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Your Horoscope For: Capricorn

by Allen Thomas

This installment of *Your Horoscope For* presents a one- or two-night scenario for *Alien Wars*. The adventure is set during the early days of Operation Future Peace, when the United Earth Armed Forces invaded the Xenovore Empire to ensure that the ravenous and ravaging Xenovores never again threatened Humanity's existence. To run *Your Horoscope For: Capricorn*, you'll need copies of *Star Hero* and *Alien Wars* (although you might get by with a copy of *Terran Empire* and some elbow-grease – see the Sidebar, *During The Terran Empire*, for help).

ADVENTURE SPECS

Designed for six 150-point characters, built according to the guidelines on page 15 of *Hero System 5th Edition* for Standard Heroes, the adventure provides an excellent starting point for a new campaign, or jumping-off point for the next chapter in an ongoing campaign. To some extent it draws upon the *Das Boot* (*Alien Wars*, page 176) and *Slave Uprisings* (*Alien Wars*, page 179) campaigns, both of which have plot seeds you can use as ideas for subsequent adventures.

The adventure assumes the PCs are a part of the military at the start, and from there they find themselves assigned to crew a Kingfisher submersible P/T boat, so at least one needs TF: Human Small Military Ships (or Submarines at your discretion) and Combat Piloting. Since the PCs are quickly separated from the rest of the force, Skills like Mechanics, Navigation, and Survival (Arctic/Subarctic) will prove invaluable, and if necessary, gently “nudge” your PCs to take some of these.

Tasked with a mission considered of secondary importance, the force is a hastily thrown together military unit, crewed by a ragtag group of men assigned to it mainly because they weren't doing anything better and the brass hate idle hands. This provides the perfect excuse for PCs with diverse backgrounds to find themselves lumped together in a makeshift squad without its full complement of troops. A group of PCs with an intelligence officer, marine, mechanic, **company cook that's “good with knives,”** or the like is perfectly plausible – and a group with a wide variety of skills will quickly prove advantageous. (On the other hand, a homogenous group of PCs – all marines, all special forces, and so on – is just as plausible, so long as one of the PCs can pilot the P/T boat.)

Adventure Background

In the earliest days of the Human invasion, the forward elements of the Combined Fleet pushed as far into Xenovore territory as possible, moving quickly and leaving behind enemy holdings to spinward and coreward. To assess the potential threat these enemy positions posed to future supply lines, UE Navy commanders assigned small task forces called long range reconnaissance patrols (LRRPs) to reconnoiter the areas.

Their mission was to journey to the star systems, determine enemy numbers and emplacements, and above all, avoid engagements with Xenovore forces unless they possessed overwhelming force or another advantage that guaranteed victory. The primary goal of the LRRPs was simply to chart unknown space and provide information to commanders so they could determine a course of action. All other objectives were secondary.

The PCs' LRRP is officially called Task Force NF/24/7 (after the stargate coordinates showing the LRRP's direction), and unofficially called Task Force No Fun 24/7. It consists of two *Centauri*-class battleships, the *Fomalhaut* and *Procyon*; four *Antarctic*-class light cruisers, the *Strang*, *Miran*, *Africa*, and *Bavoroos*; and six *Asteroid*-class cargo ships, four carrying fuel, rations, and sundry other supplies, the other two serving as troop transports. Each transport carries a regiment of UE Army forces, and the PCs are billeted on one of the troop transports, the *Simplicissimus*.

Five Terran days ago, the task force entered an unnamed star system, six planets and planetoids in orbit around a Type G star. Immediately upon entering the system, the task force engaged two Xenovore Slave Ships and a Dreadnought, destroying them in a successful ambush. A quick scan of the system indicated the fourth planet out was habitable, and further investigation revealed the presence of Xenovores. Judging from radio transmissions and electromagnetic spectroscopy, the planet was lightly garrisoned... and in the commander's mind that made it the perfect opportunity to prove he deserved the promotion he'd been bucking for before assigned to doghouse duty with Task Force NF/24/7.

The commander, Vice Admiral Marsh Tillery, is a gloryhound who feels his current assignment is better suited to De Valiere's Terran Exploration Service than an academy-trained Navy officer of his self-perceived caliber.

CAPRICORN INSIGHT

Capricorn is the last of the Earth Signs, which also include Taurus and Virgo. Its symbol is ♑, and the sign is often represented by a chimerical creature with the upper body of a goat, and the lower one of a fish... much like a Xenovore Shark, in fact!

UE ESTIMATES OF PHYSICAL DIMENSIONS

The CO provides the PCs' squad with Science and Sensor estimates of the locale around their drop – the measurements are, for the most part, correct. It's the actual physical features that are wrong (it's an iceberg, not an island; part of an ocean, not a sea; and so on).

The sea itself has a rough surface area of 370,000 square kilometers; it's approximately 1000 km long (north-south) and 400 km at its widest (east-west). Maximum depth, unknown; average depth, unknown.

Two waterways lead from the sea: one in the west, 4 km wide, with unknown destination; one in the north, .5 km wide, that ends at a second, smaller sea.

The island itself is roughly circular with a diameter of 20 km. The outpost is approximately 500 meters from the east coast (approximately 700 meters from the PCs' insertion point).

The Adventure

If Anything Can Go Wrong...

...it will. And if your players need evidence to prove the truth of this law, tell them to hold onto to their seats – pretty soon they'll be up to their necks in it!

After a briefing aboard the task force flagship, the *Fomalhaut*, the PCs receive their orders from their CO, Lieutenant Stan Kolowski.

A cargo pod will deploy them and their Kingfisher in a small inland sea (or perhaps a large lake); nearby the insertion point is an island where the Xenovore communication outpost is. Based on frequency and strength of radio transmissions, Science and Sensors estimate the communication outpost standard for the enemy, likely staffed with between ten and twenty Xenovores and a small pack (4 to 6) of War Hounds.

Immediately upon making planetfall, the PCs are to assemble with the five other Kingfishers, reconnoiter the immediate area, formulate and implement a plan of attack, seize the communication outpost, and using enemy resources, whether intelligence or sensors, identify any other threats in the area. They are to communicate their findings to either mission control aboard their transport or the UE Army regiment assaulting the Hive Colony, and then await further orders (which will either be prepare for surface-to-orbit pick-up or proceed to a secondary target).

They are also given a cursory briefing on the whole invasion plan. Five other platoons will drop at communication outposts, scattered across the planet. Two of these are Armor, three, Mechanized Infantry (one of these other Mech is made up of Kingfishers, like the PCs' own). The remainder of the PCs' regiment, the one billeted aboard the *Simplicissimus*, will be held in reserve. One full armor regiment, the one aboard the second troop transport the *Mutter Courage*, will drop in proximity to the sole Xenovore Hive Colony and lay siege upon it – optimistic estimates have the Hive Colony isolated within six hours and seized within two days.

Questions The PCs Might Have: The PCs might have some questions at this point; their CO, unhappy about the lack of solid intelligence, isn't in the mood for questions from the troops though, and his answers are terse... growing more terse after each subsequent question.

“Why on an island? Xenovores don't like water.” Answer: “No intelligence – maybe natural defense against the natives.”

“Why out in the middle of nowhere?” Answer: “Maintain planetwide communication net with relay station. Maybe cover blind spot in orbital surveillance.”

“So is it a sea or a lake?” Answer: “No intelligence. Taste the water when we land and let me know.”

“Thought we were an LRRP.” Answer: “Secondary mission objective to seize enemy position where feasible. Admiral Tillery deems this feasible. Don't worry – there's enough medals for everybody, but the Admiral will get more.”

Cargo Pod Set-Up: The modified pod used to drop the PCs holds the Kingfisher, and the PCs buckle up at their stations inside the Kingfisher. The cargo pod's sensor and systems are hooked into the Kingfisher's, so the pilot and co-pilot can monitor the descent as well as immediate environs. The pod's chemical rockets are automated (and overriding them is discussed below). Upon impact, the pod falls away, immediately deploying the Kingfisher, and SOP stipulates the first thing to do is dive, taking the Kingfisher below the water in case of enemy fire.

The PCs are the last to drop, and the six pods in their platoon are deployed in a scatter formation within a 100-meter-radius circular spread. The pods launch several seconds apart (distance increment of 30" [60 meters]), so there's a total distance of 180" between the first and last pod, and all pods will hit water within six seconds of the first.