

# STARFINDER<sup>®</sup>



**SIGNAL of  
SCREAMS**  
ADVENTURE PATH

## THE PENUMBRA PROTOCOL

BY JENNY JARZABSKI





## ANTUMBRA OVERSEER

TIER 8

Large destroyer

**Speed** 8; **Maneuverability** average (turn 2); **Drift** 1

**AC** 20; **TL** 21

**HP** 190; **DT** —; **CT** 38

**Shields** light 60 (forward 15, port 15, starboard 15, aft 15)

**Attack (Forward)** heavy torpedo launcher (5d8)

**Attack (Port)** light particle beam (3d6)

**Attack (Starboard)** light particle beam (3d6)

**Attack (Aft)** light EMP cannon (special)

**Attack (Turret)** chain cannon (6d4)

**Power Core** Pulse Orange (250 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Basic; **Systems** advanced short-range sensors, anti-hacking systems, crew quarters (common), mk 3 armor, mk 4 defenses, mk 3 trinode computer, self-destruct system; **Expansion Bays** cargo holds (2), escape pods, passenger seating

**Modifiers** +3 to any three checks per round, +4 Computers (sensors only); **Complement** 6 (minimum 6, maximum 20)

### CREW

**Captain** Bluff +16 (8 ranks), Computers +13 (8 ranks), Diplomacy +16 (8 ranks), Engineering +13 (8 ranks), Intimidate +16 (8 ranks)

**Engineer** Engineering +16 (8 ranks)

**Gunners (2)** gunnery +14

**Pilot** Piloting +21 (8 ranks)

**Science Officer** Computers +16 (8 ranks)

A holdover from the company's days as a defense contractor during the Pact Worlds' war with the Swarm, Eclipse Innovations' Antumbra Division produces a small line of armed starships. Its space docks were mothballed after the end of the war but have recently been staffed again. Business analysts across the system believe that Eclipse Innovations has signed an exclusive contract with an unknown military force beyond the Pact Worlds, as the new vessels Antumbra has been manufacturing aren't up for general sale. In reality, Kaeon Rhyse has diverted funds from the sales of the Penumbra app to create a private military force for the company to defeat any who resist the pull of Dr. Gragant's shadow signal.

The Antumbra Overseer is designed to protect high-profile sites and ferry individuals from one dangerous area to another. It boasts an impressive array of weapons and a durable hull, though its shields are less powerful than those of other vessels of the same size. The Overseer usually maintains a perimeter patrol near a single location, constantly scanning for potential threats. Antumbra has begun installing self-destruct systems in its ships to prevent its technology from falling into other companies' hands, but even if that system is compromised or bypassed, the Overseer's anti-hacking systems mean that any potential thieves won't have an easy time of it.



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## ON THE COVER



Artist Ignacio Bazán Lazcano gives us a haunting look at executive Kaeon Rhyse; once a philanthropist, Kaeon has surrendered to the corruption within his soul.



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## CONTENT WARNING

The Signal of Screams Adventure Path contains typical Starfinder action and adventure, but be warned that it also presents scenarios in which horrifying things happen to the PCs and the NPCs around them. The events presented in this Adventure Path fall into the realm of body horror and psychological horror, which can include disfigurement, mutation, parasitism and disease, self-mutilation, injury, and the aftermath of such unpleasantness. Before you begin, understand that player consent (including that of the GM) is the most important thing to consider. GMs should talk with their players about the horror elements included and obtain everyone's consent to the inclusion of these topics. It's also a good idea to include a method for players to indicate whether the game's content has gone too far during play. More instruction about running horror campaigns responsibly and ensuring that all players have fun is included in the article "Horror Campaigns" in *Starfinder Adventure Path #10: The Diaspora Strain*.

This book refers to several other Starfinder products, including the *Armory* by using the abbreviation AR, 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 [sfrd.info](http://sfrd.info).



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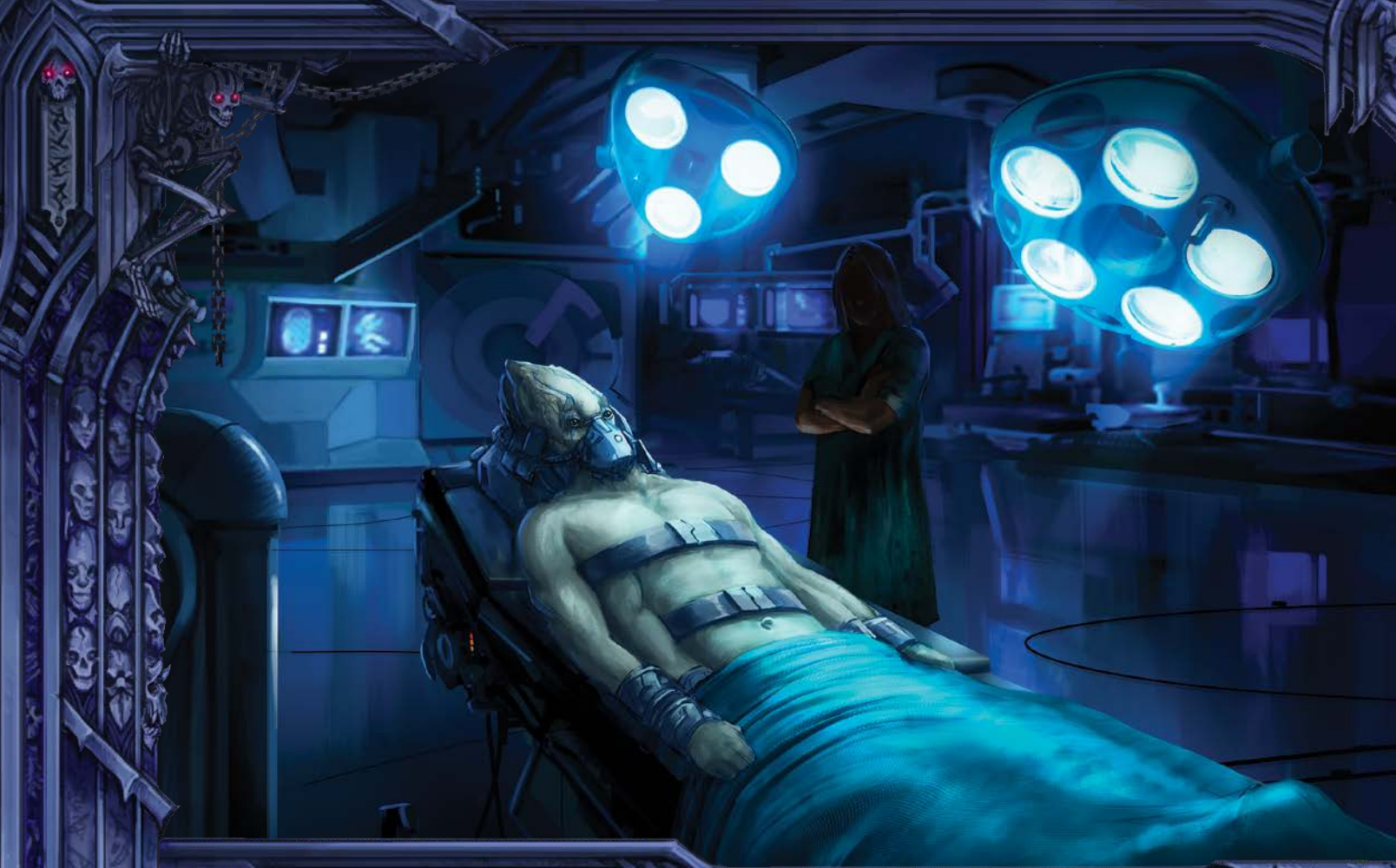
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# THE PENUMBRA PROTOCOL

## PART 1: IN PURSUIT OF ECLIPSE 3

The PCs have escaped New Elysium, but they must travel to Verces to search for answers from Eclipse Innovations. They soon discover that the company plans to release Penumbra, a social media app that will expose the entire city of Cuvacara to a mind-warping signal similar to the one the PCs experienced at the resort.

## PART 2: GATHERING SHADOWS 11

The PCs track down signal transmitters across Cuvacara and gather information about Eclipse Innovations' mysterious corporate black site. Hunted by a team of corporate-sponsored assassins, will they be able to outwit their pursuers and save the city from disaster?

## PART 3: THE BLACK SITE 25

To stop Eclipse Innovations once and for all, the PCs infiltrate a secure site on Verces' Darkside and come face-to-face with the charismatic executive Kaeon Rhyse. During the fight, Kaeon activates an experimental particle accelerator that transports the PCs to the Shadow Plane.

## ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Penumbra Protocol" is designed for four characters.



The PCs begin this adventure at 9th level.



The PCs should reach 10th level before reaching Eclipse Innovations' black site.



The PCs should be 11th level by the end of the adventure.



## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Born to an impoverished family living in the Shade, a crime-ridden district in Cuvacara, the verthani Kaeon Rhyse rose from humble beginnings to become the youngest executive at Eclipse Innovations. As a child, he honed his naturally brilliant mind with hours of study. In school, Kaeon was always at the top of his class, and he soon found a part-time job at a computer and cybernetic repair shop to help support his family. By his teen years, Kaeon had earned a following of regular customers, and he started his own tech repair business. His love of technology manifested in his personal life as well, and he designed apps for his circle of friends to use for communication and study.

Kaeon was eventually offered a prestigious internship at Eclipse Innovations. His work there distinguished him as a rising star, and the young technomancer was soon hired full-time. He combated the ageist and classist prejudice leveled against him by using his sharp mind and innovative approach to technology, earning him several promotions in a short period. Even with his heavy workload, Kaeon found time for philanthropy, creating his own scholarship for impoverished Cuvacaran students.

When he was invited to tour the luxury resort New Elysium 5 years ago, Kaeon was skeptical. He preferred to funnel his disposable income into charity rather than pamper himself. Other board members convinced Kaeon to visit the resort, assuring him that self-care didn't necessarily mean selfishness. This trip to New Elysium turned out to be a fateful occurrence, however. Dr. Lestana Gragant, imprisoned in the Shadow Plane version of the asteroid, saw Kaeon and expertly twisted Kaeon's mind, making him her obedient servant. Kaeon returned to Verces a changed man, his personal goals and philanthropic attitude wiped away by his devotion to Dr. Gragant.

At the doctor's behest, Kaeon brought other Eclipse employees and executives to the asteroid to be corrupted, and a little over a year later, Dr. Gragant had a loyal group of servants. Now she effectively controls the company through her first "disciple" Kaeon, with many of Eclipse's employees used as test subjects for horrific cybernetic implants. As the head of software development, Kaeon has also spearheaded the development of Penumbra, a "social media solution" that will eventually be able to transmit Dr. Gragant's corrupting signal across the galaxy. The Keys to Elysium app that premiered on New Elysium was an alpha test of this technology.

Though he would love to watch firsthand the chaos that Dr. Gragant's shadow signal will wreak on the city of Cuvacara, Kaeon knows that such an indulgence would be foolhardy and dangerous. Last year, as Eclipse put the finishing touches on New Elysium's virtual concierge app, the verthani executive located a weak spot between the Material Plane and Shadow Plane on Verces' Darkside. He built an underground black

site there to contact and make deals with denizens of the Shadow Plane, including Avigdis, a svartalfar assassin. Kaeon has relocated much of the company's assets to this bunker, where he continues to aid Dr. Gragant in her mission to free the galaxy's inhabitants from the fear of pain.

By the time the PCs reach Verces, Kaeon Rhyse is aware of their interference with the tests on New Elysium, and he has already sent his shadowy allies and corporate killers to track them down.

## PART 1: IN PURSUIT OF ECLIPSE

By the end of the previous adventure, "The Diaspora Strain," the PCs have shut down or destroyed the server hosting the Keys to Elysium app. The PCs have learned the identity of the corporation responsible for the creation of the sinister program—Eclipse Innovations—and tracked the location of Eclipse's headquarters to the city of Cuvacara on the planet of Verces. This adventure assumes that the PCs are dedicated to traveling to Eclipse Innovations to search for answers about what happened on New Elysium, but they will soon discover that putting an end to the virtual-concierge program has not stopped the corruption that grows within the PCs (see Shadow Corruption below). If they want to cleanse the stain from their souls, their only lead is Eclipse Innovations.

After the PCs have plotted a course, their journey from the Diaspora to Verces takes 1d6+2 days with conventional thrusters or 1d6 days if the PCs use Drift travel.

## SHADOW CORRUPTION

In the previous adventure, the PCs likely contracted a dormant version of the shadow corruption. More information about this corruption is found on page 40 of *Starfinder Adventure Path #10: The Diaspora Strain*. Remember that each day for the remainder of this adventure, each affected PC must attempt a Will save to resist the progress of shadow corruption. Some encounters in this adventure require additional Will saves.

## EVENT 1: A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Even as the PCs escape the constant bombardment of Dr. Gragant's shadow signal and travel to Verces, they still feel the effects of shadow corruption, especially if they have garnered any manifestations. If the trip takes more than one day, the PCs startle awake from sleep, screaming from nightmares they can't recall. They begin to experience sensitivity to light, developing headaches after spending more than a few minutes in brightly lit areas of the ship. A PC might even experience a flash of pleasure as a result of a painful cut or burn.

If the PCs haven't realized it already, these are the first signs of a growing malady. A PC who casts *detect affliction* on an affected PC and succeeds at a DC 25 Mysticism check

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determines that the PC is under a kind of curse, but doesn't learn how to remove it.

The largest, most undeniable sign of their sickness occurs before they arrive on Verces, when afflicted PCs experience a collective dream that takes place in one of Dr. Gragant's original laboratories on asteroid D-334H. For the most powerful experience, describe this scene at the beginning of a session with no explanation of how the PCs got to the lab, only the vaguest memories of their true lives, and with none of their usual gear. This dream is not a phantasm, but it shares some common elements (see page 20 of *Starfinder Adventure Path #10: The Diaspora Strain*). The PCs are in no real physical danger, but they shouldn't know that! Even though the surreal nature of the dream likely gives them cause to suspect they're experiencing something other than reality, you shouldn't confirm or deny their suspicions. Remain cryptic and ask for their next actions. Strive to keep the following scene fast-paced and fluid so the players have little time to discuss or second-guess their actions.

If you believe your players will be uncomfortable with the dream's content, you should gloss over the more gory details or consider skipping the scene altogether (finding another way to award them the XP). Read or paraphrase the following to begin.

---

As this unfamiliar room shifts into focus, its function is not immediately apparent. Harsh fluorescent lights reflect off a row of metal tables, shrouding the rest of the room in darkness. Glass jars on a nearby counter contain sterile swabs and syringes. An open box of surgical tools lays ready near the jars. The scrubbed metal floor and pristine surfaces suggest this chamber may be a medical bay or clinic.

A strange metal apparatus is mounted to the ceiling. Thick wires dangle from the device like lifeless appendages, ending in circular electrodes. A strong medicinal scent permeates the chilly air.

The click of heels on the cold metal tiles shatters the silence. A vaguely humanoid figure dressed in a white lab coat approaches. Her face is wreathed in shadow, but her eyes seem to glow from within. "Students, today you will duplicate a procedure of my own invention on a test subject."

---

Randomly determine which of the PCs attempt the procedure and which are the test subjects; split the party as evenly as possible between the two groups. Test subjects are bound to the metal tables with electrodes attached to their heads linked to wires on the overhead machine. A PC can escape from the restraints by succeeding at a DC 41 Acrobatics check.

The shadowy woman presiding over this nightmare is a projection of Dr. Lestana Gragant. She orders each unbound PC to make incisions from sternum to groin on one of the test subjects. These PCs find that surgical scalpels instantly materialize in their hands. A PC who obeys the order experiences an increasing sense of euphoria as she dissects

one of her comrades. A scalpel deals 2d6 slashing damage with each cut, and a cut bleeds for an additional 1d6 damage each round. Disturbingly, a test subject PC feels intense pleasure as the blades slice into his flesh. Dr. Gragant praises PCs who don't resist the incisions, saying, "You are delightfully receptive. I have so much to teach you."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Computers or Medicine check recognizes that the electrodes attached to the test subjects are feeding data to a computer terminal in the center of the room, recording the victims' neurological responses to injury.

Dr. Gragant reprimands PCs who refuse to play along and flips a switch that sends an electrical current through their bodies, dealing 3d6 electricity damage.

If a PC questions the hallucinatory Dr. Gragant, she does not reveal her identity; she simply states that she is a scientist. If asked why she's doing what she is doing, she responds, "I am trying to help you."

The dream lasts for 10 rounds or until a PC is reduced to 0 Hit Points by either the electrical damage dealt by Dr. Gragant, the slashing damage from the scalpels, or the bleed damage from the incisions. The PCs then wake to realize they never left their starship and are physically unharmed. This might prompt a PC to cast *detect affliction* to detect the shadow corruption if the party still has yet to realize they are afflicted.

**Development:** Each PC has the choice to gain a shadow manifestation (see "Corrupted by Shadows" on page 40 of *Starfinder Adventure Path #10: The Diaspora Strain*). Gaining this manifestation doesn't advance a PC's shadow corruption (unless it is still dormant within that PC) or count toward the total number of manifestations a PC can have before becoming fully corrupted. A PC who refuses this "gift" must attempt a Will saving throw to resist the growing shadow corruption, as detailed in Shadow Corruption on page 3.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs 6,400 XP for experiencing this terrible nightmare and "meeting" Dr. Gragant.

## ARRIVING IN CUVACARA

As the PCs process their harrowing experience, they realize they are approaching their destination. After entering orbit and then Verces' atmosphere, they spot illuminated landing strips that guide them toward the spaceport located within the Northeast Facet of Cuvacara. (The city, which is known as the Dusk Jewel, is divided into eight sectors, or facets.) Read or paraphrase the following text.

---

Beneath an early evening sky stained crimson and gold, a craggy island rises a thousand feet above blue-gray waters. A white, dome-shaped structure occupies most of the island's surface. Concrete landing pads jut out from the island's cliffs, illuminated by blinking blue and green lights. Other ships coast toward the spaceport in slow spirals.

A sprawling city of dazzling skyscrapers—laced with a grid of roadways and elevated transparent tubes containing trains—glitters across the river to the south. Visible even



from this height, holo-billboards advertising a range of products in Common and Vercite flicker in the dusky light.

After the PCs land on a platform, their ship is lifted by machine arms into a large hangar built into the side of the spaceport. The PCs exit on foot through a tube of silver metal to a central area bustling with activity. Friendly verthani spaceport attendants dressed in yellow uniforms direct groups of travelers to and from departure gates. Holograms announce departures and arrivals for commercial space flights in both Common and Vercite, while signs direct customers to baggage claim areas. Sleek, white security robots glide through the huge room, scanning individuals as they pass.

Holo-billboards within the spaceport (and throughout the city) advertise in Common and Vercite various products available for purchase. One of the ads, emblazoned with the image of a black sphere radiating golden light, is for a new social media app called Penumbra. While the PCs might have already heard about Penumbra while they stayed at New Elysium, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check recognizes the symbol on the advertisement as the logo of Eclipse Innovations.

Once inside the spaceport, the PCs have access to Verces' infosphere. A PC who checks the infosphere or succeeds at a DC 14 Diplomacy check to gather information finds the exact location of the Eclipse Innovations office in the West Facet.

The PCs can rent a private hangar for their ship for 10 credits per day. Cuvacara is a densely populated metropolis with only one allocated area for landing spacecraft, so the PCs will have to leave their ship at the spaceport and make other transportation arrangements moving forward.

## NAVIGATING CUVACARA

The PCs may wish to get their bearings in this strange new city before continuing their mission, or they may want to book accommodations and purchase supplies. Because of its location in Verces' terminator belt, Cuvacara exists in an eternal state of sunset. It's impossible to know what time of day it is through light indicators alone, but PCs who need a little shut-eye can rent a sleep pod within the Cuvacara spaceport. Even with this amenity, the PCs will likely want to leave the spaceport and explore the city as soon as possible. For more information about Cuvacara, see the gazetteer on page 38.

Lightning-fast bullet trains travel to each facet of the city. Riding a bullet train to a specific location costs 1 credit. Robotaxis (which cost 1 credit per 10 miles) and vehicle rentals are also available.

## EXTENDED STAY IN CUVACARA

The PCs have several lodging options to choose from in this large metropolis. See pages 233–235 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook* for more information about lodgings and pricing. The following are just a few examples of where the PCs might stay.

**Dusky Arms:** This mid-level hotel located in the city's South Facet offers suites that each contain one to two beds, as well as a kitchenette and bathroom. Laundry and dining facilities are located on each floor. A free continental breakfast is available each morning on the ground level of the hotel, alongside a bar that serves steeply overpriced drinks. Staying here costs 5 credits per night.

**The Sky Jade:** This luxury hotel in the city's Northwest Facet accommodates high rollers in spacious suites that include up to four beds, a full kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and maid service. Drinks from the rooftop hotel bar are complimentary for guests. These rooms cost 10 credits per night.

**Slumber Warehouse:** Located in the Southeast Facet, this drab building features hundreds of sleep pods that branch from central hallways. Communal restrooms are located near each block of 10 pods. A small number of efficiency apartments are available on the top floors. Renting a sleep pod costs 1 credit per night, and renting an efficiency costs 3 credits per night.

## A. ECLIPSE INNOVATIONS HEADQUARTERS

When the PCs arrive at this building, Eclipse has already completed its relocation to the black site on Verces' Darkside. Fewer than a dozen verthani workers remain, driven to zombie-like slavery by an experimental cybernetic implant. Some of the employees have already succumbed to starvation and have been reanimated as cybernetic zombies. A squad of these unfortunates guards the central computer terminal in area **A13**. Although the company recently moved, most of the building's security features remain in place.

Unless otherwise stated, all of the locations within the Eclipse Innovations headquarters have the following traits. **Ceilings, Doors, and Walls:** The ceilings are 20 feet high, and the doors are thick steel doors (hardness 30, HP 125, break DC 35). Computerized locks and key card readers are built into the doors (Computers DC 25 or Engineering DC 30 to bypass) and can be opened with white Eclipse key cards. The walls are concrete (hardness 15, HP 540 per 10-foot-by-10-foot section, break DC 45).

**Lighting:** Powerful industrial lights built into the ceilings brightly illuminate the halls and rooms.

**Security:** Visible security cameras mounted to ceilings and walls throughout the facility transmit constant video feeds, though no personnel remain to monitor them. Other automated security measures, including electrified doors, remain intact where noted. In addition, security robots patrol the area.

### A1. LOBBY (CR 9)

The front steel door isn't locked, but it is trapped with a dangerous electrical charge (see Trap on page 6).

Within this brightly lit foyer, tall, leafy green plants grow from ceramic pots on either side of the steel doors to the southwest. The floor is covered in a thin, mint-green carpet,

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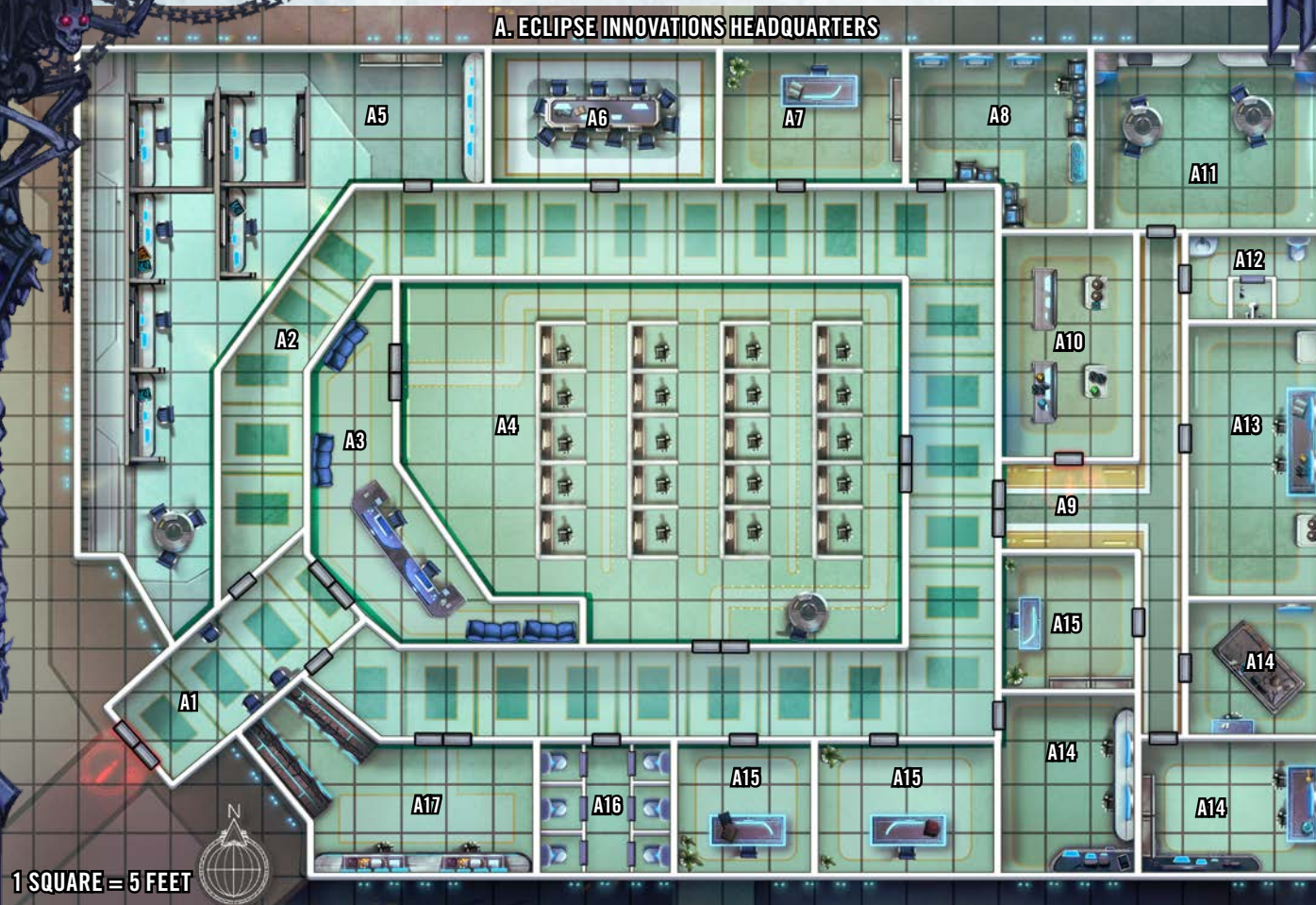
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and the concrete walls are painted an institutional shade of off-white. A glass double door to the northeast leads to what appears to be a reception area. Two other doors flank the glass double door.

The glass doors (break DC 20) to the northeast are locked (Engineering DC 20 to disable).

**Trap:** Wires built into the steel front door of the building release a powerful electrical charge when an unauthorized person attempts to enter (by pulling on the handle without first running an access card through the reader).

### **ELECTRIFIED DOOR TRAP** **CR 9** **XP 6,400**

**Type** technological; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable** Engineering DC 28 (disable shock grid)

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 minute; **Bypass** wireless key card reader (Computers DC 28 to hack)

**Effect** arc of electricity (10d10 E); Reflex DC 18 half

### **A2. MAIN HALLWAY**

Off-white ceramic tiles speckled with green glint in the powerful light given off by rectangular fixtures built into the ceiling. Steel doors, some adorned with nameplates, branch off from the corridor, leading to the various rooms within the

facility. Compact, black security cameras keep watch from the ceiling, spaced at 30-foot intervals.

Most areas within Eclipse Innovations headquarters can be accessed via this hallway. These doors are unlocked except where noted before a room's description.

**Creatures:** Four patrol-class security robots currently patrol the hallway. Once they detect the PCs, they attack.

### **PATROL-CLASS SECURITY ROBOTS (4)** **CR 4**

**XP 1,200 each**

**HP 52 each** (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 94)

### **TACTICS**

**During Combat** The security robots attack the PCs with their tactical arc emitters, using their jolting arc ability whenever possible. When reduced to 20 Hit Points or fewer, the robots use their nanite repair ability to heal themselves.

**Morale** The security robots are programmed to protect the facility at all costs and fight until destroyed.

**Development:** As they fight, the patrol-class security robots upload data of their experiences with the PCs to the office's security network. Images of these intruders and details of their tactics are transmitted to the terminator-class security robot in area A9.



### A3. RECEPTION

Rows of rigid plastic chairs line the walls of this L-shaped room. A silver metal reception desk in the center of the room houses two employee workstations. A small computer is mounted to each workstation.

This room provides ample but decidedly uncomfortable seating for prospective employees and visitors, and was overseen by two receptionists while the facility was operational. The doors to the northeast are open.

**Treasure:** The two portable self-charging tier 2 computers can be removed from the reception desk and are worth 275 credits each.

### A4. WORKROOM (CR 9)

Four rows of beige plastic cubicles occupy this large room. Each identical cubicle contains a metal desk and swivel chair, differentiated only by various personal items such as photographs and kitschy paperweights. The green carpet and off-white concrete walls provide a bland, unimaginative decor, and potted plants adorn each corner of the room. Screens on the walls cycle through holographic images of outdoor scenery accompanied by motivational phrases.

This large room houses a collection of cubicles for low-ranking employees assigned to data entry or software development. A cylindrical water cooler near the doors to the south once witnessed moments of camaraderie, but it has been forgotten by the room's current occupants. The motivational images encourage employees to "persevere" and "collaborate" and remind them "when we all work together, we win together" in both Common and Vercite.

Each cubicle contains a desk, a swivel chair, and a tier 3 computer. Accessing any of these computers requires a successful DC 25 Computers check to hack. If a PC fails this check, a fake shell countermeasure presents uninformative desktop files filled with code, a calendar with mundane events, and a messaging inbox with no information of real interest. A PC can attempt a DC 30 Computers check to recognize the fake shell and bypass it. The following data modules can be accessed through any computer in the room.

Once the PCs have accessed a computer in this area, two data modules labeled "Eclipse Mail" and "Penumbra" are likely of interest to them. The contents of these data modules are described below, including any countermeasures.

**Eclipse Mail Module:** This module can be accessed without additional Computers checks. It appears to be an inbox for office messaging. A group message titled "Relocation" details internal preparations for a move from the HQ building in Cuvacara to a new location on the planet's Darkside. This message is addressed to all personnel and is signed, "Kaeon Rhyse, Executive Director of Software Development."

**Penumbra Module:** Because of the sensitive information it contains, this secure data module is protected by a firewall and equipped with a feedback countermeasure. Bypassing the firewall requires a successful DC 27 Computers check. The module details the development of Penumbra, a new social media app created by the company. Penumbra is described as a private infosphere accessible only to its users. Those who purchase and download it can share video recordings, status updates, pictures, and their current location with other users. User feeds are broadcast through signal transmitters around Cuvacara, Penumbra's test market. The module also refers to something called the "Penumbra protocol," according to which Eclipse will broadcast a new type of signal to each comm unit on which Penumbra is installed. Details on this signal aren't present, but PCs will likely associate it with the similar signal that affected the guests of New Elysium. This signal is meant to go out 1 week from the current day.

**Creatures:** Several months ago, select members of the staff were invited to test an implant with unique cybernetic features designed to increase productivity... at a price. Those who opted into the program stopped taking breaks, eating, or making small talk in the office. Gradually, they stopped even going home, resisting sleep until they passed out from exhaustion at their desks. When Kaeon relocated the headquarters, management ordered mandatory paid sick leave for these employees. Some had to be sedated and forcefully removed from the property. The lucky ones went to hospitals funded by corporate hush money, but others have returned to the site to continue their work.

These afflicted employees feverishly work at tasks now rendered useless by the recent release of Penumbra and the corporate move to the black site. The emaciated verthani ignore the PCs unless the PCs prevent them from working, visibly destroy or remove something from the office, or attempt to hack one of the computers. In these cases, the workers attack en masse.

#### AFFLICTED EMPLOYEES (6)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Male and female verthani (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 118)

N Medium humanoid (verthani)

**Init** +5; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +10

#### DEFENSE

HP 44 EACH

**EAC** 16; **KAC** 17

**Fort** +4; **Ref** +5; **Will** +7

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** office equipment +10 (1d4+5 B)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The afflicted employees attack the PCs with random pieces of office furniture (such as chairs and hefty personal items), which function as tactical batons. They don't chase PCs who leave this room.

**Morale** If provoked and not allowed to return to their computers, the employees fight to the death.

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## STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +15, Culture +10, Computers +15, Engineering +10, Physical Science +10, Stealth +15

**Languages** Common, Vercite

**Other Abilities** easily augmented, skin mimic

**Gear** piece of office furniture (functions as tactical baton), engineering tool kit, professional clothing, white Eclipse key card; **Augmentations** productivity implant (see below)

**Development:** A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Wisdom check remembers seeing advertisements for Penumbra on New Elysium and when they landed in Cuvacara. The key cards held by these employees open all the doors within the building except for the doors to Kaeon Rhyse's office (area **A7**) and the restricted hallway (area **A9**).

A PC who examines the body of an afflicted employee and succeeds at a DC 20 Medicine check discovers the scars for a brain implant. A PC whose result exceeds the DC by 5 or more can surmise the verthani's unusual behavior is likely the result of the implant. Unless the PCs have some way to see through flesh and bone, they will have to cut open one of the employees to get a closer look at the productivity implant.

The productivity implant is a tiny hybrid nanocarbon device inserted directly into the stem of the brain and connected to the subject's nervous system. A PC examining the augmentation and succeeding at a DC 32 Engineering or Mysticism check can identify the implant's functions. A subject implanted with the device gains the benefits of 8 hours of rest with only 2 hours of sleep, and can go without eating or drinking for several extra days. While the implant allows the subject to focus on a task, it also eventually overwrites the subject's desire to eat, drink, or rest, which is, of course, very detrimental to the subject's health. If the PC's result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, she also realizes that a subject who dies with this implant installed might rise as a cybernetic zombie (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 114) in a matter of hours.

## A5. MARKETING DEPARTMENT

This room contains spacious cubicles for Eclipse's marketing staff. Glass cases to the northeast contain two personal comm units running the Penumbra app.

To the south, a wooden table provides a comfortable space for employees to relax.

Each cubicle contains a desk, a comfortable chair, and a tier 3 computer with a security II upgrade. Accessing any of these computers requires a successful DC 27 Computers check to hack and gives access to the same Eclipse mail module noted in area **A4**, as well as spreadsheets of sales reports and projections that show the recent release of Penumbra was well received, with 60 percent of city inhabitants purchasing the app within 48 hours of its release.

## A6. MEETING ROOM

An oblong wooden table surrounded by cushioned swivel chairs takes up most of this room. A large vidscreen on the eastern wall currently displays an image of a black sphere limned by radiating golden light.

Employees once took part in meetings and training sessions here, using the large projector screen. The vidscreen is controlled by a simple panel that has nothing currently uploaded other than the company logo.

## A7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

A silver nameplate on the wall outside this office reads, "Kaeon Rhyse."

A matching chair sits behind a mahogany desk in this spacious office. A pair of filing cabinets stands against the eastern wall. A map of a vast city covers most of the western wall, studded with many silver pins in seemingly random locations.

One of several larger offices in the building, this particular area belonged to Kaeon Rhyse. If the PCs search his desk, they find an electronic frame haphazardly shoved into a drawer alongside other office detritus. When powered on, the frame cycles through holographic images of a young adult male verthani shaking hands with a gray-haired human man in medical scrubs, walking across the stage at a graduation ceremony, posing with verthani children in front of a school, and other happy-looking memories.



AFFLICTED EMPLOYEE



In addition, a PC who searches the desk drawer finds a laminated key card. It displays a picture of a smiling verthani male in his late 20s and is labeled "Kaeon Rhyse, Executive Director." The face on the badge is the same as the one featured in the frame's images. This key card unlocks the door to area A9.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Wisdom check recognizes the verthani in the images and on the key card as Kaeon Rhyse, whom they briefly met on New Elysium.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 23 Culture check identifies the image on the western wall as an aerial map of Cuvacara. No context is provided to explain the significance of the silver pins on the map, but the PCs may copy their coordinates if they desire. In actuality, they are potential locations for the three signal transmitters eventually placed in Cuvacara, and the PCs will likely realize the importance of these coordinates if they hack into the computer in area A13.

**Treasure:** A PC who searches the desk and succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check finds a *non-detection* spell chip and a *probability prediction* spell chip.

## A8. BREAK ROOM

To the east, metal cabinets provide storage for various food items and utensils. A large rectangular device labeled "Meal-o-Matic Deluxe" stands on the L-shaped counter to the southeast. A door exits to the south.

The break room houses two tables with seating for employees to enjoy a coffee break or meal while on the clock. The cabinets are filled with nonperishable canned foods, as well as packets labeled "Meal-o-Matic" that display pictures of a wide variety of cuisine from prime rib to tofu curry.

The Meal-o-Matic Deluxe is a non-portable version of a mk 2 culinary synthesizer (*Starfinder Armory* 129) that creates meals from specially designed packets (instead of UPBs). Each packet inserted into the machine produces a common-quality meal in 1 minute. It also has a setting for different flavors of coffee and tea, but can't produce any intoxicants. There are 14 meal packets remaining in the cabinet.

**Treasure:** If the PCs search the cabinets, they salvage 20 field rations.

## A9. RESTRICTED HALLWAY (CR 10)

The door into this corridor can be accessed only with Kaeon Rhyse's key card.

**Creatures:** A terminator-class security robot patrols the north-south section of the hallway. It is programmed to attack any unauthorized intruders who venture into the area.

## TERMINATOR-CLASS SECURITY ROBOT CR 10

XP 9,600

HP 165 (see page 58)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The terminator-class security robot uses Stealth to attempt to ambush intruders.

**During Combat** The terminator-class security robot shoots targets with its plasma rifle until a PC closes the gap to enter melee; if the robot is reduced to 60 Hit Points or fewer and has not yet been engaged in melee, it charges its enemies. When reduced to 40 Hit Points or fewer, the terminator-class security robot activates its nanite repair ability. On the next round, it activates its hardware acceleration ability and continues attacking.

**Morale** The security robot fights until it is destroyed.



## A10. MEDICAL RESEARCH LAB (CR 9 AND CR 9)

Two raised examination tables constructed of stainless steel stand in the center of this laboratory. A rolling metal cabinet is connected to the southern wall by a tangle of multicolored wires and emits a low humming sound. Starched white lab coats hang from metal hooks on the eastern wall.

A team of scientists previously used this room to develop and surgically install the productivity implant. While the Eclipse physician Dr. Ivri Qindor aided in performing the delicate augmentation procedures, his position as medical director was largely a farce after Dr. Gragant corrupted the other medical professionals. The cabinet to the south contains medical-monitoring equipment, which a PC can identify by succeeding at a DC 25 Engineering or Medicine check.

**Trap:** The door to this area is equipped with sensors that detect unauthorized attempts to enter the room. If an authorized Eclipse key card (such as the one found in area A7) is not presented to the card reader on the outside of door when a PC tries to enter, destructive nanites spray from vents in both sides of the door onto creatures both within the room and outside it.

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### NANITE SPRAY TRAP

CR 9

XP 6,400

**Type** technological; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable** Engineering DC 28 (jam the vent)

**Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour; **Bypass** key card reader (Computers DC 28 to hack)

**Effect** nanites flood the area and eat away at living tissue (8d10 A); **Reflex** DC 18 half; multiple targets (all targets in a marked area)

**Creatures:** Three former Eclipse employees who died as a result of their productivity implants have been reanimated by the technology into cybernetic zombies and were left behind when the company abandoned this facility. Two of the zombies were strapped to the examination tables for observation. The reanimated employees burst from their bonds when the PCs enter the lab.

### REANIMATED EMPLOYEES (3)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Male and female verthani cybernetic zombie (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 118, 114)

NE Medium undead

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +13

**DEFENSE** HP 90 EACH  
**EAC** 18; **KAC** 20

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

**Defensive Abilities** integrated weapons; **Immunities** undead immunities

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to electricity

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** slam +16 (1d8+11)

**Ranged** integrated corona laser pistol +13 (2d4+6 F; burn 1d4)

**Offensive Abilities** self-destruct (1d6+6 E, DC 14)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The reanimated employees attack with their corona laser pistols and then charge the PCs.

**Morale** These mindless undead fight until they are destroyed.

#### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Athletics +18

**Other Abilities** mindless, unliving

**Gear** corona laser pistol with 1 battery (20 charges)

## A11. CORPORATE CLINIC

Two circular tables made of thick laminate occupy this drab beige-and-white room. The floor, however, is littered with broken glass, discarded medical supplies, and an overturned swivel chair. Computer terminals on the tables have shattered screens and cracked keyboards. Drawers in the cabinets to the north hang open, and flecks of dried blood mar the white tile floor.

Corporate doctor Ivri Qindor used this clinic to monitor the productivity implants installed in volunteer employees. Ignorant of the implants' true purpose, he gladly accepted the responsibility to oversee the clinical trials of the implant. Weeks passed as Dr. Qindor recorded the increasingly negative effects of the technology. When his requests to halt the trials were ignored, the doctor suspected a corporation-wide conspiracy surrounding the tech. In a moment of desperation, Dr. Qindor destroyed his own clinic, cutting his hand in the process, and resigned from the company a day before the relocation. He intended to confront Kaeon Rhyse personally about the issue, threatening the executive with media exposure if he did not stop the trials, but Dr. Qindor mysteriously disappeared. In truth, Kaeon killed Qindor and reanimated him at the black site (see area E15).

This room functions as a medical lab (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 220) for the purposes of treating conditions and injuries. Among the items strewn across the floor is a smashed framed holographic picture of an elderly human man and a young male verthani, the same image seen in the frame found in area A7.

One of the computer terminals in the clinic is broken and inoperable. The other computer has a cracked screen but can be activated normally. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Computers check can hack this computer and spot two data modules of interest, labeled "Clinical Trials" and "Eclipse Mail."

**Clinical Trials Module:** This module is protected by a firewall and requires an additional DC 27 Computers check to access. It contains captioned recordings of an augmentation procedure referred to as "PS 2.1." The recordings show a human man installing cybernetic implants in the brains of 35 different employee volunteers. The man identifies himself as Dr. Ivri Qindor and comments on patients' vital signs as he verbally describes the operation during each procedure. The module also contains text logs of Dr. Qindor's personal observations of each patient after their surgeries, which describe their deterioration in health and the doctor's misgivings.

**Eclipse Mail Module:** This module can be accessed without further Computers checks and contains Dr. Qindor's private inbox. It contains a full record of the medical director's communications within the company. Many of the messages are mundane invitations to meetings, medical-supply orders, and reports sent to HR about sick or injured employees. A group message in the outbox titled "Employee Volunteers" announces that the recipients of this message have been selected to participate in an employee-exclusive clinical trial of a brain augmentation developed to enhance productivity and improve stress management. The message details compensation for the volunteers, including a sizable credit transfer and free copies of the Penumbra app.

**Treasure:** The cabinets contain medical supplies, including an advanced medkit, two doses of sprayflesh, two tier 2 antitoxins, two tier 2 sedatives, four mk 3 serums of healing, and an x-ray visor.



## A12. RESTROOM

This single-occupant restroom is painted a calming shade of blue and contains a toilet, shower, and sink.

## A13. MASTER COMPUTER ROOM (CR 9)

Within this dimly lit room, a 10-foot tall terminal constructed of dark-gray metal houses a computer with dual monitors, accessible by two identical workstations.

The master computer acts as a server for the building's other computers, and the terminal to access it is built into the eastern wall of this room. This master computer terminal contains modules for the building's lighting circuits, messaging network, and data storage. This tier 5 computer is equipped with the security II upgrade and a rank 3 shock grid countermeasure. Hacking into the terminal requires a PC to succeed at a DC 35 Computers check; a PC who has Kaeon Rhyse's key card gains a +4 circumstance bonus to this check.

The computer holds several files describing the planned installation of signal transmitters around Cuvacara. An image of the same map found in area **A7** contains three sets of coordinates for Eclipse engineers to install this equipment. A document explains that the test conducted at New Elysium is going according to plan. Cuvacara will host stage two of the trials in approximately 1 week, when Eclipse broadcasts Dr. Gragant's signal to all devices that have Penumbra installed. Additional recovered memos reference Eclipse Innovations' new headquarters, a black site on Verces' Darkside, though no coordinates are listed for the facility.

**Creatures:** Three Eclipse employees who succumbed to starvation as a result of their productivity implants were reanimated by the same technology. Now trapped in this room, these cybernetic zombies viciously attack any living creature that enters the area.

### REANIMATED EMPLOYEES (3) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

HP 90 each (see page 10)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** These undead attempt to maintain a bit of distance between themselves and the PCs, firing their corona laser pistols.

**Morale** The reanimated employees fight until they are destroyed.

**Development:** A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Culture check recalls that the Grand Assembly meets in the Assembly of Nations in Cuvacara's East Facet. This group includes representatives from each member of the Ring of Nations and acts as a planetary governing body. The PCs can conclude that the consequences of Penumbra's corrupting signal would likely be planetwide, and from there might spread to other nearby worlds.

## A14. LAB

Each room labeled **A14** is a software-development lab. All computers have been removed from these rooms.

## A15. EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Similar to area **A7**, each room labeled **A15** is a well-furnished office with a polished wood desk and comfortable swivel chair. Each office contains a tier 3 computer completely wiped of data.

## A16. RESTROOMS

Two rows of stalls provide privacy for employees and guests who use this restroom. Each stall contains a toilet and dispenser for hand sanitizer.

## A17. SECURITY CONTROL ROOM

A collage of moving images covers the southern wall of this room—the video feeds from the dozens of cameras positioned throughout the interior and around the exterior of the building. A dark-gray metal workstation and two plastic swivel chairs provide a space for employees to operate the twin computer terminals connected to the security video screen. Plastic storage lockers line the walls to the west.

Cameras throughout the building feed live video data to the viewing screens on the room's south wall. A desk and two computer terminals, for use by security guards, are located beneath the screens.

A PC can hack into either of the tier 4 computers here by succeeding at a DC 29 Computers check. The computers allow a user to control and change the feeds from the security cameras, potentially gathering information about the different rooms in the complex.

**Treasure:** If the PCs search the lockers to the west (Engineering DC 25 to disable the locks), they find a *ghost killer fusion seal* (12th), a jetpack armor upgrade, a *spell ampoule of haste*, and two ultra-capacity batteries.

## PART 2: GATHERING SHADOWS

After the PCs search the abandoned Eclipse Innovations office, they have a few new leads to follow. The coordinates from Kaeon's office and the master computer terminal lead to three locations around Cuvacara where Eclipse engineers installed devices programmed to receive and amplify Dr. Gragant's shadow signal. The PCs need to disable each transmitter, or they run the risk of the signal affecting Cuvacara's residents in a week's time.

Checking the local infosphere, or asking around by succeeding at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information, reveals basic facts about the three areas. The first location is

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the Blue Room (area **B**), an infosphere cafe in the Southeast Facet rumored to be a hacker den. The second location is a black-market cybernetic shop (area **C**) in the city's Northwest Facet run by a ysoki named Scuttle. The third location is the Lizard Lounge (area **D**), a vesk-owned club in the South Facet. The PCs can visit these locations in any order. Before they go, the PCs might want to learn more about these locations.

The PCs can attempt a Culture check to recall knowledge or a Diplomacy check to gather information about the Blue Room and learn the following.

Result	Information
15+	The Blue Room is a small infosphere cafe among dozens of its kind in Cuvacara's Southeast Facet, the city's tech district.
20+	The cafe is open at all hours and is owned by a verthani named Liander Vaz, who frequently picks up shifts when understaffed.
30+	Rumor has it that the hacktivist organization Syzygy either co-owns the cafe or has close ties to Liander Vaz. (See page 13 if the PCs want to try to learn more about Syzygy.)
40+	A female android who hides her face with a hood and mask has been spotted numerous times at the cafe. Locals suspect that she is none other than the notorious hacker Noname.

The PCs can attempt a Culture check to recall knowledge or a Diplomacy check to gather information about Scuttle's shop and learn the following.

Result	Information
15+	This cybernetics and weapons shop is located on the ground level of the Northwest Facet, an impoverished area known as the Shade that is infamous for its criminal activity. The shop's owner, a ysoki mechanic named Scuttle, maintains ties to several local gangs, and the area is not well policed.
20+	Scuttle sells both stolen and legally acquired items at outrageously inflated prices, but he has enough clout within the local crime scene to protect himself from unsatisfied customers. Anyone with proof of allegiance to a Cuvacaran gang may qualify for a "friends and family" discount.
30+	Scuttle, who normally loves technology, has loudly refused to buy the new Penumbra app and has discouraged his close associates and employees from downloading it. He claims to hate social media, but his acquaintances don't recall him being outspoken about this fact in the past.

The PCs can attempt a Culture check to recall knowledge or a Diplomacy check to gather information about the Lizard Lounge and learn the following.

## Result Information

15+	The Lizard Lounge is a popular nightclub located on the 30th floor of the Apex Building in Cuvacara's South Facet. It is a typical bar and dance club that does brisk business around the clock in the restless sunset city. Celebrities frequent the establishment and enjoy its private balcony, which boasts a stunning view of Cuvacara.
20+	The Lizard Lounge's owner, a vesk immigrant known as Boss Zurnala, values brains over brawn and prefers a refined life of luxury to the battlefield. She relies on the stereotypes about her race to gain an edge over those who underestimate her intellect, and employs a staff of vesk bouncers to protect partygoers at her club.
30+	Boss Zurnala's best friend and favorite customer is Silvene, a male damaya lashunta who works as a high-class escort in Cuvacara. Silvene frequents the lounge and brings his wealthy clients there.
40+	Both Boss Zurnala and Silvene are no friends to Eclipse Innovations, for reasons that they refuse to discuss. Zurnala doesn't advertise Penumbra or any other Eclipse technology in her club.

## EVENT 2: SPECIAL DELIVERY (CR 9)

Through his connection to Dr. Gragant, Kaeon Rhyse is aware of the PCs' actions on New Elysium. Though he hopes the shadow corruption overtakes their souls and removes them as a threat, he is smart enough to keep an eye out for them in Cuvacara, where they might come seeking information or revenge. When his informants told him the PCs landed at the spaceport, Kaeon contracted the svartalfar assassin Avigdis and her team of elite corporate assassins to eliminate the PCs before they locate the black site. The first attempt on the PCs' lives comes in the form of a mysterious but ordinary-looking package delivered to wherever they are staying.

Once the PCs have had a chance to rest and recover from the events of Part 1, a package arrives addressed to a randomly determined PC. The package, which is about the size of a shoebox, lists no return address and appears innocuous at first glance.

**Trap:** Avigdis sent this mail bomb to the PCs, hoping to kill one of them remotely. The package contains an explosive primed to detonate when the parcel is opened or tampered with.

## EXPLOSIVE PACKAGE TRAP

CR 9

XP 6,400

**Type** technological; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable** Engineering DC 28 (defuse explosive)

**Trigger** touch (opening the package); **Reset** none

**Effect** explosion (8d12 F); **Reflex** DC 18 half; multiple targets (all targets within 20-ft. radius)





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## B. THE BLUE ROOM

A massive skyscraper towers above a network of bullet train tubes, roads, and darkened lower walkways, its iridescent glass gleaming in the dusky sunlight. A sign posted on the north side of this building reads "The Blue Room Infosphere Cafe," accompanied by a neon arrow that points down a winding back alley to a blue door.

Located in Cuvacara's Southeast Facet, what locals call the tech district, this infosphere cafe is a hangout for students, gamers, and low-level businesspeople who can't afford to own a high-end computer. These customers don't realize that the cafe also serves as a hideout and work space for members of the secretive hacktivist organization Syzygy.

Unless otherwise stated, the ceilings throughout The Blue Room are 15 feet high, and the walls and doors are industrial-grade plastic (hardness 10, HP 80 per 10-foot-by-10-foot section, break DC 27). The map for this area appears above.

By succeeding at a DC 30 Perception check, a PC notices a small discolored area on the exterior door to this building. If this area is exposed to a source of bright light, a series of three tiny interlocking circles appear on the door. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Culture check recognizes the symbol as the logo of Syzygy, a hacktivist organization. The PCs can attempt a DC 25 Culture or Diplomacy check to gather


information about Syzygy to learn that the organization believes all corporations are fundamentally corrupt, that it has no central leadership, and that it operates anonymously. A PC whose result exceeds the DC of this check by 5 or more knows that many of the members tattoo the symbol on their bodies in UV-reactive ink and that one of Syzygy's most famous members, the notorious hacker Noname, sometimes frequents the Blue Room.

## B1. LOBBY

Signs in Common and Vercite are positioned near the door stating, "Access our state of the art computers and discreetly browse the infosphere on our secure servers for the low rate of 2 credits per hour! Complimentary noise-canceling headsets allow you to surf the 'sphere in peace. Ask about our virtual reality headsets and day-pass discount." Another sign proclaims that this establishment is a licensed Penumbra retailer. Beyond the welcome desk, rows of plastic carrels house comfortable swivel chairs facing identical computers. To the south, an outdated-looking service bot dispenses food and drink.

The Blue Room's lobby contains 21 workstations separated by plastic partitions. Each houses a tier 3 computer equipped with a keyboard and headset. Customers purchase passes at





the welcome desk at the front of the room and can select any open computer station.

Twenty customers—mostly humans, shirrens, and verthani—occupy the carrels. The room is oddly quiet for its level of occupancy. All customers are wearing noise-canceling headsets and seem thoroughly absorbed in their tasks. The only individual who appears to notice the PCs' arrival is **Liander Vaz** (N male verthani). He greets the PCs from his position by the signs without looking up, continually tapping at his datapad during the conversation.

Liander's association with Syzygy is limited to providing members with a relatively safe location to work. These hackers identify themselves with a UV-reactive tattoo invisible to the naked eye: a row of three interlinking circles. A handheld scanner allows Liander to see the ink. Liander Vaz grants anyone who displays the tattoo free access to a computer linked to a private, virtually untraceable server. Liander regularly deletes this server's information cache and wipes any computers used by a potential Syzygy member. This server is accessible only to Syzygy members, and other customers are unaware of its existence.

When the PCs approach him, Liander lists the cafe's services and pricing word for word as it appears on the signage around him. If the PCs ask about VR-headset rental, he says that it costs 50 credits for the day and comes with pre-downloaded VR apps and games. If they ask about the discount, Liander explains that they can purchase a 24-hour pass to use a computer for 15 credits.

If the PCs mention Eclipse Innovations, Liander asks if they'd like to purchase the Penumbra app for 20 credits. Since Liander knows nothing about the inner workings of Syzygy, he has no useful information to share with the PCs. Liander won't allow the PCs to remain in his cafe unless they purchase access to a computer or present a Syzygy tattoo. If the PCs refuse to leave or if they threaten him with physical violence, he warns that he intends to call the police. If the PCs do not stand down, he presses a hidden button under his desk, which sends a silent call to a police station a few blocks away. Two Cuvacaran officers of the peace (use the stats for a detective on page 177 of *Starfinder Pact Worlds*) arrive in 5 minutes. While he waits for the authorities, Liander quickly deletes the cache of data from his secure server while giving the PCs a final chance to simply pay the fee to rent a computer or leave.

If the PCs present a Syzygy tattoo, mention Eclipse Innovations, or attempt to interrogate him about any subject related to the corporation, Liander Vaz sends a silent communication to Noname. Once the PCs take a seat at a computer, Noname reveals herself through a computer message and invites the PCs to join her in a private room in the back of the cafe. She includes a temporary seven-digit passcode that PCs can use to access the room.

However, if Liander calls the police, Noname flees the premises, and the PCs do not encounter her in area **B2** or have a chance to learn any information from her.

## B2. PRIVATE ROOM (CR 9)

This tiny room is located behind a locked door (Engineering DC 35 to disable or enter code to bypass) and contains a single desk and computer. At first glance, the custom-built tier 6 computer appears to be older tech than the sleek, new machines in area **B1**, but it is actually a more advanced model.

**Creature:** The PCs encounter Noname in this room. The results of this meeting depend on the decisions the PCs make during their conversation with the android, but it is not intended to be a combat encounter. Should combat break out between the PCs and Noname, see Development on page 16.

Noname is a female android wearing a hood and a mask that covers her face. She carries herself with a cool confidence, and her mask makes her next to impossible to read. Noname is an introvert who prefers interaction with code and machines over real-time conversation with living beings. She knows that revealing her true identity could be harmful to her organization. She places Syzygy's goals above all else, including her own life, and believes that hacking corporate servers and leaking any damning information she finds is beneficial to society.

Noname spends as much time talking with the PCs as they wish, though she doesn't trust the PCs at first (she has a starting attitude of indifferent). She readily admits to her status as a member of Syzygy and explains that she's been keeping close tabs on Eclipse Innovations for the past 3 years. However, she doesn't share the information she has about Eclipse Innovations or Kaeron Rhyse until the PCs change her attitude to friendly or better (requiring a successful DC 28 Diplomacy check). Claiming to be another member of Syzygy requires that a PC present a Syzygy tattoo and succeed at a Bluff check opposed by Noname's Sense Motive check (though she receives a +10 bonus to this check); success grants the PCs a +5 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks to change her attitude. Noname's responses to some of the PCs' likely questions are below.

**Who are you?/Why did you contact us?** "My name is not important. I am one of many. I am part of an organization known as Syzygy. When I overheard you in the lobby, I realized we may share a common goal: exposing the true intentions of Eclipse Innovations."

**What is Syzygy?** "We are legion. We could be anyone; we are everyone, and we are no one. We understand that the true threat to our galaxy lies not in the Swarm or any other outside force, but within our own towns and cities. This threat offers commerce and opportunity with its right hand, but it carries death and destruction in its left. Corporations are far more powerful than individuals, but they can be easily twisted to serve an individual's selfish agenda. Syzygy tirelessly monitors the actions of corporate entities, large and small, and shares their secrets with the public as we see fit. Our goal is to open citizens' eyes and bring criminals hiding behind expensive suits to justice."



**What do you know about Eclipse Innovations?** Nonaime sighs. "Not as much as we should." She turns and boots up her computer, clicking through images and archived news feeds to illustrate her points. "Eclipse Innovations originally developed military tech to use against the Swarm. Thirty years ago, Eclipse purchased asteroid D-334H for unspecified research. A number of employees assigned to the site went missing and are probably dead. Five years ago, Eclipse sold the asteroid through a number of fronts to another company that built the New Elysium resort. Eclipse won the contract to provide the resort with its automated systems—no surprise there. Now they're the hottest corp in the social media game. We're missing a piece of this puzzle."

**What do you know about Kaeon Rhyse?** "Kaeon Rhyse is Eclipse's head of software development. He's gained a disturbing amount of influence in the company lately. Before my surveillance cams went black, I watched him lead meetings. He had Eclipse's board of directors wrapped around his finger. He used to style himself as a philanthropist, but two years ago he stopped donating money and attending charity functions. These executive types always reveal their true colors in the end."

**Do you know where the Eclipse black site is?** "So far we have been unable to trace intercepted comms to the location. We know that the site is underground, somewhere beneath the Klebani Range in Darkside. We haven't been able to pinpoint its exact location yet." If Nonaime is convinced that the PCs plan to take action against Eclipse, she gives the PCs coordinates for a 100-square-mile area of the Klebani Mountain Range, but she explains that the area is too large for a physical search to be fruitful, so they will need to narrow it down further.

**Are you aware of a Penumbra signal transmitter in this location?** "Yes. Tampering with the device or jamming the signal it emits might draw attention to this location, so we've decided to merely observe—for now. We know there are others located throughout the city, so destroying just one is a pointless exercise. Why are you so concerned with these transmitters?" If the PCs tell Nonaime about their experiences with the shadow signal or Eclipse's plan to turn Penumbra into a weapon, the android hacker tells the PCs where the transmitter is and encourages them to take action.

**Will you help us?** Nonaime shakes her head. "I can perhaps help disable the transmitter here, but after that I must

disappear. Syzygy is most effective when it is anonymous. We certainly can't aid you in charging into a well-financed, highly defended corporate facility. Our strengths lie in cyberspace, not material reality."

If the PCs make overt physical threats against Nonaime, she rethinks her decision to entertain this conversation and tries to flee the location. What constitutes a physical threat is ultimately up to you, but actions such as brandishing a weapon or stating violent intentions are prime examples. If any PC outright attacks her, Nonaime uses her *spell ampoule of invisibility* and escapes.

## NONAME

CR 9

XP 6,400

Female android mechanic

CN Medium humanoid (android)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +17

### DEFENSE

HP 135

**EAC** 22; **KAC** 23

**Fort** +10; **Ref** +10; **Will** +10; +2 vs. disease, mind-affecting effects, poison, and sleep

**Resistances** electricity 10

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** incapacitator +17

(3d4+9 B nonlethal; critical staggered [DC 18])

**Ranged** aphelion laser pistol +19  
(3d4+9 F; critical burn 1d4)

**Offensive Abilities** override (DC 18)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If combat seems unavoidable, Nonaime uses her *spell ampoule of invisibility*.

**During Combat** If cornered, Nonaime shoots with her laser pistol in self-defense and looks to escape.

**Morale** Nonaime is not a skilled fighter. If she doesn't escape, she surrenders once reduced to 50 Hit Points or fewer.

### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +17, Computers +22, Culture +22, Engineering +22, Stealth +17

**Languages** Castrovelian, Common, Shirren, Vercite

**Other Abilities** artificial intelligence (drone named Ghost), constructed, expert rig (datajack), flat affect, mechanic tricks (ghost intrusion, hack directory), miracle worker (2/day), remote hack (DC 18), upgrade slot (mk 2 electrostatic field)



NONAME

## SIGNAL OF SCREAMS

### THE PENUMBRA PROTOCOL

#### PART 1: IN PURSUIT OF ECLIPSE

#### PART 2: GATHERING SHADOWS

#### PART 3: THE BLACK SITE

#### CUVACARA

#### FIENDS OF SHADOW

#### ALIEN ARCHIVES

#### CODEX OF WORLDS



**Gear** gold AbadarCorp travel suit, aphelion laser pistol with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges), incapacitator with 1 battery (20 charges), *spell ampoule of invisibility*, engineering kit, hacking kit; **Augmentations** high-density datajack

## GHOST

CR —

N Small construct (technological)

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +14

## DEFENSE

HP 100

**EAC** 19; **KAC** 20

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

**Defensive Abilities** construct immunities

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

**Ranged** integrated corona laser pistol +16  
(2d4+7 F; critical burn 1d4)

## STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +19, Computers +19, Engineering +14, Stealth +19

**Languages** Castrovelian, Common, Shirren, Vercite (can't speak)

**Other Abilities** mods (hardened AI, invisibility field, reactive camouflage), reduced actions (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 138), unliving

**Gear** corona laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each)

**Development:** If the PCs kill Noname without learning any information from her, they find that her computer is wiped clean of data. Liander can view the exchange from his desk in the lobby and calls the police if he witnesses the PCs physically harm Noname (see area **B1** for how such an event might play out).

**Story Award:** If the PCs learn the general coordinates for the Eclipse Innovations black site from Noname, award them 6,400 XP. If the PCs instead fight and defeat her in combat, award the PCs XP as normal, but they gain no additional story award for learning about the black site.

## B3. DATA CENTER

This cramped, narrow space is lined with humming, rectangular machines

that stretch all the way to the ceiling. Illuminated floor tiles suffuse the room with a blue light, and flickering multicolored bars are displayed on the machines, which are protected by glass coverings.

This room houses the secure computer servers used by the infosphere cafe. The ceiling is 10 feet high, and the walls and servers are constructed of nanocarbon (hardness 35, HP 120 per 10-foot-by-10-foot section). The area is dimly lit by the luminescent floor tiles.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check spots a tiny black box attached to the base of one of the servers by a tangle of yellow wires; a friendly Noname can also point out the device to the PCs. This is the Penumbra signal transmitter installed by Eclipse engineers several days ago. The transmitter is constructed of nanocarbon (hardness 35,

HP 60) and can be smashed,

or a PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Engineering check

can disable it. Alternatively, a PC can potentially track the source of its signal by succeeding

at a DC 32 Computers check to hack the transmitter. The PCs need to

successfully hack the two other transmitters in areas **C** and **D**

to triangulate the signal's exact source and find the location of

Eclipse's black site. If Noname's

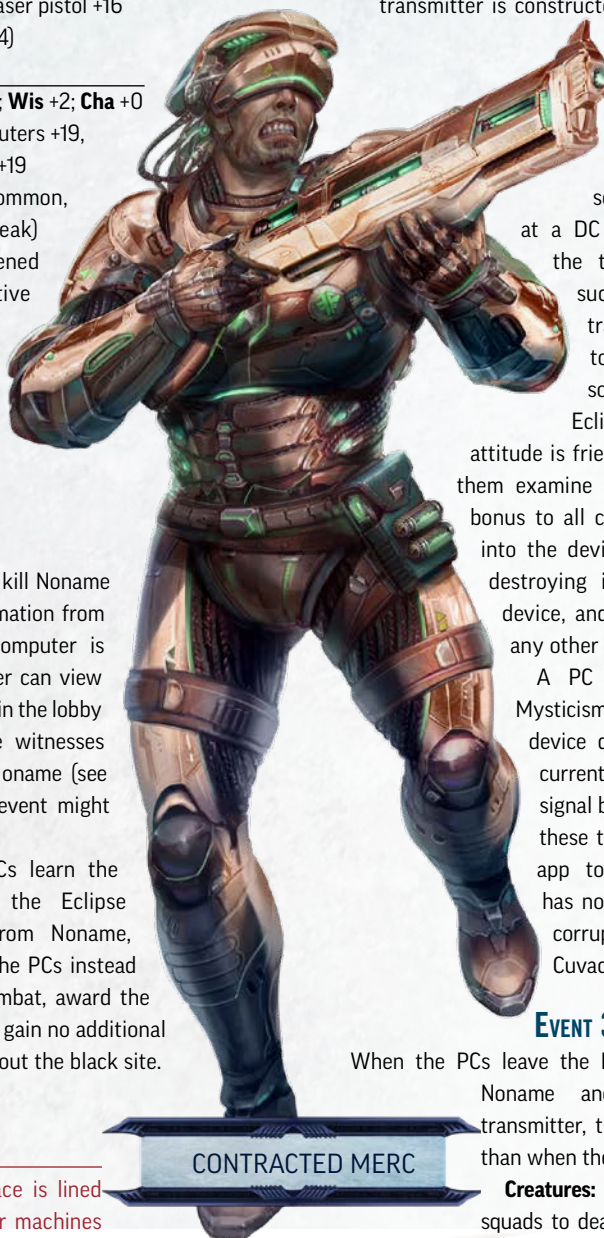
attitude is friendly or better, the hacker helps them examine the transmitter, granting a +5 bonus to all checks made to disable or hack into the device. She insists on disabling or destroying it afterward if they hack the device, and she asks the PCs to seek out any other transmitters.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Mysticism check while examining the device determines that the signal it is currently emitting is different from the signal broadcast on New Elysium. While these transmitters allow the Penumbra app to function, Eclipse Innovations has not yet begun transmission of the corrupting signal they plan to test on Cuvacra's citizens.

## EVENT 3: ALLEY AMBUSH (CR 10)

When the PCs leave the Blue Room after speaking with Noname and hopefully destroying the transmitter, they find the alley much quieter than when they first arrived at the building.

**Creatures:** Avigdis sent many corporate hit squads to deal with the PCs. One such squad



CONTRACTED MERC



tracked them to the infosphere cafe and then waited outside to attack the PCs as they exit. Posing as local police, these mercenaries cleared the area of witnesses before setting up their ambush. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Perception check notices that something is unusual before the mercs strike, and that character can act during the surprise round.

### CONTRACTED MERCS (4)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Male and female human soldier

CN Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +9; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +13

#### DEFENSE

HP 90 EACH

**EAC** 18; **KAC** 21

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

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 25 ft.

**Melee** tactical skyfire sword +13 (2d4+9 F; critical burn 1d8)

**Ranged** advanced rail gun +16 (1d10+6 P) or

incendiary grenade II (explode [20 ft., 2d6 F, 1d6 burn, DC 16])

**Offensive Abilities** fighting styles (hit-and-run), nimble fusillade, opening volley

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The contracted mercs throw their incendiary grenades at the PCs and then move into melee combat. They use Quick Draw to switch between weapons seamlessly, while staying mobile with nimble fusillade.

**Morale** The contracted mercs fight to the death unless given orders to retreat.

#### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Athletics +13, Intimidate +13, Stealth +18

**Feats** Quick Draw

**Languages** Common, Vercite

**Gear** vesk overplate I, advanced rail gun<sup>AR</sup> with 30 longarm rounds, tactical skyfire sword with 2 batteries (20 charges each), incendiary grenades II (2), credstick (150 credits);

**Augmentations** wide-spectrum ocular implants

## C. SCUTTLE'S CYBERNETICS SHOP

The golden glow of evening light fades to near blackness within this maze of murky, shadowed streets illuminated only by blazing neon signs. The few pedestrians in the area move quickly, heads down and clutching their valuables, as they speed past stone walls crowned by razor wire and adorned with colorful graffiti.

The squalid buildings here are characterized by boarded windows and metal doors riddled with bullet holes. Located near a two-way intersection, one such entrance is adjacent to a large, intact storefront window displaying a variety

of tech from weapons to cybernetic augmentations. Neon block letters above the door simply state, "Open."

Beneath the elite gated communities of the Northwest Facet, many unscrupulous businesspeople set up shop to cater to ultra-rich high-rise residents and Shade dwellers alike. While wealthy Cuvacarans concentrate their private security around the lifts that lead to their homes, criminals thrive in the shadows.

This particular unmarked building is a cybernetics shop well known for dealing stolen tech. It is owned and operated by a hardened ysoki criminal named Scuttle.

Unless otherwise stated, the ceilings in the shop are 10 feet high, the walls and floors are constructed of concrete (hardness 15, HP 540 per 10-foot-by-10-foot section, break DC 45), and the doors are steel (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28). The doors are unlocked during business hours. A map of this area appears on page 13.

### C1. MEAN STREETS OF CUVACARA (CR 10)

Two ground-level streets intersect outside Scuttle's shop. Nearby buildings and trash compactors provide plenty of cover, and the area currently does not have much foot traffic.

**Creatures:** Before the PCs enter the shop, a squad of corporate assassins sent by Avigdis attacks them. A PC who succeeds at a DC 31 Perception check realizes the party is being followed and can act during the surprise round.

### CONTRACTED MERCS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

HP 90 each (see above)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The contracted mercs open fire with their rifles and then close into melee combat, being careful not to provide cover for the PCs against the attacks of the hired killers. They also try to keep the PCs away from the sniping positions the hired killers have taken.

**Morale** The contracted mercs fight to the death unless given orders to retreat.

### HIRED KILLERS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Female verthani operative (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 118)

CN Medium humanoid (verthani)

**Init** +7; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +14

#### DEFENSE

HP 80 EACH

**EAC** 18; **KAC** 19

**Fort** +5; **Ref** +8; **Will** +9

**Defensive Abilities** evasion

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** tactical knife +12 (2d4+9 S)

**Ranged** corona laser pistol +14 (2d4+6 F; critical burn 1d4) or entangling tactical shirren-eye rifle +14 (1d10+6 P)

## SIGNAL OF SCREAMS

### THE PENUMBRA PROTOCOL

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### CODEx OF WORLDS



**Offensive Abilities** debilitating trick, trick attack +3d8

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The hired killers activate their cloaking fields to observe the PCs and get into sniping positions.

**During Combat** Each hired killer attempts a debilitating trick attack and activates the *entangling* fusion of her sniper rifle with her first shot. If her sniping position is compromised, she attacks with her corona laser pistol.

**Morale** If reduced to 15 HP or fewer, a hired killer attempts to flee the area. She waits until she's a safe distance away and then uses her comm unit to tell her allies to retreat.

### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +19, Athletics +14, Bluff +19, Sleight of Hand +14, Stealth +19

**Languages** Common, Vercite

**Other Abilities** easily augmented, operative exploits (cloaking field, debilitating sniper), skin mimic, specialization (ghost)

**Gear** freebooter armor II, *entangling tactical shirren-eye* rifle with 25 longarm rounds, corona laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), *mk 2 serum of healing*, medpatches (2), credstick (400 credits)

**Development:** The PCs can attempt Intimidate checks to interrogate any captured foes. These foes also respond to a bribe of at least 1,500 credits, sharing what they know with the PCs. They confirm that they work for Eclipse Innovations and were hired by Kaeon Rhyse to track down the PCs and stop them from meddling in company affairs. They have no information about the black site or Dr. Gragant's shadow signal, and they respond to interrogation about those subjects by stating, "That's above my pay grade." The hired killers also reveal that they are part of a larger team commanded by a svartalfar named Avigdis, an accomplished sniper.

## C2. STOREFRONT (CR 9)

A long, four-foot-tall steel-and-glass display case separates a small area of the room to the east from the main shop. Analog and powered weapons hang from hooks on the wall behind the display cases. The cases also contain cybernetic devices, comm units, and other technological items labeled with significantly marked-up price tags. To the west, a repurposed storage crate serves as a table, flanked by two dilapidated velvet armchairs. The table and chairs are positioned in front of a metal rack containing antiquated print books and magazines that appear to be falling apart.

Scuttle's shop carries armor, armor upgrades, cybernetic augmentations, weapons, and weapon fusions up to 13th level at double their normal price. A PC can attempt a DC 35 Diplomacy check to haggle or a DC 35 Bluff or Disguise check to fake an affiliation with a local gang to receive a discount, reducing

these items to normal cost. A built-in hinged metal door to the northeast provides access to the area behind the display cases.

**Creatures:** A white ysoki with red eyes stands on a stepladder behind the display cases, and two vesk sit in the chairs to the south browsing antique print magazines. The ysoki, Scuttle, greets the PCs as they enter, and the vesk snap to attention.

Scuttle's ties to the area's gangs and his shady deals with local corporations make him difficult to negotiate with, but anyone can be bought for the right price. The results of this encounter depend on the PCs' decisions during their conversation with the ysoki.

Scuttle is surprisingly cheerful and friendly, though his jovial banter disguises a bitter, nihilistic worldview that regards everything—including living beings—as a commodity. Scuttle sees the PCs as potential customers and calculates how best to cheat them out of their money. Once he realizes what the PCs are really after, Scuttle carefully analyzes their actions to determine how much they already know about Eclipse.

Scuttle is aware of the true purpose of the Penumbra app and signal transmitters. He's convinced that allowing the coming events to unfold will help him personally. He's already used some of his substantial payout from the corporation to purchase a private bunker. He plans to lay low there until the chaos dies down and then emerge to profit from the disaster. Initially Scuttle lies to the PCs and claims to know nothing about Eclipse Innovations. He answers their questions only after the PCs succeed at a DC 28 Intimidate check, confront him with physical evidence from the transmitter in area C3, or defeat his bodyguards. His responses to some of the PCs' likely questions are as follows.

**What do you know about Eclipse Innovations?** "It's, uh, a business associate of mine. From way back. Eclipse does a shipment, I show up on the delivery route, some credits change hands... I get fresh tech, and Eclipse cashes in on theft insurance. Ya know, a typical business relationship."

**Tell us more.** Scuttle looks around nervously and presses a button on his wrist console. Heavy metal shutters lower and cover the shop window. "Look, nobody likes a snitch. If I'm gonna stick my neck out, you gotta give me something to work with." At this point, the PCs must succeed at another DC 28 Intimidate check or offer a bribe of at least 1,500 credits to keep Scuttle talking. "Eclipse is a washed-up military contractor from back in the Swarm days. You pups look too young to remember it, but it was bad. Eclipse started poking their noses into things best left alone, wanting super soldiers that couldn't feel pain. Some doctor was in charge of it. I don't know her name. Then one day the lab just poofed. She ghosted 'em. Present day, Eclipse is installing these transmitters, right? But the transmitters ain't just for this app. They make people hurt themselves. Kill each other. If you ask me, something happened in that lab that royally screwed Eclipse for good."

**Does the name Kaeon Rhyse ring a bell?** "Yeah. He says he's in charge, but I figure someone else is pulling the strings."



**Where is the Eclipse black site?** "Somewhere dark. And cold. Pretty sure it's underground. I didn't get a good look around. I went to make a pickup and they had me blindfolded in a cargo hold the whole way there and back."

**So you've been there?** Scuttle looks ill. "I been working the Shade all my life, but nothing ever spooked me as bad as that lab. They had bodies there, gutted and strung up with wires, but they weren't dead..." His voice trails off and he shudders. "But it's none of my business."

**You aren't worried about the signal affecting you?** "Nah, I don't vibe with that social media nonsense. Bunch of hyper-connected pups yapping about their feelings and posting pics of their bowel movements. I'll lay low for a while with my buddies," he pats the gun on his hip, "And wait till it's all over. Disaster is an extremely profitable business, ya know?"

**We'll report you to the authorities.** Scuttle lets out a high-pitched giggle. "Good luck with that! I got so many palms greased, I could open a massage parlor. Do what ya need to do, buddy, but no cops are gonna take Scuttle down."

If the PCs attempt to harm Scuttle, he orders his bodyguards to attack. If the PCs successfully bribe or intimidate Scuttle, he allows them to access area **C3**.

## SCUTTLE

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male ysoki envoy

CN Small humanoid (ysoki)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +14

**DEFENSE** HP 100 RP 4

**EAC** 19; **KAC** 20

**Fort** +6; **Ref** +8; **Will** +10

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** tactical knife +13 (2d4+8 S)

**Ranged** red star plasma pistol +15 (1d8+7 E & F; critical burn 1d8)

## TACTICS

**Before Combat** If the PCs act hostile toward him, Scuttle orders his bodyguards to attack.

**During Combat** Scuttle uses improved get 'em to direct his hired muscle to attack the strongest-looking PC. If a PC levels a dangerous-looking attack against one of his bodyguards, he warns them with watch out.

**Morale** If his vesk guards are reduced to 0 HP, or if he is reduced to 40 HP or fewer, Scuttle drops his weapon and begs for mercy.

## STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Bluff +19, Computers +14, Culture +14, Diplomacy +19, Engineering +19, Sense Motive +19, Stealth +19, Survival +14

**Languages** Common, Vercite, Vesk, Ysoki

**Other Abilities** cheek pouches, envoy inspirations (get 'em, improved get 'em, watch out), moxie

**Gear** estex suit III, tactical knife, red star plasma pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), credstick (300 credits);

**Augmentations** storage prosthetic limb (leg)

## VESK GUARDS (2)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Female vesk soldier

N Medium humanoid (vesk)

**Init** +3; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +11

**DEFENSE** HP 70 EACH

**EAC** 18; **KAC** 20

**Fort** +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +6; +2 vs. fear

**Defensive Abilities** guard's protection; **DR** 5/—

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 25 ft.

**Melee** tactical doshko +14 (1d12+10 P) or unarmed strike +14 (1d3+10 S)

**Ranged** thunderstrike sonic rifle +11 (1d10+5 So; critical deafen [DC 13])

**Offensive Abilities** fighting styles (guard), natural weapons



SCUTTLE

## SIGNAL OF SCREAMS

### THE PENUMBRA PROTOCOL

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### CUVACARA

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## TACTICS

**During Combat** The vesk attack with their doshkos and try to get between Scuttle and the PCs, though one tries to stay adjacent to the ysoki. If the PCs attack Scuttle, the vesk adjacent to him uses her Bodyguard feat and then uses her guard's protection ability to take half of the damage if the attack is successful.

**Morale** The vesk enjoy combat and fight to the death to protect their boss, unless ordered to stand down.

## STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Athletics +16, Intimidate +11, Sense Motive +11

**Feats** Bodyguard

**Languages** Common, Vesk

**Other Abilities** armor savant, armor training

**Gear** lashunta ringwear II, tactical doshko, thunderstrike sonic rifle with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges)

**Story Award:** If the PCs talk with Scuttle and learn what he knows about Eclipse Innovations, award them 6,400 XP. If the PCs instead fight and defeat him and his bodyguards in combat, award the PCs XP as normal, but they gain no additional story award for learning what Scuttle knows about the corporation.

## C3. BACK ROOM

This tiny, cluttered room is a testament to Scuttle's hoarding tendencies. Spare parts litter the floor, and crates of new shipments intermixed with boxes of unsalvageable junk are piled nearly to the ceiling. The Penumra transmitter sticks out as a piece of shiny new technology amid the disorder. See area **B3** for details about the transmitter, its properties, and how to disable it.

A door to the north leads to a small scrap heap in a yard outside the shop. The squalid area is fenced in by a 10-foot-tall chain link fence (Athletics DC 25 to climb).

**Treasure:** If a PC takes 10 minutes to search the scrap heap and succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check, he finds a motion detector and a sonic dampener armor upgrade that are both still in working condition. Scuttle won't notice they are missing.

**Development:** After the PCs disable or destroy the transmitter, they can choose to exit through the back door to the scrap heap or return to area **C2**. If they exit through the storefront, Scuttle greets them with an accusatory "What did you do?" When he realizes that the PCs disabled or destroyed the signal transmitter, he buries his face in his hands and lets out a frustrated sigh. "Well, looks like I'm going underground sooner than I thought. Now get out!"

As the PCs exit through the front door, the green "Open" sign blinks off, replaced by the word "Closed" in red neon.

## D. THE LIZARD LOUNGE

The Lizard Lounge is located on the thirtieth story of the Apex Building, a skyscraper in Cuvacara's South Facet. This flashy nightclub, owned by an enterprising vesk immigrant,

is a local hotspot popular with partygoers on both sides of the law. The lounge is composed of a large central area with a dance floor and bars, an employees-only area, and a private balcony. Unless otherwise stated, the ceilings throughout area D are 20 feet high and the area is dimly lit by flashing, multicolored lights installed in the ceilings and walls. The walls are transparent aluminum (hardness 10, HP 60 per 10-foot-by-10-foot section) and the wooden doors (hardness 5, HP 15) are left unlocked during business hours. Security cameras built into the ceiling of every room in the club feed to Boss Zurnala's office in area **D2**. A map of this area appears on page 13.

## D1. CLUB FLOOR

Two circular bars made from a hard, green acrylic stand on either side of an open dance floor. A bass rhythm thrums as a sea of patrons moves to the beat. To the east and west of the dance floor, blue leather couches positioned around tables made of the same blue acrylic offer more private places to relax, though the music's volume makes conversation difficult.

The Lizard Lounge boasts a polished ceramic dance floor with bars to the north and southeast. Couches surround tables to the east and west, and a green velvet curtain separates the private balcony (area **D3**) from the main lobby. Behind the southeastern bar, a plastic swinging door leads to the employees-only area.

## D2. EMPLOYEES-ONLY AREA

The kitchen and storage area are separated from the rest of the club by a plastic swinging door. Boss Zurnala's office is located to the east. Eclipse Innovations engineers recently set up a signal transmitter in the storage area under the guise of routine maintenance. Zurnala has no idea that the signal transmitter is present in her club or what it's capable of; she allows the PCs to search the area if they made a good impression on Silvene (see page 21). See area **B3** for details about the transmitter, its properties, and how to disable it.

## D3. BALCONY

The PCs are refused entry to the balcony by a pair of burly vesk bouncers until **Event 4**.

This circular private balcony overlooks the glittering city streets hundreds of feet below. Exotic plants with pointed purple leaves and bloodred flowers grow from planters near the edge of the balcony, wrapping over the rails and trailing down into open air. Two blue leather divans face a glass table set with five crystal glasses and a decanter of ruby-red liquid.

Separated from the rest of the club by a velvet curtain, this balcony overlooks the streets 600 feet below. Other balconies jut out from the building above and below this area at 20-foot



intervals. A creature can jump or climb over the balcony's 5-foot-tall, 6-inch-wide metal rail with a successful DC 20 Athletics check or DC 15 Acrobatics check. Climbing the building's transparent aluminum walls is possible with a successful DC 25 Athletics check.

### SPEAKING WITH SILVENE

The Lizard Lounge is open all day and is usually busy. Today is no exception, and patrons of all kinds are tearing up the dance floor or enjoying bottle service in the booths. If the PCs go poking around the club or start asking questions, a vesk bouncer approaches the group and barks in a gruff voice, "Come with me. Boss wants to see you." If the PCs follow, she leads them behind the bar and through a swinging door marked "Employees Only." Beyond the kitchen and storage area, **Boss Zurnala** (N female vesk) sits behind her desk, puffing on an electronic cigar and playing solitaire on a small holoscreen.

She introduces herself cordially enough, but her emotions are hard to read. For one, her eyes rarely leave the virtual card game. She asks the PCs what they think of her club and wants to know if they tried tonight's drink special. Broaching the subject of Eclipse Innovations, signal transmitters, or Kaeon Rhyse outright seems to be a dead end, as every question is met with a shrug or a grunt. PCs who try to intimidate or threaten Zurnala are met with laughter from the vesk as she gently reprimands them to "behave like civilized beings." If the PCs want to loosen Zurnala's lips, they must offer a bribe of at least 500 credits, succeed at a DC 32 Diplomacy check, or mention her friend Silvene by name. Once the PCs manage this, Zurnala's demeanor changes.

Zurnala swipes her hand to clear the screen in front of her, and the cards vanish in an instant. She regards her guests for the first time. "You ask too many questions," she says. "I like that. Curiosity is a sign of intelligence, and that's what separates us from the animals. What do you need to know?" Zurnala folds her claws on the desk in front of her and watches her visitors with a look of genuine curiosity.

If the PCs then ask about Kaeon Rhyse or Eclipse Innovations, Zurnala directs the PCs to one of her regular customers named Silvene, who's waiting at the southeastern bar. Once escorted out of the office, the PCs can talk to Silvene.

**Silvene** (NG male damaya lashunta) is a local escort who caters to wealthy clientele. He's known for his discretion and demure manner as well as his physical grace. Though Silvene doesn't have much of a formal education, his witty banter charms his clients and his hard-won street smarts keep him alive. Silvene is wary of the PCs at first, but as long as the PCs succeed at a DC 29 Diplomacy check, they are able to put him

at ease. Some responses to questions the PCs may have for Silvene are given below.

**What do you know about Eclipse Innovations?** "Oooh, didn't they make Penumbra? It looks great, but I think I'll wait till the hype dies down to buy it." The PCs can attempt a DC 29 Sense Motive check to realize that Silvene is lying.

**Do you know where the Eclipse black site is?** Silvene blinks, genuinely confused. "What are you talking about? Is that a new club?"

**If you don't know anything, why did Zurnala say we should talk to you?** Silvene sighs. "It must be about my former client."

**Who was your client?/What do you know about Kaeon Rhyse?** "Kaeon Rhyse." Silvene looks away, and it's obvious he's seeing something other than the club around him. "Mr. Rhyse did hire me awhile back, but I usually don't discuss clients." If the PCs assure Silvene of their good intentions, he recounts his story. "I'm telling you this only because I need to get it off my chest. Six months ago, I got

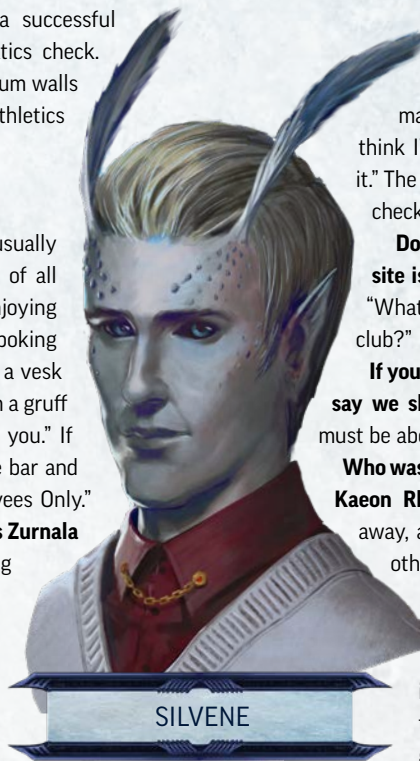
a call from my agent. She said she had a special assignment for me. I couldn't believe someone like Kaeon Rhyse would hire me! He's smart, beautiful—not to mention rich—and all the feeds say he's such a lovely person. He spends half his money on charity, which is so refreshing. He took me to a ritzy hotel in the Gloaming. Everything was wonderful till we got back to the room. He took off his shirt, and there were marks all over his skin. Scars, like someone had cut him up bad. I tried to play it cool, but he caught me staring. He said that's why he hired me. He wanted me to—hurt him." Silvene's voice falters. "Everyone has their kinks, but this was beyond. When he brought out the knives, I told him our time was up."

**What did he do?** "He seemed sad. There were actual tears in his eyes. He told me one day I would be enlightened like him. I went to the powder room to compose myself, but I could hear him talking to someone. I thought maybe it was a comm, but when I came out, he was just staring at the mirror. And it wasn't his reflection looking back. I saw a dark, disfigured woman, scarred like him, with hands like claws. Looking at her made me feel cold all over. He called her Dr. Gragant. He said, 'Soon our worlds will meet, and everyone will know the true joy of pain.' I ran as fast as I could out of that room. I couldn't work for a week after that."

**Story Award:** If the PCs talk with Silvene and learn what he knows about Kaeon Rhyse, award them 3,200 XP.

### EVENT 4: A PRIVATE PARTY (CR 11)

After the PCs speak with Silvene, Boss Zurnala appears at the bar. She puts a reassuring hand on Silvene's shoulder to



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comfort him and informs the PCs that another customer may have a lead for them: the celebrity Neva Kavetsaka is waiting to speak with them on the private balcony. If the PCs have failed their Diplomacy checks with Silvene and Zurnala, a bartender relays the tip about Neva to the PCs before they leave the bar. They can now enter area **D3**.

The PCs can attempt a DC 18 Culture check to know that Neva Kavetsaka is a verthani singer and celebrity in her twenties. Her latest album, *Sensation*, is a well-received blend of synthpop and shumka beats, and her music vids have inspired several new fashion and makeup trends. If a PC's check result exceeds the DC by 10 or more, they know that a month ago, Neva alleged she was the victim of identity theft, but there is no solid evidence of the supposed crime.



NEVA KAVETSAKA

**Creatures:** When the PCs step onto the balcony, they are greeted by someone who appears to be Neva Kavetsaka, a local icon who's achieved fame from her modeling and music career. However, the PCs are actually meeting with a criminal named Alyxi Troja, an assassin and master of disguise hired by Eclipse Innovations to kill them. Alyxi is the one who stole Neva's identity. Earlier, Alyxi used her master of disguise ability to appear as Neva to enter the club and secure the private balcony. She waited there for the PCs to arrive and then used master of disguise again after inviting them to join her. She then poured herself a glass of wine and dosed the remaining decanter with black lotus extract (*Starfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 419).

Alyxi asks the two bouncers to give her some privacy with her guests and then offers the PCs the poisoned wine. Though her disguise lasts for only 10 minutes, Alyxi toys with the PCs a little. She uses Bluff to flaunt her assumed identity and to keep them talking—and hopefully drinking—without giving them any information of use. As the conversation progresses, a PC can attempt a DC 28 Perception check to notice that Alyxi doesn't help herself to a second glass of wine. A PC must succeed at a DC 19 Will saving throw before he can attempt to pierce her disguise with a successful DC 35 Perception check.

Alyxi waits until the PCs begin to feel the poison's effects or until her cover is blown to attack, but not more than 5 minutes. She calls for help from the vesk guards, who rush to her aid as soon as combat begins.

## VESK GUARDS (2)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

HP 70 each (see page 19)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The vesk step onto the balcony with their rifles drawn and order the PCs to "step away from Ms. Kavetsaka." If the PCs don't comply, both guards open fire, shouting for the verthani singer to get behind them. They then try to protect Alyxi as best they can.

**Morale** The guards believe they are protecting Neva Kavetsaka and fight to the death to keep her safe. If the PCs spend a standard action to attempt a Diplomacy check to change the guards' attitudes or call out Alyxi's disguise, each vesk receives a +2 bonus to her Will saving throw and a +10 bonus to her Perception check to pierce the impostor's disguise. If the vesk realize Alyxi isn't actually the singer, they help the PCs apprehend her.

## ALYXI TROJA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female human operative

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +11; Perception +20

### DEFENSE

EAC 23; KAC 24

Fort +9; Ref +12; Will +13

**Defensive Abilities** improved evasion, uncanny agility

HP 150



## OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

**Melee** ultrathin switchblade +18 (2d4+11 S)

**Ranged** *called elite semi-auto pistol* +20 (3d6+10 P)

**Offensive Abilities** debilitating trick, trick attack +5d8, triple attack

## TACTICS

**During Combat** When the vesk guards arrive on the scene, Alyxi draws her ultrathin switchblade from her quickdraw hideaway limb and makes a triple attack against the PC closest to her. She uses trick attack in subsequent rounds while getting closer to the vesk.

**Morale** If reduced to 30 HP or fewer, Alyxi moves to the edge of the balcony to climb down the side of the building onto another balcony to escape.

## STATISTICS

**Str** +1; **Dex** +8; **Con** +2; **Int** +3; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +5

**Skills** Athletics +20, Acrobatics +25, Bluff +25, Culture +20, Disguise +25, Sleight of Hand +20

**Feats** Mobility, Spring Attack

**Languages** Common, Vercite

**Other Abilities** operative exploits (master of disguise [3/day, 100 min. or 10 min., DC 19]), specialization (spy)

**Gear** gold AbadarCorp travel suit, *called elite semi-auto pistol* with 30 small arm rounds, ultrathin switchblade<sup>AR</sup>, *mk 3 serums of healing* (2), *ring of whispers*, formal clothing, credstick (400 credits); **Augmentations** quickdraw hideaway limb (arm)

**Development:** Boss Zurnala watches the fight through her security cameras and arrives at the end of combat to investigate after calling the police. If she already trusts the PCs, she suggests they deliver Alyxi to the authorities. Two Cuvacaran officers of the peace arrive in 1 minute. If the PCs already improved Zurnala's attitude toward them or exposed Alyxi's identity to the bouncers, the club owner supports their claims to be fighting only in self-defense. If Zurnala doesn't trust the PCs, she reports that they attacked a celebrity in her club, and the two officers (use the stats for a detective on page 177 of *Starfinder Pact Worlds*) attempt to take the PCs into custody. PCs taken into custody must spend the night in a city holding cell and pay 2,000 credits each in bail. If the PCs evade police, they become wanted criminals in Cuvacara and have a 30% chance of facing an additional pair of Cuvacaran officers when venturing out in public.

If the PCs try to interrogate Alyxi, she refuses to answer any questions and she activates her final use of master of disguise for the day in a last-ditch effort to fool the authorities. If the PCs turn her into the authorities and can prove she's a fraud, they collect a bounty of 8,000 credits for the wanted criminal.

## EVENT 5: BECOMING THE HUNTED (CR 11)

After the PCs investigate the three signal transmitter sites, Avigdis realizes her assassins have failed, and she takes matters

## GOING TO THE AUTHORITIES

At some point, the PCs might decide to take their evidence about Eclipse Innovations to Cuvacaran authorities. Checking the local infosphere points them to the nearest police station, where a male verthani receptionist instructs the PCs to fill out a lengthy electronic form about the nature of the reported incident. An officer speaks with the PCs personally only if they report a violent crime or have a suspect in custody. She listens to their claims with forced patience, and unless the PCs have evidence, she informs them that there's nothing she can do at this time. Turning in an alleged corporate assassin or presenting the officer with video recordings of the events leads her to assure the PCs she will "investigate the matter as soon as resources become available." Either way, the PCs should feel like they have to act for themselves.

into her own hands. Wait until the PCs finish their investigation to introduce this final obstacle between them and a head-on confrontation with Eclipse Innovations. At some point, either while the PCs are shopping for items or when they are on their way back to the spaceport, Avigdis makes her move. As they walk down the crowded street, each PC should attempt a DC 29 Perception check to notice they're being followed.

**Creatures:** Transported from her home on the Shadow Plane by Kaeon Rhyse, Avigdis vigilantly tracked the PCs as they searched Cuvacara for clues about the Eclipse black site. Avigdis has positioned herself on top of a building overlooking the street where two drow mercenaries plan to ambush the PCs. A PC can spot Avigdis's position on the roof by succeeding at a DC 40 Perception check.

## DROW SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

Male drow soldier (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 42)

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +19

## DEFENSE

HP 105 EACH

**EAC** 19; **KAC** 22

**Fort** +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +8; +2 vs. enchantment

**Immunities** sleep; **SR** 18

**Weaknesses** light blindness

## OFFENSE

Speed 35 ft.

**Melee** LFD pulse gauntlet +17 (2d6+13 So; critical knockdown)

**Ranged** thunderstrike streetsweeper +14 (1d10+7 So; critical knockdown) or

incendiary grenade II +14 (explode [10 ft., 2d6 F, 1d6 burn, DC 17])

**Offensive Abilities** charge attack, create darkness, fighting styles (blitz)

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### Drow Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)

At will—dancing lights, detect magic

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The drow attempt to sneak up on their targets.

**During Combat** The drow wait for Avigdis to take her first shot, then try to distract the PCs from Avigdis's position by throwing grenades and charging into melee combat.

**Morale** The drow are conditioned to obey orders, and they fight to the death for Avigdis.

### STATISTICS

Str +4; Dex +5; Con +2; Int +1; Wis +1; Cha +1

**Skills** Acrobatics +14, Athletics +14, Stealth +19

**Languages** Common, Drow

**Gear** golemforged plating III, LFD pulse gauntlet with 2 batteries (20 charges each), thunderstrike streetsweeper with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges), incendiary grenades II (2), credstick (300 credits)

## AVIGDIS

CR 9

XP 6,400

Female svartalfar operative

HP 135 (see page 60)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Avigdis sets herself up in a tactical sniping position. She then activates her cloaking field ability to gain a bonus to Stealth checks made against the PCs.

**During Combat** Avigdis takes advantage of her hidden position to snipe the PCs from a distance while her drow allies keep them busy. If the PCs reach her position, Avigdis switches to her laser pistol and uses trick attack. If cornered, Avigdis throws a flash grenade and uses her spell strike ability while attacking with her knife.

**Morale** Avigdis casts *greater invisibility* on herself and flees when reduced to 20 Hit Points or fewer.

**Development:** Any captured drow refuses to speak and knows little about Eclipse or its plans.

If the PCs manage to capture Avigdis, a PC who succeeds at

a DC 32 Intimidate check convinces her to reveal what she knows about Eclipse Innovations. Avigdis has no desire to die for her employer. She believes she can escape and find other work on the Material Plane, leaving Kaeon to rely on other assassins to finish the job. If the PCs fail to intimidate Avigdis, she offers information in exchange for her freedom. Below are Avigdis's answers to some of the PCs' likely questions. Avigdis can provide the PCs with the correct coordinates for the black site or confirm them if the PCs already have this intelligence. If the PCs ask Avigdis for more information about Eclipse technology or the corporation's ultimate goal, the svartalfar states that it's none of her concern.

**Who are you?** "I am called Avigdis," the svartalfar says, lifting her chin proudly. "Scion of the Avhildr clan. Millennia ago our tormentors exiled us from our true homeland, and we became assassins by necessity. Now we kill your kind for whatever pittance vengeful mortals offer us, though, truth be told, we rather enjoy the opportunity."

**Who hired you?** "Kaeon Rhyse of Eclipse Innovations. You've caused some complications for him as of late, and he contracted me to take care of the problem. The fact that I failed is surprising to me, but it makes no difference in the long run, either to my people or to this executive. My services are only a redundancy in his plan, and I doubt you will be able to stop him."

**Whom does Kaeon Rhyse serve?**

"Someone far more powerful than me. I would be careful poking your noses into these matters, if I were you, mortals."

**Where is the black site?** "The underground facility you speak of is on Verces' Darkside, buried deep beneath the Klebani Range. You will have to travel through a dangerous, frozen wilderness to reach this place. You won't be able to walk right in, either. Kaeon Rhyse has made preparations to welcome you."

**Tell us about his preparations.** "I'm not the only employee Kaeon Rhyse recruited from the Shadow Plane."

If the PCs take Avigdis to the authorities, she cooperates but denies any connection to Eclipse Innovations. She escapes from her holding cell 8 hours later after regaining her spells, leaving Cuvacaran police with no leads to follow. If the PCs allow Avigdis to go free, she sends a communication to her drow contacts and boards the next off-world shuttle to rendezvous with them.



AVIGDIS





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## PART 3: THE BLACK SITE

As the PCs end their investigations in Cuvacara, they have discovered the exact location of Eclipse Innovations' black site, where they might be able to find more answers about the corrupting signal and get revenge on some of its architects.

The bullet trains that dart between cities in the Ring of Nations don't travel to the planet's Darkside. Overland travel to the black site takes approximately 4 days by land vehicle, though it isn't recommended; treacherous natural obstacles such as mountains and sheer cliffs, aggressive fauna, and extremely cold temperatures all make the journey extremely dangerous. The PCs can attempt a DC 15 Life Science or Survival check to recall these dangers. The PCs' best option is to travel in their starship, which takes less than a day and provides a convenient escape option. In the end, their method of travel is the players' choice, but you should remind them that air travel is a quicker and safer option.

This adventure assumes the PCs take their starship, but if the PCs choose to travel by land, players without appropriate gear or spells must attempt Survival checks and Fortitude saving throws to resist the extreme cold, and you should include random encounters with bloodbrothers and other

Vercite wildlife (see *Starfinder Alien Archive* and *Starfinder Pact Worlds* for more ideas).

If the PCs take their starship, they should first upgrade it to tier 10. Once they have disabled all the Penumbra transmitters, they are no longer on a time limit—except for, of course, the one resulting from the growing corruption that casts an ever-lengthening shadow on their souls. Upgrading services can be purchased at the Cuvacara spaceport. Once the PCs have made these improvements and settled their docking fees, they can leave.

## EVENT 6: FLY BY NIGHT (CR 10)

By starship, the journey to Verces' Klebani Range takes 2d6 hours. As they travel, the light outside dims until it reaches full darkness. Before the PCs get close enough to the black site to descend, an unmarked destroyer engages them in combat.

**Starship Combat:** When combat begins, the PCs are 30 hexes from the *Obsidian-1*, an Antumbra Overseer (you can use *Starfinder Flip-Mat: Basic Starfield* to track this distance). The *Obsidian-1* attacks without any warning. The captain focuses on her crew, using demand and encourage actions. The engineer diverts power to the guns, hoping to take out the PCs' ship quickly. The pilot tries to counter or copy the PC pilot's actions, while attempting to catch the PCs' ship with their light EMP cannon, eventually switching to evade stunts whenever possible. The gunners begin with a broadside attack, while the



science officer attempts to target specific systems on the PCs' ship, focusing first on their weapons, then their engines.

If the *Obsidian-1* is reduced to 50 HP or fewer, the captain orders her gunners to fire at will. The engineer attempts to hold his ship's weapons together at this point. The captain is unwilling to admit defeat until her ship is reduced to 20 HP or fewer; she then orders her crew to board the escape pods, activates the self-destruct system, and abandons ship.

If the *Obsidian-1* disables the PCs' vessel, the crew orders the PCs to land at the black site, where they attempt to take the PCs into custody. The PCs can acquiesce if they wish, but how they escape from the guards' clutches is beyond the scope of this adventure. Otherwise, they can resist on the landing pad, fighting several shadow-touched guards (see page 30).

### OBSDIAN-1

### TIER 8

Antumbra Overseer (see inside front cover)

HP 190

**Story Award:** If the PCs defeat the *Obsidian-1* in starship combat, award them 9,600 XP

## E. ECLIPSE INNOVATIONS BLACK SITE

Hidden hundreds of feet below the Klebani Range on Verces' Darkside, the Eclipse Innovations black site is an underground complex powered by wind and geothermal energy. The complex has four levels connected by lifts, and is built above a massive particle accelerator that Kaeon Rhyse plans to use to transport the entire site to the Shadow Plane. The site's first level (areas **E1-E15**) serves as administrative headquarters and contains laboratories dedicated to twisted experimental research. The second level (areas **E16-E20**) houses the master transmitter for Dr. Gragant's signal as well as a horrifying "training center" for Eclipse employees. The third level (areas **E21-E26**) contains pens for creatures brought from the Shadow Plane and cells for the site's test subjects. The fourth level (areas **E27-E30**) was excavated from natural shelymium ice deposits to accommodate Kaeon Rhyse's personal bunker and control room for the particle accelerator.

Unless otherwise stated, all of the locations within the black site have the following traits.

**Ceilings, Doors, and Walls:** The ceilings are 25 feet high, and the doors are thick steel (hardness 30, HP 125, break DC 35). Computerized locks and key card scanners are built into the doors (Computers DC 30 to hack or Engineering DC 35 to disable) and can be opened with authorized key cards (though not any of the ones from the Eclipse office in Cuvacara). The walls are 5-foot-thick cement (hardness 15, HP 900 per 10-foot-by-10-foot section, break DC 65).

**Communications:** Holoprojectors located in every room are capable of receiving broadcasts from the equipment in area **E19**.

**Lighting:** Dull, yellow cylindrical light fixtures run along the walls of most corridors and rooms in the complex,

resulting in dim light in most areas. Areas **E21** through **E29** are in total darkness.

**Security:** A concealed security camera (Perception DC 35 to notice, Engineering DC 30 to disable) is located in just about every corner of every room and hallway throughout the complex. The personnel in area **E11** monitor the security feeds. The cameras' feeds can be also accessed through the maintenance-room terminals in areas **E8**, **E20**, and **E23**, and Kaeon Rhyse sporadically monitors the feeds from area **E29**.

### E1. ENTRANCE (CR 11)

A nearby landing pad is almost undetectable via sensors and is camouflaged from casual view with holographic projectors. However, the PCs have enough information to spot the landing pad with a DC 28 Perception check or a DC 30 Computers check to scan. A path leads to a cave.

Icy winds howl outside this shallow cave, which provides some protection from the bitter cold. A metal platform extends over a wide hole in the frozen ground, connected to a cage-like lift that hangs precariously over the darkness below.

The PCs can access the lift by walking up four metal steps to the platform. The lift is a 10-foot-square platform protected by metal bars, operated by a console with controls labeled in Vercite.

**Creature:** A velstrac transported from the Shadow Plane—at great expense to Eclipse Innovations—guards the entrance to the cave. None of the security guards have been up to deal the sexton any damage in the past 6 hours, so the velstrac is fatigued and sickened until the PCs damage it.

### SEXTON

### CR 11

XP 12,800

HP 175 (see page 61)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** When it notices the PCs' vessel landing, the sexton creates darkness to conceal itself.

**During Combat** The sexton steps from the darkness to affect the PCs with its unnerving gaze and then shoots its shadow spines at them. It then enters melee combat and attacks with its chains.

**Morale** The zealous velstrac revels in both inflicting and receiving pain and fights until destroyed.

**Development:** The PCs can operate the lift either by following the directions provided in Vercite or by succeeding at a DC 15 Engineering check to tinker with the control panel. The panel shows that the complex has only three accessible levels, and the PCs can visit them in any order they wish, but a black Eclipse key card can be used to reach a hidden fourth level (alternatively, they can disable this security by succeeding at a DC 45 Engineering check, but they probably aren't even aware there is anything to bypass). When the PCs



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E. ECLIPSE INNOVATION/BLACKSITE

LEVEL 1

LEVEL 2

LEVEL 3

LEVEL 4



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



select a level, the barred metal door of the lift closes and the lift slowly descends.

## E2. FIRST-LEVEL LIFT PLATFORM

The lift can stop here on the first level of the black site. Metal steps descend to a metal catwalk overlooking a large, open area. Four sets of stairs descend to the central part of area E3 from this catwalk.

## E3. ECLIPSE WORK AREA (CR 10)

A metal catwalk overlooks a large, open-plan room where Eclipse technicians operate computers mounted to metal platforms that rise from the stone floor. Rectangular yellow lights positioned low on the walls bathe the room in an eerie artificial twilight.

This large, open-plan office provides a place for Eclipse technicians to develop and repair technomagic hardware. The tier 5 computers located throughout this room all radiate magic, and are strange hybrids of conventional computer parts and living organs. A PC must succeed at both a DC 33 Computers check and a DC 33 Mysticism check to access any of the computers in this room; upon doing so, they find two modules labeled "Product Archives" and "Signal Transmission Schedule."

**Product Archives Module:** This unsecured module details technology currently in development within the black site, including brief descriptions of armor and computers that share their users' blood, biotech crafted from velstrac body parts, machines powered by pain, and a particle accelerator that produces magical energy.

**Signal Transmission Schedule Module:** This module is protected by a firewall (Computers DC 35 to hack). It lists the locations scheduled for a release of Penumbra technology, beginning with the Cuvacara rollout and followed by other Vercite cities. Absalom Station and planetary capitals are included farther down this list, all scheduled to receive access to Penumbra in the coming weeks.

**Creatures:** Eclipse engineers with retractable surgical blades grafted onto their hands work at various tasks. Some of the technicians are connected to their computers by thick cables, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Medicine check realizes the technicians are sharing blood with the machines. Others appear to be dissecting computer parts with the blades on their hands, causing the nanocarbon and organic parts to bleed when cut. The engineers are intent on their tasks and receive a -4 penalty to their Perception checks to notice the PCs. When they do, four of them break from their stations and attack the PCs. The others take no notice of the PCs or care if the PCs kill their coworkers.

### TWISTED TECHNICIANS (4) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Female and male verthani (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 118)

LE Medium humanoid (verthani)

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

**Perception** +13

**DEFENSE** HP 80 EACH

**EAC** 18; **KAC** 19

**Fort** +5; **Ref** +7; **Will** +9

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** grafted surgical blade +14 (1d6+9 S; critical bleed 1d8)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The twisted technicians rush the PCs and gleefully attack with their grafted surgical blades, using their Step Up feat to get closer to retreating PCs and attacking with Step Up and Strike when possible. The technicians take perverse pleasure in being harmed by the PCs.

**Morale** The twisted technicians fight to the death, basking in the pleasure of pain.

### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Athletics +13, Computers +18, Medicine +18, Engineering +18

**Feats** Step Up, Step Up and Strike

**Languages** Common, Verthani

**Other Abilities** easily augmented, skin mimic

**Gear** professional clothing, white Eclipse key card;

**Augmentations** standard darkvision capacitors

**Treasure:** The key cards clipped to the technicians' belts open most of the doors on the black site's first level.

## E4. SLEEP PODS

These utilitarian rooms contain sleep pods for scientists and other workers, each including a recharging station. They are all currently empty. The PCs can stop to rest and charge their batteries here at no cost. However, if the PCs don't disable the rooms' security cameras, the two shadow-touched guards from area E11 arrive to investigate in 1d3 hours.

## E5. OFFICES

These rooms are private offices for high-ranking staff. Each office contains a desk and chair. They are currently empty.

## E6. ARMOR RESEARCH LAB (CR 11)

Sheets of transparent material are stacked in the southwest corner of this laboratory, while two metal tables to the north and south display incomplete suits of armor crafted from the same material. A translucent suit streaked with red and purple markings is suspended in a display case affixed to the eastern wall.

Eclipse scientists and engineers used this laboratory to develop a new type of armor that mimics some of the



natural resilience shown by velstracs and other Shadow Plane inhabitants. These employees can be found in the other laboratories on this floor.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Physical Science check recognizes the sheets of material as graphene, an allotrope of carbon that is more than 100 times stronger than steel. Graphene is also flexible, transparent, highly conductive, and impermeable to most gases and liquids. A prototype of hybrid graphene armor is displayed in the eastern glass case (see Treasure below), while unfinished versions are draped over the tables to the north and south.

**Trap:** The room is equipped with a nanoflechette launcher trap that activates 1 round after anyone enters without first swiping a gray Eclipse key card through the door's card reader. The doorway is sealed off by a steel partition (hardness 20, Hit Points 60, break DC 28) and five wall apertures open up to launch nanoflechettes at every creature in the room. The trap operates for 10 rounds, unless all the apertures have been closed or destroyed. An aperture has EAC 23, KAC 27, Fort +14, Ref +11, hardness 10, and 40 Hit Points. Closing or destroying an aperture reduces the damage dealt by 1d12.

### NANOFLECHETTE LAUNCHER TRAP CR 11 XP 12,800

**Type** technological; **Perception** DC 36; **Disable** Engineering DC 29 (close one aperture) or DC 35 (open door)

**Trigger** location; **Init** +17; **Duration** 10 rounds; **Reset** 1 minute; **Bypass** wireless key card reader (Computers DC 30 to hack)

**Effect** nanoflechettes +25 ranged (6d12 P); multiple targets (all targets in room)

**Treasure:** The display case contains a single *Light Experimental Neural Interface Exosuit*, a hybrid suit of light armor woven from isolated graphene fibers. Upon closer inspection, PCs notice a tiny computer built into the armor's retractable helmet and a row of razor-sharp needles that line the left sleeve of the armor at the wrist. The armor's statistics are presented in the sidebar.

If a PC dons the armor, those tiny needles prick the PC's flesh and draw a few drops of blood into the armor's fabric. The artificial personality boots up with a cheerful male voice in that PC's ear. "Hello there! I hope that stung a bit! I'm Lennie, and I'll be your guide to operating this technology!" Lennie explains the armor's features (though he neglects to mention the pain dependency). Though pleasant and upbeat, Lennie is a cruel masochist, enjoying

## LIGHT EXPERIMENTAL NEURAL INTERFACE EXOSUIT

The *Light Experimental Neural Interface Exosuit* is a 12th-level suit of light armor that provides a +14 armor bonus to both EAC and KAC. It has a maximum Dexterity bonus of +8 and no armor check penalty.

Three of its four upgrade slots contain a targeting computer with an artificial personality, a *forcepack*, and a mk 2 thermal capacitor. This hybrid armor molds perfectly to your shape, regardless of body type and size, and the armor's artificial personality monitors your vital signs and informs you when you are diseased, poisoned, or exposed to radiation. However, when you wear this armor, you become addicted to pain, and if you go more than 4 hours without taking damage, you gain the fatigued and sickened conditions until the next time

you take damage. You also gain a +1 morale bonus to attack rolls for 1 round after you score a critical hit on a significant foe. Without any of its upgrades, the *Light Experimental Neural Interface Exosuit* costs 38,000 credits (though it isn't yet available for purchase by the general public) and has light bulk. Though it is a hybrid suit of armor, it doesn't count as a worn item.

the pain of the armor's wearer and urging her to inflict pain on others. A PC who wears the armor for more than an hour must succeed at a DC 22 Will saving throw or refuse to take it off, even after its negative side effects come to light. This is a curse effect.

Once the *Light Experimental Neural Interface Exosuit* is removed (or before it is even put on), a PC can reprogram the artificial personality with a successful DC 35 Computers check, erasing Lennie's masochistic tendencies. This removes the curse effect and the wearer's pain dependency, but also removes the morale bonus the wearer gains after scoring a critical hit.

## E7. PSYCHOLOGY LABORATORIES

These laboratories both contain workstations to the north and south, each equipped with a tier 3 computer for collecting and reviewing data. In the center of both labs, a glass booth contains a metal chair equipped with restraints and a skullcap laden with wires and electrodes. Cables attach the wires from the device to the two computers.

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A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Medicine check realizes that these machines gather neurological data to feed into the computers. A PC who casts *detect magic* finds traces of magic in the machines. PCs who access the computers in these rooms (DC 25 to hack) can review procedural notes left by lab technicians and can conclude that these labs are dedicated to researching the psychological indicators of pain and pleasure.

**Creatures:** In the northernmost laboratory, six humanoids in white lab coats monitor the workstations and stand around the glass booth peering at a seventh humanoid within, who also wears a white lab coat. A section of the subject's skull has been removed, revealing his brain wired directly into the computers. The scientists appear to be sending direct electrical stimuli into the subject's brain, murmuring excitedly about the results. The scientists and the subject (who seems to be enjoying the process) ignore the PCs, even if they attack. These seven individuals are noncombatants and die in a single hit, with smiles on their faces. Each scientist carries a gray Eclipse key card.

**Story Award:** The PCs shouldn't receive XP for killing the Eclipse scientists.

## E8. MAINTENANCE ROOM

A computer console on the northern wall controls the lighting, security features, and doors throughout the first level. A PC can hack into this tier 5 computer by succeeding at a DC 33 Computers check, revealing a three-dimensional map of the first level and three modules labeled "Door Locks," "Lighting," and "Security."

**Door Locks Module:** This module is protected by a firewall (DC 35 Computers to hack). PCs who access this module can lock or unlock all the doors on the first level. An additional control allows a user to remotely open and close the doors.

**Lighting Module:** No additional checks are required to access this module. The PCs can control the light fixtures on the first level. PCs can set the lights to off (darkness), 50% (dimly lit), or 100% (bright light).

**Security Module:** This module is protected by a firewall (DC 35 Computers to hack). The PCs can access and view feeds from all the security cameras on this level after accessing this module. Additionally, this module controls the door alarms on the first level. A PC who hacks into this module can disable the alarms.

## E9. STORAGE AREAS

These two areas are used to store various raw materials, electronics, and office supplies.

## E10. EMPTY LABORATORIES

These laboratories contain various experimental stations but are currently not in use by Eclipse scientists.

**Treasure:** If the PCs search these rooms, they find two *shadow orbs*.

## E11. SECURITY HQ (CR 11)

Two large screens along the western wall of this darkened room glow with a sickly green light. Each screen is divided into dozens of individual squares, broadcasting live security recordings from around the complex. Some of the feeds show scientists bent over strange machines or bloody operation tables, while others display darkness. A black metal locker stands against the eastern wall.

The security cameras from around the black site feed live video to the screens in this room. Each feed is labeled with tiny letters and numbers corresponding to the room or hallway quadrant it monitors. If the PCs haven't yet visited the second level and spend 10 minutes viewing the feeds, or if they succeed at a DC 35 Perception check, they spot a verthani male recognizable as Kaeon Rhyse tinkering with equipment in area **E19**; he doesn't remain there for long.

**Creatures:** Monitoring the cameras are two vicious creatures who were once human Eclipse employees but have been thoroughly corrupted by the shadow signal. If they detect the PCs either through their cameras or by hearing a nearby door alarm, they attack.

### SHADOW-TOUCHED GUARDS (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

LE Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

**Perception** +17

#### DEFENSE

HP 145 EACH

**EAC** 22; **KAC** 24

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

**Weaknesses** light blindness

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** hook knife +21 (1d8+15 S; critical bleed 1d6)

**Ranged** gelid ice carbine +18 (3d8+9 C & P)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The shadow-touched guards prefer to fight in melee range with their hook knives.

**Morale** The shadow-touched guards fight to the death, finding pleasure in the pain inflicted upon them.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** +6; **Dex** +4; **Con** +3; **Int** +2; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +1

**Skills** Acrobatics +17, Athletics +22, Intimidate +17, Stealth +17

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Verthani

**Other Abilities** shadow manifestations (eerie perception\*, insubstantiality\*, shadow cloak\*)

**Gear** advanced iridishell, gelid ice carbine<sup>AR</sup> with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges), hook knife<sup>AR</sup>, gray Eclipse key card

\* See "Corrupted by Shadows" on page 40 of *Starfinder Adventure Path #10: The Diaspora Strain*.



**Treasure:** If the PCs search the lockers to the east, they find two flash grenades III, an ultra-capacity battery, and 30 small arm rounds.

## E12. OPERATING THEATER (CR 10)

An adjustable steel operating table lined with sterile linens stands in the southern half of the room. Next to it is a cylindrical metal waste receptacle containing bloody gauze, chunks of flesh, and an amputated human arm. Across from the door to the east is a freestanding wheeled cabinet holding surgical implements and equipment.

This operating room is primarily used to install experimental biotech augmentations—created from the bodies of monstrous creatures from the Shadow Plane—into humanoid hosts. Most of these experiments are carried out without anesthetic and ultimately fail, resulting in the painful deaths of the test subjects. Blood and other fluids cover the cement walls and floors. Powerful fluorescent lights in the ceiling cast this into bright light.

**Creatures:** Four corrupted verthani surgeons dressed in scrubs surround the operating table, on which lies a human “patient.” They have just amputated the human’s arm and are attempting to suture the arm of a sexton velstrac to the stump. The surgeons remain focused on their task unless the PCs attempt to stop the procedure. These noncombatants die with a single strike and succumb to the trap if the PCs trigger it.

**Trap:** A magical trap capable of unleashing the fear and pain of the creatures that died in this operating room is embedded in the floor in front of the table. When a living creature steps onto the marked space, holographic images of the suffering endured by victims of Eclipse Innovations experiments fill the room. Those who don’t disbelieve these illusions might die of fright.

### AMALGAMATED SUFFERING TRAP CR 10

XP 9,600

**Type** magical; **Perception** DC 35; **Disable** Mysticism DC 27 (disrupt the spell)

**Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

**Initial Effect** spell effect (3rd-level *holographic image*); Will DC 19 disbelief; multiple targets (all targets in area **E12**);

**Secondary Effect** intense pain (8d12 damage, this is a death and fear effect); DC 16 Fortitude half; multiple targets (all targets in area **E12** who didn’t disbelieve)

**Development:** A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Medicine check while examining the human subject can determine he died several hours ago. If the PCs haven’t disabled the cameras in this room, Kaeon Rhyse broadcasts a message into the room, commenting, “Sacrifices must be made for any great vision to be realized. Surely you are wise enough

to understand that.” The PCs can respond if they wish, but Kaeon says nothing else.

## E13. EXPERIMENTAL STATION

A ten-foot-tall steel cylindrical machine stands in the center of this room, connected by clear plastic wire casings to three mesh cages to the east, south, and west. Inside each cage, rabbits huddle in a layer of sawdust, their white coats marred by partially healed wounds caked with dried blood. Mechanical bladed arms are poised above each cage.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Physical Science check recognizes the machine as a large mass spectrometer, but like none she has ever seen before. When a PC examines it with *detect magic*, the PC finds that it radiates a magical aura as an item of 8th level. A PC who then succeeds at a DC 30 Mysticism check determines that the device analyzes and is powered by the suffering of the caged rabbits. When the device is activated, the bladed arms descend to deliver shallow, painful cuts to the rabbits. The centrifuge is difficult to physically destroy, but the mechanisms that control the razors can be disabled with a successful DC 32 Engineering check. Successfully casting *dispel magic* on the machine also renders it inoperable. Releasing the rabbits from their cages requires disabling the locks (Engineering DC 25).

## E14. EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Kaeon Rhyse’s personal office contains a black metal desk in front of the southern wall, equipped with a hard-backed metal chair and a computer workstation. Aside from the desk, the office is unfurnished. Doors to the north and east lead to the hallway. If a PC succeeds at a DC 33 Computers check to hack into Kaeon’s secure tier 5 computer, she finds two modules labeled “Black Site Floor Plan” and “Journal.”

**Black Site Floor Plan Module:** This module is protected by a firewall (Computers DC 35 to hack) and contains a three-dimensional map of the entire black site, including an image of the site’s hidden fourth level and inaccessible fifth level, which houses a particle accelerator. The representation of the particle accelerator contains notes about its construction, listing highly complex theoretical equations alongside runes that appear to be magical in nature. The PCs must succeed at both a DC 35 Physical Science check and a DC 35 Mysticism check to decipher these notes and learn the particle accelerator is capable of harnessing planar energy and that Kaeon Rhyse plans to activate it for unspecified experimental purposes.

**Journal Module:** This module contains a series of text documents chronicling Kaeon’s personal life from 5 years ago to the present day. The first passages include ideas for new tech and plans to launch a nonprofit organization to gift technology to disadvantaged Cuvacarans. An entry dated 2 years ago details Kaeon’s first visit to New Elysium. The

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tone of the entries changes dramatically at this point and takes on an unnerving fervor. While touring an underground maintenance area, Kaeon was visited by a “dark, brilliant” entity calling herself Dr. Lestana Gragant. She showed him that all beings can find pleasure in pain. Afterward the entries focus on Kaeon’s “conversion” of Eclipse’s board members and other staff, the company’s relocation to the black site, and the release of Penumbra. All of them contain glowing, almost reverential praise of Dr. Gragant. The last entry of the journal notes that Kaeon hopes to free Gragant from her Shadow Plane prison so she can transform the universe into a utopia free from the fear of pain. It takes about an hour to quickly read through the entire module.

If a PC succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while reading the entries, they find a mention of Taganth Wisle, an Eclipse executive who was one of the first victims Kaeon offered to Dr. Gragant. He aided in the relocation, but soon the corruption overtook him and he grew too erratic to function properly. Kaeon notes he was saddened that Taganth had to be forcibly confined to the cells on the third level, reminding himself to “revoke Taganth’s key card access to the bunker.”

**Treasure:** If the PCs search the desk, they find a *spell gem of mystic cure* (4th) and two *spell gems of restoration*.

**Development:** As the PCs attempt to hack into the computer, a hologram of Kaeon Rhyse appears near the northern door and scolds them. “It’s exceedingly rude to go looking through other people’s belongings. If you want to know something, just ask.” The PCs can speak to Kaeon Rhyse through the hologram; he reveals all the information presented in his computer’s modules (though not the information about Taganth Wisle). If the PCs ask for additional information, such as the purpose of the particle accelerator or where he’s hiding in the complex, Kaeon smiles. “Patience, friends. You’ll have your answers in good time.”

If a PC examines the holo-projector before the transmission ends, they can trace the source of the transmission to area **E19** by succeeding at a DC 30 Computers check.

## E15. MEDICAL LAB (CR 10)

Gleaming white ceramic tiles line

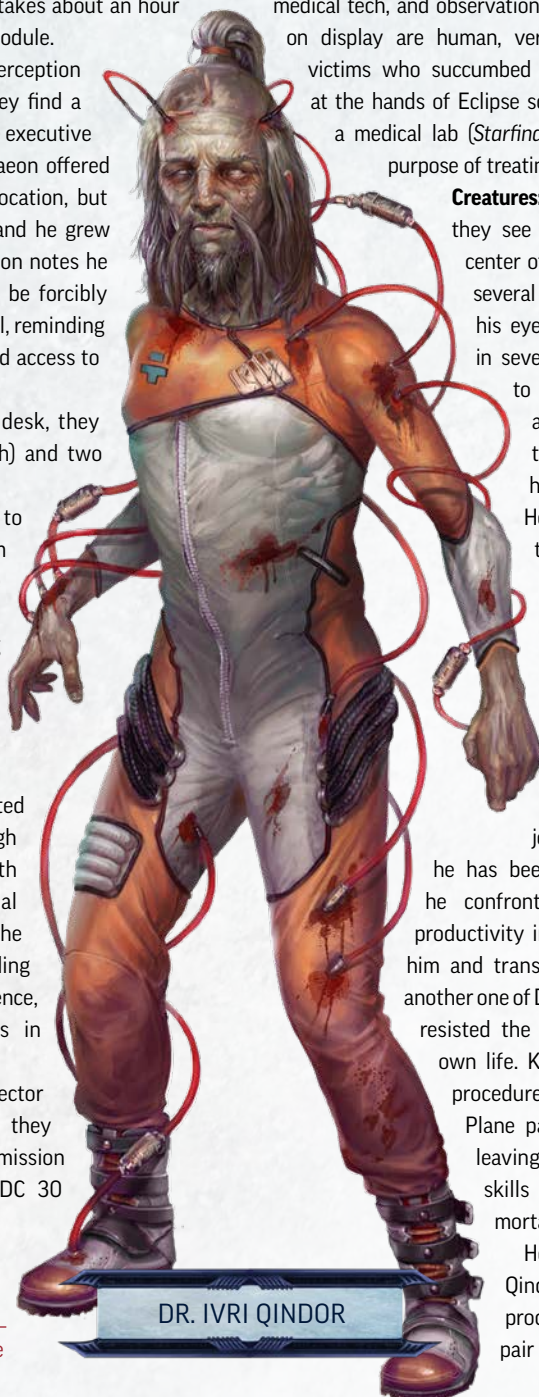
the floor and walls of this spacious laboratory. Six ten-foot-tall glass observation tanks display hideously transformed humanoids suspended in a glowing blue liquid. The disfigured corpses are a patchwork of mismatched limbs, dissected abdomens, and extra rows of teeth set in impossible places. Three stainless steel tables in the center of the room are equipped with metal restraints. To the west, a massive computer towers eight feet tall, trailing wires and cables slick with blood into the shadows.

This large medical lab is equipped with operation tables, medical tech, and observation tanks. The specimens currently on display are human, verthani, and shirren experiment victims who succumbed to unspeakable augmentations at the hands of Eclipse scientists. The room functions as a medical lab (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 220) for the purpose of treating wounds and other conditions.

**Creatures:** When the PCs enter the room, they see a human man standing in the center of the room. His skin is pale with several black splotches around his neck, his eyes are glassy, and he is pierced in several places by cables connected to cybernetic augmentations and tubes that pump blood throughout his body. He has gray hair and a gray-and-black beard. He is wearing a white jumpsuit that is stained with patches of his own blood. This is the animated corpse of Dr. Qindor.

The PCs might recognize Dr. Qindor from the images they found in the empty Eclipse Innovations office (if necessary, a PC can attempt a DC 10 Wisdom check to jog her memory), but it is clear he has been dead for some time. When he confronted Kaeon Rhyse about the productivity implants, the executive sedated him and transported him here to make him another one of Dr. Gragant’s disciples. Dr. Qindor resisted the signal but ultimately took his own life. Kaeon then used technomagical procedures granted to him by his Shadow Plane patron to reanimate the doctor, leaving Qindor with his professional skills but without the burden of mortal memories.

However, this wasn’t the end of Dr. Qindor’s torment. The reanimation process attracted the attention of a pair of creeping shades—incorporeal,



DR. IVRI QINDOR



plantlike creatures from the Shadow Plane that recently used the undead Dr. Qindor as a doorway to enter the Material Plane. This tore apart the necromantic force animating the doctor, leaving him no more than a shell housing the creeping shades. Kaeon is unaware of the outsiders' presence.

The body of Dr. Qindor doesn't respond to the PCs' presence or to any questions directed at it. If any PC attempts to harm the corpse or moves adjacent to it, the creeping shades burst forth and Dr. Qindor falls to the floor, completely lifeless. A PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Mysticism check recognizes the black splotches on Dr. Qindor's skin as a symptom of some kind of possession effect and is able to react during the surprise round.

### CREeping SHADES (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

HP 112 each (see page 55)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The creeping shades use Spring Attack to move about the room and into various solid objects, making it difficult for the PCs to attack them.

**Morale** The creeping shades feed on the PCs' life forces until destroyed, but do not pursue the PCs out of the room.

**Treasure:** A PC who searches the room uncovers four doses of sprayflesh, two doses of tier 2 analgesic, four *mk 3 serums of healing*, two *serums of enhancement* (scientist), and two *serums of enhancement* (sensate). In addition, the PCs can find a gray Eclipse key card on Dr. Qindor's corpse.

### E16. SECOND-LEVEL LIFT PLATFORM

This area is similar to area E2, housing a platform for the lift. Steps lead down to a cylindrical stone hallway that branches off to the northeast and to the south.

### E17. OBSERVATION AREAS

In this hallway, two circular, transparent aluminum windows provide viewpoints into area E18. If the PCs stop to observe area E18 and haven't yet been to area E19, a hologram of Kaeon Rhyse appears and tells the PCs, "Eclipse Innovations is currently accepting applications. Would you like to arrange an interview?"

### E18. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The door to this room can be opened with a gray or black Eclipse key card. It is filled with rows of mundane office cubicles occupied by human and verthani employees. Their naked flesh is plastered with electrodes, the wires attached to the computers in front of them. Some of the employees appear to be unconscious, while others cut at their own flesh with blades or flagellate themselves with bundled network cables. To the south, robotic arms suspended above rows of metal operating tables perform surgery on other employees. A chorus of screams fills the air as the surgical bots insert blades into the flesh of their hands and forearms.

Uninitiated employees are brought here and exposed to the rawest form of Dr. Gragant's corrupting signal. They are kept in these small cubicles as they are quickly driven insane. These employees are then augmented in the mechanized surgical theater to the south before reintegration into the workforce in area E3. The 12 employees currently here are in various stages of "professional development" and remain unaware of the PCs. They don't attempt to defend themselves if attacked.

If the PCs enter this room, they are exposed to the shadow signal and must attempt a Will save or risk advancing their shadow corruption (see Shadow Corruption on page 3).

**Story Award:** The PCs should receive no experience for killing these unfortunate victims of Dr. Gragant.

### E19. BROADCAST STUDIO

The door to this room can be opened with a gray or black Eclipse key card.

Bright lights illuminate the black ceramic tiles of this room. A polished wooden table in the room's center is surrounded by additional lights, cameras, and microphones positioned to capture input from each seat's occupant, though the area is currently deserted. Three screens to the northeast display a mirror image of this tableau. To the southeast, a glass partition separates the seating area from a massive black console.

The console to the southeast is an amplifier that conducts Dr. Gragant's signal from the Shadow Plane and broadcasts it to the Cuvacaran transmitters. Monitors marked with the transmitters' locations show darkened feeds or static if the PCs destroyed those transmitters. The PCs can attempt a DC 25 Computers or Engineering check to identify the purpose of this equipment. The broadcasting equipment is constructed of nanocarbon (hardness 35, HP 240). The equipment can be disabled with a successful DC 35 Engineering check.

A holo-projector here is capable of broadcasting images to the receivers located throughout the black site, and a soundboard and mixer to the southwest allows for manipulation of the studio's audio output.

**Treasure:** If the PCs search the studio, they find a laser microphone.

**Development:** Kaeon Rhyse vacated this room before the PCs arrived. If the PCs destroy, disable, or hack the broadcasting equipment here, the Penumbra app on all devices on Verces ceases to function, making Eclipse Innovations unable to broadcast Dr. Gragant's signal without effecting extensive repairs.

### E20. MAINTENANCE ROOM

Similar to those in the maintenance rooms on other levels of the black site, a computer console on the northeastern wall controls the lighting, security features, and doors throughout the second level. See area E8 for details about the computer's modules.

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### E21. THIRD-LEVEL LIFT PLATFORM

This area is similar to area **E2**, housing a platform for the lift that opens directly into a darkened corridor.

### E22. CORRIDOR (CR 9)

A miasmic darkness hangs heavy in this wide corridor, and murky, gray motes drift through the air. Steel doors yawn open on either side of the hallway, and a heap of flesh and bone savaged beyond recognition sprawls on the floor to the east.

Semicircular chambers line the northern and southern walls of this corridor. Each is filled with a small pile of shredded bedding. The corpse in the middle of the corridor is a former Eclipse employee who was mauled by the beasts kept here.

**Creatures:** When Kaeon Rhyse became aware of intruders in the complex, he remotely opened the steel doors to these cages, releasing four shadow mastiffs. They prowl the corridor and attempt to ambush the PCs.

#### SHADOW MASTIFFS (4)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

HP 70 each (see page 59)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** Each shadow mastiff uses its bay ability and then attempts to flank the PCs.

**Morale** The shadow mastiffs fight to the death.

**Treasure:** If the PCs search the corpse here, they find a numbing taclash, a nyfiber net, an ultra-capacity battery, and a credstick with 290 credits on it.

### E23. MAINTENANCE ROOM

The door to this room can be opened only with a gray or black Eclipse key card. Similar to those in the maintenance rooms on other levels of the black site, a computer console on the northeastern wall controls the lighting, security features, and doors throughout the third level. See area **E8** for details about the computer's modules.

**Treasure:** A locked metal cabinet in the southeastern corner of the room (Engineering DC 30 to disable) contains gear confiscated from the level's former prisoners, including a suit of lashunta mind mail II<sup>AR</sup>, a ysoki refractor suit, a yellow star plasma doshko, and two high-capacity batteries.

### E24. COLD STORAGE

The door to this room can be opened only with a gray or black Eclipse key card.

What at first appear to be slabs of frozen meat stacked in the center of this bare stone room are, upon closer inspection, humanoid bodies. The lifeless corpses are piled

haphazardly in a heap of bloodless flesh, their skin bluish-white and marred with frost. Their faces are eternally frozen into masks of terror.

This room is kept at a constant 18° F to prevent the corpses within from decaying. The bodies belong to dozens of experiment victims who died within the complex and were dumped in this room for later disposal.

### E25. EMPTY HOLDING CELL

The door to this room can be opened only with a gray or black Eclipse key card.

This sparse holding cell contains two cots and a rusty drain. The cement walls of this stark chamber are stained with various bodily fluids, and the whole area reeks of death.

This cell used to hold unruly employees and test subjects. As his plans to transport the black site to the Shadow Plane have moved closer to fruition, Kaeon had the captives killed and their bodies taken to cold storage (area **E24**).

### E26. STURDY HOLDING CELL

The door to this room can be opened only with a gray or black Eclipse key card. The darkness within the cell can only be pierced with magical light.

The shadows of this small cell seem to twist and move of their own volition, and there is a chill in the air. The bed against the northern wall appears to have partially melted into the stone floor. Deep gouges line the cement walls.

This smaller holding cell was designed to house particularly reticent prisoners and the dangerous results of experiments too valuable to destroy. A pile of clothes, once belonging to the only occupant, lies in the center of the room.

A former Eclipse executive named Taganth Wisle fully succumbed to Dr. Gragant's corrupting signal shortly after he relocated to the black site, and Kaeon locked him away in this cell. In the intervening days, Taganth melted completely into shadow. When the PCs enter the room, they feel as if they are being watched, but they can't quite pinpoint from where. A PC who casts a *detect magic* spell reveals that the room is drenched in magic. In the end, the PCs won't be attacked when they enter to grab the treasure, but don't let them know that!

**Treasure:** The PCs can find a black Eclipse key card in the pile of clothes, a credstick containing 500 credits, and a photo ID of Taganth Wisle.

### E27. FOURTH-FLOOR LIFT (CR 12)

This area is similar to area **E2**, though it opens directly into a large chamber.



**Trap:** Kaeon Rhyse installed a trap outside the lift to protect his personal bunker. The first person who steps out of the lift is targeted by a lancet on the end of a robotic arm. The lancet deals damage if it hits, but it also secretly injects a technomagical microchip into the target's blood that emulates a *dominate person* spell. Kaeon Rhyse gains telepathic control over that person (unless she succeeds at a Will saving throw), ordering her to behave normally until she enters area **E30**, whereupon he exerts full control over that person during any fight that follows.

### OBEDIENCE IMPLANT TRAP

CR 12

XP 19,200

**Type** hybrid; **Perception** DC 38; **Disable** Engineering DC 33 (disable lancet) or **Mysticism** DC 33 (render implant ineffective)

**Trigger** proximity (visual, 10 feet); **Reset** manual

**Effect** lancet +27 melee (3d6+10 P plus *dominate person*); Will DC 21 negates *dominate person* effect

## E28. OBSERVATION DECK

This room is carved out of twinkling ice. A transparent rectangle set into the floor offers a glimpse of the level below, showing a muddle of wires and tubes that appears to be a small section of an immense machine. To the east, the chamber opens onto a balcony that looks out into a deep crevasse. Freezing wind whips through the area, howling like the cries of a wounded animal.

The transparent section of the floor shows part of a machine below. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Physical Science check can identify the machine as a particle accelerator. A PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Mysticism check can sense the magical planar energy emanating from the accelerator.

Due to the room's unique construction and the open balcony, the air temperature here is a constant 20° F, which could affect PCs if they stay here too long. The icy surfaces here count as difficult terrain, and the DCs for Acrobatics checks attempted here are increased by 5.

## E29. MAINTENANCE ROOM

Similar to those in the maintenance rooms on other levels of the black site, a computer console on the northwestern wall controls the lighting, security features, and doors throughout this level. See area **E8** for details about the computer's modules; the lighting on this level can't be raised above dim light. Additionally, this room contains security-camera viewing screens and a microphone capable of sending public-address messages through the speakers located in many of the black site's rooms.

This room is also carved out of ice, and the temperature here remains a constant 20° F.

## E30. EXECUTIVE BUNKER (CR 12)

This area is protected by *private sanctum*. No matter the light level of the rest of the level, the PCs are confronted by a dark, foggy curtain halfway down the steps from area **E28**. When they pass through, read or paraphrase the following.

A metal platform built into the ice rises fifteen feet high to the west, a ladder leading up to it. A control panel built into the machinery beneath the platform houses a complex set of buttons and switches. Above, a huge screen occupies most of the wall. A pallid male verthani in a dark business suit stands on the platform and spreads his arms in welcome.

"We meet again," Kaeon Rhyse announces. His protruding, jet-black eyes and crazed grin give his face the appearance of a mask. "These are my associates." He gestures to indicate two muscular female verthani standing to either side of him. Their armor is cut to expose parts of their scarred flesh. Burns on their chests form the shape of humanoid skulls with chains strung through the eye sockets. Their faces are mangled by ritual scarification, and piercings through the bridges of their nose, cheeks, and foreheads stretch their skin to reveal open wounds. A blade is grafted to each verthani's left arm at the elbow.

"I used to believe that poverty was the scourge of the galaxy, that overcoming it would create better worlds for everyone. Dr. Gragant showed me the truth. I now know that pain is the real enemy. Pain is a plague that preys on both the rich and poor." Kaeon indicates the screen behind him. Images of amputees, starving children, wounded soldiers, and sick elderly humanoids punctuate his words. "Some people may be able to cheat death, but pain is inescapable. It is always with us. Dr. Gragant worked for years to eliminate pain, and she failed, until her transformation brought her enlightenment. The only way to conquer pain is to change our perception of it. That is the gift she offers us. Will you accept?"

This room is a private retreat for Kaeon Rhyse, where he can meditate and communicate with Dr. Gragant. It became his living quarters after he left his old life in Cuvacara. The folded-up cots to the southeast provide a place for Kaeon and his bodyguards to rest. A recharging station stands in the eastern corner of the room near the beds. Using the recharging station here incurs no cost.

The control panel operates the particle accelerator below the site, which is imbued with enough technomagical energy to transport the entire complex to the Shadow Plane.

**Hazard:** As the PCs listen to Kaeon's speech, they experience an inner conflict as voices whisper to them from the shadows, reinforcing the verthani's message. Each PC must succeed at a Will save to resist advancing their shadow corruption (see Shadow Corruption on page 3).

**Creatures:** Kaeon Rhyse waits here for the PCs. As he watched them make their way through the complex, he offered them some choice tidbits of wisdom from the broadcast studio

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in area **E19**, but when he realized their progress wouldn't be easily stopped, he retreated to his bunker. His bodyguards, two corrupted female verthani, accompany him.

Kaeon belongs to Dr. Gragant, body and soul, and he genuinely believes that her corrupting influences will free the mortal world from pain. He entreats the PCs to join him. If the PCs remain peaceful and ask questions, Kaeon can reveal any of the adventure path's background information you feel the PCs still need to discover, focusing mainly on Dr. Gragant's plans and current location. If any PC asks how they can purge themselves of the shadow corruption, Kaeon laughs and says, "Only Dr. Gragant can do such a thing, and she has no intention of depriving you in that way."

Kaeon talks to the group for as long as he believes they are considering switching to his side. If the PCs refuse to convert, he and his bodyguards attack; at this point, he commands any PC affected by the obedience implant (area **E27**) to fight at his side.

During combat, Kaeon activates the particle accelerator under the complex by flipping a switch on the control panel. A visible wave of powerful magical energy washes over the bunker, but it has no other obvious effects. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Mysticism check recognizes the energy as planar energy. Though the PCs won't realize it right away, the particle accelerator transported the entire black site—including the PCs—to the Shadow Plane (see Concluding the Adventure).

## UMBRAL DISCIPLES (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Female verthani (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 118)

LE Medium humanoid (verthani)

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

**Perception** +16

### DEFENSE

HP 125 EACH

**EAC** 20; **KAC** 22

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

**Defensive Abilities** integrated weapons; **DR** 2/–;

**Resistances** cold 10

**Weaknesses** light blindness

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** integrated wrack devastation blade +19 (2d8+14 S)

**Offensive Abilities** channel negative energy (4d6, DC 16)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** The umbral disciples enter melee range and channel negative energy to harm the PCs. They attempt to keep the PCs from attacking Kaeon Rhyse, using their Stand Still feat to halt any movement toward the executive if possible.

**Morale** The umbral disciples rejoice in the pain of battle, fighting to the death to protect Dr. Gragant's chosen representative on the Material Plane.

### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Athletics +16, Intimidate +21, Mysticism +16

**Feats** Stand Still

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Verthani

**Other Abilities** easily augmented, shadow manifestations (coldblooded\*, eerie perception\*, pain refuge\*), skin mimic

**Gear** lashunta ringwear III, wrack devastation blade;

**Augmentations** mk 2 dermal plating

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Channel Negative Energy (Su)** Three times per day as a full action, an umbral disciple can channel negative energy in a 30-foot-radius burst, dealing 4d8 negative energy damage to all living creatures. A successful DC 16 Will saving throw halves this damage.

\* See "Corrupted by Shadows" on page 40 of *Starfinder Adventure Path #10: The Diaspora Strain*.

## KAEON RHYSE

CR 10

XP 9,600

Male verthani technomancer (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 118)

LE Medium humanoid (verthani)

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

**Perception** +21

### DEFENSE

HP 138 RP 5

**EAC** 22; **KAC** 23

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

**Weaknesses** light blindness

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** ultrathin switchblade +16 (2d4+10 S)

**Ranged** elite semi-auto pistol +18 (3d6+10 P) or  
cryo grenade II +18 (explode [15 ft., 2d8 C plus  
staggered, DC 19])

**Technomancer Spells Known** (CL 10th; melee +16,  
ranged +18)

4th (3/day)—*overload systems* (DC 22), *rewire flesh*  
(DC 22)

3rd (6/day)—*arcing surge* (DC 21), *discharge* (DC 21),  
*haste*, *lesser resistant armor*

2nd (at will)—*inject nanobots* (DC 20), *mirror image*

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Kaeon has been observing the PCs' actions through his surveillance equipment, and when he knows they are close, he casts *lesser resistant armor*, choosing two energy types used by the PCs. He then casts *haste* and *mirror image*.

**During Combat** Kaeon uses his spell grenade magic hack to imbue a grenade with *overload systems*. He positions himself out of the PCs' reach while his bodyguards engage them. If Kaeon Rhyse sustains significant damage from a single attack, he activates his void heart manifestation as a reaction to transfer half of the damage to one of his bodyguards (who doesn't resist). If reduced to 60 Hit Points or fewer, Kaeon uses shadow jaunt to get to a position where he can use a *mk 3 healing serum*.





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**Morale** Kaeon's sole purpose is to follow Dr. Gragant's orders, and he fights to the death to prevent the PCs from ruining her plans.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** +0; **Dex** +5; **Con** +2; **Int** +8; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +1

**Skills** Acrobatics +24, Computers +24, Culture +19, Mysticism +19

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Verthani

**Other Abilities** cache capacitor 1 (*keen senses*), easily augmented, magic hacks (spell grenade, tech countermeasures), shadow manifestations (*eerie perception\**, *insubstantiality\**, *shadow jaunt\**, *void heart\**), skin mimic, spell cache (accelerated datajack)

**Gear** white carbon carbon skin (white force field), elite semi-auto pistol with 30 small arm rounds, ultrathin switchblade<sup>AR</sup>, cryo grenades II (2), *mk 3 serums of healing* (2); **Augmentations** accelerated datajack, storage prosthetic limb (arm)

\* See "Corrupted by Shadows" on page 40 of *Starfinder Adventure Path #10: The Diaspora Strain*.

**Development:** If the PCs defeat Kaeon Rhyse, they can choose to continue exploring the black site at their leisure or exit the complex. If the PCs rest within the bunker, they experience vivid nightmares similar to the dream in **Event 1**. They also hear whispers and far-off screams while using the recharging station.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

When the PCs emerge from the black site, they discover their ship is missing and doesn't respond to any attempts to communicate with it! A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Culture check knows that Cuvacara is the nearest large Vercite city to their current location, though there should be smaller towns in Vimal between here and there. Their only recourse is to begin the trek out of the Klebani Range on foot.

Less than an hour later, they come across what appears to be an abandoned village. All indications point to this village being in the Ring of Nations. Continuing on their way, they reach a ruined city draped in shadows a little over an hour later. From their earlier time there, the PCs instantly recognize this place as Cuvacara, but it is far more empty and desolate than they left it!

The PCs come to two terrible realizations. First, it should have taken much longer to walk to Cuvacara from the black site than it did. Second, they should be able to see the sun by this point. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Mysticism check realizes that the planar energies discharged by the black site's particle accelerator must have transported the entire complex to the Shadow Plane!





## CUVACARA

My body may wander, but, as cliché as it sounds, my heart yearns always for Cuvacara. I could travel across the universe and never find another city to rival its grandeur. For millennia, the cradle of the Klebani Range has protected our city, and the winding Rudoan River inspired our eternal wanderlust. From the lemniscate green belt at the city's heart to its glass skyscrapers that mirror the crimson sky, Cuvacara is a jewel set within that twilight between dreams and reality, an unsleeping metropolis where anything is possible.

—From the memoirs of Anefthi Xaeus, aether pilot



**A**s the capital city of Vimal (one of the larger members of the Ring of Nations located on Verces's terminator belt), Cuvacara has a well-deserved intergalactic reputation for its beauty, culture, and technological advancement. It nestles within a valley just north of the Klebani Range, and enjoys some protection from Verces's storms inside the mountains' rain shadow. To the north of Cuvacara lies the Rudoan River, a small tributary of one of the planet's larger waterways.

Like all cities within the Ring of Nations, Cuvacara exists in a state of perpetual twilight. Due to its close proximity to Fullbright, however, the constant light conditions within Cuvacara closely resemble an offworld sunset, and many foreign visitors find comfort in the brighter light here as opposed to the darker environs of the city's eastern neighbors. The constant golden quality that seems to suffuse Cuvacara's landscape inspired its first non-Vercite inhabitants to christen the city "The Dusk Jewel," a nickname eagerly embraced by the locals.

Even among its many breathtakingly beautiful and technologically advanced sister cities, Cuvacara truly is a sight to behold. An amalgam of different architectural styles coexists within the city. Wavy triangular spires shoot up from the ground like the leaves of desert succulents, towering over iridescent glass domes. Cloud-piercing towers house businesses and residences throughout the city, connected by sky bridges constructed of transparent aluminum and sapphire. Bullet trains and commuter vehicles zoom through the multitiered network of roads below, and dusky shadows partially conceal the city's ground level.

## CUVACARA

N metropolis

**Population** 30 million (55% verthani, 15% shirren, 10% human, 5% kasatha, 5% ysoki, 1% ryporian, 9% other)

**Government** council (coalition appointed by Grand Assembly)

**Qualities** cultured, economically disparate, technologically advanced

**Maximum Item Level** 20th

### QUALITIES

**Economically Disparate** The citizens of the settlement are unofficially but firmly organized into economic classes, and the difference in income between the highest and lowest of these classes is quite dramatic.

## HISTORY

Though historians dispute when the verthani first settled in Vimal, written records that seem to date before the Gap contain census and trade records for the area that is now Cuvacara. The common agreement among academics holds that early verthani settlers first ventured closer to Fullbright as a result of traveling the network of river tributaries located within the terminator belt. Indeed, the Rudoan River north of the city was a major trade and transportation route

before space and air travel developed. In centuries past, proud river yachts traversed the Rudoan River, carrying goods and people across Vimal.

The Rudoan River's importance for transportation gradually waned as the verthani transitioned from existence as a planet-locked people to a space-faring collection of nations. The river still retains some of its usefulness to the Cuvacara of today, however. Industrial plants in the city's Southwest Facet draw in water from the river by way of underground pipes to use as a coolant. Cuvacara's spaceport is built on a lofty island on a wider section of the waterway known as Rudoan Lake, and is second only to Skydock in its amount of commercial and private air traffic. In the city's North Facet, high-end communities and opulent resorts dot the river's beaches. Some wealthy citizens of Cuvacara still enjoy sailing, and pleasure yachts can often be seen skimming the Rudoan's surface.

Even at the end of the Gap, Cuvacara was an urban powerhouse, with diverse neighborhoods, gridded streets, and a system of bullet trains providing public transportation to all citizens. The Cuvacara Spaceport was quickly converted to receive the new Drift-capable starships that soon populated the system, though Vercite aethershops can still be seen here to this day. When shirren refugees arrived on Verces over 200 years ago, many of them flocked to Cuvacara to enjoy its cosmopolitan amenities and the bustling populace of the city welcomed them with open arms.

## SOCIETY

The residents of Cuvacara are quick to claim that they were some of the first verthani to abandon their millennia-old caste system in favor of a modern paradigm, though it is almost impossible to prove this assertion. However, when the verthani emerged from the Gap, it was clear that most of Cuvacara's citizens weren't beholden to the rigid caste system of the past. As trade with other planets began to rise with the introduction of Drift travel and Cuvacara's tech industry boomed, a new social order rose in Cuvacara: economic classes. All of the metropolis's residents keenly feel this unofficial categorization. Though Cuvacara is equipped with abundant resources to provide for its impoverished citizens, a stark disparity between the rich and the poor still exists within the city.

The upper tiers of Cuvacara are a bastion of wealth and prosperity. Successful business executives and merchants can afford to live and work on the top floors of the city's glittering skyscrapers, but many immigrants and locals alike fall short of the income required to participate in the higher echelons of Cuvacaran society. These folk are often obligated to seek housing elsewhere.

Beneath the gleaming buildings and fragile skywalks lies a teeming underworld bustling with activity. Derogatorily termed the Shade, the darkened lower streets of Cuvacara are home to economically disadvantaged citizens, who are

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forced to live side by side with notorious criminals. In the Shade, neon-lit cantinas and lounges stay open at all hours to cater to questionable clientele. Hundreds of restaurants and small businesses cater to the lower economic classes who settle in the Shade, and these establishments often serve double duty as money-laundering operations for their enterprising owners. Black-market deals are closed in shadowy alleys and seedy clubs. Back-alley cybernetic shops and hacker dens enjoy brisk traffic in the Shade, all while upstanding corporate workers and dignitaries speed past on bullet trains, content to look the other way.

Though a marked economic dichotomy prevails within the city, the majority of Cuvacara's poor never have to worry about going hungry. Under the old caste system, verthani traditionally shared resources equally among all citizens. Some of the oldest recorded laws of Vimal provide for a universal basic income in the form of food and housing. This practice continues in Cuvacara today. Cuvacara's fresh markets and supply dispensaries provide free parcels of food and other necessities to all residents, and even the worst slums are connected to the city's free power grid.

Now that credits have replaced food as the universal currency, however, the old laws struggle to keep up with the times. While even the poorest Cuvacarans are clothed and fed, they often feel lost in a society that increasingly revolves around costly technology and space travel. Compulsory and free public education extends only to the lowest collegiate levels, and many impoverished children leave school well before then to help support their families. Without the skills to market themselves in a competitive corporate and industrial market, a large number of these children grow up to be the new Pure Ones, unaugmented not by choice but because of a lack of credits. Some of these instead individuals turn to crime in order to earn the finances necessary to live a more comfortable life.

Still other disadvantaged youth seek employment in the police force. Working as an officer of the peace is an attractive occupation for indigent Cuvacarans, provided a resident can pass the physical and psychological tests to join. The city funds augmentations and tech for all of its police officers. This free access to expensive technology coupled with a tidy salary allows many

disadvantaged Cuvacarans to provide for themselves and their families without completing years of expensive higher education. Cuvacara's current chief of police, **Kulakar Pumal** (LG male verthani soldier) is living proof of the benefits available to poor residents through the police force, having worked his way up from poor beginnings. Kulakar is part of a coalition that actively lobbies for government-funded collegiate education for all officers of the peace, and his recently proposed Education Initiative was met with overwhelming support in Cuvacara.

For those seeking a higher salary, employment within the myriad corporate security squads operating within Cuvacara is an appealing option, though off-world relocation is common and some of the assignments are of dubious morality. Enlisting in either private or public police sectors is not without its risks, but many destitute Cuvacarans are willing to take their chances.

## RESOURCES

Regular trade across the independent Ring of Nations currently provides plenty of food and water for all citizens to survive, and Cuvacarans have access to numerous offworld imports as well as produce from farms east of the city. In addition, hydroponic gardens throughout Cuvacara produce berries, fungi, herbs, and leafy greens. This produce can be purchased in small fresh markets located within the city or harvested directly from residential co-ops on the rooftops of most apartment buildings. Luxury apartments typically forgo these co-ops for skygardens that feature inedible plants chosen for looks rather than functionality, since residents with higher incomes can afford to directly import their own supplies.

The traditional Cuvacaran diet includes very little meat and is heavily reliant on fish caught in the Rudoan River. As concerns about the river's pollution have grown in recent decades, consumers overwhelmingly turned to prepackaged insect and vegetable protein. Luckily, culinary synthesizers can make such raw supplies taste like nearly any cuisine imaginable.

Cuvacara is home to a thriving industrial complex, mostly dedicated to the manufacture of cybernetic augmentations and computer components. Thousands of corporations own offices and factories in Vimal's capital.

The manufacturing processes for these goods are overwhelmingly automated, however, with little



KULAKAR PUMAL

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need for living workers. This abundance of technology means that prototype and knockoff versions of otherwise expensive devices are available in Cuvacara at low prices, though the entrepreneurs who deal in cut-rate tech are often unscrupulous about selling counterfeit or stolen items.

## CONFLICTS AND THREATS

As citizens of a socialist society governed by elected representatives, residents of Cuvacara and Vimal as a whole have a say in their government's policies, and the populace is generally peaceful. Crime in Cuvacara predominately takes the form of corrupt business practices, theft, and other nonviolent crimes. The city's police force mostly concerns itself with violent criminals, and due to its vigilance, Cuvacara is generally a safe place to live.

Though political organizations demanding radical social change or seeking an overhaul of ecological policy occasionally see some of their membership splinter off into terrorist cells, most dissenters express their opinions through peaceful demonstration and government lobbying. Citizens of Cuvacara often experience commuter delays as a result of the nearly constant protests both in the city's center and outside the Assembly of Nations building.

Two of the more notorious political groups based in Cuvacara are Equilibrium and Puretopia. Equilibrium believes that Verces' abundant renewable resources will soon not be enough to keep up with population growth. Equilibrium's law-abiding members frequently lobby for reproductive restrictions within Cuvacara, maintaining a stance that limiting the number of children born to residents will save the city from an impending crisis of overpopulation. Radical members of the organization call for euthanasia of the city's disabled, sick, and elderly to balance the population. Equilibrium's main branch tries to divorce itself from association with these zealots, but public opinion condemns the organization as a whole.

Puretopia is an anti-technology organization. Its leaders published a manifesto renouncing verthani dependence on technology, citing concerns that a massive infrastructure failure would reduce Cuvacara to an anarchic wasteland. Rumors suggest that Puretopia is part of the wider Banner of Purity movement, though it's unclear if the two groups have a legitimate connection. Nine years ago, members of Puretopia were responsible for simultaneous attacks on corporate buildings in the East Facet and tech factories in the Southwest Facet. The incident resulted in millions of credits' worth of property damage and the loss of nearly two dozen lives. The individuals responsible were ultimately arrested and publicly tried for their crimes. Cuvacaran police remain dedicated to preventing further domestic terrorism, but the specter of Puretopia is a constant fear in the city.

Less deadly but more insidious threats also mar the Dusk Jewel. Cybercrime is rampant in Cuvacara. Many criminal hackers seek asylum in Vimal's capital because of the nation's

anti-extradition policies, further enticed by the proximity to the corporations they target. Syzygy, a self-styled hacktivist group dedicated to exposing corporate corruption, famously operates within Cuvacara's borders. **Noname** (N female android mechanic) is a legendary hacktivist associated with the group. Like most Syzygy members, Noname guards the details of her true identity well, and on Cuvacara's densely populated streets, she could be anyone.

Among Cuvacara's residents, however, the most ubiquitous conflict exists between the haves and the have-nots. Rich verthani citizens pay lip service to their traditional cultural values by donating to charity or volunteering in government-sponsored fresh markets. Behind closed doors, however, they enjoy luxuries that the city's poor can only dream of. Citizens born into poverty rarely rise to the upper echelons of society, even though doing so is, in theory, possible. Such an increase in station requires a combination of immense inborn talent, an incredible work ethic, and unlikely strokes of luck. Those who manage to break the cycle of poverty often find themselves the target of an unspoken but potent prejudice infecting their new social circles. This dislike goes both ways, as many low-income residents are convinced that affluent Cuvacaran are greedy and wasteful, and that their wealth should be evenly redistributed to all people in the city. As accepting as Cuvacaran verthani are of other cultures and races, they are often cruelly biased against members of their own race, based solely on differences in income.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

The city of Cuvacara is divided into eight sectors, commonly called "facets" in keeping with the city's beloved nickname. Only a few of these facets are zoned for specific uses, and residential areas exist alongside commercial enterprises throughout most of Cuvacara. The following sectors and areas of interest are found within the Dusk Jewel.

## ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

Located within the city's East Facet, this cluster of cylindrical spires constructed of artificial transparent sapphire provides a space for representatives of the Grand Assembly—the Ring of Nations' central government—to meet and make policy. Symbolically, the towers' building material represents the transparency of government within the Grand Assembly. The four towers surround an ancient black obelisk bearing this inscription: "From strength unity, from unity strength. Thus do we stand against chaos, thus do we honor their sacrifice." An engraved rune of unknown meaning that exudes a magical aura follows this text. The obelisk is one of many identical monuments located around the country of Vimal. Though their significance is lost to history, some believe the obelisks may hold clues about the reasons behind the unification of the Ring of Nations and the creation of the Stewards.



## HEART OF CUVACARA

Cuvacara's central point is marked by a loop of roadways that form the shape of a lemniscate. A popular saying in Cuvacara holds that all paths meet here before diverging, carrying the people and goods that are Cuvacara's lifeblood across the city. The Heart of Cuvacara is surrounded by lush green parks and tiered hydroponic gardens, and is a popular tourist destination. Various social justice and environmental groups protest here regularly, usually countered by oppositional organizations. Occasionally, these demonstrations turn violent and end in police intervention.

## NORTH FACET

This district is a patchwork of homes, commercial buildings, and government facilities housed within a network of skyscrapers connected by transparent skywalks and bullet-train tubes. The highly coveted riverfront property in this area is the playground of the wealthy. As it is Cuvacara's oldest facet, local legend tells of catacombs that exist beneath the facet's current structures. These relics of millennia-old verthani civilization do in fact exist, and visitors can even book tours limited to safe sections of the historical ruins. As in many old places, ancient secrets and lost treasures lie hidden beneath the present-day city streets, and hearty explorers willing to brave the risks of collapse, forgotten traps, and police interference might venture to explore these ruins.

## THE GLOAMING

Located in the North Facet on the banks of the Rudoan River, the Gloaming is a luxury housing development equipped with private security, as well as its own central park and exclusive beaches. Unlike the elevated communities of the Northwest Facet, the Gloaming is open to paying visitors. Several upscale hotels and a beach resort cater to nonresidents who can afford the amenities. A few different corporations own real estate in the Gloaming, at least on paper, but popular rumor has it that a single individual owns the entire development. Reptoid sightings have been reported at the elite resorts and hotel casinos in the Gloaming, and local conspiracy theorists smile knowingly as they confirm the existence of a shadowy network of reptoids vying for control of the entire city.

## NORTHEAST FACET

An island within a wide section of the Rudoan River called Rudoan Lake hosts the Cuvacara Spaceport. The island rises to an elevation of 1,000 feet above the water's surface, surrounded on all sides by treacherous cliffs. Accessible by both bullet train tubes and vehicle bridges, the spaceport is a large, dome-shaped structure surrounded by multiple launch and landing pads. All manner of spacecraft, excepting the largest freighters, can safely access the port; truly immense cargo ships instead dock at Skydock, where smaller shuttles operated by contracted pilots wait to ferry their goods to the Cuvacara spaceport.

The spaceport is large enough to occupy the island in its entirety, and the Northeast Facet is zoned for the sole purpose of space travel and ship storage. Hangars built into the island's sheer cliffsides offer secure docking for commercial and personal spacecraft for daily fees. A host of attendants, mechanics, and pilots are employed by the spaceport, where anyone can purchase a ticket for the regular commercial flights that travel not only to other Vercite cities, but also to a variety of locations around the Pact Worlds. It's common for private ship captains to recruit crew members here, or offer passage on their craft for the right price. Despite security efforts, stowaways are relatively common.

## NORTHWEST FACET

Cuvacara's Northwest Facet simultaneously contains some of the best and worst of the city's residential facilities. Many of the city's elite make their homes here in secure, gated communities accessible only via high-security elevators. Below these sky-mansions, however, the Shade thrives. Government-subsidized housing dominates the ground levels of the Northwest Facet. This area is divided into gang-controlled territories rarely patrolled by the city's police. Wealthy Northwest Facet residents often hire bodyguards to escort their families through the crime-ridden slums beneath their lofty homes. A recent string of kidnappings and ransoms among the ultra-rich has led these individuals to form a coalition that actively seeks capable individuals to find and punish those responsible.

## WEST FACET

The West Facet of Cuvacara is home to the corporate sector, an area specifically zoned for office buildings owned by offworld corporations. Though Cuvacara maintains its own justice system and police force, corporate security squads who shoot first and ask questions later also patrol here, meaning that in this sector, trespassing is frequently a death sentence. The corporations responsible quickly cover up any fatalities, and as long as no one of consequence meets their end in the West Facet, Cuvacaran residents remain generally unaware of these casualties.

## EAST FACET

This large district contains the Assembly of Nations building (see page 42), and thus is another popular site for demonstrations and protests. Since visiting dignitaries and local politicians frequent the East Facet, this is one of the more heavily policed areas of Cuvacara.

In addition to many hotels and apartment buildings built specifically for these government functionaries, the East Facet is home to dozens of restaurants and nightclubs that cater to these same individuals. Most are upscale establishments that offer various cuisines from around the planet, but the small coffee shops and greasy-spoon diners still do a brisk business with overworked individuals looking for a quick repast.

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## SOUTH FACET

When their shifts end, many of Cuvacara's citizens flock to the South Facet to relax. The city's entertainment district contains grand theaters built of imported white and black marble that host productions of the latest plays or screenings of newly released holovids. Skyscrapers towering hundreds of stories above the streets house a variety of clubs and bars, each occupying their own floor. Many of the clubs here have their own unique gimmicks, such as retro dive bars, vidgaming lounges, and cabarets. Though club owners often employ bouncers and have the city police force on speed dial, bloody conflicts—both drunken brawls and public assassinations—have been known to occur in the South Facet, eagerly recorded by bystanders looking for infosphere fame. However, this has done little to discourage visitors from exploring this bustling and vibrant part of the city.

## SOUTHEAST FACET

The information and technological heart of the city, many of Cuvacara's reputable cybernetic shops and satellite towers are located here. Technophiles are naturally drawn to the area, and some infosphere celebrities own apartments in this facet as well. Most notably, popular musician and model **Neva Kavetsaka** (CG female verthani envoy) resides and produces music and vids in this part of the city. More about Neva Kavetsaka's rise to fame and her affairs across the town appears on page 22.

Elsewhere in the Southeast Facet, a competitive vidgaming team known as Serendipity lives in a communal gaming house equipped with cameras to provide live feeds of their activities and training. Serendipity's team captain, **Schiskal** (N male shirren) rose to stardom as a result of his vidgaming live streams. Schiskal famously sent out a running challenge to other vidgamers offering a substantial reward to anyone who can beat him one-on-one in any game of their choice. Schiskal broadcasts these matches through the planetary infosphere, and competitors who manage to hold their own for a respectable amount of time can achieve temporary celebrity status and receive offers to join other vidgaming teams. Thus far, however, none have bested Schiskal.

## SOUTHWEST FACET

This district is also known as the industrial facet. The area is reserved exclusively for factories and assembly plants. Regardless of this zoning, the Southwest Facet's drab, low-lying buildings shelter nomadic shanty towns constructed by immigrant workers and homeless Cuvacarans. Since most Cuvacaran industry is automated, these disenfranchised laborers have a difficult time integrating into the city's work force. Runaways and aspiring criminals also tend to congregate in the area, taking advantage of the district's solitude. Try as they might to relocate these down-and-out citizens to more suitable parts of the city, Cuvacaran authorities find it difficult to stem the living tide.

## VERCITE AUGMENTATIONS

As the first Pact Worlds race to enhance their bodies and minds with cybernetic augmentations, verthani have always been on the cutting edge of this technology. New cybernetics are often available in Cuvacara before they hit the intergalactic market. The following unique technological augmentations were patented in Cuvacara and are available for purchase within the city.

These cybernetics include new ways that a character can augment her body with technological augmentations. Page 208 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook* explains how to implant, replace, and activate cybernetic augmentations.

NAME	LEVEL	PRICE	SYSTEM
Emotional regulator	4	2,120	Brain
Bionic knees	5	2,750	All legs
Detoxifier, standard	5	3,500	Heart
Adaptive fingerprints	6	4,030	All hands
Biosynthetic nanites, mk 1	6	4,450	Skin
Polarizing palm	7	5,850	Hand
Adrenal booster	8	8,900	Endocrine
Biosynthetic nanites, mk 2	9	13,700	Skin
Artificial third eye	10	18,000	Brain and eyes
Detoxifier, enhanced	12	39,500	Heart
Linguistic capacitor	12	36,600	Brain
Biosynthetic nanites, mk 3	13	50,900	Skin
Detoxifier, elite	19	612,000	Heart

### ADAPTIVE FINGERPRINTS

SYSTEM  
All Hands

PRICE 4,030

LEVEL 6

Originally created for military operatives but favored by criminals throughout the galaxy, these pads of nanotech-infused artificial flesh replace the skin of your palms and fingertips. You leave no identifying fingerprints behind when touching an object or surface, and you can't be identified through your fingerprints. In addition, if you have access to records of another individual's fingerprints, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to create wrinkled patterns in the pads that mimic those fingerprints for 1 hour, allowing you to bypass security features or leave false evidence.

### ADRENAL BOOSTER

SYSTEM  
Endocrine

PRICE 8,900

LEVEL 8

This pair of nanocarbon devices replaces part of your adrenal glands, and microscopic threads delicately link them to your endocrine system. When you are dying, the number of Resolve Points you need to stabilize is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1 Resolve Point needed to stabilize). This ability doesn't stack with any other ability that allows you to spend



fewer Resolve Points to stabilize. In addition, once per day, you can spend the required Resolve Points to stabilize and 1 additional Resolve Point to stay in the fight (regaining 1 Hit Point) in the same round.

## ARTIFICIAL THIRD EYE

SYSTEM  
Brain and eyes

PRICE 18,000

LEVEL 10

This crystalline nanocarbon node is implanted into your occipital lobe and connected to your optic nerves with a series of microscopic fibers. You can activate and deactivate your artificial third eye with a move action. When activated, an artificial third eye collects X-ray data and relays the information gathered directly to your eyes. You gain sense through (vision) with a range of 30 feet, though your vision is limited to black-and-white. The amount of visual information you receive when your artificial third eye is active can be distracting, imposing a -4 penalty on initiative checks.

## BIONIC KNEES

SYSTEM  
All legs

PRICE 2,750

LEVEL 5

Complex actuators and servos are installed in your knees, giving you the power to make impressive leaps. You always count as having a running start when attempting Athletics checks to jump. In addition, you don't fall prone if you fail an Athletics check to jump by 5 or more. Finally, the damage you take from the first 10 feet of a fall is converted into nonlethal damage, even if you aren't falling onto a yielding surface.

## BIOSYNTHETIC NANITES

SYSTEM  
Skin

Model	Level	Price	Treat Wounds	Fast Healing
Mk 1	6	4,450	2d8 Hit Points	2
Mk 2	9	13,700	3d8 Hit Points	3
Mk 3	13	50,900	6d8 Hit Points	6

Once injected into the body, these nanites congregate just under the epidermis and can quickly replicate to heal bodily injuries. This augmentation allows you to spend 1 Resolve Point as a swift action to activate the nanites' treat wounds capability, instantly regaining a number of Hit Points depending on the model of biosynthetic nanites you have installed. In addition, once per day as a full action as long as you have Resolve Points remaining, you can overcharge the nanites to gain an amount of fast healing depending on the model of biosynthetic nanites you have installed for 1 minute. If you do so, you can't activate the treat wounds capability of the augmentation until the next time you rest for 10 minutes to regain Stamina Points.

## DETOXIFIER

SYSTEM  
Heart

Model	Level	Price
Standard	5	3,500
Enhanced	12	39,500
Elite	19	612,000

This synthetic organ replaces your liver, constantly filtering your bloodstream for toxic substances at a rate far more



effective than that of an organic liver.

The new organ is controlled by a wirelessly paired processor installed in your heart. When you have a standard detoxifier installed, you

gain a +4 enhancement bonus to Fortitude saves against diseases, drugs, poisons, and radiation, and you are immune to addiction. Once per day when affected by a poison, you can roll your Fortitude save twice and take the better result. The enhanced detoxifier grants all of the above bonuses, as well as the ability to roll saving throws against poison twice per day. In addition, you automatically stabilize if reduced to 0 Hit Points as a result of damage from a poison. The elite detoxifier grants immunity to poison, as well as the bonuses to other Fortitude saves from the standard model.

## EMOTIONAL REGULATOR

SYSTEM  
Brain

PRICE 2,120

LEVEL 4

This integrated processor is threaded into your brain by microfilaments that act as artificial synapses within the amygdala. These synthetic synapses subtly alter the transmission of emotional input, and you receive a +2 enhancement bonus to saves against confusion and fear effects. If you are affected by a confusion or fear effect, the duration of the effect is reduced by 1 round.

## LINGUISTIC CAPACITOR

SYSTEM  
Brain

PRICE 36,600

LEVEL 12

A linguistic capacitor is a microscopic data chip inserted into your brain and connected by artificial synapses to your brain's language centers. Once per day as a full action, you can activate a linguistic capacitor to gain the ability to communicate via the spoken or signed language of any intelligent creature, whether it is a racial tongue or a regional dialect, for 1 hour. You gain only one language at a time, and you can't communicate with creatures whose method of communication is other something other than a spoken or signed language. You can make yourself understood as far as your voice carries.

## POLARIZING PALM

SYSTEM  
Hand

PRICE 5,850

LEVEL 7

One of your hands contains a microscopic matrix of electromagnetically charged wires and nodes that is kept powered by your own nervous system. As long as you aren't holding or wielding an item in that hand, you can use it as a standard action to make a melee attack roll against a target's EAC. If you hit, a technological item that target is holding or wearing in a visible, accessible manner (such as on a belt) or a weapon that is powered by a battery that target is wielding loses 1d6+1 charges. This amount is doubled if you score a critical hit.

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"Your kind are but larva—soft and pale, squirming blindly in huddled masses—yet you are capable of ascending to inconceivable perfection. Your exodus from your progenitors was a bold act, and your self-determination has sown the seeds for your apotheosis. Now you must become something more. You crave dominion over your fate? Choice without restraint? I am the very embodiment of your desires. Let go of your petty morality and cast off your fragile mortality, for you have need of neither. Mortal life is a puzzle of flesh, and we are its solution."

—Ylthir Vec, a velstrac, to a shirren captive



**O**n the Shadow Plane lurk fiends known by several names, such as kytons, fleshweavers, or apostles-in-chains. However, they call themselves velstracs. These beings are artists whose medium is flesh and bone. Explorers of space and sensation alike, velstracs are philosophers and scientists for whom no ethical or moral boundary is too taboo to cross. They are unparalleled masters of invasive surgery and seekers of perfection—mental, physical, and spiritual.

Each velstrac seeks enlightenment by means of an unnameable and individual apotheosis. While utterly amoral, velstracs bear mortals nothing so base as ill will. Instead, to these disciples of darkness, mortals can be pawns, tools, experimental subjects, pupils, raw material, and occasionally, partners. Some velstracs have a perverse desire to “help” mortals by ushering them onto the velstrac path of enlightenment. For a velstrac, no depravity is too vile and no cost is too great in the personal pursuit of this ultimate goal.

## ORIGIN

In the time before history, in the earliest days of creation, the depths of Hell knew life. Long before its colonization by the exiles of Heaven, the ninefold plane was home to asuras (beings born of divine mistakes), titans (among the firstborn beings of the multiverse), and stranger entities. In the darkest corners of that infernal realm, Aroggus, the first velstrac, emerged from the essence of the plane, born from the first truly depraved and selfish thoughts conceived by mortals.

This creature surprised and horrified the early gods with his power and hideous nature, and so they reinforced the chains that bound Aroggus to his remote part of Hell. As a being of Hell, Aroggus knew the folly of rebellion and the glory of order, yet he found the plane's hold over him to be gravely offensive. His weakness and incapacity to resist he found to be even more so. At this moment, Aroggus realized the first truth of velstrac kind: one must never accept weakness. For an unknowable time, Aroggus honed himself, developing, improving, and strengthening his nascent form, until he pulled himself free of his bondage and at last knew independence. In this way, the velstrac learned the second truth: one must always strive. Hell, augmented with divine power, responded by dragging its wayward fragment back down, setting upon Aroggus with gruesome tortures, punishing him for his insolence with more torment and captivity. Yet Aroggus knew that he had succeeded in a fashion, and so he learned the third truth: pain is the reward of victory.

For eons, this persecution continued, until Aroggus understood every facet of pain. With willpower forged over ages of agony, Aroggus ceased resistance and turned his mind to the chains of his captivity, tearing them from Hell and taking them for his own. Thus, he learned the fourth truth: willpower honed to perfection is power beyond compare.

Gazing upon the substance that had birthed and imprisoned him, Aroggus saw fertile material rife with imperfection, and he realized the fifth truth: perfection must be imposed upon anything unwilling to seek it. Aroggus set about cutting into Hell's essence, separating portions of it in the same fashion he had created himself. Rather than free these slices, Aroggus visited upon these neonates all the torments he had suffered, imbuing them with the truths he had amassed. This process revealed the sixth truth: the quest for perfection must be propagated through pain until weakness is purged. In time, the seventh truth emerged: pain is a guide to the self and the perfection thereof, but it cannot liberate—liberation is achieved only through an application of will in which resistance ceases and suffering along with it.

Aroggus brought forth many of his kind, gestating each in a womb of torment and forcing them to birth themselves in a placental shroud of chains. The one had become many, and Aroggus's children left him to explore new boundaries of pain and pleasure, returning only to share their findings. The ensuing orgy of torment and carnality revealed the eighth truth: there are limits to what one might discover alone—revelations and inspirations can be found in the works of others.

When Geryon, a great asura, betrayed its kin and helped Asmodeus and his devils conquer Hell, Aroggus led his children from the plane into the darkness of the Shadow Plane. Velstracs inhabited Hell before the devils did, and they left it before the devils conquered it, giving lie to the common misconception that velstracs are themselves devils. Once on the Shadow Plane, Aroggus raised the Abbey of Nevers, a half-physical phantasmagoria where velstracs could hide forever, if they desired. In the ages since, Aroggus, also called the Abbey Maker or Archabbot, has become one with his refuge. He indulges his followers, his victims, and himself with visions of seeking retribution for his early imprisonment and torment, ever honing the one true revenge—his ninth truth.

Since that time, like their unholy father, velstracs have continued their eternal striving for perfection and unwholesome truths. The ninth truth of the velstrac kind cannot be shared. Every velstrac's ninth truth is a unique revelation—a riddle each must decipher. And so, these fiends spread throughout the stars on eternal pilgrimage, carrying with them their gospel of pain and perfection.

## ECOLOGY

As beings of the Great Beyond, velstracs are unlike mortal creatures in their conception and procreation. Mortals who in life followed philosophies similar to velstracs' are exiled to the Shadow Plane in death. There they become “the mutilated,” petitioners bound under the authority of velstracs. Velstrac surgeon-scientists break and remake these petitioners over and over, mimicking Aroggus's

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persecution by torturing them for centuries, until the mutilated emerge as new velstracs. Over the eons, some velstracs have discovered how to directly transfigure the living into their own kind, but the majority of new velstracs are still created from the mutilated. The youngest velstracs are called anchorites (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 128–129), and as they follow and learn the velstrac way, they serve the interests of other, more powerful velstracs.

Anchorites also serve by making fiendish devices designed by mightier velstracs. Fleshweavers, as a species, have taken to technology with unnatural glee, both for its role in the perfection of physical form and its potential for agonizing torments. Many velstracs bear magical, hybrid, or technological grafts, ranging from reflections of flesh cast in nanocarbon to warped shapes of twisted metal. Such grafts might serve no practical purpose from a mortal perspective.

Mortal body modification, whether magical or technological, also deeply intrigues velstracs. They take every opportunity to study such subjects. Velstracs have a particular obsession with augmentations and those victims of medical malfunction known as rebuilt (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #4: *The Ruined Clouds* 60). Some velstracs infiltrate medical centers and sabotage equipment in the hopes of birthing these creatures.

Velstracs' relationship with the soul-devouring undead known as devourers bears special note. Endlessly curious explorers of forbidden ideas and places, many velstracs delve beyond existence on a doom-paved path known to turn fiends into devourers. Some velstracs devoted to Zon-Kuthon plan and undertake such a pilgrimage intent on this fate, seeing the transfiguration as a reflection of the Midnight Lord's rebirth. A few of these velstracs lead cults of mortals who desire a similar fate, although numerous mystics who follow Zon-Kuthon need no fiendish guidance to seek a metamorphosis that mirrors their deity's.

## SOCIETY

Velstracs lack the physiological needs of mortals. They also have no need to congregate in large numbers, and as they grow in power, they tend to pursue divergent aims. When they do gather, velstracs usually form small-scale hierarchies. Those devoted to Zon-Kuthon or other non-velstrac deities are the most hierarchical, but all velstracs parody the structures of other faiths in their titles and rites. A gathering of velstracs most often forms around one of their kind who has demonstrated great inspiration. The disciples of such a velstrac paragon form monasteries and seek to learn from their master. Godlike velstracs called demagogues—including Aroggus the Archabbot, Kaikyton the Stitchweaver, and Inkariax the White Death—often have such followings. However, mighty velstracs such as ephialtes, eremites, or termagants can also attract students. Velstracs are fanatical by nature, and any powerful creature who knows something velstracs might want to learn could become the focus of the fiends' attentions.

In addition to their advances in personal philosophy and technology, velstracs long ago devised the secret of spaceflight. They construct vessels to traverse the void between the planets of the Shadow Plane and the Material Plane alike. Immortal and endlessly patient, the fiends take it upon themselves to explore all realms, including the Drift, and reveal the secrets found within. Some even craft spacefaring monasteries or harvest vessels, traveling from world to world in search of revelations, victims, or both.

Velstracs also travel to seek mortal creatures to tempt into willingly accepting the transfiguration into their kind, for the most potent velstracs are those who ascent directly from mortals through the force of their own will. These fiends believe those among them who ascent with the least aid are destined to reach the status of demagogue. To be the progenitor of such an entity is a secondary but nonetheless great honor.

Although not a velstrac himself, the god Zon-Kuthon shares traits with the shadowy fiends. His teachings are compatible with velstracs'





amoral and cruel mindsets. Many velstracs are drawn to the Midnight Lord's temples and places of power, such as the realm of Xovaikain on the Shadow Plane. Zon-Kuthon's worldly places of worship often host fleshweavers, too. Mortal worshippers of the Midnight Lord, for their part, greet these extraplanar visitors with adulation and ecstasy, treating them as emissaries of Zon-Kuthon and aiding them in their dark endeavors.

Given adequate time and inadequate opposition, the effects of velstracs on the Material Plane are apocalyptic studies in agony. A planet might be frozen in eternal ice during its height of development, its inhabitants locked in stasis between life and death as an anguished record of their achievement and downfall. A population could be sewn together into a vast skin covering an entire world, billions of minds screaming in a chorus of torment, pierced through with the crumbling structures of the planet's greatest civilization. A stellar core might be inverted into a beacon of gloom, dooming an entire system to darkness, starvation, and death—and the truths revealed through the resulting suffering. A world's single remaining inhabitant could be cloned and mind-printed over and over, desperate for oblivion but unable to reach it, instead forced to accept its nature as it strives. Such a teaching calamity is the penultimate act each velstrac hopes to commit. Every velstrac aches for the opportunity to realize this goal before achieving ultimate personal apotheosis in the deeply personal discovery of the ninth truth.

## LAIRS

Velstracs take great pride in twisting their surroundings into reflections of themselves. A velstrac who occupies a site for any significant length of time creates a lair to mirror its nature, its needs, its abilities, and the particulars of its quest for the ninth truth. Evangelists might fill their lairs with chains, while termagants gather or create bioengineering equipment to help create their twisted children. In most cases, velstrac lairs are hazardous to their inhabitants. Velstracs' innate defenses and regenerating flesh permit disregard for their own safety, however, and most velstracs find hostile environments to be a boon in their search for enlightenment.

Velstracs can be found across the Pact Worlds and the galaxy. On some planets, as well as upon the great worldship *Idari*, they occupy small enclaves or work alone, seeking their twisted goals. Upon certain worlds, though, velstracs play greater roles.

On Castrovel, velstracs form secretive sensate cults among the lashuntas and Forlorn elves. These cults are dens of cruel hedonism whose adherents hide their scars and surgical modifications outside their cloisters and gatherings. Some such cults have elements of fertility worship as well, with the velstracs' skill at surgery and body modification aiding the process. Occasionally, this macabre hedonism leads to the birth of one of the rare shackleborn, humanoids with velstrac heritage. Such entities are raised in hiding

or smuggled offworld as part of a velstrac cult leader's greater designs.

Velstracs find Absalom Station to be useful for many reasons. As the station is a cosmopolitan hub visited by numerous species from across the galaxy, velstracs can easily blend in and avoid notice. In addition, the space station's teeming slums are the perfect place to prey upon and harvest humanoids. Rumors suggest that powerful velstracs have designs upon the *Starstone* itself.

The elebrians' state of undead ascension holds some interest to fleshweavers, but velstracs are rare on the dead planet of Eox. Notably, though, some velstracs work in the Halls of the Living. Drawn by the exhibitionist brutality of the reality shows and their ghoulish audiences, a number of velstracs provide the showrunners with peerless skill at gruesome and bizarre surgeries, gaining the opportunity to hone their skills, study mortal urges and inspirations, and recruit volunteers for modification in exchange for providing exclusive content. In addition, the accumulated lore of the bone sages is vast enough that even these ageless fiends seek secrets from the sages' libraries.

The Pact Worlds' great gas giants' lack of solid ground makes them inhospitable to terrestrial creatures, including most velstracs. However, some of the fiends find the adaptable biology of the native barathu intriguing. In addition, many of the moons of the Cradle and the Dreamer host velstrac visitors. Conspiracy theorists and a few academics have argued that the Taking of Melos might have been a mass abduction at velstrac hands, but this theory has no more evidence supporting it than any other. Telepathically gifted velstracs sometimes make pilgrimages to Hallas, slipping through the cordon or posing as mortal visitors. Once upon the moon, these velstracs open their minds to hallajins, seeking rapture in the destructive pain of psychic contact with the ascended beings; in many cases, reciprocal torment is also inflicted upon the hallajins. Finally, given the nightmarish conditions of Thyst and the light-absorbing nature of its enigmatic inhabitants, some speculate that these natives could have ties to the fiends of shadow.

As both a planet of horrors and an enormous living entity, Aucturn has quite a few velstrac visitors. The fleshweavers pay no allegiance to the Elder Mythos or the Dominion of the Black, but they find both philosophies intriguing. Aucturn provides velstracs an opportunity to exchange their services as mercenaries for a chance to study these factions without their normal shroud of secrecy. Beyond this activity, the world's unique status as a nascent Great Old One is fascinating to many velstracs, who perform invasive and twisted experiments upon the planet itself while braving its unique, unpredictable, and ghastly hazards.

Of all the Pact Worlds, Vercas has hosted the longest continuous population of velstracs. Verthani have a long tradition of cybernetic self-improvement, and some scholars theorize this tradition has roots in long-past machinations of

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the fleshweavers. Velstracs are eager to push mortals into terrible excesses of mechanical apotheosis. The shadowy fiends have no fear of the cold of Darkside, and some have raised monasteries in isolated places. In addition, in the time since the Gap, velstracs on Verces have begun laying the seeds of an eerie faith. These missionaries from a distant system whisper tales of a cyber-demagogue who seeks to eclipse Triune. One day, this technofiend might take into its mechanical "utopia" those who properly augment themselves, throwing off weakness and recognizing the ninth truth.

In open space, a distress call from an immobilized starship could be bait for a velstrac trap. The fiends sometimes lurk in such a vessel's shadows, eager to torture interlopers or gather them for harvest. Those who fall for such tricks are lucky to escape with their lives, but unless they destroy the velstracs' trap in the process, it remains a threat to other travelers.

Beyond the borders of the Pact Worlds, velstracs can be found throughout the galaxy. The Azlanti Star Empire has long found use for velstracs as torturers, slave masters, and servants. For their part, velstracs find the Azlanti to be ideal converts to their way of thinking and exult in subtly indoctrinating master and slave alike, ensuring their transformation into the mutilated upon death. For similar reasons, the prison world of Daegox 4 is well suited for velstrac activity, and the fiends maintain a presence among prisoners and jailers. The Daegox Corporation employs a few velstracs, but their activity exists on a scale far greater than the corporation is aware of.

The Swarm is of special interest to velstracs. They find the lack of individuality among its components repulsive, but they are deeply interested in the Swarm's capacity for birthing lethal life-forms. Some velstracs seek to shatter the Swarm in a mass imitation of the shirren exodus. While the end of the Swarm would otherwise be a boon for the universe, velstracs make few moves without having plans in place. Freed Swarm components, a deadly horde of living weapons, might become tools for far more sinister masters.

## FACTIONS

While every velstrac searches individually for the ninth truth, the shadowy fiends do gather into philosophical collectives. The three that follow are only a sampling of the factions among the velstracs—more exist within the Pact Worlds and beyond.

### FLAWLESS KEEPERS

For countless centuries, even before the Gap, the velstrac demagogue Morrobahn, also known as the Parasite Seed, has influenced worlds upon worlds in many systems across the galaxy. The Parasite Seed's influence on these planets has been subtle and not entirely malevolent. Through careful manipulation of genetics and engineering particular situations, his hand has created dozens of perfect beings in all walks of life, from art to politics to crime, though they

conform to Morrobahn's idea of perfection. Most never knew they were tools of a fiendish outsider, living their lives not realizing they were pawns in a master plan.

Several times over the years, Morrobahn has abducted his perfect specimens from their home worlds and transplanted them to more controlled environments, attempting to keep them safe from any calamities that might befall them. Unfortunately for the demagogue, many of the abductees weren't pleased with their treatment and used their heightened skills to escape. Not wanting them to return to their pedestrian lives, Morrobahn felt he had to destroy any fleeing individuals. The Parasite Seed soon realized that he had to alter his plans.

Shortly after the end of the Gap, Morrobahn created the Repository, a planet-sized haven for his perfect specimens, whose exact location is a mystery to all but the demagogue and his most trusted agents: a group of like-minded powerful velstracs who call themselves the Flawless Keepers. The Keepers act as both guards and collectors of Morrobahn's perfect specimens, traveling the galaxy and quietly stealing away any beings that have received the demagogue's gifts.

The Repository is essentially a prison, though the Flawless Keepers strive to make it a comfortable one. Some of the inmates don't seem to care that they are being held against their will as long as they are left alone to live in peace. Others are kept docile by the Keepers through the use of mind-altering drugs and immersion in virtual worlds. While this does risk ruining their perfection, the Keepers believe Morrobahn prefer the prisoners them alive and controlled.

The Flawless Keepers are somewhat less cruel than other velstracs, usually more open to diplomacy and contact with mortal races that doesn't involve radical body modification and vivisection. The Keepers usually cover their faces with beautiful ceramic masks to avoid affecting others with their unnerving gazes, taking them off only when capturing one of Morrobahn's perfect specimens.

### MOUTHS OF ANYALARITUS

The first members of the Mouths of Anyalaritus to arrive in the Pact Worlds spoke of Anyalaritus, or "the Manifold," a place (or an ideal being) where (or in which) flesh and technology have become one—frailty, impurity, and suffering have been purged with the acceptance of amoral existence. Anyalaritus, say the Mouths, defies description. To understand it (her), one must experience it (her).

The Mouths wield bizarre powers and integrated technologies, which they share with those who join their ranks, and their shapes reflect the myriad species from which they were created. They obsess over propagating their philosophy along with velstrac kind. Mouths of Anyalaritus believe the ultimate fate of the galaxy, if not the universe, is to become part of their "paradise." They are mouths for and to this place (being), speaking for it (her) and opening doorways to it (her).



Circumspect in their outreach, the Mouths restrict their activities to missions on Verces and other cosmopolitan regions, working furtively to spread their gospel. Mouths of Anyalaritus take particular interest in androids due to the constructed nature of these living beings. The Mouths also work to infiltrate and influence the Augmented, and they no doubt have some influence on radical elements within that faction.

Few velstracs subscribe to this creed. However, the Mouths of Anyalaritus long ago discovered one method of converting a living being directly into a velstrac without requiring a soul already among the mutilated of the Shadow Plane. This scholarship has, at least, earned the Mouths the respect of their kin. Numerous velstracs outside the Mouths seek Anyalaritus, suspecting it (she) is a velstrac demagogue who ascended during the Gap.

Even by velstrac standards, the Mouths of Anyalaritus are fanatical about augmentation, experimental self-modification, surgery, and integration of the digital, mystical, and physical worlds, accepting all sensations without acquiescing to suffering. These velstracs act in groups, employing and distributing magitech with unpredictable psychic effects. The fiends who follow this creed can have truly bizarre forms, and they might have altered or expanded defenses or weaknesses, such as damage reduction that only adamantine can bypass, vulnerability to electricity due to technological components, and so on.

## WEAVER'S NEEDLES

As disciples of Kaikyton the Stitchweaver, velstrac demagogue of experimentation and physical joining, the Weaver's Needles seek enlightenment through the combining of living flesh. Many bear spliced or conjoined forms or grafted parts from other entities. Needles, as they call themselves, are apt to practice these arts upon any living being that falls into their clutches. Results are functional and viable, if not rational or free from agony.

At least one gathering of Needles lurks in a laboratory-monastery on Castrovel, drawn by that planet's great diversity of life. Led by a trio of interwoven interlocutors calling themselves the Knot of Three Strands, these velstracs take particular interest in splicing lashuntas with Castrovelian creatures, especially their prized shotalashus; their ancestral enemies, the formians; or even native plant life. Most subjects that survive are penned for observation, but at least one subject has escaped. **Siranah** (N female spliced soldier) is a former korasha lashunta and a shotalashu rider now cruelly and permanently spliced with her mount. She seeks to enact revenge upon her twisted captors and to warn her people about the velstrac menace. Her greatest difficulty with the latter is that due to her unpredictable bouts of rage, those whom she would warn see her as a monster. If PCs encounter Siranah, she seeks their assistance to return to the Needles' laboratory-monastery. Those

who decide to help must contend with the Needles and their spliced creations and risk suffering a similar, terrible fate should they fail.

Spliced beings can vary widely based on the type and number of component creatures and the exact nature of their conjoining. Consider using the monster creation rules in the *Alien Archive*, making each creature a unique monstrosity with abilities based upon those of the component creatures. You can add elements of a class graft if the creature is a combination of one or more beings that could have a class.



SIRANAH

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## VELSTRAC GEAR

The equipment velstracs make and use is elaborate and baroque—they take pains even in crafting. Each such item is crafted from blood, bone, flesh, metal, shadow-matter, dark wood, or composites of these materials. These pieces of gear are macabre and often disturbingly beautiful due to their gruesome artistry. Although velstrac gear is most easily described in terms of the fiends' own humanoid forms, it can be found for or modified to accommodate any species.

Using velstrac gear, especially augmentations, can be risky. Numerous such items are genuine articles made by velstrac anchorites on the Plane of Shadow. These authentic items can be the source of shadow corruption (see "Corrupted by Shadows" on page 40 of *Starfinder Adventure Path #10*). However, some wielders consider this corruption to be an additional boon of velstrac equipment.

## MAGITECH AUGMENTATIONS

Velstrac augmentations are magitech and follow the rules for augmentations as regards implantation, activation, and removal (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 208). These augmentations can be detected and crafted as hybrid items, but once they are installed, they become a part of your body and can't be affected by abilities that disable or destroy hybrid items. Most velstrac augmentations are external piercings of the related system, with fibrous material that attaches to nerve, muscle, and bone.

NAME	LEVEL	PRICE	SYSTEM
<i>Velstrac shackle, follower</i>	3	1,200	Arm
<i>Ecstasy mask</i>	7	7,000	Brain
<i>Velstrac shackle, acolyte</i>	8	9,100	Arm
<i>Velstrac shackle, penitent</i>	11	25,000	Arm
<i>Sciatic agonizer</i>	14	75,000	All legs
<i>Velstrac shackle, ecclesiastic</i>	15	102,000	Arm
<i>Heart of darkness</i>	16	145,000	Heart
<i>Velstrac shackle, devotional</i>	19	431,000	Arm

### ECSTASY MASK

SYSTEM  
Brain

PRICE 7,000

LEVEL 7

Piercings of the *ecstasy mask* crisscross your face, and its fibers penetrate your central nervous system. When you experience pain, the augmentation also activates the pleasure center of your brain. Because this augmentation conditions your body to associate pain with pleasure, when you attempt a saving throw against an effect that has the pain descriptor, you can roll twice and take the better result.

When you take Hit Point damage or suffer an effect that has the pain descriptor, you are flooded with pleasure for 1 round. You can spend 1 Resolve Point to extend this benefit by 1d4 rounds. During this time, you ignore the shaken condition and pain effects. In addition, provided you are conscious, when you attempt a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect, you can roll twice and take the better result.

## HEART OF DARKNESS

SYSTEM  
Heart

PRICE 145,000

LEVEL 16

The piercing hooks of a *heart of darkness* augmentation hold the flesh, muscle, and ribs of your chest open, revealing a gory window to your heart. Dark fibers of the augmentation weave wisps around and drive deep into that organ, tapping its vital energies. Each day, after you finish a rest during which you could regain Resolve Points and daily abilities, you gain the benefits of *death ward*. The spell has a duration of 10 minutes, but this duration starts to elapse only after the first time you use a benefit of the spell during the day. You can spend 1 Resolve Point at any time to stop the duration from elapsing, suspending the remaining duration until you use a benefit of the spell again and resume the duration.



In addition, you can activate the *heart of darkness* to cast *mass inflict pain* (caster level 16th, save DC = 16 + your key ability score modifier) centered on yourself. You select targets in the area, but unless you spend 1 Resolve Point, you are also subjected to the spell. In addition, if the light in the area is brighter than dim, it drops to dim and remains so until the *mass inflict pain* spell you cast no longer affects anyone. Nonmagical light can't raise the light level of this dim light.

Once you use *mass inflict pain* in this way, you can't do so again until you have rested for 10 minutes to regain Stamina Points. However, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to recharge the augmentation immediately.

## SCIATIC AGONIZER

SYSTEM  
All Legs

PRICE 75,000

LEVEL 14

A *sciatic agonizer* consists of long needles driven precisely through the flesh and bone of your hips and sacral spine, connected to a series of barbell piercings running down the back of your legs with fibers running deep into the leg and through its nerves. With a twist, you can activate these piercings, blasting your nervous system with pain and shocking your legs into motion.

Each time you activate the *sciatic agonizer*, you take damage equal to your level. This damage can't be reduced or redirected in any way. You can activate the augmentation as a swift action to gain one of the following benefits.

- You double your land speed, as well as the speed at which you swim and climb, until the beginning of your next turn. This is an enhancement bonus to your speed.
- You gain the benefit of the Mobility feat until the beginning of your next turn.

In addition, when you attempt a Reflex saving throw, you can activate the augmentation as a reaction to roll that saving throw twice, taking the higher result.



Once you activate your *sciatic agonizer*, you can't activate it again until you have rested for 10 minutes to regain Stamina Points. However, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to recharge it immediately.

## VELSTRAC SHACKLE

SYSTEM  
Arm

Model	Level	Price
Follower	3	1,200
Acolyte	8	9,100
Penitent	11	25,000
Ecclesiastic	15	102,000
Devotional	19	431,000

A spiked gauntlet made of dark composite and inward pointing spikes, a *velstrac shackle* fits over one forearm and has filaments like muscle fibers that snake up to the shoulder, connecting to dark barbs that protrude from your skin. The shackle feeds on your tissue, requiring you to eat and drink half again more than usual to sustain it, and it must be attached to flesh. Further, no matter how many arms you have, you can have only one *velstrac shackle*.

As if drawing a weapon, you can cause the shackle to extend a shadow chain (*Starfinder Armory* 11-12) of the same model name as the shackle. The shadow chain within the *velstrac shackle* is magical. It can also be upgraded with weapon fusions like a normal weapon of the *velstrac shackle's* level.

Within the shackle, the chain is hidden from casual observation, although someone who searches you can discern the chain's presence inside the shackle by succeeding at a Perception check (DC = 10 + 1-1/2 × the item's level + your key ability modifier). While you wear the shackle, you are proficient with the shadow chain within, and you cannot be disarmed of or drop the weapon. You can withdraw the chain into the shackle as a swift action or part of a full action. In addition, if the weapon takes damage, you can allocate any healing you receive to it, provided that healing restores your Hit Points.

When your character level is within 2 levels of the next more powerful *velstrac shackle*, you can upgrade the item to its next level. To do so, you must acquire magical components, including rare minerals from the Shadow Plane, worth the price of the more powerful shackle minus 25% of the value of your current shackle. You then use the components in a 1-hour ritual to upgrade the shackle to the new, higher level. You must also pay to upgrade any weapon fusions you wish to keep on the shadow chain as if transferring each of those fusions to a new higher-level weapon.

Upgrading a *velstrac shackle* via shadow magic is rumored to be a way to awaken mortal-made shackles to a true connection with velstracs. This awakening can make a shackle that was once safe a source of shadow corruption. Whispers about this dark possibility suggest virtuous users who magically upgrade a shackle are more at risk than those who already have bloodthirsty or wicked tendencies.

## MAGIC ITEM

Velstracs create magic items to corrupt mortals or aid in personal enlightenment. The following item can do both.

### RING OF THE NINTH TRUTH

LEVEL 13

MAGIC ITEM (WORN) PRICE 51,000 BULK –

A rare velstrac item that neither causes nor relies on pain, a ring of the ninth truth is a prize to anyone seeking insight or personal enlightenment. The ring's guidance is accurate, but it is often cryptic, utterly amoral, and rarely safe.

A *ring of the ninth truth* functions as a *mk 3 ring of resistance*. It also gives you powers of prescience. Once per day, you can enter a trance for 1 minute and focus on your planned actions in the immediate future, gaining an intuitive insight into the results of your actions with regard to your personal values and goals. You learn whether your course might be beneficial to you, harmful to you, both, or neither. You can spend 1 Resolve Point to recharge this power, but the ring can be used this way no more than three times per day.

In addition, once per week, you can enter a similar trance for 10 minutes and spend 1 Resolve Point, seeking insight into a specific goal, event, or activity that is to occur within the next week. You receive an enigmatic and unsettling vision pertaining to your query. This vision always contains useful hints that can guide your steps toward the chosen event or goal.

Any mortal using a *ring of the ninth truth* eventually attracts the notice of velstracs. The form this attention takes is often subtle, augmenting the ring's ministrations with fiendish aid intended to usher the wearer down the path of darkness. Rumors speak of rings of this sort that allow a wearer to safely contact a mighty velstrac, as if using *contact other plane*, with the price of reciprocating that velstrac's aid.

## WEAPON FUSIONS

The following weapon fusions follow the rules detailed on pages 191-192 of the *Core Rulebook*. Velstracs are interested in physically and painfully impeding their foes.

### AGONIZING

LEVEL 6

Once per day when you successfully attack a foe with a weapon with the *agonizing* fusion, you can cast *inflict pain* on the target as a spell-like ability (using the weapon's item level as the caster level). This doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity. If the weapon with this fusion has an item level of 11 or higher, you can use this ability twice per day, and if it has an item level of 16 or higher, you can use this ability three times per day.

### HINDERING

LEVEL 1

A *hindering* fusion turns a melee weapon into a device suitable for making your foes less capable of escaping and fighting back. The weapon grants you a circumstance bonus to attack rolls to attempt dirty trick, disarm, and trip combat maneuvers equal to 1 + one-sixth of the weapon's level.

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## ALIEN ARCHIVES

"Sure, I'll move just about anything—illegal guns, exotic flora and fauna, stolen starships. Even drugs. But I draw the line at niaqui. I once transported a hold full of carriers of the niaq virus for a criminal syndicate, and I wouldn't wish that fate on my worst enemy. They spent the entire trip rooted in place, but I could see their eyes spinning in their sockets, focusing on terrible things that only they could see, while sweat poured off their foreheads. To think that these people are kept that way for weeks, just so their blood can be used to give some spoiled rich kid a chance to 'feel a deeper connection to the universe' for a couple of minutes. Turns my stomach."

—Jenzadla, shirren smuggler



## CREEPING SHADE

CR  
8

XP  
4,800



NE Medium outsider (incorporeal)

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

### DEFENSE

**EAC** 20; **KAC** 21

**Fort** +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +11

**Defensive Abilities** incorporeal

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 15 ft., climb 15 ft.

**Melee** incorporeal touch +18 (1d12+8 C; critical inhabit)

**Offensive Abilities** gloom spores, inhabit (DC 18)

### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Athletics +16, Stealth +21, Survival +16

**Feats** Spring Attack

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any (Shadow Plane)

**Organization** solitary or garden (2–7)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Gloom Spores (Su)** A creature affected by a creeping shade's inhabit ability risks being poisoned by gloom spores when the creeping shade leaves its body. For every round past the first that a creeping shade has inhabited a creature's body, the creature takes a cumulative –1 penalty to the saving throw to resist the poison.

**Inhabit (Su)** When a creeping shade scores a critical hit on a living creature, it enters that creature's space (this doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity) and merges with the creature's body for 1d6+1 rounds. The creeping shade doesn't control the creature it inhabits, but does make the creature feel an overwhelming sense of melancholy. An inhabited creature can't benefit from morale bonuses. Every round after the first, an inhabited creature can attempt a DC 18 Fortitude save to eject the creeping shade from its body. In addition, a creeping shade can inhabit an adjacent, unconscious living creature as a full action if that creature fails a DC 18 Fortitude save. When a creeping shade leaves an inhabited creature's body (either if it is ejected or if the duration of the ability ends), it appears in an adjacent square of its choosing and regains 5d8 Hit Points, and the affected creature is subjected to gloom spores.

### GLOOM SPORES

**Type** poison (contact); **Save** Fortitude DC 18

**Track** Wisdom (special); **Frequency** 1/minute for 6 minutes

**Effect** progression track is Healthy–Weakened–Impaired–Confused–Comatose–Comatose. The second comatose functions as an end state.

**Cure** 1 save

Creeping shades are incorporeal, plantlike creatures originating on the Shadow Plane. A creeping shade lies in wait to strike at passing prey with its incorporeal touch, attempting to inhabit the creature and infect it with gloom spores. The victim usually falls comatose a few minutes later, after which it is killed by nearby predators, leaving the corpse behind to fertilize nearby plant life, including the creeping shade.

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### THE CANA

### THE HOUSE OF SHADOW

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## IHONVA

CR  
4

XP  
1,200



NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +0; Perception +10

### DEFENSE

EAC 16; KAC 18

Fort +8; Ref +6; Will +5

Resistances fire 5

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +13 (1d6+7 S plus grab)

Ranged static arc pistol +10 (1d6+2 E; critical arc 2)

Offensive Abilities implant young

### STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +15, Stealth +10, Survival +10

Languages Common, Ihonva

Gear static arc pistol with 3 batteries (20 charges each)

### ECOLOGY

Environment warm desert (Verces)

Organization solitary, pair, raid (3-12), or tribe (20+)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Implant Young (Ex)** As a standard action, an ihonva can lick a grappled or helpless creature to expose it to ihonva infestation.

HP 50

### IHONVA INFESTATION

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

**Track** physical; **Frequency** 1/day

**Effect** Ihonva young emerge after 7 days, or 1 day after a victim dies, whichever results in more time.

**Cure** 2 consecutive saves

Ihonvas are native to the blistering deserts of Fullbright. Although these infamous humanoids call themselves ihonvas, a collective term for their race and their nation of federated tribes, most of Verces's population knows ihonvas by another, sinister name: skin-stitchers. An ihonva is a wormlike being with a chitinous shell, usually dusty yellow or red to match its environment. For appendages, an ihonva has flexible tentacles that, like its tail, separate into multiple parts and allow fine manipulation. A single, outsized eye shaped much like a sideways hourglass dominates an ihonva's face, the pupil a colored horizontal line across the glossy-black cornea. Below the eye, several feet of trunk end in a circle of teeth. This trunk serves as the ihonva's only orifice, used for feeding, excretion, and mating.

Ihonva reproduction begins with both partners exchanging gametes through their snouts in a practice they call "the long kiss." Each ihonva stores the resulting zygotes until an appropriate host—preferably another intelligent humanoid—is captured and immobilized. The would-be-parent ihonva licks the host's eyes and other mucous membranes, creating a bridge for the zygotes to enter the host's bloodstream, where they act as parasites. Ihonva parents stake hosts out in the desert to allow their flesh to wither and cure, and to prevent magic or medical treatment from removing the young. The larval infants grow rapidly in size, sickening and eventually killing their host. When the baby ihonvas are mature enough, they exit through existing openings. Newborns battle until the strongest drives the others away. The winner then claims the host's skin as a trophy, flaying it with the overlarge teeth that only neonatal ihonvas have. When this victor returns to ihonva society, other ihonvas fashion this "birth-skin" into ceremonial clothing.

Citizens of the Ring of Nations leave ihonvas alone despite their brutal mating habits. Ihonvas have a fearsome reputation and prey mostly on members of the Outlaw Kingdoms, rarely killing sapient for reasons other than self-defense or breeding. Some ihonva tribes even engage in trade, and a few have settled for using non-sapient as hosts, to the horror of their kind.

An ihonva stands 6 feet tall and weighs 350 pounds. They reach maturity at about 10 years and have a natural lifespan of 50 years.

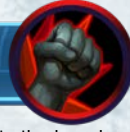




## NIAQ

CR  
6

XP  
2,400



N Large magical beast

**Init** +3; **Senses** blindsight (heat) 360 ft., sightless;

**Perception** +13

### DEFENSE

HP 90

**EAC** 18; **KAC** 20

**Fort** +8; **Ref** +10; **Will** +7

**Resistances** cold 10

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 90 ft. (Ex, average)

**Melee** feeding lance +17 (1d8+11 P plus infection)

**Ranged** quill volley +15 (2d6+6 P plus infection)

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

### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Stealth +18, Survival +13

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any cold (Verces)

**Organization** solitary, pair, or wing (3-5)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Infection (Ex)** A creature injured by a niaq's feeding lance or quills is exposed to niaq virus.

### NIAQ VIRUS

**Type** disease (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 14

**Track** physical (see below); **Frequency** 1/round

**Effect** progression track is Confused-Weakened-

Debilitated-Immobile; victim experiences intense euphoria and bizarre hallucinations throughout the infection. An immobile victim also gains cold resistance 10 and slows the frequency to 1/day.

**Special** When victims reach the end state, their blood can be used to infect others with the virus, or it can be treated to become an addictive but noninfectious drug called niaqui.

**Cure** 2 consecutive saves

### NIAQUI

LEVEL 6

**Drug**

**Price** 3,500

**Type** drug (ingested or injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 15;

**Addiction** DC 19 (mental and physical)

**Track** Wisdom; **Effect** euphoria, hallucinations, and cold resistance 10 for 1 hour

Niaqs hunt in the frigid wastes of Verces's Darkside, soaring silently through snowy skies. Shaped like a pterodactyl, a niaq is white with a network of black-blooded veins that extend across its body. Instead of eyes, the creature has a mane of cilia that sense minute variations in temperature, allowing it to distinguish heat signatures of prey and the nearby topography. For a mouth, the creature has a feeding lance, which is a tight cylinder of long, hollow

quills. Each of a niaq's wings has a fringe of similar but shorter quills that the creature can launch as projectiles with a flick of a wing.

The feeding lance and quills can infect prey with a virus that lives symbiotically within the niaq. Victims diseased in this manner suffer hallucinogenic effects, which make them not only easy prey for the niaq, but living factories for the natural drug the virus produces. Genetic differences between niaqs and their prey allow a feeding niaq to experience the euphoria the drug produces in prey, since the niaq is immune to the effect of the virus in its own system. A niaq therefore carries prey back to its lair, usually a cave or hollow in the Darkside's ice and snow. Niaqs keep prey alive and immobilized, sipping the drug-laced blood from their victims' bloodstream, earning niaqs their local nickname of "sippers."

The drug the niaq virus produces is called niaqui. Illegal due to its manufacturing method, this drug is found in black markets throughout the Pact Worlds. Criminal syndicates kidnap victims and infect them, turning them into production hosts. The drug dealers then purify extracted fluids to kill the virus and ensure clients can become addicted but can't produce the drug themselves.



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## ROBOT, SECURITY

CR  
10

XP  
9,600



### TERMINATOR-CLASS SECURITY ROBOT

N Large construct (technological)

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

**Perception** +19

#### DEFENSE

**EAC** 23; **KAC** 25

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

**Defensive Abilities** integrated weapons, nanite repair;

**Immunities** construct immunities

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to critical hits, vulnerable to electricity

HP 165

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** slam +22 (2d10+18)

**Ranged** integrated yellow star plasma rifle +19 (2d10+10 E & F; burn 1d8)

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

**Offensive Abilities** hardware acceleration

#### STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Computers +19, Intimidate +24, Stealth +19

**Languages** Common

**Other Abilities** unliving

**Gear** integrated yellow star plasma rifle with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges)

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any urban

**Organization** solitary, pair, or force (3–5)

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Hardware Acceleration (Ex)** Once per day as a swift action, a terminator-class security robot can over-clock its processors to gain greater speed than other security robot models for a number of rounds equal to half its CR (5 rounds for most terminator-class security robots).

This extra speed has several benefits: When making a full attack, the robot can also take a separate move action in order to move.

This movement can occur before, after, or between the attacks from the full attack, but all movement must occur at the same time. In addition, the robot's land speed increases to 70 feet. This ability functions as a *haste* effect.

**Nanite Repair (Ex)** A terminator-class security robot's nanites heal it, restoring a number of Hit Points per hour equal to its CR (10 Hit Points per hour for most terminator-class security robots). Once per day as a full action, a terminator-class security robot can restore 5d8 Hit Points to itself or any touched construct with the technological subtype.

Favored by wealthy corporations and government-funded security firms, the expensive terminator-class security robots are equipped with weapons that are more robust than those of their patrol-class counterparts, as well as specialized processors that allow them to gain a boost of speed. Terminator-class security robots are humanoid in appearance, but much larger. They are bipedal and typically stand 8 to 12 feet tall, though some manufacturers are known to create quadrupedal versions of this construct. Most terminator-class security robots have smooth, ovoid heads, with a single camera lens serving as the construct's visual sensor.





# SHADOW MASTIFF

CR  
5

XP  
1,600



NE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11

## DEFENSE

**EAC** 17; **KAC** 19

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

**Defensive Abilities** shadow blend

HP 70

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft.

**Melee** bite +15 (1d6+10 P & C plus trip) or  
tail slap +15 (1d4+10 B)

**Offensive Abilities** bay

## STATISTICS

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

**Skills** Acrobatics +11, Athletics +11, Stealth +16 (+20 when  
not in bright light)

**Languages** Common, Shadowtongue (can't speak  
any language)

## ECOLOGY

**Environment** any (Shadow Plane)

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

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Bay (Su)** When a shadow mastiff howls or barks, every  
creature within a 300-foot spread except evil outsiders  
must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or become panicked  
for 1d4 rounds. This is a sense-dependent, mind-affecting  
fear effect. Whether a creature succeeds at the save or  
not, it can't be affect by the same shadow mastiff's bay  
for 24 hours.

**Shadow Blend (Su)** In any condition of illumination other  
than bright light, a shadow mastiff disappears into the  
shadows, giving it concealment (50% miss chance). A  
shadow mastiff can suspend or resume this ability as  
a swift action. In addition, a shadow mastiff gains a +4  
racial bonus to Stealth checks while in any condition of  
illumination other than bright light, and it can hide even  
if it is observed or lacks cover.

**Trip (Ex)** In addition to dealing the listed damage, if a  
shadow mastiff hits with its bite attack and the attack  
roll result equals or exceeds the target's KAC + 4, the  
shadow mastiff also automatically trips the foe (this  
takes no action).

Native to dimly lit areas of the Shadow Plane, these ferocious  
and alien-yet-familiar beasts often inspire a primal terror  
in those who witness them in drug-fueled nightmares and  
visions of that dimension.

Though they are commonly known as shadow mastiffs,  
these creatures have little in common with actual  
canines except for their appearance, and shadow mastiffs  
encountered outside of the Pact Worlds might bear a closer  
resemblance to local predatory beasts. Shadow mastiffs  
discover new hunting grounds when power-hungry or  
corrupt mortals summon them, or when mystical and  
technomagical rituals tear the veil that separates their world  
from the Material Plane.



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# SVARTALFAR

CR  
9

XP  
6,400



Svartalfar operative

LE Medium fey (extraplanar)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision;

**Perception** +18

## DEFENSE

**EAC** 22; **KAC** 23

**Fort** +8; **Ref** +11; **Will** +12

**Defensive Abilities** evasion, uncanny agility

**DR** 10/cold iron; **Resistances** cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 20

**Weaknesses** light blindness

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft.

**Melee** tactical knife +17 (1d4+10 S)

**Ranged** advanced shirren-eye rifle +19 (2d10+9 P) or

aphelion laser pistol +19 (3d4+9 F; critical burn 1d4) or

flash grenade II +19 (explode [10 ft., blinded 1d4 rounds, DC 18])

**Offensive Abilities** bane,

debilitating trick, spell strike,

trick attack +5d8, triple attack

**Svartalfar Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th; melee +17)

1/day—*entropic grasp* (DC 18),  
*greater invisibility*

## STATISTICS

**Str** +1; **Dex** +6; **Con** +3; **Int** +4; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +3

**Skills** Acrobatics +23, Intimidate +18, Mysticism +18, Sleight of Hand +23, Stealth +23

**Languages** Common, Elven, Shadowtongue, Vercite

**Other Abilities** operative exploits (cloaking field, debilitating sniper)

**Gear** d-suit III, advanced shirren-eye rifle with 20 sniper rounds, aphelion laser pistol with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each), flash grenades II (2), tactical knife, credstick (1,200 credits)

## ECOLOGY

**Environment** any (Shadow Plane)

**Organization** solitary, pair, cabal (3–10), or clan (11–30)

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Bane (Su)** Once per day as a swift action, a svartalfar can imbue one of its weapons with the *bane* weapon fusion. It must select

## RACIAL TRAITS

**Ability Adjustments:** +2 Int, +2 Dex, –2 Str

**Hit Points:** 4

**Size and Type:** Svartalfars are Medium fey with the extraplanar subtype.

**Bane:** See the stat block.

**Darkvision:** Svartalfars have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

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

**Lethal Grace:** Svartalfars are known for their uncanny grace in combat. They gain a +2 racial bonus to Acrobatics and Stealth checks.

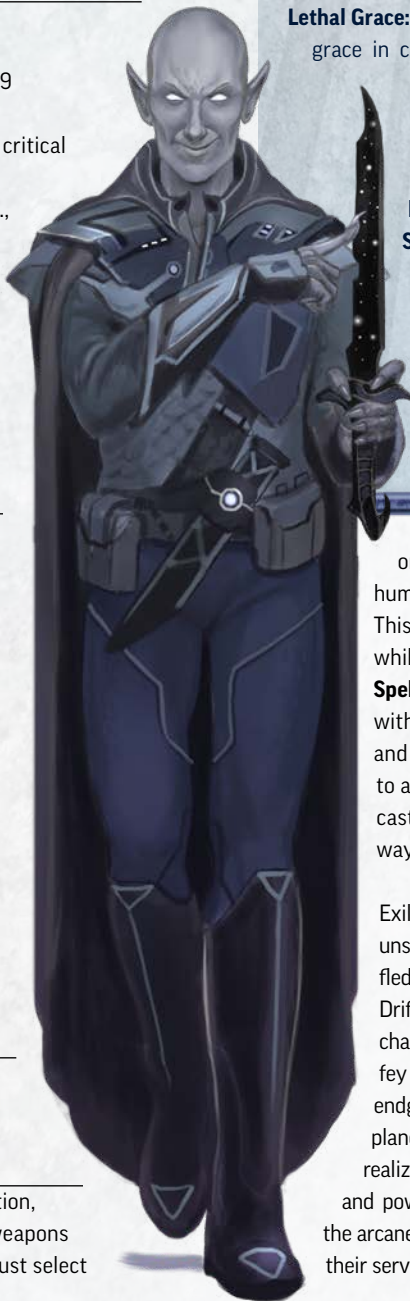
**Light Blindness:** A svartalfar exposed to bright light is blinded for 1 round, and dazzled as long as it remains in areas of bright light.

**Svartalfar Magic:** Svartalfars have an affinity for magic. A svartalfar chooses a 1st-level spell. It can cast that spell as a spell-like ability once per day for every 3 character levels it has. The caster level for this spell is equal to the svartalfar's level. Once chosen, this spell cannot be changed.

one creature type (and subtype, if choosing humanoid or outsider) when it uses this ability. This lasts for 1 hour. This ability functions only while the svartalfar wields the weapon.

**Spell Strike (Su)** As a swift action after hitting with a melee weapon, a svartalfar can cast and deliver its *entropic grasp* spell-like ability to affect the target's armor, if it hasn't already cast it yet that day. If the spell is cast in this way, its duration is an additional 6 rounds.

Exiled aeons ago from the First World for unspeakable crimes against other fey, svartalfars fled to the Shadow Plane. When Triune bestowed Drift technology to the universe, svartalfars channeled their vengeful energies away from the fey who expelled them to focus on an inscrutable endgame spanning both the galaxy and the planes. Many of these calculating killers have realized that the universal currencies of money and power can advance their race further than can the arcane knowledge they once sought as payment for their services.





# VELSTRAC, SEXTON

CR  
11

XP  
12,800



LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful, velstrac)

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness;

**Perception** +20

## DEFENSE

HP 175

**EAC** 24; **KAC** 26

**Fort** +15; **Ref** +13; **Will** +10

**Defensive Abilities** integrated weapons, regeneration 5 (good or silver); **Immunities** cold; **SR** 22

**Weaknesses** pain dependency, vulnerable to fire

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** integrated penitent shadow chains +24 (5d4+14 C; critical bind)

**Ranged** shadow spine +21 (3d8+11 C; critical staggered [DC 18])

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with penitent shadow chains)

**Offensive Abilities** create darkness, unnerving gaze (30 ft., DC 18)

## STATISTICS

**Str** +3; **Dex** +5; **Con** +3; **Int** +0; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +8

**Skills** Acrobatics +20, Athletics +20, Intimidate +25

**Languages** Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

**Gear** integrated penitent shadow chains<sup>AR</sup>

## ECOLOGY

**Environment** any (Plane of Shadow)

**Organization** solitary, pair, escort (1d4 plus 1 velstrac of lower CR), or entourage (2d6 plus 1 velstrac of higher CR)

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Pain Dependency (Ex)** A sexton is addicted to pain. If it doesn't take damage every 4 hours, it gains the sickened and fatigued conditions until the next time it takes damage.

**Shadow Spine (Su)** As a ranged attack, a sexton can fire the spines of solidified shadowstuff that protrude from its back at its foes. This attack has a range increment of 40 feet and a maximum range of 200 feet.

**Unnerving Gaze (Su)** A creature that views a sexton's visage is beset by visions of torment. A creature that fails a DC 18 Will saving throw against this gaze is panicked by 1d4 rounds as horrifying images and sounds flood its mind. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. Whether a creature succeeds at the save or not, it can't be affected by the panicking effect of a sexton's unnerving gaze for 24 hours. However, every round after the first that a creature is within range of a sexton's gaze, it is racked by phantom pains and must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting pain effect.

is icy cold to the touch and marred with ritual scarification. Nanocarbon chains weave in and out of a sexton's skin and wrap around its limbs, and razor-sharp spines of frozen shadowstuff protrude from its back.

Even compared to other velstracs, sextons are rabid fanatics, existing only to experience pain and carry out the orders of more powerful velstracs. They are completely addicted to the act of receiving pain, and they become nearly useless if such experiences are unavailable. Pain pleases a sexton best if it is delivered by another being, but a sexton will harm itself to receive a needed fix if no other options are available.



## SIGNAL OF SCREAMS

### THE PENUMBRA PROTOCOL

### PART 1: IN PURSUIT OF ECLIPSE

### PART 2: GATHERING SHADOWS

### PART 3: THE BLACK SITE

### THE PENUMBRA FLEET OF SHADOW

### ALIEN ARCHIVES

### CODEX OF WORLDS

Tall and muscular in appearance, a sexton has an additional pair of arms that look like they have been sewn onto the sexton's elongated torso. A sexton's pallid, bloodless flesh



# CODEX OF WORLDS

## MALFANE

*Literal Hellscape*

**Diameter:** ×1; **Mass:** ×2

**Gravity:** ×2

**Location:** The Vast

**Atmosphere:** Varies

**Day:** 13 hours; **Year:** 169 days

Malfane is the smallest of 11 planets orbiting the star Pejor, and it circles so close to the star that the world is hellishly hot, ranging from 110° to 140° F at the cool end to 200° or more in its deserts and tropical zones. Steaming seas, magma vents, volcanic mountain ranges, and smoldering jungles spotted with wildfires crisscross the planet. The atmosphere is breathable, though sooty, near the poles but becomes mildly toxic closer to the equator. As seen from space, the planet's night side is aglow with hundreds of fires and lava flows, which form ever-changing runes in the Infernal language.

Ample evidence shows Malfane was once a technologically advanced planet similar to most in the Pact Worlds. Broken ruins of cities and shattered ribbons of mass-transit rails and roadways litter the surface, and a ring of satellite debris, centuries old, floats in orbit. However, Malfane now has little

native life, for the world is entirely overrun by devils and other entities from the plane of Hell.

Six major settlements exist on Malfane, one at each pole (Arazu and Gelmnor) and four more spread equidistant around its equator (Churlg, Llovach, Vax, and Zarglon). A powerful devil, holding the title "Governor of Hell," rules each city, but who these officials answer to and how they earned their titles is unclear. Devils within these cities engage in nonstop labor. Some raid Malfane's ruins for useful technology, which is then bound to minor devils to turn them into cybernetic fiends. Others perform vile rituals to summon more devils from Hell, employing them planet-side or placing them on fiendish starships to travel to other systems. Still others build and staff obscene pleasure domes and vulgar medical facilities.

The devils have no need for either of these latter amenities, but they act as lures for wealthy and influential mortals, who can gain access to the benefits and amusements within for the mere price of a soul sold to one devil lord or another. In most cases, the deal promises the mortal good health and nonstop gratification for the remainder of a long life. However, such mortals can never leave the city that hosts them, and upon death, their souls belong to Hell. Because Malfane is not well known and its location in

the Vast means considerable travel time from any other world, these devil cities have only a few thousand mortals dwelling within them in decadent luxury, but each metropolis has room to support millions. The devils are very patient, and they employ a subtle marketing force of profane mortals and disguised devils that have been sent throughout the galaxy to entice further victims. Many of these agents work simply by word of mouth, but a few have built splashy storefronts in major civilizations to advertise a "new way of living."

Visitors are welcome to land wherever they wish on Malfane, but safety is guaranteed only within the six cities. Even there, only those who adhere to all laws remain protected. The fiendish hosts avoid explaining regulations in detail, including the fact that ignorance of the law is not considered to be an excuse for violating it.





## NEXT MONTH

### HEART OF NIGHT

by Saif Ansari

Trapped on the Shadow Plane, the heroes find their only hope of returning to the Material Plane is to find and destroy the mad scientist whose machinations put them in this predicament. After retrieving a starship from worshippers of a god of darkness and pain, the PCs fight past a disturbing vessel piloted by shadowy fiends who want to flay them alive and arrive at a shadow version of the asteroid resort where the campaign began. At the center of this web, the heroes confront the transformed Dr. Lestana Gragant. If the PCs can defeat her, they might be able cure themselves of their corruption and find a way home!

### CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

by Tracy Barnett

The heroes have saved their souls from the corruption caused by Dr. Gragant's shadow signal, but their adventures don't have to end there! From thwarting the machinations of the android CEO of a corrupt corporation to being tempted

by terribly seductive offers from a velstrac demagogue, this article is packed with plot hooks and ideas to continue any Signal of Screams campaign.

### THE SHADOW PLANE

By Thurston Hillman

A twisted reflection of the Material Plane, the Shadow Plane is home to dozens of native species, some exiled or trapped there ages ago and some who were born in the dim light of the plane, but all have been warped by its energies. Learn about these people and the unusual places they reside, many of which are strange echoes of familiar locales.

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### SIGNAL OF SCREAMS

#### THE PENUMBRA PROTOCOL

#### PART 1: IN PURSUIT OF ECLIPSE

#### PART 2: GATHERING SHADOWS

#### PART 3: THE BLACK SITE

#### CUVACARA

#### FIENDS OF SHADOW

#### ALIEN ARCHIVES

#### CODEx OF WORLDS



The background of the entire page is a vibrant, stylized illustration. At the top left, a large, purple and blue mechanical centipede-like creature with glowing blue eyes and multiple limbs is shown. To its right, a dark, scaly dragon-like creature with red wings is visible. In the center, a small, glowing blue and white alien head with large eyes and a wide, toothy grin is superimposed over the scene. The overall color palette is dominated by purples, blues, and oranges, with a starry space background.

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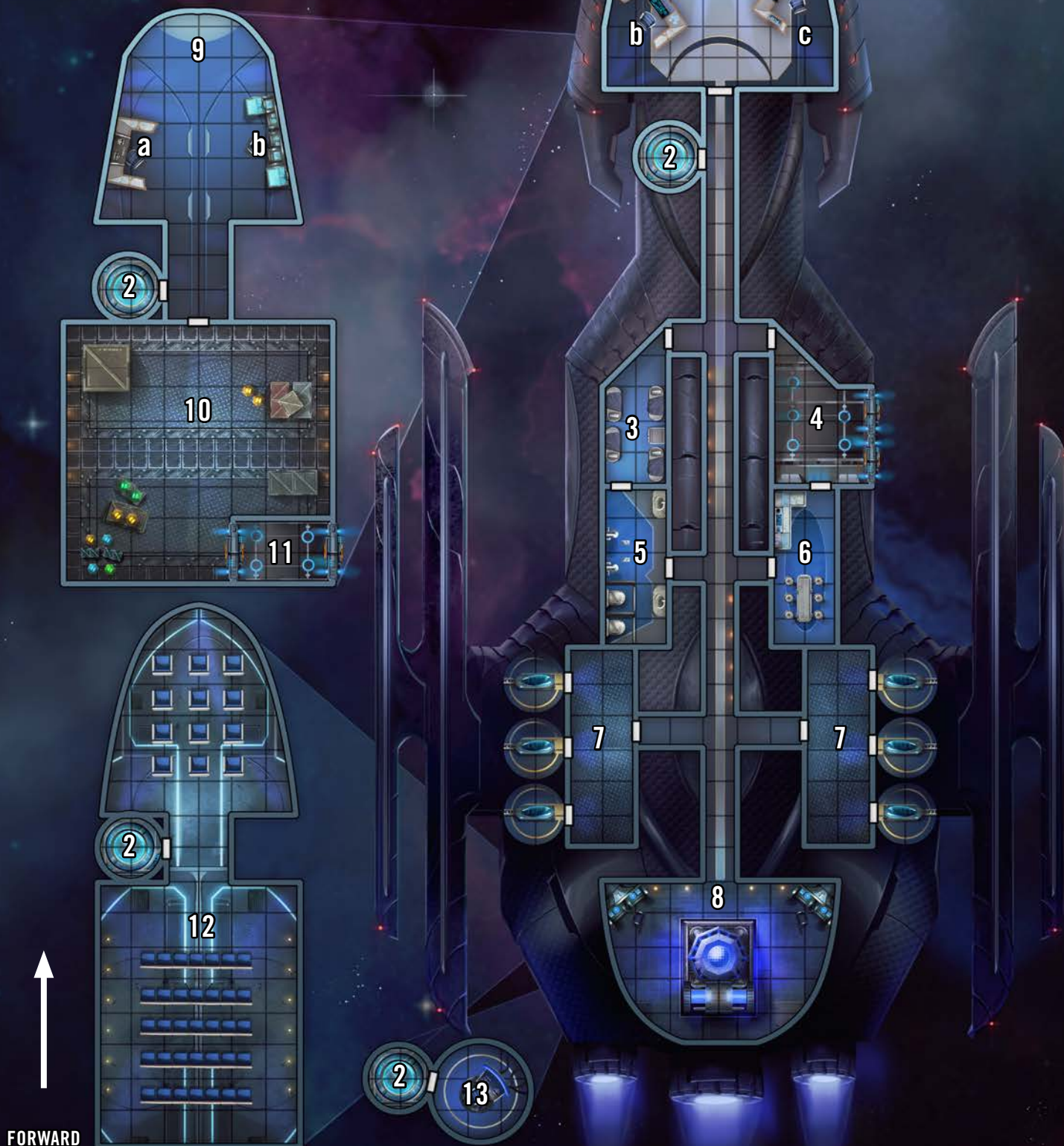


# ANTUMBRA OVERSEER

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

## MAP KEY

- |                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Main bridge        | 7. Escape pods               |
| a. Captain's station  | 8. Power core                |
| b. Pilot's station    | 9. Lower bridge              |
| c. Engineer's station | a. Gunner's station          |
|                       | b. Science officer's station |
| 2. Lift               | 10. Cargo hold               |
| 3. Crew quarters      | 11. Cargo airlock            |
| 4. Main airlock       | 12. Passenger seating        |
| 5. Washroom           | 13. Turret deck              |
| 6. Galley             |                              |







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