

THE CENTAUR KURGAN

DEAN SPENCER

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THE CENTAUR KURGAN





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Introduction

Hey, all,

Thanks for picking up the Centaur Kurgan! It's the first expansion for our popular Exodus System. This book is actually the adventure that I had in mind when I wrote the Exodus System RPG.

There's something here for everyone. Players get a brand new flavor that they can use to play powerful and fast centaurs (or even bisontaur, cameltaurs, donkeytaurs and zebrataurs).

GMs get an adventure that requires very little prep to run. You can customize the climax and some elements of the main story to suit your taste, as well as player decisions over the course of play.

What you'll need to play is a copy of the Exodus System rules, character sheets for everyone, some pencils, dice and blank hex maps to fill in your world as you travel.

We're going to expand the world of NexEarth with even more adventures, plus there are several other settings coming out, so make sure to follow Thunderegg Productions on DrivethruRPG.com.

Many thanks,
Jacob DC Ross

This document is a sci-fantasy adventure for the Exodus System RPG. It's part of our NexEarth setting, and details a small corner of that vast world. Feel free to place it in your own setting. Below is a brief contextual explanation for NexEarth.

The World of NexEarth

NexEarth is a planet far from our own. After humanity finally consumed Earth's resources and irrevocably polluted its atmosphere, the survivors fled in gigantic generation ships. Along the extended journey the passengers spent time learning about pre-industrial cultures and adopting their art, manner of dress, language and many customs and values.

When one ship, the Venture crashed on an uncharted world, the survivors eked out a living and eventually thrived. The Venture's various maker systems, such as nanofactories, gene looms and terraforming machines, set to work remaking the planet. Corruption in the computer core meant that the machines acted randomly and often violently. Some of these machines created centaurs and other "beastmen", intended as laborers, using mythology as a template.

The human societies in NexEarth follow cultural mores based on the preferences of their founders, plus what later arrivals bring. Most are mish-mash of several. Governments tend to be feudal or some other archaic form.

Centaurs

Centaur tribes are at the heart of this adventure. It wouldn't be much fun if we gave you a bunch of awesome NPCs without a way to play as something like them, would it? So here in this section we have a new Centaur Flavor for you. It's going to get rolled up into a larger "beastman/tauric creature" mega-Flavor in the future, but this contains everything you need to play a centaur. Note that

you can choose to simply be a centaur, without any mechanical benefits, and choose two other Flavors if you wish.

Centaur Flavor

You are a centaur, a creature that resembles a horse whose head is replaced with the upper half of a human. Centaurs tend to be stronger than humans, and are much faster on foot. In any settlement that has mostly bipeds, the cost of clothing, armor and similar goods is one price category higher. If a city has a Centaur Quarter or similar area, you can get goods at regular price there. You can give rides to bipeds, but this slows your movement by one hex.

Centaurs that accept their animalistic nature, and who only eat a plant-based diet, have broad faces and large, flat noses. Those who eat meat have manes that run far past the nape of their neck, down to the mid-back.

Thunderous Speed

You can move one hex more with every action. You can take this ability two more times, but if you choose to move two or three extra hexes per round it requires that you maintain Effort at least through the round after you stop running.

Glorious Charge

Make a melee attack at the end of a turn when you run at full speed. For every rank you have in this ability you can either push your target back one hex or add +1d4 to the damage roll.

Mount

You have Advantage on any rolls to keep your favored rider from falling off. For each additional rank of this ability choose melee attacks, ranged attacks or daredevil stunts. Your riders gain Advantage on the rolls that you choose. It takes a week of practice together to become a favored rider.

Running Shot

You can make a ranged attack even if you run at full speed. This attack can only fire in a forward arc. You may take this ability twice to make a second attack while running.

Elder Creature

You can only choose this as your 9th-level ability. Choose one other feature from another creature besides your base type. You gain that ability and your appearance becomes visibly more magnificent. This might manifest as metallic fur, glowing eyes or skin patterns or something else.

Additional Abilities

These abilities are common to other creatures, but are not found on horses. Elder Creatures can select them. Likewise, non-centaur creatures whose normal abilities don't include any of those from the Centaur Flavor can choose from the Centaur Flavor with Elder Creature.

Horns

Choose impressive for dangerous. At the first rank you gain Advantage, and on further ranks you gain +2 to specific rolls. Impressive horns apply to rolls to seduce, intimidate or awe someone. Dangerous horns apply to attacks. Horns can be both impressive and dangerous.

Wings

Maintain Effort to be able to fly at 2 hexes per round. At further ranks you can fly +1 hex per round. Creatures whose natural form has wings instead gain +2 hex speed at first rank, and can also choose to eliminate the need to maintain Effort in order to fly.

Brilliance

Gain a shimmering, sparkling or crackling aura. It can be any color or multiple colors. Also choose one ability from the Energy or Elements Flavors if

you don't already have them. You gain your choice of appropriate element or energy type.

Sylvan Elder

Your form begins to look more like the flora of your preferred environment. Choose one ability from the Nature Flavor to gain at this level.



Alternate Creatures

Do you want to play something other than a standard centaur? Here are a few different options for playing variant creatures with a similar body frame.

Bisontaur

You have the bottom half of a massive plains bison, and the upper half of a large, barrel-chested human. Replace Running Shot with the Horns ability from the Additional Abilities list.

Cameltaur

One hump or two, your lower half is a shaggy camel. Your human half juts forward a bit more than a centaur's does. Replace Glorious Charge with Desert-Bred, below.

Desert-Bred

You can go a long time without water. At the first rank this a week, then a month at the second rank, and finally a year. You also never suffer Disadvantage for moving or acting on sandy or shifting terrain.

Donkeytaur

These hardy creatures are capable of great labors. They prefer to stay out of melee in combat. Donkeytaurs can't select Glorious Charge, but having a human-sized rider, if they have the Mount ability, does not slow them down.

Zebrataur

A zebrataur values his own freedom above all things. They do not ever allow others to ride them and may not take the Mount ability. Instead, they may take the Savanna Adaptations ability below.

Savanna Adaptations

You gain Advantage to stay hidden when you remain still in partial cover. At the second rank this ability allows you to walk and remain hidden, and at the third you can run at full speed.

Players, Go No Further!

This ends the section that players should read. Everything else is for the GM to use as part of the adventure.

The Village of Armear

Armea is a moderate settlement near where a fertile grassland gives way to a desert plain. The inhabitants are more worldly than most outsiders expect, since their hamlet sees a lot of visitors who stop by to resupply before heading out across the desert.

The many caravans that pass through Armea are starting to report a problem. They're running into destroyed wagon trains, some of which are next to dead bodies that clearly met a violent end. The number of caravans passing through Armea is down compared to the rate of previous years. If whomever conducts the raids isn't stopped, the town's livelihood is going to suffer.

There is an open call from the village thane, Leticia MacDuff, for troubleshooters to put an end to the slaughter. Anyone who can do this gets a generous acreage and home on the outskirts of town.

The Witness

Only one eyewitness survived the actual attacks. A young man named Klimt hid under an overturned wagon and went unseen while the bandits went about their grisly business. PCs can interrogate him at the Split Heart Tavern in Armea. He gives, after prompting, the following information:

All he could see was clattering hooves covered in red warpaint

The bandits refer to humans in a derogatory manner

They seemed more interested in capturing people and animal cargo than in taking gold

Tavern patrons insist that this must be the work of centaurs, since there currently two nomadic tribes in the area. Any scholarly, scout or traveler PC whose spent any amount of time in the local region can recall this information on their own.

The Library

Scholars at the library (or wherever the PCs choose to turn for sage advice) know the following information.

There are two “local” centaur tribes, the Aganna and the Kalash.

These two tribes are part of a larger unit of five, each of which sojourns in a rough circle that takes them between two and five years to complete.

The point where the five tribes’ territory intersects is a kurgan, or ceremonial site of great cultural importance.

Both the Kalash and Aganna are due at the Kurgan in two weeks, and when two or more tribes intersect at the Kurgan they have a meeting of friendship and diplomacy.

Both tribes are currently close enough to be able to conduct the raids.

Neither tribe has a reputation for savagery.

The Khan of the Kalash is Argul; the Khan of the Aganna is Pancha.

It’s up to you, as GM, whether or not to make this information freely available from a scholar, or to choose that the PCs have to look it up on their own. You might also choose to send the players out in a general direction towards the centaur tribes, giving them only very basic information, and having the group encounter travellers with information along the way.

The Political Situation

Armear on its own isn’t strong enough to stand up to one of the tribes, but if pushed far enough, they could form a coalition with neighboring settlements. The city has little taste for the monetary and human cost of warfare, and would rather have a group of adventurers solve this problem unofficially than send their own soldiers out on a mission that might have poor diplomatic consequences.

The villagers and the centaurs leave one another alone under normal circumstances, and trade when they need to. The centaurs satisfy their urge for conquest by fighting nomadic human tribes unaffiliated with any settlement, or from battling monsters created by the genetic looms. This is useful to Armear, so Thane MacDuff prefers that the PCs and any other parties that go out in search of the raiders not offend the centaur Khans.

The Journey

Both clans are currently travelling to the southeast of Armear. The Kalash are a few hexes north of the Aganna. It’s up to you, the GM, to determine in which hex the PCs find the tribes. If you’re playing solo, get a +1/1- bonus to the overland encounter rolls for every three hexes that you travel.

The standard movement rate is one hex per day. You roll Usage Dice for rations once every day.

Overland Encounters

This table lists the various conditions and creatures that the PCs can encounter in the wilds outside of Armear.

2d6 Encounter

- 2 Kalash Tribe Camp
- 3 Bad weather hampers travel, stay in this hex
- 4 Spoilage, roll rations' Usage Dice with Disadvantage
- 5 Kalash Patrol
- 6 Small traveller group being attacked by Wildlife
- 7 Wildlife Attack
- 8 Oasis, natural rock formation or spectacularly beautiful tree
- 9 Lone merchant with trinkets and rations
- 10 Aganna Patrol
- 11 Good preservation, roll rations' Usage Dice with Advantage
- 12 Aganna Tribe Camp

1d6 Wildlife Attack

- 1 **Eruption Wurm:** 6 HD, d8 AD, d6 Armor, 1d12+1d8 Damage, Can only attack every other round.
- 2 **1d4 Gorehogs:** 3 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 2d4 Damage, +1 to attack rolls for every Gorehog still fighting.
- 3 **1d6 Needlebats:** 1 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d4 Damage, Makes ranged attacks from 1 hex away. Flies low to the ground. Melee attacks against them have Disadvantage
- 4 **1d3 Lions:** 4 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 1d10 Damage, Roars during initial round of combat Requires a Wisdom roll to resist becoming Afraid.
- 5 **Buffalippo:** 5 HD, d8 AD, d8 Armor, 1d12 Damage, Edible carcass can make 1d6 Usage Die rations.
- 6 Roll twice, rerolling further 6s

Creatures

These are animals that are somewhat common to the environs around Armear and in centaur territory.

Eruption Wurm

The Eruption Wurm is one of NexEarth's native creatures. While most of the xenofauna don't intrude very far into the terraformed areas, the Eruption Wurm lives and travels underground, where conditions are still ideal. It uses a tremorsense to find prey and attacks from underground. The initial attack is the most

dangerous. Once above ground the Eruption Wurm is somewhat ungainly and can't make very quick strikes.

Gorehogs

Gorehogs are a nasty creatures that combine the ill temper and disemboweling tusks of a wild boar with the pack cunning of African hunting dogs. They are vicious carnivores that fight until they're unconscious or dead.

Needlebats

Needlebats feed on bugs and small birds. Unlike the Earth animal from which they're derived, these creatures operate in daylight. They have a number of small quills in their lower abdomen that they use to drive away intruders. While not overly hostile to humans, these creatures chase larger creatures up to a kilometer away from the needlebats' preferred hunting grounds.

Lions

These animals didn't become the rulers of the African savanna for nothing. They are hardy enough to survive in many terraformed areas of NexEarth. Multiple prides stalk the area around Armear, though humans are never their preferred prey.

Buffalippo

The Buffalippo must have been some genetic loom AI's idea of a joke. This creature resembles a shaggy hippopotamus with broad horns based on a cape buffalo. Despite being herbivores, they're very protective of their territory and can destroy an entire caravan on their own. Buffalippos are strong swimmers, but their excess hair slows them down in the water.

Centaur Patrols

It's not uncommon for the players to run into the patrols. If you come across a party from either tribe, you have the option to try diplomacy, offering goods to barter or appealing to centaur customs to seek an audience with the Khan. Any character who spent time in the library of Armear researching centaur culture roll Advantage on this diplomacy roll.

If the PCs fail to make a good impression, they can try to attack the taur parties. Warriors from either tribe might flee, but they won't head back to the tribe until they're sure that nobody is following them. The PCs can also part ways more or less

peacefully and then sneak behind the centaur party whose patrol eventually takes them back to the camp.

To create a patrol, just roll on the appropriate Tribe Encounter Roster 1d6 times, ignoring, and not rerolling, any results of 2 or 12. The Tribe Encounter Rosters are listed in each tribe's write-up later in this book.

If you end up traveling with or shadowing a patrol, it takes 2d6 days to reach the main camp.

Relations Among the Tribes

Neither the Aganna nor the Kalash care much for the other. They maintain cordial relations, and there is very little open conflict between the groups. This goes for the other three centaur tribes that are further out right now..

The tribes' paths rarely intersect. When two or more tribes happen to converge at the Kurgan, they hold a ceremony of meeting under a flag of complete truce. Violence is strictly forbidden, with the exception of honor duels. When all five tribes meet at the same time, it's a Great Convergence. The tribes sit idle for weeks and relax, play in organized sports competitions and hold art festivals. These meetings are very rare, several years pass by between them.

The tribes each maintain networks of scouts that run ahead and in the opposite direction of their tribal camp. These scouts relay news and correspondence from one tribe to another. Despite their differences, if one tribe learns that another is in danger, they rally to its defense. The khans of either tribe in this scenario do not let an attack on the other go unpunished.

The Kalash Tribe

The Kalash are comprised of centaurs whose members mostly embrace their animal nature. The majority are herbivores, and they tend to have broad, flat faces. The Kalash are more sociable with humans than other tribes. This means that they're more likely to ask questions before shooting, but they still have no great love of city dwellers, four-legged or not.

Scattered about the camp and on some patrols are humans or other bipeds. These are called attendants or companions. Tauric tribes who take attendants use them as valets, grooms, or general laborers. It's also useful to have a skinny biped or two on hand to climb trees and explore tight spaces such as caves and holes in the ground. Exceptionally trusted companions act as diplomats or spies in human settlements, and some ride into battle, either keeping the centaurs' quivers stocked with arrows or as an additional lance or bow.

The camp of the Kalash is a busy place. It's filled with the sound of shrieking children clattering about, old men and women singing as they prepare the food and of the occasional shout as a warrior bests his comrade in a training exercise. The smell of boiling stew of root vegetables and broad, leafy greens mixes with kicked-up dust and of crushed berries used for making dyes.

Outsiders who approach the camp receive wary stares. It is not the custom of the Kalash to turn away visitors; hospitality is sacred. But if the PCs do not bear gifts, make the proper entreaties or make eye contact with their hosts before being invited to do so, the centaurs glare at them while the less curious children scurry away. The PCs do not get challenged or attacked if they make no violent actions, even until they reach the Khan's grounds in the center of the camp.

If the PCs want freedom to wander the camp without suspicion, they have to impress the Khan with their character. Argul is an elder warrior of his tribe, and while jovial to his friends and hospitable to guests, he's merciless to anyone who lies to him or abuses his people.

Argul Khan responds much more favorably if the PCs ask him outright if the Kalash are the ones attacking the caravans than if they try to insinuate or beat around the bush. He denies it without taking any offense. If the players fail to notice, feel free to let them know that none of the Kalash have hooves painted red. Argul Khan explains that that's a custom only among the untested warriors of the Aganna tribe.

The Khan also mentions that the main camps of the Kalash and Aganna are due to rendezvous at the Kurgan within a few weeks. Perhaps the PCs can find the Kalash and speak with them. Their paths are almost sure to cross at some point if they strike out on their own.

Kalash NPCs

Here are a few characters to flesh out the Kalash camp or your random encounters with the tribe.

Argul Khan

9 HD, d10 AD, d6 Armor, 2d10 Damage

Travels with 2d4 Bodyguards

Argul is a powerful warlord. He's respected for his even temper and for doing what he can to maintain the peace in the area. Argul doesn't shrink from a fight when he feels that he has a genuine reason to do so; his campaigns against nomadic barbarian human tribes are legendary. Although he encourages his warriors to fight with human mounts, in order to double their firepower or to be able to fire in a rear-facing arc, he does not have any human attendants yet.

Fen, Kalash Sentinel

8 HD, d10 AD, d6 Armor, 3d6 Damage

+1 AD when looking for dangerous things

Tasked with protecting the camp in times of battle and with leading patrols, Fen is devoted to his tribe. He's young and very curious about the outside world. While he'd never abandon his people, Fen hopes to someday get assigned as an envoy to a human settlement, just to see how the people live. He peppers the PCs with questions about human society, so long as they're on good terms with the Kalash.

Hayla, Bard

3 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 2d4 Damage

+2 AD when performing or telling a story

Hayla is her tribe's storyteller. Through young and inexperienced, she's still knowledgeable enough to have memorized the entire canon of the Kalash's secret histories. Hayla is bored with things right now and wants to follow warriors into battle to be able to compose her own songs of heroic deeds.



Kalash Encounters

Use this table whenever you need to create an encounter that includes random members of the Kalash tribe. Many of these overlap with the Aganna because they serve a function that's common to all centaur settlements and armies.

2d6 Encounter

- 2 Fen, Kalash Sentinel: 8 HD, d10 AD, d6 Armor, 3d6 Damage +1 AD when looking for dangerous things
- 3 Bodyguard: 5 HD, d8 AD, d4 Armor, 1d12 Damage AD +1 when defending an ally. Defends their Khan first, then any Traders, then the highest HD ally.
- 4 Mounted Archers: 6 HD, d8 AD, d6 Armor, 1d6+1d8, can make two ranged attacks per round, one of which may fire directly behind them.
- 5 Shepherd: 3 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 2d4 Damage +1 AD when dodging attacks.
- 6 Forward Scout: 1 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d4 damage Attacks 2x per round for half damage. Melee or 3 hexes with bow. Immune to Poison and Confusion.
- 7 Trader: 1 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d4 Damage Disadvantage to resist fear. Restore rations if defeated. 50% chance to be carrying a few coins.
- 8 Outrider: 2 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d6 Damage Double movement rate.
- 9 Brave: 4 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 1d10 Damage No attack can remove more than 10% of max HP.
- 10 Berserker: 3 HD, d6 AD, No Armor, 2d4+5 Damage. +3 total HP.
- 11 Lieutenant: 5 HD, d8 AD, d4 Armor, 1d12 Damage Tribesmen with lower HD have Advantage to resist fear.
- 12 Argul Khan: 9 HD, d10 AD, d6 Armor, 2d10 Damage Travels with 2d4 Bodyguards



The Aganna Tribe

More militant than their Kalash cousins, the Aganna still have a reputation for even-temperedness. They don't take in humans as servants or battle companions. Centaurs from other tribes get a wary eye, but are allowed to pass within the camp unchallenged. Humans and other species get blocked at the entrance by pair of sentries with crossed lances.

The guards demand that outsiders surrender their weapons. This is a test of character. If the PCs give up their arms, the Aganna view them as non-warriors, a lesser class, forever. If the PCs insist on keeping their weapons the guards nod and then explain that they can keep them so long as they agree to have them bound with rope in a manner that does not allow the PCs to draw them quickly. If they refuse this, the guards do not allow them to enter.

The Aganna are omnivorous. They've rejected the plant-eating nature of their horse half and always have the flesh of other creatures at their meals. Roasting carcasses turn on spits while the old and and those too injured to fight sprinkle on spicy powders.

There are spiked barricades set up at regular intervals, as if the Aganna always expect an attack. Every male of at least early teen years carries a weapon at all times. None of the centaurs take their eyes off of the PCs until they are out of sight.

The only music playing is the sound of the drums beaten by the watch sergeant to help the soldiers keep time as they march. The camp children don't run through the streets, but instead engage in calisthenics or competitive ball games.

Pancha Khan and his retinue spend their time in a fenced complex at the heart of the camp whenever they're not out inspecting the fortifications and

soldiers for readiness. The Khan does not seethe PCs without making them wait at least half an hour in silence. If the PCs don't get to the point about why they're here, he tosses them out of the camp. They can try again the next day to see him.

The Aganna Khan doesn't immediately deny that his tribe is responsible for the attacks. He does say that he personally didn't order the attacks, but it seems as if he might know who did. Pancha offers for the group to travel to the Kurgan with the tribe, so long as they go on the hunt every day. At night they're expected to party as hard as the centaurs, dancing in a circle without getting trampled, playing in games of strength, such as the hammer toss or seeing who can fell a tree first, using only their body to knock it over.



Aganna NPCs

Here are just a few of the individuals from the Aganna that the PCs can encounter.

Pancha Khan

10 HD, d12 AD, d8 Armor, 1d10+1d12 Damage

-1 AD in combat, +1 AD when negotiating

Travels with 1d6+2 Bodyguards

This aged centaur used to be feared throughout the area. He's long past his prime and no longer the paragon of combat prowess that he used to be, though he is still a threat to most fighters. Pancha is actually a more canny negotiator who's even more adept at speaking than he is at slaying. Pancha doesn't suffer fools and he restricts ceremonies of merrymaking to a minimum. The old man is worried that no one in his tribe has the necessary combination of will, intellect and prowess to effectively lead the Aganna after he passes away.

Surjig, First Blade of the Aganna

7 HD, d10 AD, d6 Armor, 2d8 Damage

Roll Constitution against Surjig's AD when hit in melee or gain Burning.

Surjig is a dangerous idealist. While the Aganna hold fast to their traditions, he follows his own path. Surjig has no great love for humans, but members of the tribe have seen him around human settlements. Surjig is quick to take offense and attacks at the slightest provocation. He's currently on assignment as the guardian of the Kurgan. This assignment lasts until someone from the Kalash relieves him and his men. Surjig is taking liberties with his patrol duties, venturing out farther than he's supposed to. PCs can encounter him in the field, but never when travelling with the camp of either tribe, if he comes close to dying in combat during overland travel, have his guards carry him away to fight another day.

Krenn, Aspiring Warrior

4 HD, d6 AD, 34 Armor, 1d10 Damage

+1 AD when organizing a battle plan.

Krenn just became old enough to go out on patrol with the other warriors of his tribe. He has a few months left before this year's coming-of-age ceremony, where he gets his permanent unit assignment and the designation of Brave. More studious than his peers, Krenn is fascinated by tactics. He seeks to protect the lives of his brothers in battle through superior organization.

Aganna Encounters

Use this table whenever you need to create an encounter that includes random members of the Aganna tribe. Many of these overlap with the Kalash because they serve a function that's common to all centaur settlements and armies.

2d6 Encounter

- | | |
|----|---|
| 2 | Surjig, Aganna First Blade: 7 HD, d10 AD, d6 Armor, 2d8 Damage Roll Constitution against Surjig's AD when hit in melee or gain Burning. |
| 3 | Bodyguard: 5 HD, d8 AD, d4 Armor, 1d12 Damage AD +1 when defending an ally. Defends their Khan first, then any Traders, then the highest HD ally. |
| 4 | Heavy Archer: 6 HD, d8 AD, d6 Armor, 1d6+1d8 Damage Recurve Bow has a range of 5 hexes. |
| 5 | Shepherd: 3 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 2d4 Damage +1 AD when dodging attacks. |
| 6 | Forward Scout: 1 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d4 damage Attacks 2x per round for half damage.Melee or 3 hexes with bow. Immune to Poison and Confusion. |
| 7 | Trader: 1 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d4 Damage Disadvantage to resist fear. Restore rations if defeated. 50% chance to be carrying a few coins. |
| 8 | Outrider: 2 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d6 Damage Double movement rate. |
| 9 | Brave: 4 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 1d10 Damage No attack can remove more than 10% of max HP. |
| 10 | Berserker: 3 HD, d6 AD, No Armor, 2d4+5 Damage. +3 total HP. |
| 11 | Lieutenant: 5 HD, d8 AD, d4 Armor, 1d12 Damage Tribesmen with lower HD have Advantage to resist fear. |
| 12 | Panja Khan, Aganna Ruler: 10 HD, d12 AD, d8 Armor, 1d10+1d12 Damage. -1 AD in combat, +1 AD when negotiating. Travels with 1d6+2 Bodyguards. |



The Truth

Pancha Khan didn't order the attacks. Once, when he was a young warrior, he might have. Now he's old and comfortable, and loathe to risk what he has for little gain. He seriously suspects that the tribe's First Blade, Surjig, is behind this. Surjig is eager to make a name for himself so he can step into the role of Khan unchallenged when Pancha finally passes away.

Pancha's also heard rumblings that Surjig found a secret within the Kurgan and is working on something revolutionary. If the PCs ply him with wine and song for several nights, or if they heroically defend the tribe, then he'll let his concerns slip to them.

Staying with the Tribes

While they give hospitality to visitors, the centaurs don't often invite outsiders to travel with them. If the PCs want to stay, they first have to impress the Khan and the other elders. Contrary to popular conceptions, the centaur tribes value more than just military might. A beautiful performance, a feat of athletic prowess or a lavish gift could persuade the leaders to let the PCs stay.

While they travel towards the Kurgan, the players have to earn their keep. They go out on patrol every day. Any roll on the Overland Encounters table that indicates a patrol or the camp of the tribe that the PCs are staying with instead becomes a Rival Parties result. See the section below for information.

Rival Parties

The PCs weren't the only ones to heed the quest to stop the attacks on the caravans near Armear. They' also weren't the only ones to conclude that the centaurs are behind the raids. A rival party wants the credit for stopping the attacks. They don't particularly care which centaurs did it, only

that they can bring back some carcasses to try to convince the lords of Armear that they vanquished the enemy.

Rival parties might be open to negotiation. You might also find them attacking a group of innocent centaurs. The PCs have to choose whether to keep the faith with their hosts and attack the rival party, or to refuse to take up arms against humans and defend the other adventurers from reprisals by the centaur patrol. Taking sides with the rival parties automatically earns the enmity of whichever tribe the PCs are traveling with; they have to make the rest of the way on foot and steer clear of any further centaur patrols from either tribe or come under attack.

A rival party needs a strong leader. They should really be customized for your party for maximum annoyance. If you've had any rivals show up earlier in your campaign, use them. Besides a leader, you can include one or two other serious threat NPCs. The named party members should have an HD on par with the average PC level. Add a few low-level mooks to flesh out any combats. The core members of the rival party usually flee at least their first combat encounter after losing their minions.

Arrival at the Kurgan

It's up to you, the GM, how long you want the journey to the Kurgan to take. You can use the time to explore centaur culture or to allow the PCs to bond with members of the tribes.

When the tribes finally meet, the PCs get introduced to the tribe that they haven't met, if they've only visited or traveled with one. It's time for the celebrations and rituals to start, but the specter of the raids hangs heavy. Humans have left the centaurs alone, and the Kalash and the Aganna are not eager to start a war with humans; they fear what Armear and her neighbors will do to the plains with their destructive weapons. They also rightly suspect that if Armear falls in battle then the greater nations surrounding the plains will declare war on the five tribes.

The Khans allow the PCs sit in on talks. Everyone soon determines that none of the Kalash were in on the raids. Pancha Khan comes forward with his suspicion that his tribe's First Blade, Surjig, is behind the attacks. Surjig and his men had this year's duty to act as honor guards at the Kurgan. The braves under Surjig's command are all red-hooved youths.

Both Khans approach the Kurgan together, respectfully allowing the PCs to follow behind. The Kurgan itself is a series of mounds, with a building inside the central section. Outsiders, even companions of the tribes, are not permitted inside. The Kurgan sits about 100 meters from a small lake that forms an oasis. The terrain around the sparse grass is sandy desert.

Pancha calls for Surjig to appear. One of Surjig's lieutenants meets them outside. The young centaur makes excuses for several minutes. It's apparent that either Surjig isn't here, or he's unwilling to come out. Pancha Khan orders a group of men into the Kurgan to bring Surjig out,

and Argul sends a handful of his in as well, in a show of solidarity. Both Khans insist that the PCs stay out of the Kurgan.

The sounds of the battle are fierce, and if the players do nothing they die out in a few minutes, replaced by silence. No other centaurs exit the Kurgan, so everyone assumes that Surjig's men killed the warriors.

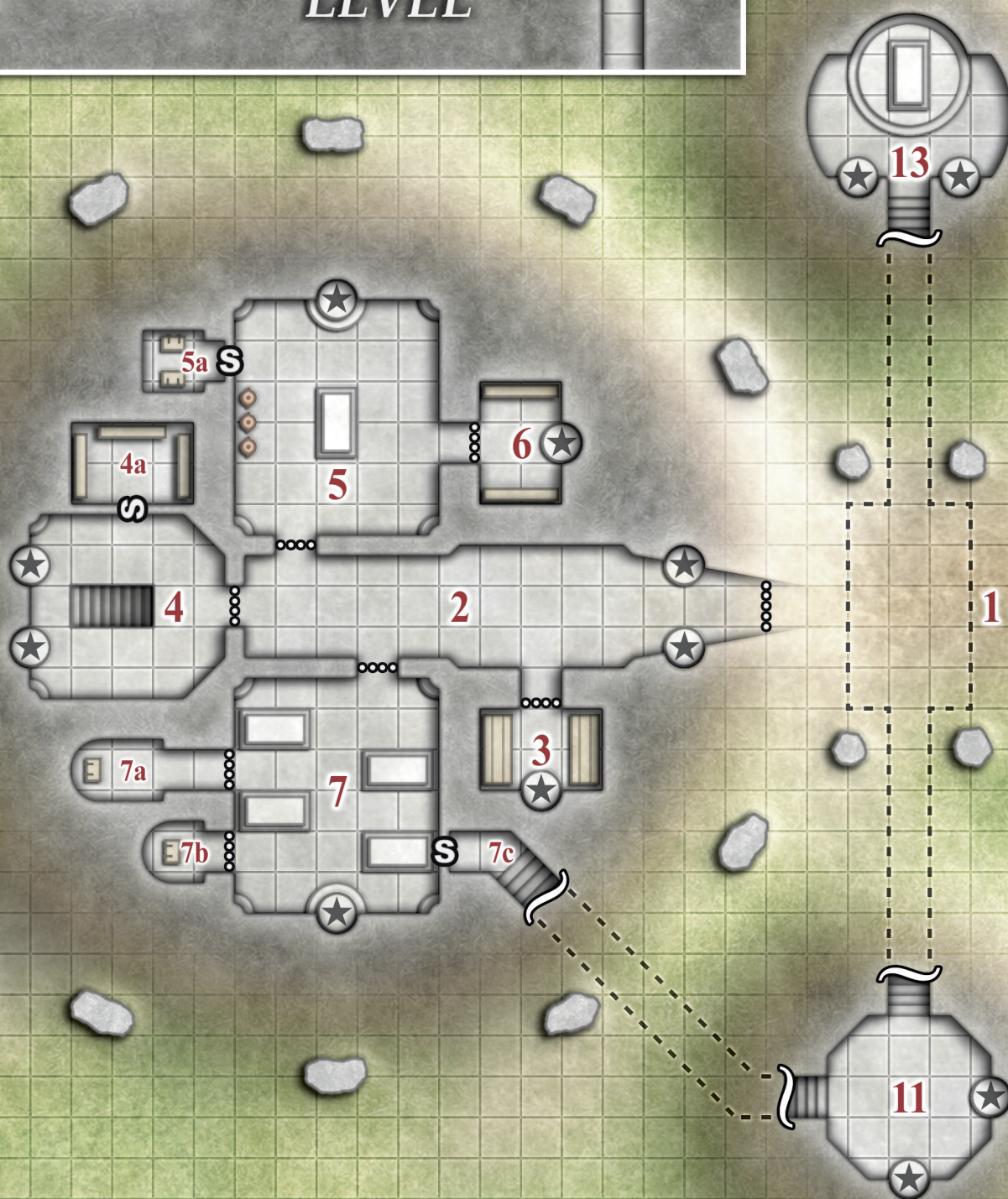
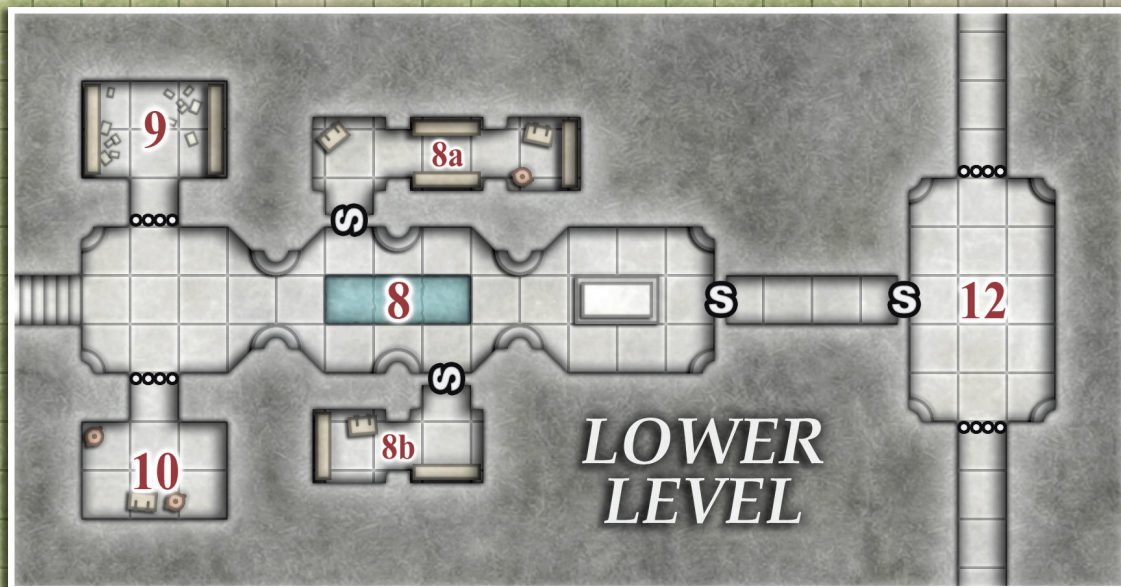
Make sure to send in any NPCs that the PCs befriended during the journey. This gives real stakes to the battle inside the Kurgan. Being true heroes, they're not going to leave their friends to die like animals. It's time to charge.

Inside the Kurgan

The Kurgan is lit via panels in the ceiling and at the top edges of the walls. The walls are made from a material that looks and feels like granite. Each square on the map is about 3 meters/ 10 feet. The ceiling stands about 6 meters/ 20 feet high to accommodate the taller centaurs..

Areas by Key

The map of the Kurgan is keyed to label various areas. Assume that enemies here are armed for melee and ranged combat. Their bows are optimized for range of three squares.



1. The Front Entrance

Scraggly grasses dot the sand. This area and the main mound are lined by a series of pillars put up by the tribes after the Venture's nanofabricators made the structure itself. This is as far as outsiders are ever permitted to be.

2. The Great Hall

This area is connected to most of the main floor. There is very little cover, and if the PCs aren't careful, they're vulnerable to fire from every door through which they pass. If they play things right, the party can attempt to lure enemies out in the open. If the PCs followed their centaur allies into the Kurgan, or rush in to assist them before they get slaughtered, there are three Centaur Initiates (3 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 1d8 Damage) on their side in this room, and four of Surjig's Braves (4 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 1d10 Damage No attack can remove more than 10% of max HP.).

3. Purification Room

This area is where entrants must stop to coat themselves with powdered pigments and spices in order to ritually purify themselves. Inside is an elderly attendant who lives here full-time. He has no loyalty to Surjig and won't fight (1 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d4 Damage).

4. Rear Foyer

This room contains the stairway to the lower level and very little else.

4a. Hidden Guard Chamber

If the PCs don't stop to inspect for hidden doors, this d8 Secret Area's door opens up to reveal a pair of Centaur Outriders (2 HD, d4 AD, d4 Armor, 1d6 Damage Double movement rate) who charge the party when they're just beginning to descend the stairs.

5. Barracks

The large room is where all of the Kurgan's occupants sleep. As part of their sacred duties, none of the guards use beds while staying here. A large table in the middle offers cover from ranged attacks. It stands 2 meters/ 6 feet high. There are 3 Berserkers (3 HD, d6 AD, No Armor, 2d4+5 Damage. +3 total HP, no ranged attacks) here, along with a Centaur Lieutenant (5 HD, d8 AD, d4 Armor, 1d12 Damage Tribesmen with lower HD have Advantage to resist fear).

5a. Secret Armory

This d10 Secret Area contains some (1d6+2) explosive grenades. When thrown they do full damage to anything within an adjacent square/hex to where they land., and half damage to the ring of hexes or squares around that. While damage for most weapons in the Exodus System is determined by a PC's Role, these explosives are no less deadly in the hands of a scholar than they are in those of a warrior. They do 1d12 damage. As this is a sacred space, the centaurs only use the grenades against invaders outside the Kurgan. There are also a dozen quivers full of arrows (Usage Die d8).

6. Store Room

This area holds one Centaur Heavy Archer (6 HD, d8 AD, d6 Armor, 1d6+1d8 Damage Recurve Bow has a range of 5 hexes). He doesn't charge out and fight, but snips at the PCs while they're busy with the Berserkers and the Lieutenant in Room 5.

7. Library

This room holds the most important texts that are revered by the five tribes. The four blocks along the walls are stacks of books. One, marked with an “S”, contains a secret passage to Area 11. The stacks of books are very tall, as centaurs have a higher reach. If the PCs start tany search for passageways by looking up high, give them Advantage for their clever thinking. If any of the PCs damage the books, such as by tossing grenades around in this room, any centaur allies turn on them immediately. There are no enemies in this section.

7a and 7b. Alcoves

These rooms are designed for meditation and reading. There’s no one in 7b. Area 7a contains a Centaur Scribe (2 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 1d4 Damage) who is reading aloud to a shackled centaur. Observant PCs note that the shackled centaur (3 HD, d8 AD, d4 Armor, 1d8 damage Disadvantage to resist Fear) has neither the broad face and flat nose of a vegetarian centaur, nore the long mane running down her back like a meat-eating centaur grows. If the PCs release her, she cowers unless given several minutes of encouragement, during which time any other hostiles in the Kurgan might advance towards the library.

What’s Going On?

Surjig discovered the secret passages within the Kurgan, which contained data on the building’s true purpose. The Venture’s nanomachines fabricated it as a genetic conversion facility. The pool on the lower level is a chamber that users can operate to create new hybrid creatures. Surjig is using it to create more centaurs, as well as other hybrids.

It’s up to you,the GM, to decide when and how much information to reveal to the players. Some ideal points include the elderly attendant in the

purification room, the shackled centaur in Area 7a, and the Chamber Controller on the lower level. You can also wait until after taking care of Surjig to reveal the whole plan.

Lower Level

The adventure continues below.

8. The Womb Pool

This chamber’s most notable features are a large, shimmering pool of blue liquid, and a monument further to the east. The walls along this area are all decorated with relief sculptures that depict the glory of the centaurs of ages past. The monument contains the remains of Gohol Khan, the first leader of the Kalash, who was also the person to unite the five tribes into their loose confederacy.

There is a d8 hidden mechanism along the far east wall. It opens to the hallway that leads to Area 12. The main chamber is guarded by a pair of Braves (4 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor, 1d10 Damage No attack can remove more than 10% of max HP) and a Lieutenant (5 HD, d8 AD, d4 Armor, 1d12 Damage Tribesmen with lower HD have Advantage to resist fear).

8a. The Holding Cells

This area is accessible either via finding the d8 Hidden Switch along the wall, or by opening it up via the controls in Area 6b. It’s filled with various creatures and humans, all stolen from the caravans. Some of them are sick or starved, having refused to eat since they were captured. The rest are in decent health. None of the humans are particularly adept fighters (1 HD, d6 AD, d4 Armor 1d4 Damage, +1 AD to a random task suitable to their training and background). There are no guards here, but feel free to add a creature or two from the Wildlife Encounters table that gets loose when you deactivate the shackles on the human prisoners.

8b. The Operations Room

This area houses the d12 Controls used to operate the Womb Pool in the main room. Once deciphered, the PCs can attempt to operate it. It's an Intelligence task with a difficulty equal to the combined levels/HD of the two subjects being combined.

9. Attendants' Chambers

This room is where the tribeless centaurs who take care of the Kurgan full-time live. The Chamber Controller (2 HD, 6 AD, 4 Armor, 1d4 Damage, +2 AD to mechanical and technical tasks) hides in this room. He knows how to operate the mechanisms that control the Womb Pool, which allows him to make hybrids. If coerced or intimidated, he can reveal what's going on to the players, but he won't ever tell them how to operate the Womb Pool. If they try and make him create a hybrid he'll intentionally kill the subjects.

10. Ceremonial Storage

The Kurgan's caretakers keep their food here, as well as supplies. This room contains three Level 8 healing kits (restores 1d10 HP, single use).

11. South Mound

This conical dome is 15 meters/ 50 feet high. You can access it from the secret passage in Area 7, or from Area 12. It has no surface-level entrance, even if anyone were to dig away the earth layer that surrounds it. The d10 Doors are locked by default. Due to the way they're hinged, it's harder to bust the doors in (roll with Disadvantage) than it is to break out of the room.

The Chamber Controller, the Chamber Controller and the Lieutenant in Area 8 both have key chips. Surjig has a key chip and a remote unit that allows him to open up the door remotely. He does open it if the PCs make a lot of noise in Area 12, or if his Lieutenant comes and warns him.

Inside the mound is normally empty. Surjig now uses it to store some of his more interesting creations. Right now it has a 6 HD creature (6 HD, d8 AD, d6 Armor, 1d6+1d8 Damage Roll twice on the table below to determine form and abilities)

1d6 Form

- 1 **Serpent:** Imparts Poison condition on a failed Constitution roll
- 2 **Bird:** Can fly at regular speed
- 3 **Pachyderm:** Upgrade the Armor Die
- 4 **Ape:** Double HP
- 5 **Feline:** Double Speed
- 6 **Bear:** Add 1d4 to Damage

The creature attacks indiscriminately. The centaurs use it to train their combat abilities.

12. Hallway

This area is empty, and simply a conduit between Areas 11 and 13. There's a d6 Hidden Door that leads to Area 8.

13. The North Mound

Surjig (7 HD, d10 AD, d6 Armor, 2d8 Damage Roll Constitution against Surjig's AD when hit in melee or gain Burning). is practicing his warrior's meditation in this room. The only way in or out is the hallway between here and Area 11. If he isn't aware of the PCs before they enter his chamber, Surjig now uses his remote key to unlock Area 11. The creature within makes it to this chamber in 1d6 rounds.

At this point Surjig is furious. If he's ever run into the PCs before and been impressed with their service to the tribes, then he might be amenable to offering them a place in his new tribe, so long as they volunteer to become hybrids. That's assuming, of course, that the PCs are even interested. Otherwise, he's going to fight to the death or until completely subdued. Surjit's Level 3 Ignition Spear is the ancestral weapon of his family. If the players try to steal it after defeating him, any centaur allies that they have insist that they return it to his children.

Fusion

The process of creating a hybrid is complex, story-wise, but simple as far as game mechanics go. After having puzzled out the controls, simply select two creatures of different species to combine. The difficulty of the process is equal to their total HD/Levels, -2. If successful, the two become one creature, stable and viable. This new creature takes 1d12 damage in the process, ignoring Armor. If failed, both creatures take 1d20 damage due to the unstable chemicals.

If one creature is an animal and the other is a person, the new creature retains the memories of the person, although its personality is altered somewhat with more bestial traits. It doesn't lose any intelligence. If both are animals, it takes on the dominant personality of the animal with a higher HD, or the more aggressive one if they have

the same HD. If both creatures are intelligent beings, then a brand new personality emerges, with many of the memories of both subjects.

In the case of an animal mixed with a person, increase any one of the new subject's physical statistics, such as Strength, Constitution and Dexterity, to equal the animal's HD, if it's higher than the person's. If the person is not a PC then give them an ability that upgrades their AD in situations appropriate to the animal's dominant physical trait. Give PCs and NPCs any one of the animal's abilities. If the person is a PC this fusion counts as leveling up, and the ability gained, if any, uses up one of their Flavor slots.

In the case of two animals, average their HD to get the new HD. Take any abilities from both original animals that you feel are appropriate to the new form and write them down.

If two PCs merge, the new character has a Level equal to the average of both original PCs, and its Attributes even out, too. Choose the Party Role of one PC and the Combat Role of the other, and one Flavor from each of the original PCs.

If a PC and an NPC merge, change the level of the new PC to the average of the PC's Level and the NPC's HD. The PC can increase one Attribute to equal the NPC's AD, if it's higher than the Attribute. The PC may replace any Flavor abilities with abilities from the original NPC, so long as they make sense for the context of the story.

Aftermath

If the PCs survive the Kurgan, they now have to convince the Khans to let them leave in peace. If they have any surviving centaur allies, these can vouch for the team, giving them Advantage to any rolls to convince the tribal leaders to let them live. If they've acted at least valiantly in the Kurgan, but still fail to convince the Khans to leave them

be, then they get sent away with a light beating and a lifetime ban from contact with the tribe.

If they manage to convince the Khans that their actions were right, the Khans retroactively declare the PCs to be centaurs, and they're welcome in tribal territory in perpetuity. No matter what, the Aganna and Kalash pledge to keep their warriors from raiding caravans going to or from Armear.

Then MacDuff recognizes the the contributions of the PCs and grants them estates n a nearby hex of savanna. Problems arise from any Rival Parties that tangled with the the PCs. They want a piece of things for their troubles. But that's a story for another time.

Changing up the Adventure

There's room for customization in this scenario. One suggestion is to have any of the tribe be kin to centaurs, rather than centaurs themselves. These options include the alternate PC species in the Centaur Flavor section (bisontaur, cameltaurs, donkeytaurs and zebrataurs). Besides cosmetic changes, this can alter the personality of the tribes.

Bisontaur are dedicated to the defense of their young and wounded. To impress a bisontaur tribe requires a feat of strength. They don't seek out human company, but they're not xenophobic.

Cameltaurs are hardy and designed to live in arid regions. They eschew luxuries and aren't impressed by displays of wealth, only endurance, storytelling or fine food. Cameltaurs get along well with humans.

Donkeytaurs are a hardworking people. They don't charge recklessly into battle, like their cousins, but are just as proficient at hit-and-run archery attacks. Donkeytaurs are the most human-friendly

of the tribes, and most of their warriors bear a rider into skirmishes.

Zebrataurs are fiercely independent. They are warlike, but not savage. Their preferred tactic is a fast ambush made from a hiding place. No zebrataur ever accepts a human rider.

You can also choose to have the rival parties get involved in the end. This is especially useful if the PCs happen to befriend Surgit during their travels. Instead of storming the Kurgan and defeating Surgit, they can instead run after human intruders who are attacking the PCs' centaur friends.

The PCs can try reasoning with Surgit and the Khans. There might be some people who are willing to voluntarily become centaurs. Surgit and the Aganna don't have much to do with humans, but many of the humans in the Kalash tribe would give anything to become centaurs, and maybe even some of the PCs would be interested in joining up.

If the quest gets resolved with the PCs and the tribes agreeing to work with Surgit on his experiments, the PCs can then start questing around the countryside, looking for willing volunteers. Perhaps the Kalash and the Aganna are ready to carve out an empire in human territory. The PCs can use this opportunity to achieve far greater glory than a simple estate on the outskirts of a small city.

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