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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Exodus is a magical world, and Koryth is one of the most magical places on it. This is especially evident when one considers the weather.

Largely, the supernatural weather is so prominent for the same reason the party is on Exodus in the first place: the Nexus Gateways. These ancient portals were created by the Gatekeepers, and while they allow travel from one world to the next, they do so by warping the world around them, regardless of consequences. On Exodus, that means frequent yet irregular storms and other, stranger effects.

On nearly any other planet, Exodus's frost-line would likely be stationary: a permafrost line above which it is always winter. Yet the frost-line wanders. Sometimes inches, but often miles per day. As a result, only the most hearty or magically aided crops are able to grow in the rugged steppe of Koryth.

For the past several years, this supernatural weather has only grown more erratic. Little do the inhabitants of Exodus know, but this is because of the vespans. Their increasing use of the gateways has caused even the natural parts of Koryth's weather to begin to spiral out of control.

Meteorologists have begun to track and speculate on the new patterns, but by the time anything is known for certain, Koryth, or even all of Exodus, might be inhospitable.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Aiming to track the activity of Nexus Gateways the party can't see, Large-Biter sends them out to track some of Koryth's supernatural weather. Of specific interest is the frost-line, the most irregular of all these phenomena, which the sasori is convinced is related to gateway activity.

As the party begins their survey, they meet the Captain. He is an inquisitive and forthright p'tan warrior, and he challenges members of the party to honorable single combat out of curiosity. After all, it is not every lifetime an Exodite gets to meet creatures as strange as them.

However, once the pleasantries are out of the way, he is willing to explain why he is simply standing in the middle of the road: he is hunting necryos, vampire-like creatures who freeze their victims before devouring them.

He suggests that he and the party team up temporarily at least, for necryos are dangerous, and both he and the party are going to be in the same area for several days.





These necryos are well aware of the Captain's approach, and begin trying to pick him and the party off as they move about the area leading to a series of attacks and sabotages that culminate in the Captain and the party putting an end to their threat for good.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Like all sidequests in the Chronicle of the Gatekeepers Campaign Serial, this adventure begins as Large-Biter approaches the party. Today, he wishes to kill two birds with one stone, and investigate something he thinks is related to the Nexus Gateway activity, that also happens to be a great and growing mystery.

"The weather in Koryth has never been what one would call... normal," Large-Biter explains, "and I strongly suspect that it is related to the abundance of Nexus Gateways nearby. The closest thing we have to proof, however, is that the weather has been acting even more strange than normal since the vespans started appearing." He pauses, and then goes on, "In particular, there is an effect known as the frost-line. It is aptly named: to the north of the line is frozen, as though it were the dead of winter while to the south the weather is temperate, or even hot on some days. What makes the line so unusual is that it moves from day to day. From my measurements, sometime at about midnight though the ground takes some time to freeze or thaw. But that is tangential."

Large-Biter hands you a local map. "If you were to take some measurements of the precise location of the frost-line, over the course of several days, I could compare them to known Nexus Gateway activity—which could prove my theory. But more relevantly to your visit here, if my theory is correct, it can also inform us of activity beyond what we can actually see. Which in turn can help us track down your missing necromancer."

THE STATE OF TERYTH

It is exceptionally uncommon for the frost-line to be so far south, but it has happened before. The folk of Teryth are stocking up on firewood and foodstuffs, more out of practicality than actual concern. After all, even if the frost-line comes this far south, all that's likely is a few days of unpleasant weather.

It's not unreasonable for the PCs to look into buying cold-weather gear for this expedition, and they can easily find it—in fact a dedicated merchant, Cudio, is visiting town expressly for that purpose. He is a short, bearded human, and while he is friendly and welcoming he always acts as though in a great hurry. His wares include typical blankets and cold-weather gear, but also more exotic variants of the same: troll-leather sleeping bags guaranteed never to tear, or elemental-infused coats that should keep one warm in even supernatural chill.

These exotic wares are more expensive than their mundane counterparts, but less expensive than common magic items that provide the same benefit. A PC who makes a **DC 15 Sense Motive** check will sense that these goods, likely stolen, are why Cudio is always rushing: he doesn't want to get caught in the open with them.

SIDEBAR: CARTOGRAPHY ISN'T ADVENTURING

It's true that most PCs wouldn't be excited over the prospect of surveying weather patterns—and it's hard to blame them. As a result, the actual survey is largely skimmed over in this sidequest. However, if your party enjoys wilderness adventuring, feel free to expand the checks and increase the difficulty of their encounters.

The Koryth area is relatively sparse in terms of typical wildlife (because of the unusual weather), so this adventure could be a real test of a party's resource management skills, especially as they may have to track the frost-line over several miles each day. In addition to the scarce resources, consider requiring checks beyond those needed to survey the area. Survival, Knowledge (geography or nature), or even Climb, Swim, or Acrobatics checks could be called for to navigate the rugged terrain. Appropriate DCs for these checks are 15–20, or even as high as 25—though only the luckiest and most specialized PCs would be able to pass such challenges.

MEETING THE CAPTAIN

While surveying the frost-line's unusual activity is fairly straightforward, the weather has been wreaking havoc on local ecology. Animals, insects, and plants are all feeling the effects of the unseasonable freeze, and any PC making a **DC 10 Knowledge** (**nature**) **check** will recognize the signs: wilting plants and an abundance of small animals acting as if readying for winter.

More of an immediate problem, though, will be one of Koryth's native creatures: necryos. These degenerate, vampire-like creatures stalk the countryside, preying on the heat and lifeforce of whatever creatures they catch, be they man or beast. They typically try to stay south of the frost-line, but with the line moving unnaturally far southward, the necryos have been driven into action, attacking people and animals in unusually large numbers.

The churches of the Sanguine Covenant take responsibility for protecting their people, and their clerics and paladins roam the countryside aiming to prevent or avenge the damage caused by these creatures.

One such cleric is the Captain: a p'tan who has been following the frost-line for several days now in search of a group of necryos that attacked a local farm.

Being a p'tan, the Captain appears very similar to a human; his catlike ears and muzzle-like nose are the most obvious things that set him apart from a human with the same muscular build and regal bearing. He also has a thin layer of fur, though its tan color makes it nearly invisible without close examination.

The Captain sees a strong parallel between his racial calling—to help free the rest of his race from the enslavement of the First Ones—and his personal calling toward the Venerate Laita—which guides him to destroy forbidden knowledge. Both implore him to travel far and wide so he might guide the world for the better.

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When the PCs meet him, on the road a few miles north of Teryth, he is standing astride the frost-line, thinking. Thus far his prey has evaded him, and while he will not abandon his duty, he is at a loss for how to overtake his foes.

The Captain will greet the PCs as they approach, then pause as he takes them in. He recognizes them immediately for the foreigners they are, and will ask them where they are from and whether they have thrown off their personal yokes of slavery and oppression. He isn't looking for deep or introspective answers only to confirm that the party isn't working alongside the vespans. The Captain feels the vespans are blasphemous to his belief that slavery is so heinous that even the thought of it must be eradicated. Since the vespans embrace their slavery, he sees them as stewards of a fundamentally flawed system, no matter how amazing the Gatekeepers they claim to serve are.

He will eagerly share his reason for being in the area and ask the party their own. If they share, he will suggest they band together for a time for safety. If they don't share, he will wish them well. As both he and the party will be following the frost-line over the next few days, however, the GM can have the party re-encounter him at least once each day, likely as they set up camp and as they return to Teryth at the end of their adventure.

THE FIRST DAY

The survey on the first day is a simple matter. The party just has to follow the line east and west, taking measurements as they travel.

Large-Biter wants the PCs to record details of the frost-line in at least three locations each day, over at least three days. As a PC who makes a **DC 15 Knowledge (nature or geography)** check will know, the further apart the measurement locations, the better the accuracy of the measurements.

These measurements are made with a **Survival** check, but the results of the check aren't revealed immediately. Instead, note the results of the checks; they'll come into play at the end of the adventure.

When a PC moves to surveys another area, ask how far they travel. If the new survey area is a mile or less away, apply a secret -4 circumstance bonus to their second and third checks of the day. If it is five or more miles apart, apply a secret +4 circumstance bonus to the same checks instead.

The Captain: If the Captain is with the party during the first day, he will quietly observe them, offering limited help where he can, such as by using an aid another action when the party is taking survey measurements.

At the end of the day, as the party sets up camp for the night, he will ask if a member of the party would do him the honor of dueling him in single combat. He simply cannot pass up the opportunity to see such exotic characters in action.

Mechanically, the duel works almost exactly like typical combat, except that both combatants only deal nonlethal damage. As such, ignore the typical penalties for nonlethal damage, and characters able to deal nonlethal damage without penalty instead receive a +4 circumstance bonus to all their attack rolls during the duel.

SIDEBAR: P'TAN

The p'tan are a young race, created only a dozen generations ago by the exiled First Ones who once enslaved all of Exodus. Only recently have any p'tan begun to return to Exodus from the shadow plane where they were born, having broken free of the enslavement that was all they had ever known.

Free p'tan are fiercely passionate in all things, above all their pursuit of freedom for their brethren. These passions earn them few friends, though: they are always pushing others to act rather than think, and they are never content with simply waiting for events to unfold. For them, every small freedom has been won with blood and tears, and resting before a job is done is akin to foolishness.

P'TAN SHADOW

Aura faint transmutation; CL 12th Slot implant; Price 6,000 gp; Weight — Implant DC 10 and Spellcraft DC 20

DESCRIPTION

This gossamer veil resembles black silk, but is actually a fragment of tangible shadow. Rather than being implanted into the body, a p'tan shadow is sewn to one's own shadow where the heart would be, which transforms the shadow's shape into something more resembling a p'tan, with catlike ears and a strong frame.

A p'tan shadow is made from the same shadowstuff all p'tan were once forged from. It grants its bearer a +2 racial bonus to Dexterity and darkvision out to 60 feet. If the bearer already possesses racial darkvision, it increases the range by 30 feet.

CREATION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *cat's grace, darkvision*; **Cost** 3,000 gp

The Captain will honor surrender as soon as it is requested, and he will request it if reduced to 15 hp or less. The last man standing is the victor. Regardless of who wins, after the duel the Captain will refresh both himself and his opponent with channeled energy, and thank them for an invigorating challenge.

The GM should track the victors of these duels: it will affect the token of favor the Captain gives the PCs when they eventually part ways.

THE CAPTAIN

CR 4 – 1,200 XP

P'tan cleric of Laita 5 (*NeoExodus: A House Divided*) LN Medium outsider (native) **Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3

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DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+8 armor, +2 shield) hp 36 (5d8+10) Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +7 Defensive Abilities shadowborn Weakness light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk cold iron heavy mace +5 (1d8+1)

Ranged mwk longbow +4 (1d8; range 100 ft.) or shadowspark +4 (1d6+2 electricity)

Special Attacks channel positive energy 4/day (DC 13, 3d6), +1 versus First Ones

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8) 5/day—touch of law

5/day—resistant touch (+2 damage)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th; concentration +8)

3rd—create food and water, dispel magic, protection from $eneray^{D}$

2nd—align weapon $(law)^{D}$, bull's strength, hold person, make whole

1st—bless, command, magic weapon (2), sanctuary^D

0 (at will)—*create water, guidance, purify food and drink, stabilize* ^D Domain spell; **Domains** Law, Protection

TACTICS

Before Combat: Before a challenging fight, the Captain casts bull's strength and magic weapon, but he prefers to save his spells for dangerous situations or for converting to cure spells, if needed.

During Combat: The Captain will target a melee combatant with hold person, then coup de gras the creature if doing so would likely make other enemies hesitate.

Morale: The Captain is almost foolhardy, fighting until reduced to 5 hp before retreating.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 17, Cha 13

Base Atk +3; CMB +4; CMD 14

Feats Improved Initiative, Selective Channeling, Weapon proficiency (longbow)

Skills Heal +11, Knowledge (religion) +6, Survival +4 **Languages** Common, Exodite

Languages Common, Exounte

Combat Gear potion of bear's endurance, potion of cure serious wounds; **Other Gear** masterwork cold iron heavy mace, masterwork longbow with 20 arrows, masterwork halfplate, masterwork heavy steel shield, cloak of resistance +1, iron holy symbol, flint and steel, signet ring, tent, incense worth 100 gp, a set of bones worth 25 gp, 507 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Shadowborn (Ex): The Captain has a +4 bonus on saves against spells with the shadow subtype.

Shadowspark (Su): As a standard action, the Captain may unleash a bolt of crackling black lightning against a target within 30 feet as a ranged touch attack. If successful, it deals 1d6+2 electrical damage. The Captain can use this ability 6 times per day.

SIDEBAR: TIME CONSTRAINTS

Each sidequest is designed to be run over a single session, which means you might not have enough time for the Captain to duel each party member one at a time. In that case, he requests that the battles only be fought to first blood. To do so, he and the PC challenger make opposed attack rolls, and the first character to win the opposed check by 5 or more lands the scoring blow and wins that round.

THE FIRST NIGHT

Unless the party is exceptionally careful in setting up camp, the necryos will locate their camp in the middle of the first night. One will approach within 15 feet of the party—close enough for its aura of mute flames to affect any fires—to study them for a few rounds, then skulk away. A PC on watch who makes a DC 20 Perception check will notice the creature's approach, but any move or attack against it will cause it to flee.

NECRYOS

CR 4 – 1,200 XP

hp 37 (page @@)

THE SECOND MORNING

Just before dawn on the second day, the party will be awoken by the sound of a sting cannon being fired, only a few hundred feet from where they camped.

Investigating the shots, the party will discover a single vespan, frozen to the core. It had been tracking the PCs for its masters, only to run afoul of the necryos who had been following the party for their association with the Captain. A PC making a DC 20 Perception check will discover a recent spattering of blood from another creature (the necryos) nearby and leading away from the vespan.

Following the blood trail north for the first mile requires only a DC 10 Survival check, but then the blood trail stops. Actually catching the injured necryos, who has stopped to rest just south of the frost-line, requires a DC 23 Survival check.

INJURED NECRYOS

CR 3 – 800 XP

hp 18 (page @@)

Development: Regardless of whether the PCs chase the necryos, it becomes evident that the frost-line has moved north overnight. It is now just shy of six miles north from where it was the previous day.

The Captain: The Captain will implore the PCs to follow the trail, though doing so requires a DC 23 Survival check. PCs who

succeed follow the necryos to its partner prowling around the frost-line.

THE SECOND DAY

As the party surveys during the second day, they will regularly come across tracks that belong to both vespans and necryos, as both are prowling the area. However, any attempts to follow the tracks will be met with dead ends, since throughout the second day the two groups will be actively avoiding the PCs.

THE SECOND NIGHT

Just before turning in for the night, the Captain will once again challenge one of the PCs to a duel. This duel works exactly the same as the duel on the first evening, though the Captain will challenge a different PC, assuring them he won't think any less of them if he defeats them.

THE THIRD MORNING

The third morning will find the PCs in the cold—the frost-line has moved four miles south. The necryos have passed near the party's camp overnight, but not close enough to have been noticed from the party's camp. As the party travels south, though, they will find a trail of small animals, frozen solid and partially eaten.

The Captain: If he is with the PCs, he will state the obvious and explain that the necryos are attempting to lure the PCs somewhere. He will urge the PCs to follow them; these creatures will likely stage an ambush, but the group will be prepared.

The Captain is right—the necryos are attempting to lure the PCs to a grove directly south of where they had camped. If the party follows the trail, which requires a **DC 15 Survival** check, they will be alerted to potential danger when they stumble across the yellow musk creepers.

GREEPING GLEARING (GR4)

Either upon following the trail left by the necryos, or at random as they begin their survey on the second day, the party will come across a clearing with three recently dead vespans. The necryos killed them and left their bodies here, intending to drive the PCs to investigate, despite the dangerous fungus.

A PC who makes a **DC 17 Knowledge (nature)** check will recognize the yellow musk creeper fungi in the clearing, allowing the party to avoid the clearing safely. If the PCs avoid the creeper, award them XP as if they had defeated it in combat.

CR 2 – 600 XP

YELLOW MUSK CREEPER

hp 22 (Pathfinder Resource Document)

YELLOW MUSK VESPANS (3) CR 1/2 – 200 XP

hp 12 Zombie (Pathfinder Resource Document)

Treasure: In addition to the parvatrophedon and trophedon worn by each vespan, a PC who makes a DC 15 Perception check searching the soil around the creeper uncovers a +1

rapier in the remains of a victim of the plant from several years ago.

THE THIRD AFTERNOON (CR 6)

About the time the party has completed their final survey on the third day, the necryos will have become impatient enough to strike. A character who makes a **DC 18 Perception check will notice the approach of the necryos before they emerge from the underbrush and attack.**

NECRYOS (3)

CR 4 – 1,200 XP

hp 37, 37, 22 (page @@)

Treasure: The necryos keep a sack of trophies from their kills with them. Mostly the bag is filled with teeth, ears, and fingers from a variety of creatures, but it also holds a gem-studded *efficient quiver*, a silver and opal tiara worth 250 gp, and two dozen small, loose gemstones worth a total of 350 gp.

Development: If the Captain isn't with the party at the time of the attack, he will emerge from the same direction as the necryos two rounds after they do, and aid the party in combat. He has been tracking both groups to the best of his ability, but he knows he isn't able to take out all three of them on his own. He will use all the healing magic at his disposal to prevent any fatalities he can.

THE THIRD NIGHT

With the necryos defeated, the Captain prepares to part ways with the party—but not before dueling the remaining PCs.

After the duels, he will thank the PCs for humoring him and offer them a token of friendship in thanks. In addition, so long as at least one PC accepted a duel with him, even if they didn't win, grant the party 1,200 XP as if they had defeated the Captain in combat.

If no PC bested him in single combat, the Captain will offer the party a gold signet ring bearing his family crest. The ring itself is beautiful and worth 100 gp—or far more as a sign of alliance with the Captain and the Church of Laita.

If one or two PCs bested him in single combat, he gives the party his ring as well as a *potion of cure serious wounds*—for an emergency.

If three or more PCs bested him, he will bow to the party's skill and offer the ring and the potion. In addition, he writes them a writ of life—a promise that the Church of Laita will perform *raise dead* for the party exactly once, free of charge.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the Captain gone and the necryos defeated, the return to Teryth is uneventful. Large-Biter will question them on all the details of the journey, especially on the behaviors of the necryos not because their behavior is unusual, but simply because he enjoys the party telling them of their adventures.

When the party turns over their survey results to the sasori, assign the following point values to each Survival check:

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5 or lower: -1 point 6-10: 0 points 11-20: 1 point 21 or higher: 2 points

If the party scores 4 points or fewer, Large-Biter reviews the data and tells the party the data isn't as detailed or accurate as he needs. He simply isn't able to determine anything from the data.

If the party scores 7 points or fewer, Large-Biter will tell the party that the data confirms his suspicions about Nexus Gateway activity, but he isn't able to pinpoint where the unknown Nexus Gateways might be. Grant the PCs 800 XP, and Large-Biter awards them 600 gp for their time and energy.

If the party scores 11 points or fewer, Large-Biter is able to confirm his theory and identify a few likely locations for the unknown Nexus Gateways: exactly the results he was hoping for. Grant the PCs 1,200 XP, and Large-Biter rewards the PCs with a list of Nexus Gateway locations and 1,000 gp.

If the party scores 12 points or more, Large-Biter confirms his theory and identifies three previously unknown, and apparently quite active, Nexus Gateways, located within a hundred miles of Teryth—one to the north, one east, and one west. Grant the PCs 1,600 XP, and Large-Biter rewards the PCs with 2,000 gp and the specific location of these three gateways.

The next adventure is up to the GM—the PCs can try one of the other sidequests for this Campaign Serial: *What Comes Before the First; Not of the Same Mind; In His Bad Books; To Not Serve Man; or Speaking the Same Language. 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.*

NECRYOS

This gaunt figure has ash-white skin and deep black eyes. Its fingers and teeth are long and sharp, and it is covered with a thin layer of frost.

CR 4 – 1.200 XP

NECRYOS

First appearing in *NeoExodus: A House Divided* CE Medium monstrous humanoid (cold) **Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0 **Aura** mute flames 15 ft.

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+1 Dex, +10 natural) hp 37 (5d10+10) Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7 Immune cold



Chronicle of the Gatekeepers

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; not affected by icy or snowy terrain
Melee 2 slams +7 (1d8+2 plus 1 cold)
Special Attacks thermal vampirism

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 7 Base Atk +5; CMB +7; CMD 19

Feats Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Run **Skills** Climb +10, Perception +8, Stealth +10 (+15 in icy or snowy terrain), Survival +8; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Climb, +5 Stealth in icy or snowy terrain **Languages** Aklo and Giant

ECOLOGY

Environment Koryth, frozen mountains

Organization solitary, pair, or tribe (3–12); larger gatherings are frequently accompanied by ice elementals (*Pathfinder Reference Document*) **Treasure** standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mute Flames (Ex): A necryos's cold aura halves the damage of any fire and heat-based attacks within 15 feet of a necryos.

Thermal Vampirism (Su): Once per day, a necryos can freeze the air around it. Everyone within 20 feet of the necryos takes 1d6 cold damage (Fort DC 17 half). For every creature that fails its save, the necryos heals a number of hit points equal to the damage taken by the target. The DC for the save is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

Necryos, also called thermal vampires, are not undead at all. Rather, they are a twisted side effect of the ancient War of Mind and Magic between the Cavian Empire and the Sorcerer-Kings of Abaddon. The apocalyptic magics that turned the fertile mountains of Nas into forbidding, ice-snarled peaks bled into some of the inhabitants, producing these vicious predators.

Necryos speak their own tongue, a grotesque, degenerate version of that shared by the ancient human and cavian inhabitants of Nas. A few also speak Common.



A Chill Wind

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CAMPAIGN SERIAL SIDE TREK: A CHILL WIND

The weather in Koryth has never been natural, and most unnatural of all is the constantly moving line of magical cold, the frostline. The party's ally, Large-Biter sends them out to research this phenomenon—and its link to the Nexus Gateways that brought the party here in the first place.

However, even a simple research mission turns deadly as heathunting vampire-creatures known as necryos begin hunting the party, on the run from the bounty-hunting p'tan, the Captain.

This adventure is an optional sidequest in the Chronicle of the Gatekeepers Campaign Serial, and includes:

- An introduction to the p'tan! A recently freed slave race with catlike features and fierce passions
- Statistics for the necryos, a vampiric creature that feeds on the heat of the living
- A new racial implant for the p'tan race, the p'tan shadow





