

THE STARS ARE SILENT

Star Wars Horror Story

Sorta Manual I guess

Hey guys!

I recently GMed an Edge of the Empire scenario called *The Stars are Silent* that I thought might be fun sharing with you. It's a **horror derelict ship type of scenario**, one of those salvage / rescue missions which holds darker twist than the characters initially expect, combined with a "race against time" element as they are slowly running out of air. Inspired by such pieces as *Alien* or *Firefly*. Read on if you're looking for some inspiration for your own game, I hope you find some here :) It's a one off session and I'll try to keep this description as brief as possible, so feel free to fill in the possible gaps (and ignore all the mistakes I'll make along the way; non native speaker warning)

I believe it's easy to modify this story for your own group. It can also branch in several directions during playthrough depending on how your group acts. So to make it as clear as possible, I'll give you the initial outline of the story, than the "behind the scenes" of what's actually going on (and what characters should not know initially, but learn by the end) and in each chapter, I'll quickly go over what my party did and in which other ways the story could have gone.

BASIC STORY OUTLINE

The party is on their way to (e.g.) Tatooine to finish a small errand for (e.g.) Jabba the Hutt, while they need to jump out of hyperspace because of a [mass shadow](#) in their way. While back in real space, they happen to catch an emergency broadcast from a ship called (e.g.) Icarus 18 (change it if you don't want to be so terribly on the nose), in which an Imperial captain James Santoso claims that their engines and life support got hit by an asteroid and their ship is slowly falling into a gravity well of Tatoo 1. What's worse, they have attackers on board: a ship of looters who boarded them under false pretenses of helping them with evacuation; and along with them *something* that broke free from one of the containers on the looter's ship. Santoso blocked the exit ramp so that the looters couldn't leave without the codes only known to the Icarus crew and then shot himself in captain's quarters as he was wounded from a shoutout anyway and wanted to save oxygen for his crew. At the time of his broadcast: the original crew, the looters and afore mentioned something only has few hours of oxygen left, and they all desperately want to get out of the ship.

Mass shadow (Wookieepedia)

In hyperspace, a mass shadow was the gravitational signature of a large object in normal space.[2] Since those shadows were potentially lethal to any starship traveling too near, it was necessary to avoid colliding with them by plotting precisely calculated hyperspace jumps. By simulating the gravity shadow of a celestial body, a ship's travel through hyperspace could be halted or their jump to hyperspace rendered impossible within an interdiction field.[3]

During the Imperial Era, the main star of the Throffdon system went supernova and formed mass shadows. As smuggler Han Solo was en route to Gwongdeen, his ship, the Millennium Falcon, was pulled from hyperspace by the Throffdon star's mass shadows. [1] The Galactic Empire was rumored to have developed a superweapon called the Mass Shadow Generator, which could exist in space and hyperspace simultaneously.[4]

Sources

- [Star Wars: The Force Awakens: Incredible Cross-Sections](#)
- [Star Wars: Battles that Changed the Galaxy](#)
- [Hyperdrive](#) in the [Databank](#) ([backup link](#))

Notes and references

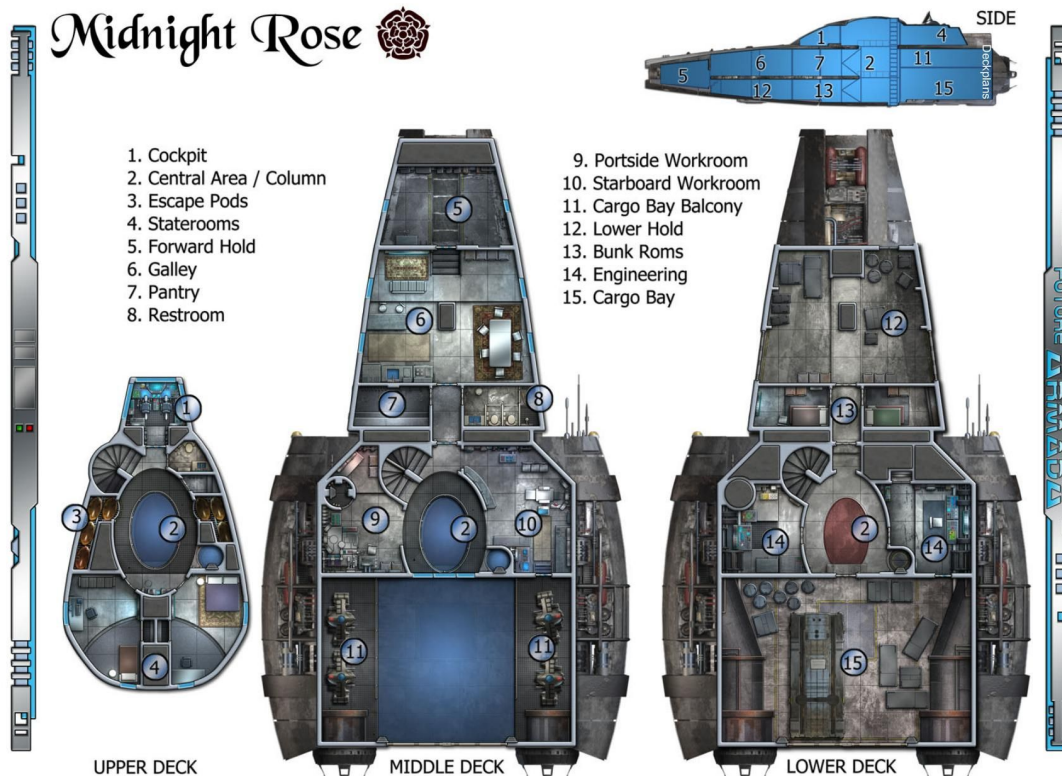
1. [Pirate's Price](#)
2. [Hyperdrive](#) in the [Databank](#) ([backup link](#))
3. [Star Wars: The Force Awakens: Incredible Cross-Sections](#)
4. [Star Wars: The Rebel Files](#)

Enter: the characters.

BEHIND THE SCENS

(what characters don't know and should eventually find out)

There's a lot more to the story of Icarus than it originally seems (as characters will figure out pretty quickly). In the broadcast, James Santoso uses an Imperial broadcast code and the ship itself is declared to be an Imperial one, but any pilot who knows what's what can take a look at it from a window and see it's actually a private recreational ship (I used this one: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/38/88/c3/3888c3e0acfcabdfc0e0ae9577e13212.jpg> from Firefly universe, simply because of it's convenient deckplan), so it's apparent something's fishy. In actuality, the captain broadcasting the emergency signal isn't James Santoso: his name is Rantann Bugbbrum and he is a smuggler who stole the ship when freeing some Imperial prisoners and has been using it to deliver them to the outer planets. James Santoso is an actual imperial officer, whom Bugbbrum had kidnapped along with the ship (specifics don't really matter), and has been using his codes to get past imperial checkpoints (and now to call for help in hope that imperial signal will get more attention). Santoso is actually still on board, trapped in the lower decks.



The looters then, led by alien called Vex, are employees of Jabba the Hutt (or simply the same ganglord as your characters are serving, for story purposes) and they were just on their way to Tatooine with a special delivery for him when they heard the emergency signal and decided to loot a bit. However, the crew of Icarus didn't want to go down easy, firefight ensued and in it the crate with looters' delivery got shot open. The delivery itself was a swarm of [Orbalisks](#) Jabba wanted to use to spice up things in his arena; and once the swarm broke free, it immediately set out to hunt and feed. The looters and Buggbrum managed to escape into the cockpit on the top of the ship, closing the doors behind them (and Buggbrum shutting himself inside his quarters while the looters stayed in the cockpit, unable to get to him), while the original crew got left in the lower decks and by the time characters arrive, they are not all dead, but they certainly wish they would be. Around the same time, James Santoso managed to break free from the container he was trapped in, immediately gets two orbalisks stuck on his forearm and face, but because he's one certifiable badass, still lives and plans on getting out of the ship.

The biggest trouble however follows Loreel Malbor, a 7 year old girl and a daughter of one of the couples on the crew. She is unaware of it but she's force sensitive and as such the orbalisks would love to feed on her - her mother however, before she died, managed to lock her in one of the containers on lower deck, which most of the orbalisks now swarm around, waiting for it to open.

Orbalisk (Wookieepedia)

An orbalisk was a parasitic creature found on Dxun that lived in groups. They lay inactive in caves or other dark places, until they found a suitable host creature on whose skin they would attach themselves to in order to feed. Orbalisks, once attached to a host, would multiply and grow, eventually enveloping and suffocating their victim. However, the holocron of Freedon Nadd contained the knowledge to make armament to prevent the orbalisks from covering the face, hands, and feet of the host, allowing them to keep this armor hidden.



Perhaps by nature or as a result of residing on Dxun (which was itself a great focus of dark side power), orbalisks were able to feed on the Force-sensitivity of darksiders. It was said that the orbalisk armor's durability was such that lightsabers had a hard time penetrating it, making a wearer basically immune to lightsaber attacks. The only weakness to this armor were the exposed joints at the neck and wrists, but these gaps were so small a lightsaber could only barely slice through. However, orbalisk armor was unable to protect the wearer from electricity, as Darth Bane discovered when he was attacked by Umbaran Shadow Assassins wielding Force pikes. However, the Orbalisks did offer some limited protection from the electrical shocks; despite being set to kill, the force pikes did not deliver a strong enough charge to subdue Bane. Orbalisks caused the wearer to feel pain, fueling the wearers dark side power and if they were removed or killed, they would release a highly potent toxin into the host's body.

Orbalisk	
Biological classification	
Designation	Non-sentient
Physical characteristics	
Skin color	Varies from specimen to specimen
Distinctions	Lightsaber-immune carapace
Sociocultural characteristics	
Homeworld	Dxun, Kintan

GM MECHANICS AND LOGISTICS

Before the actual outline of the playthrough, here are some tips I believe make the game better:

Play at night if you can. Cause it obviously helps the atmosphere.

The ***running out of oxygen*** is a crucial part of the story. Players should feel under pressure. You can invent your own mechanic for this, but what I did was: set a pool of oxygen points (between 100 and 200, 100 being probably pretty close and 200 being probably very generous) and subtracting the number of breathing people on deck from this pool every turn (turn being loosely defined as anytime characters a) have a long conversation or a fight b) search a room for loot c) walk to a different deck on the ship). Agree with this on players so that they fully understand the system and don't feel cheated later on when they are running out of air. If you feel like you accidentally set the oxygen pool too low, feel free to give them the option to raise the levels by using the white force tokens or something similar.

Space suits are going to be immensely important here. The only way to get into Icarus is through it's airlock, which has been damaged by the asteroid, meaning characters have to jump in a space suit from their airlock to Icarus', through e.g. 15 feet of vacuum depending on the skills of your party's pilot. It also means that characters should have at least one spacesuit on deck (or a droid PC), but not necessarily for all members. The number of spacesuits is crucial, because a) characters who wear them don't use up the air on deck b) without at least two suits characters cannot return back to their ship through the airlock (as in one character accompanies other back to their ship, takes his suit back, puts it on another and so on and on) and need to find a different way to get out. There are spacesuits on Icarus' deck, but don't give them to your players too easily.

Also make it clear that in a gunfight, ***ANY damage to a character with a spacesuit on means a destroyed and UNUSABLE spacesuit.*** This creates hell tension and makes characters think twice about every fired shot.

Assure the characters that ***they can leave the ship*** (if they actually can, as in they have enough spacesuits) ***at any time they desire*** and not finish the story completely. My group was several times on the edge of turning around and getting the hell out of there.

At the same time make sure the players have clear motivation to stay on the ship. For one, there's loot; potential deals struck with NPC on the ship; but the one I used as the ultimate one was Loreel's toy teddy bear in one of the first rooms of the ship as a ***hint that there is a small child on board*** (characters should run into a teddy bear early on in the ship so they can realize this).

It's a great fit if you have a jedi character in your party, but necessary. If you have such character, remember the Orbalisks should prioritize him in battle and feel free to give him a chance to glimpse that "the force isn't exactly right on this ship" or some such.

I made ***one small change to the deckplan*** of Midnight Rose, specifically I substituted the escape pods (which it doesn't have cause... convenience. They might be all used up or whatever). In their place I put a make-shift gun turret, obviously mounted ex-post, which the looters won't hesitate to use to threaten the characters who come on board (as in "put down yer guns or we're gonna shoot your ship outta sky" - with half of the party on Icarus, their ship can't really fight back easily since it would shoot them down along with Icarus)

Actually separate the players whenever the situation demands it. The story itself can be pretty quick, so don't be afraid that you will drag it out too much by this, and it can add another great layer of paranoia.

At some point **give characters at least some basic information about Orbalisks** if the characters don't already have them, e.g. through a lore check.

Also some doors are locked (e.g. between decks and important locations) because of story reasons; with these I let players roll a mechanics check, however told them that if they get more disadvantages than advantages, **they won't be able to close them again** after they have opened them.

Reveal the parts of the ship map to the players **gradually** (e.g. with paper clippings or some such)

PLAYTHROUGH

I'll first go through the general idea of how the story will probably go and how it will probably be paced; then I'll come back to specific rooms in the ship and add some descriptions to it so it all fits together.

1. The signal

In my session, I prerecorded the signal the characters receive and sent it to them as a teaser before the session; then played it again in the beginning of the game. It went something like this:

This is a prerecorded emergency broadcast of Icarus 15, imperial captain James Santoso speaking. Our ship was hit by an asteroid during a hyperspace drive, which destroyed our engines and the depending life support. We are currently dragged by the gravity pull of Tatoo 1, into which we should collapse in around 12 days. However, that doesn't have to bother us since we'll run out of oxygen much earlier. A ship D5 Mantis Patrol reacted to our first emergency signal, but as it turned out, they didn't come to help but to loot. The crew of this ship is still on our deck... And along with them something else. Something they brought...

I myself was hurt during a gunfight and I managed to lock myself in captain's quarters. Along with me there are 5 members of Icarus' crew on board; they are families without any political affiliations or bad intentions and they do not deserve to die this way.

I managed to lock down the exit ramp from the hold on the middle deck where looter's ship is stationed. It can be only opened by codes which my crew has at disposal. They have clear instructions to stay hidden in the lower deck and await help... for which I'm begging you right now.

Please. Save my crew. And destroy the ship. With everything that's left on it.

The projections of the oxygen reserves for 12 members of crew is thirteen hours. For 11... Fourteen and a half.

Captain James Santoso out.

blaster shot fired

I edited it with some sound effects, it was fun.

The first part of the story is characters deciding on what to do and how to approach this situation. It depends mostly on their affiliation to empire, how much their hearts

are made of gold, how much they are tempted by potential loot; the specifics of the plan rest mainly on how many spacesuits they have available. Later on they can find more spacesuits in captain's quarters on Icarus (all characters should eventually get to Icarus), but it's a good idea to have them split up in the beginning for higher tension. **In my session**, our pilot was a former student of Santoso in Imperial academy and went to jail because of him, so that added another fun dimension.

In any case, it's expected the characters will jump out of their ship, manually override Icarus' airlock and get inside the ship.

2. The Icarus: the middle and upper decks

The first NPCs party probably meets on Icarus will be Vex and his crew. If the party tried to establish a connection with Icarus before boarding it, Vex will try to persuade them that they are in actuality the remaining crew of Icarus and that the looters are all dead. He asks them to come on board and help them with evacuation. When they arrive, they will most probably wait for them outside the airlock with guns in their hands (and with one guy in the turret, see above). If the party doesn't try to contact Icarus before jumping through airlock, they might actually take Vex's crew by surprise in the cockpit.

In any case, Vex isn't stupid: he knows that cooperation is the least risky way to get out of Icarus. He's willing to go down with guns blazing, but he also knows that without characters' undamaged spacesuits they can't actually get to their ship anyway. He'll try to strike a deal with the characters (give them half of the cut from Jabba e.g.) and betray them only when he believes it's actually safe. He doesn't care much for his crew, but he will do his best to persuade the party to help him get the cargo (the Orbalisks, about which he doesn't really know anything about except for they are scary as hell) back to his ship so he can finish the delivery for Jabba as he knows the Hutts don't approve of incompetence. Whether that's actually a realistic goal or just a way to introduce the Orbalisk threat to characters I'll leave to the GM.

In my session one character struck a deal with Vex while the other characters (still on their ship) decided to kill him immediately after getting through the airlock (they were generally pretty trigger happy tbh). A wonderful standoff ensued, made even more nerve-wrecking because of the danger of damaging the suits. The situation was solved with Vex's death (he served as kind of a minibossfight) and loss of one spacesuit, which meant the upper decks were clear for characters to roam freely, but they also didn't get a chance to here the full story from Vex as they killed him before he had a chance to tell them. The whole situation overall had a great "no honor among thieves" vibe which stuck around for the whole duration of the story: there are no good guys on Icarus and it was great to see the party shiver on the edge of simply going "fuck it let's just kill everyone, blow this ship up and get out of here" and maintaining at least some honor in the face of horrors on the ship.

What will probably follow is a exploration of the ship. I will put some notes on this below with brief tips for certain rooms, but the most important thing about this is to create the spooky atmosphere "something's wrong here and we still don't know what", wondering around a dead ship and slooowly rising the stakes with new discoveries and clues as to what might have happened.

The second big discovery on the ship will be the orbalisks: there are none in the cockpit, but characters might find some they search the middle deck: they will be few and won't engage unless provoked / unless a force user is in reach, but should be enough to start playing on player's nerves. Also on the middle deck, there's looters' ship with the shot-through crate which originally held Orbalisks inside which might serve as a clue as to what happened. The cockpit is another important part of the ship,

where characters will be able to discover more clues as to what has happened (see the location list below)

(I based the looters ship on Mantis D5 model btw (http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/D5-Mantis_Patrol_Craft) and it serves as secondary way out of Icarus; either characters get the codes from the crew on lower decks to open the gate and fly away with it, or, if they are truly fucked, they can roll an insanely hard check to shoot the Icarus around them to pieces with Mantis' guns and fly out of the crumbling Icarus, which my characters didn't need to do, but honestly, if they had, it would be cool as fuck)

D5-Mantis Patrol Craft (Wookieepedia)

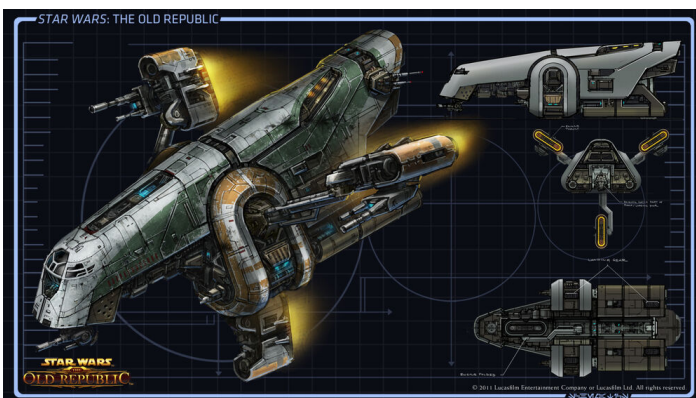
The D5-Mantis Patrol Craft was a rare, top-of-the-line starship during the Cold War. It was meant to meet the demands of larger capital ships. One is used by Hunter.

Characteristics

Built for combat, the rare, compact-framed D5-Mantis was a best-in-class patrol craft, designed to compete with—and meet the demands of—much larger starships, such as Interdictor-class cruisers.

The vessel utilized three retractable armament foils with independent power supplies, allowing it to safely use weapons meant for larger vessels. The foils also significantly reduced the ship's profile, allowing it to land or dock in more confining spaces than other ships would be able to use. A surprising number of D5-Mantis patrol craft could, therefore, be tightly packed into carrier ships presenting a nasty surprise to enemy vessels.

The D5-Mantis engineers also made extensive use of a vertically economical interior design to condense and fully utilize space. The vessel's small bulkheads accommodated large, open areas and improved the ease of maintenance.



D5-Mantis Patrol Craft	
Production information	
Manufacturer	Kuat Drive Yards ^[1]
Class	Patrol craft ^[2]
Technical specifications	
Length	68 meters ^[2]
Width	74 meters ^[2]
Height/depth	58 meters ^[2]
Armament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 retractable weapons foils^[1] 1 forward cannon^[2]
Usage	
Availability	Rare ^[1]
Role(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrol Prisoner transport
Affiliation	Bounty hunters ^[1]

3. Icarus: The lower deck

The most dangerous part of Icarus is the lower deck where the Orbalisks are roaming free. Most of them are concentrated around the Lower Hold (12 on the deckplan, see below) around the container with Loreel, but there should be enough of them spread around the lower deck so that characters would have to sneak around to avoid their

aggression. They will also find the bodies of the crew (make sure to give them a properly graphic description) enveloped in Orbalisks, still breathing, but it's hard to say if they aren't beyond saving yet. These can be used to fulfill Vex's storyline (drag one or two of these bodies on a ship and deliver them to Jabba) and there's also the dilemma of shooting them in order to save oxygen.

In the Cargo hold (15) they may encounter James Santoso who has recently broke out of his container, with one Orbalisk on his forearm and one over his eye. Depending on how the party has performed so far, this might go in several directions. Santoso is a proud (and very capable) Imperial captain who just spent several months locked in a container as a hostage, so he's understandably pretty pissed, in extreme pain because of the Orbalisks and therefore somewhat savaged. It might be possible to strike a deal with him too (even though he will at least initially insist on bringing Vex's and Icarus' crew to justice if they are still alive). Most likely he will serve as a final boss of the story: the orbalisks on his body give him higher soak value (and make fights with him terribly cinematic) and he is enraged and capable enough to simply kill everyone on board, steal the characters' ship and leave with it.

Which, **in my session**, he tried. As he is a powerful nemesis, he managed to lock three of the characters on lower deck and only closely lost a duel with the last character, lightsaber equipped jedi (wonderful scene). Again, since characters killed him off before he could give them any information, they didn't learn much about the ship's backstory. I had an alternative prepared in case he would manage to get a suit, jump through the airlock to characters' ship and fly away with it: that's where the characters would be only left with the choice of getting looters' Mantis and try to get out with it.

In case the characters make a peaceful deal with Santoso and you want some epic climax, you can have them surprised by last Icarus crew member, who, unlike the rest, is still capable of standing up. He would be crazed by terrible agony and might attack the characters in order to take their ship or something - and since he'd be completely enveloped in Orbalisks and therefore had insane soak levels, it might make for an interesting fight. I didn't use this option, but it was nice to know it was there.

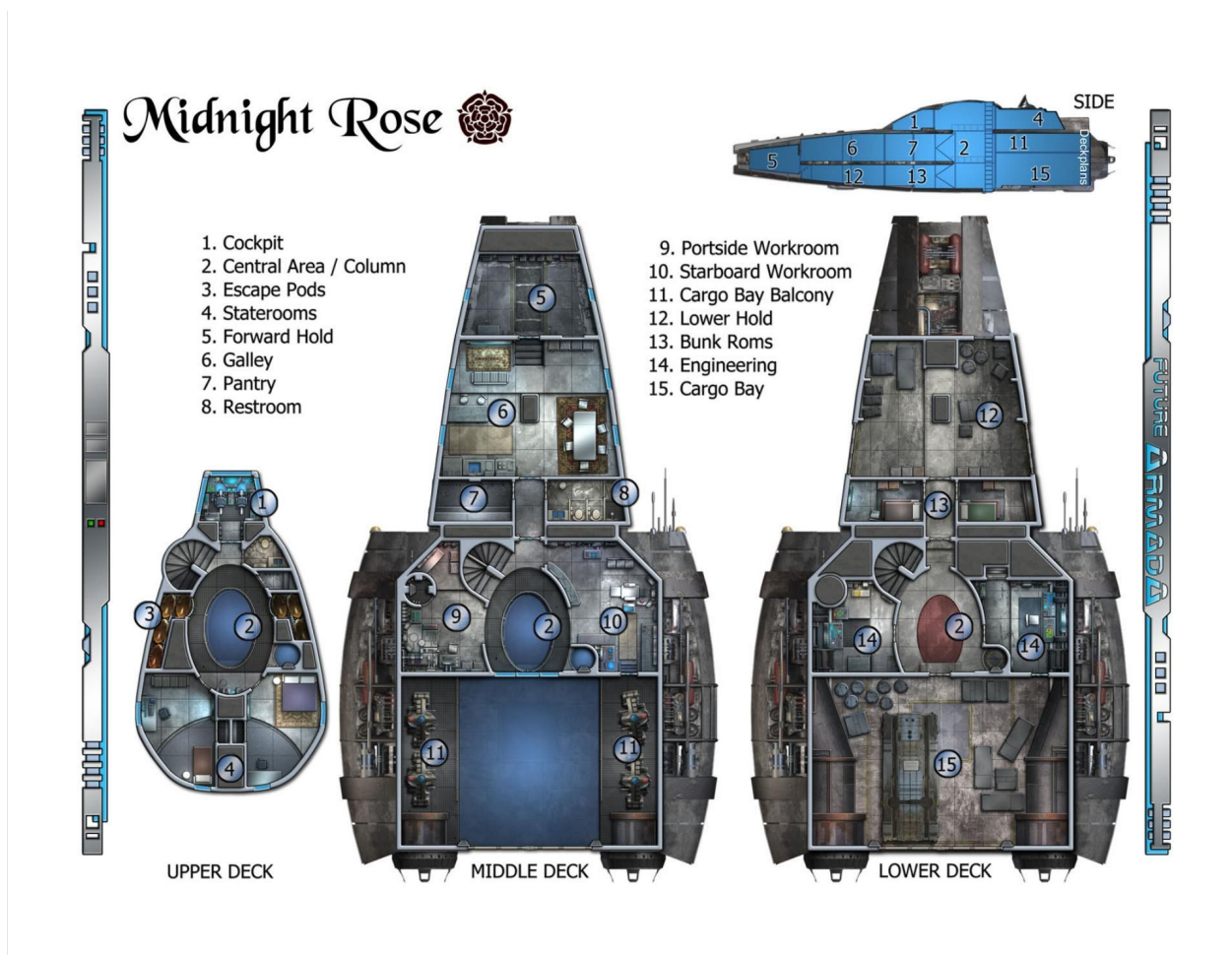
4. The end

The story ends whenever characters decide to leave the ship for good and it should be their decision. The ultimate ending however I believe would be saving Loreel from the container in the Lower Hold (however they decide to do that; **in my session**, a droid character simply entered the room as Orbalisks didn't pay attention to him, opened the container, took her in his arms and ran out like hell. Had he not been a psychotic murderer type of robot otherwise, it would have been a sweet moment). And if they put two and two together, of course, there is one final dilemma: if this girl is really force sensitive *and* if she is strong with the darkside (which Orbalisks are especially attracted to), shall they actually take her away after she had her parents devoured in front of her very eyes? Isn't that how Siths are made? It's one of those moments when a group of misfits accidentally stumbles onto a chance to actually write history: and no one will ever know the role they took in it. Hell, they can leave her on that ship and blow it to pieces and no one will ever know...

In my session we were lucky enough that the usual GM (I switched with him for this one story) took a role of a Jedi and since we didn't need his character for our next session, he stroke a deal with other characters that he will leave with the girl and take care of her. Wonderful set up for following adventures and also probably the luckiest happyend this bleak story could have. If your group doesn't have a Jedi, they have some hard decision making to do...

THE DECKPLAN

For Icarus I used the aforementioned deckplan of White Rose (<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/38/88/c3/3888c3e0acfcabdfc0e0ae9577e13212.jpg>) only with some small changes; there's a make-shift gun turret instead of escape pods in the cockpit and some of the rooms have slightly different role. You can fill the ship with any miscellaneous stuff you wish, but here are some things I believe are good to use (numbers correspond with the plan in the link). Overall, every numbered location should contain some loot or helpful guidance so that players are encouraged to spend time on searching even though it costs them air.



1. Cockpit is a place where characters can learn most about the ships history. With various difficulties, they should be able to find information about a) flight plan (ever since Bugbbrum took the ship over, it doesn't have any records on the crew, and it's easy to see how the new path around the edge of empire deviates from usual paths around central worlds) b) prediction of oxygen supplies (downloadable to datapad so they don't have to visit the cockpit everytime they need to check the air) c) database with names of original crew (which doesn't mention captain Santoso at all)
2. Number 2 on the middle deck is where the characters will probably see Orbalisks for the first time; time this moment well, it's crucial.
3. A gunturret, not an escape pod!
4. Here is where characters can find dead Bugbbrum if they manage to get the door opened. It's also where they can see he has Santoso's ID, but isn't Santoso. Also this is where space suits can be found if characters need them.
5. This is the Airlock through which character will enter the ship.

6. Diner is a room for some visual storytelling, but it's here where I've decided to put the teddy bear so that characters would realize there's a child on board as soon as possible
7. Pantry: possible loot
8. Restroom: definit smell
9. Workroom: definitely some loot (and possibly tools they can use to create a makeshift battery to help them fight Orbelisks, who are vulnerable to electricity)
10. The same as 9
11. This is the room in which looters' Mantis is parked. The ramp under it is blocked and can be only opened with a code held by one of the crew downstairs. When characters search the Mantis ship, definitely mention the shot-through crate which originally contained Orbelisks. If they haven't met them yet for some reason, this is a good place to introduce them. Also loot.
12. Lower Hold is full of Orbelisks since Loreel is locked in one of the containers in this room. As in, hundreds. Only the bravest (or droids) dare enter. Also Loreel's mother, enveloped in Orbalisks, should be found in front of the container.
13. I put another member of the crew into this short hall - it's the first time the characters will see what Orbelisks can do to a person through a closed door (they have to open it to get to here). She can be dragged on board and be delivered to Jabba with the Orbalisks (but there should be some checks whether Orbalisks will try to attack the characters). Otherwise she's there merely for exposition (also characters have to step over her in order to get to Lower Hold and can decide about killing her since she's using up oxygen)
14. If your characters discover that Orbelisks are vulnerable to electricity, you can have them find some battery in here which they can turn into a makeshift electricity grenade or some such. I just put barrels of nitrogen in here so they had something to blow this ship up on their way up.
15. Cargo Bay on Lower Deck is the place where character's will probably encounter James Santoso as he was held in one of the containers in here. They also might find dead bodies of the last members of the crew if they haven't found them anywhere else.

Hope you have fun! If you play this one, let me know how it went, I would be excited to hear your stories! :)