

STARFINDER

DAWN OF FLAME

ADVENTURE PATH

SUN DIVERS

BY JOE PASINI





SUN DIVER

TIER 6

Small light freighter

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

AC 21; **TL** 21 (assumes 6 ranks in Piloting)

HP 50; **DT** —; **CT** 10

Shields Heavy shields 240 (forward 60, port 60, starboard 60, aft 60)

Attack (Forward) linked chain cannons (12d4)

Attack (Aft) flak thrower (3d4)

Attack (Port) flak thrower (3d4)

Attack (Starboard) flak thrower (3d4)

Power Core Pulse Red (175 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal Basic; **Systems** advanced long-range sensors, crew quarters (common), mk 4 armor, mk 4 defenses, mk 3 mononode computer (tier 3, artificial personality), new weapon mount (aft); **Expansion Bays** cargo hold, science lab, tech workshop

Modifiers +3 to any one check per round, +4 Computers (sensors only), +1 Piloting; **Complement** minimum 1, maximum 6

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Limited Fire When the *Sun Diver* is within a star, the physical ammunition that its weapons fire burns up in stellar plasma after the second range increment (10 hexes), preventing these weapons from hitting anything beyond that range.

Overpowered The *Sun Diver* is designed to draw power from the energies channeled through its solar shields and power core, so it becomes much easier to distribute that power to various systems while the vessel is fully immersed in an active star. While inside such a stellar body, the DC for the engineer's divert and overpower crew actions is 5 lower than normal.

Sensitive System Balance The *Sun Diver's* systems work in delicate concert, making any adjustment of the ship's systems risky. Each time the *Sun Diver* is refitted or upgraded with new systems, the vessel takes 5d10–20 virtual damage that can also cause critical damage. Detecting this “damage” requires a successful Engineering check (DC = 15 + 1-1/2 times the *Sun Diver's* tier). When detected, this virtual damage can be repaired as if it were real, signifying rebalancing the *Sun Diver's* sensitive systems. If undetected, the damage and critical damage becomes real the next time the vessel enters a stressful situation, such as starship combat. In addition, when the *Sun Diver* takes critical damage in starship combat, it has a 10% chance to take critical damage a second time in a random system.

Siccitate Degradation Prolonged exposure to internal solar forces can eventually fatigue the ship's siccitate matrix to the point of failure. The *Sun Diver* takes 1d4 damage each day it remains in contact with solar forces. This damage can be repaired only in a safe harbor and with 1 Bulk of siccitate per 5 damage or fraction thereof repaired.

Solar Shield Channel Because the shield system channels destructive solar forces around and through the vessel, the *Sun Diver* is considered to have only half its normal shields while within a star (120 for the unmodified *Sun Diver*). The starship's shields take half damage from starship gravity, laser, and plasma weapons. These shields also block the irradiate weapon special property. Conversely, the *Sun Diver* can't fire gravity, laser, or plasma weapons through its own shields. The *Sun Diver's* shields also block the EMP and irradiate weapon special properties of any non-tracking weapon the vessel fires.

The *Sun Diver*, a ship capable of diving deep into the hostile sun, is the only vessel of its kind known to the Pact Worlds. It was recently invented by a brilliant human engineer named Lurian “Lu” Straza. The ship's plating and shield matrix employ a complex weave of siccitate, which not only protects the *Sun Diver* from the heat, pressure, and other dangers of a star's interior, but also helps power the ship. To protect herself against loneliness, Lurian gave the *Sun Diver's* computer an artificial personality—a warm, grandfatherly virtual intelligence with a gravelly voice and Lu's penchant for risk-taking and colorful language.

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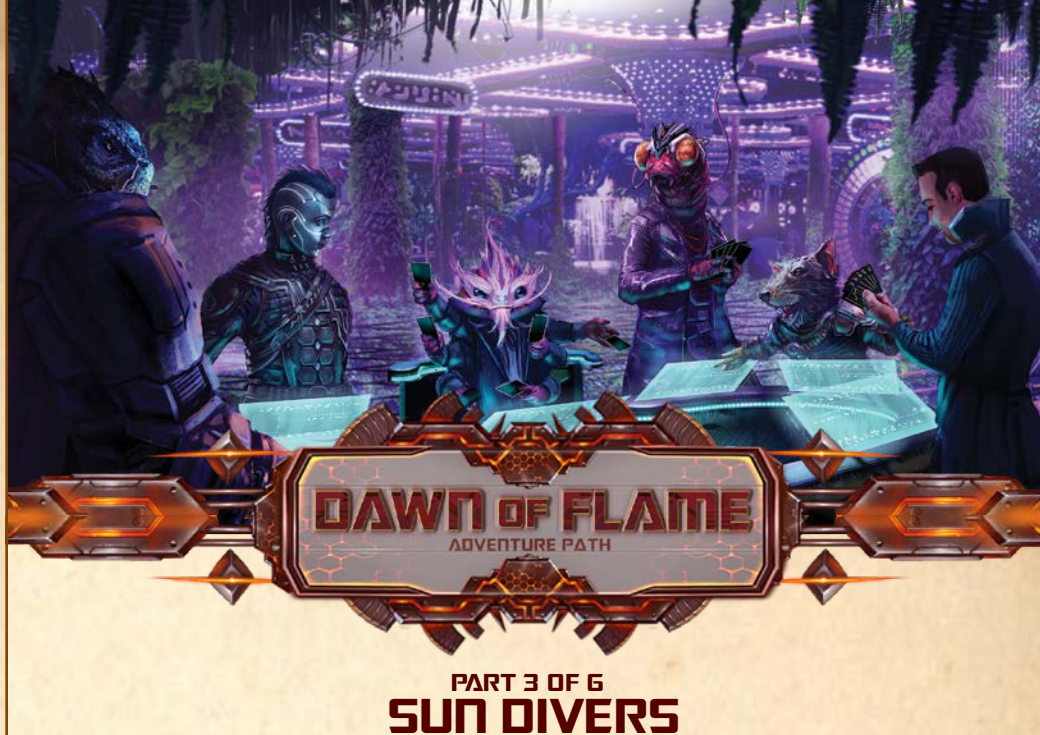
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ON THE COVER



The salamander Sulphrax is ready to take down interlopers in this cover art by Matias Tapia.



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Alien Archive 2 AA2

Armory AR

Pact Worlds PW



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DAWN OF FLAME

ADVENTURE PATH

SUN DIVERS

PART 1: SECURING THE SUN DIVER

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With coordinates of a deep culture in hand, the PCs need to secure a starship that can go into the sun. Doing so requires dealing with a gambler and the criminals she owes.

PART 2: INTO THE FIRE

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After recovering the *Sun Diver*, the PCs make history by traveling deeper into the sun than anyone from the Pact Worlds ever has. They successfully find Noma, a bizarre bubble-city full of experimental structures and anacite-like beings.

PART 3: THE CORE

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The PCs survey Noma and, by interacting with one of the residents, discover the city's Core. Within, the group discovers other mysteries and the key to further adventure within the Pact Worlds' sun.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Sun Divers" is designed for four characters.

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The PCs begin this adventure at 5th level.

6

The PCs should reach 6th level after finishing Part 1.

7

The PCs should be 7th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE
BACKGROUND

SUN DIVERS

PART 1:
SECURING
THE
SUN DIVERPART 2:
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THE FIREPART 3:
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NOMA

CRIMINAL
ORGANIZATIONS
OF THE
GALAXYALIEN
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WORLOS

Deep in the Pact Worlds' sun, a singular bubble-city called Noma quietly conducts its experiments. An artificial intelligence, also called Noma, controls the city, which is an experiment in biomimicry gone awry. Set in motion by unknown entities, Noma's neural network has generated countless strange beings known as protocites, distant relatives of Aballon's anacites. It's unclear, and unknown to the protocites, whether they are prototypes of their Aballonian kin or similar models corrupted through constant experimentation and reconfiguration. Thanks to its place in the sun, Noma has a limitless supply of energy to build these constructs and the bizarre architecture they live within—a city made even stranger by its familiarity. However, Noma's raw material, a substance called polyfluid, has dwindled over the centuries as the city ceaselessly builds and rebuilds.

When General Khaim's forces explored the Pact Worlds' sun in preparation for their upcoming invasion, they discovered Noma. A salamander (*Starfinder Adventure Path #14: Soldiers of Brass* 60) named Sulphrax, a special-forces officer in the efreeti army, recently invaded the bubble-city. The commando and his team scoured the place, laying waste to much of what they found. During their vicious search, these soldiers happened across Noma's Core. There, Sulphrax stole a piece of sun-bubble technology and departed, leaving only ruin behind.

General Khaim is arrogant, presuming the weaklings living in the Pact Worlds and the Burning Archipelago have no means to oppose him deep within the sun. Until recently, he was correct. However, he has underestimated mortal ingenuity.

The Corona Artifact Divers in some ways mirror the Deep Cultures Institute (DCI). The former organization consists of explorers, daredevils, and treasure hunters, while the latter institution is more focused on research, scientific study, and educated speculation. Based in the sun's Burning Archipelago, they are natural allies and rivals dedicated to discovering artifacts they believe exist in the sun's interior. The Corona Artifact Divers skim the sun's surface, explore solar flares and other expulsions from the star, and scoop up any interesting material that might be released by these phenomena. However, the divers also spend significant time and resources developing techniques to go deeper into the sun.

A brilliant engineer and pilot named **Lurian "Lu" Straza** (CN female human technomancer), a member of the Corona Artifact Divers, recently constructed a new starship capable of diving deeper into the sun than any other craft. This magitech miracle was made possible in part through funding from the Vestrani cartel, a crime family that has little interest in exploration or research but a great deal of interest in a return on its investment. After Lu piloted her new starship, the *Sun Diver*,

to retrieve a valuable treasure, she used the windfall to go on a massive bender at the cartel's casino. After several weeks there, not only has she burned through her recent payout, but she's also built up a sizable debt to the cartel. Its agents have seized the *Sun Diver* as collateral on Lu's debt.

Though the PCs discovered Noma's existence and location through their actions in previous adventures, they lack the means to travel that far into the sun. Luckily for them and their DCI employers, their ysoki DCI contact, Nib, has caught wind of the *Sun Diver*'s invention. In her mind, the group needs only acquire the *Sun Diver* to make history.

PART 1:
SECURING THE SUN
DIVER

As the adventure begins, the PCs meet with Nib at the DCI.

Nib rocks from heel to toe, muttering to herself and saying, "The ship can go into the sun..." She pauses mid sentence and puffs out her cheek pouches. "Will they let us use it, I wonder..."

Finally, she looks up. "The Corona Artifact Divers. I've heard they have a starship that can go into the sun... to Noma. You need to talk to them. But you mustn't tell them why. If we can use their ship, you could be the first visitors to Noma in... in... maybe ever! But we can't risk the Divers looting the place before we have a chance to survey it."

Nib pulls out a datapad and taps on it. "I'll start making preparations. It'll take me days, at least. If you find a way to Noma, we'll supply you with the rest of what you'll need!"

PCs can easily book transport to the Corona Artifact Divers' headquarters in the Brass Bazaar. Its location is easy to learn, either from the infosphere or from Nib. If the PCs have questions before they leave, use the following guidelines. Nib is disdainful of the Divers, whom she sees as plunderers rather than explorers.

How can the Corona Artifact Divers help us? "The Divers attempt expeditions into the sun's deeper layers. As far as I know, they haven't met with any greater success than we have. They're not scientists. Not like us. They're treasure hunters!"

Nib pauses with an exasperated look, then goes on, "Anyhow, rumor has it that one of their best divers, a human woman named Lurian, developed a starship. It took her farther into the sun than anyone before. But that's not all! She brought back an artifact recently. I'll bet that success put them in a generous mood."

Why shouldn't we tell the Divers about Noma? "They don't apply the scientific rigor we do. They treat the sun like a vault full of creds. We should approach any inhabitants of the sun with care and respect, not show up looking to load our holds with treasure! If they know about Noma, they'll go there and toss the place before we have a chance to take a meaningful survey."

CORONA ARTIFACT DIVERS HQ

Unless you decide otherwise, travel to the Corona Artifact Divers headquarters is uneventful, despite the dangers of Corona.

The lobby of the Corona Artifact Divers headquarters is bright, clean, and cold. Circular benches surround pillars covered with glimmering mosaic tile in various hues of red, orange, and yellow. Equally colorful, a sluglike humanoid in ornate clothing stands behind a reception desk that doubles as a broad display case. Red-orange lighting that mimics the sun's surface shines from the case's back. Lined up inside are several objects, most of which are lumps of scorched minerals.

"Welcome to the home of the Corona Artifact Divers!" says the humanoid. "I am called Pahdric. Perhaps you have heard of me? Are you here to become sponsors of our fine organization?"

Pahdric (NG male osharu^{AA2} mystic) is one of the more prestigious members of the Corona Artifact Divers, having retrieved several artifacts that were ejected from the sun by solar flares; the artifacts are on display here. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check knows the Corona Artifact Divers maintain a flat organizational structure, with even the most respected of their number taking shifts at the headquarters' lobby and public display room, which is meant to entice curious outsiders to come inside for information and inspire them to contribute resources to the cause. The Artifact Divers also have a spiritual bent—examination of the sun from that perspective is as important as scientific advances. A PC whose result exceeds the DC by 5 or more knows a small contingent of osharus, sluglike scientist-monks who disdain heat, has joined this exploration. Pahdric is a prominent member of this contingent.

In the display case, transparent plaques speculate in wondering language about the composition and origin of the objects within. A PC who succeeds at a DC 17 Engineering or Physical Science check can see that at least one of these "artifacts" is a piece of a starship's hull, twisted and malformed by solar exposure. Pointing out this fact elicits a chuckle from Pahdric, as he condescends to commend the PC's skepticism while making vague reference to the sun's mysteries.

Pahdric suggests the PCs consider a "modest donation" of 1,000 credits to help fund the organization. If they give any money, the osharu offers only a dry "thank you" in return.

Pahdric is happy to explain his role and answer questions. Some common queries and responses follow.

Why is it so cold in here? "Oh! The heat gets to me, so I keep it brisk in here! I can adjust the temperature, if it's uncomfortable."

If the PCs ask for more warmth, Pahdric swipes a panel on the desk to bring the heat up a few degrees. He then reaches under the desk to grab a necklace that emits a fine cooling mist, attempts to be subtle about putting it on, and fails.

Can you help us go into the sun?

Pahdric is at first tickled by the idea that the PCs think they could wander in off the street and jump into the quasi-spiritual exploration of the sun that he and his colleagues devote their lives to. This turns to slight offense when he realizes the PCs are serious, though he tries to be political about it, which a PC can detect by succeeding at a DC 18 Sense Motive check. Pahdric suggests they sign up for the Divers' introductory course, Understanding the Sun, starting several months from now and available via correspondence.

What did Lurian create?

"Lurian's technology is irrelevant, you see.

Only our devotion to uncovering the Burning Mother's secrets is important. That she chooses to reward one of her supplicants with intellectual gifts while tasking others with, say, suffering fools kindly"—Pahdric's slug skin tightens reflexively as he speaks—"is just one of her many mysteries."

What artifact did Lurian bring back? Pahdric laughs—an odd bubbling sound—and gestures at the "relics" before him. "Are these not wonders enough? Must something be worth an arbitrary amount of credits before you assign it true value? In any case, that's a private matter."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Sense Motive check realizes the osharu has no idea and refuses to admit it.

Where is Lurian? Pahdric takes on a troubled aspect as he chooses his words very carefully. "Lurian is an incredible engineer and pilot. But... she tends to get... carried away. She most recently carried herself away to the Vestrani Gaming Complex, over in Verdeon. She spent a lot of time there in the past after making valuable finds. This time, it's been weeks. I fear she is on a bit of a bender. I suggested to our accountants that they dole out her shares in smaller portions, but they said doing so was needlessly strict. I do hope she's all right." Pahdric's concern is sincere.

What does Lurian look like? "She has long brownish fibers on her head, and two blue-and-white eyes in the center of her face. Oh, and a tattoo of Oras's helix on the back of her neck."



The osharu can't offer much more than that, since he is not familiar with or interested in human biology. If any PCs are human, Pahdric might compare them as a means of description.

LEGWORK ON THE VESTRANI

The PCs might already know about the Vestrani Gaming Complex and its owners and operators. The group can also research via the infosphere and talk to locals as they travel in the Burning Archipelago. Each PC can attempt a Culture check to recall knowledge (the outlaw theme applies). PCs can attempt Diplomacy checks to gather information or a Profession check to recall knowledge if you determine the profession is relevant (good candidates include con artist and gambler). Regardless of the check used, a PC learns all the information from DCs equal to or lower than the result of their check.

Result	Information
10+	The Vestrani Gaming Complex is one of the biggest casino-resorts in the Pact Worlds, best known for its over-the-top Castrovelian theme. The complex is located in Verdeon and attracts the galaxy's elite, who come not only to gamble but also to be seen and to flaunt their wealth. Everyone knows that what happens in the dome stays in the dome.
15+	The Vestrani family, an extended clan of blood-related humans, runs the gaming complex. This family is rumored to rule a large criminal organization that has influence beyond Verdeon.
20+	The Vestrani family keeps a tight rein on the complex. Not only is the casino the family's primary business, siphoning money from wealthy clientele, but it also serves as a cover for the criminal cartel's shadier dealings.
25+	The Vestrani family excludes non-humans. However, several high-ranking members and many lower-ranking ones belong to other species, causing tensions between the cartel's leaders and the cartel at large. It's also rumored that the cartel runs a chop shop hidden in the casino's garage, covering the disassembly of stolen vehicles and starships with the legitimate repurposing of similar vehicles turned over to the cartel to pay gambling debts.

Development: The Vestrani cartel carefully monitors criminal activity throughout the Burning Archipelago. Members of the organization are aware of the PCs' recent conflict with the Sunrise Collective, the Bloodshots, and the Brass Dragons. Either during the PCs' visit to the Corona Artifact Divers headquarters or while the PCs are asking around for information, word gets back to the members of the cartel that the PCs are looking into the organization's affairs. This foreknowledge has ramifications later.

Story Award: Award the PCs 1,200 XP for learning more about the Vestrani Gaming Complex and where to find Lurian.

NAVIGATING VERDEON

The Vestrani Gaming Complex occupies a large dome on the southern end of Verdeon. The PCs are most likely to enter Verdeon via the energy tether to the northeast, leading from Stellacuna, where the Deep Cultures Institute is headquartered, or via the energy tether to the east, which leads from the Dawnshore bubble, the hub of the Burning Archipelago. The other primary route into Verdeon passes through Chroma, whose energy tethers are currently clogged with hours of traffic as hundreds of enercycle-racing fans queue up for a live event in the city's racing venue.

Those who enter Verdeon from one of its energy tethers notice a stark and immediate difference between this bubble and the rest of the Burning Archipelago. The air here has the rich quality of a jungle planet, its scent a constantly changing medley of flowers and soil. Birds and insects dart among dense groves of vegetation that include plant life from all over the Pact Worlds.

Drifting through the center of Verdeon are the numerous platforms of the Floating Gardens, slowly shifting in a complex and mysterious dance. As the platforms glide past one another, they spin slowly, and avenues for vehicles and alleyways for pedestrians open and close.

EVENT 1: A SITUATION OF SOME GRAVITY (CR 7)

As the PCs pass through Verdeon, they encounter **Ferrah** (N agender khizar^{PW} mystic), a plantlike humanoid with a glowing seedpod for a head, dashing to and fro amid traffic. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture or Life Science check knows that the color of the khizar's glowing head conveys its mood, and this one is panicked.

Creature: Ferrah is a Xenowarden responsible for tending one of the Floating Gardens' platforms. Unfortunately for them, their predecessor was careless, and a dangerous and rare void palm has just reached maturity on the platform. The plant's ability to manipulate gravity has also interfered with the platform's antigrav tech, setting the structure on a slow but inevitable collision course with another platform. Ferrah tried to uproot the palm to avert the disaster, but they barely escaped alive. If the PCs interact with Ferrah, the khizar begs for help. Ferrah wants to avoid killing the void palm, given its rarity, and promises to find a safe place for the plant if the PCs can subdue it.

VOID PALM

CR 7

XP 3,200

N Large plant (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #8 60)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +14

DEFENSE

HP 100

EAC 19; **KAC** 20

Fort +10; **Ref** +8; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities void fronds; **Immunities** plant immunities

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OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee lash +15 (1d8+9 S)

Multiattack 3 lashes +9 (1d4+9 S)

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

Offensive Abilities gravity void

STATISTICS

Str +2; **Dex** +4; **Con** +5; **Int** -2; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +0

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +19, Stealth +14, Survival +19

TACTICS

During Combat The void palm lashes any creature that ventures near. It saves gravity void for when it can affect several creatures or to cover its retreat.

Morale The void palm attempts to retreat into denser foliage once it reaches 15 HP or fewer.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Gravity Void (Su) Once per day as a full action, a void palm can create a dark, zero-gravity area in a 20-foot-radius

sphere centered on itself, negating the effects of gravity and nonmagical light sources in that area. Magical light sources in the area work normally. When the void palm uses this ability, each other creature in the area must succeed at a DC 17 Reflex saving throw or become off-kilter. The effect doesn't move with the void palm and lasts for 10 minutes.

Void Fronds (Su) When seen in black and white, such as with darkvision in darkness, the pattern on a void palm's fronds resembles a dim and distant field of stars. The effect is disorienting. As long as the void palm is in an area of darkness, it has concealment against creatures observing it with darkvision, and such creatures are flat-footed against the palm's attacks.

Treasure: If the PCs defeat the void palm without killing it, Ferrah is ebullient, offering three void seeds recovered from the palm and advising the PCs not to plant them. Each of these ultrarare seeds is worth 3,000 credits. If the PCs kill the void palm, Ferrah gives them two seeds, planning to plant the third.

A. VESTRANI GAMING COMPLEX

Finding the largest gaming center in Verdeen is easy. In fact, the casino has six automated hovertaxis circling the bubble to offer tourists free rides to the casino.

SECURITY

Despite being designed to appear fair, every game in the Vestrani Gaming Complex favors the house. To further the house's edge, it has a few security measures in place.



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Guards: The Vestrani cartel employs a security force. All members are either human, ex-military, or blood relatives of the cartel. Most are all three. Each wears a dark suit and mirrored sunglasses, and all these guards keep a low profile throughout the complex. Their shifts and posts on the main casino level have been designed to allow at least two guards to respond to any situation within 3 rounds, with two more able to arrive every 3 rounds thereafter. On the hotel level, however, the guards take 2d6+3 rounds to respond due to reliance upon elevators and fewer established posts.

These guards are trained to defuse most situations with tact, especially when in view of other guests. However, anytime the cartel's employees, guests, or assets are threatened, they use nonlethal tactics to subdue miscreants and drag them into a back room for roughing up while they await instructions from the cartel's leadership. After meting out some corporal punishment, guards boot troublemakers from the complex without any ill-gotten gains. Ejected individuals then face a ban, from 30 days to lifetime, depending on the severity of the incident. However, if they risk expulsion, the PCs attract the interest of one of the complex's executives—see Taza's Request on pages 8–9.

Locks: Within the complex, locks are biometric. Security has access to any area, but other employees can enter only the areas they need to. Guest services measures guest biometrics, which are then used to grant guests access to areas they are permitted to use. Otherwise, opening these locks requires a successful DC 30 Engineering check to rewire the lock or a DC 30 Computers check to hack it.

Surveillance: Security scanners constantly monitor the building, including its exterior. High-grade scanners (Perception +20) surveil the gaming floor, especially for common misconduct such as hacking, spellcasting, and theft. Any Sleight of Hand checks to hide an object, palm an object, or pick a pocket inside the gaming complex are opposed by the target and the casino's security scanners. If the scanners detect a violation, guards show up soon after. In addition, advanced image-recognition algorithms identify every individual who enters the building, granting the house a Perception check to notice any creature using Disguise to change its appearance. Security is likely to discover the true identity of guests in disguise, but the cartel seldom exposes such creatures unless they cause trouble.

VESTRANI CHIPS

The Vestrani cartel uses “chips” as currency in their casino. These chips are stored on proprietary devices similar to credsticks that glow different colors depending on their denomination. They can be upgraded to hold more value so no one has to carry more than a few at once.

Purchasing: PCs can purchase chips, each chip costing 1 credit and having a similar value inside the casino. In addition,

each transaction to purchase chips has a 10% fee with a maximum fee of 100 credits, designed to encourage visitors to buy more chips up front so the fee is a smaller percentage.

Value: Vestrani chips are as valuable as credits inside the casino for buying food, drink, and services; paying (or bribing) NPCs; and so on. They can't be used to acquire gear or other items that increase PC wealth. In addition, it should be clear to the players that a winner can earn back all the credits spent on chips and the transaction fee to acquire them. However, after a guest's chip value exceeds that initial stake, the exchange rate on the excess is 25%. The cartel uses this scheme to encourage guests to spend winnings inside the casino. Any chips taken out of the casino and returned can be exchanged only for 25% of their value. Visitors who want to earn back their original stake must exchange the chips before exiting. Alternatively, guest services can store chips so they keep their stake value when a guest leaves the complex.

A gray market exists for Vestrani chips outside the casino, but given the risk of crossing the cartel, the exchange rate is dismal. With a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information in Verdeen, a PC can find someone willing to purchase chips for 10% of their face value. If the PCs sell 100,000 chips, they draw too much attention and can't unload more for at least 30 days.



VESTRANI CHIP

GAMING

Several games of chance are available in the Vestrani Gaming Complex. See specific areas for each game's rules for play, betting, payouts, and any edge PCs can gain. Winnings are in addition to the original bet placed. This part of the adventure assumes PCs can each spend up to 8 hours per day gaming. Beyond that time, their ability to focus diminishes and any winnings are halved.

MEETING LURIAN

Lurian Straza is a human woman with a tattoo of Oras's helix on her neck. She wears a dirty leather flight vest that belonged to her grandmother. Within the gaming complex, however, Lurian is hard to find. Given the emphasis on discretion, the staff refuses to give information on any guest, and most employees are unable to find out where a given individual is, even if they want to.

When Lurian arrived, she paid in advance for a month's room and board at the casino's hotel. Now, she has burned through her credits, has gambled away her ship, and has only 4,000 chips remaining. She ventures to the casino floor to risk another sliver of her dwindling stash in hopes of paying off her debt to the cartel. Lurian holds on to that hope, but she has only 9 days left of her prepaid time. After that, she will have to leave without her life's work and primary means of generating income, the *Sun Diver*.

Every day, there's a cumulative 50% chance that Lurian leaves her room and ventures into area **A2**, **A5**, or **A6**, determined randomly, but only for the minimum required time at that area's game. On her last day, Lurian stays in each of these areas for 4 hours. If PCs actively search these areas while she's there, they can spot her. Otherwise, they have a 10% chance to happen across her on any given day, perhaps in the spa (area **A7**) or lounge (area **A8**). She starts with an attitude of indifferent, which can be improved to friendly with a successful DC 22 Diplomacy check or if the PCs give her 1,000 chips. Lurian's attitude improves to helpful only if the PCs agree to help pay off her debt to the cartel. She refuses to help the PCs recover her ship via means other than paying for it, fearing retribution. Attempts to bully Lurian are unlikely to succeed—she's more frightened of the cartel than of the PCs.

If Lurian's attitude improves to friendly, she tells the PCs her friends call her "Lu." Lu answers questions about her situation and her ship, although she insists on doing so outside the casino. She takes the PCs to a smoothie stand near the complex that sells drinks made of fruit from the trees that grow in Verdeon. She deposits her remaining chips before exiting the casino so she won't lose her stake value, then accompanies the PCs to the kiosk.

As she sips a brightly colored drink, Lurian answers the following questions. She dodges queries about what she found in the sun, and she becomes annoyed if the PCs press the issue.

Where's your ship? "It's not *my* ship, as those goons'll tell you. Hell, all I did was *design* and *build* the thing. They're the ones who put up the creds, y'know, so they say it's theirs. I figure they have it stashed somewhere in their garage. They're probably scratching their heads right now about what to do with it. Gods, the morons'll probably chop it up for parts." Lurian lets out a sharp, cynical laugh.

Lurian doesn't know about the chop shop. However, learning the *Sun Diver* might be hidden in the garage from this question or the next is enough for the PCs to gain advantages when searching the garage as if they knew about the chop shop.

Is it guarded? Lurian's mild expression falls. "Look, you do *not* want to mess with the Vestranis. They aren't known for their sense of humor. If they have the *Diver* here, it's in their garage, tucked in tight with all the rich folks' ships."

Why did the cartel take it from you? Lurian rubs the back of her head with one hand. "Well, I came by the complex to celebrate my recent success, and I got on this huge roll! I could *not* lose! It was incredible. I had a good tip on an enercycle race, so I put up the *Diver* for 75,000 chips, y'know, so I could really cash in. But the racer piloting my cycle pushed too hard, blew

the core, and lost. So, sure enough, those bastards took my ship. And if I don't get it back, it's as good as gone." She starts to tear up a little before snorting at her own sentimentality and taking a long drink.

How can we get it back? "Well." Lurian looks around conspiratorially. "Those lunkheads don't know what to do with it. I bet if I can pay off my debt, I can buy it back from them. With the luck I've been having, I'm due for a big win. Hey, if you want to help me, we can own it as partners!" The idea occurs to Lurian as she speaks it, a wide smile crossing her face.

How much will they want? "They'll have to pay attention if we offer, say, 50k in chips. Any less and we'll have to cut a deal."

What's special about this ship? Lurian smiles wryly, saying, "It's right there in the name. *Sun Diver*. I took it in. Truth is, it can go way deeper," she gestures toward the sky, "than any other ship. See, I came up with a..."

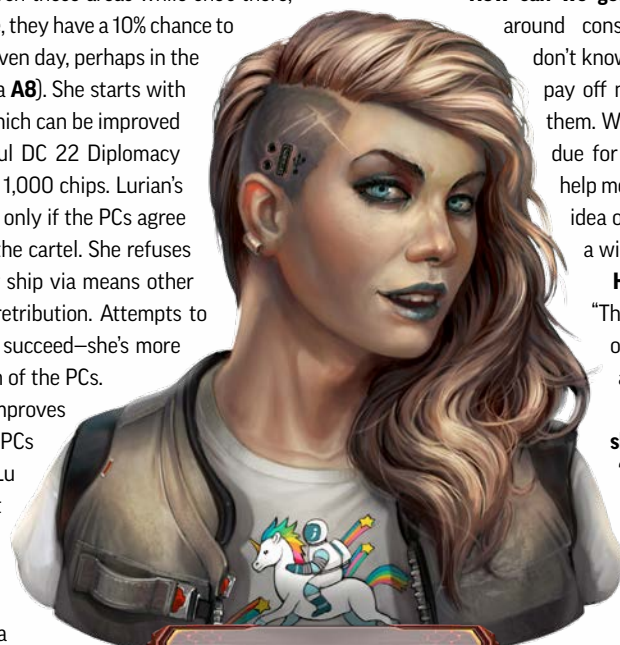
She catches herself before continuing with, "What do you know about siccattite?" A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Engineering or Mysticism check can answer to her satisfaction. If so, Lurian launches into a monologue of technobabble, such as, "a mutually inductive matrix of interwoven nanothreads of bivalent siccattite that generates a countervailing synchronic field, transforming the electromagnetic forces of the sun into power and shielding." Otherwise, she says, "Let's just say it's 'magic' and leave it at that."

What does the *Sun Diver* look like? "It's small. Just has the parts it needs, y'know? Modeled it on the cones of Triaxian evergreens. Their seeds pop out in intense heat or fire. Get it?"

Why did you deal with the cartel? "I didn't know who was behind the cash. They got in touch with the Divers and offered me funds through a shell company. Honestly, I might've accepted even if I'd known. It's not every day you get to see your dreams made reality, y'know?"

Development: Even if the PCs don't ask directly, Lurian offers to partner with them in getting the ship back by amassing chips. If the PCs manage to come up with a sufficiently large number of chips, Lurian can set up a meeting with her cartel contact, Segal Vestrani. See *Acquiring the Sun Diver* on page 19.

Story Award: When the PCs learn where the *Sun Diver* is and how they might reacquire it, award them 1,200 XP.



LURIAN STRAZA

TAZA'S REQUEST

When the PCs enter the casino, **Taza Nepobo** (NE female korasha lashunta), Vice President of Gaming for the Vestrani Gaming

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Complex, is alerted to their presence. She watches them with interest, has her underlings observe the PCs' activities when she can't, and prepares a test for them (see area A1).

At some point, especially if the PCs run afoul of security, she makes them an offer. Absent a need for speedy action, such as a PC security breach, Taza waits a few days before contacting the PCs indirectly; a concierge offers them a complimentary spa visit (area A7) as a pretext for the meeting, and Taza meets them in that area of the complex.

When they meet, Taza reveals she wants to hire the PCs to guard a shipment of freshly minted Vestrani chips. The chips aren't loaded with value, but a sophisticated rival could steal and reprogram them. The Vestrani cartel sources its chips from a legitimate credstick facility outside the Burning Archipelago. The shipments arrive at various ports and are transported to the Vestrani Gaming Complex by truck. While the cartel varies the shipping routes to prevent heists, Taza believes someone in the cartel is tipping off an outside operator to steal the shipment, so she wants the PCs to guard it.

In truth, Taza plans to tip off an outside party herself. She harbors deep and growing resentment against the Vestrani family. Taza's position affords her wealth and power, but she isn't a Vestrani relative, so she'll never be allowed to rise above her current position. She's looking for a way to gain prominence and planning to marginalize members of the Vestrani family within the cartel by painting them as incompetent. Over time, she figures she can gain enough sway to displace the Vestrani cartel and, perhaps, assume control of the organization. Part of Taza's goal is to join the Burning Archipelago's senate as a representative of gaming in Verdeen, further cementing her importance to the cartel.

Taza is careful and wily. She smiles a lot, and she works to seem on the up-and-up. A PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Sense Motive check realizes she's probably hiding something about her true motivations for asking for the PCs' help.

The PCs might have questions for Taza. Some answers follow.

Why us? "I'll be frank. I know who you are—your handiwork in Asanatown and Corona proves you can handle yourselves. You also have the distinct advantage of not being a member of my organization. I can't trust my usual agents.

"There's also the matter of heat. The incidents in Asanatown and Corona were the result of criminal activity. I want to keep my agents off the streets until the authorities cool down a bit. You, therefore, present a useful replacement."

Where is Lurian? "I can't share information about our guests with others. However, friends of the Vestrani—friends of mine—have special privileges. So, while you take care of this task for me, I can find this Lurian person."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Sense Motive check suspects Taza knows exactly who and where Lurian is, but Taza admits nothing.

Can we borrow a car? "I'll have a few vehicles assigned to you. If you wish, you can use your own instead."

What about the Sun Diver? "I handle gaming, and I have nothing to do with other aspects of the business, including the repurposing of forfeited starships. It would raise suspicion if I were to go asking about particulars. I'm afraid you're on your own there."

Again, a PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Sense Motive check suspects Taza knows all about the *Sun Diver*. If the group pushes back, Taza smiles. She reminds them that she can do more for her friends.

Development: Taza asks the PCs to meet at a location in the Brass Bazaar on the following day, offering them 4,000 credits in advance, and 4,000 more if they successfully escort the shipment. If the PCs want chips instead, she offers 36,000, with half in advance. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Diplomacy check can convince

her to split the payment into 4,000 credits and 18,000 chips. None of the chips Taza offers have a stake value.

If the PCs meet Taza because they ran afoul of security, she still proposes her plan. With this leverage, though, she offers to wipe the slate clean rather than offering pay. If the PCs have already met Taza, she intervenes just before the guards administer their punishment, issuing the PCs a severe warning. She also threatens to halve the pay, but a PC can convince her to stick to her previous offer by succeeding at a DC 22 Diplomacy check.

A1. FOYER (CR 6)

Just through the large front doors is a lobby, thickly carpeted to resemble a jungle floor covered in moss and stone. This surface is luxuriously soft. The space centers on a raised, faux-stone dais with a life-sized animated hologram of a ksarik that resembles an amalgam of predatory beasts. A couple guests take selfies using the holographic terror as a background. To the north, a large holosign above a counter reads "Guest Services," and behind it sits a bald human man.

Clearly posted in the lobby are the Vestrani Gaming Complex's Three Rules:

No Cheating! (No divination or illusions.)

Check Your Weapons! (See Guest Services.)

Have Fun!



TAZA ПЕРОВО



A1

A2

A6

A5

A3

A7

A10

A9

A8

A4

A11

A1

A12

A13

A. VESTRANI GAMING COMPLEX

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

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Creature: The hologram projector is a military-grade device that can be switched from harmless to weaponized in seconds. When alerted to the PCs' arrival, Taza Nepobo orders the switch triggered to test the PCs as potential partners in her plan.

Shortly after the PCs enter the lobby but before they check their weapons, the hologram becomes a living hologram and leaps off the dais to attack. Guests scatter, leaving the PCs as the only ones who can deal with the threat. However, in 3 rounds, two Vestrani security guards arrive to help. Taza intends this intervention as a warning for the PCs against misbehaving in the casino. Consider allowing the players to roll the guards' attacks and damage to drive home their effectiveness.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Engineering check recognizes the living hologram for what it is and understands the projector is the creature's source. It takes a move action and a successful DC 20 Perception or Engineering check to spot the projector disguised on the dais. The PCs can then destroy the projector. This Small object has an AC of 4, a hardness of 10, 45 Hit Points, and a break DC of 25.

KSARIK LIVING HOLOGRAM **CR 6**

XP 2,400

Living hologram (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #4 59)

CE Medium construct (incorporeal, technological)

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

Perception +13

DEFENSE **HP 77**

EAC 18; **KAC** 18

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

Defensive Abilities incorporeal, rejuvenation;

Immunities construct immunities

Weaknesses tethered

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee hardlight tentacle +17 (1d8+6 B; critical dazzled [DC 14])

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

TACTICS

During Combat The living hologram attacks the nearest PC, ignoring other guests.

Morale The living hologram fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +13, Bluff +18

Other Abilities unliving

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hardlight Tentacle (Ex) As an attack, a ksarik living hologram can temporarily cause its holographic tentacles to become substantial. This functions as a natural weapon that deals bludgeoning damage. On a critical hit, the attack creates a bright flash of light and the target must succeed at a DC 14 Reflex save or be dazzled for 1 round.

Rejuvenation (Ex) A ksarik living hologram reduced to 0 Hit Points or otherwise destroyed vanishes, though its projector can reconstruct it in 1d4 hours. The only way to

permanently destroy a ksarik living hologram is to find its projector and destroy it. Living holograms are aware of this link and protect their projectors at all costs.

Tethered (Ex) A ksarik living hologram can't travel more than 100 feet from its projector. If it is ever forced to do so, it is immediately destroyed.

VESTRANI SECURITY GUARDS (2) **CR 5**

XP 1,600 each

Human soldier

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE **HP 70 EACH**

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

Fort +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee cellular resonant gauntlet +14 (1d4+12 So; critical nauseate)

Ranged vector graviton pistol +12 (critical knockdown)

Offensive Abilities charge attack, fighting styles (blitz), rough up

TACTICS

During Combat These guards attack the hologram with lethal force, willingly coordinating with the PCs.

Morale The guards aren't attacked in this encounter, so they fight until the living hologram is defeated.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +16, Diplomacy +11, Intimidate +16, Sense Motive +11

Languages Common

Gear business stationwear, cellular resonant gauntlet^{AR} with 1 battery (20 charges), vector graviton pistol^{AR} with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Rough Up (Ex) A Vestrani security guard takes no penalty when using a melee weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage.

Development: Moments after the hologram is subdued, the complex's mechanic, Gallask (see page 17), arrives along with his drone and several Vestrani staff. Initially eyeing the PCs suspiciously, Gallask then ignores them and sets to work on the projector. Other staff set up portable holographic devices that project a waterfall pouring out of the ceiling onto the dais, masking the work site. They don't let the PCs investigate the projector, and security intervenes if the PCs are too insistent.

Additional Vestrani staffers, smiling as though nothing happened, offer everyone present (including the PCs) a complimentary stay in an Ukulam suite (area **A11**), along with 1,200 complimentary chips. These gifts can be acquired at Guest Services. The catch is that those who accept the offer must sign a disclaimer indemnifying the Vestrani Gaming Complex for

any injuries the incident caused. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy check can convince the staffer to throw in 800 extra chips for each member of the party. These chips have no stake value, so they're worth 25% of their face value in credits.

If the PCs fail to visit Guest Services to check their weapons and register themselves for their Ukulam Suite after the battle, security directs them to do so. Each person is allowed only one small arm and a basic melee weapon inside the casino. Those who wish to retain larger or more dangerous weapons are invited to depart the complex.

Jannik (N male human), the concierge at Guest Services, explains that guests must register their biometrics for access to areas of the casino and to check weapons. An automated system securely handles and stores checked weapons; no person comes into contact with them. Jannik directs guests to give him their comm numbers and place weapons to be checked onto flat-black panels on the counter. For each weapon, he presses a button, and the item disappears into the counter. At the same time, the casino's scanners register the guest's biometrics, and the computer sends the guest an encrypted code that can be used to retrieve the weapon. The computer accesses security-scanner data to pair with the code, as well, so a person who somehow loses access to their comm unit can still retrieve weapons after a short security check. Jannik truthfully claims no guest has ever lost a weapon here.

A2. SKIMMER TABLES

Skimmer card tables fill this room. Each is a brightly lit arc in the otherwise dimly lit space. People crowd around, playing the card game in quiet concentration. Each table has a dealer seated at the center. Most are human or kasathan, but a high-stakes table near the center features a skittermander dealer who expertly deals six cards at once.

The casino employs sapients instead of robots because creatures can't be hacked, but they can be blackmailed, extorted, and threatened. A PC who knows about the Vestrani cartel's reputation and succeeds at a DC 15 Culture check realizes that fact. One of several skilled skittermander dealers—Ali, Kwox, Lobo, Phak, Vola, or Zip—is always at the high-stakes skimmer table.

Any number of PCs can join in this skill-based card game; each must spend 4 hours (accounting for a large number of hands) and ante between 50 and 2,000 chips. Each PC in the game attempts one Bluff check, one Intimidate check, and one Sense Motive check. Their results over the course of the game are based on the results of each check, as shown on the table below. Add the modifiers for each roll and multiply a PC's initial ante by that amount to determine their winnings. For example, a PC who rolls results of 16, 17, and 27 on his three checks adds -5, -5, and 1, for a total of 0, meaning the play resulted in breaking even (no additional chips won). A PC can't lose more chips than they anted.

Result	Modifier
Less than 15	-1
16-21	-.5
22-26	.5
27+	1

A3. ENERCYCLE BETTING

A polished wooden bar with gold fittings encircles an ovoid pit here. Cheering patrons lean on the outer edge of the bar, looking down at a high-definition holographic projection of a zero-gravity enercycle race. Streamed live from the racing venue in Chroma, the race has three-dimensional models of each enercycle in its real-time position on the sloped walls of the racetrack. Each cycle's statistics, including its driver and win percentages, circle it in rotating halos. Gamblers use touchscreens and chip slots in the bar's surface to place bets and order drinks, while several drones serve beverages.

The format of these races is one of gradual elimination. Each lap, the cycle in last place is eliminated, and its engine shuts off as it crosses the finish line.

Playing the Cycles: For gambling on enercycles, gather between 5 and 10 d6s, each of which represents one enercycle. Before rolling any dice, each PC can place one bet, between 50 and 1,000 chips, and choose one die they expect to win. Each d6 should be visually distinct, rolled in a designated area, or rolled by a specific person to make it easy to keep track of the die after it's rolled. After PCs have placed their bets, roll all the dice, and then remove the die showing the lowest number. If any ties occur, reroll the tied dice until one is lowest. Repeat this procedure for each lap until one racer wins or it's clear no PC can win. If a die chosen by a PC wins, that character wins the amount indicated on the table. Four races occur per day.

Number of Racers	Winnings
10	Original bet plus 9 × chips bet
8-9	Original bet plus 7 × chips bet
6-7	Original bet plus 5 × chips bet
5	Original bet plus 4 × chips bet

Gaining an Edge: Each day, a PC can spend 2 hours studying the racers and their enercycles and talking to other gamblers. Doing so and subsequently succeeding at a DC 24 Diplomacy or Profession (gambler) check means that, once per race, that PC can reroll one d6. However, such a PC misses one race per day.

A4. WALL OF MANY MOUNTAINS

A rock wall stretches to the ceiling, various paths to the top marked with glowing, colored tracks. At the top, a leaderboard displays the best times for recent climbers and the heights they reached. A nearby kiosk plays a looped vid, showing that the wall is composed of billions of hair-thin, high-strength,

retractable rods, allowing it to configure itself into any surface. The wall's database allows it to reproduce climbing routes of real mountains. Its current display is a difficult stretch of the Pact Worlds' tallest peak: Ka, Akiton's Pillar of the Sky.

A bright digital sign reads, "Beat Darius and Win 8,000 Chips!" Below the sign, a lifelike, two-foot-tall rotating hologram displays a muscular female kasatha wearing climbing gear and a black face mask. In a looping animation, she dips her hands into a container of chalk and then claps them together before flexing and crouching, as if ready to leap.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Culture or appropriate Profession check knows the kasatha is Darius Pelata, a climber renowned for being the only one to summit each of the four highest peaks in Castrovel's Singing Range without magical or technological assistance. The Vestrani cartel lured her to their casino with promises of funding further climbing expeditions, but they require her to compete against other clients, some of whom spend small fortunes training to beat her.

The next competition occurs while the PCs are in the complex. It has an entry fee of 1,000 chips per competitor. One slot is still available, and a PC can sign up. To gain the slot, a PC must first audition by attempting five DC 17 Athletics checks to climb, succeeding at least three times, and never failing by 5 or more. Any PC who fails by 5 or more must succeed at a DC 10 Reflex save or fall harmlessly to the padded safety floor below the wall.

Competition: The competition takes place one evening with great fanfare. Hundreds of spectators attend, and the event is recorded and streamed across the Pact Worlds. The wall divides itself into identical sections, one for each contestant. Holoprojectors display live stats behind each climber.

The competition takes 10 rounds. Each round, Darius, the competing PC, and two other contestants each attempt opposed Athletics checks to climb. (Allow other players to roll for the NPCs.) Darius has a +16 bonus, and the other contestants each have a +11 bonus. Each character records the place they take on each check (1st, 2nd, etc.). However, any character who has a result lower than 15 on a check must subsequently succeed at a DC 10 Reflex save or fall. Anyone who falls is eliminated. After 10 rounds, the remaining participants each add up the places they achieved each round; the character who has the lowest total place is the winner, with the subsequent places going to any other participants who completed the climb, depending on their totals. In the case of a tie for first place, climbing continues among tied contestants in bouts of rounds equal to the number of remaining competitors until a winner is determined.

The winner is awarded 8,000 chips. A consolation prize of 1,000 chips is split among any participants tied for second place. Anyone who finishes in third or fourth place receives nothing.

Gaining an Edge: After several years of being trotted out as entertainment while receiving dwindling support for her expeditions, Darius resents her role in these competitions. A

PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check recognizes her in the casino after seeing her hologram. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Diplomacy check can convince her to throw the match in exchange for half the winnings (in credits—Darius doesn't want to explain a later chip exchange). If Darius throws the match, she rolls twice each round and takes the lower result.

A5. HOLOSLOTS

Banks of holographic slot machines produce a cacophony of chimes, music, and spoken enticements. Dozens of different models make up the array, each holoslot themed differently, from ones featuring colorful reptilian renkrodas to a game about matching different castes of ant-like formians.



DARIUS PELATA

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A particularly popular model, Kaukariki Surprise, features Castrovell's venomous bat-monkeys adorably rendered as cartoons with expressive eyes and softened features. The chittering creatures celebrate each win.

Each machine has the same function. It requires a specific bet, randomly determines a set of symbols, and pays out for certain matching sets. Sensors built into each machine detect the specific creature playing it, allowing the holograms to match a user's physiology, language needs, and personal preferences.

Playing the Slots: To simulate an hour at the slots (the minimum amount of time), a PC bets a certain amount (minimum 50 chips, maximum 500 chips) and rolls 3d6 (rolling one die at a time) to simulate the best result during that hour. The table here shows what a PC can win for various results.

Best Result	Winings
3 identical numbers	Original bet plus 20 × chips bet
3 consecutive numbers (rolled in order)	Original bet plus 20 × chips bet
3 consecutive numbers	Original bet plus 8 × chips bet
2 identical numbers	Original bet plus 1 × chips bet

Gaining an Edge: An engineer disgruntled with the Vestrani family performed the most recent maintenance on these slots, adding a secret signal to the Kaukariki Surprise software. Every few dozen plays, the animated kaukarikis' tails subtly signal the next result. A PC who spends at least 4 hours at these slots and succeeds at a DC 27 Perception check notices this fact and can play the game more efficiently. Once per play, the player can reroll one die. The day after a PC gains this edge, none of the holoslots are running the Kaukariki Surprise software. A day later, Kaukariki Surprise is back, but the glitch is gone.

A6. METEORITE ROULETTE

High stools surround oval tables here, each table with a casino employee standing at one end. Hovering above the center of each station is an electromagnetic sphere painted to look like a nonspecific jungle planet, spinning lazily in place. Each table has a grid of available bets that correspond to numbered continents, oceans, and islands on the planet. Players place bets on various squares of this grid. Groupings of markers allow a player to bet that the meteorite hits water (represented by 2-10) or land (11-19). Each round of betting, the table's operator calls "no more bets" while lobbing a stylized "meteor" into orbit around the larger sphere in a direction opposite to the planet's spin. The meteor's orbit decays until, after several seconds, it strikes the planet, sticking to a location through electromagnetic force. Winning bets are paid out, losing bets are collected, and a new round begins.

Playing Meteorite Roulette: To simulate an hour of play (the minimum amount), PCs bet on a specific result (see the table).

Each player rolls 1d20 to see where the meteorite lands for that bet. If the result is a 1 or a 20, the meteorite hits one of the planet's frozen poles, and everyone loses.

Specific Result	Winings
Specific number from 2-19	Original bet plus 15 × chips bet
Even (except 20)	Original bet plus 1 × chips bet
Odd (except 1)	Original bet plus 1 × chips bet
2-10	Original bet plus 1 × chips bet
11-19	Original bet plus 1 × chips bet

Gaining an Edge: A PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Engineering or Physical Science check realizes that the magnetosphere of one table is slightly out of alignment, biasing the meteorite toward hitting land. Once per day, after betting on a result of 11-19, the player can reroll the d20 to determine where the meteorite hits, choosing the more favorable result.

A7. SPA

A bright, clean spa sits atop a raised circular platform surrounded by deck chairs. An array of pools takes up most of the space. Each can be modified in temperature and chemical content to match a wide variety of preferences.

The spa offers a couple other amenities. Two kasathan masseurs perform eight-handed deep-tissue massage for 100 chips, granting a +1 morale bonus to saving throws for 8 hours. It costs 1,000 chips to rest for 2 hours in one of several rejuvenating beds; doing so is as effective as 8 hours of rest. (Daily-use abilities can still be regained only once per 24 hours.)

A8. QABARAT RESTAURANT AND LOUNGE

Serving varied cuisine any time of day, this massive eatery also boasts a different celebrity chef each month.

Celebrity Chef: This month, the celebrity chef is a korasha lashunta named Lassa Beni, best known for pioneering formian-lashunta fusion cuisine. If the PCs order from his menu and are in good standing with the casino, they can ask to meet the chef. Quite brusque with those not of Castrovell's endemic species (elf, formian, or lashunta), Lassa warms up quickly to anyone who demonstrates knowledge of his home planet, offering them a complimentary meal and inviting them to see his luxury starship in the garage (area A12).

Getting a Gig: One of the opening acts for the Vestrani Gaming Complex's headliners has been canceled (he's missing), and the stage manager, **Dakha Yonvenu** (N female summerborn ryporian), is desperately looking for someone to fill in. A PC who has a Charisma-based Profession (or a PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Bluff check) can offer to fill in, allowing the PC to attempt a Profession check (or Bluff check) to earn a living. In this case, a single check represents a 30-minute opening act, and it earns the PC 20 times the result in chips.

A9. BATHROOMS

The walls of these well-appointed, all-species restrooms can't talk, but their dutiful attendants can. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Diplomacy or Profession (any service industry) check can gain useful information about the casino, the odds of a game, or any other details you care to give.

A10. ELEVATORS

Each elevator's walls are floor-to-ceiling vidscreens that display a 360-degree view of Castrovel's jungles, as though the elevator's occupants were in a glass elevator on the planet, with the view changing as the elevator ascends or descends. Floors above the gaming complex hold hotel rooms, with the topmost floors reserved for enormous single suites with private access only via

A11. UKULAM SUITE (CR 7)

After the incident in area **A1**, the PCs earn themselves a free stay in one of the gaming complex's finest suites, a lush affair with a spacious bedroom, a hot tub, and windows that look out onto Verdeon. These windows are 100 feet above a plaza in front of the gaming complex.

Creatures: After the PCs have been at the Vestrani Gaming Complex for a while (perhaps a few days), or just after they foil the heist (see **Event 2** on page 18), a few Brass Dragons (each wearing an identifying pauldron) sneak into the PCs' room, lying in wait in hopes of revenge. The commandos wait in the lounge area in the northernmost part of the suite, near the windows. They've used their engineering tool kits to rig the central outer window of the room to break with minimal force (see their tactics). Their leader, Karlana Dask, keeps watch, hiding behind the pillar to the west of the stairs. Karlana was operating outside the Eos Athletics Club when the PCs invaded that Brass Dragons headquarters in the previous adventure. She's here for revenge, hoping to kill some or all of the PCs.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check upon returning to their suite notices that the lock has been tampered with. The gang members wait in their hiding spots until it seems like the entire party is inside the room. If the PCs suspect a trap, they can attempt to surprise their ambushers. They might still spot Karlana (Perception DC 21) even if they enter unaware of the tampering. If so, neither side is surprised. The commandos surprise PCs who notice nothing odd.

Once shots are fired, two Vestrani security guards arrive to intervene in 2d6+3 rounds. See the Brass Dragons' tactics for more on this eventuality.

KARLANA DASK

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female ifrit soldier (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #13 60)
LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE

EAC 18; **KAC** 20

HP 66

Fort +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +8

Resistances fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 35 ft.; fly 30 ft. (jetpack, average)

Melee yellow star solar brand +14 (1d8+9 E & F; critical wound)

Ranged azimuth laser rifle +13 (1d8+5 F; critical burn 1d6)

Offensive Abilities charge attack, fighting styles (blitz), fire affinity

Ifrit Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

1/day—overheat (DC 12)

TACTICS

During Combat Karlana prefers melee combat, and she selects a tough-looking foe to tangle with. She tries to kill as many PCs as she can.

Morale If the fight goes against her and she has fewer than 16 Hit Points left, Karlana leaps through the rigged central window and uses her jetpack to fly away. She also retreats once Vestrani security shows up. If she can't flee, she's unwilling to be captured and fights to the death. In this case, she might use the weakened window to take a PC with her.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +16, Intimidate +11, Stealth +11

Feats Step Up

Languages Common, Ignan

Gear lashunta ringwear II (jetpack with 1 battery [20 charges]), azimuth laser rifle with 2 batteries (20 charges each), yellow star solar brand^{AR} with 1 high-capacity battery (40 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fire Affinity (Su) Once per day, if using an attack that deals fire damage, Karlana can roll a single attack roll twice and take the higher result.

BRASS DRAGONS COMMANDOS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Suli operative (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #14 58)

N Medium outsider (native)

Init +; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +9

DEFENSE

HP 35 EACH

EAC 14; **KAC** 15

Fort +2; **Ref** +8; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities evasion; **Resistances** acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee survival knife +9 (1d4+5 S)

Ranged tactical semi-auto pistol +9 (1d6+4 P)

Offensive Abilities elemental assault, trick attack +1d8

TACTICS

Before Combat Given the chance, these commandos use their holographic clone ability before starting to fight.

During Combat The commandos keep mobile, leaping over the railing into the southern area if the stairs are clogged with foes. One helps Karlana take out her selected target while the second fires on other PCs in the suite.

Morale These commandos fight until Karlana retreats. Once she does, they use grapplers to rappel out of the hotel.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +9, Engineering +14, Piloting +9, Stealth +14

Languages Castrovelian, Common, Ignan

Other Abilities operative exploits (holographic clone), specialization (ghost)

Gear casual stationwear, survival knife, tactical semi-auto



VESTRANI SECURITY

pistol with 27 small arm rounds, grappler with 100 ft. of titanium cable line, tool kit (engineering)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Elemental Assault (Su) Three times per day, as a swift action, this suli can cause half the damage dealt by a weapon they wield to be of the acid, cold, electricity, or fire type for 1 round. A suli can use this ability on their unarmed strikes, causing them to be neither archaic nor nonlethal while the damage alteration persists.

Treasure: Waiting for the PCs when they first arrive at the room is a rich assortment of complimentary, prepackaged gourmet food and drink worth 100 credits. A PC who searches the room and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check finds a corona laser pistol with a fully charged battery hidden in the room's furniture, left behind by a previous guest.

Development: If the PCs capture any of the mercs, the Brass Dragons reveal that they're special operations forces that were stationed outside the Eos Club when the PCs attacked that site. The mercs came here for payback. Vestrani security allows the PCs to loot defeated foes, then takes them away for cartel justice. Taza Nepobo makes sure the PCs receive a new suite for the remainder of their stay.

A12. PRIVATE GARAGE (CR 7)

This private area is locked. Only guests who have vehicles parked within are allowed access.

A high-ceilinged garage and dock area stretches thousands of feet across, most of that space filled with yachts, midsize personal cruisers, and extravagant single-creature vessels.

The largest vessels in this garage are on pads that can be moved slowly along the floor (10 feet per round) using an attached control console (a move action each round). The craft belong to the casino's wealthy guests, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Engineering, Piloting, or Perception check can tell that none are likely to be the *Sun Diver*. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notices subtle vertical wear marks near the bottom of the western wall; for PCs who know the chop shop is supposed to be hidden in the garage, reduce the DC to 20. This entire wall can slide into the floor, revealing the other half of the garage. The control panel for this door is hidden (Perception DC 30, or DC 25 if the PCs suspect they need to find one due to suspicions about the chop shop's existence). The panel is also locked with a biometric device of the type the casino uses.

Creatures: Two Vestrani security guards patrol this garage. Unless the PCs are with Lassa Beni (see area **A8**) or have a vehicle here, the guards insist on escorting the PCs out. They use force if necessary.

VESTRANI SECURITY GUARDS (2) CR 5

XP 1,600 each

HP 70 each (see page 11)

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TACTICS

During Combat Vestrani security guards open with a charge and then pummel targets into submission, using their gauntlets to deal nonlethal damage. The guards make full attacks with their vector graviton pistols to pull evasive targets closer.

Morale Assured of backup, these guards won't back down.

A13. CHOP SHOP (CR 6)

An enormous chop shop holds a variety of vehicles and six small starships, each in various states of deconstruction and filling almost every available space.

The Vestrani cartel uses this room to strip vehicles for parts. A few have been stolen, but most were obtained legally in payment for gambling debts. Some vessels are on mobile pads like those in the garage.

In the southeast, not depicted on the map, a huge hangar door is sealed shut, with a control panel along the wall at its base. Using this panel to open the hangar doors is a trivial task. Doing so from inside a docked starship requires a standard action and a successful DC 22 Computers check. Attempting the check or opening the doors alerts security—see Development.

Creatures: The cartel employs a wiry and temperamental shobhad mechanic named Gallask, who spends most of his time in this area. He brooks no interference with his duties and knows PCs who enter the area have no clearance to do so. He attacks such intruders immediately.

GALLASK

CR 6

XP 2,400

Male shobhad mechanic (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 104)

NE Large monstrous humanoid

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

DEFENSE

HP 80

EAC 18; **KAC** 19

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

Defensive Abilities ferocity; **Resistances** cold 5

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee tactical knife +12 (2d4+6 S)

Ranged corona laser pistol +14 (2d4+4 F; critical burn 1d4)

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

Offensive Abilities overload (DC 16)



TACTICS

During Combat Gallask prefers to exchange fire with his foes. If someone threatens him in melee, his drone intercedes to help him relocate and keep shooting. If Errant is destroyed, Gallask does his best to slay the drone's "killer."

Morale Gallask's stubborn pride means he fights until nearly dead. When reduced to 0 Hit Points, he uses his last round (thanks to his ferocity ability) to implore the PCs (with some tenderness) to look after his drone.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Computers +18, Engineering +18, Intimidate +18, Survival +13

Languages Common, Shobhad

Other Abilities artificial intelligence (drone named Errant), custom rig, mechanic tricks (overcharge, overclocking), remote hack (DC 16)

Gear freebooter armor II, corona laser pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), tactical knife

ERRANT

CR -

Gallask's drone

N Medium construct (technological)

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

Perception +10

DEFENSE

HP 52

EAC 16; **KAC** 18

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

Immunities construct immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +10 (1d6+7 B)

Ranged tactical arc emitter +13 (1d4+4 E)

Offensive Abilities jolting arc

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +10, Computers +10

Languages Common, Shobhad

Other Abilities mods (cargo rack, hardened AI, manipulator arm), reduced actions, unliving

Gear tactical arc emitter with 2 batteries (20 charges each)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Jolting Arc (Ex) Once every 1d4 rounds as a standard action, Errant can shoot an arc of electricity at up to four creatures within 40 feet (no two of which can be more than 30 feet apart). This arc deals 1d8 electricity damage to each target (Reflex DC 13 half).

Development: The cartel doesn't keep records about the vessels here, so the PCs have no way to tell which of the six small starships is the *Sun Diver* without previous information. A PC can narrow the possibilities to three ships by succeeding at a DC 27 Engineering or Piloting check. Reduce the DC of this check by 5 for characters with the ace pilot or solar disciple themes, and reduce it by a further 10 if Lurian described the craft to them. The *Sun Diver* is presented on the inside covers of this book.

If the PCs have to check more than three ships to find the *Sun Diver*, two more Vestrani security guards arrive. They know no civilians should be here, so they attack. The PCs earn no XP for facing this extra threat.

EVENT 2: CHIP HEIST (CR 7)

When the PCs arrive in the Brass Bazaar, Taza sends the PCs an anonymous message on their personal comm units. She provides keyless ignition codes for two motorcycles and a nondescript hover truck nearby. An extremely nervous human, Phillin, already occupies the truck's driver seat. He refuses to give up the position and cautions the PCs (unprompted) that they'll have to answer to Taza if they "mess with" him. Phillin anxiously informs the PCs that the truck is already loaded with "the goods" in a secure container in the back. The truck can hold up to two PCs. Other PCs can use motorcycles or whatever other vehicles they have access to.

A PC who wants to drive the truck can persuade Phillin to move over with a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check, or a PC can bully Phillin away from the wheel with a successful DC 19 Intimidate check. In either case, he reports this treatment to Taza (see Development). Further, he does nothing to aid in the combat, choosing to protect himself instead. At your discretion, if the PCs take time to cajole Phillin, the attack might occur before the convoy gets moving.

Creatures: Brass Dragons mercenaries attack the convoy and chase it. These remnants of the Brass Dragons were elsewhere in the Burning Archipelago when the PCs took out their base during the previous adventure. They wear no identifying clothing. The technomancer and one commando drive or ride in an urban cruiser, and the mechanic and another commando drive motorcycles. These mercenaries want to deal as much damage to the PCs as possible, as well as stop and loot the truck. They break off the chase once it becomes clear they won't do much more harm to the PCs.

BRASS DRAGONS COMMANDOS (2) CR 3

XP 800 each

HP 35 each (see page 15)

OFFENSE

Ranged (only in the cruiser) tactical shirren-eye rifle +9 (1d10+4 P)

STATISTICS

Skills Acrobatics +9, Bluff +14, Disguise +14, Piloting +14, Stealth +9

Other Abilities operative exploits (quick disguise), specialization (spy)

Gear (only in the cruiser) tactical shirren-eye rifle with 10 sniper rounds

BRASS DRAGONS MECHANIC CR 3

XP 800

Ifrit mechanic (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #13 60)

N Medium outsider (native)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +8

DEFENSE

EAC 14; KAC 15

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

Resistances fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

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

Ranged azimuth laser pistol +9 (1d4+3 F; critical burn 1d4)

Offensive Abilities fire affinity, overload (DC 14), target tracking

Ifrit Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd)

1/day—overheat (DC 14)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Computers +13, Engineering +13, Piloting +13

Languages Castrovelian, Common, Ignan

Other Abilities artificial intelligence (exocortex), custom rig (brain augmentation with datajack), mechanic tricks (overcharge)

Gear casual stationwear, azimuth laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), tactical dueling sword

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fire Affinity (Su) See page 15.

BRASS DRAGONS TECHNOMANCER CR 3

XP 800

Ifrit technomancer (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #13 60)

N Medium outsider (native)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE

EAC 13; KAC 14

Fort +2; **Ref** +2; **Will** +6

Resistances fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical dueling sword +6 (1d6+3 S)

Ranged azimuth laser pistol +7 (1d4+3 F; critical burn 1d4)

Offensive Abilities fire affinity

Ifrit Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd)

1/day—overheat (DC 16)

Technomancer Spells Known (CL 3rd; ranged +7)

1st (3/day)—magic missile, supercharge weapon

0 (at will)—detect magic, energy ray

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STATISTICS

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

Skills Computers +13, Intimidate +8, Mysticism +8, Piloting +13

Languages Castrovelian, Common, Ignan

Other Abilities magic hacks (countertech), spell cache (personal comm unit)

Gear casual stationwear, azimuth laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), tactical dueling sword, tool kit (hacking)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fire Affinity (Su) See page 15.

Chase: This event uses the vehicle chase rules beginning on page 282 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*. Each round, Phillin attempts the keep pace pilot action, afraid to lose control of the hover truck if he goes too fast.

MOTORCYCLE

LEVEL 2

Starfinder Armory 138

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

Speed 20 ft., full 500 ft., 55 mph

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

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

Attack (Collision) 3d4 B (DC 9)

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

Systems planetary comm unit; **Passengers** 1

HOVER TRUCK

LEVEL 5

Starfinder Armory 138

Gargantuan land and water vehicle (10 ft. wide, 30 ft. long, 12 ft. high)

Speed 15 ft., full 450 ft., 50 mph (hover if antigrav activated)

EAC 14; **KAC** 17; **Cover** improved cover

HP 65 (32); **Hardness** 6

Attack (Collision) 6d8 B (DC 11)

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

Systems autocontrol, expansion bay (cargo), planetary comm unit; **Passengers** 3

URBAN CRUISER

LEVEL 2

Starfinder Core Rulebook 228

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

Speed 20 ft., full 500 ft., 55 mph

EAC 14; **KAC** 15; **Cover** improved cover

HP 24 (12); **Hardness** 5

Attack (Collision) 5d4 (DC 11)

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

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

The following features can be used during the vehicle chase. See Chase Environments on page 285 of the *Core Rulebook* for more information on how to use these elements.

Canopy Kick (New Trick): A character on a motorcycle can attempt a DC 15 Piloting check to kick out the support for a merchant stall's canopy (characters on motorcycles only; gives pursuers a -4 penalty to Piloting).

Melted Pavement (Altered Movement): Patches of pavement have melted from the Bazaar's heat and radiation. Each round, there's a 50% chance that ground vehicles (motorcycle, the urban cruiser, and the hover truck if its antigrav jets are not enabled) take a -2 penalty to Piloting checks.

Motorcycle Meddling (Active Hazard): Before the pilot actions phase, a number of Brass Bazaar residents attempt to interfere with the motorcycle riders out of annoyance at the chase. Once during the chase, they throw small objects and try to swipe at cyclists as they pass. Make three ranged attacks, each with a +8 bonus (targeting KAC), against random PCs riding motorcycles. Hits deal 2d6 bludgeoning damage and, on a critical hit, the target must succeed at a DC 12 Piloting check or fall back one zone. Three further attacks target the antagonists on motorcycles. Allow the players to roll the attack and damage rolls against their foes.

Development: If the PCs capture any Brass Dragons, the hostile mercs must be persuaded (Diplomacy DC 29) or bullied (Intimidate DC 19) into revealing who they are. They know what the truck contains and that the PCs were supposed to escort it. Vengeance on the PCs is their primary goal; taking the chips from the truck was just a bonus. The mercs don't know Taza is the snitch. Any ramifications of her involvement are left for you to decide.

If the PCs escape their assailants, they can deliver the chips to the Vestrani Gaming Complex without further incident. If the PCs succeed, Taza pays them the remaining fee, if any. She also provides information on Lurian's whereabouts, making her easy for the group to find. If the PCs lose the shipment but survive, Taza refuses to pay and declines to help the group further, though she benefits from the fallout within the cartel. In neither case does she care whether PCs "messed with" Phillin.

ACQUIRING THE SUN DIVER

The PCs can take a couple paths to retrieve the *Sun Diver*. They can steal it from the chop shop (area **A13**), earning the ire of the Vestrani cartel. Alternatively, they can pay for its release by helping Lurian acquire sufficient credits. **Segal Vestrani** (LE human technomancer), Lurian's cartel contact, is the vice-president of facilities at the Vestrani Gaming Complex. Segal releases the *Sun Diver* if the PCs can provide 50,000 in chips (or 12,500 credits) to offset Lurian's debt. He can be convinced to accept less if a PC succeeds at a Diplomacy check to negotiate. If the PCs successfully delivered the chips to the Vestrani Gaming Complex, Taza is willing to act as an intermediary, granting the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus to the check to alter this asking price. In any case, the DC of the check is the difference between the PCs' offered chip amount and 50,000 in thousands. For example, if the PCs offer 27,000 chips, the DC of the check is 23.

If PCs provide less than Lurian owes (75,000 chips), the cartel still considers her to be indebted. Segal strongly recommends she stay on the Burning Archipelago until her debt is settled. He “wouldn’t want anything bad to happen to her or her friends.”

Concluding the Acquisition: When they acquire the *Sun Diver*, the PCs meet its artificial personality (see the inside front cover). With a little time to examine the vessel from within, a PC trained in Engineering can tell the starship contains a delicate system of interdependencies. This new technology, based on siccacite and other fine workings, can channel stellar forces in a way that could protect and power the ship. With the *Sun Diver* secured, the PCs can easily leave Verdeen. They can also cash in or sell their remaining chips and resupply. Lurian goes with them if they acquired the vessel by paying part of her debt, but only as far as the DCI. She has no plans to leave the Burning Archipelago for the time being.

Even if the PCs stole the *Sun Diver*, the Vestrani cartel has no interest in a firefight outside its flagship gaming complex. The cartel bides its time for retribution.

In any case, with the *Sun Diver* in their possession, the PCs can proceed to Part 2 of this adventure.

Story Award: If the PCs peacefully acquire the *Sun Diver*, award them 6,400 XP for their hard work.

PART 2: INTO THE FIRE

Nib contacts the PCs soon after they acquire the *Sun Diver*. She’s excited and anxious for them to go to Noma, especially given the evidence from the previous adventure that others know about the site.

The ysoki becomes even more fretful (and angry) if the PCs stole the *Sun Diver*, admonishing them for making a powerful enemy. With some relief, she adds that at least the cartel won’t be foolish enough to immediately pursue the PCs into other bubbles. However, she warns the PCs that Verdeen is now a dangerous place for them to go.

If Lurian isn’t with the group, Nib invites her to the DCI while the PCs are away on the mission to Noma. Nib learns about Lu even if the PCs don’t speak of her. If the PCs stole the *Sun Diver*, you can decide if the DCI deals with the Vestrani cartel to secure Lu’s release, if Lu remains a prisoner, or if something worse occurs.

If Lurian joins the DCI, she’s glad the *Sun Diver* is out of the cartel’s hands. However, especially if still in debt to the Vestranis, she’s uninterested in going on a speculative mission. Instead, she contracts with the DCI for a steady income, serving as a lead researcher on a team working to improve and duplicate the *Sun Diver*’s prototype technologies, as well as design similar vessels.

PREPARING FOR THE TRIP

As the PCs prepare to go to Noma, Nib lets them know the DCI has supplies for them; they need only meet with an official supplier. Nib ushers the party into the lower levels of the institute’s headquarters, where the business of storing and acquiring materials the DCI needs is taken care of. When the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following text.

In a long room abutting a storage area, a gray-furred ysoki inventories supplies while absentmindedly passing something back and forth between her cheek pouches.

“This is Beran,” says Nib. “She’ll get you set up.”

Beran looks up. She blinks and pauses, then sighs and speaks wearily. “The DCI is willing to grant you five thousand credits for supplies. Tell me what you need, and I’ll acquire and log it. That way, we’ll have a record of what burns up with you.”

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check can tell Beran is bored and unimpressed with the PCs. She starts with an attitude of unfriendly. Beran dislikes the PCs’ reputation for violence (and greed, if they’ve demonstrated such), and she doesn’t hide the fact that she’s skeptical the PCs will return alive. She considers anything they take with them to be a waste of DCI resources. Limited funding means the group has a hard cap of 5,000 credits’ worth of items. The PCs can acquire items with an item level of up to 7 with these funds. In addition to this budget, Beran also provides 4 bulk of siccacite for the *Sun Diver* and a mk 3 culinary synthesizer (*Starfinder* Armory 129) for the *Sun Diver*’s tiny galley, along with 300 UPBs for synthesizing food and drink. She suggests the PCs eat well, strongly implying last meals.

Beran also lends the PCs a survey drone (a specialized spy drone with enhanced camera and shotgun microphone scanners; *Armory* 107) and a datapad (a hardened tier 2 computer with a control module for the drone and secure data storage). This drone runs on solar power, which is expected to be in ample supply in Noma, so it and its scanners need no batteries. Beran makes it clear that this drone and datapad are DCI property, and that she’s issuing the items to collect as much data as possible from Noma. The PCs are expected to return both... if they make it back. The dedicated data storage on the datapad allows the drone to store several days’ worth of scanner data.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Diplomacy check to change Beran’s attitude to indifferent learns that she studied engineering with Lurian. Beran thinks her former classmate lucked into the *Sun Diver*’s design. Despite evidence of the *Sun Diver*’s recent successful but shallow dive, Beran doesn’t believe the vessel can hold up to the fundamental forces inside the star. Any PC trained in Engineering or Mysticism who has had time to examine the *Sun Diver* knows that Beran, who admits to having never laid eyes on the vessel, is wrong. The players can have confidence the trip, absent abnormal circumstances, won’t kill them, despite the skeptical attitude of the ysoki supplier.

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SUN PASSAGE

Make sure each PC chooses a starship combat role as they depart the Burning Archipelago. After leaving the bubble-city, the *Sun Diver* must travel through the tunnel to Sunrise Station. Only then can the *Sun Diver* approach the sun and dive in. When it does, read or paraphrase the following text.

With its course set, the *Sun Diver* faces the blazing corona of the Pact Worlds' sun.

"Hold onto your butts, y'all!" says the ship computer's gravely voice. "Here we go!"

Thrusters fire. Moments later, solar plasma surrounds the vessel, and a low, soothing hum fills the interior. Instruments show the *Sun Diver* is channeling stellar forces around and through its systems, siphoning a portion as extra power.

Traveling to Noma in the *Sun Diver* takes 5 days.

EVENT 3: DIVER DOWN (CR 6)

Halfway through the journey, the PCs discover the *Sun Diver* has been sabotaged. Read or paraphrase the following text.

The *Sun Diver*'s computer says, "Well now, y'know, that is peculiar! Y'all, we got a prob..." The voice slurs and cuts out.

The vessel lurches suddenly and stops. Power to numerous systems shuts down, and the main lighting flickers off. Red emergency lighting comes on. Instruments show life support and artificial gravity still function under emergency power.

"Okay, y'all," says the computer, "Something's wrong, and I can't see it, but the *Sun Diver* is heatin' up fast. I figure we don't have much time before we're all crispy critters. Better suit up and check it out, quick-like."

The *Sun Diver*'s interior has already grown hot.

Emergency power flows to the consoles in area **2** of the *Sun Diver*. Actions the PCs can take to solve the issues follow. Handle each round of checks as if it were a round of starship combat. The situation is stressful, so the PCs don't have time to take 10 or 20 on these tasks.

At the end of any round during which a creature aboard the *Sun Diver* lacks activated environmental protections, the creature must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 14 + the number of rounds that have passed) or take 1d6 nonlethal fire damage. During rounds 4 through 6, this damage increases to 2d4, plus 1d6 lethal fire damage if breathing the *Sun Diver*'s air. The interior of the *Sun Diver* is also bathed in low radiation (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 404). During round 7 and thereafter, even those with activated environmental protections take 1d4 lethal fire damage, and the interior of the starship is bathed in medium radiation. In addition, at the end of each round, the *Sun Diver* itself takes 1 damage, increasing to 2 on rounds 4 through 6, and to 3 on rounds 7 and higher.

Command: A PC can take captain actions to direct others.

Diagnose: Someone who succeeds at a DC 18 Computers check can see a virus has shut down main power. This virus has also caused the starship's power system, including the siccitate

matrix and power core, to malfunction. The *Sun Diver* can't be restarted until these systems function again, and the virus has sealed the hatches between decks. This virus isn't an accident—someone put it into the computer.

Isolate the Virus: It takes three successful DC 25 Computers checks to isolate the virus from the ship's computer. Until someone succeeds at this check once, the hatches can't be opened, the power core can't be restarted, and the siccitate matrix can't be realigned. Even if these components are repaired, the *Sun Diver* can become operational again only after the virus is entirely isolated.

Open Hatches: Diverting emergency power to open the hatches can be done from one of the piloting consoles. It takes a successful DC 22 Engineering check to do so. PCs other than the one who succeeded at this check can move among decks on the same round the hatches open.

Realign the Siccitate Matrix: From any console, any PC who succeeds at two DC 24 Engineering or Mysticism checks, or a combination of the two, can realign the vessel's siccitate matrix.

Reset the Power Core: From *Sun Diver's* engineering deck (area **8**), any PC who succeeds at two DC 24 Engineering checks can reset the power core.

Development: Once the *Sun Diver's* systems are operational again, it returns to normal functionality, provided damage hasn't disabled it in some other way. The PCs have no way to repair Hull Point damage during passage through the sun; going outside the vessel invites certain death.

Story Award: If the PCs survive, award them 2,400 XP.

EVENT 4: ANOMALY (CR 7)

On the fourth day, a massive photonic anomaly blinks into existence near the *Sun Diver* and attacks.

Starship Combat: The photonic anomaly, a starship-scale entity, is drawn to the unusual energy signature the *Sun Diver's* shields give off. Although the anomaly has little interest in destroying the ship, it tries to erase this dissonant signal.

PHOTONIC ANOMALY

TIER 5

HP 205; DT 5; CT 41 (see page 57)

TACTICS

During Combat Each round, the photonic anomaly targets the quadrant of the *Sun Diver* that has the most shields. If the *Sun Diver's* shields are completely depleted, the anomaly retreats.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 70 HP, the anomaly retreats into the solar plasma.

At the end of a round in which the *Sun Diver* is reduced to 0 Shield Points, the starship takes 5 damage from exposure to solar forces. It takes 10 damage at the end of each subsequent round it remains at 0 Shield Points.

Story Award: If the PCs survive starship combat with the photonic anomaly, whether they defeated it or drove it away, award them 3,200 XP for the encounter.

ARRIVAL IN NOMA

As the *Sun Diver* reaches the end of its journey, read or paraphrase the following text.

A dim, round shape becomes visible on the *Sun Diver's* view screens, partially obscured by the glare of the roiling sun.

"Well now, ain't that something?!" says the computer.

The shape grows slowly larger until a polarized bubble is in full view, a sprawling cityscape barely visible within.

A PC who uses the ship's scanners finds a fluctuation in the surface of the bubble much like that of the energy tethers of the Burning Archipelago. This "opening" is more than large enough for the *Sun Diver* to fly through. As the starship accesses the bubble, read or paraphrase the following text.

As the *Sun Diver* nears the opening, the bubble suddenly balloons out, as though attracted to the ship, and begins to envelop it. Proximity sensors flash and a klaxon blares. The alarm quickly proves to be unnecessary, as a new, smaller bubble acts much like an airlock, wrapping a thin layer around the *Sun Diver* and shunting it inward. Soon, the starship is inside the main bubble. Scanners indicate a breathable atmosphere fully protected from the sun's effects.

Within the main bubble, in the perpetual glow of the surrounding sun, made tolerable by the polarization, is a bizarre but clearly advanced city. Mismatched buildings stretch in all directions. Everything has a purplish tinge, accented by the contrasting solar light. Dry canals and pools can be seen along major thoroughfares, stained dark with the remains of something, perhaps a fluid they once contained.

As the ship flies in, the PC who has the highest Perception bonus notices a nearby low, tiered building that has been burned in a manner that suggests another starship landed on the roof. A quick check using the *Sun Diver's* scanners reveals this theory to be true. Scanners indicate the landing was recent, although the exact time is impossible to tell from this distance. This building or a nearby plaza could make a fine landing point for the *Sun Diver*.

Scanners also show the city has no living beings within range. The area near the landing site is littered with debris. Although the structures within have ample power, none of that energy is being generated within the city. Instead, it all comes from the sun, channeled through the bubble and collected in solar arrays integrated into the architecture.

B. SCORCHED MANUFACTORY

The PCs land either on this building (area **B1**) or in a plaza nearby (area **B4**). In any case, the scene is similar. Although the PCs don't yet know it, they have landed where Sulphrax and his team did when they first entered Noma.

This edifice was one of Noma's manufactories, but Sulphrax and his team left little intact. The irregular walls of the three-

tiered, 40-foot-tall building (with a few protrusions extending upward to 50 feet) are full of hand- and footholds. Climbing the structure requires successful DC 15 Athletics checks.

Although not apparent from the outside, parts of this building channel sunlight to the interior. Therefore, the inside of the building is as brightly lit as the outdoors in Noma.

B1. LANDING SITE (CR 6)

The top of this irregular, tiered building has been scorched, melted, and scored. It's clear a starship landed here and great violence followed. The battle-torn remains of small robots—their arms, torsos, heads, and treads—are scattered here and there. Near the northeastern corner is an open hatchway.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Physical Science check can guess a starship took off from the roof here within the last week. The hatchway from the roof leads to a ramp that slopes downward into area B2.

Creature: Noma's AI responded to Sulphrax's attack on the protocites here by building a fearsome responder. Essentially a flying, beetle-like cryo cannon, this extinguisher drone has been resting on a tier of the building 15 feet below the roof. It assumes the PCs are threats. Damaged in a prior engagement, it's missing a leg and unable to fly continuously.

PROTOCOLITE EXTINGUISHER DRONE

CR 6

XP 2,400

Unique anacite predator drone (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 10)
LN Large construct (technological)

Init +3; **Senses** blindsight (heat) 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.,
low-light vision; **Perception** +18

DEFENSE

HP 90

EAC 18; KAC 20

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

Defensive Abilities integrated weapons;

Immunities construct immunities

Weaknesses limited flight, sunlight dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 25 ft., fly 60 ft. (Ex, clumsy)

Melee horn +17 (1d8+11 P)

Ranged gelid hailcannon +14 (2d8+6 C & P; critical
staggered)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Offensive Abilities target lock

TACTICS

Before Combat The drone pops up to shoot just after it senses the PCs, trying to gain surprise. It succeeds at doing so against those who fail a DC 23 Perception check.

During Combat The drone prioritizes attacking any creature that deals fire damage, staying at range, using its limited flying capability, and climbing to take cover on the tiers below the roof. It fires its hailcannon in automatic mode if it can catch three or more PCs in the area.

SUN DIVER REPAIRS

Regardless of the PCs' actions, the *Sun Diver* took at least some damage during the sun passage. If the ship has lost 20 or more Hull Points, the ship's artificial personality warns that it's unsafe to make the return trip to the Burning Archipelago. Any PC trained in Engineering understands that fatigue to the weakened *Sun Diver*'s siccattite matrix puts the vessel at risk of becoming disabled during the return trip if repairs aren't made. See the inside front cover of this volume for details on repairing the *Sun Diver*.

Morale The drone flees when it drops to 10 HP or fewer.

If it escapes, it might return after being repaired at a manufactory elsewhere in the city. In that case, it loses its limited flight weakness.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +13 (+5 to fly), Athletics +18, Stealth +13

Languages Noma; shortwave 100 ft.

Other Abilities tracking (heat), unliving

Gear gelid hailcannon^{AR}

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Automatic Hailcannon (Ex) An extinguisher drone can fire its gelid hailcannon in automatic mode every 1d3 rounds, recharging from an internal reserve.

Limited Flight (Ex) This extinguisher drone must end its movement on a solid surface or it falls. This weakness also gives the drone its clumsy maneuverability, which is normally perfect (Acrobatics +21 to fly).

Shortwave (Ex) See page 58.

Sunlight Dependency (Ex) See page 58.

Target Lock (Ex) As a move action, an extinguisher drone can lock on to a target within 60 feet that it can see. The drone can lock on to only one target at a time. Against the extinguisher drone's attacks, such a target gains no benefit from concealment less than total concealment, and it reduces its bonus to AC due to cover by 2.

Treasure: If the PCs defeat the extinguisher drone, they can remove its gelid hailcannon (*Armory* 21). Refitting the weapon for use by another creature takes 30 minutes and a successful DC 21 Engineering check. The weapon also requires a high-capacity battery for power, though the PCs can instead refit the protocite's power core and leave it coupled to the hailcannon in a process that requires another 30 minutes and a successful DC 21 Engineering check. This improvised power source shorts out if the hailcannon's wielder ever rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll. A shorted-out power core loses all charge and renders the hailcannon broken, and the wielder of the hailcannon must attempt a DC 14 Fortitude saving throw, taking 4d8 cold and electricity damage on a failure or half that

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1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

on a success. Otherwise, the extinguisher drone's power core provides 80 charges before becoming permanently drained. Other protocites' power systems are insufficient to properly power this heavy weapon.

B2. MEZZANINE (CR 6)

The first time the PCs approach this area, a cacophony of grinding sounds provides forewarning of the creatures here.

A metal-framed catwalk with mesh flooring, fifteen feet from the ceiling, overlooks a manufacturing level about fifteen feet below. Parts of this mezzanine have been destroyed. Debris—mostly parts of small robots and the mezzanine itself—litters the area. Ramps lead down to the lower level in two places.

Despite the damage, the mezzanine is safe and stable. The PCs have only a moment to look down into area **B3** before the protocites on the mezzanine attack.

Creatures: Three protocite reclaimers are busy devouring parts of other protocites and of the mezzanine that took heavy damage during Sulphrax's incursion. One reclaimer chews damaged railing, its long limbs guiding the refuse into its grinder. Another reclaimer gathers protocite speaker parts. Yet another is just starting to deposit reclaimed material (see the Treasure section) into a channel that carries it into a receptacle on the manufactory floor (area **B3**). All three stop what they're doing to attack the PCs.

PROTOCOL RECLAIMERS (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each

HP 40 each (see page 58)

TACTICS

During Combat The reclaimers work together to ensnare the PCs and devour them. Two reclaimers prefer to flank targets while another spits polyfluid volleys at the PCs.

Morale The reclaimers have no fear, as they know they too will be reclaimed. They fight until destroyed.

Treasure: With a little study, the PCs can identify the polyfluid (see the Polyfluid and Its Uses sidebar). A PC who succeeds at a subsequent DC 19 Engineering or Physical Science check realizes the reclaimers use their mouth-parts and internal grinding mechanisms to render recycled material into this versatile liquid. The creatures in this area have 3 bulk of polyfluid among them. A reclaimer's storage tank can be removed with 10 minutes of work. Such a container can hold up to 3 bulk of polyfluid and itself has 1 bulk.

Development: If the PCs pause here for more than a few moments, more protocites might arrive in area **B3**. See the Creatures section in that area for details.

B3. MANUFACTORY FLOOR (CR 5)

This area is visible from the mezzanine (area **B2**). If the protocite reclaimers are still in that area, the PCs can hear and see them from the floor here.

Their consoles dark, blasted machines stand among the wreckage on this manufacturing floor, along with portions of small robots that have been scorched and blown apart.

Much of the machinery within this manufactory is broken, and the remainder is powered down. Someone trained in Engineering who spends an hour surveying the machinery determines that some of it can be reactivated. Doing so takes another hour and a successful DC 24 Engineering check. PCs who reactivate this machinery can use it as a large tech workshop. Several PCs can use this workshop at once.

Creatures: If the PCs enter from the ground level, the reclaimers from **B2** descend to attack them. New creatures enter this area after that fight ends, but you decide how soon after. For a more challenging combat, you can instead start this encounter before the initial battle ends. When you're ready to start this encounter, read or paraphrase the following text.

A small robot with a humanoid head, arms, and torso races into the area on the tread that makes up its lower body. Although its tread is damaged, the creature darts among the rubble and machinery. Another robot, like a scorpion with no tail and a fat abdomen, pursues the smaller construct. Another of these insectile robots enters from an entrance in front of the fleeing robot. Both scorpion bots spit globs at the smaller automaton, anchoring it in place with sticky strands binding it to the floor and nearby machinery. As the bigger robots close in, the smaller one struggles, chirps frantically, and then emits a low drone. The grinding mouth-parts of the larger bots spin up, drowning out the little robot's sounds.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 17 Perception or Engineering check notes the smaller robot, a protocite speaker, has no weapons. It struggles against the strands holding it in place, but it doesn't fight back against the two reclaimers.

PROTOCOLITE RECLAIMERS (2) CR 3

XP 800 each

HP 40 each (see page 58)

TACTICS

During Combat The reclaimers continue attacking the speaker only if the PCs are stealthy enough to avoid notice and allow them to take down the smaller bot. Otherwise, they refocus on the PCs.

Morale These reclaimers fight until destroyed.

PROTOCOLITE SPEAKER CR 2

XP 600

HP 15 (normally 23; see page 59)

TACTICS

During Combat The speaker focuses on attempts to escape. If it escapes and the reclaimers are occupied fighting the PCs, the speaker takes cover and peeks at the battle from a place of safety.

POLYFLUID AND ITS USES

Polyfluid is a technological fluid unknown to the Pact Worlds until the PCs discover it. A PC who succeeds at a DC 19 Engineering, Mysticism, or Physical Science check realizes that this substance is essentially a liquid form of UPBs. It can be used in the same way as UPBs. In a tech workshop, the PCs can use polyfluid to make siccitate to repair the *Sun Diver*. Any PC trained in Engineering or Mysticism realizes this possibility. Polyfluid is worth 1,000 credits per 1 bulk, and 1 credit worth of polyfluid can be used in place of 1 UPB. It takes 625 credits worth of polyfluid to make 1 bulk of siccitate; the process takes 2 hours in a tech workshop per bulk produced.

Morale The curious speaker watches the fight. It flees only if the PCs attack it.

Treasure: These reclaimers hold 1 bulk of polyfluid each.

Development: PCs who examine (or examined) the robotic remains in the manufactory realize most of the parts are from models similar to the speaker. Only a few of the destroyed units are reclaimers or another sort of protocite resembling an anacite laborer (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 10).

If the PCs rescue the speaker, designated SOL-653, it is extremely grateful, thanking the group in a strange language that sounds like chirps, whirs, trills, and drones. The little robot is damaged, and it becomes more grateful if the PCs repair it.

If SOL-653 is destroyed, it ejects its data drive, a small cube, which the reclaimers ignore. PCs who pick up this data drive find that another speaker soon comes to retrieve it. Alternatively, if the PCs leave the data drive behind, a new speaker retrieves the drive and seeks out the PCs. This new speaker can stand in for SOL-653 to provide the PCs answers.

Unless the PCs chase the speaker off, it follows them. Once it can speak with them, it offers descriptions of places and creatures the PCs find. The party might also have questions for the protocite. Use the following ones as guidelines.

Who are you? "I am speaker SOL-653. I must not be reclaimed. I have data for the Core!"

What is being reclaimed? "Reclaimers salvage the broken and the finished. The reclaimed become polyfluid. We reshape polyfluid into the unbroken and the new. I have been broken, true, but I must not be reclaimed."

What are reclaimers? SOL-653 identifies the reclaimers.

Why mustn't you be reclaimed? "Citizen speakers submit to reclamation. Reclaimers mistake me for one such, because the invaders damaged my transponder. I am an observer. I have life data to contribute to the Core. I must be assimilated there."

What is the Core? "It is Noma's mind. The source and the destination of knowledge. No incomplete data must go there. What I have is complete."

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What do you have? "Data for the Core." SOL-653 either cannot or will not elaborate further.

Where is the Core? SOL-653 turns several times, and it then responds with the coordinates of the hex where it and the PCs are (likely 7, 6). Further requests for direction result in the protocite saying, "The Core is the start. We are very far."

The PCs, knowing they're on the "southern" edge of the city can guess that might mean the Core is north of them. See Finding the Core on page 27.

How many of you are there? "Hundreds of speakers. Most are hiding. Scores of reclaimers. Hundreds of active experiments, very small to very large." The construct seems pleased, almost proud, as it rattles off its statistics.

What can you tell us about this place? "This is Noma, the all-city. Here we learn the best ways by trying all ways. Perhaps your like is represented here!"

What happened here? "Burning creatures came from the fire outside. They left their vessel to assail us. Noma says they found the Core. There, they took relics. Then they flew back into the fire."

Who is Noma? "Noma is our city. Noma is our creator. For Noma we are reclaimed. Noma is all."

What relics did they take? "The Core contains relics from... Directive: Null. Invaders removed some of these objects."

When SOL-653 says "Directive: Null," a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Insight check notices it appears to lose awareness.

What does Directive: Null mean? SOL-653 is not only unable to define the directive, but the protocite can't be made aware it said the phrase. It acts as if it learned the words from the PCs.

Story Award: If the PCs rescue the speaker and learn of the Core from it, award them 1,600 XP.

B4. PLAZA

A large, dark, irregular column stands in this plaza. Debris suggests that numerous small robots were destroyed here. Part of the column is also blackened, as if struck with fire.

Read or paraphrase the following text, modifying it depending on whether the PCs landed here or came from area B3.

Nearby is an irregular, tiered structure of rough, dark metal with large ramps leading up into the structure's open archways. Other, smaller buildings neighbor this area, giving way to still larger edifices and skyscrapers.

Ramps (area B4a) lead into area B3. The column features holographic machinery that flickers on as the PCs come near. When that happens, read or paraphrase the following text.

An abstract muddle of colors floats in midair, projected from the nearby column. These colors coalesce to form a nebulous shape. Strange sounds emanate from the column, ranging from whistles and hums to almost musical rhythms.

Each time the PCs speak or make noise near the column, the sounds coming from the column change, the quality of the tones narrowing to more closely match those of the PCs' language. The column also analyzes the PCs' shapes, attempting to average them into a single form to present holographically. For a party of the same species, the column presents a simulacrum quickly. The resultant figure is an uncanny representation of the group's



average features and cycles through variations. For mixed parties, the process is slower and the resulting representation eerier. The more disparate the party members are, the more bizarre the resulting simulacrum is.

If SOL-653 is with the party, the column uses the speaker's knowledge to form a better greeter. It might replicate the PC who has been kindest to SOL-653, instead of an amalgamated simulacrum, to represent the party. The column also speaks more quickly and with more accuracy. SOL-653 can tell the PCs this column projects a greeting from Noma but that it is doing so for only the third time in the city's history.

If the group isn't with SOL-653, a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check realizes that the column is attempting to mimic the PCs' speech. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Engineering check comprehends what the holographic simulacrum is before it coheres. A group who succeeds at both checks understands that the column is trying to communicate through a holographic representation. After several minutes, the column manages to imitate the PCs' speech. In a singsong voice, it says, "Welcome, newcomer, to Noma."

The column connects to Noma's neural network. It can converse with protocites nearby, sending instructions if need be. This column has no current need to do so, since Sulphrax's attack ruined the experiment here and destroyed most of the protocites involved. With non-protocites, however, it is capable only of scanning creatures, sending that information to the network, and communicating in a cursory way.

A PC who has a hacking kit can connect to the column by succeeding at a DC 24 Computers check. Doing so reveals only the column's purpose and limitations. Although the column copies and uploads whatever harmless data it can glean from any connected device, the connection doesn't allow the PC to communicate with the wider network.

EXPLORING NOMA

Noma is a city-sized experiment, built in hex-shaped sectors (shown on the map on page 41) through the ceaseless tinkering of an AI. What was once a central physical node eventually developed into the metropolis the PCs see, thanks to a boundless energy source and a rich archive of data on which to iterate. See pages 38–45 for more on Noma.

At first, as PCs explore, common residents—speakers, reclaimers, and units much like anacite laborers—avoid them. Eventually, especially if SOL-653 is present, the PCs see protocites pursuing their lives of constant experimentation. You might play up the inexplicableness of their behavior to impart the sense of an immense, complex system with unknowable goals.

MAP COORDINATES

Noma is divided into hexes that match its sectors. To find the coordinates for any sector, use the map on page 41 to first draw a straight line from that hex through the row of hexes to the northwest until you reach the edge of the map. The number you find is the first coordinate. Then draw a straight line from the

original hex through the row of hexes to the northeast to the edge; the number there is the second coordinate. For example, the coordinates of the hex marked Landing Site are 7, 6.

FINDING THE CORE

Noma is a large city in a spherical bubble, yet its Core, the crux of its activity, is not at its center. Those who constructed Noma established the Core in a seemingly arbitrary location before setting Noma's continual building and rebuilding in motion. Over untold eons, several shell-like layers of strange, partially built skyscrapers and city blocks have obscured the Core from most vantage points. However, each protocite is able to calculate its own position relative to the Core, though no individual can pinpoint the structure immediately on its own. Finding the Core at the end of life is one of the data-creation steps important in an observer speaker's life cycle. Each time such a speaker passes into a new sector, and only then, it learns if its distance from the Core has changed.

SOL-653 is no exception. It can tell the PCs the coordinates of their location in any sector if asked, and it can tell the PCs if they are closer to or farther from the Core than previously visited locations. However, the speaker is unable to give any directions that are more useful. A PC who has heard coordinates and succeeds at a DC 30 Survival check or a DC 25 Intelligence check realizes that they can be used to pinpoint the location of the Core. Key is SOL-653's clue, "The Core is the start." Once the PCs succeed at one of these checks, they deduce the Core must be coordinates 0,0, as well as how to calculate coordinates on Noma. Each coordinate the PCs hear beyond the second reduces both DCs by 5 and allows another check.

The coordinates for the Core are 0,0. Once the PCs enter that sector, SOL-653 knows they are in the Core's sector. If the PCs succeed at a DC 22 Perception check, they find the mysterious structure (see Part 3 on page 29). SOL-653 can confirm the Core's location once it has been discovered. If the PCs fail to find the Core quickly, SOL-653 finds it and leads the PCs there, or the group spots another speaker headed there.

NOMA ENCOUNTERS

The following encounters can happen at any time as the PCs navigate Noma.

ARTISANAL ROBOTS (CR 6)

In the center of this plaza, an abstract sculpture forms a basin. Shimmering, silvery liquid dances around the sculpture like a bizarre fountain.

If asked, SOL-653 can identify the "fountain" as an artistic and experimental data-dispersal system. Tiny information-gathering robots in the liquid scan nearby entities, then fly away to randomly redistribute the data. The protocite has no way of knowing the nanobots are dangerous to the PCs, so it provides no warning.

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Hazard: A PC who watches the fountain and succeeds at a DC 26 Engineering, Life Science, or Physical Science check realizes the liquid is a swarm of highly reflective, dangerous nanobots. If SOL-653 has described the fountain's intent, the DC is only 21. A PC who approaches within 20 feet finds out how dangerous these nanobots are to creatures that aren't constructs, as the liquid streams up and out of the basin toward that character.

NANOBOT STREAM

CR 4

XP 1,200

Type hybrid; **Perception** DC 26 Engineering, Life Science, or Physical Science; **Disable** Computers DC 21 (broadcast standby signal) or Mysticism DC 21 (suppress magical "seeking" aspects of the nanobots)

Trigger proximity (20 feet); **Reset** 24 hours

Effect nanobot stream +14 ranged (targets EAC; 4d8 damage plus confused for 1 minute; Reflex DC 15 half and negates confused; creatures immune to disease are immune to the effect.) A confused target can attempt a DC 15 Will saving throw at the start of its turn each round to end the confused condition. The nanobots jump to any other target within 20 feet of the initial target and repeat their attack. After that attack, or if disabled, the nanobots disperse until the hazard resets.

Creature: Within the fountain are the remains of an ifrit, one of Sulphrax's soldiers, whom the nanobots killed. As an experiment, the minuscule bots consumed the corpse and replaced it with an artificial copy, creating a new robotic creature. The robot has the ifrit's weapons, a measure of his appearance, and an orange jewel embedded in its forehead. Just after the nanobots leave the fountain, this creature rises from the basin in a berserk state. A PC who succeeds at a DC 21 Computers or Engineering check realizes the robot has gone haywire. If such a PC can communicate with the robot, the PC can calm it with a DC 10 Charisma check as a standard action. Someone capable of remotely hacking a computer can calm the robot by succeeding at a DC 21 Computers check. If either check is successful, the robot receives a +2 cumulative circumstance bonus to its saving throw to cease being berserk. If anyone attacks the robot during the same round, this bonus is negated.

ROBOTIC IFRIT

CR 4

XP 1,200

Unique patrol-class security robot (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 94)
CN Medium construct (technological)

DEFENSE

HP 52

Resistances fire 5

OFFENSE

Ranged integrated azimuth laser rifle +12 (1d8+3 F; critical burn 1d6)

Offensive Abilities fire blast (lacks jolting arc)

TACTICS

During Combat While berserk, the robot uses its actions to

make a full attack or to move and attack. If it can't reach or shoot a creature, it attacks objects within range. It can attempt a DC 15 Will save at the end of each of its turns to end its berserk state.

Morale If the robot remains berserk, it fights until destroyed. Otherwise, it flees if reduced to 10 or fewer Hit Points.

STATISTICS

Languages Noma; shortwave 100 ft.

Gear azimuth laser rifle with 2 batteries (20 charges each)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fire Blast (Ex) Once every 1d4 rounds as a standard action, a robotic ifrit can create a 15-foot cone of flame. This cone deals 1d8 fire damage to each target (Reflex DC 13 half).

Shortwave (Ex) See page 58.

Treasure: The orange jewel in the robot's head is a *mk 2 elemental gem* (*Armory* 112).

Development: If PCs ask relevant questions of the calmed robot, it vaguely remembers what it once was. It recalls being a soldier among fire creatures that invaded Noma, and it knows the names Tash (the ifrit pilot killed in *Starfinder Adventure Path* #13: *Fire Starters*) and Sulphrax, although it has no clear personal relationship to those individuals. If left to its own devices, the robot cocks its head as if listening to something in the distance and then wanders off. If followed, it leads the group toward the Core for a hex or two.

A GROWING PROBLEM (CR 8)

Creatures in Noma sometimes gain the ability to experiment on themselves. A protocite laborer began this process, eventually focusing its efforts on becoming larger, stronger, and better protected. It succeeded. Now, the creature has an enormous outer shell that resembles its original body. It attacks other creatures for raw materials it can add to itself.

PROTOCOL HULK

CR 8

XP 4,800

Unique anacite laborer (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 10)

N Huge construct (technological)

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

Perception +16

DEFENSE

HP 125

EAC 18; **KAC** 20

Fort +4; **Ref** +4; **Will** +8

DR 5/—; **Immunities** construct immunities; **Resistances** acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5

Weaknesses brittle plating, sunlight dependency, vulnerability to sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee plasma cutter +16 (1d8+12 F) or

slam +18 (2d8+16 B)

Ranged electric arc +14 (2d8+8 E)

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

TACTICS

During Combat The protocite hulk focuses on melee attacks, moving close to enemies and making full attacks.

Morale The protocite hulk cares only about improving itself. It has no concept of destruction and fights to the death to obtain the PCs' armor and technological items.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Computers +21, Engineering +21

Languages Noma; shortwave 100 ft.

Other Abilities unliving

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Brittle Plating (Ex) The protocite hulk has reconfigured its plating so much it has become brittle. When the hulk takes 10 or more damage from a single attack after any damage reduction or resistance is applied, a large fragment of interconnected metal parts breaks off the creature and clatters to the ground in a random adjacent square. That square becomes difficult terrain.

Shortwave (Ex) See page 58.

Sunlight Dependency (Ex) See page 58.

SUN-SETTING SECTOR (CR 6)

When an experimental sector spirals too far out of control, Noma's AI exposes the area to the sun. After protections are back in place, reclaimers move in to recover the slag.

Hazard: As the PCs approach the center of a sector, a hexagonal curtain of purple energy, much like that which enveloped the *Sun Diver* as it entered Noma, slowly descends from the bubble's upper reaches to surround the borders of the sector. The curtain takes 7 minutes to reach the ground. The outer wall of the bubble reduces its protections as the film descends, eventually allowing in lethal heat and radiation after the curtain walls the sector off to protect the rest of the city. When the encounter begins, the PCs are 2,400 feet from the sector border. Use the Sun Setting table and rules here along with local-scale movement rules on page 258 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook* to adjudicate the escape. (The roads are open and flat, so they don't affect movement.) If the PCs want to remain together, they can move only as quickly as the slowest member. Every minute, a PC can attempt a DC 24 Survival check using the orienteering task to find the fastest route out of the sector. Success means the group finds a shortcut and increases its speed by 200 feet for that minute.

At the start of the first minute, each PC can attempt a DC 29 Perception check to notice the curtain descending. At the start of the second minute, the DC lowers to 24, although if the PCs have the means to detect a change in radiation, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. During these minutes, the PCs automatically notice the heat change, which might prompt them to look for a cause. Once the PCs notice the curtain's descent, it requires a PC to succeed at a DC 24 Physical Science check to understand the implications.

This DC becomes 19 at the end of the second minute. SOL-653 knows the procedure, but it fails to notice the curtain on its own and must be asked about it. Once the third minute starts, the PCs readily notice the problem as solar plasma starts to breach the upper layer of Noma's bubble but not the purple energy curtain. As the heat becomes unbearable, the danger is readily apparent.

Once the curtain begins to descend, at the end of each minute, creatures in the sector are exposed to effects shown for that minute on the Sun Setting table. (Rules for heat appear on page 402 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook* and radiation on pages 403–404 in that book.) Once the curtain has fully descended, the sector remains open for 4 more minutes, dealing the maximum amount of radiation and fire damage shown on the table, after which the purple curtain begins to move back up. At minute 12, the process happens in reverse, and creatures are exposed to the effects shown on the table with parenthetical numerals 12 to 17, until the curtain closes.

SUN SETTING

Minute	Effect at End of Minute
1 (17)	Ambient heat increases to severe
2 (16)	Low radiation, extreme heat
3 (15)	Medium radiation, 15 fire damage (Fort DC 13 half)
4 (14)	Medium radiation, 30 fire damage (Fort DC 15 half)
5 (13)	High radiation, 40 fire damage (Fort DC 17 half)
6 (12)	High radiation, 55 fire damage (Fort DC 19 half)
7–11	Severe radiation, 70 fire damage (Fort DC 21 half)

Story Award: If the PCs survive, award them 2,400 XP. The PCs eventually arrive at Noma's Core in sector 0,0.

PART 3: THE CORE

At the center of Noma's activity, the Core is the place from which the city traces its origin. It's possible the same First Ones who seeded Aballon with anacites created this place. Whatever the case, by setting this advanced mechanism in a closed system with infinite energy in a remote location, Noma's creators protected it from outside interference for untold ages. Evidence indicates that either they had aims unlike those that led to Aballon's robotic culture, or some other force interfered with Noma's progress after it was initialized.

C. THE CORE

The Core is hidden in the shadow of a skyscraper that towers above it.

EXTERIOR FEATURES

When PCs can see the Core's exterior, read or paraphrase the following text.

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The Core's forty-foot-tall irregular structure is made of a silvery metal unlike elsewhere in Noma. Crumbling in places, the building is reinforced here and there with dark, purplish support beams and a mesh of similar material. Numerous potential entrances can be seen on its surface.

The Core's primary material is like that commonly found in anacites and edifices on Aballon. A PC can identify this similarity by succeeding at a DC 22 Culture, Engineering, or Physical Science check. Someone who sees the similarity also realizes the Core must be quite ancient. The building has been reinforced but, unusually for Noma, not reconstructed.

Most entryways lead into breezeways or abrupt dead ends. Only one passageway, on the northern side at ground level, opens into a corridor that winds inside.

INTERIOR FEATURES

The Core's interior has several common features, with any exceptions noted in specific areas. Most ceilings are 30 feet high. The interior is made of a metal similar to the exterior, but the inner substance is a darker alloy. Within most of the Core, darkness pervades. Walls and ceilings within are honeycombed with hexagonal niches, the structure of which reduces the range of any light source by half. These niches also dampen sound, so noise carries only a quarter as far as normal.

During their exploration, PCs might gain insight into the Core's history and function. Areas **C4** and **C6** contain objects that can give PCs more understanding through psychic visions. Historic descriptions in the text of each room give you more information for PCs who have had these visions.

C1. ANALYSIS PASSAGE

The walls of this ten-foot-wide hallway are pocked with hexagonal niches made of dark metal. The walls seem to absorb light, perhaps because of their structure, and the hallway is dark only twenty feet from the entrance.

This hallway allows observer protocyte speakers (see page 59) to return to the Core and deposit their data. They do so with a fervency bordering on spiritual ecstasy.

Hazard: SOL-653 has been trying to reach this place and realizes that fact immediately. The protocyte thanks the PCs for their assistance and rushes forward into the darkness.

If able, SOL-653 speeds around a bend and leaps into a 30-foot-deep pit that spans the width of this hallway. SOL-653 allows itself to become pinned in the pit. It also willingly fails the Fortitude saving throw against being dismantled. That means the pit disassembles the protocyte in about 6 seconds, and its parts, including its data drive, are efficiently deposited into slots that open in the pit walls. If the PCs fail to see this occurrence, they can hear it.

If proceeding quickly, especially without means of seeing in the dark, the PCs risk falling in the same pit.

ANALYSIS PIT

CR 4

XP 1,200

Type technological; **Perception** if moving quickly in the dark with no means to see, DC 27; if moving quickly but able to see, or slowly but unable to see, DC 21; if moving carefully and able to see, automatic; **Disable** Engineering DC 21 to delay dismantling 1 round; 10 successes shuts the pit down for 10 minutes as it goes through a self-repair cycle.

Trigger location; **Reset** immediate or 10 minutes if set to self-repair mode

Effect 30-ft.-deep pit (3d6 falling damage); Reflex DC 12 to grab the edge; multiple targets (first creatures to reach the pit); if a construct enters the pit, several mechanical arms instantly spring from the wall and catch it (no falling damage), making an attack roll to grapple at a +21 bonus. Each round a construct starts its turn grappled or pinned in the pit, it takes 6d12 damage (Fortitude DC 16 half) as the arms systematically dismantle it. The pit can dismantle as many constructs as can fit on its floor.

C2. BREACHED HYPOGEUM

This metal room has honeycombed walls and four exits. Inset panels block two along the south wall, but the panel that once blocked the third has been shattered, leaving a jagged ten-foot-by-ten-foot hole. Etched into the floor is a series of lines and symbols, blurry in places, that looks like a massive schematic.

The schematic is indecipherable. Several parts of it seem to contain multidimensional information that causes a minor headache if a PC stares at it too long. However, any PC who is trained in Computers or Engineering suspects the etchings are a schematic for, or the abstract representation of, an enormously complex algorithm or machine.

The panels blocking the two southern exits are made of the same metal as the rest of the Core. They can't be opened, but they can be broken (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28).

Treasure: Sulphrax's forces broke through the door here with the help of a snub breaching gun (*Armory* 20), which they set aside on the floor along with 22 scattergun shells. The weapon's salamander manufacture is clear to anyone who succeeds at a DC 19 Engineering or Mysticism check.

C3. ITERATION POOL (CR 7)

A fifteen-foot-wide pit opens in the center of this room, and the floor slopes slightly down from the outer walls toward it. Hanging above it is a metal crane holding a platform made of metal mesh. Scorch marks mar several shiny black panels on the curved side of the pit. The faint smell of hot glass and melted plastic hangs in the air.

Noma's architects retrieved items from distant cultures and brought them here, where the crane submerged the objects in

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an enhanced pool of polyfluid. This process yielded detailed information about an object's composition and function. Software then planned improvements and implemented them, sometimes creating new objects but sometimes corrupting the original piece beyond use.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices that the hexagonal niches in a portion of the southern wall, near the area marked **S**, are distorted, as if melted or refracted through heat shimmers. Touching this portion of the wall feels like touching goo, but this "goo" leaves no residue. A character who succeeds at a DC 20 Mysticism check recognizes the wall is under some sort of magical distortion. Creatures can walk through this wall as if pressing through a wall of goo, arriving in area **C8**. PCs who experienced visions in areas **C4** or **C6** "recall" that this wall was altered by an ancient visitor to Noma, who sought to hide something here.

Creature: The pit seems to contain a shallow pool of polyfluid. However, this pool is an ancient variant of an assembly ooze, originally designed to analyze, iterate on, and improve items placed into it. The creature has an internal latticework of advanced metals and modular circuitry that functioned in concert with programming fed to it by the panels along the pit's walls. The invading forces recently destroyed some of these panels, and without the machine's guidance, the ooze has become dangerous. It attacks soon after the PCs look into the pit or a few rounds after they enter the room. The ooze's appearance is innocuous enough that PCs who fail a DC 24

Perception check to discern subtle movements in the pit's fluid are surprised when the creature attacks.

POLYFLUID OOZE

CR 7

XP 3,200

Unique assembly ooze (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 16)
N Huge ooze (technological)

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight (vibration) 100 ft., sightless;

Perception +14

DEFENSE

HP 100

EAC 19; **KAC** 20

Fort +8; **Ref** +4; **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities fast healing 5; **Immunities** ooze immunities

Weaknesses vulnerable to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee pseudopod +15 (1d8+11 B plus grab; critical knockdown)

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

Offensive Abilities disassemble, engulf (1d8+6 plus iterate; DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat The polyfluid ooze first attempts to engulf two Medium creatures so it can iterate on them. It then attacks the nearest threat with its pseudopod, moving back toward the center of its pool whenever possible.

Morale Whenever the polyfluid ooze is reduced to 20 HP

or fewer, it flees by squeezing through a small hole in the center of its holding pool. If it succeeds, it hides in the ducts beneath the pool until its fast healing restores its Hit Points. Then it reemerges to resume the fight, retreating every time its HP are brought below 20 HP.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +14, Engineering +14, Stealth +14

Other Abilities assemble, compression, mindless

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Assemble (Ex) See page 16 of *Starfinder Alien Archive*.

Disassemble (Ex) See page 16 of *Alien Archive*; DC 17.

Iterate (Ex) When the polyfluid ooze starts its turn with creatures engulfed within it, the ooze modifies one piece of each engulfed creature's technological equipment; roll 1d4 to see which type of equipment is affected; if the creature doesn't have that type of item, reroll. If the creature has multiple such items, choose randomly among them. Then roll 1d20 to see the effect. If an effect has already occurred to a specific item, reroll the effect once, applying the same effect again only if you roll it twice in this way. If you roll an option requiring choice, choose the result most beneficial to the PC.

D4 Gear (roll d20)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Technological Item: 1–10, item takes damage equal to half its remaining Hit Points; 11–15, item activates; 16–19, item is fully repaired, recharged, or reloaded; 20, item level increases by 1. |
| 2 | Grenade: 1–10, grenade explodes, dealing full damage and applying effects only to the ooze and engulfed creatures (no saves); 11–19, grenade's explode radius permanently increases by 5 feet; 20, grenade upgrades to the next better version (a frag grenade I becomes a frag grenade II, for example). |
| 3 | Weapon: 1–10, weapon takes damage equal to half its remaining Hit Points; 11–15, weapon's ammunition is expended; 16–19, weapon is fully repaired, recharged, or reloaded; 20, weapon's damage permanently increases by 1. |
| 4 | Armor: 1–10, armor takes damage equal to half its remaining Hit Points; 11–15, environmental protections are expended; 16–19, armor (including upgrades) is fully repaired or recharged; 20, armor permanently grants DR 1/–, reduces its check penalty by 1, or gains one upgrade slot. |

Treasure: If destroyed, the ooze turns into polyfluid, draining into the pit and through the drain there. It's irretrievable. Several broken items lie at the bottom of the pool. Each item has one-third its normal Hit Points. These items are alien tech (for identifying them), but they can be repaired. They include a resonant dirge pistol (*Armory* 16), a liquidator disintegrator rifle (*Armory* 17), and an electroviscous cloak (*Armory* 102).

C4. REPOSE OF RECALL

Four rectangular slabs of metal line the northern wall, each slightly angled and with a smooth, vaguely humanoid-shaped indentation big enough to hold a giant. A complex network of shallow channels runs along the inside of each cavity.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Engineering or Medicine check deduces that the function of these devices is restorative or enhancing. If a creature lies still on one of these slabs, a pleasant aura envelops that creature. The restorative effect is immediately apparent, and vague visions like those from the *ability crystal* in area **C6** occur in brief bursts, hinting at more to come if a creature remains on the slab for 1 hour. Any creature that does so regains all Stamina Points and 3d8+5 Hit Points. Any excess Hit Points become temporary Hit Points that last for 8 hours. A PC who remains in place for the hour has intense visions that become indistinguishable from memories. This function matches that of a *mk 1 mnemonic editor*. Once a slab has produced these effects, it takes 24 hours to recharge before it can be used again.

The architects of the Core employed these platforms to modify themselves with information from Noma's experimentation. Someone who uses one of these platforms as a *mnemonic editor* or merely stays on the slab for 1 hour has visions like those caused by the *ability crystal* in **C6**. Intuition tells such a PC that other visitors have used these devices since Noma was created, and that some usage occurred very recently. The character "remembers" Tash, the ifrit pilot killed in *Starfinder Adventure Path #13: Fire Starters*, being here with others, including a salamander in silvery armor. Such a PC recalls Sulphrax's name when the salamander appears.

C5. CITY WATCH

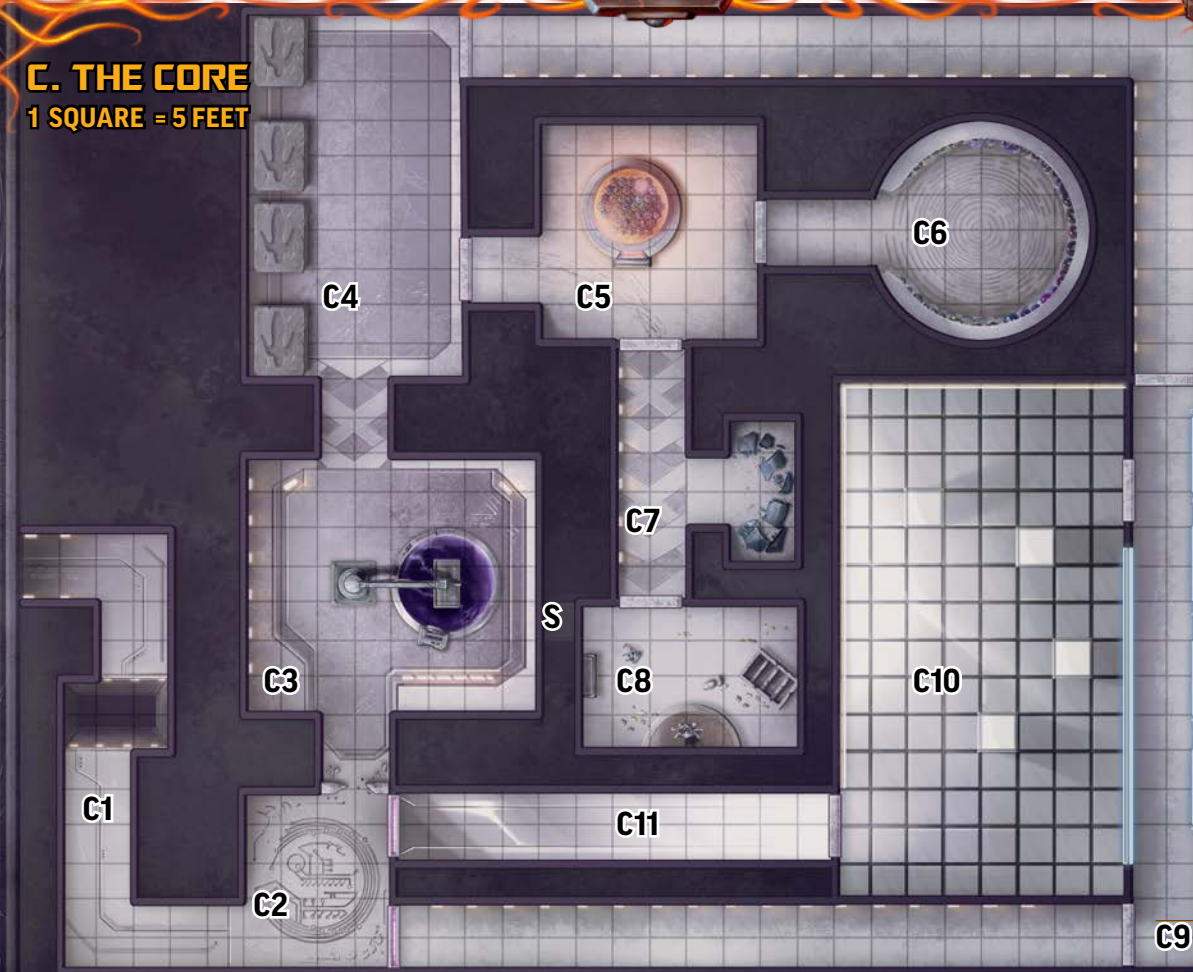
Near the center of the room is an enormous scale model of Noma. In the city are numerous holographic representations, their meaning cryptic. Above the city is a holographic projection of its protective bubble, which is slowly pulsing a deep red color. A panel on the base must be the controls. It is missing a component from a slot in its center.

Noma's overseers used this room to study the effects of large-scale changes in Noma. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices that the *Sun Diver* is included in the model of Noma. A PC who succeeds by 5 or more also notices a second starship near the Core. (Sulphrax has returned in this second vessel.) If the players state the PCs specifically examine the landing site or the area surrounding the Core, they can take 20 on these checks.

PCs who've had visions in the Core understand that the panel can usually be used to monitor Noma and influence its processes. They also know that recent invaders took a major component from the panel: a magitech orb that balanced the system. Without this orb, Noma's bubble is more vulnerable

C. THE CORE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



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to solar phenomena, though these PCs understand it's likely Noma is building a replacement somewhere. Meanwhile, the lack of the orb has locked the console, so it can't be used to manipulate Noma's bubble or to access information it otherwise imparts. A PC trained in Engineering, Mysticism, or Physical Science knows that this component functioned in ways similar to components in the Burning Archipelago, although given the tech in Noma, this component was likely to be superior tech.

The holographic bubble cannot prevent anyone from reaching the model. With a successful DC 15 Strength check, it's possible to snap off any feature of the city. Polyfluid extrudes from the model's base and hardens in a few seconds, replacing the broken part.

C6. SOURCE CODE

The walls of this high-ceilinged, cylindrical room are lined with thousands of hemispherical recessions. Most hold dull gray crystals, but several contain crystals that still glow.

Key to Noma's experiments was this vast dataset. Each crystal in this room once contained magically compressed data about a different civilization, as PCs who have seen the Core's visions learn. Noma's AI has long since harvested and integrated data from each of these crystals, and most are inert. A PC who

examines a crystal can identify its data-related purpose by succeeding at a DC 24 Engineering or Mysticism check.

Treasure: Seven crystals still glow. Six glow only dimly with unstable lattices of magic that explode with probability-altering fields if thrown. These crystals function as *mk 2 diminisher grenades* (Armory 126). The seventh crystal glows more brightly than the others. A PC who spends a few minutes holding this crystal is struck with a dizzying array of incomprehensible visions with vague humanoid shapes in a variety of environments performing incredible feats of technology and magic. These visions are interspersed with static that resolves into a colossal being of stellar plasma and incomprehensible geometry that gives the nebulous impression of multiple orbs of flesh and tentacles. The crystal functions as a *mk 2 ability crystal*. A PC who uses this crystal has visions that provide vague insight into the history and function of each area of the Core without needing to attempt checks.

C7. PORTAL

Huge, angled slabs of metal lie askew in this room, half buried in rubble. The walls are scorched and scored. A massive explosion must have wracked this confined space.

A technomagical portal once allowed the creators of Noma to travel between this room and another part of the galaxy.

A PC who examines the debris here and succeeds at a DC 24 Engineering or Mysticism check can tell what the device once did. On a success by 5 or more, the PC can tell this explosion was recent, and that it looks like a teleportation magitech malfunction. Someone who succeeds at a DC 20 Medicine or Life Science check determines that the darker patches on the walls are the remains of a creature.

Treasure: If any PC succeeds at a DC 24 Perception check, or if the group spends 10 minutes searching the area, they discover three highly charged magical crystals. Each crystal, once part of the transportation tech here, functions as a teleportation puck (*Armory 117*).

C8. GALLERY

The mummified, robed corpse of an eight-armed humanoid sits, legs crossed, atop a dais against the far wall. The robes are like new, made of a fine, metallic gold material, and a hood covers the upper part of the head. Only the humanlike jaws, with dried lips pulled back from prominent teeth, are visible. Each of its arms is at a slightly different angle, close to its body. Four of its hands have been burned away, but one of the remaining four holds a rod of dark, purplish metal. Another pinches a silvery flower between two of its three fingers and thumb. On its lap, the lowest two limbs and hands cradle a dull copper tablet.

This room has been looted. An empty shelving unit adorns the northern wall. Another shelf, scorched but otherwise identical, has been ripped from the southern wall. A few models of protocites cast in silvery metal are scattered across the floor.

The wall near the area marked **S** bears a magical distortion similar and connected to the one in **C3**. See page 31 for details.

The builders of Noma used this gallery to honor their successes, placing on display mementos cast in rare materials. PCs affected by the visions from **C4** or **C6** sense that this room was of great importance, but a visitor altered it at some point in the distant past. The mummified figure seems familiar, but somehow wrong and unnerving. A PC who has had visions also glimpses Sulphrax and a few ifrits and azers ransacking this room, but they recall that this chamber still holds a “key.”

Under its hood, the mummy has four hollow eye sockets, configured in a cross like anacite or protocite eyes. PCs who've had visions in the Core are attracted to the coppery tablet. A PC can remove the relic from the mummy's lap with a successful DC 10 Strength check. Doing so causes the mummy to lurch forward and then resettle as its natural balance is disturbed. However, if the PCs stay in this room with the tablet for more than a few moments, they notice the mummy's hands have moved slightly in the direction of the tablet, as though reaching for it.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Physical Science or Mysticism check can tell the tablet is made of horacalcum (*Armory 66*) rather than copper. This starmetal warps space-time around it. The relic has a strong but intermittent (due to the horacalcum) aura of divination. Realizing the tablet contains writing requires looking at it for a few moments. The tablet is a repository of vast amounts of information stored within the metal in layers of Aklo script.

Even PCs who understand Aklo can't fully decipher the tablet's fragmented phrases, which surface on the tablet as if rising out of murky water, such as “Deep Ezorod makes way for the First,” and “Each map has one key.” A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Mysticism check understands that translating the tablet will take effort and time.

Treasure: The rod the mummy holds is made of the same material as most of the structures within Noma. It's a curiosity



NOMA MUMMY

at best, but the DCI will pay 500 credits for it. The flower and three silvery protocites (a laborer, reclamer, and speaker) are perfect representations made of mithral, a rare silvery metal as hard as steel. Each art object is worth 1,000 credits, although the DCI pays 1,500 each due to the sculptures' Noma origins.

C9. CONJECTURE CONTROL

This narrow, high-ceilinged room has two exits to the north and one to the east. The northern wall is transparent, providing a clear view of a larger room with a floor of black-bordered squares of white tile with several ten-foot-high columns rising from it. A long series of consoles on the southern wall gives off a dim glow in the otherwise-dark room.

From this room, architects and their AI observed and recorded various creatures' interactions in an effort to study behavior. They grew impatient with the inefficiency of single trials, so they implemented a system that allowed them to observe and record multiple branching outcomes at once while also manipulating variables on the fly.

The consoles here can be used to control the features of area **C10**. A PC who succeeds at a Culture or Computers check at the listed DC can execute the related command. In combat, each manipulation of the unfamiliar system takes 1 full action. Out of combat, a PC can take 20 to experiment. A PC who has had visions in area **C4** or **C6** understands the controls intuitively. Once other PCs decipher a control, they can operate that control again at a DC that is 5 lower, but using this alien machinery is never a sure bet.

DC 15: Open or shut one or more doors.

DC 18: Set the temperature, including to extremes. Creatures vulnerable to damage dealt by an extreme (cold for cold, fire for heat) must succeed at a DC 16 Will saving throw after a sudden temperature change or become shaken for 1 round.

DC 20: Turn holograms on or off. Create extra holograms.

DC 22: Raise or lower a 5-foot-square floor panel by 10 feet, up to a maximum of 20 feet above or below floor level.

DC 25: Turn holograms on or off for a specific creature.

DC 27: Raise or lower up to four 5-foot-square floor panels by 10 feet, up to a maximum of 20 feet above or below the level of the floor.

DC 30: Activate cleaning protocol, sending forth nanite disassemblers to remove foreign matter from **C10**. Creatures in **C10** take 6d6 damage (Fortitude DC 16 half) each round this cleaning protocol remains active. Once creatures are killed, their gear and remains are destroyed 2d4 rounds later.

C10. CONJECTURE CHAMBER

The eastern and northern walls of this rectangular chamber are transparent, revealing honeycombed walls behind the transparent layer. Hexagonal compartments in these walls contain bizarre orbs, almost like eyes. The floor is a white

material segmented into squares with thick black edges. Four ten-foot-high columns with smooth sides rise from the floor.

As soon as someone enters this room, the door they entered through slams shut. Creatures close to the door when it closes can leap through by succeeding at a DC 16 Reflex saving throw or block the closure by succeeding at a Fortitude saving throw with the same DC.

Although the doors into this room are apparent from the outside, they blend almost seamlessly into the walls within this room when closed. The northern door has a transparent panel over a honeycombed layer like the wall there. Finding a previously unknown door from within the room requires a successful DC 25 Perception check. The doors have no controls within the room, but a PC can force a door to open by rigging a circuit with a hacking kit or an engineering tool kit and succeeding at a DC 30 Computers or Engineering check. The doors can also be broken (hardness 20, HP 60, break DC 28).

The architects of Noma designed this chamber to test creatures created in the city. Sometimes they pitted creatures against each other, watching and altering the tests from area **C9**.

The doors, as well as several other elements of this room, can be controlled from area **C9**. A predictive hologram feature is active by default. Whenever a creature moves or takes another action in this room, several holographic projections overlay that creature and play out potential outcomes of the action. For example, if a creature moves 20 feet, several holograms show that creature stopping short or standing still, while others show the creature continuing to move in the same direction. Or, if a creature drops prone, one image kips up and another crawls 5 feet instead. Each creature affected by these predictive holograms gains the effect of a *mirror image* spell.

C11. SHUNT PASSAGE

A long hallway slopes gently upward toward its south end. Its perfectly smooth and rounded walls, floor, and ceiling form an almost circular tunnel.

When a creature reaches the midpoint of this hallway, a metal iris snaps shut at the northern end, forming a thick wall that begins moving south. At the same time, the door to area **C10** slides open. The moving wall gently ushers creatures toward area **C10**. A PC can stop the wall by succeeding at a DC 20 Strength check. Doing so jams the wall's mechanism, so the iris opens and the wall returns to the northern end of the tunnel, where it resets.

SULPHRAX ATTACKS (CR 9)

While the PCs navigate the Core, Sulphrax returns to Noma in search of the tablet. The salamander didn't indulge in risky vision-inducing experimentation in the Core; he and his soldiers thought the tablet was merely copper, and they had no interest in examining cultural objects. However, when he turned his

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prizes and survey data over to General Khaim's efreeti analysts, they eventually noticed the minor space-time distortion from the tablet in the holographic record. Sulphrax is furious about the oversight. In a hurry to be done with Noma and expecting little resistance, he brought only a few of his minions back to the city with him.

It's up to you how and where the encounter with Sulphrax occurs. This adventure assumes he flew directly to the Core, overlooking the *Sun Diver* in his haste. He then meets the PCs inside the Core, perhaps just after they recover the tablet, and attacks them. He might use a two-pronged attack from area **C3** (through the hidden door to **C8**) and the hall outside **C8**. If the players engaged well with an area in the Core, such as if they learned to control area **C10**, you can set the battle there.

In any case, if the PCs have the tablet, Sulphrax demands they relinquish it, and he promises to let them live if they cooperate. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Sense Motive check can tell the shift-eyed salamander doesn't intend to keep his word.

SULPHRAX CR 7

XP 3,200

Male salamander soldier (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #14 60)

NE Medium outsider (extraplanar, fire)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +14

DEFENSE HP 105

EAC 19; **KAC** 21

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

DR 5/-; **Immunities** fire

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee sintered starknife +18 (4d4+12 P; critical burn 2d4) or tail slap +20 (2d6+12 B plus grab; critical burn 2d4)

Ranged tactical seeker rifle +18 (2d8+7 P; critical burn 2d4) or incendiary grenade III +18 (explode [10 ft., 3d6 F plus 1d6 burn, DC 15])

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tail)

Offensive Abilities charge attack, elemental fire, fighting styles (blitz)

TACTICS

During Combat Sulphrax prefers to strike fear into his foes by cutting down the weakest. He accepts attacks of opportunity to move to such enemies and then drops incendiary grenades among them.

Morale Sulphrax refuses to leave Noma without the tablet and fights to the death. Further, his *allegiance collar* (*Starfinder Adventure Path* #13: *Fire Starters* 16) prevents him from surviving capture.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +14, Engineering +19, Intimidate +14, Piloting +14

Languages Common, Ignan

Feats Cleave, Mobility

Gear freebooter armor II (deflective reinforcement), tactical seeker rifle with 24 longarm rounds (light bayonet bracket^{AR} with attached sintered starknife), incendiary grenades III (2), *allegiance collar*, *mk 2 serum of healing*, datapad

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Elemental Fire (Su) Sulphrax can cause any weapon he wields, including his tail slap, to deal half its damage as fire damage, making them neither archaic nor nonlethal. If the weapon already deals two damage types, this effect replaces one with fire. In addition, Sulphrax can grant weapons he wields the burn 2d4 critical hit effect. If the weapon has any other critical hit effects, Sulphrax chooses only one to apply on a critical hit.

FIRE ELEMENTALS (4) CR 3

XP 800 each

Medium fire elemental (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 46)

N Medium outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE HP 40 EACH

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +7; **Ref** +5; **Will** +2

Immunities elemental immunities, fire

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee slam +12 (1d6+7 B & F; critical burn 1d4)

TACTICS

During Combat The elementals help Sulphrax flank and use

Mobility to mitigate attacks of opportunity.

Morale The elementals continue to fight until they're destroyed, even if Sulphrax falls.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +8

Feats Mobility

Languages Ignan

Development: Soon after Sulphrax perishes, his starship self-destructs. The explosion is small, like the starship itself, but it wrecks part of Noma near where Sulphrax landed. This devastation isn't widespread enough to threaten the PCs. However, the PCs hear the blast and feel a slight tremor. The wreckage attracts a swarm of reclaimers, making it extremely dangerous to approach until they have consumed the scrap and departed, leaving nothing behind.

Sulphrax's datapad is a hardened and fireproof tier 1 miniaturized computer with enhanced camera and shotgun microphone scanners (*Armory* 107) built in. It also has a security IV upgrade. However, even with this upgrade, the DC of a Computers check to hack the datapad is only 21. The datapad has a wipe countermeasure set to activate after 5 failed attempts to access the device.

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Sulphrax and his original team used this datapad in their original survey of Noma. Most of the previous survey data has been wiped after it was downloaded by efreeti analysts. However, the datapad still contains a duty roster and a few images of and notes (in Ignan) about the Core. The duty roster includes the name Tash with a photo of the ifrit mercenary the PCs learned about in the "Fire Starters" adventure. Most of the pictures are nothing new to the PCs. However, an image of area **C7** shows a functioning portal archway. Mission notes say that, after analysis, a volunteer attempted to enter the portal with a safety anchor, and the portal exploded. Sulphrax noted the event eliminates any chance of unknown forces using the portal to access Noma.

This datapad has notes about the horacalcum tablet, as well. The analysis says that the object is magical and composed of horacalcum. Sulphrax returned to Noma only to retrieve it.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs defeat Sulphrax, on their way back to the *Sun Diver*, protocites they pass cautiously follow them. None willingly approach within 100 feet of the PC carrying the tablet, but they seem drawn to the relic. If spoken to, speakers only repeat the phrase, "Directive: Null." Protocites retreat if attacked but inevitably return to be within 100 feet of the tablet. By the time the PCs reach the *Sun Diver*, countless protocites have gathered, watching silently. They remain at attention until the *Sun Diver* departs Noma.

As the PCs return to the Burning Archipelago, the Noma tablet's inscriptions become harder to see. Faint whispering can be heard emanating from the object.

When the PCs arrive at the DCI, Nib takes custody of the survey drone and its data, and she arranges for the DCI to reward the PCs for objects they recovered. She also directs DCI researchers to help the PCs learn more about the strange tablet. She, Lurian, and Taeress (if present) listen with awe if the PCs share details of the journey. Even Beran, the gruff supplier, seems pleased the PCs have returned. Everyone is horrified, however, if the PCs report the sabotage of the *Sun Diver*.

Shortly after the party's return, Nib and the DCI publicize the discovery of Noma. This news not only boosts the DCI's reputation, but it also sparks interest throughout the galaxy. None take more interest than some of Aballon's anacites. Despite no clear evidence that the First Ones made Noma, the discovery of the protocites divides the anacites. Some maintain that Aballon's constructs must have evolved further and more naturally than protocites. Others believe protocites represent iterative forms that anacites must strive toward. These divisions don't fall cleanly along the lines that already exist between Those Who Become and Those Who Wait, further fracturing Aballon's cultural status quo.

Unknown to the PCs at this point, they have obtained a vital key to unlocking the next chapter of their adventure. They learn more in *Starfinder Adventure Path #16: The Blind City*, and in doing so, they come another step closer to uncovering General Khaim's sinister plot against the Pact Worlds.



NOMA

“What we’re calling the ‘Directive: Null phenomenon’ is a malfunction in the technological structure of Noma and its constituent protocites. It is the opinion of my team that this anomaly is a result of past introduction into Noma of aberrant magic by forces unknown. Further, the so-called ‘Noma Mummy’ is the remains of one of these interlopers, and the ‘Noma Tablet’ is a dangerous relic that may be the source of the Directive: Null phenomenon itself. We recommend the tablet’s quarantine until we can further analyze the threat it poses to our own technology.”

—Amaldrel Vershian, DCI Xenoarchaeology

Noma is a city of experimentation in structure and form. An artificial intelligence, distributed in a neural network and sometimes also referred to as Noma by the city's residents, directs activity in the city. It issues commands from everywhere and nowhere, its ultimate purpose unknowable to outsiders. Noma's AI uses a coordinate system to identify the city's hexagonal sectors. See Map Coordinates on page 27 for how to identify a sector's coordinates.

Each sector serves as a laboratory unto itself, distinct from the others and separated by shallow, dry canals. Many parts of the city resemble those of technologically advanced civilizations, seemingly with distinct industrial, residential, and commercial areas. Most sectors are filled with modern-looking structures, including skyscrapers, but stranger buildings occupy several sectors. In one sector, odd sky bridges connect globular mounds similar to those that social insects on other worlds build. In another, bizarre angular spires jut from smooth pools of viscous liquid, like raindrops frozen on impact. Ringed edifices in another sector connect in intricate patterns that seem to hold some enigmatic significance, if only because the connections serve no obvious architectural purpose.

Even within sectors filled with ordinary structures, bizarre exceptions are prevalent, and careful observation reveals strange details. Doors might have hinges on both sides, or what appear to be windows might actually be large, opaque mirrors. Entire blocks might be exact duplicates of neighboring ones, except for one detail, such as the height of lampposts, the existence of faux wear marks, or the width of the street. Other areas are apparently in ruins, though for some it's difficult to tell whether these structures were designed that way or if they represent experiments that are, as yet, unfinished or abandoned. Other areas are filled with a hodgepodge of buildings, where some seem to be vertical slices of preexisting structures, as though they were cut out from a modern city on some alien world and slotted into place next to other equally out-of-place edifices.

Despite Noma's structural diversity, almost everything in it is created from a UPB-like liquid called polyfluid. This dark, purplish liquid can be arranged into any atomic configuration to replicate ranges of material properties such as conductivity, density, hardness, tensile strength, transparency, and more. Polyfluid lends a telltale purple tinge to the objects made from it, but such objects are otherwise indistinguishable from traditionally manufactured items of a similar nature.

Anacite-like constructs roam Noma's streets and structures. However, the city can be eerily quiet. Its population is small and focused. Energy production is silent, and other activities produce no more sound than is intended or necessary.

NOMA

N bubble-city

Population 4,096 (100% protocites)

Government autocracy (AI)

Qualities automated, insular, technologically advanced

Maximum Item Level 13th

QUALITIES

Automated Noma's residents and infrastructure are automated; an inscrutable AI guides their activities.

HISTORY

The origin of Noma, much like that of the Burning Archipelago and virtually every bubble-city in the Pact Worlds' sun, is shrouded in mystery. As ever, the Gap further complicates matters. It's possible that Noma's autonomous AI was disrupted by this galaxy-wide scrambling of information, but it's equally likely that the Gap altered a management system meant to be guided by intelligent beings into an autonomous one. Aside from Noma's Core (see page 29 for more details), little trace remains of whoever or whatever constructed the original bubble and set the grand experiment in motion. Noma's enigmatic founders must also have deposited an enormous supply of raw polyfluid in the city's canals at some point in the past. The scale of the information-collecting efforts necessary to build the city's database of alien civilizations would certainly have required massive amounts of effort, magical or otherwise.

Whatever Noma's origin, its connection to the First Ones—the progenitors of the creatures that now populate the planet Aballon—is undeniable. While the exact nature of this relationship is unclear, there are multiple possible explanations. One possibility is that the First Ones seeded the bubble-city, just as they did Aballon, and the resultant artificial evolution took radically different courses because of the divergent environments. Another perhaps more likely theory is that the First Ones created Aballon's anacites for different reasons—it could be that Aballon was a control and Noma was a radical line of research. The least likely but perhaps most tantalizing explanation is that Noma is where the First Ones originated, perhaps as Noma's intended result. Maybe these synthesized beings left Noma and then fashioned Aballon's anacites in their own image.

Noma's Core is by far its oldest building, but it's impossible to tell the age of any other structure with any certainty. Given the constant recycling of the city's materials, it's difficult to say how old the whole place is. (An estimate of millennia is liable to be most accurate.) Examination of the city's most deteriorated structures, other than the Core, reveals they were built that way. Their apparent "age" is an intentional feature rather than an actual state of disrepair. Neither is there a clear rhyme or reason for the layout of the bubble's hexagonal grid. Adjacent sectors might seem, at first glance, to be iterations of one another, but upon further study, the relationships could be chalked up to coincidence. Other neighboring sectors are more glaringly disparate, once again raising the question of the purpose of the place.

It becomes apparent in Noma's Core that the city had a bizarre visitor or visitors at some point. What effects this intrusion had on Noma, if any, are impossible to tell. However, some cryptic information can be gleaned from the Core itself, in the form of physical evidence, possible visions, and ancient memories.

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Noma has also suffered a recent incursion of creatures from the Plane of Fire who damaged and destroyed several key pieces of technology. They destabilized the bubble that protects Noma from the sun. What lasting impact this invasion might have, and whether the city can recover without outside help, remains to be seen.

RESIDENTS

Noma has a small population for a city of its size and scope, yet it has nearly as many quasi-social structures as it does sectors. Its residents, the anacite-like protocites, share many common features with their counterparts on Aballon. A few model lines directly match anacite equivalents. However, some protocites are alien even to their robotic kin, particularly two of the most common protocites, speakers (see page 59) and reclaimers (see page 58), though myriad other strange models are part of Noma's populace. A few truly unique units also bustle about the city, fulfilling directives known only to them and Noma.

A given speaker is apt to be confined to a single sector for the duration of its existence, and it focuses on that sector's purpose. Although these constructs are likely to be nonhostile, and some interact with visitors, none seem able or willing to reveal what they're doing—it's possible they don't know. They might receive only the instructions they need to carry out assigned tasks on a moment-to-moment timeline. It seems Noma itself isn't interested in engaging with visitors.

Reclaimers patrol Noma, most often using the shallow channels between sectors to travel rather than traversing thoroughfares, which could interrupt ongoing activities in a sector. This habit can make the channels dangerous paths for visitors. Reclaimers might ignore intruders, but they're also likely to try to reclaim damaged or broken gear, unconcerned about taking parts of the owner at the same time. Fighting fixated reclaimers off might require destroying them.

Spidery heat-sink protocites can be found all over Noma. They are especially numerous at its edges, near the bubble separating the city from its awe-inspiring energy source. Normally dormant, these tiny protocites absorb and store excess heat when needed, using the influx of energy to clamber to cooler areas and distribute heat there. In this way, they help to maintain balance and prevent dangerous hot spots from forming. These protocites use some harvested energy to return to safe locations for dormancy, clinging to spires at the tops of buildings or forming clusters near regular heat-spike sources, such as the Blasting Grounds (see Notable Locations).

Various other protocites exist. Like most of the creatures here, they rarely interact directly with each other, even when they cross paths. Some of these creatures resemble anacites. Larger protocites—some built for conflict, others less obvious in their purpose—can be found roaming the city, and clouds of minuscule flying protocite nanobots buzz around in sudden, inexplicable migrations. Constructs of intermediate sizes perform various tasks, from construction to whatever other mysterious endeavor Noma directs them to pursue.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Noma is full of locales seen by few creatures in the galaxy. Use the sites presented here to spice up the PCs' survey during the adventure. In some areas, skill uses are suggested to allow PCs to glean meaning from what they observe. PCs who benefit from visions due to the Core (see Part 3 of the adventure) might learn the same information and any further details you wish to add.

The Assembly: This broad, round amphitheater-like plaza is host to the Assembly, one of the regular events in Noma. Following a timetable known only to the city's AI, 256 speaker protocites from all over the city periodically assemble here, in a rare example of such creatures leaving their assigned sectors. They arrive at exactly the same time, ringing the plaza in a crescent and facing inward. These protocites remain for several hours, silent and inactive the entire time, before they return to their home sectors, peeling off from the group one at a time. A character trained in Computers, Culture, Engineering, or a Profession involving organizing workers can infer this activity might be a remnant of a time when Noma's first speakers were issued commands in person. Therefore, the Assembly might be composed of protocites still following a defunct protocol, waiting for instructions that will never come.

Blasting Grounds: At the edge of the city, the Blasting Grounds sector seems devoted to producing technology that can survive direct contact with the forces inside a star. Deducing this fact requires traveling to the sector's center through layer upon layer of tall, semicircular shielding. A character trained in Engineering, Physical Science, or an appropriate construction-related Profession can tell, after seeing several shields, that the structures radiate out from a central point to form concentric shells. At that center is a large, scorched platform topped with a thin layer of hot siccacite. The shields separate the platform from the rest of the city. Characters trained in the aforementioned skills can comprehend the purpose of this arrangement.

Periodically, a protocite journeys to the platform or protocite speakers place an immobile construct there. Then, after any helper protocites leave, Noma's bubble exposes the platform to the sun for a time in a narrow beam, not unlike the Sun-Setting Sector event in the adventure (see page 29). When the bubble closes and the site cools, either protocite speakers return to collect the remains or reclaimers emerge to clean up. Heat-sink protocites also collect and disperse excess heat.

Concealed Colossus: Visible behind the facade of an otherwise normal-looking windowed skyscraper is an enormous, smooth-walled silo, hundreds of feet tall. The structure has four ground entrances that lead to enormous elevators. These conveyances go only to the top of the structure, where a single opening allows access to visitors and a stream of sunlight. Hanging from struts and scaffolding within the silo is a half-constructed protocite colossus, so large that it dwarfs some of Noma's other structures. A character trained in Engineering or Physical Science can discern the colossus is shielded like a starship and seems likely to be resistant to solar forces. However, it doesn't have any weapons.

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Whether the city has ceased developing the colossus, and for how long, is as unclear as what purpose the construct might serve if ever completed. Given its hidden location and massive size, the project might have begun as a response to an external threat the city sensed. This massive construct's continued existence could be an efficiency measure. Noma's AI might not want to start over the next time a similar protocite is called for.

The Gallery: In a bizarre approximation of an art gallery, display screens cycle through generated artwork, while daises hold sculptures that collapse into polyfluid only to reshape themselves into new forms. The works bear little resemblance to any known art, but aspects are familiar to those of common species of the Pact Worlds. Looking at any piece is like staring at pieces of several almost-familiar creatures, objects, and landscapes as if through a kaleidoscope. A small number of protocite speakers periodically tour the gallery, pausing to observe each work for the same amount of time before moving

to the next. Although this observation period is exact on a given "tour," it changes during each visit.

Glass Houses: A series of bungalows, reminiscent of some planets' suburban co-living structures, stands within this sector. However, the street side of each "home" is made of transparent material. Protocite speakers dwell in the structures, divided into groups of varying numbers of individuals configured in disparate ways, like families, couples, or other cohabitants. The individuals perform various tasks, including some leaving the area for other activities, in a 24-hour cycle, including rest periods. None act like they are aware of being visible or of being able to see into the other groups' "homes."

Lowing Hollow: This squat, domed structure contains long tubes, each of which has a huge fan at the end and an automatic iris doorway at the other. The tubes are of varying diameter and have different wind speeds. Operation of the fans creates a lowing chorus that can be heard as far away as adjacent sectors. The purpose of these wind tunnels is unclear, but a character trained in Engineering or Piloting can tell the passages are large enough for aerodynamic testing.

Machine Reef: Structures and lighting in this sector mimic a biological reef, the violet light providing some relief from the yellows and oranges of the sun. A trained Engineer can tell that, instead of being built out from a skeletal frame, the reef-like edifices are formed from countless small, jagged, rudimentary shapes sutured together with flexible strands. Although the structures are in open air, their design seems centered on principles of fluid dynamics. A character trained in Engineering, Life Science, or Physical Science can tell these buildings would indeed serve well as an undersea complex.

The Melt: This entire sector appears to have been directly exposed, however briefly, to the full intensity of the sun. Buildings are warped and bent in extreme angles, partially collapsed, and pocked with bubbles, as though the metallic structures flash boiled and then resolidified within moments. Noma has deigned neither to entirely erase the sector by cordoning it off and fully exposing it to the sun, nor to send in reclaimers to return the ruined structures to polyfluid. The most likely explanation is that this area is a transitional stage in a long-term test.

Noma's Mouth: In this area, a large circular pit, several hundred feet wide, is filled with enormous grinding plates similar to those reclaimers use to chew up material Noma designates for recycling. Dozens of empty polyfluid canals extend from the pit's fringes. This place was once a major reprocessing center. The "mouth" is still used when Noma directs a gigantic protocite or other mobile experiment to throw itself in.

Reclaimer Manufactory: This manufactory resembles the machine forges of Aballon and is of outsize importance to Noma. A large number of the city's reclaimers are produced here. The manufactory's complex assembly line produces the constructs, scaling



the speed of the process to accommodate the city's needs. As many as several reclaimers can be produced each hour, but the manufactory usually produces only one every 24 hours. This place could further prove that some deeper connection exists between Noma and Aballon.

The Shifting City: The structures composing this sector are on tracks built into the ground on a massive grid. Each edifice moves constantly, albeit at a pace of only several inches per hour. As a result, the sector's layout shifts continually, with alleys becoming avenues and areas exchanging locations. Remaining in one place for any length of time can be disorienting for sapient creatures, as their surroundings shift gradually yet undeniably.

Shiver Shell: This structure is shaped like a nautilus shell, a spiraling series of chambers that grow smaller and smaller as they curve in toward a tiny central chamber. The temperature in each chamber, starting from the largest and proceeding inward, is colder than the last, until the final chamber, which comes within a fraction of a percent of absolute zero. Multiple speakers are frozen solid in the inner chambers, each leaning toward the next chamber as though struggling to proceed when their movement was arrested. A character trained in Engineering or Physical Science realizes the speakers closer to the center have modifications designed to insulate them from the cold. All have had their data cores removed.

Sorting Grounds: In this large warehouse, scores of simplified protocite speakers (CR 1/2; no parse or sensory overload abilities) interact with metallic gray cubes about half their size on a flat floor. Seen from far enough away, the chaos might seem to have some order; tracking the actions of any individual robot reveals that the programming is very simple. Each construct wanders in a random direction until it encounters another robot, an obstacle, or a cube. Each robot has different criteria for what to do next, whether it's stopping for a specific time, turning in a new direction, dropping a cube if it's holding one, picking up a cube if it has none, and so forth. Watching a robot long enough reveals the cycles of its behavior. Given sufficient time, most metallic cubes might make their way into a single organized pile. Hours later, they might be scattered across the warehouse in a seemingly random arrangement. Other speakers wander the floor like impartial overseers, while a reclaimer patrols the perimeter, devouring any smaller protocite that ceases functioning.

Spectrum's Reach: This conical tower has an internal ramp that spirals up its interior, and opaque floors and ceilings horizontally divide it into levels. The walls of each level allow in exactly one wavelength of electromagnetic radiation and don't allow it to pass back out again. Most floors are completely dark. However, several floors of colored visible light can be found near the top of the structure. One high floor is reddish and filled with extreme heat. Farther up, ionizing radiation floods several floors, starting at low radiation and proceeding up to severe.

The Stacks: This coliseum-sized manufactory is dedicated to creating struts, similar to the framing beams used on many worlds for large structures. Reclaimers deposit polyfluid into huge hoppers, which begins a complex process. Several miles

of conveyors wind through countless stations, where struts are extruded, cut, shaped, reshaped, polished, and deposited in neat stacks. Protocites configured with forklift-like protuberances then sort and stack the struts in vast warehouses, according to some kind of arcane system, building a new warehouse as each one fills. A character trained in Engineering or a supply-chain-savvy Profession realizes a significant and increasing amount of polyfluid is tied up in these stacks. This reserve might serve a future plan, or the facility may have become caught in a loop of pointless production independent of Noma's AI.

POLYFLUID EQUIPMENT

Noma's polyfluid is like the UPBs ubiquitously used in the galaxy. Polyfluid's liquid form is its only meaningful distinction from UPBs. Its discovery soon gives rise to a number of innovations, sometimes using a polyfluid base and other times using the liquid as inspiration to configure UPBs or nanotech.

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEMS

The nature of polyfluid allows numerous functions.

ANYKEY LEVEL 4

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM	PRICE 1,750	BULK L
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An anykey is a lock-picking device, consisting of a handle and a thin metal strip. As a standard action, you can insert the strip into a physical lock and activate the anykey. Doing so causes the device to analyze the lock and extrude polyfluid into the mechanism. The fluid then hardens. This process creates a key that reduces the DC of Engineering checks to open that lock by 10. Resetting the anykey takes a standard action.

An anykey comes with a charger that can take a standard battery and that holds the device when it's not in use. Each use of the anykey, including resetting it, takes 1 charge.

CRASH PAD LEVEL 2

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM	PRICE 150	BULK L
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A popular safety accessory for stunt performers, competitive climbers, and others who regularly risk falling or sustaining high-impact injuries, a crash pad is a rectangular packet of polyfluid worn on a belt or clipped to armor. A built-in altimeter can be set to customize the distance fallen before the crash pad activates, but it defaults to 15 feet. Further, an included accelerometer can be set to account for any acceleration that could prove harmful to a wearer. When you're wearing a crash pad and fall or suffer an impact from your body being moved through space, such as in a vehicle collision, the crash pad activates, flash manufacturing ablative, protective foam and surrounding you with it. You reduce the number of dice of damage you take due to the triggering impact by three dice, taking no damage if this reduction leaves no dice to be rolled for the damage. You then halve any remaining damage you take from the triggering impact, rounded down. A used crash pad container can be recycled, allowing you to craft a new one with the usual 10% discount for having scavenged parts.

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DATA CORE

LEVEL 3

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM PRICE 1,200 BULK L

This purplish-black cube, about 4 inches on each side, is based on the data cores of protocite speakers. It can store information and protect it from punishment and erasure. A data core is tough (AC 11, hardness 35, 55 HP) and can hold as much information as a computer's large secure-data module (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 215). The core doesn't require energy, but another computer must be used to write to the drive or read it. Once you write data to the data core, it can only be read or, with a successful DC 19 Computers or Engineering check, erased. Erasing data renders that core section unmodifiable, so the core can hold less and less information the more that is erased from it.



A portable grinder requires a battery. It takes 1 charge and 1 minute to grind 1 bulk of items into junk. Another charge and minute are required to produce polyfluid.

POLYFLUID WEAPONS

Weaponized polyfluid applications are just beginning to be explored. Polyfluid's plasticity has already been applied to some melee weapons, resulting in the polymorphic weapon special property.

Polymorphic: Melee weapons with the polymorphic weapon special property are made of a multitude of linked scales that can be reconfigured with a gesture. The wielder can cause the scales to flatten, form several contiguous sharp edges, or stand upright as a series of points. As a swift action or once as part of a full action, a creature

wielding a polymorphic weapon can change its damage type from bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing to another of those types.

PORTABLE GRINDER

LEVEL 3

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM PRICE 1,500 BULK 2

Based on protocite reclaimers, this grinder has flat-toothed discs that interlock and rotate toward one another. A multistage mechanism allows these grinders to break material down into junk or polyfluid. The initial stage renders 1 bulk of technological items into 1 bulk of inert electronic equipment suitable as a target for some spells, such as *battle junkbot*. Further grinding produces polyfluid that flows into a swappable tank that itself weighs 1 bulk empty. Polyfluid can be gleaned from both analog and technological items. In any case, the material you produce is worth 10% of the original item's value. The weight of the polyfluid produced is determined by that monetary value.

POLYPLATE

Polyplate is flexible armor composed of interlocking scales that protects its wearer against trauma, absorbing blows and distributing the force across a wide area to lessen its impact. By default, the armor protects against bludgeoning damage, providing DR against that damage equal to half the armor's item level. As a move action, a creature wearing polyplate can swipe a limb across the armor, changing its DR to protect against piercing or slashing damage, or back to bludgeoning. Polyplate is also highly adaptable, easily incorporating armor upgrades.

BASIC MELEE WEAPONS

ONE-HANDED WEAPONS	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	BULK	SPECIAL
UNCATEGORIZED						
Polyclub, tactical	6	4,200	1d6 B	–	L	Analog, operative, polymorphic
Polyclub, advanced	10	17,400	2d6 B	–	L	Analog, operative, polymorphic
Polyclub, elite	14	65,000	4d6 B	–	L	Analog, operative, polymorphic
Polyclub, paragon	18	345,000	8d6 B	–	L	Analog, operative, polymorphic

ADVANCED MELEE WEAPONS

ONE-HANDED WEAPONS	LEVEL	PRICE	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	BULK	SPECIAL
UNCATEGORIZED						
Polylash, tactical	7	7,000	3d4 B	–	L	Analog, disarm, polymorphic, reach, trip
Polylash, advanced	11	25,500	3d8 B	–	L	Analog, disarm, polymorphic, reach, trip
Polylash, elite	15	110,000	6d8 B	–	L	Analog, disarm, polymorphic, reach, trip
Polylash, paragon	19	575,000	11d8 B	–	L	Analog, disarm, polymorphic, reach, trip

LIGHT ARMOR

ARMOR MODEL	LEVEL	PRICE	EAC	KAC	MAX DEX BONUS	ARMOR CHECK PENALTY	SPEED ADJUSTMENT	UPGRADE SLOTS	BULK
Polyplate, basic	6	4,200	+5	+7	+4	–	–	2	L
Polyplate, advanced	10	17,400	+11	+13	+5	–	–	3	L
Polyplate, elite	14	65,000	+15	+17	+6	–	–	4	L
Polyplate, paragon	18	345,000	+19	+21	+7	–	–	5	L

TINKER

+1 INT

You are a visionary in the field of micro-scale construction, able to elevate the applications of UPBs and other multifunctional materials to new heights. You might be a researcher who has made a breakthrough in design, a garage experimenter who delights in inventing or creating complex gizmos, or an enthusiast about all things homemade.

THEME KNOWLEDGE [1ST]

Reduce by 5 the DC of Engineering checks to identify technological devices, as well as Culture checks to recall knowledge about organizations and individuals that specialize in invention and do-it-yourself technology crafting. Engineering is a class skill for you, though if it is a class skill from the class you take at 1st level, you instead gain a +1 bonus to your Engineering checks. In addition, you gain an ability adjustment of +1 to Intelligence at character creation.

DURABLE CRAFTING [6TH]

Your mastery of the materials you craft with has given you special insight into solid construction principles. When determining the hardness, Hit Points, and saving throws of an item you have crafted, treat its item level as if it were 4 higher instead of 2 higher. It takes you a quarter of the normal time to repair an item you crafted.

DIMORPHIC CRAFTING [12TH]

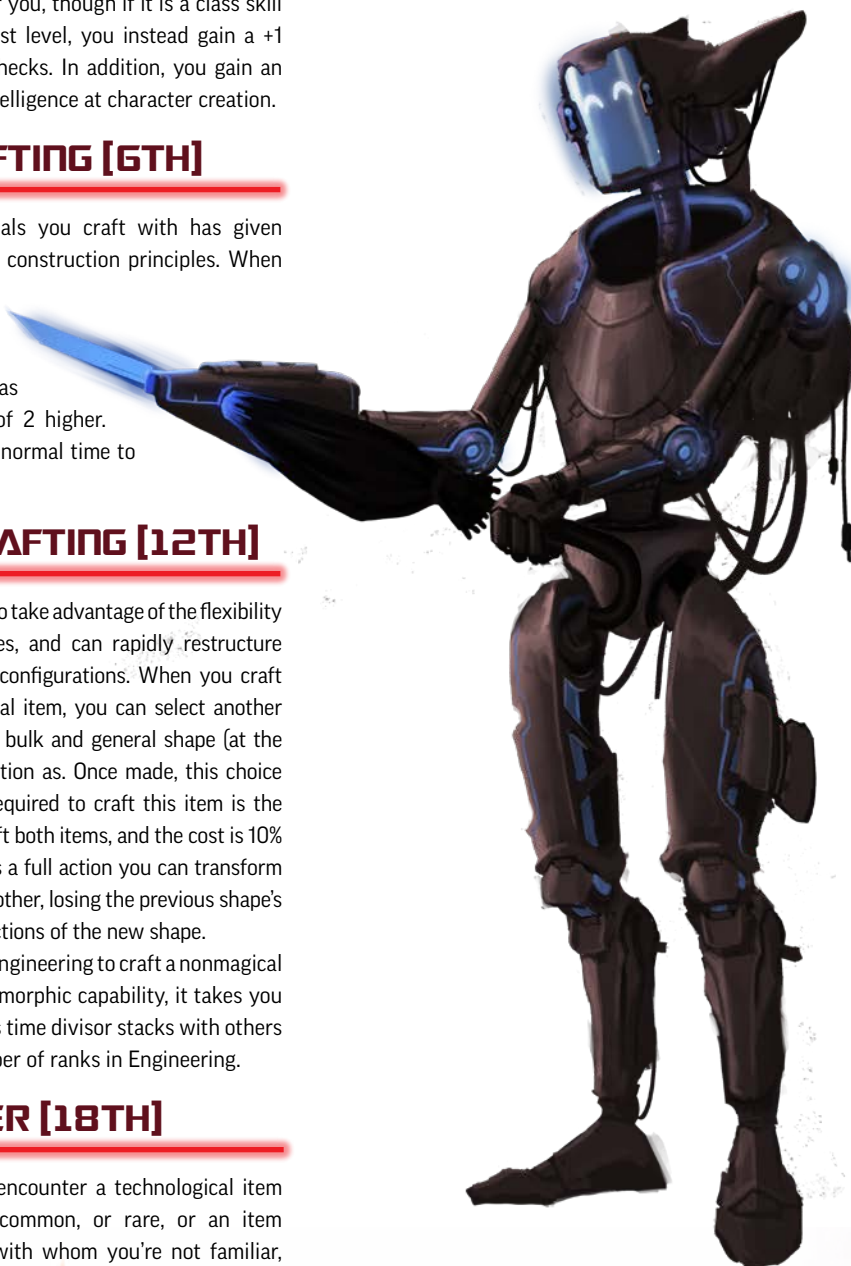
You have devised clever ways to take advantage of the flexibility of UPBs or similar substances, and can rapidly restructure them into one of two preset configurations. When you craft a melee weapon or nonmagical item, you can select another mundane item with the same bulk and general shape (at the GM's discretion) for it to function as. Once made, this choice can't be changed. The time required to craft this item is the combined time required to craft both items, and the cost is 10% more than both. Thereafter, as a full action you can transform the item from one shape to another, losing the previous shape's functions and gaining the functions of the new shape.

In addition, when you use Engineering to craft a nonmagical item that doesn't have this dimorphic capability, it takes you only half as long to do so. This time divisor stacks with others you receive due to your number of ranks in Engineering.

MASTER TINKER [18TH]

Up to twice per day, if you encounter a technological item that is alien, unfamiliar, uncommon, or rare, or an item custom built by a creature with whom you're not familiar,

after you spend at least 10 minutes studying that item, you regain 1 Resolve Point. Doing so doesn't count as resting to regain Stamina Points. In addition, once per day when you successfully repair or craft an item, you regain 1 Resolve Point. You can gain only up to 2 Resolve Points per day from this feature no matter how you use it.



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"I almost had her, damn it! I was chasing her on foot through the crowded streets of Qabarat; late in the night and pouring so hard I could barely see through the curtain of rain. I was inches away... I reached out to grab her by the collar and cuff her, but in that instant there was a surge in the crowd and some spiky-haired android in a leather duster stepped between us. It was only a second. A second! But it took only that one single moment for her to shoot me one last wink and then slip into the crowd to disappear for good."

—Lawana Adaxi, private investigator and bounty hunter

Throughout the Pact Worlds and beyond, there is no shortage of illegal activity and organized crime—for every sun-kissed street, there is a shadowy criminal underbelly. But criminals don't just lurk in the darkness. They congregate into like-minded organizations and maintain prosperous money-laundering fronts, live in skyscraping penthouses, and cultivate immense, formidable empires.

Given the thousands of intelligent beings in the universe, it's no surprise that each and every criminal organization strives toward its own unique goals, varying from species to species, planet to planet, and culture to culture. From the inscrutable designs of cabals of mysterious outsiders to the universal desire to acquire as much wealth and power as possible, any aspiring outlaw can find a group that's suited to their own wicked needs.

Criminal organizations generally operate in secret, often behind the facade of something more legitimate, such as the Disciples of Grace posing as a charitable organization. This way, the faction can sink its teeth into target communities and establish power without drawing suspicion from the authorities or victims. Most members of these leagues keep their identities hidden, and interlopers who find out too much about the inner workings of a particular organization likely are taken care of before word can get out.

Despite these efforts to remain anonymous, though, some groups end up exposed and have to contend with the long arm of justice. The most predominant peacekeeping agency in the Pact Worlds system is the ever-present Stewards. These pinnacles of law enforcement, easily recognizable by their gold-and-blue uniforms, can be found on nearly every planet and protectorate throughout the Pact Worlds. While their main purpose is to maintain peace between the various signatories to the Absalom Pact, fulfilling this grand-scheme objective sometimes involves taking down criminal organizations whose activities threaten the Pact. The Stewards often take down these groups from within by utilizing Steward infiltrators or working with the agents of planetary police forces.

Absalom Station has a security force and independent private investigators—in contrast to the lawless Diaspora, where crimes such as piracy and smuggling run rampant—and criminals are brought to justice by independent parties of vigilantes and bounty hunters rather than law enforcement controlled by a centralized government. The *Idari's* anarchic Red Corridors are home to myriad crime families, though this is well known by the ship's Doyenate and its peacekeepers. Criminal activity in this disreputable district is largely ignored.

The Veskarium operates a large government-sanctioned peacekeeping agency, known colloquially as “the Hammers,” due to the agency's tendency to “hammer down” any criminal vesk who would stick out too much in their authoritarian culture. The high despot of each planet in the Veskarium is assigned a following of Hammers to be deployed as the despot sees fit. Often, vesk criminals are dealt with more strictly than criminals of the races conquered by the Veskarium, with

the former seeing much tighter standards and more severe punishment. The Hammers rarely step in to punish individuals of conquered races for anything but dire infractions, leaving justice for minor offenses to the conquered races' own localized laws. The Hammers spend the time and resources to police indigenous groups only on occasions where such crimes might negatively affect the Veskarium as a whole.

A handful of criminal organizations that player characters might come across during the course of their adventures throughout the Pact Worlds and beyond are presented below. The PCs might lay down the law against these ne'er-do-wells... or they might join to embark on their own lives of crime!

Remember that characters with evil alignments or criminal backgrounds shouldn't use that as an excuse to steal from, harm, or otherwise antagonize their fellow party members. Players are working as a team not only in adventuring, but also in making sure the gaming experience is fun for everyone at the table! If a player's actions cross the line and begin to negatively affect the gaming experience, politely and firmly ask them to stop any inappropriate behavior. If that player refuses to, it is the Game Master's duty to handle the problem, usually by telling them to leave.

THE ABAZOBARIS

For generations, the Veskarium's Abazobari family held only moderate status in the empire. Though they were intelligent and martially proficient, they never stood out. The family's eldest living member, the vain and condescending Velatoresh Abazobari, was unsatisfied with this middling existence. She wanted eternal celebrity and power for her family's name and for countless generations of Abazobaris to come.

Velatoresh was cutthroat and cruel, and once she set her sights on attaining everlasting splendor for her family, not even the Veskarium's laws could stand in the way of her realizing this goal. Fearing that her family's story would eventually fade into obscurity, she took radical approaches to ensure its legacy. She began by paying assassins to take out competitors: more highly regarded vesk and even students who overtook her children in school. She paid off authorities to turn a blind eye when an Abazobari would clash with the peacekeeping Hammers, as well as school and military administrators to ensure relatives were accepted into educational or military programs that they may not have properly qualified for. On top of these drastic measures, she began radicalizing her children, nieces, and nephews. She instilled in them the idea that no matter their current status in the eyes of “outsiders,” the Abazobari family had the most superior blood of any being in the Veskarium pumping through their veins. She indoctrinated them with the desire to live forever through legacy and the impulse to quash inferior beings, vesk or otherwise, with a cold, elegant, iron fist.

Upon the matriarch's death, her beloved children took her place and now maintain control over the family's funds and activities. These new leaders are at odds on how to accomplish Velatoresh's ultimate goal.

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The Abazobaris consist solely of blood-related family and any spouses they've taken (though the latter are not permitted to take the Abazobari surname). No strangers are allowed to join or even learn of the family's internal workings. Despite this tradition, these xenophobic vesk maintain a cabal of non-vesk mercenaries to do their dirty work so they can keep their own claws clean. They refrain from hiring vesk agents in case a particularly patriotic hire exposes them to the authorities, and they see non-vesk as expendable and inferior, believing them "too stupid and ignorant of vesk customs" to truly understand the family's nefarious machinations. This superiority complex may eventually lead to the Abazobaris' ultimate downfall.

Velatoresh's eldest, the twins **Grigal** (CE male vesk soldier) and **Sabatra** (CE female vesk soldier) are warfare-

obsessed fanatics. They believe that the only way to establish their family's lasting legacy is for the Abazobari family to go to war with the Veskarium itself—and die together in a blaze of zealous glory. They care not that their name would be shunned and spat upon for generations, only that they would be remembered. Luckily for the Abazobaris, a few other family members manage to keep them in line.

Trintivya (NE female vesk envoy), the youngest sibling, wants to do the unspeakable in the eyes of her fervent older siblings: she wants the Abazobaris to cease their illegal and extremist activities and live crime-free lives fighting for the Veskarium as any other vesk would. She believes they can become legends through talent alone.

Whether these differences in opinions between the Abazobaris will eventually end in the family's self-destruction is yet to be seen, but as all of the members of the family gradually collect into groups based around each sibling's school of thought, conflict between the individual Abazobaris is beginning to seem more and more likely.

HOLDINGS

The Abazobaris are based on Vesk Prime and operate out of a manor-turned-fortress that has been in the family for generations. Within these steel walls, Velatoresh's children decide every plan of action. The building also contains a large facility where the youngest generations are homeschooled and combat trained, from ages as young as 5 years.

GOALS

The Abazobaris still seek notoriety (or infamy). The fanatical vesk, with the exception of Trintivya and her growing following, are willing to murder, assassinate, extort, bribe, and even undermine the autocratic Veskarium to stay relevant. The specific means by which they will accomplish this goal are still hotly debated among the family.

ENEMIES

The Abazobaris' history of eccentricity and superciliousness means they've made enemies of many of the other vesk families, as well as contacts outside of the empire. The Abazobaris are insufferably smug, and there are undoubtedly rivals who suspect they are paying off authorities or ordering assassinations to maintain their fragile relevance, but no one has yet been able to prove it.

DISCIPLES OF GRACE

The Disciples of Grace started off as a religious order and a charitable organization, founded on Absalom Station in 33 AG by a mysterious human named Jarood. Jarood claimed to have been contacted by a great and powerful deity, the name of



SABATRA ABAZOBARI

which he either didn't know or refused to disclose. He also claimed that those who dedicated their lives to this enigmatic being would be protected and granted eternal life. Most dismissed the man as a fool or a con, believing his "prophecies" to be nothing more than a series of vague guesses that happened to apply to real events. Jarood nonetheless began to gather following of believers.

The Disciples of Grace organization has become fairly known across the Pact Worlds due to the fact that the founder, Jarood, somehow still lives. Theories about this seemingly normal human abound: some suspect that he's been replaced by an identical android or holographic image, while others believe Jarood's supposed divine gift wasn't merely a fabrication.

In reality, the real Jarood was murdered and replaced centuries ago by a reptoid named Zagtar who couldn't resist the idea of having a horde of fanatics who would follow his every command. Zagtar himself has long since passed on, and though the intentions of the original Jarood were lost with his life, a devious family of reptoids still uses the Disciples of Grace as a cover for something much darker: a syndicate of slavers that acquires its chattel through subtle manipulation.

MEMBERS

The current orchestrators behind the Disciples of Grace are a ruthless family of reptoids: **Bes Ghabal** (LE male reptoid solarian), and his children **Livvi** (LE female reptoid operative), **Daxabti** (LE female reptoid envoy), and **Zirzis** (LE male reptoid technomancer). These masters of infiltration take turns wearing Jarood's identity, and they constantly invent new schemes and "prophecies" to keep the fake religion alive and continually recruit unwitting slaves.

The Disciples of Grace accepts new members with open arms, but little do these well-intentioned recruits know they're committing to a life of servitude to cunning and wicked leaders and their inner circle of wealthy sadists. It is possible to move up in the ranks of the Disciples of Grace, and even into the highest echelons of the organization, but such a promotion requires decades of work and millions of credits donated to the organization's various "charities," with little in return. Only after these steadfast members move up through the ranks and prove their trustworthiness and loyalty do they begin to gain sight of the true machinations of the Disciples of Grace. Before being promoted to the inner circle, one last "ritual," known as the Learning, requires the member in question to study a printed tome that details the true nature of the organization. The member then makes a choice: join the inner circle and partake in the sadistic actions of the upper crust, freed from perpetual labor and presented with all of the organization's luxuries, or eschew their evil lifestyle and become labeled a heretic—and quickly put to death. Most members who make it this far have lost sight of their societal mores and accept the offer without a second thought.

HOLDINGS

The Disciples of Grace obtain most of their wealth from their popular, system-spanning chain of secondhand and vintage stores. Under the guise of charity shops, these fronts funnel money into a series of fake beneficiaries that the leaders of the Disciples can pull funds from as they please.

The organization also secretly owns an armada of starships, including a massive cathedralship known as *Grace's Claw*. This imposing, stark-white cruiser serves as the organization's headquarters, in which the inner circle conspires while living opulent lives built on the credits and labor of followers. Any unsuspecting pirates who would attempt to plunder this extravagant but vulnerable-looking ship would be surprised to find that the ship has enough weaponry to blast any would-be raiders out of the sky before they could even react.

GOALS

Though the Ghabals indulge in their laundered wealth and the power their loyal following bestows upon them, they would soon grow bored with the lifestyle if wasn't all so entertaining to them. They seek to eventually spread the word of Jarood and his mysterious deity beyond even the Pact Worlds, where they hope to find access to more resources, which they will gladly monopolize and harvest with the grueling hard labor of their legions of "volunteer clergy."

ENEMIES

There are legions of conspiracy theorists on the infospheres who suspect the Disciples of Grace of nefarious doings. Though they've yet to prove it, many are convinced the organization is run by reptoids or other types of impostors. One such group of theorists, who call themselves the Seekers, is gathering intelligence on the Disciples in the hope of eventually taking them down once the Seekers have access to the resources to do so.

GOLDEN LEAGUE

The Golden League is a widespread and ancient organization, having existed since even before the Gap. It was founded in lost Golarion's Tian Xia when a family of thieves and a family of merchants joined forces to survive a time of despair. This union evolved into an official guild, and in its earliest years, the League gradually took control of the economy in Tian Xia by means of bribery, extortion, thievery, and market manipulation. After finally being exposed and exiled from Tian Xia, the Golden League moved on to another area and proceeded to take a subtler approach to gaining wealth, quietly pulling strings to turn the economy in its favor.

Now, the Golden League is no longer restricted to just one country on a single planet. Its membership has increased over the centuries and now hundreds of "families"—related by both blood and business—operate on various asteroids, moons, planetoids, and planets across the Pact Worlds in the name of the Golden League.

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MEMBERS

Recruits who show resourcefulness and loyalty to the Golden League might be recruited into a family's clique of Xun, a feared group of loyal warriors. These soldiers submit their lives and will to the Golden League and are set upon those who would resist the Golden League's reign. As steel-hearted cronies, they're not afraid to rough up—or even assassinate—any would-be resisters to make an example of them. Xun are often heavily augmented to make them even more fearsome, and also receive full-body tattoos through an almost ritualistic process that mark them as members of this terrifying enforcer group. The designs of these tattoos often bear a dedication to the families served, such as a family crest.

Those who desire to have more influential positions must show great wit and cunning, as well as the credits to cultivate a following—willing or not—of politicians, authorities, and the

like who can influence the market in the Golden League's favor and help cover their tracks. Lowly patsies who don't show the determination or ability to benefit the League are often unwittingly used as scapegoats, thrown as fodder to authorities or government officials who would otherwise catch wind of the League's actions.

Among the hundreds of Golden League families across the system, a few are particularly infamous. The most recent addition is the Hafrigeek "family" of Vesk-4, which operates out of Absalom Station. This tight-knit group of mobsters isn't actually related by blood at all—they're actually a group of wealthy delinquents who attempted to wrest control of the economy from their planet's high despot by force. This show of power was short lived, however, and the Veskarium's Hammers were sent out to execute the family for their insolence. But news of their impending demise reached them quickly, and the Hafrigeeks packed up and fled the system within minutes. They have since found refuge in the suspect depths of Absalom Station's Spike and have learned their lesson—now, they have assumed new identities and take the stealthier approach of leaving their Xun to do the dirty work.

HOLDINGS

By the organization's very nature, the Golden League has no shortage of credits to spare. This vast amount of wealth goes toward maintaining influence and power—purchasing weapons and property, augmenting Xun, ordering the assassination of their enemies, and buying off politicians. These avaricious families also can't help but spoil themselves with luxuries like mansions, private planetoids, and lavish vehicles and starships.

The Golden League has no centralized headquarters; instead, the various families each maintain their own personal manors within which they can conduct secret business deals.

GOALS

The Golden League's only goal is to manipulate the local economies wherever they operate in order to gain more wealth to fund lives of indulgence. The League employs subtle practices to accomplish their goals, including manipulating the market by controlling the scarcity of resources, bribing and extorting government officials, and maintaining laundering fronts and gambling rings. However, when those methods prove ineffective, some League families resort to violence to get what they want.

ENEMIES

The Golden League has managed to survive the tests of time, but its most powerful opposition, the Way of the Kirin, did as well. Since its founding on lost Golarion, the Way of the Kirin has used its own wealth and power to uplift the poor and enforce fair business practices across the system. The Way is a secret society consisting of good-willed, wealthy members



GARIK DAHN

of various Pact Worlds who seek to oppose the Golden League at its every turn. In addition to the Way, the Golden League has many enemies in the local governments that each family undermines, and these agencies strive to undo the damage the League has done with their manipulation.

IXO SYNDICATE

The distant Tabori Cluster is a mesmerizing but dangerous nebula whose composition interferes with communication and travel, making the area a bit of a wild frontier. Due to large deposits of the metal siccattite on many of the cluster's worlds, the Tabori Cluster has experienced a rush of engineering and mining corporations looking to line their pockets that shows no signs of slowing down. On Pan, the only planet orbiting the star Ixo, a growing group of smugglers and mobsters calling themselves the Ixo Syndicate has begun the gradual takeover of many of the world's boomtowns and mining operations.

MEMBERS

Membership in the Ixo Syndicate is loosely defined. A criminal who performs even minor jobs for the organization is often considered part of the syndicate by those with more power, even if that criminal doesn't realize it. The higher-ups then expect loyalty from the new "member," expressing disappointment (which manifests in the form of physical violence) if the syndicate is betrayed. However, this trust rarely extends in both directions, with the heads of local crime families keeping their subordinates mostly in the dark about the syndicate's larger goals and movements. As such, there is much discord and confusion in the lower ranks of the organization, with criminals betraying each other to get in the good graces of their superiors.

The current head of the Ixo Syndicate is **Garik Dahn** (NE male human soldier), a former enforcer who ingratiated himself to the organization's leader 20 years ago and took over the organization upon her death. Some believe Garik was responsible for her demise, but those who speak such suspicions out loud in his presence usually go missing shortly thereafter. Now no longer busting heads on the streets, Garik lives a life of luxury, enjoying the finest things money can buy on Pan. Many of the heads of local crime families think he is unfit to lead and a drain on the syndicate's bank accounts, but Garik is savvy enough to retain the loyalty of a few family heads and play the others against one another in a constantly shifting network of allegiances.

HOLDINGS

Based on Pan, the Ixo Syndicate controls a number of small towns and larger mining facilities. The syndicate's largest holding is the Rimehearth Mine, a massive warren of tunnels and shafts located on Pan's central continent. Rimehearth produces tons of siccattite every year, and while most of its workers aren't Ixo Syndicate members, its supervisors and head engineers are deeply entrenched in the organization.

The miners sleep in regimented barracks and are paid in scrip that can be redeemed only at a syndicate-run store, ensuring that they receive barely enough food and entertainment to survive and not rise up against their employers.

On nearly the other side of the world, the bustling port of Steepshore transports supplies and stone to and from the nearby mines. While the Ixo Syndicate doesn't own this city outright, many of Steepshore's officials—from dockmasters to the mayor herself—either have been paid off by the syndicate or are being blackmailed by syndicate extortionists, granting the organization the lowest docking fees and taxes on goods. Garik Dahn stays in a lavish penthouse suite while in Steepshore, making a show of his wealth but keeping eyes out for potential assassins.

GOALS

The Ixo Syndicate eventually wants to control the entirety of the Tabori Cluster, either through underhanded means or by establishing itself as the area's only governmental power. While the syndicate has had great success in controlling much of Pan's wealth, it has yet to expand beyond that planet, partially due to the disrupting nature of the system's high electrical activity and partially because of the members' own infighting. If the Ixo Syndicate can cease its constant bickering and backstabbing and discover a safe and reliable method to travel between the system's stars, it might be able to achieve its goals. For his part, Garik recognizes the increase in personal wealth such a shift would bring, and he has funded a handful of scientific facilities to research the system's anomalies.

ENEMIES

In many ways, the Ixo Syndicate is its own worst enemy. But while members often fight with one another, they usually briefly come together to confront any outside threats. The Ixo Syndicate's current largest competitor in the mining business is Blackshot Excavations, a subsidiary of Ulrikka Clanholdings. Though Blackshot has the backing of a large corporation, the Tabori Cluster is remote enough that help is slow to arrive. The dwarves have begun to rely on local gangs and thugs who hold grudges against the Ixo Syndicate, and the situation is verging on the edge of a planet-wide war.

VERDANT SHIELD

Several years ago, when the teenage **Shirini Odas** (N female damaya lashunta) heard the latest report of another species of animal being exploited and endangered on Castrovel, she decided to do something about it. She gathered together a small group of her like-minded friends to protect the Castrovelian fauna from these cruelties, naming themselves the Verdant Shield. They began by circulating electronic petitions across several infospheres throughout the Pact Worlds and uploaded holovids of their group's manifesto, always keeping their identities secret.

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Over the years, the Verdant Shield grew in size and scope, often effecting positive change in the field of conservation, but its policy of anonymity soon began to twist the organization's goals. Now studying at various universities, Shirini and the original founders have lost control of the Verdant Shield as it shifted toward more radical protests at the direction of newer members. The group has transformed from its origins as a handful of politically minded adolescents to a small army of ecoterrorists willing to violently defend the wildlife of Castrovel and other planets against exploitation.

Unknown to both Shirini and the rank-and-file members, the Verdant Shield was recently co-opted by a mysterious hacker calling themselves Gr1m_R4n9er. Using dummy accounts and false information, Gr1m_R4n9er essentially controls all sects of the organization, selecting targets and directing the Verdant Shield's missions. Gr1m_R4n9er blackmails corporations for vast sums of credits, threatening to unleash the Verdant Shield on the corporation's operations if they don't pay up. After several incidents of property destruction and a few deaths of hunters and security officers, most companies now accede to the hacker's demands.

Though some believe the Verdant Shield's sentiments are noble, most see the group as an anarchic terrorist organization. The Verdant Shield is routinely condemned in the public discourse, and those who support the organization do so in secret.

MEMBERS

Though the Verdant Shield originated on Castrovel, it accepts anyone who sympathizes with the organization's sentiments and is willing to take up arms and fight for the cause, no matter where they're based. The group has formed into small, independent cells of no more than a dozen volunteers, most of whom are active on Castrovel, though now almost every Pact World is home to at least one cell. Of course, worlds without native fauna (such as the barren surface of Apostae) don't garner the Verdant Shield's attention. As the organization's cells are mostly populated with extremists, they tend to be short lived, but new cells are constantly springing up thanks to the organization's viral messaging (usually coordinated by Gr1m_R4n9er). Some cells organize and execute their own grassroots plans, such as freeing animal test subjects from laboratories, but most are at Gr1m_R4n9er's beck and call. They tend not to question these opportunities, as they often appear to come from trusted fellow members of the organization (thanks to Gr1m_R4n9er's hacking wizardry).

HOLDINGS

The various cells of the Verdant Shield are scattered across the system, and each has its own secret headquarters, often in basements and abandoned warehouses. When local law enforcement closes in on these locations, the members either move to another base or engage in a last stand, ending up incarcerated or dead. The cells fund their operations using

their own credits, through anonymous donations from supportive individuals, or by fencing goods and equipment they acquire during their operations. The ecoterrorists tend to keep their money on handy credsticks; only the savviest attempt to launder their credits through legitimate businesses.

Gr1m_R4n9er's location is unknown, and they take great pains to keep it that way. They are able to transmit to the corporations of the various Pact Worlds with ease, hinting that perhaps the hacker issues their demands from a starship. The credits Gr1m_R4n9er receives from their extortion are transmitted electronically to different bank accounts and are constantly moved around, creating an extensive trail of false businesses and nonexistent account holders.

GOALS

The stated goal of the Verdant Shield is to end animal exploitation throughout the galaxy by any means necessary. This often includes bloody raids on certain facilities and planting explosives in key locations, with little regard to who gets hurt in the process. Gr1m_R4n9er has a much more selfish objective, however, and wishes only to line their pockets with credits.

ENEMIES

The Verdant Shield has faced off against a variety of enemies, from illegal poaching rings to legal pharmaceutical companies, as well as law enforcement both local and interplanetary. They are high on the Stewards' watch list of terrorist organizations, but due to their fragmented nature, it is difficult for the Stewards to track and fully eliminate them. Many members of the Xenowardens frown on the Verdant Shield's violent tactics and, if they were ever given the opportunity, would like to rehabilitate the ecoterrorists. Recently, Shirini has secretly rejoined the group, looking to turn the Verdant Shield back toward the peaceful protesting it was founded upon, but she has yet to discover Gr1m_R4n9er's extensive puppet strings.

CRIMINAL GEAR

The following selection of technological gear makes a criminally inclined buyer's job that much easier.

GECKOPAD GLOVES		LEVEL 1
TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM	PRICE 325	BULK 1

These subtle yet stylish black gloves have fingers tipped in a complex microscopic texture that mimics the setae of a gecko's foot pads, allowing you to adhere to most small objects with ease. When you wear a pair of geckopad gloves, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Sleight of Hand checks to palm an object, and you reduce the DC of Sleight of Hand checks to pick pockets by 5.

You must be wearing both gloves to gain their benefits, but they don't prevent you from holding other objects or wielding weapons with those hands. Geckopad gloves don't require a battery to function.

JAMMER CHARGE

LEVEL 4

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM PRICE 375 BULK 1

A jammer charge can be set as an explosive with the Engineering skill (with a detonator) or thrown like a grenade. When it detonates, a jammer charge silently releases a pulse of magnetic energy that interferes with broadcasting electronics. Computers and video cameras (such as security cameras and the scanners found on page 107 of *Starfinder Armory*) within the 15-foot blast radius become nonfunctional for 30 seconds, losing both their recording and displaying capabilities. Enemies, such as security guards, typically have no way to detect the detonation itself, but they may become suspicious if their video feeds are reduced to static for no apparent reason.

Any video recording, data saving, or file transferring that would happen during the 30-second duration is interrupted and canceled, but data that may have existed on the cameras or computers before the grenade was detonated still exist, and regular functions resume after the 30-second duration ends. Like a grenade, a jammer charge is consumed upon detonation.



THIEF DRONE

MICRO TAP

LEVELS 1-5

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM BULK –

MODEL	LEVEL	PRICE	INSTALLATION DC	RANGE
Mk 1	1	200	18	300 ft.
Mk 2	3	400	22	1,200 ft.
Mk 3	5	750	30	Global

A micro tap is a compact copper disk roughly the size of a fingernail. A micro tap can be installed into a comm unit or datapad to intercept both incoming and outgoing audio or digital communication. The micro tap is used in tandem with a receiving datapad that downloads intercepted data as audio or text files, which are then stored on the receiving datapad's hard drive.

Installing a micro tap into a datapad or comm unit requires a successful Engineering check and 10 minutes of work. The level, installation DC, price, and range at which the intercepted data can be downloaded vary depending on the micro tap's mark (see above). Failing the Engineering check to install a micro tap by 10 or more destroys the tap. At the GM's discretion, it might also damage the comm unit or datapad that is being tapped.

THIEF DRONE

LEVEL 5

TECHNOLOGICAL ITEM PRICE 3,000 BULK 4

A thief drone is a specialized version of a basic domestic drone (*Starfinder Armory* 101). When activated, this Tiny drone acts as the hover drone of a 1st-level mechanic, and

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

Along with the equipment introduced here, there are many existing tools that can aid those looking to perform deeds on the wrong side of the law.

Glass Cutter: Often used by stealthy cat burglars, the glass cutter provides a means of getting priceless, protected items from behind security glass.

The glass cutter appears on page 130 of *Starfinder Armory*.

Grappler: The grappler is a low-key means of bypassing security or gaining access to areas that would otherwise be inaccessible. The grappler can be found on page 219 of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*.

Hat of Disguise: For those who can afford this costly magic item, a *hat of disguise* can be indispensable for taking on a new identity to infiltrate an enemy organization. You can read more about the *hat of disguise* on page 114 of *Starfinder Armory*.

Quantum Boxes: A set of two small boxes that are spatially intertwined, quantum boxes can be used to smuggle goods quietly and discreetly. The full description of quantum boxes can be found on page 107 of *Starfinder Armory*.

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you control it as if you were a 1st-level mechanic (using either an included remote control or a computer with an added control), except it has the smuggler's compartment drone mod instead of a weapons mount. The thief drone can't make any attacks and has no feats and no ability to add drone mods beyond those specified in this entry. An activated thief drone can move its speed, but it can otherwise take only the actions specified in this description. A thief drone can understand one language (chosen at purchase), but it cannot speak. Some criminals disguise their thief drones to resemble ordinary drones, which allows these illegal models to blend in without raising suspicion.

If an activated thief drone is accessible to a creature attempting an Engineering check to disable a lock, that creature reduces the DC of the Engineering check by 5. Alternatively, the thief drone can attempt to disable a lock on its own with a –5 penalty. Its skill unit is Engineering. A thief drone has a usage of 1/hour with a capacity of 20.

A thief drone can be upgraded with any two of the following technological items by paying 125% of the item's price: grappler, glass cutter^{AR}, tool kit (hacking), or x-ray visor. The price of buying and installing an upgrade includes the price of replacing an old upgrade on a drone, if applicable.



ALIEN ARCHIVES

"The discovery of Noma was amazing, as was the technology the first expedition recovered. However, I'd say one of the most remarkable finds was polyfluid. Its similarities to our universal polymer base are remarkable, and the fact that it is a liquid illustrates the brilliance of Noma's creators. As we've seen from the survey data, Noma once contained canals full of this substance. The polyfluid flowed where it was needed, and then streamed from the abdomens of reclaimers back into the shared network. Simple, efficient, and astounding!"

—Ragna Axnamurd, DCI Stellar Archaeology

GENIE, DJINNI

CR
5XP
1,600

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CG Large outsider (air, extraplanar)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11**DEFENSE****EAC** 17; **KAC** 18**Fort** +4; **Ref** +6; **Will** +8**Defensive Abilities** air mastery; **Immunities** acid

HP 65

OFFENSE**Speed** 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (Su, perfect)**Melee** carbon steel curve blade +12 (1d10+5 S; critical bleed 1d6) or

slam +11 (1d4+9 B; critical knockdown)

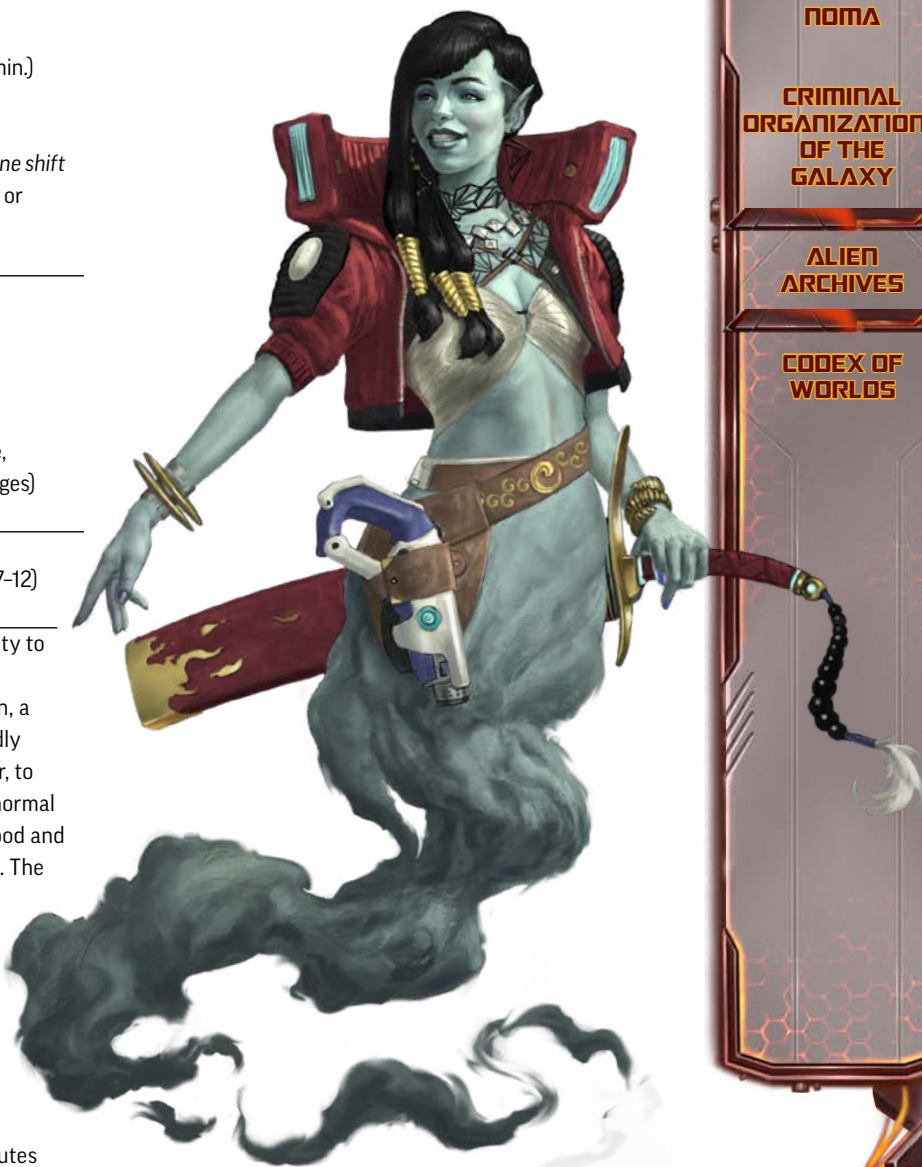
Ranged thunderstrike sonic pistol +12 (1d8+4 So; critical deafen)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Offensive Abilities** whirlwind (1d4+7 B, DC 15, 1/10 min.)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5th)1/day—*holographic image* (4th level, DC 16)At will—*flight* (3rd level), *invisibility* (self only), *plane shift* (willing targets to Astral Plane, Material Plane, or elemental planes only)**STATISTICS****Str** +4; **Dex** +4; **Con** +2; **Int** +2; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +2**Skills** Acrobatics +16 (+24 to fly), Computers +11, Mysticism +16, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +11**Languages** Aquan, Auran, Common, Ignan, Terran**Other Abilities** create feast, fabricate item**Gear** business stationwear, carbon steel curve blade, thunderstrike sonic pistol with 1 battery (20 charges)**ECOLOGY****Environment** any (Plane of Air)**Organization** solitary, pair, company (3–6), or band (7–12)**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Air Mastery (Ex)** Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls against a djinni.**Create Feast (Su)** Once per day as a standard action, a djinni can create enough luxurious food and mildly intoxicating beverages, along with potable water, to nourish up to 15 Medium creatures for a day in normal environmental conditions. If unconsumed, the food and intoxicating beverages disappear after 24 hours. The water remains.**Fabricate Item (Su)** Once per day as a full action, a djinni can create one piece of gear of an item level equal to or lower than the djinni's CR. The object can weigh up to 10 bulk and can be of up to Medium size. If the item needs ammunition, power, or other resources to function, it appears loaded with the required materials. The item persists for a number of minutes equal to the djinni's CR.

Djinn (singular djinni) are genies native to the Plane of Air. They build aerial domains where benevolent creatures are welcome. Most djinn are whimsical and gregarious. However, djinn oppose evil, especially efreet and those who aid them.

Djinn adopted mortal-built tech during the Gap. Some djinn even reside on the Material Plane. Such djinn like being around mortals, and many live on or near gas giants, where they can enjoy an environment akin to the Plane of Air.

A few djinn nobles can cast *wish* on behalf of creatures who aren't genies. However, tradition limits granting this gift only to the worthy.

A typical djinni stands 10 feet tall and weighs 1,000 pounds.



GHUL

CR
5

XP
1,600



CE Medium undead (shapechanger)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11

DEFENSE

EAC 17; **KAC** 19

HP 70

Fort +7; **Ref** +7; **Will** +6

DR 5/good, **Immunities** undead immunities; **Resistances** fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +14 (1d6+10 P) or

claw +14 (1d4+10 S; critical bleed 1d4)

Ranged corona laser pistol +11 (2d4+5 F; critical burn 1d4)

Offensive Abilities cursed bite

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +11, Bluff +16, Disguise +11, Stealth +11

Languages Aquan, Auran, Common, Ignan, Terran

Other Abilities change shape (hyena), genie blood, tracker

Gear casual stationwear, corona laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each)

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or pack (2–8)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Shape (Su) A ghul can take the form of a hyena (or resume its normal form) as a standard action, gaining blindsight (scent) with a range of 30 feet and low-light vision. It is impossible to identify it as an undead or a ghul when it is in its hyena form; a creature that succeeds at a Perception skill check to pierce its disguise notes only that it is not truly a hyena. The ghul can use its normal natural attacks while in hyena form, but it lacks hands to use tools or weapons and cannot speak.

Cursed Bite (Ex) A ghul's bite counts as cold iron, evil, and magic for the purpose of bypassing damage reduction.

Genie Blood (Ex) For effects targeting creatures by type, ghuls count as both outsiders (and genies for abilities that specifically target genies) and undead; for abilities that affect both creature types, a ghul counts as the type that results in the worse effect.

Tracker (Ex) A ghul can use Perception instead of Survival to find or follow tracks, and gains a +8 insight bonus when doing so.

A ghul is a rare form of undead that arises when a jann dies while cursed. A ghul has a skeletal visage, with desiccated skin covering most of its body and the remainder taking the form of translucent, fiery energy. Motivated by a fierce hatred of the appearance of its feet, which resemble donkey's hooves, a ghul often conceals this evidence of its cursed nature with clothing. Some ghuls even wear full suits of armor covered with an additional layer of robes and other formal garb that completely hides their forms, claiming to be aliens from distant worlds in need of extensive environmental protections to survive.

As part of their undead rebirth, ghuls crave the flesh of sapient beings. They often lurk near funerals and battlegrounds, hoping to feed on the corpses of the young and brave, for they find the taste of healthy, virtuous flesh far superior to that of the old, sick, or sinful. Ghuls feast on the living as well, but they are cunning enough to try to limit their victims to those who won't be easily missed.



PHOTONIC ANOMALY

CR
5XP
1,600

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CN Huge starship ooze (fire)

Speed see quantum movement; **Maneuverability** see quantum movement**AC** 17; **TL** 17**HP** 205; **DT** 5; **CT** 41**Shields** light 60 (forward 15, port 15, starboard 15, aft 15)**Attack (Turret)** persistent particle beam (10d6)**Power Core** photonic core (150 PCU); **Drift Engine** none; **Systems** mk 4 armor, mk 4 defenses; **Expansion Bays** none**Other Abilities** living starship, lockdown, solar adaptation, solar defenses**CREW ACTIONS****Engineer (1 action)**Engineering +11
(5 ranks)**Gunner (1 action)**

gunnery +10

Pilot (1 action) Piloting +11
(5 ranks)**ECOLOGY****Environment** any solar**Organization** solitary**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Living Starship (Ex)** A photonic anomaly is a living creature so immense that it functions as a starship (and thus engages only in starship combat). It has no crew, but it can still take engineer, gunner, and pilot actions using the skill bonuses, ranks, and level listed above. Modifiers for its size, speed, and maneuverability have already been factored into its statistics. Critical damage is rolled so that results are applied as follows (with normal effects per the table on page 321 of the Core Rulebook): 1–33, weapons array; 34–66, engines; 67–100, power core.**Lockdown (Ex)** If a science officer successfully uses the lock on crew action against a photonic anomaly before it moves, the creature's quantum movement is temporarily disabled, and it can't move during that round.**Quantum Movement (Ex)** During the helm phase of starship combat, a photonic anomaly cannot use pilot actions to move and instead moves randomly. Choose one side of its hex and roll 1d6 to determine the direction it moves (1 is toward the chosen side, 2 is the next side going clockwise, and so on). Then roll 1d8 to determine the

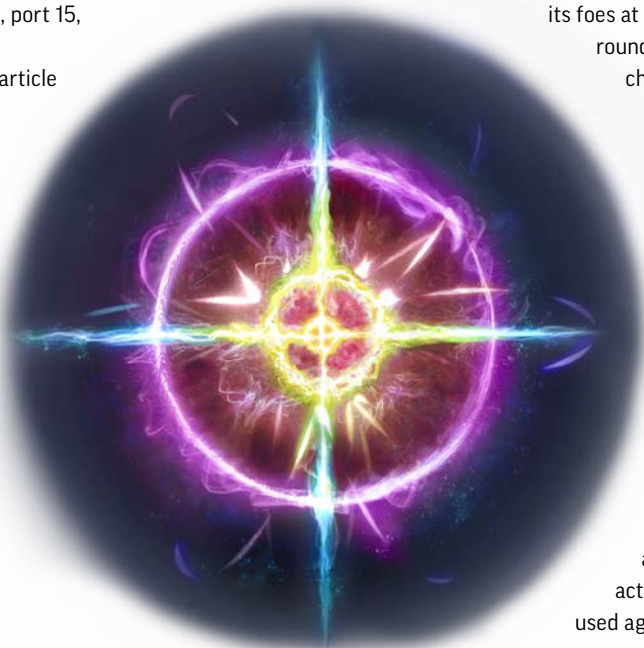
distance the anomaly moves. If the anomaly would end its movement in the same hex as another starship, it instead moves back 1 hex to an empty hex closer to its starting point. When the anomaly chooses to break off combat, it can move in a straight line away from its foes at a speed of 8 hexes per round. However, if it wants to change direction, it must move randomly for 1 round before starting to move in a straight line again the next round.

Solar Defenses (Ex)

A photonic anomaly takes half damage from starship laser weapons. In addition, the anomaly's erratic movement makes it difficult to scan. The DCs of target system and lock on science officer actions increase by 5 when used against a photonic anomaly.

Few ever encounter the exceedingly rare star-born entities known as photonic anomalies, as few creatures in the galaxy are able to survive within the stars where such creatures are normally found. A photonic anomaly is "born" when two or more infinitesimal gamma rays, each traveling a few millimeters in a random direction, happen to match trajectories perfectly. The cluster continues to dart randomly around the interior of the star until another nearby protophoton or gamma ray cluster again travels in the same direction, after which the two combine. Over millions and millions of years, these clusters can grow into a starship-sized entity that roams its home star. It continues to move chaotically, rarely interacting with any other creature. However, anomalies have been documented materializing near unusual energy phenomena inside stars.

Most other knowledge of photonic anomalies comes from their deaths, a dazzling event known as breaching. When a photonic anomaly moves out of the atmosphere of its star, the entity loses cohesion and erupts into a high-energy burst of radiation that travels in all directions at the speed of light. Sapient residents of the star's system often mistake this breaching for a supernova, sparking panic. However, advanced societies with the tools to analyze the occurrence can quickly deduce the true cause of such an event.



PROTOCITE RECLAIMER

CR
3

XP
800



N Medium construct (technological)

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

Perception +8

DEFENSE

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

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

Immunities construct immunities

Weaknesses sunlight dependency

HP 40

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee claw +12 (1d6+7 S plus grab)

Ranged polyfluid volley +10 (explode [15 ft., 1d6 B plus entangled 1d4 rounds, DC 12])

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with claws)

Offensive Abilities grind

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +13, Stealth +8

Languages Noma (can't speak any language); shortwave 100 ft.

Other Abilities unliving

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Noma)

Organization solitary, pair, or crew (3–6)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Grind (Ex) A reclaimer's grinding mouthparts can tear any material to shreds. If a reclaimer starts its turn grappling a creature, it can use a full action to grind into the creature, dealing 6d6 slashing damage (Fortitude DC 12 half) and applying the wound critical hit effect (save DC 12).

Polyfluid Volley (Ex) A reclaimer can repurpose its polyfluid extruder, normally used for transferring that raw material, to lob thick globs of the substance at enemy creatures. This attack has a range increment of 20 feet.

Shortwave (Ex) A protocite can communicate wirelessly.

This acts as telepathy, but only with other creatures with this ability or constructs with the technological subtype.

Sunlight Dependency (Ex) Protocites are solar-powered constructs, although they can function at reduced capacity away from light. In areas of darkness, protocites gain the sickened condition.

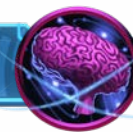
Noma's so-called protocites are as numerous and varied as their distant cousins, the anacites of Aballon. It's probable that the enigmatic First Ones created both. However, anacites were designed to harvest resources and have proliferated from that origin, while protocites were designed as experiments in form and function. Several models have the ability to iterate upon their own forms, while others serve specialized roles. Despite different origins and purposes, similar types of protocites and anacites have developed in parallel, while others are distinct.

Protocite reclaimers form one such unique model line. These scorpion-like constructs serve as the backbone of their home's ceaseless creativity. Noma's AI can conceive of endless possibilities for creatures and contraptions, and the surrounding star provides the energy for its experiments. The material resource required for this is polyfluid, a UPB-like liquid that can form any number of molecule chains, allowing the creation of any substance. Reclaimers provide a vital service as mobile recycling centers, capable of scaling any structure in Noma and gradually devouring it. They turn what they consume back into polyfluid via a complex internal system of enzymatic machinery and filters. Reclaimers then use their extruders to deposit the polyfluid in receptacles so the material can be reused.

Most of the time, reclaimers keep busy recycling materials from Noma's completed experiments. However, they also serve as a frontline immune system, attacking and recycling protocites that operate outside acceptable parameters. With recent incursions into Noma, reclaimers have adapted to recognize and process hostile visitors.



PROTOCITE SPEAKER

CR
2XP
600

N Small construct (technological)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +7

DEFENSE

HP 23

EAC 13; **KAC** 14

Fort +0; **Ref** +1; **Will** +3

Immunities construct immunities

Weaknesses sunlight dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +7 (1d4+2 B)

Ranged laser +8 (1d4+2 F; critical burn 1d4)

Offensive Abilities sensory overload

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +7, Culture +12, Diplomacy +12, Sense Motive +12

Languages Noma; parse; shortwave 100 ft.

Other Abilities congenial, unliving

ECOLOGY

Environment any urban (Noma)

Organization solitary, pair, telemetry (3–30), or cloud (30+)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Congenial (Ex) Protocite speakers relish the opportunity to learn and respond well to positive interactions. They start with a friendly attitude. This attitude worsens only if an attempt at Diplomacy fails by 10 or more.

Laser (Ex) The protocite speaker's laser has a range increment of 80 feet.

Parse (Ex) By spending 10 minutes conversing with a willing creature, a protocite speaker can approximate that creature's spoken or signed language.

Sensory Overload (Ex) As a full action, a speaker can spin in place, changing its body while emitting high-pitched shrieks and whistles. Each non-protocite creature within 30 feet must attempt a DC 14 Fortitude save. On a success, the creature is dazzled for 1 round. On a failure, the creature is sickened for 1 round.

Shortwave (Ex) See page 58.

Sunlight Dependency (Ex) See page 58.

The "life" of a protocite speaker begins with its extrusion from a manufactory into one of Noma's hex-shaped sectors, where the speaker carries out preprogrammed tasks. Most speakers exist in a state of quiet determination, moving to and fro in an approximation of a sapient creature's daily life. Speakers also interact with one another, and sometimes with other protocites, as a way of testing and evaluating various social simulations. Noma has created countless communities of speakers, in which the constituents conform to principles

such as "value the greater good" or "shun those with different limb configurations."

Usually, after a speaker performs its assigned tasks, it powers down. A reclainer then comes and grinds the speaker back into polyfluid. However, in every generation of speakers, several individuals are constructed with expanded data drives, insatiable curiosity, and no predetermined tasks to allow more autonomy than most. These "observer" speakers roam, watch, and guide other experiments. When they have reached the end of their life cycle, typically after several decades, such speakers seek Noma's Core. Within this ancient nexus, these speakers are torn limb from limb, relinquishing data drives full of their accumulated experiences.

A protocite speaker has humanoid features. Despite this appearance, its upper body, limbs, and head are reconfigurable. The construct can recreate a wide variety of physical features and mannerisms.



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WYSP

CR 2

XP 600

N Tiny outsider (elemental, extraplanar)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +7

Aura resonance (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

HP 23

EAC 13; **KAC** 14

Fort +1; **Ref** +3; **Will** +5

Immunities elemental immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee tendril +7 (1d4+4 B)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Diplomacy +12, Mysticism +7, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +12

Other Abilities living battery

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Elemental Planes)

Organization solitary, cloud (2-8), retinue (3-6 plus another creature with a matching elemental subtype), or symphony (5-20 plus one wysp conductor)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Living Battery (Ex) As an immediate action, a wysp can kill itself to cause a creature benefiting from its resonance to regain a number of Hit Points equal to 3 times that creature's CR. If the wysp does this, its death cannot be prevented, and it can be restored to life only by *miracle* or *wish*.

Resonance (Ex) The elemental energy of a wysp resonates with the bodies of creatures that share its elemental subtype. All such creatures within 30 feet gain a +1 morale bonus to damage rolls (or a +2 morale bonus if they also have the elemental subtype). The wysp is similarly affected, and this bonus is already included in its statistics.

WYSP CONDUCTOR

CR 8

XP 4,800

Wysp envoy

N Tiny outsider (elemental, extraplanar)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

Aura resonance (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

HP 115 RP 4

EAC 20; **KAC** 21

Fort +7; **Ref** +9; **Will** +11

Immunities elemental immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee tendril +15 (1d12+10 B)

Ranged elemental burst +17 (2d6+8 B)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft. (5 ft. with tendril)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Diplomacy +21, Mysticism +16, Profession (musician) +21, Sense Motive +21, Stealth +16

Other Abilities envoy improvisations (focus, improved get 'em, improved hurry), living battery

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Elemental Planes)

Organization solitary or symphony (one plus 5-20 wysps)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Elemental Burst (Su) A wysp conductor can channel a fraction of its innate elemental energy into a ranged attack with a maximum range of 60 feet. A wysp conductor's elemental type might change the damage type of this attack (see Wysp Template Grafts on page 61).

Living Battery (Ex) See above.

Resonance (Ex) See above.

Wysps are tiny, spherical creatures native to the Elemental Planes and among the oldest of outsiders. They were formed by mystical vibrations between the Elemental and Ethereal Planes, coalescing pure ethereal energy into the first of these sentient beings. These tiny creatures gathered into nomadic groups that wandered the Elemental Planes. They approached their lives with joy and wonder, marveling at the spectacular beauty and vast bounty of new experiences that their home had to offer. They were sensitive to the subtle interactions and resonances between sources of elemental energy and perceived these resonances as a musical expression of the nature of reality. The wysps most skilled at reading and manipulating this music, called wysp conductors, rapidly rose to positions of leadership within their communities. These conductors largely operated independently from one another but occasionally collaborated on projects of a particularly grand scale. Perhaps the greatest of all of these endeavors was what wysps refer to as the "song of creation"—a performance in which a large group of wysps harmonizes with an Elemental Plane to give birth to new members of their kind.

As their numbers grew, the largely peaceful and curious wysps drew the attention of the elemental lords, demigods who inhabit the Elemental Planes. The elemental lords saw great value in the wysps' understanding of elemental resonances, and sought to turn it toward their own ends. To make the wysps into better minions, the elemental lords revised their song of creation, producing new generations of wysps with innate tendencies toward service and self-sacrifice. Over time, these generations lost some of their

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connection to the music of the universe. These new wysps became specialized, turning into air, earth, fire, and water wysps as they were each attuned to a single Elemental Plane. Despite all these changes, these modified wysps retained the cheerful and curious disposition of their ancestors.

While most wysps lead lives dedicated to the service of other elemental beings, a few small groups of wysps have escaped the influence of the elemental lords and returned to lifestyles more akin to their ancestors. Led by wysp conductors who have regained their natural affinity for the music of creation, these bands of wysps rarely stay in one place for long. Free symphonies of wysps tend to be cautious around anyone they suspect may want to take away their independence, responding to potential dangers by fleeing across the planes rather than engaging in confrontation.

WYSP TEMPLATE GRAFTS

The four types of wysps tied to the Elemental Planes can be created using the grafts listed below.

Required Creature Type and Subtype: Outsider (elemental).

AIR WYSP GRAFT

Air wysps are flighty, cheerful, and at times forgetful. They enjoy playing pranks, telling jokes, and making puns.

Traits: Air subtype, supernatural fly speed of 100 feet (perfect); **Languages:** Auran.

EARTH WYSP GRAFT

Earth wysps are emotionally guarded and slow to trust, but they are dependable allies. They enjoy deep and thorough conversations that examine all sides of an issue.

Traits: Earth subtype, blindsense (vibration) 60 feet, burrow speed of 20 feet; **Abilities:** Earth glide; **Languages:** Terran.

FIRE WYSP GRAFT

Fire wysps are brave to the point of being foolhardy, often vastly overestimating their own abilities. They enjoy telling exaggerated stories about their victories and often take credit for the victories of their allies.

Traits: Fire subtype, +4 bonus to initiative, speed increases to 60 feet, supernatural fly speed of 20 feet (clumsy), immunity to fire, vulnerability to cold, **Abilities:** Searing strikes (see below); **Languages:** Ignan.

Searing Strikes (Ex): A fire wysp's tendril deals half fire damage and half bludgeoning damage. A fire wysp conductor's elemental burst deals fire damage instead of bludgeoning damage. On a critical hit, any

attacks made by a fire wysp or fire wysp conductor deal an amount of burn damage based on the creature's CR, as listed in the table below.

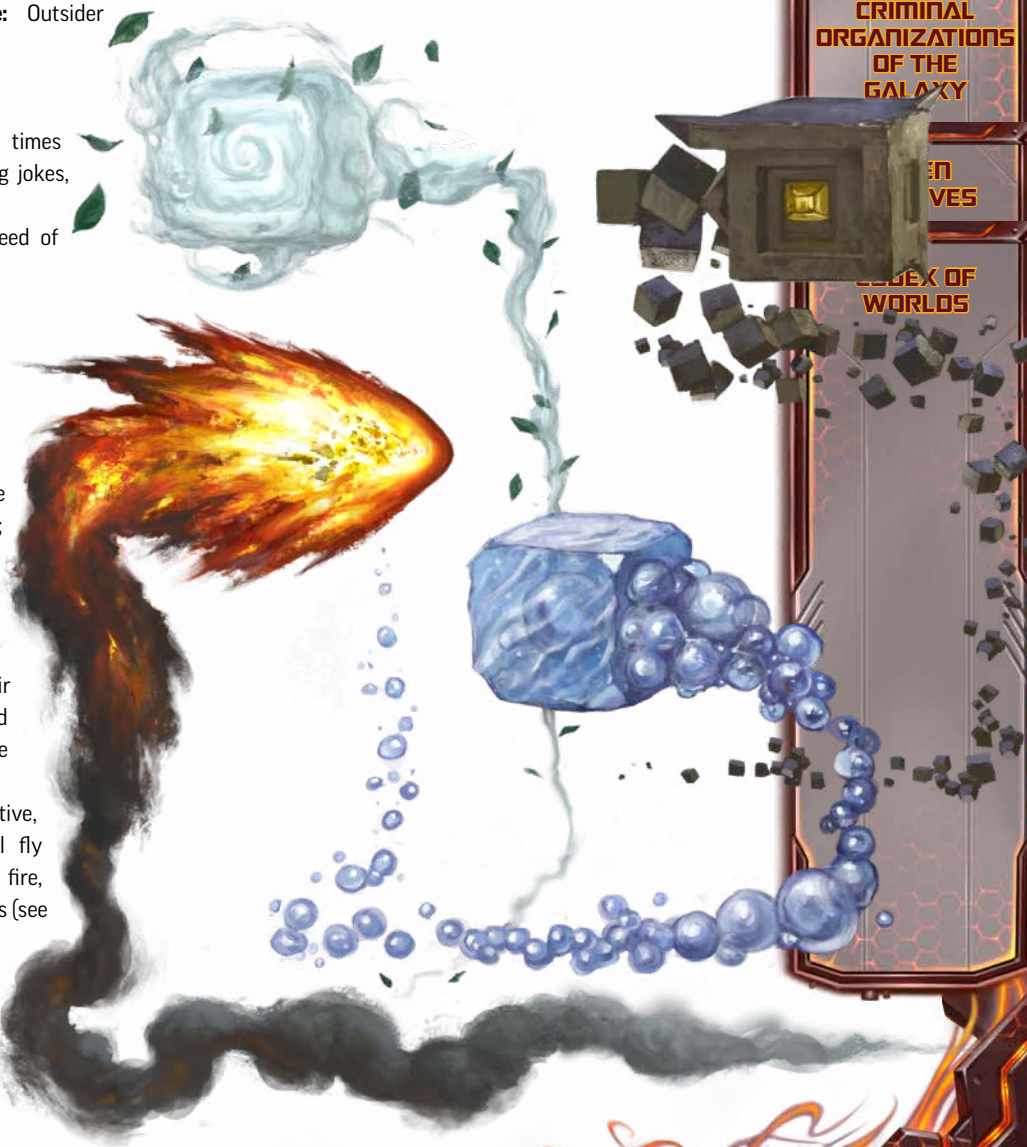
CR	Burn Damage
1-5	1d4
6-10	2d4
11-15	3d4
16+	4d4

WATER WYSP GRAFT

Water wysps are serene, gentle, and nurturing creatures. They enjoy making new friends and introducing their friends to one another.

Traits: Water subtype, swim speed of 90 feet; **Abilities:** Drench (see below); **Languages:** Aquan.

Drench (Ex): A water wysp's touch douses Large or smaller nonmagical flames. It can dispel magical fire it touches as per *dispel magic* (caster level = the wysp's CR).



CODEX OF WORLDS

ELAO

Crystallizing Moon

Diameter: $\times 1/4$; **Mass:** $\times 1/2$

Gravity: $\times 1/2$

Location: The Vast

Atmosphere: Thin

Day: 9 hours; **Year:** 413 days

Elao is the largest of six moons orbiting the planet Irtanza, a gas giant in a solar system deep in the Vast. Once a lush jungle world, it is undergoing a radical transformation. Centered on a region in the southern hemisphere and radiating outward, a technomagical force is changing Elao into a rocky world of mineral-based life-forms. Once-luxuriant forests are now glittering expanses of perimineralized trees and vines inhabited by a wide array of crystalline creatures. Elegant, fractal formations of exotic crystals now adorn colonies abandoned by the intelligent spacefaring species whose home world is Hathmatet, the gas giant's second largest moon. These settlers have mostly retreated back to Hathmatet in confusion after the first few weeks of the transformation.

On the other side of the moon, the remaining organic life-forms are struggling; the moon's atmosphere is thinning, causing the temperature to drop and radiation levels to increase. While some of the native fauna have transformed from organic to mineral-based life-forms, seemingly inexplicably, others have been forced to retreat away from the advancing front or be wiped out. Hathmatetian scientists have yet to determine why some species have been altered or even the method of transformation, and they have yet

to devise a way to even slow, let alone reverse, the change overtaking the colony moon.

The source of Elao's alteration is a series of massive, technomagical terraforming engines controlled by unscrupulous shaitan genies from the Plane of Earth and cloaked with layers of illusion magic. While the Irtanzans are unaware of the outsiders' influence on their moon, several efreet operatives have surveilled the shaitan facilities and have learned that the earth genies are attempting to establish this moon as a spawning ground and genetic laboratory to create and watch over various new species of creatures, though for what purpose remains unknown. The efreet believe the shaitans plan to use these beings as a fighting force in an upcoming attack on the Plane of Fire, but they have yet to uncover any proof.

Those who come to Elao must deal with either the dangerous terrain of the crystallized half of the moon or the panicked, fleeing creatures on the other side, some of which have been driven to extreme behavior from partially completed transformations. In addition, shaitan guards watch over the hidden terraforming engines to prevent interference from outside sources. Nevertheless, there is a fortune to be made in mining the never-before-seen minerals and crystals that have sprouted on the moon's surface, attracting all sorts of greedy corporations and other organizations, much to the shaitans' chagrin.



NEXT MONTH

THE BLIND CITY

By Ron Lundeen

The strange tablet recovered in Noma needs translation, and just as the heroes find someone to do the job, the relic attracts unwanted attention. Members of a conspiracy inside the Deep Cultures Institute try to destroy the artifact, the characters, their DCI contact, and their translator. The relic turns out to be both a map and a key—one that points the DCI to another deep-sun locale and, possibly, an ancient eldritch entity. When the heroes make their next journey into the sun, they find a site as bizarre as its map. Within this lightless bubble inside the sun, the characters discover ghastly creatures and recover hybrid solar technology that could advance solar exploration by leaps and bounds. But on the heels of this acquisition comes a call to war!

CULTS OF THE GALAXY

By Lyz Liddell

Secretive and sometimes amoral cults exist throughout the galaxy, gathering members and resources as they go about

their enigmatic goals. Learn the history and organization of several cults and discover a new theme dedicated to hunting them down!

STRANGE GEAR

By Leo Glass

Beyond the items, weapons, and armor mass-produced by megacorporations, a plethora of unusual equipment can be found or otherwise acquired. Whether manufactured by ancient alien cultures or the result of failed experiments in secret laboratories, this strange gear is sure to delight and mystify the players and their characters.

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SUN DIVERS

PART 1:
SECURING
THE
SUN DIVER

PART 2:
INTO
THE FIRE

PART 3:
THE CORE

NOMA

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ORGANIZATIONS
OF THE
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SUN DIVER

FORWARD

MAP KEY

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. PILOT STATION | 5. STORAGE |
| 2. LIVING AREA | 6. TECH WORKSHOP |
| 3. SCIENCE LAB | 7. ENGINEERING/CARGO |
| 4. CONTROL STATIONS | 8. AIRLOCK |

CROSS SECTION



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



INTO THE FIRE!

With data recovered during the previous adventure, the heroes have proof of a deep-culture site in the sun and the coordinates to travel there. What they lack is the technology to dive into the star. Luckily, a member of the Corona Artifact Divers, daredevils who delve into the sun's atmosphere for thrills and profit, has just what the heroes need. However, this genius inventor is in debt to "business people" who have claimed the sun-diving starship to recoup their investments. The characters must venture to the bubble of Verdeon, confront those holding the vessel, and pilot it into the sun. Upon doing so, the heroes find a truly bizarre bubble-city and the key to further solar adventure!

This volume of Starfinder Adventure Path continues the Dawn of Flame Adventure Path and includes:

- "Sun Divers," a Starfinder adventure for 5th-level characters, by Joe Pasini.
- A survey of Noma, a bubble-city of artificial intelligence within the sun, by Joe Pasini.
- A look at a handful of nefarious criminal organizations operating across the galaxy and equipment of use to those who engage in questionable activities, by Lacy Pellazar.
- An archive of creatures elemental and solar, as well as the unique artificial life of Noma, by Joe Pasini, Owen K.C. Stephens, and Linda Zayas-Palmer.
- Statistics and deck plans for a starship that dives into the heart of a sun, by Joe Pasini, and details of a moon being terraformed by genies from the Plane of Earth, by Judy Bauer.



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