

STARFINDER[®]



DEAD SUNS

ADVENTURE PATH

TEMPLE OF THE TWELVE

JOHN COMPTON



THAUMTECH CAIRNCARVER

TIER 2

Small light freighter

Speed 12; **Maneuverability** good (turn 1); **Drift** 1

AC 15; **TL** 15

HP 40; **DT** —; **CT** 8

Shields basic 40 (forward 10, port 10, starboard 10, aft 10)

Attack (Forward) light particle beam (3d6), light plasma torpedo launcher (3d8)

Attack (Port) coilgun (4d4)

Attack (Starboard) coilgun (4d4)

Power Core Pulse Black (120 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Basic; **Systems** basic computer, budget medium-range sensors, mk 2 armor, mk 2 defenses; **Expansion Bays** cargo holds (2), sealed environment chamber

Modifiers +1 Piloting; **Complement** 6 (minimum 1, maximum 6)

CREW

Captain Diplomacy +7 (2 ranks), gunnery +7, Intimidate +7 (2 ranks), Piloting +7 (2 ranks)

Engineer Engineering +7 (2 ranks)

Gunners (2) gunnery +12

Pilot Piloting +8 (2 ranks)

Science Officer Computers +6 (1 rank)

Although Thaumtech Unlimited may be most famous for its fearsome Omenbringer battleship, it's the versatile Cairncarver whose sales have funded the company's most ambitious research since the Gap. Like many ships of Eoxian design, the Cairncarver is an intimidating ship with an unnervingly skeletal shape that has changed little over the centuries. Cairncarvers remain fairly common ships in Eoxian space, but they're even more popular in the reviled Corpse Fleet, where they serve as ideal marauders capable of raiding distant settlements and eliminating key targets. This strong association with piracy makes Cairncarvers tempting targets for overzealous law-enforcement patrols, which often harass or even open fire on such ships without authenticating their credentials first.

Of course, with conventional life support limited to only a portion of the ship, the Cairncarver has little appeal to living crews. A typical ship configuration includes a sealed environment chamber for transporting live passengers, and even then, the crew can readily vent that chamber's atmosphere should they determine the passengers are as valuable dead as they are alive.

Standard armaments include a forward-mounted Alkaria light particle beam affixed to one of the Cairncarver's arms and a Festik light plasma torpedo launcher embedded in the other, while two Vertebrex coilguns mounted port and starboard provide flank defense. The Cairncarver's aft quarter is notoriously undefended, however.

With its ample cargo space, the Cairncarver doubles as a well-armed freighter. Eoxians often use the ship's cargo holds as crude passenger seating for undead troops, who can travel indefinitely without life support.

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ON THE COVER



The jungles of Castrovel are full of menaces, from carnivorous plants and hungry beasts to more civilized threats such as the Devourer cult leader Tahomen, depicted here by artist David Alvarez.



PART 2 OF 6

TEMPLE OF THE TWELVE

TEMPLE OF THE TWELVE

by John Compton

CASTROVEL

by John Compton and James L. Sutter

THE CULT OF THE DEVOURER

by Owen K.C. Stephens

ALIEN ARCHIVES

by John Compton, Jason Keeley, and Robert G. McCreary

CODEx OF WORLDS: RATHEREN

by Jason Keeley

STARSHIP: THAUMTECH CAIRNCARVER

by John Compton

INSIDE COVERS

This book refers to several other Starfinder products, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Starfinder hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/sfrd.



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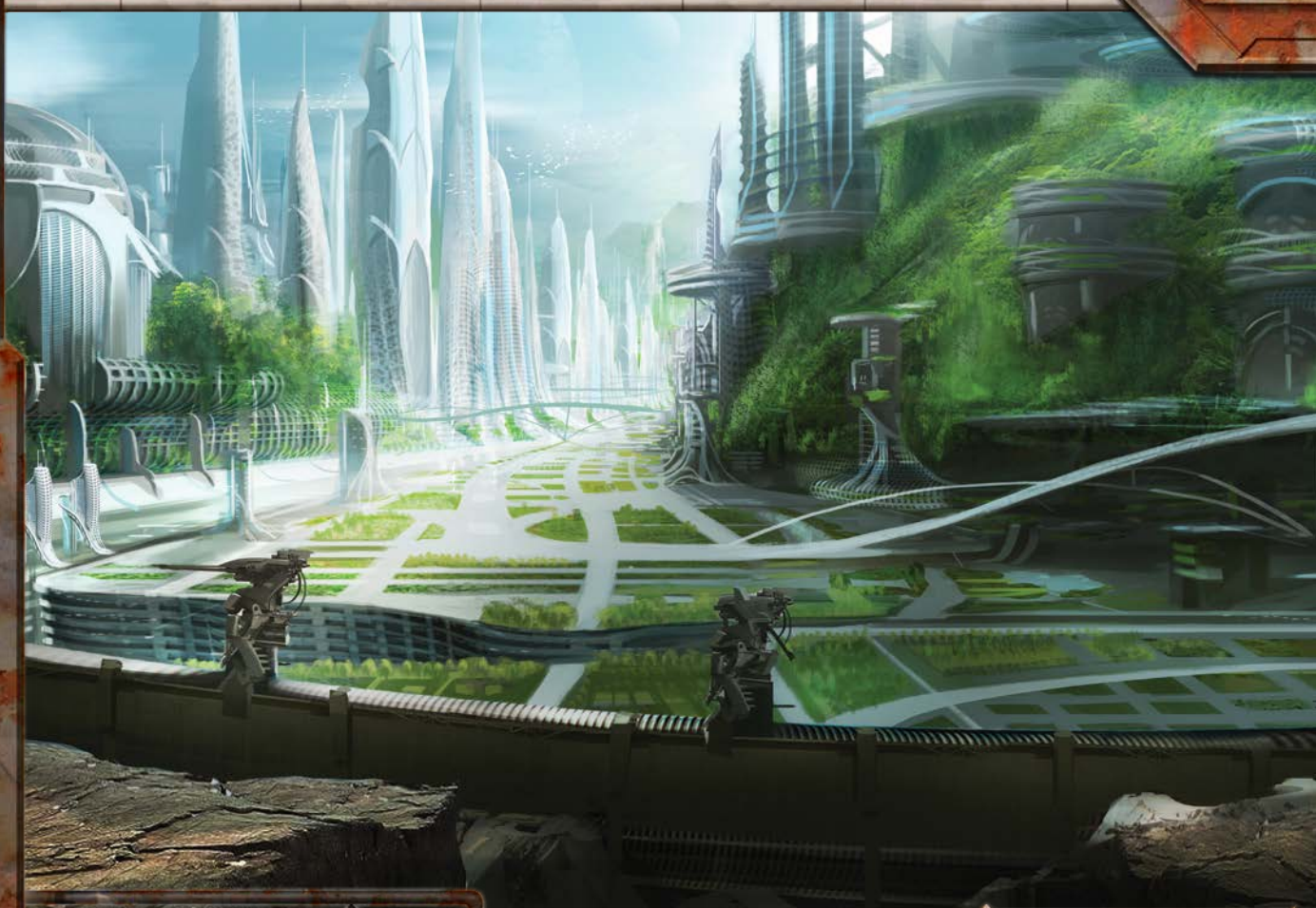
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TEMPLE OF THE TWELVE

PART 1: QUESTIONS IN QABARAT 3

To understand the strange technology they found on the Drift Rock, the heroes travel to Castrovel, where one of its finest universities holds clues to an ancient and forgotten society—one that identified an advanced alien civilization millennia ago.

PART 2: THE UKULAM EXPEDITION 14

The party sets off across the wild continent of Ukulam in search of ancient elven ruins that may hold the key to the Drift Rock's mysteries. But they must also intercept cultists of the Devourer who have kidnapped the leading expert on the ruins.

PART 3: THE LOST TEMPLE 27

The Cult of the Devourer has broken into an ancient elven temple and stolen its secrets, so the heroes must uncover the lost mysteries for themselves and confront the cult to avert a greater disaster.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Temple of the Twelve" is designed for four characters.

3 The PCs begin this adventure at 3rd level.

4 The PCs should be 4th level before reaching the Stargazer.

5 The PCs should be 5th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Each of the three major species inhabiting the planet Castrovel has historically laid claim to one of the world's four great continents: the telepathic lashuntas govern Asana, the chitinous formians inhabit the Colonies, and the gate-building elves rule Sovyrian. But Castrovel's fourth continent, Ukulam, has never fallen under the control of any one species for long. Millennia ago, the three great powers came to an informal agreement that Ukulam would belong to none of them. Even during the long-running conflicts between the lashunta city-states and the formians' Everlasting Queendoms, Ukulam has remained largely untamed—honored as a nature preserve dedicated to the planet's beauty.

Despite Ukulam's neutral and unsettled past, dozens of exceptions exist in which a company, city-state, or other entrepreneurial spirit founded a small outpost along a coastline. Only a handful of these remain occupied today, serving as refueling stations, scientific observatories, and small joint military bases. Tales of the ancient societies that may have once ruled Ukulam are more grandiose than aerial surveys have ever confirmed, yet at least one expedition into the continent's wild interior claimed to have discovered a complex culture dedicated to the stars.

Thousands of years ago, while many of their kin emigrated from Sovyrian to settle on Golarion, a smaller group of elves traveled to Ukulam in pursuit of the astronomical wonders visible only from Castrovel's northern hemisphere. The lowland jungles provided the elves ample food and shelter, and there they founded a settlement called Loskialua, but the high mountains of Ukulam's interior provided the most unobstructed view of the sky. Upon the highest summits the elves constructed their greatest observatories, storing their accumulated knowledge in a grand temple complex perched on the slopes of the mighty Alhuenar Spire, one of the tallest peaks in the Singing Range. These elven scholar-priests made extraordinary breakthroughs in astronomy, even capturing eons-old messages echoing from across the galaxy and communing with cosmic demigods.

The elves' greatest obsession, though, was a perfectly circular array of 12 stars that seemed to be more than a random constellation. In fact, they had discovered the megastructure known as the Gate of Twelve Suns, the stellar gateway to the demiplane where the ancient kishalee hid the sivr superweapon called the Stellar Degenerator. So intent were the elves on unlocking this mystery that they patterned their settlement's most prominent structure after these stars and their surrounding constellations, naming it the Temple of the Twelve. The temple complex thrived for several centuries before its sudden abandonment—a mystery

to this day—when the residents built a new magical portal called an *aiudara* (or “elf gate”) and departed for another solar system they had discovered.

Within a few lifetimes, the Temple of the Twelve and its eccentric inhabitants, now known to archaeologists as the Oatia culture, had largely faded from popular memory, and the site gradually fell to ruin. It resurfaced only a few decades after the Gap, when a human explorer named Halkueem Zan violated local travel bans to investigate a buried site his scanners had identified from space. When Zan emerged from Ukulam's jungles months later, lashunta authorities arrested him and confiscated his findings, though he retained enough notes to publish a sensationalist travelogue titled “Pyramid People of Ukulam” after he was released weeks later. Precious few have followed up on this work, not only because it was overshadowed by early contact with the Veskarium, but also because of Castrovel's limits on travel to Ukulam. Of late, the kasatha scholar Olmehya Solstarni has dedicated herself to retracing Zan's footsteps, and she has thoroughly annotated and digitized his original findings in preparation for a new expedition to the temple.

Unfortunately, the Cult of the Devourer believes that clues found on the so-called Drift Rock, which recently emerged at Absalom Station, point to the existence of some ancient superweapon that the cult could turn against the Pact Worlds and beyond. The leader of a cult cell on Castrovel, a lashunta mystic named Tahomen, has already connected the clues to Halkueem Zan's findings and arranged the abduction of Dr. Solstarni. With the captive kasatha as its guide, the Cult of the Devourer has already begun its trek to the Temple of the Twelve.

PART 1: QUESTIONS IN QABARAT

By the conclusion of “Incident at Absalom Station,” the PCs should have explored the contested Drift Rock in service of the Eoxian ambassador Gevalarsk Nor, learned how the *Acreon's* crew perished fighting akatas, and secured a fully functional ship, the *Sunrise Maiden*, to call their own. They are also likely in possession of Ambassador Nor's package from the *Acreon*, and they may well have discovered that his “cargo” is actually a Corpse Fleet officer named Hebiza Eskolar. In addition, the observer bot that Nor sent with the PCs has transmitted their findings, and the ambassador has made the feed public (after editing it to hide any evidence of Commander Eskolar) to all of Absalom Station. As a result, the station is abuzz with the news of the Drift Rock's ancient origins, and opportunists are already maneuvering to find some way to profit off the discovery.

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HOSTILE WITNESSES (CR 4)

The adventure begins with the PCs leaving the Drift Rock in their new ship, the *Sunrise Maiden*, to return to Absalom Station. Unfortunately, another ship is lying in wait for them, ready to attack the PCs as soon as they are clear of the asteroid.

Starship Combat: The attacking ship is a scout from the Corpse Fleet, the renegade armada of Eoxian starships that Eox has officially severed ties to (though many suspect that the bone sages still call upon the fleet to perform clandestine and politically insensitive military operations). The Corpse Fleet wishes to keep any knowledge of the *Acreon's* special "cargo"—Commander Eskolar—a secret, and it has entrusted the task of eliminating any witnesses to the capable crew of the *Iron Rictus*, a Thaumtech Cairncarver.

Shortly after the PCs take off from the Drift Rock, the *Iron Rictus* closes in for combat. The ship's stat block is printed on the inside front cover of this volume. If the PCs already sent Commander Eskolar to Absalom Station (such as on the shuttle *Hippocampus*), the *Iron Rictus* simply tries to destroy the PCs and their ship. If the *Iron Rictus's* crew believes the PCs have Eskolar aboard the *Sunrise Maiden*, the Corpse Fleet ship aims to disable the PCs' ship, demand the release of the *Acreon's* "cargo," and then destroy the PCs. If pressed, the *Iron Rictus* seeks to destroy the *Sunrise Maiden* even if Eskolar is on board, knowing that the bone trooper can survive the vacuum of space long enough to be extracted from the wreckage.

When the PCs first boarded the *Sunrise Maiden*, they should have selected crew roles, as described on page 316 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*; if not, have them select those roles now. The *Sunrise Maiden's* statistics appear on the inside front cover of *Starfinder Adventure Path #1*; the only adjustments the PCs need make to the statistics at this time are adjusting the ship's Armor Class and Target Lock based on the chosen pilot's Piloting skill ranks.

This encounter uses the starship combat rules in the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*. A PC can identify the make and model of the *Iron Rictus* with a successful DC 13 Engineering check to identify technology. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Culture check recognizes the ship's affiliation with the Corpse Fleet and recalls that the Corpse Fleet is outlawed in the Pact Worlds.

IRON RICTUS

TIER 2

Corpse Fleet Cairncarver (see the inside covers)

HP 40

Development: If the PCs win the starship battle, they can resume their return trip to Absalom Station. The crew of the *Iron Rictus* is trained to keep a low profile while in Pact Worlds space. If the *Iron Rictus* is disabled or destroyed, its elebrian crew activates data safeguards that wipe the ship's computer of any data in short order before destroying themselves to avoid capture. The *Iron Rictus* carries no other evidence of its crew's intentions.

If the *Iron Rictus* disables the PCs' ship, the Corpse Fleet vessel flies past the *Sunrise Maiden* and fires its light particle beam one more time for good measure—unlikely to fully destroy the starship, though it does increase the repair bill. At that point, other starships begin closing in on the scene, and the *Iron Rictus* beats a quick retreat to avoid tangling with bystanders. A ysoki wrecker ship hails the *Sunrise Maiden* shortly afterward, offering to tow the ship back to Absalom Station for the low price of 200 credits.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully defeat the *Iron Rictus*, award them 1,200 XP for the encounter.

RETURN TO ABSALOM STATION

When the PCs arrive back at Absalom Station, they find their fame has preceded them—their images have appeared on countless video screens thanks to Gevalarsk Nor's broadcast, and the PCs find that they have become minor local celebrities—at least while the buzz lasts. Their newfound popularity earns them priority docking from Absalom Traffic Control and temporarily waived docking fees. Once the PCs disembark, a small crowd of onlookers and reporters quickly tracks them down, asking for statements, autographs, and confirmation of conspiracy theories. Partaking in a few short photo opportunities and drinks on the house is fairly harmless, though using the media attention as a platform to make any inflammatory accusations could make enemies of any number of power brokers and gangs on Absalom Station. In any event, the PCs should probably meet with those on Absalom Station responsible for their most recent adventure: Chiskisk and Ambassador Gevalarsk Nor.

THE AMBASSADOR AND THE OFFICER

As the person who hired the PCs to explore the *Acreon* and the Drift Rock, Ambassador **Gevalarsk Nor** (LE male elebrian necrovite) is eager to meet with them, though his disposition depends on what the PCs have done with his "cargo." Once back on Absalom Station, the PCs have only a short window in which to contact someone regarding Commander Eskolar, should they wish to do so. If the PCs notify the Stewards, station security, or another legal authority, a squad of security personnel meets the PCs when they dock to confirm the nature of their captive, take her into custody, take the PCs' statements, and record their contact information. Due to the nature of the prisoner, the security officers request that the PCs avoid publicizing their discovery and allow the Stewards to handle the matter to avoid political fallout. Commander Eskolar goes quietly, though she once more claims diplomatic standing and demands legal representation while being escorted away.

If the PCs contact Ambassador Nor instead, he acknowledges their update and sends a team to quietly convey the *Acreon's* "cargo" to a safe location; alternatively, the PCs can bring Eskolar to him directly. If the PCs sent Commander Eskolar back to Absalom Station separately, such

as on the *Hippocampus*, Nor's agents have already recovered her. Whichever decision the PCs make will have repercussions later in the Adventure Path, so note their actions.

When the PCs meet with Ambassador Nor, he congratulates them on the success of their mission. Even though he recorded the PCs' activities on the *Acreon* and the Drift Rock, Nor would still like to hear the PCs' report firsthand. If the PCs successfully delivered Commander Eskolar to the Eoxian embassy, Nor thanks them and upholds his end of the bargain, paying each of the PCs 500 credits as payment for the task. He adeptly deflects any questions about Eskolar and his interest in the commander, and he absolutely denies any connection, official or unofficial, with the Corpse Fleet. If pressed, the ambassador suggests that securing a renegade officer is an act of interplanetary safety, not some indication that he is in league with the Corpse Fleet.

Nor has a keen mind and can quickly help piece together any of the clues that the PCs unearthed on the Drift Rock but failed to interpret. Most importantly, he can decipher the complex alien computer code the PCs found in the Drift Rock's ancient control room (see page 35 of "Incident at Absalom Station"), allowing the PCs to identify the approximate age of the technology, interpret some of the phrases, and recognize that the Drift Rock represents only a fragment of a much larger structure. The ambassador does not recognize the alien language, however. Nor also suspects that any device that large might have incredible destructive potential; he does not share these suspicions with the PCs, but he does convey that information to his Eoxian contacts after the PCs depart.

If the PCs did not deliver Commander Eskolar, or if they handed her over to the authorities, Ambassador Nor's reception is considerably cooler. He still wants to hear their report, but he does not provide the additional payment to the PCs or offer his help deciphering the secrets of the Drift Rock. He briskly informs the PCs that their business is now concluded and ends the meeting. His displeasure is almost palpable.

Development: Since the PCs were hired to investigate the *Acreon* and Drift Rock as part of Ambassador Nor's mediation between the Hardscrabble Collective and Astral Extractions, they may well be interested in the results of the ambassador's arbitration. In truth, this factional dispute has no bearing on the rest of the campaign—the PCs will soon discover they have more pressing and more dangerous concerns! As a result, it's up to you how the dispute is resolved and when. Neither Astral Extractions nor the Hardscrabble Collective has a role to play in the rest of the Adventure Path.

Story Award: If the PCs deliver Commander Eskolar to Ambassador Nor as agreed, award them 400 XP for completing the job. If they capture Eskolar and turn her over to security, award them 800 XP instead. These rewards are the same as those listed on page 26 of "Incident

at Absalom Station." The PCs can earn this award only once; if they already received experience for dealing with Commander Eskolar in the previous adventure, do not award them XP a second time.

THE STARFINDER SOCIETY

Within the Starfinder Society, **Chiskisk** (N host shirren) is likely the PCs' preferred contact, especially the more they learn about Gevalarsk Nor's relationship (however tenuous) with the Corpse Fleet. Even if the PCs don't contact the shirren, Chiskisk approaches them within an hour of their return to the station, keen to hear what their explorations revealed.

The shirren can telepathically provide the PCs with much of the same information as Nor could above, though they don't have any sense of the immense device's purpose. The nature of the device puzzles Chiskisk, and they encourage the PCs to find out more. After all, this is an excellent opportunity to uncover an extraordinary secret, and the answer might both earn the PCs fame as explorers and unlock hitherto undiscovered technologies that could better the Pact Worlds. What's more, Chiskisk has access to the Starfinder Society's detailed databases, which the shirren uses to search for any prior appearances of the language displayed on the Drift Rock's displays. As the search concludes, Chiskisk energetically scans over the findings, bobbing their head appreciatively at first before their antennae droop dejectedly and they explain their findings.

"There is some good news. The Starfinder Society's linguistic database recognized many of the symbols you found on the Drift Rock, because this is not the first time they've appeared post-Gap. The bad news is that the source is... highly unreliable," Chiskisk notes, as segments of their chitinous body scrape together in agitation. "All that we have about these earlier texts comes from Halkueem Zan nearly three centuries ago, and it seems that no published studies of those texts have appeared since. According to these records, Zan's original findings were donated to the Qabarat University of Xenoarchaeology and Xenoanthropology on Castrovel shortly after his—" The shirren pauses while contemplating how best to phrase the sentence. "—disruptive expeditions.

"Fortunately, the Society has numerous alumni from that university, and I can readily secure you a contact there and forward my personal recommendation to a few faculty members. Perhaps they can show you Zan's notes and even take you to the original site so that you can search for more clues about whatever this Drift Rock once was."

The PCs probably have questions. The following are likely inquiries and Chiskisk's telepathic responses.

Who was Halkueem Zan? "As you know, the Starfinder Society is an organization dedicated to uncovering the secrets of the universe and its past. As in any pursuit, a sensational hero can attract new recruits, and a buffoon can tarnish the

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whole field. Halkueem Zan was both. He traveled throughout the Pact Worlds making a name for himself as an explorer and archaeologist, but his techniques were utter rubbish. He was a looter with a good press agent, and he published lurid gibberish like 'Pyramid People of Ukulam.' His articles were popular with the public, but for every diligent explorer they inspired, another two were unscrupulous treasure hunters who just wanted to blow things up and call it archaeology."

Was Halkueem Zan a Starfinder?

Chiskisk shudders visibly. "No. Zan did most of his work at about the same time the Starfinder Society formed, but I don't believe he was ever associated with us."

What trouble did Halkueem Zan experience on Castrovel? "Different planets have different regulations for explorers. Zan wanted to explore a site on the restricted continent of Ukulam, but when the authorities denied him passage, he went anyway. I believe they confiscated most of his findings, and the whole incident spurred a decade of restrictions on offworld explorers."

What's the university known for? "The Qabarat University of Xenoarchaeology and Xenoanthropology is one of the foremost institutions of higher learning for explorers and galactic ethnographers in the Pact Worlds. In addition to training many great archaeologists, the university maintains a staggering archive of artifacts, recordings, and other findings from throughout the system."

Who are we meeting there? The shirren taps a few keys. "There is a postdoctoral student named Whaloss who has worked with the Society in the past. I'll ask him to greet you when you land in Qabarat."

Chiskisk believes this is a strong lead, and because the PCs have so far been at the forefront of this investigation, the shirren believes it's only proper that they have the right of first refusal to visit the university and learn more. In fact, they would rather the PCs do so, as thanks to the broadcast of the Drift Rock exploration, it's only a matter of time before someone else beats the Society to the prize. If the PCs are uninterested, Chiskisk might try to incentivize them by reminding them of the fame and fortune that can accompany a major find like this. As a last resort, they might offer the PCs 1,000 credits as a stipend for tracking down Zan's old site.

The shirren also sends them a digital copy of "Pyramid People of Ukulam," which is a tawdry travelogue that lauds the author's bravery as much as it describes the culture that built the sites using ample nonacademic language such as "exotic," "savages," and "time immemorial."

Development: If any of the PCs declined to join the Starfinder Society in the previous adventure, give them the opportunity to do so now—their recent investigation of the

Acreon and the Drift Rock is more than enough experience to warrant membership in the Society.

IN SEARCH OF LOST RECORDS

The adventure assumes that the PCs travel to Castrovel aboard their new starship, the *Sunrise Maiden*. Beyond dealing with a few fans of the PCs' recent celebrity on the way to the spaceport, their voyage is speedy and largely uneventful. The journey itself takes 1d6 days using Drift travel.

Castrovel is a vibrant planet of sparkling blue oceans, continents blanketed in vividly green forests, and swirls of clouds. As the *Sunrise Maiden* enters the atmosphere near Qabarat, the city-state's aviation authorities hail the starship, ask for identification, and direct them to one of the landing

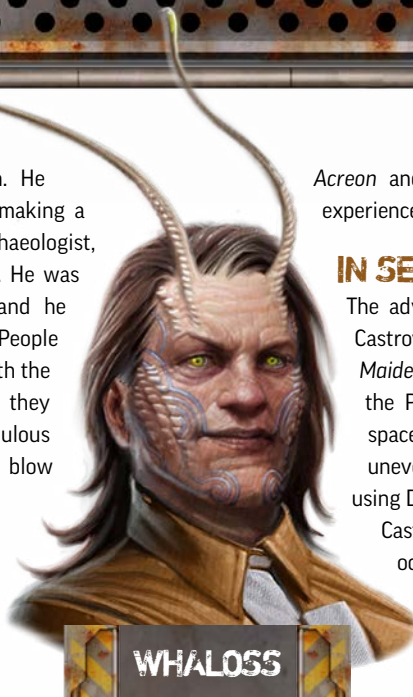
pads at the city's spaceport, Ship's End. As a matter of course, a guard and a customs official briefly interview the PCs about their business in Qabarat, whether they have local contacts, the expected duration of their stay, and whether they are importing any foreign life-forms—at worst, a PC might be required to endure a short disinfection procedure or register a pet. Carrying personal weapons is not illegal in Qabarat, merely frowned upon. After the customs process, the officers issue the PCs travel papers to keep with them for the duration of their stay.

UNIVERSITY INVESTIGATIONS

The PCs' Castrovelian contact, **Whaloss** (NG male damaya lashunta) is waiting to meet them just outside the spaceport. Even for a damaya, he is tall and thin, almost to the point of seeming gaunt. His clothing is a stylish blend of local silks, though the overall ensemble shows considerable wear, as though he has relied on this nicer outfit for formal meetings for many years. Nonetheless, he positively beams with antennae-twitching excitement to meet the PCs and show them around Qabarat. As an advanced student of xenoarchaeology, he has collaborated with members of the Starfinder Society before and he's eager to hear about the PCs' recent findings.

Meanwhile, Whaloss hails a robo-taxi to carry the group into the heart of Qabarat and to the university. As the taxi wends its way deeper into the city, trees give way to elegant towers of carbon fiber, glass, and steel, each artistically sculpted to create a stunning forest of dazzling skyscrapers. The Qabarat University of Xenoarchaeology and Xenoanthropology is just north of the downtown commercial district and consists of about 10 buildings scattered over a campus of groomed lawns and gardens.

Whaloss does not have the background to decipher the Drift Rock's writing and technology, but he offers to introduce the PCs to Professor Muhali, the head of the linguistic anthropology department. Her office is in the Alsima-Karei Hall, an eight-story building whose lobby is currently home



to a small pack of journalists insistently trying to convince a receptionist to let them upstairs. Whaloss is unfamiliar with any news that would warrant this level of attention, and if the PCs inquire, a journalist can convey that Dr. Ailabiens 21:2 gave an incendiary lecture that some interpreted as a defense of violent xenophobia; the media is here primarily to secure interviews and comments from ranking academic staff.

Creatures: The receptionist, **Ikimsi** (LN male korasha lashunta), is out of his element dealing with the media. It's all he can do to keep them at bay on the ground floor while paging for support from the university's publicist or deans. Lest the journalists try to piggyback on the PCs' access, Ikimsi is unwilling to let the Starfinders upstairs until he has control of the situation here. The PCs can peacefully wait for a dean to arrive and shepherd the media away, but they can also sweep in to Ikimsi's rescue by tricking the journalists, causing a scene, impersonating security staff, or even leveraging the PCs' recent celebrity by offering to give an interview about the Drift Rock in exchange for the media giving Ikimsi some space. A variety of skill checks might work here, with a base DC of 18 that might be as much as 5 higher or lower depending on the PCs' strategy. Most approaches should require succeeding at a minimum of two different checks, such as a Disguise check to impersonate a university official and an Intimidate check to scare off the media.

Development: Once the journalists are no longer clamoring to get upstairs, Ikimsi is amenable to hearing why the PCs would like to meet with various professors upstairs. He notes that Professor Muhali is currently very busy, but if the PCs helped him deal with the media, Ikimsi rearranges the professor's schedule for the day and creates an official appointment for them; this grants the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks to influence Professor Muhali. Ikimsi or Whaloss can lead the PCs to Muhali's office on the fifth floor.

In the event the PCs attempt to force their way upstairs or perform acts of violence, Ikimsi frantically rings for campus security. These guards escort the PCs off campus. The PCs can visit again the next day, though they take a -2 penalty to checks to influence university students and faculty.

Story Award: If the PCs help Ikimsi deal with the journalists and get an appointment with Professor Muhali, award them 600 XP.

PROFESSOR MUHALI'S OFFICE

As the head of the linguistic anthropology department, Professor Muhali has one of the nicer offices in Alsima-Karei Hall. Her door is unlocked, and she willingly accepts visitors introduced by Whaloss or announced by Ikimsi. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter.

This office is clean, roomy, and orderly. A large desk stands imposingly before a broad window that offers a charming view of a nearby park, and a small table in one corner has a quartet of chairs arranged evenly around it. Near the door is a wide examination table covered with broken fragments of stone, many of which bear incomplete words or letters written in a spiraling text. Several tiny fountains throughout the room burble soothingly and shimmer with soft light.

Creature: Professor **Muhali** (LN female damaya lashunta) is fairly stern, having wrestled with offworld authorities to secure excavation permits, cut through red tape, and debunk fraudulent ideas vigorously defended by stubborn fools. She is dark-skinned for a lashunta, with pale green facial markings and purple hair cut in an asymmetrical style. Muhali has spent the past several hours corresponding with colleagues and devising ways in which to resolve the scandal Ailabiens 21:2 started. With the media and university deans breathing down her neck over the incident, Muhali is largely uninterested in working on anything else, even as a favor to the Starfinder Society. She answers some questions—ideally to assuage the PCs' curiosity and convince them to either help her or leave.

Why are there so many journalists around? "One of my colleagues, Ailabiens 21:2, gave a rather incendiary public lecture last night in which he examined a war from nearly a millennium ago and used the cultural fallout from it to rationalize the genocide of the formian species. Even before the lashunta city-states and formian Colonies signed peace accords thirty years ago, such brutal conclusions would have been dismissed. Now he is fomenting hate crimes under the guise of 'pure logic' and anthropology. This is not what the



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university stands for, but it's what the public now believes. I've placed him on academic leave and restricted his access to university resources until we can clean this up."

Can you help us decipher this Drift Rock writing? "I'm not in any position to assist you or instruct my department to assist you—not until I can resolve the current debacle."

What can you tell us about Halkueem Zan's expedition?

"I have neither the time nor the inclination to discuss that showboating amateur's exploits. However, my colleague Doctor Olmehya Solstarni has a strong interest in the ruins of Ukulam." Muhali examines a screen and scrolls through several pages. "According to my records, though, she departed on personal leave two days ago." A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Sense Motive check can determine that Professor Muhali is somewhat confused by this development. Muhali does not recall approving Dr. Solstarni's absence, which the PCs can convince Muhali to share with a successful DC 19 Diplomacy check. Even then, Muhali is not willing to let the PCs into Dr. Solstarni's locked office at this time.

How can we help? Professor Muhali sighs and delicately massages the bases of her antennae. "You're persistent. Maybe that could come in handy. What the university needs right now is to smooth this over quickly, and Ailabiens 21:2 is not listening to anything I say. He has not quite violated enough protocols to be dismissed; firing him would otherwise be good for optics. I think the media would settle for a public apology. If you can convince him to do that, I should be able to handle the rest."

Development: Professor Muhali is unwilling to assist the PCs unless they help her defuse the current scandal by convincing Ailabiens 21:2 to apologize. Whaloss or Ikimsi can take the PCs to his office and introduce them to the contemplative (see Ailabiens 21:2's Office below).

AILABIENS 21:2'S OFFICE

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs visit the contemplative Ailabiens 21:2.

Dust, debris, and discarded papers litter the floor of this disorganized office. A single chair stands in the corner, and the desk and shelves are crowded with books, scrolls, statuettes, and loose computer hardware.

Creature: The office of the academic **Ailabiens 21:2** (N male contemplative) is a model of disorganized chaos, containing a mishmash of texts and cultural artifacts from across the Pact Worlds and beyond. Because he flies using psychic powers, the contemplative is nonchalant about the filthy floor, which crunches noisily under visitors' feet. With little else to do with his time, Ailabiens 21:2 is willing to entertain visitors, communicating almost exclusively through telepathy while doing so. If necessary, you can use the statistics for a contemplative presented in *Starfinder: First Contact* or *Starfinder Alien Archive* for Ailabiens 21:2.

As is common practice among contemplatives, Ailabiens 21:2 abandoned his childhood name for one based on a favorite quote or intellectual hero—in his case, the second article published by the radically anticonventionalist scholar Ailabiens in the year 21 AG, which contains the famous line, "When the past is unknown, we must make a tradition of challenging so-called tradition." A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Culture check can recognize the significance of the contemplative's name, and demonstrating this knowledge in conversation grants that PC a +2 circumstance bonus to skill checks to influence him.

Ailabiens 21:2 is an accomplished xenanthropologist. Although his academic peers cannot doubt the contemplative's knowledge of the subject, his own publications tend to receive mixed reviews due to the utterly sanitary impartiality and lack of empathy with which he approaches his work and subjects. This extends to his interactions with his coworkers and students, whom he boorishly psychoanalyzes to their faces as though he were performing a favor. For his part, Ailabiens 21:2 boasts of his emotional detachment with hypocritical pride, claiming that his objectivity makes him a superior analyst.

Despite his uncouth demeanor, few have read as many articles and files as he has, and he commands an unrivaled mental catalog of the university's collections. He reviewed Halkueem Zan's confiscated notes a decade ago, dismissing it as drivel. Even so, that makes him one of the few who has personally read the explorer's notebooks, few of which are properly digitized. However, thanks to his punishment for his recent lecture, he is unable to help the PCs track down the documents. In the meantime, he can answer the PCs' questions, such as the likely ones below.

What can you tell us about Halkueem Zan's expedition?

"I reviewed the entirety of Zan's original notes early in my time here as faculty, and to my considerable knowledge, only Doctor Solstarni has studied them more recently. Zan's methodology was imperfect, catering to an uneducated reader's lexicon, fetishizing the 'exotic,' and conveying a pathological love of his self-image as an adventurer—likely to earn money or as an elaborate mating ritual. As a result, his work is scientifically wanting and his conclusions doubtful. Nevertheless, his notes provide enough detail to hypothetically retrace his steps."

Can you get us Zan's notes? "Normally, I could, but I am currently on probation due to the weak-willed public's inability to process the logical arguments I posited in my recent lecture. Until I am reinstated, I cannot assist you."

How can you be reinstated? "Professor Muhali has suspended me, and barring the unlikely intervention by a dean, only she can undo this. Your convincing her to do so would allow me to help. If you also repair the damage she has dealt, you shall have my undivided attention."

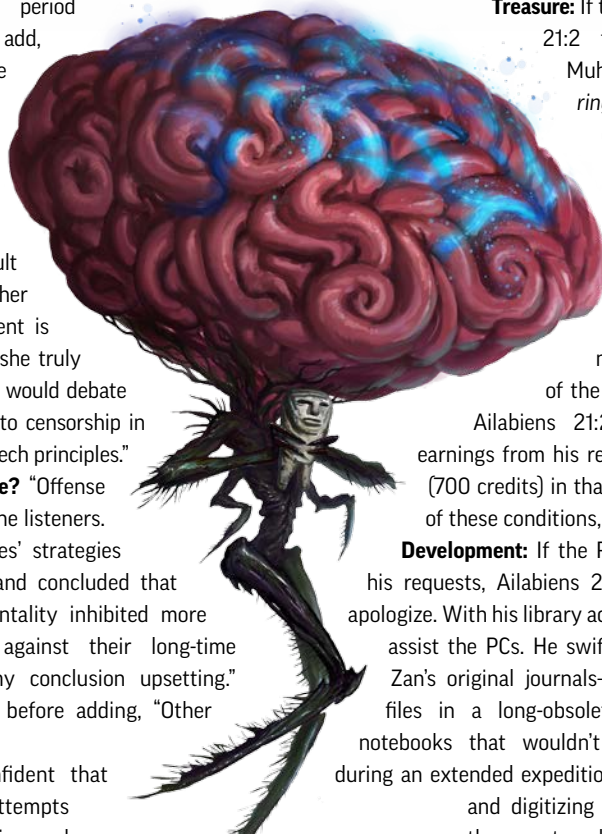
How has she hurt you? "I am on track to attain tenure at this university in several more years—requiring practically

twice as long an observation period as a lashunta would, I might add, likely because my assessors are compensating for inferiorities, real or perceived. This incident reflects an egregious stain on my record that challenges my advancement and scholarly recognition here. She must agree to erase this insult from my file. I have spoken with her about the matter, and her judgment is clouded by stress and emotion. If she truly cared about scholarly integrity, she would debate my assertions. Instead she stoops to censorship in violation of the university's free speech principles."

Why was your lecture offensive? "Offense indicates a narrow perspective in the listeners. I analyzed ancient lashunta armies' strategies against their formian neighbors and concluded that the former's conditioned sentimentality inhibited more effectively destructive actions against their long-time enemies. The audience found my conclusion upsetting." Ailabiens 21:2 bobs thoughtfully before adding, "Other species are endlessly fascinating."

Ailabiens 21:2 is utterly confident that he has done no wrong. If a PC attempts to point out why he was offensive and wrong, the contemplative disarms most attacks by discrediting the PC on the grounds of being unfit to render such a conclusion or by stating that the argument is rationally flawed, even pointing out common foibles of the PC's species as support of his mental superiority. He may be convinced that upsetting others was wrong and that it was a bad career move, but he does not accept that his academic conclusions are invalid.

Despite his frustrating insensitivity, the contemplative finds the prospect of making an apology less degrading than enduring his academic suspension. He is willing to make this gesture in a convincing manner so long as the PCs can convince Professor Muhali to make three concessions: cancel Ailabiens 21:2's academic suspension, restore his access to the university's restricted collections, and pardon the whole incident in his tenure review file. Should the PCs take this offer to Muhali, she balks at the contemplative's final demand, but she grudgingly agrees to reinstate his status and library access in exchange for a public apology before the media. Professor Muhali accepts all three concessions if the PCs convince her to do so with a successful DC 19 Diplomacy check. Alternatively, the PCs can take Muhali's two concessions back to the contemplative and try to convince him that they secured him all three demands, which requires a successful DC 24 Bluff check. After all, he won't learn about the deception until his next review months from now.



AILABIENS 21:2

Treasure: If the PCs convince Ailabiens 21:2 to apologize, Professor Muhali offers the PCs a *mk 1 ring of resistance* as a token of her appreciation; in fact, it's among the items that the contemplative requested in a grant application that fell through thanks to his recent gaffe. If the PCs managed to fulfill all three of the contemplative's requests, Ailabiens 21:2 also gives them his earnings from his recent guest lecture circuit (700 credits) in thanks. If the PCs meet both of these conditions, they earn both rewards.

Development: If the PCs fulfill two or more of his requests, Ailabiens 21:2 is willing to publicly apologize. With his library access restored, he can now assist the PCs. He swiftly checks out Halkueem Zan's original journals—a combination of image files in a long-obsolete format and physical notebooks that wouldn't require battery power during an extended expedition—and sets to converting and digitizing them. The process takes the contemplative approximately 8 hours, after which he can provide the PCs with a fairly complete copy of the reckless explorer's original account.

However, Ailabiens 21:2 notes that there appear to be some gaps in the records, either because Zan had been negligent in documenting part of his journey or because someone else has removed some documents. Ailabiens 21:2 annotates the records as best he can in this short amount of time, identifying what he believes are the most relevant parts (see the Halkueem Zan's Notes sidebar on page 10). The PCs can access this digital record on a computer of any tier.

These files enable the PCs to retrace Zan's footsteps from centuries earlier. If the PCs acquire both these records and the notes left behind by Dr. Solstarni (see Dr. Solstarni's Office on page 10), the PCs receive a +2 circumstance bonus to Survival checks to navigate Ukulam's wilderness during Part 2 of this volume.

Once the PCs resolve the dispute between Professor Muhali and Ailabiens 21:2, Muhali agrees to examine the language records the PCs found on the Drift Rock. She soon recognizes them as belonging to a non-Elven language group found in association with the few known elven sites on the continent of Ukulam to the west.

Hoping to draw upon specialized knowledge of her colleague Dr. Solstarni, Muhali attempts to contact Solstarni in her office, at home, and through her personal comm unit. Even Muhali's attempts to contact the professor's friends and family turn up

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HALKUEEM ZAN'S NOTES

Collectively, Halkueem Zan's records provide a fragmented course that the PCs can follow from the coastal outpost of Turhalu Point on the continent of Ukulam inland to the "accursed pyramid city of Loskialua," which Zan claimed to have discovered. These records—both text and audiologs—contain several key warnings and landmarks described in Zan's judgmental verbiage.

Wildlife: "Castrovel crawls with vermin and beasts of all kinds. Thunder-bellied behemoths clear paths through the jungle while bellowing madly. More vexing, though, are what we've come to call stingbats—some hellish cross of monkey, bat, and scorpion that travel in troops and harass us regularly. I fought one off as it attacked a porter and shot another as it fled, and from then on they targeted me. It's as though they can sense strength, yet resent it."

The Rune Obelisk: "A dramatic spire barely rising above the tree line was the first of our great landmarks. Each side of it was once engraved with untold wisdom, but only the sheltered runes near the base have survived the ages. The plants here grow thicker, as if feeding upon some gifts left by the ancient elves—sacrifices of flesh and blood, no doubt."

The Plague Warden: "This massive stone figure is a reclining elven form covered in weathered boils. I suspect it is an effigy that served ritual purposes, such as absorbing the illness of some great king so he might live forever."

The Forsaken City: "The city in the foothills is a forest of small pyramids overgrown with vines. As with the funerary monuments of lost Osirion, it might be this was not a place of the living but a realm of the dead. Initial excavations uncovered multiple stone tiers of fine architecture—displaying skill truly more advanced than the builders' primitive contemporaries."

The Stairs to Eternity: "From the Forsaken City rises a staggering, weathered staircase carved into the mountain beyond, evoking mystical contemplation in all who would climb it. Beyond stands a great temple whose haunted guardians feasted upon my comrades, forcing us to flee the savage sentinels."

no results, making the lashunta concerned. She informs the PCs that she will report the missing Solstarni to the police, and she lends the PCs a spare key card to Dr. Solstarni's office, asking the PCs to investigate to see if there's any sign of where her colleague might be (see Doctor Solstarni's Office below).

Story Award: If the PCs convince Ailabiens 21:2 to make a public apology and they restore his academic status and library access, award them 600 XP.

DR. SOLSTARNI'S OFFICE

The door to Dr. Solstarni's fourth-floor office is made of a heavy wood composite and is locked electronically (hardness 5, HP 15, break DC 18, Engineering DC 20 to disable). Professor Muhali's key card unlocks the door, and if the PCs have resolved her concerns with Ailabiens 21:2, Muhali accompanies them here.

This office is in disarray, with cabinet doors ajar, several stone artifacts scattered across the floor from open archival drawers, and a traveling bag open and half-packed. The computer on the desk at the far end of the room is dark, but a diode at its base blinks regularly.

Dr. Olmehya Solstarni is an archaeologist specializing in archaeoastronomic validation: the study of how ancient cultures viewed the cosmos and expressed those observations in their architecture, artifacts, and writings. Her office contains an assortment of outdated astronomy tools from sundry planets. This disarray is not typical for the kasatha, as Professor Muhali can relay, and even at a casual glance, it appears that someone was packing quickly and erratically—perhaps even ransacking the room. Suspecting criminal activity, Muhali excuses herself to contact local police to file a missing persons report, but she encourages the PCs to investigate to see what clues they can uncover.

There are three main areas the PCs can investigate to find clues: the university's security cameras, Dr. Solstarni's computer, and Solstarni's office, which contains several physical clues. These three areas of investigation are detailed below.

Cameras: The building has security cameras in its hallways and at the entrances, but there aren't any inside individual offices and classrooms. The receptionist Ikimsi can review the video logs to see that a trio of korasha lashuntas carrying heavy backpacks and wearing uniforms entered the building 2 days ago in the late evening—after all reception personnel had left. They then took the stairs up, but there seems to be no footage of them on other floors or even leaving the building. A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Culture check can identify the uniforms as those of the Gateway District's Port Authority. With a successful DC 17 Computers or Perception check, a PC can note that there are inconsistencies in the footage on several floors (including the fourth floor, where Dr. Solstarni's office is), suggesting that someone hacked into the building's security cameras and looped footage of empty hallways to hide whatever they were doing.

If the PCs fail the Culture check, the Qabarat detective can make the Port Authority connection at a later time (see Development below).

Computer: Dr. Solstarni's computer is in sleep mode, but interacting with its controls brings up her log-in screen. The computer is tier 2 (DC 21 Computers check to hack) with a 1-hour lockout countermeasure. If a PC successfully hacks into the computer, he can review the computer's recent functions and Dr. Solstarni's correspondence. Her personal calendar notes that she is scheduled for a research sabbatical in approximately 2 months, as approved by her department head, Muhali, and the authorities in Turhalu Point on the east coast of Ukulam. However, one of the recent files on the computer is a letter from Professor Muhali granting Dr. Solstarni leave to depart 2 months early to take advantage of special conditions in the field, signed 2 days ago. Muhali has no recollection of submitting this letter, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 19 Computers check can determine that it's a forged document generated by an off-site computer that spoofed Muhali's identity.

The PCs can also find a series of 15 messages exchanged between Dr. Solstarni and a person named Dr. Eyrub Paqual regarding Solstarni's research into the ancient elven settlements of Ukulam. The exchanges begin fairly cordially as Paqual and Solstarni discussed minor details of interest from the minimal research published about these sites. As the discussion continued, however, Paqual grew more insistent and attempted to cajole the kasatha to meet with him at a cafe called the Five Arches in Qabarat's Gateway District 2 days ago to appraise several artifacts he had recovered. Solstarni refused, citing a busy schedule, though a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Sense Motive check also notices that the kasatha's message conveys she was feeling increasingly skeptical about Paqual's motives.

If the PCs search for information about Eyrub Paqual on Castrovel's infosphere, they can find a series of articles about elven ruins he has published over the past 6 years. At first blush, he appears to be a moderately well-established academic. However, most of his articles appear in poorly vetted journals or cite him as one of numerous secondary authors—a point a PC can identify with a successful DC 15 Culture, Life Science, Physical Science, or relevant Profession check. Furthermore, with a successful DC 21 Computers check, a PC researching Paqual can detect inconsistencies in his online bios and records, suggesting he might be entirely fictitious.

If the PCs fail to access the computer's files, a systems administrator arrives shortly after the Qabarat detective does (see Development on page 12) and overrides the login, allowing the PCs to view the correspondence (but not necessarily identify the forged letter).

Physical Clues: The PCs can find more information by searching the office. One of the cabinets is ajar and contains Dr. Solstarni's field suit, a set of basic lashunta tempweave fitted for a kasatha, though it has fallen from its hanger where Solstarni hastily attempted to grab it when she heard strangers disabling her door lock. With a successful DC 16 Perception check, a PC can make this connection and also

EYRUB PAQUAL'S IDENTITY

As the PCs might guess, "Eyrub Paqual" is merely an alias. What they are unlikely to determine at this early stage is that he is a lashunta named Tahomen who leads a Cult of the Devourer cell on Castrovel. When news first emerged about what the PCs found on the Drift Rock, he pieced together its possible connection to old elven ruins on Ukulam and quickly stepped up his correspondence with Dr. Solstarni. When pleasantries did not work, Tahomen arranged her abduction and quickly transferred her and his subordinates to Ukulam to explore the temple.

As the adventure progresses, Tahomen can either infer that a group of Starfinders will soon embark for the temple or confirm that the PCs are actively following his group. He takes several steps—most of them during Part 2 of this volume—to delay, inconvenience, or outright destroy the PCs and ensure that he can acquire and broadcast key information to his cult contacts elsewhere in the Pact Worlds.

notice the slight dent in the carbon fiber cabinet where someone (Solstarni) collided violently with the furniture in a short fight.

In addition, with a successful DC 13 Perception check, a PC can find a printed version of Eyrub Paqual's invitation to the Five Arches. Solstarni printed this out, intending to pass it by her colleagues to see if they had been likewise contacted. When she heard strangers breaking into her office, she slipped it just behind her cabinet as a breadcrumb to help identify her likely assailants.

Finally, with a successful DC 18 Culture, Perception, or academically relevant Profession check, the PCs can find some printed scans of Halkueem Zan's notebooks marked in red pen. These are copies Dr. Solstarni annotated by hand, though the papers found here represent only a fraction of her work on the texts; her abductors snatched most of those notes when they attacked the office. Even so, these notes include both some duplicates of the stolen research and some unique conclusions that are sufficient to help the PCs chart a course from Turhalu Point to, as Zan described it, the "accursed pyramid city of Loskialua." Dr. Solstarni helpfully writes that this regards what's now known as the Oatia culture, a poorly understood dynasty of elven immigrants to Ukulam.

If the PCs do not find these physical clues, the Qabarat detective (see Development below) finds them and shares the information with the PCs.

Treasure: Dr. Solstarni's basic lashunta tempweave suit is in good condition, and it actually belongs to the university. Fearing that her colleague might be in serious trouble,

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INFERNO KNIFE

Not all developments in military technology are successful. Originally designed to be a perfect survival tool, the inferno knife combines the cutting prowess of a survival knife with the virtues of a lighter and road flare. By squeezing one trigger, the user can inject a small stream of fuel from the hilt's reservoir onto the blade's tip, and a secondary trigger can ignite it, creating a small torch to signal others or light campfires. The product's launch was disastrous, and users logged hundreds of complaints about the knives' needless complexity. As a result, inferno knives have flooded the market and become showy weapons for criminals and performers, though timing the blade's ignition in combat remains an unpredictable art.

An inferno knife is a 4th-level basic melee weapon with the analog and operative special properties. It deals 1d4 slashing damage and has the burn 1d6 critical hit effect. It costs 2,100 credits and has light bulk. An inferno knife uses petrol as fuel. It contains enough fuel to remain lit for 1 hour, shedding light in a 20-foot radius. Each successful critical hit reduces the remaining duration by 5 minutes. A single charge of petrol refills the weapon's reservoir.

Professor Muhali agrees to give the armor to the PCs, as long as they intend to help track down the missing Dr. Solstarni.

Development: As the PCs are concluding their search of the office, a Qabarat detective called by Professor Muhali arrives to survey the situation. He takes basic statements from the PCs and does a sweep of the room, uncovering any undiscovered clues as noted above. Based on the evidence, it appears the best course of action is to follow up on the connections to the Five Arches and the Port Authority, and based on the nature of the suspects, the officer suspects they might hide at the first sight of law enforcement. The officer is amenable to providing the PCs short-term deputation to investigate the situation further, but he does so under the conditions that at least two of them wear bugs to provide surveillance and that they allow a pair of officers to shadow them at a considerable distance in case of trouble. Concerned for her colleague, Muhali encourages the PCs to pursue these leads. However, the PCs do not have to investigate either site; so long as they have at least one source of Halkueem Zan's documentation, they can travel directly to Turhalu Point.

If the PCs have both Dr. Solstarni's notes and the documents from Ailabiens 21:2 (see page 9), they receive a +2 circumstance bonus to Survival checks to navigate Ukulam's wilderness during Part 2 of the adventure.

Story Award: If the PCs identify that Dr. Solstarni has been abducted and discover the leads to the Five Arches and the Port Authority, award them 600 XP. For each of the three broad evidence categories in which the PCs found clues, award the party an additional 100 XP. They do not get these additional rewards for any clues that they did not find on their own.

FIVE ARCHES (CR 4)

By investigating Dr. Solstarni's office, the PCs likely learned that an academic named Eyub Paqual was pressuring the kasatha to meet with him at a cantina called the Five Arches. The establishment is easy enough to find through Castrovel's infosphere, and it's located off the beaten path in the Gateway District near the east end of the city. According to its advertisements, the Five Arches is "a café dedicated to serving the discerning palettes of a dozen worlds." According to online reviews, it's an eclectic dive with wildly variable food and drink quality combined with bizarre food pairings for the daily specials. Overall, the reputation suggests it's not a place that right-thinking individuals frequent willingly.

The Five Arches is readily apparent from the street, thanks to its glaring neon sign suggestive of the numerous portals in the district. A riot of different worlds' souvenirs plasters the interior's walls, and each table, booth, and bench bears the name of one of the Pact Worlds' planets or habitable moons.

The proprietor, **Uilee** (CN female android), runs an efficient business marred only by her insistence on developing new recipes that her muted sense of taste can't properly judge. Even so, she delights in creating "authentic" offworld cuisine that is utterly inconsistent. Fortunately, she makes plenty of income from the various low-key criminals and gang members who know to skip the menu and just order drinks. They all know and honor her unwritten policy to take all fights outside. If the PCs arrive during the day or evening, there are likely about a dozen patrons nursing drinks alone or in pairs. The daily special is an unidentifiable avian cutlet smothered in a fig-like fruit compote and served alongside a mashed bitter tuber from Triaxus.

Creatures: The cocky Twonas En, one of three Qabarat smugglers who helped "Eyub Paqual" and his companions get to Ukulam, is hanging out here watching for future business leads. The lashunta smuggler takes note of the PCs as they enter and listens in on any conversations they have. If they start referencing Paqual or mention traveling to Ukulam, Twonas En figures the PCs are worth investigating directly, either because they're a threat to his team's operation or because they're potential clients. Depending on the PCs' tact, he might offer his services as a transporter or inquire how they know Paqual. The PCs can also pose as possible clients, requiring a successful DC 16 Bluff check.

If Twonas En smells trouble, he presses a panic button on his belt that signals his friends to converge on the location; a PC can spot his subtle move with a successful DC 18 Perception check. It takes about 2 minutes for the other two Qabarat smugglers to arrive, and in that time Twonas En attempts to sneak out of the café. The PCs can coerce him to call off his buddies with a successful DC 19 Intimidate check, so long as they guarantee his safety in return for answering questions (see Development below).

Whether the PCs leave the Five Arches to fight with Twonas En and his comrades or they trick him into leading the way to the rest of his group, combat is likely—and also probably a welcome change in tempo from the ongoing investigation. If the PCs agreed to cooperate with the police, they can signal the officers to close in on the location with a code phrase agreed on ahead of time, or a PC can quietly request that the officers keep their distance. If the PCs request backup, the officers arrive in 4d4 rounds and quickly defeat the smugglers.

QABARAT SMUGGLERS(3) CR 1

XP 400 each

Lashunta operative
NE Medium humanoid
(lashunta)

Init +5; Perception +6

DEFENSE HP 14 EACH
EAC 12; KAC 13

Fort +1; Ref +4; Will +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical baton +6 (1d4+2 B) or
[Twonas En only] inferno knife +6
(1d4+2 S; critical burn 1d6)

Ranged azimuth laser pistol +5
(1d4+1 F; critical burn 1d6)

Offensive Abilities trick attack +1d8

Lashunta Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st)

1/day—*detect thoughts* (DC 12)

At will—*daze* (DC 11), *psychokinetic hand*

TACTICS

During Combat One of the smugglers attempts to harass the majority of the PCs while the other two try to eliminate isolated targets. In an ongoing firefight, they take cover where they can and attempt to dash toward ranged threats.

Morale If only one of the smugglers is conscious, he surrenders. If the smugglers spot local police, they attempt to flee rather than fight.



TWONAS EN

STATISTICS

Str +1; Dex +4; Con +0; Int +2; Wis +0; Cha +1

Skills Bluff +11, Culture +6, Piloting +6, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +11

Languages Castrovelian, Common; limited telepathy 30 ft.

Gear freebooter armor, azimuth laser pistol with battery (20 charges), inferno knife (Twonas En only; see the sidebar on page 12), tactical baton, credstick (50 credits)

Development: The smugglers would love to make an example of the PCs, but they're far more interested in staying alive. If defeated, the lashuntas can convey that they helped a male korasha lashunta named Eyrub Paqual secure travel documents for 15 individuals, permitting them to use local portals to reach Turhalu Point. Most of the visas were counterfeit—including three fake IDs for Port Authority employees to help move the group's equipment—though the smugglers had to make only some minor adjustments to the legitimate academic visas that Paqual and his ill kasatha colleague had. They also share that they had doubts about Paqual's identity, suspecting he was using an alias to avoid suspicion; ultimately, his money was good enough that the smugglers didn't mind. Because their role focused more on securing paperwork and conveying the group's equipment through customs without scrutiny, the smugglers are not familiar with the group's exact composition. They do, however, know that Paqual was shipping a considerable number of firearms and heavy gear, most notably a shirren-eye rifle and a sizable comm unit that was disassembled into three bulky pieces. The smugglers also had to secure special permits for transporting fungal spores.

The PCs are welcome to turn the smugglers over to local police. If the PCs don't have their own paperwork allowing them to travel to Turhalu Point, though, the smugglers can secure reliable visas at a cost of 300 credits per PC. This is especially useful if the PCs haven't coordinated closely with Professor Muhali or local authorities.

QABARAT PORT AUTHORITY

Whether the PCs are investigating the clues found in Dr. Solstarni's office or attempting to travel to Ukulam, they'll need to visit Qabarat's Port Authority. Qabarat conducts trade by land, sea, and air, and like many other settlements on Castrovel, it also maintains a number of magical gateways known as *aiudara* or "elf gates." These are not large enough to sustain heavy traffic, so the local port authorities manage use of the gateways to prioritize shipments from those who pay a premium for

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instant transportation. Most of these portals are in Qabarat's Gateway District, a smaller area along the city's eastern side, where use of the portals rarely interferes with the busy harbor and spaceports.

Creature: The PCs can flag down a port worker fairly easily and secure some time with a manager in less than an hour—much faster if the police have called ahead on the PCs' behalf. Gate Controller **Raiyiri** (LN female damaya lashunta) is very professional and finds the idea that uniformed employees of the Port Authority might have broken into the university a disturbing one. She quickly pulls up the assignment logs for the past 3 days and confirms that no employees were sent to the university. Furthermore, she knows that few people travel to Turhalu Point, which is a largely decommissioned military base that now serves as a research station. Based on the PCs' information, there's only one group that fits the description: a team of 15 carrying laboratory equipment, cryogenically frozen organic compounds, and specialty foodstuffs with authorization from the Qabarat University of Xenoarchaeology and Xenoanthropology. According to the records, customs confirmed the contents of all of the crates, though the documentation is too sparse for Raiyiri's liking. She also shows the PCs the passenger data, which indicates that the group (including both Dr. Solstarni and Eyrub Paqual) consisted of a kasatha, a shirren, two humans, and 11 lashuntas.

Raiyiri is suspicious about the group upon reviewing the records, but that doesn't mean she's willing to let a second group of scallywags through. Unless the PCs secure the proper authorization, travel to the continent of Ukulam is not permitted. As she explains, the continent has long been considered off-limits for colonization by any of the planet's three dominant species, with only a few dozen military and scientific outposts established around its extensive coastline. A handful of nongovernmental organizations oversee the sanctity of Ukulam, and they allow only limited travel there for academic and resupply purposes.

Development: The PCs should now have all the clues they need to point them toward Ukulam and Turhalu Point in search of "Eyrub Paqual" and the kidnapped Dr. Solstarni. With the university's support, Professor Muhali extends the PCs a stipend of 2,500 credits for their ongoing assistance in recovering her abducted colleague.

If the PCs are working with the Qabarat police, these findings are bittersweet news. It's a fairly clear trail, but it's also clearly outside the bounds of Qabarat jurisdiction, and the police would be happy to have the PCs' continued assistance. Either the police or the university can secure visas for the PCs authorizing them to travel to Ukulam in pursuit of the criminals.

Story Award: If the PCs investigate the Port Authority and confirm that their quarry has traveled to Turhalu Point, award them 600 XP.

PART 2: THE UKULAM EXPEDITION

Travel to Ukulam requires official authorization, and there is little regular transport between Qabarat and Ukulam. In addition, starship landings on the continent are tightly restricted due to its status as a wilderness preserve, so the PCs can't just hop across the planet in their own ship. However, once the PCs have acquired visas to visit Ukulam, they can use Qabarat's *aiudara* to reach Turhalu Point without losing significant time in transit. The eastern coast of Ukulam is hours ahead of Qabarat, making it a completely different time of day when the PCs arrive.

TURHALU POINT

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive at Turhalu Point.

The station at Turhalu Point sits at the tip of a broad peninsula covered in rolling plains and expanses of tall, pale-green grasses that shimmer with violet hues in the wind. Short-lived blooms of magenta fungus tower nearly twenty feet over the landscape, though many have begun to wilt and others are marred by bite marks of half a dozen sizes. Trumpeting calls echo across the plains as immense, six-legged creatures with long, swooping necks trek steadily across the grass toward the western jungles. Beyond rises the Singing Range, its peaks barely visible through the haze.

Turhalu Point sits at the tip of a broad peninsula characterized by rolling plains, seasonal blooms of immense fans of magenta fungus, and expanses of tall, pale-green grasses that shimmer with violet hues in the wind. The most recent fungal bloom occurred about a week ago, and the 20-foot-tall fans are starting to wilt, drooping to half that height.

Once one of Qabarat's minor military outposts on Ukulam, Turhalu Point has been decommissioned for more than 20 years. It still maintains a token security force to keep the wildlife at bay, but industrious researchers have converted most of its gun turrets and bunkers into greenhouses and biology labs.

Among the researchers is Dr. **Khair al-Nuaf** (NG male human), one of the ranking scientists and a grant beneficiary of the Qabarat University of Xenoarchaeology and Xenoanthropology. Having received the school's recent call for assistance, he is nearby to greet the PCs when they arrive. He can not only inform the PCs that Paqual's group came and departed into the wilderness a little more than day ago, but also convey what he learned of the other group, which



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consisted largely of armed lashunta mercenaries. Based on what he overheard, they were headed toward some elven ruins to the northwest to perform archaeological survey work with the oversight of Dr. Solstarni, though the kasatha appeared to be groggy and perhaps ill.

The research outpost has numerous maps of the region and survey data from aircraft that have flown over most of the continent, so based on the PCs' anecdotal notes and the maps created by Halkueem Zan centuries ago, Dr. al-Nuaf estimates that the journey to the abandoned city will take about 10 to 12 days of steady travel on foot. He advises the PCs that their route should lead them first through the fairly sparse lowlands around Turhalu Point, into the dense subtropical rain forests to the northwest, and finally into the foothills of the Singing Range.

Treasure: The university has instructed Dr. al-Nuaf to assist the PCs by providing them with additional gear requisitioned from his project's inventory. This includes a scratched-up suit of lashunta ringwear II armor, a carbon steel curve blade, a stickybomb grenade II, 4 doses of tier-1 antitoxin, and 4 doses of sprayflesh. He can also supply 3 weeks' worth of field rations to each PC, up to 100 credits' worth of standard ammunition per PC, and access to the outpost's recharging stations. If necessary, Dr. al-Nuaf can also provide the PCs with consumer backpacks and mass-produced tents.

WILDERNESS TREK

Turhalu Point's security forces are willing to drive the PCs about 10 miles outside the outpost, but from there, they're on their own. Strict guidelines control vehicle traffic in this part of the reserve, so the PCs must proceed on foot.

The Temple of the Twelve lies approximately 120 miles west-northwest of Turhalu Point through a trackless expanse of subtropical forest. Assuming a speed of 30 feet, the PCs can cover about 12 miles each day. The PCs' trek across Ukulam will not be easy; in this region, the days are long, hot, and muggy, with temperatures rising to above 90° F shortly after dawn. As a result, the PCs must endure very hot conditions (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 402) for about 12 hours each day. The PCs' armor can provide them with environmental protection for 1 day per level of the armor (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 196), and if used sparingly, this could protect the group for most of their journey to the Temple of the Twelve.

Thanks to the jungle's density, the maximum distance at which the PCs can spot creatures is 2d8×10 feet (90 feet on average), except where noted. This reduced visibility makes navigation difficult, but the PCs should have Halkueem Zan's notes, which provide bearings taken at several key landmarks. Rather than attempt a Survival check each hour, have the PCs attempt either a DC 18 Survival check once per day to use the orienteering task to avoid getting lost or a DC 12 Survival check to perform the follow tracks task. Using orienteering

HIRING A TRANSLATOR

The few people known to have inhabited the interior of Ukulam were the Oatia elves millennia ago, and their occupation almost certainly predated widespread use of Common or the Lashunta language (now referred to as Castrovelian) on Castrovel. Thus, if the PCs hope to decipher any of the writing they might uncover in the course of their explorations, they're well advised to have some means of reading or speaking Elven. If a PC can reliably cast *comprehend languages* or has an exceptional bonus to Culture checks, that's likely sufficient for most of the adventure. However, there is an encounter with an undead elf near the adventure's end, and communicating effectively with him requires a proficient speaker.

Fortunately, the PCs can readily hire a translator in Qabarat or even Turhalu Point. Not many are willing to depart on a daring delve into the jungles of Ukulam, and that means the PCs have to pay a respectable premium to hire on a translator. Most candidates want 600 credits for the duration of the trip, but if a PC succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy check, she can bargain a capable translator down to 400 credits. A translator supplies his own equipment and largely stays out of the PCs' way; barring mismanagement or purposeful endangerment by the PCs, the translator is not targeted by enemies or at serious risk from hazards. If you need statistics for the translator, consider using those of the space pirate crew member (*Starfinder: First Contact* 15).

is generally faster, and each such successful check allows the PCs to make a full day's progress toward the temple. Following tracks takes more time and concentration, and each successful check allows the PCs to travel three-quarters of day's progress. Failing the check for either task causes the PCs to become lost several times over the course of that day, making only half a day's progress. How much time the PCs spend in pursuit not only prolongs their travel beyond their armors' environmental protection but also grants the Cult of the Devourer more time to explore the Temple of the Twelve, prepare traps, and destroy valuable records.

Remember that if the PCs both recovered Dr. Solstarni's notes (see page 12) and received the annotated files from Ailabiens 21:2 (see page 9), they receive a +2 circumstance bonus to these Survival checks.

Keep track of how far the PCs have traveled each day, especially if they get lost. The PCs will face several encounters on their way to the Temple of the Twelve. These are presented below as both events and location-based encounters.

Each encounter includes a suggested time for it to take place, but feel free to adjust the timing as you see fit, especially if the timeline changes based on the PCs' actions.

EVENT 1: TRAMPLING TITANS (CR 3)

It takes the PCs about 2 days to traverse the grasslands surrounding Turhalu Point. The journey is not difficult, but the grasses are in a tall, seasonally dormant state that attracts few grazers to crop the vegetation. As a result, the grass ranges in height from 3 to 8 feet tall, making it difficult to watch for wildlife. Nevertheless, the PCs face few dangers until they reach the edge of the jungle on the third day of travel.

Creatures: Rather than cover their tracks, the Devourer cultists scattered fungal spores for several miles after they entered the jungle, knowing that the fungi produce a subtle scent that attracts large herbivores that would muddle the group's trail. The plan has worked largely as intended. Dozens of huge beasts called yaruks leisurely patrol the area through which the PCs need to travel, knocking aside smaller trees and trampling the cultists' spoor as the immense creatures sniff out the delicious fungus that drew them here. A PC can identify the creatures as yaruks with a successful DC 22 Life Science check (the DC is reduced to 17 for PCs hailing from or native to Castrovel, as they're more familiar with their home world's fauna). If successful, the PCs also realize that yaruks can be extremely dangerous if the animals are threatened.

The yaruks are fairly calm at the moment, so the PCs can weave among them by keeping their distance and not making any threatening moves—much like a variety of other native creatures are doing. The giant herbivores might stamp their feet threateningly if the PCs make a commotion or draw closer than 30 feet, but only actively harming yaruks or provoking them further triggers any dangerous response.

A full stat block for a yaruk is presented on page 61, but this is not a combat encounter, as a direct clash between the PCs and even a single yaruk would likely end poorly for the characters. Instead, this is a more cinematic encounter, as the PCs race to escape the riled beasts as they blare loudly, shake the ground, and topple trees. The yaruks do not make direct attacks so much as cause potentially lethal collateral damage that the PCs must dodge and outrun (see Hazard below).

The PCs can choose to avoid this area altogether, but doing so requires an additional day of travel during which they cannot navigate using Survival to follow tracks.

Hazard: If the PCs pick an ill-advised fight with the yaruks, the beasts bellow angrily to one another and begin trampling in the PCs' general direction. Even if the PCs do their best to avoid spooking the yaruks, they're still in danger from the Cult of the Devourer. Suspecting a rival group might be in pursuit, a shirren Devourer cultist named Salask (see area **B5**) doubled back here to gather intelligence. Spotting an opportunity with so many yaruks nearby, she climbs to a

promising vantage point in the understory hundreds of feet away to line up a good shot with her sniper rifle. When the PCs are in the midst of the yaruk moot, she fires at one of the largest animals, which rears up in pain and bellows a distress call to its neighbors. A PC can discern the general direction of the shot with a successful DC 18 Perception check, and exceeding the DC by 5 or more allows the PC to spot the suppressed muzzle flare off in the distance. There's little opportunity to pursue Salask, however. Some of the yaruks bolt from the scene, while others rally to the wounded yaruk's defense to crush or chase away the PCs.

This encounter takes the form of a chase. Rather than use normal combat rounds, the chase occurs over several phases, with each phase representing approximately 1 minute of action. The yaruks act at the beginning of each phase, followed by the PCs' actions (see Yaruk Actions and PC Actions below). The encounter ends once the PCs accrue a number of successes equal to three times the number of PCs (12 successes for a party of four characters). Many of the PC actions detailed below can earn successes if a PC succeeds at a certain skill check, while others can mitigate the rampaging yaruks' damage.

Yaruk Actions: Yaruks are infamously destructive. At the beginning of each phase, roll 1d8 and consult the table below to determine the yaruks' behavior.

D8 EFFECT

- 1 **Bellow:** A nearby yaruk trumpets loudly at 1d3 randomly selected PCs, each of which takes 2d6 sonic damage and takes a -2 penalty to skill checks during this phase (Fortitude DC 14 negates the penalty and reduces the damage by half).
- 2 **Body Check:** A yaruk runs alongside a randomly selected PC and buffets him with its body. This attack has a +13 bonus to hit and deals 2d6+6 bludgeoning damage.
- 3 **Falling Tree:** A yaruk topples a tree that crashes into the PCs' path. A randomly determined PC takes 2d6+6 bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 14 negates), and all PCs take a -1 penalty to Acrobatics, Athletics, and Survival checks during this phase.
- 4 **Shower of Splinters:** A yaruk crashes through the branches, sending sharp fragments of wood raining down and dealing 2d6 piercing damage to each PC (Reflex DC 14 half).
- 5 **Gang Up:** Several yaruks converge on a randomly determined PC. Roll two more times on this table, ignoring results of 5 or higher. The first

result affects only that PC, and if the second result would affect one or more randomly selected PCs, that PC is automatically one of the targets.

- 6-8 **Sudden Shift:** Whether due to terrain or following the lead of one of the senior animal, the yaruks begin veering in an unexpected direction that requires the PCs to change tactics. During this phase, each PC takes a -4 penalty to any skill check used to perform the same action he used during the previous phase.

PC Actions: During a phase, each PC can perform one of the actions below to distract, dodge, or outthink the yaruks while scrambling for safety. A PC can attempt more than one of these actions during a phase, but doing so imposes a cumulative -3 penalty to each check he attempts during that phase. Failing a check does not harm the PCs, but it does prolong the chase. For some of the PC actions, if a PC succeeds at the check, the PCs earn a "success," which contributes to the PCs escaping the rampaging yaruks (see Development below). A PC can also perform one reaction per phase.

- **Activate an Ability (No Check):** The PC activates a special ability or casts a spell that takes a standard action or

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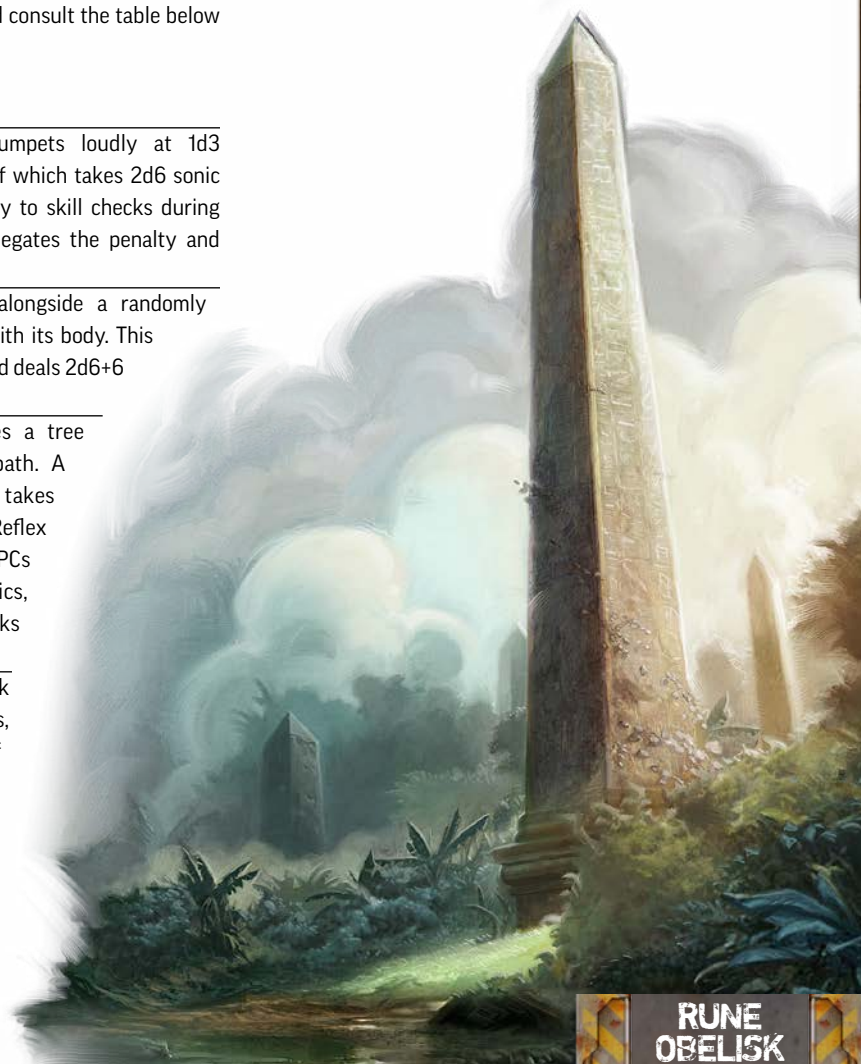
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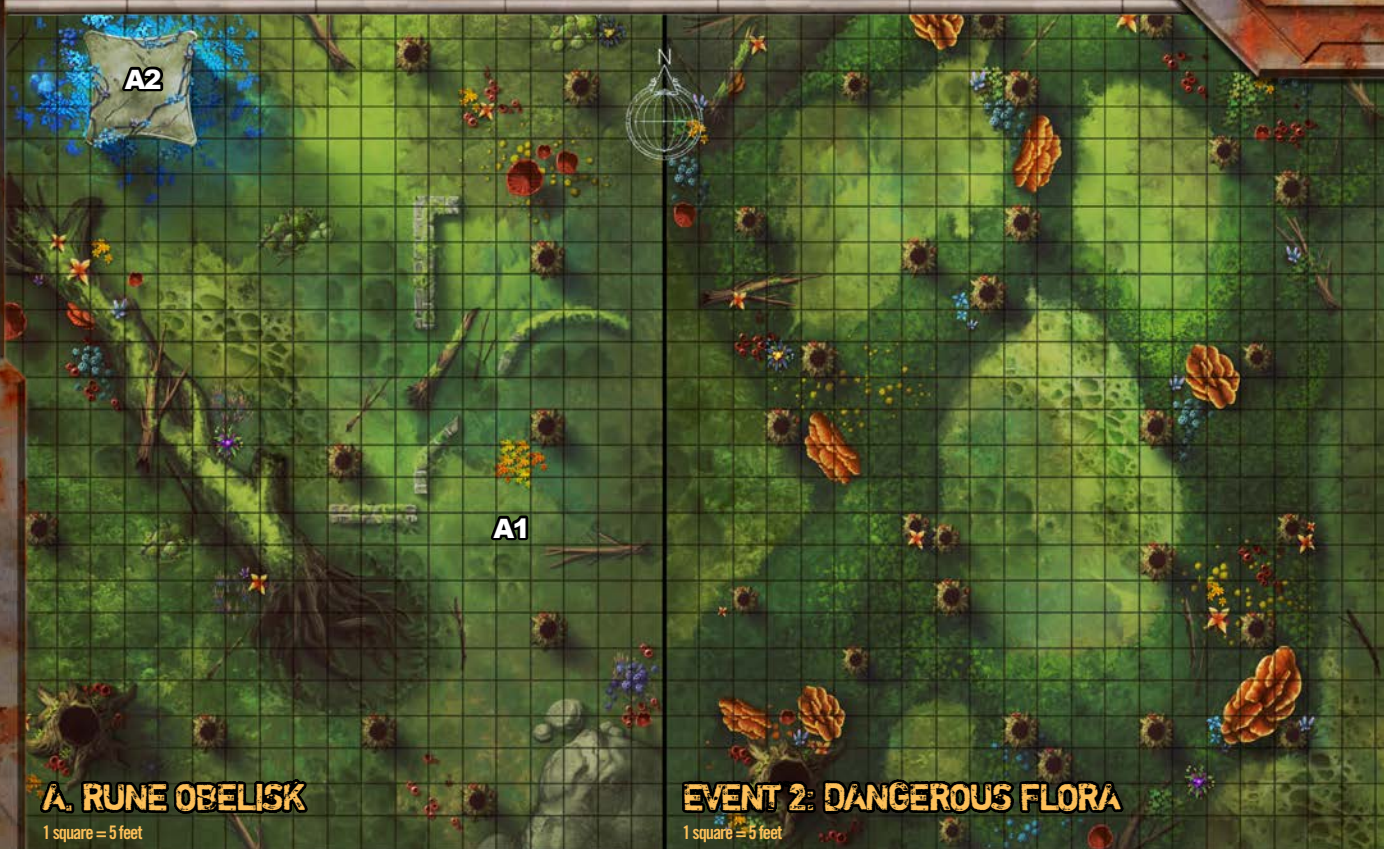
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RUNE
OBELISK



A. RUNE OBELISK

1 square = 5 feet

EVENT 2: DANGEROUS FLORA

1 square = 5 feet

- full action. This does not necessarily earn the PCs any successes, though at the GM's discretion, using an ability or spell with limited uses to perform a flashy distraction or eliminate an obstacle might count as a success.
- **Distract** (*Bluff or Intimidate DC 14*): The PC draws the yaruks' attention away from the PC's companions. With a successful check, the PC takes a -2 penalty to AC and saves against all effects in the Yaruk Actions table during the next phase, and the other PCs receive a +2 circumstance bonus to AC and saves against those effects during that time. Only one PC can use the distract action at a time, and if a second PC performs this action, it negates earlier distract actions. This does not earn the PCs any successes.
 - **Hide** (*Stealth DC 15*): The PC takes cover to avoid being attacked. With a successful check, the PC receives a +2 circumstance bonus to AC and saves against all effects in the Yaruk Actions table until he takes another action. During this time, if one of those effects would randomly target the PC, randomly determine the target again and use the second result. This does not earn the PCs any successes.
 - **Navigate** (*Survival DC 17*): The PC identifies a good path to temporarily escape the yaruks. With a successful check, the PCs earn one success.
 - **Scramble** (*Athletics DC 18*): The PC clammers over obstacles, swings across gaps, and runs ably through the jungle. With a successful check, the PCs earn one success.
 - **Spook** (*Intimidate DC 20*): The PC attempts to scare a yaruk—not necessarily enough to stop it, but enough to

slow it or make it veer off course. The PC can attempt a single ranged attack (EAC 20, KAC 22) as part of this action, and if he hits, he gains a +2 circumstance bonus to the Intimidate check; if his attack deals at least 10 damage, he gains a +4 bonus instead. With a successful check, the PCs earn one success.

- **Squeeze** (*Acrobatics DC 19*): The PC slips between two large obstacles or nimbly crosses fallen trees as a shortcut, stymieing the yaruks in pursuit. With a successful check, the PCs earn one success.

Development: Once the PCs accrue a number of successes equal to three times the number of PCs, they reach an ancient stone bridge crossing one of the river tributaries that flows through the jungle. The bridge easily supports the PCs, but once they are across, an angry yaruk pursuing them gets only a few steps across before collapsing the old elven architecture. The rest of the moot considers this the end of the chase, and the group gradually disperses after another minute of aggressive posturing. Beyond the bridge stands the landmark identified by Halkueem Zan as the Rune Obelisk (area A).

The thundering ruckus from the chase echoes for miles, alerting curious creatures, scaring off many animals, and attracting hungry scavengers that associate angry yaruks with fresh corpses. This serves as the impetus for several later antagonists, such as the kaukarikis (see area A1) and the ksarik (see **Event 2**).

Story Award: If the PCs escape the yaruk stampede, award them 800 XP.

A. RUNE OBELISK

The elven Oatia culture created a few lasting architectural works during its occupation of eastern Ukulam, among them the bridge the PCs crossed to escape the yaruks and a grand watchtower that stood vigil near what was then the edge of the jungle. The outpost towered nearly 300 feet, peeking over the trees' emergent layer and topped by an elaborate observation deck. Within a century of the elves' abandonment of the region, however, the observation deck decayed and toppled from its lofty height, leaving behind only the stone post carved with the elves' laws. But after millennia of erosion, even these have faded, barring a few sheltered inscriptions near the base. When Halkueem Zan found this site, he believed it was a mighty monument and dubbed it the Rune Obelisk. The PCs reach this area immediately after escaping the yaruks in **Event 1**. Use the Rune Obelisk map on page 18 for this encounter.

A1. THE APPROACH (CR 5)

The area surrounding the Rune Obelisk is uneven, where soil deposition and plant growth have covered most of the building foundations that surround the site. Even so, the stubborn trees that grow sparsely here have displaced many stones with their roots, leaving carved blocks scattered haphazardly around the area. With a successful DC 10 Perception check, a PC can spot a few such building stones and their purposefully smoothed forms among the mosses. A successful check also allows the PCs to spot clusters of blue-striped orange fruit ripening in the canopy above. With a successful DC 13 Life Science check, a PC can identify these as ralyrian figs, one of the more prolific fruiting trees in Castrovel's northern hemisphere and a staple food for many forest creatures. Wild ralyrian figs are rather tart but safe to eat, and a number of ripe figs have fallen from the branches and landed on the ground.

Creatures: The Rune Obelisk is part of a kaukariki troop's territory, and the past several days have been especially kind to the kaukarikis. Not only are the ralyrian figs in this area ripening, but the Cult of the Devourer also passed through the area, providing the incorrigible creatures considerable entertainment, plunder, and even meat. Also known as "stingbats," the kaukarikis clamber through the forest's understory, sometimes just bobbing their heads while inquisitively watching the PCs. Other times they actively warble their namesake "kau-kar-eeee-keeee" warning calls, throw fruit at the PCs, or even creep close to a PC to touch his leg or snatch a loose trophy before scampering away to the screeching adulation of their comrades. If a PC responds with violence, the kaukarikis scatter for several minutes before returning in greater numbers to scold and prank that PC more aggressively. Even so, the creatures avoid violence until the PCs approach the Rune Obelisk. A PC can identify the kaukarikis as such with a successful DC 11 Life Science check (DC 6 for Castrovel natives).

Earlier this season, a carnivorous plant called a vracinea took residence here, coiling itself around the obelisk and

hiding much of its body with other vines (see area **A2**). The kaukarikis were quick to investigate and harass the trespasser, which promptly lured in and consumed two troop members. The kaukarikis have since kept their distance while observing with excitement that the vracinea tends to toss aside trinkets, bones, and other treasures that are difficult to digest. In the intervening weeks, the two species have come to an unspoken understanding: the kaukarikis goad prey toward the obelisk, and the vracinea largely ignores the troop when the latter descends to recover scraps and trophies.

There are currently 13 kaukarikis in the troop. When the PCs are within a few hundred feet of the obelisk (area **A2**), the kaukarikis escalate their teasing and begin chasing one another through the trees to determine which of them are going to attack the PCs directly. They quickly establish a new pecking order and set aside any captured valuables (see Treasure below) before four of them descend to attack as their peers scream encouragement from the branches.

KAUKARIKIS (4)

CR 1

XP 400 each

HP 18 each (see page 56)

TACTICS

During Combat One of the kaukarikis harasses the largest group of PCs while the others converge on any isolated target. They amble around the battlefield, attempting to poison one target before scampering to the next. In the event that the PCs withdraw toward area **A2** and trigger the encounter there, the kaukarikis attempt to chase any other PCs into range of the vracinea's lure ability but otherwise stand aside to let the vracinea do the work; the PCs should not have to fight both encounters simultaneously.

Morale If only one of the kaukariki combatants is conscious, it flees, but the kaukarikis might retreat earlier if their tactics are utterly stymied.

Treasure: The kaukarikis managed to steal a few items of value from the Devourer cult as it passed by. Before attacking, one of the four kaukarikis hurriedly stows three *mk 2 serums of healing* in a hollow about 20 feet up a tree. A PC can spot this caching behavior with a successful DC 12 Perception check, and climbing the tree to recover the serums requires a successful DC 15 Athletics check.

Development: Once the PCs defeat the first wave of kaukarikis, the others become more skittish and screech angrily from a safe distance. The troop remains in sight, though, endeavoring to pester and goad the PCs in the direction of the obelisk and the waiting vracinea.

A2. THE OBELISK (CR 4)

The Rune Obelisk rises above the jungle, just as Halkueem Zan's notes promised. It's an immense pillar of stone,

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approximately fifteen feet wide with an X-shaped cross section that provides climbing plants—including a network of green vines, several brilliant fuchsia bromeliads, and a host of violet flowers—excellent purchase.

The inaccurately named Rune Obelisk was a massive post that supported a now-missing observation deck, which a PC can hypothesize with a successful DC 15 Engineering check and at least 5 minutes of study.

A few Elven letters are visible through the climbing vines, but deciphering anything substantive requires cutting down the clinging plants and either the ability to understand Elven or a successful DC 25 Culture check to decipher writing. What survives of the Elven inscriptions warns visitors that they approach “Loskialua, monastery of starsong, embassy of the spheres, and Temple of the Twelve.” Fragmentary notes also include mentions of paying respect, messengers from beyond, an academy, and “interpreters of the beacon.”

Creature: A carnivorous plant creature called a vracinea hides among the other plants at the obelisk’s base, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Perception check notices that something is hiding there. The ample plant cover grants the vracinea partial cover (+2 to AC, +1 to Reflex saves) until it emerges from hiding. The vracinea’s lure ability affects anyone who approaches within 120 feet of it.

VRACINEA

CR 4

XP 1,200

HP 51 (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #1 60)

TACTICS

During Combat The vracinea prefers to let lured PCs

approach within striking range before it emerges to bite its prey. If the PCs approach within 40 feet without being affected by the lure, the vracinea emerges to chase down a nearby target.

Morale So long as prey is nearby, the vracinea fights to the death. If repeatedly subjected to ranged attacks without any nearby targets or lured victims, it abandons the obelisk and flees.

Treasure: About 30 feet south of the obelisk lies a torn estex suit I once worn by one of the Devourer cultists who fell prey to the vracinea after being chased here by the kaukarikis. The vracinea tore the suit free and flung it aside, after which the kaukarikis tore at it further before discarding it here. The armor is now worthless, but among the cultist’s other gear is a frostbite-class zero rifle and a silvery credstick holding 290 credits. The credstick landed on the ground during the vracinea’s attack, and a PC can spot it while approaching the obelisk with a successful DC 15 Perception check. The vracinea gnawed on the rifle for several minutes after eating the cultist before its jaws clamped down on the battery, rupturing it and spraying painful chemicals over the area. It then dropped the scratched rifle into the northeast foliage adjacent to the obelisk.

An approaching PC can spot the rifle and superficial damage to the nearby plants with a successful DC 18 Perception check. After the PCs have resolved the encounters in area **A**, they can find both treasures without difficulty.

Development: If the PCs defeat the vracinea, the remaining kaukarikis howl in fear and clamber about the understorey in distress. Barring some exceptional opportunity to attack an isolated target, the impish creatures avoid confronting the PCs directly for the rest of the adventure. They do, however, continue following the PCs, grazing on nearby fruits, and vocalizing to unnerve the travelers—even performing low-risk acts of sabotage like dropping a rock or modest tree branch on a PC’s tent in the middle of the night.

EVENT 2: DANGEROUS FLORA (CR 4)

The kaukarikis’ antics aside, much of the next day’s travel passes without incident as the terrain gradually begins to slope upward. This encounter occurs on the fourth day of travel and continues to the fifth day.

Creatures: Shortly after the PCs break camp on the fourth day, a powerful plant creature known as a ksarik catches their scent and begins trailing them. It’s a cautious hunter, but not an especially stealthy one. With a successful DC 13 Perception check, a PC can catch sight of the colorful predator a little more than 100 feet away. The first time it’s spotted or attacked, the ksarik gallops away and waits to heal any damage incurred. As the day progresses, it becomes bolder, wriggling its feeding tentacles curiously and even gurgling audibly, which the PCs might confuse for a greeting. Shortly thereafter, it assesses that the PCs are viable hosts for its spores, and it fires a thorn dart at one of them before lumbering away. Twice more that day it returns to take a shot or two at a PC before fleeing.

On the following day, the ksarik appears only once before it heads northwest to check on one of its earlier targets, the Devourer cultist **Ralkawi** (CE female korasha lashunta), who has since grown very ill as the ksarik seedlings inside her germinate. Near the middle of the day, the PCs’ path takes them near the cultist, who has reached the bedridden stage on the carrion spores disease track. Unable to move, she has spent hours shouting herself hoarse and imploring the Devourer to grant her death. Unable to do much else, Ralkawi makes only feeble threats if the PCs approach (see Development on page 21 for more information). If needed, you can use the Devourer cultist stat block on page 24 for Ralkawi, though she is little threat to the PCs at this point.

The ksarik intends to use Ralkawi as bait, luring the PCs into a location with fewer trees behind which they can take cover. It has also used its ingested adaptation ability to learn her languages to better understand the PCs and adapt to their strategies. Shortly after they arrive, the ksarik attacks. If the PCs ignore Ralkawi, the ksarik shadows the PCs for a little while longer before attacking in a similarly open space.

Use the Dangerous Flora map on page 18 for the clearing where Ralkawi lies and where the ksarik attacks.

KSARIK**CR 4****XP 1,200****HP 52; RP 3** (*Starfinder: First Contact* 10)**TACTICS**

During Combat As the ksarik closes in and weaves between cover, it uses its ranged attacks to soften a chosen target so that it can use its ingested adaptation ability against the wounded foe. Once in melee, it uses its tentacles to maul foes and borrow their abilities.

Morale The ksarik fights to the death.

Development: Ralkawi joined the Cult of the Devourer to eliminate a string of bad personal and financial choices that left her bankrupt and alone. She's among the least pious of Tahomen's cult, though, and if the PCs are inclined to lend her assistance, she's willing to accept the help rather than stubbornly die. Given the advanced stage of her carrion spores, though, her chances of survival are slim. She likely dies shortly after the PCs find her—possibly even at the end of the encounter—as wriggling, maggot-like ksarik seedlings painfully burrow their way out of her abdomen. Since Ralkawi still has fragments of the original thorn dart in her leg, it shouldn't take much for the PCs to realize the two conditions are connected, especially if one or more of the PCs have also fallen ill.

Although this adventure assumes that Ralkawi dies or that the PCs kill her, it's possible that she survives thanks to the PCs' kindness and medical care. If so, she can aid the PCs, and might one day forsake her evil patron entirely.

EVENT 3: MOLDSTORM (CR 3)

On the morning of the seventh day of travel, the wind shifts direction, carrying with it a tangy scent. Looking to the foliage-obscured sky, the kaukarikis fall silent before yapping warnings to one another. They dash upward toward bucket-sized flowers 100 feet above and wrap themselves in the petals, practically disappearing from sight. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notices fluffy pink clouds floating gently above the trees. With a successful DC 17 Life Science or Survival check, a PC can recognize these as signs of the imminent approach of one of Castrovel's notorious moldstorms.

Hazard: Moldstorms are short-lived events in which several types of giant fungi all release their spores at once. In smaller quantities, these spores are harmless, but moldstorms can clog creatures' respiratory systems and even take root in living tissues, breaking down flesh and inhibiting neurological systems.



Enduring a moldstorm without shelter is very dangerous. In the short time the PCs have, they can attempt to build a temporary shelter using the Survival skill to endure severe weather, in which case the PCs can gain a bonus to Fortitude saves to resist the moldstorm. Exceeding this Survival DC by 10 or more allows the PCs to avoid the effects altogether, but hunkering down in any of these ways expends half a day of progress toward the temple city. If any of

the PCs have remaining environmental protection capacity in their armor, they can also ignore the harmful effects of this moldstorm by expending 4 hours of protection. If any PCs cannot avoid the moldstorm entirely, they are exposed to the disease sarkoneilia mold.

SARKONEILIA MOLD**Type** disease (inhaled); **Save** Fortitude DC 14**Track** mental; **Frequency** 1/day**Cure** 2 consecutive saves

Development: The moldstorm leaves the landscape coated with fluffy tufts of pinkish spores like a dusting of snow, accumulating in waist-high drifts as the wind blows through the forest. The spores quickly lose their harmful potential after the moldstorm ends. The kaukarikis take this as their cue to stop harassing the PCs and return to their territory.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to endure the moldstorm, award them 800 XP.

EVENT 4: THE MOLD-MADDENED BEAST (CR 5)

The following event occurs at dusk on the seventh day after the moldstorm and thus takes place in dim light (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 261). Use the map of area **B** on page 22 for this encounter.

Creatures: Most animals can sense a moldstorm coming and take precautions, but some just can't reach shelter in time. A whiskered renkroda fell victim to the latest storm, and spores have begun germinating on its body and burrowing into its soft tissues. It is extraordinarily cross and reckless as a result, and as the PCs are setting up camp or settling down for the night, it crashes toward them, arriving 3 rounds after the PCs first hear it. The renkroda fights to the death.

WHISKERED RENKRODA**CR 5****XP 1,600****HP 75** (see page 58)**TEMPLE OF THE TWELVE**

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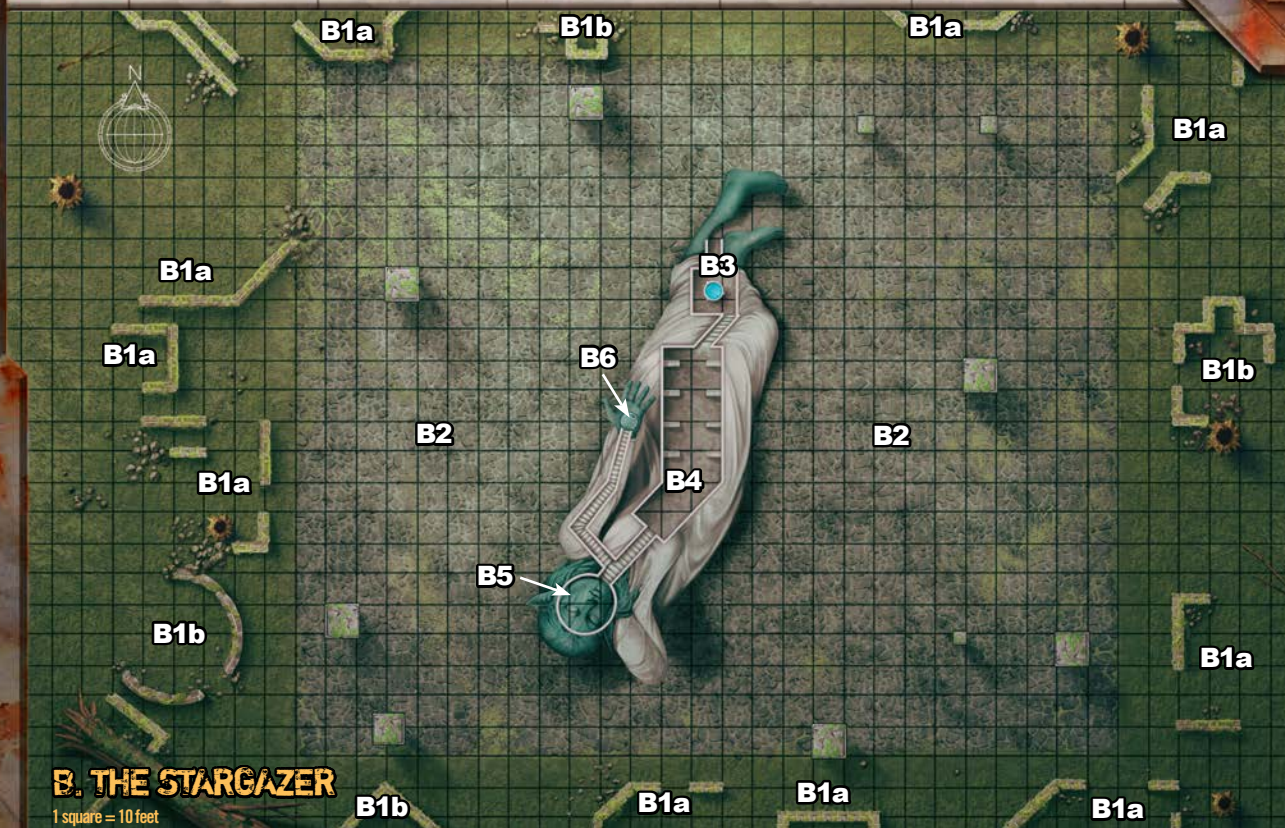
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B. THE STARGAZER

The PCs reach this location on day eight. Read or paraphrase the following as they approach.

The trees thin ahead, forming a broad clearing centered on an immense stone statue of a reclining elf whose skin bears dozens of raised markings like painful welts. The figure rests on one partially buried elbow while extending its other hand toward the sky. The elf's simple robe and hair are both sculpted of heavily weathered metal that has corroded entirely in places. Numerous crumbling outbuildings ring the clearing, where only mosses and a few stubborn, stunted trees grow.

Among the Oatia elves' greatest monuments and ritual sites was the Stargazer, an immense statue of an androgynous elf reclining and holding one hand up toward the sky. Elven scholar-priests traveled here to cleanse their bodies, meditate on their stellar observations, and tattoo their greatest discoveries into their skin as a living testament to their astronomic accomplishments. To the explorer Halkueem Zan, the immense statue depicted not an astronomer marveling at the heavens but a sickly elf wasting away from an unknown disease, leading him to dub it the "Plague Warden." In fact, the markings that cover the elven figure's skin do not indicate boils but rather stars, much like the skin of the elven monks that frequented here.

Having confirmed that the PCs are pursuing the Devourer cult, Tahomen dispatched several of his cultists under the direction of the shirren Salask to kill or delay the PCs. The team fell afoul of predators that are drawn to the Stargazer

to exploit the relative lack of cover to snatch up prey. One of the cultists fell to a pair of ksariks that still warily patrol the area (see **Event 5**), and the cult's movement also attracted an aerial ambush predator called a sky fisher, which lazily circles far above on thermals, watching for an opportunity to dive on an unsuspecting meal (see area **B1**).

Salask and two Devourer cultists survived, however, taking shelter inside the giant statue (see areas **B4** and **B5**). Salask considers the Stargazer an easily defendable site that affords her ample vantage points to watch for the PCs and snipe at them from a distance. As the PCs explore the Stargazer, they are likely to come under attack from the shirren sniper. Salask's possible actions are detailed in each encounter location.

Use the map above for this location.

B1. SHATTERED OUTBUILDINGS (CR 5)

Untold ages have reduced these buildings to low walls and buried foundations, with only a few fragmented walls standing more than four feet in height. The more complete structures have trapped millennia of sediment and runoff, forming a spongy floor of silt and moss.

Most of the buildings (marked **B1a**) consist of low walls that grant only partial cover against Salask's attacks, whereas a few buildings (marked **B1b**) have higher walls that grant total cover against her attacks. None of the outbuildings have roofs, so they grant virtually no protection against the sky fisher.

Creatures: Once the PCs break into the clearing, the meandering sky fisher begins gradually descending to within 100 feet of them, activating its aerial camouflage in the process. As the PCs investigate the outbuildings or start crossing into area **B2**, the sky fisher attacks.

The cultist Salask (see area **B5**) also keeps watch, and in the likely event she notices the PCs (with her +8 Perception modifier), she begins sniping at the PCs with her shirren-eye rifle, using its sniper special property as needed. Due to the rifle's low capacity and her desire to remain hidden using the Stealth skill to perform the sniping task, Salask can take a shot only once every 2 rounds. As a result, she tries to make the most of each shot, prioritizing PCs out in the open or those wearing minimal armor.

SKY FISHER

CR 5

XP 1,600

HP 75 (see page 59)

TACTICS

During Combat The sky fisher uses its lasso attacks to restrain several PCs before diving at an entangled target. Against multiple foes, it prefers to bite its chosen target a few times before moving to another enemy and waiting for its poison to disable its first target. Against heavy ranged attacks, it either tries to exploit cover while still attacking a creature in melee or launches itself at the ranged threat.

Morale If reduced to 10 or fewer Hit Points, the sky fisher telepathically broadcasts its desire to flee. If the PCs continue fighting, the sky fisher fights to the death.

Development: Salask continues to fire at the PCs so long as she seems likely to hit. She does not pursue them, though, so the PCs can withdraw back into the jungle to recover lost Stamina Points and plan their attack. If reduced to 25 or fewer Hit Points during this encounter, Salask steps back to consume her *serums of healing* before resuming her attacks. If reduced to 25 or fewer Hit Points again, she withdraws to take up a new sniping position in area **B6**.

In addition, the sounds of combat here or in area **B2** alert the cultists in area **B4**, who prepare for battle.

B2. SCHOLARS' PLAZA

This broad expanse forms a plaza of jumbled paving stones shifted by sinkholes and tree roots. Several large pedestals stand half-buried beneath leaves, earth, and detritus throughout the area, though any statues that once stood atop them have since eroded into little more than fragile spikes and weathered cobbles.

The millennia have not been kind to this plaza, turning the whole field into a mess of uneven paving stones that are considered difficult terrain (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 257).

The pedestals provide cover against Salask's attacks, giving clever PCs several places where they can take cover while waiting for another opportunity to race toward the Stargazer's entrance while the shirren reloads.

Creature: Salask (see area **B5**) employs this open space as a killing ground, shooting anyone who breaks cover. If the PCs try to rush for the entrance to the Stargazer, she stops hiding and prioritizes her rate of fire unless the PCs provide significant return fire.

B3. CLEANSING POOL

Corroded pipes hang down from the ceiling above a broad basin in the center of this room. The stone walls are slick with moisture and bear carvings of tattooed elves in states of undress as they wash themselves. The domed ceiling depicts hundreds of stars connected to form scores of constellations.

The Oatia elves considered the Stargazer a sacred space, and cleansing oneself of terrestrial influences was a necessary exercise before traveling deeper inside the monument. A PC can discern the ritual significance of this process with a successful DC 14 Mysticism or DC 19 Culture check (see Development below).

The constellations on the ceiling include both ones commonly taught on Castrovél as well as numerous esoteric designs. With a successful DC 16 Physical Science check, a PC can ascertain that many of the constellations are known to modern scholars but only thanks to advanced telescopes and faster-than-light travel. That the Oatia elves had identified these suggests they had extraordinary astronomical equipment, supernatural techniques for surveying the sky, or some other means of seeing far beyond the Pact Worlds system.

Development: The corroded pipes still channel rainwater to the basin, albeit more messily than in ages past. If a PC spends 1 minute washing at least her hands and head to observe the ritual cleansing, she is immune to the hazards in areas **B4** and **B5**.

B4. HALL OF INSCRIPTION (CR 3)

The walls in this long gallery depict elves using needles to tattoo one another with constellations, geometric designs, and strange runic patterns. Rows of tall stone benches line either side of the hall. Carved along the ceiling are twelve stylized elven figures, heavily tattooed, adorned in different ways, and marked with starbursts on their foreheads.

As the carvings suggest, this is where the scholar-priests from the Temple of the Twelve received sacred tattoos to mark their discoveries and status within the order. The 12 carved figures on the ceiling were leading scholars at the temple

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during the Oatia elves' early examinations of the symmetrical constellation that they called the Gate of Twelve Suns, and they were immortalized here, each symbolically representing one of the stars. This practice of living personification fell out of style within a century, though, making these carvings of quasi-saints an outdated relic even during the Stargazer's original occupation. The high stone benches act as low obstacles for cover (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 254).

Hazard: The Stargazer is a place of cosmic contemplation, and those stained by terrestrial desires cannot properly perceive the galaxy's mysteries. At the start of each round spent in

area **B4** or **B5**, any PC who did not perform the cleansing ritual in area **B3** gains either the flat-footed or the off-target condition (equal chance of each) until the beginning of the next round. Salask and the cultists have grudgingly performed the ritual and do not take penalties from this hazard.

Creatures: The two surviving cultists who accompanied Salask rest here, awaiting her signal to depart or attack. If they hear combat, they draw their weapons and take whatever cover is available.

DEVOURER CULTISTS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Lashunta soldier

CE Medium humanoid (lashunta)

Init +2; Perception +5

DEFENSE

HP 20 EACH

EAC 12; KAC 14

Fort +3; Ref +1; Will +3

OFFENSE

Speed 25 ft.

Melee defiant longsword +7 (1d8+4 S; critical bleed 1d4)

Ranged utility scattergun +5 (blast 1d4+1 P) or shock grenade I +5 (explode [15 ft., 1d8 E, DC 12])

Offensive Abilities entropic wound, fighting styles (hit-and-run)

Lashunta Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st)

1/day—*detect thoughts* (DC 11)

At will—*daze* (DC 10), *psychokinetic hand*

TACTICS

During Combat The cultists fire their scatterguns before rushing at their foes, thereafter favoring their longswords.

Morale The cultists fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str +3; **Dex** +2; **Con** +1; **Int** +1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +1

Skills Intimidate +10, Mysticism +5, Survival +5

Feat Opening Volley

Languages Castrovelian, Common; limited telepathy 30 ft.

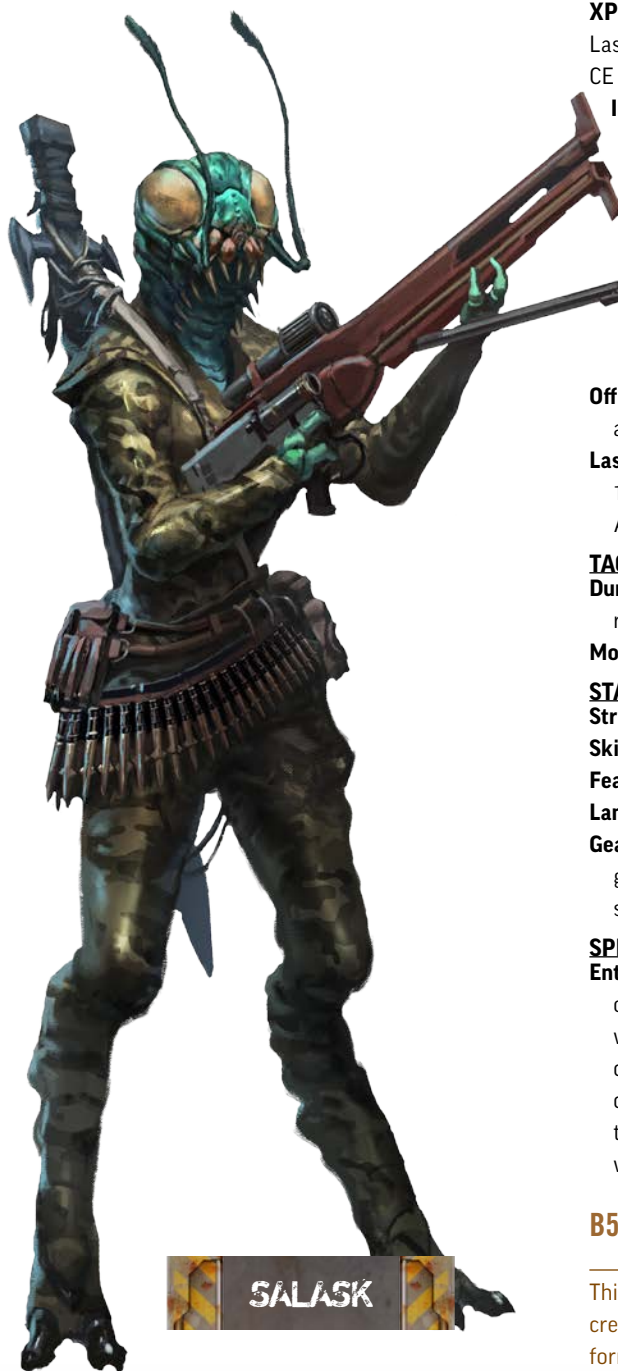
Gear lashunta ringwear I, *defiant longsword*, shock grenades I (2), utility scattergun with 25 scattergun shells, field rations (2 weeks), credstick (150 credits)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Entropic Wound (Su) Devourer cultists can channel a mote of their deity's hatred of life into their attacks. Any melee weapon a Devourer cultist wields gains the additional critical hit effect bleed 1d4. If the weapon already has a critical hit effect, the cultist can choose to apply either the weapon's normal critical hit effect or the entropic wound effect when he scores a critical hit.

B5. REFLECTION ROOM (CR 3)

This domed room has numerous open skylights and windows, creating a steady flow of outside air. A ring of slime mold forms a misshapen circular pattern on the floor.



Here, within the Stargazer's head, the elven scholar-priests pondered cosmic revelations and enhanced several of their greatest galaxy-gazing divinations. The floor bears a weathered yet perfectly symmetrical circle of 12 carved stars, replicating the pattern of the Gate of Twelve Suns. Unfortunately, the carvings also collect water and bits of organic matter, promoting the ring of mold. By taking a few minutes to clean the floor, the PCs can uncover the original pattern as well as the surrounding designs—many of which resemble words and letters from the strange writing the PCs found on the Drift Rock!

The apertures through the Stargazer's ears and a smaller one near the back of the head provide clear arcs of fire for Salask (see Creature below).

Hazard: This area is subject to the same vertiginous hazard as area B4.

Creature: Salask was once a member of the Stewards, though early in her career her team fell afoul of a terrible aberration while pursuing a criminal on Apostae. Although Salask at first tried to defend her teammates, her desperate defense quickly grew into morbid fascination as she watched from afar as the alien monstrosity rent and consumed her comrades. She became increasingly obsessed with observing carnage, even feeding false intelligence to her replacement teams to lead them into lethal situations that she could watch with delight. By the time the Stewards began to suspect her treachery, Salask had already been inducted into the Cult of the Devourer, whose agents had learned of her macabre interests. Since then, she has served Tahomen as an assassin and guide, eliminating targets while he handles the more delicate planning.

Salask uses this area as her primary sniping position, relocating elsewhere as needed.

SALASK

CR 3

XP 800

Female shirren

CE Medium humanoid (shirren)

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft.; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE

HP 45

EAC 14; KAC 16

Fort +5; **Ref** +5; **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical dueling sword +8 (1d6+4 S)

Ranged tactical shirren-eye rifle +11 (1d10+3 P)

Offensive Abilities expert sniper

TACTICS

During Combat Salask takes considerable pains to avoid melee combat. She fires her shirren-eye rifle slowly and methodically, using Stealth for sniping at foes and taking advantage of her expert sniper ability. If her foes are closing on her location, Salask seeks new hiding places as needed.

Morale Salask fights until reduced to 10 Hit Points, at which point she attempts to flee. If escape seems impossible, she surrenders.

STATISTICS

Str +1; **Dex** +4; **Con** +2; **Int** +0; **Wis** +1; **Cha** -1

Skills Athletics +8, Bluff +8, Culture +8, Diplomacy +8, Stealth +13, Survival +8

Languages Common, Shirren, Vercite; limited telepathy 30 ft.

Other Abilities communalism, trailblazer

Gear kasatha microcord I, tactical dueling sword, tactical shirren-eye rifle with 50 longarm rounds, *mk 1 serums of healing* (2), personal comm unit, field rations (3 weeks), credstick (1,000 credits)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Expert Sniper (Ex) Salask is adept at remaining hidden while firing at distant targets. When she attempts a Stealth check to snipe, creatures that are at least 50 feet away take a -10 penalty to their Perception checks to spot her. This penalty increases to -20 for creatures that are at least 150 feet away.

Trailblazer (Ex) When determining how far she can move while traveling overland, Salask treats trackless terrain as though she were traversing a trail and treats terrain with a trail as though she were traversing a highway.

Treasure: An elegant wall tapestry threaded with opal beads once hung in this room. It decayed long ago, scattering its beads across the floor. Each bead is worth 80 credits, and a PC can find eight of them without difficulty. With a successful DC 19 Perception check, a PC can find all 15.

Development: If the PCs capture Salask, she is more than willing to share the core tenets of the Devourer's minimalist doctrine of annihilation, but she is reticent to talk about Tahomen's specific plans. All she knows is that Tahomen saw something in the broadcasts from the Drift Rock that he thinks has some connection with the Temple of the Twelve, and he believes there is more to learn from the ancient elven temple city. Because she has busily traveled back and forth to harry the PCs, Salask has not seen the temple; she just knows that Tahomen believes it holds grand secrets that will speed the bloody end of the galaxy.

Although physically compliant as a prisoner, Salask makes a habit of telepathically reminding her captors that in the end, the Devourer will consume all. All the while, she watches for an opportunity to escape. Better yet, she hopes that the PCs will encounter more of her comrades, at which point she waits for a good opportunity to break free while telepathically advising the other cultists of the PCs' strengths and weaknesses.

Salask's comm unit is password protected (DC 20 Computers check to unlock) and has several logged communications with another unit (Tahomen's). These convey updates about her movements through the jungle and ways in which she has harassed the PCs. She also has an extensive number of

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1 square = 5 feet



recorded broadcasts of Eoxian "reality" programming and blood sport, favoring productions by the elebrian celebrity Zol, including an entire season of the viscerally grotesque *Survival Deathmatch Extreme*!

B6. OBSERVATION DECK

A second, much steeper staircase branches off the main stairs from area **B4** to area **B5**, leading to a 60-foot-long series of ladderlike handholds that ascend to the upraised palm of the Stargazer's hand (DC 5 Athletics check to climb). The slightly cupped hand lost its delicate guardrails long ago, but there is still space for several creatures to stand here.

EVENT 5: KSARIK RAID (CR 6)

This encounter occurs once the PCs have eliminated the cultists occupying the Stargazer. The PCs will likely want to recover Stamina Points and explore the rest of the monument and its environs, but the reprieve doesn't last long.

Creatures: Two ksariks that have been hunting nearby have detected a host of new scents. Curious and hungry, they scout the plaza's perimeter and then approach the Stargazer. Depending on where the PCs are during their downtime, they might spot the approaching predators and attack the beasts at range as they cross the plaza. If heavily injured during their approach, the ksariks climb to a sheltered part of the Stargazer and allow their fast healing to repair the damage before chasing down the PCs.

KSARIKS (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

HP 52 each; RP 3 each (*Starfinder: First Contact* 10)

TACTICS

During Combat The ksariks are cunning enough to take advantage of cover, each using their ranged attacks to soften a chosen target so that they can use their ingested adaptation ability against the wounded foes. Once in melee, they use their tentacles to maul foes and borrow their abilities.

Morale The ksariks fight to the death.

Development: With the ksariks dead, the PCs are free to travel the last several days to the Temple of the Twelve (area **D**).

PART 3: THE LOST TEMPLE

The closer the PCs get to the Temple of the Twelve, the more noticeably steep the trek becomes. By the time they are within a half day's travel from the site, the jungle thins out slightly and the ground rises, giving way to a stretch of

verdant, rolling foothills crisscrossed by meandering creeks with sources in the striking peaks of the Singing Range to the north and west.

The PCs soon reach the ruins of what Halkueem Zan called the "Forsaken City," but millennia ago, these ruins were Loskialua, the small elven settlement that sustained the Temple of the Twelve and its astronomers. The citizens built their homes upon tiered platforms, both to create an even surface in the sloping region and because the elves believed that elevation reflected the heavens' blessing. As a result, those ranked higher in society lived atop low pyramids, and in places these connected to form honored acropolises. After the elves abandoned the site long ago, their homes crumbled, windblown soil accumulated, and plants took root, creating a graveyard of pyramids studding the landscape that rise between 2 and 25 feet in height. With hundreds of structures, Loskialua represents a rare archaeological treasure that would require years of dedicated fieldwork to excavate and document. Of greater interest to the PCs, though, is the intact temple and observatory—the Temple of the Twelve—perched hundreds of feet up the side of Alhuenar Spire, one of the Singing Range's highest mountains.

Story Award: If the PCs reach the Temple of the Twelve within 11 days of departing Turhalu Point, award them 1,200 XP. If they reach the temple within 13 days, award them 600 XP instead. If they arrive later, the PCs earn no additional XP.

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Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs approach the Temple of the Twelve.

Standing imperiously on a promontory partway up the mountainside is a temple of elegantly sculpted stone with a single domed tower rising from its center. Expanses of the structure's weathered exterior bear scores of tall, glass-paned windows that cause the facade to shimmer in the sunlight. Wide stairs are carved into the rock face, winding back and forth as they ascend to the temple from the ruins below.

When the Oatia elves first settled Loskialua, they built a modest shrine to Desna on the mountain several hundred feet above their town. There they could cleanse themselves and pray to the goddess before ascending higher into the mountains, where the thinner atmosphere provided a clearer view of the stars. As the settlement grew and the astronomers' discoveries proved ever more exciting, the elves carved a staircase into the rock, creating a steep but direct route to the shrine. These buildings catered both to the astronomers, whose primary tools were mathematics and scientific instruments, and to the scholar-priests whose techniques blended divinations with the astronomers' data, who worked together here.

In the latter half of Loskialua's occupation, the elves made contact with an extraordinary alien entity known as Ibra, now

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known throughout the Pact Worlds as the god of celestial bodies, the cosmos, and the mysteries of the universe. Adopting Ibra's worship long before anyone on Castrovel knew of the god's existence, the Oatia elves built a grander temple around their Desnan shrine. They reconsecrated the building to honor both deities, calling it the Temple of the Twelve after the strange circular constellation they had discovered. Eventually, the astronomers reached the limits of their combined magic and technology. When they realized they could learn no more here, they decommissioned the site, laid enough defenses to ensure their discoveries would not fall into the hands of the incompetent, and departed for a realm beyond the stars.

The greater temple complex once included numerous smaller outbuildings to house the scholar-priests, their equipment, and food. These have largely collapsed over time, being of less durable construction than the temple itself.

All of the inscriptions in the Temple of the Twelve are written in Elven. If the PCs can't read or translate Elven, they can learn little from the temple's records. Furthermore, the temple disrupts communications for several thousand feet around itself, introducing enough static to interfere with data uploads over comm units or computers.

C1. PATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT (CR 5)

When the Temple of the Twelve began receiving more pilgrims and required greater upkeep, the elves carved a staircase into the steep slope leading up to the site. They called this the Path of Enlightenment, placing small monuments at each landing carved with cosmic wisdom that have since eroded beyond legibility. The climb is steep—a reflection of Ibra's teachings that the greatest discoveries require hard work to reach. The ascent also hides numerous traps, though the cult disabled most on its way up, whereas others had fallen apart with time. Having no idea of the temple's true purpose, Halkueem Zan called this pathway the "Stairs to Eternity."

Creature: The Devourer cultists failed to notice one trap, which launched a volley of magical darts, leaving one of them at death's door. The group abandoned him and climbed on. The dying lashunta attracted the attention of a young mountain eel, an immense bug-eyed predator that has only recently had to fend for itself. The cultist represented a caloric windfall, and as the PCs approach, the mountain eel is pinning the corpse as it tears off gobbets of flesh to consume. It attacks, both to defend its catch and to secure future meals, but it flees if reduced to 15 Hit Points or fewer.

ADOLESCENT MOUNTAIN EEL CR 5

XP 1,600

N Large animal (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 78)

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE HP 76
EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +9; **Ref** +9; **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +14 (1d6+9 P)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Offensive Abilities paralyzing gaze (60 ft., DC 13)

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +3; **Con** +2; **Int** -4; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +16, Stealth +11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Paralyzing Gaze (Ex) The sight of a mountain eel's strange compound eyes causes the muscles of most living creatures to freeze up. A living creature that has a sense of sight and begins its turn within 60 feet of a mountain eel must succeed at a DC 13 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1 round. A creature that succeeds at its save is immune to that mountain eel's paralyzing gaze for 24 hours. Other mountain eels and creatures without a sense of sight are immune to this effect.

Treasure: Most of the dead cultist's gear is demolished, though the PCs can recover a battery (17 charges remaining) and a survival knife.

C2. THE VEIL (CR 6)

A series of weathered pillars arcs around the entrance of the temple, marking a curving border around a small plaza.

The Oatia elves were versed in using the *aiudara* that linked nearby worlds, but they were incapable of true spaceflight. Unable to experience the cosmos directly, they built a symbolic barrier to protect their temple from contamination by terrestrial interference, much as their astronomers minimized light pollution to properly view the sky. They called this sacred threshold the Veil.

A steep, narrow trail leaves the plaza from the northwest, winding more than a mile up the mountainside to the temple's main observatory and the location of the *aiudara* the elves used to eventually depart Castrovel. This ruined observatory is not detailed in the adventure, but Tahomen and several of his cultists made the ascent to set up their system-wide comm unit and broadcast their discoveries to a Devourer cult base hidden in the Diaspora. By the time the PCs arrive at the temple, the cultists have already concluded the communication and are preparing to descend the mountain (see **Event 6**).

Creature: In addition to their traps, the elves left behind one of their own to guard their legacy and guide those seeking knowledge for its own sake. The elf Panelliar was one of the warrior-monks who honored Ibra by channeling the galaxy's power into divine weapons. He volunteered to stand vigil, performing a series of self-mummification rites that preserved his mind and soul within an undead body. Over his long watch, only a few beings have tried to enter the temple, most notably Halkueem Zan, whom Panelliar forcibly repelled, and

Tahomen and his cult, who used the spell *command undead* to control the guardian. Now under the cult leader's control, Panelliar has been convinced to strike down those who would enter the temple.

As the PCs approach, Panelliar steps forward and motions for them to halt outside the Veil before he solemnly greets them in Elven and orders them to turn back. If the PCs don't understand him, he repeats himself in Celestial, eventually resigning himself to concise hand motions if unable to establish verbal communication. The PCs' likely questions and his answers appear below.

Who are you? "I am Panelliar, Sun Spear of the Inscrutable. It is my duty to guard this place against those who would despoil or misuse my people's discoveries."

What is this place? "Behind me lies the Temple of the Twelve, the last repository of my people's lore in this system. Before me is the Veil, beyond which terrestrial ignorance melts beneath the weight of cosmic enlightenment. This is a sacred space."

How long have you been here? "To measure the passage of time as does the universe, my vigil has been but a moment. By the revolutions of Castrovel, I have been here for millennia."

Have others passed this way? "Centuries ago, a child of Golarion came. He sought the secrets beyond for his own glory, so I turned him away with violence. A band of lashuntas and an unfamiliar alien arrived recently. I recognized them as pawns of the Star-Eater, and although I turned them away, the leader's conviction and magic were strong; I relented." (The "child of Golarion" Panelliar is referring to is the explorer Halkueem Zan, whom he remembers as a shameless charlatan and fool. The leader of the recent arrivals whom the elf encountered is the cult leader Tahomen.)

Where did the lashuntas go? "They entered the temple and studied the secrets within. Some of them later ascended the mountain to commune with the heavens with the portable shrine they carried. The others remain inside." (The "portable shrine" is the cultists' system-wide comm unit, though Panelliar is unfamiliar with modern technology and does not recognize its purpose.)

May we enter? "The speaker for the Star-Eater does not wish to allow you to enter, and by his will, I must insist. You are not welcome here."

Once the PCs have conversed with Panelliar, if they ignore his warnings to leave, he manifests his solar weapon and attacks.

PANELLIAR CR 6

XP 2,400

Male unique undead elf solarian
N Medium undead

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision
60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +13

DEFENSE

EAC 19; KAC 19

Fort +8; **Ref** +6; **Will** +7

Immunities undead immunities (see page 54)

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee solar spear +16 (1d8+1d4+11 P; critical wound)

Ranged pulse dart +13 (1d6+8; critical burn 1d6)

Offensive Abilities stellar revelations (black hole [25 ft., pull 15 ft., DC 14], corona [2d6 F, cold resistance 10], pulse dart, supernova [10-ft. radius, 7d6 F, DC 14])

TACTICS

During Combat Panelliar favors photon mode, entering it and activating his corona revelation as soon as combat begins. He prefers melee combat, but he tends to ignore dedicated melee combatants (especially those harmed by his corona) in favor of



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pinning down spellcasters and ranged specialists.

Morale If Panelliar has already parleyed with the PCs, he fights until destroyed. If not, he fights until reduced to 35 Hit Points, at which point he calls a temporary truce to converse and discover what his foes desire. If he cannot convince them to turn away after answering their questions, he rejoins the fight.

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** –; **Int** +1; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +2

Skills Athletics +13, Mysticism +13, Sense Motive +18

Languages Celestial, Elven

Other Abilities solar manifestation (weapon: solar spear), stellar alignment (see page 54), unliving (see page 54)

Gear ancient elven battle armor (archaic), least gluon crystal

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pulse Dart (Su) As a standard action, Panelliar can fire a dart of stellar energy as a ranged attack against EAC with a range of 60 feet. The pulse dart deals 1d10+6 fire damage and has the critical hit effect burn 1d6.

Development: If the PCs are somehow able to dispel the *command undead* spell, Panelliar does not fight them, gives them his least gluon crystal in thanks, and will even help the PCs fight the cultists inside the temple. With that done, he wanders the interior for the rest of the adventure, conversing with the PCs if they wish but not helping them further until he concludes the long business of cleansing the site. It is his belief, after all, that those seeking knowledge must do much of the work themselves.

C3. ENTRY HALL

Thanks to sophisticated preservative varnishes and the extensive metalwork crisscrossing them, the ornately carved wooden doors leading into the temple have just barely survived the ages intact. They are unlocked and are only a nominal barrier (hardness 5, HP 5, break DC 10).

From its floor to its curved ceiling thirty feet above, this entry hall is covered in sweeping arcs of constellations marked with delicate lines and numbers at regular intervals.

A series of short climbing pitons stick out of the ground near the center of the room, where embedded floor scythes were placed to slash at the unwelcome. The cult readily disabled the trap, and it presents no danger to the PCs.

The intricate constellations and curves depict how key stars and galaxies migrate across the night sky, though the placement of the constellations doesn't match their actual locations as viewed from Castrovel. A PC who can read Elven and succeeds at a DC 15 Physical Science check can ascertain that while the orientation of the constellations is more artistic, the curved paths are scientifically precise, showing exact dates that the stars appear in the sky and how they migrate throughout a year.

In addition, two unknown constellations are present in the display: a jagged line of six stars and a perfect circle made up of 12 stars. With a successful DC 10 Mysticism check, a PC can identify the first as the unknown constellation commonly depicted in the god Ibra's holy symbol. What's more, the Ibran constellation's curving line records erratic dates and coordinates that defy astronomic explanation. However, a PC who succeeds at a DC 19 Physical Science check realizes that these are not true coordinates but rather encoded instructions for how to bypass the trap in area **C4**. The second constellation represents the Gate of Twelve Suns, though the PCs are likely unable to identify it as such unless they have already studied the ancient elven records in the inner sanctum (area **C8**), in which case, a PC can recognize it with a successful DC 15 Physical Science check.

C4. SOVYRIAN GALLERY (CR 3)

The exterior wall of this gallery contains nearly one hundred tall, narrow windows that allow thin streams of anemic light to pass through their foggy panes. The interior wall depicts the night sky and its stars. Dozens of stylized starburst carvings decorate the floor.

This hall was known as the Sovyrian Gallery because its interior wall depicts the night sky as seen from Sovyrian in the southern hemisphere (recognizable with a successful DC 20 Physical Science check).

Trap: The starburst carvings on the floor are about 2 feet wide and creatures can hop from one to the next with relative ease. They are part of a magical trap that rains destructive energy on trespassers, but it can be bypassed by hopping from one starburst to another to follow a defined path through the area. This path is detailed in the constellation carvings in area **C3**. Once the PCs know the proper pattern, they can travel through the area at half speed without triggering the trap.

STAR STORM TRAP

CR 3

XP 800

Type magical; **Perception** DC 24; **Disable** Mysticism DC 19 (disrupt the magical energy)

Trigger location; **Reset** 1 minute; **Bypass** follow the path of Ibra's constellation through the trapped area (Physical Science DC 19 to decipher; see area **C3**)

Initial Effect a rain of glowing stars cascades from the ceiling, striking all creatures in the secondary area and dealing 5d6 damage, half of which is electricity and half of which is fire; DC 14 Reflex half; multiple targets (all targets in a 25-by-30-foot area); **Secondary Effect** any creature that fails the Reflex save is covered in sparkling motes of light that last for 10 minutes, during which time the creature takes a –10 penalty to Stealth checks and cannot benefit from concealment; Will DC 14 negates

C5. UKULAM GALLERY (CR 5)

Three wooden doors line the west wall of this gallery. The curving interior wall depicts the night sky and its stars.

This hall was known as the Ukulam Gallery because its interior wall depicts the night sky as seen from Ukulam in the northern hemisphere (recognizable with a successful DC 20 Physical Science check). A 3-foot-tall octagonal stone platform that once served as an auxiliary altar stands in the middle of the hall, where it now supports a small pile of industrial explosives (see Hazard below).

Creatures: Having extracted everything of importance to the Cult of the Devourer from the temple, Tahomen left two cultists under the leadership of Avissa, the cult's explosives expert, to plant explosive charges and demolish the temple in a blazing tribute to their merciless deity. Once the cultists hear the PCs enter the temple, they prepare for a fight, talking cover wherever they can find it.

AVISSA CR 3

XP 800

Female korasha lashunta soldier

CE Medium humanoid (lashunta)

Init +2; Perception +8

DEFENSE HP 41

EAC 15; KAC 18

Fort +5; Ref +3; Will +4

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee cestus battleglove +8 (1d4+7 B)

Ranged squad machine gun +11 (1d10+3 P)

Offensive Abilities fighting style (arcane assailant),
withering fire

Lashunta Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd)

1/day—detect thoughts (DC 12)

At will—daze (DC 11), psychokinetic hand

TACTICS

During Combat Avissa fires short bursts at her enemies until she can catch several targets using her machine gun's automatic mode. After depleting her ammo, she reloads or moves into melee range as suits her needs.

Morale Avissa fights to the death. If reduced to 15 Hit Points with little chance of survival, she activates her detonator (see Hazard below).

STATISTICS

Str +4; Dex +2; Con +1; Int +0; Wis -1; Cha +1

Skills Athletics +8, Engineering +13, Intimidate +8

Languages Castrovelian, Common; limited telepathy 30 ft.

Other Abilities rune of the eldritch knight

Gear squad defiance series, cestus battleglove, squad machine gun (rune of the eldritch knight) with 120 heavy rounds, detonator, field rations (2 weeks)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Withering Fire (Ex) Any creature damaged by Avissa's machine gun when she operates it using automatic mode must succeed at a DC 12 Will save or be shaken for 1d3 rounds.

DEVOURER CULTISTS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

HP 20 each (see page 24)



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Hazard: The explosive charges on the altar have not yet been set. Without being armed with a detonator, only an electrical charge (such as electricity damage) can trigger them, and a PC can identify the explosives and how to trigger them with a successful DC 14 Engineering check. The charges are far more destructive when properly installed, but if detonated in the open, they function as an incendiary grenade II (Reflex DC 13 half).

The cultists have already installed numerous charges throughout this area—not yet enough to destroy the building, but enough to collapse part of the ceiling. The cultist Avissa (see Creatures on page 31) currently has a detonator programmed to these explosives, which she can draw as a move action and activate with no action. If she does so, parts of the ceiling collapse and rain down on the marked area, dealing 1d12 bludgeoning damage to all creatures in the area (Reflex DC 14 half) and filling the area within the dotted lines on the map with a cloud of dust that grants concealment for 1d3 rounds.

Treasure: The planted explosive charges present little threat once the cultists are defeated. If the PCs desire, they can carefully defuse and extract the explosive charges with 10 minutes of work and a successful DC 20 Engineering check to disable device. There are 10 charges in total, each of which is equivalent to an incendiary grenade I.

C6. STUDIES

This series of rooms once served as offices and laboratories for the high-ranking astronomers and scholar-priests that operated the temple. The rooms are now a clutter of crumbling furniture that is only a soft kick away from collapsing into dust. The doors are all unlocked and fragile (hardness 5, HP 5) to the point that a creature can topple a door entirely while moving through it by succeeding at a DC 13 Strength check.

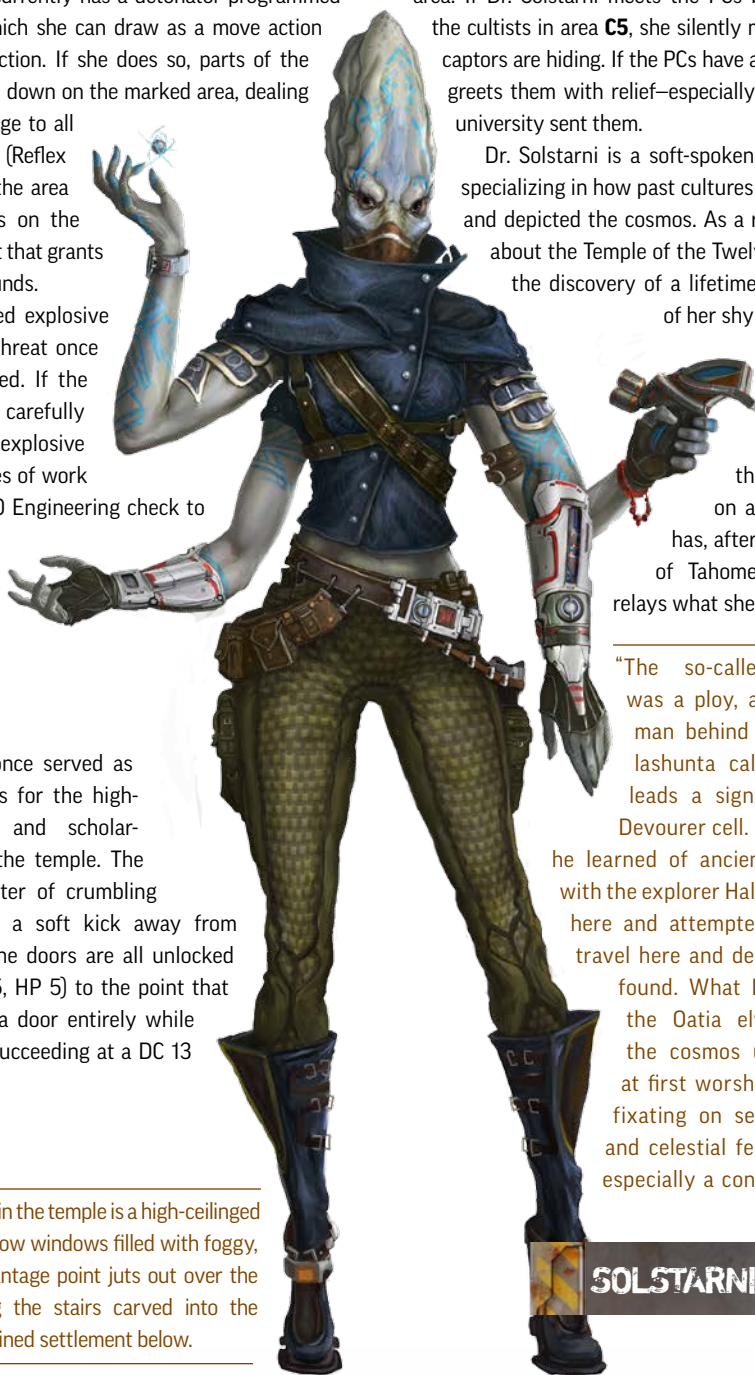
C7. THE VANTAGE

The southernmost point in the temple is a high-ceilinged sanctuary with tall, narrow windows filled with foggy, discolored glass. The vantage point juts out over the cliff below, overlooking the stairs carved into the mountainside and the ruined settlement below.

Creature: The archaeologist abducted from the university in Qabarat, Dr. **Olmehya Solstarni Wehir of House Raimar, Echo of Inshirsi's Dream** (NG female kasatha), has been fettered and left to her own devices here as the cultists patrol the temple and plant their explosives. Once Tahomen's expedition reached the Temple of the Twelve and exploited Dr. Solstarni's knowledge of elven lore to bypass several of the defenses, the cult leader had little use for the kasatha. He left her here to contemplate her imminent demise until he returned to demolish the temple with her inside. Rather than dreading her death, she has instead spent her time studying the carvings and inscriptions in this area. If Dr. Solstarni meets the PCs before they confront the cultists in area **C5**, she silently motions to where her captors are hiding. If the PCs have already prevailed, she greets them with relief—especially once she learns the university sent them.

Dr. Solstarni is a soft-spoken archaeoastronomer, specializing in how past cultures viewed, understood, and depicted the cosmos. As a result, learning more about the Temple of the Twelve and its purpose is the discovery of a lifetime that draws her out of her shy habits. With enough supplies, she would happily remain here for months, but she knows the PCs are operating on a tight schedule. She has, after all, listened to most of Tahomen's plans, and she relays what she knows.

"The so-called Eyrub Paqual was a ploy, as I suspected. The man behind my abduction is a lashunta called Tahomen, who leads a significant Cult of the Devourer cell. From what I gather, he learned of ancient texts associated with the explorer Halkueem Zan's travels here and attempted to recruit me to travel here and decipher anything we found. What I've learned is that the Oatia elven culture found the cosmos utterly fascinating, at first worshipping Desna before fixating on several alien entities and celestial features to worship—especially a constellation of twelve



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stars, which might be strictly symbolic. He knocked me out after I ceased cooperating here, and I suspect he learned something more in the temple's inner sanctum.

Once freed, Dr. Solstarni can keep up with the PCs, though she's not a reliable combatant. If necessary, you can use the statistics for a Devourer cultist with no special abilities. Given Dr. Solstarni's knowledge of elven culture and language, she is of far greater use helping to translate and understand the temple's texts and art.

Story Award: If the PCs find and rescue Dr. Solstarni, award them 1,200 XP.

C8. INNER SANCTUM (CR 4)

Once a freestanding shrine dedicated to Desna, this butterfly-shaped structure became the inner sanctum of the temple to Ibra later built around it. Even an untrained viewer can tell that the construction styles of the two phases are quite distinct. The astronomers of the Temple of the Twelve stored the records of their greatest discoveries here, and the sanctum is filled with physical books and scrolls (see Development below). A spiral staircase to the north climbs to the temple's observatory tower high above the ground floor (area C9).

Creatures: As a final line of defense, the elves left behind a pair of lore guardians—magically animated statues capable of fending off intruders. These lore guardians are slow to attack elves, and an apparently elven PC can convince them to stand down with a successful DC 18 Diplomacy check. Tahomen disguised himself as an elf to avoid combat as he perused the texts here.

LORE GUARDIANS (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

HP 28 each (see page 57)

STATISTICS

Languages Elven (can't speak)

Other Abilities species tradition (elf)

Treasure: Among the ancient texts are several magic items of note: a *spell gem of flight* (2nd level), a *spell gem of remove affliction*, a *spell gem of see invisibility*, and a *staff of mystic healing*.

Development: The true prize here is the Oatia elves' discoveries, and many of the pre-Gap books here are legible, albeit barely intact. Furthermore, Tahomen was sloppy in returning documents to their proper places, allowing the PCs to uncover the same information he did. Most of the texts here are in Elven, though some are in Celestial, Draconic, and an archaic version of Castrovelian that's very difficult for a modern speaker to parse.

If the PCs study the texts here (possibly with Dr. Solstarni's assistance), they learn that the Oatia elves were a philosophical offshoot that spurned their Sovyrian kin

and sought a new life of cosmic contemplation on Ukulam, thousands of years before the Gap. Their techniques quickly improved, and through a combination of telescopes and divination magic, the elves discovered a strange constellation of 12 stars that formed a perfect circle in the sky. The more they studied the constellation, the stranger their dreams became, and powerful scholar-priests began recording the odd language they saw and heard.

As the elves' knowledge of and exposure to the galaxy expanded, they parleyed with increasingly bizarre and powerful alien minds, most notably a powerful being known as Ibra—especially noteworthy because the elves' records suggest that Ibra may not have been a deity at the time. Through Ibra's teachings, the elves studied the mysterious circular constellation, learning that it was not a natural feature but the construction of an impossibly ancient and highly advanced species untold light years away. Casting their minds far into the cosmos, the scholar-priests sensed that the ring pulsed with an unnatural energy, which led them to believe it to be a gateway of some kind. The elves called it the Gate of Twelve Suns, and they renamed their temple in honor of it.

Some of the scholar-priests believed that the Gate of Twelve Suns held back some powerful army. Others postulated that it magnified the thoughts and dreams of another galaxy and that it could be the key to untold knowledge. The most popular hypothesis, though, was that the Gate of Twelve Suns represented such power that it could only be (or serve as the portal to) some cosmically powerful superweapon. One of the scholar-priests even posited the existence of a so-called "Stellar Degenerator," which could drain all energy from a star, turning it into a hypothetical stellar remnant called a black dwarf. Unfortunately, there's no definitive note of where the Gate of Twelve Suns is—as if identifying its location was taboo to the elves.

As interpretive disputes broke out among the elves, they agreed that from the confines of Loskialua, they could never confirm their theories, much less attain enlightenment through discovery under the inspired guidance of Ibra. They packed up what they needed, and then they performed a ritual that the texts referred to only as "the Celestial Voyage." The implication is that the elves traveled to another system, though whether they succeeded or failed is uncertain from these records.

Story Award: If the PCs decipher the Oatia elves' discoveries concerning the Gate of Twelve Suns, award them 800 XP.

C9. OBSERVATORY TOWER

The staircase climbs more than 100 feet to a broad observation platform with high guard walls.

Treasure: Most of the instruments that once stood here have corroded into nothing more than rusty stains and scratched glass. One device remains intact, though: an apparatus that measures and records psychic emanations from across the

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galaxy for later study. The crystal in which these are recorded ran out of storage capacity millennia ago, but the device continued to record and reconfigure the data, compressing it ever more densely over the ages. The inadvertent result is a *mk 1 ability crystal* that positively hums with the psychic hopes and dreams of a million minds from across the galaxy.

EVENT 6: THE DEVOURER DESCENDS (CR 6)

This encounter occurs once the PCs have had time to explore the temple and its records and are preparing to depart.

Creatures: The cult leader Tahomen and two of his surviving cultists descend from the mountain where they have finished broadcasting their findings to the cult's hidden outpost in the Diaspora. Although Salask has described the PCs to him, this is Tahomen's first time seeing his pursuers up close. Having secured and shared data that could very well spell the destruction of the galaxy, Tahomen is utterly smug and fearless. The cult leader engages in some mocking banter as his subordinates set the heavy comm unit components down, and he pulls out and activates a detonator keyed to the explosive charges in area **C5**. If the charges are still in place, an explosion rocks the temple but does not destroy it—a result Tahomen finds disappointing but still a suitable backdrop of destruction before he attacks. If the PCs disabled the charges, nothing happens, and Tahomen throws aside the detonator in disgust before launching his attack.

Tahomen is a mystic with the devastator connection, a new mystic connection presented on page 50 in the "Cult of the Devourer" article.

DEVOURER CULTISTS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

HP 20 each (see page 24)

TAHOMEN

CR 5

XP 1,600

Male korasha lashunta mystic
CE Medium humanoid (lashunta)

Init +1; Perception +11

DEFENSE

HP 55

EAC 17; KAC 18

Fort +6; Ref +4; Will +8

Resistances cold 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee survival knife +8 (1d4+7 S)

Ranged liquidator disintegrator pistol +10 (1d10+5 A)

Offensive Abilities blood mark (see page 50), destructive frenzy (see page 50)

Lashunta Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

1/day—*detect thoughts* (DC 16)

At will—*daze* (DC 15), *psychokinetic hand*

Mystic Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

At will—*mindlink*

Mystic Spells Known (CL 5th; ranged +10)

2nd (3/day)—*caustic conversion*, *command undead* (DC 17), *hurl forcedisk*

1st (6/day)—*carnivorous* (see page 51), *mind thrust* (DC 16), *reflecting armor* (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*fatigue* (DC 15), *telekinetic projectile*

Connection devastator (see page 50)

TACTICS

Before Combat Tahomen casts *reflecting armor* before he descends to the temple.

During Combat Tahomen favors ranged attacks with his spells, though he delights in the opportunity to clobber any foes foolish enough to approach him directly.

Morale Having already sent the critical data to his colleagues, Tahomen welcomes the sweet oblivion of dying in battle.

STATISTICS

Str +2; Dex +1; Con +3; Int +0; Wis +5; Cha +2

Skills Intimidate +16, Mysticism +16, Sense Motive +11

Languages Abyssal, Common, Castrovelian, Elven; limited telepathy 60 ft.

Gear d-suit I (mk 1 thermal capacitor), liquidator disintegrator pistol (see page 52) with 3 batteries (20 charges each), survival knife, *psychic booster*, detonator, personal comm unit, field rations (2 weeks), R2Es (5)

Treasure: The cultists are carrying a system-wide comm unit including a tier-2 computer with firewall and wipe countermeasures (see Development below). The comm unit is disassembled into three bulky pieces, but it is fully functional once reassembled.

Development: With Tahomen defeated, the PCs can inspect the comm unit his team carried here. The system is massive, only capable of being moved by several strong people once it's been broken into smaller components. Even with the comm unit disassembled, a PC can boot up the system's computer and access its unsecured communications log with a successful DC 10 Computers check. Tahomen has dutifully purged his correspondence history leading up to this expedition, but the PCs can still determine that the comm unit logged a call and significant data upload about 3 hours earlier.

To access more information, a PC must succeed at a DC 21 Computers check to hack the comm unit's tier-2 computer. Once the PC has access to the system, he can read Tahomen's recent communications. The correspondence relays many of the same conclusions the PCs learned in area **C8**, but with more sinister certainty: Tahomen posits that the 12-star constellation—the Gate of Twelve Suns—opens to a demiplane that hides an unspeakably powerful superweapon. The cult leader believes that the Drift Rock is a tiny fragment of this "Stellar Degenerator," broken off when a portion of the demiplane was torn away and added to the Drift as a result of Drift travel. Tahomen also recommended that the



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Cult of Devourer apply as many resources as possible to find the Gate of Twelve Suns—and the Stellar Degenerator—before anyone else does. In addition, the PCs can learn the approximate coordinates of the location Tahomen transmitted his messages to: a stretch of several hundred asteroids in the Diaspora.

The computer also contains access to Tahomen's financial account, protected behind a firewall. Hacking this requires a successful DC 23 Computers check, but a wipe countermeasure purges the data after a second failed hacking attempt. The account contains 2,000 credits.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Having thwarted Tahomen and his Devourer cult, the PCs can continue exploring the Temple of the Twelve as much as they like. However, the troubling implication that the Gate of Twelve Suns might provide access to a weapon of almost unimaginable power like a Stellar Degenerator—not to mention the fact that the Cult of the Devourer now knows about the weapon and is actively looking for it—should compel the PCs to expedite their return to civilization.

Whether or not the Stellar Degenerator is real, the Cult of the Devourer could use this information as a rallying cry to attract more recruits to the cult and inflict greater atrocities in the name of their uncaring god. At minimum, the news that the Castrovelian Devourer cult was in communication with other cult elements elsewhere in the Pact Worlds should be enough of a threat to encourage the PCs to retrace their steps back to Turhalu Point, and ultimately Qabarat.

If the PCs return to Qabarat with Dr. Solstarni in tow, Professor Muhali is relieved to see her colleague in one piece, and university officials offer each of the PCs admittance and free tuition to the school for up to 3 years in thanks for their service. Alternatively, a PC can choose to accept a “research grant” of 1,000 credits from the university in lieu of a scholarship (and it's up to each PC how they make use of this grant).

The PCs might also want to update Chiskisk about their findings, either by sending the shirren Starfinder a message or by returning to Absalom Station to report to them in person. In any case, with the Cult of the Devourer actively searching for the Gate of Twelve Suns, the Pact Worlds may need the PCs' assistance more than ever, and there is little time to waste. The PCs' efforts to thwart the cult and learn more about the alien superweapon, from the asteroid fields of the Diaspora to the necropolis cities of dead Eox, are the focus of “Splintered Worlds,” the next installment of the Dead Suns Adventure Path.



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CASTROVEL IS A HOT, HUMID WORLD WITH A RICH ATMOSPHERE THAT GIVES LIFE TO CONTINENT-SPANNING JUNGLES THAT ARE HOME TO SAURIAN PREDATORS, MOBILE CARNIVOROUS PLANTS, AND DEVASTATING MOLDSTORMS DURING THE PERIODIC MASS FLOWERING CALLED "DEATH BLOOMS." WHILE NEARLY EVERY TERRESTRIAL BIOME CAN BE FOUND SOMEWHERE ON CASTROVEL, IT REMAINS BOTH THOROUGHLY WILD AND DENSELY POPULATED, WITH MODERN CITIES AND CUTTING-EDGE INDUSTRIAL COMPLEXES SEPARATED FROM THE RAVAGES OF THE PRIMEVAL WILDERNESS BY ELECTRIFIED FENCES AND AUTOMATED WEAPONS TURRETS.

OVERVIEW

Given its extreme biodiversity, it isn't surprising that Castrovel fostered several major races, each with a unique civilization on its own continent. Most prominent in the Pact Worlds are lashuntas, telepathic humanoids with a cultural emphasis on scholarship and self-improvement from the continent of Asana. The thousands of hives of the ant-like and equally telepathic formians of the Colonies align readily to the directives of their ruling council. This philosophical battle of individualism versus collectivism (combined with telepathy's advantage in communicating such ideas) sparked a millennia-long war that raged between the two races until just 30 years ago. The elves of Sovyrian remain steadfastly aloof from this conflict—and everything else. They focus on their magical pursuits and guard their shores with stone-faced resolve.

Despite the planet's tumultuous history, the three races are not as fractious as they seem. Outposts of all three can be found beyond the borders of their native continents. The planet as a whole welcomes travelers from offworld, even if the elves largely restrict trade with non-elves to offshore ports designed for that purpose. The planetary economy is robust, due to the strength of Asana's corporations and universities combined with the relentless efficiency of formian manufactory hives.

Despite the constant threat of megafauna, Castrovelians take pride in their planet's wilderness, deliberately preserving large swaths of it for ecotourism and research. Castrovel has the largest population of Green Faith followers in the Pact Worlds and includes the Xenowardens as a prominent theopolitical faction. Even before the rise of starships, magical portals called *aiudara* (or "elf gates") facilitated this commitment by connecting major settlements across the planet without the need for expensive and dangerous roads. Today, these arches remain a major public resource as well as a subject of intense speculation, since the secret of their creation has long been lost and many gates are broken or lead to unknown destinations.

The following pages presents Castrovel's four major continents, with notable locations and a settlement stat block for the city on each continent most visited by offworld travelers.

ASANA

The homeland of the lashuntas, Asana is the largest continent on Castrovel. It boasts everything from snowcapped mountains and sweltering jungles to rocky and rain-shadowed deserts. While heavily populated compared to the other continents, it still contains wide expanses of uncontrolled and even unexplored territory, thanks in large part to the distributed nature of lashunta government.

Lashuntas on Asana traditionally organize themselves by city-state, with each state controlling a few smaller settlements and the land and resources immediately around them. Internally, these cities vary wildly, ranging from egalitarian communes to hereditary monarchies, though most favor democratically elected autocrats. Despite the lashuntas' deep love of scholarship and intellectual and magical pursuits, the constant presence of bold predators just beyond their walls—from savage megafauna to intelligent monstrous races—leads every city to maintain a significant military. This spirit of militaristic self-reliance means that attempts to unify multiple city-states rarely last long, though warring between the states is traditionally about shows of force and daring raids rather than outright slaughter, and even enemy cities will often work together when attacked by outside forces. The divided nature of lashunta government can be a double-edged sword for its citizens, however, as big businesses can easily play the competitive city-states off each other, and many lashuntas fear that their society may soon go the way of Akiton's—co-opted by commercial concerns without regard for the residents' welfare.

While Castrovel's fertile environmental conditions make it a breadbasket for the solar system and the constant discovery of useful plants and creatures makes it an attractive base for research firms, Asana's greatest resource is its people. The charismatic, educated, telepathic populace provides a talented and passionate workforce for interplanetary corporations. The relatively long history of Asana's civilization and the constant reclamation of fallen cities by the jungle also means that a great deal of magical knowledge may be simply lying undiscovered in some jungle clearing.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Both new and old locales dot Asana. Its coastlines are the regions that are the best mapped and understood, whereas records of the interior are largely confined to myth and broken history.

The Bulwarks: This chain of islands leads across the Strait of Glory to the Colonies, making its shores and causeways the most hotly contested territory in the planet's history. For thousands of years, formians and lashuntas battled constantly over these tiny islands, using them as beachheads to launch invasions onto each other's shores or score political points at home through minor advances. As a result, the islands are shattered, grotesque palimpsests, with modern fortresses built atop the ruins of ancient castles and the husks of warhives, and entire valleys filled with slowly decaying bones and chitin. Some islands are completely uninhabitable today due to radiation or military biotech. Since the truce between the two civilizations, scholars from both sides have begun cautiously combing through the ruins for lost knowledge, while groups like the Xenowardens attempt to rehabilitate the most damaged isles.

Candares: Every year, the spring meltwaters of the Tarakeshi River slowly back up, filling the massive Lake Nehan and turning the districts of Upper Candares into islands, until at last the waters reach the edge of their banks and come blasting down into the narrow valley of Lower Candares from every direction, creating dozens of spectacular waterfalls. The steep walls of this crevasse have traditionally been lined with hydroelectric turbines and seasonal temples maintained by native spider-limbed kaymos, who live in peace with the city's lashunta citizens. In recent years, however, the city has been flooded not just with water but with riches, as technomancers for the Astral Extractions mining company have discovered new magical uses for corpsicum, a rare material produced when water seeps through the kaymos' cliffside burial grounds. The resulting influx of cash has let the corporation buy leaders and votes, and most of the city is happy enough to let crab-like mining robots scale their cliffs. Exasperated and unheeded, the Wallkeepers—traditionalist rebels from both races who see the mining as a desecration of their ancestors—occasionally send the enormous machines falling in flames to the city below.

Jabask: Located deep in the Glow-silk Jungle and accessible only by *aiudara*, arduous overland treks, or daredevil shuttle flights, Jabask is perhaps the most traditional of the major city-states—and the most embattled. Behind its ugly concrete ramparts, locals live in symbiosis with the Somana Tree-Sages, intelligent plant-creatures of extreme magic and confusing mindsets whose branches are tended by furry split-tailed nobosets. The greatest of the Tree-Sages, the Prophet of the Wood, regularly offers eclectic pearls of knowledge, including advanced scientific revelations and disconcertingly accurate predictions gleaned via mystical communion with some greater power called "the Ken." In exchange, the cityfolk protect the Somana from the horde of beasts that prey upon them, most notably the three-eyed fangsaras. This would be easier if not for the frequent moldstorms that sweep the city, eating through seals and circuits, shorting out technology, and forcing citizens to shelter inside thick bunkers. While the jungle's eponymous

lights make the city quite beautiful during calm periods, every citizen in Jabask is constantly listening for the sounds of the mold siren or the invasion alarm.

Komena: The major city closest to the Bulwarks, Komena remains heavily militarized despite its extremely defensible position in the Floating Shards. While originally named for the many fjords that cut through the mountains' feet to make it look like the peaks are bobbing on the sea, the Floating Shards have also earned their name another way. Fueled by powerful magic lost during the Gap, ancient lashunta spellcasters lopped off Komena's peak and levitated it to build an ornate, cylinder-shaped city connecting the mountain's base to its crest. In times of war, the entire city slides down into a subterranean cavity. While a number of these so-called Mountainheart Cities once existed, Komena is the last one known to remain. The wreckage of another to the north and records of up to five such fortresses lead many adventurers to brave the peaks in hopes of finding one hidden since antiquity—perhaps even still inhabited.



LAUBU PILOT

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Laubu Mesa: This desert city sits atop the geological feature of the same name and has famously never been conquered. In ancient times, the city's minaret-topped Aeries were home to the thakasa riders—cavalry who'd mastered a winged version of the planet's famous reptilian shotalashu mounts—but today these same flight schools train some of the best fighter pilots in the system, specializing in death-defying proximity flying and other atmospheric maneuvers. Technomagical pumps bring water and geothermal energy up through the center of the mesa, making the city self-sufficient in case of siege, and the Scholar's Spiral, which winds down around the pumps, contains workshops and libraries handed down from master to student for millennia—ripe with rumors of lost treasures and encoded knowledge hidden behind secret doors.

Ocean of Mists: An atmospheric mystery, this sea of roiling, multicolored mist somehow supports ships that have only minor gas-based flotation capability yet remains dispersed enough for divers to breathe freely as they descend to walk its shrouded canyon floors. Occupying a huge system of canyons in Asana's center, the ocean hosts many floating mining platforms that harvest the gas for use in antigravity technology. Divers who hunt for salvage on the seafloor are always on the lookout for merfolk-like teshki and the deadly mistcallers, whose magical name-speech can turn an explorer into an expanding cloud of bloody droplets.

Qabarat: The Shining Jewel of the Western Sea, Qabarat is arguably the greatest of the lashunta city-states and the planet's largest spaceport. Where the Yaro River cuts through the sea cliffs at the edge of the Stormshield Mountains, ancient walls of crushed, glittering shells rise up to cradle a modern metropolis nestled among venerable structures dating to the civilization's beginnings. Lady **Morana Kesh** (NG female damaya lashunta envoy) and her chief consort and battle leader, **Grantaesus** (CG male korasha lashunta soldier), rule the city from the Threefold House, the city's capitol. They fight a quiet but desperate battle to maintain traditional governments and keep all of Asana from becoming a corporate free-for-all. Visitors to the city often arrive in the spaceport at Ship's End, passing by soldiers and mercenaries training in the legendary Battle Yards and scholars debating on the steps of the city's numerous great universities, before arriving in the Brightstreets, which form the city's commercial center. The city also has several *aiudara*, held by the government for public use, linking it to other settlements, most notably those in the Farstep Commons.

QABARAT

NG port city

Population 819,000 (70% lashunta, 5% elf, 5% human, 4% shirren, 4% ysoki, 3% half-elf, 9% other)

Government autocracy (Lady of the City)

Qualities academic, cultured, financial center, technologically average

Maximum Item Level 16

THE COLONIES

In sharp contrast to their lashunta neighbors' dozens of competing city-states, the ant-like formians of this continent have only one nation: a single vast country stretching from shore to shore. This state has many names, depending on a particular formian's region and beliefs, such as the Everlasting Queendoms, the Unified Hive, or the Glorious and Undeniable Dominion of All Beneath Moon and Soil. Most outsiders refer to it simply as the Colonies. Millennia ago, the disparate formian hives were at constant war with each other, battling over territory and preventing their civilization as a whole from advancing. To end this strife, several of the largest hives agreed to a conference now called the Meeting of Queens, in which they all agreed to work together in service of the "Overqueen," which was a purely theoretical concept that would allow them to act as a federation while still acceding to their hive-insect need for a single ultimate authority figure. Within years, the wars ended, and the newly unified Colonies were able to look outward and begin expanding their territory, thus inaugurating a new age of war against the lashuntas of Asana.

Life in the Colonies is extremely regimented, as formian society is strictly collectivist and authoritarian. Workers bred and raised for specific jobs complete them without complaint under the oversight of taskmasters and warriors, who in turn bow before their own superiors, all the way up to the queen of a particular settlement. Transgressions against authority are rare. Any behavior outside of the order is ignored to reduce cognitive dissonance, seen as ignorance in need of correction, or else punished as treason by immediate execution. Fortunately, generations of diplomatic missions (often by shirren emissaries) have led most hive queens to the belief that non-formian races fall outside the "natural order," and thus their individualism may be tolerated as long as it ultimately serves the Colonies' best interests.

As a result of this broadened perspective, the Colonies are now a hotbed of economic activity. Corporate employees granted honorary rank within hive society oversee massive manufacturing facilities in which the efficiency of formian workers outpaces all but the best automation. The formians' relatively weak regard for environmental concerns compared to the planet's other major races means that even the long-hostile lashuntas are now transferring more and more of their fabrication jobs to the Colonies. Strip mines follow seams of ore while industrial warrens belch smoke into the sky, and vast agricultural plantations stretch for miles aboveground and below, with photosynthesizing crops on the surface and tunnel upon tunnel of bioengineered fungus farms and chemical-synthesizing bacteria vats below.

Yet for all of this industry, the continent remains strangely pristine. While formian hive-cities sometimes mound up into monolithic, tumorous structures, most run for miles underground, and the consolidation of their cultivation for greater efficiency means that large stretches of wilderness remain intact between settlements. Though the Colonies'

borders are fiercely defended, the unification of the hives means there's little need to patrol the continent's interior, and thus entire intelligent species live quietly in the trackless expanses overlooked by formian industry.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

While the formians have little emotional investment in the names and identities of their territories, naming major settlements and features has made it easier to direct visitors.

Broken Minds: Formian society brooks no disobedience, and those formians who refuse to serve are quickly dispatched. In recent years, however, shirren relief workers have succeeded in convincing several hives to sell their "malfunctioning" citizens rather than kill them. These rebellious individuals are brought to the Broken Minds, a sort of intellectual colony quarantined on the harsh desert coast. There shirren work with these patients to prepare them for independent lives on other continents or planets—and also study them to see whether this spontaneous rebellion might hold the secret to the shirrens' own break with the Swarm in ages past.

Gulf of Legions: This central sea, the hub of intercolony contact on the continent since the beginning of formian civilization, takes its name from the flotillas of warriors who once darkened the waves as they crossed on the backs of massive water-striding yugolars to lay siege to other hives. Since the alliance, the sea has instead become a hotbed of trade, and most of the largest formian hive-cities—notably Chisk the Unyielding, Kebenaut, and Queensrock—are situated on its shores. Only Qarik on the western shore and Zysyk with its half-submerged ocean tunnels rival these metropolises in size.

Jaws of the Mother: This comparatively narrow strait, where the Nestwall Mountains to the north dip into the ocean across from the larger Setae Range to the south, provides the only water access to the Gulf of Legions. Before the era of aircraft and starships, this was one of the most important defensive positions on the continent, and even before the era of the Overqueen, the nearby insect colonies worked together to defend it and repel invaders or break enemy blockades. At its narrowest point, the channel is only 30 miles wide, and it is still regularly patrolled by floating warhives with their squadrons of buzzing fighters and submersibles. To either side of the strait rise the Mandibles, looming, ancient fortresses that house the primary aerospace defense forces for the entire continent.

Queensrock: The hive-city of Queensrock is constructed like an enormous termite mound; its mud-colored exterior is broken by gaping docking bays and entrance tunnels, albeit with the

occasional modernist steel-and-glass addition. Set just offshore in the Gulf of Legions, the city stands upon an island of the same name, artificially constructed along with the narrow causeways connecting it to shore. Thousands of formian workers gave their lives to the monumental task of engineering the city and causeways in ages past. Inside, its chambers are a disconcerting mix of traditional formian architecture and spaces designed to make other species feel at home, with limited degrees of success. The hive's leader, **Morgebard of the Thousand Spines** (LN formian queen), is a commanding presence who brought her city to prominence by seeking trade and collaboration with organizations throughout the Pact Worlds. While the queen herself is almost never seen, her elaborately branded Heralds are a constant presence in the city, and Morgebard can peer through their eyes and take possession of their bodies as the need strikes.

The Seacrown: Nominally controlled jointly by Asana and the Colonies, the Seacrown is actually owned by no one—or at least, no one known to the outside world. Believed to be the central peaks of the ancient impact crater that forms the Shattered Sea, the Seacrown is a collection of sharp mountains rising from the vast and trackless waves. While the lower beaches are accessible, each island is wrapped in a cylindrical force field of unknown technology that starts halfway up the slopes and lances straight up, slowly tapering to a close in the upper atmosphere. Within these half-opaque cells, strange monastery-like cities that conform to no known architectural style are inhabited by lashunta-sized blurs that twist the eye and look like moving gaps in the air. Each time Castrovell's moon eclipses the sun, a door opens briefly in one

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QUEENSROCK

of the force fields. Several modern expeditions have entered in an attempt to make contact with the inhabitants, but so far none have returned, though their gear sometimes reappears on a beach unharmed or is found years later and thousands of miles away.

Towers of Memory: While many of the continent's other intelligent residents—the tri-winged fakoras, the serpentine zenuways, the armored and plains-roaming carinas with their clan-herds and traveling horn lodges—survive by paying heavy tribute to the hives or hiding themselves away in undesirable regions, the inhabitants of the Towers of Memory live bold and unmolested. Rising from the shores of Lake Kechavas, just east of the Plains of Ru, these five towers confound the eye, never quite holding a defined edge. Within them, mysterious creatures called caulborn—extraplanar scholars with two mouths and crests of skin and bone where their eyes should be—collect and catalog memories of select Castrovelians, taking sustenance from the petitioners' psychic energy while they preserve these memories for eternity. No one knows when the first queen approached them, or what she was told, but all of the Colonies enforce a strict taboo against bothering the scholars, and even queens have their memories preserved if a caulborn requests it. In return, the hives are allowed to petition the scholars for information and otherworldly advice, though only those in great need dare approach the glistening towers, for the prices the caulborn demand are often unsettlingly personal.

Watchpost Quinai: Little do the formians know that the Gulf of Legions' most foreboding stretch of coastline hosts Watchpost Quinai, a secret lashunta listening post. From there, highly trained agents funded by an intercity coalition monitor formian movements and occasionally launch raids into the heart of enemy territory. Despite the recent accord between the two civilizations, lushunta leaders have felt no particular inclination to decommission the watchpost or inform the formians of its existence, and mercenaries or patriots with more courage than sense are still sometimes recruited to launch high-paying—and high-casualty—incursions from its secret bunkers.

QUEENSROCK

LN hive warren

Population 1,150,000 (99% formian, 1% other)

Government autocracy (Queen Mother)

Qualities devout, insular

Maximum Item Level 10

SOVYRIAN

Separated from other continents by the icebergs and frost cyclones of the Snowsalt Sea and the vicious psiwhales and ship-breaking komohumes of the Sea of Teeth, the elves of Sovyrian have always held themselves apart from Castrovel's other cultures. The disaster of the Gap hit their long-lived people harder than most other races, and their traditional standoffishness has since grown into xenophobia. Those elves who choose to live among other races are called Forlorn

by their Sovyrian kin, and their fraternization with lesser, untrustworthy cultures is seen as a stain on their legacy. To an elf of Sovyrian, it is an unfortunate necessity to go among other peoples to trade, and any right-minded elf does so as little as possible, returning home or to elven enclaves abroad as soon as the job is done.

Elven isolationism causes some problems. Given the elves' low birth rate and their reticence to sully themselves with outside contact, Sovyrian is constantly in danger of becoming a bit player on the global and galactic stage, prompting the government to promote several workarounds. The first is the Blood Right, a policy that states any half-elf or person with observable elven blood can automatically claim citizenship in Sovyrian. This is crucial to the nation-continent's economy, as these half-elves (as well as the gnomes who are allowed to live among elves as part of ancient tradition) are able to travel and trade with both elves and outsiders without stigma. The second custom, the Masking, allows elves who are uncomfortable interacting with outsiders to wear masks while doing so, thus allowing any dishonor to be transferred to the masks instead of themselves. This practice is particularly popular among diplomats and soldiers, who find that masks also help emphasize their cultural unity and unsettle their opponents.

For all its isolationism, Sovyrian remains sophisticated and worldly. The cultural norm of emphasizing magic and craftsmanship over mass production helps the elves maintain continuity with their ancestors and means that Sovyrian produces some of the most impressive spellcasters in the system. Their people regularly employ magic items rarely seen by outsiders. Though its citizens have embraced modern technology, their designs tend toward the artistic and fantastical, with an emphasis on biotech; even their densest cities can feel like pastoral wonderlands. These magic and artisan technologies, operating in unique and proprietary ways, are Sovyrian's chief exports, and governmental export restrictions create artificial scarcity to ensure that elven goods remain rare and expensive.

The extreme unified front by Sovyrian's residents leads most to assume Sovyrian is a restrictive totalitarian state. In fact, the opposite is true—the Sova, who are the leaders of the High Families of El and serve as Sovyrian's heads of state, focus almost exclusively on preserving the nation's borders and economic security, leaving cities and settlements to govern themselves. As a result, most Sovyrian residents enjoy great freedom, living in traditional harmony with the land or following their passions in small settlements.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

The elves' freewheeling nature, combined with a decreased population from the nation's heyday, means the continent is home to a surprising number of lost or abandoned ruins long since reclaimed by the continent's evergreen forests. Below are some of the settlements of modern significance.

Cordona: Positioned at the tip of the Clariel's Arm peninsula, this port city is a bustling and pleasant metropolis, overshadowed only somewhat by the massive steel wall—guarded by soldiers and miles of automated defenses—that cuts it off from the rest of the mainland. All visitors seeking access to the continent without a direct invitation are funneled through Cordona, where they can petition at the various corporate enclaves, embassies, and guild offices. The city is one of the largest on the continent, and a study in irony, for while the elves may officially disdain the sea of outsiders and expats living in its boroughs, they also feel the need to impress these same people with their wealth and majesty, and thus the city is a triumph of beautiful architecture and utopian hospitality. So great is the appeal that many elves actually vacation in the city, especially for Revelnight, the citywide masquerade whose charming colored lanterns and ask-no-questions frivolity greatly bolsters the population of half-elves. This is in direct contrast to the rest of the year, when disembodied eyeballs controlled by the city's overseers float magically on every street corner, carefully watching for danger or signs of subversion.

El: The great capital city of the elves has changed little since antiquity. The neighborhood-sized Great Houses of the city's aristocracy, the High Families, still climb the cliff walls to either side of the city's magnificent waterfall, these traditional structures augmented with the latest biotech and magical architectural advances. The Woven River earns its name with the dozens of elegant canals that crisscross the city in looping designs, the resulting island-neighborhoods connected by footbridges older than the Gap. Yet, while many ancient structures still stand, proudly maintained by their owners, the spaces between them are thick with modern skyscrapers—gleaming glass melded with living trees to create a beautiful surrealist forest, between which hovercars and shuttles buzz like insects. With river trade largely abandoned, the wide current is now enjoyed solely by yachts and pleasure barges, and the venerable docks now serve as the city's spaceport, where ships land under the shadow of artistically concealed energy shields and artillery capable of firing on aggressors in orbit, ensuring that no one lands without proper authorization. Just downriver from the docks stand the ruins of the Arch of Refuge, the great gateway that once demarcated a magical portal to Golarion but crumbled—or was destroyed—during the Gap. Today, this site is a shrine where elves can mourn memories lost to the Gap or aid the monastic Adducaï, scholar-therapists seeking to restore some of

those lost connections through painstaking research and clever divination.

Nerundel: Situated high in the Korinath Divide, the mountains that separate eastern and western Sovyrian, this city is inhabited by more gnomes than elves, with all the chaos that entails. While its resident university, Nerundel Halls, is a marvel of both eclectic scholarship and perilous cliffside architecture, Nerundel's true claim to fame is the Greengate, a permanent portal to the First World that allows the gnomes to trade freely with the fey. Some fey travel to Nerundel via the Greengate to study at the university. The Greengate also allows enough primal nature magic through to turn the otherwise rugged mountains into a blooming paradise for several miles around Nerundel, and biotech researchers and spellworkers flock to the city for the chance to harness some of the precious energy. The Xenowardens also keep a permanent delegation nearby to study the ancient artifact and ensure it isn't abused.

Southwatch: This city-fortress sits upon Sovyrian's southernmost point, just miles from the frozen cliffs of Aurovas, Castrovel's southern ice cap. Each winter, the narrow ribbon of ocean between the two landmasses freezes, creating a causeway of ice and snow. That's when the soldiers of Southwatch earn their keep, for across this bridge flood the white-furred horrors of Aurovas's windswept wastes: semi-intelligent aurovaks eager to drink the hot blood of the north. For an entire season, Southwatch



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holds them off, repeatedly blowing up the causeway only to watch it freeze into shape again. Once the weather grows warm, the aurovaks' feeding frenzy ceases and the creatures vanish back into the glacier mountains of Aurovas. For generations, the elves have tried everything to eliminate the aurovaks once and for all, but the creatures burrow deep into the ice and disappear without a trace during the warm season, making even aerial bombardment ineffective. In recent years, however, the horde has not appeared, leading some to assume such a mission has finally succeeded—and others to worry that the aurovaks may have finally learned to plan more complex assaults.

Telasia, the Portal Grove: Records show that in ancient times, Telasia was a magical transit hub, connecting far-flung settlements across the world. Inside each of the town's fortified tree-shaped buildings stood a different *aiudara*, and travelers paid the resident Transarchs for use of the portals. Sometime during the Gap, however, the situation changed. Today, the city is the sole domain of the green dragon Urvosk, who claims the title of High Transarch and ownership of the entire grove. As much as Sovyrian officials would love to reclaim the "lost" city, the dragon's cadre of high-priced lawyers keeps them from getting far, and claims of thermonuclear devices embedded in every building keep them from trying to take it by force. For now, anyone wishing to use the portals must pay off or otherwise convince the capricious dragon, who smugly reminds travelers that no one but he knows where every portal leads and that some of them connect to magically hidden locations completely lost to history. The dragon does, however, have a soft spot for adventurers and sometimes hires them to explore these secret realms on his behalf.

EL

N port city

Population 600,000 (90% elf, 9% half-elf, 1% other)

Government oligarchy (Convocation of High Families)

Qualities academic, cultured, insular, technologically average

Maximum Item Level 20

UKULAM

Whereas each of Castrovel's three great species has a continent to call its own, few records suggest any large-scale colonization of Ukulam ever took place. Instead, its unconquered depths have remained the domain of powerful beasts, deadly plants, and immense fungi that drive a never-ending cycle of evolution, growth, and decay. These inexorable processes ultimately consume settlements, leaving most ruins damaged beyond easy identification.

Despite this, Ukulam is far from untouched by conventional civilization. The constant conflicts between lashuntas and formians played out over the continent's southern half, littering the Ikal Expanse with craters and starship wreckage that were quickly overgrown. Dozens of bases, fortresses, and

way stations dot the coast in a nearly unbroken ring. Since the shirren-brokered treaty 30 years ago, the lashuntas and formians have systematically scaled back their presence here, decommissioning many of the outposts and allowing nature to reclaim them. Both sides nevertheless monitor the continent, maintain peace, and provide aid to travelers from smaller bases and research stations.

Castrovel's dominant species agreed that preserving Ukulam's ecology was in the planet's best interests. Following the peace accords, several nongovernmental organizations such as the Esowath Conservancy formed to maintain the continent's sanctity, with all parties' blessings. These NGOs tightly restrict travel to Ukulam, issuing a limited number of permits each year to a sizable waiting list of academics and tourists. Concerned with the impact of pollution, unrestricted access, and the disruption of the near-constant migratory patterns of Ukulam's countless aerial species, these groups even limit transit over the continent, enforcing these regulations with a force of frontier soldiers supported by a coalition fleet of interceptor starships. For all these organizations' efforts, reports of poaching—driven by a lucrative trade in hides, horns, and more believed to hold supernatural power, pharmaceutical value, or simple prestige—regularly emerge on the planet's infosphere.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

The following are several significant locations on Ukulam.

Caliria Maze: Ukulam's jungle where two smaller rivers join to form the broad Ralhoma is especially thick. Attempts to map it (even using satellites) have failed, suggesting that either the flora is constantly changing or some supernatural force obscures its true appearance from the outside world. Ukulam boasts numerous species with primal magic, and these adepts often speak of a sacred place called Caliria, whence the planet's heart beats with water and life. In this area, armies composed of numerous species have united to turn back prospectors and explorers, often using legendary Caliria as their battle cry. Rumors run wild as to whether Caliria is a grand woodland city, an unspeakably powerful magical font, or nothing more than a metaphor for Ukulam's primal rage.

Esowath Nexus: An erstwhile formian outpost, this comblike structure has been retrofitted to serve as the Esowath Conservancy's base of operations on Ukulam, while the organization's political offices are in Qabarat and Queensrock. Conservancy rangers travel far into the Ikal Expanse and patrol virtually all of the coastal waters, watching for poachers and turning away misguided travelers. The head of operations, **Ualia** (CG female korasha lashunta mystic), thinks that exposing offworld species to Ukulam's beauty can lend politicians leverage in continuing to protect the land, so she regularly awards travel grants to explorers with good track records to survey the region's geography and wildlife.

Ikal Expanse: Ukulam's southern forest is a virtually unbroken stretch of deciduous trees overshadowed only by titanic mushrooms that sprout and wither within weeks. Ecological studies suggest that this is among the most biologically productive locations on Castrovel, if not in all the Pact Worlds. Similar to the plants and fungi, the fauna here is plentiful and often immense. Most famously, the powerful yaruks topple trees in pursuit of food, inadvertently aerating the forest and creating openings for new growth. Any signs of past civilization have disappeared beneath the leaves, yet explorers still dive into the wilderness with dreams of uncovering some lost treasure.

Northern Steps: The tectonic buckling that formed the Singing Range has also uplifted the land to the north. Known as the Northern Steps, these broad plateaus descend with increasing abruptness the farther north and east one travels, eventually ending in dramatic cliffs shorn smooth by Castrovel's last known glaciation event. Warmed only by the mild current flowing north from the Western Sea, the Northern Steps are fairly chilly, made all the more so by the katabatic winds that blow icy rainstorms from the polar ice sheet. A thick taiga of scaly cacti covers the Steps' northern half, and the shovel-footed purhuams that graze on the plains regularly kick up nodes of meteoric iron and preserved scrimshaw carved from the bones of long-extinct species.

Singing Range: Home to several species of ever-gnawing rock rats, these severe peaks are riddled with alpine burrows that whistle faintly in the wind during the summers, when the snow recedes from the highest summits. Millions of years ago, two smaller continents crashed into each other here, forming this constantly growing mountain range. Flyover surveys have sighted battered ruins in the high mountains; it may be possible that these belonged to a lost species that predates even elven and lashunta history.

Station 9: The formians' eastern fortresses boasted numerous defenses to intercept lashunta attacks before they could reach the Colonies. At the outpost identified only as Station 9, the formians developed carefully cultured countermeasures to defend against a possible biological or chemical attack. During the Gap, an attack devastated the site, which was promptly abandoned, but the living countermeasures persisted, reproduced, and evolved. In recent years, scientists have identified amorphous creatures that move about

Station 9 with purpose and even skirmish with local wildlife. The Esowath Conservancy believes these creatures are an invasive species but dares not risk an air strike, which could scatter the biological material into the atmosphere. With public outcry building, the organization is desperate for a plan—and someone bold enough to execute it.

Waklohar's Expeditions: Some tourists can't help but fetishize the exoticism of Ukulam's wilderness, and the entrepreneurial lashunta **Waklohar** (N male korasha lashunta operative) has one of the few recreational installations on the continent. He organizes short-range adventures into the Ikal Expanse and to nearby islands for wide-eyed "adventurers," leading them to several famous landmarks and guaranteeing an exciting wildlife experience. Although Waklohar is a capable survivalist, his strength lies in his ability to craft spectacle, and it is his stoic business partner, the formian **Xcibiz** (LN independent formian taskmaster soldier), who tirelessly manages the finances and ultimately organizes rescue operations when a hapless safari encounters trouble.



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THE CULT OF THE DEVOURER

The Cult of the Devourer is one of the most feared and reviled organizations in the Pact Worlds, and clear evidence of its ravages can be found on the fringes of inhabited space throughout the galaxy. The cult has been around for eons, though individual cells rarely last more than a few decades, and its devotees wage a nonstop war to destroy all existence in the name of their god, the Devourer. In most cases, the cult can be thought of like a hurricane on a low-tech world—it comes with little warning, damages or destroys everything in its furious path, and then weakens and breaks apart for no apparent reason.

Nevertheless, the Cult of the Devourer is more than just a mere storm. It is a widespread interstellar and interspecies organization plotting the downfall of all civilization as part of a broader plan to end existence itself. Although the cult is made up largely of anarchists, its efforts are surprisingly well coordinated and carefully considered. Only by understanding the underlying motives and rough organization of the cult's

various cells, divine agents, and sects can the true threat of the Cult of the Devourer be understood clearly.

CULT ORGANIZATION

There is no central authority that controls the Cult of the Devourer—no specific headquarters, no single acknowledged leader, and no formal hierarchy. A lack of a universal set of rules makes it difficult to even discuss the organization as a whole in any detail—and that's exactly how its members like it. To the cultists, the destruction of everything is a goal that cannot be achieved by creating new rules or societies. The following generalities apply to most groups that consider themselves Devourer cultists, but even these are not hard rules.

CULT CELLS

Lacking any formal hierarchy, each group of Devourer cultists that works together generally refers to itself as a single

"cell" of the Devourer cult. A cell can have as few as two to three cultists, or in rare cases it could have as many as a few thousand, though these larger hordes are more often many cells fused together by an extremely powerful leader or a supernatural agent in order to accomplish a particular goal. Most cells tend toward the smaller side, operating alone but potentially maintaining contact with other cells to coordinate larger attacks. Violent disagreements are common, and different cells or even cultists within the same cell regularly turn on one another. When a cell fractures, it often splinters into multiple smaller cells, each of which strives to grow and recruit more members, thus spreading their destructive faith across the cosmos. Cells usually have a secret base of operations, and sometimes depend on mobile bases such as starships or asteroids.

Within these cells, cultists each join a group (or "choir") within the cult in keeping with their own devotion to the Devourer. Those who take a public role obvious to all are known as "wall breakers," while those who operate in secret are referred to as "hidden ones." Most wall breakers are frontline combatants who generally spend their time attacking outposts of civilization or preparing for such assaults. Hidden ones have roles that require them to pass as ordinary citizens, and many lead double lives, keeping their cult membership secret from coworkers and family members.

There are numerous different sects within the worship of the Devourer, though these are defined more by vague similarities in beliefs and operating methods than by any formal orthodoxy. A cell might drift from sect to sect as its membership and goals change over time, but for all their chaotic squabbling, few cells bother to devise and promote their own doctrines.

Each cell normally has a few senior cultists who guide and command other members of the cell. Called "longteeth," these elder cultists are respected and obeyed not due to any formal rank they hold but simply because a Devourer cultist does not achieve seniority within the cult without battle acumen, cunning, and a long track record of destruction. In some cells, the longteeth are mostly hidden ones, entrusted with planning and organizing tasks the wall breakers then carry out. In other cells, the longteeth are drawn from both choirs and divide their duties to fit their skills and inclinations. It's rare for a cell to have primarily wall breaker longteeth, though a few cells dedicated purely to acting as wandering warbands follow their most accomplished warriors. If a cell is too large for the longteeth to directly command all the cultists, intermediaries step in to lead smaller groups of cultists. These intermediaries are most often called "fangs," though cells develop numerous other terms for them. Fangs arise from subgroups within the cell as needed, primarily through leadership and longevity. If fangs live long enough, they become longteeth. If a fang dies, some other cultist attempts to fill the fallen fang's role.

Above all of these are the atrocites, supernatural agents of the Devourer that sometimes spawn, expand, command,

or train specific cult groups in order to accomplish some task important to the atrocite's own efforts to bring an end to all existence. While atrocites never devote themselves completely to a single cell, they occasionally combine cells into vast hordes under their nihilistic banners, and the largest and most effective cells may be visited by atrocites on a regular basis.

Though it's impossible to make a comprehensive list of all the various elements that can be found in the branches of the Cult of the Devourer, some of the more common elements are expanded on as follows.

HIDDEN ONE CHOIR

While the general public envisions all Devourer cultists as maddened warriors who destroy, kill, maim, and go on cannibalistic rampages, some are more subtle in their methods. While the cult has no shortage of drug-addicted and psychopathic combatants ready to spread death and terror throughout space, the Cult of the Devourer does not depend entirely on mindless mayhem. On the other side of the spectrum are those Devourer devotees who move unnoticed among their prey, gather information, sabotage defenses, spread rumors, and recruit new members among the disaffected and the sadistic members of society. While hidden ones are as diverse as the ordinary citizens they emulate, a few common types are detailed here.

Maw: Maws are the primary recruiters of the Cult of the Devourer, and they are the only cultists who regularly travel between cult strongholds and civilized society. While other hidden ones often integrate deeply into a society for years at a time, acting as sleeper agents and deep-cover insurgents, maws journey extensively on the lookout for potential cultists. They seek the angry, the downtrodden, the insane, and the suffering, and they use a variety of sophisticated psychological techniques to convert these people to the Devourer's faith. For some prospective cultists, it's only a matter of stoking their existing rage at society, teaching them to find meaning and savage joy in destroying the civilizations that caused them such pain. For others—those who've suffered but who haven't yet turned the corner into destructive nihilism—the key is often regret or grief: the maw teaches that the Devourer's destruction of this reality won't simply end the universe but retroactively erase it, thus ensuring that the incidents that caused their guilt or pain never happened in the first place. Most maws are experts at sliding easily between strategies until they find the right one for an individual, and some utilize drugs or magic to help make their targets receptive; yet, almost all such conversions involve offering new recruits a helping hand and giving them a sense of acceptance and agency in their own lives. These strategies are largely rediscovered by each cell through trial and error, but a few helpful maxims exist, such as "Heal a soul so they may break a thousand."

While not all potential recruits make the leap from disaffected citizens to Devourer cultists, there are always more

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individuals who have suffered terrible tragedies or injustices, have lost their moral path, or just want to see the galaxy burn. The cult sometimes maintains those who don't convert completely as useful contacts, but more often such potential recruits meet with unfortunate accidents before they can have a change of heart and blow the maw's cover. A maw may bring new recruits to a nearby active cell or use several recruits to begin a brand-new cell. An experienced maw is thus also likely to be a longtooth, acting as the senior advisor and planner for a network of cells the maw established or strengthened.

Plague Bringer: Plague bringers seek to infect the society within which they operate and weaken it as much as possible in preparation for an attack by one of the cult's cells. While some accomplish this by spreading actual diseases—even researching ever more effective and weaponized viruses to assist in such efforts—plague bringers undertake any form of sabotage. Many are computer experts who intentionally corrupt planetary infospheres with insidious viruses. However, those technophiles who specialize in scraping private data for blackmail material are more often silent cannibals (see below).

Silent Cannibal: Silent cannibals are spies who gather information for cult cells, living lies as deep in targeted societies as they can manage. Not all are actual cannibals—the term refers to their being members of the society they seek to destroy, thus metaphorically eating their own kind—but some certainly take the label literally, and many are serial killers. While committing murders even once every year or two puts silent cannibals at much greater risk of discovery, the dedication needed for a Devourer cultist to live a quiet life as a spy is more than most can manage without at least an occasional killing to assuage their need for destruction.

WALL BREAKER CHOIR

Wall breakers are far more common than hidden ones, and they make no effort to pass as anything other than devotees of the Devourer. Instead, they embrace bizarre appearances and elaborate self-mutilation to better shock and demoralize their victims, from elaborate piercings and burn scars to having their own bone surgically exposed and wearing the skins of their enemies. (Unlike in the church of Zon-Kuthon, these modifications are not to give them the masochistic thrill of pain, but they exist purely to further their god's nihilistic ends.) While this choir includes all the frontline troops who carry out raids and murderous rampages in the name of their god, it too has a variety of more specific roles.

Composer: Composers are among the rarest of Devourer cultists, and the majority of cells have at most one composer. A composer is a kind of mad genius and doom prophet who endlessly contemplates how to spread maximum destruction. Unlike hidden ones, a composer never operates within the confines of normal society. Composers are obsessed zealots, spending every moment plotting even greater acts of destruction. Those cells with a composer often defer to whatever plan or need the composer expresses and may

undertake minor missions to steal experimental weapons, kidnap scholars with ancient lore, or throw themselves against a planet's defenses just to see the response as the composer determines what information and resources are needed for a major operation. Composers have no official authority and command respect and obedience only so long as other members of the cell remain convinced that their schemes are the best way to rain down destruction.

Of all the Devourer cultists, composers are the ones most likely to attempt to write some sort of treatise or philosophic explanation of their devotion to the Devourer. Thus, despite their small numbers, they are often quite influential, inspiring entire sects of Devourer worship.

Degenerator: Like any group operating on an interstellar scale, the Cult of the Devourer needs engineers, mechanics, medics, quartermasters, and support personnel. Unlike most other groups, however, Devourer cultists are dedicated to the destruction of all things, and thus fixing or creating new things could be seen as heresy by some. Solutions for this dilemma vary, and some of these needed roles can be filled by robots, slaves, or even hidden ones who justify the work as necessary for a plan destined to bring greater destruction. But neither robots nor slaves can be trusted with all the work needed to keep a large military cult cell functional, and hidden ones are often better utilized in their capacity as saboteurs and spies. Thus, such tasks often fall to degenerators.

Degenerators have technical skills but do not see what they do as organization or repair. Instead, they claim to create “degenerate” versions of any equipment, person, or system they work on. It is often degenerators who add spikes and skulls to wall breaker armor, create new weapon fusions that coat cult weapons with rust and runes of death, file the teeth of cultists to sharp points, and make surgical additions to injured cultists subjected to their care. Even if responsible for tracking supplies, a degenerator often seeks to satisfy the group's needs in ways counter to whatever would be societally acceptable, such as including halfling meat in a starship's freezers. In the Cult of the Devourer, this ability to keep guns shooting and soldiers breathing without becoming part of the structure of civilization is seen as a blessed talent for devolution.

Frenzied: The frenzied are what most people think of when the Cult of the Devourer is mentioned. Frenzied exist purely to destroy, kill, and terrorize anything they can reach. Many are mentally unbalanced, as few sane minds could embrace the ultimately self-destructive lifestyle that the frenzied lead, while others either have lost all sense of right and wrong through trauma and years of drug use or have overcome it through religious devotion. It is popular to think of the frenzied (and all wall breakers) as nearly mindless killing machines, and certainly some are. But there are also frenzied gunners, officers, pilots, and tankers, and despite the name and the penchant for extreme stimulants and hallucinogens in battle, some frenzied are calm nihilists who work methodically toward their destructive goals.

ATROCITES

The greatest successes of the Cult of the Devourer can often be traced back to the arrival of one of the atrocites, horrific divine agents of the Devourer who sometimes appear to cells in order to reveal secret knowledge, task them with specific missions, or organize them into apocalyptic crusades. As atrocites are the only authority a typical cult cell answers to without question, these beings are the inevitable answer to the question of how large-scale groups of anarchists can operate in concert to threaten all of civilization.

Like the cults they often spawn, atrocites have few similarities. Most appear in a form akin to those of the cult it's addressing, from common humanoids such as lashuntas, orcs, and vesk to more bizarre entities like the barathus of Bretheda or the twisted masses of cysts and tentacles found among the Dominion

of the Black. According to what passes for scripture within the cult, the Devourer creates nothing, not even new shapes, and thus its most powerful agents borrow their forms from other creatures. In place of eyes, an atrocite may have black voids in its empty sockets, and all atrocites' heads are enshrouded in a constant halo of gray haze that sometimes crackles with red energy or offers momentary glimpses of apocalyptic prophecy.

Atrocites are clearly powerful outsiders, but if they have a native plane of existence, no scholar has been able to find it. Many theologists hypothesize that atrocites spend their time drifting through the void of deep space—the environment closest to absolute nothingness—or perhaps in the accretion disks of singularities consuming stars. Some scholars suspect that all atrocites began as mortals, Devourer cultists who engineered acts of destruction so vast, their god granted them a sliver of its own destructive power. Through the ravings and writings of those few who've survived encounters with atrocites, Pact World researchers have determined that the beings can exist perpetually in vacuum, teleport over vast distances, never work together, and prefer building up cult cells to attack and terrorize societies rather than undertaking such efforts directly. Atrocites often speak of themselves planting the seeds of cult victory and then moving on.

DEVOURER SECTS

Some broad, informal sects within the Cult of the Devourer have differing goals and philosophies on how to best serve their uncaring god. While these distinctions have little impact on how other organizations view or deal with cells of the cult, understanding them can be useful in predicting what sorts of attacks a cell may attempt.



Blood Door: Blood Door cells are motivated by the example of the Blood Scourge, a Devourer mystic who led a small fleet of cult ships to attack lone merchant ships, minor colonies, and outposts at the edge of stellar nations' zones of control. The Blood Scourge is believed to have become an atrocite, and while her cell broke up upon her disappearance,

its ships formed the cores of dozens of smaller cells. Blood Door cells endlessly seek to increase the number of lives they claim by whatever means possible, and they keep themselves mobile to constantly search for new targets. They see every death they cause as a sacrifice to the Devourer—the act of killing is referred to as forcing the victim “through the Blood Door”—and they believe such offerings increase their god's power

so it can more easily destroy the universe. Some Blood Door cultists insist that when enough sacrifices have been made, the slaughter will create a portal through which the Devourer will enter from some other realm to begin its final onslaught.

Feaster: Feaster cells focus on complete, unrecoverable destruction. While this sounds obvious given their faith, the requirement to prioritize utter annihilation actually causes them to act differently from many other sects. For instance, if a cult of this sect is in a position to damage 20 starships or obliterate just one, its members would zealously focus on the one they can destroy utterly, on the premise that while damage can be healed or repaired, there is no recovery from total annihilation. This also makes them extremely dangerous in ground combat, as a Feaster is likely to take the time to slit the throat of an injured enemy to confirm the kill rather than focus on those still attacking him. Their name comes from sect members' tendency to engage in cannibalism, consuming the body of their foes as a form of destruction.

Nightmare: Nightmare cells hide within society and work to spread discontent, fear, and misery. They are inspired by a book known as *The Darkest Night*, a tome outlawed on many worlds that presents the idea that societies are nothing more than a series of interconnected conveniences and will ultimately collapse if those within them can be made to question their safety and value. The goal of such a cell is to destroy the perceived worth of society, eventually causing a complete societal breakdown, though many also use these tactics to foster upheavals such as civil wars. Members of this sect are nearly all hidden ones, with a rare wall breaker recruited for use in suicide missions. Their efforts often take decades to come to fruition.

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DEVOURER CULT MYSTICS

While mystics of the Cult of the Devourer often choose the mindbreaker or star shaman connection (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 87, 88), when a particularly large or powerful cult attracts an atrocite, these destructive outsiders often teach their mystic followers the ways of the devastator connection and its related spells. Detailed below, this magic allows Devourer cultists to harness and pervert the universe's mysterious powers to precipitate its eventual destruction. The devastator connection is less common outside of Devourer cults, but it can be found among mystics of any deity devoted to destruction, entropy, or even war.

DEVASTATOR CONNECTION

You have embraced a nihilistic view that values nothing and thus sees only nothingness as having value. You are devoted to destroying the existence of all structure and form, from individual lives to the fabric of societies and even reality itself. You're focused on annihilation through any means, and you draw power from the dissolution of lives.

Associated Deities: Azathoth, Damoritosh, The Devourer, Groetus, Lamashtu

Associated Skills: Intimidate and Perception

Spells: 1st—*carnivorous* (see page 51), 2nd—*caustic conversion*, 3rd—*viral destruction* (see page 51), 4th—*enervation*, 5th—*crush skull*, 6th—*gravitational singularity*

BLOOD MARK (SU) 1st Level

- Whenever you kill or destroy a creature or reduce a creature to 0 HP, you immediately gain a blood mark on your skin, which manifests as a swirled, blood-red black hole. A blood mark lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1). The blood mark is attuned to creatures of the same type as the creature you killed, destroyed, or reduced to 0 HP to gain the blood mark, and it grants you one of the following benefits of your choice: a +1 morale bonus to attacks against creatures of the attuned type, a +1 morale bonus to AC against attacks from creatures of the attuned type, a +1 morale bonus to saving throws against attacks and effects created by creatures of the attuned type, or a +1 morale bonus to damage dealt to creatures of the attuned type. You choose this benefit when you gain the blood mark, and it lasts for as long as the mark lasts. You cannot have more than one blood mark active at a time, and gaining a new blood mark ends any previous blood mark you had active.

DESTRUCTIVE FRENZY (SP) 3rd Level

- You can expend a 1st-level or higher mystic spell slot as a move action to go into a destructive frenzy. This grants you a bonus to attack and damage rolls with basic

melee weapons and small arms. The bonus to attacks is equal the level of spell slot expended – 2 (minimum +1 bonus), and the bonus to damage is equal to the level of the spell slot expended. This frenzy lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1) plus the level of the spell slot expended. You can dismiss your destructive frenzy early as a free action. While your destructive frenzy is active, you can't cast spells or use any other extraordinary, spell-like, or supernatural ability that requires you to spend an action.

DEVASTATING CRITICAL (SU) 6th Level

- When you score a critical hit with an attack, you can spend 1 Resolve Point as a swift action to add the wound critical hit effect to the attack, replacing any other critical hit effect the attack has. If the attack would already have the wound critical hit effect, you can instead spend 1 Resolve Point to add the severe wound critical hit effect to the attack in place of other critical hit effects.

SHATTER DEFENSES (SU) 9th Level

- You can break a target's defenses. Once per day as a standard action, you can reduce the DR, energy resistances, and hardness of a single target by an amount equal to your mystic level (to a minimum of 0) for a number of rounds equal to your mystic level. The target can attempt a Fortitude saving throw to resist this effect (DC = 10 + half your mystic level + your Wisdom modifier). This ability can affect objects.

GREATER BLOOD MARK (SU) 12th Level

- At 12th level, whenever an ally linked by your telepathic bond class feature kills or destroys a creature or reduces a creature to 0 HP, you can grant yourself or one other ally linked by your telepathic bond a greater blood mark. This functions as the blood mark connection ability (see above), but the bonus is +2 and the subject that gains the blood mark decides which of the benefits to gain. You cannot have more than one greater blood mark active at a time, and granting a new greater blood mark ends any previous greater blood mark you had active. A creature cannot benefit from more than one greater blood mark at a time or from a blood mark as well as a greater blood mark, though you can benefit from both your own blood mark and a greater blood mark.

MYSTIC BLOODLUST (EX) 15th Level

- At 15th level, you gain renewed vigor when one of your foes is brought low. When you or an ally linked by your

telepathic bond class feature scores a critical hit against a foe, as a reaction you can spend 1 Resolve Point to regain a number of Stamina Points equal to three times your mystic level, plus your Wisdom modifier (up to your maximum number of Stamina Points). Once you have benefited from mystic bloodlust, you can't gain the benefits from this ability again until you rest to recover Stamina.

CIRCLE OF DEVASTATION (SU) 18th Level

- At 18th level, you can channel your destructive energies into a sphere of devastation around you. As a standard action, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to create a burst of energy in a 30-foot radius around you, dealing 12d10 force damage (Reflex half) to all creatures and objects in the area. Crackling residual energies turn the area into difficult terrain (even empty spaces in the air or vacuum around you) for 1 round per mystic level. You are not affected by this difficult terrain. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to your Wisdom modifier.

NEW SPELLS

The following spells are most common among Cult of the Devourer mystics, but any mystic can select them.

CARNIVOROUS 1

School transmutation

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range personal

Duration 1 minute/level

Your mouth expands to twice its normal size, and fills with rows of razor-sharp teeth, giving you

a bite attack. This attack is treated as an attack with a basic melee weapon with the operative special quality for purposes of proficiency and Weapon Specialization and for other abilities that function with basic melee operative weapons. You can make this attack without using any limbs and when pinned.

The attack deals 1d4 piercing damage. At 7th level, the damage increases to 2d4. At 10th level, it increases to 2d8. At 14th level, it increases to 3d8. At 16th level, it increases to 4d8. At 18th level, it increases to 5d8. At 20th level, it increases to 10d8.

VIRAL DESTRUCTION 3

School necromancy

Casting Time 1 reaction

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

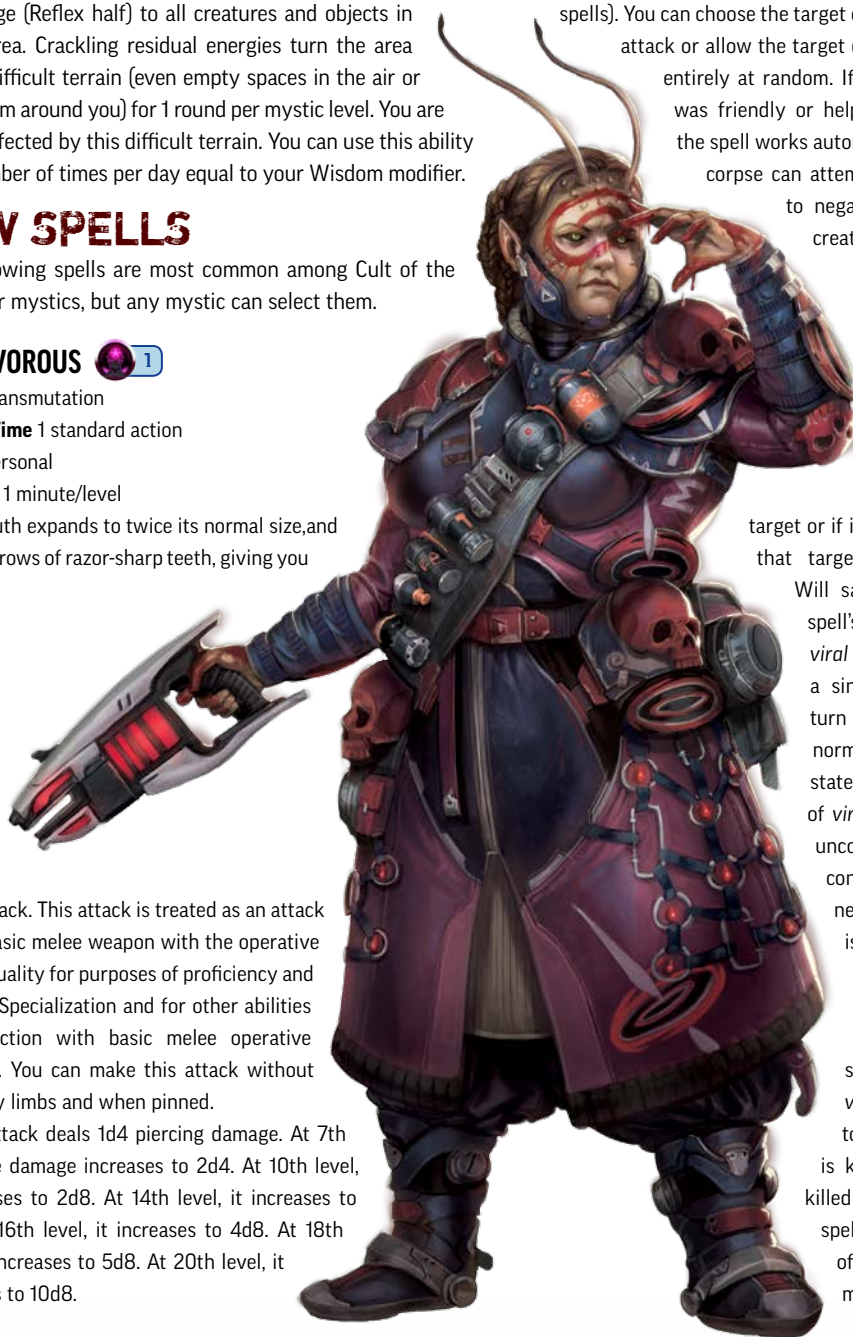
Target one newly dead creature; see text

Duration instantaneous; see text

Saving Throw Will negates, see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

You can cast this spell only immediately after a creature in range dies. On its next turn in the initiative order, the corpse stands up (if applicable; this does not require a move action), can take a single move action to move up to its speed, and makes a single attack using the weapons and bonuses it had when alive (though it can't use class features, spell-like abilities, or spells). You can choose the target of the affected creature's attack or allow the target corpse to select a target entirely at random. If the target of this spell was friendly or helpful toward you in life, the spell works automatically; otherwise, the corpse can attempt a Will saving throw to negate this spell, as if the creature were still alive.

After making its attack, the creature that you have targeted with *viral destruction* falls and is dead as normal. However, if this attack kills the affected creature's target or if it knocks it unconscious, that target must succeed at a Will saving throw (using the spell's DC) or be subject to *viral destruction* and make a single attack on its next turn before returning to its normal dead or unconscious state. If the secondary target of *viral destruction* is merely unconscious and becomes conscious again before its next action, that creature is freed from the *viral destruction* effect and the spell ends. Each attack caused by this spell can transfer the *viral destruction* effect to its target if that target is knocked unconscious or killed by the attack, until the spell has affected a number of creatures equal to your mystic level.



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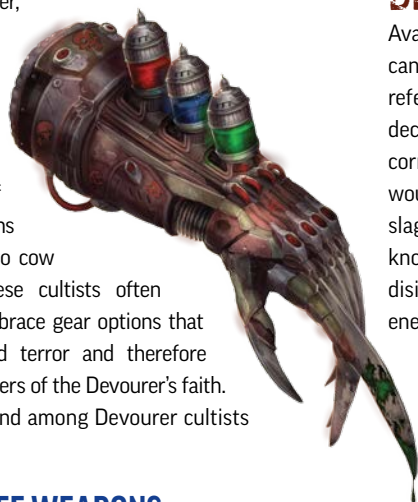
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DEVOURER CULT GEAR

Members of the Cult of the Devourer often take little care of their equipment. They are perfectly happy to grab whatever is available from communal piles of armor or to rip weapons from their foes, fire them until they're empty, or wield them until they shatter, and then toss them aside. However, the Devourer cultists who infiltrate societies more subtly are well aware of the value of terrifying-looking weapons when they are aiming to cow entire populations. These cultists often encourage others to embrace gear options that spread doubt, fear, and terror and therefore extend the insidious fingers of the Devourer's faith.

Some equipment found among Devourer cultists is detailed below.



WEAPONS

Statistics for each of the following weapons can be found on its corresponding weapon table.

DISINTEGRATOR WEAPONS

Available as pistols (small arms), rifles (longarms), and cannons (heavy weapons), these powerful weapons are often referred to by the more scientific term "high-energy proton decouplers," as they produce streams of energized fields that corrode and break down matter much like subatomic acid would. However, since their effects appear to turn metal to slag, plastic to vapor, and flesh to goo, they're commonly known as "disintegrators." Devourer cultists particularly revere disintegrators because the weapons slough away their enemies' flesh.

UNCATEGORIZED WEAPONS

The following weapons are not considered part of any other weapon category.

ADVANCED MELEE WEAPONS

ONE-HANDED WEAPONS	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	CAPACITY	USAGE	BULK	SPECIAL
UNCATEGORIZED								
Painclaw, ghoulish	3	1,250	1d8 S & P	—	40 charges	1	1	Injection (see text), unwieldy
Painclaw, demonic	11	25,000	2d8 S & P	Bleed 1d6	40 charges	1	1	Injection (see text), unwieldy
Painclaw, draconic	19	560,000	6d8 S & P	Bleed 2d6	40 charges	1	1	Injection (see text), unwieldy

SMALL ARMS

ONE-HANDED WEAPONS	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	RANGE	CRITICAL	CAPACITY	USAGE	BULK	SPECIAL
DISINTEGRATOR									
Disintegrator pistol, liquidator	6	4,500	1d10 A	15 ft.	—	20 charges	2	L	—
Disintegrator pistol, decimator	11	28,000	1d20 A	20 ft.	—	20 charges	2	L	—
Disintegrator pistol, executioner	16	200,000	2d20 A	25 ft.	Corrode 1d6	40 charges	4	L	—
Disintegrator pistol, eradicator	20	745,000	3d20 A	30 ft.	Corrode 2d6	40 charges	4	L	—

LONGARMS

TWO-HANDED WEAPONS	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	RANGE	CRITICAL	CAPACITY	USAGE	BULK	SPECIAL
DISINTEGRATOR									
Disintegrator rifle, liquidator	6	4,740	1d20 A	30 ft.	Corrode 1d6	40 charges	4	2	—
Disintegrator rifle, decimator	11	29,000	3d10 A	30 ft.	Corrode 2d6	40 charges	4	2	—
Disintegrator rifle, executioner	16	210,000	5d10 A	30 ft.	Corrode 3d6	80 charges	8	2	—
Disintegrator rifle, eradicator	20	745,000	5d20 A	30 ft.	Corrode 4d6	80 charges	8	2	—

HEAVY WEAPONS

TWO-HANDED WEAPONS	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	RANGE	CRITICAL	CAPACITY	USAGE	BULK	SPECIAL
DISINTEGRATOR									
Disintegrator cannon, liquidator	6	4,800	1d20 A	40 ft.	Corrode 1d6	40 charges	4	3	Line, unwieldy
Disintegrator cannon, decimator	11	29,500	3d10 A	40 ft.	Corrode 2d6	40 charges	4	3	Line, unwieldy
Disintegrator cannon, executioner	16	220,000	5d10 A	40 ft.	Corrode 3d6	80 charges	8	3	Line, unwieldy
Disintegrator cannon, eradicator	20	765,000	5d20 A	40 ft.	Corrode 4d6	80 charges	8	3	Line, unwieldy

PAINCLAW (DEMONIC, DRACONIC, GHOULISH)

This powered gauntlet has bladed spikes for fingers, which have built-in injectors connected to three reservoirs for storing substances used with the injection weapon special property. A painclaw can carry up to 3 doses of a drug, an injury poison, or a medicinal compound. Rather than trigger the injection on the weapon's first attack, you can choose whether to inject one of these substances upon dealing damage with the painclaw (and even select which material to inject, if the three reservoirs contain different compounds). A painclaw can inject only one substance per attack.

The hand wearing a painclaw can't be used to hold or operate any other weapon or piece of equipment. Donning or removing the painclaw is a full action. A painclaw cannot be disarmed.

WEAPON FUSIONS

Weapon fusion prices are based on weapons' item levels; see the Table 7-13 on page 192 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*.

ANNIHILATOR

LEVEL 8

A weapon with the *annihilator* fusion looks corroded, worn, and crudely formed. If a target is slain by an attack with an *annihilator* weapon, the target disintegrates entirely (as though by the *disintegrate* spell).

VICIOUS

LEVEL 5

Vicious weapons have sinister appearances. A *vicious* weapon gains the boost special weapon property, but when you make an attack with the boosted damage, you take damage equal to the additional boost damage. This damage applies even if your attack misses, and it is not reduced by DR, resistance, or any other ability. The boost is 1d4, plus an additional 1d4 for every 6 item levels the weapon has. If the weapon does not use charges or ammunition, boosting it takes a standard action and does not expend any additional charges or ammunition. You cannot boost an attack made with the automatic, blast, explode, or line weapon special property. Weapons that have the boost special weapon property cannot be *vicious*.

ARMOR UPGRADES

Most Devourer cults acquire whatever armor they can through any means necessary.

UPGRADE	LEVEL	PRICE	SLOTS	ARMOR TYPE	BULK
Grim trophies	1	125	1	Any	—
Weapon spikes	Varies	Varies	1	Heavy, powered	Varies

ARMOR UPGRADE DESCRIPTIONS

Specific armor upgrades favored by Devourer cultists are described below.

DISINTEGRATOR GEAR BOOSTS

Soldiers can choose the following gear boost using the gear boost class feature.

Caustic Burns (Ex): When you score a critical hit with a weapon from the disintegrator category, you increase its corrode critical hit effect damage by 1d6. If it does not have a corrode critical hit effect, the weapon gains a 1d6 corrode critical hit effect. You can add this corrode critical hit effect to your disintegrator weapon even if it has another critical hit effect.

GRIM TROPHIES (MAGIC)

Devourer cultists often adorn their armor with magically enhanced trophies representing their most meaningful kills, such as skulls or other bits of bone or exoskeleton taken from slain foes, defiled holy symbols, broken bits of weapons, or bloodied and tattered badges or seals of authority.

While wearing armor with grim trophies, if you successfully cause a foe to be shaken, the foe applies the -2 penalty from that condition to weapon damage rolls in addition to the other rolls it normally applies to.

WEAPON SPIKES

A suit of armor covered in wicked spikes is an iconic piece of devourer cultist gear. You can add a one-handed basic melee weapon of light or negligible bulk to your armor to act as weapon spikes. You pay 125% of the cost of the selected basic melee weapon to add it as an upgrade. You must have a hand free to attack with the weapon spikes (so you can maneuver a foe into a position where the spikes are effective), unless the foe is grappling you or you are grappling the foe (in which case you can attack with the weapon spikes even if you do not have a free hand). You can also make attacks with weapon spikes when pinned, though only against the creature pinning you.

MAGIC ITEM

Atrocities sometimes give favored Devourer cult leaders and hidden ones a *ring of fangs*.

RING OF FANGS

LEVEL 3

MAGIC ITEM (WORN) PRICE 315 BULK —

When you wear this ring, your teeth become long and sharp, giving you a powerful bite attack. You can choose to have your unarmed attacks deal lethal piercing damage, and if you are 3rd level or higher, you automatically gain a special version of the Weapon Specialization feat that adds double your level to the damage of these unarmed attacks (rather than adding your level).

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ALIEN ARCHIVES

Castrovel is home to a variety of species, but such strange and dangerous creatures can be found on any world.

UNIVERSAL CREATURE RULES

The following rules apply to many different kinds of creatures.

Construct Immunities (Ex): Constructs are immune to all the same things as undead (see below), as well as necromancy effects.

Stellar Alignment (Su): This creature has stellar and zenith revelations. When using stellar revelations, the creature is always considered attuned. When you roll initiative for the creature, roll 1d3. Once that many rounds have elapsed, the creature is considered fully attuned and gains access to its zenith powers. After it uses a zenith power, it's no longer fully attuned; roll 1d3 again to see how many rounds it will take to recharge.

Undead Immunities (Ex): Undead are immune to bleed, death effects, disease, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, sleep, and stunning. They are also immune to ability damage,



COMBATANT



EXPERT



SPELLCASTER

ability drain, exhaustion, fatigue, negative levels, and nonlethal damage. They are immune to effects that require Fortitude saves (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless).

Unliving (Ex): A construct or undead has no Constitution modifier and is immediately destroyed when it reaches 0 Hit Points. An unliving creature doesn't recover from damage naturally, but a construct can be repaired with the right tools or magic. An unliving creature with fast healing benefits from that ability. Unliving creatures don't breathe, eat, or sleep. They can't be raised or resurrected.

FERRAN

CR
5

XP
1,600



Ferran mechanic

N Small humanoid (ferran)

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE

HP 64

EAC 17; **KAC** 18; +2 vs. bull rush and reposition

Fort +6; **Ref** +4; **Will** +8; +4 vs. radiation

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical dueling sword +12 (1d6+7 S)

Ranged frostbite-class zero pistol +10 (1d6+5 C; critical staggered [DC 17])

Offensive Abilities momentum, overload (DC 17), target tracking

STATISTICS

Str +2; **Dex** +0; **Con** +3; **Int** +5; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +11, Computers +16, Engineering +16, Intimidate +11, Physical Science +16

Languages Common, Ferran

Other Abilities artificial intelligence (exocortex), custom rig (datapad), mechanic tricks (energy shield [10 HP, 5 min.], neural shunt), remote hack (DC 17), wireless hack

Gear d-suit I, frostbite-class zero pistol with 1 battery, tactical dueling sword, datapad

ECOLOGY

Environment any high-gravity (Ratheren)

Organization solitary, pair, or shift (3-5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Momentum (Ex) A ferran deals 5 additional damage with its first melee attack after it moves at least 10 feet in the same round.

Target Tracking (Ex) As a move action, a ferran can designate a single foe to track, gaining a +2 bonus to attack rolls against that target.

Ferrans are the native inhabitants of Ferrantus-4, a high-gravity world that disappeared into a massive black hole several decades ago. The surviving ferrans live in a sprawling complex on the moon Ratheren (see page 62), which once orbited their home world but is now held in place just outside of the black hole's event horizon. Though the Ratheren moon base is self-sufficient, ferrans are just another disaster away from becoming completely wiped out.

Ferrans are short, squat humanoids with constantly furrowed brows and bald heads. Much of ferran tradition is rooted in science, and as such, they tend to be agnostics and atheists. Compared to other species, the ferran population is relatively small; they will eventually need to do something to grow their numbers if they wish to secure their continuation as a species.

RACIAL TRAITS

Ability Adjustments: +2 Con, +2 Int, -2 Dex

Hit Points: 4

Size and Type: Ferrans are Small humanoids with the ferran subtype.

Low-Light Vision: Ferrans can see twice as far as humans in conditions of dim light.

Momentum: A ferran deals an additional amount of damage equal to its character level with its first melee attack after it moves at least 10 feet in the same round.

Radiation Resistant: Ferrans receive a +4 racial bonus to saving throws against radiation effects.

Sturdy: Ferrans receive a +2 racial bonus to KAC against attempts to bull rush or reposition them.



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KAUKARIKI

CR
1

XP
400



N Small magical beast

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +5

DEFENSE

HP 18

EAC 11; **KAC** 13

Fort +5; **Ref** +5; **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities scamper

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (Ex, clumsy)

Melee sting +9 (1d4+2 P plus kaukariki venom)

STATISTICS

Str +1; **Dex** +3; **Con** +1; **Int** -2; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +0

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +5, Intimidate +5, Stealth +5

ECOLOGY

Environment warm forests (Castrovel)

Organization solitary, pair, or troop (3–18)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Scamper (Ex) When a kaukariki is hit by an attack of opportunity, it can attempt an Acrobatics check as a reaction. If the result of the Acrobatics check equals or exceeds the result of the attack roll, the attack of opportunity misses, and the kaukariki gains a +1 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls until the end of its next turn.

KAUKARIKI VENOM

Type poison (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 11

Track Dexterity; **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds

Cure 1 save

Kaukarikis are inquisitive pests named after the sound of their warning vocalizations in the presence of threats; most who interact with the creatures directly prefer to call them by the less endearing moniker of “stingbats.” Primarily frugivores, kaukarikis scamper about in woodland canopies and glide from tree to tree, each troop migrating widely over its claimed territory to exploit seasonal food sources. The creatures readily take advantage of other supplies of food as needed, including insects, young leaves, bark, and even meat on rare occasions. In fact, particularly large troops—especially those with a newly ascendant alpha female—sometimes organize a hunt to take down modest prey and share the kill to reinforce social bonds within the group.

The creature’s eponymous stinger serves both defensive and offensive purposes. Few predators in the kaukarikis’ range are willing to risk the painful venom, especially because the

pests often rally to one another’s defense to mob assailants. This fearsome reputation seems to embolden kaukarikis, which infamously incite each other to harass trespassers as a way of demonstrating bravery and establishing a pecking order within the troop. For all their venom’s power, it isn’t produced directly by the kaukarikis’ bodies; many of their favorite fruits and seeds are toxic, and the creatures’ digestive systems separate and store the poisons within a small venom sac near the tip of the tail. As a result, kaukarikis fed different diets might develop venom that damages a different ability score or lose their poison altogether.

Kaukariki mating habits often coincide with massive feasts of fruits, with the male that consumes the most food being seen as the most desirable mate. The alpha female chooses first from among the potential mates, followed by the other females that have the alpha’s permission. A female that attempts to take a mate without permission is often attacked and driven off by the rest of the troop. Such a kaukariki is then left to fend for herself, and sometimes she becomes the alpha of her own troop.

Kaukarikis are most common on the continent of Ukulam, though on Asana they have adapted to the dominant lashunta city-states by adopting new habits better suited to urban environments. The people of Castrovel err on the side of deterring and dispersing kaukarikis back into the wild, though they don’t hesitate to take more drastic action when a local population gets out of hand. That’s even truer in the famed fruit orchards of southern Asana, where the kaukarikis can be so disruptive that local authorities often incentivize hunting down the creatures to trim their numbers.



LORE GUARDIAN

CR
2

XP
600



N Medium construct (magical)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +12

DEFENSE

HP 28

EAC 13; **KAC** 15

Fort +2; **Ref** +2; **Will** +0

Immunities construct immunities; **DR** 2/adamantine; **SR** 13

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical spear +10

(1d6+6 P) or

slam +10 (1d4+6 B)

Ranged tactical spear +8 (1d6+6 P)

Offensive Abilities eldritch attacks, transposing strike

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +2; **Con** –; **Int** –; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –5

Languages see species tradition (can't speak)

Other Abilities mindless, species tradition, unliving

Gear tactical spear

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or congregation (2–8)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Eldritch Attacks (Su) A lore guardian's slam attack and attacks it makes with analog weapons are treated as magic for the purpose of overcoming DR and damaging incorporeal creatures.

Species Tradition (Ex) A lore guardian mimics the anatomy and mannerisms of the culture that created it. A lore guardian counts as both a construct and a member of its parent species for any effect related to its type and subtype (such as for the *bane* weapon fusion). It also understands but cannot speak one of its parent species' languages.

Transposing Strike (Su) Once per day after making a ranged attack with an analog weapon, a lore guardian can activate a special teleportation effect as a swift action.

This either teleports the ranged weapon back into the construct's hands or teleports the construct to the weapon's location (maximum 100 feet). When using the latter option, the lore guardian appears with the weapon in its hands adjacent to the target of its ranged attack (if it hit) or in a randomly determined nearby space (if it missed; see Missing with a Thrown Weapon on page 245 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*).

Although technological constructs are especially popular in the modern era, many ancient cultures created magical automatons in their own images. Known as lore guardians, these sentries are fairly common in abandoned ruins from bygone eras, where they tirelessly chase off would-be looters.

Unlike golems, lore guardians have only limited magical resistances, and they are animated strictly by magic, not by bound spirits or outsiders.

Lore guardians are echoes of their parent cultures, and they are often psychically imbued with those societies' basic traditions. They infrequently move about their assigned areas, mindlessly aping their creators' behaviors and rituals. Even after millennia, lore guardians recognize their creators' species, and a creature of such a species can often approach the constructs peacefully. A successful DC 18 Diplomacy check is often sufficient to calm most lore guardians susceptible to negotiation (though the GM can decide whether this is possible for a particular lore guardian).

VARIANT LORE GUARDIANS

Most lore guardians are made of stone, but different materials are equally suitable. The following are typical variants, though versions made of stronger materials are possible and often have a higher CR.

Common Metal: The construct's DR increases to 4/adamantine, but the construct's spell resistance doesn't apply to spells that deal electricity damage.

Wood: The construct's base speed increases to 40 feet, and its Reflex save bonus increases to +4, but it loses its DR.



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RENKRODA, WHISKERED

CR
5

XP
1,600



N Large animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE

HP 75

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +9; **Ref** +9; **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee bite +14 (1d6+10 P) or
tail +11 (1d8+10 B)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities roar, upending charge

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +2; **Con** +3; **Int** -4; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +16, Stealth +11, Survival +11

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm forests (Castrovel)

Organization solitary or gang (2-5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Roar (Ex) As a standard action, a whiskered renkroda can bellow ferociously, causing all enemies within 60 feet to become shaken for 1d4+1 rounds (Will DC 13 negates). If the renkroda hits an opponent with its tail attack, it can activate this ability as a move action before the end of its next turn. After a whiskered renkroda roars, it must wait 1d6 rounds before it can do so again. This is a mind-affecting, sense-dependent fear effect.

Upending Charge (Ex) A whiskered renkroda takes no penalty to its attack roll when using the charge action. If it hits, it can immediately initiate a trip combat maneuver (this takes no action).

Renkrodas make up an extensive category of large reptilian hypercarnivores that are distinguished by their long necks, decorative spines, and deadly sprints. They range across broad swaths of the continents of Asana and Ukulam on Castrovel, and due to their size and place near the top of the food chain, they are often solitary and aggressively territorial. Their terrifying bellows—signaling the creatures' efforts to maintain boundaries between one another and warn scavengers away from fresh kills—are one of the iconic sounds of northern Castrovel's wilderness.

The whiskered renkroda is among the smaller varieties of renkroda, adapted to move easily through heavily forested areas and distinguished by the additional antennae that grow from its chin, which help it detect prey hiding in dense foliage. Like others of its kind, a whiskered renkroda has a four-chambered heart and a throat that can expand up to twice its normal diameter, allowing the creature to

gulp air quickly and circulate

blood effectively while

in pursuit of prey. A

typical hunting whiskered

renkroda uses trees for cover

as it stalks its victims or waits

for a target to approach and

then makes a sudden charge to

snag its victim or knock it down.

Because many of Castrovel's

herbivores boast deadly defenses,

the smaller renkrodas are fairly

discerning when selecting prey.

Some whiskered renkrodas can

be initially timid around

unfamiliar humanoids, not

knowing whether they are too

dangerous or more trouble than they're

worth. The hungrier the animals grow,

though, the more likely they are to

attack, especially during lean times

when other prey is limited.

Unlike young males of many other species of renkrodas,

whiskered adolescent males sometimes form small gangs

for mutual protection against mature adults and even

larger predators. They wander widely across forested

territory, moving to another location when food grows

scarce. As an alpha member of the gang emerges, the

rest of the group typically scatters, ceding that territory

to the dominant male. In order to broadcast its superiority,

this triumphant renkroda often engages in reckless attacks

throughout its new home and destroys its surroundings,

frequently roaring, scratching at nearby trees and rocks, and

marking with its scent to claim its territory.



SKY FISHER

CR
5

XP
1,600



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N Huge aberration

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

EAC 17; **KAC** 18

Fort +7; **Ref** +7; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities aerial camouflage

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., fly 50 ft. (Ex, good)

Melee bite +14 (1d6+7 P plus fisher poison) or
tentacle +11 (1d8+7 B)

Ranged lasso +14 (1d4+7 B nonlethal plus entangled)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (15 ft. with tentacle)

Offensive Abilities lasso

STATISTICS

Str +2; **Dex** +4; **Con** +3; **Int** -1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** -1

Skills Acrobatics +11, Stealth +11

Languages Castrovelian (can't speak); telepathy 60 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any sky (Castrovel)

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

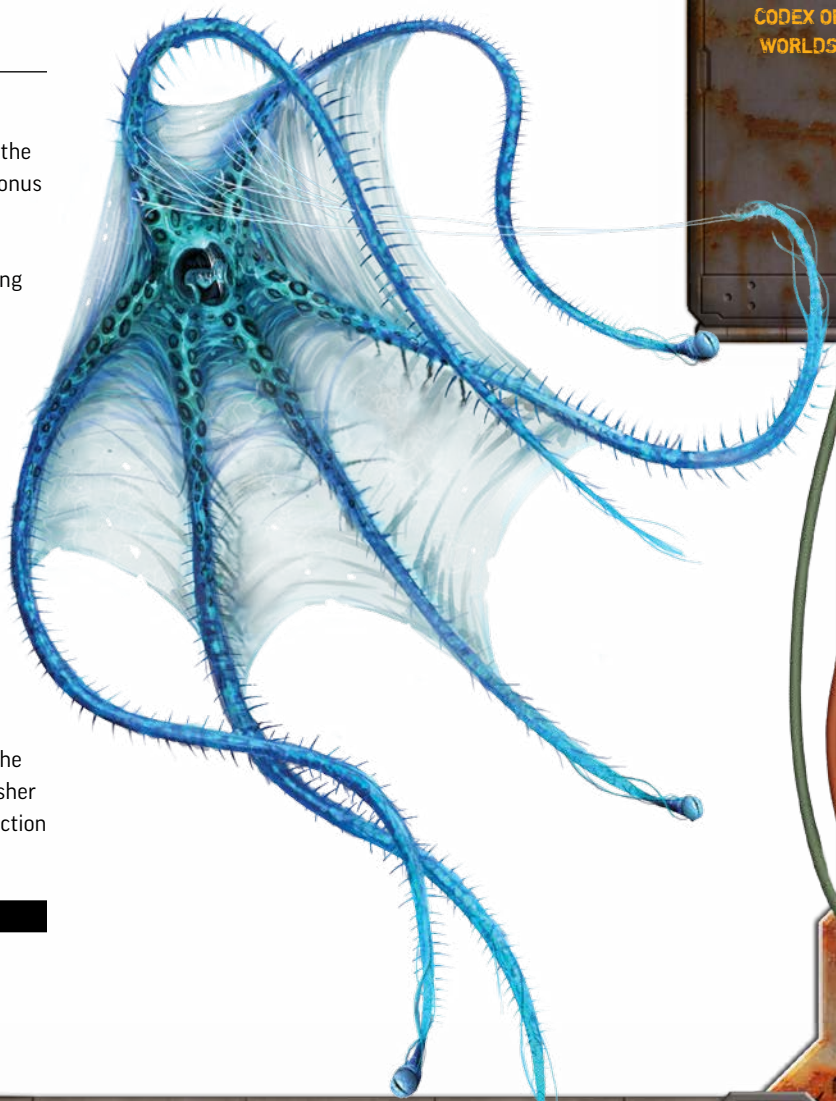
Aerial Camouflage (Su) As a swift action, a sky fisher can cause its body to become transparent. While airborne and using this ability, the sky fisher gains the staggered condition, but it also gains a +10 racial bonus to Stealth checks and can attempt Stealth checks without cover or concealment.

Lasso (Ex) A sky fisher is capable of spinning and casting gooey filaments that target KAC and have a range increment of 50 feet (maximum 250 feet). A target struck by one of these filaments takes the listed amount of nonlethal bludgeoning damage and gains the entangled condition for 1 minute. While entangled, the target can't move farther from the sky fisher than where it began its turn. As a move action, a sky fisher can attempt a combat maneuver check with a +8 bonus to reposition the target, though only to move the target closer; a sky fisher can lift a Medium or smaller target into the air in this way. A creature can end the entangled condition early with a successful DC 23 Acrobatics check to escape or by dealing at least 10 fire or slashing damage to the filament, severing it (the filament has the same AC as the sky fisher). A sky fisher can detach or remove slack in a filament as a swift action and can maintain up to three filaments at a time.

Sky fishers are aerial ambush predators notorious for casting sticky, anesthetizing filaments with which they reel in their quarry. A sky fisher's blood contains hemocyanin, which gives the creature a bluish tone. However, it can deoxygenate its blood to turn its body colorless, making the sky fisher sluggish but rendering it mostly translucent as it watches for prey.

The aberrations have remarkably complex brains that allow them to analyze patterns and even learn speech, which they observe by using their rounded bodies to magnify sounds emanating from the ground below. This predatory intelligence makes sky fishers a major threat to Castrovelian cities, most of which employ automated defenses to scare off the creatures.

Though they spend the entirety of their adult lives in the air, sky fishers lay their eggs in saltwater. Their amphibious young spend 7–8 months in the seas before clambering onto nearby rocks—losing the ability to breathe underwater—and then catching the seasonal winds to become airborne.



FISHER POISON

Type poison (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 13

Track Strength; **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds

Cure 1 save

WOIOKO

CR
4

XP
1,200



Floatborn woioko envoy

LN Medium humanoid (woioko)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +10

DEFENSE

HP 45

EAC 17; **KAC** 17

Fort +3; **Ref** +5; **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities slippery mind

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee tactical spear +8 (1d6+5 P)

Ranged *trailblazer tactical semi-auto pistol* +10 (1d6+4 P)

STATISTICS

Str +1; **Dex** +3; **Con** +0; **Int** +1; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +5

Skills Athletics +15 (+23 when swimming), Culture +10,

Diplomacy +15, Piloting +10, Sense Motive +15

Languages Common, Woiokan

Other Abilities envoy improvisations (get 'em, inspiring boost [13 SP], quick inspiring boost [9 SP]), hold breath

Gear woiokan bodyglove (functions as basic lashunta tempweave), tactical spear, *trailblazer tactical semi-auto pistol* with 90 small arm rounds

ECOLOGY

Environment any oceans (Heicoron IV)

Organization solitary, pair, or delegation (3-12)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hold Breath (Ex) A Floatborn woioko can hold her breath for 10 minutes before she risks drowning.

Slippery Mind (Ex) The first time a woioko fails her saving throw against an enchantment spell or effect, she can attempt a second saving throw 1 round later.

Inhabitants of the ocean planet Heicoron IV (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #1 62), woiokos are humanoids who have smooth, eellike skin. They evolved from underwater-dwelling ancestors, but more recently they split into two subspecies when rising sea levels destroyed their terrestrial civilization. The air-breathing Floatborn remained above the waves and now reside in vast floating arcologies divided into dozens of autonomous nations. The Deepborn genetically modified themselves to breathe water as well as air and returned to their primeval homes deep in the ocean, where short-lived domains constantly vie for dominance. The two subspecies have little contact with one another, each remaining in its preferred environment.

RACIAL TRAITS

Ability Adjustments: See Subspecies.

Hit Points: 4

Size and Type: Woiokos are Medium humanoids with the woioko subtype. Deepborn woiokos also gain the aquatic subtype.

Amphibious: Deepborn woiokos can breathe underwater (thanks to the aquatic subtype), but they can also breathe air and survive on land.

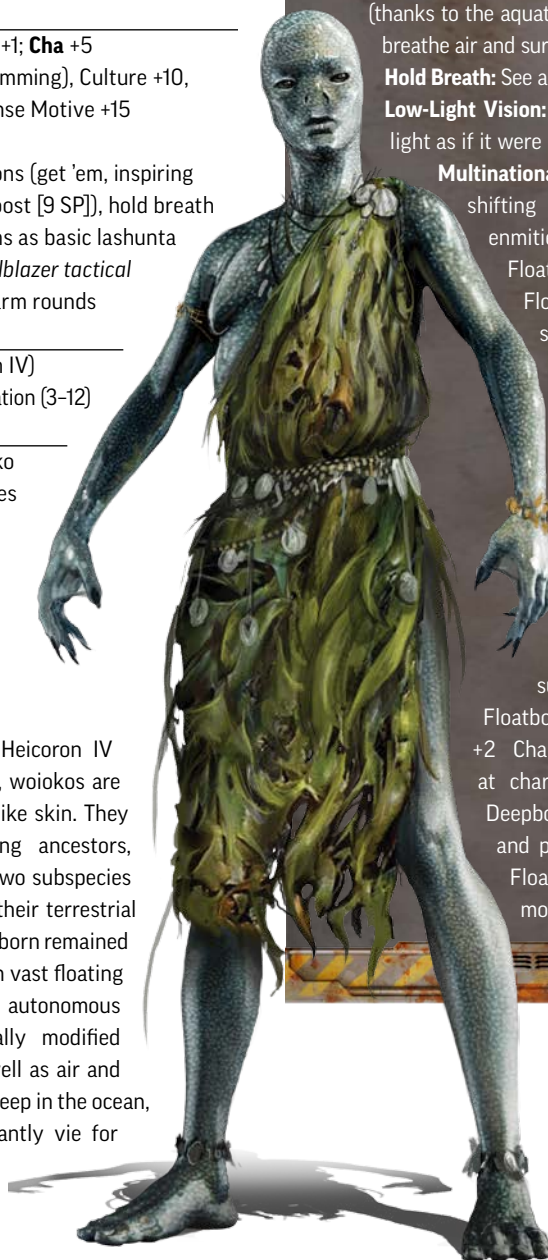
Hold Breath: See above.

Low-Light Vision: All woiokos can see in dim light as if it were normal light.

Multinational: To navigate the ever-shifting waters of alliances and enmities between the scattered Floatborn nations and arcologies, Floatborn woiokos must be skilled at dealing with those from different backgrounds; they receive a +2 racial bonus to Culture and Diplomacy checks.

Natural Swimmer: All woiokos are at home in the water and have a swim speed of 30 feet.

Subspecies: Woiokos belong to one of two subspecies: Deepborn or Floatborn. All woiokos start with +2 Charisma and -2 Constitution at character creation. Additionally, Deepborn woiokos are athletic and powerful (+2 Strength), while Floatborn woiokos are lithe and more graceful (+2 Dexterity).



YARUK

CR
8

XP
4,800



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QUESTIONS
IN QABARAT

PART 2:
THE UKULAM
EXPEDITION

PART 3:
THE LOST
TEMPLE

CASTROVEL

THE CULT OF
THE DEVOURER

ALIEN
ARCHIVES

CODEx OF
WORLDS

N Gargantuan animal

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense (scent), low-light vision;

Perception +21

DEFENSE

HP 130

EAC 20; **KAC** 22

Fort +12; **Ref** +10; **Will** +7

DR 5/-; **Resistances** sonic 10

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee slam +20 (3d4+14 B) or
tail slap +17 (2d6+14 B)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with tail slap)

Offensive Abilities bulldoze, trample, trumpet

STATISTICS

Str +6; **Dex** +0; **Con** +4; **Int** -4; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +1

Skills Athletics +16, Survival +16

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate plains and forests (Castrovel)

Organization solitary or moot (2-12)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bulldoze (Ex) When a yaruk uses its trample ability, it ignores difficult terrain created by plants. Each inanimate obstacle in its path takes twice the yaruk's trample damage (inanimate plants take quadruple damage), and if this would reduce the obstacle to half its Hit Points or fewer, the yaruk can move through the obstacle as though it were difficult terrain.

Trample (Ex) As a full action, a yaruk can move up to its speed and through the space of any creatures that are at least one size smaller than itself. The yaruk does not need to make an attack roll; each creature whose space it moves through takes 3d4+14 bludgeoning damage. A target of a trample can attempt a DC 16 Reflex save to take half damage; if it does, it can't make an attack of opportunity against the yaruk due to the yaruk's movement. A yaruk can deal trample damage to the same creature only once per round.

Trumpet (Ex) A yaruk's vocalizations are audible up to 3 miles away in typical outdoor conditions. As a standard action once per 1d6 rounds, a yaruk can blare loudly in a 60-foot cone, dealing 2d8+8 sonic damage and inflicting both the deafened condition and the off-target condition for 1d4 rounds (a successful DC 16 Fortitude save halves the damage and negates these conditions).

Yaruks are immense herbivores that can readily crop tree leaves, even using their sturdy forelimbs to partly climb trunks to reach even higher. Yaruks are infamously destructive in their ongoing migrations, toppling whatever isn't convenient to walk around. This has hidden benefits, though. Not only does this create natural pathways and game trails that other species exploit, but it also clears swaths through thick canopies, allowing for new growth.

While most yaruks are solitary, they regularly call to their neighbors with deafening bellows magnified by their hollow crests. The yaruks then form temporary gatherings, called moots, and wander together for up to a week afterward before the individual yaruks gradually disperse.



CODEx OF WORLDS

RATHEREN

Moon Base of Desperate Survivors

Diameter: $\times 1/3$

Mass: $\times 1/4$

Gravity: Special

Location: The Vast

Atmosphere: Thin

Day: 25 hours; **Year:** 300 days

Centuries ago, as the ferrans (see page 55)—the inhabitants of the planet Ferrantus-4—developed advanced technology and began to look toward the stars, they saw their race's ultimate fate: a region of nearby space so dark that it could only be a black hole. Luckily, the Ferrantus system was just far enough away to be spared the worst effects of the black hole's gravitation and radiation, but the study of the stellar phenomenon, which the ferrans came to call "the Maw," ignited the curiosity of many of the planet's scientists. Astrophysics became a popular field of study, launching a scientific revolution. Eventually, the ferrans achieved limited space flight, traveling to their moon Ratheren to build a self-sustaining research station to better study the Maw.

Decades later, the ferrans discovered that a rogue black hole-like entity was on a collision course with the Maw. Knowing that such a conglomeration of energy would result in the formation of a quasar—and render their system uninhabitable—the ferrans were faced with a multipronged crisis.

To combat the despair that arose from the future's cold truths, faiths sprang up seemingly overnight. The most popular religion declared that the ferrans were destined to merge with the Maw and that they would be safe only once they embraced this fate. The most zealous followers even thought that the catastrophe would transform them into a more advanced state of being.

Those ferrans who approached the crisis with the rationality of science worked feverishly to find some way to save their people. They came close to cracking technological interstellar travel long before the Drift made it commonplace, but in the end, they were too late. The world leader of Ferrantus-4, who firmly believed that the Maw meant their salvation rather than their destruction, enacted an

insane plan to launch the planet into the black hole using a combination of industrial force fields and teleportation magic. The fanatic succeeded, but there wasn't enough time to retrieve the moon-based researchers before Ferrantus-4 disappeared with a burst of energy that pushed Ratheren outside of the quasar's gravitational pull. Many of the remaining ferrans believed that their kin had committed an act of mass suicide, but as a few die-hard optimists studied the Maw, they picked up strange signals—signals that shouldn't have been able to pass the event horizon.

Today, most of the ferrans of Ratheren spend their time eking out an existence on their moon base and attempting to discover whether the rest of their people are still alive within the Maw. A few, however, find this pursuit foolish and wish to turn their efforts toward finding a new place to live.

Before the ferrans colonized it, Ratheren was a moon made mostly of dark stone. It has very little atmosphere, almost no natural life, and deep crevasses crisscrossing its surface. Its gravity is irregular, with a gravitational field ranging from about as strong as that of lost Golarion to twice as strong. The Ratheren base now encompasses almost a quarter of the moon—a sprawling metropolis of squat buildings connected by enclosed walkways. Hydroponic gardens provide food and oxygen for the residents, and purifiers recycle liquid waste and clean the water that's collected from the moon's dwindling polar cap. The facilities obtain geothermal power from turbines deep within Ratheren's fissures. Day and night are artificially controlled to simulate Ferrantus-4's original cycle, even though many generations of ferrans were born and lived their lives on the moon without ever knowing the lost planet of their origin.



NEXT MONTH

SPLINTERED WORLDS

By Amanda Hamon Kunz

Tracking the Cult of the Devourer, the heroes travel to the Diaspora, but they must survive the dangers of the asteroid field to find the cult's hidden command post. Exploring the secret base, the heroes find it abandoned by the cult, but they also uncover evidence that the Corpse Fleet was there first. Following this lead, the heroes continue on to Eox, where they must face both the undead inhabitants of the planet and clandestine agents of the officially disavowed Corpse Fleet to learn that the Devourer cult is headed for a distant star system in search of clues to the location of an alien superweapon.

EOX

By Owen K.C. Stephens

Although it was once a verdant world, Eox is now a dead planet, its atmosphere stripped away and its ecosystem ravaged in the fallout of an interplanetary war. The planet's powerful spellcaster leaders turned themselves into undead in order to survive, and these bone sages still rule Eox to

this day. Explore many of Eox's notable locations, from the Necropoleis populated by various undead creatures to a vast subterranean city where the living fight for their survival for the amusement of viewers across the galaxy.

THE CORPSE FLEET

By Thurston Hillman

Though Eox is a peaceful member of the Pact Worlds, some of its more militant residents were exiled for questioning the decision to join that alliance. Now known as the Corpse Fleet, this undead armada flies through the depths of space, gathering strength until it can wipe out every living thing in the Pact Worlds.

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STARFINDER

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THAUMTECH CAIRNCARVER

1 square = 5 feet

MAP KEY

1. Bridge
2. Gunner stations
3. Sealed environment unit
4. Port cargo hold
5. Starboard cargo hold
6. Armories
7. Engineering
8. Drift engine
9. Power core



WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Now members of the Starfinder Society and piloting their very own ship, the heroes head to the planet Castrovel, home of some of the best universities in the Pact Worlds, to research the clues they found on the mysterious asteroid called the Drift Rock. On Castrovel, the adventurers' findings point them toward an ancient elven temple-city called the Temple of the Twelve, lost deep within Castrovel's teeming wilderness. But in addition to the dangerous flora and fauna of the jungle, the heroes must contend with two other factions—the exiled Corpse Fleet of Eox and the Cult of the Devourer—who are also interested in the asteroid's secrets and have their own plans for the ancient alien technology behind it, if they can find it first!

This volume of Starfinder Adventure Path continues the Dead Suns Adventure Path and includes:

- "Temple of the Twelve," a Starfinder adventure for 3rd-level characters, by John Compton.
- A gazetteer of the wild planet of Castrovel, by John Compton and James L. Sutter.
- Details on the destructive Cult of the Devourer, including a new mystic connection and new cult gear, by Owen K.C. Stephens.
- An archive of strange new alien creatures, by John Compton, Jason Keeley, and Robert G. McCreary.
- Statistics and deck plans for a new starship, by John Compton, plus details on a moon whose planet disappeared into a black hole in the Codex of Worlds, by Jason Keeley.



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