SHARDSFALL QUEST

CREDITS

Author: Joseph Goodman

Art Director: Sean Glenn

Cover Artist: Niklas Janssen

Interior Artist: Jeff Carlisle

Graphic Designer: Rick Achberger

Cartographer: Sean Glenn

Developer: Mike Johnstone

Editor: Ken Hart

Managing Editor: Andrew Bates

Playtesters: Garrick Andrus, Stephen Burt,
Alan Fishman, Michael Goodman, Stephen Pellicer

Dedicated to April.

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INTRODUCTION

Thundering steam-powered walkers lumber across the plains, battling predatory dragons to protect the fearful humans who dwell within their steel-cased skins. At night the shattered moon rises, raining a hail of deadly debris upon the surface. Sturdy city-mechs batten down their hatches, cliffside dwellers retreat to safety under the rock, and worm farmers slink into the tunnels of their charges, for no one wants to be out in the open when the meteorites start to fall. Yet some meteorites hold the secrets of the moon and its alien civilizations — and perhaps the key to ending the lunar scourge that grips Highpoint. When the sun rises again, explorers crawl from their holes and scour the surface for whatever valuable lunar shards might have fallen the night before....

The **Shardsfall Quest** is an introductory adventure for **DragonMech**. It gives the characters a tour of the world, its major political factions, its history and its denizens and dangers. Along the way, the characters face combat, diplomacy, and puzzles. In the end, they become citizens of the prominent city-mech Nedderpik (see Chapter 7 of **Dragon-Mech**), make friends and enemies, and are directed to the city of Edge to continue their quest, although they are positioned to pursue adventure in almost any direction. To play this adventure, you will need a copy of **Dragon-Mech**, as well as the core d20 books (*Player's Handbook*, *DMG* and *MM*).

The **Shardsfall Quest** is designed for beginning characters of 1st level. By the end of the adventure, the characters will have accrued enough experience to be approximately 3rd level, depending on the number of characters. The adventuring party should have between 4 and 6 members, with at least one strong fighter, one coglayer or steam-borg, and one arcane spellcaster. A rogue and cleric will also come in handy at times, as will a bard with strong diplomacy skills. A mech jockey is not necessary, but at least one character should have several ranks in the Mech Pilot skill.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The **Shardsfall Quest** has four major episodes. The adventure is a cross-country jaunt of sorts, sending the characters in pursuit of the parts of a lunar relic. The relic was in a temple carved into the very bedrock of the moon, which shattered in the lunar rain and fell to earth in the form of several meteorites, each of which landed many miles from the others. With each episode, the characters encounter one of the factions of the **Dragon-Mech** world: first the Stenian Confederacy, then denizens of the gear forests, then the Legion, and lastly the Irontooth Clans.

The adventure proceeds thus:

While traveling, the characters come across a recently fallen meteorite that cracked open upon landing, revealing a network of passages inside. It turns out they are the remains of a ruined temple to the lunar god Seroficitacit. In exploring the ruins, the characters find a strange glowing globe. As they emerge from the meteorite, they are stopped by a Stenian Confederacy mech patrol. The Stenians have come to destroy the temple in case it houses any lunar creatures.

The Stenian soldiers clear the characters for lunar influence, then make a proposition. The Stenian Confederacy has learned that this is only one piece of a larger meteorite that broke into two parts when it entered the planet's atmosphere. The second section has fallen to the east, in the territory of the Legion. The Stenian Confederacy wants to find it and cleanse it of lunar creatures, but the Stenians can't risk sparking a war by sending military mechs into enemy territory. They offer to send the characters in a non-military mech to destroy the second temple in Legion territory. In return, the characters gain temporary use of the mech and will receive citizenship on the city-mech Nedderpik when they return.

The characters journey to the city-mech to get their loaner mech. While there, they are secretly recruited by cogling stowaways to help defeat a threat to the city-mech's engines. Then they move on into Legion territory. While there, they deal with several minor mech skirmishes before finally reaching the temple. Destroying it won't be easy, however, because human refugees have moved into the tunnels for protection

from the lunar rain. The characters must confront the xenophobic Legion humans, who decry non-humans as inferior. And there's a twist: The Legion's leaders are controlled by lunar skinstealers.

Once characters unravel the skinstealer mystery, they go to clear out the lunar temple. Just as they reach the last room, a small one-man mech darts out of hiding. Seemingly just as quickly, it emerges holding another radiant globe, like the one the characters found in the first temple. Then it nimbly darts out of range and retreats quickly to the north.

The characters learn from the Legion refugees that it was an Irontooth mech. Why it was here, so far from Irontooth territory, is a mystery. Once their mission here is done, they journey north, trailing their mysterious assailant. Eventually, they enter Irontooth territory, where they come across one of the legendary Irontooth jousts just getting underway. One of the mechs involved is the same one that attacked them.

The characters' mech is sighted and quickly surrounded with overwhelming odds, forcing them to negotiate. It turns out the Irontooth are pursuing the lunar globes to fulfill an ancient prophecy that predates the lunar rain, dating back to the monastic orders from which the Irontooth evolved. They are not sure of the globes' powers, but the prophecy claims that when all are collected, they will rise into the sky to form a new constellation, and the lunar rain will end. Yet that's beside the point. The only way the PCs will escape with their lives is if they accept a challenge from the Irontooth: They must duel!

If the PCs perform honorably during the duel, the Irontooth recognize their valor with admission to the clans, then ask them to join in their quest for the globes. They tell the characters there are stories of another such globe somewhere in the trading city of Edge, far to the south. Once the characters have returned to the city-mech, given back their loaner mech, and gained their citizenship medallion, they are positioned for continued adventures in almost any direction.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins with the characters coming across a recently fallen meteorite. The background material assumes they are scavengers who make a living selling ore and other valuables to passing mechs. Yet since the characters are 1st level and just beginning a campaign, the GM can use quite a few other options for explaining how they end up discovering the meteorite. Here are some ideas:

• The characters could be freelance ore-hunters. They make their living scouring the meteors left behind after each night's lunar rain, finding veins of precious metals (such as adamantine and mensite). Then they mine them before anyone else comes across them, or else guard them and sell access to third-party miners. This time, however, they've found a particularly interesting meteor....

• The characters could be refugees, like so many others on Highpoint. They once had training or occupations, but now they dwell in a secluded cave somewhere on the flatland, eking out an existence and trying to find safe passage to Edge or citizenship on a city-mech. Their normal life consists of scavenging surface wreckage and trading with passing mech tribes. They could even live with a tribe of worm farmers that took them in for their combat skills.

• The characters are scouts for a city-mech. They patrol whenever the city-mech comes to a halt. Being low-level and untrained as they are, they're in the infantry corps, not the mech division. While scouting on this morning, they find a meteorite with a lunar temple inside it.

• Alternately, the characters could be in the private employ of the Gearwrights Guild. Their task is specifically to scout meteors on foot and locate valuable lunar relics, particularly technology and magic that might help the Guild. Normally, they would take what they find back to the Guild, but the intervention of the Stenian Confederacy (in Episode One) changes their path....

BACKGROUND

This adventure is set on the continent of Highpoint in the world of **Dragon-Mech**. Highpoint was once a land of traditional medieval kingdoms, but that structure has been decimated by the lunar rain. The planet's moon is slowly falling apart, for reasons unknown. As the moon collapses, its fragments are drawn into the world's gravity well. The result is a constant meteor storm beneath the moon. On the planet, each night's moonrise brings with it the so-called lunar rain — sometimes only a particulate haze that irritates the skin, but other times a devastating meteor storm that sends two-ton boulders hurtling into the surface. As if that weren't enough, the moon's bizarre denizens are also falling to earth, and they're universally hostile.

The meteor rain destroyed the surface world. It shattered castles, flattened cities, and sent refugees scurrying for cover underground. It has taken almost a century for the world's peoples to recolonize the surface, which they did with the help of the greatest technological advance in Highpoint's history: the mech. Powered by steam, magic, or the labor of a thousand slaves, mechs have become the de facto social unit of Highpoint, particularly the massive city-mechs, which house populations in the thousands. Kingdoms have been replaced by mobile associations of city-mechs called mechdoms.

Three of the most powerful mechdoms are the Stenian Confederacy, the Legion and the Irontooth Clans. This adventure starts the characters in the territory of the Stenian Confederacy, a dwarven institution ruled by absolute martial law. In its early days, this was a driving force in retaking the surface world, as the organization and structure of the Stenians enabled them to build mechs and survive the hostile conditions of the lunar rain. Five allied city-mechs make up the Stenian Confederacy. The most famous is called Durgan-lok, which was the first city-mech ever built, while the most advanced is known as Nedderpik. Nedderpik houses 3,500 civilians and crew, and it hangars a fleet of smaller mechs in its shins.

Episode Three takes the characters to the Legion. The Legion is more of a mass movement than a proper political body. It is led by the charismatic demagogue Shar Thizdic, whose sheer force of will has united hundreds of disparate human tribes for the first time in centuries. Under his leadership, the tribes have successfully built their first city-mech and are now working on a second. Shar is considered a threat by all other factions in Highpoint, for he is ambitious, warlike and uncompromising.

Worst of all, he motivates his people through hatred. He espouses a blatant xenophobia that declares the rightful time of human rule has come and that dwarves, elves, orcs and other races are inferior. Needless to say, this attitude has won him few friends among the neighboring Stenian Confederacy, which is predominantly dwarven.

The fourth and final episode takes the characters into the territory of the Irontooth Clans. The Clans' code of behavior has evolved from ancient monastic traditions practiced by their ancestors. The lunar rains fractured the institutions that held these traditions in place. The Clans were formed by engineers who decried the failures of their previous societies, but were nonetheless influenced by them. Now the Clans are a loosely affiliated group of independent bands that mix monastic inner strength with roughneck barbarian chaos. Daily life among the Irontooth is rough-and-tumble, and their mechs are ornamented with spikes, studs, barbs and razor edges. Yet the Irontooth pilots are the best in the world, for they draw on special techniques, a culture of mech jousting, and mysterious inner reserves to deliver performance that no other mechdom can match. Their enemies call them "mech devils," and the name is well deserved.

DM'S NOTES

This adventure starts the characters off without a mech. As such, there is no need for a mech jockey character in the party. However, the adventure does include time on a city-mech, as well as travel and limited combat in a mech, so the characters are exposed to mechs quite a bit. The idea here is versatility: The players (and you) will be exposed to adventures on a mech and on foot, and you can then determine what direction you want your campaign to take.

By the time this adventure is through, the characters will have encountered the Stenian Confederacy, the Legion, and the Irontooth Clans. They'll be enemies of some and allies of others. Thanks to the assistance they give the Stenian Confederacy, they'll end up as allies with citizenship on the city-mech Nedderpik. If they succeed in the challenge offered by the Irontooth Clans, they'll be granted honorary titles and have powerful new allies there, also. On the other hand, having invaded the Legion's territory and threatened its citizens, they'll be hunted enemies of the Legion.

The adventure concludes with plot hooks leading the characters to Edge, the cliffside city far to the south. At this point, the characters are perfectly positioned for whatever direction the players (and you) want to take. They'll be on Nedderpik, which is rife with adventure; they'll feel the urge to visit Edge, which is a nexus of trade and civilization on Highpoint; they'll have Legion enemies pursuing them; and they'll have safe haven (and new adventures) with the Irontooth Clans.

EPISODE ONE: SKYFALL

INTRODUCTION

Introduce the players to the adventure by reading them this introduction, adapting it as necessary to their characters' backgrounds.

The night started like any other. Before the moon rose, you found safety in an abandoned underground shelter, then listened to the soft pinging of the lunar rain on the ceiling above. The superheated meteor fragments blasted small craters in the earth above. Some were large enough to burn through several feet of dirt, denting the scrap metal ceiling of your underground hovel. You knew that by the time the night was through, a hundred new dents would be made, with each dent glowing red from the fiery fragments resting above. Finally, the moon would sink over the horizon, carrying the lunar rain with it, and the sun would rise over a landscape scorched clean, as it had every night for nearly a hundred years.

Yet this night, something different happened. Shortly after midnight, the earth shook with the impact of a massive meteor. You were knocked from the dirt benches on which you slept, awakening suddenly to the trembling aftershocks. It was obvious that something large had fallen from the moon above.

That could mean profit — and danger. The meteor could contain valuable lunar ores or rare treasures of the lunar civilizations, both of which you could profit from. If you reach it first, you can sell the ores to the city-mechs that scavenge constantly for the supplies, or sell the lunar treasures to the military men and hunters who battle against the lunar monsters. It might not be that easy, however. There are creatures from the moon, alien monsters with bizarre minds, and they are the scourge of Highpoint. More than one salvage team has been eaten by a meteorite's unexpected stowaways.

You rose at dawn and set out immediately. The meteor's location was obvious from the gouts of steam visible on the horizon. In this scarcely populated region of the rocky flatland, you could easily be the first to reach it....

After two days of hiking, you reach the edge of a shallow crater and look down upon the now-cooled meteor. After a descent into the crater, you now stand before the huge, pitted round rock. It looms 50 feet above you, shattered into two halves by the force of the impact.

Unlike other meteors, this one seems to beckon you to enter. A gaping 10-foot-wide hole opens into its side. The tunnel inside is smooth and well crafted, clearly built by something of intelligence. Your livelihood depends on recovering something of value from what's inside... but your life may depend on how carefully you do it.

LUNAR TEMPLE
1 square = 10 feet

Now refer to Map One: The Lunar Temple. Many of the creatures in this temple should be dead, but they aren't. They have been saved by their own malleable ooze-like forms, their strange physiology and the will of Seroficitacit himself, who ensures that many of his worshippers survive to engage this strange new world.

THE LUNAR TEMPLE

This section describes the significant locations of the lunar temple.

AREA 1:
THE METEORITE

The meteorite is about 250 feet in diameter, with about 50 feet of its top visible above the ground. Its sides rise in a roughly spherical shape, but are cut off suddenly at the top; it looks as if there was another part to the meteor that was simply sheared off. The lunar rock has split into two halves, which now stand about 20 feet apart.

The only visible entrance to the meteor's outer perimeter is the one which the characters stand before, leading into Area 2. If the characters conduct a search of the area, they spy four more entrances on the walls of the channel between the two halves (Spot DC 10). These entrances (corresponding to the broken passages between Areas 7 and 8) are 20 feet above ground level and 40 feet below the meteor's roof. They are difficult to reach due to the spawns of Seroficitacit (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One) that were tossed from the openings when the rock split. These spawn now rest in the entrances to the split channel, effectively preventing the characters from passing. At least two are in the way of the PCs' entrance from any direction except dropping from above.

Dropping from above is difficult due to the meteor's temperature. It has begun to cool but is still very hot to the touch. It is coolest at its center (where it was most insulated from the friction of its earthfall) and warmest on its surface. Anyone who walks on the surface for more than two rounds takes 1 point of heat damage each round after the second (Fort save DC 10 to take no damage).

The hot rock and spawns should collectively steer the characters toward entering the passage into Area 2.

AREA 2:
THE ENTRANCE CHAMBER
(EL 2)

Read or paraphrase the following:

The hallway goes for barely 10 feet before it enters a 40-foot-wide round chamber. Hanging from the ceiling is a three-foot-tall inverted basin carved

with bizarre yet beautiful symbols. You can see an open doorway on the opposite side of the room, but there is an obstacle in your way: A 15-foot-wide shapeless mass of grayish ooze is undulating on the floor, sending pulpy tentacles swaying about. It makes no noise, but this ooze is clearly alive.

The meteorite landed upside-down relative to its orientation on the moon, so the temple that the characters enter is also upside-down. The ooze is a spawn of Seroficitacit that was originally housed in the basin when it was right side up. Now the basin is on the ceiling, and the spawn has been tossed onto the floor.

The spawn is the "greeter" for this particular temple. It can sense surface creatures and will attack all who come near, fulfilling Seroficitacit's whim that their world should change. It is a young spawn that survived the meteor crash but was wounded in the process.

Tactics: As soon as the spawn senses the characters, it advances on them to attack. It fights to the death.

Young Spawn of Seroficitacit (injured): CR 2; Medium ooze (lunar); HD 3d10+15; hp 19; Init –5; Spd 10 ft.; AC 7, touch 5, flat-footed 7; BAB +2; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change, slam); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Change; SQ Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref –4, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 1, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +6, Knowledge (lunar) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10.

Feats: Insightful Step, Seroficitacit's Changes.

SA–Change (Su): Fort DC 10 or suffer change (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One).

AREA 3: THE GREETING AREA

Read or paraphrase the following:

The hallway continues for a short distance before coming to yet another round chamber. The bottom of this room is a bowl-like half-sphere that dips 10 feet below the floor level. The ceiling stays at its current height. Directly over the lowest point of the floor is a 10-foot-wide hole in the ceiling.

The walls, floor and ceiling of this room are completely covered with utterly alien carvings. The shapes and symbols are totally foreign. You cannot read them or even understand what they represent, and they seem even more confusing than they should. Each time you look at a new section, it seems like the area you were just looking at shifts ever so slightly.

LUNAR TEMPLE FEATURES

Floor Level: The meteorite landed in a way that left the lunar temple both upside down and at an angle. The horizontal axis of the temple is tilted higher on its eastern half than its western side. This allows characters to enter at ground level on the western side of the meteorite, but when they pass through the middle chasm, they are 20 feet above ground level, and when they reach the eastern side they are about 40 feet above ground level.

Illumination: There is no light of any kind inside the meteorite. The creatures inside navigate through native blindsense or blindsight, or alien forms of navigation possessed by lunar creatures and not understood by terrestrial creatures.

Walls: All passages in the tunnel are round, with a slightly flattened floor. Unless noted otherwise, they are 10 feet tall. They have stats as follows:

Hewn Stone Wall: 3 ft. thick between rooms, otherwise solid rock; Break DC 50; hardness 8; 540 hp; Climb DC 22.

Doors: Doors within the lunar temple are quite unlike normal doors. They are round passages a full 10 feet tall, with a round door set within. The door opens by rotating on a horizontal bar set within the frame 5 feet above the ground, effectively "flipping over" to open. Humans using these doors must move with the bottom half of the door and duck under the horizontal bar. Creatures with the ability to do so can throw themselves at the upper half of the door to flip through to the other side. The rotating door can swing in either direction.

Stone Door: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked).

As you look around you, your thoughts start to feel sluggish. It seems as if the world is becoming more and more difficult to understand....

The characters are now in the influence of the mental static from the dronog in Area 4. Their Intelligence is automatically reduced by 1d4 points as long as they stay in the area of effect.

Now distribute Players Handout A. The walls of this room tell legends of Seroficitacit in a lunar language. They are magically enchanted to constantly change, but only just after someone has read them. It's not an illusion and can be perceived by anyone who carefully observes the carvings as they read (Spot DC 10). The legends told by the walls change as the walls do. Yet the stories never contradict each other; they simply add more or different details, or in some cases tell completely different stories. The walls can be read, but only with great difficulty (Decipher Script DC 35, with additional –4 penalty to check as long as symbols are upside-down).

This room was used by the temple denizens as a simple prayer area. It was here where they would come to meditate on Seroficitacit's greatness. When it was right side up, the room's exit was a simple hole in the floor through which worshippers would descend (see diagram). Now that hole is in the "ceiling," 20 feet above the upside-down "floor." The characters must figure out how to get up there.

Anyone who takes the time to observe the shifting walls carefully will eventually see images of the door at Area 8 and the ball-chutes at Area 10. It takes 10 minutes for these images to appear in the stories, which describe the building of this very temple. Although the immediate implications will not be obvious to the characters, observing these scenes allows them to make an Intelligence check (DC 12) at Areas 8 and 10 to determine, respectively, the method for passing the door and the use of the ball-chutes.

The legends told by the wall symbols will not repeat themselves until someone has observed them for a full hour.

AREA 4:
HOST STORAGE (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You have entered an oddly shaped room about 30 feet wide. The sides are lined with shallow five-foot-deep alcoves. A circular door is set into one alcove in the northwest corner of the room. Near the other alcoves, a total of four creatures sprawl on the floor. They are grotesque, ugly things, like large lizards but with five legs and no neck. Their mouths have dull teeth, and their skin is lined with ribbed veins.

As you enter, one of the creatures raises its head to look at you.

The lunar skinstealers that occupy this temple frequently used dronogs as parasitic hosts, especially when they left the temple. They kept the dronogs here. This room can house up to 15 dronogs at once, though usually there were no more than five here.

Anyone who examines the room carefully (Spot DC 10) notes that there are slight concave pits worn into the otherwise smooth "ceiling" above each alcove. These pits were worn into the floor by the dronogs after countless years of bedding down each night in the alcoves.

All four of the dronogs currently present were injured in the meteorite's landing. Three were killed outright, but one of them survived. When it sees the characters, it rises to its feet and charges.

Remember that the mental static emanated by the dronog ceases as soon as it dies.

Dronog (injured): CR1; Large aberration (lunar); HD 4d8+8; hp 12; Init –2; Spd 20 ft., burrow 10 ft.; AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 7; BAB +3; Grp +11; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d8+6, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Mental static; SQ Lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 19, Dex 7, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +8, Listen +3, Spot +3.

SA–Mental Static (Ex): Terrestrials within 50 feet lose 1d4 Int as long as they remain in area; must make a Concentration check (DC 12) to attempt any Intelligence-related action.

AREA 5: HALLWAY (EL 2)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This wide hall heads west before winding around to the north. It is rounded and smooth. Three doors line the west wall, and two doors are on the east wall.

The lunar skinstealers that worshipped here lived in the small rooms off this hallway. Only a few were in attendance when the temple crashed to earth. One was unharmed by the crash-landing. Now it lurks hidden in this hallway.

Tactics: The lunar skinstealer hides flat on the floor halfway up the hall. It is highly intelligent, and although it has never been to the surface before, it's smart enough to recognize that a big strong host will be most useful in combat. It waits until a fighter-type comes within reach, then it attacks with a face grapple. As soon as it takes over the host, it retreats to a doorway where it can deal with oncoming attackers one-on-one (or as close to that as possible).

The skinstealer's goal is to defend its temple. It could be parleyed with (once it has a host to speak from), but not likely.

Be sure to read the **DragonMech** monster entry for the lunar skinstealer carefully. Skinstealers can be brutally effective if used properly. If used in a manner that doesn't reflect their high Intelligence score, however, they are easy to defeat.

As a side note, multiple skinstealers are excellent opponents for PCs above 1st level. Because their grapple attack occupies their opponent, and a successful host domination not only removes a PC from play but uses him against his allies, a fight against lunar skinstealers with even odds becomes extremely dangerous for the PCs — particularly if the skinstealers attack at close quarters.

Lunar Skinstealer (Unhosted): CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8 (18 hp); Init –1; Spd 10 ft.; AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9; BAB +3; Grp +7 (+1 per hook used, up to +11); Atk +5 touch (domination, face grapple); Full Atk +5 touch (domination, face grapple) and +1 melee (1d2, 4 hooks); SA Improved grab, host domination, neighbor domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 4, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, Listen +2, Spot +2.

SA–Host Domination (Su): Initiates face grapple free with touch attack due to Improved Grab ability. Once enemy face is grappled, can dominate as if by *dominate person* (DC 15 to resist); absorbs host's appearance, physical stats, and abilities; gains neighbor domination ability once hosted.

SA–Neighbor Domination (Ex): Drain 1 point of host's Wisdom to cast *dominate person* (DC 15, range 200 ft., duration 10 days).

Secret Door: The secret door is a 1-foot-wide circular section of the wall (Search DC 20) that flips open into a round passage only 1 foot across. It was once used as an escape route by the skinstealers that guarded the hatchery (Area 11). Now it can't be navigated by a PC without magical aid.

AREA 6: LIVING QUARTERS (EL 1/4–1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 20-foot-wide, semicircular room looks as if it is, or was, the living quarters for some sort of alien life form. Fragments of solid stone are scattered about the room, apparently from several smashed pieces of carved rock that lie in the middle of the room. Various containers, carved icons and unusual chips of metal are strewn about. Carved into the wall are more alien symbols.

Several lunar skinstealers stayed in each of these rooms. All four rooms are practically identical.

Lurking amidst the rubble in each room are 1d4 nanites (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One). Many dead nanites are scattered about the complex, but these ones survived and were knocked from their nooks in the walls. They attack anyone who digs through the rubble.

Nanites (1d4): CR 1/4; Tiny vermin (lunar); HD 1/2d8; hp 2; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grp –11; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d3-3 plus 1 acid, bite); SA Death burst; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., lunar traits, vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 5, Dex 14, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +6.

SA–Death Burst (Ex): Acidic explosion upon reaching –1 hp; 1 point of acid damage to all within 5 feet (Reflex DC 10 to avoid).

Treasure: Searching through the mess antagonizes the nanites. Once they're taken care of, a search reveals mostly worthless junk. The skinstealers' "furniture" is carved from solid moon rock via the aid of acid-secreting oozes. Now these rectangular objects are smashed into hundreds of pieces. The containers hold lunar gruel and worthless moon rocks. The carved icons are symbols of Seroficitacit, worth nothing off the moon. The only things of value (Search DC 10) are the metal chips, which are carved from mensite. Each room has 2d6 such chips, each of which is worth 10 gp to the right person. Plenty of interested buyers will be found on any city-mech.

AREA 7: OOZE POOLS

Read or paraphrase the following:

This organically shaped corridor has several 15-foot-wide circular alcoves branching off its sides. In each one rests a puddle of gray ooze, with an inverted basin carved out of the "ceiling" above. The oozes are still and silent. Further ahead, a passage veers off to the north.

These "ooze oracles" were revered spawns of Seroficitacit, eagerly consulted by the cult in all matters of study, worship and religion. Most were killed by the crash-landing. Their bodies are inert and not dangerous; they no longer inflict changes upon those who touch them. The oozes completely fill each chamber.

The only ooze still living lies in the chamber that formerly connected to Area 13. It is on the verge of death and will not take any aggressive actions unless physically touched or jostled, at which point it will attack. It is an elder spawn of Seroficitacit that split into two halves during the impact of the collision. One half spilled into the chasm, and the other half remains in this room. Each half is now treated as a younger spawn.

Young Spawn of Seroficitacit (injured): CR 2; Medium ooze (lunar); HD 3d10+15; hp 15; Init –5; Spd 10 ft.; AC 7, touch 5, flat-footed 7; BAB +2; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change, slam); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Change; SQ Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref –4, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 1, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +6, Knowledge (lunar) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10.

Feats: Insightful Step, Seroficitacit's Changes.

SA–Change (Su): Fort DC 10 or suffer change (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One).

Crossing the Chasm: To continue on their way, the characters must cross the chasm between the two halves of the meteor. The hall opens 20 feet above ground level. Climbing down, walking across, and climbing back up is easy enough with a rope and a few Climb checks.

The real danger is the many young spawns of Seroficitacit that lurk in the chasm. These oozes are still conscious and will actively move to intercept characters who make themselves visible. The slimes start near the outer edges and move slowly, so the characters should be able to avoid them if they act quickly.

Note that the interior walls of the meteor are not hot; the meteor split after it landed, and these walls were protected from friction during the descent. Unlike the outer edges, they do not inflict heat damage on those who touch them for too long.

AREA 8: PORTAL OF THE FAITHFUL (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

After crossing the chasm successfully, you arrive in another 15-foot-wide circular room. On the eastern wall is another of the round, flip-top doors. This one looks different from the others, however, with strange symbols carved into it. An inverted basin on the ceiling directly in front of the door is adorned with different types of carvings, all of which resemble ooze-like shapes. The basin is 6 inches in diameter.

Show the players Handout B. Outsiders were welcome to worship in this temple of Seroficitacit, provided they were suitably escorted and didn't venture too deep. This portal was the limit of the outsiders' access. The door is magically locked. In order to pass, one had to scoop up a handful of a spawn of Seroficitacit, and deposit the handful of ooze in the basin in front of the door. Because the spawns would attack any non-believers who attempted this, the door was effectively locked to all but the faithful.

Now, of course, the basin is 10 feet above on the ceiling and it's not exactly easy to get a pile of ooze to defy gravity. Any amount of spawn goo will do the trick, even from a dead spawn, but it must be held in place in the basin for at least one full round. A pole or implement won't do it; the characters will have to get a pair of hands up to the right height to hold the ooze in place. Once the goo is in the basin, the door will rotate to an open position.

Alternately, the characters can simply try to bash down the door. If they figure out the puzzle, however, award them experience for defeating a CR 1 encounter.

Ooze Bowl Puzzle Door (CR 1): Magically sealed stone door (*arcane lock*); 4 in. thick; hardness 8; 60 hp; Break DC 38 (locked); opens automatically if ooze from a spawn of Seroficitacit is placed in the basin before the door for 1 round.

AREA 9: SANCTUM OF THE FAITHFUL

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 30-foot-diameter, circular room has a deep, bowl-shaped floor. The ceiling is flat and lined with rows of oblong benches carved directly from the stone. In the center of the ceiling is a one-foot-wide column some three feet in height with an inverted basin at its end. A deep crack runs through the stone floor. A number of flat, rectangular creatures lie still on the floor.

The characters enter on the ceiling, of course. When part of the temple, this worship area was used to show the visions of the *starshard* (see Area 12) to the faithful. The *starshard* was placed in the pedestal (which now resembles a column hanging from the ceiling), and the visions were projected onto the hemispherical ceiling while the worshippers rested against the small benches on the floor. The crack was caused by the crash.

The six bodies are lunar skinstealers who were worshipping here before they were killed in the crash. The characters find nothing else of interest in this room.

AREA 10: GUARD CHAMBER (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

A 20-foot-long hallway opens into a 35-foot-wide circular room. The walls are utterly smooth, almost polished in appearance. On the south wall are three one-foot-wide circular holes, beside which rest a dozen or so brass spheres. On the north wall is another round door. But the most

interesting feature of this room is the pulpy, putty-like mass of flesh in the center. It seems unable to stand still. Its body pulses and undulates before you, slowly changing shape into a semi-humanoid state. The yellowish material that composes it has an oily sheen, and you can't help but think you catch reflections of yourself in its skin.

This lunar elemental (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One) was summoned by the followers of Seroficitacit to guard their inner sanctum. Now its guardians are dead, but it still defends the area.

Lunar Elemental: CR 1; Small elemental (lunar); HD 2d8+8; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB +1; Grp –3; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d4, slam); SA Lunar mastery, adaptive; SQ Entropic skin (DC 15), blindsense, lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 4, Wis 18, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +6.

SA–Lunar Mastery (Ex): +1 to attack and damage when both it and opponent are in contact with lunar surface (including this temple).

SA–Adaptive (Su): Adapts to shape of one opponent with attack action or standard action used for study. Each round of adaptation against the same target grants a cumulative +1 insight bonus to attack rolls and AC versus that one target (max +10). Studying or attacking a new creature reduces this bonus to +1 against the new creature.

SQ–Entropic Skin (Ex): Images of potential pasts and haunting futures flash in the elemental's skin. Anyone looking at or attacking a lunar elemental must make a Will save (DC 15) or be dazzled; a new save is required each round.

Tactics: The lunar elemental is perfectly content to wait for the characters to take action. After all, every round they delay gives it another round to study one of them. The characters will notice its shape slowly approximating one of them. Unless it is attacked, the elemental will not initiate combat until it has observed the characters

for 10 rounds (giving it +10 to hit one of them, per its adaptive special ability) or until one of them tries to move through either of the room's exits.

Development: The lunar skinstealers accessed their most sacred relic (in Area 12) by wrapping their form around one of the brass spheres and rolling through one of the three small passages. The brass sphere are about 9 inches in diameter, just the right size for a lunar skinstealer to engulf one and still fit through the exits in the south wall. Each brass sphere weighs 25 lbs. and is worth 15 gp as scrap metal.

A Search of the room (DC 10) reveals a cloudlike symbol etched over each of the 12-inch-wide passages. This symbol matches the symbol on the potions in area 11.

The only way for a PC to get into Area 12 is to somehow get through the 12-inch-wide passages. It is possible for a very nimble Small character to do this (Escape Artist DC 20). Medium and larger characters cannot pass except through magical means or by use of the potion in Area 11.

The secret door is another 12-inch-wide passage that presumably only a lunar skin-stealer can move through. It leads to the hatchery, bypassing the "pit trap" that would normally capture interlopers (see Area 11).

AREA 11:
THE HATCHERY (EL 0)

The hallway into this area is trapped with a camouflaged pit. Luckily for the PCs, the fact that the meteor landed upside down means the "pit" opens on the ceiling, and they're saved from danger.

The pit is triggered by an *alarm* spell, so it activates even though the characters are walking on the "ceiling." Do not award experience for the trap unless a careful rogue manages to detect it even though it's no danger.

Camouflaged Pit Trap: CR 0 (normally 1 when on floor); mechanical; proximity trigger (*alarm*); manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6 fall, if it were located in the floor); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 20.

Once the characters are through the corridor, Read or paraphrase the following:

You stand in an oblong room about 40 feet wide and 20 feet long. Scattered about the room are dozens of small, fleshy, rectangular globs. Each chalky white pile sprouts a few tiny hooks from its sides. Some of them quiver slightly, while the rest are immobile.

A small ledge runs around the wall, about eight feet from the floor. On the floor beneath the ledge are a variety of metal and stone boxes and vials.

This is the hatchery. The lunar skinstealers bred and raised more of their own kind here. The 30 globules are immature skinstealers. These creatures are parasitic by nature and the young feed off each other, so only a few will survive to adulthood.

Eight of the immature skinstealers still

live. They are harmless now, but certainly won't be later. Characters should be awarded XP for defeating a CR 1 creature if they rid the world of these menaces.

Treasure: This room also housed most of the temple's supplies, including its magic. The mundane treasures are as follows:

- A number of cracked stone boxes contain some sort of gruel (this was fed to the immature skinstealers).
- Other boxes have strange clothing (built for lunar creatures), carvings of oozes, and similarly unusual items.
- A total of 20 symbols of Seroficitacit can be garnered from these boxes; these pendants with irregular blob shapes on them could come in handy for impersonating followers of Seroficitacit in Episode Three.
- The characters find five cubical metal boxes some 8 inches to a side, each of which holds stone carvings of unidentifiable meaning or function. (Some are symbols of Seroficitacit, while others are tools designed for the skinstealers' unique anatomy.) The metal boxes themselves are worth 10 gp each if sold as scrap, since metal is such a rare commodity on Highpoint.

The dozen metal vials contain the most important treasure. Designed for a skinstealer's anatomy, the "vials" are rather flat and squat, with lids far wider than is comfortable for a normal human hand (but which can still be opened).

Several of the metal vials were dented and punctured in the crash, but the rest are intact. They are labeled in a lunar language that isn't particularly clear (Decipher Script DC 35), but the characters can quickly distinguish three kinds of potion:

- Two of the potions are a green shade, and smell pleasantly of an unidentifiable scent (*potion of cure light wounds*, CL 1st).
- One vial seems to bounce and jostle of its own accord; it is bright red (*potion of jump*, CL 3rd).
- The other vials emit a cloud of visible but inert gas when opened; the gas looks like steam except it is cool to the touch (*potions of gaseous form*, CL 3rd). Each of these vials is inscribed with a cloudlike

symbol that matches the symbols over the 12-inch-wide holes in area 11.

The exact number of *potions of gaseous form* is up to the GM. These are necessary for entering Area 12. To create a bit of tension and tactical decision-making, give out one less potion than the number of PCs. On the other hand, if you're afraid the PCs might make a stupid mistake and get stuck in Area 12 (such as by sending in a character that can't climb out), give out more than enough.

All the potions were designed for a lunar anatomy, but magic's magic. The effects are doubled when a lunar creature drinks the potion, but they still work on terrestrial creatures.

AREA 12:
THE *STARSHARD*

Read or paraphrase the following:

This perfectly spherical 25-foot-wide room has polished black walls. The room is dark, like the last glimpse of twilight before the sun sets. A haunting gold glow emanates from a crystalline globe that floats mid-air in the exact center of the spherical space. Pinpricks in the surface of the globe send pointers of light to the walls, where they look like stars in an infinite black sky.

Have the characters make Spot checks (DC 15). Those that succeed notice a faint black rectangular outline in the southern ceiling of the room. This black outline is actually an opening into a vertical chute leading twenty feet up. It once led to the lower level of the temple, but now it leads to the surface of the meteor. The sunlight that filters through the hole is blocked by the room's magical nature (see below).

The characters can leave this room via the chute or (if they have the ability) via the same way they came in. The globe is small enough that it can be rolled through the 12-inch-wide tunnels (whether by a character or a lunar skinstealer).

Lighting: Thanks to the presence of the *starshard*, this room remains at the same light level no matter what other efforts the characters undertake. Torches still burn, but seem to emanate no light; *light* spells have no effect in the room; and even the sunlight from the chute seems simply to fade when it enters.

Development: The globe is the *starshard*, a magic item that this temple has possessed for centuries. The lunar worshippers treat it as a major relic and a sacred gift of Seroficitacit. Seroficitacit uses the globe (and its twin, found in Episode Three) to impart visions to his followers, but he did not create it. The *starshard's* divine origins precede his cult's acquisition of it.

The *starshard* is obviously magical, but the characters probably won't know what to do with it. That's fine. Once the characters enter the room, the *starshard* subtly urges them to take it with them, communicating through empathy and perhaps even telepathy if they're not persuaded. It will not answer questions or offer hints; its only message is "take me." (Feel free to assure the more paranoid players in your group that the *starshard* is not attempting to take control of their minds.)

See "New Item" in Appendix One for full details of the *starshard*.

AREA 13: STAIRWELL

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 15-foot-wide room is a perfect circle. A circular doorway in the eastern wall opens into what appears to be an upside-down staircase leading up. The stairs come down from the ceiling instead of rising from the floor!

Just in case the characters haven't figured it out yet, this should make it obvious that the temple landed upside-down. The staircase formerly led down to the next level below,

but it now rises upside-down until it emerges from the top of the meteor. The ramp that was formerly the staircase's ceiling is easily ascended (Climb DC 10), bringing the characters outside.

CONCLUSION

When the characters finally emerge from the meteor holding the enigmatic *starshard*, they probably think the adventure's over. Hardly. It's only beginning! A few minutes after the characters have left the meteor, Read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, the calm is shattered by the lumbering footsteps of a mech. Two combat mechs appear over the top of a hill less than a mile away. They are huge, bulky things, with an axe blade fixed on one arm and a huge steam cannon built into the other. They stomp toward you, trailing a choking cloud of black smoke. As they approach, you notice the insignia of the Stenian Confederacy stenciled on their torsos.

Development: The Stenians were sent to investigate this meteorite for lunar influence. Their goal is to make sure no lunar creatures survive. The encounter proceeds along these lines:

1. The mechs corner the characters, aim their cannons at them, and order them to freeze.

2. Grunnar, the dwarf commanding officer, shouts from a porthole. He wants to know who the characters are and what their business is. The characters are familiar enough with the world to know that the Stenian Confederacy is generally lawful.

3. After the characters explain their situation, Grunnar will admit they're doing a good deed for the Confederacy by clearing the meteor — but he'll demand that they submit to testing to make sure they're not infected by lunar skinstealers (a creature he's quite familiar with). Read or paraphrase the following. (**Note:** This blurb is important, since it provides a clue as to what the characters will face in the next episode!)

One mech trains its weapons on the meteor while the other aims its cannon at you! A crewman from each mech climbs down and advances toward you. You watch nervously as they pull out scalpels. Grunnar, watching from a porthole, assures you that it's a quick, painless test. The crewmen ask for your arm, then take a quick, shallow slice across the top of your forearm. As soon as they see blood, they grunt approvingly.

"You see," Grunnar shouts from his porthole, "the way lunar skinstealers work is they drape over your body and assume your shape. They look like you, feel like you, and *are* you, as far as anyone else is concerned. But you're inside, powerless to control your own body. The only way to be sure is to slice the skin. If there's a skinstealer on top of you, it won't bleed red."

4. The Stenians have no particular interest in the *starshard* (which the characters prob-

ably hid anyway). Once the characters pass the test, Read or paraphrase the following:

The mech commander Grunnar seems satisfied that you are free of lunar influence. "We could use more able-bodied soldiers like you in the Confederacy," he says. "In fact, this meteor has created a bit of a situation. What you just explored is only half of it. The other half landed in Legion territory not too far to the east. We need to clear out any skinstealers that survived, but we can't send Stenian mechs into Legion territory."

Grunnar pauses for a minute and clears his throat. "That's right. *We* can't send Stenian mechs into Legion territory. But if someone else were to clear that meteor for us, well, it would certainly do us a favor that we'd be willing to repay."

Then the mech commander gives you a pointed look. "Would you happen to know anyone who might be willing to perform such a service?"

In exchange for the characters agreeing to clear the other half of the meteor of any lunar influence, Grunnar is willing to offer the following:

• Transportation back to city-mech Nedderpik, which is traveling nearby. There the characters can clean up and rest for the night.

• Nedderpik is already moving in the general direction of the other meteor fragment. Once it closes within range, Grunnar offers the characters use of a civilian mech to close the last few miles.

• When the characters return after a successful mission, Grunnar promises to arrange provisional citizenship on Nedderpik for each of them.

If the characters agree, Grunnar makes room for them on one of the Juggernauts. The

mech is short on space, so the characters have to ride on piles of coal in the storage area, or even hang on to hammocks strung under the mech's legs or arms. That Juggernaut hauls the characters to Nedderpik while the remaining Juggernaut loads up its steam cannon and blasts what's left of the meteor to a pulp, including the spawns of Seroficitacit that were scattered about the chasm.

Tactics: The encounter with the Stenian mechs really shouldn't devolve into a combat. As a result, we haven't presented combat stats for the mech jockeys and their mechs (which are standard-issue Juggernauts). Should these stats be necessary... well, you might as well take this module back for a refund, because the players have derailed this train before it got started!

EPISODE TWO: OLD IRON ARMS

INTRODUCTION

After a four-hour journey, the characters reach city-mech Nedderpik. Full stats on Nedderpik can be found in the **Dragon-Mech** rule book. Emphasize the characters' sense of awe as they approach the city-mech. Literally the height of a skyscraper, the thing is visible on the horizon more than two hours before they actually reach it. They've never before seen a man-made object this large, and none existed prior to the creation of the city-mechs. The docking process is a carefully choreographed dance between the Juggernaut and the city-mech's wide platform docks, which hang from its feet. The city-mech never stops moving, so the Juggernaut has to time its jump onto the docks to the few seconds when the city-mech's foot is in position, all the while avoiding getting crushed by the massive quarter-mile-wide legs as they crash down to earth. Once the characters are finally on board, they have to adjust to the constant rocking of the city-mech as it lumbers across the land, and its massive vertical scale. Simply reaching the visitors' zone requires ascending in a slow-moving cargo elevator for five minutes.

Don't forget to review the rules for traveling in mechs (see "Inside a Mech" in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**). Characters who ride in the Juggernaut wearing armor other than leather, studded leather, padded or hide will suffer 1 point of nonlethal damage from the chafing and blisters, and all characters may suffer from mechsickness the first time they get on a mech.

Give the characters time to explore the city-mech, ask questions, and get a sense of how things work. They'll be assigned a small apartment (very small — 10 feet x 10 feet for four people!) in the visitors' level. The ceilings on that level are 6 feet tall to accommodate visiting humans. This is an excessive waste of space in the eyes of the dwarves who built the mech; most other ceilings are only 4 to 5 feet tall, mimicking the close quarters of the tunnels in which the dwarven builders were raised. The visitors' level also has some built-in lighting, usually in the form of gas lamps or torches, but most other areas are dark, since the dwarven inhabitants generally operate using darkvision.

Nedderpik will reach the general location of the second meteor on the second morning following the characters' arrival. In other words, they have two nights and one day on the city-mech. That second night is a good thing, because their first one will be interrupted. Once the characters have bedded

down for their first night on the mech, Read or paraphrase the following:

You finally fall asleep in your cramped city-mech apartment. But after what seems like only moments, you hear a soft tapping sound. Awakening with the quick alertness all adventurers develop, you scan your room and notice two eyes peering through the metal air vent on one wall. When the eyes see you looking back, a pair of hands pushes back the air vent, and a small, slightly built humanoid covered in filth and grease hangs out of the opening.

"Please, sirs," says the creature. "Do not make a sound. My tribe needs your help. Will you save Old Iron Arms?"

Once the characters have reacted (hopefully by not killing the cogling), continue reading or paraphrasing:

"I am Hammerbit, fourth cogling of the lower tribe. My tribe has stayed in the gear forests for four generations. We have never been discovered. In exchange for the safety provided by the Great Engine, we have maintained it perfectly. No engineer has ever needed to make repairs in our area.

"But now there is a problem we cannot solve. Old Iron Arms has been attacked by a creature that eats metal. Our weapons are useless against it, and our repairs cannot keep up with its rampage. If it is not stopped, the gear forest will be damaged beyond repair, and we will be discovered.

"Only an outsider can help us! We ask that you save Old Iron Arms without telling those who control the Great Engine. In exchange we can offer valuable metals and all the secrets of the Great Engine.

"Please, sirs. Will you save Old Iron Arms and my tribe?"

Coglings: Refer to "New Creatures" in Chapter 5 of **DragonMech** for full details on coglings. These halfling stowaways survive in the engine rooms of city-mechs, where they keep everything in perfect running order so the city-mech's engineers will never have a reason to visit the engine rooms and possibly discover the cogling stowaways. Over the generations, the halflings have degenerated into the grease-covered engine dwellers that are now called coglings. They themselves call the engine rooms "gear forests" and have built entire mythologies based around the "Great Engine," which is what they call their city-mech home. The cleric of the cogling tribe has divined that these adventurers are trustworthy allies, which is why the coglings have made contact.

Old Iron Arms: Old Iron Arms is a hidden golem that keeps Nedderpik running.

OLD IRON ARMS

1 square = 10 feet

Rust Trail

5

2

6A

4

6B

1

Gear Forest

Gear Forest

3

7

8

9

Sludge River

Gear Forest

GEAR FOREST FEATURES

The Gear Forest: Remember that a gear forest is a hazardous environment. It's a life-sized engine, and the spinning gears, whirring cogs and smashing pistons are a real hazard. Refer to Chapter 8 of **DragonMech** for details on the hazards. Most areas of this episode do not directly expose the characters to the gear forest, but it's a constant background hazard, and must be directly confronted in Areas 8 and 9.

Illumination: Gear forests are lit by the ambient light of the surrounding engine. Open flames, sparks, burning coal and small gas explosions provide a constant low-light illumination.

Walls: Some "rooms" are simply cleared areas of the gear forest. The coglings take apart and rebuild the engine rooms to make space for their habitations. Usually they make the engine more efficient in the process, as well. Those walls that do exist are made of thick sheets of iron, generally 3 inches thick. Areas 3 and 8 are cleared gear forest with no walls.

Iron Wall: 3 in. thick; Break DC 30; hardness 10; 90 hp; Climb DC 25.

Doors: The few doors are made of solid iron. They are usually locked, as this area of the gear forest was not meant to accommodate anyone but the city-mech's engineers. Of course, that hasn't stopped the coglings, who can now successfully pick the locks after generations of trying.

Iron Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked).

See the description for Area 1 of the gear forest, below.

Development: If the characters agree to help the cogling, it first recaps the basic situation for them. It describes the coglings' relationship with the city-mech and gear forests, and also gives them some sense that Old Iron Arms is a sort of speaking engine part. It also mentions that the menace is capable of destroying metal with a breath — a clue that the characters should acquire some wooden or stone weapons, if possible. (These items can be found on sale in the city-mech. Wooden items are expensive due to the rarity of trees, generally costing 50% more than an equivalent metal item. Stone items are normal price.)

Hammerbit is willing to wait until the next night if the characters insist, but the expedition has to happen at night so that the trip into the gear forests isn't detected. When the characters are ready, he leads them from their room and shows them back-alley passages down to the gear forests. He gets them around the locked entrances to the engine rooms through air vents, secret passages, cleared areas of gear forest, and in some cases fabricated keys that open normally locked doors. Finally, he leads the PCs through a long, dangerous stretch of labyrinthine gear forests to Old Iron Arms.

Now refer to Map Two: The Gear Forest.

THE GEAR FOREST

This section details the various locations of note in the Nedderpik gear forest.

AREA 1: OLD IRON ARMS

When the characters arrive at Old Iron Arms, Read or paraphrase the following:

Hammerbit leads you down narrow paths in the dangerous gear forests for what seems like miles. The heat is unbearable, and the hissing steam and sporadic flames singe your clothes. Every step seems to hold the potential for injury as you carefully avoid swinging pendulums, smashing pistons, and toothed gears spinning at breakneck speeds. If it weren't for Hammerbit's guidance, you would surely be killed.

Finally, you reach an area with metal walls. Hammerbit leads you down a wide hallway that is surprisingly clean compared to the filth and grease of the gear forest. After opening four successively locked doors of ever-more-imposing girth, he ushers you quietly into a 40-foot-wide circular room.

In the center is one of the strangest constructs you have ever seen. A gigantic metal torso is bolted securely into the floor. Its iron head is sculpted into the rough outline of a humanoid face. Each of its massive articulated arms is attached to an enormous piston, one thrusting upward into the ceiling and the other downward into the floor. Both pistons pump furiously, powered by the staggering iron strength of this massive creature.

Sparks fly from the joints in its arms as it labors to keep the pistons moving.

Hammerbit kneels before the creature. Seemingly from nowhere, a voice addresses you.

"Greetings, men. I am Old Iron Arms."

Old Iron Arms is an iron golem specially designed to keep the city-mech running. When the city-mech was built almost 100 years ago, the chief engineer discovered at the last minute that the steam engines wouldn't be powerful enough to keep it moving. Simple calculation errors had led to a dire mistake. Thousands of worker-citizens had already converged on the building site, and failure to mobilize the city-mech would not only be a huge blow to morale for the struggling Clan Duerok, but would also cost lives, as the lunar rains and waves of refugees killed a few more defenders

with each passing day. The chief engineer thus made a difficult decision, which was kept secret from all but the most senior gearwrights: He ordered a magical golem be installed to provide the final vestiges of power needed to run the city-mech.

This golem was custom-modified to fit the engine's needs. It augments the power of the steam engine to keep the city-mech running. Without the golem, the city-mech can power itself for short periods but will redline its engines with any kind of sustained functioning.

The existence of the golem was well hidden. If ever discovered, it would be far too convenient a target for enemy stalkers. Its location was secured by four massive doors, the keys to which were possessed by only the chief engineer. (Over the years, the coglings have learned to pick these locks.) When he neared the natural end of his lifespan some 40 years ago, the chief engineer knew that knowledge of the golem must be passed on, but he knew of no one with whom to entrust that knowledge. So he made a dramatic decision: Rather than die a natural death, he enlisted the aid of an old mage friend to transfer his own soul to the golem. Now, thanks to a modified version of the *clockwork double* spell and special rituals used to rebuild the golem, he continues on in eternal life as the spirit that keeps the city-mech running.

The engineer, who now calls himself Old Iron Arms, was surprised to learn that in all his years running the city-mech, the coglings had escaped his notice. Now he enjoys their company in his lonely existence, and has grown rather fond of the small creatures that consider him a god.

Old Iron Arms, Custom Iron Golem (Ex-dwarf) Cog13: CR 15; Large construct; HD 18d10+30; hp 110 (max 129; currently injured); Init –5; Spd 0 ft.; AC 26, touch 4, flat-footed 26; BAB +12; Grp N/A; Atk +57 melee (2d10+45, slam); Full Atk +57 melee (2d10+45, 2 slams); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ Construct traits, machine empathy, exotic weapon proficiencies (buzzsaw, chattersword, lobster claw, steambreather), DR 15/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immu-

nity to magic, low-light vision, dwarf traits (residual as still applicable); AL LN; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +15; Str 100, Dex 1, Con –, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft (blacksmithing) +21, Craft (mechcraft) +34, Disable Device +19, Knowledge (steam engines) +32, Knowledge (mechs) +32, Listen +19, Mech Pilot +3, Profession (engineer) +19, Spot +11.

Feats: Alertness, Craft Powered Mech, Craft Steam Gear, Gearhead, Mechanized Combat Practice, Mechwalker.

Steam Powers (17): 2x Tiny clockwork puppets (clockwork puppet + animator + discriminator + voice command + metal ear + wavemaker); 1x Small clockwork puppet (clockwork puppet + clockwork puppet + animator + discriminator + voice command).

Languages Spoken: Common, Dwarven.

Development: Old Iron Arms points out four important features of the room to the characters. First, the locked door to the north leads to supplies for repairing the golem, left over from when it was built many decades ago. None of these supplies have ever been needed until recently.

Second, Old Iron Arms shows signs of severe rust along the base of his torso. The rusted area has been repaired (badly) by the coglings, but Old Iron Arms is not in the same condition he once was. If the rusting continues, he will be disabled or destroyed, bringing the city-mech to a grinding halt and exposing the coglings.

Third, a trail of rust leads from the golem's base to a small hole burned through a section of the northeast wall. Old Iron Arms explains that the metal-eating beetles that prey upon him enter through this hole. The rust trail can't be followed, as the hole itself is barely 8 inches across and it leads to a thick patch of impassable and dangerous gear forest. Yet the coglings can lead the PCs to Area 3 and direct them from there.

Finally, another hole exists in the southern wall. This hole was made much more carefully, and it leads to the coglings' lair by way of Area 3. The coglings designed this

hole so it could be concealed; should they so desire, they can put metal panels in place to turn it into a secret door (Search DC 25).

Old Iron Arms explains his history and asks for the characters' assistance. He tells how the coglings are utterly terrified of the metal-eating beetles. All weapons possessed by the coglings are metal, and their provincial life inside the gear forest has convinced them that anything that can destroy metal must be supremely powerful. The coglings can direct the PCs to the general direction of the beetles, but the PCs must do the rest.

Future Development: Old Iron Arms' stats are provided here for reference, not for combat. He provides a patron for future adventures if you place your campaign on Nedderpik. His clockwork puppets see most of what happens on the mech, and he is surprisingly well-informed for a creature incapable of physical mobility. For decades, his only company has been the coglings, and despite his fondness for them, he welcomes additional companionship. Should the PCs prove their value and trustworthiness, he'd be happy to work with them in the future.

Old Iron Arms' profile is that of a modified iron golem with a 13th-level dwarven coglayer's mind, though many of his skills, feats and other abilities gained while he was a coglayer are inhibited by the unique construction of this particular golem body. Old Iron Arms has only one attack, which is to slam an opponent with his pistons, but this attack has a very limited reach, as the pistons are constrained in where they can move. He cannot grapple, as his pistons are unable to wrap around an enemy. He speaks via a specialized *magic mouth* that was added to the golem's essence when his soul was transplanted. He uses his clockwork puppets to spy about the city-mech and remain aware of what's going on. Normally, he would also use them for defense, but he has kept them away from the ferrovore beetles for fear they will be destroyed.

Old Iron Arms is currently injured. Any character who repairs him will immediately enter his good graces.

AREA 2: SUPPLIES

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 20-by-20-foot room is stacked full of steel bars, wooden crates, and tools.

When the golem was first installed, these supplies were stashed here for future use should the golem need repairing. The room contains more than 3,000 pounds of common metal, primarily iron and steel but also some tin and aluminum. It is clear that some supplies have been used over the years (primarily by the coglings), but most are intact. The characters also find a healthy supply of hammers, anvils, tongs and other metalworking tools. Nothing is of any particular value beyond its normal price as mundane equipment.

AREA 3: COGLING CLEARING

Read or paraphrase the following:

A narrow path leads 30 feet south through the gear forest before opening up into a roughly circular clearing. It's clear that someone rebuilt this entire area of the gear forest in order to create this safe zone. In the middle of the clearing are two more coglings. They carry crossbows that are loaded but pointed at the floor. They eye you warily.

This is a guard room. The coglings always have at least one guard here to make sure no one finds their lair, which is to the south. Lately they've doubled the guard in an unsuccessful attempt to keep the metal-eating beetles away from Old Iron Arms. The passage to the northeast leads to other areas of the gear forest, through which the characters must pass.

Development: Hammerbit introduces the characters to the two guards, named Boltrunner and Truggut. After Hammerbit explains the situation, they direct the characters toward the northeast passage, which they say leads to where the metal-eating beetles come from. The coglings are assigned to guard duty here and won't follow the characters, but will help them fight anything that directly threatens this area.

If it comes up, both guards make it clear to the characters that they're not allowed

to travel any further south. The guards will enforce this rule with violence. Only a direct invitation from the leader of the tribe will get the characters any closer to their lair.

Stats for the coglings are not presented here because they really shouldn't be involved in combat. If it comes up, treat them as standard cogling warriors as described in "New Creatures" of Chapter 5 in **DragonMech**.

The Gear Forest: Remember that the gear forest is dangerous. If the characters venture from the cleared area, they may take damage as described in Chapter 6 of **DragonMech**.

It is possible for the characters to reach the sludge river at Area 8 by hiking due east through the gear forest from Area 3. The coglings won't suggest this, as they realize the danger posed by the gear forest. However, they won't hide the possibility either, if the characters are inquisitive.

Future Development: If the characters complete the mission successfully and earn the respect of the coglings, this is their entrance point to the creatures' lair. The coglings can become allies for future adventures (or enemies if the characters botch the mission).

AREA 4: BOILER ROOM (EL 2)

This hazardous room is filled with scalding steam. Read or paraphrase the following:

You've entered a room full of white-hot steam. The steam obscures sight more than five feet in front of you. The coglings said you must pass through this room, but the steam is so thick that it's impossible to tell where you should go.

You will need to keep track of four things in this room: the high temperature; the low visibility; the dangerous centipedes; and the locked door.

The round objects on the map are boilers, which are red-hot to the touch but otherwise not dangerous. They're filled with boiling water, but short of using massive force

there's no way the characters can puncture them (hardness 10, 50 hp).

The walls of this room are solid iron. They're quite hot due to the steam.

The High Temperature: The air temperature is approximately 110 degrees Fahrenheit. This is considered severe heat, per the description of the "Heat Dangers" entry under the "The Environment" section of Chapter 8 in the *DMG*. For every full 10 minutes that the characters spend in this room, they must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing heavy clothing or any sort of armor take a –4 penalty to this check.

Low Visibility: The steam provides concealment to everything in the room. Vision is limited to 5 feet, and all attacks have a 20% miss chance.

Dangerous Centipedes: A wide variety of vermin have made this room their home. The heat is overwhelming to warm-blooded creatures, but cold-blooded centipedes rather enjoy it, at least for a while.

Lurking in the northern section of the room are 4 Small monstrous centipedes and 2 Medium monstrous centipedes. They're sluggish due to the heat, but also protective of this area, which they routinely defend from other vermin that also want to nest here. They will attack the characters on sight (but remember that sight is limited to 5 feet). Their stats are below. If the PCs win initiative, this encounter may not be particularly challenging. In this case, feel free to throw more centipedes after the PCs until they've been given a good fight.

The centipedes have no treasure per se, but a search of the floor turns up the decaying carapaces of countless centipedes, spiders and beetles, all of which died in the endless battles for this warmest of lairs. Hidden among the scraps (Search DC 15) is one thing worth owning: a *+1 ring of protection*, consumed from a wayward adventurer by some arachnid that died here soon after. The ring is very hot to the touch, however, and must be picked up carefully; it takes 20 minutes to cool down to the point where it can be worn (wearing it while hot causes 1 point of nonlethal damage per round).

Monstrous Centipede, Small (4): CR 1/4; Small vermin; HD 1/2d8; hp 2 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grp –7; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d4–3 plus poison, bite); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 5, Dex 15, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +14, Spot +4.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison: Injury, Fort DC 10, 1d2 Dex/1d2 Dex.

Monstrous Centipede, Medium (2): CR 1/2; Medium vermin; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grp –1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6–1 plus poison, bite); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +10, Spot +4.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison: Injury, Fort DC 10, 1d3 Dex/1d3 Dex.

Locked Door: The door from this room is locked. The lock is easy to pick, as it has been corroded by the constant exposure to steam. However, the metal is red hot. Anyone trying to pick the lock must make a Dexterity check (DC 15) or suffer 1d2 points of heat damage while they are working.

Iron door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked); Open Lock DC 15.

AREA 5: RUSTY CORRIDOR (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

The corridor immediately turns due east. The air is much cooler now that you are out of the steam room. About 30 feet down the corridor, you see what appears to be a rust trail running north-to-south. Past that, the corridor turns to the south.

This corridor has three main features: the rust trail; the two centipedes that are hanging upside down above it; and the locked door in the north.

The Rust Trail: The ferrovore beetles ate their way through this room in their wanderings. There are two holes in the wall, one to the north and one to the south. They are like the one in Area 1, with a rust trail connecting them. Both lead into unsafe gear forest. (The beetles left behind a rusted trail burrowed right through the gears, but it's not large enough for PCs to pass through.)

The Centipedes: Two more centipedes are in this corridor, but they are hiding on the ceiling above the rust trail. They retreated here when the beetles passed by earlier, and have not left. Give the PCs a Spot check against the centipedes' Hide skill. If the centipedes remain hidden, they wait until a character passes underneath to investigate the rust trail, then they drop and attack. This ambush gives them a surprise round before the regular combat initiates.

Monstrous Centipede, Medium (2): CR 1/2; Medium vermin; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grp –1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6–1 plus poison, bite); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +10, Spot +4.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison: Injury, Fort DC 10, 1d3 Dex/1d3 Dex.

AREA 6A: THE COGWHEELS (EL 2)

Read or paraphrase the following. This text assumes the PCs enter from the north. The ceiling is 15 feet tall.

The room ahead is 40 feet wide and at least as long. Directly in front of you, only 5 feet into the room, are three massive cogwheels turning at breakneck speed. Each wheel is over 15 feet in diameter, with its bottom half buried in the floor. Only 3 feet of space separates the gears from each other. You can pass, but it will be dangerous.

Getting past the three cogwheels require squeezing between them. This requires three successive Reflex saves per the stats given below, one check to squeeze past each wheel. A failed check results in damage. Once a character has entered, he can't advance without making subsequent checks, and he can't leave without repeating the checks he made to get in.

There is one other way to pass: on the ceiling, which would be easy along the east or west edges of the wall (where there is almost 12 feet of clear space between the top edge of the cogwheel and the ceiling). However, doing so requires the ability to fly or climb on the ceiling, which the PCs probably don't have.

Characters with the bright idea of jamming the gears are out of luck. Aside from the fact that doing so would damage the city-mech's engines and bring attention to the coglings, it should also be obvious that they don't have the power to jam a 30-foot-wide gear weighing at least a ton and spinning at high speed — hence the high Disable Device DC.

Treasure: The body of a dead adventurer lies between the second and third gears. His skeleton has been picked clean by the centipedes, but his leather armor and sacks look very appealing to greedy adventurers. However, every round spent searching provokes another Reflex save from the spinning gears, as the PCs must maneuver in a cramped, dangerous space. On the body (Search DC 12) are the following items: leather armor, a sack with 65 gp, a masterwork short sword, a light steel shield, a *+1 longsword*, two *potions of cure light wounds*, and a *potion of jump*. The coglings avoid this area because of the warder in Area 7, so they haven't touched the body.

Spinning Gears Trap: CR 1; mechanical; proximity trigger; automatic reset; DC 10 Reflex save avoids (characters must make at least 3 checks); 1d3 damage; Search DC 1; Disable Device DC 40.

AREA 6B:
THE PISTONS

Once the characters have made it past the cogwheels, Read or paraphrase the following:

Once you're past the cogwheels, you see that the room holds more danger. The southern half extends another 40 feet. Five massive pistons reach from floor to ceiling, pumping up and down with earth-shattering force. This time it looks safe to pass, though, as there's at least 10 feet of space between each piston. You can't help but notice another trail of rust, this time leading east-west across the lower half of the room.

The pistons are indeed safe to pass, but fighting a battle here is another story. Anyone fighting in a square adjacent to a piston must make a Reflex save (DC 12) each round or be struck, taking 2d8 damage from the massive blow. This probably won't come into play, but if the characters are clever, they may try to drag the warder from Area 7 to beneath one of the pistons. This is easily done with bull rushes and a grapple check; once the combatants are adjacent to a piston, whoever wins the grapple check shoves his opponent under the piston, forcing a Reflex save by the opponent while keeping himself out of danger.

AREA 7:
THE WARDER (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

As soon as you glance into this 30-by-30-foot room, you hear a robotic voice speaking to you. A tall, lanky construct with a face carved into a stern expression steps into the center of the room. "Warning!" it says. "This area is off limits. Please return to your level." As it repeats the monotonous warning over and over, you notice that it makes no additional moves toward you. You can see that the eastern wall of its room has a door.

This warder was installed to warn creatures entering from the east, not the north; the characters are approaching from the wrong direction as far as it's concerned. The door out of this area is unlocked when leaving, but is locked from the outside (which is where the creators assumed intruders would come from). Characters who aren't careful may have trouble getting back in.

Iron door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked); Open Lock DC 20 (from area 8), DC 0 (from area 7).

Warder: CR 1/2; Medium construct; HD 2d10; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; BAB +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); SQ Construct traits; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will –5; Str 12, Dex 10, Con –, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Development: The warder will continue warning until someone approaches within 20 feet, at which point it attacks. It will not pursue those who retreat.

AREA 8:
THE SLUDGE RIVER (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You've entered a natural clearing in the gear forest. It extends for about 30 feet to a river of sludge running north-to-south. The sludge river looks like it was once some sort of grease pit or oil outflow that has since become grossly overrun. Now it's a slow-running river of grease, oil, chemicals and sludge that's 30 feet wide in most places. Except for your little clearing, its banks are gear forest on both sides. On the far bank, you see a faint trail of rusty parts emerging about 20 feet upstream.

The coglings intentionally dam grease flows like this to create habitats for the grease lizards they domesticate. A few wild grease lizards are always present, however, and this is no exception. An adult grease lizard lurks midway across the sludge river. It will hide until the characters are close, then attack.

Grease Lizard: CR 1; Medium animal; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init –1; Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; BAB +1; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, bite); SQ Fire vulnerability; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 8, Con 13,
Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Hide +12 (+0 when not submerged), Listen +2, Spot +2.

Crossing the River: The river is 3 feet deep in the center. It can be waded at half speed; any faster will risk a fall (Reflex DC 16). Anyone wading through will emerge coated with grease and flammable chemicals. Characters so coated take an extra 1d6 damage the next time they are attacked by fire. They also suffer from a –1 penalty to Reflex saves for the next 10 minutes because they are so slippery. Furthermore, they must make Balance checks (DC 10) to attempt any movement faster than a walk, which includes a charge, run or jump. Failure means the PC falls prone. The grease cannot be cleaned short of a very thorough bath or specialized magic.

Characters may have the magical means to jump the river, but doing so will land them in the gear forest on the opposite bank.

Fire: The sludge itself has a high moisture content and isn't extremely flammable, but the chemicals floating above it are. Lighting the sludge river on fire will cause huge flames for 1d4+2 rounds, igniting the resident grease lizard and sending it charging into the characters. It will also cause mechanical problems throughout the gear forest, bringing unwanted attention to the coglings.

The Opposite Bank: Emerging onto the opposite bank, the characters can easily follow the rust trail, but will be forced to travel through the gear forest to do so. See Chapter 8 in **DragonMech** for rules on gear forest hazards. Award XP for any hazards encountered.
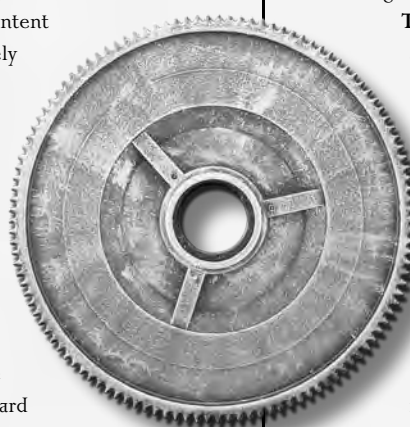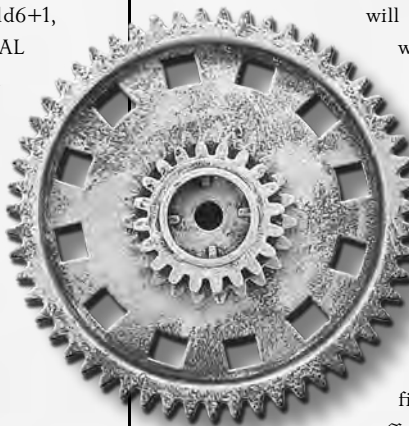
AREA 9:
THE BEETLE LAIR (EL 3)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You carefully push your way through the gear forest until the rust trail opens into a rusted clearing. It looks like something has literally consumed the gear forest in this area. Rusted frames stand like the skeleton of a dead engine. Nesting within the soft waves of rust are three large rust-red beetles, each more than 5 feet long. A soft red glow emanates from above their eyes.

This is the lair of the ferrovore fire beetles that so enjoy the taste of the golem's magical metal. Due to their ability to detect metal, it is highly unlikely that the characters will surprise them (especially if they're carrying the delicious-smelling *+1 longsword* from Area 6A). The beetles are prepared to fight and charge on sight.

Tactics: The beetles open with a barrage of breath weapons. They aren't smart enough to coordinate their actions, so all three use their breath weapon on the first round. (Hopefully the characters were smart enough to stash their valuable metal objects before the fight!) On the second round, they charge in to use their bite attack. They fight to the death.

Treasure: A search of the area reveals no treasure. The beetles were interested exclusively in metal objects, and devoured anything that might be of value to the characters.

Ferrovore Giant Fire Beetles (3): CR 1; Small vermin; HD 3d8; hp 13 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16; BAB +2; Grp –2; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d4 plus rust, bite); SA Breath weapon (DC 11); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits, detect metal, corrosive skin (DC 11); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: –

SA–Breath Weapon (Ex): Line, 30 feet, once every 1d4+1 rounds; all mundane metals instantly rusted; magic items receive Ref save (DC 11).

CONCLUSION

The coglings will be overjoyed to hear that the beetles are vanquished. They'll ask the characters to bring them the creatures' bodies, and take them to the beetles' lair so they can repair the damage they did to the gear forest.

In exchange for the characters' help, the coglings offer three valuables.

First, they give the characters three ingots of platinum. Each weighs half a pound and is worth 250 gp.

Second, they explain the network of air vents, water pipes and hydraulic cables that are woven into the structure of the city-mech like veins in a living creature. They use these passages, most of which are passable only by creatures of Small or Tiny size, to spy on affairs throughout the "Great Engine." They are aware of most significant developments on the mech — although what's "significant" to them may have little to no meaning to the characters, and vice versa. They offer their assistance in unearthing secrets in the future.

Finally, the coglings offer access to Old Iron Arms if it is needed for the future, although they insist this access be regulated by their own warriors. They are keenly aware of Old Iron Arms' importance in the functioning of the Great Engine, and they protect him as the totem of their tribe. The cogling warriors don't let *anything* get close to Old Iron Arms if they can prevent it, but they'll allow the characters access as long as it's in their presence. As far as the coglings are concerned, this is the greatest gift they can offer. The characters, of course, are probably far more interested in the platinum!

EPISODE THREE: ENTER THE LEGION

INTRODUCTION

This episode seems straightforward: The characters are to travel to Legion territory, where they have to raid a lunar temple much like the one they just left. Yet it turns out to be more difficult. First, they encounter a number of hazards as they venture deeper into Legion territory, ranging from wild giant worms to orc raiders. Once they make it into Legion territory, they are faced with a suspicious military patrol. When they finally make it to the meteor, they discover the plan has a big hitch: The meteor is now the de facto campground for a band of Legion citizens. They're living in the meteor, and if the lunar skinstealers are anywhere to be found, they're probably already controlling some of the citizens. Navigating this situation requires diplomacy and intu-

ition, lest the characters wind up mobbed by dozens of commoners. In the end, the PCs should be able to identify the skinstealers and eliminate them. In this final encounter, they discover the location of another *starshard*, hidden in the lunar temple — but as they go to retrieve it, they're beaten to the punch by a nimble Irontooth mech, which leads to the next episode.

This episode is organized into encounters. The first few encounters are along the path to Legion territory, then there are several encounters around the meteor.

TRAVELING ENCOUNTERS

Now refer to Map Three: Journey to the Legion.

Encounter A:
Getting Off Nedderpik

On the second morning after the characters arrive on Nedderpik, the city-mech comes as close to Legion territory as it will get. The

characters are loaned a Magwagon, a mech model that was once used by the Stenian Confederacy but which is now primarily in use by civilian freighters. The Magwagon (see Appendix One) lacks any official Stenian marks or insignia; to all appearances, it is completely nonpartisan.

Grunnar reiterates their mission: Destroy any lunar influence present at the site of the second meteor. He emphasizes the danger of the insidious skinstealers, and instructs the characters about them as much as possible (to whatever extent you, the DM, prefer). He warns them of the xenophobia common in Legion territory and recommends that non-humans stay out of sight as much as possible. He then gives them a rough map and tells them Nedderpik will be in this general vicinity once every week or so for the next month, so they won't have a difficult time returning. (Remember also that the city-mech is large enough to be seen on the horizon, so the characters can find it if need be.) Then he sends them on their way.

Now the characters have to get their mech off Nedderpik! This is the opening roll of this episode: the DC 10 Mech Pilot skill check to see if they can land upright after stepping off the city-mech. See "Skills" in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech** for full details on this check.

Encounter B:
The Lunar Rain

The trip to the meteor in Legion territory takes three days, unless the characters encounter delays. The first day of travel is completely uneventful. Eventually, dusk arrives and the characters must seek shelter. Read or paraphrase the following to the characters:

You pass a long, boring day trudging across the rocky soil of the roughlands. Except for the occasional wild animal or distant mech far on the horizon, you encounter no other living creatures. You pass hundreds of boulder-sized meteors embedded in the earth, and more than a few crushed houses and castles, all a constant reminder of the destructive power of the lunar rain. You're

thankful for the protection of your mech, but at the same time you're painfully aware of just how uncomfortable it is. The constant bouncing of the mech's uneven step makes your haunches sore. By the time the sun finally begins to set, you're eager to stop for the night — although you're nervous, as always, about what the moon's rising may bring.

Remind the players of the lunar rain's brutality: The characters must find secure shelter or be sandblasted through the night. The mech's walls are sufficient to protect them from most meteors, but a bad meteor storm will damage even the mech. They can watch the horizon to see how bad the lunar rain looks as it rises with the moon, then evaluate based on that.

At this point, you should roll on the lunar rain table in Chapter 4 of **DragonMech**. The moon is not full, so don't apply the +4 modifier (it was the unusually severe lunar rains of the full moon that brought down the lunar temples a few days ago). Once you know what's happening with the lunar rain, describe the effects to the players in game terms: "You feel an abrasive mist falling from the sky. Staying outside is painful — you must find cover somewhere!"

Remember to roll for the lunar rain each and every evening. In most cases, the characters are fine taking cover in the mech, though if the lunar rain is bad enough (19+ result on the table), they might want to find cover underground. They may also want to seek shelter underground if the only place for the mech is on an exposed position (high on a ridge, at the top of a hill, etc.) where you could rule that it is more likely to be hit by meteors.

Allow the characters a Survival check (DC 15) to find suitable cover. Given the scarcity of cover and the fact that every surface creature simultaneously looks for protection when the lunar rain gets bad, there's a good chance whatever cover they find will already be inhabited! Roll 1d20 on the following table to determine what sort of cover the characters find, then roll 1d20 again to determine what inhabits it:

Roll	Cover Located
1–5	Cave
6–8	Worm burrows
9–12	Ravine
13–15	Ruined castle
16–18	Burned-out hulk of a damaged mech
19–20	Underground village or town

Roll	Inhabitant of Cover Located
1–8	Uninhabited
9–10	Vermin (monstrous centipedes, scorpions, and spiders)
11–12	Friendly humanoids: humans, dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, or half-orcs
13–14	Hostile humanoids: goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, orcs, gnolls, or bugbears
15	Formians
16	Social insects (giant ants or bees)
17–18	Unfriendly animal: bear, boar, wolverine, or dire badger
19	Giant worm
20	Ankheg

Refer to the MM or Chapter 5 of **DragonMech** for the stats of the encountered creatures. Searching for cover from the lunar rain provides a constant potential for "random" encounters.

Encounter C:
The Worm Pits (EL 1)

Around noon on their second day of travel, the characters come to an area pocked with holes. Read or paraphrase the following:

For a day now, you've been walking over rocky, uneven terrain, but now it seems like the landscape is changing. Up ahead the soil has been churned — tilled, almost — and you can see no boulders or trees whatsoever. In fact, the ground is almost perfectly flat, except for the occasional pit or hole that seems to lead straight down into the earth.

Allow the following checks:

• Spot DC 12: You notice a flash of movement in one of the holes, but then it stops. Whatever caused it must have moved deeper in the hole.

- Spot DC 14: The ground ahead seems to sparkle a bit. On more careful observation, you notice that it appears to be littered with fragments of glass or gemstones.
- Listen DC 20: You hear a very faint, dull rumbling coming from under the ground.
- Survival or Knowledge (nature) DC 14: You recognize this landscape as the mark of giant worms.

The landscape is indeed the work of giant worms. They have congregated here for a natural mating and molting process, which is entering its third week. Their constant churning of the soil near the surface has caused any boulders and other surface debris to sink into the soft, tilled earth. The violent activity has also brought all sorts of smaller objects to the surface, including a wide array of gemstones, many of which have been eaten and then excreted by the worms. The holes and pits lead into the worms' burrows.

Dozens of giant worms dwell in this area. They are unintelligent and not inclined to attack in any coordinated manner, so the characters are not at great risk — but they are almost guaranteed to encounter at least one worm.

The PCs have three options: go around; advance on foot; or advance in their mech.

Go Around: Going around this area adds a half-day to the characters' travels. The worms have traversed a wide swath of land that cuts right through the characters' path. Going around makes the trip longer but poses no other dangers.

Advancing on Foot: Once the characters have entered the churned ground on foot, they make the following observations:

- The loose gemstones on the ground are now obvious to any character that didn't notice them before.
- The pits clearly lead straight into the earth, as deep as the PCs can see. Those looking into the pits catch the occasional glimpse of movement, but can't discern what's down there.
- The soft earth is undoubtedly dangerous for a mech to traverse. The characters themselves sink about 6 inches into the loose soil. A mech would be mired quickly.

The worms have tremorsense and will surface once they detect movement above them. Advancing on foot gives the characters 1d6+2 rounds before the first worm surfaces. Each round they can attempt to gather some gemstones; a Search check (DC 10) reveals 1d4 gems worth 25 gp each (mostly chunks of clear, rosy or smoky quartz) in the immediate area.

When the first worm surfaces, it rises 40 feet from the characters. Emphasize its size — a full 30 feet long — as it lurches out of the earth and then flails about in the air. From then on, another worm surfaces every 1d4 rounds. The worms advance slowly on the

characters. Make it obvious to the characters that they're outmatched — these worms are big! Their best bet is to retreat to the mech and leave. You should try to let the players come to this decision themselves so that they don't feel this was their only option all along.

If the characters attack a worm, it fights back and pursues them. The other worms don't join the fight unless they too are attacked. A damaged worm will chase the PCs to their mech. Note that the worms are unintelligent and also nearly blind. If wounded in melee, they'll retreat underground; if attacked with missile weapons (including the mech's steam cannon), they'll spend a couple of rounds out in the open, flailing about trying to identify their attacker, before retreating underground.

Advancing in the Mech: Advancing in the mech is dangerous:

• First, the much heavier seismic vibrations cause the first worm to surface in only 1d4 rounds.

• Second, the worms object to the stomping of the mech. Its heavy footfall disrupts their peace. The first 1d4 worms will attack the mech.

• Third, the worm pits count as extremely difficult terrain (refer to "Mech Combat," Moving a Mech, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**). Any pilot with at least 1 rank in Mech Pilot will be aware of this problem. The pilot must make a Mech Pilot skill check (DC 20) to enter the terrain. Passing the check means his speed is halved. Failure by 5 or less means the mech's speed is quartered; failure by more than 5 means the mech falls over. (See "Tripping a Mech," Downed Mechs, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech** to determine how it lands.)

• Finally, once the worms attack, the mech is in melee combat. This forces a Mech Pilot skill check every round, and increases the DC to 22.

If the mech does fall over, it will be swamped by attacking giant worms, which will bite it for several minutes until they're convinced it's "dead." If the characters remain motionless, the worms will conclude the mech is "dead" and eventually wander off.

Righting a downed mech requires a Mech Pilot check (DC 20) (see "Skills" in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**). Alternately, wandering traders could wander by and assist the characters.

XP Awards: If the PCs make it past this encounter without downing their mech, award them XP as if they'd defeated a CR 1 trap. Award XP for defeating giant worms as usual.

Giant Worms (1 or more): CR 4; Huge magical beast; HD 9d10+9; hp 58; Init –1; Spd 20 ft., burrow 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19; BAB +9; Grp +22; Atk/Full Atk +12 melee (1d6+5, bite); SQ Tremorsense; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +11.

Encounter D:
The Orc Raiders (EL 3)

Around dusk on the second day, the terrain begins changing. Read or paraphrase the following:

It is getting late in the day, and the sun is low in the sky. For the past several miles the rocky flatlands have become less and less flat. Ravines and gullies become common. Soon the entire landscape is a series of deep grooves running east-west. You are forced to guide your mech through narrow channels with high walls, each one surfacing to ground level for only a few hundred feet before becoming a rock-walled channel again. The stark shadows of the impending sunset make the channels seem even more isolated.

There is no way to get around this dangerous landscape. It counts as difficult terrain, requiring a Mech Pilot check (DC 10). Failure by 5 or less means the mech's speed is halved; failure by 6 or more means the mech falls over. Furthermore, climbing out of one channel to enter another requires a Climb check, per the usual rules.

The players will probably start thinking "ambush!" when they hear this description — and they're right. After a half-hour or so of navigating these ravines (especially if they fail the Mech Pilot check and topple their

mech), they are attacked by orcs intent on capturing their mech!

The Orc Ambush: A band of orcs haunts this area, living under the overhangs of the gullies and routinely ambushing anything that comes through. They spot the mech from afar and maneuver to ambush it.

Start the encounter by allowing the PCs a Spot check, as follows:

Spot DC	Result
10	You notice movement of some kind further up the gully, but you can't make out what it is.
14	It seems as if something is using the deep shadows on the gully walls to make its way toward you. The shapes appear to be humanoid.
18	Green-skinned humanoids are scurrying about the gully around you, trying unsuccessfully to conceal their movement in the deep shadows.

There are a total of 22 orcs, all with the same stats. They have a single, simple goal: to topple the mech, board it, slaughter the crew and take the mech for their own. Their combat tactics are as follows:

Round 1: Sixteen orcs charge the mech. They are concealed on both sides of the ravine, so they should be able to surround the mech completely. They then initiate a trip attack. Review the rules in "Mech Combat," *Tripping a Mech*, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech** for cooperative trip checks by hordes of infantry. The characters' Magwagon receives a whopping +26 bonus to its Trip check (+16 for size, +10 for its Strength). The orcs receive a minimum of +3 (for the team leader's 17 Strength), plus another +2 for each of the 15 orcs that passes its Strength check against DC 10 (to contribute to the attempt), for a maximum possible trip check of +33.

The other six orcs find cover along the walls of the gully, three orcs per side, and launch javelins at any character who emerges from a porthole.

Remember that if the mech passes the trip check, the mech pilot can use a full-round action for the mech to trample the orcs that surround it, potentially squashing a dozen orcs or more in one round. The Magwagon deals 4d6 points of trampling damage, as noted in its stats (see Appen-

dix One, "New Mechs"). Review the rules on trampling in "Mech Combat," *Special Attacks*, of Chapter 2 in **DragonMech**. The orcs will likely attempt Reflex saves rather than attacks of opportunity. Should they choose an attack of opportunity, however, they can use it to make another trip check before they get flattened. Orcs that survive the trample are able to grab the mech's leg as a free action, which they will do, leaving their options open for climbing or another trip check in the following round.

If the mech is downed, the pilot can right it with the usual Mech Pilot check (DC 20).

Round 2: If the mech is downed, the orcs start prying open portholes to try to board (review the rules in "Mech Combat," *Boarding a Mech,* in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**). A porthole's break DC is 28, and up to four orcs can cooperate on each attempt. They are equipped with prybars for the task. Any PC who was foolish enough to open a porthole will find himself fighting an orc who is trying to enter through it.

If the mech pilot manages to right the downed mech while the attack is underway, those orcs who were trying to pry open portholes find themselves lifted into the air with the mech. They now count as riding the mech. Refer to the mech-riding rules in "Mech Combat," *Special Attacks*, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**. The orcs must make Balance checks or fall off the mech, potentially being trampled.

If the mech isn't downed, the orcs will continue trying to trip it as long as they can muster at least 12 orcs for the attempt. If there are fewer than 12 orcs remaining, they resort to javelin-tossing against viable targets. If the PCs batten down the hatches and don't give the orcs any targets, the orcs will wait a few rounds and then retreat, knowing they don't have sufficient numbers to take down the mech.

Round 3: As round 2. The orcs continue trying to down the mech and board as long as they have sufficient numbers. Once there are 11 or fewer orcs and the mech is standing again, they will retreat.

A Note on EL: A horde of orcs this size should normally have an EL much higher than 3! However, in this case, the characters have the advantage of their mech. Many of the orcs will be trampled to death by the mech as they try to topple it. Those who aren't trampled will have a hard time boarding the mech even if they do down it. And as long as the PCs are smart enough to stay on their mech, they're fighting from higher ground and a position of cover. Unless the PCs make a catastrophically stupid tactical error, they should be able to use their mech to destroy the orcs handily, making this an easier encounter than it would otherwise be on foot.

Orc Raiders (22): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (orc); HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; BAB +1; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (2d4+4/18–20, falchion) or +1 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will –2; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 7, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +1, Spot +1.

Feats: Alertness.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, falchion, 6 javelins, 1d6 gp.

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Haimler's Town

The characters approach the second meteor on the morning of the fourth day (allowing for a half-day detour for the worm pits on what would normally be a three-day journey). As they close in, Read or paraphrase the following:

The pitted, channeled terrain gradually gives way to rocky flatland. You are growing close to the great cliff that separates the roughland from the plains to the east. As you crest a particularly rocky area, you find yourselves standing on the edge of an immense crater. At some point in the past, an enormous meteor blasted this mile-wide hole in the earth. Visible in the far wall of the crater is another crater, this one much smaller, and in it are the still-smoking remains of a recently fallen meteor. Even from this distance, you can tell it's made of the same material as the other meteor you explored. It must be the other half of the lunar temple.

Yet it's not that simple. Clustered around the meteor is a veritable tent city. It looks like a bustling community has sprung up around the meteor! They must be using its tunnels for protection from the lunar rain.

The settlement is called Haimler's Town, after the founder. At this point, it's less than a week old. Haimler is a minor tribal leader who hopes to improve his position in the Legion.

Recent History: Haimler's tribe, the Thrawtek, was one of many nomadic peoples on the endless plains before they were swayed by the speeches of Shar Thizdic. They willingly accepted his leadership, becoming part of what is now called the Legion. Shar appointed Haimler a major and made the Thrawtek's warrior leader, Thoron, a sergeant. The Thrawtek tribe

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Haimler's Town (village): Conventional; AL LN; 200 gp limit; Assets 4,670; Population 467; Isolated (human 100%).

Authority Figures: Haimler, human male Wiz5 (former leader of the Thrawtek tribe, now a major in the Legion; controlled by a lunar skinstealer).

Important Characters: Shtrawnek, human male Clr3 (tribal shaman); Thoron, human male Ftr4 (former warrior leader of the tribe, now a sergeant in the Legion; controlled by a lunar skinstealer).

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was largely dissolved as part of Shar's plans for a military that integrated disparate tribes, breaking down tribal loyalties. However, Haimler never quite accepted this situation; he'd rather be leader of his own tribe than follow orders as someone else's major. But the dominance of Shar is unquestioned, so Haimler had to find some way to return to leadership without severing ties to the Legion. When the meteor landed, he saw his chance; in the name of Shar, he led an "expedition" to recover whatever valuable artifacts might be in the meteor. Of course, the "expedition" consists almost exclusively of his former tribal brethren, and the Legion's official support for the expedition is sketchy at best — Haimler's superiors haven't exactly endorsed the tribe's mass migration. Haimler hasn't shared that little detail with his tribe. He hopes to find lunar artifacts so valuable that they'll justify the relocation of his tribe here, where he can be both a major for Shar Thizdic and the leader of his old tribe.

However, Haimler didn't evaluate the situation properly. Short of his finding a minor artifact, there's almost no way the Legion will let him get away with reforming his tribe for any extended period of time. More importantly, several lunar skinstealers survived the meteor crash. They have since taken control of Haimler and Thoron, and now drive the men to pursue the skinstealers' own agenda. The tribe members that the skinstealers possessed prior to Haimler and Thoron have since experienced unfortunate "accidents."

This situation creates an interesting dynamic within the tribe: The possessed Haimler and Thoron have effectively abandoned their own goals and those of the Legion, and now

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follow the orders of their skinstealer controllers. They want to rebuild the temple as a place of worship for Seroficitacit and convert the tribe to his worship. This sentiment has only emerged in the last three days, since they were possessed. Meanwhile, the tribal shaman Shtrawnek can't understand why his companions have changed their worldview so drastically. He (like most of the tribe) is more interested in retrofitting the lunar temple for use as living space, followed by the establishment of a new city here. This conflict has led to the creation of the tent city: Two factions continue to argue over exactly what to do with the inside of the lunar temple, so although the tribe sleeps inside at night, they haven't yet made permanent habitation there.
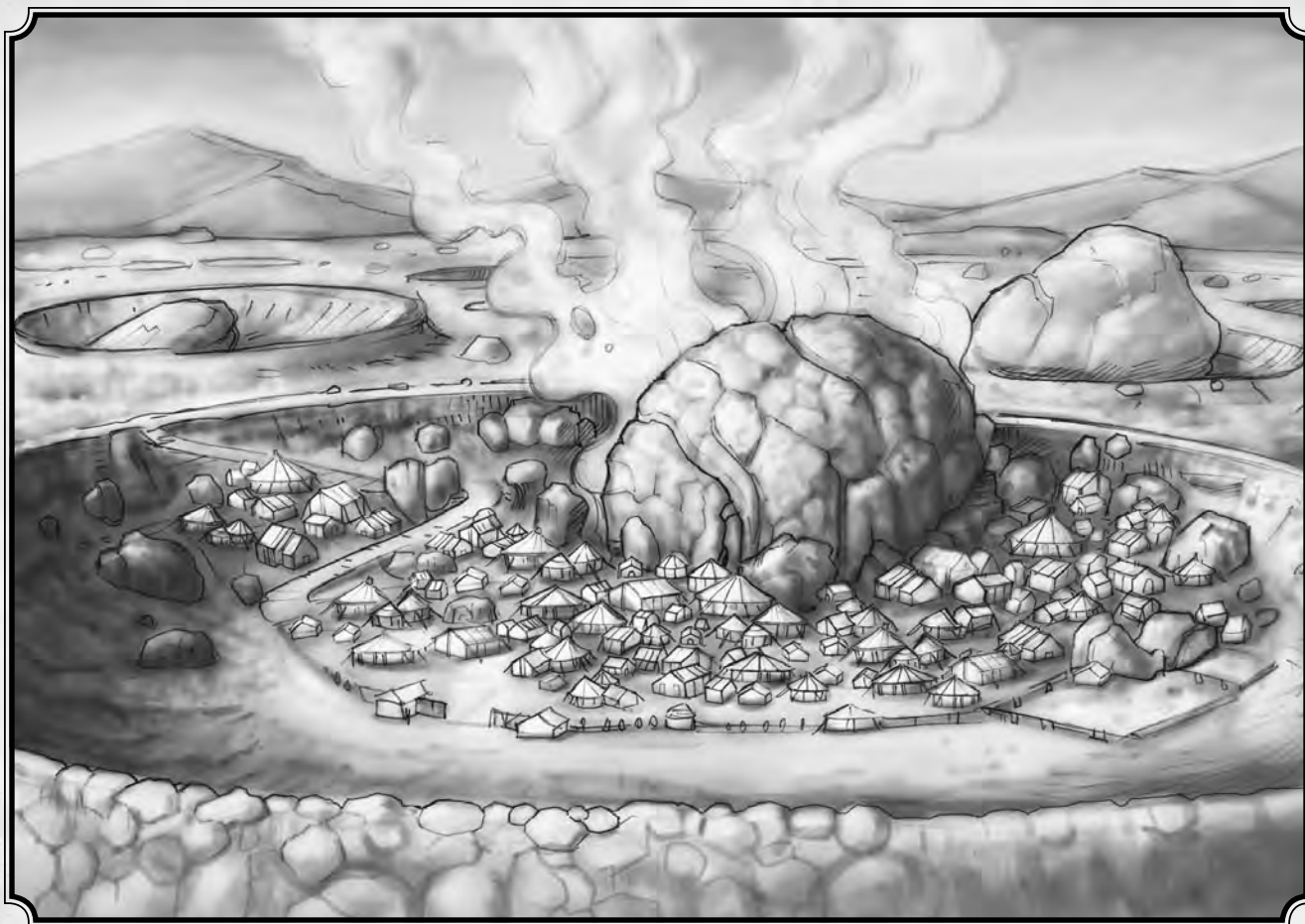
The Characters' Involvement: What of the characters' goal: destroying any lunar influence? Well, certain traces of lunar influence are extremely obvious. The temple of Seroficitacit is still intact. Some members of the tribe are actively restoring it. Haimler and Thoron are preaching the virtues of Seroficitacit, and they're nurturing several lunar creatures back to health.

The PCs have quite a few options for how they'll approach this challenge. Here is an overview of certain key events to help you guide the play. There are five key events that move the plot along: the characters' initial approach; their interaction with the community at large; their interactions with Haimler, Thoron and Shtrawnek; their investigation of the lunar temple; and the arrival of the Irontooth mech. Below is an overview of those events, followed by a breakdown of the town's important locations and NPCs.

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EVENTS

Event 1: The Characters' Initial Approach

Mechs don't travel these parts very often, and the tribe is already a little suspicious. If the characters approach in their mech, they'll be surrounded and treated as unfriendly visitors, then led to Haimler for interrogation. If the characters approach

on foot, the locals won't be as suspicious, especially if the PCs explain their presence with a disguise of being traders, refugees or pilgrims of Seroficitacit.

When the characters are close to the meteor, Read or paraphrase the following:

The meteor is roughly 250 feet wide, with about 50 feet of its top extending above ground level, just like the one you left only a few days before. From your position, no entrances are visible, but someone has already carved a rough staircase up the side of the meteor. The staircase terminates at a landing on the edge of the meteor's top. Every now and then you see someone enter or leave the meteor through the landing.

Surrounding the meteor are about 50 tents made of durable canvas. The meteor landed on the wall of the existing crater, and the tents are placed in the lee of its smaller crater. The over-hanging meteor, combined with the incline of the crater wall, keeps most of the tents in the shadow all day long, and presumably protects them from the worst of the lunar rain as well.

Two tents in particular stand out. Both are twice the size of the other tents and have red pennants flying from them. You see no mechs or signs of mechs, nor do you see any sign of a real military presence. If you didn't know you were in Legion territory, you'd think this was the tent city of wandering nomads.

You see no sign of any lunar creatures.

When they arrive, the characters aren't necessarily directed to the tribe's leadership. If their disguises are sound or their cover stories convincing, the tribe is glad to accept them as passing visitors. The tent city has an open central square that passes for a market and tavern, and the characters can find food and company there.

Remember, this is a close-knit community made up of tribesman with long associations. Any outsiders stand out, no matter how they're disguised. The PCs are immediately recognized as outsiders no matter what they do. That said, they aren't instantly distrusted unless their actions warrant it.

If for some reason the characters *are* distrusted, then the tribesmen will keep them under guard while they get Haimler or Thoron.

Legion Xenophobia: Remember that the Legion espouses a humanocentric philosophy. Shar Thizdic claims that the lunar rain is a chance for humans to rise up and take their rightful place in the world. His followers consider humanoids to be inferior to humans — a position Shar Thizdic is careful never to verbally utter himself, but which he obviously supports.

Much of the tribe remembers the days before Shar, and many remember when they used to trade with the elves and dwarves. Even

TABLE 3-1: SPOT CHECKS BY AREA OBSERVED

Spot DC	Result
Central square and general observation	
10	You notice that the community atmosphere is argumentative. Everywhere you look, people seem to be having heated discussions.
15	You see very few open displays of religion, but a number of people wear pendants decorated with strange blob-shaped emblems. (**Note to DM:** These are symbols of Seroficitacit.)
Meteor	
10	People seem to avoid the meteor; hardly anyone ventures close. Yet every now and then someone enters or exits from the landing at the top of the staircase.
15	A guard appears to be hidden at the top of the staircase. Every time someone approaches the staircase, they wait to be acknowledged by him before advancing.
20	The same people enter and leave the meteor on a steady rotation. Sometimes when they leave, they appear to be carrying baskets. You can't tell what's in the baskets, but they look heavy. (Note to DM: The baskets have rocks, debris and other construction byproducts. These are dumped by the edge of the crater.)
Large tents	
10	The two large tents with the red pennants obviously belong to important people. Each tent has a dedicated guard, and visitors are very deferential.
15	The tents occasionally get visitors who move back and forth between them before leaving, but you never see the tents' occupants emerge to speak with each other.
20	The people entering one tent all have pendants decorated with a strange blob-shaped emblem, but the people entering the other tent never wear this symbol.

so, they've been swayed. They'll automatically be distrustful toward any nonhumans. All nonhumans have a –2 penalty to Diplomacy checks when dealing with the tribesmen. If they can disguise themselves as humans, there is no penalty. Those who can't pass as humans (such as gnomes and halflings) can avoid the penalty if they act deferential toward their human fellows. A Gather Information or Knowledge (local) check reveals this rather common knowledge about the Legion and its beliefs, as follows:

Gather Information or Knowledge (local) Check:

DC	Information Revealed
10	The Legion distrusts anyone who isn't a human.
12	Nonhumans who act deferential to their human partners are judged better by the Legion than those who act proud of their heritage.

Event 2:
The Characters' Interaction with the Community

The community is split. Half of the tribesmen are willing to follow Haimler wherever he leads them, including to the worship of Seroficitacit. The other half wonder why Haimler and Thoron have suddenly latched onto this new religion, and aren't ready to convert yet. As a result of this split, the characters will get very different assessments of the situation depending on which villager they happen to speak with at any given time.

There are two primary tools with which the characters can interact with the community: Spot checks and Gather Information checks.

Spot Checks: Allow Spot checks based on what the characters observe, as follows. Some of these results require extended observation.

It doesn't take a Spot check to notice that the entire encampment clears out at night, with almost everyone moving into the meteor for safety. At night, the staircase guard disappears into the meteor with the rest of them. The residents of one of the large tents — Haimler and Thoron — pack up and enter the meteor at night. Shtrawnek, who occupies the other large tent, has stopped moving into the meteor at night out of opposition to Haimler's proposed worship of Seroficitacit. He and a few of his acolytes are the only tribesmen to remain in the village at night.

The PCs are *not* invited into the meteor at night. If their disguises lead the villagers to trust them, they're allowed to sleep in one of the common tents, although they can't go into the tents with the red flags.

Gather Information: Allow Gather Information checks based on who the characters speak with. Assume at least half the people they speak with are followers of Haimler (and recent converts of Seroficitacit), while the other half are traditionalists and holdouts. Use the following table as appropriate. Questions concerning the meteor produce consistent results, as indicated on the table, although you should slant the answers to the views of the person being questioned.

Typical Tribesman: The typical tribesman has stats as given in "NPCs" below. Here are profiles of four sample tribesmen to use in your interactions:

Sharia: Sharia was born only 19 years ago. Named after the glorious new leader Shar Thizdic, she's a model citizen of the Legion. She's always supported Haimler but considers Shar her supreme leader. She doesn't remember the old tribal ways and doubts Haimler's new course for the tribe. She's tall and thin, with sun-bleached hair and wiry muscles built from years of hard work.

Fornik: Fornik is a sturdy man over 6 feet tall whose age is catching up with him. At least 40 years old, he's now wrinkled and soft where once he was tall and strong. Nonetheless, he's still an imposing figure. His scraggly beard and tribal tattoos mark his longstanding allegiance to traditional Thrawtek ways. He was attracted to Shar Thizdic's ability to unite the tribes for the power and respect it offered, but always considered the Legion a little too militaristic. He supported Haimler's initial excursion to the meteor, if only because it would reunite his tribe, but since Haimler has begun advocating these strange gods and lunar allies rather than the old tribal ways, Fornik has withdrawn his support. He suspects something else is going on, but he does not know what.

Clarna: Clarna is a middle-aged woman still bearing children. She's currently pregnant with what she claims will be her fourteenth child. She sees it as her duty to strengthen her tribe however she can, and she hopes her unborn child will be another strong warrior. (She proudly notes that 10 of her 13 prior

TABLE 3-2: GATHER INFORMATION BY PERSON/TOPIC QUERIED

Gather Information Check:

DC	Result
Pro-Haimler	
10	*Haimler brought us to the meteor because he is a great leader and visionary. He is showing us a new way to live.*
15	*Haimler received visions from a great god. The visions showed a glorious paradise in this new world for those who follow him. Shtrawnek and his old ways are wrong. The world has changed, and we must, too.*
20	*Haimler told me confidentially that the moon creatures are our salvation. The gods work in mysterious ways, he said.*
25	*What happened to Haimler's pet lizard? It used to follow him wherever he went, but I haven't seen it for days now.* (**Note to DM:** This is Haimler's familiar, which the lunar skinstealer killed once it became aware of the changes in Haimler.)
Anti-Haimler	
10	*I really don't understand what Haimler's doing. He's always been a good leader, but taking us out here to the middle of nowhere? What is he thinking? He's been acting differently lately.*
15	*Haimler's talk of new gods is nonsense. This tribe has always followed Peripatetin. He's never failed us, so why should we abandon him? Shtrawnek is right: We're risking everything by following Haimler.*
20	*I'm worried about Haimler. Reforming the tribe, leading us out here, worshipping new gods… all this is going to get back to the Legion. What has gotten into Haimler? And Thoron, too! He used to be the backbone of sanity here, but now he's following Haimler wherever he goes.*
25	*What happened to Haimler's pet lizard? It used to follow him wherever he went, but I haven't seen it for days now.* (**Note to DM:** This is Haimler's familiar, which the lunar skinstealer killed once it became aware of the changes in Haimler.)
The Meteor	
10	*The meteor is a very safe place to live. The layout is a little weird, but it's safe, so I can live with it.*
15	*There are still things living in the meteor — strange ooze things. Haimler says not to harm them. Shtrawnek refuses to enter the meteor as long as they still live.*
20	*The first people to enter the meteor fought something — but whatever it was, it disappeared before they could finish it off. The people seemed fine and said nothing had happened. Ever since then, things have been different, Haimler and Thoron particularly.* (**Note to DM:** These were the lunar skinstealers. They took over the first people to enter the temple, then switched bodies furtively until they had taken over the leaders, Haimler and Thoron.)

PERIPATETIN

Peripatetin is the Thrawtek god of good voyages. Many other nomadic tribes of the eastern plains also worship him. Peripatetin is neutral. He doesn't necessarily guarantee safe passage, or even successful passage, but his worshippers believe he gives good voyages, meaning all things work out in the end. A wandering tribe that is forced to change course due to an overflowing river, and then finds a verdant new pasture as a result, attributes that success to Peripatetin, just as does a tribe that completes a journey successfully according to its original plan. Peripatetin's symbol varies by tribe, but usually incorporates a walking stick. The Thrawtek symbol for him is a vertical walking stick in front of a stylized sun image. The top of the sun is yellow while the bottom is black, symbolizing Peripatetin's domain over all travels whether at day or night. Peripatetin's domains are Luck, Protection and Travel. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff.

children have been men, all of them great warriors.) It isn't her place to question the gods or how men should interact with them; that's a job for great men such as Haimler. If Haimler deems this new god to be the right choice for the tribe, then she'll follow him.

Bradok: Bradok is a young man who greatly enjoyed training with the Legion military. He's always wanted to be a warrior, like his father before him. He looks up to Thoron, who is the greatest warrior he's ever met. The teachings of Seroficitacit seem reasonable to him, and if Thoron deems it the right thing to do, he's glad to go along.

Event 3: The Characters' Interactions with Haimler, Thoron and Shtrawnek

The three tribal leaders have very different perspectives on the world. Conversations with them quickly reveal their goals and disputes. The profiles and stats in "NPCs," below, should allow you to play them as distinctive NPCs.

Characters can encounter these NPCs in a variety of ways. Their initial contact with the tent city could lead to meeting Haimler or Thoron, especially if they make trouble or are distrusted from the start. As they explore the tent city, the PCs are bound to notice the large tents and find out who's in them,

perhaps eventually requesting an audience. Gathering information around town will bring up the leaders' names repeatedly.

Gaining an Audience: If it doesn't happen naturally through hostile means, the PCs may be able to gain an audience with Haimler, Thoron or Shtrawnek in a number of ways. Posing as traders, diplomats, refugees or followers of Seroficitacit are all plausible covers. Don't make it too hard for the PCs to get in contact with the leaders (unless they really screw it up themselves). In most situations, the leaders will have followers or bodyguards with them, so the PCs' real challenge will be catching the leaders alone.

Unveiling the Lunar Skinstealers: The ultimate resolution of this episode is when

the characters purge Haimler and Thoron of the lunar skinstealers that control them. Exactly how this happens could spell life or death for the characters. Whether the tribesmen agree with their leaders or not, they're still not going to allow a bunch of outsiders to jump them. It is crucial that the characters reveal (and defeat) the lunar skinstealers in a situation where the tribesmen aren't there to come to their rescue. Otherwise, the characters will be beaten to death by 400+ irate tribesmen. Game over!

The PCs should be able to lure Haimler and/ or Thoron away in any of the following ways:

• Invite them to discuss a "profitable trading venture," but insist the leaders must come to view the goods at the characters' mech. (In this case, the leaders may bring a few bodyguards, depending on how much they trust the characters. The bodyguards use the profile of the guard for Area 1 of the Second Lunar Temple; see below.) Remember to make the appropriate Bluff vs. Sense Motive check.

• Observe the leaders' routines carefully. If they do so, the characters will discover they come outside, alone, to pray to Seroficitacit under the moonlight shortly after the worst of the lunar rain passes each night. This is the perfect time to jump them.

• Request a private audience within the lunar temple. Perhaps the PCs can successfully pass themselves off as followers of Seroficitacit who wish to see the temple. This again requires a Bluff check. (Give a +4 bonus to the check if the characters use the symbols of Seroficitacit from Area 11 in Episode One.) Characters could also make such an attempt with Diplomacy (if they're up front about their religious interests but simply wish to see the temple) or Intimidate (if they use some show of force, such as their mech).

Battling the Lunar Skinstealers: Combat with Haimler and Thoron uses the profiles presented below. Remember that each of these men has a *personal* agenda that is very different from his *controller's* agenda. Review the rules in "New Creatures" of Chapter 6 in **DragonMech** for combat with skinstealers. Remember that slashing and bludgeoning attacks deal full damage to the skinstealer, hurting the host only after the skinstealer is dead. Piercing attacks deal half damage to the host and half damage to the skinstealer. As a result, combat against these high-level NPCs isn't nearly as hard as it seems. Although they'll attack using their normal high-level profiles, each skinstealer can take only 18 points of damage before it peels off from its host, dead.

A skinstealer's fundamental goal is survival; it will *not* fight to the death. If they're losing the fight, the skinstealers will hop between hosts in an attempt to escape and get others to fight for them. Prior to combat, they'll go so far as to bargain rather than actually engage in a fight, as they don't want to risk being killed. Use the following strategies to simulate their combat mentality:
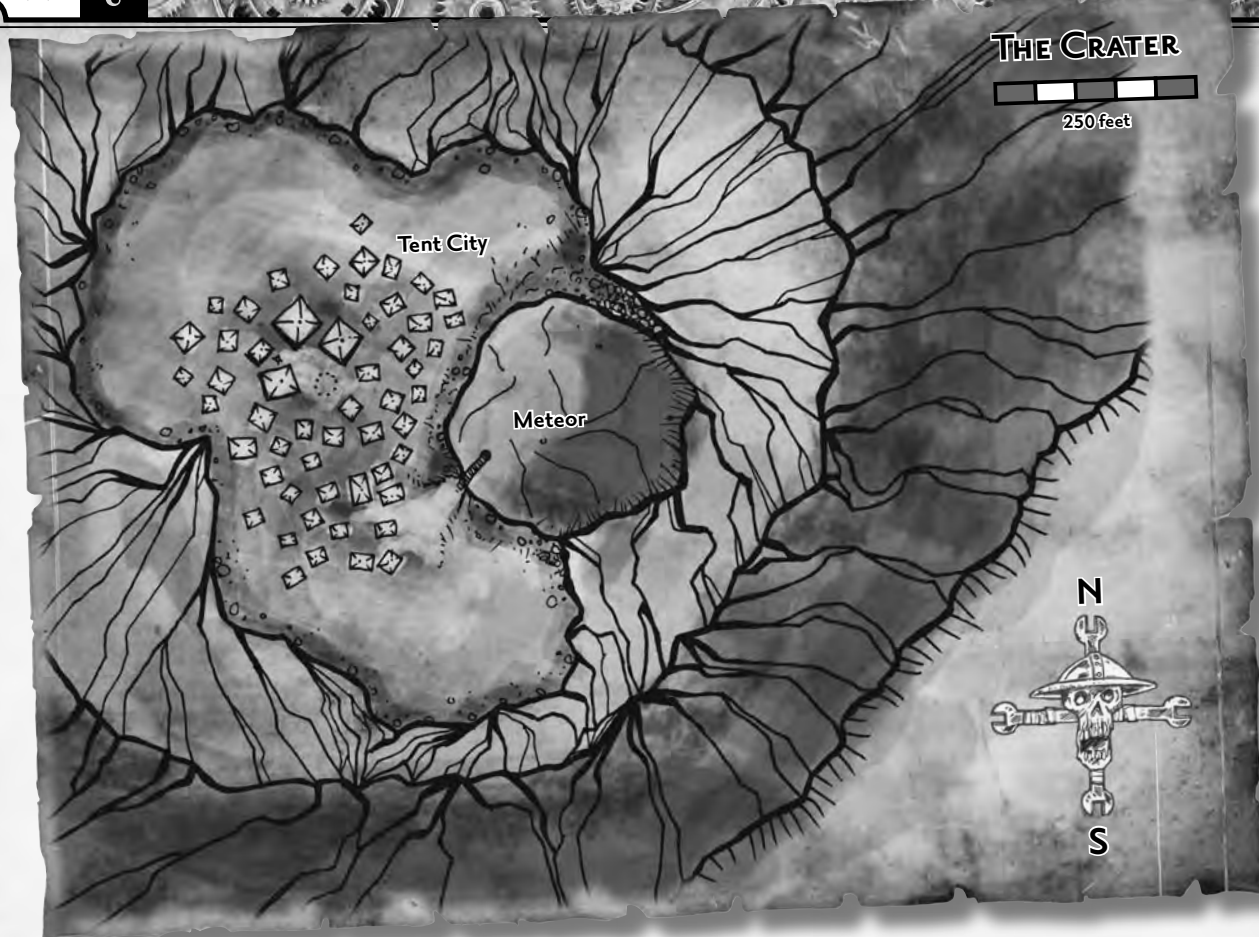
Round One: The skinstealer engages in ranged combat as much as possible, avoiding damage to itself. This also lets it split damage between itself and its host, as most ranged weapons deal piercing damage.

Round Two: The skinstealer maintains ranged combat as long as possible. If its wounds become serious or it is losing the fight, it closes into melee range and then jumps to a new host. The skinstealer is highly intelligent (Int 20) and its strategy is to recruit assistance from the rest of the Thrawtek tribe. It will choose a new host who looks fleet-footed. As soon as the new host is dominated, the skinstealer will run from the combat, raising a general alarm. Its role in this new outsider's body will be "I tried to stop my friends, but they insisted on attacking your leaders. Help your leaders!" As soon as it can, it will hop to the body of a tribesman, abandoning the body of the PC.

Remember that the bodies of the leaders will recover once a skinstealer is off them. If the PCs continue attacking, the men will obviously defend themselves, but their first reaction will

THE CRATER

250 feet

Tent City

Meteor

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be thanks — the PCs have finally freed them from these horrible alien creatures that were controlling their bodies! If the PCs play their cards right, they can have Haimler and Thoron owing them a favor.

Round Three: Once the tribesmen arrive to defend their leader, the skinstealer will send its "new" body close to a leader, if possible, and try to repossess a leader as soon as it's safe (and when it's able to switch hosts without being seen). In general, the skinstealer will try to maneuver the actions of the tribe through controlling influential people or by making the people it does control more influential (which makes their friends wonder why their personalities have changed).

This combat is tricky, because you have an enemy that can possess PCs, you have enemies that fight one way when possessed and another way when not possessed, and you have the potential for a huge brawl if the PCs don't stop a skinstealer from fleeing and alerting the tribe.

Secrets Revealed: Once Haimler and

Thoron are free of the lunar skinstealers, their agendas change radically. They'll retain their original goals of reuniting the tribe in a way that can coexist with Shar's authority, but their interest in all things lunar will be completely changed: They want to destroy the temple and all remnants of its denizens' attempts to rebuild it. They'll be happy to enlist the PCs' aid in purging the temple of whatever may be within. In fact, if the characters haven't squandered their goodwill, they'll even encourage them with gifts of weapons, armor, healing and whatever else they have that may be useful. Both Haimler and Thoron will reconcile with Shtrawnek, and the tribe's internal divisions will end.

Keep in mind, however, that all this is still within the context of the Legion. While the PCs did a great favor for the tribesmen, Legion members are still enemies of the Stenian Confederacy, and they still dislike nonhumans. Any hint of Stenian loyalty will be greeted with hostility. The tribesmen will grant the PCs a "free pass" and let them

escape with their lives, but they're warned that the next time they come around, it will mean trouble. And nonhumans, while thanked, are still considered servants of their human friends. Furthermore, if the PCs killed any members of the tribe (such as the laborers in the lunar temple), Haimler and Thoron will consider their rescue from the skinstealers as simply evening the score — in which case they owe the characters no thanks whatsoever, but neither will they attempt to punish them.

Event 4:
The Characters' Investigation of the Lunar Temple

Even if the characters unmask Haimler and Thoron early in the episode, they'll probably still want to explore the lunar temple. In order to complete the mission successfully, they have to eradicate all taint of lunar influence, which includes the three spawns of Seroficitacit that dwell in the temple, so they really must explore the temple to do their job prop-

erly. Exploring the temple also gives them the chance to catch the Irontooth mech in the act as it makes off with a valuable *starshard*.

Unlike the other lunar temple, this one landed right-side-up. This meteor is actually Level 2 of the lunar temple in the other meteor. If the first meteor were turned over and placed atop this meteor, they would match up; the hole by which the Thrawtek tribe is entering this lunar temple corresponds to the chute at Area 12 of the first lunar temple.

The full map key for the lunar temple is in the next section.

Event 5: Arrival of the Irontooth Mech

Through the use of divination magic, the Irontooth Clans heard about the *starshards'* fall to earth. They sent out several small reconnaissance mechs to infiltrate enemy territory and recover the *starshards*. They arrived at the first lunar temple too late, but an Irontooth mech arrives at this second temple just in the nick of time — it snatches the *starshard* almost literally right out of the PCs' hands!

The Irontooth encounter is described in Area 7 of the Second Lunar Temple, below. The flow of the adventure should place the encounter with the Irontooth mech as the very last encounter in this episode. That way, the PCs can immediately set out to pursue it, without having to finish any other tasks first.

If the PCs reach Area 7 before the Irontooth mech should appear, make Area 7 totally empty. In this case, the Irontooth mech has already stolen the *starshard*, but is sticking around to investigate the camp further. After this episode is resolved, present the Irontooth mech in some dramatic manner. Perhaps it emerges from the lunar temple right as the tribesmen are about to enter for the night. It could even attack the PCs (or Haimler or Thoron) in the mistaken belief that there is a

second *starshard*. (If this Irontooth mech has been to the first lunar temple, it might correctly surmise that the PCs have the other *starshard*.) However the combat progresses, the Irontooth mech should be forced to retreat. (Overwhelming odds? A critical injury?) Then begins the tracking described in Episode Four.

For further details on the Irontooth mech and its pilot, see Area 7 of the Second Lunar Temple, below.

LOCATIONS

There are four locations of particular interest in the tent city: the two large tents with the red pennants, one of which belongs to Shtrawnek and the other of which belongs to Haimler and Thoron; the typical smaller tent (of which there are roughly 48); and the meteor. The meteor is described in more detail in the next section. Here are overviews of the other locations.

Tent of Shtrawnek: This large, 30-by-30-foot tent is occupied by Shtrawnek and his two acolytes. The tent is well appointed with a thick layer of rugs and comfortable pillows. These furnishings aren't particularly valuable, however; combined, they're worth 250 gp and weigh 400 pounds. The remaining furnishings are the mundane artifacts of normal living: food, clothing, bedrolls, stools and a portable desk. A thorough search (DC 20) reveals three solid gold holy symbols of Peripatetin (worth 100 gp each); 12 silver ingots (worth 10 gp each); and six uncut, low-grade diamonds (worth 50 gp each).

Tent of Haimler and Thoron: This 30-by-30-foot tent is where Haimler and Thoron spend their days. Like Shtrawnek's tent, it is richly appointed with thick rugs and pillows, worth 250 gp and weighing 400 gp. Aside from the usual assortment of mundane items, a search (DC 15) reveals five holy symbols of Seroficitacit; two *broken* holy symbols of Peripatetin; three *potions of cure light wounds*; and a bag of 25 uncut, low-grade diamonds (worth 50 gp each). Among the clothing stored in the tent are the Legion military uniforms of both men.
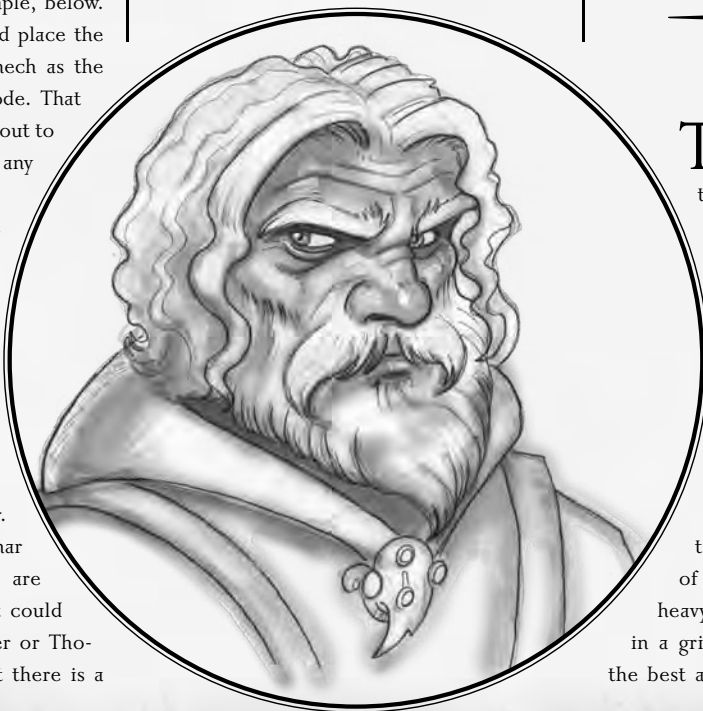
Typical Tribal Tent: The typical tent measures 10 feet by 10 feet. It has a few basic pieces of portable furniture (such as a folding stool and table), several bedrolls, and sacks of mundane goods. A typical tent has 4d10 cp hidden somewhere in the bedding (Search DC 20).

NPCS

This section provides the statistics for the major NPCs encountered in Haimler's Town, including a typical tribesman, Shtrawnek's acolytes and the lunar skinstealers that have taken over Haimler and Thoron.

Haimler, Tribal Leader and Legion Major

Haimler is a stocky, judgmental man who commands the attention of those around him. He's of medium height but is broad and heavy for his size. His face is always set in a grimace. He never offers approval; the best a subordinate can hope for is his

respect, and everyone in the tribe tries hard to gain it. Haimler is supremely skilled in almost all aspects of life (reflected by an exceptional array of ability scores); he could have excelled at any profession, but chose to be a wizard because he takes a long-term view of most things.
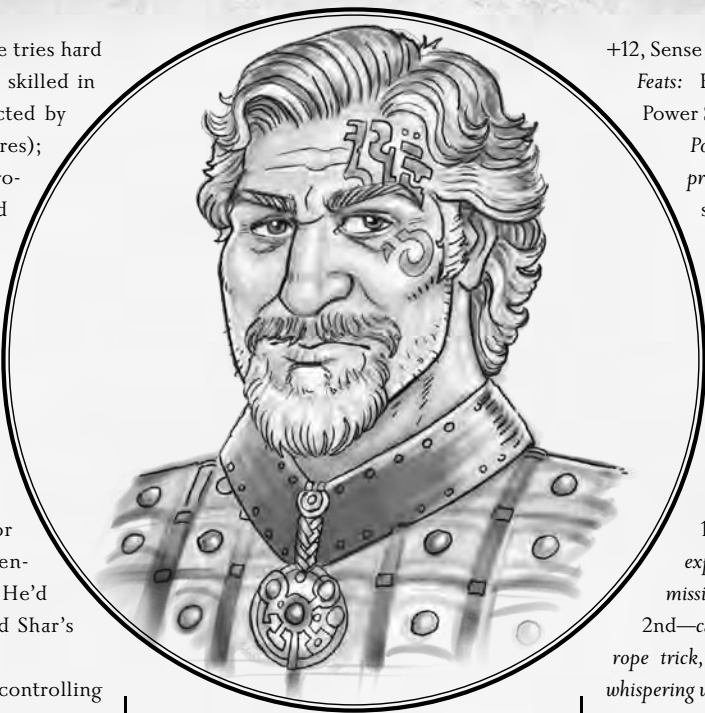
Goals: Haimler is loyal and protective. He is also ambitious. He wants to rise in the ranks of the Legion, but would prefer to do so in a way that helps his tribe as it helps him. Nonetheless, he won't abandon Shar Thizdic or the Legion, as he sees great potential in what Shar has done. He'd just prefer to find a way around Shar's heavy-handed control.

The lunar skinstealer now controlling Haimler, on the other hand, has only two goals: domination of the surface creatures and furtherance of Seroficitacit's worship.

Distinguishing Characteristics: Even when controlled by the skinstealer, Haimler comes across as himself. He carefully considers his words before speaking, and never says more than is necessary. He will not carry a conversation past the point of its usefulness; he's not impatient so much as commanding, and will simply dismiss attempts to sway his opinion after he has made up his mind. He has an intense stare that he levels on those whom he speaks to, making him very intimidating. Despite all this — or perhaps because of it — his personal magnetism is great; he is extremely influential to those around him.

Note that Haimler does *not* have a familiar. The skinstealer saw it as a threat, since it was aware of the changes overtaking Haimler, so the skinstealer made Haimler kill it. Haimler could do nothing to prevent this, as he was possessed at the time.

Haimler, Human Wiz5: CR 5; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d4+20; hp 32; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection, +3 armor), touch 15, flat-footed 15; BAB +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+2/19–20, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d4+2/19–20, dagger); SA Spells; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 18.

Skills: Concentration +12, Diplomacy +12, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +12.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Power Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Cleave.

Possessions: 6 daggers, *+2 ring of protection*, *+3 bracers of armor*, small sack, symbol of Seroficitacit, spell book, 89 sp, 12 gp.

Spells Prepared (4/4/3/2, spell DC 14 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, daze, ray of frost, message*; 1st—*charm person, magic missile* (x2), *shocking grasp*; 2nd—*cat's grace, M.'s acid arrow, web*; 3rd—*fireball, lightning bolt*.

Spells in Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*burning hands, charm person, expeditious retreat, mage armor, magic missile, shocking grasp, T.'s floating disk*; 2nd—*cat's grace, invisibility, M's acid arrow, rope trick, web*; 3rd—*fireball, lightning bolt, whispering wind*.

Thoron, Warrior Leader and Legion Sergeant

Thoron is taller and heavier than anyone else in the tribe. He wears banded armor at all times, which is painted in contrasting black and red bands that match Thoron's tribal tattoos. He's a born warrior, with a natural talent for combat that's been nurtured through years of combat training. He's quite talkative and loves to regale visitors with tales of the tribe's exploits. His modesty prevents him from telling stories about himself, but he's happy to discuss his father (Thorak) and grandfather (Thorgan), both of whom performed many daring deeds back in the days when the Thrawtek used to fight orcs for control of the endless plains.

Goals: Thoron defends his tribe from aggressors: nothing more, nothing less. He is intensely loyal to Haimler and would probably follow him in his worship of Seroficitacit even if he weren't possessed by a lunar skinstealer. Any serious threat to the community will find Thoron quickly at hand.

Distinguishing Characteristics: Tho-

ron is as garrulous as Haimler is curt. He is easygoing and well behaved, the sort of warrior who really enjoys defending those who can't defend themselves. He uses his hands a lot when talking, and when he reaches the fighting scenes of any war story, he jumps up and acts out the important parts.

Thoron, Human Ftr4: CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 4d10+12; hp 36; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +6 armor, +2 shield), touch 11, flat-footed 18; BAB +4; Grp +7; Atk/Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+5/x3, battleaxe) or +7 melee (1d8+3/19–20, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +3, Intimidate +6, Jump +3.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe).

Possessions: Banded mail, heavy steel shield, battleaxe, 3 javelins, dagger, 34 gp.

Lunar Skinstealer, Unhosted: CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8; hp 18; Init –1; Spd 10 ft.; AC 9 (–1 Dex), touch 9, flat-footed 9; Atk +5 melee touch (special, face grapple); Full Atk +5 melee touch (special, face grapple) and +1 melee (1d2, 4 hooks); SA Improved grab, host domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 4, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Lunar Skinstealer, Hosted: CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8; hp 18; Init as host; Spd as host; AC as host; Atk/Full Atk as host; SA Improved grab, host domination, camouflage, neighbor domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort as host, Ref as host, Will +4; Str as host, Dex as host, Con 10, Int 20, Wis as host, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, others as host.

See Chapter 6 of **DragonMech** for special abilities.

Shtrawnek, Tribal Shaman

Shtrawnek is a young shaman forced to accept responsibility before his time. The old shaman died in the lunar rains while Shtrawnek was still an apprentice. Shtrawnek was the most promising of the acolytes, so he assumed the mantle of shaman. He looks like a young man aged beyond his years. His brown hair is trimmed short, his unwrinkled face is leathery, and he wears passed-down, tattered skins of wild cats and boars long since wiped out by the lunar rains. He is usually accompanied by one of his two acolytes, who aren't far behind him in ability. Shtrawnek is of average build and height.

Goals: Shtrawnek worships Peripatetin, the traditional god of the Thrawtek. He is the tribe's spiritual and medicinal leader. He leaves politics and martial affairs to Haimler and Thoron, respectively. When it comes to religious matters, however, he has strong opinions, and Seroficit-acit goes against every one of them. He is not opposed to occupying the lunar temple as a matter of survival, but the idea of rebuilding it in honor of Serofici-tacit is repugnant to him. He is engaged in a standoff with Haimler over the tribe's future. He is not aware of the lunar skin-stealers but suspects something is afoot, since Haimler's behavior has changed so much over the past three days.

Over the course of the adventure, the PCs will probably end up allied with Shtrawnek. Keep his underlying goals in mind. The PCs are simple tools to him, nothing more. After they have served their purpose, he'll double-cross them if that's what has to be done to get rid of them — or if that's the best way to get rid of Haimler and Thoron. However he gets involved, he'll probably try to arrange for the PCs to face Haimler without his direct involvement, keeping his name unsullied and giving him an excuse to get rid of the PCs if need be. ("They attacked our chief. They must be killed!")

There's one last aspect of the situation to keep in mind. The Legion is by nature prejudiced against non-humans. But lunar skin-stealers aren't, and generally are inclined to dismiss such petty terrestrial concerns in favor of their larger goals. Non-human PCs may find that they're treated better by Haimler and Thoron than Shtrawnek. If you want to stir some interesting debates within the party, throw this into the mix.

DON'T SLAUGHTER THE CAMP!

In playtests of this adventure, the PCs came up with a simple, direct solution to the situation in Haimler's Town: "We have a mech. They don't. Why don't we just trample them all?"

Try to discourage this course of action. This "blunt force" approach definitely removes some of the challenge from the adventure! One simple observation should push the PCs toward more thoughtful behavior: Remember that the camp is located beside a meteor that crash-landed only days before. The impact threw up tons of debris. The surface is strewn with rubble, which counts as difficult terrain for a mech. Any attempt at running the mech through the camp requires a Mech Pilot skill check *every round* to keep the mech on its feet. The Irontooth mech that appears later in this episode has no trouble in making these checks, thanks to the pilot's +18 modifier to Mech Pilot checks (as described in Episode Four).

Distinguishing Characteristics: Shtrawnek has deep, wise eyes. He pauses to look into his interlocutor's eyes before making any statement. He speaks evenly, with little inflection. It's obvious he's a wise man, for he makes comments of stunning insight on occasion.

Shtrawnek, Human Clr3: CR 3; Medium humanoid (human); HD 3d8; hp 17; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+2 Dex, +6 armor, +1 shield (Two-Weapon Defense)), touch 12, flat-footed 17; BAB +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +1/+1 melee (1d6+1, quarterstaff) or +4 ranged (1d6+1, throwing hammer); SA Turn undead, spells, domain abilities; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +6, Heal +10, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +4, Spellcraft +7, Spot +4, Survival +6.

Feats: Combat Casting, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Possessions: Breastplate, quarterstaff, 2 throwing hammers, 16 gp, holy symbol of Peripatetin.

Domains: Luck, Travel.

TABLE 3-3: XP AWARDS

Achievement	Per-Character XP Award
Discovering that Haimler and Thoron's behavior has changed	300 XP
Deducing correctly who is controlled by the skinstealers	300 XP
Discovering the hidden chamber with the *starshard* (Area 7 within the second lunar temple)	300 XP
Defeating the skinstealers without harming Haimler and Thoron	100 XP

Spells (4/3+1/2+1; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x2), *divine favor, longstrider**; 2nd—*aid**, *cure moderate wounds, inflict moderate wounds*.

*Domain spell.

Acolytes (2), Human Clr2: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+6 armor), touch 10, flat-footed 16; BAB +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, quarterstaff); SA Turn undead, spells, domain abilities; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +3; AL N; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +4, Heal +7, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +5, Spellcraft +4, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting.

Domains: Luck, Travel.

Spells (4/3+1; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, mending, virtue*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x2), *longstrider**, *summon monster I*.

Possessions: Banded mail.

*Domain spell.

Typical Legion Citizen, Human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d4; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 armor), touch 10, flat-footed 11; BAB +0; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +0 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger); AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (any one) +6 or Profession (any one) +6, Handle Animal +3, Listen +2, Ride +3, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Craft or Profession).

Possessions: Heavy clothing (treat as padded armor), dagger, 1d10 cp.

XP AWARDS

This free-form episode involves just as much investigation and research as it does combat (perhaps more, in fact). Award XP bonuses to the PCs based on their success in uncovering the mysteries as shown on Table 3-3.

SECOND LUNAR TEMPLE

This section details the significant locations in the second lunar temple found in Haimler's Town.

AREA 1: LADDER AND CHUTE

Read or paraphrase the following:

The tribesmen enter the meteor through a rope ladder that rises up its side. At the top is a deep chute that drops straight into the meteor.

During the day, a guard watches over this ladder. The divide in the tribe has made Thoron and Haimler worried that someone will interfere with the lunar temple, so the guard prevents unauthorized entrance. He can be easily overcome, but if combat is initiated, his first action is to run back to the tent city and alert everyone — which would rapidly bring reinforcements.

SECOND LUNAR TEMPLE FEATURES

Floor Level: The floor level of this temple is a normal horizontal plane.

Illumination: There was originally no light of any kind inside the meteorite, but the tribe has now outfitted it with oil-burning lanterns. There are two lanterns per room, usually located on the floor.

Walls: All passages in the tunnel are round, with a slightly flattened floor. Unless noted otherwise they are 10 feet tall. They have stats as follows:

Hewn Stone Wall: 3 ft. thick between rooms, otherwise solid rock; Break DC 50; hardness 8; 540 hp; Climb DC 22.

Doors: Doors within the lunar temple are quite unlike normal doors. They are round passages a full 10 feet tall, with a round door set within. The door opens by rotating on a horizontal bar set within the frame 5 feet above the ground, effectively "flipping over" to open. Humans using these doors must move with the bottom half of the door and duck under the horizontal bar. Creatures with the ability to do so can throw themselves at the upper half of the door to flip through to the other side. The rotating door can swing in either direction.

Stone Door: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked).

Time Period: The room descriptions assume that the players enter during the day. If they enter at night, the temple complex will be crammed with inhabitants — almost the entire population of the town squeezes in here at night. Obviously, a night-time raid won't get the characters very far!

The chute is 20 feet deep. The rope ladder goes down the chute to the floor level of Area 2, making the descent easy.
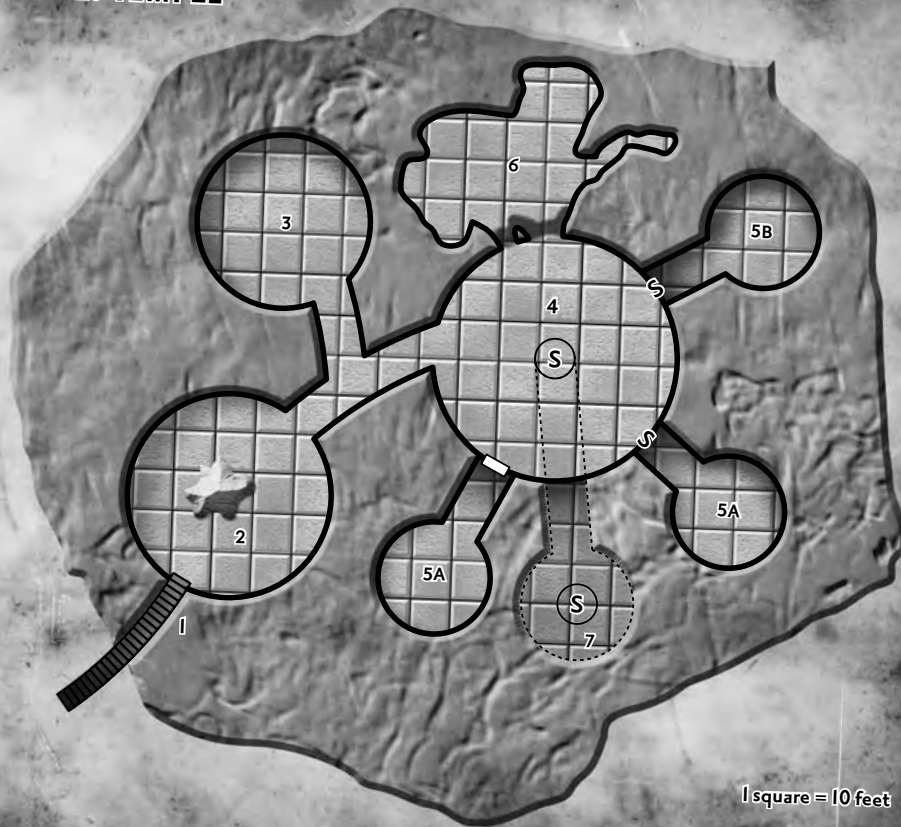
Guard, Human War1: CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 armor), touch 11, flat-footed 13; BAB +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/x3, spear) or +3 melee (1d4+2/19–20, dagger), or +3 ranged (1d8+2/x3, spear) or +2 ranged (1d4+2/19–20, dagger); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +6, Intimidate +2, Jump +5.

Feats: Power Attack, Weapon Focus (spear).

Possessions: Spear, dagger, leather armor, 1d10 sp.

THE SECOND LUNAR TEMPLE

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1 square = 10 feet

The Blob Statue: The blob statue is magical, but its properties are only useful for followers of Seroficitacit. Any follower who touches the statue while praying to Seroficitacit receives the effects of *cure minor wounds* and *guidance*, with a duration of 8 hours. The effect can be received only once per day. The statue has no effect on nonbelievers.

AREA 3:
SLEEPING CHAMBER (EL 1/2)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This perfectly round, 40-foot-wide chamber looks as if it serves as the sleeping quarters for many people. At least 90 bedrolls are crammed next to each other, along with blankets, dirty clothes and other signs of habitation. Two oil lanterns illuminate the room.

Suddenly, one of the bedrolls rustles. A man rolls over and then starts when he sees you. "Hey!" he says. "What are you doing in here?"

AREA 2:
WORSHIP AREA

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 50-foot-wide, perfectly circular room has smooth, almost glassy walls. It is illuminated by two oil lanterns, one at the foot of the chute and one beside the open passage leading out to the northeast. You see signs of recent human habitation: bedrolls, sleeping pads, dirty clothes and crumbs litter the floor. In the center of the room is a bizarre statue of a 10-foot-tall blob. It looks like it was carved from the rock of the meteorite, but it is worn smooth in many places, as if touched by a thousand hands.

This room was once a meditation and prayer chamber for the lunar skinstealers. The blob is a representation of Seroficitacit. The room is now used by the tribe as sleeping quarters.

The man is one of the laborers from Area 6 who is taking a nap. He has the stats of the laborers from Area 6, below.

The characters have 3 rounds to calm him down before he shouts an alarm. Remember that the tribe is close-knit; PCs will be immediately recognized as outsiders, although they still might be able to pass themselves off as belonging there. Possible ways to calm down the man include the following:

Bluffing: The characters can try to come up with a plausible explanation for their presence. Only allow this if the *players* can actually come up with a good reason on the spot. Allow a Bluff check opposed by the man's Sense Motive.

Diplomacy: The characters might acknowledge they don't belong, but they try to smooth things over with a silver tongue. Allow a Diplomacy check to influence the man's attitude. His initial attitude is unfriendly, so the Diplomacy check must hit DC 15 to make him indifferent to the PCs. Refer to the Diplomacy skill in Chapter 4 of

the *Player's Handbook* for full details.

Disguise: If the characters are disguised as laborers, followers of Seroficitacit, or some other good cover, they may be able to explain their presence. Allow a Disguise check opposed by the man's Spot.

Intimidation: The PCs can try to intimidate the man into shutting up. Allow a standard Intimidate check opposed by his level check (for which he receives only a +1 modifier). If successful, the man is scared for his life and will stay quiet — at least as long as the PCs are there to threaten him.

Failure: If the PCs fail to quiet the man within 3 rounds, or if they attack and he receives at least one action before dying or falling unconscious, he starts screaming at the top of his lungs. The laborers from Area 6 should make a Listen check against DC 10; if they succeed, they come running, ready to fight. Make a Listen check against DC 20 for

the guard at Area 1 (if he's still alive and able to act); if he hears the fight, he sets off the alarm in the tent town and then comes in himself.

XP Award: If the PCs do quiet the man, award them XP for defeating a CR 1/2 encounter.

AREA 4: DIVINATION CHAMBER

Read or paraphrase the following:

The walls of this 60-foot-wide circular room are completely covered in carved alien symbols. Even the 20-foot-tall domed ceiling is carved. The flickering light of two oil lanterns in the center of the room plays with the bizarre shapes and symbols. None of them resemble any sort of writing you've ever seen before.

The floor is now covered in bedrolls and sleeping gear. Two man-sized holes have been bashed through the northern wall. The sounds of picks and shovels emanate from rough-hewn passages beyond the holes.

In the southwestern corner of the room is a half-open round door leading to a dark passageway.

The lunar skinstealers used this chamber as a place to meditate on Seroficitacit's greatness.

In addition to the man-made tunnels leading to Area 6, the room contains four exits. Three are secret doors in the walls (one of which is standing half-open, as described above; it leads to Area 5B). The fourth is a secret trapdoor in the ceiling.

In fact, none of the doors are truly "secret." Any lunar creature capable of reading the language inscribed on the wall would know the doors are there (kind

of like how doors in a movie theater are marked "Exit"). Yet to terrestrial creatures, the bewildering array of symbols is utterly confusing, and it hides the presence of the round doors that don't look like normal doors to begin with.

A search (DC 25) of the room reveals the secret doors. The ceiling trapdoor is only revealed if the PCs specifically note they are searching the ceiling (and have the means to do so; Search DC 25), *or* via an exceptional search (DC 30) result on the ground, which alerts the character to the lunar equivalent of an "Exit" sign beside every exit.

A powerful Decipher Script attempt (DC 35) also reveals the secret doors via reading the wall language. The walls tell stories of the great deeds of Seroficitacit in his war against the lunar dragons.

If the characters still fail to discover the trapdoor in the ceiling, then inform the PC who possesses the *starshard* that the item pulsates — as if in anticipation — as he walks through the center of the room. They should realize that they're missing something at that point.

AREA 5A:
THE GREAT SPAWN (EL 3)

These rooms were once used to house spawns of Seroficitacit. Now they're still used for that purpose, for Haimler and Thoron have been directed by the lunar skinstealers to preserve these storehouses of knowledge. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter:

This unlit, perfectly round 30-foot-wide chamber has smooth, glassy walls. In the midst of the room is a 15-foot-wide shapeless mass of gray protoplasm. Small buds and tentacles sprout occasionally from its surface before dissipating back into the goo. As soon as you enter the room, the tentacles begin to veer toward you.

There is one spawn in each room marked 5A. These young spawns of Seroficitacit are healthy and ready to defend their temple. As soon as each becomes aware of the PCs, it advances to attack.

Roll 1d8 on the table under the spawn of Seroficitacit entry (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One) to determine what changes these particular spawn have undergone.

Young Spawn of Seroficitacit: CR 3; Medium ooze (lunar); HD 3d10+5; hp 31; Init –5; Spd 10 ft.; AC 5 (–5 Dex), touch 5, flat-footed 10; BAB +2; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change, slam); SA Change; SQ Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref –4, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 1, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +6, Knowledge (lunar) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10.

Feats: Insightful Step, Seroficitacit's Changes.

AREA 5B:
THE LAST SKINSTEALER (EL 2)

One more lunar skinstealer survived the meteor's crash to earth, but was injured in the process. It has remained in this room, recovering from its injuries while being tended by Haimler and Thoron. It has avoided taking hosts for the time being, waiting for the right moment. When the PCs enter, the moment is there! Once the PCs open the secret door, Read or paraphrase the following:

A short tunnel leads to an unlit, perfectly round 30-foot-wide chamber with smooth, glassy walls. The room appears empty.

The skinstealer uses its excellent Hide score to remain hidden until someone comes within striking distance, then it leaps up and attempts to take a host. It is highly intelligent, so play it as such. It will hide on the floor or ceiling, flat and flush against the surface, preferably in the 10-foot-wide entrance corridor. Here it can leap up and attack the first PC in the marching order, who will block other PCs from being able to make attacks. Once the skinstealer has a host, it can then fight its way out. Alternately, the skinstealer could hide in the same position but wait until the PCs have passed, then attack the last character. Once it attains a host, it can either fight the now-trapped rest of the party or simply run, taking the character's body with it, and make it do mischief that will get it killed by the tribe.

Lunar Skinstealer, Unhosted: CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8; hp 18, 25; Init –1; Spd 10 ft.; AC 9 (–1 Dex), touch 9, flat-footed 9; BAB +3; Grp +7; Atk +5 melee touch (special, face grapple); Full Atk +5 melee touch (special, face grapple) and +1 melee (1d2, 4 hooks); SA Improved grab, host domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 4, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Lunar Skinstealer, Hosted: CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8; hp 18; Init as host; Spd as host; AC as host; BAB as host; Grp as host; Atk/Full Atk as host; SA Improved grab, host domination, camouflage, neighbor domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort as host, Ref as host, Will +4; Str as host, Dex as host, Con 10, Int 20, Wis as host, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, others as host.

See "New Creatures" in Chapter 6 of **DragonMech** for special abilities.

AREA 6:
NEW LIVING QUARTERS (EL 3)

This room is filled with laborers expanding the caves. Only a few of the most loyal tribesmen are allowed to work here. In general, they're making enough noise that they hear only exceptionally loud noises (such as the man in Area 5 shouting at the top

of his lungs). When the PCs enter, Read or paraphrase the following:

This irregularly shaped cavern is about 40 feet by 40 feet. You can see six men with picks and shovels working hard to make the cave larger.

The characters may be able to surprise these men if they're careful (Hide and Move Silently). The laborers receive a –10 penalty to Listen checks due to the amount of noise they're making.
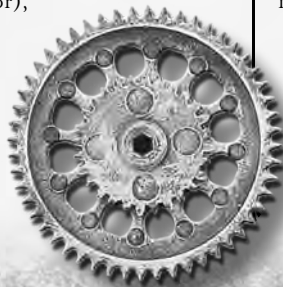
This area is considered off-limits. Even members of the tribe aren't supposed to be here during daylight; only the most faithful of Seroficitacit's recent converts are allowed to labor in his temple. Unless the PCs are accompanied by tribal leaders, the laborers will immediately assume the worst about their presence. They'll attack on sight.

Laborers (6), Human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d4; hp 3; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 armor), touch 10, flat-footed 11; BAB +0; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d6/x4, heavy pick); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Profession (miner) +4, Handle Animal +4, Listen +0, Ride +4, Spot +0.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Martial Weapon Proficiency (heavy pick).

Possessions: Heavy clothing (treat as padded armor), heavy pick, symbol of Seroficitacit, 1d10 cp.

AREA 7: THE *STARSHARD*

This room contains the *starshard* (see "New Item" in Appendix One). There are two important things to note about this area.

First, Haimler and Thoron have not discovered this room. The skinstealers consider the *starshard* to be their greatest artifact, and they have not revealed its existence.

Second, this room sets the stage for the next episode in the adventure, as the PCs pursue the Irontooth mech, described above as Event 5. It is assumed the Irontooth mech is encountered here, and it snatches the *starshard* right before the PCs get it. However, you can change this depending on the PCs' actions. The *starshard* might even be gone. See Event 5, above.

The secret trapdoor to this chamber is 20 feet above ground level. The lunar

skinstealers could reach it with the aid of their spawn (which would lift them up), but it's not so easy for humans. The secret trapdoor leads to a 40-foot-long round passage, which opens into a 30-foot-wide perfectly spherical room.

If the *starshard* is still in the chamber when the characters enter, and the Irontooth mech encounter proceeds according to plan, Read or paraphrase the following:

This perfectly spherical room has polished black walls. It immediately reminds you of a similar room you encountered in the last temple. The room is dark, like the last glimpse of twilight before the sun sets. A haunting gold glow emanates from a crystalline globe that floats mid-air in the exact center of the spherical space. Pinpricks in the surface of the globe send pointers of light to the walls, where they look like stars in an infinite black sky.

You feel a faint hum among your belongings, and something seems to tug upward. It seems as if the *starshard* you already possess is reacting to the presence of this second *starshard*.

This time, however, the PCs don't get the globe. Continue reading:

Suddenly, the mystical darkness is broken by a shaft of light. A trapdoor opens on the ceiling and sunlight floods the room. A large one-man mech drops to the floor, grabs the *starshard* and climbs back up the trapdoor before you can react!

This is an Irontooth Raptor mech (see "New Mechs" in Appendix One). The pilot drops down, grabs the *starshard*, and climbs back up the shaft. Arrange the event so the PCs can't engage the mech — perhaps it drops down

before they fully enter the room, or perhaps it gets a surprise round and wins initiative, so it's gone before they can react. If the PCs do somehow engage the Irontooth mech, it simply tries to get free, then runs once it has escaped.

The trapdoor leads up to the top of the meteor. Its Climb DC is only 10, thanks to handholds built into the shaft. The vertical shaft is 10 feet tall, for a total distance of 20 feet from the floor of Area 7 to the top of the meteor. The shaft was obscured by a pile of rubble, so it was not detected by the tribesmen.

By the time the PCs get to the top of the meteor, all they see is the Irontooth mech running off into the distance. They aren't the only ones to see this; the camp is an uproar, pointing and shouting at the strange new mech on the scene.

Stats for the Irontooth pilot are presented in Episode Four. This encounter should really proceed with only a glimpse of the Irontooth pilot and no real interaction with him and the PCs — he should be long gone before they react.

CONCLUSION

Depending on how much trouble the PCs cause before they defeat the skinstealers, they may depart on good terms or be run out with sticks. If the PCs think quickly, they may be able to escape punishment for whatever slaughter occurred within the meteor by pinning the blame on the Irontooth mech that the entire tribe has seen escaping — that is, assuming there are no living witnesses to the PCs' behavior. The reactions of Haimler and Thoron to the situation are described in Event 3, above.

Either way, the PCs should be hot on the heels of the Irontooth mech. Any PC with Knowledge (local), Knowledge (mechs), or bardic knowledge can attempt a check (DC 10) to recognize that the mech they saw was Irontooth in origin. If they speak with the tribe, they'll be similarly informed. If

the characters need to be pushed, use the *starshard* as an impetus: Aside from glowing and humming when briefly in the presence of its kin, it can also communicate empathetic messages that the characters are to reunite it with the other, now-departed *starshard.* The next stage of the adventure involves tracking down the Irontooth mech.

Further Adventures with the Legion

This episode gives a shallow view of the Legion that is tangential to its true nature, but nonetheless insightful. The Legion is built of disparate human tribes united by the sheer charisma of the greatest human leader ever to walk the endless plains. In the presence of Shar Thizdic, the tribes function like clockwork. When he's away, they often revert to their ancient traditions and rivalries. The true Legion military-industrial complexes, where the government is largely centralized and the tribal functions broken down, feel like Russian military complexes from the height of the Cold War: paranoid, autocratic, militaristic and regimented. In these places, there are no tribes, no last names; people are addressed by rank, and individuality is subsumed to the collective. Each mech is a nameless, faceless expression of Shar's will; each soldier, one of his thoughts given form.

Remember that this adventure took place on the outskirts of Legion territory. If the characters return, send them deeper next time. Make sure they experience the truly regimented side of the Legion, not just what happens when the Legion reverts to the tribal factionalism from which it was born.

Here are some plot hooks to engage the PCs in future Legion adventures:

• A routine Legion mech patrol spots the PCs' mech departing from Haimler's Town. The Legion mech travels to Haimler's Town to find out what's going on. Haimler and Thoron, barely recovered from their experience with the lunar skinstealers, need a convenient scapegoat to explain why their tribe is in the middle of nowhere with virtually no authorization. So they blame the PCs, concocting a half-baked story that they

somehow pass off as the truth. Perhaps the PCs controlled them using *charm person*; maybe the PCs are lunar creatures in disguise! Whatever they say, they make the PCs out to be important so as to better cover their own mistakes. The Legion now believes the PCs are powerful enemies, so it sends mercenaries to trail them — or perhaps hatches a plan to lure them back somehow....

• Several weeks after the end of Episode Three, the PCs are visited by a young girl. She says she is Haimler's daughter. Haimler and Thoron were brutally punished by the Legion for their insubordination. The entire tribe was rounded up and returned to the industrial complexes, where Shar Thizdic's minions made examples of them. Haimler and Thoron disappeared completely and have not been seen since. Before he was dragged off in the middle of the night, Haimler gave his daughter a handwritten note and told her to deliver it to the PCs. In it, he asks for the characters' assistance in defending his tribe against the excesses of Shar Thizdic.

• Somehow the Legion has discovered the PCs' Stenian affiliations. Perhaps a tribesman searched their mech while they were in Haimler's Town. Maybe a Legion patrol saw them enter from Stenian territory and surmised what wasn't obvious. Or maybe the PCs screwed up and told somebody something, which got passed around until it encountered the wrong ears. The Legion has mobilized its mech fleets to the Stenian border in opposition to what it decries as "an invasion and blatant act of aggression." The Legion gives the Stenians 48 hours to turn over the invaders before it declares war. Anxious to avoid a larger conflict, the Stenian Confederacy's highest political officials are perfectly happy to sacrifice a few mercenaries who were expendable to begin with. Now the PCs have both the Stenians and the Legion after them....

EPISODE FOUR: ON THE IRONTOOTH TRAIL

INTRODUCTION

As the Irontooth mech bounds away from Haimler's Town, the PCs watch the second *starshard* go with it. They can feel their own *starshard* empathetically urging them to follow. The urges are particularly compelling: There's definitely something larger at stake, though the PCs are not quite sure what.
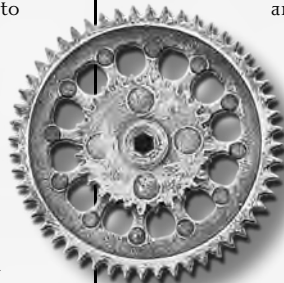
Thus begins a long episode of cat-and-mouse, as the PCs track the Irontooth mech. The Irontooth Raptor with its Speed Freak pilot outpaces the Magwagon by 2 miles per hour, or about 16–20 miles over the course of a normal day's travel. However, the Raptor stays close to the Magwagon in order to set ambushes. Except when setting ambushes, the Raptor doesn't try to hide its trail, making it relatively easy to track. If you have a ranger or other character with the Track feat in your party, you can have that character make Survival checks every so often to stay on the trail. Since the PCs *have* to stay on the trail in order for the adventure to progress, however, do this sparingly so you aren't forced to override the dice rolls to get them back on the trail.

The trail leads almost due north, to a no-man's-land between Legion and Stenian Confederacy borders. The fact that Irontooth Clans are currently operating in this vicinity is unknown to both the Stenians and the Legion. The characters finally come to the Irontooth Clan camp, where they interrupt a joust. The clan learns it is they who possess the other *starshard.* The Irontooth demand (at pain of death) that the characters turn it over and prove their valor by participating in a duel.

The Irontooth mech is fully aware of its pursuers and tries at various times to shake them, primarily so it can set ambushes without being observed. The following travel encounters give several situations in which the characters can face off with the Irontooth mech.

As always, use the *starshard* and its empathetic messages to continue motivating the PCs on their journey. Because the PC with the *starshard* can more easily communicate with his deity, you can also use divine intervention to keep things moving. Send dreams, visions and flashes of insight from the players' gods to keep them on track.

TRAVELING ENCOUNTERS

The terrain for all traveling encounters is rocky, pitted roughlands with the occasional gully or canyon. The uneven land and commonplace boulders limit visibility and encourage ambushes.

Don't forget also to roll for the lunar rain each night.

ENCOUNTER A: IRONTOOTH AMBUSHES

On the first day of pursuit, the Irontooth pilot sets several ambushes intended to delay his pursuers. These ambushes start as a series of potshots. The faster-moving Raptor mech gains ground on the Magwagon, then looks for a good place for a sniper attack, preferably at a range of 200+ feet so he gets several shots before the PCs can close. The pilot then aims at whichever PC is piloting the mech, or, if any PCs are foolish enough to stick a head out of a porthole, he goes for them.

Note the following aspects of the situation:

- The Irontooth pilot takes 20 on his Hide check to conceal his mech. The Large mech has a –1 penalty to Hide checks, offset by its 18 Dexterity. The result is a Hide modifier of +23. In order for the PCs to return fire, they must first make a Spot check to beat that result. Remember that Spot checks have a –1 penalty for every 10 feet of distance, so the 200-foot range between the Raptor and Magwagon will initially give the PCs a –20 penalty to their checks. Give the PCs a +5 bonus to their Spot check for every round they're under fire, to allow them to zero in on the shots. (Conversely, the Raptor pilot should have no problem spotting the Colossal Magwagon as it lumbers across the landscape.)

- Review the rules for targeting mech crew in "Mech Combat," Targeting the Crew, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**. Remember that the Irontooth pilot must make a DC 15 Spot check to target the Magwagon pilot. He also gets a –1 penalty to this check for every 10 feet of distance between him and

the target. Once he gets a bead, he'll fire relentlessly (using his mech attack bonus because the weapon is mounted on the mech) until the PCs locate him and return fire, at which point he'll race away, taking cover from the terrain as he goes. If he fails to get a bead on the pilot before the PCs have passed, he'll pick up and move to a new ambush ahead of their position.

• When the Raptor pilot targets the PC pilot, he bypasses the mech's hardness and directly targets the character. That's the point of the Spot check; he's firing right through the cockpit window.

• If the PCs pass the point where the Raptor changed its path to look for an ambush, allow any PCs with the Track feat a Survival check (DC 14) to detect its altered path. (The Raptor pilot will try to hide his tracks by staking ambushes on firm ground where they're hard to detect.)

Morgon, Irontooth Pilot, Human Mcj6: CR 6; Medium humanoid (human); HD 6d6; hp 24; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +3 armor), touch 13, flat-footed 13; BAB +3; Mech Attack Bonus +6/+1; Grp +3; Personal Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d6/18–20, rapier) or +6 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); Mech Atk/Full Atk (any mech weapon) +9/+4 melee or +9/+4 ranged; SA Extraordinary pilot, hand speed, mech fingers (warrior instinct), patchwork repairs, push the envelope 2/day, roll with the punches (1 increment); AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +8, Craft (mechcraft) +11, Hide +3, Jump +8, Knowledge (mechs) +11, Knowledge (steam engines) +11, Listen +2, Mech Pilot +18, Spot +10.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mechidextrous, Mechwalker, Mobility, Quick Draw, Speed Freak, Weapon Finesse.

Possessions: Pilot's armor, light crossbow, rapier, dagger, 1d6 gp.

ENCOUNTER B: IRONTOOTH CHARGES

On the second day, the Irontooth mech decides to begin charging the Magwagon. It finds an area where it can hide, waits for the Magwagon to pass, then charges from behind or the side. It stays for only a round or two, attacking with its unarmed strike, before retreating. If it is able to get a surprise round (remember its Hide +23 modifier?) and also wins initiative, it will charge, attack and retreat so the Magwagon can't return a blow. If any PC is foolish enough to expose himself (outside a porthole, walking alongside, etc.), the Raptor will directly target him with a melee strike (don't forget the Spot check [DC 15], if applicable). Otherwise, he makes general attacks against the mech.

This sort of hit-and-run tactic isn't very effective in the long run, as the Magwagon's hardness absorbs most of the damage. Yet until the Irontooth mech begins to take damage, it will continue to harry the larger mech, hoping to whittle it down so its clan brothers will have an easier time against it in the coming days.

It is unlikely that the players will capture or defeat Morgon and his mech, but it's possible that player ingenuity (or luck) may create such a situation. If this occurs, there are two easy options to keep the plot moving toward the Irontooth camp. The first option is the *starshards*, which will urge the PCs to continue traveling toward the Irontooth. The *starshards* want to be brought to the Irontooth, who know more about their powers (and proper uses) than the PCs. The second option is Morgon himself, who may try to escape being killed by promising a handsome ransom from his father Phegrip, who waits ahead at the Irontooth joust. The downside to this option is that it gives the PCs a bargaining chip when the Irontooth subsequently challenge them to a duel (see below). This is where the raucous nature of Irontooth life comes in: A number of clans are present at the joust, and although Phegrip is the foremost chieftain, he has only nominal control over other clans. Holding Morgan hostage might persuade *some* of the Irontooth to hold their fire, but certainly not all.

ENTER THE IRONTOOTH

By this stage of the adventure, the PCs should be 3rd level. The Irontooth Clans are far more powerful than low-level PCs. They are, in essence, a collective composed of some of the best mech jockeys on the planet. Their "mech devil" pilots are legendary. By the time an Irontooth clansman reaches puberty, he's already had far more experience in a mech than most Stenian mech commanders. By the time he's officially an adult, an Irontooth clansmen is at least a 4th-level mech jockey.

Part of what allows this to happen is the Irontooth jousting tradition. The Irontooth clans originally grew out of a longstanding monastic temple where the martial arts were practiced. It is believed that the jousts grew out of these practices, though no one knows for sure. Regardless, jousts and contests are now an important part of the Irontooth culture.

When the characters track the Raptor to its destination, they'll encounter such a joust. On the beginning of the fourth day of their pursuit, read or paraphrase the following:

After days of tracking your quarry, you notice that his pace has finally slowed. You come out of a boulder-strewn flatland to see a low hill that apparently rises out of nowhere. The hill extends for what looks like miles in both directions, forming

a slow, steady arc that moves away from you. The mech's tracks lead right to the top.

Once the PCs follow the tracks to the top of the hill, read or paraphrase the following:

You follow the tracks to the top of the hill. As you approach the crest, you stop short. This is no hill. The opposite side of the ridge drops precipitously at a steep angle. It must fall at least 300 feet before it starts to level out.

You're standing on the edge of an enormous crater, a gigantic bowl carved out of the earth. A meteor of cataclysmic size must have landed here once. Now, the opposite side of the crater disappears into the morning mists on the far horizon.

The Irontooth tracks lead straight down the nearly vertical cliff face right into the crater. As you bring your eyes downward to follow them, you suddenly notice movement far below you. A host of mechs is jostling for position around a crudely defined ring built from boulders piled in a circle. There must be at least 20 mechs watching as two nimble combat-mechs joust within the circle.

The joust quickly ends, however, and the mechs turn to face you. There's a booming sound, and a cannonball zips through the air over your head!

If the players think they can get away from this easily, they're mistaken. The Raptor pilot wasn't dumb enough just to leave the rear guard open. He and four other Raptor mechs suddenly appear out of nowhere behind the Magwagon. (They were hiding behind boulders with their take-20 Hide modifier of +23 up until now. You may want to make secret Spot checks for your players.) The PCs' only options are to fight or descend into the crater. The Irontooth clearly prefer the latter. Descending the crater counts as difficult terrain (DC 10 Mech Pilot check; refer to "Mech Combat," *Moving a Mech*, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**).

The Challenge: When the PCs reach the bottom of the crater, read or paraphrase the following:

At least three dozen mechs, of all different sizes and shapes, move into position around you. All are marked with the flags of various Irontooth clans. As you come to a stop before them, there is a long pause. Then a huge mech of seemingly unbelievable agility steps forward. A short, squat, grizzled man can be seen through the canopy. He speaks into a tube that blasts his voice across the field toward you: "So, you thought you could sneak up on the Irontooth, huh? Ha! Ha! They think they're funny. Ha!

"So, now that you're here, is there any reason

we shouldn't just kill you now?" He gestures toward the mech you'd been following, then adds, "My boy over there says you fight like old women."

Stress to the PCs that there's absolutely no way they can fight their way out of this alive. They're facing a small army of mechs, several of them much larger than themselves.

The ultimate goal is to steer this confrontation toward a challenge. The two main protagonists, Phegrip (the grizzled pilot) and his son Morgon, prefer sport to bloodshed, and the chance to earn a little good face in front of the tribe doesn't hurt, either. Allow the characters to make social skill checks as follows:

Diplomacy: If the characters try to talk their way out of the situation, allow them a Diplomacy check. Unless they fail dramatically, Phegrip will sportingly accept their explanation, then Morgon will shout out hot-headedly that he challenges them. Phegrip encourages this behavior in his son and makes it clear to the PCs that the only way out that doesn't involve a bodybag is accepting the duel.

Bluff: As above. Unless the PCs make an exceptionally bad or extraordinarily good roll, they still get a challenge.

Intimidate: The PCs are outnumbered more than 30-to-1, in hostile territory, and currently surrounded in a weak position. Intimidation attempts utterly fail. In fact, any attempt at intimidation elicits laughter from the entire clan, and, again, produces a challenge.

Starting the Duel: Remember that the PCs don't have to *win* the duel to make it past this encounter. They really *shouldn't* win, since they're facing a superior pilot. The Irontooth are more concerned about how courageously they fight.

Phegrip explains the duel as follows. Note that "horse-riders" is a derogatory term for incompetent mech pilots; the phrase compares them to the anachronistic knights of the old days, who are now utterly ineffectual against mechs.

"Alright then, a duel it is. Now, you horse-riders listen up. You have something we want, and you know what it is. That globe talks to you, but it talks to us more —žand we know more about it than you do. If you win the duel, you keep your lives and we keep the globe. If you lose, we keep the globe and maybe your lives, depending on how you do. If you aren't courageous, there's no reason we should spare you anyway.

"Your mech's a lot bigger than Morgon's, so we'll give you a choice: either take a Raptor for yourself, or let Morgon get a bigger mech. What's it gonna be?"

The choice is the players'. If the characters choose to fight in a Raptor, the extra passengers are allowed to stand on a boulder surrounding the ring, and the PCs' elected pilot is given a Raptor in perfect working order. If the reverse happens, the Irontooth produce a Magwagon from the back of their pack of observers. It's scarred, burnt and miserable-looking, but has the same stats as the PCs' mech. The Magwagon has the same number of crew members as the PCs' mech; treat additional crew as having the same stats as Morgon.

Traditional Irontooth jousts are described in "Mechdoms," *The Irontooth Clans*, in Chapter 4 of **DragonMech**. These jousts utilize dulled melee weapons operated at low power levels to minimize damage. The weapons are coated with dye, which is used to record "hits" on the jousting combatants. The mechs that were jousting when the PCs arrived are suitably equipped.

When outsiders are involved, however, the Irontooth aren't always so generous. This is especially the case when the outsiders need to be intimidated so they'll give up a *starshard*. Unlike a traditional joust, this duel does not consist only of close combat weapons, nor do the mechs involved use dye to record hits. Morgon's mech is already prepared for a duel to the death (or at least that's the clear impression the characters get).

The jousting arena is a level, rocky field 500 feet across. A circular ring of Huge boulders surrounds the field. There is only one

entrance, which is closed up by Irontooth mechs once the joust starts. Now Phegrip explains the rules:

"Alright, get set. When you hear the cannon, go at it!"

That's all the rules the PCs get. A Knowledge (local) or bardic knowledge check (DC 15) reveals additional information about traditional Irontooth dueling practices, as described above, including their emphasis on honorable combat and respect for those who fight with courage regardless of the outcome.

The Fight Begins: Run through the fight like a normal combat. Unless the dice go horribly awry, the Irontooth pilot should win. As he comes close to the end, evaluate the characters' behavior. If they have acted as cowards, or at any point pleaded for their lives, tried to bribe the Irontooth, or in any way impugned the Irontooth clansmens' honor, Morgon unapologetically closes in for the kill. In this case, the PCs will really have their work cut out for them trying to escape; it's up to you how you want to handle this.

If, however, the PCs have demonstrated strength, courage and resolve, even in the face of overwhelming odds, the Irontooth will accept them. Remember that the Irontooth are kind of like a loose-knit biker gang; they'll take in anybody if they respect them, and they frequently put personal loyalties ahead of political realities. There are always one or two military mech pilots from the Stenian Confederacy training with the Irontooth, anyway; the Irontooth look the other way, because they know perfectly well that these pilots will return to the Confederacy as the best-trained mech jockeys in the Stenian fleets, and someday the Irontooth will be able to call in a favor from a powerful Stenian mech commander.

If the PCs somehow win the combat against Morgon's mech, they've earned the respect of the Irontooth. That might not be enough to keep them alive, however, if they injure or kill Morgon himself. Make it clear from the activity of the crowd that mech-to-

mech combat is fine, but any sort of personal attack on the pilots — especially one that might cause injury or death — is met with jeers, boos and possibly a cannon shot or two. The parameters of a respectful victory should be clear to observant players.

If the PCs have been cowards, let them figure a way out of getting killed. If they've fought valorously in defeat, Morgon closes in for the "kill" as follows. Change the text to reflect the situation in your own combat:

You've fought hard and courageously, but Morgon gets the better of you. Suddenly, he swings around and thrusts a perfectly aimed spiked fist directly toward your cockpit. You grimace in anticipation of the hit, which will blast shattered glass into your face even as the Raptor's combat spikes rend your flesh. Yet the blow never comes. You blink to find Morgon's fist barely an inch from your mech. Then he speaks, his voice loud and clear from only a few feet away.

"You've fought bravely. You no longer ride a horse. You are a mech rider. You may keep your life!"

With those words, he backs his mech away from yours. When it's at a safe distance, he climbs out of the top and repeats his words at the top of his lungs. "You no longer ride a horse. You are a mech rider. You may keep your life!" A rousing cheer fills the air, and the mechs watching the contest toss their hands into the air.

It seems you've passed this test.

After the characters recover, they are invited to leave the mech on foot and meet Phegrip and Morgon in the center of the ring. Phegrip congratulates them on their performance and invites them to stay the night and drink with the clan.

Morgon brings the *starshard* with him. It glows as it gets closer to the characters' *starshard*. When Phegrip is done, Morgon explains the history of the globes. The clan knows much about their powers. Morgon tells about the Clan's history as monks who shook loose their lawful ways and adapted to life as nomadic mech raiders. Their ancient monastic traditions are still followed (though in rather modified ways), and those

legends speak of the *starshards* as reuniting all of humankind when the time is right.

Morgon and Phegrip do not question that the PCs will give up their *starshard*; it's simply the way things are. They do not ask; they wait until the PCs offer. The Irontooth place little value in gold or baubles, except insofar as they will buy mechs and mech parts, so they don't offer the PCs valuables. Yet they do offer to accept the characters into their own Irontooth clan (known as Clan Hawk). There is no formal process; the characters are simply "in." Make it clear to the PCs that this is a big deal. Few people are offered this honor. The PCs' honor in pursuing the *starshards*, their valor in the mech joust, and their rectitude in giving their *starshard* to its "rightful owners" in the Irontooth Clans lead Phegrip to this decision.

Oh, and once the characters are "in," Phegrip happens to mention (as part of the night's drinking) that another meteorite — with a visible vein of mensite — recently fell not far from here. "We Irontooth have no use for it," he says of the mensite. "But we have heard that your people value it. Perhaps you could take some for yourself?" Phegrip is happy to lead the PCs to the meteor, which is about the size of a shed. With a little work, the characters can mine close to 30 pounds of mensite. At a retail price of 100 gp per pound in any city-mech, that's a healthy return for the characters' trouble.

The Clans: As part of the revelry, the PCs get to know the rest of the Irontooth present for the jousts: 268 people on board 37 mechs. Five clans are represented: Clan Hawk, North Star Clan, Lotus Clan, Clan of the Middle Pass and Clan Bugbear. Each clan has its own group of leaders, who vary considerably in temperament; for instance, Lotus Clan is calm and can almost be imagined in their ancient role as monks, while Clan Bugbear is as rowdy as orcs at a pillaging. There are a wide variety of NPCs present, and we leave it up to you to develop them as it furthers your own campaign continuity!

XP Awards: Give the PCs 500 XP each for the duel. Even those who didn't directly experience get the XP for comporting themselves in a manner that didn't get everyone killed!

CONCLUSION

Now the characters drink and party with the Irontooth! A night of revelry commences, as the Irontooth enjoy the bounty of two *starshards*. The day continues with a dozen more jousts, all of which are fought honorably and fairly, with entertainment and good intentions foremost in the combatants' minds. The characters have the chance to get to know the various other members of the clans, whom you should develop to create future adventures as you see fit.

Remember that even though the PCs are now accepted by the Irontooth, they're still not likely to want to stay with the Irontooth. The Irontooth don't really partake in any sort of planning or thinking ahead. It's quite possible that when the PCs wake up in the morning, half the clans have already pulled up stakes and moved on to parts unknown. After all, now that the joust's over, it's time to find something else to do! Furthermore, if the PCs do stay with the clans, they'll have to make a living the way the clans do: raids and protection rackets. Unless that's the path you want your campaign to take, don't let the PCs get too close to the Irontooth. Arrange for a separation via the Irontooth leaving early in the morning before the PCs awake, or Stenian intervention, or something else along those lines.

FURTHER ADVENTURES WITH THE IRONTOOTH CLANS

The easiest way to separate the PCs from the Irontooth is to give them a mission. Here are some ideas:

- As the night of revelry wears on, Morgon reveals progressively more about the *starshards*. It turns out that the Irontooth know far more than they let on about these artifacts. They even know the reputed location of the third *starshard*: It is in the possession of a dwarven king in Edge, the great trading

city hundreds of miles to the south. Phegrip and Morgon offer assistance, training, and a free mech to the PCs if they'll retrieve this next *starshard*.

• One of the Irontooth mech pilots is indeed a Stenian pilot who has been training incognito with the Irontooth for a year now. It's time for him to leave, but he must do so secretly, for he owes an honor debt to one of his clansmen. For whatever reason, he wants to get out before repaying that debt. He asks the PCs to sneak him out, then help him create a cover story to get readmitted to Nedderpik. On the way back, however, he reveals another twist: He has a child in another clan by way of an Irontooth woman, and he wants to retrieve the child before returning to Nedderpik. Will the characters participate in what might amount to a kidnapping?

• Clan Hawk is running low on coal. They've heard of a shipment being hauled through Legion territory in the next few days. They're planning a raid — will the PCs come along? Things start off well, but then the PCs are separated from the rest of the group in the midst of a Legion assault. The Irontooth escape, but not the PCs. Now they're isolated in enemy territory, cut off from support, and hunted by the Legion....

LOOKING FOR HOME

Eventually, the PCs should return to Nedderpik. They still have a loaner mech, after all, and Grunnar promised them citizenship. Finding Nedderpik isn't necessarily easy, though. Remember that city-mechs are literally walking cities! They patrol a fixed territory and are tall enough to stand out against the horizon for miles around, but prospective passengers may have to wait days or weeks for their city-mech ride to make the rounds. Refer to "Getting on Board," *Finding Home*, in Appendix: City-mech Nedderpik of **DragonMech**.

If you make the PCs wait for Nedderpik to return, remember to check for the lunar rain each night; that alone can create adventure.

This waiting period is a good time for random encounters or short interludes. Here are a few ideas:

• While walking across a safe-looking plain, the PCs' mech suddenly lurches forward. Its right leg is sunk up to the thigh in a worm tunnel dug right below the surface. A worm farmer soon shows up to apologize, and offers to have his worms haul the PCs' mech out of the hole — but only if the PCs will do him a favor first. You see, it seems that a marauding ankheg has been preying on his worm herd lately....

• The PCs are stalked for several miles by a furtive band of goblins. The goblins simply won't let up, but they won't attack, either. What are they waiting for? An overcast night, that's what! On a particularly dark, cloudy night, they approach the mech under cover of darkness. Once they're up close, they produce bolt cutters and prybars — or worse yet, a rust bomb — and proceed to enter the mech and try to slaughter the crew. If you want to make this encounter really tough, have the goblins' tribal sorcerer send in an invisible, silent scout to open up the mech's porthole before the main force approaches.

• At some point, the PCs must stop to refuel, stretch their legs or find food. While out of the mech, they are suddenly accosted by dusk devils, whose frightening speed lets them close the distance almost instantly. The PCs retreat to their mech, and the dusk devils follow. The mech was turned off, and it takes 1d6 rounds to start up. Meanwhile, the dusk devils are clawing at its hide....

• During a severe lunar rain when it seems almost nothing could survive, the PCs hear a knock on their porthole. It's a band of tortog traders, who are practically immune to the lunar rain. They have a few new items available for sale and would like to know if the PCs are interested.

BACK ON NEDDERPIK

When the PCs finally make it back to Nedderpik, they have no trouble locating Grunnar. He asks for a full report of their activities. Allow him a Sense Motive check if the PCs try to lie in any way. If he detects dishonesty, he'll doubt *everything* the characters say, and will assume they did not complete their mission in a satisfactory manner. He'll thank them for their service, take back the mech and tell them they haven't yet earned citizenship.

If he is persuaded the PCs did a good job, however, his attitude is completely different. He's persuaded if he has no cause for a Sense Motive check, or if they bring back convincing proof of their battles. Any artifacts from the lunar temple go a long way toward dispelling any doubts he may have.

Once Grunnar is persuaded, he thanks the characters for their heroic efforts in the name of the Stenian Confederacy. In a formal manner, he fills out some paperwork with official-looking seals, asks them to sign it, and then escorts them to the office of an administrator. The administrator reviews the paperwork, nods at Grunnar's notes, congratulates the characters, and pulls out a citizenship medallion for each PC. The PCs are warned that this is a *provisional* citizenship, subject to their good behavior for the next year. With that one caveat, there are handshakes all around, and the PCs are welcomed on board. As citizens, they are now eligible to own "land" on the mech and can proceed to "buy" a room if they'd like, or they can simply stay at an inn. Grunnar gives them a short tour of the city-mech, then they are free to look for adventure wherever they may find it!

NEW RULES

This appendix presents the new game mechanics, items, mechs and creatures introduced in **The Shardsfall Quest**.

NEW CHARACTER OPTIONS: FEATS

Insightful Step (General)

You can anticipate enemy attacks and react accordingly.

Prerequisites: Wis 13, Bluff 3 ranks.

Benefit: You can make a feint action to mislead an opponent so that he has difficulty hitting you. Rather than using your feint to catch your opponent off guard, you instead use the feint to lead him to attack where you won't be, effectively hampering his ability to strike.

Make a Bluff check to feint as usual but specify that you are using your Insightful Step feat. The usual penalties to feinting against nonhumanoid or unintelligent creatures apply. If your Bluff check result exceeds your target's Sense Motive check result, he suffers a penalty to all attack and damage rolls against you equal to your base attack bonus. This penalty lasts until your next action. This penalty does not apply to attacks against other creatures.

Special: The benefits of this feat stack with those that improve your ability to feint. If you have Improved Feint, you can perform an Insightful Step feint as a move action.

A mech jockey of sufficient level to have the Mech Fingers – Skill Transfer ability can use this feat while in a mech.

TABLE 5-I: NEW FEATS

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Insightful Step	Wis 13, Bluff 3 ranks	Feint to reduce opponent's attack roll
Piston Rage	Rage, steamborg level I+	Add artificial part bonus to Strength while raging
Prophetic Step	Insightful Step, Improved Feint	Feint to reduce multiple opponents' attack rolls
Tinker's Touch	Knowledge (steam engines) 3 ranks	Inflict critical hits and sneak attacks against constructs
Metamagic Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefit**
Power Spell	I3 in appropriate ability	Add ability modifier to spell damage
Spell Cleave	Power Spell	Extra spell attack after dropping target

Piston Rage
(General)

You have specially crafted your mechanical body to maximize its strength potential.

Prerequisites: Ability to rage, steamborg level 1+.

Benefit: When you rage, your artificial part bonus is added to your temporary Strength bonus. It does not matter whether you have already used your artificial part bonus to enhance your Strength or for another purpose. For example, a multiclassed 1st-level barbarian/4th-level steamborg normally gains a +4 bonus to Strength when he rages. With this feat, he gains a +6 bonus because of his artificial part +2. This extra bonus wears off when the rage ends, as normal.

Power Spell
(Metamagic)

You tap a powerful inner strength to fuel your spellcasting.

Prerequisites: 13 or higher in appropriate spellcasting ability score (Int for wizards, Cha for sorcerers, Wis for clerics, etc.).

Benefit: When you cast a spell that deals damage, you add your appropriate ability modifier to the damage result. The damage is added for each individual attack generated by the spell. For example, a 5th-level wizard with Int 16 casts *magic missile*. Normally, this would produce three missiles that each does 1d4+1 damage. With this feat, each missile would do 1d4+4 damage. If the same wizard cast *fireball*, the attack would do 5d6+3 damage.

Special: The ability modifier is only added to hit point damage inflicted directly from the spell. It does not apply to duration, range, area or other aspects of the spell, nor does it apply to other kinds of damage or secondary damaging effects. For example, casting the *poison* spell with this feat would have no added benefit.

Prophetic Step
(General)

You maneuver around your opponents with uncanny ease, deftly predicting their attacks and stepping aside before they materialize.

Prerequisites: Improved Feint, Insightful Step.

Benefit: You can make a feint action to frustrate the attacks of multiple opponents. Make a Bluff check to feint as usual, using a move action due to your Improved Feint feat. You can use this feint to mislead a number of opponents equal to your Wisdom bonus, provided they are within your line of sight. Each such opponent makes a Sense Motive check to oppose your feint, as usual. Those that fail the opposed check suffer a penalty to all attack and damage rolls against you equal to your base attack bonus. This penalty takes place immediately and lasts until your first action in the following round.

Special: A mech jockey of sufficient level to have the Mech Fingers – Skill Transfer ability can use this feat while in a mech.

Spell Cleave
(Metamagic)

You can strike down multiple foes with a single spell.

Prerequisite: Power Spell.

Benefit: If you deal enough damage with a spell in one round to make an opponent drop, you can continue the momentum of the spell toward another target. The spell must have a single target (area-effect spells cannot be used with this feat) and must have a casting time of 1 round or less. When the opponent drops, you can immediately extend the specific spell effect that dropped him toward another opponent within the maximum range and other normal parameters of the spell. (Spells that require touch attacks, such as *vampiric touch,* cannot be used with this feat. However, such spells, if already active, can be used with the standard Cleave feat.) You cannot affect more than one extra target with this feat each round. A cleaved spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level. You must declare that you are casting a cleaved spell before you roll the dice.

For example, imagine a 5th-level wizard with Int 16 and this feat who casts *magic missile* against an orc. The spell generates three missiles, each of which does 1d4+4 damage. The second missile kills the orc. The wizard can then extend the effect of that second missile to impact one other target, for another 1d4+4 damage. He can then continue the original spell by aiming the third missile at a target. Even if the third missile drops the target, he cannot cleave with it, as he has already used that effect for this round.

Tinker's Touch
(General)

Your deep understanding of mechanical creatures allows you to identify their weak points.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (steam engines) 3 ranks.

Benefit: You can make sneak attacks against constructs, and inflict critical hits on them, as if they were living creatures. You never suffer a penalty to feint attempts against constructs, even if they have nonhuman anatomy or low Intelligence.

Normal: Without this feat, the constructs you attack are immune to critical hits and sneak attacks. The one exception is mechs, which are vulnerable to critical hits (but not sneak attacks) due to their complex construction.

NEW ITEM:
THE STARSHARDS

A powerful hierophant journeyed to the moon 40,000 years ago. He was the first terrestrial creature to walk there. What he saw were the earliest stages of life, a sort of life that was nothing like life on the surface: puddles and oozes and massive creatures without anatomical structure that nonetheless thrived.

This hierophant was called Athuraz, and he was lawful good. His divination spells quickly revealed that the moon held far greater significance than just another place to adventure. Its creatures were utterly unable to communicate with either him or, as he discovered, his god. They were truly alien — and their alien intelligence was coalescing into divine forces outside the terrestrial pantheon.

Athuraz lived as a mortal for 3,000 years, finally rising to his own place on the outer

planes as a minor demigod. All the while, his experience on the moon remained with him. As a demigod, he watched the formation of the young lunar gods. With prescient vision, he foresaw that they would eventually clash with the creatures of earth. He did not know when or how, but he knew it was inevitable. To prevent bloodshed should the event occur long after his influence had passed, Athuraz created the *starshards*. He imbued them with the fullness of his essence, nearly killing himself in the process. As a result, the *starshards* are extremely powerful, and Athuraz's inert husk now floats through the Astral Plane in a zombielike state, its spark of divinity barely detectable.

Eight *starshards* exist. Athuraz hid three on the moon and five on Highpoint's surface. The *starshards* have a number of minor powers, which have been experienced by countless adventurers who have encountered the items over the millennia. Yet they are actually far, far more powerful than anyone has ever realized. Only when the time is right — as it now is — will their full powers finally emerge.

To ensure the *starshards* would be found when their time came about, Athuraz had previously planted their story in countless legends and myths of innumerable terrestrial and lunar cultures. Now, 35,000 years later, the clash between the lunar and terrestrial gods is reaching its climax. Some of the legends of the *starshards* survived. They are surfacing once again, and not just among the Irontooth Clans. Even some lunar creatures are interested in the artifacts. Few of those who pursue them realize that their quest will actually bring peace to the world. The legends that motivate them are those that speak of the *starshard's* great powers, which they hope to use for selfish purposes — but no legend specifically states what those great powers are. Little do their pursuers know they are divine tools in a cosmic quest for peace.

Powers of the *Starshards*

There are eight *starshards*. Each has the following properties:

- A *starshard* maintains a constant light level within a 50-foot radius, as described in the description of Area 12 in Episode One. If completely covered with a cloak or other solid surface, this ability is suppressed.
- A *starshard* emits patterns of light that mimic the constellations in the sky, both past and present. Studying these patterns grants insight into the future. A *starshard* can be used as the focus for any divination spell, and any divination spell cast within 120 feet of the *starshard* is at +1 caster level and receives a +1 bonus to the Will DC to resist its effects.
- If held by a cleric who casts *prayer* or *commune*, a *starshard* becomes attuned to that character's deity. From then on, the presence of a *starshard* makes direct communication with the deity much simpler. Followers of that deity have +1 caster level when casting divine spells within 120 feet of a *starshard*. Furthermore, such clerics are much more likely to receive messages, dreams or visions from their deity.
- A *starshard* can cause itself and whoever holds it to levitate up to 100 feet off the ground. When not held, it usually rests at a height of 6 to 10 feet.
- The *starshards* are intelligent (Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 18; ego 19). They can communicate via empathy and telepathy, and have darkvision out to 120 feet, as well as blindsense and hearing. Their greater purpose is for them to be reunited when the time is right so that they might forestall conflict between the divine powers. However, they are quite patient and not given to dominating their possessors, except for the occasional subtle push. After all, they're operating on a god's timetable: What's the rush?

Combining the *Starshards*

The real power of the *starshards* becomes evident when they are brought together. When two or more *starshards* are aware of each other, they will rise into the sky together, glowing brightly, and start rotating around each other like planets in a constellation. When this happens, their powers are increased by +1 for each additional *starshard* present. For example, two *starshards* together grant a +2 bonus to the Will save to resist divination spells and +2 caster level to divination spells and all spells of the deities of their respective casters.

Furthermore, combining the *starshards* sets the following events into action:

- Two, three, or four *starshards*: The gods to which the *starshards* are attuned become aware of the fact that they can communicate directly via the *starshards*.
- Five or six *starshards*: Within each pantheon, all gods of alignments to which the *starshards* are attuned can now communicate directly. The powers of those of similar alignment are amplified such that each god is as powerful as the sum total of all gods of that alignment before the *starshards* were brought together.
- Seven *starshards*: All gods within each pantheon can now communicate directly, and all gods of similar alignment can communicate across pantheons. All gods of each pantheon are rendered as powerful as the sum total of all gods in that pantheon before the *starshards* were brought together.
- All eight *starshards*: The power of all gods within all pantheons represented by the *starshards* is equalized. None is stronger than any other, and none is weaker. They are no longer tied to the energies of their followers, or at least those energies now benefit all equally, effectively rendering them irrelevant.

The result of combining all eight *starshards* is a situation in which divine power is spread equally. The gods can either choose to destroy themselves utterly through endless war or make perpetual peace. The presence of weaker gods who are now super-powerful creates a core of defenders for the *starshards*, for these gods have the most to lose if the *starshards* are separated. Finally, the joining of the *starshards* has another effect, one that Athuraz foresaw long ago: Athuraz himself will be revived and raised to the same power level of all other deities, to whom he can speak in the name of peace.

Such are the *starshards*.

Strong divination; CL 25th; Weight 3 lb.

New Mechs

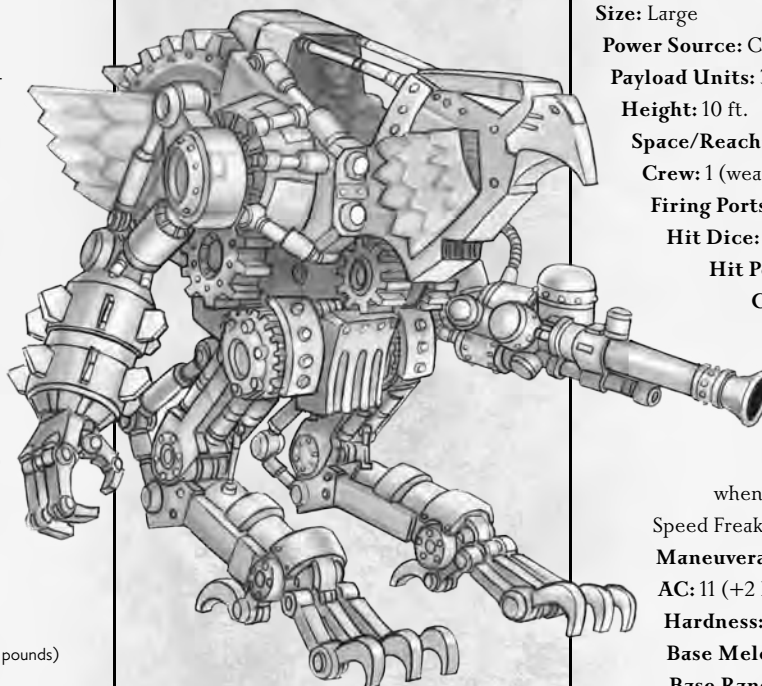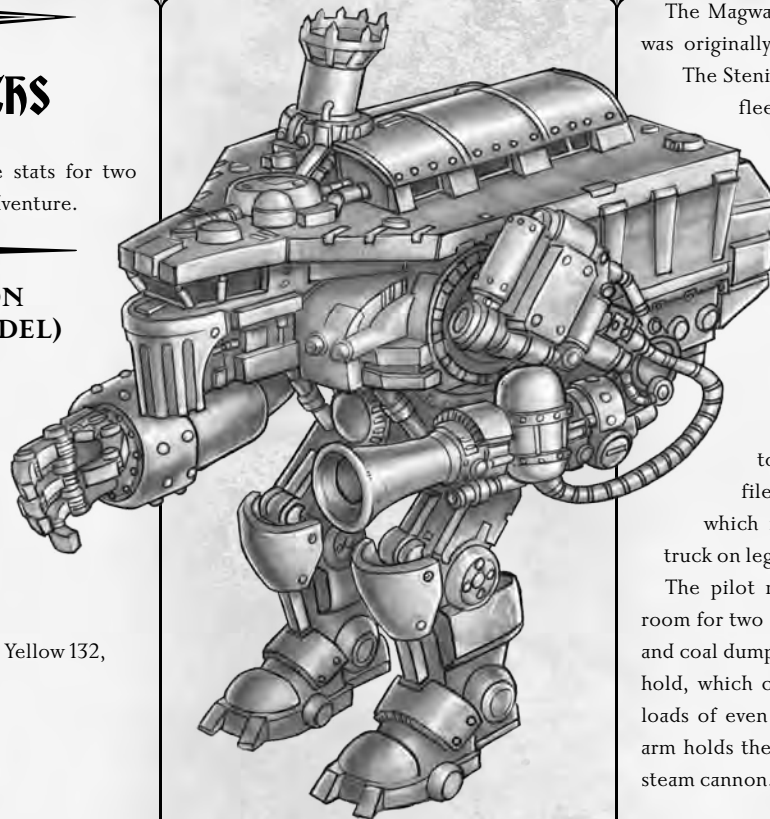This section provides the stats for two new mechs used in the adventure.

MAGWAGON (FREIGHT MODEL)

Size: Colossal
Power Source: Steam
Payload Units: 16
Height: 35 ft.
Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft.
Crew: 4 (weapons: 2)
Firing Ports: 12
Hit Dice: 48
Hit Points: 264
Critical Thresholds: Green, Yellow 132, Orange 66, Red 26
Base Initiative: –1
Speed: 50 ft. (6 mph)
Maneuverability: Average
AC: 1 (–1 Dex, –8 size)
Hardness: 9 (stone)
Base Melee Attack: +2
Base Ranged Attack: –1
Unarmed Damage: 1d12+10
Trample: largest Large; safe Medium; damage 4d6
Saves: Fort 0, Ref –1, Will +0
Abilities: Str 30, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis –, Cha –
Mechcraft DC: 39
Base Planning Time: 78 days
Base Cost: 2,752 gp
Total Cost: 9,128 gp
Labor Requirements: 3,840 man-hours
Construction Time: 16 days (30 avg. laborers plus 3 overseers)
Special: Heavy payload

PAYLOAD USAGE

PU	USE
4	Workspace for crew
8	Storage/passenger space (heavy payload = up to 16,000 pounds)
4	Onboard weaponry
128	Total

The Magwagon is an old mech model. It was originally built as a stopgap solution. The Stenians needed to develop a mech fleet quickly to extend their influence, so they constructed large, intimidating mechs with readily available materials. The Magwagon, with its stone armor and impressive physique, was one such creation. As more advanced mechs were later built, many Magwagons were retrofitted to freight duty. The above profile is for a Magwagon freighter, which resembles an awkward dump truck on legs.

The pilot rides in the head, which has room for two Medium creatures. The boiler and coal dump are located in the huge cargo hold, which can be used for passengers or loads of even the heaviest metals. The left arm holds the mech's only weapon, a Huge steam cannon.

RAPTOR

Size: Large
Power Source: Clockwork
Payload Units: 3
Height: 10 ft.
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Crew: 1 (weapons: 1)
Firing Ports: 3
Hit Dice: 9
Hit Points: 50
Critical Thresholds: Green, Yellow 25, Orange 12, Red 5
Base Initiative: +2
Speed: 60 ft. (7 mph) (70 ft./8 mph when piloted by Irontooth with Speed Freak feat)
Maneuverability: Perfect
AC: 11 (+2 Dex, –1 size)
Hardness: 12 (steel)
Base Melee Attack: +3
Base Ranged Attack: +4
Unarmed Damage: 2d6+4

TABLE 5-2: ONBOARD WEAPONS

Location	Arc of Fire	Weapon (damage, range in ft., other)	PU	Crew
Magwagon Onboard Weapons				
Left arm	180° forward	Huge steam cannon (2d10, 1,000)	4	2
Total			**4**	**2**
Raptor Onboard Weapons				
Left arm	180° forward	Large steam gun (1d10, 200)	2	1
Total 2 1			**6**	**2**

Trample: largest Tiny; safe Tiny; damage 1d6

Saves: Fort –2, Ref +4, Will +0

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 18, Con –,
Int –, Wis –, Cha –

Mechcraft DC: 40

Base Planning Time: 80 days

Base Cost: 1,021 gp

Total Cost: 5,677 gp

Labor Requirements: 960 man-hours

Construction Time: 20 days
(6 avg. laborers)

Special: Combat spikes, fast legs, steady feet

Note: Base trip bonus is +12 (+4 for perfect
maneuverability, +4 for steady feet, +4
for size Large)

Payload Usage

PU	Use
1	Pilot
2	Onboard weaponry
3	**Total**

The Raptor is a fast, nimble mech developed by the Irontooth Clans for reconnaissance purposes. Only 10 feet tall, it is a pipsqueak in the world of mechs but a frightening opponent in the world of men. Its (relatively) small size allows it to sneak about in a way larger mechs can't. The steel armor still protects the pilot securely, and the fast legs allow him to outrun many foes. The steady feet let him trip those he can't outrun, and he can follow that up with a devastating unarmed attack, courtesy of the mech's razor-sharp combat spikes. For ranged combat, the Raptor carries a steam gun, but this weapon is rarely used; Irontooth pilots prefer close combat in which they can use their mech fu to its best advantage, so the Raptor usually closes into melee as quickly as possible.

A Raptor looks like a 10-foot-tall bird of prey. Its cockpit is stylized to resemble a hooked beak, and its legs feature gigantic claws (which are more than just decorative elements). The entire mech is layered in razor-sharp steel feathers, which act as combat spikes in close combat.

NEW CREATURES

This section details four new creatures encountered in the adventure.

FERROVORE

A ferrovore is a normal creature that has developed a taste for metal. Its corrosive powers and hunger for all things metallic make even the weakest ferrovores a monumental challenge, for they can reduce an adventurer's gear to rust before he is even within striking range. Ferrovores resemble normal specimens of their type, but smell strongly of metal and have a faint rust-colored tinge to their outward appearance.

Ferrovores result from infestation by a rare fungus that corrodes metal on contact. Living creatures that consume this fungus suffer a horribly painful infection as the fungus interacts with their digestive system. Most die as a result, but a few survive with completely altered physiology. From then on, they can survive only by consuming metal. They are the ferrovores.

For most of history, ferrovores were minor annoyances, but in the age of mechs they have become catastrophically dangerous. Possessing appetites far greater than those of crumble bugs and a devastating breath weapon, most ferrovores can disable a mech in mere seconds. Because a ferrovore that mates with a normal creature of its species is capable of passing on its ferrovorous genes, the creatures are hunted with a vengeance lest they reproduce en masse.

Sample Ferrovore

This example uses a giant fire beetle advanced to 3 HD as the base creature.

Ferrovore Giant Fire Beetle, Advanced

Small Vermin (ferrovore)

Hit Dice: 3d8 (13 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 size, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16

BAB/Grapple: +2/–2

Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus rust)

Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus rust)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Breath weapon (DC 11)

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits, detect metal, corrosive skin (DC 11)

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 7

Skills: —

Feats: —

Environment: Gear forests

Organization: Cluster (2–5) or colony (6–11)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

Level Adjustment: —

This small, red-tinted beetle smells strongly of metal. A gland above each eye produces a red glow that seems distinctly rust-colored.

Combat

This giant fire beetle has an insatiable hunger for metal. The gear forests it inhabits are a veritable smorgasbord of potential meals, so the creature can afford to be picky. It seeks out the cleanest sources it can find, nibbling for hours on end until it is satisfied. The cleanest metals are often those that are magically enchanted in some way, enabling machines to run without messy oils or grease.

Breath Weapon (Ex): Rusting breath, line, 30 feet, every 1d4+1 rounds. Normal metal objects are destroyed instantly; metal magic items receive a Reflex save (DC 11) to avoid destruction. Objects made of wood, stone, gems and other materials are not affected. Metal objects securely contained within sacks, backpacks, pouches and wooden chests are not affected, although the mechanisms that hold the containers shut (such as hinges, buckles or locks) may be destroyed, exposing the metal items to a subsequent attack.

Detect Metal (Ex): The ferrovorous giant fire beetle can smell any metal within 90 feet.

Corrosive Skin (Ex): Any nonmagical metallic object or weapon that comes into contact with the ferrovorous beetle is instantly dissolved to rust, per its breath weapon attack above. Magic items receive a Reflex save to avoid being destroyed. The metal weapon is still capable of doing damage before being disintegrated by the creature's skin.

Creating a Ferrovore

"Ferrovore" is an acquired template that can be added to any animal, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, ooze or vermin (hereafter referred to as the base creature). After assuming the template, the base creature's type does not change. However, "ferrovore" is added to the creature's subtype. A ferrovore has all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Attacks: The attacks remain the same as the base creature. However, any attack that involves physical contact with the target inflicts corrosive damage per the ferrovore's corrosive skin ability (see below) in addition to normal damage.

Special Attacks: The ferrovore has all the special attacks of the base creature, and it gains the following:

Breath Weapon (Ex): The ferrovore can exhale a rusting mist (line, 30 feet, every 1d4+1 rounds). Any metallic object fully enveloped by the breath weapon (which looks like a cloud of red hissing steam) corrodes and becomes useless immediately. Objects partially covered by the breath weapon see the covered area disintegrate into rust. The size of the object in question does not alter the speed of this effect. Nonmagical metal items receive no save. Magic items receive a Reflex save (DC equals 10 + half the ferrovore's HD + the ferrovore's Constitution modifier). Objects made of wood, stone, gems and other materials are not affected by the breath weapon.

Special Qualities: The ferrovore has all the special qualities of the base creature and gains the following:

Detect Metal (Ex): A ferrovore can smell the presence of any metal object within 90 feet.

Corrosive Skin (Ex): Any nonmagical metallic object or weapon that comes into contact with a ferrovore is instantly dissolved to rust, per its breath weapon attack above. Magic items receive a Reflex save to avoid being

destroyed. The metal weapon is still capable of doing damage before disintegrating.

A secondary implication of this ability is that any natural attack of the base creature that touches an enemy also inflicts its corrosive skin quality. For example, if a ferrovore succeeds in a bite attack against an enemy in plate mail, the plate mail is instantly destroyed.

Challenge Rating: Same as base creature +1, if base creature is 6 HD or less; as base creature +2, if base creature is 7 HD or more.

LUNAR ELEMENTAL

Lunar Elemental, Small
Small Elemental (Lunar)
Hit Dice: 2d8+8 (17 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15
BAB/Grapple: +1/–3
Attack: Slam +2 melee (1d4)
Full Attack: Slam +2 melee (1d4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Lunar mastery, adaptive
Special Qualities: Lunar traits, entropic skin (DC 15), blindsense
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +7
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 4, Wis 18, Cha 11
Skills: Listen +7, Spot +6
Feats: —
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually neutral
Advancement: 3 HD (Small)
Level Adjustment: —

Lunar Elemental, Medium
Medium Elemental (Lunar)
Hit Dice: 4d8+20 (38 hp)

Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16
BAB/Grapple: +3/+5
Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d6+2)
Full Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Lunar mastery, adaptive
Special Qualities: Lunar traits, entropic skin (DC 17), blindsense
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +9
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 4, Wis 20, Cha 11
Skills: Listen +9, Spot +8
Feats: —
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually neutral
Advancement: 5–7 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment: —

Lunar Elemental, Large
Large Elemental (Lunar)
Hit Dice: 8d8+48 (84 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18
BAB/Grapple: +6/+14
Attack: Slam +9 melee (2d6+4)
Full Attack: 2 slams +9 melee (2d6+4)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Lunar mastery, adaptive
Special Qualities: Lunar traits, entropic skin (DC 20), blindsense
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +12
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 4, Wis 22, Cha 11
Skills: Listen +12, Spot +11
Feats: —
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral
Advancement: 9–15 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

This strange, putty-like mass of flesh seems unable to stand still. Its body pulses and undulates before you, slowly changing shape into a semi-humanoid state. The yellowish material that composes it has an oily sheen, and you can't help but think you catch reflections of yourself in it.

Description

Lunar elementals are embodiments of raw entropy. Their bodies are constantly in motion, undulating and even mutating before the eyes. They cannot alter their mass, but their shape seems to change almost subconsciously; they generally assume the rough shape of whatever creature stands before them. Their natural state, if it can be called that, is a shapeless mass of putty, sometimes flat like a pool of fluid, other times bulky like a pile of clay.

Scholars are divided as to what composes the body of a lunar elemental. The material is spongy but durable. It has been likened to a "solid ooze." Regardless of the lunar elemental's shape, it retains its opalescent yellowish color.

The most unusual part of a lunar elemental's anatomy is the haunting images reflected on its surface. Like the entropy it represents, the elemental reflects all possibilities, in a random and chaotic fashion. Those who stare at its skin catch glimpses of what appears to be them, but at different ages, in strange surroundings. Sometimes the image is something that really happened or something that is truly destined to happen, but most often is an alternate possibility, a tangent of entropic fate that will never connect to the material plane.

Lunar elementals appear to speak an unidentified lunar language. They attack terrestrial creatures on sight. They have been seen cooperating with other lunar creatures, although it is unknown whether this is voluntary or coerced. Lunar elementals show no signs of being extraplanar and do not appear to hail from another plane; nonetheless, they are distinctively elemental in nature. Some sages theorize that the moon may provide access to a different set of planes, or alternate versions of the known planes, and perhaps the plane of lunar energy is one such place.

Combat

A lunar elemental moves in fits and starts. Sometimes it is slow and ponderous; other times it is nimble and quick. Its form slowly adapts to that of the creature it is fighting, and it also acquires powers similar to its enemy. All the while, images of its opponent flash across its surface, distracting them and in some cases causing emotional reactions.

Lunar Mastery (Ex): The lunar elemental receives a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls as long as it and its target are in contact with the moon or fragments of the moon (including meteorites that have fallen to earth). If the elemental's target is not in contact with the moon (including via flight or any other method that takes its feet off the surface), it does not receive this bonus. If both the elemental and its target are not in contact with the moon, the lunar elemental receives a –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls.

Adaptive (Su): The lunar elemental slowly adapts to the shape of one opponent. It does not turn into an exact mimic, and there's no chance that anyone will confuse the elemental with the target. At best, it resembles a rough likeness carved from clay. As the elemental adapts, however, it slowly intuits the nature of its opponent and becomes better equipped to combat it.

Each round it is not in combat, the lunar elemental may choose to use a standard action to adapt. When in combat, it does not need to use an action if it damages the opponent with a normal melee attack; striking an enemy automatically induces adaptation. For each round of adaptation, the lunar elemental gains a +1 insight bonus to attack rolls and armor class against that one target, to a maximum of +10. Each additional bonus makes the elemental's physical form change, too, bringing it closer and closer to the form of the target creature. A lunar elemental that strikes a new opponent reverts to a +1 bonus against that new opponent and no bonus against the original target, and its form begins to shift toward the new opponent.

For example, a lunar elemental is fighting two steamborgs. For the first round, the lunar elemental studies one of them and begins to adapt, gaining a +1 insight bonus to attacks and AC against that steamborg. On the second round, the lunar elemental attacks that opponent (receiving a +1 bonus on the attack roll). The attack is successful, which increases the lunar elemental's insight bonus to +2. On the third round, the lunar elemental makes another attack (this time at +2), but it misses. Its bonus remains at +2 and does not increase. On the fourth round, the lunar elemental decides to target the other steamborg. It attacks (with no insight bonus against this target) and causes damage. It now has a +0 insight bonus against the first steamborg and a +1 bonus against the second.

Lunar Traits (Ex): Lunar creatures suffer half damage from elemental attacks (air, earth, fire or water), or no damage on a successful save. They receive a +10 bonus to saves against mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns and morale effects), mind blasts and psionic attacks, and thought detection due to alien psychology.

Entropic Skin (Su): Any creature glancing at a lunar elemental sees the nature of change in its skin. Flickering glimpses of potential pasts and haunting futures distract the viewer. Anyone attacking or even staring at a lunar elemental must make a Will save (at the DC indicated in the creature's stats) each round or be dazzled (–1 to attack rolls and Search and Spot checks). This condition lasts only until the creature's next turn, but a new check must be rolled each round. The save DC is Wisdom-based.

NANITE

Nanite
Tiny Vermin (Lunar)
Hit Dice: 1/2d8 (2 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 12

BAB/Grapple: +0/–11
Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d3–3 plus 1 acid)
Full Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d3–3 plus 1 acid)
Space/Reach: 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Death burst
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., lunar
traits, vermin traits
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities: Str 5, Dex 14, Con 10,
Int –, Wis 10, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +6
Feats: Weapon Finesse
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary, pack (2–20),
or swarm
Challenge Rating: 1/4
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always
neutral
Advancement: –
Level Adjustment: –

Nanite Swarm
Tiny Vermin
(Lunar, Swarm)
Hit Dice: 6d8 (27 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex),
touch 14, flat-footed 12
BAB/Grapple: +4/–
Attack: Swarm (2d6 plus
1d4 acid)
Full Attack: Swarm (2d6
plus 1d4 acid)
Space/Reach: 20 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks:
Acid bursts
Special Qualities: Darkvision
60 ft., damage reduction 5/piercing
or slashing, lunar traits, vermin traits,
swarm traits
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +0
Abilities: Str 7, Dex 14, Con 10,
Int –, Wis 10, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +6, Listen +2, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: –
Level Adjustment: –

This little creature looks like a five-legged spider whose carapace can barely contain its bulk. It can't weigh more than five pounds, but it looks grossly overweight for a creature with a frame its size.

Description

Nanites are tiny bug-like creatures that are the lunar equivalent of rats. Weighing no more than five pounds each, they are more pest than threat — except on the rare occasions when they gather in swarms, when they can be deadly. When attacked, they have a disgusting tendency to burst, showering the surrounding area with their caustic blood.

Combat

Nanites are pests and scavengers. They attack when frightened, hungry or threatened. Their acidic blood inflicts an extra point of damage when they bite and also makes possible their death burst attack.

Death Burst (Ex): Nanites have acidic blood. Their bodies explode when they die, showering the surrounding area with blood. A nanite reduced to –1 hit points or lower immediately explodes. All creatures within 5 feet must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or take 1 point of acid damage. Those who make their save take no damage.

Acid Bursts (Ex): Combat against a swarm of nanites results in a constant shower of caustic blood. Each time the swarm takes damage, it inflicts 1 point of acid damage on all creatures within 10 feet. A Reflex save (DC 10) avoids damage.

SPAWN OF SEROFICITACIT

Young Spawn

Medium Ooze (Lunar)

Hit Dice: 3d10+15 (31 hp)

Initiative: –5

Speed: 10 ft.

AC: 7 (–5 Dex, +2 natural), touch 5, flat-footed 7

BAB/Grapple: +2/+6

Attack: Slam +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change)

Full Attack: Slam +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Change

Special Qualities: Blind-sight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits

Saves: Fort +6, Ref -4, Will +5

Skills: Bluff +6, Knowledge (lunar) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10

Feats: Insightful Step, Serofic-itacit's Changes

Environment: Lunar or meteor

Organization: Solitary or coven (2–7), often found with lunar skinstealers

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4–6 HD (Medium); 7–12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: —

Elder Spawn

Large Ooze (Lunar)

Hit Dice: 7d10+49 (87 hp)

Initiative: –5

Speed: 10 ft.

AC: 8 (–1 size, –5 Dex, +4 natural), touch 4, flat-footed 8

BAB/Grapple: +5/+17

Attack: Slam +12 melee (1d6+8 plus change)

Full Attack: Slam +12 melee (1d6+8 plus change)

Space/Reach: 15 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Change

Special Qualities: Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits

Saves: Fort +9, Ref -3, Will +13

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 1, Con 24, Int 22, Wis 22, Cha 1

Skills: Bluff +10, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (lunar) +26, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Knowledge (religion) +16, Listen +16, Spot +16

Feats: Insightful Step, Prophetic Step, Seroficitacit's Changes

Environment: Lunar or meteor

Organization: Solitary or coven (2–7), often found with lunar skinstealers

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 8–12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: —

This shapeless mass of gray protoplasm lies flat before you. Small buds and tentacles sprout occasionally from its surface before dissipating back into the goo.

Description

The spawn of Seroficitacit is a creature created by the lunar god of change. One or more spawns are bestowed upon each temple of Seroficitacit, where they serve as guardians and guides. Unlike most oozes, a spawn is quite intelligent. It is an oracle of sorts, channeling the direct will of its creator and advising its worshippers appropriately, and serves a vast storehouse of knowledge on lunar history.

A spawn appears as a shapeless mass of gray or ochre protoplasm, generally a flat puddle no more than one foot deep. It is an ooze in the purest form: a creature with no limits to its possibilities. Spawns do not speak in any terrestrial manner, but are nonetheless capable of communicating

TABLE 5-4: SEROFICITACIT'S CHANGES

Roll (1d8)	Seroficitacit's Changes
1	*Hardened form*: spawn is partially paralyzed (speed and reach halved)
2	*Ethereal sight*: the spawn's blindsight extends onto the Ethereal Plane, but it is completely blind on the Material Plane (50% miss chance)
3	*Translucent body*
4	*Liquefied*: occupies twice the normal space but is only 1" high
5	*Antigravity effect*: floats 2 feet above the ground; no change to speed or other stats
6	*Furred*
7	*Spines*: deals an additional 1d3 damage on any slam attack or grapple check
8	*Whip tendril*: can use full-round action to make a single attack with double normal reach and +2 bonus to damage

directly with Seroficitacit's worshippers, primarily through dreams and enigmatic thoughts that are conveyed to those who meditate in their presence.

As a temple grows, more spawns are formed. Those already present grow in size, seemingly deriving their sustenance from the strength of the temple's worship. When they reach sufficient size, they split off portions, forming younger spawns from their own bodies.

Unfortunately for terrestrial creatures, the spawns have no way to communicate with them. It's not that much of a loss, however; a spawn views all terrestrial creatures as the next stage in the world's process of change and is all too happy to destroy them to fulfill Seroficitacit's next phase of change.

Combat

A spawn rarely leaves the basin in which it is kept within a temple of Seroficitacit. When it senses the approach of terrestrial creatures, it readily attacks with its slam attacks, which impart not just a great deal of force, but the whim of Seroficitacit as well.

Although spawns cover a wide area, they resemble puddles or pools rather than solid masses. Their size characteristics are based on weight rather than area.

Change (Su): Anyone hit by a spawn's slam attack must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) or see their form mutated by the channeled will of Seroficitacit. Roll 1d20 on Table 5-3 to determine the effect of the change. The change takes place instantaneously and is a permanent physiological change; it can-

not be undone with *remove curse* or the like, though *wish* or *miracle* may undo the change.

A character's minimum speed is 5 ft. Note that the DC for this check is always 10. It is a divine power not influenced by the spawn's size or personal capabilities.

Moon Lore (Ex): A spawn of Seroficitacit is imbued by its creator with a vast storehouse of knowledge about the moon. This knowledge only grows as it ages. A spawn receives a +10 bonus to all checks relating to lunar knowledge, including Knowledge (lunar) and other Knowledge skill checks involving the moon or its history, creatures or religions.

Ooze Traits (Ex): Unlike normal oozes, a spawn *is* affected by mind-affecting affects, although it has the lunar creature's normal resistance to such effects. It is still blind, with immunity to gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions and other attack forms that rely on sight. It is immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, polymorph and stunning, and not subject to critical hits or flanking.

Lunar Traits (Ex): Lunar creatures suffer half damage from elemental attacks (air, earth, fire or water), or no damage on a successful save. They receive a +10 bonus to saves against mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns and morale effects), mind blasts and psionic attacks, and thought detection due to alien psychology.

Seroficitacit's Changes: All spawns of Seroficitacit have this feat. When generating a spawn for an encounter, make a Change Check for the spawn per the usual rules for the feat and apply the results. This makes every spawn encounter different. If you're stuck on ideas for the spawn's changes, roll 1d8 on Table 5-4. (Note that 25% are harmful, 25% helpful and 50% neutral, per the feat's rules.)

TABLE 5-3: EFFECT OF SPAWN ATTACK

Roll (1d20)	Change
1–2	Melted face (–1 Cha)
3–4	Enlarged head and rapid brain growth (+1 Int)
5–6	Distorted muscle growth (+1 Str, –5 ft. speed)
7–8	1d4 new fingers sprout from each hand (+1 Dex but difficulty using some equipment)
9–10	Elastic limbs (+8 to Escape Artist checks)
11–12	Melted leg (–10 ft. speed)
13–14	Crystallized form (–20 ft. speed, –2 Dex, +4 Con)
15–16	Tactile awareness (gains blindsight 40 ft.)
17–18	Slurred thoughts and speech (–1 Int, –2 Cha)
19–20	Thoughts distorted into alien psychology (treated as lunar creature for purposes of saves against mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns and morale effects), mind blasts and psionic attacks, and thought detection due to alien psychology; gains +10 to save against these effects but has a –5 penalty to caster level checks, DCs, and other checks to create them itself)

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DESIGNER'S NOTES

The Shardsfall Quest is an amalgam of several longer adventures I ran in my first DragonMech campaign. I've taken the basic concepts, rewritten them as shorter episodes, and tied them together with the larger concept of the *starshards*. In that first campaign, all of these elements were present, including an earlier version of the *starshards*: They were crystalline pendants, in the possession of nearly a dozen brothers, sisters and various half-siblings, most of whom didn't know each other, all of whom were imparted with scattered portions of a half-understood prophecy, and each of whom bore the same strange birthmark. The PCs stumbled into this prophecy when the dying pilot of their hired mech asked them to get his *starshard* into the hands of his sister. But that's a story for another day.

Playtesting this adventure led to some interesting situations. As usual, the players did things I never expected. This was in spite of the fact that most of the scenes in this module came from other adventures the same players had been through over the preceding year. At the very onset of **The Shardsfall Quest**, the PCs decided that instead of entering the obvious beginning of the adventure (Area 2 in the first meteor), they would explore the crack running down the center of the meteor. So they pitted their 1st-level party against the several spawns of Seroficitacit residing in the ravine between the two meteor halves. They'd faced such creatures in an earlier

DragonMech campaign, so perhaps that was why they felt confident of quick success. Unknown to them, however, I'd retooled the monster and made the spawns tougher. Less than an hour into the session, two of five party members were dead, and the remaining three were dragging away the bodies and trying to figure out how to retrieve their coglayer's contraption, which was now guarded by the remaining spawn. They, of course, blamed me for not properly telegraphing how dangerous the spawns were. ("You should have said it looked like a *really powerful* ooze!")

By the next session, their neophyte characters were back on their feet and ready to explore the meteor the way the read-aloud text said they should. We played through the following episodes without incident, until we reached the second lunar temple. Herein lay the greatest D&D battle that I have ever witnessed.
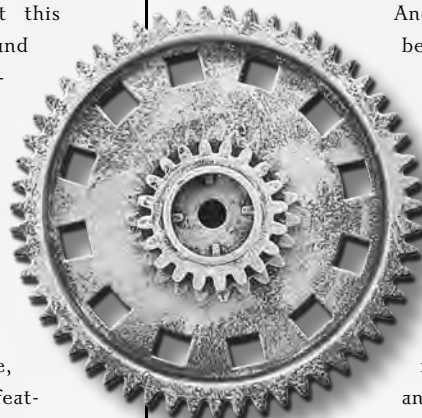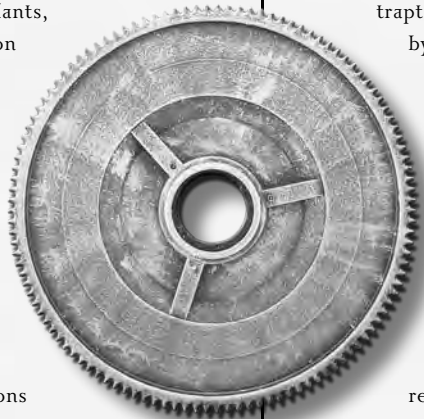
Before I tell you about this battle, you have to understand something about lunar skinstealers. They've been a consistent element of my **DragonMech** campaigns, and the players know how to fight them. The skinstealers are extremely powerful if they win the surprise round and take over a PC immediately. Otherwise, they're dead meat, easily defeated with ranged attacks. Because the playtesters knew to expect them (in a way that your own first-time players won't), I made a few allowances in the skinstealers'

favor. Suffice it to say, they made their Hide check more than once due to divine intervention.

This epic battle began with one such Hide check. It started in Area 4 of the second lunar temple. The PCs opened the door to Area 5A in the southwest corner, where they had a rocking battle against the spawn there. Next they detected the secret doors and entered the hidden room in the northeast corner. Here I departed from my own adventure text and made it a repeat of Area 5A (with the spawn, rather than two skinstealers), hoping to lull them into a sense of false security about what to expect from the last hidden chamber. When they finally opened the southeast secret door, they had their "anti-ooze SWAT-team tactics" down pat, and were prepared to dispatch another spawn. Instead, they found an empty chamber.

I made this Area 5B. The PCs went in searching. The skinstealers made a terrific Hide check (wonder how that happened?) and escaped notice. The characters blundered right into the middle of the room before one of the skinstealers made a surprise attack.

And then the fun began. The skinstealer attacked Fin, a half-elf clockwork ranger and one of the party's two main fighters. The skinstealer made its grapple and Fin failed his Will save, leaving him under the skinstealer's control. This ended the surprise round, and now the regular round began. The skin-

stealer-hosted Fin came last in the order. All four of the other PCs got a chance to attack him, but they rolled terribly. Even Rangus, the half-orc steamborg-barbarian who wielded a greataxe with a 20 Strength, failed to land a blow. Only the halfling coglayer hit, with a measly 1d4 points of damage caused by a ranged shocker device he had built.

Now came the skinstealers' turn. The second stealer jumped from hiding and attacked Rangus. It hit and grappled. Everybody assumed the dim-witted Rangus was done for, but he somehow made his save. Then the skinstealer-hosted Fin attacked... and the party would never be the same. He aimed for Ang, the party cleric. Attacking with two weapons, he rolled a 20 to threaten a critical, then rolled another 20 to confirm it. He rolled near-maximum critical damage, then proceeded to deal near-max damage with his second weapon.

In a single round, Fin the skinstealer-possessed clockwork ranger dealt more damage than he'd done in any round of the entire campaign so far – and he dealt it to the party's cleric.

Fin's player continued to have the best rolls of his career. In the combat's second round, he dropped the cleric. In the fourth round, he killed Sarah Mae the mech jockey (all the way to –10 hit points). Meanwhile, the rest of the players had been rolling terribly. They'd managed to dispatch the second skinstealer (which rolled poorly) but couldn't touch Fin.

In the sixth round, Fin dropped Rangus. Until that point in the campaign, Rangus had been nigh-unstoppable, a low-level character who routinely dealt 12+ points of damage every round– but against Fin, the half-orc barbarian-steamborg's Power Attack and 20 Strength didn't seem to matter one bit!

Round seven began with a moment of stark clarity. Fin's player looked down on a battlefield littered with the bodies of his friends. He had dropped three of the party's five members. He was the fourth,

and his possessed character swung his gaze toward the only remaining PC: Kenteth Clockwinder, the halfling coglayer. Kenteth had done more damage to the skinstealer than anyone else, pelting it with his 1d4-damage shocker for round after round – and now the skinstealer wanted revenge.

Kenteth pondered using his coglayer contraption to fly to safety in the 20-foot-tall ceilings of Area 4, but I reminded him that if he did so, Fin's skinstealer would naturally administer a coup de grace to the remaining members of the party. So the coglayer made a brave choice: to stand and fight the clockwork ranger toe-to-toe.

It didn't last long. Kenteth launched one more attack from his shocker, again doing 1d4 damage, and the skinstealer again shrugged it off. Then Fin stepped into melee and chopped Kenteth down.

There was a moment of silence. The players stared dejectedly at the table. Four of them had dead PCs, a feat which had been administered by the fifth. The campaign was over.

Then Fin's player, Stephen, jumped up. "Wait!" he shouted. "There's still a chance! You're at exactly zero hit points, right?"

"Yes," said Garrick, Kenteth's player. "So what? I die if I do anything! The exertion will put me into negative hit points."

"That's our only hope!" shouted Stephen. "You'll die either way. But if

you kill him with this last shot, the skinstealer will fall off my body and I can save the rest of you!"

A light of hope came into Garrick's eyes. "Yeah!" everybody said. "Go for it!"

Garrick picked up his lucky 20-sider. Kenteth looked Fin in the eye and then shouted the most glorious battle cry a man has ever heard –
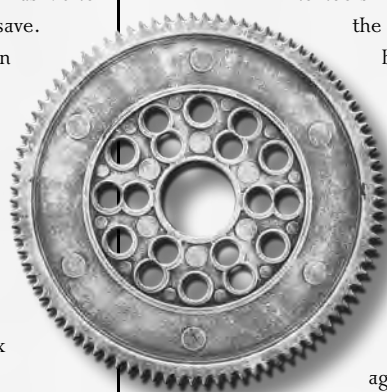
"I'LL SEE YOU IN HELL!"

Garrick threw down the d20 with a flourish. His character Kenteth took 1 point of damage and went into negative hit points. But the d20 rolled a hit! Garrick rolled for damage – a measly 1 point on 1d4! But that was enough! Eight consecutive rounds of blasting the skinstealer had finally taken their toll! As Kenteth faded into unconsciousness, the dead skinstealer slipped off of Fin. Fin was back to his senses. Kenteth's sacrifice had saved the party!

From then on it was a race against time as Fin dug through backpacks for healing potions and tried to stabilize the party. In the end, he managed to stabilize everyone, and the party was able to leave the meteor in tatters – but alive. Well, mostly. Sarah Mae the mech jockey was dead-dead, but she'd soon find resurrection.
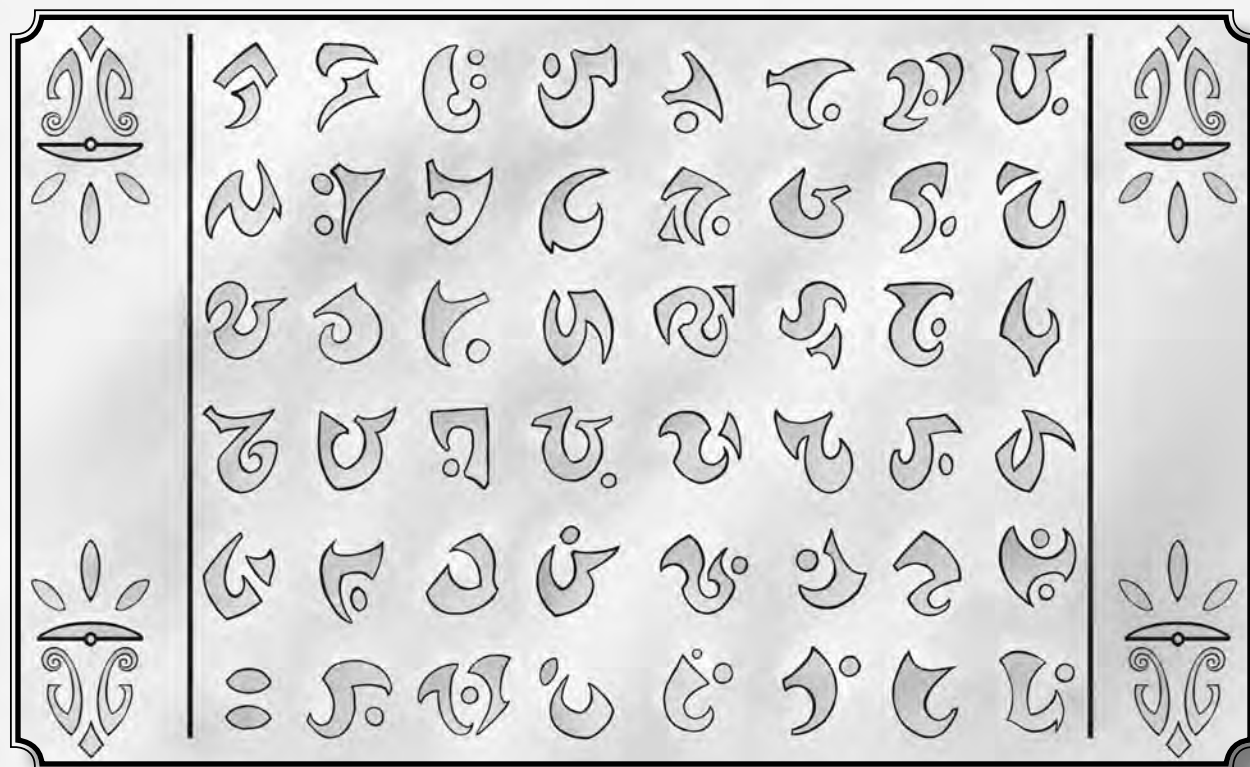
So, as you consider how to impart this adventure to your players, keep in mind the power of a lunar skinstealer with a surprise round and good dice rolls. There's a reason Area 5B only has one skinstealer now. If you have a skilled, large or experienced party, you might consider two skinstealers in that room. But be careful. The results can be deadly!
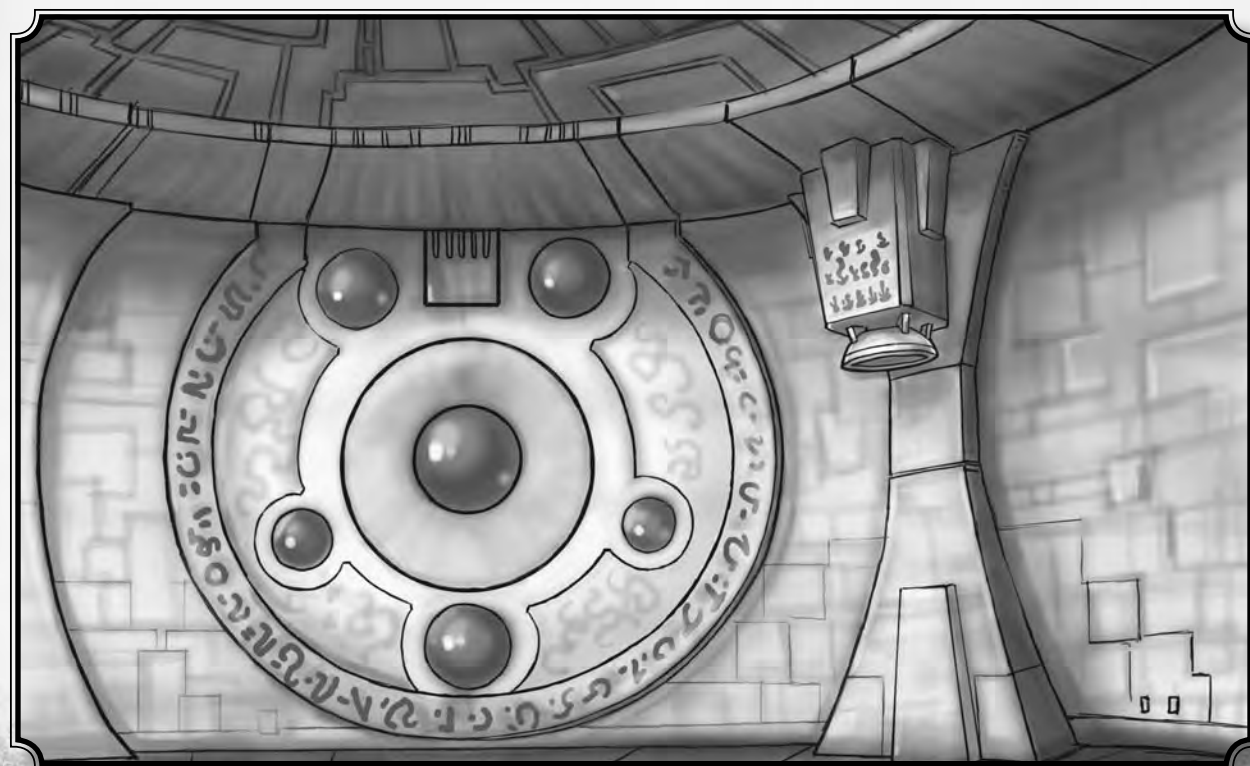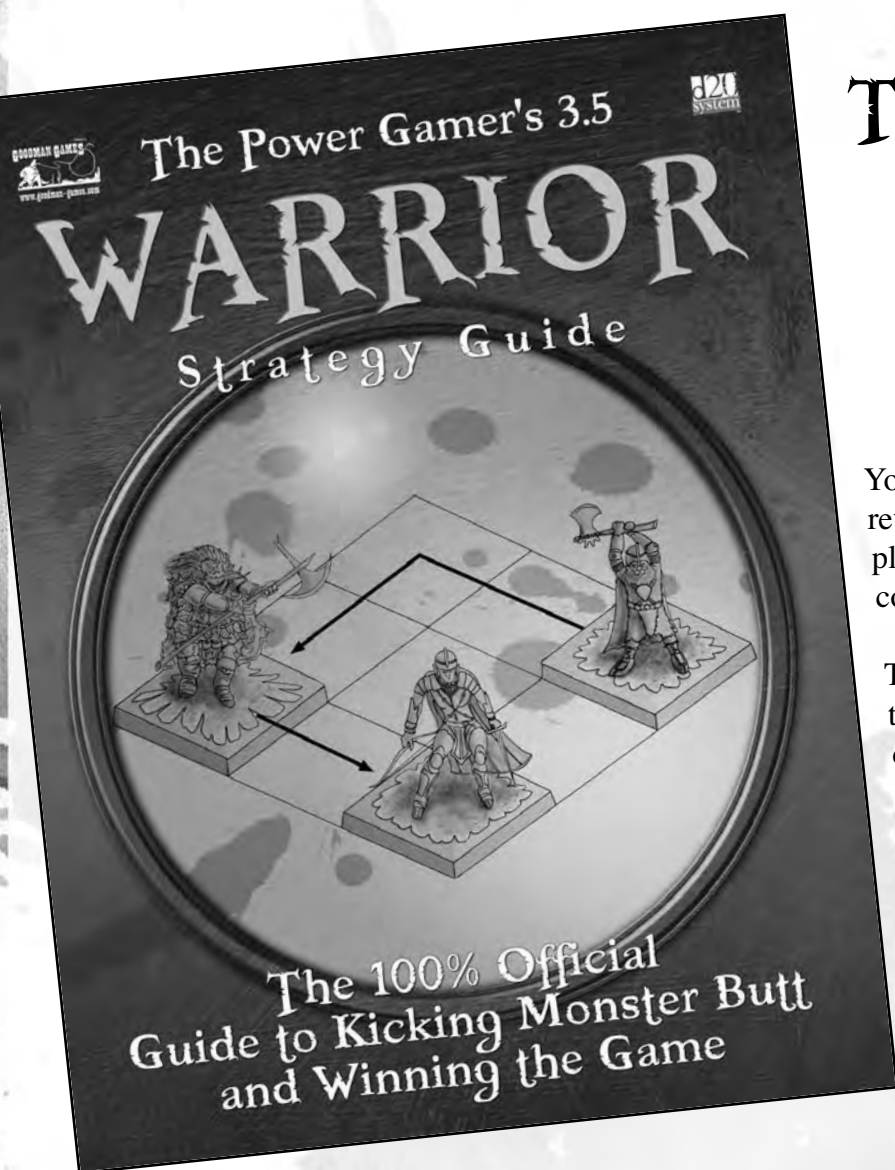
Joseph Goodman
May 2004

HANDOUT A

HANDOUT B

MECH SCHEMATIC SHEETS — DRAGONMECH

MECH NAME

MECHCRAFT DC

SIZE	POWER SOURCE	PAYLOAD UNITS	HEIGHT	SPACE/REACH			TOTAL	WOUNDS/CURRENT HP	DAMAGE REDUCTION	HIT DICE	HARDNESS	SPEED	MANEUVERABILITY

HP HIT POINTS

AC ARMOR CLASS = 10+

GREEN YELLOW RED
CRITICAL THRESHOLDS

FIRING PORTS CREW WEAPONS

TOTAL — ARMOR BONUS + SHIELD BONUS + SIZE MODIFIER + MISC MODIFIER

INITIATIVE BONUS = TOTAL + MECH DEX BONUS + PILOT DEX BONUS + MISC MODIFIER

MELEE ATTACK BONUS = MECH ATTACK BONUS + MECH STR MODIFIER + MECH SIZE MODIFIER + GUNNER DEX MOD + TEMPORARY MODIFIER

RANGED ATTACK BONUS = MECH ATTACK BONUS + MECH DEX MODIFIER + GUNNER DEX MOD + MISC MODIFIER + TEMPORARY MODIFIER

SAVING THROWS

	TOTAL	BASE SAVE	ABILITY MODIFIER	MAGIC MODIFIER	MISC. MODIFIER	TEMPORARY MODIFIER	CONDITIONAL MODIFIERS
FORTITUDE (CONSTITUTION)	=	+	+	+			
REFLEX (DEXTERITY)	=	+	+	+			
WILL (WISDOM)	=	+	+	+			

ONBOARD WEAPON LOCATION	ARC OF FIRE	WEAPON	DAMAGE	RANGE	OTHER	PU	CREW

TOTAL

BASE PLANNING TIME — DAYS
BASE COST — GOLD PIECES
TOTAL COST — GOLD PIECES

LABOR TIME — MAN HOURS
CONSTRUCTION TIME = DAYS + AVERAGE LABORERS + OVERSEER(S)

OPTIONS

ABILITY NAME	ABILITY SCORE	ABILITY MODIFIER	TEMPORARY SCORE	TEMPORARY MODIFIER
STR STRENGTH				
DEX DEXTERITY				

NOTE: *Mechs do not have Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma scores.*

UNARMED DAMAGE — BASE

TRAMPLE — LARGEST SAFE DAMAGE

SPECIAL ABILITIES

PAYLOAD USAGE — PU USE

TOTAL

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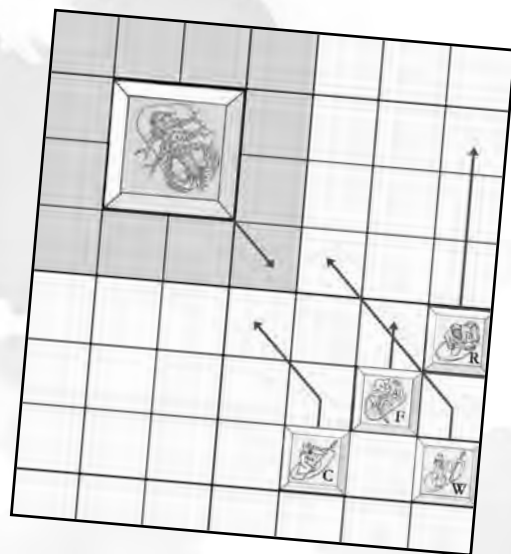
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SHARDSFALL QUEST

CREDITS

Author: Joseph Goodman

Art Director: Sean Glenn

Cover Artist: Niklas Janssen

Interior Artist: Jeff Carlisle

Graphic Designer: Rick Achberger

Cartographer: Sean Glenn

Developer: Mike Johnstone

Editor: Ken Hart

Managing Editor: Andrew Bates

Playtesters: Garrick Andrus, Stephen Burt,
Alan Fishman, Michael Goodman, Stephen Pellicer

Dedicated to April.

CONTENTS

TABLES & MAPS

INTRODUCTION

Thundering steam-powered walkers lumber across the plains, battling predatory dragons to protect the fearful humans who dwell within their steel-cased skins. At night the shattered moon rises, raining a hail of deadly debris upon the surface. Sturdy city-mechs batten down their hatches, cliffside dwellers retreat to safety under the rock, and worm farmers slink into the tunnels of their charges, for no one wants to be out in the open when the meteorites start to fall. Yet some meteorites hold the secrets of the moon and its alien civilizations — and perhaps the key to ending the lunar scourge that grips Highpoint. When the sun rises again, explorers crawl from their holes and scour the surface for whatever valuable lunar shards might have fallen the night before....

The **Shardsfall Quest** is an introductory adventure for **DragonMech**. It gives the characters a tour of the world, its major political factions, its history and its denizens and dangers. Along the way, the characters face combat, diplomacy, and puzzles. In the end, they become citizens of the prominent city-mech Nedderpik (see Chapter 7 of **Dragon-Mech**), make friends and enemies, and are directed to the city of Edge to continue their quest, although they are positioned to pursue adventure in almost any direction. To play this adventure, you will need a copy of **Dragon-Mech**, as well as the core d20 books (*Player's Handbook*, *DMG* and *MM*).

The **Shardsfall Quest** is designed for beginning characters of 1st level. By the end of the adventure, the characters will have accrued enough experience to be approximately 3rd level, depending on the number of characters. The adventuring party should have between 4 and 6 members, with at least one strong fighter, one coglayer or steamborg, and one arcane spellcaster. A rogue and cleric will also come in handy at times, as will a bard with strong diplomacy skills. A mech jockey is not necessary, but at least one character should have several ranks in the Mech Pilot skill.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The **Shardsfall Quest** has four major episodes. The adventure is a cross-country jaunt of sorts, sending the characters in pursuit of the parts of a lunar relic. The relic was in a temple carved into the very bedrock of the moon, which shattered in the lunar rain and fell to earth in the form of several meteorites, each of which landed many miles from the others. With each episode, the characters encounter one of the factions of the **Dragon-Mech** world: first the Stenian Confederacy, then denizens of the gear forests, then the Legion, and lastly the Irontooth Clans.
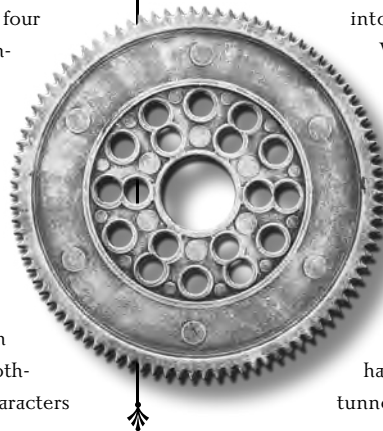
The adventure proceeds thus:

While traveling, the characters come across a recently fallen meteorite that cracked open upon landing, revealing a network of passages inside. It turns out they are the remains of a ruined temple to the lunar god Seroficitacit. In exploring the ruins, the characters find a strange glowing globe. As they emerge from the meteorite, they are stopped by a Stenian Confederacy mech patrol. The Stenians have come to destroy the temple in case it houses any lunar creatures.

The Stenian soldiers clear the characters for lunar influence, then make a proposition. The Stenian Confederacy has learned that this is only one piece of a larger meteorite that broke into two parts when it entered the planet's atmosphere. The second section has fallen to the east, in the territory of the Legion. The Stenian Confederacy wants to find it and cleanse it of lunar creatures, but the Stenians can't risk sparking a war by sending military mechs into enemy territory. They offer to send the characters in a non-military mech to destroy the second temple in Legion territory. In return, the characters gain temporary use of the mech and will receive citizenship on the city-mech Nedderpik when they return.

The characters journey to the city-mech to get their loaner mech. While there, they are secretly recruited by cogling stowaways to help defeat a threat to the city-mech's engines. Then they move on into Legion territory. While there, they deal with several minor mech skirmishes before finally reaching the temple. Destroying it won't be easy, however, because human refugees have moved into the tunnels for protection

from the lunar rain. The characters must confront the xenophobic Legion humans, who decry non-humans as inferior. And there's a twist: The Legion's leaders are controlled by lunar skinstealers.

Once characters unravel the skinstealer mystery, they go to clear out the lunar temple. Just as they reach the last room, a small one-man mech darts out of hiding. Seemingly just as quickly, it emerges holding another radiant globe, like the one the characters found in the first temple. Then it nimbly darts out of range and retreats quickly to the north.

The characters learn from the Legion refugees that it was an Irontooth mech. Why it was here, so far from Irontooth territory, is a mystery. Once their mission here is done, they journey north, trailing their mysterious assailant. Eventually, they enter Irontooth territory, where they come across one of the legendary Irontooth jousts just getting underway. One of the mechs involved is the same one that attacked them.

The characters' mech is sighted and quickly surrounded with overwhelming odds, forcing them to negotiate. It turns out the Irontooth are pursuing the lunar globes to fulfill an ancient prophecy that predates the lunar rain, dating back to the monastic orders from which the Irontooth evolved. They are not sure of the globes' powers, but the prophecy claims that when all are collected, they will rise into the sky to form a new constellation, and the lunar rain will end. Yet that's beside the point. The only way the PCs will escape with their lives is if they accept a challenge from the Irontooth: They must duel!

If the PCs perform honorably during the duel, the Irontooth recognize their valor with admission to the clans, then ask them to join in their quest for the globes. They tell the characters there are stories of another such globe somewhere in the trading city of Edge, far to the south. Once the characters have returned to the city-mech, given back their loaner mech, and gained their citizenship medallion, they are positioned for continued adventures in almost any direction.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins with the characters coming across a recently fallen meteorite. The background material assumes they are scavengers who make a living selling ore and other valuables to passing mechs. Yet since the characters are 1st level and just beginning a campaign, the GM can use quite a few other options for explaining how they end up discovering the meteorite. Here are some ideas:

• The characters could be freelance ore-hunters. They make their living scouring the meteors left behind after each night's lunar rain, finding veins of precious metals (such as adamantine and mensite). Then they mine them before anyone else comes across them, or else guard them and sell access to third-party miners. This time, however, they've found a particularly interesting meteor….

• The characters could be refugees, like so many others on Highpoint. They once had training or occupations, but now they dwell in a secluded cave somewhere on the flatland, eking out an existence and trying to find safe passage to Edge or citizenship on a city-mech. Their normal life consists of scavenging surface wreckage and trading with passing mech tribes. They could even live with a tribe of worm farmers that took them in for their combat skills.

• The characters are scouts for a city-mech. They patrol whenever the city-mech comes to a halt. Being low-level and untrained as they are, they're in the infantry corps, not the mech division. While scouting on this morning, they find a meteorite with a lunar temple inside it.

• Alternately, the characters could be in the private employ of the Gearwrights Guild. Their task is specifically to scout meteors on foot and locate valuable lunar relics, particularly technology and magic that might help the Guild. Normally, they would take what they find back to the Guild, but the intervention of the Stenian Confederacy (in Episode One) changes their path….

BACKGROUND

This adventure is set on the continent of Highpoint in the world of **DragonMech**. Highpoint was once a land of traditional medieval kingdoms, but that structure has been decimated by the lunar rain. The planet's moon is slowly falling apart, for reasons unknown. As the moon collapses, its fragments are drawn into the world's gravity well. The result is a constant meteor storm beneath the moon. On the planet, each night's moonrise brings with it the so-called lunar rain — sometimes only a particulate haze that irritates the skin, but other times a devastating meteor storm that sends two-ton boulders hurtling into the surface. As if that weren't enough, the moon's bizarre denizens are also falling to earth, and they're universally hostile.

The meteor rain destroyed the surface world. It shattered castles, flattened cities, and sent refugees scurrying for cover underground. It has taken almost a century for the world's peoples to recolonize the surface, which they did with the help of the greatest technological advance in Highpoint's history: the mech. Powered by steam, magic, or the labor of a thousand slaves, mechs have become the de facto social unit of Highpoint, particularly the massive city-mechs, which house populations in the thousands. Kingdoms have been replaced by mobile associations of city-mechs called mechdoms.

Three of the most powerful mechdoms are the Stenian Confederacy, the Legion and the Irontooth Clans. This adventure starts the characters in the territory of the Stenian Confederacy, a dwarven institution ruled by absolute martial law. In its early days, this was a driving force in retaking the surface world, as the organization and structure of the Stenians enabled them to build mechs and survive the hostile conditions of the lunar rain. Five allied city-mechs make up the Stenian Confederacy. The most famous is called Durgan-lok, which was the first city-mech ever built, while the most advanced is known as Nedderpik. Nedderpik houses 3,500 civilians and crew, and it hangars a fleet of smaller mechs in its shins.

Episode Three takes the characters to the Legion. The Legion is more of a mass movement than a proper political body. It is led by the charismatic demagogue Shar Thizdic, whose sheer force of will has united hundreds of disparate human tribes for the first time in centuries. Under his leadership, the tribes have successfully built their first city-mech and are now working on a second. Shar is considered a threat by all other factions in Highpoint, for he is ambitious, warlike and uncompromising.

Worst of all, he motivates his people through hatred. He espouses a blatant xenophobia that declares the rightful time of human rule has come and that dwarves, elves, orcs and other races are inferior. Needless to say, this attitude has won him few friends among the neighboring Stenian Confederacy, which is predominantly dwarven.

The fourth and final episode takes the characters into the territory of the Irontooth Clans. The Clans' code of behavior has evolved from ancient monastic traditions practiced by their ancestors. The lunar rains fractured the institutions that held these traditions in place. The Clans were formed by engineers who decried the failures of their previous societies, but were nonetheless influenced by them. Now the Clans are a loosely affiliated group of independent bands that mix monastic inner strength with roughneck barbarian chaos. Daily life among the Irontooth is rough-and-tumble, and their mechs are ornamented with spikes, studs, barbs and razo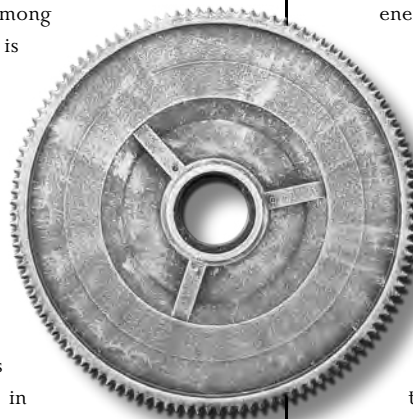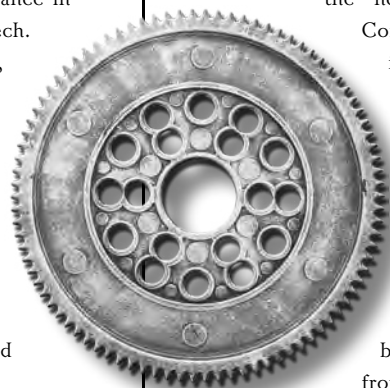r edges. Yet the Irontooth pilots are the best in the world, for they draw on special techniques, a culture of mech jousting, and mysterious inner reserves to deliver performance that no other mechdom can match. Their enemies call them "mech devils," and the name is well deserved.

DM'S NOTES

This adventure starts the characters off without a mech. As such, there is no need for a mech jockey character in the party. However, the adventure does include time on a city-mech, as well as travel and limited combat in a mech, so the characters are exposed to mechs quite a bit. The idea here is versatility: The players (and you) will be exposed to adventures on a mech and on foot, and you can then determine what direction you want your campaign to take.

By the time this adventure is through, the characters will have encountered the Stenian Confederacy, the Legion, and the Irontooth Clans. They'll be enemies of some and allies of others. Thanks to the assistance they give the Stenian Confederacy, they'll end up as allies with citizenship on the city-mech Nedderpik. If they succeed in the challenge offered by the Irontooth Clans, they'll be granted honorary titles and have powerful new allies there, also. On the other hand, having invaded the Legion's territory and threatened its citizens, they'll be hunted enemies of the Legion.

The adventure concludes with plot hooks leading the characters to Edge, the cliffside city far to the south. At this point, the characters are perfectly positioned for whatever direction the players (and you) want to take. They'll be on Nedderpik, which is rife with adventure; they'll feel the urge to visit Edge, which is a nexus of trade and civilization on Highpoint; they'll have Legion enemies pursuing them; and they'll have safe haven (and new adventures) with the Irontooth Clans.

EPISODE ONE: SKYFALL

INTRODUCTION

Introduce the players to the adventure by reading them this introduction, adapting it as necessary to their characters' backgrounds.

The night started like any other. Before the moon rose, you found safety in an abandoned underground shelter, then listened to the soft pinging of the lunar rain on the ceiling above. The superheated meteor fragments blasted small craters in the earth above. Some were large enough to burn through several feet of dirt, denting the scrap metal ceiling of your underground hovel. You knew that by the time the night was through, a hundred new dents would be made, with each dent glowing red from the fiery fragments resting above. Finally, the moon would sink over the horizon, carrying the lunar rain with it, and the sun

would rise over a landscape scorched clean, as it had every night for nearly a hundred years.

Yet this night, something different happened. Shortly after midnight, the earth shook with the impact of a massive meteor. You were knocked from the dirt benches on which you slept, awakening suddenly to the trembling aftershocks. It was obvious that something large had fallen from the moon above.

That could mean profit — and danger. The meteor could contain valuable lunar ores or rare treasures of the lunar civilizations, both of which you could profit from. If you reach it first, you can sell the ores to the city-mechs that scavenge constantly for the supplies, or sell the lunar treasures to the military men and hunters who battle against the lunar monsters. It might not be that easy, however. There are creatures from the moon, alien monsters with bizarre minds, and they are the scourge of Highpoint. More than one salvage team has been eaten by a

meteorite's unexpected stowaways.

You rose at dawn and set out immediately. The meteor's location was obvious from the gouts of steam visible on the horizon. In this scarcely populated region of the rocky flatland, you could easily be the first to reach it....
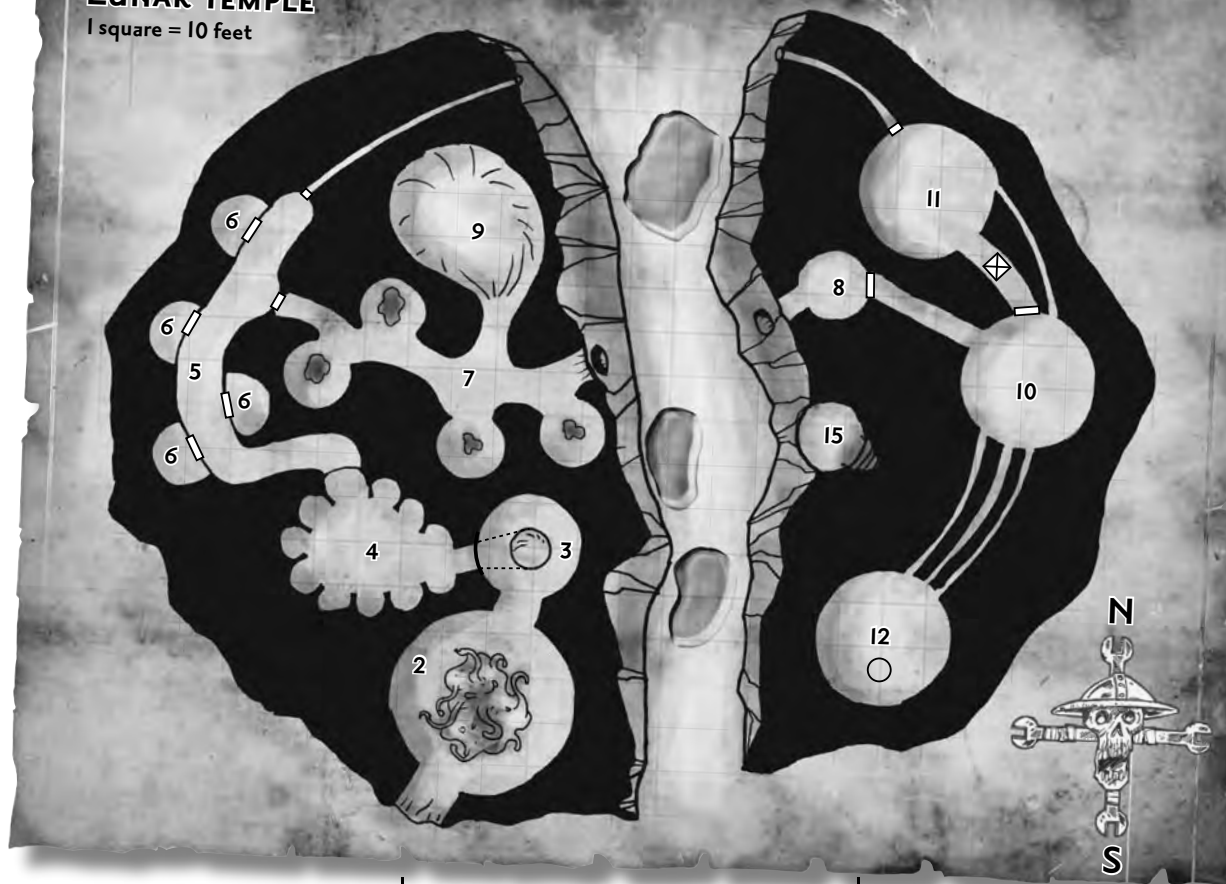
After two days of hiking, you reach the edge of a shallow crater and look down upon the now-cooled meteor. After a descent into the crater, you now stand before the huge, pitted round rock. It looms 50 feet above you, shattered into two halves by the force of the impact.

Unlike other meteors, this one seems to beckon you to enter. A gaping 10-foot-wide hole opens into its side. The tunnel inside is smooth and well crafted, clearly built by something of intelligence. Your livelihood depends on recovering something of value from what's inside... but your life may depend on how carefully you do it.

LUNAR TEMPLE
I square = 10 feet

Now refer to Map One: The Lunar Temple. Many of the creatures in this temple should be dead, but they aren't. They have been saved by their own malleable ooze-like forms, their strange physiology and the will of Seroficitacit himself, who ensures that many of his worshippers survive to engage this strange new world.

THE LUNAR TEMPLE

This section describes the significant locations of the lunar temple.

AREA 1:
THE METEORITE

The meteorite is about 250 feet in diameter, with about 50 feet of its top visible above the ground. Its sides rise in a roughly spherical shape, but are cut off suddenly at the top; it looks as if there was another part to the meteor that was simply sheared off. The lunar rock has split into two halves, which now stand about 20 feet apart.

The only visible entrance to the meteor's outer perimeter is the one which the characters stand before, leading into Area 2. If the characters conduct a search of the area, they spy four more entrances on the walls of the channel between the two halves (Spot DC 10). These entrances (corresponding to the broken passages between Areas 7 and 8) are 20 feet above ground level and 40 feet below the meteor's roof. They are difficult to reach due to the spawns of Seroficitacit (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One) that were tossed from the openings when the rock split. These spawn now rest in the entrances to the split channel, effectively preventing the characters from passing. At least two are in the way of the PCs' entrance from any direction except dropping from above.
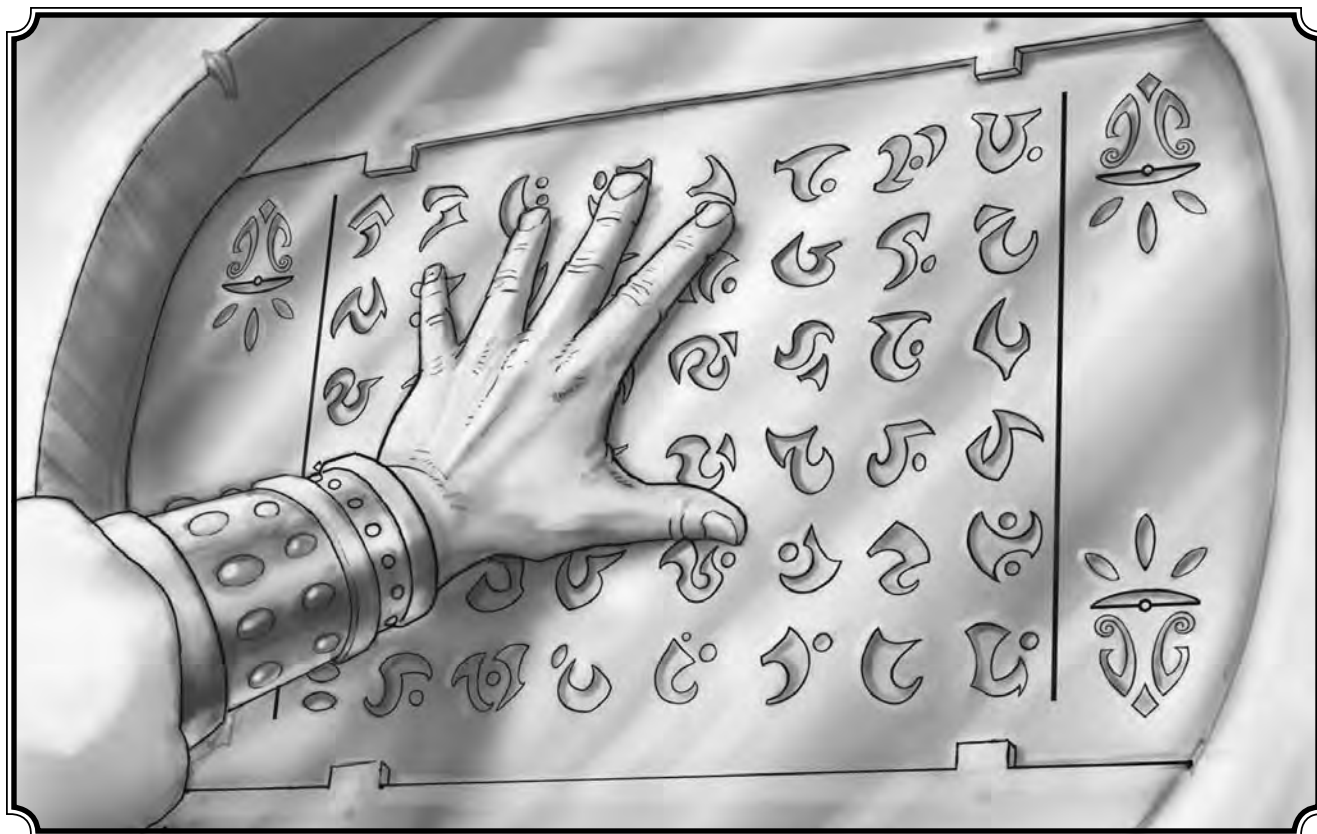
Dropping from above is difficult due to the meteor's temperature. It has begun to cool but is still very hot to the touch. It is coolest at its center (where it was most insulated from the friction of its earthfall) and warmest on its surface. Anyone who walks on the surface for more than two rounds takes 1 point of heat damage each round after the second (Fort save DC 10 to take no damage).

The hot rock and spawns should collectively steer the characters toward entering the passage into Area 2.

AREA 2:
THE ENTRANCE CHAMBER
(EL 2)

Read or paraphrase the following:

The hallway goes for barely 10 feet before it enters a 40-foot-wide round chamber. Hanging from the ceiling is a three-foot-tall inverted basin carved

with bizarre yet beautiful symbols. You can see an open doorway on the opposite side of the room, but there is an obstacle in your way: A 15-foot-wide shapeless mass of grayish ooze is undulating on the floor, sending pulpy tentacles swaying about. It makes no noise, but this ooze is clearly alive.

The meteorite landed upside-down relative to its orientation on the moon, so the temple that the characters enter is also upside-down. The ooze is a spawn of Seroficitacit that was originally housed in the basin when it was right side up. Now the basin is on the ceiling, and the spawn has been tossed onto the floor.

The spawn is the "greeter" for this particular temple. It can sense surface creatures and will attack all who come near, fulfilling Seroficitacit's whim that their world should change. It is a young spawn that survived the meteor crash but was wounded in the process.

Tactics: As soon as the spawn senses the characters, it advances on them to attack. It fights to the death.

Young Spawn of Seroficitacit (injured): CR 2; Medium ooze (lunar); HD 3d10+15; hp 19; Init –5; Spd 10 ft.; AC 7, touch 5, flat-footed 7; BAB +2; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change, slam); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Change; SQ Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref –4, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 1, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +6, Knowledge (lunar) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10.

Feats: Insightful Step, Seroficitacit's Changes.

SA–Change (Su): Fort DC 10 or suffer change (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One).

AREA 3: THE GREETING AREA

Read or paraphrase the following:

The hallway continues for a short distance before coming to yet another round chamber. The bottom of this room is a bowl-like half-sphere that dips 10 feet below the floor level. The ceiling stays at its current height. Directly over the lowest point of the floor is a 10-foot-wide hole in the ceiling.

The walls, floor and ceiling of this room are completely covered with utterly alien carvings. The shapes and symbols are totally foreign. You cannot read them or even understand what they represent, and they seem even more confusing than they should. Each time you look at a new section, it seems like the area you were just looking at shifts ever so slightly.

LUNAR TEMPLE FEATURES

Floor Level: The meteorite landed in a way that left the lunar temple both upside down and at an angle. The horizontal axis of the temple is tilted higher on its eastern half than its western side. This allows characters to enter at ground level on the western side of the meteorite, but when they pass through the middle chasm, they are 20 feet above ground level, and when they reach the eastern side they are about 40 feet above ground level.

Illumination: There is no light of any kind inside the meteorite. The creatures inside navigate through native blindsense or blindsight, or alien forms of navigation possessed by lunar creatures and not understood by terrestrial creatures.

Walls: All passages in the tunnel are round, with a slightly flattened floor. Unless noted otherwise, they are 10 feet tall. They have stats as follows:

Hewn Stone Wall: 3 ft. thick between rooms, otherwise solid rock; Break DC 50; hardness 8; 540 hp; Climb DC 22.

Doors: Doors within the lunar temple are quite unlike normal doors. They are round passages a full 10 feet tall, with a round door set within. The door opens by rotating on a horizontal bar set within the frame 5 feet above the ground, effectively "flipping over" to open. Humans using these doors must move with the bottom half of the door and duck under the horizontal bar. Creatures with the ability to do so can throw themselves at the upper half of the door to flip through to the other side. The rotating door can swing in either direction.

Stone Door: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked).

As you look around you, your thoughts start to feel sluggish. It seems as if the world is becoming more and more difficult to understand....

The characters are now in the influence of the mental static from the dronog in Area 4. Their Intelligence is automatically reduced by 1d4 points as long as they stay in the area of effect.

Now distribute Players Handout A. The walls of this room tell legends of Seroficitacit in a lunar language. They are magically enchanted to constantly change, but only just after someone has read them. It's not an illusion and can be perceived by anyone who carefully observes the carvings as they read (Spot DC 10). The legends told by the walls change as the walls do. Yet the stories never contradict each other; they simply add more or different details, or in some cases tell completely different stories. The walls can be read, but only with great difficulty (Decipher Script DC 35, with additional –4 penalty to check as long as symbols are upside-down).

This room was used by the temple denizens as a simple prayer area. It was here where they would come to meditate on Seroficitacit's greatness. When it was right side up, the room's exit was a simple hole in the floor through which worshippers would descend (see diagram). Now that hole is in the "ceiling," 20 feet above the upside-down "floor." The characters must figure out how to get up there.

Anyone who takes the time to observe the shifting walls carefully will eventually see images of the door at Area 8 and the ball-chutes at Area 10. It takes 10 minutes for these images to appear in the stories, which describe the building of this very temple. Although the immediate implications will not be obvious to the characters, observing these scenes allows them to make an Intelligence check (DC 12) at Areas 8 and 10 to determine, respectively, the method for passing the door and the use of the ball-chutes.

The legends told by the wall symbols will not repeat themselves until someone has observed them for a full hour.

AREA 4:
HOST STORAGE (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You have entered an oddly shaped room about 30 feet wide. The sides are lined with shallow five-foot-deep alcoves. A circular door is set into one alcove in the northwest corner of the room. Near the other alcoves, a total of four creatures sprawl on the floor. They are grotesque, ugly things, like large lizards but with five legs and no neck. Their mouths have dull teeth, and their skin is lined with ribbed veins.

As you enter, one of the creatures raises its head to look at you.

The lunar skinstealers that occupy this temple frequently used dronogs as parasitic hosts, especially when they left the temple. They kept the dronogs here. This room can house up to 15 dronogs at once, though usually there were no more than five here.

Anyone who examines the room carefully (Spot DC 10) notes that there are slight concave pits worn into the otherwise smooth "ceiling" above each alcove. These pits were worn into the floor by the dronogs after countless years of bedding down each night in the alcoves.
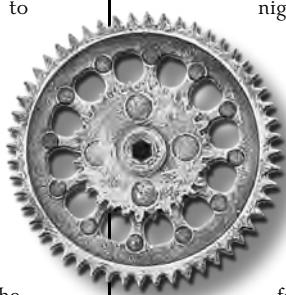
All four of the dronogs currently present were injured in the meteorite's landing. Three were killed outright, but one of them survived. When it sees the characters, it rises to its feet and charges.

Remember that the mental static emanated by the dronog ceases as soon as it dies.

Dronog (injured): CR 1; Large aberration (lunar); HD 4d8+8; hp 12; Init –2; Spd 20 ft., burrow 10 ft.; AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 7; BAB +3; Grp +11; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d8+6, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Mental static; SQ Lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 19, Dex 7, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +8, Listen +3, Spot +3.

SA–Mental Static (Ex): Terrestrials within 50 feet lose 1d4 Int as long as they remain in area; must make a Concentration check (DC 12) to attempt any Intelligence-related action.

AREA 5: HALLWAY (EL 2)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This wide hall heads west before winding around to the north. It is rounded and smooth. Three doors line the west wall, and two doors are on the east wall.

The lunar skinstealers that worshipped here lived in the small rooms off this hallway. Only a few were in attendance when the temple crashed to earth. One was unharmed by the crash-landing. Now it lurks hidden in this hallway.

Tactics: The lunar skinstealer hides flat on the floor halfway up the hall. It is highly intelligent, and although it has never been to the surface before, it's smart enough to recognize that a big strong host will be most useful in combat. It waits until a fighter-type comes within reach, then it attacks with a face grapple. As soon as it takes over the host, it retreats to a doorway where it can deal with oncoming attackers one-on-one (or as close to that as possible).

The skinstealer's goal is to defend its temple. It could be parleyed with (once it has a host to speak from), but not likely.

Be sure to read the **DragonMech** monster entry for the lunar skinstealer carefully. Skinstealers can be brutally effective if used properly. If used in a manner that doesn't reflect their high Intelligence score, however, they are easy to defeat.

As a side note, multiple skinstealers are excellent opponents for PCs above 1st level. Because their grapple attack occupies their opponent, and a successful host domination not only removes a PC from play but uses him against his allies, a fight against lunar skinstealers with even odds becomes extremely dangerous for the PCs — particularly if the skinstealers attack at close quarters.

Lunar Skinstealer (Unhosted): CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8 (18 hp); Init –1; Spd 10 ft.; AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9; BAB +3; Grp +7 (+1 per hook used, up to +11); Atk +5 touch (domination, face grapple); Full Atk +5 touch (domination, face grapple) and +1 melee (1d2, 4 hooks); SA Improved grab, host domination, neighbor domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 4, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, Listen +2, Spot +2.

SA–Host Domination (Su): Initiates face grapple free with touch attack due to Improved Grab ability. Once enemy face is grappled, can dominate as if by *dominate person* (DC 15 to resist); absorbs host's appearance, physical stats, and abilities; gains neighbor domination ability once hosted.

SA–Neighbor Domination (Ex): Drain 1 point of host's Wisdom to cast *dominate person* (DC 15, range 200 ft., duration 10 days).

Secret Door: The secret door is a 1-foot-wide circular section of the wall (Search DC 20) that flips open into a round passage only 1 foot across. It was once used as an escape route by the skinstealers that guarded the hatchery (Area 11). Now it can't be navigated by a PC without magical aid.

AREA 6: LIVING QUARTERS (EL 1/4–1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 20-foot-wide, semicircular room looks as if it is, or was, the living quarters for some sort of alien life form. Fragments of solid stone are scattered about the room, apparently from several smashed pieces of carved rock that lie in the middle of the room. Various containers, carved icons and unusual chips of metal are strewn about. Carved into the wall are more alien symbols.

Several lunar skinstealers stayed in each of these rooms. All four rooms are practically identical.

Lurking amidst the rubble in each room are 1d4 nanites (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One). Many dead nanites are scattered about the complex, but these ones survived and were knocked from their nooks in the walls. They attack anyone who digs through the rubble.

Nanites (1d4): CR 1/4; Tiny vermin (lunar); HD 1/2d8; hp 2; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grp –11; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d3-3 plus 1 acid, bite); SA Death burst; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., lunar traits, vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 5, Dex 14, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +6.

SA–Death Burst (Ex): Acidic explosion upon reaching –1 hp; 1 point of acid damage to all within 5 feet (Reflex DC 10 to avoid).

Treasure: Searching through the mess antagonizes the nanites. Once they're taken care of, a search reveals mostly worthless junk. The skinstealers' "furniture" is carved from solid moon rock via the aid of acid-secreting oozes. Now these rectangular objects are smashed into hundreds of pieces. The containers hold lunar gruel and worthless moon rocks. The carved icons are symbols of Seroficitacit, worth nothing off the moon. The only things of value (Search DC 10) are the metal chips, which are carved from mensite. Each room has 2d6 such chips, each of which is worth 10 gp to the right person. Plenty of interested buyers will be found on any city-mech.

AREA 7: OOZE POOLS

Read or paraphrase the following:

This organically shaped corridor has several 15-foot-wide circular alcoves branching off its sides. In each one rests a puddle of gray ooze, with an inverted basin carved out of the "ceiling" above. The oozes are still and silent. Further ahead, a passage veers off to the north.

These "ooze oracles" were revered spawns of Seroficitacit, eagerly consulted by the cult in all matters of study, worship and religion. Most were killed by the crash-landing. Their bodies are inert and not dangerous; they no longer inflict changes upon those who touch them. The oozes completely fill each chamber.

The only ooze still living lies in the chamber that formerly connected to Area 13. It is on the verge of death and will not take any aggressive actions unless physically touched or jostled, at which point it will attack. It is an elder spawn of Seroficitacit that split into two halves during the impact of the collision. One half spilled into the chasm, and the other half remains in this room. Each half is now treated as a younger spawn.

Young Spawn of Seroficitacit (injured): CR 2; Medium ooze (lunar); HD 3d10+15; hp 15; Init –5; Spd 10 ft.; AC 7, touch 5, flat-footed 7; BAB +2; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change, slam); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Change; SQ Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref –4, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 1, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +6, Knowledge (lunar) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10.

Feats: Insightful Step, Seroficitacit's Changes.

SA–Change (Su): Fort DC 10 or suffer change (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One).

Crossing the Chasm: To continue on their way, the characters must cross the chasm between the two halves of the meteor. The hall opens 20 feet above ground level. Climbing down, walking across, and climbing back up is easy enough with a rope and a few Climb checks.

The real danger is the many young spawns of Seroficitacit that lurk in the chasm. These oozes are still conscious and will actively move to intercept characters who make themselves visible. The slimes start near the outer edges and move slowly, so the characters should be able to avoid them if they act quickly.

Note that the interior walls of the meteor are not hot; the meteor split after it landed, and these walls were protected from friction during the descent. Unlike the outer edges, they do not inflict heat damage on those who touch them for too long.

AREA 8: PORTAL OF THE FAITHFUL (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

After crossing the chasm successfully, you arrive in another 15-foot-wide circular room. On the eastern wall is another of the round, flip-top doors. This one looks different from the others, however, with strange symbols carved into it. An inverted basin on the ceiling directly in front of the door is adorned with different types of carvings, all of which resemble ooze-like shapes. The basin is 6 inches in diameter.

Show the players Handout B. Outsiders were welcome to worship in this temple of Seroficitacit, provided they were suitably escorted and didn't venture too deep. This portal was the limit of the outsiders' access. The door is magically locked. In order to pass, one had to scoop up a handful of a spawn of Seroficitacit, and deposit the handful of ooze in the basin in front of the door. Because the spawns would attack any non-believers who attempted this, the door was effectively locked to all but the faithful.

Now, of course, the basin is 10 feet above on the ceiling and it's not exactly easy to get a pile of ooze to defy gravity. Any amount of spawn goo will do the trick, even from a dead spawn, but it must be held in place in the basin for at least one full round. A pole or implement won't do it; the characters will have to get a pair of hands up to the right height to hold the ooze in place. Once the goo is in the basin, the door will rotate to an open position.

Alternately, the characters can simply try to bash down the door. If they figure out the puzzle, however, award them experience for defeating a CR 1 encounter.

Ooze Bowl Puzzle Door (CR 1): Magical-ly sealed stone door (*arcane lock*); 4 in. thick; hardness 8; 60 hp; Break DC 38 (locked); opens automatically if ooze from a spawn of Seroficitacit is placed in the basin before the door for 1 round.

AREA 9: SANCTUM OF THE FAITHFUL

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 30-foot-diameter, circular room has a deep, bowl-shaped floor. The ceiling is flat and lined with rows of oblong benches carved directly from the stone. In the center of the ceiling is a one-foot-wide column some three feet in height with an inverted basin at its end. A deep crack runs through the stone floor. A number of flat, rectangular creatures lie still on the floor.

The characters enter on the ceiling, of course. When part of the temple, this worship area was used to show the visions of the *starshard* (see Area 12) to the faithful. The *starshard* was placed in the pedestal (which now resembles a column hanging from the ceiling), and the visions were projected onto the hemispherical ceiling while the worshippers rested against the small benches on the floor. The crack was caused by the crash.

The six bodies are lunar skinstealers who were worshipping here before they were killed in the crash. The characters find nothing else of interest in this room.

AREA 10: GUARD CHAMBER (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

A 20-foot-long hallway opens into a 35-foot-wide circular room. The walls are utterly smooth, almost polished in appearance. On the south wall are three one-foot-wide circular holes, beside which rest a dozen or so brass spheres. On the north wall is another round door. But the most

interesting feature of this room is the pulpy, putty-like mass of flesh in the center. It seems unable to stand still. Its body pulses and undulates before you, slowly changing shape into a semi-humanoid state. The yellowish material that composes it has an oily sheen, and you can't help but think you catch reflections of yourself in its skin.

This lunar elemental (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One) was summoned by the followers of Seroficitacit to guard their inner sanctum. Now its guardians are dead, but it still defends the area.

Lunar Elemental: CR 1; Small elemental (lunar); HD 2d8+8; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB +1; Grp –3; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d4, slam); SA Lunar mastery, adaptive; SQ Entropic skin (DC 15), blindsense, lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 4, Wis 18, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +6.

SA–Lunar Mastery (Ex): +1 to attack and damage when both it and opponent are in contact with lunar surface (including this temple).

SA–Adaptive (Su): Adapts to shape of one opponent with attack action or standard action used for study. Each round of adaptation against the same target grants a cumulative +1 insight bonus to attack rolls and AC versus that one target (max +10). Studying or attacking a new creature reduces this bonus to +1 against the new creature.

SQ–Entropic Skin (Ex): Images of potential pasts and haunting futures flash in the elemental's skin. Anyone looking at or attacking a lunar elemental must make a Will save (DC 15) or be dazzled; a new save is required each round.

Tactics: The lunar elemental is perfectly content to wait for the characters to take action. After all, every round they delay gives it another round to study one of them. The characters will notice its shape slowly approximating one of them. Unless it is attacked, the elemental will not initiate combat until it has observed the characters

for 10 rounds (giving it +10 to hit one of them, per its adaptive special ability) or until one of them tries to move through either of the room's exits.

Development: The lunar skinstealers accessed their most sacred relic (in Area 12) by wrapping their form around one of the brass spheres and rolling through one of the three small passages. The brass sphere are about 9 inches in diameter, just the right size for a lunar skinstealer to engulf one and still fit through the exits in the south wall. Each brass sphere weighs 25 lbs. and is worth 15 gp as scrap metal.

A Search of the room (DC 10) reveals a cloudlike symbol etched over each of the 12-inch-wide passages. This symbol matches the symbol on the potions in area 11.

The only way for a PC to get into Area 12 is to somehow get through the 12-inch-wide passages. It is possible for a very nimble Small character to do this (Escape Artist DC 20). Medium and larger characters cannot pass except through magical means or by use of the potion in Area 11.

The secret door is another 12-inch-wide passage that presumably only a lunar skinstealer can move through. It leads to the hatchery, bypassing the "pit trap" that would normally capture interlopers (see Area 11).

AREA 11:
THE HATCHERY (EL 0)

The hallway into this area is trapped with a camouflaged pit. Luckily for the PCs, the fact that the meteor landed upside down means the "pit" opens on the ceiling, and they're saved from danger.

The pit is triggered by an *alarm* spell, so it activates even though the characters are walking on the "ceiling." Do not award experience for the trap unless a careful rogue manages to detect it even though it's no danger.

Camouflaged Pit Trap: CR 0 (normally 1 when on floor); mechanical; proximity trigger (*alarm*); manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6 fall, if it were located in the floor); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 20.

Once the characters are through the corridor, Read or paraphrase the following:

You stand in an oblong room about 40 feet wide and 20 feet long. Scattered about the room are dozens of small, fleshy, rectangular globs. Each chalky white pile sprouts a few tiny hooks from its sides. Some of them quiver slightly, while the rest are immobile.

A small ledge runs around the wall, about eight feet from the floor. On the floor beneath the ledge are a variety of metal and stone boxes and vials.

This is the hatchery. The lunar skinstealers bred and raised more of their own kind here. The 30 globules are immature skinstealers. These creatures are parasitic by nature and the young feed off each other, so only a few will survive to adulthood.

Eight of the immature skinstealers still live. They are harmless now, but certainly won't be later. Characters should be awarded XP for defeating a CR 1 creature if they rid the world of these menaces.

Treasure: This room also housed most of the temple's supplies, including its magic. The mundane treasures are as follows:

- A number of cracked stone boxes contain some sort of gruel (this was fed to the immature skinstealers).
- Other boxes have strange clothing (built for lunar creatures), carvings of oozes, and similarly unusual items.
- A total of 20 symbols of Seroficitacit can be garnered from these boxes; these pendants with irregular blob shapes on them could come in handy for impersonating followers of Seroficitacit in Episode Three.
- The characters find five cubical metal boxes some 8 inches to a side, each of which holds stone carvings of unidentifiable meaning or function. (Some are symbols of Seroficitacit, while others are tools designed for the skinstealers' unique anatomy.) The metal boxes themselves are worth 10 gp each if sold as scrap, since metal is such a rare commodity on Highpoint.

The dozen metal vials contain the most important treasure. Designed for a skinstealer's anatomy, the "vials" are rather flat and squat, with lids far wider than is comfortable for a normal human hand (but which can still be opened).

Several of the metal vials were dented and punctured in the crash, but the rest are intact. They are labeled in a lunar language that isn't particularly clear (Decipher Script DC 35), but the characters can quickly distinguish three kinds of potion:

- Two of the potions are a green shade, and smell pleasantly of an unidentifiable scent (*potion of cure light wounds*, CL 1st).
- One vial seems to bounce and jostle of its own accord; it is bright red (*potion of jump*, CL 3rd).
- The other vials emit a cloud of visible but inert gas when opened; the gas looks like steam except it is cool to the touch (*potions of gaseous form*, CL 3rd). Each of these vials is inscribed with a cloudlike

symbol that matches the symbols over the 12-inch-wide holes in area 11.

The exact number of *potions of gaseous form* is up to the GM. These are necessary for entering Area 12. To create a bit of tension and tactical decision-making, give out one less potion than the number of PCs. On the other hand, if you're afraid the PCs might make a stupid mistake and get stuck in Area 12 (such as by sending in a character that can't climb out), give out more than enough.

All the potions were designed for a lunar anatomy, but magic's magic. The effects are doubled when a lunar creature drinks the potion, but they still work on terrestrial creatures.

AREA 12:
THE *STARSHARD*

Read or paraphrase the following:

This perfectly spherical 25-foot-wide room has polished black walls. The room is dark, like the last glimpse of twilight before the sun sets. A haunting gold glow emanates from a crystalline globe that floats mid-air in the exact center of the spherical space. Pinpricks in the surface of the globe send pointers of light to the walls, where they look like stars in an infinite black sky.

Have the characters make Spot checks (DC 15). Those that succeed notice a faint black rectangular outline in the southern ceiling of the room. This black outline is actually an opening into a vertical chute leading twenty feet up. It once led to the lower level of the temple, but now it leads to the surface of the meteor. The sunlight that filters through the hole is blocked by the room's magical nature (see below).

The characters can leave this room via the chute or (if they have the ability) via the same way they came in. The globe is small enough that it can be rolled through the 12-inch-wide tunnels (whether by a character or a lunar skinstealer).

Lighting: Thanks to the presence of the *starshard*, this room remains at the same light level no matter what other efforts the characters undertake. Torches still burn, but seem to emanate no light; *light* spells have no effect in the room; and even the sunlight from the chute seems simply to fade when it enters.

Development: The globe is the *starshard*, a magic item that this temple has possessed for centuries. The lunar worshippers treat it as a major relic and a sacred gift of Seroficitacit. Seroficitacit uses the globe (and its twin, found in Episode Three) to impart visions to his followers, but he did not create it. The *starshard's* divine origins precede his cult's acquisition of it.

The *starshard* is obviously magical, but the characters probably won't know what to do with it. That's fine. Once the characters enter the room, the *starshard* subtly urges them to take it with them, communicating through empathy and perhaps even telepathy if they're not persuaded. It will not answer questions or offer hints; its only message is "take me." (Feel free to assure the more paranoid players in your group that the *starshard* is not attempting to take control of their minds.)

See "New Item" in Appendix One for full details of the *starshard*.

AREA 13: STAIRWELL

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 15-foot-wide room is a perfect circle. A circular doorway in the eastern wall opens into what appears to be an upside-down staircase leading up. The stairs come down from the ceiling instead of rising from the floor!

Just in case the characters haven't figured it out yet, this should make it obvious that the temple landed upside-down. The staircase formerly led down to the next level below,

but it now rises upside-down until it emerges from the top of the meteor. The ramp that was formerly the staircase's ceiling is easily ascended (Climb DC 10), bringing the characters outside.

CONCLUSION

When the characters finally emerge from the meteor holding the enigmatic *starshard*, they probably think the adventure's over. Hardly. It's only beginning! A few minutes after the characters have left the meteor, Read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, the calm is shattered by the lumbering footsteps of a mech. Two combat mechs appear over the top of a hill less than a mile away. They are huge, bulky things, with an axe blade fixed on one arm and a huge steam cannon built into the other. They stomp toward you, trailing a choking cloud of black smoke. As they approach, you notice the insignia of the Stenian Confederacy stenciled on their torsos.

Development: The Stenians were sent to investigate this meteorite for lunar influence. Their goal is to make sure no lunar creatures survive. The encounter proceeds along these lines:

1. The mechs corner the characters, aim their cannons at them, and order them to freeze.

2. Grunnar, the dwarf commanding officer, shouts from a porthole. He wants to know who the characters are and what their business is. The characters are familiar enough with the world to know that the Stenian Confederacy is generally lawful.

3. After the characters explain their situation, Grunnar will admit they're doing a good deed for the Confederacy by clearing the meteor — but he'll demand that they submit to testing to make sure they're not infected by lunar skinstealers (a creature he's quite familiar with). Read or paraphrase the following. (**Note:** This blurb is important, since it provides a clue as to what the characters will face in the next episode!)

One mech trains its weapons on the meteor while the other aims its cannon at you! A crewman from each mech climbs down and advances toward you. You watch nervously as they pull out scalpels. Grunnar, watching from a porthole, assures you that it's a quick, painless test. The crewmen ask for your arm, then take a quick, shallow slice across the top of your forearm. As soon as they see blood, they grunt approvingly.

"You see," Grunnar shouts from his porthole, "the way lunar skinstealers work is they drape over your body and assume your shape. They look like you, feel like you, and *are* you, as far as anyone else is concerned. But you're inside, powerless to control your own body. The only way to be sure is to slice the skin. If there's a skinstealer on top of you, it won't bleed red."

4. The Stenians have no particular interest in the *starshard* (which the characters prob-

ably hid anyway). Once the characters pass the test, Read or paraphrase the following:

The mech commander Grunnar seems satisfied that you are free of lunar influence. "We could use more able-bodied soldiers like you in the Confederacy," he says. "In fact, this meteor has created a bit of a situation. What you just explored is only half of it. The other half landed in Legion territory not too far to the east. We need to clear out any skinstealers that survived, but we can't send Stenian mechs into Legion territory."

Grunnar pauses for a minute and clears his throat. "That's right. *We* can't send Stenian mechs into Legion territory. But if someone else were to clear that meteor for us, well, it would certainly do us a favor that we'd be willing to repay."

Then the mech commander gives you a pointed look. "Would you happen to know anyone who might be willing to perform such a service?"

In exchange for the characters agreeing to clear the other half of the meteor of any lunar influence, Grunnar is willing to offer the following:

- Transportation back to city-mech Nedderpik, which is traveling nearby. There the characters can clean up and rest for the night.
- Nedderpik is already moving in the general direction of the other meteor fragment. Once it closes within range, Grunnar offers the characters use of a civilian mech to close the last few miles.
- When the characters return after a successful mission, Grunnar promises to arrange provisional citizenship on Nedderpik for each of them.

If the characters agree, Grunnar makes room for them on one of the Juggernauts. The

mech is short on space, so the characters have to ride on piles of coal in the storage area, or even hang on to hammocks strung under the mech's legs or arms. That Juggernaut hauls the characters to Nedderpik while the remaining Juggernaut loads up its steam cannon and blasts what's left of the meteor to a pulp, including the spawns of Seroficit-acit that were scattered about the chasm.

Tactics: The encounter with the Stenian mechs really shouldn't devolve into a combat. As a result, we haven't presented combat stats for the mech jockeys and their mechs (which are standard-issue Juggernauts). Should these stats be necessary... well, you might as well take this module back for a refund, because the players have derailed this train before it got started!

EPISODE TWO: OLD IRON ARMS

INTRODUCTION

After a four-hour journey, the characters reach city-mech Nedderpik. Full stats on Nedderpik can be found in the **DragonMech** rule book. Emphasize the characters' sense of awe as they approach the city-mech. Literally the height of a skyscraper, the thing is visible on the horizon more than two hours before they actually reach it. They've never before seen a man-made object this large, and none existed prior to the creation of the city-mechs. The docking process is a carefully choreographed dance between the Juggernaut and the city-mech's wide platform docks, which hang from its feet. The city-mech never stops moving, so the Juggernaut has to time its jump onto the docks to the few seconds when the city-mech's foot is in position, all the while avoiding getting crushed by the massive quarter-mile-wide legs as they crash down to earth. Once the characters are finally on board, they have to adjust to the constant rocking of the city-mech as it lumbers across the land, and its massive vertical scale. Simply reaching the visitors' zone requires ascending in a slow-moving cargo elevator for five minutes.

Don't forget to review the rules for traveling in mechs (see "Inside a Mech" in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**). Characters who ride in the Juggernaut wearing armor other than leather, studded leather, padded or hide will suffer 1 point of nonlethal damage from the chafing and blisters, and all characters may suffer from mechsickness the first time they get on a mech.

Give the characters time to explore the city-mech, ask questions, and get a sense of how things work. They'll be assigned a small apartment (very small — 10 feet x 10 feet for four people!) in the visitors' level. The ceilings on that level are 6 feet tall to accommodate visiting humans. This is an excessive waste of space in the eyes of the dwarves who built the mech; most other ceilings are only 4 to 5 feet tall, mimicking the close quarters of the tunnels in which the dwarven builders were raised. The visitors' level also has some built-in lighting, usually in the form of gas lamps or torches, but most other areas are dark, since the dwarven inhabitants generally operate using darkvision.

Nedderpik will reach the general location of the second meteor on the second morning following the characters' arrival. In other words, they have two nights and one day on the city-mech. That second night is a good thing, because their first one will be interrupted. Once the characters have bedded

down for their first night on the mech, Read or paraphrase the following:

You finally fall asleep in your cramped city-mech apartment. But after what seems like only moments, you hear a soft tapping sound. Awakening with the quick alertness all adventurers develop, you scan your room and notice two eyes peering through the metal air vent on one wall. When the eyes see you looking back, a pair of hands pushes back the air vent, and a small, slightly built humanoid covered in filth and grease hangs out of the opening.

"Please, sirs," says the creature. "Do not make a sound. My tribe needs your help. Will you save Old Iron Arms?"

Once the characters have reacted (hopefully by not killing the cogling), continue reading or paraphrasing:

"I am Hammerbit, fourth cogling of the lower tribe. My tribe has stayed in the gear forests for four generations. We have never been discovered. In exchange for the safety provided by the Great Engine, we have maintained it perfectly. No engineer has ever needed to make repairs in our area.

"But now there is a problem we cannot solve. Old Iron Arms has been attacked by a creature that eats metal. Our weapons are useless against it, and our repairs cannot keep up with its rampage. If it is not stopped, the gear forest will be damaged beyond repair, and we will be discovered.

"Only an outsider can help us! We ask that you save Old Iron Arms without telling those who control the Great Engine. In exchange we can offer valuable metals and all the secrets of the Great Engine.

"Please, sirs. Will you save Old Iron Arms and my tribe?"

Coglings: Refer to "New Creatures" in Chapter 5 of **DragonMech** for full details on coglings. These halfling stowaways survive in the engine rooms of city-mechs, where they keep everything in perfect running order so the city-mech's engineers will never have a reason to visit the engine rooms and possibly discover the cogling stowaways. Over the generations, the halflings have degenerated into the grease-covered engine dwellers that are now called coglings. They themselves call the engine rooms "gear forests" and have built entire mythologies based around the "Great Engine," which is what they call their city-mech home. The cleric of the cogling tribe has divined that these adventurers are trustworthy allies, which is why the coglings have made contact.

Old Iron Arms: Old Iron Arms is a hidden golem that keeps Nedderpik running.

OLD IRON ARMS

1 square = 10 feet

Rust Trail

2

5

6A

4

6B

1

Gear Forest

Gear Forest

3

Gear Forest

7

8

9

Sludge River

GEAR FOREST FEATURES

The Gear Forest: Remember that a gear forest is a hazardous environment. It's a life-sized engine, and the spinning gears, whirring cogs and smashing pistons are a real hazard. Refer to Chapter 8 of **DragonMech** for details on the hazards. Most areas of this episode do not directly expose the characters to the gear forest, but it's a constant background hazard, and must be directly confronted in Areas 8 and 9.

Illumination: Gear forests are lit by the ambient light of the surrounding engine. Open flames, sparks, burning coal and small gas explosions provide a constant low-light illumination.

Walls: Some "rooms" are simply cleared areas of the gear forest. The coglings take apart and rebuild the engine rooms to make space for their habitations. Usually they make the engine more efficient in the process, as well. Those walls that do exist are made of thick sheets of iron, generally 3 inches thick. Areas 3 and 8 are cleared gear forest with no walls.

Iron Wall: 3 in. thick; Break DC 30; hardness 10; 90 hp; Climb DC 25.

Doors: The few doors are made of solid iron. They are usually locked, as this area of the gear forest was not meant to accommodate anyone but the city-mech's engineers. Of course, that hasn't stopped the coglings, who can now successfully pick the locks after generations of trying.

Iron Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked).

See the description for Area 1 of the gear forest, below.

Development: If the characters agree to help the cogling, it first recaps the basic situation for them. It describes the coglings' relationship with the city-mech and gear forests, and also gives them some sense that Old Iron Arms is a sort of speaking engine part. It also mentions that the menace is capable of destroying metal with a breath — a clue that the characters should acquire some wooden or stone weapons, if possible. (These items can be found on sale in the city-mech. Wooden items are expensive due to the rarity of trees, generally costing 50% more than an equivalent metal item. Stone items are normal price.)

Hammerbit is willing to wait until the next night if the characters insist, but the expedition has to happen at night so that the trip into the gear forests isn't detected. When the characters are ready, he leads them from their room and shows them back-alley passages down to the gear forests. He gets them around the locked entrances to the engine rooms through air vents, secret passages, cleared areas of gear forest, and in some cases fabricated keys that open normally locked doors. Finally, he leads the PCs through a long, dangerous stretch of labyrinthine gear forests to Old Iron Arms.

Now refer to Map Two: The Gear Forest.

THE GEAR FOREST

This section details the various locations of note in the Nedderpik gear forest.

AREA 1:
OLD IRON ARMS

When the characters arrive at Old Iron Arms, Read or paraphrase the following:

Hammerbit leads you down narrow paths in the dangerous gear forests for what seems like miles. The heat is unbearable, and the hissing steam and sporadic flames singe your clothes. Every step seems to hold the potential for injury as you carefully avoid swinging pendulums, smashing pistons, and toothed gears spinning at breakneck speeds. If it weren't for Hammerbit's guidance, you would surely be killed.

Finally, you reach an area with metal walls. Hammerbit leads you down a wide hallway that is surprisingly clean compared to the filth and grease of the gear forest. After opening four successively locked doors of ever-more-imposing girth, he ushers you quietly into a 40-foot-wide circular room.

In the center is one of the strangest constructs you have ever seen. A gigantic metal torso is bolted securely into the floor. Its iron head is sculpted into the rough outline of a humanoid face. Each of its massive articulated arms is attached to an enormous piston, one thrusting upward into the ceiling and the other downward into the floor. Both pistons pump furiously, powered by the staggering iron strength of this massive creature.

Sparks fly from the joints in its arms as it labors to keep the pistons moving.

Hammerbit kneels before the creature. Seemingly from nowhere, a voice addresses you.

"Greetings, men. I am Old Iron Arms."

Old Iron Arms is an iron golem specially designed to keep the city-mech running. When the city-mech was built almost 100 years ago, the chief engineer discovered at the last minute that the steam engines wouldn't be powerful enough to keep it moving. Simple calculation errors had led to a dire mistake. Thousands of worker-citizens had already converged on the building site, and failure to mobilize the city-mech would not only be a huge blow to morale for the struggling Clan Duerok, but would also cost lives, as the lunar rains and waves of refugees killed a few more defenders

with each passing day. The chief engineer thus made a difficult decision, which was kept secret from all but the most senior gearwrights: He ordered a magical golem be installed to provide the final vestiges of power needed to run the city-mech.

This golem was custom-modified to fit the engine's needs. It augments the power of the steam engine to keep the city-mech running. Without the golem, the city-mech can power itself for short periods but will redline its engines with any kind of sustained functioning.

The existence of the golem was well hidden. If ever discovered, it would be far too convenient a target for enemy stalkers. Its location was secured by four massive doors, the keys to which were possessed by only the chief engineer. (Over the years, the coglings have learned to pick these locks.) When he neared the natural end of his lifespan some 40 years ago, the chief engineer knew that knowledge of the golem must be passed on, but he knew of no one with whom to entrust that knowledge. So he made a dramatic decision: Rather than die a natural death, he enlisted the aid of an old mage friend to transfer his own soul to the golem. Now, thanks to a modified version of the *clockwork double* spell and special rituals used to rebuild the golem, he continues on in eternal life as the spirit that keeps the city-mech running.

The engineer, who now calls himself Old Iron Arms, was surprised to learn that in all his years running the city-mech, the coglings had escaped his notice. Now he enjoys their company in his lonely existence, and has grown rather fond of the small creatures that consider him a god.

Old Iron Arms, Custom Iron Golem (Ex-dwarf) Cog13: CR 15; Large construct; HD 18d10+30; hp 110 (max 129; currently injured); Init −5; Spd 0 ft.; AC 26, touch 4, flat-footed 26; BAB +12; Grp N/A; Atk +57 melee (2d10+45, slam); Full Atk +57 melee (2d10+45, 2 slams); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ Construct traits, machine empathy, exotic weapon proficiencies (buzzsaw, chattersword, lobster claw, steambreather), DR 15/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immu-

nity to magic, low-light vision, dwarf traits (residual as still applicable); AL LN; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +15; Str 100, Dex 1, Con –, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft (blacksmithing) +21, Craft (mechcraft) +34, Disable Device +19, Knowledge (steam engines) +32, Knowledge (mechs) +32, Listen +19, Mech Pilot +3, Profession (engineer) +19, Spot +11.

Feats: Alertness, Craft Powered Mech, Craft Steam Gear, Gearhead, Mechanized Combat Practice, Mechwalker.

Steam Powers (17): 2x Tiny clockwork puppets (clockwork puppet + animator + discriminator + voice command + metal ear + wavemaker); 1x Small clockwork puppet (clockwork puppet + clockwork puppet + animator + discriminator + voice command).

Languages Spoken: Common, Dwarven.

Development: Old Iron Arms points out four important features of the room to the characters. First, the locked door to the north leads to supplies for repairing the golem, left over from when it was built many decades ago. None of these supplies have ever been needed until recently.

Second, Old Iron Arms shows signs of severe rust along the base of his torso. The rusted area has been repaired (badly) by the coglings, but Old Iron Arms is not in the same condition he once was. If the rusting continues, he will be disabled or destroyed, bringing the city-mech to a grinding halt and exposing the coglings.

Third, a trail of rust leads from the golem's base to a small hole burned through a section of the northeast wall. Old Iron Arms explains that the metal-eating beetles that prey upon him enter through this hole. The rust trail can't be followed, as the hole itself is barely 8 inches across and it leads to a thick patch of impassable and dangerous gear forest. Yet the coglings can lead the PCs to Area 3 and direct them from there.

Finally, another hole exists in the southern wall. This hole was made much more carefully, and it leads to the coglings' lair by way of Area 3. The coglings designed this

hole so it could be concealed; should they so desire, they can put metal panels in place to turn it into a secret door (Search DC 25).

Old Iron Arms explains his history and asks for the characters' assistance. He tells how the coglings are utterly terrified of the metal-eating beetles. All weapons possessed by the coglings are metal, and their provincial life inside the gear forest has convinced them that anything that can destroy metal must be supremely powerful. The coglings can direct the PCs to the general direction of the beetles, but the PCs must do the rest.

Future Development: Old Iron Arms' stats are provided here for reference, not for combat. He provides a patron for future adventures if you place your campaign on Nedderpik. His clockwork puppets see most of what happens on the mech, and he is surprisingly well-informed for a creature incapable of physical mobility. For decades, his only company has been the coglings, and despite his fondness for them, he welcomes additional companionship. Should the PCs prove their value and trustworthiness, he'd be happy to work with them in the future.

Old Iron Arms' profile is that of a modified iron golem with a 13th-level dwarven coglayer's mind, though many of his skills, feats and other abilities gained while he was a coglayer are inhibited by the unique construction of this particular golem body. Old Iron Arms has only one attack, which is to slam an opponent with his pistons, but this attack has a very limited reach, as the pistons are constrained in where they can move. He cannot grapple, as his pistons are unable to wrap around an enemy. He speaks via a specialized *magic mouth* that was added to the golem's essence when his soul was transplanted. He uses his clockwork puppets to spy about the city-mech and remain aware of what's going on. Normally, he would also use them for defense, but he has kept them away from the ferrovore beetles for fear they will be destroyed.

Old Iron Arms is currently injured. Any character who repairs him will immediately enter his good graces.

AREA 2:
SUPPLIES

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 20-by-20-foot room is stacked full of steel bars, wooden crates, and tools.

When the golem was first installed, these supplies were stashed here for future use should the golem need repairing. The room contains more than 3,000 pounds of common metal, primarily iron and steel but also some tin and aluminum. It is clear that some supplies have been used over the years (primarily by the coglings), but most are intact. The characters also find a healthy supply of hammers, anvils, tongs and other metalworking tools. Nothing is of any particular value beyond its normal price as mundane equipment.

AREA 3:
COGLING CLEARING

Read or paraphrase the following:

A narrow path leads 30 feet south through the gear forest before opening up into a roughly circular clearing. It's clear that someone rebuilt this entire area of the gear forest in order to create this safe zone. In the middle of the clearing are two more coglings. They carry crossbows that are loaded but pointed at the floor. They eye you warily.

This is a guard room. The coglings always have at least one guard here to make sure no one finds their lair, which is to the south. Lately they've doubled the guard in an unsuccessful attempt to keep the metal-eating beetles away from Old Iron Arms. The passage to the northeast leads to other areas of the gear forest, through which the characters must pass.

Development: Hammerbit introduces the characters to the two guards, named Boltrunner and Truggut. After Hammerbit explains the situation, they direct the characters toward the northeast passage, which they say leads to where the metal-eating beetles come from. The coglings are assigned to guard duty here and won't follow the characters, but will help them fight anything that directly threatens this area.

If it comes up, both guards make it clear to the characters that they're not allowed

to travel any further south. The guards will enforce this rule with violence. Only a direct invitation from the leader of the tribe will get the characters any closer to their lair.

Stats for the coglings are not presented here because they really shouldn't be involved in combat. If it comes up, treat them as standard cogling warriors as described in "New Creatures" of Chapter 5 in **DragonMech**.

The Gear Forest: Remember that the gear forest is dangerous. If the characters venture from the cleared area, they may take damage as described in Chapter 6 of **DragonMech**.

It is possible for the characters to reach the sludge river at Area 8 by hiking due east through the gear forest from Area 3. The coglings won't suggest this, as they realize the danger posed by the gear forest. However, they won't hide the possibility either, if the characters are inquisitive.

Future Development: If the characters complete the mission successfully and earn the respect of the coglings, this is their entrance point to the creatures' lair. The coglings can become allies for future adventures (or enemies if the characters botch the mission).

AREA 4:
BOILER ROOM (EL 2)

This hazardous room is filled with scalding steam. Read or paraphrase the following:

You've entered a room full of white-hot steam. The steam obscures sight more than five feet in front of you. The coglings said you must pass through this room, but the steam is so thick that it's impossible to tell where you should go.

You will need to keep track of four things in this room: the high temperature; the low visibility; the dangerous centipedes; and the locked door.

The round objects on the map are boilers, which are red-hot to the touch but otherwise not dangerous. They're filled with boiling water, but short of using massive force

there's no way the characters can puncture them (hardness 10, 50 hp).

The walls of this room are solid iron. They're quite hot due to the steam.

The High Temperature: The air temperature is approximately 110 degrees Fahrenheit. This is considered severe heat, per the description of the "Heat Dangers" entry under the "The Environment" section of Chapter 8 in the *DMG*. For every full 10 minutes that the characters spend in this room, they must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing heavy clothing or any sort of armor take a –4 penalty to this check.

Low Visibility: The steam provides concealment to everything in the room. Vision is limited to 5 feet, and all attacks have a 20% miss chance.

Dangerous Centipedes: A wide variety of vermin have made this room their home. The heat is overwhelming to warm-blooded creatures, but cold-blooded centipedes rather enjoy it, at least for a while.

Lurking in the northern section of the room are 4 Small monstrous centipedes and 2 Medium monstrous centipedes. They're sluggish due to the heat, but also protective of this area, which they routinely defend from other vermin that also want to nest here. They will attack the characters on sight (but remember that sight is limited to 5 feet). Their stats are below. If the PCs win initiative, this encounter may not be particularly challenging. In this case, feel free to throw more centipedes after the PCs until they've been given a good fight.

The centipedes have no treasure per se, but a search of the floor turns up the decaying carapaces of countless centipedes, spiders and beetles, all of which died in the endless battles for this warmest of lairs. Hidden among the scraps (Search DC 15) is one thing worth owning: a *+1 ring of protection*, consumed from a wayward adventurer by some arachnid that died here soon after. The ring is very hot to the touch, however, and must be picked up carefully; it takes 20 minutes to cool down to the point where it can be worn (wearing it while hot causes 1 point of nonlethal damage per round).

Monstrous Centipede, Small (4): CR 1/4; Small vermin; HD 1/2d8; hp 2 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grp –7; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d4–3 plus poison, bite); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 5, Dex 15, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +14, Spot +4.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison: Injury, Fort DC 10, 1d2 Dex/ 1d2 Dex.

Monstrous Centipede, Medium (2): CR 1/2; Medium vermin; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grp –1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6–1 plus poison, bite); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +10, Spot +4.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison: Injury, Fort DC 10, 1d3 Dex/ 1d3 Dex.

Locked Door: The door from this room is locked. The lock is easy to pick, as it has been corroded by the constant exposure to steam. However, the metal is red hot. Anyone trying to pick the lock must make a Dexterity check (DC 15) or suffer 1d2 points of heat damage while they are working.

Iron door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked); Open Lock DC 15.

AREA 5:
RUSTY CORRIDOR (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

The corridor immediately turns due east. The air is much cooler now that you are out of the steam room. About 30 feet down the corridor, you see what appears to be a rust trail running north-to-south. Past that, the corridor turns to the south.

This corridor has three main features: the rust trail; the two centipedes that are hanging upside down above it; and the locked door in the north.

The Rust Trail: The ferrovore beetles ate their way through this room in their wanderings. There are two holes in the wall, one to the north and one to the south. They are like the one in Area 1, with a rust trail connecting them. Both lead into unsafe gear forest. (The beetles left behind a rusted trail burrowed right through the gears, but it's not large enough for PCs to pass through.)

The Centipedes: Two more centipedes are in this corridor, but they are hiding on the ceiling above the rust trail. They retreated here when the beetles passed by earlier, and have not left. Give the PCs a Spot check against the centipedes' Hide skill. If the centipedes remain hidden, they wait until a character passes underneath to investigate the rust trail, then they drop and attack. This ambush gives them a surprise round before the regular combat initiates.

Monstrous Centipede, Medium (2): CR 1/2; Medium vermin; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; BAB +0; Grp –1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6–1 plus poison, bite); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +10, Spot +4.

Feats: Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison: Injury, Fort DC 10, 1d3 Dex/1d3 Dex.

AREA 6A: THE COGWHEELS (EL 2)

Read or paraphrase the following. This text assumes the PCs enter from the north. The ceiling is 15 feet tall.

The room ahead is 40 feet wide and at least as long. Directly in front of you, only 5 feet into the room, are three massive cogwheels turning at breakneck speed. Each wheel is over 15 feet in diameter, with its bottom half buried in the floor. Only 3 feet of space separates the gears from each other. You can pass, but it will be dangerous.

Getting past the three cogwheels require squeezing between them. This requires three successive Reflex saves per the stats given below, one check to squeeze past each wheel. A failed check results in damage. Once a character has entered, he can't advance without making subsequent checks, and he can't leave without repeating the checks he made to get in.

There is one other way to pass: on the ceiling, which would be easy along the east or west edges of the wall (where there is almost 12 feet of clear space between the top edge of the cogwheel and the ceiling). However, doing so requires the ability to fly or climb on the ceiling, which the PCs probably don't have.

Characters with the bright idea of jamming the gears are out of luck. Aside from the fact that doing so would damage the city-mech's engines and bring attention to the coglings, it should also be obvious that they don't have the power to jam a 30-foot-wide gear weighing at least a ton and spinning at high speed — hence the high Disable Device DC.

Treasure: The body of a dead adventurer lies between the second and third gears. His skeleton has been picked clean by the centipedes, but his leather armor and sacks look very appealing to greedy adventurers. However, every round spent searching provokes another Reflex save from the spinning gears, as the PCs must maneuver in a cramped, dangerous space. On the body (Search DC 12) are the following items: leather armor, a sack with 65 gp, a masterwork short sword, a light steel shield, a *+1 longsword*, two *potions of cure light wounds*, and a *potion of jump*. The coglings avoid this area because of the warder in Area 7, so they haven't touched the body.

Spinning Gears Trap: CR 1; mechanical; proximity trigger; automatic reset; DC 10 Reflex save avoids (characters must make at least 3 checks); 1d3 damage; Search DC 1; Disable Device DC 40.

AREA 6B:
THE PISTONS

Once the characters have made it past the cogwheels, Read or paraphrase the following:

Once you're past the cogwheels, you see that the room holds more danger. The southern half extends another 40 feet. Five massive pistons reach from floor to ceiling, pumping up and down with earth-shattering force. This time it looks safe to pass, though, as there's at least 10 feet of space between each piston. You can't help but notice another trail of rust, this time leading east-west across the lower half of the room.

The pistons are indeed safe to pass, but fighting a battle here is another story. Anyone fighting in a square adjacent to a piston must make a Reflex save (DC 12) each round or be struck, taking 2d8 damage from the massive blow. This probably won't come into play, but if the characters are clever, they may try to drag the warder from Area 7 to beneath one of the pistons. This is easily done with bull rushes and a grapple check; once the combatants are adjacent to a piston, whoever wins the grapple check shoves his opponent under the piston, forcing a Reflex save by the opponent while keeping himself out of danger.

AREA 7:
THE WARDER (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

As soon as you glance into this 30-by-30-foot room, you hear a robotic voice speaking to you. A tall, lanky construct with a face carved into a stern expression steps into the center of the room. "Warning!" it says. "This area is off limits. Please return to your level." As it repeats the monotonous warning over and over, you notice that it makes no additional moves toward you. You can see that the eastern wall of its room has a door.

This warder was installed to warn creatures entering from the east, not the north; the characters are approaching from the wrong direction as far as it's concerned. The door out of this area is unlocked when leaving, but is locked from the outside (which is where the creators assumed intruders would come from). Characters who aren't careful may have trouble getting back in.

Iron door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; 60 hp; Break DC 28 (stuck or locked); Open Lock DC 20 (from area 8), DC 0 (from area 7).

Warder: CR 1/2; Medium construct; HD 2d10; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; BAB +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); SQ Construct traits; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will –5; Str 12, Dex 10, Con –, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Development: The warder will continue warning until someone approaches within 20 feet, at which point it attacks. It will not pursue those who retreat.

AREA 8:
THE SLUDGE RIVER (EL 1)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You've entered a natural clearing in the gear forest. It extends for about 30 feet to a river of sludge running north-to-south. The sludge river looks like it was once some sort of grease pit or oil outflow that has since become grossly overrun. Now it's a slow-running river of grease, oil, chemicals and sludge that's 30 feet wide in most places. Except for your little clearing, its banks are gear forest on both sides. On the far bank, you see a faint trail of rusty parts emerging about 20 feet upstream.

The coglings intentionally dam grease flows like this to create habitats for the grease lizards they domesticate. A few wild grease lizards are always present, however, and this is no exception. An adult grease lizard lurks midway across the sludge river. It will hide until the characters are close, then attack.

Grease Lizard: CR 1; Medium animal; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init –1; Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; BAB +1; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, bite); SQ Fire vulnerability; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 8, Con 13,

Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Hide +12 (+0 when not submerged), Listen +2, Spot +2.

Crossing the River: The river is 3 feet deep in the center. It can be waded at half speed; any faster will risk a fall (Reflex DC 16). Anyone wading through will emerge coated with grease and flammable chemicals. Characters so coated take an extra 1d6 damage the next time they are attacked by fire. They also suffer from a –1 penalty to Reflex saves for the next 10 minutes because they are so slippery. Furthermore, they must make Balance checks (DC 10) to attempt any movement faster than a walk, which includes a charge, run or jump. Failure means the PC falls prone. The grease cannot be cleaned short of a very thorough bath or specialized magic.

Characters may have the magical means to jump the river, but doing so will land them in the gear forest on the opposite bank.

Fire: The sludge itself has a high moisture content and isn't extremely flammable, but the chemicals floating above it are. Lighting the sludge river on fire will cause huge flames for 1d4+2 rounds, igniting the resident grease lizard and sending it charging into the characters. It will also cause mechanical problems throughout the gear forest, bringing unwanted attention to the coglings.

The Opposite Bank: Emerging onto the opposite bank, the characters can easily follow the rust trail, but will be forced to travel through the gear forest to do so. See Chapter 8 in **DragonMech** for rules on gear forest hazards. Award XP for any hazards encountered.

AREA 9:
THE BEETLE LAIR (EL 3)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You carefully push your way through the gear forest until the rust trail opens into a rusted clearing. It looks like something has literally consumed the gear forest in this area. Rusted frames stand like the skeleton of a dead engine. Nesting within the soft waves of rust are three large rust-red beetles, each more than 5 feet long. A soft red glow emanates from above their eyes.

This is the lair of the ferrovore fire beetles that so enjoy the taste of the golem's magical metal. Due to their ability to detect metal, it is highly unlikely that the characters will surprise them (especially if they're carrying the delicious-smelling *+1 longsword* from Area 6A). The beetles are prepared to fight and charge on sight.

Tactics: The beetles open with a barrage of breath weapons. They aren't smart enough to coordinate their actions, so all three use their breath weapon on the first round. (Hopefully the characters were smart enough to stash their valuable metal objects before the fight!) On the second round, they charge in to use their bite attack. They fight to the death.

Treasure: A search of the area reveals no treasure. The beetles were interested exclusively in metal objects, and devoured anything that might be of value to the characters.

Ferrovore Giant Fire Beetles (3): CR 1; Small vermin; HD 3d8; hp 13 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16; BAB +2; Grp –2; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d4 plus rust, bite); SA Breath weapon (DC 11); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits, detect metal, corrosive skin (DC 11); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: –

SA–Breath Weapon (Ex): Line, 30 feet, once every 1d4+1 rounds; all mundane metals instantly rusted; magic items receive Ref save (DC 11).

CONCLUSION

The coglings will be overjoyed to hear that the beetles are vanquished. They'll ask the characters to bring them the creatures' bodies, and take them to the beetles' lair so they can repair the damage they did to the gear forest.

In exchange for the characters' help, the coglings offer three valuables.

First, they give the characters three ingots of platinum. Each weighs half a pound and is worth 250 gp.

Second, they explain the network of air vents, water pipes and hydraulic cables that are woven into the structure of the city-mech like veins in a living creature. They use these passages, most of which are passable only by creatures of Small or Tiny size, to spy on affairs throughout the "Great Engine." They are aware of most significant developments on the mech — although what's "significant" to them may have little to no meaning to the characters, and vice versa. They offer their assistance in unearthing secrets in the future.

Finally, the coglings offer access to Old Iron Arms if it is needed for the future, although they insist this access be regulated by their own warriors. They are keenly aware of Old Iron Arms' importance in the functioning of the Great Engine, and they protect him as the totem of their tribe. The cogling warriors don't let *anything* get close to Old Iron Arms if they can prevent it, but they'll allow the characters access as long as it's in their presence. As far as the coglings are concerned, this is the greatest gift they can offer. The characters, of course, are probably far more interested in the platinum!

EPISODE THREE: ENTER THE LEGION

INTRODUCTION

This episode seems straightforward: The characters are to travel to Legion territory, where they have to raid a lunar temple much like the one they just left. Yet it turns out to be more difficult. First, they encounter a number of hazards as they venture deeper into Legion territory, ranging from wild giant worms to orc raiders. Once they make it into Legion territory, they are faced with a suspicious military patrol. When they finally make it to the meteor, they discover the plan has a big hitch: The meteor is now the de facto campground for a band of Legion citizens. They're living in the meteor, and if the lunar skinstealers are anywhere to be found, they're probably already controlling some of the citizens. Navigating this situation requires diplomacy and intu-

ition, lest the characters wind up mobbed by dozens of commoners. In the end, the PCs should be able to identify the skinstealers and eliminate them. In this final encounter, they discover the location of another *starshard*, hidden in the lunar temple — but as they go to retrieve it, they're beaten to the punch by a nimble Irontooth mech, which leads to the next episode.

This episode is organized into encounters. The first few encounters are along the path to Legion territory, then there are several encounters around the meteor.

TRAVELING ENCOUNTERS

Now refer to Map Three: Journey to the Legion.

Encounter A:
Getting Off Nedderpik

On the second morning after the characters arrive on Nedderpik, the city-mech comes as close to Legion territory as it will get. The

characters are loaned a Magwagon, a mech model that was once used by the Stenian Confederacy but which is now primarily in use by civilian freighters. The Magwagon (see Appendix One) lacks any official Stenian marks or insignia; to all appearances, it is completely nonpartisan.

Grunnar reiterates their mission: Destroy any lunar influence present at the site of the second meteor. He emphasizes the danger of the insidious skinstealers, and instructs the characters about them as much as possible (to whatever extent you, the DM, prefer). He warns them of the xenophobia common in Legion territory and recommends that non-humans stay out of sight as much as possible. He then gives them a rough map and tells them Nedderpik will be in this general vicinity once every week or so for the next month, so they won't have a difficult time returning. (Remember also that the city-mech is large enough to be seen on the horizon, so the characters can find it if need be.) Then he sends them on their way.

Now the characters have to get their mech off Nedderpik! This is the opening roll of this episode: the DC 10 Mech Pilot skill check to see if they can land upright after stepping off the city-mech. See "Skills" in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech** for full details on this check.

Encounter B:
The Lunar Rain

The trip to the meteor in Legion territory takes three days, unless the characters encounter delays. The first day of travel is completely uneventful. Eventually, dusk arrives and the characters must seek shelter. Read or paraphrase the following to the characters:

You pass a long, boring day trudging across the rocky soil of the roughlands. Except for the occasional wild animal or distant mech far on the horizon, you encounter no other living creatures. You pass hundreds of boulder-sized meteors embedded in the earth, and more than a few crushed houses and castles, all a constant reminder of the destructive power of the lunar rain. You're

thankful for the protection of your mech, but at the same time you're painfully aware of just how uncomfortable it is. The constant bouncing of the mech's uneven step makes your haunches sore. By the time the sun finally begins to set, you're eager to stop for the night — although you're nervous, as always, about what the moon's rising may bring.

Remind the players of the lunar rain's brutality: The characters must find secure shelter or be sandblasted through the night. The mech's walls are sufficient to protect them from most meteors, but a bad meteor storm will damage even the mech. They can watch the horizon to see how bad the lunar rain looks as it rises with the moon, then evaluate based on that.

At this point, you should roll on the lunar rain table in Chapter 4 of **DragonMech**. The moon is not full, so don't apply the +4 modifier (it was the unusually severe lunar rains of the full moon that brought down the lunar temples a few days ago). Once you know what's happening with the lunar rain, describe the effects to the players in game terms: "You feel an abrasive mist falling from the sky. Staying outside is painful — you must find cover somewhere!"

Remember to roll for the lunar rain each and every evening. In most cases, the characters are fine taking cover in the mech, though if the lunar rain is bad enough (19+ result on the table), they might want to find cover underground. They may also want to seek shelter underground if the only place for the mech is on an exposed position (high on a ridge, at the top of a hill, etc.) where you could rule that it is more likely to be hit by meteors.

Allow the characters a Survival check (DC 15) to find suitable cover. Given the scarcity of cover and the fact that every surface creature simultaneously looks for protection when the lunar rain gets bad, there's a good chance whatever cover they find will already be inhabited! Roll 1d20 on the following table to determine what sort of cover the characters find, then roll 1d20 again to determine what inhabits it:

Roll	Cover Located
1–5	Cave
6–8	Worm burrows
9–12	Ravine
13–15	Ruined castle
16–18	Burned-out hulk of a damaged mech
19–20	Underground village or town

Roll	Inhabitant of Cover Located
1–8	Uninhabited
9–10	Vermin (monstrous centipedes, scorpions, and spiders)
11–12	Friendly humanoids: humans, dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, or half-orcs
13–14	Hostile humanoids: goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, orcs, gnolls, or bugbears
15	Formians
16	Social insects (giant ants or bees)
17–18	Unfriendly animal: bear, boar, wolverine, or dire badger
19	Giant worm
20	Ankheg

Refer to the MM or Chapter 5 of **DragonMech** for the stats of the encountered creatures. Searching for cover from the lunar rain provides a constant potential for "random" encounters.

Encounter C:
The Worm Pits (EL 1)

Around noon on their second day of travel, the characters come to an area pocked with holes. Read or paraphrase the following:

For a day now, you've been walking over rocky, uneven terrain, but now it seems like the landscape is changing. Up ahead the soil has been churned — tilled, almost — and you can see no boulders or trees whatsoever. In fact, the ground is almost perfectly flat, except for the occasional pit or hole that seems to lead straight down into the earth.

Allow the following checks:
• Spot DC 12: You notice a flash of movement in one of the holes, but then it stops. Whatever caused it must have moved deeper in the hole.

- Spot DC 14: The ground ahead seems to sparkle a bit. On more careful observation, you notice that it appears to be littered with fragments of glass or gemstones.
- Listen DC 20: You hear a very faint, dull rumbling coming from under the ground.
- Survival or Knowledge (nature) DC 14: You recognize this landscape as the mark of giant worms.

The landscape is indeed the work of giant worms. They have congregated here for a natural mating and molting process, which is entering its third week. Their constant churning of the soil near the surface has caused any boulders and other surface debris to sink into the soft, tilled earth. The violent activity has also brought all sorts of smaller objects to the surface, including a wide array of gemstones, many of which have been eaten and then excreted by the worms. The holes and pits lead into the worms' burrows.

Dozens of giant worms dwell in this area. They are unintelligent and not inclined to attack in any coordinated manner, so the characters are not at great risk — but they are almost guaranteed to encounter at least one worm.

The PCs have three options: go around; advance on foot; or advance in their mech.

Go Around: Going around this area adds a half-day to the characters' travels. The worms have traversed a wide swath of land that cuts right through the characters' path. Going around makes the trip longer but poses no other dangers.

Advancing on Foot: Once the characters have entered the churned ground on foot, they make the following observations:

- The loose gemstones on the ground are now obvious to any character that didn't notice them before.
- The pits clearly lead straight into the earth, as deep as the PCs can see. Those looking into the pits catch the occasional glimpse of movement, but can't discern what's down there.
- The soft earth is undoubtedly dangerous for a mech to traverse. The characters themselves sink about 6 inches into the loose soil. A mech would be mired quickly.

The worms have tremorsense and will surface once they detect movement above them. Advancing on foot gives the characters 1d6+2 rounds before the first worm surfaces. Each round they can attempt to gather some gemstones; a Search check (DC 10) reveals 1d4 gems worth 25 gp each (mostly chunks of clear, rosy or smoky quartz) in the immediate area.

When the first worm surfaces, it rises 40 feet from the characters. Emphasize its size — a full 30 feet long — as it lurches out of the earth and then flails about in the air. From then on, another worm surfaces every 1d4 rounds. The worms advance slowly on the

characters. Make it obvious to the characters that they're outmatched — these worms are big! Their best bet is to retreat to the mech and leave. You should try to let the players come to this decision themselves so that they don't feel this was their only option all along.

If the characters attack a worm, it fights back and pursues them. The other worms don't join the fight unless they too are attacked. A damaged worm will chase the PCs to their mech. Note that the worms are unintelligent and also nearly blind. If wounded in melee, they'll retreat underground; if attacked with missile weapons (including the mech's steam cannon), they'll spend a couple of rounds out in the open, flailing about trying to identify their attacker, before retreating underground.

Advancing in the Mech: Advancing in the mech is dangerous:

- First, the much heavier seismic vibrations cause the first worm to surface in only 1d4 rounds.
- Second, the worms object to the stomping of the mech. Its heavy footfall disrupts their peace. The first 1d4 worms will attack the mech.
- Third, the worm pits count as extremely difficult terrain (refer to "Mech Combat," Moving a Mech, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**). Any pilot with at least 1 rank in Mech Pilot will be aware of this problem. The pilot must make a Mech Pilot skill check (DC 20) to enter the terrain. Passing the check means his speed is halved. Failure by 5 or less means the mech's speed is quartered; failure by more than 5 means the mech falls over. (See "Tripping a Mech," Downed Mechs, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech** to determine how it lands.)
- Finally, once the worms attack, the mech is in melee combat. This forces a Mech Pilot skill check every round, and increases the DC to 22.

If the mech does fall over, it will be swamped by attacking giant worms, which will bite it for several minutes until they're convinced it's "dead." If the characters remain motionless, the worms will conclude the mech is "dead" and eventually wander off.

Righting a downed mech requires a Mech Pilot check (DC 20) (see "Skills" in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**). Alternately, wandering traders could wander by and assist the characters.

XP Awards: If the PCs make it past this encounter without downing their mech, award them XP as if they'd defeated a CR 1 trap. Award XP for defeating giant worms as usual.

Giant Worms (1 or more): CR 4; Huge magical beast; HD 9d10+9; hp 58; Init –1; Spd 20 ft., burrow 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19; BAB +9; Grp +22; Atk/Full Atk +12 melee (1d6+5, bite); SQ Tremorsense; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +11.

Encounter D:
The Orc Raiders (EL 3)

Around dusk on the second day, the terrain begins changing. Read or paraphrase the following:

It is getting late in the day, and the sun is low in the sky. For the past several miles the rocky flatlands have become less and less flat. Ravines and gullies become common. Soon the entire landscape is a series of deep grooves running east-west. You are forced to guide your mech through narrow channels with high walls, each one surfacing to ground level for only a few hundred feet before becoming a rock-walled channel again. The stark shadows of the impending sunset make the channels seem even more isolated.

There is no way to get around this dangerous landscape. It counts as difficult terrain, requiring a Mech Pilot check (DC 10). Failure by 5 or less means the mech's speed is halved; failure by 6 or more means the mech falls over. Furthermore, climbing out of one channel to enter another requires a Climb check, per the usual rules.

The players will probably start thinking "ambush!" when they hear this description — and they're right. After a half-hour or so of navigating these ravines (especially if they fail the Mech Pilot check and topple their

mech), they are attacked by orcs intent on capturing their mech!

The Orc Ambush: A band of orcs haunts this area, living under the overhangs of the gullies and routinely ambushing anything that comes through. They spot the mech from afar and maneuver to ambush it.

Start the encounter by allowing the PCs a Spot check, as follows:

Spot DC	Result
10	You notice movement of some kind further up the gully, but you can't make out what it is.
14	It seems as if something is using the deep shadows on the gully walls to make its way toward you. The shapes appear to be humanoid.
18	Green-skinned humanoids are scurrying about the gully around you, trying unsuccessfully to conceal their movement in the deep shadows.

There are a total of 22 orcs, all with the same stats. They have a single, simple goal: to topple the mech, board it, slaughter the crew and take the mech for their own. Their combat tactics are as follows:

Round 1: Sixteen orcs charge the mech. They are concealed on both sides of the ravine, so they should be able to surround the mech completely. They then initiate a trip attack. Review the rules in "Mech Combat," *Tripping a Mech*, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech** for cooperative trip checks by hordes of infantry. The characters' Magwagon receives a whopping +26 bonus to its Trip check (+16 for size, +10 for its Strength). The orcs receive a minimum of +3 (for the team leader's 17 Strength), plus another +2 for each of the 15 orcs that passes its Strength check against DC 10 (to contribute to the attempt), for a maximum possible trip check of +33.

The other six orcs find cover along the walls of the gully, three orcs per side, and launch javelins at any character who emerges from a porthole.

Remember that if the mech passes the trip check, the mech pilot can use a full-round action for the mech to trample the orcs that surround it, potentially squashing a dozen orcs or more in one round. The Magwagon deals 4d6 points of trampling damage, as noted in its stats (see Appen-

dix One, "New Mechs"). Review the rules on trampling in "Mech Combat," *Special Attacks*, of Chapter 2 in **DragonMech**. The orcs will likely attempt Reflex saves rather than attacks of opportunity. Should they choose an attack of opportunity, however, they can use it to make another trip check before they get flattened. Orcs that survive the trample are able to grab the mech's leg as a free action, which they will do, leaving their options open for climbing or another trip check in the following round.

If the mech is downed, the pilot can right it with the usual Mech Pilot check (DC 20).

Round 2: If the mech is downed, the orcs start prying open portholes to try to board (review the rules in "Mech Combat," *Boarding a Mech,* in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**). A porthole's break DC is 28, and up to four orcs can cooperate on each attempt. They are equipped with prybars for the task. Any PC who was foolish enough to open a porthole will find himself fighting an orc who is trying to enter through it.

If the mech pilot manages to right the downed mech while the attack is underway, those orcs who were trying to pry open portholes find themselves lifted into the air with the mech. They now count as riding the mech. Refer to the mech-riding rules in "Mech Combat," *Special Attacks*, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**. The orcs must make Balance checks or fall off the mech, potentially being trampled.

If the mech isn't downed, the orcs will continue trying to trip it as long as they can muster at least 12 orcs for the attempt. If there are fewer than 12 orcs remaining, they resort to javelin-tossing against viable targets. If the PCs batten down the hatches and don't give the orcs any targets, the orcs will wait a few rounds and then retreat, knowing they don't have sufficient numbers to take down the mech.

Round 3: As round 2. The orcs continue trying to down the mech and board as long as they have sufficient numbers. Once there are 11 or fewer orcs and the mech is standing again, they will retreat.

A Note on EL: A horde of orcs this size should normally have an EL much higher than 3! However, in this case, the characters have the advantage of their mech. Many of the orcs will be trampled to death by the mech as they try to topple it. Those who aren't trampled will have a hard time boarding the mech even if they do down it. And as long as the PCs are smart enough to stay on their mech, they're fighting from higher ground and a position of cover. Unless the PCs make a catastrophically stupid tactical error, they should be able to use their mech to destroy the orcs handily, making this an easier encounter than it would otherwise be on foot.

Orc Raiders (22): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (orc); HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; BAB +1; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (2d4+4/18–20, falchion) or +1 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will –2; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 7, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +1, Spot +1.

Feats: Alertness.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, falchion, 6 javelins, 1d6 gp.

HAIMLER'S TOWN

The characters approach the second meteor on the morning of the fourth day (allowing for a half-day detour for the worm pits on what would normally be a three-day journey). As they close in, Read or paraphrase the following:

The pitted, channeled terrain gradually gives way to rocky flatland. You are growing close to the great cliff that separates the roughland from the plains to the east. As you crest a particularly rocky area, you find yourselves standing on the edge of an immense crater. At some point in the past, an enormous meteor blasted this mile-wide hole in the earth. Visible in the far wall of the crater is another crater, this one much smaller, and in it are the still-smoking remains of a recently fallen meteor. Even from this distance, you can tell it's made of the same material as the other meteor you explored. It must be the other half of the lunar temple.

Yet it's not that simple. Clustered around the meteor is a veritable tent city. It looks like a bustling community has sprung up around the meteor! They must be using its tunnels for protection from the lunar rain.

The settlement is called Haimler's Town, after the founder. At this point, it's less than a week old. Haimler is a minor tribal leader who hopes to improve his position in the Legion.

Recent History: Haimler's tribe, the Thrawtek, was one of many nomadic peoples on the endless plains before they were swayed by the speeches of Shar Thizdic. They willingly accepted his leadership, becoming part of what is now called the Legion. Shar appointed Haimler a major and made the Thrawtek's warrior leader, Thoron, a sergeant. The Thrawtek tribe

> **Haimler's Town (village):** Conventional; AL LN; 200 gp limit; Assets 4,670; Population 467; Isolated (human 100%).
>
> *Authority Figures:* Haimler, human male Wiz5 (former leader of the Thrawtek tribe, now a major in the Legion; controlled by a lunar skinstealer).
>
> *Important Characters:* Shtrawnek, human male Clr3 (tribal shaman); Thoron, human male Ftr4 (former warrior leader of the tribe, now a sergeant in the Legion; controlled by a lunar skinstealer).

was largely dissolved as part of Shar's plans for a military that integrated disparate tribes, breaking down tribal loyalties. However, Haimler never quite accepted this situation; he'd rather be leader of his own tribe than follow orders as someone else's major. But the dominance of Shar is unquestioned, so Haimler had to find some way to return to leadership without severing ties to the Legion. When the meteor landed, he saw his chance; in the name of Shar, he led an "expedition" to recover whatever valuable artifacts might be in the meteor. Of course, the "expedition" consists almost exclusively of his former tribal brethren, and the Legion's official support for the expedition is sketchy at best — Haimler's superiors haven't exactly endorsed the tribe's mass migration. Haimler hasn't shared that little detail with his tribe. He hopes to find lunar artifacts so valuable that they'll justify the relocation of his tribe here, where he can be both a major for Shar Thizdic and the leader of his old tribe.

However, Haimler didn't evaluate the situation properly. Short of his finding a minor artifact, there's almost no way the Legion will let him get away with reforming his tribe for any extended period of time. More importantly, several lunar skinstealers survived the meteor crash. They have since taken control of Haimler and Thoron, and now drive the men to pursue the skinstealers' own agenda. The tribe members that the skinstealers possessed prior to Haimler and Thoron have since experienced unfortunate "accidents."

This situation creates an interesting dynamic within the tribe: The possessed Haimler and Thoron have effectively abandoned their own goals and those of the Legion, and now

follow the orders of their skinstealer controllers. They want to rebuild the temple as a place of worship for Seroficitacit and convert the tribe to his worship. This sentiment has only emerged in the last three days, since they were possessed. Meanwhile, the tribal shaman Shtrawnek can't understand why his companions have changed their worldview so drastically. He (like most of the tribe) is more interested in retrofitting the lunar temple for use as living space, followed by the establishment of a new city here. This conflict has led to the creation of the tent city: Two factions continue to argue over exactly what to do with the inside of the lunar temple, so although the tribe sleeps inside at night, they haven't yet made permanent habitation there.

The Characters' Involvement: What of the characters' goal: destroying any lunar influence? Well, certain traces of lunar influence are extremely obvious. The temple of Seroficitacit is still intact. Some members of the tribe are actively restoring it. Haimler and Thoron are preaching the virtues of Seroficitacit, and they're nurturing several lunar creatures back to health.

The PCs have quite a few options for how they'll approach this challenge. Here is an overview of certain key events to help you guide the play. There are five key events that move the plot along: the characters' initial approach; their interaction with the community at large; their interactions with Haimler, Thoron and Shtrawnek; their investigation of the lunar temple; and the arrival of the Irontooth mech. Below is an overview of those events, followed by a breakdown of the town's important locations and NPCs.

EVENTS

Event 1:
The Characters'
Initial Approach

Mechs don't travel these parts very often, and the tribe is already a little suspicious. If the characters approach in their mech, they'll be surrounded and treated as unfriendly visitors, then led to Haimler for interrogation. If the characters approach

on foot, the locals won't be as suspicious, especially if the PCs explain their presence with a disguise of being traders, refugees or pilgrims of Seroficitacit.

When the characters are close to the meteor, Read or paraphrase the following:

The meteor is roughly 250 feet wide, with about 50 feet of its top extending above ground level, just like the one you left only a few days before. From your position, no entrances are visible, but someone has already carved a rough staircase up the side of the meteor. The staircase terminates at a landing on the edge of the meteor's top. Every now and then you see someone enter or leave the meteor through the landing.

Surrounding the meteor are about 50 tents made of durable canvas. The meteor landed on the wall of the existing crater, and the tents are placed in the lee of its smaller crater. The over-hanging meteor, combined with the incline of the crater wall, keeps most of the tents in the shadow all day long, and presumably protects them from the worst of the lunar rain as well.

Two tents in particular stand out. Both are twice the size of the other tents and have red pennants flying from them. You see no mechs or signs of mechs, nor do you see any sign of a real military presence. If you didn't know you were in Legion territory, you'd think this was the tent city of wandering nomads.

You see no sign of any lunar creatures.

When they arrive, the characters aren't necessarily directed to the tribe's leadership. If their disguises are sound or their cover stories convincing, the tribe is glad to accept them as passing visitors. The tent city has an open central square that passes for a market and tavern, and the characters can find food and company there.

Remember, this is a close-knit community made up of tribesman with long associations. Any outsiders stand out, no matter how they're disguised. The PCs are immediately recognized as outsiders no matter what they do. That said, they aren't instantly distrusted unless their actions warrant it.

If for some reason the characters *are* distrusted, then the tribesmen will keep them under guard while they get Haimler or Thoron.

Legion Xenophobia: Remember that the Legion espouses a humanocentric philosophy. Shar Thizdic claims that the lunar rain is a chance for humans to rise up and take their rightful place in the world. His followers consider humanoids to be inferior to humans — a position Shar Thizdic is careful never to verbally utter himself, but which he obviously supports.

Much of the tribe remembers the days before Shar, and many remember when they used to trade with the elves and dwarves. Even

TABLE 3-1: SPOT CHECKS BY AREA OBSERVED

Spot DC **Result**

Central square and general observation

| 10 | You notice that the community atmosphere is argumentative. Everywhere you look, people seem to be having heated discussions. |
| 15 | You see very few open displays of religion, but a number of people wear pendants decorated with strange blob-shaped emblems. (**Note to DM:** These are symbols of Seroficitacit.) |

Meteor

10	People seem to avoid the meteor; hardly anyone ventures close. Yet every now and then someone enters or exits from the landing at the top of the staircase.
15	A guard appears to be hidden at the top of the staircase. Every time someone approaches the staircase, they wait to be acknowledged by him before advancing.
20	The same people enter and leave the meteor on a steady rotation. Sometimes when they leave, they appear to be carrying baskets. You can't tell what's in the baskets, but they look heavy. (Note to DM: The baskets have rocks, debris and other construction byproducts. These are dumped by the edge of the crater.)

Large tents

10	The two large tents with the red pennants obviously belong to important people. Each tent has a dedicated guard, and visitors are very deferential.
15	The tents occasionally get visitors who move back and forth between them before leaving, but you never see the tents' occupants emerge to speak with each other.
20	The people entering one tent all have pendants decorated with a strange blob-shaped emblem, but the people entering the other tent never wear this symbol.

so, they've been swayed. They'll automatically be distrustful toward any nonhumans. All nonhumans have a –2 penalty to Diplomacy checks when dealing with the tribesmen. If they can disguise themselves as humans, there is no penalty. Those who can't pass as humans (such as gnomes and halflings) can avoid the penalty if they act deferential toward their human fellows. A Gather Information or Knowledge (local) check reveals this rather common knowledge about the Legion and its beliefs, as follows:

Gather Information or Knowledge (local) Check:

DC	Information Revealed
10	The Legion distrusts anyone who isn't a human.
12	Nonhumans who act deferential to their human partners are judged better by the Legion than those who act proud of their heritage.

Event 2:
The Characters' Interaction with the Community

The community is split. Half of the tribesmen are willing to follow Haimler wherever he leads them, including to the worship of Seroficitacit. The other half wonder why Haimler and Thoron have suddenly latched onto this new religion, and aren't ready to convert yet. As a result of this split, the characters will get very different assessments of the situation depending on which villager they happen to speak with at any given time.

There are two primary tools with which the characters can interact with the community: Spot checks and Gather Information checks.

Spot Checks: Allow Spot checks based on what the characters observe, as follows. Some of these results require extended observation.

It doesn't take a Spot check to notice that the entire encampment clears out at night, with almost everyone moving into the meteor for safety. At night, the staircase guard disappears into the meteor with the rest of them. The residents of one of the large tents — Haimler and Thoron — pack up and enter the meteor at night. Shtrawnek, who occupies the other large tent, has stopped moving into the meteor at night out of opposition to Haimler's proposed worship of Seroficitacit. He and a few of his acolytes are the only tribesmen to remain in the village at night.

The PCs are *not* invited into the meteor at night. If their disguises lead the villagers to trust them, they're allowed to sleep in one of the common tents, although they can't go into the tents with the red flags.

Gather Information: Allow Gather Information checks based on who the characters speak with. Assume at least half the people they speak with are followers of Haimler (and recent converts of Seroficitacit), while the other half are traditionalists and hold-outs. Use the following table as appropriate. Questions concerning the meteor produce consistent results, as indicated on the table, although you should slant the answers to the views of the person being questioned.

Typical Tribesman: The typical tribesman has stats as given in "NPCs" below. Here are profiles of four sample tribesmen to use in your interactions:

Sharia: Sharia was born only 19 years ago. Named after the glorious new leader Shar Thizdic, she's a model citizen of the Legion. She's always supported Haimler but considers Shar her supreme leader. She doesn't remember the old tribal ways and doubts Haimler's new course for the tribe. She's tall and thin, with sun-bleached hair and wiry muscles built from years of hard work.

Fornik: Fornik is a sturdy man over 6 feet tall whose age is catching up with him. At least 40 years old, he's now wrinkled and soft where once he was tall and strong. Nonetheless, he's still an imposing figure. His scraggly beard and tribal tattoos mark his longstanding allegiance to traditional Thrawtek ways. He was attracted to Shar Thizdic's ability to unite the tribes for the power and respect it offered, but always considered the Legion a little too militaristic. He supported Haimler's initial excursion to the meteor, if only because it would reunite his tribe, but since Haimler has begun advocating these strange gods and lunar allies rather than the old tribal ways, Fornik has withdrawn his support. He suspects something else is going on, but he does not know what.

Clarna: Clarna is a middle-aged woman still bearing children. She's currently pregnant with what she claims will be her fourteenth child. She sees it as her duty to strengthen her tribe however she can, and she hopes her unborn child will be another strong warrior. (She proudly notes that 10 of her 13 prior

TABLE 3-2: GATHER INFORMATION BY PERSON/TOPIC QUERIED

Gather Information Check:

DC	Result

Pro-Haimler

DC	Result
10	*Haimler brought us to the meteor because he is a great leader and visionary. He is showing us a new way to live.*
15	*Haimler received visions from a great god. The visions showed a glorious paradise in this new world for those who follow him. Shtrawnek and his old ways are wrong. The world has changed, and we must, too.*
20	*Haimler told me confidentially that the moon creatures are our salvation. The gods work in mysterious ways, he said.*
25	*What happened to Haimler's pet lizard? It used to follow him wherever he went, but I haven't seen it for days now.* (**Note to DM:** This is Haimler's familiar, which the lunar skinstealer killed once it became aware of the changes in Haimler.)

Anti-Haimler

DC	Result
10	*I really don't understand what Haimler's doing. He's always been a good leader, but taking us out here to the middle of nowhere? What is he thinking? He's been acting differently lately.*
15	*Haimler's talk of new gods is nonsense. This tribe has always followed Peripatetin. He's never failed us, so why should we abandon him? Shtrawnek is right: We're risking everything by following Haimler.*
20	*I'm worried about Haimler. Reforming the tribe, leading us out here, worshipping new gods… all this is going to get back to the Legion. What has gotten into Haimler? And Thoron, too! He used to be the backbone of sanity here, but now he's following Haimler wherever he goes.*
25	*What happened to Haimler's pet lizard? It used to follow him wherever he went, but I haven't seen it for days now.* (**Note to DM:** This is Haimler's familiar, which the lunar skinstealer killed once it became aware of the changes in Haimler.)

The Meteor

DC	Result
10	*The meteor is a very safe place to live. The layout is a little weird, but it's safe, so I can live with it.*
15	*There are still things living in the meteor — strange ooze things. Haimler says not to harm them. Shtrawnek refuses to enter the meteor as long as they still live.*
20	*The first people to enter the meteor fought something — but whatever it was, it disappeared before they could finish it off. The people seemed fine and said nothing had happened. Ever since then, things have been different, Haimler and Thoron particularly.* (**Note to DM:** These were the lunar skinstealers. They took over the first people to enter the temple, then switched bodies furtively until they had taken over the leaders, Haimler and Thoron.)

children have been men, all of them great warriors.) It isn't her place to question the gods or how men should interact with them; that's a job for great men such as Haimler. If Haimler deems this new god to be the right choice for the tribe, then she'll follow him.

Bradok: Bradok is a young man who greatly enjoyed training with the Legion military. He's always wanted to be a warrior, like his father before him. He looks up to Thoron, who is the greatest warrior he's ever met. The teachings of Seroficitacit seem reasonable to him, and if Thoron deems it the right thing to do, he's glad to go along.

Event 3: The Characters' Interactions with Haimler, Thoron and Shtrawnek

The three tribal leaders have very different perspectives on the world. Conversations with them quickly reveal their goals and disputes. The profiles and stats in "NPCs," below, should allow you to play them as distinctive NPCs.

Characters can encounter these NPCs in a variety of ways. Their initial contact with the tent city could lead to meeting Haimler or Thoron, especially if they make trouble or are distrusted from the start. As they explore the tent city, the PCs are bound to notice the large tents and find out who's in them,

PERIPATETIN

Peripatetin is the Thrawtek god of good voyages. Many other nomadic tribes of the eastern plains also worship him. Peripatetin is neutral. He doesn't necessarily guarantee safe passage, or even successful passage, but his worshippers believe he gives good voyages, meaning all things work out in the end. A wandering tribe that is forced to change course due to an overflowing river, and then finds a verdant new pasture as a result, attributes that success to Peripatetin, just as does a tribe that completes a journey successfully according to its original plan. Peripatetin's symbol varies by tribe, but usually incorporates a walking stick. The Thrawtek symbol for him is a vertical walking stick in front of a stylized sun image. The top of the sun is yellow while the bottom is black, symbolizing Peripatetin's domain over all travels whether at day or night. Peripatetin's domains are Luck, Protection and Travel. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff.

perhaps eventually requesting an audience. Gathering information around town will bring up the leaders' names repeatedly.

Gaining an Audience: If it doesn't happen naturally through hostile means, the PCs may be able to gain an audience with Haimler, Thoron or Shtrawnek in a number of ways. Posing as traders, diplomats, refugees or followers of Seroficitacit are all plausible covers. Don't make it too hard for the PCs to get in contact with the leaders (unless they really screw it up themselves). In most situations, the leaders will have followers or bodyguards with them, so the PCs' real challenge will be catching the leaders alone.

Unveiling the Lunar Skinstealers: The ultimate resolution of this episode is when

the characters purge Haimler and Thoron of the lunar skinstealers that control them. Exactly how this happens could spell life or death for the characters. Whether the tribesmen agree with their leaders or not, they're still not going to allow a bunch of outsiders to jump them. It is crucial that the characters reveal (and defeat) the lunar skinstealers in a situation where the tribesmen aren't there to come to their rescue. Otherwise, the characters will be beaten to death by 400+ irate tribesmen. Game over!

The PCs should be able to lure Haimler and/or Thoron away in any of the following ways:

• Invite them to discuss a "profitable trading venture," but insist the leaders must come to view the goods at the characters' mech. (In this case, the leaders may bring a few bodyguards, depending on how much they trust the characters. The bodyguards use the profile of the guard for Area 1 of the Second Lunar Temple; see below.) Remember to make the appropriate Bluff vs. Sense Motive check.

• Observe the leaders' routines carefully. If they do so, the characters will discover they come outside, alone, to pray to Seroficitacit under the moonlight shortly after the worst of the lunar rain passes each night. This is the perfect time to jump them.

• Request a private audience within the lunar temple. Perhaps the PCs can successfully pass themselves off as followers of Seroficitacit who wish to see the temple. This again requires a Bluff check. (Give a +4 bonus to the check if the characters use the symbols of Seroficitacit from Area 11 in Episode One.) Characters could also make such an attempt with Diplomacy (if they're up front about their religious interests but simply wish to see the temple) or Intimidate (if they use some show of force, such as their mech).

Battling the Lunar Skinstealers: Combat with Haimler and Thoron uses the profiles presented below. Remember that each of these men has a *personal* agenda that is very different from his *controller's* agenda. Review the rules in "New Creatures" of Chapter 6 in **DragonMech** for combat with skinstealers. Remember that slashing and bludgeoning attacks deal full damage to the skinstealer, hurting the host only after the skinstealer is dead. Piercing attacks deal half damage to the host and half damage to the skinstealer. As a result, combat against these high-level NPCs isn't nearly as hard as it seems. Although they'll attack using their normal high-level profiles, each skinstealer can take only 18 points of damage before it peels off from its host, dead.

A skinstealer's fundamental goal is survival; it will *not* fight to the death. If they're losing the fight, the skinstealers will hop between hosts in an attempt to escape and get others to fight for them. Prior to combat, they'll go so far as to bargain rather than actually engage in a fight, as they don't want to risk being killed. Use the following strategies to simulate their combat mentality:

Round One: The skinstealer engages in ranged combat as much as possible, avoiding damage to itself. This also lets it split damage between itself and its host, as most ranged weapons deal piercing damage.

Round Two: The skinstealer maintains ranged combat as long as possible. If its wounds become serious or it is losing the fight, it closes into melee range and then jumps to a new host. The skinstealer is highly intelligent (Int 20) and its strategy is to recruit assistance from the rest of the Thrawtek tribe. It will choose a new host who looks fleet-footed. As soon as the new host is dominated, the skinstealer will run from the combat, raising a general alarm. Its role in this new outsider's body will be "I tried to stop my friends, but they insisted on attacking your leaders. Help your leaders!" As soon as it can, it will hop to the body of a tribesman, abandoning the body of the PC.

Remember that the bodies of the leaders will recover once a skinstealer is off them. If the PCs continue attacking, the men will obviously defend themselves, but their first reaction will

THE CRATER

250 feet

Tent City

Meteor

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be thanks — the PCs have finally freed them from these horrible alien creatures that were controlling their bodies! If the PCs play their cards right, they can have Haimler and Thoron owing them a favor.

Round Three: Once the tribesmen arrive to defend their leader, the skinstealer will send its "new" body close to a leader, if possible, and try to repossess a leader as soon as it's safe (and when it's able to switch hosts without being seen). In general, the skinstealer will try to maneuver the actions of the tribe through controlling influential people or by making the people it does control more influential (which makes their friends wonder why their personalities have changed).

This combat is tricky, because you have an enemy that can possess PCs, you have enemies that fight one way when possessed and another way when not possessed, and you have the potential for a huge brawl if the PCs don't stop a skinstealer from fleeing and alerting the tribe.

Secrets Revealed: Once Haimler and

Thoron are free of the lunar skinstealers, their agendas change radically. They'll retain their original goals of reuniting the tribe in a way that can coexist with Shar's authority, but their interest in all things lunar will be completely changed: They want to destroy the temple and all remnants of its denizens' attempts to rebuild it. They'll be happy to enlist the PCs' aid in purging the temple of whatever may be within. In fact, if the characters haven't squandered their goodwill, they'll even encourage them with gifts of weapons, armor, healing and whatever else they have that may be useful. Both Haimler and Thoron will reconcile with Shtrawnek, and the tribe's internal divisions will end.

Keep in mind, however, that all this is still within the context of the Legion. While the PCs did a great favor for the tribesmen, Legion members are still enemies of the Stenian Confederacy, and they still dislike nonhumans. Any hint of Stenian loyalty will be greeted with hostility. The tribesmen will grant the PCs a "free pass" and let them

escape with their lives, but they're warned that the next time they come around, it will mean trouble. And nonhumans, while thanked, are still considered servants of their human friends. Furthermore, if the PCs killed any members of the tribe (such as the laborers in the lunar temple), Haimler and Thoron will consider their rescue from the skinstealers as simply evening the score — in which case they owe the characters no thanks whatsoever, but neither will they attempt to punish them.

Event 4:
The Characters' Investigation of the Lunar Temple

Even if the characters unmask Haimler and Thoron early in the episode, they'll probably still want to explore the lunar temple. In order to complete the mission successfully, they have to eradicate all taint of lunar influence, which includes the three spawns of Seroficitacit that dwell in the temple, so they really must explore the temple to do their job prop-

erly. Exploring the temple also gives them the chance to catch the Irontooth mech in the act as it makes off with a valuable *starshard*.

Unlike the other lunar temple, this one landed right-side-up. This meteor is actually Level 2 of the lunar temple in the other meteor. If the first meteor were turned over and placed atop this meteor, they would match up; the hole by which the Thrawtek tribe is entering this lunar temple corresponds to the chute at Area 12 of the first lunar temple.

The full map key for the lunar temple is in the next section.

Event 5:
Arrival of the
Irontooth Mech

Through the use of divination magic, the Irontooth Clans heard about the *starshards'* fall to earth. They sent out several small reconnaissance mechs to infiltrate enemy territory and recover the *starshards*. They arrived at the first lunar temple too late, but an Irontooth mech arrives at this second temple just in the nick of time — it snatches the *starshard* almost literally right out of the PCs' hands!

The Irontooth encounter is described in Area 7 of the Second Lunar Temple, below. The flow of the adventure should place the encounter with the Irontooth mech as the very last encounter in this episode. That way, the PCs can immediately set out to pursue it, without having to finish any other tasks first.

If the PCs reach Area 7 before the Irontooth mech should appear, make Area 7 totally empty. In this case, the Irontooth mech has already stolen the *starshard*, but is sticking around to investigate the camp further. After this episode is resolved, present the Irontooth mech in some dramatic manner. Perhaps it emerges from the lunar temple right as the tribesmen are about to enter for the night. It could even attack the PCs (or Haimler or Thoron) in the mistaken belief that there is a

second *starshard*. (If this Irontooth mech has been to the first lunar temple, it might correctly surmise that the PCs have the other *starshard*.) However the combat progresses, the Irontooth mech should be forced to retreat. (Overwhelming odds? A critical injury?) Then begins the tracking described in Episode Four.

For further details on the Irontooth mech and its pilot, see Area 7 of the Second Lunar Temple, below.

* * *

LOCATIONS

There are four locations of particular interest in the tent city: the two large tents with the red pennants, one of which belongs to Shtrawnek and the other of which belongs to Haimler and Thoron; the typical smaller tent (of which there are roughly 48); and the meteor. The meteor is described in more detail in the next section. Here are overviews of the other locations.

Tent of Shtrawnek: This large, 30-by-30-foot tent is occupied by Shtrawnek and his two acolytes. The tent is well appointed with a thick layer of rugs and comfortable pillows. These furnishings aren't particularly

valuable, however; combined, they're worth 250 gp and weigh 400 pounds. The remaining furnishings are the mundane artifacts of normal living: food, clothing, bedrolls, stools and a portable desk. A thorough search (DC 20) reveals three solid gold holy symbols of Peripatetin (worth 100 gp each); 12 silver ingots (worth 10 gp each); and six uncut, low-grade diamonds (worth 50 gp each).

Tent of Haimler and Thoron: This 30-by-30-foot tent is where Haimler and Thoron spend their days. Like Shtrawnek's tent, it is richly appointed with thick rugs and pillows, worth 250 gp and weighing 400 gp. Aside from the usual assortment of mundane items, a search (DC 15) reveals five holy symbols of Seroficitacit; two *broken* holy symbols of Peripatetin; three *potions of cure light wounds*; and a bag of 25 uncut, low-grade diamonds (worth 50 gp each). Among the clothing stored in the tent are the Legion military uniforms of both men.

Typical Tribal Tent: The typical tent measures 10 feet by 10 feet. It has a few basic pieces of portable furniture (such as a folding stool and table), several bedrolls, and sacks of mundane goods. A typical tent has 4d10 cp hidden somewhere in the bedding (Search DC 20).

* * *

NPCS

This section provides the statistics for the major NPCs encountered in Haimler's Town, including a typical tribesman, Shtrawnek's acolytes and the lunar skinstealers that have taken over Haimler and Thoron.

Haimler, Tribal
Leader
and Legion Major

Haimler is a stocky, judgmental man who commands the attention of those around him. He's of medium height but is broad and heavy for his size. His face is always set in a grimace. He never offers approval; the best a subordinate can hope for is his

respect, and everyone in the tribe tries hard to gain it. Haimler is supremely skilled in almost all aspects of life (reflected by an exceptional array of ability scores); he could have excelled at any profession, but chose to be a wizard because he takes a long-term view of most things.

Goals: Haimler is loyal and protective. He is also ambitious. He wants to rise in the ranks of the Legion, but would prefer to do so in a way that helps his tribe as it helps him. Nonetheless, he won't abandon Shar Thizdic or the Legion, as he sees great potential in what Shar has done. He'd just prefer to find a way around Shar's heavy-handed control.

The lunar skinstealer now controlling Haimler, on the other hand, has only two goals: domination of the surface creatures and furtherance of Seroficitacit's worship.

Distinguishing Characteristics: Even when controlled by the skinstealer, Haimler comes across as himself. He carefully considers his words before speaking, and never says more than is necessary. He will not carry a conversation past the point of its usefulness; he's not impatient so much as commanding, and will simply dismiss attempts to sway his opinion after he has made up his mind. He has an intense stare that he levels on those whom he speaks to, making him very intimidating. Despite all this — or perhaps because of it — his personal magnetism is great; he is extremely influential to those around him.

Note that Haimler does *not* have a familiar. The skinstealer saw it as a threat, since it was aware of the changes overtaking Haimler, so the skinstealer made Haimler kill it. Haimler could do nothing to prevent this, as he was possessed at the time.

Haimler, Human Wiz5: CR 5; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d4+20; hp 32; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection, +3 armor), touch 15, flat-footed 15; BAB +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+2/19–20, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d4+2/19–20, dagger); SA Spells; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 18.

Skills: Concentration +12, Diplomacy +12, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +12.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Power Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Cleave.

Possessions: 6 daggers, *+2 ring of protection*, *+3 bracers of armor*, small sack, symbol of Seroficitacit, spell book, 89 sp, 12 gp.

Spells Prepared (4/4/3/2, spell DC 14 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, daze, ray of frost, message*; 1st—*charm person, magic missile (x2), shocking grasp*; 2nd—*cat's grace, M.'s acid arrow, web*; 3rd—*fireball, lightning bolt.*

Spells in Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*burning hands, charm person, expeditious retreat, mage armor, magic missile, shocking grasp, T.'s floating disk*; 2nd—*cat's grace, invisibility, M's acid arrow, rope trick, web*; 3rd—*fireball, lightning bolt, whispering wind.*

Thoron, Warrior Leader and Legion Sergeant

Thoron is taller and heavier than anyone else in the tribe. He wears banded armor at all times, which is painted in contrasting black and red bands that match Thoron's tribal tattoos. He's a born warrior, with a natural talent for combat that's been nurtured through years of combat training. He's quite talkative and loves to regale visitors with tales of the tribe's exploits. His modesty prevents him from telling stories about himself, but he's happy to discuss his father (Thorak) and grandfather (Thorgan), both of whom performed many daring deeds back in the days when the Thrawtek used to fight orcs for control of the endless plains.

Goals: Thoron defends his tribe from aggressors: nothing more, nothing less. He is intensely loyal to Haimler and would probably follow him in his worship of Seroficitacit even if he weren't possessed by a lunar skinstealer. Any serious threat to the community will find Thoron quickly at hand.

Distinguishing Characteristics: Tho-

ron is as garrulous as Haimler is curt. He is easygoing and well behaved, the sort of warrior who really enjoys defending those who can't defend themselves. He uses his hands a lot when talking, and when he reaches the fighting scenes of any war story, he jumps up and acts out the important parts.

Thoron, Human Ftr4: CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 4d10+12; hp 36; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +6 armor, +2 shield), touch 11, flat-footed 18; BAB +4; Grp +7; Atk/Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+5/x3, battleaxe) or +7 melee (1d8+3/19–20, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +3, Intimidate +6, Jump +3.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe).

Possessions: Banded mail, heavy steel shield, battleaxe, 3 javelins, dagger, 34 gp.

Lunar Skinstealer, Unhosted: CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8; hp 18; Init –1; Spd 10 ft.; AC 9 (–1 Dex), touch 9, flat-footed 9; Atk +5 melee touch (special, face grapple); Full Atk +5 melee touch (special, face grapple) and +1 melee (1d2, 4 hooks); SA Improved grab, host domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 4, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Lunar Skinstealer, Hosted: CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8; hp 18; Init as host; Spd as host; AC as host; Atk/Full Atk as host; SA Improved grab, host domination, camouflage, neighbor domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort as host, Ref as host, Will +4; Str as host, Dex as host, Con 10, Int 20, Wis as host, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, others as host.

See Chapter 6 of **DragonMech** for special abilities.

Shtrawnek, Tribal Shaman

Shtrawnek is a young shaman forced to accept responsibility before his time. The old shaman died in the lunar rains while Shtrawnek was still an apprentice. Shtrawnek was the most promising of the acolytes, so he assumed the mantle of shaman. He looks like a young man aged beyond his years. His brown hair is trimmed short, his unwrinkled face is leathery, and he wears passed-down, tattered skins of wild cats and boars long since wiped out by the lunar rains. He is usually accompanied by one of his two acolytes, who aren't far behind him in ability. Shtrawnek is of average build and height.

Goals: Shtrawnek worships Peripatetin, the traditional god of the Thrawtek. He is the tribe's spiritual and medicinal leader. He leaves politics and martial affairs to Haimler and Thoron, respectively. When it comes to religious matters, however, he has strong opinions, and Seroficit-acit goes against every one of them. He is not opposed to occupying the lunar temple as a matter of survival, but the idea of rebuilding it in honor of Serofici-tacit is repugnant to him. He is engaged in a standoff with Haimler over the tribe's future. He is not aware of the lunar skinstealers but suspects something is afoot, since Haimler's behavior has changed so much over the past three days.

Over the course of the adventure, the PCs will probably end up allied with Shtrawnek. Keep his underlying goals in mind. The PCs are simple tools to him, nothing more. After they have served their purpose, he'll double-cross them if that's what has to be done to get rid of them — or if that's the best way to get rid of Haimler and Thoron. However he gets involved, he'll probably try to arrange for the PCs to face Haimler without his direct involvement, keeping his name unsullied and giving him an excuse to get rid of the PCs if need be. ("They attacked our chief. They must be killed!")

There's one last aspect of the situation to keep in mind. The Legion is by nature prejudiced against non-humans. But lunar skinstealers aren't, and generally are inclined to dismiss such petty terrestrial concerns in favor of their larger goals. Non-human PCs may find that they're treated better by Haimler and Thoron than Shtrawnek. If you want to stir some interesting debates within the party, throw this into the mix.

DON'T SLAUGHTER THE CAMP!

In playtests of this adventure, the PCs came up with a simple, direct solution to the situation in Haimler's Town: "We have a mech. They don't. Why don't we just trample them all?"

Try to discourage this course of action. This "blunt force" approach definitely removes some of the challenge from the adventure! One simple observation should push the PCs toward more thoughtful behavior: Remember that the camp is located beside a meteor that crash-landed only days before. The impact threw up tons of debris. The surface is strewn with rubble, which counts as difficult terrain for a mech. Any attempt at running the mech through the camp requires a Mech Pilot skill check *every round* to keep the mech on its feet. The Irontooth mech that appears later in this episode has no trouble in making these checks, thanks to the pilot's +18 modifier to Mech Pilot checks (as described in Episode Four).

Distinguishing Characteristics: Shtrawnek has deep, wise eyes. He pauses to look into his interlocutor's eyes before making any statement. He speaks evenly, with little inflection. It's obvious he's a wise man, for he makes comments of stunning insight on occasion.

Shtrawnek, Human Clr3: CR 3; Medium humanoid (human); HD 3d8; hp 17; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+2 Dex, +6 armor, +1 shield (Two-Weapon Defense)), touch 12, flat-footed 17; BAB +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +1/+1 melee (1d6+1, quarterstaff) or +4 ranged (1d6+1, throwing hammer); SA Turn undead, spells, domain abilities; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +6, Heal +10, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +4, Spellcraft +7, Spot +4, Survival +6.

Feats: Combat Casting, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Possessions: Breastplate, quarterstaff, 2 throwing hammers, 16 gp, holy symbol of Peripatetin.

Domains: Luck, Travel.

TABLE 3-3: XP AWARDS

Achievement	Per-Character XP Award
Discovering that Haimler and Thoron's behavior has changed	300 XP
Deducing correctly who is controlled by the skinstealers	300 XP
Discovering the hidden chamber with the *starshard* (Area 7 within the second lunar temple)	300 XP
Defeating the skinstealers without harming Haimler and Thoron	100 XP

Spells (4/3+1/2+1; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x2), *divine favor, longstrider**; 2nd—*aid**, *cure moderate wounds, inflict moderate wounds*.

*Domain spell.

Acolytes (2), Human Clr2: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+6 armor), touch 10, flat-footed 16; BAB +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, quarterstaff); SA Turn undead, spells, domain abilities; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +3; AL N; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +4, Heal +7, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +5, Spellcraft +4, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting.

Domains: Luck, Travel.

Spells (4/3+1; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, mending, virtue*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x2), *longstrider**, *summon monster I*.

Possessions: Banded mail.

*Domain spell.

Typical Legion Citizen, Human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d4; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 armor), touch 10, flat-footed 11; BAB +0; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +0 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger); AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (any one) +6 or Profession (any one) +6, Handle Animal +3, Listen +2, Ride +3, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Craft or Profession).

Possessions: Heavy clothing (treat as padded armor), dagger, 1d10 cp.

XP AWARDS

This free-form episode involves just as much investigation and research as it does combat (perhaps more, in fact). Award XP bonuses to the PCs based on their success in uncovering the mysteries as shown on Table 3-3.

SECOND LUNAR TEMPLE

This section details the significant locations in the second lunar temple found in Haimler's Town.

AREA 1: LADDER AND CHUTE

Read or paraphrase the following:

The tribesmen enter the meteor through a rope ladder that rises up its side. At the top is a deep chute that drops straight into the meteor.

During the day, a guard watches over this ladder. The divide in the tribe has made Thoron and Haimler worried that someone will interfere with the lunar temple, so the guard prevents unauthorized entrance. He can be easily overcome, but if combat is initiated, his first action is to run back to the tent city and alert everyone — which would rapidly bring reinforcements.

The chute is 20 feet deep. The rope ladder goes down the chute to the floor level of Area 2, making the descent easy.

Guard, Human War1: CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 armor), touch 11, flat-footed 13; BAB +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/x3, spear) or +3 melee (1d4+2/19–20, dagger), or +3 ranged (1d8+2/x3, spear) or +2 ranged (1d4+2/19–20, dagger); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +6, Intimidate +2, Jump +5.

Feats: Power Attack, Weapon Focus (spear).

Possessions: Spear, dagger, leather armor, 1d10 sp.

THE SECOND LUNAR TEMPLE

N S

1 square = 10 feet

AREA 2:
WORSHIP AREA

Read or paraphrase the following:

This 50-foot-wide, perfectly circular room has smooth, almost glassy walls. It is illuminated by two oil lanterns, one at the foot of the chute and one beside the open passage leading out to the northeast. You see signs of recent human habitation: bedrolls, sleeping pads, dirty clothes and crumbs litter the floor. In the center of the room is a bizarre statue of a 10-foot-tall blob. It looks like it was carved from the rock of the meteorite, but it is worn smooth in many places, as if touched by a thousand hands.

This room was once a meditation and prayer chamber for the lunar skinstealers. The blob is a representation of Seroficitacit. The room is now used by the tribe as sleeping quarters.

The Blob Statue: The blob statue is magical, but its properties are only useful for followers of Seroficitacit. Any follower who touches the statue while praying to Seroficitacit receives the effects of *cure minor wounds* and *guidance*, with a duration of 8 hours. The effect can be received only once per day. The statue has no effect on nonbelievers.

AREA 3:
SLEEPING CHAMBER (EL 1/2)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This perfectly round, 40-foot-wide chamber looks as if it serves as the sleeping quarters for many people. At least 90 bedrolls are crammed next to each other, along with blankets, dirty clothes and other signs of habitation. Two oil lanterns illuminate the room.

Suddenly, one of the bedrolls rustles. A man rolls over and then starts when he sees you. "Hey!" he says. "What are you doing in here?"

The man is one of the laborers from Area 6 who is taking a nap. He has the stats of the laborers from Area 6, below.

The characters have 3 rounds to calm him down before he shouts an alarm. Remember that the tribe is close-knit; PCs will be immediately recognized as outsiders, although they still might be able to pass themselves off as belonging there. Possible ways to calm down the man include the following:

Bluffing: The characters can try to come up with a plausible explanation for their presence. Only allow this if the *players* can actually come up with a good reason on the spot. Allow a Bluff check opposed by the man's Sense Motive.

Diplomacy: The characters might acknowledge they don't belong, but they try to smooth things over with a silver tongue. Allow a Diplomacy check to influence the man's attitude. His initial attitude is unfriendly, so the Diplomacy check must hit DC 15 to make him indifferent to the PCs. Refer to the Diplomacy skill in Chapter 4 of

the *Player's Handbook* for full details.

Disguise: If the characters are disguised as laborers, followers of Seroficitacit, or some other good cover, they may be able to explain their presence. Allow a Disguise check opposed by the man's Spot.

Intimidation: The PCs can try to intimidate the man into shutting up. Allow a standard Intimidate check opposed by his level check (for which he receives only a +1 modifier). If successful, the man is scared for his life and will stay quiet — at least as long as the PCs are there to threaten him.

Failure: If the PCs fail to quiet the man within 3 rounds, or if they attack and he receives at least one action before dying or falling unconscious, he starts screaming at the top of his lungs. The laborers from Area 6 should make a Listen check against DC 10; if they succeed, they come running, ready to fight. Make a Listen check against DC 20 for

the guard at Area 1 (if he's still alive and able to act); if he hears the fight, he sets off the alarm in the tent town and then comes in himself.

XP Award: If the PCs do quiet the man, award them XP for defeating a CR 1/2 encounter.

AREA 4:
DIVINATION CHAMBER

Read or paraphrase the following:

The walls of this 60-foot-wide circular room are completely covered in carved alien symbols. Even the 20-foot-tall domed ceiling is carved. The flickering light of two oil lanterns in the center of the room plays with the bizarre shapes and symbols. None of them resemble any sort of writing you've ever seen before.

The floor is now covered in bedrolls and sleeping gear. Two man-sized holes have been bashed through the northern wall. The sounds of picks and shovels emanate from rough-hewn passages beyond the holes.

In the southwestern corner of the room is a half-open round door leading to a dark passageway.

The lunar skinstealers used this chamber as a place to meditate on Seroficitacit's greatness.

In addition to the man-made tunnels leading to Area 6, the room contains four exits. Three are secret doors in the walls (one of which is standing half-open, as described above; it leads to Area 5B). The fourth is a secret trapdoor in the ceiling.

In fact, none of the doors are truly "secret." Any lunar creature capable of reading the language inscribed on the wall would know the doors are there (kind

of like how doors in a movie theater are marked "Exit"). Yet to terrestrial creatures, the bewildering array of symbols is utterly confusing, and it hides the presence of the round doors that don't look like normal doors to begin with.

A search (DC 25) of the room reveals the secret doors. The ceiling trapdoor is only revealed if the PCs specifically note they are searching the ceiling (and have the means to do so; Search DC 25), *or* via an exceptional search (DC 30) result on the ground, which alerts the character to the lunar equivalent of an "Exit" sign beside every exit.

A powerful Decipher Script attempt (DC 35) also reveals the secret doors via reading the wall language. The walls tell stories of the great deeds of Seroficitacit in his war against the lunar dragons.

If the characters still fail to discover the trapdoor in the ceiling, then inform the PC who possesses the *starshard* that the item pulsates — as if in anticipation — as he walks through the center of the room. They should realize that they're missing something at that point.

AREA 5A:
THE GREAT SPAWN (EL 3)

These rooms were once used to house spawns of Seroficitacit. Now they're still used for that purpose, for Haimler and Thoron have been directed by the lunar skinstealers to preserve these storehouses of knowledge. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter:

This unlit, perfectly round 30-foot-wide chamber has smooth, glassy walls. In the midst of the room is a 15-foot-wide shapeless mass of gray protoplasm. Small buds and tentacles sprout occasionally from its surface before dissipating back into the goo. As soon as you enter the room, the tentacles begin to veer toward you.

There is one spawn in each room marked 5A. These young spawns of Seroficitacit are healthy and ready to defend their temple. As soon as each becomes aware of the PCs, it advances to attack.

Roll 1d8 on the table under the spawn of Seroficitacit entry (see "New Creatures" in Appendix One) to determine what changes these particular spawn have undergone.

Young Spawn of Seroficitacit: CR 3; Medium ooze (lunar); HD 3d10+5; hp 31; Init –5; Spd 10 ft.; AC 5 (–5 Dex), touch 5, flat-footed 10; BAB +2; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change, slam); SA Change; SQ Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref –4, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 1, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +6, Knowledge (lunar) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10.

Feats: Insightful Step, Seroficitacit's Changes.

AREA 5B:
THE LAST SKINSTEALER (EL 2)

One more lunar skinstealer survived the meteor's crash to earth, but was injured in the process. It has remained in this room, recovering from its injuries while being tended by Haimler and Thoron. It has avoided taking hosts for the time being, waiting for the right moment. When the PCs enter, the moment is there! Once the PCs open the secret door, Read or paraphrase the following:

A short tunnel leads to an unlit, perfectly round 30-foot-wide chamber with smooth, glassy walls. The room appears empty.

The skinstealer uses its excellent Hide score to remain hidden until someone comes within striking distance, then it leaps up and attempts to take a host. It is highly intelligent, so play it as such. It will hide on the floor or ceiling, flat and flush against the surface, preferably in the 10-foot-wide entrance corridor. Here it can leap up and attack the first PC in the marching order, who will block other PCs from being able to make attacks. Once the skinstealer has a host, it can then fight its way out. Alternately, the skinstealer could hide in the same position but wait until the PCs have passed, then attack the last character. Once it attains a host, it can either fight the now-trapped rest of the party or simply run, taking the character's body with it, and make it do mischief that will get it killed by the tribe.

Lunar Skinstealer, Unhosted: CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8; hp 18, 25; Init –1; Spd 10 ft.; AC 9 (–1 Dex), touch 9, flat-footed 9; BAB +3; Grp +7; Atk +5 melee touch (special, face grapple); Full Atk +5 melee touch (special, face grapple) and +1 melee (1d2, 4 hooks); SA Improved grab, host domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 4, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Lunar Skinstealer, Hosted: CR 2; Medium aberration (lunar); HD 4d8; hp 18; Init as host; Spd as host; AC as host; BAB as host; Grp as host; Atk/Full Atk as host; SA Improved grab, host domination, camouflage, neighbor domination; SQ Lunar traits; AL CN; SV Fort as host, Ref as host, Will +4; Str as host, Dex as host, Con 10, Int 20, Wis as host, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +26, Disguise +25, Hide +14, others as host.

See "New Creatures" in Chapter 6 of **DragonMech** for special abilities.

AREA 6:
NEW LIVING QUARTERS (EL 3)

This room is filled with laborers expanding the caves. Only a few of the most loyal tribesmen are allowed to work here. In general, they're making enough noise that they hear only exceptionally loud noises (such as the man in Area 5 shouting at the top

of his lungs). When the PCs enter, Read or paraphrase the following:

This irregularly shaped cavern is about 40 feet by 40 feet. You can see six men with picks and shovels working hard to make the cave larger.

The characters may be able to surprise these men if they're careful (Hide and Move Silently). The laborers receive a –10 penalty to Listen checks due to the amount of noise they're making.

This area is considered off-limits. Even members of the tribe aren't supposed to be here during daylight; only the most faithful of Seroficitacit's recent converts are allowed to labor in his temple. Unless the PCs are accompanied by tribal leaders, the laborers will immediately assume the worst about their presence. They'll attack on sight.

Laborers (6), Human Com1: CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d4; hp 3; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 armor), touch 10, flat-footed 11; BAB +0; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d6/x4, heavy pick); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Profession (miner) +4, Handle Animal +4, Listen +0, Ride +4, Spot +0.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Martial Weapon Proficiency (heavy pick).

Possessions: Heavy clothing (treat as padded armor), heavy pick, symbol of Seroficitacit, 1d10 cp.

AREA 7: THE *STARSHARD*

This room contains the *starshard* (see "New Item" in Appendix One). There are two important things to note about this area.

First, Haimler and Thoron have not discovered this room. The skinstealers consider the *starshard* to be their greatest artifact, and they have not revealed its existence.

Second, this room sets the stage for the next episode in the adventure, as the PCs pursue the Irontooth mech, described above as Event 5. It is assumed the Irontooth mech is encountered here, and it snatches the *starshard* right before the PCs get it. However, you can change this depending on the PCs' actions. The *starshard* might even be gone. See Event 5, above.

The secret trapdoor to this chamber is 20 feet above ground level. The lunar skinstealers could reach it with the aid of their spawn (which would lift them up), but it's not so easy for humans. The secret trapdoor leads to a 40-foot-long round passage, which opens into a 30-foot-wide perfectly spherical room.

If the *starshard* is still in the chamber when the characters enter, and the Irontooth mech encounter proceeds according to plan, Read or paraphrase the following:

This perfectly spherical room has polished black walls. It immediately reminds you of a similar room you encountered in the last temple. The room is dark, like the last glimpse of twilight before the sun sets. A haunting gold glow emanates from a crystalline globe that floats mid-air in the exact center of the spherical space. Pinpricks in the surface of the globe send pointers of light to the walls, where they look like stars in an infinite black sky.

You feel a faint hum among your belongings, and something seems to tug upward. It seems as if the *starshard* you already possess is reacting to the presence of this second *starshard*.

This time, however, the PCs don't get the globe. Continue reading:

Suddenly, the mystical darkness is broken by a shaft of light. A trapdoor opens on the ceiling and sunlight floods the room. A large one-man mech drops to the floor, grabs the *starshard* and climbs back up the trapdoor before you can react!

This is an Irontooth Raptor mech (see "New Mechs" in Appendix One). The pilot drops down, grabs the *starshard*, and climbs back up the shaft. Arrange the event so the PCs can't engage the mech — perhaps it drops down

before they fully enter the room, or perhaps it gets a surprise round and wins initiative, so it's gone before they can react. If the PCs do somehow engage the Irontooth mech, it simply tries to get free, then runs once it has escaped.

The trapdoor leads up to the top of the meteor. Its Climb DC is only 10, thanks to handholds built into the shaft. The vertical shaft is 10 feet tall, for a total distance of 20 feet from the floor of Area 7 to the top of the meteor. The shaft was obscured by a pile of rubble, so it was not detected by the tribesmen.

By the time the PCs get to the top of the meteor, all they see is the Irontooth mech running off into the distance. They aren't the only ones to see this; the camp is an uproar, pointing and shouting at the strange new mech on the scene.

Stats for the Irontooth pilot are presented in Episode Four. This encounter should really proceed with only a glimpse of the Irontooth pilot and no real interaction with him and the PCs — he should be long gone before they react.

***

CONCLUSION

Depending on how much trouble the PCs cause before they defeat the skinstealers, they may depart on good terms or be run out with sticks. If the PCs think quickly, they may be able to escape punishment for whatever slaughter occurred within the meteor by pinning the blame on the Irontooth mech that the entire tribe has seen escaping — that is, assuming there are no living witnesses to the PCs' behavior. The reactions of Haimler and Thoron to the situation are described in Event 3, above.

Either way, the PCs should be hot on the heels of the Irontooth mech. Any PC with Knowledge (local), Knowledge (mechs), or bardic knowledge can attempt a check (DC 10) to recognize that the mech they saw was Irontooth in origin. If they speak with the tribe, they'll be similarly informed. If

the characters need to be pushed, use the *starshard* as an impetus: Aside from glowing and humming when briefly in the presence of its kin, it can also communicate empathetic messages that the characters are to reunite it with the other, now-departed *starshard.* The next stage of the adventure involves tracking down the Irontooth mech.

Further Adventures with the Legion

This episode gives a shallow view of the Legion that is tangential to its true nature, but nonetheless insightful. The Legion is built of disparate human tribes united by the sheer charisma of the greatest human leader ever to walk the endless plains. In the presence of Shar Thizdic, the tribes function like clockwork. When he's away, they often revert to their ancient traditions and rivalries. The true Legion military-industrial complexes, where the government is largely centralized and the tribal functions broken down, feel like Russian military complexes from the height of the Cold War: paranoid, autocratic, militaristic and regimented. In these places, there are no tribes, no last names; people are addressed by rank, and individuality is subsumed to the collective. Each mech is a nameless, faceless expression of Shar's will; each soldier, one of his thoughts given form.

Remember that this adventure took place on the outskirts of Legion territory. If the characters return, send them deeper next time. Make sure they experience the truly regimented side of the Legion, not just what happens when the Legion reverts to the tribal factionalism from which it was born.

Here are some plot hooks to engage the PCs in future Legion adventures:

- A routine Legion mech patrol spots the PCs' mech departing from Haimler's Town. The Legion mech travels to Haimler's Town to find out what's going on. Haimler and Thoron, barely recovered from their experience with the lunar skinstealers, need a convenient scapegoat to explain why their tribe is in the middle of nowhere with virtually no authorization. So they blame the PCs, concocting a half-baked story that they

somehow pass off as the truth. Perhaps the PCs controlled them using *charm person*; maybe the PCs are lunar creatures in disguise! Whatever they say, they make the PCs out to be important so as to better cover their own mistakes. The Legion now believes the PCs are powerful enemies, so it sends mercenaries to trail them — or perhaps hatches a plan to lure them back somehow....

- Several weeks after the end of Episode Three, the PCs are visited by a young girl. She says she is Haimler's daughter. Haimler and Thoron were brutally punished by the Legion for their insubordination. The entire tribe was rounded up and returned to the industrial complexes, where Shar Thizdic's minions made examples of them. Haimler and Thoron disappeared completely and have not been seen since. Before he was dragged off in the middle of the night, Haimler gave his daughter a handwritten note and told her to deliver it to the PCs. In it, he asks for the characters' assistance in defending his tribe against the excesses of Shar Thizdic.

- Somehow the Legion has discovered the PCs' Stenian affiliations. Perhaps a tribesman searched their mech while they were in Haimler's Town. Maybe a Legion patrol saw them enter from Stenian territory and surmised what wasn't obvious. Or maybe the PCs screwed up and told somebody something, which got passed around until it encountered the wrong ears. The Legion has mobilized its mech fleets to the Stenian border in opposition to what it decries as "an invasion and blatant act of aggression." The Legion gives the Stenians 48 hours to turn over the invaders before it declares war. Anxious to avoid a larger conflict, the Stenian Confederacy's highest political officials are perfectly happy to sacrifice a few mercenaries who were expendable to begin with. Now the PCs have both the Stenians and the Legion after them....

EPISODE FOUR: ON THE IRONTOOTH TRAIL

INTRODUCTION

As the Irontooth mech bounds away from Haimler's Town, the PCs watch the second *starshard* go with it. They can feel their own *starshard* empathetically urging them to follow. The urges are particularly compelling: There's definitely something larger at stake, though the PCs are not quite sure what.
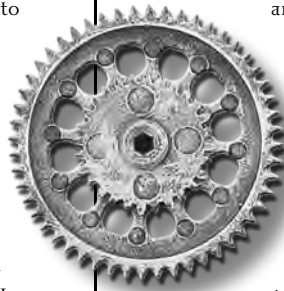
Thus begins a long episode of cat-and-mouse, as the PCs track the Irontooth mech. The Irontooth Raptor with its Speed Freak pilot outpaces the Magwagon by 2 miles per hour, or about 16–20 miles over the course of a normal day's travel. However, the Raptor stays close to the Magwagon in order to set ambushes. Except when setting ambushes, the Raptor doesn't try to hide its trail, making it relatively easy to track. If you have a ranger or other character with the Track feat in your party, you can have that character make Survival checks every so often to stay on the trail. Since the PCs *have* to stay on the trail in order for the adventure to progress, however, do this sparingly so you aren't forced to override the dice rolls to get them back on the trail.

The trail leads almost due north, to a no-man's-land between Legion and Stenian Confederacy borders. The fact that Irontooth Clans are currently operating in this vicinity is unknown to both the Stenians and the Legion. The characters finally come to the Irontooth Clan camp, where they interrupt a joust. The clan learns it is they who possess the other *starshard.* The Irontooth demand (at pain of death) that the characters turn it over and prove their valor by participating in a duel.

The Irontooth mech is fully aware of its pursuers and tries at various times to shake them, primarily so it can set ambushes without being observed. The following travel encounters give several situations in which the characters can face off with the Irontooth mech.

As always, use the *starshard* and its empathetic messages to continue motivating the PCs on their journey. Because the PC with the *starshard* can more easily communicate with his deity, you can also use divine intervention to keep things moving. Send dreams, visions and flashes of insight from the players' gods to keep them on track.

TRAVELING ENCOUNTERS

The terrain for all traveling encounters is rocky, pitted roughlands with the occasional gully or canyon. The uneven land and commonplace boulders limit visibility and encourage ambushes.

Don't forget also to roll for the lunar rain each night.

ENCOUNTER A: IRONTOOTH AMBUSHES

On the first day of pursuit, the Irontooth pilot sets several ambushes intended to delay his pursuers. These ambushes start as a series of potshots. The faster-moving Raptor mech gains ground on the Magwagon, then looks for a good place for a sniper attack, preferably at a range of 200+ feet so he gets several shots before the PCs can close. The pilot then aims at whichever PC is piloting the mech, or, if any PCs are foolish enough to stick a head out of a porthole, he goes for them.

Note the following aspects of the situation:

- The Irontooth pilot takes 20 on his Hide check to conceal his mech. The Large mech has a –1 penalty to Hide checks, offset by its

18 Dexterity. The result is a Hide modifier of +23. In order for the PCs to return fire, they must first make a Spot check to beat that result. Remember that Spot checks have a –1 penalty for every 10 feet of distance, so the 200-foot range between the Raptor and Magwagon will initially give the PCs a –20 penalty to their checks. Give the PCs a +5 bonus to their Spot check for every round they're under fire, to allow them to zero in on the shots. (Conversely, the Raptor pilot should have no problem spotting the Colossal Magwagon as it lumbers across the landscape.)

- Review the rules for targeting mech crew in "Mech Combat," Targeting the Crew, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**. Remember that the Irontooth pilot must make a DC 15 Spot check to target the Magwagon pilot. He also gets a –1 penalty to this check for every 10 feet of distance between him and

the target. Once he gets a bead, he'll fire relentlessly (using his mech attack bonus because the weapon is mounted on the mech) until the PCs locate him and return fire, at which point he'll race away, taking cover from the terrain as he goes. If he fails to get a bead on the pilot before the PCs have passed, he'll pick up and move to a new ambush ahead of their position.

- When the Raptor pilot targets the PC pilot, he bypasses the mech's hardness and directly targets the character. That's the point of the Spot check; he's firing right through the cockpit window.

- If the PCs pass the point where the Raptor changed its path to look for an ambush, allow any PCs with the Track feat a Survival check (DC 14) to detect its altered path. (The Raptor pilot will try to hide his tracks by staking ambushes on firm ground where they're hard to detect.)

Morgon, Irontooth Pilot, Human Mcj6: CR 6; Medium humanoid (human); HD 6d6; hp 24; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +3 armor), touch 13, flat-footed 13; BAB +3; Mech Attack Bonus +6/+1; Grp +3; Personal Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d6/18–20, rapier) or +6 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); Mech Atk/Full Atk (any mech weapon) +9/ +4 melee or +9/+4 ranged; SA Extraordinary pilot, hand speed, mech fingers (warrior instinct), patchwork repairs, push the envelope 2/day, roll with the punches (1 increment); AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +8, Craft (mechcraft) +11, Hide +3, Jump +8, Knowledge (mechs) +11, Knowledge (steam engines) +11, Listen +2, Mech Pilot +18, Spot +10.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mechidextrous, Mechwalker, Mobility, Quick Draw, Speed Freak, Weapon Finesse.

Possessions: Pilot's armor, light crossbow, rapier, dagger, 1d6 gp.

ENCOUNTER B: IRONTOOTH CHARGES

On the second day, the Irontooth mech decides to begin charging the Magwagon. It finds an area where it can hide, waits for the Magwagon to pass, then charges from behind or the side. It stays for only a round or two, attacking with its unarmed strike, before retreating. If it is able to get a surprise round (remember its Hide +23 modifier?) and also wins initiative, it will charge, attack and retreat so the Magwagon can't return a blow. If any PC is foolish enough to expose himself (outside a porthole, walking alongside, etc.), the Raptor will directly target him with a melee strike (don't forget the Spot check [DC 15], if applicable). Otherwise, he makes general attacks against the mech.

This sort of hit-and-run tactic isn't very effective in the long run, as the Magwagon's hardness absorbs most of the damage. Yet until the Irontooth mech begins to take damage, it will continue to harry the larger mech, hoping to whittle it down so its clan brothers will have an easier time against it in the coming days.

It is unlikely that the players will capture or defeat Morgon and his mech, but it's possible that player ingenuity (or luck) may create such a situation. If this occurs, there are two easy options to keep the plot moving toward the Irontooth camp. The first option is the *starshards*, which will urge the PCs to continue traveling toward the Irontooth. The *starshards* want to be brought to the Irontooth, who know more about their powers (and proper uses) than the PCs. The second option is Morgon himself, who may try to escape being killed by promising a handsome ransom from his father Phegrip, who waits ahead at the Irontooth joust. The downside to this option is that it gives the PCs a bargaining chip when the Irontooth subsequently challenge them to a duel (see below). This is where the raucous nature of Irontooth life comes in: A number of clans are present at the joust, and although Phegrip is the foremost chieftain, he has only nominal control over other clans. Holding Morgan hostage might persuade *some* of the Irontooth to hold their fire, but certainly not all.

ENTER THE IRONTOOTH

By this stage of the adventure, the PCs should be 3rd level. The Irontooth Clans are far more powerful than low-level PCs. They are, in essence, a collective composed of some of the best mech jockeys on the planet. Their "mech devil" pilots are legendary. By the time an Irontooth clansman reaches puberty, he's already had far more experience in a mech than most Stenian mech commanders. By the time he's officially an adult, an Irontooth clansmen is at least a 4th-level mech jockey.

Part of what allows this to happen is the Irontooth jousting tradition. The Irontooth clans originally grew out of a longstanding monastic temple where the martial arts were practiced. It is believed that the jousts grew out of these practices, though no one knows for sure. Regardless, jousts and contests are now an important part of the Irontooth culture.

When the characters track the Raptor to its destination, they'll encounter such a joust. On the beginning of the fourth day of their pursuit, read or paraphrase the following:

After days of tracking your quarry, you notice that his pace has finally slowed. You come out of a boulder-strewn flatland to see a low hill that apparently rises out of nowhere. The hill extends for what looks like miles in both directions, forming

a slow, steady arc that moves away from you. The mech's tracks lead right to the top.

Once the PCs follow the tracks to the top of the hill, read or paraphrase the following:

You follow the tracks to the top of the hill. As you approach the crest, you stop short. This is no hill. The opposite side of the ridge drops precipitously at a steep angle. It must fall at least 300 feet before it starts to level out.

You're standing on the edge of an enormous crater, a gigantic bowl carved out of the earth. A meteor of cataclysmic size must have landed here once. Now, the opposite side of the crater disappears into the morning mists on the far horizon.

The Irontooth tracks lead straight down the nearly vertical cliff face right into the crater. As you bring your eyes downward to follow them, you suddenly notice movement far below you. A host of mechs is jostling for position around a crudely defined ring built from boulders piled in a circle. There must be at least 20 mechs watching as two nimble combat-mechs joust within the circle.

The joust quickly ends, however, and the mechs turn to face you. There's a booming sound, and a cannonball zips through the air over your head!

If the players think they can get away from this easily, they're mistaken. The Raptor pilot wasn't dumb enough just to leave the rear guard open. He and four other Raptor mechs suddenly appear out of nowhere behind the Magwagon. (They were hiding behind boulders with their take-20 Hide modifier of +23 up until now. You may want to make secret Spot checks for your players.) The PCs' only options are to fight or descend into the crater. The Irontooth clearly prefer the latter. Descending the crater counts as difficult terrain (DC 10 Mech Pilot check; refer to "Mech Combat," *Moving a Mech*, in Chapter 2 of **DragonMech**).

The Challenge: When the PCs reach the bottom of the crater, read or paraphrase the following:

At least three dozen mechs, of all different sizes and shapes, move into position around you. All are marked with the flags of various Irontooth clans. As you come to a stop before them, there is a long pause. Then a huge mech of seemingly unbelievable agility steps forward. A short, squat, grizzled man can be seen through the canopy. He speaks into a tube that blasts his voice across the field toward you: "So, you thought you could sneak up on the Irontooth, huh? Ha! Ha! They think they're funny. Ha!

"So, now that you're here, is there any reason

we shouldn't just kill you now?" He gestures toward the mech you'd been following, then adds, "My boy over there says you fight like old women."

Stress to the PCs that there's absolutely no way they can fight their way out of this alive. They're facing a small army of mechs, several of them much larger than themselves.

The ultimate goal is to steer this confrontation toward a challenge. The two main protagonists, Phegrip (the grizzled pilot) and his son Morgon, prefer sport to bloodshed, and the chance to earn a little good face in front of the tribe doesn't hurt, either. Allow the characters to make social skill checks as follows:

Diplomacy: If the characters try to talk their way out of the situation, allow them a Diplomacy check. Unless they fail dramatically, Phegrip will sportingly accept their explanation, then Morgon will shout out hot-headedly that he challenges them. Phegrip encourages this behavior in his son and makes it clear to the PCs that the only way out that doesn't involve a bodybag is accepting the duel.

Bluff: As above. Unless the PCs make an exceptionally bad or extraordinarily good roll, they still get a challenge.

Intimidate: The PCs are outnumbered more than 30-to-1, in hostile territory, and currently surrounded in a weak position. Intimidation attempts utterly fail. In fact, any attempt at intimidation elicits laughter from the entire clan, and, again, produces a challenge.

Starting the Duel: Remember that the PCs don't have to *win* the duel to make it past this encounter. They really *shouldn't* win, since they're facing a superior pilot. The Irontooth are more concerned about how courageously they fight.

Phegrip explains the duel as follows. Note that "horse-riders" is a derogatory term for incompetent mech pilots; the phrase compares them to the anachronistic knights of the old days, who are now utterly ineffectual against mechs.

"Alright then, a duel it is. Now, you horse-riders listen up. You have something we want, and you know what it is. That globe talks to you, but it talks to us more —žand we know more about it than you do. If you win the duel, you keep your lives and we keep the globe. If you lose, we keep the globe and maybe your lives, depending on how you do. If you aren't courageous, there's no reason we should spare you anyway.

"Your mech's a lot bigger than Morgon's, so we'll give you a choice: either take a Raptor for yourself, or let Morgon get a bigger mech. What's it gonna be?"

The choice is the players'. If the characters choose to fight in a Raptor, the extra passengers are allowed to stand on a boulder surrounding the ring, and the PCs' elected pilot is given a Raptor in perfect working order. If the reverse happens, the Irontooth produce a Magwagon from the back of their pack of observers. It's scarred, burnt and miserable-looking, but has the same stats as the PCs' mech. The Magwagon has the same number of crew members as the PCs' mech; treat additional crew as having the same stats as Morgon.

Traditional Irontooth jousts are described in "Mechdoms," *The Irontooth Clans*, in Chapter 4 of **DragonMech**. These jousts utilize dulled melee weapons operated at low power levels to minimize damage. The weapons are coated with dye, which is used to record "hits" on the jousting combatants. The mechs that were jousting when the PCs arrived are suitably equipped.

When outsiders are involved, however, the Irontooth aren't always so generous. This is especially the case when the outsiders need to be intimidated so they'll give up a *starshard*. Unlike a traditional joust, this duel does not consist only of close combat weapons, nor do the mechs involved use dye to record hits. Morgon's mech is already prepared for a duel to the death (or at least that's the clear impression the characters get).

The jousting arena is a level, rocky field 500 feet across. A circular ring of Huge boulders surrounds the field. There is only one

entrance, which is closed up by Irontooth mechs once the joust starts. Now Phegrip explains the rules:

"Alright, get set. When you hear the cannon, go at it!"

That's all the rules the PCs get. A Knowledge (local) or bardic knowledge check (DC 15) reveals additional information about traditional Irontooth dueling practices, as described above, including their emphasis on honorable combat and respect for those who fight with courage regardless of the outcome.

The Fight Begins: Run through the fight like a normal combat. Unless the dice go horribly awry, the Irontooth pilot should win. As he comes close to the end, evaluate the characters' behavior. If they have acted as cowards, or at any point pleaded for their lives, tried to bribe the Irontooth, or in any way impugned the Irontooth clansmens' honor, Morgon unapologetically closes in for the kill. In this case, the PCs will really have their work cut out for them trying to escape; it's up to you how you want to handle this.

If, however, the PCs have demonstrated strength, courage and resolve, even in the face of overwhelming odds, the Irontooth will accept them. Remember that the Irontooth are kind of like a loose-knit biker gang; they'll take in anybody if they respect them, and they frequently put personal loyalties ahead of political realities. There are always one or two military mech pilots from the Stenian Confederacy training with the Irontooth, anyway; the Irontooth look the other way, because they know perfectly well that these pilots will return to the Confederacy as the best-trained mech jockeys in the Stenian fleets, and someday the Irontooth will be able to call in a favor from a powerful Stenian mech commander.

If the PCs somehow win the combat against Morgon's mech, they've earned the respect of the Irontooth. That might not be enough to keep them alive, however, if they injure or kill Morgon himself. Make it clear from the activity of the crowd that mech-to-

mech combat is fine, but any sort of personal attack on the pilots — especially one that might cause injury or death — is met with jeers, boos and possibly a cannon shot or two. The parameters of a respectful victory should be clear to observant players.

If the PCs have been cowards, let them figure a way out of getting killed. If they've fought valorously in defeat, Morgon closes in for the "kill" as follows. Change the text to reflect the situation in your own combat:

You've fought hard and courageously, but Morgon gets the better of you. Suddenly, he swings around and thrusts a perfectly aimed spiked fist directly toward your cockpit. You grimace in anticipation of the hit, which will blast shattered glass into your face even as the Raptor's combat spikes rend your flesh. Yet the blow never comes. You blink to find Morgon's fist barely an inch from your mech. Then he speaks, his voice loud and clear from only a few feet away.

"You've fought bravely. You no longer ride a horse. You are a mech rider. You may keep your life!"

With those words, he backs his mech away from yours. When it's at a safe distance, he climbs out of the top and repeats his words at the top of his lungs. "You no longer ride a horse. You are a mech rider. You may keep your life!" A rousing cheer fills the air, and the mechs watching the contest toss their hands into the air.

It seems you've passed this test.

After the characters recover, they are invited to leave the mech on foot and meet Phegrip and Morgon in the center of the ring. Phegrip congratulates them on their performance and invites them to stay the night and drink with the clan.

Morgon brings the *starshard* with him. It glows as it gets closer to the characters' *starshard*. When Phegrip is done, Morgon explains the history of the globes. The clan knows much about their powers. Morgon tells about the Clan's history as monks who shook loose their lawful ways and adapted to life as nomadic mech raiders. Their ancient monastic traditions are still followed (though in rather modified ways), and those

legends speak of the *starshards* as reuniting all of humankind when the time is right.

Morgon and Phegrip do not question that the PCs will give up their *starshard*; it's simply the way things are. They do not ask; they wait until the PCs offer. The Irontooth place little value in gold or baubles, except insofar as they will buy mechs and mech parts, so they don't offer the PCs valuables. Yet they do offer to accept the characters into their own Irontooth clan (known as Clan Hawk). There is no formal process; the characters are simply "in." Make it clear to the PCs that this is a big deal. Few people are offered this honor. The PCs' honor in pursuing the *starshards*, their valor in the mech joust, and their rectitude in giving their *starshard* to its "rightful owners" in the Irontooth Clans lead Phegrip to this decision.

Oh, and once the characters are "in," Phegrip happens to mention (as part of the night's drinking) that another meteorite — with a visible vein of mensite — recently fell not far from here. "We Irontooth have no use for it," he says of the mensite. "But we have heard that your people value it. Perhaps you could take some for yourself?" Phegrip is happy to lead the PCs to the meteor, which is about the size of a shed. With a little work, the characters can mine close to 30 pounds of mensite. At a retail price of 100 gp per pound in any city-mech, that's a healthy return for the characters' trouble.

The Clans: As part of the revelry, the PCs get to know the rest of the Irontooth present for the jousts: 268 people on board 37 mechs. Five clans are represented: Clan Hawk, North Star Clan, Lotus Clan, Clan of the Middle Pass and Clan Bugbear. Each clan has its own group of leaders, who vary considerably in temperament; for instance, Lotus Clan is calm and can almost be imagined in their ancient role as monks, while Clan Bugbear is as rowdy as orcs at a pillaging. There are a wide variety of NPCs present, and we leave it up to you to develop them as it furthers your own campaign continuity!

XP Awards: Give the PCs 500 XP each for the duel. Even those who didn't directly experience get the XP for comporting themselves in a manner that didn't get everyone killed!

CONCLUSION

Now the characters drink and party with the Irontooth! A night of revelry commences, as the Irontooth enjoy the bounty of two *starshards*. The day continues with a dozen more jousts, all of which are fought honorably and fairly, with entertainment and good intentions foremost in the combatants' minds. The characters have the chance to get to know the various other members of the clans, whom you should develop to create future adventures as you see fit.

Remember that even though the PCs are now accepted by the Irontooth, they're still not likely to want to stay with the Irontooth. The Irontooth don't really partake in any sort of planning or thinking ahead. It's quite possible that when the PCs wake up in the morning, half the clans have already pulled up stakes and moved on to parts unknown. After all, now that the joust's over, it's time to find something else to do! Furthermore, if the PCs do stay with the clans, they'll have to make a living the way the clans do: raids and protection rackets. Unless that's the path you want your campaign to take, don't let the PCs get too close to the Irontooth. Arrange for a separation via the Irontooth leaving early in the morning before the PCs awake, or Stenian intervention, or something else along those lines.

FURTHER ADVENTURES WITH THE IRONTOOTH CLANS

The easiest way to separate the PCs from the Irontooth is to give them a mission. Here are some ideas:

• As the night of revelry wears on, Morgon reveals progressively more about the *starshards*. It turns out that the Irontooth know far more than they let on about these artifacts. They even know the reputed location of the third *starshard*: It is in the possession of a dwarven king in Edge, the great trading

city hundreds of miles to the south. Phegrip and Morgon offer assistance, training, and a free mech to the PCs if they'll retrieve this next *starshard*.

- One of the Irontooth mech pilots is indeed a Stenian pilot who has been training incognito with the Irontooth for a year now. It's time for him to leave, but he must do so secretly, for he owes an honor debt to one of his clansmen. For whatever reason, he wants to get out before repaying that debt. He asks the PCs to sneak him out, then help him create a cover story to get readmitted to Nedderpik. On the way back, however, he reveals another twist: He has a child in another clan by way of an Irontooth woman, and he wants to retrieve the child before returning to Nedderpik. Will the characters participate in what might amount to a kidnapping?

- Clan Hawk is running low on coal. They've heard of a shipment being hauled through Legion territory in the next few days. They're planning a raid — will the PCs come along? Things start off well, but then the PCs are separated from the rest of the group in the midst of a Legion assault. The Irontooth escape, but not the PCs. Now they're isolated in enemy territory, cut off from support, and hunted by the Legion....

LOOKING FOR HOME

Eventually, the PCs should return to Nedderpik. They still have a loaner mech, after all, and Grunnar promised them citizenship. Finding Nedderpik isn't necessarily easy, though. Remember that city-mechs are literally walking cities! They patrol a fixed territory and are tall enough to stand out against the horizon for miles around, but prospective passengers may have to wait days or weeks for their city-mech ride to make the rounds. Refer to "Getting on Board," *Finding Home*, in Appendix: City-mech Nedderpik of **DragonMech**.

If you make the PCs wait for Nedderpik to return, remember to check for the lunar rain each night; that alone can create adventure.

This waiting period is a good time for random encounters or short interludes. Here are a few ideas:

- While walking across a safe-looking plain, the PCs' mech suddenly lurches forward. Its right leg is sunk up to the thigh in a worm tunnel dug right below the surface. A worm farmer soon shows up to apologize, and offers to have his worms haul the PCs' mech out of the hole — but only if the PCs will do him a favor first. You see, it seems that a marauding ankheg has been preying on his worm herd lately....

- The PCs are stalked for several miles by a furtive band of goblins. The goblins simply won't let up, but they won't attack, either. What are they waiting for? An overcast night, that's what! On a particularly dark, cloudy night, they approach the mech under cover of darkness. Once they're up close, they produce bolt cutters and prybars — or worse yet, a rust bomb — and proceed to enter the mech and try to slaughter the crew. If you want to make this encounter really tough, have the goblins' tribal sorcerer send in an invisible, silent scout to open up the mech's porthole before the main force approaches.

- At some point, the PCs must stop to refuel, stretch their legs or find food. While out of the mech, they are suddenly accosted by dusk devils, whose frightening speed lets them close the distance almost instantly. The PCs retreat to their mech, and the dusk devils follow. The mech was turned off, and it takes 1d6 rounds to start up. Meanwhile, the dusk devils are clawing at its hide....

- During a severe lunar rain when it seems almost nothing could survive, the PCs hear a knock on their porthole. It's a band of tortog traders, who are practically immune to the lunar rain. They have a few new items available for sale and would like to know if the PCs are interested.

BACK ON NEDDERPIK

When the PCs finally make it back to Nedderpik, they have no trouble locating Grunnar. He asks for a full report of their activities. Allow him a Sense Motive check if the PCs try to lie in any way. If he detects dishonesty, he'll doubt *everything* the characters say, and will assume they did not complete their mission in a satisfactory manner. He'll thank them for their service, take back the mech and tell them they haven't yet earned citizenship.

If he is persuaded the PCs did a good job, however, his attitude is completely different. He's persuaded if he has no cause for a Sense Motive check, or if they bring back convincing proof of their battles. Any artifacts from the lunar temple go a long way toward dispelling any doubts he may have.

Once Grunnar is persuaded, he thanks the characters for their heroic efforts in the name of the Stenian Confederacy. In a formal manner, he fills out some paperwork with official-looking seals, asks them to sign it, and then escorts them to the office of an administrator. The administrator reviews the paperwork, nods at Grunnar's notes, congratulates the characters, and pulls out a citizenship medallion for each PC. The PCs are warned that this is a *provisional* citizenship, subject to their good behavior for the next year. With that one caveat, there are handshakes all around, and the PCs are welcomed on board. As citizens, they are now eligible to own "land" on the mech and can proceed to "buy" a room if they'd like, or they can simply stay at an inn. Grunnar gives them a short tour of the city-mech, then they are free to look for adventure wherever they may find it!

NEW RULES

This appendix presents the new game mechanics, items, mechs and creatures introduced in **The Shardsfall Quest**.

NEW CHARACTER OPTIONS: FEATS

Insightful Step (General)

You can anticipate enemy attacks and react accordingly.

Prerequisites: Wis 13, Bluff 3 ranks.

Benefit: You can make a feint action to mislead an opponent so that he has difficulty hitting you. Rather than using your feint to catch your opponent off guard, you instead use the feint to lead him to attack where you won't be, effectively hampering his ability to strike.

Make a Bluff check to feint as usual but specify that you are using your Insightful Step feat. The usual penalties to feinting against nonhumanoid or unintelligent creatures apply. If your Bluff check result exceeds your target's Sense Motive check result, he suffers a penalty to all attack and damage rolls against you equal to your base attack bonus. This penalty lasts until your next action. This penalty does not apply to attacks against other creatures.

Special: The benefits of this feat stack with those that improve your ability to feint. If you have Improved Feint, you can perform an Insightful Step feint as a move action.

A mech jockey of sufficient level to have the Mech Fingers – Skill Transfer ability can use this feat while in a mech.

TABLE 5-1: NEW FEATS

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Insightful Step	Wis 13, Bluff 3 ranks	Feint to reduce opponent's attack roll
Piston Rage	Rage, steamborg level 1+	Add artificial part bonus to Strength while raging
Prophetic Step	Insightful Step, Improved Feint	Feint to reduce multiple opponents' attack rolls
Tinker's Touch	Knowledge (steam engines) 3 ranks	Inflict critical hits and sneak attacks against constructs
Metamagic Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefit**
Power Spell	13 in appropriate ability	Add ability modifier to spell damage
Spell Cleave	Power Spell	Extra spell attack after dropping target

Piston Rage
(General)

You have specially crafted your mechanical body to maximize its strength potential.

Prerequisites: Ability to rage, steamborg level 1+.

Benefit: When you rage, your artificial part bonus is added to your temporary Strength bonus. It does not matter whether you have already used your artificial part bonus to enhance your Strength or for another purpose. For example, a multiclassed 1st-level barbarian/4th-level steamborg normally gains a +4 bonus to Strength when he rages. With this feat, he gains a +6 bonus because of his artificial part +2. This extra bonus wears off when the rage ends, as normal.

Power Spell
(Metamagic)

You tap a powerful inner strength to fuel your spellcasting.

Prerequisites: 13 or higher in appropriate spellcasting ability score (Int for wizards, Cha for sorcerers, Wis for clerics, etc.).

Benefit: When you cast a spell that deals damage, you add your appropriate ability modifier to the damage result. The damage is added for each individual attack generated by the spell. For example, a 5th-level wizard with Int 16 casts *magic missile*. Normally, this would produce three missiles that each does 1d4+1 damage. With this feat, each missile would do 1d4+4 damage. If the same wizard cast *fireball*, the attack would do 5d6+3 damage.

Special: The ability modifier is only added to hit point damage inflicted directly from the spell. It does not apply to duration, range, area or other aspects of the spell, nor does it apply to other kinds of damage or secondary damaging effects. For example, casting the *poison* spell with this feat would have no added benefit.

Prophetic Step
(General)

You maneuver around your opponents with uncanny ease, deftly predicting their attacks and stepping aside before they materialize.

Prerequisites: Improved Feint, Insightful Step.

Benefit: You can make a feint action to frustrate the attacks of multiple opponents. Make a Bluff check to feint as usual, using a move action due to your Improved Feint feat. You can use this feint to mislead a number of opponents equal to your Wisdom bonus, provided they are within your line of sight. Each such opponent makes a Sense Motive check to oppose your feint, as usual. Those that fail the opposed check suffer a penalty to all attack and damage rolls against you equal to your base attack bonus. This penalty takes place immediately and lasts until your first action in the following round.

Special: A mech jockey of sufficient level to have the Mech Fingers – Skill Transfer ability can use this feat while in a mech.

Spell Cleave
(Metamagic)

You can strike down multiple foes with a single spell.

Prerequisite: Power Spell.

Benefit: If you deal enough damage with a spell in one round to make an opponent drop, you can continue the momentum of the spell toward another target. The spell must have a single target (area-effect spells cannot be used with this feat) and must have a casting time of 1 round or less. When the opponent drops, you can immediately extend the specific spell effect that dropped him toward another opponent within the maximum range and other normal parameters of the spell. (Spells that require touch attacks, such as *vampiric touch,* cannot be used with this feat. However, such spells, if already active, can be used with the standard Cleave feat.) You cannot affect more than one extra target with this feat each round. A cleaved spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level. You must declare that you are casting a cleaved spell before you roll the dice.

For example, imagine a 5th-level wizard with Int 16 and this feat who casts *magic missile* against an orc. The spell generates three missiles, each of which does 1d4+4 damage. The second missile kills the orc. The wizard can then extend the effect of that second missile to impact one other target, for another 1d4+4 damage. He can then continue the original spell by aiming the third missile at a target. Even if the third missile drops the target, he cannot cleave with it, as he has already used that effect for this round.

Tinker's Touch
(General)

Your deep understanding of mechanical creatures allows you to identify their weak points.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (steam engines) 3 ranks.

Benefit: You can make sneak attacks against constructs, and inflict critical hits on them, as if they were living creatures. You never suffer a penalty to feint attempts against constructs, even if they have nonhuman anatomy or low Intelligence.

Normal: Without this feat, the constructs you attack are immune to critical hits and sneak attacks. The one exception is mechs, which are vulnerable to critical hits (but not sneak attacks) due to their complex construction.

NEW ITEM:
THE STARSHARDS

A powerful hierophant journeyed to the moon 40,000 years ago. He was the first terrestrial creature to walk there. What he saw were the earliest stages of life, a sort of life that was nothing like life on the surface: puddles and oozes and massive creatures without anatomical structure that nonetheless thrived.

This hierophant was called Athuraz, and he was lawful good. His divination spells quickly revealed that the moon held far greater significance than just another place to adventure. Its creatures were utterly unable to communicate with either him or, as he discovered, his god. They were truly alien — and their alien intelligence was coalescing into divine forces outside the terrestrial pantheon.

Athuraz lived as a mortal for 3,000 years, finally rising to his own place on the outer

planes as a minor demigod. All the while, his experience on the moon remained with him. As a demigod, he watched the formation of the young lunar gods. With prescient vision, he foresaw that they would eventually clash with the creatures of earth. He did not know when or how, but he knew it was inevitable. To prevent bloodshed should the event occur long after his influence had passed, Athuraz created the *starshards*. He imbued them with the fullness of his essence, nearly killing himself in the process. As a result, the *starshards* are extremely powerful, and Athuraz's inert husk now floats through the Astral Plane in a zombielike state, its spark of divinity barely detectable.

Eight *starshards* exist. Athuraz hid three on the moon and five on Highpoint's surface. The *starshards* have a number of minor powers, which have been experienced by countless adventurers who have encountered the items over the millennia. Yet they are actually far, far more powerful than anyone has ever realized. Only when the time is right — as it now is — will their full powers finally emerge.

To ensure the *starshards* would be found when their time came about, Athuraz had previously planted their story in countless legends and myths of innumerable terrestrial and lunar cultures. Now, 35,000 years later, the clash between the lunar and terrestrial gods is reaching its climax. Some of the legends of the *starshards* survived. They are surfacing once again, and not just among the Irontooth Clans. Even some lunar creatures are interested in the artifacts. Few of those who pursue them realize that their quest will actually bring peace to the world. The legends that motivate them are those that speak of the *starshard's* great powers, which they hope to use for selfish purposes — but no legend specifically states what those great powers are. Little do their pursuers know they are divine tools in a cosmic quest for peace.

Powers of the *Starshards*

There are eight *starshards*. Each has the following properties:

- A *starshard* maintains a constant light level within a 50-foot radius, as described in the description of Area 12 in Episode One. If completely covered with a cloak or other solid surface, this ability is suppressed.
- A *starshard* emits patterns of light that mimic the constellations in the sky, both past and present. Studying these patterns grants insight into the future. A *starshard* can be used as the focus for any divination spell, and any divination spell cast within 120 feet of the *starshard* is at +1 caster level and receives a +1 bonus to the Will DC to resist its effects.
- If held by a cleric who casts *prayer* or *commune*, a *starshard* becomes attuned to that character's deity. From then on, the presence of a *starshard* makes direct communication with the deity much simpler. Followers of that deity have +1 caster level when casting divine spells within 120 feet of a *starshard*. Furthermore, such clerics are much more likely to receive messages, dreams or visions from their deity.
- A *starshard* can cause itself and whoever holds it to levitate up to 100 feet off the ground. When not held, it usually rests at a height of 6 to 10 feet.
- The *starshards* are intelligent (Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 18; ego 19). They can communicate via empathy and telepathy, and have darkvision out to 120 feet, as well as blindsense and hearing. Their greater purpose is for them to be reunited when the time is right so that they might forestall conflict between the divine powers. However, they are quite patient and not given to dominating their possessors, except for the occasional subtle push. After all, they're operating on a god's timetable: What's the rush?

Combining the *Starshards*

The real power of the *starshards* becomes evident when they are brought together. When two or more *starshards* are aware of each other, they will rise into the sky together, glowing brightly, and start rotating around each other like planets in a constellation. When this happens, their powers are increased by +1 for each additional *starshard* present. For example, two *starshards* together grant a +2 bonus to the Will save to resist divination spells and +2 caster level to divination spells and all spells of the deities of their respective casters.

Furthermore, combining the *starshards* sets the following events into action:

- Two, three, or four *starshards*: The gods to which the *starshards* are attuned become aware of the fact that they can communicate directly via the *starshards*.
- Five or six *starshards*: Within each pantheon, all gods of alignments to which the *starshards* are attuned can now communicate directly. The powers of those of similar alignment are amplified such that each god is as powerful as the sum total of all gods of that alignment before the *starshards* were brought together.
- Seven *starshards*: All gods within each pantheon can now communicate directly, and all gods of similar alignment can communicate across pantheons. All gods of each pantheon are rendered as powerful as the sum total of all gods in that pantheon before the *starshards* were brought together.
- All eight *starshards*: The power of all gods within all pantheons represented by the *starshards* is equalized. None is stronger than any other, and none is weaker. They are no longer tied to the energies of their followers, or at least those energies now benefit all equally, effectively rendering them irrelevant.

The result of combining all eight *starshards* is a situation in which divine power is spread equally. The gods can either choose to destroy themselves utterly through endless war or make perpetual peace. The presence of weaker gods who are now super-powerful creates a core of defenders for the *starshards*, for these gods have the most to lose if the *starshards* are separated. Finally, the joining of the *starshards* has another effect, one that Athuraz foresaw long ago: Athuraz himself will be revived and raised to the same power level of all other deities, to whom he can speak in the name of peace.

Such are the *starshards*.

Strong divination; CL 25th; Weight 3 lb.

NEW MECHS

This section provides the stats for two new mechs used in the adventure.

MAGWAGON (FREIGHT MODEL)

Size: Colossal
Power Source: Steam
Payload Units: 16
Height: 35 ft.
Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft.
Crew: 4 (weapons: 2)
Firing Ports: 12
Hit Dice: 48
Hit Points: 264
Critical Thresholds: Green, Yellow 132, Orange 66, Red 26
Base Initiative: –1
Speed: 50 ft. (6 mph)
Maneuverability: Average
AC: 1 (–1 Dex, –8 size)
Hardness: 9 (stone)
Base Melee Attack: +2
Base Ranged Attack: –1
Unarmed Damage: 1d12+10
Trample: largest Large; safe Medium; damage 4d6
Saves: Fort 0, Ref –1, Will +0
Abilities: Str 30, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis –, Cha –
Mechcraft DC: 39
Base Planning Time: 78 days
Base Cost: 2,752 gp
Total Cost: 9,128 gp
Labor Requirements: 3,840 man-hours
Construction Time: 16 days (30 avg. laborers plus 3 overseers)
Special: Heavy payload

PAYLOAD USAGE

PU	USE
4	Workspace for crew
8	Storage/passenger space (heavy payload = up to 16,000 pounds)
4	Onboard weaponry
I28	Total

The Magwagon is an old mech model. It was originally built as a stopgap solution. The Stenians needed to develop a mech fleet quickly to extend their influence, so they constructed large, intimidating mechs with readily available materials. The Magwagon, with its stone armor and impressive physique, was one such creation. As more advanced mechs were later built, many Magwagons were retrofitted to freight duty. The above profile is for a Magwagon freighter, which resembles an awkward dump truck on legs.

The pilot rides in the head, which has room for two Medium creatures. The boiler and coal dump are located in the huge cargo hold, which can be used for passengers or loads of even the heaviest metals. The left arm holds the mech's only weapon, a Huge steam cannon.

RAPTOR

Size: Large
Power Source: Clockwork
Payload Units: 3
Height: 10 ft.
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Crew: 1 (weapons: 1)
Firing Ports: 3
Hit Dice: 9
Hit Points: 50
Critical Thresholds: Green, Yellow 25, Orange 12, Red 5
Base Initiative: +2
Speed: 60 ft. (7 mph) (70 ft./8 mph when piloted by Irontooth with Speed Freak feat)
Maneuverability: Perfect
AC: 11 (+2 Dex, –1 size)
Hardness: 12 (steel)
Base Melee Attack: +3
Base Ranged Attack: +4
Unarmed Damage: 2d6+4

TABLE 5-2: ONBOARD WEAPONS

Location	Arc of Fire	Weapon (damage, range in ft., other)	PU	Crew
Magwagon Onboard Weapons				
Left arm	180° forward	Huge steam cannon (2d10, 1,000)	4	2
Total			**4**	**2**
Raptor Onboard Weapons				
Left arm	180° forward	Large steam gun (1d10, 200)	2	1
Total 2 1			**6**	**2**

Trample: largest Tiny; safe Tiny; damage 1d6

Saves: Fort –2, Ref +4, Will +0

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 18, Con –,
Int –, Wis –, Cha –

Mechcraft DC: 40

Base Planning Time: 80 days

Base Cost: 1,021 gp

Total Cost: 5,677 gp

Labor Requirements: 960 man-hours

Construction Time: 20 days
(6 avg. laborers)

Special: Combat spikes, fast legs, steady feet

Note: Base trip bonus is +12 (+4 for perfect maneuverability, +4 for steady feet, +4 for size Large)

Payload Usage

PU	Use
1	Pilot
2	Onboard weaponry
3	**Total**

The Raptor is a fast, nimble mech developed by the Irontooth Clans for reconnaissance purposes. Only 10 feet tall, it is a pipsqueak in the world of mechs but a frightening opponent in the world of men. Its (relatively) small size allows it to sneak about in a way larger mechs can't. The steel armor still protects the pilot securely, and the fast legs allow him to outrun many foes. The steady feet let him trip those he can't outrun, and he can follow that up with a devastating unarmed attack, courtesy of the mech's razor-sharp combat spikes. For ranged combat, the Raptor carries a steam gun, but this weapon is rarely used; Irontooth pilots prefer close combat in which they can use their mech fu to its best advantage, so the Raptor usually closes into melee as quickly as possible.

A Raptor looks like a 10-foot-tall bird of prey. Its cockpit is stylized to resemble a hooked beak, and its legs feature gigantic claws (which are more than just decorative elements). The entire mech is layered in razor-sharp steel feathers, which act as combat spikes in close combat.

NEW CREATURES

This section details four new creatures encountered in the adventure.

FERROVORE

A ferrovore is a normal creature that has developed a taste for metal. Its corrosive powers and hunger for all things metallic make even the weakest ferrovores a monumental challenge, for they can reduce an adventurer's gear to rust before he is even within striking range. Ferrovores resemble normal specimens of their type, but smell strongly of metal and have a faint rust-colored tinge to their outward appearance.

Ferrovores result from infestation by a rare fungus that corrodes metal on contact. Living creatures that consume this fungus suffer a horribly painful infection as the fungus interacts with their digestive system. Most die as a result, but a few survive with completely altered physiology. From then on, they can survive only by consuming metal. They are the ferrovores.

For most of history, ferrovores were minor annoyances, but in the age of mechs they have become catastrophically dangerous. Possessing appetites far greater than those of crumble bugs and a devastating breath weapon, most ferrovores can disable a mech in mere seconds. Because a ferrovore that mates with a normal creature of its species is capable of passing on its ferrovorous genes, the creatures are hunted with a vengeance lest they reproduce en masse.

Sample Ferrovore

This example uses a giant fire beetle advanced to 3 HD as the base creature.

Ferrovore Giant Fire Beetle, Advanced

Small Vermin (ferrovore)

Hit Dice: 3d8 (13 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 size, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16

BAB/Grapple: +2/–2

Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus rust)

Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus rust)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Breath weapon (DC 11)

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits, detect metal, corrosive skin (DC 11)

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 7

Skills: —

Feats: —

Environment: Gear forests

Organization: Cluster (2–5) or colony (6–11)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

Level Adjustment: —

This small, red-tinted beetle smells strongly of metal. A gland above each eye produces a red glow that seems distinctly rust-colored.

Combat

This giant fire beetle has an insatiable hunger for metal. The gear forests it inhabits are a veritable smorgasbord of potential meals, so the creature can afford to be picky. It seeks out the cleanest sources it can find, nibbling for hours on end until it is satisfied. The cleanest metals are often those that are magically enchanted in some way, enabling machines to run without messy oils or grease.

Breath Weapon (Ex): Rusting breath, line, 30 feet, every 1d4+1 rounds. Normal metal objects are destroyed instantly; metal magic items receive a Reflex save (DC 11) to avoid destruction. Objects made of wood, stone, gems and other materials are not affected. Metal objects securely contained within sacks, backpacks, pouches and wooden chests are not affected, although the mechanisms that hold the containers shut (such as hinges, buckles or locks) may be destroyed, exposing the metal items to a subsequent attack.

Detect Metal (Ex): The ferrovorous giant fire beetle can smell any metal within 90 feet.

Corrosive Skin (Ex): Any nonmagical metallic object or weapon that comes into contact with the ferrovorous beetle is instantly dissolved to rust, per its breath weapon attack above. Magic items receive a Reflex save to avoid being destroyed. The metal weapon is still capable of doing damage before being disintegrated by the creature's skin.

Creating a Ferrovore

"Ferrovore" is an acquired template that can be added to any animal, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, ooze or vermin (hereafter referred to as the base creature). After assuming the template, the base creature's type does not change. However, "ferrovore" is added to the creature's subtype. A ferrovore has all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Attacks: The attacks remain the same as the base creature. However, any attack that involves physical contact with the target inflicts corrosive damage per the ferrovore's corrosive skin ability (see below) in addition to normal damage.

Special Attacks: The ferrovore has all the special attacks of the base creature, and it gains the following:

Breath Weapon (Ex): The ferrovore can exhale a rusting mist (line, 30 feet, every 1d4+1 rounds). Any metallic object fully enveloped by the breath weapon (which looks like a cloud of red hissing steam) corrodes and becomes useless immediately. Objects partially covered by the breath weapon see the covered area disintegrate into rust. The size of the object in question does not alter the speed of this effect. Nonmagical metal items receive no save. Magic items receive a Reflex save (DC equals 10 + half the ferrovore's HD + the ferrovore's Constitution modifier). Objects made of wood, stone, gems and other materials are not affected by the breath weapon.

Special Qualities: The ferrovore has all the special qualities of the base creature and gains the following:

Detect Metal (Ex): A ferrovore can smell the presence of any metal object within 90 feet.

Corrosive Skin (Ex): Any nonmagical metallic object or weapon that comes into contact with a ferrovore is instantly dissolved to rust, per its breath weapon attack above. Magic items receive a Reflex save to avoid being

destroyed. The metal weapon is still capable of doing damage before disintegrating.

A secondary implication of this ability is that any natural attack of the base creature that touches an enemy also inflicts its corrosive skin quality. For example, if a ferrovore succeeds in a bite attack against an enemy in plate mail, the plate mail is instantly destroyed.

Challenge Rating: Same as base creature +1, if base creature is 6 HD or less; as base creature +2, if base creature is 7 HD or more.

LUNAR ELEMENTAL

Lunar Elemental, Small
Small Elemental (Lunar)
Hit Dice: 2d8+8 (17 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15
BAB/Grapple: +1/–3
Attack: Slam +2 melee (1d4)
Full Attack: Slam +2 melee (1d4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Lunar mastery, adaptive
Special Qualities: Lunar traits, entropic skin (DC 15), blindsense
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +7
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 4, Wis 18, Cha 11
Skills: Listen +7, Spot +6
Feats: —
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually neutral
Advancement: 3 HD (Small)
Level Adjustment: —

Lunar Elemental, Medium
Medium Elemental (Lunar)
Hit Dice: 4d8+20 (38 hp)

Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16
BAB/Grapple: +3/+5
Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d6+2)
Full Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Lunar mastery, adaptive
Special Qualities: Lunar traits, entropic skin (DC 17), blindsense
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +9
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 4, Wis 20, Cha 11
Skills: Listen +9, Spot +8
Feats: —
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually neutral
Advancement: 5–7 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment: —

Lunar Elemental, Large
Large Elemental (Lunar)
Hit Dice: 8d8+48 (84 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18
BAB/Grapple: +6/+14
Attack: Slam +9 melee (2d6+4)
Full Attack: 2 slams +9 melee (2d6+4)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Lunar mastery, adaptive
Special Qualities: Lunar traits, entropic skin (DC 20), blindsense
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +12
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 4, Wis 22, Cha 11
Skills: Listen +12, Spot +11
Feats: —
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral

Advancement: 9–15 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: —

This strange, putty-like mass of flesh seems unable to stand still. Its body pulses and undulates before you, slowly changing shape into a semi-humanoid state. The yellowish material that composes it has an oily sheen, and you can't help but think you catch reflections of yourself in it.

Description

Lunar elementals are embodiments of raw entropy. Their bodies are constantly in motion, undulating and even mutating before the eyes. They cannot alter their mass, but their shape seems to change almost subconsciously; they generally assume the rough shape of whatever creature stands before them. Their natural state, if it can be called that, is a shapeless mass of putty, sometimes flat like a pool of fluid, other times bulky like a pile of clay.

Scholars are divided as to what composes the body of a lunar elemental. The material is spongy but durable. It has been likened to a "solid ooze." Regardless of the lunar elemental's shape, it retains its opalescent yellowish color.

The most unusual part of a lunar elemental's anatomy is the haunting images reflected on its surface. Like the entropy it represents, the elemental reflects all possibilities, in a random and chaotic fashion. Those who stare at its skin catch glimpses of what appears to be them, but at different ages, in strange surroundings. Sometimes the image is something that really happened or something that is truly destined to happen, but most often is an alternate possibility, a tangent of entropic fate that will never connect to the material plane.

Lunar elementals appear to speak an unidentified lunar language. They attack terrestrial creatures on sight. They have been seen cooperating with other lunar creatures, although it is unknown whether this is voluntary or coerced. Lunar elementals show no signs of being extraplanar and do not appear to hail from another plane; nonetheless, they are distinctively elemental in nature. Some sages theorize that the moon may provide access to a different set of planes, or alternate versions of the known planes, and perhaps the plane of lunar energy is one such place.

Combat

A lunar elemental moves in fits and starts. Sometimes it is slow and ponderous; other times it is nimble and quick. Its form slowly adapts to that of the creature it is fighting, and it also acquires powers similar to its enemy. All the while, images of its opponent flash across its surface, distracting them and in some cases causing emotional reactions.

Lunar Mastery (Ex): The lunar elemental receives a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls as long as it and its target are in contact with the moon or fragments of the moon (including meteorites that have fallen to earth). If the elemental's target is not in contact with the moon (including via flight or any other method that takes its feet off the surface), it does not receive this bonus. If both the elemental and its target are not in contact with the moon, the lunar elemental receives a –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls.

Adaptive (Su): The lunar elemental slowly adapts to the shape of one opponent. It does not turn into an exact mimic, and there's no chance that anyone will confuse the elemental with the target. At best, it resembles a rough likeness carved from clay. As the elemental adapts, however, it slowly intuits the nature of its opponent and becomes better equipped to combat it.

Each round it is not in combat, the lunar elemental may choose to use a standard action to adapt. When in combat, it does not need to use an action if it damages the opponent with a normal melee attack; striking an enemy automatically induces adaptation. For each round of adaptation, the lunar elemental gains a +1 insight bonus to attack rolls and armor class against that one target, to a maximum of +10. Each additional bonus makes the elemental's physical form change, too, bringing it closer and closer to the form of the target creature. A lunar elemental that strikes a new opponent reverts to a +1 bonus against that new opponent and no bonus against the original target, and its form begins to shift toward the new opponent.

For example, a lunar elemental is fighting two steamborgs. For the first round, the lunar elemental studies one of them and begins to adapt, gaining a +1 insight bonus to attacks and AC against that steamborg. On the second round, the lunar elemental attacks that opponent (receiving a +1 bonus on the attack roll). The attack is successful, which increases the lunar elemental's insight bonus to +2. On the third round, the lunar elemental makes another attack (this time at +2), but it misses. Its bonus remains at +2 and does not increase. On the fourth round, the lunar elemental decides to target the other steamborg. It attacks (with no insight bonus against this target) and causes damage. It now has a +0 insight bonus against the first steamborg and a +1 bonus against the second.

Lunar Traits (Ex): Lunar creatures suffer half damage from elemental attacks (air, earth, fire or water), or no damage on a successful save. They receive a +10 bonus to saves against mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns and morale effects), mind blasts and psionic attacks, and thought detection due to alien psychology.

Entropic Skin (Su): Any creature glancing at a lunar elemental sees the nature of change in its skin. Flickering glimpses of potential pasts and haunting futures distract the viewer. Anyone attacking or even staring at a lunar elemental must make a Will save (at the DC indicated in the creature's stats) each round or be dazzled (–1 to attack rolls and Search and Spot checks). This condition lasts only until the creature's next turn, but a new check must be rolled each round. The save DC is Wisdom-based.

NANITE

Nanite

Tiny Vermin (Lunar)

Hit Dice: 1/2d8 (2 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 12

BAB/Grapple: +0/–11
Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d3–3 plus 1 acid)
Full Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d3–3 plus 1 acid)
Space/Reach: 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Death burst
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., lunar traits, vermin traits
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities: Str 5, Dex 14, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +6
Feats: Weapon Finesse
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary, pack (2–20), or swarm
Challenge Rating: 1/4
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: –
Level Adjustment: –

Nanite Swarm
Tiny Vermin
(Lunar, Swarm)
Hit Dice: 6d8 (27 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 12
BAB/Grapple: +4/–
Attack: Swarm (2d6 plus 1d4 acid)
Full Attack: Swarm (2d6 plus 1d4 acid)
Space/Reach: 20 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Acid bursts
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/piercing or slashing, lunar traits, vermin traits, swarm traits
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +0
Abilities: Str 7, Dex 14, Con 10, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +6, Listen +2, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse
Environment: Lunar or meteors
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: –
Level Adjustment: –

This little creature looks like a five-legged spider whose carapace can barely contain its bulk. It can't weigh more than five pounds, but it looks grossly overweight for a creature with a frame its size.

Description

Nanites are tiny bug-like creatures that are the lunar equivalent of rats. Weighing no more than five pounds each, they are more pest than threat — except on the rare occasions when they gather in swarms, when they can be deadly. When attacked, they have a disgusting tendency to burst, showering the surrounding area with their caustic blood.

Combat

Nanites are pests and scavengers. They attack when frightened, hungry or threatened. Their acidic blood inflicts an extra point of damage when they bite and also makes possible their death burst attack.

Death Burst (Ex): Nanites have acidic blood. Their bodies explode when they die, showering the surrounding area with blood. A nanite reduced to –1 hit points or lower immediately explodes. All creatures within 5 feet must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or take 1 point of acid damage. Those who make their save take no damage.

Acid Bursts (Ex): Combat against a swarm of nanites results in a constant shower of caustic blood. Each time the swarm takes damage, it inflicts 1 point of acid damage on all creatures within 10 feet. A Reflex save (DC 10) avoids damage.

SPAWN OF SEROFICITACIT

Young Spawn

Medium Ooze (Lunar)

Hit Dice: 3d10+15 (31 hp)

Initiative: –5

Speed: 10 ft.

AC: 7 (–5 Dex, +2 natural), touch 5, flat-footed 7

BAB/Grapple: +2/+6

Attack: Slam +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change)

Full Attack: Slam +6 melee (1d4+4 plus change)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Change

Special Qualities: Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits

Saves: Fort +6, Ref -4, Will +5

Skills: Bluff +6, Knowledge (lunar) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Spot +10

Feats: Insightful Step, Seroficitacit's Changes

Environment: Lunar or meteor

Organization: Solitary or coven (2–7), often found with lunar skinstealers

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4–6 HD (Medium); 7–12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: —

Elder Spawn

Large Ooze (Lunar)

Hit Dice: 7d10+49 (87 hp)

Initiative: –5

Speed: 10 ft.

AC: 8 (–1 size, –5 Dex, +4 natural), touch 4, flat-footed 8

BAB/Grapple: +5/+17

Attack: Slam +12 melee (1d6+8 plus change)

Full Attack: Slam +12 melee (1d6+8 plus change)

Space/Reach: 15 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Change

Special Qualities: Blindsight 40 ft., moon lore, ooze traits, lunar traits

Saves: Fort +9, Ref -3, Will +13

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 1, Con 24, Int 22, Wis 22, Cha 1

Skills: Bluff +10, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (lunar) +26, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Knowledge (religion) +16, Listen +16, Spot +16

Feats: Insightful Step, Prophetic Step, Seroficitacit's Changes

Environment: Lunar or meteor

Organization: Solitary or coven (2–7), often found with lunar skinstealers

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 8–12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: —

This shapeless mass of gray protoplasm lies flat before you. Small buds and tentacles sprout occasionally from its surface before dissipating back into the goo.

Description

The spawn of Seroficitacit is a creature created by the lunar god of change. One or more spawns are bestowed upon each temple of Seroficitacit, where they serve as guardians and guides. Unlike most oozes, a spawn is quite intelligent. It is an oracle of sorts, channeling the direct will of its creator and advising its worshippers appropriately, and serves as a vast storehouse of knowledge on lunar history.

A spawn appears as a shapeless mass of gray or ochre protoplasm, generally a flat puddle no more than one foot deep. It is an ooze in the purest form: a creature with no limits to its possibilities. Spawns do not speak in any terrestrial manner, but are nonetheless capable of communicating

TABLE 5-4: SEROFICITACIT'S CHANGES

Roll (1d8)	Seroficitacit's Changes
1	*Hardened form*: spawn is partially paralyzed (speed and reach halved)
2	*Ethereal sight*: the spawn's blindsight extends onto the Ethereal Plane, but it is completely blind on the Material Plane (50% miss chance)
3	*Translucent body*
4	*Liquefied*: occupies twice the normal space but is only 1" high
5	*Antigravity effect*: floats 2 feet above the ground; no change to speed or other stats
6	*Furred*
7	*Spines*: deals an additional 1d3 damage on any slam attack or grapple check
8	*Whip tendril*: can use full-round action to make a single attack with double normal reach and +2 bonus to damage

directly with Seroficitacit's worshippers, primarily through dreams and enigmatic thoughts that are conveyed to those who meditate in their presence.

As a temple grows, more spawns are formed. Those already present grow in size, seemingly deriving their sustenance from the strength of the temple's worship. When they reach sufficient size, they split off portions, forming younger spawns from their own bodies.

Unfortunately for terrestrial creatures, the spawns have no way to communicate with them. It's not that much of a loss, however; a spawn views all terrestrial creatures as the next stage in the world's process of change and is all too happy to destroy them to fulfill Seroficitacit's next phase of change.

Combat

A spawn rarely leaves the basin in which it is kept within a temple of Seroficitacit. When it senses the approach of terrestrial creatures, it readily attacks with its slam attacks, which impart not just a great deal of force, but the whim of Seroficitacit as well.

Although spawns cover a wide area, they resemble puddles or pools rather than solid masses. Their size characteristics are based on weight rather than area.

Change (Su): Anyone hit by a spawn's slam attack must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) or see their form mutated by the channeled will of Seroficitacit. Roll 1d20 on Table 5-3 to determine the effect of the change. The change takes place instantaneously and is a permanent physiological change; it can-

not be undone with *remove curse* or the like, though *wish* or *miracle* may undo the change.

A character's minimum speed is 5 ft. Note that the DC for this check is always 10. It is a divine power not influenced by the spawn's size or personal capabilities.

Moon Lore (Ex): A spawn of Seroficitacit is imbued by its creator with a vast storehouse of knowledge about the moon. This knowledge only grows as it ages. A spawn receives a +10 bonus to all checks relating to lunar knowledge, including Knowledge (lunar) and other Knowledge skill checks involving the moon or its history, creatures or religions.

Ooze Traits (Ex): Unlike normal oozes, a spawn *is* affected by mind-affecting affects, although it has the lunar creature's normal resistance to such effects. It is still blind, with immunity to gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions and other attack forms that rely on sight. It is immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, polymorph and stunning, and not subject to critical hits or flanking.

Lunar Traits (Ex): Lunar creatures suffer half damage from elemental attacks (air, earth, fire or water), or no damage on a successful save. They receive a +10 bonus to saves against mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns and morale effects), mind blasts and psionic attacks, and thought detection due to alien psychology.

Seroficitacit's Changes: All spawns of Seroficitacit have this feat. When generating a spawn for an encounter, make a Change Check for the spawn per the usual rules for the feat and apply the results. This makes every spawn encounter different. If you're stuck on ideas for the spawn's changes, roll 1d8 on Table 5-4. (Note that 25% are harmful, 25% helpful and 50% neutral, per the feat's rules.)

TABLE 5-3: EFFECT OF SPAWN ATTACK

Roll (1d20)	Change
1–2	Melted face (–1 Cha)
3–4	Enlarged head and rapid brain growth (+1 Int)
5–6	Distorted muscle growth (+1 Str, –5 ft. speed)
7–8	1d4 new fingers sprout from each hand (+1 Dex but difficulty using some equipment)
9–10	Elastic limbs (+8 to Escape Artist checks)
11–12	Melted leg (–10 ft. speed)
13–14	Crystallized form (–20 ft. speed, –2 Dex, +4 Con)
15–16	Tactile awareness (gains blindsight 40 ft.)
17–18	Slurred thoughts and speech (–1 Int, –2 Cha)
19–20	Thoughts distorted into alien psychology (treated as lunar creature for purposes of saves against mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns and morale effects), mind blasts and psionic attacks, and thought detection due to alien psychology; gains +10 to save against these effects but has a –5 penalty to caster level checks, DCs, and other checks to create them itself)

LEGAL INFORMATION

DESIGNER'S NOTES

The Shardsfall Quest is an amalgam of several longer adventures I ran in my first **DragonMech** campaign. I've taken the basic concepts, rewritten them as shorter episodes, and tied them together with the larger concept of the *starshards*. In that first campaign, all of these elements were present, including an earlier version of the *starshards*: They were crystalline pendants, in the possession of nearly a dozen brothers, sisters and various half-siblings, most of whom didn't know each other, all of whom were imparted with scattered portions of a half-understood prophecy, and each of whom bore the same strange birthmark. The PCs stumbled into this prophecy when the dying pilot of their hired mech asked them to get his *starshard* into the hands of his sister. But that's a story for another day.

Playtesting this adventure led to some interesting situations. As usual, the players did things I never expected. This was in spite of the fact that most of the scenes in this module came from other adventures the same players had been through over the preceding year. At the very onset of **The Shardsfall Quest**, the PCs decided that instead of entering the obvious beginning of the adventure (Area 2 in the first meteor), they would explore the crack running down the center of the meteor. So they pitted their 1st-level party against the several spawns of Seroficitacit residing in the ravine between the two meteor halves. They'd faced such creatures in an earlier

DragonMech campaign, so perhaps that was why they felt confident of quick success. Unknown to them, however, I'd retooled the monster and made the spawns tougher. Less than an hour into the session, two of five party members were dead, and the remaining three were dragging away the bodies and trying to figure out how to retrieve their coglayer's contraption, which was now guarded by the remaining spawn. They, of course, blamed me for not properly telegraphing how dangerous the spawns were. ("You should have said it looked like a *really powerful* ooze!")

By the next session, their neophyte characters were back on their feet and ready to explore the meteor the way the read-aloud text said they should. We played through the following episodes without incident, until we reached the second lunar temple. Herein lay the greatest D&D battle that I have ever witnessed.

Before I tell you about this battle, you have to understand something about lunar skinstealers. They've been a consistent element of my **DragonMech** campaigns, and the players know how to fight them. The skinstealers are extremely powerful if they win the surprise round and take over a PC immediately. Otherwise, they're dead meat, easily defeated with ranged attacks. Because the playtesters knew to expect them (in a way that your own first-time players won't), I made a few allowances in the skinstealers'
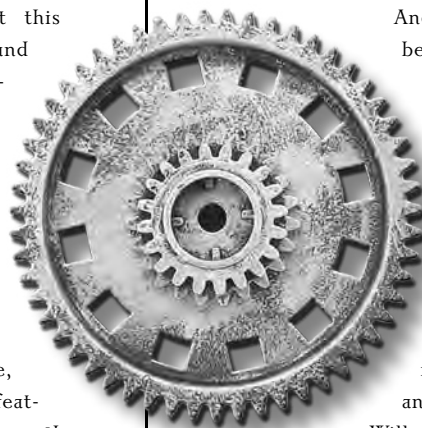
favor. Suffice it to say, they made their Hide check more than once due to divine intervention.

This epic battle began with one such Hide check. It started in Area 4 of the second lunar temple. The PCs opened the door to Area 5A in the southwest corner, where they had a rocking battle against the spawn there. Next they detected the secret doors and entered the hidden room in the northeast corner. Here I departed from my own adventure text and made it a repeat of Area 5A (with the spawn, rather than two skinstealers), hoping to lull them into a sense of false security about what to expect from the last hidden chamber. When they finally opened the southeast secret door, they had their "anti-ooze SWAT-team tactics" down pat, and were prepared to dispatch another spawn. Instead, they found an empty chamber.

I made this Area 5B. The PCs went in searching. The skinstealers made a terrific Hide check (wonder how that happened?) and escaped notice. The characters blundered right into the middle of the room before one of the skinstealers made a surprise attack.

And then the fun began. The skinstealer attacked Fin, a half-elf clockwork ranger and one of the party's two main fighters. The skinstealer made its grapple and Fin failed his Will save, leaving him under the skinstealer's control. This ended the surprise round, and now the regular round began. The skin-

stealer-hosted Fin came last in the order. All four of the other PCs got a chance to attack him, but they rolled terribly. Even Rangus, the half-orc steamborg-barbarian who wielded a greataxe with a 20 Strength, failed to land a blow. Only the halfling coglayer hit, with a measly 1d4 points of damage caused by a ranged shocker device he had built.

Now came the skinstealers' turn. The second stealer jumped from hiding and attacked Rangus. It hit and grappled. Everybody assumed the dim-witted Rangus was done for, but he somehow made his save. Then the skinstealer-hosted Fin attacked... and the party would never be the same. He aimed for Ang, the party cleric. Attacking with two weapons, he rolled a 20 to threaten a critical, then rolled another 20 to confirm it. He rolled near-maximum critical damage, then proceeded to deal near-max damage with his second weapon.

In a single round, Fin the skinstealer-possessed clockwork ranger dealt more damage than he'd done in any round of the entire campaign so far – and he dealt it to the party's cleric.

Fin's player continued to have the best rolls of his career. In the combat's second round, he dropped the cleric. In the fourth round, he killed Sarah Mae the mech jockey (all the way to –10 hit points). Meanwhile, the rest of the players had been rolling terribly. They'd managed to dispatch the second skinstealer (which rolled poorly) but couldn't touch Fin.

In the sixth round, Fin dropped Rangus. Until that point in the campaign, Rangus had been nigh-unstoppable, a low-level character who routinely dealt 12+ points of damage every round– but against Fin, the half-orc barbarian-steamborg's Power Attack and 20 Strength didn't seem to matter one bit!

Round seven began with a moment of stark clarity. Fin's player looked down on a battlefield littered with the bodies of his friends. He had dropped three of the party's five members. He was the fourth,

and his possessed character swung his gaze toward the only remaining PC: Kenteth Clockwinder, the halfling coglayer. Kenteth had done more damage to the skinstealer than anyone else, pelting it with his 1d4-damage shocker for round after round – and now the skinstealer wanted revenge.

Kenteth pondered using his coglayer contraption to fly to safety in the 20-foot-tall ceilings of Area 4, but I reminded him that if he did so, Fin's skinstealer would naturally administer a coup de grace to the remaining members of the party. So the coglayer made a brave choice: to stand and fight the clockwork ranger toe-to-toe.

It didn't last long. Kenteth launched one more attack from his shocker, again doing 1d4 damage, and the skinstealer again shrugged it off. Then Fin stepped into melee and chopped Kenteth down.

There was a moment of silence. The players stared dejectedly at the table. Four of them had dead PCs, a feat which had been administered by the fifth. The campaign was over.

Then Fin's player, Stephen, jumped up. "Wait!" he shouted. "There's still a chance! You're at exactly zero hit points, right?"

"Yes," said Garrick, Kenteth's player. "So what? I die if I do anything! The exertion will put me into negative hit points."

"That's our only hope!" shouted Stephen. "You'll die either way. But if

you kill him with this last shot, the skinstealer will fall off my body and I can save the rest of you!"

A light of hope came into Garrick's eyes. "Yeah!" everybody said. "Go for it!"

Garrick picked up his lucky 20-sider. Kenteth looked Fin in the eye and then shouted the most glorious battle cry a man has ever heard –

"I'LL SEE YOU IN HELL!"

Garrick threw down the d20 with a flourish. His character Kenteth took 1 point of damage and went into negative hit points. But the d20 rolled a hit! Garrick rolled for damage – a measly 1 point on 1d4! But that was enough! Eight consecutive rounds of blasting the skinstealer had finally taken their toll! As Kenteth faded into unconsciousness, the dead skinstealer slipped off of Fin. Fin was back to his senses. Kenteth's sacrifice had saved the party!

From then on it was a race against time as Fin dug through backpacks for healing potions and tried to stabilize the party. In the end, he managed to stabilize everyone, and the party was able to leave the meteor in tatters – but alive. Well, mostly. Sarah Mae the mech jockey was dead-dead, but she'd soon find resurrection.

So, as you consider how to impart this adventure to your players, keep in mind the power of a lunar skinstealer with a surprise round and good dice rolls. There's a reason Area 5B only has one skinstealer now. If you have a skilled, large or experienced party, you might consider two skinstealers in that room. But be careful. The results can be deadly!

Joseph Goodman
May 2004

HANDOUT A

HANDOUT B

MECH NAME **MECHCRAFT DC** MECH SCHEMATIC SHEETS **DragonMech**

SIZE | POWER SOURCE | PAYLOAD UNITS | HEIGHT | SPACE/REACH | **HP** HIT POINTS | TOTAL | WOUNDS/CURRENT HP | DAMAGE REDUCTION | HIT DICE | HARDNESS | SPEED | MANEUVERABILITY

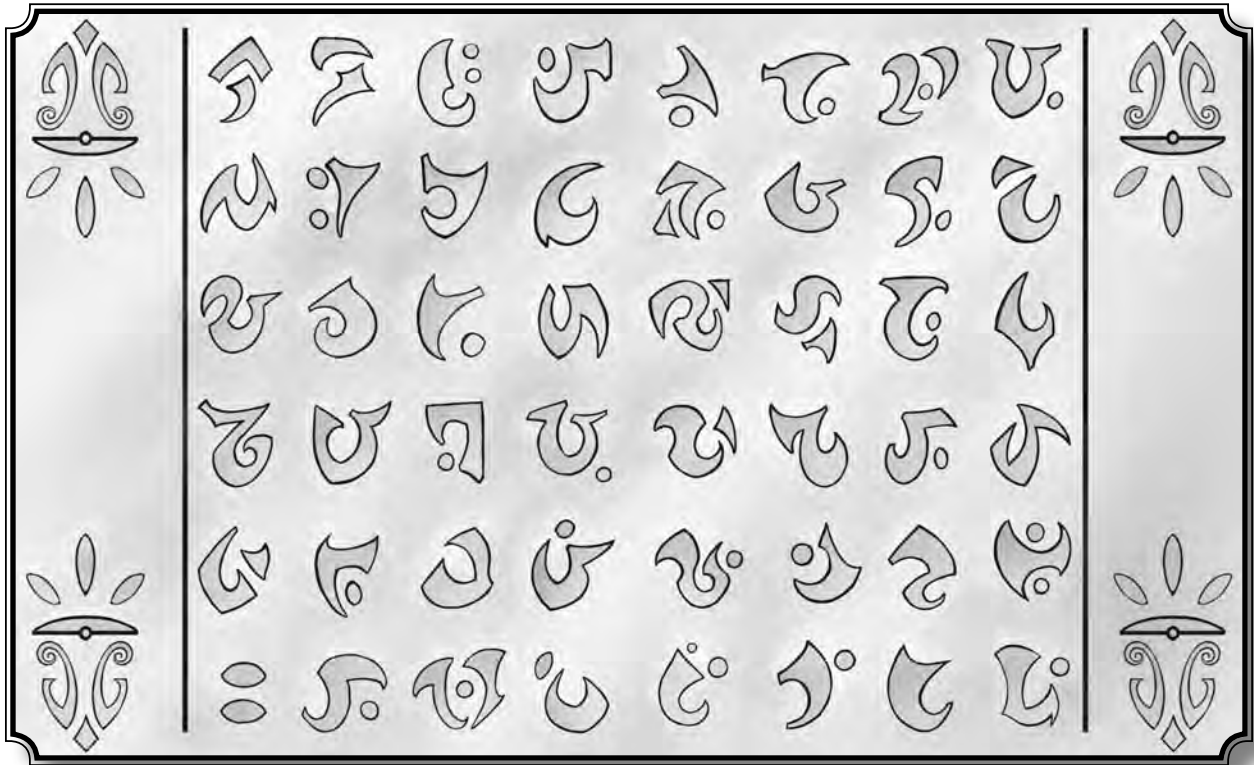**AC** ARMOR CLASS | = 10+ | TOTAL | ARMOR BONUS | SHIELD BONUS | SIZE MODIFIER | MISC MODIFIER | **INITIATIVE** BONUS | = | TOTAL | MECH DEX BONUS | PILOT DEX BONUS | MISC MODIFIER

GREEN **YELLOW** **RED**
CRITICAL THRESHOLDS

FIRING PORTS | CREW | WEAPONS

MELEE ATTACK BONUS | TOTAL | = | MECH ATTACK BONUS | + | MECH STR MODIFIER | + | MECH SIZE MODIFIER | + | GUNNER DEX MOD | + | TEMPORARY MODIFIER

RANGED ATTACK BONUS | = | + | + | + | +

TOTAL | MECH ATTACK BONUS | MECH DEX MODIFIER | GUNNER DEX MOD | MISC MODIFIER | TEMPORARY MODIFIER

BASE PLANNING TIME | DAYS | **BASE** COST | GOLD PIECES | **TOTAL** COST | GOLD PIECES
LABOR TIME | MAN HOURS | **CONSTRUCTION** TIME | = | + | DAYS | AVERAGE LABORERS | OVERSEER(S)

OPTIONS

SAVING THROWS | TOTAL | BASE SAVE | ABILITY MODIFIER | MAGIC MODIFIER | MISC. MODIFIER | TEMPORARY MODIFIER | CONDITIONAL MODIFIERS
FORTITUDE (CONSTITUTION) | = | + | + | + | +
REFLEX (DEXTERITY) | = | + | + | + | +
WILL (WISDOM) | = | + | + | + | +

ABILITY NAME | ABILITY SCORE | ABILITY MODIFIER | TEMPORARY SCORE | TEMPORARY MODIFIER
STR STRENGTH |
DEX DEXTERITY |

NOTE: *Mechs do not have Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma scores.*

ONBOARD WEAPON LOCATION | ARC OF FIRE | WEAPON | DAMAGE | RANGE | OTHER | PU | CREW

UNARMED DAMAGE | BASE
TRAMPLE | LARGEST | SAFE | DAMAGE

SPECIAL ABILITIES

PAYLOAD USAGE | PU | USE

TOTAL

TOTAL

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