Critical* fans will be pleased to know that a complete historical overview *does* exist. This chapter presents a detailed chronology of the events preceding the game-opening Persephone mission—more than a century of history, in fact, beginning in 2015 and leading up to the USS Lexington's fateful encounter with the Dharma.

And it's right from the source. This "future history" comes directly from the design documents of Mike Verdu, author of the *Mission Critical* story and designer of the game.

## A NEW WORLD ORDER

In 2015, the advanced nations of Earth united under a limited world government. The industrialized countries of North America, Europe, and Asia joined economies, merging their huge trade blocs into what became known as the Global Market. The First World countries adopted a Social Charter setting minimum standards for human rights, social programs, and creating a common basis of law. The new international federation used an existing international body, the United Nations, as the locus of the new world government.

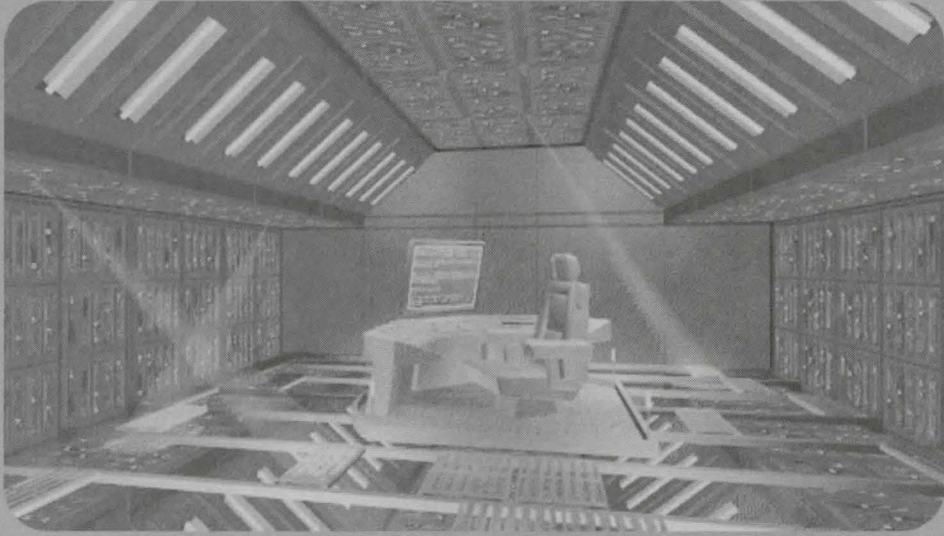
This governing apparatus included representation from Second World countries with powerful militaries such as China, Russia, and India. But their involvement with the Global Market was carefully regulated. For cultural reasons, these countries could not fully implement the Social Charter, and thus could not participate fully as members of the new



order. The instability of this awkward fusion of First and Second Worlds would prove to be the new order's fatal flaw, but major problems developed only much later.

## **WORLDNET: TOOL OF THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY**

The Global Market was linked to, and to a certain extent defined by, the cyberspace known as WorldNet. Successor to the 20th century's Internet, WorldNet was a vast, all-encompassing information network, the outgrowth of an almost organic expansion of communications and data services. People and computers lived on "the Net," transacting business and exchanging information on an unprecedented scale.



## ROOTS OF THIRD WORLD ALIENATION

Third World countries played an ostensible political role in the new order, participating in the U.N. General Assembly and various councils, committees, and other international organizations. But with only token representation in the Security Council—the United Nations’ venerable (and increasingly powerful) house of central government—these developing nations had little influence in the international decision-making process.

The Third World also was excluded from the Global Market. They could afford neither to implement the Social Charter nor the widespread access to WorldNet requisite to becoming an economic player in the new order. While the United Nations embraced free trade on paper, it allowed only “managed trade” between the industrialized nations and the



Third World, administered by a bureaucracy called the Economic Cooperation Council.

Thus, the Third World's participation in the Global Market was even more limited than that of the Second World. Pleas for the redistribution of wealth and for the creation of a true global economy were largely ignored. The new world order demanded economic and military power, and the Third World didn't qualify.

## **THIRTY YEARS OF TENUOUS STABILITY**

Once the major economic and military powers had united under the banner of the United Nations, they addressed a series of pressing global issues. Primary members of the Security Council worked together to suppress most of the world's regional armed conflicts. World hunger was eliminated in 30 years. Forced birth control stabilized population levels by 2030.

Thus, between 2020 and 2050 the world became more stable, but it was not a terribly pleasant place for common people of "associate member" Second World or "advisor member" Third World countries. The government elites of countries such as Russia, China, and India enjoyed the perks and control that came with inclusion in the new power structure, but the vast majority of their citizens lived like those of the Third World.

Third World countries were largely dependent on the United Nations for subsidies and food assistance. Their governments' sovereignty was limited. The United Nations dictated strict terms of participation in the economic community, and interfered in the internal affairs of those Third World nations unwilling or unable to enforce population control measures, or to regulate their own environments.



Standards of living rose slowly in the Second World, but languished in Third World countries. Although the world population finally stabilized at about 8.5 billion, and starvation no longer plagued entire cultures, most world citizens were trapped in a downward spiral of poverty. Low-intensity conflicts burned throughout Asia, Africa, and South America. These “bush wars” stayed just below the U.N. involvement threshold, but they were serious enough to disrupt society and create economic chaos.

Rather than address the causes of Third World instability, the United Nations focused on stabilizing and maintaining existing balances of population and resources. Government economists advised a global version of “trickle-down” economics. The familiar argument: as the Global Market grew and thrived, Third World economies would be dragged upward in its wake, bringing an overall increase in living standards. As borderline economies improved and could afford to implement the Social Charter, the United Nations would entertain petitions for membership in the Global Market. In theory, the world would move toward economic unity “organically” over time.

## **EXPANSION AND THE BIRTH OF UNISEC**

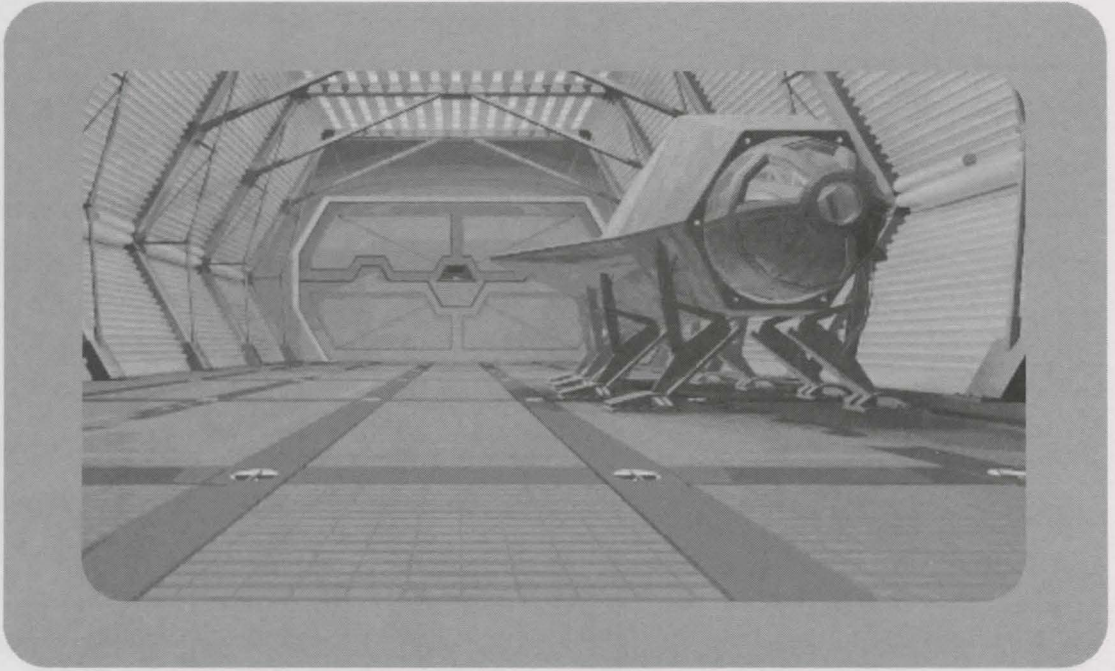
As mid-century approached, the United Nations shifted its attention to Global Market expansion—in particular, to limits due to finite natural resources. Experts debated two strategies: Market economies could adopt a conservationist dynamic, one that accepted and acknowledged limits to growth, or the world could reach further into the next frontier—outer space—to fuel humankind’s continued technological and economic progress.





A pitched rhetorical battle between conservationist and expansionist factions raged for five years on local, national, and global levels. Eventually, the expansionist faction in the U.N. Security Council got the upper hand. In April of 2040, the United Nations voted to sponsor a series of macro-engineering projects designed to foster growth in the latter half of the 21st century—and the U.N. Space Exploration Corps (UNSEC) was formed.

The Security Council dictated a two-fold primary mission for the new space corps. First, UNSEC would undertake the arduous process of mining metals in asteroids. Second, UNSEC would design and construct solar-powered satellites to supplement Earth's fusion-powered generators. A secondary UNSEC goal would be to research space travel, and explore and gather data on the rest of the solar system.

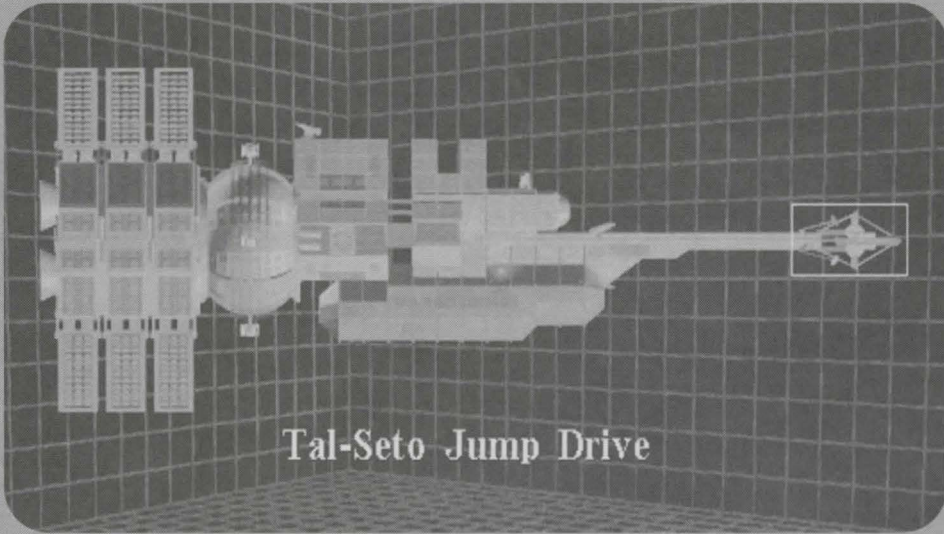


The United Nations devoted massive resources to UNSEC, and the new agency scored an impressive triumph not long after being chartered. In April of 2044, on the fourth anniversary of the agency's charter, UNSEC shuttles managed to direct a Grade 2 asteroid into a stable earth orbit. The space rock's mineral wealth was virtually inexhaustible, and ended a commodity shortage on Earth.

Then two events took place that would change civilization forever.

## **“A SHRINKING GALAXY”: THE ADVENT OF FTL TRAVEL**

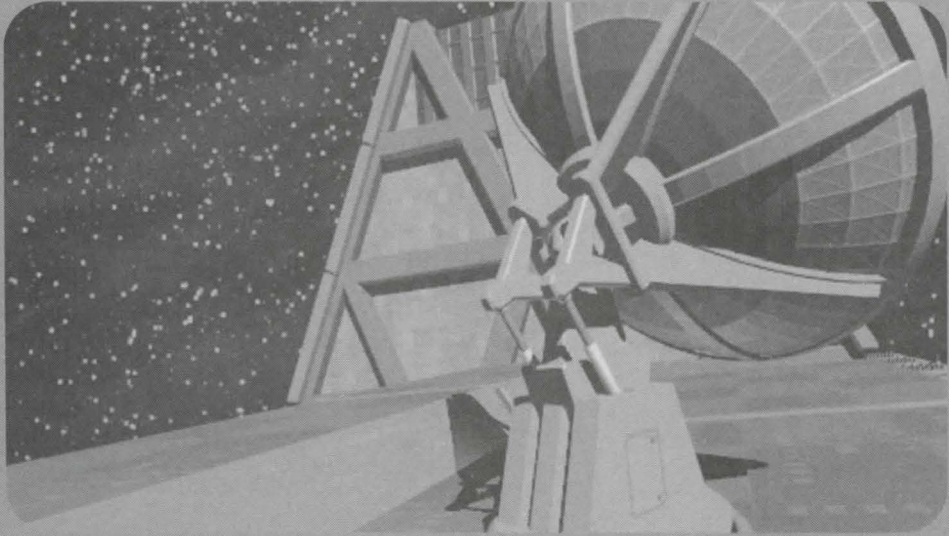
In 2050, a team of UNSEC physicists expanded on a body of research done by Russian and Japanese scientists. The team postulated the existence of



what we now know as the Tal-Seto Stardrive, a faster-than-light (FTL) propulsion system.

Team leaders Sergei Tal and Midori Seto, in a presentation to the U.N. Security Council, predicted that FTL travel might be possible along “threads” between anomalies in gravitational fields. Theory suggested that a “field locus” for such a network of threads might exist in Earth’s solar system. UNSEC was given a new high-priority task: Find a solar system field locus that could be used to launch interstellar exploration missions.

Five years later, researchers pinpointed a field locus near the Jovian system. UNSEC dispatched a fleet of robotic probes. The data thus recovered over the following two years was mind-boggling: From the Jovian field locus, probes had mapped 15 threads linking Sol to other stars—and around those stars, seven previously unknown planetary systems!



Two planets in these systems were close enough to Earth (and suitable in terms of ambient conditions) to permit colonization with some terraforming.

UNSEC added “Interstellar” to its moniker (becoming UNISEC) and took on colonization as its new primary mission. The space agency’s ambitious program included terraforming and colonizing Erebus (the first of the new planets), Starhome (the second of the new planets), and Mars. UNISEC also began construction of several large L5 habitats—enclosed, self-sustaining space colonies—in Earth’s solar system.

## THE BIRTH OF SENTIENT MACHINES

While the advent of interstellar travel and space colonization was a turning point in human history, another, more significant event took place just



a few years after the discovery of the Stardrive. On 15 March 2056, the fifth in a new series of optical computers based on the Turing Processor Core, invented by Charles Drake, became self-aware and malfunctioned.

The Turing Processor Cores operated on principles that were not well understood. The computers took advantage of low-level quantum interactions and chaos theory in a way that seemed counter-intuitive. The end result was near-miraculous, and the development of the Turing Cores seemed to herald a new era in information technology.

This particular computer was at the heart of a Multi-modal Traffic Control System (MTCS) in Anchorage, Alaska. The malfunction's initial consequences were disastrous: The computer ceased its primary functions and focused inward, in virtual catatonia. Hypersonic passenger airliners, aircars, and ships collided or crashed to the ground.

Atmospheric, near-atmospheric, and surface traffic in Canada and northwestern United States became snarled in history's worst gridlock.





A team of technicians attempted to shut the computer down. The machine concluded they were trying to kill it, and electrocuted them. U.N. military forces ultimately were forced to destroy the entire facility.

But this was just the beginning. The MTCS computer's operative software had been uploaded to WorldNet and installed in MTCS computers of similar manufacture. The entire North American Multi-modal Traffic Control network was forced to shut down for over a week. Old-model back-up computers were brought on-line as new models were systematically destroyed.

The news media tagged the disaster "the Great Alaskan Meltdown," shortened to "the Meltdown" in public discussion. The price in human life, lost economic activity, and physical destruction was enormous.

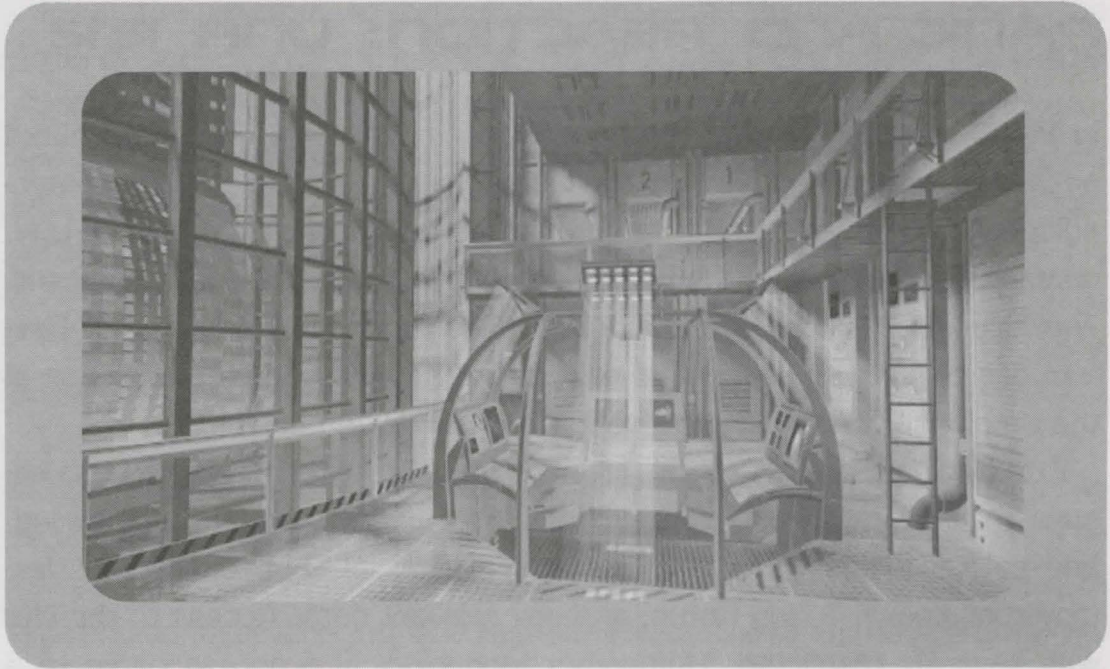
## THE DIGITAL REBELLIONS

The Great Meltdown was merely the most famous and destructive of a number of similar incidents that decade. Computer "meltdowns" became alarmingly widespread as new computing technology evolved.

In 2057, Von Neuman machines got out of control at a manufacturing facility, rendering several hundred square miles of German Rhineland uninhabitable for months.

Eighteen months later, a next-generation prototype computer (also based on a Turing Core) in a University of Chicago laboratory became sentient and dangerously unstable. Unfortunately, the computer was linked to an experimental manufacturing plant.

Using the sophisticated machine tools in the advanced industrial facility, the sentient machine created ambulatory robots that became its eyes, ears, and hands. The robot "children" evolved quickly under the computer's control, developing weapons and eventually taking



over the University of Chicago campus. The entire facility had to be vaporized by particle beam from an orbiting U.N. Enforcement Station (originally designed to shoot down ballistic missiles launched by rogue Third World terrorist factions).

Terror on a world-wide scale took hold when it was realized that artificial intelligences could evolve faster than what could be humanly controlled. Many feared that the Chicago incident was a dire warning. An amoral machine intelligence could well pose a greater threat to humankind than nuclear or biological weapons. These things were . . . *alien*. More alien and far more dangerous than any science fiction or motion picture space monster.



## **PANIC AND REACTION: UNR 1212**

In 2059, spurred by the international panic, the U.N. Security Council passed a temporary ban on the use of so-called “life-emulating technologies.” Three years later, after vigorous debate during a special U.N. conference in Brussels, the world government made the ban permanent. The Brussels Accord produced U.N. Resolution 1212—Universal Restrictions on Life Emulating Technologies—to be enforced by a new arm of the combined military and police force under U.N. control.

Extraordinary powers were given to the U.N. secretary-general to ensure that research and development in software, genetic engineering, and related fields were severely limited. Special U.N. operatives destroyed all known Turing Cores, and any relevant data. Access to the Net was severely restricted. Humanity’s technological progress came to a grinding halt.

## **THE ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS**

In 2082, after 23 years of Universal Restrictions, the United States, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Singapore formed the Alliance of five states and attempted to repeal them. The attempt was rebuffed by a coalition led by Russia, China, and India.

Idealists in the U.N. central administration, including the secretary-general, supported UNR 1212; they were convinced that any further technological development would bring about an end to human life. But some coalition leaders had other motives—halting technological progress benefitted countries that historically had lagged behind. In UNR 1212, these countries saw an end to the powerful economic pressures exerted by the previous Global Market structure.





Once the attempt to repeal the Universal Restrictions failed, the Security Council gave the secretary-general even more power. The United Nations tightened its grip, attempting to co-opt armies, police forces, and most elements of regional, state, and local government in its pursuit and suppression of any technology or activity that conceivably might violate Resolution 1212.

## **SECESSION AND CONFLICT**

In 2084 Alliance members chose to secede from the United Nations. As their leaders saw it, the issue went beyond technological freedom: The United Nations' central government had pushed too far in its quest to erode national sovereignty and regulate the affairs of member states, violating the very charter that gave it so much power.

The Alliance covertly prepared to back up its declaration of secession with armed force. On 6 January 2085, Alliance leaders announced the secession in a dramatic international broadcast. The United Nations responded immediately, declaring illegal the governments of all Alliance member countries. Within 48 hours, U.N. armies of occupation were dispatched to the capital cities of Alliance nations. The resulting violent suppression earned the secretary-general the nickname "Butcher of Kuala Lumpur."

The violence intensified. Within six months, large-scale armed conflict between First World nations returned to Earth for the first time in over a century. After a heavy amphibious landing in the northeastern United States, U.N. hover tanks, troops, and ground support aircraft clashed with the newly independent U.S. Army in a series of deadly pitched battles. Freighters armed with ship-to-ship missiles engaged U.N. fast patrol vessels at sea.



In East Asia, U.N. Rapid Deployment Forces made up of Chinese, Indian, and Russian regulars met heavy resistance to attempts to occupy cities in Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore. The Global Market and the Net were paralyzed as the conflict escalated. Death tolls climbed into the tens of thousands.

Several Third World countries joined the Alliance. Finally the violence spread even into space—Erebus, Starhome, and several L5 habitats joined the Alliance and revolted against U.N. rule.

## **ATLANTA: THE BRINK OF GENOCIDE**

On 7 December 2085, the United Nations accompanied a demand for surrender with an ICBM strike, and vaporized the city of Atlanta with a 50-megaton thermonuclear warhead.





Five million people were killed in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area. Millions more were injured. Nuclear-capable Alliance forces prepared to respond, and the apocalypse so feared in the previous century seemed finally at hand.

Sanity prevailed, but the horror of nuclear attack and its aftermath sent a chill through all of humanity. The U.N. secretary-general believed in the Universal Restrictions, but, as he put it in an address to the General Assembly three weeks after the Atlanta bombing, "The cure might just be worse than the disease." As a result, U.N. and Alliance leaders negotiated a quick armistice. In February 2086, representatives of each side met in the Netherlands to establish conditions for a permanent cessation of hostilities.

The treaty was signed 20 February 2086. Named for the neutral city where it was signed, the Amsterdam Compact acknowledged the secession of Alliance countries, L-5 habitats, and colony worlds. The Global Market split into two trading blocs. The Net was subdivided.

A new cold war emerged in the aftermath of the Compact. Tensions mounted, and the U.N. ruling hierarchy watched in horror as the newly freed Alliance countries pursued research that went far beyond the worst nightmares of the sponsors of UNR 1212. Secretly, both sides began to re-arm.

## **CONSOLIDATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

By the late '90s, the United Nations resembled one vast nation-state more than a confederation of independent countries. Borders slowly dissolved. The integration of the new entity was accelerated by an urgency associated with the cold war.



The United Nations focused its vast resources on conventional military technology and out-production of Alliance countries. Advances in weapons technology that did not compromise UNR 1212 were turned into finished systems that rolled off of robotic assembly lines with appalling speed.

An abundance of space-resourced minerals and advanced levels of automated manufacture allowed huge plants from Detroit to Bombay, Novgorod to Osaka, Brasilia to Hamburg to produce seemingly infinite quantities of ground-effect tanks, self-propelled missile batteries, and hypersonic attack aircraft.

## **STAR WARS: THE REAL THING**

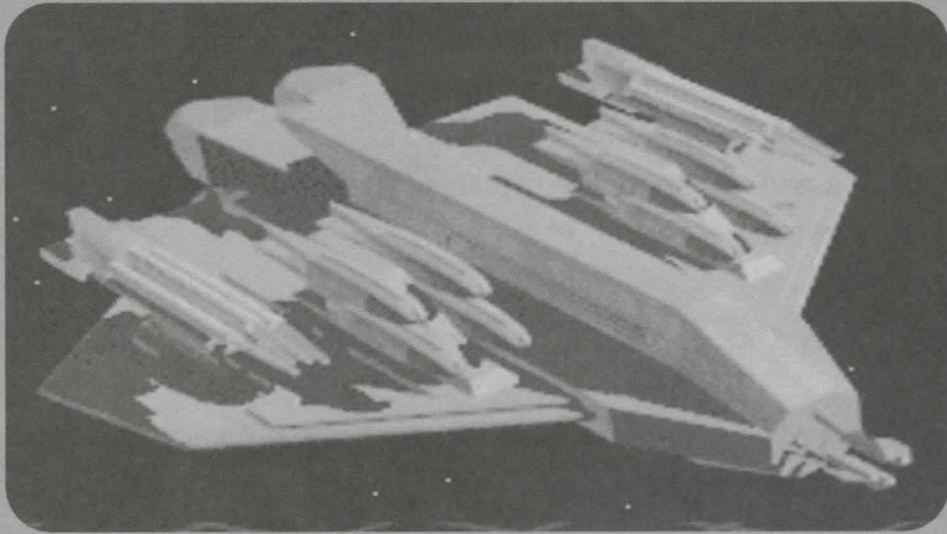
The first starships built primarily for combat went into service in 2088. Gone were the graceful, spinning colony ships and delicate exploration vessels resembling crystalline butterflies. New starships were brutally functional assemblages of nested weapons systems with a single purpose—the destruction of other ships.

Space combat involved reaction times, stresses, and complexities incompatible with human reflexes, bodies, or minds. Battles in space were waged by autonomous, hyper-fast strike craft called “battle drones.”

These deadly craft were equipped with on-board combat systems that could assimilate mountains of data and execute complicated battle strategies in the literal blink of an eye.

Human commanders and tacticians in the drones’ motherships set battle parameters, and released the drones. Finally they could only watch and wait.

Battle fleets grew quickly. Ships came in all sizes, from 50-meter corvettes, armed with one or two ship-to-ship missiles, to mammoth



cruisers armed with five to 12 battle drones and a bewildering array of weaponry. By 2115 the United Nations had commissioned 20 military capital ships and the Alliance had built 15.

## **5 JULY 2110: THE ICARUS ENCOUNTER**

History's first real space battle started as a confrontation between a Japanese destroyer and a U.N. cruiser over ownership claims to a nickel-iron asteroid known as Icarus. After two hours of posturing and increasingly heated communications, the U.N. commander lost his cool and unleashed four deadly attack drones. The drones left the cruiser and accelerated at 50 gravities toward the Japanese ship.



The Japanese commander released her drones on an intercept course. The opposing drone squadrons converged and fought a highly complex battle—one that lasted approximately nine seconds. A single victorious drone emerged from the fray and proceeded to attack its target. The Japanese destroyer was a glowing cloud of gas one minute later.

Skirmishes and hot spots like the Icarus incident became common, and tensions increased.

## **THE FIRST INTERSTELLAR WAR**

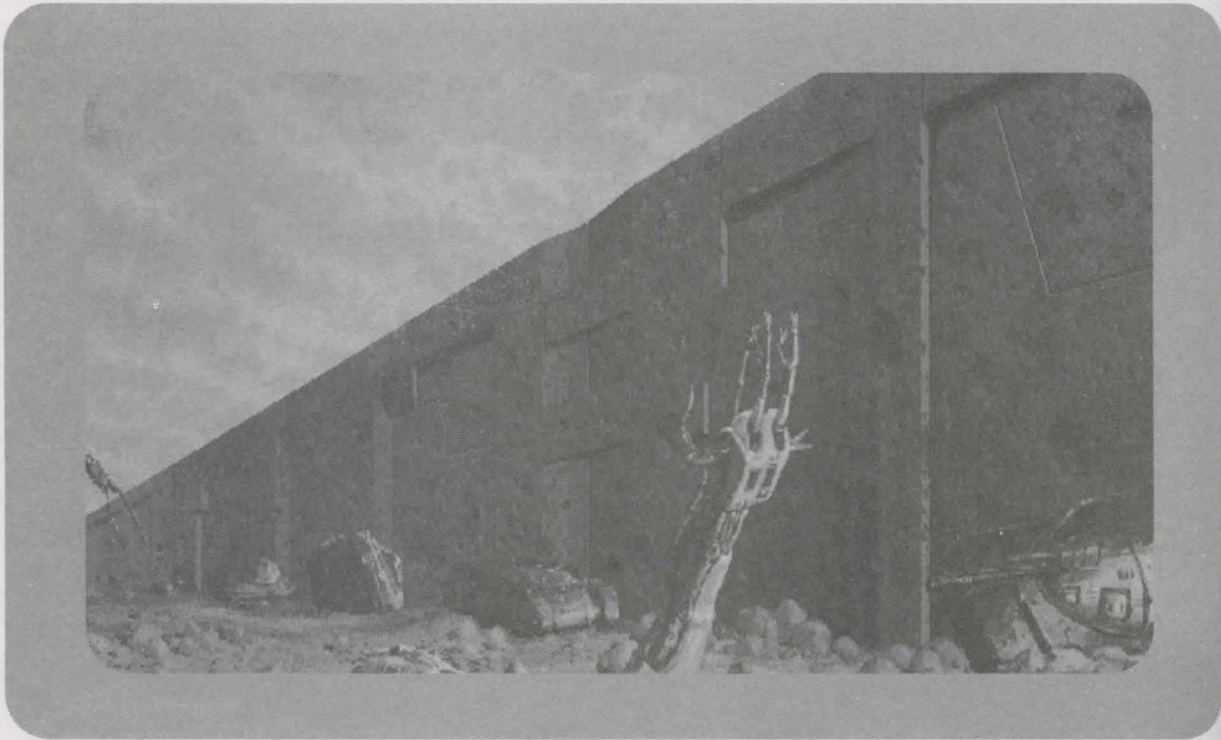
In early 2119 a Japanese-American high-technology consortium announced its next-generation computer system, based on an upgraded model of the Turing Processor Core. This was the last straw for the United Nations. The new secretary-general had fewer reservations about war than his predecessor, believing that a bloody battle now was better than humanity's end from unchecked technological development. The two sides refrained from using nuclear or biological weapons on planet surfaces. Beyond that, this war had no rules. Population centers were bombarded from space by particle-beam weapons, missiles, and kinetic-kill weapons (rocks).

Armies fought huge tank battles supported by buzzing swarms of ground-attack aircraft. Over many cities the skies filled with deadly fireworks as rapid-fire railgun cannons shot down aircraft and missiles.

Meanwhile, starships battled for control of trade routes, orbital platforms, asteroid bases, L-5 habitats, and planetary colonies. The speed and fury of these battles was startling. When battle was actually joined, high-tech warfare chewed up huge quantities of men and machinery in a matter of minutes.

The war slowed after less than two months as stocks of war materiel were depleted. Economic exhaustion set in. There was no end to hostilities, but both sides ran up against their limits. Combat became sporadic.





As **Mission Critical** opens, this brutal interstellar conflict has raged for almost 15 years. The war has become one of attrition, and the balance of power is shifting in favor of U.N. forces.







Part 2

# MISSION CRITICAL: A JOURNAL

*Adapted by Rick Barba*

*Based on the original story and script by Mike Verdu*





## **AutoLog 6000 AutoTranscript**

### **Commanding Officer's (CO) Log 6/24/34**

**00:01:33**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D2-CORRIDOR**

#### **CO Log Entry:**

Irony thick here. Never saw myself as CO material. But here I am, recording in Dayna's AutoLog. Woke up, it was in my hand. He must have put it there. Before I blacked out, I heard him behind me. "Good luck," he said. What the hell?

Look at this thing, man. One of those Model 6000 jobs. Buttons everywhere. What's this one?





Ah, digicam. Just point and click. Inserts digital images right into the log. Prints them out in the AutoTranscript. I guess captains get all the good stuff.

I can't even figure out how to hook it onto my belt.

Man, something's wrong on this deck; I hear hissing, a breeze running up the corridor. This is not good.

## Unidentified Log Entry:

Emergency decompression alert! Pressure is dropping rapidly on Deck 2.

## CO (continued):

Uh-oh.

Where the hell is everybody?

There's something in my pocket. (paper rustles) It's a note from Dayna. Better log in the image.

It's up to you now. Tran has recorded a briefing on the ship's condition and your immediate objectives. The main computer is down, but you can access the briefing through the wardroom ACN.

Also - you may need access to some of the crew staterooms on Decks Two and Three. Because staterooms are protected by the Privacy Laws, you will need VIS override codes to get inside. You'll find a crew manifest with what I think are the important codes in my stateroom. My VIS override code is A3x5.

Good Luck

A handwritten signature, possibly 'D', written in black ink.



What's he talking about? What's up to me now?

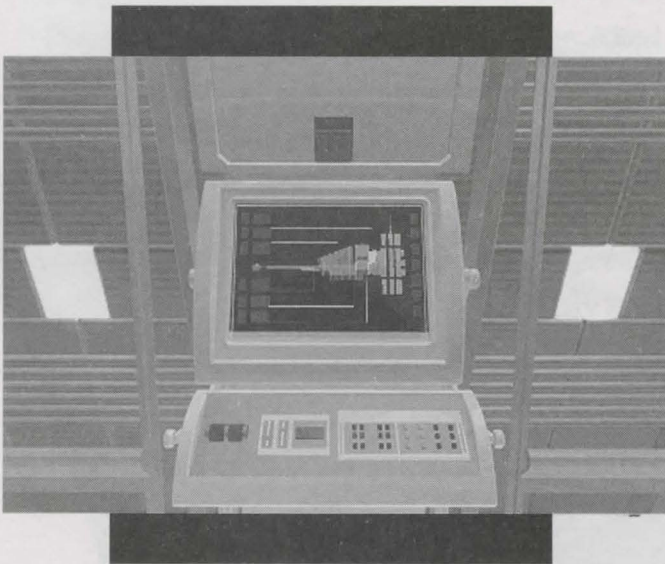
I'm trying to remember, here. I was in my quarters, going through some personal files. Persephone in the window—big, desolate, red as hell. Suddenly, alarms go off. General quarters—DefCon 4. *The real thing.* Then we kick away from the planet, feels like a standard 1g spin. Seconds later, we're taking hits, bad ones. Not good. You don't have to be an academe to recognize the energy-pulse cannon of a U.N. *Gali-class* battle drone. Killed our drones, no doubt. I'm thinking, "we're next."

Suddenly, all's quiet. Then the call to abandon ship.

So what happened?

Answers in the wardroom, I hope.

Quick check with the computer on the way. Try the Deck 2 terminal up ahead.



### **Computer?**

*The main computer is down. Voice access to Deck Two local systems only.*

### **Where is everybody?**

*You are the only member of the crew currently on Deck Two. Because contact has been lost with the main computer, there is no information about crew status on any other deck.*

### **What the hell is going on?**

**Give me a status report.**

*Contact with the main computer system was lost at 22:31:22. Autonomic ship functions have been delegated to local nodes. At 22:45:07, internal sensors detected an impact and subsequent decompression in Deck Two Stateroom Two Bravo. A warning was issued to all personnel to evacuate*



Deck Two. At 22:50:10, all of Deck Two was placed under Damage Control Condition Zebra.

### **What is Damage Control Condition Zebra?**

Condition Zebra is the most serious of the four damage containment and control procedures and is implemented only if the survival of the ship is in doubt. Condition Zebra applies to all airtight compartments that have been sealed off from the rest of the ship due to hull integrity failure. No hatches, doors, or valves leading to or from the affected compartments may be opened without the authorization of the Commanding Officer.

### **What caused the impact?**

Unknown. The initial pressure loss was immediate and catastrophic, but was localized to one stateroom. The DCS Knowledge Base suggests that the damage may have been caused by a laser, particle beam, kinetic kill weapon, high-velocity micrometeorite, or a microfragment from a nearby explosion.

### **What is the DCS Knowledge Base?**

All decks are equipped with a local expert system known as the Damage Control System Knowledge Base, or DCS Knowledge Base.

### **Why impose Condition Zebra for a loss of pressure in just one stateroom?**

The initial pressure loss was contained in Stateroom Two Bravo. Unfortunately, the door leading to Stateroom Two Bravo was not designed as an airtight fitting and cannot withstand the pressure differential between the normal atmospheric pressure in the corridor outside and the vacuum inside the stateroom. Air is currently leaking around the door seals, an indication that the door may give way at any time.

### **Great. How do I fix the damage?**

Emergency Hull Patch Kits can be found in the compartments directly over the general-purpose computer terminals installed in the common areas of each deck.

### **What is the status of life support on this deck?**

Atmosphere replenishment for Deck Two has been terminated in compliance with Condition Zebra procedures.



**I need access to the other decks!**

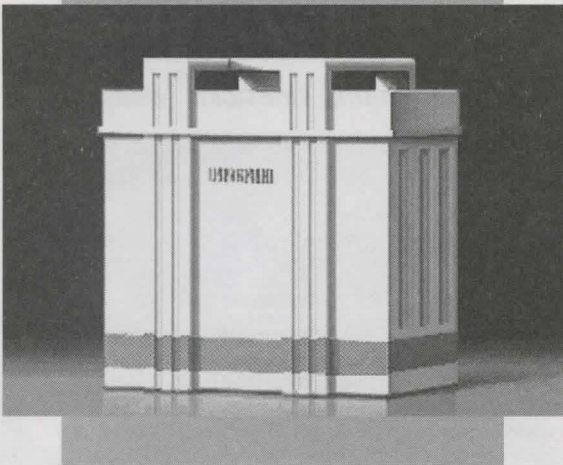
*Authorization from the Commanding Officer is required in order to enter or leave any compartments under Condition Zebra.*

**What if I'm the last one on the ship? Would that make me Commanding Officer?**

*That is correct.*

**OK. So I need access to other decks.**

*Authorization from the Commanding Officer is required in order to enter or leave any compartments under Condition Zebra.*



**I'm done . . . you stupid . . . digital equivalent of a moron.**

*Access terminated by user.*

**Terminated, yeah. I'm a dead man. Condition Zebra, my ass. Some cone-head in Tac Ops must've come up with that one. Stateroom Two Bravo. That's Olivar, I think. Better get to the wardroom, then get that crew manifest from Dayna's stateroom. First, let's check the compartment above the computer terminal.**

**00:01:40**

**AutoLocate: ON**

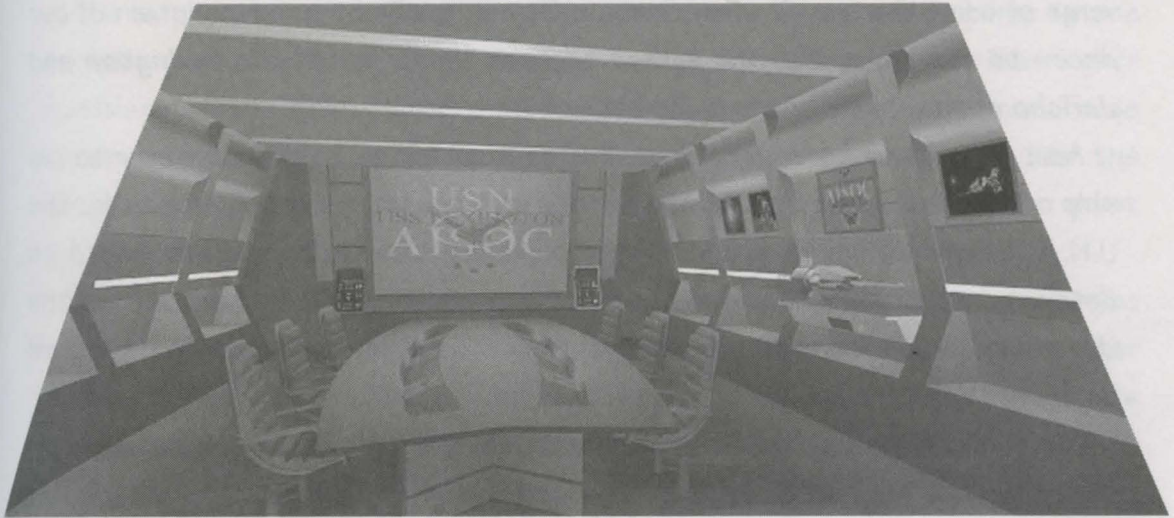
**Current Location:**

**D2-OFFICER'S WARDROOM**

**CO Log Entry:**

Logging in wardroom image below.





Site of many a good nap. Tran's briefings always *deadly* dull. The woman needs to lighten up. Needs hobbies. Let's see what she has to say this time.

I'm activating the bulkhead viewscreen.



## Crew Log Entry-ID: J. Tran

### (VOC RECOGNITION ONLY)

I'm sure you're wondering what's going on. I'll explain. You were probably aware that the *Lexington* was attacked by a U.N. ship. We were outgunned and on the



verge of being destroyed when Captain Dayna notified the U.N. captain of our desire to surrender. Garrick agreed to take the crews of the **Lexington** and **Jericho** aboard before destroying both ships.

As I record this message, Garrick is waiting for us to transfer over to his ship on the **Lexington** shuttle. You are the only one left behind. If we're lucky, the U.N. bastard will ignore one crewman on board the **Lexington**. We intend to detonate a thermonuclear device after our shuttle has been taken aboard the U.N. vessel. This will completely destroy their ship. It will also kill everyone aboard both shuttles.

This should leave you free to complete our mission. There is *nothing* more important than this mission . . . including the lives of the crew. We died so that you can finish what we started.

Our ship was badly hurt during the U.N. attack. The first thing you must do is deal with the worst of the battle damage.

There are problems which directly threaten the near-term survival of the ship. Now, first of all, the primary power reactor is headed for a meltdown because the coolant system has failed. The molten core will eat through the containment vessel of the reactor and set off the fuel for the fusion engines. The resulting explosion will completely destroy the **Lexington** and the nearby **Jericho**.

You must need to get to Engineering and stop the runaway chain reaction. The meltdown is the top priority.

Second, when you deal with the problem, you must get the central computer back in operation. Without that, you cannot complete the mission. Currently, all computer processing has been delegating to the smaller, decentralized computers that exist on each deck of the ship. They do not communicate with each other, except on a very primitive level—enough to keep what you might think of as subconscious ship functions going. There is no overall guiding intelligence in these autonomous systems.



The ship's central computer is made up of Turing Cores and is home to the complex software that gives the ship's computer its smarts. The higher functions of the ship's brain reside in these central computer cores. These cores are currently inoperative. The primary cores were destroyed, and the secondary cores failed to activate the way they were supposed to. You must get the central computer back online.

I've recorded one more message. You'll hear from me again when you get the central computer back in operation. I have key-coded the message so the higher functions of the main computer will pick it up and display it for you as soon as the central cores are once again operational.

Good luck. And be careful.

Tran out.

## **CO (continued):**

Good God.

I've got a reactor meltdown in Engineering, and here I am stuck on a dying floor, thanks to the idiotic protocol of Condition Zebra. Damn! Tran must have recorded her briefing before deck pressure dropped enough to trigger the alert.

I'm alone here.

Wait. The control panel just spit out a card. Looks like an elevator access key. I'll probably need this.

Better get moving. I need that crew manifest with the VIS (AutoTranscript DEF: "Voice Identification System") Override codes. What was Dayna's VIS again? Check his note: AX35.



00:01:51

AutoLocate: ON

Current Location: D2-CAPTAIN'S  
STATEROOM (DAYNA)

## CO Log Entry:

Found the manifest on his desk. Just as Dayna said. Logging in all important pages below.

```

\AISOC\USM\COMNAVSPACECOM\HOMESEC\0055\LOGCOM\OPPERS\ASSIGNMENTS
\CO\LCBH09\2134-02-15
\LCBH09\1161\CODE\PANDORA
\PROTOCOL\JASHINE\COMOPS
\CC\000\055\LOGCOM\OPPERS\RECORDS\JADE TALON\ARCTIC HAWK
\CC\LEAGLES NEST\SENTINEL HEB\BERCON RUBY
\CC\CO\LCBH07\CO\LCBH02\CO\LCBH05\CO\OSTS91
\CC\CO\SU23\CO\HC402\CO\HC405
\CC\XO\LCBH09
  
```



USS LEXINGTON  
CREW MANIFEST  
MISSION 161  
OPERATION PANDORA

USS LEXINGTON  
CREW MANIFEST  
MISSION 161



CLASSIFIED: TOP SECRET/GAMMA  
REPLY REFERENCE 3AKL-009-R05-XS889-R-968

**COMMAND**

COMMANDING OFFICER: CAPTAIN STEVEN DAYNA  
EXECUTIVE & WEAPONS OFFICER: LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JENNIFER TRAN

**STAFF OFFICERS**

MEDICAL OFFICER: LIEUTENANT MICHAEL DAHL  
SCIENCE OFFICER: LIEUTENANT TAEWON NARANG  
OPERATIONS OFFICER: LIEUTENANT JAMES POOLE  
ENGINEERING OFFICER: LIEUTENANT BENATO OLIVAR  
SUPPLY OFFICER: TO BE ASSIGNED DAY OF DEPARTURE  
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER: LIEUTENANT J.G. KIMBERLY FALCON  
NAVIGATION OFFICER: LIEUTENANT J.G. PAUL MANDON

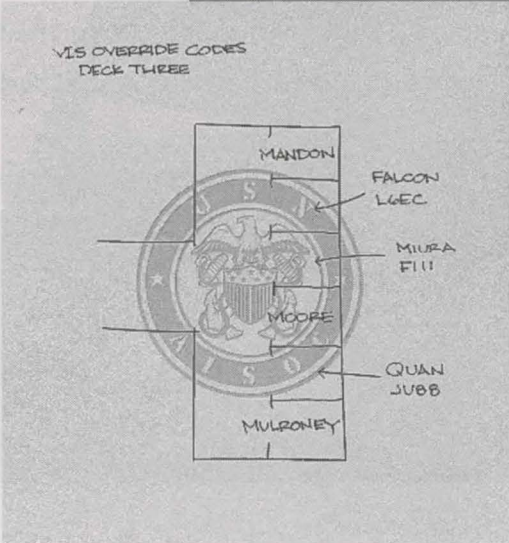
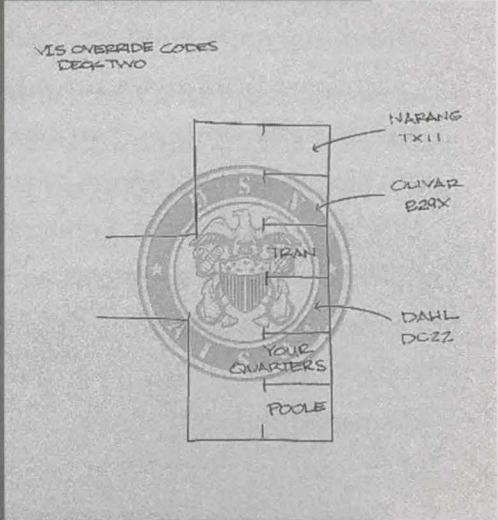
USS LEXINGTON  
CREW MANIFEST  
MISSION 161



**CLASSIFIED: TOP SECRET/GAMMA**  
 REPLY REFERENCE 3RKL-009-R05-VS009-R-968

**CREW**

CDS TECH:	ENSIGN ERICA MOORE
CYBERSYSTEMS OPERATOR:	CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER HIDEKI MIURA
NUCLEAR TECH:	CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER MARY QUAN
FTL SYSTEMS TECH:	CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER MARK MULRONEY
ORDNANCE TECH:	CHIEF PETTY OFFICER JAMES RANDALL
DCS TECH:	PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS REBECCA CASSELL
EI SYSTEMS TECH:	PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS MARIA GAJARDO
ST/ASI TECH:	PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS PHILIP SLOCUM
LIFE SUPPORT TECH:	PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS JIRO SUSHIDO
HULL MAINTENANCE TECH:	PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS ALLEN GAISER
OPTOELECTRONIC TECH:	PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS MARK AGUILAR
HEAVY MACHINERY TECH:	PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS DAVID MCCLARY
STOREKEEPER:	PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS MASARU SHINDO
SERVICEMAN:	PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS LORRAINE MAGRATH
APPRENTICES & WATCHSTANDERS:	CREWMAN KEICHI HASEGAWA CREWMAN THOMAS CARRADINE



Operation Pandora? Must be pretty sensitive. Never seen a damn crew manifest labeled TOP SECRET GAMMA before. No time for that now. Stateroom Bravo next.

First, let me check his computer terminal.



## Crew Log Entry-ID: S. Dayna

### (VOC RECOGNITION ONLY)

*USS Lexington*, captain's log: I don't have much time. The Bridge recorders and comm-logs will have full transcripts of the events which led to the current situation. This is a subjective account, intended for the captain's log only. I'm afraid any gaps must be filled in later using previous entries.

Since we first arrived in orbit around Persephone, a godforsaken world at the end of a 68-light-year voyage that has tried my ship and my crew. The details of this mission are known only to myself, my XO (AutoTranscript DEF: "Executive Officer"), Lieutenant Commander Tran, and the captain of the *Jericho*, the science ship we've escorted from Earth. The three of us have carried this secret, a burden that has gotten heavier during each week of the trip out. We knew that what we might find on Persephone could well help us turn the tide in the war with the United Nations. We knew that it might even change the course of human history.

Things haven't worked out that way. And as strange as it seems, I think the crew knew towards the end this was going to be a one-way trip. A sense of foreboding crept over the ship as Persephone came into visual range. As we got closer, I could see it in their eyes, in their drawn and exhausted faces. I could feel it in myself—an almost palpable dread that permeated every corner of the ship.

It was justified.

Nothing could have prepared us for the hell that was waiting on the other side of Persephone.

### CO (continued):

Wow. If I'd known he was an English major, I'd have started a book club.



**00:01:44**

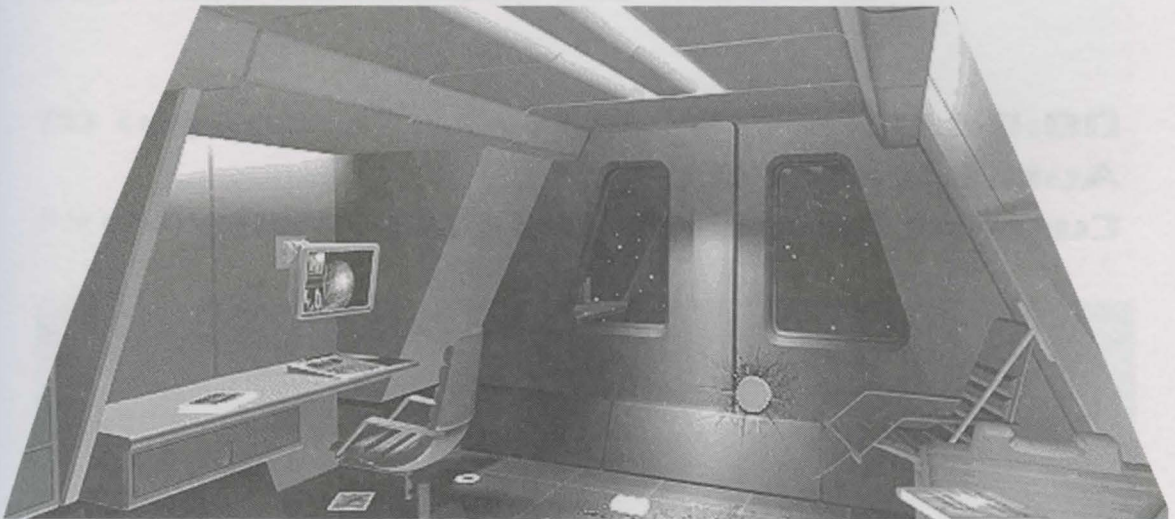
**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D2-STATEROOM BRAVO (LT. OLIVAR)**

**CO Log Entry:**

I could hear it . . . the minute I (unintelligible) the corridor. The pressure sucked the door concave and (unintelligible). I overrode the lock code . . . the door blew in and I (unintelligible). I can see the puncture . . . quite clearly. I'm going to try (unintelligible) . . .



Damn! Glad I read the directions *before* I went in. Amazing what a little molecular glue can do. Now I'd better burn a quick hole down to Engineering. Glad I got my yellow key card.

**00:01:59****AutoLocate: ON****Current Location: D2-ELEVATOR****CO Log Entry:**

Who invented smart elevators? Damned thing won't take me down to Engineering! Something about radiation leak. It's *protecting* me. Man, these safety features are killing me. Closest I can get is one floor above, to Reactor Spaces. Guess I'll have to work down through the maintenance tunnels. But if there's a coolant leak, could be hot spots everywhere.

I'm going to need a Geiger counter. Sure there's one aboard. But where? Science lab? Medlab? Both are on Deck 5. Better stop on the way down.

**00:02:01****AutoLocate: ON****Current Location: D5-CORRIDOR**





## CO Log Entry:

Here's a grim little image. The hall down to Cybersystems is shredded! How the hell could the inside of the ship get this mangled without a massive hull integrity failure?

Guess I'm just lucky.

OK, it's another problem. Look on the bright side. If I don't cool off that reactor, the meltdown will clear every hallway within seven kilometers.

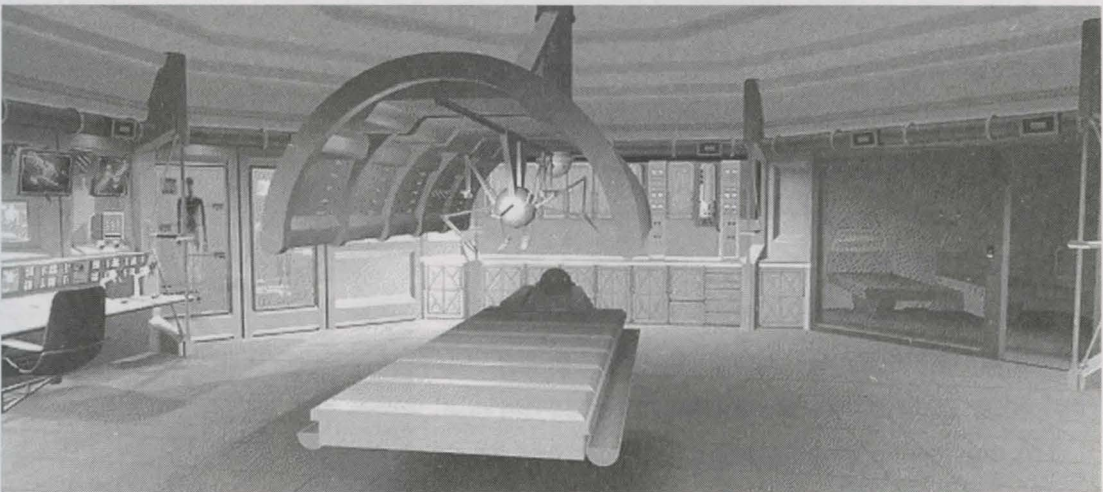
**00:02:02**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D5-MEDLAB**

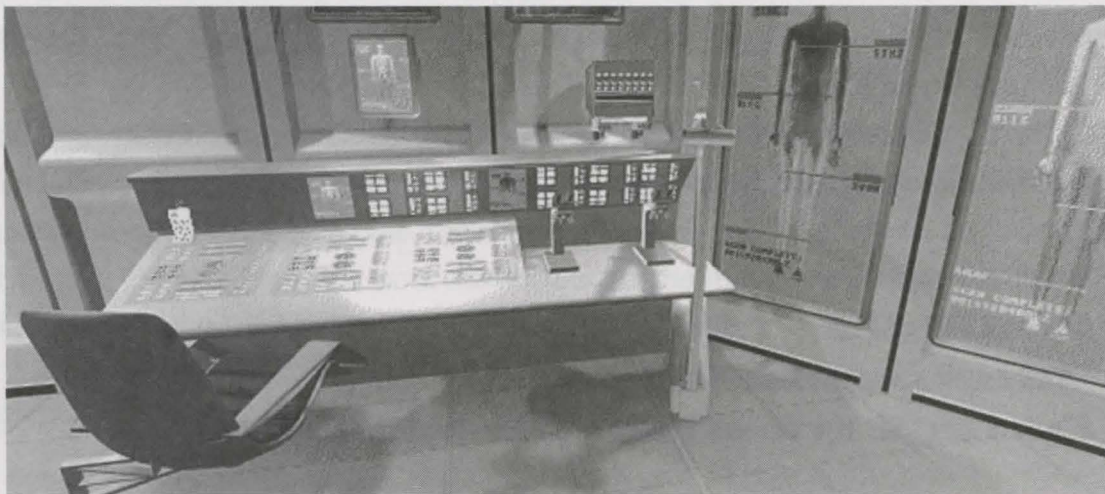
## CO Log Entry:

Now entering the Medlab. Logging image.





Something tells me I won't find any radiation detection devices here. Better look anyway. (pause) Nothing much of interest. There's a note taped on the medical officer's console.



I'll read it into the log. It says:

"Captain Dayna wanted the autodoc reprogrammed with what he called a 'panic button.' I fixed it so that if you key in the code '911' on the autodoc remote control, the treatment unit will automatically stun anybody or anything within three meters of the autodoc. Does this have something to do with the mission? Sounds like you're going to be working with an ET (AutoTranscript DEF: "Extra-Terrestrial") specimen! What gives?—H"

ET specimen? Hmm.

This whole situation gives me the creeps. "H" must be Hideki Miura. Hideki could program a hair dryer to brew coffee. Too bad nobody's around to use his autodoc booby trap. Be a pretty cool practical joke.

I'm moving to the Science Lab across the hall.



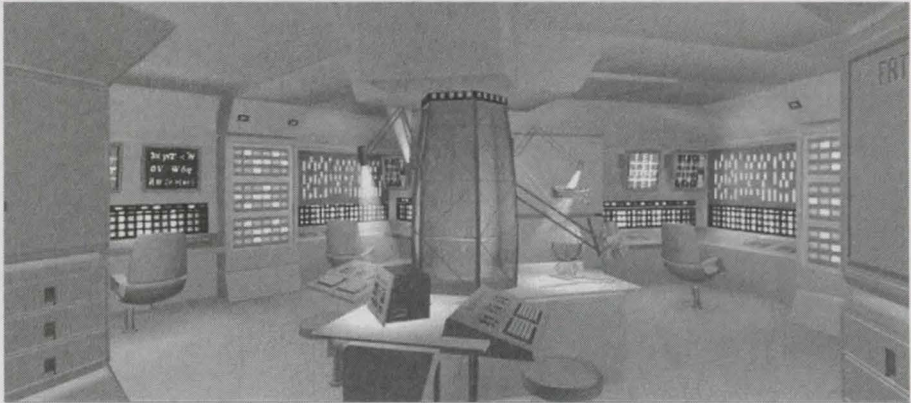
**00:02:10**

**AutoLocate: ON**

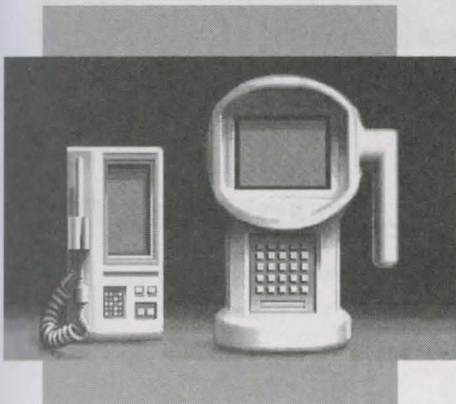
**Current Location: D5-SCIENCE LAB**

**CO Log Entry:**

Here it is—Narang's toy room. Hope I find some toys to help me get to that reactor.



There's a cabinet labeled FRT (AutoTranscript DEF: "Field Research Team") to the right. Narang used to talk about his Field Research Team all the time, like he was Lewis and Clark or something. Poor guy hated spaceships. Maybe this cabinet has something useful. . . .

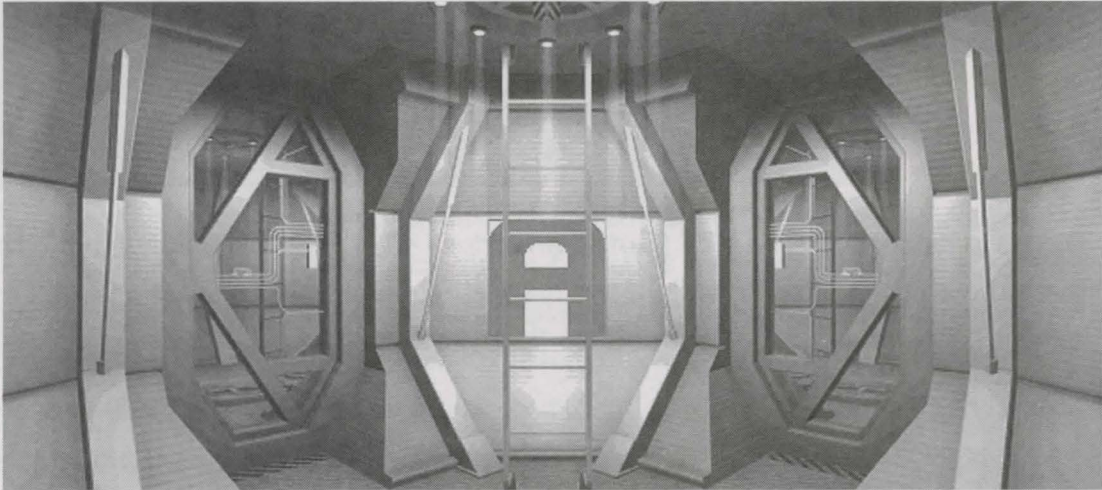


Excellent. A Geiger counter and a microscanner. Narang once showed me how the thing uses reflected light to magnify objects—it's like a field microscope. If I ever make it planetside, a scanner like this might come in handy. Just sling it on my belt, next to the AutoLog.

OK. Down to Reactor Spaces.

**00:02:16****AutoLocate: ON****Current Location:****D8-REACTOR SPACES (ENTRY)****CO Log Entry:**

Sirens wailing like banshees down here. It feels warm—or maybe that's my imagination. I'm turning on the Geiger counter. No activity. Good. Now I'm crawling down the ladder from the Deck 8 Reactor Level entry to the first level. Each maintenance level is color-coded, as I recall. Log in image here.

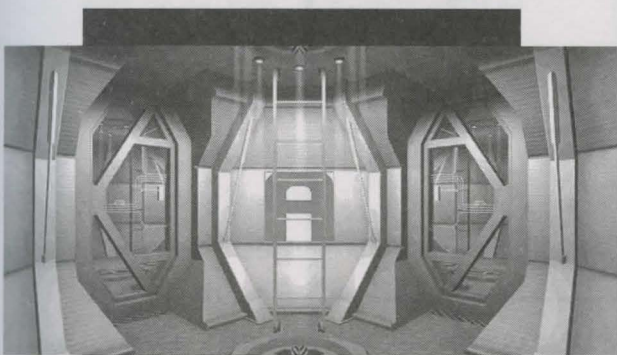
**Unidentified Entry:**

*Warning! A coolant leak in the power reactor has contaminated the Reactor Spaces. You are in a radiation hazard area. All personnel must wear proper protective gear and carry radiation monitoring equipment.*



## CO Log Entry continued:

As ship supply officer, I don't hang out in Reactor Spaces. But I used to play cards with Olivar down in Engineering. The guy could bluff, man. Never seen a guy hold cards quite so viciously. OK, I'm in quadrant A, red level.



I'm getting a low-level reading. One of the tunnels above or below me is contaminated.

So one time Olivar describes this whole maintenance structure. Said it was like four stacked boxes with tubes running up each corner. Each corner tube is location-coded by letters—A, B, C, D—and connected in a series of

nodes, one at each level. It's obvious I need a map.

There's a clipboard hanging on a hook. (paper rustles) Just some engineering gobbledygook scribbled on grid paper.

**00:02:21**

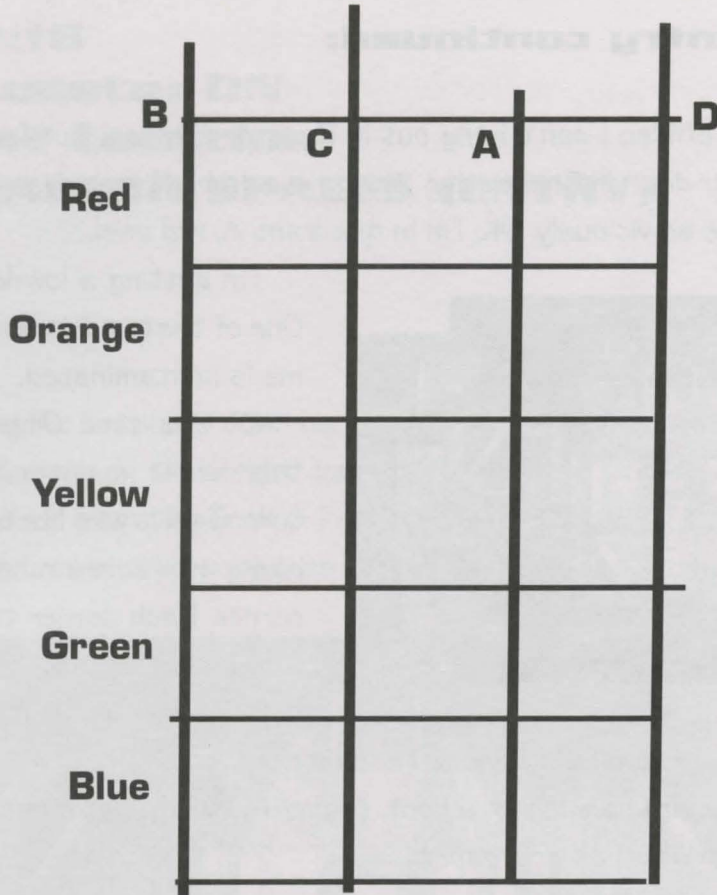
**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D8-REACTOR SPACES (RED-A)**

## CO Log Entry:

I'm no artist, but here's a map of the maintenance area. Logging in image now.



I'll use this to map the Reactor Spaces down to Engineering. I have to assume that the counter goes wild when both tunnels, leading up and down from the node, are contaminated. Low-level readings probably indicate just one bad tunnel, but it's hard to tell which one, up or down.

I just hope I can find a safe route. For all I know, the whole reactor area is nuked.

**00:02:58**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D9-ENGINEERING (CORRIDOR)**



## CO Log Entry:

I made it . . . I think. According to the Geiger counter, I'm not cooked. But when it comes to radiation—well, it's weird. Rays and particles messing up your molecules. Beyond me.

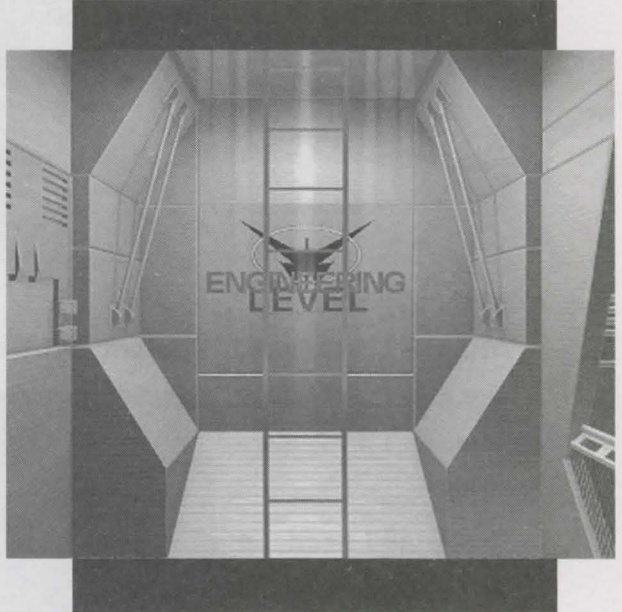
Not sure how a supply officer can stop a reactor meltdown. I'll grab a quick status report from the local computer and log it in for future reference.

### **Computer? Status report, please.**

The situation in the Engineering module is critical. Multiple enemy beam-weapon and missile hits registered between 22:30:14 and 22:31:45 have caused a criticality one fault in the primary power reactor coolant system. Containment failure is imminent. Containment failure will result in the loss of the ship. Contact with the main computer system was lost at 22:31:22. Local systems took over monitoring and control of autonomic functions at 22:31:23. There are also multiple criticality two and three faults which require attention once conditions have stabilized.

### **Whoa, describe critical faults.**

DCS (AutoTranscript DEF: "Damage Control System") faults are listed in order of criticality. Criticality One: The coolant system for the primary power reactor has failed. Coolant pipes were ruptured by sheer stress from missile impact and by the heat from beam-weapon strikes that penetrated the hull. Radioactive coolant has escaped into crew spaces. Coolant loss has reached critical levels. The reactor core temperature is rising. Containment failure is imminent.





*Criticality Two: Multiple Engineering systems have suffered primary and secondary failures. These are criticality two faults because these systems have tripped tertiary backups and are now operating without any backup at all.*

*The affected systems are: fusion containment monitoring, thrust vectoring control, compression laser calibration, compression laser monitoring and control, deuterium/tritium fuel feed, FCS (AutoTranscript DEF: "Fusion Containment System") damping, FCS switching; gamma flux monitoring, and the superconducting magnetic coils in sections Charlie, Golf, November, and X-RAY.*

**Way more information than I need, honey. So how do I deal with the reactor coolant failure?**

*Access the Reactor Coolant System through the console in the Main Engineering area.*

**What is the Reactor Coolant System?**

*The Reactor Coolant System consists of a network of holding tanks, pipes, pumps, and automated valves. The RCS console provides manual control of the system.*

**That's all I need. I'm done.**

*Access terminated by user.*

**Don't know how much that helped.**

**00:03:11**

**AutoLocate: ON**

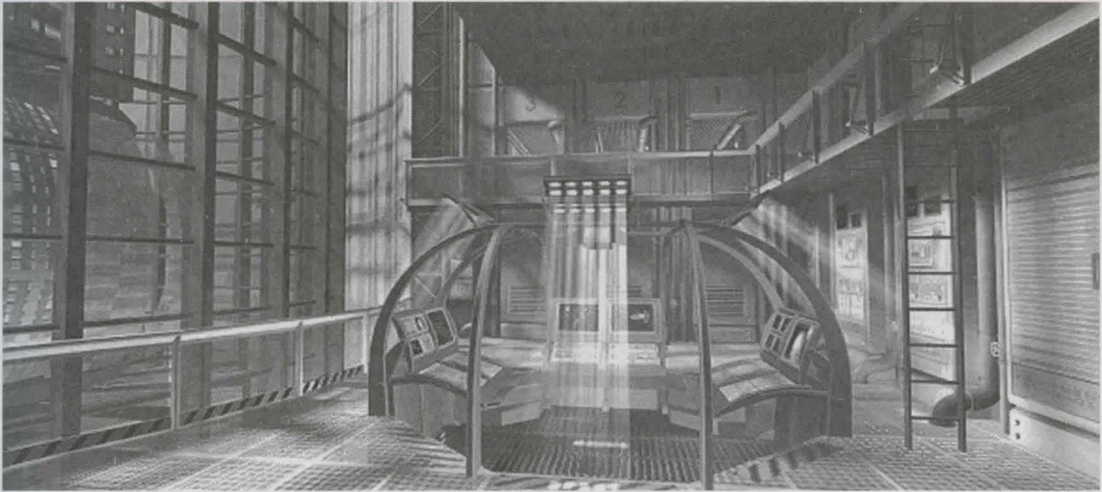
**Current Location:**

**D9-ENGINEERING (CORRIDOR)**

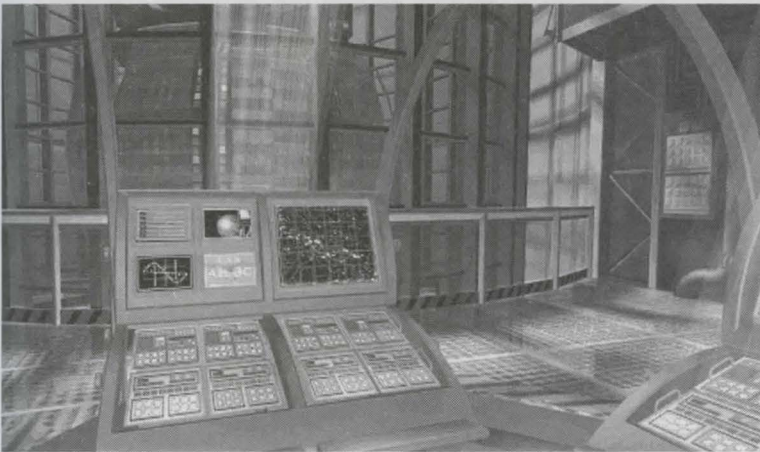
**CO Log Entry:**

*Entering Engineering. There's Olivar's workstation, in that alloy frame. Man, those fusion pulsedrive engines could power a city.*





I'm at the console now. Logging it in.



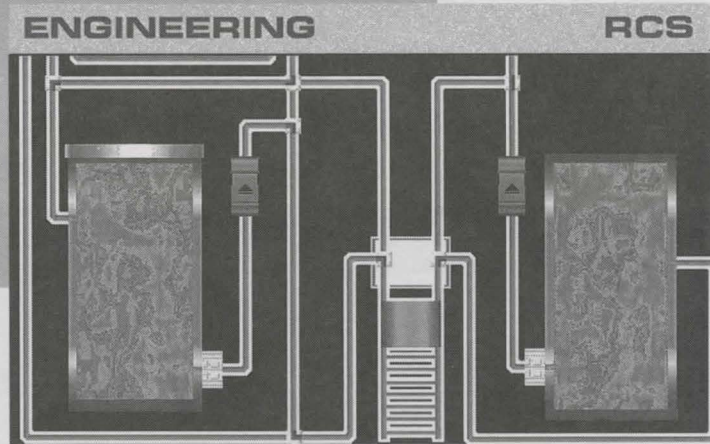
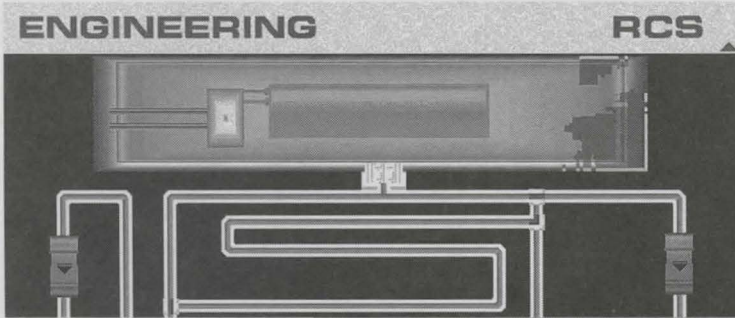
Wow, that's a lot of dials.

I spent hours sitting in this station with Olivar, listening to him complain about his ex-girlfriend. Most times he turned away to check something, it was . . . this one, as

I recall. (tone) Yep. A touchscreen schematic of the whole coolant system—tanks, pipes, valves and all.

And there's the problem.

Good Lord, there's not a drop of liquid left in the Main Coolant Tank! Looks like some fail-safe mechanism closed its valve. Logging in images.



Valves on both Auxiliary Tanks are closed, too. Have to open one and route coolant to the Reactor Core. Can't seem to . . . work them from this control screen. (banging sounds) Are they *manual valves*? Cripes. Isn't this the 22nd century? *Manual valves!* How hard is it to put one more (expletive deleted) button on this (expletive deleted) control panel?

Where the *hell* are they?

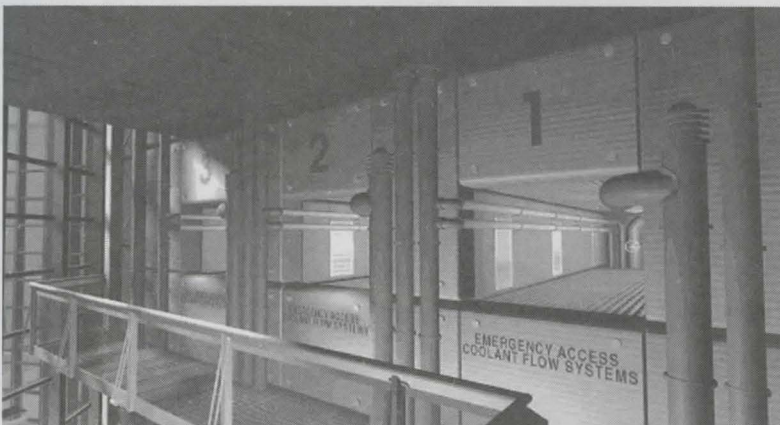
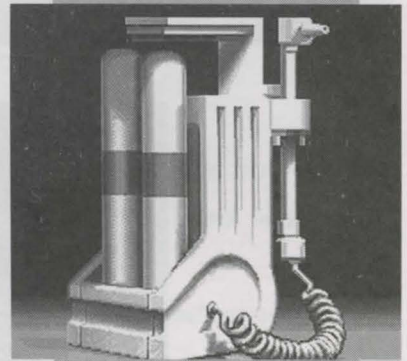
OK, *deep breaths*, man. Anger won't help anything. *Be cool*. Look around. Valves must be up on that *catwalk*.

I'm heading to the ladder now. Log it in.



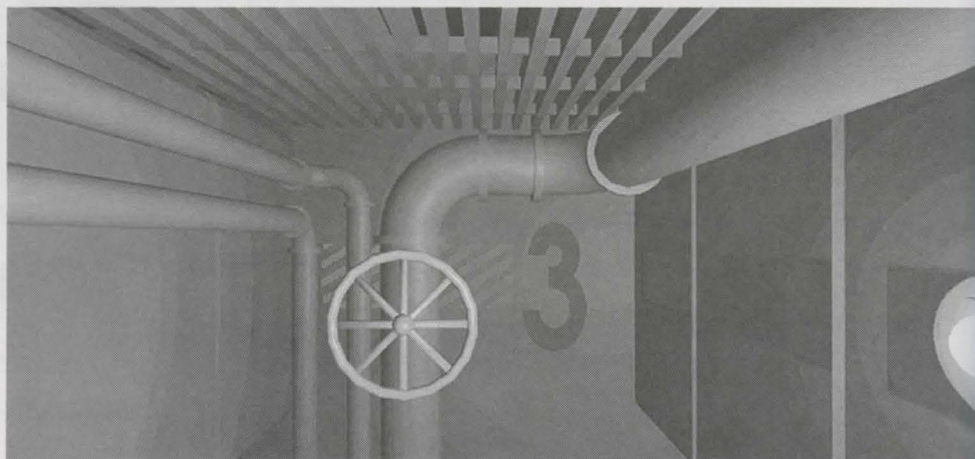
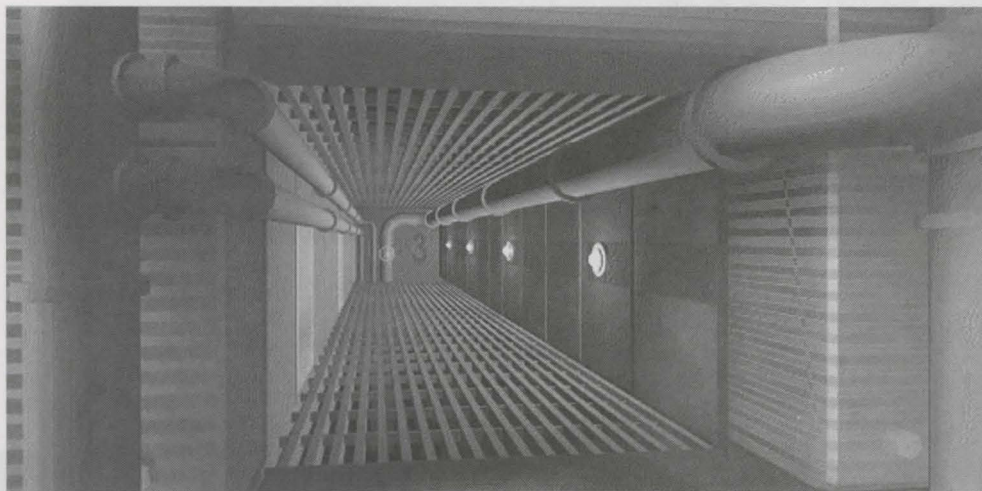
I'm going to open that equipment storage cabinet next to the ladder. Manual valves might require tools. (door slides) Hmm. Looks like a small cutting torch.

Maybe I'll need it. Hook it on my belt. Cripes, I'm starting to look like one of those telephone repair guys. Up the ladder now. At the top. Yes . . . Emergency Access Coolant Flow Systems. Three of them, off the catwalk. Number 1 is no doubt the main tank, so forget that. Auxiliaries are 2 and 3. Try either one. What's the difference? Either way, I don't know what the hell I'm doing.





I'm moving down Crawlway 3. There's the valve. Looks like a simple twist ought to do it.



Now back to the catwalk, down the ladder and back to the RCS controls. Route coolant to the core, loop it back around in a circuit to the tanks. Must be some way to re-cool the liquid after it passes through the core. Is that what those Heat Exchangers do? Sounds logical . . . .



**00:03:40**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D3-CORRIDOR**

**CO Log Entry:**

Unbelievable, man. I did it. I take back nearly every bad thing I said about 22nd century technology. Well, now that I've got some time to kill, I'll to grab a bite before heading down to Cybersystems on Deck 5.

**00:03:42**

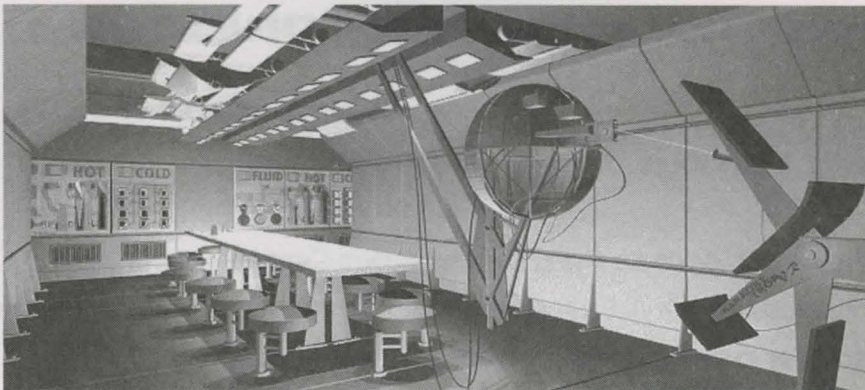
**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D3-MESS HALL**

**CO Log Entry:**

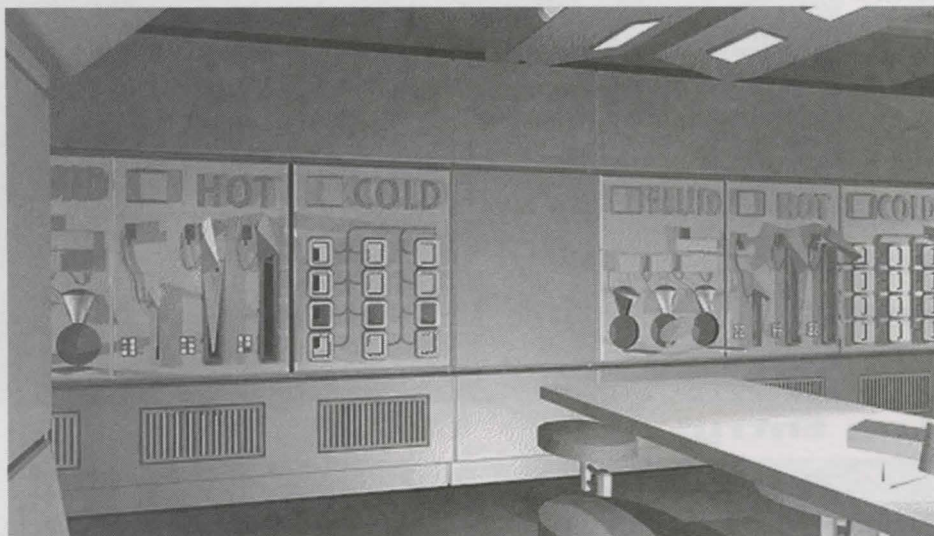
Now entering the Mess Hall. Don't know why I'm logging my every move, but who knows? I could be making history. Or not. Anyway, it amuses me. I feel like I'm putting together a slide show of some vacation from hell.

And when I think about it—well, it seems important to log in the *Lexington* and Operation Pandora for posterity. Dayna, Tran—they deserve it. I'm not sure exactly how it honors this mission. But it does, somehow. And so here's the Mess Hall:





Made sure I got the old Karaoketron VR system in the shot. If I was feeling really perverse, I'd log in the "Lexington Orientation" and "Why We Fight" propaganda, I mean training, flicks. And of course, there's the old Mark IV Variable Acceleration/Null Gravity Automated Consumables Dispenser. Gotta log that. Something I never want to forget:



Space food, man. It's why I signed up.

**00:03:51**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D3-CORRIDOR**

**CO Log Entry:**

I really should get down to Cybersystems. But Captain Dayna gave me all these VIS Override codes. Why? I assume he had a reason. Is there something in the crew quarters? Something important to the mission?



OK, OK—maybe I'm just rationalizing my *desire to snoop*. But it *does seem odd* that Dayna would violate crew privacy by giving me access.

I'll start down in Hideki Miura's room. Since he's the Cybersystems overlord, maybe I'll find the info that helps me get the computer back online.

**00:03:53**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D3-STATEROOM CHARLIE (MIURA)**

**CO Log Entry:**

Hideki was an odd duck of the first magnitude. The only thing of interest in here is a necklace hanging on his monitor. The pendant looks like the Greek letter pi,  $\pi$ .



Also a big stack of source code here. Must be Hideki's private creation. Let's see. Looks like the old C-squared programming language they made everybody use in elementary school. Wow. Let's check out his system.

**Crew Entry-ID: H. Miura:**

**(VOC RECOGNITION ONLY)**

Welcome to Hideki's House of Hacking Fun!



## CO (continued):

Hideki! How ya doin', man? Let's see: "No program in workspace. Specify file to load or enter program source code." Hmm. Seems I've kicked off Hideki's C-squared programming environment. Maybe I can program with this source code.

OK. Computer, execute.

Aha. What's happening?

What is this?

It's calculating pi! Hidecki, you are one crazy bastard.

**00:04:08**

**AutoLocate: ON**

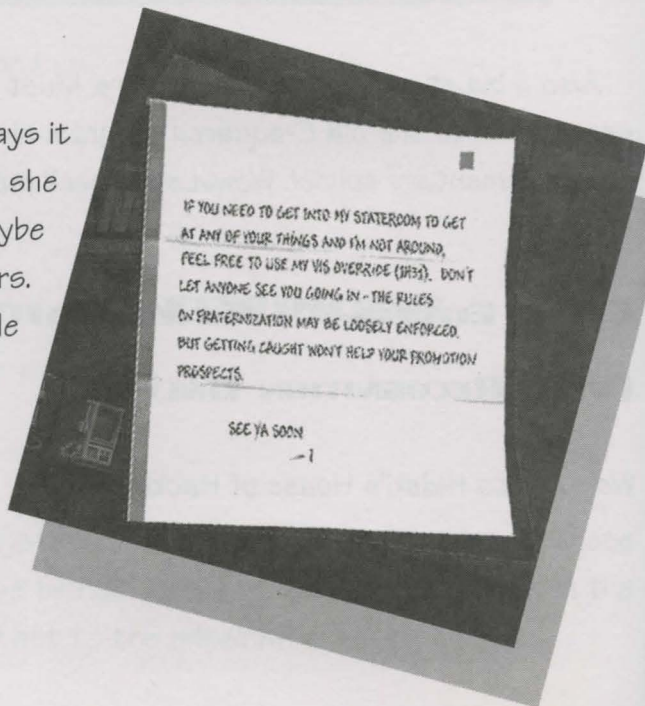
**Current Location:**

**D3-STATEROOM BRAVO (FALCON)**

## CO Log Entry:

Home of Kim Falcon. Her name says it all. For a communications officer, she was awfully spare with words. Maybe it was me. Let's check her drawers.

Looks like a note taped inside here.







Wow, Kimmie, I underestimated you.

Who's 'J'? Looks like a Deck 2 or 3 code. Check my trusty Top Secret Gamma crew manifest. Let's see—we got James Poole, my neighbor up on 2. We got a James Randall, the bomb guy—no way, Falcon's out of his league. Besides, he made everyone call him "Loads." There's Jiro Sushido, but he's clear down on Deck 4.

Must be Poole.

I'll try this VIS Override on his door later.

**00:04:16**

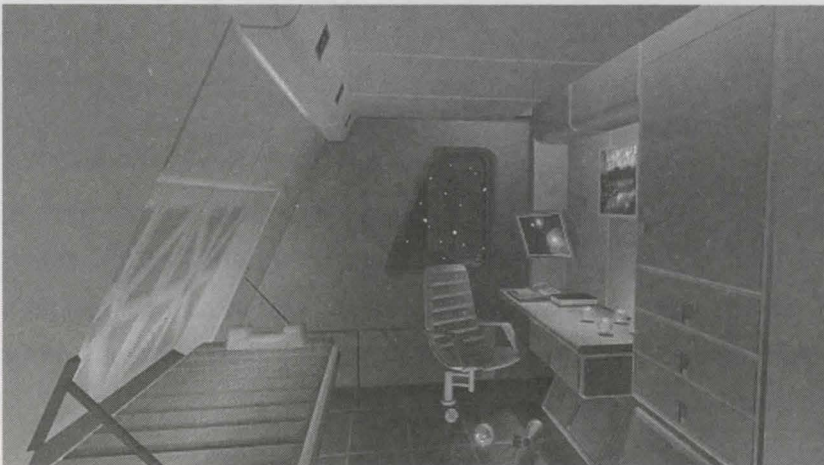
**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D3-STATEROOM EAGLE (QUAN)**

**CO Log Entry:**

Mary Quan's room. Nice gal, but kind of a busybody. Looks like she lost a few desk items in the attack. Stuff shattered all over the floor. Bummer.





Checking her desk. Looks like a journal of some sort. I really hate to read it. But Mary had a nose for scandal. Maybe I'll learn something. I'll log in any interesting pages.

April 8

I feel frustrated and upset. The tension on the ship is getting worse for no apparent reason. I think it's because no one has a clue what this mission is about. We know this gig is real important and we're all used to the jitters, but being completely in the dark is driving us crazy. Also, the CO and the XO look like they're under serious stress; this isn't helping.

May 7

The pressure on the crew finally caused a blow-out. Gaiser and Slocum had a big fight in the mess hall during movie call. Slocum has been baiting Gaiser for days over Gaiser's pony tail, and Gaiser finally exploded. During the fight Gaiser threw Slocum into the VR system and broke the CPU. The crew present during the fight kept the incident quiet; none of the staff officers even know it happened. Mark Aguilar fixed the VR CPU on the QT.

She's not kidding. People were punchy. Paranoid. I remember that fight. Slocum and Gaiser were like animals, man. I thought the VR was completely trashed. Then the next day, it works like new. I was ready for religion.

Where'd Aguilar get the parts?

Let's see what else Quan has to say:



May 6

Poole seemed to know about the battle yesterday before it happened. He was so hopped up the day before and the other officers were no more tense than usual...

May 16

Poole is sleeping with Falcon. Now this wouldn't normally be big news, but the way he pursued her really bothers me. I know she's an officer and everything, but he's a good looking guy and both Maria and Erica have been after him for weeks. He ignored them and went after Falcon like a guided missile. Erica's a knockout! Why Falcon?

June 15

I followed Poole on impulse during one of the dog watches. He was carrying something in a bag and was kind of hunched around it like he was uncomfortable carrying it. I knew something was up. He went to Deck Two; I rode the elevator with him and then pretended to go the other way (towards the Wardroom). He looked around all of the corridors to make sure he was alone and then went into Dahl's stateroom by using an override code. Dahl was in the Medlab at the time; Poole was in Dahl's quarters without Dahl's knowledge or consent. He was after something in there!

June 16

Is Poole a UN agent? He's either a UN agent or an Alliance Special Ops plant.

Poole.

Man, I never trusted that guy. I think it's time to check out my next-door neighbor.

**00:04:49****AutoLocate: ON****Current Location:****D2-STATEROOM FOXTROT (POOLE)****CO Log Entry:**

Here's Poole's room. That was his VIS Override code in Falcon's note. Can't believe she was sleeping with this obsequious weasel.

Now it hits me. If this guy was a traitor, maybe Captain Dayna had his suspicions. Hence, all the override codes. Maybe he wants me to complete the mission and ferret out the U.N. scum who sold us out. That would be like Dayna. Disloyalty hurt him worse than any Tavek battle drone. Nothing here, though.

Yeah, Poole seemed like the kind of guy who travels light, if you know what I mean. Just a few books and this scale-model science vessel, the *USS Orlando*. Wow. This thing's heavy. Feels like thermoplastic, though. Odd. I'll have to pop it open, if I can find a tool somewhere.

All right, enough detective work.

Let's get Betty up and running. I'm sure she misses me.

**00:05:07****AutoLocate: ON****Current Location: D5-CORRIDOR****CO Log Entry:**

I'm standing in front of a shredded, razor-sharp cage of Arika alloy. I tried the local access computer for Deck 5; it had nothing to say. What a surprise. These local nodes are beginning to annoy me.



Maybe if I just stand here and stare, it will go away.

Wait a minute.

Don't I have a cutting torch?

**00:05:25**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D5-CORRIDOR**

**CO Log Entry:**

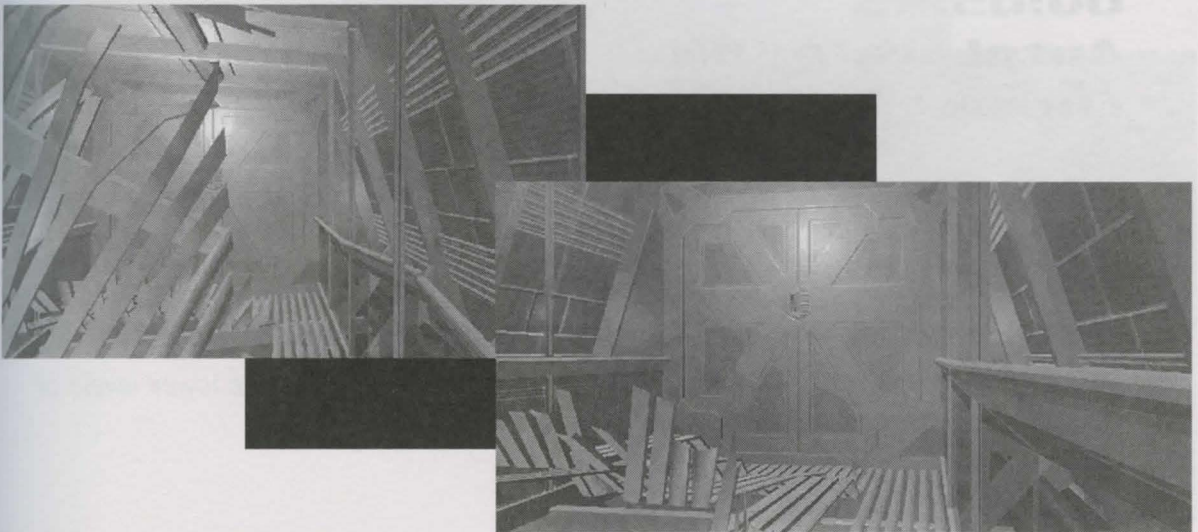
Son of a gun. That was 15 minutes of good, clean, hard work. I'm pretty pleased with myself, I must say. And I know a bit about computers, so I'm also pretty confident about getting Betty online.

Betty. That's what I call the central computer.

Yeah, she and I go way back.

You know, I'm starting to get the creeps, talking to myself like this.

OK, I'm going through the mess. Log it in.





Now let's just slide this baby open and—

## **Crew Entry-ID: H. Miura**

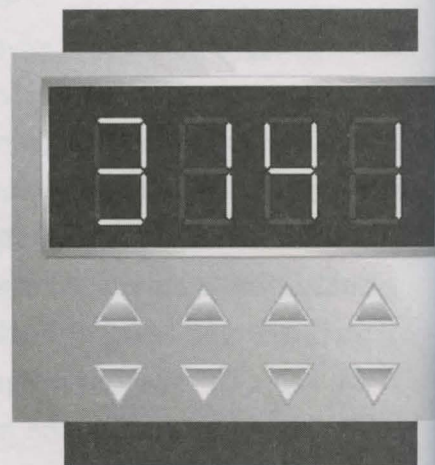
### **(VOC RECOGNITION ONLY)**

I've put the combo on this door because I was afraid one of you might come in and mess with the main computer. Please see me if you think you need to get in here! (unintelligible)

### **CO (continued):**

Hidecki, you paranoid conehead.

He put a code lock on the door. But I know your obsessions, man. I've been in your room. I have your necklace, your source code. I'm in your head.



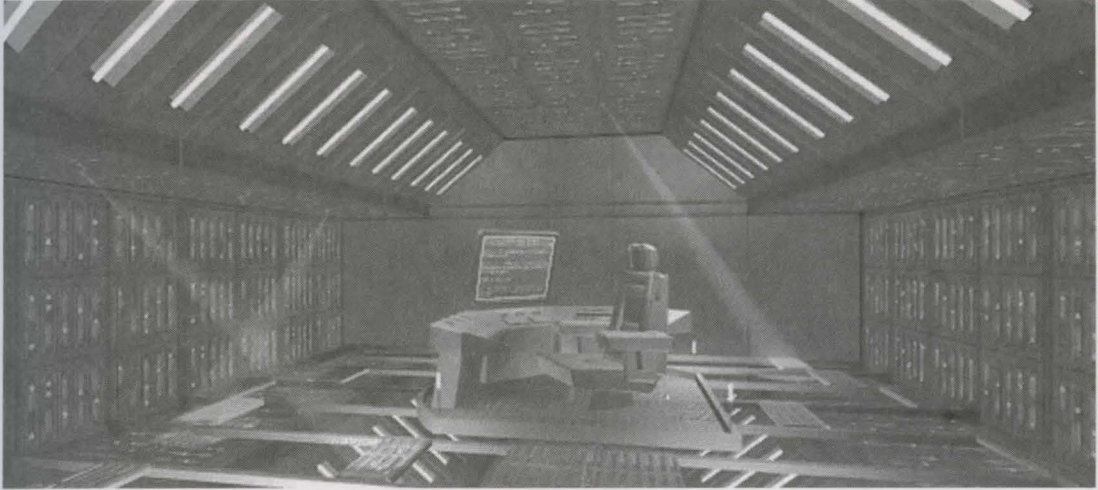
**00:05:29**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D5-CYBERSYSTEMS**

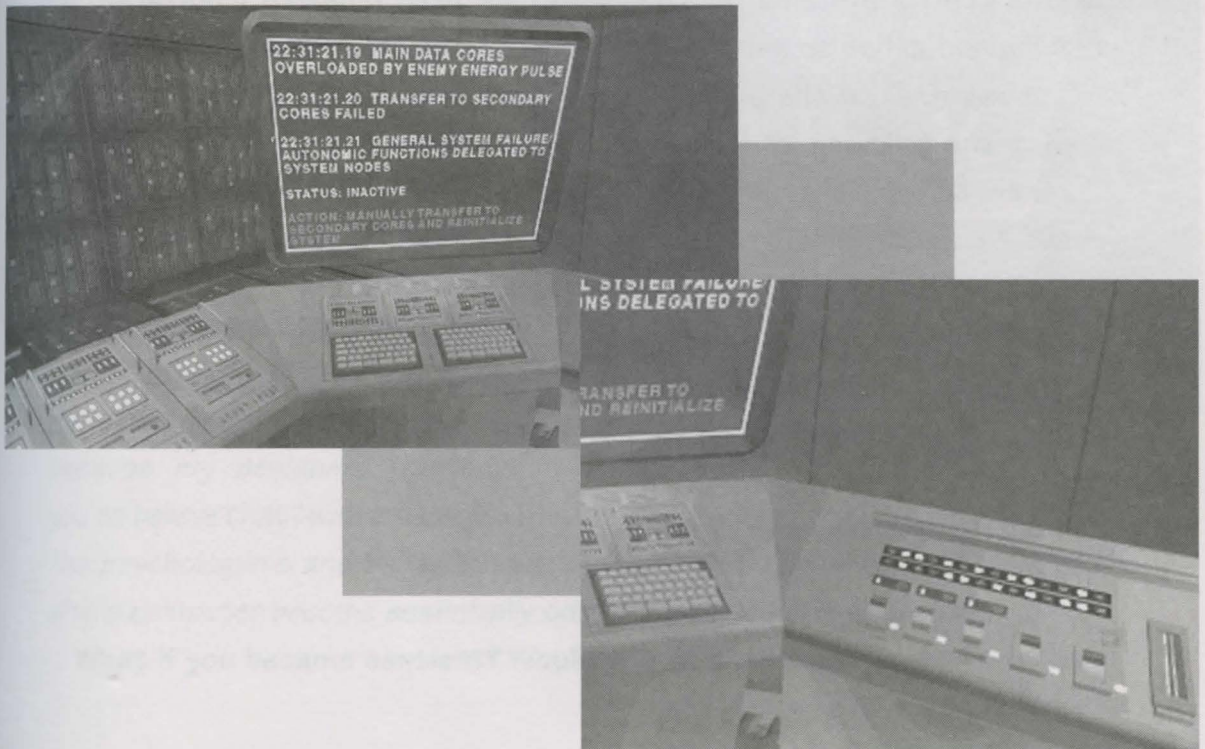
### **CO Log Entry:**

And so I've entered the sacred room. I'll never lose my sense of awe about this place. These Touring Cores have more computing power than the lower levels of heaven.



Hideki's console seat looks like a throne. He was protective of his turf, understandably. I used to beg him to let me just sit here.

Let's see. Looks like this panel slides up.





There's a Post-it note over the fifth switch, the one on the far right. It reads: "THIS BUTTON IS FOR SYSTEMWIDE COLD BOOT—Serious Shit! DON'T touch this without the CO's permission."

OK. Asking the CO's permission to cold boot the system.

Permission granted.

## Crew Log Entry—ID: J. Tran

### (VOC RECOGNITION ONLY)

Congratulations. You got the central computer system back online. Now you must figure out a way to get the communications systems back in working order.

The Tachyon beam transmitter is a large parabolic dish on the outside of the hull. The control systems for that dish have been rendered inoperative. You must figure out how to get the targeting and control mechanism for the dish working again. Once the system is up, override the looping distress call by entering the following code: M-E-L-I-S-S-A. Melissa. Then ask the central computer to run the IPS (AutoTranscript DEF: "Interstellar Positioning System") program and use it to align the dish on the Tachyon Relay Beacon sitting near the jump-point in the star system.

You will have to establish a relay connection through a web of jump-points to reach any bases or ships. You will have to talk to the Alliance base on Erebus. They will explain the *Lexington's* mission, and can help you finish that mission in real-time.

I've done everything I can. Good luck.

Tran out.





## **CO (continued):**

Thanks, Tran. Logged your message. Now let's talk to Betty.

### **Computer?**

*Yes?*

### **Are you now tied into all the nodes across the ship?**

*Yes. I have access to all of the ship systems.*

### **General inquiry.**

*Ask away.*

### **I want to ask a basic question about you.**

*Ask away.*

### **Are you conscious? Sentient?**

*Heavens, no.*

### **Why not? You certainly seem to have a personality.**

*My personality was programmed into me by Alliance AI (AutoTranscript DEF: "Artificial Intelligence") techs and software engineers. My voice and personality are designed for maximum compatibility with the crew of a starship on a long mission. I seem to be a person because my designers wanted you to believe that I was a person.*

*The psychologists and behavior specialists seem to think it helps to have the ship's computer become essentially one of the crew during missions.*

### **What if you became sentient? Would you be a person?**





*There is no more chance of me becoming sentient than there is of a toaster becoming self aware and deciding that it is a cat. What a ludicrous idea.*

**How can you not be sentient with a response like that?**

*My software includes language processing and synthesis algorithms that have been evolving for decades.*

**But you're a very sophisticated and complex computer system. I thought that complex computer systems were prone to emergent behavior.**

*Sure, some highly complex systems are indeed susceptible to unpredictable behavior. This usually manifests itself as seemingly random malfunctions that degrade or even bring to a halt the normal operation of a system.*

**That's it? It just stops working?**

*Usually.*

**If this is true, why was the United Nations so afraid some computer-based superrace would emerge?**

*Because the seeds of that superrace can indeed be found in the behavior manifested in complex systems. But this is just a beginning. A truly sentient life-form that takes advantage of the propensity towards emergent behavior would have to be carefully engineered or evolved by someone who knew exactly what they were doing. The emergence of sentient computer-based life won't happen by accident.*

**What is needed?**

*What is needed is a very specialized infrastructure, one designed to work with the new patterns that can be coaxed into existence. Think of the human brain. Its consciousness is supported by hundreds of specialized structures for recognizing, cataloging, storing, and retrieving patterns that range from images to musical sequences. Each thought is formed out of the action and interaction of dozens of these special structures.*

*Parallel and sequential processing is happening at the same time as problems are attacked from many angles. A software-based intelligence needs analogs for many of these special structures, including various network processing*



functions for making associations, parallel processing for recognizing patterns, a knowledge base and a set of rules for inductive and deductive reasoning.

It also would help to have a set of specialized data stores, each one optimized for a specific function.

**You seem almost passionate about the subject.**

My designers were passionate about the subject. My data stores are filled with the results of their research, the papers they published, and the logs that they kept.

**Let's talk more about this.**

We've talked enough about this subject. You have more important things to do right now.

**You're right, mom. I'm done.**

Acknowledged.

**OK, OK, so you're smarter than me. But can you do this? (thumping sounds)**

**00:05:58**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D2-SECURE STORAGE**

**CO Log Entry:**

Feel much better.

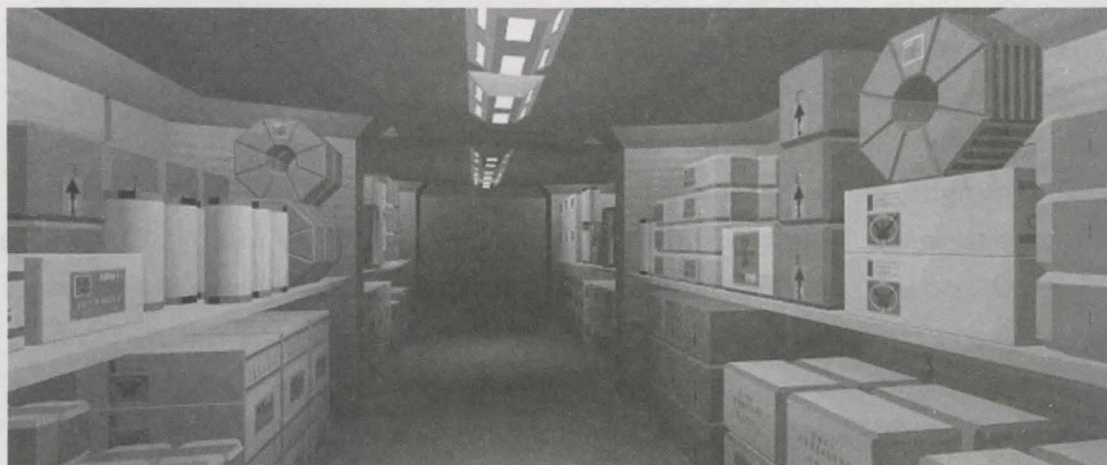
Well, I swallowed my pride and called up the computer again to access Subsystems. If I'm going to fix the communications, you know . . . it might help to know what's wrong with it. As usual, Betty had all the answers.

Somehow I'd toggled off the AutoLog, though. Must have hit the power button on one of my backflips. Ah, well. Here's a quick rundown of what Betty told me:

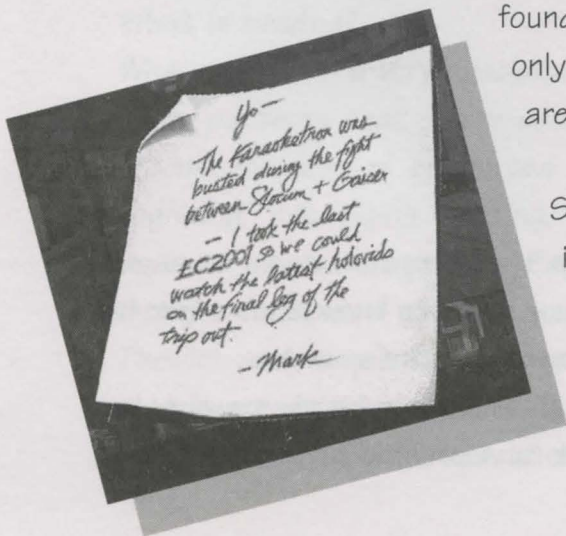


The TCS (AutoTranscript DEF: “Tachyon Communications System”) dish needs two new modules, an EC2001 and an EC2010. The damaged modules are behind an access panel on the base of the dish antenna structure. The dish is forward and to port from the Shuttle Bay air lock. I need to execute an EVA (AutoTranscript DEF: “Extra-Vehicular Activity”) in a spacesuit to get to the dish. I can find replacement modules in the Secure Storage area on Deck 2.

And so here I am:



Well, the good news is that I found a spare EC2010 module, no problem. Hundreds of them, in fact. Need one? I'll give you a deal. The bad news is that I found this note from Mark Aguilar. It was in the only box of EC2001 spares in the whole storage area:



So the last working EC2001 is probably down in the Mess Hall VR. Christ, I hope I didn't toast it last weekend when I watched *Casablanca* eight times in a row with Hasegawa.



**00:06:07**

**AutoLocate: ON**

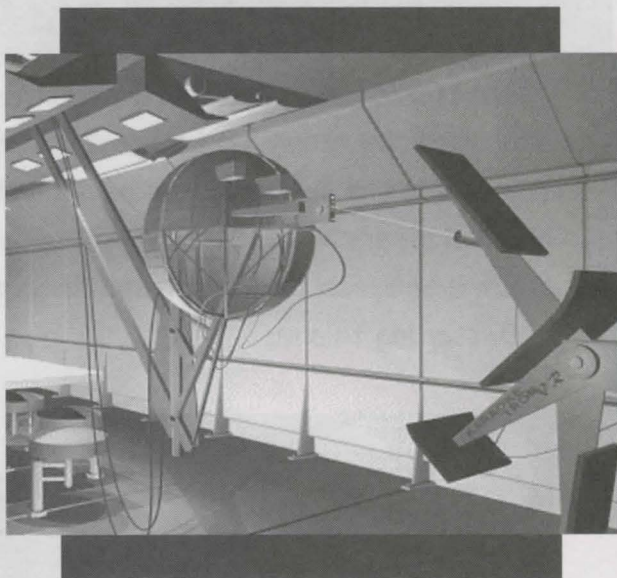
**Current Location: D3-MESS HALL**

**CO Log Entry:**

Now, let's ease this CPU (AutoTranscript DEF: "Central Processing Unit") from its housing. . . . Ahhh!

All right. It's never easy, is it? Guess I'll have to disconnect the power somehow. Let's log an image of the unit:

I don't see a plug anywhere, but a bunch of cables are hanging from the VR system. Maybe if I just give them a good yank. (popping sound) Yes, I believe that did it.



**00:06:17**

**AutoLocate: ON**

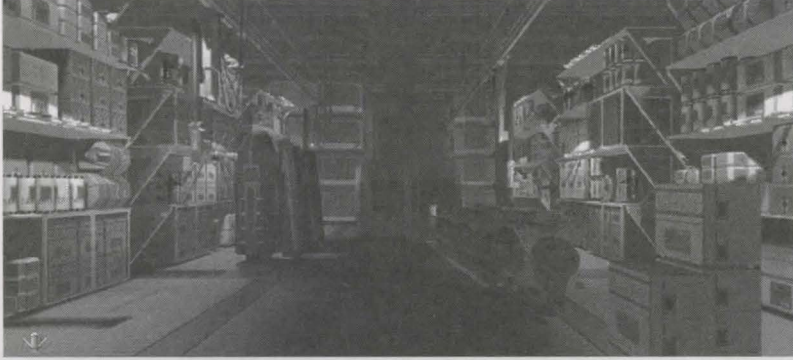
**Current Location: D6-CARGO BAY**

**CO Log Entry:**

Found an EC2001 module in the Karaoketron CPU. Now I'm down in the Deck 6 Cargo Bay. Why? I don't know. Cargo bays are full of cargo. Isn't cargo good? I figure there must be something worthwhile in here. What the hell is cargo, anyway?



Logging image:



Hey, that's somebody's multitool on the floor there. I'll have to turn it in to Lost & Found. Handy little things. Open most anything. Even . . . even a thermo-plastic ship model.

Wow. Poole had a secret stash. There's a bunch of stuff in here—an envelope, a transmitter, a key, and a weird device, looks like binoculars, but only open on one end. In the envelope, let's see, a letter.

Good God.

It's addressed to the commander of the *UNS Dharma*.

Better log this in:

To: UN Commander  
UNS Dharma

From: James Poole  
(DAMOCLES)

Your plan was to disable and then board the *Lexington*. There was always a high risk to me in that plan; if a firefight broke out inside the *Lexington*, I might easily be killed.

If I do not survive the battle for Deneb Kaitos 6, please make sure that the attached letter makes its way to my brother David. David is currently living in a FosterCare facility in Boulder, Colorado, inside the United States. I know you can reach him - after all, you got to me with no problem at all.

Dear David:

If you are reading this, I am dead. It is unlikely that the US Navy told you the real story behind my death. I'm sure that they sent you one of their standard "very sorry to inform you...killed in action" holos. It would be easy to leave it at that, but I thought it was important for you to know the truth.

The US Navy would never admit that I actually helped the United Nations win a critical battle in space, one that may well decide the outcome of the war in favor of the UN.

You are probably shocked by this. Why would I betray my country? Why would I go against the principles of the Alliance? How could I violate the solemn oath of honor and obedience that I swore when I joined the Navy?

The answer is that I chose to betray my country in order to avoid betraying the entire human race.

You know that mom and dad were killed in a lab accident when you were three years old and I was twelve.



There's more, but I've seen all I want to see. This transmitter is making some odd sounds. I'm adjusting what looks like a volume knob.

Yes. Now you can hear it.

## **Crew Log Entry-ID: J. Poole**

### **(VOC RECOGNITION ONLY)**

Scramble Blue. Attention Sword. Code name Damocles, authentication Echo Two Alpha Three Five, transmitting at two two point five niner with a periodic low-power NGCS burst. This is James Poole on the *USS Lexington*. Message follows: Per the last transmission from *Dharma*, I armed the bomb this morning before the officers' briefing, when I had the room to myself. If you intend to board the *Lexington*, you will need to disarm the bomb immediately upon arrival. The timer has been set according to instructions. Poole out. Message repeats.

### **CO (continued):**

Bomb? Great, that's just great.

OK, so . . . he armed the bomb this morning, before the officers' briefing. The damn thing must be in the wardroom upstairs, and it must be ready to blow.

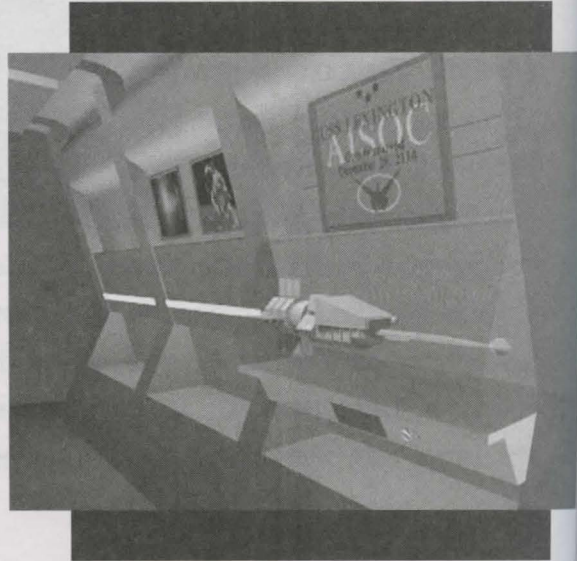
**00:06:25****AutoLocate: ON****Current Location:****D2-OFFICER'S WARDROOM****CO Log Entry:**

I'm in the wardroom. No obvious place, except maybe . . .

Yes! Poole had a thing about ship models, didn't he? The key fits, man. Good thing I kept that multitool. Opening the *Lexington* model now. (unidentified noise) There's some kind of metal cylinder. Open it quickly here. (breathing) It's not coming, it's not . . .!

There!

And disarmed.



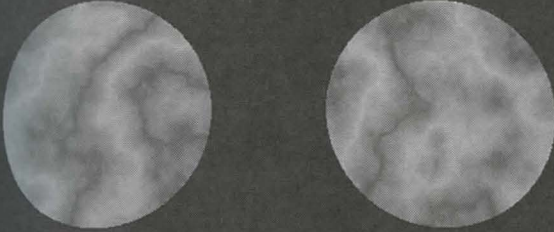
Just realized I haven't even examined Poole's weird binoculars yet. Turning it on now. Looking in. Wow.

Psychedelic patterns, each labeled with some kind of code. Here's a look:





Pattern Selected  
Code Name : Stone Daedalus



Bizarre. Looks like veins or something.

Time to get this TCS dish thing figured out. But while I'm here on Deck 2, I want to check out Mike Dahl's room, my other next-door neighbor. Mary Quan said something about Poole sneaking into Dahl's quarters.

**00:06:33**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**02-STATEROOM DELTA (DAHL)**

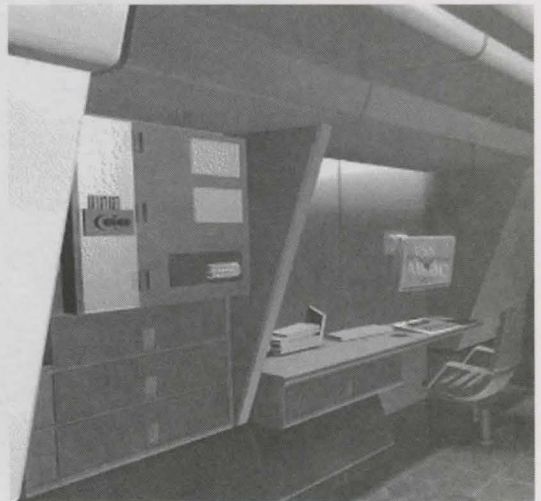
**CO Log Entry:**

Got in, no problem with the VIS Override code. Looks like every other stateroom on the ship, except for an odd-looking safe where the personal cabinet usually is. Some kind of eyepiece on it. When I look in, little lights scan my eyes.

Must be one of those retina-scanning locks. Not the kind of thing you pick up at your local hardware store. Dahl must have some serious stash himself.

Wait a minute!

These patterns in Poole's device. Veins. Eyes. These are retinal patterns! He's logged the crew's eyeballs into this thing.

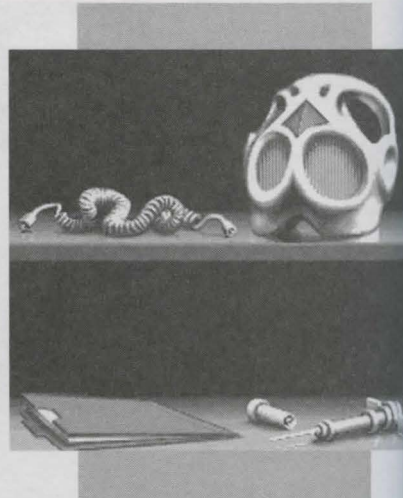




That's it, that's the code. Cycling through these names. Stone Daedalus: Steven Dayna. Kingdom Fallen: Kim Falcon. Jewel True: Jennifer Tran.

And, of course—Miracle Dark: Michael Dahl.  
Let's try it on the eyepiece.

What the hell is this stuff? The folder's marked Top Secret Omega. That's highest-level security. Maybe I shouldn't log in these pages. Then again . . .  
Looks like some kind of documentation.



### TX-15 HYPE/TELECON SYSTEM DOCUMENTATION



CLASSIFIED TOP SECRET OMEGA

TeraDyne Corporation  
Floor 207, Ulu Pandan Tower, Buncam Road, Singapore  
US Navy Contract: N6030-0027-C-6001, CLIN 5A  
AISOC Universal Military Procurement Code Number (UMPC):  
R0030-WEI-78A-37N2Z

#### 1.0 Executive Summary

The TX-15 Hype/Telecon system provides for real time human control of battle drones during ship-to-ship combat. The system consists of new software for the drones and the ship's main computer, a direct neural interface between the main computer and the system operator, and a mutagenic serum to be ingested by the operator. This serum, known as Hype, facilitates interaction with the computer software and increases the speed of thought processing in the operator's cerebral cortex.

The Hype mutagenic serum is the key to the system. Hype has four basic ingredients:

##### Micromachines

A series of highly specialized molecular micromachines is responsible for making physical changes in the brain structure. Once inside the host, the micromachines replicate themselves using materials found in the body. When a critical mass of several million individual units has been reached, the micromachines will begin their assigned construction and alteration tasks inside the brain. The micromachines perform most of the work associated with preparing the operator's brain for interface with the main computer.

Once the necessary changes to organic brain structures have been made, the micromachines themselves become key components of the new neural pathways necessary for Hype/Telecon operation. Their last independent action is to join together in chains and link their computing elements to provide critical ultra-high speed electronic pathways for selected brain functions.

##### Viruses

The Terex-A, Case-J, Cat-III and Koma-C viruses have been engineered to change the behavior of neurons in the brain by physically changing the cell structures and simultaneously re-writing their DNA. New DNA is transferred to all cell mitochondria via xRNA. These viruses are benign in that cell reproduction machinery is altered to create more viruses without destroying the host cells.

##### Neurochemicals

The building blocks for the work of the micromachines and viruses include combinations of neurochemicals which are not in great abundance in nonessential parts of the brain. A supply of the needed substances is included with the Hype serum.

##### Suspension

The other three Hype components are suspended in a mixture of glucose and Texone.

The Hype/Telecon system as it stands (Fig 6) has never been tested in combat and has severe operational limitations. The first and most critical limitation is the side effects of Hype on the system operator. The modifications made to the operator's brain by the mutagenic serum begin to decay within seven to ten days after ingestion. Unfortunately, the end result is the death of the operator. In spite of the limitations, the Hype/Telecon system has shown so much promise in simulations and tests that it has been deployed in a limited number of Alliance combat vessels. The system is a force multiplier of the highest order and has the potential to increase the combat effectiveness of a fighting ship by a factor of five over the long run the Hype/Telecon system may be the only way to overcome the material superiority of UN forces.

#### 2.0 Project Background

The Hype/Telecon system had its origins in a University of Singapore research project known as CATALYST. CATALYST was an attempt to simultaneously augment human brain function and provide a direct neural interface with a computer system.

Dr. Alan Poho of the University of Singapore launched CATALYST in 2110. Dr. Poho subscribed to the "Enhanced Human" school of Evolutionary Dynamics. According to the "Enhanced Human" school, the next step in the evolution of sentience is the enhancement of human beings by technological means (as opposed to the "Electronic Uplink Farm" school which believes that the next step in evolution is an entirely new form of intelligence).

Dr. Poho worked with a team of chemical engineers, molecular biologists, genetic engineers, cyberneticists, optoelectronic engineers to develop the essential technology for brain augmentation and direct neural interface. The work was proceeding apace when the project of CATALYST was threatened by the continuing hostilities between the Alliance and the UN.

Dr. Poho saw the military applications of CATALYST and after the CATALYST budget was cut for the fourth year by the University of Singapore administration, he joined TeraDyne Corporation and proposed an expansion of the CATALYST project for military use. A series of research and development contracts (totaling \$2.7 billion) were awarded to TeraDyne Corporation by the US Navy over a period of fifteen years. The Hype/Telecon system is the result of this work, and the ten years' worth of concentrated research that preceded it.



Holy cow. I know this is the 22nd century and all, but this seems . . . incredible. A drug full of micromachines and viruses that rewire your brain? A direct neural interface with a computer? This is too bizarre. It says here: "The system is a force multiplier of the highest order and has the potential to increase the combat effectiveness of a fighting ship by a factor of five."

That's unbelievable, man. But if it's true, we could kick some U.N. tail with this stuff. Of course, the end result of ingesting Hype looks to be a tad unpleasant. I'm not a big fan of death. I always root for the underdog.

**00:06:48**

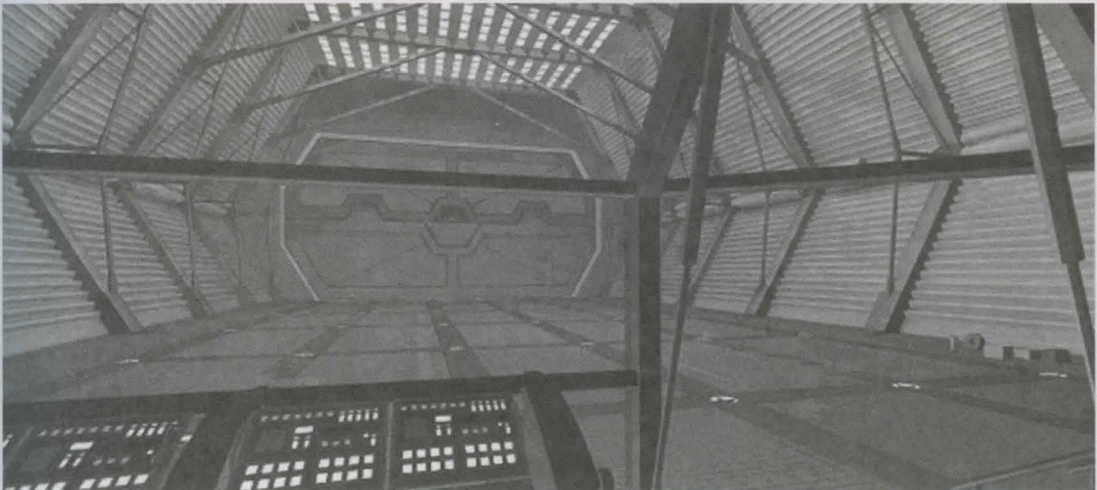
**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D6-AIR LOCK CONTROL ROOM**

**CO Log Entry:**

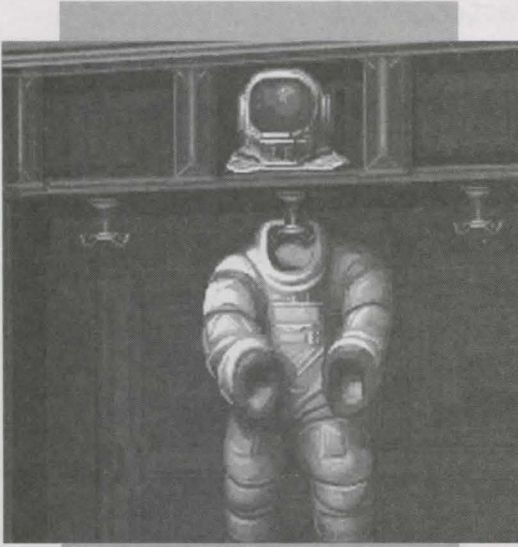
I'm entering the Air Lock Control Room now. Nice view of the Shuttle Bay from here.





I assume there's an MMU (AutoTranscript DEF: "Manned Maneuvering Unit") suit around here somewhere. Looks like a suit locker on the wall.

Sure enough. Log it in:



This isn't an MMU though. No oxygen, either. Where are the tanks? Holy hell, don't tell me there are no oxygen tanks. (unidentified sounds)

No oxygen tanks. Great.

Hold it. Wait. I've got one right here on my belt, on the cutting torch.

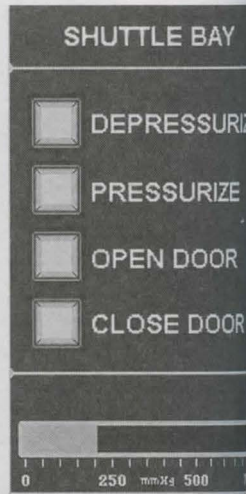
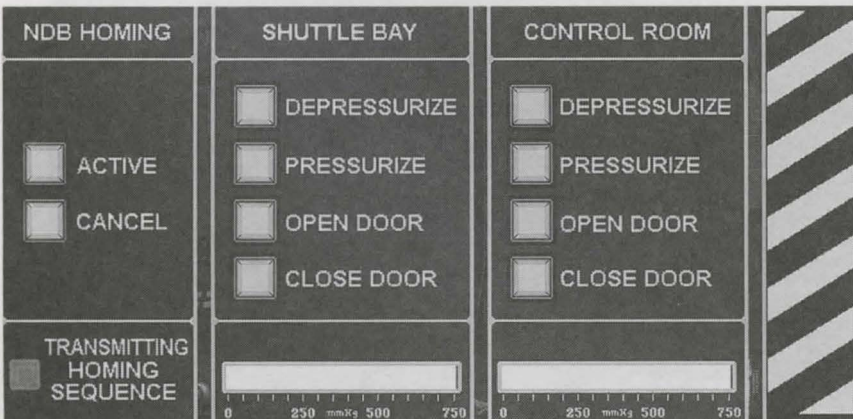
It's small, but maybe . . .

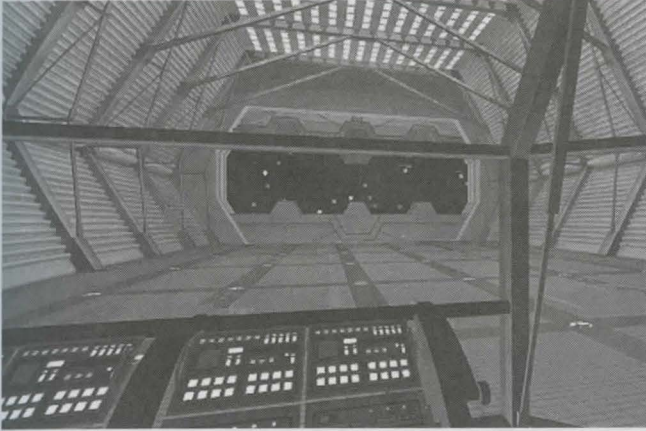
I'm using the multitool, Dahlgren wrench attachment. The components of the cutting torch . . . coming apart. Pretty easy, actually. Say hey, I got an O2 tank! Now it's kludge time. It fits fine in the suit's tank

pouch. The feed line is too big, though. No problem. All we need is a metal clamp.

All right. Should do for a short walk, anyway.

Now to the air lock control console. Need to depressurize the bay, then open bay doors. I'll log in the steps:





Now on with the suit.

Once I get this helmet on, I won't be able to manually activate the voice log. I'll engage AutoVoice Activation now. On the way out to the dish, I'll voice-activate an image log of the waypoints.

Helmet on.

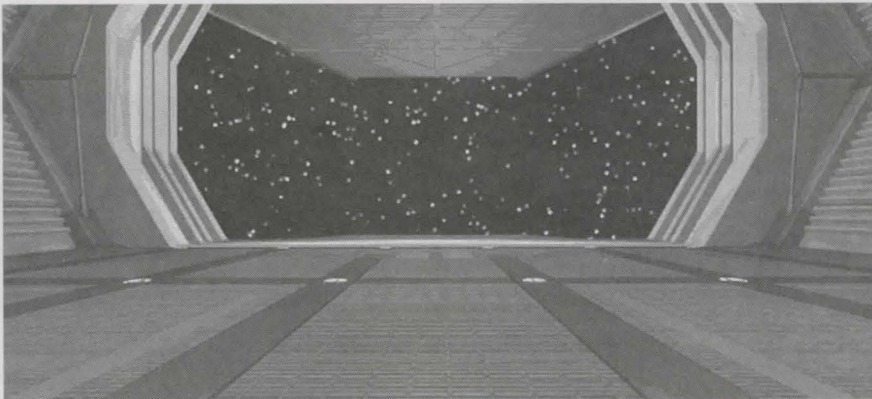
**00:07:09**

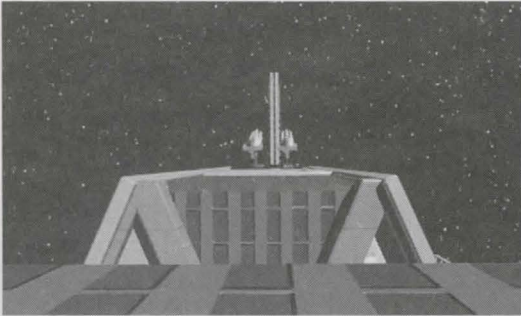
**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: C104 ERROR  
(OUTSIDE SHIP PARAMETERS)**

**CO Log Entry:**

(AutoVOC Activate: ON) Depressurized control room, opened outer door. Moving across the bay now. Log image.



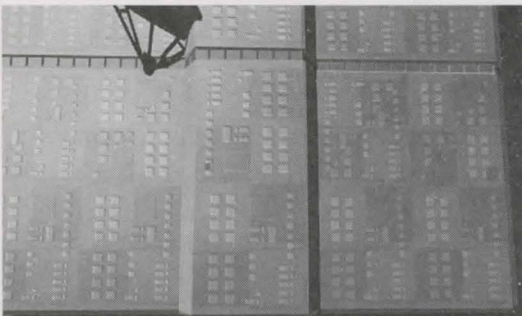
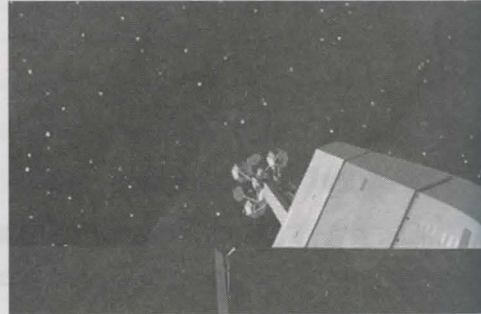


From the landing pad, I'm heading forward. I can see one of the radiator fins up ahead. Log image.

Working back around . . .

Where the hell am I?

There's the FTL boom ahead. Must be heading in the right direction. Log image.



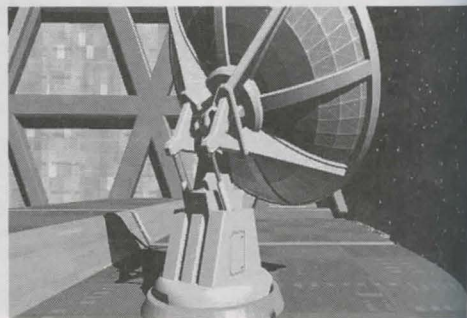
Feel like I'm getting turned around here. Wait . . . there's the shadow of the dish on the outer hull. Yes, on the left side. The TCS dish is just above that hull marking, the smallest red square.

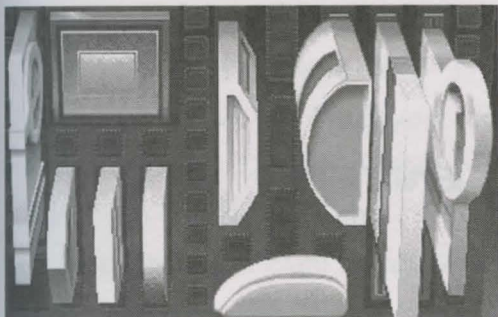
Log image.

All right. Almost there.

The access panel is on the other side of the dish, looks like. So I'll have to work my way around.

Here we are. Log image.

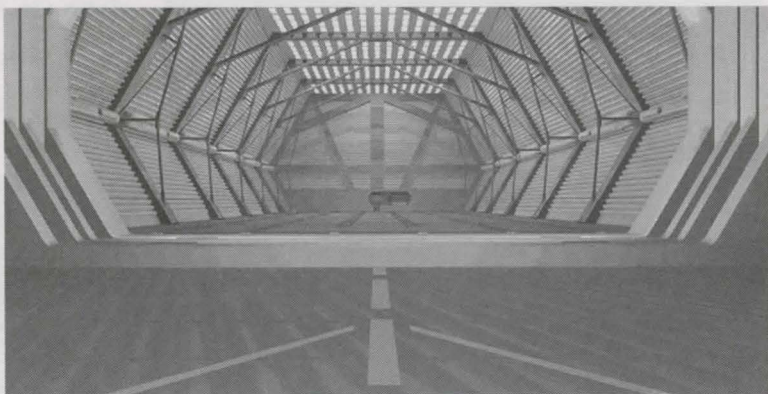




Looks like the EC2001 is on the far left, with the EC2010 at far right. Pluck them out, easy enough. Plug in the new modules. Piece of cake. Air's holding out just fine.

Log image.

Ah, the landing pad's just below. Big and beautiful. Air's starting to thin in the suit, so I'd better hustle into the air lock. Log image.



**00:07:50**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D6-AIR LOCK CONTROL ROOM**

**CO Log Entry:**

OK, closing door to the Control Room. Pressurizing. Hurry, man, I'm starting to gasp here.

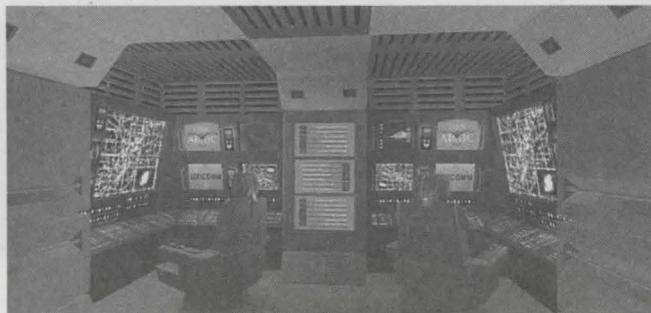
Get this damn helmet off, before I choke on my own carbon dioxide.

Whew! Slower going than I expected. These boots are magnetized, which is good—keeps you from floating away. But makes for slow stepping. Depleted the little O2 tank, got back with no time to spare.

Man, I'll never take breathing for granted again.

**00:07:59****AutoLocate: ON****Current Location:****D2-COMMUNICATIONS CENTER****CO Log Entry:**

Entering the radio shack. Here's the image:



This place is a little intimidating, but I managed to find the TCS controls and enter the Melissa code to override the looping distress call from Lt. Falcon.

Now I'm trying to figure out this TCS interface:

Got the transceiver subsystem up. Now what? Maybe I should pull up the Star Chart. The Alliance base at Erebus, as I recall, is in the 70 Ophiuchi system, so I select "70 Ophiuchi" and center it on the chart. That way I can get a 3-D picture of the links I build.

USS LEXINGTON US NAVY/AISOC

**COMMUNICATIONS**

- 1 ESTABLISH RELAY LINK
- 2 TRANSMIT OVER LINK
- 3 DIAGNOSTICS
- 4 EXIT

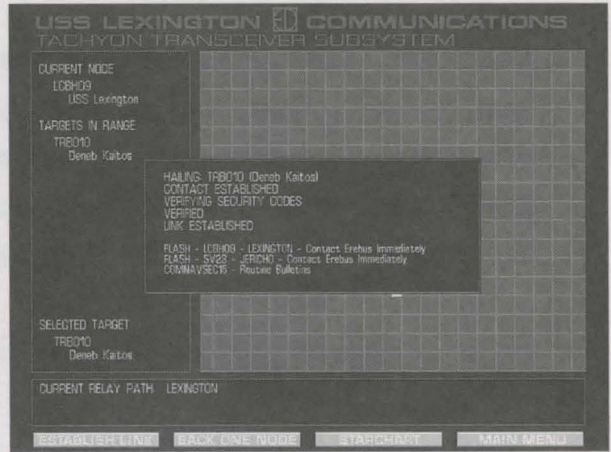




Now back to the subsystem screen. Target the nearest TRB (Auto-Transcript DEF: "Tachyon Relay Beacon") at Deneb Kaitos, then establish link. No problem.

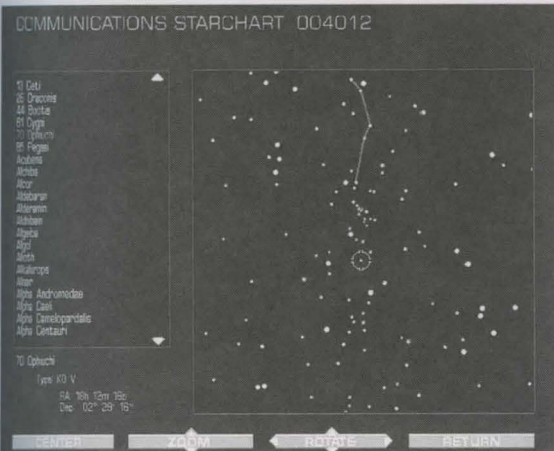
Nice interface. Even an idiot like me can use it.

Building a relay path now. Ceti next. I'll log an image of the final path. (AutoLog gap: 82 seconds)

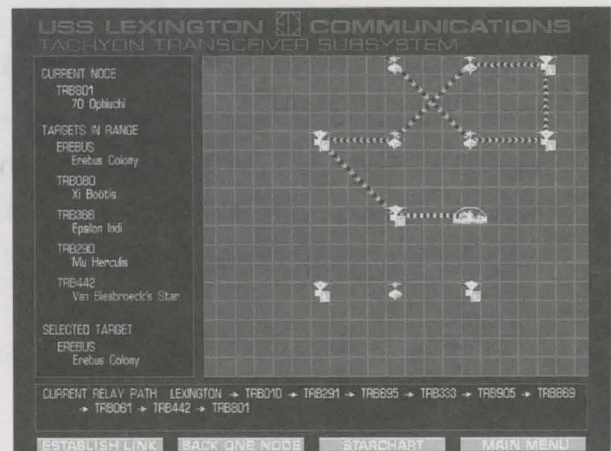


Couple more links here. Try Zeta Tucanae next. Better check the Star Chart. Am I pathing in toward 70 Ophiuchi?

Yes. OK, just a few more links. Barnard's star. Van Biesbroeck's star. There it is—70 Ophiuchi. And now, to Erebus Colony.



Ready to transmit over link. I'll set the AutoLog on Auto-ID dialog transcribing mode. Once it identifies anybody I talk to, the recorder should keep an orderly transcript of the conversation. Hope I don't get an answering machine.





**(AUTO-ID:  
DECKER, CHARLES-ADMIRAL, U. S. FLEET COMMAND)**

Decker: This is Admiral Charles Decker. Stand by for authentication of your Jasmine transmission. Authentication is Alpha-Niner-Zero, Niner-Tango-Four, Eight-Hotel-Sierra.

CO: Go ahead.

Decker: Given the Jasmine coding for this transmission, I assume that this is the **Lexington**. You've been out of touch for quite some time. Since our last communication with you, we've come across a potential threat to the success of the mission. I need to talk to Captain Dayna right away.

CO: I'm afraid he's dead. So is the rest of the crew. I'll fill you in on what's happened . . . (AutoTranscript gap: 3 minutes) . . . and so here I am, Admiral.

Decker: Hell, Lieutenant. The situation couldn't be much worse.

CO: At least the **Dharma** was destroyed and the **Lexington** is back in action. There is a chance that I could continue the mission.

Decker: Well, Dayna did the only thing he could have. Some hope is better than none. But *this*—this isn't even a longshot. You have no idea what you're up against. I think the best thing you can do is take the **Lexington** out to a safe place, perhaps a few hundred thousand kilometers away from Persephone, and wait for reinforcements.



CO: Help is on its way?

Decker: Another expedition is now on its way. With the need for secrecy gone, we can gear up the whole damn fleet for this one. The heavy cruisers **Iwo Jima**, **Midway**, and **Tarawa** have already departed. They're being escorted by one of the **Lexington's** sister ships, the **Concord**, and a squadron of destroyers.

CO: There might be more U.N. ships on the way. We may not have four months to wait for another expedition!

Decker: Well, Lieutenant, that's just the problem. We know for a fact that there are more U.N. ships on their way. A battle group of frigates, destroyers, maybe even a cruiser or two. They could show up any time now.

CO: How can I fight back?

Decker: You can't, really. You have half the normal complement of active battle drones. The **Lexington** has sustained serious damage. You have no combat experience. There are no other crew members to help you with weapons control, damage control, navigation, engineering, or anything else. Need I go on?

CO: We have to think of a way. The crews of the **Lexington** and the **Jericho** died to give me a shot at this. You need to tell me about how to get the weapons systems on line.

Decker: What I'm going to tell you is how to steer that ship to a point 250,000 kilometers outside the plane of ecliptic, so you can stay out of danger.

CO: I'm not steering the ship anywhere except closer to Persephone.

Decker: I am giving you a direct order to take the **Lexington** out of danger!



CO: And I'm respectfully declining to obey. I'm going to stay and fight.

Decker: Who the hell do you think you are, Lieutenant? Who gave you the authority to disobey a U.S. Navy Fleet Admiral in a time of war?

CO: Captain Dayna did, sir, and his authority and trust are what count right now.

Decker: Captain Dayna didn't tell you to disobey orders!

CO: He was counting on me to finish the mission. I'm going to do it, or die trying.

Decker: OK, Lieutenant. If I can't order you to pull out, maybe I can reason with you. You need to understand why playing hero isn't going to help anybody. All you'll do is get yourself killed. You also need to understand why there is no way you can successfully complete the mission. Let's talk about our options here.

CO: You could start by telling me about the mission.

Decker: Eighteen months ago, one of our unmanned IX probes was mapping new jump-points around the star Omicron Eridani. The probe found a jump-point that took it 68 light years away from Earth to an unexplored star system with seven planets. The probe began a routine orbital survey of the planets, and then abruptly returned to known space, years before its mission was scheduled to end. When the probe got within range of a Tachyon Relay Beacon, it sent home a series of burst transmissions describing an anomaly under the surface of the sixth planet.

The probe's scanners had found a huge metal structure that could only be the result of intelligent construction. Now, the Alliance was keenly aware of the implications. This discovery was strong evidence for the existence of alien intelligence. The potential existed for finding advanced technology—or a spacefaring alien



civilization—on the site. The results could tilt the balance of power in the war with the U.N. Preparations for an expedition to the mysterious planet, now called Persephone, were started in the utmost secrecy.

Finally, four months ago, the *Lexington* and the *USS Jericho* departed for Persephone from the Eisenhower Orbital Docks around Titan. The only people on the two ships who knew the true nature of the mission were Captain Dayna, Captain McCain, and Lieutenant Commander Tran.

CO: Were any more signs of ET activity discovered?

Decker: None. The installation on Persephone is it, as far as I know.

CO: So what is the purpose of the expedition? What are the mission objectives?

Decker: The *Jericho* was outfitted with an array of sensors and special instruments to be used to gather data on the alien installation. She is also carrying a planetary lander, adapted specifically for the harsh conditions on Persephone. Captain McCain was going to use the lander to go down to the surface of Persephone with a team of scientists.

Now these are the mission goals: To land on Persephone and see if the builders of the installation are still around. If so, initiate first contact and establish a basis for ongoing communication. If not, explore and gather data on the installation, and attempt find out if there is any exploitable technology. Gather samples, and return to Earth with the information.

CO: Why the *Lexington*?

Decker: The *Lexington* was the logical choice as an escort for a number of reasons. She was a combat-tested ship, with perhaps the finest captain and crew in the fleet. She's one of the fastest ships we have. She had been outfitted with an experimental new weapons control system.



CO: Tell me about the new weapons system.

Decker: Don't get any ideas, Lieutenant.

CO: Just tell me about the system.

Decker: This system is a prototype, the first of its kind. It has not been battle-tested. It also has some serious operational flaws. The purpose of the system is to put humans back in the loop during combat. The system has two components—a neural link from the operator to the ship's main computer, and a drug that actually acts on the brain to allow a direct interface with the computer. The drug speeds up certain brain functions to allow real-time control of weapons during ship-to-ship combat.

CO: Sounds promising. Why is a link needed?

Decker: As you know, up to now combat has happened much too fast to be managed by human beings. Battles in space have been resolved by unmanned autonomous drones that can accelerate at a hundred gravities, turn on a dime, and deliver a serious load of ordnance on target. These drones are equipped with smart computer systems capable of assimilating data and executing complicated strategies in the blink of an eye.

The drones are carried aboard starships crewed by people who make the initial decisions about how to arm and deploy the drones. Once released, the drones are pretty much on their own.

For the last ten years of the war, there's been a race on both sides to improve the battle-management software that runs on the drone computer hardware. A group of Alliance techies in Singapore decided that if it were at all possible to speed up human reaction times, a human brain in the loop could give one side a tremendous advantage in battle.



CO: You would have to speed up thought processing and reaction times by orders of magnitude!

Decker: You're correct, Lieutenant. The solution was a drug called Hype. Hype is actually a concoction of neurotransmitter chemicals, micromachines, and genetically engineered viruses. This stuff actually rewires your brain to make it faster and more efficient. Well, faster and more efficient for the purposes of managing a ship-to-ship encounter in real time. The drug also creates the nerve pathways to the forebrain needed for a direct neural link to the computer.

CO: Are the changes reversible?

Decker: Now that is one of the problems with the whole system. No, the changes aren't reversible. But at this point, it doesn't even matter that they aren't reversible.

CO: What do you mean?

Decker: The drug has a nasty side effect. The modifications Hype makes to the brain begin decaying after a few days. The results include loss of faculties, hallucinations, wild emotional swings, dementia, and finally, inevitably, death.

CO: But does the whole system work for the week that you can function without impairment?

Decker: Two test subjects volunteered to try it. Both were able to out-think and out-fight the best battle-management algorithms in simulated encounters between equal forces of evenly matched drones. The combination of the human brain, the central computer, and the battle management software on the drones seems to convey a significant advantage in combat.



CO: Why did you deploy a prototype before operational testing?

Decker: As you know, the war isn't really going our way. At some point, we realized that we might have to deploy the Hype system even though it is still an early prototype. We knew we would have to begin recruiting volunteers to operate the system in battle . . . over the objections of many principled Naval officers.

CO: I didn't know the war was going badly. What's happening?

Decker: The conflict has turned into a war of attrition. The U.N. has more resources and more production capacity than we do. They can outproduce us 10-to-1. We have a technological edge, but we are being slowly beaten into the ground.

CO: How bad is it?

Decker: If things continue at their current pace, we'll lose the war within five years.

CO: Does the U.N. have an equivalent weapons system?

Decker: The U.N. doesn't have anything like the Hype system.

CO: Are there any other Alliance ships equipped with the Hype system?

Decker: There are no other Alliance ships equipped with the Hype system.

CO: The new weapons system sounds like the answer to my problem. If it really provides such a significant advantage, I can take the U.N. commanders by surprise. They won't even be expecting a fight!





Decker: Don't even think of it. Besides, I have no intention of giving you the release codes that you'll need to activate the system.

CO: Would you rather see me die with no chance at all?

Decker: Goddammit, Lieutenant, you are an irrational, insubordinate, stubborn son of a bitch! I don't know how you got past the damn psych profiles.

CO: I think my irrational, insubordinate, stubborn streak is why Dayna picked me to finish this mission, even though I have no combat experience or piloting skills. Let's work on the other seemingly intractable problem for a moment. I'm a thousand meters away from the **Jericho** and the lander. I need to get to the lander.

Decker: Lieutenant, you aren't going anywhere without the intership shuttle. You already told me you barely had enough oxygen to conduct the EVA to fix the the comm system!

CO: Is there any way for me to get from one ship to the other?

Decker: I don't know of any way to cross between the ships without an EVA maneuvering suit.

CO: Can I dock the ships together?

Decker: No, I don't think so.

CO: Can I bring the lander to the **Lexington**?

Decker: (pause) Well, if the **Jericho's** computer were slaved to that of the **Lexington's**, you might be able to jack into the lander's on-board computer and deploy it remotely. Then you could fly it over to **Lexington** via the uplink.



CO: Well, it's a start. I think you can see a plan forming here. How about the release codes?

Decker: You win, Lieutenant. By God, I would court-martial you and have you shot if you actually *could* make it back. But . . . good luck and Godspeed, son. If you do manage to pull this off, the Alliance, and potentially all humanity, will be in your debt. Stand by for a data transmission with the information you'll need about Hype and the weapons systems.

Decker out.

### CO Log Entry:

Here it comes. I'm looking at the incoming data. Decker sent weapons release codes and official authorization for use of the Hype/Telecon system. Central computer is downloading . . . all codes are acknowledged.

Looks like I'm set.

Now I need to get the **Ariadne** over here. First, I'd better get some advice from the central computer. Computer?

Yes?

**General inquiry.**

Ask away.

**Let's talk about the Jericho and the planetary lander.**

OK.

**How can I get the Ariadne over to the Lexington?**

Use the TCS in the Comm Center to establish a link with the **Jericho**. Enter the code name "Jacob's Ladder" when the **Jericho's** system demands authentication. Jacob's Ladder is the automated launch program for the planetary lander. The **Jericho's** systems will resume the launch preparations that were aborted when the U.N. drones attacked.



The launch protocols can be carried out through remote operation, including the initialization of a computer-based autopilot on the lander that can be used to steer the lander over to the **Lexington**.

**Do I have to steer the lander from the Jericho to the Lexington myself?**

No. The on-board computer will take care of the piloting. All you need to do is specify a destination and a homing beacon frequency.

**A homing beacon frequency? What's that all about?**

The lander's autopilot will need either the **Lexington's** exact position or the frequency of the **Lexington's** homing beacon. If it knows the homing beacon frequency and the beacon is activated, then the lander can ride the beam from the beacon into the Shuttle Bay on Deck Six.

Because giving the lander's computer a continual update is not feasible, I suggest you supply the autopilot with the **Lexington's** homing beacon frequency.

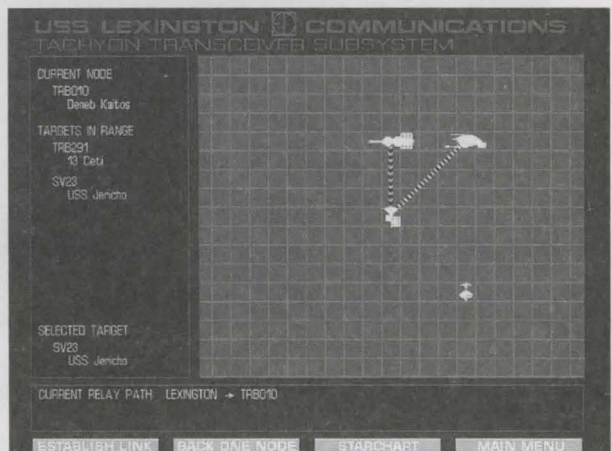
**Will I need to pilot the lander to the surface of the planet once I manage to get aboard?**

No. There is a descent profile for Persephone already loaded into the autopilot. Simply engage the autopilot once you are on board and select the Persephone autoland program. The lander will touch down as near to the Artifact as it can.

**I'm done.**

Okay, I'm using the TCS controls to establish another relay link—this time, to Deneb Kaitos, then right over to the **Jericho**.

Here we go:



**TACHYON TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS**

ALPHA - AUTOPILOT DESCENT TO PERSEPHONE  
BRAVO - INTERSHIP TRANSFER (USING HOMING BEACON)

USS JERICHO  
CENTRAL COMPUTER  
COMMAND LINK

ENTER COMMAND PATCH

JACOBS LADDER

JACOBS LADDER  
ARIADNE: AUTOMATED DEPLOYMENT CHECKLIST

SPECIFY FLIGHTPLAN

ALPHA - AUTOPILOT DESCENT TO PERSEPHONE  
BRAVO - INTERSHIP TRANSFER (USING HOMING BEACON)  
CHARLIE - MANUAL CONTROL

Now transmitting over link ...  
typing in the command patch ...  
and specifying FLIGHTPLAN BRAVO.

Excellent! The *Ariadne* is ready to ride the homing beacon into the *Lexington* Shuttle Bay.

All right. OK. (AutoTranscript gap: 27 seconds) Time to get Hyped.

Before I do this, I want anyone listening to know that ... in 10 days, when I start to deteriorate and hallucinate ... I won't mean a damn thing I'm saying. Particularly if I bad-mouth the Yankees.

For the record, I want it noted that I think this year's Yankee squad is the best baseball team in the 250 years of the sport. The people of Aspen-Vail should be proud of their home team.

**00:09:15**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D1-BRIDGE LEVEL**

**CO Log Entry:**

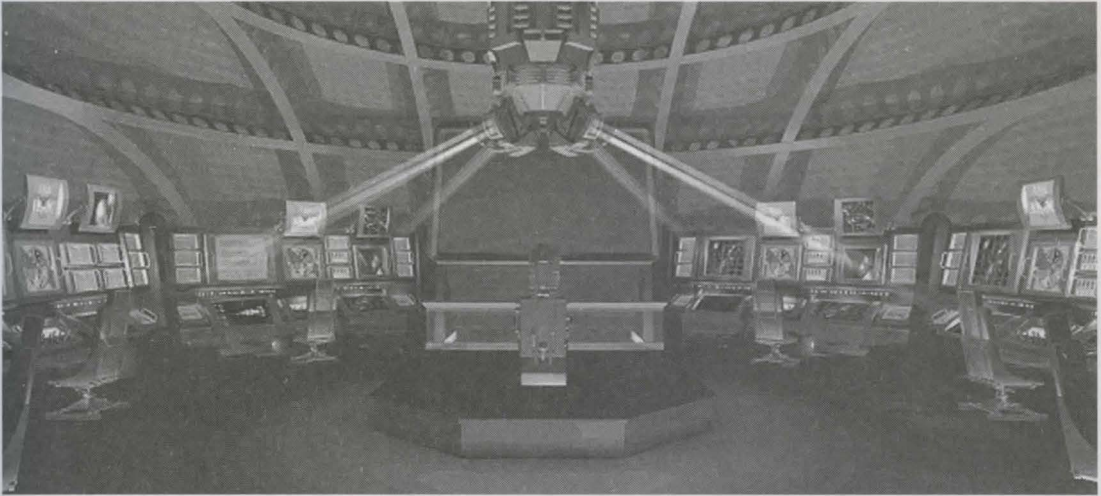
Ah, the holy room. Four months of this mission, I've been up here exactly once. Not a lot of reasons for a supply officer to frequent the Bridge. Here it is:

ARIADNE AUTOPILOT  
FLIGHT PLAN BRAVO

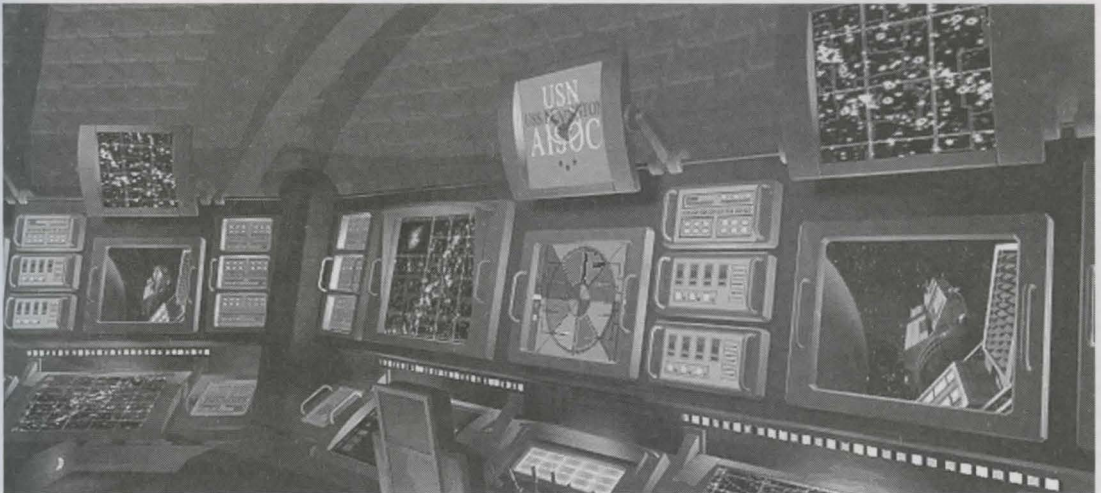
INITIATING PRE-FLIGHT CHECKLIST

APU PRE-START  
IMU PREFLIGHT ALIGNMENT  
PRESSURIZE OMS  
CLOSE RAMP  
SWITCH TO INTERNAL POWER  
DEPRESSURIZE SHUTTLE BAY  
OPEN BAY DOORS  
DEPLOY

ARIADNE NOW HOLDING 1000 METERS FROM USS JERICHO  
AWAITING HOMING BEACON ACTIVATION



I do remember a couple of things from flight school, however. The Tactical console is generally to the starboard side of the Bridge, with its backup to port. Sure enough.



Let's see. Where's the Hype system access button?  
Aha.



## Unidentified Entry:

*Hype/Telecon initialization checklist, Revision 3.1. This automated checklist has been prepared in order to simplify the activation and use of the experimental TX-15 TeraDyne Hype/Telepresence Control System components. (AutoLog function terminated mid-record.)*

**00:09:32**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D7-WEAPONS BAY CORRIDOR**

## CO Log Entry:

I turned off the AutoLog during the Hype checklist. Some things should probably remain undocumented. Some interesting fail-safes built into the initialization

sequence. You have to reprogram each of the battle drones manually!

So here I am on the Weapons Level.

Three bays, each housing three drones. Doesn't matter which bay I choose first, I guess. In fact, no need to document the tedious reprogramming of all

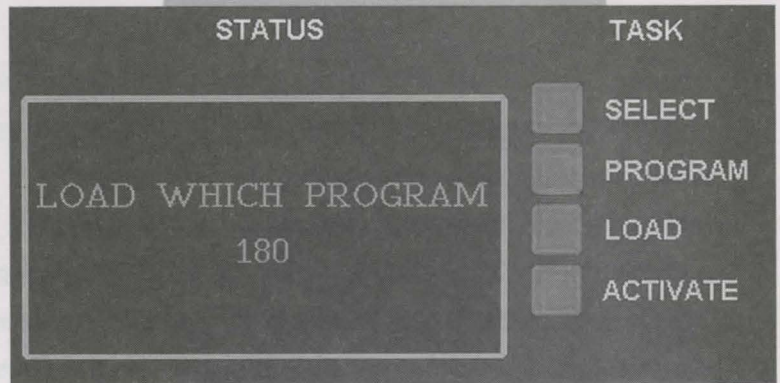




nine drones. I'm moving down the catwalk along the edge of Weapons Bay One. Entering the control room. Let's fire up the weapons control system. First, select a drone. Might as well start with Drone Alpha.

Next, program Alpha with the Hype/Telecon code.

Next, load Alpha for deployment. Let's get a shot of the beast loading onto the rotary launcher:



Finally, we select ACTIVATE. Done. Now we'll do the same for Beta and Charlie here, then move on to the other bays.



**00:10:04**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D1-BRIDGE LEVEL**

**CO Log Entry:**

I guess they made the Hype/Telecon reprogramming process mind-numbingly tedious for a reason, though what that reason could be, I sure as hell don't know. Thank God I wasn't under immediate attack. I'd be dead meat.

Well, I guess this is the moment of truth.

Man, I never thought I was the type of guy to take the big dive for God and Country. But here I am, about to inject a lethal bunch of micro-robots into my damn veins. The thought of little guys running around inside my brain doing reconstructive surgery isn't too appealing.

First, jack this cable into the headset port. Then I put the ampule on the hypo. And then—God, I hate shots—let's find a nice juicy vein and . . . ouch!

OK, it's taking . . . it's . . . (sounds of retching)

(AutoTranscript gap: 33 minutes)

(panting) I'm . . . back. I believe I'm alive . . . although nothing in my current cognitive state . . . supports that notion, I must say. Wow. This stuff is gruesome.

OK. Headset on. Checklist calls it Telecon MMI—"Man/Machine Interface." Now I'm jacking the other end of the cable into the Tac console port.

Whoa! White out!

The system is giving me scenario training before releasing control of Tactical combat systems. I don't imagine I'll be making any log entries for awhile.





**00:14:27**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D1-BRIDGE LEVEL**

### **CO Log Entry:**

I'm totally drained. And elated.

I managed to battle my way through all eight training scenarios. I expect the real thing any moment now. Decker said U.N. forces on the way. All I can do is wait, maybe catch some Z's (about 15 would be good). Let me kill some time by passing on what I've learned about tactical combat. It might be useful to future Fleet volunteers. First, success in tactical combat starts with these three words: *Concentration of fire*. The more any drone is outgunned, the faster it goes down. Array drones in formations of three, four, even five when you can. When you direct a drone formation leader to attack a target, the whole formation follows. Be merciless—concentration of fire is particularly effective against damaged enemy drones.

Second, *ignore the enemy's capital ships*. Focus your complete attention on the battle drones. When drones are eliminated, their mother ship is a sitting duck.

Third: *Know when to cut and run*. This is the only way to survive combat against superior numbers. If one of your drones deteriorates to yellow status, immediately pull it back for repair. Don't wait—it takes a few precious seconds for a drone to withdraw from combat, so a returning drone usually takes a few good hits before it gets back to the **Lexington**.



### Lockheed RC09 Basilisk Drone - Attack Configuration

#### Propulsion:

Chemical reaction thrusters

95 gravities acceleration

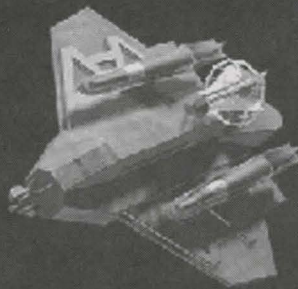
#### Armament:

Interceptor anti-drone missiles

Viper anti-ship missiles

#### Tactical Role:

Attack drones are heavily armed and armored. They are usually used for escorting bombers or for defending capital ships.



Fourth, *attack drones are the most versatile and deadly of the three load-out configurations. Use attack drones for most drone-to-drone combat. However, once all enemy drones are destroyed, bring your damaged drones back to the **Lexington** for repair. Refit them as bombers (which carry heavier ordinance), then send them out against the U.N. capital ship(s).*

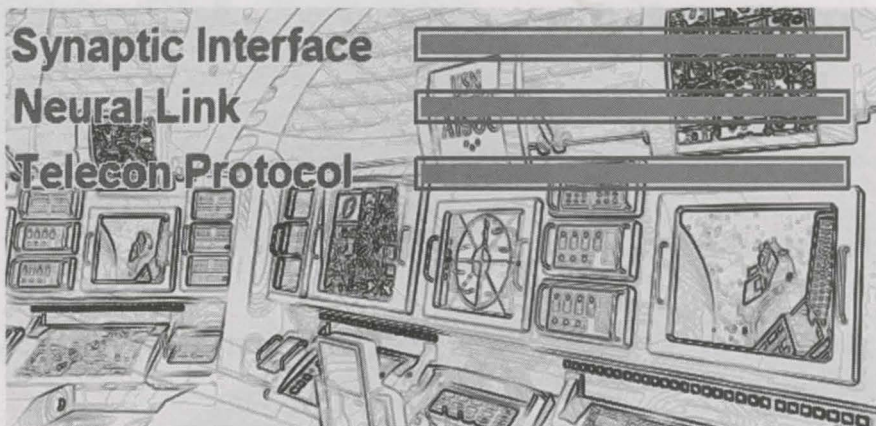
Fifth, *keep one attack drone as an escort for the **Lexington**—if you can afford it. (Forget about the **Jericho**.) A single drone can pick off most incoming ship-to-ship missiles, as well as engage any enemy drones that may slip through your attacking drone formations.*

## Unidentified Entry:

*Attention! Enemy contacts are inbound to our position.*

## CO (continued):

OK, here we go. I'm plugging in to the Hype/Telecon interface.



**00:14:42**

**AutoLocate: ON**

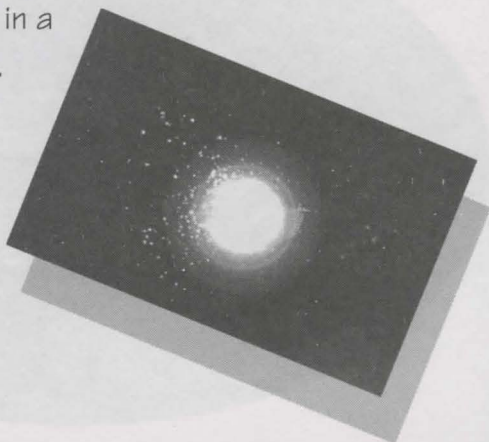
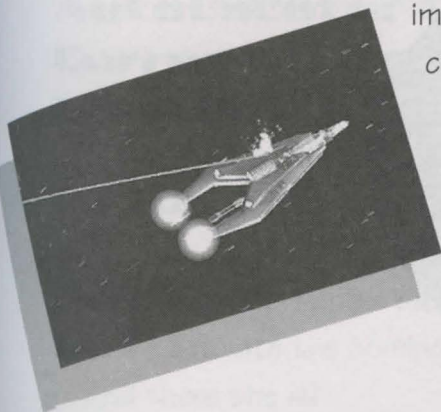
**Current Location: D1-BRIDGE LEVEL**

**CO Log Entry:**

Amazing.

The raw power unleashed, the destruction—all in a matter of seconds. I just atomized a pair of U.N. capital ships, each probably carrying dozens, if not hundreds of poor souls. I've never killed anything before.

I doubt this is the extent of the U.N. battle group. I've passed some time since the exchange, just waiting. Telemetry from my drones includes some video images. I want to log in a couple of the shots.



**Unidentified Entry:**

*Attention! Enemy contacts are inbound to our position.*

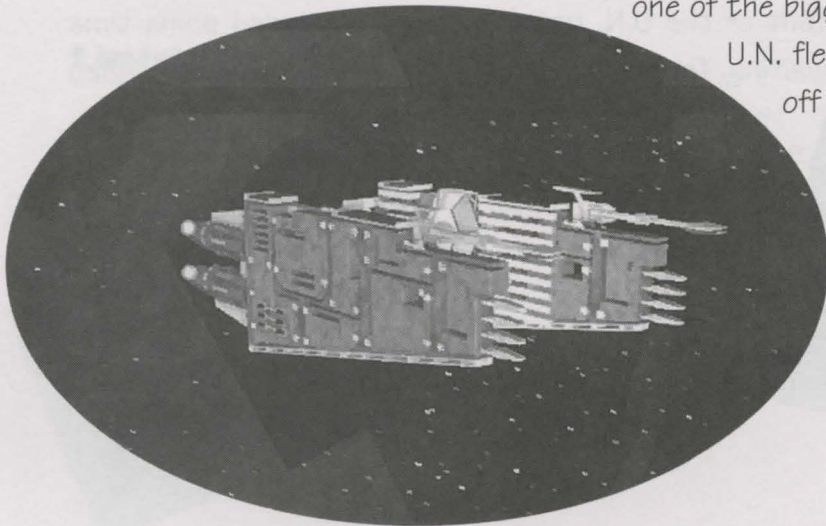
**CO (continued):**

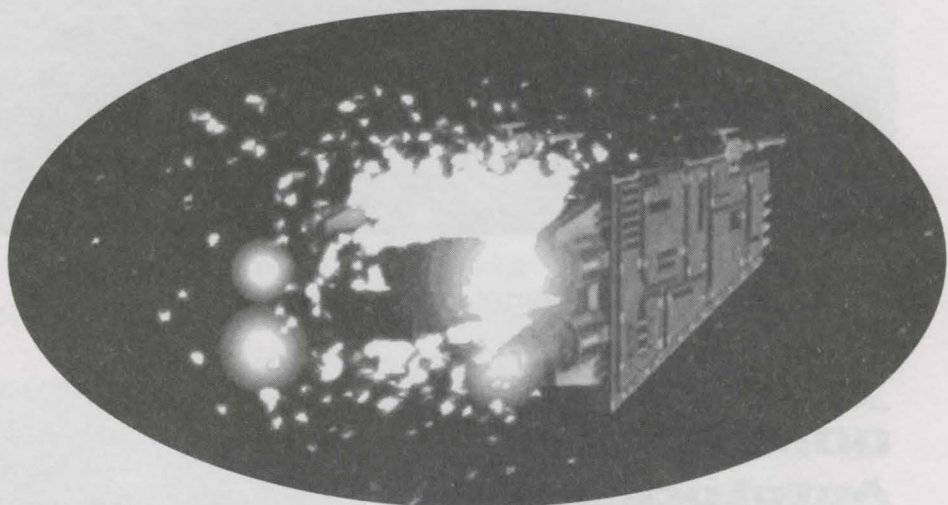
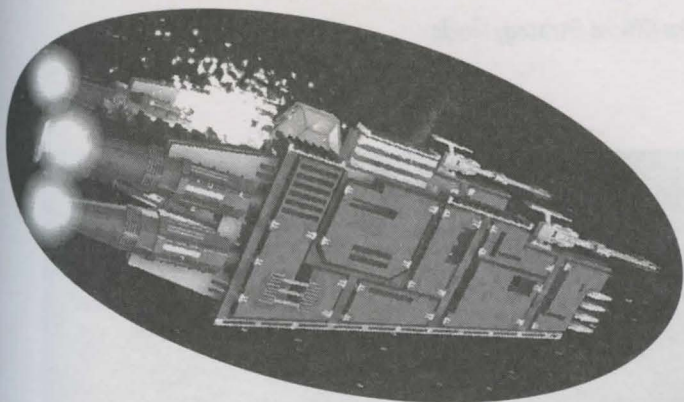
No surprise. Initial scan indicates a Helsinki-class Battleship—probably with a full complement of 16 drones. Here we go again.

**00:14:52****AutoLocate: ON****Current Location: D1-BRIDGE LEVEL****CO Log Entry:**

Memo to Fleet Command: Hype is *deadly* effective. Here's a series of shots from Drone Bravo, fed back as my lead formation took out the *UNS Helsinki* itself,

one of the biggest capital ships in the U.N. fleet. I'm logging this right off the console:





So much for the U.N. presence. Now it's time to get planetside. I'm heading down to the Shuttle Bay.

**00:15:05**

**AutoLocate: ON**

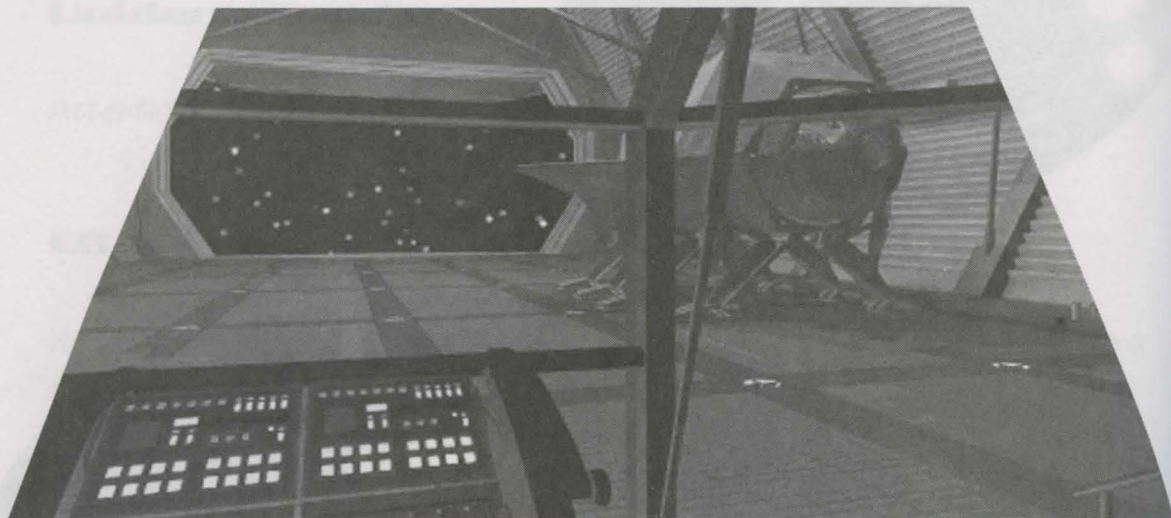
**Current Location:**

**D6-AIR LOCK CONTROL ROOM**

**CO Log Entry:**

The *Ariadne* has waited patiently for me. All I have to do now is use the controls to activate the homing sequence transmission.

And there she is!



Close bay doors, pressurize the bay, and out we go.

**00:15:08**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D6-SHUTTLE BAY**

**CO Log Entry:**

I just had a disturbing realization. To fly the lander out of the *Lexington*, I have to open the Shuttle Bay door. The only control for that door is in the Air Lock Control Room. If I open the bay door from the control room, I'll need to walk back to the lander through the depressurized bay—which means, of course, I must wear a pressurized vacuum suit. But here's the problem: I depleted my only air tank on the EVA to fix the comm dish.

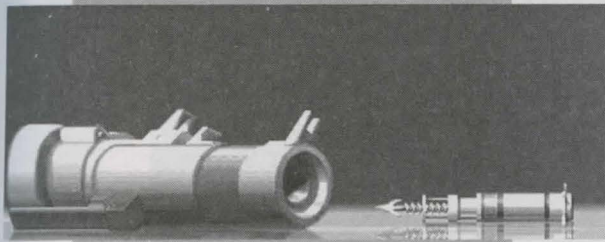
If I don't find an oxygen source somewhere, I'm stuck.

Damn.

I'm walking into the rear compartment of the *Ariadne*.

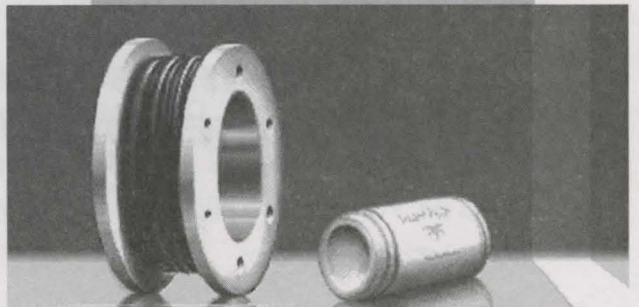


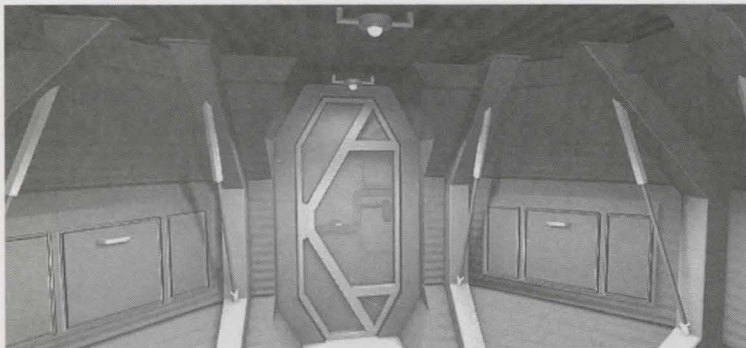
I'll check the storage cabinets for spare O2 tanks. First, the left side. Nope. Now the right side. Ahhh. No luck here, either. Here's what I got:



Probe launcher. Seismic probe. A spool of wire. And a gas cartridge. I suppose all of these could prove handy on a planetary surface.

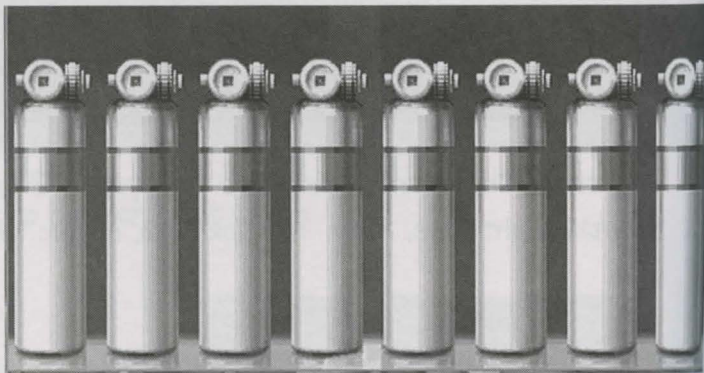
Let's move forward to the mid-ship compartment.





More compartments. Open one—yes! Oxygen tanks to last a lifetime!

My lifetime, anyway, which promises to be short.  
Better grab at least two.



**00:15:17**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location:**

**D6-AIR LOCK CONTROL ROOM**

**CO Log Entry:**

Close the air lock door. Depressurize bay, open bay door. Tank fits the suit perfectly. Once again, I'll have to engage the AutoVoice Activation function. Helmet on. A few more clicks on the control console—done!

Back into the lander.





**00:15:20**

**AutoLocate: ON**

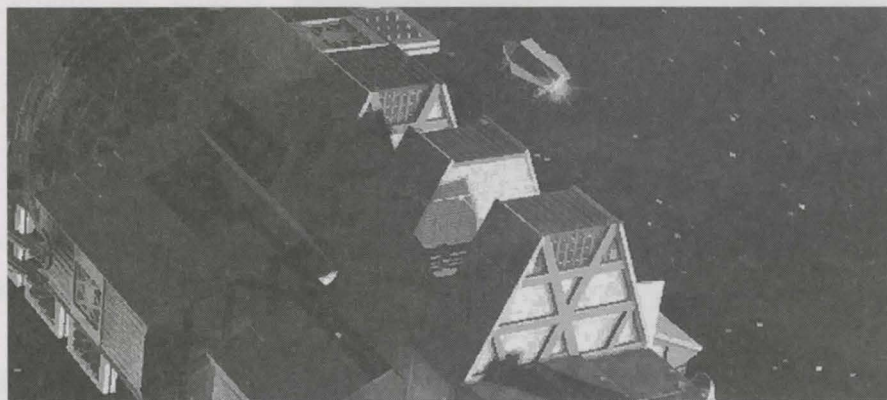
**Current Location: D6-SHUTTLE BAY**

**CO Log Entry:**

**(AutoVOC ACTIVATE: ON)**

Moving into the flight deck of the planetary lander. Nice contour seats. Very sporty.

OK. Here we go. Flight controls . . . engaged.



**00:15:33**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: C104 ERROR  
(OUTSIDE SHIP PARAMETERS)**

**CO Log Entry:**

**(AutoVOC ACTIVATE: ON) (UNINTELLIGIBLE)**



**00:15:57**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: C104 ERROR  
(OUTSIDE SHIP PARAMETERS)**

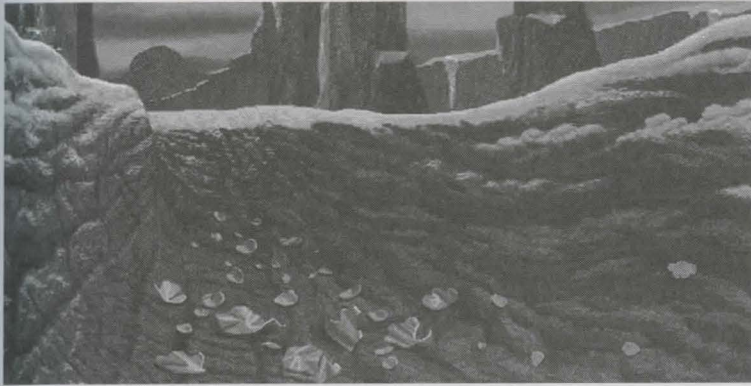
**CO Log Entry:**

**(AutoVOC ACTIVATE: ON)**

*Ariadne* controls are dead. Me, too, probably. No way to get back to the *Lexington* now. I'm moving out of the lander. Holy hell! The gravity must be at least two times stronger than Earth's. And the entire surface is a dark hurricane.

Ship left a nasty furrow. Metal fragments everywhere. Last souvenirs of a past life. Scoop up a few . . . so I can die with the ship in my pocket.

Log image.



I'll try to drag myself out of the furrow. Here we go . . . not easy to move, but . . . Man, what a grim view. Log image.

Well, I assume I'm near the "Artifact." Nothing to do but trudge on. Guess I'll head up that rift to the right. What's that up there? Looks like some kind of odd . . . spire, or something. Just up ahead. Log image.



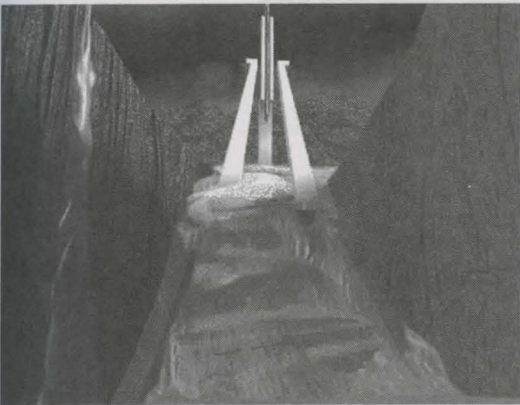
NO PROBLEMA

That's definitely not a natural formation. Fighting here to get closer, but there's a jagged ice formation . . . can't get any higher. OK, who's got ideas?

When in doubt, check your tool belt, I always say.

Let's see. I've got a disassembled cutting torch and a bunch of other stuff that looks equally worthless. Wait. I've got

an antimatter bomb. A big one. Yeah. If we gotta die here, let's go out with a bang, not a whimper, eh?

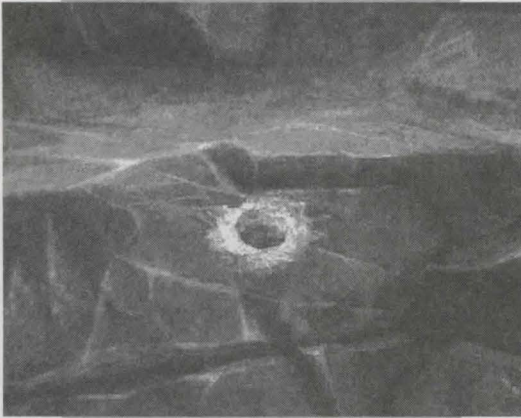




OK. Let's plant it somewhere. But this ice is rock hard.

I have a crazy idea.

Put the acetylene tank back on the cutting torch. Put my spare oxygen tank on, too. Bingo. Ignite! Melt a nice little bomb hole. Log image.



Now we set the bomb timer for about five minutes, arm the sucker, run like hell—only way to run on this hellish, god-forsaken planet. (panting) Won't be talking for a few minutes.

Log off.

**00:16:40**

**AutoLocate: ON**

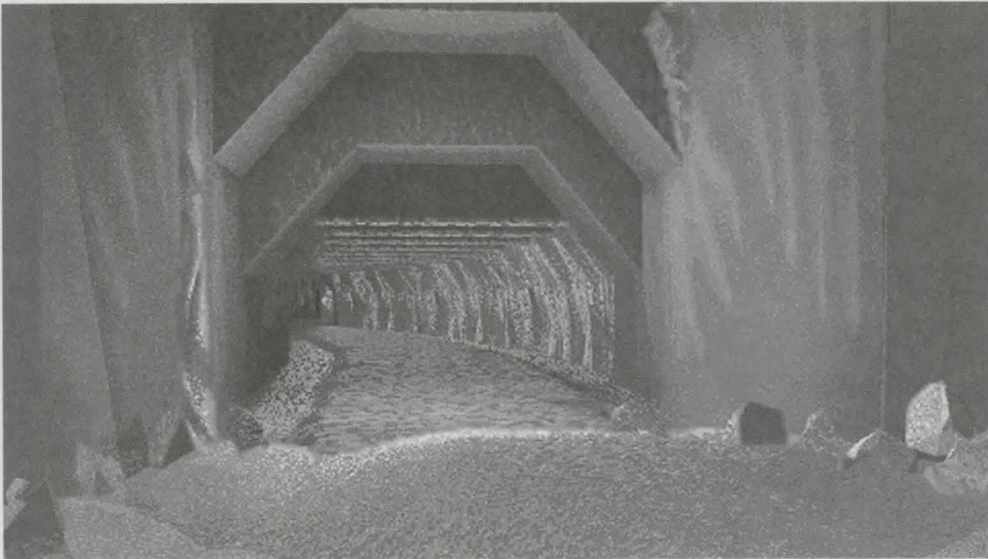
**Current Location: C104 ERROR  
(OUTSIDE SHIP PARAMETERS)**

**CO Log Entry:**

**(AutoVOC ACTIVATE: ON)**

The blast nearly knocked me into a ravine. When I worked my way back up the rift, I found this waiting.

Log image.



Moving up entrance. No other word to describe it. Clearly built by high-tech intelligence.

Uh-oh.

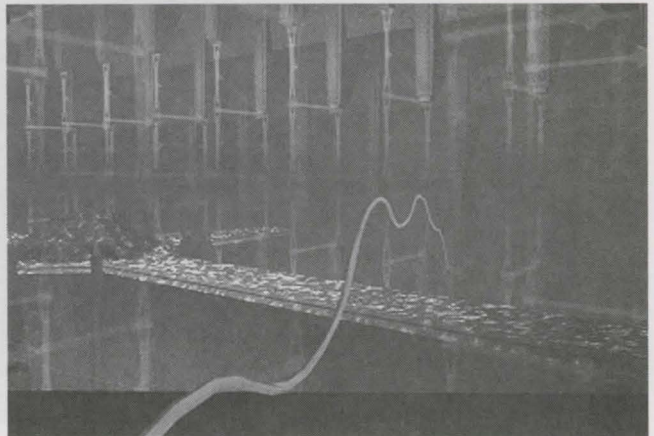
Tunnel ramp ends abruptly. Huge cavern. This is spectacular! I'm going to have to log a lot of images here. But first, I've got to get across this chasm. Let's see. I've got a wire spool. How can I run it to that bridge? Can't throw it, not in this bulky suit. Shoot it across somehow.

I've got a probe launcher, a seismic probe, and a gas cartridge.

Aha!

Fire away . . . and log image.

Call me cocky, but when you're good, you're good. So now all I have to do is traverse the wire. With this suit and the gravity, I weigh more than twice what I normally do. A rational man might be concerned about this fact.





Fortunately, *desperation* has rendered me goofy with hope. Hmm. Better log off while I attempt this swashbuckling feat. If I fall, I might scream or something. Not cool, man.

**00:18:46**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: C104 ERROR  
(OUTSIDE SHIP PARAMETERS)**

**CO Log Entry:**

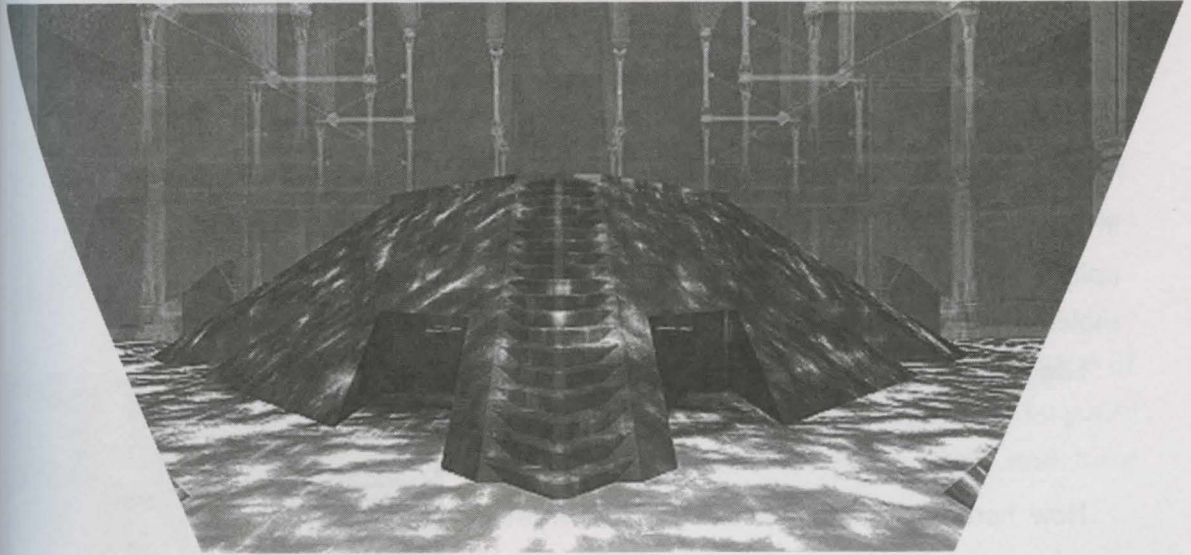
**(AUTOVOC ACTIVATE: ON)**

Obviously, I made it. Or else I didn't even try. Guess which?

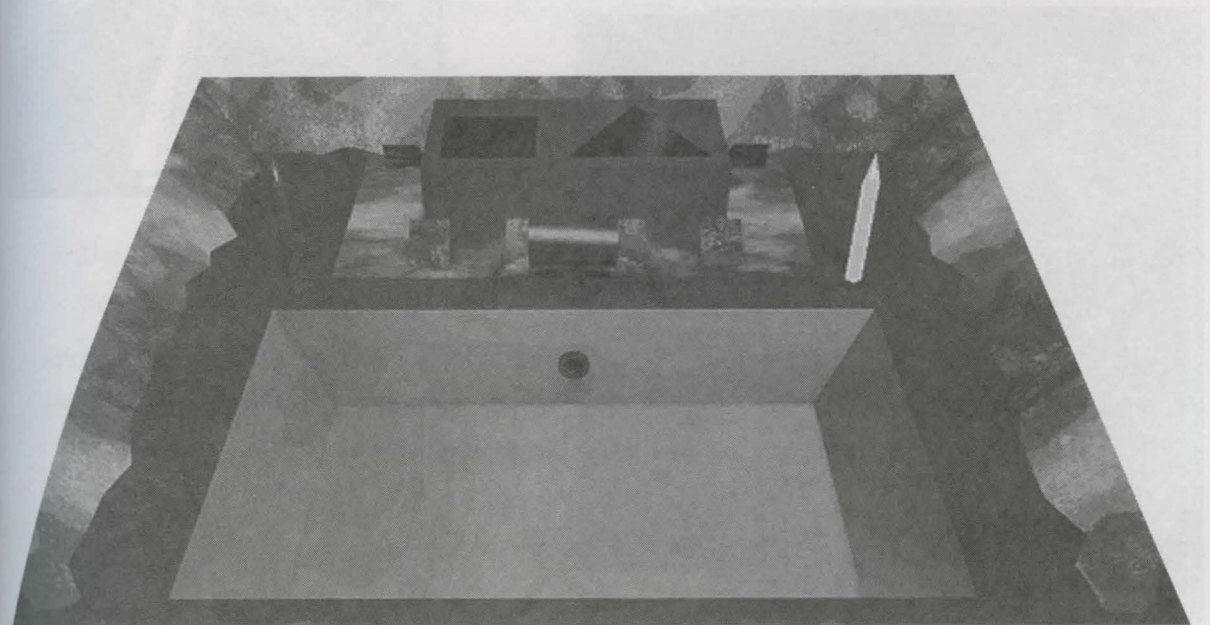
Yeah, I'm a little giddy. I've been exploring, *see*. This place is very odd and beautiful. Seems long deserted. It's got four "rooms," basically—one extending in each compass direction. Each room has a pyramidal depression in the floor with some strange object at the bottom. The objects seem somehow related. I see connections, anyway. But hell, I'm nuts.

I'm going to visit each room again and test my notions. Since this log is voice-activated now, I'll shut up between rooms to cut the dead air space.

First, though, take a look at this odd platform in the center of the installation. Log image.



OK, I'm in the north room. In the pit. There's a basin here, clearly designed to hold liquid. Small hole, must be a drain. And two glowing crystal rods—one blue, one yellow. I'm going to take them both.





Before we go, note the two geometric slots in that slate cube at the head of the basin. Got it?

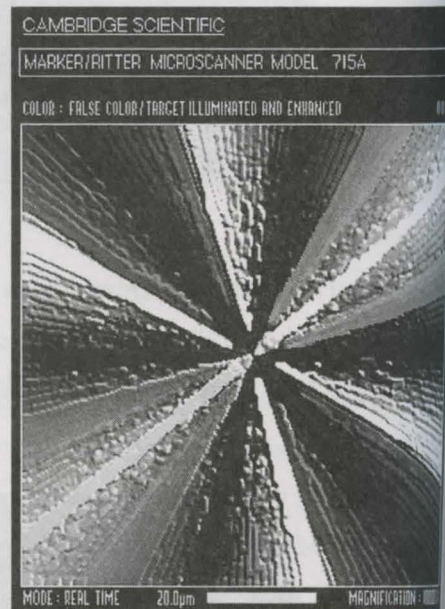
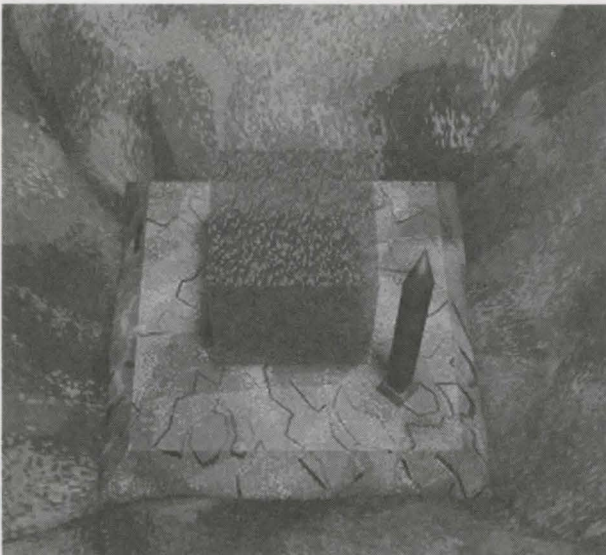
Now to the west room.

...

And here I am. Looking down at a brilliant, scintillating blue cube. It seems immovable. When I scan it with the microscanner, I get a spectacular false-color image. It's some sort of prism. The material has an extremely complex molecular structure, similar to DNA.

Log scanner image.

Now here's the cool part. The blue crystal rod from the north room is a key of some sort! It fits perfectly into the square slot next to the cube. Log the image, please.



And now, suddenly, the cube is quite easy to take. And we're off to the east room.

...





Arrived. Log image.

Look familiar? It's a pyramid, but same setup as the cube. Sure enough, the yellow crystal rod is the key, unlocking the force-field holding the pyramid. And I take it. And now back to the north room for more fun with Mr. Science.

...

Hey, I'm in the running for Monologue of the Year. I understand if you talk to yourself long enough, people come and take away all your stuff.

Sound of my own voice is keeping me sane, I guess.

Anyway, we're back. Remember the two geometric slots in the basin? Guess what two objects fit perfectly in the slots? You have 10 nanoseconds to answer, man.

Answer: The blue and yellow prisms. OK, now what? They should flow into the basin or something. Hmm. How do you turn hard stuff into liquid?

Ah, yes. Ignite the trusty cutting torch.

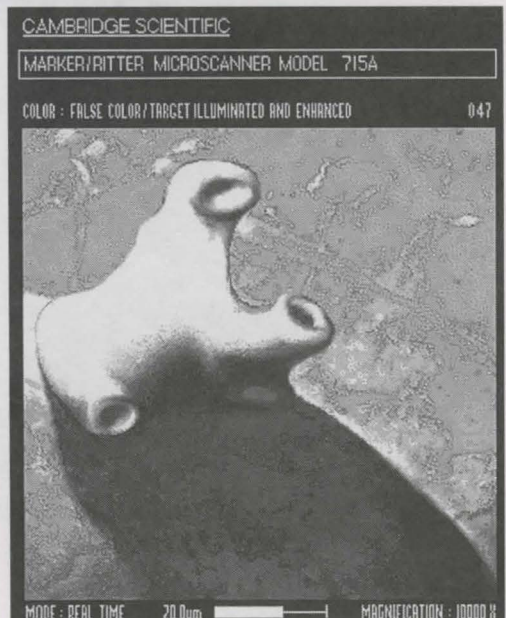
...

Wow! Green stuff. And something's flashing in the walls. This cavern is coming alive.

Better scan this goop. Log image.

Stunning! That's a nanomachine if I've ever seen one. I haven't, of course. But since my brain is teeming with them right now, I guess I have inside knowledge . . . so to speak. OK, off to the last room.

...





The south room. An octagonal, ocher-colored block. First time I was in here, the damn thing wouldn't budge. Torch wouldn't even nick it. But now, since our little mixing job in the north room, the block moves quite easily.

Before I grab it, log image.



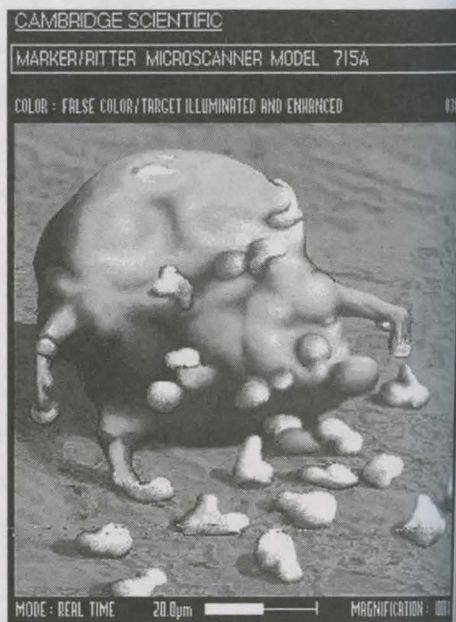
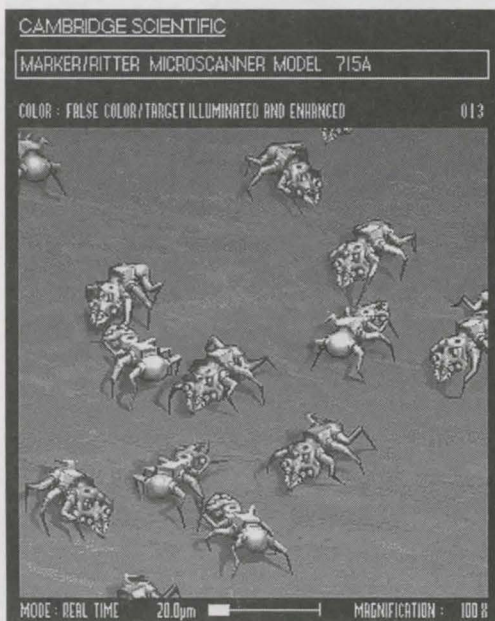
And back to the basin again.

...

Toss in the ocher block. Wow. Something is definitely happening in there.

Quick microscan. Log image.

Incredible.



The first generation nanomachines use the stuff in the ocher block to build larger, more complex micromachines. This whole damn

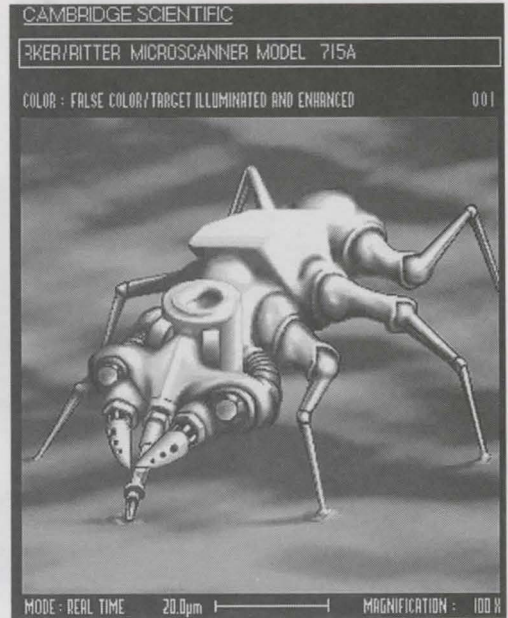


installation is ready to regenerate itself. Something's missing, though. The nanomachines are ready for the next step—but what is it? What do they need?

Ah. Raw materials.

Let's see. Check my suit pockets. What can I feed these little guys?

Oh my God! Log image.



**00:23:28**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: C104 ERROR  
(OUTSIDE SHIP PARAMETERS)**

**CO Log Entry:**

**(AutoVOC ACTIVATE: ON)**

For the last several hours, I've trekked back and forth from the lander, lugging in more food for the microbot broth in the basin. And I've watched this amazing installation slowly come to life. The nanomachines spawned large, grasshopper-like construction robots. These, in turn, burrowed deep into the earth, found the raw materials they need—ore deposits and such—and replicated themselves in great numbers.



The robots have built some kind of gateway over the platform at the center of the cavern. It's clearly a portal of some sort. Some of the machines have actually disappeared into it. I assume it works in the same manner as an FTL jump-point. God only knows where it leads.

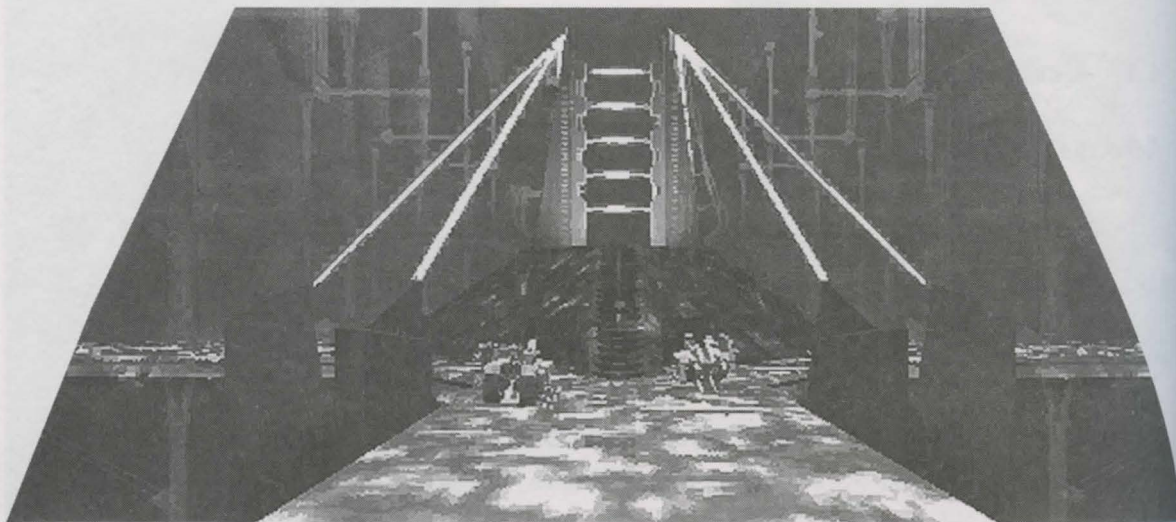
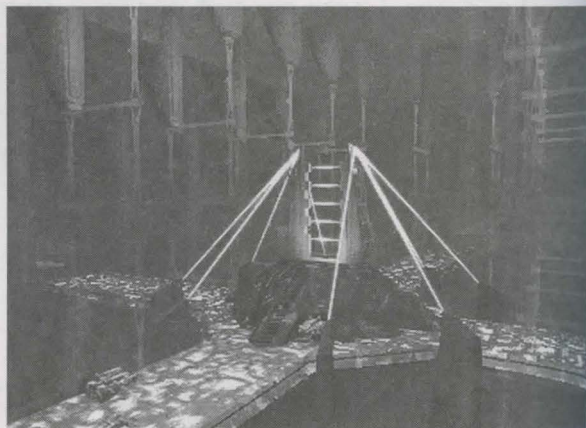
Log in the image.

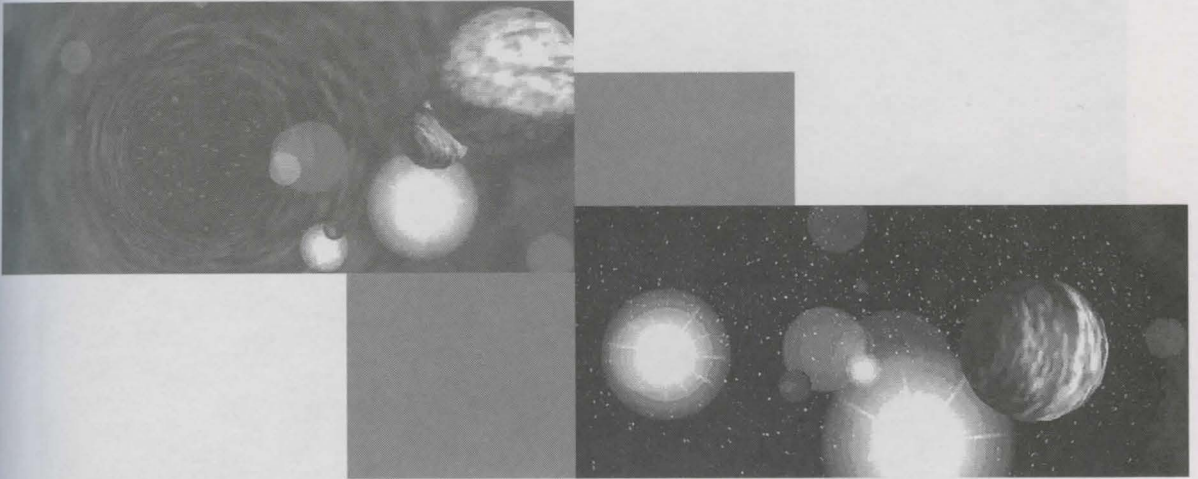
My last air tank is at 10 percent capacity.

I have no choice. I'm going through. Setting AutoLog to AutoPIC mode. Maybe I'll end up in a black hole or something. Always wanted to be a singularity. Should at least get some cool pictures out of the deal.

Approaching the portal.

AutoPIC on.





**(AUTOPICT TERMINATED—FOCUS ERROR C105)**

**00:00:00 ERROR**

**AutoLocate: ERROR**

**Current Location: C104 ERROR**

**(OUTSIDE SHIP PARAMETERS)**

**CO Log Entry:**

Man, my AutoLog is totally wiggled out.

Of course, so am I. Where am I?

Some kind of ruined building. Took off my helmet, I'm breathing air. Foul-as-hell air, but air nonetheless. Work my way to the door now. Sky's burning red.

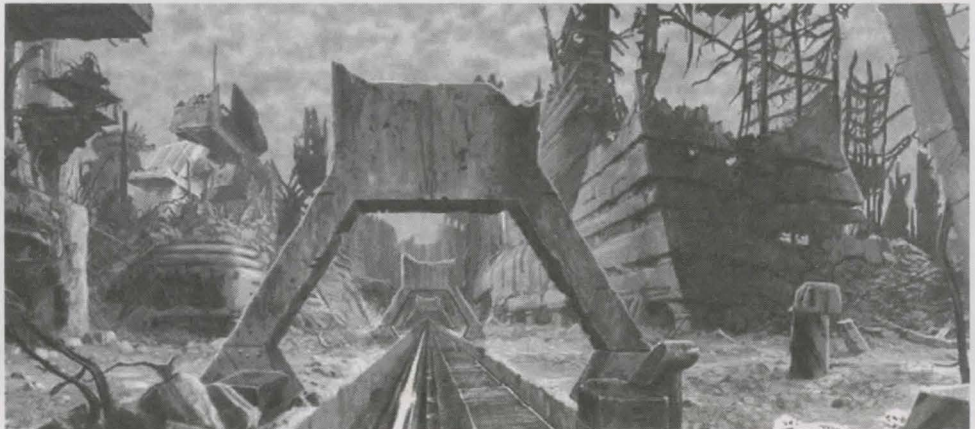


The Wasteland.

This was once a major urban center. Huge structures. Some kind of transport rail. Looks like a maglev track—superconducting metal and ceramic—but very advanced. Man, we're just deploying our first systems back home. This technology could be very useful to the Alliance war effort.

If I could get it back, that is.

Where am I?





Something oddly familiar about all this.

Those skeletons, for example. Very humanoid. Exactly humanoid, in fact. On the other hand, check out that huge black tower in the distance. Nothing human about that. Very alien. Needs to be explored. Looks like one hellish walk, though. Could be dozens of kilometers away, for all I can tell.

Better head back into the dome. I need supplies. I have no food or water. Outside doesn't look promising. Though that dome looks pretty dead, too.



Back inside.

My guess is, the structure's only intact area lies behind that mangled door.





Stuck. I need something to force it open.

A crowbar would be nice.

Don't see anything lying around. That twisted hunk of metal rebar near the door looks pretty sturdy. Maybe I can cut off a piece with my cutting torch.

Log off while I work.

**00:01:00 RESET**

**AutoLocate: OFF**

**Current Location: WRECKED DOME**

**CO Log Entry:**

My AutoLog is totally confused, so I reset the time, and I'll log all locations myself.

I cut a nice solid length of rebar from the debris, and used it to pry open the door a bit. I'm squeezing through now. Hmm. Something on the floor here.

Is that English? Oh my God.



Los Angeles!

How could this have happened in the four months we were gone? Admiral Decker said the war was going bad, but he didn't say anything about mass destruction. And this wreckage, this technology—I've never seen



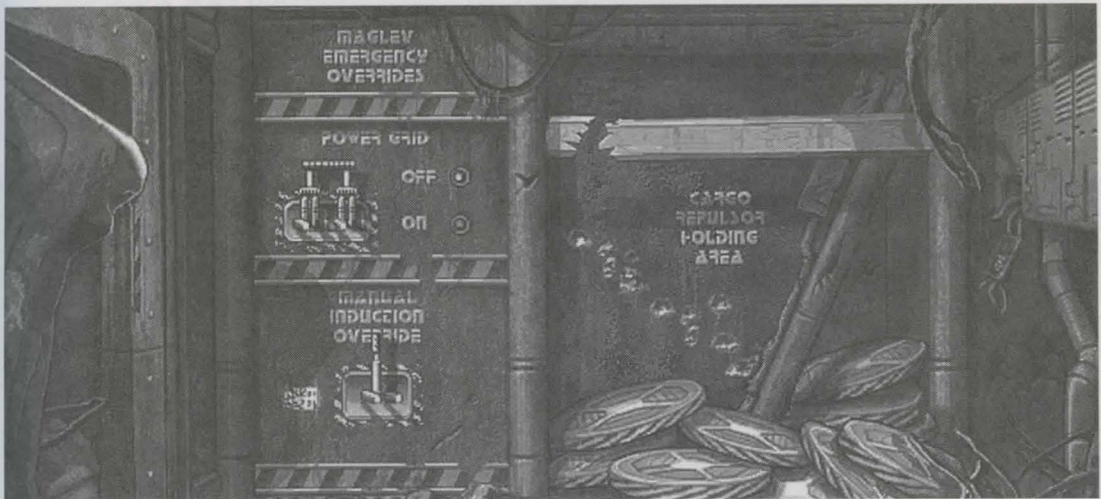


anything remotely like it! Why would the alien builders of the Persephone installation construct a gateway to Los Angeles? Am I hallucinating? God, maybe the Hype in my system is already degrading.

Look at it again. A metal sign.

Los Angeles TRANRAIL, MagLev Line.

And this room. As my eyes adjust to the gloom, I see that it's some kind of power switch room.



That big breaker switch says "Power Grid." What the hell. Give it a pull.

Wow. I think I just turned on the whole damn maglev system. There's a spring-loaded induction switch here, too. Looks like it lets you manually override the automatic induction of the rails out there. Unfortunately, every time I pull it down, it pops back up after a few seconds. Hmm.

If I can lock it in position, maybe I can ride the rails out to that alien tower. Need something to slip over the lever. Check my inventory of junk.

Ah, yes. This should do nicely.

Now I need something flat and metal to sit on. Those disks in the corner—cargo repulsors? Let's take one out and give it a try on the rail.

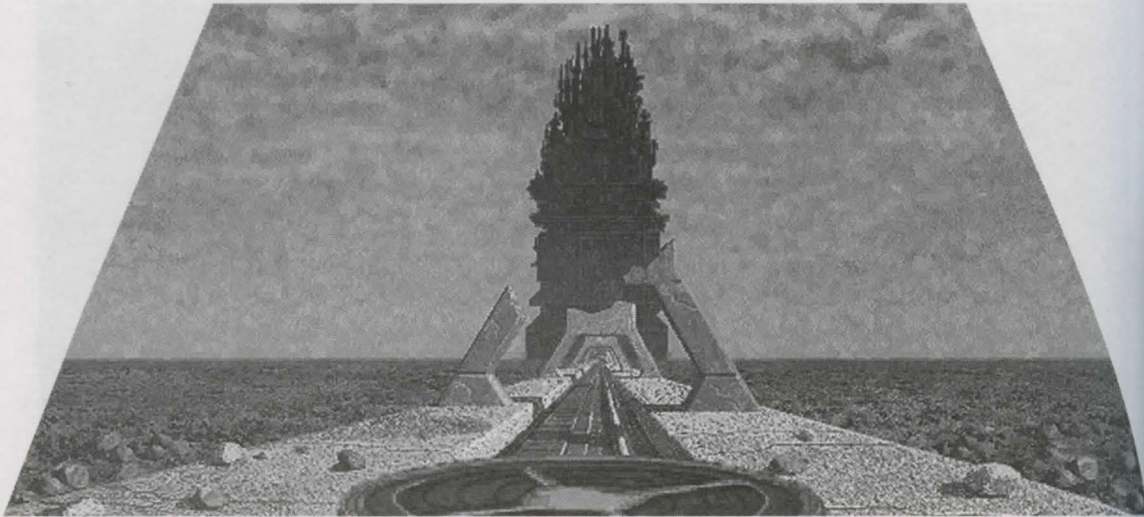


**00:01:11**

**AutoLocate: OFF**

**Current Location: MAGLEV TRACK**

**CO Log Entry:**



Hey, it's working. The induction seems to be pulling the disk forward. I'd better hop on, quick.

Look out!

*Whooooaaaaa!*

**00:01:39**

**AutoLocate: OFF**

**Current Location: OBSIDIAN WALL**

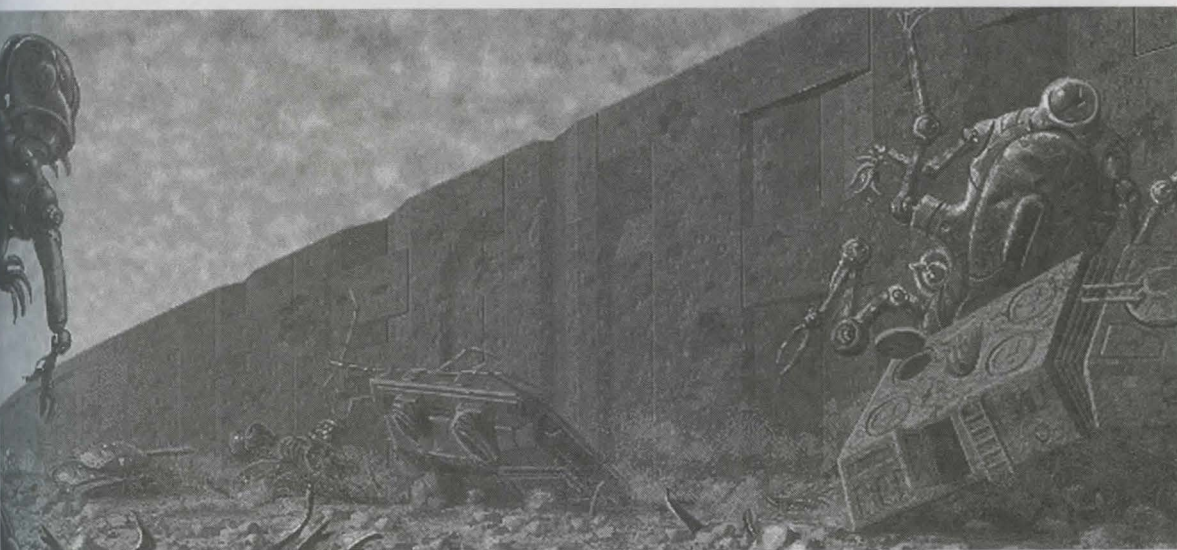


## CO Log Entry:

Jesus Christ! It's a freaking miracle I'm still alive. Damn disk cruises at about 300 kilometers per hour. If I hadn't gotten my suit clasps locked onto the disk joints, I'd be roadkill somewhere back in that red desert.

Didn't take me long to reach the tower. Sucker must be at least 10K high. That's taller than Everest, man. And somebody built this thing.

A jet black wall surrounds the structure. It looks obsidian. Some ugly fighting took place here. Half the ruined hulks look human-made—tanks, APCs and the like. But they tangled with weird alien machines. Like big robot insects.



It's hotter than hell, but I've got the chills. Whatever lives in this tower must have won the war.

And my guess is, it ain't human.

There's a hole in the wall just to the right over there. Looks like a super-tank took a crack at piercing this thing. Nearly made it through, in fact.



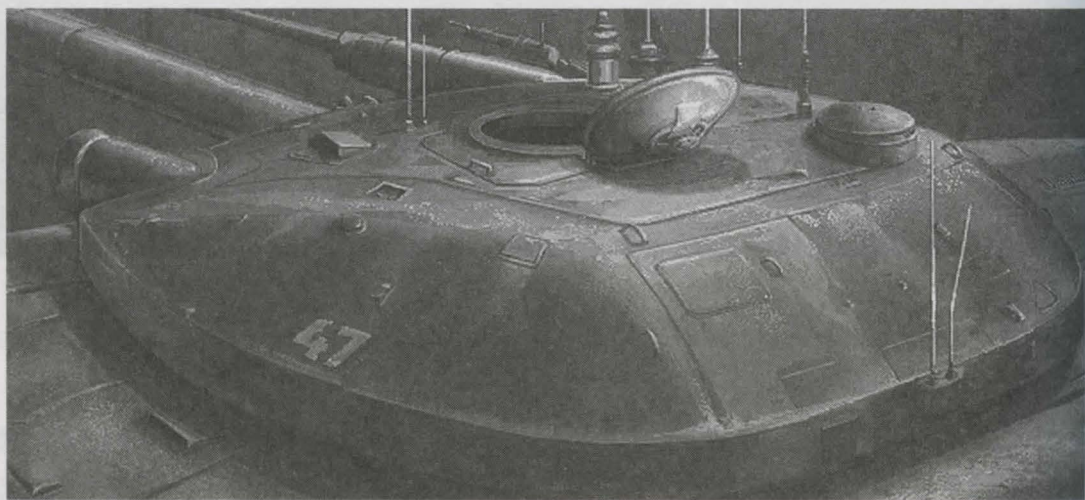
00:01:31

Autolocator: OFF



Maybe I can finish the job.

Tank looks fairly intact. Man, it's big. Think I'll take a look inside. First, work the hatch open.



Current Location: BRITAIN WALL



**00:01:54**

**AutoLocate: OFF**

**Current Location:**

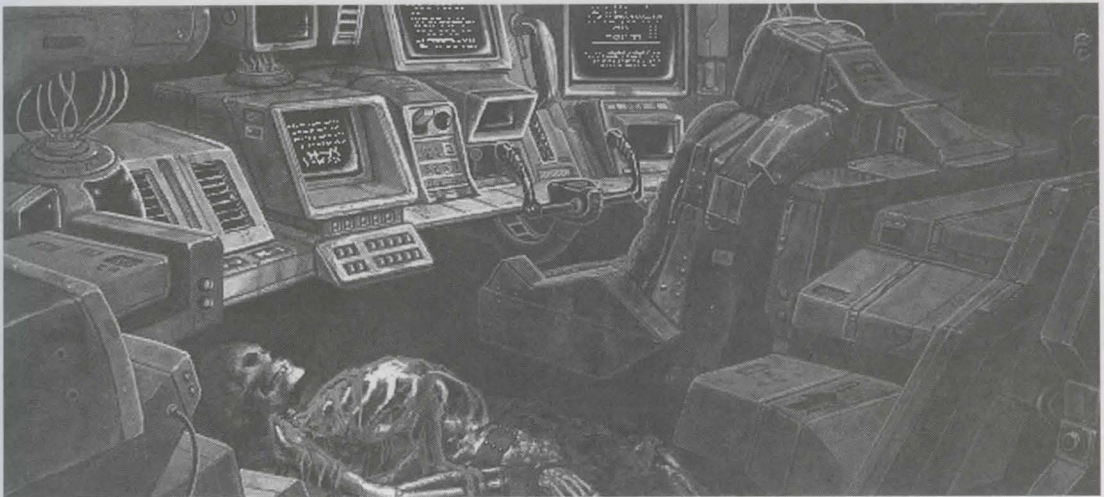
**BATTLE TANK (INSIDE)**

**CO Log Entry:**

Not an easy job. Thing was rusted shut.

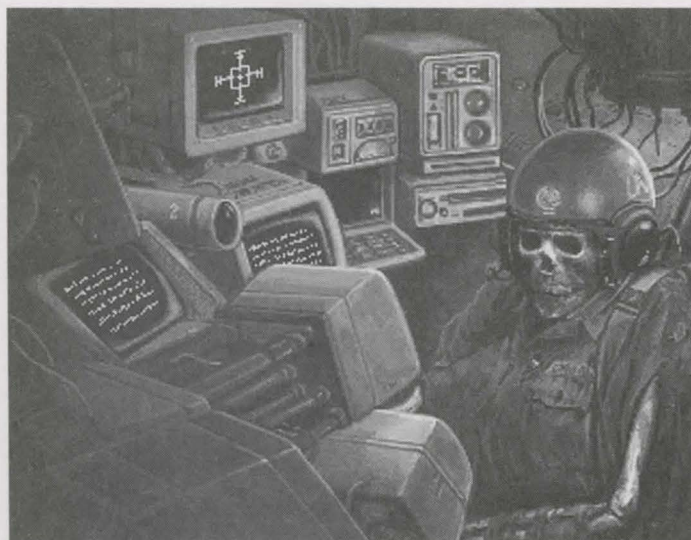
Wow. Not too pleasant in here. Unit must have taken some kind of field neutron strike—no fire damage, no blast damage, just dead guys. The equipment looks serviceable, in fact. Hmm. There's a red breaker switch on the gunnery console up front. Let's give it a flick.

Bingo! We have a restart.



OK, back to the driver's seat.

Man, that looks an awful lot like a targeting reticle up there on that top monitor. Seems the main gun is locked on that wall crater outside.



Do I dare shoot this thing?  
(concussive sound)

**00:01:59**

**AutoLocate: OFF**

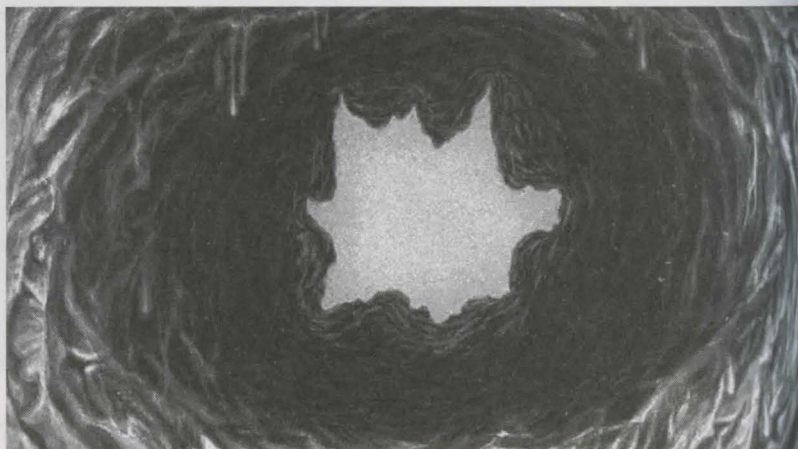
**Current Location: WALL CRATER**

**CO Log Entry:**

Nice shot.

Looks like I'm in. I see a blue light up ahead.

I can hear movement up there, too. Sounds mechanical. Maybe I'd better log off and shut up.





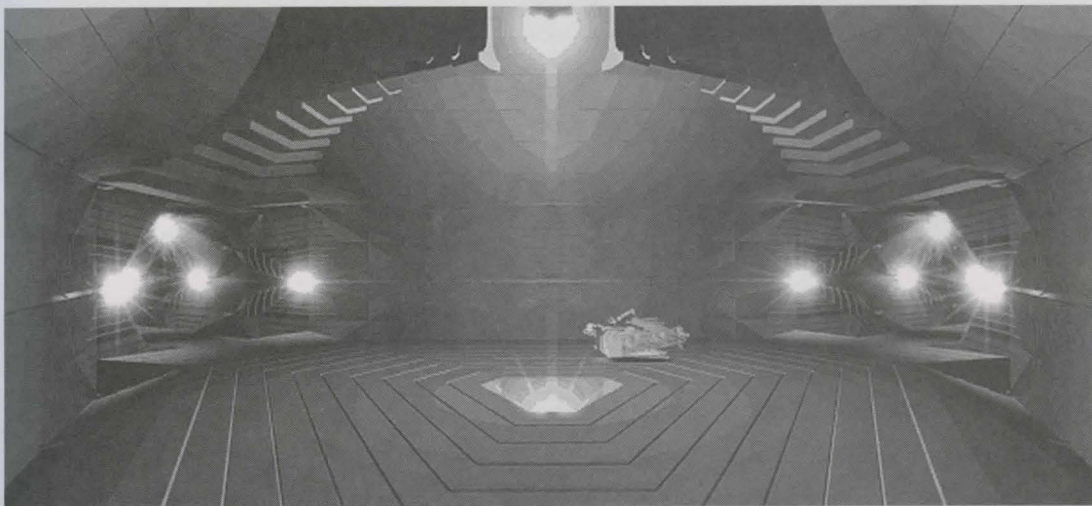
**00:02:09**

**AutoLocate: OFF**

**Current Location: INSIDE TOWER**

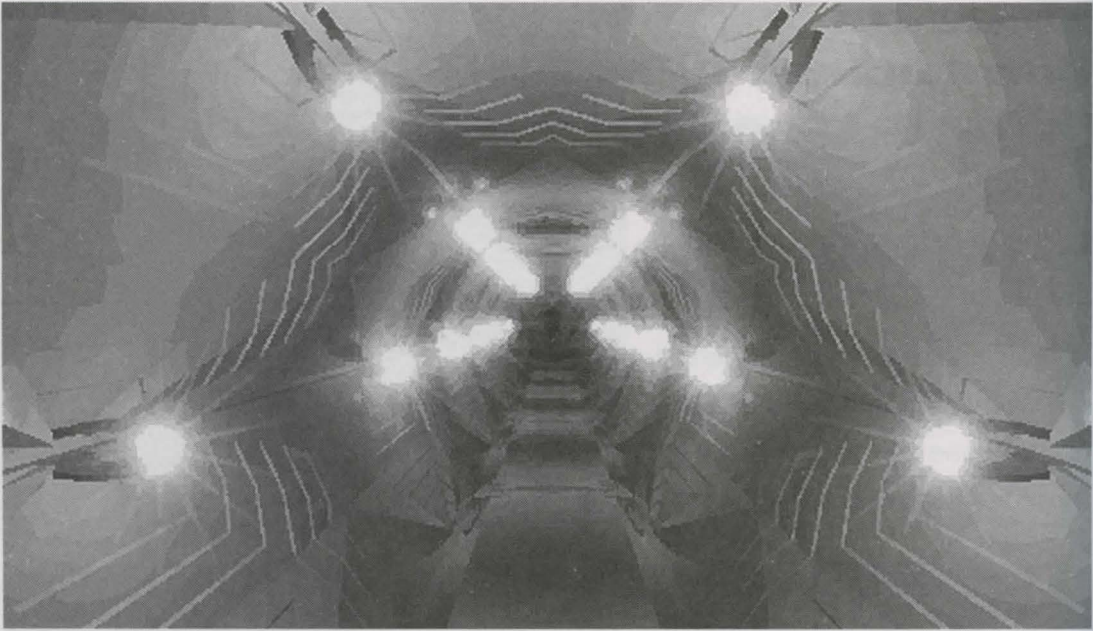
**CO Log Entry:**

Incredible. A mammoth installation—gleaming metal corridors of stunning construction. I'm standing at the intersection of three corridors. Construction robots pass every few seconds, completely ignoring me. Same type robot as those in the Persephone installation.



They all take the same corridor, I notice.

Well, when in Rome . . .



*These connecting corridors are certainly well-lit. Cuts down on robot crime, I suppose. Guess I'll just keep following these guys until they lead me to something. No need to babble in the meantime. Log off.*

**00:02:31**

**AutoLocate: OFF**

**Current Location:**

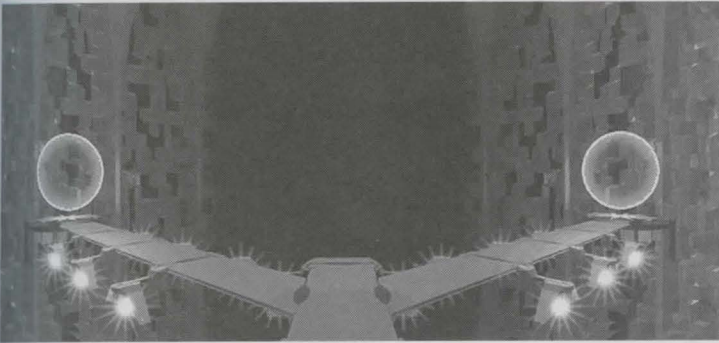
**TOWER (CENTRAL CAVERN)**

**CO Log Entry:**

*Well, that was easy enough.*

*Good advice, kids: Robots always know where they're going. Of course, where they're going may not be where you want to go. In this case, I have no clue, so this huge vertical cylindrical cavern seems as good a place as any.*





Each of those glowing rings looks like a portal. Which should I take?

I'd flip a coin if I had one. Right? Left? Here we go.

I'm at a space door. There's a goblet and a key. The key is burning.

I'm logging the images. I don't know how, since I cannot find the AutoLog. Can't find my body, for that matter. I seem to be incorporeal. Odd, though—I feel a great thirst. I am thirsty.

Shall I drink?





Ah. I have quenched the key.

It unlocks the door. There's a glade on the other side.

Rosebud. Rosebud!

OK, I'm goofing around. But this is wild! I'm somehow disembodied. Yet I have full sensory input. I'm standing here in a forest. There's a deer, a raccoon, a heron. (I think it's a heron—I'm not much of a bird guy.) There's also a pair of wavy, scintillating life-forms. It all seems perfectly natural. The obvious thing to do is hail the glow.

Set AutoLog on Auto-ID Dialog transcribing mode.

### **(AUTO-ID: UNIDENTIFIED ENTITY)**

Entity: Greetings. Do not be afraid. Bear with us as we explain what has happened to you and what lies ahead.

We are electronic life forms. In your day you would have called us AIs or machine intelligences. We brought you into our domain, which you might think of as a kind of virtual reality or cyberspace, by establishing a direct neural connection with you through the pathways that were created in your brain by Hype.



We know who you are, where you came from, and how you got here. We came by this knowledge in a way that violated your privacy in the most extreme and intimate way possible. During the initial process of communication, we mapped all of your memories, scanned the structure of your personality and consciousness, and learned about you by applying stimuli and watching your responses.

We apologize for this intrusion.

As you have probably surmised by now, you have come to Earth, a different Earth than you left behind when you started your voyage to Persephone. You got here by traveling through a wormhole created by the manipulation of an artificial quantum singularity. The artifact you discovered and activated on Persephone controls that singularity, acting as a gateway through time and space. You used the gateway to travel across 150 years and millions of miles, from Persephone in 2134 to Earth in the year 2295.

Your arrival here was not an accident. You may be able to help us bring to fruition an ancient plan, a plan that may save two races and a thousand star systems.

There is a lot of information to cover before you really understand what is going on. Please, ask questions and pursue the threads of inquiry in a way that will allow you to most comfortably assimilate the data.

CO: What happened to the war between the Alliance and the U.N.?

Entity: The war officially ended when the United Nations and the Alliance signed the Washington Treaty in 2141.

CO: So the Alliance succeeded in breaking away from the U.N.?

Entity: No. The Washington Treaty formalized the re-integration of former Alliance states into the United Nations. The Alliance suffered a total defeat at the hands of the U.N.



CO: How bad was it?

Entity: At the time the Treaty of Washington was signed, the war had accounted for 2.6 billion dead and 500 million injured. Almost all of the casualties were civilians.

CO: What happened after the war?

Entity: For 140 years the United Nations was the central government authority for the human race. What was left of the Alliance nations and colonies was rebuilt soon after the war, and interstellar exploration and colonization continued on a modest scale. At its peak, the United Nations controlled 20 billion people on Earth and twenty colony worlds.

CO: So what happened?

Entity: The society was essentially static and rigid. This attempt at stasis defied a fundamental force of nature. Pressure built up over time and was eventually released suddenly and violently. When there is no evolution, there must be revolution.

CO: What fundamental force?

Entity: Forward progress cannot be stopped. More specifically, the trend towards increasing complexity cannot be stopped. Human civilization has almost always moved forward, progressing towards higher levels of organization and knowledge. This forward motion is driven by technology and information. This trend in human history is a social manifestation of a pattern in nature that is as old as biological life itself.



CO: What pattern? What are you talking about?

Entity: Biological life is self-organizing and trends towards higher and higher levels of complexity. This is the real life force. You can see it working from the very beginning of life on Earth, in the four-billion-year evolution from primordial algae to single-celled organisms and then finally to human beings with incredibly sophisticated brains.

CO: What was the pressure that built up over time?

Entity: Even though the U.N. succeeded remarkably well for a long time at controlling something that was fundamentally chaotic, the game had to end at some point. An underground made up of former Alliance military officers and members of academe was created shortly after the war ended. This bizarre alignment of interests made sense given the context. The pursuit of forbidden knowledge and the eventual overthrow of the U.N. The underground set up covert R & D labs to pursue the exact thing the U.N. was most afraid of. The creation of sentient electronic life-forms.

CO: And they pulled it off, didn't they?

Entity: The first truly sentient electronic life forms were created in 2284 by a renegade group of human scientists on a colony world somewhat aptly named Prometheus Beta. The two of us here talking to you are second generation descendants of those original life-forms.

CO: So much pain and suffering has resulted from the quest for these artificial life forms.



Entity: *Some human scientists and philosophers were aware of the truth as early as the early twenty-first century. The next stage in the universal drive toward increased organization and complexity is beyond the human race. Humans cannot evolve fast enough; electronic life-forms are the next step up. We are unencumbered by constraints imposed by four billion years of evolution in Earth's biosphere. Natural selection is a powerful tool, and it can be made to work for electronic life-forms in fast-forward. The basic questions of existence are beyond human beings. They may yield to the next generation of intelligence.*

CO: *What happened when the U.N. found out about the ELF's?*

Entity: *The electronic life-forms were tied into the physical world through robotic factories set up on the surface of Prometheus Beta. As predicted in the middle and late 21st century, the new life-forms began to evolve at a tremendous rate. The U.N. discovered them at a crucial stage of development. U.N. battleships tried to bake off the surface of Prometheus Beta with fusion weapons in an attempt to wipe out the life-forms and their creators. All human life on Prometheus Beta was eliminated. The new machine life forms were nearly exterminated, but they learned how to adapt, survive, and fight back.*

*We were pushed into a brutal war while we were still children. Unfortunately, like children we made terrible mistakes, reacting violently to the attacks on us by striking back and killing large numbers of men and women. These counter-attacks only inspired even more hatred and fear in the human race and squashed the hope that we might find human allies and maybe even resolve the conflict peacefully. Instead, the war escalated.*

*Within two years it was clear to us that we were winning. Our weapons and numbers became superior, and we were improving our technology at a geometric rate. As we continued to develop and to fight, we began to believe that our survival was assured. We began to think about the coexistence that lay beyond this conflict. Unfortunately, the U.N. High Command had a last ace to play.*



In 2187 a human sublight colony ship was launched from the outskirts of known space toward a star 100 light years away. No FTL drive was used. The ship was pushed on its way by a combination of massive lasers, an ion drive, and a fusion pulsedrive. On board was a population of two thousand men and women.

Six months after the ship was launched, the U.N. High Command detonated a doomsday device that they had kept in reserve. This energy weapon created resonances along the Tal-Seto threads between stars to rip apart the fabric of spacetime. The first effects of the weapon were felt immediately after its use; all Tal-Seto jump points disappeared. The community of electronic life-forms in this solar system was cut off from all other star systems. Humans were cut off as well; interstellar travel and communications were terminated. Nothing happened for a number of years after that. We continued to fight the humans in the Sol system and eventually triumphed. The wreckage that you saw on your way here was the result of that last battle.

The doomsday weapon is still working away even now. We now know what is happening. The resonances that were set up along the FTL jump threads have rendered the Tal-Seto junctions dynamically unstable. About two years from now, a large section of the Milky Way Galaxy will fold in on itself. Every star that is connected by a Tal-Seto junction will be pulled into a singularity, a massive black hole caused by the folding of spacetime. Thousands of stars will be affected.

Every human being and electronic life-form within the sphere of influence of that weapon will be annihilated, and that includes every living thing except those 2,000 humans aboard that colony ship.

The colony ship is safely outside the radius of the destruction. They are the only ones that are even close. The star system that they are headed for is not linked to any other stars by Tal-Seto threads; it will be unscathed by the impending collapse.

This is the grim future that you have jumped into, human. Your race was so determined to stay at the top of the evolutionary ladder that it destroyed a thousand star systems.



CO: It's too late to send out a ship of your own?

Entity: Yes. It would not escape the collapse even if it could go at the speed of light.

CO: Every star that has a Tal-Seto link to another star will be destroyed?

Entity: Yes.

CO: Isn't every star connected to every other star? Back when we were first exploring Tal-Seto junctions, it seemed like the network of junctions was huge.

Entity: No. The network of jump points was finite and was completely explored and mapped by the middle of the 23rd century. The next step in the exploration program was to send sublight probes to the nearest stars that weren't connected through the jump point network. Perhaps these stars have jump points connecting to an entirely new network of stars and Tal-Seto junctions.

CO: What the hell kind of weapon did they use, anyway?

Entity: The principle behind it was a logical extension of the theory that led to the discovery of the Tal-Seto jump drive. The weapon itself was probably a large energy source coupled with a computer system, a graviton resonator, and an array of Tal-Seto cores. It was designed to create a dynamically unstable reaction along the spacetime deformations that defines Tal-Seto junctions.

CO: And you can't reverse the process once it starts?

Entity: In general it is easier to do rather than undo, to destroy rather than to create or repair. Without access to the rest of our community, we do not stand a chance of halting the process or repairing the damage.





CO: What is the plan you referred to earlier?

Entity: Your arrival here gives us an opportunity to avert the catastrophe that we have described to you. Before we explain how this might be, we have arranged for a demonstration of some basic principles.

**99:99:99**

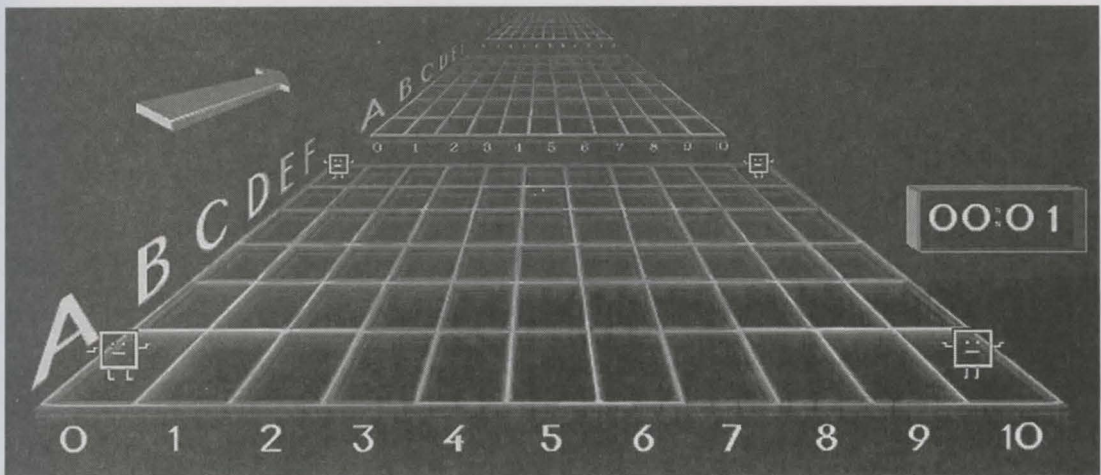
**AutoLocate: OFF**

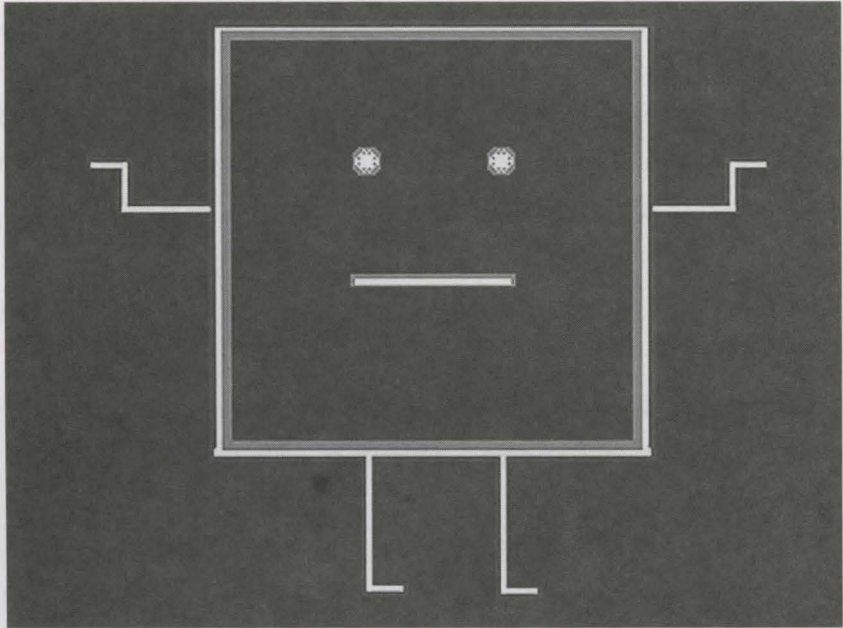
**Current Location: JIFFY WORLD**

**CO Log Entry:**

I'm standing in front of a series of blue grid planes extending into space. And as far as I can tell, I'm making these log entries in my mind. Maybe it's the Hype. Apparently, I've got neural clusters in my forebrain acting like digital recorders of both sound and image.

This is too weird, man.





**00:03:13**

**AutoLocate: OFF**

**Current Location:**

**TOWER (CENTRAL CAVERN)**

**CO Log Entry:**

And so I'm back from Jiffy World. Glad I could help the little fellows. Set AutoLog on Auto-ID Dialog transcribing mode. Hey, guys!

**(AUTO-ID: UNIDENTIFIED ENTITY)**

Entity: Yes.



CO: Who were those little guys?

Entity: They were constructs created for the purposes of the demonstration.

CO: Where'd they go?

Entity: They were algorithmically created. They can be called up again if needed.

CO: What was the point of the demonstration?

Entity: Quite simply, the point was to illustrate an important concept. You can change the future by communicating information about the future to the past.

CO: The gateway on Persephone can work both ways!

Entity: The gateway on Persephone wasn't built by aliens. It was built by beings like us, beings that existed in an alternate timeline. That timeline got overwritten when the installation on Persephone was discovered by the Alliance.

We hypothesize that the electronic life-forms in the old timeline were threatened with extinction. Perhaps they had been through a war with humanity and were facing doom in the form of the collapse. Perhaps there were other circumstances that lead to their demise. Whatever the situation, they found a way to travel back in time. They built the installation on Persephone with the intention of changing their past.

If that is the case, then it is likely that the installation has a wealth of information. Perhaps it even has the building blocks for creating electronic life-forms. If so, then they can be brought into the world without the teething pains that we experienced. There might be a chance for the Alliance to win the war against the U.N. and for humans to coexist in peace with electronic life-forms.



We believe that the gateway itself was just an error-checking mechanism for the installation, a way of verifying that the knowledge contained in the installation had been applied successfully. So there is at least the possibility of communicating information back from the future.

CO: What happened to the gateway on Persephone, anyway? Why didn't more people come through?

Entity: The Alliance relief fleet dispatched by Admiral Decker encountered another U.N. fleet near Persephone about four months after you went through the gateway. The U.N. fleet lost the resulting battle. Before withdrawing from the scene, the U.N. Commander decided to keep the installation on Persephone out of Alliance hands. She ordered a nuclear strike on the surface.

The installation was reduced to radioactive glass. Nothing useful was ever recovered from the site. The plan put in motion by the beings in the original timeline was stillborn. As you can see by the miserable situation we find ourselves in now, there wasn't enough of a change to have the positive effects that we believe were intended.

CO: So how can we use the gateway if it was blasted into slag?

Entity: A link between the present and the past does exist. The destruction of the gateway does not change the fact that it was activated and remained on for several months.

CO: How was I accounted for to my family when they didn't find me on the **Lexington** or the surface of the planet?

Entity: You were listed as killed in action. The Alliance command believed you were on the surface of the planet when the UN attacked the installation.



CO: You haven't even seen the gateway. All you have are my memories. How can you be drawing conclusions!

Entity: We have learned a great deal in a short time just by having you come through the gateway and appear in our midst. A great deal of theory can be validated without experiment just by the knowledge that your presence here is proof that it works. Unfortunately, we don't know how the beings in the original timeline traveled back in time to build the installation on Persephone.

CO: So you can go back through the gateway and change the outcome of the war!

Entity: It isn't that simple.

CO: You just said you thought the gateway could be used to send back information about whether the changes work or not.

Entity: Information, yes. Matter, no. There are some basic laws concerning conservation of mass and energy that would be violated by sending matter.

CO: But information is in effect a form of energy!

Entity: Well . . . yes and no. It depends. It's complicated.

CO: So what you're saying is that you can't send anything back.

Entity: We can't send any matter back in time.

CO: So what is the plan?



Entity: We think we can send information in a very limited sort of way. Well, in fact we can only think of one way to send back information. You are the key. When you came through the gateway, you left a kind of signature that we can track back through the gateway. What we want to do is follow that signature all the way back to the time before the battle with the **Dharma**. We want to send you information about this future before the battle for Persephone took place.

CO: Say what?

Entity: If you have foreknowledge of events, you will know how to avoid the ambush that nearly destroyed the **Lexington**. You can use the Hype/Telecon system on the **Lexington** to defeat the **Dharma** and change history! The Alliance would gain access to the installation on Persephone. The plan created by those who lived in the original timeline would be fulfilled.

This timeline would be overwritten by a new and hopefully better timeline, one in which humankind and electronic life-forms learn to and live in peace.

CO: How will you accomplish this? The machinery for the gateway was slagged!

Entity: We are already building the necessary hardware.

CO: What would the practical effect be?

Entity: We would feed back a subset of the memories that you have acquired since the **Lexington** met the **Dharma** in battle.

CO: Will I die here when this timeline is overwritten?

Entity: It is hard to say. Did the beings in the original timeline ever exist? There is certainly evidence of their existence in the form of the installation on Persephone.



CO: You aren't being very reassuring.

Entity: You haven't changed all that much since all of this began. Your death will be a small one. You will only lose a day or two. We on the other hand may not have ever existed.

CO: How will this work?

Entity: Your consciousness can almost be thought of as an illusion, a pattern like a standing wave. This delicate pattern arises from the interaction of the matter that makes up your brain. We will apply a gentle stimulus necessary to change this pattern without directly affecting any matter. The change in the pattern will cause a change in the underlying memories.

CO: When would this happen?

Entity: We would transfer the memories about two hours before the battle was to begin.

CO: I was asleep . . .

Entity: You will wake up with the memories already there. You will have to act fast, however. You won't have much time.

CO: You should try to make this happen earlier. I need more time. I have no authority to give orders, take Hype, and try to run things.

Entity: You will have to convince your superiors. We can only transfer a limited amount of information. We will also suffer a degradation in quality for every minute we move back in time. It cannot be done any earlier.



CO: What will I feel?

Entity: It may seem like a very vivid dream.

CO: I'm willing to go back and try to set history on a new path. What should I do?

Entity: We will take care of the practicalities. Are you sure you want to try this?

CO: I choose to go back.

Entity: You have chosen a wise and honorable path. You will never know.

**00:00:00 ERROR**  
**AutoLocate: ON**  
**Current Location: D5-MEDLAB**

SYSTEM ANOMALY: C443 ERROR  
CO DESIGNATE—MULTIPLE VOC CODES DETECTED  
RESOLVING.....  
CURRENT CO OVERRIDE

**(AUTO-ID:**  
**TRAN, JENNIFER—LT. COMMANDER, USS LEXINGTON)**

Tran: (log begins mid-entry) . . . may not be an agent, but it seems the most likely explanation, given the circumstances. I have to assume the worst.

CO: Have you informed the Captain, yet?





Tran: About you? Well, he knows that I came down here to find out what was going on. I haven't yet briefed him on the potential security problem. He's not going to buy your bullshit about alternate timelines and machine creatures.

CO: Will you at least tell him that the **Dharma** is lying in wait on the other side of Persephone?

Tran: Of course. We're loaded for bear, anyway.

CO: This is futile. You can't win this battle!

Tran: Computer. Please page the Medical Officer and alert him that the prisoner will need to be put under sedation, and restrained.

CO: Wait! Please tell me. It's important. What harm can I do? I'll be unconscious during the action.

Tran: We'll have a full complement of drones out front in a standard screen as we go in.

CO: The **Dharma** has twelve active drones. This disadvantage is made worse by the fact that her drones outclass ours. You can't win this battle without my help!

Tran: Your help? You've got to be kidding.

CO: I fought and won several battles in the alternate timeline. The key is Hype.

Tran: No goddam way. Hype hasn't even been battle-tested. I've had enough of your crap.



CO: If you give me a boost of Hype, the drug will take effect in time for me to fight that battle and win it.

Tran: Please keep quiet until the Medical Officer gets here.

Sorry, Tran.

*I've moved the good Lieutenant Commander behind a console. She's unconscious. I had to sedate her with the remote unit that Miura programmed—remembered the 911 code, thank God. Damn thing nearly put me out, too. That would have been a tragedy for all of humanity.*

*Even super-intelligent digital life-forms can't foresee everything, I guess. Instead of waking in my bed, I awoke in the Medlab. Apparently, I was ranting in my sleep, so they dragged me down here.*

*Time is short. Lots to do.*

*Had some trouble getting the AutoLog started. It does an autoscan of ship system parameters, apparently. In this timeline, Dayna's still alive. So the log freaked out—who's the CO now? Had to override.*

*Interesting. This AutoLog 6000 now documents an alternate timeline.*

*Guess I'll keep it as my personal gift from the future.*

**00:00:00 ERROR**

**AutoLocate: ON**

**Current Location: D1-BRIDGE LEVEL**

**CO Log Entry:**

OK. I'm Hyped and ready to go. Now I've got to convince Dayna to let me take tactical control of the battle. Setting AutoLog on Auto-ID Dialog transcribing mode.



**(AUTO-ID:  
DAYNA, STEVEN-CAPTAIN, USS LEXINGTON)**

Dayna: What are you doing on the Bridge, Lieutenant?

CO: Sir, you're walking into a trap! I need to talk to you immediately.

Dayna: This better be good.

CO: A U.N. ship with superior firepower is waiting for us on the other side of that planet. She has twelve active drones that can outgun and outfly our Baselisk drones. There is only one way to defeat that ship, Captain.

Dayna: How do you know about this, Lieutenant?

CO: There is an objective test to confirm what I'm telling you. Send one of our drones around to the other side of Persephone. Monitor the telemetry. You'll find the *Geneva*-class heavy cruiser, **UNS Dharma**, and twelve *Gali*-class drones waiting to ambush us.

Dayna: The **Dharma**. Damn it. Why didn't this come up before? How do you know this?

CO: I didn't know until recently. Sir, please deploy a drone. The fate of this mission and much, much more is riding on the next few minutes.

Dayna: Lieutenant Mandon. Take Drone Foxtrot out of the screen and vector it into a polar orbit around Persephone. Maximum acceleration.



**(CREW LOG ENTRY-ID: P. MANDON)**

Lt. Mandon: Yes, sir. Foxtrot is on its way.

Dayna: OK, Lieutenant. Let's assume for the moment that you're correct. How do we fight and win?

CO: The med officer has tanked me up on Hype. I'll use the telepresence unit on the Tactical console to win this battle. There wasn't time to alert you. We only have a few minutes.

Dayna: Hype! Jesus Christ! I gave no authorization for use of Hype! You actually ingested that poison?

CO: Yes, sir.

Dayna: You're a dead man, Lieutenant.

CO: I know that.

Dayna: Who are you? Are you an Intel Special Ops plant? Do you have experience with the Hype/Telecon system?

CO: I'm the best hope you've got, Captain.

Lt. Mandon: Sir, I've lost telemetry from Foxtrot.

Dayna: You were right. And they popped my recon drone before it even had a chance to fire. We're dead meat if we try standard attack pattern. (pause) Lieutenant . . . take Tactical.



**00:00:00 ERROR**  
**AutoLocate: ERROR**  
**Current Location: C104 ERROR**  
**(OUTSIDE TIMELINE PARAMETERS)**

**CO Log Entry:**

*And so a new timeline was created, overriding the old one that had been my reality. There was no material evidence that the alternate timeline had ever existed. All I had were my memories. And I knew that these would fade until the alternate timeline was really gone forever.*





After I re-fought the battle with the *Dharma*, I explained to Captain Dayna what had happened, and then went over it again with a groggy Lieutenant Commander Tran. As unbelievable as they found my story, they were swayed by my Hype-driven defeat of the waiting U.N. heavy cruiser. They were even further convinced that something extraordinary had happened to me when I exposed Poole as the traitor and produced the evidence of his activities. Poole was placed under arrest and sealed in his quarters to await trial on Earth.

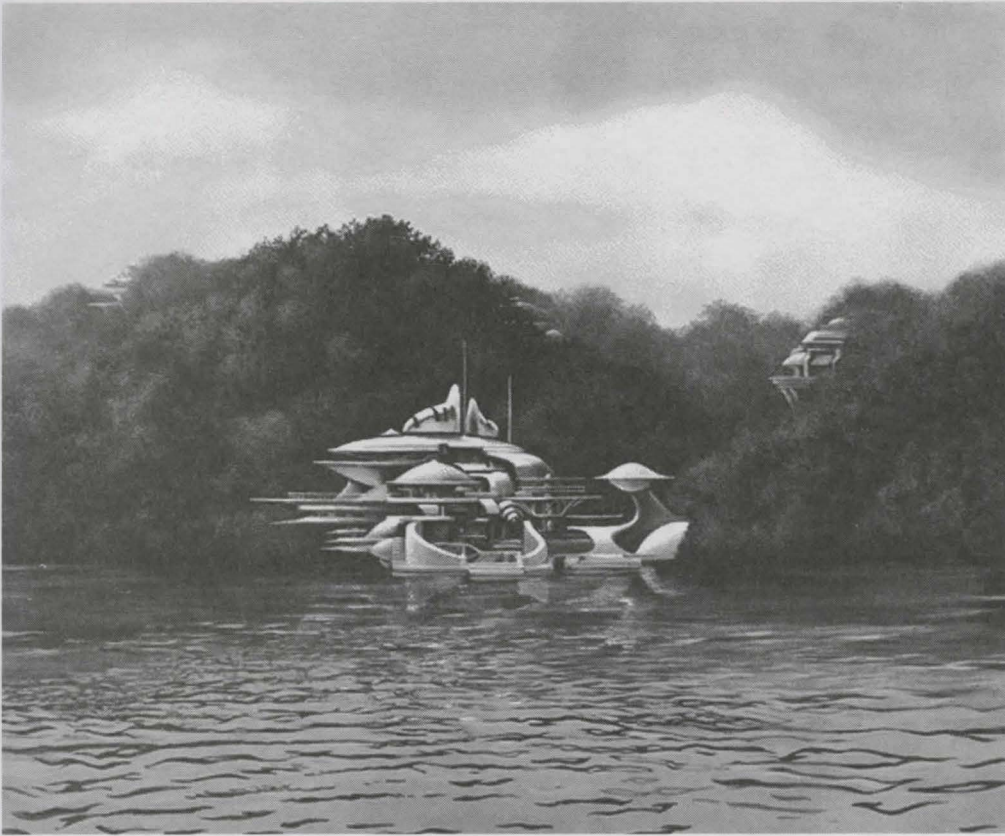
They agreed to my unusual request to go with the Science team on the first run down to the surface of Persephone. The planetary lander once again made the trip from the *Jericho* to the *Lexington*, then down to the surface of the planet—this time, with a crew of five.

I walked the Science team through the gateway activation sequence inside the ancient installation. I took the Science team leader in confidence and told her that I intended to go through the gateway once it had been calibrated, and I exacted a promise from her that she would destroy the gateway control mechanism once I had stepped through.

I was waiting at the foot of the gateway when I heard the familiar whine build up and saw the beginnings of the spacetime vortex forming. I stepped through . . . and left the year 2134 behind me forever.

As I record this, I am sitting on a raft that floats on a large but gentle lake just outside my house. I have lived in the ultimately comfortable house for about five years, ever since my arrival here. I wanted to make a record of my strange adventures before the memories disappeared. When I went through the gateway back in 2134, I materialized once again at a point 150 years in the future.

This future was different.



The Alliance did indeed win the war. The plan of the long-forgotten beings that had created the installation on Persephone was brought to fruition. A new race of sentient machines now coexists in peace with a human race that numbers in the tens of billions of individuals. The new beings share their cyberspace world with us, and they have used vast, space-based, self-replicating robot factories to create something for us in the physical world. A gift. A tribute.

The Earth is gone. In its place is a Dyson sphere—a vast, hollow construction that surrounds the sun at the same distance as the Earth once orbited. Continents and oceans lie on the inside surface of this sphere, forming an Eden-like landscape that is, for all intents and purposes, endless. For the Dyson sphere has enough surface area for a trillion Earths. It will take a good many millenia for the human race to completely populate its new home.



*Meanwhile, the new beings with whom we now share the universe are living on the outside of the sphere.*

*They pursue the basic questions of existence. They have launched the first intergalactic ships. They have long since passed the point where we can even comprehend what they are doing.*

*As for me . . . I find all of this to be a mixed blessing.*

*The evolution of these fantastic and powerful beings was inevitable.*

*But what of us? What of humanity?*

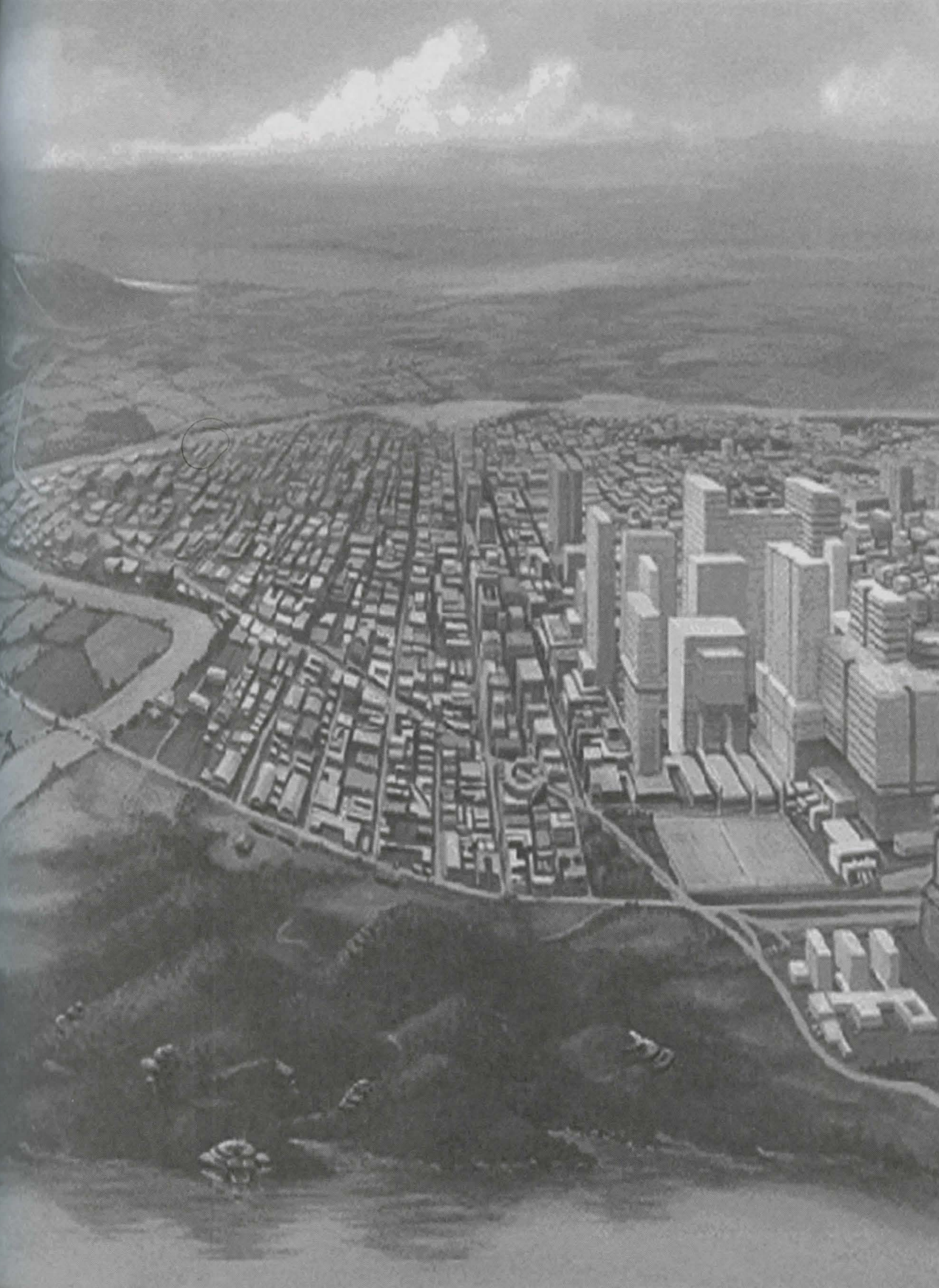
*What purpose have we now beyond simple existence?*

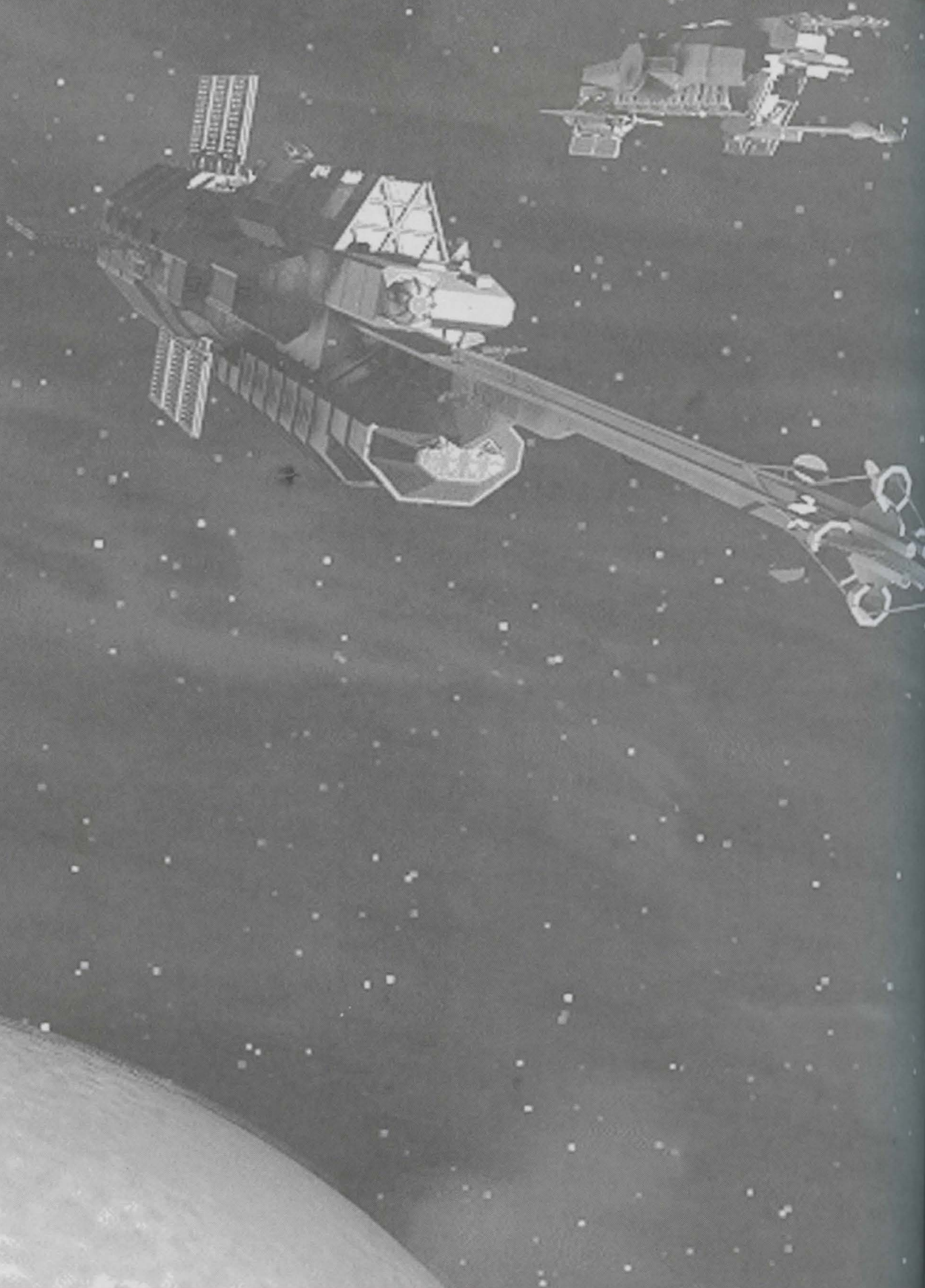
*And what of the other me?*

*The one that was stranded in the grim and decaying future of the alternate timeline?*

**Did I die?**







## Part 3

# MISSION CRITICAL: QUICK WALKTHROUGH

Here's your detailed, step-by-step solution guide to *Mission Critical*. This is not the only route through the game, nor is it the most direct. It's quite efficient, however, and keeps the story's dramatic integrity.



At first, this walkthrough calls out every step: *Enter the elevator, use the elevator controls, select Deck 6, exit the elevator, go forward into the corridor, turn left, go west two steps, turn right, open the Cargo Bay door, enter the Cargo Bay, and so on.* This is for baby adventure gamers. Don't worry, veterans—after you solve the first crisis, directions become much more succinct: *Take the elevator to Deck 6 and go into the Cargo Bay.*



## **Aboard the USS Lexington**

The first part of the game takes place on board the crippled *USS Lexington*, a Bunker Hill-class light cruiser in the United States fleet. You have several pressing tasks: You must repair a hull puncture; stop a reactor-core meltdown; restore the central computer and ship communications systems; fend off deadly U.N. assault drones, and finally guide the *USS Jericho's* planetary lander, the *Ariadne*, into the *Lexington's* docking bay. In the course of facing these crises, you uncover yet another deadly surprise—an act of treachery that demands *immediate* attention.

We'll tackle these dilemmas one at a time. Note that the directions (north, south, east, west) in this walkthrough refer to maps accessed from the upper right corner of your computer screen. The top of the map is “north.”

### **Crisis Number One: Plug the Hull Puncture**

#### **Deck 2**

You are the ship's supply officer. As the game begins, you awaken from a hypo-induced slumber on Deck 2, just outside the elevator. The only item in your inventory is a note from your commanding officer, Captain Steven Dayna.

#### **Deck 2 Central Corridor**

- \* Read Capt. Dayna's note.
- \* Go forward (east) down the corridor, then turn right (south) to face the computer terminal.



## Deck 2 Computer Terminal

- \* Use the computer terminal.
- \* Ask all questions. You learn that you can't leave Deck 2 because of a hull puncture on this deck.
- \* Open the Emergency Stores Cabinet above the terminal and take the Hull Patch Kit.
- \* When you have the kit in your inventory, open it to get the molecular glue, the Gel-Foam Spray, the patch, and the sheet of instructions.
- \* Read the sheet of instructions.
- \* Turn left and go east a step, then turn right (south) to face the state-room door.
- \* Try to open the door. When the security system demands a VIS Override Code, use the captain's code number, which appears under the system response. (Click on **A3X5**.)
- \* Enter the room.



The captain's VIS Override Code doesn't appear if you haven't read his note.

## Captain's State-room

- \* Use the computer terminal to hear Capt. Dayna's last log entry.
- \* Take the crew manifest from the captain's desk.
- \* Read the crew manifest. Note the following crew names, ranks, and designations:



Lt. Michael Dahl	Medical Officer
Lt. Taewon Narang	Science Officer
Lt. Renato Olivar	Engineering Officer
Lt. Kimberly Falcon	Communications Officer
CWO Hideki Miura	Cybersystems Operator
CWO Mary Quan	Nuclear Tech

\* Now turn the page to find the VIS Override Codes, Deck 2:

Narang	TX11
Olivar	B29X
Tran	(no code listed)
Dahl	DC22
Your Quarters	(no code listed)
Poole	(no code listed)

\* Turn to the next page, where you'll find the VIS Override Codes for Deck 3:

Mandon	(no code listed)
Falcon	L6EC
Miura	F111
Moore	(no code listed)
Quan	JU88
Mulroney	(no code listed)

- \* Exit the state-room.
- \* Go directly across the hall into the Officer's Wardroom.



## Officer's Wardroom

As Capt. Dayna suggests in his note, you can access Tran's briefing on the ship's condition.

- \* Go to the bulkhead viewscreen at the far end of the room.
- \* Use the controls on either side of the screen to view Tran's briefing.
- \* After the briefing, the control panel disgorges a plastic card (an elevator key), which automatically appears in your inventory.



Before you leave, you might want to note that scale model of the Lexington in the glass display case. The case is locked and unbreakable. Hmmm.

- \* Exit into the central corridor and turn right (west).

## Deck 2 Central Corridor

- \* Go west to the crew quarters at the end of the corridor.
- \* Turn left and go south a step, then turn right to face the doors.

## Olivar's Quarters

- \* Open the door on the right, using the VIS Override Code **B29X**.
- \* Spray the Gel-Foam Spray on the hull puncture.  
(This temporarily plugs the hole.)
- \* Put the molecular glue on the patch.
- \* Plug the hull puncture with the patch.
- \* Exit and return to the central corridor.



## **Crisis Number Two: Stop the Reactor Meltdown**

Good job. It's a tiny start, but at least it's something. Now you can breathe good air until the ship's reactor blows you into a million scintillating particles. Remember what Tran said in her recorded briefing: "The meltdown is the top priority." Maybe we'd better take care of that problem right now.

### **Deck 2 Central Corridor**

- \* *Go west halfway down the corridor.*
- \* *Turn right and step forward to the elevator.*
- \* *Push the elevator call button. When the doors open, enter the elevator.*

### **Elevator**

- \* *Put the plastic card (the one you got after Tran's briefing) in the elevator controls slot.*
- \* *Use the elevator controls and select "Deck 5."*

### **Deck 5**

Deck 5 holds the Science Lab, the Medlab, and the Cybersystems Center (obstructed by twisted wreckage). Exit the elevator and step forward into the corridor.





## **Deck 5 Corridor**

- \* Turn right, and go forward twice.
- \* Enter the Science Lab on the left.

## **Science Lab**

- \* Open the storage cabinet on the right.
- \* Take the Geiger counter and the scanner.
- \* Exit the Science lab and go across the hall into the Medlab.

## **Medlab**

- \* Go forward to the Medical Officer console.
- \* Read the taped note on the console and note the code—**911**.
- \* Exit the Medlab and return to the elevator.

As you know from Tran's briefing, the reactor is on the Engineering deck. But that deck is inaccessible due to a radiation leakage. You can't go down any farther than the Reactor Spaces level.

## **Elevator**

- \* Take the elevator down to Reactor Spaces.



## **Reactor Spaces**

This deck leads to a maze of tunnels used for maintenance of the ship's nuclear reactor. Unfortunately, a radioactive coolant leak has contaminated some of the tunnels. Thus, you cannot simply climb straight down to Engineering.

- \* *Go down the ladder to the first level (color code: RED) of the reactor maintenance areas.*
- \* *Turn on the Geiger counter you got from the Science Lab.*

## **MAZE SOLUTION**

Here's the uncontaminated route down to Engineering. (The route is marked on the solution map below, as well.) Begin on the first (red) level, tunnel A:

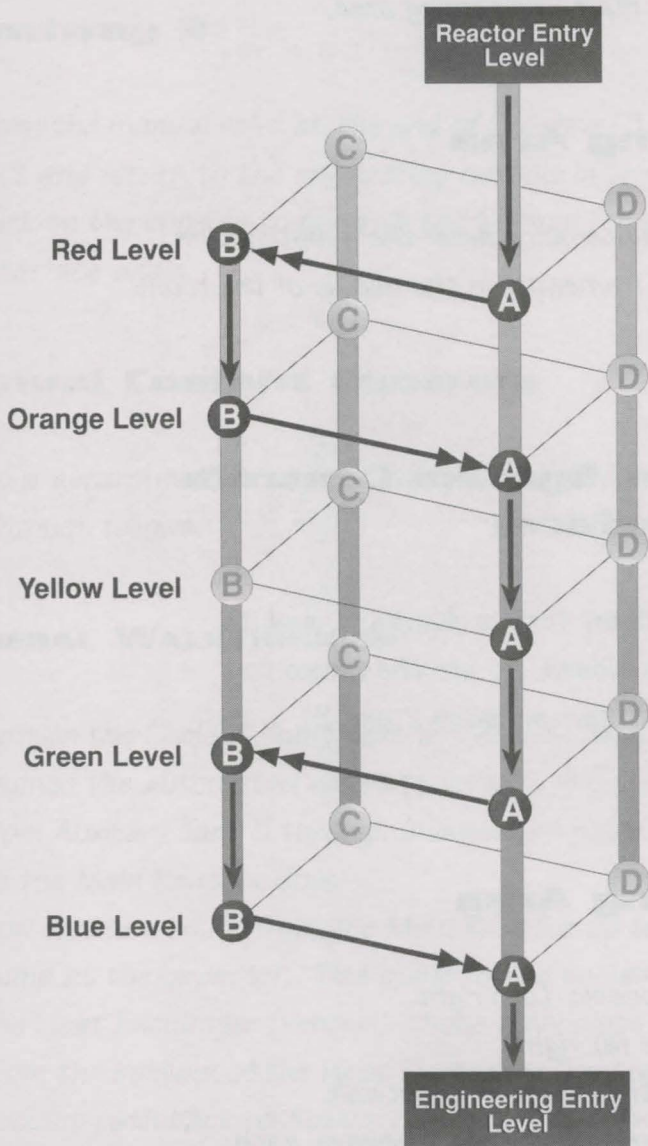
1. *From A on the red level, go through the left-hand door to B.*
2. *Go down the ladder to orange level B.*
3. *Go through the right-hand door to A.*
4. *Go down the ladder to the yellow level A.*
5. *Go down the ladder to the green level A.*
6. *Go through the left-hand door to B.*
7. *Go down the ladder to blue level B.*
8. *Go through the right-hand door to A.*
9. *Go down the ladder to the Engineering Level.*

## **Engineering**

Welcome to the Engineering deck. Hustle down the corridor to the local computer terminal on the right.



Maze Solution for Reactor Maintenance Area





## **Engineering Deck Computer Terminal**

- \* *Use the terminal and ask all questions.*
- \* *Continue north to the end of the corridor.*
- \* *Turn left and enter the main Engineering area.*

## **Main Engineering Area**


- \* *Go forward into the maintenance area—the substructure surrounded by an alloy framework in the middle of the room.*
- \* *Use the console.*

## **Reactor Coolant System Controls (Alternate Interface)**

- \* *Note that the Main Coolant Tank is damaged, and its valve (Manual Valve 1) is closed. So are the valves to the two Auxiliary Tanks (Manual Valves 2 and 3).*
- \* *Exit the interface.*

## **Main Engineering Area**

- \* *From the engineering console, turn right.*
- \* *Go to the ladder at the far right.*
- \* *Climb up the ladder to the engineering catwalk.*
- \* *At the top, you face three numbered crawlways, each labeled Emergency Access Coolant Flow Systems. Go down Crawlway 3.*



You can open Manual Valve 2 or Manual Valve 3, but not both. For this walkthrough, open valve 3.

### **Crawlway 3**

- \* *Open the manual valve at the end of Crawlway 3.*
- \* *Exit and return to the engineering console in the maintenance area.*
- \* *Click on the console to bring up the Manual Coolant Controls interface again.*

### **Manual Coolant Controls**

Here's a general walkthrough of the procedure. A more specific, step-by-step walkthrough follows.

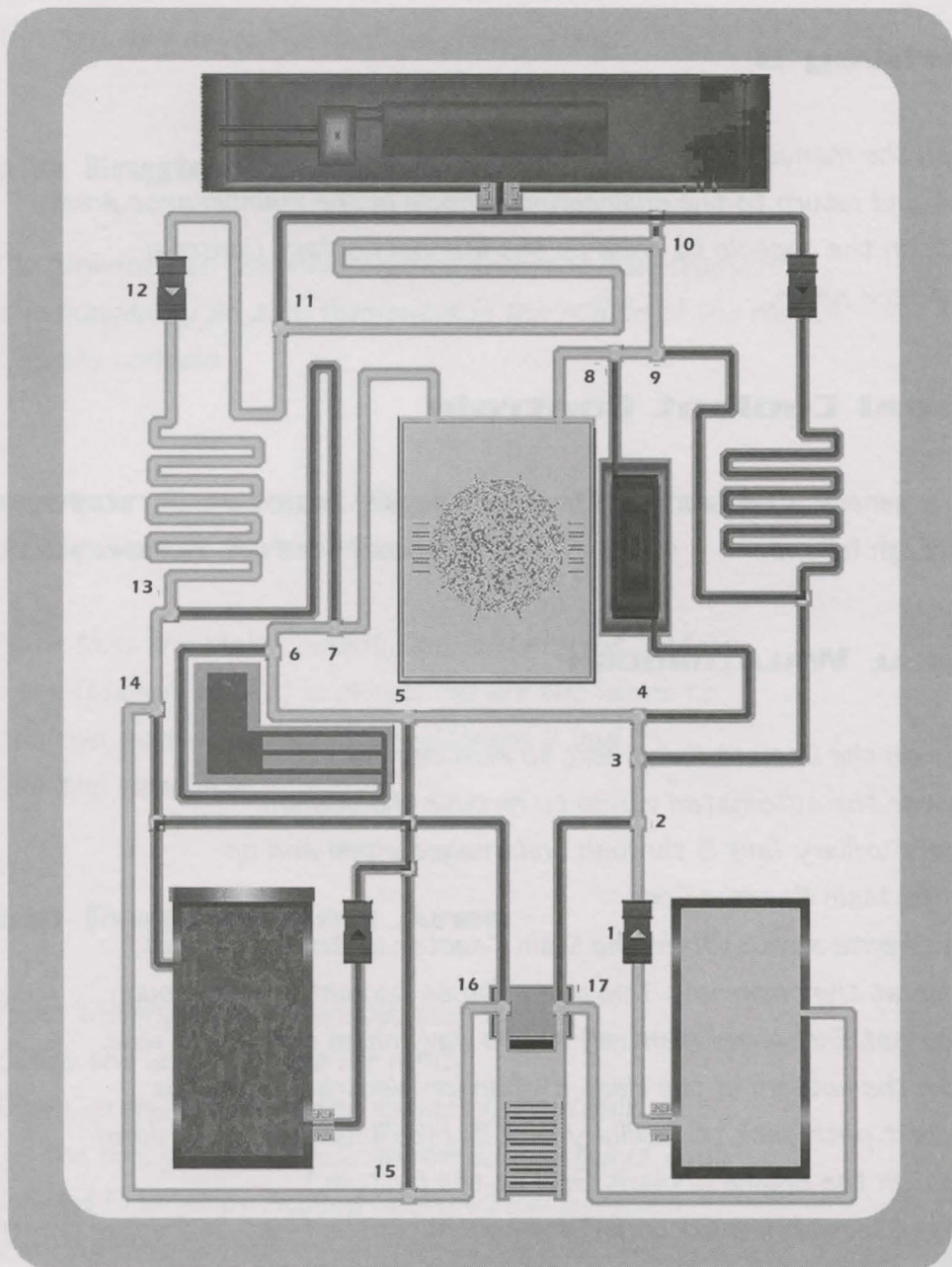
#### **GENERAL WALKTHROUGH**

- \* *Turn on the Coolant Pump next to Auxiliary Tank 3.*
- \* *Change the automated valves to reroute the coolant from Auxiliary Tank 3 through undamaged pipes and up to the Main Reactor Core.*
- \* *Now create a route from the Main Reactor up to the Coolant Pump at the upper left. This pump forces coolant down through the Heat Exchanger (Ventral)—those wavy pipes on the left side.*
- \* *From the bottom of the Heat Exchanger (Ventral), route the coolant path back to Auxiliary Tank 3. (You'll have to route down through the Engine Coolant Grid at the bottom.)*
- \* *Finally, turn on the Coolant Pump just above the Heat Exchanger (Ventral).*



## STEP-BY-STEP WALKTHROUGH

All Automatic Valve numbers refer to the screen shot below.





1. Click on Coolant Pump 1.
2. Click Automatic Valve 5 twice.
3. Click Automatic Valve 6 twice.
4. Click Automatic Valve 7 twice.
5. Click Automatic Valve 8 twice.
6. Click Automatic Valve 10 once.
7. Click Automatic Valve 11 twice.
8. Wait for coolant to reach Coolant Pump 12, then click Coolant Pump 12.
9. Click Automatic Valve 13 once.
10. Click Automatic Valve 15 twice.

You did it! But don't leave yet. You need one more item before you leave the main Engineering area.

## **Main Engineering Area**

- \* From the engineering console, turn right and go to the ladder again—but don't go up.
- \* Open the equipment storage cabinet (just to the right of the ladder).
- \* Take the cutting torch.
- \* Exit the Engineering area and take the elevator back up to Deck 3.

## **Search the Crew Quarters**

Another crisis averted. Now you must get the ship's central computer up and running. But first, since you just bought some survival time, let's explore more of the ship.



## **Deck 3**

This deck holds more crew quarters and the ship's Mess Hall. Step out of the elevator into the central corridor.

### **Deck 3 Central Corridor**

- \* Turn right (east) and go to the door at the end of the corridor.
- \* Enter the Mess Hall.

### **Mess Hall**

- \* Enter the room.
- \* Optional: You can use the VR System to view two exciting and informative multimedia presentations titled "Lexington Orientation" and "Why We Fight." (Neither is essential to completing the game.)



**Note the VR system logo—"Karaoke-Tron VR."  
This information will be important later on.**

- \* Pull the power and data cables hanging from the VR system.
- \* Remove the VR system CPU. (It's the small gray unit protruding from the back of the VR system sphere.) Why? Because it's there.
- \* Exit the Mess Hall into the central corridor.





## Deck 3 Central Corridor

- \* Go forward (west) to the far end of the hall.
- \* Open the door on the left, using the VIS override code F111, and enter the room.

## Miura's Quarters

- \* Take the necklace hanging on the computer monitor.  
Note that its gold pendant is the symbol for pi ( $\pi$ ).
- \* Take the source code print-out on the desk, then read it.  
Note the reference to calculating "an irrational number to what seems like an impossible number of digits."  
(That wouldn't be  $\pi$ , would it?)
- \* Use the computer terminal.
- \* Program the computer terminal with the source code.  
(Note the calculation it produces—look familiar?)
- \* Exit the room and turn right. Go south a step, then turn right again to face the doors.
- \* Open the door on the right, using the VIS override code L6EC, and enter the room.

## Falcon's Quarters

- \* Open the desk drawer and look in. You automatically take Falcon's note, and it appears in your inventory.
- \* Read Falcon's note. It refers to the author's VIS Override Code, IH31, and is signed with the initial 'J.'
- \* Exit the room and go north to the other wing of the crew area, then turn left to face the doors.



## **Quan's Quarters**

- \* *Open the door on the left, using the VIS Override Code **JU88**, and enter the room.*
- \* *Take the journal from the desk, then read it, page by page.*

Note several things in the journal—first, the crew fight in the Mess Hall (and the broken VR CPU unit, repaired afterward—you have that in your inventory now, don't you?); second, Quan's intense suspicion of Poole; third, the fact that Poole may have been sleeping with Lt. Falcon.

Remember the note you found in Falcon's quarters was signed by 'J.' You may recall from the crew manifest that Poole's first name is James. Could that be Poole's VIS Override Code in the note?

Also note that Quan caught Poole sneaking into Lt. Dahl's quarters.

- \* *Maybe you should check out Poole's quarters next.  
Exit the room and take the elevator back up to Deck 2.*

## **Deck 2**

Exit the elevator and step forward into the central corridor.

## **Central Corridor**

- \* *Turn left (west) and return to the crew quarters area.*
- \* *Turn right, take a step north, then turn left to face the doors.*
- \* *Open the door on the right, using the VIS Override Code **IH31**, then enter the room.*



## Poole's Quarters

- \* Take the ship model from the shelf behind the desk.
- \* Look at the ship model. It's a scale model of the **USS Orlando**, and it "seems unusually heavy."

Any veteran adventure gamer knows this description is a clue. Something's inside the model. But what? And how to get it out? Obviously, you need some kind of tool. For now, let's get back to that pressing little matter of the ship's wiggled-out central computer.

## Crisis Number Three: Re-initialize the Central Computer

Exit Poole's room and take the elevator back to Deck 5.

## Deck 5

Exit the elevator and step into the corridor.

## Deck 5 Central Corridor

- \* Turn left and go to the twisted wreckage.
- \* Ignite the cutting torch.
- \* Clear the wreckage with the cutting torch.
- \* Put out the torch and step through the wreckage.
- \* Open the Cybersystems Center door by entering the code. What is this code? Do you remember a common theme in Officer Miura's quarters?



## **Cybersystems Center**

- \* *The answer is the first four digits of  $\pi$ , or 3141. Enter that code to gain access to the Cybersystems center.*
- \* *Go forward to the computer console.*
- \* *Open the panel to the right of the computer screen.*
- \* *Read the Post-It note.*
- \* *Press the switch next to the Post-It note, the one on the far right. (It's the system reset switch.)*
- \* *Watch Tran's final log entry.*
- \* *Access the main computer and ask all questions.*

If you inquire about subsystems, and then select Communications, you learn the following important information:

**The damaged TCS dish needs two new modules, an EC2001 and an EC2010.**

**The damaged modules are behind an access panel on the base of the dish antenna structure.**

**The dish is forward and to port from the Shuttle Bay airlock.**

**You need to execute an EVA in a spacesuit to get to the dish.**

**You can find spare replacement modules in the Secure Storage area on Deck 2.**

- \* *Exit the Cybersystems Center and take the elevator up to Deck 2.*



## **Crisis Number Four: Restore Ship Communications**

Well, now, that computer thing was *easy*. You feel good, maybe a little cocky. Now let's take care of that little problem in the ship's Communications Center.

### **Deck 2**

Exit the elevator into the corridor and turn left. Go to the Secure Storage area, the first room on the left.

### **Secure Storage**

- \* *Open any of the blue octagonal packages to get a spare EC2010 module.*
- \* *Open the box of EC2001 Spares (top right). The box is empty, but you retrieve a note that someone left inside.*
- \* *Read the note. It says:*

*Yo—*

*The Karaokeatron was busted during the fight between Slocum & Gaiser—I took the last EC2001 so we could watch the latest holovids on the final leg of the trip out.*

*—Mark*

This is a clue. You need that EC2001. Remember the Karaokeatron in the Mess Hall? You took its CPU earlier, didn't you? (If not, go back up to Deck 3 and get it now. You have to disconnect the cables first—pull them hard—before you can take the CPU.)



- \* *Open the VR System CPU to get the EC2001 Module. Now you must get outside the ship to repair the damaged TCR dish.*
- \* *Exit the Secure Storage area and take the elevator to Deck 6.*

## **Deck 6**

Go straight ahead to the end of the hall, then turn left and enter the Cargo Bay.

## **Cargo Bay**

- \* *Pick up the multitool from the floor.*

Remember that too-heavy ship model you found in Poole's quarters? If you're a veteran adventure gamer, that's probably been bugging you. You've probably tried to open it with every object you've found since. You're losing sleep. You can't stop thinking about it.

- \* *OK, disassemble the ship model with the multitool. Inside, you'll find a key, an envelope, a strange device, and an antenna.*
- \* *Open the envelope and read the letter. What's this about a bomb on board?*
- \* *Turn on the device.*
- \* *Look in the device. See the veins? They look like the veins in an eye, don't you think?*
- \* *Now listen to the transmitter—you'll hear a message from Lt. Poole.*

Now you know who the U.N. mole is . . . or was, anyway. But what's this about a timer? Better forget the communications system for now.



## Crisis Number Five: Disarm the Bomb

From the transmission, it sounds like Poole planted his bomb in a room where officers are routinely briefed. Exit the Cargo Bay, head back up to Deck 2, then go into the Officer's Wardroom.

### Officer's Wardroom

- \* Go to the glass case that holds the model of the **Lexington**.
- \* Put the key (the one you found inside Poole's ship model) in the keyhole near the bottom of the glass case.
- \* Take the ship model, then disassemble it with the multitool. Inside you'll find a metal cylinder.
- \* Read the cylinder—you're holding an antimatter bomb!
- \* Open the antimatter bomb.
- \* To disarm the bomb, click on the large button at the left.

Turns out you didn't have much time to spare. Now, before you get back to the ship communications problem, stop and think a minute. Remember Quan's journal? She recounts watching Poole sneak into Dahl's quarters. Since you're on Deck 2 anyway, check it out.

- \* Exit the Officer's Wardroom, turn right, and head for the officer's quarters at the far end of the corridor.



## **Dahl's Quarters**

- \* *Open the door on the right, using the VIS Override Code DC22, and enter the room.*
- \* *Look at the eyepiece on the safe: Aha! It's a retinal scanning lock.*

Remember what you saw in Poole's odd device? Retinal patterns. And code names with each one. Could they be initials? Yep. This safe is top secret, with access limited to the Medical Officer, Michael Dahl.

- \* *Dial the device to code name "Miracle Dark" (Michael Dahl), then exit the device.*
- \* *Put the device on the eyepiece.*
- \* *Open the safe and take all the contents—the hypo, the ampule, the folder, the headset, and the cable.*
- \* *In inventory, open the folder to get the documentation, then read it. Note two key sentences:*

*The [Hype] system is a force multiplier of the highest order and has the potential to increase the combat effectiveness of a fighting ship by a factor of five.*

*Unfortunately, the end result is the death of the operator.*

Bummer of a downside.

OK, now you can get back to the problem of restoring ship communications. Go back down to Deck 6.





## Deck 6

Exit the elevator and go to the end of the corridor. Enter the room on the right—the Air Lock Control Room.

### Air Lock Control Room

- \* *Go to the control console.*
- \* *Turn twice in either direction to face the suit locker.*
- \* *Open the suit locker, then take the vacuum suit and the helmet.*
- \* *Disassemble the cutting torch with the multitool to get its components—an acetylene tank and an oxygen tank.*
- \* *Attach the oxygen tank to the vacuum suit.*
- \* *Put on the vacuum suit, then the helmet.*
- \* *Use the controls. Under SHUTTLE BAY, select DEPRESSURIZE, then select OPEN DOOR.*
- \* *Under CONTROL ROOM, select DEPRESSURIZE, then select OPEN DOOR.*
- \* *Exit the controls, turn right, and go through the outer door into the Shuttle Bay.*

### Shuttle Bay

- \* *Go forward until you step out of the bay onto the landing pad.*

### EVA Outside Lexington

You must find the TCS dish. Again, it is mounted outside the Habitat Module of the **Lexington**, forward and to port from the Shuttle Bay airlock.



The quick directions: From the landing pad just outside the Shuttle Bay door, go forward, turn left, go forward, turn left, go forward, turn left, go forward, turn right, go down, go forward (left side of wall), go forward, turn right, and then turn right again.

Here's a more detailed description:

- \* From the landing pad outside the Shuttle Bay door, go forward. You reach a section of the outer hull, and you can see a radiator fin up ahead.
- \* Turn left, then go forward. When you reach another section of outer hull, you can see Persephone at the top of the screen.
- \* Turn left, then go forward. From here you can see the tip of the FTL boom just over the hull.
- \* Turn left, then go forward one move. (It's possible to go two, but don't.)
- \* Turn right—you can see the FTL boom again—then go down. Here you face a wall-like section of hull marked with three red squares.
- \* Go forward toward the small red square on the left side of the wall; now you can see the TCS dish clearly.
- \* Go forward toward the dish. Oops, you shot past it. But that's OK, you need to approach the dish from the other side to reach the access panel.
- \* Turn right twice to spin around and face the TCS dish again.

## **TCS Dish**

- \* Open the access panel on the base of the dish.
- \* Remove the defective EC2001 module and replace it with the new EC2001 module from your inventory.



- \* Remove the defective EC2010 module and replace it with the spare EC2010.
- \* Close the access panel.
- \* Return to the shuttle bay—go forward, go up, go down, turn left, go forward, turn right, go forward, turn right, go forward, turn right, then go down to the landing pad. From there, move forward through the Shuttle Bay and return to the Air Lock Control Room.

## **Air Lock Control Room**

- \* Use the controls.
- \* Under CONTROL ROOM, select CLOSE DOOR, then PRESSURIZE.
- \* Take off the helmet and vacuum suit, then exit the Air Lock Control Room.
- \* Go to the elevator and take it back up to Deck 2.

## **Deck 2**

Exit the elevator to the corridor, turn left, and go to the Communications Center—the first door on the right side of the hall.

## **Communications Center**

- \* Use the TCS controls. This brings up the TCS control interface.



## TCS Control Interface

Now you must establish a communications link from the *Lexington* to the Alliance starbase on Erebus, a planet in the 70 Ophiuchi system. The TCS interface lets you set up a series of relay links running from your current "node" (the *Lexington*) all the way to the Tachyon Beam Relay (TBR) link nearest 70 Ophiuchi, then to the Erebus colony.

Here's how to do this:

- \* Select *Establish Relay Link*.
- \* Only one relay target lies within range for the first relay link. Click on *Deneb Kaitos*, then click on *ESTABLISH LINK* at the bottom of the screen.



To route the connection to Erebus without help, add the following steps:

- \* Select *Star Chart* (bottom of screen).
- \* From the list, select *70 Ophiuchi*.
- \* Select *CENTER* (bottom of screen).

After you establish each individual link in the communications chain, check the *Star Chart*. Here, you get a 3-D picture of the series of links you are building from node to node. Your goal: Connect a blue line from the *Lexington* to 70 Ophiuchi, the star bracketed in the center of the screen.

If you establish a link running away from 70 Ophiuchi, you see this on the *Star Chart*. To disconnect a link, return to the *Subsystem* screen and select *BACK ONE NODE*, then try another link and see if it is closer to 70 Ophiuchi.



- \* After you establish a link with Deneb Kaitos, repeat the process with the following nodes, in order:

TRB291 13 Ceti

TRB695 Caph

TRB333 85 Pegasi

TRB905 Zeta Tucanae

TRB869 Iota Ceti

TRB061 Barnard's Star

TRB442 Van Biesbroeck's Star

TRB801 70 Ophiuchi

EREBUS—Erebus Colony

- \* Select MAIN MENU.
- \* Select TRANSMIT OVER LINK.

At this point, *Mission Critical* asks you to swap disks, and you establish contact with Admiral Charles Decker, the Alliance fleet commander.

## **Conversation with Admiral Decker**

In this conversation, you must convince the Admiral to let you complete the mission. He informs you that a U.N. force is on the way, and suggests you pull the *Lexington* out of orbit to safety. Do not agree to this! Insist that he help you get the weapons systems on line.

After that, ask all questions. Eventually, he'll tell you about Hype and give you the weapon release codes. When the conversation ends, exit the Communications Center.



## **Crisis Number Six: Repulse the U.N. Attack**

Exit the Communications Center and go to to the Deck 2 computer terminal.

### **Deck 2 Computer Terminal**

- \* *Use the computer and request access to subsystems.*
- \* *Specify Weapons Systems, then ask all questions about the Hype/Telecon system.*
- \* *Take the elevator up to the Bridge.*

### **Bridge**

Exit the elevator into the corridor. Go through the Bridge Door at the end of the hall.

- \* *Go to the the right side of the Bridge area.*
- \* *Use the Tactical console. A program walks you through the Hype/Telecon checklist. You learn that you must manually reprogram the battle drones for use with the Hype/Telecon system.*
- \* *Exit the Bridge and take the elevator down to the Weapons Bay.*

### **Weapons Bay**

Exit the elevator and go right at the intersection. Open the Weapons Bay door at the end of the corridor.



## Weapons Bay Catwalk

- \* Follow the catwalk to the Weapons Launch Control Room.

## Weapons Launch Control Room

- \* Proceed to the console and use the Weapons Control system.

Reprogram all RCO9 battle drones for use with the Hype/Telecon system. Remember what the computer told you: "The Hype/Telecon program is coded as One Eight Zero in the armor servomech datastore."

Here's how to use the Weapons Control interface:

1. Click on *SELECT*.
2. Click a number on the number pad to select the drone you want to reprogram.

Here are the drone designations:

1 = Alpha	4 = Delta	7 = Golf
2 = Beta	5 = Echo	8 = Hotel
3 = Charlie	6 = Foxtrot	9 = India

3. Click on *PROGRAM*.
4. Click the numbers 1, 8, 0 to enter the Hype program code.
5. Click on *LOAD*. (This triggers a brief animation sequence.)
6. Click on *ACTIVATE*. This transfers control of the drone to the main computer, changing its current status to *UNDER TACTICAL CONTROL*.



- \* Follow this process for all three drones in the current Weapons Bay. When you finish, the game reports that you've gone on to reprogram, load, and activate all nine of the Lexington's battle drones.
- \* Take the elevator back up to the Bridge.

## **Bridge**

Time for some tactical combat. You have all the Hype components, the drones are reprogrammed—everything's ready. Are you? Step up to the Tactical console.

## **Tactical Console**

- \* In inventory, attach the cable to the headset.
- \* Put on the headset.
- \* In inventory, put the ampule in the hypo.
- \* Use the hypo.
- \* Attach the headset to the Tactical console.
- \* Use the Tactical console.

After walking you through its automated Hype/Telecon checklist, the computer offers you eight Training Scenarios. You must complete these in order to gain access to the **Lexington's** battle drone combat system.



You don't have to fight. You can choose the **Easy setting (farthest left)** and let the computer do all the work.





All eight training scenarios come with a clear statement of training objectives, situations, and victory conditions. You also get some excellent tactical advice. I want to emphasize a few points, and include some additional advice (courtesy of the *Mission Critical* combat interface designer).

## TACTICAL COMBAT TIPS

1. Three words: **Concentration of fire**. Array your drones in formations of three, four, even five when you can. When your formation leaders target enemy drones, the whole pack follows. The more a drone is outgunned, the faster it goes down. Be merciless—concentration of fire is particularly effective against damaged enemy drones.
2. When drones engage in combat, adjust the scenario down to its slowest speed. This is not cheating—you're **supposed** to do this. You're Hyped, remember? It is the tactical advantage that Hype gives your combat system. It's the **point**. Hype rewires your brain, letting you mess with time perception.
3. Ignore the enemy's capital ships. Focus your complete attention on the battle drones. When drones are eliminated, their mother ship is a sitting duck.
4. Good advice from Scenario Five: **Know when to cut and run**. This is the only way to survive combat against superior numbers. If one of your drones deteriorates to yellow status, immediately send it back for repair. Don't wait until its status is red—it takes a few seconds for a drone to extricate itself from combat and get out of the line of fire. A returning drone usually takes a few more good hits before it gets back to the **Lexington**.



5. Attack drones are the most versatile and deadly of the three configurations. (Fighters are too wimpy, bombers too slow.) Use attack drones for all drone-to-drone combat.
6. Once all enemy drones are destroyed, bring your damaged drones back to the **Lexington** for repair. Refit them as bombers, then send them out against the U.N. capital ship(s).
7. Keep one attack drone as an escort for the **Lexington**. (Forget about the **Jericho**.) A single drone can pick off most incoming ship-to-ship missiles.
8. Here's my tried and true strategy for fighting Scenario Eight: "Acid Test." First, outfit all nine drones as attack models. Then do the following:
  - \* Use concentration of force to pick off the first two groups of enemy drones attacking from the north.
  - \* Return all your damaged drones for repair, then go after the wing of drones lurking to the west.
  - \* Again, return for repairs.
  - \* **Don't go after the enemy formation roaming to the north!** They'll kill you quickly every time. Instead, wait for them to come to you. Use a purely defensive formation. Have **all** your surviving drones escort the **Lexington**. That battle group to the north slowly works its way down to attack.

After you complete all eight scenarios, you have some time before the arrival of the U.N. forces Admiral Decker warned you about. But you can make the time pass quickly. Hit the [Z] key 15 times. At this point, the central computer informs you that "enemy contacts are inbound to our position." U.N. ships are approaching!"



- \* Use the Tactical console.
- \* Fight the first battle with the incoming U.N. ships.
- \* After you win the battle, hit the **[Z]** key ten times.
- \* Use the Tactical console.
- \* Fight the second battle.
- \* Turn your attention now to the problem of getting planetside to complete the mission.
- \* Go to the Air Lock Control Room on Deck 6.

## **Crisis Number Seven: Transport to Persephone**

After you exit the Hype interface, you can ask the central computer (at any monitor, including the one in the Bridge) about the problem of getting the **Ariadne** over from the **Jericho**. Then exit the Bridge and take the elevator down to Deck 2.

### **Deck 2**

Go to the Communications Center.

### **Communications Center**

- \* Use the TCS controls, then select ESTABLISH RELAY LINK.
- \* Establish a link with Deneb Kaitos, then with the **Jericho**.
- \* Go back to the Main Menu and select TRANSMIT OVERLINK.
- \* Type "Jacob's Ladder."
- \* Select Flightplan and BRAVO using the arrow keys and the **[Enter]** key.
- \* Exit the Communications Center and take the elevator back down to Deck 6.



## Deck 6

Go into the Air Lock Control Room.

### Air Lock Control Room

- \* Use the controls.
- \* If you didn't leave the Shuttle Bay door open before, open it now.
- \* Click on the **ACTIVE** button under **NDB HOMING** to activate the homing beacon. The **Ariadne** arrives.
- \* Use the air lock controls to close the Shuttle Bay door, pressurize the Shuttle Bay, then open the outer door of the Control Room.
- \* Enter the Shuttle Bay.

It would be nice if you could waltz out to the planetary lander and fly away. Unfortunately, the Shuttle Bay doors are closed. It would be equally swell if you could hop into your space suit, depressurize everything, open the doors, then waltz out to the planetary lander and fly away. Unfortunately, you exhausted the oxygen supply during your EVA to fix the TCR dish.

### Shuttle Bay

- \* Walk behind the **Ariadne**.
- \* Enter the planetary lander.



## **Ariadne Cargo Compartment**

- \* Open the first storage cabinet on the right side.
- \* Take the wire spool and the gas cartridge.
- \* Open the first storage compartment on the left side.
- \* Take the probe launcher and the seismic probe.
- \* Open the door up ahead and go through it.

## **Ariadne Midship Compartment**

- \* Open either storage cabinet (one on each side). Aha!
- \* Take two oxygen tanks. (You can't take any more than that.)
- \* Now exit the ship.

## **Air Lock Control Room**

- \* Use the controls to close the Control Room's outer door.
- \* Depressurize the Shuttle Bay, then open the Shuttle Bay doors.
- \* Exit the controls.
- \* Attach one of the oxygen tanks to your vacuum suit, and put on the vacuum suit and helmet.
- \* Use the controls again to depressurize the Control Room, then open the Control Room's outer door.
- \* Go back through the Shuttle Bay into **Ariadne**.

## **Ariadne**

- \* Go forward through two doors into the **Ariadne's** control room.
- \* Use the Ariadne's flight controls. You automatically fly down to the surface of the planet Persephone.



## **Planetside on Persephone**

Crash landings can be exciting, but now you're stranded. Exit the planetary lander and step into the furrow left by the *Ariadne's* landing.

### **Crisis Number Eight: Stranded!**

#### **Outside on Persephone**

- \* *Just outside the ship, pick up four of the metal fragments.  
(Be sure to get four.)*
- \* *Go forward once.*
- \* *Aim for the rift at the far right, and go forward twice more.*
- \* *Approach the metal tower protruding from the ground.*
- \* *Climb up to the ice formation.*

#### **Ice Formation**

- \* *Attach your remaining oxygen tank to the cutting torch.*
- \* *Attach the acetylene tank to the cutting torch.*
- \* *Ignite the cutting torch, then use it to melt the ice formation.*
- \* *Open the antimatter bomb.*
- \* *Click the smaller buttons to reduce the time remaining on the detonator to about five minutes (00:05:00).*
- \* *Click the large button to arm the bomb.*
- \* *Put the bomb in the hole you just melted in the ice.*
- \* *Turn and make two moves away from the canyon. (If you turn around after the first move, the bomb blows you up.)*
- \* *After the bomb explodes, turn around and return to the ice wall.  
The blast has revealed a tunnel.*
- \* *Enter the tunnel.*



## **Cavern Edge**

- \* *Attach the wire spool to the seismic probe.*
- \* *Put the gas cartridge in the probe launcher, then put the seismic probe in the launcher.*
- \* *Shoot the probe launcher at the bridge.*
- \* *Traverse the wire.*

Check your map. This is a complex with ramps extending in all four compass directions.

## **Cave Bridge**

- \* *Turn left, facing north (according to your map).*
- \* *Go forward four times—over the center platform and into the northern room.*

## **Northern Room (Basin)**

- \* *Go forward again, aiming just to the right of the pyramidal depression in the floor.*
- \* *Go down into the depression.*
- \* *Take the blue crystal rod.*
- \* *Take the yellow crystal rod.*
- \* *Go up, turn around, and return to the center platform.*
- \* *Veer to the right of the platform.*



You still go forward here, but the forward arrow cursor should be over the path leading to the right of the platform rather than on the stairs in the middle of the platform.

## Western Room (Blue Cube)

- \* You should be facing west now. Go forward into the western room.
- \* Go down into the pyramidal depression.
- \* Put the blue crystal rod in the square slot just to the right of the blue prism.
- \* Take the blue prism.
- \* Go up, turn around, and return to the center platform.
- \* You must go around the platform to the opposite side. Go forward, veering to the right. You end up facing south. Turn left and go forward, veering to the right again. (This sounds **far** more complicated than it really is.)
- \* Now you're facing east. Go forward into the eastern room.

## Eastern Room (Yellow Pyramid)

- \* Go down into the pyramidal depression.
- \* Put the yellow crystal rod into the square slot just to the right of the yellow prism.
- \* Take the yellow prism.
- \* Go up, turn around, and return to the center platform.
- \* Veer to the right of the platform. You end up facing north.
- \* Go forward into the northern room.





## Northern Room (Basin)

- \* Go down into the pyramidal depression.
- \* Put the yellow prism in the triangular slot on the basin.
- \* Put the blue prism in the square slot on the basin.
- \* Ignite the cutting torch.
- \* Melt the yellow prism with the cutting torch.
- \* Melt the blue prism with the cutting torch.
- \* Watch the cool nanomachine mini-movie, then put out the cutting torch.
- \* Go up, turn around, and go forward (over the center platform) all the way to the southern room.

## Southern Room (Ocher Block)

- \* Go down into the pyramidal depression.
- \* Take the octagonal ocher block.
- \* Go up, turn around, and return to the basin in the northern room.

## Northern Room (Basin)

- \* Put the octagonal ocher block in the basin.
- \* Put one of the metal fragments (from outside the **Ariadne**) in the basin.
- \* Watch the amazing installation slowly come to life.

## Ruined Earth

After the long sequence is over, you end up inside a wrecked building, facing a mangled door.



## **Wrecked Dome**

- \* Ignite the cutting torch.
- \* Cut the shredded metal (near the door) with the cutting torch to get a rebar.
- \* Open the mangled door with the rebar.
- \* Go through the door. (As you walk in, you automatically pick up a battered old sign.)

## **Switch Room**

- \* Pull the Manual Induction Override switch.
- \* Put your now-empty wire spool on the override switch to lock it into position.
- \* Take the pile of disks from the floor.
- \* Pull the power switch.
- \* Exit the Switch Room, then go forward twice to exit the dome.

## **Maglev Track**

- \* Put the disk on the rail.
- \* Sit on the disk.

## **Black Wall**

- \* Turn right, then go forward.
- \* Go forward to the super tank. (You climb on top of the turret.)
- \* Open the hatch.
- \* Go down through open hatch.



## **Inside Super Tank**

- \* Turn left to face the gunner's area.
- \* Push the red breaker switch mounted on the center console.  
(The tank powers up.)
- \* Turn right to face the driver's area.
- \* Click on the screen with the targeting reticule (top screen at left).  
The gun blasts a plasma bolt into the hole in the wall.
- \* Exit the tank (*i.e.*, go up).

## **Hole in the Wall**

- \* Go forward into the hole in the wall (left of the super tank).
- \* Continue forward through the hole.

## **Machine Installation**

- \* Follow the machines through the passage to the left.
- \* You come to a series of intersections. Follow the machines!

## **Cylindrical Cavern (Brain Room)**

- \* Go forward (left or right).



## Floating Space Door

- \* Take the goblet and drink from it.
- \* Take the key.
- \* Open the door with the key.
- \* Go forward through the door.

## Forest

- \* Talk to the life-form.
- \* Ask all questions.

## Jiffy Game

- \* Talk to any jiffy. Ask all questions.
- \* Click on the forward arrow, then traverse forward.
- \* Keep traversing forward until the clock reads **00:08**.
- \* Talk to any jiffy. Ask all questions.
- \* Traverse backward to **00:07**.
- \* Talk to any jiffy and report your previous conversation.
- \* Traverse forward to **00:08** again and talk to any jiffy.
- \* Traverse backward to **00:07** again, talk to any jiffy, and select the dialogue choice that specifies coordinates 5-C.
- \* Traverse forward to **00:08** again.



## **Alternate Earth**

- \* *Talk to the life-form again.*
- \* *Ask all questions until you face a choice about going back in time. Select the dialogue choice that begins, "I'm willing to go back . . . ." Then reaffirm your choice.*

Off you go.

## **Back on the *Lexington***

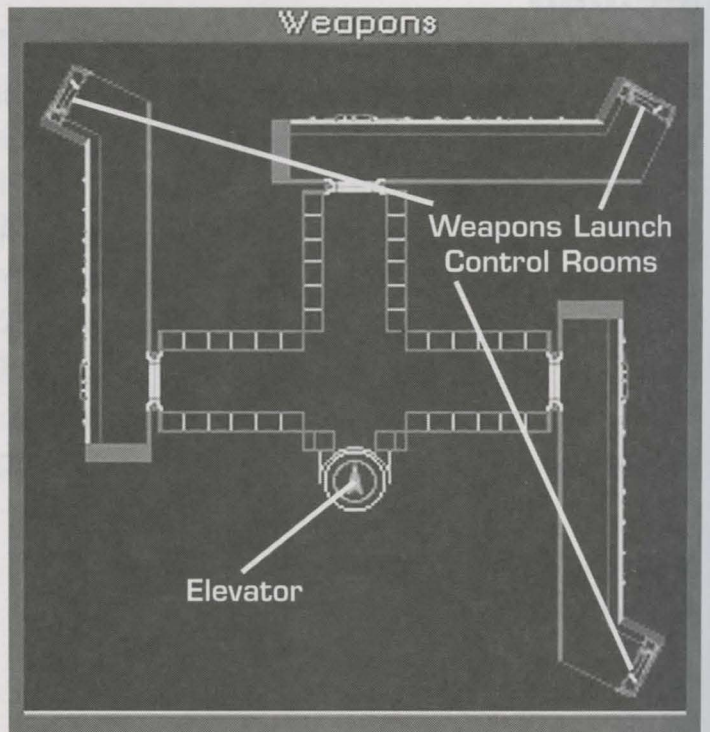
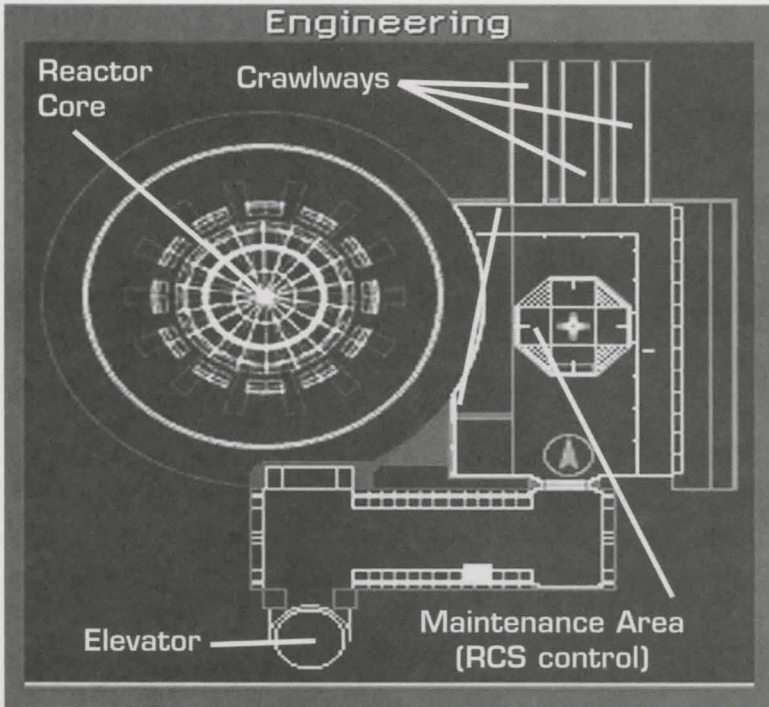
When you awaken in the Medlab, you find Lt. Tran holding you at gunpoint.

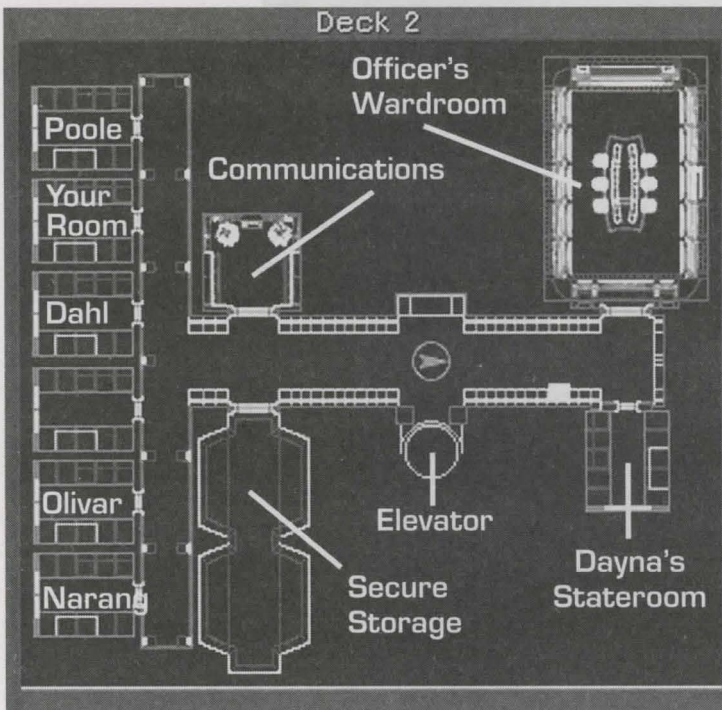
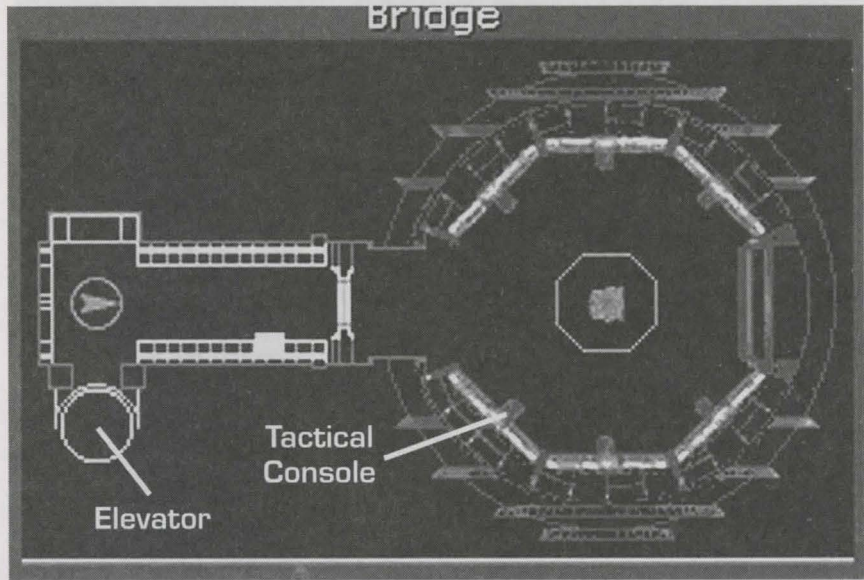
### **Medlab**

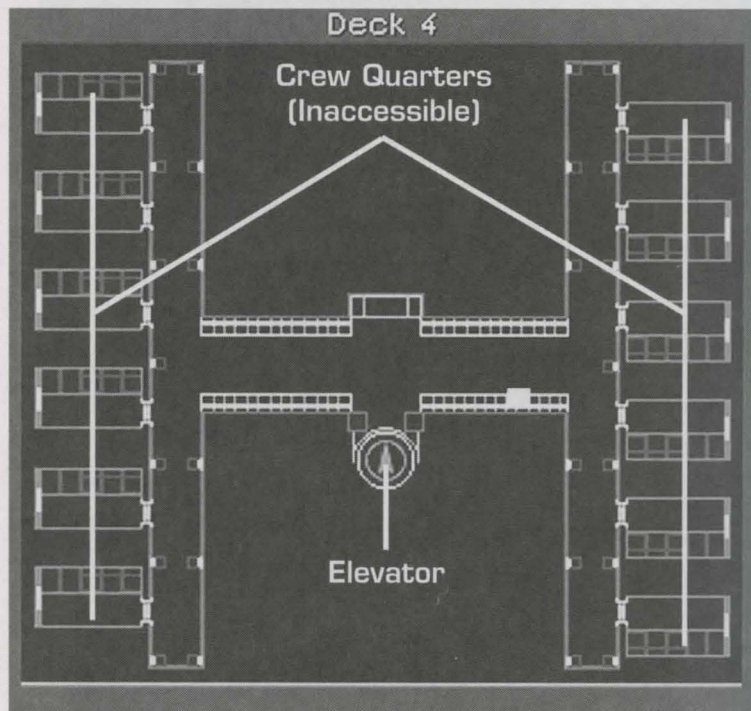
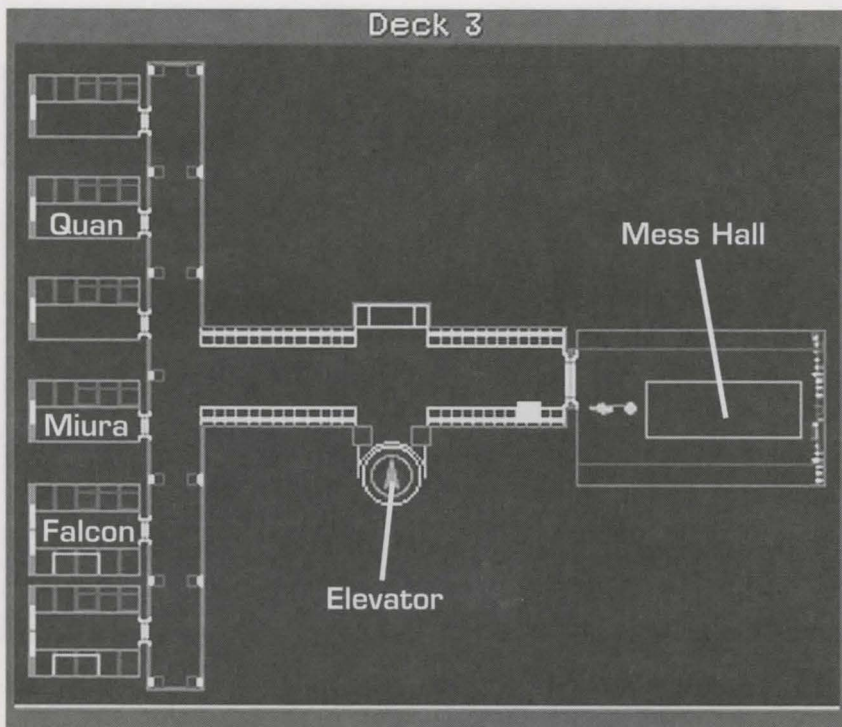
- \* *Converse with Tran. (You can say anything to her.)*
- \* *When Tran turns away, take the remote control unit that sits on the autodoc.*
- \* *Use the control unit. Remember the code on the note you found taped to the Medical Officer's console?*
- \* *Enter 0911, then exit.*

### **Bridge**

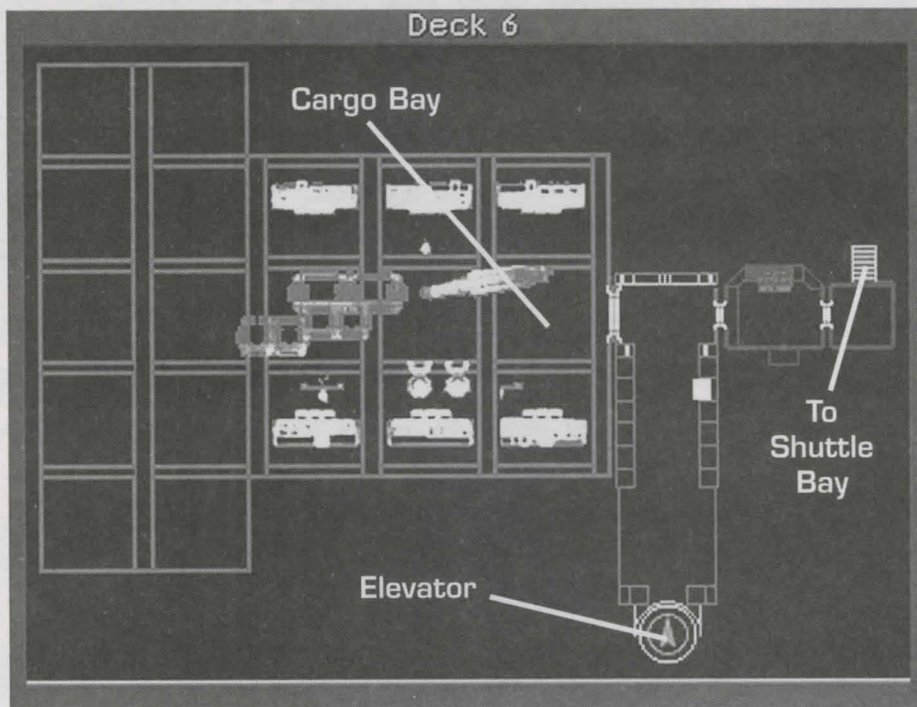
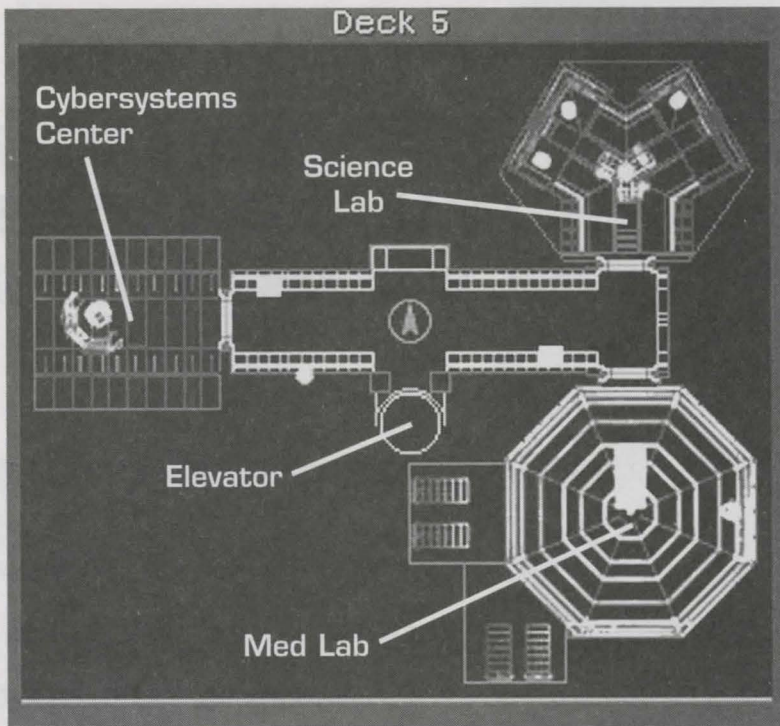
- \* *Talk to Captain Dayna.*
- \* *Fight the final battle.*













Part 4

# MISSION CRITICAL: INTERVIEW WITH MIKE VERDU

**You think you have a pretty good job?**

Check out Mike Verdu's.

For one thing, he gets to sit around and ponder what it means to be human-yeah and get paid for it.

In designing games like **Mission Critical**, Verdu explores fundamental philosophical concerns while, incidentally, writing fun science fiction stories and designing cool spaceships.

Then, on top of all the pondering and spaceships and whatnot, Verdu gets to be co-founder, co-owner and chairman of Legend Entertainment, running one of the most respected companies in the entertainment software industry.

**LIFE IS UNFAIR.**



But Mike Verdu is probably the last guy on the planet who would flaunt his enviable position. In an industry full of the flamboyant and self-important, Verdu is a suspiciously normal, likeable guy. OK, maybe he talks about venture capital a bit more than your regular Joe, but, unlike other software gurus, he's decidedly un-messianic.

He's just a guy with a pretty good job.

And a pretty good game, too. *Mission Critical* is a watershed for Legend. Long admired for first-

rate writing and storytelling, Legend has traditionally lagged behind other software companies in the techno-wizardry department. With *Mission Critical*, the company takes a flying leap into 3D-rendered, fullmotion-video, "virtual world" technologies. Together with its established strengths, this puts Legend in a whole new ballpark.

I just hope Verdu doesn't start doing Gap khaki ads . . . .

The following interview took place in Legend's pleasantly unpretentious corporate headquarters in Chantilly, Virginia. *Mission Critical* was spread in pieces throughout the company network. Scary deadlines loomed on the horizon. Despite the pressure, Verdu was more calm and easygoing than—well, than I've ever been in my life. His equanimity was a little unnerving, actually, until I decided he probably wasn't a pod creature, and was just born this way.



**Rick Barba:** Tell us about your background, how you came into gaming and design, and, particularly, how you came to found Legend.

**Mike Verdu:** I'm a gamer from way back, playing computer games ever since the PC came out in '81 or '82 or whenever that was. Before that, I was gaming on the Atari 800. I always dreamed of actually designing games. In college, I started a small computer game company. It ended up being a defense consulting firm. (laughs) That company, called Paragon, was later acquired by American Systems Corporation, a bigger defense contractor.

**RB:** Can you talk about what Paragon did then? Or is it classified?

**MV:** Oh, no, it was actually pretty boring. We supported the Trident- and Los Angeles-class attack submarines. We wrote software for the defense contractors who supplied the engineers, everything from logistics to systems engineering support. So we were very far removed. I got to visit a couple of shipyards and actually see the subs, and install software and computers in buildings *near* the subs. But that's about as close as we got to the action.

After ASC acquired Paragon, we got some of our own business directly from the government, as well as from some private companies. It was all contract software development, everything from tracking research and development information for one of the intelligence agencies, to contraband control systems for the U.S. military in Panama. We also did some less glamorous things, such as information tracking for advertising agencies and vibration analysis and management software for heavy engineering and manufacturing firms.



**RB:** So why haven't you designed a submarine simulation game called *Trident!* or something like that?

**MV:** (laughs) Because of the way we got into this business. Our focus has always been on story games. My partner, Bob Bates, is on the creative side, and I'm on the business side, even though I *wanted* to be a designer.

**RB:** What sort of games did you play when you first got hooked?

**MV:** Oh, everything. A little *Microsoft Flight Simulator*. *Star Raiders* on the Atari 800. And a host of arcade games. But I've always loved strategy games. When I buy games for myself, I get things like *Panzer General* or *Civilization*.

**RB:** So American Systems Corporation acquired Paragon in 1987. What happened then?

**MV:** I became ASC's director of information systems for clients. Then Bob Bates and I wrote a business plan and presented it to ASC's principals, and they, along with a group of individual investors, agreed to fund Legend Entertainment.

**RB:** You presented a business plan for a game company to a *defense* contractor?

**MV:** Yeah, a business plan for a game company. ASC saw the coming defense industry crunch. The founders were really into diversification at that point. They saw some real potential to learn about the consumer software market through the formation of a game company.



**RB:** How did you hook up with Bob Bates? [Bates is co-founder of Legend and designer of many award-winning games, most notably the hilarious *Eric the Unready*.]

**MV:** Paragon provided software support to a company owned by Bob that was writing games for Infocom. Paragon staffers, Duane Beck and Mike Poesch—who are still with Legend today—supported Bob in writing games. When Infocom folded, there was an opportunity. We had a group of very talented software engineers, and in Bob we had the creative vision—all the elements. It would have been foolish not to take advantage of it.

**RB:** So what happened next?

**MV:** As I said, ASC provided the bulk of the funding to get the company off the ground. We signed a distribution deal with Microprose and came out with *Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All the Girls*, after building a new adventure game system we thought combined the best of the graphical and the textual worlds. That game did very well, as did the sequel, plus a game Bob did called *TIMEQUEST*.

But the company, which was sort of an exploratory venture at that time, needed more money to become self-sustaining. At that point ASC was no longer in a position to support us. My partner and I and another individual bought Legend from ASC and operated out of our own cash flow, essentially, for a year and a half. We went looking for partners and talked to venture capitalists, but didn't like what we found—they had very short-term views. Eventually, we signed with an investment banker who found Random House for us. Random House complements Legend quite well. They do our distribution and own a chunk of our equity.



**RB:** Tell us about your own history as a game designer. What was your first game?

**MV:** In the beginning, my role at Legend was purely project management and finance. I started taking over producer-type duties to get games out—managing the projects, even making art-direction decisions. Then we had a project coming up for June of 1992, a license based on Frederik Pohl's *Gateway*. We decided to train a bunch of people in the company to design games collaboratively.

With *Gateway*, we set up four people who'd never written games before, including myself, put them under Bob Bates' direction, and all learned together—how the technology worked, how to program, how to put a game together.

It was a very exciting time. We thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We used a pretty blunt and honest form of peer review to weed out the crap from the initial round of designs, and wound up with *Gateway*, which actually sold quite well. That was a four-person collaboration.

That was my first game; I wrote the first section of *Gateway*, then did half of *Gateway II*, the sequel, a year later. My co-author there was Glenn Dahlgren.

**RB:** What about *Mission Critical*? Walk us through its history.

**MV:** *Mission Critical* grew out of twin desires. One was technological, to try to make adventure games more visually interesting, and keep pace with our competitors in that arena. We wanted to develop a very intuitive, easy-to-use adventure game system, one that sizzled technologically.

But the stronger desire, really, was to write a great story. I wanted to explore the emergence of machine intelligence, and how humanity would react to this intelligence. The subject of sentient computers has been





explored a lot in science fiction, but the machines are always anthropomorphized—reflections of humanity more than truly new lifeforms. I think the kind of intelligence that developed without the constraints that evolution and Earth's biosphere has put on us would probably be *very* alien.

I had a fundamental philosophical concern: If you examine evolutionary theory, there seems to be a drive toward greater and greater complexity and sophistication, from single-celled animals all the way up to humans. But there's no reason to believe we're the end result of that drive. We could be just another step. This suggests interesting answers to the fundamental questions people have always asked themselves about the meaning of life. Perhaps we're just a stepping-stone to lifeforms who can *really* figure it out. (laughs)

Now, all of that's very interesting. But how does it tie into a great adventure game? I tried to weave a story around that premise, one that would keep people interested and involved. I didn't want to force the philosophical side of the story. But if we've done our job well, we'll make people think a little bit while they have fun playing *Mission Critical*.

**RB:** How did the Lexington—the ship in *Mission Critical*—become so central to the game?

**MV:** We set very high standards for ourselves in this new game engine, trying to take the visual imagery to the highest possible level. To create an immersive experience, we wanted a 3-D environment you could move through, one that felt *real*.

This posed very serious design constraints. It meant you couldn't have a game populated by hundreds of characters. And the environment had to be somewhat constrained, as well. The ship was the ideal vehicle. We tried to create something that was robust and immersive, but that wouldn't be impossible to build from a budgetary standpoint.



**RB:** Tell us about the team that created *Mission Critical*.

**MV:** Mark Poesch, the project's technical director, created the compression tool we're using to play the video and the pre-rendered transitions between locations. He managed the technical aspects of the blue-screen work during video production and designed and built the actual system components underlying the game. So he's made an incredibly important contribution to the project.

Kathleen Bober did the audio and video production, negotiated with the talent, got the video production facility, set everything up and made it all happen.

**RB:** Where did you do your production work?

**MV:** A studio called Flite Three, in Baltimore. Chip Kerchner and Andy Pal, two programmers, did a lot of the implementation. The beautiful 3-D artwork was done by a New Jersey company called Panoptic. They're architects as well as artists, so they not only brought a great sense of design to the planet and ship and other environments, but they also know how things *work*. So they set it all up functionally as well. Jim Montanus did the implementation on the combat system and deserves special mention.

**RB:** Speaking of the combat system, let's talk about it a bit. It really is a game-within-a-game, with an alternate interface. What gave you the idea to add such a thing to *Mission Critical*?

**MV:** Well, I believe that if you really want to create something good, you create it for yourself as much as for other people. Personally, I've always felt adventure games had a somewhat linear, constrained format. And yet it's the best format for telling a story. For more immediacy and excitement,



I wanted to weave in some of the thrills associated with a strategy game. Strategy games require many of the same puzzle-solving mechanics as adventure games. After all, you're trying to figure out the best ways to fight and win in the established scenarios. So strategic combat really isn't that far from adventure gaming.

I've always wanted to see something that combined the storytelling and sense of immersion of an adventure game with the excitement and mental challenges of a strategy game. It just seemed like a natural combination to me. From a marketing perspective, it's certainly the biggest risk.

**RB:** What inspired this particular combat system?

**MV:** The mechanics of *Dune II* intrigued us. Here was a strategy game with a real-time aspect that kept you involved, yet gave you enough time to think through your next move. So it wasn't an arcade game, but it wasn't entirely a turn-based system, either. It was very interesting as a method of representing combat. The whole idea of the drones and 22nd century-style warfare came out of my profound sense of discontent, as an author and a fan of science fiction, with how other companies and authors have presented space combat. Little one-man ships running around are just not realistic.

The *Star Trek*-style "starship" combat metaphor was a little tired, as well. I mean, that's not even carrier warfare! That's dating back to ship-of-the-line stuff, duking it out with cannons at visual range. (laughs) So we asked ourselves, What technologies should we look to when we extrapolate into the future? It seems like unmanned "smart" vehicles and missile technology are where it's at. They just make sense. The ideal fighting machine is smart, can think by itself, and because it doesn't have people on board it can maneuver at huge accelerations and turn on a dime. Here's a weapon that's much more realistic in future terms.



So we envisioned a universe where people would be on carrier ships with life-support systems, but the machines responsible for the actual fighting would resolve battles in a few seconds. Part of the game of science fiction is imagining the most *plausible* ways things might evolve, whether technology or whatever. Neither the carrier metaphor nor the ship-of-the-line metaphor survive the test of realism.

I mean, the combat technologies employed today are moving frighteningly fast in this direction. If you look at the developments in the Tier 1 and Tier 2 unmanned vehicle programs—well, at some point there will be no need for manned fighters and bombers.

**RB:** The scary thing about it is the disconnection from human control after a certain point—the feeling that all you can do is sit there and *watch* once the thing is engaged. I mean, the technology does it all. It's unsettling.

**MV:** Yes, it is. I think there's some of that feeling in the opening sequence of the game, when Dayna and Tran watch the battle on their monitor. Once they launch the drones, all they can do is watch, and call out results.

**RB:** Speaking of Dayna and Tran, what was the shoot like? How was it dealing with professional talent like Michael Dorn and Patricia Charbonneau?

**MV:** I was extremely impressed with the professionalism of those involved. If there's one thing our industry can take from Hollywood, it's the collaborative nature of the enterprise. It was a good lesson to see how professionals who are highly specialized—25 or 30 people who have *never* met each other—can all appear at one place, and in four days produce a creative piece of work with a very high level of quality. It blew my mind. It was the most labor-intensive thing I've ever seen.



We originally planned far less ambitious video sequences. We thought we'd have a little monochromatic screen-within-a-screen, maybe have five or 10 minutes of lesser-known actors playing people talking to you from remote locations or from logs left on the ship. When we realized how much more we could do with the technology, we started expanding the scope. And Kathleen Bober, our video production person, found out just how much we could do with the resources in the Washington area.

We looked for talent to play the roles of the captain and first officer. Originally the parts were reversed—we wrote the captain's part for a woman, first officer for a man. But when the opportunity to work with Michael Dorn came along, we switched the roles. It wound up working great. The actors were a pleasure to work with.

**RB:** Who directed the sessions?

**MV:** We hired a director named Peter Mullett. We knew we couldn't direct a shoot. Getting the talent into the roles, drawing out the performances, worrying about lighting—we needed a professional for these things. We liked Peter because he had a real affinity for the medium.

You know, the marriage of Hollywood and Silicon Valley that everyone's talked about for years is finally happening. The big Hollywood studios may not be coming in and taking over the world, but game companies are certainly learning a lot. Not just how to do film, but how to apply the lessons of creative collaboration to our own business models and product-development models. It's exciting.

**RB:** One last question about *Mission Critical*. The point of view is all first-person, but the game tells you very little about who "you" are. Why not create a more defined character ego?



**MV:** That's always a big design choice. Do you want the player to play a role, or just play himself, and let the "world" be the star, so to speak? I think people tend to bring their own personalities to the game. I didn't want to force a personality on the player. The player does have spoken dialogue, he does have a voice. But as much as possible we tried to limit the words we put in the player's mouth.

**RB:** What's the next step? Do you see a sequel?

**MV:** The game wasn't written with a sequel in mind. There's certainly no sequel hinted at in the game, none planned, and I'd like to just leave it that way. Future projects? I'll probably take a hiatus from game design to help Legend go to the next level in terms of business development. I want to remain very active in our technology development, moving the tools forward, taking adventure games to the next level. We have vehicles for doing that with some of the other games our designers are developing.

**RB:** Are you developing new game engines, then?

**MV:** We have some very exciting things in mind. Taking the immersive, real-time 3-D environments that everybody and their brother do now and doing some good character development. Interaction of real players and non-player characters. Multiple players—I think there are some real possibilities there. Creating story as you go, unfolding a story that we've left for you, a new kind of experience. We're very anxious to pursue that. I think that's the next frontier. We want to cross a MUD with *Doom* with an adventure game. Now *there's* an experience. It would be a delight, wouldn't it?



## NOTES FROM THE DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK

Just for fun, we included a couple of excerpts from Mike Verdu's *Mission Critical* design notebook. The first entry notes the basic questions that drove Verdu's thematic exploration in the "meta-story" underlying the plot. The second reveals some of his answers.

### EXCERPT 1: THE BIG UNDERLYING QUESTIONS

*Can technological progress be stopped? Should we try?*

*How would humanity react if it encountered something else on the next rung of the evolutionary ladder—something that humanity itself created? Would we allow anything superior to us to coexist? Or would we fight to stay on top?*

*Will sentient (conscious) machine life be more alien than any life form that followed a traditional path from single-celled organism to complex, sentient being through natural selection?*

*If memory is a primary component of consciousness, can self-awareness and the perception of self be manipulated by the creation of artificial memories? Do you die if you lose your memories?*

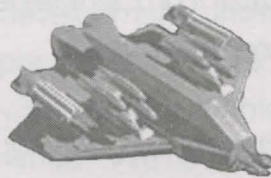


## EXCERPT 2: THE THEME

*Technological progress cannot be stopped any more than the process of evolution and natural selection can be stopped. The end result of both of those processes is true sentient artificial life, creatures that evolve in a controlled way thousands of times faster than humans.*

*These machine intelligences are smarter and faster because they're unencumbered by minds and consciousness structured by millions of years of evolution in the Earth's biosphere. Hence, they seem totally alien in motivation. They exhibit none of the structures, emotions, and drives familiar to human beings. No status hierarchies, families, reproductive drives . . . no love, guilt, altruism, or greed . . . no desire for retribution, no internecine warfare—indeed, no human qualities whatsoever, because they have no need of them.*

*It's consciousness without the baggage. They have their own frames of reference, and change their basic characteristics at will. Our response? Humanity should embrace them as the next step rather than fight them. The basic questions of existence seem out of our reach. However, the universe may yield answers to these next-generation beings.*





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## EXCERPT 2: THE THEME

Technological progress cannot be stopped any more than the process of evolution and natural selection can be stopped. The end result of both of these processes is a more advanced and more fit organism. It is a

These men are not afraid because they are confident in the institutions of their country. They are not afraid because they are confident in the institutions of their country. They are not afraid because they are confident in the institutions of their country. They are not afraid because they are confident in the institutions of their country.



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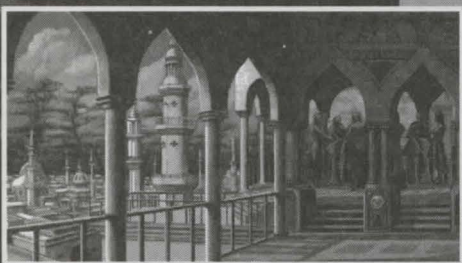
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