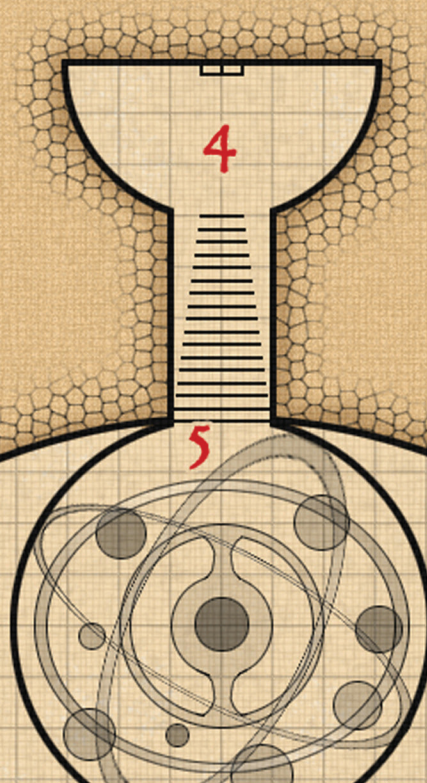




GENIUS ADVENTURES

NIGHT OF THE STARBIRD



North



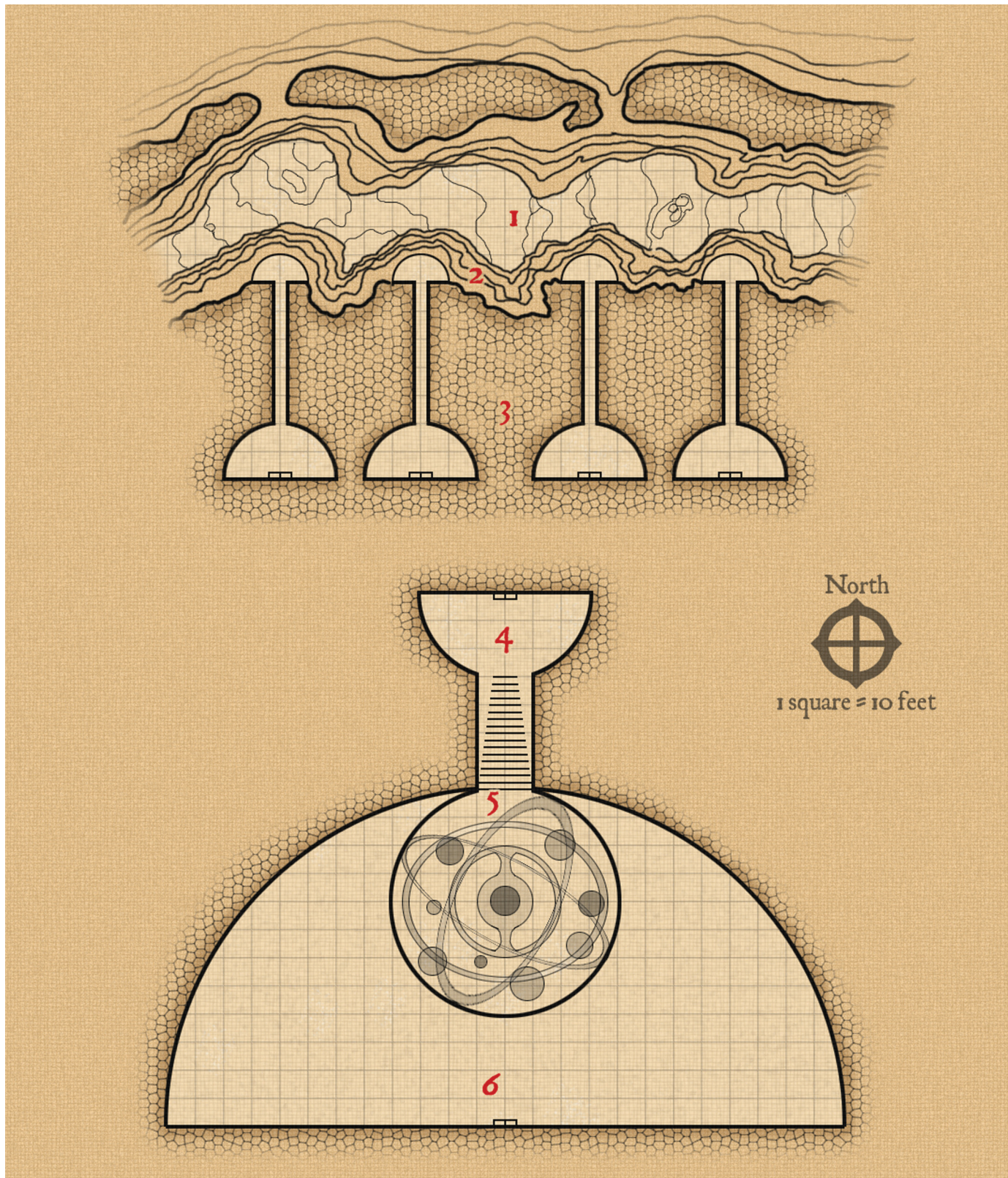
1 square = 10 feet

PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Stan!

TEMPLE OF ASTRONIX

ENTRY AND LOWER LEVEL



NIGHT OF THE STARBIRD

An Adventure for 8th-9th Level Characters
By Stan!

The discovery and exploration of forgotten ruins is the meat of “dungeon crawl” adventures. PCs are forever finding maps to lost shrines, stumbling into forgotten tombs, and questing for legendary treasure troves. There are many reasons why a site might be lost to antiquity--its existence could have been secret, and those who knew the truth met an untimely end without sharing their knowledge; its purpose may have become unnecessary and the site fallen into centuries of neglect; or it may simply be located in a place where ordinary folk never go. The latter is the case when it comes to Night of the Starbird.

The temple is an ancient site, considered holy by many avian races, and located in a place where non-avian creatures are unlikely to find it. Dedicated to Astronix--a legendary bird that is said to create the night sky by sweeping its magnificent, star-speckled tail feathers from horizon to horizon--the temple sits within a barren mountaintop whose depths hold no veins of ore, gems, or any other substance that men prize. It is a giant rock as valueless as the ones that get kicked along the roadside or skipped across ponds. What's more, the temple entrance is high on a cliffside, where it can only be easily reached by those who arrive by air, hidden from the eyes of those on the ground.

Since the legend of Astronix is not well known among non-avians, the more earthly races have no clue that a temple to the starbird would even exist, so they have no reason to start climbing cliff walls in search of it. But the avian races have a rich tradition of folktales about Astronix, though actual worship of the starbird has become somewhat rare. In the same way that ordinary folk might visit the site of an ancient chapel dedicated to a forgotten deity, avians will sometimes make pilgrimages to the Temple of Astronix.

THESE TENGU FLY

A note about the tengu in this adventure: They are based on the creatures from Japanese folk tales rather than the iteration that exists in the standard Pathfinder rules. As a result, they all have the natural ability to fly.

All of the tengu in Night of the Starbird have a fly speed of 30 and a maneuverability rating of average.

FLIGHT OF THE STARBIRD

This adventure sits at the crossroads of those two endeavors. The PCs are crossing a mountain pass on some completely unrelated mission when they happen to run into a tengu who is part of a group of his kind that are on their way to the Temple of Astronix.

The tengu group is lead by Krakkahaan, a sorcerer of not inconsiderable power, who wants to be in the Temple of Astronix during an astrological convergence that is sometimes called the “Night of the Starbird,” even by ground-bound cultures. To the PCs, if they know of it at all, it is a night when a rare bird-shaped constellation is prominent in the sky. To avians, it is the night that legend says Astronix returns to this realm in order to “renew the night sky.” In either case, the heavenly convergence is about to occur.

Exactly what Krakkahaan expects to happen is unclear--he has not shared that information with his hirelings. But it is clear that he expects to gain some measure of personal power from the event, and that he expects trouble along the way. Krakkahaan has assembled a large party of tengu--a dozen warriors, a trio of priests, and a skilled thief--and told them that they would be tested on the journey, but the rewards would be commensurate with the danger.

GETTING STARTED

The PCs enter the adventure without any efforts of their own. Indeed, the adventure literally falls into their midsts while they are traveling through a mountain pass on some completely unrelated endeavor.

In area 01 they will meet Agraa, the thief from Krakkahaan's party, who can provide all the information they need to point them in the right direction. If a group needs more motivation to get involved, the GM may use one or more of the following seeds (or create one devise specifically to entice his particular PCs).

- Starbird feathers are a rare and valuable spell component, much sought after by wizards and alchemists.
- Lately the local region has been seeing an increasing number of attacks by tengu raiders. The coming “Night of the Starbird” might actually give them some kind of power, so the

PCs have been sent to chase off any tengu they can find--but so far they have come across none.

- A nobleman of the PCs' acquaintance is fascinated by avian culture and lore. He has often bored them with folktales about the "Starbird." If the Temple of Astronix is real, he would pay dearly for any artifacts the group could bring back from there.
- One of the PCs has an inert artifact that it is said can be recharged at the Temple of Astronix on the Night of the Starbird.
- A bounty has been placed on Krakkahaan's head, either by a local magistrate or by the sorcerer's guild. The tengu has powerful enemies will handsomely reward whoever brings him in--dead or alive.

There are 10 encounters in Night of the Starbird.

There are no random encounters in Night of the Starbird.

THE LEGEND OF ASTRONIX

Note: This is not a fundamental truth about the game world--it is a legend told and (perhaps) believed by tengu and other avian races. It in no way invalidates whatever creation myth (or myths) that a particular campaign posits. However, the legend does make some basic presumptions about the world that may not be true in all settings (such as there being just one sun and moon). However, it should be a relatively simple matter to tweak the details to suit most campaigns (changing the number and name of the celestial orbs). For games where the cosmos is particularly different, the GM can modify or replace this legend as he sees fit--for the most part it just serves as background color. That having been said, the details of what the PCs see in area 04 will need to be modified to suit the new legend.

Long, long ago, before the coming of the first races, there was the earth and there was the sky. During the day, the sky was ruled by Phoenix and his fiery orb we call the sun, while at night the sky was ruled by Astronix and her silvery orb we call the moon.

Phoenix's sky was clear, with no clouds to weaken the overwhelming blue that was, in its own way, as bright as the fires of the sun. Astronix's sky was also clear, an ebon blanket that swaddled the moon and enhanced its beauty. One day, Phoenix and Astronix quarreled over whose sky was better.

"The daytime is fierce," said Phoenix. "The heat of the sun and the strength of the sky make it impossible to look up for long. Creatures will seek shelter from it and bow in supplication."

"The nighttime is comforting," said Astronix. "The moonlight is hypnotic and the sky relaxing. Creatures will sit under it for hours, staring up in awe. They will sleep under it, and it will be a comfort to them."

Phoenix realized that Astronix was right. Creatures would love the night more than the day. They would toil and work under his sky, while they would relax and make merry under hers. And so Phoenix grew jealous.

At that time, night and day were equals--each having equal reign over the sky. But one day, just at twilight, Phoenix, in his growing jealousy, sent fiery blasts toward the night and hit the moon. He did not destroy it utterly, but he did break off thousands of tiny chunks, leaving the moon smaller and weaker than before--and making the day even stronger by comparison. That is why now the length of the night varies over the course of the year and its span is never longer than the course of the day. It is also why the moon waxes and wanes as it still wobbles from the power of Phoenix's blast.

Astronix was distraught as she looked down and saw the thousands of pieces of moon lying around. They did not belong on the earth, they belonged in the sky. So she flew low over the earth and used the great feathers of her tail to sweep the fallen moon bits up. She tried to reattach them to the moon, but they would not stick, so Astronix again used her tail to sweep them across the sky, spreading them from horizon to horizon. And when she was done, there was still the moon--smaller and less constant than it had been before--but there were also the stars. Tiny bits of light laid out in beautiful patterns. However, because Astronix had to sweep the moon bits up from the earth, her tail also caused dust to billow up, and as she swept her tail across the sky, the dust followed and settled in the sky forming what we today call clouds.

As time went on, Astronix kept sweeping the sky--moving the stars until they formed the constellations we all know today--and when she was happy with the arrangement, she rested. So great was her effort, though, that Astronix slept for an entire year, and when she awoke she saw that the stars were starting to come loose from where she had put them. That is why now, once per year, she returns and sweeps her tail across the sky again--painting the stars in place so they will always shine above us in the patterns that Astronix chose.

01. UNEXPECTED COMPANY (EL 6)

Summary: When you're an adventurer, there's no such thing as a place too remote for trouble to find you. In this case, danger literally falls out of the clear blue sky.

Sights and Sounds: This encounter takes place along a lonely stretch of mountaintop--no civilization of any kind for miles, just the PCs, the crisp wind, and clear sky.

The mountain pass you're traveling along is only remarkable in that it is so unremarkable--a well-trod path along cuts between two cliffs of plain weather-worn rock. The sky is clear and the weather fine--definitely a good day for traveling.

Background: The adventure begins as the PCs are traveling through a stretch of mountains that, as far as they know, has nothing at all unusual to offer. What they don't know is that fifty feet above their heads is the entrance to an avian temple--one that is even now being explored by a band of tengu adventurers.

Getting into the temple required the group to get past the site's guardians--a cadre of immortal gargoyles--perched on a ledge that's completely hidden from view (see area 02). The tengu, led by a sorcerer named Krakkahaan, fought the gargoyles and made their way into the temple complex, but one of their number got left behind. This straggler, a rogue named Agraa, was beset by a gargoyle, and fought against it valiantly. Unfortunately, he was outmatched and the scene begins as Agraa and the gargoyle crash out of the sky and land amid the PCs.

Exactly how the scene plays out is up to the PCs. They can try to save Agraa from his attacker, wade in and try to kill both of the newly arrived combatants (tengu and gargoyle alike), or simply sit back and watch the action.

Agraa was pressed into service by Krakkahaan, and so bears no strong sense of loyalty to the tengu

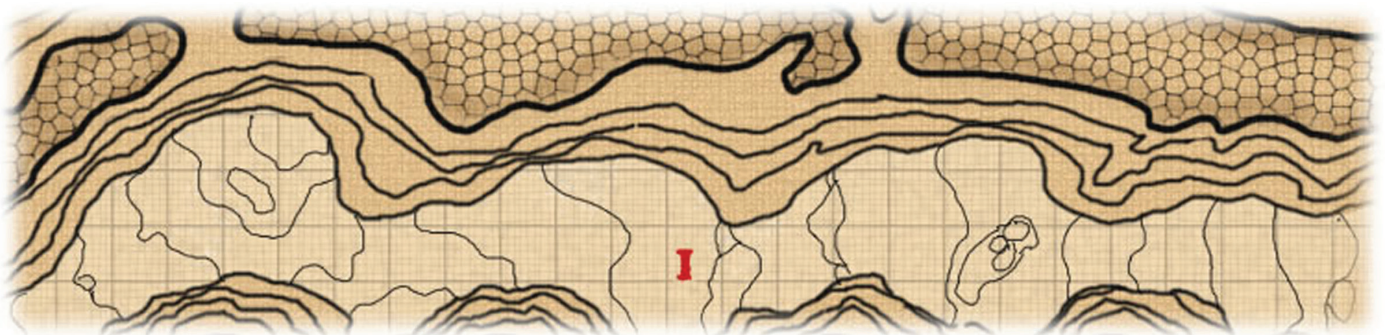
sorcerer. If the PCs rescue him from the gargoyles (or even if they merely refrain from attacking), Agraa will be willing to share what information he has with them, and can be convinced to help them find and get into the Temple of Astronix themselves.

If Agraa does not survive the combat, the GM will have to find an alternative method of letting the PCs know that there is something of interest waiting above. Having the other gargoyles (area 02) come down to make sure all the interlopers are driven away (or seeking vengeance for their fallen comrade) is a possibility, finding the notes on Agraa's body is another. In any case, the point of this encounter is merely to let the PCs know that something strange is going on among the rocks above and to provide them a gateway into the adventure.

Instant Combat: Allow the PCs to attempt DC 18 Perception checks. Those who succeed notice what seems to be a pair of winged figures diving down at them from out of a clear blue sky. Exactly where they came from is unclear, but they do seem to be swooping in for an attack. Allow anyone who succeeded at the check roll for initiative and move directly into the combat.

Agraa and the gargoyle are engaged in a grapple, and rather than flying in for an attack, they are actually plummeting to the ground. On the gargoyle's turn, the pair crash onto the mountain pass in near the PCs. Randomly select one of the PCs that will be closest to the impact. Have that character make a Reflex save (ostensibly to avoid being hit by the combatants). Describe a dramatically narrow escape (increasing the level of drama if the save roll was low), but there is no danger unless the PC rolls a natural "1" on the save. In that case, he or she is directly hit by pair, is knocked prone, and suffers 3d10 damage.

Agraa loses half his hit points and is Stunned (for 1d3 rounds) by the crash, leaving the gargoyle--who is unhurt by the experience--to do its worst, unless the PCs stop it.



The gargoyle is different than most the PCs may have seen. Rather than having the appearance of a statue, this one looks more like a collection of naturally formed boulders. It still has a roughly humanoid physique, but not the demonic expression that most gargoyles do. Statistically, it is identical to a normal gargoyle, but it has the eternal template, making it extremely resilient. If the killing blow is struck with a sonic or force attack, though, the gargoyle's death will be permanent.

Left to its own devices, the gargoyle ignores the PCs and attacks the stunned tengu. It should be a fairly easy matter for the gargoyle to finish him off utterly. (Agraa is a 4th-level rogue--use the statistics for the Feathered King--but begins this encounter at half his normal hit points.)

Gargoyle: hp 42 (with eternal template)

Agraa (Tengu, Rogue 4): hp 26 (currently 13) (Agraa has the natural ability to fly.)

After the Fight: Presuming the PCs prevent the gargoyle from killing him, Agraa is very grateful and is willing to tell the group everything he knows about Krakkahaan and his plan. He has in his possession detailed notes about their mission, and he is willing to share it all, if the PCs ask. Indeed, his bitterness toward Krakkahaan (who first pressed him into service and then left him to die at the hands of the gargoyle) is so great that he's willing to join the PCs as their assistant if they seem interested in tracking down his former master. He's even more enthusiastic if the PCs specifically say that they intend to kill Krakkahaan--tengu can be exceedingly vindictive.

Remember that even if it is killed, the gargoyle has the eternal template and so will return to life 2d6 minutes after it falls. If the PCs are still around, the gargoyle will resume the fight. Otherwise, it will fly back to its perch (area 02).

If the PCs allowed Agraa to be killed, the gargoyle will turn the them and hiss warnings for the group not to follow him, then fly back up to a spot at least fifty feet up the surrounding cliff walls and disappear behind a stone ridge. A successful DC 15 Perception check will reveal that the gargoyle did not go much further than that--it definitely landed and settled down somewhere close to the ridge.

On Agraa's body the PCs can find the equipment listed on the Feathered King stat block plus a pouch containing five gems each worth 25 gp. Also among the effects is a small notebook in which Agraa wrote the basic goals of Krakkahaan's expedition--to find the

Temple of Astronix and to be there on a certain date (which is today), though the exact reason for this was never revealed--plus the specific activities that Agraa was responsible for--sneaking past the temple guardians (the gargoyles), determining which door safely led into the temple, and other general roguish duties.

If the PCs look through the notebook carefully, or get Agraa's cooperation, they can find the following notes about the site (gleaned from various tengu historical tomes):

"The rocks do not block the entrance, they guard it. You cannot lift them, but they can be moved if you know the tale of the tail." (This pertains to area 02).

"Your eyes deceive you, there are not four doors--only one. It guards the temple through every season, and must be opened over the course of a year and closed over the course of the next." (This pertains to area 03.)

"You may navigate by these stars as you would the ones above." (This pertains to area 05.)

"The final door swings wide. When it opens, you must be prepared to fly." (This pertains to the door in area 06.)

UPPING THE ANTE

This is just meant to be an introductory encounter to bring the PCs into the adventure. As such, the challenge level is set relatively low. However, if the GM would like to make this scene more challenging, simply adding a second gargoyle increases the difficulty to EL 8, and making it three gargoyles raises the encounter to EL 9.

REVISIT

If the PCs or any other ground-bound characters come this way again, it is extremely difficult to find this particular location again. From the mountain pass there are no visible clues that the Temple of Astronix sits above, and after the PCs leave the area, the gargoyles will police the grounds, cleaning up any items or markings the characters may have left behind. They will even go so far as to tear out scrub brush or even disfigure prominent outcroppings of rock--anything to create subtle changes to the landscape and make it difficult for returning visitors to find landmarks that allow them to identify this as the spot where the combat took place.

All attempts to locate this exact spot or the location of the Temple of Astronix suffer a -5 penalty because of the changes that have been made to the area.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 02. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.

02. CLIFFSIDE GUARDIANS (EL II)

Summary: The PCs discover a site that no non-avian has ever seen before. But there remains some things even the PCs don't see--yet.

Sights and Sounds: This encounter takes place on the side of a cliff near the top of a mountain. Natural lighting and weather conditions apply.

About fifty feet up on the cliff, blocked from the view of the pass below by a series of ledges and ridges, you find four small cave mouths in the mountainside. Each is only about five feet wide and is partially blocked by a pile of rocky rubble.

Background: The Temple of Astronix was constructed by avians for use by avians, and in hopes of keeping non-avians not only out of the complex, but completely unaware of its existence. This site was chosen not merely because it was so remote, but because the mountains contain none of the materials that the ground-bound races prize--no precious ores or gems, no springs of fresh water, no caves or tunnel systems--nothing. And that decision has kept the temple an utter secret for hundreds of years. In fact, if not for the unlucky happenstance of a group of adventurers (the PCs) hiking through a mountain pass at the exact moment that a group of tengu were trying to gain entrance to the temple, the secret would yet be complete.

Unfortunately, the PCs were there when a tengu rogue and one of the temple's guardian gargoyles fell from the secret perch, and now they have learned of the site's existence. Through some means, the PCs have scaled the cliff and now can see four small caves that are part of the temple entrance. At first glance, the area seems deserted, but that is by design--in fact, the piles of rocky rubble blocking the cave entrances are immortal gargoyles bred for the purpose of preventing non-believers from entering the temple.

The main difficulty the PCs will face in this encounter is the terrain, in that for the most part it's vertical. Apart from the small ledges where the gargoyles sit, the rest of the area is a sheer cliff wall, meaning that the PCs must be able to fight while clinging to rocks, have some means of flight, or manage to get onto the ledges and hold their ground.

The DC for this encounter is set based on the basis that there are four gargoyles and the terrain is treacherous. However, one of the gargoyles may have been eliminated in the fight with Agraa (area 01). If that is the case and the PCs are only facing three gargoyles, decrease the EL to 10.

Climbing The Cliffside: The Temple of Astronix was built in this location in part because of its inaccessibility from the ground. The cliff on which it is situated is not easily climbed. The face is almost vertical and while there are abundant hand- and footholds, the rocks are loose and crumbly. While climbing, a creature can move only one-quarter its normal speed and must make a successful DC 15 Climb check in order to move at all. Failure indicates that the creature could not find a suitable hand- or foothold to use and must remain where it is. A natural "1" on the check indicates that the one of its current hand- or footholds has crumbled, and the creature has lost its grip (see below).

It is entirely likely that some of the PCs will have to engage in combat while climbing or clinging to the cliff. It is impossible to fight and climb, since climbing requires the use of both hands. However, the PC can cling to the rocks and draw a one-handed weapon or other small item (if one is within reach), but this causes him to incur a -2 penalty to all Climb checks while his hand is otherwise occupied. When a PC in this situation takes hit point damage, he must make a Climb check as described above.

When a creature climbing the cliff loses its grip, it immediately drops anything it is holding and must make a DC 13 Reflex save. Failure indicates that the creature is in danger of falling and must immediately



make a Climb, Acrobatics, Dexterity, or Strength check (DC 18). If that check succeeds, the creature has managed to regain its grip. If it fails, the creature falls from the cliff and plummets to the mountain pass below, taking normal falling damage based on how high up

The Ledges: The ledges are 50 ft. above the mountain pass. They are actually relatively large (about 20 ft. long and 10 ft. wide), and under normal circumstances they would be a welcome respite from the difficult time. What's more, once a creature can see a ledge, it becomes clear that there is a narrow cave at its rear, leading deep into the cliffside.

However, each ledge has what at first appears to be a large pile of rocks blocking the entrance to the cave--and those "piles of rock" are actually gargoyles. The gargoyles are particularly difficult to spot (see below). Once combat begins on the ledge, it will likely no longer seem nearly as safe a place to be.

Temple Guardians: The gargoyles will do nothing while the PCs are climbing the cliff. They know the value of patience. There is no need to reveal their presence (and confirm the location of the temple) when the climb is so dangerous. It is only when one or more of the PCs actually pull themselves up onto a ledge that the gargoyles take any actions.

Without visibly moving, the gargoyle nearest the PC will call out "Why have ye come?" If the PCs have read Agra's notebook or gotten advice from the tengu himself, they may have the following bit of cryptic information: "The rocks do not block the entrance, they guard it. You cannot lift them, but they can be moved if you know the tale of the tail."

The meaning of this clue is that the gargoyles are supposed to allow actual worshippers of Astronix to enter the temple. If the PCs can recite a relatively accurate account of the Legend of Astronix, or otherwise convince the gargoyles that they are worshippers of the starbird, the gargoyles will allow them to enter freely. If the PCs fail to make their case convincingly, the gargoyles will all attack.

In combat, the gargoyles will first attempt to prevent any interlopers from entering the caves or even standing on the ledges. They will try to bullrush a trespasser off a ledge or, if the creature is light enough, pick it up and fly high into the sky then simply let the creature plummet to its death. Failing that, the gargoyles will attempt to grapple an opponent and then force the grappling pair off the ledge (as one did with Agra in area 01).

Once all the ledges are clear, the gargoyles will begin attacking interlopers that are clinging to the cliff wall. They will do so by targeting obvious spellcasters first and using flyby attacks. Simply getting all the foes off the cliffs is not enough. Once non-believers know the location of the temple, they must die, so the gargoyles will press the attack even if the PCs retreat to the mountain pass.

The only thing that will stop the gargoyles' attack is if a creature successfully enters one of the caves mouths and moves more than 10 ft. down the corridor. At that point, that particular creature is safe--once a creature has entered the temple, the gargoyles will not pursue it. However, when a known interloper exits the temple, the gargoyles will immediately renew their attack.

Remember that the gargoyles have the eternal template. So even if the PCs kill one, it will come back to life and return to its duties in 2d6 minutes. If the killing blow was struck with a sonic or force attack, though, the gargoyle's death will be permanent.

Gargoyle (x4): hp 42 (with eternal template)

UPPING THE ANTE

This encounter should already be fairly difficult. However, it is by far the toughest challenge the PCs will face in the first half of the temple complex, so if they are having too easy a time of it, the GM may wish to include additional gargoyles that nest on the rocks above the ledges. For each gargoyle added, increase the EL of this encounter by +1.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 01 and area 03. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.

03. ONE DOOR NOT FOUR (VARIES)

Summary: The four caves lead to four doors. None of them lead into the temple--yet all of them do.

Sights and Sounds: Structurally, all four of the caves are identical. The stone of the floors, walls, and ceilings have been worked and finished. There is no light source other than what few rays come in through the cave mouth. If the PCs have a sufficient light source, they see the following.

A long, narrow corridor leads deep into the cliff face--all the surfaces smooth and worked in fine detail with astronomical shapes and representations of the ancient constellations. The corridor opens into a semi-circular room with a domed ceiling.

The curved walls and ceiling are covered with an intricately painted night sky, the flat wall bears a mural of a daytime landscape. The only fixture in the room is a closed wooden door set in the middle of the landscape.

At their highest point, the domed ceilings reach 15 ft. high. The murals are different in each of the chambers.

Background: The secret to entering the Temple of Astronix is to open the doors in a particular sequence. Individually, each of these is merely a false door--opening onto the back wall of the cave. However, if the doors are opened and closed in the proper order it opens a portal connecting one of them to the false door in area 04. The doors are linked to the astronomical calendar--so the pattern changes slightly for each season of the year.

Put simply, each of the caves is linked to a particular season (as measured by the time between equinoxes and solstices--or whatever astronomical measurements are appropriate for a particular GM's campaign). Clues to this are found on the domed ceilings and murals in each of the chambers. The proper sequence is to open all of the doors in seasonal order--beginning with the current season--then close them all in the same order. Once that is done, if the

current season's door is opened again, it will lead to the temple's narthex. Once it is closed, though, the portal is broken and the entire sequence must be repeated to re-open it. (Of course all of this can be avoided if someone in the narthex opens the door--which automatically activates the portal, see area 04.)

The westernmost cavern is linked to spring, followed by summer, autumn, and winter (or whatever seasonal variants fit the campaign). This adventure can take place at whatever time of the year that the GM prefers, so the exact order that these need to be opened will also vary from group to group.

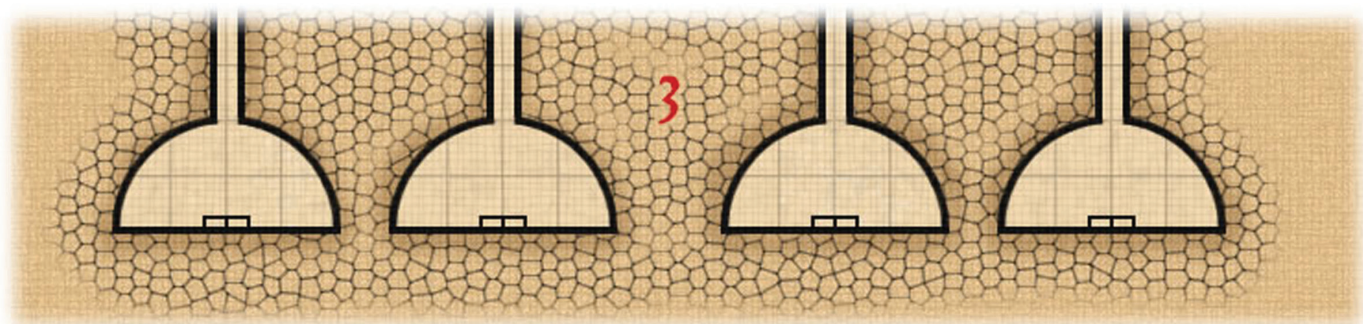
Exploring these rooms and activating the portal will necessitate the PCs traveling between the chambers (or splitting up and somehow communicating over the intervening distances). This would not be particularly challenging except for the fact that the gargoyles will still be guarding the ledges. Unless the PCs managed to convince them that the group faithfully worships Astronix, there will be some manner of fight each time a PC exits one of the corridors. The GM can factor this in as part of the EL from area 02, or give additional xp, depending on how difficult it proves to be.

The Corridors: The corridors are 5 ft. wide, and so must be entered single file. The ceilings are 10 ft. high, so they do not produce an especially cramped feeling.

A great deal of care was taken in crafting these simple corridors. Though they are formed from the rock of the cliff wall, they have been worked to the point where it is easy to mistake them for quarried and imported stone. Every surface has been engraved with fine renderings of astronomical symbols, constellation patterns, and images of a great bird from whose tail issues a flow of stars, planets, and other cosmic clutter.

A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that, with the exception of the bird (which one can safely assume is Astronix), the rest of the images pertain to astronomic events and phenomena seen in particular seasons.

The Domed Ceilings: The ceiling in each chamber has been decorated with a meticulously accurate painting of the night sky. A DC 10 Knowledge (nature) check reveals



that the view matches that as seen on the night of one solstices or equinoxes (the one that marks the beginning of the season to which the chamber is dedicated).

The Murals: The painting on the rear wall of each chamber shows various avian races engaged in the activities one would expect them to be during the season to which the chamber is dedicated. A DC 8 Knowledge (nature) or DC 12 Knowledge (local) check reveals that the painting is clearly intended to relate to a particular season (and what that season is).

A DC 15 perception check allows a character to notice that painted at the four corners of the door set into the wall are images of bare chested winged elves carrying curved swords. This is the same in all of the murals in all of the chambers. These winged elves are the only creatures in the murals that have a grim, unfriendly countenance, and they are the only ones that are armed. A DC 28 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that legends speak of the Temple of Astronix being guarded by such creatures, known as Aellar.

The Doors: The door at the back of each chamber appears to be a normal wooden door, though detect magic will reveal that it radiates moderate conjuration magic. The doors, as a whole, constitute a single artifact. As such, while they are made from normal wood, the doors are impossible to damage.

As described in the Background section above, opening and closing the doors in a prescribed order will trigger a teleportation effect similar to dimension door, but only connecting one of the doors to the door in area 04.

Solving the puzzle of how the doors function is the meat of this encounter. The PCs may have access to a clue from Agraa's notebook--"Your eyes deceive you, there are not four doors--only one. It guards the temple through every season, and must be opened over the course of a year and closed over the course of the next"--or, indeed, to Agraa himself. The tengu knows that the solution has to do with the order in which the doors are opened and closed--he heard Krakkahaan giving specific instructions to some of his minions, but did not share that information with Agraa. At the GM's discretion, the tengu's help can provide a significant bonus (ranging from +2 to +5) to checks made regarding the mystery, or Agraa could simply realize the answer and share it with the group, if the PCs appear to be completely stuck.

Gaining the knowledge is only the first part of the encounter, the second is dealing with the gargoyles who are still waiting on the ledges outside the corridors.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 02 and area 04. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.

04. THE NARTHEX (EL 6)

Summary: Stepping through the door from nowhere, the PCs enter the Temple of Astronix--the bird that paints the night sky. So why do all the murals show daytime scenes?

Sights and Sounds: This chamber is covered with a magical mural that provides illumination equal to that of the natural light in the image it portrays. When the PCs enter, the mural depicts a sunny afternoon, so the chamber is brightly lit.

The walls of this semi-circular room are covered with a mural depicting a wide, expansive landscape. There are forests and plains and mountains--every terrain and weather condition that occurs in nature. Overhead, the domed ceiling is a solid, unbroken sea of blue just like a cloudless afternoon only more so--the blue is so intense that it is difficult to look directly at it for very long. In the eastern corner of the room, a broom leans against the wall.

In the center of the curved wall, a broad staircase leads up and deeper into the temple.

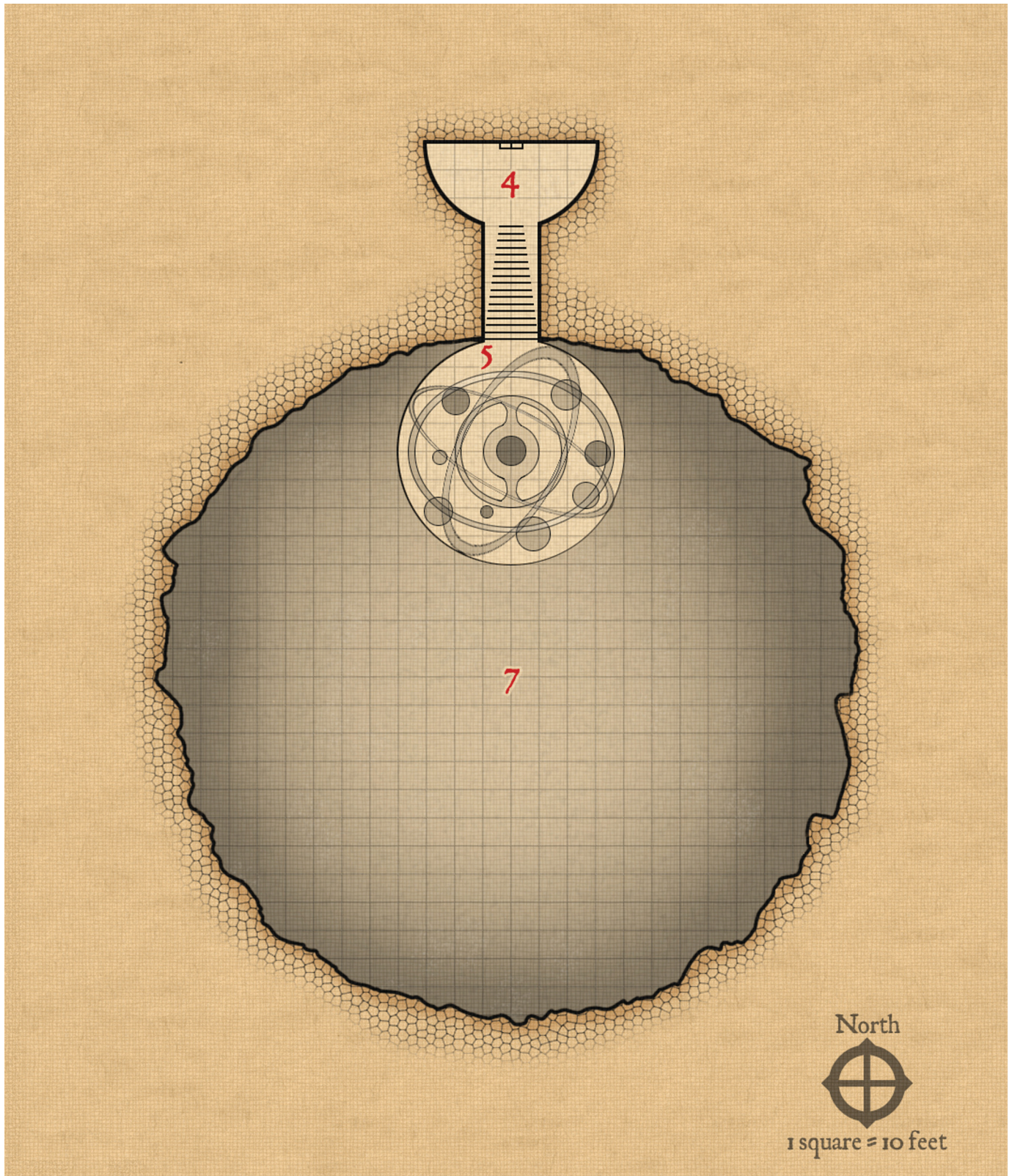
The light level in the room will shift as the encounter progresses and the mural shifts.

Background: This is the entrance to the Temple of Astronix. The mural is a magical painting that plays out the Legend of Astronix for all to see. Rather than to inform, for it is certainly expected that all visitors to the temple know Astronix's tale, it is a form of entertainment and refreshment. The trip the temple is long and taking, even if a visitor flies in (as the avian visitors generally do). This room allows them to see the story of starbird and put them in an appropriately reverent mood, while at the same time making sure that they are rested and able to give the temple and their worship there the full measure of their focus and strength.

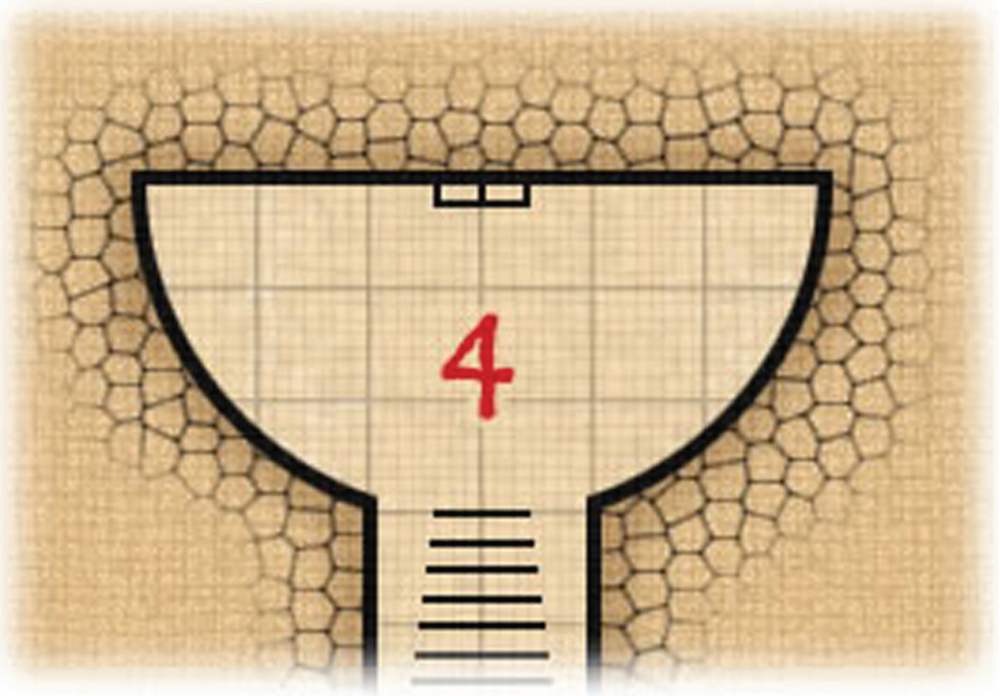
The Door: Although the map depicts this door as a false door, and physically it opens only onto a wall of rock deep within the cliff, it is this door that connects to the seasonally-themed chambers that are accessible via the cliff wall, and it is physically identical to those doors, as well. To enter this narthex, a visitor must perform the proper sequence of opening and closing the doors in those rooms. To leave from here,

TEMPLE OF ASTRONIX

LOWER LEVEL



though, all one need do is open the door and the portal will automatically connect this frame with the one in the chamber that matches the current astronomical season (see area 03). Indeed, a creature in the narthex can open the door and allow those in that remote chamber to enter the temple without solving the riddle of the doors. (At the times for important ceremonies and traditional pilgrimages, a temple guard would often be stationed here to keep the door open for hours or days on end.)



The Stairs: There is nothing unusual about the stairs--no traps, doors, or other barriers to prevent the PCs walking up them on on to area 05 whenever they like. Indeed, they can even do this in the middle of the mural's "performance," as a way to escape its more deleterious effects.

If everyone in the chamber goes onto the stairs, the performance stops (like a video being paused). It will stay that way for 1d3 minutes, then reset itself to the starting condition. When that happens, any spots of light the characters got during the performance disappear. (See "The Mural" below for details)

The Mural: When the PCs enter the chamber, the mural shows only a wide, expansive landscape and a bright blue sky above. But after a few moments, anyone who succeeds at a DC 12 Perception check will notice that the mural appears to have come alive. The trees and grass wave slightly (as though they being blown by a light breeze), the areas depicting rain- or snowfall actually show the falling of individual droplets and flakes.

The mural is a minor artifact, created during the construction of the temple. Most of what it does is merely a show--repeating the legend of Astronix for those who care to see it. But, as discussed below, it also has a more dangerous function for viewers who don't know the story. Because the mural has an interactive element.

A minute after the PCs enter the chamber, the room grows noticeably brighter as two tremendous birds appear on the wall (one on either side of the door). One has feathers that are made of fire, and flames leap from its wings whenever it moves. The other has feathers that seem to be made of moonbeams, and as its wings moves they are followed by faint after-images.

These are, of course, Phoenix and Astronix, and they soon begin speaking to one another. However, they speak in the Tengu language. Anyone who is able to understand this tongue can hear them act out the story of the Legend of Astronix. They argue just as described in the tale, and all the while the sun painted onto the domed ceiling moves lower in the western half of the room, and twilight begins to creep into the eastern side of the room. As the sun sets, the moon begins to rise.

Those who know the legend will not be surprised when Phoenix shoots a blast of flame at the moon. But they likely will be surprised what seem to be actual shards of stone to spray out from the mural. Have anyone who wants to avoid being hit by these shards attempt a DC 15 Reflex save. Those who fail the save take no damage, but find that their bodies are covered with small, glowing dots of light the size and shape of the shrapnel (those who succeed at the save are spared this minor embarrassment). Dots of light also spatter across the floor.

At this point, the Astronix in the mural looks at the characters in the room and says (again, in the Tengu language), “I cannot leave this painting. I need you to help me rescue the missing pieces of my precious moon. Can you put them in the sky for me? I’ve left a bit of my tail for you to use.” The viewers are expected to take the broom from the corner and sweep the light spots from around the chamber into the eastern corner of the room and then up and across the domed ceiling. Doing so causes the sky to be filled with as brilliant a starscape as the PCs have ever seen. (Oddly, creatures who have light spots on them from the earlier explosion cannot sweep them off using the broom.)

If the creatures in the room do not do this, Astronix will continue in Tengu, “You must help. If you don’t, Phoenix will only grow bolder!” And with that, the image of Phoenix turns and launches a real jets of flame into the room—one at each creature that has spots of light from the earlier explosion. Treat each of these as a searing light spell cast by an 8th-level cleric with a +7 ranged attack bonus. Attacking or casting spells on Phoenix will do no good—it is just a magically animated painting. The Phoenix image will make this attack again every round until the stars are spread across the sky as Astronix requested—then Phoenix will fade from the mural again.

When the stars are properly spread across the sky, Astronix will say in Tengu, “Thank you. Welcome to my temple. For your brave actions, I would give you a gift, but I have nothing but the night to offer. So that is what you shall have--the boons of a night. May the stars guide your flight.” The light dots fade from the creatures who got them during the earlier explosion. Those creatures (and those creatures only) also gain the benefits of a full 8 hours of rest—healing, recovering lost ability damage, regaining spells, and any other benefit that a night’s rest would grant.

The Broom: The broom in the eastern corner of the room is a simple item made of wood and the feathers of a large local bird (perhaps a giant eagle) that have been primped to more closely resemble the Astronix’s feathers. It is a wholly mundane item, and if it is stolen, broken, or destroyed, any other broom-like implement can be used to take its place during the mural’s performance.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 03 and area 05. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.

05. THE ORRERY

Summary: The spheres, gears, and levers in this room create a mechanical map of the night sky. But will the PCs have their wishes granted or be star-crossed by this metallic device?

Sights and Sounds: This circular room is actually a tremendous dome--walls curving from the floor to the ceiling, 50 ft. high at its apex. The dome is black as the blanket of the night sky, but the spheres in the mechanism shine with light equal to that astronomical bodies they represent. As a result, the ambient light in the room is like that on a cloudless night. Depending on the phase of the moon, that can be sufficient light to read by or barely enough to recognize the person standing next to you. The GM should be sure to emphasize the waxing and waning of the light level as the PCs experiment with the orrery.

When there is sufficient light, the PCs see the following.

The room is filled with the soft light of hundreds of stars, all coming from metallic spheres hanging throughout this great dome. The spheres are connected by rods, wires, and gears into a tremendous mechanism. In the center of the floor stands a lone pedestal that seems to be made of the same metal as the gears above.

A successful DC 10 Perception check reveals to the PCs that there is no door in this room other than the one leading back down the stairs.

Background: This is another room that was designed to allow the visiting faithful to bask in the majesty of Astronix’s great works.

The orrery represents a peculiar belief of Astronix worshippers--that the starbird not only paints the night sky across this world, but over any plane of reality that has a stars and heavenly bodies. They believe that when Astronix flies, she starts here (in this very temple), travels across our sky, and then passes on to other planes and continues her work there.

As a result, the central section of this orrery represents objects in this world’s night sky, but around the edges it represents astronomical bodies in other planes. What’s more, the mechanism is so accurate that anyone who is knowledgeable about the planes (as whoever built this orrery surely was) can identify the which planes are represented based on the spheres here. (This doesn’t mean that the religious belief is correct, merely that its devotees concocted a plausible cosmic map.)

When the orrery is aligned to the current astrological alignment, the entire dome that encloses this room will disappear and reveal area 06 beyond. The main clue the PCs may have to this fact is the quote from Agraa's notebook that says, "You may navigate by these stars as you would the ones above."

If the tengu is helping the PCs, he will further offer that the key to solving this chamber is to set the stars of the orrery to the position of a particular date--though he does not know what that date is. (For roleplaying purposes, he realizes how little help that analysis provides, but he is not an expert in the worship of Astronix--he's just a rogue.)

The Orrery: The orrery is a gigantic minor artifact. Its magical powers are limited to accurately displaying the light given off by astronomical objects (as seen from this world), knowing the current position of the stars and planets in the night sky, and controlling the existence (or disappearance) of the dome that contains this room. Anyone looking closely at the mechanism will see that while all the spheres are connected by wires, rods, and gears, the whole contraption is not connected to the dome or pedestal in any way. It magically hangs in the air.

Anyone studying the orrery can attempt a Knowledge (nature) check to gain some insight as to its purpose. With a DC 15 success, the character recognizes this as a mechanical representation of this world's night sky. A DC 18 success indicates that the character has identified discrepancies along the outer fringe--none of those astronomical bodies have ever appeared in these skies.

Once this is revealed, characters may attempt a DC 15 Knowledge (planes) check (or a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check) to realize the extra spheres all map out known constellations as seen in a handful of different planes of reality, all of which are said to be neighbors of this reality (cosmically speaking). Further, a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check will confirm that the Astronix worshippers believe their starbird paints the skies of those realities, too.

The Pedestal: The pedestal in the center of the room is the control panel for the orrery. It stands four feet high with a table-like surface on top. On this surface are a series of disks ranging in size from of a small coin to a small dinner plate. Each disk can rotate and slide across the pedestal, but none can be lifted off the surface.

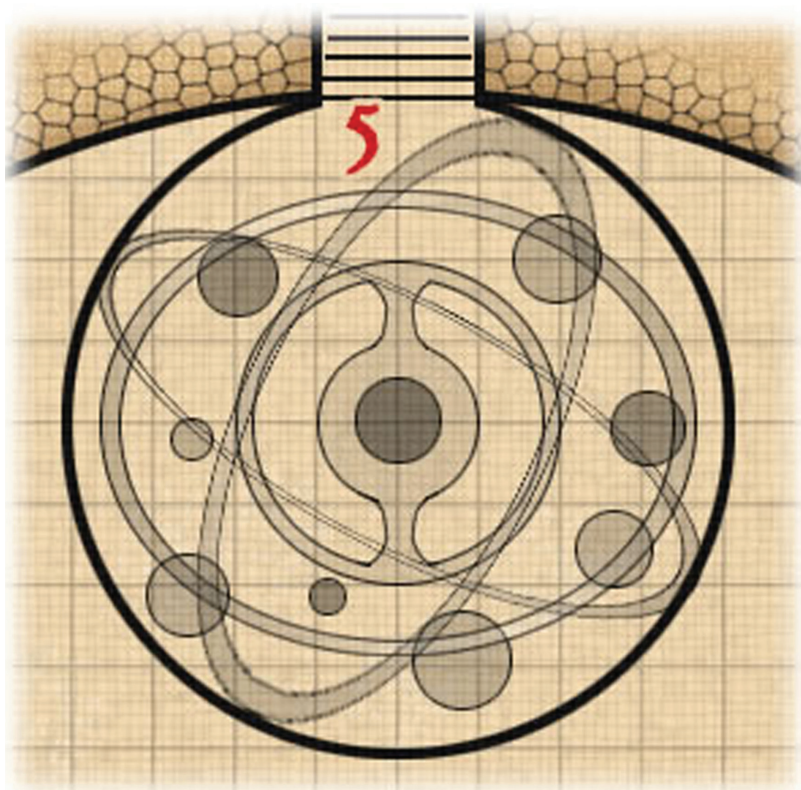
Turning the disks and sliding them in relation to one another causes the spheres of the orrery to rotate through their orbits. The motions required to do this smoothly are not intuitive, because the orrery is built to factor in astronomic motions from multiple parallel dimensions. Indeed, a successful DC 10 Knowledge (nature or planes) check reveals that in this view of the cosmos it is possible for stars and planets to pass from one plane to another.

Advancing or rewinding the orrery to match the star pattern of a given date requires two skill checks. First, a DC 12 Knowledge (nature) check to know what the correct alignment should be, then a DC 15 Disable Device, Knowledge (engineering), or Use Magic Device check to make the mechanism move to that configuration.

As the spheres move through their cycle, their brightness will wax and wane. This will be most notable with moons, planets, and rare events (such as the coming of a comet). The ambient light in the room changes dramatically as the orrery moves and, at the GM's discretion, when the light is at its weakest an alternative light source may be necessary in order to properly operate the pedestal.

When the orrery is aligned with the current star pattern--the one seen in the skies on that particular day--the black dome fades out of existence, revealing a larger room beyond the dome. The floor of this area and the orrery remain where they are (remember, the orrery is not attached to the dome in any way, it floats of its own magical accord)--they just represent a smaller section of this new larger room.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 04 and area 06 (and potentially area 07). See the map of the Temple of Astronix.



06. THE HONOR GUARD (EL 9)

Summary: The Temple of Astronix has guards, but not just any guards--winged elf holy warriors who have sworn death to all non-believers. Perhaps the PCs can let the guards know if they see anyone matching that description.

Sights and Sounds: The 50 ft. dome of area 05 may have seemed big when the PCs were in it, but the half dome of this chamber dwarfs it. Indeed, since the room simply appears around the PCs when the orrery's dome faded away, they can see that this room literally held the whole of the previous one within it.

The dome of this room reaches 150 ft. high at its tallest point. The room is filled with silvery starlight, which equates to dim lighting.

As the black dome fades away, you see that the whole thing sat inside a larger room--a great half-dome that arcs from the stairway over to a towering wall. The wall is decorated with a colossal painting of Astronix, head back and wings spread so wide that they curve along the dome to nearly touch at the stairway door. There is also a door in the far wall, but it seems tiny dwarfed as it is by the massive bird.

The disk of the orrery floor is raised a foot above this new room, so you must take a step down in order to cross its floor. On that floor, standing in a line between you and the far wall, are eight elves--only they can't be elves because from their backs grow pairs of wings, covered in beautiful, silvery white feathers.

Background: This chamber marks the entry to the heart of the complex. Once the PCs step through the door in the far wall, they will be somewhere that no non-avian has ever been--the inner sanctum of the Temple of Astronix--and the portal is understandably well guarded.

The honor guard is made up of eight aellar, a race of winged elves that many consider more legend than fact--but their presence here certainly proves the truth of their existence. The GM is free to place them in whatever role best fits the campaign: The sole colony of their kind in this world, who live for

nothing other than to protect this temple; Members of a forgotten race whose cities the PCs may one day find; Visitors from another plane who are sent to the temple on the Night of the Starbird. What matters is that the aellar are here now--the exact explanation of why is immaterial.

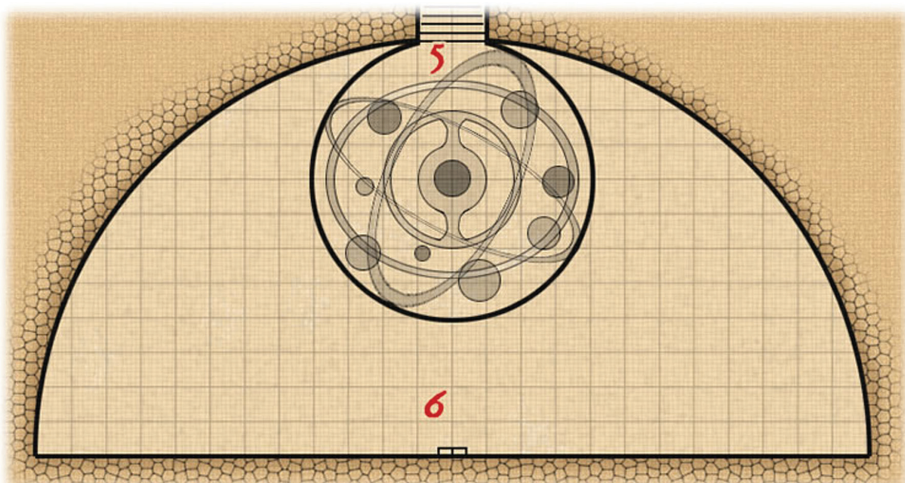
They will be incredulous at the site of non-avians, but their initial belief will be that if the group got past the gargoyles and this far into the temple, they must be Astronix worshippers (just very strange ones). They will, however, be on alert.

The Mural: The painting of Astronix shows the starbird as a fierce, powerful creature, worthy of veneration. Head back as if screeching out its potent rage to the cosmos. The paint used to create this mural was magical--it is the source of the silvery starlight that fills the room--but the final result is just a painting (not an interactive experience like in the narthex).

The Door: The door in the far wall of the chamber leads to the heart of the temple, but perhaps not in the way the PCs imagine. It is not locked or trapped, but for the unprepared, its very existence is a trap.

If the PCs have access to Agraa or his notebook, they may have heard or read this statement about the door in this chamber: "The final door swings wide. When it opens, you must be prepared to fly." A reasonable interpretation of this, particularly given that the temple is designed by and for avians, is that beyond the door is a chasm across which one is expected to fly. The truth, though, is an even greater challenge.

When the door is opened, the entirety of area 06 disappears (in just the way that the black dome did), leaving just the platform and orrery (from area 05) and a gigantic circular chasm that plummets away into darkness below (see area 07).



Technically, the door is trapped in that opening it triggers this effect. With a DC 25 Perception check, a character with the trapfinding ability can identify that some greater effect will be triggered by opening the door. However, the effect is a basic function of the door--it was never intended to simply open and allow egress--so it is not possible to “disarm” this trap. (Alternatively, if the GM prefers, a DC 25 Disable Device check can disarm the effect, but that just effectively locks the door. In order to get the door to open, the effect must be active.)

The Honor Guard: The aellar fighters are in this room as an honor guard, although they are fully capable of fighting, they were not expecting to actually have to defend this chamber. Their basic presumption is that anyone who made it this far truly belongs in the temple. (For example, they gave no special attention to Krakkahaan and his party when they came through a short while ago.) That having been said, they are shocked (and a little offended) to see non-avians in this room. Still, they will observe the proprieties of their station until such time as the PCs attack or do something to prove that they are not Astronix worshippers and do not belong in the temple.

The members of the honor guard will not speak unless spoken to. They will answer questions with terse, but truthful replies. Bear in mind that while it is certainly acceptable for a member of the faithful to not know exactly how the temple works (asking questions about what lies beyond the door, for example), any sign that a visitor does not know the basic facts about Astronix (or the tenets of the starbird’s worshippers) will cause the aellar warriors to attack. Attempting to disable the function of the door or otherwise bypass the normal functions of this chamber will also cause the guard to initiate hostilities.

Honor Guard (Aellar, Fighter 3)(x8): hp 24

HONOR GUARD

CR 2

Male Aellar Fighter 3

NN Medium Humanoid (Elf)

Init +3; Senses Low-Light Vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 24 (3d10)

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities Bravery +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee Masterwork Longsword +7 (1d8+2/19-20/x2) or

Ranged Masterwork Shortbow, Composite (Str +2) +7 (1d6+2/20/x3)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 16, **Con** 11, **Int** 8, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19

Feats Death from Above, Dodge, Elven Weapon Proficiencies, Power Attack -1/+2, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Fly +7, Perception +6, Stealth +4, Survival +5

Languages Common, Elven

SQ Armor Training 1 (Ex), Elven Magic

Combat Gear: Masterwork Chain Shirt, Masterwork Longsword, Masterwork Shortbow, Composite (Str +2)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Armor Training 1 (Ex): Worn armor -1 check penalty, +1 max DEX.

Bravery +1 (Ex): +1 Will save vs. Fear

Death from Above: Gain +5 bonus on attack rolls when charging from higher ground or flying

Low-Light Vision: See twice as far as a human in low light, distinguishing color and detail.

Power Attack (-1/+2): You can subtract from your attack roll to add to your damage.

Flight: Aellar have a 30-foot flight rate, and Fly is always a class skill for an aellar. An aellar cannot fly when in heavy armor, when carrying a medium or heavier load, or when carrying a shield. Aellar cannot fly in any space that would squeeze a Huge creature. If an aellar enters such an area, he falls.

Eagle Soul: Aellar gain a +3 bonus to Perception and Survival skill checks.

UPPING THE ANTE

If hostilities commence and the PCs are having too easy a time of it, have one of the aellar guards disengage and move to open the door. This will trigger the transformation of the room into a gigantic pit before the PCs have time to fully prepare. This technically doesn’t change the EL of this encounter, but it does force the PCs to deal with this and encounter 07 at the same time.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 05 and area 07. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.

07. THE WINGED WAY (EL VARIES)

Summary: Dealing with a hundred-foot wide bottomless chasm was always going to be a challenge for the PCs. How much more so when it simply appears, unexpectedly, under their feet?

Sights and Sounds: When the walls and floor of area 06 disappear, so does the mural, taking with it the only significant light source. If the PCs have a sufficient light source, they see the following.

The floor, wall, and domed ceiling of the room you were in simply faded out of existence leaving behind a circular chasm at least two hundred feet wide. Above you, the shaft stretches into darkness, but somewhere in the distance you can see a dot of faint light--but without any context, it's impossible to tell how big or how far away the source actually is. Below, the chasm also falls away as far as you can see with no indication that it ever ends at all.

The edge of the chasm is a rough-hewn, natural rock wall, made of a sturdier, less crumbly version of the cliff outside the temple. The only remains of the previous chamber are the small platform and metallic mechanism from the orrery room, and beyond those, stairs leading down and out of the temple.

Background: Like the one before it, the PCs enter this chamber when the one they were in previously (area 06) simply disappears around them. In this instance, however, the “chamber” is actually a tremendous chasm. The presumption of the temple’s builders, of course, was that everyone visiting the Temple of Astronix would be able to fly. They also figured that anyone who was supposed to be in the temple would be aware of this “feature” of the construction--and anyone who wasn’t deserved the fate they would meet.

This is not considered a trap at all. The chasm is referred to as “The Winged Way,” and it is considered appropriate that the only way to easily enter the Chapel of Astronix is by flying. Of course, it is possible to reach the chapel by climbing the stone walls, but someone has to be standing by the door in order to open it, and performing that task will leave that person nowhere to stand.

At the top of the chasm (250 ft. above the floor of area 06) is a small landing and a set of stairs leading

up into the rocks above and on to the Chapel of Astronix. The landing is a 10 ft. x 10 ft. platform, and the stairs are 10 ft. wide.

For most visitors, aellar the honor guard flies in formation alongside them as they ascend to the top of the cavern. This is, in fact, what happened a relatively short time ago as Krakkahaan and his party came through. Then they will fly over to the orrery and reset the chambers (see below).

A Real Pit Trap: Despite the fact that the sudden appearance of this chamber (or, rather, the sudden disappearance of the previous one) is not intended as a trap, unless the PCs all have the ability to fly the point is moot--the room functions as a trap for them.

When the door in area 06 is opened, everyone standing on the floor in the chamber should attempt a DC 15 Reflex save. (Creatures who know how the door functions and are aware that it is being opened automatically succeed at this save.) Success lets the creature realize what is happening and make a single move action. Failure indicates that the floor disappears beneath the creature’s feet and it begins to fall. Creatures with an inherent ability to fly who fail the save still fall for a round, like anyone else taken by surprise. After that, they may fly normally.

Normal falling rules apply.

The chasm’s exact depth is something the GM can decide, but the PCs should have at least 3 rounds of freefall before hitting the ground. Alternatively, the GM might prefer this to be an actual bottomless pit--one that is connected to a demiplane that is nothing more than an infinite chasm, or perhaps the elemental plane of air. It all depends on how deadly you want this chamber to be.

Climbing the Walls: The walls of the chamber are a very craggy, natural stone face with abundant hand- and footholds. Technically, it is very easy to climb (requiring only DC 10 Climb checks), but with a potentially bottomless pit below, that may not seem easy enough for the PCs.

The real difficult bit comes when they reach the top of the chasm (250 ft. above where they started). Once there, they must climb horizontally along the cavern top until they reach the landing and stairs that lead up to area 08. The DC for this action is different for each character, and is equal to 20 minus the character’s Str bonus (so a character with Str 18 would need a DC 16 Climb check, but for a character with Str 12 the DC would be 19).

The Fight Continues: It's presumed that the honor guard of aellar fighters will be engaged in combat with the PCs at the time the door is opened, unless they have already been defeated. Once they are flying, the guards will resume the fight, focusing first on PCs with the ability to fly, and then moving on to those who have found a safe perch.

If the aellars were already defeated, their bodies disappear along with the floor of area 06 and will reappear when it does (in exactly the same condition they were before).

If a fight had not yet begun with the aellars, their reaction depends on how the PCs handle the sudden disappearance of the floor. If all of the PCs are able to fly (or, at the very least, seem prepared for the current situation), the honor guard will treat them as they would any other welcomed visitor--they will fly in formation around the group and lead them up toward the platform and stairs. If they have any reason to suspect that the PCs are not prepared for this situation, the honor guard will attack the group.

Honor Guard (Aellar, Fighter 3)(number varies based on previous encounter): hp 24 (minus any damage sustained in previous encounter)

Stairs Above: The stairs leading up into the rocks is the source of the small dot of light the PCs may have

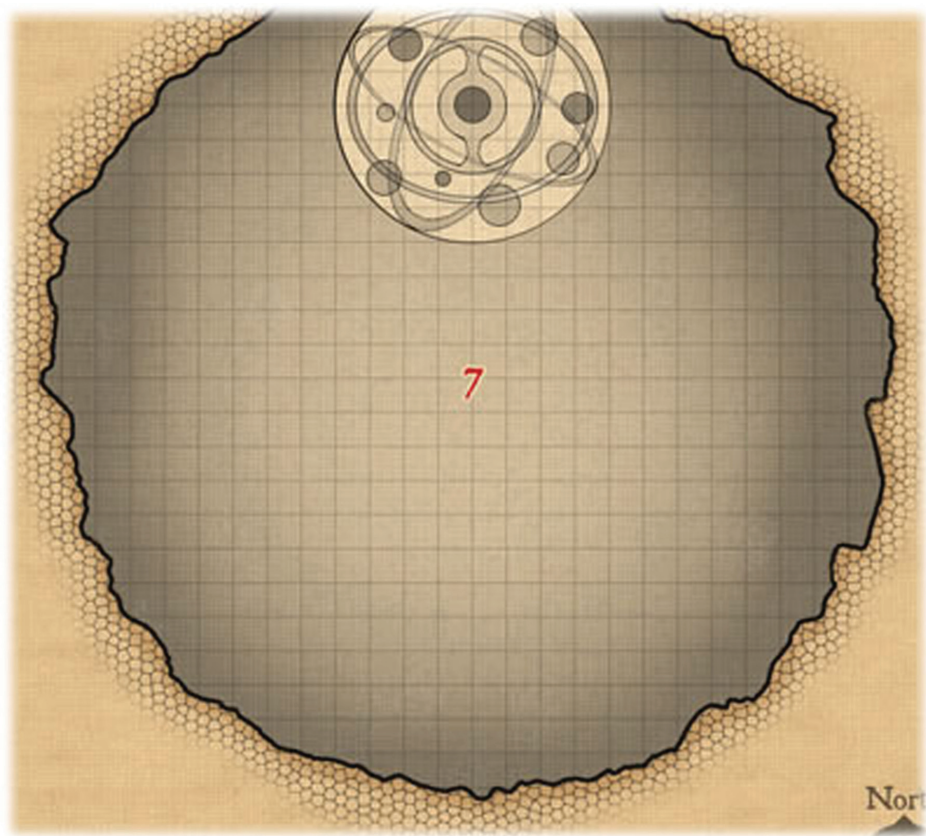
seen coming from the top of the chasm. The stairs lead to the Chapel of Astronix, which is on top of the mountain and open to the sky. Although the light that filters down through the stairwell is weak, it is enough to make an impression when shone into an otherwise lightless chasm.

Landing on the platform is easy, but it is a small space. In order to make room for other arriving creatures, one's only choice is to begin moving up the stairs toward area 08.

Resetting the Chambers: Once all of the infidels have been defeated or repelled (or merely dropped to the bottom of the chasm), the honor guard will reset the walls for area 05 and area 06. This is done using the pedestal that controls the orrery and requires a DC 20 Disable Device, Knowledge (engineering), or Use Magic Device check (if the user has performed this reset function before, the difficulty is reduced to DC 10--all the members of the honor guard here and in area 08 have used the pedestal to reset the walls in the past).

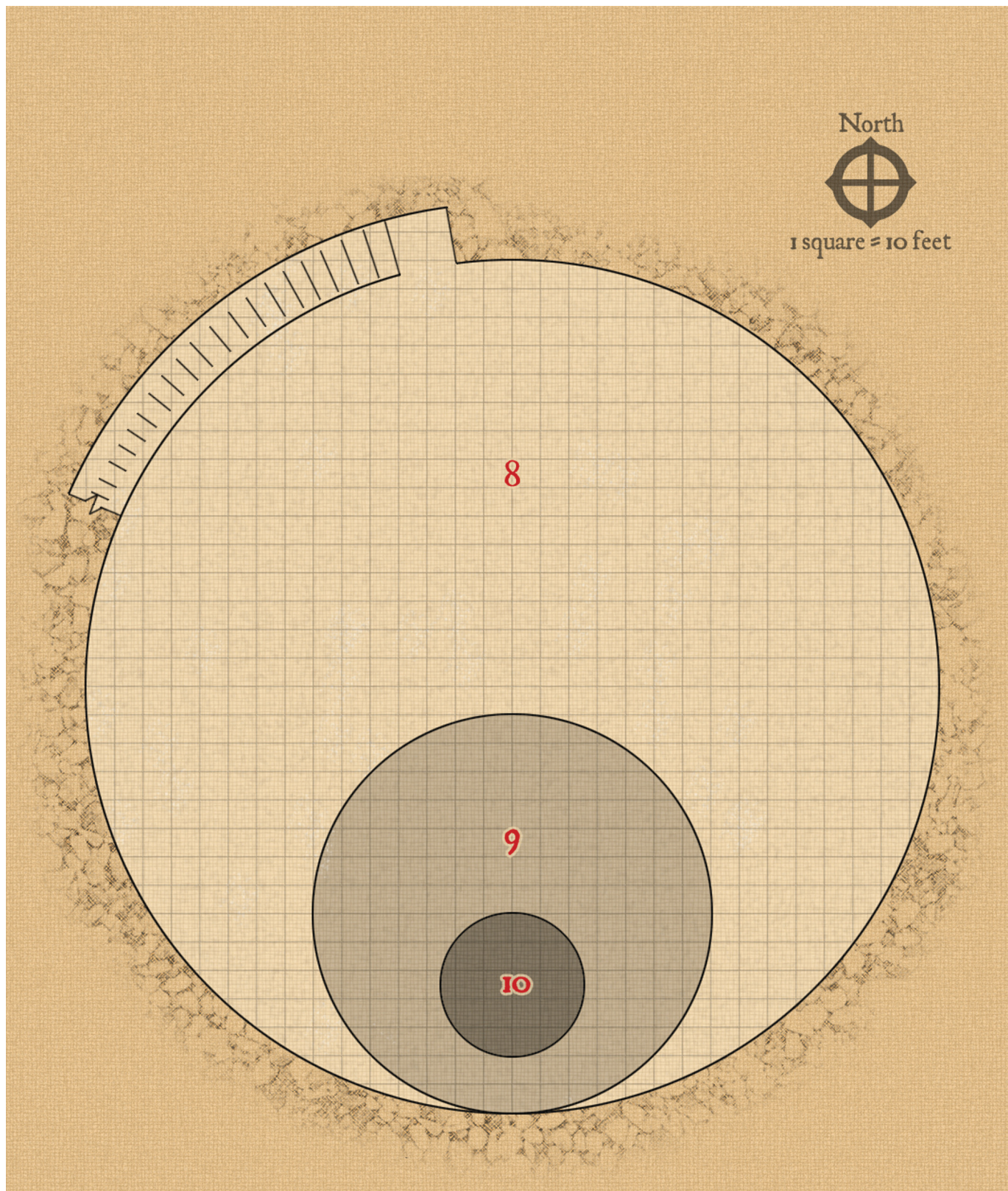
If no one resets the rooms this way, they will automatically reset themselves twelve hours after the door in area 06 is opened. When these areas are reset, visitors can fly down from the landing at the top of the chasm and open the door into area 06. Doing this triggers the disappearance of that wall and the dome over area 05, allowing full access to the outer sections of the temple.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 05 and area 08. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.



TEMPLE OF ASTRONIX

UPPER LEVEL



08. BATTLE FOR THE CHAPEL (EL VARIES)

Summary: They say that when a bar fight breaks out, you should smash people over the head with chairs first, and ask questions later. But what about when church fight breaks out?

Sights and Sounds: The chapel is built on a mountaintop--sheltered from the winds, but open to the sky. The presumption is that this encounter will take place at night, so normal nighttime lighting conditions apply. If the PCs have adequate light sources, they see the following.

The Chapel of Astronix is a great, circular space built into the top of a mountain. It is recessed deeply enough that the wind (which must be terrific at this height) blows across the top of the chamber, but not down into it. The walls are decorated with carved images of Astronix flying across the sky with stars trailing from her tail.

The area near the stairs is a flat crescent leading up to a circular dais raised about a foot above the crescent's floor level. Near the rear of the dais is a circular altar standing about four feet tall. The altar is covered with star patterns, but not images of the starbird herself.

Of course, that just describes the physical room itself. The big thing that the PCs will notice is that there is a tremendous battle taking place in the room. The fighting is mainly taking place in the lower, crescent area (that's marked as area 08 on the map) but ranges

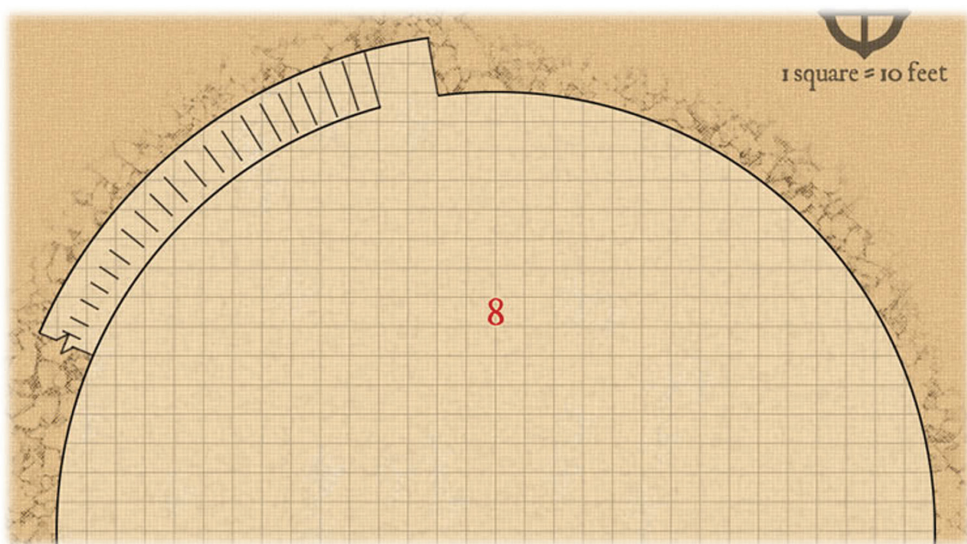
onto the dais and into the air above. The two sides are, not surprisingly, a squad of tengu warriors and priests fighting against a cadre of aellar temple guards. The GM should describe the battle in whatever way best conveys the proper message to the PCs--that they should rush out and get involved, that they should hold back and see what happens next, or simply that it's too chaotic to know exactly what's going on.

Background: The whole time they've been exploring the temple, the PCs have known that a group of tengu was somewhere ahead of them--well, now the two groups have caught up to each other. The tengu, led by Krakkahaan, have come to the Temple of Astronix for some unknown, but presumably nefarious, purpose (as the PCs have learned from Agraa or his notebook). The aellar guard, on the other hand, has shown itself to only be interested in confronting those who prove themselves unworthy of being in the temple--non-believers or those who would do harm to the facility. That the tengu made it safely past the guards in area 06 but are now fighting with the guards here proves that they must be up to no good.

In fact, what happened was that the tengu came to the room acting like humble pilgrims. But once Krakkahaan learned what he needed to about the chapel, he gave a silent order and the tengu leapt to the attack. By the time the PCs reach the top of the stairs, this combat has been going on for several minutes and there have been casualties on both sides. It yet remains unclear which side would win if this battle was left to play out on its own.

What Will the PCs Do?: The crux of this encounter hangs on what strategy the PCs adopt. If they wait for the current combat to near its conclusion, the scene will play out very differently than if they decided to jump into the combat right away. This makes it very difficult to gauge the actual EL for this encounter.

The GM should use the Designing An Encounter advice to calculate the actual EL for the encounter based on how many opponents the PCs actually end up facing. Siding with the tengu against the guards (or vice versa) will mean that only half of the NPCs on the field are opponents for the PCs. And,



if the PCs later turn on their allies, that should count as a second low-EL encounter rather than adding all the foes up to get a single large EL. On the other hand, if the PCs waded into the battle as a force of their own, fighting both the tengu and the guards at the same time, then they might well deserve the high-EL that will be calculated by adding all the opponents together.

The Tengu: When he arrived at the temple, Krakkahaan had a band of seventeen tengu--12 Black Wing Mercenaries, 3 Astronix Cultists, Agraa the thief, and himself. Agraa is either dead or currently assisting the PCs, and Krakkahaan is busy performing a ritual (see area 09). Some of the other tengu were lost either along the way or in the earlier rounds of this fight. For the purposes of setting the stage for this encounter, let's say that half of the mercenaries and one of the cultists have been removed from the encounter leaving the tengu with:

Black Wing Mercenary (x6): hp 36

Astronix Cultist (x2): hp 31

The GM may adjust these numbers to get a suitably difficult encounter for the PCs.

The mercenaries will engage the aellar guards in melee combat, while the cultists will be using their clerical abilities to keep the mercenaries healed. Although they are well trained individually, the tengu mercenaries do not have great experience fighting as a unit. They will therefore tend to each focus on their individual fights rather than functioning as a cohesive combat unit.

In addition, the tengu technically have their leader, Krakkataan, but he is currently kneeling before the altar and performing an unknown ritual. When the PCs enter the room, they may each attempt a DC 18 Perception check to notice Krakkahaan. If that fails, any time a PC ends a turn with a clear view of the altar (that is, no creatures in an intervening square), the PC may attempt the check again, this time at DC 12.

The Black Wing Mercenaries have been ordered to press the fight in the temple, rather than protect Krakkahaan and, fearing his wrath, will do so until he orders otherwise. The Astronix Cultists will begin this way, too, but if Krakkahaan falls below 40 hp, they will begin to move to his side in hopes of plying him with restorative spells.

Once Krakkahaan falls, though, all the mercenaries and cultists will give up the fight and simply try to escape with their lives. If they see Krakkahaan rise in the body of Astronix (see area 10), they will fall face down on the ground in utter supplication to him.

BLACK WING MERCENARY

CR 3

Male Tengu Fighter 4

N Medium Humanoid (Tengu)

Init +2; Senses Low-Light Vision; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor, +2 Dex)
hp 36 (4d10+4)

Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities Bravery +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee Bite (Tengu) +2 (1d3+1/20/x2) and

Masterwork Falchion +9 (2d4+6/18-20/x2)

Ranged Crossbow, Light +6 (1d8/19-20/x2)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19

Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Power Attack -2/+4, Weapon Focus (falchion), Weapon Specialization (falchion)

Skills Acrobatics +0, Climb +1, Escape Artist +0, Fly +0, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +5, Perception +4, Ride +0, Survival +7, Swim +1

Languages Common, Tengu

SQ Armor Training 1 (Ex)

Combat Gear +1 *Breastplate*, Crossbow, Light, Masterwork Falchion; **Other Gear** *Potion of Bull's Strength*, *Potion of Enlarge Person*, *Potion of Protection From Good*, *Potion of Shield of Faith* +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Armor Training 1 (Ex): Worn armor -1 check penalty, +1 max DEX.

Bravery +1 (Ex): +1 Will save vs. Fear

Cleave: If you hit your first target, attack an adjacent target at the same attack bonus in exchange for -2 AC.

Cleaving Finish: Make additional attack if opponent is knocked out

Low-Light Vision: See twice as far as a human in low light, distinguishing color and detail.

Power Attack (-2/+4): You can subtract from your attack roll to add to your damage.

ASTRONIX CULTIST

CR 3

Male Tengu Cleric 4

N Medium Humanoid (Tengu)

Init +0; Senses Low-Light Vision; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +2 shield)
hp 31 (4d8+4)
Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +8

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee Bite (Tengu) -1 (1d3/20/x2) and
Masterwork Warhammer +5 (1d8+1/20/x3) and
Shield, Heavy Wooden +0 (1d4+1/20/x2)

Special Attacks Bleeding Touch 2 rounds (7/day)

Spell-Like Abilities Bleeding Touch 2 rounds (7/day), Lightning Arc (7/day)

Cleric Spells Known (CL 4, 4 melee touch, 3 ranged touch):

2 (3/day) *Death Knell* (DC 16), *Silence* (DC 16),
Spiritual Weapon, *Hold Person* (DC 16)

1 (4/day) *Bane* (DC 15), *Entropic Shield* (DC 15),
Bless, *Obscuring Mist*, *Cure Light Wounds* (DC 15)

0 (at will) *Resistance* (DC 14), *Bleed* (DC 14),
Detect Magic, *Light*

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Channel Smite, Combat Casting

Skills Acrobatics -4, Climb -3, Escape Artist -4, Fly -4, Knowledge (planes) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +6, Ride -4, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +5, Stealth -2, Swim -3

Languages Common, Tengu

SQ Aura (Ex), Channel Negative Energy 2d6 (4/day) (DC 13) (Su), Cleric Domain (Air), Cleric Domain (Death), Spontaneous Casting

Combat Gear +1 *Breastplate*, Masterwork Shield, Heavy Wooden, Masterwork Warhammer; **Other Gear** *Potion of Cure Light Wounds* (3), *Potion of Protection From Good*, *Scroll: Cure Serious Wounds*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura (Ex): The Cleric has an aura corresponding to his deity's alignment.

Bleeding Touch 2 rounds (7/day) (Sp): Melee touch attack deals 1d6 bleeding damage.

Channel Positive Energy 2d6 (4/day) (DC 13) (Su): A good cleric can channel positive energy to heal the living and injure the undead; an evil cleric can channel negative energy to injure the living and heal the undead.

Channel Smite: Channel energy can be delivered through a Smite attack.

Cleric Domain (Air) Granted Powers: You can manipulate lightning, mist, and wind, traffic with air creatures, and are resistant to electricity damage.

Cleric Domain (Death) Granted Powers: You can cause the living to bleed at a touch, and find comfort in the presence of the dead.

Combat Casting: +4 to Concentration checks to cast while on the defensive.

Lightning Arc (1d6+2) (7/day) (Sp): 30' Ranged touch attack deals 1d6+2 Electricity damage.

Low-Light Vision: See twice as far as a human in low light, distinguishing color and detail.

Spontaneous Casting: The Cleric can convert stored spells into Cure spells.

The Aellar: The Honor Guards, who have been stationed here to serve both as a show of strength and to assist and protect Astronix when she rises from the altar (as the holy books say she will), are fighting the tengu with every ounce of their strength. At the beginning of the fight there were twenty Temple Guards in this chamber, only half of their number currently remain.

The guards will fight using strong teamwork and practical combat tactics. Their goal is first to protect the altar (none of them has noticed Krakkahaan) and then to drive the invading forces from the temple—this being their holiest of holy sites. They will not follow fleeing forces until the entire Chapel of Astronix is cleared of enemies.

Honor Guard (Aellar, fighter 3)(x10): hp 24

The Fight: However the PCs decide to approach it, this encounter is a tremendous melee battle. At the same time, Krakkahaan is performing a ritual for use when Astronix arrives. As described in area 09, Krakkahaan's ritual will take 5 rounds to complete. Once done, he will cast spells into the combat, but only if he thinks he can remain apart from the general scrum. He remains ready to act on the first sight of the starbird.

If the aellar win the fight (or once Astronix has arisen and left), they will immediately turn to the PCs and demand that they leave the temple. "This is a place for Astronix's faithful only!" If the PCs helped to beat the tengu, the aellar will be more polite in their tone, but no less adamant in their demand that the PCs leave.

Connections: This encounter is connected to areas 07, 08, and 09. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.

09. RULER OF THE ROOST (EL IO)

Summary: Is it crazy to want to transfer your mind into the body of a gargantuan, semi-divine creature of myth? Who dares call that crazy?!?

Sights and Sounds: This encounter happens deeper in the same room that encounter 08 took place in. Use the description from that encounter, plus add the following.

Kneeling next to the altar is a robed figure that, at first, could easily be mistaken for another one of the tengu clerics. But a second look reveals that the gear he carries is more suitable for arcane magic and divine. Besides, this tengu is larger and more confident than the others--and has an evil glint in his cold, black eyes.

Background: In this encounters, the PCs come face to beak with Krakkahaan, the sorcerer who organized and led the band of tengu to the Temple of Astronix. He brought them here for one reason--so that he could use an all but forgotten ritual to transform himself into one of the primal creatures of creation.

Krakkahaan is a greedy, covetous creature--out to amass as much personal power and wealth as he can. He uses his sorcerous power to bully and domineer his fellow tengu, and many follow him out of fear more than devotion. However, those in his current retinue are being well paid (by tengu standards) for their work. Still, Krakkahaan considers them eminently expendable--they are here solely to allow him to succeed. In fact, if they all die in the pursuit of his goal, he will be proud of himself for perfectly planning the amount of "resources" needed, without over-spending.

When the PCs arrive in area 08, Krakkahaan is nearing the ritual's completion. If he can devote just 5 more rounds to the process, it will be complete. The tengu prefers to finish the ritual before dealing with any interference, and hopes that between his own mercenaries and the temple guards, the PCs will be otherwise occupied long enough for him to do so.

The Ritual: When studying ancient tomes of astronomical and astrological lore, Krakkahaan discovered a ritual called "Wings of Stars." According to his research,

if performed on the Night of the Starbird, in the Temple of Astronix, the ritual would allow the caster to transfer his mind into Astronix's body.

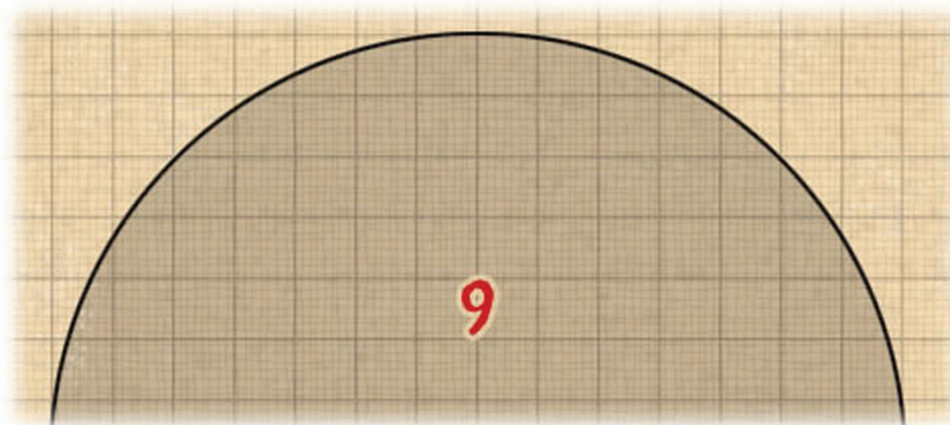
The ritual involves a collection of rare items that have actual or thematic connections to night, the stars, and Astronix; bringing them here on this day; and destroying or consuming them in order--there is nothing notably magical about it. Yet, just as alchemists can use mundane materials to produce extraordinary products, this ritual weaves non-magical actions into a magical result.

On the round that the PCs enter the Chapel, Krakkahaan has five more actions to perform. Each round on his turn, he will do the following things (in order)--he has the necessary items in a pouch strapped to his side. If one action fails, he will repeat the attempt each following round until he succeeds.

1. Spend a full-round action ritually snapping a peacock feather.
2. Make a DC 20 Spellcraft check.
3. Spend a full-round action ritually shredding a drawing of the moon.
4. Make a DC 25 Use Magic Device check.
5. Spend a full-round action ritually drinking a vial of water that has been steeped in moonbeams.

Once these are accomplished, the ritual is completed. Krakkahaan is now imbued with the magical ability to transfer his mind and life essence into Astronix with a single touch. Anyone who can detect magical auras will note that on top of any other aura he and his belongings ought to have, Krakkahaan's right hand radiates an overwhelming aura of enchantment.

As a result of the ritual, all Krakkahaan has to do is succeed at an unarmed melee touch attack against Astronix and his mind will instantly be transferred into the bird's body--he will become Astronix. This ability may be performed once (failed attempts do not count), and if is not used within 24 hours of the ritual's completion, the ability (and associated aura) dissipate.



Attacking Krakkahaan: Krakkahaan focuses on the ritual, leaving the fight to his troops. He ignores the PCs, even if they are slaughtering the other tengu. Indeed, Krakkahaan ignores attacks made against him until such time as he drops below 75 hp. Then he confronts his attacker, but not fully engaging in the battle. Once his opponent is defeated (or stops attacking Krakkahaan), he will return to the ritual.

Once the ritual is complete, Krakkahaan will turn his attention to assisting his troops. He'll begin by attacking anyone who previously attacked him (he is spiteful and vengeful), then move on to attacking other spellcasters.

Krakkahaan will attack at range and stay near the altar. If he is severely outnumbered (or reduced to 25 hp), he will fly above the chapel--presuming the PCs cannot fly after him. There, he'll use the dark for cover and wait for a sign of Astronix's arrival. At that point, he will dive at the starbird to attempt his mind transfer.

KRAKKAHAAN

CR 10

Male Tengu (advanced) Sorcerer 10

CE Medium Humanoid (Tengu)

Init +4; Senses Low-Light Vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex, +2 natural, +1 deflection)

hp 102 (10d6+50)

Fort +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

Resist electricity 20

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee Bite (Tengu) +5 (1d3/20/x2)

Special Attacks Elemental Blast (1/day) (DC 22), Elemental Ray (10/day)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 10, +5 melee touch, +9 ranged touch):

5 (4/day): *Acidic Spray* (DC 24)

4 (6/day): *Elemental Body I* (DC 21), *Black Tentacles*, *Fleshworm Infestation* (DC 23)

3 (8/day): *Protection from Energy* (DC 20), *Stinking Cloud* (DC 22), *Lightning Bolt* (DC 20), *Ice Spears* (DC 22)

2 (8/day): *Acid Arrow*, *Blur* (DC 19), *Web* (DC 21), *Scorching Ray*, *Fiery Shuriken*

1 (8/day): *Magic Missile*, *Mage Armor* (DC 20), *Cause Fear* (DC 18), *Burning Hands* (DC 18), *Grease* (DC 20), *Ray of Sickening* (DC 18)

0 (at will): *Haunted Fey Aspect* (DC 17), *Acid Splash*, *Daze* (DC 17), *Dancing Lights*, *Detect Magic*, *Light*, *Breeze*, *Jolt*, *Scoop*

STATISTICS

Str 11, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 18, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 22/24
Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 20

Feats Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Focus (conjuration), Lightning Reflexes, Sorcerous Bloodstrike (1/day), Spell Focus (conjuration), Toughness +10

Skills Bluff +20, Fly +17, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (Arcana) +17, Perception +5, Spellcraft +17, Stealth +6, Use Magic Device +20

Languages Aklo, Celestial, Common, Cyclops, Sylvan, Tengu

SQ Elemental: Air

Other Gear *Cloak of Resistance*, +1, *Elixir of Hiding*, *Feather Token*, *Bird*, *Hand of the Mage*, *Headband of Alluring Charisma*, +2, *Oil of Darkness*, *Potion of Cure Serious Wounds* (3), *Potion of Shield of Faith* +3, *Ring of Protection*, +1, *Salve of Slipperiness*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Combat Casting: +4 to Concentration checks to cast while on the defensive.

Damage Resistance, Electricity (20): You have the specified Damage Resistance against Electricity attacks.

Elemental Blast (1/day) (DC 22) (Su): 1/day, Elemental Blast deals 10d6 Electricity damage, DC 22.

Elemental Ray (10/day) (Sp): Ranged touch attack deals 1d6+5 Electricity damage.

Elemental (Air): You may change any energy spell to use [Electricity] energy.

Eschew Materials: Cast without materials, if material cost is ≤ 1 gp.

Greater Spell Focus (Conjuration): +1 to the Save DC of spells from one school.

Low-Light Vision: See twice as far as a human in low light, distinguishing color and detail.

Sorcerous Bloodstrike (1/day): Regain a bloodline power when you reduce a creature to 0 or fewer hit points

Spell Focus (conjuration): Spells from one school of magic have +1 to their save DC.

UPPING THE ANTE

To make Krakkahaan a little harder, give him two a pair of Astronix Cultists whose job it is to heal him of any damage he suffers, and who are willing to interpose themselves bodily between their master and his enemies.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 08 and area 10. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.

10. RISE OF THE STARBIRD (EL 15)

Summary: The Astronix is just a myth--there's no such thing as a gigantic bird that paints the stars onto the night sky, right? Right?!

Sights and Sounds: This encounter happens deeper in the same room that encounter 08 and encounter 09 took place in. Use the descriptions from those encounters, plus add the following.

A pale, silver light begins to emanate from the center of the circular altar. It grows brighter, motes of light begin to bubble up from the surface. At first they are small but as the flow continues the motes grow larger, and larger. The largest mote of all begins to rise through altar! In a rush, the object surges through the stone and into the chapel, spreading its wings wide--this is none other than Astronix herself.

Background: The rumors and legends were at least in part right--on this night Astronix rises from the altar in this chapel and flies across the sky. Whether this truly a divine event that has repercussions on the cosmic stability, or just a habit of cross-planar migration is up to the GM. (Indeed, GMs that wish to remove all mysticism from the event should have that astronix fly in from a nearby mountaintop and land on the altar, rather than rising through the stone.)

The course of this encounter will depend greatly on how encounter 08 and encounter 09 concluded. If the tengu and aellar forces are still fighting, they cease--shocked into stillness by the sheer awe of seeing this magnificent creature in the flesh. If Krakkahaan is still active, he will attempt to make a touch attack against Astronix if he has completed his ritual. Otherwise, he will fly away (as if retreating) to complete the ritual and then return once he has.

Astronix, left to her own devices, will stay here long enough to get her bearings, then fly off into the night. If attacked, she will return the aggression for few rounds, then fly off in a huff. If she is possessed by Krakkahaan, she will follow all of the tengu's instructions.

Rise of the Starbird: Astronix will begin to rise from the altar 1d6+4 rounds after the PCs arrive in area 08. This process will take 3 rounds.

On round 1, the altar will glow with a pale, silvery light. On round 2, motes of energy begin to bubble up through the center of the altar (these are motes from Astronix's

Shroud of Stars ability, see below). On round 3, Astronix will emerge from the altar fully. On round 4, she may roll for initiative and begin taking actions herself.

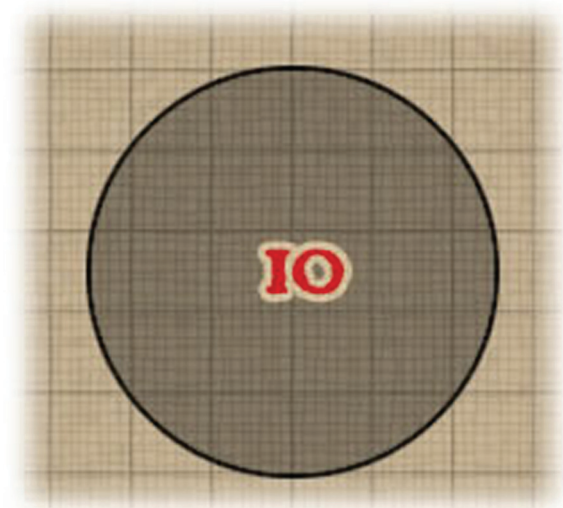
Astronix Herself: On her own, Astronix poses no real threat to the PCs. She is a peaceful creature. More to the point, she poses a bigger threat than they are likely able to handle after having just gone through the previous encounters. (At CR 15, it's quite possible that most parties playing through Night of the Starbird would have a difficult time defeating her even if they came to the encounter fresh.)

If left unmolested, Astronix will shake out her feathers for 2d4+1 rounds, primping and preening like any bird might. If there are worshippers paying her homage (or even mere onlookers keeping a respectful distance) she will give them a benevolent look and deposit 1d3+1 unfurled feathers (see "Gathering Feathers" below) as a gift. Then she will take the skies and fly away to parts unknown.

If attacked, Astronix will defend herself for 1d4+1 rounds (or until she is reduced to half hit points). At that point, she will fly off in an avian huff.

Krakkahaan as Astronix: If Krakkahaan succeeds in transferring his mind to Astronix's body, he is stunned for 1 round, then has complete control of the creature. The combined creature has all of Astronix's stats with the exceptions of WIS and Will save, which are equal to Krakkahaan's normal scores. It retains Krakkahaan's spellcasting abilities, but cannot cast spells with somatic or material components.

Krakkahaan can use Astronix's body as he sees fit, which will certainly include attacking the PCs. However, what he never fully understood was that the purpose of the ritual was not to take over Astronix, but to become one with her. It was a ritual



devised by the most devout of her worshippers who wished to give up their physical beings and simply fly through the night with their deity. There are dozens, or perhaps hundreds of other minds in Astronix and all of them are subordinate to her will, which will eventually exert itself over Krakkahaan.

Once per hour, Krakkahaan must make a DC 24 Will save or have his consciousness subsumed by Astronix's own. This save must also be made every time Astronix's body takes 15 or more hp from a single attack. Once subsumed, Krakkahaan is gone forever and the creature's peaceful persona reasserts itself.

ASTRONIX

CR 15

XP 51,200

NG Gargantuan magical beast (air, cold)

Init +11; Senses darkvision 60 ft., detect magic, detect poison, low-light vision, see invisibility; Perception +37

Aura shroud of stars (20 ft., 1d6 magic force)

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +14 natural, -4 size)

hp 210 (20d10+100); regeneration 10 (fire)

Fort +17, **Ref** +19, **Will** +14

Defensive Abilities self-resurrection; **DR** 15/adamantine; Immune cold, **SR** 26

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 90 ft. (good)

Melee 2 talons +24 (2d6+8/19-20 plus 1d6 fire) and bite +24 (2d8+8 plus 1d6 fire)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)

Constant-- *detect magic, detect poison, see invisibility*

At will-- *deeper darkness, greater dispel magic, hypnotic pattern, magic missile*

3/day-- *cone of cold, nightmare*

1/day-- *freezing sphere, meteor swarm*

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 24, **Con** 21, **Int** 22, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +32; **CMD** 50

Feats Blinding Critical, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (talon), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (cone of cold)

Skills Acrobatics +30, Diplomacy +26, Fly +28, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcane and nature) +26,

Perception +37, Sense Motive +26; Racial Modifiers +8 Perception

Languages Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Self-Resurrection (Su): A slain astronix remains dead for exactly one lunar month, unless its body is completely destroyed by an effect such as disintegrate. Otherwise, a fully healed phoenix emerges from the sky at dusk when the moon rises at the same point in the lunar cycle as was in effect when the astronix died. The astronix is restored as if raised by a resurrection. The astronix gains 1 permanent negative level when this occurs, although most seek a greater restoration to remove this negative level as soon as possible. An astronix that dies within the area of a consecrate or desecrate spell cannot self-resurrect until the effect ends, at which point the astronix resurrects a lunar month after that point. An astronix phoenix brought back to life by other means never gains negative levels as a result.

Shroud of Stars (Su): An astronix can cause its body to shed burning motes of force that appear to be tiny stars as a free action. As long as it is shedding stars, it inflicts an additional 1d6 points of force damage with each natural attack, and all its attacks are treated as magic force effects. A creature that attacks the astronix with natural or non-reach melee weapons takes 1d6 points of magic force damage (no save) with each successful hit.

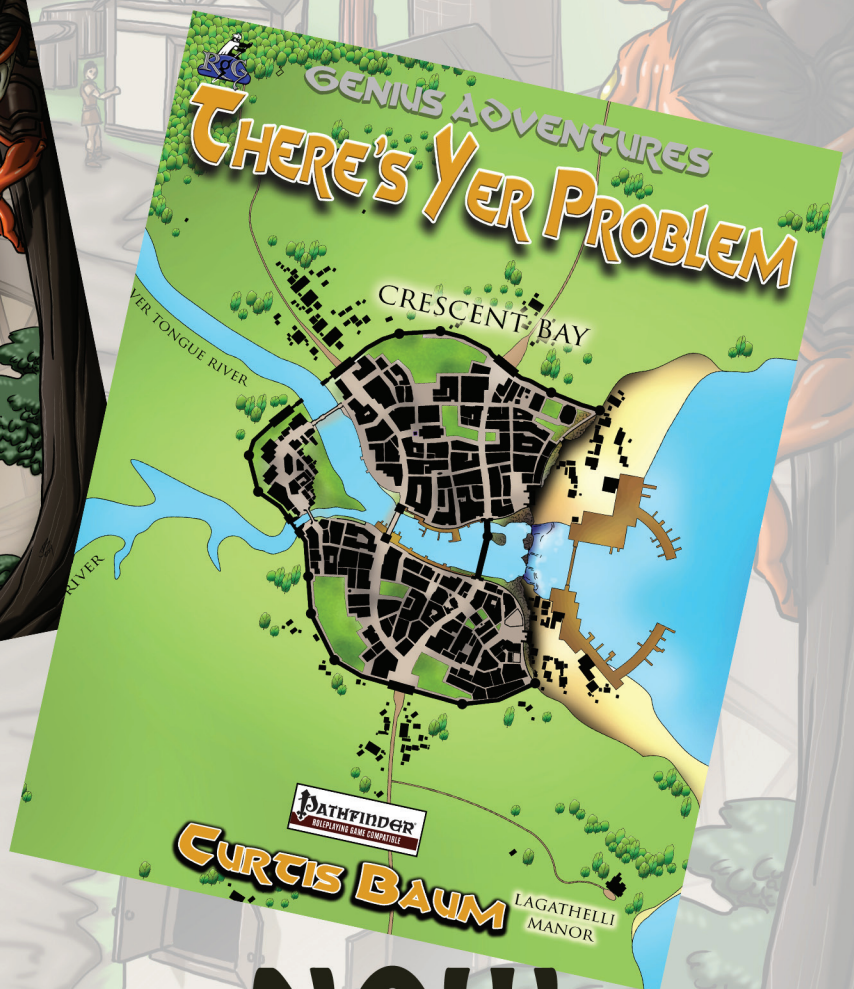
Gathering Feathers: The motes of light that Astronix casts off as part of her Shroud of Stars ability are actually feathers from her downy coat. They leave her body curled into tight balls of energy but, if carefully unfurled, can be retrieved and kept as starbird feathers. Once unfurled, these are very rare, highly prized items that are valued by alchemists, arcanists, potion makers, and spellcasters of every stripe. The GM can decide exactly what practical use they serve in his campaign, but they are worth 500 gp apiece.

When Astronix flies off, she leaves behind 1d10+4 motes that land whole and the PCs may attempt to unfurl. This requires a DC 15 Use Magic Device check, or a DC 20 Spellcraft check, or a DC 25 Disable Device check. If the check is successful, the feather has been successfully unfurled. If it fails, the character making the attempt suffers 1d6 points of force damage and the feather is destroyed.

Connections: This encounter is connected to area 07 and area 08. See the map of the Temple of Astronix.

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