

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 13:  
**Fleets of the Three Galaxies™**  
**Sneak Preview**

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# The Dominators

Fifty thousand years ago, the Three Galaxies were entirely transformed by a war. It was so destructive and so vast in scope as to make it the single most devastating conflict in the history of the Megaverse. The war theater wasn't limited to a single continent, or even a particular world. It spanned over 90,000 light-years, consumed hundreds of millions of star systems, and involved weapons of such unimaginable ferocity that a single one of them all but sterilized an entire galaxy. For this was a war waged by the god-like *Elder Races*. This was the **War against the Dominators**.

In order to fully appreciate the War's impact on galactic history, one must first understand the ones who precipitated it: the Dominators themselves. The actual name for the thirty foot (9.1 m) tall warmongers' species has been forever lost. The other *Elder Races* simply called them "the Dominators." From the moment they first left their homeworld, the Dominators seemed fanatically driven to subjugate and enslave every other race in Creation. What no one truly knows, even to this day, is why the Dominators decided to wipe out all life in the Three Galaxies,

and why they felt they had no choice but to do so. The Elven historian *Sarhon Witstaff* perhaps described them most aptly: "Their name is what they are."

## The Second Era

The **War against the Dominators** is the defining event of the Second Galactic Era, if only because modern researchers know little else about it. Everyone agrees that the Second Era ended 50,000 years ago with the destruction of the Dominator homeworld, but there is debate as to when it actually began. Most historians use the arbitrary starting date of five million years ago, coinciding with the assumed construction of *Center*, on Phase World. A smaller group uses the creation of the *Monro-Tet Obelisks*, carbon dated back a million years. Regardless of when it began, the beings that lived during the Second Era were light-years more advanced than any species alive today, with cultures that had endured for millions of years. It was a time when godlike beings ruled the universe. There was no distinction between technology and magic, because both were so advanced as to be indistinguishable. What little machinery the *Elder Races* have left behind gives only tantalizing hints as to how they lived, and of what they were capable. Perhaps the greatest testament to their deific abilities lies in the fact that, in going to war, they unleashed weapons whose might was great enough to erase all traces of both their makers and their victims.

There is no surviving record that lists all of the *Elder Races*, but a few of them are mentioned by name in a 100,000 year old document that once belonged to the *Star Elves*. Called **The Lay of Treenen**, this fragment is part of an epic poem of unknown total length. In it are mentioned eight specific *Elder Races*: the nebulous *Boiaw*, the *Moochay*, the winged *Rothamril*, the *Promethai*, the *Ferothold Gardeners*, the *Irdra-orm*, the young *Astralfein* (who later became known as the *Star Elves*), and one other. The Lay also makes mention of "fleets of shape-shifting dreadnoughts," leading many to presume that the aforementioned *Promethai* are, in fact, the *Prometheans* of Phase World.

The eighth *Elder Race* mentioned, though indirectly, are the "*Bar-aldack Kelger-est*." If translated into Trade One, this phrase literally means: "those who would dominate".

## Is there no Fate but what we make?

At some distant point in the past, the Dominators became obsessed by a prophecy. The oldest *Promethean* Second Stagers are certain that this dark prediction came from an alien species, since the Dominators have no oracular powers, and they suspect the culprits to be the mysterious *Lords of Entropy*. It may be that, as gods, they were always obsessed with it, as the Norse pantheon has always believed that it would come to an end during Ragnarok. Regardless of how it came to them, this prophecy became the single motivation for all of the Dominators' actions.

It was foretold that the Dominators would be wiped out completely by the other species in the Three Galaxies. To deific beings that were immortal, the concept of death was so frightening as to be almost inconceivable, and the extermination of their entire race even more so. It caused the Dominators to panic, and they dedicated their lives to ensuring that this turn of events would never come to pass. For, much like the Norse gods, the Dominators believed in Fate. They were certain that time flowed

in only one direction; that the past ceased to exist as soon as it became the past, and that future events were set in stone. So, they came to the conclusion that the only way to outwit the prophecy was to destroy every other species in the universe. After all, how could the Dominators be destroyed if they killed off all of their enemies first?

Contrary to what the younger races of the Third Era believe, the time of the Elder Races was one of unprecedented peace. The Three Galaxies had not known war for a hundred million years. Thus it came as a total surprise when the Dominators began what they called “the great work.” The other Elder Races were completely unprepared for what was to transpire next.

The first to suffer were the **Boiaw**, who had existed for eons as clouds of nebular gasses, light-years in size. They spent centuries at a time developing complex mathematics, and formulating theories. Having little in common with the more solid Elder Races, the Boiaw had never fought with anyone. The Dominators fell upon them, and enslaved them, for the Boiaw were greatly needed. Compacting them into tight containment fields, the Boiaw were to become the *power cores* and *central computer minds* that would drive the Dominators’ Star Fortresses – the chariots that would carry them triumphantly across the Three Galaxies. The Dominators cared little for the agonies of the Boiaw, who, used to the vastness of interstellar space, were now as close to being in Hell as they could have ever thought possible. The Dominators knew that had they not subjugated the Boiaw, they would have paid dearly for it sometime in the future. Better that some other species should suffer, rather than be given the chance to make the prophecy come true.

The Dominators then began their drive in earnest. Spreading out from their homeworld in the *Thundercloud Galaxy*, they eliminated hundreds of species before they encountered any resistance. Thousands more were turned into dust before the remaining Elder Races finally joined together to stop the carnage. *The Dominators* saw the powers aligning against them as proof that the prophecy was indeed true, the other species in the universe *were* out to destroy them. They couldn’t see that they were victims of a pre-destinational paradox, that in trying to avoid their fate, they had in fact set events in motion that would ensure their downfall.

## The End of Everything

Not all of the Elder Races joined the fight to stop the Dominators. A few of them decided that this war marked the end of everything they had ever known, and either fled or hid themselves away. **The Astralfein**, for example, used powerful magic/technology to make their planet invisible. Other races collectively traveled through time to the distant future, bypassing not only the end of the Second Era, but the Third as well. Several races, such as the vampiric **Sadut**, dug bunkers miles beneath the surface of their worlds and went into a state of suspended animation that continues to this day. In the *Corkscrew Galaxy*, the **Architects** built a giant defensive sensor net, and then tried to hide behind it (they were ultimately exterminated anyway).

Those who chose to unite and make a stand unleashed such weapons and magic/technologies as should never be seen again. The Elder Races fought back with a terrifying ferocity, but this only seemed to drive the Dominators on still stronger.

It was then that the *first* of the **Cosmo-Knights** began to appear. In retrospect, many **Star Elf** scholars believe that the war against the Dominators was causing such a loss of life that the nature of the *Cosmic Forge* itself was in danger. The **Promethean Second Stagers** fear that this was the intent all along, for the **Lords of Entropy** to instigate such strife that the *Cosmic Forge* would have no choice but to step in and reveal itself. The *Cosmo-Knights* eventually helped turn the tide, and after thousands of years of fighting, the Dominators had been forced to retreat back to the core of the *Thundercloud* from whence they had come.

It should also be noted that around this time many “younger races” were beginning to develop throughout the Three Galaxies as well. The Elder Races, who were now very few in number, knew that they would not be around long enough to protect these newer species should the Dominators regroup and begin their campaign of genocide all over again. If they were going to pass into oblivion, then they were determined to take the Dominators with them. However, their home solar system was so heavily defended that everyone feared to attack it.

So it was that the Elders most powerful creation, the **Black Hole Projector**, was built. The weapon was only fired once, but it was enough. In an instant, the Dominators’ solar system, and everything around it for one hundred light-years, imploded. A hundred thousand stars collapsed in on each other in the time it takes a heart to beat. A shock wave that was part *Ley Line Storm*, part *gamma ray burst* roared outwards from the center of the *Thundercloud Galaxy* at the speed of light. Everywhere the blast front passed, it scoured planets of life, killing hundreds of emergent younger races and millions of animal species. Those who survived its passing had their evolution set back by millennia.

Only a few hundred Dominators survived, and many of those sank into an indescribable despair. The prophecy had come true, and their people were all but extinct. As for the few remaining Elder Races, many of them, seeing the destruction that the war had wrought, willed themselves to exist no more, and vanished. The Second Galactic Era was over. It would be forty thousand years before another one would begin.

## The Third Era

During the Interim, while the Three Galaxies became filled with demons, *Splugorth*, and Alien Intelligences, the surviving Dominators remained very quiet. They disassociated themselves from one another, and considered what they should do next. Being a divine race, they did not have children or procreate as we might understand it. Their remaining numbers were all that were left of their species.

A few of them eventually shook themselves out of their despair, and took up the *Great Work* once again. Only by this time the galaxies were populated by scores of tiny, mortal creatures. The other Elder Races were nowhere to be seen, save for the bothersome *Astralfein*, and the *Promethai*, who had cloistered themselves on *Phase World* never to leave it again. These younger races would be easy prey, the Dominators figured, provided they were never allowed to unite together on a grand scale, which seemed unlikely, given how much they fought with one another. When they were all destroyed, the prophecy’s grip would finally be broken.

To the younger races, which live such tragically short lives, the Dominators' attacks seem almost random, but they are not. Since they are immortal, a Dominator's sense of time is quite different from that of humans, Kreeghor, or even Altess. They can afford to move at a slow but determined pace, striking when and where they want. In the past one thousand years, there have been *three documented* Dominator attacks. **The first** was in 8997 TE, when the, then-unified, Wulfen Empire was ravaged by a fleet of three Star Fortresses. Whether the Dominators were cooperating, or just all happened to attack the same region of space at roughly the same time, is unknown (most people pray the latter is the truth). This attack was rebuffed by the Wulfen Empire, who destroyed one of the three massive starships and forced the other two to retreat. However, the fighting left the Wulfen weakened and easy prey for the Kreeghor.

**The second** Dominator attack took place in 9612 TE, in the *Anvil Galaxy*, and resulted in the total destruction of the *Asu* people. This battle took place inside the Golgan Republik, but saw limited action on behalf of the Argosy. The Kouncil Politik thought it better to sacrifice one planet to satiate the Dominators, rather than send millions of good soldiers to fight in what was obviously a lost cause. Seven Cosmo-Knights were involved in this fight, which is most likely the only reason that the lone attacking Dominator was destroyed.

**The most recent battle** took place in the *Thundercloud Galaxy*, in 9880 TE. A single Star Fortress was heavily damaged (but not destroyed) during a protracted fight with the *Splugorth Kingdom of Dyssleth*. The Kittani were eventually ordered to fly suicide missions, crashing their ships at top speed into the hull of the Dominator Fortress, and detonating their engine cores. According to stolen reports, the Star Fortress was so tough that even the Kittani "Slicer" cannons could not cut through it. The Dominator eventually *retreated* from the combat zone.

It is now generally accepted by every major power bloc that the Dominators represent one of the gravest threats the Three Galaxies have ever known. Should the Dominators organize or band together for a coordinated attack, their intended target is doomed. As it is, it would take a fleet of ships to counter the power of a single Star Fortress. TGE and CAF officers both have "unofficial" orders to fight at each other's sides should a Dominator ship appear in their domain of space.

## Dominator Magic/Technology

As members of one of the Elder Races, the Dominators have a level of technical achievement that borders on the metaphysical. Regrettably, almost all of this knowledge has been channeled towards waging war. Even then, the Dominators do not concern themselves with things like space fighters, giant robots, and fleets that number fifty ships or less. Their goals are grandiose, and so their weapons are tailored to the destruction of huge fleets, massive capital ships, moons, and entire planets.

A writer from Terra Prime was once quoted as saying that any sufficiently advanced technology would be indistinguishable from magic. To take his analogy further, any technology built by deific beings **is** magic. All of the weapons used by the Dominators, from their handheld weapons to the massive cannons on their planetoid-sized starships, are considered to be magic in nature. This means their weapons inflict damage to be-

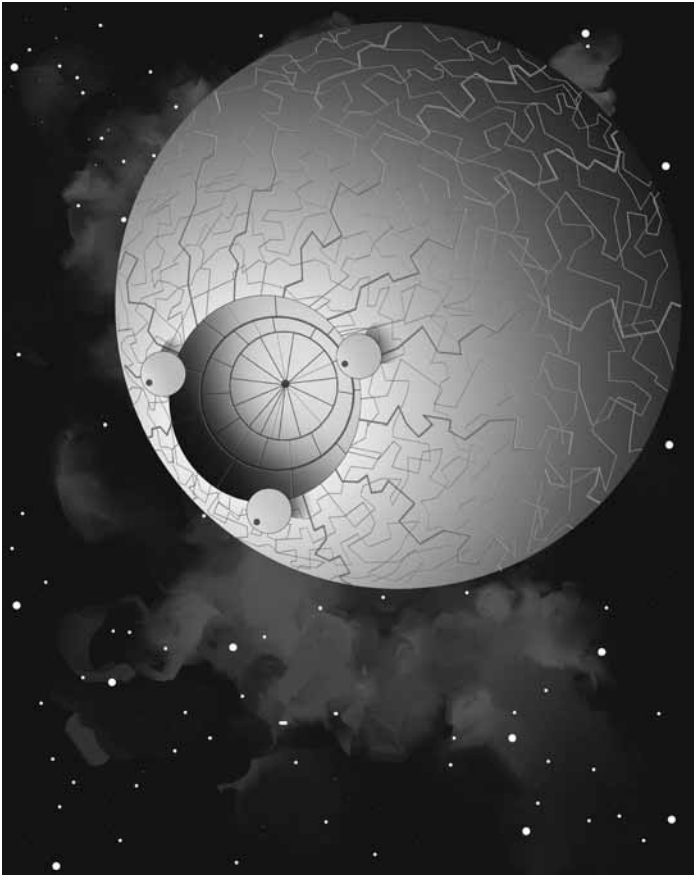
ings that are affected only by magic (vampires take half damage). *Phase fields* are still quite effective protection, but they are rare and comparatively few. Only the **Cosmo-Knights** are largely unaffected by Dominator energy weapons and take only 1/100th damage from all Dominator energy attacks. Many point to this as proof that the Cosmo-Knights were indeed sent by the Cosmic Forge specifically to stop the Dominator threat. Note that although the Knights take no damage whatsoever from beams of *Cosmic Energy*, they can still be grievously injured by the blade of a Dominator's *Star Splitter*.

**Life-Force Reactors:** The Star Fortresses are powered not by anti-matter or nuclear reactors, but by *living beings*. Each ship is built around a *Boiaw* who has been forced to live for all these long ages trapped in a temporal stasis chamber. This process is very similar to the Bio-Wizardry or Rune Magic employed by the Splugorth, and somehow provides all the energy the Dominators need to power their world-sized vessels. Since a Star Fortress is mystically tied into the Boiaw's life force, given enough time, the hull of the fortress automatically regenerates damage as if the incredible spacecraft were healing.

**Cosmic Energy Weapons:** The Dominators are the only race in the entire universe known to have developed weapons that can fire directed cosmic energy. Even defining "cosmic energy" is difficult. Scientifically, it is a mixture of protons, alpha particles, and heavy atomic nuclei. It behaves like a laser, but has similar wave mechanics to a particle beam. It affects magical constructs, and shares many of the supernatural attributes of *sunlight*, even though it contains no photons. Cosmic energy has absolutely no radioactive signature or aftereffects. Cosmo-Knights can generate it by will alone, making many think it is somehow related to the phenomenon called *zero-point energy*. In short, no one knows what it is or where it comes from.

**Electric Reactive Armor:** Both the hulls of the Dominator starships and their personal body armor are built to greatly lessen the impact from explosive and kinetic attacks. The armor is made up of multiple conductive plates separated by insulating materials. A charge is then sent through the plates, creating a high-power capacitor. When an incoming body (like a missile or rail gun burst) tries to penetrate the plates, it closes the circuit and discharges the capacitor. This dumps a great deal of energy into the penetrator, causing it to vaporize or even turn into a plasma. **In game terms**, Dominator armor, whether on their person or on their ships, takes *half damage* from all kinetic and explosive attacks, including nuclear and anti-matter warheads.

**Quantum Wormhole Drives:** The Star Fortresses of the Dominators use a method of propulsion as fantastic as their weapon systems. Again, because no Dominator ship has ever been captured intact, the exact nature of their engines is a matter of conjecture. It is most widely accepted that they use some kind of wormhole drive to tunnel under realspace and move about at fantastic speeds. When a Star Fortress needs to relocate in a hurry, it opens a massive tear in the fabric of the universe, and drops down into it. Once under normal space, the ship can traverse a multitude of "hyper-pipes," subway-like tunnels in hyperspace that crisscross the entirety of the Three Galaxies. While traveling within a wormhole, the ship is not subject to many physical laws, and can reach a top speed of 300 light-years per hour!



## A Dominator Star Fortress

Among the most terrifying sights in all the Three Galaxies is the approach of one of these planetoid-sized vessels, for it can only mean death and destruction on an unprecedented scale. A Star Fortress is a titanic sphere, 30 miles (48 km) in diameter. On its forward-facing hemisphere is a circular indentation seven miles (11.2 km) across, surrounded by three round weapon ports, each a mile (1.6 km) wide in themselves. Its surface is almost totally smooth, broken only by gun turrets the size of small mountains that evenly cover its outer hull. It has no apparent engines, it just glides along in deathly silence.

The outer hull of the ship is a mile thick. If one were to concentrate enough firepower to blast a hole through it and look inside, one could see a second, smaller sphere resting inside, connected to the outer hull by a spider web of massive catwalks, pipes, and arcs of electricity. Nestled safely in this internal core can be found the ship's lone occupant, one of the ancient Dominators. It is believed that there are fewer than two hundred Star Fortresses left in the Three Galaxies, but no one is certain.

**Class:** Mobile planet.

**Crew:** One Dominator.

**Troops:** None. But Inner Core may have 2D6 slaves or playthings of diverse races.

**M.D.C. by Location:**

Anti-Matter Cannons (3) – 200,000 each

Heavy Beam Weapons (100) – 15,000 each

Retractable Beam Turrets (5,000) – 1,200 each

Inner Core Hull per 40 foot (12.2 m) square section – 200

\* Internal Core – 3 million

Outer Hull per 5000 square foot (464.5 m) section – 7,500

\*\* Main Body (Outer Hull) – 20 million

\* Destroying the Internal Core kills the Dominator, and triggers the destruction of the entire ship. See self-destruct at the end of the description for details.

\*\* Depleting the M.D.C. of the Main Body renders the Star Fortress a floating wreck. It is not be able to move or fire weapons, but provided that the Inner Core is still intact, it begins *healing* itself.

**Speed:**

FTL: Can travel 300 light-years per hour via a hyper-pipe wormhole.

Sub-Light: Mach 4 in space. The ship is far too large to enter an atmosphere.

Range: Unlimited. The Dominators don't require supplies.

**Statistical Data:**

Height: Outer shell – 30 miles (48 km). Inner core – 10 miles (16 km).

Length: Outer shell – 30 miles (48 km). Inner core – 10 miles (16 km).

Width: Outer shell – 30 miles (48 km). Inner core – 10 miles (16 km).

Mass: Estimated at 9 trillion tons.

Power System: One Boiaw compressed in a temporal stasis bio-reactor.

**Weapon Systems:**

**1. Anti-Matter Cannons (3):** Each of these weapons works by accelerating a dense stream of frozen anti-hydrogen to near light speed. These weapons are very cumbersome, and can only be used against targets that are capital class or larger. They are relatively slow in their firing, but they are capable of completely devastating planetary targets such as entire cities. All of these weapons are located in the front-facing hemisphere of the Star Fortress. They can be fired separately, or volleyed together against one target. Each weapon has an arc of fire of 60 degrees, and creates a beam of energy a mile (1.6 km) wide.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Planet.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Ship.

Weight: Not applicable, part of the mobile planet's hull.

Range: 200,000 miles in space.

Mega-Damage: Fired singularly, each cannon inflicts 1D6x1 million M.D. If combined, the blast destroys **everything** in its path of fire, regardless of M.D.C. Against a planet, a combined volley will inflict 2D6x1 million M.D. to a ten mile area (16 km).

Rate of Fire: Each cannon may fire once every 8 minutes (32 melee rounds).

Payload: Unlimited.

**2. Heavy Beam Weaponry (100):** Spaced evenly around the outer surface of the ship are a series of beam weapons far more powerful than anything currently produced in the Three

Galaxies. These weapon mounts are placed miles apart, so generally, they cannot be combined into volleys, unless the target is very large, like a planet, moon or massive, city-sized space station. Each weapon may adjust its arc of fire by ten degrees.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Capital Ship.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Installation.

Weight: Not applicable, part of the mobile planet's hull.

Range: 200,000 miles in space.

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10,000 M.D. per blast.

Rate of Fire: Each cannon may fire once per melee round (15 seconds).

Payload: Unlimited.

**3. Retractable Beam Turrets (5,000):** The lightest of the Star Fort's armaments. They are the Dominators' idea of point defense, which is laughable considering that they are the same size as the main guns on several modern battleships. These beam emitters are spaced evenly around the surface of the Fortress to cover it from every attack vector. The average distance between turrets is less than a mile, and so they can be easily volleyed together in groups of four or more. Each gun can rotate 360 degrees, and has a 180 degree arc of fire.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Ship.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Fighter/Anti-Missile.

Weight: Not applicable, part of the mobile planet's hull.

Range: 200,000 miles (320,000 km) in space.

Mega-Damage: 1D4x1,000 M.D. each.

Rate of Fire: Each weapon may fire twice per melee round (15 seconds).

Payload: Unlimited.

**4. Plasma Shockwave:** The Dominators are far from stupid, and despite their near total reliance on overwhelming firepower to win battles, they are excellent tacticians. They fully understand that their enemies will try to overwhelm them with swarming attacks of space fighters and torpedoes, as well as try to bring their battleships into point-blank range for mass nuclear volleys or kamikaze attacks.

To counter this, the Star Fortress can vent plasma gas from its power core. The gas fills space with burning vapor, destroying all incoming missiles, fighters, and combat shuttles that enter the vapor cloud (roll to dodge at -2). Cosmo-Knights take no damage from the plasma shockwave. Firing the plasma disrupts the temporal shielding of the Star Fortress for one minute (4 melee rounds).

Primary Purpose: Anti-Ship /Anti-Missile.

Secondary Purpose: Area Denial.

Weight: Not applicable.

Range: Radius of 300 miles (480 km).

Mega-Damage: 1D6x1,000 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Once every five minutes (20 melee rounds).

Payload: Unlimited.

**5. Temporal Shielding:** The Star Fortress does not have force fields as we might understand them, but can erect a large area of distorted time around itself. This *temporal shielding* plays havoc with Cosmo-Knights, fighter pilots, and starship crews, which often gives the Dominator the initiative in a battle.

The shield is a bubble 600 miles (960 km) in diameter, with the Star Fortress sitting in the middle. Any person passing through the field must make a saving throw against magic of 17 or higher to avoid the effects of the field. Robots and A.I.s must also roll to save.

Effects: Passing through the shielding destroys a live person's perceptions of time, causing him to feel tired, confused, and to believe he has been busy – fighting, working, etc. – for much longer than he actually has been. Characters who fail their saving throws are -10% on all skills; -60% if the skill requires the measurement of time or the setting of timers. They are also -2 to strike, parry, and dodge, -3 on initiative, and lose one melee action. **Note:** Robots and artificial intelligences (A.I.s) are similarly affected, and though penalties are half (round down), the duration is double.

Duration: Those who become affected by the temporal field remain sluggish and confused for 10 minutes (40 melee rounds)!

Range: 285 miles (456 km) out from the surface of the Star Fortress; it is a bubble.

### Additional Systems of Note:

- 1. Sensors:** The Dominator Star Fortress has all the standard sensor systems found on starships. In addition, it can track 15,000 separate targets to a distance of 500,000 miles (800,000 km). It should be noted that the Star Fortress itself is a non-reflective object which is very difficult to spot visually until it is right on top of its target. The Wormhole drive means that it does not produce a gravity wake that can be easily detected.
- 2. Regeneration:** Since it is connected to a living being, the Dominator Star Fortress can regenerate damage inflicted to it in the same way as a person might *heal* from a cut or burn. For game purposes, the ship recuperates 30,000 M.D.C. per hour, but in order to do so it cannot be involved in combat or any other action during that time. It simply sits quietly and regenerates. If pressed, it can heal 6,000 M.D.C. per hour and continue fighting or flying.
- 3. Self-Destruct:** The Dominators refuse to let any part of their Fortresses fall into enemy hands. The stasis chamber that contains the Boiaw is tied directly into the brain waves of the Dominator onboard. If he is killed, then the stasis chamber collapses, and the Boiaw inside, now free from its millennia of suffering, gleefully commits suicide by blowing the ship to ribbons. This explosion inflicts enough damage to destroy everything within a one hundred mile radius (160 km). If the battle took place over a planet, which is most likely, then 1D4x10 giant pieces of flaming debris rain down, each impacting with the same force as a mass driver, the planet being saved from the Dominator only to suffer lasting ecological damage.

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