

Package Management

Initial Brief

Incoming Transmission

Source Identifier: Robust and Optimal Mainframe # Unquiet Journey

Destination Identifier: TE3-Firebrand#Her Glorious Command#Starlight Ebbing#Muse IX#Unquiet Journey#*

Subject: Troubleshooters Sought

Message Begins

The Various aboard the *Unquiet Journey* and/or Fleet 18 more broadly would appreciate the assistance of skilled troubleshooters. The problem is technological and/or biological in nature, and concerns the operation of our Various Forge. Little else is currently understood; skills in investigation, engineering, and/or combat would be of use.

Please assemble at the residential accommodation block aboard *Unquiet Journey* and ask for Optimal and/or Robust Mainframe.

Message Ends

Characters

- [Manifold Ghosts](#) - Phil
- [Delicate Harmony](#) - Mike

Summary

- The party take a shuttle to the *Unquiet Journey*, only to find the ship in total lockdown.
- Squeezing through a vent to bypass the locked bulkhead, they meet Robust Mainframe and Optimal Mainframe. They explain that what started as an increasing number of isolated faults has, since putting out their call for help, rapidly escalated into widespread faults across the ship. In particular, the forging machines have been seriously malfunctioning, and the Captain has put the whole ship on lockdown in an attempt to contain whatever the problem is. The one sliver of hope is that the increased number of faults has made a point of origin clear: a storage area in the maintenance section of the ship.
- Using an access card provided by the Mainframes to get through bulkheads, the party make their way through the forging rooms and the malfunctioning machines within. It quickly becomes apparent that an infestation of Mytenean Cave Slugs is the culprit - these have been getting into the machines and damaging them from the inside.
- In one of the rooms, a large number of slugs have got into the augmentation chambers of one of the machines, which churns out an endless number of slugs with Various augmentations until the party destroy the machine.
- Banging from the other side of this room's bulkhead prompts the party to cautiously open it, and a large creature shambles through. It appears to be a large conglomeration of slug

biomass, though is not hostile to the party. After defeating the heavily augmented granddaddy cave slug that was chasing it, the party inspect the creature and realise it is a Various who was inside an augmentation machine when slugs infested it, with the result that many slugs have been grafted onto it. The party attempt to help the creature by giving it slugs to harvest, but conclude that helping this person is beyond their ability.

- Delicate Harmony attempts to repair the destroyed forging machine as part of the attempt to help, but fails catastrophically - reducing the machine to dust and then inhaling a large amount of the dust.
- The party arrive at the storage room at the centre of the problems. Hundreds of crates are stored here, containing supplies delivered to the *Unquiet Journey*. Both Manifold Ghosts and Delicate Harmony interface with the computer terminal here, which records the supply deliveries as well as hooks into other systems on the ship. Between them they learn that a large proportion of the supplies are sourced from Mytene, and almost all deliveries from Mytene are routed through the Mytene Primary Spaceport. Those crates, upon inspection, contain mini cave slugs; crates that did not pass through the Spaceport do not.
- While most supplies are commonly-known consumables, the party are intrigued by a substance simply labelled 'The Extract'. Examining a crate containing it, they find it to be some kind of esoteric and highly effective bonding agent that is a crucial component of all Various forging. Manifold Ghost accidentally sticks their fingers together with it, but is able to carefully undo some of the damage with only moderate pain. Both Various pocket a container of Extract.
- Comparing the information learned to their existing considerations about how to complete the Mytenean Various Forge, Manifold Ghosts concludes that while the Extract is one piece of the puzzle solved, the big remaining question is what the core component of a Various Forge is that ties the whole thing together. The computer indicates where this could be found onboard the *Unquiet Journey*. The party choose to head there in order to check it has not been infested by slugs, and hopefully to understand more about what it is.
- The journey to the core indicates that the security surrounding it is watertight. The party meet with the Mainframe Twins and Captain Reassuring Heresy nearby, who confirm that the core has not suffered. The party explain their findings so far - in the process the Extract that they have pilfered is confiscated. The *Unquiet Journey* crew make it clear that no-one has ever been inside the core, nor does anyone know what it actually is - this thing dates from The Last Interstellar War. However, the Captain is able to provide Manifold Ghosts with the names of the four core components that the ship systems list.
- The crew impress upon the party that they need to deal with whatever the source of the slugs is - once new slugs stop arriving, the crew can deal with the existing infestation themselves. But without supplies from Mytene, the *Unquiet Journey* will not be able to function. The party make their way back to their shuttle.
- Unfortunately, their shuttle has a number of augmented slugs on the outside. Manifold Ghosts tinkers with a spacesuit to improve their natural ability to be in space - this only partially succeeds, so they ultimately choose to just wear a space suit. In the ensuing fight against the augmented slugs, one of the slugs is flung out into space. As it leaves ship heart range, the party observe that the augmented parts of the slug start to decay and fall off the slug - seeming to indicate that despite the slugs receiving Various augments, this alone does not seem to have made the slugs into Various. Or at least, not enough to make their augments resistant against the decay.
- With the slugs cleared, the party take the shuttle to Mytene Primary Spaceport. Leaving the shuttle, they are surrounded by panicked security forces, who have heard that the *Unquiet Journey* is under serious lockdown but not the cause. After tense negotiations and repeated medical scans for disease, decay, zombification, and more, the party are allowed to proceed to the station's postal centre.

- The postal centre is staffed by a single overworked and stressed postmaster - Sympathetic Pat, a black and white Vyixian - who has a long queue of customers and little time or patience for the party's insistence that they have a slug problem. The party can't figure out a way past the security door into the post processing rooms, but eventually the door is opened from the other side, and a small child emerges. Manifold Ghosts takes the opportunity to hold open the door and talk to the child, quickly discovering that they are the postmaster's child, their name is Box, and they are *absolutely obsessed* with slugs.
- Box takes Manifold Ghosts to see their slug collection. This turns out to be a supply closet that is absolutely stuffed with hundreds of mini and midi cave slugs. Box wants to share their obsession with everyone, and so has been secretly stashing the slugs in all the post passing through the station!
- Manifold Ghosts takes Box pack to Sympathetic Pat to finally prove that they have a slug infestation. While Box is distracted being scolded by Pat outside, Ghosts and Harmony take a flamethrower to the supply closet, and incinerate the slug farm. Box is absolutely, unconsolably distraught by this, being left with only a single slug in a party hat.

Aftermath

- With their deliveries from Mytene no longer infested, the crew of the *Unquiet Journey* are able to eradicate the remainder of their slug infestation over the course of the next week. Manifold Ghosts asks Forever Depth to put out a message to other ships that have received deliveries from Mytene Primary Spaceport recently to warn them of the potential for slugs.
- Manifold Ghosts continues fiddling with the spacesuit they previously tinkered with, and manages to stabilise the rebreather component.
- Manifold Ghosts starts looking for clues to the four components of the Forge Core that they learnt the names of. In return for their help with the slug infestation as well as past actions, the Captain Reassuring Heresy and the Mainframe Siblings permit Ghosts (under heavy supervision) temporary access to the computer terminal outside the *Unquiet Journey's* Forge Core to hunt for further leads. A painstaking search yields some potential lines of investigation which Ghosts is able to follow up.
- Instead of switching out any of their Various Augments, Ghosts uses their forge time to repair the hand they gunked up with The Extract.
- Delicate Harmony successfully persuades Captain Reassuring Heresy to provide the canister of The Extract that Harmony previously attempted to liberate in lieu of other payment.
- Delicate Harmony considers their earlier harvesting and subsequent disastrous tinkering of one of the augmentation machines.
 - With some tweaks in the right places, they can certainly see a way to keep the large quantity of dust they inhaled present in their body permanently (rather than letting it filter out naturally), although however they can think to spin it, this will only cement the disastrous consequences (OC: it is not possible to use MkII to parlay a failed tinkering into anything beneficial).
 - Putting the tinkering to one side and focusing purely on the harvesting however, Harmony can see a way to synthesise what components they did manage to harvest successfully to gain some of the augmentation machine's ability to understand what is what augmenting.
 - They eye The Extract and consider involving it, but think back to Manifold Ghost's initial experiments with it and conclude that it would probably only make things worse.
 - Having successfully achieved what they were aiming for via Synthesis alone, Harmony proceeds to MkII the dust inhalation anyway, because why not.

Consequences

The World

Knowledge about Various Forges and Various

The following would already have been known IC by all Various (and any non-Variou who had visited a Various Forge or otherwise had serious interest in the Various), but was not OC knowledge until this mission:

- No-one in the Keter Borderlands has complete knowledge of how to construct a Various Forge from scratch. (Or at least no-one has come forward as having that knowledge.)
- The augmentation machines in Various Forges are constructed from a mixture of mechanical and biological components - metal and plastic alongside flesh and bone. However, the machines themselves are not Various.
- The bio-mechanical nature of the augmentation machines is generally assumed to be a key part of what makes the Various 'work', and what makes them different from simple cybernetics. Although like most such things the reasons why are not well understood and are simply taken as rote knowledge.

The following is not widely known IC, but is known to this party and to anyone else who has ever done the experiment themselves:

- Sapience appears to be a pre-requisite for being Various. Grafting Various augmentations to a non-sapient creature will grant the creature use of those augmentations, but will not be decay-proof.

The following is not widely known IC, but is known to the highest-ranking crew of the *Unquiet Journey* and is now known to this party:

- A functioning Various Forge consists of:
 - Forge Core - special individual components required to bring the whole forge together, though exactly what most of these are is unknown
 - 'Sacrifice' - ???
 - 'THiNK' - ???
 - 'MedPod' - this might be a kind of highly advanced medical restoration chamber only afforded by the wealthy and powerful; if any exist in the Keter System there are unlikely to be many
 - 'Terraforming Residue' - ???
 - Forge Tech - by mass these are the vast majority of what is in a forge, and the part that users of the forge would see and be familiar with
 - Augmentation Machines - assorted biomechanical machines that build and install Various augmentations
 - Forge Consumables - materials used in the forging process
 - Mundane consumables such as oil, distilled water, polymers, etc
 - 'The Extract' - an esoteric liquid compound that is some manner of bonding agent used in the installation of all Various augmentations; the *Unquiet Journey* forge uses around 10 litres per day

Slug Infestations

- Any world or ship that has received postal shipments from Mytene in recent weeks has most likely also received Mytenean Mini Cave Slugs in their deliveries. (Strictly speaking this is only deliveries that have gone through Mytene Primary Spaceport - this is the vast majority of off-world post from Mytene, however bespoke couriers and other means of delivery also exist.)
- The infestation is unlikely to be problematic unless the destination has received an especially large quantity of deliveries in this time.
- The majority of locations have been proactively made aware of the potential for infestation, so would at least be aware of it.
- The *Unquiet Journey* has entirely cleared their slug infestation.
- Whether cave slugs feature in other locations on future missions is left to GM discretion as to whether this is fun. The problem will likely deal with itself in a few weeks without further intervention, so no further action is required.

All Characters

- +3 Clout with *Unquiet Journey* (N.B. no option for 'any faction' as both characters are immediately spending all of this, see below!)

Manifold Ghosts

- -4 Clout with *Unquiet Journey* in exchange for assistance with research.
- In addition to the information under *Knowledge about Various Forges and Various*, you also discover the following:
 - The term 'THiNK' does not appear in any contemporary records in the Keter System (that you can find). From careful probing of the *Unquiet Journey's* systems, you strongly suspect that the term dates from the time the *Unquiet Journey's* Various Forge was first established, and whatever this is might go by a different name now. As best you can tell, the technology in question appears to be some kind of supercomputer platform optimised for detailed simulation at scale. Even if you had schematics (which you don't), this seems far too hefty and expensive a thing to fabricate anew while the Keter System is locked off from the rest of the galaxy - but perhaps you can find a modern-day equivalent somewhere in-system?
 - From what limited publicly available information you're able to uncover about the process of terraforming planets and moons, it certainly has a large number of by-products. To a greater or lesser extent, these by-products are the whole point: the variety of substances needed for a world to support life, not to mention the creation of life itself. It stands to reason that 'Terraforming Residue' is something more specific, and presumably not commonly found. Whatever it is, the limited information you can glean about the terraforming process implies that there's a good chance concentrations would be highest closest to a terraforming seed.
 - You can't find any further detail on precisely what services a 'MedPod' provides, but it seems reasonable to assume that one could be found on one of The Fleet's ships that has a medbay. Alternatively, the data you previously obtained from Micro Management about the Ace-Altarian War appears to indicate that that Ace's Organisation recently deployed a MedPod to the rear lines of the conflict - apparently sent directly from Ace's High herself.
 - Despite your best efforts, you are unable to determine anything at all about what the component labelled 'Sacrifice' might be.

- Robust Mainframe provides you with coordinates for the facility on Mytene where 'The Extract' is sourced from. Optimal Mainframe kindly but firmly reminds you that the facility's current output is being entirely consumed by *Unquiet Journey's* Forge, and even that is sometimes insufficient to meet the Forge's needs. They do not object to you contacting the facility, but would certainly be displeased if you interrupted the *Unquiet Journey's* supply.
- MkII Integrated Rebreather:
 - Provides up to 2 hours of breathable air for you alone.
 - Inform the GM of this when it is relevant - it should allow you to mitigate negative effects caused by lack of breathable air.
- Your hand is back to how it was, however you cannot use the *Modularity* Various class feature this Downtime.

Delicate Harmony

- -3 Clout with *Unquiet Journey* in exchange for The Extract.
- A 1 litre canister of 'The Extract'. The substance inside is viscous and almost impossibly sticky, and will immediately bond almost anything it touches to almost anything else it touches in a way that almost intermingles them together. The canister itself is made of a laminated synthetic material that The Extract appears not to bond to - or at least in no more than a thin, inert layer.
 - An Augmentation Machine within a Various Forge is the only known means for utilises this substance safely and effectively.
 - Attempting to use the substance 'raw' to bond one item to another will stick them together, but will likely only have negative effects. This kind of DIY bonding on creatures is not enough to make them Various, nor can it be used as a substitute for proper Various augmentation!
- Synthesis: Subject Analysis
 - This ability costs 1XP to purchase.
 - You have synthesised the ability of a Forge Augmentation Machine to have some understanding of the subject it is about to augment.
 - Once per encounter out of combat, you may ask a single yes/no question to the GM, and receive for each of the creatures you HARVESTed in that encounter the answer from the perspective of that creature. N.B. this is the *same* question applied to all monsters, not a different question for each monster.
- MkII: Grave Dust
 - You have inhaled a significant quantity of dust from a thoroughly destroyed Forge Augmentation Machine, and then modified your respiratory system such that the dust cannot leave your body.
 - Whenever you HARVEST a creature, you immediately take EFFECT: whatever-this-creature-was-last-feeling. This roleplaying effect is overwhelming, and likely to distract you as you forget your surroundings for a moment.
 - Optional hard mode: in addition to the above EFFECT, also take any negative mechanical effects (BURN, ZAP, etc) that the target was under in the 10 seconds prior to their demise, if you know what these were. (Take these at the duration the target would take them, not your duration.)
 - N.B. This is a purely negative effect. It is not possible to use this ability to gain any tangible benefit - in particular you cannot use this to learn any useful information that the target was thinking about. However, this ability is a viable target for future tinkering, which could be used to turn this into a positive.

[mission](#), [manifold ghosts](#), [delicate harmony](#)

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