

STARFINDER®



AGAINST THE
AEON THRONE

THE RUNE DRIVE GAMBIT

BY LARRY WILHELM



VANGUARD REGNANT

TIER 5

Small light freighter

Speed 10; **Maneuverability** good (turn 1); **Drift** 2

AC 20; **TL** 19

HP 50; **DT** —; **CT** 10

Shields light 80 (forward 20, port 20, starboard 20, aft 20)

Attack (Forward) linked coilguns (8d4)

Attack (Port) gyrolaser (1d8)

Attack (Starboard) gyrolaser (1d8)

Attack (Turret) light plasma cannon (2d12)

Power Core Pulse Green (150 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Booster; **Systems** biometric locks, advanced long-range sensors, autodestruct system*, crew quarters (luxurious), mk 1 duonode computer, mk 3 defenses, mk 4 armor; **Expansion Bays** imperial shrine*, recreation suite (HAC)

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

CREW

Captain Diplomacy +14 (5 ranks), gunnery +9, Intimidate +14 (5 ranks)

Engineer Engineering +10 (5 ranks)

Gunners (2) gunnery +8

Pilot Piloting +12 (5 ranks)

Science Officer Computers +10 (5 ranks)

* See "Ships of the Star Empire" in *Starfinder Adventure Path #7: The Reach of Empire*.

Azlantian Star Empire manufacturer Vanguard Customworks is renowned for its specialized starships, including a number of luxury vessels. Much like for the Vanguard Star Palace, the commitment to comfort in the Regnant's design makes travel on the vessel a joyous experience. Rather than house several noble families at once, the Regnant serves one master, and it does so with unabashed opulence. The owner—who usually functions as the captain—has her own suite, typically an entire deck that houses a lavish apartment, private bath, lounge, and office space. Near this master area is an imperial shrine where the owner can pay homage to her Azlantian ancestors.

While lavishness defines the owner's suite, the rest of the ship is also splendidly furnished, and even its crew quarters approximate the chambers of royalty. The Vanguard Regnant has a modular layout that can hold the most extravagant entertainment and relaxation suites. Some models are fitted with upgraded armor and shields, with several armament options, allowing them to carry high-ranking Azlantian officers into war with style. Like all Azlantian Star Empire vessels, the Regnant is equipped with an autodestruct system, ensuring its high-value occupants won't be taken hostage by enemy forces.

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ON THE COVER



Illustrated on the cover by Anna Christenson, the imposing Azlanti noble Sardat Zolan Ulivestra is clearly upset about how much the heroes are disrupting his plans for the ancient *rune drive*.



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INSIDE COVERS

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THE RUNE DRIVE GAMBIT

PART 1: WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE 3

Back on Outpost Zed, the PCs upgrade their starship and learn about the existence of a secret asteroid laboratory. However, a draelik mystic betrays the PCs to Sardat Zolan Ulivestra for profit.

PART 2: INSIDE ENEMY TERRITORY 13

The PCs travel to Aurelos Station, a research facility that currently houses the *runedrive*. The PCs must secure the asteroid's surface and delve into a research facility teeming with Azlanti guards.

PART 3: SCIENTIFIC THEORIES 20

Having secured the research facility's upper levels, the PCs scour the station for the fabled *runedrive*. However, a dangerous Aeon Guard specialist plays a deadly game of cat and mouse with the PCs as they race to obtain their prize before facing the wrath of Sardat Zolan Ulivestra himself!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Rune Drive Gambit" is designed for four characters.

- 5 The PCs begin this adventure at 5th level.
- 6 The PCs should reach 6th level while exploring the upper level of Aurelos.
- 7 The PCs should be 7th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In many ways, Zolan Ulivestra is the perfect citizen of the Azlanti Star Empire. The ambition fostered within him by his noble parents is tempered by his fierce loyalty to the Aeon Throne, the very seat of power within the Azlanti empire. With every act, he seeks to both increase his own standing and bring glory to the Star Empire.

Growing up, he was enrolled in the best schools money could afford and given every opportunity to succeed. He graduated at the top of his class, after which he enlisted with the Imperial Fleet at his mother's behest, quickly rising up the ranks of the Imperial Vanguard Scout Corps (IVSC), a specialized branch of the military responsible for reconnaissance, exploration, and forward military operations. At the same time, he was given his hereditary title of sardat and control over the prison moon of Gulta. Even with all of this, Zolan continued to seek ways to gain power and wealth.

Four years ago, Zolan came upon records of the Azlanti Star Empire's earliest attempts to achieve interstellar travel prior to the discovery of the Drift. He became obsessed with these histories, in particular that of the *Royal Venture*, a ship commanded by an Azlanti parept (a noble equivalent to a prince) named Ameondria. This vessel was outfitted with a technomagical engine referred to as a *rune drive*, powered by a rare and unique *aeon stone* harvested from the Aeon Throne. Fixated with recovering this lost starship, Zolan used IVSC resources to launch several probes tracing the flight paths of these ancient star voyages. In the meantime, the sardat purchased an asteroid in the same system as the prison moon of Gulta, built a scientific research facility on and within it, and began staffing the laboratories with scientists capable of reverse-engineering any relics he might discover. When a probe accidentally crashed on a planet from which the magical signature of a powerful *aeon stone* could be detected, Zolan was certain he had located his target. He then commanded loyal troops to travel there. Little did he realize that the world was already occupied by colonists from the Pact Worlds. Ironically, Zolan's probe falling from the sky led these colonists to the *Royal Venture*'s centuries-old crash site and the *rune drive* within the ship. If Zolan had never searched for the artifact, it might have never been found by someone else.

Zolan understood that recovering any vestiges of these early interstellar voyages—especially the *Royal Venture*'s *rune drive* and its *aeon stone*—would earn favorable attention from the Aeon Throne. To make the most of his discoveries, he also took several risks. Hoping to increase his station within the Star Empire but keenly aware of the competitive nature of Azlanti nobility, Zolan hid this discovery from his superiors and peers. He overstepped the usual bureaucracy

of the Star Empire by sending forces to the Pact Worlds colony of Nakondis—a military act that far exceeded his command as a sardat. He took a captive from that world and has kept her secretly incarcerated on his prison moon. Zolan now has his scientists desperately researching the *rune drive* on the asteroid Aurelos, hoping to unlock the device's secrets before his unsanctioned efforts are discovered.

PART 1: WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

The PCs have returned to Outpost Zed after rescuing their friend Cedona from the prison moon of Gulta. A converted mining platform, Outpost Zed is an independent space station near the edge of Azlanti-controlled space and home to a wide variety of outcasts, scoundrels, and smugglers. As the PCs and Cedona await the final installation of upgrades that will bring their starship to tier 5 in the quarters their ally the wrikreechee Hasshachir has provided for them, they can discuss what the android knows about the fabled *rune drive*. Cedona says the following.

"Friends, I can't thank you enough for what you did for me. Flying all the way into Azlanti space, breaking in to a highly secured prison moon, and gods know what else just to rescue this old shell. I am humbled. But our tasks are not complete." She brushes a strand of hair from her eyes.

"Surely by now, you have learned of the existence of an artifact called the *rune drive*. I had a chance to examine the device up close for a short time, and I was able to sense only an inkling of its power. Should the Azlanti Star Empire gain full control over this technology and learn how to travel vast interstellar distances without the use of Drift engines, then all systems everywhere will fall under their shadow. We must do whatever it takes to retrieve or destroy the *rune drive*. Are you with me?"

Unfortunately, the android mystic has suffered some memory loss due to her harsh treatment by the Azlanti. She recalls that she was brought from Nakondis to Gulta, taken to a site she heard called "Aurelos" (though she doesn't know where that is), and then returned to Gulta sometime later. She remembers that Zolan Ulivestra tortured and interrogated her to determine what she had discovered in her studies of the *rune drive*; she believes the apparatus is being kept at this unknown site.

Cedona is pleased to hear that the Stewards have deputized her friends, but she asks them for a few days to recover while she meditates on her experiences, hoping a little peace and quiet will jog her memory. She suggests the PCs ask about Aurelos around Outpost Zed, but sadly none of their contacts know any information about the sardat's secret base.

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CODEx OF
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REAWAKENING CEDONA'S MEMORY

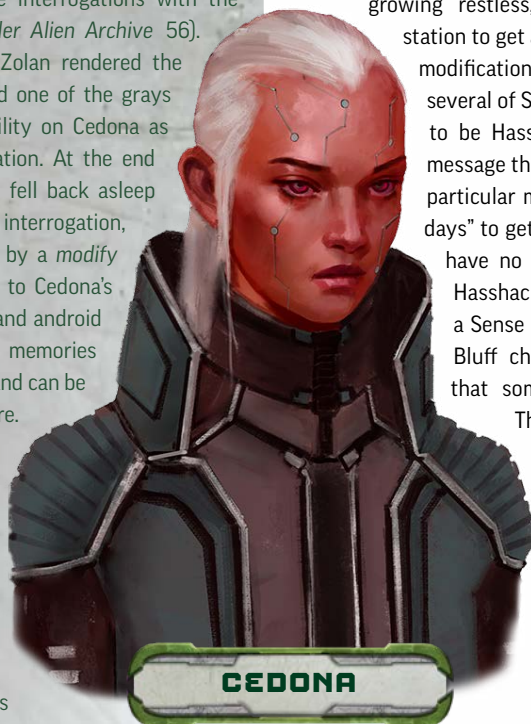
While Zolan questioned Cedona at Aurelos Station, the sardat obfuscated these interrogations with the help of two grays (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 56). During each short session, Zolan rendered the android unconscious and had one of the grays use their sleep paralysis ability on Cedona as they probed her for information. At the end of each session, the android fell back asleep and lost all memory of the interrogation, as if it had been eliminated by a *modify memory* spell. However, due to Cedona's training, mystic connection, and android physiology, some of these memories remain dormant in her mind and can be unlocked during the adventure.

These memories resurface under certain conditions, marked in each location (listed below) with the Trigger heading. For each memory restored, Cedona gains 5 temporary Hit Points during the fight with Zolan Ulivestra in **Event 7**, as she sets her mind on stopping the cruel Azlanti sardat.

- Zolan's image at the Third Eye Salvage (area **B6**)
- The android Sanidrone-12 (area **D2**)
- The *rune drive* (area **D8**)
- The gray vivisectionists (area **E1**)

As the process of her brain partially rebooting itself manifests as convulsions and unconsciousness, it can be traumatic for PCs who care about Cedona to witness. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Medicine check determines that the android is in no immediate danger as long as she is allowed to awaken on her own.

Luckily, the PCs aren't completely without leads for too long. An opportunistic draelik named Skraelin is aware of the PCs' recent exploits (they are a hot topic of gossip around Outpost Zed) and has contacted Zolan Ulivestra to offer him their heads. The Azlanti promised Skraelin a handsome stash of credits to ensure the pesky PCs are dealt with while he makes the voyage back to Aurelos Station. To this end, Skraelin hired the reptoid operative Grasilex to spend 1 week studying Hasshachir and then capture the unfortunate wrikreechee when Grasilex was ready assume his identity.



CEDONA

It takes 1d4 days to install a single upgrade in a starship and around 5 hours to repair a single Hull Point of damage. Even if the PCs insist on helping Hasshachir with the work, getting materials on Outpost Zed can sometimes take a while. After a week of waiting around, as the PCs are likely growing restless, Hasshachir heads out into the station to get a part he needs to complete the final modification, whereupon he is kidnapped by several of Skraelin's goons. Grasilex (pretending to be Hasshachir) sends the PCs a text-only message that he has been having trouble with a particular merchant and will need "a few more days" to get the needed part. Hopefully the PCs have no reason to mistrust messages from Hasshachir, but if they do, they can attempt a Sense Motive check opposed by Grasilex's Bluff check (see page 10) to get a sense that something is off with the message.

The reptoid then puts his plans into motion (see Events within the Spacedock on page 7).

Cedona accompanies the PCs when they travel to Aurelos in Part 2 of this adventure, fighting alongside them and employing her mystic spells to aid her allies. Her statistics are presented below, in case you need them before then.

Even though she is an experienced former Stewards agent, Cedona follows the PCs' lead in all manners during this adventure, allowing a new generation to gain the glory and satisfaction of a well-executed mission. You can run her as a standard NPC, or you can give this stat block to one of your players to make Cedona's round-by-round decisions when combat begins. Alternatively, Cedona makes a great character for a guest player to play for a few sessions, though you might want to build her as a standard 5th-level PC at that point. If she remains an NPC, Cedona doesn't level up when the PCs do, unless you need her to.

CEDONA

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female android mystic

NG Medium humanoid (android)

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

Perception +11

DEFENSE

HP 60 RP 4

EAC 16; **KAC** 17

Fort +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +8; +2 vs. diseases, mind-affecting effects, poison, and sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

Melee tactical baton +8 (1d4+6 B)

Ranged corona laser pistol +10 (2d4+5 F; critical burn 1d4)

Mystic Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

At will—*mindlink*

Mystic Spells Known (CL 5th; ranged +10)

2nd (3/day)—*augury*, *mystic cure*

1st (6/day)—*identify*, *lesser remove condition*, *mind thrust* (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 15), *telekinetic projectile*

Connection Akashic

TACTICS

During Combat Cedona prefers ranged combat, firing her laser pistol from cover if possible. If several low-level creatures threaten her allies, she casts *daze* on them, but she favors *mind thrust* against stronger opponents. If she witnesses an ally take a severe wound, she is quick to cast *mystic cure*, forgoing any offensive action.

Morale Cedona fights steadfastly with the PCs, risking her own life if it means saving an ally. However, if she is alone and outnumbered, she flees to look for help at the first opportune moment.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Computers +11, Culture +17, Engineering +11,

Mysticism +17, Profession (law-enforcement officer) +12

Languages Akitonian, Castrovelian, Common, Kasatha, Shirren, Vesk

Other Abilities access Akashic Record, constructed, flat affect, upgrade slot (jet pack)

Gear basic lashunta tempweave (backup generator), corona laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), tactical baton, *mk 2 serums of healing* (2)

A. HASSHACHIR'S SPACEDOCK

One of several single-starship spacedocks that ring the remote Outpost Zed, this area is a converted maintenance workshop that was used to fix mining equipment when the Azlanti owned the station. After the Star Empire abandoned the platform, traders and smugglers removed a section of the hull to allow for easier access to starships docked here, instead securing the opening with a force field, and added facilities in which customers could stay while they awaited repairs and upgrades. Hasshachir bought the spacedock a few years ago when he relocated to Outpost Zed. He has installed several rejuvenation pods, turning his waiting room into a kind of spa and hotel. The PCs have likely already used these facilities in "Escape from the Prison Moon," but with the added threat of Grasilex, the details of the spacedock have become important. The real Hasshachir is being held captive at the Third-Eye Salvage, a scrapyard found elsewhere on Outpost Zed.

The area within the space station consists of a control center, a small kitchen, a private "relaxation suite" containing several rejuvenation pods, and a repair bay for fixing systems that can be wholly removed from starships. Unless otherwise stated, the ceilings are 8 feet high, the doors are composed of

plastic (hardness 8, HP 30, break DC 22), lighting is typical manufactured lighting that provides normal light, and due to the area's proximity to open space, the structure's walls are similar to starship bulkheads (hardness 55, HP 2,400 per 10-foot-by-10-foot area, break DC 55, Climb DC 25). The interior parts of the spacedock have standard gravity and a normal atmosphere, though the gravity in area **A6** can be adjusted. The PCs can't stay onboard their starship while upgrades are being installed, and the adventure assumes the PCs spend their nights in the area's rejuvenation pods during this time, as Hasshachir has granted the PCs use of his facilities free of charge. The PCs could choose to find other accommodations on the station, though they aren't much more comfortable than resting in the pods and cost 1 credit per person per night.

The map for this area appears on page 6.

A1. ENTRANCE ALCOVE

A stark entrance of simple gray polymer separates the kitchen, relaxation suite, and repair bay. Three doors (to the south, east and west) offer entry into the complex, while a steel door (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28) to the north exits out onto a public thoroughfare. Several cubbies adorn the alcove walls, in which the PCs can secure clothing, tools, and other personal effects.

A2. RELAXATION SUITE

A row of four glass-fronted pods rests along the western wall of this sterile room. Hanging over the pods are several robotic arms housing a smorgasbord of grooming and surgical tools tailored to meet the needs of myriad species. A computer workstation stands along the northeastern corner. What appears to be a wheeled couch can be pulled out of an alcove in the southeastern corner. A large door exits to the east.

These rejuvenation pods slide open with a touch of an exterior sensor pad, and each comfortably accommodates a Medium creature resting on an upholstered cushion. Anyone resting within a pod for a minimum of 6 hours awakes refreshed, completely groomed, and with the benefits of *detect affliction* and *remove lesser condition* (if needed). The results of the *detect affliction* spell are displayed on a digital readout on the front of the pod, but a creature still needs to succeed at the ability or skill check to identify the target's specific afflictions as noted in the spell, though the pod grants a +4 circumstance bonus to these checks. The pods also remove any waste from a creature's body, negating the need for a lavatory in the spacedock. Furthermore, each pod has a place to insert a credstick, and for 450 credits, a creature can receive an infusion of any common *serum of enhancement* (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 225). This process takes 6 hours

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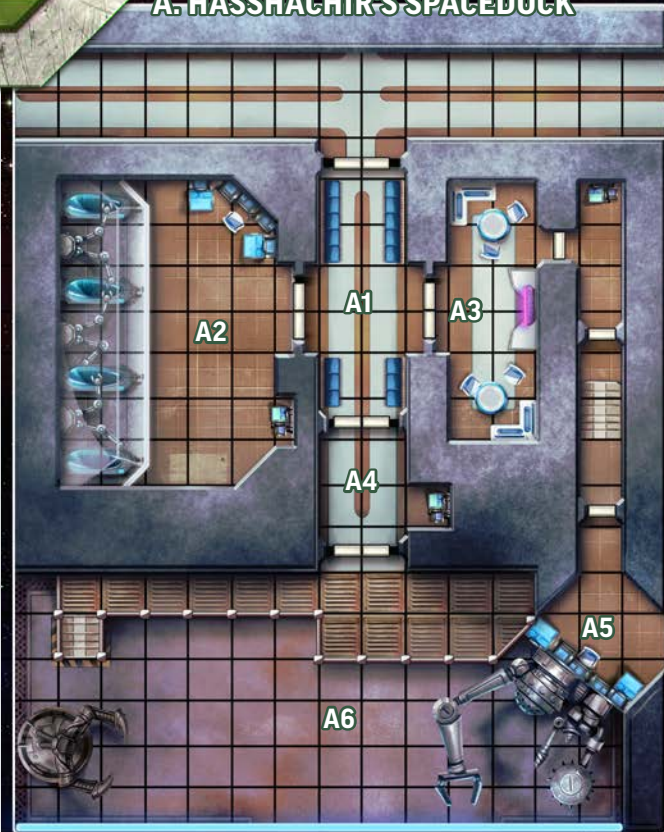
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A. HASSHACHIR'S SPACEDOCK



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

B. THIRD-EYE SALVAGE



and is completed while the PC sleeps within the pod. These serums remain dormant in the PC's body until the affected PC activates it as a standard action, at which point it lasts for 1 hour. Only one serum can be infused into a single creature per 24 hours, and if the serum has not yet been used after this period, it dissipates harmlessly into the creature's bloodstream.

When pulled out from its alcove, the couch can seat two Medium creatures or one Large creature, and it can serve as a bed for one Medium or Large creature.

The workstation here is fitted with a tier 2 computer that offers a wide variety of games and other types of entertainment (with the ability to project holovids into the center of the room), as well as access to Outpost Zed's small local infosphere. The information and entertainment presented on the computer is mostly foreign to Pact Worlds citizens and is entirely in the Azlanti language. Even the few holovids imported to the station from non-Star Empire merchants are dubbed in Azlanti. A PC can access these unsecured functions by succeeding at a DC 10 Computers check. A PC who succeeds at a DC 21 Computers check to hack into the system finds information on Hasshachir's business finances and lists of his customers.

Altogether, the relaxation suite functions as a medical lab (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 220).

A3. KITCHEN

Two comfortable booths offer a place to lounge and enjoy simple food and drink provided via a food synthesizer along the eastern wall. A large door leads out to the west, and a smaller plastic door exits to the east.

Hasshachir has programmed the synthesizer to make meals that are palatable to his new friends, unlike most of the other foodstuff available on the station. The eastern door leads to a hall that separates the kitchen from the control room (area A5).

A4. AIRLOCK

Two airlock doors (hardness 35, HP 160, break DC 40) separate the living areas from the repair bay. The control panel in the niche along the eastern wall is used to cycle the airlock, which is necessary only when the repair bay's force field is down and the room is open to space. A PC can open both doors simultaneously by succeeding at a DC 28 Engineering check, though this could cause rapid depressurization within the spacedock and nearby public thoroughfare; the station's automatic safety systems seal off this entire area if such an event occurs. Cycling the airlock takes 4 rounds.

A5. CONTROL ROOM (CR 3)

This booth overlooks a recessed bay through several transparent aluminum windows. A wide set of controls looks to be used to manipulate a series of articulated heavy-duty mechanisms within the bay. A steel door to the north can seal off this room from the rest of the suite.

The windows here have a hardness of 10, 15 Hit Points, and a break DC of 22. Hasshachir uses the mechanisms—a grasper, a saw blade, an arc welder, and so forth—to perform the large-scale parts of his job, and he can reach out of the repair bay to fix and refit any vessel attached to the spacedock. The panel here also controls the force field in area **A6**, which usually can't be deactivated if any living thing is in that area; a PC must succeed at a DC 30 Computers check to override this safety feature.

Trap: Grasilex, while disguised as Hasshachir, has installed a virus into this control panel. Once activated, this virus animates the articulated tools in the repair bay (see area **A6**) and electrifies the control panel. A PC can discover this virus before it is activated by succeeding at a DC 27 Computers check while examining the console, though they don't have much reason to do so (or even be in this room). The trap can't be detected until the virus has been activated (see **Event 1**).

JOLTING CONSOLE TRAP CR 3

XP 800

Type technological; **Perception** DC 24; **Disable** Engineering DC 19 (disable shock plates)

Trigger touch; **Reset** immediate; **Bypass** wireless key card reader (Computers DC 19 to hack)

Effect arc of electricity (6d6 E); Reflex DC 14 half

A6. REPAIR BAY (CR 3)

The view of space through this recessed repair bay's open southern wall is blocked only by a few starships docked outside. A ten-foot-high catwalk runs along the northern edge of the bay between a set of steep stairs at its western edge and an airlock door that exits to the north. A large power generator stands against the western wall and a control booth to the east, with a mass of robotic tools hanging under it, overlooks the area.

From the bay floor, the ceiling reaches a height of 18 feet. A force field along the southern wall keeps the vacuum of space at bay, and several magnetic clamps along the outside of the station can secure a docked ship in place within 100 feet of the repair-bay opening while workers bring individual starship components into the repair bay. Currently, the PCs' starship is docked at these clamps. The controls for the large mechanized tools are located in area **A5**. The power generator

can be attached to docked starship to provide it power when its own power core is being overhauled.

Creature: Once Grasilex activates his virus (see **Event 1**), the mechanized tools animate and assault anyone in the repair bay. The snapping metallic pincers are on an articulated, telescoping metal arm that can reach nearly any creature within area **A6** (even up on the catwalk).

ANIMATED MECHANIZED TOOLS CR 3

XP 800

N Huge construct (technological)

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

Perception +8

DEFENSE HP 40

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +0

Defensive Abilities hardness 10

OFFENSE

Speed 0 ft.

Melee pincers +12 (1d6+3 B plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 25 ft.

Offensive Abilities electrified saw blade (1d6+3 E & S; critical bleed 1d4)

TACTICS

During Combat The animated mechanized tools strike out at anyone within reach, attempting to grab targets with its pincers and then slice them in half with its saw blade.

Morale The animated mechanized tools fight until they are destroyed or shut down (see **Event 1**).

STATISTICS

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

Other Abilities mindless, unliving

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Electrified Saw Blade (Ex) As a full action, the animated mechanized tools can attempt a special combat maneuver against a creature it has grappled or pinned. If it succeeds at a melee attack roll against the target's KAC + 4, it maintains the grapple, moves that creature adjacent to it (this movement doesn't provoke any attacks of opportunity), and slices the target with an electrified saw blade, dealing 1d6+3 electricity and slashing damage. This saw blade has a critical hit effect of bleed 1d4.

EVENTS WITHIN THE SPACEDOCK

While the PCs spend time within Hasshachir's docking bay, three events unfold before they discover their friend has been abducted, taken to the Third-Eye Salvage Company, and replaced with a double. Each of these events includes a suggested time for the encounter to take place, but feel free to adjust the timing of these events as you see fit. Between these events, Grasilex tries to keep his contact with the PCs brief and usually over a comm unit, claiming that he is very busy with the PCs' vessel.

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EVENT 1: SABOTAGE! (CR 5)

This event occurs during the first night that Grasilex has taken Hasshachir's place. Earlier that day, he planted a minor explosive in the repair bay (area **A6**), timed to detonate several hours after the PCs have retired for the night. He then hides within the PCs' starship to wait for the opportunity to remotely trigger the virus in the control room (area **A5**).

The sound of a loud explosion echoes from the repair bay, briefly shaking the nearby walls. Fire alarms ping in all the chambers, and anyone currently within a rejuvenation pod is awoken and alerted to the disaster. A brief blackout casts the spacedock into darkness before dim emergency lights flicker along the floor and illuminate the rooms; this causes the force field in area **A6** to temporarily drop, putting out the fire in that area. Luckily, the airlock doors in area **A4** are always closed, so the atmosphere remains in the other rooms.

The computer in area **A2** alerts the PCs to what has occurred and that the atmosphere will return to the repair bay in a few moments. Grasilex doesn't respond to any PCs' attempts to hail Hasshachir on his comm unit, which he hopes will stoke their fears that something has happened to the wrikreechee and lure them into his deadly trap.

Able to monitor the repair bay from his vantage point on the PCs' vessel, Grasilex activates his virus as soon as the first PC enters the repair bay. This animates the tools in area **A6** and enables the trap in area **A5**; it also closes and locks the steel door (hardness 15, HP 60, Engineering DC 22 to open) leading out of area **A5** and triggers the airlock to cycle (even though it isn't necessary). Except for the first PC through the airlock door, any PC within 5 feet of the door when it closes can choose which side she wants to be on as it slam shuts. A PC at the control panel can decide which of the two airlock doors open at the end of the cycle 4 rounds later, and this time can be halved with a successful DC 22 Engineering check.

Even though they might get separated, the PCs are free to speak with one another using their comm units (provided they have them!), most likely letting each other know that the repair bay's mechanized tools have gone berserk. With a successful DC 10 Engineering check or DC 5 Intelligence check, a PC recalls that these devices are controlled from area **A5** (if she doesn't think of it herself). Once in the control room and after dealing with the trap there, a PC can completely shut down the tools with a successful DC 19 Computers or Engineering check (essentially defeating the creature).

Development: A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Perception check in area **A6** notices the scorch marks of an explosion on the floor near the power generator. A PC who then succeeds at a DC 22 Engineering or Physical Science check can determine from the positioning of the blast that it was likely no accident, but unfortunately, any debris was flushed

out into space. A few minutes after the PCs have shut down or destroyed the animated tools, Grasilex contacts the PCs as Hasshachir, claiming that he was doing some late-night work on their ship when he was knocked unconscious from the force of the explosion, but that he is fine now. He assures the PCs that their vessel took no damage and graciously accepts any apologies the PCs give for destroying his equipment, though he does note it will delay the repairs and upgrades even more. A suspicious PC can attempt a Sense Motive check opposed by Grasilex's Bluff check (see page 10) to get the sense that their "friend" might not be revealing everything.

EVENT 2: OUT OF AIR

This event occurs at least 1 day after **Event 1**. Grasilex uses the damage caused by the explosion as an excuse to draw out the repairs and upgrades of the PCs' starship, keeping them at the spacedock for as long as he possibly can. This event assumes at least one of the PCs sleeps in the rejuvenation pods. If more than one PC has bunked down in a pod, randomly determine which of them suffers the effects of this event. If none of the PCs use the pods, a wrikreechee friend of Hasshachir's named Sehessethitch stops by to use a pod while the PCs are gathered nearby during some downtime; use the stats for the wrikreechee on page 124 of *Starfinder Alien Archive* if necessary.

After the victim is comfortably within the rejuvenation pod for a bit, the breathable air within the pod siphons out. Suddenly, there is an audible pop and an accompanying pressure change that assaults the target's ears (awakening a character within if they had drifted off to sleep). Unless the target has an independent source of breathable air (such as by sleeping in armor) or doesn't need to breathe (if the character is an android, for example), he must hold his breath; once he can no longer do so, he begins to suffocate (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 404). Any attempt to open the pod via its usual sensor fails. The target can pound on the inside of the pod, which can be heard by anyone within areas **A1**, **A2**, or **A3** (no check required). However, each round of doing so reduces the remaining duration that the character can hold his breath by 1 round (as if he had taken a standard or full action). Luckily, there are several ways a target can escape or be freed.

Breaking the Glass: The pod's window is made of transparent aluminum (hardness 10, HP 15, break DC 22), and a PC trapped within the pod can attempt to shatter it with force (as can characters outside the pod). If the window is shattered, the victim within the pod takes 2d6 piercing damage (Reflex DC 11 half) from the shards of transparent aluminum raining down.

Disable the Locking Mechanism: A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Engineering check can disable the malfunctioning mechanism that is keeping the pod sealed shut. Each attempt at this check takes 2d4 rounds.

Finding the Emergency Escape Latch: The trapped victim can discover an emergency latch located by his feet with a successful DC 30 Perception check. This latch is a safety measure usually used in the rare event the pod's occupant experiences claustrophobia. With a pull, this simple lever opens the pod. A PC gains a cumulative +5 circumstance bonus to discover the latch for every 10 rounds he remains trapped.

Prying the Pod Open: A PC outside of the pods can force a pod open with a successful DC 20 Strength check. Using a makeshift lever (such as a weapon like a knife or longsword) grants a +2 circumstance bonus to this check. Alternately, a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Computers check can hack into one of the other pods and have one of the room's robotic arms attempt the Strength check; the robotic arm has a Strength modifier of +8 for the purpose of prying open the pod.

Development: A PCs inspecting the pod for clues about its malfunction discovers a burned-out module hastily attached to the pod's wiring that overloaded its locking mechanism and pumped all the air out of the pod. The module is untraceable, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Perception check or a DC 22 Physical Science check notices a few odd flakes of rust on the module. Grasilex (as Hasshachir) is again nowhere to be found after this incident, which might either worry PCs or make them suspicious. They will soon get answers in **Event 3**.

Story Award: If the PCs survive the tampering of the rejuvenation pod (or rescue a trapped NPC), award them 800 XP.

EVENT 3: GRASILEX STRIKES (CR 5)

This event occurs shortly after **Event 2**. If the PCs seem very anxious about Hasshachir's whereabouts and want to question him right away, Grasilex enters the spacedock ready to enact the final part of his plan. Otherwise, he arrives the following morning.

Creature: Frustrated at his inability to deal with the PCs up until this point, the reptoid operative Grasilex makes a final attempt to dispense with them. Arriving at the spacedock disguised as Hasshachir to check on the PCs, the reptoid feigns concern over their accounts of the latest accident and promises to compensate them for their losses. He engages one of the PCs in conversation about the rejuvenation pods as he moves to fix them. He painfully details the pods' workings to the collective PCs, hoping some might grow bored and depart from the tedious conversation. Grasilex is patient and hopes that the PCs will separate of their own accord. Unless Grasilex feels the PCs are starting to grow suspicious of him, he does not tip his hand. Uncovering Grasilex's ruse requires a PC to succeed at a Perception check opposed by Grasilex's Disguise check. Grasilex receives a +10 racial bonus to this check as part of his change shape ability. Alternatively, the PCs can notice something odd in the disguised Grasilex's

behavior by succeeding at a Sense Motive check opposed by the reptoid's Bluff check. Once Grasilex is alone with a PC, the reptoid drops his ruse and attacks that PC.

GRASILEX

CR 5

XP 1,600

Male reptoid operative (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 92)

LE Medium humanoid (reptoid, shapeshifter)

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +17

DEFENSE

HP 45

EAC 16; **KAC** 17



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Fort +3; **Ref** +8; **Will** +7; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects and poisons

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee claw +10 (1d4+6 S plus grab)

Ranged thunderstrike sonic pistol +12 (1d8+5 So; critical deafen [DC 15])

Offensive Abilities debilitating trick, deft claws, trick attack +3d8

TACTICS

During Combat Grasilex favors melee combat, finding ecstasy in having his claws rip through the flesh of his victims. Grasilex focuses on one target, switching to another once he incapacitates them. He uses his trick attack as much as possible, employing his uncanny mobility to favorably position himself, and he applies the off-target penalty to a foe as part of his debilitating trick ability.

Morale Grasilex is a hired killer, but he is not senseless. If he feels severely outmatched or is reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points, he attempts to flee to Third-Eye Salvage to fight alongside Skraelin (area **B3**).

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +12, Bluff +17, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +17, Sleight of Hand +12

Languages Azlanti, Common, Draelik, Reptoid, Wrikreechee

Other Abilities change shape, operative exploits (master of disguise [1/day, 5 minutes or 50 minutes, DC 15], uncanny mobility), operative specialization (spy)

Gear d-suit I, thunderstrike sonic pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), *serum of enhancement (commando)*, datapad^{AR}, credstick (200 credits)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Deft Claws (Ex) Grasilex's claw attack has the grab ability (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 155) and the operative weapon special property.

Development: If the PCs defeat Grasilex and scour his datapad (a tier 1 computer that requires a successful DC 17 Computers check to hack), they find a recent transaction of credits from a company called Third-Eye Salvage paying him for "personal services." Alternatively, they can get this same information out of a captured Grasilex by succeeding at a DC 20 Intimidate check, or if they follow him to the location if he fled from combat.

B. THIRD-EYE SALVAGE

Third-Eye Salvage is a small scrapyard in the lower levels of Outpost Zed, where Azlanti miners of the old platform used to store unused equipment that couldn't safely be jettisoned out into space. Skraelin, the draelik mystic responsible for kidnapping Hasshachir, owns and operates the scrap heap,

taking the station's unwanted and "gently used" equipment and stripping them of usable parts, which she sells to the station's merchants and anyone else who can find the scrapyard. Skraelin adheres to the philosophy of Ataxxea, which values entropy above all else, and she believes her business embodies her faith's tenets of degradation of matter and energy.

Cedona doesn't accompany the PCs to Third-Eye Salvage. Instead, she volunteers to stay at the spacedock and watch over the PCs' starship in case their enemies attempt further sabotage.

The map for this area appears on page 6.

B1. FRONT DOOR

A partially burned-out neon sign hangs over a set of rusted metal doors depicting a trio of eyes looming over the Azlanti word for "Salvage" (with a couple of letters missing). These doors are closed but unlocked, and they lead to the storefront (area **B2**). A character who succeeds at a DC 22 Culture check recognizes the sign's ominous eyes as representative of an obscure philosophy practiced within the Kurzach Nebula, the home of the Shadari Confederacy and its draelik citizens.

A second, much larger set of thin steel doors (hardness 20, HP 40, break DC 24) sized for vehicles is secured with a simple lock (Engineering DC 20 to disable). These doors lead to a short corridor and a similar (though unlocked) set of doors, which open onto the scrapyard (area **B5**), where visitors dump their payloads of junk.

Each door into the establishment are fitted with a buzzing alarm (Perception DC 20 to notice before it activates) that alerts the employees when opened, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Engineering check can deactivate these devices. A small camera (hardness 5, HP 8) is hidden behind the neon sign and swivels rhythmically, watching over these doors. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check notices this camera before entering its viewing arc. A PC can avoid being spotted by timing her movement with the camera's rotation and a successful DC 15 Acrobatics or Stealth check. Any attempt to destroy or deactivate the camera (Engineering DC 18) causes the viewing screen in area **B2** to go black, immediately alerting the employees of the Third-Eye Salvage there to intruders. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Computers check while having access to the camera can hack into the feed to display a false image on the viewing screen.

B2. STOREFRONT (CR 5)

A cluttered shop holds all sorts of refurbished electronics; some on shelves and in bins, while others dangle from the ceiling. A curved counter adjacent to the entry offers a point of sale, and a set of stairs along the eastern wall leads to a walkway that exits the shop through a curtain of opaque strips of plastic.

The counter is covered in lengths of wire and all manner of gadgets. It provides partial cover to anyone behind it. A basic viewing screen hangs behind the counter and displays the feed from the security camera out front. Due to the amount of clutter in this room, treat this area as difficult terrain (except for the stairs). The stairs rise to a height of 8 feet, and the plastic curtain at the top covers an exit onto a metal bridge that leads to area **B3**. The ceilings here loft to a height of 16 feet.

Creatures: Three draelik employees of Third-Eye Salvage mill about here, on edge ever since Skraelin made her deal with Zolan Ulivestra. Two of the draeliks wait behind the counter, watching the viewing screen for trespassers, while the third sits atop the stairs, eyes fixed on the front door. Paranoid and jittery, the employees panic and attack the PCs when they enter this room, leaving no doubt of their guilt. Meanwhile, Skraelin, their boss and mystical teacher, is disassembling a pile of electronics in area **B3**. As soon as she hears the main door's buzzer or a fight break out, she prepares as noted in her stat block and comes to investigate, taking at least 3 rounds.

DRAELIKS (3) CR 2

XP 600 each

HP 21 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 36)

TACTICS

Before Combat If the draeliks spot the PCs on the viewing screen, they each cast *reflecting armor* and *wisp ally* if they have the time, choosing a dark purple for the color of their wisps.

During Combat During the first round, the draeliks activate their dark matter special abilities and direct each of their wisps against a different PC, choosing the benefits of harrying fire. They then move into melee with their *lesser shadowstaves*. Once any of the draeliks are fully attuned, they unleash their dark nova ability before reestablishing their dark matter ability on the following round. The draeliks try not to catch their allies in their dark novas if possible.

Morale Though jumpy, these indoctrinated draeliks have a fatalistic view of their own existence, and therefore they fight to the death.



Treasure: A locked safe (Engineering DC 25 to disable) behind the counter holds a couple of unmarked credsticks holding a total of 500 credits.

B3. WORKSHOP (CR 6)

A cramped but well-organized workshop sprawls throughout this irregularly shaped area. A set of stairs ascends to a plastic curtain that leads to a bridge to area **B2**. A rusted metal door to the north leads out to the scrapyard, and a similar door to the east leads to a small sleeping area.

Creature: Skraelin, the proprietor of this scrapyard and the mastermind behind the effort to assassinate the PCs, while her time away disassembling electrical devices to calm her nerves. Having too much invested in her business here on Outpost Zed, and fearing Zolan more than the PCs, Skraelin is content to make her final stand where she knows the terrain.

SKRAELIN CR 6

XP 2,400

Female draelik mystic (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 36)

NE Medium humanoid (draelik)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +13

DEFENSE **HP 75** **RP 4**

EAC 17; **KAC** 18

Fort +5; **Ref** +5;

Will +9; +2 vs.

necromancy effects

Defensive Abilities share pain

(DC 16); **Resistances** cold 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical maul +10 (1d8+6 B; critical knockdown)

Ranged frostbite-class zero pistol +12 (1d6+6 C; critical staggered [DC 16])

Offensive Abilities backlash (6 damage), sow doubt (3 rounds, DC 16)

Draelik Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; melee +10)

1/day—*wisp ally*

At will—*fatigue* (DC 16), *ghost sound* (DC 16)

Mystic Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

At will—*mindlink*

Mystic Spells Known (CL 6th; ranged +12)

2nd (3/day)—*daze monster* (DC 18), *inflict pain* (DC 18)

1st (6/day)—*command* (DC 17), *lesser confusion* (DC 17), *mind thrust* (DC 17)

0 (at will)—*psychokinetic hand*, *telekinetic projectile*

Connection mindbreaker

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TACTICS

Before Combat If Skraelin hears a skirmish at area **B2**, she casts *wisp ally* before going to assist her employees.

During Combat First, Skraelin targets the most aggressive PC with an *inflict pain* spell. Next, if any PC has shown spellcasting capability, she targets that individual with a second casting of *inflict pain*. She then harasses a ranged combatant with her *sow doubt* ability. She looks for opportune moments to finish off weakened PCs with *mind thrust*. If she exhausts her useful spells, or they prove ineffective, she fires her zero pistol. She spends 1 Resolve Point the first three times she is damaged in combat to trigger her *share pain* ability.

Morale Skraelin fights until reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points, at which point she immediately attempts to flee into the scrapyard (area **B5**) hoping the entropy slugs there buy her enough time to reach her hidden shelter (area **B6**). Once there, she uses the *mk 2 serum of healing* found there.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Bluff +13, Mysticism +18, Stealth +18 (+22 in dim light or darker conditions)

Languages Common, Draelik, Wrikreechee

Gear kasatha microcord II (mk 1 thermal capacitor), frostbite-class zero pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), tactical maul^{AR}, security chip to the manacles in area **B6**

Treasure: Once sorted, the tools in this area can be used as an armorcrafter engineering specialty tool kit.

B4. SLEEPING AREA

A pair of bunk beds along the eastern wall provides a comfortable resting place for four Medium creatures. Opposite each bed is a set of lockers that holds personal effects (spare clothes, boots, and toiletries). Skraelin's locker has a false back (DC 22 Perception check to discover) that hides a niche containing a black cube made of a dense substance that seems to absorb light. The cube is frigid to the touch, and any living creature that comes into contact with it experiences a psychic vision of what appears to be the heat death of the universe while a faint voice whispers, "At the end, there is nothing" (this is the passphrase for the computer in area **B6**). A PC who experiences the vision (or hears a description of the vision) can attempt a DC 20 Culture or Mysticism check to recognize the message as one of the aphorisms of the philosophy of Ataxxea, which maintains that resisting entropy is a fool's errand. Those who follow this pseudoreligion don't actively destroy things like the cultists of the Devourer, but they do little to reverse natural deterioration.

B5. SCRAPYARD (CR 6 AND CR 5)

Mountains of refuse are piled high against the twenty-foot-high walls of this vault-like chamber. Garbage, abandoned

electronics, and even rusted vehicles poke out from the refuse mounds like hapless souls mired in quicksand. At the yard's less cluttered center, several barrels and crates offer a place to toss useful treasures picked from the otherwise worthless rubbish heaps.

As long as the PCs don't wade through the rubbish, traversing the scrapyard is fairly easy. However, the squares covered in garbage are difficult terrain, and climbing to the top of any of the 18-foot-high piles requires a successful DC 10 Athletics check. The barrels and crates at the yard's center provide partial cover. A simple outhouse built from scavenged plastic doors leans against the workshop's wall to the southeast.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices several trails of slimy residue winding near and around the mounds of junk. These are the remnants of the entropy slugs' slime trails. If a PC succeeds at this check by 5 or more, she also notices a worn path leading from the workshop door to the scrap pile leaning against the northeastern section of the wall. The path ends near a large section of pitted sheet metal crafted to look like discarded scrap, but in actuality it is a hidden door leading to area **B6** that opens easily when its handle (disguised as a piece of old mining machinery) is pulled.

Creatures: Two strange beasts transported from Great Shadar, known as entropy slugs, call these scrap heaps home. Trained as guard animals by Skraelin, they are very protective of the territory. Whenever anyone enters the yard without an accompanying draelik, the giant slugs lumber out from their nest along the western wall and attack.

ENTROPY SLUGS (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

HP 50 each (see page 58)

TACTICS

During Combat The slugs fiercely attack any non-draeliks.

They assault PCs carrying batteries with the most charges, circling them if possible.

Morale The slugs fight until reduced to fewer than 5 Hit Points, at which point they attempt to flee to their nest and cower there.

Trap: A precariously piled garbage mound rests near the secret door to area **B6**. Anyone who attempts to open the door without properly counterbalancing the stack triggers the trap.

AVALANCHE OF REFUSE TRAP

CR 5

XP 1,600

Type analog; **Perception** DC 27; **Disable** Engineering DC 22 (apply a counterbalance)

Trigger touch (attempting to open the secret door to area **B6**); **Reset** manual; **Bypass** pull a lever hidden directly

above the door to apply a counterbalance (Perception DC 24)

Effect falling junk +15 melee (4d10+2 B); Reflex DC 15 half; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check discovers three gear clamps and a fully loaded bonding epoxy dispenser in the barrels in the center of the scrapyard; the PCs find this treasure automatically if they look in the barrels. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check while combing through the junk uncovers a tarnished *mk 1 mindlink circlet*.

B6. HIDDEN SHELTER

When the PCs open the hidden door, read or paraphrase the following.

A steep set of stairs descends to a fifteen-foot square chamber. The droning of an air purifier keeps the atmosphere fresh. A computer terminal, a bed dressed in thick blankets, a steel footlocker, and a couch create a cozy space that contrasts the disorganized status of the scrapyard above.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Perception check notices slight movement from under the blankets. Pulling these coverings aside reveals a familiar face: their wrikreechee friend Hasshachir. He is shackled to the bed with a pair of manacles. The manacles can be opened with a successful DC 25 Engineering check or with the security chip Skraelin carries. Hasshachir is unconscious due to blue whinnis poison (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 419); a PC can determine this by succeeding at a DC 18 Medicine check or the spell *detect affliction*. Hasshachir can be woken if he receives a successful *remove affliction* spell (or similar magic). Alternatively, the wrikreechee will recover on his own with a full day of rest, moving from the unconscious state to the weakened state. If the PCs rescue Hasshachir, he is very happy to see them and is apologetic about everything that happened to them while in his spacedock.

Treasure: A narrow, foam-lined box lies tucked under the mattress (DC 17 Perception check to notice). Inside the box is a *mk 2 serum of healing* and a credstick loaded with 1,250 credits. A note attached to the inside of the box reads "The Sardat's Advance" in Aklo.

Development: The tier 3 computer here is locked and requires a passphrase—"At the end, there is nothing"—to access; handling the strange cube in area **B4** can reveal this phrase. Alternatively, a PC can hack the computer with a successful DC 25 Computers check.

This computer holds several grainy videos of the PCs going about their business on Outpost Zed over the last few days, as well as files full of incomplete notes about their abilities and weaknesses. These notes accompany digital

receipts for a small amount of explosives and a payment to a professional killer named Grasiex. There is also a cryptic reference to "the sardat's advance" as the source of the credits to make these payments.

If the PCs scour the computer for additional information, they find a video transmission in the deleted-files directory, which a PC can recover by succeeding at a DC 25 Computers check. The video contains a conversation between Skraelin and a scornful Azlanti man whom the draelik refers to as Sardat Zolan Ulivestra, in which she informs Zolan that the PCs are the cause of his troubles on Gulta and that they are currently on Outpost Zed. The Azlanti states that he is far too busy to deal with the PCs himself and offers Skraelin a small fortune to take care of his "friends from the Pact Worlds." He goes on to say that he will advance her any funds she might require for supplies before he leaves for some important political business on New Thespera, but then sternly warns her that he wants the job done before he returns to Aurelos, or else.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check knows that New Thespera is the heart of the Azlanti Star Empire. By searching the Outpost Zed infosphere and succeeding at a DC 22 Computers check, a PC discovers that Sardat Zolan Ulivestra purchased an asteroid in this system several years ago and registered it under the name Aurelos. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Diplomacy check to gather information on the station learns the same information.

Trigger: If the PCs show the video of Zolan Ulivestra to Cedona to ask her about Aurelos, she violently shudders and collapses to the floor. While easily roused, the android awakens with a fleeting barrage of visual stimuli that quickly fades. She then recalls a lost memory of the sardat interrogating her about the *rune drive* in a chamber that appeared to be some kind of shrine, containing an altar to a holy figure holding a seven-pointed star (see area **D10**).

PART 2: WITHIN ENEMY TERRITORY

Once the PCs have the name "Aurelos," they can easily find the asteroid's coordinates and prepare to travel there in search of the *rune drive*. If conscious, Hasshachir expedites the remaining work needed to get the PCs' starship upgraded. Cedona insists on accompanying the PCs on this part of the mission, though she admits that the PCs have far more expertise in this matter than she does and follows any plans they make. She is happy to offer advice but lets the PCs make the final decisions.

With the information they have already garnered, a PC can plot a course to Aurelos with a successful DC 15 Piloting check to navigate. As the asteroid is also in the Nys system

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(where they currently are), it takes only 1d6 days of Drift travel or 1d6+2 days of travel using conventional thrusters to arrive there. Aurelos is one of several hundred asteroids that orbit the barren, uninhabited world of Uthoria.

However, the PCs will soon learn that the hunk of space rock is more than it seems. It holds a research facility staffed with scientists—some of whom are there against their will—as well as military personnel to protect them and keep them in line. The first clue of its nefarious nature should be the small contingent of automated attack drones that launch from the asteroid as soon as the PCs get close.

EVENT 4: AUTOMATED RESPONSE (CR 5)

As the PCs exit the Drift and enter the vicinity of Aurelos, a flurry of Klokworx drones moves to intercept their vessel, blaring a warning message in Azlanti over the comms channel.

Starship Combat: Six Azlanti Klokworx drones protect the asteroid from invaders. Normally these drones are mounted on small plinths that ring the asteroid's landing pads, where they automatically detect and scan approaching ships. Even though the PCs' vessel still contains an Azlanti transponder, only Zolan's personal transport is currently cleared to be in this area. By succeeding at a DC 20 Engineering check to identify technology, a PC can determine that these small spacecraft are automated and have no crew.

KLOKWORX DRONES (6)

TIER 1/4

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HP 20 each

Development: If the PCs' ship is reduced to 0 Hull Points, the drones transmit a prerecorded message in Azlanti for the "unidentified enemy vessel" to follow them back to the asteroid's landing pad, while at the same time raising an alarm for Aurelos's guards. The three rune wardens from area **C5** meet the PCs as they disembark their ship, demanding they surrender. If the PCs do so, they are stripped of their gear and taken to the detention block (area **D7**), and are placed in the cell opposite Mrrgulbr's. How the PCs escape from there is beyond the scope of this adventure.

More likely, the PCs defeat the Klokworx drones. They can then scan the asteroid if they wish. It is 3 miles in diameter at its widest point, with an unremarkable, pockmarked surface and no atmosphere. A few black metal spires protrude out from the natural rock. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Culture check recognizes this architecture as similar to that of other Azlanti buildings they have seen, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Engineering or Mysticism check surmises the spires are part of a hybrid system that provides gravity to connected structures under the surface. The only other manufactured bit of architecture is a series of landing pads that offer flat

areas to touch down on the otherwise jagged surface of the asteroid.

The PCs can land their vessel on one of these pads. Once they disembark, they easily spot an elevator that leads into the facility below. The elevator leads to area **C1** and is unsecured, as the asteroid's inhabitants assume the drones will keep their secret facility safe from intruders.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully defeat the drones, award them 1,600 XP.

AURELOS

Sardat Zolan Ulivestra purchased this asteroid several years ago and built a research facility within it to launch and track the probes the IVSC used to search for ancient, experimental Azlanti vessels. He brought aboard both Azlanti and non-Azlanti scientists alike—holding some of the “second-class” citizens against their will—encouraging them to continue their research to increase the glory of the Star Empire. Now that he has the *Royal Venture*'s fabled *rune drive*, Zolan has directed the efforts of all the researchers here toward getting the device working again, forcing them to toil long hours on little sleep. To ensure their continued diligence, Zolan recently began slipping doses of a nonaddictive stimulant in their food. This has led to many of them being jittery and irritable, which has actually slowed their progress and might even spark a riot if left to continue. Guards menacingly glower at those scientists who gripe about the working conditions, sometimes going so far as to beat lollygaggers or hold them in the detention block (area **D7**).

With the exception of the landing pads, the research facility is built into tunnels carved into the asteroid and reinforced with steel and polycarbon plates. Long, gentle downward slopes connect several laboratories to a central dormitory area. Unless otherwise noted, the walls of the facility are made of a smooth white polymer (treat as typical plastic walls), the ceilings are 12 feet high, all double doors are as strong as airlock doors (hardness 35, HP 160, break DC 40), and single doors are made of plastic (hardness 8, HP 30, break DC 22). Recessed lighting bathes the research facility with bright light.

Many areas of the facility are watched over by security cameras. These cameras are near the ceiling in places marked on the maps of areas **C**, **D**, and **E**. The feeds of the cameras in area **C** display in area **C10**, while the other feeds display in area **D6**. A PC who can reach a security camera can physically disable it with a successful DC 24 Engineering check that takes 2d4 rounds. Alternatively, a PC can hack into the camera's feed with a successful DC 25 Computers check to alter the images it transmits (such as showing a loop of an empty room). However, such efforts are likely unnecessary, as the Aeon Guard specialist Evandrian is aware of the PCs' presence on the asteroid as soon as they land.

HEROES IN DISGUISE

If the PCs had success in disguising themselves as Azlanti in the previous adventure, they might want to try the same tactic on Aurelos. However, the asteroid's guards are just as suspicious of other Azlanti as they are of non-Azlanti, as anyone could be a spy coming to steal Zolan's research. No guests, Azlanti or otherwise, are scheduled to arrive at Aurelos, so unless a PC is disguised as Zolan, the rune wardens still open fire on any intruders they see.

C. UPPER AURELOS

The upper level of Aurelos is only 20 feet beneath the surface of the asteroid. It houses the main power core of the facility, a control station that monitors comings and goings, and dormitories for much of the Aurelos's security.

C1. MAINTENANCE BAY

At the bottom of an elevator shaft, this large maintenance bay houses the tools needed to maintain the asteroid's fleet of drones. Beside the machinery, a series of bright citron arrows points the way toward a tall double door.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notices the cement floor of the elevator shaft is less scuffed and stained than the floor of the rest of the maintenance bay, as if it had been poured much more recently. Originally, this shaft continued down to area **D9**, acting as a supply elevator to the labs below. This elevator was used to bring the *rune drive* into the facility, and then Zolan had the portal sealed with concrete and replaced with the smaller elevator currently here.

C2. RETRACTABLE GANGWAY

A deep underground trench separates parts of the facility here, spanned by a ten-foot-wide bridge that is currently retracted. There are small control podiums on either side of the gap behind brightly colored hazard lines.

Zolan's engineers created this enclosed trench to act as a choke point in case the asteroid was attacked. The facility generates enough atmosphere that the air here is breathable, though it is slightly thinner than in the rest of the complex.

The retracted bridge leaves 25 feet of open space above the trench. From the bridge's deck, the floor of the trench is 175 feet down. Activating the bridge's controls (found on either end of the bridge) is simple, though a PC who

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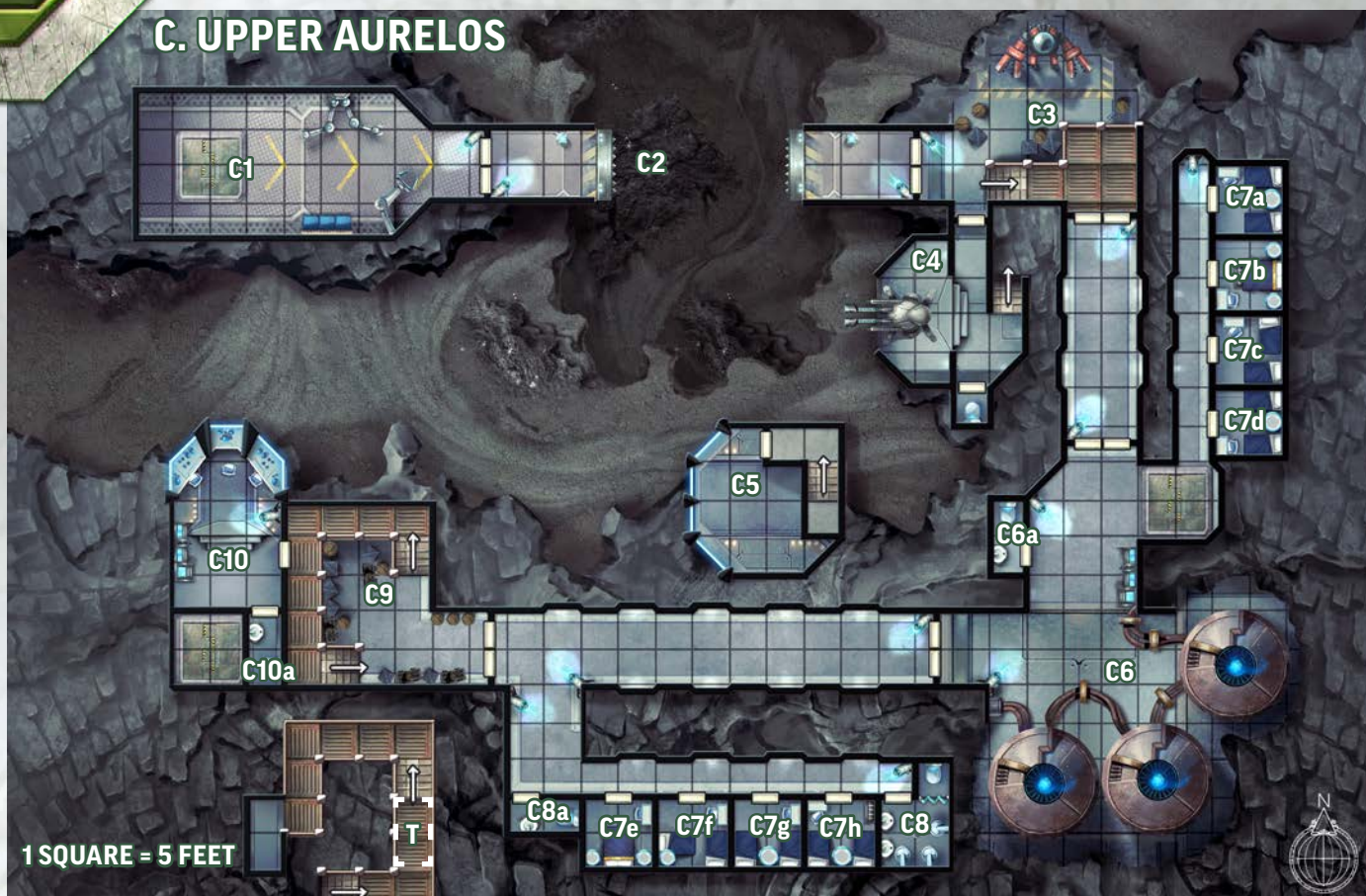
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C. UPPER AURELOS



succeeds at a DC 15 Computers or Engineering check before pulling the lever that extends the bridge realizes that doing so will cause a nearby set of warning lights to flash. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check can see the artillery laser poking out from the bunker (area **C4**), and the windowed command center (area **C5**) overlooking the trench above that.

The bridge takes 2 rounds to extend and link together via magnetic couplings. There is a cumulative 25% chance each round that the flashing lights alert the rune wardens in area **C5**. In such a case, one rune warden operates the artillery laser in area **C4** (with a total ranged attack bonus of +10), firing on the PCs, while the other two move to area **C3**, take cover, and ready actions to shoot PCs who come through the door to area **C2**. A PC can disable the flashing lights (even before they go off) by succeeding at a DC 24 Engineering check.

C3. RECEIVING BAY

Several empty crates are crammed into this irregularly shaped room, marking it as a place to receive goods. To the north, the pristine white polymer walls break away to partially reveal an exposed rock wall. A metal staircase leads up to an elevated platform where a double door

leads south. A smaller door at the base of the steps also exits south.

The ceiling rises to a height of 25 feet here. The smaller door is made of steel (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28) and is locked with a good-quality lock (Engineering DC 30 to disable).

Treasure: Leaning against the exposed rock is a fully charged suit of cargo lifter powered armor that is used to transport goods into the facility.

C4. BUNKER

A 5-foot wide hallway provides access to this secure point where a corona artillery laser is mounted upon a raised platform and fires through an open slit on the bunker's western edge. Security uses this heavy weapon to deter trespassers on the bridge. Any creature can squeeze through this slit with a successful DC 30 Acrobatics skill check (Small creatures get a +8 bonus to this check) to reach the walls of the trench in area **C2**. The stairs on the eastern side of the room ascend to area **C5**.

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Engineering check can release the corona artillery laser from its mounting and claim it as her own (this procedure takes 1 minute). Besides the laser's current high-capacity battery (which holds 40 charges

minus any fired during a fight), there are two additional high-capacity batteries in a small plastic chest here.

C5. WATCH POST (CR 5)

A sturdy watch post made of black metal juts from the asteroid's gray crust. Several windows of transparent, 1-inch-thick polycarbon plate (hardness 45, HP 60, break DC 32) provide a view of the trench in area **C2**. There is a steel door (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28) locked with a good lock (Engineering DC 30) at the top of the stairwell that leads up from area **C4**. A computer console against the eastern wall shows a feed from the security cameras located in areas **C2** and **C3**.

Creatures: Three Azlanti rune wardens—fanatical guards in Zolan's employ—stand vigil here. Thanks to the stolen transponder aboard the PCs' starship, the rune wardens aren't aware of the intruders unless they notice the flashing lights from the retracting bridge or any other suspicious activity in area **C2**. They then mobilize as noted in area **C2**, with one rune warden operating the artillery laser in area **C4** and the other two moving to area **C3** to set up an ambush.

AZLANTI RUNE WARDENS ③ CR 2

XP 600 each

Male and female Azlanti soldiers
LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +7

DEFENSE HP 26 EACH

EAC 13; **KAC** 16

Fort +4; **Ref** +5; **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 25 ft.

Melee tactical pike +7 (1d8+4 P)

Ranged *flame rifle* +10 (1d6+2 F; critical burn 1d6) or
flash grenade +10 (explode [5 ft., blinded 1d4 rounds,
DC 13])

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tactical pike)

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (arcane assailant)

TACTICS

Before Combat Every morning, the rune wardens imbue their flame rifles with a rune of the eldritch knight.

During Combat The rune wardens try to catch as many foes in the burning lines of fire from their flame rifles. If forced into melee, the rune wardens draw their tactical pikes and try to keep their foes at a distance.

Morale The rune wardens fight to the death while any their comrades remain. However, the last rune warden alive surrenders when reduced to fewer than 5 Hit Points.

STATISTICS

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

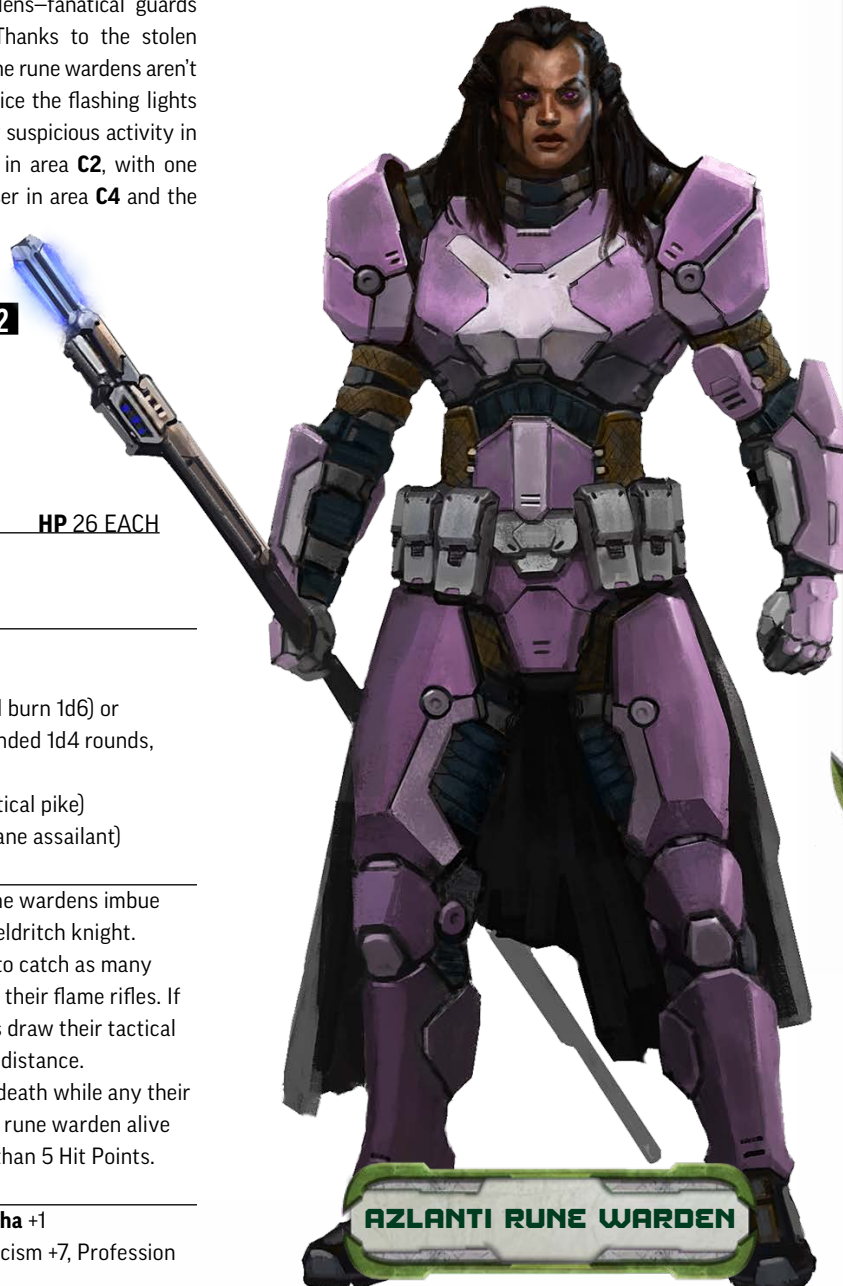
Skills Athletics +12, Medicine +7, Mysticism +7, Profession (soldier) +7

Languages Azlanti

Other Abilities rune of the eldritch knight

Gear hidden soldier armor (infrared sensors), flame rifle with 1 standard petrol tank (20 petrol), tactical pike

Development: If the PCs capture and interrogate a rune warden, he confirms the fact that Sardat Zolan Ulivestra recently brought ancient Azlanti technology here to study and used his influence to muster reinforcements to defend the find. This Azlanti doesn't know the specifics of what that item is or the layout of the lower portion of the facility (scoffing and claiming it contains only boring labs), but if coerced with a successful DC 17 Intimidate check, the rune



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warden provides the PCs with the general layout of area **C**. However, he is unaware of the ambush waiting for the PCs in areas **C9** and **C10**. If a PC succeeds at a DC 17 Diplomacy check while speaking with the prisoner, the rune warden lets slip that rumors suggest Zolan's enterprises at Aurelos are unsanctioned, and the sardat could face disciplinary actions from the Star Imperators—the leaders of the Azlanti Star Empire—themselves.

C6. MAIN POWER CORE

Three large reactors have been installed in niches hollowed

out of the asteroid rock. Thick serpentine cables run along the area's floor and quickly disappear into molded plastic walls the color of eggshells. A nearby computer console rests next to a marked elevator platform that separates this area from a secondary hallway that leads north. Opposite the console is a lone plastic door next to a wider hallway with its own double door.

The three reactors not only provide the majority of the energy needed to run the day-to-day operations of the facility, but they also act as a recharging station for batteries and power cells. The nearby computer can access Aurelos's temperature and lighting, and if a PC hacks this terminal by succeeding at a DC 25 Computers check, she can reduce the lighting within the facility to whatever level she chooses (though this will definitely put many of the inhabitants on alert) or even lower or raise the overall temperature to cold weather conditions or very hot weather conditions. The nearby elevator platform provides access to area **D1**, where the facility's scientists stay while not working. Beyond this platform, a secondary hallway leads to the eastern Azlanti dormitories (areas **C7a** through **C7d**). Finally, the plastic door opposite the computer leads to a clean, simple lavatory (area **C6a**).

C7. GUARD DORMITORIES

A series of rooms found in the eastern and southern wings of the upper level act as dormitories for the Azlanti guards who protect the facility. Each room is similar, with a single desk and either a pair of comfortable beds or a larger bed with drawers built into the frames; minor decorations and personal flair differentiate the rooms. The walls are the same uniform white found elsewhere throughout the station, and each room is kept immaculate, hinting at its occupants' discipline. Due to the recent threat of the PCs' actions at Gulta, the Azlanti spend most of their time motivating the scientists to get the *rune drive* functioning. These rooms are empty when the PCs arrive.

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check while searching area **C7a** discovers 3 doses of tier 2 medicinals (sedatives) in a box taped to the underside of the desk.

C8. Showers A communal shower at the end of the southern hallway offers the Azlanti guards a place to groom. A curtained-off cubicle hides a modest toilet. The area marked **C8a** is also a toilet.

C9. STORAGE BAY (CR 9)

Several crates are tucked under a catwalk that spirals upwards around the chamber's perimeter, offering several storage solutions within nooks carved into the asteroid's bedrock. Halfway up this spiraling catwalk, at a height of fifteen feet, a door exits to the west.



This storage area is located under and within a large rise on the asteroid, so its ceiling is 30 feet from the floor. The catwalk is built of steel and is secured directly into the asteroid's bedrock with several bolts and clamps. The steel door (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28) accessed by the catwalk is 15 feet from the floor and is locked with a good-quality lock (Engineering DC 30 to disable). Several large nooks carved into the asteroid hold additional supplies needed to run the day-to-day functions of Aurelos, such as blankets, toiletries, and cleaning supplies. At the terminus of the catwalk's spiral, within the final nook, a grate is hidden the floor (DC 20 Perception check to notice). This grate accesses a ventilation shaft leading to the lavatory in area **C10a**. This grated ventilation shaft can easily accommodate a Medium-sized creature without the need to squeeze.

The crates are easily opened and contain all manner of laboratory equipment (see Treasure on page 20). However, before any PC can inspect them, the Aeon Guard specialist Evandrian opens fire (see Creature below).

Creature: A veteran member of the Aeon Guard, the specialist Evandrian is well into his sixth decade. Rather than retire, this grizzled warrior continues his exemplary service to the Aeon Throne. Though he arrived at Aurelos to investigate rumors that Zolan has been conducting unsanctioned experiments, he has since received word of the PCs' actions in Gulta and correctly surmises they have been attacking the sardat's properties and will come here next. He has been quietly watching for signs of the PCs from the control center (area **C10**) and tracked their arrival. He sees the PCs as the latest test of his abilities and has coldly assessed their capabilities using the facility's many security cameras. Even if the PCs disable or hack the cameras, Evandrian sets up an ambush here. He waits in front of the alcove at the top of the catwalk, the grate open behind him. From this vantage point, he has cover (not included in his stat block) against attacks made from the ground. His goal is to harry the party for a while before retreating to harass them again later.

After Evandrian fires at the PCs, he calls down to them in a deep, gruff voice that is slightly amplified by the electronics of his helmet.

"Intruders! You are trespassing on the personal property of Sardat Zolan Ulivestra of the Azlanti Star Empire. Vacate the premises at once! This is your only warning."

EVANDRIAN

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male Aeon Guard specialist (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 6)

HP 102

TACTICS

Before Combat Evandrian readies an action to fire his

THE SAGA OF EVANDRIAN

The adventure assumes the PC face Evandrian (or his handiwork) up to four times, with the wily specialist narrowly escaping the PCs' grasp on multiple occasions. While this makes for a great reoccurring villain, it is possible the PCs will slay Evandrian on any of these encounters. However, this will not completely derail the adventure. Grant the PCs XP as normal for defeating the Aeon Guard specialist, and skip **Event 5**. The hostage situation of **Event 6** can still occur, but the perpetrator is instead a fiercely loyal Azlanti scientist named Iovanus who wants to punish the PCs for disrupting his work. In **Event 7**, Zolan meets the PCs alone.

corona laser pistol at the first PC who enters area **C9** through the eastern double door.

During Combat Evandrian attempts trick attacks with his laser pistol against the lead PC or any PC who attempts to scale the stairs and ramp, imparting the off-target condition with his debilitating trick ability.

Morale Evandrian fights for 2 rounds or until a PC triggers the trap on the catwalk (see Trap below) before activating his cloaking field to augment his Stealth checks to flee through the ventilation shaft behind him, retreating to the elevator and taking it to Aurelos's lower level.

Trap: A dangerous trap is hidden under the catwalk at the indicated location, triggered to detonate when a living creature with a heat signature walks over it.

SMOKING EXPLOSIVE DETONATION TRAP CR 7 XP 3,200

Type technological; **Perception** DC 30; **Disable** Engineering DC 25 (defuse explosives)

Trigger proximity (thermal, 5 feet); **Reset** none

Effect explosion (6d12 F plus smoke as a smoke grenade); Reflex DC 17 half; multiple targets (all targets within 20-ft. radius)

Hazard: When the trap detonates, the section of the catwalk under which the bomb was placed and the square directly south of it crashes to the ground, leaving a 10-foot gap. A PC on either of these squares when the trap detonates falls 20 feet to the ground below. In addition, large chunks of steel fall on a PC under either of these squares when the trap detonates; such a PC takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 14 half); this is in addition to the trap's effects.

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A PC can jump across the gap by succeeding at a DC 20 Athletics check. A PC can also climb the nearby wall by succeeding at a DC 15 Athletics check to reach the broken half of the catwalk. Alternatively, the PCs can stack crates under the gap to form makeshift stairs, though this takes at least 1 minute.

Treasure: If salvaged, the laboratory equipment can fetch 750 credits at any settlement.

Development: Evandrian wants to slow the PCs' progress throughout the facility until Zolan returns. He intends to escape from this encounter and return to harass the PCs during **Events 5, 6, and 7**. However, if the PCs get lucky and defeat Evandrian during this encounter, award them XP as normal. See The Saga of Evandrian sidebar on page 19 for more information on how the rest of the adventure plays out if he is defeated.

C10. FLIGHT MONITORING (CR 7)

On a raised dais at the chamber's north end, three leather seats in front of several computer consoles offers a comfortable-looking work environment. The screens show a variety of viewpoints throughout the facility, including the asteroid's landing pads. There is a large elevator platform to the south next to a single plastic door.

This area is used to monitor arrivals and departures, as well as the trajectories of nearby spacecraft, potential collisions with space debris, and long-range communications. Many of the other screens show video feeds of the facility's security cameras on the upper level.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Computers check while examining the consoles here learns that Sardat Zolan Ulivestra's personal starship, the *Starrunner*, departed from Aurelos over a week ago to return to New Thespera. The *Starrunner* is scheduled to return within the next few days.

The elevator platform to the south provides access to area **D4**. The door to the right of the elevator leads to a lavatory (area **C10a**), where a grate in the ceiling covers a ventilation shaft that connects to the upper part of the catwalk in area **C9**. If Evandrian escaped from the fight in that area, this grate has been knocked to the floor, exposing the open shaft.

Creatures: Normally, four rune wardens staff the control center, watching the feeds and readouts. Evandrian stationed an Aeon Guard here as well to slow down the PCs' pursuit of him after his ambush in area **C9**. All of these soldiers are aware of the PCs' intrusion into the facility and are expecting to hear a loud explosion from the storage bay. Even if the PCs somehow avoid setting off the trap in area **C9**, the Azlanti are prepared and ready for combat when the PCs enter this room.

AZLANTI RUNE WARDENS (4)

CR 2

XP 600 each

HP 26 each (see page 17)

OFFENSE

Melee *tactical pike* +10 (1d8+4 P)

Ranged flame rifle +7 (1d6+2 F; critical burn 1d6) or
flash grenade +7 (explode [5 ft., blinded 1d4 rounds,
DC 13])

TACTICS

Before Combat These rune wardens favor melee combat and imbue their tactical pikes with runes of the eldritch knight.

During Combat The rune wardens attempt to flank the PCs with their pikes and control how far they are able to move into the room.

Morale The rune wardens fight to the death while any their comrades remain. However, the last rune warden surrenders when reduced to fewer than 5 Hit Points.

AEON GUARD

CR 3

XP 800

HP 48 (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 6)

TACTICS

Before Combat The Aeon Guard readies an action to throw her frag grenade at the first target through the eastern door when she hears the explosion from area **C9**.

During Combat The Aeon Guard orders the rune wardens to move into melee combat with the PCs while she takes partial cover behind one of the chairs.

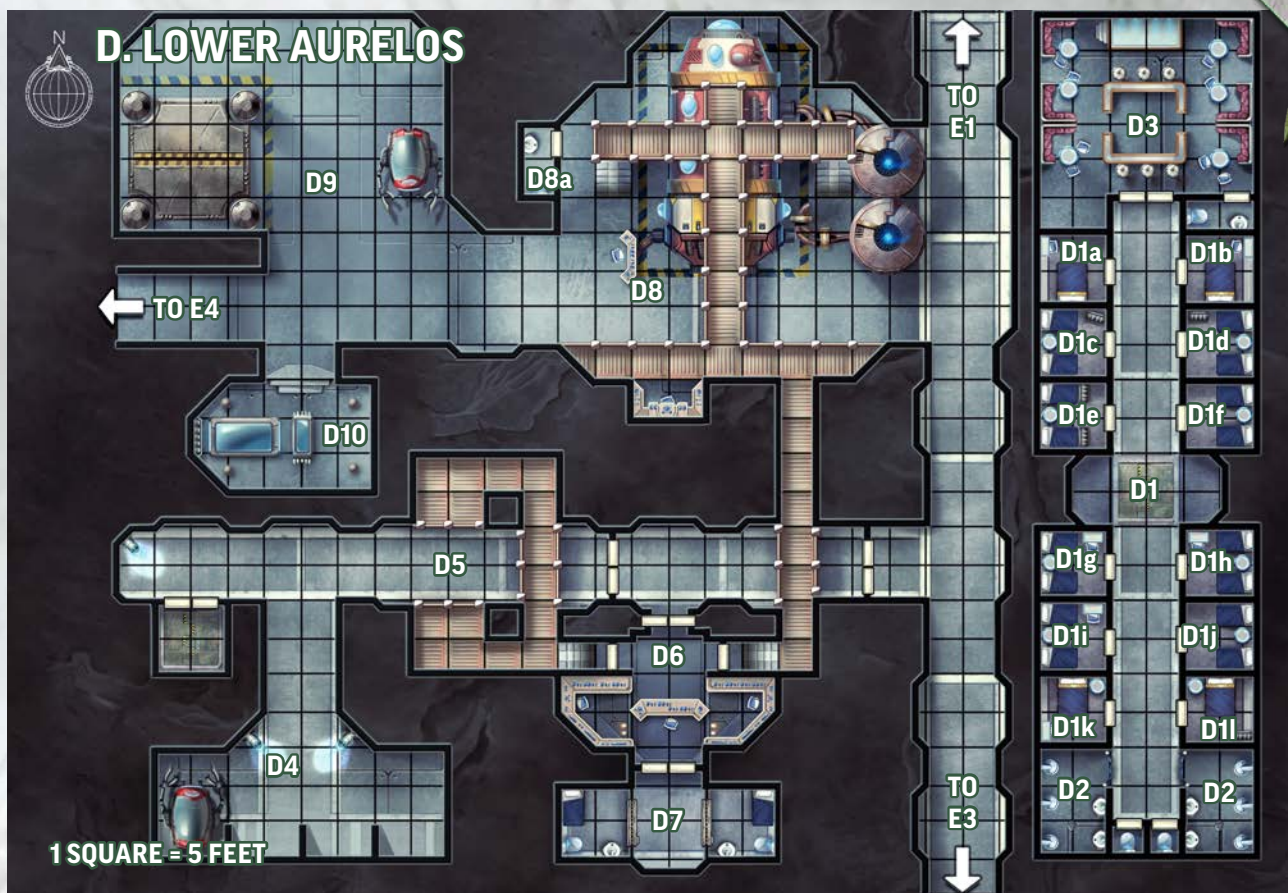
Morale The Aeon Guard is loyal to Evandrian and fights to the death.

Development: If captured, the Aeon Guard divulges no information to the PCs unless a character bullies her by succeeding at a DC 20 Intimidate check. She then reluctantly shares that she is a recent arrival to Aurelos under the command of an Aeon Guard specialist named Evandrian. She knows little about why she, the rest of her squad, and Evandrian are here, but she suspects the scientists in the labs below are working on something huge. If pressed, she informs the PCs that seven other Aeon Guards accompanied her to Aurelos.

If the PCs take a rune warden prisoner, he offers the same information as any of the rune wardens from area **C5**.

PART 3: SCIENTIFIC THEORIES

With the upper level of the asteroid facility secured, the PCs can enter its depths to find the *rune drive*. Since retrieving the artifact, Sardat Zolan Ulivestra has dedicated his staff of scientists to unlocking the device's secrets, but out of a deep sense of paranoia, he keeps the teams in separate laboratories



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and doesn't allow them to compare findings. However, if the PCs can piece together these disparate facts, they might be able to use the *runedrive* for themselves—or at the very least—disable it permanently.

D. LOWER AURELOS

The lower level of Aurelos is separated into two different areas. Living quarters for the scientists who toil at the facility can be found 50 feet below the asteroid's surface. The facility's research laboratories and security center are far deeper, at a depth of 200 feet. These two areas aren't connected and are accessed via different elevators in Upper Aurelos.

D1. SCIENTIST DORMITORIES

Easily maintained plastic furniture provides an austere background for these double-occupancy rooms. A lingering scent of chemicals pervades the air, signaling that these chambers are constantly sanitized.

The living quarters for Aurelos's scientists are accessed via the elevator platform found in area **C6**. Unlike the dorms for the Azlanti guards upstairs, this area is stark and dour. Usually, several off-duty scientists mill about these halls (especially in area **D3**). However, since efforts to study the *runedrive* have been doubled, the researchers work

almost around the clock, taking only short rests at their workstations when possible. As such, this area is now eerily quiet and almost barren of activity. The only individual down here is a sanitation drone (a brainwashed android) responsible for keeping these areas clean (see area **D2**). The contents of each room differ wildly (besides the mass-produced furnishings of some end tables, a desk, and either two beds or one larger one) as many of the scientists hail from different systems, bringing a vast, albeit unwanted, amount of cultural diversity to Aurelos. Like the dorms upstairs, these rooms are empty when the PCs arrive.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check while searching area **D1b** finds a hologram projector in a drawer of the bedside table. This device acts as the diary for one of Zolan's high-ranking subordinates, the technomancer Oliviana. It is secured with a biometric lock that opens only when it scans and identifies the genetic signature of its owner. Besides forcing the technomancer (found in area **D8**) to open this lock, or using gruesome methods such as removing her hand, a PC can bypass this lock by succeeding at a DC 30 Engineering check. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Life Science check can grant a +2 circumstance bonus to a PC attempting to bypass the lock by partially forging the required genetic markers. The diary's most recent entry is the most notable, as it shows a haggard Azlanti woman nervously complaining (not for the first time) that Zolan is sabotaging

the efforts to unlock the *rune drive*'s secrets by isolating the facility's divisions from one another, while granting only himself the ability to examine each division's results as a whole. The woman goes on to discuss the recent arrival of an Aeon Guard specialist, a grizzled operative named Evandrian, and expresses concern that Zolan is keeping the true nature of the research here secret from this specialist—which, if true, could spell exile or worse for the sardat and have unknown consequences for all the scientists.

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check while searching area **D1k** discovers a cleverly reattached panel that was once pried loose from one of the area's uniform white plastic walls. One of the non-Azlanti scientists preparing to stage a mass attack against her captors hid a cache of makeshift weapons here. These include six glass bottles with a torn strip of bed linen stuffed down their throats wicking into a bright-orange fluid. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Physical Science check identifies that the fluid is highly combustible, with the linen (once lit) acting as a fuse (treat each bottle as an incendiary grenade I). In addition, the niche contains four 1-foot-long lengths of plastic sharpened to a wicked point (treat each as a survival knife). Finally, the stash includes a pair of rubber gloves with several wires wildly coiling around the fingers and attached to a cumbersome battery (treat this as an LFD pulse gauntlet with only 5 charges in its battery).

Development: When the PCs have a chance to speak with Evandrian during **Event 6** (meaning he isn't directly shooting at them [see page 33]), they can use Oliviana's holographic diary to inform the Aeon Guard specialist that illicit research is occurring at Aurelos.

D2. HYGIENE STATIONS (CR 4)

Curtains the color of seafoam at the end of the hallway cordon off a pair of large rooms completely tiled in white ceramic. Within each of these chambers are a trio of showerheads jutting from the wall and pair of drains in the floor. A pair of signs adjacent to these curtains each states, in bright red Azlanti letters, that it is required for non-Azlanti personnel to shower twice daily, once before work and once after. This strict schedule is a product of the xenophobic Azlanti belief that other species are unclean, causing many Azlanti to take irrational precautions against perceived "contamination." Due to the recent focus on *rune drive* research, however, not many have used the showers in the past few days. Tucked in between these showering facilities is a pair of private toilets.

Creature: Currently, an enslaved and brainwashed android mockingly renamed "Sanidrone-12" by the Azlanti scrubs the floor of the eastern shower. Once a competent engineer and freedom fighter known as Erio who disguised himself as a human to infiltrate the Star Empire, he spent several successful years aiding mistreated androids and second-class citizens until he got himself assigned to Aurelos to free the unwilling non-Azlanti scientists. Erio was exposed as an impostor when he was caught tending

to Cedona's wounds during her time at Aurelos and was subsequently tortured and brainwashed, but he didn't surrender the names of any of his coconspirators. He now cleans Aurelos's dormitories and bathroom facilities, but he has been so broken and humiliated by his captors that he believes he deserves this existence and is even loyal to the Star Empire. He doesn't recognize the PCs and demands that they leave. When Cedona sees him, she convulses and falls unconscious (see Trigger on page 23), causing Sanidrone-12 to panic and lash out against the PCs with the pipe wrench stored in his quick-release sheath.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Sense Motive check notices that the android is reluctant to harm the PCs and guesses his actions are possibly the result of a magical mental effect or thorough brainwashing. Once per round, the PCs can help Sanidrone-12 return to his normal self by attempting a DC 31 Diplomacy check as a full action; having all PCs refrain from attacking Sanidrone-12 for a full round grants a +5 circumstance bonus to this check. If a PC succeeds at this check, Sanidrone-12 can then attempt a DC 16 Will saving throw (as if attempting a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect). Sanidrone-12 also attempts this saving throw automatically once he is reduced to 10 or fewer Hit Points. If he succeeds at this save, he remembers who he was and lets his wrench clatter to the ground. A PC who casts *remove affliction* on Sanidrone-12 (by touching the android) and succeeds at a DC 20 caster level check immediately brings the android back to his senses.

If any portion of this encounter spills out into the hallway, there is a 50% chance that the guard monitoring the security camera feeds in area **D6** will notice it. The guards then set up an ambush for the PCs in area **D5**.

SANIDRONE-12	CR 4
XP 1,200	
Male android mechanic N Medium humanoid (android)	
Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;	
Perception +10	
DEFENSE	HP 45
EAC 16; KAC 17	
Fort +5; Ref +7; Will +5; +2 vs. diseases, mind-affecting effects, poison, and sleep	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft.	
Melee pipe wrench +8 (1d4+4 B)	
Offensive Abilities overload (DC 15), target tracking	
TACTICS	
During Combat Sanidrone-12 focuses his attacks on the nearest PC, instinctively using his target tracking ability to gain a bonus to hit.	
Morale The android fights until he breaks through his brainwashing (see above) or until he is incapacitated or killed by the PCs.	

STATISTICS

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

Skills Bluff +10, Computers +15, Disguise +10, Engineering +15, Medicine +10, Physical Science +15, Stealth +10

Languages Azlanti, Common

Other Abilities artificial intelligence (exocortex), constructed, custom rig (datapad), flat affect, mechanic tricks (overclocking, portable power), upgrade slot (quick-release sheath)

Gear flight suit stationwear, pipe wrench (functions as a tactical baton)

Trigger: When Cedona sees Sanidrone-12, she has another physical reaction as forgotten memories from her time at Aurelos resurface, rendering her unconscious for 1 minute. When she awakens, she recalls that she met Sanidrone-12—who introduced himself with his original name, Erio—when he stealthily administered aid to her after particularly grueling interrogation sessions. She suspected he wasn't the Azlanti human he appeared to be, especially when he whispered to her about the possibility of an uprising by the captive scientists at Aurelos, but she was taken back to Gulta before anyone could help rescue her.

Development: If the PCs render Sanidrone-12 unconscious with nonlethal damage, they can bind the android. Once he awakens, they can attempt the Diplomacy checks that allow Sanidrone-12 to regain his memory as noted above (including the +5 circumstance bonus noted on page 22). Once the PCs help Sanidrone-12 regain his memory (or if the android broke through his brainwashing of his own accord during the fight), the android is understandably confused about his current predicament but seems happy to see Cedona alive and well. He introduces himself as Erio and wants to know what the PCs are doing at Aurelos. Once he learns of the PCs' mission, he tells them about the stash of weapons he crafted and hid in area **D1k**, hoping that no one else has found them yet. In addition, he tells them about a vilderaro scientist named Mrrgulbr, who expressed some interest in the Erio's uprising. Erio doesn't know Mrrgulbr's current whereabouts, but he assumes that if she isn't in her quarters, then she must be in the field stability lab (areas **E4** and **E5**). If asked, Erio can give the PCs a general description of the layout of areas **D** and **E** (except for area **D10**). Erio proposes that he continue to act as

Sanidrone-12 while the PCs infiltrate the labs. Erio will then aid them right before their fight with Zolan Ulivestra in **Event 7** (see page 36).

Story Award: If the PCs help Erio regain his memory before defeating him in combat, award them XP as if they had defeated him in combat.

D3. LOUNGE AND MESS

A large communal area with plentiful seating provides a place for the Aurelos scientists to have meals, drink, and relax, though in practice it is seldom used. Several booths ring the room. The central bar is stocked with nourishing protein shakes and cheap synthetic alcohol (which is strictly regulated). The food synthesizer in the room's southwestern corner is programmed to create only the simplest and blandest of foods. A holoivid projector is mounted on the northern wall and offers a selection of entertainment from the Azalanti Star Empire, all of which is one form of propaganda or another. A lavatory can be found behind the door to the southeast.

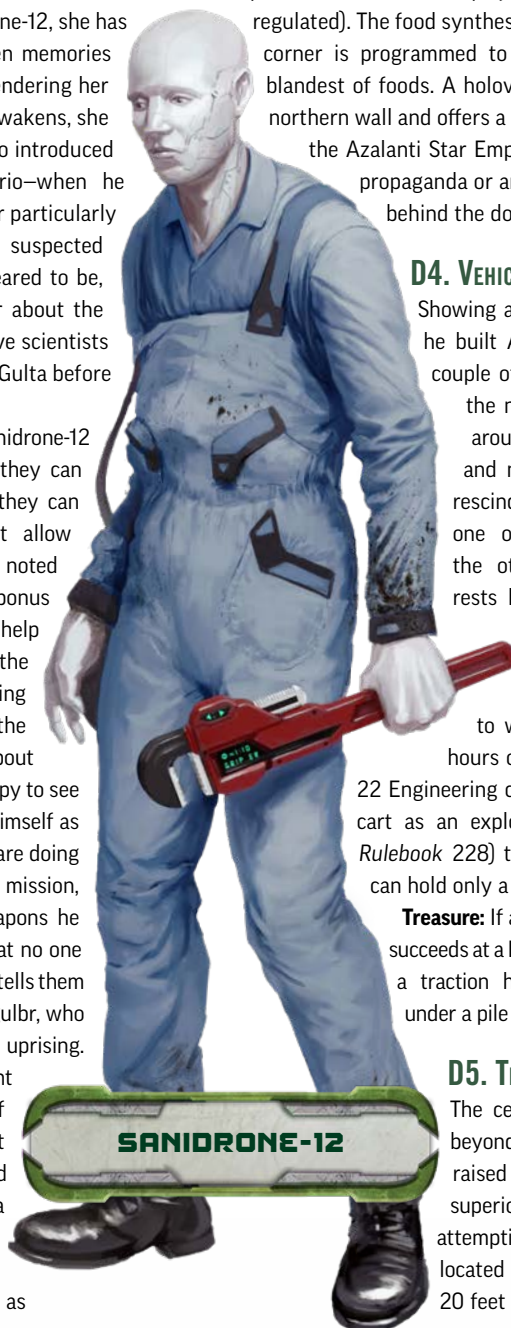
D4. VEHICLE BAYS

Showing a modicum of compassion when he built Aurelos, Zolan commissioned a couple of powered carts to aid some of the non-Azlanti scientists in getting around the facility. Over the weeks and months, however, he has since rescinded this kindness, destroying one of the vehicles and disabling the other three. One of the carts rests here in its bay, one is in area **D9**, and a third is in area **E4**. None of them are functional, but a PC can restore a cart to working order by spending 1d4 hours of work and succeeding at a DC 22 Engineering check. Treat a repaired powered cart as an exploration buggy (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 228) that has a speed of 10 feet and can hold only a driver and one passenger.

Treasure: If a PC searches the other bays and succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check, she finds a traction holster (*Starfinder Armory* 109) under a pile of oily rags.

D5. THE PERCH (CR 6)

The ceilings here and in the hallway beyond are 30 feet high. Several raised catwalks and balconies offer a superior firing angle on any intruders attempting to access the laboratories located beyond. These raised areas are 20 feet off the ground and are accessed



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via stairwells found in area **D6**. Their railings offer cover to those standing on them against ranged attacks made by those on the ground.

Past the catwalk is a locked double door (Engineering DC 30 to open) that is remotely controlled from the console in area **D6**. Beyond these doors, two more double doors, each locked in a similar fashion, head south and east. In front of the eastern double door, another catwalk runs over the hallway and into area **D8**.

Creatures: After his encounter with the PCs in area **C9**, Evandrian came through this area to the security center (area **D6**), ordering the Aeon Guards stationed there to take up positions on the catwalk and balconies here to await the PCs. If the PCs have already defeated Evandrian, it is possible they have been spotted causing a commotion on the security cameras anywhere in area **D** (such as when fighting Sanidrone-12 in the hallway near areas **D1** and **D2**), in which case the Aeon Guards establish their own ambush here.

AEON GUARDS (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each

HP 48 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 6)

TACTICS

During Combat The Aeon Guards begin combat by throwing their grenades down at the PCs. The Aeon Guard on the catwalk overlooking the hallway then uses the automatic fire function of his rifle to fill the hallway with flying bullets, while the other two fire single shots.

Morale Due to their fanatical training, the Aeon Guards fight to the death.

D6. SECURITY CENTER

A large terminal stands within the center of this irregularly shaped room, flanked by twin viewing stations plastered with monitors that rapidly shuffle between different scenes elsewhere within the facility. Two large double doors exit to the north and south, while smaller doors lead east and west.

The controls to unlock the security doors to the north and south, as well as the doors in the hallway to the north, are located on the main terminal, which also houses Aurelos's security computer. The screens at the other stations show the video feeds from the facility's security cameras on the lower level. If a PC spends a few moments watching the feeds and succeeds at a DC 21 Engineering check or DC 25 Perception check, she spots a device that she believes is the *rune drive* in area **D8** (currently being studied by several scientists). When Zolan declared the research performed here to be top secret, he removed the security cameras in the three labs (area **E**), so there are no images from any of those areas. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check while examining all the feeds notices that despite this being a scientific facility, there are very few laboratories visible.

The security computer is a tier 3 computer with several secure data modules. Accessing it requires a PC to succeed at a DC 25 Computers check to hack the system. A PC with a security key card (such as the ones held by Oliviana and Zolan) gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Computers checks to hack this computer or disable and manipulate its modules. The terminal is protected by a rank 1 shock grid (8d6 E, Reflex DC 20 half) and a wipe countermeasure that activates after two failed attempts to hack the computer, deleting the Rune Drive and SV data modules. If the PCs gain access to the computer, they discover several interesting data modules, one of which is behind a firewall. These data modules are listed below.

Aurelos Map: This module contains a map of the facility, highlighting the location of the *rune drive* (area **D8**), as well as three other unmarked locations spread across the asteroid. These unmarked areas are the station's laboratories (areas **E1** through **E5**). Finally, a fourth area labeled "Scion's Vestry" (area **D10**) is just south of the out-of-service elevator (area **D9**).

Royal Venture: This module contains restored schematics of an ancient Azlanti starship, the *Royal Venture*, which was owned by Parept Ameondria. While most of the technology seems out of date, the blueprints detail an experimental technomagical engine that incorporated as part of its power source an *aeon stone* from the Aeon Throne itself. Accompanying documents, which name the engine as the *rune drive*, suggest that this radical propulsion system could move distant points in space closer to one other for a brief second while "hopping" the attached vessel across the intervening space. These notes appear mostly theoretical and incomplete, and they don't detail exactly how the *rune drive* works, but rather make bold claims without referencing actual science.

Rune Drive Research: This module contains the research schedule Zolan expects his scientists to follow, with a cross-reference that states the *Royal Venture* data module has information about the *rune drive*'s history. The PCs can read how, claiming a need for secrecy, the sardat set himself up as the only individual privy to the data discovered from each of the facility's three laboratories. Zolan's notes state that he is certain his teams are close to completely discovering the *rune drive*'s secrets and that at the next possible occasion, he will set up a test of the *rune drive*. He mentions that his lead scientist, Oliviana, holds the specialized datapad that he will use to integrate all the information from the different labs for download into the control harness built around the *rune drive*.

Sardat Zolan Ulivestra Personal Data: This module is protected by a firewall, requiring an additional successful DC 27 Computers check to access. It contains a memoir-style recollection of Zolan's history (detailed in the Adventure Background) told by the sardat himself, so the account paints him as a dutiful son, a genius, and a beloved leader. The file eventually devolves into more of a diary,

with Zolan jotting down his thoughts as they come to him. He confesses that he has taken quite a risk authorizing the invasion, occupation, and annexation of Nakondis without formal support from the Star Empire. While he rightly fears that bureaucratic entanglements will rob him of the glory of discovering the *Royal Venture* and its *rune drive*, he deems the treasonous act of keeping his superiors in the dark worthwhile for the eventual betterment of the Azlanti Star Empire. Despite this risk, Zolan goes on to confidently say that once he has a working *rune drive* he shall eventually stand in front of the Star Imperators to present all of his findings, believing that the magnitude of this breakthrough shall pardon him of his indiscretions. He also states his hope of securing a more prominent royal title in the process.

The most recent entry discusses the timing of the attack on Gulta and the arrival of the Aeon Guard specialist Evandrian. While Zolan welcomes an ally to help protect Aurelos, he is beginning to suspect that someone in the Aeon Guard knows something about his secret research, and that Evandrian is actually on the asteroid to take the *rune drive* away from him. Zolan briefly suggests that he might be able to bribe or blackmail the specialist to keep him quiet, but the sardat dismisses the idea shortly after, realizing such an act could only further implicate him if things go poorly.

SV: When this enigmatic module is opened, seven dots appear on the screen equidistant from one another. This image functions as a password of sorts. The PCs can quickly determine that they can draw lines between these dots, and if they form the image of a seven-pointed star by doing so, they gain full access to the module. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Intelligence or Profession (mathematician) check has this idea upon looking at the screen. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Computers check can crack this visual password.

This module reveals that Zolan brought another artifact back from the *Royal Venture*: Parept Ameondria's *Azlanti royal battle regalia*. The sardat's notes describe the item as a rare and powerful suit of magic armor that predates the Gap. He goes on to say that he plans to take it as a personal prize, first stripping all traces of Ameondria's royal house insignia and replacing them with his own. He has undertaken these renovations in a place called the "Scion's Vestry," which he has had "sealed off from the rest of the facility to deter prying eyes." A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Culture or Sense Motive check gets the impression that Zolan's actions regarding the artifact are most likely frowned upon in the Azlanti Star Empire and that the sardat is aware of this fact.

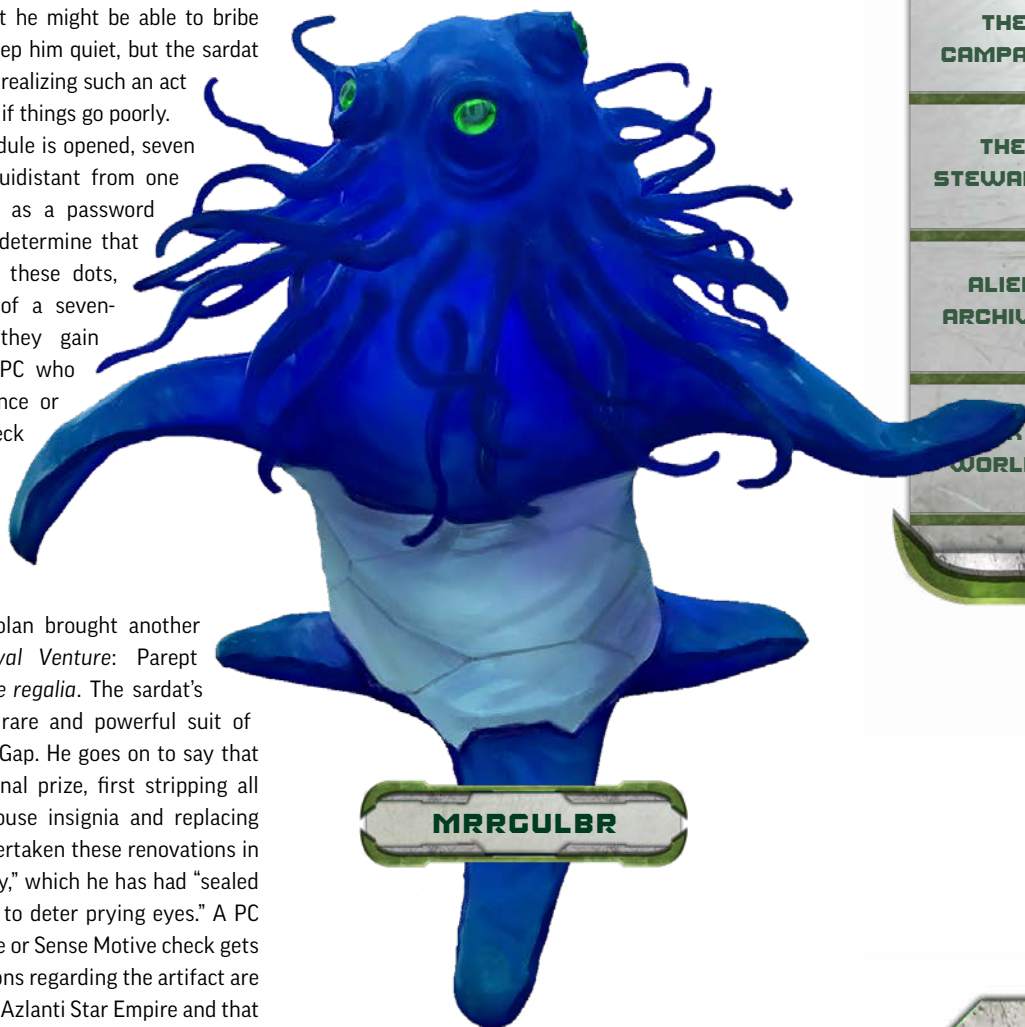
Treasure: A cabinet on the northeastern wall holds five pairs of manacles, each with an associated security chip. A similar cabinet stands next to it, but it is empty.

Development: When the PCs have a chance to speak with Evandrian during **Event 6** (meaning he isn't directly shooting at them [see page 33]), they can use the information in Zolan's personal data module to convince the Aeon Guard specialist that the sardat isn't acting with the best interests of the Aeon Throne in mind.

D7. DETENTION BLOCK

A few mysterious stains mar the floor of this otherwise barren room. A pair of brilliant, translucent fields of energy pulse to the east and west, cordoning off two simple holding cells. A control panel is mounted on the wall next to each cell's entrance.

Even though Aurelos is a research facility, it "employs" several indentured scientists. Zolan made sure to include an area to hold rebellious researchers and any pirates or



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similar ne'er-do-wells who might attack the asteroid. Each cell is furnished with a single cot, a toilet, and a sink, and both are sealed off with dangerous energy barriers (see Hazard below).

A cell's energy barrier can be deactivated at its control panel by entering a passcode, which is changed weekly. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Engineering check can disable a control panel. If the PCs have captured any of the Aeon Guards or rune wardens, that individual reveals the current passcode for the cells with a successful DC 20 Intimidate check.

Creature: A vilderaro (*Starfinder Adventure Path #8: Escape from the Prison Moon* 53) named **Mrrgulbr** (NG female vilderaro) lies on the hard cot within the eastern cell. Signs of a recent struggle (torn clothes and apparent bruises) make it obvious she was recently beaten. She was harshly detained a day ago when she organized a strike among the enslaved scientists to protest the latest untenable work schedule. Mrrgulbr is surprised to see the PCs, especially if they set her free. The vilderaro is wary that the PCs are tricking her in some way, especially if any of the PCs are human, and she isn't afraid to question them regarding their true intentions.

Mrrgulbr begins as indifferent to the PCs and speaks Aquan (the language of her home planet), Azlanti, and several other languages native to the territories conquered

by the Azlanti Star Empire. If a PC can speak to Mrrgulbr, he can improve her attitude toward the party by one category by succeeding at a DC 20 Diplomacy check. If any of the PCs are human, they take a -4 penalty to this check, but the PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus if they mention that they are here to destroy or steal the *rune drive*. If the PCs say that they helped Erio recover his memories or offer to arm Mrrgulbr with one of the makeshift weapons from area **D1k** (or even one of their own weapons), they gain an additional +2 circumstance bonus to this check.

Hazard: The energy barriers that seal off the cells block ethereal creatures as well as material ones from entry or exit. Any creature that touches an active energy barrier takes 3d6 electricity damage (no saving throw). Treat an energy barrier as a force field to determine what effects can or can't penetrate the barrier. For instance, weapon fire and most spells can't pass through an energy barrier in either direction, though *dimension door*, *teleport*, and similar effects can bypass this barrier.

Development: If Mrrgulbr is made friendly, she tells the PCs that she is one of the non-Azlanti scientists forced to work at Aurelos and answers any questions they have for her.

Why were you incarcerated? "My beneficent employers saw fit to teach me the lesson that disobedience is poor for one's health." The sarcasm in Mrrgulbr's voice is quite evident.

"They have us working day and night trying to understand this blasted ancient Azlanti tech, and I had the temerity to suggest we might be a little more cogent if we could take a break now and again."

Where is the rune drive? "Very nearby! It has been hooked up to a massive computer—a control harness—running every test conceivable, while the rest of us attempt to unravel individual aspects of its function. Most inefficient. Only the Azlanti scientists—watched over by that haughty Oliviana—are deemed 'pure' enough to get a close look at it."

Who is Oliviana? "The dark-haired termagant who Sardat Zolan Ulivestra has installed as head of research here. She is the hand that holds the whip when the sardat is busy elsewhere."

Is Zolan Ulivestra here? "I believe he had some pressing matters to deal with back on New Thespera. But he will be back. He wouldn't leave his precious project alone for too long. Not that he knows the first thing about n-dimensional propellants."

What do you know about the rune drive? "Ah, yes! The heart of the matter! Zolan believes he can have all the glory for himself by keeping his scientists from sharing information between one another. But he has forgotten that giving a group of scientists all the pieces of a puzzle and then telling us not to solve it is quite foolish. Many of us have determined much about the rune drive's nature by filling in the blanks, so to speak. Of course, none of us have informed Zolan as of yet. After all, where would we be once we were no longer useful?" She pauses for a brief moment. "Dead. Dead is where we would be."

What can we do to help? "First, we need the specialized datapad for the rune drive's control harness so we can feed it the appropriate data. Oliviana has this datapad at all times. Then, we need all the current research from the three labs—bend travel, field stability, and power dynamics—downloaded onto the datapad. With all of that, I should be able to get the rune drive working... I think."

Mrrgulbr is content to stay where she is until the coast is clear or the PCs come to fetch her. If the PCs insist that she accompany them, she stays out of any fights, and Cedona does her best to protect the scientist from harm.

D8. THE RUNE DRIVE (CR 8)

An enormous machine surrounded by metal scaffolding sits in the center of this room, connected to two cylindrical generators and a computer console. The device hums with power as the attached computer beeps regularly, displaying a dizzying array of data. The scaffolding runs along the southern wall about fifteen feet from the ground, past a desk nestled in an alcove and into a passageway leading south. Open hallways exit to the west, north, and south, and there is a small plastic door to the northwest.

The 30-ft. ceiling here accommodates the machinery and scaffolding, which provides cover from attacks coming from enemies on the ground to those standing on them. A lavatory (area D8a) can be found behind the plastic door.

The large device that takes up most of this chamber is a control harness—essentially a contained technomagical environment that can simulate a wide variety of situations to test equipment—that holds the *rune drive*. The control harness is very large, and the raised scaffolding that runs over it allows access to the machine's upper workings. A computer console is wired directly to the control harness, regulating the tests and receiving data from those tests. The *rune drive* is visible through a hatch of translucent aluminum situated in the control harness just behind the console.

The *rune drive* is a cube approximately 3 feet on each side. It has several ports on one face, all of which are connected to the control harness via thick cables. It has no display panel or other obvious means of activating it. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Engineering or Physical Science check while examining the *rune drive* determines that the device's casing is composed of a strange alloy as strong and durable as adamantite alloy (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 408) and encrusted with tiny shards of dull gray stone. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Mysticism check identifies these shards as remnants of ancient *aeon stones* that have lost much of their magical power, often referred to as *dull gray aeon stones*. The process to manufacture this alloy is currently unknown to Pact Worlds material scientists.

To open the hatch and retrieve the *rune drive* or to sync up the testing machinery with the control-harness datapad and activate the *rune drive* (see *Activating the Rune Drive* on page 35) requires access to the computer console. This tier 3 computer requires a successful DC 25 Computers check to hack; carrying an Aurelos key card (such as the one Oliviana has) grants a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. Doing so also provides the PCs with a very important piece of information: a special *aeon stone* embedded in the *rune drive* has been activated, allowing someone sitting on the Aeon Throne—the physical seat of power of the Azlanti Star Empire—to track the device wherever it goes in the galaxy and beyond. Cedona notes that simply stealing the *rune drive* will likely bring the full force of the Star Empire's might down on the Pact Worlds, which she can't allow to happen. The PCs must find another way to prevent Zolan from unlocking its secrets. If the PCs remove the *rune drive* from the control harness, they find that the device is indestructible.

Creatures: The chief researcher of the facility, the technomancer Oliviana, sits at her desk by the raised scaffolding, scouring data from the control harness and writing and rewriting theories about how to get the inert *rune drive* to function. She is tired and irritable due to the demanding work schedule she has been forced to maintain, but she has staved off fatigue through several brief naps

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here in her comfortable chair. Her raven hair is hastily tied into a serviceable bun that threatens to topple over and cover her bloodshot eyes.

Oliviana manages and coordinates the efforts of four loyal but fatigued Azlanti scientists on the floor below, who are busy tinkering with the control harness and entering new experiment parameters into the control harness's console. The effects of the fatigued condition are already calculated into the Azlanti scientists' stat blocks. These scientists can't run or charge, and if they would become fatigued, they are exhausted instead.

Oliviana and the scientists are distracted and take a -2 penalty to Perception checks to hear the PCs sneak up on them. However, if she or the scientists notice the PCs, Oliviana becomes furious over being interrupted and attacks, calling for her scientists to kill the intruders.

AZLANTI SCIENTISTS (4) CR 2

XP 600 each

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; Perception +8

DEFENSE HP 23 each

EAC 12; KAC 13

Fort +1; Ref +0; Will +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical baton +5 (1d4+2 B)

Ranged static arc pistol +7 (1d6+2 E; critical arc 2)

TACTICS

During Combat On the first round of combat, the scientists seek cover and frantically fire on the PCs. Each round Oliviana is visible, one of the scientists provides covering fire for her, selecting the most effective ranged combatant they have observed. The scientists use their batons only if forced to engage in melee combat.

Morale While Oliviana lives, the scientists fight to the death. If the PCs defeat Oliviana, a scientist surrenders when reduced to fewer than 5 Hit Points.

STATISTICS

Str +1; Dex +2; Con +1; Int +4;

Wis +1; Cha +1

Skills Computers +13, Engineering +13, Life Science +8, Medicine +8, Physical Science +13

Languages Aklo, Aquan, Azlanti

Gear flight suit stationwear,

static arc pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), tactical baton

OLIVIANA

CR 6

XP 2,400

Female Azlanti technomancer

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; Senses low-light vision; Perception +15

DEFENSE

HP 74 RP 4

EAC 17; KAC 18

Fort +5; Ref +5; Will +9

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee carbon staff +10 (1d8+6 B; critical knockdown)

Ranged frostbite class zero pistol +12 (1d6+6 C; critical staggered [DC 16])

Technomancer Spells Known (CL 6th; melee +10, ranged +12)

2nd (3/day)—*inject nanobots* (DC 18), *invisibility*

1st (5/day)—*jolting surge*, *keen senses*, *magic missile*, *overheat* (DC 17)

0 (at will)—*energy ray*, *ghost sound* (DC 16)

TACTICS

During Combat In the first round, Oliviana casts *invisibility*. She then casts *ghost sound* to make it appear that she has run away. After moving up to another spellcaster (if possible), she targets that foe with *inject nanobots*. She then retreats to a

more secure position (preferably with cover) and savages the PCs with a barrage of *magic missile* spells. If she ever runs out of spells, she relies on her zero pistol.

Morale The first time Oliviana is reduced to 30 or fewer Hit Points, she casts *invisibility* again and uses her *mk 2 serum of healing*. She knows that if the research here is compromised, it likely means exile or a death sentence for her, so she then fights to the death.

STATISTICS

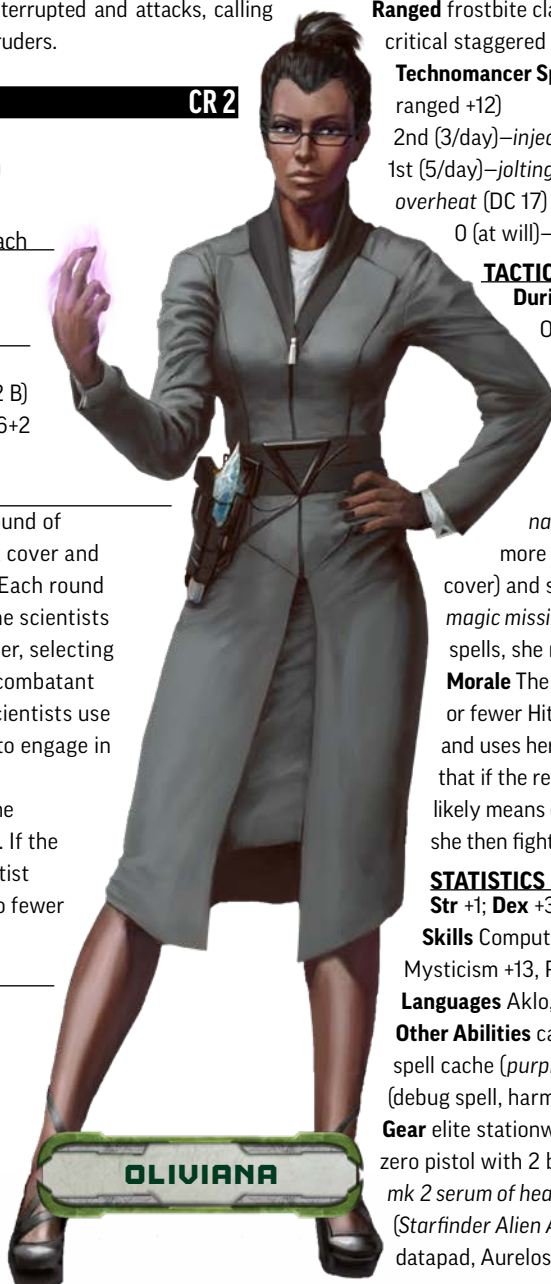
Str +1; Dex +3; Con +1; Int +5; Wis +3; Cha +1

Skills Computers +18, Life Science +13, Mysticism +13, Physical Science +18

Languages Aklo, Aquan, Azlanti, Wrikreechee

Other Abilities cache capacitor 1 (*keen senses*), spell cache (*purple sphere aeon stone*), magic hacks (debug spell, harmful spells)

Gear elite stationwear, carbon staff, frostbite-class zero pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), *mk 2 serum of healing*, *purple sphere aeon stone* (*Starfinder Alien Archive 7*), control-harness datapad, Aurelos key card



Trigger: When Cedona gets a glimpse of the *rune drive* within the control harness, she violently collapses into unconsciousness once more. She awakens a minute later with a memory of being shackled to the catwalk here while Zolan shouted questions at her about the *rune drive*. She vividly recalls his fury and moves to wipe imagined spittle from her brow. She also gingerly touches her own shoulder, saying the sardat dislocated her arm when she couldn't give him the information he wanted. In response to this memory, Cedona purses her lips in determination.

Development: If the PCs bring the vilderaro scientist Mrrgulbr (see area **D7**) to this lab and ask her how they can keep the *rune drive* out of the Azlanti Star Empire's hands, she tells the PCs that she has an inkling but that she will need the data from the three other labs before she can commit to an appropriate course of action (see Activating the Rune Drive on page 35 for more information).

EVENT 5: EVANDRIAN RETURNS (CR 7)

Sometime after the PCs have defeated Oliviana in area **D8**, possibly as they are exiting area **D10** or returning from area **E4**, but before they have gone to area **E3**, Evandrian returns to briefly harry the PCs. If it seems like the PCs are about to head to area **E3** immediately after the fight with Oliviana, then this event occurs as they are about to go down that hallway.

Creature: Evandrian enters area **D8** via the catwalk between that lab and **D6**, activates his cloaking field, lines up a shot at a PC in area **D9**, and opens fire. If he sustained any damage during his first encounter with the PCs, he has received enough healing to be at full health.

EVANDRIAN

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male Aeon Guard specialist (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 6)

HP 102

TACTICS

During Combat Evandrian makes a full attack with his AG accelerator rifle against a single PC for the first round, and then if more than two PCs are within range, he lets loose with the rifle's automatic fire. Otherwise, he makes another full attack, preferably against the same PC.

Morale Evandrian fights for 2 rounds and then withdraws back toward areas **D5** and **D6**. Once there, he uses the computer in area **D6** to close all of the double doors (if they are open), except for the ones leading east, hoping to throw the PCs off his trail while he returns to the facility's upper level using the elevator in area **D4**. While in area **C10**, he temporarily disables the elevator, giving him enough time to reach the asteroid's surface and eventually meet up with Zolan (see **Event 7**), while still being able to trigger the death trap of **Event 6**.

Development: Once again, Evandrian isn't attempting to kill the PCs (yet), only wishing to whittle down their resources a

bit. If he flees, he returns in **Events 6** and **7**. However, if the PCs get lucky and defeat Evandrian during this encounter, award them XP as normal. See the Saga of Evandrian sidebar on page 19 for more information on how the rest of the adventure plays out if this occurs.

D9. OUT-OF-SERVICE ELEVATOR SHAFT

A large service-elevator platform here was once used by passengers to access the maintenance bay far above (area **C1**). However, several weeks ago, Zolan had the shaft above this platform filled with several tons of concrete and hundreds of feet of steel rebar. Any PC who glances at the ceiling notices a stark contrast between a square of dull gray concrete and the usual white polymer found throughout the rest of the facility.

A disabled powered cart sits nearby, like the one in area **D4**. It can also be repaired with 1d4 hours of work and a successful DC 22 Engineering check, and this cart functions as an exploration buggy (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 228) that has a speed of 10 feet and is able to hold only a driver and one passenger.

D10. SHRINE TO LISSALA

If the PCs venture to the area marked "Scion's Vestry" on the Aurelos map found on the computer console in area **D6**, they find a blank wall. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check while examining the wall detects a panel with a slightly different coloration. This recently installed secret door opens with a touch. Once the PCs discover the door, read or paraphrase the following.

An alabaster panel slides open, revealing two broad steps that descend into a dimly lit room. The scent of incense wafts out from the chamber, which contains a tidy prayer mat placed in front of a rectangular alabaster altar. Behind the altar, a holographic tapestry bears the image of a stern Azlanti woman in a flowing gown with one raised hand. A glowing seven-pointed star floats in front of her palm. Ornate candelabras containing glow sticks stand in the four corners of the room.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Mysticism check identifies the figure depicted on the tapestry as Lissala, the lawful evil Azlanti goddess of duty, fate, and obedience. Also known as the Scion of Seven, she is an ancient deity who was worshiped by the empires of Azlant and Thassilon during the days of lost Golarion. She has become the patron goddess of the Azlanti Star Empire, supposedly rewarding those rulers and their subjects who follow her strict tenets. Her holy symbol is a seven-pointed star.

When Zolan built the facility, this shrine was open to all inhabitants, but when the *rune drive* was brought back to Aurelos, the sardat had this area sealed off at the same time that he filled the elevator shaft of area **D9** with concrete. He did so to hide the other artifact retrieved from

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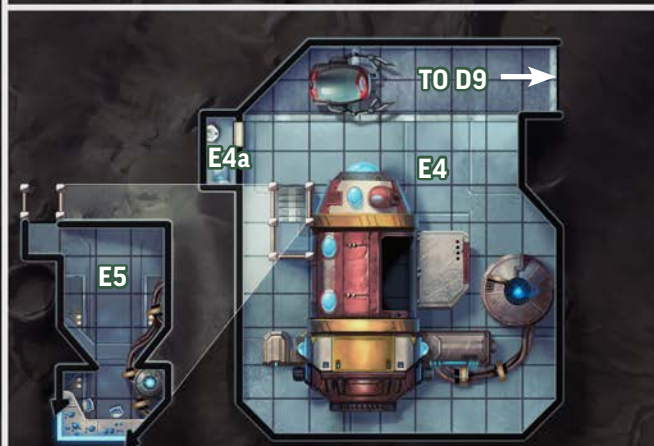
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E. RESEARCH LABS



Nakondis: Parept Ameondria's *Azlanti royal battle regalia*, a valuable suit of magical armor that rightfully belongs to the Star Imperators. Zolan wished to keep the armor for himself and didn't want any of his inferiors to know of this selfish act.

The battle regalia isn't currently here, as Zolan took a few days to remove the insignia that denoted Ameondria's royal house from the artifact, replacing them with his own family's symbols. He now proudly wears the armor, telling other Azlanti nobles who ask that he had the item commissioned from the finest armorsmiths. However, traces of his perfidy remain in this room. When the PCs first enter, a shaft of holographic light emanating from the seven-pointed star on the tapestry illuminates a handful of interlocking metal triangles resting on the altar. Closer inspection reveals that these triangles appear to have been removed from an article of clothing. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Culture check can tell the triangles were used to indicate rank or other important connection, like a noble family. PCs who read the secret data module labeled "SV" automatically know the nature of these insignia. The light stops shining on the triangles as soon as a PC picks them up off the altar.

Development: When the PCs have a chance to speak with Evandrian during **Event 6** (meaning he isn't directly shooting at them), they can show him Ameondria's insignia, which the Aeon Guard specialist will recognize right away. If the PCs

also inform him about the information in the SV data module, they might be able to convince him that Zolan isn't as loyal to the Aeon Throne as he seems.

E. RESEARCH LABS

While they are all part of Aurelos's lower level, the three research labs studying facets of the *rune drive* are set apart from one another. When the facility was built, this was to make sure none of the experiments performed in the labs interfered with each other. However, it now allows Zolan to indulge his paranoia and keep his researchers separated so they can't easily share their findings.

The three labs are the bend travel lab (where grays experiment with teleportation), the power dynamics lab (where researchers attempt to re-create the *rune drive*'s power source), and the field stability lab (where scientists test how the *rune drive* might affect the starship to which it is connected).

E1. BEND TRAVEL LAB (CR 6)

Twin metallic rings, twenty feet in diameter, are the main focus of this large chamber. Halfway up these devices, at a height of ten feet, a catwalk runs alongside each ring and curls around behind each of them, providing maintenance access. Yellow arrows painted upon a track and ramp lead

toward the northern ring, and a similar ramp and track are painted with a series of arrows leading away from the southern ring. A small vehicle, similar to a single-occupant escape pod on wheels, rests at the western end of the northern track. A pair of computer consoles sits on a raised dais between the two tracks, attached to a strange tank and a humming reactor. A hallway exits to the south, and a double door and two single doors are located in an alcove to the north.

The double door to the north is marked with several warning signs in Azlant and, surprisingly, Aklo. The eastern door leads to a small lavatory (area **E1a**), and the western door opens onto a lounge (area **E1b**) that has been converted into sleeping quarters and makeshift medical lab (complete with a steel operating table) for the grays who currently reside here (see **Creatures** below).

The unusual metal rings in this lab are part of Azlanti experiments exploring instantaneous teleportation and travel through the Ethereal Plane that Zolan hopes will help him unlock the secrets of the *rune drive*. When the rings are activated from the consoles (which they are when the PCs first arrive here), crackling energy swirls within them, creating a concave vortex within the northern ring and a convex vortex within the southern ring. A PC who examines this phenomenon using a *detect magic* spell identifies the vortexes as 10th-level hybrid items. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Engineering or Mysticism check can tell the vortexes produce a teleportation effect. Anyone or anything passing through the northern ring disappears, only to reappear 1d4 rounds later on the ramp outside the southern ring (see **Hazard** below). This effect is in part produced by the slow deterioration of the corpse of an aberration known as a twinsoul (see area **E2**) that was placed in the tank by the gray vivisectionists (see **Creatures** below).

The small vehicle seats one and can be used to travel through the rings, granting a +4 circumstance bonus to the Fortitude save to avoid being sickened from the travel (see **Hazard** below), but it automatically attracts the attention of the twinsoul in area **E2**. The pod's hatch can't be opened while on the Ethereal Plane, but the pod grants total cover to

anyone inside. The pod doesn't move fast enough to deal collision damage.

A creature at the consoles can power down the rings by succeeding at a DC 15 Computers check as a standard action.

Creatures: Shortly after Zolan purchased the asteroid, he was approached by two grays who offered to help the sardat with his research in exchange for being able to study the pair of twinsouls they knew lived within a series of natural caverns deep in the rock. Overcoming his distaste for working with non-Azlanti, Zolan allowed the grays to set up a laboratory here. Because the grays were examining the twinsouls in the hopes of enhancing their own phasing abilities, their goals aligned with Zolan's when the *rune drive* was brought to Aurelos. The grays have since built the teleportation rings, powering them with the technomagically preserved corpse of one of the twinsouls the grays captured and vivisected. Zolan also used the grays to erase Cedona's memories of this facility and brainwash Erio into believing he is a sanitation droid (see area **D2**). The grays are both on the raised dais working at the computer consoles when the PCs enter. When they notice the PCs, they telepathically demand the PCs leave. If the PCs do not obey, the grays attack.



GRAY VIVISECTIONISTS (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Grays (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 56)

HP 43 each

TACTICS

During Combat In the first round, each gray targets

a different humanoid PC with *hold person*. In the

second round, the grays use *deep slumber*

on any PCs who aren't paralyzed. The

grays then fire their needler pistols at

any remaining PCs, hoping to poison

them with blue whinnis. If

the PCs appear to be

moving in to engage

the grays in melee combat, the grays leap off

the dais and run toward the northern ring. A gray's

phase ability allows them to avoid the effect of the

vortex and hide under the scaffolding. If the PCs don't

fall for this deception, the grays continue to make

ranged attacks and cast *mind thrust* on tough-

looking PCs. If forced into melee combat, the grays

use their probe ability to stagger their foes.

Morale The grays hold no loyalty to the Azlanti Star

Empire and flee when reduced to fewer

than 10 Hit Points. If one of the grays

flees, the other also flees.

Hazard: Any creature that ends its turn on the northern ramp within 20 feet of its accompanying ring feels an overwhelming pulling

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sensation drawing them into the concave vortex. A creature in this area of effect must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or be pulled into the ring's vortex. For every 5 feet closer it is to the ring than 20 feet, a creature takes a cumulative -2 penalty to this Fortitude saving throw. A creature sucked into the vortex enters the Ethereal Plane for 1d4 rounds (as if under the effects of an *ethereal jaunt* spell). At the end of this duration, the creature reappears on the southern ramp (no matter where it was) but is sickened from this unnerving ordeal (Fortitude DC 15 negates).

Any creature affected by this hazard risks drawing the attention of the twinsoul in area **E2**. Each round a character is on the Ethereal Plane, he must succeed at a Stealth check opposed by the twinsoul's Perception check. If the character moves more than 10 feet that round or takes any obvious actions, such as casting a spell, he takes a -4 penalty to this Stealth check. If the twinsoul notices the character, it uses its planar melding ability to enter area **E1** and attacks the affected creature for as long as it remains on the Ethereal Plane. Once that creature returns to the Material Plane, the twinsoul begins to attack other creatures in the lab indiscriminately.

Trigger: Upon seeing the grays—the cause of her memory loss—Cedona once again slips into unconsciousness. Unless a PC takes a standard action to rouse the android, she doesn't take part in this encounter. Once awake (and after any fight), she relates a horrific recollection of being strapped to a hard steel table. Cedona remembers the same grays found here looming over her, probing and prodding her seemingly conscious but totally paralyzed form. She says that she remembers trying to fight back, but her brain simply would not work. She also notes that behind the grays, a bronze-skinned Azlanti man, unmistakably Zolan, chuckles to himself and says to an unseen subordinate, "We have probably extracted all she has to offer, but prepare my yacht and I shall return her to Gulta for indefinite detainment in case she decides she has more to say."

Treasure: An advanced medkit and three medpatches lay scattered amid the surgical tools in the medical lab within area **E1b**.

Development: Opening the tank reveals a partially vivisected alien creature, which a PC can recognize as an aberration by succeeding at a DC 22 Life Science check (or automatically if the PCs have already fought the twinsoul from area **E2**). Wires and needles attached to the corpse connect to the interior of the tank.

In addition, A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Computers check can download the needed data onto the control-harness datapad from the computer consoles here.

E2. TWINSOUL DEN (CR 8)

A set of cement steps leads down into a natural cavern dotted with jagged rock formations.

The cavern is dark, and the asteroid's irregular interior acts as difficult terrain.

Creature: A twinsoul inhabits this cave. Once the grays began to study it and its companion, the grays kept the aberrations docile by casting *deep slumber*, as well as by using their sleep paralysis ability and liberal doses of blue whinnis. The twinsoul has been driven mad with grief over the death of its friend at the hands of the grays, but it can't discriminate between them and any other humanoids who enter the cavern. With a psychic howl, it attacks the first PCs it detects.

TWINSOUL

CR 8

XP 4,800

HP 125 (see page 61)

TACTICS

During Combat The twinsoul always targets at least two of the PCs within its reach (if possible) using its multiattack, unless it has a difficult time hitting enemies, in which case it grants itself flanking and makes single attacks. When reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points, it melds with its ethereal twin if it has that ability available, healing in the process.

Morale Angry and distraught, the twinsoul fights to the death.

E3. POWER DYNAMICS LAB

A shining polyhedron of plastic and metal floats within a large chamber of translucent walls in the western half of this laboratory. Three electrodes connect the shape to power coils in the chamber's ceiling, appearing to siphon energy from the object in crimson waves. A raised platform runs along the outside of the containment chamber, providing multiple angles from which to view the polyhedron. A large terminal, its screens alight with information, stands at the top of a few steps near the hallway that leads out to the north, and a second set of terminals line the walls of the viewing platform. Two doors, one leading north and another leading south, exit this laboratory.

The polyhedron within the containment chamber is about 5 feet in diameter and holds a technomagic crystal that Aurelos's scientists have fashioned to simulate how the *rune drive* stores and processes power. By examining the polyhedron and succeeding at a DC 18 Mysticism or Physical Science check, a PC can determine it is constructed of the same *dull gray aeon stone*-encrusted polymer that forms the *rune drive*'s engine casing (see area **D8**).

The doors exiting this chamber lead to a simple lavatory (area **E3a**) and a break room (area **E3b**) whose furniture has been removed, leaving a practically bare chamber.

Development: The PCs can download the needed data onto the control-harness datapad from the main computer console

here with a successful DC 25 Computers check, but they must first deal with Evandrian once again (see **Event 6** on page 33).

EVENT 6: HOSTAGE SITUATION

When the PCs first ascend the steps that lead to this chamber's main computer console, they trigger a proximity alarm, causing the lights to dim and the screens to glow red. The familiar, raspy voice of Evandrian echoes out of speakers throughout the room.

"Your meddling has incurred a price. You seem untroubled by the danger you expose yourselves to, but what about danger to others?" Arcs of electricity within the translucent central chamber illuminate the faces of huddled forms trapped within. They begin to shriek in terror, unsure of their fate. "You did this! The blood of innocents is upon your hands!" Evandrian screams, but quickly regains his composure. "I am not a barbarian who raids property. I am not a savage who murders blindly. I give you a chance to save these poor souls: lay down your weapons and surrender. What say you?"

Evandrian has shackled nine scientists within the containment chamber and initiated a dangerous power-feedback loop within the crystal. The PCs have 3 rounds to defuse the situation before the trap detonates, killing the scientists inside.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Sense Motive check detects that Evandrian is hesitant to carry through with such a senseless act. If a PC's result exceeds this DC by 5 or more, she gets the impression that Evandrian, if presented with a strong case that would allow him to retain his honor, might accept a way out of this impending mass homicide. Currently, Evandrian's attitude toward the PCs is hostile, and a PC can attempt a Diplomacy check as a full action to improve Evandrian's attitude by one category. Only one PC can attempt this check per round, but one other PC can use the aid another action (also a full action) to help each round. The initial DC of this check is 35, and the PCs can't increase Evandrian's attitude by more than one category per check. Once the PCs make Evandrian unfriendly, the DC to further sway the Aeon Guard specialist decreases to 30, and once the PCs make Evandrian indifferent, the DC decreases to 25.

During this time, Evandrian states again and again that the PCs

NEVER SURRENDER

In the unlikely event that the PCs actually lay down their weapons and surrender to Evandrian, he steps into the lab a few moments later and deactivates the electrode chamber. He then puts manacles on the PCs and marches them to the detention block (area **D7**) to await Zolan's return. From here, the PCs will have to think of a clever escape before the sardat has them executed.

Surrendering could also be a gambit to trick Evandrian into freeing the hostage scientists. If the PCs attack the Aeon Guard specialist after he shuts down the power surge, he activates his cloaking field, reinitiates his death trap, and flees the lab.

must surrender. It might seem that he is fiercely loyal to Zolan Ulivestra, but if the PCs can present information to the Aeon Guard specialist that proves the sardat has been performing acts treasonous to the Aeon Throne, they might be able to convince him to leave Aurelos peacefully. If the PCs mention Zolan's illicit research on the asteroid and show Evandrian Oliviana's hologram diary from area **D1b**, they gain a +2 circumstance bonus on one Diplomacy check to change his attitude. If they transmit Zolan's personal data module from area **D6** to the computer console here, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to one Diplomacy check. Finally, if they display the fragments of Parept Ameondria's family insignia from area **D10** and explain what they learned from the SV data module from area **D6**, they gain a +5 circumstance bonus to one Diplomacy check. These circumstance bonuses can be applied to the same check or to separate checks.

If the PCs increase Evandrian's attitude to indifferent, he ceases demanding that the PCs surrender and the speakers audibly cut off. A moment later, the electrodes power down and the PCs can easily free the captive scientists. Evandrian still protects Zolan in **Event 7**; he doesn't believe outsiders should be allowed to attack the Azlanti Star Empire without reprisal, and he wishes for the sardat to face the Aeon Throne's justice. If the PCs

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increase Evandrian's attitude to friendly, he still deactivates his death trap but then returns to New Thespera on a starship he has hidden on another asteroid; this leaves Zolan with only two loyal Aeon Guards to fight alongside him in **Event 7**. Evandrian returns to Aurelos after the PCs depart to investigate Zolan's misdeeds.

Alternatively, the PCs can shut down the power surge or free the hostages before time runs out. To do either, a PC must override the safety protocols that keep the containment chamber's door shut by succeeding at a DC 25 Computers check using one of the lab's consoles. Using an Aurelos key card (such as the one Oliviana carries) grants a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. A PC can also open the door by succeeding at a DC 22 Engineering check or by breaking it (hardness 10, HP 15, break DC 24).

With access to the chamber's interior, a PC can detach the electrodes from the polyhedron by succeeding at a DC 20 Engineering or Physical Science check, rip them free by succeeding at a DC 18 Strength check, or destroy them (hardness 10, HP 8), though they are immune to electricity damage. Each time a PC physically touches the electrodes (either trying to detach them or striking them with a melee weapon), she takes 4d6 electricity damage (Reflex DC 13 half). Once the electrodes are detached, a PC can open the polyhedron and bleed off the extra energy from the crystal within by succeeding at a DC 24 Engineering or Physical Science check or a DC 19 Mysticism check. This renders the containment chamber safe.

If the PCs would rather free the hostages instead, they must first let the prisoners out of their shackles. A PC can do so by succeeding at a DC 25 Engineering check or, as these shackles are keyed to the same security chip as the shackles in area **D7**, automatically by using that chip. However, due to their panicked state, many of the scientists are frozen in fear. A PC who succeeds at a DC 21 Diplomacy or Intimidate check motivates the hostages to snap out of their terror and exit the containment chamber; human PCs who are wearing Azlanti armor or clothing take a -2 penalty to a Diplomacy check but gain a +2 circumstance bonus to an Intimidate check here.

Any hostages within the containment chamber at the end of the third round are automatically killed by the resulting blast. Each PC still in the chamber when this happens takes 8d10 electricity and fire damage (Reflex DC 17 half).

Treasure: If the PCs stop the power surge, they can retrieve the crystal from within the polyhedron. With a successful DC 18 Engineering or Mysticism check, it can be installed as a standard *resonant larynx* magitech augmentation (*Starfinder Adventure Path #8: Escape from the Prison Moon* 45).

Development: If the PCs rescue the scientists, some of who are Azlanti and some who are non-human, they are grateful. A few of them are familiar with Mrrgulbr's theories on activating the *rune drive* and can help the PCs download the appropriate

information onto the control-harness datapad. None of the scientists, not even the Azlanti, seem like they might betray the PCs to their overseers, and they all agree to wait here until given the all clear, some stumbling off to the break room (area **E3b**) for a brief nap.

Story Award: If the PCs save the hostages, award them 1,600 XP. If the PCs increase Evandrian's attitude to friendly, award them an additional 1,600 XP.

E4. FIELD STABILITY LAB

A single high-tech cylindrical device takes up the majority of this laboratory, powered by a small reactor set against the eastern wall. A set of steps leads up to an opening in the cylinder, which looks like it holds seats for several humanoid creatures. A plastic door opens in the western wall just beyond a staircase leading down into the floor, and a hallway exits to the east.

Before the PCs arrive, the scientists who were working here had been taken hostage by the Aeon Guard specialist Evandrian to be the victims of his death trap in another laboratory (see **Event 6**).

The western door leads to a small lavatory (area **E4a**) that hasn't been cleaned in some time.

The cylindrical device mimics the strain that faster-than-light travel might place on a starship and its crew. With only limited information about how the *rune drive* actually achieves its speeds, the scientists have been running a gamut of scenarios, not all of which are safe. After entering parameters into the computer console (in area **E5**, which is located beneath the device) and closing the hatch on the device, the scientists retreat to a safe distance. With no living creatures volunteering to be part of the tests, the researchers have been forced to use sturdy robots (see area **E5**). While the robots have yet to be destroyed, the scientists can get only so much applicable data from tests on them. They are reluctant to tell Zolan this fact, as it might result in them being forced to perform tests on themselves before the sardat fetches unwilling subjects from elsewhere. A self-contained reactor near the eastern wall powers the testing device.

A disabled powered cart sits nearby, like the one in area **D4**. It too can be repaired with 1d4 hours of work and a successful DC 22 Engineering check, and it functions as an exploration buggy (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 228) that has a speed of 10 feet and is able to hold only a driver and one passenger.

E5. THE PIT (CR 8)

A steep set of metallic stairs descends into a wide chamber directly under some kind of massive technological device. Cables and wires run down from the device and along the eastern wall to a computer console in an alcove to

the south. A heavy blast door can be lowered to seal off this alcove.

This pit grants access to the underside of the testing device in area **E4** to make necessary repairs. The walls and floor here are made of sturdy cement instead of the white polymer used within the rest of the facility. When closed, the blast door (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28) provides protection for the computer console against any catastrophic malfunctions of the testing device.

Creatures: The current test subjects, two Azlanti battle robots, are kept in this pit when not in use. They attack any non-Azlanti they see unless given an order not to by an Azlanti. Fooling the robots requires a PC to succeed at a Disguise check opposed by both of their Perception checks.

AZLANTI BATTLE ROBOTS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

HP 90 each (see page 60)

TACTICS

During Combat The Azlanti battle robots favor their disintegrator beams and tend to make full attacks when engaging in melee combat.

Morale Each automaton fights until reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points, at which time it charges at the PCs, hoping to catch as many as possible in its self-destruct blast radius.

Development: The PCs can download the needed data onto the control-harness datapad from the computer console here with a successful DC 25 Computers check.

ACTIVATING THE RUNE DRIVE

Once the PCs have the necessary data downloaded into the control-harness datapad and return to area **D8**, they can figure out what to do with the *runes drive*, with the help of the vilderaro scientist Mrregulbr (see area **D7**). After a few moments of perusing the data, a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Mysticism or Physical Science check concludes that if the *runes drive* were to be activated, the *aeon stone* connected to the Aeon Throne (see area **D8**) would begin to act like a powerful kind of Drift beacon. Azlanti scientists could easily reconfigure their Drift engines to be able to travel to the *runes drive*'s location in a matter of days. It's also possible that someone sitting on the Aeon Throne would be able to control the *runes drive* once it has been activated. Once established, this link could take months, possibly years, to sever. While this is another reason to not allow the *runes drive* to remain in the Star Empire's hands, it also means that the PCs can't simply use the device themselves. Mrregulbr or another scientist can inform the PCs of this information should they fail the check.

In addition, the collected data gives the PCs a general idea of how the *runes drive* is supposed to work. In

simple terms, the *runes drive* operates by "rewriting" the underlying code of the universe in a localized area, altering reality around a starship equipped with the drive. Such a vessel could, in theory, travel almost instantaneously from Aurelos to Absalom Station by manipulating the nature and space-time coordinates of the universe itself in an area surrounding the ship. It is unclear how this would affect any living creature onboard that ship, but there is no data that the ancient Azlanti who used it suffered ill effects. Unfortunately, due to a slight miscalculation in their astrogation, the original pilots of the *Royal Venture* crash-landed on Nakondis all those centuries ago.

While studying the data, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Engineering or Mysticism check has a flash of a radical idea. Mrregulbr can aid a PC on this check or, alternatively, she can put forth this idea herself if the PCs fail the check. It should be possible to use the *runes drive*'s reality-manipulating power to rewrite its connection to the Aeon Throne, forming a feedback loop between the two items and essentially overloading and "burning out" the *runes drive*'s unique *aeon stone*. This would permanently render the *runes drive* inert while also severing its link to the Aeon Throne. This plan wouldn't generate enough energy to get a ship from one point in space to another, but it could provide another benefit; if installed on the PCs' starship before setting the plan in motion, the *runes drive* could instantaneously "replace" the vessel with an upgraded version. Mrregulbr wryly notes that such improvements might be necessary to escape from Azlanti space once they get off the asteroid.

It takes less than 30 minutes for the PCs (or Mrregulbr and the other scientists) to enter a handful of equations into the control harness console that will alter the *runes drive*'s mystical connection to the Aeon Throne. Once these adjustments are made, the *runes drive* begins to hum and glow with a faint radiance from within. The PCs now need only connect it to their starship's power core to take advantage of its reality-altering power. However, they will soon find that an obstacle stands in the way of their return to their vessel (see **Event 7** on page 36).

The captive non-Azlanti scientists the PCs have rescued so far (including Mrregulbr) plead with the PCs to get them off the asteroid. They fear Zolan's return and the retribution he will likely enact on them if the PCs abscond with the *runes drive*. There are a total of eight non-Azlanti scientists (if none of them died in **Event 6**), as well as the android Erio. If the PCs failed to save the hostages during **Event 6**, only Erio and Mrregulbr remain. The Azlanti scientists are confident they will be fine, and though they are thankful the PCs rescued them, they show obvious distaste about the thought of sharing the close quarters of a starship with "lesser beings," especially if any of the PCs are non-human. The PCs likely have room in their cargo holds for the scientists if they don't have any guest quarters. If the PCs' starship has neither, the scientists are happy to stand in the corridors or anywhere

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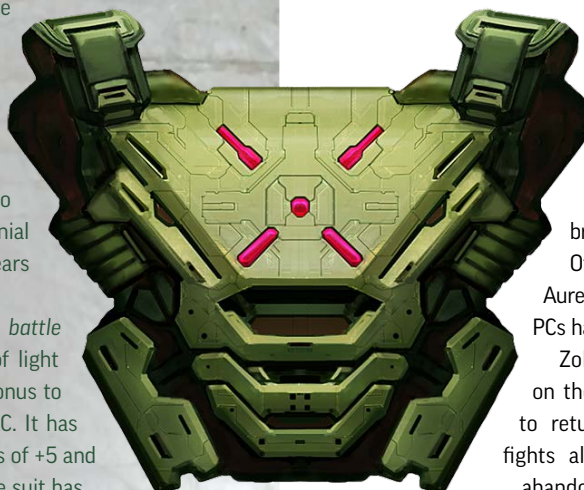
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AZLANTI ROYAL BATTLE REGALIA

Zolan's minions took Parept Ameondria's armor from the *Royal Venture* and turned it over to him when they left Nakondis. Extremely rare, suits of *Azlantian royal battle regalia* are reserved for the upper echelons of Azlanti nobility and are usually marked with insignia of the wearer's lineage. When caught, any non-Azlantian audacious enough to don one of these ceremonial suits is tortured for years before being put to death.

A suit of *Azlantian royal battle regalia* is a 7th-level suit of light armor that provides a +7 bonus to EAC and a +8 bonus to KAC. It has a maximum Dexterity bonus of +5 and no armor check penalty. The suit has 4 upgrade slots, one of which can be used only to hold an *aeon stone*. The wearer gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidation checks against Azlanti. Finally, each suit has a special contingency mechanism that activates once per day when its wearer is reduced to 15 or fewer Hit Points, whisking him away to a spot he visualizes as if he were targeted with a *dimension door* spell. A suit of *Azlantian royal battle regalia* costs 8,000 credits (though it is sold only in the Azlanti Star Empire to members of the nobility) and has 1 bulk. Though it is a magic suit of armor, it doesn't count as a worn item.



AZLANTI ROYAL BATTLE REGALIA

else that is out of the way. See Concluding the Adventure on page 39 for more details on where the PCs can drop off these scientists.

EVENT 7: THE SARDAT ARRIVES (CR 7, 8, OR 9)

As the PCs rush back to their starship to install the charged *rune drive*, they finally come face-to-face with the architect of their troubles. This confrontation takes place on the bridge across the chasm in area **C2**. Any fugitive scientists that are accompanying the PCs hide out in area **C3** as this climactic battle takes place.

If the PCs aided Erio in regaining his mind earlier, the android meets them as they pass through area **C6**. He warns them that Zolan Ulivestra has returned to Aurelos and is awaiting them

on the retractable bridge. He hands the PCs two *mk 2 serums of healing* that he scrounged from the lounge and says he will keep an eye on the scientists while the PCs confront the sardat.

Creatures: While the PCs were scrambling between Aurelos's various labs and rewriting the *rune drive*'s programming, Zolan Ulivestra returned from New Thespera in his space yacht, the *Starrunner*. Seeing an unauthorized vessel on the landing bay, the sardat feared the worst.

Unable to contact Oliviana (assuming the PCs defeated her), Zolan reaches out to Evandrian. If the Aeon Guard specialist is still alive and still loyal to the sardat, he swiftly briefs Zolan on the situation. Otherwise, Zolan is able to link up to Aurelos's computers and learn that the PCs have infiltrated his facility.

Zolan hopes to intercept the PCs on the bridge in area **C2** as they try to return to their vessel. Evandrian fights alongside Zolan, unless he has abandoned the sardat (see **Event 6**), in which case Zolan is instead joined by two Aeon Guards. If Evandrian is dead, however, Zolan is alone. After destroying the bridge's eastern control

panel, Evandrian (or the two Aeon Guards), drags a pair of metal crates from area **C3** to the western edge of the bridge, taking cover behind them. If Evandrian sustained any damage during his previous encounter with the PCs, he has received enough healing to be at full health.

AEON GUARDS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

HP 48 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive 6*)

TACTICS

During Combat The Aeon Guards begin combat by hurling grenades at the PCs from behind cover and then shoot at any PCs who make ranged attacks or cast spells at Zolan. If a particular PC consistently hits Zolan with a ranged attack, one of the Aeon Guards performs the covering fire action against that PC to grant Zolan an additional +2 bonus to AC.

Morale The Aeon Guards fight to the death.

EVANDRIAN

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male Aeon Guard specialist (*Starfinder Alien Archive 6*)

HP 102

TACTICS

During Combat From a position of cover behind the crates at the western edge of the bridge, Evandrian makes trick attacks against the PCs with his laser pistol, imparting

the off-target condition with his debilitating trick ability. When a PC enters melee combat with Zolan, Evandrian rushes to Zolan's aid (using his jetpack) and gets into a flanking position with the sardat, continuing to make trick attacks, but with his tactical knife this time.

Morale While Zolan lives, Evandrian fights to the death. If Zolan dies or his contingency activates, Evandrian attempts to flee when reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points, pausing only to deactivate the bridge at the console.

ZOLAN ULIVESTRA

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male Azlanti solarian

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

HP 108 RP 4

EAC 19; **KAC** 21

Fort +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +8; +2 vs. disease and poison

DR 5/-; **Resistances** acid 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee solar blade +17 (2d6+1d4+12 S; critical wound [DC 15])

Ranged red star plasma pistol +14 (1d8+7 E & F; critical burn 1d8)

Offensive Abilities flashing strikes, stellar revelations (black hole [25-ft. radius, pull 15 ft., DC 15], reflection, stellar rush [3d6 F, DC 15], supernova [10-ft. radius, 8d6 F, DC 15])

TACTICS

Before Combat Zolan stands at the western edge of the bridge, making no effort to conceal his presence, and forms his stellar mote into a longsword of green energy.

During Combat Zolan favors graviton mode, gaining a +1 insight bonus to Reflex saving throws. He takes the total defense standard action, gaining a +4 bonus to his AC, and dares the PCs to attack him. When they do, he uses his reflection stellar revelation to deflect incoming ranged attacks that miss him back at his enemies. When a PC gets halfway across the bridge, Zolan uses stellar rush, attempting to bull rush a foe off the bridge (if possible). He then fights defensively, slashing away with his solar blade. If a ranged attack misses Zolan while he is fighting defensively, he spends a Resolve Point to deflect this attack toward the nearest enemy. If the PCs have hunkered down in defensive positions, he uses his black hole revelation once he becomes fully attuned to pull them out into the open.

Morale Zolan fights fearlessly until he is reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points, at which point his armor's contingency triggers, whisking him back to the bridge of his ship, the *Starrunner*. The sardat then begins bombarding the asteroid from his vessel, looking to annihilate both the compromised *rune drive* and the PCs.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +14, Diplomacy +14, Mysticism +14

Languages Aklo, Azlanti, Common, Vesk

Other Abilities solar manifestation (solar weapon), stellar alignment

Gear *Azlanti royal battle regalia* (see sidebar on page 36; *cloudy blue rhomboid aeon stone* [Starfinder Adventure Path #8: *Escape from the Prison Moon* 44], deflective reinforcement, filtered rebreather, infrared sensors), red star plasma pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), *least gluon crystal*, Aurelos key card

Development: Once the PCs have either defeated Zolan or his magic armor has teleported him to safety and there are no foes remaining on the bridge, the PCs can reach their vessel without any more roadblocks and install the *rune drive* (see Ignition! below). However, the asteroid begins to shake as either Zolan's ship, the *Starrunner*, or an imperial blockade begins blasting the facility (see **Event 8** or **Event 9**).

IGNITION!

Returning to the landing pad via the elevator platform in area **C1**, the PCs find their starship heavily damaged by strafing fire from either Zolan's ship or the Sovereign Harriers (see **Event 8** or **Event 9**). Fortunately, its power core is still functional, and if the PCs hurry, they can install the *rune drive* onto their vessel before their ship is completely destroyed.

A PC must succeed at a DC 30 Engineering check to correctly attach the *rune drive* to her ship's power core and activate it. Up to two other individuals can use the aid another action to assist her, and each assistant can use the Mysticism skill in place of Engineering to provide this aid if he wishes. One of these assistants can be either Erio or Mrrgulbr; either one automatically provides that +2 bonus to the check.

Whether or not a PC succeeds at this check, after each attempt, the landing pad is barraged with starship weapon fire. Each creature aboard the PCs' starship must succeed at a DC 16 Reflex saving throw or get knocked around, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage and a -2 penalty to the next skill check to attach the *rune drive* (if applicable). Assume the scientists fail this Reflex save and are knocked unconscious after two of these barrages if they don't receive healing. If no PCs have the skills to attach the *rune drive* to their starship's engines, Mrrgulbr can do it after three attempts, though she requires healing (such as from a *mystic cure* spell, a *serum of healing*, or a healing channel from a mystic with the healer connection) to continue after the second attempt. If the PCs successfully saved the other scientists during **Event 6** or helped Erio regain his personality, their aid enables Mrrgulbr to succeed after only two attempts before she is knocked unconscious from the second barrage.

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Once the *rune drive* is attached to the power core of the PCs' starship and activated, a shimmering rainbow of energy engulfs the vessel. The PCs experience a sense of vertigo and the feeling of being in two places at once before reality snaps back into place. Any damage the PCs' starship sustained is completely repaired, and the ship has been upgraded to a tier 6 vessel. Allow the players to make any changes they wish to their ship's configuration without accounting for supplies or availability. The players can install any upgrades they can afford with their new Build Points, even if such an item is normally restricted, or they can completely rebuild their ship from scratch.

In addition, the *rune drive* is now quiet and is no longer glowing. It appears to be no more than a cube of dull metal, but it still holds the potential for galaxy-shattering technomagical breakthroughs if placed in the right hands.

Even with a newly upgraded starship, the PCs are not out of danger. To fully escape the asteroid and Azlanti space, they need to confront Zolan's personal ship, the *Starrunner* (see **Event 8** below), or a gauntlet of Azlanti fighter craft (see **Event 9** on page 39).

EVENT 8: FROM THE STARRUNNER'S BRIDGE (CR 7)

When Zolan was reduced to 15 or fewer Hit Points during his battle with the PCs, his armor's contingency teleported him to the bridge of his space yacht, the *Starrunner*. Even if the PCs

reduced him to 0 or fewer Hit Points, the sardat receives enough healing from his crew to lead them into starship combat.

If the PCs somehow divested Zolan of his armor during their fight or completely disintegrated his body, the crew of the *Starrunner* flees the area, leaving the PCs to deal with Sovereign Harriers from the Imperial Fleet who were passing by (see **Event 9**).

Starship Combat: When the PCs take to the sky in a pristine vessel he had just blasted nearly to pieces, Zolan suddenly grasps the significance of this event. His fury boils over at the fact that outsiders achieved what he could not. Zolan screams tirades directed at the PCs over comms while he orders his crew to destroy the PCs' vessel at all costs. At a crucial moment (like when he needs his pilot to get them out of poor positioning), Zolan invokes the glory of the Azlanti Star Empire with his vessel's imperial shrine to successfully perform the orders captain action. Zolan gives no quarter, and if his defeat seems imminent, he ensures the *Starrunner* is as close to the PCs' ship as possible when it autodestructs.

STARRUNNER

TIER 5

Vanguard Regnant (see inside front cover)

HP 50

Development: With Zolan finally defeated, the PCs can engage their Drift engines and leave Aurelos. If you felt

this encounter wasn't climactic enough, you can also have the PCs encounter the Azlanti vessels of **Event 9**, but keep in mind that the PCs haven't had time to repair any damage they sustained in their fight with the *Starrunner*, which could make an additional starship combat encounter very difficult.

If the PCs' ship is disabled in this combat, Zolan attempts to board it and retrieve the *rune drive*, even in its current burned-out state. This could be a repeat of the battle of **Event 7** (but on the PCs' ship instead) but if the sardat is heavily wounded, he instead sends the five members of his crew (use the statistics for rune wardens on page 17) to eliminate the PCs. The PCs have this chance to defeat Zolan and his crew and then escape, but there is a chance they could be captured. Ultimately, though, this outcome is beyond the scope of this adventure.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully defeat the *Starrunner* in starship combat, award them 3,200 XP for the encounter.

EVENT 9: RUNNING THE GAUNTLET (CR 7)

If the PCs dispatched Zolan on the asteroid's surface, the crew of his ship, the *Starrunner*, sends out a brief distress call to a handful of passing Imperial Navy vessels before fleeing to New Thespera. These four fighters intercept the PCs' starship before they can engage their Drift engines and demand they surrender to the Azlanti Star Empire. When the PCs refuse to do so, the Azlanti fighters open fire.

Alternatively, this event could occur after the PCs have delivered the rescued scientists to Outpost Zed (see Concluding the Adventure below) but before they can escape Azlanti space for good. In this case, the Star Imperators dispatched starships throughout the Nys system when they briefly felt the Aeon Throne's connection to the *rune drive* flare up and then die out. As they depart from the converted mining platform, the PCs are intercepted by a wing of fighters who don't recognize the PCs' vessel. They demand to be allowed to search the PCs' ship, and if the PCs refuse, they attempt to destroy the trespassers.

Starship Combat: Four Sovereign Harriers, iconic Azlanti fighter craft, attempt to prevent the PCs from escaping. A Sovereign Harrier flees the fight if it is reduced to 10 or fewer Hull Points. If the PCs successfully scan a Harrier, they realize that the vessels don't have Drift engines and must be part of a larger force. At the end of the third round of starship combat, the PCs' ship sensors pick up a carrier ship at extreme edges of their range. This gargantuan vessel, a Klokworx Nexus (*Starfinder Adventure Path #7: The Reach of Empire* 53), is more than a match for the PCs' starship, but they will be out of its weapons' range for at least 30 more minutes. While menacing, the Nexus is meant only to impress upon the PCs the dire need to flee as soon as they can.

SOVEREIGN HARRIERS (4)

TIER 1

Starfinder Adventure Path #7: The Reach of Empire 50

HP 35 each

Development: Once they have defeated or driven off the Harriers, the PCs have just enough time to engage their Drift engines. The Azlanti Star Empire reluctantly allows them to escape, not wishing to press this chain of events further into an interstellar incident.

If the Harriers disable the PCs' ship or the heroes foolishly stick around to battle the Nexus, they will surely be captured or killed. Captured PCs are brought to New Thespera to face judgment from the Star Imperators; what happens from there is beyond the scope of this adventure, but it could include a daring escape from the heart of the Azlanti Star Empire!

Story Award: If the PCs successfully defeat the Harriers in starship combat, award them 3,200 XP for the encounter.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once clear of Aurelos, many of the scientists request they be taken to Outpost Zed, where they can eventually make their way back to their home planets and families. Either Erio or Mrrgulbr assures the PCs they will keep the scientists safe and suggests that one day they might seek out the PCs when they are ready to escape the Star Empire on their own and seek asylum in the Pact Worlds, but until then, they will be aiding others to escape predicaments similar to their own. The trip from Aurelos to Outpost Zed takes 1d6 days in the Drift or 1d6+2 days using conventional thrusters.

After saying farewell to their allies on Outpost Zed, the PCs and Cedona can quickly return to Absalom Station with the burned-out husk of the *rune drive*. Cedona insists that the PCs present the device to the Stewards, who are happy to see the face of their former agent once again. They meet Major Deepadra Evosco face-to-face, who gratefully awards them each 5,000 credits for a job well done. Major Evosco lets the PCs know that Pact Worlds scientists will be studying the *rune drive* under Steward supervision and that they are welcome to provide any assistance they wish. However, it will be some time before researchers are able to crack the science underpinning the device's operation and re-create its reality-warping ability.

In the following weeks and months, little is heard from the Azlanti Star Empire about their failed annexation of Nakondis and their claim to the *rune drive*, but eventually, the Stewards receive a transmission from Outpost Zed that they share with the PCs. In it, one of the PCs' allies (Erio, Mrrgulbr, or Talmrin, for instance) relays news that the Star Imperators are essentially pretending the events on Nakondis, Gulta, and Aurelos never occurred—a tacit admission that Sardat Zolan Ulivestra overstepped his bounds and acted without the government's consent. The Pact Worlds don't have to fear reprisal from the Azlanti Star Empire... at least for the foreseeable future.

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“LISTEN, YOU’RE THE ONES WHO MESSED WITH A STAR-SPANNING EMPIRE AND MADE OFF WITH AN ARTIFACT THAT EVERYONE AND THEIR ELDERLY AUNTIE WOULD WANT. BUT SURE, I’LL HELP YOU OUT. WHY NOT? IT’S NOT LIKE I CAME OUT TO THE VAST TO LIVE A QUIET LIFE WITH NO FUSS. NOPE, NOT ME. YOU’RE THE HEROES, RIGHT? LEMME TELL YOU THIS, HEROES, THERE ARE BIGGER THINGS IN THIS GALAXY THAN YOU AND ME, AND AT LEAST ONE OF THEM HAS YOUR SCENT. IT’S A BEING THAT CAN MANIPULATE TIME AND SPACE THE WAY A TODDLER PLAYS WITH TOYS. YOU’RE OUTTA TIME. LITERALLY.”

—THREXEN, SHIRREN INFORMATION BROKER

The Against the Aeon Throne Adventure Path ends when the PCs rob the Azlanti Star Empire of the prize of the powerful *rune drive*, but that doesn't need to be the end of these characters' stories. Further adventures await the heroes, some a direct result of their actions during the Adventure Path.

An Invitation: From their deeds, the PCs have gained a measure of fame. After all, no Pact Worlds citizen has visited the Azlanti Star Empire and returned to tell the tale. Soon, the PCs receive invitations to a gala event on the luxury resort asteroid of New Elysium in the Diaspora. Such a trip seems like the perfect way to relax after the harried events of the past few weeks, but all is not what it seems. Arriving at New Elysium kicks off the events of *Starfinder Adventure Path #10: The Diaspora Strain*, the first adventure of the Signal of Screams Adventure Path.

On-the-Job Training: After their return to the Pact Worlds, the PCs receive an invitation to formally join the Stewards, with Cedona sponsoring them every step of the way. During a training exercise on a distant planetoid in Near Space, the PCs are attacked by a band of mercenaries calling themselves the Bloody Claw. Their Stewards commander is struck down, and the heroes must rise to the challenge of getting themselves and the other rookie Stewards to safety. Once they have escaped or defeated the Bloody Claw, who seem to be mostly vesk on a religious crusade in the name of Damoritosh, the PCs must travel to the Veskarium and investigate this crusade to stave off an interstellar incident that threatens to reignite the war between the Pact Worlds and the vesk home system.

Outpost Inroads: Smugglers, scoundrels, and scouts—Outpost Zed is bustling with people who know valuable information about the Azlanti Star Empire, and the Pact Worlds could benefit from that knowledge. The Pact Council reaches out to the PCs with a request to return to Outpost Zed and establish contacts there, with the eventual hope of gaining eyes and ears throughout the Azlanti Star Empire. Establishing this spy network would give the Pact Worlds early notice if the Aeon Throne ever decides to attack, and it could also help local engineers and scientists expand their base of knowledge. To pull it off, the PCs have to establish themselves as important figures on the space station, supporting the downtrodden second-class Azlanti citizens there without tipping off the Star Empire.

A Place to Call Home: The PCs accompany Cedona back to the colony and help her get it back on its feet after the Azlanti attack. They don't have time to rest long, though, as disease begins spreading through the settlement. Cedona suspects it has something to do with the ancient crashed Azlanti ship where the *rune drive* was housed and asks the PCs to try to pinpoint the source. Hidden within the vessel's computers are references to a similar plague affecting the Star Empire generations before the Gap, and it's possible that only Azlanti resources can stem its tide on Nakondis.

Rush on Nakondis: Removal of the wreckage around the *Royal Venture* reveals an entrance to a strange cavern system and a massive underground lake. When explorers spot shining gems washing up on the lake's shore, interested parties come in droves to the planet, staking claims and causing all kinds of trouble. However, the prospectors begin to disappear under mysterious circumstances, and the PCs are asked to investigate. What dangerous creature lurks beneath the lake's placid surface?

Turncoat: Sardat Zolan Ulivestra's covert actions have sent ripples across the normally stable Azlanti Star Empire. These internal issues rise to a boiling point when another sardat, Alios Lyceatra, sends a message to Absalom Station stating that she wishes to defect. Citing the PCs' experience, the Stewards ask them to travel to a neutral planet to assist Alios but warn them to beware of treachery. While the sardat is honest about her motives, her former second-in-command, Ushafa, has brought along a complement of Aeon Guard and Imperial Fleet ships to stop the traitor to the Aeon Throne.

Two Dogs, One Bone: The Kresap system is a collection of six planets with a dozen colonies and few strategic resources. Recently, a collection of catastrophes—spacefaring marauders, a drug crisis that killed nearly the entire population of a moon, and a radioactive comet passing close to the system's sun—has placed great strain on its government and social programs. Desperate, the government turns to the nearby Azlanti Star Empire for help, volunteering to become a vassal of the imperium. This news reaches representatives of the Pact Council, who see an opportunity to gain and maintain a foothold near Azlanti space, so they ask the PCs to travel to Kresap to convince the ruling body there to become a protectorate of the Pact Worlds instead. The heroes must engage in a series of diplomatic tasks to win over Kresap's leaders and thwart further Star Empire expansion.

What If the PCs Lose? If Sardat Zolan Ulivestra wrests control of the *rune drive* back from the PCs, he doesn't kill them, but merely gloats over their failure. He takes the PCs captive and transports them back to New Thespera, where he presents his findings to the Aeon Throne. Azlanti scientists are quickly able to replicate the technology and begin installing it into various Imperial Fleet battlecruisers, putting the entire galaxy within the Star Empire's grasp!

Meanwhile, to avoid becoming slaves, the PCs must escape their confinement in the sardat's luxurious palace. Once out of their cells, they have to figure out a way to steal a starship and take off from the planet's surface, all while being hunted by every loyal Azlanti ready to collect the bounty on the PCs' heads. The PCs are in the heart of enemy territory, but perhaps they can discover a friendly face or two, though it won't be easy. Chances are that if they make it back to Absalom Station, they find it under the thumb of an entire platoon of Aeon Guards, with the rest of the Pact Worlds ready to fall!

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AZLANTI VENGEANCE

Sardat Zolan Ulivestra has been humiliated. His defeat at the hands of the PCs puts his legacy in a dire position. He was the last of his line, and no other Azlanti nobles are willing to stand up for him or his actions. Word of the noble's death soon reaches the ears of his mother, along with the names of the PCs. While Zolan's name is being dragged through the mud in the noble circles on New Thespera, Duxillar Irestomae Ulivestra has begun planning her revenge.

The duxillar rules over the planet Aeshar, a mineral-rich world in the Danskon system. Irestomae is extremely wealthy, holding a number of lucrative trade deals with various Azlanti corporations for the world's resources. She conducts many of these business dealings at her planetside palace, a sprawling estate called Plumage that spans a multihued waterfall crashing down into an indigo sea. From there, Irestomae works to make the PCs' lives a living hell, focusing her entire fortune on the problem. She begins by seeking information.

No matter where the PCs go after dealing with the *rune drive*, they soon run into **Elkira** (LE female Azlanti operative; use the mercenary commando on page 175 of *Starfinder Pact Worlds* with human traits, Bluff +25, and Culture +20). Elkira is an agent working for Ulivestra and masquerading as a Pact Worlds merchant named Dressen. She claims to have sought out the PCs based on their reputation, and she offers a simple but lucrative job secretly transporting a shipment of rare ores from the mines on Aeshar to a buyer at Outpost Zed. Dressen says she needs protection for her goods during the long haul and offers a healthy amount of credits, up to about 30,000, with half paid up front.

If the PCs refuse, Dressen hides a tracking beacon on the PCs' starship and gives the beacon's signal code to various marauders and pirates. Once these threats' constant harassment has weakened the PCs, she moves in to finish off the PCs.

If the PCs accept Dressen's offer, they accompany her to Outpost Zed, and Dressen is careful to seem forthright and honest for the entirety of the trip. She tells the PCs about a rival merchant who might try to stop the shipment, since the goods are incredibly rare and valuable. At a few points along the journey, including in the Drift, mysterious vessels attack the PCs' starship. Irestomae set up these encounters to add plausibility to Dressen's backstory, but the threats are never quite enough to significantly harm the PCs, their vessel, or the cargo. Dressen praises the PCs for thwarting these attacks, claiming she made a good choice of guardians. She's a fast talker and strives to allay any suspicions, since the plan is to keep the PCs on the hook until Irestomae can deal with them herself.

After the PCs arrive at Outpost Zed, the phony exchange starts normally. However, the "clients" picking up the ore are mercenaries (use the statistics for mercenary rookies from pages 174–175 of *Pact Worlds*) also on Irestomae's payroll. As the exchange proceeds, Duxillar Ulivestra arrives with Azlanti battle robots (see page 60) as backup. All the NPCs attack the PCs in an encounter of epic difficulty.

The duxillar aims to take the PCs captive, bring them back to Aeshar, and use them as slaves and playthings for as long as they survive. She's a canny combatant and uses her environment to her advantage. If she is outnumbered or outgunned, she repositions herself and strikes again once she has a clear advantage. Like most Azlanti nobles would, she uses her guards as expendable cover. Irestomae prefers to start the fight invisible, cast *slow* on enemy combatants, and then attack other spellcasters, using her spell grenade magic hack to cast *inject nanobots* on them. If something causes her to become visible, she uses *mirror image* for extra defense. Her armor has been modified with Aeon Guard technology to accept *aeon stones* in its upgrade slots, and her gear is the best her money can buy.

Irestomae fights as long as she can, but she is unwilling to die. If it looks like she is losing the battle, especially if she is injured, Irestomae flees, returns to her cruiser, and recovers as she waits to ambush the PCs in interstellar space. If she retreats, Duxillar Ulivestra harries the PCs throughout the galaxy in her starship, with mercenaries and other foes, such as assassin robots (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 108).

Irestomae's starship is a customized Vanguard Craftworks cruiser built for speed and defense (using systems found in "Ships of the Star Empire" on pages 46–53 of *Starfinder Adventure Path* #7). She uses it to pursue the PCs, but she doesn't ambush them. As the vessel approaches the PCs' starship, the duxillar hails them and, with usual Azlanti arrogance, threatens them and attacks. With the help of a mercenary support craft, she then attempts to disable the PCs' ship. If the fight goes in her favor, Irestomae brings her cruiser near the PCs' disabled vessel and attempts to board it. Again she attempts to capture the PCs to ensure the remainder of their lives involves little other than suffering. If the starship combat goes poorly, the duxillar retreats, ordering her mercenaries to cover her escape.

Irestomae stops only after she achieves her revenge for the death of her son or she dies. However, if thwarted in her attempts to capture the PCs several times, she changes her tactics. In this case, she decides to be satisfied with the PCs' deaths; her subsequent attacks take on this tone.

The PCs might learn that Duxillar Ulivestra's quest for revenge eventually ruins her. She expends her fortune and her reputation in the endeavor. Rather than blaming her, though, Irestomae's kin might decide to pick up where she left off.

IRESTOMAE ULIVESTRA**CR 10****XP 9,600**

Female Azlanti technomancer

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +19**DEFENSE****HP 140 RP 5****EAC** 22; **KAC** 23**Fort** +9; **Ref** +9; **Will** +13**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** ultrathin dueling sword +16 (3d6+12 S)**Ranged** *blasting called spellthrower hailstorm-class zero pistol* +18 (2d6+10 C; critical staggered [DC 19]) or frag grenade III +18 (explode [15 ft., 4d6 P, DC 19])**Technomancer Spells Known** (CL 10th; melee +18)4th (3/day)—*dimension door*, *greater invisibility*3rd (6/day)—*arcing surge* (DC 21), *dispel magic*, *instant virus* (DC 21), *slow* (DC 21)2nd (at will)—*inject nanobots* (DC 20), *mirror image***STATISTICS****Str** +2; **Dex** +5; **Con** +2; **Int** +8; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +3**Skills** Bluff +19, Computers +24, Mysticism +24, Sense Motive +19**Languages** Azlanti, Common, Draconic, Infernal**Other Abilities** cache capacitor (*keen senses*), magic hacks (spell grenade, tech countermeasures), spell cache (datapad)**Gear** freebooter armor III (*clear spindle aeon stone*, infrared sensors, *iridescent spindle aeon stone*), *blasting called spellthrower hailstorm-class zero pistol* with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each), frag grenades III (3), ultrathin dueling sword, *glove of storing* (holding a frag grenade III), *spell gems of magic missile* (5), datapad**ULIVESTRA STAR PALACE****TIER 10**

Huge cruiser

Speed 8; **Maneuverability** average (turn 2); **Drift** 1**AC** 22; **TL** 22**HP** 230; **DT** 5; **CT** 46**Shields** heavy 320 (forward 80, port 80, starboard 80, aft 80)**Attack (Forward)** super radiant cannon (2d6×10)**Attack (Port)** light aeon torpedo launcher (3d6)**Attack (Starboard)** light aeon torpedo launcher (3d6)**Attack (Turret)** *heavy aeon caster* (6d6)**Power Core** Nova Ultra (300 PCU); **Drift Engine** SignalBasic; **Systems** advanced long-range sensors, autodestruct system, basic computer, biometric locks, crew quarters (good), mk 4 armor, mk 4 defenses;**Expansion Bays** arcane laboratory, brig, guest quarters (2 luxurious), life boats (2), recreation suite (HAC)**Modifiers** +4 Computers (sensors only); **Complement** 26 plus 5 servants and 2 Azlanti robots**CREW****Irestomae Ulivestra (captain, 2 crew)** Bluff +19 (10 ranks), Computers +28 (10 ranks), gunnery +12 (+18 with *heavy aeon caster*), Mysticism +24 (10 ranks)**Engineers (2 officers, 2 crew each)** Engineering +19 (10 ranks)**Gunners (2 officers, 3 crew each)** gunnery +15**Pilot (1 officer, 2 crew)** gunnery +15, Piloting +24 (10 ranks)**Science Officers (2 officers, 2 crew each)** Computers +19 (10 ranks)**IRESTOMAE ULIVESTRA****THE RUNE
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IN DUE TIME

As the PCs are fleeing Aurelos and Azlanti space, the universe suddenly shifts around them. They find themselves back on the asteroid, ready to flip the switch that will burn out the *rune drive* and rewrite reality around them. Do they choose to perform the same actions? Or do they do something different? No matter their decision, the universe shifts once again, returning them to their starship. For a few hours after, they have two sets of conflicting memories of what occurred within the Star Empire.

A miffed time dragon is toying with the heroes.

Kellixtrian, a mature adult time dragon, has spent the last few hundred years collecting Azlanti artifacts. The dragon learned of the existence of the *rune drive* only mere moments before the PCs began "The Rune Drive Gambit." In the weeks that followed, Kellixtrian's many contacts throughout the galaxy informed him of the drive's destruction. Incensed over losing a piece of history, the dragon grabbed the prize of his collection—the *Possibility Timer*, an artifact Kellixtrian accidentally discovered in a cache of pre-Gap Azlanti antiques—to teach the PCs a lesson. The dragon employed the artifact to manipulate the PCs' personal timelines, but Kellixtrian soon realizes that significant events in their lives can't be permanently undone. Their decision regarding the *rune drive* marked their timelines indelibly.

Changing tactics, Kellixtrian instead alters smaller aspects of the PCs' lives. As they return to the Pact Worlds, the PCs find that they have friends and enemies they have never met before. Their memories have been shattered like a piece of glass and haphazardly put back together, though all the major decisions they have made in the course of their lives remain the same. As the PCs try to reconcile the pieces of this new universe in which they exist, reality itself begins to break down! Kellixtrian has tampered too crudely with the space-time continuum, endangering everyone and everything. Before the fabric of the universe unravels, the PCs must discover the identity of their new foe and wrest control of the *Possibility Timer* from him to set things right.

By examining their altered histories, the PCs can learn about a mysterious dragon spotted nearby at moments when the new reality diverges from their memories. They can eventually use clues from these sightings to track down several of Kellixtrian's agents, who can either be bribed or forced into revealing the location of the dragon's redoubt: a crumbling castle located in a demiplane abutting the mysterious Dimension of Time. The castle is a maze of time loops and dangerous paradoxes protecting Kellixtrian's hoard of artifacts.

When confronted, Kellixtrian uses the powers of the *Possibility Timer* to hinder the PCs, slowing them down and stopping time itself. The dragon then attacks the group, roaring all the while about the loss of the *rune drive*. Once the PCs defeat Kellixtrian, they can use the *Possibility Timer* to fix the dragon's meddling, though this means they have to

fight him again and again at earlier points in his personal time stream. Alternatively, they can research how to destroy the artifact and undo the harm it has caused, though doing so moves them back in time to the very first temporal incident, with only their memories as proof of their deeds!

THE POSSIBILITY TIMER

Created at some point during the Ancient Azlanti Empire of lost Golarion, the *Possibility Timer* is a crystalline hourglass, but in place of sand flows shining, solidified fragments of time. This artifact allows users to manipulate time. (See page 118 of *Starfinder Armory* for rules on artifacts.)

The artifact changes size to match the size of its user. Inverting the hourglass as a standard action activates it, allowing you to enact one of its effects via mental commands. Three times per day, you can activate the *Possibility Timer* to use *haste* or *slow* as a spell-like ability. The spell uses your level as its caster level, and the DC to resist the effect is equal to 20 + your Charisma modifier. In addition, once per week, you can activate the *Possibility Timer* to freeze time for everyone but you. When you do so, you can act normally for 1d4+1 rounds while no other creature can. While time is stopped, you are undetectable. You can't take damage from your environment and ongoing effects, but neither can you damage other creatures. In addition, you can't move, change, or harm objects you aren't already carrying or wearing. The duration of effects you create are relative to you and can affect only you and the objects you're already carrying or wearing. Effects targeting other specific creatures or objects have no effect but still consume charges or uses. If an effect that you create doesn't target a specific creature and has a lasting duration, the time spent in stopped time counts against that duration, but if part of the effect's duration remains after the time stop, the effect continues for that amount of time.

Up to five times per day, you can attempt to meddle with a creature's personal timeline while holding the *Possibility Timer*. To do so, you name or otherwise precisely identify a target and concentrate on that target for 10 minutes to shunt it forward or backward in time. If the target isn't on the same plane as you, this power fails. Otherwise, the first meddling shunts the target by 1d3 seconds with no saving throw; the target experiences this first effect as a brief skip in time or an intense feeling of déjà vu. A single target can be affected only once every 24 hours. When you meddle with a target you have affected before, she can attempt a Will saving throw (DC = 10 + twice the number of times the target has previously been successfully affected) to negate the effect. The second success shunts the target in time by 1 round, the third success 1 minute, the fourth 10 minutes, the fifth 1 hour, the sixth 8 hours, and the seventh 24 hours. A target shunted forward in time is effectively gone for the duration, while a creature

shunted backward can effectively be in two places at once, with everyone suddenly remembering the double's existence.

Once you have successfully employed the *Possibility Timer's* time-meddling power 20 times, you can choose up to seven targets, activate the artifact, and travel into their pasts. While in the past, you can't alter significant events (such as births and deaths), but you can coax acquaintances of a target to take different courses of actions that might have rippling effects on the targets' lives. The targets retain their original memories but might instantly find themselves in an "alternate" reality where much of what they know is wrong. While this might seem more disorienting than harmful, certain changes can lead targets into very dangerous situations. Once you have visited a target's past, you can't return to that point in the target's timeline.

To destroy the *Possibility Timer*, you must throw it into the same black hole three times. The first two times, it disappears over the event horizon and it reappears somewhere else in the same galaxy. If you have affected at least 50 targets with the *Possibility Timer's* time-meddling power, you can sense the general direction of the artifact.

KELLIXTRIAN CR 16

XP 76,800

Male mature adult time dragon

(*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 42)

CN Huge dragon

Init +13; **Senses** blindsense

(vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 120

ft., *detect magic*, low-light vision,

see in darkness; **Perception** +28

Aura alien presence (220 ft., DC 24,

staggered 2d4 rounds)

DEFENSE HP 280 RP 6

EAC 30; **KAC** 31

Fort +16; **Ref** +16; **Will** +21

Defensive Abilities void adaptation; **DR** 15/

magic; **Immune** cold, paralysis, sleep,

staggered; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 200 ft. (Su, clumsy)

Melee bite +29 (3d8+26 P)

Multiattack bite +23

(3d8+26 P),

2 claws +23

(3d8+26 S), tail

slap +23 (2d8+26 B)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Offensive Abilities breath weapon (55-ft. cone, 17d10 E, Reflex DC 24 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), crush (6d8+26 B)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th)

1/day—interplanetary teleport, vision

3/day—greater dispel magic, greater remove condition, modify memory (DC 23), retrocognition

At will—arcane eye, hologram memory (DC 21), mending, psychokinetic hand

Constant—detect magic

STATISTICS

Str +10; **Dex** +1; **Con** +7; **Int** +4; **Wis** +4; **Cha** +4

Skills Acrobatics +28, Computers +33, Culture +33,

Diplomacy +28, Life Science +28, Mysticism +33,

Physical Science +28, Piloting +28, Sense Motive +28

Other Abilities immortal, starflight (Mysticism)

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Azlanti,

Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal,

Vesk

Gear *Possibility Timer*, ring of sustenance



KELLIXTRIAN

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THE STEWARDS

"LOOK AROUND YOURSELVES. LOOK AT EACH OTHER. ALL OF YOU, EACH AND EVERY ONE, ARE HERE FOR THE SAME REASON: YOU SEE WE ARE GREATER TOGETHER. UNITED, WE ARE STRONGER THAN WE COULD EVER BE ALONE, AND ONLY UNITED CAN WE SURVIVE THE THREATS FACING OUR WORLDS. DESPITE THE DIFFERENCES THAT COULD TEAR US APART, WE CHOOSE TO JOIN FORCES. THIS IS THE VISION BEHIND THE ABSALOM PACT. WE ARE STEWARDS IN THE TRUEST SENSE OF THAT WORD, AND IT IS OUR CHARGE TO UPHOLD THAT NOBLE VISION."

—DIRECTOR VESHAK, CLOSING REMARKS,
PEACEWATCH COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

In a solar system of over a dozen worlds, filled with diverse species and competing interests, the Stewards' blue-and-gold armor is a symbol of neutrality, security, and unity. Stewards officers are a common sight on most Pact Worlds and protectorates, enforcing the Absalom Pact with diplomacy, resolve, and, when necessary, weapons.

HISTORY

The earliest days of Stewards history have been lost to time, but it is known that they originated on Verces millennia before the Gap, concurrent with the unification of that world's Ring of Nations. Most scholars agree that a series of devastating wars or social upheavals inspired both events, although only the obelisks of Vimal, one of Verces's nations, directly support this theory. Each obelisk bears the inscription "From strength unity / from unity strength / thus do we stand against chaos / thus do we honor their sacrifice" followed by a different engraved rune with a magical aura but no known meaning.

One such obelisk stands in Peacewatch, an ancient fortress in Vimal's Klebani Range from which the Stewards long kept watch over their home world. The organization stood independent of any one government, and even of personal ties to kith and kin, providing the neutrality necessary to police disparate nations often at odds with one another. Countless records document the Stewards' effectiveness as warrior-diplomats, ensuring each country's loyalty to the Ring of Nations while defending the whole against outside threats. The peace with which Verces endured the Gap's end is attributed to the Stewards and the discipline, knowledge, and training officers displayed—without the memory of how they came by such qualities.

When the Veskarium attacked the Golarion System, leading to the formation of the Absalom Pact, the Stewards' leadership saw a modern-day echo of the upheaval that must have led to the formation of their organization. With modern Vercite culture unifying the Ring of Nations, the Stewards chose to heed a higher call. The organization relocated its headquarters to Absalom Station and built a new fortress there called Bastion to serve as a base of operations. From there, the Stewards pledged to bring the unification and protection they had long provided for Verces to all Pact Worlds.

This pledge received a mixed reception, making for a challenging start for the repurposed Stewards. Many people objected to Vercite warriors declaring themselves to be protectors and enforcers for planets beyond Verces. Others suspected the Stewards of plotting to undermine the autonomy of planetary governments. Among these objectors, some were secretly concerned the Stewards would be too hard to bribe or otherwise influence. To address citizens' concerns, the Pact Council formally acknowledged the Stewards. A complex legal structure placed the Stewards in a formal role tied to the government but independent of it, giving the Stewards the leeway and authority necessary to perform their duties. Notably, the Pact Council required the Stewards to choose a director-general to sit on the Pact Council in an advisory capacity. The director-general

reports to the council and carries its decisions to the Stewards, who act on the council's decisions in good faith.

In the centuries that have followed, the Stewards have diversified their membership and built a reputation as a neutral party equally capable of negotiating a contentious trade dispute or obliterating a rogue fleet. The organization now maintains a base on most Pact Worlds. Even on planets where the group lacks a base, its officers can be found keeping the peace.

STRUCTURE

The Stewards' structure has three branches: Overwatch, a spacefaring fleet; Constabulary, the planetary police forces; and Ops, or special operations. A Stewards member starts as a neophyte, graduates as a deputy constable (or, in common parlance, an officer), and can gain ranks in the Constabulary or Ops branches, such as constable, agent, staff agent (an administrative post) or special agent (with less or no administrative duty), inspector, chief inspector, deputy director, and director. Overwatch has alternative ranks (see below). A decorated veteran of any rank might become a legate, an honorary title that indicates distinguished service. The organization also has a director-general, whom the Stewards elect from among active members serving on the Conclave of Legates (see page 48).

Hierarchy within the Stewards deviates from that of military or other police organizations in that the chain of command can be nonlinear. Any Steward can issue orders to lower-ranking officers as needed, and Stewards are expected to follow the orders of higher-ranking members. This structure derives from the fact that the Stewards are a flexible, modular, and mobile force. A leader has to work with whichever agents are available on location unless others can be quickly allocated.

At the same time, each branch has its own structure, so a Stewards commander avoids giving orders to officers from another branch when a counterpart in that branch is available. Further, an agent has a duty to speak up when orders conflict so superiors can make informed decisions.

CONSTABULARY

The Stewards' second branch is the Constabulary, the one most civilians associate with the group. Planetside facilities, police actions and investigations, and ambassadorial duties fall under the jurisdiction of this branch. The Stewards Constabulary considers its primary duties to be to aid, investigate, inform, and advise in support of local government, and takes direct action only when that government approves. Each Constabulary post has a chief, but such leaders might be of chief inspector rank or higher, depending on the station's size. A chief oversees all activity in their installation, and some Stewards of higher rank coordinate multiple facilities. Like Overwatch, the Constabulary has three directors.

OPS

The Stewards' third branch, called Ops, has only a loose structure within the organization. Ops teams form primarily based on need and often include Stewards from other branches as participants.

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These Stewards often have or gain special skills that can make them valuable in Ops. After proving themselves, such Stewards receive a lasting assignment to this branch, along with the rank of special agent. Ops agents work outside the normal Stewards hierarchy, undertaking unusual missions and acting as investigators, undercover agents, spies, strike-team members, and even saboteurs and assassins. When a special-operations team forms, it has a ranking Ops agent, usually a staff agent or inspector, to oversee it. Ops leaders who demonstrate capability in such supervisory roles can choose to continue similar duties. Many move into full-time Ops logistics positions.

Despite having only a loose structure within the Stewards, Ops does have a managerial unit of deputy directors officially considered to be part of the Constabulary. The reality is that this group intersects with all Stewards branches in the usual Ops fashion. This team, along with an administrative force of other agents, has the responsibility to collect and collate intelligence, identifying threats requiring special operations. The deputy directors of Ops report to the directors of the Constabulary, although some intelligence work and special operations involve Overwatch and its admirals. Ops hierarchy sounds complex, but many missions eschew red tape to respond to situations quickly, receiving approval only during or after the operation.

In addition, Ops agents can refuse orders from commanders in other branches without explanation if that explanation would compromise clandestine Stewards activities. Simply identifying oneself as an Ops agent is enough to reject an order without further question. The commander logs the refusal with the refusing agent's identification number. If further review becomes necessary, Ops will review the refusal and update the commander in question confirming whether it was sanctioned.

OVERWATCH

The starship fleet, formally titled Overwatch, is the Stewards' largest branch. The sheer amount of space within the Pact Worlds requires a substantial force to patrol and monitor, so the Stewards enjoy greater freedom to act in outer space. Overwatch ranks have different but equivalent titles, including lieutenant (equivalent to inspector), captain (chief inspector), vice admiral (deputy director), and admiral (director). A captain commands each Overwatch starship and reports to a vice admiral. In turn, vice admirals report to the three admirals who direct the fleet. The Stewards have three flagship vessels: the *Paramount*, the *Steadfast*, and the *Touchstone*.

CONCLAVE OF LEGATES

The highest honor any Stewards officer can receive is the title of legate. Only veterans who've served the organization well can gain this title, which is applied by popular vote, proving each legate's standing among peers and subordinates. The title carries no authority, but all Stewards know to respect legates' opinions, and honorees have the right to sit on the Conclave of Legates, an advisory body outside the normal Stewards hierarchy, even after retiring from service.

In addition to reviewing policy proposals and high-profile cases and intelligence, and giving advice to other Stewards commanders, the conclave also advises the director-general and other directors, helping guide the Stewards. This assembly maintains no fixed number of positions, but a typical meeting has around 20 legates. Although the conclave has no formal power, the group shapes Stewards policy and actions with a long-term perspective, highly skilled analysis, and wise oversight.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

The Stewards' director-general is not only the group's head officer, but also its ambassador to the



BASTION

Directorate and, therefore, the Pact Council. Although the director-general's duty is to ensure the Stewards work closely with the Pact Worlds' government, enforce its laws, and aid in government-sanctioned military and investigative operations, the director-general, like the Stewards as a whole, is not accountable to the Pact Council or the Directorate and instead serves the Pact itself.

FACILITIES

The Stewards maintain facilities or a presence on nearly every Pact World, integrated into their respective societies. The Stewards have access to the *Idari* but no permanent station there. The group also has no formal presence on Aucturn, but more special agents live there than even most Stewards realize.

MAJOR BASES

The Stewards have two major bases in the Golarion System. Both are important to the group, and both serve as training centers for new Stewards.

Bastion: The primary headquarters for the Stewards is a fortified structure called Bastion, located in Absalom Station's central dome. The base houses a director, an admiral, and the administrative staff for the director-general. It also hosts the Conclave of Legates and contains the nexus of the Draws, interplanetary portals that are key to the Stewards' success in controlling the system.

Although the Stewards have yet to come into conflict with the Pact Council or the Directorate, the group acknowledges the possibility. Further, the Stewards know that the Draws nexus is an asset that attracts all kinds of interest: covetous, innocent, and malicious. Bastion was therefore designed and built to withstand a siege, and it can even function as a self-contained space station if removed from Absalom Station.

Peacewatch: The Stewards' second-largest facility is Peacewatch, the group's original fortress high in the mountains of the Klebani Range on Verces. When the Stewards relocated to Bastion, the training that has taken place at Peacewatch for millennia continued, albeit with a much more diverse student body. Peacewatch focuses on education, and unlike Bastion, this fortress allows those planning on joining other organizations admission to its program, providing instruction in leadership, negotiation, strategy, and tactics. The psychological profiling required for entry weeds out the unscrupulous, and most graduates who don't join the Stewards end up as principled officers in planetary militaries or outfits such as the Knights of Golarion or the Skyfire Legion.

Peacewatch also stands as an ancient memorial. Members, having forsworn ties to kith and kin, can easily be forgotten by their own people and planets, so Stewards honor their own in the massive Hall of Remembrance, where every Steward's name is engraved upon their death. Originally, names were inscribed on the polished granite walls of the hall, but the countless names collected through the ages eventually filled all of the available space. Names are now engraved on panels layered over the walls, and each panel slides aside to allow names on lower surfaces to be seen. At the center is an obelisk of Vimal.

THE DRAWS

The Draws are critical parts of Stewards' operations and one reason for the success of their mission over the course of millennia—it is a teleportation network that permits the Stewards to transport staff and equipment among major installations. The original Draws were sophisticated teleportation stones located around Verces. During the Gap, a technomagical portal network harnessing conjuration magic and quantum space-folding tech replaced the stones; it remains in use today. The technology is likened to the elven *aiudara* of Castrovel and other worlds, but the Draws and the *aiudara* developed independently.

Despite the modern Draws' origins in the Gap, verthani Stewards responsible for maintaining them retained full knowledge of their function, construction, and maintenance procedures. This expertise enabled the Stewards to extend the network throughout the Pact Worlds and relocate the nexus to Bastion on Absalom Station. The system requires careful maintenance and oversight, leading the Stewards to employ one of the largest teams of technomancers in the system, each subject to legal and magical confidentiality measures.

The Draws allow each station to abide by treaty-based force limits, reinforcing Stewards' deference to local governments so long as they're upholding the Pact, and they eliminate the need for a station to house a force sized for every possible contingency.

RECRUITMENT

The skills and dedication required to become a member of the Stewards set a high bar. Those looking to serve must demonstrate their interest through a rigorous application process. Active agents sometimes encourage talented people to apply; such sponsorship works in an applicant's favor but is no assurance of admission.

Any Pact Worlds citizen can apply. However, the Stewards highly value proven expertise and morals, so the majority of accepted applicants have established reputations as diplomats, police or security agents, respectable adventurers, soldiers, and so on. Very few join the Stewards as a first job, and the rare exceptions are highly specialized people who fit into internal positions where training outweighs wisdom, such as the technomancers who maintain the Draws.

Those selected for admission go to Bastion or Peacewatch for training. New trainees, formally designated neophytes but affectionately referred to as "neos," reside within the base where they train. Their yearlong program is an intense, immersive affair. Excursions beyond the fortress are only for exercises. Otherwise, neos associate only with their classmates and instructors. Classes use various techniques to cover combat, de-escalation methods, fitness, language and cultural concerns, mental strength and calmness, and so on. Neos with exceptional abilities learn from mentors how to best leverage those assets as a Steward. During the last third of their training, neos participate in more specialized schooling that depends on which of the three branches they intend to enter, although only the most exceptional graduates enter Ops directly.

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Stewards' training is difficult enough that few candidates complete it. However, the organization holds no ill will toward those who drop out. Instructors counsel neos to recognize their potential while also considering the sacrifices, acknowledging that being a Steward is a commitment that not every neophyte can make. For those who step away, instructors provide recommendations and connections to other employment so that none are left worse off for having attempted to join.

Upon completing their education, neophytes graduate as deputy constables or deputies. The pivotal point of this commencement requires each would-be deputy to take an oath to the Stewards, forsaking all other allegiances, including those to home world, species, governments, social and religious organizations, and any other ties that have the potential to interfere with devotion to upholding the Pact. Avowed neutrality allows Stewards to operate without favoritism, a quality essential to their function. This renunciation is well known in the Pact Worlds and often romanticized or maligned among non-Stewards, but Stewards see it as trading one set of loyalties for stronger lifelong bonds with like-minded associates.

The education of Stewards officers is never complete. They are required to cycle back to Bastion or Peacewatch every few years for refresher courses and advanced training, as well as to aid in coaching neos. This way, experienced agents stay in touch with the group's founding principles and new blood.

ASSIGNMENTS

Deputy constables work alongside a constable or other higher-ranking agent for a year or more before being promoted to a full-fledged constable. Constables' actual duties depend on their branch. Overwatch Stewards serve as starship crew. Constabulary deputies begin with patrol assignments, starting with guard duties inside a station, then serving as backup for other light duty and rotating between facilities for breadth of experience. The Ops branch doesn't ordinarily take on deputies, but those few who end up in Ops help with special-operations logistics.

A Steward's daily routine also varies depending on their branch. Overwatch Stewards work according to their ship's schedule and duty roster, with responsibilities varying from maintenance to space-lane patrol. Those of the Constabulary walk regular beats, gather information, support local law enforcement, de-escalate conflicts, and facilitate negotiations. Both branches support Ops for special missions. Ops agents have the most varied and challenging work, including investigating threats; performing covert reconnaissance; and engaging in direct action such as assassination, infiltration, and sabotage.

Each officer is expected to communicate and record operational preferences. Officers stay in roles that match their abilities and personalities. People who perform well together are likewise kept together when possible.

Orders are often given in terms of an objective, with agents left to achieve a goal in whatever way they see fit, provided they maintain the Stewards' principles. Stewards cooperate with a variety of external operators, such as adventurers,

bounty hunters, corporate agents, explorers, mercenaries, and countless others necessary to achieve their aims. As a result, they have broad contact networks. Few realize the extent of such partnerships, which can make it difficult to escape the Stewards' sphere of influence—and their grasp.

The Stewards also maintain a staff of non-Stewards employees. Most such personnel work at Bastion, with minimal complements at other installations. Some neos who don't complete training find fulfillment in such positions, but most civilian staff come from the general populace.

LEADERS

The Stewards are led by three admirals, three directors, and a director-general.

ADMIRALS

Three admirals command the Stewards fleet.

Echo-7 (NG male android operative) emerged from the Gap enslaved aboard the *Void Shark*, a light freighter in orbit around Absalom Station. He made such a compelling case for his freedom that the ship's captain, Takiko Tanakashi, granted it. Echo-7 remained aboard the *Void Shark*, defended Absalom Station against the Magefire Assault, and later, as the ship's captain, fought the vesk invasion. When the Stewards took up their calling, Echo-7 was among the first applicants and graduates. He has remained in service ever since, becoming an admiral and legate. From Bastion or the bridge of the *Paramount*, Echo-7 commands a portion of the Overwatch with responsibilities from Akiton sunward. Echo-7 has come up as a candidate for director-general, but thus far has refused nomination.

Grovok Dorgoda, "the Bug Hunter" (LN male vesk soldier) is a veteran who once battled Pact Worlds forces, then fought alongside them against the Swarm. He served on vesk warships as a gunner, acted as a marine in Veskarian assaults, participated in actions against the Swarm, and earned a command in the operations that brought that conflict to a close. During these latter battles, Grovok came to deeply respect the Pact Worlds' principles and to see the maintenance of the alliance with the vesk as essential. A true warrior at heart, Grovok is well aware of the value of diplomacy and the costs of war. He joined the Stewards to serve as a peacekeeper and keep watch for extrasolar enemies. Based in Trillidium on Bretheda, Grovok acts as an example of and voice for galactic cooperation.

Noor Irular (LN female kasatha technomancer) is the newest and youngest of the Stewards admirals. Noor grew up on the *Idari* and, when she came of age, joined the kasathan defense forces that took part in the war against the Swarm. In several engagements, Noor distinguished herself as a top-notch pilot and a brilliant tactician. She served under Grovok Dorgoda toward the end of the conflict, and came to see the vesk commander as a mentor. Grovok joined the Stewards, and Noor followed. When an admiral retired, Dorgoda recommended Noor for the position. She now serves from Triaxus in the city of Zo, supervising naval actions in the midsystem from Triaxus to Verces.

DIRECTORS

The Stewards have three directors.

Deepadra Evosco (NG female human envoy) gained academic fame from her research into cultures outside the Pact Worlds, including the Veskarium and Azlanti Star Empire, which led a Stewards special agent to sponsor her application. As an Ops agent, she analyzed extrasolar threats and helped produce much of the intelligence the Stewards now have on the Azlanti, the Unseen, and the Veskarium. Director Evosco supervises missions related to such menaces. She works from the Stewards station on the Liavaran settlement of Roselight, commanding actions in the outer system through a close working relationship with Admiral Dorgoda.

Kirnaxion (LN agender contemplative technomancer) left Ashok to join the Stewards nearly a century ago and aided in the exploration of and migration to the Burning Archipelago, helping to establish a Stewards station there in Dawnshore. Since then, Kirnaxion has risen in the ranks of the Stewards as a planning, research, and development genius. The contemplative, along with two other contemplative partners (Gnyvibia and Zusleggim), works in Bastion, supervising intelligence gathering, information storage, logistics, and technomagical innovation.

Veshak (N agender verthani mystic) is both the ranking Steward on Verces and the commander of Peacewatch. A Constabulary veteran and legate, they oversee the application process, training for neophytes and returning officers, and coordination of Peacewatch's daily activities and Stewards missions running out of the fortress. Most who work with Veshak admire the director, who is collaborative, forthright, and open minded. Veshak is also part of the Stewards team that oversees expansion of the Draws.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

The director-general sets the Stewards' overall agenda.

Lin Camulan (LG male korasha lashunta soldier), the current director-general of the Stewards, was raised in an Asana military family whose generations-long role in the formian-lashunta wars came to an end just as Lin came of age. Bereft of the only career he had considered, Lin decided to take up service in the Stewards. The acumen he displayed during the Swarm invasion propelled him through the ranks, earning him the title of legate and, eventually, the role he holds today. Lin is a no-nonsense leader who prefers action to debate and sometimes wishes he were still in the field.

THREATS

As the peacekeeping force for an entire star system, the Stewards monitor and respond to a variety of threats. The organization classifies threats into two broad categories: external and internal.

Three major external threats currently hold the Stewards' attention: the Corpse Fleet, the Azlanti Star Empire, and

the Swarm. The organization has long kept watch on Eox, and today the Stewards monitor Corpse Fleet activity as closely as they can. Another potential threat to the Pact Worlds is the Azlanti Star Empire. Through its contact network, the Stewards monitor imperial activities, looking for any hint that the empire has turned its gaze to the Golarion System. The Swarm poses the greatest threat to the Pact Worlds, and the Stewards gather intelligence on Swarm sightings, hoping to detect any possible incursion early enough that a larger military force can be assembled to confront it.

The list of internal threats is longer, and the Stewards maintain a watch list of organizations, individuals, locations, and other factors they have identified as potentially hostile to the Pact Worlds. This list includes extreme factions of the



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Augmented, Android Abolitionist Front, and Xenowardens, as well as fringe religious groups such as cults of the Devourer, the Elder Mythos, and other evil deities. Pirates of the Free Captains are on the list, but the Stewards prefer to deal with the most bloodthirsty brigands harshly as an example to the others.

Numerous smaller issues have come to the Stewards' attention, either raised by residents and local governments or identified as part of ongoing peacekeeping efforts. These range from the enigmatic Diaspora wyrms in the River Between and paramilitary activity within the Burning Archipelago's Asanatown, to illegal gas-mining efforts on Liavara and the establishment of a city of undead Eoxian refugees on the Brethedan moon of Thyst.



STEWARDS INFILTRATOR

STEWARDS INFILTRATOR

Ops Stewards undertaking special missions often have to gain access to sensitive information, protected stores, or specific individuals. Sometimes, this infiltration has to be subtle so the target, or those protecting it, remain unaware of the threat until it's too late. Stewards infiltrators learn how to engage in long-term undercover roles and quick, heist-style incursions.

ALTERNATE CLASS FEATURES

The Stewards infiltrator archetype grants alternate class features at 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 12th levels.

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING (EX) 2nd Level

You gain Culture and Diplomacy as class skills. For each of these skills that is already a class skill for you (or becomes a class skill) from a source other than this archetype, you learn to speak and read a new language. In addition, you can use Diplomacy in place of Intimidate for checks to demoralize and Culture for Life Science checks to identify humanoids and monstrous humanoids. When you fail a Diplomacy check to change a creature's attitude, the creature's attitude worsens only if you fail the check by 10 or more.

INFILTRATOR TRAINING (EX) 4th Level

You gain Bluff and Disguise as class skills. For each of these skills that is already a class skill for you (or becomes a class skill) from a source other than this archetype, you can learn to speak and read a new language. Alternatively, instead of learning a language this way, you can gain +2 insight bonus to one skill this archetype normally grants as a class skill.

In addition, you know how to establish a cover identity, obfuscating your Stewards connections. Your cover identity is of a single individual of your size and creature type, with a fake but established background. When using Disguise to take on the appearance of your cover identity, or when lying using Bluff to protect or supplement your cover identity, you treat the DC as 5 lower. People who meet you in your cover identity believe you to be that person until they learn otherwise. You can have only one cover identity at a time. Establishing or changing your cover identity takes 1 week.

INFILTRATOR GULE (EX) 6th Level

You can gain either Improved Feint as a bonus feat or improved demoralize from this feature. If you choose Improved Feint and later gain that feat from another source, you can switch this feature to grant you improved demoralize. Improved demoralize allows you to attempt to demoralize as a move action.

In addition, while in your cover identity, you can reveal your Stewards identity as part of an attempt to demoralize or feint against creatures unaware of that identity. This application of infiltrator guile is language dependent, and creatures that suddenly learn your Stewards identity must have reason to avoid, dislike, or fear the Stewards. As a full action, during which you can draw a weapon, you attempt to feint against or demoralize all foes within

60 feet of you who can see and hear you. If you do, roll once against a DC equal to the highest DC required to affect any one of those foes. If you feint and have the Greater Feint feat, you can apply its benefit to only one affected foe.

Revealing your Stewards identity carries risks. A creature who witnesses your Stewards identity can communicate it to others, compromising your cover. The GM can create consequences for having blown your cover identity. Further, creatures who know your Stewards identity can't be fooled by your cover identity.

DISGUISE EXPERTISE (EX) 12th Level

You can use the Disguise skill to make an impromptu disguise in 1d3 minutes, which can include programming a holoskin to aid you. These quick disguises don't stand up well to direct scrutiny, so someone who takes a move action to pierce your disguise treats the DC as 5 lower. In addition, you can use Disguise, taking the normal amount of time, to disguise yourself as a specific person.

STEWARDS STALWART

Stewards work well in teams. However, some Stewards have to work alone or with non-Stewards. These Stewards, called "stalwarts" by their comrades, undertake special courses to improve their self-sufficiency.

ALTERNATE CLASS FEATURES

The Stewards stalwart archetype grants alternate class features at 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 12th levels.

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING (EX) 2nd Level

See this feature in the Stewards infiltrator archetype.

MILITARY TRAINING (EX) 4th Level

You gain one of the following feats as a bonus feat, provided you meet all the prerequisites of the chosen feat: Advanced Melee Weapon Proficiency, Improved Unarmed Strike, or Longarm Proficiency. If you already have all the listed feats, you can choose a bonus combat feat instead. At 6th level, if you chose Improved Unarmed Strike at 4th level, you gain Improved Combat Maneuver. Otherwise, you gain the Weapon Specialization feat as a bonus feat for the same weapon type to which the bonus feat you gained at 4th level applies.

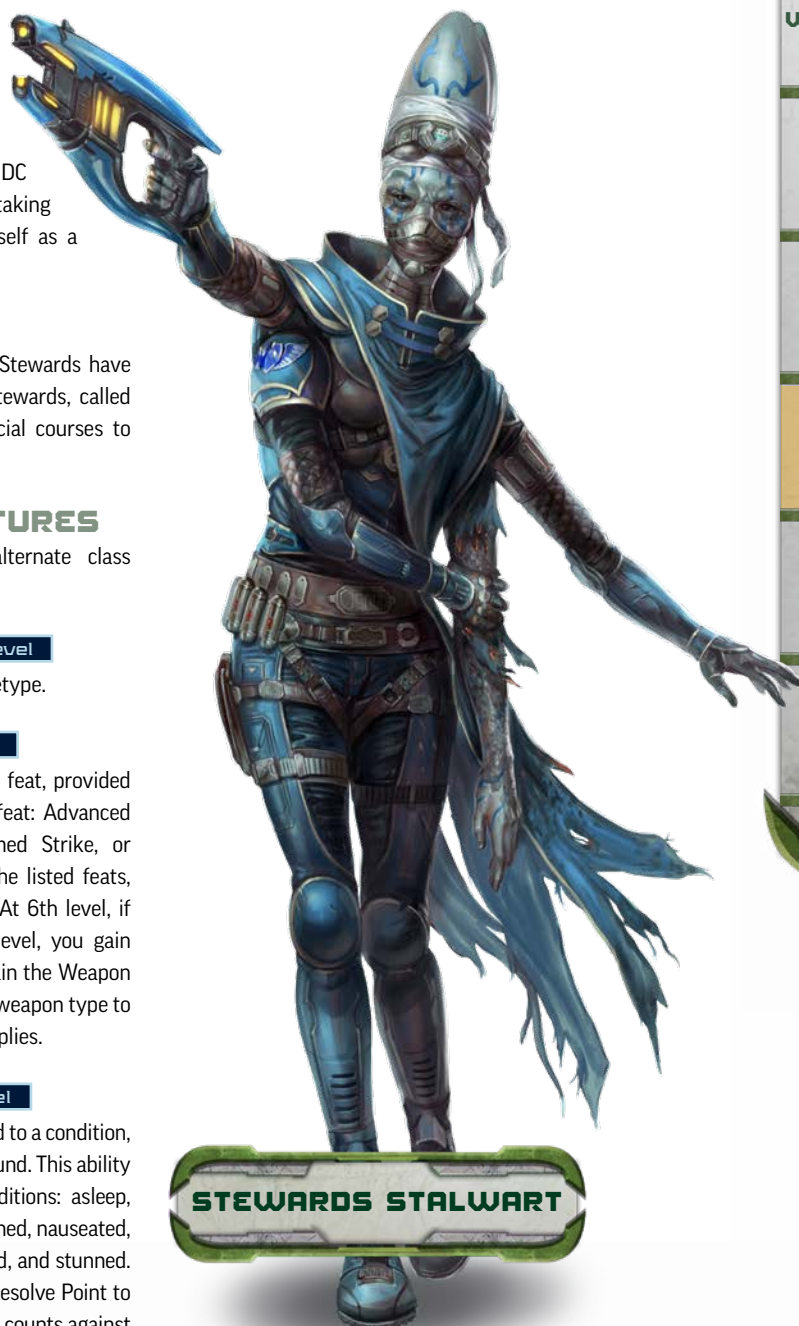
STALWART TENACITY (EX) 6th Level

Once per day, as a reaction when you're subjected to a condition, you can delay the onset of that condition for 1 round. This ability can be used to delay only the following conditions: asleep, confused, cowering, fascinated, fatigued, frightened, nauseated, panicked, paralyzed, shaken, sickened, staggered, and stunned. When a round of delay ends, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to extend the delay by 1 round. Time spent delaying counts against

the condition's duration, and if another effect ends the condition before the delay ends, the condition doesn't affect you further.

STALWART GRIT (EX) 12th Level

When you take damage from a significant enemy (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 242) while you still have Stamina Points, as a reaction you can reduce the damage you take by an amount equal to your level plus your key ability modifier. You can't use this feature if you're unaware of the enemy when the attack hits you or if you're flat-footed against the attack at the time. Once you benefit from this feature, you can't benefit from it again until you take a 10-minute rest to recover Stamina Points.



STEWARDS STALWART

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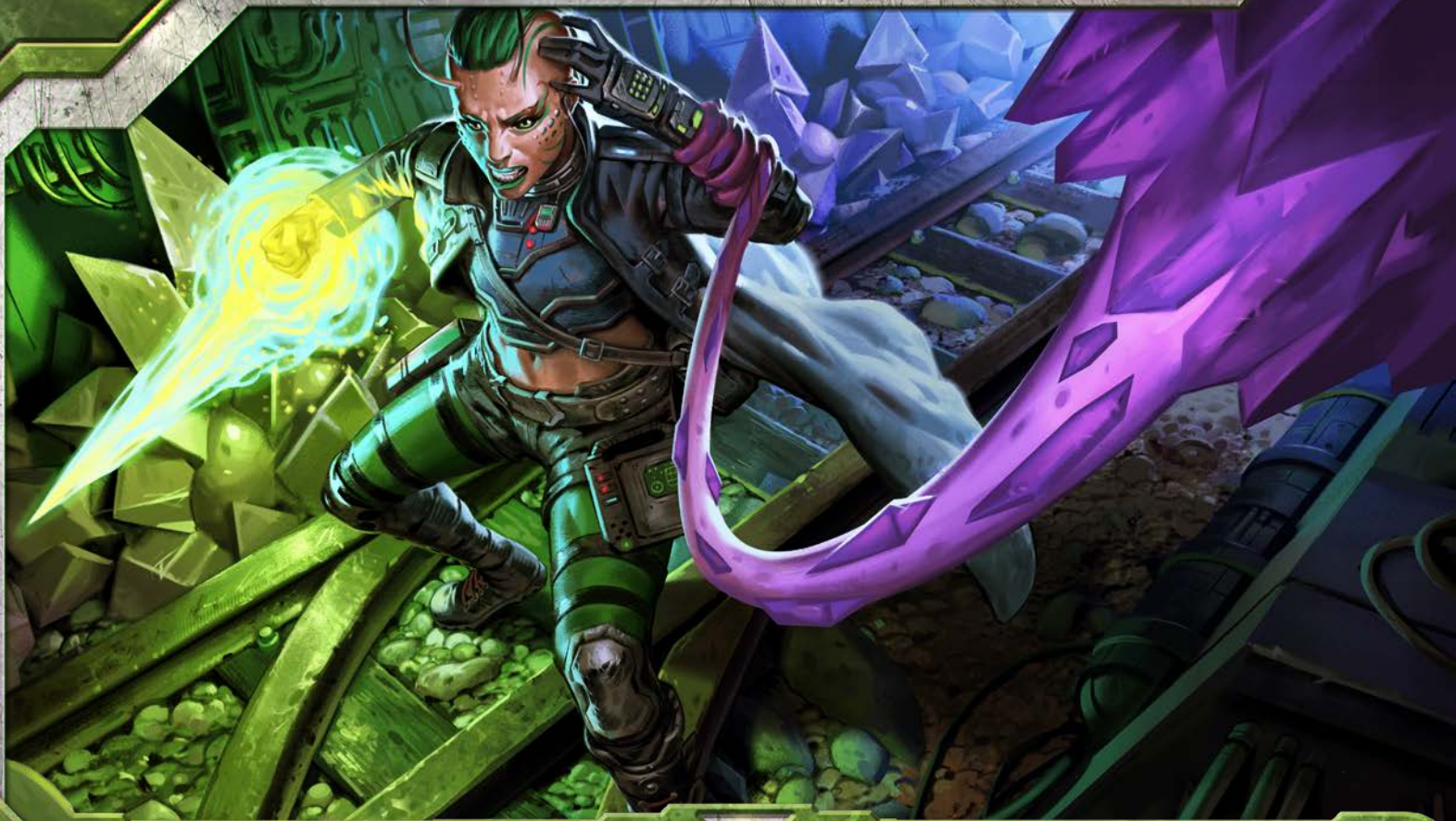
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“AMETHYZTERS—THOSE PURPLE BLOBS THAT EVERYONE LOVES TO HATE—IN TUNNELS OF TERROR 2 ARE BASED ON THESE WEIRD CREATURES I SAW IN REAL LIFE. A FEW YEARS AGO, MY WIFE TOOK ME ON A SPELUNKING EXPEDITION THROUGH THE CAVES OF KETER-7. HALFWAY IN, OUR GUIDE POINTED OUT A BEAUTIFUL CRYSTAL FORMATION NEAR THE CEILING. AS WE WATCHED, A CYCLOPS BAT FLEW BY AND THIS CRYSTAL LASHED OUT AND SNATCHED IT OUT OF THE AIR. AS THE BAT STRUGGLED, ITS WINGS TURNED TO THE SAME CRYSTALLINE MATERIAL AND SHATTERED! I THOUGHT THAT IF I WAS AN EXPLORER, I’D HATE TO BE ATTACKED BY SOMETHING LIKE THAT!”

—VELMI MACROTH, VIDGAME DESIGNER

ARCHON, POWER

CR
5

XP
1,600



LG Medium outsider (archon, extraplanar, good, lawful)

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

Perception +11

Aura aura of menace (20 ft., DC 15)

DEFENSE

HP 65 RP 1

EAC 17; **KAC** 18

Fort +4; **Ref** +8; **Will** +6; +4 vs. poison

Immunities electricity, petrification

OFFENSE

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

Melee electric bolt +13 (1d4+5 E; critical arc 1d4)

Ranged electric bolt +13 (1d4+5 E; critical arc 1d4)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; melee +13)

1/day—*discharge* (DC 15), *recharge* (DC 15)

3/day—*jolting surge*, *supercharge weapon*

At will—*detect tech*, *teleport* (self only), *transfer charge* (DC 13)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +11 (+19 to fly), Computers +16,

Diplomacy +11, Engineering +16, Intimidate +11

Languages Celestial, Common; truespeech

Other Abilities remote operations

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Heaven)

Organization solitary, pair, or team (3–5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Menace (Su) Any creature hostile to the power archon within its aura of menace must attempt a Will saving throw. A creature that fails the save takes a –2 penalty to AC, attack rolls, and saving throws for 24 hours or until it deals damage to the archon. When the effect ends for a creature, that creature can't be affected again by the same archon's aura for 24 hours.

Electric Bolt (Su) The power archon can unleash an electric bolt as a melee attack or ranged attack. Both versions can be used to deal nonlethal damage without penalty. The ranged attack has a range increment of 30 feet.

Remote Operations (Su) A power archon can attempt Computers and Engineering checks at a range of 30 feet. A creature targeted by the archon or a creature attending or observing the archon's target can discern what the archon is doing with a successful DC 15 Perception check.

engineers travel to the Material Plane to disable or destroy technology their celestial masters consider to be too corrupting to leave in the hands of mortals. What warrants such intervention is as mysterious as any other instance of celestial meddling. Once power archons are set on a mission, though little can dissuade them, but they talk first and fight only when they must.

Power archons can control the energy that powers technological devices, leading some to refer to them as “battery archons.” They are skilled techs and hackers who lend their skills to good causes, including missions led by barachius angels.



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The powers of Heaven have watched technological and magical progress in the mortal realm with skeptical eyes. Knowledge is power, after all, and power corrupts. In this age of advanced science and technomagical prowess, that corrupting influence is more threatening than ever.

Power archons are servitors of the Outer Planes tasked with tempering mortals' obsession with technology. These virtuous

CARNIVOROUS CRYSTAL

CR
11

XP
12,800



N Medium ooze (earth, extraplanar)

Init -1; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., sightless;

Perception +20

Aura infrasonic hum (60 ft., DC 18)

DEFENSE

EAC 25; **KAC** 25

Fort +15; **Ref** +8; **Will** +11

Immunities cold, electricity, ooze immunities, radiation;

Resistances fire 15

Weaknesses vulnerability to bludgeoning and sonic

HP 180

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee slam +23 (4d6+17 S plus grab; critical bleed 2d6)

STATISTICS

Str +6; **Dex** -1; **Con** +7; **Int** -; **Wis** +0; **Cha** -5

Other Abilities mindless, no breath

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Plane of Earth)

Organization solitary, pair, or cluster (3-5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Crystallize (Su) A creature made of flesh that ends its turn grappled by a carnivorous crystal must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or become staggered. If a creature already staggered from this ability fails this save, it becomes paralyzed. A creature staggered or paralyzed by this ability but not grabbed by a carnivorous crystal recovers completely at the end of its next turn.

A creature that remains grabbed while paralyzed by this ability must attempt a third saving throw; on a failure, it becomes an amalgam of crystal and flesh, unconscious but alive. A creature in this crystallized state must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw each day or die. If receiving successful long-term care, the creature gains a +4 bonus to this saving throw and needs to attempt it only once every 3 days. The crystallization is cured after two successful saving throws. *Remove affliction* allows a creature to automatically succeed at the saving throw, but an affected creature can benefit from this spell only once every 24 hours. *Flesh to stone* reverses this effect immediately.

Infrasonic Hum (Su) A carnivorous crystal emits infrasonic vibrations that act like static for any sense that relies on vibration, rendering it useless, although carnivorous crystals are immune to this effect. In addition, any creature that can hear must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw within the aura or become dazed for 1 round. A creature that successfully saves or becomes dazed by the aura can't be dazed by any carnivorous crystal's infrasonic hum for 24 hours.

Rare natives of the Elemental Plane of Earth, carnivorous crystals feed on minerals and metals, transforming them into crystalline substances. They can alter flesh in a similar way and then consume it, but carnivorous crystals are predators only in the sense that an amoeba is, as these creatures are both mindless and indiscriminate about their prey. They reproduce through fission, but only very slowly and in areas with ample food.

Amoral technomancers capture carnivorous crystals and implant them with magitech that stimulates the creatures' aggression. The agitated oozes are confined to breakaway containers, which allow them to be dropped safely into enemy territory. The augmented oozes then kill any fleshy creatures in the vicinity. This magitech burns out in a few days, so the creatures can either be recovered for further use or left in their new homes. This practice means carnivorous crystals can be found in unexpected places, such as abandoned space stations, derelict freighters, and planetoid mines.



COMANIDE

CR
7

XP
3,200



N Medium fey

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

Aura icy crown (30 ft., DC 17)

DEFENSES

HP 90

EAC 18; **KAC** 19

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

Defensive Abilities void adaptation; **Immunities** cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (Su, average)

Melee claw +14 (1d8+7 C & S; critical bleed 1d8)

Offensive Abilities comet form

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; melee +14)

1/day—*bestow curse* (DC 20), *probability prediction*

3/day—*augury*, *fog cloud*

At will—*mind thrust* (DC 18), *telepathic message* (system-wide)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +14, Culture +19, Mysticism +19

Other Abilities spaceflight

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or group (3–5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Comet Form (Su) As a full action, a comanide can fly up to 240 feet in a straight line, trailing a dazzling jet of plasma. This movement doesn't provoke attacks of opportunity, and the comanide can make one claw attack against each creature it can reach during this movement, taking a –4 penalty to each attack roll. A creature within 30 feet of the comanide that can see it during this movement must succeed at a DC 17 Will saving throw or become fascinated for 1 round. Once the comanide uses this ability, it can't use it again until after it rests for 10 minutes.

Icy Crown (Su) While a comanide wears its icy crown, the fey emanates a glowing cloud of frigid plasma in a spherical radius of 30 feet. This aura casts normal light in a 30-foot radius, and dim light for an additional 30 feet. While within the aura, the comanide has fire resistance 10. Creatures other than comanides that end their turns in the aura take 3d6 cold damage (Fortitude DC 17 half). A comanide can apply or remove its crown as a move action. The crown can be sundered (hardness 2, HP 35), and it can be taken from the comanide with a successful disarm combat maneuver or when a foe successfully renews a grapple. A non-comanide wearing the crown emits light and gains cold resistance 10 so long as the comanide lives.

Comanides are fey born from comets. A comanide can outlive its parent comet, and over the span of wakeful centuries, these fey notice mystical patterns in the movements of astronomical bodies and mortal affairs. Comanides have been known to telepathically contact people or visit planets to caution that a current course of action is likely to lead to chaos or severe imbalance, and so they appear in historical annals on numerous worlds. In some cases, a comanide's advice has raised a person to prophet status or shaped long-term cultural beliefs. In others, proof of a comanide's counsel exists only in records buried deep within the ruins left by a society that didn't heed a comanide's advice.

As retiring fey, comanides avoid violence. They can become angry when they or their warnings are disrespected. A comanide's full fury is reserved for those who dare to touch its icy crown.



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ENTROPY SLUG

CR
4

XP
1,200



NE Medium magical beast

Init -1; **Senses** blindsense (scent) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +10

DEFENSE

HP 50

EAC 16; **KAC** 18

Fort +8; **Ref** +3; **Will** +6

Immunities acid

Weaknesses susceptible to salt

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee slam +13 (1d6+9 B plus entropic mucus; critical deteriorate [DC 13])

Ranged corrosive spittle +10 (1d6+3 A; critical corrode 1d6)

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** -1; **Con** +4; **Int** -3; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0

Skills Athletics +10, Stealth +10

Other Abilities entropic mucus

ECOLOGY

Environment underground or urban (Great Shadar)

Organization solitary, pair, or cornucopia (3–30)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Corrosive Spittle (Ex) An entropy slug can spit acid as a ranged attack with a range increment of 30 feet.

Deteriorate (Su) When an entropy slug deals a critical hit with its slam attack, the target must succeed at a DC 13 Reflex saving throw or all its hybrid and technological weapons, armor, and gear gain the broken condition for 1d4 rounds. Items with the analog property are unaffected.

Entropic Mucus (Ex) When an entropy slug hits with a slam attack or moves, it leaves behind mucus on the creature it hit or in every square the slug moved through. A creature hit by the slug's slam attack or that enters a square covered in entropic mucus must succeed at a DC 13 Reflex save or each battery in the creature's possession loses 1d4 charges. This mucus remains active until it forces one such saving throw or 1 minute has passed, whichever comes first.

Susceptible to Salt (Ex) A handful or more of salt or a splash of salt water deals 1d6 damage to an entropy slug, and full immersion in salt water deals 4d6 damage per round.

Originating from Great Shadar (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 468), entropy slugs are large, terrestrial mollusks infused with the force of the gradual decline of order. They naturally congregate in abandoned industrial complexes, derelict slums, or junkyards where neglected sources of technology linger. However, draeliks and other species like to use them as guard animals, taking care to keep them away from any important electronic devices.

A typical entropy slug is about 5 feet long from eyestalk to tail and weighs 300 pounds.

ENTROPY SLUG MUCOUS GLAND

An entropy slug's mucous gland can be used to craft a special hybrid grenade known as a *drain grenade*. The mucous gland of a slain entropy slug can be harvested with a successful DC 25 Life Science check that takes 1 minute, garnering raw materials worth 700 UPBs that can be used only to craft a *drain grenade*. If you fail this check by 5 or more, you suffer the effect of a *drain grenade*. This check can be attempted only once per entropy slug.

DRAIN GRENADE

LEVEL 4

HYBRID ITEM

PRICE 700

BULK L

When a *drain grenade* explodes, each creature in a 10-foot-radius burst must succeed at a Reflex saving throw or all batteries in its possession lose 2d4 charges.



HULSA

CR
10

XP
9,600



CN Medium fey

Init +0; **Senses** see invisibility; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

HP 142 RP 5

EAC 23; **KAC** 24

Fort +11; **Ref** +9; **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities solar adaptation, soul furnace, void adaptation; **Immunities** electricity, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (Su, perfect)

Melee solar weapon +21 (3d6+11 F or S; critical burn 1d6)

Ranged light ray +20 (3d6+11 E & F; critical burn 1d6)

Offensive Abilities flashing strikes, kaleidoscopic glow, miniature star (10-ft. radius, 5d6 F), supernova (15-ft. radius, 10d6 F; DC 19)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

At will—*life bubble* (DC 19)

Constant—*see invisibility*

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +19 (+27

to fly), Life Science +24,

Mysticism +24, Physical Science +24

Languages Common; electromagnetic communication

Other Abilities life-giving glow, solar manifestation (solar weapon), stellar alignment (photon)

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or constellation (3–5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Electromagnetic Communication (Su) A halsa can communicate with other creatures within the same star system. With other hulsas, this ability functions as telepathy. Otherwise, the halsa mentally broadcasts to technological comm units.

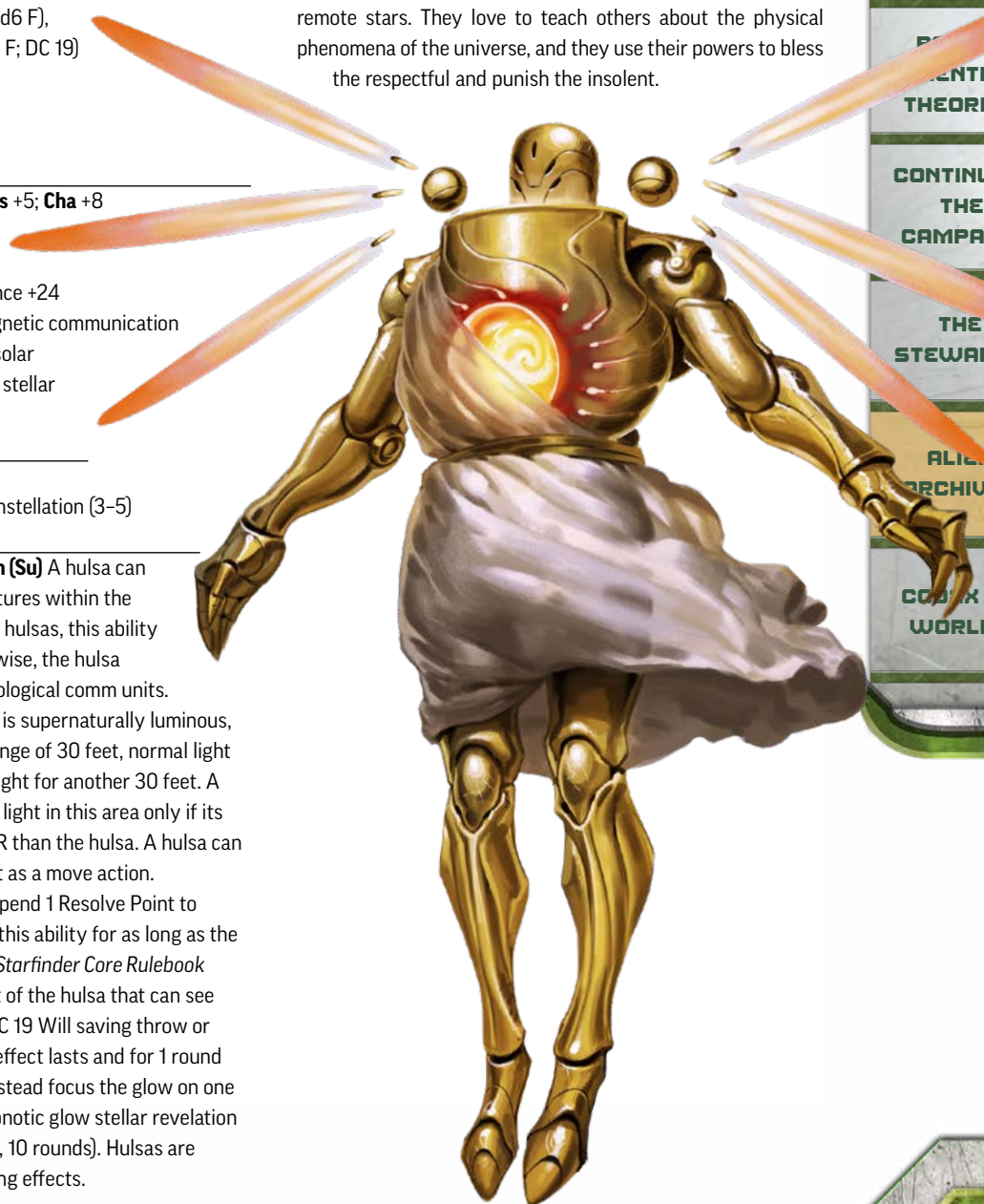
Kaleidoscopic Glow (Su) A halsa is supernaturally luminous, shining bright light out to a range of 30 feet, normal light for another 30 feet, and dim light for another 30 feet. A magical effect can reduce the light in this area only if its source has a higher level or CR than the halsa. A halsa can extinguish its light or relight it as a move action.

In addition, the halsa can spend 1 Resolve Point to oscillate the bright light from this ability for as long as the fey maintains concentration (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 271). Creatures within 90 feet of the halsa that can see this light must succeed at a DC 19 Will saving throw or become fascinated while the effect lasts and for 1 round after it ends. The halsa can instead focus the glow on one creature, working like the hypnotic glow stellar revelation of a 10th-level solarian (DC 19, 10 rounds). Hulsas are immune to these mind-affecting effects.

Life-Giving Glow (Su) A halsa can spend 1 Resolve Point to heal living creatures within its bright light. It can heal itself or one other living creature as a standard action, or itself and other creatures of its choice in its bright light as a full action. Each target regains 8d8 Hit Points. When using this ability as a full action, the halsa can spend 1 additional Resolve Point to also harm undead in the area, dealing 8d8 electricity and fire damage to each one (Fortitude DC 19 half).

Light Ray (Su) A halsa's light ray has a range increment of 90 feet and the bright special property.

Hulsas are stout, kaleidoscopically radiant fey connected to remote stars. They love to teach others about the physical phenomena of the universe, and they use their powers to bless the respectful and punish the insolent.



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PART 3:
SCIENTIFIC
THEORIES

CONTINUING
THE
CAMPAIGN

THE
STEWARDS

ALIEN
ARCHIVES

COLOSSUS OF
WORLDS

ROBOT, AZLANTI BATTLE

CR
6

XP
2,400



N Medium construct (technological)

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

Perception +18

DEFENSE

EAC 18; **KAC** 20

Fort +6; **Ref** +6; **Will** +3

Immunities construct immunities; **SR** 17

Weakness Azlanti programming, vulnerable to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee slam +17 (1d8+11 B)

HP 90

Ranged disintegrator beam +14 (2d6+6 A; critical corrode 1d6)

Offensive Abilities self-destruct (3d6 P, DC 14)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Engineering +13, Intimidate +13

Languages Azlanti

Other Abilities embedded *aeon stone* (purple sphere *aeon stone*^{AA}), unliving

ECOLOGY

Environment any urban (Azlanti Star Empire)

Organization solitary, pair, or patrol (3–7)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Azlanti Programming (Ex) An Azlanti battle robot's programming is so meticulous that it is incapable of attacking an Azlanti human. However, its sensors aren't foolproof and a creature can deceive the robot with a successful Disguise check.

Disintegrator Beam (Ex) An Azlanti battle robot has a disintegrator beam as a natural weapon built into one of its arms. This beam has a range increment of 30 feet and prevents the robot from wielding any other weapon that requires two hands.

Embedded Aeon Stone (Ex) As a full action, an *aeon stone* can be slotted into (or removed from) an Azlanti battle robot's forehead while the robot is helpless, pinned, or willing. The robot gains the benefit of a slotted *aeon stone* provided the stone's item level is no greater than the robot's CR + 1.

Self-Destruct (Ex) When an Azlanti battle robot's Hit Points are reduced to 10 or fewer, it explodes on its next turn in a 10-foot-radius burst, even if it has already been destroyed. Creatures within range take 3d6 piercing damage (Reflex DC 14 half). As a full action that provokes attacks of opportunity, a creature adjacent to the robot can attempt a DC 24 Engineering check to disarm the self-destruct mechanism before it detonates.

Azlanti battle robots can be found at the front of most Azlanti Star Empire advances. Their unwavering loyalty and disposability, coupled with their propensity to self-destruct amid enemy soldiers, makes them invaluable on the battlefield. These robots resemble members of the iconic Aeon Guard with exposed gears and pistons, which call back to the wondrous clockwork creations of the ancient Azlanti people of lost Golarion. Further, these constructs are incapable of directly assaulting anyone of pure Azlanti heritage. However, field tests have shown that exceptional disguises can trick the robots. Azlanti roboticists are hard at work correcting this flaw.

Mass-produced in imperial factories, each Azlanti robot stands 7 feet tall and weighs 500 pounds.



TWINSOUL

CR
8

XP
4,800



N Large aberration

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +21

DEFENSE

HP 125

EAC 20; **KAC** 22

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

Defensive Abilities unflankable, void adaptation;

Immunities cold, radiation

Weaknesses ethereal vulnerability

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (Su, clumsy)

Melee tentacle +19 (1d6+14 B) or

ethereal tentacle +19 (1d6+14 C)

Multiattack 2 tentacles +13 (1d6+14 B), 2 ethereal

tentacles +13 (1d6+14 C)

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

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +16 (+8 to fly), Survival +16

Languages Aklo; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities dual existence, planar melding

ECOLOGY

Environment any vacuum (Material and Ethereal Planes)

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dual Existence (Su) A twinsoul exists simultaneously on the

Ethereal and Material Planes, occupying both planes at the same time. These two forms are always coterminous with one another, and if the twinsoul is reduced to 0 Hit Points on either plane, it dies. Because of its dual existence, as a move action a twinsoul can grant itself the benefit of flanking one target within its reach until the start of its next turn.

Ethereal Vulnerability (Ex) A

twinsoul takes half again as much damage (+50%) from kinetic attacks against its ethereal form originating on the Ethereal Plane. It also takes half again as much damage from force effects.

Planar Melding (Su) Once per

day as a standard action, a twinsoul can meld its two forms until the start of its next turn, phasing slightly out of existence. While melded, a twinsoul has concealment and can pass through solid objects (excluding force effects such as force fields) on the Material Plane as long as it ends this movement outside any object. When the twinsoul returns to normal, it regains 8d6 Hit Points.

A dweller in two worlds, a twinsoul is an aberration that floats simultaneously through the vacuum of space and the void of the Ethereal Plane, seeking out thinning planar barriers. No one is certain where twinsouls originated or what purpose they serve, but many scholars of cosmic phenomena find them fascinating.

Twinsouls have two bodies, one on each plane. These bodies remain close together across planar boundaries. However, they can separate, the ethereal twinsoul providing its physical counterpart a ghostly partner in battle. The ethereal portion is particularly ephemeral, and thus vulnerable to ethereal attack and force effects.

Normally, a twinsoul melds with its ethereal half once per day, and only for a fleeting moment. However, when a twinsoul discovers a rift between the Material Plane and Ethereal Plane, it can perform an extended meld known as the joining. During this period of togetherness, the twinsoul mates with itself and creates a single spawn. Such an offspring stays with its parent for several decades before attaining maturity and departing on its own ineffable mission.

A twinsoul resembles a floating sphere of fluid about 12 feet in diameter with several probing tentacles, and weighs only a few pounds.



THE RUNE
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NEW THESPERA

Seat of the Aeon Throne

Diameter: $\times 2/3$; **Mass:** $\times 1/3$

Gravity: $\times 3/4$

Location: The Vast

Atmosphere: Normal

Day: 18-1/2 hours; **Year:** 1-1/3 years

The third planet from the bright white sun of Aristia, New Thespera is the throne world of the Azlanti Star Empire, and the destination of the original Azlanti expedition from lost Golarion thousands of years ago. New Thespera is considered the shining jewel of the Azlanti Star Empire, blessed with emerald-green oceans, deep-blue skies, verdant continents lush with life, and ample natural resources. It has six large continents, one major ocean (the True Arcadian Sea) and a dozen smaller bodies of water, small permanent ice caps at each pole, and surprisingly clement weather year-round for most of the planet. The only continent with significant earthquakes or volcanic activity is the small southern landmass of Ahkome, which is inhabited almost

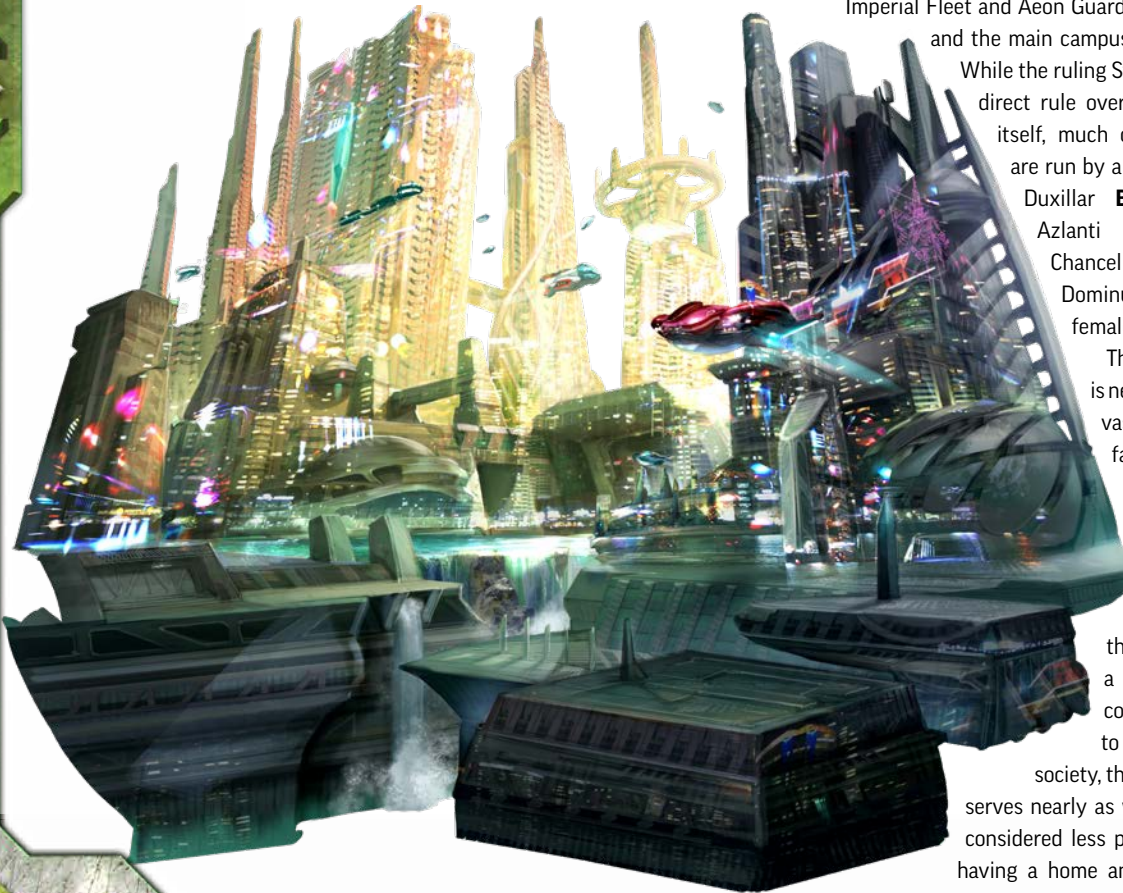
exclusively by non-Azlanti miners and engineers at geothermal power stations.

While thousands of years of technological and magical industry could have despoiled New Thespera, the empire sees the world as the true home of humanity (meaning only those humans directly descended from old Azlant) and has ensured that the world remains pristine. With a planetary population of one billion human citizens, and nearly double that number in second-class citizens and slaves, New Thespera must carefully manage resources so that no region becomes polluted. To augment the technological and magical solutions the Star Empire employs to avoid overcrowding, the government maintains a strict cap on the non-Azlanti population, enforcing it with forced relocation to other worlds (and other, more severe, methods).

The largest metropolis on the planet is Eronesse, on the smallest continent of Urgulan. This enormous city includes thousands of gleaming towers stretching up 200 or more floors, vast domes and parks, and even floating compounds that roam through the skies. The city's major sites include the enormous Imperial Palace, the Planetary Governmental Compound, the Municipal Citadel, the headquarters for the Imperial Fleet and Aeon Guard, the Grand Temple of Lissala, and the main campus of the Academy of Purpose.

While the ruling Star Imperators nominally have direct rule over the city and New Thespera itself, much of the day-to-day operations are run by a planetary governor, currently Duxillar **Bhrevi Falcavian** (LN male Azlanti technomancer), and the Chancellor of Eronesse, currently Dominus **Maellis Maellora** (NE female Azlanti mechanic).

The largest continent, Curchane, is neatly divided into smaller cities, vast farmlands and ranches, factory towns, and wilderness preserves. Most arciduxes hold token hereditary lands here, though trusted councilors or more minor family nobles often oversee these estates. Owning at least a manor house on Curchane is considered a necessity to rise to the upper ranks of imperial society, though an apartment on Urgulan serves nearly as well. The other continents are considered less prestigious real estate, though having a home anywhere on New Thespera is better than claiming only offworld domains.



NEXT MONTH

THE DIASPORA STRAIN

by Chris S. Sims

The Signal of Screams Adventure Path begins! The heroes are invited to New Elysium, a luxury resort located on an asteroid in the Diaspora. At first, it seems like an ideal relaxing vacation, until a strange corruption begins to infect them and the other guests. The heroes must protect themselves and aid those who have remained unaffected, while searching for the cause of the malady in the old mining tunnels beneath the resort. Once the true source is revealed, the PCs must return to the resort and destroy it while dealing with a number of guests—including a celebrated champion of the vicious sport of brutaris—who have been transformed into hideous abominations!

CORRUPTED BY SHADOWS

by Jason Keeley

Darkness lurks within everyone, waiting for the opportunity to overcome the mind and tarnish the soul. This article presents a new subsystem for the Starfinder Roleplaying Game that will be used throughout the Signal of Screams Adventure Path to

model supernatural and technological ways that characters might lose control over themselves for a taste of power.

HORROR CAMPAIGNS

by Epidiah Ravachol

Participating in a campaign like the Signal of Screams Adventure Path requires a certain amount of accord between players and their GM. This article presents a wealth of advice for players and GMs alike on negotiating consent about horror themes, as well as helping GMs to set the scene for fear and giving players tools to fight back against terror, including feats and a new theme!

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VANGUARD REGNANT

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

MAP KEY

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Bridge | 7. Recreation suite |
| a. Captain's chair | 8. Power core |
| b. Pilot's station | 9. Drift engine |
| c. Science officer's station | 10. Crew suites |
| d. Gunner's station | 11. Imperial shrine |
| 2. Secondary gunner's station | 12. Private lounge |
| 3. Main airlock | 13. Office |
| 4. Mess hall | 14. Captain's suite |
| 5. Port engine | 15. Cargo hold |
| 6. Starboard engine | a. Cargo lift |





IMPULSE CONTROL

The heroes must infiltrate a secluded Azlanti science facility, liberate the captive scientists forced to study an experimental starship drive, and keep the device out of their enemies' hands. They soon learn of the drive's reality-warping power firsthand, but standing in their way is the dastardly Azlanti noble who has orchestrated the entire plot!

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- "The Rune Drive Gambit," a Starfinder adventure for 5th-level characters, by Larry Wilhelm.
- Advice on how you can continue your campaign past the final encounter and how the Azlanti Star Empire will be empowered should the heroes fail, by Tracy Barnett.
- A detailed exploration of the peacekeeping organization known as the Stewards, including a pair of new archetypes for Stewards agents, by Lyz Liddell.
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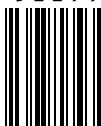
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