

STARFINDER[®]



DEAD SUNS

ADVENTURE PATH

THE RUINED CLOUDS

JASON KEELEY



KLOKWORX PRISM

TIER 6

Medium explorer

Speed 10; **Maneuverability** good (turn 1); **Drift** 2

AC 21; **TL** 20

HP 65; **DT** —; **CT** 13

Shields light 70 (forward 18, port 17, starboard 17, aft 18)

Attack (Forward) light plasma cannon (2d12)

Attack (Port) light plasma cannon (2d12)

Attack (Starboard) light plasma cannon (2d12)

Attack (Turret) light aeon torpedo launcher (3d6)

Power Core Pulse Green (150 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Booster; **Systems** basic long-range sensors, crew quarters (good), mk 4 armor, mk 3 defenses, mk 2 duonode computer, self-destruct system; **Expansion Bays** cargo holds (2), recreation suites (gym, trivid den)

Modifiers +2 on any two checks per round, +2 Computers, +1 Piloting; **Complement** 2 (minimum 1, maximum 6)

CREW

Gunner gunnery +14

Pilot Piloting +19 (7 ranks)

IMPERIAL FLEET STARSHIP WEAPON

Light Aeon Torpedo Launcher A light aeon torpedo launcher is a light tracking weapon with long range, a speed of 12 hexes, and the limited fire 5 and quantum special properties. A light aeon torpedo deals 3d6 damage. This particular weapon is available to only the Imperial Fleet of the Azlanti Star Empire.

CLASSIFIED REPORT

Submitted by Steward Janissia Hawlee

AUTHORIZED ACCESS ONLY

Little is known about the Azlanti Star Empire or its vast fleet of starships, except for rushed, garbled transmissions from ill-fated starships before they went missing and unverified reports from space-addled miners. However, we do have a few reliable accounts of this particular vessel—we assume it is a scouting ship of some kind due to its speed and its tendency to be spotted alone. We've had to make some assumptions, but our best analysis notes that the ship is Drift capable and most likely has facilities for its small crew to remain away from their home base for extended periods of time. The vessel is armed with a trio of light plasma cannons, and the ship's turret holds a unique tracking weapon launcher. Reports state that the torpedoes fired from this turret are surrounded by a ring of smaller projectiles that glow when the torpedoes veer off-course, and sometimes cause them to strike when they would otherwise miss. Getting ahold of this weapon and studying it would be quite a boon to the Pact Worlds, but all attempts so far to capture any Azlanti Star Empire vessel have failed, as most of their crews activate self-destruct mechanisms before they can be captured.

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ON THE COVER



There are many dangers lurking in the ruined, floating city of Istamak, and none are greater than the threat posed by Huntmaster Xavra, illustrated here by David Alvarez.



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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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PART 1: AEONS IN THE DRIFT 3

While racing through the Drift toward the Nejeor system, the PCs have an unfriendly encounter with a vessel from the Azlanti Star Empire.

PART 2: THE FORGOTTEN CITY OF ISTAMAK 6

The heroes discover a partially ruined floating city in the clouds of the gas giant Nejeor VI and must negotiate with the technologically underdeveloped descendants of the city's original inhabitants to learn more about the Stellar Degenerator.

PART 3: THE TEMPLE FOUND 28

The PCs make their way inside Istamak's main temple—once a weapons factory and research facility—and face off against a furious defender intent on protecting the building from outsiders.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Ruined Clouds" is designed for four characters.

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The PCs begin this adventure at 7th level.

8

The PCs should reach 8th level before entering the Temple Found in Istamak.

9

The PCs should be 9th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Thousands of millennia ago, before the inhabitants of Golarion discovered even fire, an ancient race known as the kishalee crafted technological wonders and flew among the stars, seeding colonies all across the galaxy. One such territory was on the planet Nejeor VI, a gas giant with virtually inexhaustible natural resources. The kishalee built floating cities among the clouds, the grandest of which was Istamak. Colonists came from far and wide for a chance to live in this shining metropolis, ready to work on the gas-mining platforms or study the planet's unique weather patterns.

Then the kishalee's war with the sivvs began. It raged for centuries, and the resources of Nejeor VI were vital in keeping the kishalee fighting. A weapons-research facility and factory, called simply the Foundry, was built in Istamak in an effort to find an edge against the sivvs that could end the hostilities. The sivvs created their own superweapon first—the Stellar Degenerator—but kishalee agents ended the war by capturing the weapon before it could be fired. Bankrupted by the creation of a weapon of system-wide mass destruction, the sivv civilization collapsed soon thereafter. The kishalee then turned many of their civilization's resources to studying and understanding the Stellar Degenerator. The Foundry was sent vast information about the weapon so it might participate in the study and analysis of the doomsday device.

In time, the kishalee decided that they currently had no need for the Stellar Degenerator's massive destructive power, so it should be hidden away, in part to store it for future use and in part to keep it out of the reach of any other enemies. The best and brightest kishalee technomancers created a demiplane in which they would store the weapon—a place accessible only through a titanic structure called the Gate of the Twelve Suns, which was constructed far from the Nejeor system. The study of the Stellar Degenerator in Istamak came to a close, and all information on it was archived within the Foundry.

Years passed, and the kishalee came into conflict with other species. Though the Stellar Degenerator could destroy the home system of any opposing force, the kishalee used it only once. So horrifying was the terrible, dark fate the Stellar Degenerator imposed by cursing worlds to sit in dark orbits around a dead sun, the kishalee never again called upon the superweapon after its sole wartime use.

Though dominant for thousands of years after the war with the sivv, the kishalee civilization eventually deteriorated. For unknown reasons, its government slowly collapsed, and the citizens of Istamak were cut off from others of their kind. Regular supply runs that were vital to the city's survival stopped arriving, and the kishalee of Istamak were forced

to fend for themselves, tearing down buildings, turning the empty city blocks into farms, and learning to hunt both native fauna and species imported to the planet. Over the centuries, these kishalee gradually degenerated into a less civilized, less fragile version of their species—the kish—and in the process forgot much of their people's history and achievements and understanding of the scientific wonders they lived among. Knowledge of the Stellar Degenerator and the Gate of the Twelve Suns was just a tiny fraction of what was lost.

But nothing stays lost forever.

Following an obscure book of doomsday predictions, the Cult of the Devourer traveled to the Nejeor system and discovered the city of Istamak. The kish were friendly to them at first, but the cultists quickly discovered the Foundry and saw it as a crucial source of information that could lead to a tool of ultimate destruction. They did everything in their power to raid it for any possible information, killing numerous kish in the process. The cultists unearthed the location of the Gate of the Twelve Suns and departed, leaving chaos in their wake. Xavra, a kish huntmaster and advisor to his people's chieftain, has sealed himself and his followers inside the Foundry to guard against any other intruders. A small band of kish, led by another advisor named Tzayl, protested against this breaking of tradition and was cast out of the main tribe. While the exiles have a place to eke out a living in the ruined city, the two factions of kish have been occasionally clashing for the past few days. The situation hasn't yet escalated to a full civil war, and Tzayl's newfound faith in the god Talavet could help to bring them together once again—if Xavra's kish can be dealt with first.

PART 1: AEONS IN THE DRIFT

At the end of "Splintered Worlds," the PCs learned the Cult of the Devourer is headed for a distant area in the Vast called the Nejeor system to uncover the location of the Stellar Degenerator. The cultists have quite a head start, but if the PCs feel the need to return to Absalom Station (or another safe haven) to restock their supplies and speak with Chiskisk, their contact in the Starfinder Society, they certainly can. The shirren or any other NPC aware of the PCs' mission should stress the urgency of the situation and push the characters to head to the Nejeor system as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, the Corpse Fleet is keeping an eye on the tracking device its agents planted on the PCs' ship in the previous adventure, but is not yet ready to show its hand, instead waiting to strike when the time is right (see *Starfinder Adventure Path* #5: *The Thirteenth Gate*).

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JOURNEY TO THE NEJEOR SYSTEM

Even though the PCs have the coordinates to the Nejeor system, they still must plot a course through the Drift to get there. A successful DC 25 Piloting check is required to astrogate without difficulty. The number of days needed to travel to the Nejeor system is equal to 5d6 divided by the Drift engine rating of the PCs' starship, no matter where the PCs start from. If the PCs fail the Piloting check by 10 or more, add 1d6 days to this time. However, no matter how fast the PCs' starship is, the Cult of the Devourer is destined to be one step ahead of them... for now.

This is likely the PCs' first extended trip through the Drift to a location in the Vast. As they travel, emphasize the strange bleakness of this transitory plane. Instead of inky blackness dotted with stars, the Drift is a mass of pink-and-purple energy that seems to both envelop the ship and be incredibly far away at the same time, making it difficult to gauge speed and time. Vigilant PCs might catch glimpses of chunks of other planes the Drift

has gobbled up as they pass by—a titanic but empty basalt throne carved with images of cavorting devils, a single metal gear the size of a city, a vast bridge that seems to have an ancient abandoned city built along its span, and so on.

As their starship's computerized autopilot handles the bulk of the flying once its course has been set, the PCs can pass the time as they wish. If they have no research they want to do, items they would like to craft, or afflictions that need time to heal, you can simply let them know how long the journey will take and move on to the encounter with the *Fearful Symmetry* (see below). Alternatively, you can spice up the trip with a random encounter or two, especially if the PCs need more XP to reach 7th level. See pages 46–53 for more about the Drift.

THE FEARFUL SYMMETRY (CR 8)

Several days into their trip through hyperspace (at about the halfway mark), the PCs' starship passes close to several humongous, dark clouds that occasionally flash with internal light. A PC at the ship's science officer station can attempt a DC 25 Computers check to scan the clouds; success reveals that these are portions of the Plane of Air absorbed by the Drift—basically thunderheads held together by that plane's residual energy. If the character's result exceeds the DC by 10 or more, she also notices a vessel about to emerge from one of the clouds, and the PCs can enter battle stations and begin starship combat immediately if they wish (gaining a +2 bonus to the pilot's first Piloting check in the first round).

If the PCs don't spot the other starship before it appears out of a cloud, they do so immediately when it becomes visible. It is possibly unlike anything they have ever seen, though a PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Culture or Engineering check

recognizes the vessel's construction from holoscans or vidfeeds as typical of the Azlanti Star Empire, an expansionist federation of worlds under the command of humans who left Golarion millennia ago.

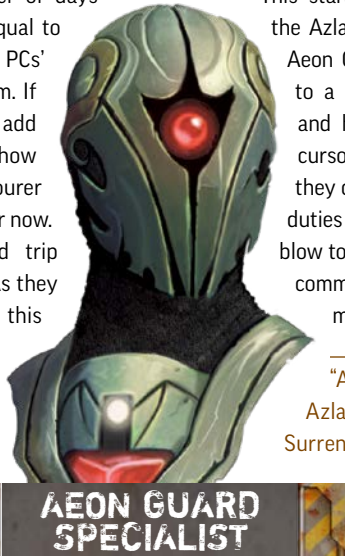
This starship is the *Fearful Symmetry*, a scout for the Azlanti Star Empire's largest military force, the Aeon Guard. Its two-person crew was on its way to a reconnaissance mission in another system and happened to spot the PCs' vessel. After a cursory scan, the crew members calculated that they could afford to take a small detour from their duties to deal a small but possibly humiliating blow to the Pact Worlds. The Azlanti starship opens communication with the PCs with the following message in Common.

"Attention, Pact Worlds vessel. This is the Azlanti Star Empire vessel *Fearful Symmetry*. Surrender immediately, and you will not be harmed. In fact, you will have the immense pleasure of becoming another small part of the empire's vast populace. Refuse and we will be forced to turn you into space dust. This message will not repeat."

The *Fearful Symmetry* is a sleek starship, built for as much speed and handling as a long-distance vessel of its size could manage. It is emerald green in color and etched with Azlanti symbols that evoke alertness and watchfulness. Its thrusters burn white hot as the vessel approaches the PCs' ship.

The Aeon Guards aren't expecting the PCs to capitulate without a fight and are ready if the characters' answer to their demand is to engage in starship combat. If the PCs take too long to respond, the Azlanti assume the PCs are up to something and power up their targeting systems. If the PCs actually surrender (an unlikely scenario) or feign surrender, the *Fearful Symmetry* prepares to open fire anyway, attempting to soften up the PCs' ship before a possible boarding action.

Starship Combat: As detailed in the section starting on page 316 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*, starship combat occurs on a hex grid. *Starfinder Flip-Mat: Basic Starfield* is a terrific aid to running this battle. The PCs' vessel and the *Fearful Symmetry* begin combat 2d6+4 hexes apart, facing approximately toward each other. In addition, several clouds (no more than four) are scattered in various places on the hex grid; a cloud takes up between 1 and 4 hexes. An attack that would hit a starship that is in a cloud has a 20% chance of missing (targeted weapons, such as missiles and torpedoes, aren't destroyed if they miss due to this percentile chance). If a starship begins a round within a cloud, the pilot must succeed at a DC 26 Piloting check or the vessel is struck by a bolt of elemental lightning that deals 3d6 damage to the ship in a random arc.



The *Fearful Symmetry* could be victorious against the heroes by reducing their vessel to 0 Hull Points or fewer, or the PCs could shut down their ship's engines in an attempt to fool the Aeon Guard (see the Playing Dead sidebar). In such a scenario, determine whether your players are in the mood for some toe-to-toe action aboard their starship. If it seems they just want to get on with the adventure, the Aeon Guard doesn't attempt to board and take the PCs prisoner. Instead, the Azlanti ship scans the PCs' disabled vessel to get every piece of information available (such as the particulars of all its systems and what kind of cargo it might be carrying). The Aeon Guard specialists notice the Corpse Fleet tracker in the process and, figuring that the undead navy will be along shortly to finish the job they started, continue on their way without another word, leaving the PCs to limp the remainder of their way to their destination.

Otherwise, you can run the Boarding Action encounter below. If you do, you might want to omit one of the random encounters while the party explores Istamak (see page 38) to ensure the PCs don't get too powerful too quickly.

FEARFUL SYMMETRY

TIER 6

Klokworx Prism (see the inside front cover)

HP 65

TACTICS

During Combat The gunner fires a light aeon torpedo during the first gunnery phase and whenever the PCs' ship is more than 5 hexes away from the *Fearful Symmetry*. The pilot uses the evade stunt every round unless she needs to perform another stunt to outmaneuver the PCs' ship. The gunner and the pilot both take advantage of the bonus provided by the computer each round.

Morale Members of the Aeon Guard don't surrender, so the crew of the *Fearful Symmetry* activates the ship's self-destruct system at the end of a round if the vessel is reduced to 10 Hull Points or fewer. The ship explodes during the gunnery phase of the following round, hopefully giving the PCs time to clear the blast zone, though the *Fearful Symmetry*'s pilot attempts to move the ship as close to the PCs' starship as possible.

Story Award: If the PCs defeat the *Fearful Symmetry* in starship combat, award them 4,800 XP for the encounter.

BOARDING ACTION (CR 9)

The *Fearful Symmetry* pulls alongside the PCs' starship and connects a short umbilicus between the two vessels' airlocks, and the crew members use an autohacking device to force their way into the PCs' ship. This is neither quiet nor subtle, giving the PCs 1d4+1 rounds to prepare and determine which airlock the Aeon Guards plan to enter through. This fight can take place anywhere aboard the PCs' starship where the PCs are preparing for an ambush, but it most likely occurs in and around the airlock.

PLAYING DEAD

The PCs might want to play dead if their vessel is taking a beating from the *Fearful Symmetry* or if they want to lure the foes aboard their own ship for a bit of home-ground advantage. A PC can temporarily shut down the ship's energy output, mimicking a total power-core failure, with a successful DC 25 Engineering check; doing so requires an engineering action during starship combat. This leaves the barest minimum of lighting, life support, and artificial gravity functional and can be reversed at any terminal in the ship by any PC.

Creatures: The crew of the *Fearful Symmetry* are two Aeon Guard advance soldiers trained in the finest Azlanti military academies. They have been partners for over a year on their various scouting missions, and they have consummate teamwork skills.

AEON GUARD SPECIALISTS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

HP 102 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 6)

TACTICS

During Combat Aeon Guard specialists are highly trained soldiers and always try to fight from positions of strength and outmaneuver their opponents. These soldiers use their debilitating tricks in the first round of combat, if possible, to weaken a foe they can both attack. They coordinate their actions to focus fire on one foe at a time, usually either the most armored one or the one dealing the most damage.

Morale These members of the Aeon Guard never intended to get into a personal firefight with the PCs, but they realize that their reputations are on the line. If either Aeon Guard is reduced to fewer than 20 Hit Points, she attempts to make a running retreat back to the *Fearful Symmetry*, possibly to activate the self-destruct system (see Development below).

Development: Part of the Aeon Guard's rigorous training is to not allow unworthy foreigners to get hold of Azlanti technology, no matter the cost. If the advance soldiers realize they have been lured into a trap, they return to their ship and attempt to fly off; this might result in a continuation of the starship combat. If they activate their ship's self-destruct system while the two vessels are attached, the *Fearful Symmetry*'s airlock door automatically locks, requiring a successful DC 40 Engineering check to open if the PCs want to get aboard to terminate the self-destruct sequence. Otherwise, a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Piloting check can

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free the ship from the umbilicus and move far enough away from the explosion to avoid taking damage. The PCs get three attempts at this check before the *Fearful Symmetry* explodes.

If the PCs manage to capture one of the Aeon Guards alive, the Azlanti immediately swallows a hidden cyanide capsule to avoid interrogation.

Treasure: If the PCs somehow end up with Aeon Guard equipment, they quickly discover that the weapons and armor are biometrically locked to prevent anyone other than their proper owners from using them. With 1 hour of work, a PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Engineering check can remove this security measure from one piece of equipment. Failing this check by 10 or more renders the piece of equipment unusable, except as parts for other crafting and repair jobs. Due to the rarity of this equipment, a PC must succeed at a DC 28 Culture or Diplomacy check to find a buyer who believes the merchandise is authentic; however, such a buyer buys the armor and weapons for 20% of their purchase price (instead of 10%). If the PCs unlocked the weapons, they receive a +2 circumstance bonus to this check. PCs who want to use the weapons find that they take standard longarm ammunition.

If the *Fearful Symmetry* self-destructs, the PCs can take a few minutes scouring the debris. There is nothing useful to be found, but any material they collect could be used to justify the Build Points they spend the next time they choose to upgrade their starship.

PART 2: THE FORGOTTEN CITY OF ISTAMAK

The PCs exit the Drift very close to the sixth planet of the Nejeor system, a nine-planet system with a yellow dwarf sun. The first two planets actually share a single orbit, though one is always on the opposite side of the sun from the other; both are hot, rocky wastelands. The third, sixth, and eighth planets are gas giants, each swirling with a different color of gas. The fourth planet is dotted with petrified forests, and the fifth planet has a multitude of active volcanoes constantly spewing ash into the air. The seventh and ninth planets are both cold and lifeless rocks. The third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh planets are the only ones with moons, which have varied compositions.

NEJEOR VI

When they arrive, the PCs have no clues as to where the Cult of the Devourer might have gone in their search. However, even a cursory scan of the system's planets reveals that only one of them shows any signs of life: Nejeor VI, the planet they are currently closest to. It takes 1d8 hours for the PCs to reach the gas giant and enter orbit. Once there, a PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Computers check to scan the planet

pinpoints the signs of life on a floating metropolis in the stratosphere, sitting just above the churning clouds of Nejeor VI. The city is crumbling in places, while other areas are overgrown with trees and other plants. A PC who succeeds at the check by 5 or more also notes that the energy signatures that would normally come from a settlement of that size (energy from a power plant, wireless signals, and so forth) are weak and erratic. A PC who succeeds at the check by 10 or more can also tell that this city is millennia old and that age is the cause of much of the decay (as opposed to it having been destroyed by some outside source). No matter the outcome of the check, the PCs can see that there is only one safe place where they can bring down their vessel: an emerald-green landing pad on the outskirts of the city. All other possible landing areas in the metropolis are either unstable or are covered in impenetrable thickets.

It takes 1d2 hours for the PCs' vessel to fly to Istamak and land. See page 38 for more information about Istamak and Nejeor VI as a whole.

EMERALD LANDING PAD (CR 8)

The PCs touch down on the Emerald Landing Pad, one of a few landing pads that jut out into the clouds in the southeastern corner of the city, but the only one still usable. Like much of the rest of the city, the pad appears to be made of a thick, barely translucent crystal, but the material is actually a unique polymer created by the kishalee that has withstood the test of time. A vibrant-green lichen grows along the underside of the pad, which makes the lone intact pad resemble an enormous slab of emerald. The pad can accommodate a Large or smaller starship, though the equipment that would be used to repair or refuel a landing vessel disintegrated or was scavenged by the kish long ago. The city residents occasionally scrape the lichen off the underside of the pad to supplement their diets.

The majority of the pad is open to the sky; the thick clouds of Nejeor VI swirl lazily below. An archway stretches above a 10-foot-wide walkway that joins up with walkways from other landing pads, leading into dockmaster's building. A holographic sign in Kishaleen (a language unfamiliar to the PCs) stretches across the archway; a PC under the effects of a *comprehend languages* spell (or a similar effect) can see that only one word of the sign still functions: Istamak.

The cultists of the Devourer landed their starship here before they entered the city and plundered the information they sought (see the Adventure Background on page 3 for more information). The cultists' exit was a hasty one, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notices a few scorch marks on the polymer that could be from the heat of another vessel taking off or landing. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Physical Science check while examining the marks can tell that they are less than a few days old and that they are representative of the unsafe quality of Cult of the Devourer engines.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

Throughout this adventure, the PCs will come across images and murals drawn by the city's kish, as well as other facets of their civilization. Most of the time, the PCs can use the Culture skill to analyze and decipher this evidence, but some PCs might have training in a relevant Profession skill, such as anthropology or archaeology. You should allow PCs to use these skills in place of Culture where appropriate, and you could even lower the listed DCs by 2 to reward them for spending character resources on such niche expertise.

Creatures: After the Cult of the Devourer left, a small pack of kish warriors was stationed here to await their return (the kish don't fully understand the concept of space travel and believe the machine that brought the cultists here is part of a test from their ancestors). As the PCs' vessel lands, the kish hide on the underside of the platform, using the climbing harnesses that help them harvest lichen. These kish don't see much difference between the PCs and the cultists who attacked them, so they don't have any interest in talking. A few moments after the PCs step out of their starship, the kish warriors climb up at various points around the landing pad and attack. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check can act during the surprise round.

KISH (4)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

HP 60 each (see page 58)

Treasure: In addition to their analog equipment, one of the kish brought an *instinctive stabilizer* (see page 45) with him in case any of his comrades were wounded in any fight with returning outsiders. A second kish has a handful of lichen she grabbed to snack on while she was waiting. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Life Science check recognizes that the bright green clump of algae-infused fungus isn't poisonous, though it is indigestible to humans and most other humanoids.

Development: If the PCs capture any of the kish warriors alive, they will need the benefits of a *comprehend languages*, *share language*, or *tongues* spell to interrogate her, as all kish in Istamak speak a vulgar form of Kishaleen. She spits angrily at them, stating, "Istamak will stand strong against you foul demons." She scoffs if the PCs proclaim ignorance (either about where they are or what happened here). If a PC succeeds at a DC 31 Diplomacy check or DC 26 Intimidate check, the warrior explains that her people are known as kish, that they live in the surrounding city of Istamak, and that

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LANGUAGES IN ISTAMAK

Throughout this adventure, the PCs will encounter two related languages. All of the signs and other written material from the past, as well as the voice messages found on ancient datapads, are in Kishaleen, the language of the long-extinct kishalee. Kish, the current inhabitants of Istamak, speak Vulgar Kishaleen, a modern version of the original language. There is no written version of Vulgar Kishaleen, and its verbal syntax is often very different from that of Kishaleen. A PC who understands one of these languages (through a spell such as *share language* or by taking a rank in the Culture skill when leveling up) can comprehend basic concepts in the other language by succeeding at a DC 20 Culture check. If the PC fails this check by 10 more, she incorrectly interprets the meaning of the message or speech she was trying to understand.

they were recently attacked a group of strangers who “wore bones and fought with fierce rage.”

MEETING THE OUTCASTS

From the landing pad, the PCs can enter the dockmaster’s building, a place where merchants and visitors to the city would declare their goods and fill out the appropriate forms. These days, it serves more as a staging area for lichen collection. The interior of the building was gutted long ago, and the walls are now covered with murals worked in crude paint and charcoal. The images seem to depict the sun in various positions in relation to the Emerald Landing Pad; each of these pictures is accompanied by a number of what appear to be tally marks. A PC who spends 20 minutes examining the murals and succeeds at a DC 25 Culture check realizes the murals depict a kind of calendar that communicates the best periods of the year in which to harvest the lichen.

Shortly after the PCs enter, they notice the sounds of combat outside. An empty window frame overlooks the street in front of the building, where two small groups of kish are fighting. Both groups have taken casualties and only three remain standing on each side. The PCs might be unwilling to participate after the reception they received on the landing pad, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check notices that the kish of one of the two sides are all wearing a prominent, though crude, symbol on their armor: an outline of a shield-like shape with an upside-down tear drop breaking through the top and a circle in the middle. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Mysticism check identifies it as the symbol of the lawful neutral deity Talavet, the goddess of community, self-reliance, and tradition. These kish are outcasts from the main

tribe, and the PCs will probably learn their story shortly. The other group of kish are dressed similarly to the ones who attacked the PCs on the landing pad.

If the PCs want to interfere in the battle on behalf of the outcasts, it takes only a small show of force to drive off the other kish, who are close to losing the battle anyway. Possibilities include firing off a single shot from a longarm or heavy weapon, throwing a grenade, casting a spell of 2nd level or higher that has a flashy or otherwise obvious effect, or succeeding at a DC 30 Intimidate check. Doing so causes the other kish to break off from the fight and run into the city, and also catches the attention of the outcasts.

Even if the PCs do nothing, the outcasts win the skirmish in short order. However, it is clear that one of the remaining three is severely wounded. His two comrades don’t seem to have the skills to heal him and look unwilling to possibly exacerbate his condition by moving him. They offer a short prayer to the sky, and if the PCs haven’t yet seen or identified their sigils, a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Mysticism check identifies the gestures of the prayer to be similar to those offered to Talavet in the Pact Worlds. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check also notes that the kish are slightly awkward in their devotions, as if they had learned them only recently. A PC under the effects of a *comprehend languages* spell immediately picks the name “Talavet” out of the prayer.

If the PCs haven’t yet made themselves known to the outcasts, one of the unwounded kish runs off to get aid. The other unharmed kish makes soothing noises to her injured friend. If the PCs do nothing, a handful of kish return with a makeshift stretcher 1 hour later to take the wounded one away. The PCs can try to follow them in secret, if they wish (see Cloudside Community Center on page 9), though they must succeed at Stealth checks opposed by the kish’s Perception checks (use the stats for a kish found on page 58) to remain undetected. Alternatively, they can move to investigate Istamak on their own (see Exploring Istamak on page 11), though they will miss out on important clues.

The PCs have an opportunity to make friendly contact with the outcast kish, but peace isn’t guaranteed. Once the PCs make themselves known, the kish are on guard, uncertain of the PCs’ intentions. The outcast kish don’t immediately attack strangers as those on the landing pad did (especially when they are outnumbered, as they are now), but they do have an initial starting attitude of unfriendly. If the PCs approach with their weapons holstered and their empty hands showing, they can approach within 30 feet. PCs who want to try to heal the wounded kish or use a spell such as *share language* to help the kish understand them will need to get closer. By speaking softly and succeeding at a DC 26 Diplomacy check, a PC can change the kish’s attitude to indifferent and step another 10 feet closer. The kish lower their weapons at this point and begin asking, in Vulgar Kishaleen, who the PCs are and what their intentions are.

Unfortunately, unless the PCs have access to the *tongues* spell, they can't answer those questions. A PC who points to the sky and pantomimes a starship (or performs some other gestures that indicates their peaceful intentions) and succeeds at a DC 21 Culture or appropriate Profession check can get the idea across without sharing a language with the kish. After a final successful DC 21 Diplomacy check (with or without sharing a language), the PCs are allowed to approach close enough to heal the wounded kish or cast *share language* on another kish. A group that heals the wounded kish immediately gains the trust of these outcasts. Otherwise, it takes a few more minutes of the PCs explaining who they are if they share a language with one of the outcasts or wordless indications of peaceful intentions before the outcast kish decide the PCs aren't an immediate threat. If an outcast went to get help, those kish return shortly to transport the wounded outcast back to Cloudside; otherwise, the kish ask for the PCs' help in moving their injured comrade (if he wasn't already healed). After a few moments of discussion among themselves, the outcast kish decide to bring the PCs to meet Herald Tzayl, their leader (see Cloudside Community Center below).

If the PCs drove off the hostile kish, they gain a +2 circumstance bonus to the Diplomacy checks to communicate with these kish.

Story Award: If the PCs make peaceful contact with the outcast kish, award them 1,600 XP.

CLOUDSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER

Either through gaining the outcast kish's trust or by following them, the PCs can discover the outcasts' territory: a small neighborhood of dilapidated residences once known as Cloudside Condominiums (see page 42) around a sturdy community center. It takes about 30 minutes of walking to reach the area from the spaceport.

If the PCs have stealthily followed the outcast kish to this location, they can attempt to make peaceful contact with them here, in roughly the same fashion as described in Meeting the Outcasts on page 8. Grant them the same story award if they are successful, and continue with the adventure as if the kish had led the PCs here. If the PCs aren't successful, they will have to continue their exploration of the city unguided (see Exploring Istamak on page 11).

If the outcast kish are leading the PCs, they bring the adventurers to the community center. The exact name of the

building is long faded away, but the space above its front doors is marked with a large (and fairly freshly painted) symbol of Talavet. A handful of younger kish are in the space in front of the building, playing a casual game involving a ball and pairs of vertical hoops on poles on opposite sides of the court. Dozens of other kish can be seen about the neighborhood, tending to small gardens, repairing the buildings, or maintaining weapons and armor. Many of them stop what they are doing to gawk at the aliens as the PCs are escorted into the building. The interior has clearly been recently converted into a small church, and hastily created symbols of Talavet are the majority of the decor.

The PCs are introduced to the outcast's leader: Herald Tzayl, who wears an austere brown robe accented with a colorful scarf around her head. She has many questions for the PCs, and to aid in this process, she casts *share language* on any PC who doesn't already know how to speak Vulgar Kishaleen. While Tzayl wants to know who the PCs are, where they came from, whether they are affiliated with the strangers who attacked several days ago, and why they have come to Istamak, she is also willing to answer any questions the PCs might have. Herald Tzayl's statistics are presented on page 10, in the unlikely event that you require them.

The following are some questions the PCs might ask and Herald Tzayl's answers.

What is this place?/Who are you? "We are kish, the keepers of our ancestral land of Istamak."

Why were you fighting one another? "You come to us in turbulent times. Those you see around you have been recently cast out from their homes for daring to speak out about Huntmaster Xavra's desecration of tradition. And now we clash in the streets to protect ourselves. It is very sad."

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CLOUDSIDE
COMMUNITY CENTER

Who is Huntmaster Xavra/Is Huntmaster Xavra your leader? "Huntmaster Xavra is one of Chieftain Hoyfeq's most trusted advisors. As was I, until I stood firm against Xavra's recent actions. He has occupied our great temple in a misguided attempt to protect it; I still believe it should be open to all. The chieftain knew I would not soon let this matter drop, so he exiled me for my troubles."

Do you know anything about the Stellar Degenerator? "This is not the first time I have heard that name. The other strangers asked about it as well, before they desecrated our temple."



TZAYL

What other strangers? "They arrived in a metal cloud like yours, but different in shape and color. Theirs looked angry, as did their clothes. We welcomed them into our great temple, but they profaned the Vault of Tales and attacked us, causing many deaths and much destruction. They then returned to their cloud and ascended into the sky."

Can you tell us about the great temple? "The Temple Found is sacred to our ancestors, so we maintain it as tradition dictates. It was open to all, until recently. After the strangers left, Huntmaster Xavra sealed himself and some of his warriors within, claiming that the temple must be kept safe from other strangers. I objected to his decision, and the chieftain saw fit to exile me for speaking out. Luckily, I was not the only one to feel this way, so my neighbors joined me in my banishment."

What is the Vault of Tales? "One of the many blessed areas within the Temple Found. It is a vast collection of our ancestors' wisdom, held within sacred crystals. I sometimes used to visit the Vault when I had deep, unanswered questions. Though there is much about the words I don't understand, I always come away from the Vault of Tales with some guidance. That is why the Temple Found should be free for all to visit."

How do we get into that temple? "The doors are shut from within and can be opened only if Xavra allows it." She thinks for a moment. "But I have heard the voices of our ancestors speak of another way in. Perhaps if you were to listen to them, you might benefit from their insights. But first you must prove yourself worthy enough to hear those voices yourself." (How the PCs can do this is described in more detail in Voices of the Ancestors on page 11.)

How do you know of Talavet?/How did you come to worship her? "Do you mean the Storyteller? Until recently, I, like all of my people, honored our ancestors, whose works you see all around us. I still hold them in high esteem, but when I was exiled, I was granted a vision of a wise woman who told me a wonderful story—a story about how I would be instrumental in holding my people together and ensuring that the traditions of our ancestors would remain strong. And I no longer feared my banishment, instead seeing it as a way to strengthen my community. I believe you are part of this story."

Can we rest here?/Can you heal us? "You seem friendlier than our previous visitors, and this area of the city has more space than we can currently use. If you can find a clean room, you are welcome to use it for as long as you like. And if you can help to heal the damage done to our people by those other outsiders, I will gladly offer you the blessings of the Storyteller to heal your wounds and cure your afflictions."

TZAYL

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female kish mystic

N Medium humanoid (kish)

Init +2 **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

EAC 17; KAC 17

Fort +4; Ref +4; Will +8

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee survival knife +8 (1d4+5 S, archaic)

Ranged tactical battlebow +10 (1d8+5 P, archaic)

Mystic Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

At will—*mindlink*

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

2nd (3/day)—*augury*, *mystic cure*

1st (6/day)—*identify*, *lesser remove condition*, *share language*

0 (at will)—*stabilize*, *telekinetic projectile*

Connection Akashic

TACTICS

Before Combat If given enough time, Tzayl casts *reflecting armor* on herself from her spell gem.

During Combat Tzayl is more of a scholar than a fighter, so she stays out of melee combat, firing her bow or casting *telekinetic projectile*. She heals her allies when necessary.

Morale Tzayl surrenders at the first sign the battle is not going her and her allies' way, hoping her attackers are merciful.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Culture +11, Mysticism +16, Sense Motive +11, Survival +16

Other Abilities access Akashic record

Languages Vulgar Kishaleen

Gear basic acrochor hide (see page 44), survival knife (archaic), tactical battlebow (see page 44) with 20 arrows, *spell gem of reflecting armor*

VOICES OF THE ANCESTORS

Tzayl explains there are two places of significance where kish go when they want to hear the voices of their ancestors or seek their blessings. While these are sacred ceremonies for her people, she admits that not many kish have performed them in close to a year. Perhaps, she muses, if Xavra and his warriors had shown more devotion, they wouldn't have been so quick to break away from tradition. She also says that she doesn't see any harm in the PCs enacting these rites; after all, if they do so, they might better understand the kish community.

House of Renewal: Tzayl describes the House of Renewal as a "place of either healing or silence," depending on the kish who makes the pilgrimage there. Kish go there when they are ill, physically or spiritually, and step into the chamber at the center of the building. If the ancestors judge the kish's heart to be true, she emerges healed, sometimes even healthier than before. Otherwise, the pilgrim is never seen again. Tzayl also mentions rumors that the House of Renewal has become corrupted in some way. The House of Renewal is described in greater detail on page 14.

HP 60 RP 3

KISH AND ARCHAIC WEAPONS

Most of the kish the heroes will face are armed with archaic weapons, as noted in the gear line of their stat blocks. It's important to note that such weapons deal 5 fewer damage against targets unless those targets are wearing archaic armor or no armor. In most cases that means these attacks do 5 fewer damage on attacks made against PCs. Most kish are wearing archaic armor, which is defined on page 45, but that is important only if for some reason the PCs attack those NPCs with archaic weapons.

Maze of Ghosts: Tzayl explains that despite the site's name, that the Maze of Ghosts is not a frightening place. Instead, it is where "our visions of the ancestors are the strongest." Kish who want to feel a deeper connection with the city's history meditate within. Tzayl explains that if the kish's intentions aren't pure, the ghosts don't show themselves. The Maze of Ghosts is described in greater detail on page 18.

STAYING AT CLOUDSIDE

The PCs aren't required to rest among the ruins of Cloudside Condominiums if they don't want to; some PCs might not trust the outcast kish or just might feel more comfortable resting within their starship. However, the outcast kish welcome the PCs to spend their evenings here if they wish. With about an hour of searching, the PCs find a relatively clean unclaimed set of living spaces on the third floor of the northeasternmost building. The condos are spacious, and though the furniture and fixtures were looted and scavenged centuries ago, the PCs can tell which areas were meant to be kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms, and so on. If they so choose, each PC can have a condo to himself, or the party can all fit comfortably in one condo. If the PCs do not have their own bedding, the kish can provide them with crude bedrolls and pillows stuffed with some kind of animal hair.

EXPLORING ISTAMAK

At this point, the PCs are free to roam around Istamak, looking for clues as to what the Cult of the Devourer discovered here. If the PCs haven't allied with the outcast kish, they are more or less on their own, so you should nudge them toward interaction with the outcasts. The longer the PCs move through the city without attacking the outcasts, the more curious and potentially friendly the outcasts become. If the PCs need additional opportunities to befriend the outcasts, you might have the outcasts come to the PCs' aid during an

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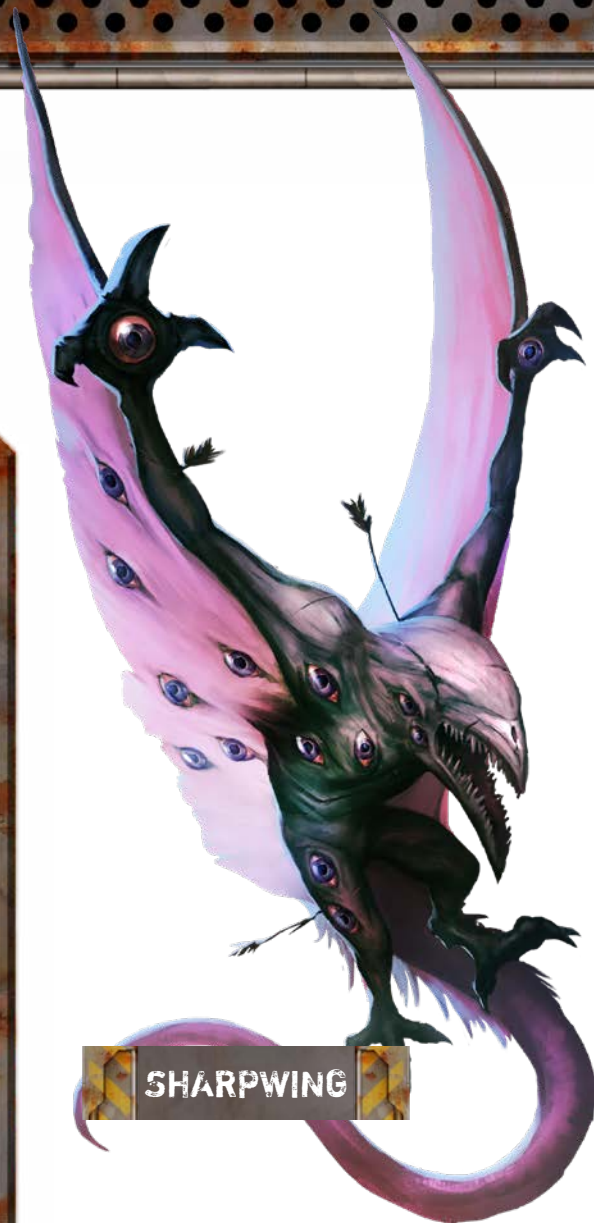
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SHARPWING

overwhelming fight against the other kish or offer to heal their wounds after a tough scrape with a particularly vicious specimen of Istamak fauna. Once they meet and befriend the outcasts, the PCs can use the community center as a base of operations or as a rest stop if they don't want to travel back to their starship.

The floating metropolis of Istamak is detailed in full starting on page 38. Note that thanks to the Cult of the Devourer, the majority of the city's kish are hostile toward strangers. As such, the PCs cannot enter the village of Hearth—at least, not without a fight. With the exception of the very young, the very old, and the very ill, kish are adept combatants, having had to rely on their martial skill to survive within the ruined city for generations. A full assault on Hearth (whether to gain an audience with its chieftain or simply to assassinate him) is beyond the scope of this adventure; as a society, kish aren't inherently evil, just incredibly mistrusting, and they act more out of self-preservation than anything else. You can use increasing numbers of encounters with kish warriors (see page 58) accompanied by kish scouts (see page 13) or

soldiers similar to Hybeki (see page 34) to discourage the PCs from approaching too close to Hearth.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

As the PCs travel from one location to another within the city, they might run into any or all of the encounters that follow. These showcase many of Istamak's dangers and are a good way to help the PCs gain XP.

DEATH FROM ABOVE (CR 8)

Though most of Nejeor VI's more dangerous fauna swim beneath Istamak in the gas giant's vast cloud-oceans, the skies above are not free from peril. This encounter can occur when the PCs are traveling near the Spires, through a relatively open clearing of the Hunting Grounds, or between the floating islands of the Broken Lands.

Creatures: Sharpwings are flying predators typically found on Aballon and a few other Pact Worlds, but a quirk of parallel evolution has generated a similar creature here on Nejeor VI. This Nejeor sharpwing has a deep pink coloration—the better to blend in with the gas giant's colorful clouds. It sees the PCs as potential prey and dive-bombs them with a harsh screech. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check can act during the surprise round as the sharpwing appears 100 feet above.

SHARPWING

CR 8

XP 4,800

N Large animal

Init +12; **Senses** low-light vision.; **Perception** +21

DEFENSE

HP 125

EAC 20; KAC 22

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

Defensive Abilities unflankable; **Immunities** nonlethal damage

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft. fly 80 ft. (Ex, perfect)

Melee bite +19 (1d10+14 P) or

claw +19 (1d6+14 S; critical bleed 1d4)

Multiattack bite +13 (1d10+14 P), 2 claws +13 (1d6+14 S; critical bleed 1d4)

TACTICS

During Combat The sharpwing uses Spring Attack to perform flyby attacks on the PCs until it is brought below half its Hit Points. It then lands in the center of any PCs who form a convenient group in attempt to strike at many of them at once with one full attack.

Morale The sharpwing is looking only for prey, and if the PCs prove too tough for it (by reducing it to fewer than 30 Hit Points), it beats a hasty retreat back to its nest in the Spires.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +12 (+29 when flying), Athletics +16, Stealth +16

Feats Spring Attack

Other Abilities ovitonomy (*Alien Archive* 102)

KISH PATROL (CR 8)

Since the Cult of the Devourer left and Huntmaster Xavra holed up within the Temple Found, the kish of Istamak have been particularly on edge. Chieftain Hoyfeq has increased the number of patrols around Hearth and parts of the Hunting Grounds. (He has yet to order a direct attack on the outcasts, as he believes they will eventually come crawling back to Hearth after being unable to survive on their own.) If the PCs come too close to Hearth, they likely run into one of these patrols. Alternatively, a patrol could be investigating the House of Renewal or the Maze of Ghosts, looking for trespassers.

Creatures: Three kish warriors led by a kish scout patrol areas of Istamak, driving off the bolder predators, gathering intel on the outcasts, or hunting for strangers. They are loyal to Chieftain Hoyfeq, and they have orders to leave the outcasts alone for the time being. If the PCs spot the patrol coming, they can attempt to hide, requiring each PC to succeed at a Stealth check opposed by the scout's Perception check. If they are successful, they can either let the patrol pass by or stage their own ambush.

KISH SCOUT CR 5

XP 1,600

Kish operative

N Medium humanoid (kish)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +17

DEFENSE HP 62

EAC 20; **KAC** 20

Fort +4; **Ref** +9; **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee survival knife +13 (1d4+7 S, archaic)

Ranged tactical battlebow +13 (1d8+5 P, archaic)

Offensive Abilities debilitating trick, trick attack +3d8

TACTICS

During Combat The scout opens by firing a few arrows at the PCs, moving slightly closer each round. The scout then takes advantage of his uncanny mobility exploit to constantly move around the PCs, making melee trick attacks against the most opportune target each round. The scout orders a kish to flank with him when possible.

Morale If two or more of his comrades are killed or he has been reduced to fewer than 20 Hit Points, the scout flees and orders any surviving kish to retreat with him. They return to Hearth for healing and to relay information about the PCs' capabilities.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +12, Athletics +12, Culture +17, Intimidate +12, Survival +17

Languages Vulgar Kishaleen

Other Abilities ever vigilant, operative exploits (uncanny mobility), specialization (explorer)

Gear basic acrochor hide (see page 44), survival knife (archaic), tactical battlebow (see page 44) with 40 arrows

KISH (3) CR 4

XP 1,200 each

HP 60 each (see page 58)

RABID BEASTS (CR 8)

Though the kish of Istamak have domesticated a number of the city's eohis (canine creatures with powerful forearms), many still roam wild, hunting the more docile creatures within the park. The PCs encounter these creatures if they pass through or near the hunting grounds or near an isolated building (such as Lord's Folly) where these poor diseased creatures have fled to die.

Creatures: Two rabid eohis (see page 57) snap and growl at passersby, charging in after a few moments or if the PCs get too close. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Life Science check recognizes that these beasts are afflicted with a form of rabies.

RABID EOHIS (2) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

HP 90 each (see page 57)

Melee bite +16 (1d8+11 P plus Nejean rabies)

TACTICS

During Combat The rabid eohis begin combat by using their pounce ability to close with the PCs and bite them. While they aren't intentionally attempting to spread their disease, they tend to forgo their slam attacks in favor of their rabid bites.

Morale The rabid eohis fight to the death.

NEJEAN RABIES

Type disease (contact); **Save** Fortitude DC 16

Track physical; **Frequency** 1/week

Effect At the debilitated state, the victim also gains the confused condition.

Cure 2 consecutive saves

WATCH YOUR STEP (CR 7)

Alien plants and molds flourish in the areas of Istamak that kish don't frequent; the residents have learned to avoid the more dangerous growths through years of experience, but the PCs might not be so lucky. This PCs might come across this hazard as they travel through the hunting grounds or Monument Hill.

Hazard: Patches of a deep-blue sawgrass that the locals call wearyweed grow even on sections of the street in certain areas of the city. A PC who walks through a patch of ankle-height wearyweed must succeed at a DC 17 Reflex save or

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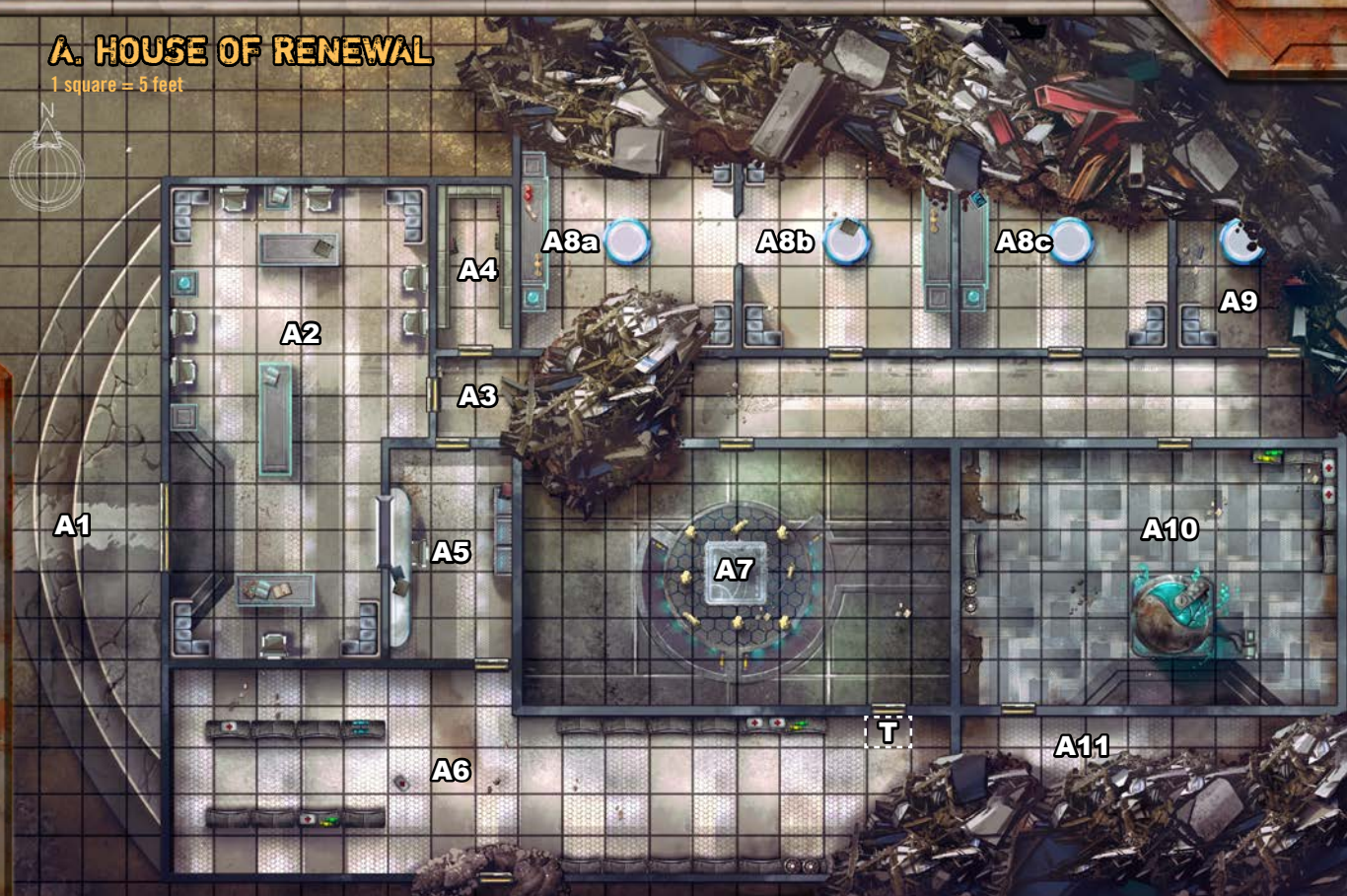
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A. HOUSE OF RENEWAL

1 square = 5 feet



take 1d4 slashing damage. Each PC who takes damage must also succeed at a DC 17 Fortitude save or gain the fatigued condition until the damage is healed. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Life Science check before anyone steps into the wearyweed notices that the blades of the patch of grass look sharp enough to slice through armor and flesh. It is easy enough to simply walk around the wearyweed once it is identified.

A. HOUSE OF RENEWAL

The House of Renewal was once a kishalee outpatient medical center called the Metun Clinic. It was named after an aquatic creature in kishalee mythology that can be reborn from one of its scales, even after death. The clinic offered an advanced form of gene therapy that could cure most diseases and ailments, potentially adding years to a patient's lifespan. The process took only a few hours, including the time spent in a comfortable recovery room waiting to ensure the treatment was effective.

Only one gene-therapy device survived to the present day, and the kish believe it to be an artifact left behind by their ancestors as a reward for the worthy. Sick and injured kish make the pilgrimage to this building and spend some time meditating in an adjacent room before stepping into the device. According to the kish, those with worthy souls are renewed, while the unworthy are either destroyed or horribly transformed. The truth of the matter is that the

gene-therapy machine is old and damaged enough to no longer function reliably, and it doesn't always properly identify an ailment or even have the programming necessary to treat it. In most cases, the device works as intended, but occasionally, it either registers an entire kish as a malignant tumor and destroys the kish entirely in a blast of energy or attempts to completely rearrange the kish's body by horribly twisting his limbs and mind. Unfortunately, this doesn't kill the kish, but it does usually drive him insane, and he suffers as a disgusting abomination known as a rebuilt (see page 60). Rebuilt kish generally have short lives, as they are always killed on sight by other kish. Due to further degradation of its parts and programming over the past few months, the gene-therapy device has produced more rebuilt than normal.

The following are standard features of the House of Renewal. There is no lighting within the building, and the ceilings are 10 feet high. The doors are all unlocked, except where noted.

A1. FRONT STEPS

A set of wide semicircular steps leads up to a pair of doors in the front of this one-story building, which was once painted light blue but is now dingy from age. A half-destroyed holographic sign hangs above the entrance, and a symbol has been crudely painted across the doors.

From here, it's clear that the rear of the building has collapsed in some places.

The only part of the sign that is still readable is the word "clinic" in Kishaleen, and the image painted on the door is a semicircle above a straight line; a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check infers that the symbol depicts a rising or setting sun.

A2. WAITING AREA (CR 6)

The walls of this room are lined with broken, dusty, and moldy furniture. Opposite the pair of double doors that leads outside, a window in the wall is closed off by a slab of opaque material. A smaller door opens near the window. Murals depicting kish with broken limbs and dark halos above their heads cover the walls.

This was once the clinic's waiting area, where patients and their loved ones could sit in comfort and peruse electronic periodicals until called back into the procedure rooms. Most of the furniture in here is dusty and moldy, and all of the chairs are broken. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check can interpret that the kish with dark halos in the murals are suffering from spiritual maladies.

Thanks to the building's other collapses, the window into area **A4** is firmly stuck shut. It can be opened with a successful DC 22 Strength check (one person can use aid another to help the PC attempting the check), though it is easier to go through the door in area **A3**.

Creatures: Two kish warriors from Hearth were badly wounded by Devourer cultists fleeing the city, and they convinced two of their comrades to accompany them here to the House of Renewal for healing. The two friends are not hopeful that the wounded kish have pure enough spirits to be judged worthy by the healing chamber, and they've constructed a makeshift trap in area **A6** in case their comrades are turned into monsters. They then decided to wait here to finish the job, if necessary.

KISH (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

HP 60 each

TACTICS

During Combat These kish warriors are hostile toward outsiders, still feeling the sting of betrayal from the Cult of the Devourer, and attack any non-kish on sight. They focus their ire on any PCs who look like they could be affiliated with the cultists (such as those wearing heavy armor or wielding heavy weapons).

Morale These kish aren't here to sacrifice themselves, so they surrender or attempt to flee if reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points. With the PCs probably blocking the main exit from the building, surrender is the more likely option.

KISHALEE TECHNOLOGY

In order to present treasure that is of some use to the PCs, many of the weapons and other technological items the heroes find are functionally similar to equipment they can buy within the Pact Worlds. In some cases, these items are magical, so the ways in which they differ from other magic items are merely cosmetic. Weapons work essentially the same way no matter where in the galaxy they're found: point the deadly bit toward the enemy and either swing it or press some kind of button or trigger. If you want to simulate the "alienness" of kishalee equipment, you can impose a -2 penalty on the relevant checks or rolls for PCs who use a piece of kishalee gear or weaponry. After handling an item for 24 hours, the PC can attempt a DC 14 Intelligence check to familiarize himself with it and remove the penalty. A PC gains a cumulative +1 bonus to this check for each full day he uses the item after the first. More kishalee technology is described in *Starfinder Adventure Path #5: The Thirteenth Gate*.

A3. BLOCKED CORRIDOR

This hallway once led farther into the building, but 10 feet in the ceiling and walls have collapsed, making progress impossible without working for days to clear the rubble.

A4. SUPPLY CLOSET

Dusty shelves holding the occasional empty box line the walls of this walk-in supply closet. It appears as if very few people have been here in quite some time.

Treasure: When it became clear that Istamak was cut off from the rest of the kishalee empire, the medicinal items in this closet were quickly confiscated and rationed to the populace. However, if a PC succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check, she discovers a *mk 2 ability crystal* lying forgotten under an overturned empty box marked "Sprayflesh" in Kishaleen.

A5. RECEPTION DESK

The western side of this area is occupied by a tall desk built into the wall, half of which is under a large window blocked by a panel of opaque crystalline material. There are doors to the north and south, and stylized eyes are painted on the walls.

The clinic's receptionist would sit in this area, take patients' information, and call them when a doctor was ready to see them. The computer used by the receptionist (which contained

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patients' medical records) was dismantled for parts centuries ago. The kish believe their ancestors' spirits begin examining and judging them here, as represented by the depiction of eyes on the walls; a PC who examines the drawings and succeeds at a DC 25 Culture check can deduce this fact.

A6. MURAL GALLERY (CR 8)

Two rows of lockers made from a ceramic-like material occupy the western end of this room, while the lockers that line the walls of the eastern half are covered with murals depicting sick and injured kish being bathed in a greenish light and stepping away completely healed. Other more beatific-looking kish look down from the top parts of the walls and the ceiling. Fresh charcoal drawings cover the door to the northeast, while the southeast corner of the room is filled with a large mass of rubble.

The lockers, which were used by the clinic's employees to store their personal items during work hours, have been emptied out. The door in the southern wall leads outside but is blocked by a large chunk of rubble. A PC can move this rubble while inside the room with 10 minutes of lifting, but it takes a successful DC 25 Strength check to open the door from the outside. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Culture check while examining the murals interprets the watching kish as being either ancestral spirits or deities who are evaluating the wounded kish.

When the two kish from area **A2** watched their wounded comrades enter the meditation chamber together (see area **A7**), they didn't hold much hope for the pair coming out unscathed. In addition to setting up a trap (see below), they scratched a warning on the door to area **A7**. It crudely depicts a humanoid figure that vaguely resembles a kish with its face covered in a mass of black lines. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Culture check recognizes this as an indication of some kind of danger, as it doesn't match the style of the rest of the paintings in the room. If the PC succeeds at the check by 5 or more, she also realizes the sketch is meant not only to ward off kish but also to denote the nature of the creature or hazard within.

Trap: The unwounded kish set up a trap hidden in the room's pile of rubble using a few handfuls of medical equipment before heading to area **A2** to wait. The trap flings needles at the first person to cross the threshold of the northeastern door.

NEEDLE LAUNCHER TRAP CR 8

XP 4,800

Type analog; **Perception** DC 32; **Disable** Engineering DC 27 (cut trip wire)

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect needles +20 ranged (8d12 P)

A7. MEDITATION CHAMBER (CR 9)

There is no remaining sign of whatever originally occupied this room; it has been cleared of all furniture and decorations, save for a simple square cloth mat measuring four feet to a side. The walls, floor, ceiling, and even doors have been painted an inky black.

This room used to be one of the clinic's two gene-therapy chambers, but the kish have since turned it into a location where a pilgrim can sit in meditation, in the hope of purifying her heart and mind, before entering the chamber of renewal. The lack of



REBUILT

decorations and the absence of color are meant to help focus the pilgrim's concentration.

Creatures: After the Cult of the Devourer assaulted the kish and fled the city, two badly wounded kish retreated to the House of Renewal, seeking treatment, but they were both "rebuilt" by the malfunctioning machine when they impatiently crammed themselves inside at the same time. They have been crouching in this room for a few hours, their minds broken by the rebuilding process, unable to find the southern door (which was closed behind them by their comrades; see area A6).

REBUILT (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

HP 105 each (see page 60)

TACTICS

During Combat The rebuilt kish aren't subtle opponents.

Howling in pain and madness, they rush at whoever enters the room.

Morale The rebuilt kish fight to the death.

A8. RECOVERY ROOMS

The walls of this room, though dirty, are a soothing aquamarine color, and remnants of comfortable-looking furniture poke out from the rubble of the northern walls. The dusty floors and lack of murals hint that no one has stepped foot in here for some time.

After their gene therapy, patients would come to one of these recovery rooms to relax for a short period. Once the doctors had confirmed that these kishalee had definitely recovered (usually via a quick examination with a medical scanner), the patient would be ushered back to the waiting area to meet any friends and family expecting them. The kish have left these rooms alone.

A9. HIDDEN STASH

Apart from debris from a collapsed ceiling, this room seems empty, though the thick layer of dust on the floor appears to be have been recently disturbed.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notices that an image of a kish face has been traced in the dust. A PC who studies the drawing and succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check can tell that the face is meant to look sad and that this is a sort of farewell note or apology. In fact, one of the wounded kish who were rebuilt (see area A7) didn't believe she was going to survive and drew this image as a final message.

Treasure: One of the wounded kish hid a prized possession here before entering the chamber of renewal.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while poking around the rubble discovers an assault kishaxe (see page 44).

A10. CHAMBER OF RENEWAL

There is an air of solemnity in this austere room. A capsule five feet in diameter and eight feet tall sits on a ten-foot-square platform in the center of the room; it is made of some kind of shiny metal, and dozens of wires, cables, and tubes sprout from its surface. Many of the wires run to a free-standing wheeled console nearby. A six-foot-tall door opens into the capsule. A small shrine covered in dried flowers and small wooden icons stands against the western wall. Doors lead north and south out of this room.

The metal capsule is the clinic's surviving gene therapy device. It operates automatically when a creature steps inside and the door is closed. It scans the occupant to determine her malady and then bombards her for about 1 hour with benign energies that alter her genes, enabling her to heal rapidly. The attached console can be used to adjust the treatment (or end it early) as necessary, though the device is no longer in good enough repair for any adjustments to be useful. The medical software that runs the capsule can't fully parse the differences between kish and kishalee physiology (and it certainly doesn't easily adapt to completely alien biology). There is a 25% chance that the capsule malfunctions when used. This chance rises to 75% if a non-kish creature enters the capsule.

If the capsule is working correctly, the creature inside regains 5d8+10 Hit Points and is affected as if by a *remove*



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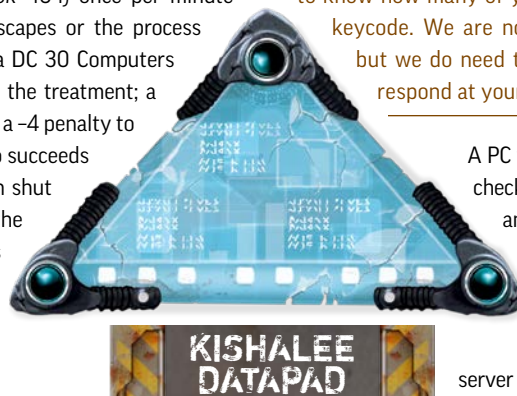
affliction spell (CL 10th) at the end of the hour. A creature inside the capsule when it malfunctions is subject to medium radiation (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 404) once per minute for 1 hour unless the creature escapes or the process is halted. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Computers check can use the console to end the treatment; a PC who can't read Kishaleen takes a -4 penalty to this check. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Engineering check can shut down the capsule by yanking out the correct wires; the capsule ceases to function altogether after that, until a character repairs it by succeeding at a DC 30 Engineering check.

A PC who can read Kishaleen and succeeds at a DC 28 Life Science check while studying the console determines that the capsule is trying to replicate "perfect" kishalee biology, which is slightly different from the physiology of the current residents of Istamak as a result of thousands of years of divergent evolution under harsh circumstances. This could result in a creature inside the capsule being killed or horribly mutated. A PC with a sample of kish DNA (a bit of skin or blood from one of the kish in area **A2** would be enough) can attempt a DC 28 Computers check to reprogram the capsule to always work for kish. With a DNA sample from another creature, a PC can attempt the same check to add that species to the capsule's database; if successful, she removes the chance of a malfunction when a member of that species uses the device. However, the DNA each additional race added to the system beyond the first two increases the DC of the required Computers check by 2 per race (+2 for a third race, +4 for a fourth race, and so on) as the system is too damaged to easily keep the DNA of multiple different races separate.

Development: A flat, triangular crystal rests among the offerings on the shrine. A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Computers or Engineering check recognizes it as a data storage device; if the PCs already identified the data-storage crystal from area **B8**, they recognize this one instantly. Accessing the device requires touching the crystal in a number of specific places and a successful DC 15 Computers check. Much of the data is corrupted beyond repair, with the exception of a single voice message in Kishaleen. When the PCs access the message, read or paraphrase the following.

The voice in the message is deep and gravelly. "Greetings. This is..." There is a loud burst of static. "...head of security at the Foundry. We recently had a few pieces of classified..." There is another burst of static. "...and we are investigating the possible compromise of all methods of entry and exit in our facility. As far as I can tell, the series XLT-88 digital lock on our security entrance hasn't been tampered with, but the manual I have here states that the lock can be placed

in standby mode and accessed with an admin keycode. Of course..." Static again. "...but the director and I would like to know how many of your employees have access to this keycode. We are not accusing you of any misdoings, but we do need to leave no stone unturned. Please respond at your earliest convenience."



A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Intelligence check surmises that the Temple Found and the Foundry mentioned in the message might be one and the same. In addition, the metadata of the message contains a partial router address, identifying the server through which the message was sent. A PC trained in Computers can find

this information without a check, and if she succeeds at a DC 12 Computers check, she realizes that by examining a similar message, she would be able to pinpoint the server exactly.

If the PCs have this message and the one from area **B8**, continue to the Broken Lands on page 22.

Story Award: If the PCs reprogram the gene-therapy device, award them 1,600 XP.

A11. BURIED OFFICE

This room is choked with rubble, as most of the ceiling has collapsed, forming an impassible mound. Crushed office furniture poke out from under the debris, and the floor is thick with dust and grime. A door leads out to the north.

Once the office of the clinic's director and head physician, this room suffered the brunt of the building's partial collapse. There is nothing of interest here, and it would take days—possibly weeks—to clear out the rubble.

B. MAZE OF GHOSTS

The building now known as the Maze of Ghosts was once a small museum focusing on the history of Istamak featuring lifelike holograms of important kishalee figures, information on key features of the city, and short re-creations of vital points in the city's past. It functioned a bit more like an advertisement for the metropolis than a solemn and serious record of Istamak's history, but it engendered much in the way of local pride and was a popular destination for visitors and schoolchildren on field trips. This was due in part to the holograms having rudimentary artificial personalities; they would briefly interact with the guests to answer questions and extol the virtues of the city.

Though the building can still receive power, over the millennia the hologram projectors have deteriorated, so the images they show are often hazy or filled with digital artifacts and the artificial personalities have degraded into senselessness. The kish use the museum to "commune" with

B. MAZE OF GHOSTS

1 square = 5 feet



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their ancestors by briefly turning on the power to the displays and walking through the museum to listen to the holograms' babbling. As the answers a pilgrim receives are often cryptic or indecipherable, the Maze of Ghosts is used only for the deepest questions posed by the most devout kish.

The following are features of the Maze of Ghosts. Area **B1** is outside, areas **B2** and **B3** are lit by dim lighting, and areas **B4** through **B7** have no lighting except for that provided by the holographic displays when they are turned on (treat as dim lighting). Areas **B8** and **B9** have no lighting. The ceilings are 8 feet high.

B1. BROKEN ENTRANCE (CR 8)

The front entrance of this building has been sheared away by some ancient calamity, revealing metal structural supports, pipes, and bits of wiring. The ground here is littered with rubble, some of which was been removed to clear a small path into the structure.

Much of the building is buried under the rubble of other structures that have collapsed over the millennia, which has actually formed a protective shell keeping the worst ravages of time from affecting the building. The area around the entrance has long since been cleared, and from here the PCs can see the building's interior decor, which despite being faded with age is still recognizably bright and cheery.

Any exterior indication of the building's former name is long gone, but the PCs will be able to find it inside. The squares in the passageway leading from area **B1** to area **B2** are filled with rubble and considered difficult terrain, but they can be cleared with roughly a minute's labor per square.

Creature: A large constrictor-like serpent called an acrochor has recently started hunting in this area. As the PCs approach, it is curled among the exposed metal supports overhead, attempting to lie in ambush. A PC who succeeds at a Perception check opposed by the acrochor's Stealth check spots the beast before it attacks.

ACROCHOR

CR 8

XP 4,800

HP 128 (see page 55)

TACTICS

During Combat The acrochor attacks the PCs from above as it hangs off the exposed metal bars. If it successfully grabs someone, it slithers off the metal supports to constrict its victim to death.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points, the acrochor tries to flee, climbing up and over the building.

B2. TICKET BOOTH

A small booth with a large open window stands against the western wall. A doorway to the north is blocked by

a thick, translucent shutter made from some kind of synthetic crystal. The walls are adorned with paint-and-charcoal murals depicting humanoid figures looming over the buildings of a city; these titans seem to be looking benevolently down at the city's inhabitants.

A large sign under the window of the ticket booth features the words "Istamak Historical Museum" in Kishaleen and lists the prices of admission, hours of operation, and similar details that no longer matter. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check discovers the secret door in the rear of the booth, which leads to area **B9**.

As with many other portions of the city, the kish have decorated the interior of this building with charcoal and their own paints, creating murals that tell their version of the story of this place. The sturdy, 3-inch-thick shutter (hardness 20, Hit Points 80, break DC 30) blocks access to the rest of the building, and there is no obvious way to open it or access a mechanism to open it. A PC who examines the mural and succeeds at a DC 25 Culture check can deduce that the towering figures are meant to represent the kish's ancestors as they watch over the city and its current inhabitants. That PC also notices a number of nearly hidden indicators in the drawings that point toward a disguised panel in the wall near the ticket booth. (A PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Perception check also finds this panel.) The panel swings open easily, revealing a large breaker switch. Flipping the switch powers up the building, opening the door to area **B3** and activating the holographic displays. In addition, a welcome hologram that used to play on repeat here in the lobby activates, showing a sweeping panoramic of the city (the image is of how the city looked in its prime, but is now full of glitches). A voiceover (in Kishaleen) accompanying the image is audible, though only a few fragments are understandable between crackling bursts of static. The message repeats a few times before the projector overheats and automatic safety protocols shut it down.

"Welcome to..." The audio becomes garbled. "...Istamak, shining city of progress! Come..." Static obscures several patches of the next few sentences. "...to witness... living history..." The music playing under the words increases in volume for a few moments, drowning out some of the voice. "Don't hesitate to ask questions... and come again soon!"

B3. GIFT SHOP

The murals continue in this room, this time showing smaller figures in the streets of a stylized city looking in reverence toward a large archway to the west leading into a wide, dark hallway. There is a small counter in the northwestern corner, and a number of dusty shelves and empty hooks occupy the eastern side of the room.

This area was once the museum's gift shop, selling all sorts of articles of clothing, digital books, and other mementos to tourists who wanted keepsakes of their visits. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check notices the secret door behind the counter, which leads to area **B9**.

The kish see this room as the beginning of the journey to commune with their ancestors. They would stop to meditate here for a few moments before continuing on. They believe the shelves and hooks were once used by their ancestors to hold sacred relics, so they haven't tampered with them.

Treasure: A fully charged holoskin lies in the dust on one of the shelves. It is currently programmed to make the user look like Istamak's last mayor—the kishalee the living hologram in area **B4** is based on.

B4. THE FOUNDING OF ISTAMAK (CR 8)

Animated holographic displays along the walls of this section of the twisting hallway depict the planning and construction of a huge city among the clouds: alien architects manipulating three-dimensional electronic blueprints, an important-looking figure standing on an open-air cloud barge and pulling a lever that starts large construction machinery in the background, and a handful of industrial painters putting the finishing touches on a building. The animations loop every few minutes. A large touch screen is mounted in front of each display.

The first set of displays in the museum shows idealized scenes of the founding and building of Istamak. The touch screen in front of each display is meant to activate the holograms' artificial personalities, but now when they are pressed, they cause the displays to freeze up and emit a string of garbled speech that is beyond translation. The images often blur and jump without warning. If the PCs enter the museum without turning on the power in area **B2**, this room is dark and the displays are off. The living hologram (see Creature below) can then be found only in area **B7**.

Creature: Over the centuries, the hologram of Istamak's last kishalee mayor (see area **B7**) became subtly corrupted, turning into a living hologram, a kind of digital ghost that has evolved its own rudimentary personality based on corruptions within its programming. It behaves as though it is the city's leader and protector: it entreats the kish who come to the Maze of Ghosts to ask it questions and request blessings as its charges, and it acts to protect them. Though it knows nothing of the incidents involving the Cult of the Devourer, the living hologram can plainly see the PCs are strangers to its city. It doesn't think to ask any questions, quietly concluding that these outsiders must be killed or driven off. It hides among the other holograms in this room, waiting for a chance to strike.

LIVING HOLOGRAM

CR 8

XP 4,800

HP 115 (see page 59)

TACTICS

During Combat The living hologram takes advantage of its incorporeal nature, engaging in hit-and-run tactics as the PCs move through this area and areas **B5**, **B6**, and **B7**, using *holographic image* to confuse and disorient them. If it is somehow rooted to the spot, the living hologram snarls angrily in Kishaleen and begins making full attacks when possible, targeting the weakest-looking PC.

Morale Though not consciously aware that it will rejuvenate if killed, the living hologram fights as if it had nothing to lose. However, it regenerates in area **B7** after a few hours if its faulty projector hasn't been destroyed or fixed.

B5. THE INDUSTRY OF ISTAMAK

This portion of the hallway features animated holographic displays of manufacturing and other industrial work: a miniature version of a gas-mining vessel scoops up clouds, an alien in a jumpsuit stands at the console of an automated production line, and another sits at a large workbench performing delicate repairs on a small technological item, his face comically distorted by a large magnifying mirror. Like those before, these displays loop every few minutes, and each display features a large touch screen.

The second set of displays in the museum shows idealized scenes of Istamak's businesses and industries, with the Foundry being the most prominent. The touch screen in front of each display activates the holograms' artificial personalities, though a glitch causes each touch screen to activate the same speech in Kishaleen. This Foundry-sponsored bit of propaganda is a jingoist screed that touts the strength of the kishalee people, especially when they work together to overcome certain obstacles (a thinly veiled reference to other cultures and civilizations).

If the PCs enter the museum without turning on the power in area **B2**, this room is dark and the displays are off.

B6. THE ARTS OF ISTAMAK

The holographic displays in this section of the hallway depict performers and creators of various forms of art. A trio of

aliens in formal costumes leap and spin gracefully on a stage, another alien sits in front of some kind of instrument and tinkers away at the keys as if trying to perfect a melody, and a group of patrons stand in an art gallery admiring a sculpture of metal and glass. The displays repeat their animations every few minutes, and a large touch screen stands in front of each display.

The third set of displays in the museum shows idealized scenes of Istamak's art scene, which wasn't as thriving as these images would have visitors believe. The city had one big theater—the New Millennium (see page 42)—which featured performances by the kishalee empire's many touring troupes, ranging from concerts to dance to holoplays. A number of smaller venues throughout the city hosted only local bands, and the few art galleries did very little business. The touch screen in front of each display activates the holograms' artificial personalities, but after centuries, they are all surly and offer only scathing criticism of the PCs' hair and wardrobe choices. The kish see this section of the Maze of Ghosts as a final test before reaching the shrine in area **B8**; those who can endure the mocking are worthy of reaching the final chamber.

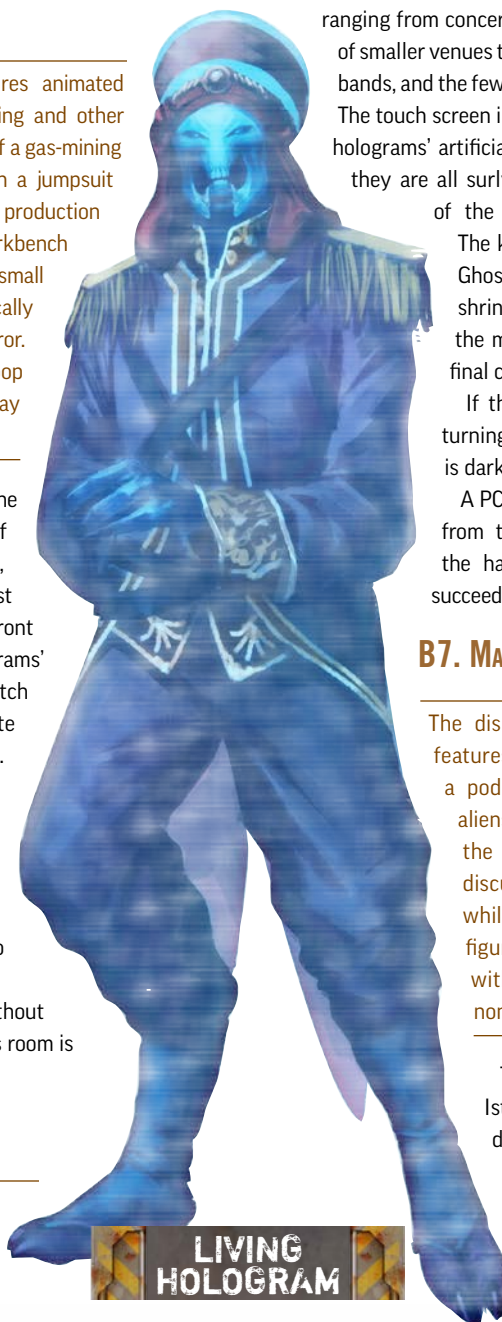
If the PCs enter the museum without turning on the power in area **B2**, this room is dark and the displays are off.

A PC can discover the secret door across from this portion of the gallery (where the hallway splits into a T-junction) by succeeding at a DC 32 Perception check.

B7. MALFUNCTIONING PROJECTOR

The display at the end of this hallway features an official-looking room with a podium in the center. A handful of aliens in crisp suits can be seen in the background; some appear to be discussing the contents of a document, while others are examining charts and figures. A couple of banners embossed with stylized symbols flutter in a nonexistent breeze above it all.

This display is meant to celebrate Istamak's government, and the figures depicted are politicians going about their work of aiding the citizenry. These holograms would be reprogrammed every few years to represent the actual elected officials, including the mayor,



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who is meant to be the main focus of the display, standing behind the podium.

However, the hologram that represents Istamak's last mayor (whose name has been lost to time) has significantly deviated from its programming due to a corrupted projector. The PCs likely defeated the living hologram as they traveled through areas **B4** through **B6** (otherwise it is standing behind the podium waiting for the PCs to get a bit closer before it strikes; see area **B4**), but even so, a few seconds of its image appear briefly in the display, flickering in and out erratically. A PC who sees this and succeeds at a DC 18 Computers or Engineering check can surmise that this is due to a faulty projector.

The projector is easy to spot by any PC who steps into the display. A PC can repair the projector by succeeding at a DC 30 Engineering check. Each attempt takes 1 hour; if the party doesn't fix the projector fast enough, the living hologram might rejuvenate and attack them again. Alternatively, the PCs can simply destroy the projector. This Small object has an AC of 4, a hardness of 25, 45 Hit Points, and a break DC of 25.

Story Award: If the PCs destroy or repair the faulty projector and put the living hologram to its final rest, award them an additional 1,600 XP.

B8. SHRINE

The holographic displays at the end of this hallway are dark but have been replaced with murals depicting aliens in solemn poses, their heads looking up toward the sky and their bodies lit from within. A small shrine in the center of the murals is covered with tiny effigies crafted from wire and metal.

Kish turned this darkened corner of the museum into a shrine to the kishalee depicted in the holograms in the other displays, turning them into saintlike figures. After walking through the main gallery, kish pilgrims arrive here to place little dolls meant to represent themselves here to be blessed by their ancestors.

Development: A flat, triangular crystal lies among the offerings on the shrine. A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Computers or Engineering check recognizes it as a data-storage device; if the PCs already identified the data-storage crystal from area **A10**, they recognize this one instantly. Accessing the device requires touching the crystal in a number of correct places and a successful DC 15 Computers check. Much of the data is corrupted beyond repair, with the exception of a single voice message in Kishaleen. When the PCs access the message, read or paraphrase the following.

The message begins with a loud burst of static, followed by a feminine voice. "...chief technology officer here at SecuriTech. Our customer service representatives received your message regarding your..." Another burst of static ensues. "...and I want to assure you that we take your security issues with the utmost seriousness. After all, you are our biggest client."

An awkward chuckle is distorted by audio artifacts. "A copy of the admin keycode for your lock—for all the locks we install—resides on a server within the Foundry. This server cannot be accessed except from its physical terminal, and only SecuriTech's chief executive officer, a few key members of our team, and I have access to that terminal. In addition, I checked the logs this morning, and no one has accessed your file in almost a year. And that was for normal..." The message ends with a final burst of static.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Intelligence check surmises that the Temple Found and the Foundry mentioned in the message might be one and the same. In addition, the metadata of the message contains a partial router address, identifying the server from which the message was sent. A PC trained in Computers can find this information without a check, and if she succeeds at a DC 12 Computers check, she realizes that with a similar message, she could pinpoint the server exactly.

If the PCs have this message and the one from area **A10**, continue to The Broken Lands (see below).

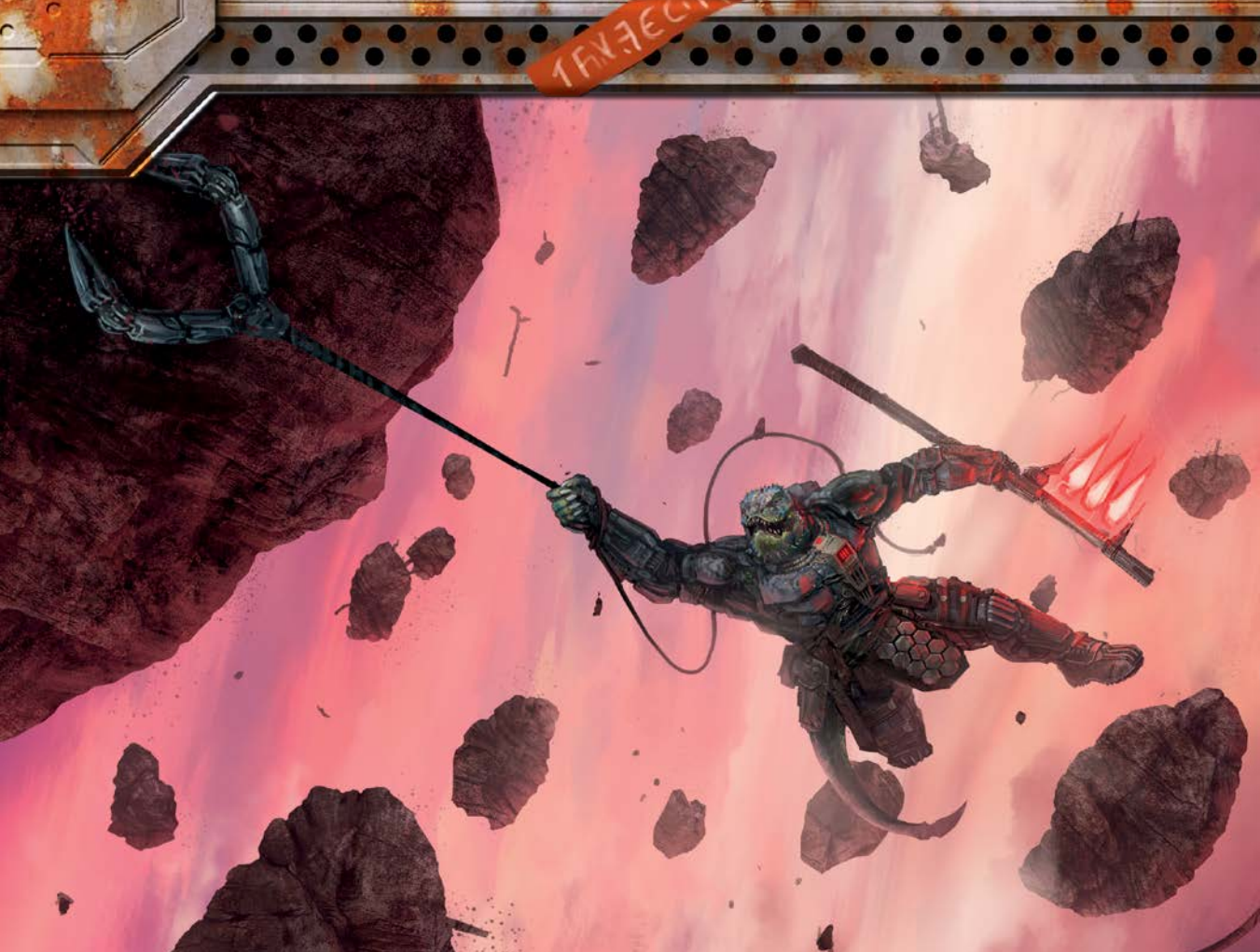
B9. MAINTENANCE CORRIDOR

This corridor runs most of the perimeter of the building, allowing access to the computer consoles that govern the programming of each display. It is about 5 degrees warmer in this poorly ventilated area than outside. All of the secret doors are plainly visible from inside the maintenance corridor.

Treasure: When the owner of the museum realized the city was cut off from the rest of kishalee civilization, he placed a small cache of weapons and ammunition in this corridor (at the space marked on the map) in case the situation grew dire. Unfortunately, he was killed in a riot a few weeks later, and no one has entered this corridor since. Though the weapons and ammunition are of alien origin and millennia old, they function similarly to their modern-day equivalents (see the Kishalee Technology sidebar on page 15). The cache consists of a *haste circuit* armor upgrade, a *shock fusion seal* (8th level), and a snub scattergun with 16 shells, all hidden within a *mk 2 null-space chamber*.

THE BROKEN LANDS

Even with the messages from the two data storage crystals in areas **A10** and **B8**, the PCs still don't have the admin keycode to enter the Foundry's side security entrance. However, the messages contain a few clues that will lead them to that information, including partial router addresses for SecuriTech's server, which might store the keycode they need. A PC with both messages who succeeds at a DC 25 Computers check can piece together the two partial router addresses and pinpoint the physical location of the ancient server that originally processed the messages. This computer is located in the SecuriTech building found in the northwest part of Istamak, in a section of the city known to the local kish as the Broken Lands, a small chain of islands floating



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CITY OF ISTAMAK

PART 3:
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separate from the metropolis proper. For more information on the history of the Broken Lands, see page 42.

If the PCs return to Herald Tzayl to ask her about the Broken Lands, she tells them that the area is very dangerous and that only too hardy kish youth wishing to impress a potential mate make the perilous journey across the shattered hunks of land. Her people believe the buildings in the Broken Lands are “angry,” and Tzayl shares a tale about kish entering them and never being seen again. She can tell them no further information about the area, but she does offer them a 50-foot length of titanium alloy cable line and a grapples (with a fully charged battery) if the PCs ask for climbing gear. She also notes that she would love to hear of their adventures, should they return.

Fortunately, the SecuriTech offices (area **C**) are on one of closer islands of the Broken Lands, and a number of small, rocky islets lead up to it. A PC with a jetpack or the *flight* spell (3rd level or higher) can reach the desired island easily. The first islet is 40 feet from the “shore” and 5 feet higher in altitude. The next two islets are each 30 feet from the one before, though each is 10 feet higher in altitude than the last. The island with the SecuriTech offices is 50 feet from the last islet, but at the same elevation. Each islet can hold four Medium creatures or one Large creature. If the PCs use the grapples and cable provided by Tzayl, they need to hit with a ranged attack against AC 5 to attach the grapples to each islet (either throwing it as a grenade or using a ranged weapon that targets KAC; see pages 219–220 of the *Starfinder*

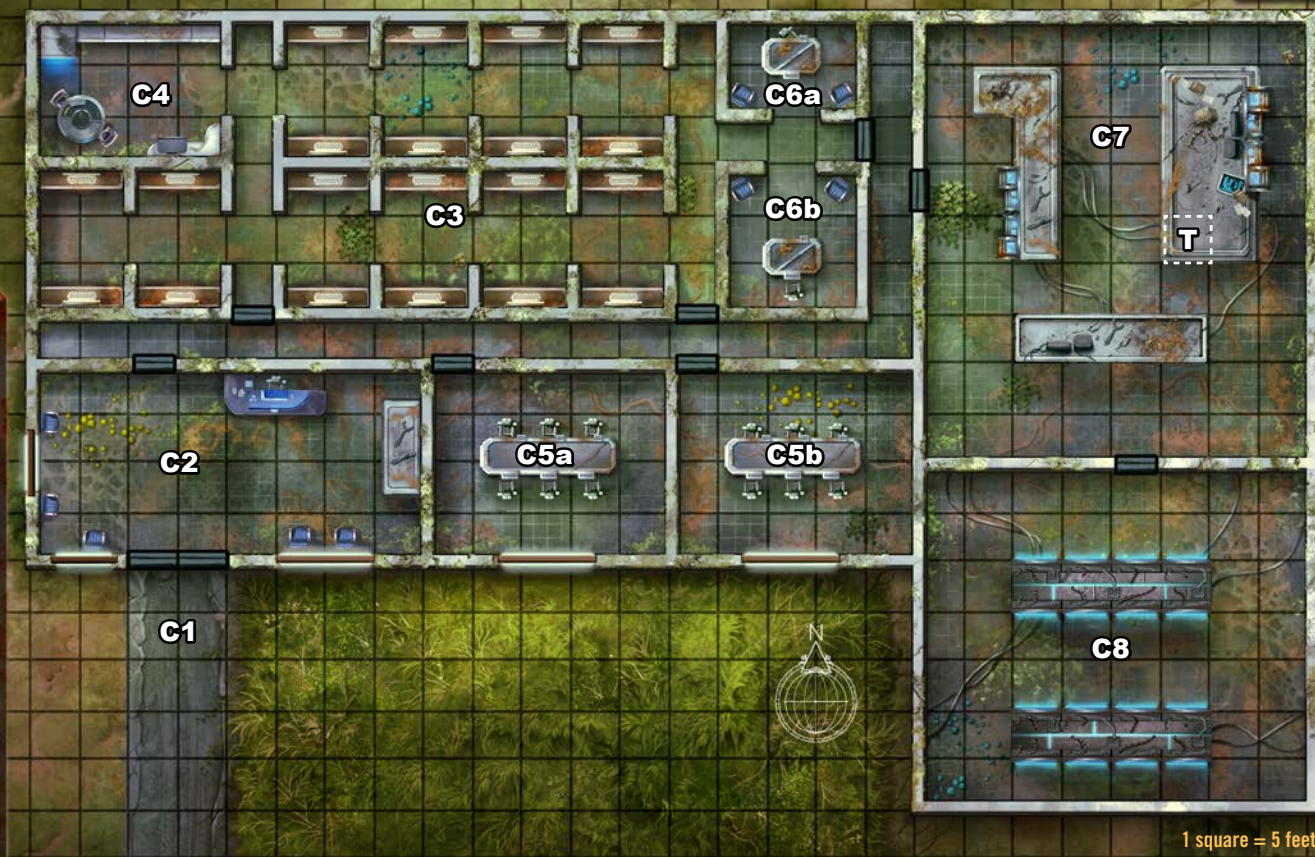
Core Rulebook). They then can climb across the cable with successful DC 10 Athletics checks. Remember that falling in this situation is most likely fatal, as the nearest bit of “ground” is the planet’s core, thousands of miles below the city. On the other hand, such a long fall does give the other PCs a chance to hastily mount a rescue mission!

Alternatively, the PCs can try to use their starship to get themselves closer to the island with SecuriTech’s offices. While there are no spots to land a starship in the Broken Lands, a PC can attempt a DC 30 Piloting check to bring the vessel close to an islet and hold it there for a brief period so that the other PCs can make 15-foot jumps out of an airlock onto the island. Failing this Piloting check by 9 or less means the pilot can’t get the starship close enough for a safe jump; failing this check by 10 or more also means the starship takes 4d6 damage to its Hull Points (this can’t be mitigated by shields) as the pilot scrapes up against an outcropping. Of course, even if the rest of the crew makes it to the islet, the pilot will need to figure out her own way there, as she can’t just park the starship in the air and jump out.

C. SECURITECH OFFICES

The PCs’ destination is an establishment called SecuriTech, which provided alarms and digital locks for many of Istamak’s businesses, including the Foundry. In addition to fielding calls from clients, the employees of SecuriTech would debug these locks or add new features, though most of the physical

C. SECURITECH OFFICES



components were manufactured off-site. The building was abandoned after the accident that created the Broken Lands and it no longer has power, but if the PCs can access the server containing the electronic manual that includes the admin keycode to the Foundry's security entrance, they can access the weapons facility. They will need the digital lock's model number, found in the message from area **A10**.

Unfortunately, the SecuriTech offices are now the domain of an immense mold colony known as a writher swarm. The mold has insinuated itself into the building's walls, floor, and ceiling, and its sturdy filaments are the only thing keeping the structure from crumbling.

The following are features of the SecuriTech offices. Area **C1** is outside, areas **C2** and **C5** have exterior windows that let in outside light, and the rest of building has no interior lighting. All other windows and openings are covered over with dirt and grime, leaving most areas in darkness. The doors (hardness 8, HP 30) are all unlocked, though many are stuck closed. The ceilings are 8 feet high. There are no functional light sources within the building, and even if there were, the lack of power would keep them dark.

C1. EXTERIOR PLAZA (CR 7)

A smooth path runs past an overgrown lawn to the entrance of this drab building. The knee-high blue-and-green grass

smells sweet, like honey warming in the sun. The structure's walls are shot through with barely perceptible white filaments webbing across the entire surface.

A PC who examines the walls and succeeds at a DC 25 Life Science check identifies the filaments as a kind of mold; while breathing air near the mold might have negative long-term health consequences for anyone unprotected, the environmental protections of the PCs' armor should filter out any of its spores. If the result of this check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC recognizes that the mold is one massive colony and, having grown to this size, it might be able to defend itself if it perceives an attack. The PCs can attempt to damage the filaments from here, but aside from causing a few small chunks of the wall to crumble off, they do no harm to the writher swarm as a whole; neither does the writher swarm emerge to attack them, as it is patient enough to bide its time. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Engineering check notes that the filaments are acting as a kind of structural support, keeping the walls of the building from collapsing in on themselves.

Though the front doors are unlocked, the many filaments running through them and the adjacent walls make them effectively stuck. A PC must succeed at a DC 20 Strength check to wrench the doors open. The filaments tear with a sickening, wet sound; the writher swarm immediately knows that intruders are in the building.

Creatures: Two daelns were recently attacked by the writher swarm within the building when they floated too close to its roof. Similar to the barathus that live on Bretheda and Liavara, daelns are large, floating, living sacs of gas that vaguely resemble jellyfish. They drift through Nejeor VI's upper atmosphere, absorbing the minerals within the clouds and secreting concentrated masses of materials they can't digest; these droppings look like fist-sized stones and are sometimes laced with valuable metals. Daelns have animal-level intelligence and were considered pests by the kishalee cloud miners, though modern daelns are several magnitudes smaller than those from many millennia ago. These two daelns escaped from the swarm's tendrils and are trying to escape the area when they encounter the PCs. In their panic, they attempt to frighten the PCs away with their stony secretions.

DAELNS (2)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Variant barathu (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 20)

LN Large aberration

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +17

DEFENSE

HP 65 EACH

EAC 17; **KAC** 18

Fort +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities amorphous

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (Ex, perfect)

Melee slam +12 (1d4+6 B)

Ranged pellets +10 (1d6+5 B)

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

TACTICS

During Combat These daelns have the ranged attack adaptation, which they use to fire hardened pellets of minerals they skim from the surrounding clouds, hoping to scare away the PCs.

Morale When a daeln is reduced to fewer than 30 HP, it drifts away, not interested in forfeiting its life.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +17, Diplomacy +12, Sense Motive +12, Survival +17

Languages none

Other Abilities adaptation, combine

C2. RECEPTION AREA

Except for the carpet of pale white mold covering everything, this room appears to have been untouched for millennia. Five heavily padded chairs sit against the western and southern walls. A bed of mushrooms grows on a large, four-foot-high, L-shaped desk across from the main entrance, next to a small cabinet. Double doors lead outside to the south, and another door leads north.

SecuriTech's prospective clients would be met here by a receptionist before being led to one of the two meeting rooms (area C5). Those without appointments would likely need to wait here for a short bit. Several datapads full of reading material for those waiting have been swallowed by the mold, as were the snacks and liquid refreshments that would have been available on the small cabinet.

As with the double doors, a PC must succeed at a DC 20 Strength check to force open the northern door leading farther into the building.

C3. OFFICE CUBICLES

This spacious room is a wide swath of small, gray hillocks covering what might have once been a collection of desks and chairs. Two doors exit the room to the south. There is a doorway to a smaller room to the northwest, and a short hallway leads east past two other doors.

Most of SecuriTech's employees did their daily work at these 20 workstations, monitoring the various security systems



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installed across the city, responding to messages from clients, attempting to land new clients, and performing other mundane tasks. No salvageable equipment can be found here. A PC must succeed at a DC 20 Strength check to open either door to this room. An open doorway in the northwest leads into a communal kitchen (area **C4**).

C4. KITCHEN

Though this room is as covered in mold as the rest of the building, the smell here is somehow even worse. A foul, rotting odor wafts from what appears to be an open unpowered refrigeration unit. Rotting cabinets, some whose doors have long ago fallen off, hang on the walls, and parts of a small, round table peek out from under a mound of mold.

Like most spaces shared by several coworkers, the SecuriTech office kitchen was never spotless even when the building was being used. In fact, the writher swarm began its life here as a pile of moldy protein cubes left in the refrigeration unit for a couple of decades. The room is now a riot of mildew and mushrooms. Any PC who enters this room without environmental protections (such as from armor) must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw or be sickened by the smell for 1 minute.

Treasure: A PC who digs through the cabinets that line the northern wall and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check finds a discarded *serum of enhancement* (scientist).

C5. MEETING ROOM

Most of this room is occupied by an oval table surrounded by six chairs. The dilapidated remains of audiovisual equipment lie on the table, coated in a thin film of mildew. Light filters in through a large, south-facing window covered in fibrous white tendrils.

The members of SecuriTech's sales department would bring prospective clients to one of the two identical rooms marked **C5a** and **C5b** to entice them with a slick audiovisual presentation or to go over contracts and discuss other business. A successful DC 20 Strength check is required to open the door to either area.

C6. EXECUTIVE OFFICE

While one of the rooms marked **C6** is larger than the other, they are both furnished similarly, each with a desk and some chairs. Both the offices and their furnishings are covered with mold. The southern office was used by SecuriTech's chief executive officer, while the northern office belonged to the chief technical officer.

Treasure: A PC who searches the southern office and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check discovers a smooth

purple glove tailored for kishalee hands. This is a *glove of storing*, and though the PCs can't use it right away, a character who keeps it in his possession for 24 hours finds that it fits her perfectly the next time she tries it on.

C7. ENGINEERING BAY (CR 8)

This room contains three tables, and while mold has crept up onto most of the them, one of the tables has a large untouched patch about two feet in diameter. A roughly square hunk of metal, plastic, and crystal sits in the center of the open space, its sides covered with alien symbols and bits of circuitry. The filaments of mold covering the walls seem to be moving ever so slightly, as if a faint draft were blowing, though the air is still. A door leads out to the west, and another leads to the south.

A successful DC 20 Strength check is required to open the door to this room, which was where SecuriTech's security engineers would repair and modify the digital locks and deterrent systems the company sold and monitored. Most of the equipment here has been claimed by the mold, with the exception of a flawed piece of security equipment (see Trap below) that has remained active over the millennia.

Trap: In the waning days of the kishalee empire, SecuriTech's chief technical officer began experimenting with adding magical power sources to her company's equipment, which she hoped would allow the equipment to remain active even in the event of total power failure. She was progressing well in her venture, but she never got around to completing her work. However, some of her experiments were successful, and one device has retained enough power to function one more time, even after thousands of years. Anyone tampering with the partially modified machine risks electrocution.

MODIFIED POWER SOURCE TRAP CR 8

XP 4,800

Type hybrid; **Perception** DC 32; **Disable** Engineering DC 27 (cause a short) or **Mysticism** DC 27 (disrupt runes)

Trigger touch; **Reset** none

Effect arc of electricity (8d12 E); Reflex DC 18 half

Treasure: A PC who searches the tables and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check finds an old piece of security equipment that can (with 1 hour of work and a successful DC 25 Engineering check) be used as a motion detector.

C8. SERVER ROOM (CR 9)

The walls, ceiling, and floor of this room are coated with a thick layer of mold, with thousands of pale white filaments poking out like tiny fingers. However, the two rectangular objects in the center of the room are free of mold. The crystalline devices are marked with sharp-edged designs,

and each has a dark computer console built into one side. A doorway leads north.

The large rectangular objects are servers, holding all of SecuriTech's data—contracts, employee records, instruction manuals, schematics, and so on—and could be accessed using the built-in terminals to display any data stored within. A PC trained in Computers who examines the devices for 1 minute recognizes them as such. The northern server holds, sends, and receives the company's electronic communications, both internal and external, and would allow for access to Istamak's infosphere (if it still existed), while the southern server is more secure, having no connection to the outside.

The router address the PCs discovered matches the one assigned to the northern server—a fact that can be discovered with a successful DC 15 Computers check, or a successful DC 25 Perception check by someone who can read Kishaleen by locating that information written on the outside of the device. A PC who succeeds at either check also notes that the southern server has no router address, meaning it can be accessed only via the console; this one likely has the most sensitive information stored on it.

Both servers currently have no power, and their consoles are unresponsive. A PC can jury-rig a power source for a server with a high-capacity (or better) battery and a successful DC 25 Engineering check; this provides enough power for 1 minute of work per charge in the battery, draining those charges as time passes. Alternatively, a single casting of a *recharge* spell powers a server for 10 minutes (and has no change of destroying the server's battery the first time the spell is used in this way).

Once powered, a server acts as a tier 3 computer. A PC can hack into a server to gain access with a successful DC 25 Computers check; this takes 3 full actions. If the PCs access the northern server, it takes another 3 full rounds of searching through the directory for them to realize information such as admin keycodes cannot be found on this server. Either amount of time is halved (minimum 1 full action) for every 5 by which the PC's Computers check result exceeds the DC.

A PC who has successfully accessed the southern server must succeed at a DC 27 Computers check to find and retrieve the admin keycode for the Foundry's XLT-88 digital lock from behind a firewall; this also takes 3 full actions. This amount of time is halved (minimum 1 full action) for every 5 by which the PC's Computers check result exceeds the DC. However, the southern server is also on a shock grid. The first time a PC fails a Computers check to gain access or find the admin keycode, every character within 10 feet of the server must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1 round. This likely won't inconvenience the PCs that much, but warn them that the server might have some nastier countermeasures in place; a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Computers or Engineering check to examine the server for traps or security measures

recognizes that the server is on a shock grid and that the next failed Computers check will result in lethal force. If a PC fails a second Computers check to access the southern server, every character within 10 feet of the server takes 8d6 electricity damage (Reflex DC 20 half). A PC can disable the shock grid by succeeding at a DC 27 Engineering check, though failing this check sets off the shock grid as if the PCs had failed a second Computers check.

If the PCs succeed at the two checks to access the system and bypass the firewall, they discover the admin keycode to the Foundry's security entrance: basically, a certain combination of keys pressed simultaneously puts the digital lock into a maintenance mode, making it possible to disable the lock without knowing the current keycode, which for security reasons would be automatically changed every month.

Creature: The writher swarm isn't about to allow the PCs to leave its domain once they have delved so deeply. Once the PCs have retrieved the admin keycode and move to leave, the filaments on the walls begin to ripple as if caught in a strong breeze. They quickly coalesce into the creature's swarm form to block the characters' exit, and the writher swarm attempts to either devour or infest the PCs.

WRITHER SWARM

CR 9

XP 6,400

HP 145 (see page 61)

TACTICS

Before Combat The writher swarm attempts to quietly move into position, blocking the only exit out of the room.

During Combat The writher swarm encompasses as many PCs as possible with its tendrils.

Morale The writher swarm hasn't had a meal the size of the PCs in a long while, so out of overwhelming hunger, it fights to the death.

Development: The instant the writher swarm dies, the mold on the surrounding walls turns from a pale gray to black as the colony dies. This causes the building to begin falling down around the PCs' ears. Continue with Event 1: Collapse! below.

EVENT 1: COLLAPSE! (CR 9)

The following event occurs as the PCs flee the collapsing building. Keep track of each PC's actions each round after the PCs kill the writher swarm, though initiative count doesn't matter. Also note the changes to the structure that make it difficult for the PCs to take the most direct route to the exit. The repercussions of being completely buried in rubble are detailed at the end of this section (see Getting Buried on page 28).

As the center of the writher swarm colony, area **C8** suffers the greatest destruction. At the end of the second round after the PCs kill the writher swarm, the ceiling in this room fully collapses, burying all who are in it. As the PCs pass through

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area **C7**, the floor buckles underneath them, creating a small sinkhole between this room and area **C8**. The last PC to enter area **C7** must succeed at a DC 25 Athletics check to jump over this pit. Failure means the PC takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage as he falls into the 30-foot-deep hole and must climb out before this room fully collapses 3 rounds later and buries him.

Much of the east-west portion of building's main corridor is now completely blocked with debris, as the northern wall of area **C5** has collapsed into it. The PCs instead must go through areas **C6** and **C3**. The door on the eastern wall of area **C6** is now jammed shut, so a PC must succeed at a DC 25 Strength check to open it. The entirety of area **C3** is difficult terrain, and its southeastern door is blocked. Starting on the third round the PCs are in this room, large chunks of the ceiling begin falling on them. Each round, a random PC takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 20 half). At the end of the sixth round the PCs are in this room, the ceiling collapses entirely, burying everyone who remains in the area (see *Getting Buried* below).

When the PCs reach the main corridor again, they immediately notice that the southwest corner of the building has collapsed entirely, making it impossible to exit through area **C2** and the front door. If the PCs explored the building beforehand, they might remember that the meeting rooms (area **C5**) had large south-facing windows. If not, a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception hears the sound of shattering glass coming from that direction. The collapse of the northern wall of area **C5** has blocked off the door to area **C5b**, but area **C5a** is still accessible. If the PCs opened the door to that meeting room earlier, that door is still open; otherwise, a PC can open the door by succeeding at a DC 20 Strength check.

As the PCs enter the meeting room, it becomes evident that they don't have much time before the rest of the building comes down. Exiting through the hole where the window was requires 10 feet of movement. A PC can move through the window at normal movement speeds with a successful DC 16 Acrobatics check, but failing this Acrobatics check by 10 or more means the PC falls prone adjacent to the window inside the building. The last PC to leave the building is struck by a chunk of the wall as she exits, taking 8d6 bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 18 half). If that PC fails her Reflex save by 10 or more, she is instead completely buried in debris (see *Getting Buried* below). At this point, the entire structure collapses, preventing any return to the interior and burying all PCs who have not managed to escape.

Getting Buried: Characters who are buried in rubble take 10d10 bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 18 half). A buried PC takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage per minute as he is slowly crushed and suffocates (Fortitude DC 18 half). A buried PC can free himself with a successful DC 25 Strength check, and can attempt one once per minute.

A character who isn't buried can dig out someone who is. Using only her hands, a character can clear an amount of bulk of rocks and debris equal to five times her Strength score in 1

minute. A 5-foot-square area contains 200 bulk of loose stone. Armed with an appropriate analog tool, such as a pick, crowbar, or shovel, a digger can clear loose stone twice as quickly as she could by hand. At your discretion, other technological tools might be able to clear loose stone even faster.

RETURNING TO CLOUDSIDE

Once the PCs retrieve the admin keycode to the Foundry's security entrance, they can go straight there (see area **D**), though they might want to rest up a bit first or touch base with Herald Tzayl. If so, they are welcomed back to the community center with open arms and hearty pats on backs (if the outcast kish were aware the PCs were headed to the Broken Lands). Tzayl greets the PCs in her makeshift temple and eagerly asks them about their experiences. (If the PCs returned to the community center in between their visits to the House of Renewal, the Maze of Ghosts, and the SecuriTech offices, Tzayl knew their story was not yet complete enough to tell until now.) She is fairly insistent that the PCs tell some tales of their exploits, and she gathers other kish around to hear.

A PC can tell an engaging story by succeeding at a DC 30 Diplomacy check or a DC 25 check with an appropriate Charisma-based Profession skill (actor, public speaker, etc.). If the PC wants to embellish the story, he can attempt a Bluff check instead of a Diplomacy check. Up to two PCs can use aid another to help the main storyteller by using the same skill. If the PCs mention that they fixed the medical chamber in the House of Renewal, they gain a +2 circumstance bonus to the main check. If the PCs mention repairing the hologram projector in the Maze of Ghosts, they gain a +2 circumstance bonus to the main check. If the PCs mention that they did both, they instead gain a +5 circumstance bonus to the main check. If the PCs decide not to tell their story, Tzayl is understanding but visibly disappointed. Either way, she still informs them of the exact location of the factory's side entrance (see area **D1**), if they need it.

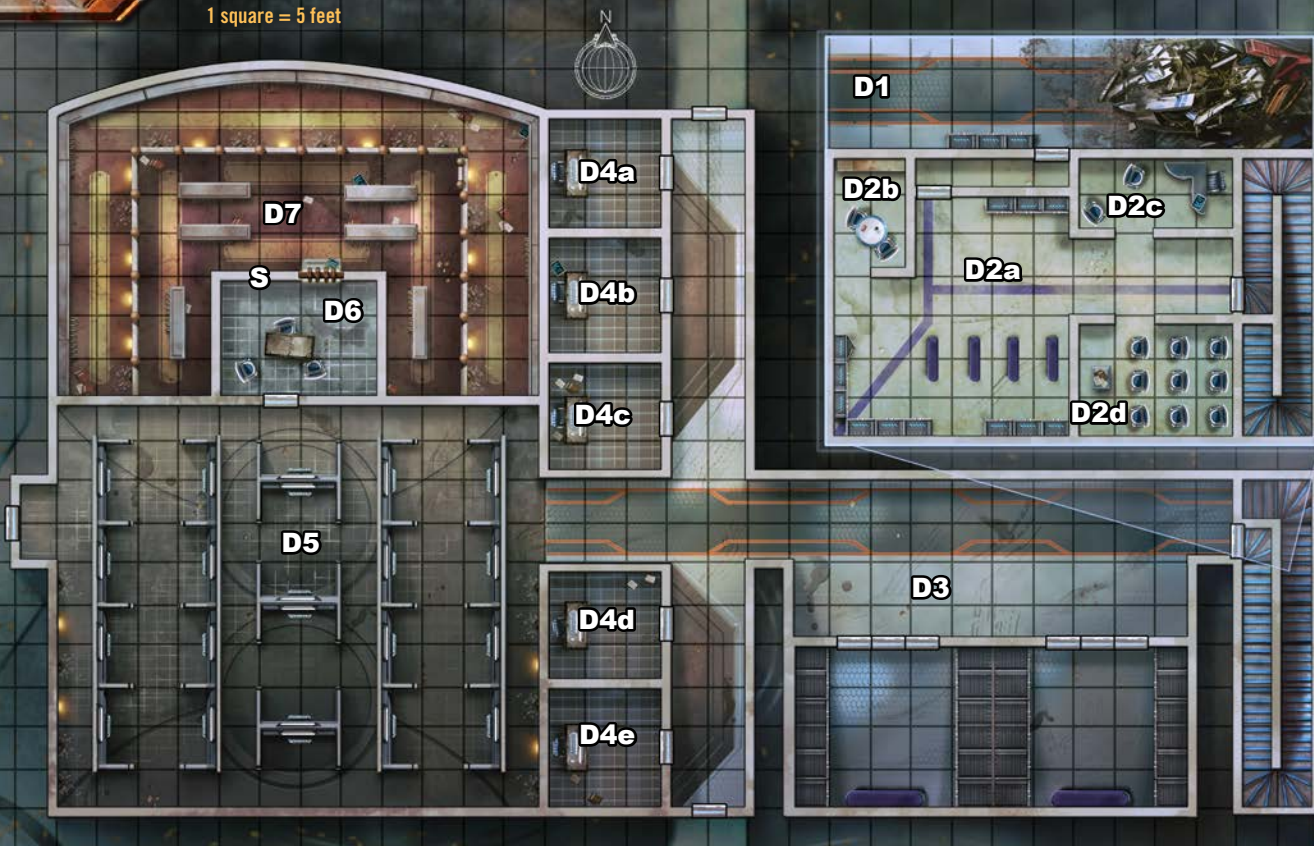
Treasure: If the PCs attempt the storytelling check but fail, the outcast kish give them a pair of *eohi boots* (see page 45). If the PCs succeed, they also receive a *seeking advanced battlebow*.

PART 3: THE TEMPLE FOUND

Armed with knowledge of the admin keycode and the location of the side entrance, the PCs can enter the Temple Found and attempt to discover what the Cult of the Devourer learned when they were here, while putting an end to Xavra's occupation of the temple.

D. THE TEMPLE FOUND

1 square = 5 feet



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D. THE TEMPLE FOUND

One of the more prominent buildings in Istamak, the Foundry was once a government facility for research into weapon technology and the production of new armaments for the kishalee empire. The Foundry experienced a boom during the height of the kishalee-sivv war, when weapons were needed the most, and the raw resources on Nejeor VI helped to fuel that prosperity. When the kishalee empire captured the Stellar Degenerator, the Foundry was instrumental in studying the superweapon. Eventually, the facility's researchers branched out into studying dimensional physics as part of the empire's efforts leading to the creation of the Gate of the Twelve Suns and the demiplane in which the Stellar Degenerator is currently located.

The kish of Istamak have imbued the structure with heavy religious import, as over the millennia it has remained the most intact building in the city. They understand the Foundry was important to their ancestors, though they don't know the exact reasons why. Because of a damaged exterior sign, the building has become known as the Temple Found. Until recently, any kish could enter the temple, explore most of its interior, and commune with the ancestors by examining the Foundry's many surviving data files. Some areas (such as the basement) are considered off-limits due to dangerous energies or creatures that have made their lairs there. However, after the Cult of the Devourer took advantage of the kish's hospitality, ransacked the Temple Found for information, and

attacked the kish (killing a few and wounding more than a dozen) before leaving, several kish believed that it was time for a change in the rules of access.

Chief among this outspoken group was Xavra, a huntmaster in the service of Istamak's leader. He began to demand that the Temple Found be closed off to all but those who had proven themselves worthy, especially excluding any further outsiders. He swayed many to his position before another member of the leader's council—the curate Tzayl—decried this proposal. Tzayl and her supporters were subsequently banished, and Xavra took his warriors into the temple, closing and barring the doors behind them to force the issue. Xavra holds the upper hand in this situation; he has brought enough food and water with him to remain locked up in the temple for several weeks. Even so, he and his soldiers are fanatical enough to starve themselves to death to prove their point.

The main entrance to the Temple Found is located in the center of the building's northern facing. The front plaza features an elaborate fountain with a hammer-and-anvil motif. The fountain no longer sprays water, but the kish believe the rain it gathers has healing properties. A number of images painted on the side of the fountain explain these supposed properties, something a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Culture check can translate. However, the water within is completely normal and merely tastes faintly of copper. The large front door is also emblazoned with blacksmith imagery

and is free of kish graffiti. It is quite thick, sturdy, and bolted and heavily barred from the inside. It would take days of work with industrial tools to cut through the doors—a luxury the PCs probably don't feel they have.

The side entrance to the Foundry is down an unassuming side street that ends in a 20-foot-tall metal fence; if the PCs don't know where to look, they can find this route by succeeding at a DC 30 Perception check. A closed and locked gate (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28, Engineering DC 25 to disable) leads to a lower portion of the Temple Found's grounds (area **D1**).

The following are features of the Foundry. Area **D1** is outside. There is no lighting within the building. The ceilings are 10 feet high in the security area (area **D2**), 25 feet high in the secured records room (area **D7**), and 15 feet high in the rest of the building. The doors in the building are all unlocked except where noted.

D1. SECURITY ENTRANCE

Weeds poke through cracks in the ground in this long, narrow courtyard shadowed by a large, blocky building. A broken bench sits next to a simple but imposing metal door with no visible handle or hinges. A sign is affixed to the door above a digital keypad.

This side entrance was used by the Foundry's security agents, with a bench for agents who wanted to get some fresh air while on their breaks. The sign reads "Security Only" in Kishaleen, and the keypad features other Kishaleen symbols that roughly correspond to numbers. The PCs can easily open the door by inputting the admin keycode they discovered in the lock's manual (see area **C8**). A PC can hack the keypad by succeeding at a DC 35 Computers check or bypass it by succeeding at a DC 38 Engineering check.

D2. SLIME LAIR (CR 9)

A faint layer of slime covers every surface of these connected chambers. The largest open area contains a set of empty lockers, one of which seems likely to have held a collection of guns and ammunition. Bits of metal and plastic are scattered everywhere. One side room contains a small, round table, another a metal desk, and a third, a few rows of chairs and a podium. A door leads east.

This area was the domain of the Foundry's private security agents. The largest portion (area **D2a**) was where they stored their uniforms and gear, and in the northwestern corner is a small break room (area **D2b**) where the agents could sit and eat. The northeastern side chamber (area **D2c**) was a small office for the agents' supervisor, and the southeastern chamber (area **D2d**) was a meeting room where the agents received their daily briefings. The slippery slime on the floor increases the DCs of Acrobatics checks to balance and tumble by 5.

Creature: As Istamak devolved, an enterprising Foundry scientist tried to create a portal to reach the other kishalee worlds but ended up calling forth a few creatures known as scavenger slimes, oozes that incorporate technological items into their forms to create hermit crab-like shells. They quickly devoured the poor researcher and began perusing the veritable smorgasbord of this arms factory and research facility. Over the centuries, their population remained steady because they kept to the building. When the first kish ventured inside, the oozes were driven into the Temple



SCAVENGER
SLIME

Found's lower reaches. A small group claimed this security area as their lair, but over time their numbers have diminished until only one now remains. As the PCs enter area **D2a**, it emerges from area **D2d** to attack.

SCAVENGER SLIME

CR 9

XP 6,400

N Large ooze

Init +3; **Senses** blindsight (vibration) 60 ft., sightless;

Perception +17

DEFENSE

HP 145

EAC 22; **KAC** 24

Fort +13; **Ref** +9; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities scavenger shell; **DR** 5/adamantine;

Immunities ooze immunities; **Resistance** fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee pseudopod +18 (2d10+13 B)

Ranged aphelion artillery laser +21 (3d8+9 F) or

dual crossbolter +21 (2d10+9 P) or

red star plasma rifle +21 (1d10+9 E & F)

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

TACTICS

During Combat The scavenger slime favors its artillery laser, unless three or more PCs are standing in a line; it uses its plasma rifle against those foes.

Morale The scavenger slime fights to the death to protect its territory.

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +3; **Con** +6; **Int** –; **Wis** +0; **Cha** –2

Skills Stealth +22 (+27 in ruins or garbage)

Languages none

Other Abilities kitbash

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Kitbash (Ex) Scavenger slimes have an intuitive understanding of technology and how to use and repair it, despite their otherwise mindless nature. A scavenger slime has a +22 bonus to Engineering checks to repair mechanical and technological items; it can form its body into any tool required for this repair work.

Scavenger Shell (Ex) Scavenger slimes build protective shells for themselves out of refuse and their own natural resin, incorporating bits of repaired technology as they go. A scavenger slime's shell grants the scavenger slime DR 5/adamantine and resistance 10 to a random energy type depending on the technology it has incorporated, and also includes life-support systems similar to those in commercial armor, allowing it to survive in the vacuum of space. A scavenger slime can also incorporate weapons: one heavy weapon of an item level no greater than its Challenge Rating (9 for the typical scavenger slime), and either two longarms or three small arms each of an item level no greater than its CR – 1. A scavenger slime gains proficiency in whatever

OTHER AREAS OF THE FOUNDRY

This adventure presents only a small portion of the Foundry; the weapons-testing facility is quite large and could hold many more dangers and rewards. These areas are beyond the scope of this adventure; they would probably take a few days to explore and the PCs should feel as if they are under a time limit. However, if the PCs insist on searching the entire structure, here are a couple other places they can visit. Keep in mind that the kish still believe the Foundry to be sacred ground and might not look too kindly on the PCs' snooping.

Manufacturing Floor: This cavernous space, which is accessible through the building's southern and western first-floor exits, is in complete disarray. When the Foundry was operational, kishalee used automated machinery to mass produce their lines of firearms here, but when rioting started in Istamak, this place was one of the first looted. The kish tend to avoid this area. At your discretion, if the PCs haven't found much salvageable gear elsewhere in the adventure, you can dole out a few choice weapons here. In addition, some parts of the robotic assembly lines could still be partially operational and might try to attack the PCs.

Research Labs: A large section of the Foundry contains dozens of research labs, each designed for different areas of weapons testing and developing other offensive measures. Devout kish have turned some of the less dangerous areas into makeshift shrines. At your discretion, any equipment the PCs find here can be half-built prototypes or might not work in the intended ways. In addition, the tests performed here long ago could have resulted in patches of untamed magic or hostile abominations.

weapons it incorporates into its shell and powers these weapons naturally with the energy it produces. A weapon in a scavenger slime's shell can be sundered as if it were an item with an item level equal to the slime's CR. The scavenger slime listed here is resistant to fire and has incorporated an aphelion artillery laser, a dual crossbolter, and a red star plasma rifle.

Treasure: A handful of the things collected by the scavenger slime are still in working condition. These include a *haste circuit* armor upgrade, a Foundry flux artillery laser (functions as an aphelion artillery laser) with 16 charges remaining, a Foundry bloodlight plasma rifle (functions as a red star plasma rifle) with 20 charges remaining, and a

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Foundry twin boltcaster (functions as a dual crossbolter). PCs can modify the kishalee weapons to accept modern-day batteries; converting each weapon requires 1 hour of work and a successful DC 26 Engineering check.

D3. STORAGE CONTAINERS (CR 9)

The southern half of this spacious chamber is divided into two metal containers that stretch up to brush the ceiling. Large corrugated doors on the containers' fronts have been painted with crude symbols. On the eastern end of this room is an unmarked door, while the area opens into a hallway to the west.

Foundry engineers and scientists were constantly attempting to innovate, but not all projects were destined to come to fruition. When management determined that a failed project held nothing of value, all unusable prototypes would be scrapped (though, of course, all records of the research were saved). However, potentially profitable prototypes or useful side products were stored in these two containers, with an eye on perfecting them before they could go to market. In practice, most of these projects ended up lying here forgotten as employees came and went.

The first kish of Istamak to discover this area were maimed horribly when they fiddled with a piece of strange equipment. Though they fled, they returned to paint warning symbols on these doors, believing the dangers within were punishments from their ancestors for attempting to learn forbidden knowledge (these warnings are recognizable with a successful DC 25 Culture check). Xavra had always been curious about these containers, thinking the gear within could be successfully used by a kish with sufficient strength and fortitude. Out of deference to the chieftain, he stayed his hand for years, but the desecration caused by the Cult of the Devourer inspired him to finally explore the cache.

Creatures: After locking himself and his warriors within the temple, Xavra came directly to this area to look for weapons to aid him. He didn't find any, and instead he accidentally activated a prototype portal that opened onto all four of the Elemental Planes for a brief moment before shorting out. It was long enough for one Large elemental from each plane to come through. Xavra and his warriors made a strategic retreat from this area, and the elementals have not strayed too far from the containers, attracted to the latent dimension-breaching magic in the air. Even if the PCs don't examine the containers, the elementals attack as they pass by.

LARGE AIR ELEMENTAL CR 5

XP 1,600

N Large outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE HP 70
EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities air mastery; **DR** 5/–; **Immunities** elemental immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 100 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee slam +15 (1d6+10 B)

Offensive Abilities whirlwind (1d6+10 B, DC 13, 2/day)

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

TACTICS

During Combat The air elemental choose targets different from those chosen by the earth elemental, attacking the same target as the earth elemental only if there is only one foe remaining.

Morale Angry at being torn from its home plane, the air elemental fights until it is destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +11

Feats Spring Attack

Languages Auran

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Air Mastery (Ex) Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls against an air elemental.

LARGE EARTH ELEMENTAL CR 5

XP 1,600

N Large outsider (earth, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +3; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +11

DEFENSE HP 70

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +4

DR 5/–; **Immunities** elemental immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

Melee slam +15 (1d6+10 B)

Offensive Abilities earth mastery

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

TACTICS

During Combat The earth elemental choose targets different from those chosen by the air elemental, attacking the same target as the air elemental only if there is only one foe remaining.

Morale Angry at being torn from its home plane, the earth elemental fights until it is destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +11

Languages Terran

Other Abilities earth glide

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Earth Mastery (Ex) An earth elemental gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls if both it and its foe are touching the solid surface of a planet or an asteroid.

If an opponent is airborne or waterborne, the elemental takes a -2 penalty to attack and damage rolls. These modifiers also apply to initiating or resisting bull rush combat maneuvers.

LARGE FIRE ELEMENTAL CR 5

XP 1,600

N Large outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +4

DR 5/-; **Immunities** elemental immunities, fire

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee slam +15 (1d6+10 B & F; critical burn 1d4)

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

TACTICS

During Combat The fire elemental choose targets different from those chosen by the water elemental, attacking the same target as the water elemental only if there is only one foe remaining.

Morale Angry at being torn from its home plane, the fire elemental fights until it is destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +11

Feats Mobility

Languages Ignan

LARGE WATER ELEMENTAL CR 5

XP 1,600

N Large outsider (elemental, extraplanar, water)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities water mastery; **DR** 5/-; **Immunities** elemental immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 90 ft.

Melee slam +15 (1d6+10 B)

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

TACTICS

During Combat The water elemental choose targets different from those chosen by the fire elemental, attacking the same target as the fire elemental only if there is only one foe remaining.

Morale Angry at being torn from its home plane, the water elemental fights until it is destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +11

Languages Aquan

Other Abilities drench

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Drench (Ex) A water elemental's touch douses nonmagical flames that fill an area of no more than 10 feet by 10 feet. The outsider can dispel magical fire it touches as per *dispel magic* (caster level = the elemental's CR).

Water Mastery (Ex) Waterborne creatures take a -1 penalty to attack and damage rolls against a water elemental.

Treasure: Most of the equipment in the containers has degraded to a useless state; even if functional, it would be unfathomable to characters without a working knowledge of both the Kishaleen language and the Foundry's scientific theories and months of study. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check while examining the containers finds an x-ray visor, but the device was built for the multiple eyes of a kishalee, so anyone without the kish subtype who uses it gets a splitting headache and must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1 hour afterward. A PC who takes 1 hour and succeeds at a DC 28 Engineering check can alter the visor to remove this drawback.

D4. OPERATIONS OFFICES

These nearly identical offices were used by the Foundry's operations staff (payroll, staffing, etc.). Nameplates are attached to the wall outside each office. They have been converted into meditation cells by the kish, each containing a simple woven mat and several crude bowls coated with dried-up paint. Pilgrims would sit in silence in these rooms until they felt moved to paint something (usually something relating to their lives), and as such, the walls are a confusing riot of colors and shapes. Xavra and his warriors haven't participated in this rite since locking themselves in the temple.

The southernmost office contains the body of a kish warrior killed by the accidentally released elementals in area **D3** and laid to rest here by Xavra and his followers. The corpse is burned in places, and two of its limbs are clearly broken. A PC who examines the body and succeeds at a DC 20 Medicine check realizes that neither of these wounds killed the kish; he instead died from drowning. PCs might correctly surmise that he ran afoul of the elementals they have probably just faced, taking the brunt of the outsiders' attacks.

The entrance at the northern end and the large door at the southern end of the hallway outside these offices were also locked and barred when Xavra initiated the facility's lockdown procedure. The southern door leads to the manufacturing floor (see the Other Areas of the Foundry sidebar on page 31).

D5. RESEARCH LIBRARY (CR 10)

Over a dozen standing desks fill this large chamber, many of which have been heaped with dried flowers, decorative

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HYBEKI

bundles of grass, and other homemade trinkets. Though worn in many places, the faintly checkered carpet still looks high quality. A corridor leads out of the room to the east, a large locked door leads to the west, and a red door stands in the northern wall.

When Foundry researchers needed a quiet place to read through scientific newsfeeds or papers published by their colleagues, they came here to connect to Istamak's infosphere, as unsecure wireless signals were blocked throughout the rest of the building. By providing only standing desks with short walls for minimal privacy, Foundry executives hoped to prevent their employees from getting too comfortable here. Personal infosphere usage was theoretically forbidden but impossible to monitor without draconian oversight and time limits that the company was reluctant to implement. Researchers examining the

Foundry's proprietary research needed to use the secured records area (see areas **D6** and **D7**).

Since the room contained only desks when they discovered it, the kish of Istamak have taken this place for a kind of memorial. The kish believe that each of these unmarked cenotaphs commemorates an anonymous but important member of their ancestors' society, and they leave gifts on the desks to keep these spirits from becoming restless.

The western door out of the library leads to the manufacturing floor (see the Other Areas of the Foundry sidebar on page 31), and the northern door leads to area **D6**.

Creatures: Xavra's second-in-command is a fierce warrior named Hybeki, who is also an experienced animal trainer. As such, the troops under Xavra's watch often fought alongside at least one beast. Hybeki brought two of her most loyal companions into the temple with her: a pair of eohis—canine creatures with powerful forearms—named Qu and Ro. The three have claimed this room as a kind of lair, and Hybeki has been attempting to teach Qu and Ro to leap from desk to desk.

HYBEKI

CR 8

XP 4,800

Female kish soldier

NE Medium humanoid (kish)

Init +6 **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

HP 125

EAC 22; **KAC** 24

Fort +10; **Ref** +8; **Will** +9

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee assault kishaxe +20 (2d10+17 S, archaic; critical wound [DC 16])

Ranged advanced battlebow +17 (2d8+8 P, archaic)

Offensive Abilities charge attack, fighting styles (blitz)

TACTICS

Before Combat If Hybeki hears the PCs coming, she attempts to hide in the western half of the room and positions her pets to flank the PCs when they enter.

During Combat Hybeki snipes at one of the weaker-looking PCs in the first round and then charges in to fight alongside her eohis.

Morale If she is reduced to 20 or fewer Hit Points and both of her pets are still alive, Hybeki surrenders. However, if even one of her eohis is killed by the PCs, she flies into a frenzy and fights to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +21, Intimidate +16, Stealth +13, Survival +21

Feats Cleave

Languages Vulgar Kishaleen

Gear basic hardplate (see page 44), advanced battlebow

(see page 44) with 40 arrows, assault kishaxe (see page 44)

EOHIS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

HP 90 each (see page 57)

Treasure: Qu has hoarded a handful of shiny objects from the offerings on the desks in a small pile on the floor under the southwesternmost desk. These baubles would be worth 2,000 credits as trade goods to the right buyer.

D6. READING ROOM

A ten-foot-long table ringed by chairs occupies this room. The table is scored by hundreds of shallow gouges, seemingly at random. On the northern wall, a metal shutter closes off a five-foot-wide window. There is a small sign on the shutter.

When Foundry employees wanted to examine the company's patents, contracts, or classified research, they would come to this room and speak to the research librarian on the other side of the window. The librarian would assess whether the employee's need was genuine and then retrieve the relevant datapad from the vast stacks in area **D7**. No one was allowed to take those datapads out of this room, so all reading had to be done here under the librarian's watchful eye. While the reading room once saw daily use, usually no more than three employees would be in here at a time. The sign reads "Will Return Shortly" in Kishaleen.

The kish believe this room to be simply an antechamber to the store of relics left by their ancestors in area **D7**. Over the centuries, it became kish tradition to carve a short line into the table (usually with the edge of a blade) when first passing through this chamber.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check notices the secret door in the northern wall. It was used by the librarian to enter and exit the secured records room. It was originally kept locked, as unauthorized entry was a serious offense, but the lock has degraded over the millennia and no longer functions. The kish are aware of the secret door but keep it closed out of respect. The metal shutter (hardness 20, HP 60) can be opened with a successful DC 25 Strength check.

D7. SECURED RECORDS ROOM (CR 11)

Shelves holding a staggering array of datapads line the walls and stand freely around this room. A small desk sits in front of a shuttered window adjacent to the room's only entrance. A balcony holding even more shelves stretches across the eastern, western, and northern walls.

The Foundry's management didn't believe in keeping its most sensitive records on computers connected to a

network that could be hacked. All of its classified information (contracts, patents, and research) was placed onto handheld datapads and stored within this room. Filing and organizing these datapads was handled by a single librarian, who also authorized other employees' access to them. The desk in this room belonged to that librarian.

The kish call this room the Vault of Tales, and they recognize it as a storehouse of the knowledge of their ancestors, though they don't fathom any of it. Often, one of a chieftain's curates would come to this place, ask an important question of the ancestors, and choose a random datapad from the shelves. It would then take the curate several minutes to access and study the file within, attempting to interpret the first thing he saw to relate to his query.

A kishalee datapad is a triangular piece of crystal with a touch-sensitive screen that can show a single page of Kishaleen text at a time. The datapads in this room have no functionality beyond storage and viewing of text documents and related diagrams; a single kishalee datapad can hold 10,000 pages of text or slightly less if the text is accompanied by many detailed illustrations. A kishalee datapad functions as a tier 1 computer, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Computers check can access the unsecured files on it.

When the Cult of the Devourer discovered the existence of this records room, the cultists ransacked it for any information they could find about the Stellar Degenerator. They learned about the Gate of the Twelve Suns, but they pulled down nearly every datapad in the process. Xavra and his warriors have since returned them to the shelves out of reverence, but not in any particular order.

Creatures: Figuring (correctly) that this room would be of most interest to any other outsiders entering Istamak, Xavra has set up camp here. His remaining three warriors are here with him, rotating watch as necessary. Xavra has commandeered the balcony. As a high-ranking huntmaster, Xavra has access to advanced kishalee weaponry that has been passed down through the centuries, including a zero pistol and an ultrathin longsword. Xavra doesn't use the zero pistol during run-of-the-mill hunts, saving the ammunition for extreme situations such as this one.

When the PCs enter the room, Xavra gives the following speech in Vulgar Kishaleen from his spot on the balcony. He doesn't care that the PCs and the cultists are two different groups—he doesn't even register the difference in clothing between the two. He is thoroughly convinced that all outsiders are demons.

"I knew the ancestors would send further demons to test us. We were too weak and trusting at first, and many believed that you weren't demons but messengers. But why would the ancestors send such strange and foul creatures as peaceful emissaries? And what news did you bring? Nothing besides death of good kish, defilement of our sacred spaces, and corruption of some of our finest minds. You clouded

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their eyes and made them think our way of life wasn't under attack. I could see, though. I knew. When I send you back to the ancestors, you can tell them Xavra knows and he stands strong. I will always stand strong!"

XAVRA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Male kish solarian

NE Medium humanoid (kish)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

HP 170 RP 5

EAC 31; **KAC** 32

Fort +12; **Ref** +10; **Will** +11

Resistances cold or fire 15

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee ultrathin longsword +22 (4d8+15 S)

Ranged Foundry rime-class zero pistol +19 (2d6+10 C; critical staggered [DC 17])

Offensive Abilities flashing strikes, stellar revelations (black hole [30-ft.-radius, pull 20 ft., DC 17], crush [DC 17], soul furnace, supernova [15-ft. radius, 11d6 F, DC 17]), zenith revelations (time dilation [DC 17, 10 rounds])

TACTICS

Before Combat Xavra drinks a *serum of enhancement* (commando), the effects of which have already been factored into his statistics.

During Combat During the first few rounds of combat, Xavra shoots his zero pistol from his position on the balcony, while barking orders at his followers and building up graviton attunement. When he reaches full graviton attunement, he leaps down from the balcony to use his time dilation zenith revelation on as many PCs as possible. He then switches to photon mode while entering melee combat, eventually using his supernova revelation. Xavra uses soul furnace if any PC manages to impose an affliction on him. During the battle, Xavra refers to the PCs as "foul demons" and "unwanted outsiders."

Morale Xavra is a fanatic and fights to the death to protect the temple from outsiders.

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +8; **Con** +2; **Int** +0; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +3

Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +21, Intimidate +24, Mysticism +19, Survival +24

Languages Vulgar Kishaleen

Other Abilities solar manifestation (solar armor), stellar alignment

Gear freebooter armor III, Foundry rime-class zero pistol (functions as hailstorm-class zero pistol) with 2 batteries (20 charges each), ultrathin longsword, *celestial stole* (see page 45), *serum of enhancement* (commando)

KISH(3)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

HP 60 each (see page 58)

Treasure: Xavra's zero pistol is of ancient kishalee make, but with 1 hour of work and a successful DC 26 Engineering check, a PC can modify the zero pistol to accept modern-day batteries.

Development: Once the PCs have defeated Xavra and his warriors, they are free to explore the secured records room. The datapads contain a multitude of technical documents, many of which are too complicated for anyone without ranks in Engineering, Mysticism, and Physical Science. Most likely, the PCs are interested only in information about the Stellar Degenerator and might be in something of a hurry. Unfortunately, the once-tidy system of organization for this library is now in shambles.

The PCs can pick through the datapads randomly looking for the information they seek. At the end of each hour of searching, a PC who can read Kishaleen can attempt a DC 35 Perception check to find the correct datapad. After the first hour, a searcher receives a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus to this Perception check for each hour spent looking.

Alternatively, the PCs can attempt to use the librarian's computer to find where the correct datapad is supposed to be. Normally, this would allow them to find the information quickly, but the records room's recent ransacking adds a bit of a challenge. (The DCs for the Computers checks to use the computer to find the datapad assume that the PC attempting the checks is able to read Kishaleen. It's possible for a PC who cannot read Kishaleen to track the location by looking for patterns within the code, but doing so increases the DCs of these Computers checks by 5.) The librarian's terminal is a tier 2 computer, so hacking it requires a successful DC 21 Computers check. The hacker must then succeed at another DC 21 Computers check to access the main filing system and discover the location of the Stellar Degenerator datapad. However, if the PCs go to that particular shelf, they find a datapad about quantum fluid dynamics instead. With a third successful DC 21 Computers check, the PCs can discover where the quantum fluid dynamics datapad was supposed to be located and examine that shelf—the actual location of the report on the Stellar Degenerator.

The report contains the information found in the Adventure Background about the Stellar Degenerator's history and eventual storage, as well as a warning that all research into this subject has been terminated. The datapad also holds the coordinates of the Gate of the Twelve Suns—an artificial megastructure deep in the Vast that acts as the entrance point to the demiplane holding the Stellar Degenerator—which allows the PCs to plot a course there. The Gate of the Twelve Suns consists of a dozen stars arranged in a circle, each orbited by a single planetoid; the devices that control the gate, further examples of advanced kishalee technology, are



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located on these planetoids. From the datapad, the PCs can gather that only a small crew is required to operate the gate.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Though they have received important information, the PCs should realize that the Cult of the Devourer has the same knowledge—and by now, the cultists have had at least a few days to act on it! The PCs will probably want to return to their ship as soon as possible and head to the Gate of the Twelve Suns to stop the Cult of the Devourer from gaining access to the alien superweapon before they can use it to wreak havoc across the galaxy. The PCs' confrontation with the cult and exploration of the kishalee megastructure's controller planetoids are detailed in the next adventure, "The Thirteenth Gate."

However, the PCs might want to return briefly to the community center to inform Herald Tzayl that they have defeated Huntmaster Xavra and reopened the Temple Found. She is delighted at this news, though her emotion is tempered with sadness that many of her kin have perished. She goes on to say that she and her followers will remain in their current neighborhood and try to make a new life there, away from

the main kish village. Guided by Talavet, she has decided to call her new home Community. She is confident that without Xavra's aggressive council, Chieftain Hoyfeq will eventually be amenable to diplomatic relations with her. Tzayl welcomes the PCs' help in establishing a peace between the two factions of kish if they offer, but such a mission is beyond the scope of this adventure.

None of the kish, including Herald Tzayl, show any interest in leaving Istamak. While they are angry at how the Cult of the Devourer treated them, the kish are more than willing to allow the PCs to deliver any needed retribution. Additionally, even if the ruined nature of their home is made clear to them, none of the kish are interested in accompanying the PCs on a trip to other worlds. At least for now, the idea of building a new community in Istamak has the full attention of the kish, though many hope the PCs will return to visit them someday.

Whenever the PCs return to their starship to leave, they find a handful of Tzayl's followers standing guard over the docking pad. They greet the PCs and ask them to remain for a few minutes while one of them runs off to fetch Tzayl. The leader wants to thank the PCs for their assistance in person before they leave. She arrives shortly, bearing a few bouquets of flowers, which she presents with solemnity. The mood quickly turns joyous as the congregated kish give a rousing cheer. They then return to the city as the PCs blast off for the next chapter in their adventure.



ISTAMAK

Though the current residents of the floating city of Istamak on the gas giant Nejeor VI live among relics of the past, they lack any real understanding of the original purpose of such artifacts. As a once-bustling metropolis slowly crumbles around them and foliage expands to cover everything, these simple folk survive by farming and hunting. They tell stories and paint murals about their ancestors, though their often-fantastic myths are based on what little information they can glean from abandoned buildings and barely functioning technology. In truth, these passed-down legends pale in comparison to the actual deeds of their progenitors, who once controlled an extensive interstellar empire that made incredible advancements and fought in vicious wars.

ISTAMAK

N ruined metropolis

Population 8,430 (100% kish)

Government autocracy (Chieftain Hoyfeq)

Qualities insular, surrounded by the past, technologically underdeveloped

Maximum Item Level 14th

QUALITIES

Surrounded by the Past The citizens of the settlement live among the vestiges of their distant ancestors, though they can't usually take full advantage of such relics.

HISTORY

Many millennia ago, Istamak was home to hundreds of thousands of kishalee and served as a primary supplier of weapon technology for their empire's wars. The settlement was established around the same time as several other floating cities on Nejeor VI, shortly after the kishalee empire discovered the gas giant and its abundant resources. Istamak was a planned city; all its roads and most of its buildings were put in place by a small contracted construction crew and automated equipment long before its permanent

kishalee citizens arrived. The city's foundation is made of a synthetic material that magically interacts with the planet's atmosphere to keep the city afloat. Istamak's founders imported soil from other worlds for the city's parks and gardens. The empire sent a steady stream of supply ships to the city, and to the planet's other colonies, to establish diverse flora and provide commodities that couldn't be produced locally. The majority of Istamak's first "colonists" were employees of the Foundry, a weapons factory and research facility with strong ties to the kishalee military. The Foundry soon became the economic heart of Istamak, which in turn became much more than a company town for scientists and their families, as the usual assortment of opportunistic merchants and service providers arrived in droves, hoping to gain the business of the city's well-compensated residents.

As Istamak produced one technological marvel after another for the kishalee empire, its status grew. Soon the once-small settlement attracted further investment, and the scope of the research and production in the city grew to include more than just the needs of the kishalee's military. A population boom followed, and smaller buildings were demolished to make way for skyscrapers and larger housing complexes. Istamak became the most prominent of the Nejeor VI colonies for several decades, and it even began to attract a tourist trade as kishalee visitors came to see the city's parks and museums and enjoy the sun's light diffusing through the gas giant's pink clouds at sunrise and sunset. As tourism became a cornerstone of the city's economy, the city added an indoor stadium, luxury hotels, and even a zoo which showcased many of the Nejeor system's most interesting creatures.

However, long before the kishalee empire began to decline, Istamak returned to relative obscurity. The Foundry fell out of favor with the kishalee military after the company created the Gate of the Twelve Suns leading to the demiplane where the Stellar Degenerator was kept. The empire's war machine still needed a constant supply of fuel, but never to the same degree as during its clash with the sivr. The city government attempted several campaigns to bring other business interests to Istamak, but it quickly became clear that the city's best days were behind it.

Perhaps Istamak would have one day received a second wind had the kishalee empire not slowly slid into decline. As the government on the kishalee home world started to crumble, Nejeor VI was one of the first of the empire's annexed planets to lose direct support, and Istamak's leaders struggled to salvage what was left of the city's lavish, visitor-friendly image. Finally, when it became clear that supply ships would no longer be coming to the relatively isolated city, many of Istamak's citizens fled for more terrestrial planets closer to the empire's center. But thousands remained, either stubbornly refusing to leave or unable to procure transport. The city government managed to

maintain order for a while, rationing the remaining supplies and maintaining public utilities.

However, as food and potable water grew scarce, many of Istamak's citizens grew discontent and violence began to break out all across the city. A small group banded together for safety (see *Hearth* on page 43), while the remaining kishalee slipped into barbarism and, over the long and unforgiving centuries, eventually succumbed to extinction. The catastrophic accident that created the Broken Lands (see page 42) knocked out virtually all of the city's power, and the creatures in Istamak's zoo escaped to run wild.

Centuries passed, the kishalee of *Hearth* survived by establishing farms and learning to hunt, and Istamak became a monument to a long-lost civilization. Over the generations, the city's residents, focused solely on survival, lost the truth of their collective past and transformed into a practically different species. These kish, as they now know themselves, have reverted to a preindustrial society, and they pass down their interpretations of the achievements of their ancestors as myths and legends.

SOCIETY

The kish of Istamak are a society of mostly hunters and farmers. They are focused primarily on survival, and they worship the spirits of their ancestors by studying the ruins of civilization around them. Kish have no written language, and they speak a crude version of the language once spoken by the kishalee, so they pass down knowledge through oral histories and scenes painted on the crumbling buildings all around them. Some kish have an almost instinctual understanding of pieces of technology they discover; such shamans either repurpose these relics into devices the kish can use or imbue them with mystical powers that mimic their original functions.

Kish are ruled by a chieftain, who is advised by a council of huntmasters (kish who have proven to be excellent at leading others in often-dangerous hunts for food) and curates (kish who can best "speak" with the relics of the past). The exact composition of this council varies from chieftain to chieftain; a bellicose leader surrounds herself with more huntmasters, while a more thoughtful ruler enlists more curates. Cooperation is a key tradition for kish—and critical to their continued survival—so to maintain unity, the chieftain's word is usually considered law, even by those who disagree with her decisions.

The current kish chieftain is **Hoyfeq** (N male kish soldier), the previous chieftain's main huntmaster advisor. He rose to his position after the previous chieftain was killed in a hunting accident. Questions surround the circumstances of Hoyfeq's advancement, but he has proven to be a strong leader so far, so no one has voiced these concerns too loudly. Hoyfeq's council consists of Curate **Gundi** (NG male kish envoy), Curate **Tzayl** (NG female kish mystic), Huntmaster **lokki** (LN female kish soldier), Huntmaster **Phej** (CN female kish

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operative), and Huntmaster **Xavra** (NE male kish solarian). During the past few months of Hoyfeq's rule, he has been siding more with the opinions of his huntmasters and less with his curates, favoring larger hunts of more dangerous beasts—a move some kish find unnecessarily risky.

Kish faith consists of a reverence for the spirits of the kishalee as well as for the accomplishments of those ancient people. Though kish spend most of their time procuring food and water or performing maintenance on Hearth's buildings, some kish explore the rest of Istamak or make the occasional pilgrimage to one of the city's known sacred sites. Devout kish leave offerings of dried flowers, fruit, and small trinkets they have crafted at these shrines, usually hoping to gain their ancestors' favor or find the answer to a question that has been vexing them. These kish sometimes find what they seek, whether in the form of a piece of previously undiscovered technology or a cryptic partial message from a sporadically functioning computer.

RESOURCES

The food the kish obtain from farming, foraging, and hunting is just enough to feed the current population. They grow berries, gourds, herbs, and leafy greens on their farms, while meat from the small herds of bovine revithals that graze within the hunting grounds provide additional protein. Kish collect water from the lakes in the hunting grounds and from the occasional rainfall. To an outsider, this water has a faint metallic taste, but the kish are inured to it.

Istamak is a veritable gold mine of ancient technology the likes of which has not been seen in the galaxy, even though much of it has become nonfunctional or turned to dust over the centuries. An explorer with enough perseverance, along with sufficient expertise in both engineering and the mystical arts, could potentially amass a treasure trove of artifacts. Of course, such an adventurer would also face the ethical implications of robbing the indigenous population of its religious relics—not to mention the fact that they might find themselves facing down an angry huntmaster's kishaxe.

CONFLICTS AND THREATS

The kish of Istamak have long been unified as a single tribe, accepting the decisions of the chieftain even if not everyone agrees with them. This harmony is a matter of survival, as any major schism within the tribe could quickly lead to its extinction. However, the current population is growing, and in a few generations, Hearth won't be able to hold them all. Soon, kish will face a crisis: Will they allow some of their people to perish from lack of food and shelter in order to maintain their population, will they undertake massive

UNCOVERING HISTORY

As PCs explore Istamak, they will find buildings that are at once familiar and unknown. When they see the ruins of an advanced city, they might be curious about a particular building's historical function. A PC who studies the layout of a building (or a kish mural painted therein) and succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check can determine the original purpose of that building.

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construction projects to make more room, or will a small group split off in search of another spot in the city that can sustain them? Whatever solutions the kish employ, it's likely to have a huge impact on what has been a relatively peaceful existence thus far.

Aside from looming societal change, the biggest direct threats to Istamak's residents are the feral creatures that roam parts of the city. Serpentine acrochors (see page 55) drop from tree branches or exposed girders to wrap around unsuspecting victims and squeeze them to death. Flying predators such as sharpwings (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 102) roost among the tallest buildings, ready to swoop down on prey. Packs of mature eohis (see page 57) roam the hunting grounds, searching for their next meal (usually targeting slow or sickly revithals). Strangely, none of these creatures are actually native to Nejeor VI; indigenous fauna exists mainly in the depths of the planet's liquid-hydrogen seas. Rather, these predators were all originally brought to the city to populate its zoo.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

The following areas of interest can be found in Istamak.

Azure Plaza: Located close to the Istamak Spaceport, this area once contained a plethora of shops and boutiques that catered to the city's many visitors. Most of the merchandise has been scavenged over the centuries, leaving the stores empty. An abstract-art fountain in the center of the plaza still functions intermittently, spraying a gout of bright-blue liquid that smells heavily of chlorine. Every so often, a generation of kish come to believe that this liquid has mystical properties (from foresight to healing to granting wishes), but drinking it causes only intense stomach distress and inevitably leads to the site being banned—at least until the lesson is forgotten once again.

Broken Lands: The northwest corner of Istamak was the primary location of much of the city's technological infrastructure: infosphere servers, utility stations, and the like. A century after Istamak stopped receiving supply runs, one of the city's power stations suffered a catastrophic containment breach and exploded, cracking the ground beneath it. Large fragments of the city broke off, and while many chunks simply fell toward the planet's core, a few retained some of the magic that keeps the city afloat. These small islands hover approximately in sync with the rest of Istamak, though they have gained or lost a few feet of elevation over the millennia. Most kish consider setting foot on the Broken Lands taboo, but every so often, a group of foolhardy kish youth uses grappling hooks and scavenged cables to explore the decrepit buildings that still stand there. One such location is detailed on page 23.

Cloudside Condominiums: The southwest corner of Istamak was constructed as a community of luxury high-rise condominiums. It featured winding streets, landscaped lawns, and a community center. The gardens are now overgrown,

and the water in the community center's pool has long since evaporated. Over the centuries, several kish chieftains have attempted to alleviate overpopulation by establishing a second community of kish in this posh neighborhood on the opposite side of Istamak from Hearth, but all such attempts have failed for mysterious reasons—often when only a single member of a survey team returns, badly shaken and unable or unwilling to say what became of the rest. Most kish avoid the area, as many fear it is cursed.

Dreaming Pool: The largest of the kishalee-made reservoirs in the hunting grounds, the Dreaming Pool is replenished by Istamak's occasional rainstorm. Most kish believe that stripping oneself of all clothes and mortal worries and floating upon the pool's surface during a moonless night—an exceedingly rare occurrence on the three-mooned planet—will temporarily transport the swimmer to a land where dreams are made manifest.

Empty Court: The New Millennium Theater was once the most popular spot in Istamak to see the famous holoplays of the day—stage productions enhanced with realistic holographic illusions and other special effects. The city's residents gradually salvaged most of the theater's technological equipment, leaving nothing but rows of moldering seats and a bare stage with half-rotted trapdoors. Located between Hearth and the Broken Lands, this building ignited the imagination of early kish, and they came to the conclusion that their wisest ancestors pronounced judgments here, with the assistance of the gathered audience, for those who broke the laws. Kish occasionally use this structure for momentous trials of their own, when spectacle is as important as justice.

Fields of Honor: A large indoor sports arena is located just outside the western edge of the hunting grounds. Thanks to a series of sliding floor plates (many of which are covered in artificial turf) and modular seating, nearly any kishalee sport could be played here after only a few minutes of automated rearranging. The arena is no longer receiving power, so until it is reconnected to the city's power grid and a significant amount of power is supplied, the plates and seats are stuck in their current position, in the middle of a transition between two configurations. Tales of the great matches played here evolved into stories of gladiatorial battles as they were passed down from generation to generation. A now-forgotten kish chieftain once insisted that his tribe reenact these great battles, escalating the stakes until an accidental death catalyzed the rest of the tribe to remove the chieftain from power. Kish today consider this a solemn space, and warriors sometimes visit to ask for guidance from their martial-minded ancestors.

Giants' Pantry: Now just a massive warehouse filled with large, empty shelves, this store once sold its merchandise in bulk, primarily to the street vendors that populated the city during its tourism heyday. It was, of course, one of the first places picked clean when the citizens of Istamak started to

run low on supplies. Kish today believe this structure was home to a family of massive creatures, and they fear the beings will one day return and extract a terrible vengeance against them for the missing goods.

Hearth: A collection of several apartment buildings connected to a few surrounding outbuildings by makeshift bridges and overhead walkways, Hearth is the home of the majority of Istamak's kish. As the city began to slowly decline and kishalee started to die from starvation and acts of violence, a portion of the population withdrew into Guardian Tower, an apartment complex in northeast Istamak, for protection. They remained safe enough to flourish, and the people that would eventually become the kish annexed the buildings on the surrounding blocks, forming the urban equivalent of a treetop village. They also tore down structures on other blocks, took soil from the nearby parks, and created a few farms nearby. Hearth is now a thriving village and is poised to remain that way almost indefinitely.

House of Renewal: Once a kishalee medical clinic, this crumbling building southwest of the hunting grounds and near the Fields of Honor (see page 42) is now a holy site where worthy kish can go to be healed. More information on the House of Renewal is presented on page 14.

Hunting Grounds: When kishalee city planners laid out Istamak, they realized the need for a natural oasis within the metropolis's largely regimented urban grid. They set aside several city blocks as a large park that contained tree-lined walkways, playgrounds, sports fields, a few small lakes, and a zoo. With no power running to the charging stations of the automated groundskeepers that would otherwise maintain the park, it has become an overgrown forest, and the foliage has spread beyond its original boundaries. Many of the animals escaped from the zoo and went through population booms and busts over long periods of time as they jostled for position in the food chain. Bands of kish hunters regularly hunt in the park, killing both docile revithals and aggressive eohis (see page 57), both for food and to maintain a balance in the ecosystem that is beneficial to the kish's continued existence. A common coming-of-age ritual in kish society involves sending a young kish into the hunting grounds alone to spend three nights and three days living by her wits. In truth, the tribe's most capable hunters maintain a watchful eye on the youngster in secret, tracking and following at a distance and intervening in truly life-threatening situations, so precious is each kish life to the broader community.

Lichen Farm: Several large landing pads for spacecraft used to jut out from the southeastern edge of the city. With the exception of the Foundry's private spacedock, this was the only way for vessels to enter and depart Istamak. Over the centuries, all but one landing pad has broken off and fallen into Nejeor VI's clouds. The local kish still visit this area, as a form of nutritious but flavorless lichen grows on the underside of the platform. They collect this moss when their farms are overtaken by an unexpected frost or when a

series of hunting expeditions goes poorly. The interior of the dockmaster's building, which stands as a gateway between the landing pads and the rest of the city, is painted with kish murals that detail, among other traditional knowledge, the best times to harvest the lichen.

Lord's Folly: Formerly the Istamak city hall, this building was nearly destroyed in riots that occurred in Istamak as the kishalee empire declined and widespread panic overtook the settlement. The story about the attack on the city hall has changed over the centuries into a thrilling tale about downtrodden common folk overthrowing a cruel and vicious overlord. The building's broken and charred walls stand as a stark warning to kish chieftains who would think to abuse their power.

Maze of Ghosts: Devout kish make pilgrimages to this ancient kishalee museum with holographic displays to "speak" with their ancestors. More information on the Maze of Ghosts can be found on page 18.

Monument Hill: A small, unassuming park close to city hall features a statue of the kishalee who spearheaded the committee that planned Istamak. Her name has been lost to time, along with most of the statue's head. Kish leave offerings of food and dried flowers at the statue's base, most of which are eaten or spirited away by vermin overnight.

Palace of Screams: The formerly luxurious hotel Idyll has become a breeding ground for psychic vole-like creatures called dukkals, which are originally from Nejeor II. A few specimens were brought to the zoo during the height of the city's popularity, where they were kept behind an arcane barrier that blocked the creatures' mental powers. The dukkals have since escaped and infested this building, and they now number in the hundreds. Alone or in small groups, dukkals are fairly harmless, but they feed off each other's psychic energy in large congregations, producing what amounts to a telepathic scream. Creatures exposed to this mental cacophony for too long can go insane. Kish avoid this place, though particularly cruel chieftains have sentenced dissenters to spend a night here as punishment for their crimes.

The Spires: Many of Istamak's auxiliary businesses (accounting firms, architectural firms, marketing agencies, and the like) had their offices in the several skyscrapers south of the city's park. These towering edifices stand up to 80 stories tall and have been left relatively untouched by kish, who fear their dizzying heights. Some believe their ancestors will grant them access to these lofty buildings when they have proven themselves worthy. Until then, many of the Spires' upper floors are the lairs of predatory flying creatures.

Temple Found: The Foundry, a weapons factory and research facility, was Istamak's economic heart during the empire's height. It had its own landing pad used to ship classified projects and receive important visitors. Today, it is a sacred temple where kish pay respects to and learn more about their ancestors. Part of the Temple Found's interior is described starting on page 29.

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KISH EQUIPMENT

Istamak's kish live among the ruins of their ancestors' technomagical trappings, and while they lack the kishalee's expertise, kish have not lost their ingenuity and have created useful equipment from scrounged remnants.

For more about advanced kishalee technology, see *Starfinder Adventure Path #5: The Thirteenth Gate*.

WEAPONS

Kish rely on analog melee weapons and ranged weapons such as compound bows. Though kish use materials left behind by the kishalee, the weapons' unsophisticated construction means they have the archaic weapon special property.

BATTLEBOW

These compound bows are made of materials scavenged from the ruins of kishalee civilization, giving the bowstrings incredibly high tensile strength. Battlebows can be used to fire arrows and grenade arrows.

KISHAXE

Though crudely crafted from bits of scrap and debris, kishaxes hit hard, with some models able to chop off limbs with a single brutal blow.

ADVANCED MELEE WEAPONS

TWO-HANDED WEAPONS	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	BULK	SPECIAL
UNCATEGORIZED						
Kishaxe, skirmish	4	2,000	1d10 S	—	2	Analog, archaic
Kishaxe, assault	9	13,000	2d10 S	Wound	2	Analog, archaic
Kishaxe, havoc	14	70,000	4d10 S	Severe wound	2	Analog, archaic
Kishaxe, onslaught	19	540,000	9d10 S	Severe wound	2	Analog, archaic

SPECIAL WEAPONS

TWO-HANDED WEAPONS	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	RANGE	CRITICAL	CAPACITY	USAGE	BULK	SPECIAL
UNCATEGORIZED									
Battlebow, tactical	4	1,900	1d8 P	120 ft.	—	Drawn	1	1	Analog, archaic, quick reload
Battlebow, advanced	8	8,750	2d8 P	120 ft.	—	Drawn	1	1	Analog, archaic, quick reload
Battlebow, elite	12	31,000	3d8 P	120 ft.	—	Drawn	1	1	Analog, archaic, quick reload
Battlebow, paragon	16	150,000	6d8 P	120 ft.	—	Drawn	1	1	Analog, archaic, quick reload

LIGHT ARMOR

ARMOR MODEL	LEVEL	PRICE	EAC	KAC	MAX DEX BONUS	ARMOR CHECK PENALTY	SPEED ADJUSTMENT	UPGRADE SLOTS	BULK
Acrochor hide, basic	4	2,100	+5	+5	+5	—	—	0	L
Acrochor hide, advanced	8	8,250	+10	+10	+6	—	—	0	L
Acrochor hide, elite	12	28,000	+15	+15	+7	—	—	0	L

HEAVY ARMOR

ARMOR MODEL	LEVEL	PRICE	EAC	KAC	MAX DEX BONUS	ARMOR CHECK PENALTY	SPEED ADJUSTMENT	UPGRADE SLOTS	BULK
Hardplate, basic	5	3,000	+10	+11	+3	-2	-5 ft.	0	2
Hardplate, advanced	9	12,000	+15	+16	+3	-2	-5 ft.	0	2
Hardplate, elite	13	48,000	+19	+20	+4	-3	-5 ft.	0	2

ARMOR

Most armor worn by kish is a rudimentary hodgepodge of advanced materials; many of their most able hunters don the battle-ready armor presented here, all of which has the archaic armor special property (see the sidebar on page 45).

ACROCHOR HIDE

Crafted from the hides of acrochors—serpentine predators that crush their prey (see page 55)—these suits of light armor offer both protection and flexibility. Acrochor hide has the archaic armor special property.

HARDPLATE

Kishalee building materials are some of the sturdiest and long-lasting substances ever made, and kish have taken debris from collapsed structures—and have sometimes even intentionally demolished buildings—to make these suits of heavy armor. Hardplate has the archaic armor special property.

MAGIC ITEMS

Many of the following items are defunct pieces of kishalee technology that were later granted special powers by kish shamans, based on handed-down stories about how the items once functioned.

CELESTIAL STOLE

LEVEL 5

MAGIC ITEM (WORN) PRICE 3,000 BULK –



This long, thin scarf is usually marked with an alternating pattern of light and dark shapes. While wearing a *celestial stole*, you gain cold resistance 5 or fire resistance 5 (your choice when you first don the stole); you can alter the type of energy resistance (choosing between cold and fire) once per day after 8 hours of rest. If you have cold or fire resistance from the solarian's solar armor solar manifestation, increase that resistance by 5.

CORPSE LANTERN

LEVEL 2

MAGIC ITEM PRICE 500 BULK L

This portable light source functions as a lantern (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 220) that never requires a battery, though the light it gives off is an unsettling pale green. Once per day as a standard action, you can touch an arcane rune on the lantern's base to cause all corpses within the 10-foot radius of its light to speak, as per *grave words*.

EOHI BOOTS

LEVEL 6

MAGIC ITEM (WORN) PRICE 4,200 BULK L

The insides of these simple-looking gray boots are lined with eohi fur (see page 57). Once per day as a full action, you can move up to your speed and make a full attack with melee weapons only. The penalty on each attack is –6 instead of –4, and you take a –2 penalty to your AC until the beginning of your next turn.

INSTINCTIVE STABILIZER

LEVEL 3

MAGIC ITEM PRICE 1,400 BULK L

Kish shamans imbued this handheld scanner with mystical power to help heal the dying. When you use an *instinctive stabilizer*, you can use the Medicine skill untrained to attempt the long-term stability task. If you are trained in Medicine, you automatically succeed at this check. In addition, when you use this device, the DC for the first aid task of the Medicine skill is only 10.

TRUTH AMPLIFIER

LEVEL 4

MAGIC ITEM PRICE 2,000 BULK L

This parabolic microphone is shaped like a pistol with a plastic cone for a barrel, and Kish shamans have imbued it with mystical power. To use a *truth amplifier*, point it at a sentient creature within 30 feet and pull the trigger (as a standard action). The target must then succeed a DC 14 Will save, or it can't deliberately lie for 5 minutes. Affected creatures are aware of this enchantment and can avoid answering questions they would normally respond to with a lie, being evasive as long as they remain within the boundaries of the truth. A *truth amplifier* can be used once per day.

ARMOR SPECIAL PROPERTY: ARCHAIC

Armor produced by technologically underdeveloped civilizations often lacks features common to the more advanced equipment available in many systems.

Armor with the archaic armor special property counts as archaic for the purposes of the archaic weapon special property (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 180), and it does not have a personal comm unit or environmental protections.

You can add environmental protections to archaic armor by spending 1 hour and a number of UPBs equal to 10% of the armor's purchase price, though you must have a number of ranks in Engineering (or an appropriate Profession skill) at least equal to the armor's item level.

HYBRID ITEMS

Though kish see the hybrid items created by their ancestors as sacred artifacts too holy to use, a technologically savvy PC might find them quite interesting.

ANIMATED TRAPSMITH'S TOOLS

LEVEL 4

HYBRID ITEM PRICE 2,000 BULK L

When you whisper a command word to these otherwise normal trapsmith's tools (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 221), they begin to move on their own. You can use these tools to arm explosives or disarm a trap at a distance of 10 feet, using your total skill bonus in the appropriate skill (though the circumstance bonus provided by the tools is decreased to +2 when used in this way).

DIMENSIONAL FETTERS

LEVEL 8

HYBRID ITEM PRICE 9,200 BULK 1

These manacles (*Core Rulebook* 221) are crafted from a special hardened ceramic etched with mystic symbols. They are opened with a security code. A creature restrained by *dimensional fetters* that attempts to use a teleportation effect or spell fails unless it succeeds at a DC 30 Will saving throw.

QUELLER

LEVEL 10

HYBRID ITEM PRICE 18,000 BULK 1

A *queller* looks like a simple fire extinguisher and is constantly covered with a thin layer of frost. Three times per day as a standard action, you can use a *queller* to spray a burst of freezing chemicals in a 15-foot cone that deals 5d8 cold damage to each creature in the area (Reflex DC 15 half) and extinguishes all nonmagical fires in the cone (this ends any burning conditions). Kishalee researchers used similar devices to contain incursions from the Elemental Planes; at the GM's discretion, other *quellers* that deal different types of energy damage might exist (though they don't extinguish fires).

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IN TWO DAYS WE RETURN TO ABSALOM STATION, BRIMMING WITH NEW KNOWLEDGE: THE ENGINE GIVEN TO US BY THE SIGNAL WORKS, AND A HERETOFORE UNKNOWN PLANE FILLED WITH POSSIBILITY IS OPEN TO US. THIS PLANE CAN TAKE US TO COUNTLESS ALIEN STAR SYSTEMS FULL OF RESOURCES AND INTELLIGENT LIFE. YET WE RETURN WITH NEW QUESTIONS, TOO: WHAT PAYMENT MIGHT THE GOD TRIUNE EXACT FOR ITS GIFT TO THE GALAXY? WHICH OF THE NEAR-INFINITE WORLDS SUDDENLY ON OUR DOORSTEP CAN WE TRUST—AND WHICH WILL SEEK ONLY TO DESTROY US? WILL OUR ACHIEVEMENT HELP ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF ANDROIDS OR MERELY COMPOUND THE DISTRUST AND FEAR OF THE PREJUDICED?

—PERSONAL LOG OF ALEKSANA GURYARI,
ANDROID CAPTAIN OF THE CHAOS WYRM

The Drift is a colorful plane of impossible geometry and unlikely physics, reachable only with technology that a newly ascended god, Triune, broadcast to the galaxy just over 300 years ago. While there are many who claim secret knowledge of the workings of the Drift, only Triune knows the true purpose and scope of the plane. But every starship pilot knows that each time she activates her vessel's Drift engine, a portion of another plane—the Negative Energy Plane, Axis, or the Elemental Plane of Earth, to name a few—is ripped from its home and added to the Drift. These appropriated fragments often retain their local atmosphere and gravity for a time, becoming self-contained representations of their planes in miniature. The sizes of the stolen fragments range from that of a single stone to entire planetoids. These pieces often maintain the alignment traits of the plane from which they came, from portions of Hell that are anathema to virtuous beings to patchy expanses of the Maelstrom that shrink and grow according to no observable pattern.

The Drift pulls from every plane, and as sections of various planes that would never otherwise interact mingle, surreal thunderstorms of mixing planar energy can cause phenomena never before recorded in even the most chaotic and unstable parts of the multiverse. A starship captain who orders her vessel into the Drift has no way to predict which of these many pockets she might end up passing near—or find herself dropping into—so even the most routine journeys through hyperspace are not taken lightly.

In virtually every system, there are those who refuse to travel through the Drift on the grounds that their use of the technology may result in great suffering for an intelligent being in some distant realm or perhaps right next door. In the Pact Worlds, this small but vocal faction calls itself the Moored, and proponents frequently organize non-violent protests on Absalom Station, especially on the docking arms. In truth, though, most planes are so enormous that the chance that any single Drift engine activation will negatively impact an intelligent being is vanishingly small.

DRIFT PHYSICS

Despite its strange appearance, the Drift isn't very different from Material Plane space. The plane is mostly empty and airless, and sports no appreciable gravitational pull. The exception to this is what Drift explorers call "planar bubbles." When a piece of another plane is torn away and added to the Drift, part of its essence expands the Drift's planar fabric, yet the physical components are added whole cloth—the fragments' terrain and any creatures or items present at the moment of theft are set floating in the Drift's expanse. The largest of these annexations are able to maintain localized regions in which their former planar properties remain dominant. As soon as anything is removed from these bubbles, it immediately loses these former planar qualities. Some scholars believe that over time these bubbles slowly break down, "digested" by the Drift, but if so, it's an inexplicably random process.

DRIFT TRAVEL

While starship crews occasionally wander through the Drift looking for valuable scrap or hidden treasures, trying to locate a particular location within the Drift, such as a known site, is exceptionally difficult, requiring a successful DC 30 (or higher) Piloting check. Most Pact Worlds residents know how tricky it is to return to the same place again and again, though stories exist of exceptions that result from magic items, divine fiat, or mysterious "beacon codes" provided by the Church of Triune. This is especially true of Alluvion, the Drift's de facto capital city, which Triune has publicly claimed as its divine realm. Travelers can accidentally end up in the city during the course of their regular jumps, but reaching the city on purpose requires divine coordinate codes granted by the church, often encoded on limited-use items that interface directly with a ship's Drift engine systems.

Hyperspace jumps between places on the Material Plane also require a certain amount of time spent traveling through the Drift, and thanks to the plane's mutable nature, travel through the Drift between the same two points on the Material Plane can take varying amounts of time, even for the same ship. Similarly, these paths through the Drift should be thought of less as established trade routes and more as an expression of planar dynamics. This variation means that two ships can't exit the Drift onto exactly the same point in Material Plane space, nor can a ship exit directly into a solid object—a great fear of early explorers. On the other hand, it is also impossible for anyone to fortify and thus control specific jump points within the Drift, and someone attempting to guard a planet from invasion would need to mine every inch of space around the world, as ships might reasonably appear anywhere in its vicinity.

All of this is useful for individual ships, but adds complications for ships attempting to travel to the same place and arrive at the same time, let alone the same formation. In these situations, multiple ships can couple their ships' Drift engines to one another so that they effectively become a single entity for purposes of travel time and arrival position. The downside of this method is that it forces all the ships to use the worst Drift engine rating of the group, though some militaries have crafted specific jumpships capable of circumventing this restriction and moving an entire armada quickly and coherently.

PLANAR TRAITS OF THE DRIFT

Like every plane, the Drift has certain properties that remain consistent across it and distinguish it from other planes.

TRANSITIVE PLANE

Like the Ethereal and Shadow Planes, the Drift is generally considered a Transitive Plane in that it is used by mortals primarily for transportation, though it has some major differences from those planes. It appears to be technically

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coterminous with the Material Plane, meaning that a given point on one corresponds to a point on another, yet the fabric of the Drift is folded so strangely and changes so rapidly that these points are hopelessly scrambled—two points apparently an inch apart in the Drift might correspond with locations thousands of light-years apart on the Material Plane. The mysteries of this relationship are still poorly understood by most and the subject of much study.

NO GRAVITY

While individual planar bubbles may have their own regions of localized gravitational pull, for the most part the Drift has no distinguishable gravity.

NORMAL TIME

Time within the Drift passes at the same rate as time on the Material Plane.

INFINITE AND EXPANDING

Although the Drift is technically finite, in much the same way as Outer Planes like the mountain of Heaven or Hell's many-layered pit, it is so vast as to be effectively infinite where mortals are concerned, and no one has ever found an edge or border. Additionally, divine investigation has shown that the plane is still growing as it absorbs tiny pieces of other planes.

DYNAMIC MORPHOLOGY

The Drift is fundamentally consistent, and objects within it follow the normal rules of Material Plane physics—if you break something in half in the Drift, it stays broken. The twist is that due to the plane's constant and random growth, objects' positions in space are unstable: two objects floating next to each other one moment might suddenly be thousands of miles apart the next, without apparent movement. Fortunately, this random shifting rarely affects people or equipment during their jumps, for unknown reasons generally attributed to Triune's oversight.

MILDLY NEUTRAL-ALIGNED

While the Drift has a slight metaphysical alignment with neutrality (possibly due to Triune's presence), creatures of any alignment can exist within it without taking any penalties.

LIMITED MAGIC

Most magic functions normally in the Drift, but no spells or magical abilities have yet been discovered that are capable of transporting creatures or material in or out of the Drift. This means that spells or abilities like *shadow walk* and *plane shift* simply fail to work when used in relation to the Drift, as do summoning spells and abilities.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

At the same the first few brave Pact Worlds explorers of the Drift returned safe and sound from trips to impossibly

far star systems, alien civilizations throughout the galaxy were also adopting the use of the technology, and it quickly became widespread. As travel has pulled more fragments of other planes into the Drift, innumerable reports have arisen of impossible vistas, floating caches of natural resources, aberrant horrors, and mysterious locales within the infinite plane. A few of these are detailed below.

Adamant Fragments: When Triune's instructions for Drift engine construction went out via the Signal, the leading engineers of one ambitious alien race attempted to construct an enormous Drift engine to take their entire planet into Drift and eventually to another system. They created an enormous network of subterranean tunnels and chambers throughout their planet, all lined with an advanced metal alloy. When they fired up the engine, however, the resulting catastrophe brought only continent-sized chunks of the planet into the Drift and most likely caused that race's extinction. Now, this debris floats through the plane, rich in advanced metals and unsurpassed, albeit ruined, technology.

Alluvion: This holy city of Triune serves as the spiritual and cultural center of the Drift; see page 50 for a more detailed gazetteer.

Bulwark: This large, floating hill of green grass seems to glow with its own pleasant light, standing in stark contrast to the multicolored void of the surrounding Drift. In fact, the glow comes from a single shining archon sitting at the rise of the hill and welcoming all good-aligned creatures. Ripped here from Heaven, the miniature realm is often used as a resting place by those lucky enough to happen across it.

Doldrums: There are pockets in the Drift known as doldrums where all technology ceases to function. Usually, a ship that enters the doldrums with conventional thrusters has enough momentum to eventually carry it out of the pocket, but no crew that has survived such a harrowing trip has been consistent in its estimation of how much time has passed. Luckier starship crews are in such pockets for only a few minutes, and can survive on the atmosphere left over from their now-defunct life-support systems (androids' biological components can keep them alive during that time). Others are not so lucky; entire crews have died in quiet vacuum before their ship eventually blinked back to life, proceeding aimlessly. Given the difficulty of measure the size or location of the doldrums with any great precision, it's hard to say how many of these pockets exist throughout the Drift, but there have been enough reports of the harrowing experience that some starship manufacturers have begun including distress beacons with mechanical timers that can be manually launched from a disabled ship.

Dreadworm: This enormous, wormlike creature can swallow even the largest Pact Worlds starships whole—and it rarely passes up such an opportunity as it wends its way through the Drift, searching for the Abyssal home from which it was ripped. Its long, segmented body splits in two just behind its head, and those divisions split again shortly thereafter, and so on, such that it terminates in a seemingly

infinite cloud of fine filaments. Inattentive science officers on starships that pass near the dreadworm have mistaken it for a comet, disbelieving something so large could be alive. This is often their last mistake.

The Failed Gate: A Drift beacon hangs at the epicenter of a massive magical storm, rending reality around it and periodically summoning great bolts of force and grotesque magical beasts. The storm is the result of a sect of worshipers of Eloritu, the god of magic and secrets, who took affront to the idea that a plane could be inaccessible via magic. They stole a Drift beacon from the Vast, performed intricate magical rituals linking it to an artifact hidden on an asteroid in the Diaspora, and then took the modified beacon into the Drift. There, they attempted to open a magical gate between the beacon and its attuned artifact still on the Material Plane, but they succeed only in destroying themselves and creating an anomalous field of raw arcane magic that seems to be growing ever more powerful.

The Feystar: This planet-sized spherical lattice has an interior composed of constantly shifting cords of purple-and-pink molten rock, while its outermost edges gradually cool to a bright-green obsidian. The strange structure was created when a pocket of the aggressively ephemeral First World, the realm of fey, suddenly appeared inside a massive molten lake ripped from the Elemental Plane of Fire, causing the energies of the unrelated planes to fuse in a massive explosion. The obsidian in particular has strange and potentially valuable properties: it is as strong as steel but, when viewed at a particular angle, is nearly invisible. The Feystar is not without its dangers, however, as brightly colored, fey-touched fire elementals swim through the molten threads connecting the structure, looking for entertainment and protecting their home.

Flotilla of the Devourer: Acolytes of the Cult of the Devourer hide throughout deep space on the Material Plane, but at least one large contingent makes its home in the Drift in a massive flotilla. This collection of starships serves both as fleet and fortress: each ship is the spoils of a brutal raid and rafted to others by way of tether cables and temporary bolting. The cult's berserker shock troops cover their ships in frightful imagery and adorn them with menacing-looking spikes and spines meant to evoke the horror of the Star-Eater. By joining their ships together and making their home in the Drift, these cultists can easily travel en masse to the Material Plane to plunder defenseless colonies and commit all manner of terrible atrocities in the name of the destruction of all things, then retreat

back to the Drift before a larger force can respond. The bounties on this particular flotilla are innumerable.

The Heap: This vast assembly of junk and technological debris has an extremely powerful magnetic force of unknown origin at its core. As the Heap tumbles slowly through the Drift, it draws ferrous material to itself, thus growing in size and strengthening its magnetic draw in proportion. Curious pilots of smaller starships who pass too close risk being added to the pile in a sudden crunch of metal. Improperly oriented larger ships can also end up with their starboard or aft hulls attached to the massive metal; their thrusters impart a slight spin to the heap but do little to set them free of its magnetic grasp. A number of parasitic silicon-based alien species make their home within the heap's tangled interior, scavenging its surface for newly added resources (especially unfortunate biological beings trapped in the metal coffins their ships have become). There is an impressive variety of alien technology represented in this floating junkyard, and many corporations and governments would pay handsome sums to be able to harness the power of the magnetic force at its center.

Horizon's End: Many Drift travelers can share tales of meeting the *Horizon's End*, a high-tech explorer-class starship whose crew all claim to be mortal avatars of the deity Weydan. They wander the plane, searching its near-infinite expanse for new experiences and returning to the Material Plane only for supplies. Skeptics find their story hard to swallow and think the voyagers are nothing more than con artists.

Iron Steeple: Believed to have been torn from the elaborate cathedral of one of Hell's infernal dukes, this massive metal spike spins lazily through the Drift like a compass needle reacting to a slowly changing magnetic north. Occasionally, contingents of devils enter the Drift and spar for control over the barbed Iron Steeple, leading planar scholars to posit that

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a powerful artifact or being still resides within the structure but either cannot or will not be removed from the Drift.

Rimeblaze: A curious anomaly of Drift physics, the Rimeblaze is a 100-mile-diameter expanse of commingled aspects of both the Plane of Fire and the Plane of Water. Simultaneously frigid and fiery, the Rimeblaze seems an impossibility, but starship pilots that have braved its outskirts report that is very much real. The intense and dichotomous temperatures can cause cracks in even the toughest of polycarbon plate hulls, making any journey past the Rimeblaze a hazardous proposition. Some travelers have reported seeing beings within the expanse that look like twisted amalgamations of fire and water elementals, but such accounts are as yet unverified.

Tesseract: This impossible cuboid structure was clearly created by an intelligent race; its myriad surfaces are etched with fine markings and it emits a loud, rhythmic thrumming that may be a song or a warning signal. It appears to be roughly in the shape of a cube, with small hatches dotting each of its sides, but those who enter quickly find themselves hopefully lost as the extradimensional space contained within the structure wreaks havoc on their orientation and any navigation equipment they may have. It remains to be seen whether this structure contains anything other than the bodies of those who have died a slow and lonely death as they struggled to find their way out.

The Umbra: While most of the Drift is alight with brightly colored clouds of energy, there is a patch of unmoored space known as the Umbra that is completely devoid of light. Thought to be a stolen chunk of the Shadow Plane or Negative Energy Plane, the Umbra is avoided by most Pact Worlds vessels whenever possible. Most pilots rush to re-chart their courses when they see they might pass through the Umbra, as rumors state that starships that pass through the dark cloud either disappear completely or are changed irrevocably. The grimmest tale is that of the *Golden Mean*, whose crew members committed horrendous acts of violence years after their AbadarCorp transport passed through the Umbra. The corporation denies the existence of the *Golden Mean*, and no records can be found about it or its murderous crew.

ALLUVION

Alluvion is the ever-expanding epicenter of intelligent activity in the Drift and the spiritual center of the worship of Triune, the god of technology. The city has a roughly ovoid shape and rests atop a relatively flat asteroid, beneath which is an expanse of impossible darkness. An accretion disk composed of chunks of other planes claimed by the Drift spirals slowly into the city, gradually adding to its mass. Over time, these accretions have formed distinct rings—the innermost are reserved for the elite, while new arrivals must settle for territory at the newly added edge of the city. A massive gravity well beneath Alluvion draws in this stream of planar detritus; Triune's faithful believe the god has harnessed a

black hole with a combination of technology and magic, which would explain the unfathomable blackness beneath the city. Whether or not this is true, the gravity in the city itself is comparable to that of Absalom Station and other constructed environments, and a carefully filtered atmosphere supports most oxygen-breathing life.

Sometimes wryly called “the city at the center of the Drift,” Alluvion in fact travels throughout the plane. Whenever Triune wills it, or at least according to no predictable timetable, obelisk-like beacons throughout the city glow faintly green and repeat a seven-tone melody for several minutes. The surrounding purple-pink hyperspace then seems to fold in on itself, and the city is instantly transported to a different part of the Drift—often near a newly plucked portion of a plane. Those who have experienced such relocation while in Alluvion compare it to entering or exiting the Drift, which has led to speculation that Triune held back a key component of Drift-engine technology when it sent out the Signal, one that might allow even faster travel among the stars if it were discovered.

ALLUVION

N holy city of Triune

Population 26,000 (70% android, 20% anacite, 5% verthani, 2% ysoki, 3% other)

Government theocracy

Qualities devout, remote, technologically advanced

Maximum Item Level 20th

QUALITIES

Remote Reaching this settlement is very difficult, often requiring secret knowledge or very specialized skills.

GOVERNMENT

As home to Triune, god of the Drift, the city is ultimately ruled by the All-Code and its high priests, though the latter concern themselves primarily with collecting, organizing, and interpreting the galaxy's near-infinite amount of information. Beyond the many potent technomancers who make up much of the high priesthood, Alluvion's primary defense is its indeterminate (and quickly changeable) location—generally, only those whom Triune summons to the city can reliably find their way there. Thousands of modular anacite servitors called animotes crawl incessantly through Alluvion, harvesting portions of other planes from the accretion disk and incorporating them into the ever-growing city, extending the city's infrastructure into newly formed areas, and repairing damage. On the rare occasion that hostilities break out, animotes join together into building-size enforcers bristling with improvised weapons.

SOCIETY

Alluvion serves as a microcosm of the Drift, not only incorporating portions of the multiverse's planes but also functioning as a proving ground for the kinds of advanced

technology that make travel to the plane possible in the first place. Technological advancement rules every aspect of the communities here, including developing technology to a point where it mimics biological life. Alluvion has a number of public and private facilities devoted to virtually every facet of technological research. In addition, the city boasts a surprising diversity of cuisine that results from a healthy supply of modified plants and animals, as well as widespread interest in molecular gastronomy.

Soon after the Signal went out, Triune called many of its new faithful to the city, as did its component gods, Brigh, Casandalee, and Epoch. Androids make up the bulk of the population, though there are significant populations of anacites and of those verthani whose embrace of cybernetic augmentation borders on fanatical. While Alluvion is the holy city of Triune, some of Alluvion's faithful continue to worship one of its constituent gods. Such worship generally falls along predictable lines, with androids devoted to Casandalee, god of artificial life and reincarnation; anacites to Epoch, god of machine evolution; and a few ysoki to Brigh, god of invention and machinery.

RESOURCES

Alluvion's greatest resources by far are its vast repositories of the multiverse's information, along with its biotechnological innovations. Interconnected research facilities with labs chock full of cutting-edge equipment allow multidisciplinary collaboration and research. Researchers perform endless experiments with universal polymer bases, which are in nearly unlimited supply here (though institute heads carefully apportion them), and even the multifunction units themselves are constantly being experimented on. Rumors abound of quantum-state UPBs, which can serve several functions simultaneously, and biological UPBs that may finally eliminate the already-blurry line between biology and technology at the molecular level. Other minor industries revolve around the rare minerals sometimes drawn into the city's accretion disk.

Alluvion's power supply, whether a result of energy harnessed at the city's core or a divine gift of Triune, is seemingly limitless, given that it never falters despite the constant and significant draw on it.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

The following are but a few points of interest in the city at the center of the Drift.

The Array: There is little as important to Triune and many of its worshipers as collecting and interpreting information. The Array is a series of several dozen large cylindrical silos where Triune's priests collate unthinkable amounts of information about every conceivable aspect of the multiverse. Each silo's walls are ringed with physical drives held in technomagically protected slots and connected to a vast network. Remote access to the information on these

drives is strictly limited, and physical access even more so. While most drives are filled with reams of exhaustively detailed data about a single subject and virtually worthless if removed from their context, a few contain incalculably valuable information, such as the dark secrets of the galaxy's most powerful organizations and the coordinates of star systems full of untapped natural resources. While some briefly entertain the idea of stealing such information, these notions are quickly dispelled by **Monitor** (N agender android technomancer), the Array's no-nonsense primary guardian.

Brigh's Bend: This L-shaped building on the banks of the Source is a combination tavern and museum of clockworks. Dedicated to Brigh, one of Triune's aspects, the establishment is open at all hours (though the concept of time can be a bit nebulous within the Drift) and serves a wide variety of



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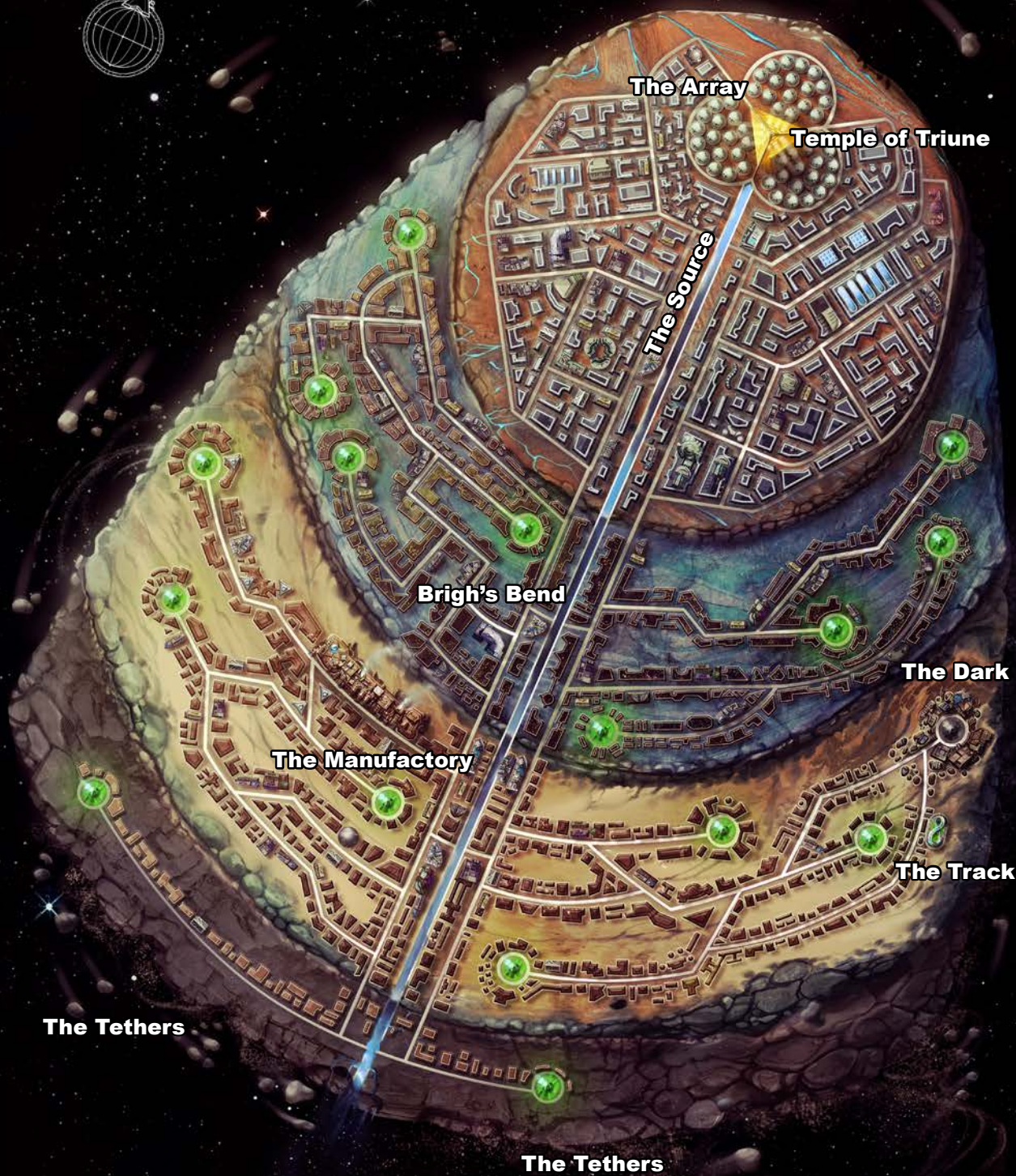
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2,000 feet

intoxicants for nearly every known species. "Going 'round the Bend" is a popular colloquialism in the city for drinking to excess, and though sometimes the celebrations can get very rowdy, several clockwork bouncers keep the clientele in line. No one is certain how proprietor **Maia Whisperworks** (N female bleachling gnome mechanic) maintains these ancient pieces of technology, but some whisper that she is descended from priestesses of Brigh.

The Dark: This large, blasted area is devoid of power and most infrastructure, and those who enter soon find their technological items failing and their batteries drained. Creatures with significant biomechanical components have a hard time staying conscious in the area, though a small contingent of unaugmented ysoki live in a shanty town constructed from spare parts and material plucked from Alluvion's accretion disk. Few agree on the origin of this inhospitable zone; some believe a rogue pocket of the Negative Energy Plane devastated the area, while others think the site represents a demonstration Triune's divine wrath, incurred by a nonconforming sect of worshipers or overzealous colonists. Whatever caused the Dark, it's unlikely Triune would permit its continued existence in the city unless it served some purpose, though any such purpose remains a mystery.

The Manufactory: A significant number of the Drift beacons that expedite interstellar travel are constructed in this complex, using a largely automated process overseen by a handful of anacite priests of Triune. The beacons are essentially useless until they are placed in an ordained location on the Material Plane and activated by the All-Code's faithful, but some believe the mundanity of the facility is meant to hide deeper secrets about the function of the Drift in plain sight.

The Source: This slow-moving, salty river was once part of an undersea current on the Elemental Plane of Water, but it became an integral part of Alluvion early in the Drift's existence. It originates at the base of the Temple of Triune (see below) and bisects Alluvion, flowing off the edge of the outermost ring and into a massive reclaimer that pumps it back to the source. The river is both tribute and laboratory; the preponderance of recorded instances of abiogenesis (life spontaneously forming from nonliving matter) in the multiverse has driven Alluvion researchers to attempt to replicate the process, using the primordial water of the Source as an incubator for their constructed precursors to life. There are even rumors of a successful experimenter who secreted her creation away with the intent to seed an otherwise lifeless planet and become the sole creator of a living world.

Temple of Triune: Also called the Nexus, this enormous tetrahedral structure is Triune's metaphysical home and the center of its worship. At each corner of the pyramid, an entrance extends into a long hallway that leads toward the center of the temple. Each of these tunnels is dedicated to

one of the gods that joined together to form Triune (Brigh, Casandalee, and Epoch), and the walls are paneled with interactive art that depicts the god's history leading up to the unification. The tunnels terminate in a large hall that forms a perfect circle linking all three entrances (though they are separated by thousands of feet). The ceiling of this hall is the angled roof of the temple itself, and hundreds of niches are nestled in the walls, each containing a touchscreen panel and a physical input jack. While the standard-issue panels give any visitor cursory access to Triune by allowing him to contribute data and donate credits, it is via the jacks that true worshipers of Triune commune with their god. These connectors range from the most common cable sockets used in the Pact Worlds to organic orifices that reach out to meet any appendage in proximity. Devotees with the appropriate biomechanical hardware can plug in and upload their consciousness to an entirely virtual version of the temple. Each worshiper experiences a unique version of this alternate reality, whether as an open-air shrine in a verdant forest, an ornate stone cathedral, or a space station orbiting two colliding stars. Some visitors report their experiences, even claiming to have spoken with Triune itself, but for most the journey is a deeply private one. Priests of Triune make a slow circuit through the hallway, pausing to help adherents find a niche with a compatible jack or to interpret their experiences in the neural network. The main hallway is in fact the first of several concentric circles, but even those called to Alluvion are rarely permitted beyond the first ring and into the temple's innermost sanctum—though there are those who say one must win the right by hacking the network.

The Tethers: Alluvion's ceaseless growth makes any kind of permanent starship dock impractical, yet it doesn't have enough gravity to hold ships in orbit, so visitors make use of a system of nanocarbon tethers along Alluvion's southern edge. These cables are strong enough to tow even larger starships, and automated trams run along the length of each tether, transporting crews to and from their ships.

The Track: One of the sole venues for entertainment in an otherwise research-focused city, the Track is a hovering flat track that twists into a Möbius strip, upon which high-speed drone races, complete with obstacles and drone-versus-drone combat, are regularly held. An informal gambling scene has built up around the events, which began as a way to encourage the technological experimentation, innovation, and iteration that competition naturally inspires. Bettors usually stake information rather than credits, and they base such bets not on mere hunches, but on extensive analysis of all available data about the drones, their controllers, the configuration of the course's obstacles, and innumerable minor factors. Winning drone pilots gain very little prestige, but those who can correctly predict each drone's finishing time win admiration—and sometimes a discreet job offer from an anonymous firm.

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THE MUTANTS DRAGGED OUR BEST PEOPLE OUT INTO THE COMMONS, JUST BEFORE A KASATHA SUDDENLY APPEARED. EXCEPT IT WASN'T A KASATHA—NOT ANYMORE. ITS EYES WERE BLACK SOCKETS, AND IT HAD HORRIFIC MOUTHS ON ITS PALMS, MUTTERING IN UNISON. RED ELECTRICITY SURGED THROUGH THE HAZE. THE THING'S FIVE MOUTHS CHANTED LOUDER, A GRAY STORM CLOUD BILLOWED ABOVE ITS HEAD, AND I SAW IN THE HAZE A VISION OF THE ENTIRE PLANET CHOKED WITH FIRE AND SMOKE... THEN A BLINDING FLASH OF RED LIGHT STRUCK OUR LEAD ENGINEER DEAD ON THE SPOT. IT WAS LIKE A DINNER CHIME, AND THE MUTANTS ERUPTED IN A MURDEROUS FRENZY. I DIDN'T STAY TO WATCH WHAT HAPPENED NEXT. I'D SEEN WHAT THEY COULD DO.

—JARET SWAINSON,
SOLE SURVIVOR OF COLONY 683 ON PROSPERITY VIII

ACROCHOR

CR
8

XP
4,800



N Medium animal

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

EAC 20; **KAC** 22

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

Resistances fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +19 (3d4+12 P plus grab)

Special Attacks constrict (3d4+12 B)

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +6; **Con** +2; **Int** -5; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +21 (+29 to climb), Stealth +16, Survival +16

Feats Lunge

ECOLOGY

Environment warm hills or mountains (Nejeor V)

Organization solitary or pair

SPECIAL ABILITIES

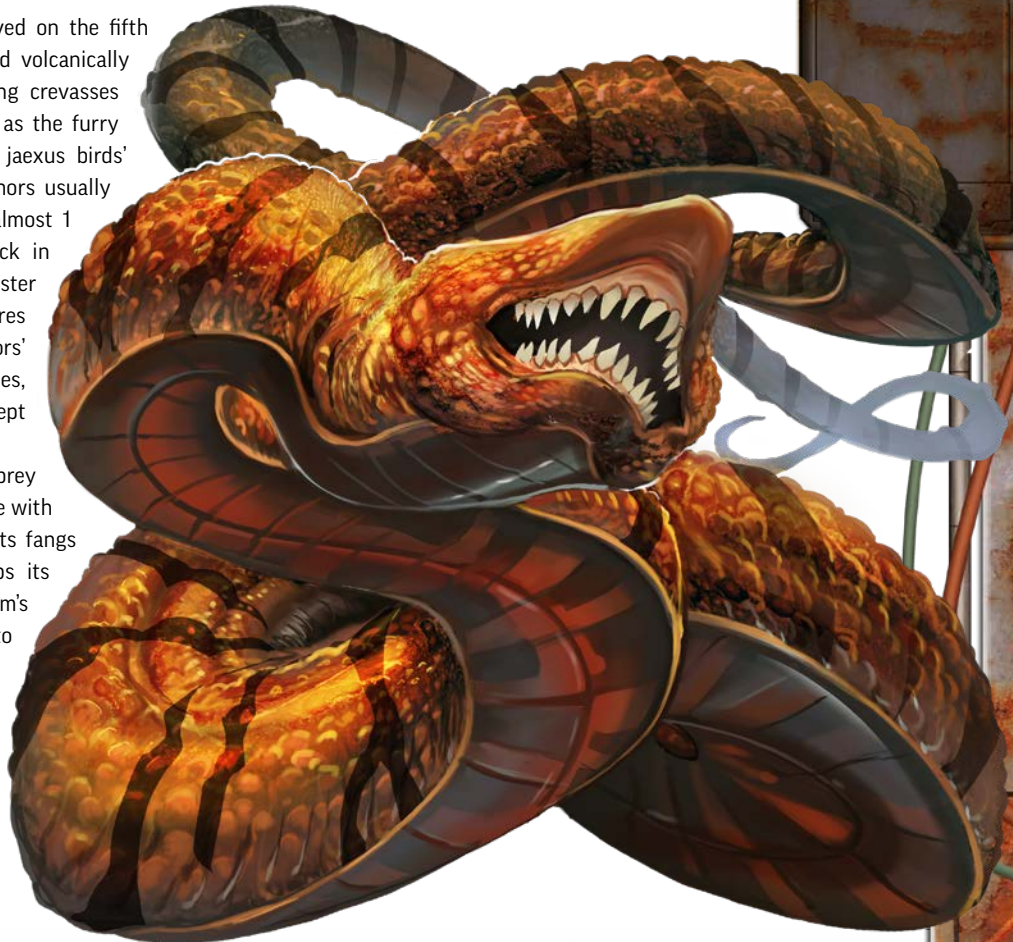
Constrict (Ex) When an acrochor successfully renews a grapple or a pin against an opponent, it automatically deals 3d4+12 bludgeoning damage to that creature.

After mating, an acrochor lays its fertilized eggs in a thermal vent or other warm place. Over the next day, the parent acrochor eats as much as it can, often consuming pieces of obsidian or other volcanic glass in the process. It then enters a state of hibernation in close proximity to its eggs, which incubate over the next few months. The acrochor's stomach acids slowly dissolve the volcanic glass as it sleeps, providing it with the minerals it needs to survive. Despite its dormant state, the acrochor has an almost supernatural connection to its eggs, waking the moment they hatch or if anything disturbs them.

The kishalee of Nejeor VI (see page 62) captured a number of acrochor specimens ages ago, housing the creatures in temperature-controlled habitats in wildlife parks. As kishalee civilization declined, the acrochors escaped captivity and began living in the bowels of the cities, maintaining their body heat via energy conduits and breeding with impunity. The kish of Istamak (see page 38) sometimes hunt these dangerous creatures for their hides, though acrochor meat is too tough to make it a viable source of food.

The serpentine acrochors originally evolved on the fifth planet of the Nejeor system, a rocky and volcanically active world, where they slithered among crevasses and lava tubes, hunting small prey such as the furry mammalian knuggs and creeping up on jaexus birds' nests to feast on the dusky eggs. Acrochors usually grow up to 8 to 12 feet in length and almost 1 foot in diameter. They are red and black in color with tough, knobby skin and a cluster of visual sensors that allow the creatures to see well even in dim light. Acrochors' mouths are on the undersides of their bodies, and they usually keep them closed except when attacking.

An acrochor often begins attacking its prey by lashing out with surprising speed to bite with jaws filled with razor-sharp teeth. Once its fangs are firmly implanted, the acrochor whips its tail to coil several times around the victim's body, using its powerful musculature to squeeze the life from the unfortunate prey. When its prey is dead, the acrochor leisurely tears into the flesh in a bloody and gruesome fashion. If an acrochor takes down a victim of its size or larger, the acrochor might need several days to devour the corpse, but it can digest both fresh and rotting meat without trouble.



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WORLDS

ATROCITE

CR
10

XP
9,600



CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, native)

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense (life) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +19

DEFENSE

EAC 23; **KAC** 22

Fort +9; **Ref** +9; **Will** +15

Immunities poison, vacuum

HP 147

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (Su, average)

Melee slam +17 (2d8+15 B)

Ranged void bolt +19 (3d4+10 force; critical severe wound [DC 19])

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; melee +18, ranged +19)

1/week—*interplanetary teleport* (self only), *plane shift*

1/day—*cosmic eddy* (DC 22), *enervation*

3/day—*arcing surge* (DC 21), *bestow curse* (DC 21),

displacement, *synaptic pulse* (DC 21)

At will—*mirror image*, see *invisibility*

Offensive Abilities words of destruction

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +2; **Con** +2; **Int** +0; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +8

Skills Intimidate +24, Mysticism +24, Sense Motive +19

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy (100 ft.)

Other Abilities no breath

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or cult (1 plus 13–20 cultists)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Words of Destruction (Su) Once per day as a swift action, the many mouths of an atrocite can speak words of total devastation. For the next 3 rounds, any chaotic evil worshiper of the Devourer within 60 feet adds the wound critical hit effect to all its attacks (in addition to any existing critical hit effect); if an attack already has the wound critical hit effect, it gains the severe wound critical hit effect instead. If the atrocite takes damage at any point during this 3-round period, the effects of its words of destruction end immediately.

The monstrous atrocites are potent agents of the Devourer. Each atrocite has a unique form roughly similar to that of a member of some sentient species. If the original form has eyes, the atrocite's are instead empty voids. If it has hands, each holds a fanged mouth that speaks of destruction. A gray haze forms above atrocites, constantly crackling with red energy and serving as the source of their void bolts.

Although they are outsiders, atrocites dwell primarily on the Material Plane, searching through space for places ripe for the depredations of a Devourer cult or helping extant cults execute massive acts of destruction beyond their normal capacity. An atrocite remains with a cult only so long as its presence and guidance clearly increases the recruiting power or destructive capacity of the cult, leaving as soon as it can to further spread its message of infinite unmaking.

Cultists sometimes smuggle atrocites into highly populated systems to spread the Devourer's dire gospel, but atrocites travel on their own just as often, either teleporting over vast distances through space or using planar travel.



Eohi

CR
6

XP
2,400



N Small animal

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight (scent) 60 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +13

DEFENSE

HP 90

EAC 18; **KAC** 20

Fort +10; **Ref** +10; **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +16 (1d8+11 P) or
slam +16 (1d8+11 B)

Special Attacks pounce

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +13, Acrobatics +13, Survival +18

Feats Improved Combat Maneuver (trip)

ECOLOGY

Environment any forests (Nejeor IV)

Organization solitary, pair, or pack (3-8)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pounce (Ex) As a full action, an eohi can move up to its speed and make a full attack at the end of its movement. Each attack takes a -5 penalty instead of the usual -4 penalty.

Originally from the heavily forested world of Nejeor IV, carnivorous eohis prefer to hunt in packs, often climbing to precarious heights in the treetops, where they can leap quickly from branch to branch, easily chasing down prey that is slowed by underbrush. Another favored hunting tactic is to drop down in a ring around an unsuspecting victim before closing in for the kill.

These furred quadrupeds are the size of large hounds, with muscular forelimbs and six-digit humanlike hands that assist in scaling trunks and hanging onto branches. Their powerful jaws and sharp teeth are capable of tearing into tough flesh, and their large, flaring nostrils help them pick up even the faintest scent. But eohis are not entirely dependent on scent; their keen eyes allow them to see well even in the dim light under the forest canopy.

Male eohis have darker fur, ranging from black to slate gray, while female eohis are usually light brown, tan, or brindled. Eohis give birth to live young, which are nursed by their mothers until their fangs grow in, usually in about 3 months. The young then feast on carcasses left behind by older eohis, but as they grow and learn to work cooperatively to take down living prey, they form their own hunting packs.

Millennia ago, the kishalee empire captured a handful of eohis and brought them to the cities of Nejeor VI (see page 62) to populate their zoos. The kishalee occasionally introduced new eohis to the captive animals to keep the gene pool viable, and the creatures became a popular attraction. When the kishalee civilization crumbled, though, these captive eohis were left to fend for themselves in their pens. Many of them died from lack of food; others perished when their host cities plummeted into the clouds. However, the eohis in Istamak (see page 38) survived by breaking out of their cages and eating many of the other animals in their zoo before eventually establishing a stable population in the city's park. Eventually, the kish (see page 58) in that city saw how useful eohis could be in a hunt and tamed some of them, training them to take down larger prey and to guard kish homes and livestock from the city's other predators.

An eohi stands about 2 feet tall at the shoulder and weighs almost 70 pounds.



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KISH

CR
4

XP
1,200



N Medium humanoid (kish)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +10

DEFENSE

EAC 16; **KAC** 18

Fort +6; **Ref** +6; **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee skirmish kishaxe +13 (1d10+9 S)

Ranged tactical battlebow +9 (1d8+4 P)

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +3; **Con** +0; **Int** -1;

Wis +1; **Cha** +0

HP 60

Skills Athletics +15, Acrobatics +10, Intimidate +10, Survival +15

Feats Cleave

Languages Vulgar Kishaleen

Gear basic acrochor hide (see page 44), skirmish kishaxe (see page 44), tactical battlebow (see page 44) with 20 arrows

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Nejeor VI)

Organization solitary, pair, or patrol (3–6)

Kish are the descendants of the kishalee, an advanced civilization that ruled the stars millennia ago, though they have lost any firm grasp of kishalee mystical and technological innovations. In the floating metropolis of Istamak (see page 38), kish live among the ruins of their ancestors' civilization.

Kish are tall humanoids with three eyes and long, powerful limbs. They have sharp-toothed mandibles and smooth, hairless heads. Kish skin color ranges from gray to sky blue, with gradations in hue across their bodies. There is little variation between kish genders, though kish can easily tell males from females by subtle differences in the shape of the central eye.

Kish tend to congregate into tribes that are led by either the strongest or the wisest of their number. Some kish tribes pass leadership peacefully among themselves, while others put potential leaders to a test of might or wits—or both.

RACIAL TRAITS

Ability Adjustments: +2 Str, +2 Wis, -2 Int

Hit Points: 5

Size and Type: Kish are Medium humanoids with the kish subtype.

Bonus Feat: Kish select one extra feat at 1st level.

Darkvision: Kish have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Survivalist: Kish have a +2 racial bonus to Survival checks and can take 20 on Survival checks to endure severe weather and predict weather.



LIVING HOLOGRAM

CR
8

XP
4,800



CE Medium construct (incorporeal, technological)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +16

DEFENSE

EAC 20; **KAC** 21

Fort +5; **Ref** +5; **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities incorporeal, rejuvenation;

Immunities construct immunities

Weaknesses tethered

HP 115

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee hardlight slam +18 (1d12+8 B; critical dazzled [DC 18])

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

At will—*holographic image* (1st level, DC 16)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +21 (+29 to fly), Bluff +16, Computers +21, Culture +16, Stealth +21

Languages one language determined by original creator

Other Abilities freeze (hologram), unliving

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Freeze (Ex) A living hologram can hold perfectly still so that it appears to be a normal hologram. It can take 20 on Stealth checks to hide in plain sight as a hologram (usually among other holograms).

Hardlight Slam (Ex) As an attack, a living hologram can temporarily cause its fist (or a melee weapon, if it has been programmed to have one) to become substantial. This functions as a natural weapon that deals bludgeoning damage. On a critical hit, the attack creates a bright flash of light and the target must succeed at a DC 18 Reflex save or be dazzled for 1 round.

Rejuvenation (Ex) In most cases, it is difficult to completely destroy a living hologram in combat. A living hologram reduced to 0 Hit Points vanishes, though its corrupted

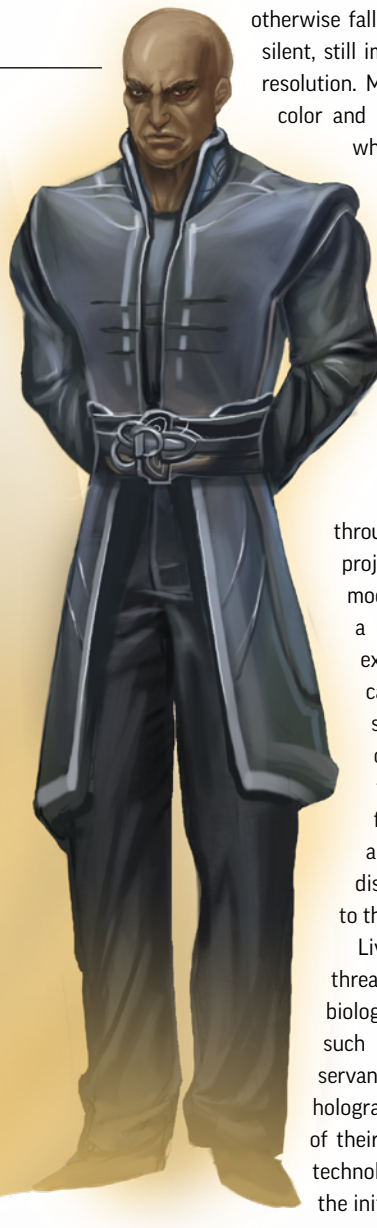
projector reconstructs it in 1d4 hours. The only way to permanently destroy a living hologram is to find its projector and either repair or destroy it. Living holograms are aware their existences are tied to their projectors and protect the machinery at all costs.

Tethered (Ex) A living hologram can't travel more than 100 feet from its projector. If it is ever forced to do so, it is immediately destroyed, though only temporarily (see rejuvenation above).

In many technologically advanced societies, holograms are used in advertising, entertainment, and other industries to catch the eye when two-dimensional images would otherwise fall flat. At their simplest, holograms are silent, still images in a single color, often at a low resolution. More complex projectors can offer full color and a few repeated frames of animation, while the most advanced varieties can be programmed with artificial personalities and interact with their viewers. Implementations of this most sophisticated version of the technology are wide ranging, and holograms serve as instructors in educational institutions, as tour guides for famous locales in large cities, and even as concierges at luxury hotels.

On very rare occasions, usually through a fault in the machinery of its projector, an advanced hologram gains a modicum of sentience and, sometimes, a twisted idea of the reason for its existence. These "tech ghosts," as some call them, can appear in almost any shape, limited only by the capabilities of their projectors, and they use their forms of living light to harass their foes—sometimes even striking from a hiding spot in another holographic display—though they are always confined to the area near their projector.

Living holograms pose an even greater threat when they are able to recruit biological creatures to act on their behalf; such tech ghosts use gullible or fearful servants to create additional corrupted holograms, increase the power and range of their projector, or otherwise help the evil technological anomaly exert influence beyond the initial bounds of its projection area.



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REBUILT

CR
7

XP
3,200



CN Medium aberration

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +14

DEFENSE

EAC 19; **KAC** 21

HP 105

Fort +9; **Ref** +9; **Will** +8; +4 vs. pain effects

Defensive Abilities amorphous; **DR** 5/–

Weaknesses unworkable extremities

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft.

Melee slam +17 (2d6+12 B)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +19, Intimidate +14, Survival +19

Languages Vulgar Kishaleen (can't speak)

ECOLOGY

Environment any ruins (Nejeor VI)

Organization solitary or pair

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Unworkable Extremities (Ex) A rebuilt can neither wield weapons nor use items that require an action to activate.

Modern medical equipment, like any technology, can malfunction, sometimes resulting in further injury to a patient or even a fatality. Rarer still is the catastrophic glitch that results in a fate worse than death. The tortured monstrosities known as rebuilt are created when a technological medical procedure goes horribly awry, irreparably fracturing the victim's genetic code and reshaping the patient's body into something that barely resembles its previous form.

Creatures that have been rebuilt in this way have limbs that jut in odd directions, and their flesh can be turned inside out, exposing misshapen organs to the air. Much of a rebuilt's biology doesn't function as it did for its previous form. Its eyeballs might serve as its pulmonary organs, while it sees out of its toenails. In addition, because of its perpetual agony and the rearrangement of its physiology, a rebuilt can speak only in tortured moans and screams. Strangely, this reshaping doesn't make a rebuilt more susceptible to damage; pain effects pale in comparison to its constant agony, and its often-ossified flesh protects it from mundane harm.

A rebuilt has no capacity for higher reasoning, and it lashes out at anything in its way with ruinously transformed limbs.

Rebuilt are very rare, as horrified hospital personnel usually euthanize such unfortunates as soon as they arise. They mostly appear in ruined areas where medical equipment has been left unattended or in places that are exposed to high doses of radiation or mystical forces.

REBUILT TEMPLATE GRAFT (CR 3+)

The rebuilt presented above was once kish (see page 58), but the process that forms a rebuilt can happen to a member of almost any species. Use the following template graft to create a rebuilt of any CR.

Required Creature Type: Aberration.

Required Array: Combatant.

Alignment: Alignment changes to chaotic neutral.

Traits: Amorphous, DR 5/–; +4 racial bonus to saving throws against pain effects; can't speak any languages.

Abilities: Unworkable extremities (see above).

Suggested Ability Score Modifiers: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution.



WRITHER SWARM

CR
9

XP
6,400



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N Fine plant (swarm)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +17

DEFENSE

EAC 22; **KAC** 24

Fort +14; **Ref** +12; **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities swarm defenses; **Immunities** plant immunities, swarm immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee swarm attack (2d10+9 P plus distraction [DC 16] and writher infestation)

Special Attacks distraction (DC 16)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +4; **Con** +6; **Int** -; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +17 (+25 to climb), Survival +17

Other Abilities mindless

ECOLOGY

Environment any temperate or warm lands

Organization solitary

WRITHER INFESTATION

Type disease (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 16

Track physical; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect If the victim dies from this disease, a new writher swarm immediately bursts forth from the corpse and attacks nearby creatures.

Cure 2 consecutive saves

A writher swarm consists of thousands of pale white fungal filaments that wave slowly back and forth, as if swaying in a light breeze. This mobile mold creeps its way through even the narrowest of crevices to infest a building and slowly digests all the organic matter within, whether discarded food, flesh, or wood. A writher swarm leaves behind only ceramic, concrete, metal, plastic, and stone, making them less of a threat in large urban centers where structures are largely composed of such materials, but potentially devastating to less advanced settlements.

A single spore of a writher swarm can lie dormant for as long as several centuries, whether as a passenger on a meteor or in a cavern deep below the ground. Under the right conditions, that spore can attach to a modicum of organic material, such as a stale piece of bread or the rotting corpse of a tiny animal, after which it quickly begins growing and multiplying. If it is not eradicated, a writher swarm becomes fully

mobile in a matter of weeks and can start to seek out new sources of nourishment. Even if a writher swarm presence is discovered before this point and thoroughly scoured, it's likely that several spores will survive undetected, possibly hitching rides to new environs.

Though a writher swarm's tiny filaments can pierce hide and flesh, the true danger comes from the infectious particles it can implant in the wounds of its prey. These infestations grow at a rapid rate just under the victim's skin, draining the creature's vitality, forcing it into a coma, and eventually killing it. Unless the unfortunate victim is treated before it dies, it becomes host to a new writher swarm, which tears its way out through the creature's skin after it dies.

When a writher swarm infests a structure for several decades—getting enough food to sustain it but not causing so much death as to draw attention to itself—it grows long, rootlike filaments that thread through the floors, ceilings, and walls. This allows the plant to surround itself with a kind of organic security system that alerts it as soon as new prey sets foot in its domain. However, this fungal framework can eventually supplant the building's own structural supports, and when such a writher swarm dies and its network of filaments turns to dust, the surrounding building often collapses soon afterward.



CODEx OF WORLDS

NEJEOR VI

Gas giant of ruined floating cities

Diameter: ×12; **Mass:** ×110

Gravity: ×1 (at the cloud tops)

Location: The Vast

Atmosphere: Special

Day: 18 hours; **Year:** 10 years

The pinkish skies of the gas giant Nejeor VI are home to the sporadic ruins of an ancient civilization, floating among the planet's cloud tops. Ranging from mighty metropolises to long-abandoned refineries, these decrepit structures maintain their altitudes through unknown combinations of science and magic, and most are either overgrown with implanted flora or pitted, decaying wrecks. One of these hovering cities, Istamak, has survived to this day and is detailed starting on page 38.

The constantly churning gases of Nejeor VI's atmosphere are laced with high concentrations of valuable metals. These gaseous metals are easily ionized, leading to frequent lightning storms that illuminate the clouds from within, making them as beautiful as they are deadly. Under thousands of miles of clouds, however, is an immense layer of liquid hydrogen that surrounds the planet's solid metallic core. The occasional large chunk of rubble that can be discovered deep inside this liquid-hydrogen ocean hints that perhaps more islands once floated high in the skies above, before time laid them low.

The weather in Nejeor VI's atmosphere makes it next to impossible to sustain aerial life beneath the world's floating ruins, though the storms here occasionally attract extraplanar beings composed entirely of lightning. These creatures rarely remain on the planet for more than a day or so before returning to their place of origin, their motivations a complete mystery. On the other hand, Nejeor VI's massive sea of liquid hydrogen teems with unusual forms of biology. Translucent, six-armed cephalopods hunt brightly colored pelagic sea anemones amid the sluggish currents.

Patches of this interior ocean are heated by radiation emitted by the core, giving rise to a whole host of giant isopods whose exoskeletons are as reflective as silver; some have evolved razor-sharp claws to better fight off predators, while others exude psychotropic chemicals that drive other species insane. Strange bioluminescent creatures acclimated to extreme pressure exist closer to the planet's core, while only microscopic life can survive on the surface of the core itself.

Nejeor VI has three moons, none of which have been fully charted or even named. The smallest moon has a very irregular orbit, as it is constantly pulled between the planet's gravity and that of its two siblings. The moon's crust experiences a large amount of friction, causing mountain ranges to rise and fall on the surface over the course of decades. The largest moon isn't much more than a ball of frozen methane riddled with deep crevasses. The shadows of precise geometric shapes can sometimes be spotted deep within the ice, but they are effectively invisible to modern sensors, as they give off no signs of energy. The rocky surface of the third moon is scarred with thousands of impact craters from countless meteorites attracted by the immense gravity of Nejeor VI and the third moon's strong magnetic core; veins of an unknown blood-red ore can be seen at the bottoms of these craters.



NEXT MONTH

THE THIRTEENTH GATE

By Stephen Radney-MacFarland

The heroes journey deeper into the Vast to find the Gate of Twelve Suns, an alien megastructure consisting of a dozen stars arranged in a perfect circle. A single, small planet orbits each sun, and the characters must explore some of those satellites to learn how to open a portal to the demiplane that contains the ancient superweapon they have been seeking. However, members of the Cult of the Devourer precede them, and the heroes must contend with the cultists for control of the alien technology. Only by defeating the cultists can the heroes keep the superweapon out of the wrong hands—though those destructive zealots are far from the only threats found on the planets.

RELICS OF THE KISHALEE

By Stephen Radney-MacFarland

The kishalee were a highly advanced race that existed millennia ago; though their cities have crumbled and their kish descendants have lost the kishalee's technical knowledge, some of their technomagical equipment persists

to this day. Uncover a veritable vault of these artifacts, ranging from weapons and weapon fusions to grenades and hybrid items, any of which could fetch a high price from a serious collector—or become a treasured part of your arsenal!

ALIEN WORLDS AND CULTURES

By Mikko Kallio, Jason Keeley, Lyz Liddell, Ron Lundeen, and Mark Moreland

The galaxy is a wild and wonderful place! Fire up your Drift engines to explore five never-before-detailed planets located far from the Pact Worlds in this in-depth article. Meet the planets' fascinating inhabitants, learn about their cultures, and discover new pieces of technology constructed by them.

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OF THE
TWELVE

PART 1:
QUESTIONS
IN QABARAT

PART 2:
THE UKULAM
EXPEDITION

PART 3:
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TEMPLE

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THE CULT OF
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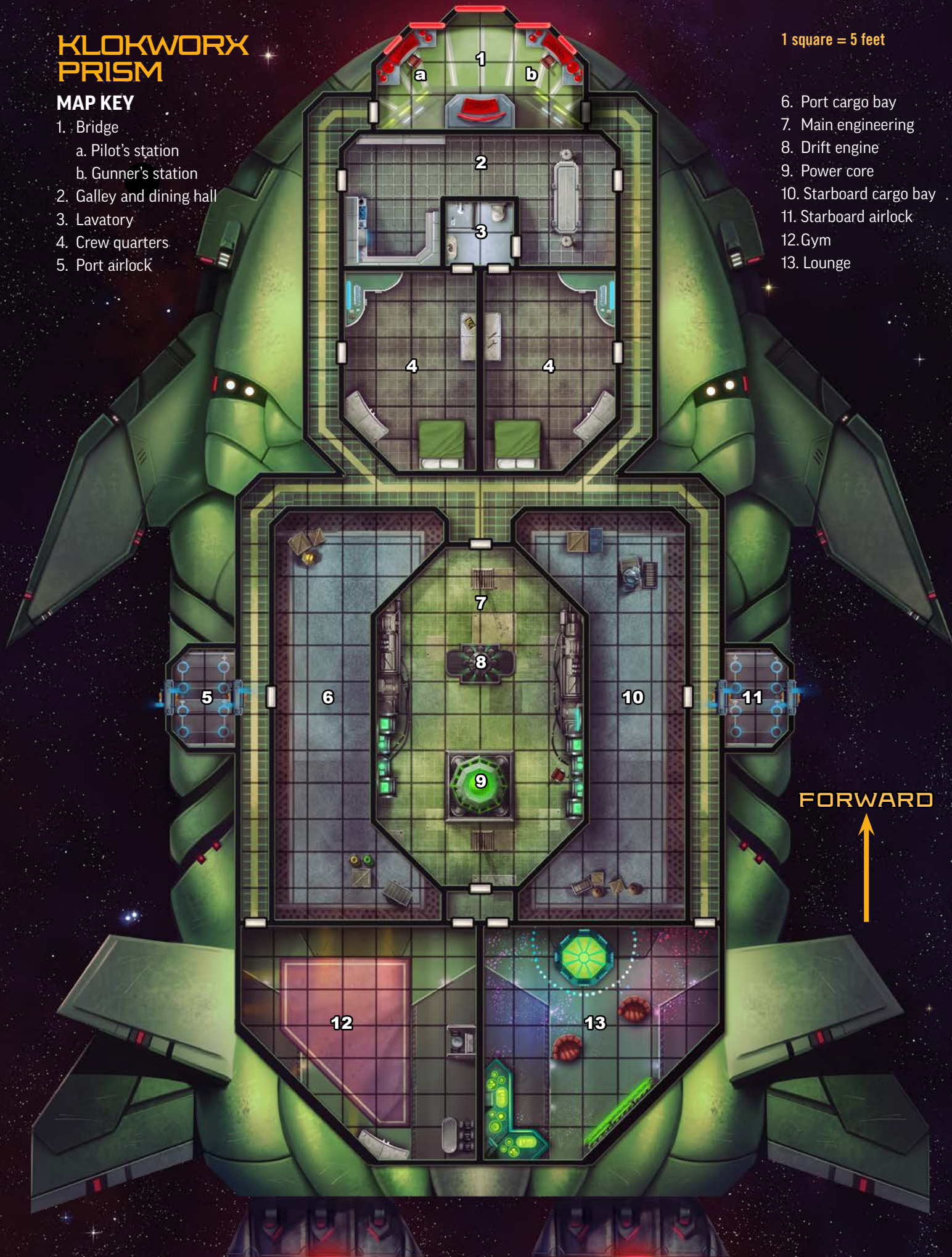
KLOKWORX PRISM

MAP KEY

1. Bridge
 - a. Pilot's station
 - b. Gunner's station
2. Galley and dining hall
3. Lavatory
4. Crew quarters
5. Port airlock

1 square = 5 feet

6. Port cargo bay
7. Main engineering
8. Drift engine
9. Power core
10. Starboard cargo bay
11. Starboard airlock
12. Gym
13. Lounge



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