

PREDATOR OR PREY

“You fear to go into those mines. Sterling Forge dug too greedily and too deep, You know what they awoke in the darkness of the mining complex” - A Yue Minerals representative interrupts an Ariadnan speaker at the Human Edge Geological Conference before being escorted off the premises.

Location: ‘The Undermines’, deep below the Sterling Forge Mining Complex, LuY 911 (Louie)

Mission: Wormsign

Armies: ISS vs Morats

Final Score: 4 – 4

Army points: 248 – 98

Secret Objectives 0 - 0

Stalemate

Summary - The Imperial service had gained control of much of the battlefield, establishing a foothold in three quadrants, but with the arrival of the Stoorworm, the Morat’s focus shifted to bigger threats. Through concentrated fire and flanking maneuvers, the morats brought down the great beast, losing ground, but securing their own kind of victory.

Crane and Hsien

GROUP 1  8  3

 **CRANE AGENT (Hacker, Hacking Device, Hacking Device)** MULTI Rifle, Nanopulser(+1B) () / Pistol, DA CC Weapon. (0.5 | 46)

 **WÚ MÍNG** Boarding Shotgun (| TinBot: Firewall [-6]) / Pistol, CC Weapon. (0 | 31)

 **WÚ MÍNG** Heavy Rocket Launcher, Light Shotgun / Pistol, CC Weapon. (1.5 | 30)

 **KUANG SHI** Boarding Shotgun / Pistol, CC Weapon. (0 | 12)

 **CELESTIAL GUARD Monitor** Combi Rifle, Smoke Grenade Launcher / Pistol, CC Weapon. (0.5 | 13)

 **KUANG SHI** Chain Rifle / Pistol, CC Weapon. (0 | 5)

 **KUANG SHI** Chain Rifle / Pistol, CC Weapon. (0 | 5)

 **XI ZHUANG** Combi Rifle, Light Flamethrower(+1B), Flash Pulse, Madtraps / Pistol, CC Weapon, PARA CC Weapon(-6). (0 | 21)

GROUP 2  5

 **GARUDA (Forward Observer)** Combi Rifle, Flash Pulse / PARA CC Weapon(-3). (0 | 20)

 **HSIEN (Lieutenant)** Heavy Machine Gun, Nanopulser / Pistol, AP CC Weapon. (1.5 | 55)

 **DAKINI (Paramedic)** Combi Rifle (| MediKit) / PARA CC Weapon(-3). (0 | 15)

 **DAKINI** MULTI Sniper Rifle / PARA CC Weapon(-3). (1.5 | 20)

 **PHEASANT IMPERIAL AGENT (Minelayer)** Boarding Shotgun, E/Mitter, Madtraps / Breaker Pistol, PARA CC Weapon(-6). (0 | 27)

5.5 SWC | 300 Points

	
 10  1  1	
	KORNAK Mk12, Light Flamethrower / DA CC Weapon, Heavy Pistol. (0 38)
	SURYAT (Tactical Awareness) Heavy Machine Gun (TinBot: Firewall [-3]) / MULTI Pistol, CC Weapon. (1.5 44)
	SURYAT (Lieutenant [+1 Order]) Heavy Machine Gun (TinBot: Firewall [-3]) / MULTI Pistol, CC Weapon. (1.5 45)
	RAKTORAK (NCO) Vulkan Shotgun / Heavy Pistol, CC Weapon. (0 24)
	MORAT VANGUARD (Paramedic) Combi Rifle (MediKit) / Heavy Pistol, CC Weapon. (0 16)
	RASYAT Spitfire, D-Charges, Eclipse Grenades / Heavy Pistol, DA CC Weapon. (1.5 37)
	MORAT VANGUARD (Paramedic) Combi Rifle (MediKit) / Heavy Pistol, CC Weapon. (0 16)
	MORAT VANGUARD (Paramedic) Combi Rifle (MediKit) / Heavy Pistol, CC Weapon. (0 16)
	KAITOK (Multispectral Visor L1) Feuerbach () / Heavy Pistol(+1B), CC Weapon. (1.5 36)
	OZNAT (Sensor) Vulkan Shotgun, Smoke Grenades / DA CC Weapon, Heavy Pistol. (0 26)
	SYNC PRETA Chain Rifle / AP CC Weapon. (0 7)
6 SWC 298 Points	

Narrative intro:

Colloquially known as ‘The Undermines’, the network of tunnels beneath the Sterling Force mining complex are a desolate, eerie place that even the Ariadnan scab workers fear to tread. The area is, in no uncertain terms, a cesspool - its primary function is a dumping ground for mining TAGs damaged beyond repair, expired and forgotten cargo, and hazardous industrial waste.

The cavern's ceiling looms high overhead, dripping with condensation that forms long, reaching, icy stalactites. There is a lingering stench of heavy-metal and stagnant meltwater, a byproduct of the massive mining operation above. The unreliable, flickering industrial lights combined with the frozen, hazardous walkways make the Undermines one of the most treacherous locations on LuY.

To navigate these tunnels, crumbling concrete platforms peek just above the frozen, canal-like waterways of industrial runoff that criss-cross the cavern, a thin layer of ice obscuring years of accumulated detritus below. In the best cases these platforms are connected by makeshift bridges, some barely holding together, creating a precarious network of paths. The majority of the time however, workers must take to the crusted ice sheets floating on the toxic waterways.

Despite its vastness, the cavern is mostly silent, save for the occasional drip of water and the distant hum of machinery from the mining operations above. The few people who use this site do so with a haste reserved only for the most dire of circumstances, whether their business is professional or illicit.

Despite its danger, the cavern is not entirely devoid of life. Small, blind creatures scurry through the shadows in search of a meal, or frantically attempt to avoid becoming one, for monsters now roam in the shadows.



'The Undermines' - LuY 911 [Image Prompt: A birds eye view a dank dark enclosed industrial cavern deep within an icy asteroid the roof is industrial and leaking and the cavern is lit by industrial floodlights. The cavern is partially flooded with toxic meltwater that pours down from the ceiling above, creating shallow canal-like waterways. Concrete platforms rise just above the frozen icy runoff. Decrepit hab blocks, cargo containers, and warehouses are scattered around these raised areas.] [Image converted to video using KlingAI]

Table:



Faction Motivations:

Yu Jing Imperial Service:

The Yu Jing Imperial Service are investigating a series of tunnel collapses, which they believe are linked to stolen demolition charges from the nearby mining zone. These cave-ins correlate with geological areas in which the StateEmpire has a financial and industrial stake. The assigned agents suspect the involvement of the Ikari Company or Spiral Corps, both high on the interrogation list following recent events, but the Yu Jing command can't rule out the involvement of one of the other major hyperpowers who are laying their own claims on the vast untapped resources of the human edge. The most recent unexpected geological activity was triangulated to this region, and given the security and financial implications of further attacks, both a Crane agent and a Hsien were dispatched with their retinue to put an end to this disruption of Yu Jing interests.

Morat Aggression Force:

The Morat Aggression Force had their own reasons for entering the Undermines. The caves and tunnels had been a favoured hunting ground for the gaki and preta creatures they'd brought with them to LuY's surface early in their campaign. The Hungries are renowned for their desire for live prey, and the human occupants living above had grown suspicious of the sudden spate of disappearances amongst family pets and company mascots. Sure, cave ducks weren't their preferred meal, but the Morat's were keen to keep their activities in the Human Edge out of the spotlight, for now. The Morat's believed they'd found the best solution to their husbandry requirements in this cavern, but recently Morat command had lost contact with a number of hunting parties - and the Dravot specialist recovery operators sent to find them. Something was going on down there. The Morats sent a heavily armoured skirmish party to investigate.

Battle Report:

ISS Turn 1

The clash began with a Wu Ming armed with a heavy rocket launcher finding an angle on Kornak Gazarot from his drop zone as he stepped out from behind a crumbling concrete bridge onto the icy waterways on the far end of the cavern. With a deafening roar, the rocket streaked across the cavern, exploding at Kornak's feet and blowing a hole through the frozen crust beneath him. Before Kornak realised what had happened he had already sunk into the murky depths of the waterways, swept away under the ice sheet by the torrent of meltwater beneath, the first casualty of the Undermines.

Seeking to capitalise on the confusion spreading amongst Morats, a sanctioned Yu Jingese Beasthunter moved up under the cover of their camouflage to engage the rest of Kornak's fireteam. However, their mimetic cloak couldn't elude the MSV-enhanced gaze of a nearby Kaitok. Their cover was blown, but they pushed on, eager to unleash fire and fury on the gathered Morat forces before they could properly spread out. The Beasthunter leapt over the tarp-covered husk of a Cavecrawler industrial TAG and unleashed a torrent of flames from their heavy flamethrower. Unfortunately for the Beasthunter, the Morats, alerted by their comrade, all managed to dive for cover in time. A Morat Vanguard who'd been spared from the threat quickly retaliated, cutting down the Beasthunter with their combi rifle.

Deep behind the ISS front-lines a Dakini MSR moved along an elevated platform skirting the edge of the cavern, taking aim at the Kaitok that had alerted his squadmates to the Beasthunter moments earlier. Three shots rang out in rapid succession, two of them finding their mark and sending the Kaitok unconscious. Meanwhile, the lone Hsien forged ahead with his own agenda, positioning himself to engage a Suryat who'd dipped into view after dodging the Beasthunter's flamer. Both elite soldiers wielded their heavy machine guns with expert skill, but it was the Hsien's superior marksmanship that

prevailed, the Suryat fell, riddled with bullets - not even the advanced nanotech of a Obsidon Medchanoid would be able bring this Morat back into the fight.

The rest of the Imperial Service units took up advanced positions, led by a spearhead of Kuang Shi driven forwards by their controller. The Wu Ming HRL dipped back behind the safety of a nearby warehouse, joining his cellmate and their Crane agent handler.

Suddenly, the cavern shook as if the entire planetoid was closing in on itself. A low, charged rumble reverberated through the cave. The cacophony of automatic fire that had filled the cavern moments ago became a trickle of scattered potshots before giving way to a confused silence. Long moments passed as both sides tried to make sense of what was happening around them. The heavy silence was abruptly cut by an even heavier guttural screech as the ground near the Morat's fireteam erupted in an explosion of concrete, soil, and ice. An immense beast belched forth, enraged and hungry. Its massive serpentine form towered over the combatants, its armored scales glistening in the dim light, as fanged manibles chattered with violent intention. It thrashed wildly, sending great columns of rock and ice crashing down from the cavern ceiling, scattering the operatives below.

Morats Turn 1

While the Imperial agents were still reeling from what they had just witnessed, the Morat Aggression Force sprung into action. An Oznat, accompanied by her ferocious Preta hunting companion charged forward, taking up a forward position amidst the scattered cargo containers and decrepit hab blocks in the middle of the cavern, blocking further ISS advances.

In the centre of the Morat deployment zone, a Vanguard paramedic aimed his medigun at the downed Kaitok. The device found its mark, sending a revitalizing pulse that shocked the Kaitok back into action. The Kaitok quickly shook off the remnants of its near-death experience and prepared to rejoin the fray, pushing his fireteam up into more defensible positions.

Initially observing this scuffle with the Imperial Service with a palpable disinterest, a Tyrok Hunter finally emerged, her vigor and bloodlust renewed after the unexpected arrival of the Stoorworm megabeast. Finally a proper fight! But before she could get down to some real hunting, she'd have to clear out the Kuang Shi blocking her path to glory. With a swift, precise shot, the Tyrok Hunter's T2 ammunition tore through the Kuang Shi, ending its life in an instant. The Kuang Shi's chain rifle fired in a desperate, final act, but the seasoned Tyrok Hunter's reflexes had been honed over a lifetime on Ugarat. The comparatively sluggish movements of the Kuang Shi were far too predictable. The cone of heated shrapnel found nothing but air.

The Kaitok, now back in the fight and eager to recover its honor, turned his attention to the monstrous Stoorworm. He unleashed a barrage of feuerbach rounds, no foe had ever survived the fury of his might before. The heavy, armor-piercing round burst forth in

a volley of fire and wrath, striking the Stoorworm's thick chitinous hide... but failing to penetrate. The creature's natural defenses were formidable, and even the Kaitok's efforts seemed futile in the face of such immense power and rage.

While the Kaitok reeled from his humbling ordeal, the Tyrok Hunter advanced undeterred, its T2 rifle at the ready. Unlike the brute-force Kaitok, the Tyrok Hunter had been observing its prey. The solid scales lining its hide were clearly impenetrable, but a row of fleshy, soft, luminous nodules ran along its flanks. Perhaps these were key to this beast's weakness. With instinctual precision, the hunter fired upon the Stoorworm, managing to pierce one of the fleshy orbs. The beast roared in pain and retreated back into the depths of its tunnel, temporarily driven off by the tempered skills of the Tyrok Hunter.

Released from the immediate peril of the Stoorworm's assault, the Suryat fireteam moved on, strategically securing a quadrant of the battlefield surrounding a large empty warehouse on the Morat's right flank. Meanwhile, the Kaitok's fireteam also advanced, pushing towards the center of the cavern and covering the Oznat that had cleared the area earlier.

The ground trembled once more as the Stoorworm re-emerged, this time near the Kuang Shi fireteam. With a terrifying speed unbecoming of its size, it struck out, its massive toothed maw obliterating a Kuang Shi in a single, devastating blow. The rest of the Kung Shi fireteam stood frozen in shock, frantic commands screamed by their controller were lost beneath the concussive auditory force of the apex predator's ravening scream.

The battle raged again, the cavern renewed with the sounds of gunfire, roars, and the pained squeal of tortured steel.

ISS Turn 2

The Yu Jing Imperial Service regrouped and renewed their assault on the Morat incursion. A Garuda executed a perfect combat drop from the far end of the cavern, landing with unnatural grace behind the Morat forces. It targeted the advancing Oznat, shooting it in the back with the callousness only a synthetic mind could enact. The Oznat fell hard, its Preta companion, now freed from the shackles of its master, scarpered from the battle, in pursuit of a nearby group of cave ducks that were idly slapping their fleshy proboscises across the mossy growths of the cavern floor, seemingly oblivious to the chaos unfolding around them.

Seizing the opportunity, the Crane agent advanced with his Wu Ming operatives towards the warehouse where the Suryat fireteam had taken cover. The Crane skirted the outside wall of the warehouse, his hacker visor alerting him that his target was now in range. The Crane's fingers danced in the air, sending a malicious Carbonite programme through the airwaves. The Suryat inside the warehouse froze, locked within its power armor and unable to move. A swift nod from the Crane directed the Wu Ming flanking

him to strike. The Wu Ming stormed in, dispatching the immobilized Suryat with the ruthless efficiency afforded by a point-blank Yu Jingese boarding shotgun.

The BSG Wu Ming continued its assault on the Morat forces, engaging a Raktarak in a brutal close-range firefight. Shotgun blasts echoed through the warehouse as the two combatants exchanged fire. The Raktarak fell, but not before wounding the Wu Ming. His HRL companion, not to be outdone, turned his attention to the Stoorworm still looming over the Kuang Shi fireteam. The rocket launcher struck true, causing the beast to roar in pain as it took a wound.

Spurred on by the pained cry of the worm, the HRL Wu Ming fired again, but missed as the creature writhed about, its movements too unpredictable for the Wu Ming to get a lock.

The Garuda, still behind enemy lines, attempted to take out the Vanguard paramedic who'd revived the Kaitok, but also missed its shot.

The Stoorworm, angered by the assault of the HRL, dove underground once more. Moments later, it erupted again from the left flank, mere metres away from the offending Wu Ming. Behind the dehumanising faceplate of the Wu Ming's helmet, the criminal's lips curled into a cruel smile. The beast lunged, but the Wu Ming reacted swiftly, bringing his light shotgun to bear. As the worm opened its maw to engulf the Wu Ming, his shot rang out, the force blowing the creature's lower mandibles clear from its face and forcing it to recoil in pain.

Morats Turn 2

The situation was looking dire for the Morat Aggression Force. They'd need to call in reinforcements. From a blind spot behind the Imperial Service forces, a Rasyat parachuted in, landing with a silent thud. The element of surprise was on their side, but there were other objectives the Morats would need to complete first.

The Tyrok Hunter vigilantly pursued her prize, moving to get a clear shot at the Stoorworm's new position. With a steady aim, it fired, but the Stoorworm was a cunning foe and a quick learner, it twisted its body to deflect the shots against its unbreachable scales. The beast was proving to be a formidable challenge even for this grizzled Morat.

Meanwhile, the Kaitok, having spotted the Garuda that had dropped in behind them, took swift action. With a burst of fire, the Garuda was destroyed. The Kaitok, content for now with the confirmed kill, pushed his fireteam back to the center of the battlefield. He once again opened fire on the Stoorworm, this time catching it off-guard, inflicting another wound on the monstrous creature.

The remaining Vanguard from the warehouse fireteam attempted to attack the Wu Ming BSG. However, the Wu Ming's armor held firm, deflecting the shots and keeping the soldier safe.

ISS Turn 3

The Stoorworm's furious roars echoed through the cavern as it lashed out at the Wu Ming with the heavy rocket launcher. The Wu Ming, undeterred, fires his light shotgun once more, the blast causing another wound to the monstrous creature.

Seizing the advantage, the Hsien turned his attention to the Rasyat that had parachuted in behind the Imperial Service forces. With a precise burst from his heavy machine gun, the Hsien eliminates the Rasyat before it could launch its surprise attack. The Hsien then redirected his fire towards the Stoorworm, the heavy rounds tearing into the beast and forcing it to retreat back underground.

With the immediate threat of the Stoorworm temporarily neutralised, the Wu Ming with the heavy rocket launcher advanced out of the warehouse, ready to rejoin the fray. Meanwhile, the Wu Ming with the boarding shotgun swept around the back of the warehouse, targeting the remaining Morat Vanguard and wiping him out.

The Imperial Service forces now held most of the battleground. The agents dug in, awaiting the morat's final push, confident they had done enough to secure victory.

Morats Turn 3

The Stoorworm re-emerged near the warehouse, its massive form looming over the battlefield. It lunged again at the Wu Ming HRL, but the agile soldier evaded the attack, and neither side inflicted damage.

While the beast's attention was fixed on the Wu Ming, the Tyrok Hunter moved up to get a clear angle on the Stoorworm's flanks. With a series of precise, critical shots, the Tyrok Hunter's T2 rifle tore through the beast's thick hide, causing four devastating wounds. The Stoorworm let out a final, agonised roar before collapsing, finally defeated, its bulk sinking down into the murky depths of the icy waterways.

With the Stoorworm vanquished, the Kaitok and his fireteam moved swiftly to re-secure a quadrant, ensuring their position was fortified, but this wouldn't be enough to claim the site. They had lost control of the battlefield, but with the Stoorworm slain, at least the Tyrok Hunter would have reason to celebrate.

Narrative Outro:

Imperial Service Perspective

The Imperial Service agents suffered minimal losses in this operation. The Dakini was a valuable asset, but ultimately replaceable. The expendable Kuang Shi were expected to face high casualty rates. The Garuda was a more substantial loss, but its loss was within acceptable operational parameters.

From the Imperial Service's perspective, the mission was a tactical success. They managed to investigate the tunnel collapses and engaged the Morat forces effectively. The discovery and subsequent engagement with the Stoorworm, while unexpected, provided valuable intelligence on the creature's capabilities and weaknesses. The loss of mostly disposable or robotic assets meant that their human operatives remained largely intact, preserving their elite fighting force for future operations.

The operation's value lay in the intelligence gathered and the disruption caused to the Morat forces. The Imperial Service could now report back on the presence of the Stoorworm and the potential threat more of its kind might pose, as well as the Morat activities in the area. While the battle was over, several questions remained unanswered. They had come to investigate the tunnel collapses and the theft of demolition charges from the mining areas above. While the Stoorworm's movements explained the collapses, the mystery of the stolen charges persisted. Who had taken them, and for what purpose? The Imperial Service would need to continue their investigation, delving deeper into the criminal underworld of the asteroid. The involvement of the Ikari Company or Spiral Corps was still a possibility, and the agents would have to uncover the truth behind the thefts to prevent further sabotage and ensure the safety of Yu Jing mining operations. The hunt for answers was far from over, and the Imperial Service would remain vigilant in their pursuit of justice.

Morat Aggression Force Perspective

For the Morat Aggression Force, the losses were devastating. The incapacitation of Kornak Gazarot, a legendary leader, was a significant blow to their morale and command structure. The deaths of two Suryats, elite heavy infantry, and an Oznat, a skilled hunter, further weakened their ranks. The loss of the Rasyat, a highly trained paratrooper, and the Raktorak, a key support unit, represented a severe depletion of their elite fighting capabilities in the local region.

For the Tyrok Hunter though, the defeat of the Stoorworm was a monumental achievement. Such a feat would elevate her status significantly. The Tyrok Hunter would be celebrated as a hero, her name spoken with respect and admiration. The kill would surely earn her a place of honor among her peers, and be the focus of many regaled stories in the Morat drinking spots of the Human Edge.