

LEGENDARY PLANET



LEGENDARY WORLDS: VOLRETZ

BY KATE BAKER

PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE



LEGENDARY WORLDS: VOLRETZ

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PLANETARY GAZETTEER: VOLRETZ	4
NEW MONSTER: HEAVY METAL ELEMENTAL	6
NEW RULES	9
ADVENTURE HOOKS	12

SUPERSCRIPT REFERENCES

The following superscripts are use to reference rules not found in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*. These references have been hyperlinked to online resources in the PDF version and are provided here for your reference

APG = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

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- Jason Nelson



INTRODUCTION

"This planet will either kill us or make us rich beyond our wildest dreams. It's time to find out which."

Reported comment from Mortuven "Morkk" Morkance, founder of the Morkance Mining Company, on his first mining mission to Volretz

Fiery hail falls on a roiling sea of molten metal. Strangely amorphous metallic creatures leap from the glowing ocean and dive back in. Miners clad in bulky heat protective gear draw valuable metals from the ground. This scorching, unforgiving planet should scare off any visitors, but the temptation of riches is mighty, and the metals that make up Volretz mean a fortune to whoever can dig them out.

Traveling in close orbit to its star, the tiny planet of Volretz glows red with molten metal ore. This acorn-shaped planet originated as a large chunk of an exploded star, and so features a heavy concentration of normally rare metals. The large oceans of Volretz contain no water, but instead vast magma-like seas of molten metal cover most of the surface. The only substantial solid ground lies at the two poles, forming two continents. The shorelines of both continents have distinctive rippled features known as the Ridges, caused by the tides of the oceans changing and the metal heating and cooling. The sky glows red during the day and still has a distinctive reddish tinge at night. During summer, the days are extremely long, and during winter, the days are extremely short. The heavy content of metals in the atmosphere leads to beautiful sunsets and sunrises with vivid colors, and even the most hardened miner can still be touched watching the sun set over the Ridges. The air is thick and heavy, holding in the heat of the planet. Both the days (18 hours) and the years (221 days) are fairly short, and colonists must adapt to the fast pace of life on the harsh planet.

In the Southern continent, devoid of any known life, rocky structures stretch quietly over empty terrain. The only colony on Volretz, the city of Morkansia, resides on the much larger Northern continent at the wide end of the planet. No native creatures populate the land here, and any journey outside the sole city reveals vast empty plains, crossed with insulated roads and occasionally dotted with mines. While the oceans of metal kill most forms of life on contact, rare metal elementals not only inhabit but thrive in the inhospitable seas. Nevertheless, the high value of the ore present in the all-metal planet quickly attracted the attention of "civilized" races once its discovery was made known.

MORKANCE MINING COMPANY

Mortuven "Morkk" Morkance, a human man, established the Morkance Mining Company slightly over two hundred years ago. Although he was far from the only entrepreneur attempting to recover the valuable natural resources of Volretz, his ingenious blending of magical and mechanical methods of heat protection to keep both miners and machinery safe led to his eventual domination of mining on the planet. A ruthless man, Morkk also wasn't above sabotaging the competition. His competitors swore that he had some way of controlling the planet's brutal flaming hailstorms, wreaking havoc on everyone else's equipment, but somehow preserving his own. All other miners eventually withdrew their claims on the planet, though some entrepreneurial explorers wonder to this day if there might be room for more than one operation on Volretz. The current Morkance Mining Company does everything in its not insubstantial power to prevent any other companies from spoiling the cozy monopoly. Further, if Morkk did have a way to control the storms, the secret has been lost to time, as the company continues to be plagued by the violent weather.

The Morkance Mining Company spurred all development on the planet Volretz. In addition to funding both the initial construction and the subsequent expansions of the sole city Morkansia, the company established eight mining



station spread evenly throughout the Northern continent. Approximately eighty employees staff each location, operating the proprietary equipment to draw valuable metals from the ground. When a site is completely drained of the most valuable metals, a crew of employees moves the mining station to a new site, though this process takes nearly six months to complete. The plains of the Northern continent are thus marred by large periodic holes where a mining station once sat. Well-compensated ore dowsers seek optimal locations in advance of the moves, as the expensive process requires a substantial return at each new site. A good location can support a mining station for ten to fifteen years. These stations feature smaller versions of the heat shield that protects the city, though they have a relatively higher likelihood of breaking down. Employees at these sites wear light heat protection suits in case of accidental exposure to the environment. While these positions are dangerous, the pay is quite good, and there is never a shortage of volunteers for these assignments.

Five mobile mining stations sail the oceans, combing the seas for currents of valuable ores. Jobs aboard these stations are even more dangerous than the land sites, and thus, more lucrative. As it's commonly heard in Morkansia bars, "You can feed your family for a year from one month on a mobile station." The refrain, "And feed your family for ten years if you don't come back at all!" refers to the company's generous life insurance policy on employees willing to brave the deadly oceans. The mobile mining stations resemble small battleships, though they are only minimally equipped for combat. These stations collect molten ore directly from the ocean, seeking out currents of the most rare and valuable metals. Large tubes on each side of the ships draw the metals from the ocean. These missions are profitable enough to make the substantial risk from elementals and the environment worth it. The company prefers creatures with fire and heat immunity for these assignments, though other experienced miners fill out the teams of twenty, constantly clad in heavy heat protection suits. Small sleeping pods protect workers at night, as the heavy gear is nearly impossible to sleep in.

All mining takes place in the Northern hemisphere, due to proximity to Morkansia. The dangerous work requires supplies, repairs, and replacement workers within easy access. One doomed experiment proved this all too clearly. The Southern continent still hosts the remains of a mining station established fifty years ago, with a thought toward collecting different metals than are found in the North. The company equipped the Southern mining station well, but the brutal environment took its toll. When a series of equipment malfunctions caused the heat shield to break down completely, all of the workers burned to death during a flaming hailstorm before the company could get anyone out to repair the shield. Rumors abound that the ghosts of the dead miners haunt the station, and the company has kept all mining on or near the Northern continent ever since.

PLANETARY GAZETTEER

MORKANSIA

LN large town

Corruption +0; **Crime** —1; **Economy** +1; **Law** +2; **Lore** —1; **Society** +1

Qualities insular, no questions asked (Adventure Path #99), prosperous

Danger +5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government Autocracy

Population 3,300 (1,000 humans, 600 dwarves, 500 auttains, 300 ifrits, 200 half-orcs, 150 half-elves, 150 fire elementals, 200 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Ancrish Illton (N male human expert 8)

Caltie Whirn (LN female auttaine cleric 9)

Hrent Cibtullon (LG male dwarf expert 7)

Kayriga Sarkit (LN female ifrit (APG) expert 9)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 2,600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 15,000 gp; **Spellcasting** 5th
Minor Items 3d4; **Medium Items** 2d4; **Major Items** 1d4

The lone city on Volretz, Morkansia, sits exactly at the North Pole, the coolest location on the planet. Even so, the temperatures pose serious risk to most creatures without fire immunity. The enormous heat shield covering the city, using technology based on the original technology developed by the original Morkance, keeps the temperature livable for the three thousand residents, though newcomers often complain that it remains uncomfortably warm. A team of both mechanics and magic users keeps the heat shield operating, and the city keeps several redundancies in play. The majority of residents of the city would perish quickly if exposed to the outside environment. Morkansia was built in three development stages, as the heat shield was expanded to increase the population and output of the mines. Virtually every building in the city was planned, and the entire city has an orderly feeling.

The Docks: An enormous multi-level airlock sits at the heart of the industrial city, allowing ships to enter and exit the city without bringing too much hot air into the cooled town. The intake facility, known somewhat sarcastically as the Docks, employs workers to unload vital cargo from incoming vessels and load them back up with valuable metals. Unsurprisingly, the intake facility connects directly to the the original Morkance processing plant, where the raw metal ores are refined into tradable goods. Huge conveyer belts move refined metal bars directly onto cargo ships. The factory, which has expanded alongside the city, employs a large percentage of the population of Morkansia. Even those residents who aren't directly employed by the Morkance

Mining Company generally make a living providing services to the factory workers and miners.

Central Morkansia: Visitors leaving the Docks by way of the pedestrian exit heading toward the town square are immediately greeted by a statue of the town and mining company's founder, Mortuven "Morkk" Morkance. The large statue features Morkk as a simple miner, rather than the wealthy mining magnate he became. Morkansia youth frequently vandalize the statue in minor ways, but the city promptly repairs any damage, lest the Mining Company look bad. Just behind the statue, the city government buildings form Morkansia's town square. The city's mayor, Hrent Cibtullon, works and lives here. This jovial dwarf, with dark brown hair and a surprisingly red beard, keeps the city's administration running smoothly, and the popular leader expects to easily win another term. However, while the democratically elected representative is ostensibly the highest authority in the city, the wise residents generally understand that the real seat of power is the Mining Company's on-site general manager, Kayriga Sarkit. Shops and restaurants fill out the downtown region, as well as an amphitheater, where the mayor gives speeches, the Mining Company gives quarterly updates, and local music and theater groups perform.

The temple of Haymot Steel-Arm stretches higher than all the other buildings in the downtown area, with a huge metal arm cresting the roof. While other smaller houses of worship exist throughout the city, the Temple of Haymot Steel-Arm is by far the largest, spurred on by donations from the Morkance Mining Company, who approve of the message of technology, innovation, and hard work. The head priest Caltie Whirn, a tall auttaine with black hair and dark skin has an intricate clockwork arm made of Morkance gold and platinum. Caltie enjoys a fair amount of social cachet in town, and the residents of Morkansia frequently ask her to settle disputes or mediate arguments when they don't want to go to the town guard or Mining Company higher-ups. However, she knows quite well that her temple would be far less prominent without the fat wallet of the Morkance Mining Company paying in, and so she is unlikely to oppose them in any way.

The largest structure on Volretz, the Morkance Mining Company Foundry, sprawls over a large part of the city, exceeding even the area of the Docks. This pinnacle of modern industry employs nearly eight hundred people, who convert the unrefined ore from both the ground mines and the oceans into refined bulk metals to be sold all over the galaxies. Precious metals like silver, gold, and platinum; industrial metals like iron and tin; and rare metals like antimony all go through processing in this facility. Huge machines separate different metals, remove impurities, and form bars of pure metals, generating enough heat along the way to make standing in some parts of the building rival going outside the shield. Expert workers create alloys like

steel, and quite a few blacksmiths make metal goods on site. While the finished goods business is dwarfed by the trade goods side of things, MMC ammunition, weapons, and armor supply the town guard directly. The paranoid Morkance family wanted to ensure that the location could protect itself, even if enemies interrupted the ships delivering cargo. Additionally, it is much cheaper to fabricate building materials and household goods on site, since the cost of importing everything drives up the price of everyday items. Most of the city's transient population lives in Central Morkansia, near the factory, with plans to make good money and then leave for more pleasant planets. Permanent residents tend to live either in downtown Morkansia near the town square or in Outer Morkansia.

The Greenbelt: A hundred and sixty years ago, the second major expansion of Morkansia established a series of greenhouses and two large water tanks, one of which specifically supplies the Morkance factory. Intended to reduce the reliance of Morkansia on externally delivered supplies, the greenhouses can't generate quite enough food to sustain the city indefinitely, but do substantially reduce the dangers of erratic cargo deliveries. The water tanks are refilled through a combination of divine magic and water processing. Quite a few divine casters work for the city, keeping the tanks filled, the greenhouses blooming, and even maintaining a couple of municipal swimming pools for residents.

The initial shipments of saplings, seeds, and sprouts proved not to be entirely sterile, and some rodents, birds, and insects also journeyed to Volretz, largely through eggs and nests hidden in the plants. These common animals have successfully adapted to life in Morkansia, and these creatures have substantially higher levels of heat tolerance than their counterparts on other planets. Arborists deal with invasive pests eating the greenhouse crops and birds flock to the town square, oddly familiar sights on this unusual planet. The farmers who grow the crops typically live in the Greenbelt, near their greenhouses. A few breed chickens for fresh eggs and occasional fresh meat, but any other livestock would require far too large a footprint.

Outer Morkansia: A hundred and ten years ago, the third major city expansion once again increased the capacity of the Morkance factory as well as the livability of the city, with nicer homes, more greenhouses and water tanks, and amenities like schools, playgrounds, and even swimming pools to help relieve the heat. Most of the town square of Central Morkansia was built during this expansion, changing the character of the region from pure company town to small metropolis with permanent residents. While much of the population of Morkansia consists of transient workers, there are now several generations of citizens who grew up on Volretz. These people, known as "Vols," are typically much more heat-acclimated than immigrants to the planet, and

CITY OF MORKANSIA



those who don't work for the Mining Company directly typically own shops or provide other services to the Morkance employees. The overall culture of the permanent residents is somewhat insular, and while they are not unfriendly to the many traders and temporary workers who come through town, they don't tend to trust newcomers until they have lived in town for a few years.

In the present day, Matildia Morkance (female human aristocrat 8), the current heir to the Morkance fortune and owner of the company, has an elaborate Outer Morkansia home with a large swimming pool, a noted extravagance on the blistering planet. However, she generally lives off-planet, visiting around once a year for board meetings, site inspections, and an annual speech to her employees. The walled complex surrounding her luxurious manor also includes the home of Kayriga Sarkit and her wife, a human named Bethusa Sarkit, as well as homes of other on-site mining company executives. Kayriga, as the direct or indirect boss of about half the population of Morkansia, tends to stay impersonal and unemotional when dealing with her employees. The crimson-skinned ifrit with curly bronze hair makes the occasional appearance at important services at the Temple of Haymot Steel-Arm and delivers the company's quarterly updates to the general populace, but otherwise does not make many social appearances. She has a reputation as stern but fair to her employees, and she always has the best interests of the company at heart. Matildia has complete faith in Kayriga as her representative on Volretz.

Ancrish Illton, a so-called Vol born on Morkansia, struck a deal with the Mining Company to build the Icebox Casino in Outer Morkansia thirty years ago when a greenhouse collapsed there, seeing an opportunity among the many miners returning from dangerous assignments with fat wallets. The center of the casino features an enormous ice sculpture: an expensive gimmick, but a successful one. The most upscale spot in Morkansia other than the home of Matildia Morkance, the Icebox Casino features gambling, luxury goods, and the best food available on the planet. Frequently, miners returning from dangerous assignments promptly lose their paychecks here, though a lucky few manage to hit a jackpot and ultimately leave Volretz extremely wealthy. Off-planet Morkance Mining Company executives, visiting merchants, and other wealthy tourists typically stay in the Icebox's lush accommodations rather than the Central Morkansia inns typically filled with new miners and dockworkers. Ancrish is essentially the only wealthy person on Volretz not directly affiliated with the Mining Company, and the tan-skinned, black-haired human man is known for opulence, as well as his habit of wearing tinted glasses even indoors. His somewhat strained relationship with Kayriga Sarkit brings some tension to the company town, as she doesn't care for the existence of a major source of wealth she can't control. Nevertheless, she doesn't seem inclined to actually shut down the casino, and Ancrish

continues to collect the bets of wealthy tourists and hopeful miners alike. Certainly, many miners who might have left town find themselves volunteering for more assignments on mining stations after gambling away their paychecks. Many of the city's wealthier residents who don't reside in Matildia Morkance's walled complex live near the Icebox Casino.

Outside the Shield: While Morkansia is the only real city, there are some limited settlements in the generally inhospitable region outside the heat shield. Small villages of fire elementals, ifrits, and other creatures with immunity to the devastating heat enjoy much more space than they would have in the crowded city. While many from this population work as miners, others operate hangars for storing ships outside the expensive Docks as well as a large junkyard, and the city employs several fire immune creatures as security, patrolling the exterior of the city on foot. These employees guard the pedestrian entrance to the city, used for mining carts full of raw ore returning from distant mining stations. Paved and insulated roads stretch from this entrance toward the mining stations, forming a spiderweb over the small continent.

CITY MAP

1. "The Docks": Intake/outtake area for ships to load metal ore and unload supplies
2. Morkance Mining Company factory
3. Water tanks
4. Temple of Haymot Steel-Arm
5. Town square: city hall and other government buildings
6. Amphitheatre
7. Greenhouses
8. Water treatment facilities
9. Swimming Pools
10. Home of Mining Company heir Matildia Morkance
11. Home of Mining Company on-site manager Kayriga Sarkit
12. Junkyard
13. Fire elemental/efreeti/ifrit settlements
14. Ground entrance
15. Hangars for ships
16. Icebox Casino
17. Statue of Mortuven Morkance, company founder

NEW MONSTER

Out of the molten magma sea arises a mass of shiny metal. Somewhere between liquid and solid, the featureless blob forms into roughly humanoid shape with large flat appendages and glowing red eyes.



HEAVY METAL ELEMENTAL

Languages Terran

ECOLOGY

Environment Volretz

Organization solitary, pair, or gang (3—8)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Forced Conduction (Ex) A heavy metal elemental takes no damage from fire, but its thermally conductive mass does heat up, making its natural attacks searing hot. If the creature has been attacked with fire damage within the last round or is in direct contact with a fire source, such as the Volretz ocean, its slam attacks deal fire damage in addition to normal damage. If the creature has been attacked with cold damage within the last round, the creature's body cools down and slam attacks do not add this damage.

Hurl Magma (Ex) Heavy metal elementals can form wide, flat, shovel-like arms that can scoop up and toss nearby material with surprising accuracy. If the material is magma from the Volretz ocean, the attack also deals fire damage equal to the creature's forced conduction damage.

MEDIUM HEAVY METAL ELEMENTAL

CR 3

XP 800

N Medium outsider (earth, elemental, native)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 30 (4d10+8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1

Immune acid, fire, elemental traits

Weaknesses vulnerability to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

Melee slam +7 (1d6+4)

Ranged hurl magma +6 (1d6+3)

Special Attacks forced conduction (1d4)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19

Feats Power Attack, Throw Anything

Skills Knowledge (dungeoneering) +3, Perception +6, Swim +15

SMALL HEAVY METAL ELEMENTAL

CR 1

XP 400

N Small outsider (earth, elemental, native)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, +1 size)

hp 13 (2d10+2)

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +0

Immune acid, fire, elemental traits

Weaknesses vulnerability to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

Melee slam +4 (1d4+3)

Ranged hurl magma +3 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks forced conduction (1d3)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Power Attack, Throw Anything

Skills Knowledge (dungeoneering) +1, Perception +4, Swim +14



LARGE HEAVY METAL ELEMENTAL**CR 5**

XP 1,600

N Large outsider (earth, elemental, native)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10**DEFENSE****AC** 20, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+4 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)**hp** 68 (8d10+24)**Fort** +9, **Ref** +10, **Will** +2**DR** 5/—; **Immune** acid, fire, elemental traits**Weaknesses** vulnerability to electricity**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft., swim 60 ft.**Melee** 2 slams +11 (1d8+6)**Ranged** hurl magma +11 (1d8+4)**Space** 10ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** forced conduction (1d6)**STATISTICS****Str** 18, **Dex** 18, **Con** 16, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 27**Feats** Deadly Aim, Power Attack, Throw Anything, Vital Strike**Skills** Climb +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Perception +10, Swim +23**HUGE HEAVY METAL ELEMENTAL****CR 7**

XP 3,200

N Huge outsider (earth, elemental, native)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13**DEFENSE****AC** 22, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+6 Dex, +8 natural, -2 size)**hp** 95 (10d10+40)**Fort** +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +3**DR** 5/—; **Immune** acid, fire, elemental traits**Weaknesses** vulnerability to electricity**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft., swim 60 ft.**Melee** 2 slams +14 (2d6+9)**Ranged** hurl magma +14 (2d6+6)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** forced conduction (1d8)**STATISTICS****Str** 22, **Dex** 22, **Con** 18, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 34**Feats** Deadly Aim, Power Attack, Point Blank Shot, Throw Anything, Vital Strike**Skills** Climb +20, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Perception +13, Swim +28**GREATER HEAVY METAL ELEMENTAL****CR 9**

XP 6,400

N Huge outsider (earth, elemental, native)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16**DEFENSE****AC** 25, touch 15, flat-footed 18 (+7 Dex, +10 natural, -2 size)**hp** 136 (13d10+65)**Fort** +13, **Ref** +15, **Will** +4**DR** 10/—; **Immune** acid, fire, elemental traits**Weaknesses** vulnerability to electricity**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft., swim 60 ft.**Melee** 2 slams +19 (2d8+10)**Ranged** hurl magma +20 (2d8+7)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** forced conduction (1d10)**STATISTICS****Str** 24, **Dex** 24, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 39**Feats** Deadly Aim, Precise Shot, Power Attack, Point Blank Shot, Throw Anything, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus(slam)**Skills** Climb +23, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +15, Perception +16, Swim +31, Stealth+15**ELDER HEAVY METAL ELEMENTAL****CR 11**

XP 12,800

N Huge outsider (earth, elemental, native)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16**DEFENSE****AC** 28, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (+8 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)**hp** 182 (16d10+96)**Fort** +16, **Ref** +18, **Will** +5**DR** 10/—; **Immune** acid, fire, elemental traits**Weaknesses** vulnerability to electricity**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft., swim 60 ft.**Melee** 2 slams +23 (2d8+12/19-20)**Ranged** hurl magma +24 (2d8+8)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** forced conduction (1d12)**STATISTICS****Str** 26, **Dex** 26, **Con** 22, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +26; **CMD** 44**Feats** Deadly Aim, Improved Critical (slam), Precise Shot, Power Attack, Point Blank Shot, Throw Anything, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus(slam)**Skills** Climb +27, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +18, Perception +19, Swim +35, Stealth+18



The only creatures native to Volretz, heavy metal elementals are related to earth elementals, but consist of more unusual metals, such as antimony and platinum. Some miners claim that the elementals have developed elaborate societies and civilizations deep under the seas, but no one has traveled there to find out. The creatures clearly do not approve of the presence of the colonists on the planet. The elementals do appear intelligent, coordinating with each other in combat, and they share a language with their earth elemental brethren. Further, they have learned to use their native terrain to their full advantage, throwing clumps of molten metal or making searing hot slam attacks. Heavy metal elementals pose the largest threat to mobile mining stations outside of the environment itself, and the creatures have even traveled over land to attack land-based mining stations too close to the shore. This is exceedingly dangerous for the miners who aren't necessarily well-equipped for combat. Ironically, the bodies of killed elementals are something of a windfall, as they are composed of many desirable metals, and some miners deliberately go hunting for elementals. Officially, the company discourages such

practices, but the generous bounty for the return of a heavy metal elemental's body tells a very different story. The elementals have never trekked all the way to Morkansia in the middle of the continent, but many residents wonder if the city is prepared for such an attack.

NEW RULES

The defining feature of life on Volretz is the brutal heat. Rules for the environmental conditions on Volretz are presented here, as well as feats, magic items, and a spell to show how the population of Volretz has adapted to life on the scorching mining planet.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

MORKANSIA

Average Air Temperature: 95 degrees Fahrenheit (very hot conditions)

Creatures who have been living in the city of Morkansia inside the protective heat shield for more than a month typically acclimate to the heat and no longer need to make Fortitude saves to avoid non-lethal damage. Newcomers to the city often need magical protection or mundane Survival tricks to manage the heat. A few buildings, such as the Icebox Casino, the Temple of Haymot Steel-Arm, and the Morkance family manor, feature additional air-conditioning, either to encourage patronage or for the comfort of the owner.

NORTHERN CONTINENT

Average Air Temperature: 135 degrees Fahrenheit (severe heat conditions)

Outside the protective heat shield of Morkansia, the temperature grows substantially hotter. Unprotected creatures without any magical or mundane protection easily succumb to heatstroke, though the environment is not immediately deadly. The ground itself, outside of insulated roads built to each of the mining stations, reaches higher temperatures than the air, dealing 1 fire damage per round to any creature in direct contact. Mining station employees without fire resistance typically wear light fire protection suits in the event of traveling off-road.

OCEANS

Average Air Temperature: 195 degrees Fahrenheit (extreme heat conditions)

Even without coming in contact with the molten oceans, simply going near the seas, such as in a mobile mining station, exposes creatures to dangerously hot conditions, where it burns even to breathe. Some long-time residents of the planet can withstand to heat to a certain extent, but magical and mundane protection are generally required for anyone without immunity to the heat.

Average Ocean Temperature: 2000 degrees Fahrenheit (treat as lava)

The actual oceans are extremely dangerous to anyone without immunity or resistance to heat, and immersion in the oceans will damage even those with resistance. Mining operation does not require entrance into the oceans, and this only tends to occur when an elemental attacks a station. Employees may enter the sea for direct combat to prevent the elemental from destroying the ship by lobbing magma.

FLAMING HAILSTORMS

A weather phenomenon unique to Volretz, flaming hailstorms occur when mineral-heavy clouds generate precipitation that combusts in the atmosphere, causing small fiery pellets to rain down from the sky. These storms pose grave risk to anyone caught outside, fire-resistant or not, and risk massive damage to both the main heat shield of Morkansia and the smaller heat shields on the mining stations. Any creature without total cover to flaming hailstones is dealt 2d6 bludgeoning damage and 2d6 fire damage per round and must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save or catch fire. Spellcasters must succeed at a DC 10 + spell level Concentration check in order to cast a spell. Flaming hailstorms typically last a few minutes, though longer massive storms of up to a few hours are possible. Mobile mining stations are recalled when flaming hailstorms are forecasted.

FEATS

ELEMENTAL TERROR (COMBAT)

The deadly elementals of Volretz withstand mighty attacks, but not from you.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +1, Knowledge (planes) 1 rank

Benefit: Once per day as a swift action, your attacks can bypass an elemental's DR/— until the beginning of your next turn. If the elemental has other types of damage reduction, such as from a template or spell effect, you ignore 5 points of that damage reduction. You can use this ability one additional time per day for every 6 points of your base attack bonus.

HEAT-ACCLIMATED

After living on the scorching planet Volretz, you have not only accustomed your body to blistering heat, but you have pushed magic to its limit to withstand scorching temperatures.

Prerequisites: Residence on Volretz for at least one year

Benefit: You may ignore the effects of very hot environments. You also treat severe heat as very hot and you treat extreme heat up to 200 degrees as severe heat. This does not apply to direct contact with the oceans of Volretz or similar substances such as lava, which are still extreme heat conditions. Further, if you are under the effects of endure elements, you can exist comfortably in temperatures up to 180 degrees Fahrenheit (80 degrees Celsius) without having to make Fortitude saves. If you cast endure elements on others, they benefit from the same extended temperature range.

Normal: *Endure elements* allows a creature to exist comfortably between -50 and 180 degrees Fahrenheit (-45 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit) without having to make Fortitude saves.

WATER MAKER

You've studied with the divine casters who keep the city of Morkansia supplied with water, and you've learned to copy their tricks. You can create water out of thin air.

Prerequisites: Wis 13

Benefit: You can use *create water* as a spell-like ability once per day, using your character level as your caster level. You can use this ability twice per day at 6th level. At 12th level, you can use this ability three times per day, or you may expend all three daily uses of this ability to use *geyser*^{APG} or *hydraulic torrent*^{APG} as a spell-like ability, using your character level as your caster level.

ORE DOWSER

After working in the Morkance mines, you have a second sense for identifying metal. Ore dowsers are highly valued by the Morkance Mining Company in order to locate optimal new sites for mining stations as existing locations get mined out.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (dungeoneering) 3 ranks, Perception 3 ranks

Benefit: You can sense the presence of nearby veins of metal. Once per day, you identify a single type of metal, and you instantly know the direction and distance to the largest agglomeration of that metal within one mile, so long as the metal exists in that radius in more than trace amounts.

SPELL

FLAMING HAIL

School evocation [fire]; **Level** bloodrager 5, druid 5, sorcerer/wizard 5, witch 5

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (pinch of ash and metal pellet)

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area 20-ft. radius

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw Reflex partial; **Spell Resistance** yes

Long-lost notes from Mortuven Morkance, the founder of the company, reveal that he created a spell to simulate the effects of Volretz's flaming hailstorms and used it to drive away the competition. An onslaught of fiery pellets rains down in the area. Creatures entering or beginning their turn within the area take 2d4 points of bludgeoning damage and 2d4 points of fire damage unless they have total cover from the *flaming hail*. In addition, entering or beginning their turn within the area must succeed on a Reflex save each round at the end of their turn or catch on fire. The area of *flaming hail* is treated as difficult terrain, and creatures attempting to cast spells in the area must succeed on a Concentration check (DC 10 + spell level) or the spell is lost.

MAGIC ITEMS

LIGHT HEAT PROTECTION SUIT PRICE 4,000 GP

Slot body/shoulders/head; **CL** 3rd; **Weight** 30 lbs.

Aura faint abjuration

This shiny metallic suit with a glass helmet covers the entire body of miners stationed outside Morkansia. While loosely resembling a spacesuit, these suits are neither vacuum-tight nor supplied with air. Though relatively lightweight, their bulky construction occupies the head, shoulders, and body slot simultaneously.

A light heat protection suits allows the wearer to ignore the effects of severe heat (up to 140 degrees). The wearer also gains resist fire 5, and can thus walk around on the super-heated ground outside a protected mining station.

The Morkance Mining Company employs crafters to produce heat protection suits for their employees. Miners receive these suits as part of their equipment for assignments at mining stations. Employees return the suits at the end of the assignment, and they are not generally for sale to anyone.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS COST 2,000 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *endure elements*, *resist energy*

HEAVY HEAT PROTECTION SUIT PRICE 10,000 GP

Slot body/shoulders/head; **CL** 5th; **Weight** 65 lbs.

Aura moderate abjuration

This bulky suit with covered in tubes and shielding protects employees sailing the dangerous molten oceans in mobile mining stations. These suits are largely airtight to keep out the burning air, with cooling filters to bring air down to a breathable temperature. These suits are extremely cumbersome, but do keep employees from burning in the merciless environment.

A *heavy heat protection suit* allows the wearer to ignore the effects of extreme heat (up to 200 degrees). The wearer also gains resist fire 10, and can very briefly survive a dip into the molten ocean, usually to fight a heavy metal elemental before it can bring the entire ship down. However, it cannot protect a wearer who is completely submerged in the ocean. After 1d4 minutes in contact with the ocean, a *heavy heat protection suit* begins to break down.

The Morkance Mining Company employs crafters to produce heat protection suits for their employees. Miners receive these suits as part of their equipment for assignments at mobile mining stations. Employees return the suits at the end of the assignment, and they are not generally for sale to anyone. The heavy heat protection suits degrade in the extreme heat, and typically need to be repaired after one year of use in the field.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS COST 5,000 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *endure elements*, *resist energy*

ADVENTURE HOOKS

While there are residents born on Volretz and it is possible for a PC to be from Morkania, it is more likely that the party ends up on the planet in search of work. With a lot of trading ships delivering supplies and returning with metal, it is not difficult to hitch a ride here. The planet has a reputation as a place where anyone can make some good money, as long as they are prepared for the risks.

Hook #1: The Morkance Mining Company on-site manager, Kayriga Sarkit, hires the PCs for a dangerous mission, though she promises to reward them handsomely. Key parts on several on the mining stations have broken down, and the company deployed all of their backup systems. The coincidental timing as well as the nature of the problems leads Kayriga to suspect internal sabotage, perhaps by a mole from a rival company hoping to establish a stake on Volretz. Not knowing who to trust, she has gone to outsiders, the PCs, for this critical mission. The abandoned mining station on the Southern continent has some key components that didn't break down. The slightly paranoid manager fears that another breakdown on an active mining station could occur before more parts are shipped in from off-planet. She wants the PCs to travel to the abandoned station to recover anything still functional.

She provides the PCs with heat-resistant suits and a generous up-front paycheck (though with a stern warning if they consider taking the money and leaving). They arrive at the station, which is eerily calm. The remains of the twenty workers have never been collected, and the rumors of hauntings soon prove to be true. The deceased workers return as a variety of fiery undead horrors, immediately attacking the intruders. (Suggested thematic undead creatures for the abandoned station include burning skeletons, combusted, and cinderghosts, depending on APL.) Once the PCs overcome or bypass the undead inhabitants, they can collect the needed components. (Knowledge (engineering) checks and Disable Device checks determine how much useful equipment the PCs can identify and collect.) However, as they return to their ship, they discover that the sabotage rumors were also true. A small team of fire elementals, hired by another mining company, has arrived to intercept the PCs and stop the return of the equipment. Can the PCs overcome the rival team before getting stranded on the Southern continent and facing the same fate as the doomed miners?

Hook #2: A friend of the PCs who works for the Mining Company offers to get them assigned to a stint on a mobile mining station as a way to make some quick money. The trip will only take one week rather than the usual month due to an impending flaming hailstorm, but a major customer has paid an extravagant expedite fee to obtain a large shipment of platinum as quickly as possible. The crew is slightly understaffed, but with the short mission, they are expected to manage without the usual redundancies.

Captain: Risgo Lirton (male half-orc warrior) has worked for the Morkance Mining Company his whole life. Loyal to a fault, he didn't push back on the understaffed assignment, and now worries whether the crew can pull this off.

First Mate: Canilia Trinz (female human adept) is a new hire for the Mining Company away from one of their rivals. She has been on Volretz for nine months, and is still a little stiff around her new co-workers.

Mining Engineer: Vietra Valduth (female ifrit expert) keeps claiming that each mission on a mobile station is her last. However, her penchant for the casino means she is perpetually short on funds and can't pass up high-paying assignments like this one.

Mechanic: Sorito Roloti (male ifrit expert) keeps the mobile station running. His fondness for terrible jokes and puns may or may not amuse his crewmates, but his skill with a toolbox keeps them safe.

Divine caster: Baerwynn Steelfist (female dwarf cleric of Haymot Steel-Arm) creates water daily and provides magical fire resistance to as many of the crew as she can manage who don't already have it. This is her first assignment to a mobile station.

Deckhand: Ash (fire elemental) knows a good deal when it's right in front of them. Immune to the fire and heat, Ash need only supply some muscle where the rest of the crew tells them, and a big paycheck comes later. Ash doesn't speak much, but remembers those who show them kindness.

Unfortunately, the mission seems cursed. First, equipment malfunctions risk exposing all the employees to the harsh environment, requiring Disable Device or Knowledge (engineering) checks, or magical repair to assist Sorito with the equipment. Next, the heavy metal elementals lurking in the magma-like oceans attack the ship in greater numbers than normal. Finally, the mining engineer, Vietra, falls gravely ill, and no one else can operate the equipment to find the correct flows of ore. The furious crew threatens to mutiny against the team leader, Risgo Lirton, who asks the PCs for assistance. A successful DC 20 Heal check reveals that Vietra was poisoned. If the PCs search the station, they find both poison and missing components in the quarters of the first mate, Canilia Trinz. She intentionally sabotaged the mission to get Risgo fired and take over his position. If confronted, she tries to take out the PCs, resorting to breaking equipment, willing to take down the entire ship rather than return and face the harsh punishment of Kayriga Sarkit. Canilia has the lost notes of company founder, including a scroll of his custom spell, flaming hail. She casts the scroll during battle, making a Use Magic Device check if needed due to APL. (If needed to make the confrontation more interesting, Canilia can have allies among the crew who fight with her.)

Hook #3: The owner of the Icebox Casino, Ancrish Illton, narrowly avoided a attempted murder. His security team took down the would-be assassin, who left no clues as to who she worked for or why someone wants Ancrish dead. However, the high-end poison used by the killer has the normally relaxed casino mogul convinced that this will not be the last attempt. He hires the PCs to investigate. In his position, he has made a few enemies, and the PCs easily discover a number of leads as their investigation leads them all over the city. A successful DC 20 Gather Information check at each of the following locations provides one rumor. Choose or randomly select one option to be the correct one.

Inn: Many returning miners immediately gambled and lost their paychecks at the Icebox, forcing many to take on more difficult assignments. Could there be a coalition out to take revenge for predatory gambling?

Morkance Mining Company Foundry: Nothing happens in Morkansia without Kayriga Sarkit knowing about it. Has the Morkance Mining Company decided that the only money-maker on Volretz that doesn't return value to the Company needs to go, perhaps to be replaced with another Morkance business?

City Administrative Buildings: The employees at the city buildings have heard that Ancrish had an affair with the vice-mayor Waltsyn Cargette, opening up the possibility of a crime of passion. Did Waltsyn convince Hrent Cibullon that Ancrish poses a threat to the safety of the city?

Icebox Casino: Wealthy tourists come to visit the Icebox from many different planets, and some of them are both powerful and dangerous. Did the wrong gambler lose a fortune at the tables and decide to take out the owner responsible?

The PCs, during the course of their investigations, get attacked by a small team of assassins. If they can not only fend off the attack, but take one hired killer alive, they can learn who hired the hit on Ancrish.

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