

# LEGENDARY PLANET



## THE SCAVENGED CODEX

BY MIKE SHEL AND  
MIKE WELHAM

STARFINDER  
COMPATIBLE



# THE SCAVENGED CODEX

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# WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE LEGENDARY PLANET: THE SCAVENGED CODEX

The Scavenged Codex continues the saga of the Legendary Planet Adventure Path by taking your heroes to yet another world called Rythes. Fresh off their hard-won freedom in *To Worlds Unknown*, they receive an opportunity to investigate a promising solution to their dilemma of being stranded on Argosa. This involves convincing a criminal gang boss to let them use his interplanetary gate to reach Rythes, and then a harrowing journey across the wasteland peninsula of the Broken Baronies to locate the pieces of an ancient codex called the *Opus Aeterna*. Mutant barbarians, misguided zealots, and savage predators challenge every step of the way, and the PCs must press on whether by luck, skill, or guile. In the end, they come to new realizations about the ancient Patrons and the nature of the Weave between planets. And their only hope of returning home lies with The Scavenged Codex.

This adventure picks up from *To Worlds Unknown*, and assumes the PCs have already experienced the events of that storyline. They should continue to adjust to life on Argosa away from the familiar cultures and traditions of home. Likewise, their newfound mythic power granted by some mystery of the Patrons both aids and perplexes them as they adapt to an expanded multiverse of possibilities. The Scavenged Codex represents just one more stop on a tour of many different worlds over the course of the entire Adventure Path. This particular chapter explores a host of post-apocalyptic themes, meant to strike a familiar chord with fans of that particular genre. From distrustful, hard-bitten survivors scrambling for resources to rising powers preying upon the gullibility of those unfamiliar with the ashes of the past, the adventure tells many different stories across the backdrop of an alien landscape, providing new gaming experiences for everyone involved.

Continuing our principle of delivering first-class product for the *Starfinder Roleplaying Game*, Legendary Games has brought together a group of authors, artists, and contributors—including industry veterans, as well as talented newcomers—all in an effort to create something inspiring and unique. Combining rich story and background with innovative layout and beautiful aesthetics, we hope to create gaming experiences that are second to none. This product follows in that proud tradition, and we hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Now go create a mythic surge of gaming! Your players deserve it!

*Neil*



# THE SCAVENGED CODEx

Stranded escapees of an alien abduction face new challenges on the planet Argosa. As they desperately search for a way home, a new benefactor presents them with a promising opportunity. While it could foster more conflict with the powerbrokers of Zel-Argose and the barbaric culture of a distant, apocalyptic world, it also represents their best chance of returning to their former lives. Can they brave the unknown dangers of Coterie politics and yet another gate to reclaim the lost lore of the Patrons? Or will they fall victim to those still hoarding the secrets of *The Scavenged Codex*?

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The ancient Patron civilization actively encouraged the evolution and growth of new worlds, using the powerful gates and gravity wells of Argosa to extend their reach across the multiverse. A fertile planet named Rythes attracted their interest, not simply as a sustainable colony, but also for its unique minerals and crystalline formations which helped refine their technology. In time, Patron engineers crafted unique artifacts from these resources, using them to enhance their interplanetary gates with regenerative terraforming properties to maintain the worlds they sought to nurture. On Rythes, these gates became known as the *Tears of Eternity*, and their energies helped scrub pollutants from the air, purify local water sources, and even control the weather and seismic activity to create a stable paradise.

Eventually, however, the equally powerful Principalities made war upon the Patrons, targeting Rythes with a massive assault and crashing its gates from multiple worlds. Even worse, they subverted the *Tears of Eternity*, corrupting the Patron artifacts to sow disease and death instead. Most of the *Tears* couldn't bear this taint and detonated, erasing entire cities and dooming the planet by poisoning its seas, ending the rains, and withering a once vibrant world. Earthquakes also wracked the land, and those who survived the resulting cataclysm quickly descended into chaos, becoming barbaric scavengers scurrying for power and resources just to survive.

As madness and anarchy consumed Rythes, further depredations assaulted the storehouses of Patron lore. Some factions worked to preserve such knowledge, hopeful of someday restoring the *Tears*—while others jealously guarded it, refusing to let such technology fall into Principality hands. One priceless treasure mislaid during this time was the *Opus Aeterna*—a crystalline tome which explored the nature of the Weave and how to maintain the gates linking so many worlds together. Agents of the Principalities walked the barrens for centuries trying to seize this potent artifact, but the few remaining allies of the Patrons separated its pages, scattering them to the far corners of Rythes to hide them. With the passage of time, the loss of gates to other worlds, and the rapid descent into barbarism, both sides dwindled

away, cut off from reinforcements for generations until most forgot the reasons behind their conflict, as well as the importance of the *Tears* and the *Opus Aeterna*.

Tens of thousands of years have passed since that time, and portions of the undetonated *Tears* have finally begun ridding themselves of infection, slowly healing the land around them to create small oases in the vast wasteland. One such *Tear*, at the end of a rugged peninsula, partially repowered a long-dormant gateway, enabling one-way travel from Argosa again. Over the ensuing years, early Argosan explorers would arrive on Rythes, quickly becoming marooned there, and then forced to survive in the barrens just like the native inhabitants. This influx of resources enabled new settlements to spring up across the peninsula, some forming monastic orders spurred on by the discovery of inscribed panes of glass from the *Opus Aeterna*. Most never understood the significance of these etchings, but the beautiful crystalline objects gained religious significance among various contemplatives in their desert strongholds, most of whom continue to divide the glass leaves and ignorantly copy their circuit-like patterns onto scrolls as decorations for hymns and psalms composed for a false god.

Today, the remaining pages of the *Opus Aeterna* lie scattered across the peninsula and its aptly named Broken Baronies. Agents of the Bellianic Accord and the Ultari Hegemony—each descended from the Patrons and Principalities—have attempted to recover as much of this invaluable tome as possible, inserting themselves into the local population and surviving as best they can. However, because of the singular, malfunctioning gate on Rythes, none of these agents have ever returned to Argosa, leading their allies across the Weave to believe them lost to whatever cataclysm claimed the lost Patron civilization. In reality, a more recent arriver on Rythes—a parasitic plant designed by the Hegemony to infiltrate and conquer new worlds—has enjoyed greater success in piecing together the *Opus Aeterna*. It now threatens to remake the planet in its image even as it seeks to re-establish contact with its dread masters. Once successful, it intends to offer them the ancient artifact in exchange for a higher position in the Hegemony and dominion over all of Rythes.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A few weeks after the PCs rescue Relstanna—their newfound elali ally featured in *To Worlds Unknown*—the alien seer approaches them with information about a mysterious world called Rythes, which she believes could hold information to enable their return home. Unfortunately, a Zel-Argose gang boss called Mr. Sarlu controls the only gate leading to Rythes, and it requires a few unsavory tasks on his behalf before he allows them to use it.

After meeting Mr. Sarlu's demands, the PCs proceed through his Red Gate, arriving on Rythes where they receive a dreadful surprise—namely, that the portal only works one-way. If another gate exists which can return them to



Argosa, the locals know nothing of it. In their ensuing travels, the PCs discover that savage cannibals and mutant predators populate the barrens of Rythes, while settlements of marooned travelers and multi-generation survivors have established small baronies as the last bastions of a ruined world. Inquiries about lost knowledge and ancient codices earns them a recommendation to seek the monasteries among the wastes, and these efforts slowly uncover fragments of the *Opus Aeterna*.

The PCs' journey eventually leads them to Trebelbet, where they meet Khedri, a krang allied with the Bellianic Accord who shares their predicament in being stranded on Rythes. He eagerly aids their search for the *Opus*, and further warns of the dangers they can expect among the Broken Baronies. After falling on the wrong side of the law, the PCs face their own potential exile to a nearby island, allowing them to meet with the fragmented spirit of a Patron scion, who recognizes their potential and provides them with information on how to reunite the remaining fragments of the codex.

Finally, the search for the *Opus* brings the PCs to the Barony of the Bloom, which has seen the most profound environmental rebirth. A sinister undercurrent pervades the barony's Monastery of St. Ioh, however, as Hegemony-spawned parasites have infested the order's monks, who now plot to spread their dread infestation to other strongholds. After defeating the mother plant controlling these thralls, the PCs finally retrieve the remainder of the *Opus Aeterna* and use its information to repair the Red Gate so they can return to Argosa, hopeful of performing a similar miracle on a gate that can take them home. But even in victory, the PCs face one final betrayal when Mr. Sarlu tries to seize the scavenged codex upon their return. They must defend themselves one last time to see the artifact safely to the Bellianic Accord.

## ADVANCEMENT TRACK

Designed for four PCs, *The Scavenged Codex* builds upon the Legendary Planet Adventure Path first introduced with *To Worlds Unknown*. PCs should be at least 5th level at the start of the adventure. They should then reach 6th level shortly after completing Part One and venturing through the Red Gate to Rythes. Upon exploring the Broken Baronies and securing the Patron's blessing in Part Two, they should attain 7th level. In Part Three, the PCs should accumulate enough XP to reach 8th level just prior to Mr. Sarlu's betrayal.

## PART 1: A DEBT REPAID

Sometime after the events of *To Worlds Unknown*—wherein the PCs rescued Relstanna from the clutches of the Hegemony's erstwhile jagladine agent, Lomrick—their grateful ally secures better (and safer) lodgings for the PCs in Zel-Argose while she looks into their current predicament. The elali occasionally returns to ask more questions about the PCs, especially regarding their species, civilization, and abduction by the Hegemony. With this insight, she then leaves Argosa to research ways to return them home, consulting with her off-world allies among the Bellianic Accord. While the PCs await her return, they may freely explore Zel-Argose, restock, and recover from their earlier ordeals. Relstanna's associate, the jaskirri rogue Kaetrix, watches over them in her absence, recommending the PCs avoid drawing unnecessary attention to themselves lest the Hegemony take an interest in recovering them and avenging the loss of Lomrick.

Approximately two weeks later, Relstanna returns to Argosa, arranging a private meeting with the PCs at her favorite restaurant, an establishment called *The Crescent Eye*. She invites Kaetrix, as well, counting on the jaskirri to keep an eye out for trouble while she speaks with the PCs over dinner. Read or paraphrase the following as she silently shares her findings with a telepathic conversation:

*'I'm sorry it took so long to get back to you. I owe you a great debt, and your good deed deserved a swifter response, but, alas, traveling off-world is risky these days. The Hegemony moves boldly against the free worlds of the Weave, but, thankfully, they know better than to mess with Argosa. You're safe here—for now. It won't last, though. And that's yet another reason to get you home as quickly as we can.'*

*'To that end, I used the information you gave me about yourselves, your experiences, and everything Kaetrix learned about the gate that brought you here. I shared it with my friends in the Accord, and they believe they've identified a means of getting you home. But I'm afraid it won't be easy.'*

*'You see, a long time ago, our greatest ancestors—the Patrons—established strongholds of learning and innovation on a world called Rythes. There, they perfected the principles of the Weave in ways that surpass our own understanding, and they recorded this knowledge in a crystalline codex called the *Opus Aeterna*. There was a great war, however, between the Patrons and the Principalities. It ruined Rythes and—much like your own situation—stranded it by severing its links to the Weave. Only recently a gate to Rythes started functioning again. It's called the Red Gate, and it's here...on Argosa. We've sent agents through it before. And so has the Hegemony. All in an effort to retrieve the *Opus Aeterna*. But none have returned—for either side.'*

*'We're certain this codex holds the best possible chance of finding your way home. After all, if a gate to Rythes is working again, whatever repaired it could potentially restore the one to your world, as well. The codex should have that information, and it may also identify alternate routes from other worlds that could reach your planet. With the knowledge it contains, I'm certain it holds the answers you seek. And, perhaps more importantly for the Accord, if you return the codex to us, we'll not only see that it gets you home. We'll greatly reward you, as well.'*

Relstanna goes on to explain that a gangster known as Mr. Sarlu currently controls the Red Gate. She knows little of this unpleasant character, sharing that Kaetrix heard he plans on forming a new Coterie in Zel-Argose and using the reactivated gate as a powerbase from which to grow his influence. She recommends the PCs exercise caution in dealing with him, as any move against a Coterie—upstart or otherwise—could draw attention from the Auditor's enforcers who would likely seize the gate and ruin their chances of using it. On the other hand, dealing with Mr. Sarlu—no matter how unsavory—promises a greater chance of securing access by appealing to his vanity and greed. Given the PCs' growing reputation in Zel-Argose, Relstanna also believes the gangster might trade access to the gate in exchange for their services. In fact, Relstanna's inquiries have already secured an interview with Mr. Sarlu at his compound, and the gangster has expressed interest in proposing such an offer.

After sharing this opportunity, Relstanna entertains any questions the PCs may have, but she has little additional information to provide. If the PCs wish to ask around Zel-Argose about Mr. Sarlu before meeting him, allow them to attempt Culture checks to gather information and consult the table below for the cumulative information they learn.

### LOCAL LORE

RESULT	RUMOR
5+	Few people know much about Mr. Sarlu. He lives in an exotic compound on the northeast side of town and rarely leaves except on important business. When he does, he's always in a big sealed carriage, causing many to speculate about his appearance.
10+	Mr. Sarlu's compound receives frequent shipments of fresh water and other liquids at all hours of the day. A bystander mentions he once heard sloshing sounds coming from the gangster's carriage as it passed by on the street.
15+	In recent days, Mr. Sarlu has hired several mercenaries, presumably as a build-up of forces to protect his Red Gate from a hostile takeover by more powerful Coterie.
20+	Mr. Sarlu probably chose his name as a pseudonym to protect his real identity, because a sarlu is actually an aquatic creature from off-world, similar to a large eel or sea serpent.
25+	Much of Mr. Sarlu's wealth comes from the drug trade in Zel-Argose. He's cornered the market on a new euphoric called Screen and no one else can figure out how to make it.

### A. UNSAVORY ELEMENTS

Getting to Mr. Sarlu's compound proves relatively easy. Kaetrix provides the PCs with the address, and their evening appointment time. Merchants, couriers, and guardsmen initially crowd the streets, but they quickly clear as Argosa's primary sun—Becedar—sets and its three moons become ascendant, each one in a different phase as they illuminate the night sky. Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs approach the compound for the first time:

*In the light of Argosa's three moons, a large structure of pale-pink, molded stone sits incongruously among the broken rubble and burnt-out husks of nearby buildings. Its strange architecture calls seashells to mind, consisting of domed forms 20 feet high that seamlessly meld into one another, backlit by exterior mood lighting that seems to ripple in rhythmic wave-like patterns. Four, narrow spires topped by windowed perches rise high above the compound's curved bulk, and, other than these towers, no visible windows mar the structure's surface.*

Unknown to the PCs, Mr. Sarlu recently suffered two major setbacks in his bid to secure a position in Argosa's political hierarchy. The Coterie that comprise the governing Peerage of Zel-Argose each have one or more gates under their control, but they enable off-world travel in both directions, whereas Mr. Sarlu's Red Gate can only send travelers to Rythes, not return them. As a result, he has no direct control of an off-world trade route and, knowing this, the Peerage once again declined his request to join their ranks despite his growing influence in the city. This limitation has long vexed him, but it hasn't prevented him from expanding his powerbase, as he's also cornered the market on one of Argosa's most potent drugs—a euphoric known locally as Screen. The secret to manufacturing this substance is something the other Coterie covet, and they've worked hard to infiltrate his operation so they can steal it away and permanently marginalize him.

Unfortunately, one of Mr. Sarlu's former minions—a bahgra alchemist named Basher—recently deduced the full recipe for Screen. But, since it involves certain excretions which only a sarlu can produce, he had no means of replicating it for a rival Coterie. So, he absconded with an element vital to Screen's manufacture—a bargaining chip he plans on ransoming back to Mr. Sarlu rather than depending on the gangster's fruitless dream of restoring the Red Gate to form a new Coterie. These developments have made Mr. Sarlu more desperate than ever, and this led him to take on additional mercenaries in anticipation of not only retrieving his property, but also fending off any attempts by the Coterie to capture him or overtake the Red Gate compound in his supposed moment of weakness.

By the time the PCs arrive, Mr. Sarlu has already interviewed several other sell-swords, relying on his mindreading skills to weed out anyone harboring ulterior motives in joining him (such as the same treachery displayed by Basher or an active allegiance to another Coterie). He's already turned

A. Sarlu's Compound



B. Baeboli's Emporium



away a handful of these mercenaries, but ultimately proves far more receptive to the PCs because of their relative neutrality and growing reputation. Even so, he requires that they prove themselves, and the PCs' first opportunity to do so occurs right outside the entrance to his compound.

**SHADOW AGENTS (CR 8)**

One of the mercenary bands turned away by Mr. Sarlu still lurks in the shadows of the rubble and burnt-out buildings surrounding his compound. These individuals actually work for the Surrat Coterie, also known as the Dagger in the Dark due to their affinity for manipulating shadows and carrying out assassinations. They witness the PCs' approach, and take it upon themselves to confront them as part of an intimidation tactic to limit the build-up of Mr. Sarlu's armed guards.

**GRIEGO, HESTER, AND OLORANDA, SHADOW AGENTS (3) CR 3**

XP 800 each  
Human soldier  
LN Medium humanoid (human)  
Init +6; Perception +8

**DEFENSE** HP 40 EACH  
EAC 14; KAC 17

Fort +5; Ref +5; Will +4

**OFFENSE**

Speed 30 ft.

Melee standard taclash +11 (1d4+7 S nonlethal) or unarmed strike +11 (1d4+7 B)

Ranged static arc pistol +8 (1d6+3 E; critical stun [DC 13]) or stickybomb grenade II +8 (explode [15 ft., entangled 2d4 rounds, DC 14])

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (blitz), shadow curse

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The shadow agents use their taclashes and stickybomb grenades to subdue the PCs so they can drag them away for interrogation and eventual execution.

**Morale** If reduced below 15 HP, an agent uses a *mk 1 serum of healing*, but they fight on until slain or knocked unconscious, triggering their shadow curse. Either outcome enacts a terrible curse laid upon them by the Surrat leadership, as their shadows supernaturally detach themselves within 1d4 rounds. This immediately and irrevocably kills the shadow's host, but introduces an entirely new adversary.

**STATISTICS**

Str +4; Dex +2 Con +1; Int +0; Wis +1; Cha +0

Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +8, Intimidate +8, Perception +8

Feats Improved Unarmed Strike



## PART 1: A DEBT REPAYED

**Languages** Common

**Gear** squad defiance series armor, standard taclash, static arc pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), stickybomb grenades II (2), *mk 1 serum of healing*

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Shadow Curse (Su)** When a shadow agent is slain or falls unconscious, a terrible curse activates. After 1d4 rounds, the agent's shadow detaches from the agent's body as an animated spirit to attack the agent's foes. The accursed shadow also detaches immediately if the shadow agent is stunned for more than 1 round. Activation of the shadow curse immediately kills the shadow agent if it isn't already dead.

### ACCURSED SHADOWS (VARIES)

CR –

XP –

NE Medium undead (incorporeal)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +7

### DEFENSE

HP 25 EACH

**EAC** 13; **KAC** 15

**Fort** +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +3

**Defensive Abilities** incorporeal; **Immunities** undead immunities; **Resistances** cold 5

**Weaknesses** light sensitivity

### OFFENSE

**Speed** fly 30 ft. (Su, perfect)

**Melee** chill touch +10 (1d4+2 C plus staggering chill)

**Ranged** chill breath +7 (1d4+2 C plus staggering chill)

**Offensive Abilities** douse light

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Accursed shadows despise living creatures and fight to destroy them.

**Morale** An accursed shadow fights until it or its foes are destroyed.

### STATISTICS

**Str** —; **Dex** +4; **Con** —; **Int** +0; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +2

**Skills** Perception +7, Stealth +12 (+16 in shadows)

**Languages** Common (can't speak)

**Other Abilities** unliving

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any (Plane of Shadow)

**Organization** solitary or drift (2–6)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Douse Light (Su)** As a standard action, an accursed shadow can attempt to douse a light source within 30 feet of itself. Attended or magic light sources that succeed at a DC 11 Fortitude save are unaffected; other light sources are extinguished or suppressed while they remain within 30 feet of the accursed shadow.

**Light Sensitivity (Ex)** Accursed shadows are dazzled in areas of bright light.

**Staggering Chill (Su)** Whenever the accursed shadow deals cold damage to a living creature, that creature is staggered for 1 round unless it succeeds at a DC 11 Will save.

### A1. MAIN ENTRANCE AND GUARD TOWERS (CR 6 OR 8)

Mr. Sarlu's compound has two separate entrances: one at the front and a warehouse delivery gate in the back. Fields of fire cover both of them from at least two of the four different guard towers rising 60 feet above the compound. The adventure assumes the PCs use the front door (but see the accompanying sidebar if they choose a different approach). Read the following when the PCs first arrive at the main entrance:

*The door to this building fits seamlessly within its molded stone and has no obvious handle or knocker. Made of a synthetic material, it appears off-white with touches of yellow, not unlike carved and polished ivory. A glassy globe sits within the concave door at eye level, though its unusual refracting surface reveals nothing of what lies beyond.*

Visitors need only bang on the door's surface, which elicits a dull thud. Should the PCs attempt to batter the door down, this attracts the attention of the tower guards—and they begin firing on the PCs until they are no longer in range, or come down to aid Oulek (see area A2) if the PCs give him any trouble. Because of Basher's recent betrayal and growing concerns about the Coteries seeking to claim the Red Gate, Mr. Sarlu has each tower manned all day long by elven henchmen armed with *paralytic squad machine guns*.

### SECURITY MEASURES

All doors in Mr. Sarlu's compound come from the shell of an enormous aquatic creature called a caarnsu—a species native to the gangster's original homeworld. Objects made from this material are immune to extreme temperatures (e.g., fire and cold damage), have hardness 15, 25 HP per inch of thickness, and a break DC 25. The doors in Mr. Sarlu's compound are four inches thick, giving them 100 HP each. In addition, these doors include a special mechanism with an alien keypad and passcode for unlocking them. Mr. Sarlu can change these codes from the safety of his pool (area A4) and telepathically shares them with Oulek on a daily basis so only the oulbaene can control the comings and goings of the compound. Bypassing these special locks requires a successful DC 25 Computers check to hack or Engineering check to disable, and the PC must accumulate 3 successes before suffering 2 failures to succeed. Meanwhile, a successful DC 25 Perception check while observing someone manipulating the keypad can also discern the current passcode.



## TOWER GUARDS

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Elf soldier

LN Medium humanoid (elf)

**Init** +5; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +15

### DEFENSE

HP 48 EACH

EAC 16; KAC 18

**Fort** +6; **Ref** +6; **Will** +5; +2 vs. enchantment effects

**Immunities** sleep

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 25 ft.

**Melee** carbon steel curve blade +9 (1d10+7 S; critical bleed 1d6)

**Ranged** *paralytic squad machine gun* +12 (1d10+5 P & E plus staggered [DC 15]; critical paralyzed)

stickybomb grenade II +12 (explode [15 ft., entangled 2d4 rounds, DC 15])

**Offensive Abilities** fighting styles (hit-and-run)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The guards remain in their towers, firing at the PCs unless Oulek calls for their aid.

**Morale** The guards know what Mr. Sarlu does to traitors and will not withdraw except under orders by Oulek.

### STATISTICS

**Str** +3; **Dex** +5; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +1

**Skills** Acrobatics +15, Athletics +10, Culture +10, Mysticism +15, Perception +15

**Feats** Opening Volley

**Languages** Common, Elven

**Other Abilities** elven magic

**Gear** officer ceremonial plate (thermal capacitors), *paralytic squad machine gun* with 20 heavy rounds, carbon steel curve blade, stickybomb grenades II (2)

## A2. POOLSIDE ATRIUM (CR 6)

Only a few seconds after the PCs knock, three enormous black eyeballs appear in the crystal globe set within the front door, exaggerated and distorted by the curvature of the glass. A muffled, tinny voice asks the PCs to state their business. Once they establish their appointment to see Mr. Sarlu, the door slides into the ground, revealing Oulek, a diminutive oulbaene armed with a pair of sickles. He gestures for them to come inside. Read the following when the PCs enter:

*Large, otherworldly sculptures stand along the walls of this circular chamber, painted in subtle hues. Solid ivory doors lead north and south, and a large oval pool sits in the western half of the chamber, overlooked by a strangely designed couch. An iron ladder rises through the ceiling of an otherwise empty niche to the southeast.*

The ladder leads to a perch within one of the 60-foot guard towers overlooking the compound and the surrounding neighborhood. It takes only a single round for the guard to slide down and aid Oulek if the oulbaene calls for help.

**Creatures:** As one of Mr. Sarlu's most loyal henchman, Oulek typically remains here throughout the day to greet visitors and

arrange business appointments. The odd couch comfortably accommodates his alien, squid-like physiology. While entertaining the PCs, he gushes about the ornate sculptures if asked about them, noting their exceeding value to discerning collectors, each one carved directly from caarnsu shell.

The clear water of the pool also allows visitors to see two colorful eels scavenging a couple of badly waterlogged corpses resting at the bottom 15 feet below. Oulek keeps the eels well fed, most recently tossing them a pair of traitorous bahgra involved in the plot to kidnap Mrs. Sarlu (see area A4). A Dsuccessful C 15 Life Sciences check identifies the species of these victims, though Oulek obliges if asked, noting they were "former associates who disappointed Mr. Sarlu."

Once again, Oulek asks the PCs to explain their purpose for using the Red Gate, reiterating the arrangement he discussed with Relstanna about requiring a service on Mr. Sarlu's behalf before letting them access it. Thereafter, he escorts the PCs to the guest hall (area A3) and asks them to sit quietly while he prepares Mr. Sarlu to receive them.

## OULEK

CR 6

XP 2,400

Male oulbaene envoy

LN Small monstrous humanoid (oulbaene)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +18

### DEFENSE

HP 76 EACH

EAC 18; KAC 19

**Fort** +5; **Ref** +9; **Will** +9

**Immunities** mind-affecting effects, trip

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

**Melee** tentacle +13 (1d4+6 A plus revolting touch)

**Ranged** corona laser pistol +15 (2d4 F; critical 1d4 burn)

**Offensive Abilities** revolting touch (DC 16)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Oulek first calls for aid from the compound's guards, then uses improved get 'em to grant bonuses to himself and any allies. He prefers to keep his distance, but uses duck under and his revolting touch in melee to keep his opponents at a disadvantage.

**Morale** Completely loyal to Mr. Sarlu, Oulek does everything possible to ensure his master's survival. If necessary, he retreats from this encounter so he can come to Mr. Sarlu's aid in the middle of battle.

### STATISTICS

**Str** +0; **Dex** +2; **Con** +0; **Int** +3; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +5

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Culture +18, Diplomacy +13, Perception +18, Stealth +13

**Languages** Aquan, Common, Elven, Oulbaene; limited telepathy 30 ft.

**Other Abilities** envoy improvisations (duck under, improved get 'em), multi-limbed, water breathing

**Gear** elite stationwear, corona laser pistol with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges), *mk 2 serum of healing*



## PART 1: A DEBT REPAYED

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Limited Telepathy (Su)** An oulbaene can mentally communicate with any other telepathic creature within 30 feet with which it shares a language.

**Multi-Limbed (Ex)** An oulbaene has six lower and four upper tentacular appendages. Its lower limbs grant it immunity to being tripped. Two of its upper limbs serve as its primary arms and can wield weapons normally; the other two upper limbs are slimy tentacles that can be used to deliver a specialized secondary attack. These tentacles cannot be used to wield weapons but can manipulate or hold items. Suckers on its limbs enable an oulbaene to climb sheer surfaces.

**Revolting Touch (Ex)** A creature damaged by an oulbaene's slimy tentacle is sickened for 1d3 rounds (Fortitude DC 16 negates). A creature that succeeds at its initial saving throw is immune to that oulbaene's revolting touch for 24 hours. A creature already sickened must attempt a new save each time it is damaged by an oulbaene's tentacle, with each failed save extending the duration of being sickened by 1 round and also causing the creature to become nauseated until the end of its next turn.

**Water Breathing (Ex)** An oulbaene can breathe underwater indefinitely, and it can use verbal and other breath-related abilities underwater normally.

### ELECTRIC EELS (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

N Small animal (aquatic)

Init +8; Senses low-light vision; Perception +7

### DEFENSE

HP 25 EACH

EAC 13; KAC 15

Fort +6; Ref +6; Will +1

Resistances electricity 10

### OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +10 (1d6+4 P & S) or tail +10 (1d4+2 E; critical stunned [DC 11])

### STATISTICS

Str +2; Dex +4; Con +1; Int -5; Wis -1; Cha -2

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +12, Perception +7, Stealth +12

### ECOLOGY

Environment any aquatic

Organization solitary

Treasure: The statues in this room are worth 1,000 credits, but weigh a total of 5 bulk.

### A3. GUEST HALL

*A large, woven rug covers most of the floor in this comfortable chamber, lit by skylights in a massive dome overhead. A number of couches upholstered in exotic materials surround it, some obviously configured for alien physiques. More painted sculptures reside throughout the room, and ivory portals enter from all directions.*

Mr. Sarlu directed Oulek to seat all guests in this area before allowing them to venture further into the compound, securing them behind the locking caarnsu doors. Additionally, he requires

Oulek to always telepathically confer with him about the nature of any visitors so the sarlu can determine if he should retreat deeper into his pool or entertain their business propositions.

### A4. MR. SARLU'S POOL (CR 8)

*Impressionistic murals of aquatic life cover the walls of this domed chamber, and the eastern half of the room holds a large pool filled with green water completely cloaking its murky depths. Overhead skylights like those in the outer hall allow natural light. To the south, a large mechanical device includes a tangled collection of copper-colored barrels, snaking tubes of silver, and pumping bladders with steam escaping from a dozen different valves. Three of the tubes enter the water, bubbles dancing on the surface of the liquid around them. Another painted abstract sculpture sits against the south wall alongside a large aquarium on wheels, filled with the same greenish water, though a bit more translucent. Rich tiling covers the floor, and the entire room feels uncomfortably warm.*

**Creature:** Following Mr. Sarlu's conversation with Oulek, he directs the oulbaene to prepare several folding chairs before the pool for the PCs. He allows his new visitors a few moments to inspect the room. However, as soon as anyone touches the machinery or attempts to peer too closely into the murky pool, read or paraphrase the following:

*A silken voice speaks like a whisper mere inches from your ear: 'Make yourself comfortable, friends. Enjoy the seating Oulek has provided. I understand you require use of my Red Gate, and I'm happy to oblige, but first you must tell me more about yourselves. What led you here and what is it you seek on the other side?'*

Because of his recent troubles, Mr. Sarlu remains submerged in his pool, subtly probing the minds of each PC during their initial conversation. He uses both his constant *detect thoughts* spell-like ability as well as his telepathy to ask leading questions about their goals, origins, and allegiances. Once he determines they have no direct affiliation with an Argosan Coterie and pose no immediate threat to his long-term plans or current business interests, he continues:

*'I appreciate your candor and empathize with your current needs. However, before granting you access to the gate, I do require an equitable exchange of services. Three simple tasks, really. You may perform the first two here, within this very compound. Oulek will provide the details, and, once you've demonstrated your capabilities in dealing with them, return here and we'll discuss the final job.'*

Following this exchange, Oulek appears once more, explaining to the PCs that two recent developments have created certain conditions within the compound that Mr. Sarlu would like them to address. The first involves a giant moray eel contained in Mrs. Sarlu's pool (area A5). Oulek withholds the exact nature of the pool and its former occupant, simply claiming that a few renegade associates left the eel there as a vengeful message for Mr. Sarlu. The beast already ate an unfortunate guard who encountered it, and they've sealed off the chamber for now. Mr. Sarlu



would prefer to avoid risking more of his men in trying to eliminate it, so the task falls to the PCs as a means of proving their capabilities.

The second task concerns an unusual crate in Mr. Sarlu's possession now held in quarantine (area A10). Oulek claims another explorer left it behind when seeking to use the Red Gate a few months ago. They have no idea what it contains, but it has a complex—and dangerous—locking mechanism similar to a puzzle box. Mr. Sarlu would like the PCs to take on the challenge (and risk) of opening it so he can determine its contents and how best to return them to the missing explorer's next of kin. This is a lie, of course, as Mr. Sarlu seized the crate before forcing its owner through the Red Gate, fully expecting him to never return. In reality, he simply covets any wealth it holds, but none of his men can solve the locking mechanism.

Once the PCs deal with both of these tasks, Mr. Sarlu addresses them once again to explain the final service he requires before granting access to the Red Gate. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs are ready:

*'Well done! You're quite resourceful. And just the kind of individuals I need for this final effort. A few days ago, some disgruntled employees of mine stole something precious to me and now they hold it for an extortionate fee. I caught two of the miscreants—you may have come across them when you first entered my home—and I discovered a former lieutenant named Basher and his remaining accomplices are trying to hire more muscle before coming here to return my property and collect their ruinous ransom. I'd like you to convince them to hire the lot of you, earn their trust, and then turn on them when Basher attempts the exchange. I have no intention of paying his ransom, but I want my property back—and, for his betrayal, Basher must pay with his life.'*

Allow the PCs to question Mr. Sarlu about this final task. If they wonder why he needs their help rather than relying on his own armed mercenaries, he explains Basher already knows his current associates and would never hire them. In addition, surprise is vital since Basher's crew has apparently secured a means of damaging his property and has already threatened to do so. He doesn't know what this entails, but he'd like to avoid such a risk at all costs—it is very precious to him. He won't disclose that this property is actually "Mrs." Sarlu, stating they needn't know. Assuming the PCs accept, read the following:

*'Excellent. Oulek has the remaining details you need. However, let me be very clear. No harm is to come to my property. Also, Basher and his verminous crew do not leave this place alive. See to these things and you may use my Red Gate. You'll also earn a powerful friend in this city, and I treat my friends very well.'*

Once the PCs leave the chamber, Oulek informs them their interrogations revealed Basher is actively recruiting aid at Baeboli's Emporium, a sordid bar in Zel-Argose near the city's Skytalon and the Grabel-Quoke marketplace. Like his master, the oulbaene withholds further details, only adding that

Basher is easily flattered and especially intrigued by magic if they wish to impress him. Oulek also gives them a cue for when they should strike down Basher's crew at the exchange, indicating he'll speak the phrase: "Basher, you may have played this dangerous game well today, but sooner or later you will make an error." Following that proclamation, Oulek expects them to eliminate Basher and liberate Mr. Sarlu's property.

## MR. SARLU

CR 8

XP 4,800

Male sarlu (see pg. 81)

HP 105

## A5. MRS. SARLU'S POOL (CR 6)

*A single entrance opens into this crescent-shaped chamber where a similarly defined pool skirts the western wall. To the south, an iron ladder leads upward from a small alcove.*

**Creatures:** Prior to her abduction, Mrs. Sarlu occupied this pool. In her place, Basher left a nasty surprise for the rest of Mr. Sarlu's crew—an especially voracious giant moray eel. It already ate the last guard to venture here, but Mr. Sarlu expects the PCs to eliminate it if they want access to his Red Gate.

## GIANT MORAY EEL

CR 6

XP 2,400

N Large animal (aquatic)

Init +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +13

### DEFENSE

HP 95

EAC 18; KAC 20

Fort +10; Ref +10; Will +5

### OFFENSE

Speed swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +13 (3d4+13 P & S plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities gnaw

### STATISTICS

Str +5; Dex +2; Con +3; Int -5; Wis +0; Cha -1

Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +18, Perception +13, Stealth +13

### ECOLOGY

Environment warm oceans

Organization solitary, pair, or nest (3-6)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Gnaw (Ex)** If a giant moray begins a round with a grabbed foe, it inflicts automatic bite damage (3d4+13 P & S). A giant moray eel has a second set of jaws in its throat that aid in swallowing: it can make a second bite attack (+11 attack, 1d8+6 P & S) against a foe it has already grabbed.

**Grab (Ex)** If a giant moray's bite attack hits the target's KAC + 4, the giant moray also automatically grapples the foe as a free action in addition to dealing damage normally. (If it hits the target's KAC + 13, it instead pins the target and deals damage normally.) The giant moray can maintain the grab either with another successful bite attack or by performing a grapple combat maneuver normally.

**A6. GATEWAY CHAMBER (CR 4)**

*The domed ceiling of this cavernous chamber peaks 25 feet overhead. Two gates, both metallic rings nearly 10 feet in diameter, one red and one green, stand at opposite ends of the room, and at its center is a strange mechanism of dark green material, from which a number of tangled cables snake across the floor. Some of them attach to the metal rings, while others head east to a baroque black iron cradle holding an egg-shaped stone pulsing with mottled hues of orange, yellow, and red. Doors lead north, south, and east, while an iron ladder leads upward from a niche in the west.*

This massive chamber represents the centerpiece of Mr. Sarlu's compound. Though the Red Gate has long stood in Zel-Argose, its dormant nature made it little more than a city monument for thousands of years. Always interested in unique sculptures and art, Mr. Sarlu claimed the site when he arrived on Argosa, building around it with caarnsu shell imported from his homeworld.

Initially surprised and elated by the gate's recent reactivation, Mr. Sarlu had to temper his enthusiasm once he discovered it only worked one-way. He's sent several of his own agents through the portal in hopes of repairing or operating it from the other side, but so far none have succeeded and no one has returned. In the interim, he's charged travelers for using it (including agents of the Hegemony and the Accord), but he conveniently leaves out its dead-end nature, only interested in taking their money or an exchange of services as he dupes and strands them. So far, he hasn't had to explain these disappearances, forcing anyone asking too many questions about them through the gate, as well. As a result, it's become a handy way of getting rid of "problems."

**Creatures:** A dwarf named Wojack typically works in this room. Purchased by Mr. Sarlu from the slave market, he endures life as an indentured servant now, hobbled by chains and spending most of his time here tinkering with the Red Gate's controls and manning them when called upon.

**WOJACK**

CR 4

XP 1,200

Male dwarf mechanic

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +3; Senses 60 ft.; Perception +11

**DEFENSE**

HP 45

EAC 16; KAC 17

Fort +5; Ref +5; Will +7; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

**OFFENSE**

Speed 20 ft.

Melee tactical sloop hammer +10 (1d10+6 B; critical knockdown)

Ranged thunderstrike sonic pistol (1d8+4 So; critical deafen [DC 15])

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with sloop hammer)

Offensive Abilities traditional enemies

**STATISTICS**

Str +2; Dex +3; Con +1; Int +5; Wis +0; Cha +0

Skills Athletics +11, Engineering +16, Physical Science +16, Profession (Craftsman) +16

Feats Barricade, Master Crafter

Languages Bahgra, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Oulbaene, Vesk

Other Abilities stonecunning

Gear golemforged plating II (load lifter), tactical sloop hammer, thunderstrike sonic pistol with 1 battery (20 charges)

**A7. OULEK AND WOJACK'S ROOM**

*A simple bedroom with two adjacent beds occupies this small chamber.*

Mr. Sarlu's underlings, Oulek (see A2) and Wojack (see A6), sleep here. The room contains little of value as both lead fairly sparse lives.

**A8. BARRACKS (CR 7)**

*Ten separate bunk beds occupy this room. Aside from the main access door from the west, an iron ladder leads upwards from a niche in the southeast corner.*

This room acts as the primary quarters for all of Mr. Sarlu's paid mercenaries. With the defection of Basher's crew, about half the beds go unused now.

**Creatures:** Three of Mr. Sarlu's enforcers currently enjoy their downtime here. Typically tasked with keeping dealers in line, chasing debtors, and pursuing off-world business interests, all of them would prefer to take on Basher themselves rather than relying on the assistance of the PCs.

**TOWER GUARDS (3)**

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Elf soldier (see pg. 8)

HP 48 each

**A9. WAREHOUSE (CR 7)**

*Organized crates, casks, and barrels litter this sprawling warehouse. Doors lead north, south, and east.*

This area of the compound supports Mr. Sarlu's drug operations—primarily the production of a new street drug called Screen manufactured from distillations of a euphoric substance known as *sarlu-ahq* among his people (see sidebar).

**Creatures:** With production at an all-time high, these workers keep active and alert with regular doses of another, less addictive stimulant called *heppah* (see sidebar). They resent any disruptions and grow irritable if pressed to answer questions from visitors.





HENDERSHOT

**DEALERS (4)**

**CR 3**

XP 800 each

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Perception +8

**DEFENSE**

**HP 35 EACH**

EAC 14; KAC 15

Fort +4; Ref +2; Will +6; +2 vs. drugs and poison

**Defensive Abilities** chemist

**OFFENSE**

Speed 30 ft.

**Melee** injection glove +7 (1d4+2 P plus blue whinnis; critical injection DC +2) or survival knife +7 (1d4+2 S)

**Ranged** needler pistol +9 (1d4 P plus blue whinnis; critical injection DC +2) or

incendiary grenade I +9 (explode [5 ft., 1d6 F plus 1d4 burn, DC 16]) or

smoke grenade +9 (explode [20 ft., smoke cloud 1 minute, DC 16]) or

stickybomb grenade I +9 (explode [15 ft., entangled 2d4 rounds, DC 16])

**Offensive Abilities** grenade specialist

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Once combat is joined, the dealers will shout for the guards and throw grenades as long as they can avoid hurting each other. Once quarters get tight, they'll use their injection gloves and needler pistols to poison foes.

**Morale** Once half the dealers have fallen, the rest will withdraw through area A6 and attempt to get to the exit.

**STATISTICS**

Str -1; Dex +2; Con +1; Int +4; Wis +0; Cha +0

**Skills** Bluff +8, Life Science +13, Medicine +13, Physical Science +13, Sleight of Hand +8

**Languages** Baghra, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Krang

**Gear** casual stationwear, injection glove, needler pistol with 6 darts, survival knife, incendiary grenades I (2), smoke grenade, stickybomb grenade I, 2 doses of blue whinnis

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Chemist (Ex)** Dealers focus on creating and using drugs, poisons, and medicinals. A dealer can craft such an item in half the normal time. She also gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against drugs and poison, and if she succeeds at a saving throw against a drug or poison that normally requires multiple saves to cure, that effect immediately ends as if she had succeeded at the required number of saves.

**Grenade Specialist (Ex)** A dealer's understanding of chemistry allows her to make the most of explosives, including grenades. She gains the benefits of the Quick Draw feat with grenades. The explosion radius of her grenades is increased by 5 feet, and the save DC against her grenades is increased by 2 (factored into her statistics above).

## ALIEN DRUGS

### HEPPAH

**Type** drug (inhaled); **Save** Fortitude DC 14; **Addiction** DC 14 (physical)

**Price** 45 credits

**Track** Constitution; **Effect** +3 alchemical bonus to initiative checks and saves against fatigue, exhaustion and sleep effects for 2 hours; fatigued for 30 minutes after the effects of the drug dissipate.

### SARLU-AHQ OR "SCREEN"

**Type** drug (ingested); **Save** Fortitude DC 22; **Addiction** DC 22 (mental)

**Price** 150 credits

**Track** Wisdom; **Effect** -3 penalty to saves against enchantments and illusions for 2 hours due to intense euphoria.



## A10. QUARANTINE VAULT (CR 4)

Yet another complex lock protects the door to this room (requiring 3 successful DC 25 Computers or Engineering checks before 2 failures to open). Keyed to a different passcode than the other access points in Mr. Sarlu's compound, the gangster keeps its sequence to himself and Oulek, trusting no one else with it.

*Seven metal barrels, crates, assorted racks, and lock-safes dominate the curved wall of this semicircular vault. It appears clean, dry, and secure.*

**Treasure:** Mr. Sarlu uses this chamber to secure his most valuable treasures. This includes several dangerous (and valuable) compounds used in drug manufacturing. Each of the seven barrels holds a different chemical (worth 500 credits each on the open market). The racks also bear medical gear, including an advanced medkit, tier 1 antitoxin (5 doses), mk 2 serum of healing (2 doses), and spray flesh (3 doses). A separate shelf also holds a collection of exotic poisons, including: blue whinnis (2 doses), id moss (6 doses), and green lotus extract. Lastly, the various lock-safes each have their own unique combination lock (DC 22 Engineering to open). Collectively, they contain: a corona artillery laser, mk1 dermal plating ready to be installed, a frag grenade II leftover in a *efficient bandolier*, a targeting computer armor upgrade, 16 agates (worth 50 credits each), 3 emeralds (worth 100 credits each), a ruby (worth 250 credits), a diamond necklace (worth 500 credits), and 1,883 credits across several credsticks.

**Trap:** Another unique treasure exists here in the form of a decorative metal crate with dozens of interlocking rods, plates, and pressure points. Oulek likely brings the PCs to this strongbox as part of the three tasks they must complete for Mr. Sarlu before he allows them to use the Red Gate (see

area A4). Casual inspection of the mechanisms reveals the metallic rods secure most of the moveable parts, thereby preventing their manipulation. A PC can remove the rods with a successful DC 23 Engineering check, or the PCs can break them off with a few carefully placed blows (hardness 5, HP 10). Either approach, however, triggers an electrical surge that occupies a 5-ft. square and aggressively pursues any living creature within 60 feet of the crate for 3 rounds. The trap resets 1d6 rounds later, and the PCs must either disable it before further manipulating the crate's locking mechanisms (DC 28 Engineering) or avoid triggering it by moving the parts in the correct order.

Solving the puzzle box is a complex DC 25 Engineering skill check requiring 5 successes before 2 failures). A successful DC 22 Physical Science skill check and/or a successful DC 22 Intelligence ability check before each Engineering attempt grants a cumulative +2 competence bonus. Other PCs may grant similar bonuses with their own successful checks through Aid Another actions. In addition, several clicks, whirs, and pops emanate from the box's interior as the PCs manipulate the mechanisms. If the PCs listen closely to these sounds (DC 20 Perception check), the audible clues provide an additional +1 bonus to each roll. If the crate's trap resets and the complex skill check ultimately fails, the *aggressive thundercloud* emerges again, but the PCs can make another attempt once it dissipates.

## PUZZLE BOX ELECTRIC TRAP

CR 4

XP 1,200

**Type** magical; **Perception** DC 26 **Disable** Mysticism DC 21 (remove control rods)

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1d6 rounds

**Effect** ball of electricity (4d10+2 E); Reflex DC 15 half

## B. BAEBOLI'S EMPORIUM

Once the PCs have accepted Mr. Sarlu's final task, they should proceed to Baeboli's Emporium. The structure closes off the back end of the popular Grabel-Quoke marketplace—one of the busiest Argosan trade centers which benefits from an off-world gate controlled by the Lath-Tom Coterie near the city's Skytalon. While the Coterie has no active ownership of Baeboli's Emporium, they do have an interest in its missing owner. Unfortunately, Baeboli disappeared several months ago and now Lath-Tom agents exert authority over his remaining staff while they continue to operate the establishment, taxing its revenue more heavily than before—a heavy-handed approach which doesn't sit well with most of the workers. When the PCs first approach Baeboli's Emporium, read or paraphrase the following:

*A large domed structure of molded gray stone stands in this seedy part of town, its broad, windowless, door offering just a single entry point. A number of words in a rainbow of colors and alphabets pulses like a heartbeat above the door, each one spelling out: **BAEBOLI'S EMPORIUM.***

The door glides open easily with a pull on the metallic handle, allowing a cacophony of drumbeats and wildly meandering music to pour forth from the low-lit interior.

## B1. BOUNCER STATION (CR 4)

*This ill-lit anteroom appears bare, save for two drunken patrons sitting crookedly against the east wall. To the north, a broad opening leads onto the emporium's main floor, where every manner of sentient creature indulges in vices both legal and otherwise. Standing impassively at a tall table in the center of this opening stands a heavily muscled, simian-faced humanoid, clad in cracked leather armor, his arms crossed over his chest and wearing a look of boredom and contempt.*

**Creature:** Known popularly as Kodr the Hammer, the emporium's chief bouncer—a disaffected member of an ape-like species called the krang—has little patience for nonsense. As the PCs approach his station, he holds up a massive hand to determine their business and confiscate their weapons. Should the PCs ask for clarification of the establishment's rules on these matters, he rolls his eyes and claims, "Do I look like a city magistrate to you? Don't be any trouble, and if you catch any, see to it that you finish it without damaging the property. But any weapons stay here." Assuming the PCs hand over their gear, he tosses the items into a wooden box below his table and returns them when they've finished their business.

**Treasure:** Aside from any gear confiscated from the PCs, Kodr's box also contains: two azimuth laser pistols, six carbonedged shuriken, two light reaction cannons, a longsword, a tactical dueling sword, a tactical starknife, and two tactical swoop hammers. He also has a separate box holding two survival knives and two tactical shirren-eye rifles (which belong to Basher's minions in B4).

**Development:** If the PCs navigate their way past Kodr without a confrontation or win an opposed DC 21 Sleight of Hand skill check to smuggle a weapon into the emporium, award them 1,200 XP (equivalent to a CR 4 encounter).

### KODR THE HAMMER

CR 4

XP 1,200

N Medium humanoid (krang)

Init +5; Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

HP 50

EAC 16; KAC 18

Fort +8; Ref +6; Will +3; +2 vs. fear, +4 vs. disease and poison

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +12 (1d6+9 B nonlethal) or head-butt +12 (1d6+11 B)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities relentless, smash

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Kodr sticks with his fists, dealing nonlethal damage unless an opponent draws a lethal weapon. Then he resorts to his head-butt and the smash ability.

**Morale** Kodr withdraws to get the other bouncers from B2 as soon as he's reduced below 40 HP. As long as at least one other bouncer is standing, he fights to the death.

#### STATISTICS

Str +5; Dex +1; Con +3; Int +0; Wis +0; Cha +1

Skills Engineering +10, Intimidate +15, Survival +10

Feats Multiattack

Languages Common, Krang

Other Abilities elongated arms

Gear squad defiance series

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Elongated Arms (Ex)** Krang have exceptionally long arms relative to their bodies, giving them a natural reach of 10 feet with unarmed strikes and melee weapons and a climb speed of 20 feet.

**Relentless (Ex)** Krang gain a +2 racial bonus to combat maneuvers to bull rush or reposition an opponent. This bonus only applies while both a krang and its opponent are standing on the ground.

**Smash (Ex)** Three times per day, when a krang damages an opponent with its head-butt, it can cause the opponent to become dazed for 1 round (Fortitude DC 13 negates). If the head-butt was a critical hit, the target creature is instead stunned for 1 round and dazed for the following round on a failed save.

**Stout Constitution (Ex)** Krang have robust mental and physical resistances, granting them a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against fear effects and a +4 racial bonus to saves against disease and poison.

## B2. SUNKEN BAR (CR 4 OR 8)

*A long sunken bar runs the length of this cavernous chamber, crowded with a diversity of strange, dodgy patrons. Diaphanous clouds of smoke rise toward the domed ceiling overhead where multicolored lights blink and pulse from hanging globes. Upholstered booths line the length of the east wall, while open tables stand to the west. The noise of jarring music and a hundred different conversations poses a challenge to communicating here.*

The PCs can mingle in this sordid dive as long as they wish. Should they ask about Basher, a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check to gather information reveals that he's in the private room (area B4). This check receives a +1 circumstance bonus for every 10 credits used to bribe those questioned (maximum +5) and secures a friendlier introduction to the bahgra's crew. Award the PCs equivalent XP for a CR 4 encounter for finding their way to Basher in this manner. Otherwise, the bahgra's initial attitude starts as Unfriendly rather than Indifferent.

**Creatures:** Two additional bouncers monitor client activities inside Baeboli's Emporium. If the PCs take a more belligerent approach during their inquiries about Basher (such as relying on Intimidate checks or coercive spells), they quickly find themselves at odds with these enforcers. None of them hesitate to summon Kodr as backup in giving the PCs a good thumping, dropping their bruised bodies and egos in the gutter out back, if necessary.

**BACKUP BOUNCERS (2)****CR 6**

XP 2,400 each

Human solarian

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; Perception +13

**DEFENSE****HP 90 EACH**

EAC 18; KAC 20

Fort +8; Ref +8; Will +7

**OFFENSE**

Speed 30 ft.

Melee solar weapon +16 (1d8+1d6+11 B; critical knockdown)

Offensive Abilities stellar revelations (black hole [25-ft. radius, pull 15 ft., DC 14], defy gravity, flare [DC 14], supernova [10-ft. radius, 7d6 F, DC 14])

**STATISTICS**

Str +5; Dex +3; Con +0; Int +0; Wis +1; Cha +2

Skills Acrobatics +18, Intimidation +13, Mysticism +13

Feats Kip Up

Languages Common, Krang, Ultari

Other Abilities solar manifestation (solar weapon), stellar alignment

Gear kasatha microcord II, minor graviton crystal

**B3. TATTOO PARLOR**

Three tables sit behind a trio of tattoo stations in this corner of Baeboli's establishment. Bright overhead lights help illuminate a stretched canvas across the back wall depicting a variety of tattoo designs to select from.

Aside from plentiful libations and a well-run smoke room, Baeboli's also offers a small tattoo parlor run by an off-world human named Sheela. She charges up to 500 credits for her more complex designs, but most cost only 50-150 credits. Sitting for the entire process requires at least an hour, and she currently has two customers waiting.

**B4. BASHER'S PRIVATE ROOM (CR 4 OR 8)**

The adventure assumes the PCs eventually find their way to Basher in his private room. Read the following when they enter:

Three wooden tables and a large, angular couch fill this private room. Two rodent-faced figures sit at one of the tables, nibbling from a platter of cheese and yeast-filled bread while sipping on berry-scented wine from slender glasses. A shaggy-haired bahgra sits on the couch, downing the contents of a frothy mug before ravenously feasting on a platter of barely-roasted meats. He looks up momentarily and barks, "Are you the jugglers I ordered?" He holds the haunch of meat before his muzzle, hair and hands greasy as a bit of fat falls from the bone, "Well, don't just stand there—juggle!"

**Creatures:** Mr. Sarlu's former lieutenant—a bahgra named Basher—and his ysoki sidekicks, Geldek and Riaz, occupy this room. Especially observant players (DC 24 Perception)

may also notice a book sitting on the couch next to Basher entitled *The Adept's Guide to Baushaudi Poisons*, a clue to his alchemical specialization as a poisoner. Since kidnapping their boss's prized possession (i.e., Mrs. Sarlu), they provided lucrative information about his operations to the Surrat Coterie. Now, the turncoats are enjoying the spoils of that transaction while planning the details of the exchange to ransom back Mr. Sarlu's property. Once the PCs inform Basher they've heard he's hiring muscle for an important job, he responds with a dismissive belch: "Too late! Don't need any more help. Already hired a couple of mercs to do the job! Now, unless one of you can juggle, shove off!" This draws high-pitched titters from his ysoki minions.

Ultimately, the PCs need to make a case for hiring them instead, and Basher listens absently to their proposal while dining on his roasted meats. If the PCs found their way to him by gathering assistance from a friendly patron in the bar (area B2), his starting attitude is only Indifferent, establishing a DC 22 to ply him with Diplomacy. Otherwise, he proves Unfriendly to their interruption of his festivities and the DC rises to 27. Regardless, the PCs must succeed at a series of Diplomacy checks (5 successes required before 3 failures) to persuade the bahgra to reconsider his prior arrangements. Each of these checks receives a +1 circumstance bonus if the PCs adequately flatter the bahgra, a +3 bonus if one of them demonstrates a special martial skill (doubled if it involves juggling!), and another +5 bonus if someone shows off a bit of spellcasting. Assuming the PCs succeed, award them XP equivalent to a CR 4 encounter, and read or paraphrase the following exchange from Basher:

*"Well, maybe I'd be smarter to go with you lot after all. Still, I signed a contract...those boys insisted on one." Basher takes another bite of his meal, chewing thoughtfully for a moment. "I tell you what. You convince the two I hired that they should forfeit the job, and I'll hire you instead—same fee, mind you, and not a coin more. They already negotiated the deal and you'll live by it if you want in. They also said they'd be in the hookah bar. Go on and have yourselves a 'friendly' chat with'em. Last one standing gets the job. Just bring that contract back with you. I don't want any trouble with the Auditor if she finds out I broke my word on a written agreement like that."*

If asked, Basher informs the PCs he hired two "snaky-looking folk, 'reptilian' I think you'd say." He reveals their names as Sepes and Vaugh, but only if the PCs specifically ask for them. He has no interest in discussing further details of the job until he has the aforementioned contract in his hands.

**BASHER****CR 5**

XP 1,600 each

Bahgra operative

CN Medium humanoid (bahgra)

Init +6; Senses low-light vision; Perception +17

**DEFENSE****HP 70 RP 4**

EAC 17; KAC 18

Fort +4; Ref +9; Will +8  
**Defensive Abilities** evasion

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.  
**Melee** *entangling tactical knife* +12 (2d4+5 S) or bite +12 (1d6+9 P & S)  
**Ranged** frostbite-class zero pistol +10 (1d6+5 C; critical staggered [DC 15])  
**Offensive Abilities** debilitating trick, trick attack +3d8

## TACTICS

**During Combat** Basher uses his trick attack each round, switching between targets to use his staggering shot as many times as possible.

**Morale** Basher is used to lording his smuggled weapons over people, but will still flee if both of his minions are killed or he is reduced below 35 HP. When fleeing, he uses his holographic distraction ability to split his pursuers.

## STATISTICS

Str +3; Dex +5; Con +0; Int +2; Wis +0; Cha +1  
**Skills** Acrobatics +17, Engineering +12, Sleight of Hand +17, Stealth +12, Survival +12  
**Languages** Common, Bahgra

**Other Abilities** operative exploits (holographic distraction, staggering shot [DC 15]), specialization (thief)  
**Gear** estex suit II, frostbite-class zero pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), *entangling tactical knife*, *mk 2 serum of healing*, *The Adept's Guide to Baushaudi Poisons* (book worth 250 credits)

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Natural Weapon Training (Ex)** Basher treats his bite attack as an operative weapon for the purpose of his operative class features.

## GELDEK AND RIAZ

CR 5

XP 1,600 each  
 Ysoki operative  
 CN Medium humanoid (ysoki)  
**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +12

## DEFENSE

HP 65 EACH

EAC 17; KAC 18  
 Fort +4; Ref +9; Will +8  
**Defensive Abilities** evasion

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.  
**Melee** survival knife +12 (1d4+5 S)  
**Ranged** frostbite-class zero pistol +10 (1d6+5 C; critical staggered [DC 15]) or tactical shirren-eye rifle +10 (2d10+5 P)  
**Offensive Abilities** debilitating trick, trick attack +3d8

## TACTICS

**During Combat** Geldek and Riaz turned over their survival knives and sniper rifles to Kodr, but managed to hide their zero pistols in their cheek pouches. In battle, they quickly use a *spell amp of invisibility* to disappear long enough to execute sneak attacks with their pistols.

**Morale** While Basher lives, both ysoki fight to the death.

Otherwise, they quickly surrender or flee when reduced to 5 HP or less.

## STATISTICS

Str +0; Dex +5; Con +0; Int +3; Wis +2; Cha +1  
**Skills** Acrobatics +17, Athletics +17, Engineering +17, Sleight of Hand +12, Survival +12  
**Languages** Bahgra, Common, Ysoki  
**Other Abilities** cheek pouches, moxie, operative exploits (uncanny shooter), specialization (daredevil)  
**Gear** estex suit II, frostbite-class zero pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), survival knife, tactical shirren-eye rifle with 10 sniper rounds, *mk 2 healing serum*, *spell amp of invisibility*, 140 credits

## KISS OF TSUNIS

**Type** poison (ingested or injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 18  
**Track** Constitution; **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds  
**Cure** 2 consecutive saves.

## B5. HOOKAH BAR (CR 6 OR CR 8)

*A well-attended hookah bar rises a foot above the main floor here, tiled in psychedelic patterns partially obscured by the drifting smoke. Patrons recline on two long couches upholstered with mismatched hides from exotic alien beasts. Some have pipes to their mouths, while others sit in languorous oblivion, swept away by narcotic euphoria. Elaborate water pipes sit before the couches with two bored attendants walking from client to client, tending to their needs before returning to a rectangular counter stocked with various powders, rock crystals, shredded leaves, and less identifiable substances.*

This stylish hookah bar serves as the main attraction of Baeboli's Emporium, serving up exotic smoking diversions from all across the multiverse. By the time the PCs meet with Basher (at area B4), the bar has already drawn a crowd. The reptilian humanoids they seek—Sepes and Vaugh—are actually nagaji, currently reclining towards the back section in the northeast corner and obscured by the crowd (DC 22 Perception check to notice). Meanwhile, much closer to the bar's entrance, a pair of vesk—named Roog and Targuhl—are more likely to draw the PCs' attention. They arrived only a few moments before the PCs emerge from their meeting with Basher, somewhat impatiently awaiting service from the wait staff and conversing with one another in Draconic about which drug to try. It's entirely possible the party mistakes these reptilian mercenaries for their true targets.

Roog and Targuhl treat any initial approach as unwanted and potentially hostile or insulting. As a result, their starting attitudes begin as Unfriendly, but a successful DC 26 Diplomacy check results in them becoming Indifferent enough to listen to the PCs. If made Friendly or Helpful, they deny having anything to do with a bahgra named Basher and direct the PCs toward the back corner, indicating

## PART 1: A DEBT REPAYED

another pair of reptilian humanoids preceded them there. Additional attempts to speak with the lizardfolk after this initial encounter incur a cumulative -2 penalty. If the PCs fail these checks, or address the churlish duo with any degree of hostility (including attempts to Intimidate), the lizardfolk become Hostile enough to fight. If, however, the PCs succeed in a diplomatic approach, reward them XP equivalent to a CR 4 encounter.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the bar, the PCs' true quarry awaits. Read the following when the PCs have fixed their attention upon the two nagaji lying on the couches in the northeast corner:

*Two scaly, green humanoids clad in embroidered robes of exotic design, lounge in the northeast corner of the bar. The one on the left lies on his belly as he speaks to a female server refilling his pipe, while the other lies on his back, pulling a long drag from another pipe before exhaling a cloud of pink smoke toward the rafters.*

Sepes and Vaugh, the two itinerant nagaji mercenaries hired by Basher, are celebrating their recent contract by spending a portion of their retainer on a drug called zerk. Long-time addicts, the two intend on enjoying a bender before meeting their new employer in the morning to assist with the exchange at Mr. Sarlu's compound. If the PCs avoided any conflict with Roog and Targuhl, the nagaji and their fellow patrons remain blissfully unaware of them. However, if the PCs created a scene with the vesk and drew attention to themselves, customers and staff alike are on edge and wary (becoming Unfriendly). The GM must use his own judgment in managing this complex encounter in such a congested space. For instance, patrons are doubtlessly perturbed by the PCs should the entire party move towards the nagaji in a crowded area already near capacity. In addition, a belligerent approach—whether with Roog and Targuhl or in how they engage the nagaji—puts Sepes and Vaugh on their guard. The reptilian humanoids may swiftly come to one another's aid out of a sense of kinship. Additionally, the bouncers (from **B2**) may also get involved, caring little for who started a fight.

Regardless, the nagaji mercenaries are quite displeased that Basher decided to hire the PCs instead. Sepes takes the crumpled contract from his robe and points to the paper angrily indicating: "The dog-man signed this! We signed this! You make the dog-man break his word? You pay up for dog-man?" Unless the PCs succeed at a DC 26 Diplomacy check or a DC 19 Intimidate check, or pay the 1,000 credits Basher promised Sepes and Vaugh for their services, the two nagaji initiate a fight with the PCs on their own. If the PCs manage to avoid fighting the nagaji, award them XP equivalent to a CR 4 encounter. If they avoid fighting both groups, award additional XP equivalent to a third CR 4 encounter.

**Development:** If combat does occur, Kodr and his bouncer team (see area **B2**) investigate, but it requires 3 rounds navigating the crowded bar before they can arrive. Provided the PCs have done no damage to the property and haven't

yet killed the lizardfolk or nagaji, the staff refrains from further confrontation with the PCs, merely escorting them from the premises and telling them they can take up their business with Basher once he leaves the establishment, as well. Otherwise, Kodr and the bouncers also enter the fray, knocking heads equally between the PCs and their opponents. If things truly get out of hand (especially with massive damage to the emporium), members of the Auditor's city guard soon arrive and take matters into their own hands, an outcome which draws considerable attention, fines, and possible incarceration for the PCs.

### ROOG AND TARGUHL

CR 4

XP 600

Vesk soldier

N Medium humanoid (vesk)

**Init** +5; **Senses** low-light vision **Perception** +0

#### DEFENSE

HP 50

EAC 16; KAC 19

**Fort** +8; **Ref** +6; **Will** +3; +2 vs. fear

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** unarmed strike +12 (1d3+11 B)

**Offensive Abilities** fighting styles (blitz), natural weapons

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The vesk had their weapons confiscated by Kodr, so they only fight with their natural attacks, flanking the heaviest-armored opponent, if possible, while dealing nonlethal damage.

**Morale** Roog and Targuhl surrender if either of them falls below 15 HP, but seek revenge on the PCs outside Baeboli's after recovering their weapons from Kodr.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

**Skills** Engineering +10, Intimidate +15, Survival +10

**Feats** Cleave

**Languages** Common, Vesk

**Other Abilities** armor savant

**Gear** officer ceremonial plate

### SEPEs AND VAUGH

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Nagaji solarian

LE Medium humanoid (nagaji)

**Init** +3; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +15

#### DEFENSE

HP 48 EACH

EAC 16; KAC 18

**Fort** +6; **Ref** +6; **Will** +5; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects and poison

**Defensive Abilities** armored scales, resistant

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** solar weapon +12 (1d6+1d3+9 F; critical burn 1d6)

**Ranged** carbonedged shuriken +9 (1d4+9 P; critical bleed 1d4)

**Offensive Abilities** stellar revelations (black hole [20-ft. radius, pull 10 ft., DC 13], gravity anchor, stellar rush [2d6 F, DC 13], supernova [10-ft. radius, 5d6 F, DC 13])

## TACTICS

**During Combat** Sepes and Vaugh both attune photon, using stellar rush to move between targets, particularly once the floor has been cleared of other patrons. If one solarion has been taken out, the other uses supernovas as soon as he is fully attuned.

**Morale** Both nagaji are in the clutch of a zerk high and won't flee, no matter how the tables turn against them.

## STATISTICS

**Str** +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +1

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Athletics +15, Mysticism +10, Sense Motive +15

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Other Abilities** solar manifestation (solar weapon), stellar alignment

**Gear** basic lashunta tempweave, least photon crystal, 2 doses of heppah (see pg. 13)

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Armored Scales (Ex)** When a nagaji wears light or no armor, she gains a +1 racial bonus to KAC.

**Resistant (Ex)** Nagaji receive a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against mind-affecting effects and poison.

**Serpent's Sense (Ex)** Nagaji receive a +2 racial bonus to Perception and Sense Motive checks.

## B6. BAEBOLI'S OFFICE

The door to this room remains locked at all times (DC 25 Engineering to open). A Lath-Tom lieutenant confiscated the key, and the Coterie intends to hold onto it until Baeboli resurfaces. If the PCs manage to access the office, they find little of value here aside from ledgers detailing the running of the emporium's business, as well as a receipt for off-world gate access to something called the Shattered Zone.

## THE BRIEFING

After reclaiming Basher's contract from Sepes and Vaugh (and dealing with the aftermath of any barroom brawl), read or paraphrase the following when the PCs deliver it to him:

*Basher eyes the returned contract and nods in satisfaction. "The job's yours, friends. Now, let's discuss the details—and I'll trust you can be discreet about them. I've recently come into possession of something rather precious to a former employer of mine, and I intend to make that slimy worm pay well for its return. Thing is, he's a slippery one, and though I've cost him a number of his thugs, he's still got ways of mucking up the deal. So, I need extra muscle to accompany us to the exchange as backup. The delivery's got to be at his place. No way around that. You lot just meet me there tomorrow at sunrise. My associates can give you the address. Come armed and ready for action. I'll give you a total of 500 credits now and another 125 for each of you that survives. I don't think the whole job'll take more than 10 minutes if we're quick about it. Any questions?"*

If the PCs ask about his former employer, Basher gets testy. "He calls himself 'Mr. Sarlu.' One of the low-level crimelords who fancies himself a high-and-mighty gang boss. But he's lost a lot of his strength and now the Coterie are moving in. He's only got a handful of mercenaries to protect him now. So, it should be easy enough. You're not gonna back out on me now, are you?" Basher remains vague about the rest of his plan, suggesting such matters are above the PCs' pay and they should trust he'll take care of his end of things.

## B7. MARKETPLACE MAYHEM (CR 8)

Following the PCs' encounter with Basher at Baeboli's Emporium, several hours remain in the day before they need to meet him again for the exchange at Mr. Sarlu's compound. The route home should take them through the Grabel-Quoke marketplace again. Unbeknownst to the PCs, a new threat emerges from their past. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene:

*It appears more off-world visitors have arrived through the Skytalon gate, and the marketplace foot traffic has slowed considerably to accommodate them. Up ahead, several beasts of burden—all unusually alien in appearance—are navigating the crowd, swaying dangerously under heavy loads. Suddenly, a pair of robed bystanders impede their way forward, before turning and readying weighted nets and spears. Gesturing in your direction, one of them raises a loud voice, speaking to everyone in the crowded market. "These creatures are our property! Escaped slaves! Stand aside as we reclaim them!"*

Prior to Lomrick's fall—which the PCs engineered in *To Worlds Unknown*—the jagladine sent several reports to the Hegemony about his breakthrough in assessing the genetic markers he detected in their species. His superiors lost contact with Lomrick once the PCs eliminated him, but eventually recognized the importance of his discovery and sent a group of klaven to reacquire the PCs for further study. These special infiltrators operate in pairs, using information from Lomrick's files to identify them. Each pair arrives 2 rounds after the other, communicating with their nanites to alert the others, head off any escape, and tighten the circle to surround the PCs.

**Development:** Should a pair of klaven manage to subdue or otherwise incapacitate one of the PCs, they bind and drag them away, moving at only half-speed (15 ft. per round) due to the additional burden and crowded marketplace. This should enable pursuit from other PCs, but if the klaven escape the ambush site, consider having Kaetrix or one of the PCs' other allies assist in tracking them down. The klaven currently occupy a burned out safehouse near one of Argosa's gates. Any would-be rescuers should face additional klaven reinforcements if they assault this location to regain their comrades.

## KLAVEN INFILTRATORS (6)

CR 3

XP 800 each

LE Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

## DEFENSE

HP 40 EACH

**EAC** 14; **KAC** 16

**Fort** +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +2; +2 vs. disease, ingested poison,

nauseated, and sickened

**Immunities** fear

**Weaknesses** malign influence

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** bone spur +11 (1d6+7 P)

**Ranged** lieutenant spur rifle +8 (1d10+3 P plus id moss; critical injection DC +2) or nyfiber net +8 (entangle)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The klaven use their nets or coordinated grapple attacks to impede and subdue opponents, pummeling pinned or entangled victims in an effort to subdue and carry them off. They only lash out with their claws and shortspears if the battle turns against them or a potent adversary gravely wounds them.

**Morale** The klaven fight until half their number are slain. The others then withdraw, seeking to disappear by relying on their adaptation ability to blend with the crowd.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** -4; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

**Skills** Athletics +8, Intimidate +8, Stealth +13 (+17 in forest/jungle)

**Feats** Improved Combat Maneuver (grapple)

**Languages** Common, Ultari

**Other Abilities** converted host, energy modulation (1/day), nanite exchange

**Gear** armor, lieutenant spur rifle (see sidebar) with 10 spurs, nyfiber nets (2), id moss (2)

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Converted Host (Ex)** Klaven transformations leave nothing to allow for restoration of a base creature to its original self. As a result, klaven cannot be killed and returned to life with *raise dead* or similar effects, though spells such as *miracle* and *wish* could be used to do so.

**Energy Modulation (Su)** Once per day as a reaction, a klaven foot soldier can treat positive and negative energy effects as if it were an undead creature, taking damage from positive energy and healing damage from negative energy. This effect lasts until the start of the klaven's next turn.

**Malign Influence (Su)** Klaven take a -2 penalty to resist charm and mind-affecting (compulsion) effects from evil creatures. This penalty increases to -6 if the creature also has the jagladine subtype.

**Nanite Exchange (Su)** Klaven nanites swarm around each klaven on a microscopic level, providing a continuous awareness of the location and condition of other klaven within 60 feet, as the *status* spell. Klaven can communicate with one another by passing memories and sensory information through their nanites, but must come into physical contact to do so. This exchange of memories requires a full-round action and only consists of perceptions and first-hand experiences. Klaven cannot exchange skills, special abilities, or other individual qualities in this manner.

## SPUR RIFLES

First introduced in *Legendary Planet: To Worlds Unknown*, these ranged weapons were designed by the jagladine for use by their klaven footsoldiers. They fire thorny projectiles of a hard, resin-like substance that are porous and can be easily poisoned. Each rifle can hold up to six spurs at a time in a self-contained case attached to the stock. As long as the rifle holds ammunition, its wielder can ready a new projectile with a free action, but loading a new case requires a full-round action which provokes attacks of opportunity. This is a longarm in the projectile category with a range of 80 feet.

**Lieutenant Spur Rifle:** Issued only to jagladine lieutenants or those higher in rank, the lieutenant spur rifle functions identically to the typical spur rifle, but it deals more damage and gains the critical hit effect injection DC +2.

## THE EXCHANGE (CR 8)

It's possible the PCs may want to consult with Relstanna or Kaetrix before joining Basher the following day. Both the elali and jaskirri admit that Mr. Sarlu's task sounds distasteful, but it does serve their purpose, so they urge the PCs to comply with the arrangement, including the betrayal of Basher's crew. Read the following when the PCs join him at the entrance to Mr. Sarlu's compound:

*Basher and his rat-faced cohorts stand warily at the door to Mr. Sarlu's compound. Three more half-elven thugs have joined him, each carrying a bow and quiver. Next to them is a large, box-shaped cart on four wheels—8 feet long, 4 feet wide, and about 6 feet tall—covered by a canvas tarp. Basher looks a bit nervous, but fixes a baleful eye on everyone. "Look. Sarlu's got mind powers, okay? But they got a limit—40 or 50 feet near as I can figure. Make sure you don't get too close or you might find a tickle of a thought in your head saying you should slit your own throat—or mine. So, stay with the cart and do what I say or I'll knife you myself."*

If the PCs have more questions, Basher angrily tells them their job is simple: "Do what I tell you." A DC 15 Perception check notices the dimensions of the covered cart look similar to those of the aquarium they saw in Mr. Sarlu's chamber (at A4). Once Basher knocks on the door, Oulek swiftly answers. He eyes the group testily and steps aside to let them enter. Basher directs the PCs in first, followed by himself, between them and the aquarium, while Geldek, Riaz, and the rest of his thugs take up the rear, pushing the cart. As Oulek gestures toward the atrium's pool, he asks offhandedly if Basher would like to "say hello to Mickles and

WEAPON	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	CAPACITY	USAGE	BULK	SPECIAL
Spur rifle	1	100	1d6 P	—	80 ft.	6 spurs	1	1	Analog, see text
Lieutenant spur rifle	3	2,250	1d10 P	Injection DC +2	80 ft.	6 spurs	1	1	Analog, see text



Verney” (the corpses at A2). He then escorts the PCs to the Gateway Chamber (at A6), playing along as he addresses the PCs with his back to them.

*“Has your employer told you about Mickles and Verney? Told you what a disloyal, untrustworthy snake he is? Has he told you who he’s stolen from? Can you rely on him to hold up any bargain he’s struck with you?”*

*“That’s enough, Oulek, you bootlicker,” Basher retorts. “Things better be just like I said or I’ll drop this in the tank.” Oulek looks back at the bahgra, who holds a vial of colorless liquid. “She’ll be dead quicker’n greased spogash, and then where will your sweet master be without any Screen to buy off the Coteries?”*

*“Oh, things are like you asked,” Oulek replies. “Mr. Sarlu’s at the far end of the room, secured, as you requested. It’s the gods you need to worry about, Basher. The gods despise a traitor.”*

If the PCs interject during this conversation, Basher tells them to, “Shut up an’ do your job!” Oulek then shelters the panel with his body as he enters the passcode to the Gateway Chamber.

What follows is a potentially complex encounter with several NPCs. It should take place in area A6, but could easily spill over into other parts of the compound. Mr. Sarlu is unlikely to figure into the conflict, as he remains out of telepathic range within the portable aquarium at the far side of the chamber. Read the following as soon as the party comes before him:

*At the north end of the chamber sits the portable water tank seen earlier at your interview with Mr. Sarlu, save that a large segmented worm—anemic white in color with yellow blotches along its length—now occupies it. An iron chain secures the tank to the far wall. Basher halts your party as Oulek walks carefully over the cables to stand beside the aquarium.*

Oulek acts as Mr. Sarlu’s voice during this episode as the worm’s telepathy only extends 50 feet from the tank. Oulek first reports that Mr. Sarlu “wishes to see that she’s unharmed.” Basher complies by taking off the tarp on the aquarium manned by Geldek and Riaz. Once removed, it reveals another translucent water tank occupied by a smaller aquatic worm identical to Mr. Sarlu, save that its body also carries dozens of black-skinned leech-like creatures the size of a man’s thumb.

*After a sigh of relief from Oulek, he conveys, “Mr. Sarlu appreciates that she appears unharmed. Now, if you’ll turn her over as you promised, we’ll give you your blood money.”*

*Basher holds the opened vial of poison over the top of the tank. “No! Don’t take me for a fool! Give me the loot first and then I’ll hand over Mrs. Sarlu!”*

*There’s a brief pause as Oulek telepathically confers with his master. “Very well, Basher. Wojack!” From a side door on the west wall an emaciated dwarf appears with shackles on his ankles, carrying a leather case. He walks awkwardly over the cables, a chain trailing from him to the room from whence he came, and he sets the*

*case down in the center of the room before retreating again. Geldek and Riaz skitter forward excitedly to examine it.*

*“Basher?” Oulek speaks as the two rat-faced creatures open the case and giggle with glee, “You may have played this dangerous game well today, but sooner or later you will make an error.”*

Having spoken that phrase, the PCs should have their cue to jump into action. Their first concern should focus on preventing Basher from dropping the vial of poison into Mrs. Sarlu’s aquarium. At his first opportunity, he does so, and, in a single round the kiss of tsunis poison (see pg. 16) spreads through the water to affect Mrs. Sarlu, who must begin attempting Fortitude saves. If attacked before he drops the poison into the aquarium, Basher fights off his attackers instead. Meanwhile, Geldek slams the leather case shut and runs for the door, but Riaz scrambles towards the fight to aid his boss and the rest of their band. Treat the areas covered by the cables as difficult terrain. Attempting to run over them requires a DC 22 Acrobatics check to avoid tripping (this is true for Geldek, as well). Oulek hangs back, guarding his employer, but Mr. Sarlu’s streetrunners (emerging from A8) join the fray at the first sounds of battle.

**Development:** If Geldek makes it out of the chamber, Oulek yells for one of the PCs to pursue him. Mr. Sarlu’s tower guards (from area A1) also work to cut off his escape. The ysoki must take the time to disable the locks on two more doors to flee the compound and only stops to defend himself if a PC catches up to him. The leather case contains a half-dozen bars of platinum worth 1,000 credits each. Needless to say, Mr. Sarlu considers it his property, but rewards the PCs with a single platinum bar if they recover the ransom and slay Geldek.

If Basher succeeds in poisoning Mrs. Sarlu, the PCs must do what they can to aid her—if she dies, they haven’t fulfilled their commitment to Mr. Sarlu; if she survives, however, the gangster is satisfied they held up their end of the bargain, even if she requires further medical attention to recover.

## BASHER CR 5

XP 1,600

Male bahgra operative (see pg. 15)

HP 70; RP 5

**Gear** In addition to his normal gear, Basher is carrying a credstick with 500 credits on it to pay the group on completion of the mission.

## GELDEK AND RIAZ CR 5

XP 1,600

Male ysoki operatives (see pg. 16)

HP 65

## BASHER’S THUGS (3) CR 2

XP 600 each

Half-elf operative

CN Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +13

## PART 2: THE BROKEN BARONIES

### DEFENSE

HP 22 EACH

EAC 13; KAC 14

Fort +1; Ref +6; Will +5; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities evasion; Immunities sleep

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee survival knife +8 (1d4+2 S)

Ranged static arc pistol +8 (1d6+2 E; critical arc 2) or tactical shirren-eye rifle +8 (1d10 P)

Offensive Abilities trick attack +1d4

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Basher's thugs try to keep out of the way of the main combat, firing from the sidelines with their sniper rifles. If brought into direct conflict, they'll use their uncanny mobility to slip away from fights.

**Morale** Basher's thugs aren't proud and will flee when Basher goes down or when reduced to half HP.

### STATISTICS

Str +0; Dex +4; Con +0; Int +2; Wis +1; Cha +1

Skills Acrobatics +13, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +13, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +13

Feats Antagonize

Languages Common, Elven

Other Abilities operative exploits (uncanny mobility), specialization (ghost)

Gear freebooter armor I, static arc pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), survival knife, tactical shirren-eye rifle with 10 rounds

### MRS. SARLU

CR 5

XP 1,600

Young female sarlu (see pg. 82)

HP 60

### CELEBRATORY LIBATIONS

Once the PCs have slain or captured Basher and his cohorts, read or paraphrase the following as Mr. Sarlu's forces celebrate their victory:

*As the last foe is subdued, Oulek calls for assistance in unchaining Mr. Sarlu's aquarium from the wall and then pushes it across the room until the two tanks are adjacent. 'Ahh, you are safe now, my beloved,' the sarlu transmits to those in the chamber via his silky telepathy. 'Those ruffians can't hurt you anymore.'*

*One of Mr. Sarlu's guards, foot tapping eagerly on the ground, suddenly asks, "Boss! Is it okay if we have a taste? It's been an age!"*

*The sarlu's feeler tentacles writhe about in apparent assent. Two of his mercenaries produce tin cups and trot over to their employer's tank. They fill their cups with its green waters, then move quickly to Mrs. Sarlu. Each pluck off one of the squirming leech-like organisms that cover her body, the fat black worms wriggling as they emit high-pitched squeals. Without pause, both pop a leech into their salivating mouths and drain their cups. Vapid grins break across their faces almost immediately and their bodies relax, clearly overcome by an enveloping euphoria. The intoxicated guards then pass through the*

*eastern door towards their barracks.*

The PCs may have briefly held some sympathy for Mr. and Mrs. Sarlu's plight at the outset of Basher's exchange. However, revealed in this rather graphic way is the true nature of Mr. Sarlu's profitable enterprise: he had this female of his species lobotomized so she docilely produces sarlu larvae. Ingesting a larva along with water infused by a male sarlu's natural oils produces a powerful, highly addictive narcotic effect. The substance is called *sarlu-ahq*, but users on the streets of Zel-Argose more commonly refer to it as Screen.

### THROUGH THE RED GATE

Despite any misgivings on the part of the PCs, Mr. Sarlu remains true to his word and allows them to use the Red Gate. Before doing so, the heroes may want to take time to recuperate, consult with Relstanna, or resupply. Read the following when the PCs assemble in the chamber:

*Oulek clacks his beak in a gesture of impatience, asking if you're ready for the journey to Rythes. With your assent, he calls upon Wojack again. The manacled dwarf plods over to the dark green mechanism at the center of the chamber, slamming a fist on a number of protuberances, which sparkle with light, then places his open palm on a smooth panel. With an almost sensual howl the red ring shudders to life, with thin arcs of energy crossing the ring's center. The morose dwarf gives an incongruous wink. "Step through, friends! Another world awaits!"*

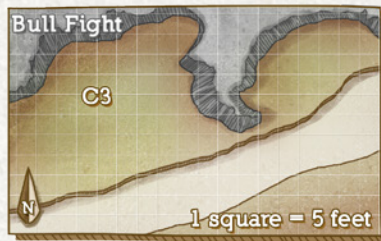
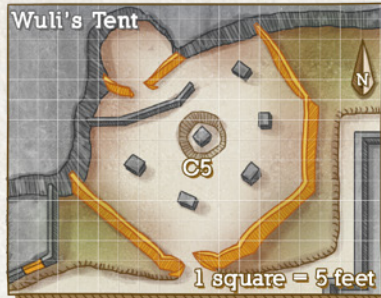
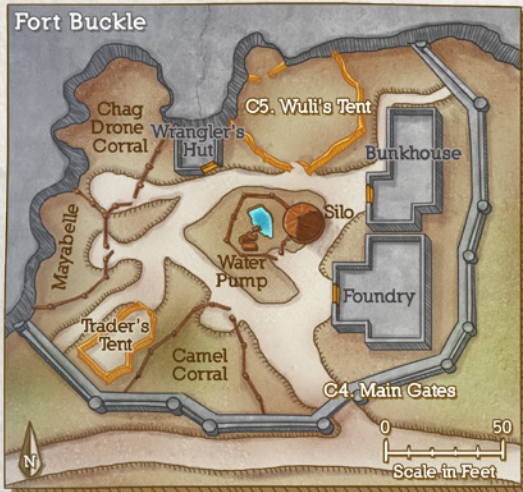
Nothing can be spied through the gateway itself, which Wojack states is normal "for this particular model" should the PCs inquire. Neither the dwarf nor Oulek truly know what awaits on the other side. If the PCs bother to ask if anything has ever come through from Rythes, the response, after a long pause, is "No. Nothing."

A pleasant tingling sensation washes over the PCs as they near the shimmering pink energy playing across the gate's ring, making the hair on their heads stand on end. Partially passing through the gate reveals nothing of the other side. It requires full passage to see their destination, and once the PCs step through, transportation is instantaneous, and they appear on Rythes.

## PART 2: THE BROKEN BARONIES

The Red Gate takes the PCs to the southeastern tip of a peninsula on Rythes—an area collectively known as the Broken Baronies. Citizens of these insular forts, encampments, and city-states always distrust the sudden appearance of strangers, and actively guard against anyone who might steal or forcibly take their hard-earned supplies and resources. As a result, initial encounters with natives of Rythes have a starting attitude of Unfriendly, and all Diplomacy checks which fail to improve this situation immediately causes them to become Hostile. This change in attitude may not manifest right away, however, as even Hostile NPCs may bide their time, carefully planning to rob, capture, or slay the PCs as a means of taking their resources instead.

## C. BARONY OF DUST



### C. THE BARONY OF DUST

The Red Gate emerges in the Barony of Dust, one of the hardest hit regions among the Broken Baronies. Its sparse population relies on native chag beetles for sustenance, tools, and trade with the neighboring Barony of Merebec. The Dustfolk are a hard lot, banding together for survival and always on guard, but accept strangers a little more openly as long as they present themselves with courtesy. The small settlement of Buckle represents their only major concentration of people, and the adventure assumes the PCs find their way there, but first they encounter a few challenges along the way.

#### C1. WET ARRIVAL

*In the blink of an eye, a murky green, liquid haze replaces the scene from Mr. Sarlu's gateway chamber. Tall, snaky plants with deep blue fronds wave hypnotically all around you, growing from a deep-red coral reef. Your arrival on Rythes has seemingly submerged you in seawater!*

Ages ago, the ancient earthquakes that rocked Rythes caused lower lying areas of land to slide into the sea, including this ancient gateway, which once sat on a beautiful coastline. The instant an unsuspecting PC emerges from the gate, he or she must make a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid taking in a lungful of seawater. Those who fail assume the nauseated condition and begin suffocating, while those who succeed manage to hold their breath at the last instant. While seemingly dire, the water is only 15 feet deep here, and the shore lies 60 feet ahead in a relatively placid grotto. A successful DC 12 Athletics check allows a PC to move forward or upward, but failure indicates one of two possible outcomes (50/50 chance). The PC either unintentionally slices themselves on the coral reef, taking 2d4 points of slashing damage, or they become entangled in the seaweed-like growths rising from the ocean floor. In the event of entanglement, PCs may break free with a DC 14 Strength check or by dealing 5 Hit Points of damage to the fronds with a slashing weapon. Ultimately, the PCs may need to aid one another to make it safely to shore. Anyone affected by the seawater-induced nausea suffers the condition for 1d4 rounds after surfacing, and becomes sickened for 1d4 hours thereafter.



## C2. HONIGAL'S SHACK

A small ledge leads to a shack along the shoreline, built from dull gray stone shot through with purple marbling. A bow-legged old dwarf emerges from the shack, clad in dusty homespun clothes and sporting a near-toothless grin. He walks to the water's edge, one hand pressed against the small of his stooped back and the other clutching a bundle of tattered towels. He waves the towels in the air. "Hey there, off-worlders!" he shouts, "Welcome to the arse-end of Rythes!"

A naturally affable dwarf named Honigal (NG dwarf operative) serves as a watchman for the submerged gateway from Argosa. Originally from Buckle, he makes his home in the caves along the shore, but uses the shack for fishing from the ocean. He hands out towels to the PCs as they emerge, wearing an amused grin on his weathered face. As long as the PCs aren't hostile towards him, he mentions they're the third party to venture through the gate in the last six weeks after an eight-month stretch of no one coming through at all. He directs them to a road west over a slight ridge toward Fort Buckle, stating they can find civilization there. If they improve the dwarf's attitude to Friendly (DC 13 Diplomacy), he can answer basic questions and provide further information in the accompanying sidebar.

## C3. BULL FIGHT (CR 5 OR 7)

Two, enormous beetles, each crowned with a trio of wicked horns, circle each other. When one finds an opening, it charges the other, and they lock horns, only to disengage and continue circling.

**Creatures:** Two bull chag beetles are attempting to achieve dominance over one another without really inflicting injury to themselves. They both scented the chag cow, Mayabelle, corralled in Fort Buckle and now battle for the right to mate with her. Once the winning bull drives off the loser, the herders in Buckle plan on releasing her to it. Unless the PCs give these two beasts a wide berth—circling around them no closer than 50 feet—they attract the attention of the beetles, which charge to attack intruders in their territory. Even if the PCs avoid initial conflict, the winning beetle likely crosses their path again after driving off its rival.

### DUELING BULLS (2)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Bull chag (see pg. 75)

HP 75 each

### CHATTY HONIGAL

Roll a d8 to determine the information Honigal provides in conversation. He talks as long as the PCs engage him, absentmindedly repeating himself in the event of duplicate results.

ROLL	INFORMATION
1	"You're aware this is your new home now, no? That gate is one-way. No going back that direction. No other way off planet either, unless another one's still working out in the wastes."
2	"A krang named Khedri came through six weeks back. Stone serious fellow. Said something 'bout runnin' afoul of a Zar-boo or something like that."
3	"Month ago, I saw six fellas come through. Gray-skinned, glowin' purple eyes. Holdin' tall spears. Patted me on the head as they came outta the water, didn't say a word, but kept grinnin' with mouths full o' needle teeth. You folks look a lot nicer."
4	They serve drinks down at Wuli's in Buckle, but steer clear of Wuli's daughter. That minx flirts too much with off-worlders. Probably thinks one of 'em can take her off planet, I guess."
5	"I was born and bred here on Rythes, though I spent my first years in True Veleate. Left when the zealots got sterner. They don't mess around with magic."
6	"Buckle ain't so bad a place, long as you don't mind chag meat and workin' a grinder. I keep by the sea, though. Like to fish and set traps for lobsters."
7	"I hear the other baronies started recoverin' from the blight. The Barony of the Bloom's rightmost worshipful of their plants, and they trade crops with everyone now. What I wouldn't give for a basketful of berries!"
8	"Stay away from those bull chags 'round the ridge. Two of 'em are bumpin' horns for the privilege of a night with Mayabelle."

### C4. FORT BUCKLE

*A small settlement rises here against the rock face of a dull gray cliff. Its buildings are constructed from similar individual stones, fit closely together with a pale-white mortar. A few plumes of smoke waft up from within, and several men with heavy rifles guard the walls near the town's only gate.*

A guard captain named **Rolly** (LN male human mystic) takes turns defending Buckle's wall with a few villagers to assist him. When the PCs approach, he asks the nature of their business. If the PCs mention their interest in a book (such as the *Opus Aeterna*), he states the only book in town is Wuli's ledger and suggests they seek one of the monasteries to the west for such luxuries. As the group approaches, he casts *detect thoughts* before leaving the gatehouse (Perception DC 20 to notice and Mysticism DC 15 to identify the spell). If the PCs ask to rest or resupply in Buckle, Rolly asks if they plan on making any trouble. He uses *detect thoughts* in an attempt to verify his claim (DC 13 Will negates). An honest "no" is enough to gain admittance and directions to Wuli's tent (at C5), which serves as a community tavern and gathering place. If the PCs show signs of a violent confrontation with the bull chags (at C3), Rolly asks about it. He becomes Unfriendly if he discovers the PCs slew or drove off the bulls, demanding they wait outside while he summons Wuli. He reappears 5 minutes later with a rodent-faced humanoid (a DC 12 Life Science check suggests an uncanny resemblance to ysoki, save that Wuli is Medium-sized).

As Buckle's community leader and de-facto Baron of the Dustfolk, Wuli asks about the circumstances that led the PCs to fight the chag beetles. If the PCs truthfully indicate they only defended themselves, Wuli pauses and shakes his head, saying to Rolly: "They've beggared us, but they had no way of knowing. It's that lazy Bolog's fault. He should have had some wranglers there instead of chasing Shakes. Let the bastards in." If the PCs boast of their kill or suggest they fought the bulls for sport, Wuli tells them they're not welcome in Buckle and should be on their way. Rolly and his guardsmen then ready their crossbows to repel the PCs, if necessary, using the settlement wall for cover. If the ostracized PCs show remorse after learning of Buckle's dependence on chag beetles for survival, skip to C6, "Making Amends."

### C5. WULI'S TENT

*The interior of this tent features several benches surrounding a smoking fire-pit beneath a hooded vent. A curved bar covers the opposite wall blocking access to another door leading to an area nestled against the cliff. An alcoholic smell mixed with a powerful earthy scent permeates the air.*

Wuli's tent acts as the primary hub of activity for Buckle, and Wuli has taken on the role of the town's Baron, though none of the other baronies truly recognize him as such. Aware of everything that happens in town thanks to his patrons, the ysoki uses such information to cement his leadership, securing survival for himself and those under his care.

Wuli's makeshift tavern serves chag meat, seaweed and crustaceans from the nearby sea, camel's cheese and milk, as well as mossbeard ale. Chag meat is greasy and chewy but provides sustenance like any other meat. The seaweed is bitter and not something people from Buckle typically request. Mossbeard ale is a foamy green liquid with flecks of moss



floating in it. It has a sour smell and flavor but intoxicates its drinker as well as traditional ale. The room behind the bar contains paperwork detailing trade deals with the Barony of Merebec. The top page indicates that Baron Jacob expects a shipment of chag armor in two weeks. The cool room also serves as a storage area for six barrels of mossbeard ale.

**Wuli** (LN male ysoki operative) and his daughter, **Wula-Dor** (N female ysoki), engage the locals with friendly chatter, refilling mugs and cleaning tables. After recognizing the PCs as off-worlders, Wula-Dor flirts with them if they aren't in trouble with her father. The tavern hosts a dozen other patrons, including four syaandi (see pg. 84) drinking at a nearby table and ignoring all attempts at conversation. They've come to Buckle to secretly assess the fort's defenses as part of a scouting mission for their chief (see C10). If the PCs ask Wuli about them, he shares a bit about their culture before stating, "Their coin's as good as anyone else's, and they've caused no trouble. If you want to know more about them, I know they camp somewhere west of here."

### C6. MAKING AMENDS

The adventure assumes the PCs arrive in Buckle following a conflict with the bull chag beetles (at area C3). If the PCs killed or chased off the bulls, Wuli eventually learns of it—whether

from Rolly (at area C4) or through a concerned traveler that witnessed the event from afar. If the PCs somehow tamed or avoided the bulls, Wuli eventually approaches them in a more friendly manner with a job offer. Otherwise, read the following as he confronts them:

*Wuli's expression sours as he barks out, "Meat and money, you stupid off-world bastards! Flesh is hard to come by here and we make our living raising chags. We butcher the drones for food and we fashion their shells into armor. Without a bull to fertilize a cow's eggs—don't know if you saw Mayabelle before you came here—there's no drones. With no drones, there's not enough food to feed everyone or keep the fort defensible. And bulls are rare enough 'round here with Shakes hunting them down."*

Wuli eventually informs the PCs about "Shakes," indicating it's a beast that took up residence in a nearby gully called the Gash. The creature, "a winged lion with the face of a man," preys on wild chags, especially bulls and it keeps the chag population at an all-time low. Depending on how the PCs dealt with the bulls on their way into town, he either demands or requests that they deal with Shakes. He indicates they've lost half a dozen people to it already, and two of them were professional hunters.

Further inquiry regarding Shakes from the local citizens elicits descriptions of escalating exaggeration: "His teeth

and claws are as long as daggers, he has great bat wings that blot out the sun, his eyes sparkle like gemstones and can turn a man to stone, and he throws fiery swords from his tail." These descriptions are not willful deception; only an indication of the dread in which the locals hold Shakes. Rolly can escort the PCs to the Gash, but turns back for Buckle when still a half mile away: "I watched that monster feast on my friend Jorval's guts, and I ain't gettin' any closer than this. His den's at the far end of the Gash. Good luck to ya."

## C7. SHAKES THE CHAG KILLER (CR 6)

*This broad, hook-shaped gully is about 10 feet deep, surrounded by tenacious scrub growth and stony boulders. A number of chitinous oval disks lie scattered on the ground along with bleached bones denuded of flesh. A stiff desert breeze brings the stink of rot.*

A successful DC 10 Life Science check identifies the oval disks as the cast-off shells of chag beetles, the flesh within hungrily consumed by the beast which lairs here. A successful DC 15 Survival check also spots nearby footprints and teeth marks on the chag shells suggesting a large lion. The largest cluster of shells lies before the entrance to a rocky cave.

**Creature:** A mantichore named Shakes lairs within this gully. If the PCs arrive during the day, he resides inside his den, quietly napping. Approaching him unawares requires a DC 13 Stealth check (made at a -3 penalty if a PC treads across the brittle bones he left at the entrance). If the PCs arrive at night, Shakes is instead feasting on another beetle, and approaching him stealthily proves much dicier (DC 23 Stealth with the same potential penalty for walking into his cave). The instant Shakes becomes aware of any intruders, he charges from his cave with a mighty roar, launching a volley of spikes at the closest target. Read the following text.

*A leonine creature with the powerful wings of a dragon and the face of a man stalks about, bellowing loudly, "Does my next meal bring itself so willingly to my doorstep? I so love to play with my food as the chase builds a larger appetite. Yet, I can hardly turn away such easy prey...especially something which smells so tantalizing and different."*

If the PCs remain outside the Gash, Shakes takes to the air, launching spikes at his visitors. However, as soon as someone enters his cave, he chases after them to protect his most recent kill—another dead chag bull.

**Treasure:** There are 21 chag shells lying about the Gash, each worth 100 credits to the residents of Buckle for their armor-making industry. Within Shakes' cave, six saltwater pearls (worth 50 credits each) and a silvery pouch lie buried among a pile of gnawed bones. The pouch contains mk1 darkvision capacitors, unused and still ready to be installed in a new patient. The PCs also find a chunk of glass etched with lines resembling circuit-like schematics. The glass radiates a faint aura of divination and represents just a single pane from the *Opus Aeterna*.

## SHAKES

CR 6

XP 2,400

Manticore

LE Large magical beast

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +13

### DEFENSE

HP 95

**EAC** 18; **KAC** 20

**Fort** +10; **Ref** +10; **Will** +5

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (Ex, clumsy)

**Melee** bite +16 (1d8+11 P) or claw +16 (1d8+11 S)

**Ranged** spikes +13 (2d6+6 p)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

**Offensive Abilities** spike volley

### STATISTICS

**Str** +5; **Dex** +2; **Con** +3; **Int** -1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

**Skills** Survival +18 (+22 when tracking)

**Feats** Mobility, Spring Attack

**Languages** Common

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Shakes launches himself into the sky so he can soften up opponents with multiple volleys of spikes first, staying at a range of 180 feet during the day or just 60 feet (and the limits of his darkvision) at night. After identifying a weaker target, he executes Spring Attacks to bring them down, only landing to use his bite and claw attacks if he feels he has the advantage against multiple attackers.

**Morale** A wily veteran of many battles, Shakes retreats if reduced to less than 10 HP, flying away to recover before resuming the hunt and stalking the PCs's by scent.

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Spike Volley (Ex)** With a snap of its tail, a mantichore can loose a volley of four spikes as a standard action. This attack has a range of 180 feet with no range increment. All targets must be within 30 feet of each other. Make a separate attack roll for each spike; due to the lessened accuracy, these spikes deal only 1d6+6 piercing damage on a hit. The creature can launch only 24 spikes in any 24-hour period.

## C8. WESTWARD

Following their victory over Shakes, the PCs may return to Buckle, and its citizens greet them with cheers once they learn of the mantichore's death. Wuli also happily pays for any chag shells retrieved from the beast's lair. If the PCs left treasure behind, intrepid citizens eventually head to the Gash to gather them up, also returning with the crystalline shard. Wuli recognizes the *Opus* fragment, telling the PCs he saw similar pieces further west and recommends they seek a monastery in the Barony of Merebec called St. Albat of the Soil if they wish to learn more about them. He also asks the PCs to deliver a shipment of chag armor to Baron Yacob if they travel there, giving them 1,000 credits and four camels (temperamental, orange-furred, one-humped beasts of burden) for their trouble. Other than dried chag meat and provisions, Buckle offers little else to aid their mission.

**C9. HOWLING STONES (CR 7)**

*A stand of orange, glass-like stones surrounds the dirt highway passing through this part of the barrens. Each one towers almost 20 feet high with hundreds of sharp, glossy shards scattered around them like small halos. Pitted holes riddle the pillars themselves and, as the wind picks up, they emit a high-pitched howl that eventually harmonizes into dozens of unique, orchestrated whistles. The hardpan within the circle of stones is noticeably darker than the surrounding sand and no scrub grows here. A larger stone nearly 50 feet high and twice as wide sits alone outside the howling circle.*

This conglomeration of pillars once represented another *Tear of Eternity* as a revolutionary and experimental gate developed by the Patrons many years ago to reach the Ethereal Plane. Only recently, the energy from the reactivated *Tear* near Buckle (at C1) brought this long dormant technology back to life. Touching the stones from outside the circle reveals the glassy monoliths are hot to the touch, but this seems little more than the result of unsheltered exposure to the sun's unforgiving rays. A *detect magic* spell, however, reveals a strong transmutation aura emanating from each column, and a successful DC 15 Survival check notices an indeterminate scorching effect of the ground inside the circle. A successful DC 22 Perception also notices that the broken shards around each pillar bear tiny cracks and fractures similar to the circuitry-like patterns of the *Opus* shard (from C7).

**Hazard:** A total of 1d3 arcs of plasma energy strike any sentient creature who carries anything metallic into the darkened circle marked by the pillars. This deals 2d4 electricity and 2d4 fire damage per arc (DC 15 Reflex for half; roll separately for each arc). Travelers can easily avoid the hazard by walking around the cluster of stones.

**Creatures:** If the PCs touch the larger stone outside the circle—or if any plasma surge emanates from one of the smaller pillars—it attracts a plasma elemental bound to the gate. Up to three of these creatures may emerge, each bound to the dormant gate when the *Tear* detonated under the corruption of the Principalities. The elementals are eager to return home, but can only do so if no less than 5 pillars generate an arc of plasma energy at the same time to sustain the portal for a fraction of a second. Once the elementals sense the PCs carry enough metal to trigger such an event, they attempt to force that outcome by using their telekinetic throw ability to hurl them into the circle.

**PLASMA ELEMENTAL, MEDIUM (3)****CR 3****XP 800 each**

N Medium elemental (electricity, elemental, extraplanar, fire)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8**DEFENSE****HP 40****EAC** 14; **KAC** 16**Fort** +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +2**Immunities** electricity, elemental immunities, fire**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold**OFFENSE****Speed** 50 ft.**Melee** slam +12 (1d6+7 E & F; critical burn 1d4 or staggered [DC 12])**Offensive Abilities** plasma strikes**STATISTICS****Str** +4; **Dex** +2; **Con** +1; **Int** -3; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Athletics +8**Feats** Mobility**Languages** Auran, Ignan**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Plasma Strikes (Ex)** A plasma elemental's slams deal half electricity damage and half fire damage. In addition, on a critical hit, the elemental can apply either an additional 1d4 burn damage or the staggered critical hit effect.

**Development:** If the PCs can speak with the elementals and succeed on a DC 25 Diplomacy check, the creatures withhold their attack and explain the nature of their dilemma. If made Friendly, they plead with the PCs to liberate them, suggesting that they willingly stand within the circle to generate enough plasma arcs or force some other creatures to do so. If the PCs manage to free the elementals in either manner, award them XP equivalent to a CR 6 encounter.

**C10. SYAANDI CAMP (CR 7)**

*North of the graveled road stands a large tent of dusty white silk topped by a red-stained pennant flapping in the stiff breeze. Five wooden racks directly south of the tent bear the bloody carcasses of unidentified creatures, the hardpan and scrub around these gory trophies spattered with the sloppy remnants of skinning done without finesse or care.*

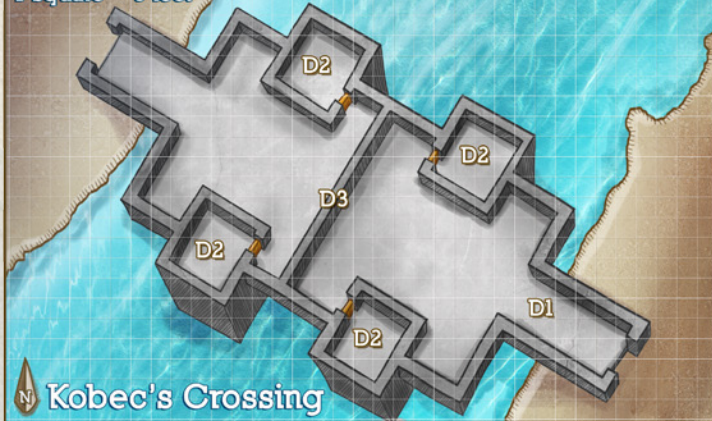
**Creatures:** A syaandi scouting party has made a small camp here along the border between the Barony of Dust and the Barony of Merebec. They await the return of the four spies they sent to Buckle (at C5) in preparation of a larger force joining them to take the fort. They observe the PCs' approach with consternation, and swiftly make plans to eliminate any witnesses to their presence. Three warriors bar the way forward, initially doing so in a non-threatening manner and calling out for "Trade!" in the Common tongue to draw the PCs closer. Soon after, their leader—a veteran warpriest named Erlantu bearing an angry red scar across his forehead—emerges from the tent with a fourth warrior at his side. Erlantu commands a blood cult devoted to the syaandi god, Chtok, and, along with his trained aspirants, hopes to seize Buckle so he can lay claim to the entire Barony of Dust.

At first, Erlantu makes a show of inviting only two PCs into his tent so he can offer them various trade goods. In truth, this just serves as a ruse to separate the PCs before initiating battle. Regardless of whether anyone accompanies him, Erlantu eventually casts *boiling blood* on two of the PCs



### D. BARONY OF MEREPEC

1 square = 5 feet

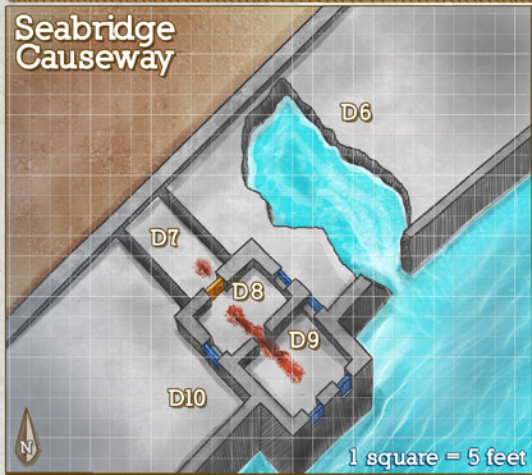


Kobec's Crossing

### Rock Quarry

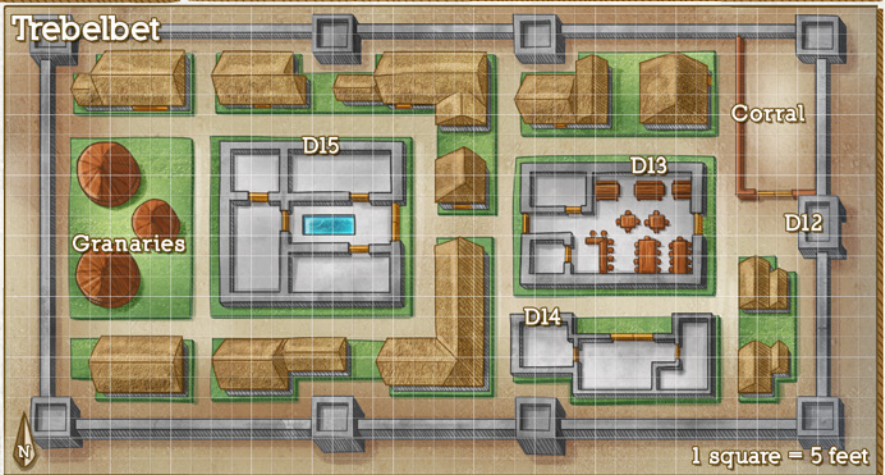


1 square = 5 feet



Seabridge Causeway

1 square = 5 feet



Trebelbet

1 square = 5 feet

as a provocation. The words to his spell serve as the signal for his warriors to begin hostilities against the other PCs outside. The syaandi fight with reckless abandon, laughing even as they receive mortal wounds. This unusual approach to combat stems from the *tear shards* they carry with them (see below).

**Treasure:** Each syaandi wears an intact *tear shard* on a necklace. These crystals retain warmth when held near living flesh, and glow a faint orange at sunrise and sunset. More importantly, they have a unique *resurrection* effect on descendants of the original syaandi bloodline that ventured to Rythes. Attuned to any recovering *Tear of Eternity*, the crystals preserve the spirit of slain syaandi wearing them. Thereafter, the spirit travels to the broken *Tear* and revives the syaandi with a one-time *resurrection* effect. While extremely potent, the shard only affects syaandi—typically just those who follow the cult of Chtok (as they're descended from the original bloodline). The shard becomes inert after a single use, remaining a beautiful gem worth 150 credits. As a result, syaandi warriors prize these crystals above all else, seeking to replace inert shards after each resurrection.

#### ERLANTU, CHTOK BLOOD GLUTTON

CR 4

XP 1,200

Syaandi Warrior-Priest (see pg. 83)

HP 50 each

Other Gear *tear shard*

#### SYAANDI SOLDIERS (4)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Syaandi soldiers (see pg. 83)

HP 25 each

Other Gear *tear shard*

### D. THE BARONY OF MEREPEC

Following their adventures in the Barony of Dust, the PCs should journey to the slightly more robust Barony of Merepec in their search for the monastery of St. Albat and the *Opus Aeterna*. Leaving the dustlands behind, the PCs soon discover an ancient structure known locally as the Seabridge Causeway rising from the sea and tracing an intracoastal waterway which extends for miles along the shoreline. Built by the Patrons, this structure has slowly eroded over the years, but the Barony of Merepec still relies on it as a defensible trade route due to the secure gatehouses maintained along its length.

## PART 2: THE BROKEN BARONIES

Despite Merebec's relative security and growing wealth, its people prove less accommodating than the Barony of Dust. The residents contend with raiders on a more regular basis and maintain a natural distrust of off-worlders. In addition, the syaandi warriors gathering at their border (at **C10**) made matters worse for future visitors when they attacked the causeway. After their defeat (and subsequent resurrection), the raiders made expensive restitution and turned their eye to the isolated Barony of Dust for easier prey. Their warriors sometimes frequent the Mossbeard Alehouse in Trebelbet (at **D13**) on their way east, but Merebec's citizenry still regard them and other off-worlders with trepidation.

### D1. KOBEC'S CROSSING

*Bridging this wide gap between two shores is a structure of brown stone, its surface shot through with faded purple marbling. A low wall bisects the causeway with four, 15-foot-high, crenelated towers flanking its length. The sound of ocean waves crashing against the stony edifice echoes across the hardpan.*

Local inhabitants refer to this section of the Seabridge Causeway as Kobec's Crossing—so named for the inscription an ancient explorer chiseled into it. It rises from the sea and extends inland, its stone surface sometimes buried by shifting sand or collapsed rubble. The crossing's towers show no outward signs of occupation, and calls from the PCs go unanswered. Close examination of the causeway (with a successful DC 18 Perception check) suggests the bridge has seen a fair amount of wheeled traffic, with the words **KOBEC BUILT THIS** etched into the stone just before it broadens. As soon as a PC moves beyond the narrower entrance or attempts to cross via the water, sentries in the guard towers (at **D2**) accost them.

### D2. TRUEK AND THE ROOFTOP BOYS

*A lone figure stands up from behind the battlements atop the easternmost tower, pointing a readied longbow in your direction. "Truek says far enough, off-worlders! Travelers pay a toll at dead-and-buried Kobec's Crossing, god rest his salty soul. It's a hundred credits a head, and fifty for any animals. Of course, if you claim poverty, you can always run the gauntlet or run away—right boys?" At that moment, more armed figures stand above the ramparts of the other three towers and shout in unison, "Spoken true, boss!"*

A Merebec border guard named Truek (N half-orc soldier) leads this band of warriors who call themselves the Rooftop Boys. Baron Yacob of Trebelbet (at **D12**) has charged them with monitoring traffic from the Barony of Dust, and alerting him of any threats with messenger birds kept in the room beneath Truek's tower. The guards normally charge native merchants just 1 credit to use the causeway, but Yacob lets them shake down off-worlders for whatever they can get. If the PCs agree to pay Truek's toll, a guard atop the southernmost tower lowers a beaten metal bucket on a rope to collect the coins and they're then allowed to pass unmolested. PCs who mention the delivery of chag shell armor from Wuli may negotiate the

native fee with a successful DC 23 Diplomacy check. If the PCs refuse to pay, Truek states they can try their luck with the free crossing: either running for the low wall (at **D3**) or attempting to swim the ocean gap. The seasonally turbulent waters here are 20 feet deep and require DC 15 Athletics checks each round to traverse. While attempting either, Truek and his cohorts harass them with ranged attacks, using their crenelated towers for improved cover.

### D3. LOW WALL

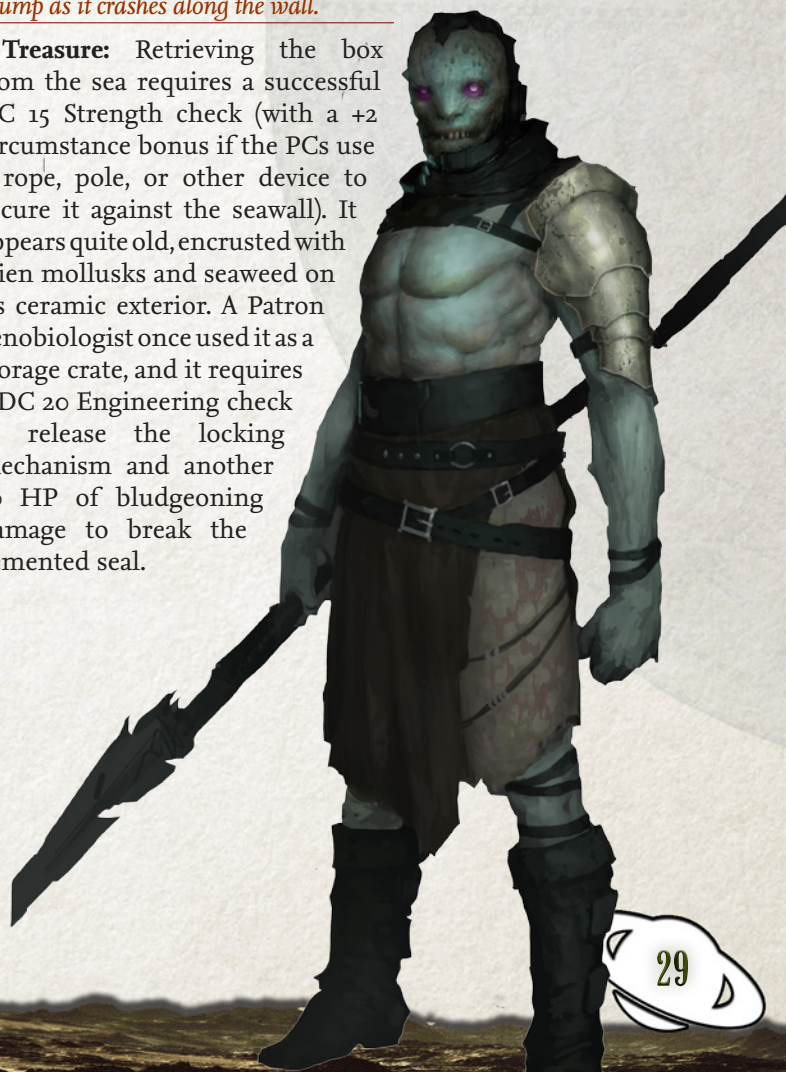
*This wall is 7 feet tall and made of the same stone as the rest of the causeway and bridge.*

A solid, 3-foot-thick, stone wall serves as the main barrier for impeding traffic across the causeway. Its 7-foot height doesn't pose a serious climbing challenge (DC 10 Athletics check to ascend, and PCs may aid one another), but the threat of arrow fire complicates the task and any pack animals must be left behind. Of course, the mechanical cranks in the southernmost and westernmost towers can also lower the wall.

### D4. ANCIENT DEBRIS

*The causeway runs precariously close to the sea here, with waves occasionally rolling across the slick outer wall to spill across the ancient stones. They bring a salty ocean tang and a heavy spray of mist. A box-like container also drifts within the surging tide, creating a hollow thump as it crashes along the wall.*

**Treasure:** Retrieving the box from the sea requires a successful DC 15 Strength check (with a +2 circumstance bonus if the PCs use a rope, pole, or other device to secure it against the seawall). It appears quite old, encrusted with alien mollusks and seaweed on its ceramic exterior. A Patron xenobiologist once used it as a storage crate, and it requires a DC 20 Engineering check to release the locking mechanism and another 10 HP of bludgeoning damage to break the cemented seal.



If opened, the strange box contains 85 unusual holographic coins depicting varying amounts of Patron currency (worth up to 250 credits to collectors among the Accord). It also holds 5 glass vials (their caps broken and the contents long since evaporated). The 24 mollusks clinging to the box's exterior also provide an edible food source. If pried open, one contains a saltwater pearl (worth 50 credits).

## D5. UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER

*Dark clouds have started gathering just off the coast, and the wind picks up from a steady breeze to a strong squall. An occasional rumble of thunder sounds in the distance.*

With the slow recovery of the *Tears of Eternity*, the terraforming artifacts have started re-exerting their influence over the weather. This phenomenon proves erratic at best, and this particular stretch of the Seabridge Causeway comes under a sudden barrage of lightning strikes. A single bolt strikes the causeway each round for 5 rounds, dealing 3d10 points of electricity damage (DC 15 Reflex for half) to anyone it strikes. The bolt only has a 50% chance of targeting an exposed PC (roll randomly to determine which).

## D6. DAMAGED CAUSEWAY

*A broad causeway of brown stone runs more than half a mile along the shore here with sea waves washing against the structure's southern face. Part of the stonework seems blasted away—creating a yawning gap near a ruined gatehouse where a long flag of tattered green cloth still flutters in the breeze.*

A prolonged battle took place on this part of the causeway, precipitated by a pair of off-worlders once allied with a tribe of Rythes gnolls. The unlikely duo—a tengu bard named Kilik and a wayang slayer named Shu—fell victim to one of Mr. Sarlu's ploys and subsequently found themselves forced through the Red Gate several months ago. They eventually impressed a gnoll packlord named Shaghak near the Barony of Merebec, convincing him to attack the causeway's gatehouse with a made-up story of easy plunder. In reality, they only used the gnolls to overrun the border guards, betraying Shaghak in the middle of battle and killing the rest of their allies before slipping into Trebelbet, searching for a gate that can take them home.

The crumbling path of the broken causeway falls away into inrushing seawater 30 feet below, and the water itself descends another 20 feet to the underlying seabed. A successful DC 15 Engineering skill check suggests the broken brickwork resulted from an explosion, and exceeding the check by 3 or more also reveals the blast took place quite recently (within a day or so). Hails to the damaged gatehouse go unanswered.

**Hazard:** To safely cross the gap and reach the gatehouse, the PCs have two choices. They can either head back across the intact causeway, making a longer trek around the dry riverbed before scaling the outer wall at **D7**—or, they can

attempt a riskier crossing using the damaged brickwork still joining the northern wall which forms a narrow ledge. The simpler, more time-consuming method through the dry riverbed ultimately requires a successful DC 15 Athletics check to scale the 30-foot outer wall to reach the other side, and this approach may prove necessary anyway if the PCs still intend on bringing Wuli's camels and cargo with them. Otherwise, unhorsed and intrepid souls can more quickly cross the narrow ledge-like remains of the north wall with two separate DC 15 Acrobatics checks. Failing either of them necessitates a DC 20 Reflex save to grab a piece of solid masonry to avoid falling into the churning seawater. Failure results in 1d3 points of nonlethal damage plus another 2d6 bludgeoning damage from crumbling masonry landing on top of them. Perhaps worse, PCs must succeed at a DC 15 Athletics check to stay afloat every round they remain in the rough surf. Climbing onto the slick rocks of the outer sea wall requires a successful DC 18 Athletics check to escape the water, and similar checks to regain the causeway.

## D7. CROSSING GATE

*Two levered crossing gates close off the causeway near this damaged gatehouse. A single wooden door into the structure lies between the two barriers.*

A cursory examination of this area (with a successful DC 10 Perception check) notes a few dried bloodstains in front of the gatehouse door. A more detailed search (with a successful DC 20 Perception check) discovers an unusual blond feather wedged in a gap between the causeway stones. This belonged to the albino tengu named Kilik (at **D13**).

## D8. BLOODY ROOM

*This office seems damaged beyond repair—the scene of a considerable fight. A table and two chairs lay overturned, a third and fourth smashed to kindling, and some ceramic jars shattered with their contents spilled onto the floor. Blood also spatters the floor and walls, with crimson drag marks leading to a broken door in the southeast wall.*

The gatehouse guards put up a desperate defense here, but the gnolls allied with Kilik and Shu easily overwhelmed them. A battered metal strongbox sits beneath the overturned table, its lock broken and contents missing—stolen away by Kilik. Following the battle, Shu dragged the fallen guards into the next room (at **D9**).

## D9. SHAGHAK'S SPITE (CR 3)

*More carnage lies here. The bodies of five bloodied humans form a garish pile in the northern corner, while two other corpses of hairless, hyena-headed humanoids with pasty skin covered in primitive blue tattoos, lie at the center of the room. A third such creature sits propped against the east corner, three bullet wounds in its chest.*

**Creature:** The brutish gnoll chieftain, Shaghak, met his fate here, betrayed by Kilik and Shu after losing most of his warriors against the gatehouse guards. Grievously wounded and knocked unconscious, he only stabilized shortly after the murderous tengu and wayang left him to die. Shaghak still lives, but suffers from a concussion and badly broken leg, preventing his escape. Shortly after the PCs enter the room, he coughs up a gout of blood and snarls at them, but takes no initially threatening actions.

If the PCs seek to communicate with Shaghak, they must first succeed on a DC 18 Diplomacy check to improve his attitude from Unfriendly to Indifferent. Even so, he only speaks his native tongue (a garbled version of Gnoll requiring a successful DC 10 Culture check even for those who speak the un-bastardized version of the language), but a *comprehend languages* or *tongues* spell may assist. Ultimately, Shaghak has little to say, other than he was wrong to trust “the white birdman and one-eyed assassin” (Kilik and Shu, respectively). He attacked the causeway because “he was promised great plunder and his people always raid to survive.” If asked about the gap in the causeway, he explains he “used his necklace to blast it apart, killing many humans.” A successful DC 12 Perception check notices he still grips a battered grenade hanging from a necklace that still bearing the pins of several others—his last frag grenade III. If the PCs attack him before or after any interrogation, Shaghak detonates the grenade with a readied action, engulfing the room in one last explosion (4d6 P, DC 16 Reflex for half) to avoid capture and take more enemies with him. If the PCs heal Shaghak instead, his attitude immediately improves to Friendly. He offers them his *ring of resistance mk 2* in gratitude, requesting they let him return to his people. If prevented from leaving, he threatens to detonate the grenade, and a successful DC 10 Sense Motive check recognizes the sincerity of his threat.

**Development:** If Shaghak escapes or the PCs let him go, he rejoins his tribe, leading them away from the Barony of Merebec. Their paths may cross again during the PCs’ journey across the Parched Plains in **Part Three** (see **G10**), or when they return to restore the Red Gate. Shaghak could represent another threat, or come to their aid depending on how they part ways. Regardless, the PCs should earn XPs equivalent to a CR 3 encounter, even if they simply survive the last detonation from his grenade.

### SHAGHAK

CR 5

XP 1,600

Male gnoll lieutenant (see pg. 62)

HP 65 (currently 3)

Gear frag grenade III, *ring of resistance mk 2*

### D10. SURVIVOR

*Another body hangs from a broken window on the south side of the gatehouse, its left foot hooked to an iron lamp mounted to the wall. Suddenly, the corpse moves, groaning in pain.*

**Creature:** A visiting noncombatant named **Brennan Quall** (N male human) survived the gatehouse onslaught by pretending to be dead when Shu shot him with a crossbow as he escaped through the window. His trouser leg got tangled in the iron lamp and he quietly hung from the wall while Kilik and Shu turned on the gnolls. He’s been unable to free himself ever since. Upon sighting the PCs, he thanks his improving luck and implores them to help him down before he passes out from all the blood rushing to his head.

If the PCs free Brennan, he promises to vouch for them with the guards at Trebelbet so they can win their way into the city despite being off-worlders. If asked about Trebelbet’s leader, Brennan describes Baron Yacob (at **D15**) as a competent leader and savvy strategist, protecting his people from the savages of the barren wastes. If the PCs ask about the attack on the causeway, he explains the gnolls normally attack lone travelers and rarely a defensible outpost like the gatehouse. He never got a good look at Kilik or Shu since he kept his eyes shut as part of his ruse, but mentions he heard a croaking voice among the raiders—something very different than a gnoll’s guttural bark. He also tells the PCs about an argument between the croak-voiced raider and one of the gnolls.

### D11. MOLLOT’S MOSS FARM

After crossing the Seabridge Causeway, the PCs enter the agricultural lands of the Barony of Merebec. The turbulent seashore, dry riverbeds, and unforgiving desert give way to lush moss-covered greenery and a spongy turf—part of an ever-widening oasis generated by a recovering *Tear of Eternity*. The moss covers nearly every structure in the region, and the local population has become dependent on it as both a food source and trade good with other baronies.

*The scrub becomes noticeably more vibrant in this region—a vast difference from the barren shores and wastelands of the past few miles. Squat trees, none more than 10 feet tall, grow along the highway with large clumps of pale-green moss growing in their shadows. In the distance, a modest homestead rests beside a placid lake, smoke wafting from its stone chimney. Several, triangular structures—none more than a few feet in length—surround it, positioned in neat rows resembling open-faced tents.*

Multiple lean-tos mark the fields of this active moss farm, each crafted from wooden spindles and coarsely woven sheets of cloth. Beneath their shade, patches of cultivated moss grow in similar fashion to those of the nearby trees, save their appearance seems more varied and thicker.

**Creature:** A moss farmer named **Kesko Mollot** (NG male tengu) makes his home here, one of many who nurture the growth of various breeds of greenery in the Barony of Merebec. Mollot sells his produce in Trebelbet, relying on an aurochs-drawn cart to carry it to market. If approached with common courtesy (and a successful DC 16 Diplomacy check), he proves far more amiable than other Merebec natives. He too was once an off-worlder, voluntarily venturing

through the Red Gate with his family to escape a Coterie misunderstanding on Argosa twenty years ago. His wife and two children recently passed away, however, and Mollot still deals with the grief by keeping busy on the farm. If made Helpful, he willingly offers the PCs a place to spend the night, providing them with food, water, and information, should they ask the right questions:

**Why do you live here alone?** “Alas, my wife and two chicks succumbed to fever last month. I thought about moving on, but moss farming’s all I know.”

**What good is moss?** “Oi, friends, I grow six different kinds here. Four are edible if cooked right. You can weave hempmoss into rope and clothing when dried and treated. And, if you soak and ferment mossbeard, it makes a potent ale. Growing the stuff just requires shade and a good deal of moisture.”

**Why is this area so fertile?** “The land is blossoming again, blessed by god because of our faithfulness. In my father’s day we could only farm near the cenotes, but the arable soil has expanded ever since! The whole barony’s getting bigger because of it, and I’ve heard travelers say the same thing’s happening in the Blue Barony, over in Veleate, and the Barony of the Bloom as well.”

**Tell us about your faith.** “I follow the teachings of St. Albat, the Planter, the Sower—St. Albat of the Soil. I tithe to their abbey in Singwheel Canyon. All civilized folk follow the catechism of one saint or another. Most in Merebec follow St. Albat, and just about everyone but off-worlders worship the one god, the lord of all creation on Rythes. The saints established the first teachings, pulling the world out of certain death after the Great Cataclysm.”

**What’s the Great Cataclysm?** “I’m not entirely sure. No one is really. The teachings say it happened so long ago that no one remembers what happened or why. There are still ruins from that time, though—like the Seabridge Causeway you must have crossed. There are artifacts, too. The monasteries guard most of them, but I’ve never seen any.”

**Where can we find books and centers of learning?** “The monasteries, I’d imagine. They preserve those kinds of things. St. Albat’s sits in Singwheel Canyon to the west. St. Oolaav is in the Blue Barony to the south. And St. Ioh lies farther north. You might head to Trebelbet and see what they say about them, though. Baron Yacob knows more than most and he’s visited St. Albat’s before.”

**What can you tell us about Baron Yacob?** “He rules Trebelbet, and that’s the main stronghold in these parts. The stories say he’s done more traveling than most. Seen more. Done more. Makes him the closest thing to a scholar outside the monasteries, and people look up to him for it—for wisdom and such. He’s kept folks safer because of it, fending off syaandi raiders, gnolls, and the like.”

## D12. THE WALLS OF TREBELBET

*The stone highway broadens as it rises towards a small city overlooking several forested lakes. A 20-foot-tall wall surrounds the entire settlement with armed watchtowers every 30 feet, and the ubiquitous moss blanketing the countryside grows on its every surface, giving the walls a greenish cast in the setting sun.*

A tall, red-haired woman named **Sabila Carn** (LN female human soldier) stands watch on the walls of Trebelbet with a handful of guards. She wears a necklace made from polished chag shell fragments with a carved stone medallion indicating her station. When the PCs come within earshot she calls out, challenging their approach and demanding they sheath their weapons and keep their hands in sight. Once they stand beneath her watchtower, she asks if they’re off-worlders and what business they have in coming to Trebelbet. Her starting attitude is Unfriendly, and it requires a successful DC 23 Diplomacy check to improve it, or the PCs may pretend to be natives of Rythes with a successful DC 20 Bluff check instead. If Brennan (from D10) accompanies them, he can vouch for their character, granting a +5 circumstance bonus to either check. Likewise, if the PCs mention Wuli’s shipment of chag shell armor, Sabila leaves the wall and emerges to examine it. After verifying its authenticity, she questions them about Wuli to assure herself their on good terms with the leader of Buckle. One last DC 15 Diplomacy or Bluff check earns her initial trust. Assuming the PCs succeed, Sabila allows them to enter Trebelbet “at Baron Yacob’s sufferance,” but indicates they’ll be viewed with suspicion as outsiders until they prove themselves fully trustworthy. After the PCs pass through the gates, she directs one of her guardsman to secretly shadow them during their time in Trebelbet to keep an eye on them. Should the PCs cause any trouble, this guardsman summons Sabila to deal with the matter. The watch captain arrives in 2d4+1 rounds with an entire squad to keep the peace, fully authorized to expel the PCs from the city, if necessary.

## D13. MOSSBEARD ALEHOUSE (CR 7)

*This bustling tavern holds several stone tables fashioned from the same purple-veined, brown stone comprising the walls of Trebelbet. A sour smell permeates the entire room as a diminutive gnome takes orders at the bar, and another navigates the tables to serve patrons a tray of mugs filled with green liquid.*

The Mossbeard Alehouse caters to all travelers as long as they show no outward signs of hostility towards one another. As a result, a variety of customers fill the tables, served by a pair of gnomes, **Miggli** (NG male gnome) and **Venielen** (CG female gnome), who fled to Trebelbet 10 years ago when gnolls overran their moss farm. They’ve made themselves at home ever since, serving ale in Trebelbet.

Among the current patrons, the PCs may recognize Erlantu and the syaandi warriors they encountered on their way into the Barony of Merebec (at C10) with a successful DC 10 Perception check. If the PCs slew them, the syaandi

## PART 2: THE BROKEN BARONIES

show no signs of ill health, having fully recovered due to the *resurrection* effect of their *tear shards*. They initially refrain from causing trouble in the alehouse, but acknowledge the PCs by raising a mug of ale and giving them a toothy smile. Thereafter, they look for an opportunity to accost the PCs elsewhere in Trebelbet and repay them in kind.

In addition, an albino tengu named Kilik, and her wayang associate Shu, size up visitors to the alehouse when they enter, showing particular interest in off-worlders. If the PCs found the blonde feather (at **D7**), or Shaghak talked about the “white birdman” (at **D9**), or Brennan described the croaking voice (at **D10**), they may recognize those traits in the flamboyant tengu with a successful DC 15 Perception check. Since sneaking their way into Trebelbet, she and her partner Shu have made a handful of dubious contacts and identified a possible strategy for escaping Rythes by seeking the monasteries of the Broken Baronies in hopes of finding another active gate. But Kilik also recognizes the dangers of traveling the barrens alone, and the tengu hopes to form a new gang to see them safely there. She views other off-worlders as better potential partners for this endeavor, prepared to double-cross them as easily as the gnolls she betrayed at the Seabridge Causeway. If the PCs speak with them, Kilik alludes to a close brush with bandits on their way into Trebelbet, pretending to be traders in an attempt to get a read on their feelings about raiding. A successful DC 23 Sense Motive check may see through this ruse, and if called on it, Kilik attempts to smooth over any misgivings by claiming she uses that story as a cover to move about more safely in the Broken Baronies. She conspiratorially shares their goal of reaching the monastery of St. Albat in Singwheel Canyon, hoping to find a way off-world and offers the PCs a chance to join them if they're of a like mind. If the PCs turn them down, Kilik takes offense, but hides it well, plotting to eliminate the PCs and seize their resources now that they know her true nature and motives. If the PCs haven't yet dealt with Erlantu, Kilik and Shu form a temporary partnership with the syaandi to assault them at an opportune moment, whether in the city or on the road.

The PCs also draw the attention from one more patron in the tavern. An Accord agent—a krang named Khedri—observes their interactions with growing curiosity. He also seeks the *Opus Aeterna* and hopes it can help him escape Rythes by either repairing the Red Gate back to Argosa or by revealing another way off planet. If the PCs discuss books with anyone in the tavern or display their fragment of the *Opus Aeterna*, he eventually approaches and offers to assist them by pooling his information about the codex. Alternately, he may also seek the PCs if he recognizes the threat posed by the syaandi or Kilik and Shu, coming to their aid to disrupt any ambush concocted by the PCs' enemies, and eventually engaging them in a similar conversation about escaping Rythes. If the PCs accept his offer to combine forces, he shares that he's only found three fragments of the *Opus Aeterna* during his travels and the entire codex was apparently separated and hidden across the Broken Baronies

a long time ago. Most individuals possessing such fragments don't even recognize their significance, and some treat them with religious reverence, believing them to be the creations of a false god. He recommends they work together to recover the fragments, suggesting the PCs investigate the monastery of St. Albat while he does the same at the abbey of St. Oolaav in the Blue Barony. Thereafter, they can meet again in the Barony of Veleate to reconstruct the codex.

### KILIK

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female tengu envoy

CE Medium humanoid (tengu)

Init +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +11

### DEFENSE

HP 60 EACH

EAC 17; KAC 18

Fort +4; Ref +8; Will +8

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee kukri +12 (1d4+5 S; critical wound) or

bite +12 (1d3+5 S)

Ranged frostbite-class zero pistol +10 (1d6+5 C; critical staggered [DC 15])

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Kilik fights closely with Shu, attempting to attack the same target to give both of them the effects of her clever feint.

**Morale** If reduced to less than 15 HP or if Shu is killed, Kilik takes her *spell ampoule of invisibility* and seeks to escape.

### STATISTICS

Str +0; Dex +2; Con +0; Int +3; Wis +1; Cha +5

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +16, Culture +11, Diplomacy +16, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +11

Feats Unfriendly Fire

Languages Common, Gnoll, Tengu

Other Abilities envoy improvisations (clever attack, clever feint)

Combat Gear *spell ampoule of invisibility*; Other Gear business stationwear, frostbite-class zero pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), kukri

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Kukri (Ex)** A kukri is an uncommon advanced one-handed melee weapon that functions as a survival dagger with the wound critical hit effect.

**Blade Training (Ex)** Tengu are trained from a young age in melee combat with bladed weapons. They are automatically proficient in one advanced or special melee weapon of their choice so long as that weapon has a blade, and they gain Weapon Specialization with that weapon at 3rd level.

**Gifted Linguist (Ex)** Tengu learn two languages each time they take a rank in Culture rather than one language per rank.

**SHU**

CR 4

XP 1,200

Male wayang operative

NE Small humanoid (wayang)

Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

**DEFENSE**

HP 45

EAC 16; KAC 17

Fort +5; Ref +6; Will +7; +2 vs. spells with the shadow descriptor

Defensive Abilities evasion, shadow resistance

**OFFENSE**

Speed 40 ft.

Melee tactical baton +10 (1d4+4)

Ranged thunderstrike sonic pistol +10 (1d8+4 So; critical deafen [DC 15]) or tactical shirren-eye rifle +10 (1d10+4 P)

Offensive Abilities debilitating trick, trick attack +1d8

Wayang Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)

1/day—ghost sound (DC 13), token spell

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Shu consistently uses trick attack with debilitating trick to render targets flat-footed or, if Kilik has already done so, off-target.

**Morale** If reduced below 15 HP or if Kilik has died, Shu activates his holographic clone exploit and flees the battle with all haste.

**STATISTICS**

Str +0; Dex +5; Con +0; Int +3; Wis +1; Cha +0

Skills Acrobatics +16, Culture +11, Sense Motive +11, Stealth +11

Languages Common, Elali, Krang, Wayang

Other Abilities light and dark, lurker, operative exploits (holographic clone [1/day], uncanny mobility), shadow magic, specialization (detective)

Gear basic lashunta tempweave, tactical baton, tactical shirren-eye rifle with 10 sniper rounds, thunderstrike sonic pistol with 1 battery (20 charges)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Light and Dark (Su):** Once per day as a reaction when affected by positive or negative energy, a wayang can treat such effects as if she were an undead creature, taking damage from positive energy and recovering Hit Points from negative energy. This ability lasts for 1 minute once activated.

**Lurker:** Wayangs gain a +2 racial bonus to Perception and Stealth checks.

**Shadow Magic:** When wayangs cast spells or spell-like abilities with the shadow descriptor, the DC of those effects increases by 1. They also gain *ghost sound* and *token spell* as spell-like abilities usable once per day each.

**Shadow Resistance:** Wayangs receive a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against spells with the shadow descriptor.

**KHEDRI OF VOSH**

CR 5

XP 1,600

Male krang soldier

N Medium humanoid (krang)

Init +2; Perception +0

**DEFENSE**

HP 70

EAC 17; KAC 19

Fort +9; Ref +7; Will +4; +2 vs. fear, +4 vs. disease and poison

**OFFENSE**

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee tactical cryopike +14 (1d8+12 C) or head-butt +14 (1d6+12 B)

Ranged corona laser pistol +11 (2d4+5 F; critical burn 1d4) or frag grenade II +11 (explode [15 ft., 2d6 P, DC 13])

Space 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (hit-and-run), nimble fusillade, relentless, smash

**STATISTICS**

Str +5; Dex +3; Con +2; Int +0; Wis +0; Cha +1

Skills Engineering +11, Intimidate +16, Survival +11

Feats Multiattack, Opening Volley

Languages Common, Krang

Other Abilities elongated arms

Gear lashunta ringwear II, corona laser pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), tactical cryopike with 1 battery (20 charges), frag grenades II (2)



**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Elongated Arms (Ex)** Krang have exceptionally long arms relative to their bodies, giving them a natural reach of 10 feet with unarmed strikes and melee weapons and a climb speed of 20 feet.

**Relentless (Ex)** Krang gain a +2 racial bonus to combat maneuvers to bull rush or reposition an opponent. This bonus only applies while both a krang and its opponent are standing on the ground.

**Smash (Ex)** Three times per day, when a krang damages an opponent with its head-butt, it can cause the opponent to become dazed for 1 round (Fortitude DC 13 negates). If the head-butt was a critical hit, the target creature is instead stunned for 1 round and dazed for the following round on a failed save.

**Stout Constitution (Ex)** Krang have robust mental and physical resistances, granting them a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against fear effects and a +4 racial bonus to saves against disease and poison.

**ERLANTU, CHTOK BLOOD GLUTTON****CR 4****XP 1,200**

Syaandi warrior-priest (see pg. 83)

**HP 50 each****SYAANDI SOLDIERS (4)****CR 2****XP 600 each****HP 25 each** (see pg. 83)**D14. CRAEBIN'S GENERAL STORE**

*This store contains various tools and equipment, but everything seems in complete disarray, haphazardly placed on scattered shelves, tables, and even the exceedingly cramped floor.*

**Belindra Craebin** (CN female halfling technomancer) took over this store from her father, Garrett, when he died of natural causes, but has little interest in running the business. When she receives new items, she places them in random locations about the store—usually any open space—thereby frustrating customers searching for specific gear. Belindra has an incredible memory, however, so she eventually recalls where to find things and assists customers in locating whatever they request by climbing over, under, and into hard to reach places to drag forth each prize. She keeps traditional adventuring gear in stock, but any shopping experience by the PCs likely takes hours while she gathers everything.

**D15. BARON YACOB'S HOME**

*This enormous sandstone mansion represents the largest building in town. Purple banners displaying a green, two-headed stag flank the double doors leading inside. A pair of liveried guards stand at attention just outside.*

The guards assume an intimidating posture when outsiders approach the baron's mansion, demanding they

state their business. If the PCs avoid a belligerent attitude with the guards and make a reasonable request for an audience with the baron, they relax and summon their liege, politely asking the PCs to leave their weapons behind. One of the guards then accompanies the PCs to a drawing room past a freshwater pool and a magnificent dining area.

**Baron Yacob** (LN male human envoy) soon appears to meet with the PCs, likely having already heard of their arrival from Sabila Carn. The Baron inherited his crown through traditional means, but also wandered the wastes in his younger years, compiling a wealth of knowledge and adventuring experience beyond the sheltered walls of Trebelbet. As a result, his people often turn to him for leadership, protection, and the resolution of disputes. A capable leader, he instituted a fairer schedule for wall duty (reducing the time from 12 to 8 hours with rotating shifts to avoid forcing the same people into constant overnight duty). A new development now tests his resolve, however, as a nearby rock quarry operation for the purple-veined stone comprising Trebelbet's walls recently uncovered a tremendous pit filled with bones. Workers also claimed they heard whispers and scratching from beyond the entrance to the pit. When miners began complaining of suddenly debilitating rashes and blisters, he issued an order to quarantine the cave.

As a result, Yacob views the PCs' arrival as an opportunity to discover the cause of the bone pit and the unusual malady afflicting his miners. He wants to put his people back to work as soon as possible so they can quarry enough stone to repair some recent damage to one Trebelbet's walls. As off-worlders, he views the PCs as more expendable than his own men, and, if they prove as capable as they seem, he hopes they can fix the problem, earn his trust, and then be on their way following a 3,000 credit reward for dealing with the matter. If the PCs ask him about the *Opus Aeterna* or the various monasteries across the Broken Baronies, he can describe each one to the best of his ability, having visited them years ago when seeking to better understand the ruins of Rythes. If they agree to deal with the problems at the rock quarry, he also promises to draft them an official decree in his name to secure the cooperation of any monks they encounter.

**D16. ROCK QUARRY**

The PCs have to travel a few miles further west of Trebelbet to reach the "rock quarry" described by Baron Yacob. A moss-covered track of heavy wagon ruts marks the route as it ventures away from the Seabridge Causeway and into wilder areas of the barony.

*Several unworked blocks of brown stone shot through with purple marbling sit in a pile as if someone pulled them from the earth and then abandoned them. A sign with bright blue paint stands outside a small cave, proclaiming: "Quarantined! By Order of Baron Yacob!"*

The stone quarried from this hillside serves as the primary building material for Trebelbet, which continues to expand





as the population grows under Baron Yacob's leadership. The "rock quarry" is actually the ruins of an ancient Patron shrine that contains the nearest *Tear of Eternity*. A landslide covered the structure when the Principalities created such devastation on Rythes. The active mining by Trebelbet's workers reopened the entrance to the shrine, and shortly thereafter, the miners started showing signs of disease manifesting from the same corruption affecting the *Tear*. This forced the baron to quarantine the mine, because he now fears the stone itself might carry the taint. Spells like *detect poison* and *diagnose disease* fail to identify any toxins or pathogens, but *detect radiation* does reveal a faint trace emanating from the stone. It grows stronger (but still registers as faint) upon approaching the cave.

### D17. BONE PIT

*Moss hangs from the surprisingly smooth ceiling of the long corridor leading to this circular chamber. A massive 20-foot-wide pit takes up most of the floor, piled high with gnawed bones of every description. Faint orange light emanates from another passage to the northwest.*

This pit once served as a chamber of renewal and rebirth for those using the intact *Tear of Eternity* (at D19). Followers of

the Patrons could literally shed their bodies for restoration, particularly those with grievous injuries or devastating illnesses. By aligning themselves within the circular pit and undergoing a ritual of euthanasia, individuals could rely on the *Tear* to resurrect and restore them in this chamber. Those with *tear shards* (such as the syaandi the PCs encountered at C10 and again at D13) enjoy a similar effect. The 20-foot-deep pit contains the bones of those who took their lives, as well as the bones of victims attacked by the tear-warped wretches (at D18).

### D18. TEAR-WARPED WRETCHES (CR 7)

*An overwhelming stench of decay and an orange light fills this chamber. The apparent source of illumination emanates from an area further south, while the smell results from two carrion corpses piled along a ledge overlooking an oval chamber 10 feet below. Two spherical areas also expand to the northwest and southeast completely overrun by layers of vibrant green moss.*

This room acted as a meditation chamber for the recently resurrected where they could reflect on their former lives, regain their memories, and plan new futures under the guidance and instruction of the Patrons.

## PART 2: THE BROKEN BARONIES

**Creatures:** Four former syaandi benefitted from the *resurrection* effect of *tear shards* found elsewhere in the Barony of Merebec and had their spirits drawn to this shrine's fractured *Tear* (at **D19**) when they died. Sealed within the buried ruins and unable to escape, their newbodies eventually perished from the radiation, and the *Tear* subsequently resurrected them again and again, eventually causing them to mutate into undead festrogs. They now mindlessly protect the cave, hungrily attacking anything entering their domain as evidenced by the slain corpses of two Merebec miners left on the ledge. Unless the PCs take precautions to hide their approach (with a DC 19 Stealth check), the wretches hide themselves on the ceiling just above the northern ledge (DC 20 Perception to notice), seeking to surprise intruders.

### TEAR-WARPED WRETCHES

CR 4

XP 1,200

NE Medium undead

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

HP 50 EACH

EAC 16; KAC 18

Fort +6; Ref +6; Will +5

**Defensive Abilities** diseased pustules; **Immunities** undead immunities

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.; *spider climb*

**Melee** bite +12 (1d6+9 P plus feed) or claw +12 (1d6+9 S)

**Offensive Abilities** feed

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The wretches use their *spider climb* ability to scale the walls and ceiling to surround and flank opponents. They attempt to shove their foes into the oval pit with bull rush combat maneuvers, inflicting 1d6 falling damage before climbing down to feed on them.

**Morale** The wretches fight to the death.

#### STATISTICS

Str +5; Dex +3; Con —; Int +0;

Wis +0; Cha +1

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Athletics +15, Stealth +10

**Feats** Improved Combat Maneuver (bull rush)

**Languages** Syaandu

**Other Abilities** unliving

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Diseased Pustules (Ex)** When a wretch takes damage from a piercing or slashing weapon, some of its boils rupture,

squirting the attacker with puslike fluids. The noxious secretions carry a potent contact disease that causes those infected to break out into painful necrotic boils.

**Feed (Su)** Every time a wretch deals damage with a bite attack, it feeds on its opponent's flesh and gains 5 temporary Hit Points. The wretch cannot have more than 5 temporary Hit Points gained by this ability at one time.

**Spider Climb (Ex)** The wretches benefit from a revolting adhesive created by the pus-like fluids released by their diseased pustules. The substance lets them climb walls and ceilings as if under a *spider climb* effect.

#### NECROTIC BOILS

**Type** disease (contact); **Save** Fortitude DC 13

**Track** physical; **Frequency** 1/day

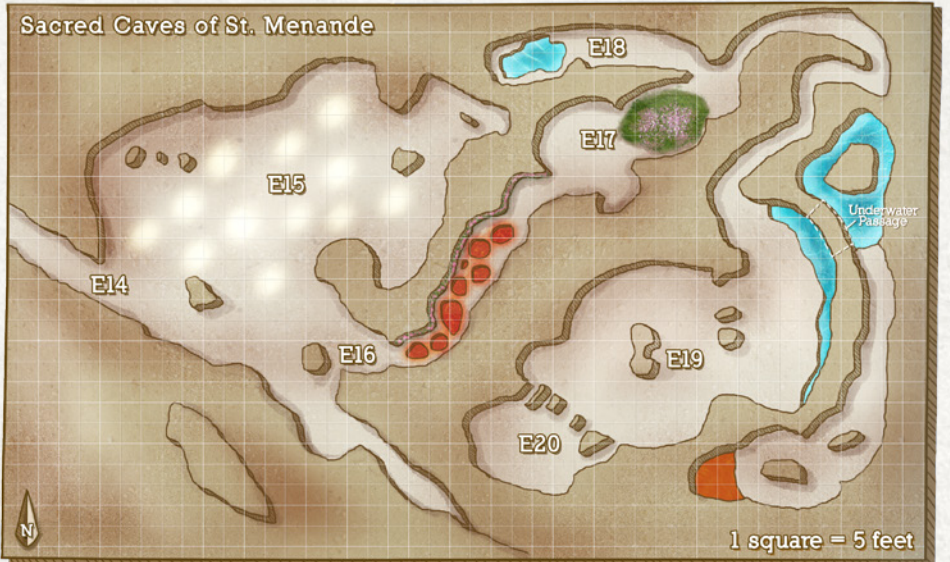
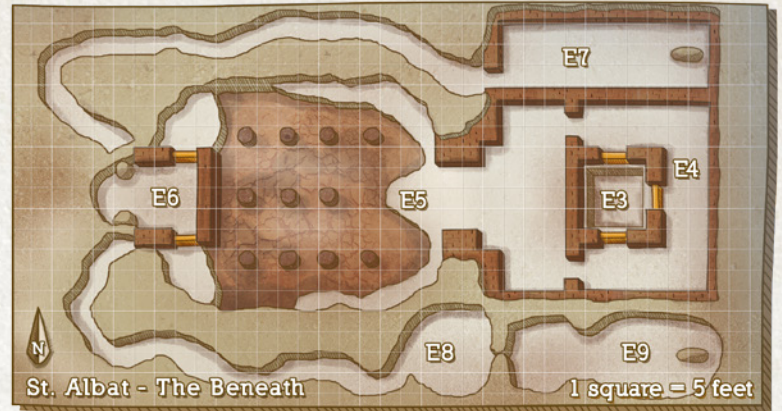
**Cure** 1 save

### D19. FRACTURED TEAR

*The far end of this chamber contains a large, cracked, tear-shaped gem resting on a pedestal and radiating with a fierce orange light. Similar colored shards surround the pedestal, their glow much softer, but wavering in a heat-like haze.*

Canny PCs may recognize the similarities between this *Tear of Eternity* and the Red Gate at Mr. Sarlu's. Finger-length shards lie about the cave, initially claimed and moved about by the resurrected syaandi. The partial destruction of the *Tear* results from the corruption inflicted by the Principalities when they assaulted Rythes millennia ago. The damage has caused the ancient artifact to leak a strange form of radiation within the entire chamber. The most immediate effect induces a severe headache, forcing any living creature occupying the room to make a DC 18 Fortitude save or suffer the sickened condition. This effect lasts for 2d6 hours even upon leaving the immediate area. The radiation also has a secondary and more insidious effect: each hour of exposure in this chamber causes lesions to appear, dealing 1d4 points of Dex damage to those who fail a DC 18 Fortitude save. If the radiation reduces a character to 0 Dex, the victim dies, and then returns as another tear-warped wretch 8 hours later.





Despite the incredible danger posed by the malfunctioning *Tear*, its radiation is also responsible for the prodigious growth of the barony's unique moss. A successful DC 15 Life Science or DC 20 Mysticism check reveals this fact, presenting a conundrum for PCs who may wish to finish destroying the *Tear* to end the radiation. If the PCs attempt the latter, the cracked gem has hardness 8 and 60 HP. Destroying it releases an intense wave of desiccating heat, inflicting 4d6 points of fire damage (DC 18 Fortitude save for half) and immediately inflicting the fatigued and nauseated conditions for 24 hours.

**Development:** However the PCs choose to resolve the situation with the fractured *Tear*, it pleases Baron Yacob to put the matter behind him. If they inform him of the cave's dangerous radiation, he ensures it remains off-limits so the *Tear* can continue promoting the growth of the barony's moss. If the PCs destroy the *Tear*, it takes a while for the moss to recede, making it possible for Merebec's farmers to find alternative solutions to ensure its survival. The Baron makes good on the monetary reward he promised and provides them his written authorization to secure the assistance of the monks at St. Albat's monastery.

## E. THE RIVER'S GHOST

The mighty Singwheel River once provided fresh water for the entire peninsula now occupied by the Broken Baronies. With the destruction of so many *Tears of Eternity*, great earthquakes opened fissures beneath the river basin, eventually draining the water. Now, the remaining riverbed carves an impressive scar through the land, ranging from 50 feet to 2 miles in width, reduced to pockets of fast-drying mud created by rare rainfalls.

## ST. ALBAT'S MONASTERY

The St. Albat monastery represents the first sign of civilization along the dead river. Its monks have spent centuries faithfully illuminating passages from a single pane of the *Opus Aeterna* to honor their god. They no longer possess the crystalline page from the codex, however, believing St. Albat took it with him to his eternal reward in paradise. As the years have passed, the monks have copied the script into their book of psalms, but their work has become less legible as they lack a true understanding of the codex's meaning. Now, they spend their time in quiet meditation, using the slowly drying soil in all their endeavors as part of a misguided effort to renew Rythes.

## E1. ST. ALBAT OF THE SOIL

*As the dry riverbed passes beyond the confines of Trebelbet, signs of civilization fade. Days of travelling have seen few signs of life as the river doubles back on itself several times in a snake-like fashion. Eventually, it broadens into a huge canyon filled with the rhythmic chanting of humanoids caked head to toe in sunbaked mud. They sit upon flat stones, arms raised to the cloudless sky. A number of misshapen slabs of tin and wood also lie scattered across the ground all around them.*

The monks of St. Albat lack a true “monastery” to call their own. In reality, they spend most of their days engaged in daily rituals within the canyon itself, living within individual holes dug into the ground for shelter. They cover themselves with mud to keep cool and also as a means for beseeching their god to renew all life on Rythes, believing it has life-giving properties capable of garnering their god’s attention and protection. A successful DC 18 Perception check notices several lines and circular patterns (similar to those from the *Opus Aeterna*) inscribed into the flat stones where they sit. While none of these drawings are complete, they too serve as an outward reflection of the monks’ diligence in copying the ancient script.

Twelve monks currently sit among the stones. They remain silent even if the PCs attempt to speak with them, focused intently on their rhythmic chant. Even harassed or physically interrupted, irritated monks temporarily break their meditation to shush the speakers, but continue to ignore them. If, however, the PCs show them any of the fragments they’ve retrieved from the *Opus Aeterna*, the monks immediately cease their meditation, brushing away flakes of drying mud to eagerly surround the PCs in awe and admiration, asking where they obtained them. The excitable chatter causes a number of monks to emerge from their covered holes, interrupting their sleep to investigate the disturbance. These higher-ranking initiates harshly reprimand the gawking chanters and urge them to resume their meditation. The newcomers speak more directly with the PCs, requesting the purpose of their visit. If shown Baron Yacob’s missive or the *Opus* fragments, they direct the PCs to their abbess, Sister Kaolin (at E2).

## E2. THE WAY BENEATH

*As the path moves beyond the strange monastic community, it makes a final turn, passing near a sheltered structure composed of a horseshoe-shaped wall of mud 10 feet high. A dirty blanket hangs from two pegs, shading the interior from the harsh sun.*

**Creature:** This handmade hut of mud and straw houses the only member of St. Albat’s to consistently live above ground—the monastery’s abbess, **Sister Kaolin** (LN female human mystic). With the assistance of her trained monks, she stands guard over the holiest location in the entire canyon—a small pit that descends into the dark recesses of a Patron shrine discovered thousands of years ago by the

original St. Albat. Assuming the initiates (from E1) escort the PCs to her, she greets them with an earthen embrace, following tradition by marking them with the blessed soil of St. Albat’s. If they show her an *Opus* fragment, she attempts to hide her sudden interest, but questions them intently about it, noting its patterns are similar but different from those they copy in their psalms upon the stones.

Before Sister Kaolin allows the PCs to ask her questions, she insists on knowing where they found the fragment, listening raptly as the PCs relate the tale. Able to sense their off-worlder heritage, she also asks about their homelands. She then questions them about anything unusual they may have seen on their journeys across Rythes, showing particular interest in areas of regrowth and recovery they may have encountered. Once satisfied with their responses, she entertains their own questions, providing answers as outlined below:

**What is this place?** “This is the Monastery of St. Albat, founded after the Great Cataclysm drained the Singwheel River.”

**What happened to the river?** “Centuries ago, the land shook and opened, dragging the water down into the earth. Now we dig to recover it.”

**Who is St. Albat?** “He taught us that god grew disappointed with us taking advantage of the bounty we had. We had become wasteful and allowed many of his gifts to go extinct. St. Albat believed god would one day heal the land and restore the river, but, as the soil’s caretakers, we must tend to and protect all that remains here in the basin.”

**Why does nothing grow here?** “As the river will reclaim this land, we don’t need to grow anything here. When god is satisfied with the renewal of his bounty, he will return the river to us and allow the entire land to bloom again.”

**What do you eat, then?** “We receive gifts from the people of Merebec, who revere St. Albat as the provider of their sustenance, especially now that their moss farms have begun producing more than they can consume. The mud also holds a surprising bounty of worms and beetles if we search diligently for them.”

**Why the interest in this fragment?** “St. Albat possessed a full pane of such glass which also bore these markings. He claimed it was the word of divinity and taught him the way to receive god’s grace. Recently, the signs in the heavens have started to align with the patterns on the glass. That’s how we know a renewal is coming, and now your arrival is further proof of that.”

**Why have you been copying the text from St. Albat?** “We seek to gain our own understanding of the holy word, to commit it to memory forever so it won’t be lost, and it is a daily reminder of our sacred duty as caretakers of the land.”

**Where is St. Albat’s tomb?** “It lies below. You would have to journey underground to reach it, and we sealed its entrance long ago, because too many petitioners sought to steal a pinch of dust from his remains.”



HENDERSHOT

**Can we visit the tomb?** “Normally, I would refuse, but it is a sign of god that you possess another fragment of the sacred word. If you present this to St. Albat, perhaps his spirit may further enlighten us to the coming restoration so we might better prepare for it.”

**Will you accompany us?** “No. God has ordained you as his messenger, and I don’t wish to go against his will. Besides, none of us know the way. The tomb was sealed in my great, great grandfather’s time and no one’s ventured beyond the seal ever since.”

After answering the PCs’ questions, Sister Kaolin encourages them to explore St. Albat’s tomb, leading them to the pit within her hut, and instructing her initiates to lower them into the chamber below (at E3).

### E3. THE DARK PIT

*A simple platform operated with ropes and pulleys lowers occupants 100 feet below ground into the cool confines of this manmade chamber. Reddish-brown water slowly drips from the enclosing walls into a deeper pit below the platform, and three crystalline doors—all inscribed with familiar circuit-like cracks and etchings—open into a larger room beyond.*

This humid chamber allows the underlying pit to serve as a deep well, filling with mineral-laced water draining into the water table running beneath the dry riverbed. Despite the particles coloring the water, it proves potable and serves as the main source of drinking water for the monks.

### E4. VESTIBULE

*Alien images and unusual hieroglyphs line the walls of this U-shaped chamber. Two passageways lead further west.*

During the days of St. Albat, this area served as an anchor point for testing the underground water level to gauge the recovery of the *Tears of Eternity*. With the passage of time, however, the monastery’s monks fell into variations of their “faith,” misinterpreting their purpose and the words of their founder following his death. Now, they use this place to commune with the soil, using the water from the well to manufacture the mud they apply to themselves.

A successful DC 23 Culture or Mysticism check or a *comprehend languages* spell can decipher most of the Patron markings on the wall. They tell much of the story of ancient Rythes, including its early founding, the raising of gates to other worlds as guided by the *Opus Aeterna*, and the subsequent

war with the Principalities, including a mass exodus of every Patron before the collapse of the last interplanetary gate.

### E5. ELEVEN PENITENTS

*The tunnel leading to this chamber ends at a wide ledge descending 5 feet into an unworked, mud-filled chamber. A worked stone ledge stands on the opposite side roughly 40 feet away with another short passageway leading west to a brick wall. Within the sunken chamber, eleven cylinders of dried mud rise from the floor, a single tube protruding from their side.*

The monks of St. Albat's use this chamber for punishing the sins of their own. Currently, eleven initiates occupy the mud cylinders, completely encased within them and a single breathing tube enabling their survival while they do penance for a variety of indiscretions (such as taking more water than the allotted amount, questioning the task of illumination, speaking during meditation, and other seemingly minor infractions). They must spend 12 hours bound by the mud to receive absolution, and, during this time, the higher-ranking monks visit to encourage them to contemplate their sins while seeking forgiveness from their god. The proximity to St. Albat's tomb supposedly helps to focus their thoughts on redemption.

**Development:** Should the PCs free any of the monks from their prison, they become flustered and confused, adopting a defensive posture in the belief the PCs have trespassed into the shrine. Once Sister Kaolin learns of this situation, she intervenes, chastising the PCs for not understanding their ways. She explains the harsh environment of the river basin requires them to follow the strictures laid out by St. Albat, and failure to do so may result in the dissolution of their order.

### E6. BRICKED PASSAGeways

*This passage ends before multiple walls formed from clay bricks. Cold air seeps from small gaps in the mortar and the sound of dripping water echoes from the passageways beyond.*

A prior abbot had this passageway sealed off over a century ago after detecting a growing evil in the depths of the shrine. He kept this information to himself, however, fearing it might cause concern among the faithful if St. Albat's corpse had returned as an undead creature. Since then, the monks of St. Albat's have maintained the wall, but it still shows small signs of deterioration. It takes an hour to dig through enough bricks in either wall to allow Medium creatures to pass beyond.

### E7. FALSE SHRINE (CR 3)

*The earthen walls of the corridor leading to this chamber give way to reinforced brick of red clay etched with lines and circles reminiscent of those found in the rest of St. Albat's. A shrouded body rests upon a bier in the center of room.*

When St. Albat died, his successor created a false tomb for his master to mislead grave robbers. He then used magic to seal St. Albat's true tomb to the south (at E9). Originally, the monks left this passage open for petitioners to visit, but added the wall (at E6) a few years later. The body resting on the bier belonged to another priest who violated the order's now-defunct vows of celibacy. The monk who built the chamber assumed he might receive atonement by acting as St. Albat's proxy.

**Creature:** The monk posing as St. Albat died with no regret for breaking his vows and eventually returned to life as a terrible undead creature. His growing evil alarmed Sister Kaolin's great, great grandfather and he sealed off the tomb before it emerged. The creature has languished ever since, unable to break free. It lashes out at the first individual to disturb its grave.

**Treasure:** To impress petitioners (and satisfy potential tomb robbers), the monk who built the tomb left a few trinkets behind. Beneath the false saint's bier, a small shelf holds 3 oblong pieces of turquoise worth 300 credits each, a *disruptive carbon staff*, and a *spell ampoule of tongues*.

**Development:** If the PCs return to Sister Kaolin and inform her St. Albat has become an undead mockery, they must succeed at a DC 24 Diplomacy check to avoid her exiling them from the monastery. If they manage to avoid angering her, she acknowledges much of the history of the tomb has been lost over several generations, and perhaps the older monks fell prey to a creature imitating the saint. She also suggests there must be a way find to St. Albat's actual tomb. Assuming the PCs have not already explored the southern passage (at E8), she urges them to do so.

#### FALSE ST. ALBAT

CR 3

XP 800

NE Medium undead

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

HP 40

EAC 14; KAC 16

Fort +5; Ref +5; Will +3

Immunities undead immunities; Resistances cold 10

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee claw +11 (1d6+4 S plus 1d4 Charisma damage; critical sensory deprivation)

Offensive Abilities sensory deprivation

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** False St. Albat fights with its claws, taking the form of each enemy with Assume Identity as it damages them.

**Morale** The false saint fights until destroyed.

#### STATISTICS

Str +2; Dex +1; Con —; Int +0; Wis +0; Cha +4

Skills Bluff +13, Diplomacy +8, Sense Motive +8

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal

Other Abilities assume identity, unliving

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Assume Identity (Su)** False St. Albat can assume the physical form of a creature it has dealt Charisma damage. It also gains a shadow of its victim's memories, sufficient for it to assume the victim's identity and approximate its personality, gaining a +10 racial bonus to Disguise checks. The false saint can only maintain the form of a living victim until their Charisma damage heals. It can return to its innate form as a swift action, after which it cannot assume another identity until it deals Charisma damage again.

**Sensory Deprivation (Su)** On a critical hit with its claw attack, the false St. Albat can twist the target's perceptions of the world, causing it to believe it has utterly lost one of its sensory organs (Will DC 13 negates). False St. Albat can choose for its target to become blinded, deafened, mute (denying the target's ability to speak), numb (negating vibration-based blindsense and blindsight), or anosmic (unable to smell, negating scent-based blindsense and blindsight). This effect lasts for 1 minute or until the target is subject to a *remove affliction* spell or similar effect. This is a curse, mind-affecting effect.

## E8. WORMS OF GOD (CR 5)

*The southern passage ends at an unworked cavern, from which a narrow passageway leads southeast. After a 100-foot crawl, it mercifully opens into a small cavern.*

The monk who interred St. Albat ensured the path to the saint's shrine discouraged tomb raiders by tunneling through the dirt and leaving just enough room for him to crawl through and respectfully pull the saint's body. Medium PCs must squeeze to reach this chamber. He also repacked the northern wall, using to conceal the saint's true shrine (at E9). It requires a successful DC 25 Perception check to detect the hollow chamber behind the eastern wall.

**Creatures:** A swarm of fleshworms has made its way to this chamber, tunneling through the surrounding soil and resting within it. Once the PCs enter the room, the swarm slowly burrows from the ceiling to reach them. A PC must succeed at a separate DC 24 Perception check to notice the swarm to act during the surprise round.

### FLESHWORM SWARM

CR 5

XP 1,600

N Fine vermin (swarm)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

### DEFENSE

HP 70

EAC 17; KAC 19

Fort +9; Ref +7; Will +4

**Defensive Abilities** swarm defenses; **Immunities** swarm immunities

### OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

**Melee** swarm attack (1d8+5 plus infestation)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

**Offensive Abilities** distraction

### STATISTICS

Str -5; Dex +3; Con +5; Int —; Wis +0; Cha -5

**Other Abilities** mindless

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Infestation (Ex)** Any living creature that takes damage from a fleshworm swarm must attempt a DC 13 Reflex save to avoid becoming infested. An infested creature takes 1d4 Constitution damage per round as the fleshworms burrow through and consume its flesh—this effect continues as long as the victim remains in the swarm and continues for 1d6 rounds after it leaves the swarm. Any energy-based attack (including damage from negative energy) that deals at least 5 of damage to the victim automatically destroys all of the fleshworms infesting it, ending the effect prematurely. Additionally, any effect that removes disease instantly ends a fleshworm infestation, though immunity to disease offers no defense.

## E9. THE TRUE SHRINE OF ST. ALBAT

*The breach in the wall reveals a much larger cavern beyond. A 7-foot-long mound of dirt rests at the far end, forming a rough, humanoid shape on the ground. A metal tube protrudes from its presumed head, coated in heavy layers of dust.*

This chamber serves as St. Albat's true resting place. The mound's vaguely human shape and a "breathing tube" is similar to the penitent cylinders in E5.

**Treasure:** Clutched tightly to its chest, St. Albat's corpse holds a fully intact pane from the *Opus Aeterna*. Assuming the PCs still have their own fragment, it grows warm and lights up when brought within 10 feet of St. Albat's burial mound. His piece flickers to life, as well, illuminating the entire chamber. A successful DC 25 Mysticism or Physical Science check recognizes the combined fragments represent a star chart and partial schematic pertaining to interplanetary gates, but it also comes with the realization that several more pieces are needed to complete the diagram.

**Development:** The PCs easily receive Sister Kaolin's permission to take possession of the pane, since she sees its literal illumination as a sign of St. Albat's blessing. She does request, however, that the PCs tarry for a few days while her monks make several copies for their records. She then suggests they also seek out the monastery of St. Menande to the northwest to see if they have more fragments, believing they could help complete the full message of their god's will and the coming apotheosis of Rythes. She also urges caution, however, as no one has heard from the monastery of St. Menande in over 3 years.

**THE HELLBIT TRENCH**

This section of the Singwheel River Basin runs through a region of the Broken Baronies known as the Hellbit Trench, so named because of the intense heat born by the darker rocks of the surrounding plain and canyon walls. Travel here proves more difficult, as overland movement rates are halved, and anything greater automatically inflicts the fatigued condition unless protected by *endure elements* or similar precautions.

**E10. WORN TROUGH**

*This section of the riverbed narrows and deepens simultaneously with the walls rising 10 feet on either side to create a natural trough. A shifting wind periodically funnels through the resulting pass, driving clouds of sand before it. Unusual rock formations also stand on the ledges above, some them resembling broken statues worn down by the elements.*

When the Singwheel River originally flowed through this area, it narrowed against the harder rock, speeding its current and cutting a narrow passage just wide enough for a wagon or two to pass through. The odd geography also acts as a natural wind tunnel, and occasional blasts sweep down from the superheated plains above. They carry a fine, powdery sand with them, filling the entire trough with an effect similar to a *fog cloud* every 1d6 minutes. The resulting dust lasts 2d4 rounds before settling enough to enable vision again.

**E11. CRUDE GARLANDED STATUES**

*Dry, withered vines adorn the weatherworn statues dotting each ledge overlooking the riverbed. A dozen stand at irregular intervals along each side, 5 on the west and 7 to the east. Further up, the canyon walls also include two small caves.*

The broken and weathered statues on these ledges resulted from the petrifying gaze of a pair of dracolisks. One of the creatures perished in an attack on a caravan further north, but its mate still lairs within the Hellbit Trench. The monks of St. Menande used to visit this area to adorn the stone statues with garlands of flowers in an attempt to appease the creatures. Unfortunately, the act did little to protect the monks, who simply became further additions to the menagerie of petrified victims. With a recent change in leadership at the monastery of St. Menande, the monks have now abandoned this area. A successful DC 25 Perception check notices some of the statues have bite marks where pieces have broken away.

**E12. CARCASS-STREWN DEN (CR 7)**

*A sulfurous reek fills this large cave where charred bones and chunks of pitted stone litter the ground. Piles of broken statues sit midway through the cavern, half-obscuring the back wall with their debris.*

**Creature:** A fiendish dracolisk uses this cave to keep watch on the riverbed and fresh water cave (at E13). It regards the entire Hellbit Trench as its hunting territory and notes the arrival of any travelers from a camouflaged position high on the ledge near its lair (DC 24 Perception check to notice).

**Treasure:** The dracolisk recently lost its mate and now viciously guards three intact eggs near the back portion of the cave, nurturing them so they can hatch. The PCs can use the eggs to restore any petrified companions. Using them on the statues also removes the petrification, but the wounds sustained from the broken, bitten pieces prove too much for any revived victims who immediately perish. If the PCs save the eggs, they can sell them to collectors in any market on Rythes for 500 credits each or as much as 1,500 credits on Argosa.

**HELLBIT DRACOLISK****CR 7****XP 3,200**

N Large dragon

**Init +4; Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception +14****DEFENSE** **HP 110 EACH****EAC 19; KAC 21****Fort +11; Ref +11; Will +7****Immunities** paralysis, sleep; **Resistances** acid 10, fire 10**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (Ex, poor)**Melee** bite +18 (2d6+12 P) or

claw +18 (2d6+12 S)

**Multiaction** bite +12 (1d8+12 P), 2 claws +12 (1d8+12 S)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Offensive Abilities** breath weapon (30-ft. cone, 8d6 A & F, DC 15, usable every 1d4 rounds), petrifying gaze (30 ft., DC 15)**STATISTICS****Str +5; Dex +4; Con +2; Int +1; Wis +0; Cha +0****Skills** Athletics +19, Sense Motive +14**Languages** Draconic**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Petrifying Gaze (Su)** Each creature within 30 ft. of the dracolisk must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer 1d6 Dexterity damage as their flesh begins to petrify. If a creature's Dexterity is reduced to 0 in this way, it is fully petrified as *flesh to stone*. Any stage of this petrification can be removed by bathing the effected in the blood or eggs of the dracolisk, either fluid remaining viable for 1 hour after death or cracking.

**E13. FRESH WATER CAVE**

*Sparkling blue pools of water offer a welcome sight at the end of this low cavern, seemingly fed from an underground spring collecting within an aquifer.*

One of the few water sources within miles of the Hellbit Trench, these pools often draw thirsty animal and travelers, but they are also closely watched by the hellbit dracolisk (at E12).

**Treasure:** The westernmost pool is shallower than the other, reaching a depth of only 5 feet and allowing anyone



looking into it to clearly see the bottom. A small circular device about the size of a hand is visible at the bottom of a pool. This is a *mk 1 null-space chamber* that fell into the pool when a prior traveler lost his life to the dracolisk. Although its contents are still preserved, they prove to be communications to Baron Yacob's father, warning him of an attack that took place many years ago.

## THE SACRED CAVES OF ST. MENANDE

The Order of St. Menande first formed around a cave system revealed when Hargo Lake receded to its current depth. The former waterbound caverns offered shelter for a group of survivors led by Menande, who kept them alive with a combination of underground food sources and rainwater collectors. His monks were among the first to venture beyond their relative safety to seek out and assist others in surviving the Great Cataclysm, and, until recently, they continued that tradition by protecting trade routes between the Broken Baronies and helping hard hit regions recover arable land from the desert by building aqueducts.

Unfortunately, the benevolence of St. Menande's followers came to an abrupt end three years ago with the arrival of a mesmerizing gathlain named Banshau. Hailing from the greenhouse world of Emerald, which shares a similar orbit to Rythes, the fey explorer accidentally triggered an *interplanetary teleport* effect launching him into the wastelands near Buckle. Ever resourceful, he sought out native civilizations, hoping he could trick the local population into accepting him as a leader or an off-world god. But the survivors of Buckle ran him off, and he carefully avoided the suspicious folk of Trebelbet, traveling further west cursing his terrible plight.

Banshau survived the dracolisks in the Hellbit Trench and arrived near the caves of St. Menande just as its abbot and a small team of monks returned from one of their missionary sojourns. Banshau used his considerable mesmerist powers to convince the monks to extend their hospitality, accepting him into their order. As he learned more about St. Menande, he saw great potential for a small group of followers who could serve his whims. And, after formulating a plan to dispatch the former abbot, he successfully implanted a *suggestion* that they could convince the dracolisks to share their territory by hanging garlands of flowers on the petrified victims surrounding their cave. This effectively sent the highest-ranking members of the order to their doom, and Banshau filled the resulting power vacuum to lord over the remaining monks, secure in his station, but no longer concerned with helping the surrounding baronies.

## E14. CHORISTERS

*Four garlanded monks sing and chant in the distance, standing along an adjacent ridge to the riverbed trail as they raise their arms to the rising sun. Each seems small in stature, and their voices almost child-like.*

**Creatures:** These unassuming monks attempt to recruit travelers into joining the Order of St. Menande as they pass through the Hellbit Trench and into the Hargo Basin. Peaceful and friendly, they politely ask the PCs to put their weapons away, speaking in an unnaturally euphoric, singsong voice. Even as one monk addresses them, the others harmonize with the words, creating an odd conversation. After ascertaining the reason for the PCs' visit, they suggest they join them in the cavern beyond (at E15) so they can share in the celebration of life returning to Rythes and meet their spiritual leader, Banshau the Oracle.

A successful DC 15 Diplomacy check can convince the adherents to speak rather than sing. If pressed with questions, they answer to the best of their ability.

**What is this place?** "The Sacred Caves of St. Menande, blessed be his name."

**Why are you all singing?** "Our abbot, Banshau, encourages us to sing to let god know we still praise him and understand he'll restore the land when all of us lift up our voices. By singing together, we more easily reach the heavens."

**You used to travel. Why have you stopped?** "Bandits and monsters make it impossible for us to spread the word to others, but Banshau says that we will soon mobilize again. We just need to grow our numbers to ensure our safety."

**Who is Banshau?** "Our enlightened abbot. He has served our monastery for three years now, arriving as a godsend when our former abbot died in the Hellbit Trench. He's always eager to meet new potential initiates and you'd do well to seek his guidance in your lives."

**Can we see Banshau now?** "He takes his rest now, but receives visitors at dawn and dusk. While you wait, you're more than welcome to enjoy our hospitality and join in the Song of Light."

## E15. CAVERN OF SUN & SONG

*The sound of joyous song fills this massive, flower-carpeted cavern, where small holes drilled into the ceiling allow shafts of natural sunlight to fully illuminate the entire chamber.*

**Creatures:** More monks—mostly gnomes—spend their time singing here in praise to the life-giving sun. When the PCs arrive, the cavern's residents crown the PCs with flowers and drape hand-woven garlands around their necks. If they accept these gifts, the PCs are then encouraged to participate in the gathered choir, and several monks take time away from the performance to teach them the lyrics. If the PCs ultimately participate in this song for at least 1 minute, they become subject to an *enthral* effect (DC 17 Will save negates).

**Development:** If the PCs insist on meeting Banshau immediately, the cavern's residents protest their rudeness, but no one moves to stop them.

**E16. PITTED CORRIDOR (CR 3)**

*Flowers line the edges of several 10-foot-deep pits in this perfumed passageway. A sweet smelling smoke drifts from the multicolored rocks illuminating their depths.*

The pits are plainly visible, posing no threat to wary PCs. They used to hold hot coals to warm the cavern at night, and members of the order would traverse the pits to simulate the effects of the desert heat and scorching sands. When Banshau took over the order, he repurposed them to cloud the minds of those brought before him.

**Hazard:** The vapors from the pits create an inhaled toxin in the form of an insanity mist (*type* poison [inhaled], *save* Fortitude DC 15, *track* Wisdom, *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds, *cure* 1 save). Before the PCs venture this way, one of Banshau's adherents makes sure to precede them so he can light the rocks. Those who succeed on their save likely notice nothing more than a bit of light-headedness, and even victims of the mist feel no initially alarming effect.

**E17. PATH OF FLOWERS (CR 3)**

*Flowers completely cover this irregular passageway travelling from southwest to northeast. A restrictive tunnel, choked with flowers, curves out of sight to the east.*

**Trap:** The flowers in this hallway conceal a 40-foot-deep pit, its cover rigged to collapse under more than 250 pounds of weight. Fortunately, the mounds of flowers within the pit also cushion the fall, so it deals less damage. One of the order's monks once again precedes the PCs during any escorted trip to see Banshau, and he makes sure to lock the pit's cover in place so it won't trigger, but a trailing monk resets it after they pass through the hall.

**FLOWER-COVERED PIT TRAP****CR 3****XP 800**

**Type** analog; **Perception** DC 24; **Disable** Engineering DC 19 (open trap door) or DC 25 (force cover lock into place without key)

**Trigger** location; **Reset** manual; **Bypass** cover lock (Perception DC 24 to notice)

**Effect** 60-ft.-deep pit (6d6 falling damage); Reflex DC 14 avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft. square)

**E18. PRECEPTOR OF TEARS**

*A narrow ledge skirts this rough pool containing fresh water and a host of multicolored fish.*

When Banshau receives visitors, he always does so in this cavern, using the fish to check the emotional auras of those brought before him so he can determine which have come under the influence of the insanity mist (at **E16**). He can reliably do so since the fish follow visitors through each of the water-filled caverns, changing colors to match the emotional state of the nearest intelligent creature. Fish near a charmed individual gain a vibrant pink stripe running down their center scales.

**E19. BLISS**

*This enormous cavern includes a green-hued statue of a small female figure missing its left arm. A line of stones blocks the view of a more distant chamber to the south, and a subterranean pool traces the eastern wall.*

A successful DC 16 Life Science check recognizes the statue as the petrified form of a nixie (a Small aquatic fey with webbed hands and feet that inhabits streams). Banshau acquired this prize when traveling through the Hellbit Trench, liberating the mostly intact statue from the trough outside the dracolisk's cave. Periodically, he scrapes a bit of powder from the statue's broken arm, sprinkling it into the food and drink he prepares for his followers, thereby doubling the effective duration of any enchantments he uses to keep the cult under his sway.

**Development:** If the PCs restore the nixie by reversing her petrification, her missing arm temporarily horrifies her, and she quickly tries to stop the bleeding. If treated before she dies of blood loss in three rounds, she expresses her gratitude to the PCs and offers them 2 pearls that allow those she has given them to breathe underwater for 10 hours each day (worth 50 gp each to others). She then refreshes herself in the pool at **E18** and entertains the remaining cultists, effectively replacing Banshau in the event the PCs depose him.

**E20. BANSHAU THE ORACLE (CR 7)**

*Wreathes of flowers hang from dozens of hooks in this chamber. A mattress, also filled with flowers, sits on the floor beneath a trio of glass panes glowing with circuitry, and small incense candles exude a soothing fragrance.*

Like the order's previous abbot, Banshau selected this remote cave for himself. He spends most of his time here, relying on his charmed monks to see to his every need.

**Creatures:** Banshau, a winged fey tied to the great trees of old known as a gathlain, has assumed the position of abbot here using a combination of his fey talents, mind control, and outright deception. Banshau always has two charmed bodyguards with him at all times, and they move to protect the gathlain if the PCs attack.

If Banshau expects no hostility, he continues his ruse as the current abbot of St. Menande. If the PCs seem less disposed toward him, he entertains their questions and provides what little information he can before attempting to send them on their way. If he's able to separate anyone for a private conversation, he uses *charm person* in an attempt to persuade them to stay and join his cult. If anyone questions him about the order's relative withdrawal from society, he explains the loss of their previous abbot greatly affected morale, and the monks now believe their wandering ways risked more than necessary. Under his leadership, Banshau has directed the order to remain in one location so they can draw others to them to join their choir.

**Treasure:** In his travels, Banshau managed to acquire three additional panes from the *Opus Aeterna* fashioned into a triptych by his monks and now serving as a decoration hanging among the flower wreathes over his bed. A strongbox on the floor also contains a powder brought with him from Emerald that acts as a supernatural fertilizer when mixed with water (taking several days to see full effects but worth 200 credits).

Banshau is fond of his panes of the *Opus Aeterna*, but will agree to part with them in exchange for 6,000 credits (or 2,000 with a successful DC 24 Diplomacy or Intimidate check). He isn't aware of their significance, but has seen several more in the Barony of Bloom.

**Development:** If the PCs oppose and defeat Banshau, it breaks his hold over the monks of St. Menande. As his former followers come to their senses, they apologize to the PCs for their complicit behavior while under the gathlain's mesmerizing control. As recompense, they readily part with the triptych containing the three panes of the *Opus Aeterna*.

## BANSHAU THE ORACLE

CR 6

XP 2,400

Gathlain mystic

CN Small fey (gathlain)

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +5

### DEFENSE

HP 75 RP 4

EAC 17; KAC 18

**Fort** +7; **Ref** +7; **Will** +9

**Defensive Abilities** share pain (DC 16)

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (Ex, poor)

**Melee** battle staff +9 (1d4+5 B; critical knockdown)

**Ranged** advanced semi-auto pistol +11 (2d6+6 P)

**Offensive Abilities** backlash (6 damage), grasping vines (DC 16), sow doubt (3 rounds, DC 16)

**Mystic Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 6th)

At will—*mindlink*

**Mystic Spells Known** (CL 6th; melee +9)

2nd (3/day)—*inflict pain* (DC 18), *mind thrust* (DC 18)

1st (6/day)—*charm person* (DC 17), *command* (DC 17), *lesser confusion* (DC 17)

o (at will)—*daze* (DC 16), *fatigue* (DC 16)

**Connection** mindbreaker

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Banshau focuses his attention on those he believes were effected by the insanity mist, beginning with his sow doubt ability and stepping up to *mind thrust* when the intruders prove themselves a threat.

**Morale** Banshau prefers to survive so he can dupe another group into accepting his selfish influence. When reduced below 20 HP or one of his bodyguards is slain, he leaves any remaining guards behind to cover his escape.

### STATISTICS

**Str** -1; **Dex** +2; **Con** +0; **Int** +0; **Wis** +5; **Cha** +3

**Skills** Bluff +18, Diplomacy +18, Intimidate +18, Sense Motive +13

**Languages** Common, Halfling, Sylvan

**Gear** ysoki refractor suit, battle staff, advanced semi-auto pistol with 20 small arm rounds, *mk1 mindlink circlet*, handgrown living vine necklace worth 1,000 credits, ten silver rings worth 10 credits each

### STATISTICS

**Grasping Vines (Su)** Once per day, a gathlain can spend 1 RP to summon vines to entangle foes, as the mystic xenodruid connection ability.

## ENTHRALLED MONKS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Gnome (feychild) solarians

LN Small humanoid (gnome)

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +8

### DEFENSE

HP 40 EACH

EAC 15; KAC 17

**Fort** +5; **Ref** +5; **Will** +4; +2 vs. fear, despair, and illusions

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** carbon steel curve blade +11 (1d10+7 S; critical bleed 1d6)

**Ranged** static arc pistol +8 (1d6+3 E; critical arc 2) or

flash grenade I +8 (explode [5 ft., blinded 1d4 rounds, DC 12])

**Offensive Abilities** stellar revelations (black hole [20-ft. radius, pull 10 ft., DC 12], plasma sheath, supernova [10-ft. radius, 5d6 F, DC 12])

**Gnome Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 11), *token spell*

### STATISTICS

**Str** +4; **Dex** +2; **Con** +0; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +1

**Skills** Culture +13, Mysticism +8

**Languages** Common, Gnome

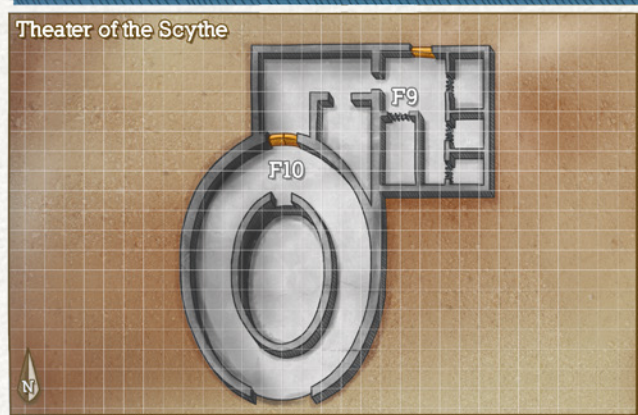
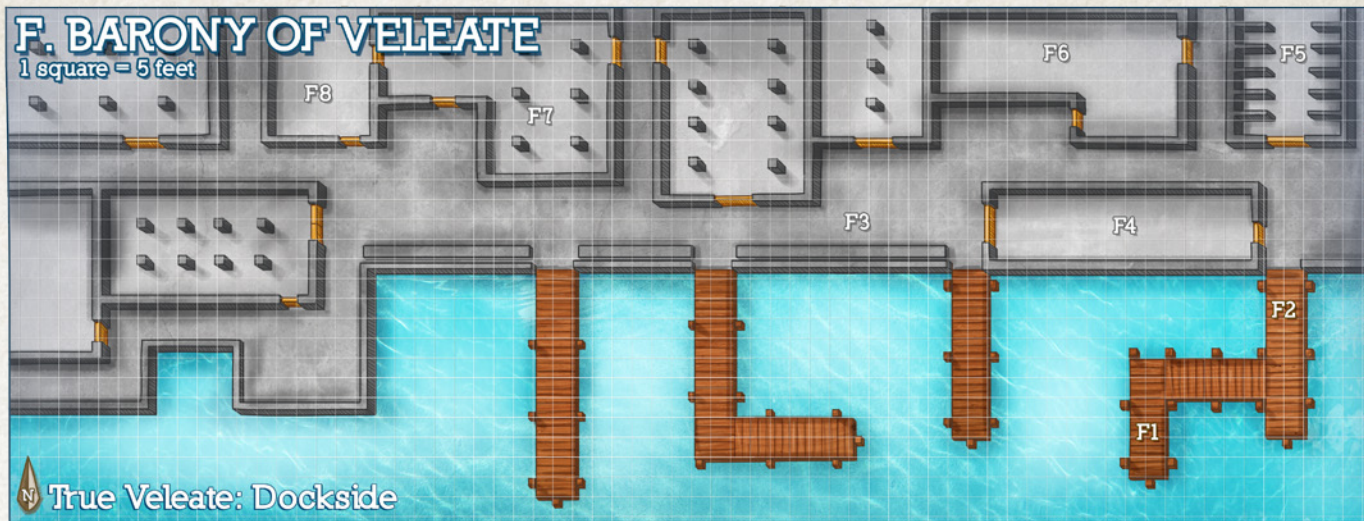
**Other Abilities** eternal hope, solar manifestation (solar armor), stellar alignment

**Gear** graphite carbon skin, carbon steel curve blade, static arc pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), flash grenades I (2)

## F. BARONY OF VELEATE

After leaving the caves of St. Menande, the PCs should continue northwest toward the Barony of Veleate so they can meet Khedri again with their reclaimed pages of the *Opus Aeterna*. Unknown to them, the krang already reached Veleate by taking a sailing ship from the Blue Barony and a shorter trek through the Keloche River Basin. Unfortunately, he ran afoul of the anti-arcane zealots in True Veleate for refusing to part with his magic weapons upon entering the city. Soon thereafter, he was exiled to a nearby prison island for his crimes. To succeed in their mission, the PCs will have to rescue Khedri and add his fragments of the *Opus Aeterna* to their own.

Hargo Lake has receded considerably since the Great Cataclysm and now a vast, cracked mesa stretches from the caves of St. Menande to the newer shoreline. The ruts of a well-used wagon trail winds across the dry basin, and



it requires a full day of travel before the PCs can reach the docks on the lake's edge. Several ferries await there, crewed by merchants who make their living transporting others to the city across the bay.

### HIRING A BOAT

*A soft breeze carries the smell of brackish water—a welcome circumstance given the arid, blistering plains of the past few days. Soon thereafter, the shoreline of a large lake appears. Several boats have moored next to a sun-bleached dock, their crews assisting with offloading or taking on cargo from caravan wagons parked in neat rows.*

Hargo Lake grants the capital city of True Veleate greater protection compared to other settlements across the Broken Baronies. As a result, the Barony of Veleate represents one of the larger populations on the peninsula, and its magistrates carefully control the flow of traffic, limiting it to only the boats casting off from this dock to ferry travelers and supplies.

**Creature:** A ferry captain named **Ginny Graythorn** (N female human soldier) sizes up anyone seeking passage to True Veleate. She helped Khedri reach the city just a day or two prior to the PCs' arrival and the krang paid her quite well to watch for them. Unless PCs take pains to disguise themselves, she recognizes and approaches them before any of her competitors can secure their coin.

*"You look a bit road weary, travelers! Nice day for a water crossin', yeah? If you're headed to True Veleate, I'd be happy to get you there. It's a lot cooler on the water and not nearly as much dust."*

Once she has their attention, Ginny pulls them aside, immediately lowering her voice to keep their conversation private. She informs the PCs that Khedri already paid her to take them to True Veleate, but she fears for the krang's safety after the Dockmaster seized him for carrying contraband into the city and they'd do well to avoid a similar fate. In fact, True Veleate recently passed very stringent laws forbidding the possession and use of magic. She shares that Khedri refused to part with his magical gear, and the city guards—a unit known as the Witchbreakers—clapped him in irons. Ginny came to respect and like Khedri when he helped defend her boat from a pair of kelpies, and feels she owes him, even if she wants to avoid trouble with the Dockmaster. Assuming the PCs are friends of the krang, she hopes they'll find a way to resolve the situation. If asked about the Witchbreakers, she explains their zero-tolerance for magic and the screening process they use on everyone at the city docks. She recommends the PCs refrain from using anything other than pure technology and that they hide any hybrid or magic items they may be carrying—even suggesting they leave them on her boat, if necessary. While PCs may find it difficult to trust Ginny, she's absolutely sincere in her wish to help

Khedri by aiding them, and that includes looking after any gear they leave behind. Her ship is well-stocked with a variety of mundane replacement items for armor or weapons, and she promises to remain docked so they can reclaim anything they leave behind as soon as they might need it.

## EVENTS IN TRUE VELEATE

The citizens of True Veleate follow an aspect of Rythes' god known as the Bountiful Morrow. The town's former leaders ascribed to the belief that if they lived pious lives, their god would provide them with a better future. But, the recovery of the *Tear of Eternity* near Veleate proceeded at a much slower pace, and they quickly became jealous of the resurgent agriculture of the other baronies. A young firebrand named Onkat-Oun railed against the status quo, and the embarrassed leaders sent her on a mission to the Barony of the Bloom to discover what they were doing differently to encourage god to grant them such a tremendous bounty. Just shy of Pelicole Pass, Onkat-Oun and her companions ran afoul of gnoll raiders, resulting in the death of everyone in her party and a lingering reminder of the ambush in the form of a terrible acid burn leaving a wicked scar on her face. She tracked down the surviving gnoll leader—a powerful mystic—to their lair and took her bloody revenge. As she surveyed the withered vegetation around the witch's hut, she concluded their god had chosen to withhold blessings of recovery from those who relied on magic. Armed with this newly held doctrine, she returned to True Veleate and proselytized about eschewing mystic knowledge and all items crafted with it.

After instituting new laws to support this course of action, the magic from Veleate's *Tear of Eternity* finally—and coincidentally—strengthened, bringing renewed health to the town's plants, along with underwater plants that supported the fish population in Hargo Lake. This outcome bolstered Onkat-Oun's position, and she took power over the city, instituting ever more draconian laws regarding magic, to the point that people now accept brands to mark themselves as true believers. The PCs arrive against this backdrop and—with Ginny's forewarning—are immediately confronted by Witchbreaker enforcers.

## F1. CROWDED DOCK

*The ship finally arrives at a large dock at a marina filled with fishing boats, ferries, and other visiting watercraft. A sign at the end of the pier warns visitors to stop at the Dockmaster's Hall for processing.*

Ginny helps the PCs hide their magical equipment on her boat, if they wish. She strongly recommends against smuggling anything past the Witchbreakers, as she knows they mete out harsher punishments for anyone intentionally breaking the law. If the PCs succeed at a DC 18 Perception check, they notice a boat filled with orange-clad passengers pulling away from the westernmost dock. Beating the Perception check by 5 allows a PC to notice shackles on the prisoners' hands and feet.

## F2. CONTRABAND CHECKPOINT (CR 7)

*A uniformed guard and robed priest clad in the silver-and-bronze colors of the Barony of Veleate bar the way forward, examining the belongings of each arriver disembarking from the moored ships at the dock.*

**Creatures:** The priesthood of the Bountiful Morrow assists the Witchbreakers at each dock along the waterfront of Veleate, checking for arcane paraphernalia entering the city. At the PCs' pier, a priest named Jorn-Mar checks over the PCs and attempts to identify their gear with Engineering (taking 10 for identify all non-magical items of level 7 or even higher for more common items). If he finds an item he cannot explain, he has his Witchbreaker companion, a dwarf named Tybern, confiscate them for the Dockmaster (at area F4).

Otherwise, he extolls the virtues of the Bountiful Morrow with a quick invocation, and then marks each of them with a rune of purity on their forehead, explaining it contains a dye that will last for a few days and they're expected to return for a new one if it fades before they leave the city. Anyone found in True Veleate without the mark immediately attracts suspicion from the Witchbreakers, and the Dockmaster changes the shape and color of the rune every day to ensure it can't be forged.

### WITCHBREAKER TYBERN

CR 6

XP 2,400

Human soldier

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; Perception +13

#### DEFENSE

HP 90

EAC 18; KAC 21

Fort +8; Ref +6; Will +9

#### OFFENSE

Speed 25 ft.

Melee *ethereal wrack devastation blade* +16 (2d8+11 S)

Ranged red star plasma rifle +13 (1d10 E & F; critical burn 1d4) or cryo grenade II +13 (explode [10 ft., 1d8 C plus staggered, DC 14])

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (arcane assailant)

#### STATISTICS

Str +5; Dex +3; Con +1; Int +0; Wis +1; Cha +0

Skills Acrobatics +18, Mysticism +13

Feats Slippery Shooter

Languages Common

Other Abilities rune of the eldritch knight, secret of the magi

Gear vesk overplate I, *ethereal wrack devastation blade*, red star plasma rifle with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges), cryo grenades II (2)

### JORN-MAR, VELEATE PRIEST

CR 5

XP 1,600

Human mechanic

LN humanoid (human)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +16

## PART 2: THE BROKEN BARONIES

### DEFENSE

HP 65 EACH

EAC 17; KAC 18

Fort +6; Ref +8; Will +6

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical dueling sword +10 (1d6+6 S)

Ranged advanced semi-auto pistol +12 (2d6+5 P)

Offensive Abilities overload (DC 15), target tracking

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Veleate priests prefers to stay at range, using target tracking and their pistols.

**Morale** The priests are zealots and fight to the death against those using magic.

### STATISTICS

Str +1; Dex +3; Con +2; Int +5; Wis +0; Cha +0

Skills Culture +16, Engineering +16, Life Science +11, Medicine +11, Physical Science +11

Feats Medical Expert

Languages Common, Elven, Gnoll, Gnome, Vesk

Other Abilities artificial intelligence (exocortex), custom rig, mechanic tricks (nightvision processor, visual data processor), wireless hack

Gear d-suit I, advanced semi-auto pistol with 20 small arm rounds, tactical dueling sword

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Target Tracking (Ex)** As a move action, this NPC can designate and track a single foe, gaining a +2 bonus to attack rolls against that target.

### F3. PILLORY

*Several dispirited captives fill the gibbets lining this waterfront. Occasionally, a passing resident spits on the ground just below one of the prisoners, flinging a garland of orange flowers at the gibbet and raising cheers or jeers from the gathered crowd.*

If the PCs stop to look at the accused, a DC 15 Culture check reveals they have different brands meant to label them as lawbreakers. If a PC stops a passerby to ask what crime the imprisoned individuals committed, they bitterly reply with “witchcraft” or “arcanery.”

### F4. DOCKMASTER'S HALL (CR 9)

*This long, rectangular building is bustling with energy as longshoremen and city guards move impounded cargo or escort unmarked arrivals pulled from the lines of those seeking entrance into Veleate.*

The Dockmaster's Hall serves as a storage place for confiscated contraband as well as a holding area for arrivals deemed to be an arcane threat to the barony's ecosystem or someone resisting the Witchbreakers' demands to search their belongings. If the PCs attempt to go anywhere in True Veleate (other than F1-F4) without an appropriate rune marked on their forehead by a priest of the Bountiful Morrow

(at F2), a guard from the Dockmaster's Hall brusquely stops them and tells them to report to the Dockmaster for further questioning. If the PCs resist, he summons more guards and attempts to subdue them.

**Creatures:** Dockmaster Ronnerby Kolme receives all visitors to the hall, processing them individually with the scathing demeanor of a cutthroat lawyer. He questions everyone about their purpose in town and wields the authority to detain those he suspects of arcane taint. All magic items in his possession were confiscated from prior “criminals” brought before him, and he calls upon a veteran Witchbreaker named Hasken to throw anyone disputing his will into the jailhouse (at F9).

At night, this area is guarded by two Witchbreakers and two guardsmen instead of its daily complement.

Combats here will be heard as far away as area F10 unless the party takes precautions to prevent noise. Should they hear, Onkat-Oun and her guards will arrive to investigate in three rounds.

**Treasure:** The confiscated goods in Ronnerby's possession are kept in a large, lead-lined strongbox beneath his interview table. The locked box contains a *bleeding fusion seal* (level 10) that appears as the red-eyed skull of Lurn Shadowhand (see Planetary Pantheon in *To Worlds Unknown*), an *iridescent spindle ioun stone*, a *serum of enhancement* (diplomat), a *spell ampoule of invisibility*, a *spell crystal of irradiate*, a *spell crystal of zone of truth*, and a *staff of mystic healing*.

It also includes Khedri's fragments of the *Opus Aeterna*. Notes wrapped around the fragments (to prevent them from clinking against each other) include a crude map and a list of locations, all crossed off save for the Barony of the Bloom.

The box has 10 Bulk and unlocking it without Ronnerby's key requires a DC 30 Engineering check.

### DOCKMASTER RONNERBY KOLME

CR 5

XP 1,600

Use statistics for Jorn-Mar, Veleate Priest (pg. 48)

HP 65

Other Items key to the strongbox

### WITCHBREAKER HASKEN

CR 6

XP 2,400

Use Witchbreaker Tybern's stats (pg. 48)

HP 90

### VELEATE GUARDSMEN (3)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Use statistics for Tower Guard (pg. 8)

HP 48

### F5. STABLES

This cramped building houses camels, only a few horses, and other more exotic riding animals native to Rythes, most used by couriers or caravans visiting from other baronies.

## F6. HOUSE OF THE BOUNTIFUL MORROW (CR 10)

*Garden boxes filled with vibrant silver and bronze flowers line the windows of this stately building. An ornate whitewashed sign at each entrance proclaims this as the “House of the Bountiful Morrow.”*

The religious and political headquarters of True Veleate, the House of the Bountiful Morrow administers the laws and holy ceremonies for the entire barony, often drawing pilgrims from the outlying farms and shores at least once a week. The building features three main sections: the eastern side acts as a two-story boarding house for priests and servants of the Bountiful Morrow, the central structure serves as an administration building for the Witchbreakers, and the western hall presents a grand temple where the priests give open sermons every three days.

**Creature:** The Baroness and head Witchbreaker—a stern elven matron named Onkat-Oun, also known as the Tiller of Souls—hears from her guardsmen when anyone breaks the law, or when notable visitors arrive in Veleate. Unless the PCs take precautions to disguise themselves, she easily hears of their presence in the city, and the same occurs if they resist any of her Witchbreaker enforcers. If arrested, the PCs receive an expedited trial directly at her hand in order to set an example for other outsiders and off-worlders who think they can flaunt the divine laws of True Veleate (see **Standing Trial**). While it is unlikely the PCs initially encounter Onkat-Oun here, if they break into the temple or somehow look to follow her here, she calls for her Witchbreaker bodyguards and fellow priests to attack any trespassers.

### BARONESS ONKAT-OUN, TILLER OF SOULS CR 7

XP 1,600

Elf mechanic

LN humanoid (elf)

Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +19

**DEFENSE** HP 100

EAC 19; KAC 20

Fort +8; Ref +10; Will +8; +2 vs. enchantment effects

Immunities sleep

**OFFENSE**

Speed 30 ft.

Melee carbon staff +13 (1d8+8 B; critical knockdown)

Ranged red star plasma pistol +15 (1d8+7 E & F; critical burn 1d8)

Offensive Abilities overload (DC 17), target tracking

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** At the beginning of combat, Onkat-Oun activates her energy shield before designating the most dangerous-looking enemy with her exocortex. She prefers to take the fight to spellcasters, using her carbon staff to keep them from easily casting spells.

**Morale** Onkat-Oun fights to the death, knowing she will become a martyr in the eyes of her people if she dies.

### STATISTICS

Str +1; Dex +4; Con +2; Int +5; Wis +0; Cha +0

Skills Culture +14, Engineering +19, Mysticism +19, Physical Science +14

Languages Common, Elven

**Other Abilities** artificial intelligence (exocortex), elven magic, expert rig, mechanic tricks (energy shield, overcharge), miracle worker 1/day, wireless hack

**Gear** estex suit III, carbon staff, red star plasma pistol with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Target Tracking (Ex)** As a move action, this NPC can designate and track a single foe, gaining a +2 bonus to attack rolls against that target.

### WITCHBREAKER (2) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Use Witchbreaker Tybern's stats (pg. 48)

HP 90 each

### VELEATE PRIESTS (2) CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Use statistics for Jorn-Mar, Veleate Priest (pg. 48)

HP 65 each

## F7. THREE SISTERS TAVERN

*Apart from Veleate's docks, this building seems to have the most activity in the city. A statue near the door displays three barmaids presenting tankards as if offering them to passersby on the street.*

This tavern serves visitors and native citizens of True Veleate alike, featuring a large common area and several private booths and side-rooms.

The youngest two of three sisters, **Avna-Kul** and **Peri-Kul** (CN female human) oversee this busy tavern. They serve a decent meal of fish and seaweed, but at a premium price of 5 credits. They also offer mead for 1 credit per mug. As the laws in town grow ever stricter, especially with the growing population of visitors, they can only serve 2 mugs per customer. If the PCs talk with the harried women, Avna-Kul responds to their questions and, if the topic comes up, gives her opinion that Onkat-Oun's laws have become unbearable.

## F8. THREE SISTERS HOSTEL

*This two-story building includes a painted sign with a bed and crescent moon.*

The eldest of three sisters, **Verat-Kul** (LN female human envoy) manages the hostel and charges 20 credits a night for an overnight stay. If anyone complains about the high prices, she shrugs, reminds the complainer that Veleate has strong laws against vagrancy, and casually mentions they can take their chances on the streets if they want to risk drawing attention from the city guard.



### F9. JAILHOUSE (CR 8)

*This pristine jail includes four separate cells of varying size, each with a pair of cots and a washbasin filled with water. Prisoners already occupy two of the four cells.*

This stout jailhouse joins with Veleate's courtroom (at F10), serving as a holding area for prisoners and lawbreakers before sentencing by Onkat-Oun. The cots are quite comfortable, and the locks to the cells require a successful DC 30 Engineering check to bypass. The jail also rests above an unusual Patron artifact buried there by Onkat-Oun when constructing the courthouse. She found it during her adventures in the Parched Plains and interpreted it as a divine blessing from her god. The device creates a subsonic wave that induces a powerful headache and prevents restful sleep, leaving the victim fatigued and unable to regain spells for 24 hours.

**Creatures:** Four guards stand watch here over any prisoners. They can summon more from the town's contingent in rapid order if someone attempts to escape, always alerting Onkat-Oun and the Witchbreakers, as well. The current prisoners wear a bright orange smock. Each bears a bright red rune on the front and back identifying the wearer as an "accused."

### VELEATE GUARDSMEN (4)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Use statistics for Tower Guard (pg. 8)

HP 48 each

### F10. THEATER OF THE SCYTHE

*A large gallery overlooks an oval-shaped pit in this domed courtroom. Human-sized, metal racks with a variety of restraints stand upright facing a circular stone intended as a speaker's podium.*

The citizens of True Veleate have come to regard this courtroom as an arena of sorts, often gathering in droves to witness the justice dispensed by Onkat-Oun. Prisoners are typically led from the jail (at F9) and then restrained on one of the racks while their case is presented for judgment.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO KHEDRI?

The PCs' first order of business in True Veleate—provided they don't immediately land themselves in jail or face expulsion from the city—should be to determine Khedri's fate. While Ginny knows the Witchbreakers took the rebellious krang into custody, she's been away from the city and unaware of what transpired since his arrest. A successful DC 20 Diplomacy check to gather information (or DC 15 if



the PCs ask at the Three Sisters Tavern at F7) reveals Khedri already stood trial and Onkat-Oun exiled him to the Isle of Orange, another islet in Hargo Lake that the Baroness repurposed into an offshore prison. The PCs may think to secure Ginny's aid in reaching the island, but she fears her ferry would attract too much attention from Witchbreaker patrols. Instead, she suggests the PCs take an easier route to reach the Isle of Orange by getting themselves arrested and exiled there, as well. Then, under cover of darkness with a much smaller one-man skiff, she feels confident she can bring them their gear (including any magic items they left in her care). In fact, even if the PCs have their items confiscated by the Witchbreakers, Ginny believes she can work with a sympathizer in the priesthood to recover them (see **A Sympathetic Ear**).

Of course, the PCs are free to pursue their own plan, including a clandestine lake crossing to reach the Isle of Orange on their own. This approach will almost certainly draw the attention of the Witchbreakers patrolling both shores and the lake itself, quite possibly leading to yet another confrontation that could land them in jail anyway. Regardless, the adventure hinges on the PCs eventually visiting the Isle of Orange—and not just to rescue Khedri. The island also emits an orange glow at night, generated by a Patron ruin.

It's possible the PCs will instead elect to recover the confiscated pages from F4 through guile or violence. If they do so, they do not need to visit the Isle of Orange, although they may still wish to rescue Khedri. If Onkat-Oun herself is slain, True Veleate falls into chaos unless the PCs are known to be the killers, in which case the guardsmen, Witchhunters, and citizens unite to kill.

## ARRESTED!

It's entirely possible the PCs may face their own arrest, whether by resisting the Witchbreakers, casting a spell within the city, or breaking some other law like trespassing, petty theft, etc. Depending on their plan for rescuing Khedri, they might also heed Ginny's advice by intentionally getting themselves jailed so they can join him in exile on the Isle of Orange. Either way, if the PCs get arrested, the Witchbreakers bring them to the jailhouse at F9, taking away all of their equipment (mundane and magical) and replacing their clothes with the orange smock of the "accused."

## STANDING TRIAL

Judgment comes swiftly in True Veleate, especially for off-worlders and non-native visitors to the city. Onkat-Oun personally sees to such trials, viewing them as an opportunity to further rail against the sins of arcane magic and the threat she believes it poses to the barony's recovery. The trial itself proves relatively straightforward. The Tiller of Souls reads the list of crimes committed by the accused (e.g., witchcraft, sedition, conspiracy, etc.). The Witchbreakers then give their

own testimony—truthful or otherwise—as evidence. Onkat-Oun then casts *zone of truth* or *confess* to prompt the PCs with leading questions to force them into publicly admitting their guilt. Whether or not they do so, she "divines their guilt" through silent prayer to the Bountiful Morrow. She brooks no questions or interruptions from the PCs during her interrogation. At the trial's end, she asks those accused to provide any reason for the court to take mercy on them while she contemplates their sentence. Afterwards, the guards escort the PCs back to their cells.

## A SYMPATHETIC EAR

A monk of the Bountiful Morrow always visits the jailhouse to receive confessions from anyone due to receive Onkat-Oun's sentencing. These conversations are confidential and do not factor into the trial or Onkat-Oun's judgment (especially since a guilty verdict proves such a foregone conclusion). Following the trial, any jailed PCs receive a visit from **Brother Emehl** (LG male mystic), an older priest who can still remember a time before Onkat-Oun's claim to the title of Baroness and the passage of her draconian anti-magic laws. A friend of Ginny's, she implored him to seek out the PCs and aid them. Intrigued by their case, he offers a far more sympathetic ear, and a successful DC 15 Sense Motive check can discern his sincerity.

Following his duty, Brother Emehl begins by asking for the PCs' confessions, but eventually steers the conversation towards their quest for the *Opus Aeterna*, sharing that he took Khedri's confession, as well. Before the krang's exile, he explained the importance of the ancient artifact to Brother Emehl. The priest also shares that he received a vision soon afterward—one he believes emanated from a source other than the Bountiful Morrow—and that it encouraged him to see them safely to an old ruin on the Isle of Orange. If the PCs welcome his assistance, he divulges that Onkat-Oun will find them guilty, but he can work with Ginny to ensure their belongings also reach them on the island. He then expresses he would be most interested in eventually learning what they find there.

## THE VERDICT

*The next morning, a guard bangs upon the cells' bars, jarringly announcing, "Wake up! It's time to face the Tiller's judgment!" Several guards stand ready as an escort to the courtroom.*

Once the guards bring the PCs to the courtroom (at F10), Onkat-Oun appears in her official robes as Baroness. She then declares, "Before I pronounce my judgment, you have one last opportunity to throw yourself on our maker's mercy." After pausing for any of the PCs to repent their sins, she proclaims, "Very well. I have reached a decision. The punishment for your crimes against the Barony of Veleate is exile to the Isle of Orange. Guards, prepare the prisoners for transfer."



At this point, the Witchbreakers shackle the PCs to one another at the ankles and lead them through the south door. On the way to the dock, townspeople shout epithets at the PCs and throw wreaths of orange flowers. With a successful DC 20 Perception check, PCs may notice Ginny and Brother Emehl watching from among the crowd. The guards create a procession toward a moored transfer ship at the westernmost dock. After loading the prisoners on the boat, they sail towards the setting sun as they depart for the Isle of Orange.

### EXILED!

*The boat's captain brings the ship into dock as several Witchbreakers stand ready to repel a crowd of gaunt exiles gathered at the edge of the island shore. More guardsmen begin moving prisoners off the boat and down a wide gangplank onto a listing dock, unlocking the shackles one at a time.*

A successful DC 20 Mysticism check notices the light emanating from the island bears a strong resemblance to the radioactive energy from the fractured *Tear* they encountered

at the quarantined rock quarry in the Barony of Merebec (at **D19**). After the guards release each PC from the boat, they swiftly cast off and depart.

### THE ISLE OF ORANGE

*The skies have grown darker with the setting sun, but the way ahead remains well lit by a column of orange light shooting directly from the center of the island into the clouds above Hargo Lake. Several campfires also line the beach with silhouette figures gathered around them for warmth.*

If the PCs befriended Brother Emehl, he and Ginny arrive soon after the Witchbreaker ship departs. Or, if they made prior arrangements with Ginny, she convinces the priest to accompany her anyway so he can assure her safety should a Witchbreaker patrol impede her skiff. Regardless, they deliver all the PCs' belongings to them again, as well as Khedri's gear. Ginny also includes a meteorite flare (see pg. 86) instructing them to use it to contact her again when they find Khedri and want off the island.

While the PCs don't find Khedri on the beach, there are a number of human and elven exiles instead. Some of the exiles have lived on the island since Onkat-Oun started "punishing witches," so they can provide the PCs with the lay of the land. Kargun-Pel, a grizzled man edging toward the other side of middle age, acts spokesperson for the group.

**Have you seen a krang named Khedri?** "Yeah. Big fella. Got here a day or two ago, if I recall. Didn't wanna share our company much. He headed inland, hopin' to find better food or another way off the island, I guess. But I been here longer'n most and there ain't no way off that don't take you straight through the Witchbreakers again and the best food is always what they drop off for us."

**How long have you been here?** "Ain't got a calendar, so I can't rightly say. Ever since the Tiller's been in power, I reckon."

**Why haven't you escaped?** "Cause it's safer here. Out there on the water, there's Witchbreaker patrols and they're a lot less gentle with escapees. More often than not, they just feed'em to the kelpies or the gar. 'Sides, life ain't so bad here. It's a damn sight better than a place where you get exiled for lookin' the wrong way at a Witchbreaker."

**What's that orange light?** "Been here ever since my grandpa was a lad and maybe afore that. Don't rightly know what it is."

**Has anyone investigated it?** "There's a pit that goes down near the light. Ain't no one returned who ever went there, though. Heh. Mebbe it beams them away, and that's why we never see 'em. More likely, they just get themselves killed by something better left alone. Ain't nothin' safe on this island."

## THE ORANGE LIGHT

Following their conversation with Kargun-Pel, the PCs likely make their way towards the orange light at the center of the island. Read or paraphrase the following when they arrive:

*The trek into the highlands of the Isle of Orange proves difficult, with steep climbs among broken rock and overgrown nettles scratching every bit of exposed skin. Suddenly a vast pit opens in the ground. It stretches 30 feet across, tapering into a funnel as it descends. A hellish, orange light pours forth, illuminating and magnified by the pit's interior as a dizzying surge of vertigo hits like a punch to the gut. A passageway cuts to the west after passing the funnel roughly 20 feet down.*

This pit once served as a maintenance shaft and exhaust vent for the amphitheater and *Tear of Eternity* housed within the Patron ruin (at **F19**). The ancient quakes that shook Rythes sunk the entire complex, making this tunnel the only remaining entrance, and now the *Tear* uses it to purge the weakening Principality corruption by releasing a slow-acting radiation from below. This exposure works as medium-level radiation (DC 17) requiring a save each hour rather than each round. With the proper equipment, PCs can make their way down the edge of the funneled pit and reach a maintenance hatch (at **F11**). This requires a successful DC 15 Athletics check. Failure indicates a PC slips, sliding down the funnel.

With a DC 20 Reflex save, such victims can catch themselves on the lip of the funnel. Otherwise, they suffer falling damage into a 40-foot pit.

## F11. MAINTENANCE HATCH

*Just 20 feet into the straight portion of the funneled pit, a 5-foot hatch stands open. Gray slime gives its metal an eerie sheen and a wide handprint has left a mark within it.*

A DC 15 Life Science skill check identifies the handprint as the same shape and size of a large simian. It belongs to Khedri, who ventured this way when investigating the ruin's orange light.

*Beyond the hatch, an angled chute leads down, eventually emptying into a perfectly round chamber where a single passageway leads further west.*

**Creatures:** Khedri sits propped against the wall within the western passage. When the PCs arrive, he numbly regards them for a while before recognition sets in, and he weakly rises to his feet. He made the mistake of trying to win his way past the thirsty one (at **F12**) and now suffers 8 points of Constitution damage. Too weak to continue, he chose to rest despite the dangers of radiation. If the PCs can restore him, his spirits brighten considerably. Otherwise, he tells them what he can about the undead, but refrains from joining any further attempt to fight it, lest he prove a liability.

If asked about the *Opus Aeterna*, Khedri tells the PCs his search found two more fragments in the Blue Barony. After reaching True Veleate, however, the Witchbreakers subdued him ("but not before I punched a guard so hard I knew what he had for lunch," he adds with a gruff laugh). Unfortunately, the Dockmaster confiscated the fragments.

## KHEDRI OF VOSH

CR 5

HP 60 (currently 40; see pg. 34)

## F12. CURSED SALT (CR 7)

*The passageway opens into a much larger chamber surrounded by a ledge curving around to a higher tunnel traveling north. Salt-encrusted corpses lie in heaps among puddles of water on the floor.*

This chamber used to desalinate the water in **F16** as pumps pulled in water, extracted salt and other impurities, and shot the purified water back out.

**Creature:** One of the first exiles to explore this area couldn't make his way back up the pit. After drinking salt-tainted water, he died of thirst, sealing his doom and causing him to rise once again as a spectre. His merciless anger and frustration have caused him to slay anyone venturing here, and he immediately attacks those stepping into the chamber, futilely hoping to slake his unquenchable thirst. Bound to the chamber, he cannot follow anyone retreating to **F11** or gaining the ledge to access the passage to **F13**.

## PART 2: THE BROKEN BARONIES

### THIRSTY ONE

CR 7

XP 3,200

LE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft., fluid sense 120 ft.; Perception +19

Aura anhydrous aura (10 ft., DC 15)

#### DEFENSE

HP 105 EACH

EAC 19; KAC 21

Fort +9; Ref +9; Will +8

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; Immunities undead immunities

#### OFFENSE

Speed fly 50 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee claw +17 (2d6+7 S plus desiccate)

Offensive Abilities desiccate (1d6 Con damage, DC 15)

#### STATISTICS

Str —; Dex +5; Con —; Int +2; Wis +0; Cha +4

Skills Intimidate +14, Stealth +14

Languages Common

Other Abilities unliving

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Anhydrous Aura (Su)** A thirsty one draws out moisture from everything within 10 feet. Creatures within this aura must succeed at a Fortitude save each round or become fatigued as dehydration sets in. If a fatigued creature fails this saving throw, it is instead exhausted. A creature that successfully saves is immune to the anhydrous aura of this thirsty one for 24 hours.

**Desiccate (Su)** When a thirsty one deals damage with its claw attack, it can pull the liquid from its foe, dealing 1d6 Constitution damage. For every point of Constitution damage it deals, it recovers 5 Hit Points up to its normal maximum. These temporary HP last for 10 minutes or until depleted.

**Unnatural Aura (Su)** Animals, whether wild or domesticated, can sense the unnatural presence of a spectre at a distance of 30 feet. They do not willingly approach nearer than that and panic if forced to do so unless a master succeeds at a DC 25 Survival check. A panicked animal remains so as long as it is within 30 feet of the spectre.

**Fluid Sense (Su)** A thirsty one can detect any liquid within 120 feet as with blindsense.

### F13. WATERY GALLERY

*This small anteroom overlooks a pool filled with silty water. A faint orange glow filters through its murky depths as the water swirls and eddies.*

When the *Tear of Eternity* was still intact (at F19), it made this area into a recuperative spa. With its destruction, the water no longer has healing properties, let alone potability.

### F14. CONTROL ROOM

*Carved stone panels hang along the curved surface of this chamber's walls. Faint light gleams within the the etched lines marking them, depicting alien runes in neat, uniform rows.*

A successful DC 25 Culture or Mysticism check, or DC 15 Engineering check, can determine that these panels each served some purpose in operating the ancient Patron machinery comprising the ruin. Though faintly illuminated, none of the controls work any longer.

### F15. POWER COILS (CR 5)

*The passageway entering this chamber ends at a sharply defined ledge, and another awaits on the other side of the room, leading to a corridor headed further south. The chamber floor lies 20 feet down where long coils of superheated metal continually emit an orange glow.*

**Hazard:** Part of the technology powering the Patron facility runs through this chamber, its machinery now exposed to the elements after earthquakes struck the complex. An incredibly oppressive wave of heat strikes anyone venturing onto the chamber floor. Those without fire resistance must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or become fatigued.

### F16. HEAT SINKS (CR 5)

*For a split second, one can see a bubbling orange mass in the depths of this circular chamber 20 feet below the ledge standing before it. Another ledge and hallway stands on the far side of the room, and then, everything blazes with an immense flash of orange light.*

**Hazard:** When the *Tear of Eternity* (at F19) became corrupted, its energies blazed out in all directions in a failed attempt to burn out the infection. The resulting explosion blew through the entire ceiling, allowing the light to shoot into the exhaust vents and then skyward. PCs venturing here risk blindness from the intense light. Each creature standing on the ledge or moving through the room must succeed on a DC 21 Fortitude save or go blind for 24 hours. A successful save reduces this blindness to just 1 round, but the victim is dazzled for another 10 minutes afterward.

### F17. NARROW TUBE

*This passageway tightens considerably as it continues another 100 feet before turning north. Perfectly round, its width is only 3 feet, further compromised by steaming hot pipes, ruptured tubes, and sparking tendrils hanging from the ceiling and walls.*

This passageway allowed engineers to reach the central core (at F19) by either accessing the secret door in the north wall (DC 35 Perception to notice) or the core overlook (at F18). It served double duty as an access route to the service and maintenance crews examining the base of the *Tear*.

**F18. CORE OVERLOOK**

*This 10-foot-wide balcony curves around a huge amphitheater, providing a glorious view of a writhing turmoil of energy contained within a crystalline column far below. Dozens of flat crystal panels—some alive with vibrant colors and others completely dark and opaque—reside within the balcony's inner wall alongside hundreds of gauges, buttons, knobs, and iron levers.*

A force field generator (at **F20**) remains intact despite the devastated complex, and it creates an invisible (as well as impenetrable) wall of energy along the edge of the central core (at **F19**). The Patrons and their followers once used the crystalline panels and other paraphernalia to monitor and control the fractured *Tear of Eternity*, but they no longer function for anything other than the flickering spectacle they provide.

**Development:** The PCs have a much easier time spotting the entrance to the central core from this vantage point. A successful DC 18 Perception check notices the partial tunnel on the south wall. Subsequent attempts to locate the other side of the secret door within the narrow tube (at **F17**) require only a DC 15 Perception check to find it thereafter.

**F19. CENTRAL CORE (CR 7)**

*The passage of time and inherent damage to the ancient complex has left this amphitheater in disarray. Chunks of debris litter the broad, circular floor, and occasional arcs of energy leap from the crystalline column at its center, always striking somewhere in the gloom above. In fact, the ceiling to this complex lies hidden behind clouds of roiling energy at least 50 feet overhead.*

This chamber once supported a *Tear of Eternity*, but its crystalline column now represents only the base of the great gate that once resided in the higher reaches of the Patron complex. With the Principality corruption and resulting cataclysm, it became unstable and fractured, with most of its components (and the upper halls) incinerated in the resulting backlash.

**Creatures:** Long ago, several engineers perished in the upper reaches of the Patron complex when the *Tear of Eternity* collapsed. Undeath followed death on apocalyptic gusts of energy, and two radioactive winds formed from their fused souls, becoming trapped above the central core when the force field generation (at **F20**) activated to contain the backlash of energy. The frustrated creatures still lurk within the roiling clouds (DC 30 Perception check to notice). As soon as anyone deactivates the force field, they rush down to attack. In addition, the Principality corruption still contained within the base of the column holds 60 points of negative energy. The radioactive winds can tap this resource to heal themselves of 4d6 Hit Points as an immediate action, thereby further venting the Principality corruption.

The crystalline column representing the base of the ruined *Tear* also trapped the spirit of an ancient half-Patron traveler named Aal-Av-Ri. In the process of crossing the Weave to

reach Rythes from another world, he found his essence shunted into the column when the *Tear* exploded. Doing so first involves locating and shutting down the force field generator (at **F20**). Thereafter, if a PC targets the column with enough channeled positive energy or *cure* spells to counter and deplete the remaining points of negative energy contained within it, Aal-Av-Ri can escape, manifesting as a being of luminous blue energy (see **Meeting a Patron**, below). His essence can communicate these necessary actions to them if the PCs touch the crystal column.

**Development:** In addition to the XP for defeating the rotting winds, the PCs also receive a story award equivalent to overcoming a second CR 7 encounter if they remove the Principality's taint from the remnants of the *Tear*. This not only releases the spirit of Aal-Av-Ri, but the corrupted *Tear* of Veleate no longer stunts the barony's environmental and ecological recovery.

**RADIOACTIVE WINDS (2) CR 5**

XP 1,600 each

NE Large undead (air, incorporeal)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

Aura radiation (30 ft., DC 13)

**DEFENSE HP 74 EACH**

EAC 17; KAC 19

Fort +7; Ref +7; Will +6

**Defensive Abilities** air mastery, improved evasion, incorporeal, natural invisibility, unliving; **Immunities** undead immunities

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to winds

**OFFENSE**

Speed fly 60 ft. (Su, perfect); seep

Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

**Offensive Abilities** distraction, rending wind (1d6+5 negative energy plus radiation)

**STATISTICS**

Str —; Dex +5; Con —; Int +0; Wis +1; Cha +2

Skills Athletics +16

Other Abilities unliving

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Air Mastery (Ex)** Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls against a rotting wind.

**Aura of Radiation (Su)** The area around a radioactive wind is constantly affected as if by an *irradiate* spell (CL 6th).

**Rending Wind (Su)** A radioactive wind deals 1d6+5 negative energy damage to creatures in its space at the end of its turn. It also damages creatures that enter its space on their turn. Creatures damaged by this rending wind are exposed to medium radiation and may contract radiation sickness.

**Seep (Su)** A rotting wind is a gaseous creature and can slip through tiny cracks into any area that is not airtight, but it cannot pass through solid barriers.

**Vulnerable to Winds (Ex)** A rotting wind takes a –4 penalty on saving throws against wind effects, and it is treated as a Tiny creature for the purpose of wind effects determined by size.



### F20. FORCE FIELD GENERATOR

*Dazzling energy traverses multiple crystalline arrays lining the walls of this oval chamber. A 1-foot-diameter metal sphere hangs suspended 5 feet above the floor, slowly shifting its rune-carved surface like the pieces of an alien puzzle.*

This chamber acts as the control medium for the force field between the core overlook (at **F18**) and the central core (at **F19**). The field also extends 100 feet over the central core preventing the roiling clouds of energized gas from collapsing into the chamber. The PCs likely find their way here so they can release Aal-Av-Ri from the fragmented remains of the *Tear of Eternity*. A PC must grasp the hovering metal sphere to do so, purposefully reconfiguring its rune-scribed tiles to issue the proper command. This requires a successful DC 22 Mysticism or DC 25 Engineering check, but the PC attempting the check receives a +5 circumstance bonus if a PC successfully translates the Beligren language of the Patrons with a DC 25 Culture check or a *comprehend languages* spell first.

### MEETING A PATRON

Any resulting conversation with Aal-Av-Ri takes place within the central core (at **F19**). Despite being only half-Patron, he possesses a god-like intellect, and his mere presence within the chamber—though greatly muted by his millennia-long entrapment—still resonates so strongly that his aura inflicts the stunned condition for 1d4 rounds unless the PCs succeed at a DC 20 Will save. Unfortunately, the spirit of Aal-Av-Ri cannot linger in the damaged complex for very long, and must return to a source of healing far across the Weave. The means by which he does so is utterly unattainable by lesser creatures, and he can do little to return the PCs directly to their homeworld. However, he can help them understand the true nature of the *Opus Aeterna* and its ability to repair damaged gateways. Aal-Av-Ri informs them that 99 crystalline panes comprise the codex, and he can sense a large concentration of them miles away in the northeast portion of the peninsula. He can also relate the nature of the war between the Patrons and the Principalities, the sorrowful devastation wreaked upon Rythes, and the original history of the *Tears of Eternity* before the Great Cataclysm.

## BRINGING THE TRUTH TO VELEATE

Returning from the Patron ruin, the PCs have no trouble reaching the beach. Khedri gladly accompanies them, full of questions about their experience in the ruins. Using Ginny's meteorite flare, they can summon a ride back to True Veleate or the far shore of Hargo Lake. If the PCs haven't yet retrieved Khedri's fragments of the *Opus Aeterna*, they must still find a way to take them back from the authorities.

There are a number of ways for the PCs to do this, but the extinguishing of the light at the Isle of Orange and sudden improvement of crop yields leave the citizens far more willing to accept the PCs. They can still challenge Onkat-Oun and her church if they wish, but Brother Emehl and other citizens are willing to take their case to the Baroness. Although her fury is bottomless, she will agree to turn over the pages (and even the other confiscated magics in **F4**) in exchange for the PCs leaving the area immediately.

However your party wishes to resolve the problem, make certain that they get the pages, because they will need them to escape Rythes.

## PART 3: INTO THE BLOOM

Following the resolution of matters in the Barony of Veleate, the PCs should continue their search for the remaining pieces of the *Opus Aeterna*. The information provided by Aal-Av-Ri or Khedri's notes points them north towards the Barony of the Bloom. If Khedri is with the group, he offers to seek the monks of St. Stoneheart near the Murcaedur Mines further west in case they have any remaining fragments, as well. He promises to rejoin them at the Red Gate in anticipation of returning to Argosa so he can update the Accord on their combined findings.

The journey to the Barony of the Bloom promises even more peril. Khedri, Ginny, and even Brother Emehl advise the PCs against traveling there alone, as packs of barbaric raiders inhabit the peninsula's northern coast, and gargantuan beasts assault all who wander the wastes without the safety of large numbers. As a result, most who seek the bounty of the Bloom band together in long trade caravans. The adventure assumes the PCs join one, hiring on as additional guards and drivers for a caravan master named **Maryk Garu** (LN male human operative). A veteran of many desert crossings along every trade route between the Broken Baronies, he welcomes their assistance, unconcerned with their past in Veleate as long as they vow to protect his goods so he can reach the settlement of St. Ioh.

Maryk leads a team of four Rythes oxen—shaggy beasts of burden with curved, trident-like horns. They pull a double-hitched warwagon (see pg. 90) laden with trade goods. Maryk assigns one of the PCs to drive the wagon, and expects the rest to guard it. If any PCs wish to travel separately from the wagon, he can also provide them with a camel.

## G1. TAKING ON SUPPLIES

Before Maryk's caravan can depart, he still needs to secure enough supplies to sustain his guards and draft animals for the desert crossing. The PCs can further ingratiate themselves to the caravan master by assisting his negotiations with the merchants of True Veleate. If the PCs influenced the people to turn against Onkat-Oun, this only requires a single DC 20 Diplomacy check; otherwise, it becomes a complex DC 25 Diplomacy check (3 successes needed before 1 failure). Success acquires enough supplies to get underway. Failure simply puts the caravan in a worse situation when water becomes scarce at the watering holes Maryk typically uses (see **G4**).

## G2. A CARAVAN IN NEED

*The shores of Hargo Lake have receded beyond the horizon as the caravan heads north across the Rocky Barrens toward Pelicole Pass. About a days' ride out, a dust cloud signals the approach of another caravan moving south.*

Maryk calls for a halt until the other caravan arrives, then rides out to meet it, inviting the PCs to accompany him. They soon discover a dire situation for the southbound travelers. Many bear significant wounds, and describe an attack by gnoll raiders they suffered on the Parched Plains. They also explain that many of the usual water sources have dried up and some of their draft animals died of thirst. This prompts Maryk to give them enough of his own water supply to see them to True Veleate, but he rations the rest for the remainder of the trip unless the PCs can augment it with *create water* or similar magic.

## G3. SAND GLUTTON AMBUSH (CR 6)

*Fresh water fills this slight depression between a pair of sand dunes, funneled into an ancient, concave slab of stone and protected from the wind by stony outcroppings.*

Maryk remarks he's pleased to see the rain hasn't stopped since the last time he came through, but also notes the watering hole has greatly diminished.

**Creatures:** The recent drought has drawn a pair of sand gluttons to this small oasis. They lie in wait for creatures to approach the water. While they only have animal intelligence, they prove cunning enough to spring their attacks simultaneously, attacking the nearest creatures until they draw one beneath the sand to digest.

**SAND GLUTTON (2)**

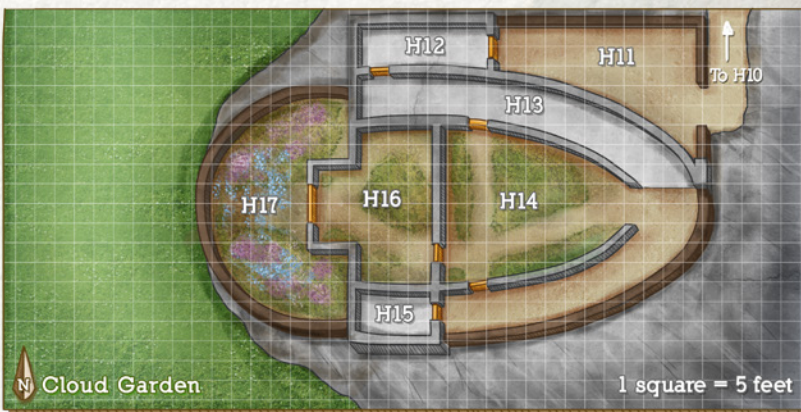
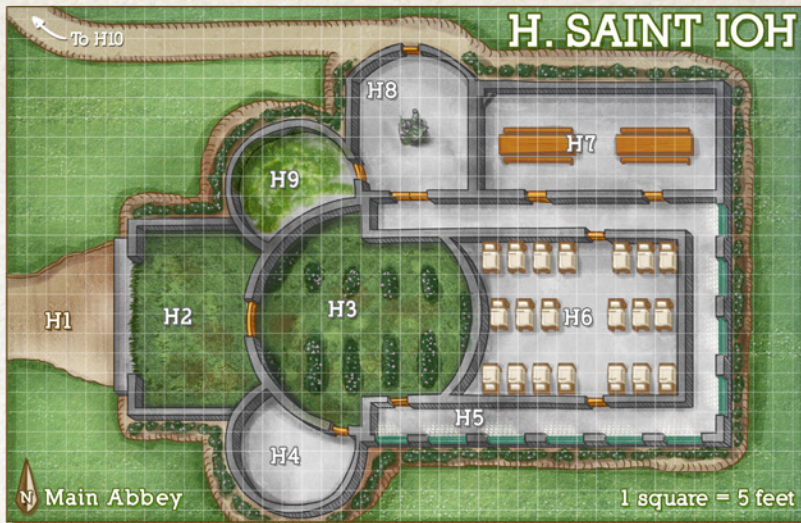
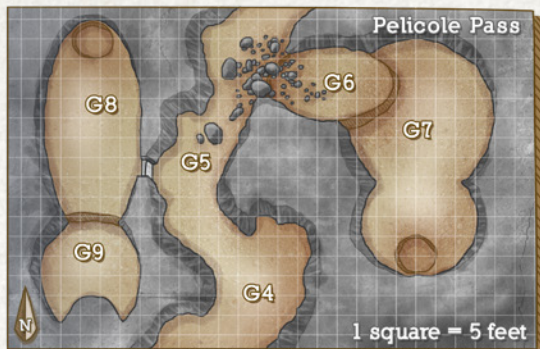
**CR 4**

**XP 1,200 each**

**HP 50 each (See pg. 80)**

## G. OVERLAND JOURNEY

### The Parched Plains



### G4. PELICOLE PASS

The desert gives way to a rocky rise that pushes directly into the mountains. It finally reaches a narrow pass between opposing walls of winding stone, and small depressions of muddy water taper off until only a dry, cracked slope remains.

Halfway up the slope, Maryk becomes increasingly worried by the absence of water, swearing he's never seen the drought this bad before, recalling a lake-sized water supply he had to skirt on his last trip. In the hopes of finding water further afield, he asks the PCs to investigate the remainder of the Pelicole Pass without him while he takes the wagons further east, promising to rejoin them in a few hours.

### G5. DROUGHT SWALLOWS DESCEND (CR 6)

The shadows cast by the mountains in this pass bring a welcome relief from the glaring heat of the sun, but rocks from a recent landslide block the way forward.

**Creatures:** A drought swallow swarm bears responsibility for the missing watering holes. They've taken nearly all available moisture on their migration north, and the PCs provide a welcome source of additional water before their continued journey.

### DROUGHT SWALLOW SWARM

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

N Tiny magical beast (swarm)

Init +5; Senses low-light vision; Perception +13

Aura desiccation field (20 ft., DC 14)

#### DEFENSE

HP 90 EACH

EAC 18; KAC 20

Fort +10; Ref +10; Will +5

**Defensive Abilities** swarm defenses; **Immunities** swarm immunities

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (Ex, perfect)

**Melee** swarm attack (1d6+5 P)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

**Offensive Abilities** distraction (DC 14)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** -1; **Dex** +5; **Con** +2; **Int** -3; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +0

**Skills** Acrobatics +18, Perception +13

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any desert

**Organization** swarm or plague (2-6)



## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Desiccation Field (Su)** Drought swallows are surrounded by a magical field that evaporates moisture from living creatures. Those beginning their turn inside the aura take 2d6 nonlethal damage from dehydration (DC 14 Fortitude negates). Like damage from normal dehydration, it cannot be cured unless the victim has adequate water and the victims are fatigued until the damage is cured.

## G6. ROCKSLIDE

*Rocks from a recent landslide block the way forward, shifting underfoot as they continue to settle. To the east, they appear to have broken through a hollow portion in the mountainside, revealing an ancient chamber beyond.*

The sudden drought in this area triggered the recent rockslide. Unmounted PCs can potentially climb across it, but Maryk's caravan cannot do so without clearing some of the larger rocks for the wagons. The chamber in the mountainside once played a role in a Patron weather control station, but no longer functions.

Moving the rocks so a mount can pass through takes half an hour, and an additional hour clears enough for a wagon. Every 10 minutes spent among the debris, PCs must succeed at a DC 25 Engineering check or a DC 20 Survival check to avoid shifting key rocks that trigger another avalanche. If the PCs opt to just climb over the rocks or down into the oval chamber, it requires a DC 20 Athletics check, but failing this check by 5 or more also triggers the second rockslide. If an avalanche occurs, all of **G5** falls within the bury zone and PCs suffer 8d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 18 half) and become buried. In addition, **G4** and **G6** fall within the slide zone of the avalanche. PCs located in these areas suffer only 3d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 18 negates).

## G7. REVEALED CHAMBER

*The rocks of this unusual chamber seem carved directly out of the mountain itself.*

This complex once played a role in assisting the terraforming provided by the nearest *Tear of Eternity*, repurposing moisture wrung from clouds rising up the mountain for use in controlling the weather. During the Great Cataclysm, an earthquake sheared this chamber from its concealed entrance in the higher elevations, and it ceased functioning, reverting the northeastern territory to its arid state.

## G8. BONE-STREWED CHAMBER

*Neat piles of bones occupy this chamber's floor, covered in dust undisturbed by the passage of time.*

The Great Cataclysm buried and trapped several workers in this former weather station. Two of them went mad with hunger and murdered their coworkers, drinking their blood, but they too eventually perished. One returned as an undead spirit, now whiling away each day talking to the dry bones of her former companions. She makes lair in area **G9**.

**Treasure:** If the characters search among the remains, one was wearing an estex suit III that withstood the test of time. Even its filtered rebreather and mk1 thermal capacitor upgrades are still in place. However, searching the remains attracts the attention of the thirsty one from **G9**.

## G9. LOST SOULS (CR 7)

*The smell of decay permeates this crescent-shaped chamber. It sits 5 feet below the adjoining room, with a network of cracks in its walls indicating it broke away during some kind of seismic event.*

**Creatures:** The self-loathing shade that murdered her companions lurks within this sunken chamber. Perpetually driven to thirst for living essence, she attacks any creature venturing here.



## PART 3: INTO THE BLOOM

### THIRSTY ONE

CR 7

XP 3,200 each  
HP 105 (see pg. 55)

### G10. PARCHED PLAINS RIDERS

After clearing Pelicole Pass, the caravan continues towards the Barony of the Bloom, but first, it faces a long trek across the Parched Plains. A tribe of Rythes gnolls hides within the tall, dry grass, having prepared an elaborate ambush. This can be resolved with the Vehicle Chase rules from the *Starfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* with a little help from the *Legendary Vehicles* article (see pg. 87) and the Parched Plains Zones table, below, rolling as each zone is revealed to the players.

If you are not interested in using the vehicle chase rules, consider rolling on the Parched Plains Zones table each round to provide color for the chase and possibly mechanical effects.

### TIMED EVENT: MOUNTED GNOLL SHARPSHOOTERS (CR 7)

*Each step on these arid plains kicks up a cloud of dust. Several bleached skeletons and animal skulls add to the bleak landscape, half-hidden by tall, dry grass growing to either side of the trail. Suddenly, a cry goes up from one of the caravan's other wagons, as a rifle shot leaves a frozen hole in his chest. A fast-moving figure riding a four-legged animal races past, disappearing into the scrub with a barking laugh and echoing howl. Dozens more soon match the sound as a group of gnolls riding wild boars race from the grass toward the wagons.*

**Creatures:** Four marauding gnolls bear down on the PCs, riding their massive boars alongside the warwagon. The raiders focus their attacks on the driver, but happily attempt to cut down lone riders, their mounts, or even the team of aurochs pulling the wagons. The riding boars are well-trained and do not flee from combat while carrying their riders. However, a rider-less boar flees the battle.

### PARCHED PLAINS ZONES

D12	COMPLICATION
1-2	Rutted ground. All aboard the warwagon must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid being knocked prone. Anyone who fails by 5 or more is instead thrown from the wagon, taking 2d6 damage.
3-4	Thick grass. -2 to Piloting checks.
5-6	Dusty ground. As a trick, any pilot in this zone may kick up a cloud of dust, giving itself full concealment until it leaves this zone.
7-8	Boar herd. As a trick, a pilot in this zone can attempt a Survival check to spook the boars, dealing 4d8 damage to another vehicle in this zone (its pilot can attempt a DC 15 Survival check to take half damage).
9	Razorgrass stand. The pilot of each vehicle passing through this zone must make a DC 15 Survival check or the vehicle and its passengers each suffer 2d6 slashing damage.
10	Dry riverbed. All vehicles in this zone are automatically engaged.
11-12	Parched Plains. No special effect.

### RYTHES GNOLL SHARPSHOOTER (4)

CR 3

XP 800 each  
Gnoll soldier  
CE Medium humanoid (gnoll)  
**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

**DEFENSE** HP 40 EACH

**EAC** 15; **KAC** 17  
**Fort** +7; **Ref** +3; **Will** +4

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.  
**Melee** longsword +8 (1d8+5 S) or bite +8 (1d3+6 P)  
**Ranged** frostbite-class zero rifle +11 (1d8+3 C) or incendiary grenade +11 (explode [5 ft., 1d6 F plus 1d4 burn, DC 12])  
**Offensive Abilities** natural weapons

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The sharpshooters remain on their boars, trying to get close enough to take shots at exposed PCs. They will only use their grenades after they're wounded, not wanting to risk damaging the goods if they're fighting easy prey (see **Catching on Fire** on pg. 87).  
**Morale** If two sharpshooters fall, the last will flee and look for weaker prey. If it escapes, it joins the enemies in the final part of this timed event.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** +2; **Dex** +4; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** -1  
**Skills** Athletics +8, Intimidate +8, Perception +8, Survival +13  
**Languages** Gnoll  
**Other Abilities** gear boost (armored advantage)  
**Gear** graphite carbon skin, frost-bite class zero rifle with 1 battery (40 charges), longsword, 2 incendiary grenades

### WAR BOAR (4)

CR —

XP —  
N Large animal  
**Init** +1; **Perception** +7

**DEFENSE** HP 25 EACH

**EAC** 13; **KAC** 15  
**Fort** +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +1

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** gore +10 (1d6+6 P; critical 1d6 bleed)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

**Offensive Abilities**

## STATISTICS

**Str** +4; **Dex** +1; **Con** +2; **Int** -4; **Wis** +1; **Cha** -2

**Skills** Perception +7

**Other abilities** living vehicle

## ECOLOGY

**Environment** temperate or tropical forests

**Organization** solitary, pair, or herd (3-8)

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Living Vehicle (Ex)** War boars can be piloting using the vehicle rules and join in vehicle chases using Survival in place of Piloting. While being ridden in this way, the boar cannot take move or standard actions, but does deal 5d4 bludgeoning damage (DC 11 to avoid) when using the ram or run over action.

## TIMED EVENT: GNOLL COMMANDOS (CR 7)

*Another whoop announces the arrival of yet more gnolls assaulting the caravan. Riding double, the rear gnolls stands up from its shared mount to leap for the moving wagon.*

**Creatures:** Six more gnolls ride the boars in pairs. The lead rider controls the beast, while the other uses it as a moving base from which to leap upon the PCs' vehicle. Because the warwagon has two decks (one on top and another inside), the gnolls initially attempt to take the high ground against the PCs so they can cut loose any trade goods they can toss down to their companions. If given the opportunity, they attempt to unhitch the second wagon so they can fully loot it as the main wagon continues.

## RYTHES GNOLL COMMANDOS (6)

CR 2

**XP** 600 each

Gnoll operative

CE Medium humanoid (gnoll)

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

## DEFENSE

HP 23 EACH

**EAC** 14; **KAC** 15

**Fort** +4; **Ref** +9; **Will** +2

**Defensive Abilities** evasion

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** survival knife +8 (1d4+4 S) or  
bite +8 (1d3+5 P)

**Ranged** pulsecaster pistol +6 (1d4+2 E nonlethal)

**Offensive Abilities** natural weapons, trick attack +1d4

## TACTICS

**During Combat** One commando from each pair will leap from their mount, using Acrobatics to board the wagon. Once there, they attempt to keep the high ground and use their trick attacks from above (note that, as daredevils, they can use

Acrobatics for trick attack). Commandos still on their mounts will take shots with their pistols as they become available.

**Morale** Once three commandos are taken care of and no commandos remain on the wagon, the rest break off the chase.

## STATISTICS

**Str** +2; **Dex** +4; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** -1

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Athletics +13, Intimidate +8, Perception +8, Stealth +8, Survival +13

**Languages** Gnoll

**Other Abilities** operative exploits (uncanny mobility), specialization (daredevil)

**Gear** second skin, pulsecaster pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), survival knife

## WAR BOAR (3)

CR —

**XP** —

**HP** 25 each (see pg. 61)

## TIMED EVENT: OVERTURNED WAGON (CR 7)

*A large plume of dust erupts from one of the wagons racing across the plains as it overturns and crashes. Passengers and trade goods go flying as the vehicle rolls through the scrub, half-burying itself and then finally coming to rest in an area of soft sand where it slowly begins to sink.*

**Creatures:** A gnoll lieutenant, deceitful cultist, and three rageborn barbarians have lured Maryk's wagon into an area of shifting sand that acts as quicksand. Now, they close in on any survivors, preparing to savage them unless the PCs intervene. Having fended off most of their own direct attacks, they have an opportunity to aid the caravan master before the gnolls kill him. Unfortunately, the shifting sand also poses a hazard. Each round, Maryk slides further into the sand. After 3 rounds, his head goes under and he starts to suffocate (see Suffocation and Drowning in Chapter 11 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*). After rescuing Maryk, the PCs can rally the remaining caravan guards to drive off the gnolls. The caravan loses some goods (and at least a couple of wagons) to the raiders, but Maryk is happy to survive, and quite pleased with the role the PCs played in coming to his aid.

**Development:** If the PCs allowed Shaghak to survive their encounter with the gnoll chieftain at the Damaged Causeway (at D9), he makes another appearance during this encounter. Depending on the terms under which they parted, he could be an enemy or an ally.

## RYTHES GNOLL LIEUTENANT

CR 5

**XP** 1,600

Gnoll envoy

CN Medium humanoid (gnoll)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

## DEFENSE

HP 65

**EAC** 18; **KAC** 19

**Fort** +6; **Ref** +6; **Will** +8

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** standard taclash +10 (1d4+6 S nonlethal) or bite +10 (1d4+6 P)

**Ranged** frostbite-class zero pistol +12 (1d6+5 C; critical staggered [DC 15])

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with taclash)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The lieutenant leads from the front, using his taclash to threaten as many enemies as possible and designating the weakest target in reach with get 'em.

**Morale** The lieutenant fights to the death.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** +1; **Dex** +2; **Con** +0; **Int** +3; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +5

**Skills** Acrobatics +16, Athletics +16, Intimidate +11, Survival +11

**Languages** Gnoll

**Other Abilities** envoy improvisations (get 'em, hurry)

**Gear** d-suit I, frostbite-class zero pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), standard taclash

**RYTHES GNOLL SHARPSHOOTER (2)****CR 3**

**XP** 800 each

**HP** 40 each (see pg. 61)

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** The sharpshooters remain at range, targeting whoever the lieutenant designates. Whenever possible, they use grenades on clumps of enemies away from the lieutenant.

**Morale** The sharpshooters will not flee as long as the lieutenant stands but, once he falls, will leave or surrender as soon as they reach 20 HP.

**G11. JENJAC FERRY**

*The welcome sight of water in this strait precedes an overwhelming green on the other side. A smiling man stands next to a sizable boat.*

A ferryman named **Correvon** (NG male human) welcomes newcomers to the Barony of the Bloom, offering them passage on his ferry for 1 credit each (and charging Maryk 10 credits for each warwagon). He asks the PCs about their

journey and mentions the growing prosperity of the barony due to its abundant and varied agriculture. The journey across the strait takes 15 minutes, after which Correvon helps the caravan disembark.

## G12. HOMESTEADERS OF THE BLOOM

*This lush land features farms and orchards on plots of land all of roughly equal size. Each farm grows a mixture of fruiting trees, crops, decorative shrubs, and beautiful flowers. Cenotes and small streams irrigate the plants.*

The people of the Barony of the Bloom prove more welcoming to visitors and off-worlders than any other. An emissary named **Gwennett** (NG female human) greets Maryk and the PCs on behalf of the barony, providing a brief tour of their holdings to show how St. Ioh brought their god's blessings to the island. After one of her attendants leads Maryk away on business, Gwennett answers any questions the PCs might have about their culture.

**What is this place?** "The Barony of the Bloom—by all accounts, the most bountiful of all holdings across the entire peninsula. Thanks be to St. Ioh and god's welcome grace."

**Who was St. Ioh?** "A survivor of the Great Cataclysm. He invoked our rebirth long ago upon this island, teaching our ancestors how to irrigate the land, rotate our crops, and reap the bounty of the field and sea. He also passed down holy instructions, which we follow to this day: never plant indoors, leave your crops open to the sky so god can see and bless them, always harvest after the fourth blooming of the largest moon, and many more. Those commandments have helped us thrive. And, thanks to St. Ioh, we now have more food supply than we can possibly enjoy. It also enables our trade with the other baronies."

**What do the other baronies trade for your food?** "Manufactured goods, building materials, and other things. Mostly from the Barony of Stoneheart, but also the Barony of Veleate and Merebec. With the increase in banditry, however, yours is the first caravan we've seen in months. It's good to share again. Maryk will undoubtedly find a good market here."

**Why haven't the bandits attacked you?** "They lack enough ships to cross the strait, and they likely fear the legends of the terrible monsters at sea. We do all we can to spread those tales, and many of them are true."

**Who leads the Barony of the Bloom?** "Abbot Redalpo. The Grandfather of Flowers. High priest of the Monastery of St. Ioh. He is both religious and political leader here. A kinder, more benevolent soul has never ruled so well over the Bloom. Our bounty has increased tenfold under his governance."

**Have you seen any crystalline panes of etched glass in the monastery?** "Yes! Once as a girl when I visited the mountain. Such panes decorate the windows of the great dome on the mountain. If you look there, in the distance,

you can see the glint of the sun on its windows. The monks say the holy lines etched in the glass helps focus god's glory so we will always prosper."

## THE HIGHEST YIELD

While touring the Barony of the Bloom and meeting its people, attentive PCs (DC 25 Perception check) may also notice a particularly lavish home has a small seedling just inside one of its windows. This might seem odd considering the teachings Gwennett shared about St. Ioh requiring plants to remain outdoors. If the PCs ask about it, Gwennett explains Abbot Redalpo has begun awarding the plant annually to homesteaders who produce the highest yield, and they must root the seedling outside after one year's time when the next one is given. In reality, the plant is a begedhi seedling (see pg. 73), cultivated by the parasite-infested monks in the mountains (at **H14**). It will soon undergo an apotheosis, and then target its owners for infestation and subversion to the mother plant's parasites. Abbot Redalpo also knows that awarding the prestigious plant incites jealousy among the rest of the homesteaders, making them more desirable in every home, and thereby widening the coming infestation of the Bloom.

## THE GRANDFATHER'S SPEECH

Eventually, Gwennett takes the PCs to St. Ioh's monastery (at **H1** and **H2**) excitedly informing them the Grandfather of Flowers will address the homesteaders there. Abbot Redalpo soon appears and preaches about St. Ioh's plans for Rythes' rebirth, citing an upcoming surge of growth based on portents divined in communion with god. The crowd alternates between cheers and excited whispers during his speech. After 10 minutes, the Abbot concludes, and his monks usher him back into the monastery before anyone can approach him. The monks turn away any PC requesting an audience with Redalpo, saying the Abbot is far too busy with preparations for the coming Bloom for them to dissuade him from god's work.

## ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT (CR 7)

The monks of St. Ioh quickly notice the presence of the PCs. Word of their arrival spreads to the monastery and any request for an audience with Abbot Redalpo draws their scrutiny. An alien mother plant known as a begedhi has infested each of them with its parasites and now controls their minds and actions. Through them, she watches for newcomers to the Bloom—especially off-worlders allied with the Accord—and guards against any interruption of her plans by eliminating those she considers a threat. This includes the PCs as she learns of their growing power and soon dispatches members of the order of St. Ioh to kill or convert them. The adventure provides no map for this encounter, as the attack likely takes place somewhere in the city at an inn, boarding house, or wherever the PCs make camp.

**PARASITE-INFESTED MONK (2)****CR 5**

XP 1,600 each

Human mystic

LE humanoid (human)

Init +0; Perception +5

**DEFENSE****HP 60 EACH RP 4 EACH**

EAC 16; KAC 17

Fort +6; Ref +4; Will +5

Defensive Abilities regeneration 2 (only in areas of sunlight);

DR 5/—

Weaknesses plantlike

**OFFENSE**

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *returning tactical spear* +10 (1d4+6 B; critical knockdown)

or vine +8 (1d4+6 S)

Ranged *returning tactical spear* +8 (1d4+6 B; critical knockdown)

Offensive Abilities grasping vines (DC 15), vines

Mystic Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

At will—*mindlink*

Mystic Spells Known (CL 5th; melee +10)

2nd (3/day)—*fog cloud*, *hold person* (DC 17)1st (6/day)—*fear* (DC 16), *mind thrust* (DC 16), *reflecting armor*o (at will)—*daze* (DC 15), *fatigue* (DC 15)

Connection xenodruid

**TACTICS****Before Combat** The monks cast *reflecting armor* on themselves before entering danger.**During Combat** If the monks are able to isolate a single target, they just *mind thrust* them to death. In battles against a group, one monk focuses on a target with *mind thrust* while the other uses entangling vines and spells like *hold person* to keep the rest of the group occupied.**Morale** The monks are unable to flee while under begedhi command.**STATISTICS**

Str +1; Dex +0; Con +3; Int +0; Wis +5; Cha +2

Skills Life Science +16, Mysticism +16, Stealth +11, Survival +11

Languages Common; speak with animals

Gear business stationwear, *returning tactical spear*;

Augmentations begedhi parasite

**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Plantlike (Ex)** A begedhi parasite host is treated as both its original type and as a plant creature for effects targeting creatures by type (whichever would be worse for the host).**Vines (Ex)** When a begedhi parasite attacks with its spiky vines while inside a host, it deals minimum damage to the host, regardless of whether it strikes its intended target. The creature can make a full attack with two vines and take only a –3 penalty on each attack roll.

## H. THE MONASTERY OF ST. IOH

Assuming the PCs survive the deadly assault of parasite-infested monks, they should turn their attention to the monastery of St. Ioh to fully unearth the begedhi's conspiracy and reclaim the remaining fragments of the *Opus Aeterna*.

### H1. THE BLOSSOMING WAY

*Multicolored flower petals line the path to this magnificent building abutting a single peak at the island's edge. Dozens of flowerbeds in full bloom brighten the base of its 30-foot walls. Beyond them, a small, stone-lined path heads higher into the mountains toward a distant glass-and-stone structure.*

The monks of St. Ioh keep the approach to their monastery meticulously groomed and cultivated. The PCs likely find their way here initially at Gwennett's direction when she brings them to hear Abbot Redalpo give his speech to the people of the Bloom.

### H2. FECUND COURTYARD (CR 8)

*A rich carpet of grass covers this courtyard and flowering plants of all description line the walls. Despite the seeming riot of growth here, the plants seem well pruned. A double door to the west, flanked by guards, leads into the monastery's abbey.*

All of the monks use their spellcasting abilities to care for the plants here, but Sister Gardener (at H4) spends more time looking after them than anyone else, preferring to work with her hands rather than relying on magic. At night, the monks keep the outer doors to H3 locked (DC 25 Engineering to open), but PCs might also gain access through the windows of the monastery's sunlit hall (at H5).

**Creatures:** The monastery also employs a handful of guards from the neighboring settlement. They remain parasite-free in order to maintain the begedhi's deception when they return home. Each of them have orders to keep people from entering the monastery until Abbot Redalpo has better prepared himself to receive visitors, which they always claim will be the next day. If PCs insist on gaining an audience, one of the guards retrieves a parasite-infested monk, who "relents" (while telepathically informing the mother plant about the threat posed by the PCs). He then asks them to wait in the grand nursery (at H3) for 15 minutes while he summons more of his brothers to deal with them.

#### MONASTERY GUARDS (4)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Elf soldier (see Tower Guard pg. 8)

HP 48 each

### H3. GRAND NURSERY (CR 3)

*This roughly circular chamber is open to the sky to allow a diverse array of plants to grow. Two doors exit the room to the south, and the door to the east leads to an open courtyard.*

**Creatures:** This nursery holds at least one specimen of each plant cultivated by the Barony of the Bloom. Abbot Redalpo originally hoped to create more seedlings from them to aid the recovery of the other baronies. PCs who inspect the plants notice their diversity and usefulness. A successful DC 25 Perception or DC 20 Life Science check also notices four begedhi seedlings among the plants. If the PCs get within 5 feet of the seedlings, they spray their spores to implant a suggestion to leave them alone.

#### BEGEDHI SEEDLINGS (4)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (see pg. 73)

### H4. SISTER GARDENER'S ROOM

*This room contains a simple, neatly made cot. Several gardening tools, each in pristine condition, hang from hooks along the wall.*

**Creatures:** The monastery's oldest adherent, **Sister Gardener**, claims this room. Innocent of the conspiracy to infect the Bloom with the begedhi's parasites, she doesn't yet realize Abbot Redalpo's corruption. She does recognize he's changed considerably in the past year, however. If the PCs ask her about the monks' behavior, she mentions they've become more reclusive and disdain visitors now. She also remarks that they sometimes make her feel uneasy, as though she's no longer wanted in the order, and they regard her like a sickly plant to be pruned from the monastery.

### H5. SUNLIT HALL

*This long corridor makes a U-shape through monastery's abbey. Stained glass depictions of St. Ioh's miracles alternate with plain glass, allowing it to stay pleasantly lit when facing the sun. Several doors lead to the center of the monastery, and even more lead further north.*

A successful DC 18 Perception check notices that one section of stained glass windows (the middle section of the eastern hall) incorporates a single pane from the *Opus Aeterna*.

**Development:** If the PCs decide to break into the monastery here, they have a much easier time. The plain glass only has hardness 2 and 20 HP. The stained glass is sturdier, with hardness 4 and 30 HP.

### H6. MONKS' LODGING

This monastery's monks sleep and keep their personal belongings here. Most of the beds remain unmade, as the parasite-infested monks no longer care about neatness, and the absence of visitors means they have no need to keep up appearances.

## PART 3: INTO THE BLOOM

### H7. KITCHEN & DINING HALL

*A smell of mold and rot assaults the senses when this door opens. The stench emanates from dozens of unwashed plates sitting upon a long table.*

Monks who underwent conversion by the begedhi mother plant initially continued their daily routine, but soon left uneaten food in the dining hall. Sister Gardener avoids this place because of its current state, feeding herself with fruits and vegetables grown on the monastery grounds and taking her meals in her room (at **H4**).

### H8. SHRINE TO ST. IOH (CR 6)

*An overgrown shrine fills this chamber, where a vine-covered statue of a robed young man stands at the northern end of the room. Doors lead north, south, and west.*

This shrine to St. Ioh shows little sign of recent tending. Sister Gardener tried to look after it, but the monks passing through this area make her uncomfortable, so she stopped visiting.

**Creatures:** The mother begedhi plant directed her parasite-infested monks to intentionally grow assassin vines here as a failsafe protection against anyone visiting the shrine or attempting to access the northern door leading to the mountain trail's cloud walk (at **H10**). The plants keep hidden, but each monk instinctively knows their location, as well as how to avoid them.

ASSASSIN VINE (3)	CR 3
XP 800 each	
N Large plant	
Init -2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +8	
Aura entangling plants (20 ft., DC 12)	
<b>DEFENSE</b>	<b>HP 40 EACH</b>
EAC 14; KAC 16	
Fort +7; Ref +5; Will +2	
Immunities electricity, plant immunities; Resistances cold 10, fire 10	
<b>OFFENSE</b>	
Speed 5 ft.	
Melee slam +11 (1d6+7 B plus grab)	
Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.	
<b>STATISTICS</b>	
Str +4; Dex -2; Con +2; Int —; Wis +1; Cha +0	
Skills Perception +8, Stealth +8	
Other Abilities mindless	
<b>ECOLOGY</b>	
Environment temperate forest	
Organization solitary, pair, or patch (3–6)	
<b>SPECIAL ABILITIES</b>	
Entangling Plants (Su) Mundane plants within 20 feet of the assassin vine grasp at non-plant creatures in that area, entangling them for one round if they fail a DC 11 Reflex	

save. This aura is suppressed while the assassin vine is waiting in ambush.

### H9. PRIOR URSULEC'S ROOM (CR 4)

*A damp, earthy smell fills this quiet chamber, where puddles of thick, vibrant-green liquid has collected. It coats nearly every surface, even clinging to the walls and ceiling in smaller patches of growth.*

**Hazard:** Green slime covers every inch of the floor in this room. It once served as Prior Ursulec's quarters, but Abbot Redalpo had him murdered when Ursulec grew suspicious of his parasitic infestation. Releasing green slime into the chamber helped hide the evidence as it devoured the prior's remains (and everything else). The parasite-infested monks now use it as a handy means of disposing of any unwanted visitors to the monastery, and likely lead the PCs here if pressed into granting them an audience with the abbot.

#### GREEN SLIME (HAZARD) CR 4

Green slime devours flesh and organic materials on contact and is even capable of dissolving metal. Bright green, wet, and sticky, it clings to walls, floors, and ceilings in patches, reproducing as it consumes organic matter. It drops from walls and ceilings when it detects movement (and possible food) below.

A single 5-foot square of green slime deals 1d6 Constitution damage each round to organic creatures and objects. Against wood or metal, green slime deals 2d6 points of damage per round, ignoring hardness. It does not harm stone.

On the first round of contact, green slime can be scraped off a creature (destroying the scraping device), but after that it must be frozen, burned, or cut away (dealing damage to the victim as well). An effect that deals cold or fire damage, natural sunlight, or a *remove affliction* spell destroys one contiguous patch of green slime; an area effect meeting these criteria can destroy multiple patches.

### H10. CLOUD WALK (CR 7)

*This mountain path climbs toward another building built onto the mountainside. Looking down provides a grand view of the entire Barony of the Bloom, a vibrant blend of healthy farms, orchards, and streams.*

**Creatures:** Two parasite-infested monks keep watch over the mountain approach, positioning themselves just around a small bend in the path. Surprising them requires an opposed DC 22 Stealth check. Failure allows them to hear travelers on the trail below, and they quickly prepare a surprise attack with the advantage of the high ground on their side. They attempt to subdue any intruders so they can bring them before Abbot Redalpo (at **H16**) and the mother begedhi plant (at **H17**) for implantation.





**PARASITE-INFESTED MONKS (2)**

**CR 5**

XP 1,600 each

HP 60 each (see pg. 65)

**H11. PATIO**

The mountain path ends at an open-air patio with low walls. This location provides a breathtaking view of the barony. Besides the mountain path, only a door to the west provides an exit from the patio.

**H12. VESTRY**

Several robes once worn by the monastery's monks lie in a heap on the floor of this simple vestry. Green residue stains nearly all of them, and a successful DC 15 Life Science check determines it comes from an unnatural, alien source—all resulting from the mother begedhi plant's apotheosis.

**H13. OCEAN VIEW**

Archways dot this half-oval walkway, ending at a low wall to the south overlooking the sea. Two doors provide a northern and southern entrance to the area already accessible by the open space of the arcing walkway's apex. The southwestern arm of the corridor ends at another door.

**H14. INNER GARDEN (CR 9)**

*This garden, like all others in the monastery, lies opens to the sky above. Flowering desert plants unlike any seen in the barony cover the floor. The air is dry and warm here.*

St. Ioh and his successors helped revive and sustain the recovery of many plants in this garden, always with the intent of replanting them in the Barony of the Bloom or to reclaim the Parched Plains. Since the begedhi established dominion over the monastery, it has repurposed the chamber as a nursery for its seedlings.

**Creatures:** Three parasite-infested monks tend to this garden to protect the eight seedlings. If alerted to the PCs' arrival, they prepare to ambush them before they can reach Abbot Redalpo or the mother begedhi.

**PARASITE-INFESTED MONKS (3)**

**CR 5**

XP 1,600 each

HP 60 each (see pg. 65)

**BEGEDHI SEEDLINGS (8)**

**CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

HP 6 each (see pg. 73)

## PART 3: INTO THE BLOOM

### H15. STORAGE SHED

This room holds various gardening implements used—and sometimes wielded—by the parasite-infested monks inhabiting the monastery.

### H16. GRANDFATHER OF FLOWERS (CR 8)

*Thick, chest-high weeds cover the entrance to this chamber, which remains open to the sky. Exits lead to the east and west.*

**Creature:** Abbot Redalpo, the Grandfather of Flowers, spends his time in meditation here. In the past, he did so when communing with the supposed god of Rythes—which unknown to him and the rest of the monasteries throughout the Broken Baronies, is actually a Patron demigod reaching from another dimension to guide and influence the younger civilizations its people left behind. Now, Redalpo only communes with the mother begedhi plant (at H17), allowing his parasite to telepathically receive her commands.

If encountered here, Redalpo feigns surprise at the PCs' arrival, pleading with them to save him from the creatures overrunning the monastery. He also attempts to convince them he had to fool the other monks into thinking he too was controlled by a parasite, so they wouldn't suspect he had actually destroyed the creature before it could take over his mind. He does everything possible to get the PCs to escort him out of the monastery in the hopes of preventing them from reaching the greenhouse (at H17).

If asked about the fragments of the *Opus Aeterna*, Redalpo acknowledges the monastery has a great many of them, offering to take the PCs to them. While insincere, Redalpo uses this half-truth to lure the PCs back to the fragment in the sunlit hall (at H5) where he hopes to rally any remaining monks against them. Or, he might take them through the shrine to St. Ioh (at H8) to fight alongside the assassin vines, or he could convince the PCs to follow him to Prior Ursulec's room (at H9) to feed the PCs to the green slime. If the PCs see through his ruse (with a DC 32 Sense Motive check or an ability to read his thoughts), he immediately attacks in order to defend the mother plant's greenhouse (at H17).

#### ABBOT REDALPO, GRANDFATHER OF FLOWERS CR 8

XP 1,600

Human mystic

LE humanoid (human)

Init +0; Perception +6

#### DEFENSE

HP 105 RP 4

EAC 19; KAC 20

Fort +9; Ref +7; Will +5

**Defensive Abilities** regeneration 2 (only in areas of sunlight);

DR 5/—

**Weaknesses** plantlike

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** carbon staff +15 (1d8+9 B; critical knockdown) or vine +13 (1d12+9 S)

**Ranged** red star plasma pistol +13 (1d8+6 E & F; critical burn 1d4)

**Offensive Abilities** grasping vines (DC 17), vines

**Mystic Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5th)

At will—*mindlink*

**Mystic Spells Known** (CL 5th; melee +15, ranged +13)

3rd (3/day)—*entropic grasp* (DC 21), *psychokinetic strangulation* (DC 21)

2nd (6/day)—*fog cloud*, *hurl forcedisk*, *mind thrust* (DC 20), *spider climb*

1st (at will)—*life bubble*, *reflecting armor*

**Connection** xenodruid

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Redalpo prepares for combat with *life bubble*, *reflecting armor*, and *spider climb*.

**During Combat** The abbot avoids melee combat if at all possible, using *spider climb* to climb the walls and *psychokinetic strangulation* to attempt to keep enemies with melee weapons away from him. If he manages to keep things at range, he uses *hurl forcedisk* or *mind thrust* against his foes. But, if forced into melee, he resolves to use his parasite's vines or, if he's lucky enough to be fighting some form of construct, *entropic grasp*.

**Morale** Abbot Redalpo fights to the death to protect the mother plant.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** +1; **Dex** +0; **Con** +4; **Int** +0; **Wis** +6; **Cha** +2

**Skills** Life Science +21, Mysticism +21, Stealth +16, Survival +16

**Languages** Common; speak with animals

**Other Abilities** animal adaptation (8 minutes)

**Gear** advanced lashunta tempweave, carbon staff, chrome scorpion (pg. 85), red star plasma pistol with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges); **Augmentations** begedhi parasite

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Plantlike (Ex)** A begedhi parasite host is treated as both its original type and as a plant creature for effects targeting creatures by type (whichever would be worse for the host).

**Vines (Ex)** When a begedhi parasite attacks with its spiky vines while inside a host, it deals minimum damage to the host, regardless of whether it strikes its intended target. The creature can make a full attack with two vines and take only a –3 penalty on each attack roll.

### H17. DOMED GREENHOUSE (CR 9)

*Sunlight streams through dozens of panes of decorative glass comprising the 30-foot-high, translucent dome of this massive greenhouse. Within the crystalline glass, tiny fractures and lines create a faint tracery of focused light projected onto a riot of luscious green plants below.*

**Creatures:** A mother begedhi plant grows here under the radiant energy focused through the remaining fragments of the *Opus Aeterna* that comprise the greenhouse windowpanes. It first came to Rythes as a seedling carried by a jagladine agent in service to the Hegemony. While the jagladine

perished in the desert wasteland, the begedhi survived by using its suggestive spores to continuously influence those who encountered it, convincing them to always protect and nurture it. In time, others carried the seedling to the Barony of the Bloom, a curiosity none of the monks of St. Ioh had ever seen before. After maturing into a mother plant, it began systematically infesting the monks with parasites, slowly taking over the leadership of the entire barony. Now, it seeks to complete the mission of the agent who carried it to Rythes, slowly drawing every fragment of the *Opus Aeterna* to itself so it can reopen gates to other worlds. With this goal in mind, it eliminates anyone who might pose a threat to its plan to rule Rythes on the Hegemony's behalf.

Likely warned of the approaching PCs by the telepathic parasites inhabiting Abbot Redalpo and the monastery's monks, the begedhi prepares to defend itself by climbing the wall over the doorway to **H16**, and clinging to the arch overhead so it can surprise attack anyone who enters. If any parasite-infested minions remain in the mountain complex, it sends a telepathic command calling them to defend it, as well.

**Development:** PCs examining the remaining plants within the greenhouse may attempt a DC 25 Life Science check to determine that four of them are begedhi seedlings, all of which will soon mature into additional mother plants once they undergo an apotheosis. If the PCs take time to exterminate all the begedhi seedlings (both here and those encountered elsewhere in the abbey), it prevents them from overtaking the Barony of the Bloom and the rest of Rythes.

## BEGEDHI, MOTHER PLANT

CR 9

XP 6,400

HP 125 (see pg. 74)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The mother plant initially focuses its attacks on one foe, attempting grab, pin, and implant them with a parasite. When multiple foes move within 30 feet, it releases its spores to draw them closer into its entangling vines so it can strangle them unimpeded.

**Morale** The mother plant fights to the death.

## BEGEDHI SEEDLINGS (4)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (see pg. 73)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The seedlings release their spores in small 10-foot bursts from around the greenhouse, attempting to compel any attackers to defend them and the mother plant.

**Morale** The seedlings fight to the death.

## ASSEMBLING THE OPUS AETERNA

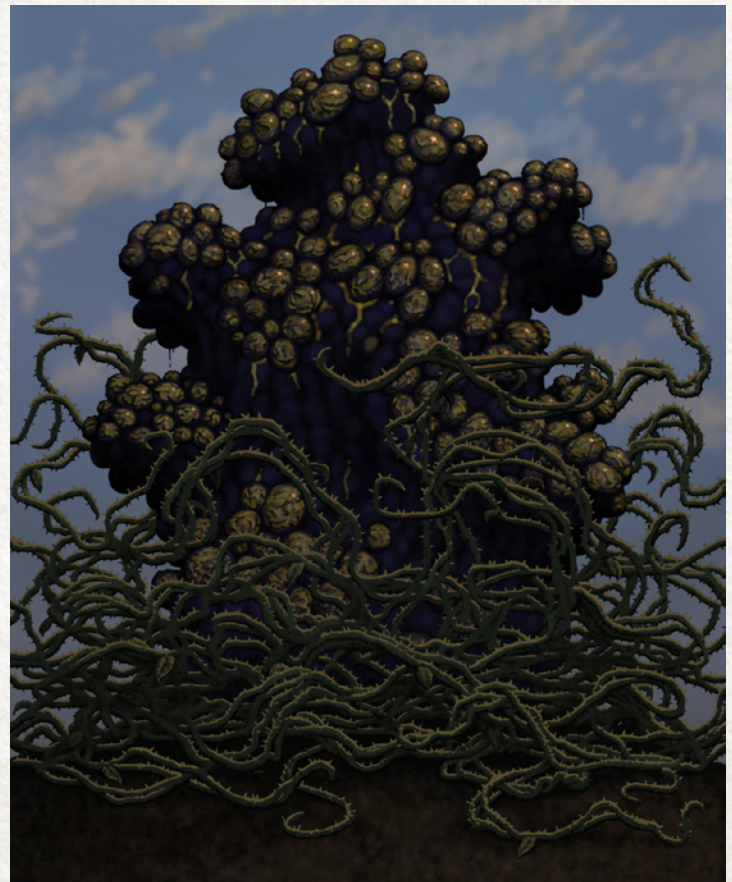
With the defeat of the parasite-infested monks, mother begedhi plant, and her seedlings, the PCs can finally reclaim the vast remainder of the fragments from the *Opus Aeterna*. Well over 90 pieces await extraction from the greenhouse

dome, and it requires a meticulous effort over 2d6+4 hours. Thereafter, a flash of light from the artifact fills a 60-foot radius, imprinting a dozen different constellations on the retinas of every creature within it. With this insight, the PCs acquire a rudimentary understanding of how the interplanetary gates work, and they now have the means to attempt repairs on the Red Gate to return to Argosa.

At the PCs discretion, they can further study the *Opus Aeterna*. Studying the work requires a complex DC 25 Mysticism or Engineering skill check (7 successes needed before 3 failures). PCs may pool their efforts with aid another checks, and a successful DC 20 Culture check grants a +2 circumstance bonus on each roll. Even if the PCs do not fully understand it, they can still use the information within to repair the Red Gate (see below).

## RESTORING THE RED GATE

The adventure assumes the PCs retrace their steps across the Broken Baronies to reach Fort Buckle and the Red Gate again. If they haven't yet reached 8th level, feel free to include more encounters along the way. Restoring the Red Gate requires careful study of the *Opus Aeterna* to locate the proper pane that identifies the star around which Rythes orbits. Unfortunately, they won't be able to reopen different gates on Rythes yet, as the remaining *Tears of Eternity* haven't finished purging the Principality corruption, or were utterly destroyed during the Great Cataclysm.



## PART 3: INTO THE BLOOM

After 24 hours of reading and attunement to the artifact, the PCs should be ready to enable two-way travel again to Argosa. During the process, the PCs should attempt three skill checks: a DC 27 Mysticism check, a DC 27 Physical Science check, and a DC 27 Engineering check. PCs can use Aid Another and, further, receive a +4 circumstance bonus if they successfully studied the *Opus Aeterna*.

Even if the PCs fail these checks, the portal still opens. However, upon stepping through the portal, they learn it is misaligned and the passage is extremely painful (dealing those passing through 3d6 force damage per failed check). After a few passages, the portal will properly align itself, but they have some things to deal with back on Argosa before that becomes a concern.

### BACK TO ARGOSA (CR 11)

Because of their unfamiliarity with performing repairs on the Patron gateways, the PCs generate some unusual activity on the other side of the Red Gate as they restore its two-way operation. This alerts Mr. Sarlu and his gang that something unusual is about to happen with the device. As a result, when the PCs step through, Mr. Sarlu's entire crew—greatly diminished now from ongoing conflicts with the Surrat Coterie—has gathered in the Gateway Chamber (at A6). When the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

*Tiny points of light rush towards you, blazing red as they flare into a ring of pure energy. With one final burst that dazzles the eyes and pops your ears, you emerge once again within Mr. Sarlu's compound. Most of his gang have gathered in the chamber, staring in disbelief at your arrival as they look to the sarlu's now familiar aquarium for guidance.*

Mr. Sarlu is extremely surprised to see the PCs again, as no one using the Red Gate has ever returned. While his minions gawk, he quickly realizes the portal has become fully operationa again, and the gangster's quick mind recognizes the rare opportunity it presents. By controlling a two-way gate, he can finally lay claim to a seat among the ruling Peerage in Zel-Argose, and establish himself as the leader of a true Coterie. He welcomes the PCs to put them at ease and then questions them about their trip, subtly using *seek thoughts* and *detect thoughts* to ascertain the truth of their experiences on Rythes. If the PCs share information about the *Opus Aeterna* (willingly or otherwise), the sarlu's greed and visions of grandeur soar even higher, and he quickly concocts a scheme to take the artifact from them, recognizing it could give him an advantage on multiple worlds and not just Argosa. He silently commands Oulek and the rest of his gang to bar the exits from the Gateway Chamber and prepare to subdue their guests. He then attempts to use a *suggestion* on the PC carrying the codex to place it in his aquarium so he can keep it safe for them. Regardless of the outcome, he directs his followers to seize the artifact.

### MR. SARLU

CR 8

XP 4,800

HP 105 (see pg. 81)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Mr. Sarlu remains secure in his aquarium, relying on its hardness to protect him while he wields his considerable mind powers against the PCs. He first casts *synaptic pulse* in an attempt to hinder as many opponents as possible while his men move in. If anyone approaches his aquarium, Mr. Sarlu pops open the lid to target individuals with a jet of alchemical juices. Otherwise, he remains inside, guiding the actions of his men as he uses *suggestion* to turn the battle in their favor. Mr. Sarlu is a survivor in every sense of the word. If forced to abandon his aquarium, he attempts to grab an opponent, trying to use them as a hostage to force the other PCs to surrender.

**Morale** If outside his aquarium and reduced to less than 30 Hit Points, Mr. Sarlu pleads for mercy, cowering before the PCs and acknowledging them as his betters. He attempts to negotiate his way out of the situation, pledging their freedom and the *Opus Aeterna* in exchange for mastery of the Red Gate. He also offers them free use of the portal whenever they want and an ongoing cut of the tariffs imposed on any trade which passes through it. A DC 20 Sense Motive check determines his sincerity. Mr. Sarlu would rather give up the codex and still gain a seat on the ruling council of Zel-Argose than die.

### OULEK

CR 6

XP 2,400

HP 76 (see pg. 8)

### WOJACK

CR 4

XP 1,200

HP 45 (see pg. 11)

### TOWER GUARDS (4)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

HP 48 each (see pg. 8)

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs win their way free of Mr. Sarlu, Relstana is overwhelmingly pleased that they recovered the *Opus Aeterna* and invites them to enjoy a much-deserved break in Zel-Argose while she and the Accord scholars apply their own considerable talents to deciphering the codex. Curious or fellow-minded PCs receive invitations to participate in this endeavor, and, a few days later, Relstana summons the PCs to share their findings. Unfortunately, she informs them that even the codex cannot re-enable the gate to Garsilt that brought them to Argosa. That route to their homeworld is now lost forever. However, she has identified another possible path across the Weave that could take them home again. To reach it, they must venture to yet another world long thought lost to them. But, with the power of the codex theirs to command, they can revive a once-dead gate to reach it—an adventure which continues the next chapter of the Legendary Planet Adventure Path in *Dead Vault Descent*.



## BEYOND THE ADVENTURE

Every installment of the **Legendary Planet** saga is a grand adventure, but what you will find between these pages is far more than just an adventure. Each issue also brings you a selection of articles expanding the incredible universe in ways that go far beyond the adventure itself.

- Nine marvelous new monsters: the sinister beghedi seedling, parasite, and mother plant; the rapacious chag beetle; the stealthy sand glutton; the warlike krang; the merciless syaandi; the disgusting oulbaene; and the sinister sarlu!
- 4 new magic items and 6 new technological items, from the Bellianic crown to the meteroite flare!
- A detailed gazetteer of the desolate world of Rythes and the scattered baronies that linger on in the wake of environmental catastrophe.
- A detailed look at vehicles and vehicular combat, including dynamic races and chases as part of an adventure, plus brand-new vehicles from the deadcrawler and sand skiff to the sarlu aquarium!
- "Fixer," the latest chapter in Chris A. Jackson's ongoing tale of Anasya, an interplanetary adventurer in a world on edge as bungling offworlders create problems that require special talents to fix.

# BESTIARY

## BEGEDHI, SEEDLING

This colorful plant with vibrant green leaves and sparkling blue berries seems very delicate.

### BEGEDHI SEEDLING CR 1/2

XP 200

NE Tiny plant

Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +9

#### DEFENSE HP 13

EAC 10; KAC 12

Fort +4; Ref +0; Will +2

Immunities acid, plant immunities

#### OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee tendril +4 (1d4-4)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

Offensive Abilities spores

#### STATISTICS

Str -4; Dex +2; Con +3; Int -4; Wis +0; Cha +1

Other Abilities unassuming

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Spores (Ex)** As a standard action, a begedhi seedling can release spores in a 10-foot-radius burst. Each creature in the area that fails a DC 12 Will save feels a compulsion to protect the seedling and any other begedhi in the area for 1 hour. This otherwise functions as *suggestion*, though the seedling does not need to speak and the effect is not language-dependent.

**Unassuming (Ex)** A begedhi seedling looks like an inoffensive plant. A creature must succeed at a DC 15 Life Science check to identify the plant or realize it poses any threat.



### BEGEDHI PARASITE CR 2

XP 600

NE Small plant

Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +12

#### DEFENSE HP 23

EAC 13; KAC 14

Fort +3; Ref +1; Will +5

Immunities acid, plant immunities

#### OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee vine +8 (1d4-1 S plus grab)

Offensive Abilities infest, vines

#### STATISTICS

Str -3; Dex +1; Con +2; Int -4; Wis +0; Cha +4

Skills Bluff +12, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +7

Other Abilities control host, create seedlings

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Control Host (Ex)** A begedhi parasite which has fully taken over a host gains access to the host's abilities and memories. Its recollection is not perfect, however, so it must succeed at Bluff checks to fool those familiar with the host. Anyone intimately familiar with the host gain a +4 circumstance bonus on their opposed Sense Motive check. While a parasite controls a host, the CR for the composite creature increases to the host creature's CR+2.

**Create Seedlings (Ex)** If a begedhi parasite survives its host's death, it can harvest flesh from the host as a full action to produce 1d4 new begedhi seedlings.

This process destroys the parasite.

**Infest (Ex)** A begedhi parasite can enter the body of a helpless creature or be implanted by a mother plant; see below. Once inside, a parasite requires one week to gain full control of the host. During this time, *remove affliction* (DC 13) will kill the parasite. After this point, it must be brought to fewer than 0 hp, and then *remove affliction* can be used to destroy it. A creature with an integrated begedhi parasite uses the template graft provided below.

**Vines (Ex)** When a begedhi parasite attacks

with its spiky vines while inside a host, it deals minimum damage to the host, regardless of whether it strikes its intended target. The creature can make a full attack with two vines and take only a -3 penalty on each attack roll.

## BEGEDHI PARASITE HOST TEMPLATE GRAFT (CR 2+)

**Required Creature Type:** Aberration, animal, dragon, humanoid, magical beast, or monstrous humanoid.

**Required Array:** Any.

**Traits:** Regeneration 2 (in areas of sunlight only).

**Attack:** Gains a vine melee attack that uses the low attack bonus and deals slashing damage as normal for CR, but the host takes the minimum damage from each attack regardless of whether it strikes the intended target. The creature can make a full attack with two vines and take only -3 on each attack roll.

**Drawbacks:** The begedhi parasite host is treated as both its original type and as a plant creature for effects targeting creatures by type (whichever would be worse for the host).

**Systems:** brain, spinal column

**Suggested Ability Score Modifiers:** Charisma, Constitution

## BEGEDHI, MOTHER PLANT

Giant tumorous seeds comprise the majority of this plant, which sits atop a nest of writhing, thorny tentacles.

## BEGEDHI MOTHER PLANT CR 9

XP 6,400

NE Large plant

**Init** +0; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision; **Perception** +21

**DEFENSE** HP 125

EAC 20; KAC 22

**Fort** +12; **Ref** +7; **Will** +10

**Defensive Abilities** regeneration 5 (fire); **DR** 10/—; **Immunities** acid, electricity, plant immunities; **SR** 20

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

**Melee** vine +21 (2d10+17 S plus grab and drag)

**Multiattack** 3 vines +15 (2d6+17 S plus grab and drag)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with vines)

**Offensive Abilities** entangling vines, implant parasite, spores, strangle

### STATISTICS

**Str** +4; **Dex** +0; **Con** +2; **Int** +1; **Wis** +6; **Cha** +2

**Skills** Stealth +16

**Languages** Common (can't speak); telepathy 500 ft. (only with parasites and seedlings it produces)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**All-Around Vision (Su)** When it has at least two living seedlings or parasites within 50 feet, a begedhi mother plant can see in all directions and can't be flanked.

**Entangling Vines (Su)** A riot of vines grows in a 10-foot radius around a begedhi mother

plant, creating an effect similar to a xenodruid mystic's grasping vines connection power (DC 16). The mother plant is unaffected by this manifestation.

**Grab and Drag (Ex)** When a begedhi mother plant hits with its vine attack, it deals normal damage, but if the attack roll hits the target's KAC + 4, it also automatically grapples the foe as a free action, or pins the target if it hits KAC + 13. When it grapples a foe in this manner, a mother plant can pull the target 5 feet closer to it without requiring an action. The begedhi mother plant can maintain the grapple on subsequent rounds either by hitting again with its vine attack or by performing a grapple combat maneuver normally.

**Implant Parasite (Ex)** As a swift action, a begedhi mother plant can force a begedhi parasite down the throat of a creature it has grappled or an adjacent helpless creature.

**Spores (Ex)** As a standard action, a begedhi mother plant can release spores in a 30-foot-radius burst. A creature within the burst that fails a DC 16 Will save is stunned until the beginning of its turn, and can take no actions that turn other than a double move toward the begedhi mother plant. This is a mind-affecting, compulsion effect.

**Strangle (Ex)** An opponent grappled by a begedhi mother plant cannot speak or use any language-dependent abilities.



Transplanted by the Hegemony from a riotous jungle planet where all flora is inimical to fleshy life, begedhi have appeared on a variety of worlds. The Hegemony believed they could control the parasitic creatures and use them to infiltrate enemy forces, but the begedhi proved unpredictable and attacked anything within reach. Rather than destroy the plants, the Hegemony dumped them on worlds allied with their enemies with the expectation they would eventually arrive as saviors to exterminate the pests and convert such worlds to their side of the conflict.

Begedhi have two growth stages: a seedling and a mother plant. Seedlings are deceptively delicate plants, evolved that way to evoke a sense of protectiveness in other creatures. Their spores enforce this desire, which serves them well when multiple creatures work to remove them. Seedlings rarely defend themselves to give the illusion of helplessness so those left unmolested may eventually mature into a mother plant and further propagate. This process takes five years, during which seedlings feed on rotten organic material or small creatures they overcome. As the years pass, seedling tendrils lengthen and become tentacles, and their cheerfully colored berries transform into sickly green lumps which gestate with more parasites.

Once seedlings become mother plants, complete with fully grown parasites, their demeanor changes. The spore cloud they release covers a larger area and compels living creatures to move closer to them. The plants' tentacles then sprout wicked thorns to ensnare prey more effectively and infect them with parasites. These victims then travel to other locations where they slowly rot, perish, and sprout more seedlings.

Begedhi parasites exist as extensions of their mother plant, but still act as autonomous creatures with a tremendous ability to absorb knowledge and memories from their hosts to mimic them. Since it requires a week for parasites to fully overcome their hosts, mother plants maintain a larder of infected victims in a secluded place and release them when a week has elapsed to spread their progeny. Mother plants cannot regrow parasites, so they die once they have release all their "children." Parasites can maintain a symbiotic relationship with their hosts for up to five years, allowing them to spread throughout the stars without having to draw undue attention to themselves. Before the vines tear from their body, the only telltale sign of a begedhi-infected host is a small mote of green in one of its eyes.

Begedhi seedlings are about 1 foot in diameter and grow as tall as 3 feet. Mother plants are 10 feet in diameter and grow to a height of 15 feet.

## BEETLE, CHAG

*A trio of exaggerated horns protrude from the crown of this massive beetle's head and its six legs kick up a large amount of dust as it snorts aggressively.*

### BEETLE, CHAG BULL

CR 5

XP 1,200

N Large vermin

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16 (+20 vs. invisible creatures)

#### DEFENSE

HP 75

EAC 17; KAC 19

**Fort** +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +4

**Defensive Abilities** iridescent carapace; **DR** 5/bludgeoning; **Immunities** mind-affecting effects, poison

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** gore +11 (2d6+12 P plus 1d2 bleed; critical wound) or slam +14 (1d6+10 B)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

**Offensive Abilities** trample (3d4+14 B, DC 13)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** +5; **Dex** +0; **Con** +3; **Int** -5; **Wis** -1; **Cha** +2

**Other Abilities** mindless, probing antennae

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** desert or temperate

**Organization** single, mated pair (1 chag bull and 1 chag cow), or herd (1 chag bull, 1 chag cow, and 2d6 drones)

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Iridescent Carapace (Ex)** A chag bull's chitinous shell has an impressive, highly reflective surface. When in areas of bright illumination, those attempting to attack or otherwise corral a chag bull must succeed at a DC 13 Fortitude save or be dazzled for 1 round by its iridescent carapace.

**Probing Antennae (Ex)** A chag bull's four sensitive antennae endlessly probe the air. As a result, it treats Perception as a master skill. Because of its sensitivity to light waves, chag bulls prove especially sensitive to invisible creatures, gaining an additional +4 bonus to Perception checks against such creatures.

**Trample (Ex)** As a full action, a chag bull can move up to its speed and through the space of any creatures that are at least one size smaller than itself. The chag bull does not need to make an attack roll; each creature whose space it moves through takes 3d4+14 bludgeoning damage. A target of a trample can attempt a DC 13 Reflex save to take half damage; if it does, it can't make an attack of opportunity against the chag bull due to the chag bull's movement. A chag bull can deal trample damage to the each creature in its path only once per round, even if it moves through that creature's space more than once.



Chag beetles roam the grasslands in sizable herds, searching for carrion and plant matter. When a mature herd finds a steady supply of food, the beetles revert to a territorial, hierarchical organization typical of many insectoid species. They aggressively protect this territory, as well as their eggs and hatchlings. Chags mate for life, and newly born beetles depart as they mature to start their own herds. During mating season, unmated chag cows attract several bulls which battle one another by charging and tangling horns to win mating rights. The victor is the bull with its horns still intact after such clashes, and this ritual proves dangerous to anyone stumbling upon them as the beetles stop their singular combat to drive off or kill intruders.

Various races on Rythes have domesticated these foul-tempered beetles and use them as a source of armor, tools, and food. Expert scavengers can strip the chitinous shells protecting chags and fashion them into suits of armor retaining the chitin's resistance to blows. Very few armorsmiths can retain the shell's reflective qualities, however, but many smiths purposely dull the armor to ensure the wearers don't make easy targets on the desert plain. Smaller plates and bull horns are more often fashioned into hammering tools or serrated into saws and other cutting implements. Thanks to the shell's natural hardness, objects crafted from them can withstand a lot of wear before breaking. Despite these benefits, chag meat remains the most popular product harvested from chags. For those unaccustomed to the simultaneously chewy and greasy substance, it demands an acquired taste. However, the beetles' carrion diets surprisingly do not taint the meat, and it proves quite filling. A widespread technique on Rythes transforms the chag meat into jerky which greatly reduces the greasy quality, making it more palatable to offworlders.

Juvenile chags are 3 feet long, but weigh a very compact 150 pounds. The larger cows and bulls are 8 feet long, with cows weighing 500 pounds and bulls weighing nearly a ton.



## KRANG

A heavily-muscled, horned simian pounds its chest, exuding strength and confidence, its thick fur well-groomed and its long arms nearly reaching the ground.

KRANG	CR 2
XP 600	
N Medium humanoid (krang)	
Init +2; Perception +0	
DEFENSE	HP 25
EAC 13; KAC 15	
Fort +6; Ref +4; Will +1; +2 vs. fear, +4 vs. disease and poison	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.	
Melee tactical doshko +10 (1d12+6 P) or head-butt +10 (1d6+8 B)	
Ranged flame pistol +7 (1d4+2 F; critical burn 1d4)	
Space 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.	
Offensive Abilities relentless, smash	
STATISTICS	
Str +4; Dex +2; Con +1; Int +0; Wis +0; Cha +1	
Skills Engineering +7, Intimidate +12, Survival +7	
Languages Common, Krang	
Other Abilities elongated arms	
Gear hidden soldier armor, flame pistol with 20 petrol, tactical doshko	
ECOLOGY	
Environment any land	
Organization single, pair, or troop (3–16)	
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
<b>Elongated Arms (Ex)</b> Krang have exceptionally long arms relative to their bodies, giving them a natural reach of 10 feet with unarmed strikes and melee weapons and a climb speed of 20 feet.	
<b>Relentless (Ex)</b> Krang gain a +2 racial bonus to combat maneuvers to bull rush or reposition an opponent. This bonus only applies while both a krang and its opponent are standing on the ground.	
<b>Smash (Ex)</b> Three times per day, when a krang damages an opponent with its head-butt, it can cause the opponent to become dazed for 1 round (Fortitude DC 11 negates). If the head-butt was a critical hit, the target creature is instead stunned for 1 round and dazed for the following round on a failed save.	
<b>Stout Constitution (Ex)</b> Krang have robust mental and physical resistances, granting them a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against fear effects and a +4 racial bonus to saves against disease and poison.	

### PC RACIAL TRAITS

**Ability Adjustments:** +2 Str, +2 Con, –2 Int. Krang are powerful and sturdy, but tend not to be academically inclined.

**Hit Points:** 6

**Size and Type:** Krang are Medium humanoids with the krang subtype.

**Elongated Arms:** See above.

**Natural Attack:** The krang train to use their whole bodies in combat, giving them a head-butt attack which deals 1d6 bludgeoning damage. This attack deals lethal damage and doesn't count as archaic. They gain a unique weapon specialization with this bite attack at 3rd level, allowing them to add 1–1/2 × their character level to their damage rolls for this bite attack (instead of just adding their character level, as usual).

**Stout Constitution:** See above.

**Languages:** Krang begin play speaking Common and Krang. Krang with high Intelligence scores can choose from Bahgra, Orc, Tretharri, Vesk, and Zvarr.



Krang come from a lush, forested homeworld called Tohrvaul, where their forebears first gathered in small tribes of arboreal apes. Fighting one another for centuries over territory and resources, the krang eventually evolved and merged into industrialized nation-states, causing their skirmishes to blossom into full-fledged wars for control of their entire planet. During this upheaval, agents of the Ultari Hegemony discovered Tohrvaul and approached the krang with an opportunity to test themselves against far greater enemies in a war of epic conquest across the multiverse. Amused by promises of glory from such a perceived 'lesser' species, the krang instead challenged the Ultari diplomats to single combat, offering to demonstrate the true superiority of krang culture and savagery for their guests. But the Ultari mindmasters defeated every opponent arrayed before them, thereby earning the respect and admiration of the krang.

Thereafter, krang mercenaries set aside their tribal and national identities, unifying for the first time and quickly earning a powerful position in the Hegemony. Directed to make war against the Bellianic Accord, they proved a terrifying force. However, even in the execution of their duties, the honorable krang began to notice the Hegemony engaged in far more terrible practices of warfare, such as the use of torture, the deaths of innocents, and the use of biological agents and other weapons of mass destruction. When rumors surfaced that leaders within the Hegemony also sought the release of dark gods capable of purging entire worlds, many krang mercenaries defied their masters and turned on the Hegemony. In the face of brutal retaliation for these betrayals, the remaining krang restrained themselves, realizing the Ultari still held an iron grip over Tohrvaul. Nearly a generation later, however, the krang established peaceful contact with elali leaders among the Bellianic Accord and requested clemency for their war crimes, safe harbor, and an alliance to liberate their homeworld from Ultari control. While this choice galled their sense of honor and independence, it ultimately made for a far better outcome, with elali assistance proving vital in blunting the Ultari's mental dominance over their species.

Now valued members of the Bellianic Accord, individual krang value themselves as honorable warriors, and they tend to regard other beings based on their own battlefield merits, as well. The krang language includes a number of words for respect and valor, and oftentimes a phrase or saying can mean something related simultaneously to both an honor spirit and combat prowess. Fleeing from an evenly matched foe, or disregarding orders given by a commander, represent dishonorable actions to the krang. Yet, they eschew foolhardy endeavors when a tactical retreat brings a greater chance of winning against superior odds. After all, pyrrhic victories with few survivors fail to support the greater good. While krang prefer to fight at close range, they also engage from a distance if conditions call for it, and abhor the use of disease and poison in weaponized warfare.

The greatest sign of dishonor for a krang is the shaving of its fur. This strong aversion to hairlessness also explains their initially negative reactions to most smooth-skinned humanoids. Since joining the Accord, they've relaxed this stance, especially as more species ally with them against the Hegemony. Still, they have an inherent distrust towards elves

and often seek the advice of dwarves, jaskirri catfolk, and other hirsute species above all others.

Many who meet krang for the first time view them as humorless apes with a fixation on combat and skill-arms. After spending time together, they soon realize the krang cling to their honor as a bastion against the painful memories of their association with the ultari. While krang possess a modicum of humor, they generally fail to recognize sarcasm and deceptive word play to deliver a punch line. Gnomish pranks typically frustrate the krang a great deal.

Krang initially had no deities of their own, practicing a rudimentary form of ancestor worship. But centuries serving with the Hegemony (and now the Accord) exposed them to a variety of religious doctrines and principles with many now following the faith of Rarmezarn. Even so, during combat or moments of great stress, krang often invoke the names of powerful warriors who faced similar trials or hardships. Funerary rites are always simple affairs for the krang, and usually involve a recitation of the deceased's achievements and an entreaty for ancestors to accept the worthy krang into their embrace. A krang who committed a spectacularly commendable deed (e.g., giving her life to single-handedly save innocent tribemates) immediately enters into the register of krang ancestors, and the krang's name may be invoked in combat by those familiar with them. As a result, many strive for this coveted, eternal recognition.

Krang devote themselves to their children, alternately raising them as one parent goes to war while the other stays behind. At-home parents spend much of their time sparring with their children to teach them the principles of honorable combat. As a result, krang offspring mature quickly and demonstrate their martial prowess as a rite of passage on their tenth birthdays. The resulting celebration often precedes a child's first participation in communal hunts or patrols.

Despite their strong familial bonds, a krang judges another krang on individual merit rather than lineage. Thus, a krang from a shamed tribe or family has an equal chance to impress other krang as any other. A krang meeting an outsider typically asks for an accounting of the outsider's proficiency with weapons or a demonstration of bravery. A single tale, truthful or not, impresses a krang, but they always seek visual evidence of another's skill in battle. Displays of cowardice inevitably cast shadows over all future dealings with a krang, with many refusing to fight alongside such individuals.

A long-used method of gaining a krang's acceptance is to engage in a trial by combat loosely translated as "stand or fall." This consists of each combatant head-butting the other until one falls to the ground, either due to unconsciousness or as a means of surrender. Regardless of the outcome, krang view any outsider more favorably for participating in this ritual—especially if they remain standing for more than one strike.

Krang average 6-and-a-half feet in height, but their long arms give them the appearance of being taller. They weigh between 200 and 300 pounds.

## OULBAENE

*This strange creature's skin casts an oily sheen like that of a gray squid clad in humanoid clothing. Six, black eyes fill its bulbous head, arrayed three atop three, and a cluster of worm-like tendrils hang beneath its black beak. Waving tentacles suffice as arms, with suckers on their undersides exuding a clear mucus, as the creature ambulates over the ground on another half-dozen tentacles beneath it.*

### OULBAENE

CR 2

XP 600

N Small monstrous humanoid (oulbaene)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

### DEFENSE

HP 22 EACH

EAC 13; KAC 14

Fort +1; Ref +3; Will +7

Immunities mind-affecting effects, trip

### OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee tentacle +7 (1d4+1 A plus revolting touch)

Ranged tactical semi-auto pistol +9 (1d6+2 P)

Offensive Abilities revolting touch (DC 13)

### STATISTICS

Str -1; Dex +4; Con +0; Int +2; Wis +0; Cha +1

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +7, Culture +12, Perception +7, Stealth +12

Languages Common, Oulbaene; limited telepathy 30 ft.

Other Abilities multi-limbed, water breathing

Gear flight suit stationwear, tactical semi-auto pistol with 18 small arm rounds

### ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or clique (3–8)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Limited Telepathy (Su)** An oulbaene can mentally communicate with any other telepathic creature within 30 feet with which it shares a language.

**Multi-Limbed (Ex)** An oulbaene has six lower and four upper tentacular appendages. Its lower limbs grant it immunity to being tripped. Two of its upper limbs serve as its primary arms and can wield weapons normally; the other two upper limbs are slimy tentacles that can be used to deliver a specialized secondary attack. These tentacles cannot be used to wield weapons but can manipulate or hold items. Suckers on its limbs enable an oulbaene to climb sheer surfaces.

**Revolting Touch (Ex)** A creature damaged by an oulbaene's slimy tentacle is sickened for 1d3 rounds (Fortitude DC 13 negates). A creature that succeeds at its initial saving throw is immune to that oulbaene's revolting touch for 24 hours. A creature already sickened must attempt a new save each time it is damaged by an oulbaene's tentacle, with each failed save extending the duration of being sickened by 1 round and also causing the creature to become nauseated until the end of its next turn.

**Water Breathing (Ex)** An oulbaene can breathe underwater indefinitely, and it can use verbal and other breath-related abilities underwater normally.

### PC RACIAL TRAITS

**Ability Adjustments:** +2 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Str. Oulbaene are swift and cunning, but small and weak.

**Hit Points:** 2

**Size and Type:** Oulbaene are Small monstrous humanoids with the oulbaene subtype.

**Darkvision:** Oulbaene can see in the dark up to 60 feet.

**Multi-Limbed:** An oulbaene has six lower and four upper tentacular appendages. Its lower limbs grant it immunity to being tripped. Two of its upper limbs serve as its primary arms and can wield weapons normally; the other two upper limbs are slimy tentacles that be used to wield weapons but can manipulate or hold items. Suckers on its limbs enable an oulbaene to climb sheer surfaces. An oulbaene can take a special feat that represents training to use its tentacles to gain the revolting touch offensive ability (as above).

**Limited Telepathy:** See above.

**Water Breathing:** See above.

**Languages:** Oulbaene begin play speaking Common and Oulbaene. Oulbaene with high Intelligence scores can choose from Aquan or the language of any humanoid culture which they have studied.



Oulbaene are mercenary creatures which sell their services to more powerful races to improve their lot in life. They only take opportunities with a high degree of success, plotting their chances like a master gambler or commodities merchant. Some even obsessively plan ahead of time to ensure such outcomes. Oulbaene enjoy a natural ability to resist mental manipulation and can travel in almost any environment, which makes them popular as couriers and spies on multiple worlds. While not naturally adept at manipulation themselves, their size and coloration give them an advantage in matters of stealth, which many overlook because of their bizarre appearance. In combat, an oulbaene's tentacles provide them an extra edge, allowing them to move unimpeded over terrain that would give most opponents pause. Their ability to climb also allows them to use three-dimensional combat, often coming at attackers from unexpected angles.

Oulbaene eke out a living as social climbers, meticulously studying local fashion and culture before entering into new relationships. They take great offense, however, when anyone remarks on their 'alien' appearance, even seeking revenge on such individuals if they can get away with it. Oulbaene occasionally work together and take advantage of their telepathic communication without alerting others to their plans or presence. As they gain favors from powerful creatures, they also subtly work to undermine their ostensible partners to ensure their own schemes succeed ahead of all others.

Oulbaene stand 3 feet tall and weigh 80 pounds.

## SAND GLUTTON

The bulbous body of this burrowing sand creature is a rubbery black and blue mass from which four writhing tentacles emerge. A large toothless maw pulses and contorts at its center.

### SAND GLUTTON

CR 4

XP 1,200

N Large aberration

Init +0; Senses blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +10

### DEFENSE

HP 50 EACH

EAC 14; KAC 16

Fort +6; Ref +6; Will +5

Defensive Abilities subterranean cover

### OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

Melee tentacle +12 (1d6+6 B plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities grappling tentacles

### STATISTICS

Str +5; Dex +0; Con +3; Int -3; Wis +1; Cha -2

Skills Perception +10, Stealth +15, Survival +10

### ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm desert

Organization solitary, pair, or clutch (3-6)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Grappling Tentacles (Ex)** A sand glutton can grapple separate targets with each of its four tentacles. When making a full attack, the sand glutton may use its tentacle attacks to renew any number of these grapples in addition to making up to two tentacle attacks on different ungrappled targets.

**Subterranean Cover (Ex)** Sand gluttons' long tentacles can attack from beneath the ground, maintaining cover from those on the surface while still being able to make melee attacks. Sunder attempts against the sand glutton's tentacles ignore this cover. A sand glutton has four tentacles each with 10 HP. Destroyed tentacles regenerate in 1d4 days.

Sand gluttons are opportunistic hunters which wait for prey to move within range of their grasping tentacles. They pull unsuspecting prey into their maws and then drag them underground to suffocate, where sand gluttons can feed on the body for days.



## SARLU

The anemic, segmented body of this enormous white worm swims in a baroquely decorated aquarium, its mouth nothing more than a tube-like opening frilled with dozens of writhing feelers.

**SARLU** CR 8

XP 4,800

NE Large aberration (aquatic)

Init +4; Senses blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +2

**DEFENSE** HP 105

EAC 19; KAC 20

Fort +7; Ref +7; Will +13

Immunities acid, cold; Resistances fire 10

Weaknesses vulnerable to electricity and poison

**OFFENSE**

Speed 50 ft., swim 40 ft.

Melee tentacle +13 (1d12+9 B plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Offensive Abilities alchemical juices (9d6 A & C, DC 19, usable every 1d4+1 rounds), constrict (1d12+9 B)

Sarlu Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

1/day—*inflict pain* (DC 20), *synaptic pulse* (DC 21)

3/day—*hypnotize* (DC 20), *suggestion* (DC 21), *wisp ally*

At will—*daze* (DC 18), *command* (DC 19)

Constant—*detect thoughts* (DC 19)

**STATISTICS**

Str +1; Dex +4; Con +1; Int +5; Wis +2; Cha +3

Skills Athletics +16, Bluff +21, Culture +16, Diplomacy +16, Mysticism +16, Sense Motive +21

Languages telepathy 50 ft.

Other Abilities alien mind, amphibious, inscrutable, water breathing

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Alchemical Juices (Ex)** As a standard action, a sarlu can spew a jet of internally chilled, caustic mucus as a ranged attack against a target within 30 feet. The mucus deals 9d6 acid and cold damage (Reflex DC 17 half), and unless the targeted creature spends a full action removing this substance (using water or scraping it off), it takes an additional 2d6 acid damage on the following round (or 1d6 if it succeeded at the initial Reflex save). The sarlu can't use this ability in an aquatic environment, but otherwise it may employ this weapon every 1d4+1 rounds.

**Alien Mind (Ex)** Any creature that attempts to interact directly with a sarlu's thoughts (such as via *detect thoughts*, limited telepathy, or *telepathy*) must succeed at a DC 17 Will save or be dazed for 1 round. A sarlu using its enhanced telepathy to communicate doesn't activate this ability unless it spends a standard action to focus its mind on one opponent. This is a mind-affecting effect.

**Amphibious (Ex)** Though it has the aquatic subtype, a sarlu can survive indefinitely on land.

**Constrict (Ex)** Each time a sarlu succeeds at a grapple combat maneuver with its tentacle (including with the grab ability), it can deal an additional 1d12+9 bludgeoning damage.

**Enhanced Telepathy (Su)** A sarlu communicates via telepathy, as the spell, with a range of 50 feet. A sarlu also "listens" via this ability so that it perceives and comprehends all spoken language within telepathic range as the spell *tongues*—this includes things clandestinely whispered by creatures who speak within that range. A sarlu is essentially deaf to all sounds more than 50 feet away. Furthermore, sarlu spell-like abilities are connected to its telepathic power, and so their maximum range is also limited to 50 feet.

**Grab (Ex)** If a sarlu's tentacle attack hits the target's KAC + 4, the sarlu also automatically grapples the foe as a free action in addition to dealing damage normally. (If it hits the target's KAC + 13, it instead pins the target and deals damage normally.) The sarlu can maintain the grab either with another successful bite attack or by performing a grapple combat maneuver normally.

**Hypnotize (Sp)** As a standard action, a sarlu can drone and weave hypnotically. Each creature within 30 feet must succeed at a DC 20 Will save or gain the fascinated condition for 2d4 rounds (or until an outside stimulus interrupts the condition). This is a mind-affecting effect.

**Inscrutable (Ex)** Sarlu minds and motivations are often strange and indecipherable to creatures not from their homeworld. A creature attempting a Sense Motive check against a sarlu takes a penalty equal to half the alien creature's CR (−4 for most sarlu). Sarlu are treated as rare creatures for the purpose of skill checks to identify creatures.



HENDERSHOT

**Water Breathing (Ex)** A sarlu can breathe underwater indefinitely, and it can use verbal and other breath-related abilities underwater normally.

## LOBOTIMIZED SARLU

CR 5

XP 1,600

NE Large aberration (aquatic)

**Init** +2; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +0

## DEFENSE

HP 60

EAC 14; KAC 15

**Fort** +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +10

**Immunities** acid, cold; **Resistances** fire 10

**Weaknesses** lobotomized, vulnerable to electricity and poison

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

**Melee** tentacle +8 (1d4+6 B plus grab)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

**Offensive Abilities** alchemical juices (6d6 A & C, DC 15, usable every 1d4+1 rounds), constrict (1d4+6 B)

## STATISTICS

**Str** +1; **Dex** +2; **Con** +1; **Int** +3; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +2

**Skills** Athletics +11, Bluff +16, Culture +11, Diplomacy +11, Mysticism +11, Sense Motive +16

**Other Abilities** alien mind, amphibious, inscrutable, water breathing

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Alchemical Juices (Ex)** As a standard action, a sarlu can spew a jet of internally chilled, caustic mucus as a ranged attack against a target within 30 feet. The mucus deals 6d6 acid and cold damage (Reflex DC 15 half), and unless the targeted creature spends a full action removing this substance (using water or scraping it off), it takes an additional 2d6 acid damage on the following round (or 1d6 if it succeeded at the initial Reflex save). The sarlu can't use this ability in an aquatic environment, but otherwise it may employ this weapon every 1d4+1 rounds.

**Alien Mind (Ex)** Any creature that attempts to interact directly with a sarlu's thoughts (such as via *detect thoughts*, limited telepathy, or *telepathy*) must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or be dazed for 1 round. A sarlu using its enhanced telepathy to communicate doesn't activate this ability unless it spends a standard action to focus its mind on one opponent. This is a mind-affecting effect.

**Amphibious (Ex)** Though it has the aquatic subtype, a sarlu can survive indefinitely on land.

**Constrict (Ex)** Each time a sarlu succeeds at a grapple combat maneuver with its tentacle (including with the grab ability), it can deal an additional 1d12+9 bludgeoning damage.

**Grab (Ex)** If a sarlu's tentacle attack hits the target's KAC + 4, the sarlu also automatically grapples the foe as a free action in addition to dealing damage normally. (If it hits the target's KAC + 13, it instead pins the target and deals damage normally.) The sarlu can maintain the grab either with

another successful bite attack or by performing a grapple combat maneuver normally.

**Inscrutable (Ex)** Sarlu minds and motivations are often strange and indecipherable to creatures not from their homeworld. A creature attempting a Sense Motive check against a sarlu takes a penalty equal to half the alien creature's CR (−4 for most sarlu). Sarlu are treated as rare creatures for the purpose of skill checks to identify creatures.

**Lobotomized (Ex)** Mrs. Sarlu has suffered a medical lobotomy and lacks all the telepathic and spell-like abilities of a typical sarlu. This causes her to only marginally perceive her surroundings and reduces her Dexterity modifier to +2, and she permanently has the flat-footed condition as a result (factored into her statistics above).

**Water Breathing (Ex)** A sarlu can breathe underwater indefinitely, and it can use verbal and other breath-related abilities underwater normally

Sarlu have insinuated themselves throughout the multiverse

## SARLU AQUARIUMS

While sarlu are fully capable of ambulating in a snake-like fashion upon dry land, they prefer to travel in specially manufactured aquariums filled with the waters of their native world. The specifications of these devices vary from sarlu to sarlu, but a standard version is presented in this volume (see pg. 81). A sarlu's aquarium almost always increases its CR, but it varies depending on the encasement's design. Some aquariums, for instance, include shielding or mounted beam weapons for ranged combat. Many aquariums also have a grounding mechanism to disperse electricity (which can more easily overcome a sarlu's resistances and harm them). Most also include a means of propulsion, but some sarlu prefer a stationary aquarium or one which its underlings must manually carry about at its telepathic direction. Some less well-made aquariums can limit or interfere with an occupant's telepathic abilities, and more expensive ones can extend or enhance the sarlu's telepathic abilities.



in order to expand their criminal empires. Originally hailing from an oceanic world, they have adapted quite well to dry land and can move about more quickly than native land-walkers due to their sinuous undulations. However, Sarlu actually prefer the comfort of their mobile aquariums (see below) from which they direct their mental attacks and conduct business via telepathic conversations. Foolhardy adventures have often assumed these aquariums represent a sign of weakness or limitation, only to swiftly learn to their

detriment (or demise) that a sarlu can perfectly move beyond its aquarium.

Sarlu can read the minds of virtually all beings they converse with, and secretly use this advantage to negotiate deals in their favor. Their unreadable expressions also allow them to pretend they're making unwanted concessions without fear of being called on their claims. They delight in the unease they bring out in opponents (as sarlu never think of others as their equals or partners), especially when such individuals attempt to read their minds, as well. Sarlu have gained a frightful reputation throughout the worlds in which they operate, and often that reputation makes it unnecessary to engage in their typical means of intimidation. Ultimately, sarlu wish to sink their tendrils into all underworld activity, but they occasionally participate in legitimate businesses, usually in an attempt to corner the market on a certain commodity so they can demand incredible prices for their services.

The war between the Hegemony and the benign agents of the Accord has created a favorable business climate for the sarlu. Their primary source of income includes the sale of weapons at a premium, and they earn plenty of money by selling information to both sides, as well. Despite overtures by the Hegemony to join their side, including promises of considerable power and wealth when the war ends, sarlu have remained neutral. They never hesitate to throw in with the Hegemony if a confrontation ultimately tips the balance in their favor, but sarlu always wish to keep their options open. This proves especially easy since they've earned favors from both sides. Dark whispers claim the sarlu prefer the current status quo, since a victorious Hegemony would undoubtedly seek to purge the sarlu as they tighten their grip on the multiverse and a similarly rewarded Accord would do the same to make the multiverse a safer place for everyone. If the sarlu can eventually arrange for both sides to wipe each other out and leave a power vacuum which they can then fill, all the better.

Itinerant beings, sarlu rarely return to their own homeworld after leaving it behind, and only roughly do so once every decade to spawn. This asexual process produces a dozen or more mindless offspring, which fight each other until a lone survivor remains. The juvenile sarlu then consumes its spawn-mates and grows prodigiously larger in size and mental acuity over the course of the following year. When it finally reaches maturity, the progeny then seeks out its parent for assistance in mentoring its first profitable scheme, after which it sets off on its own. Sarlu bear no familial obligation beyond this period of induction and often compete with one another thereafter.

Sarlu are roughly eight inches in diameter from end to end and about 20 feet in length, though this is disguised by the fact that the creatures tend to coil themselves into irregular corkscrews. They only weigh 100 pounds.

## SYAANDI

*This towering, muscular humanoid has a lizard-like face and an open mouth revealing no tongue, causing it to issue challenges with guttural grunts and inhaled screeches.*

### SYAANDI SOLDIERS

CR 2

XP 600

Syaandi soldier

CN Medium humanoid (reptilian)

**Init** +6; **Senses** blindsense (scent) 30 ft., low-light vision;

**Perception** +7

### DEFENSE

HP 25

EAC 13; KAC 15

**Fort** +6; **Ref** +2; **Will** +3; +2 vs. fear, poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** fearless, ferocity, hardy

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** tactical pike +10 (1d8+8 P) or tactical spear +10 (1d6+8 P)

**Ranged** tactical semi-auto pistol +7 (1d6+2 P) or frag grenade +7 (explode [15 ft., 1d6 P, DC 11])

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with pike)

**Offensive Abilities** fighting styles (blitz)

### STATISTICS

**Str** +4; **Dex** +2; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

**Skills** Athletics +7, Survival +12

**Feats** Cleave

**Languages** Syaandu

**Other Abilities** cornered fury

**Gear** basic iridishell, tactical pike, tactical semi-auto pistol with 20 small arm rounds, tactical spear

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Cornered Fury (Ex)** Whenever a syaandi is reduced to less than half its Hit Points and has no conscious ally within 30 feet, it gains a +2 racial bonus to damage rolls and a +1 racial bonus to AC.

**Fearless (Ex)** Syaandi gain a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against fear effects.

**Hardy (Ex)** Syaandi gain a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against poison, spells, and spell-like abilities.

### SYAANDI WARRIOR-PRIESTS

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Syaandi solarian

LN Medium humanoid (reptilian)

**Init** +3; **Senses** blindsense (scent) 30 ft., low-light vision;

**Perception** +10

### DEFENSE

HP 50 EACH

EAC 16; KAC 18

**Fort** +6; **Ref** +6; **Will** +5; +2 vs. fear, poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

**Defensive Abilities** fearless, ferocity, hardy



## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** solar weapon +12 (1d6+1d4+9 S; critical bleed 1d6)

**Ranged** thunderstrike sonic pistol +9 (1d8+4 So; critical deafen [DC 13])

**Offensive Abilities** stellar revelations (black hole [20-ft. radius, pull 10 ft., DC 13], dark matter [DR 1/—], radiation, supernova [10-ft. radius, 5d6 F, DC 13])

## STATISTICS

**Str** +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** +0; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +1

**Skills** Mysticism +10, Survival +13

**Languages** Common, Syaandu

**Other Abilities** cornered fury, solar manifestation (solar weapon), stellar alignment

**Gear** defrex hide, least W-boson crystal, thunderstrike sonic pistol with 1 battery (20 charges)

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Cornered Fury (Ex)** Whenever a syaandi is reduced to less than half its Hit Points and has no conscious ally within 30 feet, it gains a +2 racial bonus to damage rolls and a +1 racial bonus to AC.

**Fearless (Ex)** Syaandi gain a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against fear effects.

**Hardy (Ex)** Syaandi gain a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against poison, spells, and spell-like abilities.

## PC RACIAL TRAITS

**Ability Adjustments:** +2 Str, +2 Con, -2 Cha.  
Syaandi are strong and hardy, but their desert-worn appearance is off-putting to most species.

**Hit Points:** 4

**Size and Type:** Syaandi are Medium humanoids with the reptilian subtype.

**Cornered Fury:** See above.

**Fearless:** See above.

**Hardy:** See above.

**Languages:** Syaandi begin play speaking Common and Syaandu. Syaandi with high Intelligence scores can choose from Bahgra, Goblin, Krang, Orc, Vesk, and Zvarr.

Syaandi are a hardy, nomadic race of lizard-like humanoids forced to adapt to Rythes when a large contingent blundered through a gate from another world. Thriving in the arid environment, they've survived everything the planet has thrown at them, expanding to become the apex predators of their territories, which often range over dozens of square miles. Syaandi split their territories among small family units, each staying close to one another for mutual support. During festivals, they gather in greater numbers to engage in mock

combat and athletic competitions. Syaandi often use these events to create further family units by marrying off eligible children, all in an effort to keep the entire race viable.

Consummate hunters, syaandi feed and clothe themselves with their kills. They prove fearless in combat and shrug off even the most mortal wounds to keep fighting to the bitter end, even giving up their self-control to enter a focused rage. Though syaandi often craft their own weapons, they also assault travelers and caravans to scavenge additional equipment, reasoning that any group incapable of repelling them would only suffer the horrors of the desert anyway, so they do such victims a favor by dispatching them more mercifully.

Syaandi childbearing benefits from their hermaphroditic physiology, and gestation requires only one month so as not to overburden the parent or family unit. Children learn to handle a sling and spear as soon as they can walk, and syaandi parents abandon any offspring incapable of hunting alongside them. Within their culture, even aging syaandi elders may sacrifice themselves in battle to weaken their enemies rather than slow down the rest of their kind in fleeing a great beast.

Outsiders who encounter syaandi have difficulty winning their trust, least of all because communicating with them is nigh impossible without magic or telepathy. Syaandi have no tongues and have worked out a complex language comprised of clicks, screeches, and guttural grunts that prove hard to translate. They can easily grasp concepts from other languages if they take the time to learn them, but in most cases, they demand that interlopers prove themselves to gain acceptance. Such trials include severing a sand glutton's tentacle and returning with it or tearing off a chag bull's horn without the use of weapons. Some syaandi even attempt the same trial in competition with them to show their own bravery. Depending on how well outsiders perform at these tasks, the syaandi family may entertain a newcomer's requests, accept them into their family, or simply drive them out. Regardless, syaandi make good guides through the wastelands and command premiums goods in return for such assistance. Most people who require help from the syaandi do not balk at their demands.

Syaandi stand nearly 7 feet tall and weigh 250 pounds.



# ALIEN TREASURES

**BELLIANIC CROWN****LEVEL 5****MAGIC ITEM (WORN)    PRICE 3,400    BULK L**

This simple headband is adorned with a single reddish crystal that sits above the brow. These crowns were used by ancient missionaries of the Bellianic Accord during their early years of exploration and aided them in safely approaching new species. The crown grants a continuous effect that discourages others from attacking you; any creature attempting to attack you must succeed at a DC 12 Will saving throw or become unable to complete the attack; if you make any attack, this effect is suppressed for 24 hours. As long as the effect persists, you also gain a +5 bonus to Diplomacy checks. In addition, once per day the crown can radiate a sphere of peaceful communication and negotiation. This extends the benefits of the protection effect to every creature within 20 feet, and all affected creatures can understand each other's speech as if using tongues. This effect lasts for 10 minutes, typically enough time for an Accord agent to make peaceful first contact with a new species.

**CHROME SCORPION****LEVEL 3****TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM    PRICE 2,800    BULK L**

Upon command, this Tiny mechanized scorpion animates and seeks out a single individual to sting, as you designate when you activate it. You can load one dose of a poison of your choice into the scorpion when you activate it. The scorpion has AC 15, hardness 8, HP 8. After striking its target, the chrome scorpion crawls off and attempts to return to its owner as quickly as possible. The chrome scorpion can be animated for a total of 1 hour per day, though this duration can be expended in 10-minute increments.

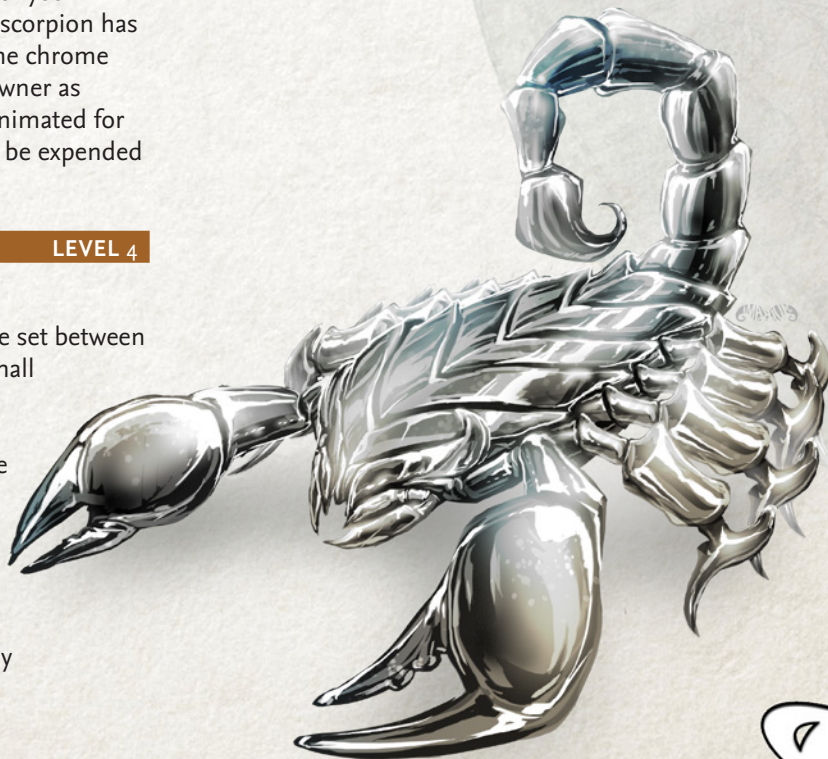
**ENERGY LEECH****LEVEL 4****HYBRID ITEM    PRICE 2,400    BULK 1**

An energy leech looks like a spool of insulated wire set between a pair of round magnetic disks. The spool has a small red button at one end. The device is typically used by unsavory or unscrupulous individuals to drain charges from an adversary's technology. To use the device, place one magnet on the device or battery while the other end is attached to a larger object or structure. When the button on the spool is depressed, a low energy field begins draining charges from the attached device at a rate of 1 charge per 10 minutes. Charges drained are simply

dissipated and lost; an energy leech cannot be used to transfer charges from one device to another. This device is typically used to drain weapons or charges from vehicles so as to render them temporarily nonfunctional. Attaching and activating the device is a full action that provokes attacks of opportunity. It can be removed with a successful DC 15 Engineering check to disable a device or Strength check or by dealing 2 points of damage; the energy leech has hardness 5.

**GLARE VISOR****LEVEL 2****ARMOR UPGRADE PRICE 450****SLOTS 1    ARMOR TYPE ANY BULK L**

This protective upgrade consists of a thin, gold-colored panel that covers the visor of a typical suit of armor. While wearing a glare visor, you treat areas of bright light as if they were normal light, and you are immune to being dazzled. The armor grants a +2 circumstance bonus to saving throws against blindness (if caused by light-based effects), illusion (pattern) effects, gaze attacks, and similar effects triggered by looking at a creature. A glare visor does not alter the light levels in areas of dim light or darkness, except against instantaneous light-based effects.



## KLAVEN'S BANE

LEVEL 3

MAGIC ITEM    PRICE 435    BULK —

Wisps of golden smoke swirl within this tiny bulbous flask sealed with a crystalline stopper. When opened or shattered the smoke fills a single 5-foot square for 1 round before dissipating. During that time, any creature with the klaven template that has fewer than 4 HD entering or beginning its turn within the smoke is dazed for 1 round (Will DC 16 negates). A klaven dazed by this effect also forgets whatever happened while it is dazed and for 1 round prior to being dazed and takes a -4 penalty to Perception and Sense Motive checks for 1d4 rounds afterwards.

## LIQUID CHARGE

LEVEL 6

MAGIC ITEM    PRICE 550    BULK —

This small glass vial is filled with an azure-colored viscous fluid and is slightly cold to the touch. If the fluid comes in contact with organic matter, it deals 1d4 acid and 1d4 cold damage (Fortitude DC 14 half). While the fluid is caustic, its true purpose is as emergency fuel to power technological items. One vial of liquid charge contains enough energy to fill a 10-charge item or weapon to capacity, with no risk of overcharging. A vial of liquid charge can be used only once.

## METEORITE FLARE

LEVEL 1

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM    PRICE 15    BULK L

This 18-inch metal rod has a thin, beaded chain protruding from one end, while the other end is sealed with thin plastic. The hollow end has a vaguely metallic scent tinged with a hint of combustible residue. Pulling the chain on a meteorite flare launches sparkling pea-sized objects hundreds of feet into the air, glowing like a shooting star. Meteorite flares can be used as emergency signals or to send secret messages, though the signal is quite subtle unless an individual is deliberately looking for it. Identifying a meteorite flare for what it is requires a successful DC 20 Perception check; creatures specifically watching for a meteorite flare gain a +10 bonus to this check. A single flare tube carries a total of 10 flares. A meteorite flare cannot be used as a weapon.



## PARALYTIC WEAPON FUSION

LEVEL 12

With the paralytic fusion, a weapon delivers a pulsing electrical charge on impact. On a critical hit with the weapon, the target must succeed at a Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1 round. If the weapon already has a critical hit effect, when you score a critical hit, you can apply either the weapon's normal critical hit effect or the paralyzed effect. Only projectile weapons, weapons made of metal, or weapons that deal electric damage can benefit from a paralytic fusion.

## FORCE GLOVE (BASIC ONE-HANDED MELEE WEAPON)

This carbon mesh glove is covered with a thin layer of nanite composite plating. They function much like a battleglove, except that the wearer can discharge a jolt of kinetic energy at an opponent within 10 feet by making a punching gesture at that creature.

## WHISPER STONE

LEVEL 3

MAGIC ITEM    PRICE 800    BULK —

This palm-sized gray stone is carved with the ancient Bellianic symbol for peace, but often contain additional hidden messages, bits of prayer, knowledge, and simple advice. The stored message can be accessed with 10 minutes of meditation while a creature traces its fingers along the symbol, causing the message to be whispered into their subconscious.

Each stone holds only a single message and each message is as unique as the elder that created it. The messages typically provide some sort of simple but eloquent insight that reveals something of interest about a single subject. The message is never more than a few short sentences (up to 25 words). If the user knows the subject associated with stone, she can listen to it to gain a +4 insight bonus to skill checks to recall knowledge concerning that same subject.

UNCATEGORIZED	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	BULK	SPECIAL
Force glove, cestus	2	425	1d6 B	—	L	Reach
Force glove, power	11	21,000	3d6 B	—	L	Powered (capacity 20, usage 1), reach
Force glove, nova	14	63,500	5d6 B	—	L	Powered (capacity 20, usage 1), reach
Force glove, gravity	18	326,300	7d6 B	—	L	Powered (capacity 20, usage 1), reach

# VEHICLES

Like most technology, transportation plays a crucial role in the construction of a space-fantasy world. How characters get from one place to another is key to shaping their view of existence and the size and scope of their experience, as well as influencing their culture and philosophical understanding of the world around them. Work, trade, warfare, and numerous other activities can readily be determined by their ability to transport themselves and their gear, leading to the domestication of animals and in turn to the development of vehicles, from the simplest sledges and carts to sophisticated technological transports. In addition, a vehicle may also denote a person's political status, ethnicity, or other types of social demarcation. Unique modes of transport give flavor to the world often becoming as iconic as characters flying ships of Edgar Rice Burroughs or the numerous vehicles of popular science fiction movies.

In a sword-and-planet setting, the focus remains on the alien worlds themselves, rather than the soaring space operas that take heroes and villains alike into the black beyond. While characters will venture beyond the planetary surface from time to time in the *Legendary Planet* series, the core of this adventure saga takes place on the land, sea, and atmosphere of a half-

dozen alien worlds. This article deals primarily with vehicles a character might encounter on the surface of an "alien" planet but avoids defining anything in regard to starships. It's a little bit of a departure from the approach of typical role-playing game design in that, with a broad world-spanning campaign, one must assume and accommodate for a wide range of social, financial, and technological developments, as well as the resources which would exist across a vast multiverse. The concepts presented here were intended to work in tandem with the rules for vehicles presented in *Starfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*.

## DAMAGING VEHICLES

The archaic vehicles found on Rythes and many other less-advanced planets are of a different technological era than those found in the *Starfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*. Whether the inhabitants are simply primitives that have never achieved a high level of technology or if they live amid the apocalyptic remnant of an advanced civilization that fell in some long-forgotten catastrophe, their vehicles have certain additional vulnerabilities that may not apply to modern hover pods and police cruisers.

**TABLE 2: VEHICULAR ACCIDENTS**

D20 <sup>1</sup>	ACCIDENT	DC	EFFECT <sup>2</sup>
1-4	Bump	10	No additional effect
5-7	Damaged wheel/runner	12	-2 Piloting or Survival checks to drive vehicle
8-10	Broken wheel/runner	15	Speed reduced by 50%
11-12	Broken frame	20	Further damage ignores vehicle hardness
13-14	Team shies	10	Team diverts 45 degrees left or right (equal chance of either) for remainder of movement and will not turn. In a chase, the driver cannot engage or speed up. The pilot or a passenger can attempt a DC 10 Survival check as a full round action to calm the animals
15-16	Team balks	15	The team refuses to move and, in a chase, will only take the slow down action. The pilot or a passenger can attempt a DC 20 Survival check as a full round action to encourage the animals.
17-18	Team tripped	20	Each action piloting requires an additional standard action until the pilot takes a full action (including the extra standard action), to let the team sort themselves out.
19-20	Broken leg	15	One draft creature breaks its leg. Speed is reduced by half unless a healing effect restores hit points equal to the vehicle's level to the creature.

<sup>1</sup> If the vehicle does not have a pack team, roll 1d12 instead.

<sup>2</sup> These effects stack and persist until the vehicle is repaired and/or the draft team is healed or replaced.



**Accidents:** In most cases, vehicles that take damage in excess of one-half their total hit points gain the broken condition. However, a more dynamic and cinematic method of dealing with damage to vehicles is to make vehicles subject to an accident whenever it takes damage that reduces it below one-half its hit points, including any damage that occurs when it is already at one-half its hit points. These vehicles can also be subject to an accident whenever its pilot takes the ram or runover action.

When an accident occurs, the driver and any passengers must make an Reflex save with a DC as listed in Table 2. A creature failing this check falls prone in the vehicle. A creature that fails by 5 or more is thrown from the vehicle and takes damage as in a failed boarding attempt (double normal falling damage or 1d6 for a fall of less than 10 feet). If the driver is knocked prone, she takes a -2 penalty on driving checks and vehicular combat maneuver checks. If the driver is thrown from the vehicle, it becomes uncontrolled.

**Catching on Fire:** Vehicles made of cloth or wood are vulnerable to catching on fire. Whenever it takes fire damage that

reduces it below one-half its hit points, including damage once it is already below half, a chosen square of the vehicle will catch fire. Similarly, if the vehicle suffers a critical effect or magical ability that would cause it to begin burning, a chosen square catches fire for every die of damage the burning would deal.

For each square of a vehicle that is on fire, the vehicle takes 1d6 damage per round (bypassing hardness) and any creature in that square suffers 1d6 damage. Note that this damage will cause additional squares of the vehicle to catch fire if the vehicle is below half hit points.

Extinguishing a burning square requires a full-round action and a DC 10 Survival check. The DC increases by 1 for each other square of the vehicle that is on fire. If the check fails by more than 5, those fighting the fire take 1d6 fire damage from exposure.

**Composite Construction:** Vehicles are complex objects constructed of myriad interconnected parts crafted from many different materials, but unless otherwise noted the primary material of a vehicle's construction is used for resolving the effect of attacks against it.

## APPENDIX: LEGENDARY VEHICLES

**Damaged Vehicles:** When a vehicle is reduced below one-half its hit points gains the broken condition, as described in the *Starfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*. In addition to the effects of this condition on the vehicle itself, the structure of a broken vehicle is treacherous and difficult to navigate. Creatures moving across a broken vehicle's space treat it as an area of dense rubble, increasing the DC of Acrobatics checks by 5 and Stealth checks by 2, and requiring 2 squares of movement to enter a square.

**Vehicle Repairs:** Vehicles can be repaired with magic such as *make whole*, but mundane skills also can be used. Engineering suffices to repair most vehicles made, though various Professions could also apply at the GM's discretion. In general, these follow the Engineering repair table with the vehicle being treated as equipment.

**Repairs in Motion:** It is easiest to repair vehicles while stationary, but skill checks can also be made to repair a vehicle while in motion by taking a -5 penalty on the check.

**Repair Yard:** Skill checks made to repair a vehicle are made with a +10 bonus if performed in a shipyard, workshop, or similar facility.

### SAMPLE VEHICLES

Many worlds in the Legendary Planet campaign setting are not substantially different from those found in most typical sci-fi campaigns, but on more remote or isolated worlds the alien cultures there may have conveyances mundane, magical, or mechanical that are rather unlike those found in a typical science fiction setting.

#### CHARIOT, LIGHT SAND

LEVEL 1/4

PRICE 120

Large land vehicle (5 ft. wide, 10 ft. long, 5 ft. high)

Speed special

EAC 8; KAC 9; Cover none

HP 12 (6); Hardness 5

Attack (Collision) 2d4 B (DC 7)

Modifiers -2 attack (-3 at full speed)

Systems drawn; Passengers 1

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Drawn** This vehicle is pulled by two Medium creatures or 1 Large creature. Its speeds are limited to those of the creatures pulling it (generally 40 ft. for a Large creature), and the pilot must attempt Survival checks to handle animals in place of Piloting checks.

#### DEADCRAWLER

LEVEL 6

PRICE 10,000

Huge land vehicle (10 ft. wide; 20 ft. long; 10 ft. tall)

Speed 20 ft., full 200 ft., 22 mph

EAC 13; KAC 16; Cover partial

HP 90 (45); Hardness 8

Attack (Collision) 7d8 B (DC 13)

Modifiers -4 Piloting, -3 attack (-6 at full speed)

Systems variable height; Passengers 15

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Variable Height** With a DC 15 Piloting check, the driver can raise or lower the decks of the deadwalker by up to 10 feet, making melee combat between passengers and creatures on the ground difficult or impossible without reach weapons.

#### DESCRIPTION

Created for centuries on desert worlds with little wood for vehicular construction but considerable alchemical and magical knowledge, deadwalkers are magically created vehicles usually crafted from the carcasses of monstrous vermin. Bound together into many-legged necromechanical constructs, deadwalkers serve as versatile and tireless vehicles for those with the skill to command them, able to navigate difficult terrain far more easily than other vehicles. The desiccated chitin or bone structure of a deadwalker can be repaired by spells that fix objects, but it is not undead and is not affected by positive or negative energy.

#### DROGUE CHUTE

LEVEL 2

PRICE 700

Medium air vehicle (5 ft. wide, 5 ft. long, 5 ft. high)

Speed 10 ft., full 200 ft., 22 mph (glide)

EAC 10; KAC 11; Cover none

HP 7 (3); Hardness 6

Attack (Collision) 1d4 B (DC 11)

Modifiers -2 Piloting, -2 attack (-4 at full speed)

#### DESCRIPTION

A drogue chute is a small personal gliding device, used to slow the wearer's fall while providing some limited maneuverability. In primitive or remote societies, drogue chutes are often cobbled together from the hollowed out carcasses of local insects, reptiles, and birds, with scavenged winglets attached to a reconstructed ribcage. Those in more developed areas are generally made of cloth, leather, or plastic. In either case, a drogue chute must be built for a specific pilot's body; any creature using a drogue chute not made for them takes a -4 Piloting modifier instead of the normal -2 Piloting modifier.

#### SAND SKIFF

LEVEL 4

PRICE 3,700

Huge land vehicle (10 ft. wide, 30 ft. long, 10 ft. high)

Speed 80 ft.; full 450 ft.; 50 mph

EAC 11; KAC 12; Cover partial

HP 50 (25); Hardness 9

Attack (Collision) 5d6 (DC 13)

Modifiers -2 Piloting, -2 attack (-3 at full speed)

Systems wind-driven; Passengers 5

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Wind Driven** A sand skiff that is moving without use of its sails must be pushed along with poles. Its speed in this case is limited to 20 feet.

## DESCRIPTION

A sand skiff is a sailed vessel that moves across shifting or unstable landforms, most often seen on desert planets or snowbound worlds, and sometimes outfitted with runners to cross areas of ice, salt flats, or seas of glass. They can navigate areas of rubble and scree with care, but cannot travel through areas of vegetation and heavy soil. Sand skiffs are lightly built, with frames of wood, bone, or metal supporting lightweight bodies and an angled mast and bowsprit to catch the wind. A sand skiff can carry up to 2,000 pounds of cargo.

## SARLU AQUARIUM

LEVEL 5

PRICE 8,450

Large land vehicle (5 ft. wide, 10 ft. long, 5 ft. high)

Speed special

EAC 13; KAC 15; Cover total cover

HP 75 (32); Hardness 10

Attack (Collision) 1d8 B (DC 13)

Modifiers -2 attacks (-4 at full speed)

Systems drawn

Base Save +1

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Drawn** This vehicle is pulled or pushed by two Medium creatures or 1 Large creature. Its speeds are limited to those of the creatures moving it (generally 40 ft. for a Large creature), and the pilot must attempt Survival checks to handle animals in place of Piloting checks.

## DESCRIPTION

This aquarium on wheels is custom made for sarlus so that they may move through non-aquatic environments in comfort and dignity. Made of transparent aluminum and heavy metal framing, it rides on four sturdy wheeled legs, pushed by servants or pulled by trained draft animals which the sarlu directs telepathically. If the aquarium is being pushed or pulled by intelligent creatures, the sarlu can attempt Diplomacy or Intimidate checks in place of the Survival checks to control the vehicle.

When occupying this aquarium, the sarlu gains total cover, unless the aquarium has no lid and the assailant attacks from above. If the sarlu rears above the lip of the aquarium, it still benefits from improved cover. Furthermore, the tank absorbs 50% of the damage of area-of-effect attacks directed at the occupant (such as grenades or spell effects). Once it is reduced to 30 or fewer HP, the tank is no longer maneuverable. When reduced to 0 HP, the transparent aluminum of the aquarium cracks, sending the sarlu and the tank's water spilling out onto the ground; the sarlu is stunned for 1 round and takes 3d6 slashing damage from the shattered glass.

## WARWAGON

LEVEL 3

PRICE 4,800

Gargantuan land vehicle (15 ft. wide; 30 ft. long; 10 ft. high)

Speed 10 ft., full 450 ft., 50 mph

EAC 13; KAC 14; Cover improved cover

HP 80 (40); Hardness 8

Attack (Forward) ifrit-class flamethrower (1d6 F; critical burn 1d6)

Attack (Collision) 7d4 B (DC 8)

Modifiers -4 Piloting, -2 attack (-3 at full speed)

Passengers 18

## DESCRIPTION

This massive six-wheeled vehicle is used both in long-distance freight transport and in battle, or a combination of both when cargo must be carried through dangerous wilderness or war-torn lands where raiders are common. Constructed primarily of wood, a warwagon's spiked wheels and jagged armor plating makes it far more resilient than a typical vehicle. A warwagon can carry up to 20,000 pounds of cargo but often carries troops instead.

**Spikes:** Some warwagons include exterior spikes designed to impede attackers from boarding it. Creatures or vehicles ramming such a warwagon take 4d6 points of piercing damage, and any creature moving into a square of the warwagon's exterior armor plating, such as with an Acrobatics or Athletics check to board the wagon, must succeed at a DC 12 Reflex save or also takes this damage. A creature moving through multiple squares must attempt this saving throw in every square it moves through, with a cumulative -1 penalty to the saving throw for each square after the first until the beginning of the creature's next turn. This also applies to involuntary movement, such as from a bull rush, drag, or reposition combat maneuver, or a creature trying to catch itself when falling after a failed Athletics check to climb.

# GAZETTEER

## THE ONE-WAY WORLD

“Not everyone likes offworlders here, friend. The gates always let 'em through, but they get pretty upset when they realize they're just stranded here. After that, it all becomes a game of survival. The strong take what they want, and the weak die out. After that, those who remain get stronger by banding together, huddled around the gates 'cause life's more sustainable there. That's how the Barons came about. They control everything. Except one another, of course. But if you ask me, the real danger lies out there...in the Outlands. Anything that can survive the desert is far worse than what you'll find here. I know, 'cause that's where I live. And if you want to go there...to explore the ruins of the Ancients buried in the sand...you're gonna need a guide.” –Sesek, wasteland wanderer of Rythes

Once-proud Rythes is one of the greatest casualties of the war between the Patrons and the Hegemony, its surface scoured and wracked when its own interplanetary gates, the Tears of Eternity, were turned against it. The Tears had been designed to bring health to the world and long life to its inhabitants, but when corrupted instead into engines of disease Rythes as a habitable world was nearly destroyed under the strain.

Over the long centuries, the detonated Tears of Eternity have been working to repair themselves, with the results just beginning to manifest. The areas around some of the Tears have become fertile again, with scrub and hardpan giving way to more verdant plant life, painstakingly tended and encouraged by the locals. A community has claimed each of these oases for its own, some simply trying to keep themselves fed but others trying to remake civilization one oasis at a time. These baronies are beacons of civilization on Rythes, and their reach continues to expand as the Tears become more powerful.

The scouring of Rythes was thorough, however, and involved the corruption of nearly every gate on the planet. In recent years, however, the power of one of the healing Tears has brought a singular gate to life again, but it only works one way, allowing outsiders to reach Rythes but gives with no hope of a return passage.

With the oases of healed land expanding from the Tears and new blood trickling in through the solitary gate, Rythes is starting to change. Can the planet overcome its past and become great again?

## PREHISTORY

Centuries ago, the garden world of Rythes was hub-world, one of the jewels of the Weave constructed by the far-reaching Patrons. With many gates leading to far-flung worlds, it served as a regional capital for its creators. An already clement world was made a paradise by the Tears of Eternity, powerful artifacts which granted abundance and long life to all who dwelt near them. The war between the Patrons and the Hegemony was not kind to this artificial Eden, as the Hegemony devised the means to corrupt the Tears of Eternity, inverting their life-giving power to instead spread plague, famine, and desolation across the planet. The gardens withered and death stalked the land. This corruption of their true purpose caused many of the Tears of Eternity to implode under the stress, creating an eruptive cataclysm whose impact and aftermath raised entire mountain ranges and shattered the landscape, wreaking devastation on top of the calamity brought on by the corruption spread by the tainted Tears. This energetic backlash of this event purged the corruption that had engulfed the land, but in the same stroke it scoured the gardens and leveled the temples, palaces, and gateways to other worlds. Nothing was left but a few bewildered survivors, scattered across the face of a nearly dead world.

While many desperate survivors descended into brigandry and barbarism, some tried to gather the remaining vestiges of technology and culture together to preserve them for future rebuilding. These preservationists formed monastic orders to keep the knowledge of the past alive. In the peninsula now inhabited by the broken baronies, some of that preservation ethic was focused on the *Opus Aeterna*, a magical codex that contained the knowledge and power necessary to repair gates. However, in the chaos following the desolation, the pages of the *Opus Aeterna* were scattered to the four winds. Many pages have been gathered together once more, though the knowledge of their significance has largely faded and they are venerated as holy icons and relics in and of themselves, but with little understanding of what is preserved within them.







## CLIMATE

Once tightly controlled by the Patrons to turn the planet into an unrivaled garden, the climate and weather of Rythes are now profoundly broken. In the past, rains came when and where they were needed, cloud cover was an aesthetic to be turned on and off according to plan. If the detonation of the Tears had destroyed the entire climate control system, the planet would have been able to heal itself in time, developing a new homeostasis. The break was not so clean, however, and the weather control systems remain operational but the elegantly balanced system that controlled them is no more, with no skilled engineers around to maintain it or manage it to ensure that all parts of the system work in harmony. Instead, much of the world lies under the thrall of dessicating systems that keep water from evaporating from the sea and forming clouds. The only area near the Broken Baronies that seems to have a functioning system is the mountains to the north, though whether that is due to a completely broken system that allowed nature to reassert itself or a functioning system that provides precipitation as needed is unclear.

## GEOGRAPHY

Rythes retains a few small vestiges of its former garden glory, and the general shape of the continents and seas remains familiar to those consulting ancient maps, but most of the planet's geography has been altered beyond recognition. Rythes was highly urbanized before the desolation, with expansive parks, reserves, and hanging gardens connecting cities spread across the face of the land, save only in the high mountain peaks. Those urban areas, however, were where the Tears of Eternity were kept, and much as they reaped the Tears' bounty during the halcyon days of the planet's history, so in turn they suffered the most grievous destruction of all when things went terribly awry. The lowlands now harbor the few oases around which the Baronies have grown, but otherwise they remain desolate wastelands of scrub, hardpan, and broken rock.

**Outlands:** The formerly verdant lowlands of Rythes have become the Outlands. These dusty barrens hide the shattered ruins of dozens of fallen cities that sleep in crumbled heaps beneath the feet of desert travelers. So complete was the devastation of this region, that most of the cities were utterly flattened by the cataclysmic shockwaves that reverberated from the imploding Tears of Eternity. In few places, however, what lies beneath the surface is faintly evident to the trained

eye, as eerily regular hills, slopes, and canyons mirror the structure of the long-gone city buried within.

The Patrons' building materials, where they survived the cataclysm at all, typically fused into a distinctive schist, a brown stone veined with purple. Many of the baronies mine this stone from the Outlands and use it for construction, not knowing that they are building with the bones of the past.

**Baronies:** The Baronies have sprung up around the oases growing around the healing Tears of Eternity. These small verdant zones are largely similar to the wastes that surround them in terms of sitting atop ancient structures, and massifs of the fused brown and purple rock. The baronies are, of course, far more fertile than the surrounding terrain, though the extent of this fecundity varies wildly based on how far a given Tear has progressed in repairing itself and other aspects of the surrounding terrain and native plant life.

The ancestors of the people inhabiting the baronies were raiders who settled down as agriculture became possible around the oases, but they are many generations separated from that life now and generally see themselves as more civilized. This is a matter of context, however, and visitors from the urbane worlds of the Weave may find the baronies' version of civilization rough and crude. Each of the baronies on the peninsula has developed an autocratic monarchy, whether officially or *de facto*, and the notion of civil authority not derived from the use of force is a concept still in its infancy here.

**Mountains:** Mostly untouched by the past cataclysm, the mountains of Rythes are largely unchanged, aside from occasional seismic and tectonic shifts. The Patrons left the mountains in their natural state, and few installations or artifacts were ever located there. The mountains harbor far richer biodiversity the wastes below, but many of the creatures found there are inimical to humanoids. The mountains see much more rainfall than the outlands, draining through rivers either to Hargo Lake or out to the sea. Strangely, according to records kept by the monastery of St. Stoneheart, the rains began only a few centuries ago, around the same time that the oases began to spread in earnest across the baronies.

**Monasteries:** While the baronies are the economic lifeblood of the peninsula, the various monasteries represent its strongest connection to its glorious past. The monasteries attempt to keep that past alive through worship and preservation, though their success in this endeavor is uneven. They also look to the future, believing that their worship and veneration are necessary for God to heal the world by spreading the oases. Each monastery reveres a different saint and each has radically different systems of worship, but all claim to ultimately worship the same god and are all preoccupied with the grand mission of healing a broken world.

## SECRETS OF THE PATRONS

Even the terrible destruction of the Tears of Eternity could not efface all evidence of the Patrons from the surface of Rythes. Some artifacts were shielded from the detonations and the worst of the following catastrophe, either by their location or their own defenses. When these are found on the surface, they are usually viewed with suspicion and are avoided.

While the surface of the Outlands has been blasted and eroded into naturalistic barrens, occasionally erosion or landslides will open up passages below the ground, leading into installations sufficiently hardened or deep enough underground to survive the cataclysm. Locals treat these discoveries much as they do the surface artifacts and often attempt to collapse entrances they find or otherwise make them impassible. Unblockable entrances to the underworld are surrounded by warning signs to keep the curious away from the real or imagined dangers that lurk beneath.

The suspicions of the populace are easily aroused, and they have not yet moved beyond guilt by association. Offworlders who interact to any significant degree with artifacts and ruins may find themselves taking the blame next time disaster befalls the nearest barony.

One question that has surely crossed the mind of every explorer stranded on Rythes is whether there are oases anywhere else on the planet or whether they're restricted to the peninsula of the Broken Baronies. The locals eschew sea travel entirely, citing run-ins with terrible sea monsters, and there are no stories of anyone traveling off the peninsula by land and coming back to tell the tale. It is possible that the entire planet beyond the peninsula is just a desert of scrub interspersed with hostile mountains, but perhaps more oases await exploration.

## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

The history of Rythes since the fall is largely a matter of speculation, as what few records remain in the monasteries are unreliable and often written centuries after the events they record. It was long after the destruction that society began to rebuild itself, and the earliest hints of civilization's return are accounts of the oases drawing local survivors into closer community and once again tending the land as their legendary ancestors did. Once the baronies became large enough to attract notice, the reclusive monasteries made contact with those nearby and began trading with them, slowly increasing their commerce for their mutual benefit. The monasteries helped further civilize the baronies through remnants of

## IMMIGRATION

With the gate in the Barony of Dust enabling one-way traffic again, an erratic trickle of offworlders arrives through it from the hub world of Argosa, generally a dozen or so travelers a year. Few of these immigrants realize the gate is only one-way or that no other gates can take them off planet to a different world. Hence, immigrants generally come as explorers and historians with adventure, knowledge and profit in mind; or as unfortunates forced through the gate, or passing through it without realizing what they're getting into, and often expecting a civilization on the other side much like the one they have just left, realizing to their dismay how very different things are on Rythes.

The explorers and historians arriving here were at least prepared for the adversity they would face, even if they did not know there was no return trip in store. Hence, they have spread across the Broken Baronies, often searching for more functioning gates but also making the best of their situation by exploring and excavating the ruins seeking ancient artifacts and structures. The more numerous unprepared immigrants, once they overcome their initial bewilderment, generally do their best to blend into the local population, filling various niches in the baronies or fleeing into the Outlands. Offworlders of either stripes often die before they get their feet under them in this new hostile world, but their slow but steady in-migration has led to nearly 10% of the total population of the Broken Baronies being offworlders or their descendants still striving to fit in among the native-born.

## RELIGION

The monasteries of the Broken Baronies follow several different creeds, and the rules of worship within each stronghold are so varied as to be mutually incomprehensible. Those creeds all boil down to worship of a single all-powerful god, and the centerpiece of their worship is a belief that if this god is pleased, it will heal Rythes once again. There is no theological agreement on whether the wrath of this deity caused the destruction of the world in the first place, but all can clearly see that the world is continuing to heal via the ever-expanding oases, and that hope keeps the monastics going forward with zeal where their predecessors were more often driven by the rote preservation of ritual, knowledge, and other esoteric pursuits.

Outside of the monasteries, religious beliefs are as rough and ready as the rest of society, with occasional aberrations such as the extreme anti-arcane absolutism of True Veleate. In most cases, religion is simply used to encourage the positive impulses already present in the baronies, such as the emphasis on agriculture in the Barony of the Bloom.

## LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Legal systems on the peninsula of the Broken Baronies are rooted entirely in the authority of each baron personally, and the rule of law exists only in the most attenuated form in the Outlands. To the extent that all of the baronies share the basic laws of humanoid societies across the Weave, these laws are likely to be enforced somewhat equally across the peninsula. A traveler assaulted halfway between the Barony of Dust and the Barony of Merebec can request the same justice whichever way she goes for aid. That said, justice is generally recumbent and reactive—while the leaders of any Barony will exert themselves enough to lock up a criminal in their own communities, they're unlikely to send a posse out into the wastes to bring them in. On those rare occasions when the arm of the law is extended into the wastes, it usually executed by hired mercenaries or thief-takers rather than constables or guards, as few people with options choose to tempt fate by tracking criminals into the wastes.

This system results in a halo of criminals and ne'er-dowells ringing the outskirts of each barony, living just outside the reach of the law, remaining on the fringes of the Outlands to avoid its dangers with infrequent trips into the more settled regions as their business demands. A penumbra of law thus shades the periphery of the baronies, but even this penumbra falters just a few miles out into the wastes.

The law of the Outlands is simple: Do whatever you have the power to do. While most waste-dwellers are raiders who revel in plunder and slaughter, a fair number of travelers, outcasts, and adventurers of less predatory nature also call the wastes home. Survivors in the wastes understand that looking for trouble leads to a short life, so outlanders are generally polite but standoffish, wary of raiders in dissembling guise. Their caution and savvy keeps them alive, but if befriended an outlander can provide a treasure trove of survival knowledge.

the secrets of engineering, basic science, and magic. In return, the baronies supported the monasteries with tithes of foodstuffs, tools, labor, and new recruits to swell their ranks and replenish their anemic numbers.

As the baronies connected with each other, forming trade and pilgrimage routes between monasteries, the peninsula begin to take on greater character as a unified civilization. With this development, the lawless wastes receded to current boundaries established by each baron. Immigrants have added to this mix, bringing knowledge to the locals of an entire multiverse of worlds that awaits on the far side of the gates, even if they cannot currently reach them again. This realization is not universally welcomed, however, and most barons remain suspicious of offworlders, even as they covet the technologies and treasures they bring with them.



However friendly, though, those who dwell in the outlands are seen as outsiders to polite society, and those letting their social ties languish in the baronies in favor of friendships in the outer rim are eventually ostracized by those they once knew, reduced in their eyes to just another dusty-faced raider.

The law in most baronies is utilitarian and summary. None of the barons are wealthy enough nor stable enough in their authority to allow much leniency without emboldening their rivals, and most serious crimes lead to exile or death. Often the penalty for lesser crimes has more to do with individual connections than justice, and it is typical for disputes to be settled by money changing hands.

## THE BROKEN BARONIES

**Barony of Dust:** The Barony of Dust is the least verdant and least developed of the Broken Baronies. The oasis around which the Barony is based is underwater, and while this has created an abundance of sea life, none of it is edible but the bitter seaweed. Nature's bounty in the barony mostly takes the form of the chag, a chitinous giant beetle used for meat and a source of chitin for armor, weapons, and tools.

The only settlement of note in the barony is the small town of Buckle, an unimposing fortress filled with a handful of tents and crude structures. The "baron" of the Buckle is a rodent-like humanoid named Wuli who runs the local watering hole and keeps his grip on power mostly through the collective apathy of the populace and his status as an ale-fueled information nexus; his loose-lipped patrons ensure that he knows everything happening in the region.

Aside from being a source of chag-shell armor, the Barony of Dust also is the location of the one working gate on Rythes

and thus is the entry point for all immigrants. Wuli has yet to capitalize on this phenomenon, aside from guarding against dangerous newcomers and putting peaceful immigrants to work doing dangerous odd jobs for him.

**Barony of Merebec:** Unlike the Barony of Dust, the Barony of Merebec a prominent oasis, with a prodigious growth of climbing, clinging, and draping moss everywhere. The ubiquitous green shrouds and carpets are kept clear of the roads and squares mostly by dint of foot traffic. Cultivation and breeding of the barony's moss is the central fact of life in the major settlement of Trebelbet, which has grown wealthy off the many uses for the moss, from food to textiles to pungent Mossbeard Ale.

Trebelbet is much larger than Buckle, with 20-foot-high walls surrounding many buildings, including the Mossbeard Alehouse, Craebin's General Store, and the palace of Baron Yacob. The Baron rules Merebec with a light hand and is a hereditary ruler who seems to be going through the motions primarily because there's nobody else better qualified.

While outwardly cosmopolitan in some ways, under the surface Merebec is far less trusting of strangers than the humble hamlet of Buckle. Merebec is surrounded by raiders, and their constant depredations have largely exhausted any goodwill the people once had. The residents of Merebec are generally religious and revere St. Albat of the Soil, to whose intercession they attribute the fecundity of their local plant life.

**The Blue Barony:** Off the major trade routes, the Blue Barony occupies the island and mainland around a nearly enclosed bay on the peninsula's coast. The Tear sunken in the middle of that bay supports a proliferation of sea life, including vibrant coral reefs and teeming shoals of brightly

colored fish, and fishing is the most common occupation here by far. While some few farmers and fisherfolk make their living on the coast of the peninsula, that area is seen as the domain of the reckless or desperate since raids from the interior occur there more often. All who live on the coast have a boat at the ready in case of trouble, and several watchtowers line the edge of the wastes, manned by the monks of St. Oolaav, standing ready to light the beacons in case of attack.

Most of the population of the barony live on the beautiful Lazuli Island, whose unusual blue rock cliffs give the barony its name. The landward side of the island is riddled with artificial caves from the bayside to the summit, cunningly constructed with the excess bluestone creating jetties and quays for the fishing fleet.

The advanced engineering marvels of the Blue Barony, from the tall watchtowers to the exquisite blue caves of the city, are all due to the monks of St. Oolaav, also known as Oolaav the Builder. Oolaav represents the creative spark that God instilled in its creations, and the Oolaavine monks have husbanded numerous engineering and crafting projects through the centuries. They willingly share this knowledge with the people of the Blue Barony in exchange for a secure position near the top of the barony's government. While Baron Resker runs the civil administration of the barony, the Oolaavine monks run their own affairs and are shown considerable deference by the Baron and everyone else in the barony.

**Barony of Veleate:** The Barony of Veleate encompasses the newly fertile lands on the northern edge of Hargo Lake, as well as the luminous Island of Orange, an island prison from which orange light pours forth day or night. True Veleate is the capital and largest settlement in the barony, but other smaller settlements dot the slowly expanding oasis.

The citizens of the barony worship God in its guise as the Bountiful Morrow, believing that pious lives and good works will please God and cause it to heal the world. Unfortunately, Veleate was a late-blooming oasis, and as they saw other baronies grow lush while theirs lagged their faith was sorely tested. The current leader of True Veleate is Onkat-Oun, the Tiller of Souls, an ecclesiast who believes that use of magic is either impeding the planet's recovery or offending God to the point where the foreordained healing is being retarded or postponed. Since the spread of the oasis has coincidentally increased since Onkat-Oun's passed these new laws, the citizens of True Veleate have come to believe that banishing magic is working as their spiritual shepherd intended. In Onkat-Oun's True Veleate, law is maintained by the Witchbreakers, who hunt down magic users and make sure the citizenry cooperate in maintaining the ban on such practices and reporting violators to the monks for proper punishment.

True Veleate is a sizeable city by Rythes standards and stretches up the hill from the dock, but its most striking feature is the Dockmaster's Hall. This is the seat of power for the Tiller of Souls, and all newcomers entering True Veleate are checked here for arcane magic before being allowed to enter.

**Barony of the Bloom:** The Barony of the Bloom is an idyllic island that nearly kisses the peninsula at the Jenjac ferry, while its seaward tip is crowned by Mount Blossom, home to the monastery of St. Ioh. The island is dotted with cenotes, water-filled sinkholes that provide irrigation to the nearby farms. The entire island is a riot of plant life and the population, save for the monks, is almost entirely given over to farming. Unlike the rest of the Broken Baronies, who farm mostly for food, the Barony of the Bloom sets aside much of its labor for decorative trees and flowers. The abundance of the barony means there is a ready surplus of food, and the citizens are generous and welcoming to outsiders.

The Barony of Bloom, citizens and monks alike, is unified in its reverence of St. Ioh, who taught them how to irrigate and bring many beautiful, useful, and exotic plants into bloom. The monastery's hierarchy and the government of the Barony are one and the same, with the Grandfather of Flowers at the top, literally and figuratively, looking down from his greenhouse monastery at the top of Mount Blossom.

While the Barony of the Bloom is a cornucopia of food, the distance and danger between the island and the rest of the baronies keeps the island's surplus from benefiting the rest of the peninsula. Nestled in their agricultural utopia, the monks of St. Ioh have shown little enthusiasm for increasing trade along the treacherous route to their neighbors. Once the island is fully cultivated, perhaps they will expand their reach, and their agricultural success will surely win over those wishing to curry favor with them.

## THE OUTLANDS

Outside the baronies, life on Rythes is hard and the privations of the environment cruel. The Outlands fall outside the healing powers of the Tears of Eternity, ranging from scrub desert to blasted plains of dust, with little to no arable land. Those that live in the Outlands match the terrain—tough, inhospitable, and frequently murderous. The animal life and even the sparse plant life are each lethal in their own way, from giant scorpions to thorny relatives of the assassin vine guarding the few meager sources of moisture.

The Outlands contain the same mix of humanoids that live in the baronies, including the flotsam and jetsam coming through the planet's sole functioning gate blended with the scattered descendants of pre-cataclysm Rythes. Sometimes these outlanders are lone wanderers, explorers, and scavengers, but often they form into gangs of raiders that plague caravans and even launch barbaric forays into the heart of the baronies themselves.

Raider groups in the Outlands run the gamut in terms of size, organization, and style, from berserkers who charge into battle against anyone they identify as an interloper, to wily ambushers who set traps in narrow canyons to snare the unwary. Some groups are bloodthirsty killers, but just as many will merely strip victims of useful supplies and leave them to die in the desert or stagger in desperation back to civilization to tell tales of the raiders' ferocity.

One legendary raider group is the Night Caravan, a mounted troop of scavengers who ride hardy local camel-like creatures. The Night Caravan has no home base, with camels carrying all of the raiders' possessions as well as their families. As their name suggests, they never attack during the day, and nobody has ever claimed to have seen them in the light. The Night Caravan attacks during moonless periods, sweeping down on caravans that have already bedded down for the night. The vanguard sweeps through the encampment, slaying any guards, while the rest surge through the camp menacing anyone who would fight back but otherwise focusing solely on stripping the victims of their valuables and supplies. Unlike some raiders, the Night Caravan does not steal or kill pack animals and always leaves its victims with enough supplies to survive. As soon as the looting is complete, the raiders leap back on their camels and the Night Caravan is gone as quickly as it arrived, leaving scattered supplies and dead guards in its wake.

As unpleasant as a visit from the Night Caravan is, it is far preferable to being caught by the Cottonmouths, a gang of raiders renowned for wasting nothing of their victims. When caravans that have been hit by the Cottonmouths are found afterward, nothing remaining but the skeletons of their victims and pack beasts alike, often missing their skulls or other bones. The rare survivors of the Cottonmouths tell tales of bestial raiders adorned with skins and skulls, slaughtering every living thing in their path for meat, sinew, and blood.

While most raiders are of the same mix of races as the citizens of the baronies, there are a few sentient species that make the Outlands their home exclusively. The two most prominent examples are the Rythes gnolls and the reptilian syaandi (see pg. 83).

Rythes gnolls are fearsome fighters who ride wild boars into battle. They are well-adapted to the desert and are the most serious threat to the baronies. While other raiders seek out soft targets unable to protect themselves, Rythes gnolls frequently launch raids against well-defended caravans and travelers. Rythes gnolls are nigh fearless in battle, driven by the ever-present need for sustenance that the desert cannot provide. When not actively raiding, Rythes gnolls tend to wander in large nomadic groups, husbanding their herds of boars and teaching their young the ways of the desert. The gnolls congregate near the major sources of water, primarily Hargo Lake and the Peakborn River. Beyond these homelands, any Rythes gnoll encountered is likely to be part of an active raiding party.

Syaandi live in small family groups, generally keeping to themselves. They occasionally engage in raiding, but are equally likely to extend a diplomatic hand to those who need aid and prove themselves worthy of it. Syaandi survive by learning the ways of their desert homes, where water and edible plants can be found and where the few game animals can be hunted. While syaandi generally leave the baronies alone, they've been known to augment their stores by opportunistic attacks on caravans and rival raider groups alike. Syaandi are generally hesitant to help outsiders, but each syaandi family group is closely tied by bonds of blood and history with each other group. Hurting one set of syaandi is likely to provoke a deadly blood feud as word of the attack spreads until every syaandi group in the area is out for vengeance. This penchant for solidarity works well to dissuade others from molesting them, and even Rythes gnolls think twice before attacking a syaandi encampment unless they think they can leave no survivors to tell the tale and no trace of who did the deed.

In addition to the often-hostile sentient races of the Outlands, the ordinary flora and fauna of the wastes is lethal to those who don't know how to comport themselves. Typical desert dangers abound—from uncountable vermin of every size, with scorpions and ant lions the most fearsome, to an array of other desert predators and carrion scavengers that eagerly stalk small groups of travelers. The rare sources of water are the epicenter of thriving ecosystems of danger, from thorny assassin vines lying in wait to poisonous cacti and succulents that lure the unwary to their doom and then leach their blood out of the dust. For those who know the signs, however, these creatures provide signposts pointing to precious water. Experienced denizens of the Outlands know how to avoid most of the hazards, most of the time, and know which plants and animals provide the best source of sustenance and which are deadly. Aside from mere survival, certain plant species of the Outlands also point to more esoteric rewards, with some only growing adjacent to special materials and deposits left by the Patrons. Only the most experienced and knowledgeable outlanders know the patterns of life that lead to ancient installations and abandoned tunnels, and they guard that knowledge jealously.

## THE MONASTERIES

**Abby of St. Oolaav:** The Abby of St. Oolaav sits at the peak of Lazuli Island in the Blue Barony. The monks of St. Oolaav are intimately involved in the lives of their barony, providing engineering expertise and guidance on everything from public works projects to individual dwellings. The abbey's library contains many great reference works of science and engineering which the monks assiduously copy and preserve.

**St. Albat of the Soil:** The monks of St. Albat live in caves in the Songwheel River basin, living ascetic lives copying an ancient sheet of complicated diagrams handed down to them by St. Albat. None of the monks have any understanding

of these diagrams other than their holy nature, content to simply preserve them for future generations. When the monks are not copying their treasures, they are covering themselves in the mud of the river in an attempt to return life to themselves by bonding with the still-healing land.

**Sacred Caves of St. Menande:** The monks of St. Menande used to travel all across the Broken Baronies to spread hope that the prophesied rebirth would happen soon. The monks, all halflings, gnomes, and other small races, have recently become more reclusive and no longer leave the areas near their caves. Flower-bedecked statues and songs of praise give the area a festive atmosphere.

**St. Stoneheart:** Of all the monasteries, St. Stoneheart's is the farthest off the beaten path. While the rest of the monasteries guide baronies from within or sit on the major trade route of the Songwheel River basin, St. Stoneheart's is nearly inaccessible, high in the mountains beyond the Mercaedur Mines. The monastery can only be reached by hugging the banks of the Peakborn River all the way from Hargo Lake, through wastes of deadly raiders and then dangerously steep mountainous terrain.

Visitors who make it to the monastery find the monks friendly but reticent, as St. Stoneheart's is a repository of artifacts from before the destruction, and St. Stoneheart taught her followers that those artifacts would trigger further destruction if given into the hands of the unworthy. The monks of St. Stoneheart wait, marking time until the lowlands advance enough to be worthy of rediscovering the secrets of the past.

**St. Ioh:** The monastery of St. Ioh is a garden monastery, sitting among the clouds on the highest reaches of Mount Blossom. From its perch it guides more than rules the Barony of the Bloom. Monks of St. Ioh tend plants and teach others how to do the same, spreading St. Ioh's religious strictures and practical advice. The holy of holies of the monastery is a shimmering greenhouse that holds the most exotic, fragile, and beautiful plants on all of Rythes.

## THE HYRAX SOLAR SYSTEM

Rythes's star was called Hyrax by the Patrons, but the latterday locals on Rythes just refer to it as the Sun. This sun is a typical middling yellow star of the type favored by the Patrons, and is generally unremarkable. When Rythes was still an important hub world at the center of the Weave, Hyrax was ringed by small orbital stations researching ways to harness solar power to communicate across the vast gulfs of space. Abandoned after the destruction of Rythes, most of these stations eventually fell into the star's gravitational pull, but one station remains, its orbit as perfect as when Rythes fell. Invisible from any of the planets due to Hyrax's brightness, Station Conductor 4 shows no sign of habitation except for its improbable, well-maintained orbit.

**Gerrocene:** The innermost planet of Hyrax's system, Gerrocene is a rocky, small inner planet, zipping quickly around its star, tidally locked with a meltingly hot day side and a frozen night side. The termination zone where day meets night is ringed by Patron installations connected to each other in an unbroken chain of tunnel and conduit except in one location, where a starburst of char marks an ancient explosion. The ring installation was originally intended to power a giant gate structure in the middle of the night side of the planet.

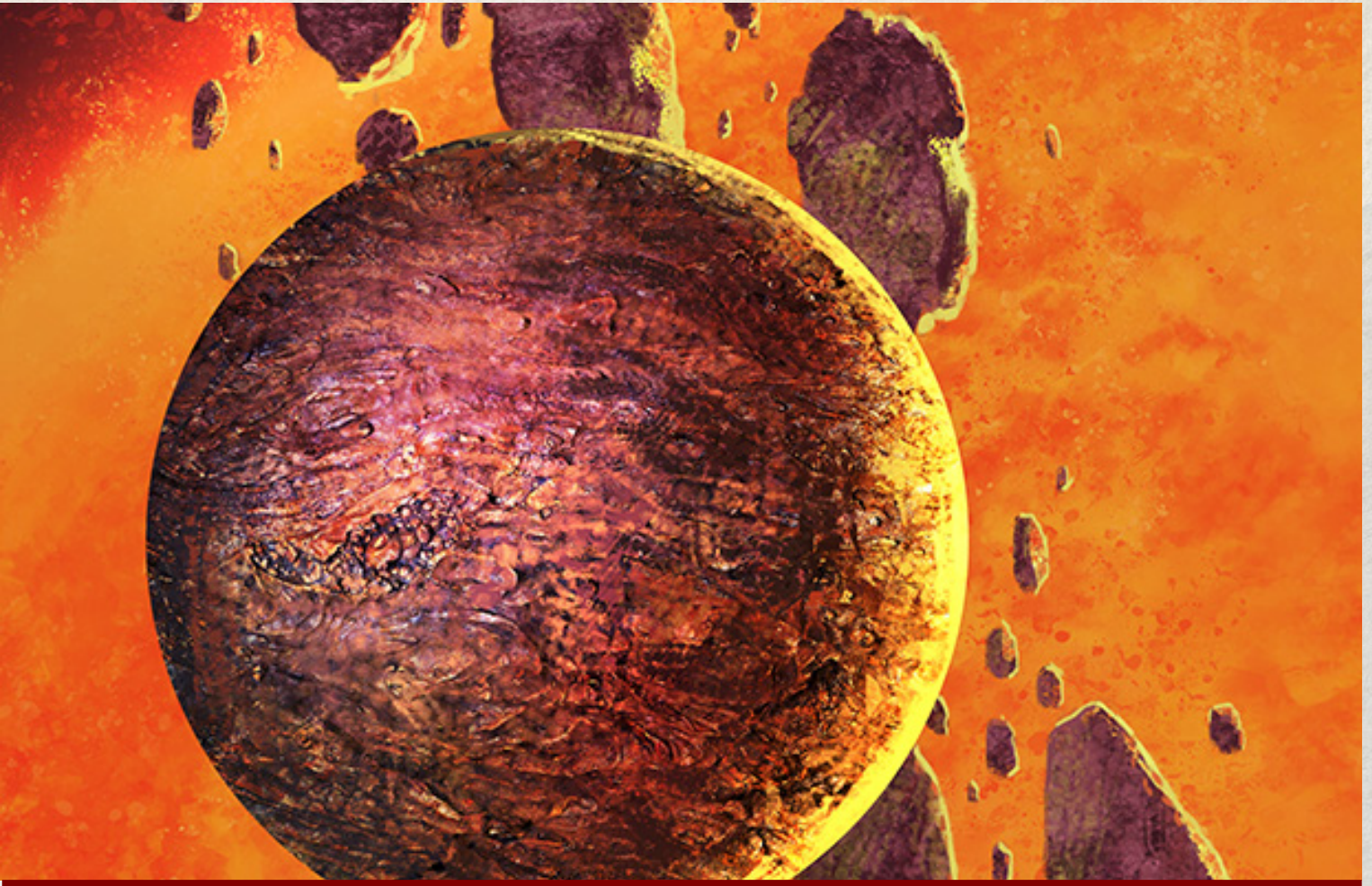
**The Glitter Cloud:** The orbit between Gerrocene and Rythes is full of enough mass to form a mid-sized planet. The planetesimals are machined into strange arcane shapes, and many are large enough to be seen from Rythes with the naked eye at dawn and dusk, when the shiny faces of the shapes catch Hyrax's light. Known to the astronomically-minded as the Glitter Cloud, these objects might once have been a planet deconstructed utterly by the Patrons or some other powerful force for who knows what reason. Whether any of the planetesimals harbor life or anything of interest is unknowable from the planet's surface.

**Rythes:** Rythes, the third planet from Hyrax, is an improbable world of oceans and deserts with little else. The planet has almost no cloud cover, and what cloud cover there is seems to rise and disperse over specific areas without moving farther afield.

In orbit around Rythes, below the level of its two moons, are a multitude of artificial satellites in geosynchronous orbit. Built to serve a multitude of purposes in the time of the Patrons, these satellite stations have been abandoned for ages. Some still function, interacting in complex ways with the Tears of Eternity on the planet's surface. Many of the stations are weather control machines, prepared to return Rythes' original ecology with the necessary rain to sustain a healthy global ecosystem, and wait only for someone to reboot the system.

**Semnis:** Rythes' larger moon rotates the planet sedately, providing Rythes with moderate tides and a guiding light in the night. Its surface is shaded with narrowly set furrows that trace around the moon in elaborate motifs of amplification and interference. The surface is airless and no Patron installations are in evidence, despite the seemingly purposeful surface architecture.

**Gurjis:** Rythes' smaller moon zips around the planet at a much lower orbit, doing little to influence the tides. It is red in coloration and not entirely spherical. As the red egg of Gurjis passes between Semnis and the planet below, the shape occludes various grooves and intersections on the larger moon from different points on the planet, possibly as a form of divination or just high concept art.



**Emerald:** A bright green point in Rythes' sky, Emerald is a world under glass. The Patrons put in place a force field high in the planet's skies which holds in the heat, allowing what would ordinarily be a cold planet to run riot with life. The landmass that surrounds Emerald's small seas is green with life, mostly tall canopied dense forests where the density of life is matched only by its danger. On Emerald is imprisoned the descendants of the Jazhan, a species that once warred with the Patrons. The remnants of the Jazhan were put on this metal-poor prison planet in hopes that over the millennia they would learn the ways of peace and cooperation. They've certainly learned to cooperate with each other if nothing else, building their way back from savagery with little memory of their lost heritage and beginning to look again to the stars.

**Sorpose:** The largest planet orbiting Hyrax by a factor of 10, Sorpose is an angry red gas giant, the ochre swirls of its storms giving the planet a beautiful but sinister appearance. It has dozens of small moons as well as an intermittent ring system. Two of the moons are large enough to be spherical—Galsi is an ice moon, perfectly smooth, while Rofecti is torn into seismic chaos by Sorpose's gravity, with volcanoes constantly recycling its molten core onto its surface. Strange

crystalline matrices of unknown origin can be found among the icy rings of Sorpose, which seem to be slowly organizing the rest of their rings into the same pattern. A Patron installation originally intended to monitor the matrices sits among them, its bulkheads encrusted by crystalline growths that seem intended to connect the aberration into the complex symmetry of the whole.

**Pasich:** Pasich is the farthest planet from Hyrax, a planet of brilliant crystal. From space the planet presents a fuzzy affect, the surface being less a hard limit and more a gradual attenuation of the density of the crystal structures. The Patrons never had a presence around Pasich and its crystalline surface is unmarred by anything that would disrupt its fractal magnificence.



## FIXER

By Chris A. Jackson

I skirted the stockyards, sticking to the shadows and trying to ignore the stench of aurochs' dung. I don't like bad smells, and generally avoid breathing at all when I'm around them. What's the fun in being auttaine if you can't selectively filter your senses? But I was trying to use the reek to throw off the thugs who'd followed me since leaving Threnia's, and I had to smell it to know when I'd reached the thick of it. If my gag reflex was any indication, I'd found the right spot.

I'd caught a glimpse of my stalkers, and figured they were tracking me by scent rather than sight. I didn't know if they were after blood, coin, or the crystalline artifact tucked in my pocket. The last seemed the least plausible, assuming they even knew of it. Nobody could have discovered I'd taken more work from Threnia, or that she served the Bellianic Accord. I also felt confident nobody had followed me to her villa, and doubly certain no one knew I still had the crystal. Someone might have learned I'd sold it to her, but usually when that much money changes hands, so does the merchandise. Threnia had simply offered to double my payment if I agreed to also install it in a defunct gate owned by the Thanex Coterie.

*So, what exactly am I doing?*

I knew my mission, of course. I just didn't know what to call it. When you break into someplace, it's usually to steal something valuable, not leave it behind. I wasn't burgling. I wasn't placing something lethal or covert. I wasn't laying a trap. And I wasn't planting incriminating evidence. None of my usual pastimes.

*So, I'm breaking and...what? Fixing?* Assured of my olfactory camouflage, I ducked into the deeper shadows to wait. If the thugs still had my scent, they'd show themselves soon enough. I stopped breathing for a moment and just focused on listening, but heard nothing except a couple having a late-night romp in one of the nearby brothels. I must have lost my stalkers. Allowing myself a satisfied smile, I moved on, cutting around the stockyards and north into the Cliff Shadow neighborhood.

All of the coterie among the Peerage of Argosa have impressive compounds which house their gates—the precious portals to other worlds which bring untold riches and commerce under their sway. The coterie also have businesses scattered around the city, some legal, but many illicit. Even so, their real power comes from ownership of the gates. When you control what comes into and out of a world, you control the world-at-large and the lives of all those living there. The Ultari Hegemony found that out the hard way when they tried pressuring the Peerage to cede control of Argosa. The coterie threatened to destroy one of the gates if the Hegemony didn't back off. When the Ultari called their bluff, they found out the coterie had the means to back up their threat. At that time within the Peerage, only the Thanex Coterie held more than two gates. When they sacrificed one, the Hegemony immediately relented, scrapping their invasion plans and leaving Argosa alone lest they lose access to its riches and the planetary gates to other parts of the

multiverse. That left twelve active gates in the city, but if I proved successful tonight, it would become thirteen again.

I didn't know Threnia's motivations for wanting this particular gate back in operation, and I honestly didn't care. I didn't have a dog in the fight between the Accord and the Hegemony. I was purely in it for the money.

*Just remember, Anasya, it's hard to spend money when you're dead.*

I edged around the corner of a walled villa, my boots crunching on the pea gravel surrounding a bed of thorny, succulent plants. The Thanex compound hove into view, and I paused to pierce the gloom of the shadows with my clockwork eye, taking the time to examine every detail—every rock, shrub, and smudge in the seamless walls—and correlating it with the information Threnia had given me.

With the deactivation of the gate housed within, this compound had become nothing more than a warehouse, but that didn't mean the coterie had left it unsecured. Thanex guarded its merchandise just as jealously as its trade routes, and tended to use deadly force as a first line of defense. Even so, I had to get in, install the crystal, and get out without leaving any trace I'd been there. Not an easy task.

"You can't be identified, and you cannot implicate the Bellianic Accord," Threnia had instructed. "Our enemies must not discern our plans, or we'll *all* end up like Master Kweesh."

Unknown to me beforehand, my acquaintance Kweesh had also worked for the Accord, and the Hegemony had orchestrated an accident that left him smeared over several hundred feet of the city's dusty streets. Since it had always been my goal *not* to end up a smear, I planned on using as much caution as possible.

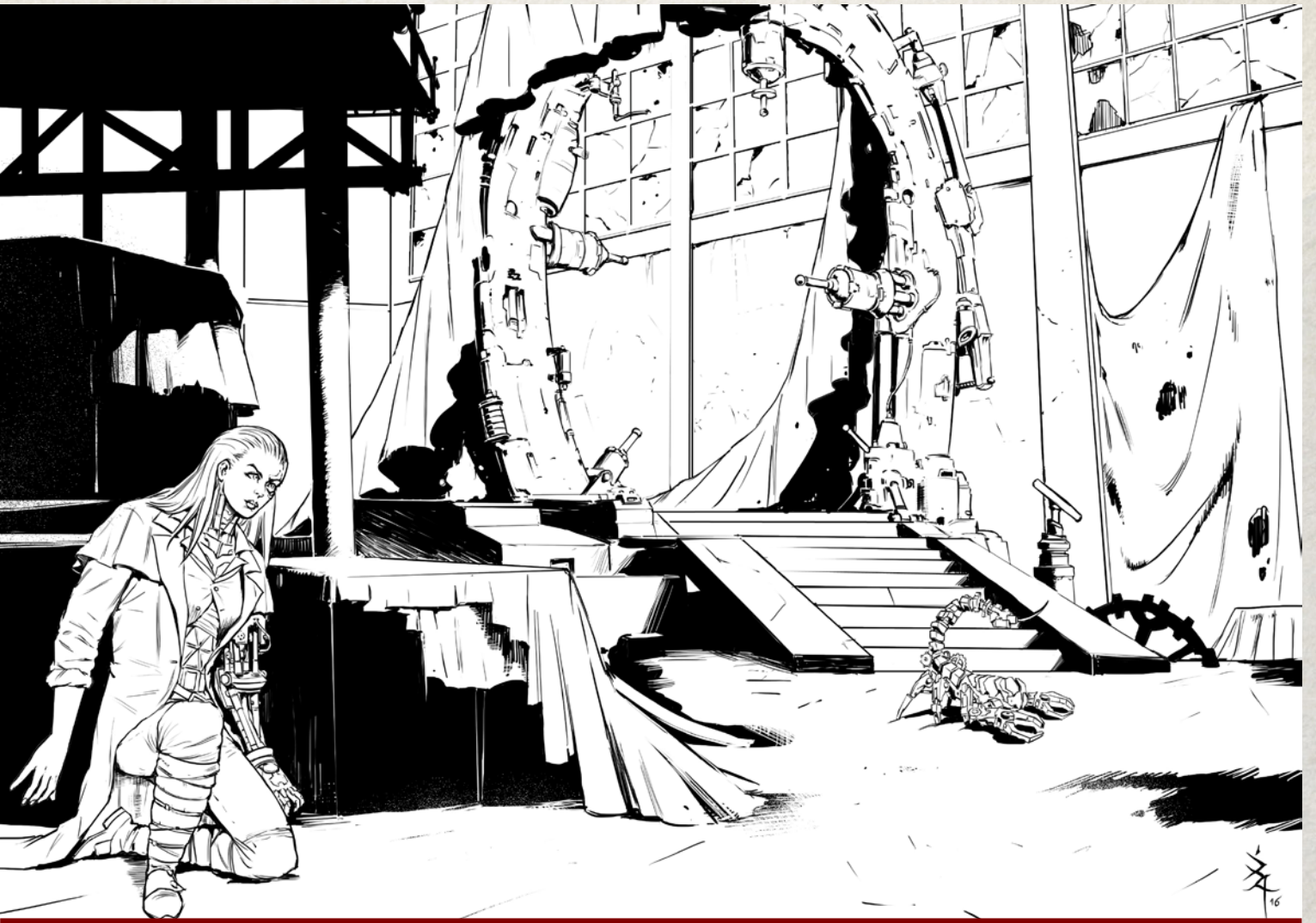
No one in sight. Not a sound but the chatter of night-time insects, and the squeak of a rodent or night-hunting predator. The building had three entrances: a pair of large double-doors for carts and carriages, and two smaller ones for routine access. I ignored them all and worked my way north again, hunkering down in the three-phase shadow cast by Argosa's moons. Looking up, I could see the building had no neighbors on this side, only a sheer cliff rising several hundred feet to the plateau behind it.

*Perfect...*

I crossed the road into the moonlight, reached the foot of the cliff, and picked out a path to start climbing. The going wasn't easy, but I wasn't in a hurry. The moonlight posed my only concern. Even this late, there were still a few people out and about, and if someone looked up, they might see me. Of course, they'd have to pick out a gray duster against a gray cliff face, but I wasn't invisible. Not yet anyway. When I reached a shelf of rock about two hundred feet up, I lay flat and watched the streets below for a time. A few, fleeting shadows moved among alleyways, but I saw no one headed my way.

*Good...*

I stood up, gauged the distance, and leapt.



Threnia's ring tickled my finger as I drifted down like a feather onto the roof of the compound, my duster flapping like the wings of a stooping owl. I'd picked my landing well, and the roof accepted my weight with little complaint as I crouched low and listened again. Quiet. Only a few chirps and squeaks. I hadn't even disturbed the night song of the desert.

The roof sported several cupolas with vented eaves. I picked the one I needed, and skulked to the shadowed side. The tools in my mechanical fingertips made short work of the screws securing the louvered vent. A few healthy spiders had made their webs inside, preying on moths and flies, but thankfully, not burglars. I swept their handiwork aside and peered into the blackness. Bare ceiling joists strewn with straw awaited me as I edged through the aperture, hung from my hands, and dropped into the attic's crawlspace.

Something rustled in the straw, a rodent or insect. I ignored it and inspected my surroundings. There was barely enough room to crawl between the ceiling and the roof, but still adequate. The attic looked vast, with vertical supports denoting the walls of every chamber below. I checked my bearings, and scabbled over to the nearest vent leading into the main storehouse.

*Now for the tricky part.*

I knew Thanex had a preference for small, clockwork assassins which they often used for security. My own people—the auttaine—had likely sold such things to them, and that could create a serious problem. Not only could they kill me, but they might also record my image and send it to whoever monitored the devices. So, I not only had to survive, but I also needed to remain unseen.

Lying flat beside the vent, I peered down. Eventually, a faint buzz reached my ears, and I pulled a mirror on a slim rod from my duster to slip between the louvers and scan the room below. Luckily, the chamber housed not only the defunct gate, but also the accumulated contraband of decades of Thanex graft. The gate loomed large amid a pile of crates, barrels, chests, and glittering junk. Under different circumstances, the goods would make a tempting target, but only a fool stole from a coterie. I was no fool, and I wasn't here to steal. Unfortunately, the assassin drones didn't know that.

As I turned the mirror, movement finally caught my eye. A glowing red orb framed by a tiny, metallic body, angular

legs dangling below it and gossamer wings buzzing in a blur, above. A segmented tail hung among its legs, the needle tip gleaming in the ruddy light. The drone flew in a ceaseless pattern, scanning for intruders, tireless and vigilant. I knew there should be a second one, but scanning the rest of the room revealed nothing.

*Maybe Threnia's intelligence isn't so good after all?*

I didn't know whether to worry or take heart. With only one drone to evade, it would make my job significantly easier. But if Threnia had missed this detail, what else had she overlooked?

Again, my fingertip tools made short work of the fasteners securing the louvered vent. I worked as quietly as I could, knowing the sentry had acute hearing as well as a sharp eye. I lifted the louver out of its frame and lay it aside, cringing at the fine specks of dust I'd jostled loose. Peering through again with my mirror, I saw the drone continuing its search pattern, still oblivious to my presence.

*Sweet...*

Since stealth trumped my need for tools and weapons, I doffed my duster and lay it aside. Then, I strapped my rapier over my shoulder to keep it from catching on anything, and peered through with my mirror once again.

*Patience...timing...quiet...*

When the drone turned its baleful eye away, I dropped through the hole to the floor below, Threnia's ring once again slowing my descent. I landed between two tall rows of crates, and crouched to listen. The buzz of the drone remained unchanged.

Moving toward my goal, I checked each corner with my mirror and listened for the buzzing drone. Halfway there, I heard another sound—a faint, irregular ticking, varying in direction. Threnia's intelligence wasn't bad after all. Thanex must have directed the second drone to patrol on foot.

*Well, fine.*

I paused to analyze the combined search patterns, and picked a route to avoid them. When I reached the rune-scribed arch of the gate, however, I realized I had yet another dilemma. The ancient monument sat on a low, stone dais which the Thanex wranglers had kept clear. But, the hidden nook where the crystal had to be placed resided in the exact center beneath the arch. And that meant I'd have no cover while interacting with it. I had to remove the hidden panel, open the receptacle, remove the old crystal, insert mine, and close the whole thing up, all in plain view.

*Only one way to do this...*

Most of my goodies were still in my duster in the attic, but I'd kept one vial for just this purpose. I slipped it from my belt and eased the stopper free, tilting the contents into my mouth.

*Why do potions always taste like rat piss?*

I swallowed hard, and made sure the magic had taken hold.

I could still see myself, but just a hazy, translucent outline.

Slipping from hiding, I edged toward my goal, feeling like a cockroach skittering across a marble floor waiting to be stomped on. The distant buzz-and-tick of the drones remained unchanged, and I found the hidden niche, applying my tools and working as quietly as possible. The catch came free, and I checked my surroundings again. The flying drone still followed its patrol pattern, but I couldn't see or hear the other one.

I opened the niche and withdrew the crystal from my pocket. The recess inside held a similar crystal, its lustrous facets clouded and scorched. I flipped the catches that restrained the damaged one and pulled it free. Its replacement slipped right into place, and I locked it down—*tick, click, tick, click*—finally closing the concealing panel over my work.

*Tick tick tick...*

I turned and froze. The crawling drone ambled from the shadows toward the gate, its metal limbs maneuvering the stone floor. I didn't know if it had heard my handiwork, or merely seen the hidden panel open, but it must have detected something, and now it came closer to investigate.

*Damn...*

I edged over to one side of the arch and stood perfectly still.

*Tick, tick, tick.* The tiny drone climbed the dais and trundled to the exact center, its tail now arched over its bulbous body, quivering with every step. It inspected the spot where I'd closed the panel, a tiny, metal proboscis flicking out as if scenting the air.

Fortunately, the lethal construct wasn't very smart.

The drone started a simple search pattern, spiraling outward from the center of the dais, and this gave me the opportunity to slip away. With my task done, I only needed to remove myself without leaving any trace. My invisibility remained intact, so I hurried to the stack of crates beneath the louvered vent and climbed as quietly as possible, trying not to jostle the stack of bins. At the top, the buzz of the airborne drone grew louder. Its own search pattern brought it my way. Perhaps the two were communicating with one another somehow? I crouched low and muttered a silent curse. This would be a very bad time for the potion's magic to expire.

The flying drone buzzed by overhead, close enough to ruffle my hair. I waited until it passed, then rose up and leapt to catch the rim of the vent. A quick twist and I lifted myself up and inside, not even waiting to see if the drones had heard me, but securing the louvered vent in place again, just in case. As long as they hadn't spotted me, I was okay. Mission accomplished, and no evidence anyone had ever been inside the chamber.

*Money in the bank...*

I put on my duster again, crawled back to the cupola, and climbed out onto the moonlit roof. While securing the vent in place, I felt a tingle and looked down to see myself clearly once more.

*Nice timing...*

With the potion's magic used up, I hurried to the edge of the roof and dropped into the shadows.

*Safe...*

I started for home, satisfied with a job well done, even though I still wasn't sure exactly what I'd accomplished on Threnia's behalf. Wondering about the motivations of the Bellianic Accord was like wondering why planets orbited their stars. As long as they kept doing what they were doing, I shouldn't ask questions. I'd finished the job and set myself up for months of ease...

I should really learn not to get so cocky.

A faint crunch of pea gravel turned my head in time to glimpse a flicker of motion. Something hit my shoulder, and teeth clamped down on my metal arm as a whip-like tail lashed at my face. The thing's stinger scored a line across my cheek and the wound stung even though the barb on the little critter's tail had only scratched me.

Reacting more out of reflex and revulsion than any cognizant thought, I flung myself down hard. The thing elicited a satisfying *squeak-crunch* as my weight smashed it into the hard street. I'd never seen such a thing before—some kind of half-rat, half-scorpion—but I left it smeared on the cobblestones and rolled to my feet with daggers in my hands, looking for a target.

A low growl from my left and motion from my right divided my attention. They had me perfectly flanked and were closing in. Only one option popped into my mind. I threw a dagger at one and charged the other, drawing my rapier.

Canine teeth gleamed in the shadows, and my foe halted its advance long enough to pull another squeaking horror from a large satchel to throw at me. I ducked under the slashing teeth, claws, and whipping tail, barreling forward and leading with my rapier. I channeled all the energy I could muster into the weapon, and the blade slipped through the creature, crackling and hissing with power. As the cross guard slammed into its stomach, my canine foe twitched and flailed, the smoke from his cooking viscera filling the air. I whipped the blade free, feeling the telltale weakness of expending so much energy on one thrust, but getting caught between two assassins seemed a much worse option, and I needed at least one of them dead to have a fighting chance.

Or so I thought.

My other assailant charged me with little regard for its fallen comrade. I finally recognized my canine attackers. They were bahgra, a dog-like race of scavenging humanoids, barbaric hunters often hired as mercenaries. It didn't surprise me. I'd seen a few of them in Zel-Argose, and if they'd tailed me, they could easily have followed my scent. Hence, my detour to the stockyards, but they must have picked up my trail again.

I flung my second dagger to dissuade the final bahgra's charge, and sidestepped. The blade lodged in its shoulder, but didn't slow it down. Two hooked hand-axes slashed at me as it passed. I managed to parry one, but the other struck sparks from my armored corset, hitting hard enough to dent some of my internal

workings. I staggered with the blow and turned to face it.

The dog-man jerked my dagger from its shoulder and growled, baring teeth dripping with saliva. It outweighed me by half and knew how to fight. I would have been quicker if I hadn't just spent about half my energy killing its buddy, but now...

I took a sliding step back, and my heel struck the dead bahgra's corpse. Something chittered there and I risked a glance. The thing's satchel writhed with motion, the leather flap secured by a single thong. A desperate idea gelled in my head, and I feigned a stagger, letting my rapier dip.

"You hurt, tick-tock woman?" The bahgra licked its lips, advancing more carefully this time, axes held at the ready. "Dent your gears, did I?"

"Leave while you can, mongrel." I tried to look shaken. It was easier than I really wanted. I let the tip of my rapier droop further to the ground, right next to the strap of the dead bahgra's satchel.

"Not leaving, tick-tock woman." It grinned at me. "We was supposed to take you, not kill you, but I think I'll see what you taste like before I give over what's left."

"Take me for who?" I hesitated, remembering Threnia's warning, but also knowing the bahgra didn't like the Hegemony. Then again, they might make an exception for the right price. "Tell me and I'll double your pay."

The bahgra stopped, obviously considering my offer. Its friend was dead, which doubled its percentage, and I'd just doubled that again. But then its lip curled back from its teeth.

"I think I take all you got on you, *and* get paid." It took a step forward. "I got a reputation to—"

I flicked the tip of my blade, severing the leather strap of the satchel, and slashed the flap's restraining thong. One kick sent the squirming bag into the bahgra's chest. With widening eyes, it desperately slashed with its axes to deflect the oncoming danger, but the blow simply disgorged the irate contents in a hail of slashing teeth, claws, and venomous stingers.

The bahgra went down howling and writhing, batting at the scabbling mass clinging to it. I ended the racket with a quick thrust, taking care not to get too close to the ravening swarm.

I considered going through its things to figure out who paid the mercenaries to take me, but quickly reconsidered. The noise of the fight could draw attention, and I didn't want witnesses.

Sheathing my rapier, I lit out for home at my best pace, which wasn't very good. I'd be fine in the morning, but felt my expenditure of energy dragging at every step. Tomorrow, I'd visit Threnia and get paid.

*Then I'm going to take a vacation.*

I sniffed the air of Zel-Argose and wrinkled my nose again.

*Maybe someplace that smells nice, for a change.*

## COMING SOON

### DEAD VAULT DESCENT

BY MATT GOODALL

With the *Opus Aeterna* having imprinted the ancient lore of the Weave onto the altered minds of the PCs, it presents yet another alternative for finding their way home. This mythic knowledge reopens a once-dead gate to a tidally-locked world called Kylorn. Steeped in the ancient technology of the Patrons, it promises a host of new challenges and wonders—from ageless constructs still carrying out the last directives of their original creators to the undead survivors of a lost age. The PCs gain new insights into the ancient war between the Patrons and the Principalities, journeying across the unending cold of the dark side of the planet, deep into the underground vaults of the Divymm, and once more to the molten surface to reach a gate guarded by an alien lich and an interstellar dragon. Can the PCs overcome these terrifying challenges, or will their journey end with their *Dead Vault Descent*?

### MACHINE LANGUAGE

BY CHRIS A. JACKSON

Unsung hero Anasya takes advantage of the aftermath of the reopened portal to Kylorn, paid by her Accord benefactors to carry out yet another mission. Focused on rebooting an ancient construct in the vaults of the Divymm, she hopes her actions significantly boost the recovery of the tidally-locked planet, as well as the resistance against the incursions of the Ultari Hegemony. But, Anasya soon learns she's not alone in the tunnels, and a new player emerges from the shadows to confront her. Will the Hegemony finally eliminate the upstart thorn in their side, or can the auttaine freelance her way out of yet another scrape?

### GAZETTEER OF KYLORN

BY JONATHAN KEITH

A once vibrant world attacked with an alien weapon so strong it stopped the planet's rotation, Kylorn now languishes in a tidally-locked position with its dying star, captive to a blistering cold and eternal darkness on one side, and a super-heated hell on the other. But creatures still stir on this ancient world, as the underground Divymm manipulate the seeds of life to foster a nascent civilization in the narrow habitability zone, and the undead survivors of a lost age prey upon them for sustenance. This gazetteer will introduce you to the cultures, strongholds, and secrets of the Dead Vaults and open up a unique world for future exploration.



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