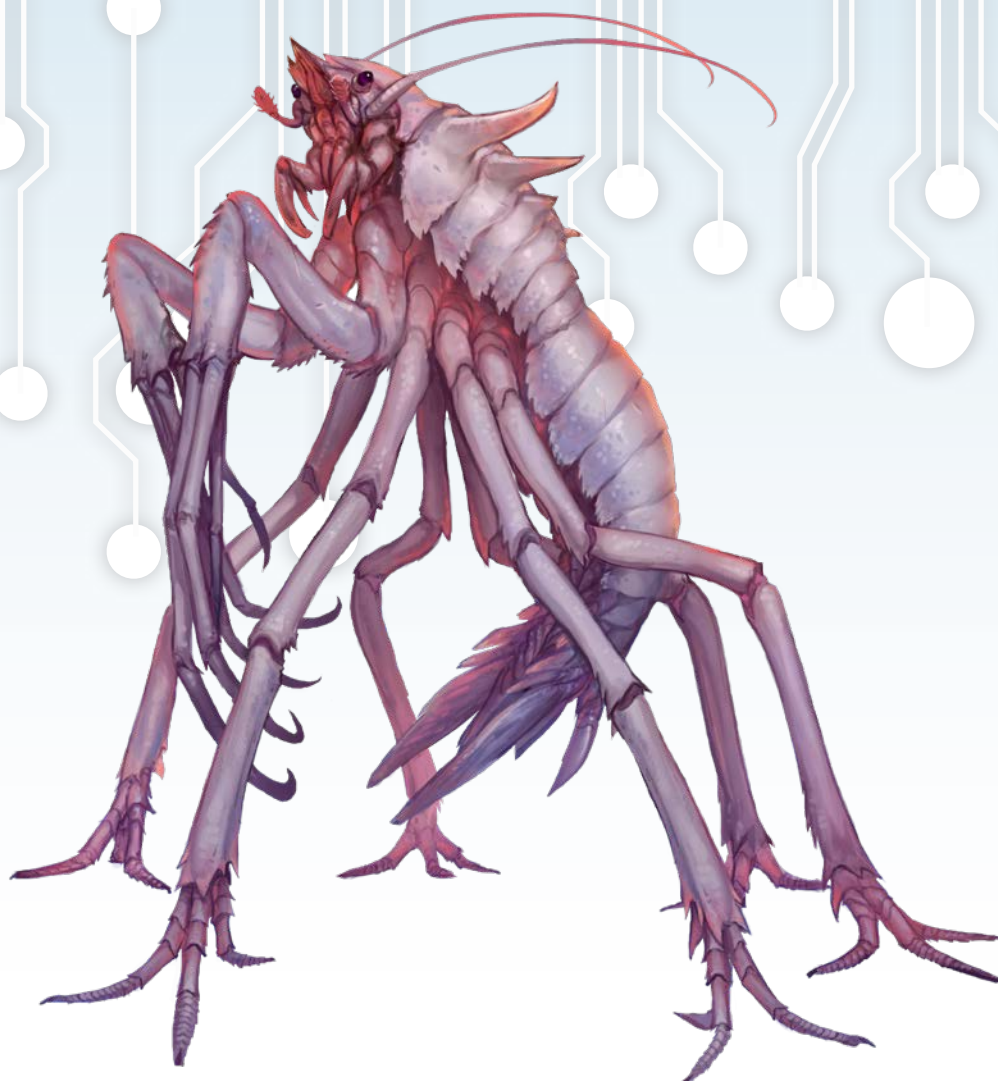


YEAR OF SCOURED STARS
STARFINDER SOCIETY SCENARIO #1-28, TIER 1-4



IT RESTS BENEATH

BY JASON TONDRO





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HOW TO PLAY

Starfinder Society Scenario #1-28: It Rests Beneath is a Starfinder Society Scenario designed for 1st-through 4th-level characters (Tier 1-4; Subtiers 1-2 and 3-4). This scenario is designed for play in the Starfinder Society Roleplaying Guild campaign, but can easily be adapted for use with any world. For more information on the Roleplaying Guild, how to read the attached Chronicle sheets, and how to find games in your area, check out the campaign's home page at StarfinderSociety.club.



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GM RESOURCES

It Rests Beneath makes use of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*, *Starfinder Alien Archive*, and *Starfinder Armory*. This adventure assumes the GM has access to these sourcebooks. All rules referenced in this adventure are available in the free online Starfinder Reference Document at sfrd.info, and all the relevant rules from the *Alien Archive* volumes are reprinted at the back of the adventure for the GM's convenience.

SCENARIO TAGS

Scenario tags provide additional information about an adventure's contents. For more information on scenario tags, see Chapter 1 of the *Starfinder Society Roleplaying Guild Guide*. This adventure has the following scenario tags.



FACTION (WAYFINDERS)



VEHICLE

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IT RESTS BENEATH

BY JASON TONDRO



Millions of years ago, a unique life-form crashed on the surface of Vabaimus, a vibrant world in Near Space. The alien life-form, which possessed only animal-like intelligence, survived by consuming and converting the ecosystem around it. Initially weighing only a few pounds when it crashed on the surface of the planet, the alien creature began absorbing the planet and growing. Water and plant life slowly vanished, and the land nearby was covered with a gray, shell-like material—the alien's new “skin.” While the area around the creature appeared lifeless, the creature was actually expanding its form in the calcified regions it had sucked dry, until the entire region for miles around had become the alien's body. This process was glacially slow, but over millions of years, the alien expanded its mass into a vast plateau of roughly 85,000 square miles, creating a region riddled with tunnels that serve as heat vents for the alien's crystalline brain, now buried deep underground in the heart of the plateau.

Native life on Vabaimus has slowly adapted to the crashed alien's presence on their world. Since the life-form is contained to a single (albeit very large) area, most of the species on Vabaimus have never even seen the plateau that acts as the life-form's outer shell. The alien's own ecosystem has gradually adapted, and species of local fauna have found ways to survive by feeding on the calcium embedded in the alien's shell. Other creatures have adopted the role of cleaners: living in the series of hot tunnels that riddle the plateau, they feed on parasites and other creatures that descend into the invasive alien's massive body. For Vabaimus, life goes on.

Prior to the Scoured Stars incident several years ago, the Starfinder Society's Wayfinders faction established a small research outpost on Vabaimus. A staff of about 20 engineers and scientists under the supervision of Dr. Mora Motressi, a specialist in the evolution of pre-sapient life, has monitored the planet's ecosystems, studied local fauna and flora, and begun an intensive survey of local mineral deposits. This survey led the outpost staff to investigate the calcified landscape caused by the alien life-form. Unaware of the plateau's true nature, Dr. Motressi and her team consider the plateau to be a unique landmark and theorize it might be the site of a magical blight or other unique event.

Fitch, leader of the Wayfinders faction, took note of Dr. Motressi's latest report and is intrigued by the strange plateau. Since the outpost lacks the equipment and vehicles necessary to undertake a proper survey of the calcified area, Fitch has stepped

Where in the Universe?

Most of this scenario takes place on the planet Vabaimus, which is located in Near Space.

VABAIMUS

Verdant World with a Secret

Diameter: ×1; **Mass:** ×1; **Gravity:** ×1

Atmosphere: Normal; **Day:** 1 day; **Year:** 1 year

Vabaimus is rich in mineral resources and boasts diverse ecosystems with highly varied native life. A species of sloth-like marsupials on the northern continent are approaching sapience. A massive plateau on the southern continent is actually a strange alien organism.

SUMMARY

Fitch contacts the PCs and provides them with basic information on the planet Vabaimus, the strange geological feature that has been discovered there, and a native species that is evolving toward sapience and civilization. The PCs then travel to Vabaimus, deliver some vehicles and other survey equipment, and meet with Dr. Mora Motressi, the head of the research outpost. Mora, in turn, introduces them to two native specimens, informs them of an abandoned kasatha starship that was discovered on the planet, and invites the PCs to help with the geological survey of the plateau, which she has named “Big Mina,” in honor of her young daughter, “Little” Mina.

The geological survey calls for the construction of three scanning towers which, once all online and their signals triangulated, will allow Mora to perform a deep scan of the entire plateau in minutes. Using the vehicles they brought from Fitch, the PCs travel to each of these three locations and erect the scanning towers, fight off local wildlife, brave environmental dangers, and discover a lead on the kasatha explorer who came to this planet long before them. Once the scanning towers are in operation, Mora and the PCs confirm the suspicion that the Big Mina Plateau is, in fact, a single alien life-form.

In order to better understand the creature, and to gather the data they'll need to decide what to do about the alien, the PCs descend into the ventilation tunnels that allow heat to escape from Big Mina's crystalline brain. Big Mina's natural defenses make the descent challenging, as do human-sized cleaner organisms eager to keep the tunnels free of parasites. In their exploration, the PCs discover the remains—and last message of—a young kasatha who was on her Tempering when she perished inside Big Mina. The PCs arrive at the plateau's crystal brain, and after some scans confirm that the alien creature will continue to grow until it consumes all life on Vabaimus, including the planet's proto-civilization! The PCs are faced with a moral dilemma: do they allow Big Mina, a unique life-form simply following its instincts, to consume Vabaimus; do they kill it to save the many native species of the planet; or do they "cripple" Big Mina, damaging her brain and permanently halting her growth? Once this decision is made (or not, if the PCs choose to avoid the decision), the PCs can return to Mora at the research outpost, say their goodbyes, and return to Absalom Station for a debriefing with Fitch.



GETTING STARTED

Fitch briefs the PCs aboard the nearly repaired *Master of Stars*, the largest starship in the Starfinder Society's fleet and the current base of operations for the Wayfinders faction. A shuttle carries the PCs from Absalom Station to the vessel through the Armada. The repairs to the *Master of Stars* are almost complete, and although a few rings of scaffolding remain visible around sections of the ship, its armor-plated hull, powerful engines, and sleek lines are almost complete. The shuttle lands in a spacious hangar bay, and a drone leads them to a briefing room on an upper deck of the ship.

Fitch is waiting with a plate of bread, jams, and sweet pastries. When the PCs arrive, she's trying to chase off three of her grandchildren while scolding them with restrained aggravation that those snacks are for the visiting Starfinders. The three young ysoki flee past the PCs as Fitch hurls a doughnut to chase them off, and the target nimbly snatches it, takes a bite out of it, and grins triumphantly at Fitch. She performs an exaggerated scowl, though once the door closes, her face exudes smug pride in her cunning descendants.

Once the PCs are situated in the briefing room, read or paraphrase the following.

"Vabaimus is a planet in Near Space," Fitch says, gesturing in the air as she paces atop her desk. "Green, lots of water, bright

sunlight, beautiful, if you go in for that sort of thing. Plenty of animal and plant life, but the most intelligent species is a marsupial no bigger than my kids. Look kind of like sloths. I like them, but we're leaving them alone till they advance enough to at least get a language. Could take a while.

"But there is a research station on the southern continent. The scientist in charge is Dr. Mora Motressi, a xenobiologist. She and her people have been checking out the local flora and fauna, and they've just starting a geological survey. Vabaimus is a resource-rich planet; we could do a lot with that, but we need to be careful to do it right. We don't want to make decisions we later regret, disrupt the ecosystem, and create problems for ourselves and the locals."

Fitch pulls a datachip from her cheek pouch and waves it around. "I was reading the first report from their geological survey, and apparently they've got a weird landmass down there. A plateau hundreds of miles across covered in a slick gray shell, like a giant lobster or something! No water or plant life at all—maybe it got blasted by some kind of curse, I don't know. Mora and her people, they don't have the equipment to do a proper survey,

so I figured we could give her a hand. I'd like you to take some vehicles and survey equipment to Dr. Motressi and her people on Vabaimus, and help them get to the bottom of this mystery."

Raising her hands and shaking her head, Fitch goes on. "I know, I know. This doesn't sound like the sort of thing a bunch of super-stars like you usually go in for. There's no first contact to figure out, no Swarm army to blast into smithereens. But this is how the hard work of research and science gets done, and besides, if this lifeless plateau is the result of a curse or a magical accident or something, Mora and those scientists will need help, maybe even an evacuation.

"So, what do you say? Can I trust you on this one?"

Fitch is happy to answer any questions the PCs might have.

Can you tell us anything about the research station? "There's maybe twenty people there. Scientists mostly and some assistants. They've got half a dozen buildings not far from the plateau."

Are the researchers in danger? "Don't think so. Vabaimus is pretty peaceful, but you never know. It's a dangerous galaxy."

What can you tell us about the pre-sapient native species? "They're a long way from civilization, but from what Dr. Motressi's written in her reports, they're definitely on their way. Check back with me in a few thousand years."

What kind of equipment are we bringing? "We've packed up some towers, high-intensity scanners, and computers which, once

you put them all together, will give you a 3-D map of the plateau's interior and do a complete chemical analysis of the ground. Oh, and I threw in some enercycles and buggies, to help you get around out there. You'll have a lot of ground to cover."

And there's no one else on Vabaimus except the scientists? "Far as I can tell, Mora's team is the first to explore the planet."

Once the PCs accept the mission, Fitch happily thanks them and sends them back to their shuttle, where drones have already loaded the scanning equipment and vehicles. They can get underway as soon as they wish, and a PC can load their own Large or smaller vehicle if they wish.

Boon Allocation: Following their briefing with Fitch, the PCs have an opportunity to finalize their boon slots. This scenario is important to Fitch, and PCs are encouraged to slot the Wayfinders faction boon. This scenario also has the vehicle tag, indicating that it involves the PCs' driving one or more vehicles, for which any boon interacting with vehicle use would be appropriate.



Dr. Mora
Motressi

ON VABAIMUS

Vabaimus is in Near Space, so the journey takes 3d6 days of Drift travel. This gives the PCs a chance to get to know each other a little, if they wish. When they arrive at the planet, a cursory scan confirms what they've been told by Fitch: Vabaimus is a temperate planet with considerable surface water and a variety of native life. It looks like a perfect colony world. There is, however, a strange geological formation, a stony plateau which covers approximately 85,000 square miles on the southern continent. This is the feature they have been sent to investigate, and the Wayfinders' research station is situated nearby.

Within minutes, **Dr. Mora Motressi** (NG female human), the lead scientist at the research station, contacts the PCs and invites them to land. Mora is a friendly professional and devoted mother; as she speaks to the PCs, they can see a sloth-like creature clinging to her torso and playing with her ears, while a human child plays with a datapad in the background.

The outpost is a simple affair on the grassy shore of a broad river, with two dormitory buildings to the east, two science labs to the west, and between them a common room for the staff to relax. All the buildings are white half-cylinders obviously assembled from prefabricated parts shipped to Vabaimus from the Pact Worlds. A basic chain-link fence surrounds the compound, an improvised exercise track loops around the entire campus, and a pair of researchers in athletic clothes are jogging in the morning sun. The mysterious plateau looms only a few miles away.

As the PCs land at the outpost, some of the scientists and assistants emerge to help unload the vehicles and survey equipment. Mora leads the way, carrying the sloth-like creature and with her young and curious daughter following close behind. She introduces her daughter as "Little Mina" and invites the PCs to the common room, where she can brief them on the mission.

Once the PCs are settled, read or paraphrase the following.

After activating a handheld control, Mora gestures to a holographic image of an imposing, gray plateau. "This is Big Mina. You probably saw it as you came down from orbit. The plateau's covered in a gray calcium compound, somewhat like a shell or a bony crest. There's nothing like it anywhere else on Vabaimus and, frankly, we're not sure what to make of it. But that's where you and the equipment you've brought us come in."

The image of the plateau rotates to a top-down perspective, and three circles of light appear. "The survey equipment will allow us to construct three towers, one at each of these locations: Forsaken Canyon, the Windy Cliffs, and this dry riverbed. Once the scanners on the towers are calibrated to the computers we keep here at the station, we'll perform a deep scan of the entire plateau, going down thousands of feet. We'll have a three-dimensional map of Big Mina's interior, we'll know the chemical composition of the soil, and hopefully we'll figure out whatever caused this formation to appear in the first place. We have an office pool going, and right now the popular choice is some kind of magical accident, but my money is on an anomalous weather pattern. Anyway.

"Those enercycles and explorer buggies you brought will be handy to travel across the plateau, so use any combination of them you want. We're currently loading them up with the equipment you'll need to raise the towers, plus some climbing gear just in case. Once you arrive at each scan location, you'll need to assemble the tower and calibrate the computer. I can help you with that last bit from here. We have twelve hours of daylight left, and while I'd love to knock this out in a day, you don't need to be reckless. You can bunk on these sofas for the night if you need.

"There's one other thing. It's probably not important, but just in case—we found a small, abandoned starship a few months back. It was centuries old and clearly kasathan in origin. It didn't crash; we think its pilot landed safely. But there's no sign of what happened to them. Whoever it was must be long dead.

"So, I think that's everything. Any questions?"

Mora can answer any questions the PCs might have.

Can you tell us more about these three locations we need to visit? “Yes. We’ve seen some native life in the canyon, resembling birds. I don’t know how anything survives on the plateau, where there’s no plant life or water. Maybe you can get a closer look at them when you’re setting up the scanning tower? The second site is along the cliffs; try to get a tower up anywhere along the ridgeline, but be careful: the wind can get pretty intense up there, and it’s a long drop. Finally, there’s the riverbed. We tried to set up a scanner there when we first arrived, but it stopped functioning after a few days, and we eventually found it knocked over and smashed up. It looked like it had been hit by a meteor or something!”

How far away are the sites? Mora highlights the locations on the projection. “The canyon and riverbed are both about 60 miles away and a fair distance from one another. The cliffs are about 75 miles away. Once you get out there, all three of the sites are roughly equidistant from one another.”

Do we need to set up the towers in any particular order? “No, set them up in whatever order you think best.”

What is that little creature you are carrying? “This is Bud. He and his mate Beky are visitors from the northern continent. Their species aren’t yet sapient, but they’re on their way. Right now, Bud’s pretty good at using a stick to get insects out of the ground, but eventually he and the rest of his species could be farming, building towns, or doing whatever else expresses their evolving culture. We have avoided interfering with the species overall, but we do want to know more about them and maybe find a way to communicate, so we brought Bud and Beky here for a closer look. They’re easy to get along with, and my daughter likes them.”

Why did you name the plateau after your daughter? “She said she wanted a big sister. This was the best I could do.”

Were you able to salvage anything from the kasathan starship? “Actually, yes. If you want, I’ll be happy to show you. Maybe you can make more of it than we can.”

THE KASATHAN SCOUT

Mora and her team found a small kasathan starship on Vabaimus. Unbeknownst to Mora and her team, this was the personal vessel of a young kasathan pilgrim on her Tempering, a year-long journey of self-discovery undertaken by many kasathas. This explorer was accompanied only by a small family of crest-eater cubs who were the kasatha’s pets. When she found Vabaimus and the strange plateau, the kasatha left her ship to investigate. She died, centuries ago, deep inside the plateau (see The Tempering on page 13). Her crest-eater pets escaped the ship and have thrived on the calcium-rich plateau, eventually siring a breeding population of their species that lives in the dry riverbed (see area B).

Treasure: Mora has a few relics recovered from the kasathan starship. She shows them to the PCs and allows the PCs to take anything they want. In Subtier 1–2, this includes three large, gray pearls each worth 50 credits, three *mk 1 serums of healing*, and 2 doses of zero (*Starfinder Armory* 132). In Subtier 3–4, the salvage

includes 12 large, gray pearls each worth 50 credits, 2 doses of tier 2 stimulant (*Armory* 133), and a *mk 1 computer idol* (*Armory* 120) in the shape of Talavet’s holy symbol.

VEHICLES

The PCs can take any combination of explorer buggies and basic energycles; explorer buggies can carry three passengers in addition to the driver, and basic energycles can carry one passenger in addition to the driver. Statistics for these vehicles are reprinted in **Handout #1** on page 20, and you should review the basics of vehicle combat on pages 278–281 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook* in case the PCs use them during combat. The vehicles each carry the following gear the PCs might find useful: 100 feet of titanium alloy cable (1 bulk), an engineering kit (bulk L), a grappler (bulk L), and a handheld geological scanner (bulk L). The scanners are specialized tools that can identify chemical compounds and parse geological phenomena, and the devices help the PCs decipher specific features later in the adventure. Each energycle has one set of each of these items, and each explorer buggy has two sets of each.

Neither type of vehicle has an autocontrol or autopilot system. The basic energycles in this scenario have an increased overland speed to match that of the exploration buggies.

TRAVELING TO THE SCAN LOCATIONS

The players can travel to the three scanning tower sites—Forsaken Canyon (page 7), the Windy Cliffs (page 9), and the Dry Riverbed (page 10)—in any order they wish. While each location presents its own hazards, the following rules apply regardless of where the PCs are located.

Navigation: The tower sites are each about 50–75 miles away from one another, and reaching each point involves driving off-road over the bleak and challenging terrain of the Big Mina Plateau. Dr. Motressi provides the PCs digital maps of the plateau, though this includes neither the means to track the PCs’ global position nor any automated pathfinding function. It’s up to the PCs to navigate.

While traveling overland, each vehicle requires a pilot, and at least one PC acts as the party’s navigator. A pilot can also navigate, but doing so imposes a –2 penalty on that PC’s Piloting checks while traveling overland. Other PCs can help navigate by using the aid another action. When traveling to another site, each pilot attempts a DC 12 Piloting check, and the navigator attempts a DC 10 Piloting check; increase these DCs by 2 in Subtier 3–4. If each of the pilots succeeds, the PCs reach their destination in 2 hours. If at least one pilot fails, the trip takes 3 hours. If a pilot fails by 5 or more, they experience a delay (such as getting stuck) that adds 1 hour to the travel time. If the navigator fails their check, increase the travel time by 1 hour.

Time: The PCs have no time limit, though there’s the incentive of performing these tasks quickly to prove their skill as explorers; this impacts one of the scenario’s secondary success conditions. While traveling the plateau, the PCs can operate in

the field for up to 10 hours a day before experiencing the effects of a forced march (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 258), and the area has 14 hours of functional light per day. Traveling at night is difficult, and the Piloting checks to drive or navigate increase by 5 during this time.

Towers: Each of the scanning towers is a 30-foot-tall structure of titanium alloy rods that the PCs must assemble on the spot. A tower has a small platform at the top, which can support only one Medium or smaller creature. The scanner and computer must be installed at this platform. Twenty feet above the ground is a secondary platform that can support two Medium or smaller creatures. A ladder (Athletics DC 5 to climb) ascends the tower's length. A tower's parts are 20 bulk in total, and an assembled tower occupies a 15-foot square.

Assembling the tower takes 30 minutes and a successful DC 15 Engineering check (DC 17 in Subtier 3–4). PCs can use the aid another action to assist a primary character. Only a creature perched atop the tower's upper platform can calibrate the instruments, which involves 15 minutes of work, communicating with Mora by comm unit, and succeeding at a DC 15 Computers check (DC 17 in Subtier 3–4). The PCs' documentation has the instructions to assemble and anchor a tower, as well as to calibrate its instruments once it's intact. These allow a PC to attempt the skill checks to prepare the tower and instruments untrained, though doing so requires repeatedly referencing these instructions and takes twice as long as a check by a character trained in the skill. The PCs can attempt the Engineering checks repeatedly simply by expending more time; however, if the PCs fail the Computers check for a given tower three times, Mora misinterprets the consistently erroneous test data as evidence that it's properly installed.

Development: Once the tower is properly erected and calibrated, the PCs' work is done, and they can move to the next area. After setting up the third tower, Dr. Motressi begins the full scan (see *Scanning the Plateau* on page 12).

Rewards: The PCs find fairly little treasure while exploring the plateau, but they receive some compensation in the form of small grants they can secure after returning to Absalom Station. For each tower the PCs do not properly build, reduce each PC's credits earned as follows. If the PCs build the tower but failed to properly calibrate the instruments, instead reduce their credits earned by the amount in parentheses.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 167 (or 40 credits).

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 250 (or 80 credits).

Subtier 3–4: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 333 (or 120 credits).

A. FORSAKEN CANYON (CR 3 OR CR 5)

Like the rest of the plateau, Forsaken Canyon is a bleak and lifeless region, the ground covered in a hard, gray substance that resembles the shell of a lobster or the surface of an oyster. But

here, the ground slopes steeply down into a wide canyon with large mounds the size of vehicles and narrow gullies that wind between hills. The coordinates the PCs have been given lead them to a hill in the middle of the canyon. The scanning tower must be erected at the top of the hill in the center of the map. The path ascends gradually, whereas the sides of the hill ascend at about an angle of about 35–45 degrees, making these slopes difficult terrain. A PC must succeed at a DC 15 Piloting check per round to drive a vehicle up, down, or along these slopes. Failure causes the vehicle to make no progress that round, and failing by 5 or more causes the vehicle to slide down the slope uncontrollably, dealing 1d10 damage to the vehicle when it reaches the closest patch of flat terrain.

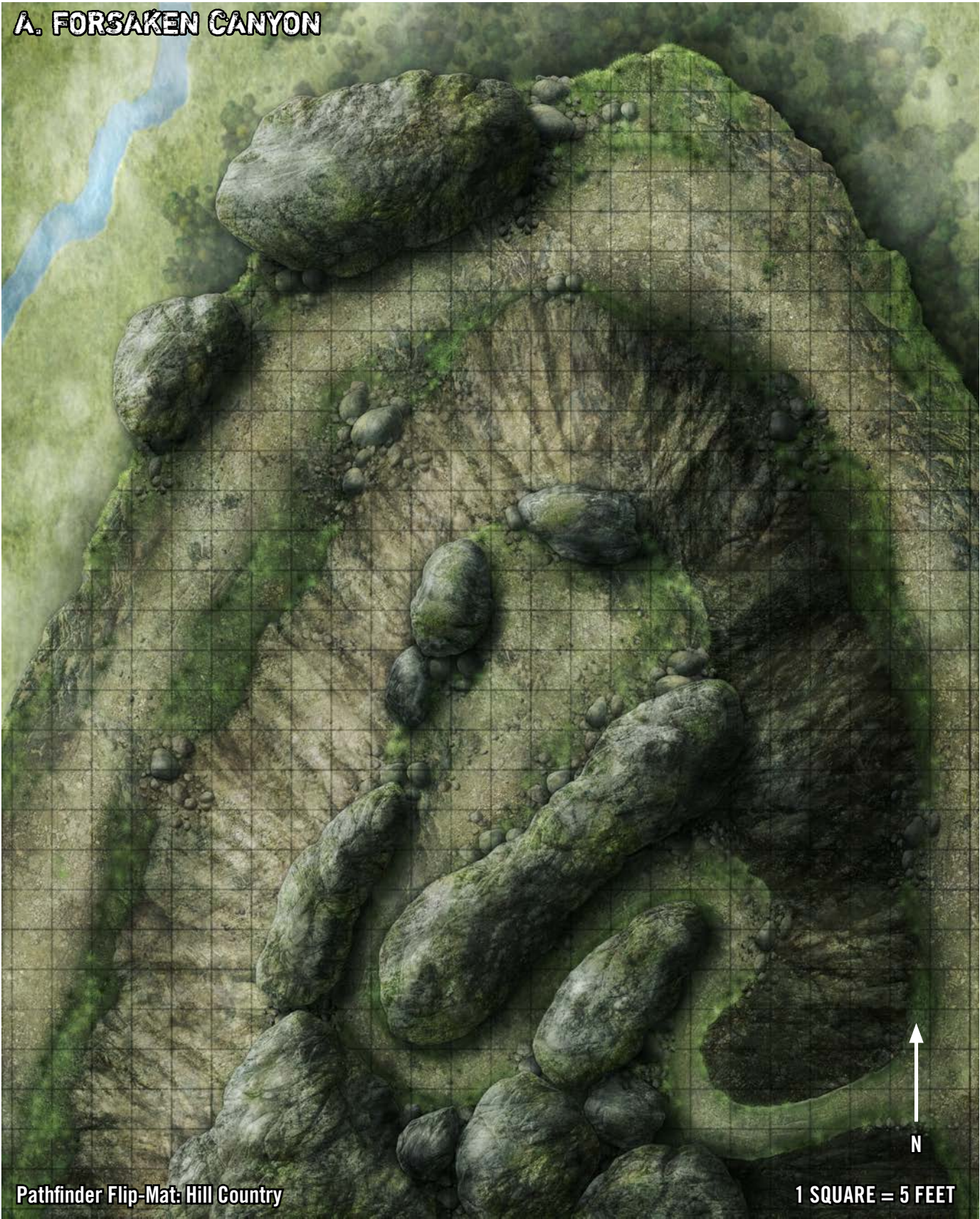
The PCs should erect the tower on top of the hill. As they work, bird-like creatures (the stonegulls—see *Creatures*) watch from afar and gradually approach.

Creatures: As they drive up the hill, PCs who succeed at a DC 15 Perception check spot a flock of birds a mile or so away, perched on the edge of the canyon and looking toward the PCs. A PC who can get a close look at these creatures—perhaps with binoculars or a flying drone with a camera—can see these birdlike creatures have stony shells the same color as the plateau, and instead of a beak, each has a long proboscis. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Life Science check deduces the birds must consume an enormous amount of calcium to maintain their shells, likely liquefying the calcium before drinking it up through their proboscis; the creatures are uniquely adapted to this ecosystem and there is nothing quite like them on record. Although this adventure refers to these creatures as stonegulls, the species has no given name, so the PCs might invent their own.

The stonegulls are fairly curious and slowly approach as the PCs assemble the tower. By the time the PCs are ready to calibrate the instruments, several stonegulls are circling overhead, and more perch atop nearby hills. The instruments' signals and pulses distress the stonegulls, though, and after about 30 seconds of the calibration process, they begin fluttering their wings and tapping each other's shells with their proboscises. Shortly after that, another test pulse from the instruments spooks the stonegulls, many of which begin flying away while wailing in shrill tones. Several others instead respond by attacking. Half of these begin 90 feet above the hill, and the other half should begin at roughly ground level 30–50 feet off the edge of the map.

Since this occurs during the calibration process, one PC is likely at the top of the tower. On their first turn, each PC can attempt a DC 20 Life Science or Survival check to discern that the stonegulls appear to be attracted to movement and are attacking out of a sense of alarm. A PC without any cover can remain still enough to avoid the stonegulls' attention (in effect using the delay action) with a successful DC 14 Stealth check (DC 17 in Subtier 3–4) or attempt such a Stealth check after moving to a position with cover. Once a PC attacks a stonegull or has been damaged by one, hiding in the open is no longer an option. A Small or Medium PC who crawls beneath a buggy can attempt a new Stealth check to hide

A. FORSAKEN CANYON



Pathfinder Flip-Mat: Hill Country

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

even after antagonizing the stonegulls.

If all of the PCs successfully hide from the stonegulls, these flying predators swoop through the area for several more rounds before flapping away. Once the stonegulls are defeated or gone, the PCs can complete the instruments' calibration.

SUBTIER 1-2 (CR 3)

STONEGULLS (4) CR 1/2

N Small animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +4

DEFENSE HP 12 EACH

EAC 10; **KAC** 13

Fort +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., fly 60 ft. (Ex, average)

Melee proboscis +5 (1d6 P; critical corrosive injection 1d4)

TACTICS

During Combat Stonegulls attack PCs individually and do not gang up on a single target unless no other target is readily accessible. They fly in and attempt to pierce their foe with their proboscis, releasing acid that corrodes bone into a liquid which they can then slurp up.

Morale If more than half of the stonegulls are defeated, the rest flee.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +9, Stealth +4, Survival +4

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Corrosive Injection (Ex) On a critical hit, a stonegull's proboscis injects the target with a specialized chemical that liquefies bone. At the start of each of its turns, the target takes 1d4 acid damage. At the end of each turn, the target can attempt a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + the amount of acid damage taken that turn). On a success, the effect ends.

SUBTIER 3-4 (CR 5)

STONEGULLS (8) CR 1/2

Use the statistics in Subtier 1-2.

Development: Once the stonegulls are defeated or driven off, the PCs can finish calibrating the computer and move on to the next location.

THE WINDY CLIFFS (CR 2 OR CR 4)

As the PCs arrive at a high cliff that curves along one edge of the plateau, the wind is noticeably strong. Flying creatures, such as a mechanic's drone, have some difficulty hovering, though this does not require Acrobatics checks until later (see below). The

SCALING ENCOUNTER A1

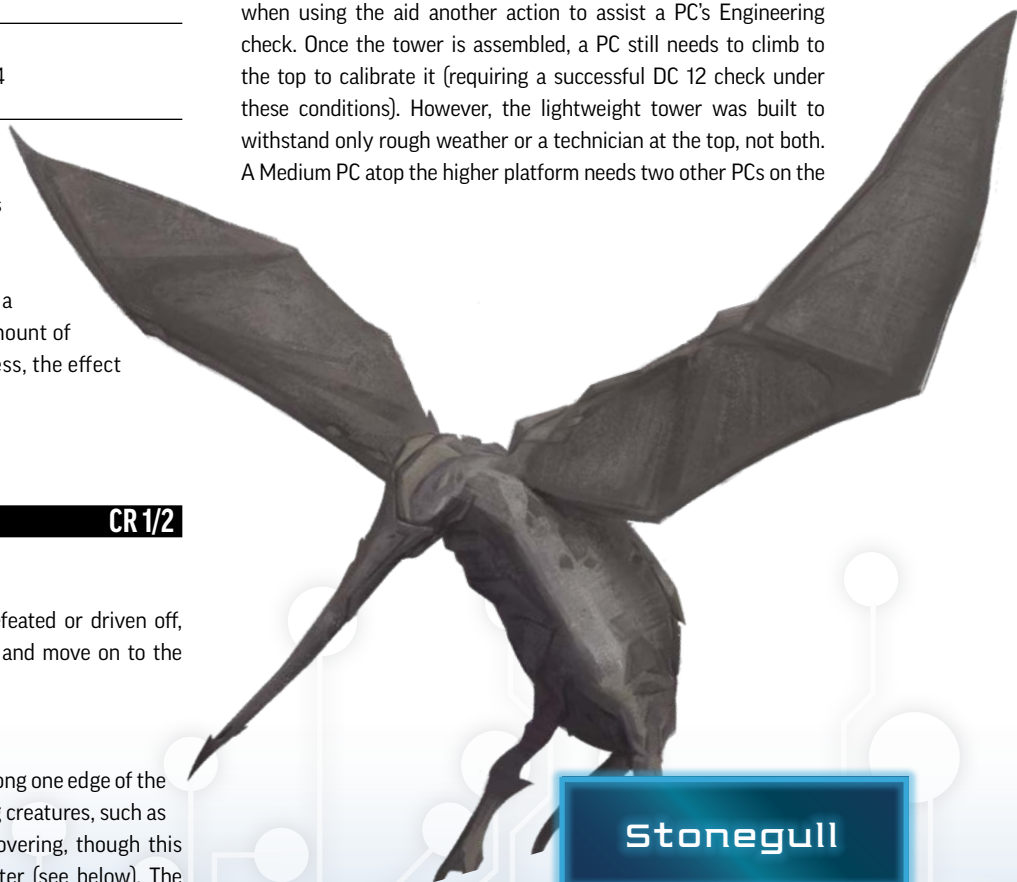
Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Subtier 1-2: Remove one stonegull from the encounter.

Subtier 3-4: Remove two stonegulls from the encounter.

ground here is a strange field of uniform shallow depressions, each about 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, and about 1-1/2 feet deep. At scattered intervals throughout this strange geological feature, the shallow depressions are replaced with long, low, mounds equal in size to the depressions, but rising about 1-1/2 feet above the ground. This region is a feeding ground for Big Mina. Each of the long depressions is a concealed trap that functions much like the modified leaves of a Venus flytrap, snapping shut when live prey brushes along the interior. The small mounds of equal size are traps that have closed and are slowly digesting their contents. In this region, the PCs are rarely more than 15 feet from the nearest trap.

Building the scanning tower on this unusual terrain and in the middle of fierce winds is particularly challenging. Strength is nearly as important as technical skill, so PCs can attempt Athletics checks when using the aid another action to assist a PC's Engineering check. Once the tower is assembled, a PC still needs to climb to the top to calibrate it (requiring a successful DC 12 check under these conditions). However, the lightweight tower was built to withstand only rough weather or a technician at the top, not both. A Medium PC atop the higher platform needs two other PCs on the



Stonegull

lower platform to help brace the structure until the work's done. A Small PC needs only one other PC to brace the structure. The PCs might also take safety precautions, such as linking themselves to the tower with cable line. A PC perched at the top platform must succeed at a DC 10 Acrobatics check to avoid falling partway through the calibration process, taking 3d6 damage on a failure.

If a PC falls from the tower, the windy conditions also push that PC into one of the traps (see below). If none of the PCs fall from the tower, the PCs have enough time to attempt the instruments' calibration once before a gust of severe wind rips across the area. Each PC gets blown from their current position unless they succeed at a DC 10 Fortitude save (DC 11 in Subtier 3–4). On a failure, a PC on the tower falls, and any PC affected has a 50% chance of being blown into one of the traps. This is the only gust that strikes the area during the encounter, even if the PCs attempt multiple checks to calibrate the instruments.

Trap: The trapped troughs here typically capture stonegulls and other animals, particularly those knocked down by or taking shelter from the high winds that whip through this region. A PC can correctly infer these troughs' nature with a successful DC 23 Perception check (DC 26 in Subtier 3–4). Even in the strong winds, the PCs can readily walk around the troughs. A PC who enters one of the troughs might be caught inside as the sides snap shut around them (see the trap statistics below). This first knocks the victim prone and grapples them, and on the following round the trap sprays immobilizing liquid that quickly hardens to trap the target further. Each round that the victim remains trapped, the fluid continues to accumulate and harden, pinning a grappled creature and paralyzing a pinned creature. The traps are large enough to engulf and paralyze only a Medium or smaller creature. A Large creature is large enough that the trap cannot progress beyond the grappled stage.

A grappled or pinned creature can try to break free as if escaping from a grapple (DC 25 in Subtier 1–2, DC 28 in Subtier 3–4), and a creature that escapes can scramble clear of the trap completely. A paralyzed victim is unable to escape without help, and over the course of several days an impermeable shell grows around the victim, digesting them over the course of several weeks. Another creature can pull a trapped victim free with a successful DC 20 Athletics check (DC 23 in Subtier 3–4). Alternatively, PCs can break a victim out by destroying the trapping material; the new shell has hardness 5 and 5 Hit Points, though any excess damage is dealt to the trapped victim.

SUBTIER 1–2 (CR 2)

FEEDING TRAP

CR 2

Type analog; **Perception** DC 23; **Disable** Life Science or Survival DC 18 (safely cause trap to close)

Trigger location; **Reset** 1 hour

Initial Effect snapping vise (prone and grappled); Reflex DC 13 avoids; **Secondary Effect** immobilizing goo (grappled creature becomes pinned, pinned creature becomes

paralyzed); Reflex DC 13 negates.

SUBTIER 1–2 (CR 4)

FEEDING TRAP

CR 4

Type analog; **Perception** DC 26; **Disable** Life Science or Survival DC 21 (safely cause trap to close)

Trigger location; **Reset** 1 hour

Initial Effect snapping vise (prone and grappled); Reflex DC 15 avoids; **Secondary Effect** immobilizing goo (grappled creature becomes pinned, pinned creature becomes paralyzed); Reflex DC 15 negates.

Treasure: Big Mina slowly coats indigestible remains of trapped victims in a nacreous substance, forming huge pearls worth 50 credits. If the PCs cut into one of the digestive mounds nearby or look for other trapped creatures, they release a viscous gray fluid surrounding either the almost entirely digested remains of a stonegull (see area A) or one of these enormous pearls. The PCs can recover four of these in Subtier 1–2 or eight in Subtier 3–4).

Development: Once the PCs have escaped or avoided the traps, set up the tower, and configured the instruments, they can depart. If they first examined some of the digestive mounds, a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Life Science check can recognize that these traps all appear to be connected to one organism—much like some large root structure—and that the viscous fluid is a calcium-rich substance that serves as some form of blood.

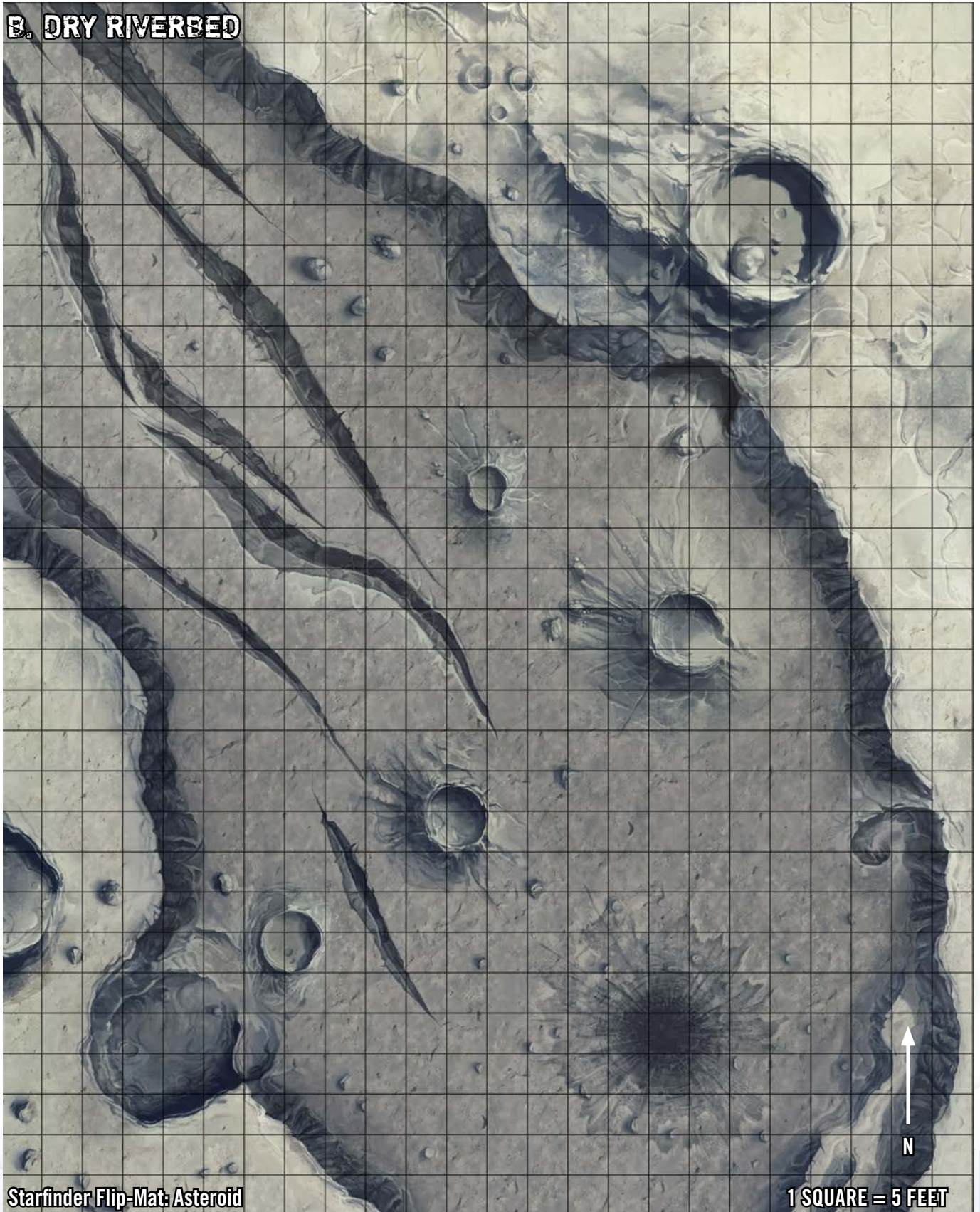
B. DRY RIVERBED (CR 4 OR CR 6)

A long, shallow depression winds across the plateau in this area. Like the rest of the region, it is entirely covered in a gray, shell-like substance. The research team has labeled this region as a dry riverbed, though in fact no one is entirely sure if there was ever water here. The small crater walls on this map rise to a height of about 4 feet, providing cover to most creatures. The deep furrows in the gully are difficult terrain. The large hole at the southern end of the map descends deep into the plateau and can be used to reach Big Mina's crystalline brain later in the adventure (see page 17).

The PCs arrive at the top of the ridge, which descends steeply (Athletics DC 17) 10 feet into the gully. Alternatively, a PC can drive a vehicle off the edge of the ridge, though doing so without damaging the vehicle requires a successful DC 15 Piloting check, and the vehicle lands 10 feet away from the ridge (plus an additional 5 feet for every 5 by which the PC's Piloting check exceeded the DC, if the driver desires). Failing this Piloting check deals damage to the vehicle equal to its collision damage. If the PCs land a vehicle atop a crest-eater (see Creatures), treat it as a ram action (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 279) that then shunts the vehicle into the nearest available space.

Creatures: As the PCs approach the coordinates for this scanning tower, they spot a large, green-skinned quadruped with a flame-colored crest and massive bony projections. (In Subtier 3–4 there are two such creatures.) A PC who succeeds

B. DRY RIVERBED



Starfinder Flip-Mat: Asteroid

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

SCALING ENCOUNTER B

Both Subtiers: To accommodate a group of four PCs, the crest-eaters are old and in failing health, giving them the sickened condition.

at a DC 16 Life Science check recognizes the creature as a crest-eater, a predator native to Kasath and sometimes raised as pets by kasathas. By exceeding this DC by 5 or more, the PC recalls that crest-eaters spit a bone-dissolving acid, and by exceeding the result by 10 or more, the PC recalls that the crest-eater can track anyone who has been struck by this acid. A kasatha PC automatically knows this information.

The only sure way to secure the area is to drive off or kill the crest-eaters. The crest-eaters are currently breaking up some of the ground in this area to extract mineral nutrients. PCs may speculate that the crest-eaters have some connection to the kasathan ship that was found wrecked on the plateau and to the damaged equipment Mora mentioned when she was explaining the mission. In fact, the kasatha explorer had some immature crest-eaters on her ship when she crashed, and they have since thrived on the unusually calcium-rich plateau. Large, strong, and aggressive, the creatures have destroyed any equipment Mora and her team have left behind. Even if the PCs can find a way to erect the tower without fighting the crest-eaters, the creatures are sure to destroy the tower after the PCs have left (see Development).

A PC seeking to avoid combat with the creatures can change the crest-eaters' attitude to indifferent by getting their attention and succeeding at a DC 26 Survival check. If successful, the crest-eaters sniff curiously at the PCs but retreat when coaxed to leave, buying the PCs 3 hours to work before the creatures return. If the PC fails, the crest-eaters instead respond with hunger that swiftly escalates to hostility.

SUBTIER 1-2 (CR 4)

CREST-EATER

CR 4

HP 54 (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 30; see page 21)

TACTICS

During Combat The crest-eater prefers to bite creatures, charging into melee when the terrain allows it. Foes who remain beyond melee range prompt the crest-eater to use its venom spit.

Morale A crest-eater fights to the death.

SUBTIER 3-4 (CR 6)

CREST-EATERS (2)

CR 4

HP 54 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 30; see page 21)

TACTICS

Use the tactics in Subtier 1-2.

Treasure: If the PCs kill one or both crest-eaters, they can fashion parts of their shells into bone cestuses (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 31). This is reflected on this scenario's Chronicle sheet.

Development: If the PCs shooed away the crest-eaters but have not finished setting up all three towers within 3 hours, the crest-eaters return to their favored mineral patch and push at the tower until it falls over; Mora can advise the PCs that the tower has fallen. If this happens, the PCs need to return and set up the tower again, though the damage to it increases the DCs of Computers and Engineering checks to set it up properly by 2.

SCANNING THE PLATEAU

Once the PCs have erected and calibrated all three scanning towers, Dr. Motressi contacts the Starfinders, congratulates them on their work, and announces that she's ready to perform a deep image scan of the entire plateau. The process takes about 10 minutes, after which she sends the PCs the preliminary data while she and her team analyze this new information. If all three of the towers are functioning properly, the results are very clear. If the PCs calibrated one of the towers incorrectly, the results are difficult to decipher but provide enough information to proceed further. If a tower is missing entirely or if two or more sets of instruments are poorly calibrated, the scan's results are unusable. In that case, Mora sends the PCs to recalibrate one of the towers (using three attempts, as described in *Traveling to the Scan Locations* on page 6) and then tries the scan again. If the PCs still incorrectly calibrate the tower, proceed with the adventure; this is reflected in the secondary success conditions and shouldn't be a reason to drag out the adventure.

Once the scan is complete, Mara sends the data to the PCs' comm units and discusses her team's findings. Read or paraphrase the following.

Slowly the three scanning towers begin to construct an image of the Big Mina Plateau on the screen. Forsaken Canyon, the cliffside, and the dry riverbed all come into focus, along with many other terrain features over many square miles. But the image also goes down into the ground, and as temperature, seismic activity, and other geological readings begin to light up on the screen, Mora's voice becomes more and more excited.

"This is wonderful. You've saved us years of work! I can't believe some of these readings. Wait... is that right? That doesn't make sense. These tunnels look like some kind of... respiration network? And the composition of the plateau... that mineral doesn't appear naturally on this planet. Is this whole area some kind of... transplant?" Mara audibly consults with several puzzled scientists in the background.

The scan concludes, showing deep below the surface of the planet where a network of narrow tunnels come together to form a large chamber filled with a crystalline object. Mora's face appears in a small window of the screen. "According to

these readings, that crystal is giving off an incredible amount of heat. And all the tunnels we've found—like the one at the dry riverbed where you put up one of the towers—converge at that spot. Starfinders, I can't believe I'm staying this, but I think this entire plateau is one enormous, living creature that migrated here from another world. Big Mina is alive!"

Mora asks the PCs to continue their investigation by descending into the tunnels, reaching the central crystal, and performing additional scans to confirm the thesis that the plateau is a single alien organism of immense size. "We don't know how or when it got here, how it grows, or if it poses any danger to the rest of the planet's inhabitants," she says. "And we can't answer those questions if we have to scan through a mile of rock. If that crystal object is what I think it is—some kind of brain—I need you to get down there and find some answers. Can you do that?"

If the PCs are hesitant to go down into the tunnels, remind them that they have titanium alloy cable lines and grapples in their vehicles, which make any descent relatively easy (the Athletics check to climb using a grapples is only DC 5). There is no rush to delve into the tunnels—the secondary success condition to set up the towers expediently has now concluded—and so this is a good time for the PCs to rest.

THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

The PCs are now tasked with investigating Big Mina by descending through the tunnels that line her interior. These tunnels ventilate heat generated by Mina's unusual physiology, especially that generated by the crystalline brain that lies at her center. So long as the PCs are wearing modern armor, their environmental protections make this heat harmless. The temperature rises as the PCs descend deeper, and for most of their journey, the temperature is 90–100° F. This qualifies as very hot weather (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 402), which deals 1d4 nonlethal fire damage to anyone wearing archaic armor or not using environmental protections (Fortitude DC 15 negates). This damage takes into account the approximate time (about 1 hour) it takes the PCs to traverse the tunnels, though a Large PC must squeeze for much of the initial descent, doubling the number of times the group is exposed to heat damage.

The tunnels are about 5 feet wide for most of their length, and they descend at varying inclines ranging from about 30–60 degrees. Have the PCs establish how they plan to traverse the tunnels. In most cases, the modest angles and opportunity to brace against opposing walls reduces the DC of Athletics checks to 5, and the PCs have enough cable that they can use grapples in other places to reduce those Athletics DCs to 5 as well. Because characters fall only if they fail these checks by 5 or more, it's unlikely that any PC would fall. Even then, the PCs can take precautions to help those characters descend safely.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTERS

Treat either the Tempering (below) or the encounter in area **C** as an optional encounter, skipping it if fewer than 90 minutes remain in

which to complete the scenario. Consider the encounters the PCs have already had so far in the scenario. If your group has avoided combat so far and solved every problem with skill checks, you might leave out the trap and skill challenge that follows and give them encounter **C** (a combat with native life-forms) instead. Conversely, if the players have had their fill of fighting and are looking for a change of pace, skip Encounter **C** and use the trap encounter instead.

Regardless, even if you skip the Tempering, the PCs should discover the petrified remains of Exu Jana Onorab of House Hadulan, as this helps them fulfill one of the secondary objectives for the scenario.

Rewards: If the PCs do not find Exu Jana Onorab's remains, reduce each PC's credits earned as follows.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 224.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 355.

Subtier 3–4: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 486.

THE TEMPERING (CR 3 OR CR 5)

As the PCs descend, the tunnel becomes a vertical shaft 8 feet across and over 50 feet deep (in Subtier 1–2) or over 80 feet deep (in Subtier 3–4). There is no map for this encounter; instead, clarify with the players the order in which they descend the shaft, and ask what safety precautions they might have taken. Ask each PC to attempt a DC 5 Athletics check. In the unlikely event a PC fails, allow the character to attempt a Reflex save (DC 14 in Subtier 1–2 or DC 15 in Subtier 3–4) to catch the cable farther down the shaft and avoid a fall (5d6 damage in Subtier 1–2 or 8d6 damage in Subtier 3–4). If PCs are tied together, a PC can safely stop the fall of a PC to whom they are tied with a successful DC 5 Athletics check, though the check DC increases by 5 if the falling creature is Medium and by 10 if the falling creature is Large. On a failed check, that PC also falls. Other characters can attempt Athletics checks to catch falling creatures to whom they are tied, though the DC increases by an additional 2, 5, or 10 for each additional Small, Medium, or Large creature that is falling. When trying to stop a fall in this way, other PCs tied to the character attempting the Athletics check can attempt Athletics checks to use the aid another action to assist that PC.

Hazard: The same gray, shell-like material that the PCs saw on the surface of the plateau covers the interior of this shaft, though it is much lumpier and more irregular in this section of tunnel. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Perception check (DC 27 in Subtier 3–4) makes out the vague contours of living creatures beneath the gray shell and realizes that the tunnels are a kind of trap that captures prey that fall or climb down. Organic nozzles hidden in the walls of the shaft spray a rapidly hardening gel that calcifies creatures, turning the outer layer of their flesh to a bone-like material (this is similar to the trap in the Windy Cliffs encounter on page 9). The nozzles here can spray only once per minute, so PCs who descend quickly after the hazard triggers generally can avoid being targeted a second time.

If the PCs succeeded at the Perception check, they can attempt

to bypass the calcifying spray in a variety of ways. The following skill check DCs increase by 2 in Subtier 3–4.

Athletics (DC 12): A PC can descend the shaft quickly, slipping past the hazard quickly enough that the gel strikes only empty air.

Engineering (DC 16): A PC can rig up an improvised shield that blocks the spray. This allows multiple PCs to pass unharmed. If the PC fails the check, the shield seems suitable but fails to protect the first person who relies on it.

Life Science (DC 13): A PC can study the trap and assess how and when the hazard would trigger, allowing others to descend more safely. This grants each PC a +2 bonus to checks to bypass this hazard.

Stealth (DC 15): A PC can try to sneak past the sprayers without being sensed.

Survival (DC 18): A PC can fashion a lure on a cable and lower it down the tunnel, triggering the spray harmlessly and allowing multiple PCs to hurry past unharmed. If the PCs either fail to notice the trap with Perception or accidentally trigger the trap with a failed skill check, they are strung out on a cable descending through the tunnel when nozzles spray them with calcifying gel. The triggering PC and any creatures within 20 feet can attempt a DC 14 Reflex save (DC 15 in Subtier 3–4) to avoid the spray. Those who fail are struck, covered, and numbed by the rapidly hardening shell, and they fall just a second later. The trap triggers once a PC has already descended 30 feet, so affected PCs are unlikely to fall the full distance of the tunnel. The calcium-rich glue has hardness 5 and 5 Hit Points, and any damage dealt in excess of its Hit Points is dealt to the trapped PC. The gel does not reduce the damage dealt by the fall, though falling damage can destroy this shell.

Development: At the bottom of the shaft waits one more surprise for the PCs. Ribbons of green cloth are still visible sticking out from the stony surface at the bottom of the shaft; as the PCs shine their flashlights and beacons over the area, they can clearly see the distinctive four-armed outline of a kasatha who was caught within the calcifying spray and must have slowly suffocated to death. A spherical holorecorder is in one of the kasatha's hands. The PCs can easily free the object from the corpse's hand, knock off the shell covering, and play the recording.

The projector creates a hologram of a female kasatha, her mouth covered with a green mask and her hands outstretched in ritual gestures. A faint audio crackles to life, echoing in the tunnel.

Read or paraphrase the following.

"It has been three days since I landed, and I believe I am the first sapient creature ever to visit this planet. What a privilege this discovery is. Thank Talavet for the tales she has charged me to tell. I shall not fail in this duty.

"When I first beheld the vast, dry, expanse of this plateau, I felt the call of home. A year have I journeyed, with only my crest-eater cubs for company, and as a citizen of the Idari, I have never seen the deserts of Kasath with my waking eyes. Yet, they are as clear to me now as if they stretched out before me.

Now I descend into the depths of this strange, alien desert to find what rests beneath it. Mother, father, I miss you and all the members of our family. Soon I will return to add my story to the records of our House. Perhaps one day that story will be retold, and the lessons others have taught me about myself will be repeated in the halls of our ancestors.

"But if I should fail, I leave behind this record in the hope that other pilgrims follow in my footsteps. And while it is hope beyond hope, I ask that if you, strangers, find me before the carrion birds have made a meal of my flesh, perform the work of the adata and preserve my memories, for what they are worth, so that I may be returned to my people. For even in failure, there are lessons to be learned, and love can still be found and remembered.

"I am Exu Jana Onorab of House Hadulan, and this is my Tempering."

A kasathan PC, or another PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Culture check, recalls that the adata are a special class of kasatha aboard the *Idari* who remove a thin slice of brain material from kasathas who die aboard the vessel. This brain matter is added to a vast ancestral record which kasathas can access, even asking questions of those who have died.

The calcifying gel has petrified Exu Jana Onorab's brain. A PC can remove the brain or a piece of it with a successful DC 15 Engineering, Medicine, or Profession check related to handling stone. Alternatively, a PC could just hack the petrified head from the body or otherwise extract a large portion of the petrified corpse, though in doing so the PC should attempt a DC 5 Dexterity check to avoid damaging the brain's preserved structure in the process. While it is not within the PCs' ability to restore the petrified brain sample, the adata aboard the *Idari* may know a way to do so.

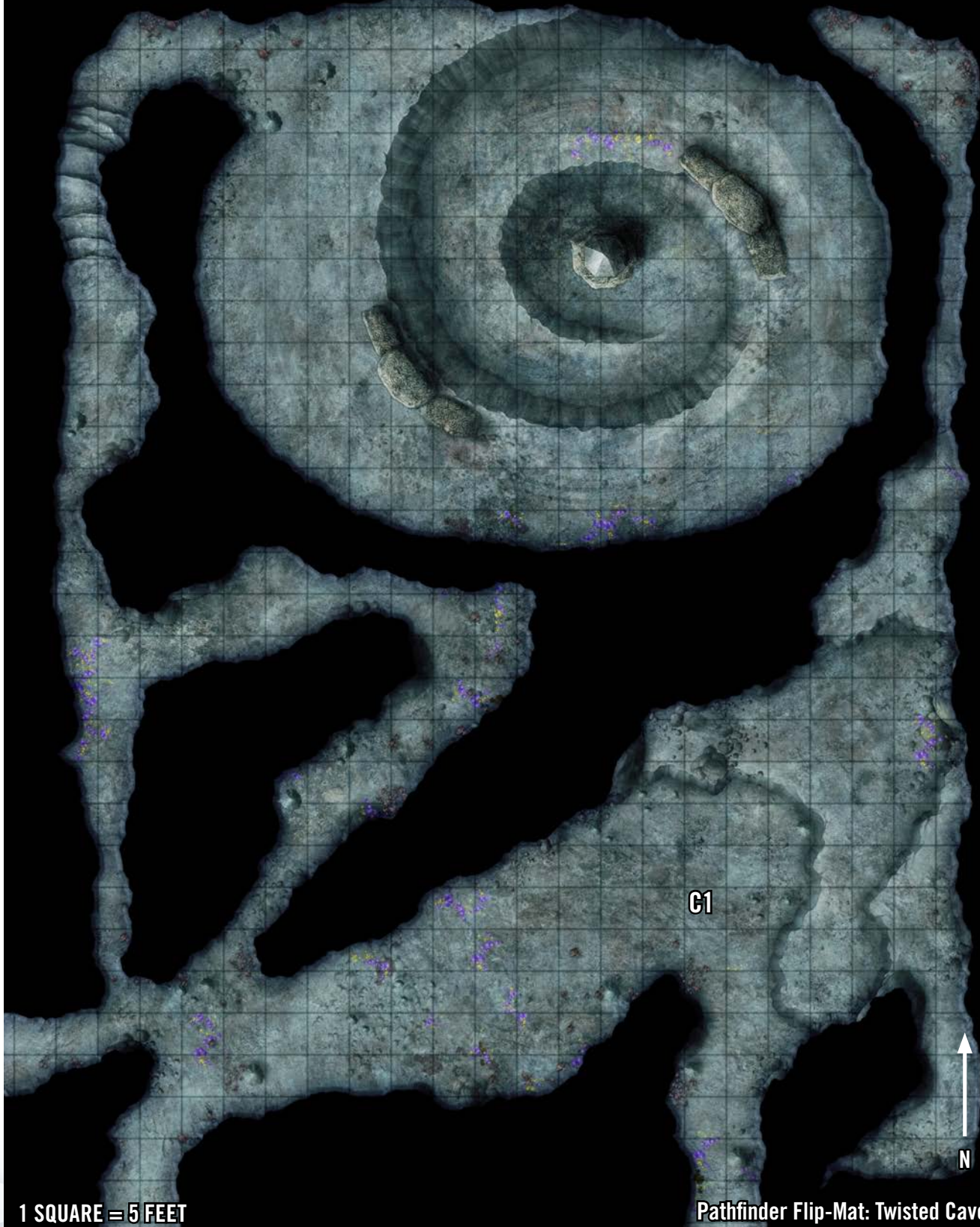
If the PCs would rather extract the whole body, they can do so using any of the methods and risks above. However, Exu's petrified body is 45 bulk, which is extraordinarily difficult to carry, much less maneuver up through the tunnels. If the PCs are strong enough and devise a means to hoist the body through thousands of feet of tunnels, the process likely takes many hours.

Treasure: If the PCs investigate further, the corpse of Exu Jana Onorab, while petrified, nevertheless yields her equipment, which can be salvaged as treasure. In Subtier 1–2, the PCs recover a suit of kasatha microcord I, spark polarity gauntlets (*Starfinder Armory* 12), a frost subduer (*Armory* 13), jump jets, and a *mk 1 ring of resistance*. In Subtier 3–4, the corpse instead yields a suit of hidden soldier armor, a conviction puzzleblade (*Armory* 9), an *amulet of camouflage*, a targeting computer armor upgrade, and a *spell amp of reflecting armor*.

C. ATTACK OF THE CAVERN CLEANERS (CR 3 OR CR 5)

As the PCs descend through the tunnels, each character should attempt a DC 15 Perception check. Those who succeed hear movement both ahead and behind them, marked by a clacking sound like two shells rapidly struck together. Characters with

C. ATTACK OF THE CAVERN CLEANERS



Pathfinder Flip-Mat: Twisted Caverns

Scaling Encounter C

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Subtier 1-2: The cavern cleaners have not eaten for a long time and are sickened for the entire encounter.

Subtier 3-4: Remove one cavern cleaner from the encounter.

darkvision who succeed at the Perception check actually see the source of the noise: crustaceans about 5 feet long with many long, spindly legs. In groups of three to five, they observe the PCs from secondary tunnels, slowly rocking back and forth in unison as they watch the PCs. As the PCs descend, they see multiple groups of

such creatures, all silently observing the PCs and rocking back and forth, but the speed and tempo with which they move varies; some groups move very slowly while others move more quickly. None of them chase or follow the PCs—at least, not yet. If attacked, the creatures at first don't respond before suddenly scuttling away.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 17 Life Science check can recognize these creatures as an example of “cleaning symbiosis,” life-forms which have built up a symbiotic relationship with Big Mina, surviving on the parasites and other creatures they clean from inside Mina's ventilation tunnels. The rocking back and forth is a way of signaling relative hunger to others of their own kind and regulating competition. The faster the rocking motion, the more hungry that group of “cavern cleaners” is; less hungry cleaners know to let the hungry ones take their turn. If a PC's result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, they can deduce the creatures might be sensitive to light, considering they live their entire existence deep inside Big Mina. If the result exceeds the DC by 10 or more, a PC realizes the creatures must navigate the tunnels through a keen sense of vibration, carried through the tunnel walls (blindsense [vibration]).

Creatures: As the PCs descend, one of the PCs (using either darkvision or a light source, such as a flashlight or beacon), spots another group of cavern cleaners, this time rocking back and forth very quickly. As the PC watches, the group splits up and disappears into the tunnels. The sound of their movement audibly echoes all around the PCs as the creatures surround the team. Roll initiative as the cavern cleaners attack the PCs from many directions.

Have the players place their characters near the middle of the area marked **C1**. In Subtier 1-2, two cavern cleaners emerge from non-adjacent tunnels that lead into area **C1**. In Subtier 3-4, three cavern cleaners emerge from three separate tunnels.

Because the cavern cleaners are animals, the PCs may seek to avoid this encounter using the handle animal function of Survival. But these creatures are very hungry and aggressive; a PC must succeed at a DC 27 Survival check to frighten away the cavern cleaners with a display of firepower, such as by creating a bright flash, loud sound, or making an attack before using the handle animal task. This tactic works only on the first round of combat; if the PCs don't try to frighten the creatures away on the first turn, the cavern cleaner are too committed to the battle to withdraw.

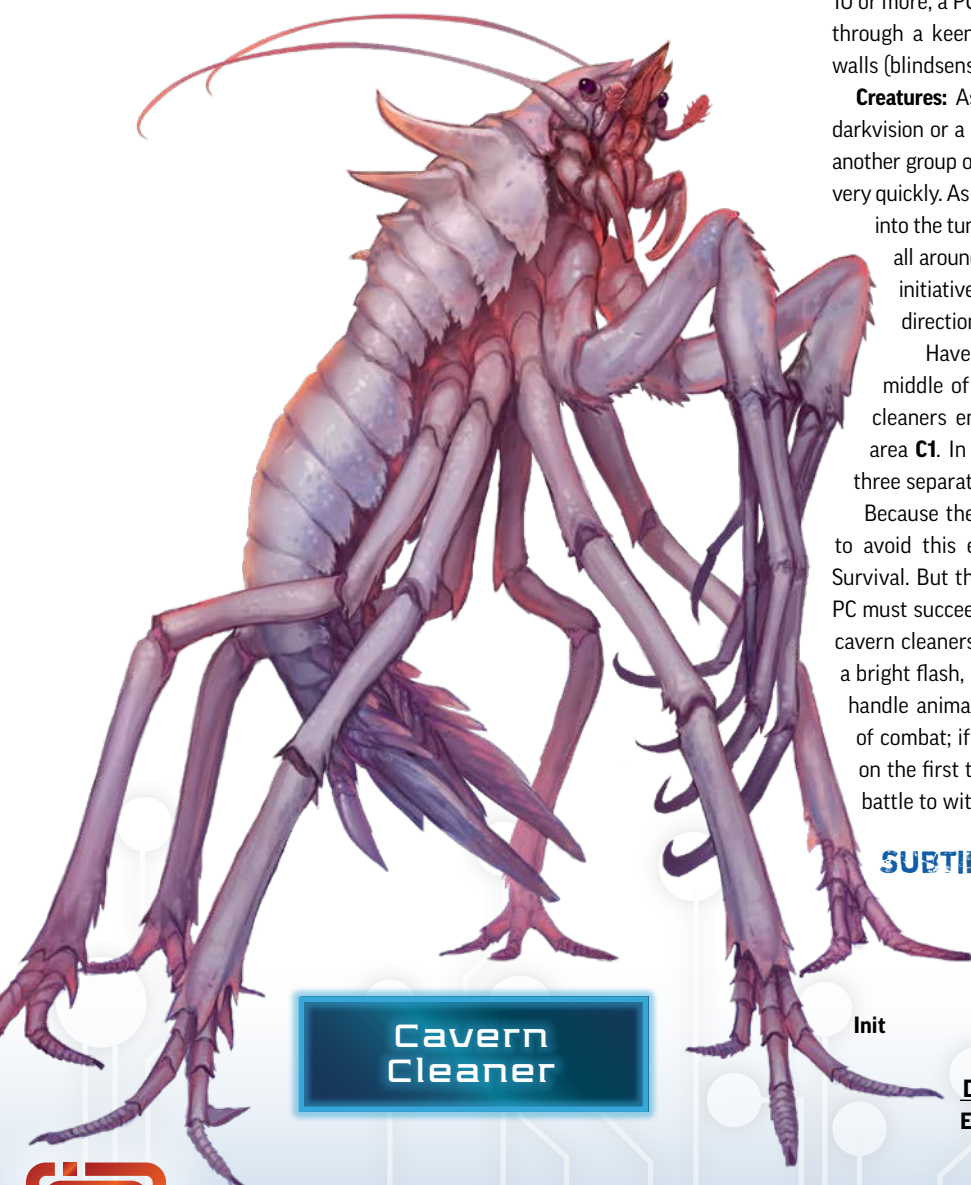
SUBTIER 1-2 (CR 3)

CAVERN CLEANERS (2) CR 1

Variant medium predator
N Medium animal

+2; **Senses** blindsense (vibration), darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +5

DEFENSE HP 20 EACH
EAC 11; **KAC** 13



Cavern Cleaner

Fort +3; Ref +3; Will +1**Weakness** light blindness**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.; spider climb**Melee** mandibles +7 (1d6+2 P)**Offensive Abilities** disarming fingers**TACTICS**

During Combat Cavern cleaners close with PCs and try to disarm their target before attacking with their mandibles. If they fail to hit with their mandibles, they try to “clean” the target by removing its armor.

Morale The cavern crawlers fight to the death.**STATISTICS****Str +1; Dex +2; Con +3; Int -4; Wis +1; Cha -2****Skills** Athletics +10, Stealth +5, Survival +5**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Disarming Fingers (Ex) Cavern cleaners instinctively “clean” creatures they encounter, pulling loose objects free of the target. A cavern cleaner can perform a disarm maneuver as a move action and receives a +4 bonus to its attack roll for the maneuver. Alternatively, it can use a full action to attempt to remove one worn item (such as armor or backpacks) from a target within reach. The target must succeed at a DC 10 Reflex save; on a failure, the worn item is removed from the target and dropped in a square adjacent to the cavern cleaner.

SUBTIER 3-4 (CR 5)**SPINY CAVERN CLEANERS (3)****CR 2**

Variant medium predator

N Medium animal

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense (vibration), darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +7**DEFENSE****HP 25 EACH****EAC** 13; **KAC** 15**Fort** +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +1**Weakness** light blindness**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.; spider climb**Melee** mandibles +9 (1d6+5 P)**Offensive Abilities** disarming fingers**TACTICS**

Use the tactics from Subtier 1-2.

STATISTICS**Str** +3; **Dex** +2; **Con** +3; **Int** -4; **Wis** +1; **Cha** -2**Skills** Athletics +12, Stealth +7, Survival +7**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Disarming Fingers (Ex) Cavern cleaners instinctively “clean” creatures they encounter, pulling loose objects free of the target. A cavern cleaner can perform a disarm maneuver as a move action and receives a +4 bonus to its attack roll for the maneuver. Alternatively, it can use a full action

to attempt to remove one worn item (such as armor or backpacks) from a target within reach. The target must succeed at a DC 11 Reflex save; on a failure, the worn item is removed from the target and dropped in a square adjacent to the cavern cleaner.

Development: Once the PCs have defeated or driven off the cavern cleaners, they can continue to the final destination, Big Mina's crystalline brain.

MEETING BIG MINA

The PCs travel down the shaft for a total of about an hour as the temperature steadily rises. Eventually the tunnel, bending at a 45-degree angle, empties out into an enormous spherical chamber 120 feet in diameter. Dozens of tunnels like the one the PCs traversed lead up from this chamber, some directly from the ceiling and others ascending more gently around the edges. The temperature here is 120° F, which is hot enough to deal 1d4 nonlethal fire damage to each unprotected PC every 10 minutes (Fortitude DC 16 negates). The heat emanates from a massive, golden crystal about 90 feet in diameter that almost fills the chamber. It is suspended in the center of the chamber by many gray, shell-covered columns that each stretch across the 15-foot gap separating the crystal from the walls of the chamber. The crystal is a network of nerve cells and other matter that functions as Big Mina's brain.

If the PCs do not contact her themselves, Mora contacts them on their comm units and asks them to use their handheld geological survey scanners to analyze the crystal. She can process the data through the computers back at the research station, and together they can learn more about Big Mina.

After a few minutes, Mora has the data she needs. Read or paraphrase the following.

“Well, Big Mina is definitely not from around here. There are enough traces of cosmic particle decay that she must have spent a long time moving slowly through deep space. Our preliminary growth estimates suggest that was millions of years ago, and she must have been very small—maybe no larger than your fist. But it looks like Big Mina and my little one have something in common: a big appetite! This alien creature can consume anything: rock, water, organic material... it'll take a while, hundreds or maybe thousands of years, but eventually Big Mina will consume the entire planet!”

Mora's face appears on the computer screen. “I'm not sure if we should allow that to happen. Vabaimus has a rich ecosystem, and while there aren't any sapient creatures here yet, it's only a matter of time before these sloths, or something else, make that critical step. Can we sentence them, and every other species on the planet, to certain death? On the other hand, Mina is a unique life-form, and it doesn't seem evil. It's no more intelligent than a giant clam. Can we bring ourselves to murder it when it's just doing what it's evolved to do?”

“Starfinders, you've taken the lead in so many of our recent

discoveries, I would really benefit from your perspective. What do you recommend?"

Mora can answer additional questions the PCs might have.

What happens if we leave the creature alone? "Eventually Big Mina will consume the entire planet. The bigger she gets, the faster she'll grow. She's already 85,000 square miles. Projections show she could finish the job in as little as a few centuries, but it might take one or two thousand years."

What happens if we kill it? "Multiple species have adapted to life on Big Mina. Those shell-covered birds you saw, the cleaner parasites that live in her tunnels, even the crest-eaters brought on the kasatha ship. The more specialized of those creatures would also die, as they lose their primary habitat. Others might survive by migrating to a different part of the planet."

Will the sloth creatures achieve sapience in time to stop the alien from consuming the planet? "No. It could take tens of thousands of years for them just to develop a language or agriculture, much less combat a global threat. Mina will consume the entire planet long before then."

Can we talk to it? "I wish we could. Based on what I'm reading, it's not intelligent as we understand the term. It's an animal, and can feel pain, but it doesn't have a language."

Is there a way to slow or stop Big Mina's growth? "I'm not sure..." A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Life Science check calculates that if enough damage were dealt to the correct parts of Big Mina's crystalline brain, the creature would stop growing. Damage to the crystal might never heal, so this would permanently cripple Big Mina, but the plateau would never grow any larger. The current species that live on the plateau could continue to do so, and the other species on Vabaimus would not be in danger.

Development: Once the PCs make their recommendations, Mora requests more time to consult with the rest of her staff. She contacts the PCs again 10 minutes later and advises they follow through with the players' prevailing recommendation. The resolution of the adventure is in the hands of the player characters.

If the PCs decide to kill Big Mina: They can execute the alien without interference. Dealing 100 damage to the crystalline brain structure is sufficiently lethal.

If the PCs decide to leave Big Mina alone: They can return to the surface without incident.

If the PCs decide to cripple Big Mina: Carefully destroying enough of the brain to stop Big Mina without killing it outright is difficult. The PCs first need to identify the appropriate targets, requiring a successful DC 20 Life Science, Medicine, or Physical Science check. If successful, the PC notes two sections that seem to be auxiliary nerve clusters that are ideal targets. If the PC fails by 5 or more, they identify incorrect targets that are vital to Big Mina's survival. If the check fails by 4 or less, the PC can't identify any suitable targets.

Destroying a target requires dealing 20 points of damage to it with a steady hand; a PC can precisely damage that section with either a successful DC 12 Life Science, Medicine, or Physical

Science check or with a successful attack roll against AC 11. If the PC fails, their removal of that part substantially damages some of the nearby crystalline structure.

If the PCs identify the proper targets and destroy them carefully, they have effectively lobotomized Big Mina, ensuring it never grows much larger but not killing it. If the PCs destroy the incorrect targets or do so in a way that damages nearby sections, Big Mina's life signs gradually fade as it dies over the next week.

If the PCs can't or refuse to decide: They can return to the surface without incident.

CONCLUSION

The PCs can safely return to the surface, where they can take their vehicles back to the research station. Little Mina, who has overheard much of the conversation between the PCs and her mother, has realized Big Mina is alive and she asks the PCs what they decided to do about her "Big Sister."

Dr. Motressi thanks the Starfinders for all they have done and expresses sympathy for the difficult decision they were confronted with. If the PCs decided to kill or cripple Big Mina, she supports their difficult choice. If they chose to leave Big Mina alone, to grow and eventually consume the planet, she reveals that she has begun plans to save as many of Vabaimus's native species as possible. "Including this little guy," she says, petting Bud as he clings to her chest. "And all his brothers and sisters. Don't worry, we'll find a new home for them, somewhere without a giant rock-eating alien." But if the PCs decided not to make a decision, she expresses her own doubts and confusion. "I don't know what we're going to do now," she admits. "I guess you should kick this up the chain of command. It just feels wrong to let some bureaucrat light-years away make a decision about something you all discovered."

Regardless, Dr. Motressi and Little Mina bid the PCs goodbye, and the team can return to Absalom Station. Their journey through the Drift takes only 1d6 days. Once they arrive, they are contacted by Fitch, who asks them for a report. Fitch is startled by the revelation that a massive geological feature turned out to be a single living creature. "I didn't think this was going to be a first contact mission when I asked you to take it," Fitch admits. "It sounds like you all did the best you could in a really difficult situation. The Wayfinders will back you up on this, don't worry." If the PCs didn't make a decision regarding the future of Big Mina and Vabaimus, Fitch asks them each for their opinion and tells them she will consider all their comments before making an informed decision. She thanks them for all they have done and promises to assign them future missions to discover alien life-forms and explore unknown regions of space.

REPORTING NOTES

If the PCs recovered a piece of Exu Jana Onorab's petrified brain to turn over to kasathas aboard the *Idari*, check box A. If the PCs chose to let Big Mina live, check box B. If the PCs destroyed Big Mina's brain (either intentionally or accidentally), check box C. If the PCs successfully disabled Big Mina's brain, check box D.

PRIMARY SUCCESS CONDITIONS

If the PCs learned that the Big Mina Plateau is actually a single alien organism and traveled to observe the creature's brain, their mission is a success, regardless of their ultimate decision (if any) on the ultimate fate of the alien. Doing so earns each PC 1 Fame and Reputation for any faction associated with their currently slotted faction boon.

SECONDARY SUCCESS CONDITIONS

This adventure is an opportunity for the PCs to distinguish themselves through efficient fieldwork, resourcefulness, and initiative. The PCs succeed at their secondary success conditions if they fulfill three of the following five objectives:

- Properly set up all three towers and instruments
- Finish setting up the towers to perform the deep scan within 14 hours
- Finish setting up the towers to perform the deep scan within 36 hours
- Learn the final fate of Exu Jana Onorab (by finding her remains and playing her final recording)
- Recover an undamaged portion of the Exu Jana Onorab's petrified brain

FACTION NOTES

If the PCs fulfilled four of the five secondary success conditions, they impress the Wayfinders faction leader. Each PC earns 1 additional Reputation with the Wayfinders faction, in addition to any other Reputation earned as a result of completing this scenario.

HANDOUT #1: VEHICLE STATISTICS

BASIC ENERCYCLE

LEVEL 1

PRICE 700

Large land vehicle (5 ft. wide, 10 ft. long, 3 ft. high)

Speed 20 ft., full 350 ft., 40 mph

EAC 10; **KAC** 12; **Cover** none

HP 7 (3); **Hardness** 5

Attack (Collision) 2d4 (DC 8)

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

Passengers 1

EXPLORATION BUGGY

LEVEL 1

PRICE 1,000

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

Speed 15 ft., full 350 ft., 40 mph

EAC 12; **KAC** 14; **Cover** partial cover

HP 14 (7); **Hardness** 5

Attack (Collision) 4d4 (DC 10)

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

Passengers 3

HANDOUT #2: BASIC VEHICLE RULES

During this adventure, you can have the opportunity to use your vehicles in dangerous situations. The following is a brief overview of how to use a vehicle during combat. Refer to pages 278–281 of *Starfinder Core Rulebook* for more details.

Moving: As a move action, you can drive the vehicle by moving a distance up to its speed and turning as much as you like. As a full action, you can race the vehicle by moving up to its full speed in a straight line; this requires a DC 11 Piloting check or DC 16 from a dead stop. Failing this check causes the vehicle to stall (from a dead stop), slow down (over rough terrain), or veer off course (most other situations). After a race action, you can either continue racing, use a move action to drive at normal speed, use a move action to stop short, or use a swift action to relinquish control. See page 279 for more information about steering with the race action.

Ramming: As a full action, you can pilot a vehicle up to its full speed in a straight line at its current heading to ram a target. This deals double the collision damage to the target and half the collision damage to the vehicle. The target can attempt a Reflex save to avoid being hit.

Attacks: Performing attacks from a moving or racing vehicle imposes a penalty on the attack rolls. This varies by vehicle (see the Modifiers entry).

APPENDIX: STAT BLOCK

CREST-EATER**CR 4***Starfinder Alien Archive 30*

N Large magical beast

Init +1; **Senses** bone tracker, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;**Perception** +10**DEFENSE****HP 54****EAC** 16; **KAC** 19**Fort** +8; **Ref** +8; **Will** +3**OFFENSE****Speed** 60 ft.**Melee** bite +13 (1d6+7 P plus 1 Con)**Ranged** venom spit +10 (1 Con)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Offensive Abilities** bone eater**STATISTICS****Str** +3; **Dex** +1; **Con** +3; **Int** -2; **Wis** +1; **Cha** -1**Skills** Stealth +15, Survival +10**Languages** Kasatha (can't speak any language)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Bone Eater (Su) A crest-eater's bite delivers a magical venom that dissolves certain minerals in its victim's body, liquefying that creature's bones. Each bite attack that deals damage also deals 1 Constitution damage. A target can negate this damage with a successful DC 13 Fortitude save.

Bone Tracker (Ex) A crest-eater's sense of smell is keenly attuned to the minerals it needs to survive. It can sniff out natural deposits of calcium, and it gains blindsense (scent) against creatures that have taken Constitution damage from its attacks in the past hour.

Venom Spit (Su) As a standard action, a crest-eater can make a ranged attack against the KAC of a single target within 30 feet, spitting its bone-liquefying venom. If struck, the target must succeed at a DC 13 Fortitude save or take 1 Constitution damage.

Starfinder Society Scenario #1-28: It Rests Beneath

Event _____		Date _____	
GM # _____		GM Character # _____	
GM Name _____		GM Fame Earned _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisitives	<input type="checkbox"/> Exo-Guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> Dataphiles	
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Seekers ()	<input type="checkbox"/> Faction _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinders	
<input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D		

Character # _____

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fame	Faction Boons

Character Name _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisitives	<input type="checkbox"/> Exo-Guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> Dataphiles
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Seekers ()	<input type="checkbox"/> Faction _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinders

Character # _____

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fame	Faction Boons

Character Name _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisitives	<input type="checkbox"/> Exo-Guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> Dataphiles
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Seekers ()	<input type="checkbox"/> Faction _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinders

Character # _____

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Fame	Faction Boons

Character Name _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisitives	<input type="checkbox"/> Exo-Guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> Dataphiles
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Seekers ()	<input type="checkbox"/> Faction _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinders

Character # _____

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fame	Faction Boons

Character Name _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisitives	<input type="checkbox"/> Exo-Guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> Dataphiles
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Seekers ()	<input type="checkbox"/> Faction _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinders

Character # _____

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Fame	Faction Boons

Character Name _____

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<input type="checkbox"/> Second Seekers ()	<input type="checkbox"/> Faction _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinders

Character # _____

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Fame	Faction Boons

Character Name _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisitives	<input type="checkbox"/> Exo-Guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> Dataphiles
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Seekers ()	<input type="checkbox"/> Faction _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinders

Character # _____

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fame	Faction Boons

Character Name _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisitives	<input type="checkbox"/> Exo-Guardians	<input type="checkbox"/> Dataphiles
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Seekers ()	<input type="checkbox"/> Faction _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinders

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Starfinder Society Scenario #1-28: It Rests Beneath 2018, Paizo Inc.; Author: Jason Tondro.



Starfinder Society Scenario

#1-28: It Rests Beneath

Character Chronicle #

A.K.A. _____ - 7					SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal Max Credits
Player Name	Character Name	Organized Play #	Character #	Faction	1-2	725
This Chronicle sheet grants access to the following:						
<p>In-the-Vehicle Training (Starship Boon): Hours of traversing Vabaimus's uneven ground has given you valuable experience when maneuvering a vehicle in dangerous conditions. While operating a vehicle (but not a starship), you increase its EAC, KAC, and hardness by 1. When a vehicle you are operating would be wrecked, you can cross this boon off your Chronicle sheet and attempt a Piloting check; the vehicle is instead reduced to 1 Hit Point and remains operable for a number of rounds equal half the result of your Piloting check unless it is reduced to 0 Hit Points first.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Souvenir Cestus (Slotless Boon; Limited Use): Vabaimus is home to numerous crest-eaters, and you departed with several of their horns as souvenirs. You can check the box that precedes this boon to use your Downtime to fashion an austere bone cestus (<i>Starfinder Alien Archive</i> 31) at a cost of 120 credits. This cestus has an effective resale value of 60 credits. If you use this boon when you are level 8 or higher, you instead fashion a measured bone cestus as a cost of 1,100 credits and whose effective resale value is 550 credits.</p>					SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal
					Out of Subtier	1,105
					SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal
					3-4	1,485
					SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal
					-	-
					Starting XP	
					+ <input type="text"/> GM's Initials	
					XP Gained (GM ONLY)	
					= <input type="text"/>	
					Final XP Total	
					Initial Fame	
					+ <input type="text"/> GM's Initials	
					Fame Gained (GM ONLY)	
					- <input type="text"/>	
					Fame Spent	
					Final Fame	
					Starting Credits	
					+ <input type="text"/> GM's Initials	
					Credits Garnered (GM ONLY)	
					+ <input type="text"/> GM's Initials	
					Day Job (GM ONLY)	
					- <input type="text"/>	
					Credits Spent	
					= <input type="text"/>	
					Total	

All Subtiers				Subtier 3-4	
austere bone cestus (600; item level 2; <i>Starfinder Alien Archive</i> 31)				amulet of camouflage (1,400; item level 3)	
basic energycle (700; item level 1)				computer idol mk 1 (1,850; item level 4; <i>Armory</i> 120)	
exploration buggy (1,000; item level 1)				conviction puzzleblade (2,100; item level 4; <i>Armory</i> 9)	
frost subduer (790; item level 2; <i>Starfinder Armory</i> 13)				hidden soldier armor (465; item level 2)	
jump jets (1,000; item level 2)				measured bone cestus (5,500; item level 7; <i>Alien Archive</i> 31)	
kasatha microcord I (460; item level 2)				spell amp of reflecting armor (300; item level 3)	
ring of resistance mk 1 (735; item level 2)				targeting computer armor upgrade (2,250; item level 4)	
spark polarity gauntlets (410; item level 1; <i>Armory</i> 12)				tier 2 stimulant (3,000; item level 5; <i>Armory</i> 133)	
zero (500; item level 3; <i>Armory</i> 132)					

Reputation			
Faction	Reputation	Faction	Reputation
Faction	Reputation	Infamy	

For GM Only

EVENT

EVENT CODE

DATE

Game Master's Signature

GM Organized Play #