

STARFINDER[®]



THE THREEFOLD CONSPIRACY
ADVENTURE PATH

PUPPETS WITHOUT STRINGS

BY LANDON WINKLER



OPULOS AMBASSADOR

TIER 11

Medium transport

Speed 12; **Maneuverability** average (turn 2); **Drift** 2

AC 31; **TL** 29

HP 100; **DT** —; **CT** 20

Shields heavy 360 (forward 90, port 90, starboard 90, aft 90)

Attack (Forward) particle beam (8d6; 20 hexes)

Attack (Aft) particle beam (8d6; 20 hexes)

Attack (Turret) maser (6d10; 20 hexes)

Power Core Pulse Prismatic (300 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Booster; **Systems** advanced long-range sensors, crew quarters (luxurious), mk 4 duonode computer, mk 10 armor, mk 10 defenses; **Expansion Bays** cargo hold, escape pods, medical bay, passenger seating, smuggler compartment (DC 30)

Modifiers +4 to any 2 checks per round, +4 Computers (sensors only), -1 Piloting; **Complement** 6 (minimum 1, maximum 6)

CREW

Captain Diplomacy +25 (11 ranks), Engineering +20 (11 ranks), gunnery +16 (11th level), Intimidate +20 (11 ranks), Piloting +20 (11 ranks)

Engineer Engineering +20 (11 ranks)

Gunners (2) gunnery +15 (11th level)

Pilot Piloting +20 (11 ranks)

Science Officer Computers +20 (11 ranks)

The Opolos Ambassador embodies three ideals: luxury, privacy, and security. The ship's interior is a masterpiece of understated elegance, intended to impress influential guests and keep the ship's inhabitants in the lap of luxury wherever they go, while the ship's powerful weapons and cutting-edge defenses serve as deterrents against those who might mistake a luxury ship as an easy target. Top-of-the-line power cores and thrusters place the ship among the fastest in its class, easily able to escape from threats that prove too powerful for shipboard weapons. In the event of disaster, the ship's fully stocked medical bay ensures that an on-staff doctor can take care of any emergencies—and allows the crew to avoid visiting a hospital, should they want to stave off leaving a trail of records. Boardroom-style passenger seating allows for discreet meetings where conversations of a sensitive nature can be conducted outside of planetary jurisdiction. Opolos also offers its customers customization services for modular bays based on client specifications, allowing the Ambassador to fit any customer's needs—assuming they have the credits to afford this boutique service. Popular customizations include, but are not limited to, vidstreaming studios, private sports training facilities, and even weapon testing ranges.

While the Ambassador is marketed to diplomats, businesspeople, and interplanetary jetsetters, the starship's privacy and safety features make it popular among a certain class of highly successful criminals—particularly those who provide clandestine services to the ultra-wealthy. The Stewards have issued multiple statements condemning the Ambassador's "privacy suite" as encouraging illegal transport of dangerous goods and individuals throughout the Pact Worlds. Opolos maintains that the smuggler-style compartment is necessary for diplomats and elite executives who wish to maintain their privacy—and Opolos's lawyers have thus far kept any prying eyes from acquiring client records that would reveal the identity of those who have purchased these ships. Still, savvy captains encountering an Ambassador in transit might think twice before scanning the ship—they may find themselves privy to knowledge the ship's crew is willing to fight to keep secret.

STARFINDER

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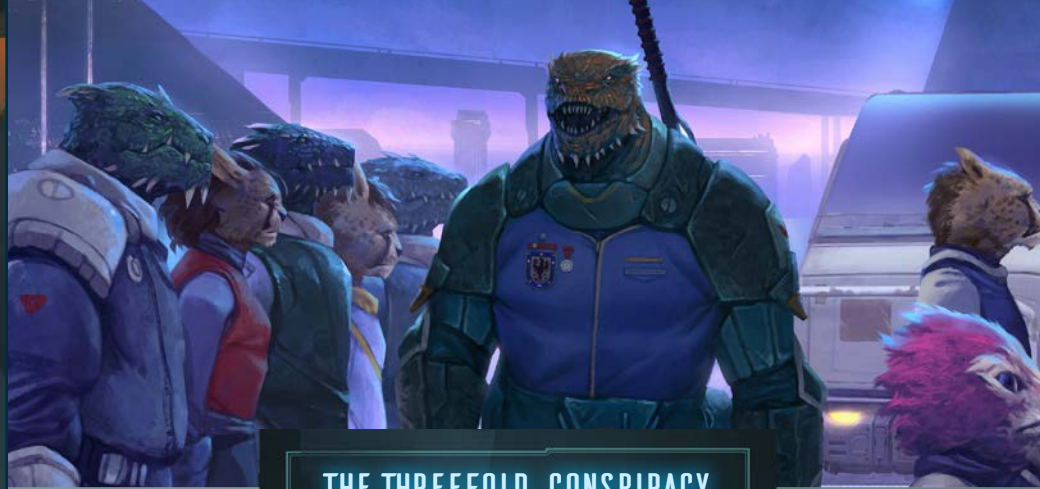
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This book refers to other Starfinder products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Starfinder hardcovers can find the complete rules of these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

<i>Alien Archive</i>	AA	<i>Character Operations Manual</i>	COM
<i>Alien Archive 2</i>	AA2	<i>Pact Worlds</i>	PW
<i>Armory</i>	AR		



ON THE COVER

Artist Tomasz Chistowski provides a glimpse of Mysteriarch Zaxo, the mastermind gray who has been pulling the PCs' strings for the entire campaign.



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THE THREEFOLD CONSPIRACY

ADVENTURE PATH

PUPPETS WITHOUT STRINGS

PART 1: ABSALOM'S SHADOW

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The PCs must undertake an investigation into several nominees for the Pact Council's Directorate to discover which might be reptoids in disguise.

PART 2: NO MORE MASKS

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With the help of the Stewards, the PCs can expose a number of reptoid infiltrators and put an end to their power-grabbing schemes.

PART 3: MEETING YOUR MAKER

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The PCs are called to a starship invisibly lurking just outside Absalom Station's Armada, where they confront the gray leader who was ultimately responsible for their creation as clones!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Puppets Without Strings" is designed for four characters.

11

The PCs begin this adventure at 11th level.

12

The PCs should reach 12th level after they defeat the reptoid infiltrators.

13

The PCs should be 13th level before confronting Mysteriarch Zaxo.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Reptoids living within the Pact Worlds desire to secretly control the system. To that end, their agents have infiltrated various governments and other powerful organizations, including the Pact Council, but their grasp is not unbreakable.

Meanwhile, a faction of grays under the leadership of Mysteriarch Zaxo created the PCs as clones, hoping to train and use them to root out and—at least temporarily—replace some of these covert reptoids. The grays intended to study the value of such direct infiltration; while most believe this sort of interference is unnecessary and makes objective observation impossible, they also consider the reptoid presence equally disruptive, and so the plan was put in motion.

The reptoids quickly threw the grays' scheme into disarray with their attack on Outpost Omicron, where the clones were created. With few other options, Zaxo altered the parameters of the experiment, instead observing the newly freed clones to evaluate the effects of their initial training. At first, the PCs were remarkable subjects, defeating a cell of reptoids on their own, allying with the Stewards, and uncovering a dycepskian plot. Now that the PCs have destroyed an important observation post at Laoe Araae, however, Zaxo has decided to eliminate the PCs and their allies, but not before giving them the chance to finally serve their intended purpose and further disrupt a major reptoid plot aboard Absalom Station.

Three reptoids posing as members of the Pact Council—including one from whom one of the PCs was cloned—have been nominated for seats on the Directorate, a committee that plays a major role in governing the Pact Worlds. No one is aware of their true natures, and if elected to these positions, the reptoids would be able to influence the system's politics for years to come.

One reptoid secretly replaced a popular Pact Council member named Erem years ago by sneaking into their apartment and killing them in their sleep. The reptoid version of Erem slowly gained power, earning a seat on the Directorate 2 years ago (as a representative of Absalom Station) and is seeking reelection. Erem is aware of the other two reptoids among the nominees but hasn't played more than a subtle role in helping them get elected as well.

The second reptoid replaced noted stream host Thylas Starhammer when the dwarf started publicly asking questions about shapechanging infiltrators within the church of Iomedae. Soon after, the reptoid version of Thylas officially moved his residence to the poisonous Liavaran moon of Osoro (though his holovid studio is on Absalom Station) and

eventually became that moon's representative on the Pact Council. The original Thylas was a proponent of studying the history of Lost Golarion, but his reptoid replacement has turned into an outspoken demagogue of racial politics, spreading misinformation about many of the unliving and nonhumanoid species of the Pact Worlds. Though he still has a loyal audience, many believe he is a long shot to gain a Directorate seat.

The third reptoid replaced wealthy ryphorian Vora Rinn during her campaign to become one of Triaxus's representatives. A former athlete in a niche sport called bondracing who then became a club owner, Vora purchased a great deal of political collateral that her reptoid replacement has leveraged in her pursuit of a Directorate seat. Earlier this year, she convinced a reptoid ally to assassinate the Triaxian ambassador (and member of the Directorate) Balam Dori. The Triaxian government decided that another representative, Zia Choh, who also killed Dori's assassin, would serve out the rest of their term. Zia is looking to keep this position, but since only one Triaxian council member can serve on the Directorate, the reptoid Vora has been attempting to secretly discredit the true ryphorian. The PCs must wade into this tangled snare of politics and conspiracies if they wish to save the Pact Worlds.

PART 1: ABSALOM'S SHADOW

After investigating Observation Post Zairx in the previous adventure, the PCs have uncovered proof that they are, in fact, clones, and have located the original versions of themselves—including a member of the Pact Council's Directorate who is actually a reptoid in disguise. The exact species and gender of this councilor, named Erem, will depend on the PCs of your campaign. See the Choosing Erem sidebar on page 4 for tips on how to make this decision.

The PCs are likely eager to head to Absalom Station from Laoe Araae to confront Erem. If they haven't already contacted Xych Vorsen and Ephecta, their Steward allies, the two agents reach out to them before the PCs' ship enters the Drift, reminding them that they are still wanted criminals. Ephecta transmits a Stewards-approved docking code to the PCs that will get them through Absalom Traffic Control without scrutiny. She then tells them to meet the agents at an address in the Ring neighborhood of Drifter's End, where they can plan their next move. Xych says that they will be speaking with Director-General Lin Camulan to earn his support. In the meantime, the shirren advises the PCs to keep a low profile.

The trip from Bretheda is uneventful, taking 1d6 days of Drift travel or 1d6+2 days by conventional thrusters;

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CHOOSING EREM

Ultimately, picking which of your PCs is a clone of Erem, the Pact Council member replaced by a reptoid, is your decision. Erem is a popular and compelling politician, so you might consider choosing the PC with the highest Charisma bonus, a PC with the icon theme, or the PC who has been the most diplomatic during the campaign. Alternatively, you can select a gruff and laconic PC as an interesting counterpoint, showing that experience shapes people beyond their genetics. Though Absalom Station is a very diverse location, most of its population is human, which means its leading representative likely would be as well. However, if none of the PCs are human, you don't need to jump through hoops to explain why Erem isn't either. Erem is also equally likely to be any gender.

remember to divide this result by the PCs' Drift engine rating. If PCs need to craft, retrain, or perform other downtime activities (see page 150 of the *Starfinder Character Operations Manual*), they have some time to do so.

BROADCAST NEWS

By looking up Erem on the local infosphere, the PCs learn about the upcoming election for Directorate members in the Pact Council. Erem, as an incumbent member of the Directorate, appears on many news vidstreams explaining how the process works (while the actual nominations and voting are internal to the Pact Council, some members take time to solicit support from their respective planets' governments and populaces) and explaining their vision for the next 2 years, should they be reelected.

At least 1 day after the PCs leave Laoe Araae, Erem gives an interview to an Absalom Station reporter that mentions the PCs. Read or paraphrase the following.

The lashunta reporter leans over and gives a lively grin. "So, do you have anything to say about your body double rampaging around Gamut Bio and Laoe Araae?"

Erem gives a practiced laugh in response. "Oh, Laoe Araae now? I clearly get around."

"Absolutely. Let me show some of the exclusive new footage we just received." She gestures off screen. The promised footage rolls, showing a fight within the hospice. It has been carefully edited to make it look like a professional attack on the site.

Erem laughs again. "Good thing I haven't left the station or citizens would think I'd taken up a life of crime."

The reporter turns to the camera with a smile. "We'd like to remind everyone that, despite the sizable bounty on these criminals' heads, you shouldn't try to haul in councilor Erem. And," she adds, tapping a datapad on the table, "we have a statement from the Brethedan entity of Confluence saying

the footage from the hospice is fake. So maybe it was a smear all along."

"Well, I have no reason to think Confluence would lie about something like that. And I trust my political opponents could have done better than those gods-awful disguises." Erem chuckles as the interviewer signs off.

EVENT 1: A FIGHT OF ANGELS (CR 13)

The PCs complete docking procedures at the arm closest to the Lorespire Complex with no difficulty. They disembark from their starship to find a couple of bored-looking security guards and other travelers milling about the docking bay. Neither pay any real attention to the PCs unless the PCs do something to draw attention to themselves. Cautious PCs might even be in disguise.

A tram regularly runs from these docking bays to Drifter's End; the PCs don't need to wait more than a few minutes for the next tram. A PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Perception check notices that the only other passenger boarding the tram with them is a sarcesian woman wearing flexible armor. Less than a minute after the tram leaves the docking bay, it comes to a slow stop within a dark stretch of tunnel.

Creatures: The sarcesian woman is Jynma, a prominent bounty hunter, who has used her glimpse the truth operative exploit to see through any of the PCs' methods of staying unnoticed. When the tram stops, she announces who she is and her intent to bring in the PCs. She asks the PCs to surrender peacefully, but she expects them to fight back. A pair of her associates are hiding in the tunnel to assist if the situation escalates to combat. Jynma attempts to stall the PCs until her associates are in position (a PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Perception check notices the sound of something landing on the tram's roof during their conversation) and then attacks if the PCs haven't yet given themselves up. If the PCs attack immediately, it takes the other sarcesians 2 rounds to arrive. In either case, the two cybercommandos come crashing through the windows as soon as they are in position. Jynma also has access to the tram's security systems (see Trap on page 5).

If the PCs don't take the tram with Jynma, she still ambushes them in the tunnel. If the PCs get to Drifter's End by other means, Jynma continues to track them and can show up at the KSN Interstellar offices (page 15).

SARCESIAN CYBERCOMMANDOS (2) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

HP 110 each; RP 4 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 98)

TACTICS

During Combat After they each throw a screamer grenade at the PCs, one cybercommando engages the toughest-looking PC in melee while the other stays back and fires their laser rifle at spellcasting PCs.

Morale The cybercommandos follow Jynma's lead.

JYNMA

CR 11

XP 12,800

Female sarcesian operative (*Alien Archive* 98)

LN Large humanoid (sarcesian)

Init +10; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +26

DEFENSE

HP 170 RP 5

EAC 24; **KAC** 25

Fort +10; **Ref** +13; **Will** +14

Defensive Abilities improved evasion, uncanny agility

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee heavy sap +21 (2d8+11 nonlethal B)

Ranged LFD sonic pistol +21 (2d8+11 So; critical deafen [DC 20])

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

Offensive Abilities debilitating trick, trick attack +6d8, triple attack

TACTICS

During Combat Jynma uses Sense Motive to perform trick attacks with her heavy sap, attempting to capture the PCs alive if possible.

Morale Jynma will flee if an ally is killed and surrender if one of them is held hostage. In either case, she might reappear later in the adventure at your discretion.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +26, Culture +21, Diplomacy +21, Sense Motive +26, Survival +21

Languages Common, Dwarven, Eoxian, Sarcesian, Ysoki

Other Abilities detective's insight, operative exploit (glimpse the truth), specialization (detective), void flyer

Gear kasatha microcord IV, heavy sap^{AR}, LFD sonic pistol with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each), secured comm unit, credstick with 25,000 credits

Trap: The tram's automated security system is set to stun participants whenever a fight begins, but has been modified by one of Jynma's contacts to recognize Jynma and her allies as law enforcement. As such, it ignores them when targeting hostile combatants.

TRAM SECURITY

CR 7

XP 3,200

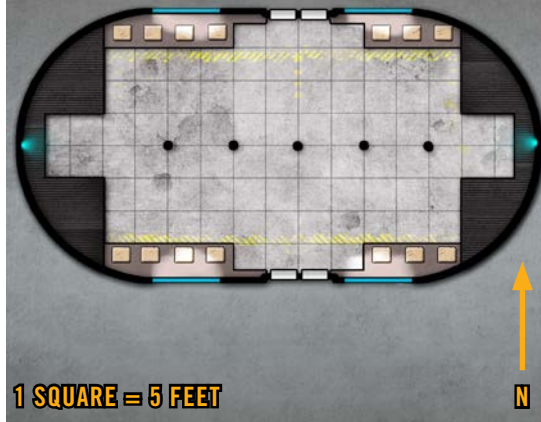
Type technological; **Perception** DC 30; **Disable** Computers DC 25 (add additional individuals as law enforcement personnel) or Engineering DC 25 (disconnect sensors)

Trigger proximity (auditory); **Reset** 1 round

Effect pacifying pulse +12 ranged (4d10 nonlethal So); multiple targets (each creature in tram that has attacked someone recognized as a law enforcement official in the previous round); Fortitude DC 17 half

Development: Jynma's comm unit is well-secured, requiring a successful DC 26 Computers check to hack; after

EVENT 1: A FIGHT OF ANGELS



three failed attempts, the comm unit wipes all of its data. The comm unit contains several folders of documentation, including Jynma's research into the PCs' actions at Gamut Bio and Laoe Araae (much of which the PCs know is fabricated). The contact that is supposed to pay her for the bounty is KSN Interstellar (page 15). In addition, there is a message from someone calling themselves "TERMINAL" (page 14) that provides the PCs' arrival time and docking bay, as well as assurances for Jynma that the tram's security system has "been modified per your request."

If Jynma surrenders and a PC succeeds at a DC 30 Diplomacy check or DC 34 Intimidate check, the bounty hunter can tell them the above information.

A PC who attempts to disable the tram's security system using Computers finds an electronic calling card for TERMINAL—including a pixelated image of a sword piercing a datapad.

THE SAFE HOUSE

At the address they were given, the PCs find a dreary gray structure with a commanding view of the Lorespire Complex. A holographic sign on the exterior names the building Orphys Tower. A PC who succeeds at a DC 5 Culture check knows that Orphys is the largest city on the undead planet of Eox. The connection to Eox is confirmed when a ghoul in a finely tailored doorman's outfit opens the front door for the PCs and invites them inside. If any PCs seem reluctant to enter, the ghoul—who identifies himself as Khade—tells them that Xych Vorsen and Ephecta are awaiting them upstairs. Khade also explains that the building is indeed owned by the Eoxian government.

Khade directs the PCs to a set of chambers near the tower's top floor. The suite is decorated in tones of ashen gray and black, but someone has added several lamps, a range of instant beverages, and vases of fresh flowers to

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make the place a bit more homey. The PCs' Steward allies wait in the common room; Xych paces in front of a window, its shades drawn, and Ephecta sits in an overstuffed black easy chair.

Xych begins by apologizing for the suite's dreariness, explaining that Confluence called in a favor with the Eoxian embassy to use the building off the books. Since reptoids can't easily disguise themselves as undead, this serves as a safe place for the PCs to be in their current situation (as safe as possible, at least). After the PCs have had a chance to settle in—each of them is given use of a room—read or paraphrase the following.

After a muted conversation on their comm unit, Xych Vorsen turns to address the room, their eyes gleaming and fists balled. "He believes us!"

"Director-General Lin Camulan," Ephecta clarifies.

"Yes! He agrees that Erem is definitely suspicious and might even be a reptoid. If we can expose them, it will deal a serious blow to the reptoid conspiracy." Their excitement wanes a little. "The director-general is even more cautious than my partner here and has some concerns, however. He said that if Erem is indeed a reptoid, there's likely to be more, particularly in the pool of Directorate nominees. And he has a point. One reptoid in the Directorate is a disaster, but even more would grant them total control."

"Sounds like the reptoid M0," Ephecta states dryly.

Through the PCs' previous actions, the director-general is aware that the Stewards have been compromised. He would like to know whether that corruption has spread to (or originated from) the Pact Council, but he is aware of the political issues at play. Acting against Pact Council members is a tremendous risk and—even if successful—will have long-ranging consequences. He believes the threat of having reptoids as members of the Directorate merits those risks, but any plan to stop them must go perfectly; there aren't second chances. Xych relates all this to the PCs.

For the purpose of this adventure, you will track Trust Points, an abstracted score that represents the director-general's confidence in the proof the PCs uncover. He agrees to provide covert search warrants that won't arouse the suspicions of the reptoid infiltrators at 3 Trust Points, and approves the PCs to act against the reptoid nominees after they accumulate 6 Trust Points. However, if the players are enjoying turning over every rock, you might have him

wait until they have uncovered everything; conversely, if the players have run out of patience investigating, you can allow things to move more quickly.

Story Award: For each Trust Point the PCs gain, award them 6,400 XP, to a maximum of 38,400 XP.

A TANGLED WEB

The PCs have several days to perform their investigations before the Pact Council votes on Directorate members. While the vote is officially scheduled in five days, there is often wheeling and dealing behind the scenes. If the PCs are making progress but need a little extra time, powerful allies like the Brethedan Pact Council delegation and the director-general can slow down the process.

The sections that follow are divided into public knowledge, sources, locations, and events. Public knowledge represents information that can be obtained from the infosphere or by talking to everyday citizens. Sources are individuals, groups, or other pools of information the PCs can contact to learn more. Locations are specific places to investigate. Events occur when noted or when you need to move the investigation along.

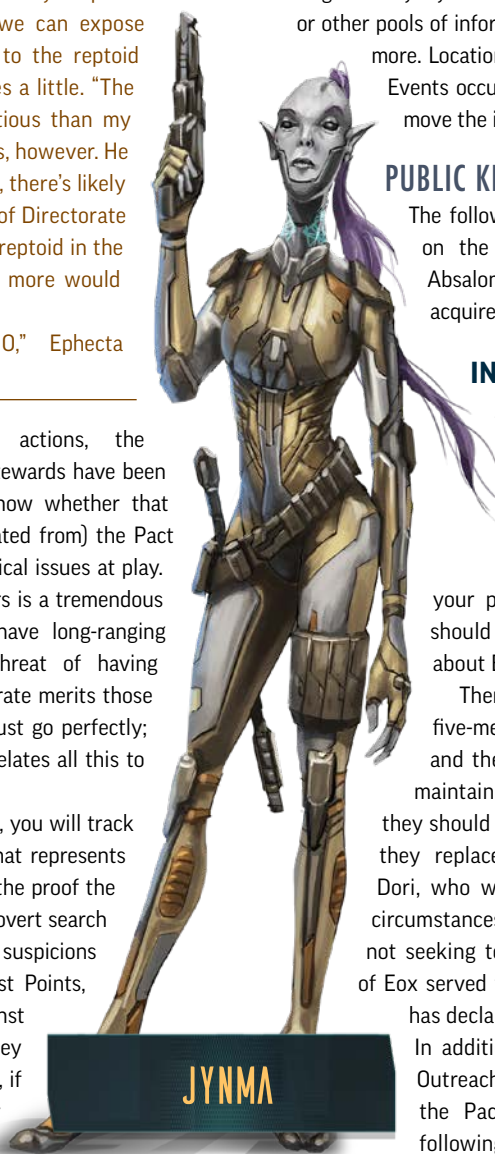
PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

The following information can be discovered on the infosphere or by asking around Absalom Station, presented from easiest to acquire to the most difficult.

INFOSPHERE NEWS

Just by watching news vids, the PCs can learn the list of nominees and some basic information about them. This list can be found in Handout: Directorate Nominees on page 7, which can be given to your players as a resource (though you should first fill in any relevant information about Erem).

There is a bit of turnover in the five-member Directorate this year. Erem and the shirren Klendalikh are looking to maintain their seats, while Zia Choh believes they should continue representing Triaxus after they replaced the ryphorian Director Balam Dori, who was assassinated under mysterious circumstances earlier this year. Two members are not seeking to retain their seats. Avarak Plutas of Eox served their maximum of three terms, but has declared their support for Gevalarsk Nor. In addition, a barathu collective known as Outreach has recently stepped down from the Pact Council entirely and dissolved following allegations that several of its



constituent parts had been involved in a radical branch of Oras's faith; the Brethedan government is focusing its efforts on replacing this representative.

Meanwhile, much of the news coverage is focusing on the clash between two representatives from Triaxus—Vora Rinn and Zia Choh—who each seek to represent Triaxus on the Pact Council (a world can have only one director at a time). Both were respected athletes in the past—Zia competed as a battleflower and Vora became famous in the relatively obscure Triaxian sport of bondracing (which the news anchors discuss in detail). As usual for Absalom Station news, more time seems to be spent on clips of them competing than their political records.

GATHERING INFORMATION

The Directorate nominees are rather public figures and it's not terribly difficult to collect information about them. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information (which takes 1d4 hours) learns the following about a candidate of their choosing; if the result of the check exceeds the DC by 10 or more, the PC finds a particularly talkative crowd who will also provide information on another nominee.

Remember that the PCs are wanted criminals, and so canvassing Absalom Station for information might expose their presence. Generally speaking, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Disguise check can attempt one Diplomacy check to gather information without being recognized. This DC is increased by 5 for the PC who looks like Erem and by 5 for asking questions about Erem, as both encourage more acute observation; these DC increases stack.

HANDOUT: DIRECTORATE NOMINEES

NOMINEE	REPRESENTS	BASIC FACTS	NOTES
Erem	Absalom Station	Current director, popular	
Gevalarsk Nor (male undead elebrian)	Eox	Has been linked to the Corpse Fleet	
Haussill Hau (male human)	Akiton	Hylki ethnicity, former Director, left Pact Council for personal reasons	
Klendlalh (female shirren)	Verces	Current director, proponent of cybernetic research	
Losifaran (male elf)	Castrovel	Laconic, past is unknown	
Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar of House Hadulan (female kasatha)	Idari	Vocal devotee of Talavet	
Thylas Starhammer (male dwarf)	Osoro	Host of Lorecast stream	
Uvali Rycast (female drow)	Apostae	Noble of House Rycast	
Vora Rinn (female transitional ryphorian)	Triaxus	Former bondracer and club owner	
Zia Choh (nonbinary winterborn ryphorian)	Triaxus	Former battleflower of Ning	

Each piece of information represents the most prominent public opinion about that candidate. Whether or not each opinion is based in fact is noted in parentheses.

Erem: It's easy to find an Absalom Station native willing to talk about Erem. "Ah, yeah, everybody knows Erem. Spends more time on the news than in the council chamber but keeps an eye on our interests and does a good job keeping the barathus from gaining too much influence. Maybe too good a job, if you can believe the news from Gamut Bio and Lae Araae." (The general public is unaware that Erem is a reptoid, and that their efforts to stall barathu political influence are rooted in the fact that reptoids can't replace them.)

Gevalarsk Nor: As a resident of Absalom Station and the go-to suspect whenever a local controversy involves Eox, Gevalarsk Nor is well-known among the populace. "I don't know if he's working with the Corpse Fleet or what, but he's definitely up to something. He's probably got something on Avarak Plutas to get their endorsement, but don't mess around with Eoxian business unless you want to end up as dead as them." (Gevalarsk Nor received Tova's endorsement because he is a skilled diplomat and politician, though most people's prejudices against the undead mean they don't trust the necrovite.)

Haussill Hau: The aging human of Hylki ethnicity faded from public view after he stepped down from the Pact Council decades ago, so most of those who remember him are from an older generation. "Haussill Hau? Pfft. He 'stepped down' right after the Swarm War without giving a reason. But I heard he was involved in some shady deals trying to sell bits of Swarm corpses to biotech companies! And now he comes back like nothing ever happened?!" (This

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particular rumor is true, but Haussill recently returned to the Akitonian government's good graces after spending some time off-planet.)

Klendalikh: Even among political enthusiasts, Klendalikh is the Director they're most likely to forget. "Yeah, she doesn't show up in public a lot. They say it's because she's focused on external issues: the Swarm, the Azlanti, and all that. But I heard it's actually because she's got too much experimental cyberware." (Though Klendalikh is a proponent of cybernetic enhancements, her augmentations haven't affected her attention span. She is indeed interested in protecting the Pact Worlds from outside threats.)

Losifaran: Although Losifaran's name has come up a great deal recently, most of the conversation has been around how little people actually know about him. "All I've heard are these weird baseless theories—he's a pawn of Morgebard of the Thousand Spines or a reptoid or whatever. But most of his life occurred during the Gap, so he probably doesn't even know himself." (None of the theories circulating about Losifaran are true. Unlike many of the other isolationist elves of Castrovel, Losifaran is actually interested in the future of the system. He just doesn't have the charisma or political acumen of some of the other nominees.) If pressed for information about reptoids, the source looks deeply disappointed in the PC but provides a link to ConSpire (page 11).

Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar: Most of those who have heard of Andar are kasathas. "I'm not really sure why she's the *Idari*'s choice for Director. She's got the experience, but she's really old-fashioned. Listen to Talavet's teachings, sure, but go to a real doctor. And who knows why she sticks up for people like Allish Fluerasik?" (Milgan, a vocal devotee of Talavet, believes the church is sufficient for her medical treatments after they discovered she contracted a rare kasathan nerve disease. Milgan has kept this health news a secret from even the Pact Council, with the help of Allish Fluerasik.) Pressing for information about Allish Fluerasik reveals that he is a prominent power broker in the station who is very close to becoming the head of a crime syndicate, and that Milgan helped block legislation that would hurt his family's business.

Thylas Starhammer: Humans, dwarves, and others whose ancestral homes vanished with the disappearance of the planet Golarion are likely to have heard of Thylas. "Ah, yeah, have you seen his stream, the Lorecast? You should totally give it a watch. I learned way more about Golarion from his vids than in school, but I was surprised when he officially moved to Osoro to become a Pact Council representative. The Knights of Golarion won't officially endorse anyone, but I'm sure they all want him to win." (Starhammer began his political career after he was replaced by a reptoid.) Although the Lorecast stream (page 14) is easy enough to find, the source will also enthusiastically provide a link.

Uvali Rycast: Merchants and pilots are likely to know about Uvali. "She's a real rising star among House Rycast. They've been keeping her away from the shadier side of things, so she looks pretty innocent... for a drow noble." (Though she knows generally how her house operates, Uvali isn't aware of its manipulation of Pact Council medical records.)

Vora Rinn: Rinn has a number of fans among older Triaxians. "I remember watching her race with her dragonkin partner. Exciting stuff. Then they retired, opened up a club in the Drakelands or some such, and got into politics. Don't know if she's fit for a Directorate seat, but she's been saying someone should look at her fellow council member Zia Choh's involvement in Director Dori's assassination. I don't know what to believe." (The reptoid Rinn is the one actually responsible for the director's murder and is trying to discredit Choh.)

Zia Choh: The ryphorian is best known among political enthusiasts and battleflower viewers. "Seems like most Triaxians support them after they stepped in to fill Director Dori's seat—even after that interview where they said that crazy stuff about reptoids." The source can point to an interview on the infosphere where Zia mentions that the director's assassin returned to their scaled, reptoid form after being killed. (Choh was telling the truth.)

SOURCES

At the beginning of the adventure, the PCs may want to look for information from certain sources (such as their Steward and barathu allies) and will discover more potential sources as they investigate. Each source generally presents only the information the PCs ask about. The PCs might need to revisit sources as their investigations proceeds. The sources below are listed in the most likely order the PCs would contact them.

THE STEWARDS

The PCs have two staunch allies in Yych Vorsen and Ephecta, who can provide them with much of the information the Stewards have collected on certain topics. Meeting directly with Director-General Lin Camulan risks exposing the PCs, but Yych and Ephecta can act as go-betweens. In general, Yych is excited that most of their conspiracy theories have proven true and that they are finally able to fight "the good fight." Ephecta provides periodic reality checks and is recognized as the more responsible party by the director-general.

Bounty/Criminal Records: The Stewards have substantial files on the PCs. The director-general is willing to share these files as a sign of good will once the PCs have gained 1 Trust Point, or after they've convinced Ephecta the information is vital to their investigation with a successful DC 30 Bluff or Diplomacy check.

The files include a variety of conflicting reports from Stewards who turned out to be reptoids and those the PCs have befriended. Most relevant to their investigation,

however, is the information that the old bounty on them—held by Gamut Bio—has been withdrawn, and that a new bounty for nonlethal apprehension has been placed anonymously. The Stewards have traced that bounty back to a small Absalom Station company named KSN Interstellar (page 15).

Director Balam Dori: The Stewards' investigation into the director's death discovered that the disguised assassin, who was killed by Zia Choh on the scene, was a member of an extremist group within the Veskarium; both the Veskarium and the Pact Worlds have agreed to downplay the death to reduce tensions. In the early days of the investigation, both Vora Rinn and Zia Choh were cleared of suspicion. The file contains a pair of shockingly grainy images of two dead bodies: a ryphorian and a vesk. (If these images are compared to the video from ConSpire or Vora's datapad, it's obvious they were pulled from that doctored video.)

The PCs' Steward allies can't explain why the information is so limited. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Computers check or a DC 26 check with an appropriate Profession skill (such as bureaucrat) discovers that the file was altered through an account linked to the Stewards' Roselight base, a fact that should arouse the PCs' suspicions as to its veracity.

Directorate Nominees: The Stewards keep some basic records on the council members, which Yych and Ephecta can provide to the PCs. In addition, while medical records are handled by an individual's home government, they are audited by the Pact Council medical review board (page 12). Ephecta claims that if any of those records found that anyone was a reptoid, that information would already have been released, but Yych says that they might be worth taking a look at regardless.

What information the Stewards do have focuses on finances and connections with extremist groups. The financial information is mostly a list of secret accounts, with frustratingly little information on individual transactions. Erem and Haussill Hau each have over a dozen known accounts collected over years on the Pact Council. Of particular note in Haussill's files are repeated covert transfers of funds to a company called KSN Interstellar (page 15). Losifaran is the only nominee who doesn't have any secret accounts.

Only a few files mention extremist ties, but those that do go into substantial detail. Gevalarsk Nor has been responsible for leading negotiations with the Corpse Fleet on a number of occasions and maintains a level of contact with the group that makes the Stewards uncomfortable. Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar is tied to a few ultra-conservative groups aboard the *Idari*. Thylas Starhammer's stream has spread widely among factions in the church of Iomedae and the Knights of Golarion, who often clash with everyday Eoxians.

Fluerasik Family: The Stewards recognize the Fluerasik family, and its head Allish Fluerasik, as important power brokers on Absalom Station. The public side of the family donates money and other resources to various political

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campaigns, and the Stewards believe Alish has blackmail material on a number of Pact Council members—but can't prove it. The director-general is particularly worried that Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar has been compromised by the family, since she once helped block legislation that would limit political contributions (including those made by the Fluerasiks). Several investigations into the family have stalled.

Outreach: The collective stepped down before a formal inquiry could be held, but Steward records show that the identity and earlier ties of its members were disclosed to the Stewards when the collective first earned a spot on the Pact Council. It wasn't flagged as a security risk at the time, but the status of the collective was changed to "high risk" several months ago by Legate Tavin Arill.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check knows that the legates are a group of veteran and retired Stewards without official power, but that hold deep respect and wide-ranging access within the organization (Ephecta can also explain this to the PCs). Most legates are well known within the organization, but Tavin Arill isn't particularly prominent, suggesting he worked in either logistics or intelligence. Any Steward can pull Tavin Arill's contact info from the database, but should also know not to investigate a legate unless it's a very serious matter.

CONFLUENCE AND THEIR AGENTS

Verifier Ki and the rest of the Confluence agents who serve as Bretheda's delegation on the Pact Council arrive on Absalom Station shortly after the PCs. They are more than happy to provide any information they have—but prefer to meet anywhere but Orphys Tower. Thanks to their telepathy, such an interview can be clandestine even in a public space.

Bounty/Criminal Records: The barathus are aware that Gamut Bio has withdrawn their bounty and know about the new bounty placed on the PCs' heads. They don't know much about KSN Interstellar, meaning it is unlikely to be a barathu company. However, their computer experts noticed a skilled hacker also snooping around for more information about the organization. They haven't been able to track a physical location more accurately than "somewhere on Absalom Station."

Directorate Nominees: The barathus consider Erem an enemy and Klendalikh a close ally. The deceased Director Balam Dori was an ally, and both Vora Rinn and Zia Choh have made good-faith efforts to secure the Brethedan delegation's votes. The barathus don't trust Gevalarsk Nor at all, but don't think he's a reptoid. The barathus have no strong opinions about the other nominees.

Outreach: The barathus naturally have a great deal of information on Outreach and can even arrange for a meeting with some of Outreach's former members, if the PCs would like. Either can confirm that Erem was largely responsible for stirring up the controversy and was probably the original source of the leak. Klendalikh argued in Outreach's favor, but

was largely ignored. Haussill Hau helped spread the rumor and Thylas Starhammer gave it substantial airtime on his channel, but neither worked directly with Erem.

Outreach's former members have formed a smaller barathu collective that is still looking for a new purpose and name and can provide some additional information about Erem, a fragment of memory from the larger collective. Outreach hired a detective to dig into Erem's medical records held by Dr. Gircix (page 13), hoping to find dirt, but the detective disappeared. As hectic as the time was, the barathus don't believe Outreach was able to follow up on the matter before the split. If asked about Legate Tavin Arill, Outreach's former members don't have a strong memory of the man, suggesting he worked in the background, investigating their political enemies and performing background checks. They aren't aware of the man's new job.

THE DIRECTORATE NOMINEES

The director-general advises the PCs not to speak directly with any of the nominees. If any of them are reptoids, they might recognize the PCs and ruin the investigation. Ephecta notes that the quietest way to discover the truth would be to look into any of their associates.

LEGATE TAVIN ARILL

The PCs can learn Legate Tavin Arill's name and contact information through the Stewards, Confluence, or other sources. He's actually been a reptoid for years.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy check to gather information about Tavin finds that he's an older damaya lashunta who was decorated for intelligence work, but retired a few years ago to freelance in high-end private security. He worked for a brief period on Outreach's security team, but now leads Director Erem's security detail.

At first, Arill communicates only through electronic message, feeding the PCs the disinformation presented below. He doesn't hesitate to arrange for a face-to-face meeting if the PCs want to discuss things that are too sensitive (see below) and particularly if they offer to obtain a warrant. He then tries to kill the PCs as described in **Event 2** (page 18).

Directorate Nominees: The legate has a fair amount of experience with the various nominees. He says he trusts Erem with his life and has had good relations with Haussill Hau before, but has his suspicions about Gevalarsk Nor and Zia Choh (the former because he likely has ties with the Corpse Fleet and the latter because "nobody is that clean.")

He admits that Losifaran is something of an enigma but jokingly floats the idea that he might be a reptoid to test the PCs' response. If the PCs show any knowledge of reptoids, he's more likely to arrange a direct meeting.

Outreach: Tavin is extremely aware of Outreach's situation, but refuses to discuss further without a warrant because he's signed all sorts of paperwork. He does admit, however, that Outreach's situation weighs on his mind,

bemoaning how a few bad barathus in a collective entity can cause an insidious descent. If presented with a warrant, he asks to meet in person.

HOUSE RYCAST

If the PCs send a request for information to the public face of House Rycast on Absalom Station, within 24 hours they receive a polite refusal to talk about Uvali Rycast (or any of the nominees) from local family head **Timaran Rycast** (LE female drow). Shortly after that, the PCs are contacted anonymously by Mersadask Rycast (see **Event 4** on page 20).

Lin Camulan will provide the PCs with an official warrant that requires House Rycast to speak with them as long as they have 3 Trust Points. In that case, Timaran Rycast agrees to meet with the PCs in a plush café attached to House Rycast's offices in the Nyori Palisades. The older drow woman is polite but cagey, not revealing any information the PCs don't already have. However, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Sense Motive check determines the drow might be amenable to a trade of information. If the PCs broach this topic of conversation, Timaran indicates that she is curious what the PCs have to offer, hinting that she might know something of great interest to them.

Timaran Rycast is mostly interested in the other nominees' secrets, though she is aware of many of them herself. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Bluff or Diplomacy check gets Timaran to admit that she wants to know why the traditional Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar once helped block legislation that would hurt Allish Fluerasik. She is aware of most other candidates' dirty laundry, but doesn't let on that she knows any of it if the PCs tell her, and asks for more. While Timaran doesn't really care that there might be reptoids on the Pact Council (beyond the fact that such a secret makes them easy to manipulate), she is unaware that Erem and Vora Rinn have been replaced.

If the PCs provide Timaran with proof of Milgan's secret medical problems or that both Erem and Vora Rinn are reptoids, she tells them that House Rycast discovered Thylas Starhammer's reptoid identity after he came to them looking for a way to weaponize Osoro's poisonous gas against nonhumanoids. She strung him along while drow diviners looked into his past and learned of his replacement.

Breaking into House Rycast's offices is possible, but quite dangerous. The building is staffed with dozens of drow, including several noble arms dealers (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 42). Xych and Ephecta caution the PCs against this tactic, which would be beyond the scope of this adventure. However,

if the PCs capture Timaran alive, she will give the PCs her information about Thylas if they agree to let her go.

Learning that Thylas is a reptoid by dealing with Timaran Rycast earns the PCs 1 Trust Point.



TIMARAN RYCAST

THE INFOSPHERE AND CONSPIRE

Finding conspiracy theories on Absalom Station's infosphere is upsettingly easy, but finding facts among the noise is not. A PC who spends 1d4 hours searching the infosphere about any of the topics below and who succeeds at a DC 25 Computers check discovers ConSpire, a site where much of the more reliable (though still fringe) information about Absalom Station's strange goings-on is aggregated. Of course, the PCs might hear about ConSpire through other means.

Director Balam Dori: The Director's assassination is a huge topic of discussion on the site, even though it happened nearly a year ago. A shockingly low-resolution video, claiming to show the

assassin transforming into a reptoid after his death, is one of the most viewed and discussed on the site. However, most of the users believe it to be a clumsy fake.

The vid shows the director exiting the Plenara and being struck by a ray of green light from off-screen. Zia Choh rushes to his side as he collapses and begins to turn to ash, a look of terrible grief on Zia's face. The camera swings wildly to show the assassin: an unarmed male winterborn ryphorian whose shouts remain unheard over the panic of the surrounding crowd. Zia appears, their face now still and stoic, and they proceed to pummel the assassin to death. The assassin's body morphs into a reptilian form after it hits the ground, just before the vid ends.

Any PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Life Science check or who has seen a reptoid before can tell that the dead assassin transforms into a vesk, not a reptoid. A PC who analyzes the video and succeeds at a DC 30 Computers or relevant Profession check discovers that the vesk corpse is of slightly higher quality than the rest of the scene, indicating it was edited in. A PC who succeeds at a DC 21 Mysticism check can identify the ray as a *disintegrate* spell.

Beyond the video itself, substantial conversation exists on the site regarding the motives of both the assassination and the doctored vid. The most popular theory is that someone—possibly reptoids—was trying to push the Veskarium and Pact Worlds closer to war. Other theories suggest that Balam was involved in a love triangle with Vora Rinn and Zia Choh and was killed when one of them got jealous, or that the director was actually a reptoid and that Zia released the fake video to stop investigators from finding out the truth.

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Presenting evidence to the director-general that this vid was doctored earns the PCs 1 Trust Point.

Grays: Grays are another popular topic on ConSpire, with discussion focused mostly on abduction reports. Finding information about the nominees in relation to grays requires a successful DC 25 Computers or Society check.

One theory posits that Erem disappeared during a long trip several years ago and was replaced by a gray clone. A commenter by the name of TERMINAL (page 14) claims to have hacked into the security of the vessel and verified that Erem did disappear for several hours before reappearing in his quarters. The appearance of the PCs has brought new life to this theory, with commenters referring to the current Erem as Erem-2 and the PC as Erem-3.

If a PC fails the check to find information connecting the nominees to grays, they only find a much-discussed theory that Eoxians actually control the grays and that Gevalarsk Nor is a member of a ruling class of grays called a mysteriarch.

Outreach: The scandal around Outreach, tying them to radical believers of the church of Oras, is considered to be a smear campaign by the few users who comment on it. Among them, the most popular theory is that Erem is normalizing blaming barathu collectives for the actions of their parts to weaken barathu political strength.

Another theory is that the Stewards intentionally took down Outreach for threatening their control of the Pact Worlds.

Reptoids: ConSpire has a substantial database of reptoid theories, including accusations against every one of the Directorate nominees, several entire species, and the PCs themselves (especially after their role in "the attack on Gamut Bio"). The most prominent reptoid discussion on the site revolves around the director's assassination video.

Beyond that, there is a long history of accusing Haussill Hau of being a reptoid, from his earlier days on the Directorate. Losifaran, as an elf, is also commonly accused. Some theories even charge Losifaran and other elves of being a reptoid cabal who use the "hoax of the Gap" to cover their tracks.

PACT COUNCIL MEDICAL REVIEW BOARD

Members of the Pact Council are usually given regular medical exams by doctors in the employ of their world's government, but these records are reviewed by an independent board. This board also has the power to call for additional screenings if they have sufficient cause (such as if they believe a member is under magical control). All records are kept confidential, released only on a need-to-know basis when action is warranted.

The board will allow the PCs to examine specific records if they have a warrant from the director-general (which can

be acquired when the PCs earn 3 Trust Points). However, using such an official channel alerts Dr. Gircix and, through her, Allish Fluerasik; he responds violently (see **Event 3** on page 19). A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Diplomacy check to gather information about the review board learns of a young clerk named **Nadhu Laste** (N male human) with a considerable amount of debt; if contacted, he is willing to leak whichever records the PCs want in exchange for 10,000 credits. However, Nadhu has his own secrets, which the PCs can uncover if they dig (see below).

The board's servers are connected to the infosphere, but they are behind several layers of encryption and require three successful DC 30 Computers checks to hack into. The board is alerted to each failed attempt, and two failed attempts within 1 hour cause the servers to disconnect from the infosphere for 24 hours. If this happens, an alerted board member reports the matter to the Stewards (leading to the PCs receiving a stern lecture from Ephecta), but

more importantly, Dr. Gircix notifies Allish Fluerasik, leading to **Event 3** (page 19).

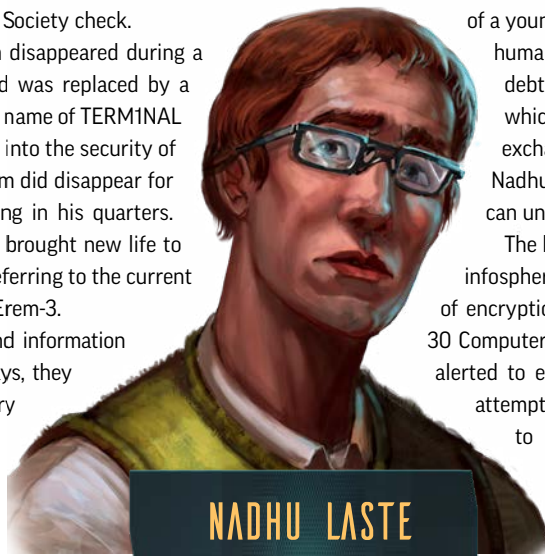
Nadhu Laste: This young human clerk is a recent university graduate, enjoying his first job and spending far beyond his means. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Computers check to research him online discovers that the largest of his debts—several hundred thousand credits worth of student loans—was forgiven for unknown reasons nearly 1 year ago, right after he took the job as a clerk with the medical review board. Since then, he has racked up other debts.

If asked, Nadhu is reluctant to explain what happened with his student loans, but a successful DC 26 Intimidate check causes him to admit to taking bribes, even as he whines that Dr. Gircix takes way more bribes and changes far more records than he does. However, he realizes his slipup and claims to know nothing more, unless the PCs either threaten to get a warrant and succeed at a DC 28 Bluff or Intimidate check, or get an actual warrant from the director-general.

Once pressured, Nadhu explains that House Rycast offered to take care of his largest loan in exchange for a series of favors. The first of these was entering false records for Haussill Hau, Losifaran, and a handful of Pact Council members who aren't nominees, presumably to use that information in the future to benefit Apostae and House Rycast itself. Nadhu dreads the next time the drow approaches him for more favors.

Reporting Nadhu to the director-general earns the party 1 Trust Point.

Director Balam Dori: The board wasn't responsible for the inquest into Balam's disintegration, but do note that his



records were released by special order from the Directorate so that a body could be fabricated for his funeral. The included records show a ryphorian in relatively good health, with the exception of a mild addiction to legal stimulants and a propensity for heat exhaustion.

Directorate Nominees: Being undead, Gevalarsk Nor doesn't have medical records as such, but his documents still include regular checks by the board to ensure he isn't under any enchantment or compulsion. A somewhat cryptic note in the records reads, "Despite claims on ConSpire forums, Nor's body certainly isn't of gray stock," which may lead characters to investigate ConSpire (page 11).

The medical records of the other nominees are from their respective government's official doctors and all of them look clean at first glance. However, a PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Computers check or DC 32 Medicine check notices some unusual discrepancies in both Haussill Hau's and Losifaran's records; they appear to have been altered on the same

day and indicate that both nominees show the first signs of the same immunodeficiency. Further inspection reveals the last clerk to access these records is named Nadhu Laste.

In addition, Erem, Klendalikh, Vora Rinn, and Zia Choh have each been personally examined by the board's head doctor, Dr. Gircix. None of these examinations found anything strange, though Zia Choh's records include a few notes about old scars from their battleflower days.

Turning these records over to the director-general, regardless of how they were obtained, earns the PCs 1 Trust Point.

Dr. Gircix: The host shirren is the Medical Review Board's preferred doctor. For the past several years, they have performed the required medical examinations of Pact Council members. The board knows their credentials (they graduated from a prestigious Vercite medical academy) and the address of their practice, Spectrum Clinic (on the top floor of an office building near the Plenara and overlooking Jatembe Park), but doesn't keep other information on the doctor.

DR. GIRCIX

If the PCs try to contact Dr. Gircix, they are told that Spectrum Clinic isn't accepting any new patients. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Bluff or Diplomacy check while speaking with the receptionist learns that Dr. Gircix plans to soon take an extended vacation. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Computers check while trying to hack into the clinic's records quickly discovers they aren't connected to the infosphere. See area **B** (page 16) for more information.

ALLISH FLUERASIK

There is no easy way to directly contact **Allish Fluerasik** (NE male human), as the family head keeps his information private. A PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Computers check can send a message to his comm unit, but receives only a curt "no thank you" in response. Repeated attempts to contact Allish Fluerasik leads to **Event 3** (page 19). A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Diplomacy check to gather information is directed to the Fluerasik family home, a small compound-like estate in Nyori Palisades. The security in front of the building doesn't tolerate any unknown visitors. See area **C** on page 17 for more information on how the PCs can find a way to sneak inside.

However, if the PCs get an official warrant from the director-general to speak with Allish Fluerasik (after earning 3 Trust Points) and one PC succeeds at a DC 30 Intimidate check to compose a strongly worded message to him, Allish agrees to meet. He chooses a fancy restaurant he owns in Parkside as "neutral" ground and arrives with four of his enforcers (page 19). Allish Fluerasik is brusque, beginning the conversation by saying, "You have 10 minutes." He gives his opinions about the candidates if asked (mostly positive for anyone he believes he can manipulate or make deals with, such as Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar, Erem, Haussill Hau, Vora Rinn, and Uvali Rycast; mostly negative for the others, except for Gevalarsk Nor, whom he hasn't be able to figure out yet). However, he answers "No comment" to questions involving his business dealings (especially in relation to the nominees).

The PCs won't be able to get Allish to admit to anything unless they have copies of the files from Spectrum Clinic (see area **B** on page 16). A PC who shows Allish these files and succeeds at a DC 32 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check elicits an angry bark of "How did you get those?" The PCs can lie or tell the truth as they see fit, and Allish denies any wrongdoing for a few moments. If the PCs keep the pressure on him, he realizes he's been beat. He admits that he has indeed been blackmailing Milgan to not reveal her health problems and plans to do the same to Vora if she manages to get a seat on the Directorate. He actually dares the PCs to arrest him, noting that he has the best lawyers in the Pact Worlds.

If asked about Erem's file, Allish flinches for the first time. When Dr. Gircix noted a few anomalies in Erem's medical records, Allish saw this an opportunity to get another powerful politician in his pocket. He sent a messenger with the details of a deal to the reptoid, but Erem didn't take kindly to being pressured and the messenger never returned—not



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whole, anyway. A day later, Allish received a small unmarked package containing his messenger's heart and a note that read "Leave it be."

Allish will relate all this to the PCs if they promise to take down Erem and succeed at a DC 30 Diplomacy check. He won't admit to being scared of Erem, but it's clear from the look in his eyes that he is. He can give the PCs Dr. Gircix's full report on Erem, which shows signs of Erem being some type of cold-blooded shapeshifter. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Life Science check identifies Erem as a reptoid with this information.

If the PCs don't have (or don't want to show) the files from Spectrum Clinic and have been generally polite with Allish, he ends the conversation with a smile. He invites the PCs to a "little shindig" at his estate, looking to flaunt his wealth and power over them. See area **C** on page 17 for more information.

Acquiring Dr. Gircix's files on Erem from a meeting with Allish Fluerasik earns the PCs 1 Trust Point.

THE LORECAST

It's a simple matter to find Thylas Starhammer's vid stream, the Lorecast, particularly with how shamelessly he plugs it during political interviews. It purports to be an objective discussion of historical matters relating mainly to Lost Golarion. Since Thylas joined the Pact Council as a representative of Osoro, most of the content on the stream has been hosted by a variety of other presenters, but the dwarf still appears at least once a week, increasingly focused on politics rather than the usual topic of history.

The stream generally expresses a positive message of rebuilding the ways of life for Lost Golarion's many species, though the hosts (including Thylas) staunchly believe the world was destroyed during the Gap. The content displays a bias against Eox, often conflating the planet with the Corpse Fleet or making leading statements like "three planets in our solar system have been destroyed. And we already know who's responsible for two."

Although the PCs can directly ask questions through the stream's chat, they can more easily find relevant answers by searching the archive.

Director Balam Dori: Thylas touched on the director's assassination for a few weeks after it occurred. He speaks prudently about the matter, only subtly speculating about the assassin's motivations. The closest he comes to outright blaming someone comes after news that the Castrovelian government chose not to use magic to restore Balam's life. After suggesting that Balam must have then been killed by a powerful spellcaster, Thylas goes on to talk about the necromantic skill of the Corpse Fleet.

Directorate Nominees: Thylas's latest vids have focused more and more on Gevalarsk Nor, even before their respective nominations were announced. The dwarf skirts the line of calling Gevalarsk an acting member of the Corpse Fleet. Among the other nominees, the only one Thylas has

commented on positively is Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar, claiming the shared suffering of having their home worlds destroyed gives them common ground.

Outreach: When the scandal was fresh, Thylas talked about Outreach only once on his stream. At that time, he didn't go into great detail about the barathu entity, but he brought the topic of conversation around to suggest that residents of the Pact Worlds need to be careful around religious fanatics and the Corpse Fleet.

TERM1NAL

TERM1NAL is an Absalom-based freelance hacker with little in the way of a physical presence. With a successful DC 25 Computers check, a PC who researches TERM1NAL on the infosphere finds their posts on ConSpire (page 11), as well as theories from other users speculating that TERM1NAL is an artificial intelligence or machine spirit, which the hacker never denies. This search alerts TERM1NAL that the PCs are looking for them, and the hacker contacts them via a text message a few hours later.

TERM1NAL prefers to communicate only through text, and their writing style consists mostly of jargon and infosphere slang. At first, TERM1NAL offers to perform any research or online hacking that requires a Computers check for 10,000 credits per job. However, if the PCs share their actual goal or concoct a plausible conspiracy-related story with a successful DC 30 Bluff check, TERM1NAL agrees to work in exchange for information.

Bounty/Criminal Records: TERM1NAL is aware of the bounty on the PCs' heads, having aided Jynma in her pursuit of them. They admit they were curious to know more about an Erem clone (pointing to their posts about grays on ConSpire; see page 12). They looked into KSN Interstellar before accepting the work but found nothing suspicious. If pressed, TERM1NAL believes there might be more useful information located on the company's internal servers. However, they aren't interested in breaking and entering.

Director Balam Dori: The controversy around the director's death intrigues TERM1NAL, but they believe the waters have been intentionally muddied to defame Zia Choh. For their normal fee or if angered by enough trash-talking of Zia with a successful DC 28 Bluff or Intimidate check, TERM1NAL provides the hacked audio from one Zia's calls to the nominee's sister. Although the audio is in Triaxian, even nonspeakers can detect Zia's distress with a successful DC 28 Sense Motive check.

"They say the vid shows it was a vesk agent. But I've met with Veskarium ambassadors. I know what a vesk looks like!" Zia's sister hesitantly asks if they have seen an illusion, to which Zia shouts, "The vid's a fake! Not even a good one! But they'll sign off on whatever makes them not look like fools..." After an awkward pause, Zia disconnects the call.

This audio is a new piece of evidence in Balam's case. If the PCs share it with the director-general, they earn 1 Trust Point.

Directorate Nominees: TERM1NAL is happy to discuss the nominees. In addition to their beliefs about Balam Dori's assassination (page 14), they can also reveal any information the PCs might not have yet found through their attempts to gather information or on ConSpire.

However, for their normal fee, they also offer a possibly important lead. TERM1NAL notes that during the course of their "normal online surveillance," they discovered that several pieces of Klendalikh's cybernetics were pulled from the market due to serious side effects. TERM1NAL admits that this seems suspicious, since the shirren has continually received clean bills of health from the Pact Council Medical Review Board.

Grays: Most of TERM1NAL's information about grays is focused on disappearances. If the PCs share even a part of their experiences with grays, TERM1NAL is eager to listen and share their own collection of hundreds of hours of footage that forms an extended montage of individuals disappearing off security footage, personal comm unit vids, and even a live stream.

The majority of this footage is credible, as TERM1NAL has weeded out most of the questionable disappearances and those explainable through normal technological or magical means. If the PCs scrub through the vids over the next several hours, they can discover the abductions of Erem and the other people the PCs are copied from (though these are of the lowest quality of his collection).

Outreach: TERM1NAL has largely ignored the scandal with Outreach, but will look into it for their normal rate. They're able to obtain the Stewards' records on the matter (page 9), including Legate Tavin Arill's note and contact information.

Reptoids: Confident that reptoids were responsible for Director Balam Dori's assassination, TERM1NAL also believes that Vora Rinn is most likely a reptoid. However, they reiterate that Erem, as an obvious gray already in the Directorate, is a greater threat.

TERM1NAL also warns the PCs about seeing reptoids where there aren't any. "Reptoids are mysterious and power-hungry, but most elves are mysterious, and they can't all be reptoids. And if all scheming, power-hungry people are reptoids, I don't know how you explain Gevalarsk Nor."

LOCATIONS

The PCs will learn throughout their investigations about certain locations they might want to search to find more information about certain nominees. Most of these aren't meant to be areas where combat occurs, so detailed maps aren't provided. The places where the PCs confront the suspects they believe are reptoids are detailed in Part 2. The locations are presented in the likely order the PCs will visit them, and any location not listed here is unimportant to the investigation.

A. KSN INTERSTELLAR

Looking into the new bounty on their heads may lead the PCs to a company that's barely more than a shell, KSN Interstellar. It has an extremely basic infosphere site, explaining the company is an "Exclusive firm that invests in the Pact Worlds and beyond!" and listing its street address as a unit in a large office block in Drifter's End. It is secretly owned by Haussill Hau and was once used as his front to sell Swarm genetic material. More recently, it hired investigators to perform clandestine opposition research on the other Directorate candidates. Before the PCs arrive on Absalom Station, Haussill dismissed the staff but hasn't had time to sweep the office clean.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Computers check can examine the site's code to see that it hasn't been updated in over a decade, except for regular software updates and a digital calling card left behind by the mysterious hacker TERM1NAL. The business's servers, if there are any, aren't connected to the infosphere.

Physically breaking into the office is potentially more fruitful. Canvassing the building over the course of a day shows no one entering or leaving at any point. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notices the trio of security cameras watching over the exterior. A PC can disable one of the cameras with a successful DC 26 Engineering check, providing a safe window for the group to enter (the door's buildings have Hardness 10, 50 Hit Points, and can be opened with a successful DC 30 Engineering check). If the PCs don't spot or disable at least one camera, Haussill is alerted. If the PCs didn't defeat Jynma, the Directorate candidate points her to the office. Otherwise, he contacts House Rycast and asks for their help, triggering **Event 4** (page 20).

Inside is little more than a large conference room with a long table and over a dozen chairs. A screen integrated in the table's surface rotates between scenes of the different Pact Worlds from orbit. Paintings on one wall depict similar views of Absalom Station and Akiton. A well-stocked liquor cabinet stands near the open door of the attached bathroom.

The table contains a basic computer that's used to display information during meetings. It's not supposed to store anything, but a successful DC 30 Computers or Engineering check can bring up the display last in its memory. It shows pictures of several nominees: Gevalarsk Nor, Klendalikh, Losifaran, Thylas Starhammer, and Zia Choh. A red line labeled "Corpse Fleet" connects the images of Gevalarsk and Thylas, while Zia's has the words "Dori's murderer?" written next to it. A few notes about her augmentations accompany Klendalikh's image, while Losifaran's picture is simply circled. This is the list of nominees Haussill wants to knock out of the running.

The paintings aren't worth anything, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Perception check discovers a small niche behind the Akitonian landscape. It contains a glowing crystal sphere the size of a grapefruit. This hybrid item is

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a *telepathic data storage device* attuned to Haussill Hau's mind. Though it can be accessed by anyone with telepathy or limited telepathy, anyone other than Haussill who uses it must succeed at a DC 20 Will save or gain 1 temporary negative level.

The sphere's records contain a ledger of KSN Interstellar's incoming and outgoing funds. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Computers check and does a bit of forensic accounting learns that most of the company's capital comes from Haussill Hau through other shell companies and anonymous political donations. Most of the payments seem to have been paid onto untraceable credsticks, with the largest earmarked for the current bounty on the PCs. It includes a note emphasizing that "Erem's impostor" must be brought in alive to "discover what they know about Erem." While these records could be potentially damning for Haussill, they don't contain anything that directly links him to the reptoids.

Treasure: The niche also contains a pair of *mk 2 holding gloves* (*Starfinder Armory* 122) and two *mk 3 serums of healing*.

Development: Turning over the crystal sphere or the information within it to the director-general earns the PCs 1 Trust Point.

B. SPECTRUM CLINIC

Spectrum Clinic is on the top floor of an office block overlooking Jatembe Park. It's an expensive area that caters to high-end clients, but Dr. Gircix only rents a single floor. The building is owned by the Fluerasik family through a shell company, which can be learned through a successful DC 30 Computers check to search the infosphere or Diplomacy check to gather information.

During the day, the building is a constant buzz of activity. Getting legitimate access to the building requires an appointment with one of the businesses there, but with over 20 floors containing a range of entertainment, health, legal, and trading companies, this is a trivial matter. Alternatively, the PCs can bluster their way into the building with a successful DC 30 Bluff or Intimidate check. After business hours, the building is virtually empty, and the PCs need only worry about the watchful security cameras in the corridors (which can be avoided with a successful DC 30 Stealth check or disabled with a successful DC 28 Engineering check). The feed from these cameras is monitored by security personnel on the building's first floor. Use the statistics for a Fluerasik enforcer (page 19) for these guards, who are on the family's payroll. They attempt to capture intruders to hand them over to station security, though they inform their boss if the situation seems out of the ordinary.

Regardless of the time, a pair of human security guards watches over the lobby. Like the other security guards, they work for Allish Fluerasik and use the statistics for a Fluerasik enforcer (page 19). They move to intercept anyone they notice trying to sneak past them.

The clinic's commanding view also leaves it quite exposed to characters who can fly. A flying PC must succeed at a DC 25 Stealth check to reach one of the clinic's windows during the night without drawing attention to themselves; they are spotted by eagle-eyed security on a failure, drawing a response from the Fluerasik family (see **Event 3** on page 19). These enforcers arrive at the building 15 minutes later. A PC can open a locked window from the outside with a successful DC 26 Engineering check.

The clinic consists of a waiting room, which has a window onto the receptionist's desk, and a hallway that connects the records room, a pair of exam rooms, and the doctor's office. A secret door behind a bookcase in Dr. Gircix's office (which can be discovered with a successful DC 30 Perception check) leads to a hidden security room. Concealed cameras in the exam rooms record footage of the patients, which is sometimes used by Allish Fluerasik to blackmail the doctor's patients (who often don't want people to know about their embarrassing or compromising medical conditions). An exam room's camera can be spotted with a successful DC 33 Perception check.

If the PCs show up to the clinic during the day, they are promptly turned away by the ysoki receptionist, as they don't have an appointment. The receptionist calls building security on a PC who makes too much of a fuss. At your discretion, this could provide enough of a distraction for another PC to sneak into Dr. Gircix's office, but that PC will have to deal with the shirren doctor. Gircix immediately contacts security unless the PCs have a way to stop them. The doctor doesn't reveal the existence of their secret room, even if subjected to intimidation (the threat of Allish Fluerasik outweighs any of the PCs' attempts). However, PCs can search the doctor's office if they restrain them. If the PCs break into the office at night without being spotted, they find no one inside and can explore at their leisure.

Not much of interest can be found within the clinic's computerized records, other than the names and personal information of some of Dr. Gircix's most famous clients. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Medicine check notices that none of these patients have any serious issues; the most serious medical condition the PC can find record of is the occasional case of influenza, which they realize is statistically unlikely.

The tier 4 computer in the hidden security room can be hacked with a successful DC 29 Computers check. It contains the true records of any of the clinic's patients with medical secrets. When any of these records are accessed, Allish Fluerasik receives an alert on his computer unless a PC succeeds at another DC 29 Computers check to disable this alarm countermeasure. While the information on other Absalom Station luminaries is interesting, only the secret records of four of the Directorate nominees—Erem, Klendalikh, Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar, and Vora Rinn—are relevant to this adventure.

Upon examining Erem's file, the PCs find it blank except for note that reads, "I'll take care of this one. AF." Klendalikh's

records show that she has more problems with her cybernetics than has been reported publicly, but can confirm that she is definitely shirren. Milgan's records indicate she has a rare kasathan degenerative nerve disease, but claims she is getting treatment from priests of Talavet aboard the *Idari*. Finally, Dr. Gircix notes in a report that dates back several years that Vora Rinn is a reptoid, revealing that she has been one since early in her political career. A message accompanies Vora's file that reads, "Let's sit on this one until she tries to make a move. AF."

Treasure: The clinic's exam rooms are well stocked with medical supplies, including several copies of everything that can be found in a medkit. In addition, each room contains two purple hypopans and one white nanite hypopan (*Starfinder* Armory 106) for emergencies.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Perception check while searching Dr. Gircix's office finds a fancy silver credstick with 120,000 credits on it, a recent blackmail payment that the doctor has yet to hand over to Allish Fluerasik.

Development: Turning over Dr. Gircix's secret records to the director-general, which prove that Vora Rinn is a reptoid, earns the PCs 1 Trust Point.

C. FLUERASIK ESTATE

Like many other personal residences in Nyori Palisades, the Fluerasik Estate has an extremely high level of security. There is only one way in or out of the complex, and it is guarded by a pair of Fluerasik enforcers (page 19), two laser turrets, and several cameras monitored by more guards within the house. The family strictly controls who is allowed to enter the estate, even their own employees (which the PCs can easily see by staking out the entrance for a few hours). Deliveries are simply left at the front gate and fetched by a servant from inside. Allish Fluerasik rarely leaves the complex and is accompanied by four enforcers when he does. Other members of the Fluerasik family come and go more regularly but don't reveal anything about the ongoing investigation if the PCs follow or accost them.

If the PCs are persistent, however, they can find a way inside. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Diplomacy check to gather information hears about a party happening at the estate that evening. The event is invite-only, and many of Absalom Station's richest and most influential people are going (as it is usually in their best interest not to turn down an invite from Allish Fluerasik). A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Computers check can forge an invitation for the group. The PCs should wear formal clothing if they want to blend in.

Arriving at the estate for the party, the PCs can see that security has increased, as many of the guests have brought their own personal bodyguards. The PCs are asked to surrender over any obvious weapons (such as two-handed melee weapons, longarms, heavy weapons, and sniper rifles) at the gate with the promise they will be returned; this includes any small arms and basic melee weapons that a PC

doesn't take pains to hide with a successful DC 26 Sleight of Hand check.

Inside the estate, the PCs can wander freely through the front garden (which is lit with hundreds of strands of lights) and the downstairs dining room, library, den, and bathrooms. The kitchen and the upstairs are off-limits to the guests (as noted by temporary signage). Wait staff from the caterer (mostly human and all dressed similarly) circulate among the guests with trays of canapes, other finger food, and glasses of sparkling wine.

Allish Fluerasik mingles with his guests, talking and laughing loudly, occasionally clapping someone on the back hard enough to spill their drink. He likely doesn't recognize the PCs (who may be in disguise) but doesn't go out of his way to call them out as party-crashers. He speaks with them only perfunctorily, unless a PC charms him with a successful DC 28 Bluff or Diplomacy check. In such a case, that PC can keep his attention for as long as they want. At your discretion, the other guests might include certain Directorate nominees (such as Haussill Hau) or important movers and shakers on the station, such as Timaran Rycast (page 11). The nominees have Stewards protecting them and aren't particularly interested in talking to the PCs, though a clever group might find a way to get information out of them.

Allish Fluerasik's study is upstairs, and the PCs can assume that it might be a good starting place to find the information they're seeking, though they will need a way to get upstairs without being seen. They can attempt this however they like, but the most obvious route is to sneak away when no one is looking, which requires a successful DC 30 Stealth check from each PC going upstairs. A PC can stay downstairs and provide a distraction (by spilling a tray of food or otherwise being very disruptive) to provide a +2 circumstance bonus to this Stealth check. Alternatively, a PC can use illusion magic to make themselves invisible or disguise themselves as a member of the wait staff. PCs can also attempt to steal the uniform of a member of the wait staff, either demanding the clothes with a successful DC 28 Intimidate check or by knocking the server unconscious with a nonlethal melee attack against a KAC of 18.

Once upstairs, the PCs will have to avoid the notice of a Fluerasik enforcer (page 19) patrolling the floor, requiring a successful DC 26 Bluff (if in disguise) or Stealth check (if not). They can then locate Allish's study with a successful DC 24 Perception check; failure means they spend too much time bumbling around and need to avoid the enforcer again.

The study is appointed with dark wood paneling, several shelves holding paper books, and a sturdy mahogany desk. There are no obvious signs of any electronic devices, but if a PC succeeds at a DC 31 Perception check, they find a false row of books that folds down to reveal a tier 4 computer console (Computers DC 29 to hack). The computer contains the quasi-legal dealings of the Fluerasik family, none of which could easily bring them down; a thorough investigation of this info

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would be needed to even acquire a warrant to examine related business's accounts (however, turning the files over to the Stewards does grant the PCs an award; see *Treasure* below). The PCs can spot a data module labeled "Spectrum"—the name of Dr. Gircix's clinic—which holds copies of the secret medical records of their patients (those the PCs might have found on the doctor's own secret computer). If the PCs don't yet have this information, it is detailed on page 16.

Allish Fluerasik's personal computer also holds Erem's medical files. In addition to Dr. Gircix's notes that say Erem appears not to be human, but rather some kind of cold-blooded shapeshifter, the file contains a photograph of what appears to be a human heart in a box packed with straw accompanied by a note that reads, "Leave it be" in simple block letters. Allish received the image in a message from one of his enforcers that read, "Erem is legit crazy, boss! How are we getting back at this bastard?" Allish responded, "We're leaving it be. For now." A PC who succeeds at a DC 26

Life Science check identifies Dr. Gircix's notes as referring to a reptoid.

If the PCs are spotted in an area of the estate where they don't belong, they are firmly asked to leave. A Fluerasik enforcer isn't above threatening violence against interlopers or informing station security, whichever they think will best motivate the PCs. If a fight does break out, an enforcer retreats to get backup, which could lead to the PCs being overwhelmed by other enforcers, who either kill the PCs or turn them over to station security, depending on how violently the PCs have acted (and if the enforcers suspect the PCs have information on their boss).

Treasure: If the PCs turn over the many files detailing the internal workings of the Fluerasik family to the Stewards, they are awarded 100,000 credits by the director-general.

Development: Turning over a copy of Erem's medical records to the director-general earns the PCs 1 Trust Point.

EVENTS

The following events occur in response to the PCs' investigations and can be used to increase the tension of the adventure or to nudge the PCs back in the right direction if they start getting off track. You should strive to present each of these encounters, no matter how they come about, so that the characters receive the XP they need to be prepared when they eventually face off against Mysteriarch Zaxo. The events are listed in the approximate order they occur, with **Event 5** (page 21) happening only when the PCs are ready to confront the reptoid infiltrators.

EVENT 2: LEGATE'S LEGACY (CR 13)

When Legate Tavin Arill calls for a direct meeting with the PCs, he asks to meet with one of them alone at a relatively private location (such as a level on the Spike), though he will compromise on both of these requests if the PCs push back. Regardless of the location, Tavin sneaks to the meeting point early, hides, and attempts to assassinate the PCs as they arrive.

This event can also occur at some point when Erem believes the PCs are drawing too close to the truth.

He sends Tavin out to locate the PCs, kill them quickly, and then quietly dispose of their bodies.

Creature: The reptoid disguised as Legate

Tavin Arill has the benefit of both his reptoid infiltrator training and the tactics he learned in his many years spent masquerading as a Steward.



TAVIN ARILL

TAVIN ARILL

CR 13

XP 25,600

Male reptoid operative (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 92)

LE Medium humanoid (reptoid, shapechanger)

Init +12; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +29

DEFENSE

HP 210 RP 6

EAC 27; KAC 28

Fort +12; **Ref** +15; **Will** +16; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects and poisons

Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny agility

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee ultrathin dagger +24 (4d4+19 S)

Ranged elite shirren eye rifle +24 (4d10+13 P) or paragon semi-auto pistol +24 (4d6+13 P)

Offensive Abilities debilitating attack, quad attack, trick attack +7d8

TACTICS

Before Combat Tavin puts his operative training to good use before combat, finding a hiding place and settling in with his cloaking field.

During Combat From long range, Tavin uses his sniper rifle and his debilitating sniper ability to keep anyone who can fire back off-target. At closer range, he keeps to the shadows, relying on trick attack and his pistol.

Morale If his targets disappear or he's reduced to fewer than half his Hit Points, he tries to withdraw. After a failed attempt on the PCs' lives, he ambushes them again at a later date. During that encounter, he fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str +6; **Dex** +8; **Con** +0; **Int** +2; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +4

Skills Acrobatics +29, Disguise +24, Life Science +24, Sense Motive +24, Stealth +29

Languages Brethedan, Common, Reptoid

Other Abilities change shape (any specific humanoid), operative exploits (cloaking field, debilitating sniper), phase shift escape, specialization (ghost)

Gear d-suit IV, elite shirren-eye rifle with 12 sniper rounds, paragon semi-auto pistol with 32 small arm rounds, ultrathin dagger

Development: If the PCs defeat Tavin Arill or otherwise prove he's a reptoid, they earn 1 Trust Point.

EVENT 3: FLUERASIK RESPONSE (CR 12)

If the PCs' investigations come to the attention of the Fluerasik family, mostly likely by asking too many questions or snooping around Dr. Gircix's office, Allish Fluerasik sends a group of enforcers to deal with the PCs. This event can occur just about anywhere on Absalom Station that's secluded, such as a rarely traveled corridor or alley behind a building.

Creatures: The four Fluerasik enforcers expect to beat the PCs

into submission and leave them unconscious somewhere relatively safe as a warning.

FLUERASIK ENFORCERS (4)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Human soldier

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +8; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

EAC 20; **KAC** 22

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

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee amperometric neural lash +19 (3d4+14 E; critical arc 2d4)

Ranged snub scattergun +16 (1d12+11 P) or screamer grenade II +16 (explode [20 ft., 2d10 So plus deafened 1d4 minutes, DC 16])

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with amperometric neural lash)

Offensive Abilities charge attack, fighting style (blitz), gear boosts (electric arc [9 E])

TACTICS

Before Combat Enforcers that are watching a public area generally stash their scatterguns somewhere nearby but retrieve them if combat seems imminent. When acting in groups, they keep their allies nearby appraised of their situation with their *mindlink circlets*.

During Combat The enforcers use their neural lashes in stun mode whenever possible, preferring to capture opponents rather than kill them. If outnumbered and attacked with lethal force, they don't hesitate to use their scatterguns and grenades.

Morale The enforcers flee when more than half their number have been defeated. They only surrender if they are alone and unable to flee.

STATISTICS

Str +6; **Dex** +4; **Con** +1; **Int** +0;

Wis +0; **Cha** +2

Skills Culture +16, Intimidate +21, Sense Motive +16

Feats Step Up

Languages Akitonian, Common; limited telepathy 30 ft.



FLUERASIK ENFORCER

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Gear silver AbadarCorp travel suit, amperometric neural lash^{AR} with 1 battery (20 charges), snub scattergun with 8 scattergun shells, screamer grenades II (2), *mk 1 mindlink circlet*, credstick with 220 credits

Development: Any captured guards can be coerced into revealing that their boss is Allish Fluerasik with a successful DC 27 Intimidate check. Otherwise, the PCs can take descriptions of their attackers and ask around; with a successful DC 26 Diplomacy check to gather information, they identify the guards as known associates of Allish Fluerasik.

Presenting evidence that they were attacked by associates of the Fluerasik family earns the PCs 1 Trust Point and allows them to acquire a warrant for Allish's residence without needing 3 Trust Points.

EVENT 4: HOUSE RYCAST NEGOTIATOR (CR 12)

House Rycast is likely to become aware of the PCs' investigations, but—unlike the Fluerasik Family—Absalom Station is not their home territory. Instead of immediately resorting to violence, Mersadask Rycast is tasked with reaching out to the PCs to see if they can come to a mutual accord. He first contacts the PCs anonymously, claiming to have insider information from House Rycast. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Computers check can trace the message back to House Rycast's network. Mersadask invites the PCs to meet him at a public study lounge in the Arcanamirium in the evening.

Creatures: Mersadask Rycast is a well-dressed and composed drow. His prized assassin robot hides nearby, camouflaged but ready to respond if the meeting goes poorly. After greeting the PCs (but not identifying himself), Mersadask advises the PCs that Haussill Haul, Thylas Starhammer, and Uvali Rycast are under House Rycast's protection. He doesn't know why Haussill and Thylas are being shielded from scrutiny, but suspects they are probably paying the house blackmail money. Uvali Rycast is obviously a member of the drow house.

Mersadask informs the PCs that he has been authorized to give them access to an anonymous account containing 75,000 credits if they promise to drop their investigations into these three. Like the rest of House Rycast, he has no interest in interfering with an official investigation and will step back if shown a warrant.

If a PC succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy or Intimidate check while speaking with Mersadask, he offers his suspicion that

Dr. Gircix on the medical review board is corrupt and backed by Allish Fluerasik. While true, this is also an attempt to direct the investigation away from Rycast assets. If asked about any of the other candidates, Mersadask says he'd least want to be on Gevalarsk Nor's bad side and admits that Losifaran is probably the most dangerous to House Rycast's interests.

Mersadask isn't interested in a fight and doesn't hesitate to warn the PCs that he isn't alone if they grow aggressive. However, he will defend himself if attacked.

ASSASSIN ROBOT

CR 9

XP 6,400

HP 135 (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 108)

TACTICS

During Combat The assassin robot emerges from hiding to attempt a holographic trick with its retractable longsword against the PC that started the fight. It continues to attack that target until the target is killed.

Morale The assassin robot is programmed to fight until destroyed.

MERSADASK RYCAST

CR 11

XP 12,800

Male drow noble arms dealer (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 42)

HP 170; RP 6

TACTICS

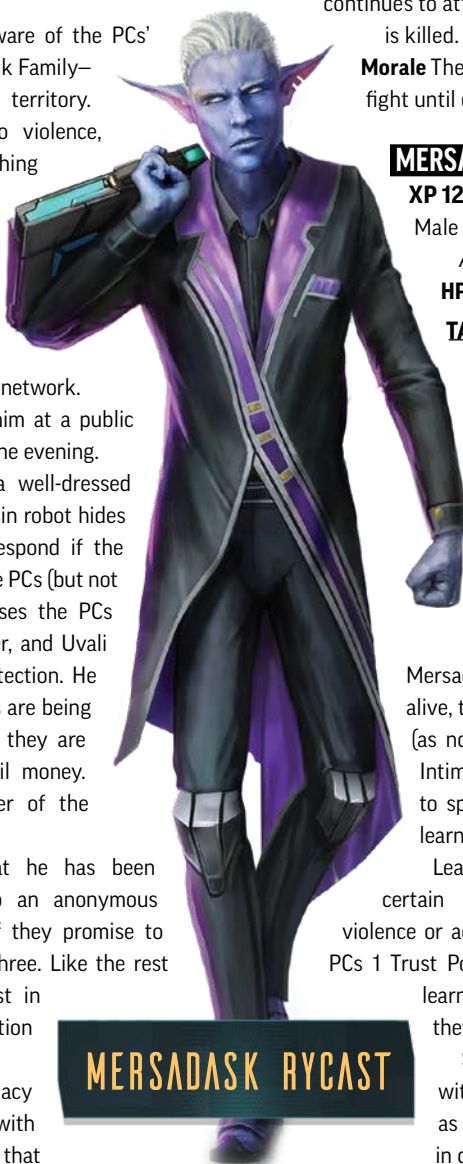
During Combat Mersadask uses his envoy improvisations to aid his assassin robot. He attempts to stay out of melee.

Morale When reduced to 100 Hit Points or fewer, Mersadask uses create darkness to attempt an escape.

Development: If the PCs fight Mersadask Rycast and manage to take him alive, they can still get information from him (as noted above) with a successful DC 28 Intimidate check. Otherwise, they will have to speak to the head of House Rycast to learn anything (page 11).

Learning that House Rycast is protecting certain candidates without resorting to violence or accepting Mersadask's bribe earns the PCs 1 Trust Point. However, if the director-general learns that the PCs took Mersadask's bribe, they lose 1 Trust Point.

Story Award: If the PCs deal peacefully with Mersadask Rycast, award them XP as if they had defeated him and his robot in combat.



MERSADASK RYCAST

EVENT 5: CONFLUENCE AND CLONES (CR 14)

As the PCs reach the end of their investigation, they receive a strange communication from Xych Vorsen. The shirren warns them not to travel so openly, especially when meeting with Verifier Ki and the rest of the barathu delegation. The existence of this meeting should be a surprise to the PCs, and if they ask where the meeting is, Xych is confused and explains that they received a report that the PCs were already in attendance, but gives the group the location of a docking bay in Fogtown, where more agents of Confluence are scheduled to arrive.

Assuming the PCs hurry, they have plenty of time to get to the site before the barathu ship docks. The supposed meeting place is a public docking bay with a thin layer of multicolored mist—pumped in to make visitors from the Pact Worlds' gas giants feel more at home—swirling across the floor. This fog doesn't hinder vision in any way.

If the PCs elect not to investigate, the barathu delegation is killed and images of the PCs performing the terrible act are publicized; they will need to be extra careful moving around the station if that occurs.

Creatures: The PCs see clones of themselves—wearing strangely formal armor—standing on the opposite side of the bridge and waiting motionlessly. These clones were grown quickly by Mysteriarch Zaxo on board his ship and sent to further test the PCs. The gray leader believes they will have to be ready for anything when they confront the reptoid infiltrators, so these clones are his way of keeping the PCs sharp, but they are relatively simple-minded and can only follow orders. There are two combat clones and two telepathic clones, but you can alter the numbers to better fit the composition of the player characters. While the statistics of these clones list them as humanoids, you should be sure to describe them as near-exact duplicates of the PCs, though because of their rushed creation, they don't have many of the major benefits or drawbacks a PC's species might confer.

COMBAT CLONES (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

LN Medium humanoid

Init +5; Perception +19

DEFENSE

HP 165 EACH

EAC 23; KAC 25

Fort +12; Ref +14; Will +9

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

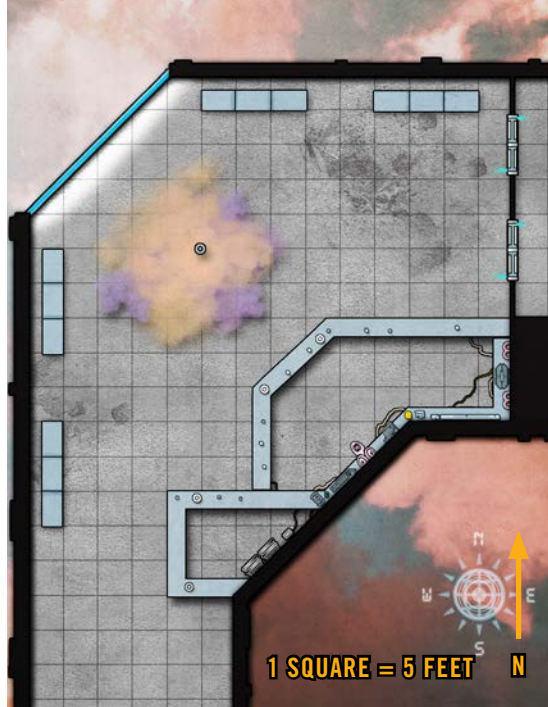
Melee comet hammer +22 (4d6+18 B)

Ranged yellow star plasma rifle +19 (2d10+10 E & F line; critical burn 1d8) or

cryo grenade II +19 (explode [15 ft., 2d8 C plus staggered, DC 17])

Offensive Abilities duplicate fury

EVENT 5: CONFLUENCE AND CLONES



TACTICS

During Combat The combat clones have very simple programming. They are designed to kill their assigned targets and haven't lived long enough to develop any real personalities of their own.

Morale The clones fight to the death. If captured, they willingly describe who they've been assigned to kill, but are very confused by questions outside of that.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +24

Languages Aklo, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear specialist defiance series, comet hammer with 1 battery (20 charges), yellow star plasma rifle with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges), cryo grenades II (3); **Augmentations** gray transponder (see Development on page 22)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Duplicate Fury (Ex) When faced with a duplicate grown with more care (such as a PC with the same appearance), the clones are inspired to an anger they don't fully understand. Once a day, the clone can reroll one attack roll against their duplicate.

PSYCHIC CLONES (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

LN Medium humanoid

Init +5; Perception +19

DEFENSE

HP 140 EACH

EAC 22; KAC 23

Fort +9; Ref +11; Will +13

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THE WRONG REPTOIDS

It is also possible (though unlikely) that the PCs will decide to go after the wrong nominees. You can try to steer them in the right direction by having Xych and Ephecta express doubts about their conclusions, or you can simply let them perform a mistaken raid on someone's quarters. The accused nominee protests greatly and threatens to publicly denounce the Stewards for working with "known terrorists." Luckily, Lin Camulan is able to smooth over any hard feelings, but he has some harsh words for the PCs and revokes any other warrants he has issued. The PCs will need to investigate any leads they left untouched. Once they have some solid proof and succeed at a DC 34 Diplomacy check, they regain the director-general's trust.

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee power battleglove +16 (2d8+13 B)

Ranged hailstorm-class zero pistol +18 (2d6+10 C; critical staggered [DC 19])

Offensive Abilities duplicate fury

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

1/day—*overload systems* (DC 22), *resistant armor*

3/day—*dispel magic*, *explosive blast* (DC 21), *haste*, *slow* (DC 21)

At will—*caustic conversion* (DC 20), *see invisibility*

TACTICS

During Combat The telepathic clones aren't much more complex than their combat kin. After one casts *haste* to assist their allies and the other casts *resistant armor*, they focus on their duplicates whenever possible.

Morale The clones fight to the death. If captured, they willingly describe who they've been assigned to kill, but are very confused by questions outside of that.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Intimidation +24, Mysticism +19

Languages Aklo, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear white carbon carbon skin, power battleglove with 1 battery (20 charges), hailstorm-class zero pistol with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges); **Augmentations** gray transponder (see Development below)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Duplicate Fury (Ex) As combat clones (page 21).

Development: After defeating the clones, a PC who examines their bodies and succeeds at a DC 30 Medicine check finds the gray transponders: pea-sized technological devices implanted at the base of their skulls. A PC who then succeeds at a DC 28 Engineering check can tell the augmentation allows for long-range

telepathic communication with a specific receiver. Though the augmentation no longer emits a signal after a clone's death, a PC can analyze the device with a successful DC 32 Engineering or Mysticism check to trace the origin of the transmissions it receives to an empty area of space just outside Absalom Station's Armada. This is the general location of Mysteriarch Zaxo's ship, which the PCs will visit in Part 3.

If the PCs need help finding or identifying these augmentations, Verifier Ki can do so.

Defeating the clones and saving the barathu delegation earns the PCs 1 Trust Point (if they still need it).

PART 2: NO MORE MASKS

Once the PCs have discovered the reptoid infiltrators among the Directorate nominees and earned at least 6 Trust Points, they can ask the director-general to act. Though each nominee is being protected by a small Steward detail, Lin Camulan doesn't feel comfortable moving against the infiltrators, worried by the possibility that more reptoids have replaced other Stewards, especially those close to known reptoid agents.

Instead, the director-general authorizes the PCs to make the busts. He would prefer not to have them make any arrests while the suspects are engaged in Pact Council business, so he directs them toward their homes or personal haunts—Vora Rinn at a club called the Phantom Wing in Kemanis, Thylas Starhammer at Lorecast Studio on the outskirts of Olensa, and Erem within their penthouse apartment near the Plenara. The PCs can choose the order in which they approach the targets, and as they do, Lin will quietly pull back the Steward guards at each location as the PCs approach and try to feed the target false information to keep them off guard. Groups that move on a target without the director-general's support will find they have to deal with up to a dozen high-ranking Steward officers in addition to their primary targets. You can use the statistics for the reptoid Steward found on page 28 if necessary, but the PCs should quickly realize that such battles are losing propositions.

If they act quickly, the PCs should have a few days to complete their raids. After that, the director-general will have to start explaining things to the Pact Council and it will soon become apparent that they're hunting reptoids. The Stewards would prefer if the suspected reptoids are brought in alive, but will accept reptoid corpses if necessary.

Xych Vorsen and Ephecta explain all this to the PCs, warning them that if they fail in an attack, a reptoid might escape to warn the others (though it doesn't seem like they currently have much contact with one another). Such a result

could be disastrous, but would at least force the reptoid to adopt a new identity, preventing them from gaining any more power on the Pact Council.

D. PHANTOM WING (CR 14)

Phantom Wing is a private club themed around Triaxus's long summers. Because of its exclusivity, most guests are rich enough to bring their own security with them. There is rarely an incursion from the outside, but the eccentric club owner sometimes imports Triaxian creatures as temporary attractions, and they've been known to get out of hand.

Throughout the day, at least a dozen members and employees are in the club. Guests may include nominees like Haussill Hau or other influential people that the PCs might have already encountered like Allish Fluerasik. Although the front door requires a membership card to open, picking the lock (Engineering DC 25) or convincing a member to allow guests in (Diplomacy DC 25) isn't particularly difficult. All guests are asked to sign a waiver that they're responsible for their own injuries if they disturb the elmeshras.

Phantom Wing's atmosphere is humid, with steam constantly pumped in through the vents. Fern-like plants droop over bar stools and private booths alike. A pair of creatures that look like many-legged salamanders lounge in a large central pool. Smaller furry creatures scurry among the ferns and two smaller pools, chittering.

D1. Central Pool: The main area of the club features a large pool that varies between 5 and 10 feet deep, with several planters hanging from the ceiling. Some fronds even reach the floor. A smaller pond (only 3 feet deep) occupies the southwest corner. The water of both pools is uncomfortably warm but not hot enough to be dangerous.

D2. Main Bar: Several shelves of high-quality liquor are hung behind the long pine bar (which has been treated with a veneer that protects it from the club's humidity). Most of the bartenders are summerborn ryphorians, though occasionally a cheery android modified to look more like a ryphorian serves drinks.

D3. Booths: Several booths line the western wall of the club.

D4. Restrooms: These restrooms are just large enough to fit most of Phantom Wing's dragonkin customers.

D5. Private Party Room: An area in the back is generally reserved for private parties, with its own bar, booth, restroom, and shallow pool.

D6. Kitchenette: The Phantom Wing has a menu featuring small appetizer plates, but few patrons order from it, so this small kitchen sees very little use.

D7. Storage Room: This room is used to store extra crates of liquor, cleaning and gardening supplies, and elmeshra food.

D8. Employee Break Room: The club's employees take their breaks at this small table. A locked door (Engineering DC 24 to disable) leads out to an alley.



D9. Owner's Office: The club owner, **Graketh Sel** (N male summerborn ryphorian) keeps the Phantom Wing's books here on a tier 1 computer. If the PCs look, they find the club's finances are generally spotless.

Creatures: Most nights, **Vora Rinn** can be found at the club with her dragonkin partner **Phixara**, who is unaware that Vora was replaced by a reptoid. The nominee is usually at the bar or in a booth, while Phixara feeds the amphibious elmeshras.

Vora isn't expecting the PCs, but tries to play it cool. She invites the PCs to drink with her, hoping to trick them into letting their guard down. When the PCs attempt to arrest her, she pretends to agree to come quietly, though she does ask if she can retrieve a datapad she left with the club owner. If allowed to approach the northern door, she presses a button on a device that emits a high-pitched noise, which drives the elmeshras into a frenzy. She then yells for Phixara to cover her escape as she makes for the back door, grabbing her advanced cryopike from the kitchenette along the way.

When a fight breaks out, the noncombatant patrons run for the exits, while the employees move toward the storage room or break room. At your discretion, this rush of people can cause the space around the central pool to be difficult terrain for the first 2 rounds.

ELMESHRAS (2) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

HP 105 each (see page 56)

TACTICS

During Combat The frenzied elmeshras attack the closest non-elmeshra.

Morale The elmeshras fight to the death.

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PHIXARA

CR 9

XP 6,400

Male dragonkin (*Alien Archive* 40)

HP 125

TACTICS

During Combat Phixara attacks anyone attempting to restrain or hurt Vora, even using his breath weapon with little concern for collateral damage. The dragonkin doesn't listen to any accusations against his partner.

Morale Phixara surrenders immediately when he sees Vora return to her true reptoid form upon her death. Otherwise, he is an unrelenting combatant.

VORA RINN

CR 13

XP 25,600

Female reptoid (*Alien Archive* 92)

LE Medium humanoid (reptoid, shapechanger)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +23

DEFENSE

HP 210

EAC 27; **KAC** 28

Fort +12; **Ref** +14; **Will** +16; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects and poisons

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee advanced cryopike +22 (2d8+17 C; critical staggered [DC 21]) or claw +22 (6d4+17 S)

Ranged perihelion laser pistol +24 (4d4+13 F; critical burn 2d4)

Offensive Abilities controlled dragonkin

TACTICS

During Combat While in the same room as Phixara, Vora Rinn maintains her disguise. If prevented from fleeing, she stays close to Phixara. Otherwise, she makes a fighting retreat.

Morale Vora would rather die than betray the reptoid cause, though fleeing is her first order of business.

STATISTICS

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

Cha +8

Skills Acrobatics +23, Athletics +23, Bluff +28, Diplomacy +28, Disguise +28, Sense Motive +23

Languages Common, Draconic, Reptoid, Triaxian

Feats Mobility

Other Abilities change shape (any specific humanoid)

Gear estex suit IV, advanced cryopike with 1 high-capacity battery

(40 charges), perihelion laser pistol with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each), datapad^{AR}, credstick (22,000 credits)

OTHER ABILITIES

Controlled Dragonkin (Ex) The reptoid version of Vora Rinn has warped the bond the real ryphorian had with Phixara. As a move action when in line of sight of the dragonkin, she can grant Phixara an additional move or standard action.

Treasure: The club has a substantial amount of alcohol and decorations, but most of those aren't worth carrying off. The director-general allows the PCs to take the reptoid Vora's gear if they want. He also looks the other way if the PCs poke through the club's lost-and-found cabinet (which can be located with a successful DC 22 Perception check); it holds a yellow star plasma pistol with no battery.

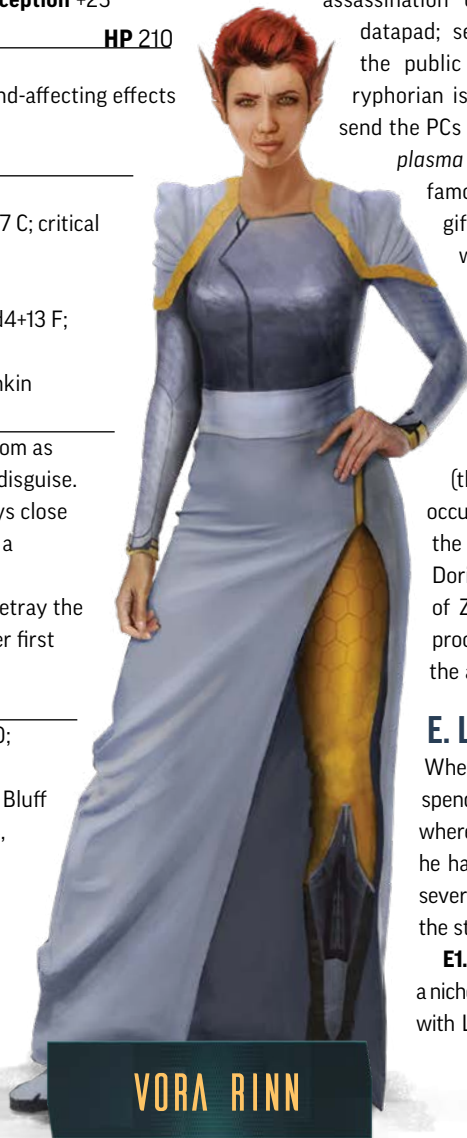
If the PCs share evidence that Vora ordered the assassination of Director Balam Dori (from her datapad; see Development below) either with the public or with Zia Choh personally, the ryphorian is grateful. Within the next day, they send the PCs their *illuminating merciful competitor plasma ribbon* (Armory 12), the weapon they famously used as a battleflower, as a gift. As a piece of popular culture, the weapon can be sold for 97,500 credits to the right collector.

Development: Vora Rinn's datapad can be accessed with a successful DC 30 Computers check. It contains evidence of several reptoid operations on Triaxus (though none intersect with those occurring on Absalom Station), including the assassination of Director Balam Dori and the subsequent discrediting of Zia Choh. One particular file provides proof that Vora altered the footage of the assassination.

E. LORECAST STUDIO (CR 14)

When not in the Plenara, Thylas Starhammer spends a lot of his time in the studio from where the Lorecast is streamed. Although he has an apartment, he hasn't visited it in several weeks, instead preferring to crash in the studio's green room.

E1. Entryway: The entryway to the studio is a niche containing an abandoned desk crowded with Lorecast pamphlets. Both the main door and the one behind the desk are locked (Hardness 15, 60 Hit Points, DC 30 Engineering to open).



VORA RINN

E2. Security Post: A pair of chairs face the one-way glass that looks out onto the entryway. The fragile glass shatters if it takes any damage. The hidden entrance to this room from the outside can be spotted with a DC 30 Perception check, though it is locked (Engineering DC 30 to open).

E3. Conference Room: Several chairs surround a long table, where the Lorecast streamers plan their next shows. A large whiteboard on the southern wall displays a programming schedule, which is focused primarily on the upcoming Directorate election.

E4. Archives: The room is locked (Engineering DC 30 to open) and has several data storage servers that hold all of the Lorecast's streams.

E5. Green Room: Guests and stream hosts wait in this room when not in the studio. A locked display case (Engineering DC 24 to open) on the western wall holds supposed pieces of Golarion history (see Treasure on page 27). A light above the northern door indicates when recording is happening in the studio.

E6. Equipment Storage: This area holds parts for repairing the studio's cameras and lighting rigs, as well as endless coils of cables. A light above the northern door indicates when recording is happening in the studio.

E7. Control Room: A large control panel stretches along the western wall, under a soundproof transparent aluminum window that looks out onto the studio. The computers here capture the feeds of the studio's cameras, which are then edited in real-time and streamed out to the infosphere.

E8. Restroom: This restroom is austere and practical, with a single toilet and a sink.

E9. Studio: This is where Lorecast is brought live to Absalom Station (and beyond). Sound baffling covers the walls and a lighting rig hangs from the ceiling. Three hovering cameras all point toward a stage area, which features a desk, several chairs, and a backdrop with the Lorecast logo painted in white and blue.

Creatures: With the Steward officers called away, the studio is temporarily defended by Thylas's guests from the Knights of Golarion. Two knights wait in the security post, watching over the front door, while another pair wait in the green room. If the knights see the PCs breaking into the building, they move to protect Thylas. Otherwise, they do their best to pull attackers into the studio so that the Pact Worlds can see the attack. These Knights of Golarion believe that Thylas is being targeted due to his outspoken opposition to Eoxian interests. A PC can convince a knight that Thylas is a reptoid by presenting evidence (as a standard action) and succeeding at a DC 32 Diplomacy check, causing that knight to stand down.

Meanwhile, when the PCs arrive, Thylas is live on his stream, explaining to his audience how the Stewards pulled his guards as part of their ongoing collusion with the Eoxians. He refuses to go quietly, especially if the PCs are already attacking his Knights of Golarion "allies."



Five noncombatant staff members operate the control room. The PCs can stop the feed by destroying the cameras in the main studio or convincing the staff to turn it off with a successful DC 28 Intimidate check.

KNIGHTS OF GOLARION (4) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Human soldier

LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +8; Perception +16

DEFENSE

EAC 20; KAC 23

Fort +10; Ref +8; Will +9

Defensive Abilities guard's protection

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee microerrated longsword +19 (2d10+17 S; critical bleed 2d6)

Ranged light machine gun +16 (2d10+8 P) or holy water grenade II +16 (explode [20 ft., 4d6 B holy water, DC 16])

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (guard)

TACTICS

During Combat The knights focus their attacks on those that seem the most likely to be undead and shout about how the living shouldn't bend the knee to the dead. During the fight, they try to draw enemies into the studio to expose their crimes and keep near their allies.

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Morale The knights fight to the death but surrender immediately in shame if they are convinced Thylas is a reptoid (see page 25) or if they see him return to his true reptoid form upon death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +23, Culture +16, Mysticism +16

Languages Celestial, Common

Other Abilities armor training

Gear commander ceremonial plate, light machine gun with 100 heavy rounds, microerrated longsword, holy water grenade II^{AR}

THYLAS STARHAMMER

CR 12

XP 19,200

Male reptoid technomancer

LE Medium humanoid (reptoid, shapechanger)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +24

DEFENSE

HP 170 RP 5

EAC 25; **KAC** 26

Fort +11; **Ref** +11; **Will** +15; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects and poisons

DR 5/-

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee ultrathin dagger +21 (4d4+12 S)

Ranged perihelion laser pistol +21 (4d4+12 F; critical burn 2d4)

Technomancer Spells Known (CL 12th, melee +19)

4th (3/day)—*greater invisibility*, *rewire flesh* (DC 23)

3rd (6/day)—*arcing surge* (DC 22), *dispel magic*, *entropic grasp*, *explosive blast* (DC 22)

2nd (at will)—*caustic conversion* (DC 21), *mirror image*

TACTICS

During Combat If the battle takes place in front of the cameras, Thylas pushes his message that the PCs were sent by the Eoxian government to silence him. Otherwise, he attempts to move the fight back toward the cameras. He focuses on flashy attacks, using seeking shot and spellshot. If he cannot find a way to move the combat on camera, he casts *greater invisibility* on himself.

Morale When reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points, Thylas tries to catch himself in the area of his most damaging remaining spell, intentionally failing the save in an attempt to render his body unrecognizable as a reptoid. The Stewards will be able to verify his true form from the remains, but Thylas hopes to foster conspiracy theories even after his death.

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +4; **Con** +1; **Int** +8; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +5

Skills Bluff +22, Computers +27, Culture +22, Diplomacy +22, Disguise +27, Mysticism +22, Profession (vidcaster) +27

Languages Brethedan, Common, Dwarven, Reptoid

Other Abilities cache capacitor (*keen senses*, *lesser resistant armor*), change shape (any specific)

humanoid), magic hacks (seeking shot, spellshot), spell cache (datapad)

Gear platinum AbadarCorp travel suit, perihelion laser pistol with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each), ultrathin dagger, keys to studio and archive room, datapad^{AR}

Treasure: The director-general allows the PCs to take the reptoid Thylas's gear if they want, though he requests that any defeated Knight of Golarion's equipment be returned to that organization. If a PC succeeds at a DC 28 Diplomacy check while explaining to the personnel why they started a fight in their studio, one of the engineers thanks the group and offers them one of the more valuable relics from the green room: a set of chaotic good *mk 3 planar runeplates* (Armory 115) engraved with the butterfly symbol of Desna.

If the PCs discredit Thylas on air, Gevalarsk Nor sends them a bouquet of beverages to their safe house with a hand-written note saying, "Thanks for the show!" The bouquet includes four bottles of Eoxian wine each worth 1,500 credits, eight *mk 3 serums of healing*, and four *close-quarters serums* (Armory 116).

Development: If the identity of any of the other reptoid infiltrators is revealed on air, that reptoid fakes their own death and disappears within the next day. Otherwise, even if Thylas is revealed to be a reptoid on air, the others hunker down and hope they weren't also discovered.

Story Award: For each Knight of Golarion the PCs manage to talk down, grant the PCs XP as if they had defeated the knight in combat.

F. EREM'S PENTHOUSE (CR 14)

Erem is extremely careful, even during normal circumstances, spending basically all of their time in their penthouse at the top floor of a Plenara-adjacent high rise. Long ago, Erem replaced some of their Steward detail with reptoids, so when the director-general orders them to leave their posts for an emergency reassignment, he gets word that a pair of the agents refused. The director-general informs the PCs of this, suspecting that these two have been replaced by reptoids. He asks the PCs to confirm this suspicion, but if he is wrong, the PCs should try to not kill these misguided Stewards.

The PCs can approach Erem's penthouse either by accessing the private elevator or via the roof. While the Stewards should have access to the elevator, Erem changes the passcode as soon as their detail is recalled. A PC can override the elevator security with a successful DC 30 Engineering check or revert the code with a successful DC 30 Computers check. The elevator leads to area **F1**. Alternatively, if the PCs have access to flight, they can head directly to area **F10**; the locals are used to tenants flying to the tops of various buildings nearby and don't report anything to station security unless

a flying PC begins bombarding Erem's penthouse with obvious spells or heavy weapons fire. In either case, Erem can tell the PCs are coming for them and prepares for their arrival (see Creatures on page 28).

F1. Elevator: The tastefully decorated elevator opens directly onto Erem's plush penthouse.

F2. Bathrooms: Both of Erem's bathrooms are clean and well-decorated, but don't hold any particular secrets.

F3. Stairs: Two wide sets of stairs connect the main penthouse with the rooftop pool area.

F4. Kitchen: An open kitchen looks out over the rest of the penthouse and features the latest appliances.

F5. Living Room: This expansive living room has a long, comfortable couch, a few chairs around a side table, and a state-of-the-art tri-vid display on the northern wall.

F6. Sauna: After replacing the real Pact Council member, the reptoid Erem had this sauna installed. Wooden benches and a stone heater fill up most of the room.

F7. Bedroom: Erem's bedroom more closely resembles an L-shaped hallway. A plush bed is in the northwest corner, while a wardrobe stands against the eastern wall.

F8. Office: The wedge-shaped office contains a desk with a tier 3 computer, a few bookshelves, and other necessities. A



THYLAS STARHAMMER

PUPPETS WITHOUT STRINGS

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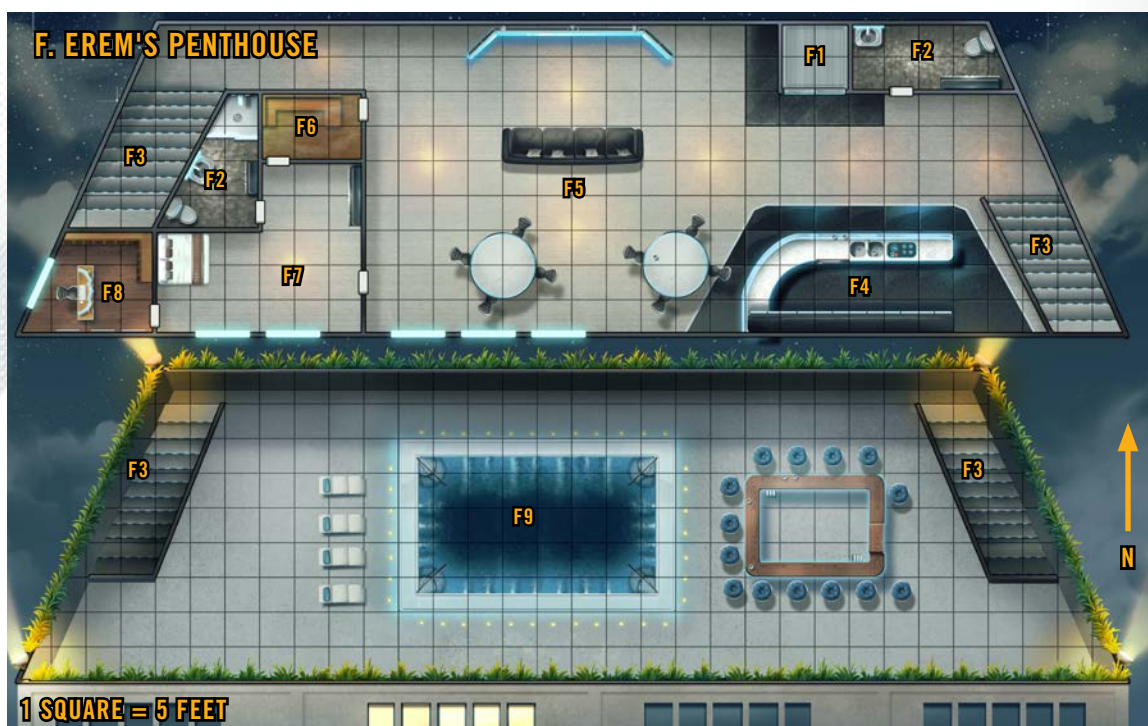
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map of the Armada surrounding Absalom Station is attached to one wall, with a few sections highlighted and pictures of the PCs pinned beneath. The contents of the computer are described in Development on page 29.

F9. Rooftop: A 3-foot wall topped with a small bit of shrubbery keeps people from falling off the roof. Four small spotlights pointing straight up to the sky occupy the roof's corners. A shimmering pool of water takes up most of the space here, lit from within. Several deck chairs sit on one side of the pool opposite a cabana with an attached bar.

Creatures: Erem and their two reptoid guards, disguised as Steward agents, await the PCs inside the penthouse. Erem is sure that their time in the spotlight is over and doesn't expect the encounter to end peacefully.

If the PCs enter by elevator, the three reptoids take up defensive positions on the rooftop, with Erem attempting to taunt the PCs into the line of fire once they arrive. If the PCs fly onto the roof, the reptoids make their stand in the living room, using the couch and chairs for cover. Erem puts a recording of one their interviews on the tri-vid display and cranks up the volume in hopes of distracting the PCs.

REPTOID STEWARDS (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Reptoid soldier (*Alien Archive* 92)

LE Medium humanoid (reptoid, shapechanger)

Init +12; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

EAC 23; KAC 26

HP 165 RP 5

Fort +15; **Ref** +10; **Will** +11; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects and poisons

Defensive Abilities guard's protection

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor)

Melee numbing taclash +19 (5d4+15 S)

Ranged white star conqueror +22 (3d12+10 E & F; critical wound [DC 17]) or

frag grenade IV +22 (explode [15 ft., 6d6 P, DC 17])

Size 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with numbing taclash)

Offensive Abilities gear boost (plasma immolation), fighting styles (blitz, guard)

TACTICS

During Combat The reptoids in Steward disguises are primarily concerned with protecting Erem, their leader here on Absalom Station. They stay behind cover for as long as possible. If Erem is nearby, they use guard's protection to shield him.

Morale The reptoids fight to the death, knowing their plans are forfeit if they fail to defeat the PCs.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +24, Athletics +19, Disguise +19

Languages Common, Reptoid

Other Abilities change shape (any specific humanoid), rapid recovery

Gear specialist defiance series, numbing taclash with 2 batteries (20 charges each), white star conqueror^{AR} with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each), frag grenades IV (2)

EREM

CR 12

XP 19,200

Nonbinary reptoid (*Alien Archive* 92)

LE Medium humanoid (reptoid, shapechanger)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +22

DEFENSE

HP 185

EAC 26; **KAC** 27

Fort +11; **Ref** +11; **Will** +17; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects and poisons

Defensive Abilities pawn sacrifice

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee claw +21 (2d12+16 S plus rend mind [DC 21])

Ranged aurora arc pistol +23 (3d6+12 E; critical arc 2d6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

1/day—*hold monster* (DC 21)

3/day—*charm monster* (DC 20)

at will—*inflict pain* (DC 19)

TACTICS

During Combat As a rare reptoid with more experience fighting in their natural form, Erem drops their disguise to use their claws. They stick close to their false Steward guards, using pawn sacrifice as often as possible. Erem focuses their attacks on their duplicate, snarling that the PCs are just gray pawns and will be discarded once this is all over.

Morale Erem knows this can all be swept under the rug or even played to their advantage as long as the reptoids are victorious. As such, Erem refuses to surrender.

STATISTICS

Str +4; **Dex** +8; **Con** +0; **Int** +1; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +5

Skills Bluff +22, Culture +27, Diplomacy +27, Disguise +27, Stealth +22

Languages Common, Reptoid

Other Abilities change shape (any specific humanoid)

Gear platinum AbadarCorp travel suit, aurora arc pistol with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pawn Sacrifice (Ex) As a reaction when they are hit with an attack, Erem can redirect that attack to automatically hit an adjacent ally instead.

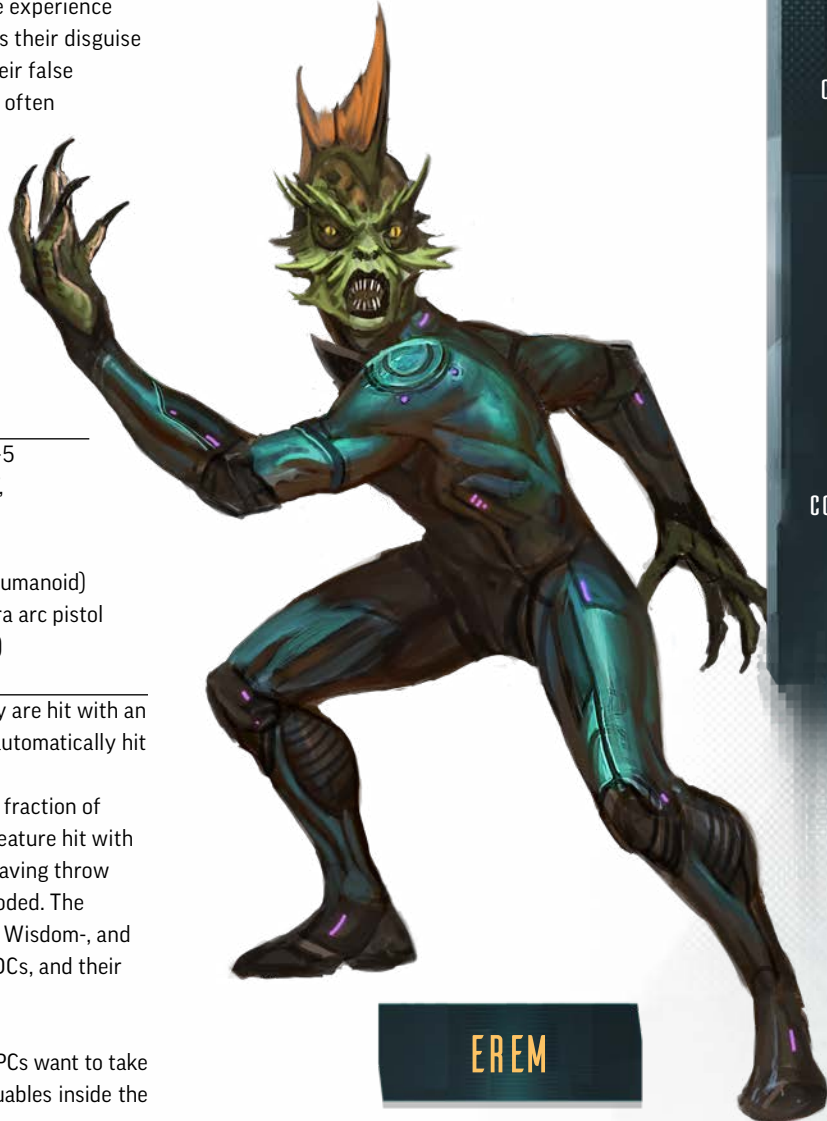
Rend Mind (Su) Erem has learned to focus a fraction of their psychic power into their claws. A creature hit with their claw must succeed at a DC 21 Will saving throw or have their sense of self temporarily eroded. The target takes a -2 penalty to Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks, their spell save DCs, and their Will saving throws for 1d4 rounds.

Treasure: Lin Camulan doesn't care if the PCs want to take the reptoids' equipment or any portable valuables inside the

penthouse if they wish. Since the reptoid Erem has been entrenched in this penthouse for so long, the director-general doesn't think anyone will miss the items.

Erem keeps a *mind scour* (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #27: *Deceivers' Moon* 44) in the wardrobe in their bedroom behind a false panel that can be spotted with a successful DC 30 Perception check; the Stewards aren't comfortable having such a device show up in a random marketplace, so they offer to buy it from the PCs for 50% of its price. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check while searching the sauna finds a zero-edge switchblade (*Armory* 8) hidden under the bench. Finally, the PCs can find a number of starmetal serums (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #27: *Deceivers' Moon* 45) within the pool's cabana area, including two vials of *djezet draught*, a vial of *horacalcum mélange*, a vial of *inubrix brew*, three vials of *noqual elixir*, and three vials of *siccitate tonic*.

Development: The tier 3 computer in Erem's office has a security II module attached but can be hacked with a



EREM

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successful DC 27 Computers check. The data contained within seems to only relate to Erem's work on the Pact Council, including proposals from other members and requests for interviews from various Absalom Station news feeds. However, there is a hidden data module behind a firewall that the PCs can find and gain access to with a successful DC 29 Computers check.

The hidden module contains correspondence with reptoid masters from an unknown location outside of the Pact Worlds. These conversations include discussions of further plans to be carried out once they gain control of a majority of the Directorate (focused primarily on furthering dissension among the Pact Worlds for an unstated purpose), requests from Erem to learn the identity of other reptoid agents within the Pact Council (which are denied, but accompanied by calls for patience), and screeds about the danger posed by the grays, who are undoubtedly watching over Absalom Station.

Since their abduction by grays months ago, Erem has quietly railed against the gray threat to their commanders. It seems as though their warnings have gone unheeded, especially the most recent messages, which become nearly apoplectic about certain gray-created clones (the PCs) "rampaging across the Pact Worlds." Nevertheless, Erem's paranoia has paid off—their search for the gray puppet masters might be able to help the PCs. The files, accompanied by the map on their office wall, mark an area of space just outside the Armada that might hold a cloaked ship. See Part 3 for more details.

If need be, Steward analysts (or even TERMINAL, for a fee) can find this information on Erem's computer for the PCs.

THE END OF THE INVESTIGATION

Once the reptoids among the Directorate nominees are all unmasked and dealt with, Director-General Lin Camulan thanks the PCs and assures them they will be cleared of all criminal charges. He notes that the Stewards will handle any media backlash that will inevitably come from Pact Council members who are arrested or revealed to be reptoids (especially if the PCs' fight with Thylas Starhammer occurred during a live broadcast) and that he is personally going to speak with the governments those candidates represent. For now, the director-general suggests the PCs take a well-deserved break.

How long the PCs can relax is up to you; they should have time for at least a full 8 hours of rest, but if you like, you can give them time to shop for new equipment or craft items. Soon, though, they receive a psychic transmission from Mysteriarch Zaxo—his final attempt to reestablish control over his clones. His calm voice echoes in their minds: "This completes the test. Please return to the ship to report your findings." Each PC also receives a momentary psychic flash: with Absalom Station in the distance, an empty patch of space briefly shimmers.

The last leg of the PCs' personal journey is to confront their creator, Mysteriarch Zaxo, and free themselves once and for all. His ship lurks invisibly at the edge of the Armada to monitor the station.

The PCs can confront Zaxo as soon as they learn the location of his vessel (which they might want to try to do after **Event 5**), but they should feel the pressure to first unmask all the reptoids among the Directorate nominees. Use Xych Vorsen, Ephecta, and even Director-General Lin Camulan to steer the PCs back to the task at hand, warning them that the grays and the reptoids are unlikely to be working together and that leaving Absalom Station, even for a few hours, might provide the reptoid agents an opportunity to escape.

FINDING THE MYSTERIARCH

Mysteriarch Zaxo's unnamed ship floats at the very edge of the Armada, cloaked and just barely in phase with the Material Plane. The PCs likely learned its general location from Erem's office (page 28) or else reverse-engineered the signal from the clones' transmitters (page 22).

If neither of these happen, the Stewards can track security footage of the attacking clones (page 21) to a small shuttlecraft that seems to appear in an empty section of space outside of the Armada. However, they're reluctant to do this before the matter with the Directorate nominees is resolved; the search will require a great deal of resources and would be apparent to any infiltrators within the Stewards.

Any of these approaches lead the PCs to an area of space just at the edge of the Armada. Ships fly through that area regularly without running into anything or noticing anything out of the ordinary, but Zaxo's ship responds if the PCs approach. The PCs can take their own vessel or borrow one from a friendly force on the station. Read or paraphrase the following.

The space in front of your ship shimmers with countless colors as though something is emerging from the Drift. A small vessel shaped like a pair of conjoined discs suddenly appears—as though it's always been there.

The PCs then receive direct contact from Zaxo, his voice echoing telepathically in their heads.

"Well done. Your mission is complete. Enter and prepare for processing." A beam of bright light emanates from the underside of the starboard disc.

Once the mysteriarch's ship has appeared, the PCs might want to try to destroy it, and the Stewards are more than happy to help them drive it off. However, a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Culture check knows that almost all encounters with gray starships result in the vessels successfully fleeing to evade capture. If the PCs wish to gain an opportunity to deal with Zaxo permanently, they need to accept his invitation.

The mysteriarch's ship doesn't have a traditional docking setup, but once the PCs enter the beam of light coming from the starboard side of the vessel (either maneuvering their own ship into it or by taking a brief spacewalk), they are rendered partially out of phase and drawn into the mysteriarch's ship (in a similar fashion to their abduction from the *Voidcrier* in *Starfinder Adventure Path #28: Deceivers' Moon*). No NPCs are brought with them (though, of course, any of the PCs' drones or animal companions are).

G. THE MYSTERIARCH'S SHIP

Though Zaxo is a gray leader and mastermind, his vessel is relatively small and crewed by only a handful of gray officers. Zaxo eschews the gargantuan size of a gray mothership (*Starfinder Adventure Path #28: Deceivers' Moon* 51), trading its size and complement for stealth and maneuverability. Zaxo's vessel is built for both observation and experimentation.

The lighting within the mysteriarch's ship is bright light (the gray crew doesn't need it, but they have found that stark lighting unsettles their experiments and abductees), and the artificial gravity is normal. The ceilings rise to a height of 15 feet, the doors are all airlock door quality, and the walls are all starship interior quality. However, a high-tech gray laminate gives the walls and fixtures a hardness of 40. The gray crew can pass through the walls and doors using their phase ability and only use the doors when moving material or abductees.

The walls are also psychically tagged with information about what lies on the other side of each. Characters with limited telepathy or telepathy can sense this naturally as part of searching a room, but another character can also get the flash of the same information by touching a wall and succeeding at a DC 30 Mysticism check.

Thanks to his abilities, Zaxo can speak telepathically to anyone onboard the vessel wherever they are, and he constantly orders the PCs to "report for processing." He gives them no further instructions, but his incessant commands don't allow the PCs to get a full night's rest while they are aboard the ship. Zaxo can also project holographic illusions of himself anywhere in the ship. These illusions watch the group's progress with great interest and can project an audible voice for Zaxo, although he generally finds this distasteful and only does so if the PCs have somehow blocked his telepathic transmissions.

G1. SAMPLE ACQUISITION BAY (CR 12)

The room's high, domed ceiling and single door shimmer with a strange luster. A central dais glows with an otherworldly light and a raised walkway encircles the chamber. A pair of consoles flank the dais.

The PCs are brought into this chamber from their ship (or from space) and float gently above the dais. The nearby equipment renders the area of the dais as zero-g; this can be altered by a PC who accesses one of the consoles and succeeds at a DC 32 Engineering check, reverting the gravity to normal.

A holographic illusion of Zaxo appears on the front of the door to telepathically greet the PCs, advising them to follow his researchers and begin their final debriefing.

Creatures: Six gray researchers are spaced evenly around the walkway, staring down at the PCs with blank eyes. On Zaxo's orders, they aren't immediately hostile; they are prepared to lead the PCs through the door into the medical lab (area **G2**), examine their memories, and perform a range of exploratory surgeries that will likely kill the PCs. See the description of that area for more information on how PCs submitting to this process are restrained.



GRAY RESEARCHER

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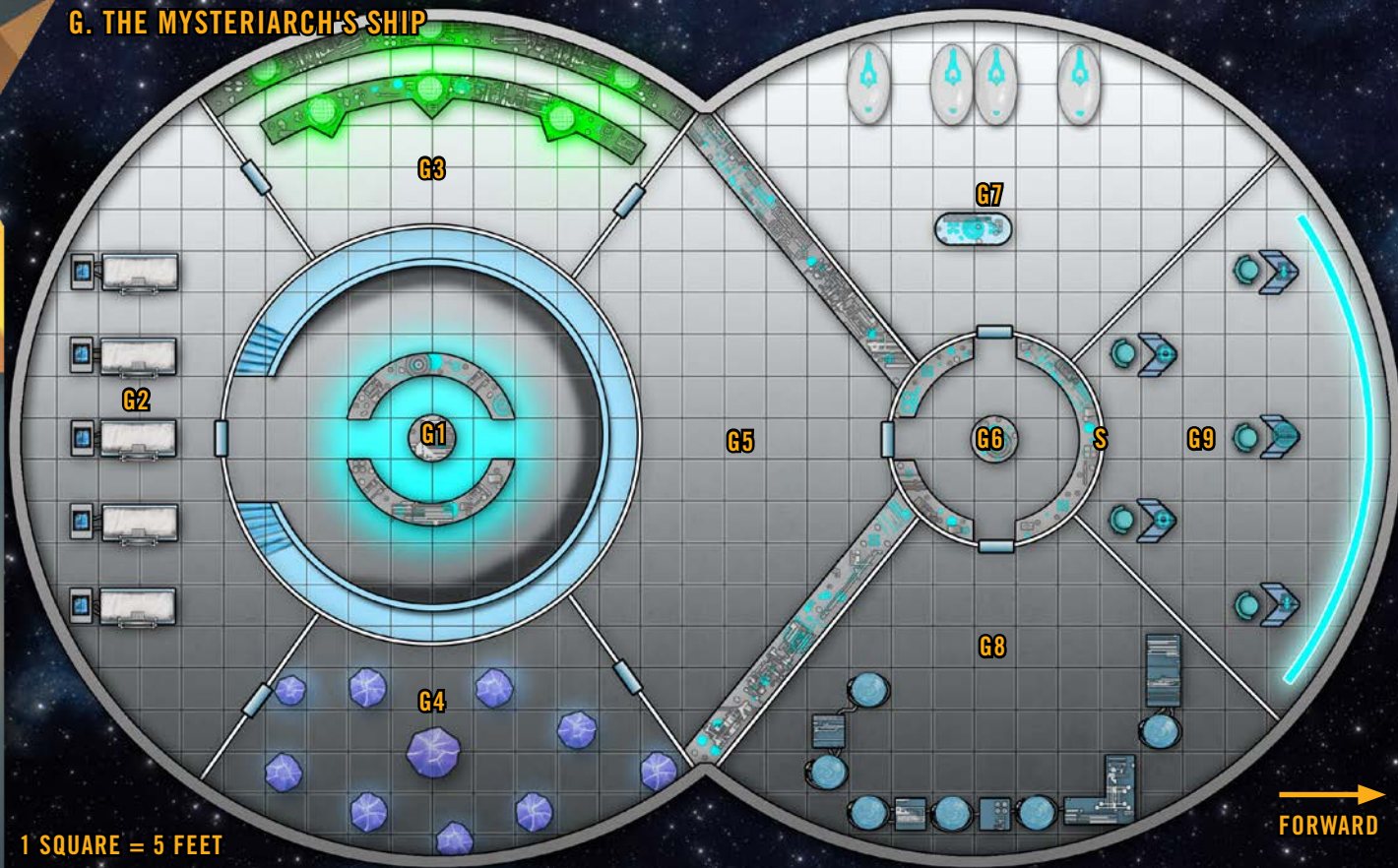
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G. THE MYSTERIARCH'S SHIP



If the PCs strike out against the grays, they chastise the clones to calm down and complete the mission while they defend themselves.

GRAY RESEARCHERS (G)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

NE Small humanoid (gray)

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

DEFENSE

HP 90 EACH

EAC 18; KAC 19

Fort +6; Ref +6; Will +12

Defensive Abilities phase

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee touch +11 (puppeteer's touch [DC 17])

Ranged reality pistol +13 (1d10+7 E; critical confuse^{AR} [DC 17])

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)

1/day—*dispel magic*, *mind thrust* (3rd level, DC 20),
modify memory (DC 22)

3/day—*force blast* (DC 19), *inflict pain* (DC 19)

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

TACTICS

During Combat The researchers use their spells to damage and control the PCs, eventually resorting to their reality pistols. If engaged in melee, a gray researcher uses their puppeteer's touch ability to move their opponent away.

Morale If half of the researchers are killed, the rest withdraw

through the walls to area G7 to fetch the clones there.

Together, they make a final stand in area G5.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Life Science +19, Medicine +19, Physical Science +14

Languages Aklo (can't speak any language); telepathy 100 ft.

Gear gray flightsuit (functions as silver AbadarCorp travel suit), reality pistol (*Starfinder Adventure Path #26: Flight of the Sleepers* 45) with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Phase (Su) Grays exist slightly out of phase with the

Material Plane. A gray can pass through walls or material objects (but not corporeal creatures) as long as they begin and end their turn outside of any wall or obstacle. In addition, a gray always benefits from a 20% miss chance against attacks and effects targeting them directly and takes only half damage from area effects. Force effects, however, function normally against a gray.

Puppeteer's Touch (Su) A gray researcher can touch a character within their reach as a melee attack against KAC. A touched target must succeed at a DC 17 Will save or be staggered for 1 round. At the end of the target's next turn, the target moves up to their speed, directed by the gray researcher. If the gray researcher is knocked unconscious or can no longer see the target before the

target's next turn, the target is still staggered but the gray researcher can't direct them.

Development: If the PCs subdue a gray researcher, the alien will grudgingly escort the PCs toward the security checkpoint (area **G6**) but doesn't participate in any encounters the PCs might have along the way, perhaps even using one as a distraction to escape. On the other hand, if the PCs are all knocked unconscious by the grays, they find themselves restrained on the examination tables in area **G2**.

G2. MEDICAL LAB (CR 11)

Austere slabs resembling operating tables are spaced throughout the room, each with several attached mechanical articulators. Three doors are set in the lustrous metallic walls.

If the PCs as a group agree to be experimented on or are rendered unconscious, they are brought into this chamber and laid out on the cold examination tables. Force fields restrain each PC's appendages, though a PC can escape from them with a successful DC 30 Acrobatics check. An adjacent PC can also disable these force fields as a standard action with a successful DC 28 Engineering check or by commanding the table to do so (see below).

The examination tables can be controlled telepathically to perform a wide variety of operations. They respond only to gray thoughts, but a PC with telepathy or limited telepathy can fool a table into obeying one command by succeeding at a DC 31 Bluff check. A table can diagnose a living creature on it by using *detect affliction*, install an augmentation, paralyze a creature on it (using an ability equivalent to a gray's sleep paralysis ability), gather information from a paralyzed subject's mind (using an ability equivalent to a gray's probe ability), or modify a target's memory by using *modify memory*. Any of these effects that requires a check has a DC of 24. Also, once per day, a table can heal a creature as per *psychic surgery*.

Creatures: A pair of small, colorful oozes hide within the machinery of the operating tables. Known as memory mucks, these pests have an instinctive fear of grays, but will attack PCs that are more than 30 feet from the nearest gray. If the PCs have allowed themselves to be brought into this room, the memory mucks stay hidden while procedures are performed.

MEMORY MUCKS (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

HP 180 each (page 59)

TACTICS

During Combat Each memory muck teleports into the space of a different PC, drawn to their manufactured memories.

Morale The memory mucks fight to the death.

Treasure: A drawer hidden inside each slab (Perception DC 35 to notice) can be opened by anyone with telepathy

or limited telepathy. Although each slab has one of these drawers, only two drawers contain anything of note. One contains a memory expunger (*Alien Archive* 103), two gray nanite hypopens (*Armory* 106), a red nanite hypopen (*Armory* 106), and two *mk 3 serums of healing*.

The other drawer contains a *mk 3 synaptic accelerator* and a *parallax optical laser* (*Armory* 89). Both of these augmentations include a gray transponder similar to the one found within the clone attackers (see **Event 5** on page 21), noticeable with a successful DC 38 Perception or DC 33 Engineering check. A transmitter can be removed with 10 minutes of work and a successful DC 35 Engineering check. A PC who has an augmentation with an active gray transmitter still installed takes a -4 penalty to their saving throws against effects produced by grays.

G3. RADIATION LAB (CR 14)

The radiation in this chamber produces a force field effect that prevents phasing through the walls, primarily to keep the chamber's inhabitant captive. The grays tend to avoid this area as a result.

Complex machinery along the wall hums quietly, filling the chamber with a psychic thrum. Doors stand at both ends.

The machinery here is linked to the ship's thrusters and Drift engine, though it can't be used to control those systems. Instead, it harnesses and amplifies the radiation produced by them. A PC who studies the equipment and succeeds at a DC 33 Engineering check notices the energy signature it gives off has a complex—almost musical—rhythm and that it forms a semi-permeable force field effect that can't be phased through. A PC who then succeeds at a DC 35 Mysticism check knows that such radiation could be used to attract a *garaggakal*—an outsider sometimes called a “Drift wraith”—looking to reproduce through cytogenesis.

Hazard: As long as the machinery is operational, this area is filled with high radiation (*Core Rulebook* 404). If the machinery is destroyed (Hardness 40, 200 Hit Points), the area is flooded with severe radiation for 1d4 rounds before fading away. A character with telepathy or limited telepathy can turn off the machines with a successful DC 30 Mysticism or Physical Science check; in this case, the radiation dissipates immediately with no harmful effects. Shutting down the radiation also allows the *garaggakal* polymath to escape into space.

If the PCs begin damaging the equipment, Zaxo appears to telepathically admonish them for disrupting an experiment in progress, though he doesn't inform the PCs of the full nature of the experiment.

Creature: Several weeks ago, Zaxo and his crew lured a *garaggakal* polymath to this chamber with the unusual Drift radiation produced by the machinery. The grays then altered the radiation to form a force-field effect that trapped

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the creature inside. Zaxo visits the chamber occasionally, attempting to imprint psychic commands on the garaggakal and turn it—and any of its offspring—into loyal minions.

The garaggakal is understandably upset, not to mention quite hungry. Before it attacks the PCs, it offers them a deal: if they allow it to use its leech life ability three times on three different living targets, it will allow the group to pass through the chamber. The garaggakal knows that the machinery is responsible for its captivity, but it is too proud to share that information with the PCs. If the PCs take the creature up on its offer, Zaxo telepathically tells them, "Your brains are fascinating. I can't wait to study them."

GARAGGAKAL POLYMATH

CR 14

XP 38,400

HP 255; RP 5 (*Alien Archive 2 54*)

TACTICS



GARAGGAKAL POLYMATH

During Combat The garaggakal makes full attacks against any PC it begins its turn adjacent to, unless that PC has demonstrated an ability to use melee attacks that deal electricity damage; if a PC uses melee attacks that deal electricity damage, the garaggakal stays as far away from that PC as it can. It uses leech life when it is first reduced to 200 Hit Points or fewer and again when reduced to 100 Hit Points or fewer.

Morale If it remains trapped in this chamber, the garaggakal fights to the death. However, if the machinery has been destroyed, the garaggakal flees the ship when reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points.

G4. PLASMA LAB (CR 12)

A series of crystalline pylons decorate this chamber, the largest rising above the others in the center. The air is thick with a mixed odor of ozone and smoke. Doors stand on both ends of the room.

Gray engineers use this lab to research new plasma-based starship weapons they hope will allow them to fire from the Drift into the Material Plane. The experiments are not proceeding as expected, making this chamber a dangerous place for non-gray creatures.

Each of the crystalline pylons in this room contains technology that generates plasma energy, along with emitters that release that energy. The central pylon holds a console that collects and analyzes the experimental data. Like most gray computers, the console in the central pylon has a psychic interface, but a PC need not understand Aklo to glean information from and manipulate the computer. This is a tier 5 computer, requiring a successful DC 33 Computers check to hack. The research data within is interesting, but likely of little use to the PCs at the moment. However, after gaining access, a PC can attempt additional DC 33 Computers checks each round in place of either an

Engineering or Physical Science check to disable the trap here (and when using the computer, the PCs don't need to be adjacent to the emitter they are attempting to knock out or realign to disable it).

Trap: When a non-gray creature enters this room, a security program powers up the pylons, causing them to throw plasma energy throughout the chamber. A non-gray creature takes increasing amounts of damage as they move through the room each round; calculate the total amount of damage a PC would take before having them attempt the Reflex saving throw to reduce it. A PC can also avoid the arcs of plasma by attempting a DC 30 Acrobatics check as a move action. On a success, they can move 5 feet without taking damage, and an additional 5 feet for every 5 their result exceeds the DC.

A PC must be adjacent to a pylon to attempt the Engineering or Physical Science check to disable part of the trap. Each pylon has hardness 20 and 50 Hit Points, though destroying one doesn't reduce the amount of damage dealt by the trap. The trap automatically shuts down when there are no more targets in the room.

As the PCs deal with this trap, Zaxo appears as a holograph to comment on their actions, remarking in particular on any PCs who are exceptionally nimble.

PLASMA ARCS TRAP

CR 12

XP 19,200

Type technological; **Perception** DC 38; **Disable** Engineering DC 32 (knock out emitter, which reduces the Reflex save DC by 2 each time and completely disables the trap if the DC is reduced to 11 or less) or Physical Science DC 32 (realign emitter, which excludes one 5-foot square in the room from the trap)

Trigger location; **Reset** instant; **Bypass** gray telepathy

Effect plasma arc (2d12 electrical and fire damage for every 5-foot square a creature moves through or ends their turn in); Reflex DC 21 for half; multiple targets (each non-gray target in area **G4**)

G5. DATA STORAGE

Two of the walls of this chamber are lined with tall racks stacked to the ceiling with high-tech equipment. Hundreds of lights blink in a seemingly random pattern along the machinery. Three doors lead in and out of this chamber.

Mysteriarch Zaxo has been in charge of the gray faction watching over the Pact Worlds (and Absalom Station in particular) for decades, and the information they have collected is stored within these telepathic servers. In addition, these computers constantly run stochastic programs attempting to predict the results of gray activity throughout the system. The grays check these predictions regularly, adjusting the parameters to reduce the margins of error.

Like most gray computers, these servers have a psychic interface, but a PC need not understand Aklo to glean information from and manipulate the computer. Taken together, the servers function as a tier 7 computer, requiring a successful DC 41 Computers check to hack. If the PCs gain access, they can learn about any of the gray's plans and experiments (most of which are outside of the scope of this adventure, but can lead to further escapades), including anything related to the PCs that they don't already know (including the reason for their creation). The latest stochastic simulation, which is currently running, aims to predict the Pact Council's next few years of decisions in light of the PCs' recent actions.

If the PCs hack into the data servers here, Zaxo telepathically congratulates them, sounding impressed. He

then informs the PCs that they "can help shape the future of this system" if they submit to him.

G6. SECURITY CHECKPOINT

This cramped circular chamber has several computer consoles against the walls, dispersed between the three doors.

The telepathic computer consoles here (similar to the one in area **G4**) allow the gray crew to monitor other parts of the ship. A PC can hack this tier 5 computer with a successful DC 33 Computers check. Gaining access allows a user to perceive psychic flashes of an area of their choice within the vessel, including the bridge, which shows Mysteriarch Zaxo waiting by himself. A PC who looks in on the bridge sees the gray leader acknowledging them with a slight nod. A PC who succeeds at another DC 33 Computers check while interfacing with a console is made aware of the emergency entrance to the bridge and how to open it (see below).

Though the gray crew doesn't require doors to move from one chamber to the next, there is an emergency entrance to the bridge hidden here in the starboard wall. A PC can spot the faint outline of the portal with a successful DC 38 Perception check, but it can't be opened from this chamber. To open it, the two emergency telepathic switches in areas **G7** and **G8** must be activated simultaneously.

G7. CLONING CHAMBER (CR 14)

Four sterile coffin-shaped containers line the walls here, with a few tall cabinets between them. A silver table, attached to a series of medical monitoring devices, occupies the center of the room.

The four devices in this room can grow basic clones with just a sample of DNA. Using data scavenged from the remains of Outpost Omicron, Zaxo has been able to grow more clones of the PCs, some which the PCs have already encountered.

The tables here are used to examine newly made clones (the tables function as a regeneration table), and clones are outfitted with armor and gear found in the cabinets.

Creatures: As the PCs approached the ship, Zaxo created four more clones of the PCs in case things went poorly. These clones have already been outfitted with gear but stand silently in this room until either fetched by gray crew members (see area **G1**) or the PCs enter. Zaxo telepathically orders the clones to attack, while simultaneously telling the PCs, "By simple chance, these poor castoffs could have been you. Appreciate the full sentence you have been given and submit to debriefing."

Like the clones the PCs fought in **Event 5**, the statistics of these clones list them as humanoids, but you should be

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sure to describe them as near-exact duplicates of the PCs. Similarly, because of their rushed creation, these clones don't have many of the major benefits or drawbacks a PC's species might confer.

COMBAT CLONES (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

HP 165 each (see page 21)

TACTICS

During Combat The combat clones have very simple programming. They seek out their duplicates to attack them with reckless abandon.

Morale The clones fight to the death.

PSYCHIC CLONES (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

HP 140 each (see page 21)

TACTICS

During Combat The telepathic clones aren't much more complex than their combat kin. After one casts *haste* to assist their allies and the other casts *resistant armor*, they focus attacks on their duplicates whenever possible.

Morale The clones fight to the death.

Development: A PC with telepathy or limited telepathy can sense the presence of an invisible psychic switch by the door—this is one of the two switches required to open the emergency door to the bridge in area **G6**. The switch can be activated with a simple touch, but both this switch and the one in area **G8** must be activated simultaneously for either to function.

G8. EXPERIMENTAL LAB (CR 13)

Liquid-filled vertical tubes are spaced along the room's walls between other complex machinery. A humanoid form floats in each tube, some small, withered, and lifeless, while others look quite vital, though their eyes are perhaps too large and their skin too smooth.

Formulating countless plans, Zaxo and other gray mysteriarchs studying other systems have recently started to test a hypothesis that clones (such as the PCs) would be easier to control if animated by a more loyal force. To that end, they have been accumulating incorporeal gray life energy (souls, to some) and inserting it into clone templates.

When the PCs enter this chamber, Zaxo invites them to admire his new creations.

Creatures: While most of the subjects have either perished in their tubes or have yet to fully mature, a single gray shell is functional. Shortly after Zaxo introduces his experiment, he activates it to test its capabilities. This gray shell—who looks like the PC cloned from Erem—phases out of its tube and attacks. (Note: If you are running this encounter with miniatures or pawns, you might want to first use one that

resembles a clone from the previous encounters to represent the gray shell until the incorporeal force animating it erupts forth.)

GRAY SHELL

CR 13

XP 25,600

HP 190 (see page 57)

TACTICS

During Combat The gray shell fights with its weapons at first, but when reduced to fewer than half its Hit Points, the incorporeal animating force within bursts out. This "gray ghost" relies on its spell-like abilities.

Morale The gray shell fights to the death.

Development: A PC with telepathy or limited telepathy can sense the presence of an invisible psychic switch by the door—this is one of the two switches required to open the emergency door to the bridge in area **G6**. The switch can be activated with a simple touch, but both this switch and the one in area **G7** must be activated simultaneously for either to function.

G9. BRIDGE (CR 16)

The only way to access the bridge is by phasing through the walls or by finding and opening the emergency entrance in area **G6**.

A large crystal chair faces a curved screen flickering with scenes of both the inside of Absalom Station and surrounding space. Other stations have their own, smaller seats.

Creatures: When the PCs enter, Mysteriarch Zaxo is sitting in the larger chair, turned toward the viewscreen. He slowly spins around to telepathically say to them, "You have performed... adequately. The final test is complete. Now, report your experiences."

Zaxo allows, even encourages, his clone subjects to speak for as long as they'd like. He introduces himself if he hasn't already done so through his holographic illusions, and answers the PCs' questions, as he expects to erase their memories later; you can use this opportunity to fill in any blanks in the players' knowledge about the campaign. His statement about the PCs completing their "final test" is a bluff; he is slightly worried that the PCs have breached the bridge. He doesn't ignore hostile actions taken by the PCs but doesn't attack first unless they simply attempt to leave.

Zaxo communicates telepathically with the PCs even in a fight, asking them to explain what they learned during their exploits. He summons projections of creatures from their experiences to see how they react, and if insulted or threatened, he presses them to determine what led to each outburst.

Only once seriously injured does Zaxo realize that he's created something that could be a danger to himself.

He becomes incredulous, even going so far as to tear chunks out of his ship to destroy his failed experiments at any cost.

ZAXO**CR 16****XP 76,800**Male gray (*Alien Archive* 56)

NE Small humanoid (gray)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +28**DEFENSE****HP 250 RP 6****EAC** 29; **KAC** 30**Fort** +14; **Ref** +14; **Will** +21**Defensive Abilities** phase**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (jetpack, average)**Melee** touch mind +24 (4d8+16 plus probe memory [DC 24])**Ranged** glacier subduer +26 (3d10+16 C; critical staggered [DC 24])**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th)1/day—*gravitational singularity* (DC 26), *regenerate*3/day—*crush skull* (DC 25), *dominate person* (DC 25), *greater command* (DC 25)At will—*mind probe* (DC 24), *mind thrust* (4th level, DC 24), *modify memory* (DC 25)**Offensive Abilities** debris strike, silverlight summon**TACTICS**

During Combat Zaxo summons a silverlight construct to occupy the PCs while he casts spells, starting with *dominate person* and *gravitational singularity*. He summons a new construct each time one is reduced to fewer than half its Hit Points. If he can safely get close to a PC, he uses his touch mind ability to gain information the PCs seemed reluctant to divulge. When Zaxo is reduced to fewer than half his Hit Points, he begins tearing the ship apart with debris strikes. Zaxo is wary of spellcasters but will only use his *pulsar skullcap* against the most powerful spells or when he's on the brink of death.

Morale Zaxo has nowhere to flee and so fights to the death, trusting the ship's automated systems to get his data to a gray mothership.

STATISTICS**Str** +0; **Dex** +5; **Con** +2; **Int** +10; **Wis** +4; **Cha** +7**Skills** Life Science +33, Mysticism +28, Physical Science +33**Languages** Aklo, Common (can't speak any language); telepathy 100 ft.

Gear gray silversuit (functions as elite hardlight series with jetpack upgrade), glacier subduer^{AR} with 3 batteries (20 charges each), *pulsar skullcap* (functions as *pulsar captive-star amulet*^{AR}), identification bracelets (see page 38)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Debris Strike (Su) Zaxo has the ability to telekinetically tear apart his ship. As a standard action, Zaxo can rip up the flooring from a 10-foot square and throw it at another

10-foot square in the same chamber. This deals 4d10 slashing damage (Reflex DC 24 half) to any creatures either in the area it was pulled from or in the area it was sent to. Both areas become difficult terrain.

Silverlight Summon (Su) As a swift action, Zaxo can spend a Resolve Point to create a silverlight construct (see below). Each construct takes the form of a different NPC the PCs have faced earlier in the campaign and acts independently. A construct lasts for 16 rounds, until it is destroyed, or until Zaxo summons a different silverlight construct.

Touch Mind (Su) As a melee attack that targets EAC, Zaxo can attempt to touch a creature. On a successful attack, the target takes 4d8+16 damage, as if affected by a *mind thrust* spell. In addition, Zaxo can extract a memory from the target as though they answered one simple question truthfully, unless they succeed at a DC 24 Will save. This is a mind-affecting divination effect.

SILVERLIGHT CONSTRUCT**CR —**

N Medium construct (technological)

Senses darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +20**DEFENSE****HP 180****EAC** 24; **KAC** 26**Fort** +13; **Ref** +13; **Will** +10**Immunities** construct immunities**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** slam +23 (4d6+19 B)**Ranged** holographic laser +20 (3d8+11 F)**TACTICS**

During Combat The constructs have only a very basic grasp of tactics, though they try to mimic what Zaxo has learned about the NPCs they represent.

Morale The constructs fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS**Str** +8; **Dex** +5; **Con** —; **Int** -1; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +0**Skills** Acrobatics +20, Athletics +25**Other Abilities** holographic form, unliving**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Holographic Form (Ex) Each construct is meant to represent a particular previous encounter from the PCs' past. Each of these forms grants special abilities.

Barathu: The construct is Large and has a reach of 10 feet. Its slam deals an additional 8 damage.

Gray: The construct is Small and gains Zaxo's phase ability.

Reptoid: The construct gains a claw attack that deals 2d8+19 slashing damage. It also gains the triple attack operative ability with these claws.

Development: Once Zaxo is defeated, the display screen goes blank. A few moments later, a telepathic (but otherwise automated) voice echoes through the PCs' heads: "Uploading research data to mothership. Self-destruct upon completion."

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The image of a purple progress bar appears on the screen. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Computers check recognizes that Zaxo's ship has some sort of dead-man's failsafe and that the upload signal could be designed to piggyback on regular Drift beacon communication, meaning that the mothership could be anywhere.

At the end of each round, the progress bar fills up by 10%. A PC who succeeds at a DC 40 Computers check to hack the telepathic interface here (a full action) can introduce a crude virus that stalls the download's progress by 1d4+1 rounds. Unfortunately, the download can't be stopped. A PC with telepathy or limited telepathy or who succeeds at a DC 28 Mysticism check can sense that the bracelets Zaxo wears act as a kind of identification badge, and these bracelets grant a PC a +10 circumstance bonus to Computers checks to hack the download.



SELF-DESTRUCTION

Even if they slow the download, the PCs have a limited amount of time to escape the mysteriarch's ship. Depending on their previous actions, they might even have a dangerous foe or a deadly trap in their way back to area **G1**, the sample acquisition bay. However, if the PCs left any gray crew alive, the aliens stare eerily as they pass by, quietly awaiting their fate.

Once in area **G1**, the PCs can reverse the process that brought them onto the ship by activating one of the consoles (which requires only a standard action) and stepping onto the glowing dais. The process that transported them onto the vessel is reversed, and the PCs are phased through the bulkheads. They find themselves back aboard their ship or floating in space (if they were brought here by a vessel that left in the meantime) a safe distance from the gray starship. Moments later, the mysteriarch's vessel crumples in on itself in a violent but oddly beautiful implosion that seems to tear through planar barriers.

Anyone onboard the gray ship when it implodes takes 30d6 damage (which has the force descriptor) with no saving throw. Creatures killed by this damage are absorbed into the implosion, and no trace of their bodies can be found. However, a creature that survives this damage is shunted fully back into the Material Plane, left adrift in space. Any PCs who escaped can easily rescue these unfortunate victims or, if no PCs made it out, the Stewards find and quickly recover any survivors. In such a case, the PCs awaken several days later in a Steward medical facility with many of their wounds tended to and Yych Vorsen and Ephecta waiting anxiously by their beds. The agents smile when they see their friends returning to consciousness, though their relief may be tinged with sadness if any PCs perished in the blast.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Whether or not the PCs escape the mysteriarch's ship with their lives, they have significantly impeded both reptoid and gray activity in the Pact Worlds... for now.

If the PCs did make it out alive, they will eventually have to contend with the fact that they are clones (of some fairly prominent people, in some cases). However, considering the incredibly formative experiences they've had up to this point, they've probably become more assured of their own identities and recognize themselves as independent personalities from those that share their DNA. Luckily, in the Pact Worlds, there are plenty of opportunities for the PCs to permanently alter their appearances if they desire. The Stewards are more than

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happy to provide such PCs with *serums of appearance change* (or similar magic) and aid them with the legal processes of changing their names. Other PCs might not want to alter their looks, instead preferring to start new lives somewhere outside of the Pact Worlds, where there will be less of a chance of being mistaken for their doppelgangers. The Stewards also aid those characters with the costs and logistics of, for instance, heading out into the Vast and living on a colony world.

In addition, the current situation with the Directorate election could still be fraught with political intrigue. If the PCs were successful in unmasking the reptoid nominees, Gevalarsk Nor, Klendalikh, Losifaran, Milgan Nivaris Katchal Andar, and Zia Choh are elected to the Directorate. Despite their maneuvering (and perhaps because the PCs disclosed their political secrets), Haussill Hau and Uvali Rycast are viewed as too tarnished and don't receive the support they need, even though they remain on the Pact Council for the time being. However, it is also possible the PCs might want to influence the election result, perhaps favoring a different non-reptoid nominee than the ones listed above. The character who resembles Erem may even want to take that candidate's place and try to retain Erem's seat on the Directorate. That PC will have to do a lot of explaining to resolve any discrepancies between their personality and that of the reptoid Erem's. If the PCs' goal in this partial deception is to help maintain order or defend against future threats, they might receive assistance from the Stewards in

smoothing over these bumps. Director-General Lin Camulan is a bit uncomfortable with harboring this secret, though, and he advises that the PCs take the other members of the Directorate into their confidence and explain the situation to avoid any future scandals or political maneuvering. In such a case, either Losifaran or Zia Choh loses.

No matter the election result, the Stewards issue a statement that Erem, Thylas Starhammer, and Vora Rinn were taken into custody (even if the PCs were forced to kill them), noting that these infiltrators were a "serious threat from forces outside the Pact Worlds," without directly mentioning reptoids. The director-general names the PCs as important factors in wrapping up the case, unless they prefer to keep their involvement quiet. In that case, he publicly thanks the agents Xych Vorsen and Ephecta for their efforts.

The Stewards reward the PCs as publicly as the group desires. They may be granted honorary positions as legates, sizable rewards, or endorsements to run for the Pact Council. The Stewards also grant the PCs a great deal of latitude with what to do with any Unseen data they have recovered over the course of the campaign. The Stewards would be happy to have it, but admit that they will continue to keep the truth of the Unseen a secret. The PCs might want to release it to the public, though they will have to struggle to make sure it's noticed among the other conspiracy theories across the infosphere.



CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

"I'm telling you, there's something off about all of this. One of those people who supposedly attacked Laoe Araae looks just like my cousin, except I know for a fact my cousin's been studying on Castrovel and hasn't left the planet in three years. I bet 'they're' trying to replace all of us eventually, and we're the only ones with our eyes open and willing to speak up before it's too late. But 'they' seem to be fighting one another, too. My friend's sister works as an assistant for a member of—well, never mind who—and she said... wait, how up-to-date are this server's security protocols?"

—JadeStar22, Mysteries Among Us message board

The defeat of Mysteriarch Zaxo marks the end of The Threefold Conspiracy Adventure Path, but the PCs' adventures need not end there. Though the PCs have uncovered the truth about their origins and stopped the mysteriarch's schemes, along with the reptoid infiltration of the Pact Council, their discoveries likely only lead to further questions. Many of the Unseen's plots are still a mystery, and enterprising heroes may want to find out just how far these conspiracies spread.

A Cryptid for All Seasons: Regardless of whether or not the PCs keep their identities out of the public eye, they are contacted by a reality-vid producer looking to offer the PCs the "deal of a lifetime." The executive wants to create a show that follows the PCs' exploits as they search the galaxy for the truth behind mysterious monsters and urban legends. The producer promises the group fame and fortune and asks to meet on a secluded moon base in Near Space. The PCs are likely wary of such a proposition, and research turns up no information about the producer. Days later, they receive another transmission, including coordinates and a plea for help, as the executive claims that "the star of the first episode got loose!" Traveling to the provided coordinates leads the PCs to find a seemingly abandoned film set marred by the signs of a vicious attack. As they explore, the PCs start to suspect they are being watched. Is there a cryptid loose in the corridors? Or are the PCs being recorded for an elaborate prank show? And who is the mysterious producer behind it all?

Cleaning House: From reptoid replacements to dycepskian infestations, the Stewards are reeling from recent events. Unfortunately, unscrupulous elements within the law-enforcement organization take this opportunity to gain power and call for an agency-wide purge of "untrustworthy" personnel, targeting anyone who doesn't agree with their politics. Foremost on the chopping block are agents Yych Vorsen and Ephecta, who call upon the PCs once more to speak on their behalf and investigate the corrupt officials in hopes of ousting them from the Stewards. While the PCs might suspect further interference from the Unseen, these rotten agents aren't under anyone's control, but they still threaten the Stewards from within.

Doctor Zero: A Diorama R&D researcher studying the Brethedan blight and the aftermath of the dycepskian attack on Laoe Araae discovers the connection between the disease and a fungicide treatment created at the very same facility decades earlier. Shortly thereafter, she claims to have fashioned an actual cure and boards a transport ship, the *Myrmidon*, bound for the hospice facility. However, the transport mysteriously disappears during the brief trip, and the news reaches the PCs. They find the vessel floating in deep space in the Vast, but the decks are deserted except for hostile robot guardians. The crew and passengers seem to be missing, though no escape pods have launched. It's up to the PCs to discover who or what kidnapped the doctor, whether she can be rescued, and if it's possible to bring her cure back to the Pact Worlds.

Faces in the Mirror: After realizing they are actually clones of other people, the PCs might have a difficult time going back to normal life. Some may wish to seek out the beings they were cloned from; but not all of those the grays selected for cloning are benevolent. One of them has learned of their clone and wishes to capture the clone for their own purposes, whether to eliminate a potential threat or to use the clone as a handy replacement should anything go wrong with their own body. Not only that, but more clones resembling the PCs begin appearing all over the Pact Worlds. Did these clones also escape from a different gray facility or was their release deliberate?

The Gray Cabal: Although the PCs have stopped Mysteriarch Zaxo, they find alarming hints that his was not the only group of grays active in the Pact Worlds system, and that Zaxo may have been following someone else's orders. Once the PCs begin investigating these leads, they are targeted by masked assassins who seem to break the laws of physics, phasing in and out of locations, appearing in multiple places at once, and reshaping their surroundings to suit their needs. In order to put an end to these assassination attempts, the PCs must delve into the mysterious grays' origins, find a way to travel to the alternate dimension from which they originated, and survive as interlopers as they track down the grays in charge.

The Simulation Enigma: Soon after Mysteriarch Zaxo's death, the PCs' reality seems to blur and fracture. The heroes wake up in an empty room, hooked up to strange machines that appear to be VR simulators, though the machines use a type of technology they've never seen before. As they make their way out of the facility, they find themselves on a strange planet seemingly devoid of any other sentient life. At your discretion, the PCs can even wake up without their abilities and gear and be forced to survive using only their wits. Who created the simulation the PCs experienced, and why? Or is this experience the simulation, a contingency set up by the grays to contain the PCs for further experiments? Unable to trust even their own memories and senses, the PCs must find the truth or never see home—wherever that may be—again.

What If the PCs Lose?: If the PCs are defeated by Mysteriarch Zaxo, he subdues them and ensures they are captured alive (or at least fit enough to be returned to life). Although the clones have fought against their assigned roles, he recognizes they have learned many skills during the experience and may be even more useful now. The PCs are kept unconscious until they are brought to a secure gray facility and thoroughly brainwashed, making them completely loyal agents. They are then sent to replace their "originals." Throughout the Pact Worlds system, many such replacements occur unnoticed. The PCs' actions have shifted the balance of power between the factions of the Unseen; their interference in the plots of the reptoids and dycepskians has given the grays an advantage for the time being. Life goes on as usual, but conspiracy theorists start to notice disturbing patterns of behavior among many of the Pact Worlds' elite...

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GRAY SCALES

The elimination of the gray leader Mysteriarch Zaxo tips the balance of power among the factions of the Unseen, exposing some of their plots, but providing a distraction from others. As the grays stationed within the Pact Worlds attempt to adjust from this setback, other players among the Unseen are quick to take advantage of the situation. One of these individuals is a reptoid known as Tlodech, who has assumed the identity of General Etralashka "Chitinsnapper" Korovisant in the Army of the Veskarium. Before she was replaced by Tlodech, the real General Korovisant earned her rank through her heroics in the Swarm War. Though lauded in the Veskarium for her strong leadership and combat skill, her talents did not protect her from Tlodech's midnight infiltration of her quarters and subsequent assassination. For the past 8 years, Tlodech has bided her time while using General Korovisant's honored reputation to try to nudge the Veskarium and the Pact Worlds toward war with one another once again.

With the grays in disarray and unable to interfere, Tlodech seizes the opportunity to make an open assault on the Pact Worlds colony world of Bluewillow in Near Space. Bluewillow is an agrarian "greenhouse colony," taking advantage of the planet's temperate climate and fertile soil to grow a wide variety of crops. Disguised as General Korovisant, Tlodech directs a small fleet to attack Bluewillow without informing the rest of the Veskarium. Though unexpected, troops had no reason to doubt her orders. After a brief initial bombardment against Bluewillow's major settlements, the Veskarium forces landed at Parthis, the planet's primary trade hub. The city's defenses, more equipped to take on individual pirate ships than a military fleet, were rapidly overwhelmed, and Tlodech's forces took the city in a matter of hours. She hopes to reignite the war between the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium, using the conflict as an opportunity for the reptoids to gain more power.

The attack on Bluewillow shocks the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium alike, and tensions are rapidly escalating. The Veskarium denies responsibility for the operation, claiming (truthfully) that General Korovisant has gone rogue. The Pact Worlds, meanwhile, are unwilling to trust the Veskarium's word and many of the planets begin preparing for skirmishes both local and afar.

Fortunately, the hacker TERM1NAL followed the exploits of the PCs quite closely after they got in touch and managed to partially intercept the signal transmitted from Mysteriarch Zaxo's starship before it imploded. Decrypting the information, TERM1NAL discovered evidence that the vesk general might not be what she claims. TERM1NAL contacts the PCs and hands over this data, figuring the Pact Council will listen to them over

a faceless hacker. Though TERM1NAL isn't the biggest fan of government, they like interstellar wars even less.

To prevent the loss of countless lives and a treaty that has served both the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium well for decades, the PCs must convince the Pact Council to temporarily stand down. The recent revelation that the Directorate had been infiltrated by reptoids lends more credence to what once would have been considered an outlandish conspiracy theory. However, some councilors have secretly never trusted the Veskarium (or stand to profit from a possible war) so the PCs must use all their guile and cunning to navigate this political mine field.

Once the PCs are successful within the chambers of the Plenara, the Pact Council decides that they should fully investigate the situation. The PCs are tasked with finding absolute proof of their claims and even eliminating General Korovisant if necessary. The Pact Council could even authorize new technology or starship upgrades to help the PCs get the job done. Though vesk forces have spread out across the world of Bluewillow, the more military-minded on the Pact Council recommend heading straight for Parthis, where the faux general is headquartered.

Before they can continue, the Pact Council is contacted by a similar task force within the Veskarium from Directive 9, the empire's military intelligence branch. Since both sides have a vested interest in getting to the bottom of things, the Council advises the PCs to work with these allies, but it quickly becomes clear that personality conflicts exist between the two groups. Even if the PCs are honest about their motives and where they received their information, several of the Directive 9 agents are suspicious of the PCs and make no attempt to hide it. The other agents recommend mercy in dealing with the soldiers who are simply following orders, which could complicate things if the PCs disregard this request.

The general's fleet has multiple starships still stationed in orbit around Bluewillow, and the PCs have to fight some of them on their way in, breaking through enemy lines to land on the planet. Once they land at Parthis, they discover the city has become a bombed-out war zone, and that most of its residents have fled or been killed. Still, fragments of the city's law enforcement remain who could prove to be potential allies. The PCs will likely need to operate as a guerilla strike force, as they are vastly outnumbered. They can make hit-and-run assaults against the Veskarium forces as they work their way toward Parthis City Hall, which General Korovisant has commandeered as a base. Interrogation of enemy soldiers proves to be less than fruitful; they all seem fanatically devoted to the general, even more so than would be expected of Veskarium troops. None of the rank-and-

file soldiers are aware that their general is a reptoid. The Directive 9 agents suspect some kind of brainwashing.

Once the PCs reach city hall, they must face the general's elite forces, either defeating them in combat or convincing them that General Korovisant has been replaced. However, the general isn't the only one who has been replaced by a reptoid, and these disguised officers will do everything they can to discredit the PCs if they attempt to convince the other soldiers of a reptoid plot. At this point, one of the more distrustful Directive 9 agents might buy into the lies, forcing the PCs to deal with dissension in their own ranks.

Alternatively, the PCs might be able to sneak into city hall and go directly for Tlodech. Defeating Tlodech will provide the proof they need that the decorated vesk soldier is actually a reptoid. But if she escapes, she takes on a new identity and makes it her top priority to kill the PCs for disrupting her plans.

TLODECH**CR 16****XP 78,800**Female reptoid soldier (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 92)

LE Medium humanoid (reptoid, shapechanger)

Init +10; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +28**DEFENSE** **HP** 300 **RP** 6**EAC** 30; **KAC** 32**Fort** +18; **Ref** +16; **Will** +16; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects and poisons**Defensive Abilities** shatter morale**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** claw +27 (6d10+23 S) or

storm shock truncheon +27 (3d12+23 E; critical arc 3d4)

Ranged shock parallax laser rifle +30 (8d6+16 E & F; critical burn 4d6) or

mk VI frag grenade +30 (explode [15 ft., 12d6 P, DC 23])

Offensive Abilities debilitating attack (DC 22, 7 rounds), fighting styles (arcane assailant, bombard), gear boosts (anchoring arcana [DC 22], powerful explosive), grenade expert (55 ft.), heavy fire (+7 damage), soldier's onslaught**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th)

1/day—charm person (DC 17), command (DC 17)

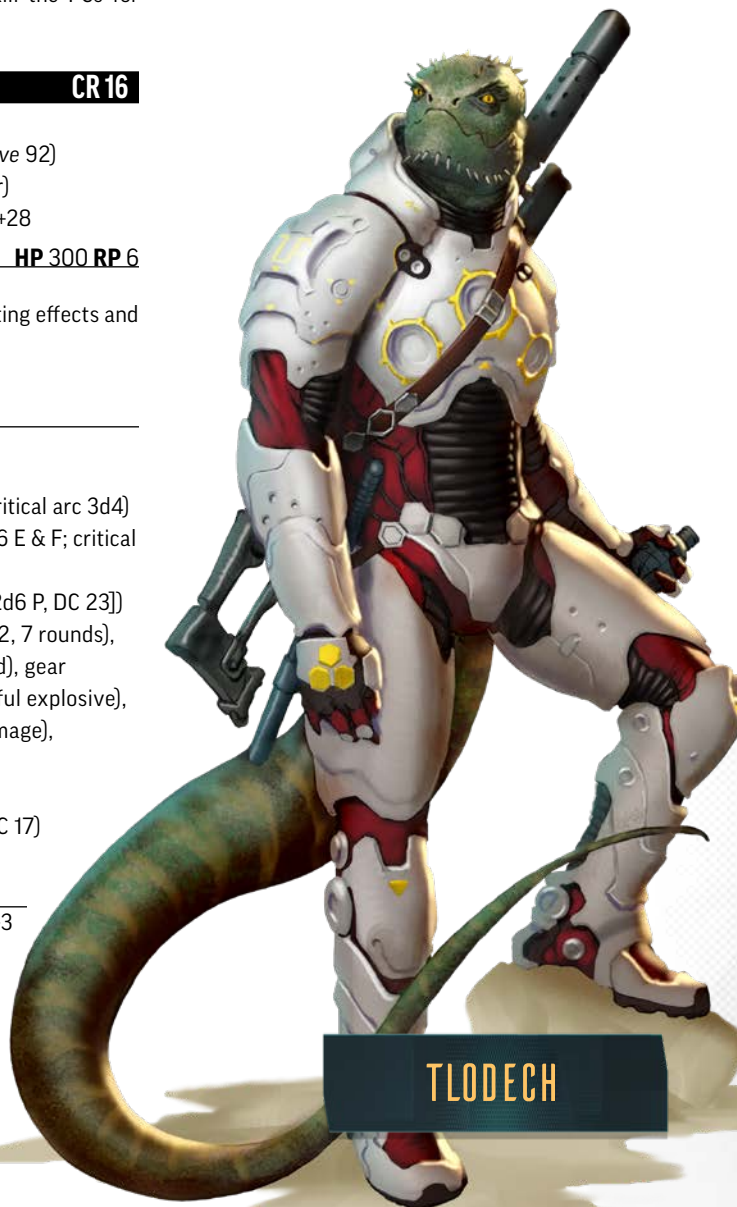
At will—daze (DC 16), telepathic message

STATISTICS**Str** +7; **Dex** +10; **Con** +4; **Int** +5; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +3**Skills** Bluff +33, Disguise +28, Intimidate +28, Sense Motive +28**Feats** Quick Draw**Languages** Common, Reptoid, Vercite, Vesk**Other Abilities** change shape (any specific humanoid), explosives acumen (–7 damage), rune of the eldritch knight, secret of the magi**Gear** vesk monolith II, parallax laser

rifle with 1 ultra-capacity battery (100 charges), storm shock truncheon with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each), mk VI frag grenades (2)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Shatter Morale (Su) As a reaction, when Tlodech is targeted with a melee or ranged attack or a spell requiring an attack roll, she can mentally assault her attacker, attempting to break their focus. The attacker must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or be unable to attack Tlodech for that round as their resolve momentarily falters. This costs the target their action but does not expend a spell slot if the target was casting a spell. Once a creature succeeds at a save against this ability, they are immune to its effects for the next 24 hours.



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TLODECH

MAZE OF MOLD

The PCs' recent encounters with the Unseen have likely made them uneasy about the extent of the conspiracies crossing the galaxy and how deep some of them might run, but they seem to have dealt with the most pressing threats for the time being, giving them time to relax and recover. Their vacation is cut short, however, when they receive a distress call originating from the Vast. This call asks for the PCs help by name but has no other identifiers. The PCs can trace this call to an asteroid orbiting a dying sun. Faint signs of life from the asteroid appear on scans, though they are oddly indistinct, and none of the other planetoids in the system seem to show any such signs. If the PCs are reluctant to heed the call, they receive more and more insistent pleas for aid, some perhaps promising a great deal of wealth or answers to their most pressing questions.

Upon exploring the asteroid, the PCs begin hearing strange whispers in their minds, beckoning them, and feel a pull toward the asteroid's largest crater. At the bottom of the crater, a cave leads to multiple tunnels winding through the asteroid, far deeper than should be possible. After several hours of walking, a PC who succeeds at a DC 40 Mysticism check realizes they've stumbled into an extradimensional space. If the PCs attempt to leave, however, they cannot find the way out; every time they believe they're making progress, the tunnels twist and wrap in on themselves, leading the PCs further into the asteroid. The PCs also start to get the sense they're being watched and experience hallucinations of their fears, dreams, and even loved ones, though none of these hallucinations last longer than a few minutes. Along the way, they must contend with various creatures—both humanoid and otherwise—infested with the dycepskian mycelium who appear to attempt to capture them alive, rather than kill them. By this point, the PCs can recognize the telltale signs of the infection immediately, but there appears to be no rhyme or reason to the types of hosts they encounter.

Unknown to the PCs, this twisted space within the asteroid is the product of a creature known as a dycepskian elder brain. In rare cases, when a vast number of dycepskian-infested creatures congregate, the psychic energies from the fungal mass mind can spark the creation of a dycepskian elder brain, a massive fungus with psychic abilities. Unlike most dycepskians lacking a host, elder brains are fully sentient and seek to create more dycepskians by using their victims as a vector. This elder brain, aware that its home system's star is dying, heard of the PCs through its psychic communications with other dycepskians and decided to lure them to its lair. It intends to take over the body of one of the PCs and infest the rest so that it can depart the system safely, reforming as another elder brain once its previous body dies.

As the PCs wind their way through the maze toward the asteroid's center, the elder brain puts them through a variety of psychic trials to weaken their minds, hoping to break the PCs' mental defenses so that by the time they reach it, they will be easy prey for its spells and abilities. These trials could include forcing the PCs to confront their regrets, beckoning them deeper into the maze with visions of their loved ones, tempting them with things they have always wanted to achieve, or even making them believe for a time that they've escaped. Consult the "Mindscapes" article in *Starfinder Adventure Path #23: Hive of Minds* for more information on how such mindscapes work.

To make their way through the ordeals with their minds intact, the PCs must learn not to trust their senses and to be wary of anything they see or hear. As they get closer to the dycepskian elder brain, the hallucinations become more intense and the host creatures deadlier. Some hosts begin to speak for the elder brain, telling the PCs to let themselves be overwhelmed to serve as the new leader of all dycepskians, even going so far as to suggest that a PC that helps defeat their allies will gain this utmost honor. The dycepskian hosts fail to mention that this will, of course, kill that PC.

When the PCs reach the center of the maze, they must confront the dycepskian elder brain and destroy it, fighting off its attempts to take over their bodies and minds. Only once the elder brain is destroyed will they be freed from its multidimensional space and be able to return to their starship to fly home.

However, one of the PCs might end up infected with elder spores, the symptoms of which might not present themselves for several days. The PCs will likely be able to purge this affliction easily, but a psychic shard of the elder brain remains in that character's mind, causing the unsettling sensation that nothing is quite real.

DYCEPSKIAN ELDER BRAIN

CR 18

XP 153,600

NE Gargantuan plant (dycepskian)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsight (thought) 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +31

Aura dimension warp (5 miles)

DEFENSE

HP 320

EAC 31; **KAC** 32

Fort +18; **Ref** +14; **Will** +20

Immunities disease, plant immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee tendril +28 (8d8+18 B plus elder spores)

Ranged fungal pod +26 (8d6+18 A & B; critical confuse^{AR} [DC 25])

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

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; melee +28, ranged +26)

1/day—*mind thrust* (6th level, DC 27), *unwilling guardian* (DC 26)

3/day—*feeblemind* (DC 26), *greater command* (DC 26), *modify memory* (DC 26), *synapse overload* (DC 26)

At will—*confusion* (DC 25), *mind probe* (DC 25)

Constant—*detect thoughts* (DC 22)

STATISTICS

Str +6; **Dex** +0; **Con** +4; **Int** +11; **Wis** +4; **Cha** +8

Skills Bluff +36, Life Science +31, Sense Motive +36

Languages Aklo, Common (can't speak any language); telepathy 200 ft.

Other Abilities fungal mass mind nexus, lesser mindscape

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dimensional Warp (Su) A dycepskian elder brain's psychic energies warp the 5-mile radius around itself. Though not strictly extra-dimensional, the area within seems far larger than it actually is. Creatures can enter this area normally but can't leave unless the elder brain is killed or they cast a spell such as *plane shift*.

Fungal Mass Mind Nexus (Ex) A dycepskian elder brain can communicate telepathically with any creature that has the dycepskian subtype within 1 mile, even if they don't share a common language. If any creature that has the dycepskian subtype within 1 mile of the dycepskian elder brain is aware of a combatant, the elder brain is also aware of this combatant. As a standard action, a dycepskian elder brain can project its senses into any creature with the dycepskian subtype, allowing it to observe from its host's point of view. It can use the host as an origin point for casting spells, using the host's physical ability score modifiers and its own mental ability score modifiers. While projecting its senses, an elder brain's body is helpless. It can end this effect as a swift action.

Lesser Mindscape (Su) A dycepskian elder brain can induce hallucinations in living or undead creatures within 100 feet of itself or a creature that is part of its fungal mass mind. As a full action, it can create an illusion in the minds of up to eight targets, covering an area up to twenty 20-foot cubes. It shapes the illusion as it wishes as per *holographic terrain* and a 5th-level casting of *holographic image*. A target interacting with the illusion can attempt a DC 25 Will saving throw to disbelieve the effect. A creature that fails this initial save takes 1 Wisdom damage, though subsequent failed saves from the same mindscape don't deal more ability damage.

Those affected by the same mindscape all view the same illusion. This lesser mindscape lasts for 5 minutes or until dismissed. This is an illusion effect.

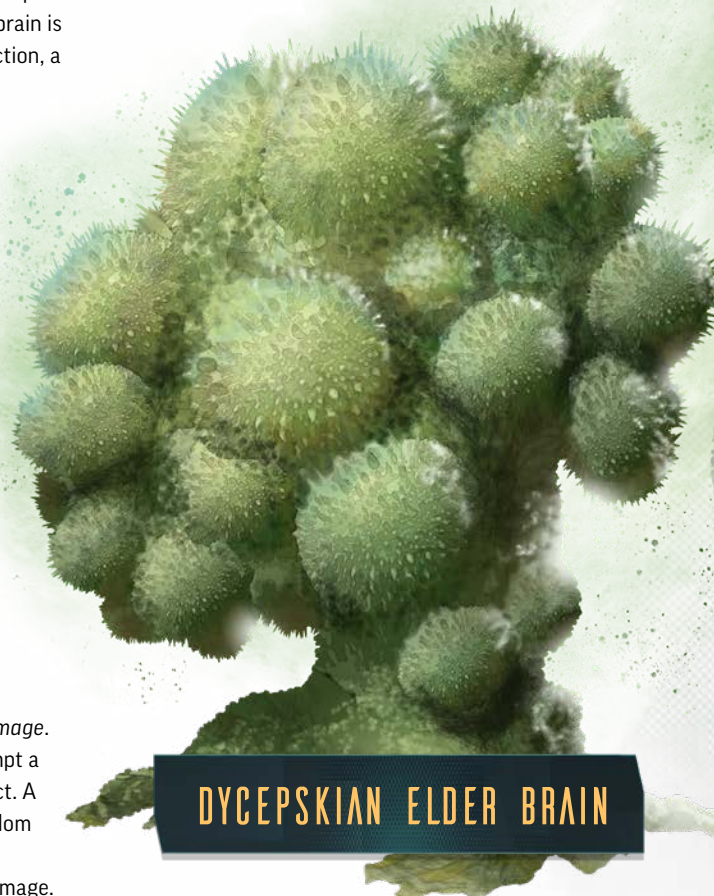
ELDER SPORES

Type disease (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 25

Tracks physical and mental (special); **Frequency** 1/day (special)

Effect The latent state lasts 1d4 days; the victim takes all penalties from progressing on both the physical and mental disease tracks, though instead of a dead end state, each track has the transformed end state; when the victim reaches the impaired state, they exhibit faint yellowish-green veins around the eyes, which are noticeable with a successful DC 25 Perception check; when the victim reaches the transformed state, their body turns into an dycepskian elder brain; only *miracle*, *warp reality*^{COM}, or *wish* can restore the victim at that point.

Cure The victim must benefit from two successful castings of remove affliction within 1 minute.



DYCEPSKIAN ELDER BRAIN

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MAGIC ACADEMIES

"So, you want more in-depth magical theory and spellwork? Fine. Here's a hypothesis for you: If you don't use your magic to kill your enemy, he will he shoot you in the face! Care to test that one in the field? Look, you want to waste months fine-tuning a bit of spellcode? Go to the Arcanamirium, SENOT, or the Prit. If you wash out, maybe Nerundel Halls will let you bask in First World auras. But you're here, where my job's to teach you to kill and survive, and that's what you will learn!"

— Spell Sergeant Vaya Bodgusk, Karchizara Battle Magic Academy on Vesk Prime

WHERE MAGIC IS TAUGHT

A magic academy is an educational institution where spellcasters learn to harness their innate gifts and employ magic for the benefit of society. Some schools explore magical theory and develop new spells, while others emphasize practical skills more useful in a professional or military career. But a magic academy is more than just a place to hone mystical skills; for students and alumni, the academy brings with it a lifestyle and an extended family. An academy's philosophy often shapes a student's future and their perspective on the universe. Years after a student graduates, the friends and contacts they made in school remain relevant, providing career opportunities, research assistance, and lasting friendships.

THE ARCANAMIRIUM

Nestled prominently in the Eye, the Arcanamirium's metallic dome and soaring archways make it one of the most iconic locations in Absalom Station. The Arcanamirium merges cutting edge engineering with in-depth magical theory. Here, science is the gateway to truth, and the mystic arts unlock the underpinnings of the universe. The university's vaults can be its most unique institutional asset; containing alien artifacts, ancient magical items, and pre-Gap writings, the vaults are a treasure trove for esotericists and other scholars of magic untouched by technology.

Though the Arcanamirium's facilities are top-notch, advanced students are encouraged to seek lab space elsewhere. Labs in the Arcanamirium proper have to be shared, so renting private lab space allows a student to focus full-time on a thesis project. Fortunately, the Brainery, Freemarkets, and Lorespire all offer inexpensive rentals, and grants to fund lab space are available for applicants that can convince a review committee their project is worthwhile.

Collaboration is a key principle at the Arcanamirium. Faculty and students note with pride how much of an Arcanamirium education takes place beyond its walls. Intense classroom discussions spill out into Jatembe Park, coffee shops, and magical clubs like the Brainery. Students test out their ideas in late-night debates with their peers before bringing the best theories back to the laboratory for eventual development into new spells, fusions, and other magical effects. To keep up with the curriculum's crushing pace, Arcanamirium students band together into study clubs so intense that participants end up either closer than family or bitter enemies. Some students swear it's better to share a study club with rivals than with friends; there's less danger of distraction, and your relationship with your fellow scholars can't possibly get worse.

While most other institutions have job fairs and showcases to help their students find careers, the Arcanamirium places most of its students into jobs in academia or industry even before they graduate. Promising students intern with AbadarCorp and other corporations

that have a presence on the station, many of whom endow scholarships for their student workers. Bolder graduates set up a stall in Freemarkets to become entrepreneurs. Collaborations and cross-disciplinary studies are not just encouraged but required. Engineering-focused technomancers are encouraged to work with mystics, esotericists, and witchwarpers. Above all, students interact with colleagues from other species, genders, and worldviews, broadening their experience and challenging their preconceptions.

ECLIPSE ACADEMY

Few outside of Apostae have even heard of Eclipse Academy, one of the most secretive institutions in the Pact Worlds. Eclipse draws its students not from admissions applications, but from a list of nominees drafted by prominent drow houses. All accepted students swear a strict oath of secrecy enforced by powerful magic. While most students are drow, Eclipse Academy also admits a small percentage of talented half-orcs, free orcs, and off-worlders. These "non-traditional students" are each sponsored by a member of a drow house, earning the privilege by performing a service, agreeing to act as a house agent, or simply demonstrating unusual potential. Some whisper that an invitation to enter the academy is not just a reward for clever and magically talented individuals; it's also a way to remove someone who knows too much—while simultaneously indebting them to your house. Those who receive a letter of admission to Eclipse Academy find the offer all but impossible to refuse, as nominating houses and sponsors are quick to take offense.

A single black tower 80 feet high and made of a ceramic-like substance marks the entrance to Eclipse Academy. The rest of the campus is underground, and anyone without darkvision who must rely on a light source to navigate the campus is mercilessly hazed by students, professors, and staff. Professors expelled from other institutions for ethical violations and dangerous magic have been welcomed to and celebrated at Eclipse, so long as their work yields results. The academy's curricula are cruel, experimental, and unrelenting; classes push students to their mental and physical limits, and injuries and accidents are routine.

Only one in five Eclipse students graduates. Those that fail in the first year are sent to careers of hard physical labor unless they have a powerful protector. As the program progresses, many students actually die of literal exhaustion, or survive with severe mental stress and trauma. While those who endure such abuse graduate and often go on to become unparalleled masters of their craft, the emotional and physical damage they suffer usually presents challenges later. Much to the consternation of drow supremacists, Eclipse's highest graduation rate comes from its handful of half-orc students. Although these students are hazed by

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UNIVERSITY OF QABARAT

The chaos of Nerundel Halls isn't for everyone. Castrovelian technomancers and lashunta who wish to develop their psionic talent often seek a more traditional academic experience and enroll within the University of Qabarat's Psionics Extension. This facility, located on the U of Q's main campus, offers graduate programs to dedicated students of the mind who have already earned an undergraduate degree. Most of their students come from other institutions—such as the Arcanamirium or the Prit—but U of Q grads are also accepted. The current headmaster, **Raylund Farsig** (LN male korasha lashunta phrenic adept) is devoted to recovering lost psychic knowledge through expeditions and research.

fellow students and continually harassed by faculty and staff, they have learned to trust and rely on one another, banding tightly together to help each other succeed.

KARCHIZARA COMBAT COLLEGE

Located on the plains just outside the Veskarium's capital, Karchizara Combat College is a private military academy with a long and honorable tradition that was founded by Karzai Karchizara—a long-dead vesk war hero and witchwarper. Housed in a soaring black fortress, the college's walls encompass parade grounds, magical and technological laboratories, barracks, obstacle courses, and much more. Tuition is free to those who agree to serve a term of service in the Veskarium upon graduation, while others must pay annual tuition. Most of the college's students are vesk, pahtra, and skittermanders, but student exchanges bring a smattering of students from the Pact Worlds and beyond. New arrivals hone mind and body with an exhausting eight-week boot camp meant to instill them with loyalty to their military unit and a willingness to sacrifice themselves for others. Vesk—who undergo basic training at the age of 10—can secure a waiver exempting them from this training. As a result, the college's boot camp is almost entirely populated by non-vesk students who inevitably bond with each other and resent the proud vesk who think themselves too good to train alongside other species.

Karchizara instructors emphasize a highly structured routine and a team approach to problem-solving. After students finish boot camp, each day begins with calisthenics combining weapon training with spell practice. Advanced coursework includes a focus on military strategy and field exercises, and in their final semester all students act as embedded magic specialists for Veskarium units engaged in war games. Students and instructors go through exercises side by side, and groups that train together often take

leave time together, drinking all evening while listening to battle marches and inspirational music they've learned in the academy. Despite the emphasis on group training, instructors embrace every form of magic as useful in war, and they recognize that every student brings unique strengths and weaknesses to the field. While it's true that vesk military mages prefer to use their skills in personal combat, some support front-line fighters with healing or magical enhancements, while others specialize in battlefield control and artillery strikes. Karchizara faculty keep a very close eye on their students, "volunteering" experienced soldiers to act as mentors for rookies, providing personal attention to the most promising candidates, and arranging additional support for those who are falling behind.

Unsurprisingly, Karchizara holds a long tradition of dueling over affairs of honor, but students are expected to show self-control. Deaths or serious injuries can result in expulsion. Nevertheless, the camaraderie built at Karchizara lasts a lifetime, and graduates who don't immediately enter the Veskarium military can expect prestigious offers from other organizations in Near Space and the Pact Worlds.

NERUNDEL HALLS

Understanding Nerundel Halls first requires an understanding of the gnomish city of Nerundel itself. Located high in Castrovel's Korinath Mountains, Nerundel is known for its perilous cliffside architecture and for Greengate, a permanent portal that enables trade with fey of the First World. Primal fey magic permeates Nerundel and the entire ecosystem for miles around, and the city blooms with a diverse array of magical species, making it a place of pilgrimage for biotechnicians and xenodruids and home of one of the university's oddest professors, the **Oracle of Nerundel** (CN xenodruid oracle of Oras [Alien Archive 3 74]). The Oracle of Nerundel is one of the sacred trees and spends its time cataloging rare species and genomes. The tree is also Dean of Students, and its treehouse serves as a popular, if highly exclusive, campus dormitory.

The Nerundel Halls campus lies on both sides of the Korinath divide, with stonework balconies, hanging gardens, and tiled public squares throughout. The students, faculty, and staff cross the East Campus to the West Campus via zip lines, intricately carved gondolas, personal gliders, or other methods of flight. Although computer science and engineering are taught at Nerundel Halls, the constructs made here tend to be overly intricate clockwork creations designed for whimsy more than function.

Fey students comprise a full third of the student body, and another third come from Castrovel: gnomes, elves, lashuntas and even some formians. Most of the other students hail from other Pact Worlds. Witchwarpers and mystics abound, but other spellcasters and devotees of magic in its purest form also choose Nerundel Halls. With such a chaotic group of students, pranks on the campus are legendary. The most imaginative of these are immortalized as stories passed down

from one generation to the next, and graduating seniors vie to outdo their predecessors. By tradition, the most highly esteemed pranks involve high-level magic and well-considered consequences that include everyone in the joke. Some senior pranks are so detailed that they serve as graduate theses in their own right.

PREITA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Preita Institute of Technology, known universally as “the Prit,” prides itself not just on being the best technomancy school on Triaxus, but also one of the best in the Pact Worlds. Here, scholarly enlightenment and career advancement are twin ideals, and students are taught that the only way they can secure their own financial future is by developing their own magical potential. The Prit has deep ties to corporate interests, and students who excel here can expect lucrative offers upon graduation. Scholarship sponsors include draconic corporations, the Oligarchy of Ning, the Skyfire Legion, and a wide range of off-world business concerns.

Upon enrollment, new students face a panel of advisors that assigns them to a clutch. More than a mere dormitory, each clutch attaches a family of students to an experienced mentor. Most of these mentors have a strong connection to a draconic bloodline, and some are even actual dragons, whose clutches are always the most sought-after. Draconic clutches compete intensely with each other; the academic prestige earned by each student contributes to a clutch’s honor, but scandal, disgrace, and failure are viewed as shames for the clutch that should embarrass its members. Because dragons can remember glories and humiliations that go back many hundreds of years, rivalries between clutches date back to Triaxus’s emergence from the Gap. Clutches work on projects together, sabotage rivals, and scheme for excellence. The intensity of the clutch experience ensures that most humanoid students seek relationships, alliances, and friendships outside their clutch, just to have something other than clutch business to talk about.

Prit culture also values astute risk taking. Gambling is common, and debts of honor are sacred. Spell dueling takes place both in private and as part of elaborate public technomancy duels, a scheduled part of clutch challenges. These duels draw on technical and magical aptitude, cunning, and subterfuge. However, Prit rules prohibit deadly duels; instead, competitors trap or trick their rivals. Nevertheless, sometimes injuries or even deaths do occur. Many consider dueling scars from the Prit, especially when linked to victory, as a fashion accessory and mark of honor.

SENOT (SPELL EDUCATION NETWORK OF TELATERANOS)

The city of Telateranos on Arkanen hosts more than a hundred elite magical universities and mystical academies,

making it a unique concentration of institutions unlike anything else in the Pact Worlds. The students and faculty here are cosmopolitan, drawing from all of Near Space. Each school is small enough that students generally work with only a single professor, who mentors a handful of students over the course of their entire time at the school. Distinguished professors who have made significant contributions to their field are often revered as academic celebrities who broadcast well-watched lectures over the infosphere and appear in SENOT’s famous spell showcase, Shockwave. The competition to secure these professors as mentors is good-natured, but it was not always so collegial.

In the first decades after the Gap, the academies in Telateranos competed so fiercely that magical brawls broke out in the streets. The exasperated city council appointed a dirindi mediator, Annel Watts, to solve the problem. Annel proposed SENOT: a confederation that would allow schools to keep their independence while sharing resources on a scale never before seen. Schools that joined SENOT agreed to a unified credit system, schedule, and basic general requirements in return for government funding. Each college retained its own specialties, culture, quirks, and curriculum. Students would enroll in courses throughout the network, reserve laboratories, and have access to shared libraries and a host of other facilities. The ability to outsource general requirements and language classes made SENOT appealing to smaller specialty schools in the network, including Priggs, Muser, and the Institute for Extraordinary Minds. But even larger institutions in the city, such as the Polymath School and Telateranos Tech, soon joined the network for a chance to compete in the prestigious Shockwave event. All interschool competition now funnels into Shockwave, a biannual fundraiser broadcast throughout the Pact Worlds.

The schools of SENOT claim to offer everything a potential student could want: the intense study, personal attention, and cozy community of a small school alongside all the amenities offered by larger institutions. Facilities vary from small manor-style houses to ultra-modern labs nestled among tall pylons that absorb energy from the electrical storms that roll over the city. Linking all the schools is the lightning rail, a subterranean shuttle system that provides rapid transportation throughout Telateranos. The students here work hard and play hard, and SENOT has a reputation as the Pact Worlds party school. When everyone goes on recess for the Fullbreath Festival during Arkanen’s dive into Liavara, drunken parades, lewd dancing, magical fireworks, and illusions erupt to a background of actual thunder and lightning. Once their general requirements are completed, however, most SENOT students put such behavior behind them and concentrate on coursework. Each year, a few maverick students compete to become Watts Fellows, an elite scholarship track that allows a custom course of study assembled from schools all over the network.

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CLASS OPTIONS

Students who attend a magic academy have the opportunity to learn many new and unusual abilities.

MYSTIC EPIPHANY

The epiphany alternate class feature is described on page 76 of the *Starfinder Character Operations Manual*.

Mystic Flare (Su)

In your studies, you have benefited from a solarian tutor, who taught you how to draw power from the foundational forces of the universe. For you, a star's corona or a black hole's event horizon is a source of infinite energy. You gain a solar flare^{COM}, as the solar manifestation ability of a solarian with a class level equal to your mystic level. If you have levels in both classes, you add them together to determine the effectiveness of your solar flare. You do not gain any other solar-flare solarian abilities from mystic class levels.

TECHNOMANCER CACHE HACKS

The cache hack alternate class feature is described on page 92 of the *Character Operations Manual*. If you select one of the cache hacks described below, your cache capacitor holds the listed spells instead of those described on page 120 of the *Core Rulebook*. Some of the cache hacks described below allow you to place spells with targets into your cache capacitor; these spells are marked with an asterisk (*).

Officer's Cache

An officer draws on their cache to satisfy a variety of tactical options in the field.

First Slot (6th Level): *comprehend languages*, *junksword*^{*PW} (1st level), *summon creature*^{AA} (1st level), or *supercharge weapon**

Second Slot (12th Level): *invisibility**, *junksword*^{*PW} (2nd level or lower), *school spirit* (see page 53), or *summon creature*^{AA} (2nd level or lower)

Third Slot (18th Level): *junksword*^{*PW} (3rd level or lower), *summon creature*^{AA} (3rd level or lower) or *tongues**

Scholar's Cache

The scholar uses their spell cache to further their studies.

First Slot (6th Level): *Akashic download* (*Starfinder Adventure Path #23: Hive of Minds* 50), *comprehend languages*, *identify**, or *unseen servant*

Second Slot (12th Level): *Akashic tutor* (2nd level or lower), *hoverdisk*^{COM}, *instant upgrade*^{*COM}, or *school spirit* (see page 53)

Third Slot (18th Level): *arcane sight*, *handy junkbot*, *mind of three* (*Starfinder Adventure Path #22: Forever Reliquary* 52), or *tongues*

WITCHWARPER PARADIGM SHIFT

You must be 5th level or higher to choose this paradigm shift.

Alternative Curricula (Su)

As a move action, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to envision an alternate reality in which you trained differently, took different coursework in school, or just paid more attention in the classes you did take. Choose a skill to acquire; for 1 minute, all the ranks you have in the skill to which your compound sight feature applies, as well as the compound sight feature itself, instead apply to the skill you are acquiring. This skill also becomes a class skill for you, so you receive a trained class skill bonus when making checks with it. However, you have 0 ranks in the skill to which your compound sight usually applies for the duration of this ability.

This effect lasts for 1 minute, though you can dismiss it at any time. If you use this ability to acquire a skill that requires you to make choices—such as Culture, which grants an additional language for every rank—you make those choices when you spend the Resolve Point to activate this ability.

MAGIC ACADEMY STUDENT (ARCHETYPE)

The magic academies in the Pact Worlds, Near Space, and the Vast take many forms, and each has a distinct culture. Some, like the Arcanamirium or the Eclipse Academy, emphasize time-honored traditions that have lasted for centuries or even millennia. Others, like the Preita Institute of Technology, are quicker to embrace new ways to teach, learn, and work magic. A prospective student of one of these schools has a hard decision to make: they might choose a campus based on family history and connections, the chance to work with a famous faculty member, job placement rates after graduation, or the financial scholarship help an academy can offer. Some students, of course, throw all academic qualifications out the window and just pick a school where they can have a good time—like SENOT or Nerundel Halls.

An academy student must balance the demands of classroom instruction and homework with the need for a personal life. There are always new books to read, new assignments to complete, and a new round of examinations. But for many students, this is the first opportunity they've had to live on their own, apart from family, and the temptation to ignore



all rules and regulations can be difficult to resist. They're assisted by academy staff, who watch over and nurture students, ensuring that day-to-day operations of the academy run smoothly, and by faculty, who challenge students every day and prepare them for an unpredictable future. At a good magic academy, even the most wayward student is exposed to a galaxy's worth of new ideas, experiences, and methods.

The career of an academy student ends relatively quickly; some programs last less than a year, though most continue for two or four. Typically, a student authors a final thesis that leads to graduation. Some alumni, however, choose to continue their research even after graduation.

PREREQUISITE

Only characters who have the spells class feature can take this archetype.

ALTERNATE CLASS FEATURES

This archetype grants alternate class features at 2nd, 4th, and 6th level.

Cram (Ex) 2nd Level

You're a quick study when you have to be. Spend 1 Resolve Point and 10 minutes in study, meditation, or practice, then choose one spell you know. You swap out that spell for a single new spell of the same level from the same class spell list. After 1 hour, you lose the new spell from your known spells and regain the original spell.

Interdisciplinary Studies (Ex) 4th Level

Training in a magic academy has exposed you to students and professors outside your spellcasting tradition. Select one spell from a spell list other than your own. It must be of a level no greater than 1 lower than the highest level spell you can cast. Add this to your list of spells known. Each time you gain the ability to cast a higher level of spells, you can swap out the spell gained with this alternate class feature for a new spell of a maximum level no greater than 1 lower than the highest-level spell you can cast.

Spell Thesis (Ex) 6th Level

You have researched a single spell in great detail. Select a single spell you know. When you cast this spell, its DC is increased by 1 and you have a +1 bonus to caster level checks to overcome a creature's spell resistance. In addition, once per day, you can cast this spell without expending a spell slot. Each time you gain the ability to cast a higher level of spells, you can swap out the spell associated with this ability for a new spell that you know.

SPELL SERGEANT (ARCHETYPE)

The spellcasters who teach at military magic academies such as the Karchizara Combat College are known as spell sergeants, a title that is also extended to their trainees, students who

specialize in integrating magic with high-intensity personal combat. Spell sergeants lead the way in hand-to-hand combat, supplementing their chosen weapon with potent spells; their mobility allows them to penetrate enemy lines or quickly fall back to rescue an ally in trouble.

It's easy to dismiss spell sergeants as brutal thugs, uninterested in the finer points of magical theory and practice, but this is untrue. In fact, spell sergeants prize their own education and are voracious consumers of information, constantly seeking out and evaluating the latest tactical innovations in magical military combat. When off duty, a spell sergeant might be practicing or carousing at a military bar, but they're just as likely to be found buried in a book.

PREREQUISITE

Only characters who have the spells class feature can take this archetype.

ALTERNATE CLASS FEATURES

The spell sergeant grants alternate class features at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 9th, and 12th levels.

Military Training (Ex) 2nd Level

You underwent basic training and have spent time in the field. You gain one of the following feats: Advanced Weapon Proficiency, Great Fortitude, Heavy Armor Proficiency, or Longarm Proficiency. At 7th level, you gain an additional bonus feat depending on your initial feat choice; if you chose Great Fortitude, you gain Improved Great Fortitude. If you chose Heavy Armor Proficiency, you gain Powered Armor Proficiency. If you chose Advanced Weapon Proficiency or Longarm Proficiency, you gain Versatile Specialization. If you already have one of these bonus feats, you can choose a different combat feat for which you qualify.

Spellstrike (Su) 4th Level

A spell sergeant trains with weapons as much as with spells, and you've learned to combine the two. You can cast spells with a range of touch into a melee weapon you hold. The spell is held within your weapon for up to one minute; if you successfully hit an enemy with the weapon, the spell discharges, targeting that enemy. If you are no longer holding the weapon, the spell dissipates harmlessly. Spell damage and weapon damage affect the target separately. If the spell you cast allows an attack as part of casting the spell (such as *jolting surge*), you can cast the spell into your weapon and attack in the same turn. In addition, for the purpose of meeting feat prerequisites, you treat your class level as your base attack bonus.

Cantrip Specialization (Su) 6th Level

Casters who find themselves behind enemy lines must conserve their most potent spells, making use of what they have at hand. You can cast a cantrip that deals damage and

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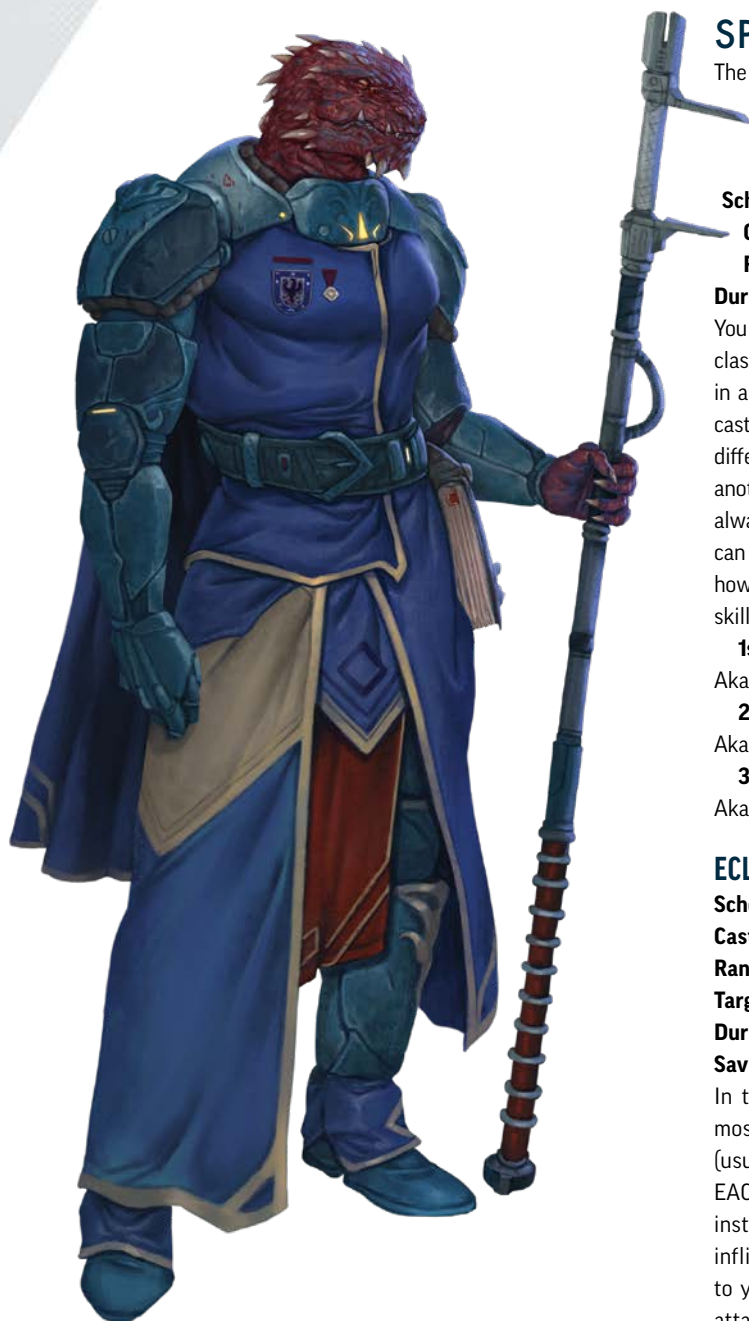
ALIEN
ARCHIVES

CODEX OF WORLDS

has a casting time of 1 standard action as a full action; when you do, add your caster level to the cantrip's damage.

Flash Flourish (Su) 9th Level

The ability to change your position, even across short distances, can bring victory from sure defeat. After you make a successful melee attack, you can teleport up to 10 feet. This movement does not provoke an attack of opportunity. Once you've used flash flourish, you can't do so again until after you take a 10-minute rest to recover Stamina Points, though you can spend 1 Resolve Point to recharge the ability immediately.



Flash Stab (Su) 12th Level

When you make a full attack in melee against a single opponent, you can teleport up to 20 feet to an unoccupied space between your attacks; the target of your melee attacks must be within your reach at both the beginning and end of this teleport. When you do so, you flank the opponent with your final attack. Once you have used flash stab, you can't use it again until after you take a 10-minute rest to recover Stamina Points, though you can spend 1 Resolve Point to recharge the ability immediately. In addition, the range of your flash flourish teleport increases to 20 feet.

SPELLS

The following new spells are most frequently used by the students, faculty, and staff of magic academies.

AKASHIC TUTOR 1-3 1-3 1-3

School divination

Casting Time 1 round

Range personal

Duration 1 minute/level

You communicate with the Akashic Record of one of your classmates or former instructors, asking them to assist you in a task. When you cast this spell, select two skills; if you cast Akashic tutor more than once a day, you must select different skills each time. The tutor can provide you with aid another benefits for the two skills you have selected, and always succeeds at the check to aid you. Alternatively, you can instead choose to let the Akashic tutor instruct you on how the task should be performed, substituting the tutor's skill modifier for your own.

1st: When you cast *Akashic tutor* as a 1st-level spell, your Akashic tutor has a total skill modifier equal to your level + 2.

2nd: When you cast *Akashic tutor* as a 2nd-level spell, your Akashic tutor has a total skill modifier equal to your level + 4.

3rd: When you cast *Akashic tutor* as a 3rd-level spell, your Akashic tutor has a total skill modifier equal to your level + 6.

ECLIPSE TOUCH 1-6

School evocation (force)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range touch

Targets one creature or object

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw partial (see text); **Spell Resistance** yes

In the darkened halls of the Eclipse Academy, only the most ruthless students survive. By touching the target (usually requiring a melee attack roll against the target's EAC, but you can add your key ability score modifier instead of your Strength modifier if it is higher), you inflict bludgeoning damage that has the force descriptor to your opponent. Casting this spell does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

The spell deals force damage and has additional effects on a critical hit, depending on the spell's level. Staggered and wound effects allow a saving throw.

- 1st:** 3d6 B; critical staggered
- 2nd:** 4d6 B; critical staggered
- 3rd:** 6d8 B; critical staggered
- 4th:** 8d8 B; critical wound
- 5th:** 11d10 B; critical wound
- 6th:** 16d10 B; critical wound

ELECTRIC LIGHT SHOW

School transmutation (electricity, light)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Area 5-ft.-diameter burst

Duration 1 minute

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

A favorite among SENOT students, this spell lets you create a charming electrical light show that can mimic fireworks, skywrite a message or logo, or depict anything—from birds and butterflies to a colorful dragon or starship. Once per round as a move action, including on the round you cast this spell, you can target a 5-foot-square within range and launch a spark in that direction. The spark takes a zigzag path from you to that square, missing all creatures and objects in its path, and detonating in the target square with a loud noise and a colorful burst of electricity and light. Creatures in the target square take 1d6 electricity damage and are dazzled for 1 round (a successful Reflex save reduces damage by half and negates the dazzled condition). If you attack in the same round as you launch a spark, that attack has a -4 penalty.

FEY PRANKSTERS

School conjuration (summoning)

Casting Time 1 round

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

Effect 1 predator swarm (tiny rainbow-colored fey)

Duration 1 minute

Saving Throw partial (see text); **Spell Resistance** no

This spell was created and used to win a Nerundel Halls prank challenge a few years ago. You summon a 10-foot-by-10-foot swarm of mischievous fey creatures armed with various tiny weapons who fly around chaotically. The swarm understands and obeys your commands, and has the statistics of a predator swarm^{AA2} with the exceptions noted below.

The swarm has the fey type (instead of animal) and an Intelligence modifier of +0. Each round, the swarm deals 1d6 nonlethal slashing damage to creatures in its squares. If the swarm damages a target, it grants the benefit of harrying fire to the next creature that attacks that target. A swarm of fey pranksters does not have the usual distraction ability of a predator swarm; instead, all creatures sharing spaces with a swarm of fey pranksters must attempt a saving throw

against a fey prank. The exact nature of the prank, and the required saving throw, is determined randomly:

d6	Prank	Saving Throw	Effect
1-2	Earworm	Will	Target is deafened for 1 minute.
3-4	Pie in the Face	Reflex	Target is blinded for 1 minute, but can remove this condition with a full action.
5-6	Tickle Attack	Fortitude	Target drops held item, chosen randomly.

Creatures who save against a fey prank are immune to fey pranks for 1 day. If the swarm is killed, all fey prank effects end.

SCHOOL SPIRIT

School enchantment (emotion, fear, mind-affecting)

Casting Time 1 standard action

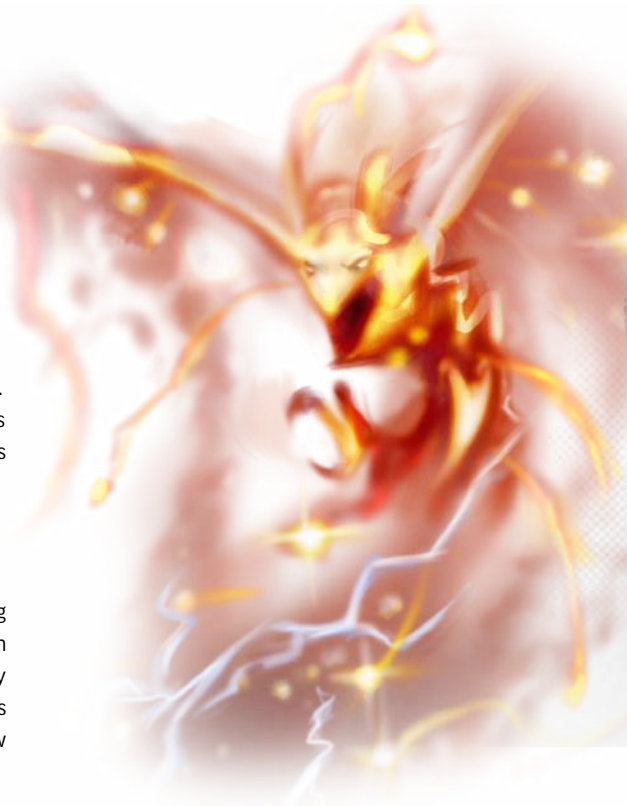
Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)

Area 30-ft.-radius spread

Duration 1 minute

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

In your time of need, you call upon a spirit of your school to help you. The spirit might manifest as a famous graduate of your school, your school's mascot, your school's symbol, or just the specter of a terrifying professor; regardless, the spirit's ghostly appearance demoralizes your foes. Enemies who begin their turn within the effect or who enter it must succeed at a Will saving throw or be shaken for 1 minute.



PUPPETS WITHOUT STRINGS

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ALIEN ARCHIVES

"Don't you hear it? The Drift beckons me to it. The songs of a million fractured planes roughly pulled together to form the patchwork quilt of another. Their cries as they die are like music. A swirling tune encompassing everything and everyone. Don't you hear it? A voice of possibilities from the reality next door. Whispering the secrets of the multiverse so loud the gods can hear. It calls me to come and see, come and see infinity. Don't you hear it? The rushing of the wind in the airless void. The crashing of a waterfall of subatomic particles. The rumbling of the tectonic plates under your skin. Don't you hear it?"

—last words of Chei Ollura

DRIFTLURE

CR
14XP
38,400

CE Huge outsider (extraplanar)

Init +25; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., sense through (life) 60 ft.; **Perception** +25**DEFENSE****HP** 250**EAC** 28; **KAC** 30**Fort** +18; **Ref** +16; **Will** +12**Defensive Abilities** grisly armor, void adaptation**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (Su, perfect)**Melee** pincer +28 (4d6+22 P plus grab)**Multiaction** 4 pincers +22 (4d6+22 P plus grab)**Ranged** fling body +28 (5d10+14 B plus off-kilter [DC 20])**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Offensive Abilities** call of the void (DC 22)**STATISTICS****Str** +8; **Dex** +3; **Con** +6; **Int** +2; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +4**Skills** Acrobatics +30, Athletics +25, Intimidate +25**Feats** Improved Combat Maneuver (grapple)**ECOLOGY****Environment** any (the Drift)**Organization** solitary or pair**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Call of the Void (Su) Once per day as a standard action, a driftlure can psychically cause all creatures within a radius of 120 feet to be compelled to immediately seek exposure to the Drift by the most direct means available, such as an airlock (DC 22 Will negates). This effect penetrates all barriers, including starship hulls and force fields. An affected creature acts too hastily to use safety precautions (such as activating environmental protections), but any attempt to block the creature's progress or convince it to take an alternative action grants it a new saving throw (maximum one new attempt per round). The effect persists for 1 hour, during which time the creature's attempts to reach the Drift become more and more frantic. An affected creature that reaches the Drift becomes fascinated for 1d4 rounds, and the effect ends. This ability has no effect on creatures not within the Drift.

Fling Body (Ex) Once per round as a standard action, a driftlure can transfer a creature ensnared in its cilia to a free pincer and hurl it at a target up to 60 ft. away as a ranged attack that deals 5d10+14 bludgeoning damage to both the target and the flung creature. If a driftlure hits or throws a creature that is in zero-g with this attack, that creature must succeed at a DC 20

Reflex save or be knocked off-kilter. A driftlure must have at least 1 creature ensnared in its cilia to use this ability.

Grisly Armor (Ex) If a driftlure begins its turn grappling a creature that is Large or smaller, it can attempt a grapple combat maneuver as a move action to ensnare the creature in the cilia that cover its shell. Alternatively, the driftlure can use a swift action to ensnare a corpse within its reach. A creature ensnared in these cilia has the grappled condition. A driftlure can have up to 4 Medium or smaller creatures or corpses ensnared in its cilia at a time. If a driftlure has at least 2 creatures or corpses ensnared in its cilia, it gains partial cover; if it has more, it gains normal cover. Whenever an attack targeting the driftlure misses due to its cover bonus, one creature or corpse ensnared in its cilia is knocked free and deposited in an adjacent square. When encountered, a driftlure typically has 2 Medium corpses already ensnared.

The coarse cilia that cover this large, pale crustacean undulate with bioluminescence. A driftlure attacks by attaching to the hull of a starship, where it emits a powerful psychic blast, luring the crew into space. The driftlure then collects the choicest specimens (often still clawing for breath in the vacuum) and nestles them amongst its cilia as macabre decorations. Its motivations remain unknown.



PUPPETS WITHOUT STRINGS

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NEW WORLDS

ELMESHRA

CR
7

XP
3,200



N Large animal (aquatic)

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

Perception +14

DEFENSE

EAC 19; **KAC** 21

Fort +11; **Ref** +11; **Will** +6

Resistances fire 10

Weaknesses hot-blooded

HP 105

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +17 (2d6+12 P plus swallow whole) or
claw +17 (1d6+12 S)

Multiattack 4 claws +11 (1d6+12 S)

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

Offensive Abilities swallow whole (2d6+12 A, EAC 19, KAC
17, 21 HP)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +19 (+27 to swim)

Other Abilities amphibious

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate aquatic and marsh (Triaxus)

Organization solitary or pair

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hot-Blooded (Ex) All cold damage the elmeshra takes is nonlethal damage. Each time it takes cold damage, the elmeshra is staggered until the end of its next turn.

Elmeshras are large six-legged amphibians native to Triaxus. They are omnivorous, eating fish, smaller aquatic animals, and fruit in equal quantity. While elmeshras might seem lethargic, floating calmly with their eyes just above the surface, they are surprisingly quick to act, especially if provoked or when a tempting bit of prey swims too close. Elmeshras tend to eat close to their weight in food every day. They spawn in shallow pools and marshes during Triaxus's summer, and the handful that survive to reach the winter hibernate through it, storing fertilized eggs to release as the weather improves. A typical elmeshra is over 12 feet long and weighs 3,000 pounds.

Before the Gap, it was common for dragons and rhyphorians to dig up the massive amphibians throughout the winter. Their carcasses provided meat for lean winter days, but also elmeshra oil—originally drained from the creature's flesh and extracted chemically—which protected against fatal freezing. Triaxians no longer rely on elmeshras for survival, but elmeshra steaks are still considered a delicacy by certain long-lived dragons, and the oil is often used as an ingredient in high-end perfumes.

On Triaxus, hibernating elmeshras can occasionally be found buried in ice floes, but it's more common to find living versions on other planets. The ease of shipping frozen elmeshras makes them a common animal attraction in zoos and a popular quarry in hunting expeditions across many systems. However, outside of their natural environment, elmeshras engage in frequent cycles of spawning that can rapidly cause ecological blight.

Elmeshra eggs are found clustered in spheres up to 10 feet in diameter and hatch based on the weather. When they finally spring forth, hundreds of elmeshra spawn surge across land and sea alike. These spawn sometimes overwhelm larger animals, especially those still adjusting to the changing season.



GRAY SHELL

CR
13XP
25,600

NE Medium humanoid (gray)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +23**DEFENSE****EAC** 26; **KAC** 27**Fort** +12; **Ref** +12; **Will** +18**Defensive Abilities** incorporeal rider**Weaknesses** vulnerable to acid**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** HFD pulse gauntlet +20 (5d6+14 B & So; critical knockdown)**Ranged** LFD sonic rifle +22 (2d10+13 So; critical deafen [DC 21])**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 13th; ranged +22)1/day—*dominate person* (DC 24), *modify memory* (DC 24)3/day—*confusion* (DC 23), *discern lies* (DC 23), *hold**monster* (DC 23), *mind probe* (DC 23)At will—*deep slumber* (DC 22), *mind thrust* (4th level, DC 22)**STATISTICS****Str** +1; **Dex** +4; **Con** -1; **Int** +8; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +6**Skills** Bluff +28, **Disguise** +28, Sense Motive +23**Languages** Aklo, Common; telepathy 100 ft.**Other Abilities** concealing shell, partial phasing**Gear** platinum AbadarCorp travel suit, HFD pulse gauntlet with 1 battery (20 charges), LFD sonic rifle with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each)**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary, pair, or conspiracy (4–8)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

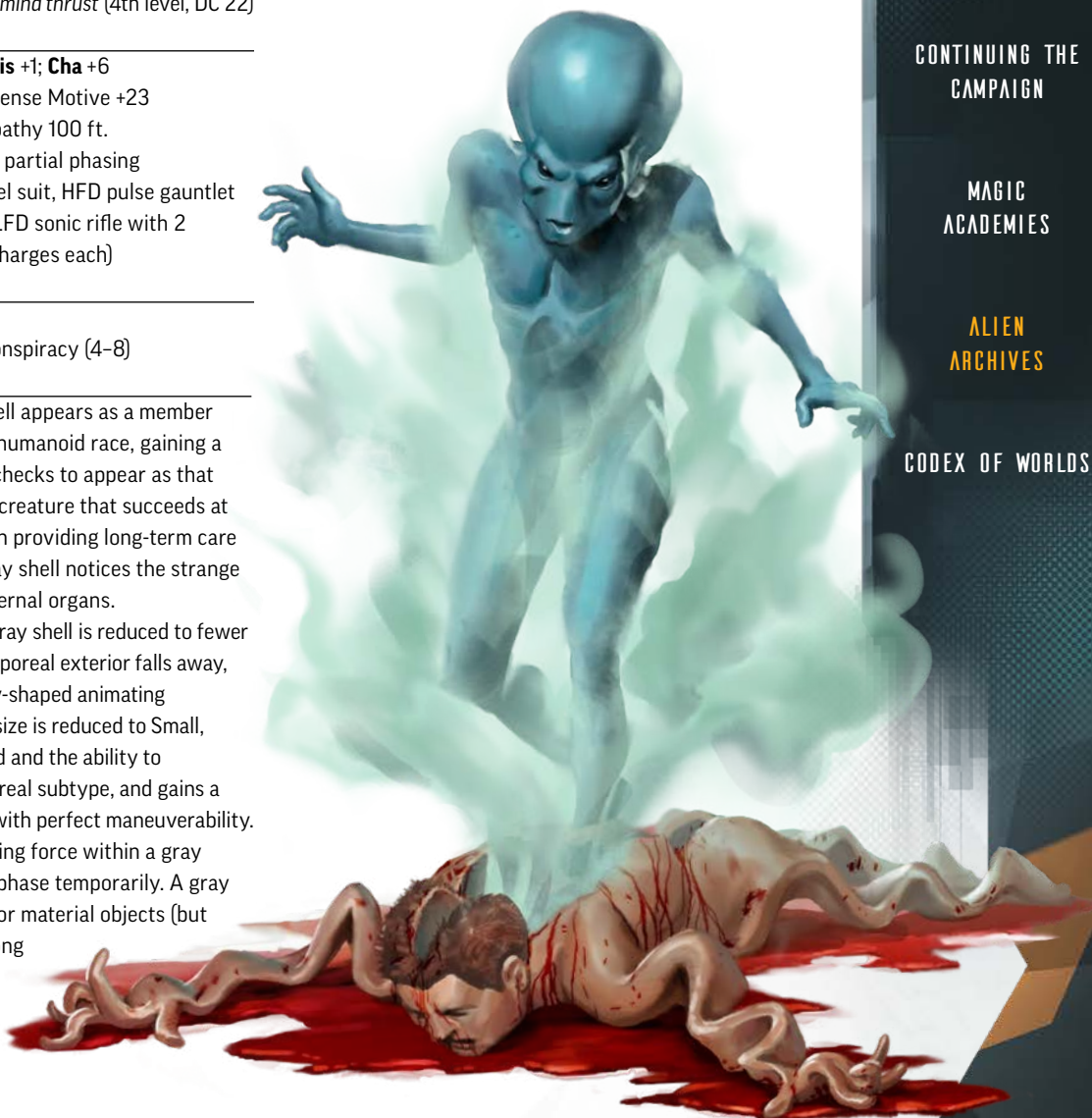
Concealing Shell (Ex) A gray shell appears as a member of a humanoid or monstrous humanoid race, gaining a +10 racial bonus to Disguise checks to appear as that type of creature. However, a creature that succeeds at a DC 30 Medicine check when providing long-term care or long-term stability to a gray shell notices the strange hollowness of many of its internal organs.

Incorporeal Rider (Ex) When a gray shell is reduced to fewer than half its Hit Points, its corporeal exterior falls away, revealing the incorporeal gray-shaped animating force within. The gray shell's size is reduced to Small, it loses its vulnerability to acid and the ability to use its gear, gains the incorporeal subtype, and gains a supernatural fly speed of 30 with perfect maneuverability.

Partial Phasing (Su) The animating force within a gray shell can pull its body out of phase temporarily. A gray shell can pass through walls or material objects (but not corporeal creatures) as long as it begins and ends its turn outside of any wall or obstacle.

As part of their continued efforts to observe other species, a symposium of gray mysteriarchs collaborated to create a clone controlled by a more loyal force than is typical, a creature they call a gray shell. A gray shell has an exterior made of partially living organic material but is animated by an incorporeal gray-shaped being drawn from whatever world or dimension grays call home. These gray shells can be produced to look like nearly any humanoid form in the galaxy and, like the clones grays can engineer, are able to speak languages and exhibit cultural knowledge appropriate to whatever area they are meant to infiltrate. However, to keen onlookers, a gray shell's skin is too smooth, their eyes slightly larger than normal for the species they are imitating.

Gray shells are still mostly experimental and haven't seen much use outside of carefully monitored testing grounds.

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CODEX OF WORLDS

GUARDIAN RHINO

CR
14

XP
38,400



LN Medium monstrous humanoid (shapechanger)

Init +4; **Senses** blindsight (scent) 30 ft.; **Perception** +25

DEFENSE **HP** 215

EAC 27; **KAC** 28

Fort +12; **Ref** +14, **Will** +18

Defensive Abilities magic warrior, regeneration 5 (fire and unholy); **DR** 10/-; **Immune** sleep, stunned; **SR** 25

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +23 (6d6+20 B)

Multiattack 4 unarmed strikes +18 (3d6+20 B)

Ranged magic ray +21 (5d4+14; see text)

Mystic Spells Known (CL 14th)

5th (3/day)—*baleful polymorph* (DC 24), *crush skull* (DC 24)

4th (6/day)—*cosmic eddy* (DC 23), *death ward*, *mystic cure*, *reincarnate*

3rd (at will)—*bestow curse* (DC 22), *dispel magic*

Offensive Abilities ferocious charge

STATISTICS

Str +6; **Dex** +4; **Con** +3; **Int** +2; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +8

Skills Athletics +25, Mysticism +30, Sense Motive +30, Survival +25

Languages Common; telepathy 30 ft.

Other Abilities change shape (rhino), park guardian

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Jatembe Park)

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Shape (Su) When in rhino form, Guardian Rhino's size increases to Large and his speed increases to 40 ft.; his unarmed strike damage changes to inflict bludgeoning and piercing damage and gains the critical effect 2d6 bleed; he also gains the trample ability (4d6+22 B and P, DC 22).

Magic Ray (Su) Guardian Rhino's magic ray has a range of 100 feet and a maximum of five range increments, and does not provoke attacks of opportunity. Each time Guardian Rhino attacks with his magic ray, he chooses whether the ray deals acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic damage. When Guardian Rhino takes a full action to multiattack, he can replace any number of his melee attacks with magic ray attacks that have an attack bonus of +16.

Magic Warrior (Ex) Guardian Rhino does not provoke attacks of opportunity when he casts spells.

Park Guardian (Sp) While within Jatembe Park, Guardian Rhino can cast *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *commune with nature*, and *teleport* as spell-like abilities at will (CL 14th). When he casts *clairaudience/clairvoyance* or *teleport*, the range for these spells is anywhere within Jatembe Park.

Among the greatest of Absalom Station's landmarks, Jatembe Park is known for its many oddities and is the subject of countless ghost tales. Among these is the story of Guardian Rhino, an ancient and immortal creature who is said to have lurked within the park since Absalom Station's construction. Legend states that Guardian Rhino served Old-Mage Jatembe on lost Golarion during the Age of Legends; he appears as a powerfully built man with dark umber skin, archaic clothing, and a ritual mask built from wood and bone to resemble a rhinoceros. Guardian Rhino is said to stalk the park at night, punishing the wicked. When trespassers defile the park or threaten those who belong there, he punishes them with a powerful curse that transforms them into trees.



HUNGERER FROM THE DARK

CR
13XP
25,600

CE Large aberration

Init +4; **Senses** blindsight (thought) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;**Perception** +23**Aura** frightful presence (30 ft., DC 19)**DEFENSE****HP 225 RP 5****EAC** 27; **KAC** 29**Fort** +15; **Ref** +15; **Will** +14**Defensive Abilities** void adaptation; **DR** 10/–**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (Ex, average)**Melee** claws +27 (3d8+21 S; critical severe wound [DC 21] plus consume flesh) or horns +27 (3d12+21 P; critical bleed 2d8) or jaws +27 (3d10+21 P; critical wound [DC 21] plus consume flesh)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Offensive Abilities** predatory instincts**STATISTICS****Str** +8; **Dex** +4; **Con** +6; **Int** +0; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +3**Skills** Acrobatics +28, Athletics +23, Intimidate +23, Stealth +23**Languages** Aklo**Other Abilities** spaceflight (Acrobatics)**ECOLOGY****Environment** vacuum**Organization** solitary**SPECIAL ATTACKS**

Consume Flesh (Ex) When a creature attempts a saving throw against a hungerer from the dark's wound or severe wound critical effect and fails, the hungerer in the dark can spend 1 Resolve Point as a reaction to consume the wounded body part. Upon doing so, the hungerer in the dark heals 9d8+6 points of damage. If this healing exceeds the total amount of Hit Point damage that the hungerer from the dark has taken, it also gains the benefits of a *haste* spell (CL 13th).

Frightful Presence (Ex) When a creature fails a saving throw against the hungerer from the dark's frightful presence, the hungerer can spend 1 Resolve Point as a reaction. If it does, the creature is also paralyzed for 1 round.

Predatory Instincts (Ex) As a swift action, a hungerer from the dark can designate any one humanoid or monstrous humanoid as its prey. Against its prey, a hungerer from the dark can multiattack, making a claws, horns, and jaws attack, each at a –6 penalty. If the hungerer rolls a natural 19 on any of these attacks and hits, it applies its critical hit effect to the target, but does not roll damage twice and add the results together, nor does it double the static damage bonus, as it would on a critical hit. A hungerer

in the dark can only designate one target as its prey at a time.

At home in the depths of space where starlight is but a memory, creatures known as hungerers from the dark soar from world to world on bat-like wings, driven by their insatiable appetites for humanoid flesh. While intelligent, these creatures are so spurred by their incessant cravings that they care little for tactics or subtlety, preferring violent ambushes that quickly overwhelm their prey.



PUPPETS WITHOUT STRINGS

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THE MAKER

CODE: RLS

MEMORY MUCK

CR
9

XP
6,400



CN Tiny ooze

Init +6; **Senses** blindsight (emotion) 60 ft., sightless;

Perception +17

DEFENSE

HP 165

EAC 19; **KAC** 21

Fort +13; **Ref** +9; **Will** +8

Immunities ooze immunities

Weaknesses vulnerable to *modify memory*

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Melee slam +21 (2d6+12 A plus memory residue [DC 16])

STATISTICS

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

Other Abilities compression, mindless, recall

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or story (2-5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Memory Residue (Su) A memory muck's strikes are charged with hundreds of memory fragments from dozens of minds. A creature struck by a memory muck's slam attack must succeed at a DC 16 Will saving throw or be overwhelmed by these sensations, becoming confused for 1 round. During this time, attacks from the memory muck that imparted this confusion don't cause the confused target to automatically attack the memory muck. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Recall (Su) As a move action, a memory muck can momentarily slip through the Astral Plane to materialize in a creature's space. The target must have an Intelligence score and be within the range of the memory muck's blindsight. As a reaction, the target can attempt a DC 28 Bluff check to imagine false memories, redirecting the memory muck to a random empty adjacent square; use the rules for missing with a thrown weapon (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 245) to determine this square. This is a mind-affecting teleportation effect.

Vulnerable to Modify Memory (Su) A memory muck can be targeted by *modify memory* despite being mindless. If a memory muck fails its saving throw against this spell, it is instantly destroyed.

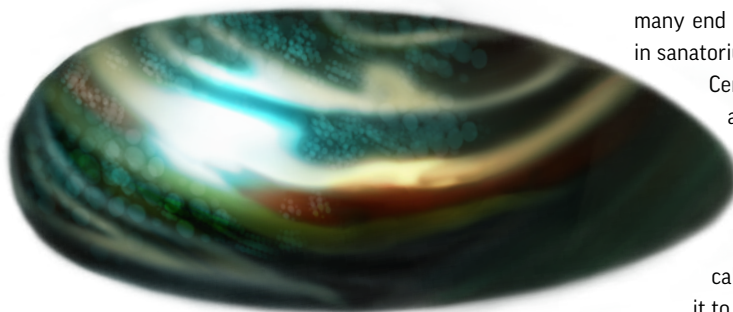
When a creature's memories are removed or altered, a faint psychic residue forms on the Astral Plane. Normally, such small deposits are of little note, eventually dissipating harmlessly. However, in places where minds are violated regularly (such as in the operating theaters of gray facilities), this residue can build up and push its way onto the Material Plane to form colorful, unthinking oozes known as memory mucks.

These tiny creatures often have an instinctive fear of the beings whose memory-modifying magic or technology created them. Thanks to their size and composition, they can easily hide in the shadows and even slip through small cracks in the walls to move between chambers like vermin. Grays, for example, take little notice of memory mucks, only exterminating those oozes that become a large nuisance or damage abductees.

Occasionally, a gray scientist will capture a handful of memory mucks to study their formation and their connection to the Astral Plane, attempting to separate out a specific creature's memories with complex centrifuge-like machines. Invariably, this leads to the memory mucks' destruction, leaving behind only a faint shimmering film of concentrated psychic energy that the grays have yet to find a use for, though some believe it could be weaponized.

The clergy of certain deities (such as Eloritu, Talavet, and Yaraesa) pay more attention to memory mucks, sometimes deliberately seeking out what others would consider living waste. They too believe that if these oozes are properly examined, important historical facts can be gleaned from their makeup. Some fringe archaeologists even go so far as to use memory-altering magic on themselves while camped out at sites they are studying in the hopes of creating memory mucks that are infused with the thoughts of the area's previous inhabitants. These scholars believe they can unlock important mysteries of the past in this way, but many end up damaging their minds instead and ending up in sanatoriums.

Certain mystics have theorized the existence of a star-sized memory muck somewhere in the universe that holds those memories lost due to the Gap, and have spent their lives chasing rumors of this titanic ooze. Others scoff at such obviously doomed endeavors, as most calculations suggest the muck's mass would cause it to collapse into a black hole.



SPOOKFISH SWARM

CR
16XP
76,800

NE Tiny undead (incorporeal, swarm)

Init +10; **Senses** blindsense (scent) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;**Perception** +28**DEFENSE**

HP 275

EAC 30; **KAC** 32**Fort** +18; **Ref** +18; **Will** +16**Defensive Abilities** incorporeal, swarm defenses;**Immunities** undead immunities**OFFENSE****Speed** fly 40 ft. (Su, average)**Melee** swarm attack (3d10+15 C)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.**Offensive Abilities** distraction (DC 22), whelming curse (DC 22)**STATISTICS****Str** -1; **Dex** +10; **Con** -; **Int** -4; **Wis** +7; **Cha** -2**Skills** Acrobatics +28, Stealth +28, Survival +28**Other Abilities** unliving**ECOLOGY****Environment** warm land (Akition)**Organization** solitary or school (2-4)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Whelming Curse (Su) As a standard action, the spookfish swarm lashes out into a disorienting frenzy of flashing fins and ghostly currents around a creature within its space. That creature must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or be afflicted by the curse of the depths (see below). A creature that has a swim speed or that doesn't need to breathe gains a +2 circumstance bonus on this save.

CURSE OF THE DEPTHS**Type** curse; **Save** Will DC 22

Effect The victim feels as though they are standing in chest-high water, no matter their current environment. The victim counts all terrain as difficult terrain and must spend 20 feet of movement to move 5 feet (and the victim can't attempt to swim through this illusory water). When the victim rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll, they feel as though they have been fully submerged in water and must hold their breath or begin drowning (regardless of the availability of breathable air or any equipment that would normally allow them to breathe underwater); creatures that don't need to breathe are immune to this effect. At the start of each subsequent round, the victim can attempt a Will saving throw to end the drowning effect of this curse.

Cure The victim must spend 1 week fully submerged underwater; they can use equipment to breathe, but spending time in a submersible vehicle or domed underwater facility or settlement does not meet this requirement.

Explorers and wanderers sometimes return from their ventures in the galaxy's wild and lonely places with chilling ghost stories or wondrous "big fish" tales. Prospectors and outlaws brave enough to travel the ancient seabed of Akition's arid Irkonian Sea sometimes come back with a bit of both. They speak of dreamlike beings that haunt the barren gorges and desert flats, apparitions from the bottom of a prehistoric ocean who drift and swim through the air. The most terrifying of these marine phantasms is known simply as the spookfish; though individually tiny, they rise from the sand in bloodthirsty swarms of flashing scales and serrated teeth. Each spectral fish is dotted with false eyespots along its flanks; this defensive camouflage has proven utterly disorienting to those hapless souls caught in a spookfish swarm.

Akitonian archaeologists have unearthed fossils of creatures with a physiology that matches the spookfish, and some speculate that the impact of a meteor evaporated the Irkonian Sea and obliterated the entire species in one fateful instant. Some victims relate a strange curse inflicted by these swarming aquatic ghosts. Innocent travelers report feeling slowly engulfed by steadily rising (though unseen) water—as though an entire spectral ocean was rising up in retribution.

PUPPETS WITHOUT
STRINGSPART 1:
ABSALOM'S
SHADOWPART 2:
NO MORE MASKSPART 3:
MEETING
YOUR MAKERCONTINUING THE
CAMPAIGNMAGIC
ACADEMIESALIEN
ARCHIVES

CODEX OF WORLDS

CODEx OF WORLDS

NERRALEN

Technologically Advanced Satellite

Diameter: x1/5; **Mass:** x1/10

Gravity: x1/2

Location: Mobile

Atmosphere: Normal

Day: 24 hours; **Year:** variable

This large satellite is often found near planets whose populations are in the process of making a significant technological innovation. While it usually appears as a normal moon of lifeless rock, scans of Nerralen suggest it to be hollow. Most sensors cannot probe beneath the surface, and few know its true nature: Nerralen is home to a vibrant community of advanced technomancers who use their arts to teleport the moon throughout the galaxy, moving from the orbit of one world to another. Through their magic, these technomancers can give Nerralen any appearance they desire, fooling even technologically advanced cultures.

The technomancers who guide Nerralen keep to small or less-traveled star systems, usually in the Vast. Their own magic is amplified by hybrid technology deep within the moon itself,

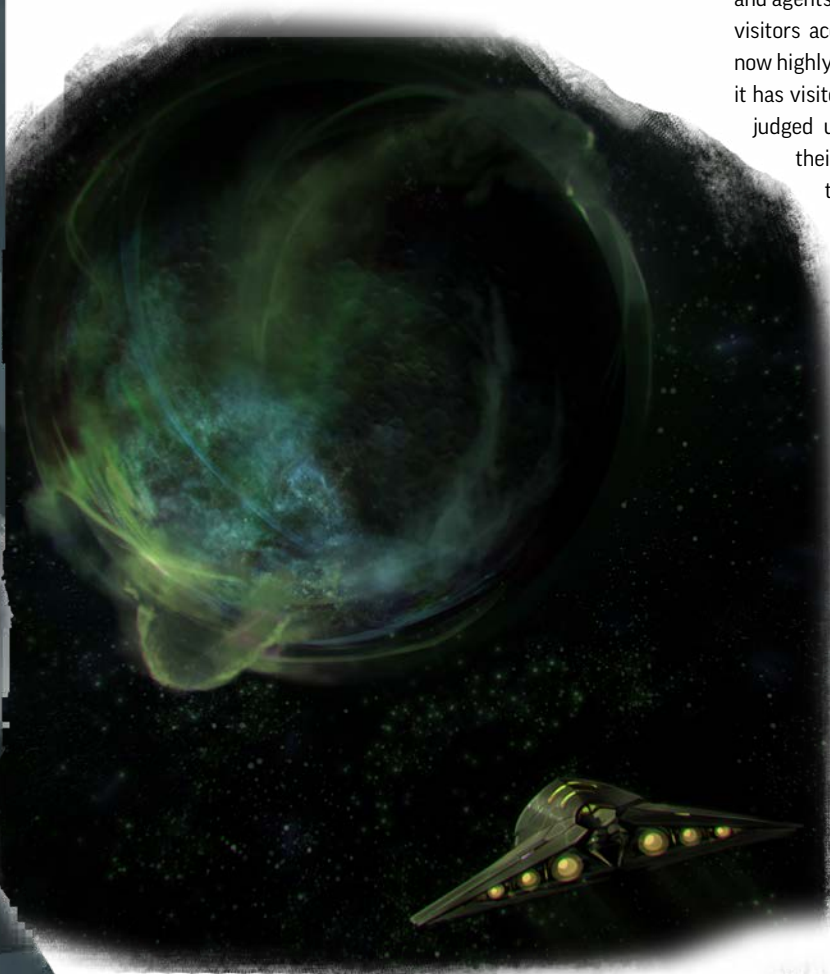
teleporting Nerralen from one orbit to another as necessary. The guides who steer Nerralen seem to pick worlds where technology is making a dramatic leap forward, or where a new innovation is changing lifestyle and culture.

Most of Nerralen's inhabitants dwell in its hollow interior, provided with light, heat, and power by a tiny artificial sun. Aqueduct systems redirect water from a small inner sea. Indeed, everything required to sustain life is provided by Nerralen itself, which also houses a menagerie of alien life collected from the worlds it has visited, many of which have gone extinct in their original habitat. Vast halls and a maze of smaller chambers and corridors cover the rest of the moon, filled with technology acquired from countless worlds, each used in innovative ways to create devices and capabilities found nowhere else. Powerful sensors enable the inhabitants of Nerralen to closely observe the world they are orbiting, as well as monitor other planets they've visited or might return to.

When Nerralen arrives in orbit around a planet, the inhabitants of the target world often send exploratory vessels to learn more about the new satellite. If these explorers are deemed worthy, they are brought aboard Nerralen and offered a chance to join the cabal of technomancers, military leaders, and agents who investigate target worlds in deep cover. Many visitors accept this offer, and the population of Nerralen is now highly diverse, made up of inhabitants from all the worlds it has visited over many years. Those who refuse, or who are judged unworthy of a meeting, are returned home with

their memories of Nerralen erased. A few worlds, home to regular scientific advancements and frequently visited by Nerralen, believe it to be native to the Astral or Ethereal Plane, a malevolent harbinger that captures scientists and inventors.

Nerralen avoids close inspection from the populations it visits by obscuring itself with high-technology screens; when anyone truly threatens it, the cabal of technomancers who guide the moon simply teleport it to a new orbit around a distant world. Nerralen rarely comes anywhere near the Pact Worlds or other highly-developed star systems, since these societies pose a reasonable threat to its way of life. A century ago, it appeared around Verces, and many scientists from Kashak joined Nerralen's community at that time; soon thereafter, Nerralen's range expanded significantly, and it was spotted orbiting planets where it had never been seen before. The guides of Nerralen have not since risked a visit to such a large, populous, and well-trafficked planet, and now the moon only visits worlds far from most Drift beacons.



NEXT MONTH

WAKING THE WORLDSEED

By Jenny Jarzabski

The heroes are asked to rescue a xenoarcheological team from an ancient ruin on the frozen world of Jedarat. In doing so, they kick off a series of events that could change the face of the galaxy forever. Among the secrets of a long-dead civilization, they discover technology somehow connected to a Liavaran moon called Hibb. Returning to the Pact Worlds, the heroes explore a previously unseen facility under Hibb's surface that threatens to overheat and melt the moon. As they attempt to shut down the facility, the PCs learn that the moon is calling out to another craft quickly approaching the system that might contain members of an ancient evil empire in stasis!

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By Mikhail Rekun

This seemingly uninteresting moon orbiting Liavara was the focus of attention when spiraling towers rose from the surface and released the wheeled creatures known as bantrids. Learn more about this strange moon and its amnesiac inhabitants.

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PUPPETS WITHOUT
STRINGS

PART 1:
ABSALOM'S
SHADOW

PART 2:
NO MORE MASKS

PART 3:
MEETING
YOUR MAKER

CONTINUING THE
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MAGIC
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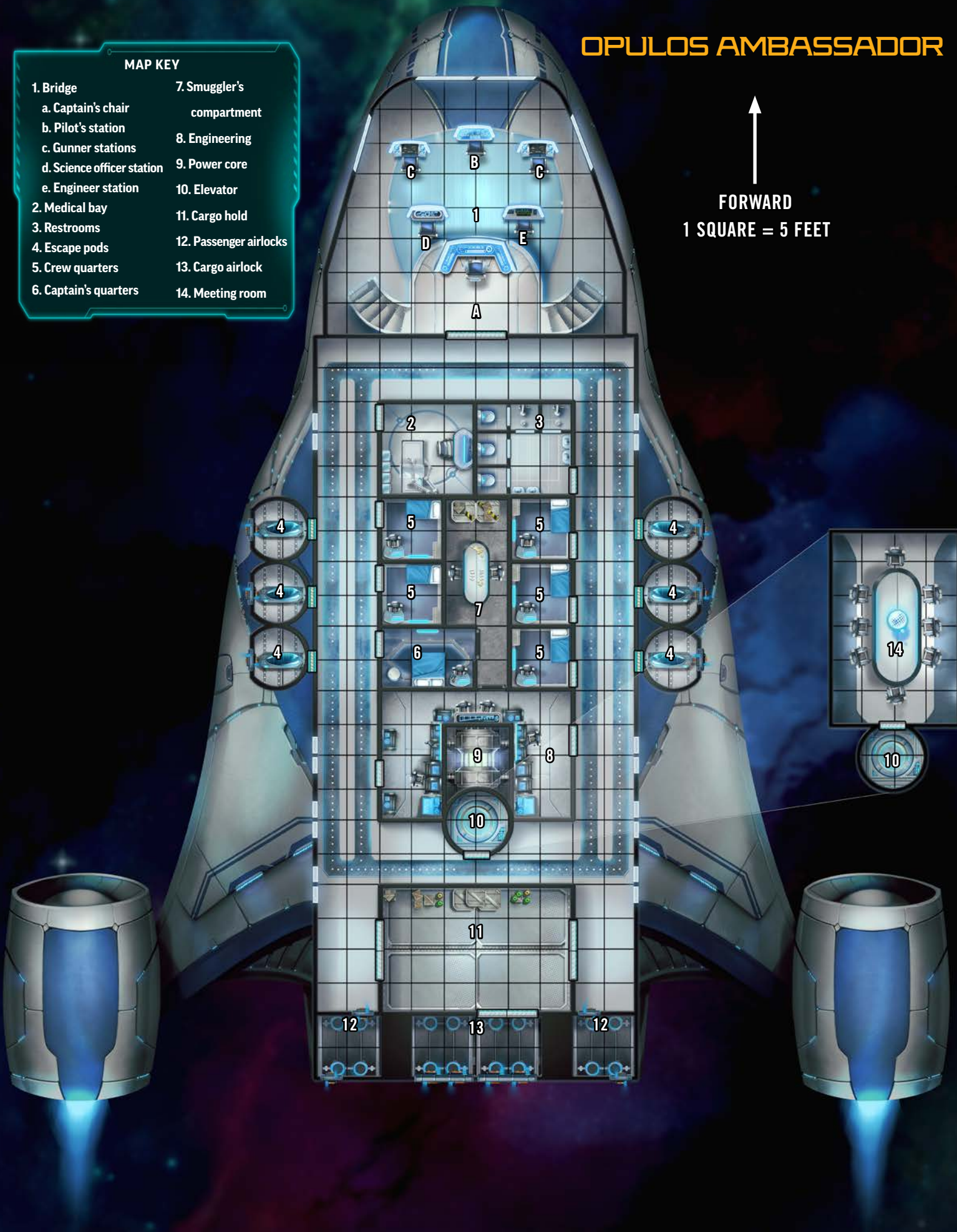
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OPULOS AMBASSADOR

MAP KEY

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Bridge | 7. Smuggler's compartment |
| a. Captain's chair | |
| b. Pilot's station | 8. Engineering |
| c. Gunner stations | 9. Power core |
| d. Science officer station | 10. Elevator |
| e. Engineer station | 11. Cargo hold |
| 2. Medical bay | 12. Passenger airlocks |
| 3. Restrooms | 13. Cargo airlock |
| 4. Escape pods | 14. Meeting room |
| 5. Crew quarters | |
| 6. Captain's quarters | |

↑
FORWARD
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET





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