UNDER THE ASTEROID

AN INTRODUCTORY SCENARIO FOR ORBITAL 2100 AND OTHER 2D6 SF RPGS

ZOZER

UNDER THE ASTEROID

This is a short introductory scenario that allows the Game Master and players to become familiar with both the setting and the rules of **Orbital 2100** and **Cepheus Universal**. It is an 'open adventure', meaning that a situation is presented and the player characters have free reign to react to it and explore their options. There is no on-going narrative or cast of involved NPCs, each with their own agenda and goals. This approach is intended to minimise the Game Master's workload, and hand the reins over to the players instead.

ADVENTURE PREMISE

Asteroid 3404 Sokar is a stony S-type asteroid approximately 3 kilometres in length that travels around the Sun within Earth's orbit. It has secretly been used as a remote surveillance base by the Lunar Republic, and fitted with a missile defence system. Oblivious to this fact, two belt miners from Earth have arrived to fit thrusters to the asteroid in order to bring it into co-orbital location with Earth making it easier to transfer mined ores to Earth. Job done, they activated the thrusters and prepared to lift-off for the trip back to Earth. Unfortunately, the missile defence system activated, damaging the miner's spacecraft and forcing it to crash back on to the asteroid. Both miners are trapped within their wrecked lander, now crippled and on the surface. The attack has destabilized the boosters, which are now propelling Sokar in Earth's direction for a near miss or perhaps even a strike.

A team of spacers needs to get to Sokar quickly, realign the boosters to safely miss Earth, and rescue any survivors from the mining ship. The trip to the asteroid will take 3 days and 6 hours. The asteroid will strike Earth in 4 days. Any delay could be catastrophic.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

The player characters are pregenerated and a character sheet for each one accompanies this scenario. They are a freshly qualified space crew that have recently completed their training with the Frontier Foundation, and are now in orbit at the Foundation's Carl Sagan spin-station. The team is called to an emergency briefing. The team is tasked with intercepting the asteroid themselves and assessing the situation. If the miners are in peril, assist or rescue them; if the miners require technical assistance, then the PCs must help them get communications and life support established. The player characters are in command of the *Equinox*, a small 100-ton Horizon class survey craft, which will take three and a-half days to intercept the asteroid.

Mission Briefing

You are all recent graduates of the Frontier Foundation's spaceflight programme, a newly qualified crew looking for your first employer. And you are currently at the Carl Sagan spin station, up in in Earth orbit.

Out of the blue, you get your first mission – it's an emergency. Traffic control has lost contact with a pair of miners tasked with the job of moving an asteroid closer to Earth. The asteroid is definitely moving, but it's on a near collision course with Earth – this might potentially be a catastrophe. The asteroid was supposed to be relocated along Earth's orbit, making it easier to ferry any ore extracted from it, back to Earth. Something has obviously gone terribly wrong.

Your team is available, and the Frontier Foundation has a space vehicle fuelled and ready-to-go. Success will mean that your team can take the pick of any space-based job you like in future! Failure means a close call or even possible impact with Earth.

Briefing Notes

The asteroid is 3404 Sokar, one of the Aten group of near earth asteroids that orbits the Sun within the Earth's orbit. It is 3 km in length and is a stony S-class rock. Your spacecraft will take 3 days 8 hours to reach the asteroid if you leave within the hour.

Your vehicle for this mission is a small Frontier Foundation spacecraft, the Equinox, which carries a lander for touching down on small moons (or asteroids).

Mission Goals

1 – Reach the Remote Asteroid Boost Unit (RABU) on the surface of the rock, and reprogram it for a 2 minute burn (which will push it off its current trajectory).

2 – Locate the miners' spacecraft if possible, and rescue or retrieve them for return to Earth. The spacecraft might be on the asteroid, or perhaps left behind as the asteroid began its course change.

THE FLIGHT TO SOKAR

The crew board the Equinox through the forward hatch and prepare the craft for flight. Within 30 minutes, the craft has undocked from the spin station and has begun its acceleration towards the asteroid Sokar. The trip should take 3 days and 8 hours. Tell the players that although the craft has cold sleep cryoberths for long journeys, they are not needed for a three-day flight. Instead the crew members can (1) carry out a trajectory change (Navigation roll), (2) try to contact the miners, (3) attempt to locate Sokar using the Horizon's telescope and (4) determine cause of a cabin pressure drop. Players must carry out (1) during their acceleration burn, but (2) and (3) can be done in any order and as many times as they like. (4) should be imposed on day 2.

1 Navigation Skill Roll to Hasten Arrival Time
The GM can illustrate the Cepheus Universal task procedure by having the navigator make an Average Navigation roll to attempt to shave off some time to the destination. Roll 8+ plus 2 for the navigator's Navigation-2 skill level. Any excess points are called Effect and can be used to help interpret the quality of the success. In this case we could use the Effect to reduce the travel time by the number of points rolled OVER the target number of 8, in hours).

2 Use Comms Skill to Acquire Radio Contact With Miners
Make a Difficult Comms roll to pick up a radio signal. If successful, then static is detected but the static has an interference pattern, perhaps blotting out the miners' transmissions. Time taken 1 hour.

3 Use Pilot Skill Roll to Locate Sokar With Telescope
Make an Average Pilot roll to align the sensors and get a visual on the asteroid. If successful, the asteroid comes into view and it seems to be intact and as expected. Time taken 20 mins. Further rolls (taking 4 hours each) will reveal the shiny speck of light that must be the miners' spacecraft, and another roll might even locate the small Remote Asteroid Boost Unit (RABU), now quiet and no longer firing. They are approximately 1 km apart from one another, across the asteroid's rocky and undulating surface. A third success if someone continues to look, will spot another man-made object between those two locations. Mission control will have no idea what it is, suggesting, perhaps an old space probe. [GM: In fact it is the Lunar Republic's missile launch facility]

4 Troubleshoot Cabin Pressure Drop
On day two tell the players that there is a continuing drop in cabin pressure; this is an opportunity to use the Malfunction rules, and to offer the players three alternate paths of diagnosis. Use the procedure outlined on page 174 of the **Orbital 2100** book. Cabin Pressure is the seventh entry from the top. Describe to the players how they detect it, via warning alarm, or flashing light, then follow the Procedure, describing the problem, then the potential consequence, the one hour deadline and then give them their three checklist items: Filters, Pump or Leak. Do the players wish to split up to diagnose each one, or team up to work together on just one? Remember that the first attempt takes 5 mins, the second 10 mins and the third 20 mins. In addition the repair itself will take 20 minutes.

The same procedure will be used for any space suit malfunctions, later, on the asteroid's surface.

ARRIVAL AT SOKAR

The Equinox has arrived at the asteroid and needs to park at its north pole, above the axis of its spin. At this location, the crew's lander can descend to the surface, matching the asteroid's spin and landing without being too affected by the constant spin of this 3 km tumbling rock. This means, however, an overland trek to both the miner's spacecraft and (before they leave) the Remote Asteroid Boost Unit (RABU). If they hadn't detected the RABU and the miners' spacecraft – they can do so before they park, but this takes up 20 minutes of observation.

At this late stage they will NOT be able to detect the missile launcher.

TIME LIMIT!

The PCs were told that the Sokar might hit Earth in 4 days (subtract the time taken by the Equinox to reach the rock). If the Navigation roll was failed, this will be 16 hours. But the RABU rockets must fire at a minimum of 6 hours before that (leaving only 10 hours to complete the mission once the Equinox has parked above the north-pole). The clock is ticking down. Everything the PCs do from now on takes time; the GM should keep a running record.

Even more urgent is oxygen. Each suit only has 6 hours-worth of air.

A day is 1½ hours, followed by a 1½ hour night.

The lander takes 5 minutes to board, switch on and undock, and 5 minutes to touch down at the north pole and switch-off.

IN THE LANDER

The Spider lander holds up to 4 people. It has a cargo compartment that could be used as an emergency passenger cabin for the two miners. Each PC wears a standard Frontier Foundation Semi-Hard Suit (Armour Value 4, 6 hours air). That includes drinking water, 5m-range flashlight, and 10km-range radio and TV camera communications (used between PCs as well as for contact with Earth, using the Equinox as a relay). The following equipment can be loaded on board the lander, but when the PCs set off across the asteroid they can each only take ONE of these; which do they take, and who carries what? They may need a bit of extra oxygen…

- Winch with folding legs and 30m of high strength cable.
- Portable zero-G rated tool kit
- Full medical response kit
- Gyrojet rifle
- Hand-held plasma welder
- Portable solar-power charger
- Emergency two-person shelter with airlock
- Spare space-suit folded and packed
- Folding Spade
- Refill Oxygen Tank (6 hours – can be shared out to refill suit air supply)

SURFACE SITES

MOVING ACROSS THE SURFACE

There is some surface gravity, but not much. Characters can move across the surface of the asteroid in long bounds, but must be careful not to bound too far or else risk launching themselves up and into space … They can move roughly 1 km in one hour in this way. The following obstacles can be used to add a challenge on each leg of their trek to a surface site:

Crater: A large crater is ahead, it will add 15 minutes to the journey going around it, but there is some danger in climbing down and up its sides to continue straight ahead without incurring a time penalty. Each PC makes a Routine (+2) Vacc Suit roll or falls, suffering 1D6 damage (subtract 4 for the suits Armour Value). Anyone who falls must roll 1D6, and on a 1 they suffer a suit malfunction. Roll for the malfunction randomly. A suit malfunction (**Orbital 2100** page 176) may eat up more time.

Dust Pool: A PC blunders into a dust pool and sinks up to their chest. Getting out is difficult … make a Dex 10+ roll. If they brought the rope and winch they can set it up and get them out with a roll of 8+. Each failed roll at the Dust Pool costs 5 minutes. Otherwise they must improvise a way to get the stuck PC out.

Suit Malfunction: Roll a random suit malfunction for one PC, or HINT at a malfunction, and let the player worry about it, then hit them with the actual malfunction later on.

CAN WE USE THE LANDER TO REACH RABU?
No. You will have to walk/ bounce. Imagine a spinning basketball, landing gently on any part of that spinning ball is impossible except at the poles. Even if you matched the speed of the spin, the surface beneath you is also rapidly turning away from you. On the Moon this isn't a problem, but this asteroid is too small and rotating far too quickly.

MINERS' CRASH SITE
A **Spider lander** belonging to the miners, sits **on its side**, with crumpled landing legs and smashed antenna. The hull seems to be intact, but the side hatch cannot be opened because it is partially on the underside resting on the regolith. The top hatch at the nose (used for docking) is buried just under the regolith where it ploughed into the asteroid when it crashed.

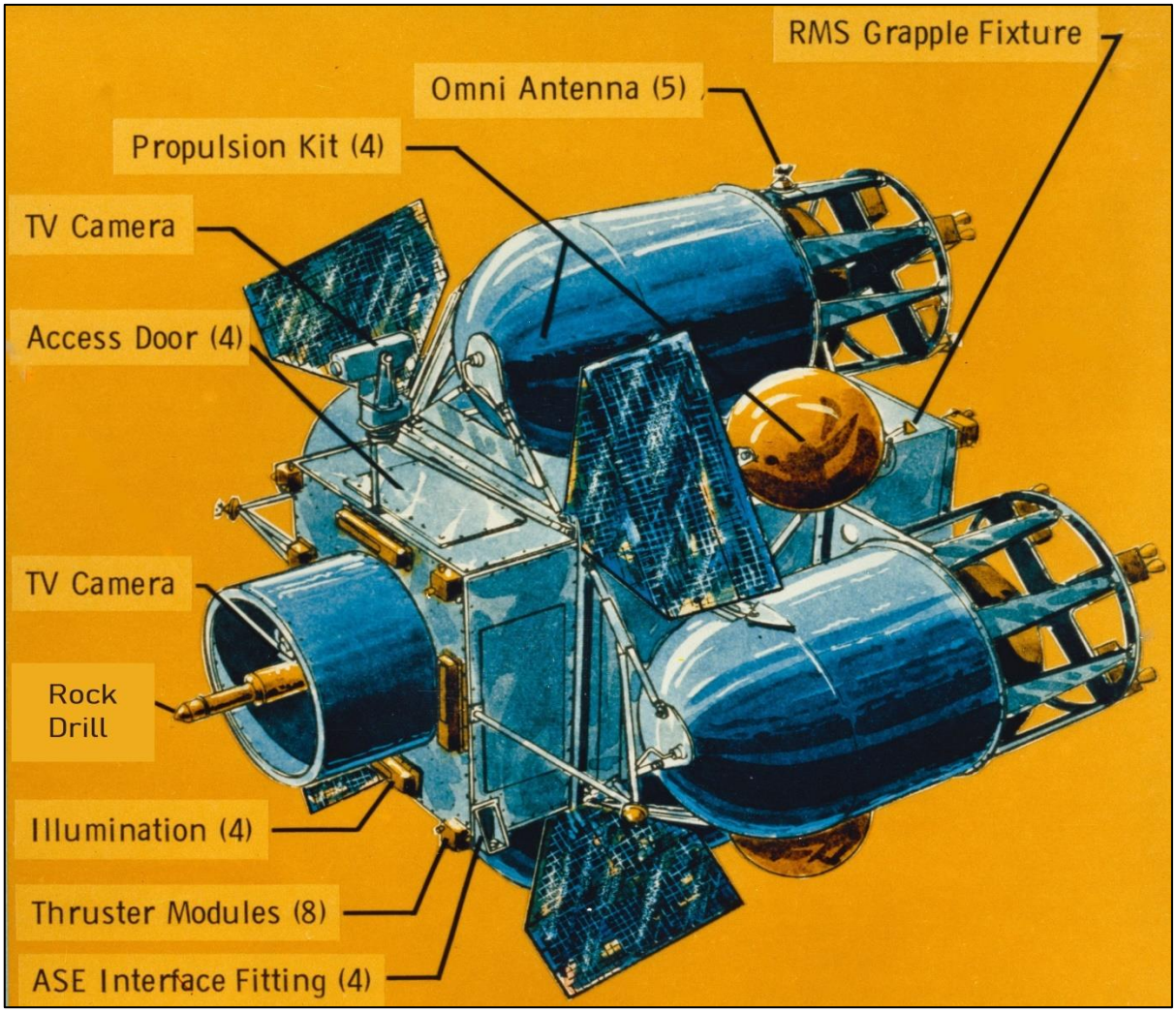
Through the **window** they can see **two space suited figures** in the semi-darkness, sprawled across the acceleration couches, without restraints. One is helmeted, the other has no helmet and looks dead or unconscious. It seems the fuel cells are still operating, there is power and probably air. **There is no airlock** on this model of lander, the hatch would open directly into the cabin if could be opened at all.

The unhelmeted miner is **Moller, and he is alive** and sleeping. He has given up hope of rescue and is waiting for the air to run out in a few days. Banging hard on the hull will wake him. He will be overjoyed to see them, but cannot open the hatch. With a spade, **the top hatch can be dug out** in ten minutes, or the PCs can use their hands and take 20 minutes (roll a 1D6, on a 1 a PC doing this will puncture their gauntlet and will need someone else to try and seal the suit breach). Or, the winch and rope could be used to **roll the lander over** to expose the side hatch. Make an 8+ Mechanical roll. This takes 10 minutes per attempt.

Moller will put on his helmet before he opens the hatch. He is injured, his friend Greely is unfortunately dead. Moller recounts how he attempted to dock the lander to his mining spacecraft, when it was hit by a missile. He lost control and the lander crashed into Sokar. He has no idea where the missile came from. He brings a Spare 6hr Air Tank with him to share if needed.

Moller (injured)	344776	Age 33	Hesitant, Cautious
Vacc Suit-1, Mining-1, Computer-1, Pilot-1			

REMOTE ASTEROID BOOST UNIT (RABU)
The Remote Asteroid Boost unit is a collection of fuel tanks, rocket motors and bracing structure, that has been **anchored to the asteroid** rock with a rock drill. It is roughly the size of a modern civilian single-car domestic automobile garage. Its rocket vents point directly up toward space. At ground level is a **control unit**, behind an access door. The door is locked, but this could be defeated using the gyrojet **rifle** (instant), the **plasma welder** or the **tool kit**. Once open, the controls must be set for a 30 second burn with a delay long enough to allow the PCs to get back to the Equinox. The delay must be at least 6 hours before the asteroid is due to pass by or strike the Earth or it might be too late.



Gyrojet Rifle: This will blow the lock on the access door. If the PCs don't take precautions regarding a ricochet, then one person nearby will take 2D6 damage from flying debris. This will cause a suit breach if it exceeds the suit's 4 points of armour protection.

Plasma Welder: Make an 6+ Mechanical roll to burn through the steel door or lock, taking 5 minutes. This can be repeated until successful. The plasma welder only has 20 minutes of fuel.

Tool Kit: Make an 8+ Mechanical roll to drill through the lock, or grind off the hinges, taking 5 minutes. This can be repeated until successful.

Reprogram the Controls: Anyone can attempt this 10 minute task; make a 5+ Computer roll to reset the motors to burn for 2 minutes for a prearranged time. If a '2' is rolled, the automatic system is damaged and the rockets must be activated manually at the time of firing – probably a suicide mission for the crewmember who volunteers for that job. The blast wave itself from the lit rocket motors will cause 6D6 damage to anyone within 20m. Are we all set? Let's get out of here!

MYSTERY SITE

Exactly halfway between the RABU and the Miners' Crash Site is the Lunar Republic's Missile Emplacement, a semi-buried **metal bunker** with four **silo hatches** in the roof. There is also an **instrument cluster** on the roof, as well as a **locked door** in the front, reached via a semi-sunken ramp cut through the regolith. The PCs heading between the two sites cannot fail to spot it (even if they somehow figure out how to fly to the RABU site in their lander).

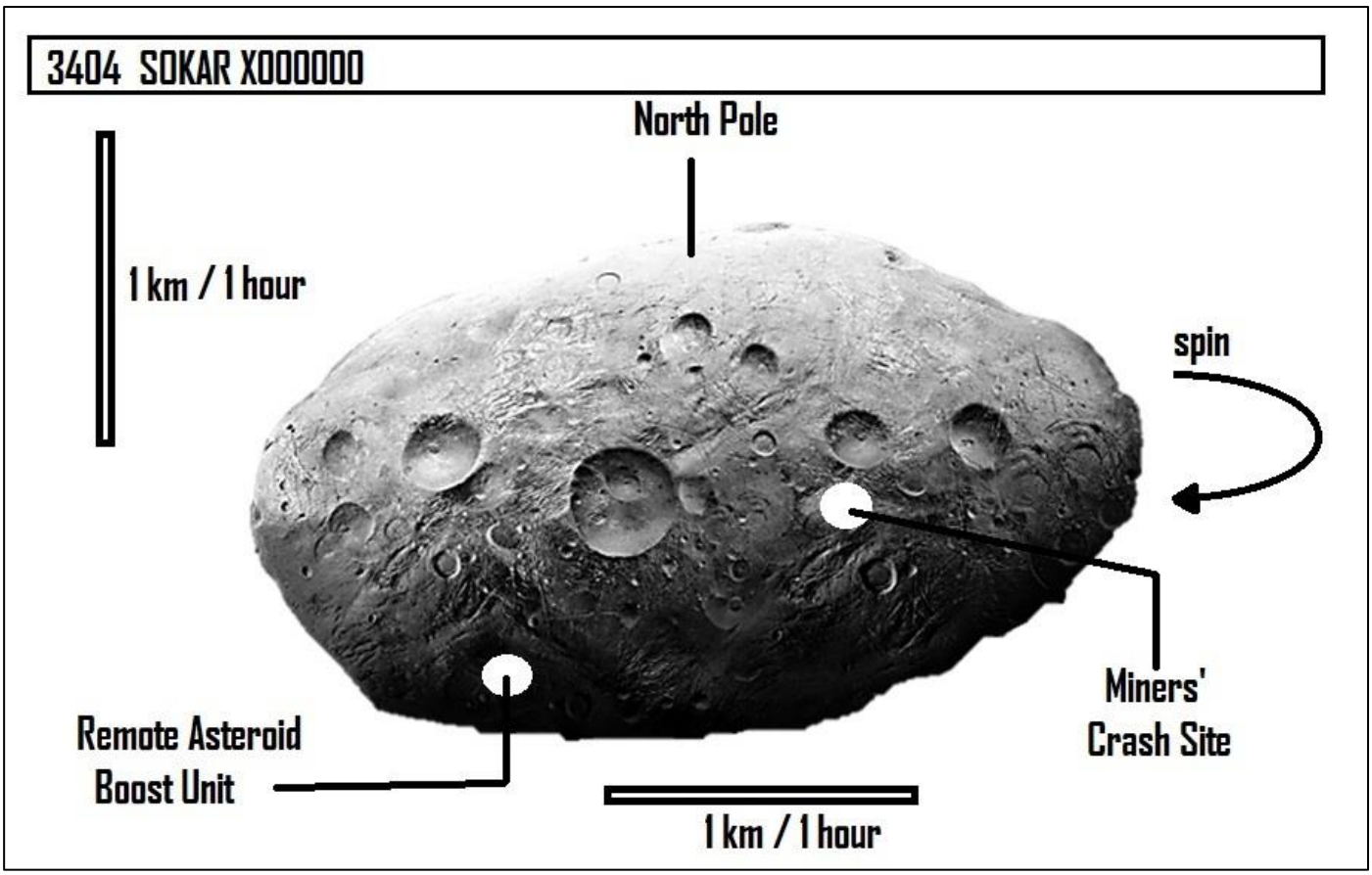
This Lunar Republic Space Force silo is top secret and designed to protect itself. Currently, however, it is not properly co-ordinating with its tracking equipment, and is only targeting unauthorised vehicles **taking off** from the asteroid. If the PCs take off in their lander, they will become a target for this missile system and will be killed. The PCs must get inside this silo and de-activate the missile system. The door is locked – use one of the three methods for getting into the RABU's access door (see that section). Inside the small missile room are three missiles on their launch cradles with closed silo doors above them. The missing missile destroyed the miners' spacecraft and damaged their lander, forcing it to crash land on the asteroid.

The missiles are propelled with solid rockets, and do not need refuelling. **Ladders** climb each missile cradle to the silo hatches. There is an **electrical bay** controlling the communications and surveillance equipment, there is also a **missile control unit**. It can be accessed easily, but will require some computer knowledge to reprogram.

To reprogram and disable, make a 10+ Computer roll, with each attempt taking 5 minutes. On a natural roll of '2' the missiles detect the tampering and all begin a one minute countdown to launch, inflicting 3D6 damage to anyone still inside the bunker. All three missiles will be tracked towards the Equinox and destroy it. The PCs could still get away on the lander, they are closer to Earth now – but it will only serve as a lifeboat until an Earth rescue craft can pick them up. No Computer skill available? Try **locking the silo doors**, **blocking the cradle** mechanisms or using the welder to **cut away key supports** in the cradle, causing it to collapse when the missiles begin to move. Any or all of those could work.

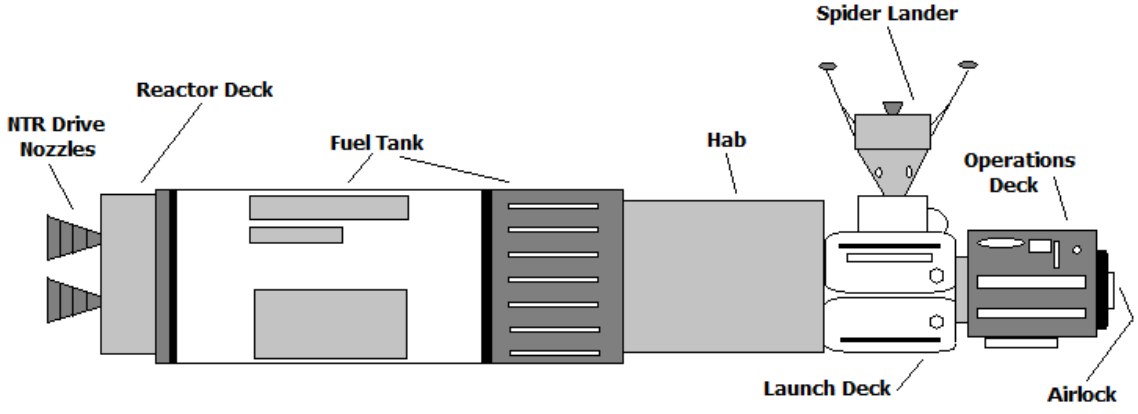
GETTING BACK TO THE LANDER

Repeat the journey back to the lander, but there will be only the most minimal interference, if any at all. Let the PCs make a dash, just try not to fall over too often! The lander takes 5 minutes to board, switch on and lift-off, and 3 minutes to dock with the Equinox, just above. The Equinox will take another five minutes to re-orientate and make a rocket burn to get off of their Earth-ward trajectory. Hopefully the asteroid is heading off its Earth-smashing trajectory, and now the Equinox needs to get off that trajectory too. Following that are a short few hours trip back to the Carl Sagan station. Did they reset the RABU? Was Earth saved? Or did Sokar graze the atmosphere and create a tremendous light show, destroying buildings and other infrastructure over a 500 km area below it, and killing upwards of 10,000 people in the process?



THE EQUINOX

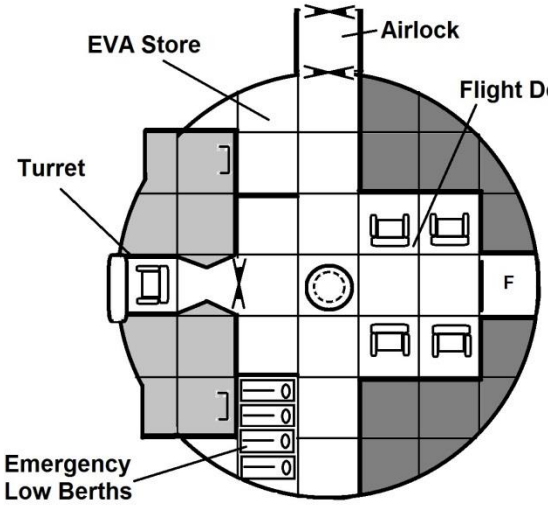
The Equinox is a Horizon-class survey craft. It has no spin habitats so the interior is a zero-G environment, much like the modern ISS. Crewmembers pull themselves along or kick-off of a wall, in order to move around the interior of the craft. The Equinox is laid out as a cylinder divided into six main sections. The aft part of the vehicle is three decks in height, housing the **(6) reactor and rocket motors**, **(5) fuel pumps** and **(4) fuel tanks**. Two radiator panels are mounted on the hull here, spreading out like rectangular wings. Forward of this is the **(3) habitation compartment**, covered with reflective Mylar. Forward of the hab section are more two compartments, first **(2)** the **launch deck** with a docked Spider lander, science probes and cargo space; then at the forward end of the spacecraft, **(1)** the **operations deck**. Here the flight deck is located, along with two airlocks, cryoberths and a double turret; it forms the nerve centre of the vehicle.



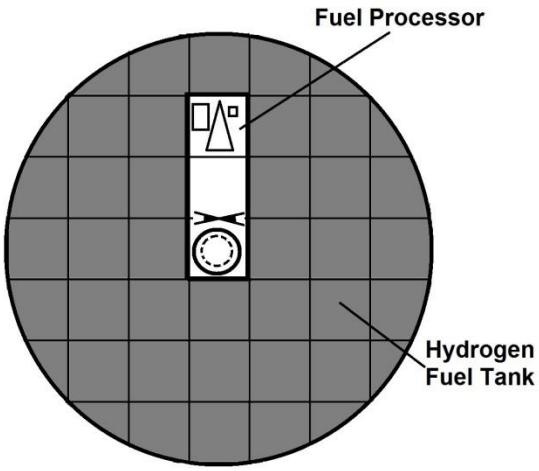
Reiner Gama DRV Horizon

1.5m square

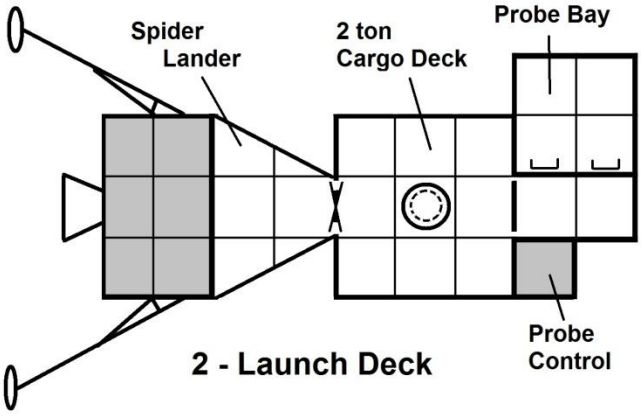
F Fresher



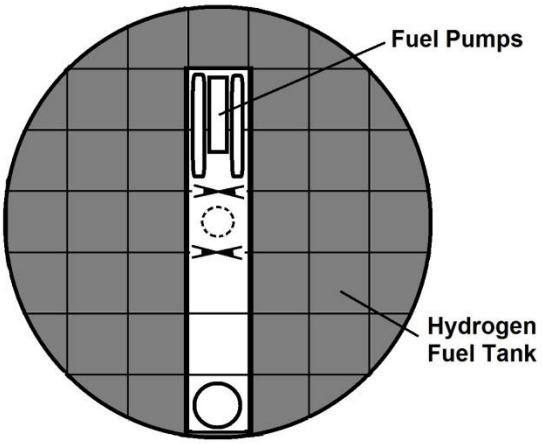
1 - Operations Deck



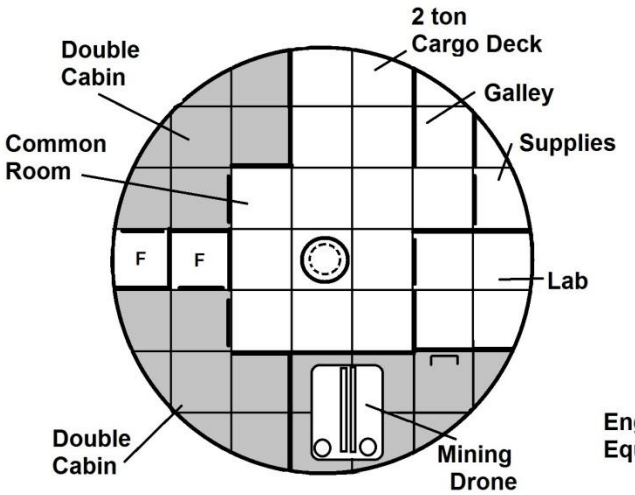
4 - Processor Crawlway



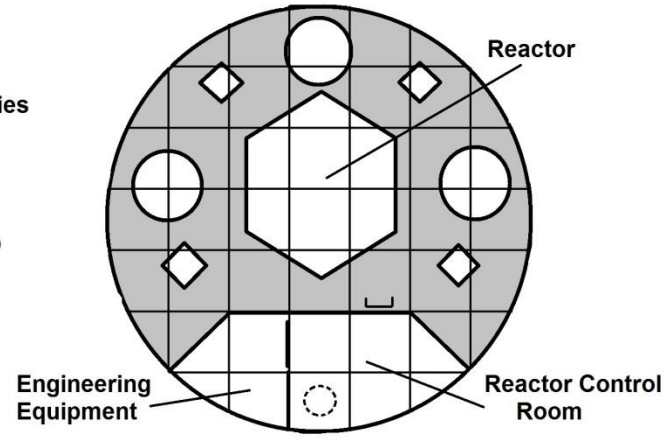
2 - Launch Deck



5 - Fuel Pump Crawlway



3 - Hab Deck



6 - Reactor Deck

CREW OF THE EQUINOX

Captain Dmitri Solokov (command-pilot) 697A86 Age 42
Vacc Suit-1, Pilot-2, Computer-3, Engineering-1, Leader-1, Comms-1

Solokov trained as a commercial airline pilot before retraining as a spacer. He took to orbit along with his wife, but in an accident in Mars orbit, his wife was killed. Dmitri is talkative and confident, but can lapse into sullen moods. Always unshaven, he wears a baseball cap.

Executive Officer Raymond Friedman (pilot) 758789 Age 38
Vacc Suit-2, Pilot-1, Comms-2, Navigation-2, Computer-1, Electronics-2

Friedman is a thin, blonde spacer with a goatee beard. Raymond is light-hearted and easy-going, a real optimist.

Flight Officer Mark Martinez (science officer) 68A7B5 Age 34
Vacc Suit-2, Investigate-1, Medical-2, Mechanical-1, Comms-2

Mark is the crew's science officer, and he also pilots the lander when required. He is always keen to get his hands dirty, land, dig down and recover samples. His geology training was conducted at the University of Adrienne. Mark is flippant and terse, and he does not waste words. He has Latin features, short, wiry black hair and tattoos on his forearms and chest.

Flight Officer Marina Shu (flight engineer) 658894 Age 30
Vacc Suit-1, Pilot 1, Admin-1, Mechanical-3

Marina is stubborn, her brown hair is pulled severely back into a pony-tail and sleeves are perpetually rolled up.

Written by Paul Elliott / Zozer Games/ 2025

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