

ESPER GENESIS

HEROIC SCI-FI ROLEPLAYING

AFTERMATH



EGCC 01-10



ESPER GENESIS:
**CRUCIBLE
CORPS**



EPISODE TEN OF
***SHADOW
OF THE
ZEPHYR***



AFTERMATH

Part Ten of the Shadow of the Zephyr Series.

The search for Shatterstar has brought the heroes to an uncharted planet that is rumored to be the resting place of an ancient item of immense power. On a planet ravaged by war, can the heroes find a way to secure the legendary device?

A 4-Hour Adventure for 5th to 10th Level Characters

Optimized for APL 7

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Aftermath*, an Esper Genesis™ adventure, part of the official Esper Genesis Crucible Corps™ organized play campaign, and the *Shadow of the Zephyr*™ storyline season.

This adventure takes place on the rocky, desert planet Illustria, located in the galactic Outer Zones.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 5th to 10th level characters** and is optimized for five characters with an **average party level (APL) of 7**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Stormdark, a secret arm of the Shadow Technocracy, attempted to unleash a technovirus granting them dominion over the galaxy. Their attempts were thwarted and their headquarters destroyed. However, Zix, the technocrat overseer of the scheme, is far from finished.

Garland, a master hacker presumed dead, used his false demise to secretly gather intel on Overlord Zix. The technocrat operates from the Shatterstar, a transdimensional base whose location can only be reached by the Technocracy. Garland discovered encrypted data referring to a strange device that fell from the stars onto the planet Illustria. The people there regarded it as a holy relic, presumably gifted from their gods. The device appeared capable of traversing through dimensions. Garland believes the item to be cypheos, a cosmic artifact, and it may be the only way of locating and entering the Shatterstar. Now it's just a matter of finding someone to investigate...

ILLUSTRIA

Ten years ago, the planet Illustria was on the verge of entering the galactic economy. With their bountiful mines and cutting edge technology, the Illustrians were on the verge of a new kind of starship fuel.

After years of asking their nebula god who they referred to as “The Mother” for the answer of controlled fuel combustion, a fleet of xamaron ships came from within the nebula and descended upon the planet. The planet’s defenses were no match for the swarm tactics of the xamaron and within the first year, more than half of the planet’s population was killed.

The Illustrian army mounted a counterattack but with each victory, more xamaron arrived from the depths of The Mother. After nearly a decade of war, the remaining survivors of Illustria’s civilization were able to create a bastion of defense deep in the Gorgon Teeth – the planet’s tallest mountain chain. The base was eventually referred to as “Aftermath”. From this highly defensible position, the remnants of Illustria have survived for several years, but recently the xamaron have stopped attacking the base and no one has been able to figure out why.

LOCATION AND NPC SUMMARY

Lara Kershaw (LAIR-ah KUR-shaw). The head priestess of the Church of the Mother. Once the xamaron arrived, the Church of the Mother collapsed as followers felt they were being punished by the Mother’s wrath. Over the years, Lara has slowly reintroduced the religion to the people of Aftermath.

Reevus Lament(REE-vas LA-ment). Reevus is the captain of the Aftermath army. With his troop count at less than one hundred warriors, Reevus has primarily resorted to defensive tactics with the army. Over the last year, the army has focused on training all survivors in the art of combat.

Spindel Lerox (SPIN-del LEE-rocks). Spindel is an eleven year old boy who has recently been conscripted as a spy for the Aftermath army.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The adventure is broken down into four parts:

Part 1 - Arrival. The characters negotiate their descent into the city. Upon arrival, they learn about the history of the planet and the location of the Luminant.

Part2 - Infiltration. The team must infiltrate an old factory that is infested with xamaron. Once there, the team must get out with the refined but unstable stardrive fuel the people invented.

Part3 - Assault. The team must assault the old Church of the Mother complex where the luminant used to be kept. Sadly, this is also to center of xamaron hive activity.

Part4 - Exodus. The team must escape the Church of the Mother alive and decide whether or not they should bring the survivors of Aftermath with them.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The team is hired by Garland to travel into the Outer Zones and find the uncharted planet of Illustria. There they must acquire the Luminant, an item that Garland believes could be an ancient cypheos. Use one of the following story hooks, or create your own.

Heroes. Garland found details of your exploits recorded in several SIM databases. The hacker believes you are the best team to complete this job. Garland offers each of you 1,000 cu. He’s also bought you passage aboard a ship with Captain Rufus Drake.

STORY LINKS

If this adventure is being used as a follow-up to *EGCC01-09 Stormfall*, after the destruction of the *Hyperlance* (and possible subsequent wreck of the *Rafaela*), Arisa contacts the team weeks later, informs them that Garland is alive and found intel on the Technocracy. She requests they go with Captain Drake to Illustria in the Outer Zone to retrieve an ancient cypheos, which may hold the key to putting a permanent end to the Technocracy’s plans. With the Stormdark destroyed. Arisa has worked to expunge any evidence of the team’s wrongdoing in the hijacking of the *Hyperlance*. In the meantime, she offers the team 1,000 cu to take on the Illustria job.



U.C.T.E.H.3.Y.1.E.U.C.H PART 1. ARRIVAL U.2.H.3.U.C.H.3.C.E.N.3

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

Give the characters a chance to introduce themselves and talk about what they can do. Once introductions are done, read or paraphrase the following:

The trip to the Outer Regions is long and mind numbing. Captain Drake pilots his ship, The Raphaelia with grace and cunning. The sparkling purple Anemone Nebula shimmers in the distance, the only landmark you have to locate the planet.

The ship's sensors easily pick up a planetary body but as Drake settles into orbit, he confesses that his sensor array is top of the line at detecting space-based obstacles but it isn't the best at scanning planetary surfaces. The sensors can gather some information, but if they could be enhanced, the data would be much more detailed.

Allow the characters to determine how they'd like to proceed. Captain Drake refuses to land his ship on an unknown planet without some information first. Allow the team a DC 14 Wisdom (Mechanics) check to try to increase the power of the sensor array if they ask. A success grants advantage on the check to gather information about the planet.

Allow one of the members of the team to attempt an Intelligence (Computers) check to find out information about the planet. The amount of information they receive is based on how high their check is. This information is cumulative based on the check.

DC 10 – The planet is a rocky planet with little liquid water on its surface.

DC 12 – A single tall mountain chain rims the planet's equator.

DC 14 – There only appears to be a single settlement nestled inside the mountain chain.

DC 16 – Across the globe there a dozen subsurface heat anomalies of higher temperatures than the surrounding rock.

DC 18 – There are strong biological signals being detected all over the planet.

DC 20 – Several mountains radiate an energy signal similar to that of sorium but the signal fluxuates much more than that of the precious fuel.

Once this information is received, the team may attempt to hail the settlement below if they wish. If they don't, the settlement hails them as they begin their descent. Once they're ready to proceed, read or paraphrase the following:

Amidst the crackling static, a gruff male voice comes through, "This is *Aftermath*, please announce your purpose and cargo".

Allow the team to reply as they wish. If the team wishes to carry on conversation, the voice gives them the following information:

- His name is Captain Reevus Lament, leader of Aftermath and the Illustrian army.

- The planet isn't safe and visitors are not allowed.
- The planet has been taken over by a vast xamaron army.
- His people believe the xamaron are a punishment from their god called The Mother.
- Aftermath is the last bastion of civilization on Illustria.

Because of their isolation, the Illustrians haven't had interactions with the outside world except when the xamaron arrived. Therefore, the Illustrian demeanor toward the players can change over the course of the module. Keep track of the Illustrian demeanor which can cause different interactions later on. The Illustrians start with a Defensive demeanor.

DEMEANOR SCALE

1. Angry
2. Defensive
3. Guarded
4. Cautious
5. Friendly
6. Loving

Reevus tells the team that they should leave and any attempt to descend through the atmosphere will be met with swift action from the xamaron swarm.

If the team wants to land, they must first convince Captain Lament to allow them. Doing so requires a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If the team mentioned the Luminant, they may make the check with advantage. Success increases the Illustrian demeanor by 1. If they succeed by 5 or more, their demeanor instead increases by 2.

1. THE LANDING

This part assumes the team has made friends with the Illustrians. If the team hasn't, they must land outside the city and walk in. If the team chooses to ignore the city altogether, they are attacked by waves of xamaron until they die or can escape.

Descending through the cloud cover, you see what looks like a large military base built into one of the nearby mountains. A twenty-foot tall metal wall surrounds a yard roughly the size of four city blocks. A grid of red, crackling energy emanates from each wall assuring anything descending without permission is sufficiently scrapped. Part of the energy grid dissipates revealing a landing zone. Two other fighter-sized ships sit on the pad. Once the *Raphaelia* dips below the walls, the energy grid reactivates. A contingent of twenty-five soldiers surrounds the ship, weapons drawn.

If the team lands outside the base, instead read or paraphrase the following:

Descending through the cloud cover, you see what looks like a large military base built into one of the nearby mountains. A twenty-foot tall metal wall surrounds a yard roughly the size of four city blocks. A grid of red, crackling energy emanates from each wall assuring anything descending without permission is sufficiently scrapped. As you put down the *Raphaelia* and approach the wall, three swivel turrets point at you and a single, armored sentry yells down from above, "You were asked to leave, now your deaths are on your own hands!"

If the team ignores Aftermath altogether, instead read or paraphrase the following

Descending through the cloud cover, you see the mountains in the distance and a rusty red rock desert. A single plateau rises to the north. You set down to survey the land and conduct another sensor sweep, the sun darkens as a swarm of black dots flies toward you.

AFTERMATH

GENERAL FEATURES

The planet is mostly a rocky desert with no visible water sources on its surface. A lone mountain chain runs along the planet's equator and a single large plateau stands to the north even taller than the mountains.

Terrain. Rocky, dusty desert

Weather. Windy and dry

Light. A single sun provides bright light.

Smells and Sounds. A faint sweet smell and a slight buzzing sensation resonating through the larger rocks.

Depending on how they get to the surface, the team needs to interact with the people of Aftermath. If the demeanor table is 3 or less, all skill checks are done made at disadvantage.

1A – INSIDE THE BASE

As the team leaves the protection of your ship, the army parts as their captain walks forward. Reevus is clearly a dendus with green skin.

Allow the characters to make skill checks of their choice at a DC 14 to notice that the contingent is uncoordinated and that many of its members are quite old.

Captain Reevus Lament walks up to the team and gives them the following information:

- He is sorry for the aggression but the last beings who descended upon Illustria killed 95% of their population.
- The team is welcome to stay here but if they stay too long, they will become part of the war effort.

Allow the team to ask Reeve's question. If the Illustrian demeanor is 3 or less, he doesn't reveal all the information. Here are some common questions with answers that he gives:

Are you all dendus?

- Reeve doesn't know what this means.
- Everyone here is Illustrian
- They were brought here by the prophet.

Where is the Luminant?

- Reeve has never heard of such a thing.
- He recommends speaking with Lara the priestess of the Church of the Mother.

What happened here?

- A year ago a swarm of insectoid creatures came out of The Mother and laid waste to our people.
- The Illustrians fought but it seemed like for every creature they killed, five more showed up in their place.
- Aftermath is the last Illustrian outpost. For some reason the insectoid stopped attacking them when they retreated here.

How long has this been going on?

- A year or so.

What is the Church of the Mother?

- The Illustrians all worshipped the Mother, he points at the nebula twinkling in the sky above.
- When the insects flew down from The Mother, most Illustrians saw it as a punishment from their god and have lost their faith.

What is your plan?

- They are holding out here at aftermath and training all the children and elderly to fight.
- They will eventually mount an attack on the aliens' base – their former Church of the Mother.
- They will retrieve the vessel and continue to protect it.

Where is the vessel?

- Inside the Mother's Stage, the large plateau in the north.
- We believe it is the center of the insect hive.
- Once the team has gained some information, read or paraphrase the following:

A shadow falls upon Aftermath as the sun is blotted out by a swarm of dots. Dropping out from below the swarm is a fifty-foot wide metal ring held horizontally. As the clattering mouthparts and buzzing wings become visible, the ring is dropped into the energy grid and held there, creating a portal for the creatures to fly through. "Sound the alarm, we're under attack!" shouts Captain Lament.

This scene is meant to be cinematic in scope. The drones are treated like a complex trap. If they wish, the players can roll initiative; otherwise narrate the inexperienced Illustrian army fighting off the attack.

THE DRONE SWARM

The Drones are a complex trap that acts on multiple steps of initiative. The drones have an A.C. 10 and 500 HP.

Initiative Count 15. Stinger Guns – All characters get attacked with a +6 range attack that does 7 (1d6+3) poison damage on a hit.

Initiative Count 5. Needle Grenades – All characters must succeed at a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) piercing damage.

Initiative Count 0. Illustrian Army – The Illustrian army deals 50 damage to the Drones.

An observant character may also try to cut the lines the metal ring is dangling from, this should reconnect the energy grid and keep the swarm at bay. There are 6 lines that the ring dangles from. Each line has an A.C. 20 and 10 hit points. Once all 6 are destroyed, the ring drops and the energy grid reforms.

If the team helps the Illustrian army, Captain Lament thanks you personally and the Illustrian demeanor increases by 1. If the team doesn't help, their demeanor is reduced by 1.

Once the encounter is over, allow the team to proceed as they wish. Captain Lament offers to take them to the Church of the Mother to meet Lara.

At this point in time, Captain Drake insists on staying in orbit around the planet until the team has finished their job.

XP REWARD.

If the team caused the metal ring to drop in the first round, award them an additional 500 XP each.

1B – AT THE GATES

GENERAL FEATURES

The planet is mostly a rocky desert with no visible water sources on its surface. A lone mountain chain runs along the planet's equator and a single large plateau stands to the north even taller than the mountains.

Terrain. Rocky, dusty desert

Weather. Windy and dry

Light. A single sun provides bright light.

Smells and Sounds. A faint sweet smell and an slight buzzing sensation resonating through the larger rocks.

The man at the gate is a grizzled old veteran named Trevar Winsle. Trevar refuses to let the team in unless they prove themselves friendly. This can be done with a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Also, if the conversation is going south, you can start the xamaron attack and let the team sneak their way into the city.

The wall can be scaled with a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check while the encounter is happening. The combat with the xamaron is happening about 300 feet away. As such, only the turrets atop the wall have sufficient range to hit the swarm. There are 4 turrets total but Trevar is already manning one.

COMPRESSION CANNON

Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target, **Hit:** 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage.

An observant team member may also try to cut the lines the metal ring is dangling from, this should reconnect the energy grid and keep the swarm at bay. There are 6 lines that the ring dangles from. Each line has an A.C. 20 and 10 hit points. Once all 6 are destroyed, the ring drops and the energy grid reforms.

If the team helps the Illustrian army, Captain Lament thanks you personally and the Illustrian demeanor increases by 1. If the team doesn't help, their demeanor is reduced by 1.

Once the encounter is over, allow the team to proceed as they wish. Captain Lament offers to take them to the Church of the Mother to meet Lara.

XP REWARD.

If the team caused the metal ring to drop in the first round, award them an additional 500 XP each.

1C – PLANETARY LANDING

If a team ignores Aftermath altogether and decides to land on the planet, they are met with an unrelenting swarm of xamaron soldiers and elites. You can play this out as you wish, but it should be clear that the xamaron will not stop coming and that the team should retreat. Enemies killed in this encounter do not provide XP.

1D– THE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER

Inside the mountain, a large natural cavern has been converted into a beautifully accented church. Bright tapestries dangle from the roof of the chamber and a large pulpit sits on a low ledge to the east. A single illustrian kneels as a beautiful middle-aged woman stands over him giving some sort of blessing.

If the Illustrian demeanor is 3 or less, a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check is needed to get the priestess to talk with the team, otherwise she simply offers them a blessing and a prayer.

If the team gets Lara to talk, she is quite eloquent in her responses. Some questions along with the answers Lara may give are:

What is the Church of the Mother about?

- They believe that the nebula is actually a god who gives birth.
- The Illustrians were the first children the mother gave birth to.
- The prophet helped the Illustrians descend to the planet.
- All that remains of the prophet is his vessel which they call the Luminant.

Can we see the Luminant?

- The Luminant was lost when the xamaron descended.
- It is located deep beneath Mother's Stage which they now fear is the center of xamaron hive.
- It would be crazy to delve into the center of their hive.

If we could get rid of the xamaron could we borrow the Luminant?

- If the team asks this or a similar question, increase the Illustrian demeanor by 1.
- You would need an army bigger than we have to get in but maybe there is another way?
- If you could reclaim the holy site, we would let you borrow the Luminant but we would demand to send protectors with you.
- Captain Reeves has been planning an attack on the Mother's Stage for some time now. Maybe he has some ideas?

1E – THE MESS HALL

As you finish with the Church of the Mother, a loud bell begins to clang. As you look back to the courtyard of the base, you see several hundred people walking toward a long tent that abuts the rock wall of the mountain. You overhear a child shout excitedly to his friend, "I think it is rhularsh today!" His friend shouts back, "I'll be you there you little trilarkite!"

At this point, if the Illustrian demeanor is a 4 or more, several people invite the team into the mess hall. If it is less than 4, the people still allow the team in but no one sits near them or talk to them. Some children may even run away. The cooks however, feed the team no matter what.

Allow the team to choose what they'd like to do during this time. If the team wishes to socialize with people, choose from the social encounters listed below. If they'd prefer to first try to increase the Illustrian demeanor by doing something, allow them! Award the characters for being creative but don't be afraid to decrease the Illustrian demeanor if the team messes up or insults them.

Leo and Channer

These two boys are clearly the best of friends. Leo holds a drill-like tool and is using it like a gun as he ducks under the table and his Channer pretends to get shot. The boys have no adults with them.

What do they know?

- Leo and Channer's parents were killed shortly after they were born in a xamaron raid.
- They found the drill in one of the abandoned star fuel factories.
- The factory is nearby and hasn't been touched since the Illustrians deemed it too dangerous to leave Aftermath.
- If the team plays with the boys or gives them extra food, Leo and Channer offer to show the team to the factory.

Spindel Lerax

Spindel is an eleven year old boy who is sitting with the Aftermath guards. He is talking about what the xamaron tunnels look and smell like.

What does he know?

- Spindel is a spy for the illustrian army.
- The xamaron hive consists of a myriad of tunnels that they never stop excavating.

- There are two queens of the colony though their purposes are unclear.
- There are dozens of different kinds of xamaron, each serving different roles.
- The xamaron need to incubate their eggs. These incubation rooms are kept extremely hot.
- If the team wins over the boy, he gives them player handout #1 – Types of Xamaron.

Trevayus Lark

Trevayus is a gaunt older man whose face and head are covered in burn scars.

What does he know?

- He is the lead scientist in Aftermath.
- He was working on stabilizing a fuel called Feldilar that could help the Illustrians get into space.
- The scars on his face are from a Feldilar explosion at the old factory.
- Research stopped a month ago when they found a small xamaron nest in the factory.
- Feldilar is derived from mineral samples taken from near the prophet's vessel.
- The fuel is volatile and too much motion causes it to explode.
- If asked, he thinks it would be crazy to go into the hive at the Mother's Stage, though he does postulate that the Feldilar could be used as a weapon.

Reevus Lament (Save for Last)

Reevus is dining with several high-ranking officers in his military force. If the Illustrian demeanor is 4 or higher, he talks with the team. If not, he ignores them as though they aren't even there. He offers the following if the appropriate questions are asked:

- Assaulting the Mother's Stage without a sufficient weapon is crazy. If the team were to gather some Feldilar, the Illustrian army is willing to aid in the attack.
- A hover cart to help bring the Feldilar back from the factory.
- His mechanics will build a containment unit that can be attached to a ship and launched at the hive.
- They would probably need at least ten containers of Feldilar to create a big enough explosion.
- Their healers will take care of injuries that befall them.
- His army can lead an assault on the Mother's Stage as a distraction.



Part 2. INFILTRATION

Estimated Duration: 70 minutes

Though the sun has set, The Mother's light provides an eerie twilight as you make your way to the abandoned factory. After an hour of travel, you see several of the smaller mountains whose tops have been replaced by geodesic domes with giant smokestacks coming out the domes' apexes.

GENERAL FEATURES

The factory is a giant complex but a majority of it has collapsed due to an explosion.

Terrain. Packed dirt and stone floors.

Light. Beyond sixty feet from the door, there is no light.

Smells and Sounds. A light gurgling sound echoes throughout the facility.

A set of tracks leads into the facility but it is currently without a cart. The huge metal doors into the facility barely hang on their hinges and are ajar.

2A – THE REFINEMENT ROOM

This room extends for nearly three hundred feet and is around fifty feet wide. The northwest corner of the structure has completely collapsed leaving a slew of debris. To the east, a closed iron door cleverly interlocks with the rail tracks on the floor.

This room looks like a massive assembly line. Tracks and belts zigzag everywhere, some dangle freely with their purchase detached in the explosion.

If Leo and Channer are with the team, they run off and start playing war but not before they tell the team they've never been able to open the door to the east.

Allow players to attempt ability checks for whatever they'd like to do in the room. All ability checks should be set at DC 15 unless otherwise specified. Here are some checks that may occur:

Investigation – Among the rubble the team finds a fairly undamaged rail cart.

Perception – Along the west wall is a large device that looks similar to a large generator. A Mechanics check can activate the generator for 10 minutes of power.

Athletics – The door to the east can be lifted with a DC 18 check, revealing the room beyond.

Computers – The door to the east can be opened with a successful check.

2B – THE HATCHERY

A warm gust of wind blows in your face as you navigate the thirty-foot long hallway. Ahead of you, a bizarre slurping sound comes from the next room.

This room used to be a break room but now a large sinkhole descends below into a tunnel. Across the tunnel, a massive slug-like creature lies on its side in front of a set of doors and four grubs are nursing on it. The room is sixty feet long and sixty feet wide.

A closer look at the pit below reveals that its walls are covered with jelly-like egg sacks. Shadows undulate and writhe within the sacks. The pit drops 40 feet and then veers off to the west.

The Large slug is a **xamaron feeder**, there are 4 **xamaron grubs** as well.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some tips for adjusting the encounter. These adjustments are not cumulative.

Very Weak. Remove 3 xamaron grubs

Weak. Remove 1 xamaron grub

Strong. Add the Egg Pit trap to the encounter

Very Strong. Add the Egg Pit trap to the encounter and add 1 xamaron feeder.

EGG PIT

xamaron nymphs burrow into the first creature they see when their eggs are ruptured.

Trigger. Falling into the egg pit or causing damage to any of the eggs in the pit.

Effect. A character that falls in is infected with 1d4 xamaron nymphs. If damage is dealt to the eggs, they explode and all characters within 50 ft. are infected with 1d4 xamaron nymphs instead.

Countermeasure. A small ledge circles the pit but it is only three inches wide. This requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If a character fails, they fall in. Allow clever ways of traversing the pit to grant advantage on the check.

XAMARON NYMPHS

At the start of a player's turn, they take 1d6 piercing damage for each nymph attached to them. A single nymph can be pulled off and squished using an action.

If the team decides to follow the tunnel, they quickly come to an intersection with six branching tunnels and so on. If you wish, you may send waves of xamaron at the team but these creatures will provide no XP.

XP REWARD.

If the team avoided both combat, award them 1000 XP each. If no team member fell into the Egg Pit, award them an additional 500 XP each.

2C – THE WAREHOUSE

Beyond the door is a narrow room with holes drilled into the walls. Three rows of holes run the length of each wall, each five feet from another hole. Several of the holes emit a flashing red light from a metal cylinder resting inside them.

Each container requires a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check to put on the hover cart or into a rail cart (Clever parties may have found a way to transport one over the Egg Pit). The hover cart can carry 8 containers before it sinks to the ground and the rail

cart can hold 4 containers.

If a container is dropped, it explodes. All characters within a 60-foot radius of the container must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (4d6) Bludgeoning and 14 (4d6) fire damage. On a success, the damage is cut in half. While the containers rupture when dropped, the explosions do not cause the rest of the containers to explode.

Allow the team to role-play through this section and keep options open for them. If they want to blow up the egg pit and can do it without injury, let them!

Crossing the egg pit with the hover cart is simple, but it can only carry 8 containers so the team must figure out how they want to get all the containers across. Make sure you have them roll the strength check any time they move a container to build up the stress!

Reduce the Illustrian's demeanor by 2 if the team drops a container. If the team makes it back without causing an explosion, increase the Illustrian's demeanor by 1.

2D – BACK TO AFTERMATH

There are two possibilities at this point depending on the Illustrian's demeanor towards the team.

If the Illustrian's demeanor is 4 or higher, read or paraphrase the following:

The journey back to Aftermath is a slow and stressful one. You are greeted at the gates by spotlights and three engineers who are excited that you made it back. "You guys get some rest and we will start retrofitting this feldilar into some old missile casings. Any preference which ship you'd like to mount it to?" The engineer points at the two ships in the bases yard, one looks fast and agile, the other looks tougher and slower. The agile ship can carry only two passengers whereas the slower ship can fit up to ten.

If the Illustrian's demeanor is 3 or lower, read or paraphrase the following:

The journey back to Aftermath is a slow and stressful one. As you come upon Aftermath, you see an odd site; Captain Rufus Drake stands in front of the Raphaelia about a hundred clicks from city's gate. "Ahoy friends, seems as though the Illustrians have voted you off the planet. They contacted me a couple hours ago after an explosion at their plant. Reeves Lament has ordered all of Aftermath to turn you in if they see you. Soooo what do you want to do now?"



Getting into the Mother's stage requires interacting with one of the following traps depending on how the team is assaulting the plateau.

If the team is assaulting from the ground:

FALLING BODIES

Thousands of burning xamaron fall from the sky.

Trigger. Being within 300 feet of the feldilar explosion.

Effect. A character must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check. If they fail, they take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning and 4 (1d6) fire damage.

Countermeasure. If a team member specifically states they are taking the dodge action on their way in, they get advantage on the checks.

If the team is assaulting from the air:

POISON CLOUD

The venom sacks of the xamaron workers ruptured in the explosion creating a cloud of poison.

Trigger. Touching the poison

Effect. A character must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 21 (6d6) poison damage. A successful save reduces the damage in half.

Countermeasure. If the cloud of poison is first dispersed, the team doesn't need to make the saving throw.

3B-2 – THE MOTHER'S STAGE (NEGATIVE DEMEANOR)

Depending on how the team chose to get to the Mother's Stage, the route of attack may be slightly different. There are two entry points into the plateau, a large opening in its side and the sink hole on top. Once the team knows which way they're assaulting from, read or paraphrase the following:

The trip to the Mother's Stage is quick and there is no sign of the xamaron. As the ship gets into position high above the stage, the ground starts to hum. You see the bomb start to fall as thousands of xamaron workers fly out of the plateau creating an organic dome protecting it. One huge insect easily three times the size of the workers leads the charge. This alien monstrosity looks like the Queen of the colony. The bomb connects with the mass of insects and an explosion of fire engulfs the enemy. Charred bodies begin raining down from the sky as you rush to get into the holy site.

If the team is assaulting from the ground:

FALLING BODIES

Thousands of burning xamaron fall from the sky.

Trigger. Being within 300 feet of the feldilar explosion.

Effect. A character must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check. If they fail, they take 13 (4d6) bludgeoning and 7 (2d6) fire damage or half as much on a successful save.

Countermeasures. If a team member specifically states they are taking the dodge action on their way in, they get advantage on the checks.

If the team is assaulting from the air:

SURVIVORS

Several xamaron with smoldering wings shoot their needle guns at the players as they fall to their deaths.

Trigger. Descending from the sky to get on top of the Mother's Stage.

Effect. Make 2 ranged weapon +7 to hit 3(1d6) piercing damage and 7(2d6) poison damage attacks at each team member.

Countermeasure. Characters can use their reactions against these attacks.

3C-1 – THE OUTER HIVE (POSITIVE DEMEANOR)

The Illustrian army draws out most of what is left of the xamaron defenses as you descend into the bizarre ruins beneath the Mother's Stage. A golden sticky substance drips slowly down the walls and whatever structures were once part of the holy site are now lost beneath the goop and hundreds of hexagonal-shaped openings. You head into one of these structures that should head directly towards the temple where the Luminant is held.

There are no creatures in this part of the hive as the Illustrian army has drawn them out, but there are still several bizarre traps that team members must dodge on the way to the temple. This should feel fast-paced and slightly chaotic. If necessary to help with the chaos, have the team roll initiative when the first trap is encountered.

Know your table: If your team prefers combat and are frustrated they haven't had a chance to fight anything yet, feel free to replace these with the combat from the Negative Demeanor section instead!

RESIN TOMBS

The ceiling opens up and a thick liquid amber pours down over them.

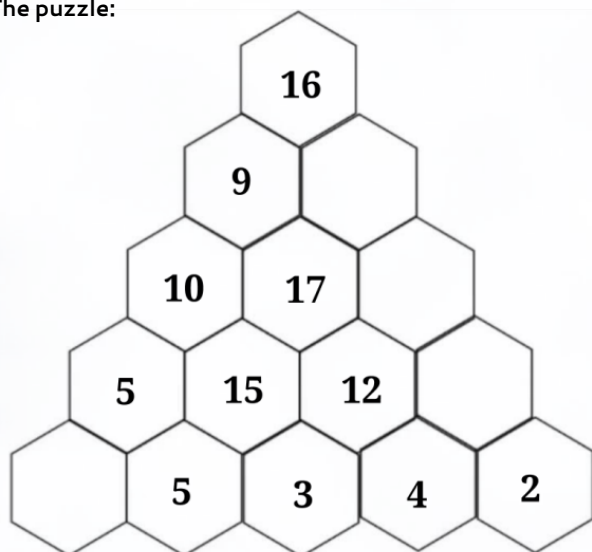
Trigger. Once each team member has stepped 100 feet into the tunnel.

Effect. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. If they fail, they are covered in the substance and it begins to harden. The creature is then immobilized. At the end of its turn, a creature immobilized in this fashion must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or become petrified.

Countermeasures. A team member may attempt a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check to get enough off of the substance off themselves or another creature so that they are no longer immobilized. A character may also attack a creature that has become petrified. The amber shells have an AC 15, 55 HP, damage threshold 10, and is immune to poison and psychic damage.

Once they make it through the initial tunnel, a large, hexagonal room opens in front of them. Another tunnel leads off to the north. The tunnel's entrance is covered by a thick membrane. On that membrane is the image of a pyramid made out of hexagons and five hexagons beneath it. Most of the hexagons in the pyramid have numbers written in them. The team must figure out what the empty cells are and write them into the hexagons below.

The puzzle:



The way these puzzles are solved is by working from the bottom up performing a different mathematical rule to the side by side hexagons in a row. The hexagon above them is the answer to the equation.

Row 1 Rule – Multiply the numbers below together.

Row 2 Rule – Add the numbers together and then subtract 10

Row 3 Rule – Add the numbers together and divide by 3.

Once all the numbers are figured out, the answer is 1-8-10-9 as you move up the pyramid. These 5 digits are the code to open the door.

If the team is struggling to solve the problem and they can rationalize a skill check (i.e. a computers check to see if this kind of code exists on the SIM) they may do so and the check should have a DC 12. A success will explain how to solve the puzzle. A success by 5 or more will give them the rule for Row #2 (Add the numbers together and then subtract 10).

Once the team opens the door, move on to the Inner Hive.

XP REWARD.

If the team solves the puzzle without needing to make an ability check, award each team member with 1,000 XP.

3C-2 – THE OUTER HIVE (NEGATIVE DEMEANOR)

You descend into the bizarre ruins beneath the Mother's Stage. On guard for any straggling enemies. A golden sticky substance drips slowly down the walls and whatever structures were once part of the holy site are now lost beneath the goop and hundreds of hexagonal-shaped openings. You head into one of these structures that should head directly towards the temple where the Luminant is held.

Characters with a passive perception of 14 or less are surprised as 3 **xamaron burrowers** and 2 **xamaron spikers** burst out of the floor and attack.

Know your table: If your table prefers role playing and puzzle solving, feel free to use the Positive Demeanor section instead of forcing your players into combat.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions as to how to adjust this encounter. These are not cumulative.

Very Weak. Remove one **xamaron spiker** and one **xamaron burrower**

Weak. Remove one **xamaron spiker**

Strong. Replace a **xamaron burrower** with a **xamaron tunneler**

Very Strong. Replace 2 **xamaron burrowers** with 2 **xamaron tunnelers**

After combat, the team can follow the first hexagonal tunnel to the Inner Hive without any issues. If time isn't a concern, feel free to ass the trap and puzzle from part 3C-1.

3D - THE INNER HIVE (POSITIVE & NEGATIVE DEMEANOR)

What used to be a large temple dedicated to the Mother and her prophet is now a bizarre alien landscape. Sticky organic membranes stretch over old stone pews and connect to the ceiling in several places. At the far end of the room, an elevate pulpit rises out of the muck, as set of massive armor rests upon it. Two lumbering insectoids guard the armor while another hovers above, its needle-like stinger pointed toward you.

The guards are 2 **xamaron brutes** and the flying creature is a **xamaron stinger**. Once the last creature dies, or when the players grab the luminant, whichever happens LAST, proceed to *3E - The Other Queen*.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions as to how to adjust this encounter. These are not cumulative.

Very Weak. Remove one **xamaron brute**

Weak. The **xamaron brutes** have 78 hit points

Strong. Add 1 **xamaron brute**

Very Strong. Add 1 **xamaron stinger**

TREASURE.

The armor on the pulpit is **+1 Centurion** armor. Fused to the inside of the armor, where a human's heart would be, is the cubical device known as the **Luminant**. The Luminant cannot be detached easily and the team must take the armor to get the device out of the hive.

3E - THE OTHER QUEEN (POSITIVE & NEGATIVE DEMEANOR)

As you turn to leave, the entire chamber trembles. The wall behind the pulpit explodes, showering the room with debris and sticky resin. When the dust settles, standing where the pulpit was is a huge, towering insectoid similar to the one that flew out of the hive earlier and was destroyed by the bomb. This is the hive's second queen. It looks at you and the chase begins!

Have the team roll initiative. They should realize immediately that they are severely outmatched. An actual Xamron Queen would destroy the team with ease so for this module, the xamaron queen is a complex trap that activates on Initiative 20, 15, 10, and 5.

For this chase encounter, each team member starts 20 feet away from The xamaron queen. The team has a total of 300 feet they need to traverse to get out of the hive. Each play may choose to dash, move and interact with the Queen, or move and cast a spell on themselves or a team member.

THE QUEEN

The following things happen on these initiative counts, losing ties.

Initiative Count 20. A swarm of tiny insects bursts out of a sack below the queen's mouthparts. Each team member within 50 feet. Each target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving through or take 7 (3d4) piercing damage and may not dash on their next turn.

Initiative Count 15. The queen belches out blobs of sticky goo at 3 targets it can see within 100 ft. The targets must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) poison damage and become immobilized until the end of their next turn.

Initiative Count 10. The queen makes a melee weapon attack against each target within 15 feet of it, +9 to hit for 23 (4d8+5) slashing damage.

Initiative Count 5. The queen rushes forward 50 feet.

INTERACTING WITH THE QUEEN

The team can instead interact with the queen in several ways. Though her chitin is impenetrable, her weapons can still get damaged.

Swarm Sack. The swarm sack has an A.C. 10 and 50 hit points. Once destroyed, the queen skips this initiative count. If the sack takes 15 or more damage from a single attack, team members have advantage on their saves to resist the swarm.

Sticky Goo. A team member may use their action to remove the immobilized condition from a single ally they are next to.

Scything Claws. The scything claws have an A.C. 20, Damage Threshold 15, and 100 hit points. Once they have lost 50 hit points, reduce their damage to 14 (2d8+5) slashing damage.

Movement. If the team wishes, they may try to collapse the tunnel on top of the queen. The tunnel has an AC 10, and 100 hit points. If more than 25 damage is dealt to it in a round, enough collapses to slow the queen down. It may only rush forward 25 ft. this round. When the tunnel loses its last hit point, it collapses on top of the queen. I then skips all initiative activations until its next initiative 0 action at which point it only moves 25 ft.

XP REWARD.

If the team escapes the queen without a single team member dropping to 0 hit points, award each team member 1,000 XP.

Once the team makes it out of the complex, read or paraphrase the following based on the Illustrian demeanor.

Positive Demeanor:

You rush out of the tunnel just in time as queen takes one last slash at you, the Illustrian army rejoices and give you covering fire as the queen retreats back into its hive. A unit of soldiers run in after the monster. Reeves Lament greets you. "Well done friends, it appears you are true to your word. We thank you for all you've done! Let's retreat back to Aftermath, clearly this battle has been won!"

Negative Demeanor:

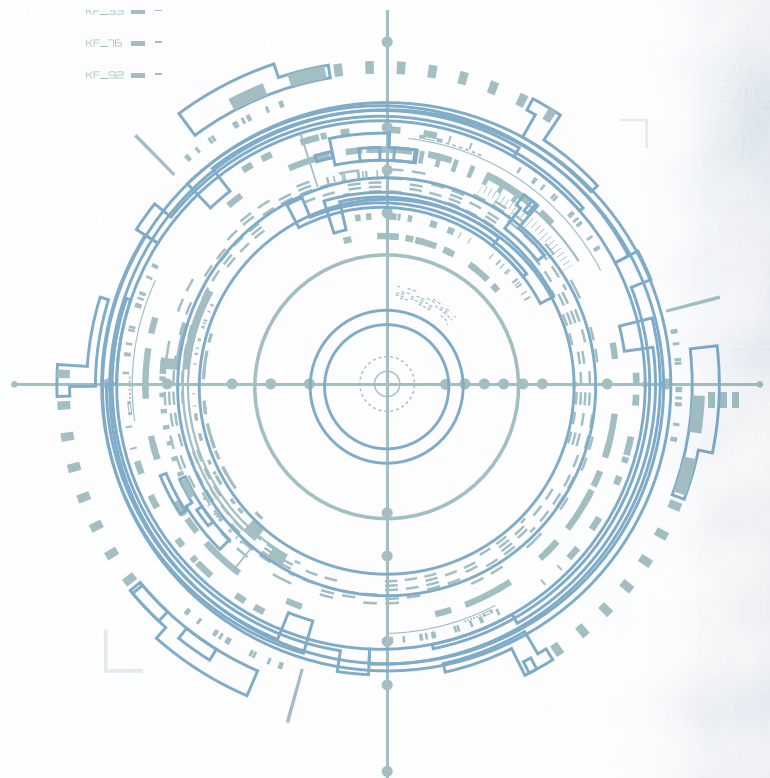
You rush out of the tunnel just in time as queen takes one last slash at you, the *Raphaela* awaits you as you exit. Diving for the doors before the queen can deliver a killing blow, Captain Drake ignites the thrusters scorching the monster's chitin plates. "Well I'll be a thrinart's brother, you guys are crazy! Did you find what you were looking for?"

4A – AFTERMATH (POSITIVE DEMEANOR ONLY)

Award each player the **Friend of Illustria** story award.

As the *Raphaëla* ascends into orbit, its coms station lights up. Captain Drake activates the device and two sentences come through in Captain Lament's voice, "Crew of the Raphaëla, you are in possession of a stolen holy artifact of Illustria. After the xamaron are finally defeated, you will suffer in the aftermath of our wrath."

Regardless of the way the team left the planet, award each player the **Bearer of a Cypheos** story award.



Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and CC serial number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

PLAYER REWARDS

Consider the following when calculating player rewards.

EXPERIENCE

Total up all experience earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat.

For non-combat experience, the rewards are listed per character.

COMBAT AWARDS

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
xamaron feeder	1,800
xamaron grub	450
xamaron burrower	450
xamaron spiker	700
xamaron tunneler	1,800
xamaron brute	1,100
xamaron stinger	2,300

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Egg Pit	1,000
Hive Puzzle	1,000
Escape the Queen	1,000

The adventures minimum and maximum XP awards are located on the Adventure Rewards document. Note that DDAL adventures award a maximum of the “target XP” award. Only epics may grant the “maximum” amount.

The minimum total award for each character participating in this adventure is 4,000 experience points.

The maximum total award for each character participating in this adventure is 6,500 experience points.

LOOT

The characters receive the following loot, divided up amongst the team. Loot is divided as evenly as possible. Monetary values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

LOOT AWARDS

Item Name	Cu. Value
Mission payment	1,000 per character

Consumable items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the GM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

Permanent items are divided according to a system detailed in the *Esper Genesis Crucible Corps Campaign Guide*.

EXPLORER CENTURION ARMOR

Armor, heavy (centurion), rare, requires affinity
This armor is converted from an ancient Belare exosuit. When you take this armor off, your hair stands on end from a static charge. This item can be found in *Player Handout 4*.

STORY AWARDS

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award:

Friend of Illustria. You have become friends with a new civilization. When in the Outer Zones, you may dock here free of charge.

Enemy of Illustria. You have made an enemy of a fledgling civilization. This may come into play in the future.

Bearer of a Cypheos. You recovered one of one of the rarest artifacts in the universe. The cubical device is extremely complex and you can’t figure out how to make it work. This may come into play in the future.

Further information can be found in *Player Handout 3*.

RENOWN

All characters that belong to a faction receives one renown at the conclusion of this adventure.

GM REWARD

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn GM Rewards as described in the *EG Crucible Corps Game Master’s Guide (CCGMG)*.



APPENDIX B. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

LARA KERSHAW (*LAIR-AH KUR-SHAW*)

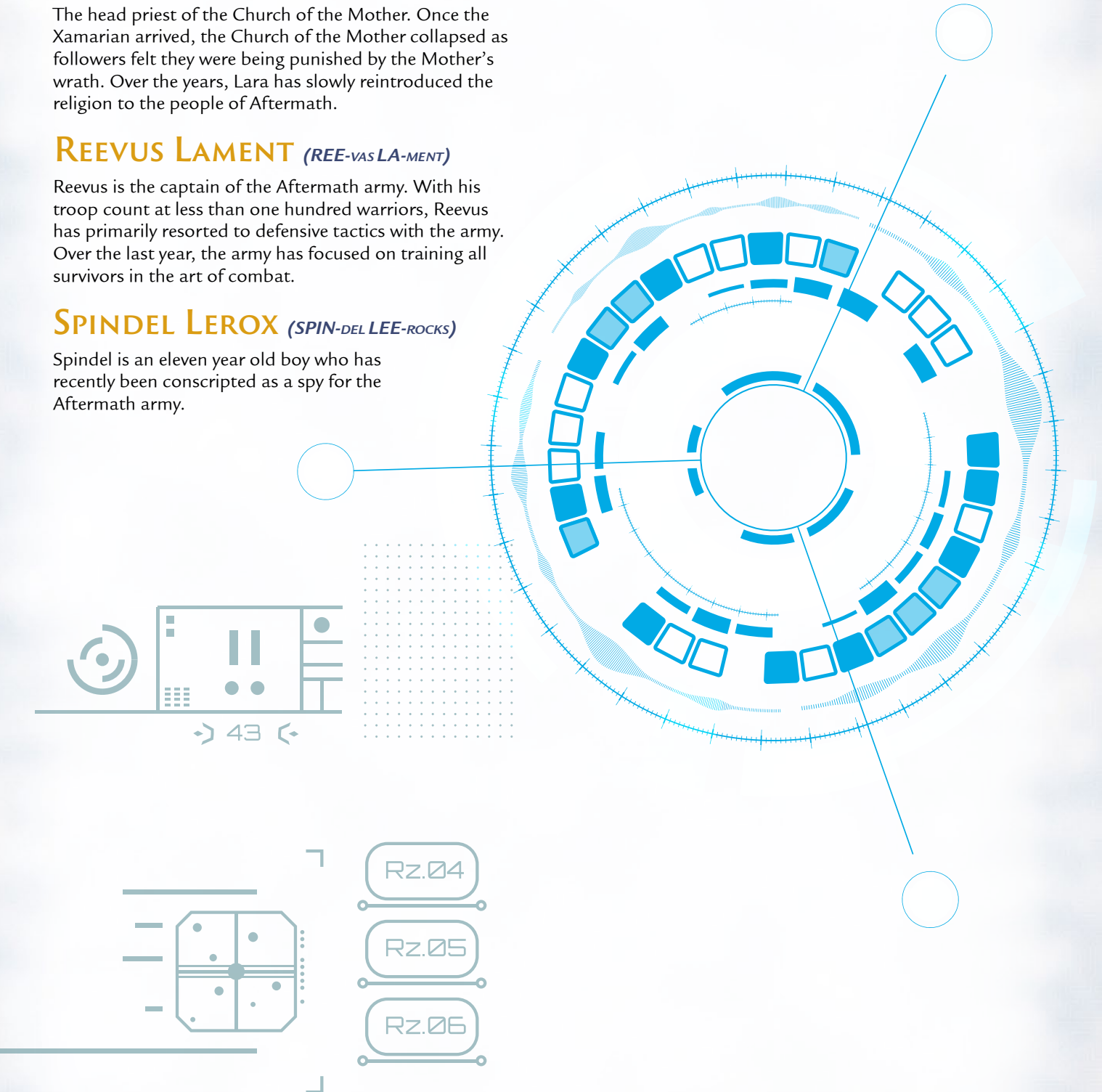
The head priest of the Church of the Mother. Once the Xamarian arrived, the Church of the Mother collapsed as followers felt they were being punished by the Mother's wrath. Over the years, Lara has slowly reintroduced the religion to the people of Aftermath.

REEVUS LAMENT (*REE-VAS LA-MENT*)

Reevus is the captain of the Aftermath army. With his troop count at less than one hundred warriors, Reevus has primarily resorted to defensive tactics with the army. Over the last year, the army has focused on training all survivors in the art of combat.

SPINDEL LEROX (*SPIN-DEL LEE-ROCKS*)

Spindel is an eleven year old boy who has recently been conscripted as a spy for the Aftermath army.



APPENDIX C. THREAT STATISTICS

XAMARON FEEDER

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 16

Languages -

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Grasping Tendrils. The feeder can have up to six tendrils at a time. Each tendril can be attacked (AC 20; 10 hit points; immunity to psychic and poison damage). Destroying a tendril deals no damage to the feeder which can extrude a replacement tendril on its next turn. A tendril can also be broken if a creature takes an action and succeeds on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check against it.

Spiderclimb. The feeder can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

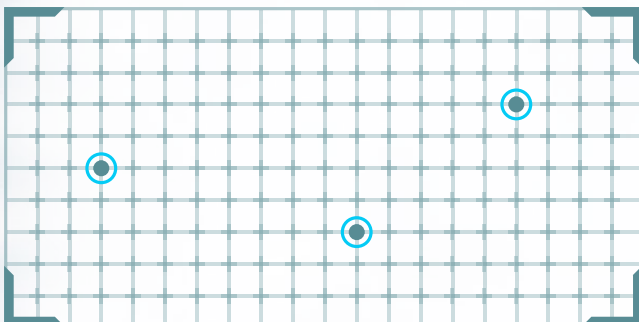
ACTIONS

Multiattack. The feeder makes four attacks with its tendrils, uses Reel, and makes one attack with its bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d8+4) piercing damage.

Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 50 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws, and the feeder can't use the same tendril on another target.

Reel. The feeder pulls each creature grappled by it 25 ft. straight toward it.



XAMARON GRUB

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing damage from mundane weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 12

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spiderclimb. The feeder can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The grub makes one attack with its tentacles. If the attack hits, the grub may make a beak attack against the same target.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6+2) bludgeoning damage.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

XAMARON BURROWER

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d10 + 6)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6+3) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) acid damage. If the target is Large or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the burrower may only bite the grappled creature and has advantage on attacks that do so.

Acid Spray (Recharge 6). The burrower spits acid in a line that is 30 feet long and 5 feet wide, provided that it has no creature grappled. Each creature in that line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

XAMARON SPIKER

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spike Regrowth. The spiker has twenty-four spikes.

Used spikes regrow when the spiker finishes a long rest.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spiker makes three attacks; one with its bite and two with its claws, or three with its spikes.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

Spike. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 100/200 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.



XAMARON TUNNELER

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Confusing Gaze. When a creature starts its turn within 30 ft. of a tunneler, and is able to see the tunneler's eyes, the tunneler can force it to make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw, unless the tunneler is incapacitated.

On a failed saving throw, the creature can't take reactions until the start of its next turn and it rolls a d8 to determine what it does during that turn. On a 1-4, the creature does nothing, on a 5 or 6, the creature takes no action but uses all of its movement to move in a random direction. On a 7 or 8, the creature makes one melee attack against a random creature or does nothing if no creature is within its reach.

Unless surprised, a creature can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If it does so, it can't see the tunneler until the start of its next turn when it can avert its eyes again. If the creature looks at the tunneler in the meantime, it must make the saving throw.

Tunneler. The tunneler can burrow through solid rock at half its burrowing speed and leaves behind a 5 foot-wide and 8 foot-tall tunnel in its wake.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The tunneler makes three attacks: two with its claws and one with its mandibles.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d8+5) slashing damage.

Mandibles. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8+5) slashing damage.



XAMARON BRUTE

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +4
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages understands Deep Speech but can't talk
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Amphibius. The brute can breathe both air and water.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The brute makes two pincer attacks. If the brute is grappling a creature, it can use its tentacles once.

Pincer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage. If the target is Large or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 14) if the brute doesn't have 2 other targets grappled.

Tentacles. One creature grappled by the brute must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. Until the poison ends, the target is paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself with a success.

XAMARON STINGER

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 110 (13d10 + 39)
Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages -
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

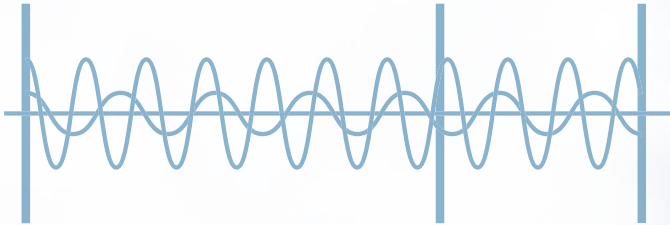
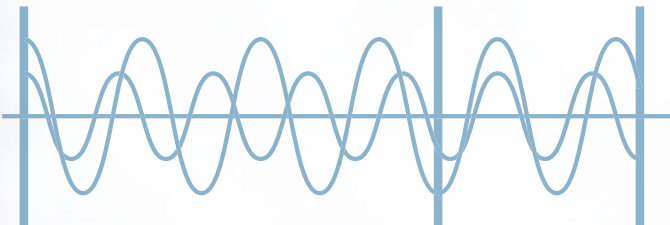
ACTIONS

Multiattack. The stinger makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its stinger. While flying, it can use its claws in place of one other attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) slashing damage.

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.



Consider the following advice when running this adventure.

RUNNING FOR CRUCIBLE CORPS

This adventure is designed for five to seven 5th to 10th level characters with an APL of 7.

Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure when being run for organized play.

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure provides suggestions to make adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for.

You're not bound to these adjustments — they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should adjust the adventure difficulty, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding 0.5 or greater up; rounding 0.4 or less down). This is the group's APL.

To approximate the party strength for the adventure, consult the following table.

DETERMINE PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very Strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

PLAYING THE GAME MASTER

As the Game Master, your role is to present and narrate a fun and immersive experience for yourself and your players.

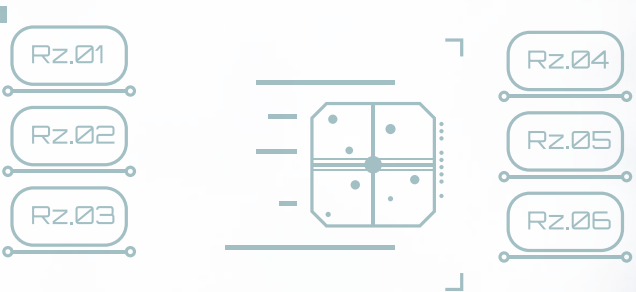
When running these adventures, please keep the following in mind:

Be Prepared. Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself during your session, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC, or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure's appendices and threat entries.

Be a Part of the Group. Always remember that you are not the enemy of, nor are you competing with any of the players. Your job is to present and run the adventure, encounters, adversaries, and story while maintaining flow of events. You also get to play any other persona in the adventure that are not the player characters.

Encourage the Dialogue. Always introduce yourself to players you don't know and encourage them to do the same for both themselves and their character. Gauge the experience level of your players (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep with the Flow. While you are the authority on the rules and encounters, it is really your players that provide the catalyst to make the story go. Their actions and decisions should affect how you run encounters, while your method of presenting the story influences their decisions. This circular relationship allows everyone to be involved and have as much fun as possible. Use the rules as a tool to move the story rather than delay it. The best game masters use the rules in a fair, impartial, and consistent manner for every single player in their game. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players in order to keep things moving.



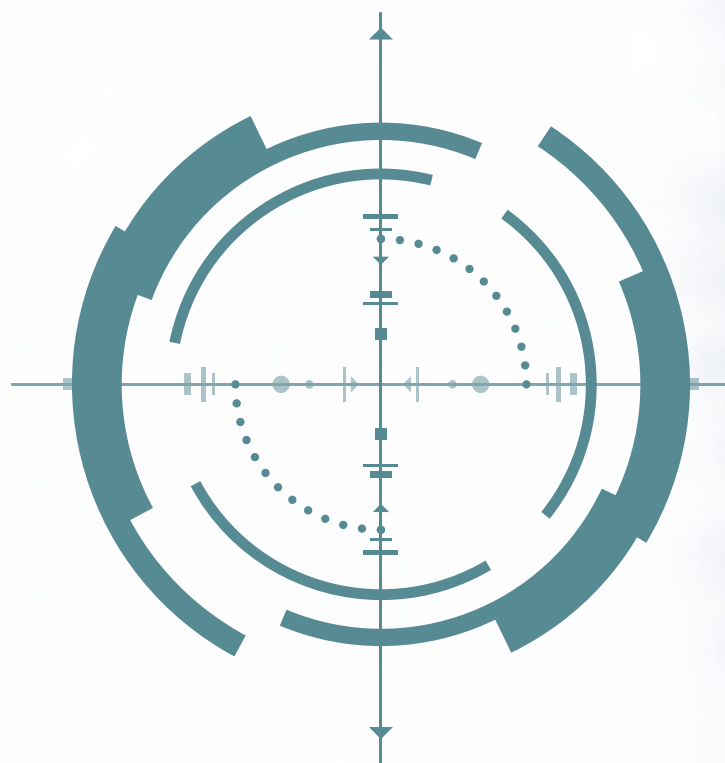
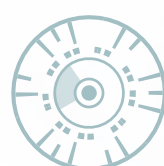
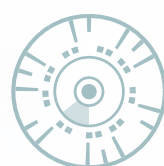
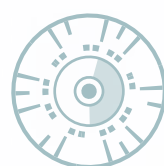
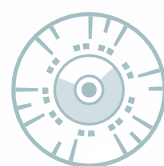
During the course of this adventure, the characters may find the following permanent magic item:

EXPLORER CENTURION ARMOR

Armor, heavy (centurion), rare, requires affinity

This armor is converted from an ancient Belare exosuit. When you take this armor off, your hair stands on end with a static charge. It provides the following benefits.

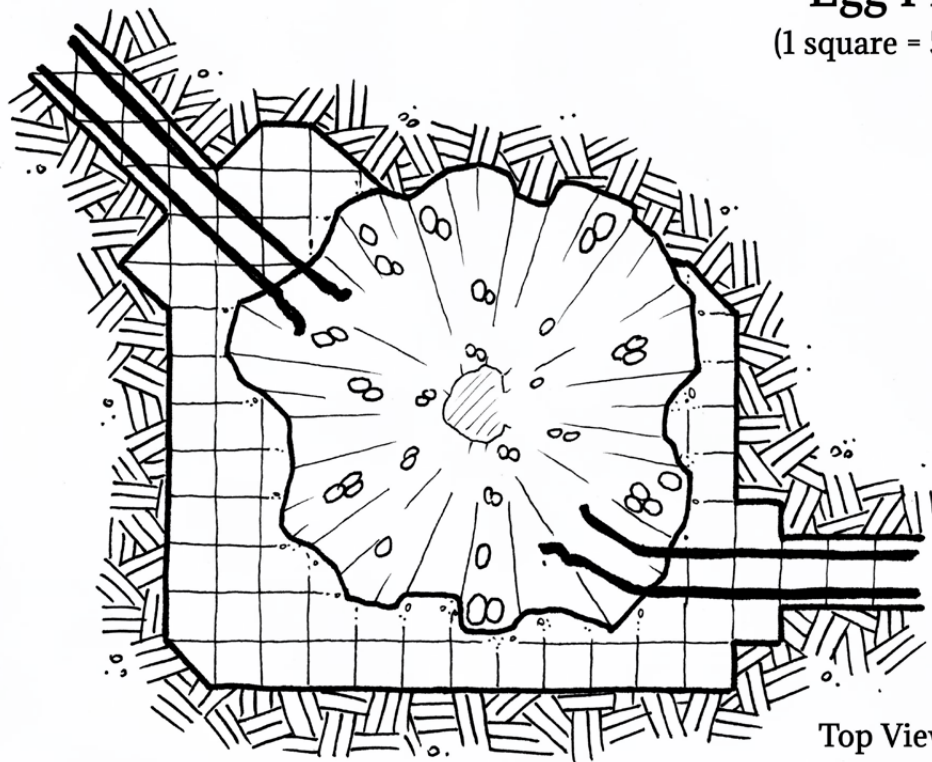
- You have a +1 bonus to AC while wearing this armor.
- While wearing this armor, your speed increases by 10.



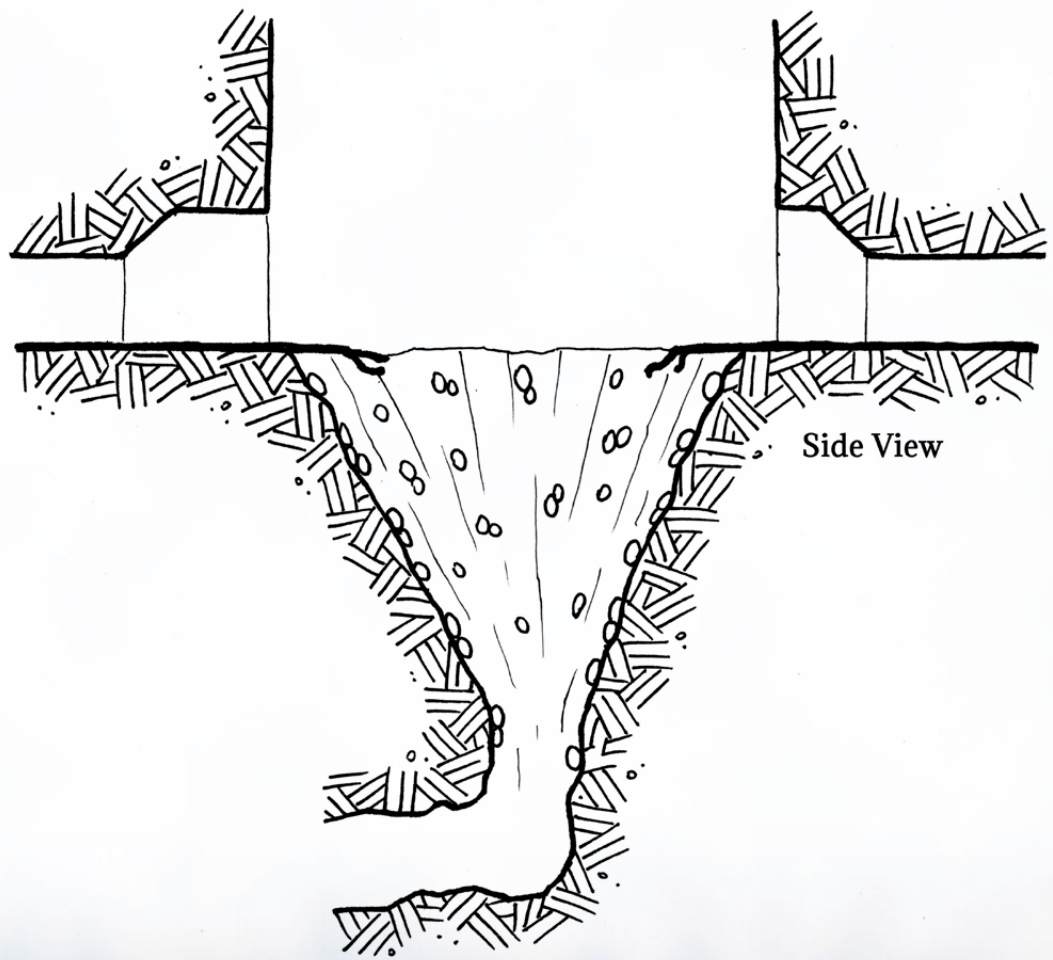
APPENDIX — EGG PIT MAP_k

Egg Pit

(1 square = 5 feet)

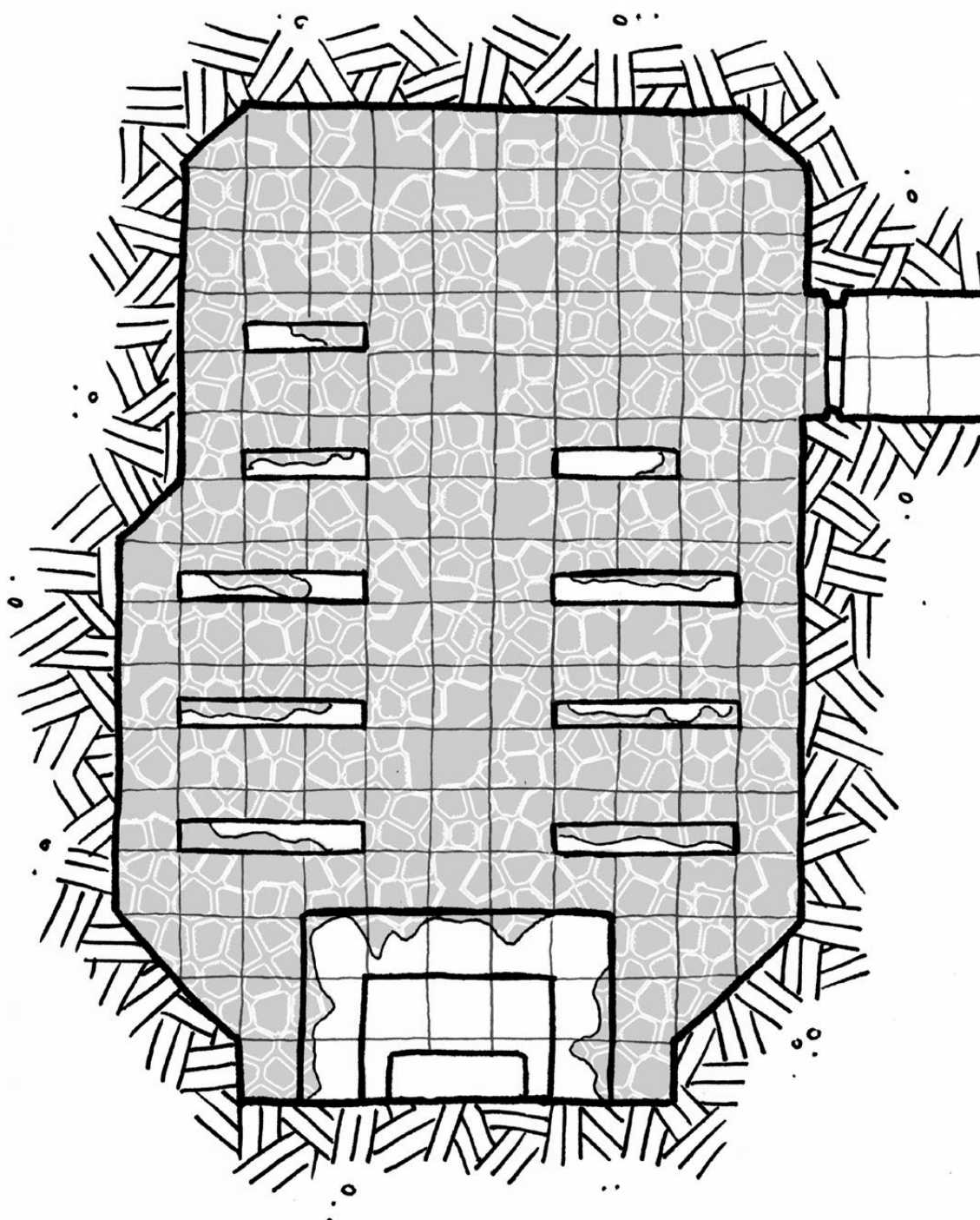


Top View



Side View

APPENDIX — INNER HIVE MAP



Inner Hive

(1 square = 5 feet)

APPENDIX — PLAYER HANDOUT #1: TYPES OF XAMARON

BURROWERS - CAPABLE OF DIGGING THROUGH THE GROUND, LARGE MANDIBLES, SPITS ACID

FEEDERS - ADOPTED PARENTS OF THE GRUB STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT. HAVE LONG TENDRILS THAT COME OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS

DRONES - FAIRLY MINDLESS, SEEM TO FOLLOW ORDERS. RELATIVELY WEAK

TUNNELERS - MAYBE THE NEXT STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT OF BURROWERS? SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THEIR EYES

BRUTES - LARGE PINCERS, THEIR MOUTHS CAN PARALYZE PREY

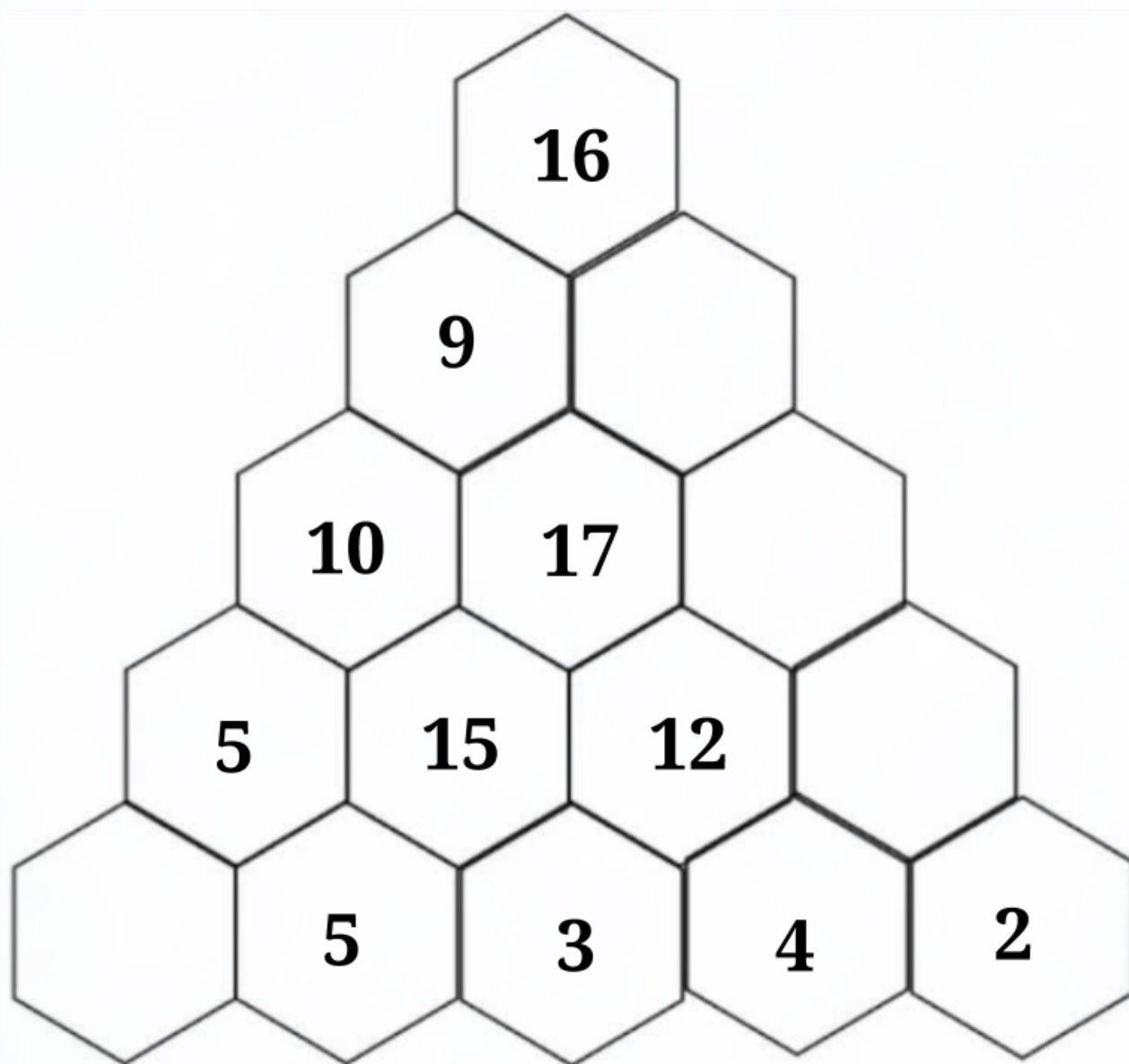
SPIKERS - CAPABLE OF FLIGHT, SHOOTS LONG SPIKE FROM IT ABDOMEN

STINGERS - CAPABLE OF FLIGHT, HAS POTENT VENOM IN ITS STINGER

MONARCH - NEVER SEEN ONE BEFORE BUT THESE CREATURES MUST TAKE ORDERS FOR SOMETHING

GRUBS - FIRST STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT, BURROW INTO CREATURES AND EAT THEIR WAY OUT.

APPENDIX — PLAYER HANDOUT #2: HIVE PUZZLE



APPENDIX — PLAYER HANDOUT #3: STORY AWARDS

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn access to the following downtime activity. If you are printing these out for your characters, print as many as you may need to ensure that any eligible character receives a copy:

FRIEND OF ILLUSTRIA

You have become friends with a new civilization. When in the Outer Zones, you may dock here free of charge.

ENEMY OF ILLUSTRIA

You have made an enemy of a fledgling civilization. This may come into play in the future.

BEARER OF A CYPHEOS

You recovered one of one of the rarest artifacts in the universe. The cubical device is extremely complex and you can't figure out how to make it work. This may come into play in the future.

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