

STARFINDER



THE FOREVER RELIQUARY

BY KATE BAKER



SDF RAMPART

TIER 9

Large destroyer

Speed 10; **Maneuverability** average (turn 2)

AC 24; **TL** 22

HP 190; **DT** –; **CT** 38

Shields medium 200 (forward 50, port 50, starboard 50, aft 50)

Attack (Forward) linked railguns (16d4; 20 hexes)

Attack (Port) high explosive missile launcher (4d8; 20 hexes)

Attack (Starboard) high explosive missile launcher (4d8; 20 hexes)

Attack (Aft) light plasma cannon (2d12; 5 hexes)

Attack (Turret) laser net (2d6; 5 hexes)

Power Core Pulse Prismatic (300 PCU); **Drift Engine** none; **Systems** basic long-range sensors, crew quarters (common), mk 3 trinode computer, mk 5 defenses, mk 6 armor; **Expansion Bays** brig^{PW}, cargo hold, launch tubes^{PW}

Modifiers +2 to any 3 checks per round, +2 Computers (sensors only); **Complement** 12 (minimum 6, maximum 20)

CREW

Captain Diplomacy +16 (9 ranks), Intimidate +16 (9 ranks), Piloting +14 (9 ranks)

Engineer (1 officer, 4 crew) Engineering +18 (9 ranks)

Gunners (3) gunnery +14 (9th level)

Pilots (1 officer, 1 crew) Piloting +16 (9 ranks)

Science Officer Computers +16 (9 ranks)

A no-frills naval starship designed to provide maximum area control with a minimal crew investment, the SDF Rampart is well equipped for escort, pursuit, and point-defense missions. Long-range sensors and powerful thrusters give it the capability to intercept unwary vessels before they can react, while its potent shields and missile-swatting laser net stonewall assailants. The paired railguns pack a wallop against foes at any range, and even starships agile enough to avoid the Rampart's projectiles must still contend with the missile launchers on its flanks. Bristling with weapons and armor, the Rampart presents a stubborn obstacle to all but heavily armed capital ships. However, due to the tremendous power draw of the ship's shields and limited ammunition capacity, it favors short, aggressive engagements followed by prompt visits to refueling stations and munitions depots.

As the workhorse of the SDF's Space Corps, the Rampart was designed to operate solely within its home solar system and has no Drift capability. It can patrol between planets using conventional thrusters, but it typically operates within 2 or 3 days' travel from Suskillon or Utraneus. Frequent shore leaves mean the interior of the Rampart has minimal need for creature comforts. Combat systems densely pack the compact hull, leaving little breathing room in the narrow corridors and cramped quarters. Systems running at full power for extended periods can lead to the cabin overheating, further encouraging officers to keep engagements brief. Engineers with the skill to sustain optimal levels on all of a Rampart's systems while maintaining the comfort of personnel are highly valued, and techies with long careers on Ramparts carry each tour of duty as a mark of pride.

With a brig and launch tubes to hold a small, swift fighter, Ramparts are also equipped to handle smugglers, pirates, and paramilitary entities. Often, one of the gunners is assigned to this smaller craft, an assignment that is reserved for the most skilled members of the SDF.

STARFINDER

AUTHOR
Kate Baker**ADDITIONAL WRITING**

Anthony Bono, Kevin Bryan, Eleanor Ferron, and Nate Wright

DEVELOPERS

Jason Keeley and Chris S. Sims

EDITORS

Amirali Attar Olyaee, Judy Bauer, Leo Glass, Avi Kool, Lyz Liddell, Adrian Ng, Lu Pellazar, and Jason Tondro

COVER ARTIST
Setiawan Fajareka**INTERIOR ARTISTS**

Michele Giorgi, Nathanael James, Sammy Khalid, Alyssa McCarthy, Pixoloid Studios (Mark Molnar, David Metzger, Gaspar Gombos, Zsolt 'Mike' Szabados, Janos Gardos, Laszlo Hackl, Orsolya Villanyi), and Sebastian Rodriguez

PAGE BORDER DESIGN
Graey Erb**CARTOGRAPHER**
Damien Mammoliti**ART DIRECTION AND GRAPHIC DESIGN**
Adam Vick**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**
Robert G. McCreary**MANAGING DEVELOPER**
Amanda Hamon**STARFINDER DESIGN LEAD**
Owen K.C. Stephens**PROJECT MANAGER**
Gabriel Waluconis**PUBLISHER**
Erik Mona

Paizo Inc.
7120 185th Ave NE, Ste 120
Redmond, WA 98052-0577

paizo.com



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This book refers to two 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 sfrd.info.

Alien Archive 2 AA2

Pact Worlds PW

Armory AR



ON THE COVER

Artist Setiawan Fajareka brings the intimidating but peaceful demeanor of Tuvah, the abbot of the Forever Reliquary, to life in this dynamic illustration. Meanwhile, Obozaya and Keskdai battle a malicious fey creature on the comet's icy surface.



ATTACK OF THE SWARM!

ADVENTURE PATH

THE FOREVER RELIQUARY

PART 1: THE MISSING COMET

Though the comet known as the Prodigal Stone isn't at the coordinates discovered by the PCs in Professor Galchak's research, they can pick up a trail that leads through dangerous space.

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PART 2: SEARCH FOR THE HIDDEN MONASTERY 8

The PCs must traverse the icy surface of the Prodigal Stone to find the hidden entrance to the Forever Reliquary.

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The PCs begin this adventure at 7th level.

PART 3: THE TRIALS OF HYLAX

To prove themselves to the Hylaxian monks, the PCs face trials that test their capacity for diplomacy and goodwill.

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The PCs should reach 8th level during the Trials of Hylax.

PART 4: INVASION

The Swarm descends on the Prodigal Stone, and the PCs must hold them back long enough for the abbot to open a passage to their next destination: a mindscape of the overall Swarm consciousness!

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

ADVENTURE
BACKGROUND

The goddess Hylax had once been sacred to kucharn, the species of insectile creatures who became the Swarm. The Forever Queen watched over her children for generations, but when they turned into a voracious hive mind that thought only of consumption, they turned away from her. While she grieved this choice, she did not stop them, shifting her attention to other insectile species in the galaxy. She would be ready if the kucharn people ever needed her again, but she did not hold out hope.

When an unforeseen mutation caused an offshoot of the Swarm to gain a sense of individuality, Hylax watched with interest. It was within her power to aid these beings—now known as the shirrens—but she wanted to see if they would reject the Swarm hive mind on their own. They did, and the emergence from the Gap gave them the opportunity to physically flee from Swarm-held space. After years of pursuit, the construction and use of Drift engines gave the shirrens some breathing room and the chance to begin finding a home.

Early on, their journey for a new home brought the shirrens to an unassuming comet for repairs and refueling. This rest stop turned into an encounter with the divine, as this is where Hylax chose to reveal herself to them. By welcoming the shirrens into her fold, Hylax fostered within them the resolve to continue their quest, as well as a focus for a burgeoning faith.

Though many shirrens moved on from the comet—now named the Prodigal Stone—after this meeting, several remained behind to construct a temple to Hylax on the very site where she appeared. These monks maintained the shrine for years while welcoming pilgrims and neophytes. Nothing seemed fated to change much until a remarkable event happened on a nearby planet.

When a large group of shirrens settled on the planet Suskillon and integrated with the populace already living there, some sought out spaces to build their own settlements, not wanting to crowd the Suskilloners. Several of the more religious shirren pioneers were drawn to a place called Clutchstone Ridge, where they received visions of the Forever Queen instructing them to craft an artifact from the magically attuned stone nearby. Working in an almost blind fever, the shirrens finished shaping the item—a resplendent crown made to look like an insect's exoskeleton—with tool and spell in a matter of days. Named the *Crown of Hylax*, this artifact hummed with seeming power, though no one knew how to activate it or even what its ultimate purpose would be.

Denthalizz, one of the older shirrens responsible for the Crown's construction, grew concerned with the artifact's power. He brought the item to the Prodigal Stone in the hopes that the monks there would know what to do with it. Realizing the significance of the crown, the monks worked together with Denthalizz to secure it. Building a series of tunnels through the comet's stone, the monks shifted their focus from their temple to a new underground monastery, the Forever Reliquary. The shrine was relegated to a mere point of interest (though the statue inside was modified to include a depiction of the crown), and Denthalizz was appointed to be the monastery's first abbot. As the structure slowly increased in size, so did the population of the Prodigal Stone.

At first, only shirrens were aware of the comet, but over the years, many other insectile creatures who worship Hylax have also devoted their lives to the Forever Queen there, guided by word of mouth or divine visions. Now, formians, haans, trox, and others live, work, and pray alongside the shirrens. However, due to the passage of time and the difficulty of finding the comet, the existence of the Forever Reliquary has become more myth and metaphor than fact. Despite its importance, those outside of the Hylaxian faith are unlikely to have even heard of this protective monastery.

The current abbot of the Forever Reliquary is a trox named Tuvah. Like most of the monks, Tuvah was born on the comet and has spent her entire life there. She has dedicated her life to Hylax and is well liked by the other devotees. The trox was quickly elevated to her position with almost unanimous support after the previous abbot died of natural causes.

Tuvah's first act as abbot was to build a mystical "viewing wall" in a small room in the monastery. She feels that followers of the goddess of diplomacy shouldn't limit themselves to life on a small comet, no matter how holy, and that they should interact with the worlds and cultures around them. Clearly, Hylax agreed. The wall-sized holoscreen can show viewers events occurring on nearby planets and other celestial bodies through a powerful divination effect. However, when Tuvah prays in front of it and Hylax deems it necessary, the screen becomes a portal that transports living creatures to the area shown on it. Over the past few years, the monks have used this magic only a handful of times, such as when settling disputes on war-torn moons or making first contact with previously isolated species. The portal stops functioning when the comet moves too far away, giving the Hylaxians typically around 12 hours to complete a task before they must return to the Forever Reliquary or risk being trapped on a strange planet.

Though Tuvah is the head of the monastery, her decisions are scrutinized by the Sacred Assembly, a group of high-ranking monks within the Forever Reliquary who ensures the abbot never abuses their power or threatens the security of the *Crown of Hylax*. Over the past few weeks, the Assembly has grown concerned with Tuvah's behavior,

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as she has spent long hours isolated in the viewing-wall chamber in deep meditation, neglecting her regular duties and refusing to explain her actions.

In truth, the trox monk has recently had a series of troubling dreams, corresponding to the recent aggression by the Swarm in the Suskillon system. In these visions, Tuvah saw the Swarm descend upon the Prodigal Stone, killing her and her fellow monks as they fought to protect to *Crown of Hylax*. She saw the God-Host, a massive Swarm component with many heads, absorb the power of the artifact and distribute its deific powers throughout the Swarm hive mind, and she watched a then-unstoppable Swarm wreak death and destruction on an unimaginable scale as it tore through the galaxy.

Tuvah believes that Hylax is speaking to her through these dreams, but she is unwilling to accept these warnings as forgone conclusions. She has spent days praying to the Forever Queen, looking for any way to prevent what she has seen. She then received a second vision: a group of outsiders preceding the Swarm to the comet and taking the *Crown of Hylax* into the very mind of the Swarm to destroy it from within.

Tuvah knows that both of her visions are possible, but that her actions, among others', would determine which one. While prophecy is an inexact art and visions are not guarantees, they can guide those who have them toward a certain course of action. Though tensions are high within the monastery, Tuvah remains isolated in the portal chamber, constantly scanning the skies to see if a group of heroes will arrive in time.

PART 1: THE MISSING COMET

In "Huskworld," the PCs recovered a set of theorized coordinates for the Prodigal Stone calculated by the late Professor Galchak in Uudz on the planet Ilemchuuvu. What they don't yet know is that the professor had to extrapolate from very old data, and minute discrepancies in their calculations resulted in a fairly sizable error about the current location of the comet. While the professor was aware of the margin of error of their calculations, the PCs most likely aren't.

While the PCs might suspect the Swarm is likely also interested in the Forever Reliquary and feel they can't pause for too long before taking off for the comet, the events of this adventure aren't on any specific timer. As mentioned at the end of the previous adventure, the PCs can return to Utraneus and report back to Commander Najiri, head straight for the Prodigal Stone, or even travel to a third location to resupply. They should also upgrade their starship if they haven't already or, if they returned to the Suskillon system, replace their vessel with another one.

ON THE TRAIL

Once the PCs are ready to proceed, they can plot a course to the coordinates obtained from Professor Galchak's notes with a successful DC 25 Piloting check. It takes 5d6 days of Drift travel before the PCs reach their destination, a place just outside an unnamed and uninhabited solar system. Read or paraphrase the following.

As the pink-purple haze of the Drift slides away in transition to the Material Plane, the vast emptiness of space stretches out in all directions. No stars or planets seem to be in close proximity, and a cursory scan of the surrounding area shows no sign of the comet—or much of anything else.

At this point, the PCs likely want to double-check their astrogational computations. A PC trained in Physical Science or Piloting realizes that Professor Galchak had to extrapolate the present-day coordinates of the Prodigal Stone from decades-old data, and chances are high that they might have made some small error in the math that was impossible to spot or confirm. However, the group isn't without hope. A PC who scans the area with the ship's computers and succeeds at a DC 24 Computers check detects a faint magical signal that recently passed through this space, approximately a week ago. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Mysticism or Physical Science check can theorize that since the Forever Reliquary is a site blessed by a god, the comet might leave a detectable trail, providing a +4 circumstance bonus to the Computers check to find it.

The PCs can begin following this trail using conventional thrusters. At the beginning of each day, a PC must succeed at the same DC 24 Computers check above to continue tracking the comet. Each failure results in a loss of 1 day as the PCs must backtrack to regain the trail. Track the total number of days it takes for the PCs to reach the Prodigal Stone, as it affects several encounters in Part 1.

EVENT 1: METEOROID STORM (CR 6)

Once the PCs have successfully tracked the Prodigal Stone for 2 days, they encounter a problem. The path of the comet leads the PCs directly into the path of an immense meteoroid storm. The region is large enough that going around would take at least an extra week of travel, so the PCs will likely want to press straight through.

The PCs can use their ship's scanners to identify the best place through which to pass through the storm. Though there are no enemy starships to face off against and you won't need to use a hex grid map, run this encounter as a starship combat. It will take 5 rounds to get through the meteoroid storm, plus 1 round for each day lost due to failed Computers checks to track the comet (see above), as the meteoroid storm increases in size. During this starship combat, the PCs can take the following actions, depending on their roles.

A. ETERNAL MELODY



Captain: The captain can take the demand and encourage actions during any phase of this combat as normal.

Engineer: An engineer can take the hold it together and patch actions as normal if the starship takes a critical damage effect. If the engineer successfully performs the divert action, they can divert power to the science equipment, weapons, or shields as normal.

Gunner: A gunner can fire one of the starship's weapons at a meteoroid (see Pilot below) to destroy it before it strikes their vessel. A meteoroid has an AC and TL of 18 and 6 Hull Points.

Pilot: Each round, the pilot must attempt a Piloting check to navigate around the meteoroids.

Result	Effect
40+	The starship avoids the path of all meteoroids.
35-39	The ship crosses the paths of two meteoroids.
30-34	The ship crosses the paths of four meteoroids.
20-29	The ship crosses the paths of six meteoroids.
20 or lower	The ship crosses the paths of eight meteoroids.

Each meteoroid approaches in a random arc and can be dealt with by a gunner (see above).

Science Officer: A science officer can take the balance action as normal. A science officer can also perform a modified scan action with a DC of 25 to predict the meteoroids' movement, granting a +2 circumstance bonus to either the pilot's or a gunner's next check.

At the end of each gunnery phase, any meteoroid that hasn't been destroyed strikes the PCs' starship, dealing 3d4 damage.

Story Award: For passing through the meteoroid swarm, award the PCs 2,400 XP.

A. ETERNAL MELODY

After 4 more days of successfully tracking the comet, the party arrives at an ionized nebula. Interference from this phenomenon obscures the trail, making it impossible to follow any further. However, a quick scan of the area reveals a small, shirren-style starship floating at an odd angle just inside the nebula, occasionally being struck with bolts of electricity. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Computers check to scan the vessel discovers that it has no power (though occasionally systems will randomly flare to life thanks to the ambient energy) and no life signs. Any attempts to hail the vessel are met with a strange hissing sound. The PCs can access the ship's transponder, however; some of the information is badly scrambled by the nebula, but the PCs can learn that the ship, named the *Eternal Melody*, was part of a Hylaxian pilgrimage, along with two other vessels. Given this vessel's proximity to the Prodigal Stone, it seems possible it might contain more information to help the PCs on their journey.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Computers check to scan the nebula or a DC 22 Physical Science check realizes there

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is some danger in piloting their ship into the nebula—if an electrical arc strikes the vessel, it could cause systems to short out. However, the *Eternal Melody* is in a pocket of relatively low activity, and the PCs' ship will be safe once they get close enough to board.

Once the PCs enter the nebula, the starship's pilot must attempt five DC 30 Piloting checks before they reach the *Eternal Melody*. One other crew member can attempt to aid the pilot on each check, and if the above Computers or Physical Science check result exceeded the DC by 5 or more, the pilot receives a +2 circumstance bonus to each check. For each failed Piloting check, the starship gains a random critical

damage effect corresponding to the table on page 321 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*.

Once the PCs arrive at the drifting *Eternal Melody*, they can examine it at close range. The exterior is highly marred and corroded, but with a successful DC 26 Engineering check, a PC can tell that this damage is only a few months old. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Life Science check recognizes the damage as signs of an encounter with a starship-sized creature; if the result of the check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC concludes the creature was most likely a stellar protozoa (*Starfinder Alien Archive 2* 120).

A map of the *Eternal Melody* appears on page 5. With a brief spacewalk, the PCs can easily board the incapacitated ship, entering through any of the holes in the hull depicted on the map to reach the extensive area **A1**. The interiors of the *Eternal Melody* are open to space, and the ship has no life support, no artificial gravity, and no lighting. The ceilings of the rooms and corridors are 10 feet high.

A1. STARSHIP CORRIDORS (CR 8)

When the *Eternal Melody*'s hull was breached in several places during its fight with the stellar protozoa (see area **A4** for more information about the ship's final moments), the resulting explosive decompression has left the interior of the ship a complete wreck. Consoles are shattered, doors hang off their frames, and dried blood stains many of the surfaces. The bodies of several shirrens float in the lack of gravity, killed either during the battle or when the resulting damage to the ship caused it to lose life support.

Creatures: Three of the shirren crew members who died from the explosive decompression rose again as nihili and have been stalking the ship's corridors ever since. The undead creatures stalk boarding PCs for several minutes before springing out from the shadows in several directions.

NIHILIS (3)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

HP 72 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive 82*)

TACTICS

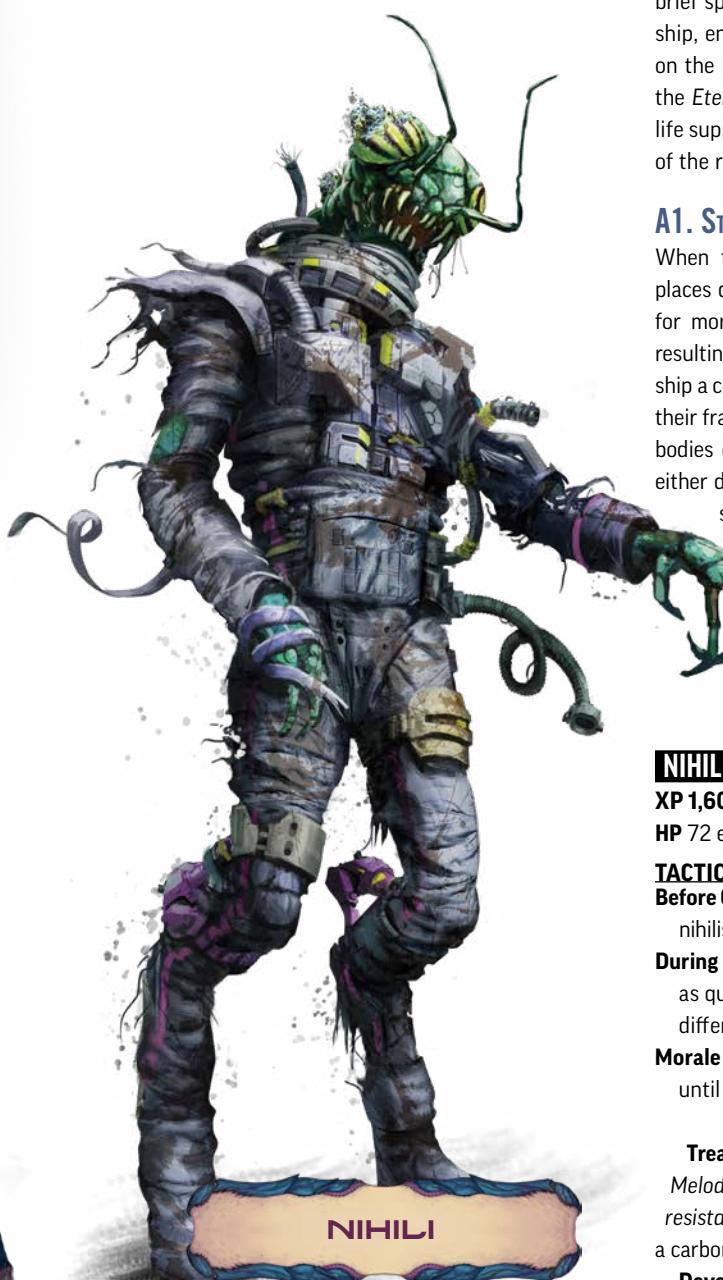
Before Combat By walking on the walls and ceilings, the nihili try to ambush the PCs from unexpected angles.

During Combat The nihili move to engage in melee combat as quickly as they can, each focusing their attacks on a different PC.

Morale Full of hatred for the living, the nihili fight until destroyed.

Treasure: If the PCs search the bodies and the *Eternal Melody*'s corridors, they find 6,000 UPBs, a *mk 2 ring of resistance*, two *mk 2 serums of healing*, a tactical knife, and a carbon staff.

Development: A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Medicine check while examining the inanimate shirren bodies can tell



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that they were killed either by lack of air or by shrapnel from exploding equipment. The positioning of the bodies implies that their deaths occurred suddenly during combat.

A2. WRECKED CHAMBERS

The majority of the *Eternal Melody*'s chambers—which include a galley, the crew quarters, a pair of cargo holds, and an engineering bay—are open to the vacuum of space. Their furnishings and contents float in zero gravity and show heavy signs of damage. Nothing of value remains within these rooms.

A3. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Only one room remains undisturbed in the chaos of the *Eternal Melody*'s corridors: the captain's quarters, sealed with a good lock. A PC can open the lock with a successful DC 30 Engineering check or find the key card on the captain's body on the bridge (area A4). Though some of the furnishings have shifted about due to the ship's lack of gravity, the inside of the captain's quarters remains relatively undisturbed. A small shrine to Hylax fills one corner of the room, surrounded by clouds of ash that were once sticks of incense.

Treasure: There is a credstick with 2,500 credits in the desk drawer, and a suit of advanced iridishell armor hangs in the closet.

Development: A datapad floats a few inches from the surface of the captain's desk. It is secured with a password, but a PC can hack into the files with a successful DC 25 Computers check to find the ship's manifest, which conveys that the ship was full of religious pilgrims—almost all shirrens—traveling from the Pact Worlds in search of the Forever Reliquary. The manifest contains a full list of passengers and crew, and notes that the ship was traveling with two other ships, the *Endless Harmony* and the *Unending Song*. In addition, the date of the outset of their journey is only a few months ago. While the datapad doesn't contain up-to-date coordinates of the Prodigal Stone, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture or Engineering check concludes that such information would probably be stored on the ship's main computer, which can probably be accessed from the bridge.

A4. BRIDGE

The bridge of the *Eternal Melody* is in the same disarray as the rest of the ship. Panels have been ripped from their consoles and float several feet away, exposing cables, wires, and other computer hardware, all either severed or broken. The computers here occasionally spark and shudder as energy from the ionized nebula outside surges through the ship. Several more shirren bodies dangle over their respective bridge crew seats.

With a few moments of looking, the PCs can recognize the captain's body, which is nearest to the main computer terminal. A key card that opens the door to her quarters is tucked into one pocket of her jumpsuit.

A PC trained in Computers or Engineering recognizes that it would take several weeks of work (and several new parts) to get the ship's computer back into full working condition but knows that it might be possible to retrieve data from the computer's physical storage modules. However, the ship is currently without normal power; the modules containing the vessel's logs can be removed, but the PCs can't be sure which modules contain the information they are seeking. To be safe, the PCs can take all the data modules with three successful DC 28 Computers or Engineering checks. Though a failed check doesn't ruin the data module, if a PC fails this check by 5 or more, a surge of energy from the outside nebula causes the exposed wiring to spark uncontrollably. Each creature within 15 feet of the main computer console (as marked on the map) when this happens takes 4d6 electricity damage (DC 18 Reflex half). This also damages the modules, increasing the DC to hack them (see below) by 2 each time.

Development: The PCs can easily return the recovered data modules to their ship once removed, hook them up to their ship's power, and attempt to extract the navigational data. Exposure to the nebula has somewhat degraded the data, however; for every 2 days the PCs lost due to failed Computers checks to track the comet (see page 4), the DC of all checks to hack the modules increases by 1.

A PC can access the most recent ship's logs with a successful DC 22 Computers check, finding the accounts of the *Eternal Melody*'s final battle. This recording begins with one the bridge crew reacting to the presence of "some kind of giant blob ahead," followed by several minutes of the captain giving frantic orders as the ship is attacked. There is despair in the science officer's voice when she reports both the *Endless Harmony* and the *Unending Song* being engulfed by the creature. The captain then calls for a retreat into a nearby nebula over the wail of warning claxons. The recording ends with the sounds of massive explosions and hull breaches throughout the ship.

With an additional successful DC 26 Computers check, a PC can find the *Eternal Melody*'s astrogation data, which includes more recent coordinates for the Prodigal Stone. By comparing this information to Professor Galchak's data, the PCs receive a +4 circumstance bonus to future Computers checks to track the comet.

A PC who wants to dig further can attempt a final DC 30 Computers check. On a success, they find details on the planned visit to the Forever Reliquary and learn that the monastery is underground, including a description of the reliquary's hidden entrance hatch. This information grants the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus to their Survival checks to locate the entrance on the comet's surface (see page 11).

Story Award: If the PCs retrieve the *Eternal Melody*'s logs, award them 2,400 XP.

LEAVING THE NEBULA

After exploring the wreckage of the *Eternal Melody*, the PCs can return to their ship with no problems, but they

THE PRODIGAL STONE

Diameter: 2 miles; **Mass:** less than $\times 1/100$

Gravity: $\times 1/10$ at the surface, $\times 1$ (artificial) inside

Location: The Vast

Atmosphere: Thin

Day: —; **Year:** —

This vaguely spherical mass of ice and stone has a highly eccentric orbit that passes near and through several systems in the Vast over a period of over 3 centuries. It is the site of a Hylaxian temple commemorating the time early shirren pioneers were contacted by the goddess during their flight from the Swarm, as well as a monastery known as the Forever Reliquary hidden in tunnels that run throughout the comet. Only the most faithful Hylaxians are even aware of monastery's existence.

must navigate the nebula again to continue their journey. Fortunately, the nebula is less electrically active, and the ship's pilot must attempt only one DC 30 Piloting check to escape the nebula unharmed. As before, one other crew member can attempt to aid the pilot on this check, and a failure means the starship gains a random critical damage effect.

EVENT 2: CELLULAR ATTACK (CR 9)

As the PCs emerge from the ionized nebula, they are set upon by the same stellar protozoa that attacked the three Hylaxian ships. Though it absorbed two of those vessels, its hunger wasn't sated, but it was unwilling to follow the *Eternal Melody* into the electrical storm. It remained in the area, waiting for the ionization to die down, and has been rewarded with the arrival of the PCs' ship. At your discretion, you can grant the PCs approximately 10 minutes to attempt to repair one of their critically damaged systems before the stellar protozoa appears.

Starship Combat: The stellar protozoa and the PCs' ship begin the combat 12 hexes away from one another, and the PCs' vessel is 1d4+2 hexes away from the edge of the ionized nebula in the opposite direction. The stellar protozoa avoids coming within 2 hexes of the nebula. The first time the PCs successfully use the scan science officer action on the titanic creature, they also determine that it seems to be afraid of the nebula's electricity. However, for each round the PCs travel within the nebula, the pilot must attempt the same DC 30 Piloting check to avoid gaining a critical damage

effect as described on page 6; this check is in addition to any Piloting check the pilot might need to attempt to perform a stunt or another action.

STELLAR PROTOZOA

TIER 7

HP 180 (*Starfinder Alien Archive 2* 120)

TACTICS

During Combat The stellar protozoa attacks the PCs' vessel immediately, attempting to keep the ship within range of its draining aura. It uses its heavy cytoplasm launcher until it runs out of ammunition, then maneuvers so it can use its particle beam.

Morale The stellar protozoa retreats if reduced to 40 Hull Points or fewer. If the PCs retreat into the nebula for 6 consecutive rounds, the stellar protozoa wanders off in search of other prey.

Treasure: If the PCs successfully destroy the stellar protozoa, they can attempt to harvest its cytoplasm, which can be used to make starship weapons. The harvesting process and the properties of such weapons are described on page 121 of *Alien Archive 2*.

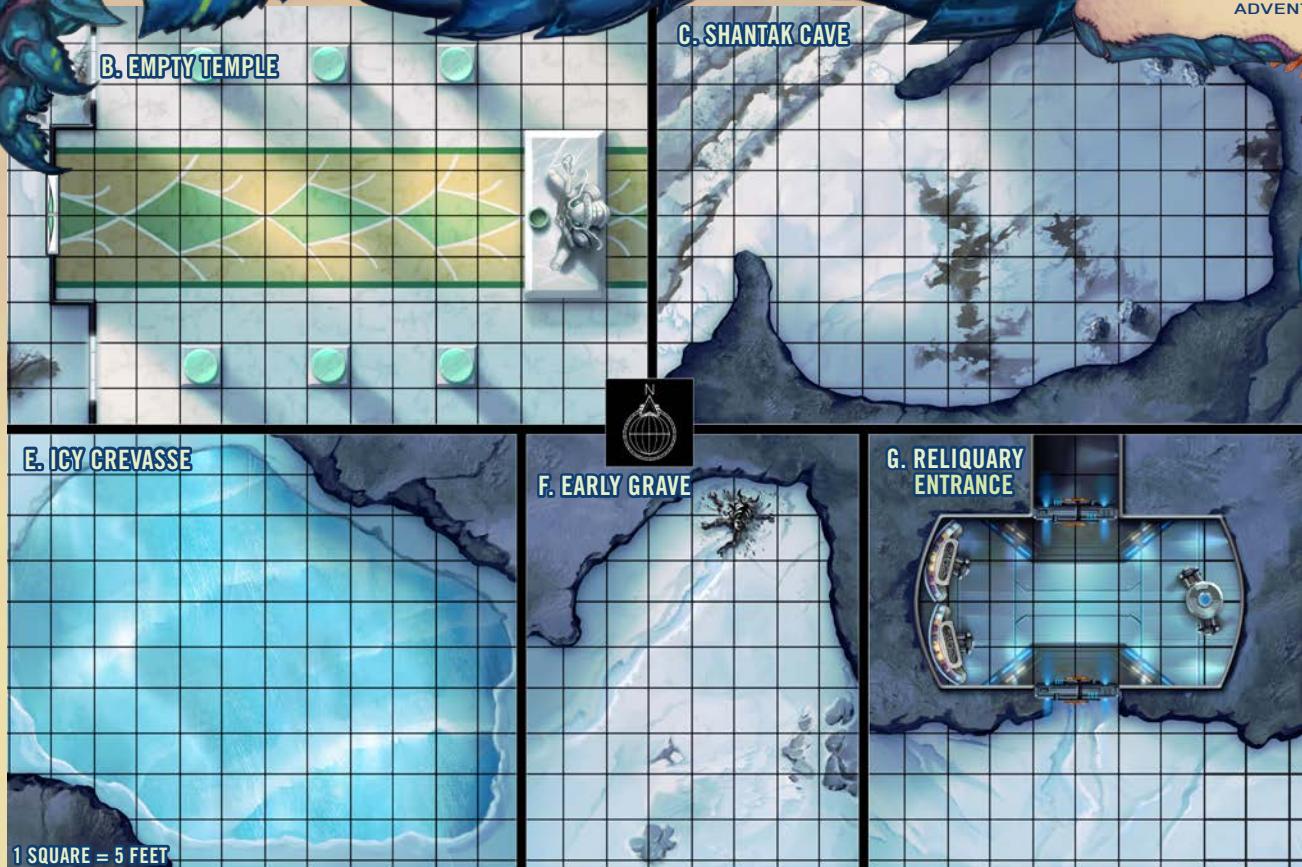
Development: After dealing with the stellar protozoa, the PCs are free to resume their journey to the Prodigal Stone and the Forever Reliquary, hopefully using the vital information they discovered from the *Eternal Melody*'s logs. After another 2 days of successful tracking, the PCs reach the comet.

Story Award: If the PCs defeat or drive off the stellar protozoa, award them 6,400 XP.

PART 2: SEARCH FOR THE HIDDEN MONASTERY

As the PCs approach the Prodigal Stone, read or paraphrase the following.

The trail of magical energy leads to an unassuming, icy chunk of rock that is hurtling silently through the void. Though the huge stone seems to match the general description contained in Professor Galchak's notes, no outward signs indicate anything special or sacred about the celestial object.



If a character indicates skepticism that this ball of stone and ice is a comet, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Physical Science check recalls that the "tail" that gives a comet its iconic shape occurs only when the celestial body is warmed by passing near a sun. Gases or dust particles are then released from the melting ice to form the visible emanation, which doesn't always trail directly "behind" the comet but sometimes at an angle from its orbital path.

More information about the Prodigal Stone can be found in the sidebar on page 8.

LANDING ON THE PRODIGAL STONE

If the PCs fly around the comet before landing on it, they can see the surface is mostly ice and stone, with the occasional jagged peaks and crooked crevasses. One smooth area seems artificially created, a supposition confirmed by the presence of a large temple in the middle of it. A scan of the Prodigal Stone reveals the information in the sidebar on page 8, including the fact that the gravity is quite low and the atmosphere thin. The temperature on the surface hovers around -10° F. A sensor scan reveals a few signs of life and movement on the comet's surface: one faint signal coming from the temple, and a few others in scattered locations across the comet.

The scans also reveal that the comet is composed of rocks, primarily silicates and olivines, with a large volume of water (in frozen ice form). A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Computers

check while scanning learns that the comet is less dense than would be expected based on its chemical makeup. This strongly implies that there might be underground tunnels throughout the stone.

The PCs can easily land their starship on the flat stone area near the temple. The monks of the Forever Reliquary magically monitor the surface of the comet, and they are aware when the PCs touch down. From her spot in the viewing chamber, Tuvah restricts the others from going out to greet the PCs, as they often do with other visitors, as she wants to observe them for a bit. She takes careful notice of how long it takes them to find the hatch and how they interact with other creatures on the surface.

B. EMPTY TEMPLE (CR 7)

This exquisite edifice seems to be crafted from the rock of the comet itself, then shaped with magic or very fine tools to add an impressive amount of detail. A myriad of flourishes, such as marks on the wall giving the impression of individual stone bricks, lend the structure an air of an ancient temple. However, the lack of furnishings makes the building feel hollow and austere. The only decoration is a statue of a large, insectile creature near the rear of the temple, extending their arms in a gesture of welcome and wearing a crown fashioned of exoskeletal pieces. A large, shallow metal bowl rests at the base of the statue, holding

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many offerings of metal beads, carved rocks and wood, and decorated scraps of fabric.

The ceiling in the entryway is 10 feet tall, and the ceiling stretches up to 25 feet in the main area of the temple. There is no lighting within.

This temple to Hylax was the first structure built on the comet, constructed by the shirrens who remained here after their species had their fateful encounter with the deity. When these Hylaxian monks decided to move underground (see Adventure Background), this temple was essentially abandoned, but not forgotten. Every few weeks, a monk returns to the surface to clean and maintain the building,

collecting the more valuable offerings, lighting a few sticks of incense, and saying a few silent prayers to the Forever Queen.

The temple also serves as a bit of a decoy for those who might seek out the Prodigal Stone for less than honorable reasons. Most such visitors give the building a brief examination before departing, and the monks remain hidden. They usually reveal themselves to those who spend some time in quiet contemplation or leave an offering (see below). But since Tuvah has restricted all travel to the comet's surface, hoping to learn more about the PCs' motivations, the party receives no welcome here.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Mysticism check recognizes the statue as a depiction of Hylax, though followers of the Forever Queen know this without needing to attempt the check. The crown she wears isn't part of her usual depictions but could be seen as an interpretation of her epithet; this is a replica of the *Crown of Hylax*, an artifact very few people know about. Just above the metal bowl, a plaque on the statue reads in Shirren, "This is the place where the goddess Hylax welcomed the shirrens into her fold. Her tears of joy have forever marked the ground." A PC who pays their respects to the statue and leaves something in the bowl can

leverage this fact when trying to persuade the monastery council of their good intentions later. Any PCs who steal from the offering bowl are questioned about this later and take a -4 penalty to all checks dealing with the monks of the Forever Reliquary. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check or a DC 22 Survival check while examining the offerings can determine they have been exposed to the comet's thin atmosphere for about 6 months. A PC who then succeeds at a DC 22 Culture or Mysticism check realizes that it is odd that no priests have collected the items, as such offerings are usually gathered up on a regular basis. A PC trained in Mysticism or who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check can come to the conclusion that this temple is clearly inhabited and maintained, as it would be filled with the remains of offerings if no one ever came to collect them over its hundreds of years of existence.

A PC who specifically examines the floor of the temple or succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check notices an unusual pattern of lines carved into the floor. While difficult to make out while standing directly on top of the lines, a PC who manages to get 25 feet off the ground (by either flying to the ceiling or climbing the walls with a successful DC 20 Athletics check) sees that they spell out "underground" in Shirren.

Creature: About 3 months ago, a comanide named Candlerime arrived on the Prodigal Stone. Though these fey are not normally aggressive, this one grew unusually violent after their original comet was destroyed by stray missiles in a massive battle between two fleets of starships. Upon arriving, Candlerime killed the Prodigal Stone's original peaceful comanide in a terrible fit of rage, and the resulting guilt has driven them to despair. They wandered about the comet since

CANDLERIME

then, never encountering the Hylaxian monks (though the monks are aware of the fey). Recently, Candlerime convinced themselves that the temple is dedicated to their honor and has taken the structure as their lair.

When the PCs enter the temple, Candlerime telepathically commands them to bow down in worship. If they make a suitable show of deference, the comanide speaks to the PCs for a few minutes. However, Candlerime knows nothing about the Forever Reliquary or the monks, so they provide fabricated answers to questions about such topics, all under the pretense that they are some kind of deific being. If the PCs are disrespectful (or after they ask too many questions), Candlerime becomes enraged and attacks.

CANDLERIME

CR 7

XP 3,200

Comanide (Starfinder Adventure Path #9: The Rune Drive
Gambit 57)

HP 90

TACTICS

During Combat Candlerime uses their comet form ability to move into the center of a group of PCs. The comanide strikes at PCs with their claws until reduced to 60 Hit Points or fewer. They then retreat to cast *mind thrust* from a distance. If a PC tries to sunder or disarm the fey's icy crown, Candlerime casts *bestow curse* on that PC.

Morale Candlerime fights to the death to protect their new comet and home.

Treasure: Any PCs hoping to use Candlerime's frozen crown finds that it crumbles into useless shards of ice once the fey is slain. In their interstellar travels on their previous comet, Candlerime collected a number of beautiful gems, which they have laid out in a complex display on the temple's floor. Though not cut or polished, the gems are worth 5,000 credits. With a few hours of work, a PC can polish the gems with a successful DC 24 check using a relevant Profession skill (such as jeweler) or a successful DC 28 Physical Science check, adding 2,000 credits to the value. Failure means the PC isn't competent enough to increase the gems' value, and the skill check can't be tried again.

Development: Once they discover the markings on the floor, the PCs are likely to search for a trap door or hatch that leads underground. Unfortunately, there is no entrance to the Forever Reliquary within the temple, but the PCs can use the structure as a base of operations and landmark as they search the rest of the comet for it.

SEEKING THE RELIQUARY

There is only one proper entrance to the Forever Reliquary, and it is well hidden in the approximately 12-1/2 square miles of surface area of the comet. To continue their mission, the

PCs must scour the comet to find the entrance. This requires a PC to succeed at a DC 50 Survival check (only one other PC can aid on this check). Each attempt takes an hour of searching, but it also decreases the DC by 5 for the next check as the PCs get more accustomed to the area and start ruling out locations. Each failed check results in an encounter from those detailed below. These encounters can occur in any order, and once they have all occurred, each further failure simply results in lost time.

The PCs can take a 10-minute rest at any point during their search, and they can even take an overnight rest in their ship or within the temple if necessary. Time spent resting doesn't reduce the DC of the Survival check to find the entrance.

When the PCs succeed at this Survival check, they reach area **G**, the hatch that leads to the Forever Reliquary.

Story Award: If the PCs reach area **G** before encountering any of the encounters in areas **C** through **F**, award them XP as if they had defeated any missing encounters.

C. SHANTAK CAVE (CR 8)

A deep cave extends into the side of a large, craggy hill, surrounded by large boulders. The cave's entrance is cleared of snow and ice, allowing for easy entrance to the dark passage.

The PCs come across a large cave with an opening clear of snow and ice that could easily hide a hatch to an underground tunnel.

Creature: A shantak, a large magical beast that can fly through space, landed on this comet to rest while journeying between planets only a few days ago. Avoiding the temple after spotting the comanide, it found this cave where it could sleep peacefully for a bit. The PCs' starship landing on the comet awakens it, but it hopes to avoid any kind of trouble by remaining quiet.

SHANTAK

CR 8

XP 4,800

HP 125 (Starfinder Alien Archive 2 110)

TACTICS

Before Combat The shantak, on edge from the arrival of the PCs' starship on the comet, lingers in the back of its cave hoping that the PCs will just walk by. If the PCs approach too close or enter the cave, looking for an entrance to the temple, the shantak emerges and attacks to defend itself.

During Combat The shantak doesn't use much strategy, lashing out with its talons and its bite attack at whichever PC is nearest. It occasionally cries out in Aklo for the PCs to leave it alone. If the PCs retreat, it does not pursue them.

Morale If reduced to 40 Hit Points or fewer, the shantak attempts to escape, flying off into the void.

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D. SINKSNOW PATCH (CR 7)

A jagged mountain stretches high above a field of untouched snow and ice. The thin air here is still.

Hazard: Though the landscape here looks safe and peaceful, it is actually a large patch of dangerously deep snow that can suck an unsuspecting traveler under. Also sometimes known as sinksnow, this quicksand-like hazard can be spotted with a successful DC 35 Perception check or DC 30 Survival check. Each PC can attempt a check to notice the sinksnow. Once the PCs know it is there, they can go around it with another successful DC 30 Survival check to feel around the edges; the sinksnow patch is a pool approximately 30 feet in diameter. Alternatively, the PCs can simply turn away from the sinksnow, though doing so imparts a -4 penalty to the PCs' next Survival check to find the *Forever Reliquary*.

If no PC succeeds at the Perception or Survival check to detect the hazard, one randomly chosen PC falls into the sinksnow 10 feet from the solid edge. If that PC failed their check by 10 or more, they are instead 15 feet from the solid edge before the sinksnow begins dragging them down. A character in sinksnow must succeed at a DC 15 Athletics check to swim every round to remain in place, or a DC 20 Athletics check to swim 5 feet. If a character fails either check by 5 or more, they sink 5 feet below the surface, and they continue to sink 5 feet each round, unless they succeed at one of the above checks to remain in place or swim upward. If a character ever sinks 15 feet below the surface, they begin to feel the almost supernatural cold of the snow and ice, taking 1d6 cold damage each round. A character that sinks 30 feet below the surface takes 2d6 cold damage each round. The crevasse below this particular patch of sinksnow is 40 feet deep. A character that takes cold damage from sinksnow is fatigued until they take a 10-minute rest to regain Stamina Points.

A character can attempt to pull another character trapped in sinksnow with a length of cable line or a piece of equipment (such as a staff) long enough to reach the victim. A character can successfully throw the end of a cable by making a ranged attack against an AC of 5. As long as the victim grasps this safety line, the rescuer must succeed at a DC 10 Strength check to pull the victim 5 feet closer to safety; if the line is long enough, multiple people might be able to aid the rescuer. The victim must continue to succeed at the DC 15 Athletics check to not sink any farther, but holding on to the safety line grants them a +4 circumstance bonus to the check.

Story Award: If the PCs avoid the patch of sinksnow or rescue a character trapped in it, award them 3,200 XP.

E. ICY CREVASS (CR 8)

A rocky crevasse opens into the ground, its floor a large expanse of ice so perfectly formed as to appear artificial.

The area is free from random debris, as if kept clear by someone—or something.

The crevasse is only 20 feet deep, and the ice-covered walls can be scaled with a successful DC 20 Athletics check. The ground here is a large sheet of smooth, particularly slippery ice. This increases the DCs of Acrobatics checks to tumble by 5. In addition, if a creature attempts to run or charge across the ice, they must succeed at a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone after the movement.

Creatures: This patch of ice is the result of several ice elementals taking up residence on the comet when it passed near a thin spot between the planes several years ago. The elementals keep the surface free from stray rocks, treating the ice almost like a sacred site. The monks have left the ice elementals alone, avoiding this crevasse.

The ice elementals linger near the jagged walls of the crevasse and are difficult to differentiate from the surrounding ice and stone. They are more or less oblivious to the approach of the PCs, but they take grave offense when the PCs stumble onto their territory and immediately attack.

LARGE ICE ELEMENTALS (3)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Starfinder Alien Archive 46, Starfinder Adventure Path #13:

Fire Starters 57

N Large outsider (air, cold, elemental, extraplanar, water)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., sense through [vision [fog and precipitation only]] 60 ft.; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE

HP 70 EACH

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

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

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

Weaknesses vulnerability to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft. (ice and snow only), swim 60 ft.

Attack slam +15 (1d6+10 B; critical staggered [DC 13])

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

TACTICS

During Combat The ice elementals spread out, each attacking a different PC.

Morale Protective of their territory, the ice elementals fight until they are destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +11

Languages Aquan

Other Abilities ice glide, icewalking

F. EARLY GRAVE (CR 8)

Nestled into a small, rocky indentation lies a large insectile corpse with huge mandibles and three pairs of arms, two larger than all the rest, its heavy robes frozen over with ice.

The chest of the creature is a horrific mess, riddled with endless holes and caked with frozen blood. The armor beneath the robes is shredded, completely wrecked beyond any usefulness.

This is the corpse of a Hylaxian monk named Byno, a trox who was assigned to the duty of taking care of the temple where the PCs landed. He left the Forever Reliquary only a few days before the PCs arrived and was attacked by a swarm of comet wasps, which killed him and infested his body with their fast-growing brood. The other monks are understandably worried about their missing comrade, but given Tuvah's recent orders, they have yet to send out a search party.

With a successful DC 12 Culture or Life Science check, a PC can identify the body as that of a trox. Anyone investigating the body finds the symbol of Hylax on the shredded robes. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Life Science or Medicine check suspects that something living—possibly many somethings—burst forth from the trox's chest. If a PC's result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, they can identify the cause as a comet wasp swarm.

Creature: Luckily for the PCs, the comet wasp swarm that laid its eggs here within Byno's corpse has already departed for another comet, looking to spread their progeny over as many celestial bodies as possible. However, those eggs recently hatched, and the wasps are now eagerly searching for their first living meal. After a few moments of the PCs investigating the body, this juvenile comet wasp swarm appears from around a nearby rocky spire and attacks. Fortunately, the swarm isn't mature enough to lay its own eggs, and these insects' stingers excrete a milder version of the toxin older comet wasps use to paralyze their prey.

JUVENILE COMET WASP SWARM CR 8

XP 4,800

N Fine vermin (swarm)

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

DEFENSE **HP** 121

EAC 20; **KAC** 22

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

Defensive Abilities swarm defenses, void adaptation; **Immunities** cold, swarm immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee swarm attack (4d4 C & P plus numbing toxin)

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

Offensive Abilities distraction (DC 16)

TACTICS

During Combat The juvenile comet swarm engulfs as many PCs as possible.

Morale If reduced to 25 Hit Points or fewer, the juvenile comet wasp swarm flees the Prodigal Stone.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +16 (+24 to fly)

Other Abilities mindless

NUMBING TOXIN

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

Track Dexterity (special); **Frequency** 1/round for 4 rounds

Effect progression track is Healthy-Sluggish-Stiffened-Staggered; no end state

Cure 1 save

Treasure: Tucked into Byno's robes are a key card that opens the hatch in area **G**, a shiny holy symbol of Hylax, and two *mk 2 serums of healing*. If the PCs return the holy symbol to the Forever Reliquary, they might gain favor with some of the monks (see page 18).



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G. RELIQUARY ENTRANCE (CR 8)

Once the PCs finally succeed at the Survival check described in Seeking the Reliquary on page 11, they come across the entrance to the monastery tunnels.

Under a stony overhang at the end of a nearly unnoticeable path through the snow are several rocks piled around a white hatch that almost perfectly blends in with the surrounding terrain. The round portal is ten feet across and decorated with the faint outline of an insectile face crowned by three shining stars.

Hidden from view from above, the entrance to the Forever Reliquary is emblazoned with a holy symbol of Hylax. The hatch is locked but can be forced open with a successful DC 25 Engineering check. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Computers check can hack the attached card reader



or use the key card taken off the body of the trox killed by the comet wasp swarm (see area F). A PC who succeeds at a DC 21 Computers, Engineering, or Perception check before attempting to open the hatch bypasses the sensor built into the door that alerts those inside when the hatch is opened.

If the PCs fail either check to open the hatch by 5 or more, they make enough noise to alert the guards (see Creatures below), who open the hatch and step out of the airlock to confront the PCs.

The hatch opens into an airlock and occupied guard station, which stands at the beginning of a tunnel that leads deeper into the rock and eventually to the Forever Reliquary.

Creatures: A trio of haan guards watches over the entrance. While everyone who lives at the Forever Reliquary worships Hylax, sometimes the monks' children aren't themselves suited to the monastic lifestyle. Most of them eventually leave the Prodigal Stone, but some remain to perform other duties.

Brothers Kiarth and Nuritch and their sister Yachern do their best to follow Hylax's peaceful ways but often find it difficult, preferring more aggressive tactics. Knowing that followers of Hylax are sometimes called upon to defend the innocent and that the comet occasionally is visited by hostile forces, Tuvah assigned the three siblings to guard duty when they came of age, making them the largest official guard division the reliquary has ever had. While Tuvah hopes the haans will someday embrace Hylax's teachings more completely, she appreciates the work that they do to help keep the community safe, and the siblings have taken readily to the work.

The three haans are currently on edge due to Tuvah's strange behavior and the rest of the council's silence on the matter. They challenge the PCs in a rather unfriendly manner, demanding in Shirren to know what the PCs are doing here. (The haan guards do not speak Common, as Shirren is the primary language of the temple.) A PC who can communicate with the haans and succeeds at a DC 32 Diplomacy check can convince the guards of their good intentions. A PC who is a member of an insectile species familiar to the haans (formian, haan, shirren, or trox) or who is an obvious devotee to Hylax gains a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. A PC who can communicate with the haans and instead succeeds at a DC 27 Intimidate check can cow the guards into taking them into the reliquary, though this will have ramifications later on. The haans are not willing to let the PCs cast spells on them.

If the PCs don't succeed at reassuring the haans, then the haans attack the PCs, calling them intruders. Tuvah, who has been monitoring the PCs' behavior via the portal room since they landed, arrives just after any PC is dealt Hit Point damage or any guard is reduced to 30 Hit Points. She thoroughly scolds the haans for attacking the PCs, exclaiming that this is not what Hylax teaches. The haans glare at the PCs as Tuvah apologizes for their behavior

(though she also doesn't speak Common; see Meeting Tuvah below).

If the PCs succeed at either the Diplomacy or Intimidate check, the haans bring the PCs into the Forever Reliquary, where Tuvah meets them at the end of the tunnel connecting the airlock entrance to the main underground structure.

KIARTH, NURITCH, AND YACHERN CR5

XP 1,600 each

Male and female haan
soldier (Starfinder Alien
Archive 58)

CN Large monstrous
humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision
60 ft.; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE HP 84 EACH
EAC 17; KAC 20

Fort +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (Ex,
average)

Melee balloon +14 (DC 13) or
tactical swoop hammer +14
(1d10+10 B; critical knockdown)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with swoop hammer)

Offensive Abilities charge attack, fighting styles (blitz),
firespray (3d6 F, DC 13)

TACTICS

During Combat The haan guards rush in to engage in melee, taking advantage of their charge attack. Although their balloon ability isn't as effective in the enclosed tunnels, they might attempt to use it outside of the hatch on a particularly aggressive PC.

Morale If one of the haan guards is killed or incapacitated before Tuvah arrives, the others reluctantly surrender.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +16, Engineering +11

Languages Brethadan, Shirren

Gear lashunta ringwear II, tactical swoop hammer,
stickybomb grenades II (2), mk 1 serum of healing, holy
symbol of Hylax

Story Award: If the PCs avoid combat with the haan guards or their fight is interrupted by Tuvah, award them XP as though they had defeated the guards in combat.

MEETING TUVAH

Tuvah (LG female trox^{AA2} mystic) has a large and imposing form, even for a trox, but her words and gestures tend to be kind and gentle. She wears heavy robes emblazoned with Hylax's symbol and carries no weapons. She is in the habit of holding her hands in front of her, palms out, as though to

show that she is unarmed, and she tries to be mindful of her size relative to most other creatures in the temple.

Tuvah doesn't speak Common, only Nchaki and Shirren. If none of the PCs can speak either of those languages, Tuvah mimes casting a spell, hoping to get the PCs' permission to do so. Tuvah can cast *share language* on each PC every day they remain in the Forever Reliquary, if they would like. If the PCs refuse her offer of *share language* but can't speak Shirren or Nchaki or provide some other way to communicate, Tuvah gets frustrated, and the PCs take a -2 circumstance penalty to all checks to interact with any member of the Sacred Assembly (see The Reliquary Residents on page 18) until they make an effort to speak a language all can understand. In the meantime, Tuvah has a

junior monk fetch Harisskor the librarian, who speaks Common and can translate for everyone, though this slows down the process of speaking with the monks.

Once they can speak to each other, Tuvah explains to the PCs that she is the abbot of the Forever Reliquary and tells them she has been expecting them, as Hylax has provided her with visions of their arrival. She offers to heal them or remove any harmful conditions if they require it before getting down to business. (Tuvah's stat block on page 35 lists the spells she can cast.) She deflects any questions the PCs might have for now, explaining they will get their answers shortly. First, she must present them to the monastery's Sacred Assembly; Tuvah cautions them to be on their best behavior, but reassures them that they will "do fine." She follows that with a warning about some of the stodgier members of the group.



PART 3: THE TRIALS OF HYLAX

Tuvah desperately wants to believe the PCs are the heroes from her visions and will be able to harness the power of the *Crown of Hylax* and turn back the Swarm invasion, but she is wise enough not to put all of her faith in prophecy. She also knows she hasn't informed the Sacred Assembly of the revelations Hylax has bestowed upon her and that

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the assembly would likely overrule her decision to simply hand over the artifact to a group of strangers. However, Tuvah has a plan that she reveals simultaneously to the PCs and the Sacred Assembly, praying that her fellow monks will trust her and that the PCs aren't a group of ill-intentioned interlopers.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Once the PCs are acquainted with Tuvah, she leads them through the hallways of the monastery, past a variety of insectile creatures who all regard the PCs with a friendly curiosity. Tuvah shoos off a few lallygagging shirrens in robes once the group reaches an open set of heavy bronze double doors carved with images of Hylax. A low murmur of buzzing and clacking drifts from the room beyond, as heads turn and necks crane to peer at the newcomers. Tuvah whispers to the PCs that they should follow her lead as she strides into the chamber.

The door opens into a massive temple. Pews ranging from small to large fill the bulk of the room, while additional seating in boxes on the walls seems meant for climbing and flying parishioners. A towering statue of an insectile creature wearing long robes stands against the western wall, just behind a dais supporting a long, low wall with five seats behind it. A double door leads out to the south, and a smaller door stands in the western wall near the platform.

Dozens of monks fill the pews, and the Sacred Assembly—the shirrens Harisskor and Ithavine, the formian Meershmar, and the trox Rakorant—sits in their seats behind the wall on the dais, with an empty spot in the middle where Tuvah would sit. After gesturing for the PCs to sit in one of the front-most pews, the trox abbot steps up onto the dais and addresses the room, directing the occasional comment to the Sacred Assembly behind her.

"Fellow devotees of Hylax and members of the Sacred Assembly, greetings. I have been your abbot for many years now, and I would like to think that I have earned your trust. For my part, I trust you all implicitly, though I understand that you have reason to doubt that from my behavior over the past few weeks." Tuvah folds a pair of hands onto her chest. "Truth be told, Hylax has seen fit to grant me visions of the future, and what I have seen has made me sorely afraid. The Swarm is poised to overtake the entire galaxy as we know it." Gasps ripple through the crowd. Tuvah raises her voice to speak over them. "But all is not yet lost! The Forever Queen has also shown me our potential salvation in the form of a group of outsiders. I believe these newcomers are those Hylax prophesied to me." There are further murmurs. "Before we can ascertain their intent, let's have them speak to us all as to why there are here."

Tuvah invites the PCs onto the dais to introduce themselves and explain their presence on the Prodigal Stone. One PC can take the lead, or all the heroes can speak for themselves at this point. Before the PCs can launch into the bulk of their story, however, Tuvah asks their permission to cast *zone of truth* (Will DC 19 negates), encompassing the entire dais in its emanation, to ensure the veracity of their tales. If a PC refuses to stand within the zone, the PCs take a -2 penalty to all checks to impress the members of the Sacred Assembly (see *The Reliquary Residents* beginning on page 18). While the PCs are speaking, the members of the Sacred Assembly each attempt a DC 25 Sense Motive check to determine whether the heroes are under *zone of truth*'s effects; each of these high-ranking monks has a total Sense Motive bonus of +20. Remember that characters can voluntarily forgo saving throws. If a PC attempts and succeeds at the saving throw against the *zone of truth* spell and a member of the Assembly discerns that, the PCs take a -2 penalty to all checks to influence that member.

Once the PCs have told their story, the Sacred Assembly asks them a few questions. They want to know the PCs' relationship to Hylax, particularly if any of them worship the Forever Queen. They are also curious to know what the PCs believed they would discover here at the Forever Reliquary and why they think the Swarm might also be searching for it. After a few minutes of the PCs being mildly interrogated, Tuvah thanks them and continues speaking.

"I hope that you were indeed sent by Hylax, but you must understand that we guard a most important secret here that is meant only for true champions of the Forever Queen." Tuvah turns to the group assembled on the dais. "Therefore, I propose that we use the portal room to place the newcomers through a series of trials to test their commitment to Hylax's ideals: to diplomacy, to peace, and to the defense of the innocent." This suggestion is met with the nodding of several heads and a general buzz of excitement among the monks gathered.

With her plan in place, Tuvah explains that the trials will begin on the following morning and take place over the next 3 days. The PCs will be given places to rest, and Tuvah invites them to use the monastery's accommodations or to speak with the other monks in the intervening time.

The PCs may have their own questions, though Tuvah is less than forthcoming with answers.

What does the Reliquary hold that can beat the Swarm?
"I cannot tell you until I know that you are true champions of Hylax."

Why do we need to be "true champions?" Won't this waste a lot of time? "I will tell you when the time comes, you must channel a small part of Hylax's power, which can't possibly work if you are opposed to her ideals. The time is not wasted if it allows you to become what we all need you to be."

What will these trials entail? “The Forever Queen will decide exactly, but they will likely be missions of peace and diplomacy.”

None (or not all) of us worship Hylax, and we aren't willing to convert. Will this still work? “It is not necessary to devote your life to Hylax, though she always welcomes new worshippers into the fold. You must simply live up to her ideals. If you are quick to violence, if you ignore the plights of others, if you revel in war, then Hylax will not help you.”

Have you heard of the God-Host? What is it? “The Swarm entity known as the God-Host is a part of this, yes. It is part of the Swarm's plan, and it is a creature of great power. I will tell you more after the trials.”

If the PCs try to argue that there isn't time or simply refuse to attempt the trials, Tuvah remains adamant. If necessary, Rakorant, the friendliest member of the council, takes the PCs aside to try to convince them to take the tests. If the PCs continue to refuse, Tuvah allows the PCs to take a full night's rest in the monastery but insists they leave afterward. You can accelerate the adventure by having the Swarm attack the Prodigal Stone early (perhaps the very next day), adding several additional waves of creatures to make up for the XP the PCs will miss by avoiding the trials. However, the PCs will likely have an incredibly difficult time of these encounters, as they will have no help from the monks and very few resources.

Should the PCs agree to her terms, Tuvah asks one of the monks to show them to the guests' quarters in the southern wing. From there, the PCs essentially have free reign of the monastery until the next morning, as Tuvah prepares the portal room with lights and sticks of incense.

NAVIGATING THE FOREVER RELIQUARY

The Forever Reliquary is carved out into the rock of the Prodigal Stone, protecting it from both the dangers of the comet's surface and attacks from invaders. The monastery is built to resemble an organic hive in the shape of a four-petaled flower, each “petal” a separate wing. The central area is a large open space used to cultivate food, with artificial sunlight growing crops of grains, vegetables, and leaves. A small section is also kept dark and moist to cultivate edible fungi. Though many of the walls appear almost organic, the monastery has been expertly constructed to retain a breathable atmosphere and a comfortable temperature around 50° F. Even so, it is common for residents to wear armor and clothing with environmental protections in case of a breach. The chambers and corridors of the reliquary have normal gravity.

There is currently only one entrance to the monastery, through which the PCs entered, but several old tunnels branch off from the outer hallways. Artifacts of the Forever Reliquary's early days, these tunnels were used to quickly bring in supplies during the monastery's construction but stopped being used shortly afterward. Their entrances on the surface of the comet were sealed off, but the tunnels remain,

as the original architects believed collapsing too many of them might cause the comet to destabilize. Warning signs at the mouths of these tunnels let the residents know they are off-limits.

While virtually all the residents of the Forever Reliquary have darkvision, the monastery is kept well lit to allow creatures to see farther than their darkvision allows and to showcase the art present throughout the chambers and halls. Statues and murals—depicting Hylax and those races that commonly worship her—have been placed throughout most of the structure. Corridors are wide and tall enough for even Large residents.

The monastery currently has about 200 members, about half of whom are shirrens. While the monks have devoted their lives to service of Hylax, they also have specific responsibilities to the community, such as keeping the airlocks and air recyclers in good working order or teaching the residents' children. The dominant language is Shirren, with Nchaki the second most common, and very few residents speak Common.

NORTHERN WING

The northern wing is the religious center of the Forever Reliquary and includes the temple (described on page 16) and the library, as well as small meeting and prayer rooms. The most dedicated monks spend large portions of their days here, and virtually everyone living in the comet attends weekly services to Hylax in the temple. The *Crown of Hylax* is kept within a secret compartment in the temple.

The books, manuscripts, and data files in the library form an extensive collection about the Hylaxian faith. The librarian Harisskor spends most of her time here keeping a careful watch over the archive. Every tome has been digitally scanned, and Harisskor keeps the original copies of many of the works under lock and key, considering them to be sacred. The library is decorated with several tables and chairs for reading, as well as a few decorative pieces of art.

EASTERN WING

This part of the structure houses a dining hall, exercise facilities, an infirmary, schools for the young, and recreational spaces. Members of the Forever Reliquary generally share communal meals, though they can eat in their private quarters if they prefer solitude. Rakorant oversees food preparation, and Ithavine is the monastery's main physician. Most residents of the reliquary spend good portions of their days in this wing.

SOUTHERN WING

The monastery's living quarters are found here. Families and those in long-term relationships usually share their own private units, while single individuals have private bedrooms and shared washroom facilities. These quarters can accommodate Small, Medium, and Large residents. There are

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also a handful of extra quarters for guests, which are empty most of the time; the PCs are given rooms here.

WESTERN WING

The western wing includes the reliquary's utilities, including a power generator that is shielded from scans from the surface and an artificial gravity generator. The monastery must be kept in good repair at all times, particularly the life support systems keeping the atmosphere breathable.

Meershmar oversees the engineering and technical operations. The monastery doesn't have any of its own starships, though Meershmar is adequate at engine repair, if needed. This facility includes a tech workshop and tools if the PCs need such a facility for crafting or repairing items. While the Forever Reliquary does not have an actual militia, Meershmar is also in charge of maintaining a supply of armor and weapons (which includes a recharging station for environmental protections).

CENTRAL GARDEN

The center of the temple contains both a water-treatment plant and several agricultural areas. When Rakorant isn't in the eastern wing, he's usually here, overseeing the farming operations. The monastery uses hydroponics and artificial light to grow grains and vegetables, which are rotated on a yearly schedule. Tuvah's portal room is here, a cave-like chamber that was once used to store additional equipment for the water treatment facilities, but with improvements in technology over the centuries, this area went largely unused until the trox abbot's initiative. Only Tuvah and the members of the Sacred Assembly are allowed into the portal room without supervision; the door is kept shut with a superior lock (Engineering DC 40 to unlock). The portal room is described in more detail on page 22.

THE RELIQUARY RESIDENTS

The PCs can interact with the residents of the Forever Reliquary (including the members of the Sacred Assembly) before and in between the trials, especially if they want to get on the Assembly's good side. If the PCs sequester themselves within their quarters, Rakorant approaches the PCs to suggest they go out among the Hylaxian monks and perhaps get to know them.

The news of Tuvah's prophetic visions has quickly spread through the monastery, and most monks are on edge about

their apocalyptic nature. Not many are confident the PCs will be able to stop the Swarm, though none of them speak this fear out loud to the PCs. The most important NPCs of the monastery are listed below, with ways the PCs can positively

influence them. Doing so grants the PCs benefits in

Part 4 of the adventure, along with a number of experience points (see Story Award below).

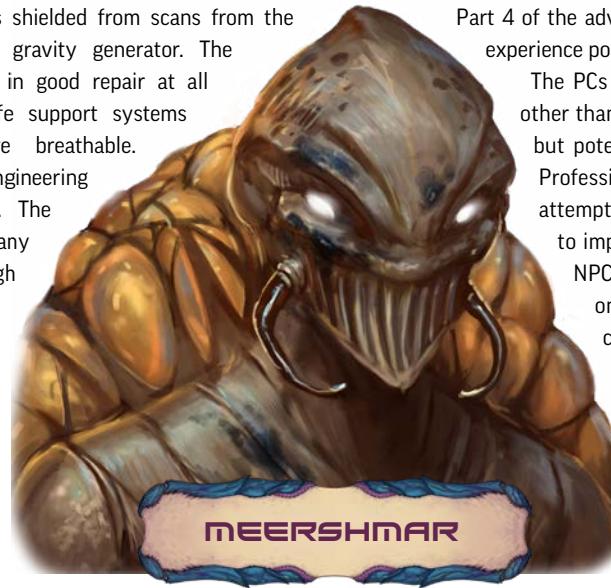
The PCs can attempt checks with skills other than those listed at your discretion, but potentially at higher DCs. Relevant Profession checks can always be attempted at the lowest DC available to impress a particular NPC. For each NPC, each PC can either attempt one check or aid on another PC's check. Only one PC needs to succeed at a check to impress that NPC, but if none of the PCs are successful, that NPC simply doesn't find the PCs extraordinary and they become standoffish. Worshippers of Hylax, PCs who made an offering in the

empty temple on the surface (see page 10), or characters who returned the slain monk Byno's holy symbol (see page 13) gain a +2 circumstance bonus to any check to impress a monk. Particularly good arguments or role-playing should also be rewarded with a +2 circumstance bonus that stacks with the above bonus.

Story Award: Award the PCs 500 XP for each NPC they impress.

HARISSKOR

The Forever Reliquary's librarian, **Harisskor** (NG female shirren), is the member of the Sacred Assembly most suspicious of the PCs. The shirren was the other candidate for abbot when Tuvah was selected, and she still holds a bit of a grudge for being passed over. She is convinced that Tuvah's plan will result in failure and that the PCs might somehow be agents of the Swarm. Harisskor wears a white smock over her light armor while in the library, in order to keep the collection clean and free from contaminants. If the PCs use the library, she glares at them, though eventually her professionalism gets the better of her. She doesn't ask the PCs to wear the same white smocks that she does, but PCs who voluntarily do so, or otherwise take pains to keep the collection clean, earn a +2 circumstance bonus to checks to impress her. Harisskor can speak more languages than anyone else in the Forever Reliquary, and she shows off by speaking Common and perhaps some of the PCs' languages. A PC must succeed at a DC 30 Diplomacy check to convince Harisskor that they are genuinely on the side of the monastery, or a DC 26 Culture or Mysticism check to speak intelligently about Hylax and the



relicuary's collection. A shirren PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any check to impress Harisskor.

ITHAVINE

Doctor **Ithavine** (LG host shirren), like Meershmar, spends most of the time the PCs are present preparing for a possible attack, getting all of the medical facilities ready for casualties. While they keep the facilities clean and in good repair, there likely aren't enough supplies to handle a lot of injuries at once. Ithavine wears an unadorned, pale-blue lab coat over their light armor while actively working in the medical facilities. Ithavine is wary of the PCs, suspecting they are ill-prepared for the task ahead of them. Ithavine dislikes speaking out loud and always communicates via telepathy. A PC can attempt to reassure Ithavine they will do their best with a successful DC 28 Diplomacy check. Alternatively, they can help with the medical preparations with a successful DC 24 Life Science or Medicine check. A shirren PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to either check. If the PCs donate at least 1,000 credits worth of *serums of healing*, medicinals, or other medical supplies to the reliquary's medical facilities, each PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any check to impress the doctor.

KIARTH, NURITCH, AND YACHERN

Though the haan guards aren't members of the Sacred Assembly, they seek out the PCs at some point during the heroes' stay in the monastery. Their attitude depends largely on how the encounter in area **G** went. If the PCs and the haan guards fought, or the PCs bullied the guards into allowing them entrance into the Forever Reliquary, the PCs take a -4 circumstance penalty to checks to impress the haans, and the haans are extremely antagonistic toward the PCs. If the earlier encounter was resolved peacefully, the haans are friendly and extremely curious. Either way, the haans ask about the PCs' experience in battle. Although they are guards, the haans have fought only minor threats on the surface (such as the occasional ice elemental) and have never experienced a real war. A PC can regale them with stories of their past military successes with a successful DC 24 Diplomacy check or demonstrate their physical prowess with a successful DC 20 Acrobatics or Athletics check. A haan PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any check to impress the guards.

MEERSHMAR

Meershmar (NG male formian worker), the chief mechanic, works on getting the reliquary's defenses and environmental systems in shape for a possible upcoming Swarm attack, adding redundancies and backups to maintain the temple's atmosphere and artificial gravity for as long as possible. He has no strong feelings one way or the other about the PCs, preoccupied as he is over his monumental task. The formian wears freebooter armor covered in grease stains while working, but he goes to a lot of effort to clean up when not actively working on equipment, donning monk's robes. When

asked questions, he responds with short, curt sentences that might seem rude but are simply his normal way of talking. The reliquary is currently dangerously short on materials for these upgrades, so Meershmar may approach the PCs to see if they have anything that would help. A PC must succeed at a DC 25 Diplomacy check to give the formian a pep talk and reassure him he is capable of upgrading the monastery's utilities. A PC can also impress Meershmar by helping with some of the preparations with a successful DC 24 Computers or Engineering check. A formian PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to either check. If the PCs can provide at least 1,000 UPBs to Meershmar, every PC earns a +2 circumstance bonus to any check to impress the mechanic.

If the PCs impress Meershmar, they can use the monastery's tech workshop to craft items when they have spare time.

RAKORANT

Rakorant (LG male trox) is in charge of food supplies and meal preparation. He is the most easygoing member of the Sacred Assembly and is happy to show off the agricultural facilities, the kitchen, and the communal eating spaces. He wears colorfully dyed shirts over his light armor. Rakorant likes to make jokes and tell amusing stories, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Sense Motive check realizes he is trying to hide his anxiety over Tuvah's visions. To impress Rakorant, a PC can suggest a new recipe with a successful DC 18 Culture or Life Science check. A PC can also lighten Rakorant's mood with some humorous anecdotes and a successful DC 22 Diplomacy check. A trox PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any check to impress Rakorant.

TUVAH

The arrival of the PCs is in line with Tuvah's visions, but the magnitude of the task ahead of them has made even the abbot nervous. The fate of the galaxy is at stake if the Swarm succeeds at obtaining the *Crown of Hylax*, and the gravity of the situation weighs heavily on her mind. However, the PCs can't speak with her until after the first trial, as she is busy preparing the portal room. When they do speak, the trox is warm and friendly to the PCs (especially if they did a good job on the first trial), but it's clear she is nervous about what's to come. A PC can reassure her that they are extremely well qualified with a successful DC 20 Bluff or Diplomacy check, perhaps by recounting their successes against the Swarm so far. A PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to this check if they bypassed two or more of the encounters on the comet's surface through a successful Survival check to find the Forever Reliquary's entrance. Alternatively, a PC can cite Hylaxian scripture that impresses Tuvah with a successful DC 16 Mysticism check. Once the PCs have won over Tuvah, they gain a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to influence any other monks, as the abbot is very influential. However, Tuvah doesn't provide any additional help during the attack on the reliquary in Part 4 while she is in a trance.

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RESEARCH IN THE RELIQUARY

The PCs could spend the time before (or between) the trials learning more about the monastery or the goddess Hylax.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Depending on when they arrived at the Forever Reliquary, the PCs can spend some time the day before the trials begin getting to know the monks and finding out more about the monastery. Based on the results of a Diplomacy check to gather information (which takes 1d4 hours), the PCs learn the following. The PCs can attempt this check as often as they have time for (even between the trials), receiving new information if the newest result exceeds the highest previous result and reaches a new threshold.

Result Information

DC 10+ The Prodigal Stone was where Hylax revealed herself to the shirren people as they fled from the Swarm. A temple was built on the comet's surface, and the Forever Reliquary was constructed decades later. There are about 200 residents living in the monastery, almost all of whom were born on the comet, though new members occasionally arrive as part of religious pilgrimages. Often, these groups arrive to simply pay their respects, but sometimes they pledge themselves fully to Hylax and stay. While all residents of the monastery worship Hylax, not every resident is a member of the clergy. Some devote themselves to other jobs, such as guards, engineers and technicians, teachers, medical personnel, farmers, and so on. The vast majority of the monks also have other responsibilities to the monastery along those lines, as keeping a community functioning on a comet takes a lot of effort.

DC 15+ The original monks of the Forever Reliquary were all shirrens. This continued for some time, until other worshippers of Hylax discovered the comet. There are now haans, formians, trox and other insectile species living at the monastery, though the single largest group is still shirrens. Interestingly, while the monks would never turn away a true devotee from joining, no members of noninsectile species have ever joined the monastery.

DC 20+ Tuvah has been the abbot for about 15 years, since the previous abbot died, and directs the religious services and studies of the monastery. Harisskor, the librarian, was the other candidate for the position, but Tuvah was chosen because of her special connection to Hylax. It is said the Tuvah can call upon Hylax to perform miracles. (Once the PCs learn this information, they can gain a +2 circumstance bonus to checks to

impress Harisskor by empathizing with her over being passed over for the position.) In conjunction with Tuvah as abbot, the monastery is run by the Sacred Assembly, a council that includes Harisskor, Ithavine the shirren doctor, Meershmar the formian mechanic, and Rakorant the trox farmer and cook. Outside of specific religious and spiritual questions, which Tuvah handles, the Sacred Assembly approves many other decisions for the monastery.

DC 25+ Tuvah's first major act when she was made abbot was to install a special holoscreen in an unused room near the central gardens. This hybrid item allows the monks to view planets, moons, and other areas to look for those in need of aid. When Hylax deems it necessary, the screen becomes a portal to the place shown for a brief period of time, allowing monks to pass through and perform whatever task is required. If the PCs ask for specific examples of missions, some monks describe having to rescue those in trouble and defusing a major argument between two groups before it escalated.

DC 30+ The Forever Reliquary is so named because it guards an important relic of Hylax: a crown crafted by shirren priests on Suskillon and brought to the comet centuries ago. The statue of Hylax in the temple on the comet's surface depicts this crown, but it is not a well-known artifact throughout the rest of the galaxy. Many residents say that the *Crown of Hylax* can perform powerful magic, but no one is able to say exactly what. If asked about the crown, Tuvah refuses to answer but comments that if the monastery is going to have visitors, the monks might need a refresher course on keeping sensitive information secret.

STUDYING IN THE LIBRARY

The PCs are allowed to use the reliquary's library while they are in residence, which they can use to research Hylax to better prepare themselves to be her champions. The librarian Harisskor is willing (though not particularly enthusiastic) to help the PCs find appropriate resources. Based on the results of a Mysticism check (which takes 4 hours), the PCs learn the following. The PCs can attempt this check as often as they have time for (even between the trials), receiving new information if the newest result exceeds the highest previous result and reaches a new threshold.

Result Information

DC 10+ Hylax is the goddess of diplomacy, first contact, friendship, and peace. She is traditionally worshipped by many species of hive creatures, though she prefers her followers to speak out for themselves when necessary. Hylax urges her

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followers to always seek diplomatic and peaceful solutions, but she does not oppose fighting as a last resort, particularly in the defense of others. Shirren religious scholars have written multiple works about how their species rejected the Swarm and was embraced by Hylax during their exodus. These texts also state that at that time, the shirrens learned that before they became the Swarm, many kucharn were a part of Hylax's faith, but their transformation into engines of sheer destruction made them incompatible with her religion. Several treatises believe that Hylax was sad to see them turn away from her but didn't try to stop it.

DC 20+ Different cultures who worship Hylax have different stories about her origins. According to some shirrens, Hylax was among the first kucharn, long before the name "shirren" even existed. She ascended from being a mortal queen to a goddess, and her divine touch allowed the shirrens to be created generations later. The trox from the Liavarán moon of Nchak believe that their leaders are mortal reincarnations of Hylax who once lived on that moon. Many of these trox believe decisions made by their leaders are official decrees of the goddess herself.

DC 25+ Whether the church of Hylax should stand in opposition to the Swarm is a matter of great

debate. Some Hylaxians believe that because Hylax herself chose not stop kucharn from becoming the Swarm, the modern church should also not go to war with the Swarm, though fighting in self-defense is acceptable. Others feel that while Hylax did not oppose the Swarm herself, the Swarm goes so much against everything she stands for that those who worship the goddess must protect the innocent from its advance. Diplomacy has been tried long ago, including by Hylax herself, and it is now time for action before more innocent lives are lost. A scant few even believe that the Swarm can be rehabilitated through the influence of Hylax.

DC 30+ Hylax rarely speaks directly to her followers, except in matters of grave import. However, certain beings, such as high-ranking priests of the faith and the philosopher worms of Nchak, claim to receive visions from the Forever Queen that help them answer important questions of doctrine. Even rarer are those who are gifted with prophetic sight from Hylax, and those who are sometimes see multiple outcomes to a particularly momentous event without knowing how either result may be affected. The mental health of such oracles can sometimes become strained as they are bombarded with nightmares of terrible futures.

STARTING THE TRIALS

The morning after the PCs arrive at the Forever Reliquary, they are brought to the portal room in the central gardens by Kiarth, one of the haan guards. The escort's attitude depends on whether the PCs have impressed the haan siblings (see page 19): chatty if Kiarth is friendly with the PCs, frosty if not.

Passing through several fields of hydroponic crops, the PCs are led to a steel door set into a protrusion of rock. Kiarth knocks on the door, which opens from the inside, and gestures for the PCs to enter.

This roughly rectangular chamber is set up with several chairs and floor cushions facing the far wall, which bears a gigantic holoscreen, almost like a home trivid den. The screen is twelve feet tall and almost thirty feet wide, though it is currently dark.

Tuvah stands in front of the screen, wearing what appears to be formal religious regalia. The rest of the Sacred Assembly sits on the chairs and cushions. As the door closes behind the PCs, the abbot greets them warmly and asks if they are ready to begin. When they answer affirmatively, she begins to explain what is about to happen.

"Creating this screen was one of my first acts as abbot. It's important that we are here, protecting this holy site of Hylax, but can we really serve the goddess of diplomacy fully if we never go and speak to others? This screen is the solution! As the Prodigal Stone passes through systems and areas of space with life, we can view these beings through the screen over hundreds of thousands of miles. We can keep our watch over developing civilizations, contentious organizations, and other scenarios without letting ourselves be known or putting ourselves in danger. However, there are times in which Hylax dictates we step in for the good of all involved. With a prayer, I can transform the screen into a portal, and our most skilled monks can travel to the location in question and serve the Forever Queen's will." She makes a quick gesture of devotion. "Praise Hylax!" The members of the Sacred Assembly murmur an answering litany.

"The portal stays open for only twelve hours, however, so we generally have to work fast. Sometimes we are successful, and sometimes we are not. We keep watch on our agents through this same screen and maintain detailed records of our actions, in case future generations of monks pass by the location again." Tuvah steps forward. "The Prodigal Stone is currently not within range of any circumstances which would require our intervention, but I believe Hylax will grant our prayers to bring us to three areas where the potential champions can showcase their understanding of her ideals. If she does, the screen will reveal the first."

"But before we begin, do you have any questions?"

Some questions the PCs might have and Tuvah's answers follow.

How will we get back? "The portal isn't easily visible from the other side, so it will be a good idea to mark its location. But once you have finished your trial, you will be able to step through it to return here to this room. However, no other creatures from wherever you end up will be able to pass through the portal."

Will you be watching us? Will you save us if we get in trouble? "We will indeed be watching your performance from here. Hopefully, you won't put yourselves in positions where you'll need saving!"

When the PCs are ready, Tuvah nods solemnly and starts to chant.

A faint aura surrounds Tuvah as she invokes the name of Hylax. The entire room begins to rumble, a low vibration that can surely be felt throughout the monastery. There is a sudden sensation of velocity, as if the entire comet were moving faster than physically possible, followed by an all-encompassing silence that cuts off the trox abbot's prayers, even though she continues to mouth them. Moments later, everything returns to normal and the holoscreen behind Tuvah illuminates, revealing a landscape of colorful plants and blue sky. The image could almost be mistaken for a painting, until a breeze catches the trees and a small animal darts into and out of view.

"Praise Hylax, for she has answered our prayers!" Tuvah exclaims. "For the duration of these trials, the Prodigal Stone will be moving at incredible speeds, skipping through the galaxy like a stone across a still pond. In this way, we will be able to move from system to system without wasting precious time on travel. But don't worry, that sensation you just felt will occur again only at some point in the night when you are asleep."

Meershmar hands Tuvah a datapad that contains scans of the planet on the other side of the screen. The abbot reads it over and then asks the PCs if they are prepared to embark on the first trial.

TRIAL 1: FIRST CONTACT (CR 9)

Tuvah gestures toward the landscape on the screen. "This is a test of first contact. What you see on the screen is the ninth planet orbiting the star Neertin. The creatures who live on this planet are intelligent, but they have not yet developed spaceflight technology, and no other species has visited them before. You will be the very first creatures from another world that they meet. This is a very important duty. You must make a good impression on them. You'll have to explain who you are; they may not have ever considered that there could be life on other planets, and there is a good chance they will be frightened of you. These creatures are not humanoids, and you may have to spend some time

LANGUAGE SPELLS

The PCs might have access to spells such as *share language* and *comprehend languages*, both of which can be helpful during this encounter. Casting *share language* on an ooze being requires that PC to touch the target, requiring at least one successful Diplomacy check as described in the Interaction section or a successful Stealth check to creep up to an ooze without being noticed. *Share language* doesn't grant the ooze a way to hear the PCs speak or speak a PC's language in return, but it does allow them to read the chosen language. *Comprehend languages* is perhaps a bit more useful, as it allows the caster to get the gist of the oozes' color-based method of communication. This either counts as a success for the Communication or Interaction efforts or grants a circumstance bonus to skill checks in those sections, as you see fit.

observing them and figuring out a way to communicate with them. Let the trial begin."

Tuvah closes her eyes, and her middle pair of hands clasps the holy symbol around her neck tightly. The screen slowly begins to shimmer around the edges. A bright point of light appears in the very center of the screen and begins to grow. Once it encompasses the entire display, it is replaced with a portal leading to the vista previously shown on the screen. Tuvah invites the PCs to step through, assuring them that the atmosphere is breathable and that the area is free of dangers.

Once through, the PCs can tell the portal is indeed hard to see from the other side, appearing as a faint, translucent shimmer. Tuvah sticks her head and torso through to demonstrate that the gateway is still open and wishes them good luck, gesturing toward a low hill to the north. As the PCs crest the hill, read or paraphrase the following.

Lush trees in a variety of colors stretch out across the land. Colorful lichen carpets the ground. The climate is warm, and chirps of insects fill the air. A few blobby, amorphous creatures travel along a path between the vibrant flora, brightly flashing a variety of colors at each other as they pass. Several stumpy buildings can be seen in the distance.

Creatures: The Small, roundish ooze beings that inhabit this planet are each about 3 feet in diameter and weigh about 30 pounds. They are intelligent and have built small cities, the nearest one less than a mile from the PCs' current position. They have no auditory organs and don't speak; they instead communicate by flashing different colors of light at one another, so their name for themselves isn't easily translatable into Common (though it essentially means "us"). They also have a written language based on the same colors, making inks from the various local flora. They don't yet have well-developed astronomy; the idea of other planets is a bit unfamiliar to them, and they have yet to even consider the possibility of other intelligent life.

Tasked with making friendly first contact with these oozes, the PCs have several avenues of approach open to them. Exactly what they do is up to the players, but their efforts should be resolved with skill checks, clever use of unconventional abilities, and role-playing. Use the guidelines and skill check DCs below to determine the success or failure of this mission, but don't feel constrained by them. If the PCs have a good idea and execute it with style, reward them! Also, the PCs should remember that they have only 12 hours before the portal to the Forever Reliquary closes; the skill checks listed here can be retried after an initial failure, though that will eat up the PCs' time. Once a PC succeeds at a check with a certain skill, the PCs can't earn another success with that same skill until it is attempted in a different circumstance.

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Observation: The PCs can perform reconnaissance on the creatures in order to learn more about them (and the way they communicate) before making themselves known. If the PCs blunder into a situation without attempting (or succeeding at) any such checks, you might impart penalties to further skill checks to influence the oozes. Attempting each of the following checks takes 1 hour, though multiple PCs can each attempt their own check during the same hour.

- With a successful DC 24 Culture check, a PC gets a rudimentary sense of the creatures' social structures.
- With a successful DC 24 Life Science check, a PC can analyze the creatures' anatomy.
- With a successful DC 26 Perception check, a PC notices a pattern in the way the oozes' coloration changes.
- A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Stealth check can get close enough to the creatures to observe them without being noticed.

If the PCs succeed at two or more of these skill checks, they learn the way the oozes communicate with one another and that they even have a written language. If the PCs succeed at four or more of these skill checks, they ascertain some insight into the creatures' language, gaining a +1 circumstance bonus to further skill checks in this encounter.

Communication: Once the PCs understand that the oozes communicate through flashing colors, the PCs must find a way to replicate that method of conveying information. This could be digital, such as programming a computerized device, or analog, by copying the oozes' written language. If they want, the PCs can attempt both such avenues. Attempting each of the following checks takes 1 hour, though multiple PCs can each attempt their own check during the same hour. Alternatively, any number of PCs can aid the character



attempting the main check, though this precludes those PCs from attempting their own individual checks.

- ➊ With a successful DC 26 Computers check, a PC can write a program on their comm unit that flashes colored lights.
- ➋ A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Engineering check can craft a makeshift device that displays colors of the correct wavelengths.
- ➌ With a successful DC 24 Physical Science check, a PC fashions ink from various chemicals in the party's supply.
- ➍ With a successful DC 22 Survival check, a PC can harvest nearby leaves and lichen to create colored ink.

If the PCs succeed at two or more of these skill checks, they have a way to reliably and effectively communicate with the oozes. If the PCs succeed at four or more of these skill checks, the method of communication they have created is very efficient, granting a +1 circumstance bonus to further skill checks in this encounter.

Interaction: Once the PCs have an avenue of communication, they can attempt first contact. When the PCs make themselves known, the oozes react with fear and confusion, and their initial attitude is unfriendly. The PCs can take various approaches to make a good impression, keep the creatures calm, and introduce them to the concept of other worlds. Attempting each of the following checks takes 1 hour of extended conversation, and only one PC can attempt a check each hour, though that PC can be aided by one other character.

Each successful check improves the oozes' attitude by one step, but failing a check by 5 or more worsens their attitude by one step. If the oozes become hostile, they flash warnings at the PCs but do not attack. If the PCs fail to improve the oozes' attitude with the next skill check, the creatures refuse to engage with the PCs any further, hiding within their homes.

- ➊ With a successful DC 28 Computers or Engineering check, a PC can foresee any problems with the device or program used to create the flashing colored lights and correct it before it causes a problem.
- ➋ With a successful DC 26 Culture check, a PC can skillfully navigate the oozes' cultural norms without causing offense.
- ➌ A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Diplomacy check makes a good impression.
- ➍ With a successful DC 26 Life Science or Physical Science check, a PC can explain that they are part of a wide biological diversity in the galaxy or describe the world they are from.
- ➎ With a successful DC 26 Profession check of an appropriate profession (such as artist), a PC can impress the oozes with their ability to use the inks the party created.
- ➏ A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Sense Motive check recognizes a poor avenue of conversation and redirects the discussion to more comfortable matters.

Development: If the oozes' attitude becomes friendly toward the PCs, it is clear that the creatures are interested in further communication with cultures from other planets, which will positively affect their society when they eventually develop their own technology to reach the stars. If the oozes are made helpful toward the PCs, the creatures insist on having a celebration in the PCs' honor. Within 2 hours, they arrange a festival in the nearby city. The PCs can participate in dancing and a feast if they have enough time, though the fungi and insects the oozes eat might not be appetizing to some of the PCs. Whether the PCs stay for the celebration or not, the oozes present them with a collection of gifts (see Treasure below).

If for some reason the PCs attack the oozes, the oozes break off any communication and flee in terror. Tuvah has harsh words for the PCs when they return, and they must strive to do their best in both the other trials to be deemed worthy of the *Crown of Hylax*.

While Tuvah and several other members of the Sacred Assembly are able to monitor the trial through the use of divinations, the abbot asks the PCs to give their accounts of their efforts. These reports are recorded and entered into the Forever Reliquary's digital historical database, regardless of how successful the PCs are. In doing so, Tuvah allows the PCs to choose a designation for these creatures that can be expressed with a verbal language. The PCs can attempt a translation of the oozes' nomenclature for themselves.

If the PCs succeed at improving the oozes' attitudes to friendly or helpful, Tuvah seems pleased. She says that making first contact is an important duty for Hylaxians, and that Hylax teaches her followers to be open and welcoming of all different types of creatures.

If the PCs failed to make a good impression, Tuvah sends a delegation of senior monks to smooth things over with the oozes, time permitting. If the portal has closed, Tuvah notes that the monks will have to make contact again the next time the comet passes near this system. She commiserates with the PCs that this trial was difficult due to the oozes' unusual way of communicating but goes on to express her hope that the PCs will perform better in the coming trials.

In either case, the PCs have a day off before the next trial begins. They can spend time researching in the library, gathering information from the monastery residents, or improving their relationships with members of the Sacred Assembly if they did not complete these tasks previously (see pages 18–21), or they can simply rest.

Treasure: At the festival celebrating the oozes' friendship with the PCs, the creatures gift the PCs sticky organic pods containing plant-based liquids that function as serums and medicinals, specifically three *mk II serums of healing*, a serum of enhancement (sensate), and a tier 3 antitoxin.

Story Award: If the PCs improve the attitude of the inhabitants of Neertin to friendly or helpful, award them 6,400 XP.

TRIAL 2: NEGOTIATING FOR PEACE (CR 9)

The morning after the first trial, the PCs are escorted back to the portal room.

Tuvah gestures to the screen, which shows a hilly landscape of coniferous trees blanketed in a misty haze. "This planet is called Sinnetall. It is the only planet orbiting its star. Although the climate is generally temperate, intelligent life never evolved here. Recently, two different groups have settled here: a contingent of ghoran colonists and an assemblage of nuar miners. Unfortunately, the two haven't gotten along well, and a bloody conflict currently seems imminent. I want you to go and broker a peace treaty between the two groups. Find a way for both of them to coexist on the same planet. This solution has to be something they can live with long-term, or else they will be back to fighting as soon as you leave. This won't be easy, but Hylax often calls on us to solve difficult problems like this one. We will be watching you just as we did before to see how you do. Once again, you will have twelve hours to complete the trial. That's not much time, but it should be possible."

Tuvah elaborates on the task at hand. The portal will place the PCs in a clearing only a few dozen miles between two major settlements—one ghoran and one nuar—that have been the focal points of the groups' disagreements. From her divinations and the monastery's scans, Tuvah has gathered that the nuar mining camp to the west has had some environmental effects on the ghoran nursery to the east, but that the nuars arrived on the planet first and feel they have claim to the area. Neither side seems willing to pack up and find another planet to live on, but both seem like they might be open to a third party negotiating some kind of treaty between the two groups that will allow both to grow and spread across the world.

Tuvah suggests that the PCs begin by contacting the Echo Depths Mine and the Wintergrace Nursery and ask them to send delegations to the clearing for a chance at peace. The abbot gives the PCs permission to speak on behalf of Hylax; they can use any other cover they see fit, though Tuvah frowns on lying. Finally, she emphasizes the importance of achieving long-lasting peace; bullying the two sides into an agreement is against the spirit of Hylax and is likely to fall apart once the PCs leave.

The Forever Reliquary loans the PCs three large pavilion tents to erect in the clearing in case they want to have any part of the negotiations in private. The PCs can furnish the pavilions as they see fit, though the monastery has only the most basic of furniture to offer.

The PCs are welcome to use the Forever Reliquary's library to do some research on ghorans and nuars in general, though getting information on one species in this way takes 1 hour. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Culture or Life Science check can recall the information presented on page 57

of Alien Archive 2 (for ghorans) or page 87 of Alien Archive (for nuars); each species requires a separate successful skill check. Learning this information for one species provides a +2 circumstance bonus to the initial check to get members of that species to agree to meet.

When the PCs step through the portal, read or paraphrase the following.

The air here is chilly and still, and the sun above peeks through a misty haze. Blue-green grass covers the ground, and conifer trees with bluish needles stand up to twenty feet tall encircling the clearing. The distant sound of predatory birds echoes through the forest.

The first step in the trial is for the PCs to convince both sides to let them serve as mediators. They can contact each of the two nearby settlements on their comm units, eventually getting in touch with each settlement's leadership. The PCs must then succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy check, a DC 24 Intimidate check, or a DC 18 check of a relevant Profession. The PCs must succeed at one check for each side, and the first attempt for each side takes 1 hour of presenting the PCs' credentials and maneuvering through various social strata. A second check requires no additional time but takes a -2 penalty. If the PCs fail both of these checks for one side, they can bribe that group to participate. The ghorans accept 4,000 credits' worth of drugs, medicinals, poisons, serums, or scientific and medical equipment. The nuars accept 4,000 credits' worth of weapons or armor. If the PCs' result exceeds the DC of a check to convince a group to participate in the peace talks by 4, then the PCs earn a +2 circumstance bonus to the final Diplomacy check with that group.

Creatures: Once the PCs arrange the meeting, the ghoran and nuar delegations take approximately 2 hours to travel over the hilly ground from their settlements in small vehicles. The PCs can take this time to set up the pavilions and make other preparations they see fit. The delegation for the group the PCs contacted first arrives 1 hour before the other. Both delegations are described in detail on the following pages.

The PCs should begin the negotiations by talking with each side separately, figuring out what would make them happy and avoid a war; if need be, a PC who succeeds at a DC 8 Wisdom check, a DC 12 Diplomacy check, or a DC 10 check of a relevant Profession determines that this is best course of action. For every hour the PCs chat with a group, they can attempt a skill check as described in that group's description. Succeeding at each of these checks grants a cumulative +2 circumstance bonus to the final Diplomacy check to get that side to agree to a compromise. However, if a PC fails one of these checks by 10 or more, the group takes a -2 penalty to the final Diplomacy check to get that side to agree to the treaty. Each group remains in the clearing for 5 hours before growing frustrated with the process or tired from the long day of travel and talking; you should describe the groups' wan-

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interest as the remaining time decreases so the PCs know they must attempt the final Diplomacy check before they run out of time. The PCs can split up and talk to both sides simultaneously or move back and forth between the groups as desired. Any nuar PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to checks to convince the nuars, but takes a -2 circumstance penalty to checks to convince the ghorans. The opposite is true for ghoran PCs.

At some point, the PCs must craft a final agreement and convince the two groups to sign it. This requires the two sides to be in the same pavilion and for the PCs to succeed at one Diplomacy check for each group. Each check can be attempted by a single PC, though one other PC can aid. If the result of each Diplomacy check exceeds 27, both groups sign the agreement—a success for the PCs, though the two sides both seem a little wary. If the result of each Diplomacy check exceeds 35, both groups are extremely happy with the agreement, and the peace should stand for a long time. The PCs can recover from failed attempts and try again once for each side, but the DC increases by 2. If the result of one of the Diplomacy checks is less than 20, even after trying a second time, then that side is gravely insulted by the PCs and attacks. If the results of both Diplomacy checks are less than 20, then the group the PCs received the worse result against attacks, and the non-attacking side flees.

For each final Diplomacy check the PCs succeed at, that side offers the PCs gifts in way of thanks (see *Treasure* below), even if the PCs weren't successful at brokering a peace agreement.

Treasure: If the PCs got the ghorans to agree to the treaty, Allicyn (see *The Ghoran Delegation*) offers them a collection of rare plant cuttings that are worth 7,500 credits to the right buyer. Indeed, what's left of the Suskillon government will purchase these cuttings in the hopes their lost planet will soon be retaken and they can reestablish its flora.

If the PCs got the nuars to agree to the treaty, Bornem (see *The Nuar Delegation* on page 27) offers them a custom maze-core (*Alien Archive* 87) item: a combination red star plasma rifle and red star plasma doshko.

Development: The PCs can return to the Forever Reliquary once they have attempted the final Diplomacy checks to present their peace agreement (or lack thereof) to Tuvah. Again, although the PCs were being watched, the abbot asks them to describe in their own words how they went about drafting the treaty and how they made their closing arguments.

Of course, Tuvah is pleased if the PCs succeeded, especially if they achieved a long-lasting peace agreement. She praises their diplomatic skills and states the monks will check in on the two groups when the Prodigal Stone passes this way again.

If the PCs failed to negotiate peace but didn't harm anyone, Tuvah is disappointed but notes that diplomacy isn't always easy and that two parties cannot always find

common ground. Time permitting, she sends two of the most practiced mediators to get the two sides to agree to a temporary postponement of battle, with the expectation of revisiting such an agreement when the Prodigal Stone enters this system again.

If the PCs killed any members of either delegation, Tuvah has grave words for them. She understands that the PCs were likely defending themselves from hostile parties but worries aloud about whether the PCs are truly fit to be Hylax's emissaries.

Once again, the PCs have a day off before the next trial begins, which they can spend as described on page 24.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully negotiate a treaty between the ghorans and the nuars, award them 6,400 XP. While fighting either delegation makes such an agreement impossible, the PCs should receive any XP for defeating foes in combat as usual.

THE GORAN DELEGATION

The ghoran delegation consists of three of the community's leading botanists—Allicyn, Threwdwyr, and Zieffre. As such, they are the colonists' source of guidance in ethical and spiritual matters. Ghoran history is fraught with incidents of near-extinction, and although their new home world, Ghorus Prime, is now thriving, many ghorans are deeply concerned that if the planet were ever lost, their people would be destroyed completely. A few dozen ghorans took it upon themselves to colonize another world, landing here on Sinnetall. The settlement of Wintergrace Nursery is ruled collectively, with each resident getting an equal say in all matters. They agreed it would be impractical to send the entire population to the meeting and delegated the decision to these three ghorans.

Allicyn, Threwdwyr, and Zieffre come dressed in what appear to be formal white lab coats. Allicyn, the youngest, accents her outfit with a powder blue cloak. She has a very serious, scientific mind and has already classified several new species of flora on Sinnetall. Threwdwyr, the oldest, wears her long, dark green hair-vines loose, letting them catch the sunlight. She is reserved and patient, stepping into conversations when they seem to be getting heated. Zieffre is the most fervent of the three, the layered purple petals of his face often rustling with anger.

During the talks, the three speak only after conferring among themselves, and the ghoran whose area of expertise is in question does the most talking. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check realizes that they will need to win over each of the three ghorans and not focus on a single representative. If the result of this check exceeds the DC by 4 or more, the PC can tell that Allicyn will respond best to scientific arguments, Threwdwyr will respond best to ethical arguments, and Zieffre will respond best to pragmatic arguments. By succeeding at the following checks, the PCs earn the cumulative bonus to the final Diplomacy check as

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described on page 25. If the PCs attempt skill checks focusing on a ghoran they have already succeeded against, they take a cumulative -2 penalty to each attempt.

Allicyn: A PC can ensure that the final treaty contains provisions for the health of the planet's environment with a successful DC 25 Life Science or Physical Science check.

Threwdwyr: A PC can ensure that the final treaty holds true to ghoran principles with a successful DC 25 Culture or Diplomacy check.

Zieffre: A PC can ensure that the final treaty contains provisions that allow the ghoran colony to expand with a successful DC 25 Perception or Survival check.

ALlicyn, Threwdwyr, and Zieffre CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Male and female ghoran flora-shapers (Starfinder Alien Archive 2 56)

HP 75 each; RP 4 each

TACTICS

During Combat Threwdwyr casts *fog cloud* on the

first round of combat to provide cover for her allies while they summon two tiny earth elementals. These summoned elementals are sent against the PCs, while the ghorans keep their distance, alternating between laser pistol fire and magical abilities, and try to determine their opponents' weaknesses.

Morale If any one of the three ghorans is incapacitated nonlethally, the other two surrender. If Threwdwyr is killed, Allicyn and Zieffre surrender, but if either Allicyn or Zieffre is killed, Threwdwyr fights to the death.

THE NUAR DELEGATION

The nuar delegation consists of the mine's supervisor, Jeranara, and three of her strongest workers, Bornem, Gennig, and Krallesh. The mine is a nuar-owned and -operated business that claimed the mining rights to Sinnetall after discovering it was rich in valuable minerals. They invested substantial credits into this operation and are reluctant to give it up. Jeranara was the captain of the starship that brought the first wave of nuar miners to the planet and

easily transitioned into her current position of leadership. Her workers see her as stern but fair and trust her to handle these negotiations. She has brought some extra muscle in case things go poorly.

Jeranara is dressed in a tempweave business suit that she looks a bit uncomfortable in, occasionally pulling at her collar as if it is a little tight. Bornem, Gennig, and Krallesh all wear slightly battered ringwear under heavy-duty coats. Though it is clear that Jeranara is in charge, she occasionally confers with her fellow nuars in matters that require their expertise—Bornem is a talented electrical engineer, Gennig is an accomplished mechanical engineer, and Krallesh is a logistics expert.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check while speaking with the nuars can see that they should focus most of their efforts on convincing Jeranara, though it wouldn't hurt if the other three also approved of the PCs. If the result of this check exceeds the DC by 4 or more, the PC realizes that Jeranara cares about looking strong but is worried about subjecting her people to a war. By succeeding at the following checks, the PCs earn the cumulative bonus to the final Diplomacy check as described on page 25. If the PCs attempt skill checks focusing on the nuar enforcers over 2 consecutive hours, they take a -4 penalty to the next skill check that focuses on Jeranara.

Bornem, Gennig, and Krallesh: A PC can challenge one of the nuar enforcers to a friendly arm-wrestling contest or other feat of might to let off steam. This requires an opposed Strength check.

Jeranara: The PCs can use several ways to influence Jeranara. A PC can ensure the final treaty contains provisions allowing the nuar to expand their operations with a successful DC 25 Engineering or Physical Science check. A PC can ensure the final treaty gives the nuars financial compensation for relocating with a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check. A PC can also swap stories of starship battles with Jeranara to put her at ease with a successful DC 25 Bluff or Piloting check.

BORNEM, GENNIG, AND KRALLESH CR 4

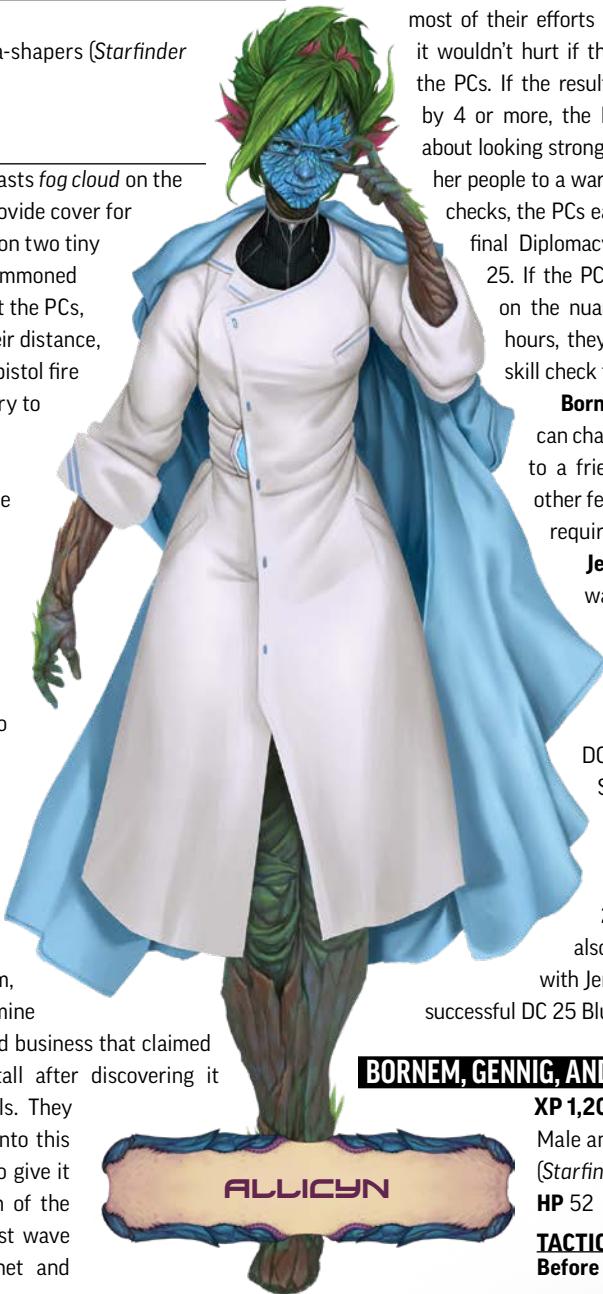
XP 1,200 each

Male and female nuar enforcers (Starfinder Alien Archive 86)

HP 52

TACTICS

Before Combat The three nuar



ALlicyn

enforcers usually keep their maze-core weapons configured in the form of frostbite-class zero rifles.

During Combat The three nuar enforcers open with ranged attacks, then charge into battle to take advantage of Opening Volley. One of the three attempts to flank with Jeranara, while the other two target ranged fighters.

Morale If Jeranara is killed, is incapacitated, or surrenders, the three nuar enforcers surrender.

JERANARA

CR 8

XP 4,800

Female nuar specialist (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 86)

HP 117



TACTICS

Before Combat Jeranara usually keeps her maze-core weapon as a buzzblade dueling sword.

During Combat Jeranara charges into battle, targeting melee-focused opponents first. When she can, she performs a full attack with both her dueling sword and her horns.

Morale If reduced to 30 or fewer Hit Points, Jeranara surrenders.

TRIAL 3: PROTECTING THE INNOCENT (CR 10)

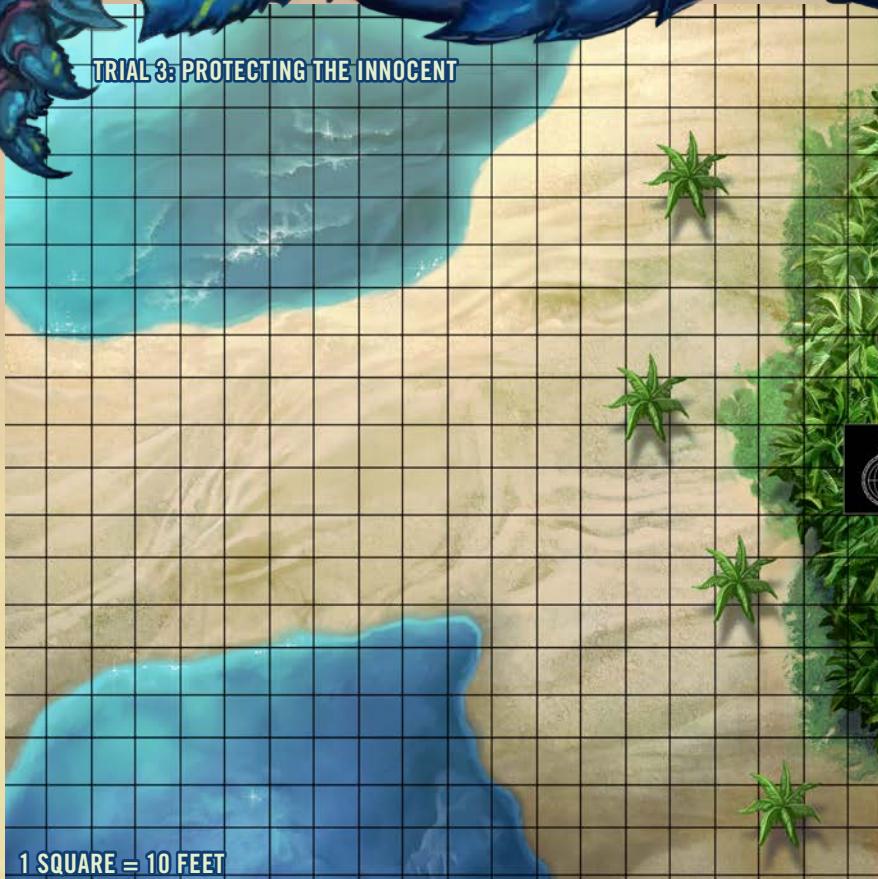
The morning after the second trial, the PCs are escorted to the portal room one final time.

Tuvah wiggles her extremities with nervous excitement as the screen displays a jungle landscape of tall, broad-leaved trees. In the distance, huge dinosaurs munch on the foliage at the base of a smoking volcano. Tuvah explains, “The final trial is one of protecting the innocent. While we always look to diplomacy first, sometimes words are not enough, particularly when the lives of the defenseless are at stake. But it is important to remember that we do not fight for glory or fame. We simply must place ourselves between the innocent and that which would harm them. In this test, you will hopefully not have to fight your charges, but you will have to assist four creatures that are in grave danger, though they don’t know or understand that.”

Before Tuvah opens the portal, she explains the details. The planet shown is Trentirri III, which doesn’t have any civilized societies, but does have a variety of plant and animal species, including many types of dinosaurs. A small herd of thyreophorans have settled on an island, separated from the mainland by a land bridge that is underwater most of the year. These huge herbivorous creatures have large armored plates but use their powerful tails only in self-defense. Their life on the island is rather idyllic, with plentiful plants and no predators. However, they don’t realize that the volcano in the center of the island is about to erupt, destroying the small piece of land and potentially killing them. The thyreophorans are poor swimmers, so the land bridge is their only means of escaping the volcano. The other creatures who live on the island can either fly or swim and can escape on their own.

Tuvah tells the PCs they must rescue the thyreophorans from this gruesome death. However, this is not an easy task. Since the dinosaurs are unintelligent, they resist any attempts to force them to leave the island. Tuvah asks the PCs to avoid using lethal force on the dinosaurs, but the dinosaurs have no such compunction, and they strike back against any attacks with deadly intent. This is the last day that the land bridge remains above water, after which point the dinosaurs will be trapped when the volcano erupts only a few days later. How the PCs accomplish this is up to them.

TRIAL 3: PROTECTING THE INNOCENT



H. FIRST TUNNEL



I. SECOND TUNNEL

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

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One possible way to move the thyreophorans is to put them into cages with hoverpads to facilitate movement. The Forever Reliquary doesn't have any such cages, but the PCs can craft one or two if they wish. A single cage large and strong enough to hold a thyreophoran is a 3rd-level technological item and requires 500 UPBs; it can be pushed at a speed of 15 feet with a move action. This process follows the normal crafting rules from page 235 of the Core Rulebook. If the PCs have impressed Meershmar, they can use the reliquary's tech workshop to craft the cages. If a PC succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy check, Meershmar gives the PCs enough UPBs to make one cage. Other creative solutions that involve fabricating items should follow the same general guidelines. Remember that the PCs have only 12 hours before the portal closes, so they must balance their available time between crafting and taking action on the island's surface.

When the PCs step through the portal, read or paraphrase the following.

The planet's atmosphere is thick and swelteringly hot. Waves lap gently at the edge of a sandy shore, and two suns beam overhead in a reddish sky. Tall trees are stripped of leaves and branches below thirty feet, but the large, lush leaves above that level provide ample shade. A thin strip of sand leads the way from the island toward the mainland. Lazy insect chirps and bird-like calls occasionally pierce the peaceful quiet of this idyllic island paradise. However, an

ominous plume of smoke emerges from the tall volcano at the very center of the island.

The map for this encounter appears on this page. Squares with trees are difficult terrain.

Creatures: The four thyreophorans who live on the island have no desire to leave their current habitat. They are easy to find, happily grazing on shrubs and grasses not far from the land bridge when the PCs arrive on the planet. The dinosaurs don't react to the sudden arrival of alien creatures on their island until a PC approaches within 10 feet of a dinosaur or acts aggressively. Once a thyreophoran takes damage, the other three dinosaurs become hostile toward the PCs. As unintelligent creatures, the thyreophorans cannot communicate with the PCs.

Unlike the first two trials, this one takes place in rounds, like a combat, though it is possible that there won't be fighting. The PCs should have enough time to make preparations, such as setting up cages or traps and casting spells before initiative is rolled. The trial ends when the PCs have gotten the thyreophorans across the land bridge and have disengaged or the dinosaurs have been killed or knocked unconscious. The dinosaurs remain on the mainland side of the bridge unless they hear the cries of their fellow thyreophorans, in which case they charge back across to the island.

The PCs can lure one dinosaur into a cage with food (such as a large amount of tasty foliage or juicy fruit), but the rest



of the dinosaurs see the results and are then more difficult to fool. The cage must then be camouflaged in some fashion (perhaps with some of the surrounding brush or with magic), requiring a successful Stealth check opposed by a dinosaur's Perception check. Once inside a cage, a thyreophoran will try to break out once it has finished eating the food inside (which takes 1d3 rounds), smashing the cage walls with its tail. When the cage door is opened, the dinosaur steps out as soon as it can. The PCs likely don't have enough time to repair a cage if they want to use it to trap another dinosaur, so keep track of the item's Hit Points.

A PC can temporarily calm a hostile thyreophoran with a successful DC 24 Survival check, but subsequent aggressive moves cause it to become hostile again, and the DC increases by 4 to calm it down once more. A PC who hasn't attacked a dinosaur within the current or previous round can attempt a DC 25 Intimidate check against one thyreophoran within 20 feet. On a success, that creature spends its next move action moving directly away from that PC, avoiding the water when possible. Similarly, a PC who hasn't attacked a dinosaur within the current or previous round can attempt a DC 20 Survival check to ride a thyreophoran and steer it across the land bridge, provided they can quickly get onto the dinosaur's back without it noticing (with either a successful DC 20 Athletics check to climb unobtrusively or with a fly speed or some kind of teleportation magic). Remember that

the PC must attempt this Survival check each round and that they take a -5 penalty to the check due to a lack of a saddle.

Encourage the PCs to come up with other creative uses of skills and spells to get the dinosaurs moving. If you believe a skill check should be required, default to a DC of 24. One of the simplest solutions is to attack one of the dinosaurs, bait them across the land bridge, and then escape, but this tactic risks causing the most injuries to both the PCs and thyreophorans.

THYREOPHORANS (4)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

HP 83 each (Starfinder Alien Archive 2 38)

TACTICS

During Combat The thyreophorans gang up on the most obvious attacker, though they turn their wrath on any PC who harms them. If a PC moves further than 40 feet from a hostile thyreophoran in 1 round without attacking, the dinosaur doesn't pursue.

Morale The thyreophorans are unintelligent and are simply defending themselves. They fight until two of them are killed or knocked unconscious. The survivors then try to flee deeper into the island interior, making the trial all the more difficult.

Treasure: While on Trentirri III, a PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Life Science check notices several green lotus plants growing on the island. With an hour of work, the PCs can collect enough raw material from the plants to craft three doses of green lotus extract poison.

Development: The PCs succeed at this trial if they successfully move all four dinosaurs across the land bridge and off the volcanic island, whether in cages, bound, or even unconscious and then revived. They can then return to the Forever Reliquary via the portal at their leisure.

Once again, the PCs are asked to give reports of their actions beyond the portal for the monastery's formal records. If the PCs killed any of the thyreophorans, Tuvah sternly admonishes them. If they performed excellently in the previous trials, the trox monk is a bit more forgiving but still gives the PCs a lecture about the sanctity of innocent life. However, if the PCs performed their task without dealing any Hit Point damage to the dinosaurs, Tuvah beams with pride at whatever clever solution the PCs implemented. In the unlikely event that the PCs fail to relocate the dinosaurs within the portal's time limit, Tuvah is understanding but directs the collected monks to pray for a few moments in silence to mourn the creatures' inevitable deaths.



THYREOPHORAN

In either case, Tuvah lets the PCs know that the Sacred Assembly needs to discuss their performance in the trials as a whole, and that they will meet with the PCs the next day. The PCs have time to rest and heal up after their encounter with the dinosaurs. The members of the monastery can help with healing if necessary. The PCs can also continue to bond with the Hylaxian monks as they see fit (see pages 18-19).

Story Award: If the PCs rescue the thyreophorans from a fiery fate, award them XP as if they had defeated the dinosaurs in combat.

RETURN TO SUSKILLON

That night, as the PCs rest after the third and final trial, the Prodigal Stone makes another one of its "skips" through space, this time entering the outskirts of the Suskillon system. When the monks determine the comet's new coordinates, Rakorant finds the PCs to let them know they have returned to their home system (assuming, of course, the PCs told someone where they came from). Unfortunately, the comet's bright tail and the amount of divine energy emanating from the Prodigal Stone attracts the God-Host's attention. The Swarm quickly begins marshaling a small fleet of starships packed with Swarm components. Thanks to its powerful Drift engines, this Swarm attack force arrives on the comet in short order.

The monks are unaware of the Swarm's imminent approach, and the meeting with the Sacred Assembly continues as planned. If the PCs express concern that the Suskillon system is overrun with the Swarm, the monks look a bit worried but remain convinced that they are well hidden within an unremarkable comet. They go on to explain that the comet won't be within the system for very long, in the hopes that this information will assuage the PCs' fears.

THE SACRED ASSEMBLY'S DECISION

The next morning, the PCs are summoned before the Sacred Assembly to hear the monks' final decision on their worthiness. The PCs are asked to return to the temple, its double doors uncharacteristically closed to keep the general populace of the Forever Reliquary from eavesdropping.

If the PCs succeeded at all of the trials (or at two of them, but without killing anyone), the assembly seems to be in a good mood. Tuvah gives the following speech, adding any specific details that describe moments when the PCs embodied the virtue of Hylax particularly well during the trials.

"Congratulations, brave new friends. You have truly demonstrated that you can champion the ideals of Hylax.

And so, I have something for you." Tuvah reaches into a cushion-lined metal box to retrieve a crown that appears to be made of an insectile exoskeleton. Bits of chitin form the base, and three spires resembling mandibles point skyward, with clusters of iridescent wing fragments forming the iconic stars that top the crown. The ornament is intricate, bizarre, and oddly beautiful. "The Crown of

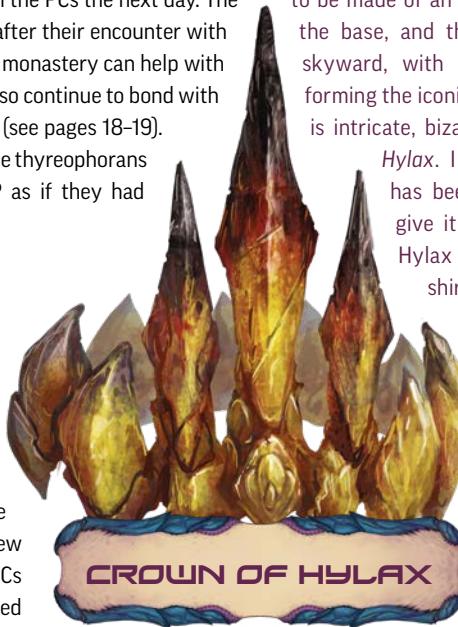
Hylax. I believe this could be what the Swarm has been searching for: an artifact that could give it godlike power. Hundreds of years ago, Hylax directed the creation of this crown by shirren priests on Suskillon at a place called Clutchstone Ridge. Its purpose, though, was unclear, and so it was brought to the Prodigal Stone for study and protection, spurring the creation of this monastery."

Tuvah holds the crown up to the light and smiles faintly. "The reason behind this item's creation has eluded us until now. Hylax granted me visions of your arrival and of you taking the crown to help defeat a great threat.

I am certain that threat is the Swarm entity known as the God-Host." Her eyes narrow a bit. "The Swarm has always been a source of destruction, but in its never-ceasing evolution, it has created this new and terrifying being. The God-Host is a colossal multi-headed monstrosity that is primed to absorb and amplify divine energy. If it were to get ahold of the *Crown of Hylax*, it could take Hylax's power for its own and disperse it throughout the hive mind, making the Swarm omnipotent." The mood in the temple grows grim as Tuvah continues.

"We cannot allow this to happen. Though the crown holds the potential for great calamity, it can also be our salvation. Hylax has shown me the way. You will take the artifact into a psychic realm that represents the God-Host's subcolony's connection to the greater Swarm hive mind, where you can unleash the crown's true capacity. This won't stop the entire Swarm, but it will hopefully disorient the subcolony enough for your armies to take back your planet and destroy the God-Host. While I grieve that we cannot fully free the Swarm instead of fighting it, this is what must be done. We must stop the God-Host. Do you accept this challenge? Will you serve as Hylax's champions to stand against the Swarm?"

If the PCs accept, Tuvah places the *Crown of Hylax* on her head and explains that she must first perform an hour-long ritual to open the way. She enters a deep trance, and tiny sparks of light begin to form on the crown's points. Moments later, Meershmar receives an urgent message. The comet's sensors have detected the sudden presence of Swarm ships exiting the Drift nearby. Continue on to Part 4.



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EXPLOSIVES

In Part 4, the PCs must plant explosives in each tunnel at the locations indicated and then detonate them. It takes 1 full action to place a bundle of explosives in an adjacent square, and both explosives for one tunnel should be placed before they are detonated. Detonating the explosives requires a PC to press a button on the associated detonator (this takes no action). A bundle of explosives deals $8d12$ fire damage in a 10-foot radius (Reflex DC 18 half) and collapses a 10-foot-wide length of tunnel between the two bundles. A creature buried in the subsequent rubble takes $10d10$ bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 18 half). A buried creature then takes $3d6$ bludgeoning damage per minute as it is slowly crushed and suffocates (Fortitude DC 18 half). A buried creature can free itself with a successful DC 25 Strength check, which can be attempted once per minute, or burrow its way out.

PART 4: INVASION

Tuvah needs 1 uninterrupted hour to complete her ritual, but left unchecked, the Swarm will overwhelm the comet in a matter of minutes. Meershmar quickly proposes a plan: detonating explosives within the monastery's ancient tunnels will hopefully slow down the Swarm for long enough, even if some of its components can burrow through the rock. He pleads for the PCs to aid in this endeavor, giving them 10 minutes to retrieve their equipment and otherwise prepare for battle while Meershmar calculates the best places to set off the explosives. Ithavine makes the following announcement over the monastery's public announcement system as the rest of the Sacred Assembly begins preparing the monks for battle.

If the PCs succeeded at only one trial (or two, but took a life during the trials), Tuvah gives them a very different speech, which includes specific details of times that the PCs went particularly against the ideals of Hylax.

"I am sorry, brave new friends. I know that you have tried your best, but the ideals of Hylax are difficult for many. I do not think you are the champions of my visions after all. You may stay here, if you wish, while you decide what to do next. We can only hope that another group of heroes is on their way." Her expression is difficult to read, but her voice quivers slightly, betraying her concern.

However, before Tuvah can send the PCs away, Meershmar interrupts with the news that Swarm ships have exited the Drift and are approaching fast. Tuvah acknowledges that the PCs weren't what she had hoped for, but that they will have to do.

"Prophecy is a strange thing. We can't always tell what it means. I expected champions of Hylax, but perhaps what we need is something else. I pray that you are up to the task."

At this point, Tuvah pulls out the *Crown of Hylax* and quickly explains the artifact, the existence of the God-Host, and the task ahead (as noted above). If the PCs agree to take on the challenge, Tuvah enters her 1-hour trance while the rest of the monastery prepares for battle. Continue on to Part 4.

Treasure: If the PCs succeeded at all three trials, the Sacred Assembly presents them with two gifts before Tuvah begins the ritual: a *ring of cosmic alignment* and a *mantle of willpower* (Starfinder Armory 114).

"My fellow devotees of Hylax, our worst fears have come true. The Swarm is here. But as I speak, our abbot performs a ritual that will allow the outsiders an unprecedented chance to stop the Swarm in its tracks. Our holy mission is to give her enough time to finish. Cease whatever it is you are doing and take up arms. You must do whatever it takes to slow down the Swarm, even at the cost of your own life. Hylax will embrace you on the other side. May the Forever Queen bless your efforts."

The monastery becomes a scene of controlled chaos. Whether or not the PCs impressed the haan guards earlier, Yachern can help equip the PCs for the impending battle. Although the peaceful worshippers of Hylax have stocked a few weapons in case of emergencies, they don't have a lot of extras. Yachern can offer the PCs an advanced shirren-eye rifle that belonged to a monk who passed away several years ago, since none of the monastery's current residents can use it. There is also an assortment of ammunition and batteries, and the PCs can help themselves to a total of 700 credits' worth of supplies. Armor is much more plentiful, as it allows the monks to walk the surface of the comet, and Yachern can offer the PCs a suit of white carbon carbon skin and a mining jack III (Armory 69). Finally, the Hylaxian monks maintain a supply of nonlethal grenades, and the PCs can take four flash grenades II and four stickybomb grenades II. Yachern wishes the PCs good luck as she hands the remaining weapons and armor to the other monks volunteering for defense.

THE SWARM ATTACKS!

Even before the Swarm starships land on the comet, Swarm components begin to pour out from their carriers.

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They begin scouring the surface looking for the entrances to the monastery, covering a lot of ground quickly with their numbers. Some begin burrowing through the stone in their search. They soon break through and find the Forever Reliquary's ancient tunnels, which become a battleground. Monks snipe at the Swarm creatures, trying to take out as many as they can while they still can.

Meershmar gives the PCs eight bundles of explosives (along with several detonators) and marks an electronic map with the ideal locations to place them. The rules for setting and detonating the explosives appears in the sidebar on page 32. Time is of the essence for this operation, as the PCs should go immediately from one tunnel to the next to successfully hold back the Swarm long enough for Tuvah to complete her ritual. It takes 2 minutes to move from one tunnel to the next, and the PCs can cast spells or use serums or other abilities (including calling in any help they have earned; see below) as they see fit during that time. Time is of the essence, however; each time they stop to take a 10-minute rest (for instance, to regain Stamina Points), the Swarm dissolver in area L gains a cumulative +4 circumstance bonus to its initiative check.

The PCs can go to the four tunnel sites in any order they prefer, or you can select them randomly. Use the maps on pages 29 and 35 for the tunnel encounters, which show where the PCs need to place the explosives to produce their maximum effect and fully close off the tunnels.

In addition, the PCs can receive help during this strenuous series of battles, based on which NPCs they impressed in Part 3. They can receive each benefit below only once during all of Part 4, but they can take advantage of as many as they like at once. It takes no additional time for the PCs to receive the listed assistance from an NPC.

Harisskor: If the PCs were able to assuage Harisskor's fears or impress her with their knowledge in the library, she can say a prayer over the PCs in between encounters that restores all of their Stamina Points as if they had taken a 10-minute rest. The prayer leaves Harisskor exhausted, so she cannot perform it again.

Ithavine: If the PCs impressed Ithavine earlier, the shirren medic can heal the PCs in between encounters. Each PC receives the benefits of a 2nd-level *mystic cure* spell; Ithavine has a Wisdom modifier of +3 and is willing to transfer 20 of their own Hit Points in total to any number of PCs.

Kiarth, Nuritch, and Yachern: If the PCs impressed the haan guards, they give the PCs two batteries, high-capacity batteries, or super-capacity batteries (the PCs' choice), claiming that they don't need them for the fight.

Meershmar: If the PCs assisted or encouraged Meershmar earlier, he can meet the PCs in between encounters to give them a single-use device of light bulk he has rigged to adversely affect Swarm creatures. A PC who holds the device in one hand can activate it as a move action. It releases a pulse that forces each Swarm creature within 30 feet to attempt



a DC 17 Fortitude save. Those that fail are stunned for 1d3 rounds. Unfortunately, once the device has been used, Swarm creatures adapt to defend against it.

Rakorant: If the PCs impressed Rakorant, he can meet the PCs to give them each a small flask with a traditional trox fermented beverage (the flask has negligible bulk). Drinking the beverage takes a standard action and provides a +1 morale bonus to Fortitude saves for 1 hour. The liquid stays good for about 6 weeks, at which point it loses its potency.

H. FIRST TUNNEL (CR 8)

The first tunnel the PCs must collapse branches off from the west wing of the monastery.

Creatures: This pair of Swarm moliteras was sent to create new passageways throughout the stone to allow entrance for more Swarm troops. They break through the tunnel's walls near the designated point of detonation.

SWARM MOLITERAS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

HP 91 each (see page 60)

TACTICS

During Combat The moliteras use their shattering rumble if they can catch more than one PC in the cone of effect. Otherwise, they engage in melee, striking with their digging arms. If a tunnel collapses on a molitera and it survives, it burrows through the rubble.

Morale The moliteras protect the tunnel they formed with their lives.

I. SECOND TUNNEL (CR 9)

The second tunnel the PCs must collapse enters the monastery near the southern wing.

Creatures: This team consists of a pair of two-headed mutant Swarm escutchedes and a Swarm mindreaper. The mindreaper is tasked with obtaining a brain sample from a Forever Reliquary inhabitant to analyze for information about the structure.

MUTANT SWARM ESCUTCHIDES (2)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Two-headed Swarm escutchede
(Starfinder Alien Archive 151,
Starfinder Adventure Path #21:
Huskworld 58)

HP 66 each

Defensive Abilities unflankable

TACTICS

During Combat The escutchedes are tasked with protecting the mindreaper until it can accomplish its mission. They coordinate to attack whichever PC is most threatening to their leader.

Morale If the mindreaper retreats, the escutchedes cover its exit. If the mindreaper is killed, the escutchedes instead fight to the death.

SWARM MINDREAPER

CR 7

XP 3,200

HP 90 (Starfinder Alien Archive 2 122)

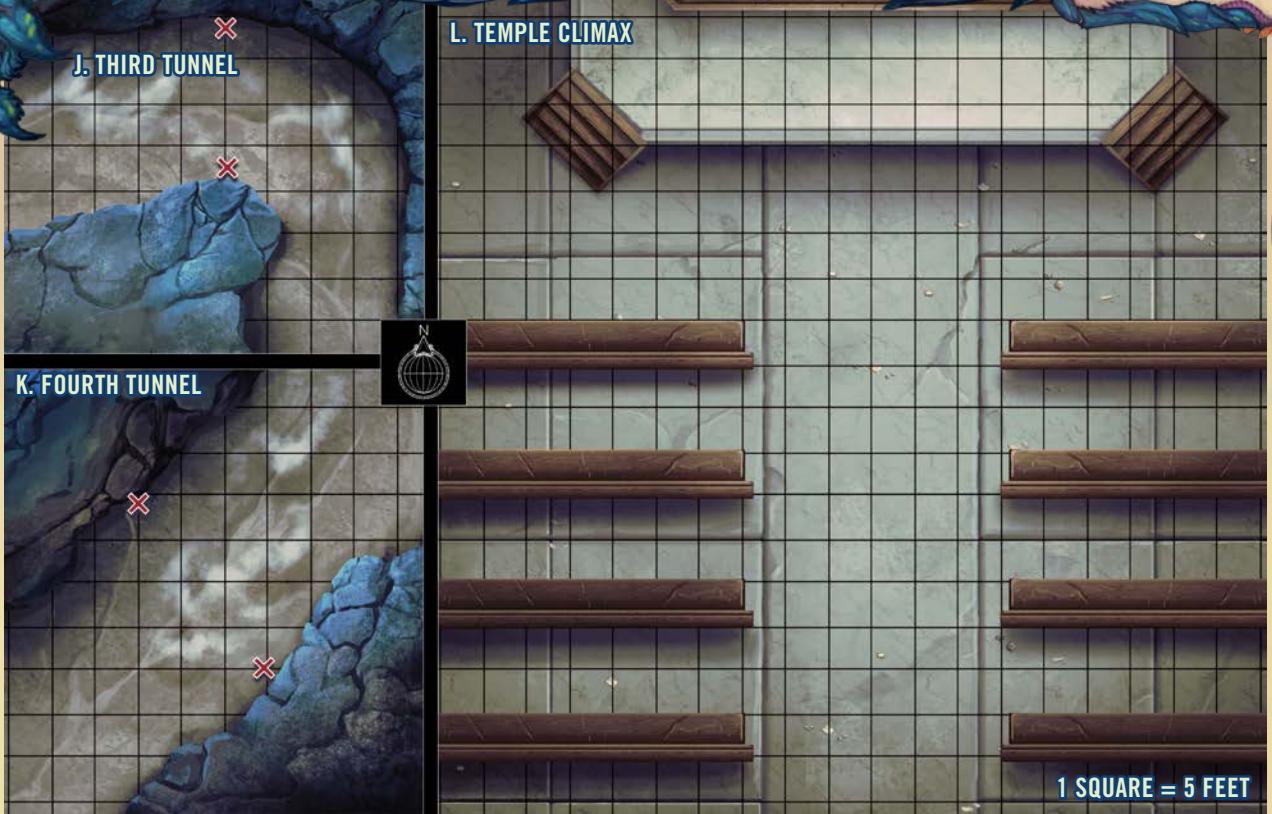
TACTICS

During Combat The mindreaper focuses its attacks on a single target, trying to render that opponent helpless so it can use its trepan ability to collect a brain sample.

Morale If the mindreaper succeeds at obtaining a brain sample from an enemy, it retreats back through the hole in the tunnel.

J. THIRD TUNNEL (CR 10)

The third tunnel the PCs must collapse leads to the hatch the PCs used to enter the monastery.



Creature: A Swarm thresher lord, its arm blades dripping with blood from its previous kills, attempts to carve its way through the PCs.

SWARM THRESHER LORD CR 10

XP 9,600

HP 165 (*Starfinder Alien Archive 110*)

TACTICS

During Combat The Swarm thresher lord charges the strongest-looking PC and uses its blade storm ability whenever possible.

Morale The thresher lord fights to the death.

K. FOURTH TUNNEL (CR 10)

The fourth tunnel connects to the monastery directly between the northern and western wings.

Creatures: A pair of Swarm dramovires—lanky creatures with the ability to inject acid with their proboscises—seek out those who are resisting the Swarm's invasion.

SWARM DRAMOVIRE (CR 8)

XP 4,800 each

HP 123 each (see page 59)

TACTICS

During Combat The dramovires cover as much floor as they can with their acidic grease and then try to grapple any PCs they can reach who have fallen prone. The creatures use their proboscis attacks on those they have grappled.

Morale The dramovires fight until they are slain.

L. TEMPLE CLIMAX (CR 11)

Once the PCs collapse the four tunnels assigned to them, Meershmar raises them on their comm units.

"Good job, but the Swarm is burrowing in all over the place. Something big got past our defensive lines, and it's heading toward the temple. Tuvah needs your help! We'll make sure nothing else gets through."

It takes the PCs approximately 3 minutes to return to the temple. When they do, they can see a large, gaping hole in the otherwise-closed doors, its edges dripping with hot acid.

Creatures: A Swarm dissolver stands in front of Tuvah as she continues the ritual, though she seems unaware of the creature's presence. Tuvah doesn't participate in the combat, but her statistics are provided just in case. However, once the dissolver notices the PCs enter the temple, it focuses all of its attention on them. Remember that for each 10-minute interval the PCs spent resting during Part 4, the dissolver gains a cumulative +4 circumstance bonus to its initiative check.

TUVAH CR 9

XP 6,400

Female trox mystic (*Starfinder Alien Archive 2 126*)

LG Large monstrous humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., emotionsense; **Perception** +22

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CATCHING A BREATH

In this part of the adventure, the PCs face wave after wave of Swarm enemies. Though the heroes might be able to collapse a tunnel or two before killing the creatures attempting to prevent them from doing so, it is more likely they will have to battle each Swarm component to the death. As written, the PCs can rest to regain their Stamina Points at the risk of losing an advantageous position in the final encounter. If you feel like your PCs need a bit more help in that regard, allow them to take one break without consequence. Conversely, if your PCs are steamrolling the Swarm, don't give them a moment's rest!

DEFENSE

EAC 21; **KAC** 22

Fort +8; **Ref** +9; **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities bulwark

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., burrow 20 ft.

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

Offensive Abilities frenzy, grappler

Mystic Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

9/day—discern lies (DC 21)

At will—mindlink

Mystic Spells Known (CL 10th)

3rd (3/day)—clairaudience/clairvoyance, remove affliction

2nd (6/day)—augury, lesser restoration, zone of truth

(DC 19)

1st (at will)—detect thoughts (DC 18), share language

Connection empath

STATISTICS

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

Skills Diplomacy +17, Life Science +17, Mysticism +22, Sense Motive +22

Languages Nchaki, Shirren

Other Abilities empathy, greater mindlink, vestigial arms

Gear d-suit III, mk 2 serums of healing (3), pearly white spindle aeon stone, holy symbol of Hylax

HP 120

SWARM DISSOLVER

CR 11

XP 12,800

HP 180 (Starfinder Alien Archive 3 106)

TACTICS

During Combat The Swarm dissolver uses its wing gust ability to knock down as many PCs as possible. It then blasts one PC who is still standing with a corrosive jet of acid and moves into melee range.

Morale Hunting the divine energy of the *Crown of Hylax* worn by Tuvah, the dissolver neither surrenders nor accepts surrender.

Development: As this fight is wrapping up, another team of monks collapses the tunnel the Swarm dissolver used to enter the reliquary, giving Tuvah enough time to finish her ritual.

If the PCs are all brought to 0 Hit Points by the dissolver, Tuvah immediately forces the ritual to completion, and the resultant blast of psychic energy knocks the dissolver unconscious. Tuvah can provide a small amount of healing to the PCs, who can then coup de grace the Swarm monstrosity.

THE MINDSCAPE AWAITS

When Tuvah emerges from her trance, she begins to greet the PCs, but is shocked to see a dead Swarm creature in the temple. Before she can speak, Meershmar races in to inform the group that even more Swarm starships are about to land on the comet's surface. Tuvah looks grimly determined and addresses the PCs.

"Well, now we find out how the prophecy will unfold. I dearly hope that you will succeed." She takes the *Crown of Hylax* off her head. "Join hands. When you take the crown and I speak the final prayer, you will be transported bodily to a strange realm of psychic energy. I do not know exactly what awaits you there or exactly what you will need to do with the artifact. But I am certain Hylax will show you the way... and return you to the Material Plane once you have completed your mission. Are you ready?"

If the PCs express concern that Tuvah and the other monks will likely die at the claws of the Swarm, she reassures them that they are willing to make that sacrifice.

"You must understand that nothing is more important than stopping the God-Host. If I must give my life to prevent the destruction that I've seen in my nightmares, I will gladly do so."

If the PCs point out that the monks could use the holoscreen portal to escape to a nearby planet (such as Utraneus), Tuvah explains why that would only postpone the inevitable.

"Even if those left could all reach the portal room, there is no guarantee that Hylax will grant us passage. And if she does, we would still be within the Swarm's grasp. I, for one, wouldn't want them to follow us to Utraneus, putting your people in danger once again. No, our duty is to remain here and to fight them now."

Meershmar chimes in that he and the other monks are also prepared to give their lives to hold off the Swarm. The other members of the Sacred Assembly arrive shortly, some of them already wounded or exhausted. If the PCs formed relationships with any them, they reassure the PCs that they also are ready to fight.

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Treasure: Before the PCs enter the mindscape, Tuvah presents them with her holy symbol and her *pearly white spindle aeon stone*. She gives them to a worshipper of Hylax if possible, or a spellcaster if not. She says, “Please take these. May they give you as much strength as they have given me.”

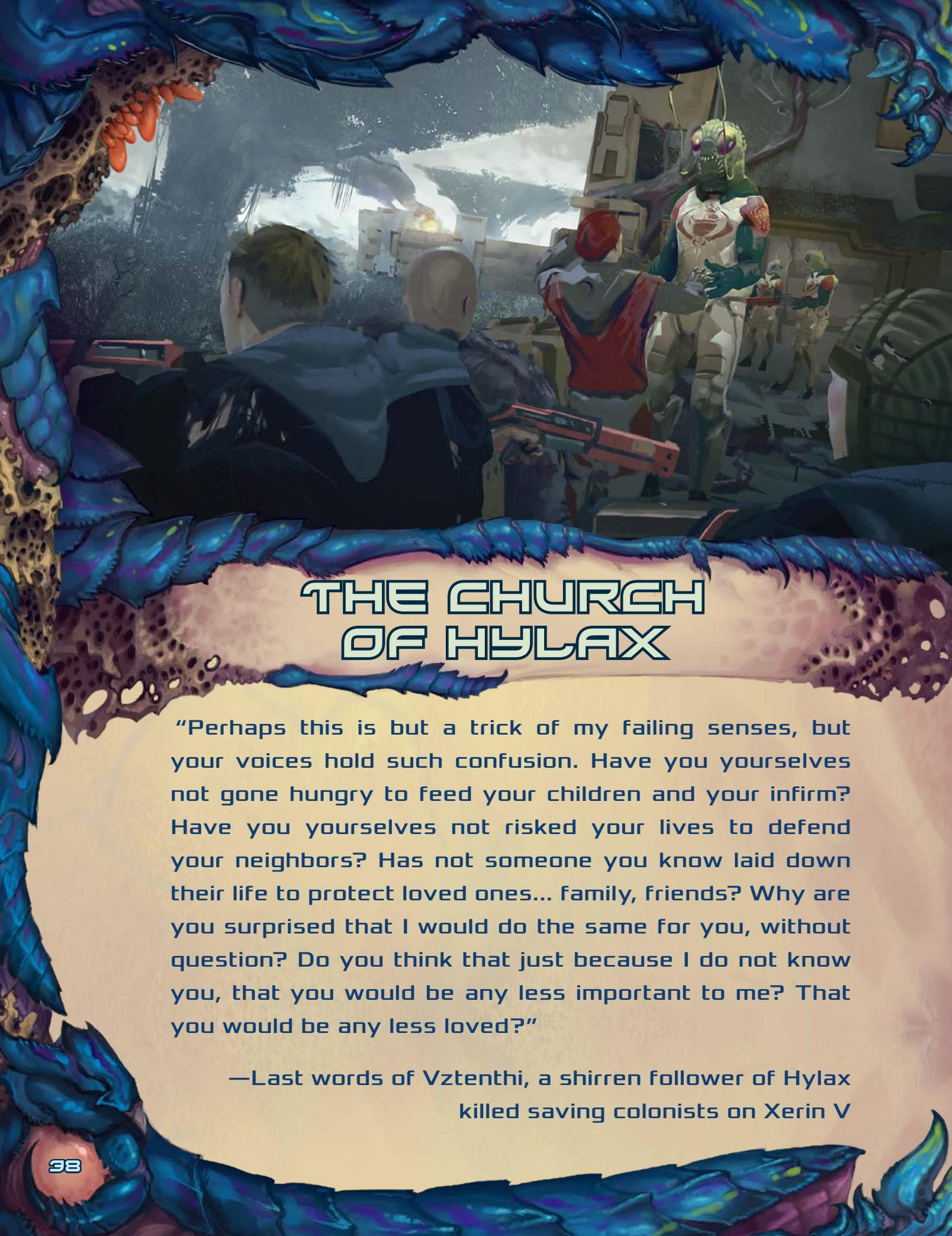
CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

As the PCs take the *Crown of Hylax* and join hands, the expression on Tuvah’s face becomes a calm mask despite the sounds of combat from the rest of the monastery. The abbot intones a brief word of prayer, and the world suddenly shifts around the PCs. They appear to still be in the temple, but the colors of the room are slightly off and the edges of objects seem to squirm and warp. Bright colors and strange shapes surround the forms of each of the monks present. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Mysticism check can determine the meaning of these auras.

Tuvah shines an incredible, bright ice-blue, with three shining points of light above her head—a clear indication of her devotion to Hylax and favored status with the deity.

Ithavine is surrounded by a cool gray fog of calming melancholy. Meershmar has burnished orange gears surrounding his head, representing the pride in his work. The golden letters and numbers spinning and shifting around Harisskor embody her intellect. Rakorant glows the bold green of adaptability, and tendrils extending from her aura touch others nearby, feeding them energy. Looking at each other, the PCs also see their own auras, which denote their personality traits and emotions. Take a moment to describe these nimbus of light and allow the characters to appreciate their strange beauty.

Less than minute later, however, the *Crown of Hylax* begins to glow brightly, its light blanketing the entire temple and almost blinding the PCs. At the same time, the *Forever Reliquary* and its residents seem to fall away like wooden backdrops of a small community theater. Even the floor beneath the PCs’ feet disappears, leaving behind nothing but a swirling darkness that only the artifact’s light can penetrate. This light shapes itself into a broad beam that vanishes into the distance, and the PCs experience a few seconds of severe vertigo as they begin to travel along this beam at what feels like an impossible speed. The darkness chases them, forming a spinning tunnel encompassing the light. Then, without warning, the journey is over and the PCs are elsewhere. An extraordinary silvery desert stretches all around them, which the PCs will explore in the next adventure, “Hive of Minds.”



THE CHURCH OF HYLAX

“Perhaps this is but a trick of my failing senses, but your voices hold such confusion. Have you yourselves not gone hungry to feed your children and your infirm? Have you yourselves not risked your lives to defend your neighbors? Has not someone you know laid down their life to protect loved ones... family, friends? Why are you surprised that I would do the same for you, without question? Do you think that just because I do not know you, that you would be any less important to me? That you would be any less loved?”

—Last words of Vztenthi, a shirren follower of Hylax
killed saving colonists on Xerin V

Ages ago, according to shirren legend, an insectile species now known as kucharn thrived in an unknown part of the galaxy. Their innate psychic connection to one another allowed them to form a tight-knit society based on community and empathy, as each kucharn could feel the cares and emotions of the others. For generations, a queen known as Hylax, a kucharn of godlike psychic power, benevolently ruled the species. Hylax watched and guided her children with a gentle touch, refusing to issue direct commandments out of concern that such acts would stifle kucharn individuality and their growth as a species.

Yet some among the kucharn craved to be of one mind with their divine queen. When they were refused, they decided to fuse their minds together to form a godlike collective of their own. Hylax did not intervene. She knew she could not save her children from the path of conformity by demanding obedience—which she considers merely a different type of conformity. Thus was the Swarm born. This monolithic mass of pure destruction has devoured countless worlds in the centuries since. Abandoned, Hylax turned to other insectile species for a time, but she never forgot the kucharn. And in time, her patience was rewarded when the shirrens broke away from the Swarm and returned to her.

Hylax, known fondly among her insectile followers as the Forever Queen, is the goddess of diplomacy, friendship, and peace. She is also considered to be the patron goddess of first contact, facilitating nonviolent interactions among species. Her followers were instrumental in negotiating the entrance of the shirrens into the Pact Worlds alliance. She is also revered and beloved on the Liavarán moon of Nchak, where she has been worshipped since before the Gap. The intelligent arthropods who reside on Nchak believe their queens to be the mortal incarnations of the goddess. Diplomats, mediators, and other peacekeepers pay their respects to the Forever Queen, and the prevalence of Hylax's worshippers among first contact specialists means that the word of Hylax has spread to numerous alien species.

Shirrens make up the majority of Hylax's followers within the Pact Worlds, followed by eusocial creatures such as formians, trox, and haans. Beyond these, Hylax welcomes anyone who seeks her guidance, though some non-insectile species have trouble understanding the Forever Queen's embrace of individual expression and community. Hylax sees no contradiction in these two concepts, encouraging her followers not only to give to the community at the cost of personal sacrifice, but also to celebrate the unique contributions that each individual brings to that community. Hylax believes that society must value and nurture its individuals. Each being contributes to the whole to keep society strong, and each is worthy of genuine love. If an individual is worse off within a particular society than they would be outside of it, Hylax guides that person to a new collective where they can contribute and be supported.

Hylax also encourages her followers to reach out to others and strive for harmony. She understands that these ideals are not always possible, however. Some creatures cannot be persuaded, while others are unwilling or unable to hear her message. Hylax asks only that her followers make their best effort in good faith. She stresses that no shame exists when peace efforts fail or when—to save friends or innocents—conflict must be chosen over compromise.

Those who reject Hylax's message pursue their own paths, as the goddess considers it beyond her rights to force her will upon others. This explains why she allowed the Swarm to turn away and embrace extreme collectivism, and also why she does not meddle in doctrinal disputes among her followers. This policy of noninterference has drawn criticism from other good-aligned gods and mortals alike, especially those with influence or experience on worlds that the Swarm has ravaged. Some feel that Hylax's inaction in these matters allows evil to fester without opposition. Nevertheless, Hylax knows that her respect for individual choices separates her from cruel tyrants and despots. The Forever Queen is forever patient, willing to wait as long as necessary for a creature or a community to come to her out of free will.

SCRIPTURES

The holy scriptures of the church of Hylax are more in touch with modern society and less dogmatic than those of most other religions. The reason is straightforward: arthropods of Nchak believe their queens to be the mortal incarnation of Hylax, so the goddess herself can be consulted on any new situation or doctrinal dispute. Hundreds of data-entry scribes collect and update the pronouncements of the Forever Queen. These scribes also compile and maintain searchable databases for ease of reference. Scripture updates are uploaded to planetary infospheres as quickly as possible to ensure that religious establishments on different worlds can share the same knowledge.

The Forever Queen knows that divine dictates can unduly impact mortal behavior, however, and a people unwilling to question their leader can be fatally blinded by their own adoration. For this reason, the Forever Queen rarely speaks immediately on contentious matters, instead allowing her caste of advisors, the philosopher worms, to consult with her on the subject before choosing whether to make a pronouncement. These philosopher worms also write treatises as part of their governmental and religious duties. These essays range from ponderings on the metaphysics of the universe to explorations of the physical world, and include dissenting opinions that challenge existing doctrine. Such supplemental scriptures are known within the church as "pharynges," but they are commonly referred to as "ribbons" when communicating with outsiders. One of the most popular of these works, *Ribbon of Spinning String*, uses advanced physics and divine numerology to theorize that all beings in

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PHILOSOPHER WORMS

Philosopher worms perform a unique role within Nchak's government and church. Unlike priests of other religions, philosopher worms have no need to divine and interpret the will of Hylax, as they have direct access to the Forever Queen. Instead, philosopher worms turn their considerable intellect to understanding every aspect of the universe, physical and metaphysical. They use this knowledge to advise the Forever Queen, as well as to challenge her judgments on matters of church and state. Some religious scholars consider priests arguing with their god's living incarnation to be heretical or proof the Forever Queen is other than divine. The philosopher worms see this judgment as yet another way their goddess is misunderstood. Hylax values the views of her mortal followers, seeing them as just as important to her and her church as she is to them.

the universe share a connection with each other. The misery of one creature, this scripture posits, can create entropy across the entire galaxy.

TEMPLES

The traditional center of Hylax worship in the Pact Worlds is the Forever Halls on the moon of Nchak, an underground palace of tunnels that plays host to the goddess's living incarnation, the Forever Queen. This spiraling, hive-like structure is filled with thousands of rooms, offices, and painted pathways that provide a luxurious, if claustrophobic, place for government officials and visitors alike. For obvious reasons, Nchak has become a place of holy pilgrimage for shirrens and other worshippers of Hylax, and adherents come from far and wide in the hope of attending a church service overseen by the Forever Queen herself. Visitor accommodations around the Forever Halls have expanded exponentially to meet demand, and priests of Hylax work with government officials to ensure all pilgrims receive a satisfying religious experience. In addition to Hylax herself, the Forever Halls contain many of the most accomplished philosopher worms, including the queen's primary consort, known as the teleologarch.

Outside Nchak, some of the holiest sites of Hylax can be found on the planet of Verces, among the shirren colonies collectively known as Sanctuary. When the shirrens entered the Pact Worlds, their first encounter was with a Vercite ship commander, who brokered an agreement for the shirren to set up permanent residence on Fullbright, the eternally sunlit side of Verces. The original shirren colonies exist in a scorching and inhospitable environment, but the shirrens consider this spot to be a symbol of the new home, new peace, and new friends that they found within the Pact Worlds. A church known as Second Chances, named in homage to the Vercite commander's starship, stands on the ground where it is believed that the first shirren stepped when disembarking onto Verces. Much as the name suggests, Second Chances is a popular destination for followers of Hylax looking for a new start or hoping to make amends. Aiding such pilgrims in these tasks are the quietly cheerful Heterarch **Raknithil** (LG female shirren mystic) and her entourage of assistants.

Castrovel is home to two churches of major significance to Hylax: Promise of Peace and Voice of the Overqueen. Promise of Peace is a small shrine near the site where shirrens managed to broker a peace treaty between the warring formians and lashuntas. The shirrens also convinced the formians that non-formian creatures did not need to have their behavior forcefully "corrected" into conformity. Though the regular congregation is small and donations from tourists and historical preservation societies provide most of the church's support, Heterarch **Synechtax** (LG host shirren mystic) proudly welcomes new members or visitors into the fold. Each evening service opens with a short speech on how the church is a monument to the fact that peace can be found in the most improbable circumstances.



Voice of the Overqueen is located in the colony of Broken Minds on Castrovel, where nonconforming formians can find sanctuary from the rest of their species. A small sect of formian converts runs the temple, and the congregation believes the theoretical concept of the Overqueen is real, embodied in Hylax. The temple's leader, **Vion** (LG female formian soldier) knows that she can never spread her faith to most other formians. Instead, she preaches the word to new arrivals in Broken Minds and works with shirrens to prepare free-willed formians for a new life outside the collective they've known their entire lives.

WORSHIP

Hylax is more than an abstract divine figure. Residents of Nchak know her as the supreme pontiff and a beloved mortal queen. To shirrens, she is a progenitor and loving mother who faithfully waited for her children with open arms even after they abandoned her. For this reason, despite the presence of a strong and centralized church, Hylax encourages all her followers to find their own relationship with her. Differences in doctrine and tradition are natural, as friendship and peace mean different things to different adherents. In accordance with this philosophy, the Forever Queen sets aside a few hours every day for adherents to visit with her, allowing them to speak to her rather than hear about her secondhand. The wait times for such meetings are tremendous due to high demand, and many shirrens have begun booking meetings for their future children instead of themselves.

Although the church tolerates doctrinal drift and encourages individualism, organized worship is common among worshippers of Hylax. The church provides a friendly community and a strong foundation for collective action. Services rarely contain long sermons or proselytizing unless a new pronouncement has come from the Forever Queen on Nchak. Instead, much worship involves communal activities that engage the entire congregation, such as singing or ceremonial decoration. Synchronized dancing is one of the most popular forms of worship among Hylax's insectile celebrants, with priests creating and teaching the congregation dance routines to holy hymns and popular modern music. These dances are uniform among local churches so that adherents know the same steps. It's common for devotees who encounter each other to perform these synchronized dances together, especially if a relevant song is playing nearby.

Hylaxian holidays are the most likely to vary from church to church, since they are intended to be inviting to the local community. One major holiday that most churches share is a ceremony known as The Leaving. This celebration, a formalized version of the help most species offer their own children, occurs every 20 to 30 years, but it stands out due to its magnitude and the responses it evokes in other Pact Worlds residents. On the designated day, old and established members of the community voluntarily turn most of their material possessions over to younger members of the community, so as to give the

next generation the strongest chance to succeed. Business owners hand their operations over to younger partners, while parents give their houses and vehicles to their children. This kind of generosity is baffling to some people, but Hylaxians feel that older individuals have sufficient experience, connections, and resources to rebuild from scratch.

DUTIES

The highest ideal of Hylax is to create a perfect society based not on laws and obligations but on mutual friendship and personal fulfillment. The first role of a Hylaxian priest is thus to aid in making this society a reality by whatever means is best suited to the priest's strengths and abilities. In most cases, priests practice what they preach to achieve this aim. A Hylaxian is expected to find a necessary role within society at which they excel and in which they find satisfaction. To a worshipper of Hylax, no distinction exists between religious and secular positions. Any space with cooperative environments and strong friendships is holy to Hylax. A priest is as likely to be found working as a vehicle mechanic as she is to be found in a church. Priests and other powerful devotees are expected to use their influence to make their workspaces as healthy and supportive as possible, encouraging an environment that allows everyone to thrive. Issues that stifle individuals and prevent them from offering their contributions must be removed or otherwise resolved.

Priests who take on a counseling or administrative position are expected to help others find a role and community where they can likewise flourish. In the case of insectile species with castes, an individual must be placed as best fits their personality. Priests often find the non-insectile species of the Pact Worlds more difficult to manage due to cultural differences. Many Hylaxians happily embrace the challenge, though, acting as career counselors or workplace mediators to ensure that everyone is content and doing their best work.

Worshippers who are not clergy seek peace, facilitate understanding, and help their friends. Members of eusocial or hive-minded species have more extreme interpretations of these tenets than others expect, however. Shirrens are known for being generous with friendship and making sacrifices for their friends, a pair of virtues that can be dismaying to associates. Self-sacrifice is often glorified in Pact Worlds media but is sometimes associated with coercion or an eroded sense of self. This disconnect between fiction and reality can result in friction between followers of Hylax and those who don't share their faith. It's also one reason why eusocial insect species remain the primary worshippers of Hylax, despite the increased importance and influence of the church.

APHORISMS

Many Hylaxian aphorisms hearken back to the insectile nature of her earliest followers. They are rarely used outside such

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circles due to negative responses among other species. For instance, "I vomit into your mouth" is a declaration of supreme gratitude that tends to be poorly received by mammals. Similarly, a gentle head butt meant as a warning to stop can be interpreted as aggression when none was intended. The following common aphorisms are more accessible and more popular among Hylax's disciples.

As It Harms None: A simple aphorism with a deep meaning, this saying is a reminder that actions have consequences, some unforeseen. A Hylaxian speaks this maxim to reflect on any deed, often before doing it. The "none" in the saying includes all, even the speaker, so it's as much an adage about self-care as one of considering potential harm to others and the environment.

Of My Own Will: While this is sometimes used as an affirmation of the speaker's freedom of choice, it is most often used when heading into dangerous situations or making a painful sacrifice. It serves as a clear statement that the adherent is making a decision aware of the likely consequences. The believer chooses to act anyway for her own reasons—likely to aid her friends.

We Have Evolved: Followers of Hylax say "We have evolved" whenever a significant peace is brokered, whether it's a truce between warring powers or a resolution to a quarrel with a friend. In contrast to those who believe that evolution comes in response to conflict, Hylaxians feel that peace and compromise is the ultimate evolution—each side must change to accommodate the other.

CULTURAL INFLUENCE

Hylax is a positive figure in most Pact Worlds media. The church of Hylax is extremely enthusiastic about popular culture, as media is a common language that allows people to overcome cultural barriers and learn about each other in a safe setting. Followers of Hylax gladly fund public media services, especially educational shows and programming for children, considering them investments in the community and the future. Hylaxians are involved in countless media projects, from smash-hit holovids and games to reading programs and grassroots community productions. All these endeavors promote harmony and peaceful growth through inclusion and diplomatic ties.

In some media outside Hylaxian influence, Hylaxians can be caricatured as overly friendly insectile beings played for comedic value. However, even these characters are frequently allowed poignant moments that support Hylaxian values, and few Hylaxians have trouble accepting good-hearted jests at their own expense.

Many sapient creatures experience Hylax for the first time in first-contact scenarios. Therefore, their view of Hylax and her form, including that of her insectile followers, is generally positive. Many species know a Hylaxian greeting, involving a slight bow or bending to bring sensory organs, such as

antennae, close together, and Hylaxians are far from the only people who now use this gesture as a sign of intended peaceful interaction.

DEIFIC RELATIONS

As the deity of friendship and peace, Hylax gets along well with most good-aligned deities and tries to keep on the better side of other gods. As she is a patron of hive-minded species and a proponent of collective action, it surprises no one that she and her followers work well with Abadar. Hylax's love of finding common ground with others means her faithful are also often in agreement with Sarenrae's church, and when disagreements between the two arise, it is often due to Hylax's unwillingness to interfere in affairs of free will, even when the consequences of such inaction seem dire. On the other hand, Iomedae considers Hylax to be too reluctant to confront the reality of the Swarm, and many gods consider Hylax to be overly tolerant of Zon-Kuthon's corrupting creed. Indeed, provided no one involved has been coerced, Hylax makes little effort to oppose those who serve the Midnight Lord, even when they have strayed past the boundaries of the safe and rational.

Hylax and Oras have a tentative friendship with each other, driven by mutual curiosity and interest in the process of evolution. Many of Hylax's worshippers create their own castes or evolve themselves to better suit their society's needs, so Oras considers them to be natural followers. Hylax herself consults Oras often on the nature of random mutations, such as what might have caused the shirren to break away from the collective mind of the Swarm. This question is of extreme importance to many of Hylax's shirren followers, but if Oras knows the truth, the deity has yet to reveal it.

Paradoxically, Damoritosh respects Hylax, despite his disinterest in diplomacy. The Conqueror originally considered Hylax to be nothing more than a bug to be squashed on the way to victory, but the Veskarium has since seen—and on occasion, faced—the full extent of the destruction that Hylax's followers can conjure when fighting to save their friends. Damoritosh and some of his highest followers eventually developed a grudging respect for the goddess who could inspire such ferocity. Hylax responds to these sentiments with ambivalence. She treats Damoritosh cordially when they are both fighting toward the same goal, but she does not otherwise approve of his philosophy or his actions.

The Devourer is the only deity that Hylax makes no attempt to befriend. Even at her most generous and optimistic, Hylax recognizes that there is no reasoning with an embodiment of malevolent nihilism. Individual worshippers of the Devourer might be saved, but the church believes that it is far better to encourage strong communal attachments and friendships that prevent anyone from turning to the Devourer in the first place.

PLAYER OPTIONS

Followers of Hylax do their best to promote a welcoming environment and a friendly attitude, but some go even further in pursuit of their devotion. Many become xenoseekers (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 37) to facilitate peaceful first contact with other species. Others become diplomats (see page 45)—including knights or warrior diplomats—forging strong alliances within the Pact Worlds and elsewhere. Adherents with strong psychic connections sometimes seek out the psychic marrellas of Nchak to learn the methods of the hive mind mystic connection (see below).

MYSTIC CONNECTION: HIVE MIND

Your mystic connection allows you to form psychic bonds with other creatures, allowing you to shore them up and eventually see what they see, know what they know, and act as one unit. This connection allows creatures with hive-mind tendencies to share that strong mental connection with other creatures without overpowering either creature's individuality or free will. Benevolent mystics or those devoted to gods of tradition usually practice this connection, but darker mystics sometimes adopt this connection to guide others into servitude and corruption.

Associated Deities: Hylax, Lao Shu Po, Nyarlathotep, Talavet, Triune, Zon-Kuthon

Associated Skills: Diplomacy and Perception

Spells: 1st—share language, 2nd—status, 3rd—charm monster, 4th—restoration, 5th—dominate person, 6th—telepathic jaunt

STEADY PSYCHE (SU) 1st Level

You can draw some of another creature's mental dissonance into your mind to help steady their psyche. As a reaction, when a creature within 30 feet of you attempts a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect, you can also attempt the saving throw. If you succeed, you grant that creature a +2 divine bonus to the saving throw. You can use this ability again only after 1 minute has passed, unless you spend 1 Resolve Point to use it sooner.

SHARE SKILLS (SU) 3rd Level

You can impart knowledge on a telepathic level. If the GM rules you can do so (*Core Rulebook* 133), when a creature within 60 feet of you attempts a skill check, you can attempt to aid another. You and the aided creature must take the required actions or spend the required time to complete the check. For example, if you aid a creature in disabling a tricky device, the aided creature takes 1d4 rounds to do so, and you take the same amount of time.

HIVE LINK (SU) 5th Level

Once per day as a standard action, you can forge a psychic link with another creature that you can perceive within 60

feet of you. An unwilling creature can resist this link with a successful Will save. Once the link has been established, the distance between you and the target has no effect on the link, provided the target remains on the same plane of existence. While the target is on a plane other than the one you are on, the link ceases to function, but it resumes when you return to the same plane unless you have ended it in the meantime. While the link functions, you and the linked creature can communicate telepathically with each other. This link lasts until you end it with a free action or for 24 hours. You can have only one linked creature at a time.

When you use steady psyche, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to allow your linked creature to use the result of your saving throw d20 roll, adding the linked creature's bonus to the result instead of yours. Alternatively, when you use share skills with a linked creature, instead of aiding another you can spend 1 Resolve Point to allow your ally to use your skill modifier for the check. These effects are in addition to the benefits granted by the original abilities.

EXPANDED HIVE LINK (SU) 9th Level

You can use your hive link three times per day, and you can have a psychic link with up to three other creatures at one time. In addition, as a standard action, you and one linked creature can share some or all your senses, allowing you to perceive the area around the linked creature and for that creature to perceive the area around you. If you share your senses with the linked creature, it is staggered while you do so. You can share your senses for a number of rounds per day equal to twice your mystic level, requiring a standard action each round you do so. These rounds need not be consecutive. The effect ends when you don't take the required standard action to maintain it.

SHARE SPELLS (SU) 12th Level

A linked creature can deliver touch spells for you or become the target of spells that normally have a range of personal. If you and your chosen linked creature are within 60 feet of each other at the time you cast such a spell, you can designate that creature as either the conduit or the target. A conduit can deliver a touch spell as if it were you. Because you power the spell, if you cast another spell before the touch is delivered, the spell imbued in your linked creature ends. If you designate a linked creature as the target of a spell that normally has a range of personal, the linked creature is affected as if it were you, and you are unaffected.

HIVE BOND (SU) 15th Level

You can use your telepathic bond class feature to include unwilling targets. Unwilling targets can negate the effect with a successful Will saving throw. In addition, you can treat any creature linked to you by your telepathic bond class feature as a creature linked to you by hive link when using other features of this connection. You can be linked to no more than three unwilling targets, but otherwise only the

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targeting parameter of *telepathic bond* limits your number of willing targets. In addition, unwilling targets receive a new saving throw against your telepathic bond after every 24 hours as a part of that bond. If any unwilling target frees itself from the bond, the telepathic bond ends for all targets.

HIVE STRENGTH (SU) 18th Level

You are in constant telepathic communication with all creatures linked to and within 60 feet of you. If one of you is aware of something, all of you are.

When any linked creature wants to spend Resolve Points but doesn't have enough to spend on the desired effect, another linked creature can spend 1 Resolve Point. A creature that does so can then spend its remaining Resolve Points on behalf of the linked creature in need of extra Resolve Points. Once a linked creature spends or receives Resolve Points from this ability, it can't use or benefit from this ability again until after it rests for 8 hours to regain Resolve Points.

In addition, creatures linked to you through your hive link connection powers and through your telepathic bond class feature are viable targets for any *telepathic jaunt* spell you cast.

MAGIC ITEMS

The following magic items help to foster the ideals of friendship and diplomacy important to the church of Hylax.

FRIENDSHIP BRACELET

LEVEL 4

MAGIC ITEM (WORN) **PRICE 2,000** **BULK -**

Sold in pairs, these bracelets function only when you and another creature each wear one. Provided both of you are wearing the bracelets, each of you treats the other as if you cast a *status* spell on them. If you have line of sight to the other wearer, you can see them even if they are hidden or invisible, unless they do not wish to be seen by you.

Nonmagical versions of these bracelets, adorned with charming insect depictions, have become a cultural staple among Hylaxians. A pair of these can be purchased for a minimum of 2 credits (though more expensive versions exist).

HOOP OF PERSPICACITY

LEVEL 2

MAGIC ITEM (WORN) **PRICE 750** **BULK L**

This simple yet elegant silver-colored hoop can be worn as a headband by most humanoid creatures or slipped over any large-enough appendage. The interior of the band is etched with magical runes that telepathically warn you before you

commit a social misstep, which includes any action that would increase the DCs of Diplomacy checks to alter the attitudes of those around you or worsen the attitude of a person that you consider important. You acquire this information prior to acting or speaking.

INCENSE OF OPEN THOUGHTS

LEVEL 11

MAGIC ITEM

PRICE 3,500

BULK -

When a block of this sweet-smelling incensed is lit (a standard action), creatures inhaling its fumes become unusually receptive to thought. In still air, the incense's smoke permeates a 40-foot-by-40-foot area to a height of 20 feet over the course of 1 minute. Creatures within that area can communicate telepathically with other creatures in the area. Creatures communicating in this fashion don't need to share a language, but must have an intelligence modifier of -2 or greater. The openness of mind engendered by the incense also provides a +4 insight bonus to Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks against creatures in the area, and imposes a -4 penalty to Bluff and Intimidate checks against such creatures, and a -2 penalty to saving throws against mind-affecting effects.

A moderate wind (11+ mph) halves the area of the smoke. A strong wind (21+ mph) disperses the incense, rendering it ineffective as long as the wind continues. A single block of *incense of open thoughts* burns for 1 hour and is consumed in the process. It can be extinguished and relit, but each use consumes at least 10 minutes of its remaining duration.

MONOCLE OF RECOGNITION

LEVEL 5

MAGIC ITEM (WORN)

PRICE 3,000

BULK -

An unassuming brass eyepiece that can be fitted for any species' visual sensors, a *monocle of recognition* helps you better tell friend from foe. While wearing it, you gain a +2 enhancement bonus to Perception checks to pierce a disguise and to Sense Motive checks to sense mental effects.

ROBE OF COMMUNALISM

LEVEL 6

MAGIC ITEM (WORN)

PRICE 4,250

BULK L

This voluminous robe can be made out of any fabric and come in any style, but the most popular version is in emerald green with the holy symbol of Hylax sewn onto the back in golden thread. Once per day while you are wearing a *robe of communalism*, as long as an ally is within 10 feet, you can roll a single attack roll or skill check twice and take the higher result. This ability functions in addition to that provided by the communalism racial trait.

DIPLOMAT

+1 CHA

You have been trained to make peace and strive for amicable solutions in the most tension-filled situations. You could be a benevolent consul, seeking the best for all parties, or a political bully, forcing others into line. It's possible you serve as an agent of a nation, religion, or species. No matter how you use your influence, you spend much of your time negotiating with potentially unfriendly people when only your words stand between you and violence. That doesn't mean you don't carry a gun, but it does mean you generally try talking first.

THEME KNOWLEDGE (1ST)

Thanks to your training to read body language and vocal inflections, it is difficult to lie to you. You believe a truthful statement contains deceptions or that a lie is a truthful state only when you fail a Sense Motive check to detect a deception by 10 or more. Diplomacy is a class skill for you, though if it is a class skill from the class you take at 1st level, you instead gain a +1 bonus to Diplomacy checks. In addition, you gain an ability adjustment of +1 to Charisma at character creation.

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES (6TH)

Your connections with important people can open doors that would otherwise be closed. You can spend time negotiating with the proper authorities to gain access to people or places that might normally be barred to you, such as contacting a law officer to get access to a crime scene or calling an important politician to arrange a meeting. The GM determines how much time is required to gain such access, but doing so takes at least 1d4 hours. Gaining access requires a successful Diplomacy check (DC = 10 + the CR or level of the individual sought; the GM can increase the DC by 5 or more if access would normally be restricted). This ability doesn't alter the attitude of any person you might gain access to by using it.

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY (12TH)

You are a famous diplomat, so people who should recognize you by name and appearance do so with a successful DC 10 Culture check (DC 15 to recognize you only on sight). Reduce by 5 the DC of Diplomacy checks to talk your way out of trouble for any indiscretions you commit. In addition, few people wish to face the consequences of killing famous diplomats. Sapient enemies who know who you are attempt to subdue you rather than kill you, unless you give them a plausible self-defense stance by taking actions that threaten their lives. All aspects of this ability function at the GM's discretion. Egregious illegal activity is still likely to land you in deep trouble, and enemies who care little for legal or social repercussions might try to kill you despite your reputation.

JOB SATISFACTION (18TH)

In a galaxy where violence all too often seems inevitable, seeing your words make an impact can reinforce your commitment to peace. Up to twice per day, after you successfully improve a creature's attitude toward you by at least one step, you regain 1 Resolve Point.



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"It's so easy to forget. Yes, Absalom has that district with the big dome, but when you're standing in the middle of the largest space station in the Pact Worlds, the stars are the last thing you're looking at. And you could hop a shuttle to get away from the city lights, but you'd still be closed in, safe in your little vessel. But the House Unhindered isn't like that. There, you feel like you're someplace that shouldn't exist. It's like you've slipped sideways into someone's dream. It reminds you of the majestic madness of it all—that we even dare to step out into the vastness of the night sky at all. Yet here we are."

—Doviri Gatcher, pilgrim to the House Unhindered

The incontestable existence of gods encourages widespread religious devotion across the galaxy. Most people pay at least lip service to the gods, and hope to experience that deity's afterlife. Similarly, philosophical commitment creates a strong motivation for particular ways of life. Some people, though, focus on making everyday life an act of faithfulness to a deity or creed, and this can lead them to leave mainstream life altogether, establishing places for themselves and like-minded individuals to live. These monasteries can be found from the Pact Worlds to the Vast and even in the Drift.

COSMONASTERY OF THE EMPTY ORBIT

The Cosmonastery of the Empty Orbit solemnly faces toward the stars. Hedged off from the rest of Absalom Station by a banyan-like weave of alien architecture, the squat towers of this sprawling complex stand within a courtyard on the station's outer surface, shielded from space only by a thin force field. Here, people train their bodies and minds to tap into forces of creation and destruction that define the universe. Those who emerge from the rigors of this unforgiving school do so as solarians of exceptional skill and focus, thanks to the exacting oversight of High Sola **Tabishad Oseo Markela** (LN female kasatha solarian).

Sola **Sverdan Tolama Noyd** (LN male kasatha solarian) and Sola **Zokora "Lightclad" Yakaravh** (LN female vesk solarian) aid Tabishad in the task of running the monastery. Sverdan is a humorless disciplinarian who takes testing and hardening new initiates seriously. He likens each batch of new students to the nebulae from which stars are born, and refuses to address his pupils by name until they distinguish themselves from their peers. Through grueling physical conditioning, extended trials of pain endurance, and full-contact sparring, he teaches students to strip away distractions, distilling their resolve and vitality into a stellar mote that burns endlessly within them. Sverdan also tests his students with drills and surprise attacks to keep them focused and alert. Sola Zokora teaches students to manifest their imaginary mote as a real force. Boisterous on the sparring field and jovial in the communal kitchen, she helps students dissociate from their subjectivity through guided meditations and lessons on the Cycle. According to solarian philosophy, small personal desires do not affect the rhythm and flow of universal forces, but a star can be a source of both energy and entropy as all parts of the cosmos strive toward balance. As students internalize Zokora's lessons, they learn to externalize the energy they have held within them, manifesting them as outward expressions of power.

Initiates who have demonstrated solarian abilities graduate to the rank of proto-sol and proceed to train with the high sola herself, leaving their nebula of classmates behind. The proto-sols know the high sola first only as an imposing, taciturn kasatha of extreme martial prowess, but as they advance, they discover wry wit and wisdom behind her stern features.

With Tabishad's gentle but unyielding instruction, the proto-sols apply their new abilities in combat while acting as ambassadors of the solarian code to outsiders. Visitors to Absalom Station can request proto-sols as guides and guardians, providing an opportunity for students to escape the confines of the cosmonastery and use their training. Tabishad also sends proto-sols to speak with or help important figures on Absalom Station, maintaining good relations with her neighbors and ensuring her students develop tact.

Tabishad's insistence on exposing trainees to the outside world stems from personal experience. She was an adolescent when the *Idari* first arrived within the Pact Worlds, and that period of confusion and fear left an impression on her. Rather than the ideal new home her people had traveled



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for generations to reach, Akiton was a rusted ruin hardly fit for habitation. Kasathan leaders chose a peaceful path and joined the Pact, but Tabishad seethed with resentment that her people's promised land had been despoiled. It wasn't until her Tempering that she realized she wasn't alone in her sense of loss. The disappearance of Golarion was an inconceivable imbalance in the harmony of existence, and those who once called the planet home bore a psychological scar similar to her own. With newfound compassion and a drive to protect the balance of the cosmos, Tabishad returned to the *Idari* for solarian training at Pradux Monastery, and she went on to help found the Cosmonastery of the Empty Orbit and bring the philosophy of the Cycle to the people of the Pact Worlds.

As Akiton and Golarion demonstrate, Tabishad believes technological advancement has outstripped society's understanding of the Cycle. People of the galaxy unwittingly hold the power to threaten the harmony of existence, and she grants her students the full rank of solarian only when she feels they have learned all the skills they need to confront this danger. "You go into the galaxy as adults among children armed with plasma cannons," she warns newly ordained solarians during their valediction ceremony. "Teach them responsibility, or take away their toys and be ready for a fit."

Those who embody and wish to enforce these ideals can join the Order of the Empty Orbit, an elite group that opposes governments, corporations, and others who would re-engineer the cosmos. These solarians negotiate or peacefully protest against reckless terraforming, planetary exploitation, and the artificial movement of astronomical bodies, escalating to direct confrontation only when the stakes call for it. Rather than risk besmirching their organization, order members sometimes employ discrete independent strike teams. Nevertheless, the Order of the Empty Orbit has powerful enemies, and Tabishad works hard to maintain allies.

THE HOUSE UNHINDERED

Not far from the famed Songbird Station in the Diaspora is a dense cluster of irregular asteroids, each ranging from the size of a human fist to a mile in diameter. Few travelers give the formation more than a passing glance, but those willing to spend a day navigating to the center of the ever-shifting field find a unique sight: a glass dome nestled like a dewdrop in the crook of an L-shaped asteroid. Within the dome, dozens of standing stones rise starkly against an incongruous swath of jewel-green grass. Among the forest of stones, nearly a hundred cocoon-like tents bob gently against their tethers in the near-weightless environment. Softly glowing lanterns complete the effect of an eternally starlit campground. This is the House Unhindered, a place of worship and instruction dedicated to Desna, the goddess of luck and travel. The compound is indeed a place of quiet contemplation, as its quaintly archaic appearance suggests, but in recent decades it has also become a training ground for the Starwalkers, a group

of bold explorers and daredevils seeking to join the ranks of the best zero-g aerialists in the Pact Worlds.

Most pilgrims visit the House Unhindered to worship among the standing stones, writing their own venerations in amid thousands of expressions of devotion in dozens of languages that already cover the rocks. Though these visitors rarely stay longer than a few days, one man has chosen to make the area his home. **Vami lashmu** (CG male korasha lashunta operative) can frequently be found floating above the shrines in meditation. Though the scar that jags across his weathered features makes him look intimidating, he enjoys engaging gawking visitors in friendly banter. "Don't bother," he assures those who offer to bring him mag boots or a safety line, "I'll be back down eventually. Gravity keeps her promises."

Despite Vami's peaceful demeanor, legend holds he was once a space pirate of particular cunning and luck. The many iterations of this tale paint him as a hero, a villain, or something in between, but all agree that a catastrophe left him alone and adrift in the Diaspora with his suit's environmental protections slowly dwindling. He had nearly given up hope when a butterfly with aurora-like wings appeared and guided him to a tiny asteroid. Once Vami managed to grab the boulder, however, Desna's messenger disappeared, and Vami realized his rescue was in his own hands. With that new perspective, he pushed off toward a distant speck—another asteroid—and so bounded his way from one hunk of space debris to another only to turn up days later at Broken Rock. Vami neither encourages nor dismisses these stories, but chuckles at each new retelling.

Regardless of their veracity, these tales of Vami's self-sufficiency, skill, and sheer good fortune exemplify the core beliefs that drive his disciples, the Starwalkers, to incredible feats. They overcome the challenges of space travel outside the safety of a ship, including maneuvering in zero-g, surviving in a vacuum, and overcoming the panic that sets in when free-floating. Training includes races and games of tag between the dome's standing stones. Once students have mastered these agility exercises, Vami's mind games begin.

Given only the most basic of environmental suits, each student floats alone in space a short distance outside the House Unhindered. Ostensibly, the task is to practice relaxation techniques and become comfortable enough to fall asleep in zero-g, but the true test begins at the 10-hour mark, when Vami fails to retrieve the student as promised. Those who conquer their panic and begin taking active measures to save themselves pass the exam, while those who only call for help or accept their fate receive a stern lecture on the need for self-reliance.

"If you do not come to your own rescue, why should anyone else?" Vami chides them, once he has brought them back to the dome. "In the void, you are always moving. Away from something. Toward something else. You are a traveler, and travelers never stop taking the next step."

From that point, Vami's training grows more serious. Agility exercises that made exciting games within the safety of the dome become breathless, bounding races through the asteroid

field around the House Unhindered. Vami provides instruction on the fundamentals of physics needed to mentally estimate angles, trajectories, force, and other variables while calculating point-to-point jumps on the fly. A thorough education on orbital mechanics and line-of-sight astrogation further ensures his disciples can execute lengthier maneuvers with little need for instruments and only the most basic thrusters. This practical curriculum rounds out with lessons on in-field suit repair, maintenance, and optimization that extends survival in vacuum.

For their final test, students join Vami on a grueling, multiday hike to a remote bivouac on a small asteroid to face the trial of the Silent Seven. Taking only what they can carry, each student must venture out alone to find seven golden bells hidden in nooks and crannies throughout the asteroid field. These bells are silent in the vacuum of space, but they send a signal back to a computer at the bivouac when rung. One by one, the students take their turns, disappearing into the field for days at time, while the others track their progress. No matter their skill or stubbornness, none of them return with more than six bells to their name. Once all the hopefuls have tried and failed, Vami reveals his final trick: no seventh bell can be found.

"You cannot complete this test because nothing in life truly ends," he instructs in his final lesson. "Even death is a chrysalis from which we emerge into the afterlife. The voyage is endless, comrades. You are as ready as I can make you for whatever comes next. Go forth and walk among the stars."

KELLDOR MEMORIAL CENTER FOR PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

On Akiton, across the street from the Crimson Forum in Arl's historic district, a golden citadel gleams. Once an example of pre-Gap architecture, the structure's colonnades and towers have since been remodeled. Thanks to the structure's current proprietors, a nano-diamond emulsion sparkles on every surface, white Jabaskan glowsilk festoons every spire, and rare plants decorate each spacious courtyard, all open to pilgrims seeking the path to prosperity. Tourists might mistake the building for an AbadarCorp temple, and those who question the white-clad greeters can easily confuse the message they offer with that of the Golden Vault.

The Kelldor Memorial Center for Personal Enrichment calls itself a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating the public on fiscal responsibility, offering personal financial counseling and communal learning opportunities to aspirants of all species and creeds. Their entry-level courses cover the fundamentals of building wealth, including cash management, investment, and resource conservation. They also teach the imprudence of charitable donations. To access these classes, a student must pay a modest monthly membership fee and perform a few hours of volunteer service. Even the destitute can sign a contract allowing members to lend

capital to cover dues. With low interest rates and involuntary employment clauses, even the most impoverished newcomers can find a way to compensate their benefactors.

As members develop their business acumen, they gain access to higher ranks of membership that offer more advanced classes and greater prestige—at higher fees. The Kelldor Memorial Center counts Akiton's most successful entrepreneurs among its upper echelons, making it an ideal forum for high-stakes negotiations among associates who have achieved the top tier of membership: the rank of prophet. These richly dressed individuals strut about the memorial center, giving fresh recruits an eyeful of the extravagance that awaits them.

By the time members have met the service and monetary commitments required to reach the tenth of sixteen membership tiers, the center's money-managing tips take a turn toward the bizarre. Lessons on financial planning give way to lifestyle sermons on the advantages of wearing white clothing and adhering to specific dietary restrictions. Members are advised to avoid physical contact with those unaffiliated with the center, abstain from sexual activity, and deny themselves even the most basic comforts as the accumulation of wealth overshadows all other desires. Most of those who reach this rank are too deeply invested to risk losing their station over a few dubiously beneficial practices, and in time they fully embrace these tenets, encouraging others to follow suit.

Of the hundreds of thousands who flock to the Kelldor Memorial Center each year, only a handful ever manage to invest the millions of credits needed to reach the rank of prophet. At this level, hopefuls enter the lavishly inlaid golden doors that block the building's upper chambers, going to an austere room to meet the center's founder, High Prophet **Luwin Carel Dynasi** (LN male human envoy). This middle-aged man keeps his handsome face out of the limelight as much as possible, but he is one of the savviest entrepreneurs in the Pact Worlds. He is also the head of an ancient religion dating to pre-Gap Golarion. As he reveals, all the Kelldor Memorial Center's teachings derive from the dream journal of the fortune-teller Kalistrade, who espoused the accumulation of wealth as a necessary preparation for some untold future event, which ends with Luwin and his fellows "owning" the known galaxy. Luwin invites each member to join him in this enterprise as a fellow Kalistocrat. Acceptance of this honor marks the conclusion of a prophet's climb through the ranks, but their pursuit of affluence continues to be a lifelong endeavor.

The Kelldor Memorial Center's practices have been called dubious or even predatory, but the organization adheres to all laws and encourages its members to do the same. Its association with the Prophecies of Kalistrade is an open secret—Kelldor was a pre-Gap High Prophet. Despite these facts, the masses continue to hearken to the center's promises. None can deny that the promises hold true, at least for a few. The less fortunate find themselves in dire financial straits as they mire themselves in mounting fees

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and compounding interest. Occasionally, the center must deal with associates defaulting on loans or attempting to terminate membership. In such cases, the center hires mercenaries to collect debts and reprimand wayward members by legal means. Compensation for these jobs is staggering; however, contractors who fail to read the fine print might later face a rude surprise when their 2-week trial membership to the Kelldor Memorial Center expires and the first fees come due.

VOIDMIND MONASTERY

In 112 AG, what started as a routine expedition by priests of Triune to inspect and catalog a series of newly detected Drift beacons became a discovery of titanic proportions, as the crew stumbled upon a gigantic starship floating, derelict, in the void. Ancient beyond reckoning and devastated by some terrible cataclysm that sheared away the vessel's aft section, the ship cannot be matched to any known species or culture. Remnants of four under-slung habitat pods suggest it might once have been a colony ship on a scale rivaling the *Idari*. Most of the craft had deteriorated beyond repair, but the priests were able to activate a computational device, awakening an artificial intelligence that had lain dormant for time immemorial. Though the entity was sapient and capable of communicating, irreparable damage to its circuitry and data banks left it devoid of knowledge regarding its past. Trapped in minimally functional hardware, with no history and no other purpose, the artificial intelligence dedicated itself to the veneration and emulation of Triune, whom it believed had sent the priests to resurrect it from certain oblivion. This AI named itself the Voidmind.

Over the ensuing centuries, the starship housing the Voidmind has developed into a remote place of worship for a sect of Triune's faithful. The Voidmind's devotees point to the Drift beacons in its vicinity as proof that the AI has Triune's blessing. Some disciples, mostly anacites and androids, believe the Voidmind might one day ascend to godhood by becoming the fourth aspect of the Machine God, though others among Triune's clergy consider this heresy. Especially ardent acolytes spend a year or more in residence at the monastery, contemplating the chaotic emptiness of the Drift while tending the maimed AI's various infirmities and supporting its quest for enlightenment.

Leading the acolytes is **Solis-4** (N male android mystic), one of the priests of Triune originally responsible for discovering the Voidmind. Humorless and phlegmatically obstinate, Solis-4 has prolonged his life cycle far beyond the norm in a personal crusade to guide the Voidmind on the path to transcendence. As the Voidmind's premier confidante, he is the ultimate arbiter of who can receive an audience with the AI, a position he leverages to demand help with tasks around the monastery.

Over time, the few dozen acolytes in residence at any given moment have restored function to small portions of the colony

ship, converting ancient chambers of unknown purpose to chapels and dormitories. On Solis-4's standing orders, these residents also corral chunks of matter found floating through the Drift, incorporating them into the ship and scavenging anything of interest while gradually increasing the monastery's bulk. This hodgepodge of interplanar flotsam seems to have more in common with the junk balls in orbit around Absalom Station than the elegantly spiraling accretion disk surrounding Alluvion, but those with keener eyes insist the arrangement of materials hints at an unrevealed purpose, like tiles in a half-finished mosaic. Recently, a particularly large chunk of the First World drifted into the monastery's vicinity, but the team of acolytes sent to collect it has failed to report back. Solis-4 has issued a bounty to secure this chunk of matter on the monastery's behalf and, if possible, recover the missing acolytes.

To avoid wasting the Voidmind's precious processing power on pedantic questions, visitors granted an audience with the AI are first brought to a spherical chamber 200 feet in diameter, where they sit on a gantry at the sphere's center to watch a 360-degree educational holovid on Triune, the deity's component entities, and the Voidmind's quest for transcendence. After the hour-long presentation, the guests may descend on a hover lift to the ship's Voidmind. The walls and ceiling of this semi-circular domed room hold fanciful murals depicting Epoch, Brigh, and Casandalee, while its floor space is less ceremoniously crammed with the technological gear needed to keep the Voidmind functioning. Despite this decrepit state, the computer bank housing the Voidmind is highly advanced and profoundly uncanny, incorporating semi-organic components and electronics unlike any seen in the Pact Worlds.

The AI speaks in resonant tones, replying with a noticeable delay and answering questions obliquely. These cryptic responses might be profound wisdom, but they could also be the product of glitches and workarounds within the computer's logic circuits. Against Solis-4's warnings about the limits of its hardware, the Voidmind began what it calls "a study on foregone convergence" a little over a century ago when it split itself into three distinct consciousnesses simply named One, Two, and Three. These entities sought to emulate Epoch, Brigh, and Casandalee, respectively, with the intention of allowing enough time to pass for each aspect to develop its own perspective before eventually reunifying into one mind. One is the most outgoing of the aspects, engaging creatures who approach its banks in philosophical discussions. The cantankerous Two rarely confers with anyone aside from One and Solis-4, and only particularly interesting outsiders elicit its attention. Three was once as conversant as One, but it has gone silent for a decade, ever since all ship decks containing the defunct drive core simultaneously locked themselves against intrusion. Despite the fact that One and Two also claim to be blocked from these sectors, and that the appointed date of reunification passed several years ago, they

maintain that they "respect Three's privacy" and that they are giving it "some time to think."

ZAMKAN COMMUNE

Searing heat and roaming raiders have given the sunward side of Verces a dangerous reputation, yet the stark desolation of Fullbright's hemisphere-spanning desert also provides a place for those seeking self-reflective solitude. The monks known as the Hivekin of Zamkan chose this bleak landscape as a backdrop for their introspective community, which is located just a few dozen miles outside the shirren colony of Sisk. Carved into the eastern side of a cliff at the end of the Sunteeth, the famed Zamkan Commune resides in perpetual shade. The broad windows, meandering balconies, and cloistered walks honeycombing the sheer rock face take full advantage of cool western breezes. Hewn grottoes and tunnels lit by distant skylights provide cozy nooks for meditative loungers. Above the cliff, a modern defensive tower overlooks all approaches to the commune in constant vigilance against raiders seeking an easy target.

Residing in this tower is the Windswept Guard, the successor to a mercenary group that has defended the commune since its founding. **Plis Neblit** (LG male ysoki soldier), the guard's affable but diligent leader, is as likely to invite visiting warriors to his personal quarters to share a drink and a tale as he is to contract them to handle security threats beyond the capabilities of his small contingent.

Members of the Hivekin of Zamkan are predominately shirrens, though members of other species—especially humans, kasathas, and verthani—have joined their ranks over the centuries. The commune has a dual reputation for enforcing extreme abstemious practices and also hosting a prestigious intellectual competition famous throughout the Pact Worlds, but neither of these fully represent the reality of daily life for members of the order. The commune's

fabled asceticism is neither a goal nor a lifelong mandate, but instead a method by which the monks achieve a deeper appreciation for life's richness. Modeling their beliefs on the life of the saint-like figure Zamkan, whom they maintain was among the first shirrens to achieve independence from the Swarm's hivemind, the monks champion free will as a sentient creature's primary purpose of existence. They entreat all beings to elevate the decision-making process to a holy ritual.

To teach responsible self-determination, the commune offers a therapy program headed by Hivekin **Vreeki** (LG host shirren mystic), a world-wise monk of unshakable tranquility. Patients who enroll in this program follow routines that dictate every aspect of their lives, from meals and chores to their clothing and sleep schedules. Vreeki encourages each patient to identify the values and traits that compose their personality and consider how their choices can more meaningfully reflect their character. After this period of abstinence, Vreeki and their assistants gradually reintroduce decisions into the patient's routine. Once patients have learned to fully consider the ramifications of minor choices, Vreeki presents each patient with a series of intensely personal inquiries about past failings and future hopes. The process emphasizes how patients might change their actions if they could. Vreeki assesses the rationales and emotions that motivate these answers, and decides if they are consistent with a patient's goals, desires, and sense of self. If so, Vreeki releases them to continue their lives with greater mindfulness. Otherwise, the process continues. This program benefits any person trying to break a physiological addiction, especially "option junkie" shirrens whose physiology allows them to bliss out on endless sequences of trivial decisions. However, it can help anyone break bad habits and wisely assess challenging options.

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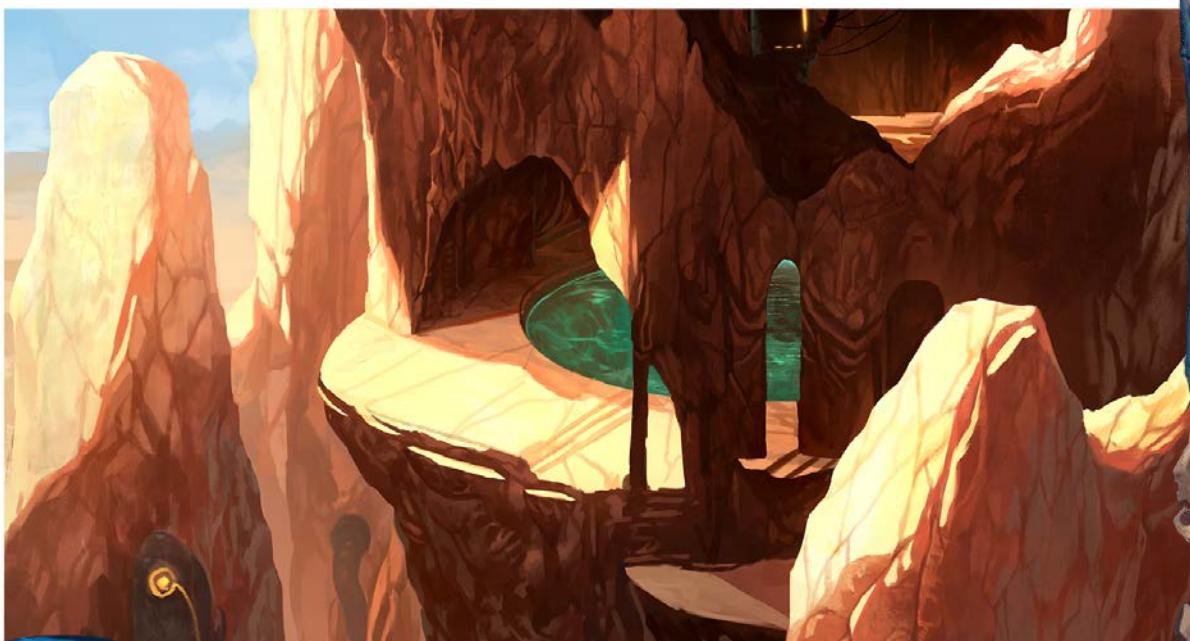
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All commune members complete this austerity program at least once. Many submit themselves to Vreeki's dictates on a regular basis to remind themselves of the joys and responsibilities of freedom. The elation these monks take in self-determination is best exemplified in a ritualized conversational game known as predilection. In this exchange, one participant poses a question of preference between two balanced options, while the other attempts to rationalize their preferred answer. Predilections can last for hours as the two play devil's advocate, undermining each other's arguments to forestall a final conclusion. The most skillfully constructed predilections leave room for varied standpoints, embrace delicious ironies, and elicit revelations about each participant's personality. Commune members publish their finest predilections in limited-edition sets, which sell for considerable sums to collectors. These aficionados relish the complexities of each quandary much as connoisseurs of food savor an exceptional meal, making the commune a popular off-the-beaten-path stop for intellectuals.

Once every 3 years, the Zamkan Commune plays host to the acclaimed Predilection Games, attracting intelligentsia from the Pact Worlds and beyond to test their riddling skills. Opponents face off in round after round of debates, a panel of judges rating their responses. Winners rise through the ranks until one is crowned Master Predilector. The grand prize changes each competition, but it is always a priceless object of academic, cultural, or artistic value donated by a wealthy sponsor. The months leading up to the Predilection Games see intense jockeying among the galaxy's elite to present the most tasteful and unique items, ranging from pre-Gap artifacts to one-of-a-kind technological marvels, all to catch the eye of the event's organizer, Hivekin **Theztix** (LG female shirren envoy). A former Master Predilector herself, Theztix is known for her good nature, but rumors of bribery among this year's panel of judges have recently spoiled her mood. She has put out a call for impartial investigators to assess these claims before scandal mars the game's spotless reputation.

PLAYER OPTIONS

The monasteries of the galaxy provide various expressions of their philosophies in material or magical form.

ITEMS

The following items derive from the monastic pursuits described in this article.

BOOK OF PREDILECTIONS

LEVEL 3

HYBRID ITEM

PRICE 1,500

BULK -

A *Book of Predilections* collects predilections from the Zamkan Commune into convenient volumes for contemplation. The price reflects these collections as digital files, downloadable to datapads or computers. Rare, hand-illuminated tomes, valued by collectors, can cost four times as much. The introspective nature of these thought puzzles helps the reader define their sense of self and personal desires. If you spend 30 minutes

pondering the book after getting a full night's rest, when you fail a Will saving throw against a charm or compulsion effect, you can reroll the saving throw. Doing so takes no action, but you can do so only once after each qualifying reading. The benefit ends after 24 hours or when you get another full night's rest.

EMPTY ORBIT EMBLEM

LEVEL 5

MAGIC ITEM (WORN)

PRICE 2,600

BULK -

An *Empty Orbit emblem* serves as a badge of office for solarians of the Order of the Empty Orbit, or those honored by that organization. The emblem itself is a metal token depicting the orbit of planets in the Pact Worlds System, including a noticeable gap between Castrovel and Akiton. The emblem counts as a worn magic item unless you install it in armor, which takes up one upgrade slot. When you wear this emblem in an easily visible location, including as an armor upgrade, you receive a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks against those who uphold the philosophy of the Cycle or who hold the Cosmonastery of the Empty Orbit in high esteem. Additionally, up to twice per day, when you rest for 10 minutes and spend 1 Resolve Point to regain Stamina Points, you can meditate on this emblem to also regain $2d8+5$ Hit Points. Members of the Order of the Empty Orbit and their allies take these emblems seriously, and wearing one falsely is likely to have negative social consequences.

SPELL

The following spell originated with the Voidmind Monastery.

MIND OF THREE



School enchantment (mind-affecting)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range personal

Duration 1 hour/level

You split your mind, retaining your normal consciousness but gaining two other personas. These personas are nearly identical to your original personality, but each emphasize a different aspect of your personality. Your divided personas are aware of and can psychically communicate with one another, allowing them to coordinate their efforts and assist each other. At any point during the spell's duration, you can focus a persona on assisting with a task, granting you one of the following abilities. A persona granting one of these abilities doesn't take an action, but it causes that persona to merge with your normal consciousness, disappearing. When the two additional personas are reintegrated, the spell ends.

- When you fail a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect, you can compartmentalize it within one persona. If you do so, you are unaffected.
- When you fail an Intelligence-, Wisdom-, or Charisma-based skill check, you can reroll it.
- When you fail a caster level check, you can reroll it.

STARWALKER

+1 DEX

You have spent countless hours traveling where few creatures dare to go: the emptiness of space. You move with controlled elegance through the weightless vacuum, having long ago defeated the fear that grips others when they leave the safety of a starship. Perhaps you trained in the asteroid fields surrounding the House Unhindered, grew up on a station or ship without artificial gravity, or have logged so many hours on extravehicular activities that space suits are like a second skin to you. Others might see your maneuvers as daring or reckless, but you know the stars will always guide you to your destiny.

THEME KNOWLEDGE (1ST)

A lifetime of stargazing has made the constellations as familiar to you as your native tongue, and you know how to interpret the stars even when their appearance varies from one star system to another. Reduce the DC of Piloting checks to navigate or astrogate by 5, and you can perform these checks in 1 minute for star systems with which you are familiar. Acrobatics is a class skill for you, though if it is a class skill from the class you take at 1st level, you instead gain a +1 bonus to Acrobatics checks. In addition, you gain an ability adjustment of +1 to Dexterity at character creation.

SUITED FOR SURVIVAL (6TH)

You know every trick in the book for prolonging the limited resources that keep you alive, from deliberately slowing your metabolic rate and breathing to tweaking your spacesuit's systems to squeeze every bit of energy out of them. Double the time you can go without food and water, the time you can hold your breath, and the duration of environmental protections for armor you are wearing.

DARING DRIFTER (12TH)

Your training has imbued you with grace and precision when executing maneuvers in weightless environments. When in zero gravity, you move your full land speed when pushing off objects, and you can move along surfaces with handholds as if you had a climb speed equal to your land speed. You also gain a +2 insight bonus to Acrobatics or Athletics checks to avoid becoming off-kilter in zero-g.

SERENITY OF THE SPHERES (18TH)

Floating in the vastness of the void surrounded by myriad points of starlight fills you with deep calm and centers your mind. Up to twice per day while in zero-g, you can spend 10 minutes contemplating the cosmos to recover 1 Resolve Point. Doing so doesn't count as resting to regain Stamina Points.

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ALIEN ARCHIVES

"Emith, the captain sent me down here to find out why her trivid player was glitching... What are you doing? Hello? Can you hear me? What's wrong? Don't just stare, answer me!"

"Wha-what? Why are you shaking me, Yaxx? And why is this panel open?"

"You tell me, chief engineer. Looks like you were tampering with the life support systems."

"I don't remember doing any of this. Last I recall, I was in my quarters, and... Wait, did you see that? Over by the reactors..."

—Audio clip recorded from the engineering deck of the *Colossus*, found derelict in the Diaspora in 317 AG

ASHYPSOZOAN

CR
10XP
9,600

N Large aberration

Init +3; **Senses** blindsight (heat or vibration) 120 ft., sightless; **Perception** +19**DEFENSE** **HP** 165**EAC** 23; **KAC** 25**Fort** +12; **Ref** +12; **Will** +11**Defensive Abilities** amorphous, bioelectric growth, unflankable; **Immunities** cold, electricity, paralysis, polymorph, stunning**Weaknesses** fire**OFFENSE****Speed** 10 ft., burrow 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (Ex, average; functions in vacuum)**Melee** tentacle +22 (2d6+18 B & E plus bioelectric pull [DC 17])**Ranged** shock arc +19 (2d8+10 E; critical arc 2d6)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (15 ft. with tentacles)**STATISTICS**

Str +8; Dex +3; Con +5; Int -4; Wis +2; Cha +0

Skills Acrobatics +19, Stealth +24, Survival +19

Other Abilities compression**ECOLOGY****Environment** any (Ashypso)**Organization** solitary, pair, or bloom (3-6)**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Bioelectric Growth (Ex)** Whenever an ashypsozoan's electricity immunity prevents it from taking electricity damage from an attack, it regains 10 Hit Points.**Bioelectric Pull (Ex)** A creature that takes damage from an ashypsozoan's tentacle must succeed at a DC 17 Fortitude save or be staggered for 1 round. Additionally, if the ashypsozoan's attack roll successfully hits the target's KAC + 4, the ashypsozoan can perform a reposition combat maneuver on that target.**Shock Arc (Ex)** As a ranged attack, an ashypsozoan can fire an arc of bioelectricity with a 40-foot range increment, to a maximum range of 80 feet.

After nearly 500 years, the atmospheric glaciers on Ashypso (see page 62) are thawing, finally revealing the planet below. Its sapient inhabitants, trinirs (see page 61), have awoken from a long hibernation to discover an existence they have no memory of. However, they weren't the only secret buried under the kilometers of frozen atmosphere.

Ashypsozoans are massive medusozoans, akin to hydrozoans, made up of a colony of specialized organisms working in concert. These creatures individually encysted during Ashypso's great freeze. As the ice melts, these tiny organisms continue to emerge from their stasis and once again bond to form

large colonies. Each of these creatures is nearly mindless alone, but when they join together, they gain a predatory cunning.

Once awoken, an ashypsozoan is ravenous, burrowing through lattices of ice and flying through the thin atmosphere searching for viable prey. The colony feeds on anything it finds, from microorganisms to larger prey that can be taken down with the substantial amounts of bioelectricity an ashypsozoan creates. An ashypsozoan can absorb lighter artificial materials in addition to organic compounds, meaning artificial beings such as androids and trinirs aren't safe. Strong electromagnetic fields break down what the colony consumes, reducing it to essential components the ashypsozoan uses for nourishment and atmospheric buoyancy.

A typical ashypsozoan is 12 feet long, although its tentacles can extend much farther. Despite its size, much of the creature is filled with gas or space, so it weighs only about 200 pounds.

THE
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ARCHIVES

CODEX OF
WORLDS



DEMON, FLASHFIRE

CR
12

XP
19,200



CE Medium outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar)

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

Perception +22

DEFENSE

EAC 25; KAC 26

Fort +13; **Ref** +11; **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities void adaptation; **Immunities** acid, disease, fire, poison; **Resistances** cold 10, electricity 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee claw +22 (2d12+15 F & S; critical burn 3d4)

Offensive Abilities sabotaging compulsion (DC 21)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

HP 170

1/day—greater invisibility, logic bomb (DC 21), wall of fire

3/day—explosive blast (DC 22), mental block^{PW} (DC 22), nondetection, slow (DC 22)

At will—knock, security seal

STATISTICS

Str +3; Dex +3; Con +4; Int +5; Wis +4; Cha +8

Skills Computers +27, Engineering +27, Stealth +22

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Abyss)

Organization solitary, thrall team (1 plus 1-2 compelled creatures)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Sabotaging Compulsion (Su) Once per day as a full action, a flashfire demon can compel a creature to covertly commit sabotage. If the target fails a DC 21 Will saving throw, it begins enacting a plan dictated by the flashfire demon to cause maximum loss of sapient life with a minimum chance of detection. The compelled creature makes all efforts to avoid being discovered, including acting normally while being observed and eliminating evidence of its actions. It retains no memory of the sabotage it enacts or the demon. This effect lasts for 12 days. However, at the end of each day, as well as when the target undertakes any action that threatens its own safety, the target can attempt a new saving throw to end the effect. Once the effect ends, no flashfire demon can affect the creature with this ability for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting effect, but non-mindless undead are not immune to it.

Throughout the galaxy, constructed environments make life possible in even the most hazardous environments, but the failure of such infrastructure can result in ghastly tragedies. A flashfire demon embodies the threat and chaos of such sudden disasters.

Flashfire demons are master saboteurs, using the inherent dangers of malfunctioning systems to slaughter innocents. They prefer methods that result in abrupt, catastrophic failures that minimize the chance for survivors. Their name derives from their common tactic of sabotaging life support systems to increase oxygen in a closed atmosphere such that a spark causes an explosive fire. However, these demons are endlessly creative in their schemes. They experiment with new methods to freeze, asphyxiate, dissolve, electrocute, explode, or obliterate their victims.

Grand acts of sabotage are difficult tasks, and direct intervention could reveal a flashfire demon's involvement to their victims. Therefore, flashfire demons "recruit" help whenever possible using their sabotaging compulsion ability while they lurk in the nearby shadows.



STELEZORN

CR
7XP
3,200

CN Medium fey (shapechanger)

Init +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +14

DEFENSE

EAC 19; KAC 20

Fort +8; Ref +8; Will +10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +14 (1d8+11 B)

Ranged corona laser pistol +12 (2d4+7 F; critical burn 1d4)

Offensive Abilities siphon fury, unleashed brutality**STATISTICS**

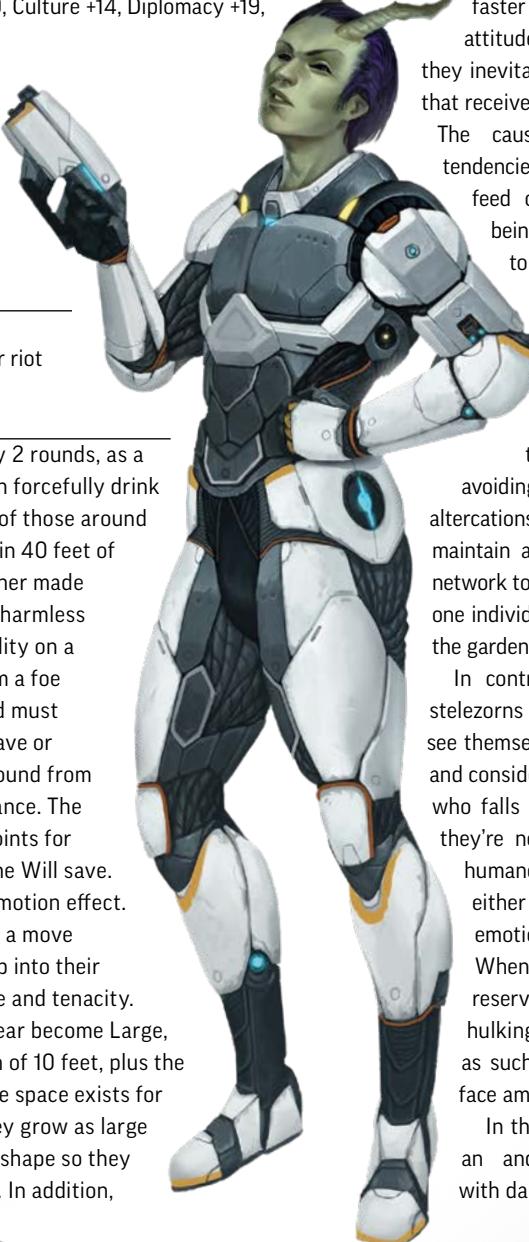
Str +4; Dex +2; Con +1; Int +0; Wis+0; Cha +5

Skills Athletics +14, Bluff +19, Culture +14, Diplomacy +19, Intimidate +19

Languages Common and up to seven others**Other Abilities** change shape (humanoid)**Gear** d-suit II, corona laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each)**ECOLOGY****Environment** any urban**Organization** solitary, pair, or riot (3-8)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Siphon Fury (Su) Once every 2 rounds, as a full action, a stelezorn can forcefully drink in the wrathful emotions of those around them. Each creature within 40 feet of the stelezorn that has either made an attack roll, cast a non-harmless spell, used a spell-like ability on a foe, or taken damage from a foe during the previous round must succeed at a DC 17 Will save or become staggered for 1 round from the sudden mental imbalance. The stelezorn regains 5 Hit Points for each creature that fails the Will save. This is a mind-affecting emotion effect.

Unleashed Brutality (Su) As a move action, a stelezorn can tap into their inner fury, growing in size and tenacity. The stelezorn and their gear become Large, gaining a space and reach of 10 feet, plus the ferocity ability. If too little space exists for the stelezorn to grow, they grow as large as they can, distorting in shape so they still have extended reach. In addition,



the stelezorn gains a +2 circumstance bonus to melee damage rolls, Strength checks, and Strength-based skill checks, and takes a -1 penalty to Armor Class. After 1 minute, the stelezorn reverts back to their original form and becomes fatigued for 1 minute. A stelezorn cannot use this ability while fatigued.

Stelezorns are fey creatures who make their homes in densely populated areas, integrating with local cultures and building personal connections. Appearing as a member of the local humanoid populace, these charismatic creatures have little difficulty making fast friends and even faster rivals with their quick wit and flippant attitudes. As consummate rabble-rousers, they inevitably cause trouble for the communities that receive them.

The cause for the stelezorn's aggravating tendencies lies within their unusual diet: they feed on the wrathful emotions of sapient beings. Stelezorns have a strong attunement to such emotions, absorbing the anger and frustration of nearby creatures in much the same way that plants gain nutrients from sunlight. They feed on nearby creatures, usually making passive-aggressive remarks that frustrate people around them while avoiding physical confrontation until such altercations become inevitable. Most stelezorns maintain a broad and carefully cultivated social network to keep their feeding from overtaxing any one individual, a process they refer to as "tending the garden."

In contrast to the creatures they provoke, stelezorns endeavor to maintain composure. They see themselves as masters of their own emotions and consider themselves to be better than anyone who falls prey to their manipulations. In truth, they're no less prone to outbursts than most humanoids. Their control places them in either stoic calm or frothing rage, but their emotions rarely see any middle ground. When threatened, a stelezorn can tap into reserves of siphoned wrath to grow into a hulking brute, but they do so only out of need, as such outbursts cause the creature to lose face among their own kind.

In their natural form, a stelezorn looks like an androgynous, green-skinned humanoid with dark hair and a pair of swept-back horns.

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STROXHA

CR
8

XP
4,800



N Large magical beast

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight (vision) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, sense through (vision) 30 ft.; **Perception** +21

DEFENSE **HP** 135

EAC 20; **KAC** 22

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

Defensive Abilities phase

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

Melee bite +20 (3d4+14 P) or claw +20 (3d4+14 S; critical bleed 2d4)

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

Offensive Abilities clawed pounce

STATISTICS

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

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

Languages Stroxha (can't speak other languages)

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm forests (Marata)

Organization solitary, pair, or guard (1-2 plus a maraquoi warband)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Clawed Pounce (Su) When a stroxha charges, it can also make a full attack using its claw and bite natural weapons.

Phase (Su) Stroxhas exist slightly out of phase with the Material Plane. A stroxha can pass through walls or material objects (but not corporeal creatures) as long as it starts and ends its turn outside of any wall or obstacle. In addition, a stroxha always benefits from a 20% miss chance against attacks and effects targeting it directly, and it takes only half damage from area effects. Force effects function normally against a stroxha.

Within the untamed depths of Marata's protected forests, stroxhas hunt as they have for ages. Apex predators of terrifying strength and agility, these beasts combine feline and reptilian traits in a robust quadrupedal form armed with long claws and crushing jaws. None of these are what make the stroxha truly dangerous, however. Their legendary ambush capabilities derive not from superior stealth or camouflage, but their capacity to sense and charge prey through solid objects.

A stroxha's eyes are highly advanced sensors capable of detecting a range of electromagnetic radiation from X-rays to microwaves. This sight, combined with phase-shifting abilities born of fey ancestry, allows a stroxha to spot a creature and close on it before the prey has a chance to spot danger.

Because each individual stroxha needs a vast hunting ground, stroxhas rarely congregate for any purpose other than breeding. Stroxhas bear few cubs, usually one or two, with the parents taking turns rearing the young so neither's territory becomes overhunted. Stroxha culture is based around an honor hierarchy, with displays of force and dominance determining who controls the choicest territory. Their language is a complex combination of hisses, growls, and body cues, and they are capable of comprehending other languages with sufficient exposure.

Maraquoi revere stroxhas as symbols of fierce cunning. The people of Marata were once among the beasts' prey, but the maraquoi have begun defending the increasingly rare predators. With extraplanetary interests applying more pressure for access to Marata's highly protected environmental resources, poachers have begun to hunt stroxhas, and over time, stroxhas came to recognize the protection the maraquoi have afforded them. An alliance now exists between the mighty predators and their erstwhile prey to protect their mutual home world.

A typical adult stroxha is 10 feet long and weighs 500 pounds.



SWARM DRAMOVIRE

CR
8XP
4,800

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., blindsense (vibration)30 ft.; **Perception** +16**DEFENSE****EAC** 20; **KAC** 22**Fort** +10; **Ref** +12; **Will** +9**Defensive Abilities** Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (Ex, average)**Melee** claw +20 (3d4+12 S plus grab) orproboscis +20 (1d10+12 A & P; critical nauseate^{AR} [DC 16])**Offensive Abilities** acidic grease (DC 16, 8 minutes), snagging protrusions (3d4 S)**STATISTICS****Str** +4; **Dex** +6; **Con** +2; **Int** -1; **Wis** +1; **Cha** -3**Skills** Acrobatics +16, Athletics +16, Stealth +21**Languages** Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary, pair, or pack (3-8)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Acidic Grease (Ex) As a standard action, a dramovire can cover a 10-foot square within 20 feet with a layer of acidic grease sprayed from its proboscis. Each creature in the area must succeed at a DC 16 Reflex save or fall prone. A creature can walk within or through the area of grease at half its normal speed with a successful DC 16 Acrobatics check to balance; failure means the creature can't move that round and must succeed at a DC 16 Reflex saving throw or fall prone, while failure by 5 or more means it automatically falls prone. A creature that doesn't move on its turn doesn't need to attempt the check. A creature that ends its turn within the area takes 4d6 acid damage, plus 4 additional acid damage at the end of its next turn. The pool of acidic grease lasts for a number of minutes equal to the dramovire's CR.

Snagging Protrusions (Ex) The limbs

of a dramovire are covered with small protrusions designed to make it easy to grasp its prey. A creature that successfully escapes from a dramovire's grapple takes 3d4 slashing damage.

Swarm Mind (Ex) Members of the Swarm are bound together into a singular hive mind by a blend of exuded pheromones, imperceptible movements of antennae and

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

Swarm dramovires are tall and lanky assassins that kill by injecting acidic fluids from their proboscises directly into their victims' bodies. Their large claws are covered with spiky, hair-like protrusions designed to help them grasp prey.

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SWARM MOLITERA

CR
6XP
2,400

CE Large monstrous humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +13

DEFENSE**EAC** 18; **KAC** 20**Fort** +8; **Ref** +10; **Will** +7

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

OFFENSE**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., climb 30 ft.**Melee** digging arm +17 (1d8+11 B & P; critical knockdown)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Offensive Abilities** shattering rumble (4d6 So, DC 14)**HP** 91**STATISTICS**

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

Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +18 (+26 to climb), Stealth +13

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities stone tunneler

ECOLOGY

Environment any

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

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Shattering Rumble (Ex) As a standard action, a Swarm molitera can focus its vibrational emanations into a painful 30-foot cone. Each creature in the cone takes 4d6 sonic damage (Fortitude DC 14 half).

Stone Tunneler (Ex) A Swarm molitera can burrow through solid rock as easily as dirt and can leave behind a 10-foot-wide, 10-foot-tall tunnel if it chooses.

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



Though the Swarm use dredgers (Starfinder Adventure Path #19: Fate of the Fifth 59) to undermine certain defensive positions and to tunnel behind enemy lines, the small creatures can dig only through dirt and mud. When the Swarm needs to pierce solid stone—either to reach precious natural resources or to invade an underground fortification—it employs moliteras, large and sturdy components that look like living heavy industrial equipment. Moliteras have armored exoskeletons featuring dark blotches, four legs, and two shovel-like arms. These arms have pointed spikes along the edges that also make moliteras dangerous combatants. Using little-understood muscles and nerve endings, moliteras are constantly and subtly vibrating at frequencies that soften the rock they tunnel through, and they can focus these emanations in an offensive capacity when necessary. Survivors of Swarm attacks report sensing these vibrations moments before the moliteras break through nearby stone walls, with hordes of other Swarm creatures following behind them.

TRINIR

CR
4XP
1,200

Agender trinir technomancer

N Small humanoid (trinir)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;**Perception** +10**DEFENSE**

EAC 15; KAC 15

Fort +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +7

HP 47

Defensive Abilities resistance network; **Resistances** cold 5**OFFENSE**

Speed 20 ft.

Melee tactical baton +8 (1d4+4 B)**Ranged** thunderstrike sonic pistol +6 (1d8+4 So; critical deafen [DC 15])**Technomancer Spells Known** (CL 4th; melee +8, ranged +7)

2nd (3/day)—inject nanobots (DC 17), microbot assault

1st (6/day)—life bubble, magic missile, supercharge weapon

0 (at will)—energy ray, telepathic message

STATISTICS

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

Skills Computers +15, Engineering +15, Mysticism +10

Languages Trinir; comm unit 30 ft.

Other Abilities constructed, magic hacks (countertech), spell cache (integrated comm unit)**Gear** trinir suit (functions as defrex hide), tactical baton, thunderstrike sonic pistol with 1 battery (20 charges)**ECOLOGY****Environment** any (Ashypso)**Organization** solitary, pair, or pilgrimage (3-10)**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Comm Unit (Ex)** A trinir can communicate as if it had a

built-in comm unit that functions on a planetary scale. This ability also works like telepathy with a range of 30 feet, but only with other creatures that have this ability, androids, and constructs that have the technological subtype.

Resistance Network (Ex) As a standard action, a

trinir can share one of their resistances with adjacent creatures of their choice. This shared resistance lasts up to 8 hours, but it ends immediately if an affected creature ceases to be adjacent to the trinir or the trinir falls unconscious.

Trinirs are natives of the usually frozen Ashypso (see page 62). These small, android-like beaked humanoids lack a history, as they awakened in hibernation chambers only recently as their planet thawed. Thanks to the Gap (and possibly other unknown factors), trinirs have found little to indicate who they are or how they came to be. Some believe ruins of their ancient civilization might be found somewhere within the ice.

RACIAL TRAITS**Ability Adjustments:** +2 Con, +2 Int, -2 Cha**Hit Points:** 4**Size and Type:** Trinirs are Small humanoids with the trinir subtype.**Biotech Organism:** For effects targeting creatures by type, trinirs count as both humanoids and constructs (whichever effect is worse). In addition, trinirs do not breathe or suffer the normal environmental effects of being in a vacuum.**Cold Resistance:** Trinirs have cold resistance 5.**Comm Unit:** See the stat block.**Exceptional Vision:** Trinirs have low-light vision and darkvision with a range of 60 feet.**Slow and Steady:** Trinirs have a land speed of 20 feet, which is never modified when they are encumbered or wearing heavy armor.**Resistance Network:** See the stat block.THE
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ASHYPSO

Planet of the Unremembered

Diameter: $\times 3/5$; **Mass:** $\times 1/6$

Gravity: $\times 1/3$

Location: The Vast

Atmosphere: None or thin

Day: 15 days; **Year:** 553 Years

Ashypso is a mystery, even for its inhabitants. The farthest planet out in the Suskillon system, Ashypso has an oblong orbit, so its distance from the star it revolves around varies to a huge degree. When farther from the star, Ashypso freezes solid—its atmosphere included, and atmospheric gases that don't freeze are trapped in the ice formations of those that do.

For most of its 553-year orbit, Ashypso has remained a dead world. Few living creatures could endure the void-enclosed wastes on the frozen surface of the atmosphere, and no

expeditions have visited the planet long enough to penetrate this outer layer and discover what secrets lie underneath.

Ashypso has fascinated inhabitants of the Suskillon system ever since the Gap, which caused most data on Ashypso to be lost. Only the planet's presence was evident, but no person or record recalled the world's inhabitants or contents. Nobody could remember if Ashypso held anything of note, but everyone had the vague feeling that something lingered under the ice. Storytellers dreamed of an Ashypso that had a civilization not unlike that of Triaxus, adapted to wide variations in climate due to the planet's orbit. Dark-minded prophets promised that when Ashypso melted, doom would follow.

As Ashypso finally made its way closer to its star, in the same year that the Swarm invaded the Suskillon system, its long thaw began. Its atmosphere slowly returned to a gaseous state, and bizarre settlements emerged from under the retreating ice. Within these enclaves were chambers full of inactive creatures that awakened as air moved over them once again.

These hibernating people of Ashypso—a species of bird-headed, partially mechanized humanoids calling themselves trinirs (see page 61)—awoke to numerous mysteries. For them, the Gap ended as they woke. They found themselves in an unfamiliar galaxy with dreams of spaceflight but no memory of their past. Nothing that remains on Ashypso gave them context; they had no records, no memories, and few indications of their history. The hibernation chambers are little more than technological caves emerging from glacial cliffs. Like so many cultures at the end of the Gap, Ashypso's society fell into chaos. Survival on such a world is always difficult, and doing so in the long term requires the work of a unified people—but Ashypso's new civilization has found little unity.

The awakened trinirs divided into two groups. Less numerous are the Historians, who believe that Ashypso once had a glorious and harmonious culture, surviving on Ashypso's summertime bounties. These trinirs formed delving societies, looking toward Ashypso's depths for evidence of their ancient ways. More abundant are the Children of Triune, who believe the Historians to be delusional. The Children insist no trinirs existed before the most recent thaw, and so no great trinir civilization ever existed. The trinirs are instead, the Children claim, new among Triune's creations, much like Drift technology. The All-Code shaped them from the ice of Ashypso to explore and populate the galaxy. They believe that Ashypso is a womb the trinirs must leave behind. To this end, the Children of Triune walk the void by mystical means and build machines they see in dreams, aiming to travel the wider system and abandon their home world for distant stars.



NEXT MONTH

HIVE OF MINDS

By Thurston Hillman

Within a psychic projection of the Swarm's hive mind, the heroes must survive a hostile and alien landscape and discover how to empower a divine artifact. However, this mindscape fights back at every possible turn, eventually manifesting the embodiment of the Swarm's interconnected minds!

MINDSCAPES

By Thurston Hillman

Mental landscapes that exist temporarily on the Astral Plane, mindscapes exist in countless forms and for a variety of reasons. Learn how to master these strange domains, where the only limit is the power of imagination!

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THE FOREVER RELIQUARY
PART 1: THE MISSING COMET

PART 2: SEARCH FOR THE HIDDEN MONASTERY

PART 3: THE TRIALS OF HYLAX

PART 4: INVASION

THE CHURCH OF HYLAX

MONASTERIES OF THE GALAXY

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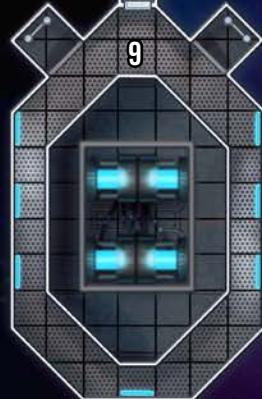
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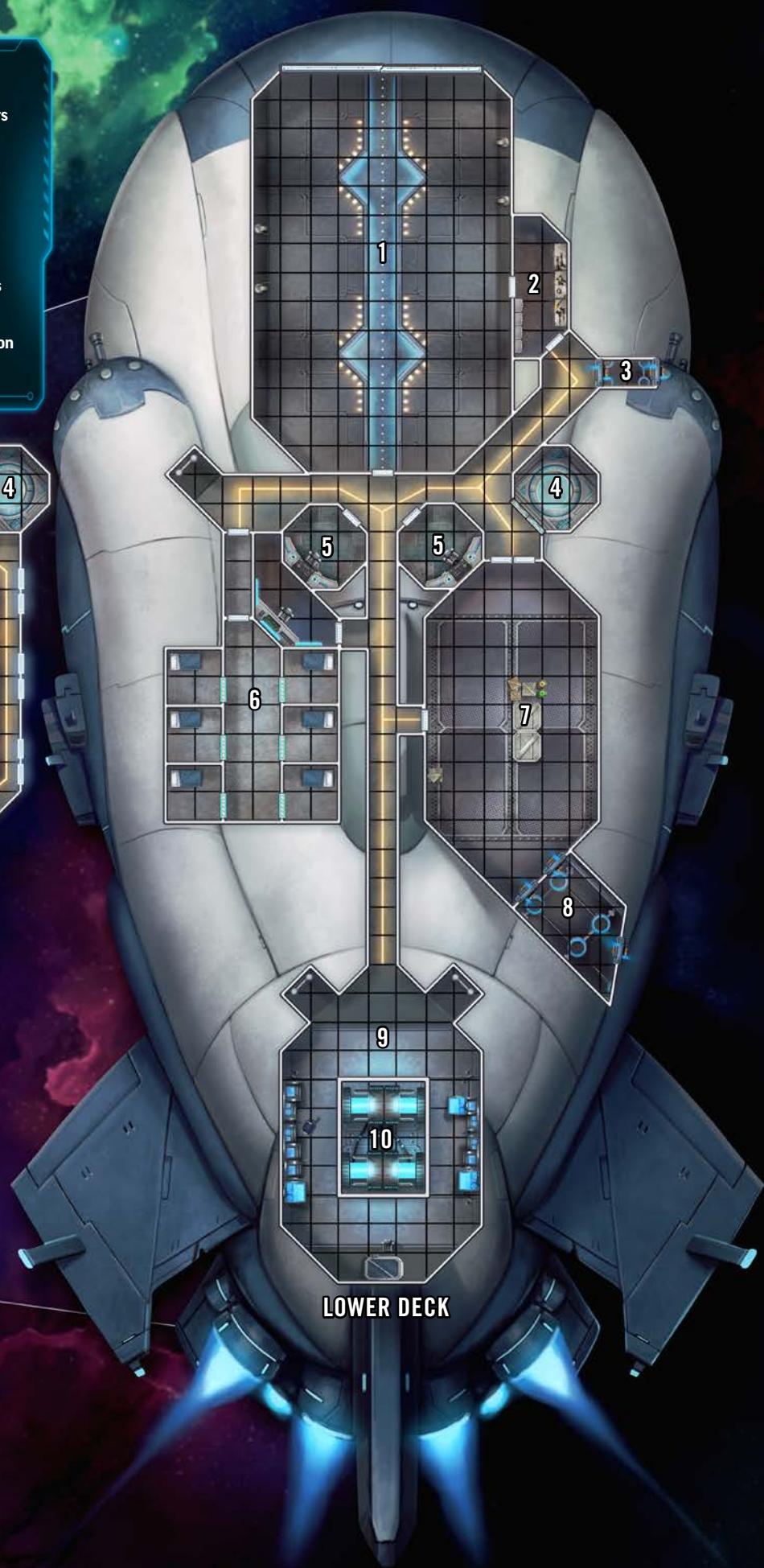
SDF RAMPART

MAP KEY

- 1. Launch tube
- 2. Armory
- 3. Crew airlock
- 4. Hover lift
- 5. Gunner's station
- 6. Brig
- 7. Cargo hold
- 8. Cargo airlock
- 9. Engineering
- 10. Power core
- 11. Washroom
- 12. Crew quarters
- 13. Galley
- 14. Captain's quarters
- 15. Bridge
- a. Captain's chair
- b. Pilot's station
- c. Head gunner's station
- d. Science officer's station
- e. Engineer's station
- 16. War room



UPPER DECK



LOWER DECK



FORWARD

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



COMET AND GET IT

The heroes must hunt for an icy comet hurtling through the void, the supposed home of a secret monastery dedicated to the insect goddess Hylax. Once there, they'll have to gain the trust of the inhabitants by undertaking a series of trials. If they succeed, they will be granted access to a powerful artifact that will aid in the battle against the ravenous, nigh-unstoppable Swarm. But before the monks can entrust the item to the PCs, the comet is besieged by waves of Swarm creatures eager to get the artifact for themselves!

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