



BURIED BURDENS

A Numenera compatible scenario
by Fabio Passamonti

Requires the Numenera corebook
from Monte Cook Games



BEYOND THE EDGE

Beyond The Edge is a useful Numenera compatible digital resource for your roleplaying campaign. Every installment brings you in-depth characters, mortal perils and breathtaking locations. Each issue offers new game options, creatures and thrilling adventures – everything you need to take your campaign beyond the edge...of the known world. *Beyond The Edge* is optimized for tablet and on screen reading.

INTRODUCTION

Buried Burdens is an adventure designed with four beginning characters in mind, although some exploring skills may be essential to the party. It could easily be located in almost any barren region of the Ninth World.

HISTORICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Millennia ago, when the Kingdom of Xendalia controlled the land now known as Dustdale (a region of the Scattered Lands, which can be placed nearly everywhere beyond the Beyond), an hermetic covenant created the Xenostats, powerful defensive structures to protect the borders of the land. These machines controlled insidious shell-like traps. In fact, buried underground lay dozens of dormant xendoids, bioengineered insectoid creatures specifically bred to fight enemies of the country. The covenant configured the xendoid to remain quiescent until enemies breached the borders of the land. Should an invading army approach the Xenostats, the trap would unleash a monstrous horde upon the unsuspecting ranks of the enemy. Occasionally these traps were activated, though in many cases they remained undisturbed. As the kingdom was annihilated by an ecological cataclysm these mines were left – forgotten and undisturbed – awaiting the unwary to trigger them.

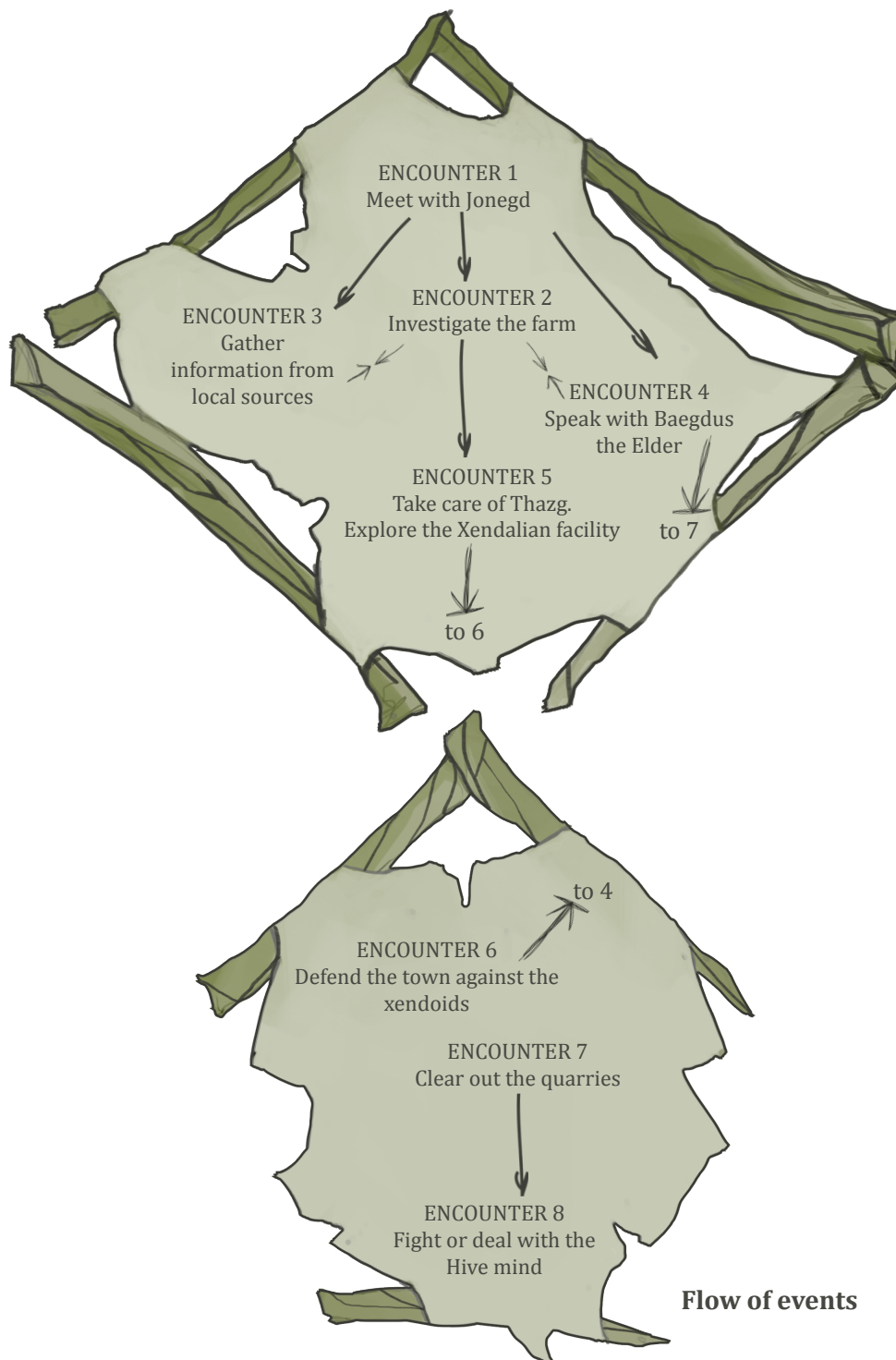


A THRILLING ADVENTURE

For larger parties (5-6 players) or experienced characters the adventure needs some adjustments to be thrilling. For tier 3 or 4 characters, double the number of the bandits. Additionally Thazg is now a Convergence magister of renown. If you're running *Buried Burdens* for tier 5 or 6 characters, do as above and increase the level (proportionate health, damage inflicted and other factors) for all creatures, obstacles (such as the defense trap in the bunker) and bandits, and the Armor of all creatures and bandits by 2.

To increase story tension, have Teuul's son (Encounter 3) taken captive (and not murdered) by the bandits. This way the PCs will feel the urge to act, as consequences of a delay could be more serious. Don't forget, that a hostage situation significantly changes the stakes, as the bandits could take advantage of the prisoner by using him as bait, leverage or - worse - a human shield.





THE ALDEIA OF AMPLE QUARRY AND ITS TROUBLES

Ample Quarry is a mining aldeia of about 200 people, whose economy relies basically on quartz extraction. It's located in a valley strewn with Xendalian ruins, a few miles from The Nameless Road, which leads to the Golden Shore and the rich metropolis of Mirage.

An elected local serves as spokesperson for the town. Jonegd, a charming rascal in his forties, currently leads, while his wife – Yphia the Melodic – runs the Crystal Rest, Ample Quarry's only public house, music hall and hostel.

Problems started when Thazg – a ruthless **Convergence** agent (page 223 of the **Numenera** corebook) – and his bunch of thugs hid themselves in an old facility near the town limits, searching for lost Xendalian knowledge. While Thazg's goons began to rob more isolated estates, the Convergence agent discovered a bizarre and baffling device shut away in a strongroom. After the murder of a farmsteader and his family, Jonegd has resolved to prevent further bloodshed through any means. Unfortunately, the progression of events will release a far worse threat upon Ample Quarry, as the machine recovered by Thazg is none other than a still functional Xenostat, connected to a number of Xendalian traps buried below the area where the town now stands.

HOW THE STORY STARTS

The easiest way to get the PCs involved is by having them hired by Jonegd to deal with the bandits. Despite being a daring man, Jonegd knows that this gang is a tough threat not to be taken lightly. A few other options are:



1. The PCs hear from an old friend or a distant relative who lives in Ample Quarry, asking them for help.
2. The PCs just wander into the aldeia on their own, and find the slaughtered farmers family (start from [Encounter 3](#)).
3. The PCs intend to visit Baegdus the Elder knowing that he is a renowned scholar, and the priest asks them for help against a Convergence cell operating nearby (start from [Encounter 4](#)).

ENCOUNTER 1: THE CRYSTAL REST

The PCs have gathered at the Crystal Rest, a striking two-story landmark building located on the main road.

READ THE TEXT BELOW

The ground floor offers a large open space decorated with chunks of quartz. The rocks radiate a soft purple glow all around. The place is crowded with workers, merchants and travelers. Judging by the fine furnishings it looks like a meeting hall and not like an

ordinary diner. An attractive man in his forty approaches you while a dark haired woman plays a large xylophone on a small stage. "Amazing, innit?" He says. "Yphia, my wife, she's a brilliant musician. As for me, I'm Jonegd, Ample Quarry spokesman, like some of you may already know. Take a seat and enjoy the performance. Can I get you something to drink? A star fruit smoothie perhaps?" Jonegd turns out to be a charming man and you have a great time enjoying Yphia's show.

There's a cascade of clapping hands as the last song ends. Suddenly Jonegd's face darkens and the man turns to you. "Look. I hate to ruin your stay but I could use some help dealing with a tough problem. You look like you can handle yourself."



Ample Quarry and its environs

Jonegd tells the PCs that a very brutal gang of thugs has taken shelter near the hills at the edge of Ample Quarry. He points to the nearby burnt out farm as the best place to start tracking down the raiders. The family who lived there was slaughtered just two days ago. Despite being an adventurous man Jonegd recognizes these bandits as a real threat for the town, something he can't deal with alone. He offers various rewards: equipment, help and guidance in the Scattered Lands as well as safe transit to the rich metropolis of Mirage – though the Nameless Road – thanks to his Dust Bedouins friends.

Jonegd remembers the days when he was a good-hearted scoundrel. He still keeps alive a shady network of contacts. No one in Ample Quarry – except Yphia – is aware of his criminal past. The spokesman keeps his long dark grey hair and goatee well trimmed. He wears an odd red lens visor over his left eye.

ENCOUNTER 2: THE OPEN MARKET (OPTIONAL)

This interaction encounter may happen or not depending on the PCs' actions. It can take place before or after they investigate Teuul's farm.

The PCs can gather more information about Ample Quarry surroundings from the locals (Sod'onu, Eonem and Brumt).

READ THE TEXT BELOW

The open market is a large area cluttered with tents and stalls just a few blocks from the main road. Behind a sturdy wooden fence graze a large flock of reptilian ostriches, looked after by a dark

skinned nomad. You can hear the distinct sound of a blacksmith's hammer nearby, and the whistle of a miner going back to work.

The animal dealer – Sod'onu – knows the Scattered Lands very well. He fear the ancient ruins and the secrets buried beneath them.

Quotes: "Forget about those ruins! You may hear the restless spirits' hum in the very earth beneath you feet there." (Speaking of still active machines in the bunkers). Ask Sod'onu for advice and directions (level 3 Intellect task) may earn the PCs one level of asset for all actions to navigate around the hills.

Eonem run's the blacksmith's shop with his two sons.

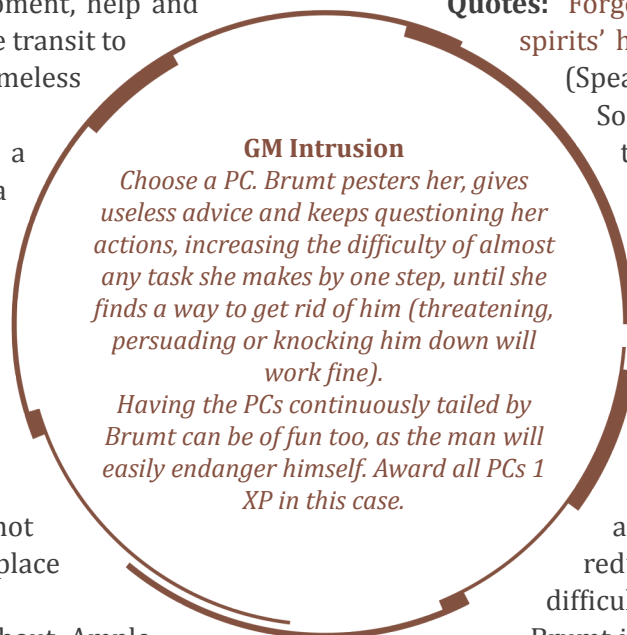
Quotes: "I saw what those bandits did to Teuul's farm. Awful. They're well armed. Set the farm on fire and took away his cattle. Poor wretch."

The hint about the stolen cattle can be useful during Encounter 3. The difficulty of any tasks the PCs take to follow their quarry is reduced by one step, since animal footprints are difficult to hide.

Brumt is an ill-tempered miner. He's of no aid and can only make things worse.

ENCOUNTER 3: THE BURNT FARM

Following Jonegd's directions the PCs can easily find the burned farm. It was a pleasant estate; now columns of foul smelling fumes now rise from the ashes.



READ THE TEXT BELOW

Not long ago this had to be a quiet, beautiful place, filled with farm animals and flourishing crops. Now it's just a pile of still warm embers. The roof of the barn collapsed next to the three-storey house. A gust of wind carries the intense smell of charred bones to your nostrils. Amongst the rubble lie the residents. They all died in a dreadful way.

PCs searching the area find some of the bandits tracks. To succeed in a level 3 Intellect task (trying to figure out what really happened) points to some evidence:

- At least four bandits attacked the estate with dart-throwers and other ranged weapons.
- The bandits were mounted, their steeds hidden behind a large rock.
- The thugs set the house on fire after murdering the residents to cover their tracks.
- The animal pen is empty but there are no dead animals in the yard.

Tracking down the bandits requires a level 3 Intellect task (so PCs who spoke to both Sod'onu and Eonem will succeed almost automatically). Failure means they get lost in the hills for hours (and become Impaired by fatigue). They will eventually reach the hideout, about twelve miles northeast from Ample Quarry (move to **Encounter 5**).

ENCOUNTER 4: THE WISE MAN (OPTIONAL UNTIL ENCOUNTER 6)

The existence of Baegdus the Elder remains unknown until Encounter 6, unless the PCs ask specifically for an Aeon Priest or a local sage. The residents are accustomed to the moody scholar who lives outside the town.

Baegdus is the only Aeon Priest in Ample Quarry, so the aldeia cannot be said to have a real clave.

READ THE TEXT BELOW

The Aeon Priest's shelter lies on the top of a barren hill, a couple of miles away from Ample Quarry. Here you can see the sky perfectly as no town lights interfere. Weird noises – like those of rotating gears – come from the small square building. The hermit, his orange robe worn and patched, greets you with an unreadable grin as he settles strange lenses on his wide nose.

Trying to overcome the scholar's reticence is easier said than done since he hates being disturbed. He's the leading expert on Xendalian history but – as Aeon Priest (although outside the Order of the Truth) – his mind is also focused on numenera insight. If the PCs manage to capture his interest (level 4 Intellect task) the elder may be willing to share a bit of his knowledge. He'll alternatively accept some kind of payment (e.g. cyphers, oddities):

- The ruins surrounding the town were the last defense against

Jonegd: Level 4, level 5 for all interaction (including deceive and negotiate) and to appraise metals and minerals (thanks to his visor);
Armor 1

Yphia the Melodic: Level 3, level 5 to perform (singing, dancing and playing xylophone)

Sod'onu: Level 3, level 5 to tame beasts and wilderness survival; Armor 1

Eonem: Level 3, level 5 to smith

Brumt: Level 3, level 4 to resist intimidation, level 5 to perform mining tasks



outside invasions.

- These crumbling facilities and the quartz veins are likely connected.
- Judging by all the cracking and popping noises the ruins make, foolishly mistaken by locals for ghosts, it seems that some of these structures are still working.

Baegdus is aware of the Convergence's interest in Xendalian lost lore so, if the PCs show him Thazg's medallion, the sage will look even more upset.

If the PCs came here on Jonegd's behalf (after **Encounter 6**), Baegdus looks really concerned about what's going on. He listens to their story without saying a word then asks to examine the body of one of the monsters. When he has done so – nearly five hours later – he cryptically says: “Unbelievable! It's like a silicon-based life form!” or: “This can't be true” and keeps muttering to himself: “I need to complete more research”.

Baegdus won't give up his analysis too quickly, but will share snippets of his findings with the PCs:

- The creature's nervous system seems able to withstand a great deal of stress. Static stimula can activate its otherwise dormant awareness.
- These “insectoid stalkers” (as Baegdus will call them) are formidable diggers and can burrow at an impressive rate.
- Their body somehow incorporates silicon.
- They seem to share informations in a ant-like way, probably by

imprinting in quartz sensory stimula others of their kind are able to read.

- The Kingdom of Xendalia was well known for using biological warfare.
- The creatures probably have a colony in the nearby quarries.

If the PCs report the insects' strange behavior (acting in concert) Baegdus adds that: “Their brain is designed to handle a lot of external stimula. They're probably guided by a controlling mind. Find a way to bring it down and you'll defeat all of them.”

ENCOUNTER 5: THE CONVERGENCE HIDEOUT

It's about three hours march across bleak terrain to reach the bandits' hideout. The stolen cattle and the bandits' mounts are securely tethered to the remnant of a steel spire.

READ THE TEXT BELOW

The trail ends in a narrow rubble-strewn valley. You feel tears begin to flood your eyes as dusty winds blow. A low, constant wail rises from the soil. Oddly shaped metal spires – adorned with unreadable glyphs and symmetrical silicon lines – sprout from the ground. From here you can spot a large tor rising abruptly from the surrounding smooth slopes of a ridge crest. The rock outcrop has an entrance which seems far too regular to be natural.

***Baegdus the Elder:** Level 4, level 5 to resist being persuaded to talk, level 6 to understand the numenera and perform researching tasks.*

GM Intrusion

The entrance guard with the siren whistle surprises the PCs while they observe the bunker. The PCs must silence this thug quickly before he alerts the others.



Two bandits guard the entrance (Area 1 on the map) at night, so the PCs have to deal with them to explore the area safely. Those bandits spend the day in the guard post (Area 2) or in their dorm (Area 3). One of them carries an oddity with a clip hook – a filigree designed spherical **siren whistle** – to raise the alarm.

Bunker Areas: Unless stated otherwise the bunker has thick metal walls and quartz floor. It's rather dark, except for some backlit ceiling panels.

Area 1: This wide passage leads to a bolted vault door (level 5 lock). Unfurnished, it holds only a few wooden crates. If someone is guarding the entrance the defensive mechanism (level 4 device) is deactivated. Otherwise anyone coming from outside triggers a

nasty attack as the quartz lights start to flash violently. Creature in the hallway must make an Intellect defense roll or be dazed for 1d6 rounds.

Area 2: The **bandits** (page 270 of the **Numenera corebook**) use this large area (once a control room) as a guard post. On the wall near the vault door is a metal panel with controls. It's a difficulty 4 task to figure out its purpose (activate or shut down the defense mechanism of the hallway). Other devices – synth panels, handles and faders – are destroyed or not working.

Area 3: This was (and still is used as) a dorm. Camp beds, benches and weapons racks on the walls compose the furniture of the room.

Goods: The thugs have scavenged 20 shins from the machinery of the bunker. They are hidden inside a small metal trunk.

Area 4: Once a store for spare parts. Thazg had to blow up the vault door to search the area. The shelves on the walls are filled with shattered glass and scraps of twisted metal. If the PCs search the area (without care about leave anything intact) they can gather 1d6 random cyphers. If Teul's son is still alive he'll be here, securely tied to a rack.

Area 5: A Xenostat lies within this room. The huge treelike machine, its branching structure made of synth and metal, occupies almost the entire area due to its cogs and offshoots. Thazg can be found here, studying and scavenging the device.

The Xenostat is made up of spinning gears, control panels and motion sensing silicon tendrils that run deep beneath the ground. The machine was connected to the outside spires which worked as transmitters and signal amplifiers. Its purpose was to control the stasis of the xendoids' hives through core-generated pulses, sent through the quartz. It's a difficulty 6 Intellect task to figure out the



The Xendalian Facility



following information:

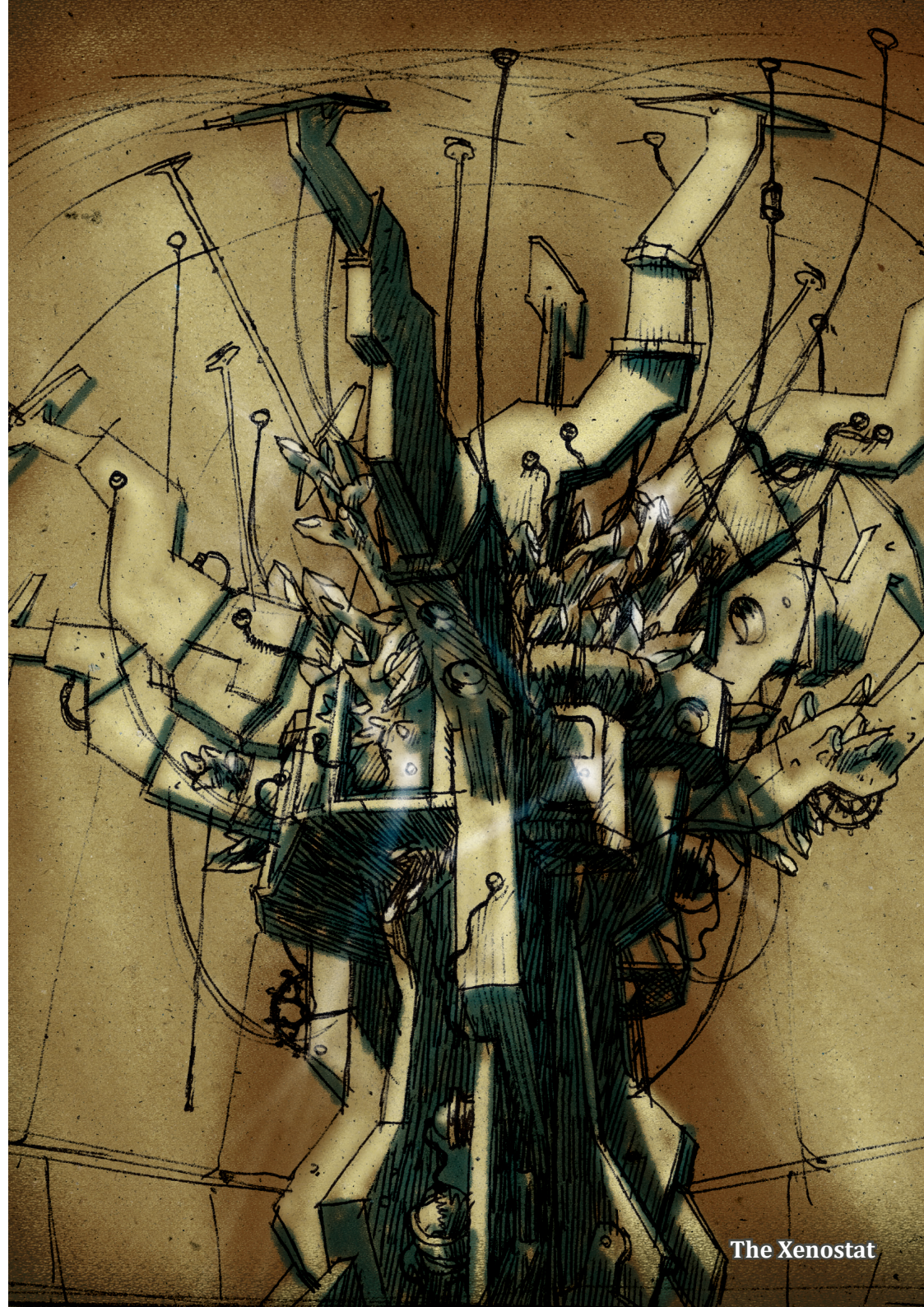
- The machine should spread some kind of signal into the very ground but obviously is not working.
- The device should also send its signal to other repeaters via ether.
- Quartz somehow serves to amplify this signal.
- The machine cannot be scavenged or repaired.

THE CONVERGENCE'S GOAL AND THAZG'S AIMS

Many Convergence members wish to unearth and master the warfare knowledge once achieved by the Kingdom of Xendalia. If you're running *Buried Burdens* for beginning characters, have Thazg simply turn off the Xenostat – by removing its power core – to complete his hover belt. He's a power-hungry rookie and does not really care about the consequences of his actions. It can be more appropriate otherwise – if Thazg's a renowned magister – that he has deliberately unleashed the xendoid horde on Ample Quarry, as a truly hideous experiment. In this case, if Thazg manages to escape from the bunker somehow, you can always have him come back later during Encounter 8.

THAZG'S GANG

It is made up of six cutthroats. Two of them guard the entrance while the others remain in the dorm, inspect the storage or roam the area. They know nothing about the Convergence and serve Thazg because he allows them to indulge in their taste for violence.



The Xenostat



Thazg (Convergence agent)

Level 4 (12)

Description: Thazg wears dark hooded robes and a medallion bearing the Convergence symbol. His Convergence sponsor – Magister Raasul – recognized his ambition and chose him for his talent as machinesmith. He entrusted his protégé with the task of studying Xendalian ruins.

Aims: Power hunger. Pleasing Magister Raasul.

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Resist mental effects as level 5.

Combat: Thazg has a subdermal finger implant. It's a cell-disrupting radiation ray emitter (a level 5 cypher, page 293 of the Numenera corebook).

Special: Ability to gain 2 Armor for ten minutes via a force shield.

Roleplaying Tips: He's a ruthless man with nothing at heart but becoming a magister of the Convergence.

Goods: Thazg has 12 shins, a random cypher and a random oddity.

THAZG'S ASCENSION WAISTBAND (LEVEL 3 ARTIFACT)

Thazg put the Xenostat core – a quartz which emits a now weak stasis field – into a large belt buckle. Height controls were placed on its sides. The belt (a Hover Belt, page 305 of the Numenera corebook) lies on a work table nearby.

If you are running *Buried Burdens* for experienced characters use the game stats below (see A thrilling adventure, page 2).

Magister Thazg

Level 5 (15)

Description: Magister Thazg wears dark hooded robes and a medallion bearing the Convergence symbol. He proved to be a gifted nano as well as a prodigious tinkerer and now leads the Convergence research group studying Xendalian lost secrets.

Aims: Gain more and more personal power.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Resist mental effects as level 6.

Combat: Magister Thazg fights with his terrorizer (page 390 of the *Numenera* corebook). He also has three subdermal finger implants (all level 5 cyphers): A cell-disrupting radiation ray emitter, a numbing ray emitter and a paralysis ray emitter.

Special: Ability to gain 4 Armor for ten minutes via a force field.

Roleplaying Tips: He's a completely deranged and power-hungry nano. He is remorseless in the pursuit of his ambitions.

Goods: Magister Thazg has 22 shins, a random cyphers and a random oddity.

GM Intrusion

Thazg activates a mosquito nanobot hidden among his robes. The tiny construct immediately flies against a target at Long range, searching for fuel to consume. The target must succeed in a Speed defense roll to avoid losing a random cypher. At the beginning of the next turn – assuming Thazg is still alive – the bot will fly back to him, releasing the stolen energy via its sting to heal Thazg an amount of health equal to the level of the consumed cypher.

ENCOUNTER 6: A BITTER VICTORY

This is meant to be a real anticlimax since the PCs' deeds have yet to unleash their direst consequences on Ample Quarry.

The townsfolk are so joyful at the PCs' victory they throw a feast in their honor. Nighttime – while enjoying a well deserved rest – they're abruptly awakened by the sound of a loud crash and bloodcurdling screams. Several tremors shake the ground.

The village is under attack by the xendoids, freed from their dormancy. The creatures are still able to sense out Xendalians' genetic lineages (a security measure to prevent attacks from within) but no one today – except perhaps a few individuals – can claim such bloodlines. The xendoids act to seek and destroy all their enemies since they don't recognize anyone or anything around them. This encounter must really feel like a single breathtaking, fast and furious action sequence. Rather than follow a definite path you can mix up some of these encounters:

- Three xendoids break into the PCs' bedroom through a window at the exact moment they peep out to see what's happening.
- A poor victim is dragged on a roof and is about to fall.
- Two children lie in the middle of the street. The earth beneath their feet crumbles as they're surrounded by xendoids.
- Jonegd asks the PCs to hold back an incoming horde while he blocks the road with two wagons loaded with flammable chemicals.
- A family is stuck in a barn which the monsters are going to



destroy.

- A fire breaks out while the PCs are fighting (or fleeing).
- Jonegd needs the PCs to warn the others: those monsters seem almost immune to electricity.

Xendoid (Insectoid stalker)

Level 2 (6)

Description: Xendoids are insect-like creatures the size of a dog, with a not entirely organic frame. They bear some resemblance to ants, although these similarities are just superficial. Their articulated limbs move unnaturally and make screeching sounds. Xendoids are restless, hideous aberrations always hunting for prey.

Aims: Defend the Kingdom of Xendalia. Obey the Hive Mind.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Armor: 2 (4 against electrical damage)

Movement: Long while on the ground. Short while climbing or digging.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 3 due to nimbleness (4 in tight spaces due to their ability to maneuver and climb). Perception as level 4. Climb and dig as level 6.

Combat: Xendoids attack with their pickaxe-like paws. A pack of three xendoids concentrating on a target can make a single attack as level 4 to inflict 6 points of damage.

Roleplaying Tips: They act like automatons and engage in combat

for one purpose: destroy their enemies.

Jonegd calls a meeting for later that evening, and asks for the PCs' presence. He needs their help to investigate the attack as – for now – the creatures seem to have withdrawn from Ample Quarry. The town has never faced a similar danger before and another assault could easily destroy it for good.

Jonegd shares what he knows about the creatures:

- Can emerge from the ground.
- May stick to vertical surfaces.
- Seemed to follow common aims.
- Tend to fight in packs of three.
- Are resistant to electrical attacks.

Jonegd points out that Baegdus the Elder – Ample Quarry's only Aeon Priest – might know something more about these creatures and suggests (if the PCs don't figure out for themselves) to bring him one of them as a biological sample (move to [Encounter 4](#)).

After the PCs have updated Jonegd about the discoveries made by Baegdus, he will entrust them to destroy the creatures' nest. The dangerous task might be accomplished in one of several ways:

- Wipe out all the creatures from the caves.
- Seal the newer tunnels (e.g. find a weak spot in the caves and set up a powerful disruptor cypher).
- Deal with the mind who controls the xendoids.

GM Intrusion

Three or more xendoids cling to the character. The difficulty of any action she takes while overwhelmed is increased by one step.



Jonegd cannot spare support for the PCs to explore the quarries since the risk of another assault is still high: he needs every man able to fight.

ENCOUNTER 7: DOWN THE QUARRIES

The quartz quarries produce quality vitreous silica, although also recognized as an open-air Xendalian site by scholars. Some of the pits have disappeared under the water of the nearby salt-water lake. They're located five miles southeast of Ample Quarry. The bodies of a mining team lie mangled near a recently-opened grotto.

READ THE TEXT BELOW

The quarrying area is located in an eastern valley, a site noted for the presence of unfinished obelisks and ruined pillars. The materials quarried from the pits give the lake a disturbing reddish hue. Winds have gone and the air is still and awfully warm as you approach the place, distracted by crackling noises all around. Dead bodies are everywhere as miners fell butchered one by one. A recently-opened tunnel leads to maze-like caverns: the earthquake must have fundamentally changed the shape of the mine workings.

The PCs may scavenge some excavation equipment (e.g. from the miners' bodies) before adventuring further.

Searching the area around the quarries for other means of access (level 5 Intellect task) may lead to the discovery of a

ventilation shaft (Area 5).

Cave Areas:

The area beneath Ample Quarry is honeycombed with natural caves. In the darkness of the deep caverns, xendoids lay inactive in the stasis-shells installed by the Xendalian cabalists. Unless otherwise specified tunnels are completely dark, five feet (1.5m) high and ten (3 m) feet wide shafts. Any but the smallest PC takes a -1 penalty to all Might and Speed rolls.

Area 1: This shaft is the most straightforward way to get to the central nest. It's patrolled by a pack of three xendoids but – due to its uneven structure – the PCs may try to sneak past the creatures somehow (level 4 Speed task).

Area 2: The tunnel suddenly narrows to hardly wider than the space a person could crawl through. A sinister glow lights up the small cave that lies beyond. If the PCs manage somehow to reach the other side (through skills, abilities, equipment or numenera items) they see the whole cavern, ten feet (3 m) high, and a nest of unhatched xendoids. For some reason – despite the impulse sent by the Xenostat – stasis-shells have not released the monsters which remain dormant.

The system failure can be a good opportunity to better understand those creatures and their condition. An in-depth analysis of the hatching machinery (a three-hours level 6 Intellect task) earns each PCs involved a +1 bonus for all combat tasks against xendoids. The machine can also be scavenged to find 1d6 random cyphers.

Tips for GMs

Players don't need to know that the hatching machinery is broken for sure. Let them think the creatures can still wake up suddenly, by describing them as they writhe and twist in their shells or pointing out weird noises coming from the device.

GM Intrusion

The noise of the fall attracts three xendoids. They crawl out through a crack on the pit-bottom and attack immediately.





Building Atmosphere

For a great atmosphere it's crucial that xendoids appear as weird, gibberish creatures and not just like huge bugs. Describe them with loathsome words:

- "It seems like its uneven eyes are constantly about to fall out."
- "Their paws produce a clicking noise which makes your skin crawl."
- "Within their translucent, silicon-like chitin, throbs a set of grotesque organs."
- "Its movement are unnatural, like those of a huge, fleshy severed hand."

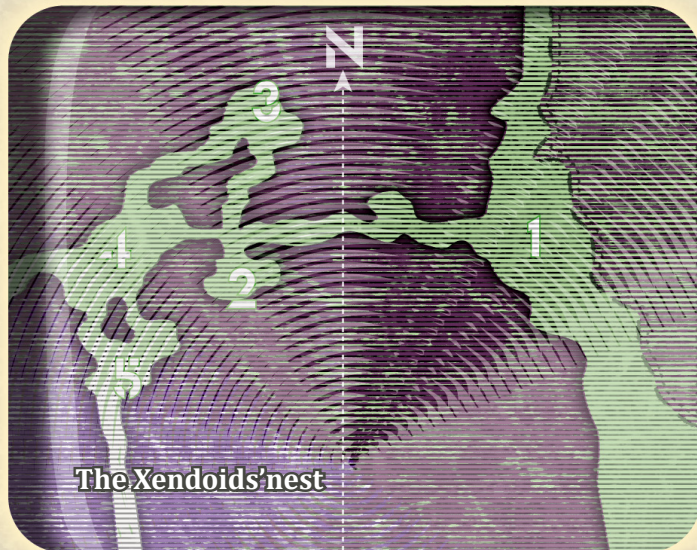
Xendoids awakening



Area 3: A pit lies just barely visible in the floor of this tunnel junction. To spot the cavity is a level 3 Intellect task, but if one of the PCs asks specifically for snares it is automatic. Anyone falling into the pit takes 2 points of damage (damage from hazards, page 94 of the Numenera corebook) and becomes prone. Climbing up the pit is a level 3 Speed task.

Area 4: This large underground chamber hosts a large xendoid nest and the Hive Mind (see Encounter 8).

Area 5: An uneven airshaft – about forty feet (12 m) high – connects this cave to the outside. Climbing up or down this natural lightwell is a level 4 Speed task. The cave is close to the xendoid nest.



ENCOUNTER 8: THE BURIED MENACE

Within this cave a massive natural column rises almost twenty feet (6 m) to the cavern ceiling. It's honeycombed with (now hatched) xendoid stasis-shells. It serves as home for dozens of those creatures. A soft glow – released by huge crystal formations – lights up the area.

READ THE TEXT BELOW

This cave is wider and higher than the previous tunnels, lighted by fluorescent glowing growths of quartz. The shaft from which you just came out lies about ten feet from the bottom of the chamber. An odd alveolate pillar stands amid the cave and more of the odd spherical stasis shells lie open like split grapes. Three of those insect-like creatures are dragging the body of a dead miner toward a grotesque being clinging to the pitted column. It's a massive tarry jellyfish, shaped as a cluster of silicon guts inside an amniotic sac, with a single funnel-like organ. A mess of nerve-like tendrils run from its body into the earth, and make the quartz pulse. It seems only partially organic.

The Hive Mind is busy studying the laborer's corpse. It woke up sensing only enemies around it and – being a semiconsciousness entity – has begun to analyze the current situation.

Although generally ill-disposed towards outsiders, the Hive Mind can be persuaded (it's a level 6 Intellect task) into at least hearing out the PCs, so this encounter may end up in unpredictable ways. Depending on the PCs' actions it's entirely possible that:

- A fight burst out in the cave. The three xendoids try to defend the Hive Mind while it transmits a SOS call to the others. The



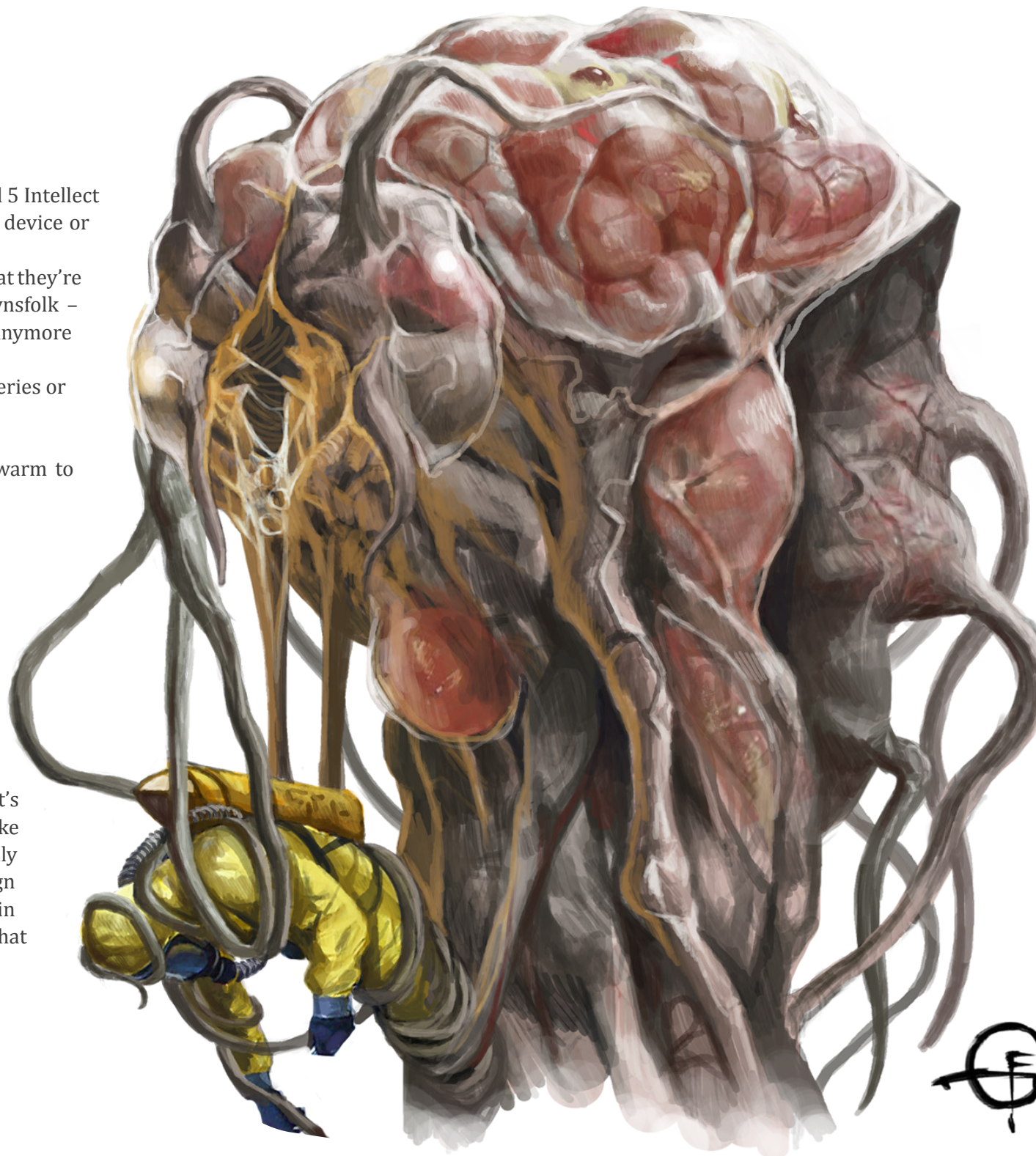
- PCs must take care of the creatures quickly.
- The PCs try to sneak past the stalkers (a level 5 Intellect task), perhaps to set some kind of explosive device or to make the cave collapse somehow.
 - The PCs attempt to convince the Hive Mind that they're not enemies – nor are Ample Quarry's townsfolk – since the Kingdom of Xendalia doesn't exist anymore (a level 7 Intellect task).
 - The PCs try to control the Hive Mind via esoterics or numenera items.

The Hive Mind death will cause the xendoid swarm to disperse.

Xendoid Hive Mind

Level 4 (12)

Description: Xendoid Hive Mind is a freakish fleshy creature not entirely organic. It's a silicon-based life form created to capture and boost signals from Xenostats and direct xendoids' actions. It resembles a huge cerebrovascular organ with a tarry and almost spherical body, docked in a special pillar structure. Its neural network it's made of tendrils which grow in the earth like roots, using quartz to spread orders. It literally absorbs informations from corpses to design warfare strategies. Sometimes it uses a slain victim to communicate (speaking though that puppet-body with a throaty, chilling voice).



Aims: Defend the Kingdom of Xendalia.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 10 against electrical damage

Movement: None (although its offensive tendrils may reach short distance)

Modifications: Speed defense as level 1 since it's almost motionless. Perception and resists mental attacks as level 5.

Combat: The Hive Mind attacks with its strong tendrils. It can whip two targets at a time as level 3. By forgoing it's attack, the Hive Mind can make all xendoids at short range attack as level 3 for one turn.

Roleplaying Tips: The Hive Mind thinks almost like a data processor. Sometimes – when confused or overstimulated – it acts out of curiosity by gathering inputs to conceive a better strategy.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Given enough time, resourceful and imaginative players may come up with truly brilliant solutions. A PC who Craft Unique Objects may try perhaps to create a numenera by which he can govern the Hive Mind. A PC who Controls Beasts or who Craft Illusions could fool the Hive Mind into believing him a Xendalian scion. Others may use their abilities in a way that goes beyond their bounds (**Modifying abilities**, page 114 of the **Numenera** corebook). This kind of gameplay – although demanding – should be encouraged by the GM.

THE AFTERMATH

Townfolk will look at PCs as heroes once they've dealt with the xendoid threat. Even so Ample Quarry has been subject to so much damage its citizens will probably be too busy repairing homes and grieving their losses to celebrate. The town is safe though the dead are significant and the aldeia will be reeling from this for a long time to come. Others might instead blame the PCs for the town ill-fate, as their actions led to the attack of those monsters. The exact way the locals will feel about the PCs it's up to the GM. Jonegd will express his gratitude anyway, rewarding them with shins or provisions and putting in a good word for them with the Dust Bedouins. Their caravan can take them through the Scattered Lands safely. Still, some question remain unanswered: What kind of organization is the Convergence and what purpose did Thazg's plan play in their long term strategy?

ALTERNATIVE BENEFITS

PCs can spend XP to gain rewards specific to their locale and situation.

Contact (3 XP): The character has earned the respect, support and friendship of Jonegd, leader of Ample Quarry. He will help him with information, equipment and shelter as long as he remains in the Scattered Lands. The difficulty of any social tasks involving merchants and scoundrels in the same area will be decreased by one level.

Skill (2 XP): The character learns from the Dust Bedouins how to navigate the Nameless Road without a guide safely.

GM Intrusion

The Hive Mind drains a large amount of mental energy. Targets at short range must succeed an Intellect defense roll or suffer 4 points of Intellect damage (1 XP each).





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CREDITS

Writer

Fabio Passamonti

Proofreader

Paul Baldowski

Graphic Designer

Silvia Lucia Valori

Beyond The Edge Logo design

Roberto Pitturru

Cartographer

Toni Cittadini

Cover Artist

Fabio Gorla

Artists

Toni Cittadini, Fabio Gorla

Playtesters

Mario Basti, Enea Traini, Silvia Lucia Valori

Dedicated to *Gid*, Claudio Trangoni

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