

CHRONICLE OF THE GATEKEEPERS

SIDE TREK: SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE



BATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

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CHRONICLE OF THE GATEKEEPERS

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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

There are many worlds in the multiverse, perhaps an uncountable number. Yet, despite all odds, many of them share commonalities. The humanoid form, for instance, is the shape of the dominant species of many planets. Likewise, the dominant languages of most worlds share a number of similarities.

This is not a coincidence. Long ago, the Gatekeepers had spread far and wide across thousands of worlds. On some of these worlds, they settled. On others they shaped and guided the native creatures. Sometimes their influence was a boon, while at other times it was an agent of great destruction. They guided and created races similar to their own, consciously and unconsciously molding the cultures of a thousand worlds.

Many worlds think little of how physically similar many of their dominant races are. Yet on Exodus, with its unique abundance of Nexus Gateways, its peoples have noticed the pattern. Not only do visitors from other worlds have a similar physical shape with the Exodites, but also share the same language.

Drawn by this linguistic impossibility, a pair of prymidian explorers has begun digging into vespan activities. They (correctly) believe that these strange travelers know more about this universe-spanning similarity than they let on.

Yet while these prymidians are clever and curious, they are not magically capable. They managed to follow a group of vespans through a Nexus Gateway before it closed, only to find themselves trapped on the far side. Little do they know, while they were trapped on a distant planet, a group of heroes from that world followed the same vespans back through the same portal to Exodus.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Having returned to the site of their arrival on Exodus, the party is faced with the daunting task of reactivating the Nexus Gateway. Yet they discover it isn't activating the portal that proves difficult, but opening it to where they need it to go: home.

The party must puzzle out how a Nexus Gateway works and align it to their distant home world. The closer the party gets to home, the more attention the gateway draws from creatures in the dark void between planets.

When the party finally opens the gateway back to their home world, they meet Gryn and Kieve Meda, the prymidian adventurers who had trapped themselves on the PCs' home world in the same



Speaking the Same Language

way the PCs had on Exodus. In thanks, they teach the party what they have learned and guessed about the similarities between worlds—and what the vespans might be hiding.

But something is always watching, and as the party prepares to return home with the knowledge of how to accurately align a Nexus Gateway, the portal opens on its own. From the void beyond worlds crawls a terrible creature, a hound of Tindalos, intent on exterminating whatever creatures have been toying with the fabric of space!

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Like all sidequests in the Chronicle of the Gatekeepers, this adventure begins with Large-Biter meeting with the party, trying to find ways for them to be further both their goals and his own.

"It is time for you to head home," Large-Biter says, holding up a clawed finger before you can interject. "Not to say you should abandon your quest—far from it. In fact, all we know for certain is that these vespans have incredible control over the Nexus Gateways."

"While I work at narrowing down how to follow them, you should all return to the gateway where we first met...and see if you can open it once more. It is better than being trapped forever on a world other than your own, no?"

THE NEXUS GATEWAY

The large, flat plateau where the party arrived on Exodus remains unchanged from their last visit. The flat, square ruin provides an excellent place to work, while the Nexus Gateway stands mostly free of obstructions nearby.

The Nexus Gateway is an arch twelve feet tall, cut from grey stone that contrasts sharply with the brown rock around it. The entire arch is covered in complex astronomical charts and runic symbols, and cleverly worked into them are a number of small switches and dials.

Each Nexus Gateway is slightly different, and this one has four distinct sets of controls. Two sets are obvious upon cursory examination, and a third can be detected with a **DC 10 Perception** check. The fourth set of controls is invisible to the naked eye, though it becomes immediately visible to a character examining the gateway with *detect magic* or to a character with trapfinding who succeeds on a **DC 20 Perception** check.

Though each set of controls is a complex affair, for simplicity each is treated as a dial that can have a value of 1 to 6. Adjusting any dial by 1 is a move action, and adjusting it to any value is a full-round action.

THE FIRST DIAL

The first set of controls defines where the Nexus Gateway's portal will open on the target world. This dial is initially set to 1, which is correct for the party to return home. For each number away

SIDEBAR: THE RETURN TO THE GRIT MOUNTAINS

This adventure assumes the journey back up the Grit Mountains isn't particularly noteworthy, but that doesn't mean you have to hand-wave past it.

In particular, if the N and N Mining Group hears the party is leaving for the Grit Mountains, they are likely to ask the group to do some prospecting for them, offering payment for their troubles: 100 gp for each site worthy of a closer look!

from 1 this control is when the portal activates, the party suffers a -2 penalty on checks to align the portal.

The closer to 1 this dial is, the closer the scenes shown by the Nexus Gateway will be to the Gatekeeper Ruin.

THE SECOND DIAL

The second set of controls chooses the mass and density of the target planet. The dial begins at 5, but the party needs it to be 3. For each number below 3 it is, the party suffers a cumulative -2 penalty on checks to align the portal. For each number above 3, the party instead suffers a cumulative -4 penalty on such checks.

If the dial is set to 1, the portal will open inside a cloud (or perhaps a planet made entirely of clouds) high above the ground. This immediately floods a 60-foot area around the portal with fog (as *fog cloud*) that lasts for 2d4 rounds before dispersing.

If the dial is set to 2, the portal will reveal scenes of coastlines and oceans. If the dial is set to 3 or 4, it shows fields and forests. If the dial is set to 5 or 6, the scenes will be of rocky mountains or deep underground.

THE THIRD DIAL

The third set of controls determines what portion of the galaxy the portal will open to, which greatly affects the chemical makeup of the destination planet. The dial is currently set to 1, but should be set to 2. For each number away from 2 the dial is, the party takes a cumulative -4 penalty on checks made to align the portal.

These controls are more complex than the first two sets, and adjusting this dial requires a successful **DC 15 Disable Device** check. Failing this check changes the dial to a random value. Failing by 5 or more does the same, but the players won't know which value it changes to.

If the dial is set to 1, the party will see barren, sandy deserts.

If the dial is set to 3, the party will see lush forests gripped with green slime.

If the dial is set to 4, the party will see stretches of barren, blue-white stone that might just be diamond.

If the dial is set to 5, the party will see a blue thundercloud crackling with electricity. Anyone within 10 feet of the portal must make a **DC 12 Reflex** save or take 1d8 electricity damage.

If the dial is set to 6, the portal will open to a white-hot sheet of stone. Anyone within 10 feet of the portal will be subjected to a blinding blast of sunlight. They must succeed on a **DC 14 Fortitude save** or take 1d6 fire damage and become blinded for 1d4 minutes.

THE FOURTH DIAL

The fourth set of controls determines the distance of the target planet from the local star, and thus the climate of the planet. The dial begins at 4, but the party needs it to be 3. For each number away the dial is, the party takes a cumulative –3 penalty on checks made to align the portal.

This dial can't be adjusted by characters unable to detect it.

When this dial is below 3, the portal will show mountains of ice or frozen forests.

When the dial is 4, the portal will reveal scenes dark and sandy, devoid of water.

If the dial is set to 5, the portal will open to a stretch of desert so hot the air shimmers. Anyone within 10 feet of the portal takes 2d6 fire damage (DC 14 Fortitude save for half).

If the dial is set to 6, the party will open the portal onto the surface of a sun! Fortunately, this is only for a brief moment; the Nexus Gateway's safeguards will close the portal only seconds after it opens. Still, everyone within 30 feet will take 3d6 fire damage (DC 16 Reflex save for half). Once shut down, the portal is hot to the touch and can't be reactivated for 2d4 minutes.

ACTIVATING THE PORTAL

Once the party has set the dial values they want to use to activate the portal, they will still need to activate it. Activating the portal requires a successful **DC 20 Use Magic Device** or a **DC 25 Disable Device** check. If the party knows the ritual from Raxe from the sidequest *In His Bad Books*, they gain a +10 circumstance bonus on this check.

If this check fails, the portal crackles with static, and nothing happens. If it succeeds, the portal briefly flashes four times then yawns open.

The scenes revealed by the flashes depend on what the controls are set to. If a dial is set correctly, the momentary flash will show the Gatekeeper Ruins, back on the party's home world. If a dial is set to a number that would be correct on a different dial, it shows the party's world, but from a vast distance. If the dial is at 4, 5, or 6, the flashes only show the blackness of space.

Upon activating the portal, the party must roll a d% alignment check to see where the gate opens to. If they have the Nexus Key from *To Save a Soul*, they gain a +25 circumstance bonus to align the portal. For each point by which the party exceeded their check to activate the portal, they gain a +1 circumstance bonus to this roll. The maximum circumstance bonus possible is +100.

Each set of unaligned controls imposes a penalty specific to the dial and reduces the maximum d% result possible by the difference of the unaligned control from its ideal value.

SIDEBAR: HOW THE PORTAL WORKS

Opening the portal follows rules similar to those of the board game Mastermind. In Mastermind, one player (the game master) chooses a code of four pegs, each of which being one of six colors. The other players (the PCs) then make guesses with the same restrictions until they guess correctly or run out of moves.

In this adventure, there is no limit on the number of moves the players can take—unless the GM knows the party is particularly good at puzzles and is looking for a challenge. If so, try restricting the portal to only ten, or eight, activations in a 24-hour period, randomizing the correct code each day at dawn.

1–20%	21–45%	46–95%	96–100%
<i>The void</i>	<i>Wrong world</i>	<i>Off target</i>	<i>On target</i>

While the portal is open, it can be closed with a **DC 10 Use Magic Device** or **DC 15 Disable Device** check as a standard action. As a standard action, a **DC 20 Use Magic Device** check can align the portal by up to 5% plus 3% for each point the check is exceeded by.

Finally, while the portal is open, any of the dials can be adjusted as a move action, modifying the final value as appropriate.

Adjusting the portal while it is open exposes any nearby characters to the void briefly.

THE VOID

The void is the vast gulf of empty space between the stars. The creatures that live in this dark, cold place obey different rules from those most mortals can comprehend, and they are almost universally hostile towards terrestrial life.

Whenever the portal opens to the void, it is accompanied by a screaming wind that pulls anything and everything in toward it. The gate makes a single CMD check with a +8 bonus against everything within 15 feet of the portal. Anyone pulled through it is subjected to the airless void: they take 3d6 cold damage each round (DC 16 Fortitude save for half) and must hold their breath.

The first time a PC is pulled into the void, they will be caught by a passing shantak (*Pathfinder Reference Document*), who sees the open portal and jumps upon an opportunity to skip the tedium of simply drifting through space.

The first and second times the portal opens to the void, it is nothing more than that: an open void to emptiness.

The third time, a pair of voidworm proteans will swim through the open portal, almost carelessly attacking anything nearby.

VOIDWORM PROTEAN (2)

CR 2 – 600 XP

hp 16 (*Pathfinder Reference Document*)

On the fourth time and onward, in addition to the open space beyond, there is a 25% chance each round that the portal will collapse on itself. When it does, it will emit an earth-shaking bang, permanently deafening anyone within 30 feet unless they succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save.

WRONG WORLD

There are countless worlds connected to the Nexus Pathways, most with only a small handful of Nexus Gateways on them.

Whenever the portal opens to the wrong world, there is a 50% chance that this world is Exodus. Scenes from Exodus should be varied, but always obviously on Exodus. Whatever the scene, the creatures beyond should be rat-like caviars, bestial enuka, or red-skinned prymidians.

When the portal doesn't open to Exodus, it can open to any number of worlds at the GM's discretion. Most of these worlds are entirely barren, with an appearance based on the values of the incorrect dials. The first time the party opens the portal to a world other than Exodus or their own, they will be presented with a group of vespan warriors on the other side, about to activate their own Nexus Gateway.

VESPAN WARRIOR (3) CR 1 – 400 XP

hp 17 (*Chronicle of the Gatekeepers: To Save a Soul*)

OFF TARGET

While the Nexus Gateway is built to connect to other Nexus Gateways, it is entirely capable of opening a gate anywhere at all.

Whenever the portal opens off-target, it opens to the party's world but somewhere that isn't useful. Where specifically the portal opens to depends on the dial settings.

While the GM should include hints that the players are looking at their own world, the scene should never be a place wherefrom the party can easily return home. For instance, the portal might open a mile above the ground, or in the middle of a wall.

ON TARGET

When the party finally opens the portal to the Gatekeeper Ruin back on their home world, they will find they have the same trouble as the vespans they followed did: a group of adventurers immediately stumbles through!

This small party, two prymidians and a human, had followed the vespans through the portal when they first went through to find Sodan. They've been camped in the portal chamber since about two days after the party's departure to Exodus, but they haven't been able to open the portal themselves.

The prymidians Gryn and Kieve Meda are brother and sister performers whose curiosity got the best of them. They've traveled for a long time, but when the vespans were passing by and Gryn and Kieve could not only understand what they were saying, but also spot parallels between it and other languages they knew... well, they couldn't help but follow. Ultimately, they found themselves stuck on another world, but their brief exile from

SIDEBAR: PRYMIANS

While they would never openly admit to such a thing, prymidians are not native to Exodus, but visitors from another world entirely. They keep their true origins secret, but they have been visiting and living on Exodus since the days of the First Ones. However, it wasn't until the last century that prymidians visited Exodus in numbers more than a few hundred explorers.

Prymidians physically resemble humanoids, though they tend to stand taller and are more heavily built. What sets them truly apart from humans is their bright red skin and ash-white hair.

Prymidians are scholars and linguists, and they have the supernatural ability to speak to any creatures that have the capacity to use language. They use this ability to travel far and wide, gathering and sharing information as much as they can.

LINGUISTIC TONGUE

Aura faint divination; **CL** 3rd

Slot implant; **Price** 10,000 gp; **Weight** —

Implant DC 22

DESCRIPTION

This bright red tongue is emblazoned with a yellow, sun-like rune. When implanted, the *linguistic tongue* allows its bearer's speech to be understood by any creature that is capable of understanding language. The tongue does not let the bearer understand the speech of other creatures, but it does let him ignore the language-dependent descriptors of any spells or effects.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *tongues*; **Cost** 5,000 gp

Exodus taught them that it isn't just vespan and Exodite languages that share a few unlikely similarities, but those of all worlds.

In fact, the world they most recently visited (which they are able to identify as the PCs' own merely by analyzing their speech patterns) has a language extraordinarily similar to those of Exodus. So similar that they must have shared some common ancestor language, or at least exchanged ideas, within the last few hundred years.

The human, Tannis, is a somber man, but completely enthralled by the Meda siblings, especially Kieve. He hopes one day to impress her with his physical prowess and win her affections.

TANNIS

CR 2 – 600 XP

Human monk 3 (as vigilant bodyguard; *Pathfinder Reference Document*)

hp 20

GRYN AND KIEVE MEDA**CR 3 – 800 XP**

Prymidian bard 4

LN Medium humanoid (prymidian)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +6**DEFENSE****AC** 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)**hp** 29 (4d8+8)**Fort** +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent and sonic effects**OFFENSE****Spd** 30 ft.**Melee** mwk short sword +5 (1d6+1/19–20)**Ranged** sling +4 (1d4)**Special Attacks** bardic performance 13 rounds/day (countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire competence +2, inspire courage +1)**Bard Spells Known (CL 4th)****2nd (2/day)**—*detect thoughts, suggestion* (DC 15)**1st (4/day)**—*animate rope, charm person* (DC 14), *cure light wounds, summon monster I***cantrips (at will)**—*daze, detect magic, know direction, mage hand, mending, summon instrument***Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)****at will**—*read magic***TACTICS****Before Combat** if the Meda siblings have time to prepare for a fight, they cast *animate rope* and then, immediately before combat begins, *summon monster I***During Combat** the Meda siblings alternate between attacking from a distance and using their bardic performance to buoy one another and any allies nearby**Morale** the Meda siblings retreat when one of them is reduced to 15 hp or less or when their bodyguard is slain**STATISTICS****Str** 12, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 9, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 17**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 16**Feats** Dodge, Lunge, Weapon Finesse**Skills** Diplomacy +10, Linguistics +8, Perception +6, Perform (string) +10, Sense Motive +6**Languages** Balite, Common, Draconic, Exodite, Prymidian, Sasori; arcane polyglot**SQ** bardic knowledge +2, tentacles, versatile performance (string)**Combat Gear** *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), tanglefoot bags (2); **Other Gear** +1 *chain shirt*, masterwork short sword, sling with 20 bullets, *everburning torch*, 30 gp**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Arcane Polyglot (Su):** Prymidians can speak and understand the language of any intelligent creature they encounter, whether it is a racial tongue or a regional dialect. In addition, a prymidian can cast *read magic at will* as a spell-like ability with a caster level equal to his Hit Dice. This ability only applies to spoken languages. A prymidian does not retain the ability to**SIDEBAR: FLEEING THE HOUND**

Even by itself, a hound of Tindalos is a very dangerous encounter for a group of 3rd-level PCs! This isn't to say the party might not win, but it's quite possible for the hound to incapacitate the entire party in a single round.

To impress upon the PCs the difficulty of this fight, the hound should first attack Tannis, then one or both of the Meda siblings, smelling on them their recent journey through space. This should give the PCs a few rounds to decide whether they are willing to take up the fight against such a dangerous creature or want to try to escape with their lives.

Should the party attempt to flee, the hound doesn't pursue them. If they later return, they will find the Nexus Gateway heavily scarred and magically inert. Should the PCs want to return to their own world, either now or at the end of the *Chronicle of the Gatekeepers*, they'll have to find another route.

speak or understand when not in the presence of a creature speaking that language.

Tentacles (Ex): Some prymidians possess the distinctive, retractable tentacles of their ancestors under each arm. Prymidians with this racial trait receive *Lunge* as a bonus feat.

Development: If the party begins to open the portal correctly a second time, instead it begins to open of its own accord; proceed to **The Portal Opens Again**.

THE PORTAL OPENS AGAIN (CR 6)

Once the party is satisfied with their understanding of the Nexus Gateway and they prepare to leave, they are interrupted by a horrible wrenching feeling. Moments later, that feeling is accompanied by the keening scream of the Nexus Gateway being torn open from the other side.

The vespans and the Gatekeepers know the dangers accompanying regular travel through the dark places of the multiverse. There are creatures who take offense at the very presence of interplanetary portals, for reasons they seem unwilling explain.

Among them are the hounds of Tindalos, and one has noticed the party's repeated opening and reopening of the Nexus Gateway.

HOUND OF TINDALOS**CR 7 – 3,200 XP****hp 85** (*Pathfinder Reference Document*)

The first round that the hound appears, it cannot move beyond the square of the Nexus Gateway as it tears itself free. It can, however, attack and defend itself just fine, though it won't use

its ripping gaze. On later rounds, it acts normally, but it won't activate its ripping gaze until the third round.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Having hopefully gained some understanding of how the Nexus Gateways work, as well as the dangers of using them, the party's adventure is over. Unlike most sidequests, all the PCs have to learn from this adventure they learn from the adventure itself.

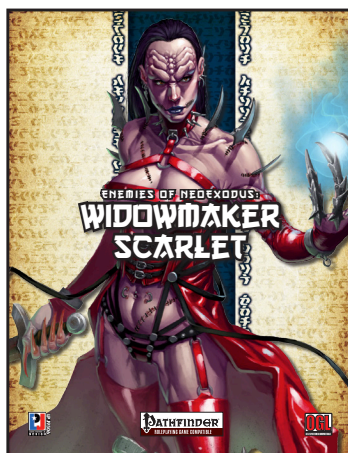
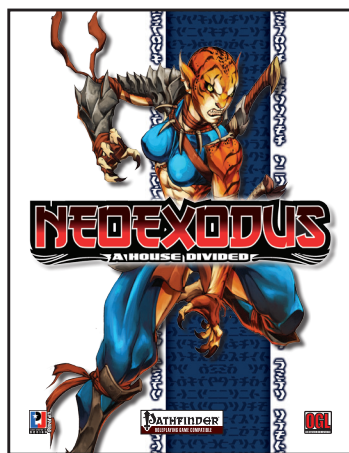
Large-Biter, of course, is fascinated to learn all about it, and he's willing to compensate the party for details on what happened. Specifically, he will pay 500 gp to the PCs (up to 2,500 gp) for each collection of details on the other worlds, how to activate or focus a Nexus Gateway, and the creatures that live in the void beyond.

The next adventure is up to the GM—the PCs can try one of the other sidequests for this journey: *A Chill Wind*, *What Comes Before the First*, *Not of the Same Mind*, *In His Bad Books*, or *To Not Serve Man*. If the party is already level 4, or if they're eager to move on, the GM should proceed to *Adventure Omega: Dawn of a Thousand Wars*.

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THE WORLD OF EXODUS NEEDS HEROES...

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CHRONICLE OF THE GATEKEEPERS

CAMPAIGN SERIAL SIDE TREK: SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE

One should never meddle with interplanar portals without knowing what one is doing. Unless, of course, you find yourself stranded on an alien planet littered with portals, of course. The party happens to be in this exact situation, trapped on Exodus with the portal they walked through closed behind them. Through careful magical experimentation, or perhaps trial and error, they can work to solve the puzzle of the gateway and re-establish a link back to their home!

This adventure is a sidequest in the Chronicle of the Gatekeepers Journey, and includes:

- Details on how precisely things can go wrong when messing with unstable interplanetary gateways
- An introduction to the prymidians, brilliant linguists and scholars
- A new racial implant for prymidians, the linguistic tongue