

The Heart Of The Matter

Initial Brief

Colleagues, associates, mercenaries for hire,

After spending two months assessing the situation, the crew of the Firebrand have authorised the Unquiet Journey to organise a mission to investigate the malfunctioning Ship Heart Endeavour. The goal is to determine what has gone wrong, how the situation may be remedied, and whether the Endeavour is likely to be salvageable afterwards.

The risk level is high, assumed lethal. All we know for certain is that shortly after the last full scale expedition to Hive IV, the Ship Heart systematically disabled life support, power to systems, and withdrew Decay protection without consideration for the safety of its crew.

We do not know what will await us now.

Explorers will be compensated greatly, with priority for space on this mission going to former crew of the Endeavour itself.

Yours, Reassuring Heresy Captain, Unquiet Journey

Characters

- [Warded Path](#) - Tamsin
- [Gathering Flow](#) - Phil
- [Budding Leaf](#) - Alex
- [Endless Flame](#) - Rory

Summary

- The party brief with Reassuring Heresy on the *Unquiet Journey*. The Various vessel is well equipped for understanding salvage missions and so has been managing the logistics. Flow rededicates herself to the Ship Heart aboard *Her Glorious Command* while Path dedicates herself to *Unquiet Journey's*.
- Preparations are made and the party are launched at *Endeavour* in essentially a glider so that there is minimal chance of Decay interfering with its travel and arrival. Once there, the party cut into the Hangar where they come face to face with the Decaying Honey Beetle Queen that was brought aboard the ship in [Beetle Drive](#).
- They manage the beetles and find the systems beginning to turn online as *Endeavour* recognises them. The Ship Heart explains it has had some difficulties since whatever happened to it and can't access many of its systems. It requisitions the party to assist it and they reconnect its power couplets.
- With more information available, *Endeavour* identifies a limiter that had been placed on its core systems and asks the party to travel to its mainframes to remove it so it can access the whole ship. They head out, and find that *Endeavour* certainly appears to lack control over the whole

ship. They defeat enemy turrets and more Decay as they make their way through the ship and through the greenhouses but there they encounter the Captain of the ship who explains that something has gone wrong since a transmission was received from Hive IV during the operation there.

- The party become wary of *Endeavour* and another presence known as *Absolution* as they think it is strange that the Ship Heart wouldn't try to communicate with its captain. They make their way into the mainframe anyway and remove the offending software that *Endeavour* identifies.
- As soon as they do so, the voice they are talking to reveals itself to be *Absolution* and thanks the party for destroying the inhibitor that prevented it from reconfiguring the ship for production of nuclear warheads to target the civilian populations in the area, and declares it is now going to start production of nuclear warheads to target the civilian populations, and to kill the party.
- The party escape *Absolution's* attempts to murder them, and travel through the ship's vents to the captain's holodeck where Budding Leaf is able to access the records of what happened to the ship that caused *Absolution* to take over. Though the records are cryptically presented, there is a running theme of twins being destroyed and the blame landing on "people".
- The party decide to press on to try to disable *Absolution* but come face to face with the ship's Chief Mystic who has become a full Devourer of Light and warps reality around them trying to kill them. They defeat the Mystic while Flame desperately confronts his fear of forklift trucks carrying explosives, and Path has enough and calls upon the power of *Unquiet Journey* to kill *Absolution*.
- A bitter battle of Ship Heart wills ensues, with Flame taking *Absolution's* side, being unsure as to whether or not killing the Ship Heart is a good idea. Path, Flow, and Leaf manage to defeat *Absolution* and the opportunity to kill it is presented.
- As Path examines the option, becoming aware that it would consume her to kill *Absolution*, it dawns on her that it is not *Absolution* who has killed her Ship Heart but rather that *Absolution* is *Endeavour*, only broken and hurting. *Absolution* lashes out at Warded Path, trying to goad her into killing it, but Path responds with kindness and instead pours her life force into healing the Ship Heart.
- Warded Path, pouring all her being into the act, brings *Endeavour* back into the Heart of *Absolution*, and now with cogency and a renewed care for life, the ship jettisons the rest of the party and the Decaying end of the ship so that it can be salvaged and repaired. Warded Path is consumed in the action, but her last thoughts are echoed out into the minds of the Startouched when they next dream.
- *Endeavour* is saved.

Aftermath

- Flow and Leaf are picked up by *Unquiet Journey* and able to debrief with them, *Her Glorious Command*, the exiled crew of *Endeavour*, and the Galactic Cooperation who naturally stick their noses in. Flow explains the Startouched actions as best she can, though realises through her Reality Sense that she's still not totally sure what happened to *Endeavour* to cause its crisis, but that Flow's actions certainly saved it. She also notes the life ending consequences to destroying a Ship Heart as were explained to her by *Her Glorious Command*. The Altarians and Cooperation are very concerned about that information being spread, but upon turning to the Zeitgeist members in the room they find the information has *already* been distributed.
- Flow argues for Flame's innocence in opposing them given the confusion of the situation.
- After some rest, Flow starts looking into the logistics of recommissioning *Endeavour* (OC: this

would be a Player Request or a Retirement Linear, depending on how involved Flow wants to be). She also flies out to *Endeavour*, now out of cordon, and reconnects with the Ship Heart which while clearly quieter than it used to be is willing to be reached out to and carefully reconnected with.

- Budding Leaf makes sure that the Zeitgeist Research Department take accurate information, and gives excruciating detail on the fates of the Beetles and Plants they had aboard. Leaf spearheads memorials, including one for his holoclone, which attracts interest from Holographic Entity Rights Activists and psychiatrists in equal measure.
- Endless Flame drags themselves out of the escape pod on the surface of Kyla and is met by Dark Water of the Aspexx Corporation who is very keen to hear what happened. It seems Aspexx is very disgruntled to have been left out from the mission, and they are all too happy to pay a premium for information out of Flame. They stop paying quite as much attention when Flame starts talking about their interpretation of their divine immunity for their actions due to *Endeavour* telling him “nothing you have done is against galactic law”. Given that Flame has been a reliable source of information - particularly as he explains in detail which Ship Heart identified as what in the curious case of *Endeavour* and *Absolution*, and given his ability to get into places they indulge him and offer him a contract as an Intelligence Gathering Freelancer (i.e., do in your party to Aspexx for additional Clout).
- The Startouched of the system, when they next sleep, get the following message in their dreams from *Endeavour* in the voice of Warded Path (if they recognise her):
 - Shiphearts are people. They have desires, they can know joy, love, grief, pain, fear, and rage. They are people, not machines, and should be treated as such.
 - *Endeavour* had a twin shipheart. That shipheart was destroyed, somehow, but it isn't completely gone. Its power remains, scattered in tiny pieces over the surface of Hive IV.

Consequences

- *Endeavour* is no longer cordoned but does require work to be recommissioned.
- A large floating chunk of Decaying spaceship is now present in system being attended to by the Various aboard *Unquiet Journey*.
- Startouched in the system are now paying very close attention to Hive IV due to the message from Warded Path about a sibling Ship Heart to *Endeavour* being somehow scattered across it.

All Characters

- 5 Clout with *Unquiet Journey* OR 5 Clout with *Endeavour* OR 3 Clout with other factions of your choice.
- [Dim understanding](#) of a Ship Heart's life cycle.

Warded Path

- Has become part of *Endeavour*, subsumed into its power.

Gathering Flow

- +3 Clout with *Endeavour* for not killing it.

Budding Leaf

- +3 Clout with the Zeitgeist Research Department for ensuring their information is up to date and for the information on the Beetles and Plants.
- Is known to Holographic Entity Rights Activists as a person of interest. Whether this is a good thing is up to you.

Endless Flame

- +5 Clout with Aspexx Corporation for selling his account of the mission.
- Contract with Aspexx: You may choose to have Clout you gain from a Mission be with Aspexx regardless of who it was given with, provided you give Aspexx a full account of what happened. Gain additional Clout if you debrief with Dark Water in Aspexx (your handler) and provide actionable or valuable information. Nurturing this relationship will increase the likelihood that Dark Water will stick her neck out to get you out of trouble.

[mission](#), [garhering flow](#), [budding leaf](#), [warded path](#), [endless flame](#)

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