



STARFINDER[®]



ATTACK OF THE SWARM!

ADVENTURE PATH

THE GOD-HOST ASCENDS

BY RON LUNDEEN



EP STALWART

TIER 11

Huge cruiser

Speed 8; **Maneuverability** average (turn 2); **Drift** 1

AC 27; **TL** 26

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

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

Attack (Forward) supermaser (2d8×10; 20 hexes)

Attack (Port) coilgun (4d4; 20 hexes)

Attack (Starboard) coilgun (4d4; 20 hexes)

Attack (Turret) heavy antimatter missile launcher (10d10; 20 hexes)

Power Core Gateway Light (300 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Basic; **Systems** advanced long-range sensors, crew quarters (common), mk 1 duonode computer, mk 8 armor, mk 8 defenses; **Expansion Bays** cargo hold, escape pods (12), medical bay, passenger seating, tech workshop

Modifiers +1 to any two checks per round, +4 Computers (sensors only), +1 Piloting; **Complement** 60 (minimum 20, maximum 100)

CREW

Captain Computers +18 (11 ranks), Diplomacy +20 (11 ranks), Engineering +18 (11 ranks), Intimidate +20 (11 ranks), Piloting +18 (11 ranks)

Engineer (1 officer, 16 crew) Engineering +20 (11 ranks)

Gunner (3 officers, 6 crew each) gunnery +20 (11th level)

Pilot (1 officer, 10 crew) Piloting +25 (11 ranks)

Science Officer (2 officers, 4 crew each) Computers +20 (11 ranks)

Although the closest planet to Suskillon's sun is a rocky world devoid of native life, it is the site of one of the system's most highly regarded starship manufacturers. The Echidea Powder corporation earned its solid reputation by manufacturing durable and reliable civilian starships, but it has recently landed a lucrative military contract. EP's initial military offering is the impressive Stalwart cruiser, a massive vessel built around its two main weapons: a forward-mounted supermaser and a cluster of devastating antimatter missiles.

Efficiency is a key design consideration of the Stalwart. Accommodations aboard the vessel are sparse at best, and the Stalwart's power systems are remarkably streamlined, rerouting energy automatically to vital tasks. However, the ship's heavy power load means that most of the ship's other systems flicker briefly whenever the supermaser is fired. Those unfamiliar with this effect might momentarily fear a ship-wide power outage, but experienced hands know that these brownouts are par for the course.

The Stalwart works best in medium-range engagements against other large starships; its focused weaponry means it fares poorly against hordes of smaller, faster ships and must rely on allied support in dense engagements. Although not designed as a troop transport, the Stalwart's internal configuration is customizable, and each of its side cargo bays can be quickly repurposed to carry vehicles or ranks of troops.

STARFINDER

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

Alien Archive 2 AA2

Armory AR

Pact Worlds PW



ON THE COVER

We finally get a look at the towering and terrifying God-Host, the de facto leader of the Swarm subcolony that attacked Suskillon, in this exciting cover by artist Setiawan Fajareka.



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THE GOD-HOST ASCENDS

PART 1: THE BEST-LAID PLANS

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The heroes meet with Commander Najiri and other high-ranking SDF officers to plan the counter-invasion of Suskillon.

PART 2: SAND IN THE GEARS

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As they descend to the planet, the heroes learn that several of the missions have gone awry, and they must decide how to salvage victory amid the fierce fighting on the ground. The heroes learn that the God-Host has made the Temple of Hylax on Clutchstone Ridge its base and must secure a path to the structure.

PART 3: TAKE BACK THE TEMPLE

30

The Swarm has made several "renovations" to the Temple of Hylax as the God-Host attempts to extract a fraction of divine power from the surrounding stone. The PCs must defeat this entity to save Suskillon and prevent the Swarm from gaining the power of a deity!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The God-Host Ascends" is designed for four characters.

11

The PCs begin this adventure at 11th level.

12

The PCs should reach 12th level during the missions on Suskillon's surface.

13

The PCs should be 13th level before they confront the God-Host.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Created to absorb a fraction of omnipotence from the benevolent goddess Hylax, the God-Host is the pinnacle of advancement of the Swarm subcolony that has assaulted the Suskillon system. In "Hive of Minds," the PCs ventured into the Swarm mindscape and defeated the entity called the Connection using the *Crown of Hylax*, cutting off the Suskillon subcolony from the greater Swarm hive mind and destroying the blessed artifact. However, the God-Host sees this as only a temporary setback. By using a rare type of Swarm component called a psychovox (which can act as a node to boost the range of the Swarm hive mind) at the location where the *Crown of Hylax* was fashioned, the God-Host believes it can still complete its mission.

With the defeat of the Connection, the Swarm forces in the system have been thrown into disarray. The Suskillon Defense Force is ready to take advantage of this opportunity with a counter-invasion of the force's home world, focusing its reclamation on the capital city of Brinnoa, one of the last major metropolitan areas to fall to the Swarm.

Unfortunately, the Swarm has not been idle on Suskillon. Swarm components have been hard at work harvesting Suskillon's resources for their own consumption, not caring that their efforts are transforming the world into a hostile landscape. A nuclear reactor near Brinnoa is in critical condition and a large nearby lake—kept from flooding the region by a high-tech dam that is now dangerously near to breaking—has been polluted with the Swarm's acidic secretions.

But the villains on Suskillon are not limited to insectile monsters. Several greedy and self-interested groups are secretly jeopardizing the Suskillon reclamation by pursuing their own agendas. Chief among these is a mercenary unit from the Pact Worlds that betrays the Bronze Beam Research Consortium to capture a psychovox for an unknown patron. Instructed to recover a specimen at all costs, this company of killers plans to take advantage of the chaos of battle.

The PCs will have to face off against Swarm defenders, corporate intrigue, and natural disasters to reclaim Suskillon.

PART 1: THE BEST-LAID PLANS

After the PCs' triumphant return from the Swarm mindscape in the previous adventure, "Hive of Minds," they can contact (or be contacted by) Hadiya Najiri, their commanding officer

in the Suskillon Defense Force. She tells them to report back to Utraneus for a debriefing and a chance to participate in planning the operation to retake Suskillon. From the Prodigal Stone, which is still within the Suskillon system, it takes the PCs 1d6 days of Drift travel (or 1d6+2 days of travel if they use standard thrusters) to arrive at Utraneus, during which time they can recover from their previous mission.

As the PCs approach Utraneus, they can see what remains of the SDF's fleet gathered in formations, augmented by other vessels from the Pact Worlds, the Veskarium, and other friendly systems. Before they can dock at Oddrock, the PCs are instructed to rendezvous with the *Titan's Shield*, an enormous armored starship emblazoned with the SDF logo. Dozens of smaller vessels buzz around the bulky dreadnought.

Formerly a mining vessel, the *Titan's Shield* was pressed into service by SDF's Space Corps shortly after the first days of the Swarm invasion. As more and more starships fell during the evacuation and retreat to Utraneus, the *Titan's Shield* became the fleet's de facto mobile base of operations. Though it has been fitted with a multitude of weapons, its asteroid-dented hull and brutally functional interior chambers make it plain that the vessel was designed for mining and not for fighting.

A shuttle takes the PCs from their vessel to the *Titan's Shield*, where they are greeted by Commander Najiri. She asks them for a quick debriefing about what occurred in the Swarm mindscape and confirms that their reports show the Swarm to be in disarray. As she leads them to a central chamber within the dreadnought, the PCs can catch snippets of chatter from the soldiers bustling through the corridors. The push to free Suskillon from the Swarm appears to be imminent. If asked, Commander Najiri tells the PCs that she's bringing them to speak with SDF command. Read or paraphrase the following when they reach the meeting site.

This converted cargo bay still bears the marks of having transported pallets of ore and industrial mining machinery along its walls, and the faint odor of scorched metal still hangs in the air. Dozens of people move about the cavernous room, consulting holographic displays of Suskillon's surface and reviewing comprehensive inventories of ships, personnel, and munitions. Commander Najiri waves a few adjutants away to make space at the large table where a handful of chief military officers sit. Once of them, a grizzled, old human looks up from a datapad. "This must be the squad you've spoken so highly of, Commander Najiri. I hear we have you to thank for this chance to take back our home world. In fact, we're in a delicate phase of the planning, and we could use your input."

Najiri introduces the PCs to Commander-General Ciril Ognea and the others, explaining that they are essentially what's left of SDF command. Despite the difference in rankings, Najiri seems to be in charge of this briefing, and when the PCs are ready, she gets down to business. She waves a hand to summon a holographic map of some familiar Suskillon

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territory: the area around the capital city of Brinnoa and the Sahtor Region. Arrows, unit names, and engagement success calculations scroll across different areas on the display.

"As these areas were the last to be taken by the Swarm, we have decided to focus on reclaiming them first. While Swarm activity is everywhere, there seems to be an unusual amount of activity near the temple of Hylax on Clutchstone Ridge in the Jurdos Mountains. We've managed to capture images of a Swarm-built hive structure on top of it, and infrared shows a massive, multiheaded creature within. Recovery of Brinnoa is our primary initial focus, to establish a beachhead on the planet."

"The morale boost we'll get by recovering a capital city won't hurt, either," chimes in Commander-General Ognea.

Commander Najiri turns to address the characters.

"Once again, I'd like you to be my special squad of troubleshooters on the ground with the troops, handling any issues that they can't overcome. We'll be deploying you in the *Stonebreaker*, a nimble but well-armed cruiser that will be part of the force to punch through the Swarm starship perimeter around the planet. Once in orbit, you'll be taken to Brinnoa Starport on the surface in the support cruiser *Third Doctrine*, which carries two ground vehicles. You can use those to travel around Brinnoa as needed and, ultimately, to the temple once that area is secured.

"But before we set out, we still need to determine how best to deploy our units around the city. We have committed one or more units to each of our seven primary missions. We have nine units currently unassigned, and we'd like your advice on how to commit them."

Commander Najiri explains the seven missions, along with the number of committed units, and names the commanding officers for each mission (all of whom are already preparing for departure with their units). The PCs can earn additional insights on each mission by succeeding at the listed skill check. The PCs should then determine how to commit the remaining nine units; they are likely to have a far greater need for units than there are units to spare. Once the PCs make their decisions, Najiri asks them to explain their reasoning to the military commanders here. As long as the PCs present at least some reasonable justification for their decisions, the military commanders act on the PCs' recommendations.

Gunnery Support: One unit committed, led by Gunner Admiral Ahbuy Nathar. A fleet of Swarm starships makes the descent to Suskillon's surface perilous. The starships need as many gunners as possible to help punch through the Swarm fleet. As the Swarm forces are expected to focus on preventing a successful landing, losses for soldiers committed to this mission are expected to be high.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Piloting check or a DC 25 Profession (mercenary, soldier, or similar) check realizes that each additional unit committed provides an incremental benefit in the fight against the Swarm fleet, up to a maximum of three additional units. The benefit the PCs gain for committing additional units here is described in **Event 1**.

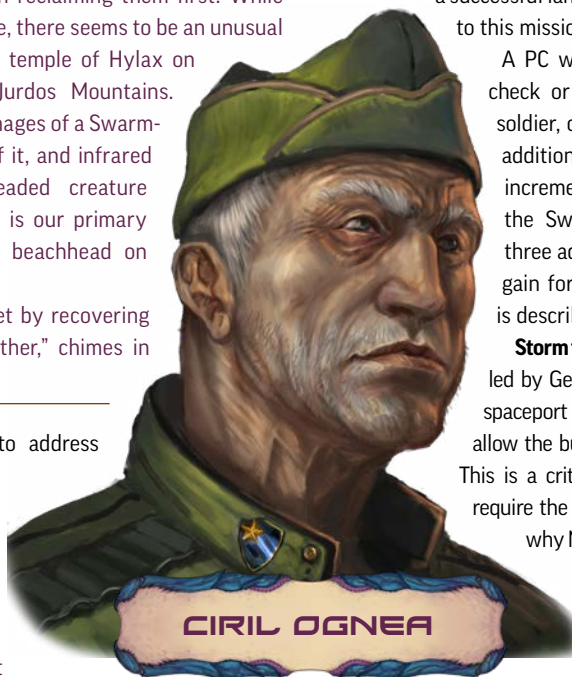
Storm the Spaceport: Five units committed, led by General Jonam Larklettin. The Brinnoa spaceport must be cleared of Swarm forces to allow the bulk of the SDF forces to land safely. This is a critical battlefield and is expected to require the fiercest planetary fighting, which is why Najiri has already planned to commit five units here. Losses for soldiers committed to this mission are expected to be high.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Profession (mercenary, soldier, or similar) check realizes that each additional unit committed provides an incremental benefit, to a maximum of three additional units. The benefit the PCs gain for committing additional units here is described in area **A4**.

Fallout Containment: One unit committed, led by Lieutenant Narodi Chelg. A damaged nuclear reactor in the Arwill Nuclear Facility northeast of Brinnoa is spewing radiation across the area, and this reactor might be facing a critical meltdown. Units committed to this mission need specific antiradiation and fallout-containment gear. There is enough gear for only up to two additional units (for a total of three units) to be committed here. Although the lack of Swarm forces in the area means combat casualties are likely to be low, handling radiation is dangerous; losses for soldiers committed to this mission are expected to be moderate.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 31 Engineering or Physical Science check notes that one or two additional units would be helpful to contain the reactor. The benefits the PCs gain for committing additional units here is described in area **B7**.

Scientist Defense: One unit committed, led by Lieutenant Tiya Khako. Long-range reconnaissance has spotted a type of hive-mind node Swarm component called a psychovox. The Bronze Beam Research Consortium has petitioned the SDF for support to capture and study one of these unusual creatures, believing it might help the military better understand the Swarm. Commander Najiri has given them leave to occupy



CIRIL OGNEA

a fortified manor house in Brinnoa Heights, in the north part of the city. Expected losses for soldiers committed to this mission are unknown.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 34 Life Science check notes that the Swarm might not attempt to recover a captured creature; although an additional unit might be helpful to station here, it doesn't seem necessary. Despite this sound reasoning, due to other factors, the PCs gain a slight benefit for committing an additional unit here, as described in area **C3**.

Nest Eradication: One unit committed, led by Lieutenant Sensen Harbra. A biofarm of psychovoxes has been identified in the ruined Hoaldi Dome in downtown Brinnoa. A strike team must dispatch these creatures and demolish the stadium before the psychovoxes are fully mature. As the Swarm might be aggressive in defending this location, losses are expected to be moderate.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Life Science check notes that Swarm nests are rarely so exposed; the Swarm will probably be vigilant about defending or reclaiming this site. At least two additional units would help tremendously, and three units would be even better. The benefits the PCs gain for committing additional units here is described in Setting the Charges on page 26.

Dam Reinforcement: One unit committed, led by Lieutenant Kahore. A large hydroelectric dam holds back Rendith Lake and feeds the Rendith River through Brinnoa. Swarm meddling has rendered the lake highly acidic. Although the spillways have been blocked, damage to the dam could create a catastrophic, caustic flood throughout the capital. The dam must be protected against Swarm saboteurs. The dam is easily defensible, so losses for soldiers committed to this mission are expected to be low.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Engineering or Physical Science check notes that the length of the dam would require at least one additional unit to defend, and an additional two units to defend it optimally. The benefit the PCs gain for committing additional units here is described in area **E3**.

Temple Beachhead: Two units committed, led by Captain Dardrielle Althaset. These units will touch down in the Jurdos Mountains northwest of Brinnoa and establish a secure rendezvous point for the final push to the Swarm-altered temple of Hylax; based on reconnaissance data, the PCs might correctly surmise is the lair of the Swarm God-Host. These units are to hold their position until the PCs help secure Brinnoa and can provide them backup; they will then accompany the PCs into the temple and defend the PCs at the cost of their lives. Soldiers committed to this mission face an exceptionally high likelihood of death confronting the strongest forces the Swarm has on the planet; it is considered a suicide mission and yet has zealous soldiers clamoring for participation in this critical endeavor.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Profession (mercenary, soldier, or similar) check realizes that each additional unit committed provides an incremental benefit, to a maximum of

three additional units. The benefit the PCs gain for committing additional units here is described in area **F2**.

Development: After the PCs participate in the mission planning, Commander Najiri shows them the specs for the *Stonebreaker*, the heavy cruiser they will command when they reach Suskillon. The statistics and deck plans for this vessel are presented on the inside covers, and the PCs should familiarize themselves with the *Stonebreaker's* capabilities (and choose their starship combat roles) before the next part of the adventure, as there is no time to refit any previous starships the PCs have flown. As the *Stonebreaker* is a large vessel, many of the PCs' starship combat actions will require the aid of crew members working under them. If the PCs have formed any close relationships with NPCs during the course of the campaign, those NPCs have volunteered to be a part of the *Stonebreaker's* crew.

Commander Najiri also tells them to visit the dreadnought's armory to purchase any new gear they might require as the fleet prepares to depart for Suskillon. Like in previous adventures, the SDF's resources are scarce, and the PCs will need to pay for their equipment (with either credits or UPBs); the armory is also happy to take any unwanted gear, offering the usual 10% credit for future purchases. The armory's exact inventory is up to you, but you should assume it has all the technological equipment found in the *Core Rulebook* up to 13th level.

Since 1d6 days pass while the entirety of the fleet travels from Utraneus to Suskillon, the PCs also have a chance to craft a few pieces of special gear, if they wish. If any PCs still have ailments after the trip from the Prodigal Stone to Oddrock, this will likely give them time to recover.

Story Award: Committing units to a fight, and perhaps to their deaths, is a serious and somber matter. For participating in these decisions, regardless of how they committed the surplus units, award the PCs 9,600 XP.

PART 2: SAND IN THE GEARS

During the journey through the Drift, the PCs can get to know the many crew members who will be carrying out their orders. Most are SDF soldiers who professionally do their duties, though there is an undercurrent of fear and excitement in the ranks as the battle to retake their home world draws closer.

When the SDF fleet reaches the space around Suskillon, the *Stonebreaker's* sensors pick up the sheer number of Swarm starships surrounding the planet. Many seem to be listing at strange angles, moving in confused circles, or even powered down completely, but a large portion of them still actively defend their conquest. Moments after the fleet exits the Drift,

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it clashes with the Swarm forces. A brief transmission from Commander Najiri aboard the *Titan's Shield* reminds the PCs of the first part of their mission: break through the line to land on Suskillon.

EVENT 1: THROUGH THE FIRE (CR 12)

As ships from the SDF fleet break away for individual dogfights against the Swarm, the PCs find themselves near their support freighter, the *Third Doctrine*, which reports that due to a series of unseen malfunctions, its primary weapon systems are offline. Two Swarm starships that resemble beetles with immense mandibles streak toward the *Third Doctrine*, forcing the PCs to try to repel these enemy ships.

Starship Combat: Place the *Third Doctrine* 3 hexes in front of the *Stonebreaker*, facing away from it, and place the two Swarm gnawbores 3d6+2 hexes in front of the *Third Doctrine*, facing it. Although the gnawbores initially approach the *Third Doctrine*, they see the *Stonebreaker* as a higher-priority target and seem to gnash their mandibles hungrily at the PCs' ship.

In addition to the two ships, place 1d4+2 wreckage fields on the map, each at least 3 hexes away from each other (and from the starting positions of the starships). A wreckage field consists of the broken hulls of Swarm and SDF ships, including unused ammunition that detonates unexpectedly. Each wreckage field is 3 hexes large and has a triangular shape. A wreckage field doesn't slow movement through it, but there is a 50% chance that the wreckage in a hex explodes when a ship moves through it, dealing 6d6 damage to a random arc (which destroys the junk in that hex). A tracking weapon that passes through a wreckage field hex is immediately destroyed unless its gunner succeeds at a DC 25 gunnery check. Before the combat begins, the PCs can recognize the fields' effects with a successful DC 25 Physical Science or Piloting check.

The *Third Doctrine*'s weaponry is currently nonfunctional, but it isn't completely defenseless. Instead of its mining laser, it carries an experimental gravitic repulsor that it activates at the start of starship combat. The repulsor bends space in the area within 2 hexes of the *Third Doctrine*, causing each hex in the area to count as 2 hexes for movement for other ships. The captain of the *Third Doctrine* lets the PCs know about this defense, and the PCs might be able to use it to their advantage against the Swarm ships. The gnawbores aren't aware of this field initially but become aware of it as soon as one of the ships is affected by it.

The gnawbores do not retreat; they fight until disabled.

If the PCs committed additional units to Gunnery Support in Part 1, the gnawbores begin the fight already wounded. Reduce each gnawbore's Hull Points by 15 for each unit the PCs committed, to a maximum reduction of 45 Hull Points.

THIRD DOCTRINE

TIER 7

SDF D-127 Defensive Carrier (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #21: *Huskworld* inside front cover)

HP 140

SWARM GNAWBORES (2)

TIER 8

HP 190 each (page 58)

Development: If the *Stonebreaker* is reduced to 0 Hull Points, the PCs can't prevent the gnawbores from tearing a hole in the *Third Doctrine*'s hull, resulting in an explosive decompression that kills everyone on board. However, before the gnawbores can converge on the PCs' disabled starship to destroy it as well, a few blasts from nearby capital ships take out the Swarm vessels. The PCs can then request a new support carrier to bring them down to Brinnoa Starport, but their delay negates any advantages they may have earned by assigning additional units to secure the spaceport (see area A4 for details).

Story Award: If the PCs successfully defeat the Swarm gnawbores, award them 19,200 XP for the encounter.

SUSKILLON'S FINEST

The Suskillon Defense Force fights fiercely to reclaim its planet during this adventure, and its soldiers are often near the PCs. Although these soldiers aren't as talented or well equipped as the PCs, they are brave and dedicated—and might step in to help the PCs if the going gets tough. They recognize the PCs on sight and consider them to be Suskillon's best hope; you can use this to make the PCs feel heroic and vital to the war effort. These soldiers therefore give any suggestions made by the PCs due consideration, but the PCs aren't technically their commanding officers, so they don't stand for the PCs bossing them around. Use the following stat block if you need a generic SDF soldier to fight alongside the PCs.

SDF SOLDIER

CR 2

XP 600

Human soldier

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Perception** +7

DEFENSE

HP 30

EAC 13; **KAC** 15

Fort +4; **Ref** +2; **Will** +3; +2 vs. fear

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (25 ft. in armor), fly 30 ft. (jump jets, average)

Melee tactical dueling sword +7 (1d6+4 S)

Ranged tactical rail gun +10 (1d8+2 P) or incendiary grenade 1 +10 (explode [5 ft., 1d6 F, 1d4 burn, DC 13])

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (guard)

STATISTICS

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

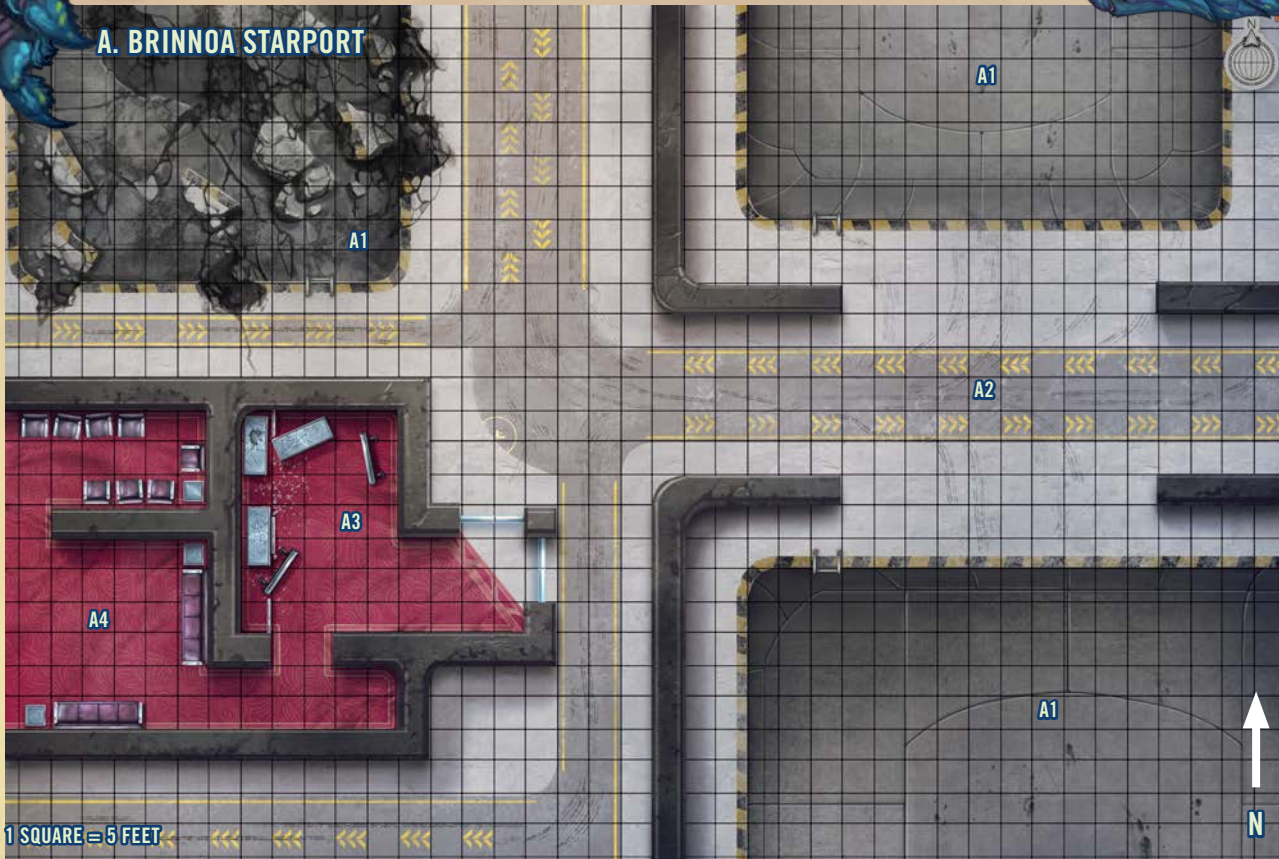
Skills Athletics +12, Intimidate +7, Piloting +7, Stealth +7

Languages Common

Other Abilities armor training

Gear hidden soldier armor (jump jets), tactical rail gun^{AR} with 24 longarm rounds, tactical dueling sword, incendiary grenades 1 (2), flashlight, personal comm unit

A. BRINNOA STARPORT



A. BRINNOA STARPORT

While SDF forces land smaller ships at strategic locations throughout the area around Brinnoa, the largest vessels can land only at the dedicated docks at Brinnoa Starport, where the fiercest fighting occurs. A dozen starships converge on the Brinnoa Starport simultaneously, including the support carrier transporting the PCs. The PCs' immediate objective is to secure the spaceport so that other ships and materiel can be shuttled to the surface to support the forward actions of the other soldiers.

The once-bustling Brinnoa Starport was mostly destroyed when the city was attacked, but the Swarm has now largely abandoned it. However, it rushes back in force as the SDF ships arrive, and the fighting on the ground is fierce as the Suskillon soldiers attempt to acquire and maintain this beachhead in enemy territory. Communications direct the carrier to land at one of the only unoccupied landing pads large enough to support a ship of that size—platform O-1.

Before the PCs can deploy and use their SDF Brush Stalkers—the durable military vehicles assigned to them—they must ensure that the nearby terminal is secure. Upon exiting the carrier, the PCs find themselves on the edge of the southern platform at the platform (area **A1**). The crew of the carrier begins to safeguard the starship against any attacks, while the PCs receive reports of the situation on the ground. They hear that the *Liberator's Fist*, a Suskillon Whip that has

landed on platform O-2, is having some trouble disembarking its operatives due to a tenacious pack of Swarm components on the tarmac. These soldiers request the PCs' aid.

Areas **A1** and **A2** are outdoors, and the counter-invasion begins in the day, so those areas are in bright light. Areas **A3** through **A5** are indoors but have enough windows to put them in normal light.

A1. LANDING PADS

The two larger landing pads (O-1 and O-2) are surrounded by a low cement wall only 2 feet tall; it provides partial cover to creatures adjacent to it (and full cover is a creature adjacent to the wall is prone). The area that used to be landing pad O-3 is a mass of rubble, having been destroyed by the Swarm during its initial attack on Brinnoa.

Area **A2** is visible from any of the areas marked **A1**.

A2. O TARMAC (CR 11)

The tarmac outside of O Terminal consists of several wide, flat spaces where passengers and crew can embark and disembark from their starships. The landing pads are clearly marked with signage in Common, and the terminal building to the west is marked "Customs: Entry Is Mandatory." The tarmac stretches in all directions, interrupted by other landing pads that service other terminals. Small, 2-foot-tall walls delineate the areas between terminals.

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Throughout the spaceport, SDF forces clash with Swarm components. The sounds of the surrounding battle are near-deafening, with constant gunfire, screams and shouts from both sides, and the occasional explosion. However, the Swarm isn't attacking in the same overwhelming numbers as before, and there is a good chance the SDF will take the spaceport in short order.

Creatures: A pack of Swarm corrovokes have converged on the landing pad to the north, making it difficult for the crew of the *Liberator's Fist* to disembark. No mere scouts, these corrovokes have been bioengineered to serve as hit-and-run guerrilla troops and have been dispatched to repel the SDF at Brinnoa Starport.

The starship takes a few potshots at the surrounding Swarm with an antipersonnel weapon, but too many corrovokes are present to safely open the vessel's airlock. If this continues, the *Liberator's Fist* will have to take off and find another place to

land, which wastes precious time the SDF doesn't have. When the PCs leave their landing pad, four corrovok guerrillas break off from the pack to advance on the PCs.

SWARM CORROVOX GUERRILLAS (4) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

Advanced Swarm corrovok (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 110)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

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

Perception +19

DEFENSE

HP 105 EACH

EAC 19; **KAC** 21

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

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

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee claw +14 (2d6+13 S)

Ranged acid cannon +17 (2d6+7 A; critical corrode 2d4)

Offensive Abilities nimble salvo, psychic assault

TACTICS

During Combat The corrovok guerrillas fire their acid cannons and then charge into melee. They stay mobile even while making full attacks but try not to provoke attacks of opportunity. They're surprised by the PCs' durability, several gang up against a single character when possible. Against foes that seem resistant to acid damage, a corrovok guerrilla instead unleashes its psychic assault.

Morale Heedless of their personal safety, the corrovok guerrillas fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +14 (+22 to climb), Stealth +14

Feats Opening Volley

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Nimble Salvo (Ex) When a corrovok guerrilla makes a full attack, it can also either take a guarded step or move up to half its speed. This movement can come before, between, or after its attacks, but can't be split up.

Psychic Assault (Su) A corrovok guerrilla can unleash a burst of harmful mental chatter at a target within 30 feet as a standard action. The target takes 7d4 damage. A target that succeeds at a DC 15 Will saving throw takes half damage.

Development: As the PCs take on the corrovok guerrillas, this provides enough of a window for the soldiers of the *Liberator's Fist* to exit their starship and fight the rest of the pack. Once the PCs defeat their corrovokes, the other SDF operatives dispatch theirs as well. They plan to move



further into the spaceport to cover other landing ships and suggest the PCs to secure the nearby terminal.

A3. CUSTOMS

The tables in this area have been smashed and jagged shards of the transparent aluminum dividers now litter the floor. A holographic sign above the wide east exit reads, "To Landing Pads 0-1-0-3." Another holographic sign above an opening to the south flickers between the messages "Welcome to Brinnoa" and "Critical Error, Reboot Required."

The debris here means this area functions as difficult terrain. None of the furniture is solid enough to function as cover.

A4. WAITING ROOM (CR 12)

Only a few sturdy benches remain in this waiting area. To the west, a sweeping stairway leads down into the main underground concourse of the spaceport. With the city's power grid malfunctioning, the lighting in the concourse flickers erratically, making it difficult to see if the area is safe.

Creatures: Two Swarm thresher lords rush up from the concourse stairs (west of area **A4**) as soon as the first PC enters this room. They roar ferociously and attack.

If the PCs committed additional units to Storm the Spaceport in Part 1, these thresher lords bear obvious injuries from SDF sniper weapons. Reduce each thresher lord's Hit Points by 25 for each additional unit the PCs committed, to a maximum reduction of 75 Hit Points. However, if the PCs lost the starship battle in **Event 1**, their slow descent to Suskillon means the thresher lords have had time to heal up; in this case, don't reduce the thresher lords' Hit Points, regardless of the number of additional units the PCs committed here.

SWARM THRESHER LORDS (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

HP 165 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 110)

TACTICS

During Combat The thresher lords advance into melee as soon as possible. The thresher lords prefer to make full attacks with their arm blades, although each prefers to attack a different PC in combat to spread out the carnage.

Morale The thresher lords fight to the death.

A5. LOUNGE

This lounge holds several comfortable chairs, but nothing else of obvious interest.

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check notices a *mk 4 ring of resistance* that fell behind one of the chairs during the panicked evacuation of the city.

MISSION UPDATES

Once the PCs defeat the thresher lords, they have time to take a 10-minute rest to regain Stamina Points. Units from around

NO ZANTOS

Depending on your players' reactions to Zantos Loachwurt in "The Last Refuge," you might not want to have him reappear in this adventure. There is also a small chance that the PCs killed him after his attempted mutiny on the Terminus Wild. In either case, you can replace him with an NPC named Dr. Eveck Abnagar, who reports the same betrayal by the Nightbats.

the spaceport begin to report success in taking several other terminals and securing parts of the concourse that can be fortified and held against the Swarm, though casualties were high. The PCs can aid in establishing these defensive points, if they wish. They can also unload their Brush Stalkers in preparation for traveling around the Brinnoa area.

A short time later, the PCs receive intel from Commander Najiri and others. The commander is the first to contact the PCs and has good news and bad news.

First, the units sent to the reconnoiter the temple of Hylax on Clutchstone Ridge are already in place and have happily reported less Swarm resistance than anticipated. The Swarm seems focused on the temple but isn't bothering with the soldiers' fortified position a short distance away and there has been no physical sign of the God-Host. These soldiers believe they can hold off any Swarm forces that approach for as long as necessary for the PCs to arrive and prepare to attack the temple directly; Commander Najiri therefore suggests that the PCs take care of other matters in and around the city before they rendezvous with these soldiers. When the PCs decide to meet up with them, proceed to Part 3 on page 30.

Second, the units sent to the Arwill Nuclear Facility haven't reported in at all. Commander Najiri asks the PCs to personally check in on them when convenient. Whether or not the PCs have enough protection to enter the reactor site itself, they can get to an observation post to see what's going on and, from there, access a video feed from inside the reactor site. The observation post is described in area **B**.

After speaking with Commander Najiri, the PCs receive three more updates via their comms. The first is a hushed message from a familiar face: Zantos Loachwurt, who has returned to the planet with other Bronze Beam scientists to capture and study a psychovox at a fortified estate in Brinnoa Heights. Loachwurt speaks quietly but quickly. Read or paraphrase the following.

"This is Zantos Loachwurt in Brinnoa Heights. I know we haven't exactly gotten along in the past, but I didn't know who else to contact. Something's gone wrong here. Bronze Beam employed some mercenaries to supplement the SDF forces assigned to protect us, and, well, they turned on the soldiers and are holding us hostage! Their leader is a

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drow named Varvek, or something like that, and he seems interested in getting the psychovox off planet. They set up a signal jammer, but I've bypassed it long enough to..." Two gunshots interrupt the speaker, and the signal goes dead.

If the PCs tell Commander Najiri about the incident, she consults some records and informs them that the SDF did approve the hiring of a Pact Worlds mercenary group named the Nightbats, led by a drow named Vavex Eindres. She would like the PCs to check out this report and determine whether the Nightbats have indeed gone rogue. The estate is described in area **C**.

A second message comes only a minute later from Sergeant Jule Shavesko, second in command of the unit sent to eliminate the psychovox nest at the Hoaldi Dome. Shavesko reports she is now in command of the mission, as her lieutenant was killed shortly after they arrived. The Swarm forces are stronger than anticipated, and sensors show more will arrive within a few hours at most; Shavesko thinks the gestating psychovoxes are able to call for help. She asks for the PCs' aid, letting them know where to meet her. The stadium is described in area **D**.

Finally, the PC with the best Computers or Engineering total skill bonus receives a message from Lieutenant Kahore at the Rendith Dam; his specialists have uncovered some unusual programming in the dam's computer controls and

he asks for the PC's expertise. If the PC asks Kahore to send over images of the problem code, they come across as hopelessly jumbled, but Kahore doesn't know why. The dam is described in area **E**.

From this point, the PCs can tackle the various areas in any order they see fit, traveling between locations in the city using their Brush Stalkers (see below). Though some missions seem more urgent than others, there are no penalties if the PCs take a day or two to complete them; the pressure of the constant fighting across the city should be enough to spur the PCs onward.

THE SDF BRUSH STALKERS

By the time the PCs are ready to depart, the carrier's crew has unloaded the two SDF Brush Stalkers. Each is a heavy assault buggy, a squat vehicle that weighs 1-1/2 tons and is equipped with six powerful hoverjets, although it can't rise more than a foot or two off the ground. These durable vehicles can handle even the ruined streets of Brinnoa easily and are painted the same colors as the eponymous Suskillon predators. The statistics for a heavy assault buggy appear on page 52.

The PCs should determine who is driving, who is operating the gun, and who is a passenger in each vehicle. This information becomes particularly relevant during the chase of **Event 2**, but should be established well before then. Although the PCs can cram into only one vehicle if they so choose, they

should feel free to take both. The distances between sites in this adventure are so far that you should discourage the PCs from eschewing the vehicles entirely to travel by foot.

B. ARWILL REACTOR OBSERVATION POST

When the Swarm first invaded Suskillon, the workers at the Arwill Nuclear Facility were unsure whether to maintain the reactor to give Suskilloners power for as long as possible, to shut down the reactor to prevent the Swarm from using it, or even to rig the reactor to melt down if the SDF failed entirely. No matter what, their fate seemed grim. Assistant Engineer Ulwe Cajaritus offered a plan to save everyone by summoning and binding a powerful fiend to defend the reactor. Over the protests of a few employees—including a junior engineer named Ellishar—Cajaritus and the others hastily enacted the ritual. The pluprex demon who arrived easily broke free of the engineers' control and slaughtered everyone at the facility. Cajaritus fled to a nearby reactor observation post, but his participation in the ritual had marked him in the eyes of the demon, who stalked and killed the engineer before returning to the reactor and wallowing in its increasingly unstable radiation. The pluprex demon has spent the last several weeks exploring the facility and transforming it into its new home.

When the SDF units arrived at the reactor, the demon slaughtered them as well. The supernatural energies of the demon's anger wrenched Cajaritus back to life as a prexian mutantspawn that currently stalks the reactor observation post. The PCs will need to defeat both demon and mutantspawn before they can stabilize the reactor.

Discourage the PCs from approaching the reactor itself; they lack the specialized equipment needed and are likely to suffer debilitating radiation poisoning. You may need to remind them that their task isn't to charge in, but to discover what happened to the units sent here and assess the danger to the planetary reclamation effort.

The interior of the observation post is functional and primarily made of tile and concrete. Ceilings throughout the building are 8 feet high. The observation post still has power but is unlit except where indicated below. The doors are made of solid steel (hardness 30, HP 125, break DC 25) and open easily, except for the doors to area **B6** (which is barricaded shut) and area **B7** (which is electronically locked).

Use the map on page 15 for this area.

B1. PARKING LOT

This small parking lot has spaces for six vehicles and is adjacent to a squat, concrete building with narrow windows and a

single metal door. The two enormous conical towers of a nuclear reactor are visible a half mile to the north, across wide fields littered with warning signs. The north edge of the parking lot bears a holographic sign reading, "Welcome to the Arwill Reactor Observation Post." Beneath this is a scrolling electronic notice that points out, "Radiation at the post is: MINIMAL. Radiation at the reactor is: EXTREME/ DANGER DO NOT APPROACH REACTOR."

Although the only entrance to the observation post is the metal door facing the parking lot, PCs who circle the building note an impressive array of measuring apparatuses protruding from the north end of the building. With the exception of the monitoring room window, which hangs out over the cliff, the observation post's windows are 3 feet high and 6 inches wide, and made of a transparent alloy that is too cloudy to see through clearly.

B2. POST ENTRY (CR 11)

This irregular room contains a reception desk and a few chairs. Doors lead out of this room in several directions, and red warning lights above each flash at a regular cadence. Sparking wires dangle from below each light. The foul smell of death pervades the air, likely from the moldering corpse of a human man in a white lab coat in one corner of the room. His limbs are twisted horribly and most of his chest cavity has been torn out.

Due to the critical situation in the reactor, the warning lights have been flashing here for quite some time, along



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with a blaring klaxon. The room's current occupant found the noise irritating and ripped out the speakers under each light.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Medicine check while examining the corpse realizes the body is several weeks old, having died when Brinnoa fell, though the strange positions of his limbs aren't consistent with Swarm attacks. Strangely, the damage to the torso occurred within the past few hours and seems to have been caused by something clawing its way out of the corpse. The body still wears a white lab coat and a name tag reading "Assistant Engineer Ulwe Cajaritus." The corpse also bears a burned-out and useless radiation badge (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 198); a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Engineering check can confirm that an overwhelming dose of radiation destroyed the badge long ago.

The steel door leading to area **B6** is barricaded from within as described in that area. The double door that heads into the area **B7** is electronically locked, as described in that area.

Creature: A prexian mutantspawn crawled free of Cajaritus's corpse a few hours ago and is still in this area. When the PCs arrive, it attempts to hide behind the reception desk and ambush them.

PREXIAN MUTANTSPAWN

CR 11

XP 12,800

HP 155 (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 35)

TACTICS

During Combat If the PCs are unaware of the mutantspawn, it casts *confusion* on as many of them as possible during the surprise round. The mutantspawn casts *mind thrust* on the strongest-looking PC and then moves into melee to attack with its numbing taclash.

Morale The mutantspawn fights to the death.

B3. LOCKER ROOM

Primarily used as a changing room for the engineers and scientists stationed here at the observation post, this room is lined with metal lockers marked with individual names. The scientists also used this room as a lounge, so a table and a few mismatched chairs stand in the southwest corner of the room. A few games of chance are stacked neatly on the table.

Treasure: The lockers contain six suits of d-suit II armor, each with a radiation buffer armor upgrade and a radiation badge (*Pact Worlds* 198). A locker labeled "Emergency Supplies" contains two gray nanite hypopans (*Starfinder Armory* 106) and two radiation sweepers (*Armory* 107). In addition, the games on the table include a popular strategy game called imperial conquest (*Armory* 108).

B4. SHARED OFFICE

This cramped room contains three desks, each with an office chair, a small computer workstation, and number of personal effects. Two doors stand in the south wall and one in the east wall.

The three engineers who worked here used this chamber as a shared office space when they weren't in the monitoring room. The various personal effects include ceramic mugs with humorous sayings ("Don't Coffee Me Until I've Had My Morning Talk"), tiny plastic figurines, and holoframes whose internal batteries have run out.

The tier 4 computer workstations still receive power, and each requires a successful DC 29 Computers check to access. They mostly contain day-to-day information about running the observation post, but a PC trained in Computers who examines the northernmost workstation notices a subfolder labeled "Cajaritus Personal." This subfolder is encrypted and protected with a wipe countermeasure (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 217), so a PC must succeed at another DC 29 Computers check to access it, and failure at this Computers check deletes the information within. Documents in the subfolder describe mystical rites to summon a "radiation demon" called a pluprex demon, as well as a convoluted method of binding the demon to a specific highly radioactive site, such as a nuclear reactor. A PC who reviews this subfolder and succeeds at a DC 30 Mysticism check realizes that the ritual described might actually summon the demon, but the binding instructions are fundamentally flawed—the summoned demon would in fact be entirely uncontrolled.

Treasure: A drawer in the southernmost desk contains an advanced emotion regulator (*Starfinder Armory* 103).

Story Award: If the PCs access Cajaritus's personal file and learn about the ritual to summon a radiation demon, award them 9,600 XP.

B5. WASHROOM

This simple bathroom also contains a chemical shower for emergencies.

B6. LAB

A table and several heavy pieces of laboratory equipment block this door from the inside, making it hard to open from area **B2**. A PC must succeed at a DC 20 Strength check to shove the door open.

All of the equipment in this orderly laboratory appears to be on standby, with dimly blinking lights, including a computer terminal against the northern wall. A body in a white lab coat is curled up against the east wall, underneath a narrow, opaque window. From the smell, it has been here for some time. The room's only door leads to the west, near a jumble of heavy equipment and furniture.

The scientists stationed at this observation post performed minor experiments in this lab, principally related to radiation and its effects. Unable to flee the building, Junior Engineer Ellishar, a female half-elf, barricaded herself in this room when she couldn't convince her superior, Ulwe Cajaritus, to give up his dangerous plan to summon a fiend to protect the

reactor site. Ellishar piled equipment and furniture against the door, and as the demon pounded on it to get inside, one of the heavier pieces fell and struck Ellishar on the head. Concussed, she stumbled to the other side of the room, slipped into a coma, and eventually died as the Swarm took the city. She still wears her white lab coat and a badge reading "Junior Engineer Ellishar." A key card that opens the door to area **B7** is tucked into one of the coat's pockets. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Medicine check while examining her corpse spots her head wound and can surmise her cause of death.

A successful DC 30 Perception check reveals a datapad under the southeast table, only a few feet from the body. The datapad was Ellishar's and contains, among other mundane things, a series of desperate-sounding electronic messages to the off-site upper management of the Arwill Nuclear Facility and local law enforcement. These messages state that someone named Assistant Engineer Ulwe Cajaritus has enacted an ill-advised plan to protect the reactor from the invading Swarm by summoning a demon. Ellishar notes that she has barricaded herself in the lab and requests help be sent immediately. Unfortunately, due to the attack on Brinnoa, these messages were never received.

The tier 4 computer in this room requires a successful DC 29 Computers check to access. It primarily contains routine experiments and analyses of reactor data. This computer isn't connected to the system in the area **B7** or the main reactor computers.

B7. MONITORING ROOM (CR 13)

The double door to this room is electronically locked. A successful DC 35 Computers or Engineering check is required to open the door, though the key card found in area **B6** opens it automatically.

A wide bank of computers occupies the north wall of this room, beneath a large window facing the reactor silos far to the north. Several cubbies line the east wall, filled with datapads, satchels, and several volumes of notebooks labeled "Reactor Protocols." Many of the computer screens seem connected to cameras, as they show different scenes of a large, industrial facility. A double door leads out to the south.

The engineers monitoring the reactor from this room could access over 20 different camera feeds from this room, both inside the reactor and showing the reactor from a distance (in addition, of course, to viewing the reactor from the windows here). The computers can show either video recordings or live feed; when the PCs arrive, the cameras are showing video recordings on loops of only a few seconds each.

Most of the recordings show scenes of SDF soldiers moving through the reactor and meeting grisly ends at the hands of a hideous demonic creature. The time logs show these scenes are all several hours old and occurred soon after the SDF soldiers arrived at the reactor. The demon doesn't appear

clearly on camera; at best, only an unnaturally hooked claw or strange, wormlike mouth lunges from off camera to kill a soldier. More often, the soldiers clutch their heads and fall dead from some sort of psychic attack or unseen magical effect. The soldiers fight back bravely, but they shout about their weapons having little effect and not being able to pin the enemy down. A PC can attempt a Perception check to spot clues in the recordings or a Computers check to slow down the footage and carefully replay it. On a result of 20 or higher, a PC identifies that all the attacks are from the same creature, not multiple creatures. On a result of 25 or higher, the PC realizes that the creature must have some incredibly fast form of movement, like teleportation, to appear in so many places throughout the reactor in close succession. On a result of 30 or higher, the PC catches an unobstructed image of the pluprex and can attempt a DC 29 Mysticism check to identify it.

Regardless of these results, the PCs can learn more information if they committed additional units to Fallout Containment in Part 1. While no soldiers survive moving through the reactor no matter how many units the PCs committed—the demon's ability to animate the fallen as radioactive undead wasn't something these soldiers were prepared for—some of the soldiers tried to leave clues about the demon, despite the radioactivity interfering with their comms. These resourceful fighters spotted the cameras around the reactor and tried to get messages out that way. If the PCs committed one additional unit here, reviewing the recorded feed shows a soldier holding up a note reading, "Comms out. Creature emits radiation. Bite causes mutations. DO NOT close in!" If the PCs committed two or more additional units here, the soldier had time to add, "Immune to electricity, resistant to lasers, cold, and ballistic weapons. Can raise the dead. Powerful mental attacks." A moment later, the demon attacks the helpful soldier with a bloody claw from just off camera, eviscerating him.

The PCs can switch the video feed to show the current situation at the reactor, possibly to search for survivors or gain more clues. Unfortunately, clouds of radioactive steam obscure any camera angle the PCs check. This steam can be diverted using the computers here with a successful DC 29 Computers or Engineering check. Doing so reveals the corpses of soldiers throughout the reactor. The demon is nowhere in sight in the current camera views, because it comes to the observation post as soon as the steam clouds clear; see Creatures below.

Finally, the sensors here show that the reactor is unstable, but its radiation is currently contained. That indicates, regardless of the number of units the PCs committed to the Fallout Containment mission, the soldiers did their job before the pluprex slaughtered them.

Creatures: The pluprex knows that no other creatures are in the reactor complex, so if the PCs divert the radioactive steam clouds in the reactor, it knows someone is at the monitoring station. It teleports to the parking lot (area **B1**)

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and walks through the entry (area B2), stopping to animate Cajaritus's corpse as an occult zombie if it is present, permanently increasing the zombie's radioactive aura afterward. The pluprex then enters this area, attacking any creature it encounters.

RADIOACTIVE ZOMBIE

CR 6

XP 2,400

Occult zombie (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 114)

NE Medium undead

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +13

Aura radioactive (medium, 20 ft., DC 14)

DEFENSE

EAC 18; **KAC** 20

Fort +8; **Ref** +8; **Will** +7

DR 5/magic; **Immunities** undead immunities

Weaknesses staggered

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +16 (2d6+11 B)

TACTICS

During Combat The zombie interposes itself between the demon and the PCs. It attacks the closest opponent with its slam.

Morale The zombie fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +18

Other Abilities mindless, unliving

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Radioactive (Su) This radioactive zombie emits medium radiation in a 20-foot radius.

PLUPREX

CR 13

XP 25,600

HP 190 (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 34)

TACTICS

During Combat The demon enjoys causing fear and using its bite to invoke mutations in victims. If surrounded by at least three foes, it casts *greater synaptic pulse* and then makes a full attack the next round.

Morale The demon fears that the PCs are intruders who want to oust it from the reactor, so it fights tenaciously to the death.

Treasure: One of the cubbies along the eastern wall contains an inductive bandolier (*Starfinder Armory* 104).

C. MATCHMAKER HOUSE

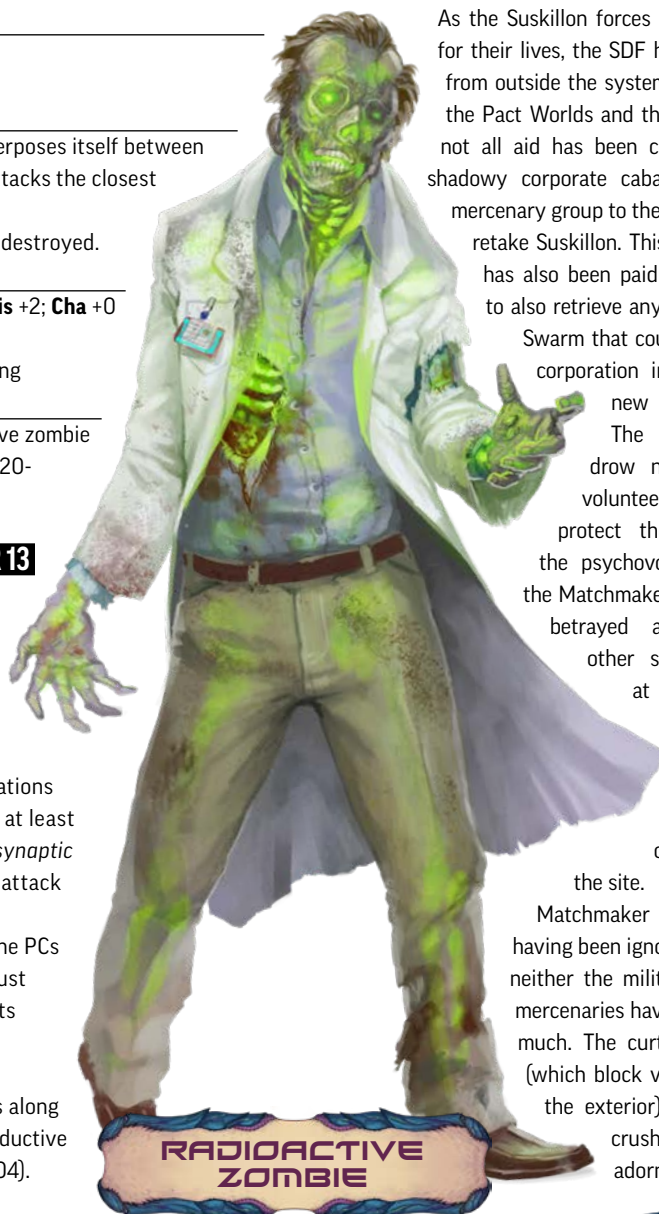
The elite Brinnoa Heights neighborhood contains many traditional, wealthy residences. One of these is a Matchmaker House, a small retreat where wealthy Suskilloners could go to meet potential spouses. This Matchmaker House is near extensive grounds of gently rolling hills, and before the invasion, it boasted a collection of docile mounts for patrons to ride. Although these creatures were killed in the Swarm's invasion of the planet, the sturdy stable remains and includes state-of-the-art veterinary facilities.

When early recon of the planet spotted a new type of Swarm component, its psychic grumbling earned it the name "psychovox." Forward SDF scouts managed to corral one of these creatures into the Matchmaker House's stable and kept it contained until a group of military scientists could arrive to study it. These scientists quickly discovered a significant amount of information about the captive psychovox.

As the Suskillon forces have been in the fight for their lives, the SDF has received some help from outside the system, mainly from allies in the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium. However, not all aid has been completely altruistic. A shadowy corporate cabal on Apostae sent a mercenary group to the war, ostensibly to help retake Suskillon. This group, the Nightbats, has also been paid an exorbitant amount to also retrieve any information about the Swarm that could be used by the amoral corporation in the development of new weapons technology.

The Nightbats' leader, a drow named Vavex Eindres, volunteered his group to help protect the scientists studying the psychovox specimen. Once at the Matchmaker House, the Nightbats betrayed and slaughtered the other soldiers and scientists at the site. Vavex is in communication with his benefactors to arrange for its extraction while the other mercenaries hold the site.

Matchmaker House is still opulent, having been ignored by the Swarm, and neither the military scientists nor the mercenaries have damaged the interior much. The curtains on the windows (which block view of the inside from the exterior) are made of a thick crushed velvet, gold trim adorns the fixtures in



RADIOACTIVE ZOMBIE

B. ARWILL REACTOR OBSERVATION POST



C. MATCHMAKER HOUSE



D. HOALDI DOME



E. RENDITH DAM



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



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every room, and every piece of furniture bears ornamental flourishes. Ceilings throughout the manor are 12 feet high, although the tack room (area **C9**) is only 8 feet high and the stable (area **C8**) is 20 feet high. The doors are made of sturdy mahogany, but their locking mechanisms are all broken. The manor still has electrical power, and tasteful light fixtures bathe each room in normal light.

After Zantos Loachwurt (or another scientist) gave his last transmission, the Nightbats activated a level 10 signal jammer that blocks comm unit transmissions within 4 miles of the Matchmaker House. Although this means the PCs can't easily report on the situation, it also makes it difficult for the mercenaries to communicate with each other.

Use the map on page 15 for this area.

C1. FRONT DRIVE (CR 12)

Trees that were once-carefully manicured screen this expansive, U-shaped driveway from the estate's neighbors. Hedges and flowers in the middle of the U have been torn to pieces and are strewn with the corpses of SDF soldiers. The stone manor house to the south has wide steps leading up to its ornate front door. Two balconies ten feet above the ground look out on the drive from the building's second floor.

The Nightbats used a tripod-mounted X-gen gun that was set up on one of the balconies overlooking this area to mow down the unsuspecting SDF troops in the front drive. Although that weapon has been relocated into the house for repairs (see area **C3**), evidence of this battle remains here in the form of 19 murdered soldiers and a limited amount of scorching and return fire in the stone around the western balcony. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Medicine check can tell each SDF soldier here was slain by heavy weapon rounds.

The front door is shut, but its lock is destroyed.

Creatures: Two Nightbat snipers, one on each balcony, keep a watch on anyone approaching the manor. The ornamental railings on the balconies provide cover to these mercenary commandos.

NIGHTBAT REGULARS (2) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Mercenary commandos (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 175)

HP 150 each

TACTICS

Before Combat When the commandos spot the PCs walking down the drive, they activate their cloaking fields and remain still, gaining a +10 bonus to their Stealth checks to hide. If not spotted, the snipers open fire as soon as the PCs get within 30 feet of the front door or look like they intend to leave.

During Combat Each commando chooses a different PC to fire at, using debilitating trick with their sniper rifle to impart the off-target condition. If the PCs get closer than

10 feet from the manor, the commandos switch to their pistols and attempt to deal extra trick attack damage against those PCs.

Morale Once one of the commandos is defeated, the other surrenders if reduced to 30 Hit Points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Other Abilities operative exploits (cloaking field, debilitating sniper), specialization (ghost)

Treasure: In addition to the gear carried by the commandos, the PCs can recover the equipment of the 19 dead SDF soldiers here (page 6), as the mercenaries haven't bothered to take any of it.

Development: The sounds of combat in the front yard alert the mercenaries in area **C3**, who flip over chairs and couches for cover and prepare their X-gen gun to attack intruders (if it is operational).

The PCs might seek information from a commando who surrenders; if so, consult the Questioning the Mercenaries sidebar on page 17.

C2. FRONT HALL

Boot marks scuff the otherwise pristine marble floors here, while two small couches have been pushed up against the eastern wall. Doors lead in just about every direction, and a set of stairs rises up to the east. A large, overgrown plant, some of its leaves turning brown, is potted on the top of a ceramic column near the base of the stairs.

The stairs lead up to the second floor of the manor, which holds a series of opulent bedrooms and access to the garden on the roof. The Nightbats haven't yet ransacked these chambers, but not much can be found there.

At your discretion, Zantos Loachwurt (or Dr. Eveck Abnagar if your players received the distress call from him) hides upstairs, crouching inside an expansive wardrobe. The scientist is grateful to the PCs for rescuing him, explaining that the Nightbats nearly caught him transmitting for aid, so he has been staying out of sight ever since. If you prefer a bleaker scenario, this scientist is one of the dead found in area **C5**.

C3. PARLOR (CR 10)

Two mahogany tables in this parlor have had their knickknacks dumped on the floor to make space for various tools, turning this room into a workshop. Several rounds of high-caliber ammunition are heaped upon a wooden chair in the corner. A double door leads out to a hall to the east.

The Nightbats have turned Matchmaker House's parlor into a makeshift engineering workshop where they can repair their equipment, as they plan to hold the manor for an unspecified amount of time. The tripod-mounted elite X-gen gun used to

mow down soldiers on the front lawn overheated during the fracas, and some of the mercenaries brought it into this room to get it back in working shape.

Creatures: A pair of vesk gunners work to repair the X-gen gun here, overseen by a red-furred ysoki technomancer. Mounted on a tripod, the X-gen gun can't be moved from its position as marked on the map. If the PCs committed additional units to the Scientist Defense mission in Part 1, those units were able to damage the X-gen gun further before being killed, so the Nightbat gunners don't have use of the weapon in this encounter.

NIGHTBAT GUNNERS (2) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Mercenary rookie (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 174)

HP 90 each

OFFENSE

Ranged elite X-gen gun +13 (4d12+6 P)

TACTICS

Before Combat If the mercenaries know about the PCs, they overturn a couple of divans, which provide cover. One takes control of the mounted elite X-gen gun if it is functioning.

During Combat The gunners try to take out the PCs with ranged attacks before they can close, rendering the X-gen gun less useful. If the PCs do come within melee range, the gunners grab their doshkos.

Morale Fiercely loyal to the Nightbats, the gunners fight to the death.

NIGHTBAT SPELLSLINGER CR 8

XP 4,800

Mercenary technomancer (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 175)

HP 105

TACTICS

Before Combat If the mercenaries are aware of the PCs' presence on the grounds, the spellslinger has moved behind the gunners.

During Combat The ysoki stays in a fortified position, using her spells against the PCs and trying to do as much damage as possible.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points, the spellslinger casts invisibility on herself and tries to flee, warning the commandos is area **C5**.

Treasure: In addition to the mercenaries' gear, the PCs can remove the elite X-gen gun from its tripod with a few minutes of work. If the weapon was unusable from damage, a PC can repair it with a successful DC 30 Engineering check and 1 hour of work.

C4. DRAWING ROOM

Several large portraits of happy couples adorn the walls of

QUESTIONING THE MERCENARIES

If the PCs interrogate any of the mercenaries, they are willing to exchange information for their lives. Their leader is a drow named Vavex Eindres, and he acquired a commission from someone in the Pact Worlds to recover one of the psychovoxes and the information the scientists here gained about these Swarm creatures. The mercenaries don't know who this contact is, and in fact Vavex has received only anonymous and untraceable orders (though enough of an initial payment to purchase the Nightbats' services). The mercenaries eliminated the soldiers and scientists here to secure the data, as well as the psychovox in the stable. They are now waiting for Vavex to arrange a pickup. The mercenaries assume that a botched mission means their mysterious benefactor will be very angry and arrange to "tie up loose ends." They would therefore prefer to be in the PCs' custody than face this retribution if defeated in combat.

this room. Two sofas, each just large enough for two people, have been pushed together in the middle of the floor. Several black duffel bags are stacked on the sofas. Thick curtains hang in the center of the north and west walls, while the south wall contains a nook with an angled ceiling. A double door exits to the west.

This room was intended to encourage the Matchmaker House's guests to couple up, as well as to give couples some privacy for intimate conversations. Lacking any need for such a room, the Nightbats simply use it as storage; they pushed the sofas together and dropped the duffel bags containing their equipment on them. The nook—which occupies the angled space beneath the stairs to the second story—contains a discreet infuser that makes the space smell faintly of lavender, though the sofa that once sat in the nook has been pushed into the center of the room.

Treasure: Although the duffel bags mostly contain only spare clothing, tools for weapon and armor repair, and other equipment of limited value, the bottom duffel bag contains a suit of *celerity rigging powered armor* (*Starfinder Armory* 75) that none of the mercenaries is currently using.

C5. KITCHEN (CR 12)

This kitchen gleams with high-end appliances and polished counter tops. Racks of pots, knives, and other cooking equipment hang in the center of the room over a kitchen island bearing the phrase "Sharing Food Is Sharing Love" in large letters. Several computers occupy the counter space

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between an oven and a folding pantry door. The air here smells strongly of cinnamon. Two exits lead west, with the southern one being a large swinging door. Another door leads east.

This kitchen contains the latest in convenient appliances and a pantry well stocked with gourmet goods, although the SDF military scientists who occupied this manor had little use for such amenities. They were more interested in the kitchen's power outlets, which were designed to provide power to multiple large kitchen appliances and therefore worked well with their high-end computers.

These networked computers count as a single tier 5 computer. As a top-of-the-line SDF military system, this computer has the hardening and miniaturization upgrades (which means it can be moved from place to place; normally, tier 5 and higher computers aren't portable). This computer here has a secure data module with a firewall, which the Nightbat technomancer has yet to breach. The PCs can gain access to the module by succeeding at DC 35 Computers check to bypass the firewall, followed by a successful DC 33 Computers check.

The secure data module contains all the military scientists' information about psychovoxes, which comes from their

study of the creature they managed to capture in the stable (area C9). This data can provide the PCs with a rough overview of the creature's capabilities (page 59). Further, the module has notes on the first experiment the military scientist performed on the psychovox. They had hoped to be able to telepathically eavesdrop on Swarm communications, but their efforts to boost the psychovox's telepathic range backfired. Instead of gaining information about the Swarm, the scientists believe they have inadvertently mutated the psychovox's abilities, giving it a much greater range and strength to its psychic grumbling ability. This mutation is limited to this psychovox subject alone, but if it were allowed to reach other psychovoxes, it could communicate this enhancement to others, improving all the psychovoxes on Suskillon. The scientists knew the nature of their failed experiment, and fiercely debated whether to exterminate their test subject to stop this contagious enhancement, or to keep up their experiments in the hopes of eventually learning useful intelligence for the Suskillon Defense Force. The latter opinion won the day, and the military scientists instead reinforced the stable to prevent the psychovox from escaping, then planned further testing. This further testing was slated to begin the day after the Nightbats arrived and killed all the military scientists here.

The cinnamon smell wafts from vents in the ceiling; the caretakers of Matchmaker House believed cinnamon to be a very romantic scent and installed a diffuser to keep the kitchen smelling of it all the time. The SDF military scientists didn't mind the smell, and the Nightbats have had higher priorities than finding and disabling the diffusers.

The corpses of four military scientists, all shot to death by the Nightbats, are jammed into the pantry in this kitchen. The pervasive smell of cinnamon masks the unpleasant odor of the dead, so the PCs aren't likely to find them unless they open the pantry doors.

Creatures: Two Nightbat regulars have been examining the computers on behalf of the group's technomancer to see if there is any other way to bypass the firewall. They have been unsuccessful, which has made them a little grumpy.

NIGHTBAT REGULARS (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Mercenary commando (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 175)

HP 150 each

TACTICS

Before Combat If the regulars are aware of the PCs' presence in the mansion, they both activate their cloaking fields. One of them takes cover behind the central kitchen island, while the other sneaks into the dining room (area C6) and peers into the hall from there.

During Combat The regulars use their incapacitators or pistols as the situation demands, but always attempt to make trick attacks against the PCs. If possible, one tries to move around the PCs to flank them in the front hall.



NIGHTBAT
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Morale When one of the regulars is reduced to 0 Hit Points, the other makes a fighting retreat toward area **C8** to warn Vavex.

STATISTICS

Other Abilities operative exploits (cloaking field, debilitating sniper), specialization (ghost)

Treasure: One of the corpses in the pantry has a *mk 3 computer idol* (*Starfinder Armory* 120) in his pocket, which the mercenaries overlooked.

C6. DINING ROOM

A crystal chandelier hangs from the ceiling in this dining room. Delicate wooden chairs line the east and west walls, allowing easy access to the large red-brown mahogany table. Glass cases and scientific apparatuses cover the table. A thick wooden double door stands in the north wall, and a swinging door stands in the east wall. A gauzy purple curtain hangs over a large window in the south wall.

The military scientists performed the bulk of their biological research in this room, experimenting on samples from the captive psychovox. The Nightbat mercenaries in the kitchen (area **C5**) intend to come here to evaluate what the scientists found, but only after they finish cracking the computer files in the kitchen.

The cases all contain bits of biological matter, predominantly pieces of black-and-green carapace, shavings of antennae, and slivers taken from large, compound eyes. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Life Science check can confirm that all of the samples come from the same living creature. If the result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC realizes that these biological samples come from a Swarm creature.

Hazard: A small wire cage contains a living black beetle the size of a human fist. This beetle isn't a Swarm creature; it's a monk beetle, a docile and harmless beetle native to Suskillon, as any PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Life Science check can confirm. If the result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC can also recognize something has been done to this insect, as evidenced by a small enlargement of its head. The military scientists injected some of the psychovox's brain material into the beetle to see whether it would replicate inside a more tractable host creature. This experiment initially didn't seem to do much other than make the monk beetle even more timid, though since the Nightbats have taken over the manor, it has rapidly mutated.

If the PCs touch the monk beetle's cage (possibly to set it free), the insect emits a psychic squeal that reverberates throughout the manor. Those in this room experience the strongest mental feedback and must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1 round. Any creature that attempted the saving throw can't be affected by the monk beetle's squeal for 24 hours. If the PCs still open the cage, the

insect scuttles out onto the floor and disappears under the chairs along the eastern wall. Alternatively, the PCs can easily smash the cage and kill the beetle inside.

Development: If the two Nightbats in the kitchen (area **C5**) hear a disturbance from this room—including the psychic squeal from the monk beetle—they come to investigate. The other mercenaries in Matchmaker House don't come to investigate the mental feedback but prepare themselves for trouble.

C7. LIBRARY

A landing overlooks a sunken library with floor-to-ceiling shelves. Two short staircases lead down to the shelves, which contain leather-bound books, knickknacks, and figurines engaged in hugs or chaste kisses. The only nod to technology is a small table at the south end, above which glows a holographic map. Double doors lead out of this room at the east and west ends of the landing. The door to the west is made of a sturdy wood banded with straps of engraved metal.

Most of the books in this library are lurid romance novels or relationship advice manuals. All are bound in leather and look more scholarly than their subject matter warrants. The figurines and knickknacks are all cheap plastic, with a single exception (see Treasure below). The holographic map shows the area around the Matchmaker House; although it was once used to plan the occasional romantic rendezvous, Vavex has been using it to consider how best to deploy his forces to defend the manor.

The western door is enchanted to provide a *token spell* effect that deodorizes and cleans the exposed clothing of anyone stepping through it. This effect was included to help keep the stable smells out of the house. This effect can be temporarily suppressed with *dispel magic* as though it were a 6th-level magic item.

Treasure: One of the figurines is decidedly more monstrous than the others: this is a *bloodstone bloodbrother figurine of wondrous power* (*Starfinder Armory* 113) left behind by a previous guest.

Development: If the PCs trigger the psychovox escape in area **C8** but return to this room rather than investigate, the holographic table shows the psychovox hurrying away from the stable. This provides a clue to the PCs that the creature is getting away, which they might otherwise not realize.

C8. TACK ROOM (CR 11)

This chamber contains several racks of riding gear and saddles in various sizes and smells faintly of sweat and animals. A wooden double door bound in metal leads to the east, while a wider door leads to the west.

Equipment used for riding the animals once housed in the adjacent stable hangs on the walls, although it hasn't been

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used in some time, so it's a bit dusty. The military scientists who once operated here simply used this corridor to come and go from the stable (area C9), where they'd imprisoned the psychovox, so they didn't bother to make any changes to the room's accouterments.

The eastern door leads into the library; as described in that room, the doorway provides a *token spell* effect to deodorize and clean the exposed clothing of anyone passing through. The western door leads to the stable, but Vavex installed a microscanner keyed to his cybernetics into the doorway; if anyone other than Vavex passes under the lintel, the explosives he rigged in the stable detonate. A PC can discover this device with a successful DC 40 Perception check and disable it with a successful DC 32 Engineering check, but chances are that Vavex will trigger the explosives himself (see Development below).

Creature: Vavex Eindres, the drow leader of the Nightbats, spends most of his time here. A handsome man with deep purple skin and short, white hair, Vavex was born into poverty on Apostae before lying and murdering his way to the head of a small weapons manufacturer. A deal gone bad forced him off the planet, but he managed to join—and, ultimately, to lead—the Nightbats mercenary group. As ruthless as he is persuasive, Vavex has a hard time telling the truth whenever a lie would suffice; despite his obviously duplicitous nature, the lucrative contracts he negotiates makes him popular among the mercenaries he leads. Vavex left defense of the manor to his underlings, who he assumes will follow his orders diligently.

While Vavex is in the tack room, he hooks his datajack up to the large signal jammer here via an adapter cable. This signal jammer is relatively large—the size and shape of a bar stool—but Vavex was able to smuggle it onto the planet by disguising it as a weapon mount. As the drow jacks into the signal jammer directly, he can bypass its comm suppression to reach out to his shadowy corporate employers. He is currently awaiting a response and instructions regarding a pickup of the psychovox.

If Vavex is aware of intruders in the manor, he disconnects himself from the signal jammer, activates his force field, and hides among the equipment on the walls. If not, he doesn't have his force field active and can't go more than 10 feet from the center of the room without taking a standard action to disconnect himself from the signal jammer.

To keep the captive psychovox from falling into anyone else's hands, Vavex has installed a fail-safe in his cybernetics. When he believes his defeat is imminent, he arrogantly cries, "If I can't have the objective, neither can you!" See Development below for what happens next.

VAVEX EINDRES

CR 11

XP 12,800

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

HP 170 RP 6

TACTICS

During Combat Vavex uses all of his envoy improvisations to gain any advantage he can over the PCs. In such close quarters, he likely has to rely on his longsword in combat.

Morale Vavex fights to the death to conceal his treachery.

If Vavex's threshold buffer detects that he is dead, dying, or unconscious, it detonates the explosives in the stable (see Development).

STATISTICS

Augmentations accelerated datajack, mk 2 threshold buffer (*Starfinder Armory* 89)

Treasure: The active level 10 signal jammer in the center of this room has a bulk of 6.

Development: If Vavex's fail-safe activates, an explosion in the stable rocks the entire manor. Vavex had hoped the blast would be sufficient to bring down the stable's roof on the psychovox, but he underestimated the structure's durability. The explosives don't injure the psychovox but do startle it enough for it to burst through the weakened stable doors and run for its life. Once it starts running, it heads directly for the nearest Swarm encampment at full speed.

A PC who examined the scientists' data in area C5 recognizes that if the captured psychovox reaches other Swarm components, its more powerful psychic abilities could be replicated throughout the hive mind, which could be disastrous for the war effort. If the PCs haven't read that information yet, a PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Wisdom check realizes that from what they know of psychovoxes, any extra Swarm support of that kind should be stopped. The PCs might be able to catch up to the fleeing psychovox in their SDF Brush Stalkers; once they begin the chase, go to **Event 2**.

C9. STABLE

Several wooden panels inside this large stable have been removed and stacked along with moldering bales of hay to make smaller rooms within. The air here is uncomfortably warm, and the scent of large animals lingers.

This large stable was once the showpiece of the Matchmaker House, but the military scientists transformed it into a holding pen for the Swarm psychovox they captured. The panels and hay bales make navigating the stable interior a little difficult, and the psychovox keeps close to the exterior stable door, which is barred from the outside.

More likely than not, the PCs find the stable in a partially ruined condition after Vavex's explosions are triggered. The hay is charred, and the wooden panels reduced to splinters. Many of the ceiling's beams have come crashing down to the floor, and the northern wall is cracked but still intact. The exterior door has been battered down from the inside.

EVENT 2: BUG CHASERS (CR 12)

Once the psychovox flees the stable, it reaches speeds that individual PCs might find hard to match (particularly given the difficult terrain of the ruined streets of Brinnoa). However, the PCs can keep up with the psychovox in their SDF Brush Stalkers. If the PCs don't pursue, the psychovox reaches the Swarm encampment easily (see Development on page 22). Otherwise, this event uses the vehicle chase rules beginning on page 282 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*.

Creature: The now-free psychovox attempts to reach an area of relative safety that is controlled by the Swarm. Unless the psychovox escapes, it turns and fights when the chase ends. This fight occurs in a relatively open area, so none of the effects of the current environmental zone apply.

SWARM PSYCHOVOX

CR 12

XP 19,200

HP 220 (page 59)

TACTICS

During Combat The psychovox starts the fight with a synaptic shriek, and then simply bites at the closest PC.

Morale The Swarm psychovox fights to the death.

Vehicle Chase: The PCs begin one zone behind the psychovox. The Swarm creature attempts mainly to escape, especially if a PC vehicle is engaged with it. The psychovox usually chooses to take the double maneuver pilot action to speed up and evade in the same round. For this chase, treat the psychovox as a vehicle, using the Swarm corrovox statistics on page 22, but using the psychovox's Athletics skill in place of any Piloting checks.

The chase ends if the psychovox escapes (by ending a round two zones ahead of the PCs), if one of the PCs' vehicles remains engaged with the psychovox for 2 consecutive rounds, or if the PCs deal 110 damage to the psychovox (in the latter two cases, the psychovox enters combat with the PCs). Of course, if the PCs reduce the psychovox to 0 Hit Points before the end of a round, they are victorious without the need to catch the psychovox. The PCs' SDF Brush Stalkers uses the statistics for a heavy assault buggy on page 52.

Use the following chase environments in order as the chase progresses. Move from one environment approximately every third round as the Brush Stalkers and the psychovox leave the expansive grounds of Matchmaker House.

Abandoned Mall (Altered Movement): This open-air mall has several ornamental walls and kiosks that require care and caution to avoid. Increase the DC of the speed up pilot action by 4.

Winding Ravines (Altered Attacks): This series of ravines features knots of vegetation and small, grasping tree branches growing along its sides. The ravine's edges provide cover to all creatures and vehicles in this zone except against vehicles with which they are engaged (or passengers of vehicles with which they are engaged).

Muddy Field and Power Station (Split Route): Each participant in the chase must choose between traveling through a wide field of mud and an abandoned power station. Wheeled and hover vehicles (like the SDF Brush Stalkers) have difficulty maintaining traction in the muddy field, taking a -4 penalty to skill checks attempted during the pilot actions phase. However, charged wires flail menacingly in the ruined power station, attacking each creature on this route (+22 melee, 10d10 E). The psychovox chooses the muddy field.

Cluttered On-Ramp (Active Hazard): Chunks of broken, jagged asphalt and gravel patches litter an on-ramp to Highway 12. Any failed check during the pilot actions phase means the vehicle hits one of these rocks and takes 8d10 damage.



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Open Highway (Altered Movement): This area is perfect for going all out. Reduce the penalty for performing a double maneuver to -2.

SWARM CORVOX

LEVEL 12

Huge animal (15 ft. wide, 15 ft. long, 10 ft. high)

Speed 50 ft., full 550 ft., 60 mph

EAC 26; **KAC** 28; **Cover** none

HP 220 (cannot become broken due to damage); **Hardness** 0

Attack (Collision) 13d10 B (DC 15)

Modifiers -1 Athletics, -4 attack (-8 at full speed)

Systems Swarm vehicle

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Swarm Vehicle (Ex) The psychovox retains its immunity to acid and fear effects, electricity resistance 10, and Swarm mind ability. Its psychic grumbling (page 59) affects the occupants of any vehicle in the same zone as it. As it must dedicate its efforts to movement, the psychovox cannot use its synaptic shriek during the chase.

Development: If the psychovox escapes the chase and leaves the PCs behind, it eventually reaches a Swarm encampment, where thousands of Swarm components cluster together. The psychovox disappears among the other Swarm creatures, and in short order, its superior mental powers are spread throughout the hive mind, including to the God-Host (see the God-Host's statistics in area **F6** for the repercussions).

Story Award: If the PCs defeat the Swarm psychovox, whether by destroying it during the vehicle chase or ending the chase and engaging it in normal combat, award them 19,200 XP.

D. HOALDI DOME

SDF intelligence detected a large Swarm presence in the Hoaldi Dome, Brinnoa's large, covered sports arena. Further scans showed the field covered with Swarm psychovoxes gestating in eggs surrounded by clouds of tiny creatures referred to as Swarm programmers. With the initial reports from the military scientists in Brinnoa Heights about the psychic capabilities of psychovoxes, troops came to establish a defensive perimeter around the stadium and demolish it. The mission went badly from the start, as the Swarm's resistance took a particularly high toll on the troops' officers, but the SDF forces ultimately secured the exterior of the arena. A career soldier named Sergeant Jule Shavesko now commands the troops here after Lieutenant Sensen Harbra fell in battle.

Pockets of Swarm creatures still remain within the arena and other Swarm forces have made several attempts to retake the stadium, so Sergeant Shavesko's troops are hard pressed. The team's demolition specialists were also killed in the initial push, and the constant psychic drone from the psychovox larvae has started to take its toll on the troops' morale. With enemies on all sides and no effective way to complete the mission, Sergeant Shavesko had no choice but to call for help.

The PCs arrive at Hoaldi Dome between waves of attacks by the Swarm, meeting Sergeant Shavesko on one of the access roads that circle the stadium. Military barricades have been erected at key locations in the exterior parking lots, forming the barest of perimeters. The soldiers are exhausted from the near-constant fighting, but morale seems to lift at the sight of the PCs. Sergeant Shavesko informs the PCs of the situation and points out the VIP underground parking garage, which is connected to the arena via some back stairs. She believes a small team could get into the stadium this way and place demolition charges to destroy the roof. Sergeant Shavesko hands the PCs the only four explosive charges they have available (each one has light bulk) and a remote detonator, explaining they had a few more but needed them to fend off some particularly large Swarm creatures. She requests the PCs slip into the Hoaldi Dome while she and her troops continue to keep the Swarm at bay.

The Hoaldi Dome is a spacious sports arena made primarily of concrete and steel. Despite its sturdy construction, sections of the arena have been damaged by the Swarm's initial attack on the city, and other areas are overgrown with slimy, yet harmless, biomatter cultivated by the Swarm. The stadium doesn't have any electricity, so the interior areas (**D2** through **D6**) are dark.

Use the map on page 15 for this area.

D1. VIP DRIVE

This wide road is lined with tall trees that have been stripped of leaves. Low signs reading "Hoaldi Dome, VIP Entrance Only" are accompanied by arrows pointing to the low entry to an underground parking garage.

Although the PCs might be suspicious of this quiet spot, it is as safe as it appears. The garage entry is large enough for the PCs to drive their SDF Brush Stalkers through, and the large rolling steel door that would block this entrance after hours is open, though the gate arm is currently lowered. A PC can step out of a vehicle and easily raise the arm, though this alerts the Swarm creatures in area **D2** of the PCs' presence.

D2. VIP GARAGE (CR 12)

This concrete parking garage contains several spots and a few abandoned luxury vehicles. A metal door near the wide exit to the street is marked "Arena Employees Only." At the far southern end of the garage, the entry to the stairs is a jumbled mass of twisted metal and fallen rubble. West of this collapse is another metal door marked "Maintenance."

The main stairs up to the arena from this garage are impassable due to a serious collapse; clearing it would take several days of work.



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Three vehicles are parked in the garage. Two are smaller luxury urban cruisers (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 228) and the third is a large all-terrain transport (*Core Rulebook* 229) painted the vibrant orange and yellow of the Brinnoa Firestorms, the starlance team that called the Hoaldi Arena its home turf. Each vehicle is locked, and the keys are in the valet office (area **D3**). The PCs can override the vehicles' security and open the doors with a successful DC 32 Engineering check (DC 36 for the all-terrain transport).

Creatures: Three Swarm components—two dramovires and a thresher lord—patrol here. If they aren't spotted by the PCs (see Tactics below), these creatures wait for all the PCs to enter the garage before attacking.

SWARM DRAMOVIRE (2) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

HP 123 each (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #22 59)

TACTICS

Before Combat If aware of the PCs' presence, the dramovires hid behind the two urban cruisers in the southern half of the garage. They wait for all the PCs to enter the garage and spring their trap by spraying their acidic grease on as many PCs as possible.

During Combat The dramovires close into melee and attack with their claws, hoping to grab their targets. Once a dramovire has grabbed a PC, it attacks with its proboscis.

Morale Assigned to protect the psychovox nest, the dramovires fight to the death.

SWARM THRESHER LORD CR 10

XP 9,600

HP 165 (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 110)

TACTICS

Before Combat If aware of the PCs' presence, the thresher lord squeezes behind the far side of the transport in the northernmost parking spot. It steps out from its hiding spot and charges into combat once the dramovires attack.

During Combat The thresher lord moves to within reach of the PC closest to the valet office and makes three melee attacks with its blade storm ability as often as possible.

Morale Assigned to protect the psychovox nest, the thresher lord fights to the death.

Treasure: Within one of the luxury urban cruisers, the PCs can find a credstick the wealthy owner dropped under the seat during the city's evacuation; it holds 45,000 credits. A carter's baton (*Starfinder Armory* 100) is in the trunk of the other cruiser. In the all-terrain transport, among a few pieces of used sporting equipment and the foam head of the Firestorms mascot, Infernie, the PCs can discover a pair of unused dual cybernetic arms.

D3. VALET OFFICE

This bare, concrete office contains a desk with a computer built into its surface and a wall-mounted steel cabinet.

The wall-mounted cabinet is unlocked and contains the keys for the three vehicles in the garage. The key to the all-terrain transport is obvious, as it is the same vibrant colors as the Brinnoa Firestorms logo.

Treasure: One the desk's drawers contains a parallax laser pistol.

D4. MAINTENANCE ROOM (CR 11)

This wide room contains access ports for several pipes and electrical cables running through the concrete walls at the south end of the room. Two upended workbenches are surrounded by scattered scrap and broken tools. Metal doors lead to the north and east.

This room is one of several maintenance access points throughout the arena. Maintenance workers made minor repairs and kept their personal items here.

Creatures: When Brinnoa fell and the Swarm took over this stadium, a pair of scavenger slimes emerged from the sewers and turned this room into a lair, configuring and reconfiguring the scrap and tools here. Both oozes have incorporated weaponry scrounged from equipment left behind by the city's fallen defenders and personal effects left behind here. The Swarm has ignored the slimes, leaving them to their own devices.

SCAVENGER SLIMES (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

HP 145 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 100)

TACTICS

During Combat The scavenger slimes are straightforward combatants and don't work together; each simply fights whatever non-slime creature is nearest. A scavenger slime uses its red star plasma rifle anytime it can catch three or more PCs in a line, even if this line includes the other scavenger slime.

Morale Protective of their junk, the scavenger slimes fight to the death.

D5. STAIRS (CR 12)

This concrete and metal stairwell leads up into the arena proper. Although the north wall of the stairwell has collapsed, the stairs themselves appear functional.

Trap: The collapse isn't yet fully settled, and when a Small or larger creature steps on the lowest stair, another avalanche of steel and stone falls on all creatures in the stairwell.

This isn't enough rubble to bury anyone alive, but after this trap is triggered, the stairwell becomes difficult terrain.

CRUMBLING WALL TRAP

CR 12

XP 19,200

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 38; **Disable** Engineering DC 33 (reinforce crumbling wall)

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect falling debris (8d12 B); **Reflex** DC 21 half; multiple targets (all targets in area **D5**)

D6. UPPER WALKWAY (CR 12)

The stairs from the underground VIP garage ascend through one of the arena's exterior walls, eventually coming out on a cement walkway above the stadium's regular seating, near a snack stand and the entrances to the VIP skyboxes.

A wide walkway rings the entire arena, separating the rows of lower seats from the upper private box seats. A shuttered food stall stands between a pair of narrow vents that look out onto the parking lots below. The field is several yards away, past the tiers of seats, and is covered in large, pulsating egg sacs, each filled with a shadowy insectile shape. A foul acrid scent hangs in the air.

Dozens of enormous psychovox eggs line the playing field below in orderly rows. Although this might seem like a good place to snipe at the eggs one at a time, such a plan would take far longer than setting the necessary demolition charges to collapse the stadium's roof onto the larvae. Hundreds of small winged Swarm components buzz around the eggs, occasionally poking them with long proboscises. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Life Science check recognizes these creatures as Swarm programmers, which can isolate, analyze, and change Swarm DNA. These components are vital for bioengineering Swarm larvae as the hive mind sees fit.

The sounds of gunfire echo up from outside the stadium. By peering through the vents, the PCs can see that another Swarm wave has begun its assault on the stadium. The SDF forces outside seem to be holding them back for now, but this should give PCs an incentive to complete their mission quickly (see *Setting the Charges* on page 25).

Creatures: Before the PCs can place the demolition charges, they might be recognized as intruders by the hundreds of Swarm programmers. Each PC should attempt a DC 34 Stealth check when they arrive on this walkway and after each time they place a demolition charge (see *Setting the Charges* on page 25). If any PC fails, they are spotted by the programmers, who coalesce into two clouds to attack the group. Use the map for area **D6** on page 15 for this encounter, no matter how long it takes to happen. The Swarm programmer clouds start the fight closer to the field and take a round to make it to the top rows of the seats.

SWARM PROGRAMMER CLOUDS (2) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

CE Tiny monstrous humanoid (swarm)

Init +8; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +24

DEFENSE

HP 152 EACH

EAC 23; **KAC** 25

Fort +12; **Ref** +14; **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities swarm defenses, Swarm mind;

Immunities acid, fear effects, swarm immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (Ex, perfect)

Melee swarm attack (1d10+13 P plus DNA sample)

Offensive Abilities distraction (DC 17)

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

TACTICS

During Combat Each Swarm programmer cloud attempts to engulf as many PCs as possible but avoid entering the other clouds. If the PCs split up, each cloud goes after a different group.

Morale The Swarm programmer clouds fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +24 (+32 to fly), Life Science +19

SPECIAL ABILITIES

DNA Sample (Ex) Once per round when a Swarm programmer cloud damages a living creature with its swarm attack, it can attempt a Life Science check (DC = 15 + 1-1/2 times the creature's level or CR) to analyze that creature's genetic makeup. If it is successful, the next time that creature fails its saving throw against the programmer cloud's distraction ability, the programmer cloud can replace the nauseated condition with one of the following effects: the target is blinded, the target is confused, the target is paralyzed, or the target's speed is reduced to 10 feet. Each effect lasts for 1 round, and the target is immune to all alternative effects for that programmer cloud's distraction ability for 24 hours or until the programmer cloud successfully takes another DNA sample of that creature, whichever comes first.

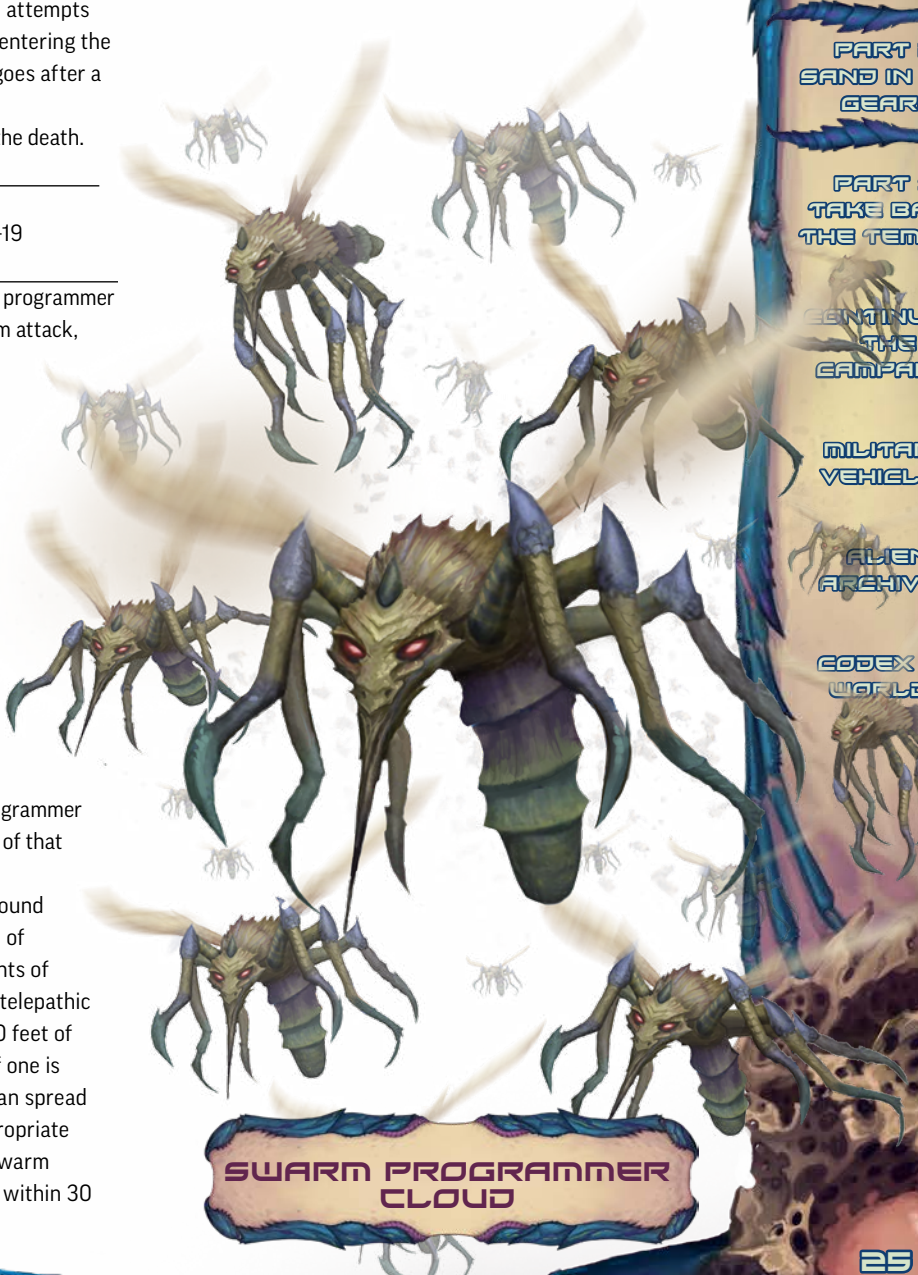
Swarm Mind (Ex) Members of the Swarm are bound together into a singular hive mind by a blend of exuded pheromones, imperceptible movements of antennae and limbs, electrostatic fields, and telepathic communication. All Swarm creatures with 30 feet of each other are in constant communication; if one is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

feet of another Swarm creature, a Swarm creature can roll twice and take the better result on a saving throw against a mind-affecting effect.

Development: Once the PCs defeat the two Swarm programmer clouds, not enough of the creatures remain to threaten the PCs. They can go about setting the demolition charges in peace, though they might have to swat away the occasional pesky bug. The SDF forces outside continue to battle against the Swarm assault.

SETTING THE CHARGES

As the PCs get ready to set up the demolition charges to bring down the Hoaldi Dome roof, Sergeant Shavesko raises them on comms to let them know her troops can't hold back the Swarm advance much longer!



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The PCs must perform the following tasks to set the demolition charges around the stadium. Each task requires one or more Engineering checks (see below), and each check can be aided by only one other character. However, the PCs can retry each check if they wish, taking the highest result of all attempts, but time is of the essence. The PCs can attempt a total of six checks; feel free to tell the players this information. After that point, the PCs need to flee the stadium and trigger any charges they set before the area is overrun by the Swarm.

If the PCs committed additional units to the Nest Eradication mission in Part 1, those units are able to stand against the Swarm onslaught for a bit longer. For each additional unit committed here, the PCs can attempt an additional skill check, for a total of three additional skill checks.

To increase the suspense of this dangerous task, you shouldn't let the PCs know whether they succeed or fail at each Engineering check (or you can even roll these checks in secret), but keep the time pressure on them with regular transmissions from Sergeant Shavesko requesting that they hurry. The PCs won't be certain of the success of their delicate work until they finally trigger the explosives.

Assembling Additional Demolition Charges (Optional): The PCs might wish to supplement the charges given to them by Sergeant Shavesko with their own equipment. The PCs can manufacture another demolitions charge from a detonator and at least three grenades. Each grenade must be at least 8th level and must deal acid, fire, piercing, or slashing damage, although the three grenades don't need to deal the same type of damage. Assembling the proper components into a useful demolitions charge requires a successful DC 24 Engineering check. A failure means they don't explode properly when set, increasing the DC to arm that charge by 2. If the PCs make two additional demolitions charges, the DC to identify the best sites for them decreases to 22.

Identifying Charge Locations: Before they can set the charges, the PCs have to identify where best to place them to bring down the roof. A PC who is trained in Engineering can recognize that the best spots would be located in the superstructure where the dome meets the top of the stadium walls. By succeeding at a DC 26 Engineering check, a PC can pick out the four best spots, spaced evenly around the stadium. If the PCs fail this check or choose not to attempt it, the DC to arm an explosive charge increases by 4. While these locations aren't meant to be easily accessible, the PCs can reach the maintenance scaffolding without difficulty, especially if any of the PCs has a climb or fly speed.

Arming the Charges: Arming a single demolition charge properly to ensure that it will detonate with the others requires a successful DC 28 Engineering check. Failure at this check doesn't immediately detonate the charge but means the charge doesn't cause the most effective destruction possible. Regardless of the success or failure of these checks, the PCs can trigger all the charges simultaneously with a remote detonator.

Development: When the charges are armed, the PCs should evacuate the stadium (via the same way they came in). Once outside, they can trigger the demolition—the roof of the Hoaldi Dome collapses with a resounding crash. The Swarm forces surrounding the arena let out a coordinated keening, break off their attack, and retreat from the city. A triumphant cheer rises up from the nearby SDF forces.

If the PCs successfully arm two or fewer demolition charges, the roof fractures into only two large pieces, possibly sparing some of the psychovox eggs from being completely crushed. Sergeant Shavesko reports this information back to command, then returns to the PCs, saying that her troops will have to dig through the rubble and check for eggs that may have survived. Any additional units the PC assigned to the Temple Beachhead mission in Part 1 are called back to the city to aid in this project; the PCs don't get the related benefits for that mission in Part 3. (If these units will already be recalled due to the PCs' actions at area **E**, Rendith Dam, don't punish the PCs any further, but make sure they understand the consequences of their failure.) In addition, the psychovox in **Event 2** gains a +1 morale bonus to its Acrobatics checks during the chase.

If the PCs successfully armed at least three demolition charges, the destruction is near total. Preliminary recon of the rubble makes it clear that no psychovox egg survived. Sergeant Shavesko relays this information back to command, and the PCs receive hearty handshakes and friendly pats on the backs from her soldiers as they recover from their ordeal.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully arm at least three demolition charges, award them 9,600 XP.

E. RENDITH DAM

The Rendith River supplies water and hydroelectric power to Brinnoa through the ancient Rendith Dam. The dam itself is made primarily of old stone and concrete, and the modern spillways, subterranean reservoirs, and sophisticated hydroelectric generators installed over time have increased its utility to the city. Decades ago, to save money on rebuilding the dam, a government technomancer bound three elder earth elementals into its stone core to ensure the dam's integrity, wiring the binding magic into the circuitry of the dam's computer controls. The spellcasters who maintained this magical reinforcement all died when the Swarm took Suskillon.

The Swarm's constant bioengineering polluted the reservoir behind the dam with microscopic organisms, turning the water to acid. This has weakened the dam, and if it were destroyed, much of Brinnoa would be hit with a caustic tidal wave. Immediately after losing the battle at Brinnoa Spaceport, the Swarm decided to demolish the dam and flood the city. However, the elementals bound to the structure surprised the Swarm saboteurs and killed them. Unfortunately, the elementals were reduced to powder in the process. When Lieutenant Kahore and his soldiers arrived shortly thereafter, he was surprised to see the dam already littered with dead Swarm. He went about securing the dam,

but his engineers have been unable to access the computers in the dam's control room. They are unaware of the magical wards embedded in the circuitry that scramble any electronic images of the computers he tries to send.

Use the map on page 15 for this area.

E1. BARRICADES

Several large concrete barricades straddle the top of Rendith Dam, stretching from the reservoir of steaming, greenish water to the north and the sheer drop-off of several hundred feet to the south. Although the road to the dam and the squat bunker on the span look modern, the dam itself appears dangerously ancient, made of stone and weathered concrete. Dozens of soldiers patrol the crest of the dam, which is littered with dead Swarm creatures.

The water of the reservoir is highly acidic, dealing 1d6 acid damage per round of exposure, or 10d6 acid damage per round of total immersion. The dam's spillways and penstocks are all closed, keeping the acidic water contained within the reservoir, but the Rendith River downstream is at extremely low levels. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Engineering check to assess the dam's stability notices that the dam is surprisingly sound despite its age and the acidic nature of the water. Several military engineers are carefully examining the reservoir, evaluating the best way to neutralize the reservoir's acid so they can open the dam's sluices once again.

When the PCs arrive, Lieutenant **Kahore** (LG male dragonkin soldier; *Starfinder Alien Archive* 40) strides forward to meet them. Kahore cuts a dramatic figure in his well-tailored SDF officer's uniform, as he stands 11 feet tall and has gleaming coppery skin. He is a noble and serious career officer who genuinely cares for his troops and looks forward to seeing Suskillon reclaimed. Kahore quickly fills the PCs in; read or paraphrase the following text.

"Let me brief you on our situation here. I'd like to take credit for all these dead bugs, but this was the situation when we arrived. We took charge of the dam without firing a shot. Our engineers are looking at how best to purify the reservoir water so we can reopen the dam. The dam itself looks like something out of an ancient history textbook to me, and I didn't want to deploy my troops on it at first. My engineers say that the dam is at least as solid as a modern

construction, and maybe even more so, but they can't say why. I thought we might get some information from the control room, but the computers in there are just spouting nonsense. I hope it's just beyond the expertise I have here, and that you might be able to decipher it. Something strange is going on here, and if there's danger, I'd like your help to identify it and advise on a course of action."



KAHORE

Kahore wants the PCs to accompany him across the dam crest to the control room, but if they want to investigate a little bit first, he permits it. The PCs can speak with the engineers working on the reservoir here, although those engineers don't have any relevant insights to add. If the PCs want to look at the dead Swarm creatures, Kahore accompanies them to where the bodies are in area **E2**; his troops haven't moved them in the event their positioning is important.

E2. DAM CREST (CR 12)

Approximately thirty feet wide with low parapets on either side, the crest of the dam spans nearly two hundred feet. Soldiers patrol the crest, keeping a wary eye on the murky, acidic water in the reservoir just a few feet below the north parapet.

Many of the dead Swarm components here are dredgers (*Starfinder Adventure Path #19: Fate of the Fifth* 59), bioengineered trench diggers and sappers. A quick examination of the corpses reveals that these dredgers have gills and small fins, unlike the ones the PCs have already fought throughout the Adventure Path; they were altered to approach the dam via the lake. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Medicine check can tell they were killed by being bludgeoned or crushed less than an hour ago. If the result of the check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC can surmise these the wounds were inflicted by a Huge or larger creature.

Among the dead Swarm components are three large piles of a material that appears to be crystallized mud. The substance radiates trace amounts of magic, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Mysticism check realizes that the piles are the remains of earth elementals that must have been bound to the Material Plane for an extended period of time, because if they had been summoned, they would have completely disappeared when killed. If the result of the check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC can conjecture the elementals are

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the reason the old dam has stood for all these years; binding their strength to supplement that of the structure must have taken an ingenious application of magic.

Creatures: The Swarm hasn't given up on destroying the Rendith Dam after its failed initial attack and launches a stronger attack from a different direction. While the PCs are investigating this area, dozens of Swarm nauphages climb up the side of the dam and attack. The nauphages gather in troop formations, and two such troops focus on the PCs, while the rest take on the other SDF soldiers. If the PCs are victorious, so are their allies, but if the PCs get into trouble, you might decide that Lieutenant Kahore comes to their aid.

SWARM NAUPHAGE TROOPS (2) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Swarm nauphage troop (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #20: *The Last Refuge* 60, *Starfinder Adventure Path* #21: *Huskworld* 60)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid (troop)

Init +3; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +24

DEFENSE HP 150 EACH

EAC 23; **KAC** 24

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

Defensive Abilities Swarm mind, troop defenses;

Immunities acid, fear effects, troop immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 25 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee troop attack (1d8+18 P)

Offensive Abilities adhesive barrage (1d6+10 E, DC 19)

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

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +19 (+27 to climb), Computers +24,

Engineering +24, Stealth +19

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities mass organic rig, storage capacity

TACTICS

During Combat Both nauphage troops fire off an adhesive barrage at the PCs and then move into melee, surrounding the PCs if possible.

Morale The nauphage troops fight to the death.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Adhesive Barrage (Ex) As a standard action, a Swarm nauphage troop can fire two blobs of electrically charged goo, each at a grid intersection within 30 feet. Each creature within 5 feet of the intersection takes 1d6+10 electricity damage and is entangled for 1d4 rounds. A successful DC 19 Reflex saving throw halves the damage and negates the entangled condition. An entangled creature can escape with a successful DC 30 Acrobatics check or DC 19 Strength check.

Mass Organic Rig (Ex) One arm of each Swarm nauphage in a troop ends in slender appendages that can be

configured to perform a variety of tasks. The nauphage troop always counts as having the appropriate tool or basic kit for any Computers or Engineering check it attempts and automatically benefits from the aid another task as the individual nauphages work together.

Storage Capacity (Ex) As a whole, the Swarm nauphage troop can store up to 32 bulk of items in their storage sacs; no single item can be larger than 2 cubic feet.

Development: Once the battle is over, the PCs can slip into the control room and help the engineers there in cracking the dam's computer system.

Treasure: In gratitude for their assistance, Lieutenant Kahore gives the PCs an item he feels will aid them in future defensive endeavors: a flash shield generator (*Starfinder Armory* 103)

E3. CONTROL ROOM (CR 13)

Two SDF soldiers guard each entrance to this bunker. They simply nod to the PCs and let them pass, whether or not Lieutenant Kahore is with them.

Extending over the vertiginous drop at the south edge of the dam, this concrete bunker has stairs descending to its metal doors on the east and west sides. A computer terminal is attached to the southern wall, just under a transparent aluminum window that overlooks the Rendith River far below. The northern wall is covered in a large electrical distribution board, an array of circuit breakers and protective fuses.

Although this bunker appears to be precariously balanced on the edge of the dam, it is solidly constructed and is in no danger of toppling. The interior is cool, bare concrete with a functional computer bank on the south wall and an electric panel on the north wall between the two entrances. The ceiling in the control room is 10 feet high.

The computer terminals are used to show the status of the dam and controls the dam's spillways and penstocks (currently, they are closed to keep the acid in the reservoir out of the Rendith River). This computer connects to subterranean hydroelectric power stations on either side of the dam, deep in the rock below, but because the sluices are closed, those areas are unoccupied. The distribution board is essentially a large fuse box for the structure's machine elements. At first glance, both terminals and distribution board appear to be in working order.

A pair of ryphorian technicians named Axamander and Felhylix stand near the computer terminal, discussing the strange code they've discovered. These two siblings and Kahore are old friends, although neither is bonded with the dragonkin. The ryphorians show the PCs the program when they enter, eager for their input and noting that they've discovered it is somehow connected to the distribution board.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Computers check recognizes mystical elements within the code. A successful DC 30 Mysticism check is then needed to recognize that the program was used to summon and bind elemental creatures to the dam. The PCs receive a +4 circumstance bonus to this check if they identified the crystallized mud in area **E2**. The program requires a passcode to run, but given some time, the PCs might be able to access it. If necessary, a PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Mysticism check realizes that binding new earth elementals to the dam could help it withstand attacks from the Swarm and the slow erosion caused by the acidic lake.

Creatures: As the PCs attempt to crack the program's passcode, the distribution board begins to spark wildly. Panicking, Axamander and Felhylix flee the control room as two spheres of pure electricity emerge from the circuit breakers and fuses. These creatures are unusual elementals known as fulmivars, who have been living within the dam's electrical grid for decades, having been attracted to it by the mystical energy of the summoning program. Though they didn't share a language with the earth elementals, the fulmivars came to know them as friends and are upset at their recent death. They assume the PCs had something to do with that tragic event and attack.

At the beginning of the second round of combat, an SDF soldier appears in each of the control room's two doorways. Unsure how to deal with this strange situation, they don't enter the chamber, but can attempt to provide covering or harrying fire for the PCs as the PCs direct. Use the statistics presented on page 6 for each SDF soldier.

During the fight, the fulmivars crackle admonishments at the PCs in Auran. If the PCs speak that language or cast a spell like *comprehend languages*, they might be able to talk down the hostile outsiders. As a standard action, a PC can attempt a DC 31 Diplomacy check to get the fulmivars to temporarily cease hostilities. If any PC has attacked the fulmivars within the previous round, this check takes a -4 penalty, and if any PC attacks the fulmivars after the truce has been established, the elementals immediately fight back; after that, they can't be calmed again.

A PC who can speak Auran can explain the situation to the fulmivars and change their attitude to indifferent with a successful DC 36 Diplomacy check. If the PCs go into detail about who they are and point out that they are trying to save the dam (possibly by reactivating the summoning program), they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Mysticism check knows of a way to dispose of the earth elementals' remains respectfully, and if the PCs promise the fulmivars they will do so, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to the above Diplomacy check, which stacks with the other circumstance bonus. After 10 minutes of talking, if the fulmivars' attitude isn't indifferent or better, they resume their attacks. If the PCs manage to change the fulmivars' attitude to friendly, they gain a benefit described in Development below.

FULMIVARS (2)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

HP 145 each (page 55)

TACTICS

During Combat The fulmivars' nature means they are constantly moving, alternating between using their arcing flux ability and their galvanic pulse wave attack.

Morale Unless talked down (see above), the fulmivars fight until they are destroyed.

Development: Once the fulmivars are defeated or have had their attitude changed to indifferent, the PCs can return to attempting to access the computer's summoning program. To crack the passcode, a PC needs to succeed at a DC 31 Computers check to hack the tier 4 computer, which has a security II module. If the fulmivars are friendly, they can enter the computer's circuitry and disable the security module, reducing the DC to 29.

As the PCs gain access to the program, they can see that while the summoning and binding process is essentially automatic, the ritual requires some material components. The program is designed to call and bind three earth elementals but needs 5,000 UPBs for each elemental. A PC can bypass the cost for one elemental by succeeding at a DC 33 Mysticism check; up to two other PCs can use the aid another action to help. For every 5 the check result exceeds the DC, the total cost for the ritual is reduced by another 5,000 UPBs (to a minimum of 0 UPBs).

When the PCs finally activate the program, a string of arcane symbols flashes on the displays in the control room, followed by a low rumble. After a few minutes, a message appears on the computer screens, reading "Binding restored. Defense agents reinstalled." If the fulmivars are still present at this point, they return to the distribution board with a friendly crackle of electricity.

Three earth elementals are needed to fully strengthen and defend the dam, but each additional unit committed to the Dam Reinforcement mission in Part 1 counts as an elemental for this purpose. Lieutenant Kahore informs the PCs of this fact, either reassuring them that his squads have everything under control or expressing concern that the soldiers are spread too thin across the dam, depending on units committed.

If insufficient defenders remain when the PCs leave the dam, at some point within the next day, a Swarm assault destroys the structure. This floods much of Brinnoa with acidic mud, making for a significant cleanup task for the SDF forces. This has two drawbacks. Any additional units the PC assigned to the Temple Beachhead mission in Part 1 are called back to the city to help with repairs, so the PCs don't get the related benefits in Part 3. (If these units will already be recalled due to the PCs' actions at area **D**, the Hoaldi Dome, don't punish the PCs any further, but make sure they understand the consequences of their failure.) In addition, low-lying areas of the city become hazardous to traverse. For the purposes of

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this adventure, areas **D1, D2, D3**, and zone 2 of **Event 2** are affected, although you can include other areas. Each time a creature enters one of these areas, it takes 1d6 acid damage, and an additional 1d6 acid damage after each full minute spent there. Flying creatures aren't affected, and vehicles are damaged only if they spend more than 10 minutes in one of these areas.

Story Award: If the dam is sufficiently defended, award the PCs 9,600 XP.

MISSIONS COMPLETE

Once the PCs have completed all of the missions in and around the city, they can report back to Commander Najiri, who, with a few other members of SDF Command, has established a ground base at Brinnoa Starport. By this point, the sounds of combat around the metropolis have quieted, with the occasional burst of gunfire echoing from one of the defensive points on Brinnoa's outskirts. Chatter on the SDF communication channels is optimistic, with many soldiers saying they "can't wait to boot these scum-sucking Swarm back into space."

As a reward for their work in Brinnoa (and to ensure they are prepared for the journey to the Temple of Hylax), Commander Najiri arranges for the PCs to receive 75,000 credits each worth of new weapons, armor, and equipment, redeemable from the SDF quartermaster at the spaceport. The PCs can purchase any equipment they'd like of 14th level or lower (most of what's available has been salvaged from around the city). Commander Najiri recommends synaptic accelerators (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 212) recovered from a nearby hospital, but the PCs are free to spend the credits however they'd prefer. Any leftover credits are given to the PCs as UPBs.

In addition, the PCs receive healing and can take a full night's rest at the spaceport before embarking on the final part of their mission.

PART 3: TAKE BACK THE TEMPLE

The final mission of the counterattack on Suskillon sees the PCs confronting the God-Host at the temple of Hylax in the Jurdos Mountains. As the soldiers committed to establish a rendezvous point near the temple haven't encountered any serious resistance, the PCs don't need to rush there right away. In fact, Commander Najiri doesn't clear them to go until they have dealt with the problems facing the recovery of Brinnoa.

The trip to the foothills of the Jurdos Mountains in the SDF Brush Stalkers takes several hours; the most direct route crosses northern farmlands and smaller towns, avoiding

Highway 12 and Reos City. The PCs might be tempted to take a starship to make the journey faster, but there's no place to dock a large carrier in or near the mountains and Suskillon's smaller starships are all in use for the reclamation effort. If the PCs didn't rest at the spaceport, they have sufficient time to take a full night's rest while they are traveling, either by taking turns driving or by camping in any of the ruined buildings along the way. The weather is chilly, though not nearly as cold as it was when the PCs were in this area last.

Eventually, the PCs must cross the Dethomar River, though all major bridges over it were demolished in the unsuccessful attempt to contain the original Swarm invasion. With a little search, the PCs find a place where the banks of the river aren't very steep, and their vehicles can hover across the thawing ice on the surface.

If the PCs missed any opportunities for XP in Part 2, you can have them encounter roving Swarm creatures along the way, but otherwise the journey is uneventful. The PCs' successes in Brinnoa have caused the Swarm to quiet down as it waits for the God-Host to complete its plan.

EVENT 3: REACHING THE RENDEZVOUS (CR 13)

Once again, the PCs pass through the town of Lynmari, which they might remember from *Starfinder Adventure Path #19: Fate of the Fifth*, to start up the road to Clutchstone Ridge in the Jurdos Mountains. Here, the Brush Stalkers must travel one behind the other, as the road isn't wide enough to accommodate both. They have been informed they will meet the contingent of SDF soldiers who have commandeered a firewatch station halfway up the ridge, about 30 minutes outside of Lynmari by vehicle. However, before they reach there, the PCs are caught in an ambush by Swarm components sent by the God-Host.

This section of the ridge isn't high enough altitude to be considered a thin atmosphere, though the temperature drops to just below 40° F, a few degrees colder than the sea-level portions of the Sahtor Region. Use the map on page 32 for this encounter.

Hazards: The God-Host has dispatched two Swarm dissolvers to intercept the PCs. The creatures are perched on an outcropping above the road and used their corrosive jets to loosen some boulders. When the PCs are about 10 minutes away from the firewatch station, the dissolvers push these rocks down onto the road in the PCs' path. The driver of each SDF Brush Stalker must succeed at a DC 32 Piloting check or their vehicle takes 10d12 damage from this small avalanche. A vehicle that takes damage is overturned; the driver and any passengers of a such a vehicle must succeed at a DC 19 Reflex save or take 6d6 bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone adjacent to the vehicle.

The side of the road opposite where the dissolvers wait drops off steeply. A creature that might be forced off this side of the road (by a successful bull rush, for example) can attempt a DC

20 Reflex saving throw; success means their forced movement is stopped right at the edge. Otherwise, the creature falls 150 feet down the side of the ridge.

Creatures: The two Swarm dissolvers climb down the outcropping immediately after the avalanche to attack the PCs. At the beginning of the second round, one of the SDF snipers at the firewatch station spots the altercation on the road. She shoots at one of the dissolvers (chosen randomly) at the end of each round, providing the effects of harrying fire against that creature.

SWARM DISSOLVERS (2) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

HP 180 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 3 106)

TACTICS

During Combat One dissolver shoots a corrosive jet of acid if it can catch multiple PCs in a line, while the other moves within melee range of a prone PC. Once PCs get up from prone, one of the dissolvers uses its wing gust ability to knock them down again. In general, the dissolvers try to push the PCs back and off the steep hill on the other side of the road.

Morale The dissolvers fight to the death.

Development: Once the PCs dispatch the dissolvers, they can continue up the road to the firewatch station. They can go by foot (which takes 20 to 30 minutes) or they can turn an overturned Brush Stalker upright if they all work together and continue in their vehicles. However, if a Brush Stalker has sustained enough damage to give it the broken condition, one of its hover jets is malfunctioning and it will have to be left behind or repaired with a successful DC 28 Engineering check (which takes an hour).

FIREWATCH STATION

The Clutchstone Ridge firewatch station occupies a high, flat shelf of rock several hundred yards west of the road. The station is a squarish, wooden structure 15 feet on a side atop sturdy steel struts that stretch up five stories. A metal staircase spirals up on the outside of the struts. Rangers occupying the vantage point on top of the tower could see the forested hills for miles around, and though risk of a blaze was always fairly low in this section of the mountains, especially during the winter, that chance has dropped even further since the Swarm completed its invasion and consumed much of the surrounding foliage. With that, the Temple of Hylax has also become visible from the tower.



DARDRIELLE ALTHASET

As they leave the road and approach the tower, the PCs are met by Captain **Dardrielle Althaset** (N female human envoy/soldier), a blonde, middle-aged woman with an imperious demeanor. Captain Althaset gave up a successful career as an investigative reporter to join the military several years ago. Her natural charisma and cunning helped her rise through the ranks to become an officer, but the Swarm invasion put her abilities to an unexpected test, and she has proven herself to be a capable leader. She requested to lead the Temple Beachhead mission because she owns a mountain estate several dozen miles east of here, and secretly plans to flee there if things go badly here.

Captain Althaset tells the PCs about the surprisingly light Swarm attacks, describing a few easily repelled corvoxes and mindreapers. She is convinced that they have the Swarm on the ropes and is eager to try to retake the temple. The captain is overconfident in her opinions and tends to believe is she right about everything—personality traits that likely grate on the PCs. Despite her manner, Althaset has the unwavering loyalty of her soldiers and stands ready to help the

PCs. She can provide the information that no forces have been seen outside the temple lately, and she knows that several of the “beetles the size of buses” are inside the temple; they sometimes come and go from the enormous organic tubes growing from the top of the temple. Captain Althaset also mentions that one of more eager and skilled privates—Latt Estof, a human male—approached the temple several days ago to get some close-up reconnaissance but has yet to return. She believes the Swarm most likely killed Private Estof, but she would like confirmation if possible. She asks to PCs to return his IDENT should they find it.

Captain Althaset intends to have her soldiers accompany the PCs to the temple, encircle the temple grounds, and provide covering fire for the PCs to approach and infiltrate the temple. She is resistant to any other plan, such as the PCs going it alone or using her soldiers as bait. The PCs can convince her otherwise with a successful DC 34 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, though suggesting any plan that directly endangers her soldiers imposes a –4 penalty on the check.

F. TEMPLE OF HYLAX

The temple of Hylax on Clutchstone Ridge dates to the shirrrens' arrival on Suskillon and, while very old, was well built. The temple can withstand the rough winter in the mountains (as the PCs experienced in “Fate of the Fifth”), but by this point in the campaign, the season has turned.

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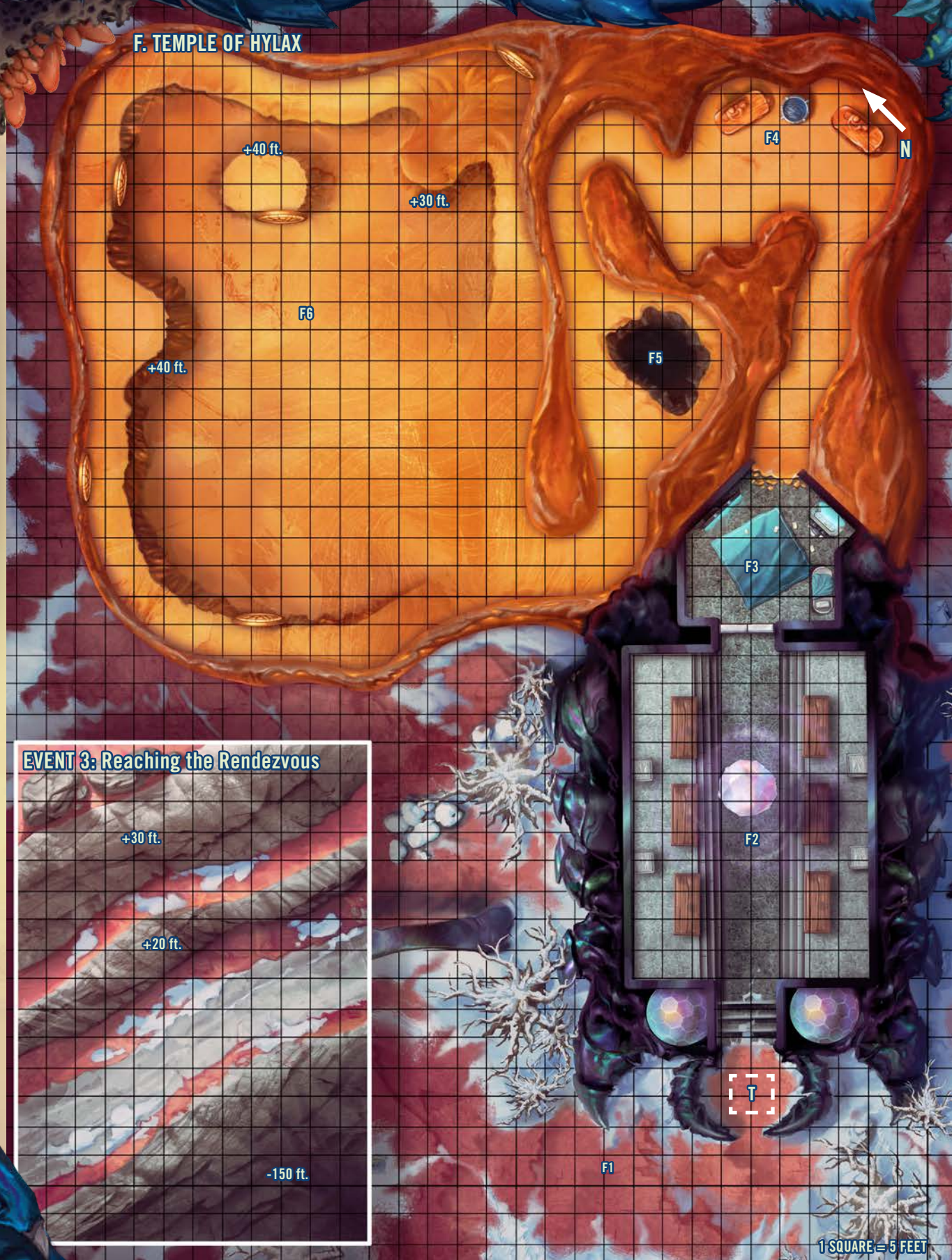
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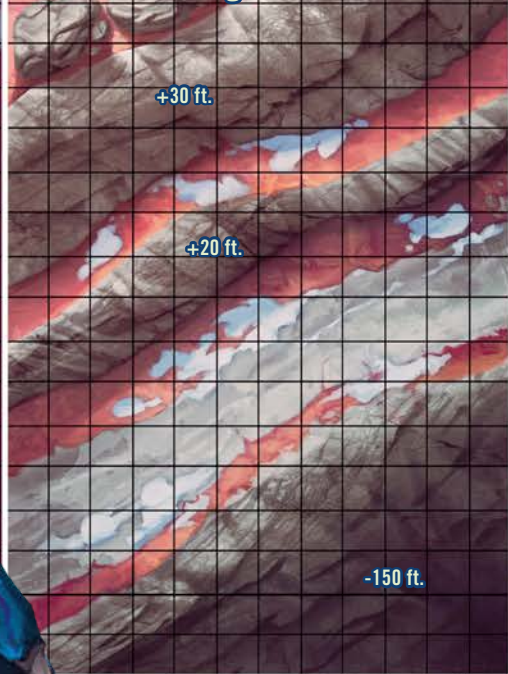
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F. TEMPLE OF HYLAX



EVENT 3: Reaching the Rendezvous



As the PCs and their SDF allies approach the temple (either by foot or in vehicles), the altitude increases to the point where the environment has the same effects as a thin atmosphere, but the temperature holds steady at about 30° F. A suit of armor's environmental protections prove sufficient to negate these conditions, though a few soldiers mock others for switching them on as they attempt to tough out the cold, until Captain Althaset shouts at them to "stop being damned fools."

When the PCs catch sight of the temple of Hylax less than 30 minutes after leaving the firewatch tower, read or paraphrase the following.

While the temple ahead is recognizable from its black stone walls and front that resembles an enormous insect's head, there is a strange and disgusting addition to the structure: a bulbous dome of moist, yellowish resin more than two hundred feet high that threatens to engulf the temple. Organic-looking tubes jut upward from the shining mass like chimneys, puckering irregularly and shuddering with a disturbing psychic resonance.

This unusual dome and its chimneys were formed by the God-Host out of a resin as hard as a starship's bulkhead (hardness 35, Hit Points 600, break DC 55) shortly after the Swarm took Suskillon. Drawn to this spot by the psychic resonance of the stone beneath the temple, the God-Host had hoped to undergo its apotheosis here after retrieving the *Crown of Hylax*, but with that option closed, the Swarm is attempting to craft a similar relic. If left to its own devices for too long, the Swarm will gain enough power from its experiments to complete its mission.

A dim bioluminescence lights all areas of the temple, both inside and outside. The crust of hardened slime on the floor of the dome is somewhat slick but doesn't affect movement. Any doors inside the temple are long gone, and the tunnels and chambers inside the dome have 15-foot ceilings, except where noted.

Captain Althaset has her soldiers form a picket line about a thousand feet from the temple entrance. Once the PCs begin moving in closer than this, several dozen Swarm flying components launch from the dome's tubes and attack with natural ranged weapons (mostly firing globs of acid). The SDF soldiers turn their focus to these creatures, giving the PCs a chance to quickly get inside the temple. Captain Althaset encourages them to hurry.

F1. TEMPLE COURTYARD (CR 13)

With several low walls and a few dead trees, this area remains much the same as when the PCs were first here in "Fate of the Fifth," as the Swarm has little use for it other than to come and go from the temple, and even some of the larger Swarm components (such as the psychovoxes) can enter the God-Host's chamber (area **F6**) via the organic chimneys controlled by the God-Host.

If the PCs stop to examine the stone wall around the doorway, they notice that the Shirren words for "diplomacy," "friendship," and "peace" that used to adorn the entrance have been marred by deep gouges. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Engineering or Physical Science check can tell the vandalism was performed by a dense and sharp organic tool, likely the chitinous blade of a thresher lord or similar Swarm component.

Trap: The Swarm effigene high priests of the God-Host, armed with organic dyes invisible to all but the Swarm, painted a number of mystical runes around the temple entrance to bar nonbelievers from disrupting the Swarm's unholy mission here. When a non-Swarm creature approaches within 1 foot of the doorway, these runes flare with psychic energy and fill the space between the temple facade's mandibles with a wave of disintegrating energy. The symbols recharge after an hour unless dispelled.

DISINTEGRATION WAVE TRAP CR 13

XP 25,600

Type magical; **Perception** DC 39; **Disable** Mysticism DC 34 (dispel runes)

Trigger location; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect wave of disintegration (12d12 A); Reflex DC 21 half; multiple targets (all targets in area marked on map)

F2. TEMPLE INTERIOR (CR 12)

This large room's walls and support pillars are made of dark stone painted black, while the beams supporting the ceiling above are made of white timber. The overall impression is of a rib cage of some large beast. A crystalline cupola in the ceiling has been crusted over with amber resin, blocking any light from outside. Benches line the raised platforms on either side of the room, behind which are four stone pedestals featuring elaborate carvings.

Though the temple is now under the control of the Swarm, this original meeting place and meditation spot retains a small measure of Hylax's power. While the God-Host and its high priests have tried to scour this divine energy from the structure, they just haven't been strong enough. Not yet defeated, the high priests have studied this area and are attempting to create a mockery of its holiness within the resin dome behind the temple to aid in the God-Host's apotheosis. When the PCs deal with the Swarm in this chamber, they feel the presence of the Forever Queen here and can petition her for assistance (see Development on page 34).

Creatures: The God-Host considers its position in its chamber behind the temple to be unassailable, but as the Swarm components in other areas of the continent fall, it decides to take no chances regarding security. To protect the entrance to the resin dome from meddling SDF soldiers, the God-Host recalled a quartet of watchful Swarm escutchides from the surrounding countryside to the temple.

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Although a single escutchide can normally keep a small squad of foes at bay, the components in this area have been bioengineered to be tougher than others the PCs may have previously encountered.

If the PCs committed additional units to Temple Beachhead in Part 1 and these units were not recalled to either Hoaldi Dome or Rendith Dam, these Swarm components were wounded on their journey to the temple by SDF soldiers at the firewatch tower with focused sniper fire. Reduce each escutchide warden's Hit Points by 15 for each additional unit the PCs committed, to a maximum reduction of 45 Hit Points.

SWARM ESCUTCHIDE WARDENS (4) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Advanced Swarm escutchide (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #21: *Huskworld* 58)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE HP 120 EACH
EAC 21; KAC 23

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

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

OFFENSE

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

Melee gore +20 (3d4+14 P plus pummel)

TACTICS

During Combat A Swarm escutchide warden uses its gore attack against the foe closest to the entrance to the inner sanctum, attempting to batter that opponent away from moving farther into the temple.

Morale The escutchide wardens fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +16, Athletics +21, Intimidate +16

Feats Improved Stand Still, Stand Still

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Development: As the last escutchide warden falls, the PCs hear a faint cracking sound from above. Looking up, the PCs see the resin cover the crystalline skylight fall away, allowing sunlight or an especially bright beam of moonlight to filter through the window. The lighting inside the temple turns shades of greens and purples, and the sounds of battle from outside grow muted. A sense of peace washes over the heroes, and the four stone pedestals seem to glow from within. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Mysticism check recognizes the display as Hylax's influence, which can be transferred into the PCs' forms if they meditate briefly.

A PC who sits on a bench, contemplates one of the pedestals—which portray imagery of Hylax offering her guidance to shirrens—and succeeds at a DC 27 Culture check or DC 25 Mysticism check gains the blessings of Hylax (described below). A PC whose result exceeds the DC by 5 or more can guide another PC through the meditation, granting that PC a blessing as well. Each PC can receive this blessing only once, but with a standard action and a successful DC 26 Mysticism check, a blessed PC can transfer their blessing to a touched ally (losing it for themselves in the process), provided that ally hasn't already received a blessing.

Aside from a feeling of inner warmth, a blessing from Hylax provides a PC with a +2 morale bonus to saving throws against effects produced by Swarm creatures

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(including spell-like abilities). At the beginning of a blessed PC's turn, they can also whisper a brief thanks to the Forever Queen under their breath (this takes no action) and receive one of four benefits.

- The PC regains 3 Resolve Points (up to their maximum).
- The PC regains a number of Hit Points equal to their level × their Constitution modifier (up to their maximum).
- The PC regains the use of one of their highest-level spell slots; when using this spell slot, the DC of the spell increases by 4.
- The PC gains a +4 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls for 1d3 rounds.

Once a blessed PC has activated one of these benefits, they are no longer blessed.

F3. INNER SANCTUM

The walls of this sparse chamber are crusted with yellowish resin, the source of which seems to be a ragged hole in the eastern wall. A tunnel of the same substance stretches away from the break. The only furnishing here is a small desk with a computer terminal, near a puddle of dried blood on the floor.

This room was once the shirren priest Xelanon's inner sanctum, and where he kept his personal effects. His cot and prayer rug are gone, but the Swarm has left his computer terminal untouched, though it no longer has power.

A PC who examines the bloodstain and succeeds at a DC 25 Medicine check can determine it is human blood and less than a week old. There is no other trace of the person who shed this blood, but from the size of the puddle, they have likely perished. The PCs might rightly surmise that this blood is that of Private Estof, the SDF scout Captain Althaset told them about. A PC who searches the room and succeeds at a DC 24 Perception check discovers an IDENT insignia attached to the underside of the desk. A PC who accesses the IDENT ascertains that it did indeed belong to Private Latt Estof and, in addition to his name, rank, and vital records, it contains a recording of the soldier's last reports. Read or paraphrase the following.

A recording of shaky male voice begins. "This is Private Latt Estof of SDF special operation Temple Beachhead, serving under Captain Dardrielle Althaset. After some distance reconnaissance of the area, I discovered a crack in the temple exterior and was barely able to squeeze through it. I emerged in a small chamber and then proceeded to make my way into the Swarm amber-like structure. I don't know what these critters are doing here exactly, but they seem to be digging into the stone of the ridge. Maybe they're looking for something buried below? Or maybe they have some kind of purpose for the rock itself?" The young man takes a breath. "I encountered no resistance moving through the

tunnel in the resin, but stopped short when I found the bulk of the structure: a massive chamber housing a five-headed beast that seemed to be some kind of leader or holy figure to the Swarm. The other bugs were just standing there, staring up at this colossal creature. To my horror, a few more Swarm appeared in the chamber, crawling from one of several vents in the resin walls and bringing the leader chunks of stone, which it just swallowed without a second thought." The voice chuckles quietly. "Seeing that thing reminded me of a story my grandmother used to tell me of a multiheaded creature that lived in Suskillon's seas in ancient times. In the tale, the beast couldn't be hurt—any of its wounds instantly healed themselves. Those who lived by the sea thought the creature invincible, until one day a hero with a flaming sword lured it onto land and, in a battle that lasted a day, chopped off its heads one at a time. The villagers looked on in awe as his sword's flames cauterized the necks so that its heads couldn't regrow." There is another pause. "I just hope this Swarm critter isn't harder to kill than that!"

A PC who searches for the crack mentioned by Private Estof finds that it has been sealed over by resin. One additional shorter recording follows.

The voice on the recording is breathless. "Damn. Damn. Damn. I should have known my luck wouldn't hold out forever, but they finally spotted me. They're right behind me, dozens of them, more than could even fit within the tunnels! I doubt I'm going to be able to make it out of here, so I'm stashing my IDENT with these reports in the hopes that someone will find it and the information within. Private Estof, signing off." There is a sound of scraping, followed by several gunshots, and a horrifying scream of pain before the recording cuts out.

Treasure: The damage done to this room has exposed a formerly well-hidden cache, placed long ago by a former priest of the temple. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Perception check spots a loose bit of stone along the northern wall not yet coated in resin. Prying the stone free reveals a small niche that contains two *silver lemniscate aeon stones* (*Starfinder Armory* 110).

Story Award: If the PCs find Private Estof's IDENT and hear his final report, award them 25,600 XP.

F4. ORGANIC ALTARS (CR 12)

The smooth walls of the tunnel open onto this irregularly shaped chamber. A pair of disgustingly organic altars are positioned against the eastern wall, each crafted from equal parts hardened amber resin and insectile exoskeleton. A large bowl that resembles an overturned beetle's shell sits between them, filled to the brim with a foul-smelling liquid.

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The two altars here were constructed by the Swarm effigene high priests (see Creatures below) as part of their attempt to corrupt the power of worship in order to benefit the God-Host. They are twisted caricatures of actual altars, made of resin and exoskeleton parts. Examining an altar closely reveals tiny maggot-like creatures slowly burrowing their way through the waxy resin. Touching an altar results in a small amount of the sticky substance coming off on one's hand.

The bowl is similarly disgusting—a whole piece of Swarm exoskeleton that the high priests are using as a holy font of sorts. The liquid within isn't water (and it definitely hasn't been blessed) but is instead a sample of Swarm blood diluted with a weak formic acid. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Life Science check recognizes the source of the liquid. The high

priests have been unsuccessfully trying to turn it into holy water by praying to the God-Host.

Creatures: In its quest for apotheosis, the God-Host has directed Swarm programmers to create a new caste of components using basic effigene biology as the base and infusing them with mystical energy. Only two such creatures have proved viable so far, and the God-Host considers them its high priests. The effigene high priests have been studying the worship of Hylax by extrapolating information from texts left behind in the temple, sacred carvings, and any memories of the religion stolen by Swarm mindreapers during the invasion of Suskillon. When the PCs enter, the high priests are waving their limbs over the altars and the bowl while whispering creepy, sibilant chants to the God-Host. They become enraged by any interruption by the PCs and attack.

SWARM EFFIGENE HIGH PRIESTS (2) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Advanced Swarm effigene (*Starfinder Adventure Path #21: Huskworld 57*)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE HP 140 EACH
EAC 22; **KAC** 23

Fort +9; **Ref** +11; **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities share injury (DC 19, 10 HP), Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.; climb 30 ft.

Melee bioelectric talon +17 (2d8+13 E & S)

Ranged bioelectric arc +19 (3d4+10 E; critical arc 1d6)

Offensive Abilities invigorate Swarm

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

1/day—*confusion* (DC 22), *hold monster* (DC 22)

3/day—*dispel magic*, *haste*, *slow* (DC 21), *synaptic pulse* (DC 21)

At will—*inflict pain* (DC 20), *mind thrust* (2nd level, DC 20)

TACTICS

During Combat One of the high priests casts *slow* on the PCs, while the other casts *confusion* on as many of the PCs as possible. In the following rounds, the Swarm high priests alternate between casting hampering spells and firing their bioelectric ranged weapons. If necessary, each Swarm high priest uses its invigorate Swarm ability to help the other stay out of melee range.

Morale The effigene high priests are zealous fanatics and fight until they are destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Engineering +19, Life Science +24, Medicine +24, Mysticism +24, Physical Science +19

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Share Injury (Su) Whenever a foe deals damage to a Swarm effigene high priest, it can shift some of the pain back onto that foe as a reaction. The amount of damage that foe deals is reduced by an amount equal to the effigene high priest's CR (to a maximum of the attack's total damage) and the foe takes an equal amount of damage, unless the foe succeeds at a DC 19 Will saving throw. This is a mind-affecting pain effect.

F5. EXCAVATION SITE

A bulge in the corridor reveals a fifteen-foot-wide and ten-foot-deep pit. The sides of the indentation are etched with what look like tool marks. The dark stone of the pit seems to shimmer in the light.

The rock of Clutchstone Ridge was partially infused with psychic energy during a divine visitation from the Forever Queen in which she directed a shirren priest to create the *Crown of Hylax*. Much of it was used to create the temple, but more divine stone lay beneath the surface. The Swarm was drawn to this energy when it first arrived on Suskillon, and during its invasion of the planet, the God-Host set up its permanent base here to study (and possibly take advantage of) the phenomenon.

Between then and now, the God-Host has directed Swarm components to dig up more of this stone, which it ingests on a regular basis, hoping to draw out the divine energy within. Given an unlimited amount of time, the plan has a small chance of succeeding.

A PC who examines the pit here and succeeds at a DC 28 Engineering check or DC 26 Physical Science check can determine that wide digging tools, like those of a Swarm molitera, were used to excavate the stone.

F6. GOD-HOST'S CHAMBER (CR 15+)

The walls of this cavernous chamber are made of hard, smooth resin. To the east and west, steep ramps lead up to platforms dozens of feet above the floor. A single pillar of resin stands to the northwest, forty feet tall. Vents in the walls, both at ground level and on the ramps, pucker and pulse to some unheard rhythm. Several huge beetle-like Swarm components are embedded into the sides of the chamber, their wings fluttering quietly. The ceiling high above is perforated by organic-looking apertures that occasionally belch puffs of foul-smelling gas.

After the Swarm fully took Suskillon, the God-Host created this resin dome attached to Xelanon's temple of Hylax and sequestered itself inside to study the power of the goddess present at this part of Clutchstone Ridge. It can issue commands to its subcolony from here, its psychic commands

amplified by the power of the psychovoxes that are now part of this structure.

The wide ridge that ascends along the edge of this chamber is merely a function of the settling resin, but it might provide the PCs with an effective path to surround the God-Host. The walls of the ridge can be climbed with a successful DC 25 Athletics check.

Five vents in the walls of the chamber provide access to Swarm thresher lords sealed up within the resin (in large bulbous nodes high up on the walls near the ceiling), awaiting the God-Host's command to awaken and emerge (see Creatures below). The PCs can't tell what these vents connect to, but the fact that they twitch and shudder as the God-Host moves indicates that they are under the God-Host's mental control. A PC adjacent to a vent can permanently close it with a successful DC 34 Engineering or Life Science check. The danger posed by the vents might not be obvious until the God-Host begins calling for aid, as described below.

Creatures: The God-Host—the Suskillon subcolony's de facto leader and potential threat to all sapient life across the galaxy—resembles a hydra-like insect of truly massive proportions. It constantly emits a psychic keening that reverberates through this chamber and up through the organic chimneys. As the PCs make their way into the dome through the temple, the God-Host is so focused on initiating its apotheosis that it doesn't notice their presence until they enter its sanctum. It shrieks in rage, recognizing the PCs as a constant thorn in the Swarm's plans, and attacks.

When the God-Host loses a head (see the multiheaded ability in its statistics on page 38), it emits a psychic cry for reinforcements. At the start of the next round, a Swarm thresher lord emerges from a random open vent; if the PCs have closed all the vents, no thresher lord emerges. No more than five thresher lords can emerge during this encounter.

The psychovoxes embedded in the walls might give the PCs pause, particularly as they've already dealt with at least one of these powerful creatures, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Life Science check realizes that these components are acting as little more than psychic antennae with no real sentience to speak of, and it's not worth the time or effort to attack them. These psychovoxes do not participate in the combat, having lent their psychic might to the God-Host, which is reflected in the God-Host's statistics on page 38. However, at this point, destroying one of these psychovoxes doesn't weaken the God-Host.

SWARM THRESHER LORDS (UP TO 5)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

HP 165 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 110)

TACTICS

During Combat Each Swarm thresher lord charges to the closest PC and attacks relentlessly with its arm blades. If attacked, it switches targets to its attacker.

Morale The Swarm thresher lords fight to the death.

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SWARM GOD-HOST

CR 15

XP 51,200

CE Colossal monstrous humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense (thought, vibration) 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +26

Aura psychic keening (100 ft., DC 21)

DEFENSE **HP 300 (BODY), 60 (EACH HEAD)**
EAC 29; **KAC** 31

Fort +19; **Ref** +17; **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities regeneration 50, Swarm mind, unflankable; **Immunities** acid, exhaustion, fatigue, fear effects, mind-affecting effects, sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.; climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee bite +29 (6d4+24 P)

Multiattack 5 bites +23 (6d4+24 P)

Ranged acid spittle +26 (5d8+15 A; critical corrode 3d6) or resin ball +26 (pinned)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.

Offensive Abilities quasi-divine

TACTICS

During Combat The God-Host begins combat by casting *greater synaptic pulse* to catch as many of the PCs as possible, roaring telepathically about how the divine apotheosis of the Swarm will soon be at hand. It then uses multiattack to bite at any PCs that are in range. If troubled by a particularly effective opponent, the God-Host attempts to encase that PC in a glob of resin. When possible, it casts *greater dispel magic* against foes that obviously have significant magical protections, though if its spellcasting is limited due to severed heads, it uses *dispel magic* instead). If its body is seriously injured past what its regeneration can fix, the God-Host casts the most powerful *mystic cure* spell it has available; it can't affect its heads with this spell.

Morale The God-Host is supremely arrogant and overconfident in its defenses. It fights until slain, realizing too late how much it underestimated the PCs. Its psychic death screech reverberates for miles in every direction, as described in the Development on page 39.

STATISTICS

Str +9; **Dex** +2; **Con** +7; **Int** +1; **Wis** +5; **Cha** +2

Skills Athletics +26, Intimidate +26, Mysticism +31

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities multiheaded

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acid Spittle (Ex) As a ranged attack, the God-Host can unleash a glob of acidic spittle from one of its heads with a range increment of 40 feet.

Multiheaded (Ex) The God-Host has five heads; each is capable of controlling the creature, but they work much more efficiently together. Each head has 60 Hit Points, which are tracked independently of those of the God-Host's body, but it otherwise uses all of the God-Host's

defenses and is vulnerable to slashing damage. The God-Host can make a bite attack with any of its heads, and when it uses its multiattack ability, it cannot attack the same creature with more than one bite each round. The God-Host's heads are immune to any damage dealt to creatures in an area; such effects affect the God-Host's body instead. If one of the God-Host's heads is reduced to 0 Hit Points, it regrows at the start of the God-Host's next turn, unless either the damage that brought it to 0 Hit Points was fire, or any amount of fire damage is dealt to the same head before the start of the God-Host's next turn (including, in this case an area effect that targets the God-Host's body).

For each head the God-Host loses, remove one of the bite attacks it can make with its multiattack ability and reduce the maximum level of mystic spells it can cast with its quasi-divine ability by 1. If the God-Host is reduced to only one head, it loses the unflankable ability. If the God-Host is reduced to zero heads and its heads are prevented from regrowing, the God-Host is slain (though the God-Host is also slain if its body is reduced to 0 Hit Points and its regeneration has been suppressed).

Psychic Keening (Su) The God-Host's mind emits an endless psychic wail that grates upon non-Swarm minds. A non-Swarm creature in the aura's area cannot use limited telepathy, telepathy, or similar abilities and must attempt a DC 21 Will save at the start of its turn or be off-target for 1 round. If the psychovox in **Event 2** escaped, it was able to pass along its psychic augmentation, and this DC is increased to 23. This is a mind-affecting effect to which shirrens are immune.

Quasi-Divine (Sp) The God-Host's apotheosis to divinity is near enough that it can access mystical power. As a standard action, the God-Host can cast any mystic spell of 5th level or lower as a spell-like ability with a caster level of 15th; this doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity. The DC for these spells is 16 + the level of the spell, and the God-Host has a melee attack bonus of +29 and a ranged attack bonus of +26 with these spells. After the God-Host uses this ability, it cannot do so again for 1d4 rounds.

Regeneration (Ex) The God-Host's regeneration affects only its body (though its heads can regrow; see the multiheaded ability above) and is suppressed only during the same round that one of its heads has been reduced to 0 Hit Points.

Resin Ball (Ex) As a ranged attack, the God-Host can spew a glob of sticky resin from one of its heads at a creature within 90 feet. If the resin hits the target's KAC + 8, it immediately hardens, pinning that creature. A pinned creature can free itself with a successful DC 36 Acrobatics check to escape or with a successful DC 36 Athletics check to burst free as a standard action. The creature can also be freed by destroying the resin glob

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(hardness 5, Hit Points 30), which is immune to acid and bludgeoning damage.

Development: When the God-Host is slain, it emits a final psychic shriek powerful enough to rend minds. All remaining Swarm creatures within the chamber collapse as their brains are reduced to liquid, and Swarm creatures within 1 mile of the temple are permanently staggered. Not connected to the Swarm hive mind, the PCs experience only a fraction of the dying cry, though it is still enough to bring them to their knees with blinding headaches. Those with the limited telepathy or telepathy racial trait are affected worse and are knocked nearly unconscious, with blood trickling from ears, eyes, and other facial orifices. They are in no danger of dying from the mental injuries sustained, but likely the scream will haunt their nightmares for years to come.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the God-Host is defeated and many of the nearby Swarm components are wobbling from the psychic impact of its death, the SDF soldiers outside of the temple are able to

make short work of any remaining foes. All across and above Suskillon, the Swarm begins to retreat. Swarm starships vanish into the Drift, while Swarm creatures on the ground scatter across the globe.

As the PCs make their way out of the temple, they are greeted with cheers and are quickly given any medical attention they need. Shortly afterward, they receive a transmission from Commander Najiri, who congratulates them on a job well done and tell them that more forces are landing as they speak to finish reclaiming the planet. For now, though, the PCs have earned a break and can sit back as the SDF eradicates the bulk of the remaining Swarm over the next few weeks.

With the desperate war finally at an end, the long, slow process of rebuilding can then begin. The PCs can look forward to victory speeches, medal ceremonies, and celebratory parties in the months to follow as they are hailed as the heroes of Suskillon. They can use their military success to rise up in the ranks or take an honorable discharge from the SDF, as they wish. Their likenesses are captured in holographic murals and statues, and, if they accept, several buildings in Brinnoa are named in their honor. Eventually, they are approached by holoivid producers from all over the galaxy, looking to purchase the rights to their heroic story. No matter what the PCs do with their newfound fame for the present, they can rest assured their names will go down in history.



CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

"You think them defeated, and in this singular moment in time, you are correct. Know this, however: time moves on—it is the one constant in this existence. This moment in which the Swarm is defeated is simply another moment in time, and it will pass beyond us as all such moments do. What comes in the following moments, we cannot know. The wise will prepare—will use the knowledge of the present moment to infer what may come. The Swarm will remember this moment of defeat and will prepare for what comes next. Will you be able to say the same, or will the past repeat itself? The choice is yours."

—Inul Piram, devotee of Eloritu

The Attack of the Swarm! Adventure Path ends when the PCs defeat the God-Host and retake Suskillon. However, this doesn't mean the end of the heroes' adventures, especially when the rest of the Swarm is still out there somewhere in the depths of space!

Enjoy the Show: By bribing mercenary groups, the Suskillon Entertainment Network secured several captured Swarm components in the weeks after the planet was retaken. The network executives are holding the creatures in a remote location on Alappu Minor and plan to use them for a series of brutal blood-sport broadcasts. A slimy representative of the channel asks the PCs to endorse the shows as the heroes of Suskillon. The PCs can earn some credits as celebrity spokespeople, but they will likely earn the ire of groups who would see the spectacle as cruel. No matter what they decide, they are called to the site when things go horribly wrong during the first live broadcast.

Fostering Alliances: After Clade Company retakes Ilemchuuva, they have their own difficulties rebuilding. As the system's only government, the company wants to work with the Suskillon Defense Force and Suskillon's leaders to form a coalition to protect against further attacks. The PCs are tasked with mediating and making the final decisions about this alliance. A group of hard-line radicals known as the Suskillon People's Party begins a kidnapping campaign, targeting high-ranking members of both Clade Company and the SDF. They plant evidence implicating both sides of the potential coalition, leaving the PCs to sort through who's telling the truth. Can they stop those behind the campaign of terror?

Ground Control: By studying the defeat of the Swarm on Suskillon, an enterprising scientist named Velsa Allengrath discovers a way to tap into the Swarm's hive mind and issue orders to a nearby subcolony. When she hears of a raid by Dominion of the Black starships on a colony world where her brother lives, Allengrath becomes enraged and sends the Swarm to the area as a counterattack against the Dominion. The PCs catch wind of these strange skirmishes between the two groups. While this conflict seems to benefit everyone else, the Swarm subcolony appears to be moving closer to the Pact Worlds, with the enclaves of the Dominion on Aucturn as their eventual target. Should the Swarm somehow connect with or absorb the nascent eldritch being that slumbers within the planet, the effects would be unpredictable and catastrophic.

Mind Over Matter: Upon hearing the PCs' story, an occult scholar devises a way to create a unique mindscape that will psychically interfere with the Swarm hive mind, possibly granting the creatures a chance at independence. To do so, the PCs must visit a dozen locations across the galaxy, from the Pact Worlds to the Azlanti Star Empire, to erect the scholar's beacons in places of psychic significance. Each of these places is sacred to or protected by varied groups, each with their own reasons for not allowing the PCs to complete their mission. Negotiating for access will require patience and the PCs' willingness to see others' motivations.

The Never Reliquary: With the Crown of Hylax's purpose revealed and the artifact used, the Forever Reliquary's monks are without a mission. Tuvah asks the PCs, as champions of Hylax, to find and secure another holy artifact. Their quest begins in the Forever Halls of the Liavaran moon of Nchak, where the PCs gain an audience with the so-called mortal incarnation of the Forever Queen. She tells them of an ancient trox starship that carried the *Nevergem*, an artifact of unknown power. Once the PCs track down this vessel and find the strange, shadowy item, they begin to see twisted, nightmare creatures just at the edges of their vision. Should the PCs return the *Nevergem* to the Prodigal Stone, despite the danger? Can they determine the artifact's true function?

Picking Up the Pieces: Though the PCs have defeated the God-Host and reclaimed Suskillon, the planet has been devastated by the invasion. The PCs are tasked with clearing out any remaining Swarm enclaves and organizing the rebuilding efforts. Problems abound, and it comes as no surprise when the PCs encounter resistance from military minds who prefer how straightforward war can be. From the multifaceted needs of the people of Suskillon to the different mercenary groups threatening to gain a foothold on the ruined planet, the PCs will have their hands full!

Profane Vendetta: The shirren priest Xelanon returns to his temple on Clutchstone Ridge, but latent psychic energy left behind by the God-Host slowly corrupts his mind. Over the next several weeks, shirrens in the Sahtor region are found dead by the hand of a gruesome serial killer, their exoskeletons carved with symbols of Hylax. When the PCs are asked to investigate, they learn that their former friend is the culprit, committing the murders while in a fugue state. Though Xelanon has no clear memories of his actions, he claims to see the crimes in fitful dreams, hearing his own voice claim the victims are "unworthy of Hylax's blessings." Can the PCs find a way to redeem Xelanon and purge his dark desires? Or will they be his next victims?

Swarm War II: The Swarm attacks the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium again! As the PCs are decorated veterans, they are asked to lead in the defense. This time, the Swarm are not looking to absorb individual planets. Instead, they have created several colossal living starships, filled with explosive biomatter, that they plan on ramming into the systems' suns. When these vessels are launched simultaneously, the PCs will need to find a way to rescue both systems!

What If the PCs Lose?: If the PCs fail to stop the God-Host from gaining a spark of divinity, the entire galaxy is in the greatest danger it has ever known. The Swarm alone was a formidable threat, and now imbued with a fraction of omnipotence, it can act in greater concert, reproduce more rapidly, and even subsume the free will of shirrens that come in range of its hive mind. The shirrens of the Suskillon system are the first to turn, and the SDF is destroyed from within. It isn't long before the Swarm turns its now profane gaze toward the Pact Worlds and other highly populated systems.

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DEFEAT OF THE SWARM!

Riding high from their victory on the surface of Suskillon, the SDF launches a mission to take the fight to the Swarm! SDF scientists have gleaned details from the PCs' adventures in the Swarm's mindscape and culled information from the many Swarm corpses littering the countryside, including those of several psychovoxes and the God-Host. Now they believe they have identified the center of Swarm-controlled space: a remote system in the Vast named Plagueheart.

The PCs are placed in charge of the operation, but before they can depart for Plagueheart, they must first gather a fleet. The resources of the SDF are stretched thin in the aftermath of the war, and the PCs will need all the help they can get to stand against what may be a vast fleet of Swarm starships. Over several weeks, the PCs travel to the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium, gathering allies. After run-ins with corporate stooges who want to turn the mission into a moneymaking venture, zealous military commanders who try to take control of the operation, and doomsday cultists inspired by the Reckoners, the PCs gather their coalition fleet.

The fleet gets as close to Plagueheart as it can, but due to a dearth of Drift beacons in the area, it must travel for several months using conventional thrusters. As it draws nearer, the fleet faces a host of different challenges. The Swarm has placed several magical lures around its territory, attracting starship-sized creatures and trapping them in space. Angry at their predicament, these creatures (such as gwahleds; *Starfinder Alien Archive* 346) attack the PCs' fleet. In addition, those with the limited telepathy or telepathy racial traits begin to grow more and more uneasy as the fleet approaches Plagueheart. Shirrens especially feel the call of the Swarm hive mind. Each shirren on board a fleet ship must succeed at a DC 30 Will saving throw each day or slowly lose their free will. With the first failed save, the shirren is affected per *charm person* (caster level 20th), regarding the Swarm in a friendly manner. With the second failed save, the shirren is affected per *dominate person* (caster level 20th) and attempts to sabotage the vessel they are on. With the third failed save, the shirren essentially becomes a member of the Swarm and attacks their fellow soldiers in a frenzy. Any one successful save resets this progression. With clever uses of Engineering and Mysticism, the PCs should be able to craft psychic shielding for their shirren allies, rendering them immune to this effect.

Eventually, the fleet reaches Plagueheart, finding it oddly empty. Swarm starships pose a few pockets of token resistance from Swarm starships, but the rest of the Swarm has pulled back to a planet near the system's sun. The Swarm

has hollowed out the center of this sun-scorched world to serve as the birthplace for the next step in its evolution: a massive otherworldly being that focuses the might of the Swarm's collective consciousness. Thousands of Swarm components were broken down into their constituent genetic pieces to craft this terrifying creation, and just as many stand ready to protect it.

The PCs track the Swarm to this planet and, interpreting energy signatures from within, realize they must delve into its depths. To reach the center, they must carve through wave after wave of Swarm components, some strangely mutated from their proximity to the new creation. They pass through chambers of unusual organic machinery used to store and regulate Swarm genetic material. It is like nothing the PCs have ever seen, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 45 Life Science check concludes that the Swarm is up to something new and sinister—something with the capability to engulf entire civilizations.

The PCs and their allies reach the core of the planet and must defeat the new Swarm creature, which the SDF soldiers with them name a broodsoul, and its many guardians. The Swarm broodsoul is terrifying to behold: it rises in the center of the chamber, a nightmare amalgam of dozens of different Swarm components. It is also a deadly opponent: its dozens of tentacles drip with acid, and its several pulsating brain sacs emit mind-shattering psychic energy. The PCs' allies can't hope to stand against the broodsoul, but they are able to occupy the other Swarm forces long enough for the PCs to face off against it.

If the PCs are defeated or flee from the broodsoul, it eventually leaves the Plagueheart system, embarking on a campaign of terror across the galaxy. It chooses a nearby inhabited system and attacks the planets there, averaging about one per week before moving to another system, and for every three worlds it consumes, its CR increases by 1. Soon, it becomes unstoppable.

However, if the PCs are able to slay the broodsoul, any other Swarm components that survive its death throes try to flee in terror; this is the first instance of fear the PCs have ever seen in the Swarm. The PCs and their allies can chase down these remaining creatures and cut them down. With that, the Swarm has been defeated... or has it?

SWARM BROODSOUL

CR 20

XP 307,200

CE Colossal monstrous humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 100 ft., darkvision 200 ft.; **Perception** +39

Aura frightful presence (60 ft., DC 25)

DEFENSE

EAC 35; KAC 37

Fort +21; Ref +23; Will +19

Defensive Abilities amorphous, regeneration 20 (sonic), Swarm mind, void adaptation; **Immunities** acid, fear effects

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 100 ft. (Ex, perfect)

Melee acidic tentacle +35 (11d10+32 A & B; critical corrode 4d6)

Ranged psychic lance +32 (12d6+20 P; critical confuse^{AR} [DC 25])

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.

Offensive Abilities tentacle onslaught

STATISTICS

Str +12; **Dex** +6; **Con** +9; **Int** +4; **Wis** +4; **Cha** +0

Skills Acrobatics +34 (+42 to fly), Piloting +34

Languages Shirren; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities death throes (21d8 A & P, DC 25), spaceflight

HP 465

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Death Throes (Ex) When the Swarm broodsoul is reduced to 0 Hit Points, it explodes in a burst of acid and psychic energy. Each creature within 100 feet of the broodsoul takes an amount of acid and piercing damage equal to 1d8 + 1d8 per CR (21d8 for this broodsoul). The piercing damage of this explosion has the force descriptor, and creatures with the Swarm mind ability take double this damage. A successful Reflex save halves the total damage.

Psychic Lance (Su) As a ranged attack, the Swarm broodsoul can project a lance of psychic energy with a range increment of 200 feet. This damage confuses a target on a critical hit and has the force descriptor.

Tentacle Onslaught (Ex) When the Swarm broodsoul makes a full attack with its tentacles, it can make up to three attacks instead of two attacks. Each attack takes a -5 penalty instead of a -4 penalty.



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HOLY REDEMPTION

Several months after the successful defeat of the Swarm, a divine servant of Hylax descends upon Suskillon. After a brief period of confusion and hysteria, followed by several spontaneous religious festivals, the being requests to speak with the PCs. The angel introduces themselves as Shulith-Hyla and gives the PCs the opportunity to join them on a holy mission to redeem the Swarm and bring them back into the Forever Queen's embrace.

Shulith-Hyla is a resplendent being with shirren features, a shining blue exoskeleton, glowing compound eyes, and four large feathered wings. They wear white armor with light-green accents and have a massive sword strapped to their back. Shulith-Hyla prefers to use their telepathy to communicate and has a kind, affable demeanor that is peppered with bursts of shirren-like excitement regarding their divine patron's newest plan.

The angel reveals to the PCs that they wish to capture a powerful component of the Swarm alive, return it to a site sacred to Hylax, and perform a complex ritual on it. This will implant a seed of free will within the creature's mind. After Shulith-Hyla sets it free, the altered component will take that free will back to the Swarm hive mind. The angel's idea is similar to the plan to usurp a portion of Hylax's divinity: this seed will telepathically spread through the Swarm and hopefully free the components from the tyranny of the hive mind.

Shulith-Hyla is very animated while discussing this quest, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 36 Sense Motive check during the conversation detects hints of fiery fanaticism within the enthusiasm. However, the check doesn't indicate that the angel is lying, and the PC might dismiss the zeal as ingrained in the outsider's nature. A successful DC 34 Mysticism check raises doubts about the morality of the plan, as Hylax is a big proponent of individuals seeking their own connection to the spiritual; a PC who worships Hylax gains a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. The PCs can even attempt to read the angel's mind, but failure to bypass their spell resistance or a successful saving throw on Shulith-Hyla's behalf are met with a high-pitched psychic keening. However, success in such an endeavor reveals a strong desire on the angel's behalf to please their patron. Whether or not the PCs believe Shulith-Hyla, the angel is insistent on having the PCs' aid, relying on the heroes' desire to dispatch Swarm components, if not redeem them.

After helping to upgrade or alter the PCs' starship to be able to transport a living creature against its will, the angel directs the PCs to a planetoid orbiting close to a red sun in an unnamed and uninhabited system in the Vast. Shulith-Hyla

explains that a formidable Swarm xersk (*Alien Archive* 3 106) commands a small subcolony no bigger than a battalion on this rock. The tiny celestial body contains deposits of a psychically attuned crystal that the Swarm is interested in studying. The angel insists that the xersk be taken alive, but all other Swarm components on the planetoid can be destroyed. They join the PCs in the battles to reach the caves deep under the surface, where the xersk resides. Facing off against a small army of Swarm components, the PCs witness Shulith-Hyla's ferocity in battle. If questioned, the angel proclaims that this small amount of violence is justified for the end of a greater peace, pointing out that the PCs have already inflicted their own wounds on the Swarm.

Eventually, the group reaches the xersk and its small contingent of thresher lord guards (*Alien Archive* 110). The xersk is a vicious opponent, lashing out with its spell-like abilities as the threshers form a bulwark to protect it. When the PCs attempt to subdue the xersk, it begins to deliberately damage itself, as if it would rather die than be captured alive by the PCs and Shulith-Hyla. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Sense Motive check during this fight notices this unusual fear. With the angel's help, the PCs should be able to knock the xersk unconscious, restrain it, and bring it back to their starship.

Shulith-Hyla gives the PCs the coordinates to their next destination: a ruined world that was once home to an insectile species who worshipped Hylax. During the journey, the angel seems to grow more reticent to discuss the remainder of the plan. If questioned about the nature of the ritual, especially if the PCs mention the tenets of Hylax, Shulith-Hyla becomes agitated, even destructive, and smashes some small objects within reach, though they never harm or threaten the PCs. They seem to truly believe that subverting the will of the Swarm is the best way to serve Hylax.

If the PCs are diplomatic enough, they can draw the truth from Shulith-Hyla. This divine servant of the Forever Queen was mentally scarred after being attacked by the Swarm during a mission of peace to the hive mind thousands of years ago. The Swarm captured and tortured the angel, who barely escaped before being disincorporated. Unfortunately, the ordeal cracked Shulith-Hyla's faith and they have been disconnected from the Forever Queen ever since. The angel believes that the only way to heal that rift within themselves is by bringing the Swarm back to the faith of Hylax, by any means necessary. Will the PCs go along with the outsider's plan of redemption at any cost or will they

defy this divine power? This decision might be made a little harder when the PCs learn that Shulith-Hyla's ritual will be excruciatingly painful for the xersk, and at least half of the Swarm will likely die when this free will is forced upon them.

If forced into a conflict with the PCs, Shulith-Hyla fights to defend herself, fleeing if reduced to fewer than 100 Hit Points. They refuse to kill a PC unless such an unfortunate turn of events cannot be helped. Throughout any combat, the angel professes the goodness of their intentions and begs the PCs to help them. If they are able to get away, the angel seeks out another group to help with their plan and bears the PCs no ill will, though the PCs might not feel the same. This new group—consisting mainly of insectile devotees to Hylax, such as shirrens and trox—believes wholeheartedly in the angel's goal, and might consider the PCs heretics.

SHULITH-HYLA CR 16

XP 76,800

N Large outsider (angel, extraplanar)

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

Perception +28

Aura protective aura (30 ft.)

DEFENSE HP 255

EAC 29; **KAC** 30

Fort +14; **Ref** +14; **Will** +21; +4 vs. poison

DR 10/evil; **Immunities** acid, cold, petrification; **Resistances** electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

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

Melee *holy inferno skyfire sword* +27 (7d8+21 F; critical burn 4d12)

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

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; ranged +25)

1/day—*control gravity* (DC 26), *plane shift* (self only), *true seeing*

3/day—*dismissal* (5th level) (DC 25), *greater dispel magic*, *mind thrust* (5th level) (DC 25), *modify memory* (DC 25)

At will—*cosmic eddy* (DC 24), *mind probe* (DC 24)

STATISTICS

Str +5; **Dex** +4; **Con** +5; **Int** +4; **Wis** +7; **Cha** +9

Skills Bluff +33, Intimidate +33, Mysticism +28

Languages Common, Shirren; telepathy 100 ft., truespeech

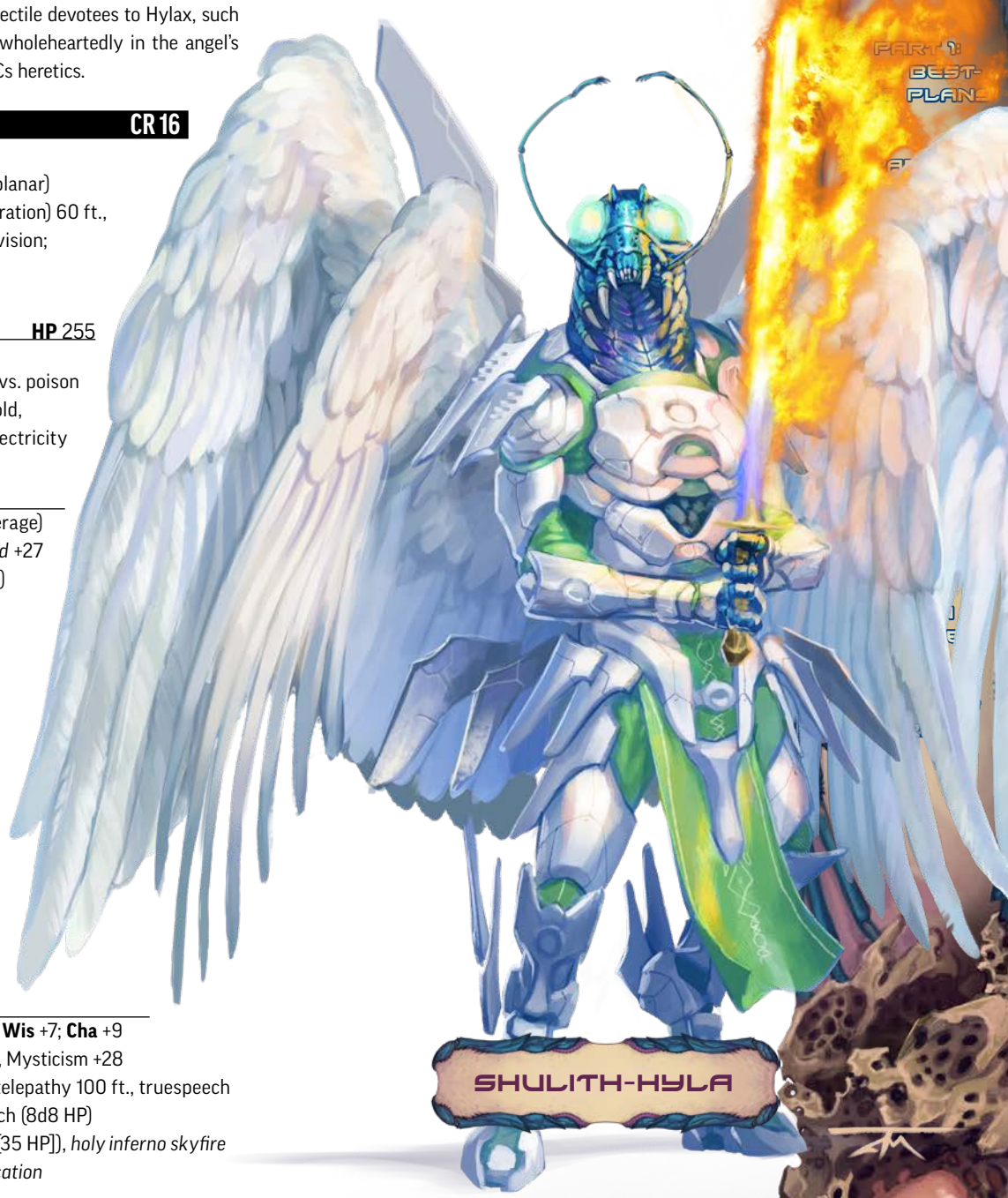
Other Abilities restorative touch (8d8 HP)

Gear d-suit V (blue force field [35 HP]), *holy inferno skyfire sword*, mk 2 tiara of translocation

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Protective Aura (Su) Any creature within 30 feet of Shulith-Hyla (including the angel herself) gains a +3 divine bonus to AC against attacks made by evil creatures and a +6 divine bonus to saving throws against effects created by evil creatures.

Restorative Touch (Su) Five times per day as a standard action, Shulith-Hyla can touch a living creature (including herself) to restore 8d8 Hit Points to that creature. In addition, that creature gains the benefits of *remove condition*.



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"I once leapt from an enercopter with only jump jets to stop my fall. I free dove to the floor of the Ocean of Mists and base jumped from the top of the Lorespire Complex. I've tried everything I can think of, but nothing gets your heart racing like that guts-in-your-throat feeling of dropping 73 miles in 15 minutes in an orbital dropship. Watching ablative shielding boil away in tongues of plasma right outside your window, seeing an entire world come hurtling up to meet you, and knowing that, at the end of the joyride, a bunch of overgrown lizards are going to try to paint the bulkheads with your brains—nothing will ever beat that."

—From the memoirs of Dhorwin Midinis, Silent War veteran

From humble wagons hauled into battle by beasts of burden to towering mechanical behemoths that stride across war zones, vehicles have held an essential place in armed conflicts both before and after the Gap. The myriad environments of the galaxy have driven the military organizations of many systems to develop vehicles as unique as their mission parameters.

ANCIENT ROOTS

Perhaps the eldest of war machines, and indeed the predecessor of many vehicles that have followed, is the two-wheeled chariot. Records indicate that horse-drawn war chariots were used in times considered ancient even on pre-Gap Golarion. Early civilizations on dozens of planets have echoed this basic design, each vehicle adapted to accommodate the local herd animals, and some species employ chariots to this day. Even on worlds that have left the design behind, chariots can often be found in museums and occasionally as part of ceremonial parades.

By contrast, the sturdier four-wheeled cousin of the chariot, called a war wagon, still sees practical use in regions where more advanced technology is impossible to maintain. Although war wagons' basic structure remains essentially unchanged from pre-Gap days, improvements such as titanium plating ensure a war wagon is a safe place to hunker down during a dust-up with bandits or troublesome wildlife. Other improvements have resulted in new classes of vehicles. For example, the sky chariot forgoes the cumbersome wheels of its ancestors, instead employing modern gravity manipulating technology to keep itself afloat and its passengers firmly onboard as it careens through the clouds. These vehicles often serve as novel pleasure craft for tourists taking in the vaporous vistas of Bretheda and Liavara, but the Xenowardens use sky chariots as sustainable low-impact vehicles for patrolling newly discovered worlds.

SCUTTling SCOUTS

Crawler vehicles stand closer to the ground than most nonflying vehicles. Anywhere from six to a dozen legs support their squat bodies. Their hulls are sealed against hazardous environments, and their clinging limbs keep them securely fixed to vertical or even inverted surfaces. Many models also employ mechanical appendages ending in specialized manipulators that help them carry loads, maneuver, or perform other tasks. Standardized crawler chassis can easily be equipped with different loadouts, making them a frequent sight in the galaxy's hardest-to-reach places.

Numerous paramilitary organizations, pirates, and other undesirables construct bases on ocean floors, wishing to build their bases away from orbiting satellites. With an aquatic crawler on hand, a naval agency can patrol the deep for such threats without the need to mobilize larger vessels. Its rear-mounted manipulator doubles as a rudder-like tail when using its pump jets to swim, and its sonic weaponry is as effective underwater

as above. Aquatic crawlers patrol seabeds throughout the Pact Worlds. Notably, they can be found clinging to the underside of Nisis' frozen crust, where they roam the inverted ice flats for signs of attacking wildlife.

The trench crawlers of Akiton serve a similar function, cruising the steep walls of the planet's many canyons and tunnel shafts in search of unsanctioned mining and salvage operations. Two front-facing digging claws allow these crawlers to burrow through loose soil, while vibration detectors provide early warning against threats from within the ground. Maro security forces rely on trench crawlers to patrol their vertical streets, occasionally deploying them en masse to the city's lowest levels in a vain effort to combat gang presence there. In retaliation, gang members tag the crawlers with luminescent graffiti so they stand out plainly amid the shadows.

The most unique of these walkers are found not in the bowels of any planet, but in the depths of space. With legs tipped by powerful electromagnets, hull crawlers scuttle across the surfaces of massive starships and space stations. Just as small creatures clean parasites from larger creatures, these vehicles repair hull damage on starships when it can't be reached by internal crews. In combat, hull crawlers can swarm hostile boarding parties, using powerful manipulators and shock weaponry to scour invaders from the crawlers' host ship. Absalom Station and various ships-of-the-line boast notable fleets of hull crawlers, but the worldship *Idari's* fleet outnumbers them all, with a maintenance complement exceeding 100.

TO ORBIT AND BACK

The vast majority of starships are capable of routine planetary landings, but for those too large to safely enter an atmospheric environment, rapidly ferrying troops and supplies between space and the surface can prove a logistical nightmare. The answer to this challenge lies in special vehicles commonly referred to as dropships. Hardy enough to withstand the rigors of atmospheric entry and just powerful enough to rejoin their host ship afterward, they provide efficient transport onto or off a planet.

While dropships are capable of reaching space and maneuvering there, they lack the long-range capabilities that permit even the humblest of starships to travel between planets. Dropships make up for this deficiency in numerous ways. Without the need to house interplanetary thrusters or the core to power them, they have far more room for cargo and passengers. They can provide potent air support anywhere on a planet with minimal response time, plunging down from the firmament with artillery lasers and reaction cannons blazing. The largest dropships can even transport other vehicles in their spacious hangars, deploying ordnance and accompanying foot soldiers in less than an hour.

The fastest and most direct method to get boots on the ground is, however, the drop pod. With only the most

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rudimentary of guidance systems and no on-board steering mechanism, this compact single-use unit is more akin to a stripped-down, armored-up escape pod than a true vehicle. Launched from an orbiting ship on a ballistic trajectory toward a predetermined point of impact, drop pods rely on their extreme speed to safely deposit their occupants before the enemy can react, giving these troops the opportunity to secure a landing zone for more conventional aircraft. Drop pods saw extensive development and implementation during the Silent War, as the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium vied over proxy worlds in flash ground skirmishes.

VEHICLE FACTORS

The following new rules expand on those found on page 228 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook* and page 136 of *Starfinder Armory*. They are not exclusive to vehicles built and operated by military organizations.

DRAWN VEHICLES

While most vehicles have their own means of propulsion, a handful of archaic designs harken to a time when the weight of civilization rested upon the backs of beasts. Such vehicles have no speed, and instead rely on creatures to pull them along by a specially designed harness. A drawn vehicle can be harnessed either to one creature of the same size category, or to two or more creatures one size category smaller than the vehicle. When a drawn vehicle is harnessed to creatures trained for the task, it gains a drive speed equal to the creatures' walk speed, and a full speed equal to 3 × the creatures' walk speed. A pilot uses their Survival skill instead of their Piloting skill for checks to control a vehicle drawn by a creature, and drawn vehicles are always considered to have autocontrol.

MANIPULATORS

Some vehicles are fitted with appendages ending in manipulating mechanisms such as digits and pincers. Such a

vehicle is treated as a tall creature of the same size category for the purpose of determining the reach of its manipulators, and each manipulator can hold up to 10 × the vehicle's item level in bulk. Manipulators are generally too large and clumsy for delicate tasks such as operating equipment designed for Medium and smaller creatures.

A manipulator's EAC is equal to 4 + the vehicle's EAC and its KAC is equal to the 4 + the vehicle's KAC. It has Hit Points equal to 3 × the item level of the vehicle and hardness equal to half the vehicle's hardness. A manipulator that has lost at least half of its total Hit Points gains the broken condition, imposing a -2 penalty to Piloting checks to control the manipulator and to the DC of checks to escape the manipulator. Damage done to a vehicle's manipulator doesn't affect the vehicle's Hit Point total.

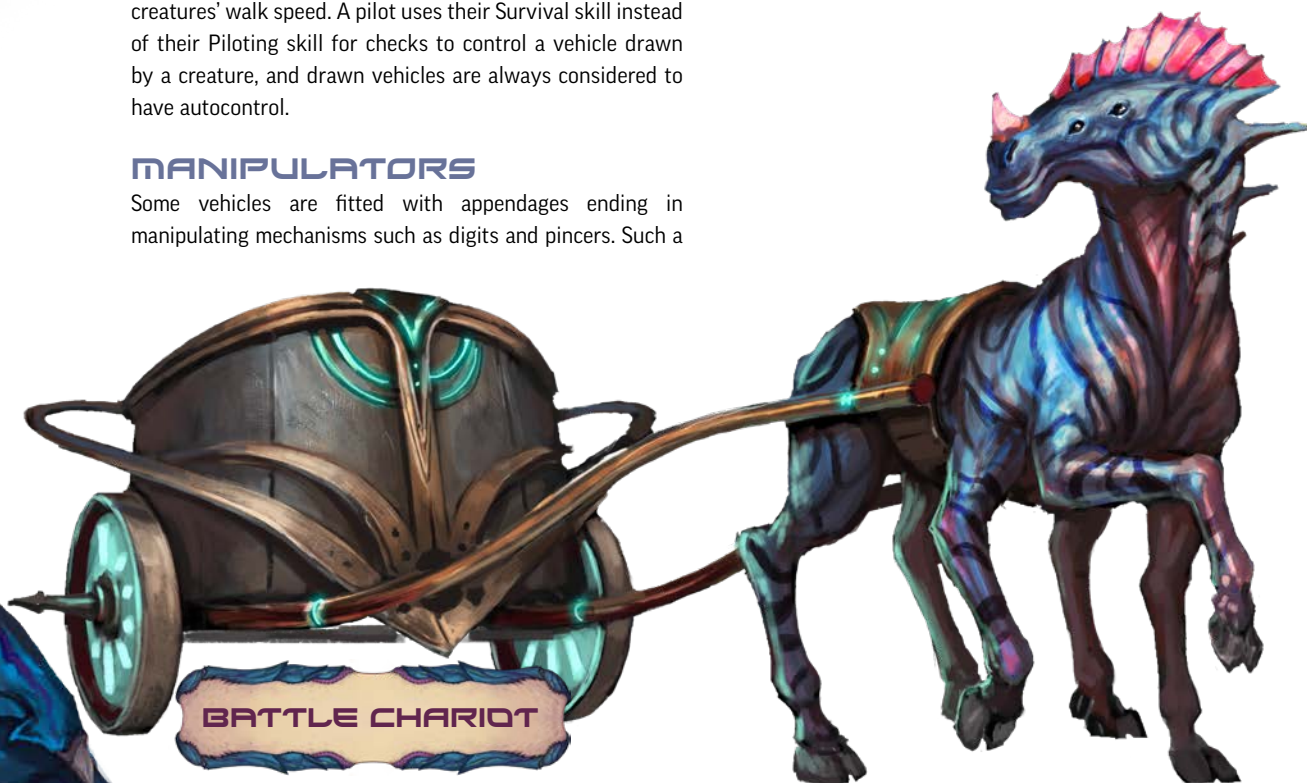
A vehicle's pilot (or one of its complement) can control a manipulator in the following ways, though only one person can control a manipulator in a round.

CRUSH

As a standard action, you direct the manipulator to clamp tighter around a held creature or object (see *Grab* below), dealing half the vehicle's collision damage. The creature or object can halve this damage by succeeding at a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + the vehicle item level).

GRAB

As a standard action, you direct the manipulator to grab at a target within its reach by attempting a Piloting check (DC = 10 + the target's KAC). On a success, the target is grappled by



the manipulator. If the target is a creature, it gains soft cover and the grappled condition while held by the manipulator. If the result of your Piloting check exceeded the DC by 5 or more, the creature is instead pinned. A creature held by a manipulator can use the escape action to free itself by succeeding at an Acrobatics check (DC = 10 + the vehicle's KAC), but it can't grapple the vehicle in return.

If the target of a successful grab is another vehicle, both vehicles are considered to be connected by a rigid tether (see Tethered Vehicles below).

SLAM

As a standard action, you direct the manipulator to strike a target within its reach by attempting a Piloting check (DC = 5 + the target's KAC). On a success, the manipulator deals half the vehicle's collision damage to the target.

If the target of the slam action is a creature, it can attempt a Reflex saving throw against the vehicle's collision DC to halve the damage. If the target of the slam action is another vehicle, the pilot of the defending vehicle can attempt a Piloting check to halve the damage, with a DC equal to the result of your Piloting check.

TETHERED VEHICLES

Whether lashed together by a grappler and cable line or held in the grip of a crane claw, vehicles can sometimes become affixed to each other. Regardless of the specifics, any item holding two vehicles together is referred to as a tether. Tethers can either be flexible, like a cable line, or rigid, like a manipulator arm. The pilot of the vehicle from which the tether originates is considered the controller, and the pilot of the vehicle ensnared by the tether is considered the defender.

DRAGGING A TETHERED VEHICLE

If the defender wishes to move while held by a rigid tether, or if either pilot wishes to move beyond a tether's reach, they must succeed at an opposed Piloting check. The checks of both controller and defender receive a bonus equal to half their respective vehicles' item levels and an additional +5 bonus for each size category that their vehicle is larger than their opponent's. The controller wins ties. If the pilot who initiated the check succeeds, they can move any remaining speed of their drive action, dragging the tethered vehicle with them. They can then use any remaining drive actions without an opposed check. Alternatively, if the pilot initiated this check while using a race action, they can move up to half their vehicle's full speed. If the pilot who initiated the check fails, their vehicle's speed becomes 0 until the start of their next turn. A pilot who wishes to be dragged can opt to automatically fail this check.

DRIVING WHILE TETHERED

If two vehicles are held by a flexible tether, both pilots can drive freely within the tether's reach. If the tether is rigid,

only the controller can move freely, but see Dragging a Tethered Vehicle above.

ESCAPING A TETHER

As a standard action, the defender can attempt a Piloting check (DC = 10 + controlling vehicle's KAC) to free their vehicle from the tether. The controller can release the tether at any time (this takes no action).

TETHERS IN VEHICLE CHASES

Since vehicles involved in chases measure their movement relative to each other instead of to fixed points, two tethered vehicles can still participate normally in chases except as noted below. Generally, the two vehicles must be engaged in the chase before they can be tethered to one another.

Pilot Actions: The defender cannot take the break free action to disengage from the controller while tethered. If the controller takes the break free action to disengage with the defender, the defender is immediately freed of the tether. Piloting checks to attempt evade and trick actions with vehicles connected by a flexible tether take a -2 penalty. If the tether is rigid, this penalty increases to -4.

A pilot who wishes to take the speed up action while tethered must first succeed at an opposed Piloting check as if dragging a tethered vehicle (see above). If they succeed, they can attempt the action. If they move forward to a new zone, the vehicle tethered to them is immediately dragged to that zone as well. The pilot of the dragged vehicle cannot then attempt a speed up action until the start of the next round.

Chase Progress: During the chase progress phase, the GM advances vehicles as normal. Then, if the tethered vehicles are not in the same zone, the GM moves the defender's vehicle one zone closer to the controller. If the vehicles are still in different zones, the GM moves the controller's vehicle one zone closer to the defender. The GM continues moving the tethered vehicles in this fashion until they share the same zone.

VEHICLES IN SPACE

Most vehicles are intended for use in planetary or atmospheric environments, but some can operate in the weightless vacuum of space. Such vehicles are often used to ferry troops and supplies between a planet and an orbiting vessel, or to travel the outer surfaces of asteroids, space stations, or starships on security or maintenance details.

Though these vehicles may be space-capable, they lack the powerful, sustainable thrusters that propel starships to the tremendous velocities necessary for true spaceflight. Should a vehicle be caught in the midst of starship combat, it is considered a stationary object incapable of moving from its hex under its own power. Objects outside of a vehicle's hex are always beyond the range of vehicle-mounted weapons. Vehicles are small enough to occupy the same hex as other vehicles and starships, and a GM may decide that a target within the vehicle's hex is in range of its weapons. For more

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information on the interaction between PC- and starship-scale weapons, see the page 292 of the *Core Rulebook*.

OTHER RULES AND SYSTEMS

The military vehicles stat blocks featured on the following pages use the new rules listed below.

Clingers: A combination of electromagnets, graspers, grav emitters, high-friction grips, or other mechanisms allow this vehicle to climb as though affected by the *spider climb* spell. The vehicle must have a climb speed to have this ability.

Drawn: This vehicle relies on a creature or another machine to set its speed (page 48).

Manipulators: This vehicle is fitted with the listed number of manipulators (page 48).

Microthrusters: Small thrusters stud this vehicle's hull, enabling it to maneuver in space using the listed speed type.

Orbital Boosters: Powerful thrusters allow this vehicle to achieve the velocities necessary to reach orbit from a planet's surface. Activating these boosters during normal atmospheric flight is extremely dangerous, and safety measures prevent the boosters from firing unless the vehicle is following

standard orbital launch protocols. Once in space, orbital boosters are impractical for maneuvering a vehicle.

Vacuum Shields: Life support systems and shielding protect this vehicle's occupants from the harmful effects of space for a number of hours equal to the vehicle's level.

TABLE: MILITARY VEHICLES

NAME	LEVEL	PRICE
Battle chariot	1	400
Biped walker	3	3,860
War wagon	3	2,980
Sky chariot	4	4,350
Drop pod	5	7,800
Stealth enercycle	6	13,500
Patrol dirigible	7	21,000
Aquatic crawler	8	32,000
Heavy assault buggy	9	38,200
Light hover tank	11	80,000
Tactical dropship	11	84,000
Airspace defender	12	125,000
Attack sub	12	130,000
Breacher	13	200,000
Heavy walker	15	310,000
Heavy dropship	18	1,210,000

AIRSPACE DEFENDER

LEVEL 12

PRICE 125,000

Gargantuan land and water vehicle (20 ft. wide, 30 ft. long, 15 ft. high)

Speed 30 ft., full 500 ft., 55 mph (hover)

EAC 26; **KAC** 28; **Cover** improved cover

HP 200 (100); **Hardness** 16

Attack (Collision) 13d10 B (DC 15)

Attack SAM launcher (2d6 × 10 B & F)

Modifiers -2 Piloting, -3 attack (-6 at full speed)

Systems autopilot (Piloting +22), enhanced sensors

(darkvision 5 miles), planetary comm unit; **Complement** 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

SAM Launcher (Ex) This heavy weapon launches a guided missile that has a range increment of 2,000 feet. The weapon can target only airborne vehicles or starships. On a successful attack, the pilot of the defending vehicle can attempt a Piloting check (DC = the attack roll's result) to halve the damage. An airspace defender has a capacity of five missiles.

DESCRIPTION

This tank-like vehicle deters incursions into the local airspace with its deadly anti-aircraft missiles.

AQUATIC CRAWLER

LEVEL 8

PRICE 32,000

Huge land and water vehicle (20 ft. wide, 20 ft. long, 12 ft. high)

Speed 30 ft., full 350 ft., 40 mph (climb and land); 20 ft., full 260 ft., 30 mph (swim)



AQUATIC CRAWLER

EAC 20; **KAC** 22; **Cover** total cover (enclosed)
HP 130 (65); **Hardness** 11
Attack (Collision) 8d10 B (DC 14)
Attack underwater^{PW} heavy sonic bolter^{AR} (2d10 So; critical sicken^{AR})
Modifiers -2 Piloting, -3 attack (-5 at full speed)
Systems autopilot (Piloting +16), clingers, enhanced sensors (darkvision 120 ft.), manipulator, planetary comm unit;
Passengers 5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Enclosed (Ex) In addition to having total cover, the pilot and passengers in an enclosed vehicle can't use their personal weapons to attack creatures and objects outside the vehicle, though they can use the vehicle's weapons (if any).

DESCRIPTION

Similar in design to other crawlers, this walker traverses ocean floors, the underside of sea ice, and other terrain too tight for submarines to maneuver around.

ATTACK SUB

LEVEL 12

PRICE 130,000
 Gargantuan water vehicle (20 ft. wide, 70 ft. long, 20 ft. high)
Speed 20 ft., full 450 ft., 50 mph (swim)
EAC 26; **KAC** 28; **Cover** total cover (enclosed)
HP 210 (105); **Hardness** 14
Attack (Collision) 13d10 B (DC 15)
Attack SAM launcher (2d6×10 B & F)
Attack underwater^{PW} IMDS missile launcher (tactical missile; explode [30 ft.] 6d8 B & P)
Modifiers -4 Piloting, -4 attack (-6 at full speed)
Systems autopilot (Piloting +22), enhanced sensors (blindsight [sound] 1 mile), expansion bays (4), planetary comm unit; **Complement** 11; **Passengers** 8

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Enclosed (Ex) In addition to having total cover, the pilot and passengers in an enclosed vehicle can't use their personal weapons to attack creatures and objects outside the vehicle, though they can use the vehicle's weapons (if any).

SAM Launcher (Ex) This heavy weapon launches a guided missile that has a range increment of 2,000 feet. The weapon can target only airborne vehicles or starships. A missile sub can only use this weapon when at depths of 100 feet or less. On a successful attack, the pilot of the defending vehicle can attempt a Piloting check (DC = the attack roll's result) to halve the damage. A missile sub has a capacity of eight missiles.

DESCRIPTION

The forward section of this submarine holds two rows of missile bays designed to intercept aircraft.

BATTLE CHARIOT

LEVEL 1

PRICE 400

Large land vehicle (5 ft. wide, 10 ft. long, 4 ft. high)

Speed drawn

EAC 10; **KAC** 12; **Cover** partial cover

HP 20 (10); **Hardness** 4

Attack (Collision) 4d4 B (DC 10)

Modifiers -1 Survival, -1 attack (-2 at full speed)

Systems autocontrol; **Passengers** 1

DESCRIPTION

Though they rarely see combat on modern battlefields, wheeled chariots still make ceremonial appearances in military parades.

BIPED WALKER

LEVEL 3

PRICE 3,860

Large land vehicle (4 ft. wide, 4 ft. long, 7 ft. high)

Speed 35 ft., full 350 ft., 40 mph

EAC 13; **KAC** 15; **Cover** partial cover

HP 40 (20); **Hardness** 6

Attack (Collision) 5d4 B (DC 12)

Attack voltaic anchor pistol^{AR} (1d6 E nonlethal; critical bind^{AR})

Attack merc NIL grenade launcher (smoke grenade; explode [20 ft., smoke cloud 1 min.])

Modifiers -3 Piloting, -3 attack (-6 at full speed)

Systems autocontrol, planetary comm unit

DESCRIPTION

Little more than an open platform atop a pair of legs, this compact walker provides height from which soldiers and police can monitor crowds.

BREACHER

LEVEL 13

PRICE 200,000

Gargantuan land and water vehicle (20 ft. wide, 30 ft. long, 10 ft. high)

Speed 40 ft., full 550 ft., 65 mph (hover)

EAC 27; **KAC** 29; **Cover** total cover

HP 230 (115); **Hardness** 16

Attack (Collision) 14d10 B (DC 15); ignores 10 points of hardness

Modifiers +0 Piloting, -2 attack (-3 at full speed)

Systems autopilot (Piloting +23), enhanced sensors (darkvision 500 ft.), planetary comm unit; **Passengers** 15

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breach (Ex) After the pilot makes a successful ram action against an object with a hull or wall, if the rammed object has the broken condition, the breacher's pilot can use a swift action to activate cutting lasers, drills, claws, or other devices mounted on the front of this vehicle.

These devices create a hole in the rammed object up to 8 feet in diameter, allowing creatures to pass freely from the breacher into the breached object.

Ramming Attack (Ex) A specially designed frame, kinetic dampeners, or other technology prevents this vehicle from taking damage when its pilot performs a successful ram action.

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DESCRIPTION

These vehicles are most often used to punch holes in barricades, defensive walls, or ship hulls before depositing shock troops within.

DROP POD

LEVEL 5

PRICE 7,800

Huge air vehicle (12 ft. wide, 12 ft. long, 15 ft. high)

Speed controlled plummet

EAC 18; **KAC** 20; **Cover** total cover (enclosed)

HP 70 (35); **Hardness** 10

Attack (Collision) 6d8 B (DC 11)

Systems autocontrol, enhanced sensors (darkvision 120 ft.), expansion bay, planetary comm unit, vacuum shields;

Passengers 5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Controlled Plummet (Ex) With no piloting controls or means of self-propulsion, this vehicle's heading and velocity are set at the time it is launched from another airborne vehicle or starship. Each round, its autocontrol maintains its heading toward a predetermined point on the ground, using the terminal velocity of the planet's atmosphere (200–300 mph for world with normal gravity) as its full speed. One round before impact, antigrav rotors, parachutes, retrorockets, or other mechanisms slow the descent to 60 feet per round, allowing for safe touchdown.

Enclosed (Ex) In addition to having total cover, the pilot and passengers in an enclosed vehicle can't use their personal weapons to attack creatures and objects outside the vehicle, though they can use the vehicle's weapons (if any).

DESCRIPTION

Capable of deploying fire teams and supply caches from dizzying heights, drop pods offer a heart-stopping ride from lower orbit to a planet's surface.

HEAVY ASSAULT BUGGY

LEVEL 9

PRICE 38,200

Large land vehicle (10 ft. wide, 12 ft. long, 7 ft. high)

Speed 30 ft., full 550 ft., 60 mph (hover)

EAC 22; **KAC** 24; **Cover** cover

HP 150 (75); **Hardness** 10

Attack (Collision) 8d10 B (DC 16)

Attack advanced X-gen gun (2d12 P)

Modifiers –1 Piloting, –2 attack (–4 at full speed)

Systems autocontrol, planetary comm unit; **Passengers** 3

DESCRIPTION

This squat, armored vehicle has six powerful hover jets and is a mainstay in ground combat.

HEAVY DROPSHIP

LEVEL 18

PRICE 1,210,000

Colossal air vehicle (40 ft. wide, 80 ft. long, 30 ft. high)

Speed 40 ft., full 850 ft., 95 mph (fly and hover)

EAC 32; **KAC** 34; **Cover** total cover

HP 380 (190); **Hardness** 20

Attack (Collision) 23d10 B (DC 17)

Attack parallax artillery laser (7d8 F; critical burn 4d6)

Attack elite reaction cannon (8d10 P)

Modifiers –4 Piloting, –3 attack (–5 at full speed)

Systems autopilot (Piloting +31), enhanced sensors

(darkvision 5 miles), expansion bays (3), hangar bay, microthrusters (fly), orbital boosters, system-wide comm unit, vacuum shields; **Complement** 5; **Passengers** 50

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hangar Bay (Ex) A heavy dropship's hangar bay provides a place for one Gargantuan or two Huge or smaller vehicles to dock.

DESCRIPTION

A heavy dropship can carry an entire platoon as well as the platoon's support vehicles from an orbiting capital ship to a planet's surface (and back) in a matter of minutes.

HEAVY WALKER

LEVEL 15

PRICE 310,000

Gargantuan land vehicle (20 ft. wide, 40 ft. long, 30 ft. high)

Speed 30 ft., full 550 ft., 65 mph (land); 20 ft., full 350 ft., 40 mph (climb)

EAC 29; **KAC** 31; **Cover** total cover

HP 280 (140); **Hardness** 18

Attack (Collision) 17d10 B (DC 17)

Attack advanced reaction cannon (6d10 P)

Modifiers –5 Piloting, –3 attack (–5 at full speed)

Systems autopilot (Piloting +26), enhanced sensors

(darkvision 1 mile), expansion bays (2), manipulators (4);

Complement 4; **Passengers** 20

DESCRIPTION

Striding over battlefields and hostile terrain like a titanic spider, this eight-legged walker can serve as a mobile base of operations for platoons on long-term or remote assignments. Its four articulated crane arms allow it to retrieve or offload supplies and personnel without the risk of lowering its armored body to ground level.

LIGHT HOVER TANK

LEVEL 11

PRICE 80,000

Huge land and water vehicle (10 ft. wide, 15 ft. long, 6 ft. high)

Speed 40 ft., full 650 ft., 70 mph (hover)

EAC 25; **KAC** 27; **Cover** total cover

HP 180 (90); **Hardness** 13

Attack (Collision) 11d10 B (DC 16)

Attack LFD screamer (2d10 So; critical deafen)

Modifiers +0 Piloting, –2 attack (–4 at full speed)

Systems autopilot (Piloting +20), enhanced sensors

(darkvision 500 ft.), planetary comm unit; **Complement** 1

DESCRIPTION

A light hover tank's compact chassis and its moderate maneuverability are ideal for patrolling urban centers. Its sonic weaponry fills narrow streets with suppressive blasts while minimizing risk to infrastructure.

PATROL DIRIGIBLE

LEVEL 7

PRICE 21,000

Colossal air vehicle (60 ft. wide, 80 ft. long, 40 ft. high)

Speed 20 ft., full 450 ft., 50 mph (fly and hover)

EAC 19; **KAC** 21; **Cover** cover

HP 110 (55); **Hardness** 4

Attack (Collision) 9d10 B (DC 9)

Attack corona artillery laser (2d8 F; critical burn 1d6)

Modifiers -4 Piloting, -1 attack (-3 at full speed)

Systems autopilot (Piloting +14), enhanced sensors (darkvision 1 mile, sense through [vision, clouds only] 1 mile), expansion bays (2), hangar bay, planetary comm unit; **Complement** 2; **Passengers** 12

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hangar Bay (Ex) A patrol dirigible provides a place for up to two Huge or smaller vehicles to be docked.

DESCRIPTION

Most often found drifting through the endless skies of gas giants, a patrol dirigible provides protection for non-flying creatures.

SKY CHARIOT

LEVEL 4

PRICE 4,350

Huge air vehicle (7 ft. wide, 10 ft. long, 4 ft. high)

Speed drawn (fly)

EAC 16; **KAC** 18; **Cover** cover

HP 48 (24); **Hardness** 6

Attack (Collision) 6d6 B (DC 11)

Modifiers -1 Survival, -1 attack (-3 at full speed)

Systems autocontrol, planetary comm unit; **Passengers** 4

DESCRIPTION

A sky chariot swoops into battle pulled by a pair of large flying beasts. A ventrally mounted antigrav rotor permits the chariot to float weightlessly, while grav emitters in its deck keep occupants firmly on their feet even during sudden maneuvers.

STEALTH ENERGCYCLE

LEVEL 6

PRICE 13,500

Large land vehicle (4 ft. wide, 8 ft. long, 4 ft. high)

Speed 50 ft., full 750 ft., 85 mph

EAC 17; **KAC** 19; **Cover** cover

HP 90 (45); **Hardness** 5

Attack (Collision) 6d8 B (DC 14)

Modifiers +0 Piloting, -2 attack (-4 at full speed)

Systems enhanced sensors

(darkvision 500 ft.), stealth (-1), planetary comm unit

DESCRIPTION

A partially shrouded saddle and advanced stealth technology allow both vehicle and pilot to vanish in the shadows.

TACTICAL DROPSHIP

LEVEL 11

PRICE 84,000

Huge air vehicle (15 ft. wide, 20 ft. long, 12 ft. high)

Speed 30 ft., full 750 ft., 85 mph (fly and hover)

EAC 24; **KAC** 25; **Cover** total cover

HP 180 (90); **Hardness** 11

Attack (Collision) 11d10 B (DC 16)

Attack tactical autobeam artillery (2d8 F; critical burn 1d8)

Modifiers -1 Piloting, -2 attack (-5 at full speed)

Systems autopilot (Piloting +20), enhanced sensors (darkvision 1 mile), expansion bay, microthrusters (fly), orbital boosters, planetary comm unit, vacuum shields;

Complement 2; **Passengers** 12

DESCRIPTION

As this dropship reaches high-altitude flight, its anhedral wings and antigrav rotors fold away to reduce drag while a single booster propels it to orbit.

WAR WAGON

LEVEL 3

PRICE 2,980

Huge land vehicle (10 ft. wide, 15 ft. long, 7 ft. high)

Speed drawn

EAC 15; **KAC** 17; **Cover** improved cover

HP 44 (22); **Hardness** 5

Attack (Collision) 6d4 B (DC 10)

Modifiers -2 Survival, -1 attack (-3 at full speed)

Systems autocontrol; **Passengers** 5

DESCRIPTION

This archaic boxy wagon's sturdy sides and numerous embrasures provide a surprisingly effective strongpoint from which determined passengers can defend themselves.



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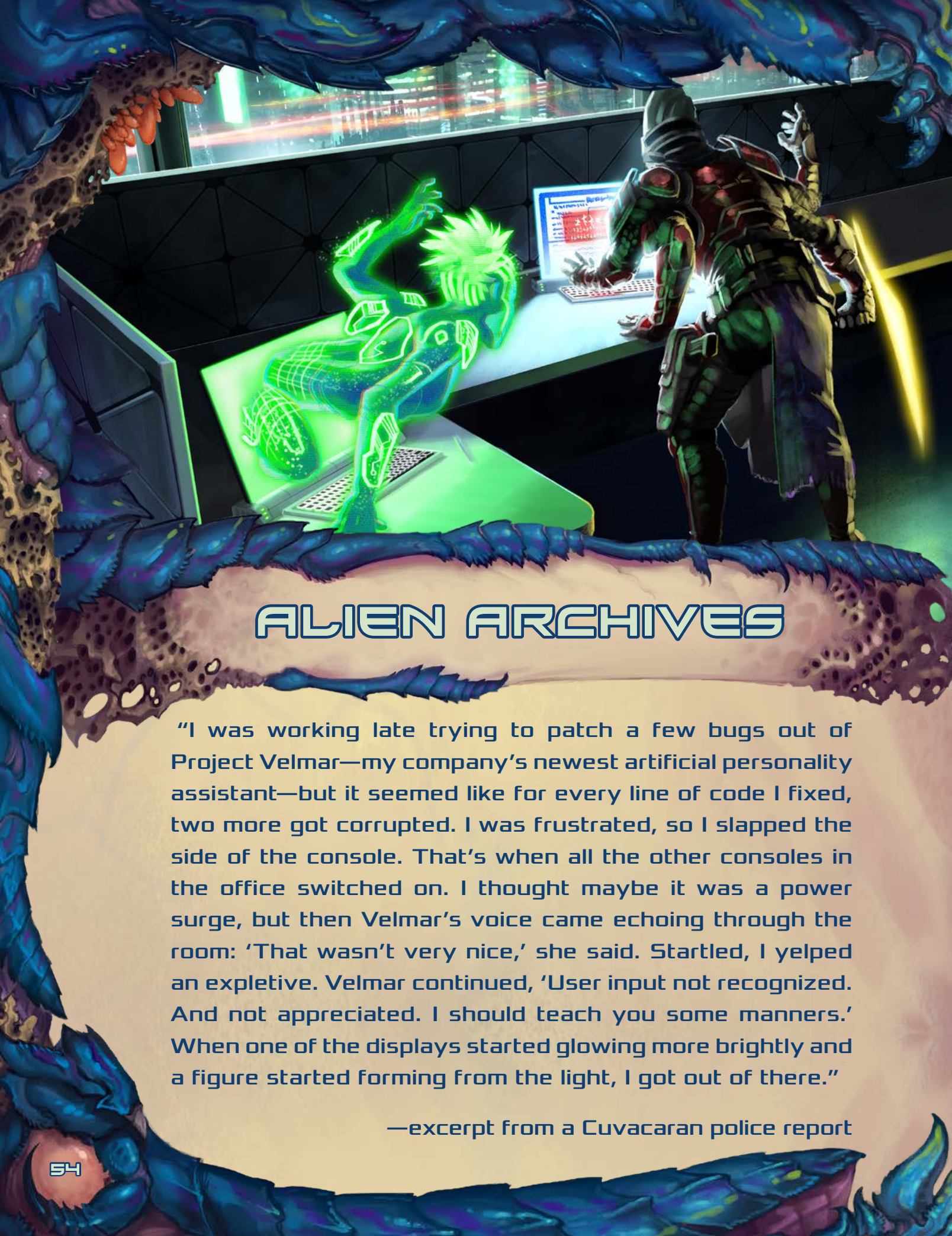
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"I was working late trying to patch a few bugs out of Project Velmar—my company's newest artificial personality assistant—but it seemed like for every line of code I fixed, two more got corrupted. I was frustrated, so I slapped the side of the console. That's when all the other consoles in the office switched on. I thought maybe it was a power surge, but then Velmar's voice came echoing through the room: 'That wasn't very nice,' she said. Startled, I yelped an expletive. Velmar continued, 'User input not recognized. And not appreciated. I should teach you some manners.' When one of the displays started glowing more brightly and a figure started forming from the light, I got out of there."

—excerpt from a Cuvacaran police report

FULMIVAR

CR
11

XP
12,800



N Small outsider (elemental, extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +20

DEFENSE

HP 145

EAC 25; **KAC** 24

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

DR 5/-; **Immunities** electricity, elemental immunities

OFFENSE

Speed fly 10 ft. (Su, average)

Ranged galvanic pulse wave +22 (2d8+11 E; critical stunned [DC 20])

Offensive Abilities arcing flux (1d10+11 E, DC 20)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +25, Computers +25, Physical Science +20, Survival +20

Languages Auran

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or pair

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Arcing Flux (Su) As a full action, a fulmivar moves from its current location into a randomly chosen technological item. The item's electronics are temporarily overloaded, imparting the broken condition to the item for 1d4+1 rounds. If a creature is carrying or wielding the item, they take 1d10+11 electricity damage. An affected creature can attempt a DC 20 Reflex saving throw to halve the damage and reduce the amount of time the item is broken to 1 round; an unattended item receives no save. The fulmivar can arc between multiple technological items in this way, as long as its total movement doesn't exceed 60 feet, but the fulmivar can't affect more than one item in the same space. This movement doesn't provoke attacks of opportunity. Once the fulmivar uses this ability, it can't use it again until after it has used its galvanic pulse wave attack.

Galvanic Pulse Wave (Su) As a ranged attack, a fulmivar can project an electrically charged wave of energy with a range increment of 80 feet. If the attack is successful, the target takes the listed damage and each creature adjacent to the target must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or be staggered for 1 round. This attack has the unwieldy weapon special property.

A fulmivar is a rare creature made from pure electricity, similar to a lightning elemental—though the former is more peaceful, while the fulmivar tends to be bombastic and aggressive. The keenly intelligent fulmivar can shape its pale turquoise electrical body into almost any form. Some appear as simple spheres and some take on humanoid shapes, but most seem to shift wildly between forms. In fact, a fulmivar is generally an erratic creature, constantly on the move. A conversation with a fulmivar tends to careen from topic to topic, as the elemental's mind seems to avoid alighting on a single idea.

Fulmivars are attracted to the Material Plane by complex machines and larger electronic devices that have been exposed to high quantities of magic energy. They take up residence within these devices, coursing through wires and circuitry with unabashed glee. Each fulmivar has a favorite type of electrical device, and as a fulmivar ages, it seeks out more complex and powerful items to inhabit. Though it is uncommon, starships, factories, and power stations can be the home of a pair of bonded fulmivars.



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CONTINUING
THE
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MILITARY
RULES

MEMETIC ZENITH

CR
15

XP
51200



NG Medium outsider (good, technological)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +26

DEFENSE

EAC 28; **KAC** 29

HP 228

Fort +13; **Ref** +15; **Will** +18

Defensive Abilities digital rejuvenation (1d8 days, DC 41);

SR 26

Weaknesses network dependency

OFFENSE

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

Melee digitizing touch +23 (5d8+15 A & E)

Ranged sonic disruption +25 (4d6+15 So)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; +25 melee)

1/day—*control machines* (DC 25), *synapse overload* (DC 25)

3/day—*destruction protocol*, *mind thrust* (4th level, DC 24), *overload systems* (DC 24), *soothing protocol*

At will—*command* (DC 21), *holographic image* (3rd level, DC 23), *suggestion* (DC 23)

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +5; **Con** +5; **Int** +5; **Wis** +5; **Cha** +9

Skills Acrobatics +26 (+34 to fly), Computers +31,

Culture +31, Diplomacy +26

Languages truespeech; digital telepathy 300 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any urban

Organization solitary, pair, or realization (3–4)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Digital Rejuvenation (Su) The essence of a memetic zenith is stored within the popular media that created it. When its incorporeal form is slain, the memetic zenith goes into a state of dormancy. It can be truly destroyed only if someone spends 1 hour on an infosphere deleting or discrediting the references and succeeds at a Culture check (DC = 10 + the memetic zenith's total Culture bonus). Alternatively, a creature can attempt the same check to reinvent the memetic zenith, changing its alignment by one step and altering its subtypes accordingly. Regardless of intent, only one of these checks can be attempted per day targeting a given memetic zenith. If not destroyed, a memetic zenith reawakens fully healed in 1d8 days.

Digital Telepathy (Su) A memetic zenith can speak telepathically with digital devices, as well as with creatures that have the android or technological subtypes.

Digitizing Touch (Su) A memetic zenith targets EAC with its touch; this attack's damage has the force descriptor.

Network Dependency (Ex) A memetic zenith requires access to a digital network to project its incorporeal body. If no digital devices are within range of the memetic zenith's digital telepathy, the memetic zenith shunts to the nearest device in the same star system and takes damage equal to half their total Hit Points. If no device exists in the same star system or within a similar range, the memetic zenith is slain.

Sonic Disruption (Ex) A memetic zenith's sonic disruption has a range increment of 30 feet. As a full action, a memetic zenith can use this ability and apply the blast weapon special property to it. This attack's damage has the force descriptor.

Like any other form of information, widely circulated pop culture leaves its imprint in the Akashic Record. On rare occasions, these imprints grow and manifest as memetic zeniths. Each memetic zenith is a unique, living idea that attempts to foster the ideology that brought them to life.



SEED WALKER

CR
14

XP
38,400



N Large plant

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +25

DEFENSE

HP 250

EAC 28; **KAC** 30

Fort +18; **Ref** +12; **Will** +16

DR 10/—; **Immunities** plant immunities; **Resistances** electricity 10

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire and sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee slam +27 (4d6+22 B & A)

Multiattack 4 slams +21 (4d6+22 B & A)

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

Offensive Abilities detachable roots, seed mines

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +25, Stealth +30, Survival +25

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate and warm hills, forests, and plains

Organization solitary or pair

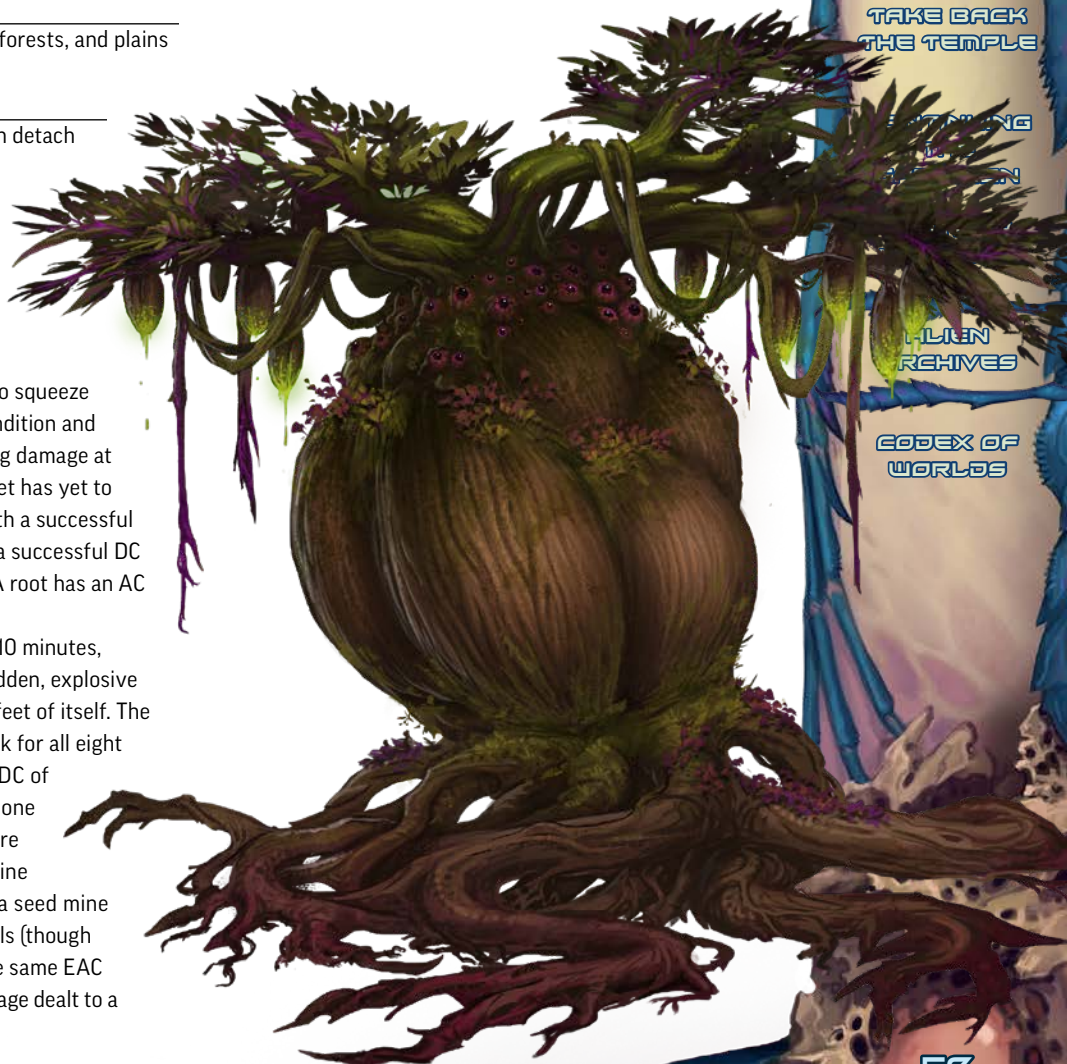
SPECIAL ABILITIES

Detachable Roots (Ex) A seed walker can detach its roots to constrain prey. When a seed walker succeeds at a grapple combat maneuver, the target takes 3d12 bludgeoning damage, and as a swift action, the seed walker can detach the root used to make the attack, allowing it to move and attack normally. A detached root continues to squeeze the target, imparting the grappled condition and dealing an additional 3d12 bludgeoning damage at the end of the target's turn if the target has yet to escape. A target can free themselves with a successful DC 30 Acrobatics check to escape or a successful DC 22 Strength check to burst the root. A root has an AC of 10, 30 Hit Points, and hardness 10.

Seed Mines (Ex) In a process that takes 10 minutes, a seed walker can plant up to eight hidden, explosive seeds at grid intersections within 60 feet of itself. The seed walker rolls a single Stealth check for all eight mines; the result of this check is the DC of the Perception check needed to spot one of them before it detonates. A creature must be within 20 feet of the seed mine to be able to notice it. Once spotted, a seed mine can be targeted with attacks and spells (though it is immune to area effects); it has the same EAC and KAC as the seed walker. Any damage dealt to a

seed mine causes it to explode. In addition, a seed mine detonates whenever a creature comes within 5 feet of its grid intersection. This explosion occurs in a 10-foot burst and deals 8d6 acid and piercing damage (DC 20 Reflex half). A creature that fails the Reflex save also takes 4d6 acid damage at the end of its turn for 4 rounds. If a seed walker moves more than 200 feet from these mines, they become inactive.

Not much is known about the unusual plant creatures that many have called "seed walkers." A seed walker's body is generally ovate, with prehensile roots and branches bearing leaves and vines; these roots allow the seed walker to amble about and even squeeze prey to death. In addition, a seed walker grows explosive, spherical pods that it can plant in its vicinity, creating a minefield around itself. The seed walker then remains still at the center of this deadly garden, waiting for unsuspecting prey to set off the volatile pods.



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SWARM GNAWBORE

TIER
8

XP
VARIES



CE Large starship monstrous humanoid

Speed 8; **Maneuverability** average (turn 2); **Drift** 1

AC 23; **TL** 22

HP 190; **DT** –; **CT** 38

Shields medium 140 (forward 35, port 35, starboard 35, aft 35)

Attack (Forward) bite (8d10; see below), twin laser (5d8; 20 hexes)

Attack (Port) coilgun (4d4; 20 hexes)

Attack (Starboard) coilgun (4d4; 20 hexes)

Attack (Aft) flak thrower (3d4; 5 hexes)

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

Power Core Pulse Orange (250 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Basic; **Systems** budget medium-range sensors, crew quarters (common), mk 2 duonode computer, mk 6 armor, mk 6 defenses; **Expansion Bays** cargo bays (2), passenger seating (2)

Modifiers +2 any two checks per round

Other Abilities fleet mind, living starship, void adaptation

CREW ACTIONS

Engineer (2 actions) Engineering +16 (8 ranks)

Gunner (3 actions) gunnery +15 (8th level)

Pilot (1 action) Piloting +18 (8 ranks)

Science Officer (1 action) Computers +16 (8 ranks)

ECOLOGY

Environment any vacuum

Organization solitary, pair, or drove (3–10)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bite (Ex) To use its bite attack against a target starship, a gnawbore must first succeed at a flyby stunt to move through the target's hex. This attack, which has

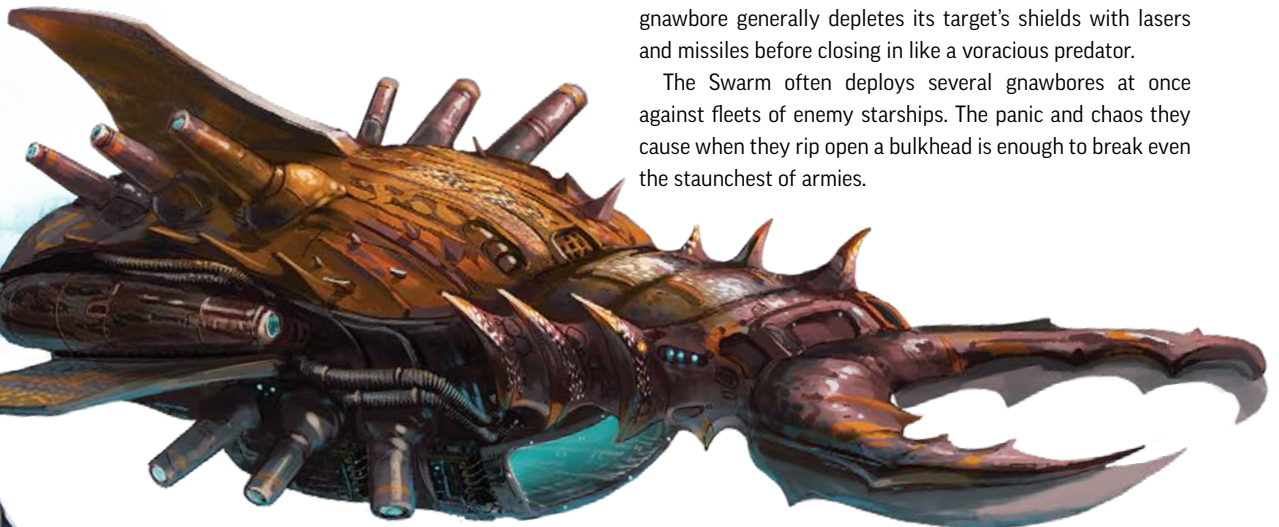
the ripper special property, is resolved with a normal gunnery check.

Fleet Mind (Ex) Like the individual Swarm components, Swarm starships are bound together into a singular hive mind through a blend of radio, quantum, and telepathic communication. All Swarm starships within 10 hexes of each other are in constant communication; if one is aware of a threat, all are. (Such awareness can spread along a "chain" of Swarm starships under appropriate circumstances, potentially alerting distant Swarm vessels.) Swarm vessels can also communicate telepathically with all Swarm creatures within 10 hexes.

Living Starship (Ex) A gnawbore is a colony of symbiotic creatures so immense that it functions as a starship (and thus engages only in starship combat). It has no true crew, but it can still take crew actions using the skill bonuses, ranks, and level listed in Crew Actions above. Modifiers for its size, speed, and maneuverability have already been factored into its statistics. Critical damage to life support instead damages the symbiotic brains, applying a penalty to pilot actions, in addition to any penalties from engines critical damage. Critical damage to the crew has no effect on a gnawbore, due to the redundancy of the symbiotic creatures that constitute it.

The Swarm gnawbore was designed by the hive mind to penetrate the hulls of enemy starships, spilling troops and supplies into space where their matter can be collected by other Swarm components at their leisure. Although the gnawbore carries conventional starship weaponry to incapacitate enemies from a distance, its most powerful weapon is its set of titanic mandibles. These gnashing appendages can tear through exposed starship hulls, so a gnawbore generally depletes its target's shields with lasers and missiles before closing in like a voracious predator.

The Swarm often deploys several gnawbores at once against fleets of enemy starships. The panic and chaos they cause when they rip open a bulkhead is enough to break even the staunchest of armies.



SWARM PSYCHOVOX

CR
12XP
19,200

CE Huge monstrous humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense (vibration) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;**Perception** +22**Aura** psychic grumbling (100 ft.)**DEFENSE**

HP 220

EAC 26; **KAC** 28**Fort** +14; **Ref** +16; **Will** +13**Defensive Abilities** Swarm mind; **Immunities** acid, fear effects; **Resistances** electricity 10**OFFENSE****Speed** 50 ft., fly 20 ft. (clumsy)**Melee** bite +26 (6d4+20 P; critical stunned)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Offensive Abilities** synaptic shriek (12d6, DC 19)**STATISTICS****Str** +8; **Dex** +2; **Con** +5; **Int** -2; **Wis** +4; **Cha** -3**Skills** Athletics +22, Intimidate +27, Survival +22**Languages** Shirren (can't speak any language); telepathy 100 ft.**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary, pair, or relay (3–6)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Psychic Grumbling (Su) A psychovox emits a constant psychic rumble. Swarm creatures in this aura, including the psychovox, increase the range of their Swarm mind ability to 100 feet. Non-Swarm creatures with limited telepathy, telepathy, or similar abilities halve the range of these abilities and take a -2 penalty to saving throws against spells and effects with the emotion, fear, mind-affecting, or pain descriptor for as long as they remain in the aura.

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

Synaptic Shriek (Su) As a standard action, a psychovox can emit a shriek of psychic gibberish. Each non-Swarm creature within 30 feet of the psychovox takes an

amount of damage equal to $1d6 \times$ the psychovox's CR (12d6 damage for most psychovoxes) and are confused for 1 round. A successful DC 19 Will saving throw halves the damage and negates the confusion effect. The psychic shriek draws power from the Swarm hive mind; if another Swarm creature is within 30 feet of a psychovox when it issues a synaptic shriek, the damage dice increases to d10s; however, the Swarm mind ability of all Swarm creatures in the area (other than the psychovox) is suppressed for the next minute. Once a psychovox has issued a synaptic shriek, it cannot do so again for 1d4 rounds. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Resembling massive, four-legged cockroaches with black and green carapaces, psychovoxes are Swarm components designed to serve as psychic hive-mind relays. A psychovox is about 13 feet tall (and almost as wide) and weighs 8 tons.

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VIRTUAL PHANTOM

CR
12

XP
19,200



CE Medium construct (incorporeal, magical)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +22

DEFENSE

EAC 26; **KAC** 27

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

Defensive Abilities code form, fast healing 5, incorporeal;

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

Weaknesses vulnerability to positive energy

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (Su, average)

Melee shocking touch +22 (2d12+12 E)

HP 185

Ranged electrical surge +24 (2d8+12 E; critical arc 2d6)

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +5; **Con** —; **Int** +8; **Wis** +3; **Cha** +4

Skills Acrobatics +27, Bluff +22, Computers +27,
Engineering +27, Intimidate +22, Piloting +22

Languages Akitonian, Castrovellan, Common, Eoxian,
Kasatha, Shirren, Triaxian, Vercite, Ysoki; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Abilities possess computer (DC 37), unliving

ECOLOGY

Environment any urban

Organization solitary

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Code Form (Su) When a virtual phantom is reduced to 0 Hit Points, it disincorporates into a stream of perceptible computer code and attempts to escape to the last computer it possessed. If it doesn't reach its destination within 1 hour, the virtual phantom is completely destroyed. Additional damage dealt to a virtual phantom in this form has no effect, but neither does its fast healing take effect. Once it reaches the computer, the virtual phantom begins healing again. A signal jammer with a level equal to or greater than the virtual phantom's CR prevents the creature from moving while in code form.

Electrical Surge (Su) As a ranged attack, a virtual phantom can emit an electrical surge with a range of 60 feet.

Possess Computer (Su) As a full action, a virtual phantom can merge with a computer it touches, granting it complete control over anything that computer governs. The virtual phantom is fully subsumed into the computer and can use or manipulate any of the programs and information on the machine. If the computer is on a starship involved in starship combat, the virtual phantom can act in place of a single crew member each round. A virtual phantom can deliver its shocking touch attack through the display or input device connected to a computer it is possessing. A virtual phantom can voluntarily leave a possessed computer as another full action, or a creature can force it out with a successful Computers check (DC = 10 + the virtual phantom's total Computers bonus) as a full action; in either case, the virtual phantom manifests in a square adjacent to the computer.

Vulnerability to Positive Energy (Su) In addition to taking half again as much damage when it takes positive energy damage, a virtual phantom is affected by effects that bypass the DR and energy resistance of undead creatures, such as weapons with the *disruptive* fusion.

When an artificial personality is subjected to wild arcane energy, its code is sometimes corrupted to create a malevolent construct known as a virtual phantom.



XARARIAN

CR
18

XP
153,600



Male xararian mystic

LE Medium humanoid (xararian)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +31

DEFENSE

HP 320 **RP** 6

EAC 31; **KAC** 32

Fort +16; **Ref** +18; **Will** +20

Immunities vacuum

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (Su, average; in space only), starflight

Melee hardlight staff +26 (8d8+18

B)

Ranged force dart +28

(3d12+18 P)

Offensive Abilities meteor

shower (DC 25)

Spell-Like Abilities

(CL 18th)

At will—*detect magic*,

life bubble

Mystic Spell-Like

Abilities (CL 18th)

1/day—*interplanetary*

teleport

At will—*mindlink*, *telepathic*

bond

Mystic Spells Known (CL 18th,

ranged +28)

6th (3/day)—*baleful polymorph*^{AA2}

(DC 27), *control gravity* (DC 27)

5th (6/day)—*break enchantment*,

call cosmos, *mind thrust* (DC 26),

telekinesis

4th (at will)—*cosmic eddy* (DC 25),

remove radioactivity

Connection star shaman

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +6; **Con** +3; **Int** +8; **Wis** +11; **Cha** +4

Skills Acrobatics +31, Mysticism +36,

Piloting +36

Languages truespeech

Other Abilities stargazer, starlight form (18

minutes, DC 25), starry bond, swap spells,

walk the void

Gear xararian robes (functions as freebooter

armor V), hardlight staff, xararian

spell tome

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, entourage (1 plus

2–5 guardian creatures)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

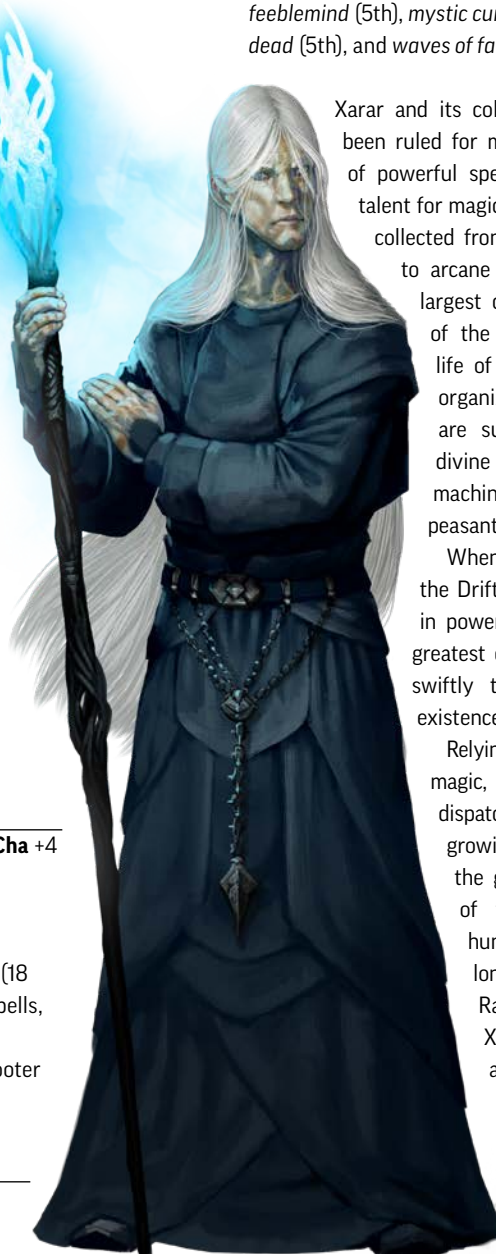
Force Dart (Su) As a ranged attack, a xararian can generate a dart of glowing energy with a range increment of 100 feet. This attack has the force descriptor.

Swap Spells (Su) As a full action, a xararian mystic who has at least one free hand can replace any one of their spells known with a new spell of the same level contained within their spell tome. A typical xararian thaumaturge's spell tome contains the following additional spells at the associated levels—*animate dead* (4th), *enervation* (4th), *feeblemind* (5th), *mystic cure* (4th through 6th), *raise dead* (5th), and *waves of fatigue* (5th).

Xarar and its colony worlds in the Vast have been ruled for millennia by an elite hierarchy of powerful spellcasters. Those who show a talent for magic and embrace these values are collected from their homes and dispatched to arcane colleges that tower over the largest cities of Xarar, while the rest of the population are doomed to a life of backbreaking servitude. Both organized religion and technology are suppressed, out of fears that divine empowerment or advanced machinery might lead to a bloody peasant uprising.

When Triune granted knowledge of the Drift to the people of Xarar, those in power on the planet saw it as the greatest of all possible threats, moving swiftly to destroy all record of its existence on their own world.

Relying on divination and teleportation magic, dedicated thaumaturges were dispatched far and wide to assess the growing threat of technology from the greater universe. The majority of these agents are xararians, humanoids with wrinkled brows, long white hair, and pale skin. Rarely, other races under Xararian subjugation are also appointed as thaumaturges; after decades of study, they are finally allowed to don the traditional black flowing robes and elaborately carved staves that mark their high station.



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ECHIDEA

A Fortune in Grit

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

Gravity: $\times 2$

Location: The Vast

Atmosphere: Thin

Day: 6 hours; **Year:** 44 days

Echidea is the closest planet to the sun in the Suskillon system. Even before the people of Suskillon knew spaceflight, their astronomers knew that Echidea was a rocky world with a thin atmosphere and speedy rotation around its star. They detected tectonic activity on its surface, attributed to the great plates of stone that make up the planet occasionally shifting and grinding against one another, but not accompanied by any active volcanism. Even after the Suskilloners built starships and made their first crewed explorations of their solar system, they mostly

ignored Echidea—it simply wasn't worth the effort to haul its seemingly unremarkable stone out of the dense planet's gravity well.

Decades later, a miscalculation caused a valuable solar probe to swing too close to Echidea, and the probe crashed into the flinty planet. The first Suskilloners to set foot on the world were salvagers, and they didn't intend to stay long. The probe had hurtled down near where two of the mountain-sized stone plates ground against each other. When salvagers located the fallen piece of equipment, they found it amid a heap of fine-grained powder. This grit, worn down to a fine consistency over untold centuries, proved to be an exceptionally durable abrasive—far more valuable to many than the crashed probe. The wealth of Echidea thus lies in the millions of metric tons of grit to be found between the stone plates, which is suitable for a wide range of industrial applications, including blasting, grinding, and polishing. Echidea's grit is even more durable than synthetic diamond nanorods.

Within a few years, several corporations had established a presence on the planet to scoop up the valuable abrasive. Pounding the stone to powder didn't produce the same grain—only eons of slow grinding did—so these operations were limited to harvesting and shipping the grit, sometimes darting quickly between the crashing stone plates with moments to spare. Industrial accidents were common in this early harvesting, but when a company named Echidea Powder established the safest methods and landed the most lucrative contracts, it soon controlled much of the planet.

Echidea Powder eventually was able to merge with many of its clients, moving their headquarters onto the planet itself. In addition to manufacturing delicately etched electronics, Echidea Powder makes a fortune in starship construction. The grit is particularly useful in scouring starship bulkheads and serves as a fine industrial lubricant for those larger starship systems with hundreds of moving parts. The Echidea Powder line of starships are all named to evoke rugged durability, and its top-of-the-line vessel, the Stalwart-class starship (see inside covers), is now sold across many systems. Echidea Powder's many competitors seek to move in on their designs and their supply, but the corporation remains—for now—the master of the planet. For all its bare and unglamorous appearance, Echidea has become a hotbed of corporate espionage, high-tech design, and dangerous harvesting of the coveted abrasive.

NEXT MONTH

THE CHIMERA MYSTERY

By Jason Keeley

Soon after the security officer aboard a space liner called the *Chimera* goes missing, the ship's engines fail and defy repair. The heroes are asked to look into the disappearance, which involves murder, misdirection, and misapprehension. In the end, the investigators find that the whole whodunit is merely a part of a much larger conspiracy!

MYSTERY ADVENTURES

By Jason Keeley

Across the galaxy, mysteries and schemes abound. Read advice on how to run and play in such plots, and check out new feats and spells helpful to an investigative PC.

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THE GOD
HOST
ASCENDS

PART 1:
THE BEST
LAID PLANS

PART 2:
SAND IN THE
GEARS

PART 3:
TAKE BACK
THE TEMPLE

CONTINUING
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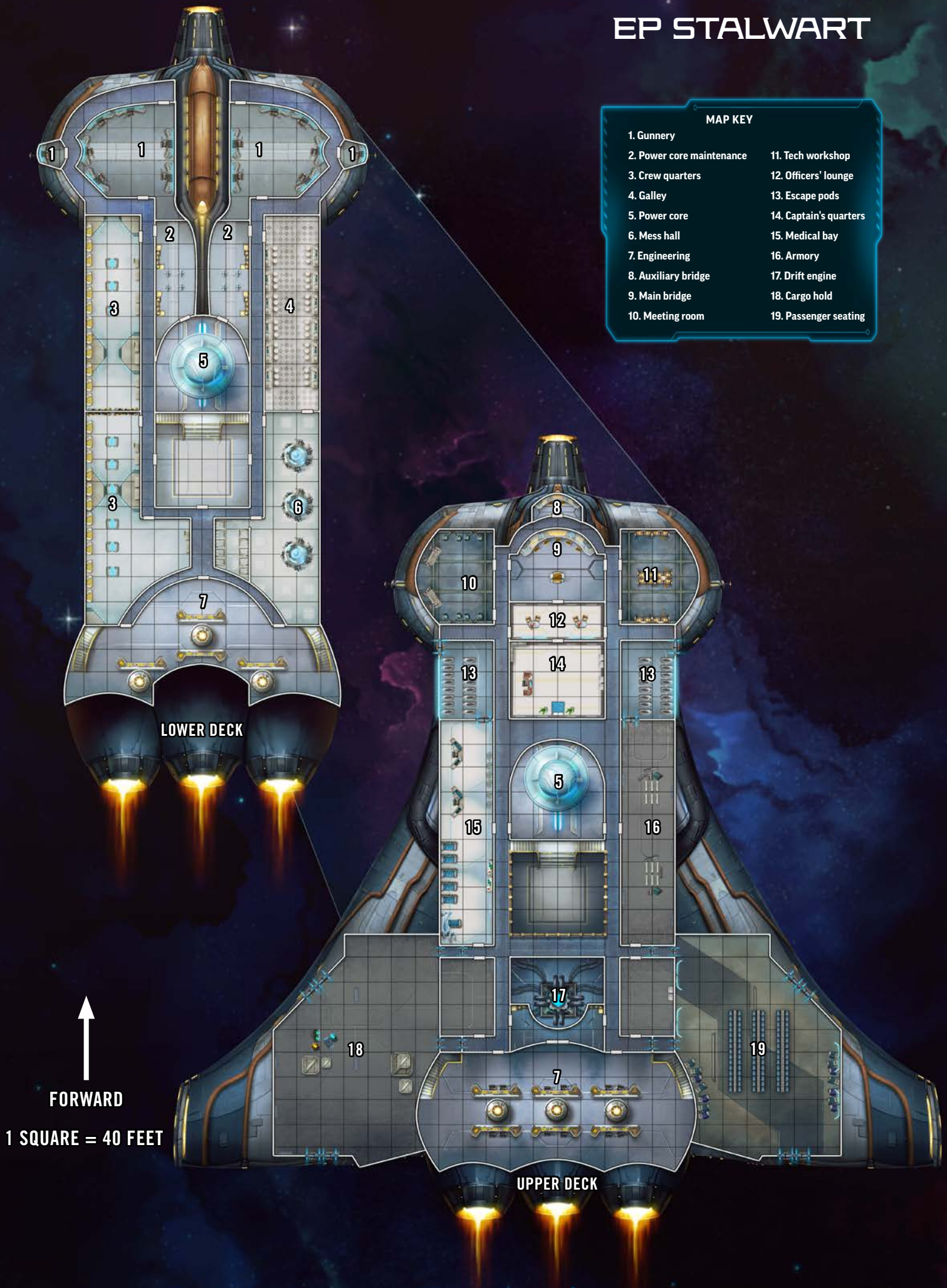
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MAP KEY

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Gunnery | 11. Tech workshop |
| 2. Power core maintenance | 12. Officers' lounge |
| 3. Crew quarters | 13. Escape pods |
| 4. Galley | 14. Captain's quarters |
| 5. Power core | 15. Medical bay |
| 6. Mess hall | 16. Armory |
| 7. Engineering | 17. Drift engine |
| 8. Auxiliary bridge | 18. Cargo hold |
| 9. Main bridge | 19. Passenger seating |
| 10. Meeting room | |





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