

## THROUGH THE WATERS, DARKLY

By *JOSHUA FOX*

### WITNESS

*Vicente "Tási" Fuentes*, a Guamanian marine biologist, trained in California. He is driven by a *burning need to know what's out there*. He is an avid consumer of science fiction books and movies, and has a *vivid imagination*.

### OTHER CHARACTERS

- ⊙ *Maria Irshad*, an Irish medical doctor and anatomist. Earnest and dedicated to her work, she often works late into the night powered by the magic of caffeine.
- ⊙ *Yoshi Ota*, a Japanese submariner. Obsessed with a vast thing he once saw swimming in the depths.
- ⊙ *Ursula Easton*, Russian engineer. She is an avid collector of specimens taken from the ocean floor, which festoon her bunk like christmas decorations.
- ⊙ *Jay Brooks*, a young and enthusiastic American postdoc funded by a well-known oil exploration company.

### LOCATION AND ERA

The *Challenger* United Nations research expedition, at the bottom of the Mariana oceanic trench, 10km beneath the surface. The year is 2025. The characters are a team of experts seconded to the UN from their home institutions.

*We have found the Elder Ones. Dead  
- heads torn from their bodies - and  
covered in an unpleasant slime. The  
stench is atrocious.*

### OTHER LOCATIONS

- ⊙ *The Challenger base*, an undersea research station named after the first sub to reach the bottom of the trench. It consists of six modular units: the hab unit, the laboratory, storage, the generator room (powered by a geothermal probe) and two Explorer launch bays. Each unit can be independently sealed off.
- ⊙ *Explorer 1 and 2*, two deep-sea submersibles equipped for exploration and investigation of the ocean floor. They are powered by an array of batteries, with an 8-hour operational life (though can last 16 hours on life support alone).
- ⊙ *The lower ground* of the trench is covered in a thick, grey diatomaceous (i.e. fine silicate) ooze. Some flatfish, as well as cuttlefish, may be observed here. Otherwise life-forms are limited to foramenifera (tiny soft-shelled life) and bacteria.
- ⊙ *A valley* to the Northwest of the research station contains numerous hydrothermal vents. Here there are worms, a vast variety of bacteria and invertebrate creatures such as shrimp and the odd squid that feed on them.

### SPECIAL CARDS

- ⊙ A bizzarerie
- ⊙ Ancient civilisation
- ⊙ An inhuman creature
- ⊙ Specimen
- ⊙ Strange location

**THROUGH THE WATERS, DARKLY: SAMPLE CLUES**

- ⊙ Someone disappears from the *Challenger*. Both Explorators are still in their bays.
- ⊙ An earthquake rips through the trench, damaging the base's systems.
- ⊙ A massive form, knifing through the water, not quite out of sight.
- ⊙ An enormous, regular structure protruding from the ocean floor.
- ⊙ Silty footprints on the floor of the *Challenger*.
- ⊙ Dreams of a deep, regular breathing, close by and all around.
- ⊙ Encounters with deep sea creatures familiar from previous undersea expeditions, but gargantuan in size.
- ⊙ Samples taken from the sea floor contain a black, viscous, foul-smelling substance of unknown origin.
- ⊙ Sensors detect a faint signal which sounds like speech, but of no known language.
- ⊙ An Explorator's battery suddenly drains away to nothing while out of the base.
- ⊙ An Explorator scoops up fragments of metal, with regular markings on them.
- ⊙ Vital supplies disappear from the *Challenger's* storage unit.

*I can barely stand to  
commit to paper our  
frenzied experience in the  
loathsome darkness of  
that ancient abyss. I  
must do so, before my  
fear-addled memory  
betrays me.*