

NUMENÉRA™



BEYOND ALL WORLDS

BY ROBERT J. SCHWALB



INTRODUCTION

You don't think Hell is real? That it can't exist? That such an outmoded, antiquated concept born of superstition and fear has no place in the Ninth World? Then you are a fool. Hell is real. It exists. And I've been there. Don't believe me? Come. I will show you the gates.

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BACKGROUND

Some whisper that the Mouth of Hell is a gateway, an entrance to a realm of perdition and suffering, a place where the wicked and corrupt receive their just rewards. What people call the Mouth of Hell is an entrance certainly. It is not, however, one that leads to a supernatural plane of punishment. Rather, it is the opening to an interdimensional machine whose purpose was to peer through the boundaries between universes and allow free passage between them. The machine, a ship really, creates an ultradimensional space of staggering proportions that floats atop reality like a soap bubble. The entrance is anchored in place and never moves. The world outside it lies beyond a mortal's ability to perceive. It could be that the makers explored the multiverse searching for life and technology, anything to get a better sense of their place in the cosmos. It seems likely that they found something, something terrifying, something so dangerous that—in the end—they were forced

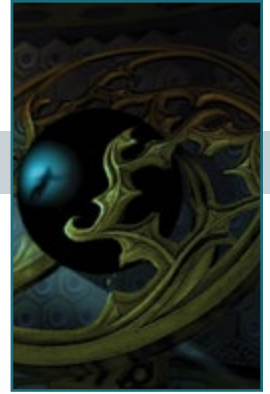
to quit the machine and seal the entrance behind them.

The gateway, once sealed, remained so for eons. But time can be cruel and eventually the energies sustaining the bindings began to fray and unravel. What at first was a flickering light became a luminous crack in reality. Sometimes, people who happened upon it swore they heard moaning and crying, as well as other, more frightening noises. Locals came to believe the crack led to a horrific place: Hell. After all, what else could it be? As the people grew more fearful, leaders decreed that their criminals, murderers, and other villains would be cast into the Mouth as was fitting for their crimes, and into the light they disappeared, never to be seen again. And as less selective leaders came into power, the Mouth became a convenient way to get rid of political rivals, enemies, and anyone else that got in their way. Hell filled up with the unwanted and the insane, the evil and the rebellious, and has become a place no right-thinking person would dare to set foot.

HELL IN THE NINTH WORLD: A NOTE TO THE GM

The prevailing religions in the Ninth World look little like those found in our current cultures. Although nearly every Ninth World culture includes at least one version of Hell—a spiritual or physical realm of evil and suffering—they don't think about "hell" in the same way we do.

For many Ninth Worlders, this is that place. Thus, the name Mouth of Hell is used here to capture that sensibility rather than to denote an exact likeness to our existing version of hell. You should feel free to come up with your own place name to create a stronger sense of fear, evil, and suffering at the table. After all, places that live in whispers and prayers have many names, not all of which can be spoken aloud.



Mungrun, page 9

Shork, page 10

Glea, page 10

Reva, page 16



Throughout this supplement, you'll see page references to various items accompanied by this symbol. These are page references to the *Numenera* corebook, where you can find additional details about that item, place, creature, or concept.

CHARACTERS

This adventure works well with experienced characters. Second-tier and even third-tier characters should find it challenging, but not overwhelming. You should consider increasing the numbers and levels of foes and hazards to properly challenge characters of the fourth tier or higher.

How the characters become involved is up to you. One great way is for someone the characters know to have been condemned and tossed into the Mouth. This person might be a trusted ally, a lover, a relative, or even a bitter enemy. Rescuing this character becomes the primary objective and draws the PCs through the Mouth and into darkness. If you use this hook, you can replace a named character in the adventure with the character the PCs seek. For example, an enemy might take the place of [Mungrun](#), while an ally could replace [Shork](#), [Glea](#), or [Reva](#).

Being tossed into the Mouth of Hell could also be a fate for the PCs. Characters who have crossed a powerful NPC and have become captured as a result might wind up joining the others as a show of power and victory. Alternatively, the PCs might come across the Mouth while involved in another adventure or while traveling to some other destination. The characters might witness the interment of a prisoner into the ultradimensional bubble—the mere appearance of such a weird phenomenon might be enough to lure the characters inside.

OVERVIEW

The adventure begins when the characters find the Mouth of Hell and must contend with the guardian, a horrific monstrosity that the locals say keeps things in and keeps trespassers out. Once the PCs enter the Mouth, they discover they have left the Ninth World behind and are now trapped in a void. The characters can explore the void or travel to a distant sphere—the machine that sustains the ultradimensional bubble. There, the characters discover that the people thrown into the Mouth have built small camps all over the sphere's surface and struggle to survive.

From their encounters on the sphere, the characters learn there might be a way out. Escaping the place requires moving deeper into the machine. The first stage of the characters' journey is through the Maze, where traps and monstrosities dog their steps. Once through the Maze, the characters discover a great chamber with its walls covered by a million flickering portals that lead to worlds in other universes.

The adventure ends when the characters find the Heart of the Void and shut off the machine. The ultradimensional space begins to collapse, causing the device and everything in it to fall into the Ninth World, possibly unleashing all these despicable people and strange terrors on an unsuspecting populace.

PLACEMENT

You can place the Mouth of Hell anywhere you want in the Ninth World. It's best if you choose a spot within a day's walk from a modest-sized community. This way, you can explain how the place filled up with people. If you don't want to put it near a community, there might once have been a community nearby that got into the habit of tossing people they didn't like into the Mouth. This could have led to an uprising that ultimately wiped out the people living there. Or, you might say a band of pilgrims sought out the place long ago and passed through it to whatever lay beyond.





THE ADVENTURE

MOUTH OF HELL

The energy leaking out from the ultradimensional space has poisoned the lands near the Mouth of Hell. Nothing grows within a mile of the place. Dead, blackened trees rise from dusty earth littered with human and animal bones along with the remnants of other, stranger creatures. Jagged rocks rise like teeth from the ground throughout, and from cracks in the stone, steam vents fill the air with roiling mist that gives the entire area a hellish appearance. Every hour or so, a faint tremor ripples through the ground. Somewhere in this waste lies the entrance.

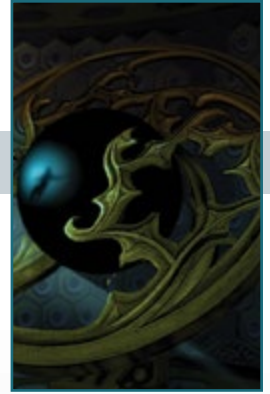
Optional Encounters: You can easily expand this part of the adventure by adding locations for the characters to explore and creatures to fight. A few suggestions follow. If you don't have the *Ninth World Bestiary*, you can substitute other creatures from the *Numenera* corebook or create some of your own.

Accelerator: level 6, perceives as level 8, Speed defense as level 5 due to size; damage 7, health 30; can attack up to three foes with a single action or alter the acceleration of up to three different creatures. For full details, see the Ninth World Bestiary, page 20

Dimensional husk: level 5, social interaction tasks as level 1; damage 3; health 15. For full details, see the Ninth World Bestiary, page 36

- An **accelerator** roams the wastes around the gate. It is a remnant left behind from the makers of the Machine in the Void and it regards any creature it encounters as a threat.
- A **dimensional husk** is all that's left of a person who tried to escape from the Void. The husk might reveal hints about what lies on the other side of the gate, might try to drive off the characters, or might be insane and just attack them.
- Instead of a faint tremor, a strong quake rips through the ground and lasts for a few minutes. When the earth stops heaving, the characters find one of the stone formations has crumbled to reveal a white metal pylon rising from the ground. The top is glass, and a red light rotates inside it. Hieroglyphic symbols decorate the exterior, though they are faded and scratched. A character able to translate the symbols determines that they seem to be a warning of some kind.





GUARDIAN OF THE GATE

People who enter the Mouth of Hell do not leave it easily. The road to freedom is long and dangerous. Without certain precautions, one who stumbles free from the Void becomes hideously changed. The Guardian of the Gate began not as one prisoner, but many. When they slipped free from the Void, they fused into a horrible mass of limbs, faces, and flesh. The transformation utterly shattered their minds, and thus they have become a monstrosity driven by hunger, eager to pull apart whatever it finds to stuff the profusion of maws across the surface of its bulk with sopping meat torn from the bones.

AMALGAM

5 (15)

A gelatinous mass of skin, hair, and limbs, the amalgam crashes over the landscape, a wave of flesh that slithers and slides toward whatever the thing sees. Arms and legs sprout like hairs from the great bubbling tumor, while patches of hair, stiff with its excretions, add to its unwholesome topography. The thing can spread out across the ground in a radius of 30 feet (9.1 m) or draw itself up like a wave to smash down on its prey.

Motive: Hunger

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 3 due to size; stealth actions as level 2.

Combat: The amalgam greedily and idiotically rushes toward anything it thinks it can eat. As it draws close to its prey, it rises up and falls down with incredible force on anything within immediate distance of it. Affected targets are knocked prone, and the only action they can take is to attempt to crawl out from under the mass. Each round a character spends under the amalgam, the character takes 5 points of ambient (crushing) damage. The amalgam is fearless and attacks regardless of the odds.

Loot: The amalgam eats whatever it catches. Characters who pull the body apart can harvest 1d6 + 1 cyphers and an artifact. This is messy and time-consuming work.

FINDING THE MOUTH

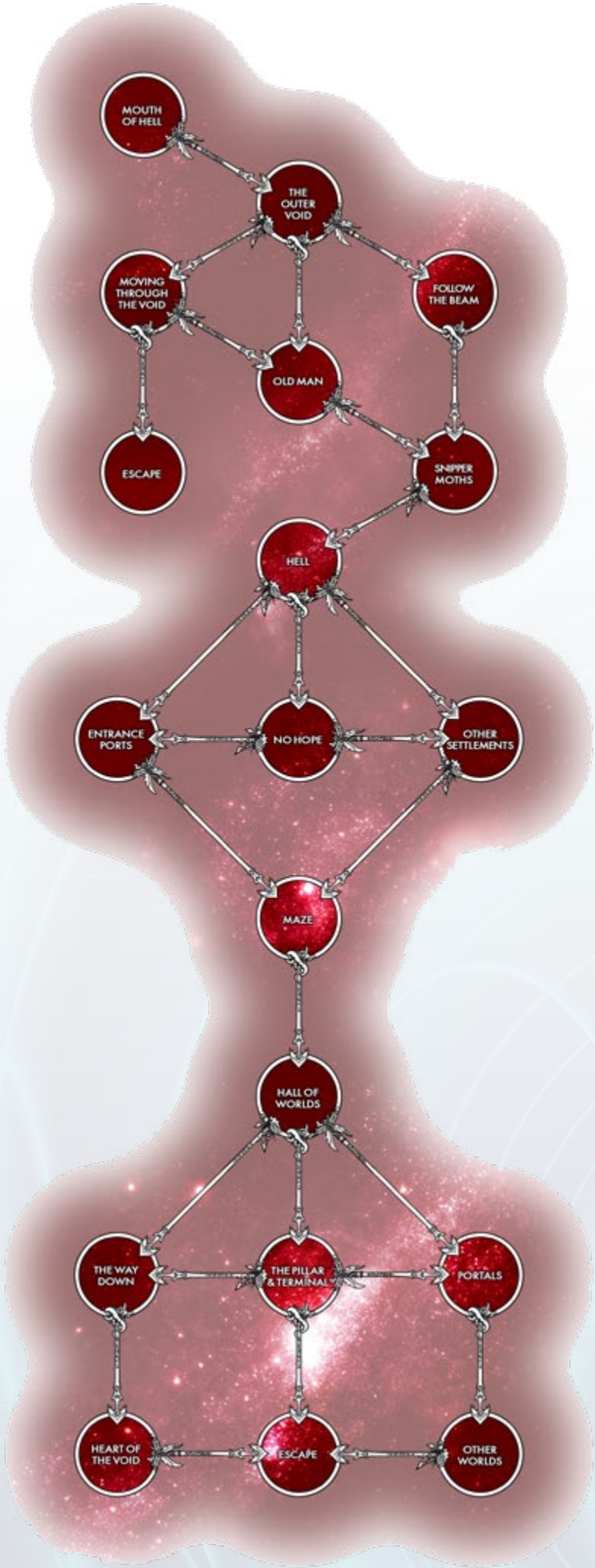
The characters should locate the entrance without much trouble. Footprints from previous visitors, a guide from a nearby community, or simple searching puts them in front of it. The Mouth looks like a wiggling ribbon of crimson light hovering in the air. No heat emanates from it, but it issues enough light for characters to see in the dark. Characters who look around near the entrance see numerous tracks in the dust, smell the stench of urine from previous people who were thrown inside against their will, and find bits of cloth, bone, and other rubbish.

A character merely has to move into the light to be whisked into the Outer Void. When someone does so, the light flares and then returns to its normal dimness. This is a one-way passage, however, so characters traveling into the Outer Void must find another way out.

GM Intrusion: *Injuries the amalgam sustains spurt a foul-smelling stew of blood and excrement that causes the ground around the creature to become slippery. A character near it slips and falls to the ground.*



ADVENTURE PATH





THE OUTER VOID

The Outer Void is an expanse of emptiness that extends out from the machine and serves as the boundary between this microcosm and whatever lies beyond in the gaps between worlds.

Characters who step through the gate experience a flash of bright crimson light. When their vision clears, they see they are standing on a metal platform that hangs in the emptiness. The platform is a disk with a diameter of 10 feet (3 m) and a thickness of 1 foot (0.3 m). Blood, skin, and tattered cloth lie on the disk's surface. Lights flicker all along the disk's outer edge. A metal beam, 1 foot (0.3 m) wide and thick, extends out from the disk and travels through the gloom to a speck of darkness some great distance away. No way back to the entrance suggests itself.

Before the ancients sealed the machine, these platforms allowed them to open portals to different places in the Ninth World. The characters might be able to use the machine to [reopen the portals](#) on each platform, which would give everyone and everything inside an opportunity to escape.

The Void extends around the platform for as far as the characters can see. Uniformly grey, it is broken only by the winking lights of other disks attached to the beams that travel to the center. The nearest disk is 300 feet (91 m) away in a direction you choose, and the characters can see a larger shape on the disk.

Every now and then, a ripple of crimson light flares into existence a great distance away and then disappears.

Moving through the Void: The characters experience gravity while on the disk and the beam. About 10 feet (3 m) away from the disk, gravity's pull abates and characters become weightless. Characters who jump off or move off the platform find themselves in [zero gravity](#) and suffer all the drawbacks for being in such an environment. If the PCs can find a way to push off from the beam or the disk, the character could float away. Reaching the other disk is a level 4 Speed task.

If the characters attempt to move out from the disk away from the center, they can travel in that direction for hours. Eventually, they come into the Void from the other side and see suspended disks and the beams to which they are attached pointing toward the dark orb in the center.

The Light Ripples: The ripples the characters see are weak places in the barrier that separates the Void from the Ninth World. Just

as at the Mouth of Hell, characters simply have to move into one of these lights to return to the world they left. There are several challenges. The ripples manifest for only a few seconds before they fade out. They appear in random locations, and it's almost impossible to predict where one will appear. They appear only in the outermost reaches, and it takes at least an hour of travel to get out there. Finally, anyone who manages to slip through one of these cracks is severely warped by the energies. A character takes 10 points of damage and gains a [harmful mutation](#). This way out is truly a last resort.

THE OLD MAN AND THE CORPSE

The figure seen on the closest disk is an old man named Zebulah. He sits on the edge of his disk, feet dangling over the rim, head down and face hidden by his long, greasy hair. He rocks slowly back and forth. He ignores any calls from the characters, though they can notice he's moving as a level 1 task.

Zebulah is not alone. His wife's corpse lies next to him. The two were tossed through the Mouth several years ago after being deemed political enemies. They crawled across the surface of the sphere, and settled in [No Hope](#). The savagery and terrible squalor eventually drove them to find a way out. They traveled up the beam to the disk, then waited for one of the flashes of light to come close enough to whisk them home. They waited several days. Without food or water, both became a little unhinged and Zebulah, driven by a moment of madness, strangled his wife so he could eat her. After she died, he realized what he had done, and he couldn't consume her. Instead, he sits next to her, holding her hand and waiting for death to take him.

If the characters can reach his disk, they find him painfully thin, with dark circles under his eyes, scratches on his arms and face, and black scabs where the tips of his fingers should be. Next to him, they see his dead wife, her head twisted all the way around.

Zebulah is unresponsive. Gentle words or violent shaking can coax him into conversation. Zebulah can tell the characters the following information. He should seem erratic and distracted, repeatedly looking at his dead wife.

- He tells the characters his story, though he refuses to say anything about his wife and ignores questions about her. At most, he tells the PCs she is sleeping.

Harmful mutation, page 124

Zebulah: level 2

Reopening the portals, page 15

No Hope, page 9

Zero gravity, page 98

*He Who Shudders,
page 20*

*The mantle is made
from dead sniper
moths, and a character
wearing it looks to the
snipper moths like one
of their own.*

GM Intrusion: A
character becomes
distracted by one of
the crimson lights in
the distance and slips
off the beam.

*A sniper moth's
appendages are
perfectly designed
for causing
bleeding wounds.*

- There is no escape from the Void. The lights out in the distance might be ways out, but there is no way to reach them or to predict where they will appear.
- The beams lead to what he calls "Hell." He tells the characters that the Hell is closer than it appears, and if they follow the beams they will get there in a few hours.
- There are many settlements on Hell, and each is worse than the last, filled with horrendous people who deserve to be there.

If the characters treat Zebulah kindly, he offers them his mantle, saying, "I don't need it anymore." He says the character who was nicest to him should wear it, as it will keep him or her safe from the moths. A sniper moth will not attack a character who wears the mantle unless that character first attacks the moth.

Zebulah will not accompany the characters willingly. He would rather stay here and die. If the characters force him to come along, he accompanies them, but attempts to commit suicide the first chance he gets.

FOLLOW THE BEAM

The characters can walk across the beam to make the journey to the sphere the people here call Hell. Since the beam is only 1 foot (0.3 m) across, the characters have to crawl or balance. Each hour the characters walk across the beam, they must maintain their balance (a difficulty 2 task) or fall. Momentum carries them several hundred feet away from the beam, and reeling in a falling character is difficult unless the characters thought to tie themselves together.

As they travel, the characters see splashes of blood, body parts, and other leavings that hint at the danger to come.

SNIPPER MOTHS

Halfway to Hell, a wing of eight sniper moths fly up from the orb to intercept the PCs. Noticing the sniper moths is a difficulty 3 task. On a failure, the characters don't notice the moths until they are within a short distance. In combat with the moths, a character must make a Speed defense roll (difficulty 2) to maintain his balance whenever he attacks or moves. On a failure, the character slips from the beam and falls as described above. Remember, the difficulty of a character's attacks in zero gravity are increased by one step unless she is trained in zero-gravity maneuvering.

SNIPPER MOTH

2 (6)

Formed from the scabs crusting the tarry body of a creature called **He Who Shudders**, these fluttering, noisome things flit through the Maze and scour the surface of Hell for organic material to harvest and add to their master's prodigious bulk. The sniper moth is a flat, misshapen bit of brown-black organic material that flutters through the air by folding its body as if it had wings. Scissor-like appendages extend out from what is more or less the front of it, and between them is a bright spot of blood that it uses as an eye. A sniper moth measures 5 feet (1.5 m) in diameter and is almost as thin as paper.

Motive: Harvest tissue for master

Health: 4

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Armor: 0

Movement: Long while flying; immediate on the ground

Combat: The sniper moth swoops down to snip the skin of a creature it can reach. A character who takes damage from the moth must succeed at a Might defense roll or start bleeding from the injury. On each of the character's turns, he takes 1 point of ambient damage. If he takes damage from the bleeding, the difficulty of Speed defense rolls is increased by one step for one round. A character can use an action to stanch the wound (a difficulty 2 task) and stop the bleeding. A character needs to make this Might defense roll only once per round regardless of how many times he takes damage from the moths.

Loot: The characters can harvest one oddity for each sniper moth they kill.

HELL, THE SURFACE OF THE SPHERE

What the people trapped here call Hell is actually a great metal sphere with a diameter of 1 mile (1.6 km) covered in a layer of dust about 1 foot (0.3 m) thick. The beams jut out from the sphere's surface into the Void to create space in the pocket universe for the machine. The nature of this place distorts distances, making objects appear farther away than they actually are. So although it looked like the sphere was a long way off, it is in fact only a short walk. As the characters near the sphere, they can see fortified camps scattered across its surface. Metal panels, sharpened poles, and other debris encircle each camp, and the characters can see armed human figures standing guard.



Aside from the camps, characters on the beam can see black dimples on the sphere's surface. These are access ports to the interior of the sphere. If the characters watch for a while, they should see a person climbing out from one of the dark spots or going into one.

Once the characters come to within 100 feet (30 m) of the sphere's surface, the gravity of the place asserts itself. Unless the characters have secured themselves, they fall from the beam toward the "ground" and take 10 points of ambient damage on landing. Characters who examine the beam before this point notice handgrips on either side that can be used as a ladder for a safe descent.

SURVIVING IN HELL

The sphere's surface is as barren as it looks. The light throughout is dim, like twilight. There's no water, and nothing could grow in the dust even if there was. If it wasn't for the overlarge grubs infesting the powdery surface, no one would be able to survive. The grubs are gigantic maggots that came through from another universe along with the other dreadful things that caused this place to become abandoned. A grub is a fat, segmented, fleshy, pale grey worm with horny protrusions on its back, and it can grow up to 1 foot (0.3 m) long. These grubs taste bad, but a person can survive by eating one of them every couple of days. People who eat them for a length of time find that their bodies start to change in unexpected ways. Mutations are so common here that everyone but the newest arrivals sports some sort of physical abnormality. Many times, the mutations are severe enough that the victims spend their last few days screaming in pain.

A few settlements have turned to cannibalism, choosing to raid their neighbors for fresh meat. As a result, violence and tension are on the rise, and many believe things are about to get a lot worse.

Runners: A few brave souls have discovered other sources of food in the place. Called runners, these crazy or courageous people pass through the black membranes, make their way through the Maze, and slip into the inner workings of the machine where they can pass through the open doorways to any of a million worlds. Many runners never return. There are dangers aplenty in the Maze and worse things in the worlds beyond. Others quit the surface and the people depending on them to make new lives for themselves in another reality. But a few feel responsible for their fellows and

make runs into the sphere to bring back food, supplies, water, and anything else they can find that will make their time here easier to endure.

NO HOPE

The settlement nearest to the point where the characters arrive is a vicious community of cannibals called No Hope. Home to a dozen people who live in fear of their leader, a hideous man named Mungrun, they conduct raids against runners and settlements for fresh meat. Since there's no weather, the people of No Hope have no shelters, and when they sleep, they just do so in a big stinking pile. A low wall made of metal containers, spools of wire, and other debris offers a modicum of protection. A gap on one side grants access to the filthy interior. Two sentries typically stand guard. Each is a horrid mutant with a bevy of sores crusting its face and extra parts that seem to be climbing out of its flesh. These guards wear armor made from scraps and wield clubs made from human leg bones and hips. Another eight raiders live in the camp. All of these characters are loyal to Mungrun.

Mungrun

Mungrun leads the cannibals in No Hope. As strong as he is corpulent, he struts around his petty kingdom in the nude, the rolls of his glistening body quivering with each step he takes. A pronounced brow forms a shelf over his beady eyes. His mouth hangs open, wormy lips shimmering with spittle, and clusters of tumescent sores blight his skin. He wears a necklace of thrashing grubs around his neck and a crown of wires on his head. He carries a big hatchet.

Stupid, rude, and violent, Mungrun leads by terrorizing the others. He realizes, though, that his numbers are diminishing and that No Hope will be destroyed unless the place gets help. He has made many enemies. So even though the characters' arrival makes his belly rumble with hunger, he has enough self-control to welcome the PCs to his proud community and try to win them over.

Conversation with the leader should be a trial, between his repellent appearance and unsavory habits. He leers at the characters and touches himself while talking to them. He tries to be welcoming, but his horrible manner ought to undermine him. He doesn't know much about the world where he finds himself, and makes up whatever he thinks the characters want to hear. He offers them a place in No Hope if they swear fealty to him.

GM Intrusion: *The bandits decide to attack first and ask questions later.*

Sentry and Raider: level 3; health 9; armor 2

Mungrun: level 5, level 8 for intimidation and resisting threats, level 10 for being disgusting; health 20

Doorways to other worlds, page 13

Shork: level 3, level 6 for sneaking, hiding, and perception; health 9

Shork

Shork hates Mungrun and everything he has done to the small settlement. Mungrun would have killed Shork long ago if it hadn't been for the man's skill as a runner. Shork would have done away with Mungrun if he had a chance and knew he could get away with it.

Of middling height with dark skin, long, tangled hair, and bright white eyes, Shork is the most normal person in the camp, thanks to a diet that usually does not include grubs. He wears tattered clothes and keeps a broken sword through a loop in his belt.

Shork is one of the best runners, having survived over fifty runs so far. During his last run, he discovered an elevator shaft that travels down into the Heart of the Sphere. He didn't descend because he was alone and suspected there was something nasty down there, but he believes the way out must be somewhere in the heart of this place. He would go there again, but he has no one he can trust to go with him.

The arrival of the PCs gives Shork hope. He believes they aren't like the other villains he's living with and thinks they might be his ticket out of this place. For this reason, he keeps an eye on the PCs after they arrive and steps in if things look like they are going to turn ugly. He tries to defuse any conflict between them and the leader to save their lives. If combat breaks out, Shork throws in his lot with the PCs and helps them defeat the chieftain and his henchmen.

If the characters deal peacefully with Mungrun but show signs of being disgusted by him, then Shork pulls one or two characters aside at his first chance. He explains that he thinks he knows a way out of this place, but it's dangerous. She offers to show the characters the way, but they have to leave without Mungrun knowing because he'll never let them leave alive. Shork says the only reason Mungrun and his lackeys haven't killed them and eaten the PCs is because he thinks they might be useful. Shork suggests they all sneak off, insisting to the characters that Mungrun won't follow them into the Maze.

Glea

No Hope's raiders recently kidnapped a few people from a nearby settlement. They've killed and eaten all but Glea. They keep her in a cage in the center of the camp. Glea is a young woman of plain appearance, dirty, and dressed in rags. She's missing an arm and has scars all over her body from an encounter with snipper moths when she was younger. Fierce and

proud, she is not afraid to die. Her courage comes from the fact that she, like Shork, is a runner, and a good one too. If the characters free her, she will help them navigate the Maze.

Development

This is not a nice place, and most of the people living in No Hope are vile miscreants without a single redeeming quality to share between them. Characters who are disturbed or offended by the monstrous leader might try to kill him. Resolve this event in any way that makes sense. An open conflict should be tough since the characters are likely outnumbered. Killing Mungrun in his sleep is also difficult, since he sleeps on the bottom of the pile.

Aside from dealing with Mungrun, the characters should also have the opportunity to talk with Shork, Glea (if they're careful), and other people living in the camp. You can reveal as much or as little as you like about this place, but characters should learn how to enter the Maze (by way of the membranous portals on the surface) so they can proceed to the next part of the adventure when they're ready.

Lingering too long here will probably cause problems. Unless the characters are enthusiastic about helping Mungrun, eating other people, and engaging in other, more wicked activities, Mungrun will tire of them and have his cronies kill them for food. As well, any number of horrors spawned from the Maze or deeper inside the sphere might emerge and attack the settlement. You can choose creatures from this book or other sources as you like.

Finally, the characters might decide to skip No Hope and find a more suitable haven. Other settlements should be equally strange and desperate. Characters will find that their options for food are limited and dangerous and that settlements attack each other all the time. In short, make the surface of this world deadly and ugly. Doing so will convince the PCs they should start looking for a way out.

Loot

Characters who scavenge the rubbish in No Hope find 1d6 + 1 cyphers.

THE MAZE

A layer of tunnels and chambers sits between the metal sphere's exterior and its core. Originally a system of duct works for ventilation, it is now a gantlet through which runners must travel to reach the supplies they need, one made dangerous by the sphere's

Glea: level 3, level 6 for sneaking, hiding, and perception; health 9



system of protections and the perils that stalk the cramped rooms and the passages between them.

The characters can access the Maze through one of the hundred or so entrance ports found all over the surface of the sphere. Each port has a diameter of 5 feet (1.5 m) and is covered by a thick, gelatinous, black membrane. The membrane allows air to pass through and filters it. Small creatures find the membrane too thick to pierce, but a human-sized creature can push through it. The membrane automatically repairs itself when something passes through it.

NAVIGATING THE MAZE

The Maze is a lattice of chambers connected by passages. Each chamber is a dark metal room 10 feet (3 m) on a side and pierced on each side by a round tube with a diameter of 5 feet (1.5 m) that extends 10 feet (3 m) until it connects to an identical chamber. This lattice extends inward nearly 1,000 feet (305 m) until it opens onto the core. This means the characters have to travel through some fifty tubes and chambers to reach the center, which would not be difficult if the characters had a straight path from the surface. As the machine has begun to fail, many chambers have become dangerous. Others have disappeared, while others still are now contaminated with poisonous gas, parasites, and radiation. Also, several predators roam the chambers looking for creatures to eat.

When the characters enter the second chamber and every couple of chambers thereafter, roll a d20 or choose a result from the chambers described below to determine what's inside one. If the characters have already had that result, they instead find an empty chamber. After the characters find their third dangerous chamber, the characters can make an Intellect roll (a difficulty 5 task) to navigate the Maze each time they come to a chamber and need to decide which direction they should go. On a success, the characters find the Path to the core three chambers later. On a failure, the characters can repeat the roll every two new chambers they explore, reducing the difficulty each time by one step. If at any point you feel the story is starting to lag, jump ahead and get the characters to the Path in the next chamber they enter.

If the characters have a guide with them (Shork or Glea), they encounter only two possibly dangerous chambers before traveling



through a series of empty chambers that lead to the Path.

1. **Fire:** When the third person moves into this chamber, a pipe bursts and fills the room with fire. Characters in the room must make a Might defense roll (difficulty 2). On a failure, a character takes 6 points of ambient damage from the roaring flames. On a success, a character takes 1 point of ambient damage.
2. **Cracked Pipe:** A shrill whistling noise sounds as gas escapes from a cracked pipe. Anyone moving through this chamber must make a Might defense roll (difficulty 4). On a failure, the character has a *weakness* of 1 in Intellect for one hour.
3. **Sticky Strands:** Sticky, gluey strands fill the room from floor to ceiling. To proceed through this chamber, the characters must make a Might or Speed defense roll (difficulty 4) to maneuver through the webs. On a failure, a character gets through, but the gluey substance clings to the character and increases the difficulty of all Speed rolls by one step until the substance is burned off or dissolved with alcohol.

Weakness,
page 114





*Steel spider,
page 260*

*Cosmetic mutations,
page 128*



Chirog, page 235

4. **Poison Gas:** A faint green mist fills the room. A character might notice the haze (difficulty 2). The mist is poisonous. Anyone who enters this chamber and breathes the air must make a Might defense roll (difficulty 4). On a failure, a character moves one step down the damage track.
5. **Radiation:** Radiation permeates this chamber. One hour after a character moves through this room, she must make a Might defense roll (difficulty 3). On a failure, the character takes 3 points of ambient damage from radiation poisoning and has a weakness of 1 in Might
6. **Skin Mites:** The walls, floors, and ceilings in this room look rusty. The rust is a blanket of tiny red mites. Any character who moves across the surface must make a Speed defense roll (difficulty 2). On a failure, the mites infest the character. The difficulty of all her Speed rolls is increased by one step until the character washes her body and possessions.
7. **Treasure:** A pile of junk sits in one corner. Characters who search the pile find 3d10 shins.
8. **Heat:** This chamber is extremely hot. Provided the characters don't linger here, there is no danger. A character takes 1 point of ambient damage from the heat every 10 minutes she spends here.
9. **Electricity:** The walls, floor, and ceiling of this chamber are electrified. Any character who comes into contact with a surface in the chamber must make a Speed defense roll (difficulty 4). On a failure, the character is electrocuted and takes 6 points of ambient damage.
10. **Dripping Water:** Water leaks into this chamber from a crack in one wall. The water is clean and safe to drink.
11. **Lit Room:** A minor glowglobe floats in the center of this room.
12. **Dead End:** There are no exits from this room except the passage by which the characters entered it.
13. **Dead Runner:** The corpse of a runner lies in various places around this chamber. The Maze sweeper ripped him to pieces. Characters who search his remains find a cypher and an oddity or two.
14. **Chirogs:** A band of three *chirogs* have become lost in the Maze. They are hungry and very aggressive.
15. **Cyphers:** Part of the wall caved in here, revealing a mass of wires and mechanical

components. Characters who scavenge the components find 1d6 + 1 cyphers and an oddity.

16. **Missing Chamber:** The chamber that's supposed to be here is missing. Each tube that connects to it simply ends. Wires and machines fill the space and throw deadly sparks. Characters who attempt to move through this area must make Speed defense rolls (difficulty 6). On a failure, the character is electrocuted, takes 6 points of ambient damage, and becomes stunned for 1 round, losing his next turn. If the character is not pulled out, the character takes the damage again each round he remains in contact with the machinery.
17. **Cold Room:** This chamber is extremely cold, and frost covers every surface.
18. **Steel Spiders:** This chamber is a nest of four *steel spiders*. They have stretched their webs across the adjacent tunnels.
19. **Warp Room:** Strange energy leaking from another world causes any character who moves through this room to gain a *cosmetic mutation*.
20. **Artifact and Cyphers:** Some machinery covers the floor of this chamber. Scavenging characters find 1d6 cyphers and one artifact.

MAZE SWEEPER

Although the ancients that built this machine are long gone, many of its automated functions are still in operation. The Maze sweeper maintains the chambers and tubes by keeping them free of debris. Anything it finds in the chambers it considers debris. It sets to reducing an offending substance it finds into pieces, as many and as tiny as possible.

You can have the characters encounter the Maze sweeper at any time they are in the Maze.

MAZE SWEEPER 5 (15)

The Maze sweeper is a spheroid mechanical organism that bristles with bores, brushes, saw blades, and other sinister bits. Lights shine from the thing in all directions so that it can inspect its environs. It defies gravity, so it can move through the Maze without trouble. The entire thing is no larger than 5 feet (1.5 m) in diameter and is weightless while active. The Maze sweeper is filthy, thanks to its work and is covered in whatever it has most recently cleaned.

Motive: Keeping the tunnels clean

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points



Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Combat: When the Maze sweeper detects a foreign object, it zooms forward to clean it by subjecting the target to an assortment of lethal cleaning tools. The sweeper attacks all characters within immediate distance from it. A character who takes damage from the Maze sweeper must also make a Might defense roll. On a failure, the character becomes infected with a disease. Each day thereafter, the character must make another Might roll. On a failure, the character takes 5 points of damage (ignoring Armor) and has a weakness of 1 in Might. A character recovers from the disease after three successful rolls.

Loot: The characters can harvest many interesting things from its body, including 1d6 + 1 cyphers, a couple of oddities, and 1d10 shins.

PATH TO THE CORE

The most direct and route to the core is the Path, a route many runners discovered that provides a straight shot into the Hall of Worlds. Whether their guide led them to the core or they stumbled across it while navigating the Maze, the PCs find the Path is a round shaft with a diameter of 100 feet (30 m) that descends into the heart of the sphere at a steep angle. The characters can climb down the shaft (difficulty 2), but it's too steep to walk. The shaft has smooth walls made from metal and polished to a mirror finish. At regular intervals, a tunnel connects to the Path on either side. The tunnels, of course, lead to the Maze

Regardless of where the PCs enter the shaft, it's a descent of 500 feet (152 m) to the center.

THE SPACES BETWEEN

He Who Shudders has spread throughout the machine and fills in the gaps between the tunnels and chambers. If the characters try to smash through the walls, a foulness leaks in through the cracks. If they persist, tar floods the chamber. PCs must make Speed defense rolls (difficulty 2) to escape before being washed away by the putrescence. Failure indicates that the flow washes the character down into the next chamber.

The shaft ends at a grill that has been warped and bent to allow a human-sized creature to move through it. Throughout the shaft the characters find bits of organic material left by the sniper moths and a couple of sniper moth carcasses.

HALL OF WORLDS

The Hall of Worlds was the place where the ancients looked into other universes and could travel into them by way of the million portals adorning the walls of this enormous spherical chamber. The characters most likely enter this room by way of the Path to the core, which comes into the room through a grate near the floor.

A great black pillar commands the center of the chamber. Stairs wind around it and climb up to the top. Two heavy steel doors on the pillar's far side, opposite where the characters enter the room, have been wedged open.

The floor, also black, spreads from the pillar out to a distance of 500 feet (152 m) until it meets the walls. The walls rise up to form a sphere. A web of metal scaffolding connected by stairs and ladders spreads across the walls and allows access to the countless rows of grey disks that cover the walls. Every few minutes, one of the disks blooms with light, signaling that it is open, meaning that a character can move through the portal to another world and back again. The portal remains open for a few minutes before going dark and closing.

Radiation saturates this area. Each hour a character spends in this room, she must make a Might defense roll (difficulty 3). On a failure, a character suffers 6 points of ambient damage and takes a cumulative -1 penalty to recovery rolls. The penalty lessens by 1 every 28 hours a character spends in an area not saturated by radiation.

THE WAY DOWN

The doors in the pillar's side open onto a very dark shaft that's 10 feet (3 m) wide and long and that descends some 200 feet (61 m) before reaching the destroyed elevator at the bottom. Inside the shaft on the right side of the door is a metal ladder that leads all the way down past the elevator's roof. Ten thick, greasy metal cables hang from a spool in the ceiling. All but one of the cables has been cut. The intact cable descends into the darkness to where it's attached to the elevator.

The shaft leads down to the engine room far below, and it's in that area where the characters have a chance to find a way back

The Heart of the Void, page 17

to the Ninth World. If Shork is with the characters, he tells them that he has been down this way and he believes the secret of the place rests somewhere down here. He didn't go farther inside because he thought there was something else in the darkness, something that scared him.

PCs can use the ladder to climb down the shaft. Climbing the walls without using the ladder is a difficulty 4 task, while shimmying down the cable is a difficulty 6 task since it's covered in thick, goopy grease. If they reach the bottom, skip ahead to [The Heart of the Void](#).

The Thing in the Dark

A nasty creature has made its lair in the shaft. It survives by feeding on the snipper moths that fly up through the elevator car in the bottom. Characters who enter the shaft catch a whiff of rotting meat wafting up from the bottom. The thing lurking here is a revenor, a nightmarish horror from another universe. It clings to the wall of the shaft about halfway down. It notices when something enters its lair and conceals itself using its camouflage ability until the characters come within reach.

REVENOR 4 (12)

Few creatures that fall prey to the revenor ever realize the danger they were in. One moment all is fine; the next brings nothing but pain, followed quickly by death. Like a chameleon, the revenor alters the colors of its hide to blend in with its surroundings. By remaining perfectly still, it is practically invisible. When the revenor attacks, its spider-like body turns rust-red, revealing nine fleshy appendages emerging from its misshapen body. Each one ends in a three-fingered grasping hand. Sucker-like protrusions extend from its fingertips, enabling it to cling to walls and ceilings. In the center of its body is a hole with four flaps. Each flap bristles with sharp teeth that catch and rend the creatures the revenor catches.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 6; climbing and hiding as level 8

Combat: When a revenor senses prey, it holds still to allow its body to change to the color of its surroundings. It freezes in place so as not to give away its position. When prey comes within its reach, it moves to attack, clubbing its prey with its appendages. If



the revenor's target fails to notice it before the revenor attacks, increase the difficulty of the target's Speed defense roll by two steps. Once the revenor beats its prey to unconsciousness, it stuffs its victim inside its orifice, letting the toothy protrusions rend the flesh so it can digest the pulp. A revenor attacks to eat, so after it gets a meal, it scuttles away to digest it.

THE PILLAR AND THE TERMINAL

The stairs winding around the pillar reach to the top, where the characters find a large, horseshoe-shaped terminal. The terminal controls the entire machine, allowing an individual to reopen the portals to the Ninth World, to open portals in this room to other universes, and to learn the purpose for which this machine was made and why it was abandoned.

The terminal wraps around the top of the pillar. The floor within is soft and spongy. Eight chairs hover over the floor, each in position before one of eight black glass displays. Unfamiliar characters and numbers crawl across them. Below each display are two sunken trays filled with pink gel.

A character who sits in front of a display can sink her hands into the gel. Doing so causes



the machine to merge with the character's consciousness, and the character becomes stunned for as long as she remains merged. The character must make an Intellect defense roll (difficulty 5). On a failure, nothing else happens. On a success, the character gleans some information about the machine. Although she remains stunned, other characters can see random circles on the room's walls flash with bright light as they open and dim as they close, reflecting the influence of the character on the machine

Regardless of success or failure, the character remains merged until someone else pulls her hands free. A sudden break from the machine in this way inflicts 5 points of Intellect damage. If a character who succeeded on the roll survives this experience, she learns the following:

- The general purpose for which the machine was built, and hints to what happened to the people who built it, as described in the Background (page 2).
- How to open a portal and close it.
- How to unlock the portals that link this place to the Ninth World. The character, while merged with the machine, can give a command. One, some, or all of the platforms hanging in the Void, as the user decides, flare with bright red light. Anyone can move onto a lit platform and return instantly to a destination in the Ninth World that is familiar to the character.
- How to shut off the [machine in the Heart of the Void](#). Shutting off the machine will cause the pocket universe to close and eject the machine and everything in it into the Ninth World.

Once a character has successfully merged with the machine, the character can place her hands back into the gel and use the machine to open or close any sphere she chooses. Each time the character does so, she must make an Intellect defense roll (difficulty 5). Success indicates the character can safely withdraw her hands. Failure indicates that the machine inflicts 5 points of Intellect damage when the character pulls her hands free.

Loot: Characters that dismantle the machine can harvest from it 2d6 cyphers, 1 artifact, and 1d6 oddities.

THE PORTALS

A million portals, each with a diameter of 3 feet (1 m), cover the walls of this room. Adjacent

to each one is a platform large enough to hold several observers. When not active, they are grey and featureless. When active, they shine with light, revealing the landscape beyond. Many worlds they show look familiar, while others appear strange or deadly. One place shown is the same location in the Ninth World where the characters entered the machine, but as it exists in another universe.

Even if the characters don't figure out the machine, the failing technology causes some portals to open and close at random. The portals allow physical objects to move in and out, but hedge out atmosphere and very small creatures, similar to the membranes that offer access to the sphere's interior.

The characters might use a portal to escape the machine and make new lives for themselves in another world. Or, the character might mount expeditions into other worlds, using this place as a nexus for further adventures of your own design. The radiation filling this room, the lack of supplies, and the threats posed by the things lurking in the Heart of the Void make an extended stay here unlikely or even impossible.

Portal Destinations

Given the number of portals in this room, describing the places they access is well beyond the scope of this adventure. The worlds run the gamut. They range from the eerily familiar to the downright strange, and everything in between. Some worlds are inhabited with life similar to that found in the Ninth World, while others are barren wastelands, drenched in radiation, choked by a poisonous atmosphere, or featuring temperatures that plunge far below freezing or soar past the point where water boils. The runners have managed to find a few worlds that are not immediately hostile to life, and in some of them they also have found materials useful to their fellow survivors huddling on the surface of the sphere.

This is a great opportunity to take your campaign in new and unexpected directions, to open up new vistas to explore, and new perils to face. For threats and dangers, you can use the existing creatures as written, modify them, or just make up new ones that fit into the world the characters explore.

Characters who step into a portal travel to the spot the portal depicts. For as long as the portal stays open, it reveals itself in that world as a faint ribbon of red light, not unlike the flashes the characters saw in the Void. A PC

The characters might see viscous black ooze leaking from the walls between the portals. This goo is the body of He Who Shudders as it continues to spread throughout the machine.

Machine at the heart of the Void, page 17

Atmosphere

Roll	Result
1	None
2	Radioactive
3	Poisonous
4	Thin, clear conditions
5	Thin, some clouds
6	Normal, clear conditions
7	Normal, some clouds
8	Normal, heavy clouds
9	Dense, some clouds
10	Dense, heavy clouds

Visibility

Roll	Result
1	Mist, fog, clouds, gases
2-4	Clear
5-6	Precipitation

Temperature

Roll	Result
1	Lethal cold
2	Freezing or colder
3	Cold
4	Cool
5-6	Temperate
7	Warm
8	Hot
9	Extreme heat
10	Lethal heat

Gravity

Roll	Result
1	No world, vacuum of space
2	Low gravity
3-5	Normal gravity
6	High gravity

Dominant Terrain

Roll	Result
1	No land, acidic or poisonous water
2	No land, salt water
3	No land, fresh water
4	Lava
5	Badlands
6	Sandy desert
7	Rocky desert
8	Rocky islands
9	Lush islands
10	Desolate plain
11	Grassy plain
12	Lightly wooded plain
13	Forested plain
14	Grassy hills
15	Rocky hills
16	Wooded hills
17	Mountains
18	Volcanic mountains
19	Subterranean
20	Weird (crystals, glass, floating landscape)

Life

Roll	Result
1-4	None
5	Scant
6-8	Minor
9	Major
10	Abundant

Civilization and Technology

Roll	Result
1-5	None
6	Stone Age
7	Bronze or Iron Age
8	Middle Ages to Industrial
9	Digital to Advanced
10	Futuristic

can move back into a ribbon and then step out of the corresponding portal onto its scaffold.

To help you quickly determine the kind of world the characters find when they inspect a portal, you can choose results or randomly determine them by rolling on the tables above. It's best to have a few ready before hand. Ignore conflicting results.

ENCOUNTERS

While the characters explore the Hall of Worlds, either (or both) of the following encounters might occur. You can introduce additional encounters to challenge the characters or goad them into action. Just as the characters can

move through an open portal, creatures from beyond can move through one and into this room. If the adventure feels like it's dragging or if the characters have not been challenged, have something come out of one of the portals to attack the PCs. A great choice is the *varakith*, but any creature from the Numenera corebook or the *Ninth World Bestiary* can shake things up.

Reva

Reva was a runner from one of the communities on the sphere's surface. During her last run into the core, she slipped into one of the open portals to search for supplies.



Varakith, page 264

Reva: level 4, level 6 for sneaking, hiding, and perception; health 12



Before she could return, the portal closed, stranding her on that world. Monstrous predators attacked her, and the world's poisonous atmosphere has sickened her. Close to death, she remains near the portal, hoping that it will open, knowing that it will probably not open in time. If the characters open any of the portals using the terminal, Reva comes tumbling through.

A young woman of plain appearance, grey hair cut short, and dressed in rags, she loses consciousness as soon as she comes through. A character can tend to her injuries and rouse her (a difficulty 3 task). Otherwise, she wakes up a few hours later.

When Reva recovers, she offers to help the characters. She's a capable warrior, carries a short blade, and knows her way around the machine. She knows about the passage under the pillar and has not yet explored it because she saw something big and scary clinging to the wall.

Snipper Moths

At some point after the characters enter the Hall, a flock of eight **snipper moths** bursts out from the elevator shaft and wheels about the room, before diving through the grate and flying to the sphere's surface to hunt. If the characters attack the moths, the group turns its attention to the PCs.

HEART OF THE VOID

The Heart of the Void powers the machine. Cutting or disturbing the power can cause the pocket universe to collapse and force the machine back into the Ninth World.

ELEVATOR CAR

Access to the heart is by way of the elevator shaft in the Hall of Worlds. Characters who descend the shaft, dealing with the creature lairing there, can access this area by crawling through the open trapdoor in the roof of the elevator car. The interior is 7 feet (2.1 m) by 10 feet (3 m). Black, slippery slime covers the walls, floor, and ceiling throughout.

The door of the elevator car is closed, but something has torn a large hole through it. The snipper moths use the hole and the trapdoor in the roof to travel to and from the surface. Characters who inspect the area near the doors find a few rotting body parts and organs dropped by careless moths.

Through the hole, the PCs can see into the long hall protected by the Watchers.



WATCHERS

A long hallway extends from the torn elevator door and ends at an archway filled with darkness. The hall is 20 feet (6 m) wide, 100 feet (30 m) long, and 20 feet (6 m) high. Soft light fills the hall, cast by two rows of mostly burned-out lamps in the ceiling. To either side of the hall stand three identical metal humanoid figures.

When the characters enter the hall, a panel opens in the ceiling to drop a floating metal ball equipped with a glass lens. It flies toward the characters. If the characters let it, a red beam shines from it and passes over their bodies. When it finishes scanning them, the beam stops, the lights overhead turn red, and a high-pitched siren sounds from within the walls. The siren signals the six automatons to activate and move to dispatch the characters. Attacking the floating ball sets off the alarm and activates the automatons, unless the characters destroy the ball in one attack.

If the alarm sounds, the machine locks down. The terminal in the Hall of Worlds shuts off and does not function until it powers back on 28 hours later.

SECURITY DRONE

1 (3)

The security drone inspects visitors to the Heart of the Void with its sophisticated scanner, which determines their genetic makeup and compares it to that of the makers. The drone is programmed to sound the alarm if it scans any creature that does not have the same genetic makeup as its creators.

The security drone is a metal orb fitted with a scanning device.

Motive: Prevent intruders from moving deeper into the core.

Snipper moth, page 8

GM Intrusion: *The PC comes in direct contact with the slime. If she fails a Might defense roll (difficulty 2), she takes 2 points of damage.*

Health: 3
Damage Inflicted: 1 point
Armor: 2
Movement: Short when flying, none on the ground
Modifications: Perception as level 5. Hides as level 3 due to size.
Combat: The drone exists to activate the alarm, not fight. If attacked, it looses a crackling bolt of electricity at its attacker. Then it flies back to its cradle, and the panel shuts behind it.
Loot: Destroying the drone and searching its wreckage turns up 1 cypher.

SECURITY AUTOMATONS 3 (9)

The security automatons exist to protect the Heart of the Void from intruders. Each one stands 10 feet (3 m) tall with smooth metal plates covering the inner workings of its head, chest, arms, and legs. The automatons do not speak.

Motive: Contain and destroy intruders

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4

Combat: When activated, a long blade slides out from one of its arms. Security automatons move to prevent intruders from reaching the archway behind them. They move with grace and speed, attacking with single-minded purpose. If a character gets past them, one automaton leaves the fight and follows. The automatons pursue fleeing characters anywhere in the core, but will not follow them into the Maze.

Loot: Searching the remains of a security automaton turns up 1d6 – 3 cyphers and an oddity.

SECOND SHAFT

The archway at the end of the hall opens onto a second shaft that leads both up and down. The characters are near the top, and there's a ceiling just 20 feet (6 m) above. A mechanical apparatus from which hang several greasy cables occupies the center of the ceiling, and there's an opening off to the side. As with the first elevator, a ladder just inside the shaft climbs along the inside and passes up through the trapdoor and down to the bottom, where the elevator car fell a long time ago. Faint light flickers through an open door midway down the shaft.

The ladder climbs about 600 feet (180 m) toward the sphere's surface and ends at a hatch fitted with a door that has a wheel in the center. Turning the wheel allows a climber to open the hatch; doing so spills dust and grubs down into the passage. The hatch opens onto the surface of the sphere.

The ladder descends from the archway 100 feet (30 m). Every 15 feet (4.6 m) or so, there's a door that opens onto a level. Most doors are closed, but they can be forced open (difficulty 2).

The elevator car sits another 50 feet (15 m) below the last door. From above it looks like a heap of rubble covered in tar.

PREPARATION CHAMBER

The first door that descending characters reach opens onto a small white chamber. In the center stands a mechanical device equipped with a seat. A folding arm extends from the top and ends at a flower-like contraption with a sharp spike in the center.

The ancients used this device to inoculate themselves against contagions, poisons, and radiation they encountered when they explored new worlds. Any character sitting in the chair activates the device. The arm at the top bends down to fit over the character's head and jams the spike into the back of the character's neck, inflicting 1 point of damage. A character can escape the contraption with a Speed defense roll (difficulty 2). A character damaged by the device becomes immune to damage from disease, poison, or radiation for 10 days.

Dismantling the device turns up 1d6 + 1 cyphers.

SPECIMEN CHAMBER

The next set of elevator doors open onto a vast storage room. The room is 300 feet by 300 feet (91 m by 91 m). The ceiling, however, is just 15 feet (4.6 m) overhead. A strong chemical odor fills the air.

Fifteen rows of glass and metal canisters fill the room. An alley, 10 feet (3 m) wide, runs between adjacent canisters. Each canister is 10 feet (3 m) in diameter and stands 10 feet (3 m) tall. The base and cap are made from metal with lights and a display on each one. Thick cables run from the base and into the floor. Fluid and a solid mass fill each canister. When characters enter the room, their motion causes green light to shine up from the bottom of each canister, illuminating its contents. The light from the containers is sufficient to fill the room with dim light.

GM Intrusion: *The chair malfunctions. Instead of jabbing the character once, it jabs the character several times, inflicting 3 points of damage.*

GM Intrusion: *A flock of snipper moths fly up from the bottom. They do not attack, but their frantic flight dislodges a climbing character, causing him to lose his grip.*



Each canister holds a specimen the ancients captured from one of the worlds they explored and preserved in a thick, clear gel for further study. The room contains a menagerie of strange and unspeakable creatures, including enormous worms, beetles, things that look like birds, lizards, and others that have no recognizable shape.

Against the back wall are three glass cases fitted with sliding doors. They hold a level 4 **trigger trap** and seven cyphers, including:

- A level 3 **visage changer**
- A level 6 **magnetic shield**
- A level 9 **temporal viewer**
- A vial of level 6 poison that causes the victim to do nothing for one minute except scream as loudly as possible
- A level 5 injector that restores 5 points to one's Might pool
- A level 6 pill that restores 6 points to one's Intellect pool
- A level 8 ray emitter that fires a beam of searing heat up to long range, inflicting 8 points of damage to one target

There are three oddities as well:

- A ceramic head of some unknown creature whose eyes follow the shiniest object in its field of vision
- A glass bead that glows different colors, seemingly at random
- A short metal rod that vibrates when in close range of grain alcohol

Moving into the room reveals the source of the smell. A few canisters toward the back have been broken, the glass shattered, and mutilated contents strewn about in the spilled gel. A titinik, a hairless gorilla-like creature from another universe, made its way down here in search of food. It smashed open a few canisters, but found the contents inedible. It is currently crouched on top of a tank, watching the PCs as they move through

TITINIK 6 (18)

A titinik is a large, hairless simian that hails from another universe. It has a stooped posture and drags its long arms behind it when it moves. Hard plates of chitin cover its pale body like armor, and its wedge-shaped head sports a sizable mouth filled with sharp teeth.

Motive: Hungers for fresh meat

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size; climbs and jumps as level 8.

Combat: The titinik leaps through the air to bring both armored fists down on its prey. A target damaged by the titinik's fists must make a Might defense roll. On a failure, the target falls to the ground. Once engaged, the titinik alternates between its savage bite and its fists, attacking in a wild frenzy until its prey stops moving. Once it makes a kill, it grabs its victim and drags it off to feast.

SUPPLY ROOMS

Below the specimen chamber, another set of doors opens onto a short, white corridor, 10 feet (3 m) long, wide, and high. A red metal door stands in the center of each wall. Entering the corridor causes the ceiling to illuminate, filling the corridor and adjoining rooms with soft light.

Each door leads to a room that contains materials the ancients used. A supply room is 30 feet (9 m) long and wide with a lit ceiling 10 feet (3 m) overhead. Two racks run down the center of each, and hanging on them are tools, a few oddities, a cypher or two, and junk. In the room opposite the elevator shaft, the characters find three body suits—environmental sheaths.

Environmental Sheath

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A full body suit large enough to fit over a human character with a large frame. The suit is made of red canvas and covered with a mesh of reflective black material. The matching helmet completely encases the head and snaps onto the neck guard. The helmet is transparent except for a section on the back that clips to the rest of the suit.

Effect: The sheath protects its wearer from airborne pathogens, poison gas, radiation, and similar environmental hazards, as well as extreme cold and heat (from -100 degrees to 200 degrees). In addition, a character wearing the suit can pass through the energy mesh that blocks access to the Singularity Chamber without harm.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (roll a depletion roll each day that the sheath is worn)

POWER NEXUS

The second-to-last chamber that characters encounter on their way down to the bottom

GM Intrusion: *The floor is slippery with the spilled gel. A character moving to engage the titinik slips.*



Trigger Trap,
page 313

Visage Changer,
page 297

Magnetic Shield,
page 290

Temporal Viewer,
page 296

GM Intrusion: *The titinik strikes with such force that the character flies a short distance through the air.*

is another large room. Inside, characters see thick cables that rise up from the floor and connect to black, floating cubes. From the tops of the cubes, a veritable forest of smaller cables emerges and extends up through the ceiling, carrying power to the entire complex. The ceiling here is 10 feet (3 m) overhead, but the room wraps around the elevator shaft and extends out from it in a 300-foot (91 m) radius.

Characters who search this room discover a power regulator. The device is a sphere with a diameter of 5 feet (1.5 m) that floats in the air. Its function is to regulate the flow of power from the Singularity Room below it to the rest of the machine. The device can be moved around the room but will not leave it. A character might be able to identify its function (difficulty 5). If it is destroyed (difficulty 5), power surges up from the Singularity Room, causing the machine to become overloaded and momentarily shut down. The machine begins to flicker in and out of the pocket universe it creates, returning to the Ninth World and going back again every few seconds until safeguards kick in and stabilize the structure. The first time the machine returns to the Ninth World, gravity asserts itself and all but a small section of dust and perhaps one settlement slide off the surface and tumble to the ground below it.

THE GOD IN THE MACHINE

The black tar smeared all over the shattered elevator car and clinging to the walls at the shaft's bottom is the reason the ancients quit this place. A being from another universe, anathema to all other living things, slipped through reality's cracks and spread its foulness throughout the machine. Upon arriving, it consumed the ancients it encountered, adding their substance to its own, which is why the snipper moths that flutter up from its body can move unmolested past the few remaining automatons that protect the machine. Unfortunately for it, the atmosphere in the machine is toxic to it, causing its fundamental material to break down and dissolve into its present goopy state. Thus it sends its snipper moths to harvest organic materials it can incorporate into itself and thereby extend its life.

The thing lurking in the shaft is just one of many such creatures scattered throughout the sphere. Destroying this one weakens the

organism but doesn't kill it. Only by destroying the entire machine can the threat from He Who Shudders be ended.

The thing regards the characters as organic material suitable for assimilation, and so it attacks them when they reach the bottom door in the shaft.

HE WHO SHUDDERS 7 (21)

He Who Shudders spreads across the wreckage and creeps up the walls, infesting the area like mold. Its touch has weakened the walls in places, enabling it to spread throughout the machine.

In its own universe, He Who Shudders is a crystalline being that can reorganize itself into whatever shape it chooses. In this universe, exposure to the environment it finds toxic has destroyed its beauty and reduced it to an ocean of black slime. Worse, it is sick and lethargic, and the pain it experienced after becoming trapped here has driven it insane.

Motive: Survival

Health: 48

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Immediate

Modifications: Perceives as level 10; Speed defense as level 5 due to size.

Combat: When He Who Shudders senses living creatures nearby, it issues a psychic murmuring that inflicts 1 point of ambient Intellect damage to each creature within immediate distance of it on each of its turns.

In addition, He Who Shudders launches four pseudopods from its body as a single action to strike at four different targets within range. Any character who takes damage from its pseudopods must make a Might defense roll. On a failure, the creature injects enzymes into the target's system that causes rapid degeneration of its body, increasing the difficulty of all tasks by one step until the target makes a recovery roll. If a character becomes debilitated by He Who Shudders's attack, and it has increased the difficulty by at least one step because of its enzymes, the character collapses into a tarry substance that flows into the creature and lets it recover 1d6 health.

GM Intrusion: A character affected by He Who Shudders's enzymes becomes paralyzed for 1 round.



THE HEART OF THE VOID

The lowest set of doors in this shaft are closed and must be destroyed or forced open (a difficulty 3 task).

The doors open onto a short ledge that protrudes into a spherical room that has a diameter of 33 feet (10 m). At the center hovers a great ball of utter darkness that seems to drink in all light. A fine bronze metal frame surrounds the darkness. The walls throughout this room are made up of tiny white tiles, each fitted with a glass lens held in place by a silver ring.

The darkness in the center is an unstable black hole created and contained by the surrounding frame. The black hole powers the machine. If the characters can break the frame, the singularity collapses into itself and kills all power to the machine. There are some complications, however.

Energy Lattice: An invisible energy field extends 1 foot (0.3 m) around the sphere and the frame. Any character who tries to touch the frame or the darkness inside must make a Speed defense roll (a difficulty 7 task). On a failure, radiation burns whatever comes in contact with it, inflicting for 7 points of ambient damage. Any character immune to damage from radiation (such as a character wearing one of the suits from the Supply Rooms) can reach through the field and touch the frame or the darkness without being harmed.

Frame: The frame surrounding the darkness provides stability to the singularity and translates its weird energy into power that sustains the machine. A character who reaches through the energy lattice can attempt to deactivate the lattice (a difficulty 4 task) or deactivate the frame (a difficulty 7 task). The frame is immune to all damage while the lattice is activated. Anything that inflicts 4 or more points of damage weakens the frame and causes it to slide into the darkness. This, in turn, causes the darkness to waver and pulse for a few moments and then collapse in on itself until it finally winks out. Once the singularity collapses, the machine loses power and falls into the Ninth World.

Singularity: Anything that comes into contact with the darkness freezes in place, trapped in time. This state lasts indefinitely. If the framework is destroyed and the singularity collapses, a character trapped in this way is freed.

Solid Light Guardians: Anything that comes

into contact with the lattice, the singularity, or frame causes beams of light to shine from several of the lenses in the walls. The light assembles one guardian for every two characters in this room. The guardians look almost human with pale red skin, no hair, and glowing red eyes. They speak when they appear: "Can we help you?"

If the characters persist in trying to tamper with the sphere, the guardians attack them, fighting until destroyed. A guardian reduced to 0 health dissipates into motes of light.

AFTERMATH

Escaping the machine ends the adventure. The characters can escape by leaping through one of the unstable portals, reactivating the portals on the platforms suspended in the Void, or causing the machine to fail so that it tumbles back into the Ninth World. How the adventure ends may entail other consequences.

Machine is Intact: If the PCs escape the machine while it's intact, it remains as it has for countless millennia. People can wander in and possibly become imprisoned or fall victim to any of the nasty tricks and traps. Horrors might come through portals to the machine and find their own way out. With the machine still out there, drifting atop the surface of the universe, the PCs might return, especially if they find a reliable way out. The thrill of exploring other worlds might be too much to pass up for some groups.

Of course, there's He Who Shudders. Its infestation could be the reasons the machine has begun to fail, and if so, it's just a matter of time before it emerges from the universe and releases the strange creature into the world.

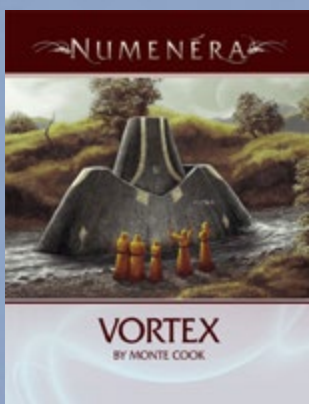
Machine is Deactivated: Shutting off the machine causes the pocket universe it occupies to collapse in on itself in a matter of minutes. The machine slides out of this universe and into the Ninth World or, if you prefer, another world in a different universe. The machine has no gravity while nonfunctional, so everything on its surface slides off and tumbles to the ground, followed shortly thereafter by the machine. The device might fall out of the sky, suffering tremendous damage and causing the same when it lands. The wreckage is ripe for further exploration. More artifacts and cyphers and oddities undoubtedly await keen searchers and scavengers, while monstrous things from other worlds might stalk the ruins, confounded by the new world they have found.

*Solid Light Guardian:
level 3; health 9*

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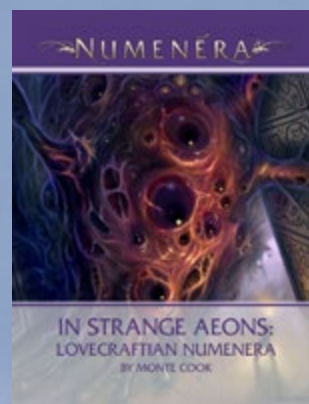
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