

TITANSGRAVE



THE HERMIT'S ROAD



AN ADVENTURE
SCENARIO FOR

FANTASY
AGE

THE HERMIT'S ROAD



The Hermit's Road is a *Titansgrave* adventure for characters of level 2-4, wherein the Player Characters (PCs) are sent to investigate the existence of purported pre-Cataclysm ruins on the outskirts of the City-State of Karros (see *Titansgrave: The Ashes of Valkana*, page 15). According to rumors, the ruins are filled with treasures, and their location is known only to a very old golem hermit called Verdigris. The PCs must find Verdigris, convince the golem to reveal the ruins' location, and then explore the ruins for the riches they are said to contain. In so doing, the PCs discover more than they bargained for, as the ruins hide a secret more valuable than gold or jewels.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The first step of the adventure requires the PCs to locate Verdigris, the golem hermit, and convince it to reveal the location of the pre-Cataclysm ruins. Though Verdigris appears to be harmless and is a hospitable host, it has needs that must be fulfilled before it can reveal such details. The PCs can choose to coerce the golem in whatever manner they wish, though choosing a peaceful or diplomatic route is likely to have the best results.

Once the entrance to the ruins has been revealed, there is only a short hike required to reach them. Gaining access might present the PCs with some trouble, depending on how their parley with Verdigris was handled, but once inside they discover a series of jagged caves that lead deep into the rocky, igneous earth. The path evens out eventually, leading the PCs to a dimly-lit cavern replete with crumbling stone walls and signs of an ancient civilization.

While exploring the ruins, the adventurers find a faded mural depicting a map upon one of the crumbling walls. The map seems to indicate that a northerly course leads to the City-State of Karros itself, completely bypassing the defensive measures established by the Triumvirate in the years since the Chaos Wars. If it exists, this secret road would be valuable for anyone wishing to enter or leave Karros without attracting the attention of its rulers.

The northerly route, once investigated, leads the PCs deeper underground and through several switchbacks and defensive barriers that appear to be unmanned. Along the way,

automated defense turrets set up as traps provide the PCs with a life-or-death situation that must be dealt with. Beyond the turrets, the road opens up into a wider corridor, eventually leading to an undercroft beneath Karros.

Though quiet and seemingly devoid of life, this final antechamber is far from uninhabited. Chaos Wars-era defense drones, left behind long ago to secure the entrance to the ruins, activate and attempt to drive the PCs back. Should the adventurers overcome the drones, their efforts are rewarded by a passage leading into the sewers of Karros. What the PCs do with this information is up to them.

THE UNKNOWN TRUTH

Though stories the PCs have heard may indicate the origin of the ruins is decidedly pre-Cataclysm, the fact is that they are part of a golem manufactory created during the Chaos Wars. The manufactory was a laboratory where the technology of creating golems was researched and perfected, and many of the earliest of Karros' golems were "born" there.

Verdigris, the hermit, is representative of the earliest of Karros' golem designs. While it isn't perfect, it remains (mostly) functional, and its ability to survive for so long with minimal repairs is a testament to the skill of Karros' scientists and mages during the Chaos Wars. Though the manufactory was sealed off following a violent earthquake 400 years ago, the tremor also created at least one unexpected entry into (or, in Verdigris' case, exit from) the golem manufactory.

GETTING THE PCs INVOLVED

The Hermit's Road assumes the PCs have been together as a party for some time. For new groups who are about to embark on their first adventure together, the GM must find some way to tie them together and set them upon their path. Some examples of starting points are described here, though the GM and players may have ideas of their own.

FOR HIRE

The PCs are hired by a group or individual to follow up on tales of the golem hermit living in the hills south of Karros. Their employer may be an independent citizen looking to make a profit,





or perhaps an agent from one of the city-states with more knowledge of the situation than he lets on. In either case, this benefactor promises the PCs a cut of the treasure, as well as a fixed fee for finding the hermit and learning where the ruins are located.

SELF-MOTIVATED

It's also possible the PCs have learned about the golem hermit themselves and have decided to investigate the rumor of the ruins independently. They may have learned about the hermit and the ruins as part of a prior adventure, though it's also possible one of the Player Characters was given the information by a friend or relative and has possessed the knowledge for some time. In either case, their expedition is likely self-funded unless they can secure financial backing elsewhere.

Unless they are particularly careful about discussing their current goals, the PCs should be on the lookout for unsavory groups and individuals who aim to make a profit off their endeavors. For instance, agents of Karros who learn of the PCs' destination might very well follow them, for good or ill. Such intrigues are beyond the scope of this adventure, and it is up to the game master to integrate them as he sees fit.

A HAPPY ACCIDENT

It may also be that the PCs stumble upon the golem hermit's abode quite by accident as they travel overland. The golem's abode is a curious distraction from the surrounding country, and any *real* adventurers would be remiss if they didn't explore it. In finding Verdigris and learning of the ruins, self-motivated characters can discover a worthwhile diversion from the tedious nature of traveling through the wilderness.

PROLOGUE

THE HERMIT'S ABODE

Whether the PCs have set out in search of the golem hermit on purpose, or stumble upon his demesne while traveling through the wild lands south of Karros and west of the Tensile River, they find themselves in a secluded valley with a slow-moving, brackish stream running its length. Read or paraphrase the following:

A strange, tinkling noise carries on the breeze that blows up from the shallow valley before you. Reminiscent of wind chimes, the noise is an eerie companion to the sound of a slow-flowing creek that runs from the narrow valley's cradle. The creek, which is shallow and brackish, smells slightly of sulfur and does not appear safe for drinking. Hardy underbrush clings to the valley's rocky floor and slopes, hiding any path that might present an easier way to traverse the broken ground.

As you move through the undergrowth, the sounds of tinkling grow louder. Looking above and around you, you notice that bits of tarnished metal and fragments of milky glass have been strung from the branches of bushes and low-lying trees. Blown by the breeze, they collide with one another making a creepy clinking sound that only intensifies as you move through the foliage.

Though you've obviously set off some manner of primitive alarm, no hostiles appear to challenge you as you continue onward. The dense bushes give way to a clear, sandy path that follows the stream further into the valley. After fifty feet, you see a small, ramshackle hut fashioned from scraps of wood, rusty metal sheets, and ragged canvas tarps.

This is Verdigris' all-too humble abode, and the old golem is within, sorting through a new batch of rubbish in search of

spare parts. It has heard the PCs coming, thanks to the simple alarm system it has rigged within the valley's foliage, unless they have taken measures to avoid making any noise at all during their approach. When they advance to within ten feet of the hut, read or paraphrase the following:

A mechanical voice from within the hut calls out, "Nothing to fear in here, I assure you." There is a stuttering, staticky noise, akin to a cough, then the voice returns. "Come in, so I can cast my optics upon you."

ENVIRONS: THE HERMIT'S HUT AND VALLEY

Verdigris has lived in its hut for so long, even it can't remember how many years ago it left Karros behind. The hut has seen a number of incarnations, but the rickety golem has always erected it on the same spot throughout the centuries. As time passes, the construction slowly evolves as Verdigris adds new materials in a constant effort to renovate, recycle, and improve. In fact, the appearance of the dwelling changes slightly from week to week, and from month to month it appears to be completely different than it was before.

The area surrounding the hut has been cleared of foliage and is stacked with all manner of refuse and junk, which Verdigris refers to as "raw materials." The golem was once a builder, and it hasn't been able to overcome its directive to create new things. Given the lack of proper materials and tools, most of its efforts are unsuccessful. Despite this, Verdigris never shows any signs of disappointment. The joy seems to lie in the actions taken, whether they are fruitful or not.

Beyond the hut, the short valley follows the length of the creek. The water, tainted with heavy metals and the remnants of ancient chemicals, isn't fit for drinking. In fact, the creek's source is within the very ruins that Verdigris combs for baubles and refuse, which it has continued to keep (mostly) secret for generations. It remembers emerging from the ruins long ago, but can hardly recall why it came to be there in the first place. All it knows is that it was fleeing from a great terror, but cannot remember any other specifics.

SCENE 1

TIT FOR TAT

Roleplaying Encounter

Verdigris has recently returned to its hut following an expedition further upstream. While there, it collected a large sack of junk and is now methodically sorting through it. The golem is constantly searching for bits and bobs that it can use to construct new items, though the use of such things is questionable. Some might consider it to be art, but most people would dismiss it out of hand as random garbage.

What the golem is really searching for is spare parts. Though created long ago as an engineer, Verdigris has been unable to maintain its own bronze physique. Its joints and internal workings are growing more and more delicate, and it fears

VERDIGRIS

Abilities (Focuses)					
2	Accuracy (Brawling)				
2	Communication (Bargaining)				
4	Constitution (Stamina)				
1	Dexterity				
1	Fighting				
3	Intelligence (Engineering, Historical Lore)				
1	Perception (Seeing)				
2	Strength				
3	Willpower (Self-Discipline)				
Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating		
11	40	11	5		
Weapon	Attack Roll		Damage		
Manipulator	+4		1d6+2		
Volt Field	Special		2d6		
Special Features					
FAVORED STUNTS: Defensive Stance, Disarm					
VOLT FIELD: While in Defense Stance, Verdigris channels electricity over its chassis. Any enemy that hits Verdigris while it is benefiting from Defensive Stance suffers 2d6 electrical damage.					
WEAPON GROUPS: Brawling					
EQUIPMENT: Rickety hut, tools, various bits of junk					
MYSTERIOUS GOLEM HERMIT					

that it is only a matter of time before it is crippled completely by its inevitable decrepitude.

As the PCs enter the golem's hut, they see it sorting through a pile of metal pieces. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

Stepping into the hut, you see a man-sized golem wearing a threadbare and grease-stained brown robe. The golem's face is featureless apart from two luminous viridian eyes, and it appears to be crafted from copper and bronze. The metal of the golem's skin is green with verdigris, and its arms and legs whir and whine painfully as it rummages through what appears to be a pile of rubbish.

The golem rotates its head around and affixes you with its glowing green eyes. "Ah, so there you are. I will be with you in a moment," it says before returning to its work.

The adventurers can speak to Verdigris once they are inside the hut, but it answers in monosyllables so long as it's engrossed in its work. Assuming the PCs don't unduly interrupt it, the golem finishes its sorting after another two or three minutes. If they continue to pester it, it asks them to wait outside. Though the golem is incredibly patient, even it has limits. Once it has completed its task, Verdigris straightens up and faces the PCs.

Verdigris gets very few visitors. Despite being somewhat reluctant to entertain strangers, the golem is nonetheless



lonely and longs for conversation, if not companionship. It begins the encounter using simple phrasing, but as the interaction continues and the conversation evolves, Verdigris becomes much more verbose. It is obvious to anyone with any empathy that the golem is enjoying the conversation, no matter which direction it takes.

WHAT VERDIGRIS WANTS

If the PCs approach the golem hermit concerning the location of the ruins, it clucks its proverbial tongue and nods. If, on the other hand, the PCs have merely stumbled upon Verdigris and its domicile on accident, it decides to put them to good use. In either case, it makes the PCs an offer. Read or paraphrase the following:

"Long have I dwelled here and my body has grown fragile. What benefit is being a golem if I cannot enjoy my relative immortality? You seek adventure, and treasure, and secrets, do you? I ask only one thing in exchange – the parts necessary to repair my body. If you swear to provide me with such trifles, I shall divulge the secret I have kept for many hundreds of years."

If the PCs agree to help Verdigris by supplying it with new parts, the golem nods solemnly, before stating the following:

"Know that you are not the first I have sent on this perilous expedition. Others have gone and never come back, I know not why. Are you bound to succeed? I cannot say. But if you do, I shall await your return until such time as your end is beyond doubt."

"Follow the valley, against the flow of the stream, until you reach the crumbling stones that come from within. Climb the stones, if you can, and brave the crevasse that leads into the deep ground. From there you may see signs of my passage, but I cannot go too far for fear of... serpents. And I fear I have found all that is worth finding in those places I have thus far dared to venture."

As the golem is enjoying the conversation, it makes no attempt to end the discourse and send the adventurers on their way. Should they grow weary of the parley, they must find some way to extricate themselves in order to continue on their way. If they don't, Verdigris continues to talk their ears off, primarily with idle chit chat and small talk.

Canny PCs might take advantage of the golem's chatty nature to ask a few pointed questions. The golem tries to answer them as best as it can, fearing that if it can't, they may grow bored and leave. As mentioned, Verdigris can't remember much of its past beyond the life it has eeked out in the valley since it emerged from the ground.

If asked about its own forays into the buried city, it shrugs. Any character succeeding on a **TN 10 COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)** test convinces the golem to reveal that it is fearful of the serpents living in the depths of the earth. If pressed further, Verdigris describes the serpents as creatures that can drain the life from their victims. *"I have precious little life to give them,"* the golem mutters before attempting to change the subject.

ALTERNATE METHODS OF COERCION

Verdigris responds well to reasoned discussion, even if its guests are obviously attempting to be deceptive. If the conversation takes on a threatening tone, the golem clams up and refuses to reveal anything of further value. PCs who seem ready and willing to make good on any threats can goad the golem into revealing the entrance to the subterranean ruins, but Verdigris feigns ignorance of any dangers that might be encountered within them.

Some tech-minded characters might offer to help repair Verdigris' aging mechanisms. If they seem sincere and capable, the golem allows them to inspect his systems. A successful **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** test indicates that replacement of parts, rather than repair, is the only cure for Verdigris' ills. If the test is a failure, the PC isn't even sure what he's looking at insofar as the golem's anatomy is concerned.

GOODBYE AND GOOD FORTUNE

When the PCs finally decide to leave, the golem follows them outside so long as the overall interaction was favorable. Read or paraphrase the following:

"The old golem imitates clearing its throat as it follows you out of the hut. "I have so enjoyed our discourse. Please, allow me to provide you with some trifles that may aid you in your search for my spare parts." With that, Verdigris kneels down painfully near a pile of junk and reveals a rusting box crafted from iron.

"The golem stands and offers the box to you, its green eyes expressionless. "With my compliments," it says.

The box is unlocked and not trapped. Within, the PCs find two tarnished flashlights, along with two Fulgin M batteries with three charges each. Whether the PCs accept the gifts or not, the golem wishes them good fortune. *"After all,"* it says, *"My continued functionality depends upon your success."*

SCENE 2

ON THE DOORSTEP OF ETERNITY

Exploration Encounter

Once they are done dealing with Verdigris, the PCs are free to follow his directions. The further they follow the stream, the more jagged and unstable the sides of the valley become until it turns into a claustrophobic gorge. Aside from the creek, which grows into a shallow stream the closer one gets to its source, a well-worn path – created by Verdigris' constant treks up and down the valley – is the only other distinguishing feature. Bits of metal and shards of glass and ceramic litter the trail, indicating that the flow of water was at one point much more aggressive.

The path ends at a pile of sharp stones and boulders that have seemingly been pushed out from the ground by some unimaginable force. Cracks and fissures between the rocks emit the brackish water that trickles down noisily to form the creek bed.

GOLEM MANUFACTORY



The manufactory is a pre-Cataclysm ruin.
Within, it is strewn with debris and rubble.
Syphon Serpents are indigenous to the area.
For more information, [TAP HERE](#)

Warning: Scans detect high energy levels deep within the manufactory.



Scan

7.75m



Afraid you may come under attack by Syphon Serpents and your interactive parchment may fail? Order a new one now from the Ritkin-Siert Alliance. [TAP HERE](#)

A successful TN 11 PERCEPTION (SEARCH) test reveals a larger crack about fifteen feet above the floor of the gorge which spits out the lion's share of the contaminated water flowing into the creek. The crack is of such a size that anyone of human height or less would have little trouble squeezing inside, but reaching it requires a successful TN 13 STRENGTH (CLIMBING) test.

Once the PCs are inside the crack, the narrow passageway continues at a relatively even level. Only one character can move forward at a time, and there is no room to move past those who are either in front or behind. It is also impossible to follow the passage without being soaked by the contaminated water, but it causes no ill effects to the PCs in the short term.

After nearly 75 yards, the PCs come to a spot where a series of old, corroded metal pipes spew forth a torrent of dingy liquid. Because the pipes emerge some distance from the ceiling, the passage is narrower and moving past the pipes requires a successful TN 11 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) test. Anyone who fails is unable to move forward. Companions can assist by either pushing or pulling the affected character through the tight space and this grants a +2 bonus on the test.

With the pipes behind them, the passageway grows somewhat drier before it starts to slope downwards at a slight angle. After another sixty yards of descent, the tunnel opens up into a larger chamber. Read or paraphrase the following:

You find yourselves in a vaulted chamber littered with rubble. The jagged ceiling above your heads, nearly out of sight in the gloom, gives way to a smoother finish as you move away from the tunnel. The ground here appears to have been disturbed recently, and piles of rubbish and stone have been placed at regular intervals around the chamber as if someone has been organizing them. A single corridor leads to the west.

As indicated by the sorted piles of stones and garbage, Verdigris has been here on numerous occasions searching for spare parts and other treasures. What remains scattered about is largely worthless, a testament to the golem's methodical nature. The PCs may attempt to search for valuables here, but even a cursory look reveals that nothing of value remains.

THE WESTWARD CORRIDOR

The corridor leading from the vaulted antechamber is clear of debris, likely due to Verdigris' ministrations. The walls and floor are of polished stone, and it measures eight feet in both height and width. The walls are occasionally cracked, but otherwise appear to be quite stable. Like the antechamber, the corridor appears to be well-traveled.

EMPTY ROOMS (4)

The corridor connects to four rooms of various sizes. From the looks of things, each room was equipped with a door that has since been removed, and all interior furnishings have either been taken or destroyed. Just like the antechamber, the ruined furnishings in these rooms have been neatly organized and placed in piles. Most of the items in the piles of refuse were crafted from stone and metal, and consist of chairs, tables, and raised platforms (beds). There is nothing further to be found in these rooms.

ASSEMBLY HALL

As the PCs continue on for another hundred feet, they notice that the further they travel from the antechamber, the less well-traveled the corridor appears to be. It is obvious that



Verdigris rarely comes this far, as rubble and other detritus are scattered rather than carefully organized and sorted.

The corridor stops at a pair of doors made from a strong, light metal alloy. Two large ornamental handles crafted from the same alloy allow the doors to be pulled open. The doors' ancient hinges whine in protest when they are opened, and the unsettling sound echoes down the corridor for several moments before silence overtakes it.

Read or paraphrase the following when the party enters the Assembly Hall:

Beyond the double doors is a large room furnished with metal tables and chairs, most of which have collapsed with age or been knocked over. The ceiling is 20 feet high and masked in shadows. Dust and stones litter the floor, and an occasional glint of metal reflects your lights. Given the presence of rusting tools amongst the rubble, it appears as if this was some sort of assembly room or machine shop.

Another set of double doors along one wall leads north, in addition to a single passageway along the west wall.

Adventurers who succeed on a **TN 12 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test notice a number of silver cables hanging from the ceiling at odd intervals. Any character succeeding with a degree of success of 5 or higher can see the cables moving ever so slightly.

Assuming the PCs don't disturb the cables in some way, they are able to advance into the great hall unhindered. If they do decide to mess with the cables, proceed immediately to **Scene 3: Serpents on the Ceiling**. Otherwise, examination of the debris on the floor proves that this was a crafting room or machine shop of some kind. Corroded tools and pieces of metal and other materials are littered about, along with tiny gears and rivet-like fasteners.

Though it isn't immediately obvious what was being constructed here, inquisitive PCs are rewarded when they find a clockwork hand assembly similar to Verdigris' manipulators. Many other pieces and parts can be recovered for the golem, should the PCs wish to collect them, but it is obvious that the old golem needs more than a new pair of hands to return to full functionality.

If any of the PCs are carrying or using powered items, such as blasters, power weapons, or the flashlights given to them by Verdigris, jump immediately to **Scene 3: Serpents on the Ceiling**. Otherwise, the party can continue to explore the remainder of the ruins unmolested.

EQUIPMENT STORAGE

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter this room:

You stand in what appears to have served as a storage room for tools. Metal shelves fill the room, most of them overturned or hanging from the walls. The chamber is further cluttered by rusting and corroded tools of all kinds.

This room, which appears to have been used to store various kinds of tools, contains several metal shelves, most of which have collapsed due to some ancient seismic event. Most of the

containers once kept on the shelves have been smashed, their rusting contents spilled out across the floor. A fair number of tools can be collected from the floor, but their corroded condition results in dubious reliability if they are used for actual work.

PCs who choose to search the room, and who succeed at a **TN 12 Perception (Search)** test, locate three unopened metal containers of varying sizes. Each container contains a different set of tools—one suited for fine mechanical work, one designed for general repair and upkeep of mechanical items, and a third relating to metalwork.

PRODUCTION CORRIDOR

When the PCs enter the Production Corridor, read or paraphrase the following:

Opening the second set of double doors reveals a wide corridor cluttered with cracked stones and the crushed bodies of several golems. The stone floor is uneven in spots, making your footing treacherous. Partially-completed golems, similar in appearance to Verdigris, hang eerily from hooks attached to the walls. Though you expect them to move, they remain as silent as death.

You see another pair of double doors, broken and hanging askew from their hinges, at the other end of the corridor, as well as a single door along the eastern wall.

The double doors leading north from the Assembly Hall connect to a wide corridor. The walls here are equipped with racks and hooks where finished goods were once kept prior to completion. Though most of the hooks are empty, some still hold incomplete golem bodies, and these hang from the walls. The golems are similar to Verdigris, and more parts—or, even, an entire golem body—can be used to provide the hermit with most of the materials he requires for self-repair.

Aside from the quiet menace of the inactive golems along the walls of the corridor, there is little else of interest here. If the PCs decide to investigate the door along the eastern wall, they are able to access the Foreman's Chamber. If they choose to pass through the broken double doors, proceed to **Scene 4: Where None Dare Tread**.

FOREMAN'S CHAMBER

If the eastern door is investigated, read or paraphrase the following:

This small room contains the remains of a metal desk, long since crushed beneath the collapsed ceiling. Rubble litters what remains of the floor. The wall behind the desk is unusual due to the faded mural that has been painted on it. The mural appears to depict a map of the area, though many parts are obscured by piled stones.

Characters who examine the mural can attempt a **TN 14 Knowledge (Cartography)** test or a **TN 16 Knowledge (Historical Lore)** test to decipher the map. Success reveals the map depicts an underground route from their present location to what appears to be ancient Karros. If the map is accurate, and the route clear of obstruction, it may very well lead beneath the Fanged Wall and into the heart of Karros itself.



Outside of the map, which is obvious to anyone examining the room, a successful TN 14 PERCEPTION (SEARCH) test allows one character to find a fine gold chain among the stones and rubble. The chain is hung with a pendant resembling a clawed Saurian hand crafted from bronze which is nearly two inches in length.

SCENE 3

SERPENTS ON THE CEILING

Combat Encounter

The silver cables the PCs might have noticed hanging from the ceiling of the Assembly Hall aren't cables at all, but a creature known as siphon serpents. Due to lack of available food, the serpents have hung themselves from the ceiling of the chamber and entered a state of hibernation. If the snakes sense creatures, or are directly disturbed, they awaken immediately and drop down upon anyone (or anything) that is beneath them.

The siphon serpents aren't interested in anything but food, namely the PCs. However, they are especially attracted to any device that is powered by or stores an electrical current, and preferentially attack anyone in possession of such items.

There are two snakes per character.

SIPHON SERPENTS

Siphon serpents are snake-like subterranean creatures that subsist on whatever organic material they can find. In addition, they have an unusual attraction to anything fed by or containing electrical power. If such items are detected, siphon serpents seek them out and attempt to feed on the electrical charge they hold. This has the unfortunate effect of rendering

SIPHON SERPENTS

Abilities (Focuses)			
2	Accuracy (Bite)		
-1	Communication		
2	Constitution		
3	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)		
0	Fighting		
-2	Intelligence		
1	Perception (BIOELECTRIC SENSITIVITY)		
3	Strength (Climbing)		
0	Willpower		
Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
20	20	13	3
Weapon	Attack Roll		Damage
Bite	+4		1d6+3

FAVORED STUNTS: Constrict (3 SP), Siphon Energy (2 SP)

BIOELECTRIC SENSITIVITY: Siphon serpents track their prey by sensing the electrical fields generated by organic creatures. This works much as sight does for conventional organisms.

CONSTRICT: As a special stunt costing 3 SP, a siphon serpent can wrap its body around an opponent. At the start of its turn every subsequent round, the siphon serpent inflicts 1d6+1 penetrating damage and can then use its bite attack as normal if desired. To end the constriction, either the target or an ally must succeed in an opposed Strength test (a minor action) against the siphon serpent.

SCALES: Siphon serpents possess tough silvery scales that grant an Armor Rating of 3.

SIPHON ENERGY: As a special stunt costing 2 SP, the siphon serpent can choose to latch onto a piece of powered technology and drain it of 1d6 charges. This has the side-effect of healing the same amount of damage to the siphon serpent

POWER-HUNGRY SERPENTS



many powered items completely useless, as well as draining charges from batteries.

In appearance, each siphon serpent is between six and eight feet in length. Their bodies are snake-like and covered in a dense layer of silver scales. Their heads are completely eyeless and feature a large tripartite mouth containing a number of sharp, silvery fangs. Despite their resemblance of snakes, siphon serpents are not venomous.

Siphon serpents actively stalk prey. When food sources become scarce, they attach themselves to ceilings and walls and enter a state of hibernation to conserve energy.

SCENE 4

WHERE NONE DARE TREAD

Combat Encounter

Moving from the Production Corridor and through the broken double doors brings the PCs into a long, wide room—the Gauntlet. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

AUTONOMOUS GOLEM TURRET					
Abilities (Focuses)					
2	ACCURACY (BLASTER PISTOLS, LIGHT BLADES)				
0	COMMUNICATION				
4	CONSTITUTION				
0	DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)				
0	FIGHTING				
0	INTELLIGENCE				
2	PERCEPTION (HEARING, SEEING)				
3	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)				
0	WILLPOWER				
Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating		
0	20	6	8		
Weapon	Attack Roll		Damage		
HEAVY BLASTER PISTOL +4	2D6+2		1D6+3		
SLASHING BLADE	+4		1D6+5		
Special Features					
FAVORED STUNTS: Dual Strike, Pierce Armor					
HEAVILY ARMORED: Autonomous golem turrets were built to withstand damage due to their inherent immobility. As such, they possess a natural Armor Rating of 8.					
IMMOVABLE: As the autonomous golem turret is set in place, it cannot be pushed or moved from its location. Its Defense is also a lowly 6.					
TALENTS: Observation (Novice)					
WEAPON GROUPS: Blaster Pistols, Light Blades					
EQUIPMENT: Cybernetic Eyes, Heavy Blaster Pistol					
CHAOS WARS-ERA DEFENSE SYSTEM					

The room before you, carved from igneous stone, is littered with chunks of rock that crashed down from the ceiling long ago. The floor – at least, as much as is exposed – is laid out in a checkerboard pattern with alternating squares of black and white stone. Once polished to a high sheen, the floor is currently covered in dust, gravel, and large chunks of stone. A single bronze door can be seen at the opposite end of the chamber.

Interspersed between you and the far door, you see four grey statues affixed to some of the white and black squares of the floor. Standing as they are, the statues resemble man-sized game pieces similar to pawns or bishops. Other statues, crushed beneath fallen rocks, appear to be hollow and wrought from some kind of metal, but you'd need a closer look to be sure.

Even more chilling, you notice three decayed corpses scattered across the floor, fading bloodstains surrounding them like the petals of some macabre flower.

When any character steps into the room and onto the Gauntlet floor, read or paraphrase the following:

As you enter the room, a mechanical whine attracts your attention to one of the statues. While remaining in place, its upper portion has rotated to reveal an odd protrusion resembling the barrel of a weapon pointed right at you. With a staccato burst, the statue fires a series of blue energy bolts in your direction.

The playing piece statues are actually autonomous golem turrets created to guard the exit of the ancient facility. Once any of the PCs physically enters the Gauntlet, the turrets begin to activate one by one. By the fourth round following the first's activation, all remaining golem turrets should be aggressively discouraging the adventurers from proceeding further.

One thing to note is that the golem turrets are completely immobile. While this makes them somewhat easier to hit, they are heavily armored and quite dangerous. Luckily, there is plenty of cover for the PCs to shelter behind given the presence of so much rubble scattered about.

AUTONOMOUS GOLEM TURRET

Autonomous golem turrets are stationary defenses equipped with heavy blasters that track and fire at targets they deem to be intruders. Their exterior is crafted from a ballistic alloy, leaving them well-armored and able to withstand a great deal of punishment before being destroyed. Internally they comprise a power cell and mechanisms allowing them to focus their attacks in any direction.

In addition to the turrets' ranged capabilities, each is equipped with a slashing blade that can be extended to melee distance and used to defend against anyone who attacks it physically. Only one weapon sequence can run at a time, meaning that if the golem turret is firing, it can't make a melee attack. Likewise, if forced to defend itself using its melee weapon, the turret cannot fire its blaster.

Though capable of following their defense directive, the golem turrets aren't particularly bright and possess little personality

to speak of. They do not intentionally work together to isolate and neutralize enemies, and tend to focus on one specific target at a time to the exclusion of any others.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs defeat the turrets, they can advance freely across the Gauntlet. The corpses on the floor—consisting of one human female, one elf male, and one saurian male—are at least a year old and dried out. Their gear is largely useless, having been peppered liberally by blaster fire. Salvageable items include a hold-out blaster with no charges tucked away in the human's clothes, a data reader in the saurian's pack, and a blaster carbine with 4 charges remaining on the ground near the Elf's outstretched arm. Between the three bodies, a total of 67 silver pieces can be collected.

The bronze door at the other end of the room is closed and lacks an obvious opening mechanism. With a successful **TN 14 PERCEPTION (SEARCH)** test, the PCs locate a series of five indentations in a small circle near the door's left side. If the PCs recovered the gold chain hung with the Saurian hand pendant in the Foreman's Chamber, they might attempt (correctly) to use it as a key.

PCs who possess the key, but who do not make the connection, should be allowed to attempt a **TN 12 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** test to recognize the pendant as a key to the bronze door. Failing that, the GM can gently nudge them into realizing the pendant's importance. If the PCs did not locate the necklace and pendant, they can still attempt to open the door. Doing so is difficult, requiring a successful **TN 15 DEXTERITY (LOCK PICKING)** test.

In the event the PCs don't possess the key and are unable to unlock the door by any another method, they can return to Verdigris with its spare parts in tow. Pleased with their success, the golem offers them a modest payment in addition to a bronze pendant (sans chain) in the shape of a clawed Saurian hand. Kindly GMs can either suggest that the pendant could be some manner of key, or allow the PCs to make a **TN 12 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** test.

Once the door is open, proceed to *Scene 5: Tripping the Alarm*.

SCENE 5

TRIPPING THE ALARM

Exploration/Combat Encounter

Beyond the locked bronze door is a rough corridor leading in a northerly direction. Read or paraphrase the following:

The corridor beyond the sentry room recedes into the distance. The floor, as with the rest of the complex, is strewn with debris and fallen rocks. From the look of things, this area hasn't been disturbed in hundreds, or perhaps even thousands, of years. Following the passage is a claustrophobic experience. Occasionally, the tunnel is nearly impenetrable due to fallen rubble blocking the way. At other times, which are admittedly rare, the walls and ceiling appear completely stable and the floor is clear of any debris.

The trek north can last as long as you wish, but long periods of travel should be glossed over as much as possible. To make matters interesting, feel free to incorporate one or more of the following hazards to spice things up.

BLOCKED

A cave-in has caused a large amount of rubble and detritus to block the tunnel. While casual examination seems to indicate that this is the end of the road, determined PCs can attempt a **TN 12 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING), INTELLIGENCE (NATURE), or PERCEPTION (SEARCH)** test to recognize the rubble isn't particularly deep and can be cleared away with a little elbow grease.

Clearing the tunnel of stones and debris takes an hour of time, less ten minutes for each member of the party. Likewise, smaller parties will take ten minutes longer to clear the blockage for every party member fewer than four. For adventurers who are in a hurry, a **TN 15 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test can clear enough debris in a single stroke to allow everyone to scramble through.

CHASM

A broad chasm, nearly 15 feet wide, has consumed the floor in this section of the tunnel. PCs can attempt to make a running jump across, but this requires a **TN 13 STRENGTH (JUMPING)** test. Alternate methods of getting to the other side are up to the PCs to invent, but they should be reasonable.

Falling into the chasm is a bad thing, as it appears to be nearly bottomless to casual observation. Using other methods to determine its depth—dropping objects into it, shining flashlights down there, and so forth—allow the adventurers to estimate the actual depth to be nearly 60 feet. Even then, the floor of the chasm is uneven and inhospitable, featuring sharp chunks of igneous rock and volcanic glass.

FLOODED

A portion of the tunnel is flooded with water, requiring the party to submerge and swim to the other side. Without light to guide them, this is more difficult than it sounds. Should the adventurers have access to special optics or the flashlights given to them by Verdigris, darkness is much less of an impediment. Making it through requires a successful **TN 13 CONSTITUTION (SWIMMING)** test.

At your option, you can place one or more hostile aquatic creatures of your choice in the water to make this hazard much more memorable.

ORK IN THE ROAD

The party comes to a fork in the tunnel, with each path heading in roughly the same direction. With nothing to guide them, one side is as good as the other. However, it may be that one side or the other is blocked, features an additional hazard, or curves off in a completely different direction. As the GM, it is up to you to determine what, if anything, lies in either direction, or if they eventually merge back into a single tunnel.

RIVER

A fast-moving underground river some twenty feet wide cuts across the tunnel. To cross, the party must either swim against the current or devise some other method, perhaps with ropes.



Swimming across without being swept away by the river's rough current requires a **TN 13 CONSTITUTION (SWIMMING)** test. Liberal use of ropes and tethers can make failure less of an inconvenience than it might be.

Anyone failing their Constitution test is subsequently battered against sharp rocks beneath the surface and suffers 1D6 damage as a result. Particularly horrible failures end with the character in question being swept through the tunnel wall.

SURPRISE ATTACK

During the trek through the tunnel, the party passes small circular recesses in the walls on a regular basis. The recesses appear at waist height (for humans, anyway), and are twelve inches in diameter and twenty inches deep. Inspecting each recess is a time-consuming undertaking, and more often than not they are empty—at least, initially.

The recesses were designed to house sentry drones, which were activated and placed here some time after the Chaos Wars. The drones themselves use passive sensors to monitor traffic through the tunnel, and then silently inform one another via radio link, assuming they are within range.

At some point during the journey, allow one or more party members to attempt a **TN 14 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test to

SENTRY DRONE								
Abilities (Focuses)								
3	ACCURACY (BLASTER PISTOLS)							
-1	COMMUNICATION							
2	CONSTITUTION							
3	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)							
0	FIGHTING							
1	INTELLIGENCE (NAVIGATION)							
3	PERCEPTION (SEARCHING, SEEING)							
2	STRENGTH							
1	WILLPOWER							
Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating					
22 (Fly)	25	13	3					
Weapon	Attack Roll		Damage					
Light Blaster Pistol	+5		1D6+5					
Special Features								
FAVORED STUNTS: Set Up, Lightning Attack (2 SP)								
LIGHTLY ARMORED: Sentry drones are lightly armored and possess a natural Armor Rating of 3.								
QUICK SHOT: Sentry drones can use the Lighting Attack for 2 SP instead of the normal 3.								
TALENTS: Quick Reflexes (Novice)								
WEAPON GROUPS: Blaster Pistols								
EQUIPMENT: Cybernetic Eyes, Light Blaster Pistol (integrated), Radio Transmitter (integrated)								
AUTONOMOUS GOLEM SENTRY								

discover a recess occupied by a sentry drone. If discovered, the drone remains inert in the hopes that the PCs leave it alone and continue onward. In the unlikely event this happens, or if the PCs fail their **PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test, the drone activates and follows them at a discreet distance, radioing ahead to its counterparts and advising they set up an ambush.

If, on the other hand, the PCs provoke a response from the drone by attacking it, attempting to break it open, or inflicting any manner of damage upon it, it activates and attempts to fly away south. If it escapes from the party, the drone waits a sufficient amount of time (10-20 minutes) before attempting to pursue them and inform others of its kind of their presence. If unable to escape, the drone sends out a distress signal and attempts to defend itself.

In either case, odds are good that the remaining sentry drones can set up an ambush along the party's path by taking cover behind rubble, hiding within recesses in the walls, or attempting to disguise themselves as debris and rubble. To detect the drone ambushers and avoid being ambushed, PCs must succeed on a **PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test opposed by the drones' **DEXTERITY (STEALTH)**.

To liven the skirmish up, consider setting the ambush near one of the aforementioned hazards. The drones are intelligent enough to take advantage of such things, and they are well-informed as to the condition of the tunnel in its entirety. As an example, the drones are capable of waiting until the PCs are occupied crossing a chasm—and potentially separated by their efforts—before launching their attack.

When encountered, there should be 2 sentry drones for each character present.

SENTRY DRONE

Sentry drones are small, spherical units designed to monitor intrusions through the tunnels and, if possible, terminate any offenders they encounter. Each drone is crafted from a dark grey, non-reflective alloy, and features a single compound eye at its center that glows purple when active. Apertures in the sentry's metal skin can slide open to reveal an integrated light blaster pistol.

Sentry drones are more intelligent and mobile than the old model autonomous turrets the PCs encountered previously. They work together and communicate constantly, making them especially dangerous. Common tactics are to hit their targets hard for a round or two before fading away to prepare for another attack elsewhere.

SCENE 6

PASSAGE TO KARROS

Exploration Encounter

After what seems like an eternity, the party finally reaches the end of the tunnel. Read or paraphrase the following:

The black expanse of the seemingly infinite tunnel gives way to a wall with a circular, hatch-like door. As you draw closer, you notice the door has a glass lens at its center

which resembles the inverse of an eye from one of the sentry drones you encountered earlier. Other than the lens, there is no obvious mechanism visible that might allow you to open the hatch.

Assuming the party kept one or more defeated sentry drones, they can use them to unlock the hatch. Unfortunately, this requires the sentry's eye to have power coursing through it. Jury-rigging a sentry's eye to turn on can be accomplished by succeeding on a **TN 12 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** test. Otherwise, the PCs can attempt to force or pry the hatch open with a **TN 16 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test, or trick it into opening with a **TN 16 DEXTERITY (LOCK PICKING)** test.

Regardless of the method used, read or paraphrase the following aloud when the door is opened:

There is a loud hissing noise of atmosphere being equalized as the hatch swings inward. Beyond the portal, you can make out dim lights in the distance. You detect the unmistakable scent of sewage, as well as a constant sound of moving and dripping water.

Should they decide to move through the portal, the group can advance forward into a well-maintained series of conduits and tunnels designed to move water. The further they go, the stronger the smell of sewage becomes. Eventually they find themselves in an active sewage system. Though still well-maintained—at least as far as sewers are concerned—the presence of organic waste indicates that it must be coming from somewhere above.

Access to the surface is eventually located in the form of a metal ladder leading upwards to a grated aperture in a street gutter. Read or paraphrase the following when the party reaches the surface:

Peering through a metal grate, you see a well-traveled city street. People of all races go about their business, unaware of your voyeurism. One thing you notice almost immediately is that each citizen that passes by wears a distinctive bracelet. It appears as if you've made your way into the city-state of Karros undetected... Or have you?

ADVENTURE RESOLUTION

At this point in the adventure, it's up to the PCs to choose what they should do. Do they attempt to enter Karros without the proper identification and risk being arrested? Or do they return the way they came and take Verdigris the spare parts they promised him? Whatever they decide to do, the party should be congratulated for successfully completing a hard and perilous journey.

It's entirely possible for the party to keep the nature and location of the underground ruins a secret, especially if they have contributed directly to making Verdigris' repairs a reality. The

THE HERMIT'S ROAD

A TITANSGRAVE ADVENTURE FOR THE FANTASY AGE RPG

FOR CHARACTERS LEVEL 2-4

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old golem, so long without companionship, makes an excellent contact, and his ability to fix nearly anything of a technical nature can come in handy.

Each player character should be rewarded with 1,100 experience points for completing the adventure. Bonus experience points can be awarded at your discretion, or to reflect any changes you might have made to the encounters.

