



STARFINDER[®]



ATTACK OF THE SWARM!

ADVENTURE PATH

HIVE OF MINDS

BY THURSTON HILLMAN



SUSKILLON AURORA

TIER 10

Huge cruiser

Speed 6; **Maneuverability** average (turn 2); **Drift** 1

AC 22; **TL** 23

HP 230; **DT** 5; **CT** 46

Shields heavy 240 (forward 60, port 60, starboard 60, aft 60)

Attack (Forward) mass driver (2d6×10; 20 hexes)

Attack (Port) light particle beam (3d6; 10 hexes)

Attack (Starboard) light particle beam (3d6; 10 hexes)

Attack (Turret) persistent particle beam (10d6; 20 hexes)

Power Core Nova Ultra (300 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Basic; **Systems** advanced medium-range sensors, crew quarters (common), mk 4 armor, mk 5 defenses, mk 3 duonode computer; **Expansion Bays** cargo hold, escape pods (12), general science lab, medical bay, tech workshop

Modifiers +3 any two checks per round, +4 Computers (sensors only), +1 Piloting; **Complement** 40 (minimum 20, maximum 100)

CREW

Captain Bluff +18 (10 ranks), Computers +14 (10 ranks), Diplomacy +18 (10 ranks), Engineering +16 (10 ranks), Intimidate +18 (10 ranks), Piloting +16 (10 ranks)

Engineer (1 officer, 10 crew) Engineering +20 (10 ranks)

Gunner (2 officers, 5 crew each) gunnery +15 (10th level)

Pilot (1 officer, 5 crew) Piloting +18 (10 ranks)

Science Officer (1 officer, 9 crew) Computers +18 (10 ranks)

Outfitted with top-notch computers, advanced sensors, and high-end science labs, the Aurora class of ships were vessels designed in peacetime for deep-space scientific research by Suskillon's government-funded astronautics organization, Skylead. Only two Auroras were ever built: the *Ranger* and the *Scout*. The *Scout* was first to launch, and it spent 10 years exploring the Suskillon system, advancing the fields of astronomy, stellar physics, chemistry, and life sciences. The *Ranger* was the first Suskillon vessel to leave the system and make contact with the Pact Worlds. The original crews of each vessel were honored upon their return to Suskillon, and they have all retired or passed away since the ends of their missions decades ago.

Both cruisers were in spacedock for repairs around Suskillon when the Swarm attacked. Many vessels were commandeered by the Suskillon Defense Force as other ships fell, and the *Ranger* and the *Scout* were modified for combat, with upgrades to both vessels' weapons, armor, and defense systems. Their crews are now mostly soldiers and SDF volunteers.

Despite their changed roles, the Auroras' scientific capabilities aren't going to waste. Military scientists and engineers aboard each ship are hard at work studying the aftermath of every battle and scrutinizing the Swarm from afar. Reports indicate these researchers are close to developing a breakthrough "antilife" starship weapon that will give the SDF an edge against the deadly biological starships of the Swarm. Unfortunately, most estimates for when this technology will become available aren't optimistic.

STARFINDER

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This book refers to another Starfinder product using the following abbreviation, yet this additional supplement is not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Starfinder hardcovers can find the complete rules of this book available online for free at sfrd.info.

Armory

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ON THE COVER

The Connection, the psychic embodiment of the Suskillon subcolony's link to the greater Swarm hive mind, rears its ugly head in this harrowing cover by artist Setiawan Fajareka.



ATTACK OF THE SWARM!

ADVENTURE PATH

HIVE OF MINDS

PART 1: INTO THE MINDSCAPE

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The PCs enter a bizarre mindscape that represents the Swarm hive mind. Called toward an echo of an ancient Hylaxian building, the PCs are able to establish a beachhead within the hostile landscape.

PART 2: A HISTORY OF LOSS

18

With the help of some allies, the PCs visit dangerous sites in the mindscape, empowering the *Crown of Hylax* to draw the attention of the metaphysical representation of the Suskillon subcolony's connection to the hive mind.

PART 3: SEVERING THE CONNECTION

29

With the mindscape fighting back against them, the PCs must defend their refuge against an onslaught before finally confronting the Connection!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Hive of Minds" is designed for four characters.

9

The PCs begin this adventure at 9th level.

10

The PCs should reach 10th level as they visit the various locations within the mindscape desert.

11

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

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Swarm is an insatiable force that threatens the known galaxy. By means of powerful psychic connections, the individual components of the Swarm remain in constant communication and act as a unified force. Though they are remorseless killers with a constant hunger, the fluke independence of the subcolony that became the shirren species has been a thorn in the side of the Swarm for centuries. Many shirren believe the Swarm desires vengeance for this rebellion, and they point to the recent assault on the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium as an attempt to destroy or re-assimilate shirrens.

After destroying a shirren world in the Vast, the Swarm discovered a possible way to gain a fraction of omnipotence that would make them unstoppable. By generating a semi-autonomous subcolony to retrace the path of the shirren exodus, the Swarm believes it can learn more about shirren independence and their re-established faith in the deity Hylax. This subcolony is "led" by an entity called the God-Host, a massive Swarm component engineered to absorb divine power and transmit it through the Swarm hive mind. The God-Host's search has brought the subcolony to the Suskillon system, where a holy relic—the *Crown of Hylax*—was crafted long ago. If the Swarm were to obtain this artifact, it would gain fantastic divine powers, but fortunately, the crown was moved to a comet monastery called the Forever Reliquary shortly after its creation.

In their efforts to stop the Swarm and save their home system, the PCs tracked down the comet known as the Prodigal Stone (where Hylax first revealed herself to the shirrens) and reached the Forever Reliquary within. The PCs underwent various trials to prove themselves to the monks there and affirm their devotion to Hylaxian ideals. However, once the tests were complete, the Prodigal Stone entered the Suskillon system and caught the attention of the God-Host's subcolony. As the Swarm descended upon the monastery, the abbot performed a ritual that would allow the PCs to physically pass into a psychic representation of the Swarm's greater hive mind consciousness. The monks believe the *Crown of Hylax* can somehow be used within this mindscape to disrupt the Suskillon subcolony in the physical world. This theory is correct, but the artifact must first be empowered with the weight of history.

Bringing the *Crown of Hylax* into this mindscape has an unintended side effect: the Forever Queen's own divine energies, channeled by the abbot to open the way, have caused a memory of the kucharn's former independence to manifest as a unique entity, along with echoes of several deceased

Hylaxian personalities. Unfortunately, it also attracts attention to the PCs as they explore this hostile and unusual terrain.

PART 1: INTO THE MINDSCAPE

At the end of the previous adventure, "The Forever Reliquary," the PCs were pulled into a surreal landscape representing the Swarm's hive mind. This adventure begins immediately after that event, with no time for the PCs to prepare or even purchase equipment. Much of this adventure emphasizes the utterly outlandish space the PCs find themselves in and their lack of external support. Be sure to play up these elements during the initial encounters, especially when the PCs question the use of resources during their time within the mindscape.

THE SWARM MINDSCAPE

The Swarm mindscape is a unique immersive mindscape that represents the telepathic connection between Swarm components across the galaxy. Though it was created by the Swarm's powerful psychic links, no individual Swarm creature has conscious control over its terrain or inhabitants. The mindscape creatures the PCs meet and do battle with here are a kind of mystical defense mechanism. In addition, as the PCs arrive physically within the landscape through the power of Hylax, their presence creates unintended ripples. The following entries describe this mindscape's traits. For more information on mindscapes, see the Mindscapes article on page 40.

Self-Contained Shape: The Swarm mindscape maintains the false appearance that it goes on forever, but instead it simply folds back on itself. Creatures attempting to exit the mindscape by walking beyond its borders find themselves re-entering the mindscape from the point they tried to exit. Nevertheless, the mindscape is thousands of miles across, much like a real-world desert.

Harmful Feedback: Injuries and conditions inflicted on the PCs or other creatures visiting the mindscape are real. The PCs' physical bodies are present in the Swarm mindscape, so the PCs' injuries are real, and any resources they use are expended as normal.

Normal Gravity: At first, gravity functions just as it does on the Material Plane. As the adventure progresses, the PCs can master their own relationship to the mindscape and learn to control their relative gravity.

Mutable Time: Time in the mindscape is not constant. It speeds up and slows down when compared to the passage of time on the Material Plane. The PCs likely get a sense of this from visions they receive from the Forever Reliquary. This also

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THE CROWN OF HYLAX

A PC might want to wear the *Crown of Hylax* once they get it, but until the artifact is empowered, it offers no particular benefits. A PC who puts the unpowered crown on their head feels a sense of peace, especially if they worship the Forever Queen, but nothing else. As the PCs perform activities within the mindscape, the artifact will grant the wearer (and those attuned to it) particular powers, as detailed on page 30.

allows the adventure to proceed at a pace that works for your particular players and their play style.

Normal Magic: There are no adjustments to magic cast within the mindscape.

ARRIVING IN THE MINDSCAPE

Due to their unique means of arrival, the PCs enter the Swarm mindscape fully healed and restored from their previous encounters. Their abilities and Resolve Points have been replenished, as though the PCs had taken a full 8-hour rest. In addition, if any of the PCs suffered from lingering ability damage, diseases, or poisons, those effects all end as they enter the mindscape. Because they are physically traveling into the mindscape, the PCs also bring their equipment with them. While the PCs may not know this at first, any consumable items they use in the mindscape are consumed as they would be on the Material Plane.

The PCs find themselves standing in a silver-hued desert with roiling fog touched by pastel colors. Read or paraphrase the following.

The smoky color of silver obscures this space entirely. Soon enough, colors begin to appear in the miasmic fog, dancing like muted wisps of painted air within the encompassing mist. The ground becomes tangible, each step or movement generating the telltale crunch of sand, and this sand has the same silvery coloration as the encompassing fog. Clicking noises can be heard off in the distance, though their direction and source remains a mystery. Many different odors assail the senses. One moment the air smells like cinnamon, while the next moment it switches to the salty smell of the sea.

The PCs' minds and senses require a few moments to adapt to this new and utterly alien landscape. As they do, the surrounding terrain gradually shifts in appearance. The all-encompassing fog is a physical manifestation of the PCs' own lack of knowledge regarding the mindscape, and it is also a representation of the "sleeping" state of the Suskillon subcolony's connection to the hive mind. A PC who succeeds

at a DC 27 Mysticism check can surmise what is happening, and that it will take some time before the PCs can get their bearings.

The fog acts as a *fog cloud*, except that it does not affect laser weapons, and mindscape creatures are immune to it. Wind temporarily disperses the fog in a given area, but the miasma reforms after 1d4 rounds. Since the fog is a mental effect, it can be penetrated by the mental signatures of other living creatures or mindscape creatures. Whenever a creature comes within 100 feet of a PC within the mindscape, that PC can attempt a Will save (DC = 10 + CR of the creature) to perceive that creature through the fog. Succeeding at this check allows the PC to see the creature as a glowing outline when it is farther than 5 feet away, allowing the PC to target that creature without any penalty up to 100 feet (though it still has concealment). If a PC fails a check to perceive a creature in this manner, they can take a standard action to focus on finding the target, allowing them a new Will save to view the creature.

EVENT 1: IMMUNE SYSTEM (CR 10)

While the PCs explore the fog, the Swarm's automatic response begins to stir. This encounter should occur after the PCs have spent a few minutes exploring the mindscape. Since this fight occurs in an open region of desert, there is no additional terrain, which should give the PCs a chance to get used to the rules for perceiving creatures within the mindscape fog.

Creatures: A pair of mindscape creatures patiently wait under the sands to ambush intruders. These beings are similar to Swarm mindreapers, but their purpose in the mindscape is more akin to that of an immune system that attacks foreign bodies, and they use their trepan analysis ability to disseminate information to the hive mind. When a PC first witnesses these creatures, they can attempt a Life Science check to identify them as mindreapers, though these mindreapers seem to be made of the same desert sand that stretches beneath them. A successful DC 28 Mysticism check identifies these creatures as being mindscape simulacra of Swarm components, with subtle differences in their abilities and purpose.

MINDSCAPE MINDREAPERS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

HP 105 each (page 56)

TACTICS

Before Combat The mindreapers patiently wait

underground, using Stealth to remain hidden within the silvery sand. Once a PC comes within 30 feet, one emerges close to the PCs, attacking a random target; the other surfaces farther away in the fog.

During Combat The mindreapers attempt to wear down opponents in combat as quickly as possible. The mindreaper who bursts out of the ground near the

party uses its melee attacks, while the mindreaper that emerges further away attempts to slow the PCs. The two continue to act in concert in this manner.

Morale Little more than animated antibodies, the mindreapers fight until destroyed. When destroyed, the mindscape mindreapers collapse into piles of silvery sand.

Development: Defeating the ambushing mindreapers repels the first instinctual attempt by the mindscape to seek out the reason for the PCs' intrusion. The PCs probably don't realize it, but their victory buys them time to further investigate their surroundings. This victory also alerts the mindscape entity called Independence to the PCs' presence in the mindscape.

The PCs begin hearing indistinct whispers, as if someone were faintly murmuring into their ears. These are the first attempts at communication by Independence, though the mindscape entity needs time to properly attune itself to the PCs' unfamiliar minds. While the exact words remain incomprehensible, even under magical scrutiny, the PCs have a sense of where the sounds come from and can follow them deeper into the mindscape.

EVENT 2: MENTAL MIRAGE (CR 9)

Regardless of whether the PCs follow the mysterious whispers, they eventually come across a strange and hazardous environment. This encounter doesn't require a specific map to run, though you may wish to place down a blank map to raise the tension.

This encounter begins when the fog ahead of the PCs parts slightly to reveal a familiar sight: a building that should evoke a feeling of comfort and safety for the PCs. Each PC sees a different structure, and it could range from a PC's childhood home to a fortified SDF base, depending on each PC's personality and backstory. Should the PCs talk to one another about what they see, it should become immediately obvious they are looking at different buildings. However, this mental mirage isn't easily defeated as that.

Hazard: A mental mirage is a mindscape hazard similar to the mirages seen in deserts on the Material Plane, but it psychically drains the minds of those who view it. A character that looks at the mental mirage must succeed at a DC 19 Will saving throw or gain the fascinated condition and take 1 damage to their Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma as the mirage saps their mind. While a character has the fascinated condition, they stand still, peering at the mirage, which seems to move ever closer with each passing round. An affected creature must attempt a new saving throw each round, and failure means they take 2 additional damage to their Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. A character that succeeds at the saving throw is immune to further mental mirages for the next 24 hours. This is a sense-dependent, mind-affecting effect.

A character can recognize what is happening to their allies with a successful DC 33 Perception or DC 28 Mysticism check. A character can shake an adjacent ally free from the fascinated condition with a standard action, though if that ally looks at the mental mirage again, they must attempt the initial saving throw once more and are again fascinated if they fail. A character who closes their eyes can't see the mirage, but still feels a powerful mental compulsion to look at the building, believing that it is a form of salvation and safety. If that character fails a DC 15 Will save, they inadvertently open their eyes and are fascinated by the mirage again (unless they are immune to its effects).

A character who has resisted the effects of the mirage can place a steadying hand (or other suitable appendage) on an adjacent ally to bolster that ally's mind. That ally gains a +2 circumstance bonus to their Will save, and if they fail, the aiding character can choose to reduce the ability score damage the ally takes to 1, but they take 1 damage to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma themselves (even though they are immune to the mirage). The ally gains the bonus each round they are given a steadying hand.

A character who takes ability damage equal to one of their ability scores believes that the mirage has moved right up to their location and that they have entered the building. They fall unconscious, and their mind is lost in a fantasy of security until they have been healed of at least 1 ability damage.

The mental mirage persists until all the PCs are immune to its effects or all the PCs are knocked unconscious by ability damage.

Development: If all the PCs fall unconscious due to the mental mirage, Independence reaches out to them, as described in the next event, after first healing each of their ability scores of 1d4 damage. The PCs awaken to the sight of the raging cyclone of sand.

If the PCs are able to withstand the mental mirage, the whispers in their mind increase in urgency, whether the PCs have been following them not. Soon after, Independence reaches out to the PCs directly in the following encounter.

Story Award: For enduring the hazard of the mental mirage, award the PCs 6,400 XP.

A STRANGE VISION

The PCs hear more of the muted whispers that previously intruded upon their thoughts, and they begin to catch brief words among the jumbled syllables moving through their minds. Each PC should attempt a DC 15 Will save; success allows them to make out the words "follow," "safety," and "shelter" in the language they are most comfortable with. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Mysticism or Sense Motive check senses that these impressions are different than those imparted by the mental mirage. The PCs can follow the unusual whispers if they like, but either way, as they continue through the seemingly impenetrable fog, Independence makes itself fully known. Read or paraphrase the following.

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Suddenly, a fierce gale picks up all around. The unexpected wind catches the fog with cyclonic force, creating a kaleidoscopic cylinder of color in a thirty-foot diameter. This alien vista is a churning maelstrom of color, above which is a dull, black, starless sky. In the distance, through the break at the top of the eye of the storm, a shining comet of silvery light streaks across the empty heavens.

The PCs are now at the center of a temporary spot free from the fog. The silvery comet visible from the storm's eye is a manifestation of Hylax's own divine presence, which orbits the mindscape. Any PC with the priest theme devoted to Hylax or who is in possession of Tuvah's holy symbol from the previous adventure immediately feels a spiritual pull from the silver comet, recognizing it as a divine display of Hylax.

The same presence that has been mentally reaching out to the PCs has used its minor influence over the mindscape to blow away the fog. Known as Independence, this being is a reflection of a sliver of the original kucharn's capacity for independent thought, awoken by the PCs' presence in the mindscape.

Independence projects an avatar of itself that steps out of the raging cyclone, an insectile humanoid made of solidified energy, though with intricate details. It stands close to the edge of the cyclone, unaffected by the colorful winds whipping around it. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Culture or Life Science check can identify features in the manifestation that resemble both shirren and Swarm biology, though it seems to be neither.

Independence knows the PCs are physical beings transplanted into the mindscape by the will of Hylax, but it seeks to learn more about them. It uses its telepathy to speak with the PCs, who recognize the voice in their heads as the source of the whispers they have heard since arriving in the mindscape. Independence initiates conversation with any shirren PCs first, followed by those who recognize the significance of the silver comet, and finally focusing on any PCs who seem interested in conversation. At first, Independence knows only an ancient form of Shirren, so it converses telepathically with those who know that language. If no PC knows Shirren, however, the PCs feel something rummaging around in their brains, and after a few nerve-wracking moments, Independence is able to pick up Common from their thoughts.



As Independence talks to the PCs, its manifestation skirts the outer edge of the storm. Independence seeks to learn the PCs' basic intent within the mindscape, asking questions such as "Who are you?" and "Who do you serve?" Independence wants to ensure the PCs are opposed to the "Malign Union" (its term for the Swarm). Independence answers what few questions it can, identifying itself as one of the few free mental forms within the mindscape. It says that the PCs should come to its refuge to escape further assault from the hive mind's waking defenses, and it offers to guide them there.

If any of the PCs suffered ability damage from the mental mirage, Independence offers to heal those afflicted as a sign of its good intentions. Independence can restore 1d4 ability damage once for each ability score per PC.

If the PCs still have remaining ability damage, Independence says they can

heal by resting within its shelter.

Development: By the end of the conversation, the PCs should have a sense that their only safe and viable option is to follow Independence's directions to its refuge. If none of the PCs recognized the origin of the silver comet in the sky, then Independence can further prove its good intent by explaining that Hylax herself watches the mindscape from afar.

As the encounter draws to a natural conclusion, the manifestation steps back into the swirling winds and disappears. Moments later, the cyclone ends, and the fog settles back over the PCs. Independence's whispers to the PCs, telling them where to travel. However, as the Swarm hive mind continues to become more aware of the PCs' presence, it instinctively recognizes they are a threat and whips up a dangerous storm to overtake them.

EVENT 3: CONNECTION STORM (CR 11)

At this point, the Connection, the psychic entity that represents the Suskillon subcolony's link to the greater Swarm hive mind, has fully awakened. Much like Independence, it recognizes the PCs as outsiders, but it wishes them only harm. Approximately 20 minutes after the PCs have had their first encounter with Independence, the connection conjures an unusual storm to wipe them off the face of the mindscape. Read or paraphrase the following.

The fog slowly lifts from all around, revealing the horizon and distant features of the landscape: titanic termite mounds

and other frightening organic structures. The night sky above is a starless dark with the faint glow of a small comet providing the only light. Soon, the wind picks up, carrying with it stinging sands and a barely audible inhuman wail. Clouds the color of dark bruises move quickly in as the howl becomes a terrible, soul-wrenching screech that couldn't possibly come from the throat of any mortal creature. The sand being blown by the winds becomes like thousands of tiny needles and swirls in strange shapes and colors just at the edge of vision.

When the storm hits, Independence's mental guidance becomes more insistent, though the incredibly loud screech almost drowns out Independence's psychic impressions. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Physical Science or Survival check recognizes that there is nothing natural about this storm—an unsurprising revelation while within a mindscape. But a PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Mysticism check senses a malignancy behind the unusual weather, directed at the PCs. A PC who succeeds at any of these checks also realizes that, within the distorted reality of a mindscape, the storm could cause anything to happen and will be impossible to outrun. The best bet is to hunker down and try to survive, though the PCs can continue to follow Independence's directions if they wish.

Hazard: Have the PCs roll initiative as though this encounter were combat. At the start of each PC's turn, roll on the following table to determine the specific storm event that occurs for them. These events occur specifically for each PC, as the storm plays with their perceptions. Each PC can otherwise act normally on their turn, casting spells, using equipment, or performing other abilities as they see fit. If you don't want to use a map for this encounter, the PCs can assume they are within a move action's distance from one another.

D8 Effect

- 1 **Neurostatic:** The terrifying mental screech overwhelms the PC, who takes 6d6 sonic damage (DC 18 Will save for half). This is a mind-affecting effect.
- 2 **Cacophony:** Voices rise from the surrounding winds, asking questions that cut at the heart of the PCs' psyche. The PC must succeed at a DC 28 Diplomacy or Intimidate check to answer the voices or gain the shaken condition for 1d4 rounds.
- 3 **Mutating Terrain:** The sands under the PC's feet suddenly begin to melt and bubble, dealing 4d6 acid damage (DC 18 Reflex save negates). If the PC moved any distance during the previous round, they gain a +2 circumstance bonus to this save.
- 4 **Thickening Atmosphere:** The air around the PC becomes difficult to breathe, even if their armor's environmental protections have been activated. The PC must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or gain the sickened condition for 1d4 rounds.

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT HERE

The connection storm and the battle against Doubt and Hesitation that follows are encounters in which the PCs must overcome several different unique abilities used by their enemies. These unusual mechanics should help highlight how different the mindscape is, as well as nudge the PCs to think outside of the box. If the players find themselves frustrated by an encounter within the mindscape, don't hesitate to let them use their skills to understand a given ability as it is used against them. Similarly, don't be afraid to provide information from Independence, further ingratiating the mysterious mental entity with the PCs.

- 5 **Dangerous Inquiry:** A complex scientific question physically manifests in front of the PC. It appears as a cloud of glowing text and symbols and demands to be answered. To do so, the PC must succeed at a DC 26 Life Science or Physical Science check. Failure means that in the following round, roll twice on this table for that PC and choose one effect from the two results as you see fit.
- 6 **Seen This in a Vid:** The terrain changes to represent a scene from a holovid or vidgame with which the PC is familiar. The PC must succeed at a DC 26 Acrobatics, Athletics, Piloting, or appropriate Profession check to avoid the scene's dangers. Failure means the PC takes 4d6 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (chosen randomly).
- 7 **Vampiric Wound:** The nearby ground turns into a bloody slash and a mass of suppurating flesh. The PC can sense it crying out in pain that threatens to become reflected on the PCs own body. The PC must succeed at a DC 26 Life Science or Medicine check to diagnose or dress the wound or take 1 Con damage.
- 8 **It Approaches:** The darkened clouds form into an angry Swarm-like visage, and the PC is blasted with gusts of wind, taking 6d8 damage (the PC's choice of a DC 20 Fortitude, Reflex, or Will save for half); this effect has the force descriptor.

The storm is essentially inescapable, and the PCs must withstand its effects. However, as the PCs succeed at saving throws and skill checks against those effects, the storm visibly weakens. Each success grants the group 1 Resistance Point; a PC who rolls a natural 20 (for either a skill check or a saving throw) grants the group an additional Resistance Point, even if they don't succeed.

Development: When the group accumulates a total of 15 Resistance Points, read or paraphrase the following.

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With little fanfare, the winds cease and the sand settles. The dark clouds above recede, concentrating around several large mounds to the northeast like a pall of smoke hanging over massive volcanoes. The departure of the storm reveals a changed landscape: a faint path now leads ahead between the silvery dunes.

For now, the PCs have managed to fight back against the fell entity called Connection.

Story Award: For enduring the psychic storm, award the players 12,800 XP.

EVENT 4: RELIQUARY DEFENSE (CR 10)

The PCs likely follow the path ahead of them. If not, Independence telepathically urges them to do so. Thirty minutes after the connection storm ends, the PCs crest a dune and see the Hylaxian Refuge (area **A**)—a structure that looks like three beehive-shaped mounds of clay—before them, lying within a small stony valley. However, before they can go any further, the PCs suddenly find themselves somewhere familiar. Read or paraphrase the following.

With a single step, everything changes. You unexpectedly feel yourself inhabiting another's body, seeing through their eyes. You hear the sounds of terrified shouts nearby and the scuttling of your own chitinous feet on stone. You smell the tangy odor of foul organic acid along with the fear and desperation of those who stand in your way. You feel a powerful instinct to overwhelm and destroy.

This encounter can use the map for area **L** from the previous adventure. If you don't have that map, you can substitute the map for area **A2** from this adventure to stand in as another place within the Forever Reliquary. At your discretion, this event might occur after the PCs fight Doubt and Hesitation in area **A1** but before the PCs enter the Hylaxian Refuge proper.

It takes a moment for the PCs to realize they are viewing part of the Swarm's continuing assault on the Forever Reliquary that they left behind, but they are no longer themselves. Instead, each player takes control of a Swarm thresher lord as they advance alongside a coterie of corrovokes on a group of desperate shirren defenders. For maximum effect, you can describe the familiar faces of the monks, perhaps including one of the members of the Sacred Assembly in the defensive line.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Mysticism check realizes that what they are seeing is currently happening, and that no matter how long the PCs have already spent within the mindscape, only minutes have passed on the Material Plane. The PCs have none of their own gear or abilities but can communicate with each other through the power of the Swarm hive mind. However, their minds are also filled with the constant psychic "chatter" of the other nearby Swarm components. It should be a disorienting experience, especially

for those species who don't have any telepathic abilities; this could also be a terrifying encounter for any shirren PC.

Creatures: A dozen Swarm corrovokes push toward a smaller group of Reliquary defenders, who are crouching behind hastily erected barricades for cover. The shirren defenders see the impending arrival of the thresher lords and believe they have no hope of taking down those brutes, so they focus fire on the smaller Swarm components.

Each player controls a different Swarm thresher lord, which has the normal complement of actions in combat. The PCs can't take actions with their own bodies, but they can use the thresher lords they control to fight back against the Swarm components and assist the shirren defenders. As this encounter plays out, don't give the players their creature's exact statistics; instead, simply ask the players what they want to do and how they want to do it. The players should still roll their own dice for attacks and damage, however. You might hint at the thresher lord's blade storm ability by encouraging full attacks, but the PCs might choose to use full attacks anyway once they realize how easily they can hit a corrovok. The PCs cannot leave the bodies of the thresher lords until the encounter is over, though they can choose to do nothing. Each round a PC decides to take no action with their thresher lord, they must watch as that thresher lord acts normally and attacks one of the Reliquary defenders.

At first, as the PCs subvert the thresher lords, the shirren monks don't realize what's happening. But after the PCs' thresher lords have turned on the other Swarm components for a round or two, Tuvah's voice sounds over the monks' comm units, speculating that the PCs are aiding in the defense of the Reliquary from within the mindscape.

SWARM CORROVOXES (12)

CR 3

XP 800 each

HP 40 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 110)

TACTICS

During Combat The corrovokes fire their acid cannons

at the shirren defenders, even when they begin to get attacked by the thresher lords. If a corrovok survives a round of being attacked by a thresher lord, it uses its psychic assault ability against the thresher lord that attacked it.

Morale The corrovokes fight to the death.

RELIQUARY DEFENDERS (8)

CR 6

XP 2,400

LG Medium humanoid (shirren)

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft.; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

HP 90 EACH

EAC 18; **KAC** 20

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

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical dueling sword +13 (1d6+9 S)

Ranged corona laser pistol +16 (2d4+6 F; critical burn 1d4)

TACTICS

During Combat The defenders fire their laser pistols at the corrovoxes, recognizing that the thresher lords are beyond their ability to defeat. When they notice the thresher lords turning on other Swarm components, they make full attacks against the remaining corrovoxes and shout praises to Hylax.

Morale With only a few remaining areas left to defend, these shirrrens fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +14, Culture +14, Diplomacy +14, Mysticism +14

Languages Common, Shirren; limited telepathy 30 ft.

Other Abilities communalism

Gear freebooter armor II, corona laser pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), tactical dueling sword

SWARM THRESHER LORDS (1 PER PC) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

HP 165 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 110)

STATISTICS

Other Abilities mind-vessel, synaptic feedback

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mind-Vessel (Su) Each Swarm thresher lord is under the control of a different PC. They gain the benefits of the Swarm mind ability only if they are within 30 feet of another thresher lord with this ability. When a PC is no longer in control of a thresher lord, it takes 200 damage (no saving throw).

Synaptic Feedback (Su) Though a PC dictates the thresher lord's actions, each round that a PC causes a thresher lord to make one or more attacks against another Swarm creature, that PC must succeed at a DC 16 Will save (using the PC's normal Will save modifier) or take 4d6 damage from mental feedback. This is a mind-affecting effect. A PC reduced to 0 Hit Points in this way falls unconscious but immediately stabilizes; that PC no longer controls a thresher lord.

Treasure: For assisting in the defense of the Forever Reliquary, the PCs will receive 20,000 credits worth of credit in the bazaar at area **A7** (see sidebar on page 16).

Development: This combat lasts as long as it continues to hold the players' interests. They might enjoy ripping apart a handful of corrovoxes and want to play this fight through to victory, or they might get the general idea of the strange power of the Swarm mindscape after 2 rounds. In any case, make sure that the PCs feel like their actions had an impact in the defense of the Forever Reliquary, and especially emphasize the death throes of the thresher lords as the PCs leave their minds.

BEST INTENTIONS

This vision of the ongoing battle at the Forever Reliquary is intended to provide the PCs with an update on their allies from the previous adventure, as well as to encourage the PCs not to dally within the mindscape. The PCs likely use their ability to control the thresher lords to disrupt the Swarm attack and provide some small respite for the monks, but after experiencing synaptic feedback for the first time, it is entirely possible that some less-altruistic PCs place their personal safety above all else. In no way should a PC feel forced to attack the monks.

When the PCs come to their senses again, they find themselves at the same point in the mindscape as they were previously. Remember that if any of the PCs were rendered unconscious by synaptic feedback damage, those PCs lie stable at the feet of the other characters.

Story Award: As the corrovoxes aren't significant enemies in this encounter, the PCs will not receive any XP for defeating them. Instead, award the PCs 9,600 XP for defending the Forever Reliquary, no matter how long the encounter lasts.

A. HYLAXIAN REFUGE

Like all things within the Swarm mindscape, the Hylaxian Refuge is a structure fashioned around emotion, interpretation, and thought. It represents a time from long ago, the earliest days of the Swarm's hive mind, before they completely rejected Hylax. The entity called Independence has slumbered here for centuries in the hope that the Swarm might one day be freed from its stifling uniformity. With Independence awakened by the PCs' intrusion, the refuge is one of the few vestiges of safety within the hostile mindscape.

Though the PCs probably won't know this, the Hylaxian Refuge takes the appearance of a structure once used by the ancient kucharn to venerate the Forever Queen. It is an upright beehive-like mound of darkened brown clay that ascends in rounded layers for almost a hundred feet. The top of this mound is adorned with three short, slender spires. Two smaller structures of similar design lie behind the primary mound, each representing different sites within the greater complex.

Inside the refuge, the walls are constructed of the same brown clay as the exterior, though within the mindscape these act as though they had the durability of starship bulkheads. Similarly, the doors of baked stone at the entrance and within the complex each act as though they were as sturdy as airlocks, despite their unassuming appearance. Two-foot-long insects scurry around the interior walls at regular intervals, their luminescent lower abdomens providing normal lighting

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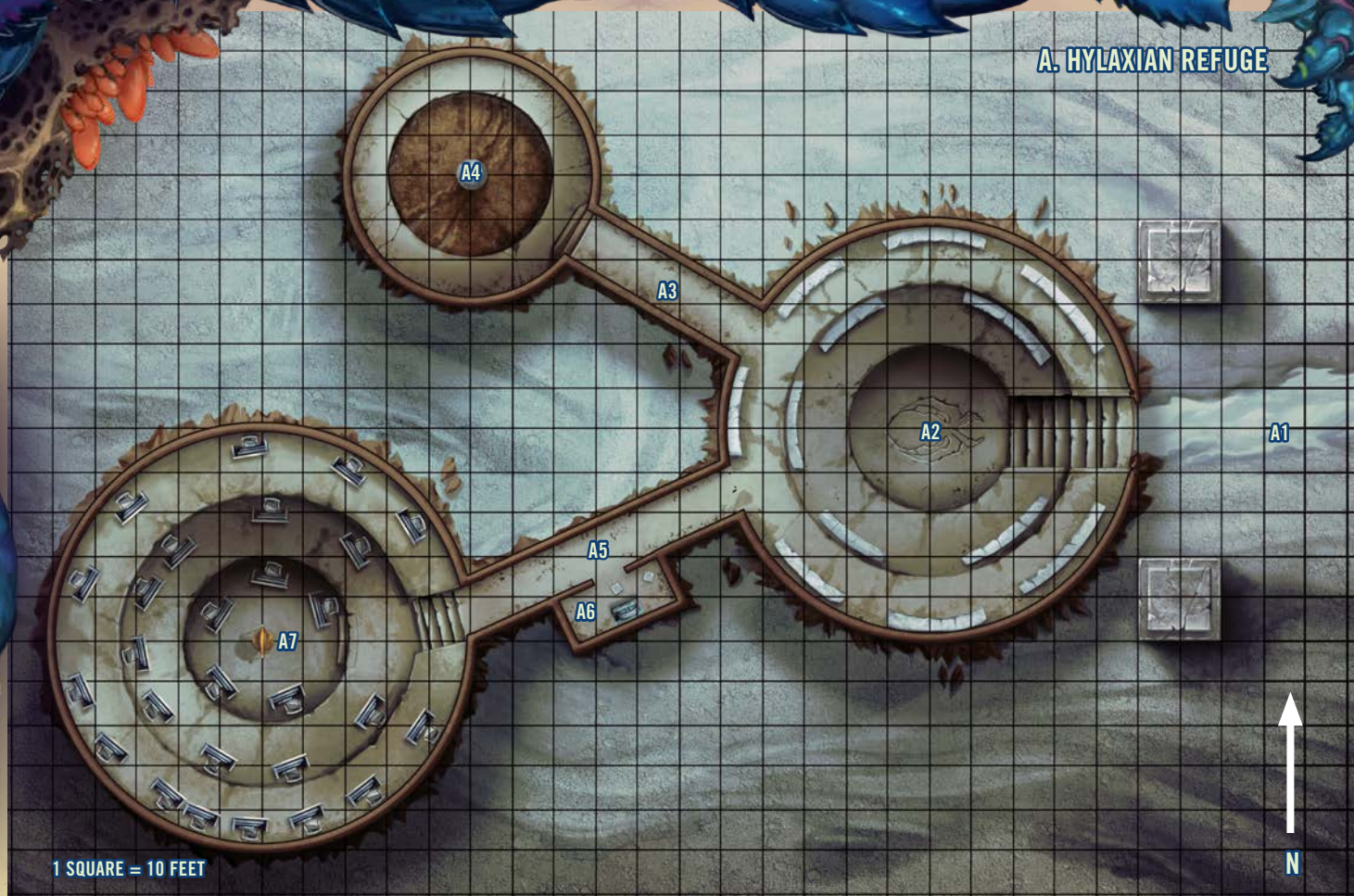
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A. HYLAXIAN REFUGE



within the refuge. These illuminating insects disappear if attacked, only to reappear moments later on a different section of wall.

A1. REFUGE ENTRANCE (CR 11)

Silver sand covers the space around a trio of imposing structures. The largest building rises above the landscape, resembling a baked-brown upright mound of clay. Two smaller mound-structures spread out from the first, each connected to the primary building by a covered tunnel of similar dark clay. Two immense doors are sealed shut yet display the image of a welcoming insectile face crowned with stars. Two towering twenty-by-twenty-foot stone platforms rise five feet from the sands near the entrance, each supporting an immense and hideous statue of black stone.

This is the only exterior entrance to the refuge.

Creatures: A pair of Huge constructs stand sentinel over the entrance to the Hylaxian Refuge. They embody Independence's doubt over its future within the mindscape and its hesitation to act to destroy the Swarm from within, and have been given a form of life by the PCs' own negative

emotions and presence within the mindscape. The constructs animate when the PCs come within 30 feet of the complex; both statues step off their respective platforms and move to intercept the PCs.

Doubt is a 25-foot-tall statue of an insectile humanoid with gigantic pummeling fists made from hardened black stone. Hesitation appears much the same, though it is slimmer and a foot or two shorter, and its arms end in wicked blades.

DOUBT CR 9

XP 6,400

Mindscape unique creature (page 56)

CE Huge construct (magical)

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense (emotion) 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +22

DEFENSE HP 275

EAC 22; **KAC** 23

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

Defensive Abilities manifested fears; **DR** 10/magic;

Immunities construct immunities

Weaknesses apprehensive, mindscape dependency, shared essence

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee slam +14 (2d10+15 B; critical staggered [DC 18])

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Offensive Abilities cleaving blows

TACTICS

During Combat Doubt moves to a position where it can attack as many PCs as possible with its cleaving blows.

Morale Doubt fights until it and Hesitation's shared pool of Hit Points is reduced to 0, at which point it crumbles into dust.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +22, Intimidate +22, Mysticism +17, Sense Motive +17

Languages Shirren; limited telepathy 30 ft.

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 18), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless, shifting fears, unliving

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Apprehensive (Ex) The attack bonus for flanking Doubt is +3 instead of +2. If Doubt would be rendered flat-footed, it takes a -3 penalty to its AC instead of -2. If Doubt gains the off-kilter condition, it takes a -3 penalty to its attack rolls instead of -2.

Cleaving Blows (Ex) As a full action, Doubt can make a slam attack against all creatures within its reach. Each attack takes a -6 penalty.

Manifested Fears (Su) Doubt gains fast healing 15 while within 20 feet of Hesitation.

Shared Essence (Su) Doubt and Hesitation share a Hit Point total. Whenever one takes damage, the other takes the same amount of damage.

Shifting Fears (Su) The first time Doubt is reduced to 200 Hit Points or fewer, it and Hesitation immediately change places. This occurs again when Doubt is first reduced to 125 Hit Points or fewer and 50 Hit Points or fewer. If a single attack would trigger this ability twice, then the two change positions only once. This is a teleportation effect.

HESITATION

CR 9

XP 6,400

Mindscape unique creature (page 56)

CE Huge construct (magical)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense (emotion) 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +17

DEFENSE

HP 275

EAC 21; KAC 22

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

Defensive Abilities manifested fears; **Immunities** construct immunities

Weaknesses hesitant, mindscape dependency, shared essence

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee arm blade +16 (3d4+9 S)

Melee eye laser +16 (2d6+9 F; critical 2d4)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; ranged +18)

1/day—*dispel magic*, *mind thrust* (3rd level, DC 20)

3/day—*caustic conversion*, *force blast* (DC 19), *mirror image*, *see invisibility*

At will—*command* (DC 18), *magic missile*

TACTICS

During Combat Hesitation does its best to stay within 20 feet of Doubt, but it may be forced to move further away by its hesitant weakness. It prefers to attack with



DOUBT

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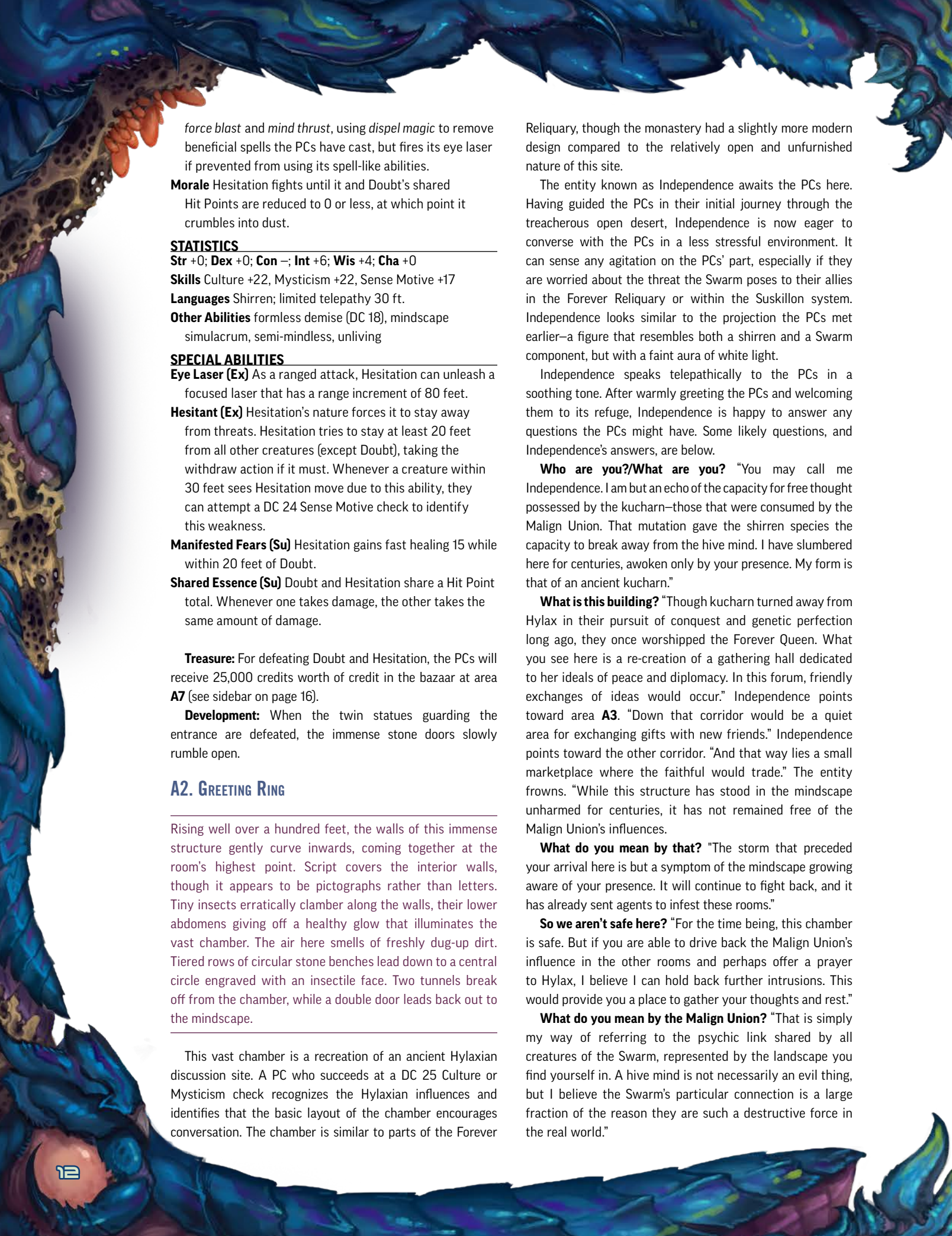
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force blast and *mind thrust*, using *dispel magic* to remove beneficial spells the PCs have cast, but fires its eye laser if prevented from using its spell-like abilities.

Morale Hesitation fights until it and Doubt's shared Hit Points are reduced to 0 or less, at which point it crumbles into dust.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Culture +22, Mysticism +22, Sense Motive +17

Languages Shirren; limited telepathy 30 ft.

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 18), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless, unliving

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Eye Laser (Ex) As a ranged attack, Hesitation can unleash a focused laser that has a range increment of 80 feet.

Hesitant (Ex) Hesitation's nature forces it to stay away from threats. Hesitation tries to stay at least 20 feet from all other creatures (except Doubt), taking the withdraw action if it must. Whenever a creature within 30 feet sees Hesitation move due to this ability, they can attempt a DC 24 Sense Motive check to identify this weakness.

Manifested Fears (Su) Hesitation gains fast healing 15 while within 20 feet of Doubt.

Shared Essence (Su) Doubt and Hesitation share a Hit Point total. Whenever one takes damage, the other takes the same amount of damage.

Treasure: For defeating Doubt and Hesitation, the PCs will receive 25,000 credits worth of credit in the bazaar at area **A7** (see sidebar on page 16).

Development: When the twin statues guarding the entrance are defeated, the immense stone doors slowly rumble open.

A2. GREETING RING

Rising well over a hundred feet, the walls of this immense structure gently curve inwards, coming together at the room's highest point. Script covers the interior walls, though it appears to be pictographs rather than letters. Tiny insects erratically clamber along the walls, their lower abdomens giving off a healthy glow that illuminates the vast chamber. The air here smells of freshly dug-up dirt. Tiered rows of circular stone benches lead down to a central circle engraved with an insectile face. Two tunnels break off from the chamber, while a double door leads back out to the mindscape.

This vast chamber is a recreation of an ancient Hylaxian discussion site. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Culture or Mysticism check recognizes the Hylaxian influences and identifies that the basic layout of the chamber encourages conversation. The chamber is similar to parts of the Forever

Reliquary, though the monastery had a slightly more modern design compared to the relatively open and unfurnished nature of this site.

The entity known as Independence awaits the PCs here. Having guided the PCs in their initial journey through the treacherous open desert, Independence is now eager to converse with the PCs in a less stressful environment. It can sense any agitation on the PCs' part, especially if they are worried about the threat the Swarm poses to their allies in the Forever Reliquary or within the Suskillon system. Independence looks similar to the projection the PCs met earlier—a figure that resembles both a shirren and a Swarm component, but with a faint aura of white light.

Independence speaks telepathically to the PCs in a soothing tone. After warmly greeting the PCs and welcoming them to its refuge, Independence is happy to answer any questions the PCs might have. Some likely questions, and Independence's answers, are below.

Who are you?/What are you? "You may call me Independence. I am but an echo of the capacity for free thought possessed by the kucharn—those that were consumed by the Malign Union. That mutation gave the shirren species the capacity to break away from the hive mind. I have slumbered here for centuries, awoken only by your presence. My form is that of an ancient kucharn."

What is this building? "Though kucharn turned away from Hylax in their pursuit of conquest and genetic perfection long ago, they once worshipped the Forever Queen. What you see here is a re-creation of a gathering hall dedicated to her ideals of peace and diplomacy. In this forum, friendly exchanges of ideas would occur." Independence points toward area **A3**. "Down that corridor would be a quiet area for exchanging gifts with new friends." Independence points toward the other corridor. "And that way lies a small marketplace where the faithful would trade." The entity frowns. "While this structure has stood in the mindscape unharmed for centuries, it has not remained free of the Malign Union's influences."

What do you mean by that? "The storm that preceded your arrival here is but a symptom of the mindscape growing aware of your presence. It will continue to fight back, and it has already sent agents to infest these rooms."

So we aren't safe here? "For the time being, this chamber is safe. But if you are able to drive back the Malign Union's influence in the other rooms and perhaps offer a prayer to Hylax, I believe I can hold back further intrusions. This would provide you a place to gather your thoughts and rest."

What do you mean by the Malign Union? "That is simply my way of referring to the psychic link shared by all creatures of the Swarm, represented by the landscape you find yourself in. A hive mind is not necessarily an evil thing, but I believe the Swarm's particular connection is a large fraction of the reason they are such a destructive force in the real world."

We have the Crown of Hylax! What do we do with it? “An artifact of the Forever Queen! Yes, this must be why Hylax’s comet appears more brightly in the sky.” Independence strokes what can charitably be described as a chin. “If she sent you here with such an item, it must be important. Unfortunately, I do not know its purpose.”

We think it has something to do with the God-Host and its connection to the Swarm hive mind. “God-Host? A troubling name. And likely a powerful creature. Perhaps its mind is responsible for the storm? I will have to do some thinking and meditation on this problem. Perhaps Hylax will reveal something as you explore this refuge.”

Once we know what to do, will you come with us? “As you saw, I am able to manifest outside of the refuge, but only over brief periods of time. I am otherwise constrained to this building, and I fear that even if I could leave, the Malign Union might react poorly to my presence.”

When the PCs are ready to continue on, Independence informs them that if they find any unclaimed equipment within the refuge, they are welcome to take it. Independence is unsure whether or not the PCs will be able to take such gear from the mindscape after they have completed their mission, but he reassures them that while they are here, the things they find are essentially real.

A3. CONNECTING PASSAGE (CR 9)

This long hall continues down for almost a hundred feet. The dark baked-brown walls dance with smaller bioluminescent bugs that illuminate the corridor, highlighting an ongoing tapestry of red and white paintings. The walls rise about fifteen feet before gently arching, the ceiling bereft of the images adorning the walls.

The paintings on the walls here provide a visual history of Hylax and her association with the kucharn. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Culture or Mysticism check can interpret the general meaning of the frescoes, working backward from the illustrations of familiar Swarm creatures. The images closest to area **A2** show various insectile humanoids—the kucharn—praising Hylax’s divinity. They go on to show the kucharn’s eventual abandonment of Hylax as they moved toward sharing a single consciousness, represented in the murals as a blazing white circle. The second half of the hall shows the kucharn’s transformation into the Swarm, as they consumed the weaker members of their species. A section of the hall remains oddly blank, representing the period of the Gap. The final few feet show shirrrens escaping from the Swarm and praying atop a representation of a comet.

As the PCs walk down the hall, some of the images begin to animate, acting out key scenes within the murals in brief loops. At first, these movements are harmless albeit fascinating, but they help to mask the psychic trap that infuses this corridor.

Trap: In addition to their intended purpose of summarizing Hylax’s history with the Swarm, the wall paintings in this hallway drip with psychic energy. Over the centuries, some of the ancient, unspoken resentment held by the Swarm against Hylax for abandoning them has permeated the frescoes. As the PCs traverse the hall and study the murals, their physical presence gives this psychic impression a form of life; the simple animations turn three-dimensional and reach out to claw at the intruders. The trap triggers when the first PC passes halfway down the hall.

ANIMATED HISTORY TRAP

CR 9

XP 6,400

Type magical; **Perception** DC 33 (see the frescoes begin to move off the walls); **Disable** Mysticism DC 32 (dispel the magical script) or Diplomacy DC 28 (to acknowledge the mental anguish of the imagery)

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Initial Effect panic from moving shapes (creatures in area become shaken for 1d4 rounds); Will DC 18 negates; multiple targets (all targets in area **A3**); **Secondary Effect** manifested Swarm attack (8d10 S); Reflex DC 18 half; multiple targets (all targets in area **A3**)

A4. GIVING CHAMBER (CR 9)

Dark brown stairs descend toward a circular depression at the center of this chamber. A dirt floor surrounds the chamber’s center, which contains a raised area of circular stone bordered by a ten-foot-wide circle of silver sand. A chest made of chitin rests at the center of the stone platform. The walls here gradually curve up until they almost join near the ceiling, leaving a gap that looks up to the starless sky above.

A smaller reproduction of the chamber in area **A2**, this room represents a common kucharn structure common among their ancient hives. When these hives engaged in diplomacy or trade, it was customary for a hive complex to maintain a chamber where guests could go to receive gifts from the presenting hive in private. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Culture or Mysticism check recognizes the similarities between this chamber and Hylaxian temples, though those within the Pact Worlds don’t generally take the form of an insect hive.

Creature: A particularly vicious mindscape creature has tunneled into the ground under this chamber. A manifestation of the suppressed grief the Swarm felt when the early shirrrens first left the hive mind, it appears as a large burrowing serpent made of dark, purple energy, with vague Swarm-like features. It was attracted to the refuge by the reawakening of Independence and hides in the sand underneath the floor between the outer ring of clay and the central island.

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ANGUISH WORM

CR 9

XP 6,400

Mindscape surnoch (page 56, *Starfinder Alien Archive* 108)

HP 145

DEFENSE

Weaknesses mindscape dependency

STATISTICS

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 16), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless

TACTICS

Before Combat The anguish worm uses Stealth to remain hidden under the dirt, waiting for a PC to pass overhead before it bursts out.

During Combat The anguish worm prefers to attack a single target with its bite attack, attempting a grapple combat maneuver in the second round to wrap that PC up in its corrosive spines. If enemies move away or cluster together, it unleashes an acidic jet attack.

Morale The anguish worm fights until destroyed.

Treasure: The chest at the center of the chamber contains a variety of items, including an elaborate, smaller box that holds a *spell gem of death ward*, a *spell gem of dispel magic*, a *spell gem of wall of fire*, and three *mk 3 serums of healing*. A comet hammer with a haft made from chitin taken from a Swarm thresher lord and a *holy fusion seal* (12th) emblazoned with the symbol of Hylax rest beside the smaller box.

In addition, after witnessing the visions described in Development below, the PCs will receive 10,000 credits worth of credit that they can spend in the bazaar at area **A7** (see sidebar on page 16).

Development: A PC who stands in the center of the chamber and looks up toward the hole in the ceiling is in the perfect position to see Hylax's silvery comet coursing through the sky. Those who do so feel an overwhelming sense of compassion and warmth flow through them. Shortly after this feeling subsides, the PC receives a series of brief mental flashes: the first shows a growing chasm in the silver sands of the mindscape (area **B**), the second an oasis of sparkling water and alien greenery (area **C**), the third the ruins of alien architecture (area **D**), and the fourth an immense wall of dark, swirling clouds (area **E**). These images provide the PCs the first clues as to where they can empower the *Crown of Hylax*.

A5. CATACOMB (CR 10)

Small alcoves, little more than two feet high and twice as wide, line the outer walls of this long hallway. Exoskeletal remains and tattered cloth fill some of these niches, while others remain empty. A doorway about halfway down the corridor interrupts the wall of niches.

This hallway honors the memories of those shirrens who first exhibited independent thought and were killed by the Swarm. These shirrens perished during the Gap, but soon after, Independence was able to fashion replicas of their bodies here in the mindscape. Now, however, the names of these shirrens—if they even had names—are gone forever. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Life Science or Medicine check can identify the remains as belonging to creatures that bear a very close resemblance to shirrens, though some of their exoskeletal features are reminiscent of some Swarm creatures. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Mysticism check can tell, like everything else within the mindscape, they are made of psychic energy.

Creatures: Some of the dark energy from the earlier connection storm seeped into this corridor, attracted by Independence's ancient grief over the loss of the shirrens who were memorialized here. This energy has coalesced into the form of two shades shaped like these shirrens. They instinctually sense Hylax's blessings on the PCs and seek to destroy them.

ANGUISH WORM

RESTLESS SPIRITS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Mindscape oblivion shade (page 56, *Starfinder Adventure Path #5: The Thirteenth Gate* 58)

NE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense (life) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +21

DEFENSE

HP 115 EACH

EAC 20; **KAC** 21

Fort +7; **Ref** +7; **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; **Immunities** undead immunities

Weaknesses aversion to Hylax, mindscape dependency

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee incorporeal touch +17 (1d12+8 A; critical corrode 1d6)

Offensive Abilities create spawn (DC 18)

TACTICS

Before Combat The restless spirits lie dormant within alcoves at opposite ends of the corridor until the PCs enter the area. As the PCs approach the doorway to area A6, the restless spirits emerge and attempt to glide silently toward the PCs using Stealth before attacking.

During Combat Each restless spirit attacks the closest living target. If faced with a shirren PC or a PC bearing obvious Hylaxian iconography, a restless spirit enters a kind of fury, making full attacks to bring down that character and turn them into an oblivion shade spawn. The spirit continues to make these full attacks even if they aren't able to reliably hit the PC.

Morale The restless spirits fight until destroyed, at which point their forms dissipate like smoke.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +21, Intimidate +21, Stealth +21

Languages Shirren

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 18), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless, unliving, void leap

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aversion to Hylax (Su) The restless spirits cannot abide the sight of Hylax's holy symbol. As a standard action, a creature with a holy symbol of Hylax (including Tuvah's holy symbol) can confront a restless spirit with it; the spirit must be within 10 feet. The restless spirit must succeed at a DC 20 Will saving throw or be shaken for the remainder of the encounter.

Create Spawn (Su) A living humanoid creature killed by an oblivion shade's incorporeal touch must attempt a DC 18 Will saving throw. If it fails, it becomes an oblivion shade spawn under the control of the original oblivion shade in 1d4 rounds. An oblivion shade spawn usually has a CR that is 3 lower than that of the original oblivion shade.

Void Leap (Su) An oblivion shade can pass incorporeally through the center of a solid object with a space larger

than its own, but not an object with a space larger than the distance an oblivion shade can move with a single move action (40 feet for most oblivion shades).

A6. FORGOTTEN SHRINE

This smaller chamber has only a single entryway, connecting back to a larger hall. A crude insectile statue stands vigil against the far wall, its carved eyes holding magical dancing flames that give the room a warm, inviting glow. A plain, dark green mat rests at the statue's feet.

Though the whole refuge is essentially dedicated to Hylax, it is not a church or temple. Such a structure would quickly draw the ire of the Swarm hive mind and be destroyed, even if it were protected by a deity. However, the kind of building the refuge is modeled after did contain a small shrine to the Forever Queen, and this chamber replicates that space.



RESTLESS SPIRIT

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PSYCHIC MAGIC

ALIEN
ARCHIVES

CODEX OF
WORLDS

MINDSCAPE CREDIT

For each of the following encounters the PCs overcome, the bazaar vendors offer equipment equal to the listed credit amount. The vendors inform the PCs of their running credit total when asked and when they return to the bazaar after completing one of the listed encounters.

Event 4—Assisting the Forever Reliquary Defenders:

20,000 credits

Area A1—Defeating Doubt and Hesitation:

25,000 credits

Area A4—Witnessing the Visions Granted by Hylax:

10,000 credits

Area B—Experiencing the History of the God-Host's

Subcolony: 40,000 credits

Area C—Being Submerged into the Wellspring of

Memories: 40,000 credits

Area D—Battling within the Ruins of War: 40,000 credits

Event 6—Saving the Scout: 20,000 credits

Just as the PCs were brought physically into the mindscape through the power of Hylax, this area calls out to them with small telepathic whispers. If a character who worships Hylax spends 30 minutes in this chamber meditating and praying to the Forever Queen, the DCs of their abilities (including class abilities and spell DCs) increase by 1 until the next time they take an 8-hour rest. Each PC can gain this benefit only once every 24 hours.

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Perception check while examining this room uncovers a *mk 3 ring of resistance* in one of the stone caskets.

A7. BAZAAR

This expansive circular chamber holds several tiers, each a few feet higher than the last. Each tier is lined with stalls and tables with seats behind them. A simple brass gong etched with the holy symbol of Hylax stands in the center of the chamber, and the walls dance with luminescent bugs that move in gentle patterns that provide constant illumination. The air is filled with the low murmur of conversation, as if the room were filled with people talking.

In the ancient kucharn structure upon which this room is based, this area would be filled with merchants and traders, all engaged in friendly and diplomatic commerce in Hylax's name. The room still holds a memory of such events and needs only to be awakened by the PCs. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture or Mysticism check notes the significance of the gong in the center of the chamber, realizing that in some places, instruments are used to signal the start of something, be it a ceremony or just the day. A PC who picks up the gong's

mallet feels it grow warm as it seems to pull itself toward the gong.

When the PCs ring the gong, a host of ghostly forms appear behind the stalls and tables, along with a full stock of merchandise. These shirrrens are mindscape reconstructions of famous shirrrens, trox, and a few other Hylax-associated species. Though none of these individuals were ever connected to the Swarm hive mind, echoes of their personalities have been recreated here through the power of Hylax to act as vendors for equipment the PCs will need to succeed at their quest within the mindscape.

Each vendor is eager to meet with the PCs and engage in jolly conversation as they showcase the various items they sell; some specific merchants are named below. These beings are less tangible than full mindscape creatures; the PCs can't physically interact with them, and if they are attacked, they fade away for 12 hours, after which they return with no memory of the violent act.

This bazaar acts as a settlement with a maximum item level of 12. Though the room couldn't possibly contain all the equipment typically available in such a settlement, the vendors here can produce almost any item the PCs request after a few seconds of rummaging behind their stall or under their table. Unfortunately for the PCs, they can't just take whatever they want, as the tangibility of each piece of equipment relies on the buyer undergoing the ritual of paying for the item, either through credits or trading in their unwanted gear. The mindscape vendors can relay this information if the PCs ask, as they each recognize the truth of their existence.

The PCs can restock their supplies here for as long as they remain within the mindscape. They can also "sell" any of the equipment they brought with them or anything they've discovered during the explorations they don't want for the normal 10% of its sale price, receiving credit that can be transferred from stall to stall. The PCs won't be discovering any credsticks within the Swarm mindscape, but the vendors can see the "weight" of certain actions the PCs perform here and can offer credit to their shops as a reward (see the Mindscape Credit sidebar).

BAZAAR VENDORS

The PCs might be interested in speaking with the bazaar's vendors or recognize the people they are based on via successful skill checks. What follows are a few examples of NPCs present within the bazaar and what they sell.

Dvin: As the war between lashuntas and formians raged on Castrovel, the worker **Dvin** (LN female formian) attempted to preach peace between the two species after receiving a holy vision from the Forever Queen. Though her message wasn't well received at the time, Dvin never stopped trying to end the war, and she traveled from front to front giving out devices for nonlethal incapacitation to the soldiers. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Culture check recognizes the quiet



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Dvin, whom history has largely forgotten. Dvin offers a wide array of technological and personal items.

Ikrikix: A figure of calmness, **Ikrikix** (LG host shirren) was instrumental in building the early temple to Hylax on the Prodigal Stone but left the comet to preach lessons of friendship and peace across the cosmos. Mostly traveling alone, Ikrikix picked up a wide variety of companions on their travels. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Culture or Mysticism check recognizes Ikrikix as a saint-like figure in the church of Hylax's more recent teachings, and many shirrrens revere them for their part in paving the way for peaceful relations across the cosmos. The mindscape recreation of Ikrikix does their best to downplay their historical actions. Ikrikix sells restorative items like *serums of healing* and various spell amps or spell gems.

N'Crahi: Hailing from the Liavaran moon of Nchak, **N'Crahi** (N male trox) was one of Hylax's most ardent defenders prior to the Gap. Though he did not know the name of the deity he served, N'Crahi was instrumental in freeing a group of trox slaves from their duergar masters on lost Golarion. He then went on to form a small subterranean trox colony that lasted until the earliest years of the Gap. His mindscape incarnation is patterned after N'Crahi in his later years and acts the part of an anachronistic blacksmith. A PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Culture or Mysticism check recognizes N'Crahi. The ebullient trox eagerly explains his craft and offers the PCs a variety of armor and weapons.

Thelyic: Following the shirrrens' arrival in the Pact Worlds, **Thelyic** (LN female shirren) became a renowned physician who specialized in training other medical staff to properly treat shirren patients. She traveled to most worlds in the system before contracting a virulent disease that took her life, though she spent her last days passing on what knowledge she could into digitized recording devices. The PCs can recognize Thelyic with a successful DC 25 Culture or Medicine check. She operates a small clinic near the back of the chamber, where she sells and installs all manner of augmentations.

Zasipai: The shirren **Zasipai** (CN male shirren) was responsible for the creation of several unique hybrid innovations. Though he refused to comment on his religious beliefs during his lifetime, which ended roughly a half-century ago, Zasipai's prowess in the realms of both magic and technology helped cement the shirren as useful contributors to the Pact Worlds. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Culture or Mysticism check can recognize Zasipai. Always amenable to conversation and tales of the creative exploits of visitors, the mindscape Zasipai can sell the PCs all manner of magical and hybrid items.

A BRIEF REPRIEVE

Once the PCs have explored the various chambers within the Hylaxian Refuge, they can take some time to rest and recuperate, even taking an 8-hour rest if they wish.

During this period, Independence telepathically scours the mindscape for clues to further assist the PCs—particularly if the PCs told it about the visions they received in area **A4**—searching for the locations shown in the visions.

PART 2: A HISTORY OF LOSS

Having secured the Hylaxian Refuge as their beachhead within the mindscape, the PCs can begin venturing out into the open desert to complete their mission. Luckily, a new arrival in the refuge can inform the PCs how they can use the *Crown of Hylax*, as well as offer them transport across the mindscape.

This portion of the adventure is somewhat nonlinear, allowing the PCs to visit the four areas where they can empower the artifact as they see fit. Along with these locations, there are several events that can be used to break up the pacing of various encounters, or, in the case of the next vision of the Forever Reliquary, remind the PCs of the time-sensitive nature of their mission.

DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

Once the PCs have enjoyed resting for the “night” (though with no sun, the light level in the mindscape desert never changes) Independence asks to speak with them again in area **A2**. It has spent some time reaching out into the greater mindscape, searching for information vital to the PCs’ ongoing mission. As Independence greets the PCs, read or paraphrase the following.

“Even though we are temporarily shielded from the Malign Union’s attention, Hylax has yet to show me what must be done next. I do not believe the Forever Goddess has forgotten us, however. She has given you the tools to aid your world, we just do not know how we should use them. Perhaps some further meditation on the subject—”

Independence is interrupted as the door to the refuge flies open, revealing a four-armed figure silhouetted in the entryway. This person speaks in a raspy and slightly muffled voice, “And here I thought I’d die in this place before seeing another being of flesh and blood.” She steps fully into the building, revealing herself to be a weathered, pale-skinned kasatha. Her mouth is covered by a battered oxygen mask, likely from a pilot’s helmet, and a pair of smoky goggles are pushed up above her piercing blue eyes. She wears old freebooter armor that clearly has been repaired time and time again and a wicked-looking blade at her hip. A hunting rifle is strapped across her back under a tattered cape.

This is the dramatic entrance of **Cinneka Midur Ji Heltan** (CN female kasatha soldier), a former pilot of the Pact Worlds who has been physically trapped within the Swarm mindscape for 30 years. Growing up aboard the *Idari*, Cinneka studied with solarian monks but couldn’t master the patience and focus needed to become one of them. However, the physical training honed her reflexes to become an ace pilot, and she, along with many others, joined the fight against the Swarm invasion of the Pact Worlds in 291 AG. During one fateful mission, Cinneka and her squadron were ambushed by Swarm starships on the outskirts of the system. Her fellow pilots were all killed in the attack, and Cinneka survived only when she accidentally tapped into a hidden reserve of psychic energy that transported her bodily into the mindscape. The entire squadron was deemed killed on arrival.

Cinneka arrived disoriented and terrified but managed to survive through cunning and a fierce, burning hatred of the Swarm. Using techniques learned from solarian monks, Cinneka is able to control small parts of the Swarm mindscape herself, first crafting a mobile shelter (page 19) to remain constantly on the move and avoid the attention of the hive mind. She has figured out how to eke sustenance from the few strange plants that grow in the desert, and she can determine the actions of the Swarm on the Material Plane through events that occur within the mindscape. She knew something unusual was happening when she spotted the connection storm, and she has now tracked the PCs to their refuge.

Cinneka introduces herself to the PCs as she closes the door behind her. She hasn’t spoken to another living creature in decades, and might seem a little too eager to chat, but she is otherwise a very confident and poised individual. Cinneka is happy to answer any questions about her history, though she brings them back to the matter at hand, asking them why they are here. When the PCs explain themselves, Cinneka shakes her head in amused disbelief, but a smile can be heard in her voice when she replies, “If there’s any way I can help you throw a wrench in the Swarm’s gears, count me in!” If the PCs look to Independence for guidance, the entity notes that Hylax encourages making new allies whenever possible.

At this point, Cinneka encourages the PCs to share everything they know with her. The PCs hopefully describe the visions they received in area **A4**, show the *Crown of Hylax* to Cinneka, or both. Cinneka seems to recognize the areas seen in the visions and tells the PCs she has a map of the area aboard her sand-barge. If the PCs allow Cinneka to examine the *Crown*, read or paraphrase the following.

The kasatha looks over the artifact for a few minutes before handing it back. “What you’ve got there is a weapon, or at least as much of a weapon as the Forever Queen would create. Not something that deals lethal force, but more a tool for pacification. And since Hylax sent you here, behind

enemy lines so to speak, you've got a real shot at disrupting your Swarm subcolony. At least temporarily." Cinneka rubs the back of her neck. "I've been surviving in this mindscape for thirty years now, and I've seen just about everything it has to offer. This is a place of thought and emotion, not reality, and so you're not going to be able to just point this weapon at your target and shoot.

"I spent some time with solarian monks on the *Idari* before I got into this whole mess, and they taught me a few things about how everything's energies are connected—even things that might seem superficially different, like stars and black holes." Her eyes twinkle momentarily with mirth. "Or the Swarm and some champions of Hylax. I think that if you want the crown to be an effective weapon, you're going to need to expose it to some of the Swarm's energies while sacrificing some of your own."

If the PCs ask, Cinneka admits that the places the PCs saw in their visions might "do the trick" for Swarm energy, though she isn't sure what the PCs will need to give of themselves when the time comes. When the PCs are ready to embark, Cinneka shows them to her sand-barge, which is anchored just outside of the refuge. Independence remains behind and assures the PCs they can return to the refuge if they need a safe haven to rest or purchase equipment.

CINNEKA'S BARGE

Outside, Cinneka gestures with pride at her sand-barge: a yacht-sized vehicle constructed from petrified wood and panels of transparent aluminum with crude hoverjets along the bottom and a tall mast that supports a leathery sail, currently lowered. The kasatha pulls on a rope that lowers a set of stairs on the other side of a section of the hull and invites the PCs in.

Inside, the lower deck of the barge is sparsely decorated and lit with wax candles that give off the faint aroma of burning copper. A number of weapons, both melee and ranged, lean up against the walls between Cinneka's trophies of conquest: the empty exoskeletal heads of Swarm components and other bits of dried Swarm anatomy. A pile of leathery blankets at one end of the barge forms a bed. If the PCs ask how Cinneka has these keepsakes—especially if they've seen how mindscape creatures explode in a burst of psychic energy after being defeated—the kasatha explains she knows how to exert her will over the mindscape to a small degree, something she agrees to teach the PCs if they have a few decades to spare.

Cinneka motions for the PCs to follow her onto the barge's main deck, where there is a large pot boiling over a makeshift camp stove. Before she says anything else, the kasatha takes the lid off the pot, revealing a watery stew of broad leaves and roots. Using a ladle made from chitin, she samples the soup. Grimacing, she replaces the lid and declares that it "needs a bit more time." If asked, she

explains that she learned how to cook the strange plants and water found within the landscape, making them safe to consume. She is happy to share the stew with the PCs once it is ready.

The kasatha soldier then shows the PC over to a table under a canopy at the aft of the barge. At first glance, it appears to be an ordinary wooden table, but as Cinneka waves her hand over it, the surface warps into a three-dimensional representation of the surrounding area (see the map on page 21). Not exactly a hologram, this map is more of a model with features that update in real time. If the PCs peer close enough, they can see the desert sands shifting in the wind, and if they examine the sand-barge on the map, they can even spot themselves!

Cinneka points out the four areas the PCs saw in their visions, explaining briefly what she knows about them.



CINNEKA MIDUR JI
HELTAN

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Area B: "I know that place. It's not much more than a great big crevice. It's got some powerful psychic energy though, so I've never gone too near to it."

Area C: "Oases like these pop up in remote areas of the desert. I harvest water and plants from them, when I can."

Area D: "The Swarm has built a simulacrum of all the civilizations it has conquered, where it tests battle tactics. Chances are, there'll be some kind of Swarm presence there."

Area E: "The whirling wall of clouds, that's new. Probably a response to your arrival. But it looks like the barriers that powerful Swarm creatures here in the mindscape put up to protect themselves."

Cinneka agrees to ferry the PCs wherever they would like to go within the mindscape and allows them to rest on board the sand-barge if they like. The vehicle is propelled by a combination of wind and hoverjets and makes good speed over the desert sands. Cinneka steers the barge from a small wheelhouse near its fore. A journey through the mindscape presents its own hazards, however, as detailed in The Desert of the Mind below.

THE DESERT OF THE MIND

The area outside the Hylaxian Refuge isn't the entirety of the Swarm mindscape, but it does represent much of the Suskillon subcolony's mental links to one another. When the PCs venture forth on Cinneka's sand-barge, they find the landscape far less claustrophobic than when they arrived. The pervasive mist has dissipated, leaving open hills of rolling silver sand and a matte black sky featuring only a single silver comet. Skinny spires of mud like termite mounds stand on the horizon, never seeming to get any closer no matter how long the PCs travel in their direction.

Cinneka explains that while she has a map, the mindscape has a tendency to change, reacting to the hive mind's subconscious whims. She warns the PCs that they will continue to be targets for its wrath while outside of the refuge. She is correct. When the PCs travel from one point to another on the sand-barge, they must contend with one of the hazards below. You can choose a hazard at random or pick your favorites; the PCs should experience at least two of these dangers, but you can use as many as you like. Other events can occur during these trips (see Events 5 and 6).

It takes 1d4+1 hours for the sand-barge to travel from one location to another.

Captain Overboard: A dune unexpectedly swells beneath the sand-barge, knocking it off balance. Each PC must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex saving throw or be knocked prone. Cinneka, though, is thrown overboard by the incident. There are several ways the PCs can save her. A PC who moves to the edge of the barge and makes a successful ranged attack roll against an AC of 20 can throw a rope to Cinneka; the AC increases by 1 every round the PCs fail to get a line to her. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Piloting check can turn the barge around, getting the barge 1 round closer to Cinneka. Clever

uses of spells or other abilities should also work at your discretion. At the end of 3 rounds, assume the PCs rescue Cinneka, but two of her arms have been broken in the fall. A PC will have to steer the barge, attempting a DC 25 Piloting check each time they go from one place to another; failure adds an additional hour to each journey. Cinneka can return to her normal duties after receiving 30 Hit Points of healing or after 2 full days of bed rest.

Dust Squall: A massive cloud of silvery dust appears on the horizon, quickly engulfing the sand-barge before Cinneka can steer away from it. The dust blocks vision beyond 5 feet and gets into the environmental protections of armor. A breathing character must attempt a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw each round or begin choking and coughing on the dust. If a PC fails two consecutive saves, they gain the fatigued condition. Assume that Cinneka's mask prevents her from becoming fatigued. A dust squall lasts for 1d6+1 rounds.

High Winds: The tame gusts of wind that propel the sand-barge suddenly grow fierce, straining the vehicle's sail and rigging. Cinneka shouts for the PCs to help take down the sail so that it isn't ripped free from the mast. The PCs must succeed at a total of four DC 28 Acrobatics or Athletics checks to climb and balance among the rigging, untying knots and slackening ropes; a PC who has an appropriate Profession skill (such as sailor) can attempt a DC 25 check instead. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Engineering check can grant another PC a +2 circumstance bonus to their next check by pointing out the best places to manage the sail. Each PC can attempt two of these checks. If they fail, the winds destroy the sail and it takes twice as long for the barge to go anywhere. Cinneka can repair the sails with a day of labor.

Lost: Approximately halfway through a trip, Cinneka calls out to the PCs with a worried voice. She sheepishly admits that her normally astute navigation has been thrown off by some subtle changes in the surrounding terrain, and they are currently lost. A PC must succeed at a DC 40 Survival check to get the barge back on the proper course. Each failed check adds an hour to the travel time, and up to two PCs can aid this check. A PC who has Tuvah's holy symbol and uses the comet above to assist with navigation gains a +2 circumstance bonus to the check. If the PCs fail this check three times, they actually arrive at one of the other locations in the mindscape, though they are disoriented and take a -2 penalty to saving throws, skill checks, and attack rolls during that area's encounter.

Treasure: After the PCs make it through the first mindscape danger, Cinneka expresses her appreciation for their actions and gives the PCs some gifts as thanks. Alternatively, if the PCs roll poorly or made some bad decisions during the hazard, she offers these items to the PCs noting that they'll need all the help they can get. Cinneka has fashioned a series of injections using fluids extracted

THE DESERT OF THE MIND



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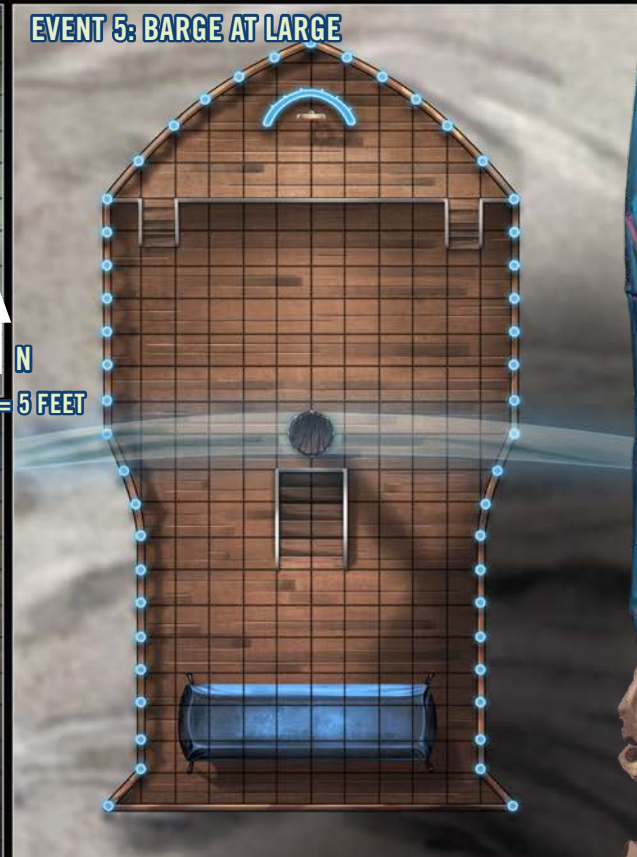



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

D. RUINS OF WAR



EVENT 5: BARGE AT LARGE





from Swarm mindscape components she captured alive; they operate as nanite hypopods (*Starfinder Armory* 106). Cinneka gives the PCs the equivalent of four purple, four black, and two white hypopods.

After the PCs endure the second mindscape hazard, Cinneka offers them a personal keepsake from her time at the solarian monastery: a set of *mk 2 plasma beads* (*Armory* 115) in the form of a necklace with each bead carved in the shape of a sun.

Story Award: Award the PCs 4,800 XP for making it through the first mindscape hazard, and 4,800 XP for experiencing the second mindscape hazard.

B. THE CONNECTION RIFT (CR 9)

As Cinneka's sand-barge approaches area **B**, the kasatha lowers the sail and asks the PCs to continue onward by foot. She claims that the unusual psychic energy emanating from the crevice might interfere with her vehicle. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Sense Motive check can tell that Cinneka is clearly afraid of something.

It takes 20 minutes of walking for the PCs to come within sight of a crack in the ground. What follows is a series of staged events that depict the departure of the shirren species from the hive mind, the Swarm's attack on the Pact Worlds, and the attack on Suskillon. Though these are but phantasms and visions, they seem real to the PCs. To begin, read or paraphrase the following.

Ahead, a two-foot-wide crevice, several yards long, breaks the silver desert's uniformity. Suddenly, the hole begins to slowly expand, and the sand around it starts to fall into the widening maw. The edge of the growing crater rushes closer, revealing a descent into black oblivion.

Stage 1: The encounter begins with a widening chasm that threatens to swallow up the PCs. The PCs can run from the oncoming collapse or use some means of flight to escape. Each PC should attempt a DC 35 Acrobatics check, whether running or flying. For every 5 feet of land speed over 30 feet, a running PC gains a cumulative +2 circumstance bonus to this check; a flying PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus if their fly speed is at least 30 feet and a +6 circumstance bonus if their fly speed is at least 40 feet. Succeed or fail, the edge of the hole catches up to the PCs, and even flying PCs find their means of flight unexpectedly failing, causing them to plummet into the dark depths. However, a PC who fails the Acrobatics check also takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage from the first part of the fall as they hit the edge of the chasm, striking their heads or extremities.

Stage 2: As the PCs fall, they are engulfed in deep darkness. The only light seems to come from the silver glow of Hylax's comet far above them, though even this point of brightness begins to dwindle. As this occurs, read or paraphrase the following.

Images and sounds coalesce out of the perpetual gloom in all directions: scenes of the ravenous Swarm consuming all in its path, traversing the galaxy and devouring worlds and star systems. Fleets of living ships and hordes of lesser entities engulf countless worlds. Suddenly, the images fracture, and a shard in which the faces of shirrens can be seen rises toward the comet high above.

This scene represents shirrens breaking away from the Swarm and eventually falling into Hylax's embrace. Each PC must attempt a DC 20 Will saving throw as a wave of anguish and confusion washes over them; this is a mind-affecting effect, and shirren PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus to this save. Failure means that PC is overcome with the desire to lash out in revenge as they partially empathize with the Swarm, gaining the shaken condition for the remainder of this encounter.

Stage 3: At this point, the PCs no longer feel like they are falling, but are instead floating weightlessly in a strange void. Above, the light of the comet and the fragment showing images of shirrens is replaced by two glowing globes, like miniature suns. The images of Swarm components around the PCs distort into sharp points that stretch like rubbery fingers toward the tiny suns. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Culture check realizes they are viewing an interpretation of the Swarm's attack on the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium in 291 AG, with each sun representing one of the two civilizations. The PCs realize they have the ability to interfere if they wish.

Each PC has a full round of actions in which they can act. A PC has three options. They can make a melee or ranged attack against an EAC of 23 or KAC of 25. They can cast a damaging spell at the Swarm images, which have a Fortitude saving throw bonus of +12, a Reflex saving throw bonus of +14, and a Will saving throw bonus of +11. Finally, they can attempt a DC 30 Intimidate check to get the Swarm's attention. By succeeding at this skill check or by dealing at least 20 damage (of any type), the PC destroys or drives off one of the Swarm's points of attack; such a success grants that PC a +4 morale bonus on skill checks for the remainder of this encounter. However, if a PC does not succeed at the skill check or deal enough damage, they feel themselves momentarily transported to the site of a battle and take 8d10 slashing damage from scything Swarm claws.

Stage 4: Whether or not the PCs were successful, the Swarm attack on the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium recedes, and the light of the two suns vanishes. In this total darkness, the PCs can feel the constant, gnawing hunger of the Swarm. This overwhelming sensation is accompanied by more scenes of the Swarm advancing on countless civilizations, though these are hazier than the ones before. After several minutes, a mote of violet light appears behind the images, growing rapidly but remaining distinct from the Swarm.

The light is composed of hundreds of winged and glowing Swarm components surrounding a massive five-headed creature, recognizable as the immense beast the PCs spotted as they fled Suskillon in "Fate of the Fifth." The other images fall away and become blurry as this collection of Swarm creatures moves more into focus. The PCs see the light descend on a familiar world of shirrrens and other insectile beings. The light engulfs the world and seems to burn away the citizens and buildings. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Wisdom check recognizes the planet as Ilemchuuva and the mote of light as representing the God-Host's subcolony, with the five-headed creature being the God-Host itself.

The light departs from the charred remains of the planet, though it still glows faintly, like an ember. The light moves with purpose through the darkness of space only to arrive at the familiar Suskillon system. The PCs face a choice: each PC can choose to watch the Swarm attack on Suskillon or look away. The characters instinctively know that seeing this massacre will cost them a part of their psyche, but this sacrifice will help empower the *Crown of Hylax*. Each player should choose for themselves what their character does in this moment; however, make sure they know at least one PC must make this sacrifice and the more PCs that do so, the greater the power the artifact will bestow (see The Crown Empowered sidebar).

Those that choose to witness the Swarm attack see a gruesome replay of the Battle at Stone Sea (as described in *Starfinder Adventure Path #19: Fate of the Fifth*). Hundreds of Swarm components descend from the sky on the 5th Battalion, slaughtering most of the SDF soldiers. A PC who views the battle feels every blow and experiences every death, leaving them mentally exhausted. These PCs take a -3 penalty to Will saving throws until they use the *Crown* on the Connection. This penalty can't otherwise be removed by any means. In addition, each such PC feels a growing connection to the artifact.

Stage 5: By now, the Connection has noticed the PCs are meddling in its memories, and it attempts to retaliate. As the God-Host's subcolony invasion of Suskillon fades into blackness, sand begins to fill the seemingly bottomless crevice. Though the PCs feel like they are floating, surrounded by nothingness, they can sense the sand pouring down from above at a rapid pace and threatening to bury them alive. Hylax's comet appears high above them, granting the PCs the knowledge that they can will themselves up and out of the hole. Each PC must attempt a DC 28 Acrobatics check to fly or Athletics check to climb in order to beat the sand, however. A PC who fails this check is seemingly swallowed by the morass of sand.

Moments later, the PCs find themselves back in the mindscape desert proper, with any PCs who failed this final check coughing up sand. PCs who failed are fatigued until they get a full night's rest; a PC who was already fatigued from a previous event or encounter is instead exhausted.

THE CROWN EMPOWERED

Any PC can wear the empowered *Crown of Hylax* to use its powers, which are more effective depending on how many PCs sacrificed part of themselves in each encounter. The *Crown of Hylax* is an artifact (*Starfinder Armory* 118), and though it must be worn to be used, it doesn't count against a character's limit of worn magic and hybrid items. The fully empowered *Crown* will also play a vital role in the climactic encounter of this adventure.

CROWN OF HYLAX

The *Crown of Hylax* is a stone headpiece intricately carved to look like parts of an insectile exoskeleton. Bits of chitin form the base, and three spires resembling mandibles raise into the air, topped with clusters of iridescent wing fragments in the shape of starbursts. When fully empowered (a difficult process that requires four separate infusions of psychic energy and personal sacrifices by champions of Hylax), the artifact can be placed on a hostile creature's head to force the target to experience the thoughts and feelings of those they consider their enemies.

In addition, even if only partially empowered, the *Crown of Hylax* grants abilities to a champion of the Forever Queen who wears it. Which powers it grants depends on how many infusions of psychic energy the artifact has gotten.

1st: When an ally within 60 feet of you attempts a skill check, you can attempt to aid another as a reaction. The bonus you grant increases by 1 for every two champions who sacrificed to gain this power.

2nd: Three times per day, you can cast *lesser battlemind link* (*Starfinder Adventure Path #20: The Last Refuge* 45) as a spell-like ability. You can target one additional creature with this ability for every two champions who sacrificed to gain this power.

3rd: Once per day as a standard action, you can transfer Hit Points between any number of willing allies within 30 feet (including yourself). For every two champions who sacrificed to gain this power, you may also heal 2d8 Hit Points, distributing the Hit Points as you wish among the creatures affected by this ability.

4th: Once per day, you can cast a 3rd-level *mind thrust* as a spell-like ability. For every two champions who sacrificed to gain this power, you can use this spell-like ability an additional time per day.

Treasure: For witnessing this abbreviated history of the Swarm and the creation of the God-Host's subcolony, the PCs will receive 40,000 credits worth of credit in the bazaar at area A7 (see sidebar on page 16).

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Development: If the PCs investigate the nearby crack in the ground, it looks quite mundane and only a few feet deep. The Connection has removed its psychic significance, hiding its own memory somewhere else within the mindscape.

The *Crown of Hylax*, however, now glows with a faint lime-green light, as the PCs have unlocked one of its powers (see sidebar on page 30). A PC touching the artifact recognizes what it can now do.

Story Award: Award the PCs 6,400 XP for experiencing this collection of visions.

C. WELLSPRING OF MEMORIES (CR 9)

Cinneka anchors her sand-barge a few dozen yards outside area **C**, as the plants prevent the vehicle from approaching closer. She warns the PCs that while she hasn't been to this oasis, water in the mindscape is generally unsafe to consume until it has been purified, pointing to her pot with a hand. If asked to clarify, she tells them a brief tale of the few harrowing days after her canteen ran out Material Plane water, emphasizing the mindscape water's addictive properties. When the PCs approach the oasis's center, read or paraphrase the following.

A pool of water laps gently along a periphery of greenery. The oasis is over a hundred feet in diameter. Strange multi-frondded plants rise above the rest of the foliage.

When a Swarm mindreaper (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 122) uses its trepan analysis ability to analyze the memories of a victim, that knowledge is used to further the immediate goals of the Swarm but is then discarded. However, general impressions of those thoughts collect in places like this one throughout the silvery desert of the mindscape. The water in the pool is a manifestation of these discarded memories, and the leafy plants growing along its banks are extensions of that metaphor.

Hazard: A single taste of the oasis water is enough to nourish a living creature as though they'd eaten a full meal and drank sufficient water for a day. In addition, a living creature who drinks the oasis water receives visions of destroyed cultures from across the galaxy, inuring them to other horrors. This effect is strangely soothing to a living mind but acts like a drug.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Survival check can tell that the water likely has deleterious effects. If the result of this check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC knows of the water's potentially addictive properties. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Mysticism check while examining the area recognizes what the water represents and believes it has beneficial properties. If the result of this check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC is also aware of the water's potential for harm.



WELLSPRING OF
MEMORIES

MEMORIAL WATER

LEVEL 9

Type drug (ingested); **Save** Will DC 18; **Addiction** Will DC 18 (mental)

Track Charisma; **Effect** +4 morale bonus to Will saves against fear or mind-affecting effects for 2d4 hours and heal 1d4 Wisdom damage. A user can gain this healing only once per 24-hour period.

Trap: While this area seems like a respite from the bleakness of the mindscape desert, it holds dangers beyond water with addictive properties. The oasis is protected by an entity of malicious psychic energy that appears as a horned viper with Swarm features and functions as a trap. The snake hides underneath the sand near the oasis at the location indicated on the map, emerging when a PC steps within 15 feet. The viper seeks out living beings and can move 30 feet per round, but it must stay within 30 feet of the square where it appears. Each round, the snake moves toward a different PC within its designated area and—if it ends its movement adjacent to the PC—attacks. A PC using Diplomacy or Intimidate to “disarm” the trap ensures that they aren’t a possible target for 1 round. A PC that takes damage from the snake is entangled and flooded with mental stimuli on their next turn; they must succeed at a Will saving throw or be confused. This is a mind-affecting effect.

PSYCHIC VIPER

CR 9

XP 6,400

Type magical; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable** Engineering DC 28 (disable the physical snare) or Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 25 (use charm or force of personality to make the snare seek a different target)

Trigger location (see above); **Init** +15; **Duration** 6 rounds; **Reset** manual

Initial Effect snare +22 melee (4d12+4 B plus entangled);

Secondary Effect an entangled target gains the confused condition for 1d4 rounds; Will DC 18 negates

Treasure: If at least one PC submerges themselves in the Wellspring of Memories, the PCs will receive 40,000 credits worth of credit in the bazaar at area **A7** (see sidebar on page 16).

A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check finds an unusually shaped tree near the oasis in the shape of a humanoid. When pried from the ground and trimmed (a process that takes 1 hour of work), the tree functions as a suit of preserver’s mantle III (*Armory* 69).

Development: The PCs can take as much water as they wish, though the liquid loses potency 1 hour after being removed from the oasis. However, its addictive properties feel very real for as long as the PCs are within the mindscape. Any addictions to this drug ends once the PCs return to the Material Plane.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Mysticism check realizes that to empower the *Crown of Hylax* here, it and the person holding it must be fully immersed in the oasis water for at least 30 seconds. While under the surface, the person must open their mind to the water’s metaphorical nature and sacrifice some of their memories to it. This PC takes a –6 penalty to Intelligence-based checks until PCs use the *Crown* on the Connection. This penalty can’t otherwise be removed by any means. Any number of PCs can make this sacrifice; each one feels their connection to the artifact strengthen.

When empowered by the oasis water, the *Crown of Hylax* is cool to the touch, like a glass filled with ice water, as the PCs have unlocked one of its powers (see sidebar on page 30). A PC touching the artifact recognizes what it can now do.

D. RUINS OF WAR (CR 9)

Cinneka brings her sand-barge as close as she can to area **D**, parking the vehicle in the shade of a partially destroyed cement tower. Read or paraphrase the following.

Buildings rise from the sand in the distance, each one constructed using different materials and of wildly different design philosophies. Concrete poured walls brush up against towering arches made of piled bricks, while crystalline growths dance around makeshift shelters made of leather, bones, and skulls. These mismatched ruins form a city that stretches for miles in every direction.

Cinneka explains how this area is used by the Swarm hive mind as one of many places where it can quickly consider different strategies by running battle simulations. Though they tend to overwhelm their victims with superior numbers and nigh-unstoppable relentlessness, the Swarm are not without tactics. Occasionally, the hive mind will overwrite sections of this battlefield to reflect the architecture of a new world with little consideration for aesthetics, resulting in this jumble of half-constructed buildings scorched from simulated warfare. Cinneka suspects that the PCs will need to search through the ruins for some link to the Connection that will empower the *Crown of Hylax*. She would prefer to stay with her vehicle in case the group needs to make a quick escape.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Engineering check can identify some of the structures as belonging to civilizations known to have been attacked by the Swarm, with signs of Utranean architecture rising up prominently near the center of the city. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Mysticism check recognizes these structures as thought experiments created by the hive mind to test out certain methods of attack.

Creatures: After picking their way through the crumbling buildings, the PCs reach an area that looks like a crude replica of the streets of New Grakka. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check can hear the sounds of battle around a

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nearby corner: pistol fire and the screams of the dying. When they move to investigate, they see four Swarm revulsors made from plastic and metal performing killing blows on simulacra of SDF soldiers. The hive mind is planning on eventually invading Utraneus, and this exercise is sort of a daydream. The mindscape creatures attack as soon as they see the PCs.

Use the map on page 21 for this encounter.

MINDSCAPE REVULSORS (4)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Mindscape Swarm revulsor (page 56, *Starfinder Adventure Path #20: The Last Refuge* 61)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11



DEFENSE

HP 70 EACH

EAC 17; KAC 19

Fort +7; **Ref** +9; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind, regeneration 5 (fire);

Immunities acid, fear effects

Weaknesses mindscape dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee claw +15 (1d6+8 S)

Offensive Abilities ferocity, ear-splitting shriek (30-ft. cone, 5d6 So plus deafen, DC 13)

TACTICS

During Combat Each revulsor uses its ear-splitting shriek on a different round, trying to catch as many PCs in each blast as possible. Otherwise, they engage in melee combat, relying on their regeneration.

Morale Constructed solely for war, the revulsors fight until they are destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +11, Intimidate +11

Languages Shirren, telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 13), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless

Treasure: If the PCs spend 1d3 hours exploring the ruins, searching for scraps leftover from the Swarm's recreations of past conquests, they discover an *unholy series-42 plasma guide sniper rifle* (*Armory* 24) marked with symbols of Damoritosh, a *lesser photon crystal*, three pulse grenades II (*Armory* 26), and a set of specialist defiance series armor marred by deep claw marks.

In addition, for battling among the Ruins of War, the PCs will receive 40,000 credits worth of credit in the bazaar at area A7 (see sidebar on page 16).

Development: At the end of the fight, the psychic shards that made up the defeated revulsors and SDF soldiers re-coalesce into a featureless humanoid figure that stands motionless in the middle of the street. Three small spikes adorn its head, making it look like it is wearing a copy of the *Crown of Hylax*. A PC who holds the artifact and approaches the figure realizes that by touching the *Crown* to the figure's head, it will empower the artifact, but will require a sacrifice of martial strength. Multiple PCs can perform this sacrifice if they are all touching when the *Crown* comes into contact with the figure. There is a soundless blast of psychic energy when this happens, almost knocking nearby PCs off their feet and causing the figure to crumble into dust. Any PC who makes this sacrifice feels an increasing link to the artifact but takes a -2 penalty to attack and damage rolls until the PCs use the *Crown* on the Connection. This penalty can't otherwise be removed by any means.

When empowered in the ruins, the *Crown of Hylax* emits a barely audible ringing noise like a tiny bell, as the PCs have unlocked one of its powers (see sidebar on page 30). A PC touching the artifact recognizes what it can now do.

E. THE BARRIER (CR 9)

As Cinneka's sand-barge comes within 100 feet of area **E**, read or paraphrase the following.

A wall of roiling silver dust rises up to impossible heights here, its outermost edge replete with hunks of sharpened chitin moving at high velocity.

Cinneka explains that the Connection dwells beyond this deadly wall of whirling wind. While this obstacle prevents the PCs from directly confronting the Connection, its energy can be used to empower the *Crown of Hylax*. The landscape past this seemingly impervious obstacle is detailed in area **F**.

A PC holding the artifact can sense it pulling slightly toward the barrier. The PC realizes that all it will take to the empower the *Crown* here is to step fully into the storm. It should be obvious that this activity is quite dangerous (see Hazard below). Multiple PCs can link hands to walk into the winds together, and each PC who does so must also decide if they wish to sacrifice to empower the artifact.

Hazard: The storm wall rises to impossible heights, always 30 feet higher than whatever altitude the PCs can reach. A creature entering the slicing winds takes 6d10 slashing damage from small chitinous matter caught in the vortex before being flung back 1d4×10 feet away from the outer edge of the otherwise stationary storm.

Development: Any PC who makes a sacrifice here at the barrier grows closer to the *Crown of Hylax*, but their maximum Stamina Points are reduced by 15 until PCs use the *Crown* on the Connection. This penalty can't otherwise be removed by any means. When the *Crown of Hylax* is brought into the storm, it is empowered. It vibrates ever so slightly, as the PCs have unlocked one of its powers (see sidebar on page 30). A PC touching the artifact recognizes what it can now do.

Story Award: Award the PCs 6,400 XP if at least one of them endures the wrath of the barrier.

EVENT 5: BARGE AT LARGE (CR 10)

This event can occur at any point while the PCs travel from one mindscape location to another on Cinneka's sand-barge, preferably after the PCs have empowered the *Crown of Hylax* at least once. At your discretion, you can have this event occur immediately before or after one of the Desert of the Mind dangers (page 20).

Creatures: Angered by the PCs' presence, the Connection sends out hit squads to track down the heroes and stop their meddling. Thanks to Cinneka's sand-barge and her

experience avoiding hostile mindscape creatures, the PCs haven't even seen most of these patrols. However, one group—consisting of four mindscape escutchides made of a stone-like substance—has tracked down the barge and now descends upon it in force.

During this fight, Cinneka must maintain her grip on the barge's steering wheel, but at your discretion, she can use one of her arms to provide covering or harrying fire with a pistol every other round. Use the map on page 21 for this encounter. A creature bull rushed or who otherwise falls or is pushed off the edge of the barge can attempt a DC 18 Reflex saving throw to avoid going completely over the side. If a creature does go overboard, they falls 20 feet to the sand below and are essentially out of the combat unless they have a flight speed of 20 feet or more, in which case they can take a full action to catch up to the barge and land on its aft section.

MINDSCAPE ESCUTCHIDES (4)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Mindscape Swarm escutchide (page 56, *Starfinder Adventure Path* #21: *Huskworld* 58)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +13

DEFENSE

HP 85 EACH

EAC 19; **KAC** 21

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

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects

Weaknesses mindscape dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (Ex, average)

Melee slam +17 (1d8+11 B plus pummel)

TACTICS

Before Combat The escutchides attempt to land near the center of the barge, even if it puts them in the middle of the PCs.

During Combat Each escutchide focuses on a different PC, attempting to pummel them off the edge of the barge.

Morale The escutchides fight until they are destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

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

Feats Stand Still

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 14), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless

Development: Once the PCs have defeated the escutchides, they can continue on their way to their destination. Cinneka turns the barge around to fetch any PCs who might have been knocked overboard, though this adds 1 hour to the travel time.

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EVENT 6: A STAR-STUDED BETRAYAL (CR 11)

This event can occur at any point while the PCs travel from one mindscape location to another on Cinneka's sand-barge, preferably after the PCs have empowered the *Crown of Hylax* at least once. At your discretion, if the PCs are dawdling between areas of the desert, you can use this encounter to help remind them of the ongoing Swarm threat in the Material Plane.

To begin this encounter, read or paraphrase the following.

Without warning, dozens of pinpricks of light appear in your field of vision. The rest of the world around you darkens and falls away. The lights resolve into the images of distant stars as you find yourself moving through outer space, your minds now inhabiting a vast living starship. You feel thousands of organic servos moving inside you as biofuel rockets propel you forward. A similar ship glides alongside you, its hull pitted and scorched from battle. You both move toward your prey: another vessel, though this one is made of metals and plastic.

Starship Combat: The PCs find themselves in joint control of a Swarm dreadlancer, displacing the subcolony's command of the vessel. Show the PCs the stat block for a dreadlancer and have each PC choose a crew role. The PCs should use the bonuses listed when performing crew actions, though the PCs get only as many crew actions as there are PCs. Also, because of their disruptive control, the PCs' dreadlancer doesn't benefit from the fleet mind ability. The dreadlancer with them has suffered some minor damage from a fight with SDF forces that has just ended, but the PCs' vessel remains in pristine condition.

An SDF research vessel-turned-military-cruiser, the *Scout*, led several other ships in a blockade to keep Swarm starships away from Utraneus, but the two dreadlancers thoroughly destroyed the other vessels in the blockade and are closing the distance to the cruiser. The *Scout* begins in the center of the map, while the two dreadlancers begin 3d6+5 hexes away (with only 3 hexes separating the two).

The Suskillon vessel is attempting to flee but is unlikely to escape before the Swarm can destroy it.

As starship combat begins, the PCs can contact the *Scout* to let them know what's going on. Though initially wary of some new Swarm trick, the Suskillon vessel can be convinced not to engage the PCs and even coordinate attacks, as long as the PCs focus their efforts on destroying the other Swarm dreadlancer. The Swarm-controlled dreadlancer believes its fellow starship is an ally until the PCs take a hostile action against it. It then proceeds to attack the PCs as best it can.

SCOUT

TIER 10

Suskillon Aurora (see inside front cover)

HP 230

DAMAGED SWARM DREADLANCER

TIER 11

Swarm dreadlancer (*Starfinder Alien Archive 2* 123)

HP 230 (currently 190)

Shields heavy 240 (currently forward 0, port 30, starboard 30, aft 60)

PC-CONTROLLED SWARM DREADLANCER TIER 11

Swarm dreadlancer (*Starfinder Alien Archive 2* 123)

HP 230

Treasure: For saving the *Scout*, the PCs will receive 20,000 credits worth of credit in the bazaar at area **A7** (see sidebar on page 16).

Development: If the PCs manage to defeat the other dreadlancer and save the *Scout*, its captain sends one final hail of thanks before retreating from the field of battle. The PCs' connection with the Swarm vessel ends, and as the PCs return to the mindscape, they can feel a rush of psychic

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feedback surging through their Swarm ship that overloads vital systems and destroys the vessel.

If the PCs' dreadlancer is reduced to 0 HP, the PCs are immediately shunted back to the mindscape, but they feel the vessel they were controlling begin to crumble. Before they fully leave the Material Plane, the PCs hear chatter from the *Scout*. The *Aurora* uses the distraction of the exploding dreadlancer to escape.

Story Award: For defeating the Swam-controlled dreadlancer, award the PCs 12,800 XP.

RETURNING TO THE REFUGE

When the PCs have empowered the *Crown of Hylax* four times, they receive a telepathic message from Independence, requesting that they return to the Hylaxian Refuge. As usual, it takes the PCs 1d4+1 hours to travel from their current location to the refuge by sand-barge. If the PCs haven't faced at least two mindscape desert dangers (page 20) or both **Events 5** and **6**, use this return trip as an opportunity to run these encounters.

Independence eagerly awaits the PCs in area **A1**. Upon their arrival, it immediately begins asking the PCs about their encounters within the mindscape, reacting with excitement or fear as appropriate for the PCs' stories. Independence also asks to see the fully empowered artifact, marveling at the divine energy it exudes. The mindscape entity explains that the *Crown* likely burns as bright as a beacon to the hive mind, and that the Connection might be aware of the PCs' plans. Independence is unsure if the hive mind will attack the refuge, but the PCs should be ready for such a possibility.

However, Independence says that it can manipulate the flow of time around the Hylaxian Refuge, giving the PCs the chance to rest and recuperate if they wish. They can also craft new equipment or trade with the bazaar merchants, especially since their recent exploits have probably earned them credits with the merchants. The PCs should be able to prepare themselves for more confrontations.

During this time, a feeling of worried anticipation falls over the refuge's inhabitants. The merchants are all clearly anxious, unsure of when and how the Swarm hive mind will react to the PCs' plans. However, they are still happy to sell items to the PCs, and some even praise the party as heroes.

THE FINAL BLESSING

Once the PCs are ready to continue, Independence explains that the *Crown of Hylax* requires one final blessing: the mindscape entity will place a sliver of itself within the artifact to act as a kind of virus against the Connection's own mental defenses. Independence explains that the PCs will have to place the *Crown* on the Connection's head for the artifact to do its work. Until that time, however, the PCs can wear and use the *Crown*'s powers.

Independence asks the PCs to bring the *Crown of Hylax* into area **A4** to perform this last blessing. Cinneka also attends. Read or paraphrase the following.

Independence stands in the center of the chamber and holds the *Crown of Hylax* aloft. Light from the silver comet above shines down through the hole in the ceiling, suddenly becoming a focused beam of light that engulfs the mindscape entity and the artifact. A sense of peace radiates throughout the room, temporarily washing away all anxieties and fears about the future. When the light recedes, Independence appears slightly diminished, while the *Crown* seems to be more real than the surroundings.

Independence hands the *Crown of Hylax* back to the PCs, saying simply, "It's ready." Cinneka clasps a few of the PCs on their backs, congratulating them but also warning them that the fight will probably only get harder from here.

The kasatha is correct. Moments later, the Connection begins its attack on the Hylaxian Refuge.

PART 3: SEVERING THE CONNECTION

Fed up with the PCs' presence within the mindscape, the Connection unleashes its full might, launching an assault on the Hylaxian Refuge. Fortunately for the PCs, this provides an opportunity for them to get close enough to the entity to use the *Crown of Hylax*.

EVENT 7: INVASION FROM THE MATERIAL PLANE (CR 11)

Once the PCs have taken the fully empowered *Crown of Hylax* from Independence and perhaps had a few moments to discuss their next steps, read or paraphrase the following.

A loud crash echoes from the chamber at the refuge's entrance, followed by chittering and the flapping of wings. A look of surprise and terror crosses Independence's face. "We have the Connection's full attention now. It has stirred the entire mindscape against us. The refuge is surrounded and creatures—components the Malign Union has somehow physically pulled into this realm—have breached the front door." With that, Independence falls into a trance and rises a few feet from the floor.

Cinneka grabs her rifle. She says, "Go. See what all the commotion is about. I'll look after this one."

The PCs might recognize the trance Independence is in as similar to that which they saw Xelonan perform in his temple

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MINDSCAPE POWERS

Following Independence's sacrifice, each PC gains access to two of the following unique abilities, which they can use until they leave the mindscape. Which two powers each PC receives is up to you, but these powers should reflect that character's strengths and personality. Once a PC uses a power, they can't use that power again until they've rested for 10 minutes to regain Stamina Points, though a PC can spend 1 Resolve Point at any point to recharge that power immediately.

Alter Gravity: For the next minute, as a move action, a PC can change their subjective gravity. The PC can choose to act as though in low, standard, or zero gravity.

Instant Recuperation: As a move action, the PC can regain 4d6 Stamina Points and 4d6 Hit Points.

Recharge Spellcasting: As a move action, the PC can regain the use of a spell slot that is at least 2 levels lower than the highest-level spell slot they have.

Surge of Power: A PC can add 1d6 to the result of a single d20 roll; this takes no action. A PC can use this ability after the original result is declared, changing the outcome of the roll.

back on Suskillon. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Mysticism check makes this association and realizes the mindscape entity is drawing on the power of Hylax—as faint as it is here—to help protect the refuge.

If the PCs need prodding, Cinneka suggests they rush to area **A2**, the only entrance to the Hylaxian Refuge, and where the front doors have been busted down from outside.

Creatures: Not content to allow the PCs to be the only physical creatures within the Swarm mindscape, the Suskillon subcolony stopped attacking the Forever Reliquary long enough to focus their minds as one in the direction of the God-Host. The resulting psychic energy clawed open a small portal to the mindscape, allowing a pair of living Swarm components to enter. Known as ceretorams, they are psychic warriors who have some qualities in common with mindreapers. They are here to kill and consume the PCs.

In the unfortunate event that a PC succumbed to a trepan attack from one of the mindscape mindreapers earlier in the adventure, the ceretorams know all the information that the PC knew. This includes information on the PCs' tactics and abilities. The Swarm components take advantage of that data to the best of their abilities to counter the PCs' strategies.

SWARM CERETORAMS (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

HP 120 each (page 59)

TACTICS

During Combat Each ceretoram targets a different

PC with *mind thrust*, hoping to trigger their remote pulse ability. One then rushes into melee range, using its tentacle attacks to regain Hit Points. The other ceretoram flies around and uses its spell-like abilities to harry the PCs.

Morale Tasked with removing the intruding presence from the Swarm mindscape, the ceretorams fight to the death.

Development: Once the PCs defeat the two ceretorams, they can hear the howling of winds and the roaring of a massive creature outside the refuge. The walls of the building shudder occasionally as something strikes at the walls. A PC who peers out of the front doorway can see a churning silver sandstorm that surrounds the refuge. Any PC who steps outside initiates the next event.

However, the PCs can take a few minutes to make any last-minute purchases at the bazaar or take a 10-minute rest to regain Stamina Points if they wish. The PCs should feel a mounting time pressure as the Hive Mind Avatar (see **Event 8**) attempts to bring down the refuge around their heads, but Independence can keep the structure intact as long as the PCs need (though not long enough to take a full rest).

EVENT 8: AGAINST THE AVATAR (CR 11)

If the PCs don't go outside to area **A1** of their own accord to investigate whatever is attacking the refuge, Cinneka finds them and urges them to do so. If the PCs seem reluctant, they receive a telepathic message from Independence telling them that Hylax will aid them if they can fend off the Connection's attacks. When they leave the refuge, read or paraphrase the following.

Outside, churning silver banks of clouds block all vision farther than one hundred feet in all directions, even directly above. Occasionally, the shadows of Swarm creatures can be seen within the clouds, constantly moving and circling the refuge. The figures seem to be joining in a single keening wail that threatens to overtake the deep, ominous howling of the storm's winds.

As if to counteract the gloom surrounding it, the refuge glows with a bright light, accompanied by a droning hum that evokes harmony and peace. The sand near the building's walls begins to swirl in tiny vortices, each rising only a few feet in height. Slowly, the whirlwinds of sand form into shining simulacra of all manner of insectile beings: shirrens, trox, formians, and more. With a buzzing roar, these mindscape constructs charge into the storm to battle the Swarm!

Simultaneously, portions of this light encompass the PCs, filling them with calmness and warmth. Unfortunately, the PCs have no time to savor this sensation as Independence's voice echoes in their minds.

"I have existed within this place in one form or another since the dawn of the Malign Union you know as the Swarm. I hoped that one day, through Hylax's blessing, that the kucharn would return to her graces and abandon their hostile ways. I fear that will never come to pass, but independence does exist. It can be found in both the shirrens who've escaped the Swarm's grasp and in you, who would fight so valiantly to stop the Swarm from its consumption of the galaxy."

The glow intensifies to near-blinding levels as Independence continues. "My presence here is no longer needed, as there are real champions in the Material Plane who uphold what I've long held to be true. As I disperse, I will impart unto each of you an understanding of this mindscape. Use this power to stop the Connection and save your world! And fear not for me, as I am sure Hylax will smile on this sacrifice for the greater good!"

With that, each PC feels a surge of power as they gain the ability to alter the properties of the mindscape on a personal scale. They instinctively know what these abilities are and how to use them (see the Mindscape Powers sidebar on page 30).

Moments later, Cinneka charges out of the refuge and fights alongside the glowing insectile beings against the Swarm figures within the storm. If the PCs stop her to ask about Independence, she simply shakes her head and grimly marches into battle, her blade drawn.

Creature: The Connection has sent a powerful defense—an embodiment of the greater Swarm hive mind—to smash the Hylaxian Refuge and to kill the PCs. Soon after the PCs receive their new abilities, a huge Swarm-like creature appears out of the storm; it should be clear to the PCs that this was what was causing the buildings to shake earlier. With a screech, the Hive Mind Avatar attacks the PCs.

HIVE MIND AVATAR CR 11

XP 12,800

CE Huge outsider

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense (lfe) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +20

Aura frightful presence (30 ft., DC 18)

DEFENSE HP 180

EAC 24; **KAC** 26

Fort +15; **Ref** +13; **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee claw +24 (4d6+19 S) or

bite +24 (2d8+19 P plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Offensive Abilities swallow whole (3d8+11 A, EAC 24, KAC 22, 45 HP)

TACTICS

During Combat Approaching the toughest-looking PC, the avatar attempts to bite that character and swallow them whole. Once it has a character swallowed, it makes full attacks with its claws against the other PCs.

Morale The avatar fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

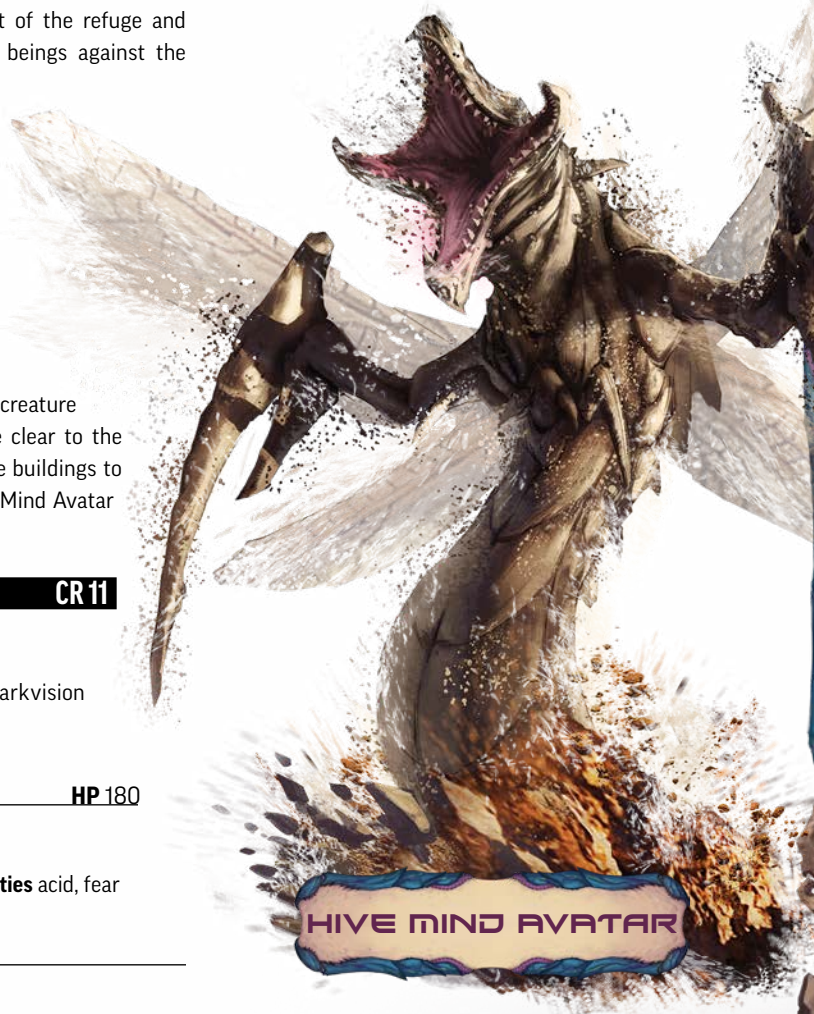
Str +8; **Dex** +5; **Con** +3; **Int** +0; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +25, Survival +20

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Swarm Mind (Ex) Members of the Swarm are bound together into a singular hive mind by a blend of exuded pheromones, imperceptible movements of antennae and limbs, electrostatic fields, and telepathic communication. All Swarm creatures within 30 feet of each other are in constant communication; if one is aware of a threat,



HIVE MIND AVATAR

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all are. (Such awareness can spread along a “chain” of Swarm creatures under appropriate circumstances, potentially alerting distant Swarm creatures). In addition, once per round when within 30 feet of another Swarm creature, a Swarm creature can roll twice and take the better result on a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect.

Development: When the killing blow is dealt to the Hive Mind Avatar, it crumbles into a desiccated pile of chitin that is quickly blown away by the winds. The glowing mindscape protectors of the refuge similarly begin to fade, but then simultaneously burst in multiple explosions of energy that push back the front of the storm, revealing Cinneka’s sand-barge. Continue on to the next event.

EVENT 9: THROUGH THE TEMPEST (CR 10)

In addition to the PCs, Cinneka remains standing outside the refuge. When the storm front rolls back, the PCs see her holding the severed head of a Swarm corrovox, which quickly crumbles into nothingness. The kasatha has a few cuts and acid burns, but otherwise looks fine and ready to continue the fight. Her head whips around as she looks for another enemy, spotting the PCs and her sand-barge instead. She rushes toward the vehicle and waves the PCs to follow, shouting. “This break in the weather won’t last for long! Let’s go!”

After a few moments to raise the sail and brace it against the ferocious winds, the vehicle heads out into the tempest that seems to encompass the entirety of the desert.

The PCs have just enough time to take a 10-minute rest to regain Stamina Points before they have to deal with the hazard of the tempest. Use the map of the barge on page 21 for this event.

Hazard: As Cinneka’s sand-barge barrels through the surrounding tempest, the Connection reaches out to attack with wind and sand. Swarm-like claws and blades form from the tempest and strike at the PCs. When the heroes notice this disturbing fact, find out where they are on the barge’s deck and roll initiative. At the end of each round at initiative count 0, each PC is attacked by one of these appendages, each of which has a total attack bonus of +18 and deals 5d10 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (determined randomly with each attack). Before that, however, each PC does get a round’s worth of actions. Cinneka is safe from the attacks unless the PCs all abandon her (see below). The attacks from the tempest last for 6 rounds.

A PC can also strike back at the tempest, which counts as a single target with construct immunities. The tempest has an EAC of 22 and a KAC of 26, a Fortitude save bonus of +13, and Reflex and Will save bonuses of +10. Making ranged attacks and casting spells doesn’t provoke attacks of opportunity from the storm’s appendages, though they seem to be everywhere at once. If a PC deals at least 25 damage to

the tempest in a round (with either spells or weapons), that PC isn't attacked that round; that PC can grant this benefit to another PC instead, if they wish.

A PC who spends a standard action reciting prayers to Hylax or another good-aligned god and who succeeds at a DC 25 Mysticism check isn't attacked by the hazard that round. For every 5 by which the result of this check exceeds the DC, the character can extend this protection to one adjacent ally.

A PC can move down into the barge's lower deck, but this only grants them cover against the attacking appendages. If all the PCs hide below deck, Cinneka derides them for their cowardice and is eventually overcome by the tempest's attacks. When the sand-barge crashes (see Development), it is much worse for the PCs if they all hid.

Development: At the end of the 6 rounds, the attacking appendages withdraw, melting back into the tempest. A sudden break in the dust ahead reveals a massive slab of black stone jutting up from the desert directly in the barge's path. Cinneka attempts to steer out of the way by turning the wheel hard, but she fails to avoid the sudden hazard. The barge plows into the slab with an ear-splitting crash, and everyone on board is knocked prone. The mast cracks and comes down like a felled tree, while several of the hoverjets flicker and cease functioning.

If the PCs retreated to the barge's lower deck during the tempest, this crash is much worse, and each PC takes 8d10 bludgeoning damage; a successful DC 19 Reflex saving throw halves this damage. At your discretion, Cinneka is killed in the crash.

Once the PCs regain their bearings after the crash, they see they are at the base of a path that leads up the side of a steep mountain of obsidian. Cinneka's map table is unsteady, and the landscape it depicts shudders and trembles, but the PCs can tell they have passed beyond the barrier of area E.

Story Award: For making it through the tempest, award the PCs 9,600 XP.

F. HEART OF THE STORM

To reach the Connection, the PCs must follow the path up the obsidian mountain while the mindscape tries to stop them. They are at the heart of the storm that rages throughout the mindscape. The air is calm, but twisting clouds can still be seen in the distance.

Cinneka remains behind at her crashed sand-barge, pulling down stunted trees and chipping away at the nearby obsidian. The raw materials warp into useful sheets of wood and metal in her hands as she brings them over to the broken barge. If the PCs ask her to accompany them, she notes that in case they aren't successful but manage to escape the Connection's wrath, they'll need a quick way to escape this area, and a fixed sand-barge would be their only ticket out. She doesn't believe it will come to that, as she believes in the PCs, but the kasatha is a practical

thinker. At your discretion, Cinneka can come to the PCs' rescue in the following encounters if things look dire.

F1. THE LINE (CR 10)

The path ends near the base of a set of tiered cliffs, like massive steps cut into the face of the mountain. The ground is littered with chunks of obsidian, and the distant storm fills the air with a constant eerie drone.

The pieces of obsidian feel like they are always underfoot, as if they are moving of their own accord. In this area, the DC of Acrobatics checks to tumble is increased by 5.

Creatures: The Connection continues to place obstacles in the PCs' way. Here, it has amassed dozens of Swarm vorphomas into two large troop formations. Though vorphomas are generally stealthy infiltrators, the Connection hopes their ability to cause confusion (and their sheer numbers) will at least slow down the heroes. The vorphoma troops form a line near the base of the cliffs and wait for the PCs to come to them.

MINDSCAPE VORPHOMA TROOPS (2) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Mindscape Swarm vorphoma troop (page 56, *Starfinder*

Adventure Path #19: Fate of the Fifth 61, *Starfinder*

Adventure Path #21: Huskworld 60)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid (troop)

Init +6; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE HP 105 EACH

EAC 19; **KAC** 20

Fort +10; **Ref** +12; **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind, troop defenses;

Immunities acid, fear effects, troop immunities

Weaknesses mindscape dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (Ex, average)

Melee troop attack (1d4+10 P)

Offensive Abilities arm barbs (1d6+8 P, DC 18), disorienting burst (DC 18)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

TACTICS

During Combat Each vorphoma troop fires its arm barbs at approaching PCs and then uses disorienting burst when a majority of the PCs draw close. The troops rely on their troop attack to damage foes who get within reach.

Morale The vorphoma troops fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +16, Stealth +21

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 18), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless

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SPECIAL ABILITIES

Arm Barbs (Ex) As a standard action, a Swarm vorphoma troop can fire two 60-foot lines of tiny barbs at foes; these lines can be measured from any square within the troop's space. All creatures in the lines' areas of effect automatically take 1d6+8 piercing damage and are sickened for 1d3 rounds. A PC can attempt a DC 18 Reflex saving throw to halve the damage and a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw to negate the sickened condition.

Disorienting Burst (Sp) Three times per day as a standard action, a Swarm vorphoma troop can sow confusion in all non-Swarm creatures within 15 feet. Each creature must succeed at a DC 16 Will saving throw or gain the confused condition for 1 round.

Development: Each ridge rises up 30 feet from the previous cliff top and can be climbed with a successful DC 20 Athletics check.

F2. SPIRITS OF THE LAND (CR 12)

At the top of the cliffs, a swath of land circles a large depression where the mountain's peak should be. The ground is a messy patchwork of biomes—a stretch of desert directly abuts several square yards of ice, and a small marsh borders a patch of dry, sunbaked badlands. Bits of this differing terrain break off from the mountainside to float aimlessly above the crater, a single column of white stone rising up in the center to support a smooth, flat surface.

Similar to area **D**, this part of the mountain is another example of reconstructed memories of various biomes the Swarm has devoured over the centuries. However, none of them have the true features of the environments they represent—the ice isn't cold or slippery, the desert isn't hot, and the swamp isn't difficult terrain.

Creatures: The Connection turns the land against the PCs as they get closer. Like the surrounding terrain, these huge earth elementals are composed of a hodgepodge of environments: bog, desert, glacier, and mountain. Each has a general humanoid shape, though there is a small cascade of sand where a head should be.

LIVING EARTHS (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Mindsight greater earth elemental (page 56, *Starfinder Alien Archive* 46)

N Huge outsider (earth, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

HP 165 EACH

EAC 23; KAC 25

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

DR 10/—; **Immunities** elemental immunities

Weaknesses mindscape dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

Melee slam +23 (2d10+18 B)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

TACTICS

Before Combat The elementals wait within the ground, hiding just under the surface using Stealth.

During Combat If detected or when the PCs walk close to where they are, the elementals burst forth and pummel the nearest PCs with slam attacks.

Morale The elementals fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +19, Stealth +19

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VORPHOMA TROOP

F. HEART OF THE STORM



1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

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Other Abilities earth glide, earth mastery, formless demise (DC 17), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless

F3. ABOVE THE CRATER

Several islands float above the crater at the top of the mountain, orbiting the central pillar of white stone; some are barren chunks of earth, while others support lush greenery or desert sands. Each island moves in its own path, passing very close to one another but never colliding. Below, hundreds of sharp obsidian spikes line the bottom of the crater. A twisting vortex of shadow spins high above the central pillar.

The PCs have several ways to cross these floating islands to reach the central pillar. Any method of magical or technological flight—including their newfound gravity-altering mindscape powers—gets the PCs across with ease.

Alternatively, the PCs can jump between the islands when they pass close to one another. Each jump requires a successful DC 15 Athletics check, and each PC will have to make 1d6+2 jumps to reach area **F4**. A PC who fails one of these checks can attempt a DC 14 Reflex saving throw to catch the edge of the island they are jumping to and pull themselves up. If a PC also fails this save, they plummet toward the spikes below, falling over 150 feet. Give the others a chance to save them, but before the falling PC impacts onto the crater's bottom,

they disappear in a flash of light and reappear in area **F2**, thanks to the grace of Hylax. However, that PC must succeed at a DC 18 Will saving throw or be shaken for the next hour; this is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Finally, a PC who spends several minutes at the edge of the crater examining the paths the islands take can chart them with a successful DC 30 Perception check or a successful DC 26 check with Physical Science or an appropriate Profession. With a chart of the islands' movements, the PCs can see that one island comes very close to the edge of the crater and then slowly traces a spiraling path to the central pillar. No jumping is required to step onto and off that island.

F4. CENTRAL PILLAR (CR 13)

This featureless outcropping of stone stands in the center of the crater, surrounded by floating islands that drift lazily by. Suddenly, the twisting shadows above begin to descend, heralded by the sounds of buzzing insects!

Like in area **F3**, the bottom of the crater is over 150 feet below. Anyone who falls off the pillar spends their next turn falling, but then reappears as close to the edge they fell from as possible. That character must then succeed at a DC 18 Will saving throw or gain the shaken condition for the next hour; this is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Creatures: The vortex of shadows that descends on the PCs resolves itself into a collection of smaller Swarm components acting in concert—the Connection. Representing the Suskillon subcolony's link to the greater Swarm hive mind, the Connection is the final obstacle the PCs must face in order to complete their mission within the mindscape. The gargantuan Connection flies around the central pillar, telepathically taunting the PCs in Shirren and recommending they surrender to be consumed by the Swarm. When this battle begins, the Connection also conjures forth two mindscape Swarm moliteras from the stone on opposite ends of the pillar.

The PC who wears or carries the *Crown of Hylax* knows instinctively that if the artifact is placed on the Connection's head, it will disrupt the mindscape entity by granting it the ability to empathize with all those the Swarm has destroyed (and are currently destroying) across history. During combat,

placing the crown on the Connection's head requires a successful melee attack against its KAC + 4. This deals no damage, but forces the Connection to attempt a DC 22 Will saving throw. For every 50 Hit Points of damage the Connection has taken, it takes a -1 penalty on this save. If the Connection is successful, it brushes the artifact off its head, depositing it in an adjacent square of its choice; if that would cause the crown to fall into the crater below, a PC adjacent to the square it was placed in can attempt a DC 19 Reflex save to catch the artifact. If dropped, the crown reappears like a PC. If the Connection fails the Will save, see Development on page 37.

MINDSCAPE MOLITERAS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

Mindscape Swarm molitera (page 56, *Starfinder Adventure Path #22: The Forever Reliquary* 60)

CE Large monstrous humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +14

DEFENSE

HP 106 EACH

EAC 19; **KAC** 21

Fort +9; **Ref** +11; **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects, sonic

Weaknesses mindscape dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee digging arm +18 (2d6+12 B & P; critical knockdown)

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

Offensive Abilities shattering rumble (4d6 So, DC 15)

TACTICS

During Combat During the first round of combat, each mindscape molitera tries to catch as many PCs as possible in its shattering rumble ability, uncaring if they catch each other in the area of effect. They then attack the PCs with their digging arms.

Morale These mindscape creatures fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +19

(+27 to climb), Stealth +14

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 15), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless, stone tunneler

THE CONNECTION

CR 12

XP 19,200

CE Gargantuan outsider

Init +8; **Senses** blindsense (life) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +22

LIVING EARTH

DEFENSE

HP 200

EAC 26; KAC 28

Fort +14; Ref +16; Will +14

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects, swarm immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee claw +23 (3d6+16 S)

Ranged bioelectric bolt +26 (6d4+12 E)

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

Offensive Abilities hurl island, mindscape control

TACTICS

During Combat The Connection begins combat by using its hurl island ability to smash a chunk of island onto the highest concentration of PCs, heedless of the mindscape moliteras who might be damaged in the process. In the next round, it alters its personal gravity to zero-G so it no longer needs to hover while making full attacks with its bioelectric bolts. It tries to remain beyond the reach of the PCs, occasionally hurling another island at them, until its moliteras are defeated. Then it lands on the pillar to slash at the PCs with its claw attacks.

Morale Unable to comprehend defeat, the Connection fights until the PCs place the *Crown of Hylax* on its head or it is reduced to 0 Hit Points, whichever comes first. See Development below for more information when either occurs.

STATISTICS

Str +4; Dex +8; Con +5; Int +0; Wis +0; Cha +2

Skills Acrobatics +27 (+35 to fly), Intimidate +22, Mysticism +22

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bioelectric Bolt (Ex) As a ranged attack, the Connection can unleash a blast of electricity that has a range increment of 30 feet.

Hurl Island (Ex) As a full action, the Connection can move up to double its speed toward the nearest floating island, smashing into it and hurling a section of its mass like a weapon with a range increment of 20 feet and the explode weapon special property with a radius of 20 feet. The Connection has a total bonus of +26 to the ranged attack to hit a grid intersection. Each creature in the area of effect takes 8d6 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone; a successful DC 19 Reflex saving throw halves the damage and avoids the prone condition. The hurled chunk of island is destroyed in the process, creating an area of difficult terrain in its area of effect (as long as it struck a solid object).

Mindscape Control (Su) The Connection has near-complete control over the Swarm mindscape and can use all the powers listed in the Mindscape Powers sidebar on page 30 at will, without the expenditure of Resolve Points (though it can use each power only once per turn).

Swarm Mind (Ex) Members of the Swarm are bound together into a singular hive mind by a blend of exuded pheromones, imperceptible movements of antennae and limbs, electrostatic fields, and telepathic communication. All Swarm creatures within 30 feet of each other are in constant communication; if one is aware of a threat, all are. (Such awareness can spread along a "chain" of Swarm creatures under appropriate circumstances, potentially alerting distant Swarm creatures). In addition, once per round when within 30 feet of another Swarm creature, a Swarm creature can roll twice and take the better result on a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect.

Development: When the PCs manage to reduce the Connection to 0 Hit Points, its constituent components coalesce into the form of a Medium-sized kucharn on the central pillar. It kneels on the ground, catching its breath, and its exoskeleton shifts and ripples as if it were made out of water. At this point, a PC can place the *Crown of Hylax* on the Connection's head with no resistance (and no attack roll), and the Connection automatically fails the Will saving throw mentioned above.

Once the artifact is on the Connection's head and it fails the Will save, the crown begins to glow with a green light and seems to merge with the Connection's body. Slow realizations cross the Connection's face, which contorts from moment to moment in grief and agony. After a moment, it speaks, and its voice is a less harsh buzz than the PCs have previously heard.

"I see it all now... All the pain, all the misery, all the horror that the Swarm has wrought." The Connection looks up, tears streaming from its eyes. "It cannot be undone, and it shouldn't be forgiven, but perhaps it is time to... let go of the hate." The mindscape entity gives a melancholy smile and begins to slowly dissolve, bits of its exoskeleton drifting away in the wind of the surrounding storm, which also dies down as the Connection disappears. High above in the now-clear sky, Hylax's comet twinkles.

The Connection is destroyed, having voluntarily given its "life" as a form of repentance. The Suskillon subcolony is now completely cut off from the greater Swarm hive mind, a fact the PCs will soon discover for themselves. All penalties the PCs have taken on as part of their sacrifices to empower the *Crown of Hylax* are removed, but the artifact is also nowhere to be seen.

RETURN TO REALITY

Moments later, after the PCs have had time to recover their dying or wounded, the edges of their vision begin to blur and the mindscape around them falls away, leaving only an endless tunnel of light. There is a brief feeling of extreme

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vertigo as the PCs travel down this tunnel, similar to what the PCs experienced when first entering the mindscape. Then, as quickly as it came on them, it ends, and the PCs find themselves standing once again in the Forever Reliquary's main temple (area L of that adventure).

The journey revitalizes the PCs; each character is fully healed, and their abilities and Resolve Points are refreshed, as though the PCs had taken a full 8-hour rest. Thanks to the blessings of Hylax, any equipment or items the PCs discovered or purchased at the bazaar in the mindscape are now completely real and come with them into the Material Plane. However, any consumable items the PCs might have brought with them or found and then used during their time in the mindscape remain consumed.

As the PCs get their bearings, they notice they aren't alone in the temple. A few of the Reliquary monks are present, maintaining a defensive line against a handful of Swarm creatures!

EVENT 10: FOREVER TRIUMPHANT (CR 9)

The Forever Reliquary's temple is a mess, littered with the bodies of monks and Swarm creatures alike. The corpses of the thrasher lords the PCs inhabited earlier (see **Event 4**) are still present and fresh, hinting that only a few hours at most have passed since then.

Use the map for area L from the previous adventure for this encounter.

Creatures: A small force of Swarm creatures have made their way to the temple, though the monastery residents have held their ground as best they could; the Swarm ceretoram here has already been wounded, but several Reliquary defenders in the temple have been killed. Only four defenders remain. Half a dozen Swarm dredgers make up the rest of the opposition, but they aren't considered significant enemies for the PCs.

With the defeat of the Connection, the Swarm in the Suskillon system are reeling. Each Swarm creature is stunned for the first round of combat, giving the PCs a chance to move against them. On subsequent rounds, each Swarm creature is sickened, and has a 50% chance each round of gaining the staggered condition until the end of their turn.

SWARM DREDGERS (6)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (*Starfinder Adventure Path #19: Fate of the Fifth* 59)

TACTICS

During Combat The dredgers have very little chance of hitting the PCs, so they gang up against the Reliquary defenders.

Morale The dredgers fight to the death.

RELIQUARY DEFENDERS (4)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

HP 90 each; currently 45 each (page 8)

TACTICS

During Combat The defenders aid the PCs, providing covering fire or harrying fire as needed.

Morale These shirrrens fight for as long as the PCs remain around. If the PCs retreat, so do the defenders.

SWARM CERETORAM

CR 9

XP 6,400

HP 120; currently 100 (page 59)

TACTICS

During Combat The ceretoram attempts to heal itself by targeting the PCs with its tentacle attacks. In its disorientation, it makes poor use of its spell-like abilities.

Morale Unable to consider defeat even now, the ceretoram fights to the death.

MINDSCAPE
MOLITERA



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CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Development: Once the PCs defeat the Swarm attackers within the temple, they finally have a proper respite and can take stock of what has been happening on the Material Plane. The shirren defenders take the PCs to find Tuvah, the monastery's leader, who is holed up in the now-fortified infirmary. As the PCs move through the Forever Reliquary's halls, they see much carnage, though it seems like the battle is over. Other monks arrive from other areas of the complex to note that the Swarm seems to be faltering.

Tuvah greets the PCs warmly, immensely pleased that they have fulfilled their destinies as the champions of Hylax. She has many questions for them and is eager to hear their answers, but she understands if the PCs want to rest or check in on the SDF.

Treasure: The Forever Reliquary recognizes the PCs as saviors and offers up a large cache of their remaining wealth to assist with the coming final battle against the disoriented Suskillon subcolony. The wealth comes in the form of a combination of fascinating artwork, jewels, and credsticks stashed away by the monks since their arrival on the comet. This cache has a combined total of 125,000 credits. If the PCs failed to spend all their encounter-based credit within the bazaar (area A7), then the amount of the Reliquary's gift increases by that unspent amount.

Story Award: As the Swarm dredgers don't count as significant enemies for the PCs at this point, the PCs receive no additional XP for defeating them.

The PCs probably want to go to the surface of the Prodigal Stone to see if their starship survived the Swarm attack. Luckily, it was ignored by the Swarm and is intact (or, at least, as intact as the PCs left it), although it holds a possibly unexpected visitor—the kasatha Cinneka! The mindscape survivor shakes her head in bewilderment when the PCs arrive, saying, "I guess ol' Hylax figured I'd spent enough time in the Swarm's mind and brought me back here!" She laments that she'll miss her sand-barge and requests the PCs give her a ride for a change. Cinneka has no further role to play in this Adventure Path, but will gladly serve as a member of the PCs' crew if needed.

Once the PCs power up their starship, they receive a message from Commander Najiri, commending them for "whatever they did to throw the Swarm for a loop." She orders the PCs to report back to Utraneus, as she needs their expertise to assist in the plan to take back Suskillon, which will be detailed in the Attack of the Swarm! Adventure Path's final adventure, "The God-Host Ascends!"



MINDSCAPES

"I didn't believe it at first. You know, I'd just kind of doze off while I was traveling on those long freighter runs. But then... then in the corner of my mind's eye, I'd see it: the Endless Forest. Eventually, thanks to a friend, I started going there instead of just scratching at it with waking dreams. It's amazing, you know? Sitting in the so-called 'real world' with your knees up to your snout in a cramped freighter, while in your mind you're racing through a forest that stretches on forever. I'd wager that after seeing that beautiful forest, most folks couldn't tell the difference between what's real and what's not—and wouldn't want to."

—Rizzgror, freighter security and aspiring metaphysicist

Creations of psychic mastery that surpass the conventional, mindscapes are mentally formed landscapes that exist on the Astral Plane for only as long as their creator maintains them. They are brought into existence for a variety of reasons, from the subconscious mental activity of powerful minds to the actions of two or more beings locked in psychic combat. The ongoing creation of mindscapes seeds the Astral Plane with an almost endless number of these temporary domains.

A mindscape can be of any imaginable shape or size—its only limits are those of its creator's imagination. Some mindscapes take on the form of entire worlds, spawned by the intellects of creatures so cosmically unknowable that their waking thoughts create planets that live and die in an instant. More common are the mindscapes that exist as re-creations of treasured locations in their creators' minds. A psychic might find refuge in an imitation of an ancient city or a vision of their family farmstead.

Mindscapes exist in two distinct types: binary and immersive. Binary mindscapes serve as conduits between two minds engaged in a psychic duel. They are by far the most temporary of such constructs, existing only as long as the duel that created them lasts. Immersive mindscapes, in contrast, are created when a powerful mind wills them into existence using specialized psychic magic, unique spells, rituals, or even a traumatic event occurring to someone with psychic potential.

Creatures can enter a mindscape in a few different ways. Most enter a mindscape through the assistance of powerful rituals, spells, or magic or hybrid items. In most such cases, a creature travels to the mindscape as a being of pure thought, albeit one foreign to the mindscape creatures (page 56) that already populate the area. Beings entering a mindscape can take no actions with their physical bodies and lose their Dexterity bonus to AC, but they can still attempt saving throws and are not considered helpless, as the unconscious parts of their mind still provide some resistance to their destruction. Due to the mental investment of being in an immersive mindscape, creatures within such realms have no information about their real-world bodies and can't tell if they take damage or suffer other negative effects. Conversely, minds engaged in a binary mindscape maintain a connection with their actual bodies and can tell if they take damage or experience other negative effects.

A creature that mentally enters a mindscape does so in the form of a mental avatar. A creature's mental avatar has the same physical statistics in the mindscape that the creature does in the real world (KAC, EAC, Hit Points, ability scores, and so on). Armor, items, and weapons all function inside the mindscape, though they do not consume charges or uses of their real-world counterparts. Spells and limited-use abilities likewise function, but their uses are expended both in the mindscape and in the real world.

Rarely, beings can enter a mindscape as physical entities. Such events occur when a creature is bodily transported to

the Astral Plane at the exact location of the mindscape. It's almost impossible for a creature to achieve such a feat without the assistance of powerful magic or using artifacts intended specifically for such acts of transportation. A creature who finds itself physically within a mindscape is always at risk, as even a normally harmless mindscape can deal very real damage to creatures who transport their real bodies into it. Otherwise, mindscapes deal damage to a connected body based solely on the mindscape's associated traits (page 42).

Throughout the galaxy, species and even deities interact with mindscapes in different ways. Telepathic species like lashuntas and shirrens have a long historical association with mindscapes. To lashuntas, mindscapes have been a form of entertainment and escapism since the species' earliest days on Castrovel. Shirrens view mindscapes with a mix of apprehension and excitement; the individual choice to create or enter a mindscape is enthralling, while the potential for being at the mercy of another's mind is a sobering reminder that such false existences can come with a price.

Followers of Damoritosh gifted with psychic potential often conjure forth binary mindscape battlefields in which to engage in psychic duels, or create immersive mindscape battlefields to replay past battles and wars to see if they can change the outcome. Some disciples of Eloritu maintain ongoing mindscapes that act as vast repositories of knowledge, with the creators' bodies kept under exceptional security. Such mindscapes allow those who know about them to tap into these mental reservoirs without need of maintaining physical data repositories, though some question the ethics of using the minds of powerful immobilized psychics as data storage. Followers of Ibra and Weydan notably venture into mindscapes in search of either answers to cosmic mysteries (in the case of Ibrans) or simply to see what exists in the minds of others (in the case of Weydanites).

BINARY MINDSCAPES

Binary mindscapes exist to serve as backdrops for psychic combats between two beings. Such environments appear as ghostly images that lack definition, as they manifest from residual psychic energies of both combatants. Common examples of binary mindscapes include a grassy field on a rainy day or a flat stone surface surrounded by fog. These mindscapes often lack technological trappings or modern architectural styles, as the mental energies used to craft them often pull from the mind's most primeval stored memories. The most powerful instinctive metaphysicists (page 44) can force creatures to enter a binary mindscape to engage in a psychic duel.

IMMERSIVE MINDSCAPES

Far less common than binary mindscapes, immersive mindscapes are powerful mental constructs where a person could live an entire lifetime without ever realizing where

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they truly are. When created, these mindscapes appear to be as real as the mind that perceives them, and only faults in the creator's imagination create imperfections within. The greatest danger of such mindscapes is the potential to become permanently lost within them while one's physical body wastes away in the real world.

Most immersive mindscapes serve a purpose for the real-world psychic who created them. Some act as personal retreats for psychics who can't bear living on the Material Plane. Other immersive mindscapes act as available repositories of knowledge or meeting spaces for those who know how to access them.

MINDSCAPE TRAITS

Much like other planes of existence, mindscapes have specific traits that dictate their appearance and behavior, though their traits can vary based on their creator's whim. These traits supersede the Astral Plane's normal traits. As most mindscapes come from the minds of those on the Material

Plane, they most often imitate the traits of that plane, but this is by no means a rule. For example, some mindscapes exist to support specific alignments, with creatures whose alignment matches the mindscape's dominant alignment axis or axes gaining additional bonuses to saves or spellcasting. In others, the laws of physics are mutated. These elements can fluctuate within a given mindscape, with gravity changing in controlled or randomized ways or based on location within the mindscape. Similarly, some visionary mindscape creators even manage to control the flow of relative time within their domain. Accelerated time allows one to live lifetimes in the mindscape while only hours or days pass in the real world, while delayed time may mean spending only a few hours in a mindscape results in a mental avatar's real body dying of starvation in the real world.

Every mindscape is the construct of a living mind and changes according to the will of that mind. Though a mindscape's creator holds the greatest degree of control over it, other creatures within the mindscape who recognize that they're within a mindscape can alter it to suit their whims, effectively imposing their will onto the mindscape. Often times, these adjustments come in the form of psychic duels or certain spells or abilities that alter terrain. A mindscape also reacts to beings inside it who don't exist as part of the creator's desire, be they friendly visitors or hostile intruders.

TRANSPARENCY

The transparency of a mindscape describes whether other creatures know that they've entered a mindscape.

Overt: Overt mindscapes actively let entrants know they're entering into a mindscape. This can occur when an individual invites someone to enter their mindscape through use of an item, ritual, or spell. Other times, a mindscape might be considered overt because it's the result of an identified psychic attack or the start of a psychic duel accepted by both sides. Knowing that one is inside a mindscape can help a creature escape or better understand the mindscape's traits, and some spells and items may even require that a creature know they're within a mindscape in order to function. Binary mindscapes are always overt.

Veiled: A veiled mindscape is a sinister creation intended to obfuscate its true nature from those who enter it. A being usually enters such a mindscape in a manner that doesn't make it apparent they are leaving their body. The creature may not realize the doorway they're stepping through is actually a magical portal or the newly learned spell they're casting is actually a trap. The canniest and most powerful psychic spellcasters can disguise their spells this way, forcibly shunting targets into their mindscapes without the targets realizing what has happened. Veiled mindscapes can be insidiously dangerous, as a creature unknowingly trapped within could suddenly drop dead within the mindscape without any warning as their real-world body perishes from physical trauma or even lack of food or water.

SHAPE AND SIZE

Upon its creation, each mindscape has a shape and size based on the whims of its creator.

Finite: A finite mindscape has clearly discernible boundaries and limits within its space on the Astral Plane. Such mindscapes may have misty borders that lead off into pure nothingness or insurmountable barriers. These mindscapes can be as small as one can imagine, though generally they vary from the size of a single homestead to the size of an entire world. All binary mindscapes are finite.

Infinite: As the name suggests, an infinite mindscape goes on forever. Though the notion of an endless mindscape may be difficult for some to grasp, the dimensions of these mindscapes exist thanks to a strong connection with the mindscape's creator. Creators of infinite mindscapes subconsciously generate more content through mental procedural generation, similar to the software that many videogame creators employ in level design.

Self-Contained Shape: The most unnerving of mindscapes, a self-contained mindscape essentially folds back on itself. This could be a foggy exterior that always reorients a traveler inward, or the entrance to a corporate office that, once exited from, unerringly causes the departing beings to find themselves walking right back in. Such mindscapes often manifest when the creator wishes to emphasize a specific location they have in mind, either due to an emotional connection or as punishment to themselves or visitors.

FEEDBACK

Though purely mental in nature, a mindscape can cause physiological effects through mental feedback. In some cases, these mindscapes are more or less harmless, but in other cases, the mindscape can be as deadly as the real world.

Harmful: Injuries and conditions inflicted upon those visiting a harmful mindscape are real. The psychic feedback convinces the real-world body that any damage incurred is real, and the body reacts accordingly. In rare cases, a mindscape's creator is so powerful they can relay even afflictions and diseases to the host body. Binary mindscapes are always harmful, though they don't convey afflictions or diseases unless otherwise noted.

Harmless: A harmless mindscape's occupant feels the sensations of their environment and other mindscape occupants, and their real-world body may be affected in minor ways (such as a mild headache or persistent feeling of euphoria), but any injuries and conditions they experience aren't real. Such damage causes no physical harm or effect to the host's real-world body. A creature that dies in a harmless mindscape wakes up in their real body without taking any damage or ill effects from the mindscape.

MAGIC

As a force that breaks all preconceptions, a mindscape can cause magic to operate in wildly different ways within its confines. Mindscape creators can attempt to place rules on

the effects of magic within their mindscape, but even those often break apart if the willpower of the creator falters.

Normal: Magic, including spells and spell-like abilities, function normally within such mindscapes. These mindscapes operate similarly to what one would expect to find on the Material Plane, though their creator may still apply minor caveats that occupants have to discover on their own. Spellcasters who leave a normal magic mindscape find that any spells they've expended in the mindscape have also been expended in the real world.

Dead: The creators of these mindscapes deaden the use of magic within. Creatures within a dead-magic mindscape can attempt to use their magical abilities to cast spells and use spell-like abilities, but every creature counts as having spell resistance (usually equal to 11 + the level or CR of the mindscape's creator). Spells that don't allow spell resistance have a 50% chance to fail when cast, though the spell is expended regardless of success. Magic items simply don't work, nor do serums or any other magical equipment; fusion seals don't apply their bonuses. Hybrid items have a 50% chance of working if they're activated, while hybrid items that do not require activation to function are too erratic to function properly. Spellcasters who leave a dead magic mindscape don't lose any spells they cast while within the mindscape.

Altered Magic: Some mindscapes include unique traits relating to magic that greatly affect magic used within. These mindscapes may enhance, impede, limit, or even randomize all magic or certain schools of magic cast within.

NOTABLE MINDSCAPES

Though most mindscapes are temporary endeavors, fashioned and then disappearing at the whims of their creators, some mindscapes exist in a more permanent state. The following are examples of well-known mindscapes that have survived the test of time and can be visited by any creature that finds a suitable means of entry.

The Endless Forest: Sometimes, an entire species can subconsciously create a mindscape without ever realizing it. The Endless Forest, an infinite immersive mindscape with no formal title beyond its descriptor, is one such place. Many believe it was forged by the combined subconscious, primeval yearning of every uplifted bear (*Starfinder Alien Archive 2* 16) in existence. Though few uplifted bears ever fully enter the mindscape, those who manage to enter do so by daydreaming, which manifests a new bear who temporarily wanders the woods in a lifestyle that forgoes all the needs and stress of modern-day living. While it remains something of a safe space for the wandering psyches of uplifted bears across the galaxy, others who find themselves within quickly realize that a forest filled with bears may not be the best place to trespass.

Hive Akarax: Created by a powerful formian queen during her species' ongoing conflict with the lashuntas, the mindscape of Hive Akarax is a finite mindscape that takes the form of

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a continent-sized formian hive. Due to the hive's inability to grow on the Material Plane, the queen instead chose to expand her territory through a mindscape, intentionally creating offspring with the psychic potential to join her within her mental construct. While this unimpeded and idyllic—for a formian, at least—life means the real-world formians of Hive Akarax don't occupy much territory, it also means that the hive is more reliant on outside assistance to acquire food and resources. The hive queen's adjutants occasionally wake from their mental sojourns within the mindscape to retrieve donated items or supplies.

Hospice of the Unfettered Mind: First created by lashunta and shirren followers of Weydan, this self-contained immersive mindscape takes the form of a bucolic farmstead on an open plain. Various buildings stand across the mindscape's terrain, though a wall of light fog keeps everything contained within a fixed area, looping wanderers around should they try to leave the confines of the farmstead. Weydanite psychic healers pass down knowledge of this mindscape to one another, each supporting it with a fraction of their own mental energies. These healers then travel the cosmos in search of creatures dying of

untreatable illnesses, offering those without any options access to this mindscape, where they can live out their remaining days in psychic freedom instead of imprisoned within a failing physical body. Many medical professionals protest the nature of such actions, however, claiming it's a prison of the mind no different than a prison of the body.

The Spire of Transcendence: This permanent immersive mindscape can be accessed through a myriad of magical gateways throughout the galaxy. Each such gate is marked by the holy symbol of Yaraesa, though little else provides information regarding their creation or full function. Creatures walking through one of these gates find their minds transported into a self-contained mindscape that appears as a skyscraper standing on a rocky cliffside with a view over a churning sea. Training rooms and libraries in a multitude of architectural styles fill each floor of the tower, and floating nuclei of energy buzz throughout the edifice on predetermined paths.

USING MINDSCAPES

Mindscales provide an interesting means of changing up the pace of an ongoing campaign or adding an utterly outlandish locale to a game. Whether the PCs use an experimental technological procedure to enter the mind of a patient to extract important information or step through a mystical archway that provides access to an expansive immersive mindscape, these locations can be some of the most memorable locations that PCs get the chance to explore in the course of a campaign.

Mindscales shine when they combine the expected and unexpected in different configurations. Since a mindscape is left to the imagination of its creator, imperfections both large and small can showcase exactly how variable a mindscape can be. A creature with a natural fear of flying animals may project a mindscape where every flying creature is some horrific terror, while a creature with no understanding of corporate culture who manifests an office might fill it with workers who repeat the same four lines of dialogue in any interaction. Mindscales often create a sense of unease as a result of these departures from reality, but the more time the PCs have to interact with a mindscape, the more they come to understand what causes it to act the way it does.

INSTINCTIVE METAPHYSICIST (ARCHETYPE)

An instinctive metaphysicist is a creature exposed, whether overtly or subconsciously, to the effects of one or more mindscales during the course of their life. Unlike fully fledged psychics (like phrenic adepts or psychic warriors), an instinctive metaphysicist might not have any innate psychic potential, instead unlocking their abilities through continued exposure to psychic sources. An instinctive metaphysicist could be of a creature of any background or class who has just learned to harness their mental focus to mold the existence of psychic mindscales to suit their needs.

ALTERNATE CLASS FEATURES

The instinctive metaphysicist archetype grants alternate class features at 9th, 12th, and 18th levels.

PSYCHIC REFUGE (SU) 9th Level

Your connection to one or more mindscapes allows you to condense your rest periods when you rest in those mindscapes. Whenever you rest to regain Resolve Points, you can do so in 4 hours instead of 8. During this shortened rest period, you can attempt a saving throw against a single mind-affecting effect currently affecting you. However, you can't perceive the outside world during this time unless you take damage or a creature actively tries to wake you. If you are damaged or otherwise forcibly awakened from this state, you gain the staggered condition for 1d4 rounds.

BLUR THE BOUNDARIES (SP) 12th Level

Through discipline or ill-advised testing, you've learned how to manifest mindscape effects in the real world. The resulting elements are temporary and sometimes insubstantial, fueled by your own reservoir of mental energy. Once per day, you can cast one of the following spells as a spell-like ability, pulling its effects from a mindscape and into the real world: *creation* (4th level) or *holographic image* (4th level). At 15th level, you can increase the spell level of these effects to 5th and you add *holographic terrain* to the list of available spells. At 17th level, you can use this ability twice per day, and at 18th level, you can use this ability three times per day. The saving throw DC of these spells is equal to 10 + the spell's level + your key ability score modifier.

MINDSCAPE CHALLENGE (SU) 18th Level

You've learned to use your knowledge of other mindscapes to manifest one of your own: a binary mindscape in which to challenge the minds of others. Once per day as a full action, you can designate a creature within 60 feet as the target of a psychic duel. That creature must succeed at a Will save (DC = 10 + half your level + your key ability score modifier) or be forced into a finite binary mindscape with you. This mindscape is a circular open plain with a radius equal to your level × 10 feet. Your mental avatar and the avatar of the targeted creature exist within the mindscape, starting the same distance apart as you are in the real world. Once the duel begins, the avatars can move in any direction they wish and no longer need to correspond to their real-world locations or distance.

Your mental avatar acts immediately after you in the initiative count and has all your same statistics; the designated creature's mental avatar functions in the same way. Both avatars are subject to the traits of the mindscape, which you define when you create the mindscape. Any damage or effects a mental avatar takes are shared with its real-world counterpart (including death). Your real-world counterpart must spend a move action each round to maintain the mindscape challenge, and you can maintain it in this way for up to a number of rounds equal to half your level + your key ability score modifier. If the real-world target of this ability moves beyond 600 feet from your real-world body, the mindscape immediately shatters. The real-world creature can spend a full action to attempt another Will save to end the effect immediately.

Mindless creatures or creatures immune to mind-affecting effects cannot be targeted by this ability. This ability counts as a mind-affecting effect.



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"We came only because the shirren representative Hishkec asked us. I didn't want to sit at that table with formians. I'd fought the formians, and though I'd made peace with them, I never wanted to see one again, let alone talk with one. 'The Swarm is coming,' Hishkec said. 'It will consume everything in its path. It hungers for our worlds and everything we are. We shirrens can bring our special knowledge and telepathic gifts to combat this terrible menace, but we need help. So we turn to you. Our mentors. Our friends. Seasoned warriors, all. Will you help us defend us?' I stood to volunteer. And by Desna, so did all the formians."

—Raylund Farsig, *The Founding of the Swarm Patrol Corps*

Psychedelic magic taps into the connections that exist not only between people, but among all things. Many species naturally tie into these connections, some in specialized ways. Dragonkin have partner bonds; khizarz have empathy and the ability to sense life; and contemplatives have thought sense, myriad telepathic gifts, and psychic flight. Throughout the galaxy, telepathy of some form is a common gift and has become a widely accepted form of communication. But even those species with psychic gifts have unlocked only part of their potential. Those who wish to progress with their psychic gifts need to study psychic traditions, hack the universe to achieve psychic effects through spells, or dedicate themselves to a mystic connection.

PSYCHIC ORGANIZATIONS

Numerous organizations in the Pact Worlds seek to push the boundaries of psychic magic; here are a few.

The Brainery is an invitation-only brew club located close to the Arcanamirium in Absalom Station's elegant Eye district. Devoted to furthering the best amateur explorations of psychic phenomena, it features lecture nights, classes, and live demonstrations of psionic science experiments. Rowdy drinking games with floating pitchers of alcohol, telepathic karaoke, fortune telling, and a variety of other raucous entertainments also allow members to show off their talents. Members, called Braincases, publish their discoveries, among other cultural articles, in a biweekly electronic publication called *Braindump*. Despite the whimsical approach, several articles from *Braindump* have been reprinted in academic journals throughout the galaxy, so the Brainery serves as a networking hub for scholars, researchers, and psychic enthusiasts of all stripes.

The Harmony of Clouds is an assembly of Liavaran dreamers that come together to sing. Their eerie music, recorded by visitors to Liavara's atmosphere, has a cult following throughout the Pact Worlds. But it's not just music lovers who listen, for the Harmony of Clouds includes some of the most famed dream prophets on the planet. Something in their complicated, improvised melodies seems to unlock psychic potential. Their performances resonate with psionic energy, and their lyrics often contain cryptic references to events to come. Audiences who attend live performances report euphoric visions followed by deep depression only hours later. Many attendees have vivid dreams in the days following a performance. Whether those second-hand dreams are prophetic is a matter of much debate among psychic researchers, but no one who works with the dreamers can deny the psychic impact that comes from regular contact with the music of the Harmony of Clouds. The Stewards and a number of Pact Worlds corporations have observers and analysts monitoring the group. These specialists decipher cryptic references from lyrics into useful predictions. However, these interpretations are wrong almost

SYNAPTIC SUGAR

The drug synaptic sugar is a dangerous and potent psychoactive substance.

SYNAPTIC SUGAR

5th Level

Type drug (ingested); **Save** Fortitude DC 18; **Addiction** Fort DC 18 (mental); **Price per Dose** 500

Track Wisdom; **Effect** Increase the saving throw DC of your mind-affecting effects by 2 and gain a +2 morale bonus to your Will saving throws and caster level checks for mind-affecting effects. When you use a mind-affecting effect, you must attempt a DC 15 Will saving throw. If you fail, you become confused for 1 round. These effects last 1d3 hours.

as often as they are right. The true meanings of the songs and the visions that come with them often become clear only after events unfold.

The Salient Order is a rogue research organization the Stewards are tracking. This "order" performs illicit research on the effects of psychic magic cast while under the influence of experimental drugs. The Salient Order isn't very careful about the safety of its subjects. One of the drugs it developed, the highly addictive synaptic sugar (see the sidebar), has shown up on the black market in Verces and in various locations in the Diaspora.

Warfare has always been a source of technological and magical innovation. The Swarm Patrol Corps was formed during such a time—when the Swarm threatened the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium—but its roots reach further back. When shirrrens first split from the Swarm, they sought mentorship and guidance from the psychic species of Castrovel. They needed help discovering their identity as psychic individuals outside the hive mind of the Swarm. The communal formians and the individualistic lashuntas helped shirrrens adjust and settle into their new homes.

When the need came to defend the Pact Worlds, formerly peaceful shirrrens volunteered, asking to join the fight. Veterans from both sides of the lashunta-formian wars joined with shirrrens to use their specialized psychic knowledge in the war against the Swarm, forming the Swarm Patrol Corps, a unique unit in Pact Worlds history. This unit, with its diverse species and special focus, became a hotbed for psionic innovation, developing new tech and magic that helped repel the Swarm, and its members shared the knowledge and tactics they discovered with other groups.

Although the corps' primary purpose was to fight off the Swarm's invasion of the Pact Worlds, it has maintained a tactical and research division on Absalom Station ever since. Now devoted to the identification of psychic threats in the Pact Worlds, the organization still mobilizes field units to deal

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with psionic predators, invaders from other planes, and other unwelcome psychic visitors.

PSYCHIC TRAINING

Numerous universities have schools devoted to the study of psychic arts and similar phenomena. One of the most famous and also least forthcoming is the Institute of Higher Consciousness, located next to the Ashok crater on Akiton. The contemplative researchers there strictly control access to the crater, which they use as an enormous amplifier to push the boundaries of what one can accomplish with psychic energy. Their stated goal is to prove how the mind might achieve supremacy over matter, as they dissect and analyze the underpinnings of the universe. They publish infrequent articles laden with layers of academic jargon, and everything they write leads to waves of publishing elsewhere when other places of learning rush to explore and explain the contemplatives' findings.

On Castrovel, the Qabarat Psionics Seminary has graduate programs open to all who are serious students of the mind. It was once an Asana-only institution, but its current headmaster, **Raylund Farsig** (LN male korasha lashunta mystic), is a founding member of the Swarm Patrol Corps. After returning from battling the Swarm, he opened the seminary to all with the new motto "Strength in Diversity." The seminary has worked hand in hand with some of Asana's leading corporations, such as Ereus Teletech, to patent technological gear that enhances natural psychic abilities. However, the real passion among the seminary's members lies in developing new spells and rediscovering old ones. In partnership with the University of Qabarat, the seminary has funded numerous expeditions into ancient pre-Gap sites in the hope of recovering lost psychic knowledge. It is also allied with the Starfinder Society, translating and analyzing found works.

Denkiri Center on Arkanen bills itself as one of the leading technomagical research facilities in the Pact Worlds, studying a wide variety of phenomena. However, so many of its top researchers have died of cranial overstimulation (also known as "exploding brain syndrome") during the moon's dive into Liavara's clouds that the center built a new wing devoted to the study of potent psychic energies. Named the Saryn Valen Memorial Center, it honors the first researcher who died of overstimulation. Along with the rest of the Denkiri Center, the center closes for several weeks around the time of Arkanen's dive into Liavara to prevent further accidents.

MYSTIC CONNECTION: SHAPER

No force in the universe is more addictive or satisfying than creation. You are adept at sensing and reshaping the fundamental connections in matter, manipulating the physical world around you. Although you're good at taking things apart, you delight in building as well, bringing structures into being with the power of thought.

Associated Deities: Abadar, Damoritosh, Eloritu, Ibra, Iomedae, Yaraesa

Associated Skills: Two from among Computers, Engineering, Life Science, Mysticism, Physical Science, or Profession (in a crafting profession)

Spells: 1st–6th *ectoplasmic barrage* (page 51); replaced by 1st–grease, 2nd–make whole, 3rd–slow, 4th–ectoplasmic eruption (page 52), 5th–rapid repair

MATTER FIELD (SU) 1st Level

As a standard action, you can surround yourself with a field of swirling debris and "hardened" air. This field grants you temporary Hit Points and fortification as if it were a force field with an item level equal to or lower than your mystic level. This field doesn't block gases, liquids, or light. If the field drops to 0 temporary Hit Points, it ends. You can use this ability for a number of rounds per day equal to $3 \times$ your mystic level, but these rounds need not be consecutive. In general, it can

be assumed you have enough air or loose matter around you to use this ability, but in some circumstances, such as when you are surrounded by vacuum, the GM is free to rule that this ability can function only if you can provide a source of matter.

MATTER SENSE (SU) 3rd Level

You develop a feel for the movement of matter around you. You gain blindsense (vibration) with a range of 30 feet, and you gain the Blind Fight feat. If you already have blindsense (vibration), increase its range by 30 feet.

SHAPE MATTER (SU) 6th Level

You can shape unformed matter into items you need. To do so, you follow the rules outlined on page 235 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*, using the exceptions that follow. You need no tools or workshop, only your will and matter to rearrange—UPBs or an existing item. An existing item imparts only 10% of its value toward the cost of your creation. In any case, the raw materials must be in your possession and can't be carried or worn by another creature or exist as part of a structure. Creating an item this way takes 10 minutes. However, if your number of ranks in the appropriate skill to craft an item exceeds that item's level by 5 or more, you can craft that item in 1 minute. If your ranks exceed the item level by 10 or more, you can create the item as a full action that provokes attacks of opportunity. If you create an item that has daily uses (such as a magic item) or charges (such as a battery) with this ability, the item starts with no uses or charges available but can be recharged normally. However, consumable items function normally. Items you create or convert using this ability can have no more bulk than you have mystic levels and can't exceed Large size.

APPORTATION (SP) 9th Level

You have achieved mastery over material objects and are able to transport small amounts of matter from one spot to another without those objects crossing the intervening space. A number of times per day equal to half your mystic level, you can teleport a nonliving, inanimate object that you are touching and that has up to 2 bulk up to 500 feet away. You do not need to be able to see the destination, but you must be able to clearly describe it, such as "500 feet north." If the object would arrive in an occupied space, this ability fails but is still expended. Alternatively, you can teleport an object within 500 feet to yourself; you must be able to clearly identify both the object and its current location. You can choose to be holding the object when it arrives, if you are able to hold it; otherwise, the object arrives on the ground in your space.

PHASING (SP) 12th Level

You can temporarily cause your body and gear to become out of phase with other matter. For a number of rounds per day equal to your mystic level, as a move action, you can phase. These rounds need not be consecutive. When you're phased,

you can pass through walls or material objects other than corporeal creatures, provided you begin and end your turn outside of the object. During a round in which you phase, attackers who target you with attacks and effects have a 20% miss chance, and you take only half damage from area effects. Force effects block your phasing and have no miss chance or reduced damage when targeting or affecting you. You cease phasing if you are incapable of thinking.

You can spend 1 Resolve Point to allow up to one willing creature per 3 mystic levels you have to phase with you, provided such creatures are within 30 feet of you when you phase. However, each additional creature you phase consumes 1 round of your phasing duration each round it remains phased, and it ceases being phased when you do or if it strays more than 90 feet from you. If a creature is part of your mystic telepathic bond, however, it consumes 1 round the first round it is phased and 1 additional round every other round thereafter.

MOLECULAR WALL (SP) 15th Level

Up to two times per day, you can manipulate the air and minuscule amounts of matter around you to create a protective field. You can spend 1 Resolve Point to use *wall of force* as a spell-like ability. As with matter field, the GM can rule that you lack sufficient matter to create such a field, depending on your circumstances. In this case, you can create the wall out of psychic matter (sometimes called ectoplasm) that you will into temporary existence. When you do this, the wall costs you 1 additional Resolve Point and lasts half as long.

In addition, you can create your matter field out of the same psychic matter you can use to create molecular walls. If you do, each round your matter field exists expends 2 rounds from your daily uses of matter field.

TRANSLOCATION (SP) 18th Level

You can invert the matter of the universe, creating a portal to other worlds. Once per day, you can spend 1 Resolve Point as a full action to use *interplanetary teleport* as a spell-like ability. You can instead expend the use of this ability and 2 Resolve Points to use *plane shift* as a spell-like ability.

TECHNOMANCER MAGIC HACKS

These magic hacks follow the normal rules for this class feature (*Core Rulebook* 119).

2nd Level

You must be 2nd level or higher to choose these magic hacks.

AURA READING (SU)

As a standard action, you can scan the auras of creatures and objects within a 30-foot cone to learn about them. You must have line of sight to a target to scan it. By scanning the auras of creatures and items, you gain a +2 insight bonus to checks to identify them. If you successfully identify a creature or

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an item after scanning it, you learn one more useful piece of information than normal. If you scan an injured creature or damaged item, you gain a +2 insight bonus to your next Medicine or Engineering check to treat or repair it, provided you initiate the process that leads to the check within 10 minutes.

PSYLORE (SU)

You attune yourself to the psychic energy of other beings, gaining the insight bonus from your techlore class feature to Sense Motive checks.

8th Level

You must be 8th level or higher to choose this magic hack.

SPELL STATIC (SU)

If you have the spell countermeasures magic hack (*Core Rulebook* 121), as a standard action, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to extend that protection to creatures of your choice within 30 feet. This protection lasts 1 round per technomancer level you have, even if the creature subsequently moves more than 30 feet away from you. A creature can benefit

from this ability again only after it has taken a 10-minute rest from which it could regain Stamina Points.

11th Level

You must be 11th level or higher to choose this magic hack.

MIND VIRUS (SU)

You implant a psychic countermeasure in your mind to protect against intrusion, much like computer security. When you attempt a Will saving throw against a mind-affecting effect, the creature using the effect on you must also attempt a Will saving throw. On a failure, the target is nauseated for 1d4 rounds. Even if the target succeeds at the Will save, it is sickened for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting effect.

SPELLS

Many of these spells were researched and reconstructed from pre-Gap psychic traditions.

AKASHIC DOWNLOAD

School divination

Casting Time 1 round

Range personal

Duration 2 minutes (see text)

You do a cosmic search of the Akashic Record for information about a topic. Your tier 0 or better computer (such as a comm unit) instantly compiles snippets and selections from various media relevant to the subject. The information remains for 2 minutes, during which you explore it. Once you're finished, you can attempt one skill check to recall knowledge on the topic with a +4 divine bonus, and you can do so untrained if the DC is 20 or lower. On a failed skill check, the GM can select some small insight into the topic that you retain. All the information you downloaded from this spell then disappears back to the Akashic Record. Using this spell doesn't prevent you from doing further research using a downloaded data set or library chip (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 199), but perusing this magical download can't be done concurrently with such study.

AKASHIC REVIVAL

School necromancy

Casting Time 1 hour

Range personal

Duration 24 hours

You create perfect documentation of your physical body in the Akashic Record at the time the spell is cast, allowing you



to later recall this record and reconstruct your body as it was when you cast this spell. The record of your body includes your current Stamina Points, Hit Points, augmentations, physical ability scores, and any enduring negative physical states (including ability damage or drain to physical ability scores, disease, negative levels, poison, and so on). Any effect that was affecting you when you cast this spell to store your record continues with its normal duration, so that effect might expire between the time you store your record and when you later recall it.

To recall your record, either you must die due to events other than old age or, if you are at 0 Hit Points, you can instead allow your body to perish by spending 3 Resolve Points. If either of these things occurs, you can claim your record as your new physical body at the start of your next turn. Your corpse disappears. Then, you instantly reappear, standing in your recorded body in the corpse's space and wearing your gear. If you cannot appear in that space, you appear as close to it as you can. You retain your mind as it was at the time of your body's death, so you regain no expended spells, Resolve Points, or uses of special abilities. Any mental effects affecting you or mental ability damage present at the time of your death persist in your new body.

Casting this spell again replaces any previous record of yourself with a new one—you can store only one copy of yourself in the Akashic Record.

BILOCATION 5 6

School conjuration (creation)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range personal

Duration 1 round/level (D)

The spell creates an identical copy of you in an adjacent space, along with everything you wear and carry other than artifacts. (If you carry an artifact, you decide which body retains it.) You exist in two places at once until the spell ends. Once the copy is created, it can travel an unlimited distance away from you. Your duplicate acts just after you do each round—it doesn't have a separate initiative count. One of you can use a full round's worth of actions, and the other can take only a standard or a move action. Between the two of you, you can cast only one spell per round—unless you have a special ability that allows you to cast more than one spell when you have no duplicate, such as the quickened spell magic hack (*Core Rulebook* 123). You and your duplicate share sensory information, so if one of you is aware of or knows something, both of you do. The duplicate is another creature for most purposes, with the following exceptions.

You and the duplicate use the same statistics and share resources, including one pool of consumable items (including ammo), daily-use abilities (including from items) and spell slots, Hit Points, Resolve Points, and Stamina Points. If your duplicate casts a spell, your spell is expended, and if your duplicate uses a consumable item, that item is no longer

available to you. Similarly, if an item one of you carries is permanently lost or destroyed, that item is lost or destroyed for both. Attacks, spells, and effects affect the two bodies as though they were one person, taking the worst effect applicable. For example, if both bodies are in the same *explosive blast*, you attempt the saving throw only once and take the damage only once. If you fail the saving throw against *hold person*, both bodies are paralyzed, and if one body catches a disease, both do. Both bodies count as one creature for spell effects, and they can't be chosen more than once for such effects. Any magical effect on you has its duration halved while you're bilocating. For example, the aforementioned *hold person* loses 2 rounds of duration each round it paralyzes you and your duplicate. Similarly, if you cast *resistant armor* on yourself, your duplicate is also affected, and the spell has a duration of 5 minutes per level. An effect that has its duration shortened in this way lasts a minimum of 1 round.

In addition, if you attempt a skill check to recall knowledge, you roll only one check. Similarly, if you and your duplicate are in the same area, you roll only one Perception check to determine what you're both aware of, although you receive a +2 bonus to this check as if your duplicate aided you on it.

When this spell ends, you decide which body remains and which disappears. Any enduring effects continue to affect you.

ECTOPLASMIC BARRAGE 1-6 1-6

School evocation

Casting Time 1 standard action

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

Targets up to two creatures that are no more than 30 ft. apart from each other

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes

You fling psychic material, called ectoplasm, at the target, making a ranged attack against its KAC and dealing bludgeoning damage. Each projectile in the barrage has the knockdown critical hit effect. In addition, ectoplasm extends to the Ethereal Plane, so it affects ethereal and incorporeal creatures.

1st: When you cast *ectoplasmic barrage* as a 1st-level spell, each projectile deals 2d6 damage on a hit.

2nd: When you cast *ectoplasmic barrage* as a 2nd-level spell, each projectile deals 4d6 damage on a hit.

3rd: When you cast *ectoplasmic barrage* as a 3rd-level spell, each projectile deals 7d6 damage on a hit.

4th: When you cast *ectoplasmic barrage* as a 4th-level spell, each projectile deals 10d6 damage on a hit.

5th: When you cast *ectoplasmic barrage* as a 5th-level spell, each projectile deals 13d6 damage on a hit. A struck target is also entangled for 1 round.

6th: When you cast *ectoplasmic barrage* as a 6th-level spell, each projectile deals 15d6 damage on a hit. A struck target is also entangled for 1d4 rounds.

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ECTOPLASMIC ERUPTION

School evocation

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Area 30-ft.-radius burst

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw Reflex half, see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

Swirling psychic matter, known as ectoplasm, erupts from a point you choose. Those in the area take 6d6 bludgeoning damage. Those who fail the Reflex saving throw are entangled for the spell's duration. The ectoplasm extends to the Ethereal Plane, so it affects ethereal and incorporeal creatures and objects. Such a creature entangled in the eruption is forced to partially materialize, so it cannot enter or pass through solid objects, takes half damage from nonmagical kinetic attacks, and takes full damage from magic and energy weapons, spells, spell-like effects, and supernatural effects. It reacts as a material creature to non-damaging spells.

ECTOPLASMIC SNARE

School evocation

Casting Time 1 standard action

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

Duration concentration, up to 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw Reflex partial, see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

You launch a writhing tendril of ectoplasm to snare a creature. Make a ranged attack roll against your target's EAC. If you hit, the target can attempt a Reflex save. On a successful save, the target is entangled for the duration. If the target fails, it is grappled and takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage each round it remains so. If the target escapes the grapple, it remains entangled for the duration. While the target remains grappled, you can move it up to 15 feet each time you concentrate on the spell. If the distance between you and the target ever exceeds the spell's range, the snare disappears. This spell affects ethereal and incorporeal creatures.

EGO WHIP

School enchantment (emotion, mind-affecting)

Casting Time 1 standard action

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

Targets one creature

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw Will partial; **Spell Resistance** yes

You overwhelm your opponent's ego, diminishing its sense of self, hope, and confidence. The target takes a -2 penalty to Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks; its spell save DCs; and its Will saving throws. In addition, the target is staggered for the duration. A successful initial Will save reduces the duration to 1 round.

ETHERIC SHARDS

School evocation (force)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Area one 10-ft. cube/level

Duration 1 hour/level (D)

Saving Throw Reflex partial or Reflex negates, see text; **Spell**

Resistance no

You harden ethereal matter into interplanar blades that are invisible to those who cannot see into the Ethereal Plane. Movement through an area of etheric shards is halved, even for incorporeal creatures, and creatures entering a 5-foot cube filled with etheric shards take 1d8 slashing damage and must succeed at a Reflex saving throw or gain the bleeding 1 condition. The damage from this bleeding stacks with itself and other sources of bleeding. A creature that remains motionless within the area takes no damage, but such a creature is flat-footed unless it moves enough to defend itself, which forces it to take damage and attempt a saving throw.

Etheric shards are a magical trap. A creature trained in Mysticism and within 30 feet of the area can attempt a DC 35 Perception check to sense the shards. The shards cannot be disabled, but they can be dispelled.

ID INSINUATION

School enchantment (compulsion, mind-affecting)

Casting Time 1 standard action

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

Area up to one creature/4 levels, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

Duration concentration + 1 round

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

By invading targets with your psychic presence, you isolate parts of their minds, preventing them from functioning in a coherent manner. Targets who fail their save are confused for the duration. Each round, a target rolls twice to determine their behavior due to the confused condition, and you choose which result applies.

INTELLECT FORTRESS

School abjuration

Casting Time 1 reaction

Range 20 ft.

Area 20-ft.-radius spherical emanation centered on you

Duration 1 round

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

When you or a creature within range is subjected to a mind-affecting effect while this spell is active, you disrupt it with the power of pure logic. Mind-affecting effects deal only half damage—including ability score damage—to creatures in the area, before any reduction due to successful saves or other effects. When a creature within the area succeeds at a saving throw against an emotion or fear effect, they are not affected by that effect, even if that effect would have a partial effect on a successful saving throw. Ongoing emotion and fear effects are also suppressed for creatures within the area.

ESPER

+1 CHA

Monsters are out there. They seek to invade your mind and destroy all that lies within. Some might quail at that thought, but not you. You hunt these monsters down wherever they may hide. You have trained with an elite psionic squad or a specialist unit dealing with psychic threats, or served as the psionics officer for a military task force or law enforcement group. Even if you were born without psychic gifts of your own, the exposure you've had working with these units has helped you unlock some of your latent potential.

THEME KNOWLEDGE (1ST)

You might have studied the traditions and techniques of the Swarm Patrol Corps, who once used their psychic abilities against the Swarm. Or you may be part of a new unit that is finding novel ways to leverage psychic gifts to achieve military victories. Whichever is true, you fight battles with your brain as much as your weaponry and use the psychic talents of your team to seize victory.

Always alert to dangers, you've created extensive files on past psychic threats. You know that psychic foes can come in countless varieties, from sapient beings to monsters. You've cataloged not only their most dangerous abilities, but also their weaknesses and the best methods to combat them. Reduce the DC by 5 for Culture, Life Science, or Mysticism checks to identify creatures or opponents with psychic or magical abilities, from the Swarm with their hive mind to necrovites with their mighty spellcasting. Mysticism is a class skill for you, though if it is a class skill from the class you take at 1st level, you instead gain a +1 bonus to Mysticism checks. In addition, you gain an ability adjustment of +1 to Charisma at character creation.

PSYCHIC COORDINATION (6TH)

Being able to communicate with your squad is of utmost importance. When in the field, you need to stay in touch, coordinate attacks, or revise battle plans in light of new information. Fortunately, your extensive training in psychic lore has awakened your own latent psychic gifts, or expanded upon talents that were already there. You gain limited telepathy with a range of 30 feet. If your species already grants you any sort of telepathy, you instead increase the range of that telepathy by 30 feet.

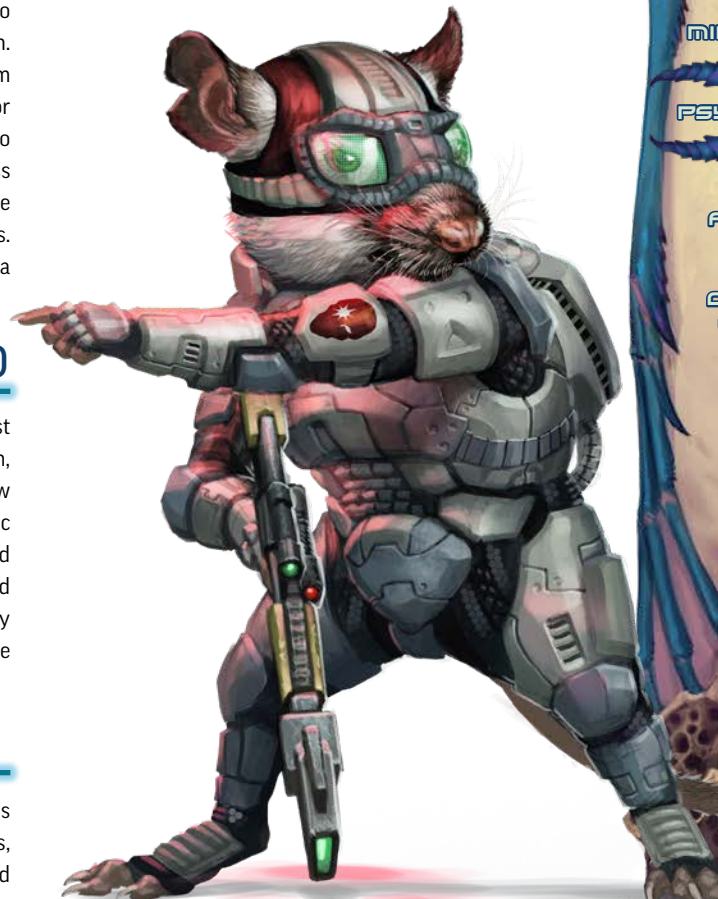
DANGER SENSE (12TH)

Being forewarned is half the battle. Through continuous training and work in the field against a variety of enemies, you've opened the pathways of your mind and developed a deep sensitivity to the presence of opponents, no matter

where they may hide. You develop blindsense (hostile thought) with a range of 30 feet. The hostility need not be aimed at you.

TACTICIAN (18TH)

When you make plans with your squad, your determination increases. Once per day, when you spend 10 minutes reviewing a battle plan with a team member against a significant foe, you recover 1 Resolve Point. Doing so doesn't count as resting to regain Stamina Points. In addition, once per day, if you successfully carry out such a tactical plan, you recover 1 Resolve Point.



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"As if the fog wasn't disorienting enough, our comm units would sometimes go haywire from the planet's pervasive arcane radiation and we would lose our bearings. That's how we ended up stumbling into one of the giant, stony beasts we've taken to calling yotuhns. It wasn't happy about seeing us, and the feeling was mutual. After it plucked a sapling from the ground and used it to knock down Griemhild, Pepridon tried to paralyze it with a spell. We're still trying to figure out exactly what happened next, but the several thousand bright pink butterflies that suddenly surrounded the yotuhn gave us an opportunity to escape."

—excerpt from the journal of Mardyth Foi, early explorer
of Chonax

IMPOSTOR

CR
8

XP
4,800



CE Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +21

DEFENSE

EAC 20; **KAC** 21

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

Defensive Abilities enhance doubt

Weaknesses vulnerability to self-confidence

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee doubt blade +18 (1d12+9 C & S; critical staggered [DC 18])

Offensive Abilities mocking visage (DC 18)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Bluff +21, Disguise +21, Intimidate +16, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +16

Languages Common and up to 2 others

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Astral Plane)

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Doubt Blade (Su) As a swift action, an impostor can manifest a blade made of pure doubt and cold darkness in its hand. This blade exists only when the impostor wields it, and they can dismiss it at will (this takes no action).

Enhance Doubt (Su) A creature that fails to hit an impostor is filled with self-doubt and must succeed at a DC 18 Will saving throw or gain the shaken condition until the end of its next turn. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Mocking Visage (Su) As a move action, an impostor can alter its face into a twisted version of the face of a creature within 15 feet that can see it. The targeted creature must then succeed at a DC 18 Will saving throw or gain the flat-footed condition against the impostor until the beginning of the impostor's next turn. This is a mind-affecting, sense-dependent effect.

Vulnerability to Self-Confidence (Su) An impostor takes half again as much damage (+50%) when it takes damage from a creature benefiting from a morale bonus.

a psychic impression on the Astral Plane. When a creature's lack of confidence returns again and again, these imprints grow strong enough to create a rare outsider known as an impostor—a creature that feeds on self-doubt.

An impostor takes on a form reminiscent of the creature whose doubt created it. However, it is a nightmarish, funhouse-mirror version of the creature, with an elongated face and hollow eyes. When an impostor is created, it can push its way onto the Material Plane, its only thought to end its progenitor's life. As a creature born from the dark places of the mind, an impostor can manifest doubt as a weapon: a cold blade that seems to absorb light.

Once an impostor has finished off its creator, it seeks ways to undo their accomplishments. Though an impostor is rarely mistaken for its progenitor, it knows their every shameful secret and worst impulses, and it uses this knowledge to further its cruel agenda. Once it thoroughly spoils a person's reputation, the impostor fades from existence, its energy returning to the Astral Plane.



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From the fumbling fool to the universally respected prodigy, every being suffers from moments of doubt when they believe all of their successes are due only to luck and that they will soon be revealed to be the frauds they are. Such thoughts usually pass quickly, but sometimes they can leave

MINDSCAPE CREATURE

CR VARIES XP VARIES



MINDSCAPE MINDREAPER

CR 8

XP 4,800

Mindscape Swarm mindreaper (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 122)
CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.,
see invisibility; **Perception** +21

DEFENSE

EAC 19; **KAC** 20

Fort +7; **Ref** +9; **Will** +13; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects

Weaknesses mindscape dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

HP 105

Melee arm spike +16 (1d12+9 P; critical staggered [DC 18])

Offensive Abilities trepan

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

1/day—*haste*, *slow* (DC 20)

3/day—*force blast* (DC 19), *inflict pain* (DC 19), *mirror image*, *mystic cure* (2nd level)

At will—*mind thrust* (1st level, DC 18)

Constant—see invisibility

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +16 (+24 to climb), Mysticism +21, Stealth +16

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities formless demise (DC 18), mindscape simulacrum, semi-mindless, trepan analysis

ECOLOGY

Environment any mindscape

Organization solitary or pair

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Formless Demise (Su) A slain mindscape creature

disappears in a brief explosion of psychic shards.

Each non-mindscape creature within 10 feet of a slain mindscape creature must succeed at a Will save or be staggered for 1 round.

Mindscape Dependency (Su) A mindscape creature can exist only within the mindscape in which it was created. It cannot survive outside, and it dies if it is forcibly removed from the mindscape, but the mindscape usually recreates it 1d4 rounds later.

Mindscape Simulacrum (Su) A mindscape creature retains its original creature type, but while it is within its mindscape, it also counts as an outsider with the native subtype for the purposes of spells or effects that target it.

Semi-Mindless (Ex) A mindscape creature gains a +4 bonus to saves against mind-affecting effects. A mindscape creature with the confused condition that rolls an “act normally” result must roll again and use the second result.

When a truly powerful mind creates a mindscape (see page 41), they often populate it with creatures drawn from their psyche.

MINDSCAPE CREATURE TEMPLATE GRAFT

Use the following template graft to create a mindscape creature based on any existing creature, or to make a new creation unique to a mindscape.

Required Creature Type: Any.

Suggested Array: Any.

Traits: Formless demise (see above), mindscape dependency (see above), mindscape simulacrum (see above), semi-mindless (see above).

MUNEEN

CR
11XP
12,800

N Large magical beast

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense (thought) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +25**DEFENSE**

HP 155

EAC 23; **KAC** 24**Fort** +12; **Ref** +12; **Will** +14**Defensive Abilities** unflankable; **Immunities** divination magic, enchantment magic; **SR** 22**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (Ex, average)**Melee** beak +18 (2d10+13 P) or

claw +18 (2d10+13 S; critical bleed 2d6)

Ranged feather barrage +20 (2d8+11 P)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Offensive Abilities** magical**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 11th; melee +20)1/day—*mind probe* (DC 22), *overload systems* (DC 22)3/day—*probability prediction*, *suggestion* (DC 21),
synaptic pulse (DC 21)At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 19), *mind thrust* (2nd level,
DC 20), *zone of truth* (DC 20)**STATISTICS****Str** +2; **Dex** +5; **Con** +1; **Int** +0; **Wis** +8; **Cha** +3**Skills** Acrobatics +25, Mysticism +20**Languages** Muneen; telepathy 100 ft.**Other Abilities** tracking (divination)**ECOLOGY****Environment** any (Chonax)**Organization** solitary, pair, or murder (3–8)**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Magical (Su)** A muneen's attacks are magical, and all typed damage the muneen deals has the force descriptor.

Muneens are corvid avian creatures infused with the magic of Chonax (see page 62), evidenced by the coruscating colors emitted by their dark feathers. Although these creatures are omnivores, they can also subsist on magical energy from divination or enchantment loci of their home world. Muneens typically live near such loci, often with others of their kind.

These corvids are intensely curious, and the thoughts and emotions of other creatures fascinate them. Muneens enjoy sating their curiosity through peaceful contact with other sapient species. Thanks to their spell-like abilities, muneens are almost prescient in their awareness, so enemies are

unlikely to surprise them. When threatened, the creatures are quick to defend themselves with their natural weapons—using their beaks, claws, and barrages of magically charged feathers—or mind-bending magic.

Muneens may form lasting relationships with other creatures, depending on how they're treated. A visitor to Chonax can expect muneens to be inquisitive during initial contact. If initial interactions go well, given a little time, muneens are likely to become friendly toward acquaintances. Muneens have also helped explorers survive on Chonax by driving off hostile fauna. However, muneens remember harm done to them and teach others of their kind whom to treat as an enemy.

Muneens are oviparous and form long-lasting mated pairs to procreate and raise young. A mature female muneen in a pair lays one egg every year, and the pair cares for the egg for 3 months before it hatches. Young muneens absorb magic as their initial nourishment in life, learning to hunt and forage only as they mature. An adult muneen is 9 feet tall and has a wingspan of about 20 feet, and it weighs 280 pounds.

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PSYCHIC ABOMINATION

CR
11

XP
12,800



NE Medium aberration (incorporeal)

Init +8; **Senses** blindsight (thought) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +25

Aura unsettling whispers (30 ft., DC 20)

DEFENSE

EAC 24; **KAC** 25

Fort +10; **Ref** +10; **Will** +16

Defensive Abilities incorporeal

Weaknesses vulnerability to electricity, vulnerability to fire

HP 170

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee draining touch +21 (2d10+11 B plus fatigued; critical exhausted [DC 20])

Ranged concussive blast +21 (2d8+11 B)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)

1/day—*mind thrust* (4th level, DC 20)

3/day—*psychokinetic strangulation* (DC 19)

At will—*invisibility*

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +20 (+28 to fly), Intimidate +20, Mysticism +25, Sense Motive +20, Stealth +25

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Concussive Blast (Su) As a ranged attack, a psychic abomination can unleash a focused beam of invisible force against a single target within 60 feet. This attack has the force descriptor.

Draining Touch (Su) A psychic abomination's incorporeal touch wracks a victim's body. In addition to the bludgeoning damage, a target must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude saving throw or gain the fatigued condition; if the attack is a critical hit, the target is instead exhausted on a failed save. In addition, the psychic abomination regains an amount of Hit Points equal to its CR (11 for most psychic abominations) when its target fails this save. If the psychic abomination strikes an already-fatigued creature and that creature fails its saving throw, its condition doesn't worsen, but the abomination still heals. The fatigued or exhausted condition gained from these attacks ends when the affected creature takes a 10-minute rest to regain Stamina Points.

Unsettling Whispers (Su) A hearing creature within 30 feet of an invisible psychic abomination must succeed at a DC 20 Will saving throw or be shaken for 5d6 rounds. Once a creature has been exposed to a psychic abomination's unsettling whispers (whether or not the creature succeeds at its saving throw), it cannot be affected by the same psychic abomination's unsettling whispers for 24 hours. This is an emotion, fear, mind-affecting, and sense-dependent effect.

No one is certain where psychic abominations come from or what they want. Many disagree on what the creatures even look like. The only commonality linking these accounts are the distinctive abilities of psychic abominations. They can become invisible at will, unleash blasts of concussive force, and drain the energy from even undead creatures. But what is most disquieting about them is the constant susurrus of half-formed words and upsetting noises that surrounds an invisible psychic abomination. Scholars have yet to pinpoint the source of these noises, but some believe they are the voices of the abomination's previous victims.

SWARM CERETORAM

CR
9

XP
6,400



CE Large monstrous humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +22

DEFENSE

EAC 21; **KAC** 22

Fort +8; **Ref** +10; **Will** +14

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (Ex, average)

Melee claw +15 (3d4+12 S; critical bleed 2d6) or tentacle +15 (1d8+12 P plus consume; critical staggered [DC 18])

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

Offensive Abilities remote pulse

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; ranged +17)

1/day—ray of exhaustion (DC 20), synaptic pulse (DC 20)

3/day—daze monster (DC 19), fear (2nd level, DC 19), force blast (DC 19), hold person (DC 19)

At will—lesser confusion (DC 18), mind thrust (1st level, DC 18)

STATISTICS

Str +3; **Dex** +6; **Con** +0; **Int** +0; **Wis** +4; **Cha** -1

Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +17, Sense Motive +22

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

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

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Consume (Ex) A creature struck by a Swarm ceretoram's tentacle must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or have some of its biological matter siphoned off by the attack, taking an additional 1d8 piercing damage. The ceretoram then regains Hit Points equal to double this additional damage.

Remote Pulse (Su) As a reaction when a creature fails its save against a ceretoram's *mind thrust* spell-like ability, the ceretoram can immediately cast its *synaptic pulse* spell-like ability, centering the effect on the target of the *mind thrust*. That creature isn't subject to the effects of the *synaptic pulse*.

Swarm Mind (Ex) Members of the Swarm are bound together into a singular hive mind by a blend of exuded pheromones, imperceptible movements of antennae and limbs, electrostatic fields, and telepathic communication. All Swarm

creatures within 30 feet of each other are in constant communication; if one is aware of a threat, all are. (Such awareness can spread along a "chain" of Swarm creatures under appropriate circumstances, potentially alerting distant Swarm creatures). In addition, once per round when within 30 feet of another Swarm creature, a Swarm creature can roll twice and take the better result on a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect.

Swarm ceretorams employ a vicious set of mental abilities that allow them to quickly overwhelm their opposition through psychic might before closing in and rending with their claws in close combat. They can feed on nearly all forms of matter, including constructs and undead.



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VALNARUM

CR
8

XP
3,200



LN Huge magical beast

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense (life) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

EAC 21; **KAC** 20

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

Defensive Abilities fast healing 8, void adaptation; **Immunities** cold

HP 116

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 200 ft. (Su, average)

Melee bite +16 (1d12+14 P) or
claw +16 (2d6+14 S)

Special Attacks pulse roar (30-ft. cone, 8d10 B & So; critical push^{AR} [20 ft.])

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +21, Diplomacy +16, Mysticism +16, Stealth +21 (+29 in forest or jungle), Survival +21

Languages Common, Lexonian

Other Abilities share defenses, spaceflight (Mysticism)

ECOLOGY

Environment any

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

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pulse Roar (Su) As a standard action, a valnarum can bellow a 30-foot cone of battering sonic energy. This natural attack has the blast and unwieldy weapon special properties and a range increment of 30 feet. On a critical hit, the energy pushes a creature 20 feet away from the valnarum. This attack is effective in a vacuum.

Share Defenses (Su) As a swift action, a valnarum can grant a single creature touching it void adaptation for as long as the creature remains in contact. The valnarum can withdraw this protection as a swift action.

Standing almost 10 feet tall at the shoulders and 20 feet from nose to tip of tail, a valnarum is a mystical, intelligent predator that can be found in many systems. A valnarum's fur is mottled blue and purple with a series of black spots that provides simple camouflage in forest and jungle terrain. In addition to its long tail, a valnarum has a pair of blue, glowing wings made of pure energy that allow the creature to fly through space and provide protection from cosmic radiation.

Originally from Lexonia VII—the seventh satellite of the star Lexon and a magic-filled world of massive, interconnected forests—valnarums became the apex predators on the planet after mystically evolving their energy wings.

As valnarums continually moved upward through the ecosystem's massive canopies, which abutted the edge of the planet's atmosphere, they gradually adapted to micro-gravity and the lack of breathable air. Eventually, mutations allowed valnarums to travel through space and visit other worlds.

Though they travel throughout the galaxy in small groups known as chains to hunt new and exciting prey, valnarums aren't ruthless destroyers. When they discover a planet they haven't visited before, they attempt to make contact with the world's dominant species to ask permission to hunt. Most valnarums try to respect the laws and customs wherever they land and kill only what they need to survive, though they enjoy the thrill of tracking down a creature they've never feasted upon before.

YOTUHN

CR
11

XP
12,800



CN Large monstrous humanoid (giant)

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

Perception +20

Aura magic disruption (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

EAC 24; **KAC** 26

Fort +15; **Ref** +13; **Will** +10

SR 22

HP 180

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee handheld debris +23 (4d6+16 B; critical knockdown) or slam +23 (4d4+16 B)

Ranged hurled debris +23 (3d10+11 B plus 5-ft.-radius area of difficult terrain around the target)

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

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +25, Intimidate +20

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Chonax)

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

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Handheld Debris (Ex) A yotuhn can turn nearly any debris in reach into a melee weapon. Such debris is available (either loose or readily torn from the environment without requiring an extra action) to the yotuhn unless the GM rules otherwise. A yotuhn takes no penalty to attack rolls with such improvised weapons, which are never considered to be archaic in the yotuhn's hands. Whenever a yotuhn uses an improvised melee weapon, it gains the knockdown critical hit effect.

Hurled Debris (Ex) Much as with handheld debris, a yotuhn can turn nearly any debris in reach into a ranged weapon. A yotuhn's hurled debris has a range increment of 25 feet. Such attacks also create difficult terrain in a 5-foot-radius area around the target.

Magic Disruption (Ex) This aura twists magic around the yotuhn. Any creature that casts a spell or uses a spell-like ability within 30 feet of the yotuhn must succeed at a DC 22 caster level check or the effect warps to become the result of a random roll on the table associated with the *wonder grenade* (Starfinder Armory 127). If the spell comes from an item, the check is 1d20 + the item's level. This randomized magical effect also occurs if a spell targets the yotuhn from any range and fails to overcome the creature's spell resistance.

Yotuhns are among the most adaptable and bellicose species to plague Chonax (see page 62). Territorial and prone to violent outbursts, these horrors clash with all creatures they encounter. A yotuhn stands 13 feet tall and weighs 1,800 pounds.

When provoked, yotuhns attack wildly, grabbing debris from their lairs or slamming about with furious kicks and fists. These giants also have an inherent aura that warps magic, causing it to behave in a random and chaotic manner, even changing that magic's fundamental properties.

These giants lair most frequently in caves or ruined structures. Some scientists theorize their nature might somehow be connected to the intense storms that were pervasive on Chonax until 30 years ago. Unfortunately for those researchers, not only are yotuhns incapable of speaking, but they are also aggressive toward anyone other than other yotuhns.



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CHONAX

Masked in Arcane Mists, Radiating Mystery

Diameter: $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$; **Mass:** $\times 2\frac{1}{4}$

Gravity: $\times 1$

Location: The Vast

Atmosphere: Variable

Day: 37 hours; **Year:** 8 months

The second planet in the Suskillon system, Chonax was largely inhospitable to outsiders because of wild storms of magic until about 30 years ago, when the storms began to die down. Exploring the planet has been further complicated by its unique atmosphere and volatile topography. With temperatures ranging from coolly temperate to freezing,

and with large swathes of the world covered in thick fog, navigating Chonax has proven difficult. Chonax's three large continents are covered in rugged hills dominated by thick evergreen forests, descending to valleys filled by bogs and swamps, all blanketed with the ubiquitous fog. For reasons that are still unclear, magical energies saturate the planet with arcane radiation anathema to most non-native life. These energies create Chonax's fog, and the effects of this magical mist are unpredictable. Multiple banks of mist can even mix together, creating ever more bizarre magical phenomena.

These fog banks gather magical effects from larger concentrations of permanent magic, each of which is known as a locus, carrying these effects along as the fog moves and spreads. Loci vary in their range, potency, type, and effect, warping the surrounding landscape in ways influenced by the kind of magical energies the locus exudes. Ghostly images of past or future events might play out within the boundaries of a locus of divination magic, for example, which is disconcerting but not particularly threatening. But a pocket of transmutation magic, in contrast, can be extremely dangerous, as materials within it spontaneously and unpredictably change in nature. Structures alter, deteriorate, or shift into different modes of existence, and the ground changes consistency, devouring buildings and visitors as it shifts phases from solid to liquid. Evocation loci create uncanny magical weather that can kill creatures in seconds with a rain of fire or a precipitous temperature drop. Illusion loci are often easy to spot due to the strange alterations they create in the landscape, but can also be incredibly subtle. Necromancy loci are thankfully few and far between, while summoned creatures wander freely through and around the landscape that surrounds a conjuration locus.

Despite such conditions, and sometimes due to them, life on Chonax has adapted to the loci. These adaptations frequently take the form of improved magic resistance or a connection to a specific type of magic. The creatures of Chonax spend much of their time migrating between loci they are attuned or resistant to, spending as little time as possible in the mists between. Some life on Chonax, such as muneens (see page 57), are benign or even helpful, providing a natural barometer of arcane radiation and offering aid to friendly creatures they encounter. Others, such as the yotuhns (see page 61), are highly aggressive, made more viciously dangerous by the magic they dwell around and feed upon.

Every creature native to Chonax feeds on the abundant magic to some extent. Most young creatures grow on magic absorption alone, and they retain the ability to survive on magic when other food is absent. Therefore, even when a magical environ becomes inhospitable, Chonax's varied life doesn't starve.



NEXT MONTH

THE GOD-HOST ASCENDS

By Ron Lundeen

Returning triumphantly to the Suskillon system, the heroes find the Swarm in disarray, but the entity called the God-Host still stands on the verge of completing its plans. To end this threat, the heroes at last return to their overrun home world—but this time with the might of an entire military behind them!

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

By Tracy Barnett

The heroes might have brought peace back to Suskillon, but their adventures don't need to end there! This article is packed with plot hooks to continue any Attack of the Swarm! campaign.

MILITARY VEHICLES

By Anthony Bono

From wheeled chariots to high-tech hovortanks, vehicles are an important part of almost every military operation. Explore these new options for vehicle and vehicle chases, as well as over a dozen new armed vessels.

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SUSKILLON AURORA

MAP KEY

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Gunnery | 10. Meeting room |
| 2. Power core maintenance | 11. Tech workshop |
| 3. Crew quarters | 12. Officers' lounge |
| 4. Galley | 13. Escape pods |
| 5. Power core | 14. Captain's quarters |
| 6. Mess hall | 15. Medical bay |
| 7. Engineering | 16. Armory |
| 8. Auxiliary bridge | 17. Drift engine |
| 9. Main bridge | 18. Cargo hold |



FORWARD

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



MENTAL BLOCKS

The heroes have been physically transported to a psychic projection of the Swarm's hive mind, and must survive this hostile and alien landscape while searching for a way to empower a divine artifact known as the *Crown of Hylax*. However, this mindscape fights back at every possible turn, eventually manifesting the embodiment of the Swarm's interconnected minds for an epic battle that will determine the outcome of the war!

This volume of Starfinder Adventure Path continues the Attack of the Swarm! Adventure Path and includes:

- "Hive of Minds," a Starfinder adventure for 9th-level characters, by Thurston Hillman.
- An examination of the strange and mutable mental landscapes known as mindscapes, by Thurston Hillman.
- An exploration of psychic magic, including new spells and class options, by Hilary Moon Murphy.
- An archive of alien creatures, including nightmarish monsters that feed off fear and insecurity and a multicolored bird that devours arcane energies, by Emily Care Boss, Thurston Hillman, Louis Rezanka, and Gabriel Waluconis.
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