

THE DYSON DILEMMA

A WARP21 ADVENTURE

A woman with blonde hair and blue eyes, wearing a clear space helmet and an orange space suit, is shown in a close-up. She is looking slightly to the right. The background is a dark space with stars and a large, glowing orange and blue structure, possibly a space station or planet, with a sense of motion or speed. The overall style is a vibrant, painterly illustration.

SAVE NEXUS STATION
FROM TOTAL DESTRUCTION!

BACKGROUND

Although much of Nexus Station is still mysterious, over the last 15 years the occupants have uncovered its alien power source and learned how to operate it. This Dyson Sphere, or simply “The Sphere,” as the Earthlings call it, is a superstructure surrounding Sol, the star at the center of the solar system. Using energy harnessed directly from Sol, power is delivered via a tight microwave beam from The Sphere directly to Nexus Station. The Sphere is operated and maintained by a small crew. Any disruption to the flow of power from The Sphere would mean certain death for the inhabitants of Nexus Station.

THE ADVENTURE

This adventure takes Players from Nexus Station to Sphere Control, the facility that manages operations for The Sphere, where they will have to overcome a mutant plant that threatens to disrupt the power supply and plunge Nexus Station into darkness. The plant, originally cultivated in a biolab on Sphere Control, is using its proximity to Sol to supercharge its growth. Unfortunately, the plant has become insatiable, and it has rapidly overtaken the biolab, growing ever closer to destroying Sphere Control entirely.

Player Hook

For the last few days, Nexus Station has been experiencing rolling brownouts, tossing the station into chaos: robots stopping dead in their tracks, powered doors trapping occupants, and pneumatic elevators leaving commuters stranded.

Three days ago, Nexus Station received a distress signal from Sphere Control. Since then, power output from The Sphere has

dropped steadily. The Players have been called to the office of David Jiminez, one of the station’s chief executives.

Note on Encounters

To help familiarize the Dealer with WARP21, this adventure challenges Players with pre-written Tasks and Contests that the Dealer can choose to use, modify, or skip. Ultimately, the Dealer determines when a Player is attempting to do something that is too challenging or important to simply resolve narratively, which would prompt them to run an Encounter.

As a rule of thumb, Contests are better suited to multi-step actions that take more time, with each hand being described as a single step in the action. Tasks are faster, which can keep the narrative pace up for simpler actions. The Dealer determines which of the two would be best for each Encounter. Below are non-exhaustive lists for both.

Tasks

- Picking a lock or operating a simple device
- Convincing someone to do you a small favor or a small lie
- Jumping over an obstacle or other feat of athleticism

Contests

- Hacking a computer or repairing a machine
- Encrypting or decoding a message
- A protracted blaster battle

1.0 Trapped in the Elevator

The Players board an elevator headed to Jiminez's office for their meeting with him.

Your group is ushered into a pneumatic elevator that will take you up to the top of Nexus Station. As the glass chamber begins to rise, you see the vast sprawl of Nexus Station. The glint of distant stars reflects off of its chrome plated exterior. The monumental crystal dome that encapsulates the entire top half of the station provides a dream-like view of the endless expanse of space beyond.

From here, you can see The Sphere; the massive Dyson Sphere around Sol, the star at the center of the system; a feat of engineering far beyond comprehension for the Earthlings that now live on Nexus.

As you ascend higher, you see the twinkling lights of the colony, the many small shops, laboratories, cafeterias, and domiciles that seem half in one world, and half in another.

The lift shudders, the lights flickering for a moment, before turning off. The elevator is out of order.

The elevator stops half a floor away from the Player's final destination, Jiminez's office. To escape this predicament, the Players could climb out of the elevator through a trapdoor on the ceiling or redirect power to the elevator by hacking into the elevator's control panel. Ask the Players what ideas they have and try to encourage them to come up with a creative solution. Make sure to ask the Players if their Superlatives or Backgrounds are relevant to the Task, as each can provide a +1 bonus to the result.

[Task] Find a Way to Jiminez's Office

If the result is 11+

Depending on what method the Players use, they are easily able to make it to Jiminez's office without any problems.

If the result is 10

The Players make it to Jiminez's office, but a complication occurs. For example, the elevator breaks and needs repairs, the Players are late and Jiminez treats them with scrutiny, or they simply show up disheveled and looking unprepared for the job ahead.

If the result is 9 or below

The Player's method is unsuccessful. Encourage another Player to try something and perform the Task again. If the Players run out of ideas, the elevator might start working again after some time passes.

1.1 Jiminez's Office

The glass and steel decor of this fashionably decorated lobby seem almost out of place in the monolithic rock structure of Nexus Station. A well-dressed assistant, Garfield, stands from his desk and ushers the Players into Jiminez's lavishly decorated office. Guided to comfortable chairs around a scale model of Nexus Station, Mr. Jiminez stands to greet them.

"You have all been called here to solve a problem of utmost importance and urgency. Perhaps you have noticed the occasional power flickers over the past few days? It seems that something has happened to the crew working on The Sphere."

Garfield pours liquid from a crystal decanter on Jiminez's desk and hands

it to the executive, who takes a sip before continuing.

“We’ve lost contact with them and we’re steadily receiving less power. Engineering has silently shut down the collider experiments to conserve power but at this rate we’ll be on emergency power by the end of the week. We looked through your files, you seem like the best crew for the job. A shuttle will be ready for you in the next hour.”

If the Players express concern or disinterest in solving the problem, Jiminez tries his best to appeal to their sense of community, or he can offer them incentives such as job promotions or extra funds for personal projects. He reiterates that Nexus Station is doomed if they refuse. Once they’ve agreed and are done speaking with Jiminez, let the Players use the hour they have to introduce themselves and acquire anything they think might be useful during the mission.

1.2 Shuttle to The Sphere

In the shuttle bay you find a concerned looking Jiminez. As you approach, Garfield appears from around a corner and hands the executive a topped-off rocks glass.

“Good news kids, one of you has been promoted to captain.” Jiminez takes a deep swig of his drink and walks out the door you came in. Garfield smiles contritely.

“What Mr. Jiminez means to say is that it appears there is a... sudden shortage of pilots, given the potential need to evacuate the station. One of you will have to drive the shuttle to The Sphere.”

To lighten the mood, Garfield challenges all of the Players to a game of cards, perhaps with an ulterior motive. He proposes that instead of playing for money, they play for secrets. For each hand of the Contest, resolve it as outlined in the first table, depending on how many Players win or lose each hand. The overall Contest outcomes are described, by winner, in the table after.

[Contest – Average] A Game of Cards and Secrets

Hand Result	Outcome
Players win half or more of the hands	Garfield reveals one secret that he has learned during his time as Jiminez’s assistant. If you want to explore threads beyond the scope of this adventure, this is a good place to plant them. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• He refills Jiminez’s whiskey decanter about three times a day• Two of the chief executives (he won’t say which) have had love-children with the same woman.• One of the senior directors went missing mysteriously a month ago, and Garfield hasn’t seen an investigation launched.
Players lose more than half of the hands	Each Player that lost the hand divulges a personal secret. Encourage players to use this as an opportunity to expound on their backstories.

Contest Winner	Outcome
Players	Garfield tells the Players that he believes that an experiment has been left on, despite the power rationing. He believes that it's some kind of teleportation device so that key members of the station can escape.
Dealer	Garfield cracks a smile, "Maybe we can play again sometime." He's called back to Jiminez's office and leaves.

1.3 Asteroid Belt

As you leave Nexus Station, The Sphere looms ever more impressive through the glass-topped shuttle roof. The structure is impossibly large, surrounding Sol like a giant net. Less than a quarter of the star's light escapes through the holes in the device, but it is still bright enough to burn corneas. The main obstacle between your group and the Sphere Control is a dense asteroid belt known to frustrate shuttle pilots on routine supply missions.

In order to get through the asteroid belt to Sphere Control, the Players will have to work together to win a Contest. Players should describe what job they have on the shuttle, such as pilot or engineer.

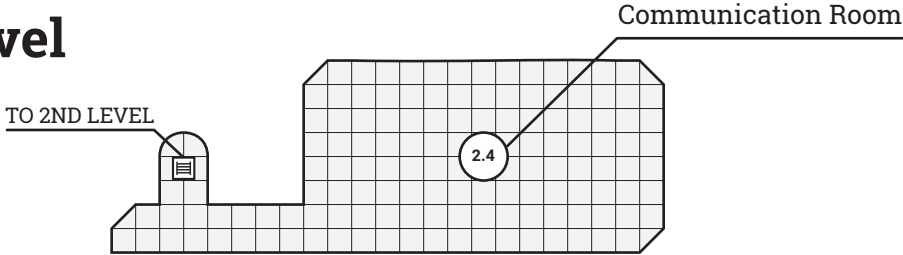
[Contest – Average] Navigate the Asteroid Belt to The Sphere

Hand Result	Outcome
Players win half or more of the hands	The Players successfully pilot the shuttle through a portion of their journey. Ask a Player who won their hand to describe what their character did to keep them flying while dodging the asteroids.
Players lose more than half of the hands	The shuttle hits an asteroid or veers off in the wrong direction. For example: the communications array is knocked clean off of the ship, one of the Players who lost the hand is briefly knocked unconscious, or the pilot takes them far off course and the journey takes longer than expected.

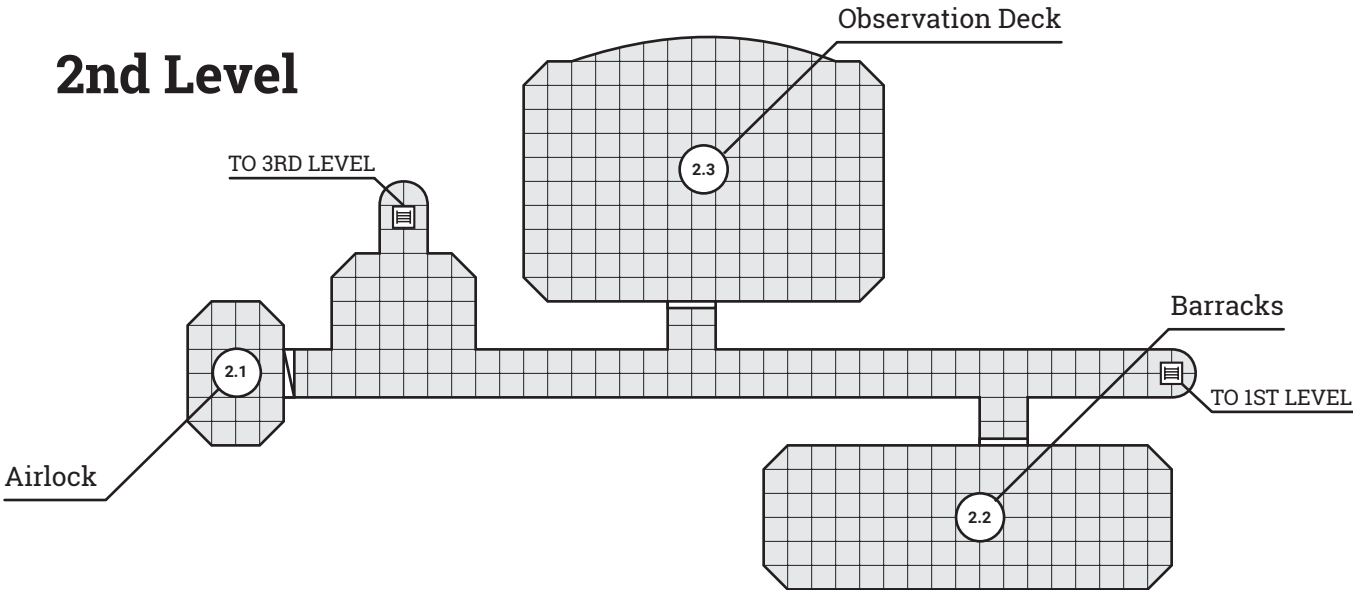
Contest Winner	Outcome
Players	The Players navigate the asteroid belt and dock successfully at Sphere Control.
Dealer	After a difficult journey, the Players crash into the docking port, barely making it to The Sphere. The players could perform a Task to attempt to repair the docking port, otherwise, the shuttle will float off into space after the Players disembark.

MAP OF SPHERE CONTROL

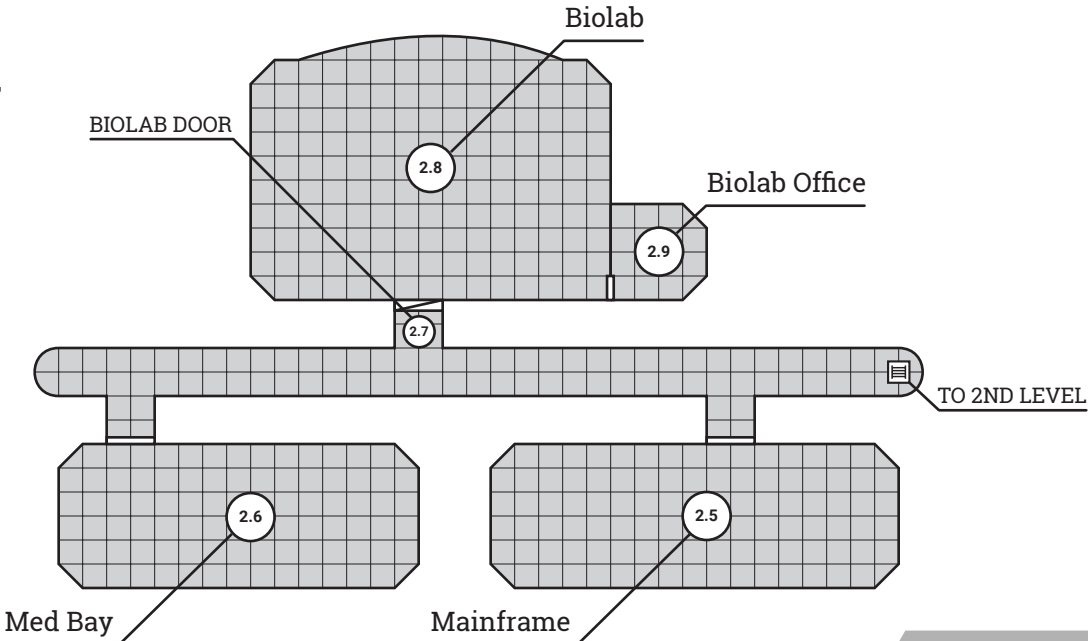
3rd Level



2nd Level



1st Level



2.0 Sphere Control

The shuttle drives forward toward Sphere Control, the glass tinting itself darker as you approach the radiant light of Sol. The sun is stippled with countless tiny, minorred panels that harness its energy and relay it back to Nexus Station. Sphere Control is miniscule by comparison, a small, three tiered structure covered in white, ceramic plating that glows softly in the extreme heat. As you draw closer, the facility blocks the bright light, and you can spot the docking bay on the second level.

2.1 Airlock

Stepping off of the shuttle, you enter a small, cylindrical room with another door on the opposite side. With a loud hiss the airlock depressurizes, a blast of breathable air rushing around you. The interior door lifts, revealing a long hallway. On one side, windows with tinted glass give you a view at the immense superstructure of The Sphere. The other side is lined with lockers, each with a pane of clear acrylic that shows that space suits hang neatly inside.

A bright red diode strobes at the end of the hall while track lights softly illuminate the floor. Sphere Control appears intact but empty. You become aware of the tiny hairs standing up on the back of your neck—clearly something has gone wrong.

On a nearby wall you find a map of the station. Noting it, you continue deeper into the facility, the red flashing light casting sinister black shadows behind you as you go.

The Players start at the primary entrance and exit of The Sphere. The long hallway is dark and difficult to navigate. Players should consult the map and decide where they want to investigate first.

2.2 Barracks

Six beds and footlockers fill this room. Tidy beds look undisturbed and some half empty glasses still sit on night stands. The barracks is deserted but it seems that all of the crews' belongings are still here.

The Players can choose to perform a Task to search this room or move on. If a Player fails this task, another attempt can be made by a Player who has not tried yet.

[Task] Search the Room

If the result is 11+

The Player finds a **Handy Atomic Doodad that Glows Faintly**.

If the result is 10

The Player finds the item, but not easily. For example, the device is stuck in a locker or is trapped under a heavy object that takes more time than expected to obtain. Alternatively, the device is unstable and will only work once or twice before exploding in the user's hand.

If the result is 9 or below

The Player wastes time looking around the room but finds nothing.

Handy Atomic Doodad that Glows Faintly

If used during a Task, this item allows a Player to Explode when they draw a 2.

2.3 Observation Deck

As you enter this room, you're greeted by a beautiful view of Sol through a panoramic window. The window is impressively able to shield your eyes from the light. This room appears to currently be used as a rec room. A long table in the center has some playing cards scattered across it.

2.4 Communication Room

At the top of the ladder a hallway opens into a large room full of flashing panels. A man lies collapsed in a small pile of blankets on the floor. The area is littered with food wrappers and other trash.

The Players find Chui Boro, Sphere Control's administrator, who has fallen unconscious near one of the panels. If the Players attempt to rouse him, he awakens. Boro claims that he doesn't know what is going on, just that everyone else was in the biolab on Level 1 when something went wrong and he's been trying for days to get a distress signal out.

Boro is on-edge from being alone in this room for almost three days. A Player may perform a Task to gather information from him or to try and convince him to help them.

[Task] Persuade Boro to Help

If the result is 11+

In addition to providing the information for the other outcomes, Boro offers to guide the Players through the station.

If the result is 10

Boro provides this additional information, however he refuses to leave the communication room.

- Three days ago, he lost contact with the biolab. The security officer went to

investigate and he hasn't heard from her since. He believes that the rest of the crew is trapped inside the lab.

- The door to the biolab is locked and he doesn't know how to unlock it.
- Most of the major functions of The Sphere are controlled by the mainframe. Boro does not know how to operate it.

If the result is 9 or below

Boro does not provide any additional information and refuses to cooperate with the Players.

If Boro accompanies the party, they gain access to this ability

Chui Boro | Not-Your-Average Administrator

Once per Contest after hands have been dealt but not played, any Player can discard their hand and be dealt another one.

The communication room handles messages between Sphere Control and Nexus Station and reports how efficiently the Sphere is relaying power. Most of The Sphere's functions and processes are automated by the mainframe on level 1.

The radio in the communication room is not currently functional, but a Player can perform a Task to repair it.

[Task] Repair the Radio

If the result is 11+

"Come in Nexus—do you read me?"

The Players can have an unrestricted conversation with Nexus Station about their current status.

If the result is 10

The connection is choppy, the Players can only send a short message to the Nexus.

If the result is 9 or below

The radio cannot be repaired by the Player.

2.5 Mainframe

This room is filled with a massive, vacuum tube powered computer. A stack of punch cards for computer inputs sit on a desk and a roll of paper tape feeds out of the computer confirming Sphere Control's current status. Blinking lights on the computer indicate that the mainframe is automatically reducing power to the facility.

The mutated plants are feeding off Sphere Control's power supply. In order to keep them contained within the biolab, the mainframe has throttled the power output to Nexus Station and reduced power to non-critical functions in the facility. To further contain the plant menace, the biolab door has been locked using the mainframe. Any number of Players may attempt a Contest to try and unlock the door from this room.

[Contest – Simple] Hack the Mainframe to Open the Biolab Door

Hand Result	Outcome
Players win half or more of the hands	The Players make some progress hacking into the mainframe. A Player who won the hand should describe what happened. Are they a computer genius, or was it just dumb luck?
Players lose more than half of the hands	Diodes flare as the mainframe prints ERROR! ERROR! ERROR! over and over again.

Contest Winner	Outcome
Players	A loud click echoes from down the hall, accompanied by a whoosh of airflow into the biolab.
Dealer	After many failed attempts to hack the mainframe, it locks itself down for an hour. The Players will have to either wait or come up with another way into the biolab.

Once the Players have resolved the issue in the biolab, they can return this room and perform a Task to reset the mainframe and return full power to Sphere Control and Nexus.

[Task] Reset the Power at Sphere Control

If the result is 11+

The Player successfully resets the mainframe. The lights turn back on and Nexus is saved.

If the result is 10

The Player resets the mainframe, but not as easily as they would have hoped. The mainframe might need to be serviced or reset again by someone else.

If the result is 9 or below

The mainframe is not reset. Jiminez will be disappointed.

If the Players choose, they can try to bypass the mainframe's safety measures with a Contest to turn the power back on before eliminating the plants.

[Contest – Complex] Bypass the Mainframe's Safety Power Control

Hand Result	Outcome
Players win half or more of the hands	The power slowly begins to return to the station, but the mainframe's blinking lights still indicate there is a problem in Sphere Control. Ask the Players to explain how they proceed to override the mainframe's safety control.
Players lose more than half of the hands	The mainframe frantically prints out warning messages in an attempt to stop the Players such as the ones below. (The Players may choose to stop a Contest at any time) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WARNING! IMMINENT DANGER TO THE SPHERE • ERROR! CODE ORANGE STILL IN EFFECT

Contest Winner	Outcome
Players	Power returns to Sphere Control. The lights turn back on as a crash can be heard from the biolab door as the plant, once locked inside, surges out of control. Those inside the biolab may no longer be safe, and facility may not have much time. This could complicate the final Contest of the adventure, or the Players may need to evacuate immediately. Nexus is in great danger.
Dealer	The mainframe's safety measures prove difficult to bypass. The mainframe locks itself down for an hour.

2.6 Med Bay

The door to this room is locked from the inside.

[Task] Pick the Lock on the Med Bay Door

If the result is 11+

The Player successfully unlocks the door.

If the result is 10

The Player successfully unlocks the door, albeit with difficulty. The Player breaks the tool they were using, a blaster shot fires out through the opening causing an injury, or the locking mechanism delivers an electrical shock to the Player.

If the result is 9 or below

The Player is unable to pick the lock and the door remains closed.

This room is lined with cabinets around a central exam table. Most of the cabinets are filled to the brim with bandages, gauze, and other medical supplies, but one has been torn open, the contents spilling out onto the floor next to a woman with a blaster resting on her knee. The weapon slides to the side after a moment, and the woman appears light-headed. "It's about time someone showed up."

Kim Eun Ae is Sphere Control's security officer who was sent to investigate the disturbance in the biolab after telling Boro to message Nexus Station for help. Kim was injured during the fight with the mutant plants, but she was able to limp to the mainframe and seal the biolab door before locking herself in the med bay. If asked, she knows that something went wrong with an experiment in the lab causing the plants to grow out of control and become violent. She doesn't know if any of the scientists survived.

Kim can instruct the Players how to access Sphere Control's transport ship, if the Players need to escape and the shuttle they arrived in is not an option.

Due to her injuries, Kim cannot leave the room safely and needs to rest. She's taken painkillers which would make it difficult for her to operate the mainframe herself, even if she could leave the room.

2.7 Biolab Door

This imposing steel and chrome door is pressurized. The windows across its top are obscured by dense plant growth that seem to be trying to press their way through.

The Biolab door is locked. Boro (See communication room) knows that the mainframe was used to lock the door, but he doesn't know how to unlock it himself.

2.8 Biolab

As you step into the lab, the first thing you notice is the blinding light that etches its brightness into your corneas. The room is sweltering, and as you raise your hand to block the light from your eyes, you start to see vines sprawling across every surface.

Chrome and crystal workbenches are dominated by dense, RED sinews that twist and knot around one-shining brass instruments. At the window you can see the unrestrained power of the sun through a frame of veiny, reddish foliage. Occasionally you hear a muffled whimper from somewhere in the vines.

On the right side of the room, you can see blackened and shriveled plants that appear to be cut away from the door from someone fighting their way inside. The vines have begun to grow across the door.

The biolab is used both for experimentation and food production. It has a wall-to-wall window facing Sol which the scientists use to perform experiments on plant growth factors. Their most recent experiment went awry and the window's safety shade was forced completely open—causing the plants to grow at an incredible rate and threatening to destroy Sphere Control.

Each Player that wants to safely cross the infested room to access the office must complete a Task,

[Task] Fend Off the Plant Menace to Access the Office

If the result is 11+

The Player deftly weaves across the infested lab, managing to avoid becoming entangled in the vines.

If the result is 10

In crossing the room, the Player trips or is grabbed by a vine, and in the process drops something they were carrying, sustains a minor injury, or disturbs the plant, making them more reactive.

If the result is 9 or below

The Player is unable to cross the room safely and is potentially caught by the vines. Another Task may be required by them to escape or another Player could attempt a rescue.

2.9 Biolab Office

The office is small and smells of sweat. As soon as you make it through the door, you find yourself at the business end of an improvised machete. A tall woman in a dirty lab coat relaxes once she realizes that it wasn't the plants bursting through the door. She lowers the machete. "Aren't you a little short for a space trooper?"

The woman is Doctor Barbara Roberts, the station's chief botanist. Roberts has been trapped inside the biolab for several days. She explains that the plants have grown out of control and have begun to aggressively dismantle everything in the biolab, and soon The Sphere itself. The mainframe's safety measures cut the power and Kim sealed the biolab door to keep the plants from escaping temporarily, but now that the door is unlocked, the plants will begin to move out into other areas of Sphere Control.

If saved by the Players, Roberts joins them in the final Contest and they gain access to the following ability.

Doctor Barbara Roberts | Dynamite Botanist

Once per Contest if a Player were to Bust, discard the last card they played and play one from the top of the deck.

3.0 The Plant Menace

In order to save Sphere Control and eradicate the plants, the Players will need to come up with a plan that should be

represented with a complex Contest that begins sometime after the biolab door is opened. During this Contest, a new consequence presents itself after each hand, shown in the table on the next page, regardless of the outcome of the hand. As usual, the Players should describe the steps that they take for their plan to come to fruition anytime half or more of them win a hand.

What Do We Do?

In this climactic Encounter, the Players should be encouraged to improvise and get creative with their plan to deal with the plants. Perhaps the Players lure the mutant plant into a cleverly laid trap, or they utilize an unusual but awesome weapon in the biolab that Roberts couldn't operate.



[Contest – Complex] Stop the Plants and Save the Scientists

Hand #	Consequence
1	The plant begins to draw extra power from Sphere Control in order to defend against their attacks.
2	Sphere Control's life support goes offline. If not provided power within 15 minutes, anyone not in a space suit will suffocate.
3	The plant begins to damage the hull of Sphere Control, making a small opening in the biolab to the vacuum of space. Anyone who lost this hand is pulled toward the opening.
4	If any players win this hand, ask them to describe how they successfully managed to seal the opening. Otherwise, the hole expands and sucks anyone in the room who is not secured to something into the vacuum of space. Players not wearing a space suit are removed from the Contest. The Dealer wins if no Players remain in the Contest.
5+	The plant continues to damage the hull, consequences 3 and 4 repeat until the Contest is concluded.

Contest Winner	Outcome
Players	The Player's plan is a success, ask them to describe how they achieve victory over the plant menace.
Dealer	The mutant plant is too powerful, and it overtakes The Sphere

3.1 Resolving the Conflict

If Sphere Control is destroyed by the plant menace

Alarms blare as the plants tear away at Sphere Control's hull, tearing protective shielding away bit-by-bit, accelerated by the vacuum of space. Laboratory equipment flies off into the void, the plants themselves too rooted in place to lose their grip. Anyone standing in the room is ripped out of the facility, and the biolab doors curl in as the whole station begins to shudder and collapse, hurled toward The Sphere and its own utter destruction.

Any surviving Players will have to escape as quickly as possible from the station. Sphere Control is effectively lost, and

Nexus Station will have to be evacuated immediately as the loss of their power source means that the station will quickly lose the ability to sustain human life. If the Players arrive back at Nexus Station, it might already be empty, but perhaps they can find their own way to safety.

If the Players defeat the plant menace

Alarms blare as the plant menace's central root system is struck down, causing it to wither and blacken, never to terrorize the inhabitants of Sphere Control ever again. As the survivors emerge from the chaos, they share a sigh of relief before getting to work repairing the facility and ensuring that Nexus Station gets the power they need to survive.

4.0

Returning to Nexus Station

If the Players successfully save Sphere Control, they may need to go to the Med Bay to heal any wounded Players or crew members that they save. The Players can return to the mainframe to switch the power back on.

Once everything on Sphere Control is stabilized, the Players can prepare to leave for Nexus Station. If their shuttle was lost, they can make use of the facility's transport or message Nexus Station to send a shuttle to retrieve them.

APPENDIX: GENERATING NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Occasionally, the Players will travel with non-player characters. Instead of generating an entire character sheet, these characters have a simplified design process.

Below is a list of Descriptors and their associated abilities that you can assign to NPCs. Pair these with a Profession in the following table, or make up a Profession of your own.

Descriptors provide helpful abilities that can be used by the Players in Contests, while Professions might grant a +1 bonus to the result of relevant Tasks.

NPC Descriptors	Ability
Dynamite	Once per Contest if a Player were to Bust, discard the last card they played and play one from the top of the deck.
Note-Your-Average	Once per Contest after hands have been dealt but not played, any Player can discard their hand and be dealt another one.
Smart-Alec	Once per Contest, swap two cards between the Player Cribbs.
Untrustworthy	The first time a Player gets WARP during a Contest, they are forced to discard the last card played and play one from the top of the deck.

NPC Professions		
Actor	Firefighter	Restaurateur
Administrator	Gardener	PhD
Baker	Henchman	Student
Courier	Mechanic	Teacher
Driver	Painter	Violinist

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