



INTO THE FUTURE

DERELICT STARSHIPS

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Product Update Password for Into the Future: Derelict Starships - Skeleton

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome!

Welcome to *Into the Future: Derelict Starships*TM, Tabletop Adventures' book designed to help you, the GM, bring those dead spaceships to life. Here you have a whole book of descriptions that can assist you in providing the images and experience of being in a derelict starship, building apprehension for your players with each step as their characters explore the unknown. These pieces do not answer the question of why a ship has become a derelict. Instead they are designed to augment your own campaign and game plans without taking your story a completely different direction from where you wanted it to go. These are for all those places in the ship that are not key to the story. Think of it as camouflage to avoid the "Cunning Player Syndrome": "Oh, if the GM took time to explain this it must be a trap – we draw our Type 75 super-duper dual phase laser cannon and sweep the area." Now you have descriptions for items and damage that are just what they appear to be – or maybe a bit more. Damage that, while it may be dangerous (as being in any wrecked ship or house might be), is merely damage to the ship and nothing more. Some descriptions are creepy or may cause characters to go "ewwww," while others may be humorous, but the overall effect should be to ramp up the tension in your players.

These written pieces range from descriptions of specific places like the ship's bridge, hydroponics, gun turrets, observation decks, crew quarters, and so on to small "bits" of description that can be used anywhere: wires and conduits that have broken loose from their fastenings and spill into a room or corridor, damaged control and interface panels, dead bodies, and much, much more.

Harried Game Masters.

or How We Came to Write This Book

So, I hear you ask, "Why write a book like this?" Well, I'm glad you asked. We wrote it for all those

Game Masters who have ever lamented not having the time that they wanted to spend on their game because those unforgiving intrusions to gaming (life, work, family, school) interfered. We wrote it for all those game masters who have come home from a hard day of work or just finished a grueling finals week and had friends call up and say, "Hey, let's play tonight. I had a rough day and I want to get mind off it." For all of you who need more than 24 hours in a day, welcome to Tabletop Adventures' line of products for the Harried Game Master.

We here at TTA believe that description is a very important part of game mastering and that vivid descriptions can make a world or an adventure come alive. However, we have noticed that the more rushed or frazzled a GM becomes, the more mechanical the game tends to be. So we have written a book that we've always wished to have, one that would have made our lives easier over the years. Tabletop Adventures' "Harried Game Master" products are designed to be products that you can buy today and play tonight. We have taken care to make *Derelict Starships* flexible so it could be useful in virtually any space game. Our products are to help you, the Game Master, make the maximum use of the limited time you have available.

This tool provides the GM with a way to stimulate the characters' senses and the players' imaginations. The descriptions can give players a "feel" for a situation; a better image of what is happening or what their characters are experiencing. They are intended to enhance role-playing by encouraging character building, reaction, and interaction. These slightly off-kilter descriptions are made for you, to ease the life of the Harried Game Master.

Enjoy, have fun, and create fun for others!

The good people at Tabletop Adventures,
and the Overlord.



HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

What are Shards and Bits™, Anyway?

Shards and Bits™ should be viewed as small pieces of an adventure. Think of the scientist or daring explorer who is gathering together the diverse pieces of a mystery until they fit together into a sometimes-surprising ending or revelation. Bits are tiny pieces of description that can be thrown in to provide “color” or add a little excitement as characters move from one place to another. Shards are longer and more elaborate, meant to be selected rather than added randomly. They may describe a certain area or a specific thing. They can be a wonderful way of getting your player-characters back on course, reminding them they are in the middle of a dead spacecraft and if they don’t want to end up that way themselves they should stay alert!

One thing to remember in using this product is that we provide you products that will add a bit of drama to your game, therefore, delivery is important. The way you choose to deliver the descriptions here can have a tremendous effect on the subsequent playability of the situation involved. With proper use, our Bits and Shards can add a greater depth to your gaming experience and make everything seem more “real” and exciting for your players.

Bold print is to be read aloud to the players; light print is for the GM. This may include optional changes, such as “**stairs going up** [down]”, or the notes could be additional information. As with our previous fantasy and horror products (such as the *Bits of Darkness™* series and *Halls of Horror*), these pieces have been numbered so that a GM can roll percentile dice or pick a card to randomly generate a dash of description for an adventure. An Index is provided in case a Bit is needed to fit a particular situation, and we have included many Shards for specific locations or circumstances. These all can help you flesh out areas or give you an “instant” description for those occasions when your players go someplace you didn’t expect and catch you off-guard.

Don’t feel that you have to use a Bit or Shard verbatim! As GM, you can and should feel free to adapt them to get the effect you want. Some may need to be adjusted to fit your setting. For example, many pieces have alternate descriptions or choices of more than one word that allow you to tailor the description to whether the ship has gravity or not, or if it has atmosphere, or not. Another thing to consider is that some of the Shards or longer Bits are written to be used gradually. Read one sentence and wait for a response or action; depending on the action you have another there ready. Whatever the situation, we have tried to make your life easier and give you the tools you need to make even an impromptu game a wonderful adventure.

In some instances these pieces may even give you ideas for additional adventures for your group. These Bits are for whatever you want! If a piece sparks your imagination (or those of your players) and you want to build on it, then go for it.

Printing This Product

If you have the electronic version of *Derelict Starships*, you can print it on regular paper. However, the final pages are formatted to be printed on card stock. (The same result can be achieved by photocopying those pages from the printed book, which you have permission to do.) As cards, they can be shuffled and drawn randomly during play or sorted ahead of time, with the GM selecting certain pieces for use and placing them with the appropriate map or other materials. Some GMs prefer to just roll randomly as needed, or write the corresponding number on the GM’s map and refer to it when the characters arrive there.

Other Products from TTA

Tabletop Adventures continues to bring you high quality products with lots of description, to augment your imagination and enhance your role-playing experience. For more information visit our website at www.tabletopadventures.com.



BITS OF STARSHIPS

01. Flickering lights cast an intermittent illumination, revealing the area before you. Occasional panels have been knocked or pried off, exposing tangles of multicolored wiring. A cable swings loose, sparking blue and white on contact with the wall; the scent of ozone fills the air. The low, ever-present thrum of the dormant engines vibrates up through the floors.
02. Your first impression here is of a great tentacled monster reaching down from above. [Pause.] The reality is somewhat different, however: a massive tangle of twisted metal, wiring and conduits hangs down from the ceiling. The structural supports that kept this entire assembly in place must have given way. The gnarled and contorted knot protruding from above gives the uncomfortable impression that the ship's guts have been ripped out. It will be difficult to move around as the jagged metal protrudes at unexpected angles that are often concealed by harmless-looking wiring. [There is a possibility of slight injury or a rip in an environmental suit. Characters could use dexterity or alertness to move around the area without damage.]
03. A duffle bag sits on [or: floats above] the deck in an awkward position. Its built-in locking seal is still engaged. On its side you can see traces of what once was a name and number but years of wear and tear have worn it off to the point where it is unreadable. Only part of the crewperson's number is evident—the last 4 digits were 6947. There is no indication of who owned it or who dropped it and left it in haste. [If the duffle is opened, the characters will find it is full of uniforms, women's underwear, and a data pad. If this is investigated, it appears to have a series of video letters sent and received between a slender woman with black skin and her family and friends. They also find a tiny ceramic animal with a flowing mane.]
04. A large patch of the floor here is extremely badly damaged, perhaps by a grenade or other small explosive; it may even have been just a very large power surge from within the ship's structural support net. The walls and ceiling are largely undamaged, but the raised metal edges and jagged pieces of debris on the floor will make it hazardous to traverse the area, as will the malfunctioning equipment. [If no gravity:] In the absence of gravity it is not as much of an issue, though movement is hampered by a lack of handholds on the walls or ceiling to use to pull yourself along.
05. The dim light here flickers on and off with a series of noisy clicks. Upon closer inspection the illumination is found to be a single emergency light flickering in its broken housing.
06. A body lies on [or: floats above] the deck, dressed in what was once an immaculately kept uniform. From what you can tell the man was young, possibly just starting out a career in space exploration. His career is now nothing more than a note in your log entry as you list your discoveries aboard the derelict spacecraft. There is a sidearm in a holster at his belt and an identification card still clipped to his shirt.
07. On the wall near the door is a rectangular green handle. It is the most low-tech control you have seen so far on the ship; it appears one need only pull it down to activate it. [Pulling the lever down activates a fire suppression nozzle overhead. The person pulling the handle will be covered in foam, which is non-toxic but messy. This emergency system functions even if the ship has no power.]
08. On the left is a small table that folds down from the wall; on it are several items of interest. One of them seems to be an identification card belonging to a security officer. Another is a small pack of playing cards, trimmed in silver and with stars and planets for their suits. The cards themselves are scattered about the area on the surface of



DERELICT SHARDS

01 In Endless Night

Running on low power, the huge warship swims through the black like a ghostly shark. No running lights, no querying scans, no attempt to signal anyone... not even a distress beacon. The only sign of activity is the wash of light and waste from the engines. Without any rupturing of the hull, the ship may still have atmosphere, life support, even water and food if supply levels were properly maintained. The colossal vessel may be carrying a complement of weapons extreme enough to devastate a continent from space and yet she glides, empty and alone, through the endless night. There is no external sign of damage, of combat, of anything to empty such a fortress of her guardians, nor is there an indication of what mind—if any—set the course she now follows unwaveringly.

HATCHES, DOORS, AND ENTRYWAYS

02 Ship's Airlock

The airlock hatch hisses open. Even through your protective suit you can feel the bitter coldness that waits aboard this hulk. Your spotlight flickers to life and burns away the darkness of the compartment. A crystalline layer of frost covers every surface in the room. To the left are several empty suit lockers, and to the right a tool chest hangs on the bulkhead, still holding three or four wrenches and other implements for repair work. Further into the room sits a long dead control console.

03 Airlock Interior

After entering the airlock, you see that the internal design of the abandoned vessel is as unfamiliar as the hull configuration: traditional parts, pieces you might see on almost any vessel, have been cobbled together in ways you would never have expected. The external portal of the

airlock is perfectly standard, but instead of a single internal portal letting into an access chamber, you find that the airlock has been altered to contain two portals, each dimly visible in the poor emergency lighting. A moment later the indicators on each door's control pad blink green, indicating that pressure has been restored.

04 Exterior Hatch

The exterior hatch [outside entrance to the ship] is a reinforced pair of doors of several dark metals. There is a panel beside it but it does not respond. [They must force it open]. Some air rushes out as you step inside, but it is clear there was not normal pressure in this compartment. There is no gravity. Inside, the entry room is relatively spacious but dark and cold; the lights do not respond. The ship is silent: no motors can be heard anywhere. Your breath and small movements seem exceedingly loud. The reinforced door leading from this room to the rest of the ship seems intact. It is not locked but must be opened manually. [Beyond it there can be air.]

05 Sealed Doors

You come to a set of sealed blast doors. Through a view port you see that the chamber [passage] beyond is damaged beyond recognition, and is exposed to vacuum.

06 Closed Blast Doors

A set of blast doors are solidly closed before you. To the left of the doors as you are facing them, there is a small control surface that appears to be the operating mechanism for the door. There seems to be no power to the unit and you see no manual safety release on the door itself. This way is blocked unless you can find a way through the sealed blast doors. [The GM may allow the characters to remove the panel and hot wire it if they have the skill – assuming that there is still some emergency power operating in the vessel or that they have an alternate power source.]



ENVIRONMENTAL

74 Hydroponics Bay

The first things that strike you about this room are the extreme brightness, and the warmth. Though the rest of the ship is typically dim, cool



and still, this room is not only warm but also somewhat humid. [The contrast is enough to cause goggles or faceplates to fog up.] The climate, you realize, is essential for the growth of the plants that fill this bay – long rows of plants rooted in a light blue gel. Two kinds of grain, beans, and root vegetables are in long troughs that run the length of the chamber. Despite not having been tended in some time, the plants seem healthy. The bushy beans are sprawling over the sides of their trough, and the root vegetables have long sturdy stalks producing flowers. Plump red fruits hang from plants supported by frames along one wall, and long vines sprawl along another. Both of these have overgrown their containers so much that they give a distinctly jungle-like look to the room. Huge ultraviolet lamps provide artificial sunlight and heat, though that is beginning to fade as a few light tubes are dark and others are flickering. [The lamps are powered by emergency batteries, possibly connected to solar collectors.] In the far corner, a tiny dented pot of gel holds a four-petaled flower with brilliant purple blooms. [The hydrogel is light blue, sticky yet resilient to the touch. It holds enough nutrients to nurture years' worth of crops.]

75 Cold-damaged Hydroponics

This heavy metal door is locked. [When the characters manage to unlock it:] Inside it is as dark and cold as the rest of the ship, but it is rank with the smell of decay. There are no light controls near the door. [A sensor panel in the middle of the right wall controls the lights; timers were set at “off” when the power failed.] The room seems to be filled with ceiling-high metal racks covered in frost and holding tanks with things floating in them. There are walkways between the shelves but they are quite narrow and slick with ice.

[If the boarding party ventures farther in:] The racks hold shallow tanks of cloudy liquid or of small solid particles. Lights are positioned so that all tanks would be illuminated when they are lit. The cloudy liquids are various colors: dull gray, the rusty color of old blood, and a violet that is nearly black. On the surfaces float withered, black growths. Some are very fine, others have large rotted leaves draped over the sides of the tanks.



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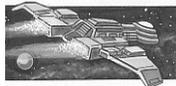
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Derelict Starships 01

Flickering lights cast an intermittent illumination, revealing the area before you. Occasional panels have been knocked or pried off, exposing tangles of multicolored wiring. A cable swings loose, sparking blue and white on contact with the wall; the scent of ozone fills the air. The low, ever-present thrum of the dormant engines vibrates up through the floors.

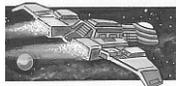
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Derelict Starships 03

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Derelict Starships 05

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Derelict Starships 02

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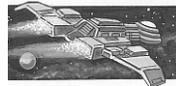
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Derelict Starships 06

A body lies on [or: floats above] the deck, dressed in what was once an immaculately kept uniform. From what you can tell the man was young, possibly just starting out a career in space exploration. His career is now nothing more than a note in your log entry as you list your discoveries aboard the derelict spacecraft. There is a sidearm in a holster at his belt and an identification card still clipped to his shirt.

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