

STARFINDER



THE THREEFOLD CONSPIRACY

ADVENTURE PATH

THE CHIMERA MYSTERY

BY JASON KEELEY



SANJAVAL PALANQUIN

TIER 5

Large heavy freighter

Speed 6; **Maneuverability** average (turn 2); **Drift** 1

AC 17; **TL** 17

HP 140; **DT** —; **CT** 28

Shields medium 100 (forward 25, port 25, starboard 25, aft 25)

Attack (Forward) heavy laser cannon (4d8; 5 hexes)

Attack (Port) light laser cannon (2d4; 5 hexes)

Attack (Starboard) light laser cannon (2d4; 5 hexes)

Power Core Arcus Maximum (200 PCU); **Drift Engine** Signal basic; **Systems** basic computer, basic medium-range sensors, crew quarters (luxurious), mk 3 armor, mk 3 defenses; **Expansion Bays** cargo holds (2), escape pods (12), guest quarters (2, good), recreation suite (gym), smuggler compartment (DC 25)

Modifiers +2 Computers (sensors only), +1 Piloting; **Complement** 6 (minimum 6, maximum 20)

CREW

Captain Computers +11 (5 ranks), Diplomacy +14 (5 ranks), Engineering +11 (5 ranks), Intimidate +14 (5 ranks)

Engineer Engineering +16 (5 ranks)

Gunners (2) gunnery +10 (5th level)

Pilot Piloting +17 (5 ranks)

Science Officer Computers +18 (5 ranks)

Sanjaval Spaceflight Systems produces the Palanquin model of heavy freighter for a variety of transport applications, but it's often converted into a long-distance high-quality passenger conveyance for regularly traveled space lanes. The Palanquin's several decks provide enough room for spacious guest accommodations, which are far enough away from crew quarters that the two groups don't need to mingle in the corridors. With two cargo holds standard, the Palanquin serves as a capable freighter for those passengers who are transporting valuable goods to far-off reaches.

Most Palanquins come equipped with two bays of escape pods. Captains who want to take on additional crew or passengers tend to add a few more pods or life boats, since the vessel's offensive and defensive capabilities are on the light side. (This light armament is a major reason the transport Palanquin is rarely used for dangerous travel.) The Palanquin's forward-mounted heavy laser cannon is usually enough to scare off contingents of smaller space pirate vessels, but the freighter's low speed and average maneuverability can make it an easy target for larger enemy craft.

A few Palanquin crews have been known to engage in illicit activities on the side, either smuggling illegal goods or carrying fugitive passengers. To do so, they usually install a hidden compartment within the ship to conceal this unauthorized cargo.

STARFINDER

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

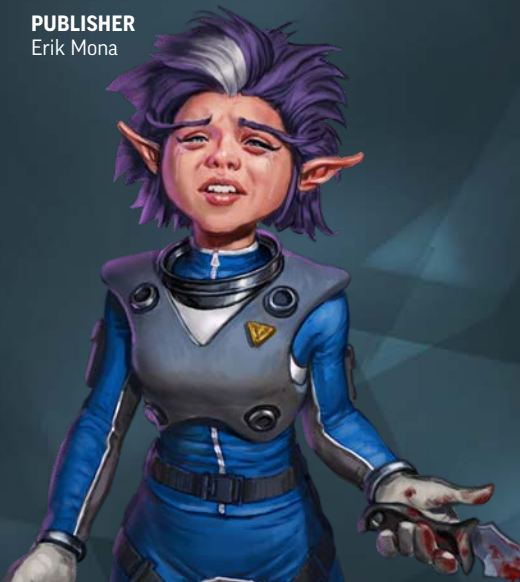
Armory

AR



ON THE COVER

Artist Tomasz Chistowski gives us a glimpse of the Chimera's ryphorian security officer, Algiada Iom, before her mysterious disappearance.



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I WANT TO BELIEVE

A few sapient species—the dycepskians, grays, and reptoids—have infiltrated galactic civilization for ages and for unknown purposes. Collectively known as the Unseen, these beings manipulate, observe, and subvert to meet their inscrutable goals. Sometimes, as with the grays, they take prisoners for experimentation. Other times, most prevalently with the dycepskians, they kill for survival and to protect their secrets. So secretive are the Unseen that accurate knowledge of their origins and home worlds is nearly nonexistent among other sapient species. What is known is that they have already invaded the Pact Worlds.

Although conspiracy theorists lump the Unseen together, the disparate groups aren't allies. They have their own goals, and they often seem to be at odds, if not directly antagonistic. Dycepskians, fungal entities that become sapient only by taking over other sapient beings, insinuate themselves into societies to survive and propagate. Grays seem content to observe and experiment, although they do so with no regard for the agency or dignity of their subjects. Reptoids use their shapechanging abilities to seek places of power and to replace people who already in such positions. Their means are control and manipulation, but their ends are unclear.

In this Adventure Path, the PCs have origins rooted in the conspiracies of the Unseen—particularly the grays and their leader, Mysteriarch Zaxo. The PCs start out within one layer of these plots and work their way through several others. By the end, the PCs unravel several intrigues, perpetrated in turns by dycepskians, grays, and reptoids. The PCs also discover their own weird origins as part of these machinations.

For more details on the events precipitating the Threefold Conspiracy Adventure Path and Mysteriarch Zaxo, see the Adventure Background on page 5.

THE CHIMERA MYSTERY

By Jason Keeley

Starfinder Adventure Path #25, Levels 1–2

What starts out as a normal Drift trip aboard the long-haul transport *Chimera* from Near Space to the Pact Worlds turns into a bizarre whodunit! The ship's security officer goes missing after the PCs witness her arguing with another passenger. A professor shipping a valuable relic hires the group to look into the disappearance, suspecting someone might be after his antiquity. Could it be the space goblins who have a cabin

CAMPAIGN OUTLINE

Spoiler Alert!

On these pages you'll find the background and outline for the Threefold Conspiracy Adventure Path. If you intend to play in this campaign, be warned! These pages spoil the plot for the upcoming adventures as thoroughly as possible.

thanks to their sly leader? Is it the vesk bounty hunter who argued with the security officer? Or is it one of the other crew members or passengers? Everyone has their secrets, and it's up to the PC investigators to find them. But not long after the inquiry starts, the *Chimera's*

engines fail and defy repair. To unravel the plot around them, the PCs have to follow clues to the truth that lies beyond the enigmas and unexpected foes on the *Chimera*. In the end, the *Chimera* faces destruction, and the investigators find that little about the starship was as it seemed!

FLIGHT OF THE SLEEPERS

By Owen K.C. Stephens

Starfinder Adventure Path #26, Levels 3–4

When the *Chimera* is destroyed at the end of the previous adventure, the PCs survive in escape pods. However, these pods launch them not into the Drift, but rather into a mysterious research facility. The *Chimera* and its contents were a fake—some sort of simulation in which the PCs were unwitting participants. After escaping the counterfeit starship, the PCs find themselves trapped within the installation that housed the mock *Chimera*. Worse, the place has come under attack, and escape is the first order of business. As the PCs fight their way through experiments freed of their captivity, they run across the attackers: elite Stewards specialists and accompanying mercenaries. The Stewards' mission was to destroy this dangerous facility, located in Near Space, but a security failsafe locked them within and began a meltdown timer for two reactors. To escape, they need to shut down one reactor while the PCs brave terrible dangers to deactivate the other. When both groups flee the installation in a Stewards starship, the PCs' rescuers reveal that grays ran the research station!

DECEIVERS' MOON

By Jason Tondro

Starfinder Adventure Path #27, Levels 5–6

After escaping their imprisonment with the help of the Stewards, the PCs begin the trek back to the Pact Worlds from Near Space. Unknown to the PCs and their allies, the grays are shadowing the Stewards starship, temporarily preventing it from entering the Drift. These grays have discovered the Stewards are actually reptoids in disguise and decide to further test the PCs. As the Stewards try

to fix their ship, everyone aboard realizes they've lost time. The PCs piece together that they were abducted and manipulated, and that their previous captors might still be after them. They then uncover clues about a hidden gray starship tailing them from nearby. The PCs have the opportunity to confront the gray starship, and upon its defeat, they can proceed to the Stewards' secret base on a Brethedan moon for debriefing. While the PCs are on that base, it becomes clear that they are prisoners and their "allies" are not Stewards. As the truth dawns, the PCs must formulate a way to unmask and face their captors. When they do, a few enemies, including the chief reptoid agent, destroy part of the false Stewards' base and escape. The PCs must pursue these foes to a comm station and defeat them to commandeer their vessel and escape. Before the PCs can do so, though, they find the reptoids sent an alert including their images and descriptions to hidden allies among the Stewards of Roselight.

THE HOLLOW CABAL

By Crystal Frasier

Starfinder Adventure Path #28, Levels 7-8

The PCs are now wanted criminals, thanks to a reptoid agent who transmitted an all-points bulletin on the PCs to Roseligh on Liavara. The PCs also discovered reptoids have infiltrated the Stewards there. However, the reptoids have noted that their agents are acting strangely. The PCs must uncover the reptoid plot, knowing that the information they have isn't enough to prove anything. They must get to Roseligh through Upwell, and while there, the group meets a shirren Steward with a reputation for investigating the unusual, and they and their android partner ally with the PCs. Once the PCs make it to Roseligh, they have to find a way to uncover the infiltrators. What the reptoids on Roseligh don't know, though, is that dycepskians have subverted some of their agents. The PCs, with the help of their new Stewards allies, root out the reptoids and the dycepskians among the Roseligh Stewards, learning in the process that the fungal invasion centers on implants from Gamut Bio, a barathu biotech firm. Investigating Gamut's local station allows the PCs to uncover that Gamut Bio plans to mass-produce this dycepskian implant on Bretheda. Bound by rules and red tape, the PCs' new Stewards allies ask the PCs to rush to stop this potential catastrophe!

THE CRADLE INFESTATION

By Vanessa Hoskins

Starfinder Adventure Path #29, Levels 9-10

Having learned that a dycepskian contagion is hidden inside prototype biotech bound for mass production, the PCs follow the trail to Gamut Bio's production facility on a tiny private Brethedan moon. Meanwhile, video "evidence" of the PCs' criminal activity on Liavara circulates, keeping them fugitives despite their success. The group must avoid bounty

hunters as they continue their mission, and once within their target destination, they have to deal with security and find inside help to deal with the dycepskian threat. Success leads the PCs to a final beta test of the dycepskian augmentation on the floating platform of the Brethedan hospice colony Laoe Araae. Results have been hush-hush, but back-channel communications have kept the Brethedan government informed. Confluence, the barathus' governing body, has dispatched a Confluence agent to Laoe Araae. The dycepskians see this as an opportunity to infect Confluence itself. The PCs meet the Confluence Agent and must soon protect the barathu from dycepskians. Events slide quickly into chaos as the dycepskians scramble to make sure their plans remain intact despite the PCs' meddling. As confusion rises on Laoe Araae, gray observers, who think the hospice is a testing ground for their anti-dycepskian treatments, intervene from their secret post attached to the hospice. During this attack, the grays try to reclaim the PCs, who are growing to be a nuisance, and kidnap the Confluence agent to erase the barathu's memories. However, the appearance of the grays triggers some living on Laoe Araae to remember that the grays abducted and mind-wiped them, enabling the PCs to find the gray outpost. Inside, records reveal much of the plot, the name and aims of the mysteriarch, and the existence of reptoid agents on Absalom Station!

PUPPETS WITHOUT STRINGS

By Landon Winkler

Starfinder Adventure Path #30, Levels 11-12

With evidence of a conspiracy that goes all the way to the top of the Pact Worlds government, a need to clear themselves of false charges, and a request from Stewards allies to meet to deal with these issues, the PCs travel to Absalom Station. As the PCs head to the heart of the Pact Worlds, they learn more doctored footage of them fighting in Gamut Bio and Laoe Araae has leaked to the press. The "evidence" looks damning. Bounty hunters try to capture the PCs again, but the PCs escape to a Stewards safe house. While the PCs hole up and look into solving their problems, clones of the PCs attack the barathu delegation coming to Absalom Station as witnesses after events on Laoe Araae. On the clones' remains, the PCs find augmentations that turn out to be gray monitoring devices. A tech-oriented PC intuits these bugs can tap into gray communications. Thereafter, the PCs and their allies work to compile evidence and root the Unseen agents out of the Pact Worlds' governing body—but the unmasked agents won't go peacefully. However, the PCs' success allows the Stewards to sanction the investigation and progressively clear the PCs of wrongdoing, culminating in exposing a reptoid masquerading as a Pact councilor. After a final showdown with this reptoid, the PCs are cleared. With their access to gray communications, they can track down the mysteriarch in the Armada, invade his starship, and put an end to the grays' plans... for now.

THE CHIMERA MYSTERY

CAMPAIGN OUTLINE

PART 1: BUILDING A MYSTERY

PART 2: THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

PART 3: CASE CLOSED

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PART 1: BUILDING A MYSTERY

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The PCs travel through the Drift aboard a transport vessel named the *Chimera* and meet the various crew members and other passengers.

PART 2: THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

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While investigating the disappearance of the *Chimera*'s security chief, the PCs uncover an abundance of secrets.

PART 3: CASE CLOSED

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Before the PCs can confront the culprit, space pirates attack the *Chimera*!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Chimera Mystery" is designed for four characters.

1

The PCs begin this adventure at 1st level.

2

The PCs should reach 2nd level before space pirates attack the *Chimera*.

3

The PCs should be 3rd level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The grays tasked with monitoring the Pact Worlds see the reptoids' infiltration of other species as a corruption. However, they are curious as to the reptoids' aims. A gray research lead named Zaxo began monitoring reptoid activity in and around Absalom Station several years ago. From his invisible starship positioned in Absalom Station's Armada, Mysteriarch Zaxo grows ever more paranoid about the other factions of the Unseen. He has become obsessed with uncovering and ultimately undermining what he believes to be an impediment to the grays' long-term experiments—and now aims to expose reptoids in high places.

Conspiracy theorists in the Pact Worlds use the word “mysteriarch” to refer to grays in positions of power, such as Zaxo. The literal- and serious-minded grays have adopted this common term when speaking to other species.

After working long and hard to uncover the reptoids influencing the Pact Worlds' government and population, Zaxo and his team have orchestrated a plan to replace the imposters and observe the results. Not all these individuals are important leaders. Some are assistants to the powerful, manipulating from the shadows, or hold important technical positions. Zaxo has ordered clones of these individuals from a gray research and development facility in Near Space.

The PCs are those clones.

In this adventure, although they are unaware of it, the PCs are being trained for their intended roles in Zaxo's plan. Zaxo wants his replacements to be adept at recognizing shapechangers and skinwalkers, such as the reptoids and dycepskians. The events in this adventure are, therefore, part of an elaborate fake, orchestrated by the grays who run the facility at which the PCs were created. Not only are all the NPCs clones with false memories, but their entire environment is a simulator.

This simulation is a mystery involving shapechangers: a gang of astrazoan (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 209) space pirates named the Star Fishers. This gang has developed a method of following starships into the Drift, provided one of them is aboard the targeted vessel and carrying a specialized tracker. One or more of the astrazoans take the place of passengers or crew on the target starship, killing the people they impersonate in the process. They sabotage the ship from within, making it easier for the pirates to find, board, and loot the vessel. Once the pirates have taken their plunder, they spare anyone who didn't get in their way. However, they often leave the starship adrift with no way to easily return to the Material Plane, sentencing any victims unable to repair their transport to slow death. Although the pirates'

WEIRDNESS

Parts of the gray-simulated mystery are likely to seem weird or incongruous, and others seem improbably convenient. That's intentional. The players might notice, and that's all right. This aspect of the adventure is intended not only to entertain, but also to create an “Aha!” moment at the conclusion, when the players and PCs realize the whole situation was a ruse. Much of the oddness the PCs run across as they unwittingly participate is due to the grays' inability to fully comprehend the circumstances they're trying to simulate. These sorts of passion-related intrigues are rare in gray society.

method is complicated, it often works and leaves little trail for authorities to follow. When the strategy goes awry, the disguised astrazoans can change shape to disappear when the targeted ship reaches its port of call. The other pirates then pick up their comrades and try again on another mark.

The PCs are all passengers aboard a high-end private transport starship named the *Chimera*, which is the latest target of the Star Fishers, a group of space pirates working from a transport hub called Legacy Station. Two of their leaders, Qub and Yox, have killed and impersonated two people on board: the *Chimera*'s security chief, Algiada Iom, and a bounty hunter named Trostinek, who had booked passage aboard the *Chimera* and had Iom as his main contact. The two were convenient targets, especially since they took a liking to one another during the last night at Legacy Station and decided to spend that night together.

GALACTIC GUMSHOES

Each player should create a 1st-level character using the normal rules in the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*, choosing a race, class, and theme, as well as equipment. Even if a character is a scientist or entertainer, the galaxy can be a dangerous place, especially in Near Space, so everyone has armor and weapons. It's a good idea to tell the players their first adventure involves a mystery aboard a starship, in case that information influences their choices. Remind them that the Adventure Path itself isn't necessarily all about solving mysteries, so the PCs should have diverse capabilities like any *Starfinder* crew.

The players can choose any races presented in the *Core Rulebook*, any *Alien Archive*, or one of the many other *Starfinder* resources, although unusual choices might make your job as GM a little more difficult in the later adventures. For instance, if a player wants to create a gray or reptoid character, you need to invent a reason the grays cloned a member of one of those species. Perhaps they need to infiltrate another gray organization or replace a known reptoid operative. In addition, such characters will have to work hard to earn the trust of the

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other characters once they start learning the truth of their situation. As always, the races the players can choose from when they make their characters is at your discretion.

Players should also choose backgrounds from the following section for their PCs. Doing so helps determine why the PCs are aboard the *Chimera*. As the players create their characters, encourage them to make connections between the PCs to foster cooperation. If two players choose the same background, such a connection might be obvious. Any backstory links are part of the false memories implanted by the grays. (As the campaign progresses, the PCs learn the grays implanted these memories as part of the characters' clone training. The grays intended to rewrite these memories when the clones are ready to take their rightful positions, but circumstances conspire to prevent this.) In addition, the feats presented in the "Mystery Adventures" article, starting on page 44, might come in handy during this and future adventures.

BACKGROUNDS

As the adventure begins, each PC has a ticket for a trip on the *Chimera*, a decent transport vessel traveling to the Pact Worlds through the Drift. They each plan to board the ship at Legacy Station, an outpost in Near Space that is a hub for travel. The journey aboard the *Chimera* represents the final stretch for everyone's trip back to the Pact Worlds.

Each player should choose one of the following backgrounds, although you as GM should feel free to add your own to this list. Multiple players can choose the same background. Each background suggests themes, and combining the two can help players determine their specific characters' vocation and past.

Artist: You're taking the *Chimera* to reach a showing or your next gig somewhere in the Pact Worlds. Whether the show is in a small gallery or venue on Absalom Station or a larger site, such as Songbird Station in the Diaspora, you plan on arriving on time and meeting your supporters and fans. This background fits well with the ace pilot, icon, and gladiator (*Pact Worlds* 57) themes.

Entrepreneur: In attempting to start your own business, you received word that a firm within the Pact Worlds is interested in supplying the funds you need. They want you to come in person to present your business plan or a sample of your work, so you booked passage on the *Chimera* to take advantage of the opportunity. This background fits well with the biotechnician (*Pact Worlds* 127), corporate agent (*Pact Worlds* 47), and roboticist (*Pact Worlds* 27) themes.

Intellectual: The *Chimera* is taking you back to the Pact Worlds after a successful expedition to a Near Space planet or interesting cosmic phenomenon. You have much information to impart to your colleagues, some of which you believe might further the understanding of your field of study. This background fits well with the scholar, xenoseeker, and xenoarchaeologist (*Pact Worlds* 137) themes.

Traveler: Your home is in the Pact Worlds, and you're coming back from an extended vacation. Alternatively, you're on your way to tour the Pact Worlds as part of a whirlwind journey through the galaxy. The *Chimera* was the only vessel departing on your timetable. This background fits well with the spacefarer, tempered pilgrim (*Pact Worlds* 77), wild warden (*Pact Worlds* 37), and xenoseeker themes.

Veteran: Lucrative warrior work is on offer in the Pact Worlds. Whether you're providing security for a ruthless corporation or aiding a small group against the predations of space pirates, the proposed job fits your morals. This background fits well with the bounty hunter, mercenary, outlaw, and space pirate (*Pact Worlds* 87) themes.

Visionary: A vision from another plane of existence calls you to the Pact Worlds, so you purchased passage aboard the *Chimera*. You aren't entirely certain what awaits you when you arrive, but you are sure you will be guided to where you need to be. This background fits well with the dream prophet (*Pact Worlds* 117), priest, and solar disciple (*Pact Worlds* 17) themes; the theme can help you decide whether you are devoted to a deity or some other force.

WHO'S WHO?

As the players finish their characters, think about who they might be clones of. By examining each character's strengths and weaknesses, you might be able to determine who they were cloned to replace. The charismatic character might be the clone of a famous holovid star, and the wise, levelheaded one might be the clone of a member of the Pact Council. The grays have created these clones for specific purposes, not all of which are evident to an outside observer. One character might simply be the clone of a low-level bureaucrat whose power can be wielded at just the right moment. You needn't set this information in stone before starting this Adventure Path, but it's a good idea to keep it in mind as you play. Later volumes further detail the use of the PCs' roles.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The PCs interact with the following NPCs throughout the course of this adventure. Each NPC's entry lists their alignment, gender, and species, as well as a brief physical description and notes on their personality. Each NPC is likely to be in the location listed if the PCs go looking, but these characters can be wherever you need them to be to keep the adventure moving. Use this information to aid in roleplaying and moving the adventure forward, revealing secondary aspects of the NPCs during interaction as you like.

Each NPC has a secret that might implicate them in the adventure's central mystery, which the PCs attempt to solve in Part 2. PCs receive a story award listed for discovering an NPC's secret.

Even though the grays engineered the mystery, the adventure is written as if the events were real, as all the participants believe that they are actual people on an actual ship. Everything

about these clones is something the grays constructed, but none of the NPCs realize this fact. They are fully convinced of their histories and motivations and are unaware of their roles as disposable training facilitators.

ALGIADA IOM, SECURITY CHIEF

Algiada Iom (LN female transitional ryphorian) was the *Chimera's* chief of security and served as the head gunner. Yox, one of the Star Fisher pirates (page 10), is impersonating Algiada.

Appearance: Algiada is a brown-haired transitional ryphorian woman, so she lacks the fur found on winterborn ryphorians. She usually keeps her hair in a topknot, though some of it spills down the sides of her face. Her pointy, fringed ears are her most prominent feature, and she has a mole above her mouth on the left side of her face. Algiada wears her armor even in casual settings, which some people find imposing.

Personality: While Yox is disguised as Algiada Iom, the supposed security chief is brusque and acerbic. The real Algiada's personality wasn't much different, though.

Location: Until she disappears, Algiada patrols the ship's corridors and can be found just about anywhere.

Secret: In addition to the fact that Algiada has been replaced, the actual security chief shared secrets and rivalries with the other crew members. Most are detailed in those crew members' entries, but there was one secret only Algiada was aware of: she recently contacted an Akitonian crime family and offered them the chance to acquire the captain's blackmail material in exchange for killing him and giving Algiada the *Chimera*. This deal is set to take place when the *Chimera* arrives in the Pact Worlds, but neither the deal nor the arrival will ever happen.

BRODYNT BENJAM, PROFESSOR

Professor **Brodynt Benjam** (NG male human) recently returned from an archaeological dig with an important relic (page 26). He booked passage aboard the *Chimera* to transport himself and his treasure back to the Pact Worlds.

Appearance: Professor Benjam is an older gentleman with gray hair and a beard to match. He has a few cybernetic augmentations in his forehead and on the back of his neck (consisting of a datajack and some other minor systems). He wears a pair of round glasses and a suit of casual stationwear that resembles a finely tailored suit.

Personality: The professor is very excitable and talkative, eager to share stories about his travels and his archaeological research to anyone who will listen. Brodynt is fluent in several languages and has a wide base of knowledge of nearly any

subject, though ancient histories are his most studied topic. Play him as a sympathetic figure.

Location: When not in his quarters, Professor Benjam is reading in the dining hall.

Secret: When Algiada disappears, Professor Benjam asks the PCs to investigate because he's afraid someone is after his relic. However, he has an ulterior motive. About a decade ago, the professor was on Triaxus, engaging in some highly suspect methods to get his hands on an artifact from the Drakelands, which is now in a museum. In the process, Algiada's brother was badly wounded. The professor has aged and has grown his goatee since then, but he is afraid that Algiada might recognize him. Brodynt feels guilty about his past actions, and initiating the investigation into Algiada's disappearance assuages his conscience.

Story Award: If the PCs find out about Professor Benjam's past, award them 400 XP.

GRATH METEK, PILOT

The *Chimera's* pilot is **Grath Metek** (NE male ysoki).

Appearance: Grath is short with russet fur, a tan tail, and gold eyes. One of his ears is pierced with a small silver hoop. He wears a stained flight suit and always has a disheveled appearance.

Personality: The ysoki mingles only with guests he considers to be "fun"—a nebulous criterion based on Grath's initial impression of them. Law enforcement and those who seem bookish don't qualify. He brushes off those he thinks are dull, but he offers nips from his illicit stash of moonshine to those who have caught his attention. His attempts to party with PCs he finds interesting could become annoying.

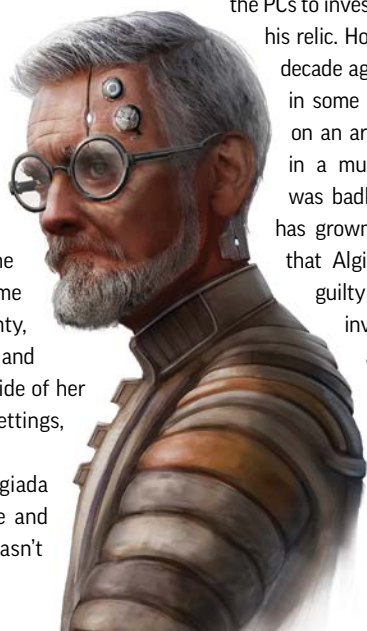
Location: When not flying the *Chimera*, Grath is in his quarters. He has replaced the desk in his room with a still.

Secret: Several weeks ago, Grath lost an heirloom tail ring while sparring with Algiada in the gym. The ysoki leapt to the conclusion that the security chief stole it, since she had been admiring the piece of jewelry earlier. The two's friendship deteriorated to the point that, when the journey begins, they are barely speaking to one another. In truth, the tail ring can be found among the gym's equipment.

Story Award: If the PCs learn about the reasons behind Grath and Algiada's falling out and discover the ysoki's tail ring, award them 400 XP.

JINCHEROGA, MERCENARY LEADER

Jincheroga (NE female barghest; page 57) commands a quartet of space goblins as an up-and-coming mercenary group called the Newbloods who are looking for work in



BRODYNT BENJAM

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the Pact Worlds. Jincheroga has taken one cabin in the guest quarters for herself and crammed her four lackeys into another.

Appearance: Jincheroga usually takes the form of a hobgoblin (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 276) when with her minions, and is better dressed than the goblins. The barghest reserves her monstrous form as a surprise to intimidate her foes, which the PCs will experience later when she tries to take over the ship.

Personality: Jincheroga is more refined than her minions, but she is still selfish, cruel, and calculating. The barghest believes she is destined to lead an army of goblinoid mercenaries and sell their services to the highest bidders. She hopes to seize a small moon to rule over after she grows to her full potential. Jincheroga is proud and arrogant, sure that her might makes her right.

Location: Jincheroga can be spotted sniffing around the ship, especially the cargo holds and lower deck, or in the gym training with her minions. She's looking for opportunities. Later in the adventure, she decides she has found enough leverage to make taking over the *Chimera* worth the risk. See page 29.

Secret: When Jincheroga boarded the *Chimera* and met some of the other passengers, she decided that Professor Benjam could make an excellent resource for gear the goblinoids could steal to make themselves more powerful. She formulated a plan to take over the ship and kidnap the professor. Right before the ship entered the Drift, Jincheroga and Algiada (Yox in disguise) had a brief confrontation. Yox recognized the barghest as a potential threat and warned her to stand down. After the security chief disappears, Jincheroga decides to go ahead and enact her schemes. See Part 2 of the adventure.

KIIV CAEDENNS, ENGINEER

Kiiv Caedenns (N nonbinary maraquoi) is the *Chimera*'s competent engineer.

Appearance: Kiiv is a maraquoi with dark gray fur and a skinny tail. They wear an estex suit and thick safety goggles, which are usually propped up on their forehead when not in use. They try to keep a meticulous appearance, though it's often marred by engine coolant stains on their clothes and the occasional patch of burned fur on their tail.

Personality: When the engineer left their home moon of Marata in the Pact Worlds to take up with Captain Rameem's crew, they had not experienced other cultures and lived a fairly traditional maraquoi life. Kiiv is fascinated with new experiences and often bombards the *Chimera*'s passengers with questions about their home worlds or lines of work, sometimes irritating the guests. This occasionally leads to Kiiv experiencing bouts of melancholy as the maraquoi remembers their own family.

Location: When not on the engineering deck, Kiiv is either on the bridge, in the dining hall, or in their quarters.

Secret: Kiiv has had trouble overcoming homesickness and has been unable to adopt the *Chimera*'s crew as a new family. The late security chief bullied

Kiiv, exacerbating the maraquoi's loneliness. However, First Mate Lozu has been sympathetic to Kiiv's plight, and the two are in the early stages of a romantic relationship. They have kept this fact a secret.

At Legacy Station, Kiiv received several messages from Marata, but they don't read them until the *Chimera*'s first night in the Drift. When they do so, they learn that two of their sires passed away in a terrible accident only a week ago. Kiiv takes the tragedy hard, breaking down and attempting to numb the pain with copious amounts of alcohol from Grath. They spend the majority of the evening incapacitated, giving the astrazoan the opportunity to impersonate them and sabotage the engines.

Story Award: If the PCs discover Kiiv's recent personal tragedy and learn that they couldn't have tampered with the engines, award them 400 XP.

LOZU PAHIR, FIRST MATE

Lozu Pahir (N female human) is the *Chimera*'s first mate, and the most recent member of the crew. In starship combat, Lozu serves as the ship's science officer.

Appearance: First Mate Pahir has long, black hair, a round face, and hazel eyes. She keeps her hair tied back in a long ponytail to keep it out of the way. She wears an olive-green flight suit with brown accents when on duty (which is practically the entirety of the journey), but she throws on a pressed sleeveless t-shirt when relaxing.



Personality: The first mate is more serious than her captain. It's her job to track much of the *Chimera*'s expenses for repairs, fuel, stores, and so forth. But despite her solemnity and work ethic, she is approachable and friendly. Lozu often seems distracted, thanks to her money troubles.

Location: During her work hours, Lozu is either on the bridge or checking on the passengers' cargo. She's usually in her quarters during off hours.

Secret: Lozu joined the *Chimera* crew after the vessel was upgraded to carry more passengers and cargo a few years ago. She came highly recommended by some of Captain Rameem's criminal contacts. However, they neglected to mention her gambling problem. Lozu has racked up several thousand credits worth of debts in ports around the galaxy, once even losing money earmarked for ship repairs. Algiada found out, but instead of telling the captain, she loaned Lozu enough credits to cover the debt and warned the first mate not to repeat the mistake. Before stopping at Legacy Station, Algiada started pressuring Lozu to pay the loan back.

In addition, Lozu and Kiiv the engineer are in the early stages of a romantic relationship. They are taking it slow because the maraquoi is having a little trouble overcoming their traditionalist upbringing. The two have kept their feelings secret from the other crew members.

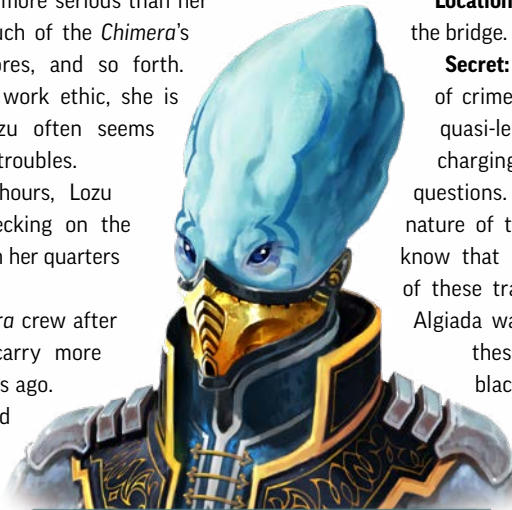
Story Award: If the PCs learn about Lozu's gambling debts, award them 400 XP.

RAMEEM VI SIALA CORSEN, CAPTAIN

Rameem Vi Siala Corsen (CN male kasatha) is a former fence turned starship owner and captain of the *Chimera*.

Appearance: The middle-aged Rameem cuts a dashing form. His skin is pale blue with darker blue markings running up the side of his head. His dark eyes occasionally sparkle with humor. He dresses in casual stationwear that resembles black leather, with yellow trim that matches his face covering.

Personality: The captain is affable and quick with a joke, a trait that endears him to his crew and his passengers. However, almost all PC interactions with him occur after Yox kills him and takes his place (page 14). Yox's portrayal of the captain is all business.



RAMEEM VI SIALA CORSEN

Location: Captain Rameem is usually on the bridge.

Secret: Rameem hasn't given up his life of crime. He uses the *Chimera* to transport quasi-legal goods and passengers without charging too much or asking unwanted questions. His crew is aware of the true nature of these jobs, but most of them don't know that he keeps extensive documentation of these transactions as a form of insurance.

Algiada was the only crew member aware of these records, which could be used to blackmail the captain's former clients.

Rameem intended to use these secrets only in the days before he decided to retire, which, according to him, is still some years away.

Story Award: If the PCs find the captain's stash of blackmail information, award them 400 XP.

SONG, COOK

Song (CN agender android) is the *Chimera*'s cook. When needed, they serve as one of the ship's gunners.

Appearance: Song is a short android with silver skin and red circuitry tattoos. They have piercing blue eyes. They are rarely seen without their spotless apron, which they wear over a drab set of stationwear. When they're preparing food or want to stress their role aboard the *Chimera*, they put on a white chef's hat.

Personality: The cook is quick to fly off the handle, especially when it comes to people making a mess in their galley and dining hall. They are prone to quietly fuming over some perceived slight or unspoken grievance. The rest of the crew knows Song would never carry out threats of physical violence, so they consider the android's expressions of temper to be funny or worthy of little regard. This indifference only makes Song crankier toward their shipmates.

Location: Song spends most of their time in the galley and the

dining hall.

Secret: The ship's gym is adjacent to the kitchen, and sometimes, when she was feeling mischievous during her daily exercises, Algiada would purposely strike the adjoining wall hard enough to knock cans and other sundries off the kitchen shelves. One such incident occurred right before the



TROSTINEK

THE CHIMERA MYSTERY

CAMPAIGN OUTLINE

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PART 2: THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

PART 3: CASE CLOSED

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Chimera arrived at Legacy Station and picked up passengers. Song flew into a white-hot rage and threatened to turn Algiada's weapons against her, describing the violence in gruesome detail. As usual, the crew didn't place much importance on the scene at the time.

Story Award: If the PCs learn about Song's threats against Algiada, award them 400 XP.

STAR FISHERS

Qub (NE agender astrazoan soldier) and **Yox** (NE genderfluid astrazoan envoy) are two of three astrazoans who run the Star Fishers. They're the main antagonists in this adventure. At the adventure's start, Qub poses as Trostinek, a vesk bounty hunter. Yox starts having taken the form of Algiada Iom, the *Chimera*'s security officer, but later takes the shape of Captain Rameem. The grays didn't want it to be too easy to undermine the disguises of the astrazoans, so as part of the simulation's weirdness, these clones "conveniently" speak languages necessary for their main disguises. Yox speaks Kasatha and Triaxian, and Qub speaks Vesk. Text in the adventure often refers to an astrazoan as the person the PCs believe the pirate to be where appropriate.

TROSTINEK, BOUNTY HUNTER

The real **Trostinek** (N male vesk) died on Legacy Station. Qub, one of the Star Fisher astrazoan pirates, impersonates him for the majority of this adventure.

Appearance: Trostinek is a burly vesk with a thick but short tail and a handsome beard of horns. Trostinek's yellow eyes are framed with rings of tan scales. He has a fanged underbite that is common among many vesks, and he displays mementos from his past jobs on a leather strap around his neck. Ready for a fight at any moment, he wears his defrex hide armor and weapons at most times.

Personality: Qub observed Trostinek on Legacy Station before assuming his identity. Based on what the astrazoan gathered there, they try to portray the vesk as a good-natured but self-indulgent lummo.

Location: In between bouts of sitting silently in his quarters, Trostinek surreptitiously monitors the engineering deck and the entrance to the smuggler compartment.

Secret: The actual Trostinek had a secret. He was an inveterate adulterer during his bounty hunting trips, cheating on his wife back on Vesk-2. Algiada was his latest date on Legacy Station. The PCs can find evidence of Trostinek's marriage among his belongings (page 21). However, Qub learns of Trostinek's unfaithfulness only when the PCs mention it.

THE CHIMERA

The *Chimera* is built to mimic a Sanjaval Palanquin (see the inside covers). The statistics for this starship aren't necessary for this adventure, but the map of the ship's three decks should be useful for when the PCs want to explore

their surroundings. While this map has a scale of 40 feet to one square, specific areas of the *Chimera* are detailed where appropriate in this adventure (accompanied by an appropriately scaled map in many cases). In addition, general locations on board the ship are described briefly below. As a side note, the *Chimera* only resembles a Palanquin. It is actually constructed from parts of older starships the grays have "disappeared" over the decades (see the Hints of Reality sidebar on page 17).

The sections described here include specific areas detailed later in the adventure where noted. If the PCs decide to search every nook and cranny of the ship, use similar areas to improvise. For example, Song's quarters don't receive a full description; if the PCs want to break into that chamber, they must bypass the lock like those on Algiada Iom's or Kiiv's rooms. Avoid dwelling on superfluous exploration. When the PCs go to a location where they won't find anything, make that clear after a few checks, saying, "You don't find anything interesting" or something similar.

Ceilings in the *Chimera* are 14 feet high, with about 6 feet of room for conduits, ventilation, and the like between decks. Lighting is automatic, coming on when someone enters an area. The lights can be dimmed or turned off with manual controls in each room or via voice command. Most areas have dim lighting even when the main lights are off, although sleeping chambers and the smuggler compartment are dark when the lights are out.

Bridge: The *Chimera*'s bridge has stations for six crew members. Only from here can the forward laser cannon be fired, although the port and starboard guns have dedicated auxiliary controls. (These weapons seem to work from within the *Chimera*, but they do nothing outside the simulated starship.) The captain's station hides a secret shaft with a ladder down to the smuggler compartment. It takes a successful DC 25 Perception check for a PC to find scuff marks on the floor near the base of the captain's chair that hint at the presence of the shaft. Opening the shaft requires hacking the captain's station with a successful DC 21 Computers check, which causes the captain's chair to swivel out of the way.

Cargo Holds: The two enormous cargo holds store passengers' luggage and bulk goods. The shaft from the bridge to the smuggler compartment leads through both cargo holds. In both, a secret door (Perception DC 25 to find) allows access to the shaft and its ladder.

Crew Quarters: Each of the *Chimera*'s six crew members has personal quarters, which feature individual washrooms, on the upper deck. The doors to each chamber can be locked from the inside. Algiada Iom's quarters are described in the Scene of the Crime section on page 18. Rameem's are described in the Kiiv's Quarters section on page 24. Kiiv's quarters are described in the Captain's Quarters section on page 26. A map of a couple crew quarters accompanies the bridge map on page 29.

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Dining and Event Hall: This hall typically contains tables where passengers and crew eat their meals. The crew members tend to eat at a different time than the passengers or take meals in their quarters or on the bridge. The room can be rearranged for events, such as dances.

Engineering: The engineering deck of the *Chimera* is devoted to all the systems that keep the ship running. This deck is mostly made up of a bunch of corridors lined with conduits, control and monitoring consoles, and other machinery. To the rear are the Drift engine, the power core with an attached incinerator for trash, and two thruster access bays, along with an access passage to allow quick egress to the escape pods. To the fore is a secret area—see the smuggler compartment description below.

Escape Pods: The *Chimera* has 12 escape pods, which are usually enough for the crew and passengers, even though the vessel can comfortably hold more passengers, as mentioned in the guest quarters section. In the rare times when the *Chimera* is fully booked, the captain assures the passengers that the crew, in order of descending seniority, will be willing to remain with the ship as needed.

Galley: This kitchen is fully stocked at the start of each voyage, occasionally with interesting ingredients for passengers with special dietary needs.

Guest Quarters: The *Chimera* has eight rooms for passengers. The rooms are nice, each with a bed, a desk with a chair, a padded chair and small table, a dresser, and a personal lavatory. These accommodations are elegantly decorated in

kasathan style. Although each cabin is designed for one, it can accommodate more provided those persons are willing to be in close quarters.

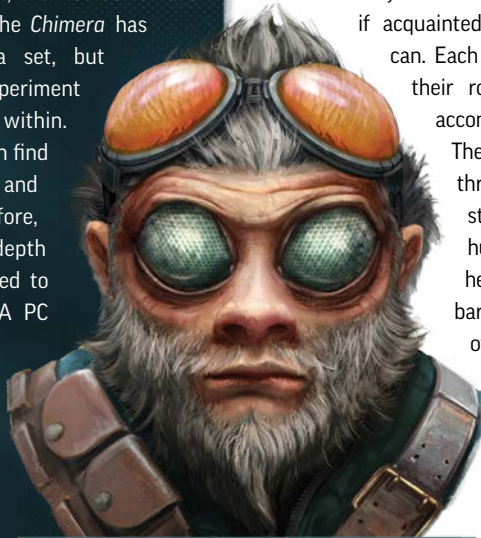
Gunner Stations: Extra control consoles for the port and starboard guns can be found in the midship corridors. The doors to these chambers require authorization from the bridge to open (Engineering DC 20 to disable or Computers DC 20 to hack), which is usually given only to the crew members who have been designated as gunners. Consoles in these booths are also locked down outside of combat. A PC must succeed at a DC 21 Computers check to override the lockout, and failing by 5 or more sends a notification to the bridge.

Gym: A large space aboard the ship has been designated as a gym. Passengers and the crew have access. It contains workout equipment, small pools with retractable covers that can be used for current swimming or as hot tubs, and an open padded area for floor work or sparring. See the Gym section on page 24 for an expanded description.

Smuggler Compartment: The *Chimera's* captain offers the use of this well-hidden compartment to passengers whose cargo is less than legal or requires more security. Sometimes, the captain smuggles his own illicit goods and, as such, he is the only one with the key card to open the compartment's lock (which ends up in Qub's/Trostinek's hands near the end of the adventure). A secret door from the forward engineering section requires a successful DC 25 Perception check to find. Inside, the shaft from the captain's station looks like a stout pillar, but it has a secret door in it that is equally hard to find.

DRIFT INFOSPHERE

While the *Chimera* is in the Drift, the PCs don't have full access to any infosphere. The *Chimera* has a downloaded infosphere data set, but the grays in charge of this experiment carefully curated the information within. Using this infosphere, the PCs can find only the most basic information and several popular holovids. Therefore, the PCs are unable to do any in-depth research on most topics and need to rely on their own knowledge. A PC who asks for a catalog of the downloaded data set notices how simplistic it is with a successful DC 22 Computers check, and can tell that for it to be so limited, it must have been edited down rather than somehow being flawed. If asked, *Chimera* crew members know nothing about the curated data set.



KIIV CAEDENNS

softens a bit when dealing with the vesk bounty hunter. He winks at her as she hands him his room's key card.

Every PC can have their own quarters, though if acquainted PCs want to bunk together, they can. Each PC is given a key card that unlocks their room. As the PCs settle into their accommodations, the *Chimera* disembarks. The PCs feel the usual minor jolt of thrusters firing as the vessel leaves the station's orbit. A few minutes later the hum of the ship's Drift engine can be heard as it breaks through the planar barrier, and the captain's voice comes over the ship's comm.

"Welcome aboard the *Chimera*. This is your captain, Rameem Vi Siala Corsen, speaking, and it'll be my pleasure to ferry you through the Drift. We've just finished making our astrogation calculations here on the bridge, and it looks like it'll take us the next five days to reach our

destination at Absalom Station, center of the Pact Worlds system. In the meantime, make yourselves at home. If you need any assistance, don't hesitate to ask any of our friendly crew members. Meals are served at the times listed in the dining hall, but if you're looking for a snack, I'm sure our cook, Song, will be happy to accommodate you." The captain chuckles as he signs off.

PART 1: BUILDING A MYSTERY

As the adventure begins, the PCs are already passing through the *Chimera*'s airlock from Legacy Station. Gloss over any minute details about how they booked passage or how long they've been at Legacy Station. They have just been activated by the grays, and unknown to them, every moment before this one is nothing more than intricate fabricated memories. Read or paraphrase the following.

A ryphorian woman monitors those passing through the airlock into the *Chimera* from Legacy Station. Her armored suit has a tag that reads "Security Chief Algiada Iom." Datapad in hand, she gruffly scans boarding passes and directs passengers to their quarters.

The *Chimera* is a large freighter, and its interior corridors are well maintained with only the occasional spot of wear. Take a moment to point out the other passengers—Professor Benjam, Jincheroga and her space goblins, and Trostinek—who are all also in the process of boarding. The PC with the highest Sense Motive bonus notices that the security chief

FIRST DAY

During the first day in the Drift, give the PCs an opportunity to meet the crew and other passengers at meals or in other situations, such as at the gym. They can also watch a brief holovid that describes the *Chimera* and its features, including the escape pods. Make sure the players know the ship's general layout.

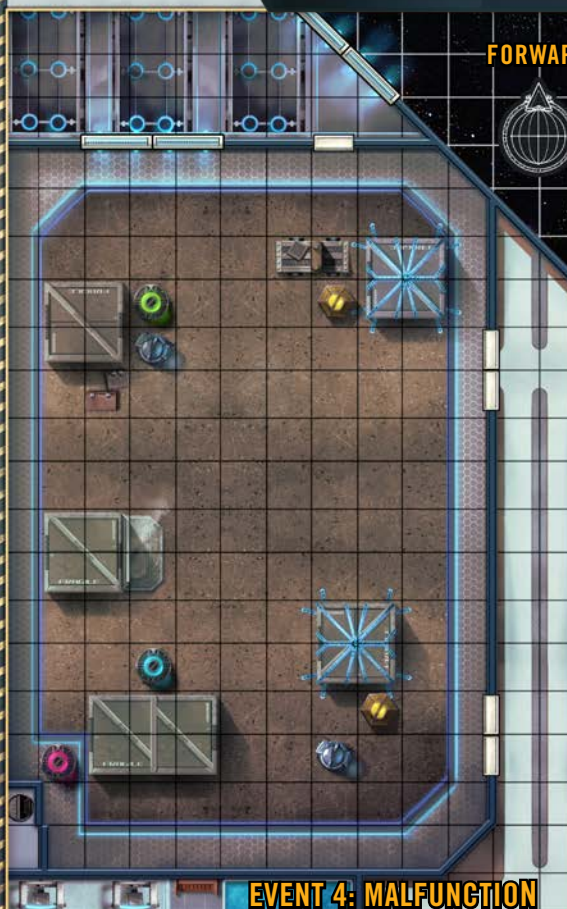
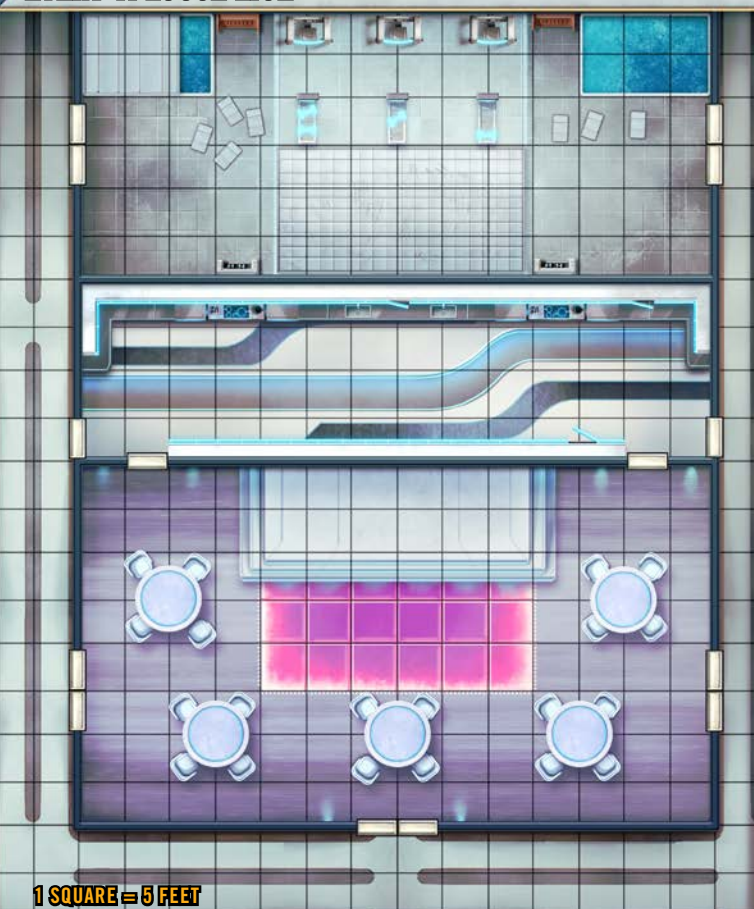
EVENT 1: LOOSE LICE (CR 3)

On the first evening of travel, the PCs are gathered in the dining hall waiting for Song to finish cooking dinner, along with Professor Benjam and Kiiv, the ship's engineer. The professor shows off an unusual souvenir he purchased at Legacy Station. Read or paraphrase the following.

Professor Benjam holds up a dull gray metal cube, which is approximately 1 foot on each side with a couple transparent aluminum panels set within. He excitedly explains its function to the maraquoi mechanic.

"The gentleman who sold this to me called it a 'shrinking box,' a feat of engineering I was sure you would be

EVENT 1: LOOSE LICE



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interested in seeing, Kiiv. He said it worked according to the same principles as a null-space chamber but for living creatures! Look, peer into one of these windows! He told me he put four asteroid lice inside and, as I'm sure you know, just one of those outer-space vermin is almost as big as a ysoki!"

Kiiv takes the box and investigates one of the panels. "Professor, I don't know how to tell you this, but I think you were scammed. Those are just tiny bugs in there."

"Nonsense! He seemed like quite the reputable salesman! I'm sure..." The professor reaches to take the box back from Kiiv, but it slips from his hands and crashes onto the floor. A loud crack accompanies a dazzling flash of light!

The shrinking box breaks open when it hits the floor, releasing the creatures within. Anyone within 20 feet of the box when it breaks must succeed at a DC 13 Reflex saving throw or be dazzled for 1 round. Sightless creatures are immune to this effect.

Creatures: When the flash of light clears, four asteroid lice are, in fact, crawling about the room. Agitated from their confinement and not seeing any minerals to feed on, they lash out against the PCs.

Use the dining hall portion of the midship map above for this combat. During the fight, Kiiv and the professor retreat to one corner of the dining hall in fear.

ASTEROID LICE (4)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

HP 13 each (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 2 132)

TACTICS

During Combat Each asteroid louse focuses its attention on a different PC, first attaching itself to that character and then continuously biting them.

Morale The asteroid lice fight until they are killed. The remains are dangerously caustic for 5 rounds after a louse's death.

Development: The acidic corpses of the asteroid lice leave smoking burns on the floor. Moments after the fight ends, Song enters, having heard the fighting.

"What's all the ruckus in here?" Song says as they walk in holding a large metal spoon.

The android spots the dead insects, and their mouth becomes a thin line.

"I don't know who's responsible for this, but someone better get these bugs outta here!" they say, gesturing with the spoon at Kiiv. "Throw them out the airlock, in the incinerator, or whatever! I don't care! Just get 'em outta here!"

Kiiv looks sheepish. "Sure, Song. Just let me get some gloves or tongs, or something."

MYSTERIOUS CHECKS

This adventure advises you to allow players to attempt a variety of skill checks, often to note key details or make connections between various clues, beyond what an adventure normally allows or suggests. These checks facilitate the PCs' ability to successfully investigate the mystery, helping the characters pick up on clues the players might otherwise miss. If your party is drawing the right conclusions on their own, feel free to omit these extra checks. For more information on these and other tools to help your players enjoy a mystery adventure, see "Mystery Adventures" beginning on page 40.

"Hurry! I'm supposed to be serving supper in here. No one wants to eat looking at that!"

Song waves their spoon at the lice corpses while Kiiv slinks out of the room.

After a few minutes, Kiiv returns wearing defrex hide gloves and carrying a scoop and a couple of plastic bins. The maraquoi notes that they can't carry all four of the dead lice on their own and asks the PCs for help, since the group did so well in defeating the creatures. The corpses are safe to handle by this point. If the PCs agree, Kiiv rewards them with the item detailed in the Treasure section. If the PCs refuse, Kiiv offers the same item as a bribe. It's important that at least one PC witnesses the exchange in the next section, so feel free to sweeten the deal to make at least one agree.

Treasure: For any help, Kiiv gives the PCs a mk 1 grenade scrambler (*Starfinder Armory* 102) the maraquoi constructed in their spare time. The professor also thanks the PCs by giving the group four *mk 1 healing serums*.

THE ARGUMENT

After depositing the remains of the asteroid lice in the incinerator in the bowels of the ship, the PCs turn a corner in engineering and stumble onto the following scene on their way back.

Security Chief Algiada and Trostinek, the vesk bounty hunter, stand in the shadows to one side of the corridor, having what seems to be an argument.

"It's just too risky," says Trostinek. "We should stick to the plan."

"If we follow the plan, it'll go wrong. We'll get nothing," Algiada retorts.

It seems like she is about to continue, but she spots the PCs, and the two conclude their conversation. Trostinek huffs off toward the passenger cabins. Algiada, with strained civility, asks the PCs to explain their presence in this section of the ship. She accepts whatever explanation they give, but she escorts them back to their quarters or the galley, whichever they prefer. If the PCs ask about her argument with the vesk bounty hunter, Algiada gives the following brief response.

"Oh, we've done some security work together in the past. I was trying to convince him to upgrade that rickety robot he's got stored in the starboard cargo hold if he wants to land some better jobs," Algiada says and grins, showing her sharp canines.

If a PC succeeds at a DC 22 Sense Motive check, remind them that Algiada said "we" during the exchange with

Trostinek. It seems odd that she and Trostinek were talking only about him landing better jobs. If the PCs ask about this oddity, Algiada grows coldly irritated and says, "Listen, it's not really your business, is it?"

Once the PCs have arrived at their destination, Algiada wishes them a good night in a tone appropriate to the conditions of their parting (indifferently polite or stonily annoyed). She then walks away. If any PCs follow her, she confronts them unless they succeed at a DC 18 Stealth check. In any case, she then retires to her quarters. The PCs don't see her again until the adventure is nearly over.

FIRST NIGHT

The passengers share a meal soon after the asteroid lice incident. Introduce the other passengers, excluding the bounty hunter Trostinek. During the meal, the space goblins are loud, messy, and gluttonous. They leave the hall without cleaning up after themselves. Otherwise, the evening passes without incident.

Late in the night, unbeknownst to the players, Yox squeezes through a ventilation duct to sneak out of Algiada's quarters and into the captain's chambers. They bludgeon the captain to death with a statue of a starship while he is sleeping and look for a place to hide the body. Qub, in their disguise as Trostinek, stalks through the *Chimera's* corridors, afraid that Yox is about to do something drastic. The two astrazoans run into each other, and Qub helps Yox so they can both continue to avoid detection. The two of them stash the captain's corpse in the smuggler compartment in case they need to plant it somewhere later. Qub briefly takes the shape of Kiiv to sabotage important pieces of machinery



in engineering before returning to Trostinek's quarters. Meanwhile, Yox takes the captain's place. These events take a little more than an hour.

EVENT 2: STANDOFF (CR 3)

The next morning, the PCs hear a heated discussion when they go to eat breakfast.

Song stands in the door to the dining hall, arms crossed. The android seems to be blocking Jincheroga and her goblins from entering.

"You can't bring those... those fiends in here any more! They ate twice their allotted portions last night and made a right mess doing it! I was up until all hours scrubbing, and I won't be spending the rest of this trip tidying up after them!"

Jincheroga straightens her spine and snarls, saying, "You dare to bar us from our rightful repast? I paid good credits for passage aboard this bucket of rust. I demand satisfaction!"

"You can take your food and go," Song snarls back. "I'll pack it up for you. And you lot can clean up after yourselves or wallow in it in your own blasted cabins!"

Jincheroga bristles and seems ready to start a fight, but with a successful DC 19 Diplomacy check or DC 21 Intimidate check, a PC causes her to back off. A PC can convince Song to allow the goblinoids into the dining hall with a successful DC 18 Diplomacy check, making the check with a +4 circumstance bonus if they promise to help with the cleaning.

If the PCs don't step in, Jincheroga huffs a few times in Song's face, while the space goblins reach for their junklasers. However, the barghest is unwilling to initiate hostilities right now. After a few moments, she says, "Pack it up, then, cookie!"

The space goblins cackle. Song departs long enough to bag some meals for the goblins, hands the bag to Jincheroga, and waits for the goblins to leave. With a feral look, Jincheroga leads her pack back to their quarters.

Development: Song thanks the PCs for their help (or refers to the PCs as "lookie-loos" if they didn't try to intervene) as First Mate Lozu Pahir approaches after the situation is resolved. Lozu asks Song if they have seen Algiada yet this morning. The cook complains that they could have used the security chief's help just now. Interrupting, Lozu explains that Algiada is nowhere to be found on the ship and isn't answering the locked door to her room. The first mate is clearly worried. She asks the PCs to keep their eyes peeled for Algiada.

Moments later, power aboard the *Chimera* flickers, plunging the corridor into darkness for a moment. Emergency lighting illuminates the area dimly as a voice comes over the ship's intercom system, as follows.

"Folks, this your captain speaking. We've had a bit of a hitch in our systems and, unfortunately, we've lost power to our thrusters. Rest assured, though, that our capable chief engineer is on the job and will have the problem fixed as soon as possible. Sorry for the inconvenience, and once we get this fixed, I'll speak with our pilot and see if we can't make up for any lost time."

With that announcement, Lozu rushes off to the bridge, and Song glumly serves breakfast. If the PCs convinced Song to allow the goblins to eat in the dining hall, the android asks them to help clean up after the messy Newbloods. Before the PCs can perform any in-depth probes into the Algiada situation, Professor Benjam seeks them out for a favor.

Story Award: Award the PCs 800 XP for attempting to defuse the situation between Jincheroga and Song.

INVESTIGATION REQUEST

After the meal, Professor Benjam asks the PCs to join him in his quarters and makes an offer.

Professor Benjam's brow creases in concern, making him look older than his graying hair suggests.

He fumbles with a pen for a few moments, then says, "I don't know if you are concerned about events on board, but the disappearance of Security Chief Iom and the subsequent loss of thrusters have left me... uneasy. Are these events connected? Perhaps I'm being overly cautious, but I am transporting a valuable relic, and I cannot dismiss these things as mere coincidence. What if someone has disabled the ship and put the security chief out of commission to steal my cargo?"

The professor removes his spectacles and continues, "Given how you handled the mishap with my broken containment box, you all seem to be quite competent. Would you be willing to do me a personal favor and look into this disappearance? No matter what you uncover, I can pay you once we reach Absalom Station and reestablish connections to a wider infosphere."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Sense Motive check can tell that the professor seems unduly nervous over his cargo, which he can reveal is a relic from his last dig. If pressed, he insists his reasons are practical. If the relic is stolen, he might have trouble obtaining funding for future research. A PC who then succeeds at a DC 22 Diplomacy check or DC 20 Intimidate check can persuade the professor to explain his connection to Algiada Iom, as described on page 26. The PCs have at least one more chance to uncover this information as the investigation proceeds.

If the PCs ask about the relic, the professor says it's unimportant to their search for Iom. He refuses to reveal its location aboard the ship. Try as they might, the PCs can't get him to do so, because the fact is that this clone

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doesn't know. Even with *detect thoughts*, the PCs get only a bizarre psychic blank space. The professor scoffs at any such claim from the PCs, however. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Mysticism check surmises the blank space might be due to memory manipulation and could be a result of this "relic" itself. The truth is that the relic is not placed aboard the *Chimera* until Part 3, and even then, the grays make a mistake when placing it.

Treasure: The professor offers the PCs 1,000 credits each for investigating Security Chief Iom's vanishing. (They are destined to never receive this payment.) If a PC asks for an advance and succeeds at a DC 16 Diplomacy check, the professor is willing to give the group a *mk 1 ring of resistance* he currently has on his person.

PART 2: THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

This part of the adventure is open-ended, as the PCs begin to snoop around the *Chimera* and ask questions of the crew members and other passengers. Use the map presented on the inside back cover and the summaries of the suspects' personalities presented on pages 7-10 to aid you in making the ship and the mystery occurring on it feel dynamic. Most events presented in this part can occur in any order, interspersed with the PCs' investigations, but save Jincheroga's attempted takeover (**Events 6 and 7**) for last.

In many cases, the DCs are low enough for the PCs to succeed if they take 10 or 20. They should be able to do so whenever they have the time. Remind the players of this option if they seem to have forgotten they can take their time for a better chance of success.

NPC ACTIVITIES

While the PCs try to solve the security chief's disappearance, the other NPCs go about their normal business. In some cases, though, this "business" amounts to passing time the way one does on a trip. Qub and Yox attempt to maintain their adopted personas while keeping the *Chimera*'s thrusters from being repaired. Qub's sabotage is thorough, allowing this part of the adventure to take as long as you need it to. The same goes for the amount of time it takes for the space pirates to catch up to the stranded vessel. Just as the PCs close in on a solution or hit a dead-end and become too frustrated, the raiders strike in their climactic attack as detailed in Part 3.

GRAY HELP

Grays monitor the events as part of the PCs' training simulation. The observers don't plan to interfere with the

exercise, but they have contingencies in place in case the PCs need them. Use this fact to reveal clues that the PCs might have otherwise missed with unlikely but favorable circumstances, such as a friendly NPC finding a piece of information that moves events forward or a cabinet holding evidence of an NPC's secrets swinging open of its own accord. You can make this help seem as weird or natural as you like, as suggested in the Hints of Reality sidebar on page 17.

ASKING AROUND

The PCs must ask around about the missing Algiada to gather information. However, not everyone is particularly forthcoming this early in the investigation. Each individual's initial response can be found in this section. Further questions the PCs might want to ask the suspects once they have discovered more clues can be found in Following Up on page 26.

Captain Rameem: The captain is on the bridge and has asked not to be disturbed. Lozu makes sure that the PCs know this and keep them away from the captain. The PCs later have a chance to speak with the captain (who is now Yox in disguise) after the goblinoids try to take over the ship (page 29). Alternatively, the investigators can break into the captain's quarters to search for clues (see Captain's Quarters on page 24).

First Mate Pahir: "Algiada could be rough. I think the whole crew basically liked her, though." After a pause, Mate Lozu goes on, "I can't imagine any reason why someone might want to hurt her."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check can tell the question makes Lozu nervous, because she flushes, and she clearly did imagine why someone would hurt the security chief while she paused. If pressed, she continues, "Well, Song and Algiada have gotten into a few shouting matches in the past. And Algiada and Grath used to be close, but for some reason, they stopped talking. But, you know how it can be on these long voyages, cooped up with the same people day after day."

Lozu divulges her debt to Algiada only when presented with evidence (page 18). She might admit to being with Kiiv in a "more than friends" way if asked directly, but she doesn't believe Kiiv would have done anything to Algiada, despite their contentious past.

Grath: The ysoki pilot talks only to PCs he has deemed worthy of his time and who have a drink with him. Otherwise, a PC must succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy check to persuade him to come out of his quarters.

Grath responds, "Algiada? I don't want to talk about her, other than to say good riddance to bad ryphorians."

He refuses to say any more unless the PCs spend a few hours drinking his moonshine with him. A PC who does so must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude check or gain the fatigued condition as Grath drunkenly circles back to his former friend.

He says, "Yeah, you could say Algiada and I had a falling out. You know what she did? She stole my tail ring while we were sparring in the gym. Right under my nose! My grandfather gave me that ring! She denied it, of course. But you can't trust her, see? I know she's got some serious side business with the captain."

Grath is speaking on a hunch. He is confident in his assertion, but he doesn't know any details. The PCs can find Grath's tail ring in the gym (page 24) if they search for it.

Kiiv: The maraquoi is busy on the engineering deck, trying to get the thrusters back online. See **Event 5** on page 21.

Song: At work in the galley, Song claims to be too busy to talk unless the PCs succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy check. A PC can attempt the check with a +4 circumstance bonus if they offer to pitch in with the work. The PCs can also try multiple times, provided they wait a few hours between each attempt. If the initial check fails by 4 or less, Song tells them to check back later.

When Song speaks up, they say, "With Algiada missing, exactly who's going to keep those damned goblins in line? Mark my words, they had something to do with it."

If the PCs ask if Song saw anything unusual the previous evening, the android responds, "I was too busy scrubbing the dining hall's floor after those goblins finally left. I went back to my quarters pretty late. Now that I think of it, I am pretty sure I saw the captain and that vesk bounty hunter enter the captain's room. The captain said something about the ship's thrusters before the door closed behind them." Song doesn't have anything else to offer.

Professor Benjam: The professor gave the PCs an explanation of his interest in Algiada's disappearance. He explains his true reasoning only when presented with further pressure (page 26).

Trostinek: Other passengers or the crew can point the PCs toward Trostinek's location: the port cargo hold. See **Event 4** on page 19.

Jincheroga: The "hobgoblin" snorts in derision, saying, "If someone has killed the security chief, then she was weak. Like most of you." The space goblins titter in agreement, and one of them mimes stabbing another in the chest. Jincheroga merely shrugs if someone points out she is the only one who has suggested Algiada might be dead. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Sense Motive check senses Jincheroga is cruelly indifferent; it is likely that her predilections made her jump to the worst possible conclusion, rather than any actual involvement or guilt.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Diplomacy or Intimidate check can get Jincheroga to reveal a bit more. She says, "When we boarded this vessel, that woman looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'I know what you're up to you, and I won't let you ruin this for us.' I have no idea what she was on about. Perhaps she mistook me for someone else, or she was paranoid or something. Perhaps I just frightened her."

Jincheroga smiles and picks at her teeth with a fingernail. "Maybe you should talk to the vesk. I saw the two of them

HINTS OF REALITY

As the PCs investigate Algiada's disappearance, pepper in a few signs that everything isn't what it seems on the *Chimera*.

For instance, after turning a corner in a corridor, the PCs spot an NPC standing very still, staring blankly at a wall. If questioned, the NPC claims to have "spaced out" for a moment and returns to normal. That NPC clone experiences a bit of lost time, because the grays abducted them from the *Chimera* for adjustments to their personality and wiped their memory of the event.

Alternatively, while searching a part of the ship, the PCs discover a part that looks out of place, such as a discolored bulkhead or an unusual valve handle. A PC who closely examines the part can see the name *Stardream II* emblazoned on it. Any PC who then succeeds at a DC 20 Culture check recognizes the name as that of a cruise liner than vanished decades ago near the sun. If the PC succeeds by 5 or more, they remember details, such as the year 295 AG and that a few survivors reported small gray aliens aboard.

getting very friendly at a bar on Legacy Station the night before we left that heap."

THE MURDER WEAPON

At some point during their investigation, the PCs find a hefty statue of a starship with dried blood on it. This object is the improvised weapon Yox used to kill Captain Rameem in his quarters during the first night in the Drift.

Location: Depending on where you think the PCs might be searching, the item ends up in one of several places.

The most likely place for them to find it is in the incinerator on the engineering deck. In this case, Qub brought the statue here to get dispose of it after helping Yox move the captain's body. The PCs might want to head back down to that area, where they last saw Algiada arguing with Trostinek, to look for clues. Alternatively, they might pass by the incinerator while helping Kiiv with repairs in **Event 5** or trailing the false Kiiv during the night (see *Further Nights* on page 25). In any case, the PC who has the highest Perception bonus notices that the door to the incinerator is slightly ajar. The metal door creaks ominously as a PC opens it, revealing the bloody statue. Whoever was trying to get rid of it didn't seal the door properly, and the evidence wasn't destroyed.

Alternatively, the weapon fell under the captain's bed after Yox used it to murder Rameem. The two astrazoans were careless enough to leave it there along with the captain's shoe. The PCs can discover it if they search the captain's quarters (see *Captain's Quarters* on page 24). In this case, it is clear that someone was injured in the captain's quarters at some point.

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A third possibility is that the PCs find the bloody statue in Trostinek's quarters with a successful DC 18 Perception check, tucked hastily behind the desk but noticeable. The PCs find it automatically if they move Trostinek's suitcase when the statue falls from its precarious hiding spot. In this case, Qub spotted the weapon after helping Yox hide the captain's body, but they were unable to return to the smuggler compartment and stash it there.

The astrazoan hid the damning piece of evidence in the vesk's room, not knowing what else to do with it.

Finally, the murder weapon can end up in the smuggler compartment with the captain's body (page 32), but that doesn't give the PCs a juicy clue to chew on during the majority of the investigation. Use this option if the PCs have yet to uncover the statue up to that point in the adventure.

Features: The statue, made of a dense plastic polymer and of light bulk, is of the *Idari*. While the statue is painted in light browns and grays, the nose is stained with blood. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Life Science or Medicine can check can tell that the blood has dried only fairly recently, depending on how many days have passed since the investigation began. If the check result exceeds the DC by 5 or more and the character is using a chemalyzer^{AR} or a medkit in their investigation, the PC is also able to tell the blood is from a kasatha.

EVENT 3: SCENE OF THE CRIME (CR 2)

The PCs can examine Algiada's quarters early in the investigation. One option is to get First Mate Lozu Pahir's permission to examine Algiada's room, which they can do by asking politely and succeeding at a DC 16 Diplomacy check. A PC who expresses concern over the security chief's disappearance and succeeds at a DC 15 Bluff or Diplomacy check to do so gains a +4 circumstance bonus to the Diplomacy check for the search request. If they succeed at the check, First Mate Pahir provides the group with a key card to Algiada's room. Alternatively, the group can sneak to the upper deck of the ship, where the crew's quarters are.

The door to Algiada's quarters is locked. If the PCs don't have the key card, one of them can disable the lock with a successful DC 20 Engineering check or bypass the key card reader with a successful DC 20 Computers check. However, Yox installed a makeshift trap on the door (see Trap below) before they squeezed out the ventilation duct; they believe it will keep people out of the security chief's room while they impersonate the captain. Even if the PCs use a key card, this trap goes off.

Trap: If someone enters the room, motion sensors mounted just inside the doorway send a signal to an ice carbine mounted on the far wall to overcharge and fire a single shot. Anyone who perceives the trap spots the motion sensors before entering and setting them off, and has a chance to disable them.

ICE CARBINE TRAP

CR 2

XP 600

Type technological; **Perception** DC 23; **Disable**

Engineering DC 18 (disable motion sensors)

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect ice carbine +12 (3d8 C & P)

Treasure: A PC trained in Engineering can remove the subzero ice carbine (*Armory* 16) from the wall mount. If the PCs triggered the trap, the gun has only 10 charges left. Otherwise, it has 20 charges. Other crew members can confirm that this weapon belonged to Algiada, but they don't object if the PCs keep it. They figure that if Algiada wants it back, she can claim it when she reappears.

Development: When the PCs finally enter the room, read or paraphrase the following.

This small room is kept in an orderly fashion. It has a desk and simple furniture, including a neatly made bed.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check finds among Algiada's personal effects a small paper notebook that appears to be an old-fashioned account ledger. By spending 30 minutes poring through the ledger, the PCs can form a basic picture of Algiada's finances. The ryporian made regular deposits into accounts in a few Pact Worlds and Near Space banks and had quite a lot of money saved up. One recent transaction that stands out is a 10,000-credit withdrawal to a credstick that is accompanied with a note reading "For LP, ship repairs." (If the PCs need it, a PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Wisdom check recalls that the first mate's full name is Lozu Pahir.)

If the result of the Perception check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PCs also note a holopicture of a young ryporian man taken at an archaeological dig on Triaxus. The man in the picture bears a familial resemblance to Algiada, but what might be of more interest to the PCs is a figure in the background. It appears to be Professor Brodynt Benjam, although younger and without a goatee.

Datapad: Algiada's personal datapad sits on her desk. The PCs can hack into it with a successful DC 17 Computers check and gain access to the security chief's personal messages and



other programs. At first, the PCs can see nothing suspicious and no obvious connections to her disappearance. However, a folder in her messages is password protected. Breaking into this folder requires another successful DC 21 Computers check. After two failures on either of the two checks, the datapad locks for 24 hours. Succeeding at the second check opens the folder, which contains a set of messages between Algiada and a “no-reply” contact in the city of Maro on Akiton. The conversation appears largely innocuous, discussing the “memories” of an “Uncle R.” A successful DC 15 Sense Motive check, though, reveals a sinister undertone to the messages. The “memories” are records of something nefarious that “no-reply” would like to see. Algiada can provide the “memories” if “no-reply” can ensure Uncle R a new home, permanently. Algiada writes that she will “take care of Uncle R’s old place once he’s gone.” It sounds as if the two participants were plotting something sinister against Uncle R upon the *Chimera*’s return to the Pact Worlds. Again, if the PCs need it, a successful DC 10 Wisdom check reminds them of the captain’s first initial and can help them surmise that “Uncle R’s old place” is most likely the *Chimera*.

Vent Grate: Finally, a PC who succeeds at a separate DC 25 Perception check discovers a partially loose ventilation grate under the bed. The grate and the duct behind it are approximately 1 foot wide and 6 inches tall. Only the smallest of creatures could fit through it, but a residue coats the bottom part of the vent entrance. A PC who succeeds at DC 17 Life Science check surmises the residue is the dried remains of a natural, slippery substance, like mucus, such as that produced by an ooze or similar creature. If the result of the check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC guesses this slippery residue could also accompany an amorphous body, such as a creature that has the compression ability (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 153). Yox left this residue as they squeezed into the vent in their natural form to leave the room without using the door.

EVENT 4: MALFUNCTION (CR 3)

The PCs can find Trostinek in the port cargo hold, where the other passengers and crew members last saw the vesk bounty hunter. When the group arrives, read or paraphrase the following.

Trostinek sprawls unconscious, one eye bruised, amid the shipping containers. A robot that looks like a humanoid wearing over-padded armor stands near a large open crate nearby. The lights surrounding its cardioid-shaped face plate glow an ominous red as it scans the hold. A small arm mounted on its shoulder seems to move independently of the construct’s body.

Creature: When the PCs enter the cargo hold, this incapacitator robot tracks their positions and attacks. Use the starboard cargo hold map on page 13. The robot starts

near the farthest port-side container on the map. Trostinek sprawls amid the boxes 15 feet forward of that position.

INCAPACITATOR ROBOT

CR 3

XP 800

HP 40 (page 61)

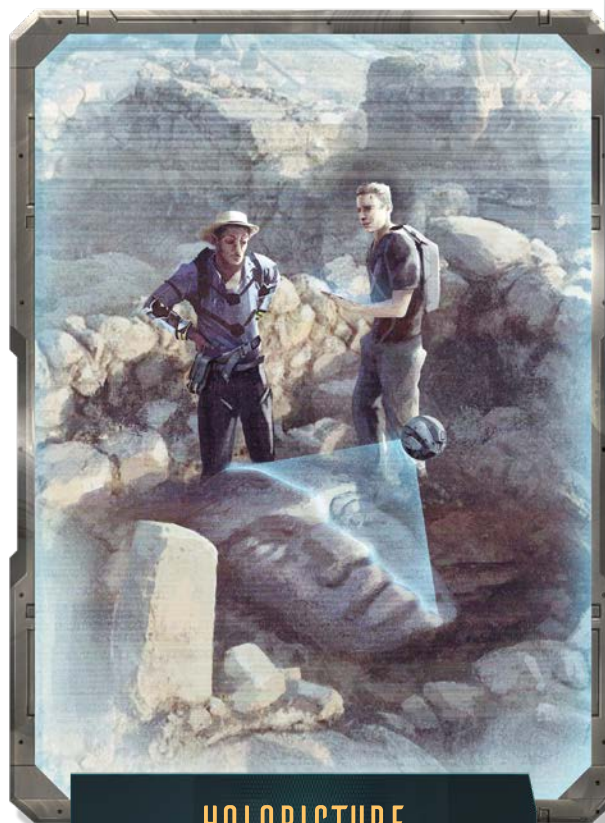
TACTICS

During Combat The incapacitator robot fires a stickybomb grenade at a close group of PCs, then fires its anchor pistol at the toughest-looking PC. If it misses, it moves into melee to slam and grab at the closest PC.

Morale The robot fights until destroyed.

Development: Trostinek had an incapacitator robot loaded onto the *Chimera* in preparation for a job in the Pact Worlds. Qub learned of the robot while observing Trostinek and Algiada on Legacy Station. When Qub noticed the PCs investigating Security Chief Algiada’s disappearance, the astrazoan staged this incident with the robot to make it look like Trostinek was the target of a deliberate attack. Qub reprogrammed the robot to attack and let it pummel them, knowing it would only knock them out.

If the PCs pat down the unconscious Trostinek without waking him, which requires a successful DC 15 Sleight of Hand check, they can “borrow” his key card to his room. (Although he later has the key card to the smuggler compartment, he doesn’t now.) The PCs can revive Trostinek



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with any amount of magical healing or a successful Medicine check to treat deadly wounds. The vesk is disoriented when he awakens, almost taking a swipe at anyone nearby. He begins to stammer out a few questions when he spots the destroyed robot. "I see you took care of the problem," he says and then grunts in approval.

Trostinek doesn't seem upset at the loss of his robot. If this strikes a PC as strange, that PC can attempt a DC 16 Sense Motive check to confirm Trostinek's unruffled attitude.

If the PCs ask why Trostinek isn't upset, he shrugs and says, "It's not your fault you had to take the thing out. It hurt me, tried to hurt you, and might have hurt someone else. Lucky it was just an incapacitator model. Anyhow, I can get it fixed up in port. Just need to find out what went wrong with the blasted thing."



A PC who examines the incapacitator robot's remains and succeeds at a DC 18 Computers and Engineering check can tell that it has been tampered with. The robot's corrupted programming treats all nearby living creatures as viable targets for its attacks. A PC whose result exceeds the DC by 5 or more recognizes that someone hacked the robot's aggression settings. A hard reboot—shutting down the robot and reactivating it—could fix such an alteration. As a method of sabotage, it was very short-term.

If the PCs offer to repair the robot, Trostinek appreciates the offer, but he doesn't have the parts or UPBs for the task at the moment.

QUESTIONING TROSTINEK

Below are some possible questions the PCs might have for Trostinek and the vesk's responses. Further questions the PCs might want to ask once they have discovered more clues can be found in Following Up on page 26.

What happened? "With Security Chief Iom missing, I thought maybe my robot pal would be helpful in restraining any culprit that turned up. But when I opened up the crate and turned on the bot, it went berserk and punched me. A lot. Someone must have tampered with it!"

We saw your argument with Algiada. What was going on? "She's... a friend. She was trying to get me to install some upgrades onto my robot. But I don't need 'em! I can handle the bounties myself! My robot is for bringing 'em in alive when the client doesn't want... too much blood."

Trostinek scratches his bony chin. "Maybe Algiada's responsible for this thing going crazy, though. Wanted to prove me wrong."

Qub and Yox conferred about the PCs' sighting their argument when hiding the captain's body, so their answers are consistent. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Sense Motive check gets the feeling that Trostinek added that last bit on the fly, perhaps thinking the PCs might like to hear it. Confronting him on it leads only to him claiming he was thinking out loud.

What do you know about Algiada's disappearance? "Nothing! That argument was the last I saw of her!"

A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Sense Motive check can tell Trostinek is a little too agitated by the question.

If pressed, he continues, "Okay, okay! I couldn't sleep much last night—first nights in the Drift leave me a bit restless, so I took a walk. I spotted the first mate—Pahir, uh, Lozu—knocking on Algiada's door. Algiada opened it from the inside, but I only caught a glimpse of her hand. That's all I saw!"

If a PC succeeds at a DC 26 Sense Motive check, they get the feeling Trostinek just made that story up. Regardless, Trostinek continues to assert it's true.

Someone said you went into the captain's quarters. "Uh, yeah. While I was roaming around, I ran into the captain. Seems like he had a bit of insomnia too. He invited me into his room to talk."

If the PCs ask about the captain mentioning the word “thrusters,” Trostinek nods. “We were just talking about the *Chimera*’s specs. I was curious just how fast this vessel could go.”

A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Sense Motive check gets the feeling from his shifting eyes that the vesk made up this story just now, too. He tries to prove his assertion by claiming Rameem told him that “the *Chimera* has average thrust for a vessel of its size” and “its made for comfort, not speed” among other things a captain might say, although these facts are information Trostinek should have already known. These assertions about the Sanjaval Palanquin are correct, as anyone who succeeds at a DC 10 Engineering or Piloting check can confirm.

Can you tell us anything else? Even if the PCs don’t ask this specific question, Trostinek stops them before they leave. “I don’t know if this is even worth mentioning, but while I was up last night, I saw Kiiv the engineer heading toward the engineering deck. I didn’t think anything of it at the time. After all, that’s part of their job, right? But it was very late. And with the *Chimera*’s problems, maybe Kiiv knows something...?”

Trostinek doesn’t come right out and say he suspects Kiiv of sabotaging the thrusters, though he does try to point the PCs toward that conclusion.

TROSTINEK’S QUARTERS

The PCs might want to peek into Trostinek’s quarters. If they do so after they have revived him, they need to devise a plan to keep him away from his room. Such a scheme requires, for instance, a successful DC 16 Bluff check to convince him he’s needed elsewhere, or asking an NPC ally such as Professor Benjam, to keep the vesk busy. If an NPC aids the PCs, they have only 15 minutes to break in and search Trostinek’s quarters. Otherwise, if the vesk is still unconscious in the cargo bay, the PCs have an hour before First Mate Pahir stumbles across the bounty hunter and wakes him, after which he stumbles back to his quarters. They can gain more time at your discretion, based on the plans they make and how well you think they might work.

The door to Trostinek’s room is locked. A PC can disable the lock with a successful DC 20 Engineering check or bypass the key card reader with a successful DC 20 Computers check.

If the PCs go inside Trostinek’s room, read or paraphrase the following.

This room is much like the other passenger cabins. The bed is unmade and tossed as if by a restless sleeper, but the rest of the room is tidy and free of personal effects. A shiny, hard-shell suitcase is tucked under the desk.

The clothes inside the suitcase are a jumbled mess, as if shoved in hastily. A PC who paws through the clothing and succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check finds a small, gift-wrapped package tucked away in an interior pocket. A holographic tag on the gift reads, “From Your Loving Wife!” In the same pocket is a folded note.

If the result of the Perception check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PCs also find that one of Trostinek’s undershirts has a splotch of dried blood on it. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Life Science or Medicine check can tell that the stain is less than a few days old. If the result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC is also able to distinguish the stain as vesk blood due to the color it has dried. When the astrazooan space pirates murdered the real Trostinek, a drop of the vesk’s blood fell onto this shirt, which Qub hurriedly tossed into the suitcase before leaving Trostinek’s lodgings on Legacy Station.

The folded note is on military stationery from Vesk-2, preprinted to show it’s from the office of Brigadier Alonya Sobok. It reads, in Vesk, as follows.

Trostinek,

I love you. You are free to engage in your hobby, traipsing across the galaxy. I want you to live your life, despite how I miss you. But remember your vow to me. Although I have been tolerant of your previous infidelities, mother is well able to find out and is not as forgiving. Have a care.

—Your Alonya

This note isn’t dated. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Culture check gets the context of this message. Trostinek is married to a powerful soldier in the Veskarium who doesn’t approve of his extramarital antics. Or, at least, her mother doesn’t. Vesk, like humans, have a variety of relationship arrangements, but Trostinek has clearly made a marital oath to Brigadier Sobok. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the PC understands the brigadier’s mention of her mother also suggests the elder Sobok is more powerful than the brigadier, suggesting a higher military rank. On any success, the PC surmises Trostinek might have trouble at home if his wife or mother-in-law discovers his fling with Algiada on Legacy Station.

Treasure: The suitcase contains two rolls of ion tape (Armory 105). A gold-plated zip stick (worth 100 credits; Armory 109) is inside the gift-wrapped package. It’s engraved with the letter “T” in Vesk script.

EVENT 5: ENGINEERING EXPLOSION (CR 3)

If the PCs go to engineering, they find Kiiv hard at work in the port thruster access area, just past the incinerator. Read or paraphrase the following.

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Kiiv bangs on a thick metal pipe with a large wrench, distracted enough to notice little else.

Kiiv seems relieved to see the PCs when the maraquoi finally notices them. Continue with the following.

"Thank the fates," Kiiv says. "I don't know exactly what happened to the thrusters, but it's done a real number on the *Chimera's* whole damn propulsion system. I could really use a hand here. Do any of you have any skill in engineering?"

If a PC answers in the affirmative, Kiiv hands them the wrench and points them toward a fuel intake valve along the pipe a few feet away. If no PC answers, Kiiv shrugs and hands the wrench to a random PC, saying, "No matter. I'll talk you through it." They point that PC to the same fuel intake valve. If the PCs insist on questioning Kiiv, the maraquoi claims to need to concentrate until this problem is fixed. Then, they'll be happy to talk. Continue with the following.

Kiiv crosses to a toolbox on the other side of the room and produces a small diagnostic datapad.

"You see that big valve in front of you? I think it's jammed. If we can get it unstuck, we might be able to get the *Chimera* moving again. However, I need to temporarily slow down the amount of fuel pumping through there or..." Kiiv mimics the noise of an explosion.

"Trouble is, this limiter over here has always been finicky and needs constant supervision during the process. When I give you the word, just twist that valve to the right real hard. Okay?"

A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Engineering check knows what Kiiv claims is plausible. A successful DC 15 Sense Motive check lets the PCs know that Kiiv appears to be confident and on the level about all of their claims. Kiiv doesn't mind if the PCs want to watch the engineer's actions closely, figuring the PCs are merely curious. A PC who is watching the maraquoi and succeeds at a DC 15 Computers or Engineering check can see that Kiiv is doing exactly what they said they were going to do. The maraquoi gives the PC at the valve the signal after about 1 minute of muttering and tinkering with the diagnostic datapad and the limiter on the pipe nearby.

Trap: Kiiv is unaware that Qub, in efforts to sabotage the *Chimera*, damaged this fuel intake valve. When a PC twists the valve, it breaks off and lets out a jet of flame in a 15-foot cone that's perpendicular to the corridor. Someone who perceives the trap can see the valve is stripped, so it will slide out if twisted.

FUEL VALVE TRAP
XP 800

CR 3

Type technological; **Perception** DC 24; **Disable** Engineering DC 19 (adjust pressure to allow the valve to be turned safely)

Trigger touch; **Reset** none

Effect gout of flame (4d6 F); Reflex DC 14 half; multiple targets (all targets in 15-ft. cone)

If this explosion occurs, Kiiv looks as surprised as the PCs and loudly apologizes. If a PC spots the damage before the trap goes off, they can point it out to Kiiv, who has to rethink the repair plans (see Development).

Development: If the PCs trigger the trap, Kiiv is quick to shut down the fuel flow so the fire doesn't continue. If the PCs discovered the trap but don't disable it, Kiiv notes the same problem as if the trap were triggered. They are just thankful no one got hurt. Unfortunately for everyone, as the engineer explains, the incident has set back repairs of the thrusters by at least another day. Kiiv first has to repair the fuel intake valve, a project that the maraquoi doesn't have the proper parts for. They are confident that they can rig some kind of replacement, but doing so takes time.

If the PCs discovered the trap and disabled it, the fuel intake valve comes unstuck, seemingly solving Kiiv's problem. However, the maraquoi begins swearing while tapping on the diagnostic datapad. Kiiv explains that a blockage farther down the fuel pipe is causing irregularities in the flow that could cause the valve to break no matter how well the PCs implemented a temporary repair. The maraquoi engineer has to shut down the flow of fuel for at least another day to scour the pipe. Once again, Kiiv turns down long-term help from the PCs, noting that they've done enough (supposing they've helped Kiiv one or more times) and passengers aren't supposed to have to work on the ship while it's in transit.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Engineering or DC 20 Perception check while examining the fuel intake valve can tell it was deliberately damaged. Kiiv confirms this conclusion but has no idea who might have done it. The maraquoi believes that only they, the captain, and maybe Grath have the technical knowledge to perform such sabotage.

QUESTIONING KIIV

Questions the PCs might have for Kiiv and the maraquoi's responses follow. Kiiv is happy to answer the PCs' questions, but the maraquoi insists they be allowed to continue repairs while they do so. In between the PCs' questions, Kiiv asks them to hand over one tool or another as the engineer tightens bolts, checks gauges, and splices wires here and there throughout the engineering deck.

Further questions the PCs might want to ask the maraquoi once the group has discovered more clues can be found in Following Up on page 26.

What can you tell us about the thruster malfunction?
"It was the damndest thing. They were working fine last

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night. No sign of wear and tear. And now..." Kiiv blows out a puff of air. "Look, this ship isn't brand-new. Sometimes things just break, you know? Or wear out. But seeing how thoroughly the thrusters are broken, I think it might have been sabotage." Their attitude brightens. "But I'll get them fixed, don't you worry!"

Do you know anything about Algiada's disappearance?

"No. Been kinda busy with this thruster failure, to be honest. But I'm sure she'll turn up. Algiada was never one to be put off easily."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Sense Motive check can hear the edge of contempt in Kiiv's voice.

What's your relationship to Algiada? "We live and work on this here ship, of course. I wouldn't say the two of us are friends. That's no secret."

Kiiv smooths the fur on their face and continues, "Joining the crew was the first time I stepped foot off Marata and, for a while, I was homesick. Algiada wasn't exactly a comfort. She'd tell me I had to 'toughen up' if I was going to be of any use. I do a fine job of keeping the *Chimera* flying, but words like that are tough to hear when you feel far away from your family."

So why not get a job on another starship? "I thought about it. But I kind of got used to Algiada's rough edges. And the rest of the crew were, well, they're... okay. Besides, Captain Rameem has a knack for picking up some good jobs, even if they can be a little... sketchy."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Sense Motive check can tell by the pause that Kiiv isn't saying everything.

But why did you really stick around? Kiiv more or less reiterates that "the crew is okay." A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Diplomacy check and ensures Kiiv that the group can be trusted gets the engineer to open up a bit. They say, "Things started getting better on the *Chimera* once Lozu came aboard. She wanted to hear stories about my family. She stood up to Algiada. Let her know what was going too far. She... cares. We're friends now. Maybe even more than that." Kiiv smiles. "But don't tell anyone else. We're trying to figure it out for ourselves first."

What do you mean by "sketchy" jobs? "I probably shouldn't be saying this, but Captain Rameem used to be a fence before he ran this ship. Everyone on the crew knows that sometimes he moves some gray-market cargo or takes on a passenger in some trouble with the law for extra credits. We all get a little bonus after those kinds of runs, so we're all pretty much fine with it." Kiiv smiles sheepishly. "Hope you don't think any less of me for it."

Would anyone else have a reason to hurt Algiada? "I don't know if Algiada had any friends, really. She and Captain Rameem seemed to get along, I guess. But she had arguments with the other members of the crew. Like, always. In fact, just before we docked at Legacy Station, I heard a shouting match over by the galley. Algiada liked training in the gym, which sometimes rattled the shelves in

Song's kitchen. Song didn't like that one bit. Complained. This time, though, something got knocked down, and Song flew off the handle. Even threatened to use Algiada's weapons against her! Lozu broke up the ruckus before it went too far, but it was... awkward."

Anything else? "I don't know if it's relevant at all, but when I was on Legacy Station, getting some correspondence from home, I think I saw Algiada and that vesk bounty hunter sitting together at a bar, drinking. Algiada sometimes picks up a... temporary companion when we stop at stations for more than a day. And from what I've seen in the past, this meet-up was heading in that general direction."

GYM

If the PCs investigate the *Chimera's* gym, read or paraphrase the following.

This rec area contains workout machines next to free weights along the forward wall, small pools with retractable covers that can be used for current swimming or as hot tubs to port, and an open padded area for floor work or sparring to the aft. The sparring mats are fraying at the corners, revealing the foam within. Hooks along the wall hold several plastic batons and staves, each wrapped in black tape and cushions. Parts of the forward and aft walls are mirrored.

The exercise machines can be adjusted to simulate walking, running, cycling, or rowing for creatures as big as Large at a variety of speeds and skill levels. The dumbbells are labeled by their weight, from 1 pound all the way up to 50 pounds. The batons and staves are used for weapon training. These training weapons have seen a lot of use and have been repaired or padded with black tape in places. They function as clubs, but the larger ones require two hands to wield properly.

The aft wall is scuffed in several places, likely the result of repeated strikes. However, the practice weapons here couldn't cause that kind of damage. Algiada often brought real weapons into the gym when training by herself or with Grath. The scuffs, a soldier can tell, are from dueling swords or battle staves, but a few are from powered weapons such as flame doshkos. When Algiada wanted to annoy Song, she banged on the aft wall with her weapons.

Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check while examining the gym notices a glint of coppery metal under one of the exercise machines. An wide, ornate metal ring sits there among ample dust bunnies. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Culture check recognizes the piece

of jewelry as a traditional ysoki tail ring. If the PCs show the tail ring to Grath, he demands it back, claiming that it's his and asking where the PCs found it. If they tell him the truth, he mutters, "Guess Algiada didn't steal it after all," before heading back to his quarters to brood about his missing friend.

The tail ring is worth 250 credits. If the PCs return it to Grath, he gives them a *burst* fusion seal (3rd), claiming that he never found a use for it.

CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Since the captain is often on the bridge, the PCs have ample opportunities to search his quarters. He keeps his door locked, but a PC can disable the lock with a successful DC 22 Engineering check or bypass the key card reader with a successful DC 22 Computers check. The captain's quarters are similar to those of his crew, albeit with nicer furnishings, as described below.

This room has a bed, a desk made of real wood, and several shelves and chests of drawers, all decorated in kasathan style. A pair comfortable, high-backed chairs fronts the desk, with a similar nice chair behind it. The chamber is tidy but has a lived-in look.

When Yox crept in through the vent to kill the real captain, they attempted to do so without leaving much of a mess and straightened up after the struggle. The real captain's body is stored in the *Chimera's* smuggler compartment. The PCs likely come across it in Part 3.

Searching: The PCs can perform a thorough search of the captain's quarters, but they lack the time to take 20, since the captain could return or another crew member might notice the PCs at any moment. If they do attempt to take 20, the group encounters the captain. A PC who succeeds at a separate DC 18 Perception check can hear him coming down the corridor; if the PCs stop searching and exit the quarters immediately, they avoid being caught, but if they fail the Perception check or linger, the captain catches them in the act. In either case, they find one of the smaller clues listed below. If caught or if they encounter the captain in the hall, they need to attempt a DC 20 Bluff or Diplomacy check to explain why they're on the upper deck when the captain comes along. In either case, Yox secures the captain's door further, increasing the DCs to break in again by 2.

Clues: A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Perception check notices a spot on the captain's desk that is free of dust. This square patch is adjacent to a hard resin statue of the *Chimera*. The base of the *Chimera* statue is the same shape as, though



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a half-inch smaller than, the dust-free area. If the PCs have already discovered the murder weapon, its base fits the dust-free area exactly.

If a PC's Perception check result is 17 or higher, they find one of the captain's shoes that has been kicked under the bed. Close examination reveals dried blood on to the shoe's toe. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Life Science or Medicine check can tell that the blood has dried within the number of days that have passed since Algiada's disappearance. If the check result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC is also able to distinguish the stain as kasathan blood. During the struggle between Rameem and Yox, one of the captain's shoes came off and tumbled under the bed. Yox didn't spot the errant footwear when scrubbing the chamber for evidence.

A PC whose Perception check result is 25 or higher discovers a secret panel in the underside of a central desk drawer. This panel is locked, requiring a successful DC 20 Engineering check to open. Alternatively, a PC can force open the panel with a successful DC 20 Strength check or by dealing it 10 damage (the panel has a hardness of 5). Yox has no clue about this secret compartment and its contents, and the astrazoan won't notice if the drawer is broken, provided the PCs close it. Hidden within the compartment are a datapad and a credstick (see *Treasure*).

Datapad Contents: This datapad is secured with a biometric lock. A PC can hack into the datapad with a successful DC 22 Computers check. If the PCs found the captain's bloody shoe and one of them succeeds at a DC 19 Life Science check, they can scrape a sample of the kasatha's DNA to help fool the biometric lock, gaining a +4 circumstance bonus to the Computers check to gain access. The datapad contains spreadsheets and holopictures that chronicle the *Chimera's* criminal passengers. Occasional notes indicate that Algiada helped compile this information. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Culture check or a DC 12 Intelligence or Wisdom check realizes Captain Rameem and Algiada kept this information either to turn it in to the authorities or to blackmail the criminals.

Vent Grate: PCs who have already found a loose ventilation grate in **Event 3** find the one here automatically if they are looking for it. Otherwise, it takes a successful DC 26 Perception check to spot the grate under the bed. This vent grate cover is closed, but it's 1 foot wide and 6 inches tall, like the one in Algiada's room. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices the cover's screws aren't as discolored as the rest of the cover, as if someone recently replaced them. A quick glance around the room uncovers a small screwdriver in the captain's desk, and if the PCs open the vent, they spot traces of a viscous substance inside. A PC who succeeds at DC 17 Life Science check identifies the mucus-like material as something an ooze or similar creature might produce. If the check result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC guesses the creature that left the residue has

the compression ability (*Alien Archive* 153). In any case, if the PCs compare it to the residue they found before, the two samples are very similar. Yox left this material behind when squeezing through the vent to murder the captain.

Treasure: The credstick inside the secret compartment holds 1,000 credits.

FURTHER NIGHTS

The PCs are free to rest whenever they please. They have as many days as they need to uncover the *Chimera's* secrets.

Kiiv isn't able to fix the thrusters before the space pirates arrive in Part 3, though this is due to ongoing meddling and not maliciousness or incompetence on the maraquoi's part. Qub sneaks away from their quarters late every night, morphs into a Kiiv disguise, and undoes many of the maraquoi's repairs from the day.

If a PC decides not to sleep through the night, or if the PCs post watches, they have a chance to spot Qub disguised as Kiiv in the corridors. If the PC stops the false Kiiv to ask what they are doing, Kiiv says, "Just had a bit of a brainstorm on why the decouplers might be jammed and thought I would see if I was right..."

If the PC decides not to believe Kiiv, attempt a Bluff check for Qub (+8 bonus) opposed by the PC's Sense Motive check. If the PC wins, they notice Kiiv seems overly nervous, like they have something to hide. What happens next depends on whether the PC calls Kiiv out. If the PC says nothing, Qub believes they fooled the PCs and returns to their sabotage. If the PC points out Kiiv seems nervous, the "engineer" tries to smooth over the PC's misgivings, attempting another Bluff check, which the PC can then oppose with another check.

If a PC volunteers to help Kiiv, the disguised astrazoan brushes off any aid. Kiiv insists that the PC get some rest.

A PC who follows the false Kiiv down to the engineering deck must attempt a Stealth check opposed by Qub's Perception check (+8 bonus) to remain unseen. If successful, the PC witnesses the false Kiiv pick up some tools and tinker with part of the ship's engines. An observer who succeeds at a DC 18 Engineering check can tell that the maraquoi is sabotaging the systems instead of fixing them.

Also, if the PC spends at least 1 minute watching or interacting with the false Kiiv, they can attempt a Perception check opposed by Qub's Disguise check (+18 bonus). A PC who succeeds notices something odd about the false Kiiv's appearance, perhaps an unusual patch of fur color or a missing tooth. That PC concludes the person isn't Kiiv, but someone in a very good disguise, such as a creature that can change its shape or a spellcaster cloaked by a well-crafted illusion.

If the PC persists in pestering or tries to restrain the false Kiiv, Qub runs away, trying to escape the PC's line of sight. If they succeed, the astrazoan takes the form of Jincheroga before fleeing into a nearby room where they can squeeze into an air duct. The PC can catch a glimpse of the "hobgoblin"

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before she vanishes entirely. A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Perception check in the room in which Qub disappeared finds a loose ventilation grate. Similar to the grates in Algiada's and the captain's quarters, it is approximately 1 foot wide and 6 inches tall and there is a faint trace of slimy residue on it. See page 25 for the result of analyzing this substance.

If somehow the PC is able to catch up with Qub and initiate a fight, the astrazoan's statistics appear on page 32. Qub tries their best to escape at this point.

To further complicate things, if Qub fools a PC, that PC then runs into the actual Kiiv on their way back to their quarters in a corridor on the opposite end of the ship. When the PC tries to find the first Kiiv, Qub has already performed the sabotage and slunk back to Trostinek's quarters.

KIIV'S QUARTERS

If the PCs want to search Kiiv's quarters, the door is locked like the other crew quarters. A PC can disable the lock with a successful DC 20 Engineering check or bypass the key card reader with a successful DC 20 Computers check. Kiiv is willing to allow a search of their quarters, provided the PCs succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy check to ask honestly, saying that is related to Algiada's disappearance or mentioning that they spotted a false Kiiv, or a DC 20 Bluff check for contrived reasons. Kiiv prefers to accompany the PCs in their search, but the PCs can influence the maraquoi to trust the group and continue work on the thrusters with a second successful DC 20 Diplomacy check.

When the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following.

These comfortable quarters include a bed, a desk with a chair, and a wardrobe. The walls are decorated with paintings of forested landscapes, and holopictures of maraquoi are situated on the desk and several shelves. A comfortable quilt with a handmade look covers the bed.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Perception check while searching the room discovers a plastic jug tossed in the corner. If the PCs drank with Grath, they recognize it as one of the containers in which he stores his moonshine. Otherwise, a cursory examination of the bottle reveals a few drops of clear liquid at the bottom that smell of alcohol. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Life Science or Physical Science check identifies the liquid as concentrated drinking alcohol, most likely non-commercial.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check while examining the desk finds a datapad belonging to Kiiv. The PCs can hack into it with a successful DC 17 Computers check, gaining access to the engineer's personal messages. Most are mundane. The PCs find a few romantic messages between Kiiv and First Mate Lozu Pahir. The most recent message originated from Marata, one of the moons of Bretheda, and reads as follows in Common (unless one of the PCs speaks Maraquoi, in which case, the message is in Maraquoi).

Cherished Kiiv,

It is with a heavy heart that I must express deep sorrow for you and ours. Gurq and Suytio were traveling the forest in their hover-speeder. The recordings show an animal darted onto the path. Gurq lost control of the speeder and crashed. They both reentered the cycle, Kiiv. I am so sorry.

I know you are too far away to do anything but grieve, cherished one. However, if your starwalking brings you near Marata, the rites for the slain will be held seven days hence. Even if you can't make it for the rites, which we all understand, come home soon. We would like to see and hold you when we can.

—V

A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Sense Motive check can infer that the two deceased were likely part of Kiiv's family, as is the sender.

Unless the PCs took specific precautions to prevent it, there is a 20% chance (or you can simply decide that it happens) that Kiiv returns to their quarters while the PCs are inside (if the maraquoi isn't already present). A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check can hear someone approaching. The group has seconds to slip out of the room before being spotted. If Kiiv realizes the PCs broke into the room, the maraquoi is furious, especially if they've all been friendly in the past. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy check can smooth things over by apologizing or explaining the situation. Any PC who expresses sympathy over Kiiv's lost loved ones gains a +2 circumstance bonus to this check, even another PC—Kiiv doesn't immediately assume the PCs got this information from the datapad. Kiiv insists on being alone afterward and won't answer any questions. The PCs must wait until the next day to ask them more, per the Following Up section.

FOLLOWING UP

As the investigation continues, the PCs can and likely need to speak with suspects again. This time, the PCs are armed with evidence they have discovered. The following section is broken down by NPC, each of whose secrets might be revealed as the PCs continue questioning or present the right evidence. Each section has an aftermath that describes how the NPC reacts to the questioning or information the PCs drag out of them.

PROFESSOR BRODYNT BENJAM

The PCs might have more questions for the professor. His likely answers follow.

Do you know anything about this bloody statue? "How gruesome! No, I don't know a thing about that! You don't think someone used it on Algiada, do you!?"

Is this you in this picture we found in Algiada's room? "Ah." Brodynt is silent for a moment while he stares at the holophoto.

"Hokkoun lom. Such a shame."

He takes his spectacles off and rubs the bridge of his nose, going on, "I should be completely honest with you. I knew Algiada before coming aboard the *Chimera*. Well, really, I knew her older brother."

He gestures at the picture, saying, "This was taken at a dig I was supervising in the Drakelands on Triaxus, near the Deathing Mountains. This was during my younger, more reckless days, when I was considered a maverick in archaeological circles and not the stodgy old man you see before you."

He thinks for a second and says, "Algiada probably wasn't more than 10 years old then."

What happened? "We had just made an incredible find. A draconic artifact dating back to, I believe, before the Gap. But I knew that Zemellyzian, the dragon who gave us permission to dig, wouldn't allow us to take it for study. So, Hokkoun, a few others, and I devised a plan to smuggle the artifact off the planet. Long story short, Zemellyzian's dragonkin enforcers caught up with us at the spaceport. There was a firefight. Hokkoun was wounded. Badly. He survived, but he was in a coma for years, and when he came out, he had lost the use of his legs."

What was the artifact? "It was a massive copper bladed glove—one that would fit over an adult dragon's claw, mind you—etched with Terran runes. For our troubles, we got it off Triaxus. I believe it now sits in a museum on Absalom Station."

And Hokkoun? "We were paid handsomely for the find. I gave most of my share to the lom family, but the medical bills were astronomical."

What does this have to do with Algiada? "From what I found out later, she idolized her older brother, and it crushed her to see him in a hospital bed for so long. It would be reasonable for her to blame me. When I saw her on the *Chimera*—a terrible coincidence if you ask me—it all came rushing back. I have grown this goatee since those days, and perhaps she didn't recognize me, but I can't shake the guilt that I ruined the lives of two loms."

Professor Benjam sighs and then says, "That's the real reason I asked you to look for Algiada. The guilt still gnaws at me to this day."

Aftermath: After baring his soul to the PCs, the professor weeps softly. If the PCs decide to cease their investigation because of this, Professor Benjam begs them to continue, doubling the amount of credits he has promised them if need be.

KIIV CAEDENNS

The PCs might have more questions or accusations for Kiiv. Their likely answers follow.

Do you know anything about this bloody statue? Kiiv peers closer at the statue, and says, "I think... I think the captain has a statue like that in his quarters."

We heard you were (or saw you) sneaking around! "What are you talking about?"

Kiiv needs the PCs to explain themselves, because the engineer has no idea what they mean. When the PCs do clarify, especially if they accuse Kiiv of any sabotage, the maraquoi denies everything. If asked to explain, Kiiv looks confused, and admits an inability to do so. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Sense Motive check sees Kiiv is genuinely baffled by the insinuations, though the engineer appears nervous, as if trying to remember something.

What are you hiding? "Nothing!"

A PC must succeed at a DC 18 Diplomacy check or DC 20 Intimidate check to get Kiiv to open up. If this check succeeds, Kiiv says, "There's no way I could have had anything to do with the sabotage! That first night we were in the Drift, I was... out of commission."

What do you mean? "I mean I was passed out drunk in my quarters, okay?" Kiiv says and begins to sniff.

"We received long-distance communications at Legacy Station, but I was busy making sure the *Chimera* was refueled and tidied up from our last job, so I didn't read them until after we entered the Drift."

Kiiv's voice wavers, but they go on, "There had been an accident back on Marata, some kind of hover-speeder crash that killed my qsha and susha—my sky-sire and my water-sire. All that homesickness I thought I had gotten over just washed over me. Lozu tried to console me, but what I needed was to drown my pain. Grath gave me a bottle of his moonshine, and I drank until I blacked out."

Kiiv wipes a tear from their cheek. A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Culture or Life Science check recalls that the maraquoi species has an intricate familial structure, with a child having seven different parents. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Sense Motive check can tell Kiiv is not only sincere, but also quite upset.

Could you have done something in your stupor? "Unlikely. Have you had Grath's moonshine? A sip can leave your toes numb, and I guzzled almost a whole bottle. Spilled the rest when I passed out. Sabotage the thrusters? I probably wouldn't have been able to walk down the corridor in the condition I was in."

Aftermath: The PCs can confirm Kiiv's story by talking with Grath or Lozu. Grath verifies that he gave the engineer a bottle of moonshine. Lozu corroborates the maraquoi's sadness and its source. The first mate appears to be as broken up about Kiiv's loss as they were. After this interaction, Kiiv avoids the PCs for a while.

SONG

The PCs might have more questions for Song, whom they can find the galley. Song's likely answers follow.

Do you know anything about this bloody statue? "It doesn't look familiar to me. Why are you bringing a dirty, bloody statue into my galley, anyway?"

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Did you ever threaten Algiada? Song harrumphs and says, "You heard about that, did you? Think I'm going to deny it just because that churl is missing? Well, I'm not."

The cook picks up a ladle and continues, "I assume you've talked to most of the crew, so you probably know I yell. A lot. At a lot of people. Especially when they get on my nerves. No easier way to get on my nerves than to make more work for me."

What did Algiada do? Song points the ladle toward the forward wall of the kitchen, where a few full shelves hang. "Algiada's precious gym is just on the other side of that bulkhead. Whatever idiot built this ship decided to make that the thinnest wall in the whole vessel."

The cook bangs the bulkhead with their utensil, saying, "Algiada liked to hit the wall. She knew how much it pissed me off. The other day, she hit it so hard a jar of spices I picked up in the Veskarium fell off the shelf into my soup. Ruined the soup and the spices."

You got mad about soup? "I've got to feed the crew and passengers every day we aren't docked. I have to do it on a budget. Every scrap of waste increases the chances someone has to go hungry or eat rations... or food made of UPBs. If that happens, I assume you volunteer to go without the good stuff?"

Do you really care that much? "I care about my job. I could toss out a pile of R2Es for every meal, and you lot could fight over them for all I care. But that's not why I was hired onto this crew."

Did you carry out your threat? "No." Song stares at the PCs for a few moments, as if daring them to disagree.

Can you prove it? "Not really. After cleaning up, I went to my quarters to rest that first night in the Drift. Then, I got up early to start breakfast. I know I didn't do anything."

Song shakes their head, saying, "Look, if I hurt Algiada, it wouldn't be a secret."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Sense Motive check gets cool confidence from Song. If they're lying, they seem unafraid of being caught or the consequences. The simplest explanation is lack of guilt.

Aftermath: After a while, Song grows tired of being questioned and shoos the PCs out of their kitchen, claiming to be too busy prepping the next meal to talk anymore.

TROSTINEK

The PCs might have more questions for Trostinek. His likely answers follow.

Do you know anything about this bloody statue? Trostinek scratches his bony beard and says, "No, I can't say as I've seen that before. Is that blood?"

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check notes Trostinek seems to have at least some familiarity with the statue but has improvised his seemingly innocent question about the blood. Still, he refuses to admit he has seen the statue before.

Did you know Algiada lom before this trip? "Yeah, we did some security jobs together a few years ago. When I heard she was head of security here on the *Chimera*, I contacted her on the station for a trip to Akiton. She got me and my bot squared away. Then we got a few drinks the night before departing. You know, catching up on old times."

A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Sense Motive check can tell Trostinek is edgy about this question. If asked about it, he says, "She's missing, and she's a friend of mine. I'm a little worried, okay?"

The two of you were... very friendly, right? "Maybe we had one too many and ended up back in my room that night. It wouldn't have been the first time. But that's not a crime, is it? More reason for me to worry about someone I was very close with."

If the PCs found the note from Trostinek's wife and confront the vesk about it, he becomes flustered, which a PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Sense Motive check notices. Qub is taken off-guard to learn about Trostinek's wife but tries to cover it up.

He responds in one of two ways. If the PCs produce the note, he becomes angry and says, "Did you go through my things?" Otherwise, he says, "How did you hear that?" In either case, a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Sense Motive check gets the feeling Trostinek is trying to blow off the question.

Are you married or not? "Listen, my wife and I split months ago, not that it's your business." If the PCs produced the note, he adds, "I guess I never found that note. Give it back to me."

To a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Sense Motive check, this deflection doesn't ring true. However, Trostinek doesn't budge on his tale. He doubles down, claiming the PCs are dredging up painful memories and, if appropriate, that they had no right to search his room. He doesn't become violent over the intrusion, but he feigns deep offense. The PCs can calm him if they mention they did so to find Algiada. Otherwise, he storms off soon after this, answering no other questions. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Sense Motive can tell that he's performing to give himself an out.

Did you hurt Algiada? Maybe she used your vow against you? "I won't stand here and be accused! Get out of my face!" Trostinek says and attempts to leave. Again, a PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Sense Motive can tell this "anger" is a performance.

If a PC refuses to let Trostinek leave and succeeds at a DC 18 Intimidate check, the vesk practically explodes, saying, "I didn't have anything to do with Algiada's disappearance! She was my friend! Now leave me alone!"

Aftermath: If he is pushed to the point he has to storm off, Trostinek becomes unfriendly toward the PCs and answers no more questions. The PCs eventually get more out of him when they discover that he isn't who he says he is in Part 3.

EVENT 6: ZAP ZAP!

EVENT 7: BARGHEST ON THE BRIDGE

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ATTEMPTED TAKEOVER

With the *Chimera*'s security chief missing, Jincheroga sees a chance to take control of the vessel. Since the *Chimera* left Legacy Station, Jincheroga has also studied the interior and is convinced that it has a smuggler compartment. She sends her goblins to scour the *Chimera* for such a compartment. In her supreme confidence, she takes the bridge alone. The following two events occur no earlier than the second evening the ship is in the Drift, preferably when the PCs hit a lull in the investigation or they seem close to accusing a suspect, right or wrong.

EVENT 6: ZAP, ZAP! (CR 2)

A commotion near the guest quarters draws the PCs to where Jincheroga's four space goblins are searching for the *Chimera*'s smuggler compartment. Alternatively, Song finds the PCs to tell them the space goblins are ransacking part of the ship near the dining hall, and the android can't find anyone else to put a stop to their shenanigans. You can use the map above, although the battle could spill into the midship, requiring that map, too (page 13).

Creatures: The space goblins have been ordered to find the *Chimera*'s smuggler compartment, which Jincheroga believes could hold treasures. The barghest leader rules by fear. Therefore, the space goblins brook no interruption in their search, terrified she might punish them for failing (which has occurred several times in the past). They attack with screeches once they realize the PCs might interfere, no matter how well the PCs have interacted with the space goblins up to this point.

SPACE GOBLIN ZAPERATORS (4)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

HP 6 each (*Alien Archive* 54)

TACTICS

During Combat Thanks to their association with

Jincheroga, these space goblins demonstrate a better grasp on tactics than most other space goblins. They focus their laser fire on the weakest-looking PC, hoping that taking someone out will make the barghest proud of them.

Morale When only one space goblin remains standing, they try to flee to Jincheroga's side on the bridge. As the goblins fall, they brag that their boss, Jincheroga, is making her way to the bridge and plans to kill everyone there if they don't relinquish control of the *Chimera* to her.

Treasure: One space goblin carries an engineer's puzzle box (*Armory* 103) that he has never been able to open, despite fiddling with it for hours on end.

Development: Jincheroga provided the space goblins with a rough schematic of the *Chimera* scribbled onto a pillowcase in black ink and marked with a few likely places she believes a smuggler compartment could be. A PC who searches the space goblin's bodies or succeeds at a DC 14 Perception check after the fight notices this map. Using the map grants the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus to finding the smuggler compartment, but before they can begin their search, read or paraphrase the following.

The ship's intercom crackles, and Captain Rameem can be heard shouting, "...off my bridge!" Someone screams in a high pitch, and then the intercom cuts out again with a pop.

Alternatively, if the PCs capture a space goblin, the mercenary-in-training talks only after the PCs succeed at a DC 14 Intimidate check. The goblin reveals the existence and nature of the makeshift map. In addition, the goblin tells the PCs, gleefully, that Jincheroga is taking over the ship and is on the bridge now.

EVENT 7: BARGHEST ON THE BRIDGE (CR 4)

The PCs realize they have no time to spare if they want to stop Jincheroga. As the PCs move to the upper deck, Qub, worried that someone might find the real captain's body stashed in the smuggler compartment, heads there to hide some evidence. The PCs meet the astrazoan in Part 3.

When the PCs reach the bridge and its doors open, read or paraphrase the following.

On the bridge, amid the officer stations and near the central captain's chair, a creature that seems to be part goblin and part wolf holds Captain Rameem by the neck.

"Stay back!" it says in Jincheroga's voice, snarling. "I'll tear his throat out if you interfere!"

She addresses First Mate Lozu Pahir, who has her hands raised. A pistol has been cast to the floor near her.

Mate Pahir says, "Let's talk about this, Jincheroga."

Jincheroga draws Rameem close, then says, "I'll tear you apart if you don't clear the bridge and give me control. I'll swallow your soul, whoever you are."

Creatures: Jincheroga, in full barghest form, has taken the bridge. How she reacts depends on how she feels about the PCs. The PCs can interrupt at any time to react to the events here.

If Jincheroga thinks the PCs intend to stop her, she continues to shout threats. Any interference from the PCs prompts Jincheroga to bite Captain Rameem's neck. She can do so during a surprise round, but each PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check can also act during this surprise round. Yox has enough Hit Points to survive the bite, but they pretend to be wounded and slump to the ground, faking unconsciousness. The barghest doesn't finish the captain off, attacking the PCs instead.

If Jincheroga believes the PCs might be sympathetic to her, she gives a feral grin. The barghest offers the PCs a share of the spoils for taking over the *Chimera* and stealing "whatever that professor has aboard." She adds that to prove they intend to help, Jincheroga says the PCs have only to grab and restrain First Mate Pahir. By this point, however, First Mate Pahir grabs her pistol and fires a wild shot at the barghest, missing. Again, the PCs might sense Lozu's

intentions, but they need only to succeed at DC 10 Sense Motive check to do so. Jincheroga notices, but she takes her action during the surprise round to drop Rameem and rush at First Mate Pahir in a rage. Yox, as Rameem, fakes striking their head on a console and pretends to be unconscious for the duration of the fight.

If a PC tries to aid the captain during combat, from up to 10 feet away, they can attempt a DC 14 Medicine check to see Rameem's injuries aren't lethal. If the check result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the PC is sure the captain's injuries aren't as severe as his reaction indicates. He doesn't rouse, even if a PC stops to give him medical treatment, preferring to try to maintain the subterfuge. If a PC shouts in his face and shakes him during the fight, though, he does open his eyes to plead with the PC to help take back his bridge.

LOZU PAHIR

CR 1/2

XP 200

Female human

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Perception +5

DEFENSE

HP 12

EAC 10; KAC 11

Fort +0; Ref +2; Will +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical baton +2 (1d4 B)

Ranged azimuth laser pistol +4 (1d4 F; critical burn 1d4)

TACTICS

During Combat Lozu provides harrying fire against

Jincheroga, benefiting the PC who needs it most. She also tries to stay out of Jincheroga's reach.

Morale First Mate Pahir backs the PCs as long as they remain in the fight, though she retreats if reduced to fewer than 4 Hit Points.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Computers +10, Diplomacy +5, Engineering +5, Life Science +10, Physical Science +10, Sense Motive +5

Languages Brethedan, Common, Maraquoi

Gear flight suit stationwear, azimuth laser pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), tactical baton

JINCHEROGA

CR 4

XP 1,200

Female barghest (page 57)

HP 50

TACTICS

During Combat Jincheroga focuses on the PCs, starting with a *fear* spell. She then focuses on the most dangerous-looking PC, preferring tooth and claw to her pistol.

Morale Jincheroga could escape with *dimension door*, but

her pride (and nature as a gray clone) forces her to fight to the death.

Development: If the PCs take Jincheroga captive, Yox, as Captain Rameem, recovers enough to fire a laser blast that kills the barghest. Gasping in her last breaths, Jincheroga—who spotted a flaw in Yox's disguise shortly before the PCs intruded—says, “You... fools're... being... deceived. He... isn't...” She dies before she finishes.

First Mate Pahir is effusively grateful for the PCs' actions, especially if they save her life in some way. If the PCs haven't questioned her for a final time, they gain a +4 circumstance to skill checks to learn any further information she has (see *Wrapping Up* on page 26).

If he doesn't have to shut Jincheroga up, Yox pretends to wake up after First Mate Pahir speaks with the PCs and thanks the PCs for saving him. They go on to ask if the PCs have made any progress on Algiada's disappearance, expressing dismay that they haven't solved the mystery.

QUESTIONING RAMEEM

The PCs have an opportunity to question the captain about Algiada's disappearance. Some possible questions and answers follow. Yox isn't aware of Rameem's secrets and knows little about the crew's dynamics. If the PCs push the captain too far at any point, such as accusing him of any wrongdoing or hiding information, he orders them off his bridge, ending the questioning.

Why do you think Jincheroga attacked? “With Algiada's disappearance, that... creature... probably saw her chance to take the ship and our cargo.”

Rameem rubs his temples and continues, saying, “I took a big risk allowing those goblinoids on my ship, but their credits spend as well as anyone else's. I haven't had issues like this in the past.”

Who did Jincheroga think you are? “I have no idea what she was raving about. In any case, it would be to her benefit to sow doubt, yes?”

Yox becomes nervous as the PCs come close to the truth. A PC who succeeds at a DC 23 Sense Motive can tell the captain is on edge about the direction of this questioning. They dismiss any further queries along these lines, eventually leading to a brush-off.

Do you know anything about Algiada's disappearance? “No, but I wish I did. She was my toughest crew member, so I find it hard to believe someone took her out.”

Yox is lying. A PC must succeed at a Sense Motive check opposed by Yox's Bluff check (+13 bonus) to pick up on the guilty shiftiness that accompanies the answer.

Did Algiada have any enemies? “Not that I know of. You should talk to the others, if you haven't already.”

Did you know Algiada was planning to have you killed? If the PCs present the evidence discovered on Algiada's personal computer, Yox is genuinely perplexed. “My, my, my... this is

troubling. I can't imagine why Algiada would do this. I assure you, I had no idea. I wouldn't keep her on the roster if I did, tough customer or not.”

Someone saw you and Trostinek in your quarters the night of the disappearance. “True, true! Neither of us could sleep, so I invited him into my room to have a chat. So, you see, neither of us could have had anything to do with Algiada going missing.”

Unless you both did it. “Preposterous! Trostinek didn't even know Algiada! Why would he hurt her or help anyone do so?” The captain crosses one set of his arms, saying, “I don't like your tone.”

A PC must succeed at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to get Rameem to answer any more questions. Failure means that the kasatha politely asks the PCs to leave, though he has an angry edge to his voice.

WRAPPING UP WITH RAMEEM

When they're about finished questioning Rameem, each PC can attempt a Perception check opposed by Yox's Disguise check (+23 bonus) to spot a strange ripple in the astrazoan's skin as they become more and more unnerved. Yox is paranoid that the PCs suspect the truth. The “captain” claims to need a few moments' rest and politely ask the PCs to leave the bridge, assigning First Mate Pahir temporary command. Lozu takes the captain's chair while Rameem heads to his quarters. The PCs can follow, requiring successful DC 18 Stealth checks.

If the PCs start a fight with the captain, Yox's statistics are on page 37. Yox tries to escape, leaving the PCs' lines of sight and shifting into another disguise.

FINISHING THE INVESTIGATION

Allow the PCs to continue to follow any other leads they might believe are more promising and learn any of the crew's secrets they have yet to discover. If the investigation stalls, nudge the group toward **Event 8**, which takes place in the ship's smuggler compartment. Jincheroga's map is one clue to that compartment's location.

If the PCs were close to wrapping up when the fight on the bridge happened, and they followed Rameem and kept watch near his quarters, then Yox (as Rameem) decides to check to see if the smuggler compartment is secure. The false captain leaves the room, moving to the lower deck and through the twisting passageways. Yox reaches the corridor where the secret door to the smuggler compartment is and walks right up to where it is hidden, reaching toward the concealed keypad. There, the astrazoan suddenly second-guesses his plan. The “captain” then turns around and heads back to the upper deck. However, the PCs might find the smuggler compartment door near where Rameem turns around.

If the PCs haven't followed Rameem to the compartment or used Jincheroga's map at some point, they spot the false

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Trostinek slinking through the corridors and can follow the vesk bounty hunter. Trostinek opens the compartment after arriving at it.

Event 8 occurs at the start of Part 3.

PART 3: CASE CLOSED

By this point, the PCs should be aware of most of the secrets on board the *Chimera*. When they uncover the captain's body in **Event 8**, the space-pirate conspiracy begins to unravel and the climactic encounters begin.

EVENT 8: TRUE COLORS (CR 3)

To discover the *Chimera*'s smuggler compartment, the PCs must be within the forward section of the lower deck, past the engineering section, in a specific but otherwise unremarkable corridor. Following an NPC or Jincheroga's makeshift map leads the group to the right corridor, although using the map requires more trial and error. A PC must succeed at a DC 25 Perception check to find the faint outline of the door and a hidden keypad panel. However, if the PCs followed "Rameem," they receive a +6 circumstance bonus to the check. Trostinek ends up opening the door for the PCs if they follow him.

The door is locked with the keypad. Rewiring the pad requires a successful DC 20 Engineering check, while hacking it takes a successful DC 20 Computers check. When the compartment opens, read or paraphrase the following.

Automatic lights click on inside a room beyond the open secret door, revealing a cargo hold full of dusty boxes. Netting hangs from the ceiling. The form of a male kasatha lies in the center of the room, his arms twisted in painful positions and one of his shoes missing. A puddle of blood has dried under his head.

The body is that of the real Captain Rameem.

Creature: If the PCs followed the false Trostinek (Qub) here, he claims he learned of the compartment from Algiada and came here to see if she was hiding. He has no idea why a corpse has been stowed here. Although this statement is largely true, Qub as Trostinek is flustered. They don't know what to do now that the PCs have them in this position.

If the PCs found the chamber in another way, the fake Trostinek steps in long enough after the group starts looking over the captain's body for it to seem like he wasn't sneaking right behind them. He pretends to be shocked by the corpse. He spends a few minutes trying to keep up the charade, claiming he just happened to be walking by. The astrazoan

tries to deflect any blame back onto the PCs, who are standing over a dead body and have been snooping around the ship.

If the PCs present a theory that at least one shapechanger is aboard the *Chimera* impersonating members of the crew, or something close, Qub attacks, whether or not they accuse "Trostinek." They also attack if a few moments pass in the compartment with no resolution. When Qub becomes hostile, combat begins; use the smuggler compartment map on page 33, and read or paraphrase the following.

Trostinek says, "Curse you, meddlers. We were so close to pulling this thing off with minimal bloodshed, but you just had to nose around."

QUB CR 3

XP 800

Agender astrazoan soldier (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 209)

NE Medium aberration (shapechanger)

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

DEFENSE HP 40

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +5; **Ref** +3; **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee diamagnetic storm hammer +11 (1d8+7 B & E; critical knockdown)

Ranged tactical semi-auto pistol +9 (1d6+3 P)

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (blitz)

TACTICS

During Combat If the fight starts at a distance, Qub shoots once or twice with their pistol and then charges in with the storm hammer.

Morale Qub fights ruthlessly to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +13, Bluff +8, Disguise +8, Intimidate +8, Stealth +8

Languages Common, Vesk

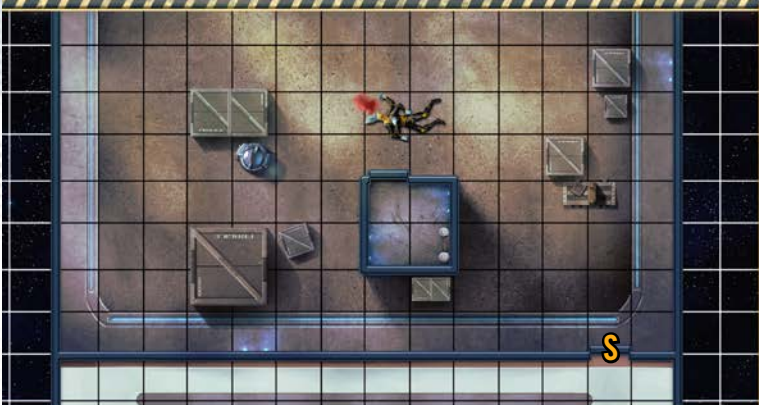
Other Abilities change shape, compression

Gear defrex hide, diamagnetic storm hammer^{AR} with 1 battery (20 charges), tactical semi-auto pistol with 18 small arm rounds, key card to the smuggler compartment

Development: Either if captured or with their dying breath, Qub sputters, "This means nothing! The rest will be here any second! You can't stop us!" Upon dying or being captured, Qub returns to their natural astrazoan form.

A PC who looks over Qub's body notices that, in the astrazoan's natural form, they're covered with a thin layer of viscous liquid. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Culture or Life Science check has heard of astrazoans, a species that only recently made themselves known throughout the Pact

EVENT 8: TRUE COLORS



EVENT 9: PIRATE PERIL



FORWARD



EVENT 11: FINAL CONFRONTATION

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Worlds, although they claim to have existed for centuries. They have powerful shapechanger abilities. If the PC succeeds by 5 or more, they realize astrazoans have the compression ability, allowing them to squeeze through tight spaces other Medium species might not be able to fit into. A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Life Science or Physical Science check can surmise that the fluid on Qub is similar to that found in the vents in Algiada's quarters, the captain's room, and elsewhere. If the PCs didn't identify the astrazoans' compression ability, a PC who scrutinizes Qub and succeeds at another DC 18 Life Science check can tell Qub has this ability.

A PC who examines the captain's body and succeeds at a DC 15 Medicine check gains a number of clues. First, this is the real captain, not a facsimile. Second, several sharp blows to the back of his head with a blunt object killed him, as evidenced by his head wounds. Although some blood has collected on the floor, the small amount indicates that the captain didn't bleed out here—he was killed elsewhere and brought to the smuggler compartment afterward. If the PC succeeds by 5 or more, they can tell from the condition of the body that the captain died during the first night the *Chimera* was in the Drift.

If the PCs found the bloody statue, they can compare it to the wound on the back of the captain's head. A PC who succeeded at the Medicine check above can tell the statue or a similar blunt object made the captain's wounds. If the PCs

failed the check mentioned above, having the statue allows a new check at the same DC to determine whether the statue is the likely murder weapon.

Regardless of the details, it's now clear to the PCs that the Captain Rameem they might have interacted with over the past day or so is a fake. In addition, any PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Wisdom check realizes, at some point during their journey, they've seen Trostinek and the false captain together, meaning those two can't be the same creature. The PC who rolls the highest on this check remembers spotting Algiada and Trostinek arguing about something before the ryphorian disappeared. It's a reasonable conclusion that at least one other shapechanger is aboard the *Chimera*, possibly masquerading as the captain.

Treasure: Captain Rameem kept a few of his personal valuables in the smuggler compartment. By taking a few minutes to scour the various crates and containers, the PCs can find an autotarget rifle with 30 longarm rounds, a flash dazzler (*Armory* 22), a suit of kasatha microcord I, a jump jets armor upgrade, a grappler with 50 feet of adamantite alloy cable line, a laser drill (*Armory* 105), and three batteries. Other boxes hold outdated kasathan clothing, some of it damaged and stained (possibly with blood), and cheap souvenirs from various places in the Pact Worlds. Captain Rameem has kept some of these items from his old life of crime. If a PC succeeds at a DC 20 Perception

check during the search, they discover an old credstick holding 5,000 credits among the keepsakes; these credits are legitimate.

ATTACK ON THE CHIMERA

Before the PCs can find and confront the replaced Captain Rameem, the Star Fisher pirates finally catch up to the *Chimera*. The freighter jolts as the space pirate vessel latches on. With a few explosive charges, the pirates board through the forward airlock. When a few of them move to take the bridge, they meet up with Yox, who takes them to the cargo hold, which now contains Professor Benjam's relic. Three other pirates move through the *Chimera*, looking for other valuables. Read or paraphrase the following as this raid begins.

An explosion rocks the *Chimera*. The noise indicates the blast came from the forward section of the ship, possibly near the forward airlock and cargo holds.

The PCs can encounter **Events 9** and **10** in any order that makes sense to you. Run **Event 11** last.

EVENT 9: PIRATE PERIL (CR 4)

As the PCs move through the *Chimera*, they come across pirates holding a corridor to the cargo holds behind a makeshift barricade. This rubbish forms a low obstacle blocking the 10-foot-wide corridor. The map shows an example, although the pirates should be blocking the PCs' progress no matter which route they take through the starship. In any case, each of the 2 squares of this barrier is difficult terrain that can provide partial cover and has hardness 6 and 6 Hit Points. Once it or a creature adjacent to it is hit by an attack, the barricade collapses at the start of the dwarf pirate's turn in 1d4 rounds. You can use the corridor map on page 33, reuse the one from page 29, or extrapolate a map from the sample corridor map and the one on the inside back cover, based on the PCs' route.

Creatures: These three space pirates are almost comically evil: the dwarf has long, dirty hair and a sadistic grin, the human has a scar over one eye, and the vesk has chipped beard spikes. They sneer as they confront the PCs, demanding unconditional surrender and all valuables. If the PCs fail to comply, the pirates attack, the vesk roaring a battle cry. The PCs can easily goad the pirates into revealing that they boarded from the forward airlock.

DWARF SPACE PIRATE CR 1

XP 400

Female dwarf soldier

NE Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +5

DEFENSE

EAC 11; **KAC** 13

HP 24

Defensive Abilities slow but steady

Fort +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +3; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee tactical handaxe +8 (1d6+4 S)

Ranged subzero hailcannon +5 (1d8+1 C & P; critical staggered [DC 10]) or tactical handaxe +8 (1d6+4 S)

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (guard), traditional enemies

TACTICS

During Combat The dwarf remains in cover and uses her hailcannon. During the first round, while her allies are not among the PCs, she uses automatic mode. If she needs more cover, she might retreat into adjacent rooms.

Morale This pirate surrenders only if she is the last pirate standing and has 5 or fewer Hit Points.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +10, Engineering +5, Intimidate +5

Feats Barricade

Languages Common, Dwarven

Other Abilities armor training, stonecunning

Gear golemforged plating I, subzero hailcannon^{AR} with 4 batteries (20 charges each), tactical handaxes^{AR} (2)

HUMAN SPACE PIRATE CR 1

XP 400

Female human soldier

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +8; **Perception** +5

DEFENSE

EAC 11; **KAC** 13

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

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee longsword +5 (1d8+3 S)

Ranged tactical semi-auto pistol +8 (1d6+1 P) or frag grenade I +5 (explode [15 ft., 1d6 P, DC 12])

Offensive Abilities fighting styles (bombard), grenade expert (+10 ft.)

TACTICS

During Combat The pirate lobs a grenade and follows up with pistol fire at a tough-looking PC or a PC that has angered her. She stays behind cover until the PCs are close enough for her to move to and attack with her longsword. If the dwarf withdraws to another room, this pirate follows if she can.

Morale This pirate surrenders only if she is the last pirate standing and has 5 or fewer Hit Points.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +5, Athletics +5, Intimidate +5, Stealth +10

Languages Common, Dwarven

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Gear second skin, tactical semi-auto pistol with 30 small arm rounds, frag grenades I (2)

VESK SPACE PIRATE**CR 1****XP 400**

Male vesk soldier

CE Medium humanoid (vesk)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +5**DEFENSE****HP 25****EAC** 12; **KAC** 14**Fort** +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +3; +2 vs. fear**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.**Melee** tactical greataxe +8 (1d12+7 S) or unarmed strike +8 (1d3+7 S)**Ranged** hunting rifle +5 (1d8+1 P)**Offensive Abilities** fighting styles (blitz), natural weapons**TACTICS****During Combat** This pirate fires his rifle until the human pirate throws her grenade. He then draws his axe and moves into melee.**Morale** A berserker at his core, the vesk fights until knocked unconscious or killed.**STATISTICS****Str** +4; **Dex** +2; **Con** +1; **Int** -1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +0**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Athletics +5, Intimidate +10**Languages** Common, Vesk**Other Abilities** armor savant**Gear** second skin, hunting rifle with 12 longarm rounds, tactical greataxe^{AR}

Development: If the PCs take a pirate captive, the criminal is reluctant to speak unless a PC succeeds at a DC 18 Intimidate check. The pirate then admits the Star Fishers tracked the *Chimera* into the Drift with the help of their “shapeshifters.” If pressed, the pirate says that three such creatures are in the gang and that two of them have been on the *Chimera* the whole time. You can use this opportunity to fill in any gaps in the PCs’ knowledge of the pirates’ plan up to this point, including that the pirates came in through the forward airlock.

EVENT 10: FAKE FIRST MATE (CR 3)

As the PCs pass the gym on the way to the forward cargo holds and airlock, they hear First Mate Lozu Pahir cry out for help. Entering the room, they see two Lozus struggling with one another! The gym appears on the **Event 1** map on page 13.

Creature: Wem, the third astrazoan in the Star Fisher gang, caught Lozu alone in the gym, where she went to escape the notice of Yox and their pirates. When the PCs arrive, each Lozu grapples with the other, shouting accusations. They stop when they notice the PCs and each starts begging the PCs to shoot the other Lozu.

Wem is at a disadvantage because First Mate Pahir wears her usual armor and Wem wears gray casual stationwear. A PC who succeeds at a Perception check opposed by Wem's Disguise check (+14 bonus with no additional bonus due to change shape) can immediately tell the two apart. Any PC who checks for a difference in clothing also immediately notices the astrazoan's unique apparel. In addition, if the PCs begin questioning the two, Wem knows nothing the real First Mate Pahir would. After a few moments, Wem gives up the masquerade and attacks the PCs, surprising them if they haven't figured out who's who.

LOZU PAHIR

CR 1/2

XP 200

HP 12 (page 30)

TACTICS

During Combat Lozu was disarmed and tries to find her laser pistol. She takes as long as you like, joining in the



HUMAN SPACE PIRATE

fight to aid the PCs if they need it.

Morale Lozu remains as long as the PCs do.

WEM

CR 3

XP 800

Agender astrazoan operative (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 209)

NE Medium aberration (shapechanger)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +9

DEFENSE

HP 35

EAC 14; **KAC** 15

Fort +2; **Ref** +5; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee tactical switchblade +9 (1d4+4 S)

Ranged vapor cavitation pistol +9 (1d6+3 E & F; critical pulse^{AR} 1d4)

Offensive Abilities trick attack +1d8

TACTICS

During Combat When combat begins, Wem initiates holographic clone. The astrazoan tries to stay on the move, using Bluff to make trick attacks with their cavitation pistol, choosing targets that give them the greatest chance of causing the most damage.

Morale If Wem is reduced to 10 or fewer Hit Points, they feign surrender, dropping their pistol. When a PC gets close (such as in an attempt to restrain them), Wem draws their switchblade and tries to slash that PC's throat. The astrazoan again surprises PCs who fail a Sense Motive check against Wem's Bluff check. Wem then fights to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +9, Bluff +14, Disguise +14, Sense Motive +9, Stealth +14

Feats Quick Draw

Languages Common

Other Abilities change shape, compression, operative exploits (holographic clone), specialization (spy)

Gear casual stationwear, tactical switchblade^{AR}, vapor cavitation pistol^{AR} with 2 batteries (20 charges each)

Development: Lozu is shaken up after the fight. If the PCs don't already have a good relationship with her, a PC must succeed at a DC 18 Diplomacy check to get her to trust them. She then reveals the following.

Lozu brushes a stray lock of hair from her eyes. "I heard that explosion. I rushed to the bridge to receive a damage report from the captain, but two these pirates had gotten there before me. It looked like they had Captain Rameem at gunpoint, but then he... transformed into a creature like the one here." She nudges the shapechanger's body with the toe of her boot.

"I nearly dropped dead! 'Rameem' greeted the pirates and had them follow along to find the professor's relic in the starboard cargo hold. I ducked out of sight and started looking for others I could trust to help me, but nearly got caught by three other pirates. I hid here for a minute as they passed by, but then this one found me! Thanks for rescuing me. Again! I can't believe Rameem, the same Rameem that's always been so friendly and so nice to me, is... something else."

First Mate Pahir believes Rameem might always have been a shapechanger. She's distraught that the person she trusted is not who she thought he was. If the PCs tell her a shapechanger killed the actual captain, Lozu's confusion shifts to grief over the loss. However she quickly composes herself and leaves to secure the bridge and check on the other crew members. She asks the PCs to take care of the false captain.

Treasure: Lozu gives the PCs a pair of incendiary grenades if she grabbed from her room when the pirates attacked.

EVENT 11: FINAL CONFRONTATION (CR 5)

As the PCs enter the starboard cargo bay, read or paraphrase the following.

Several crates within the cargo bay have been opened, their contents—cheap trade goods and mass-produced trinkets—spilled across the area. One large container, though, has been separated from the rest. Its computerized locks have been destroyed, its physical latches bent out of place, and one of its sides now lies flat on the floor. A smaller, silvery box on a pedestal sits inside, the box's smooth sides nearly identical except for a biometric scanner on one.

A figure steps out from the darkness behind the plinth: Algiada Iom, a haggard look in her eyes and bruises on her face. "Please help. The captain locked me in this crate when I found out he was working with a group of pirates to steal the relic the professor brought aboard. Careful, I think he's still around here!" She staggers and falls to one knee, stretching out her hand for assistance.

Creatures: Algiada is actually Yox. Use the port cargo hold map on page 33, with Yox inside the largest container (the 10-foot-high top of which is not shown so the interior can be seen). Two human space pirates hide among the crates beyond the largest crate.

A PC who succeeds at a Sense Motive check against Yox's Bluff check intuitively feels something is off about the fake security chief. Yox waits until the PCs are close before lashing out with a knife they have hidden on their hip. The pirates emerge from hiding to attack. Only a PC who succeeds at the aforementioned Sense Motive check or a Perception check opposed by the pirates' Stealth checks can act during the surprise round.

YOX

CR 3

XP 800

Genderfluid astrazoan envoy (*Starfinder Pact Worlds* 209)

NE Medium aberration (shapechanger)

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

DEFENSE

HP 38

EAC 14; **KAC** 15**Fort** +2; **Ref** +4; **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.**Melee** survival knife +8 (1d4+4 S)**Ranged** azimuth laser pistol +8 (1d4+3 F)

TACTICS

During Combat After ambushing the PCs with the survival knife, Yox switches to the laser pistol.**Morale** Cornered, Yox fights until killed.

STATISTICS

Str +1; **Dex** +2; **Con** +0; **Int** +1; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +4**Skills** Bluff +13, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +13, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +8**Languages** Common, Kasatha, Triaxian**Other Abilities** change shape, compression, envoy improvisations (clever feint, get 'em)**Gear** casual stationwear, azimuth laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each), survival knife

HUMAN SPACE PIRATES (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

HP 22 each (page 34)

TACTICS

During Combat The space pirates keep their distance from the PCs and focus on using their pistols. They engage in melee only with those who move too close to Yox.**Morale** So close to their goal and with Yox on their side, the space pirates fight to the death.

Treasure: Yox had gathered valuables from the cargo in a *Starfinder* backpack (*Armory* 116). The backpack contains an *efficient bandolier*, an *obsidian electrovore figurine of wondrous power* (*Armory* 113), and a proximity helmet (*Armory* 107).

Development: If the PCs still need questions answered about the mystery and manage to take Yox captive, the astrazoan tells the PCs what they want to know in exchange for a promise to spare Yox's life. Yox can confirm that the real Algiada Iom and Trostinek are dead, killed back on Legacy Station when Qub and Yox assumed their identities. Yox doesn't believe the ryporian and the vesk knew each other before a few days ago. If asked, Yox laments complicating the plan by killing the captain and taking his place, but they were afraid their pirate allies wouldn't catch up to the *Chimera* before the ship made it to Absalom Station.

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Yox also explains their comm unit is installed with a custom program that allows a vessel with the sister program to track them through the Drift. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Engineering, Physical Science, or Piloting check realizes that such a feat would be a marvel of astrogation, engineering and miniaturization, and computer science (though the PCs don't know this, the grays have actually perfected a version of this technology and will use it in a future adventure). If the PCs hack Yox's comm unit, requiring a successful DC 17 Computers check, they find an application that seems to verify Yox's claim. Analysis of this program, requiring a successful DC 22 Computers check, reveals it is a complicated fake. It can't actually do what Yox claims—in fact, Yox's comm is otherwise of a typical planetary-range variety.

If questioned about these facts, Yox shrugs and says, "I don't know what to tell you. It just works!" The presence of the pirates on the *Chimera* supports this claim if nothing else does.

The PCs might also be curious as to the professor's relic, assuming it to be in the biometrically sealed silver box. They might want to ask the professor to open it, but **Event 12** occurs before they can find him. However, a PC can crack open the box by succeeding at a DC 15 Computers check to spoof a "test mode" password for this model of lock. A PC whose result exceeds this DC by 5 or more realizes that no actual biometric data has been entered into this lock—it is essentially in a factory-default state. Opening the box reveals a note that seems to be made of thin metal and contains a message written in Aklo. If the PCs can understand that language, read or paraphrase the following.

The unusual note reads, "Relic removed for recalibration. Install before starting simulation." A bizarre geometric symbol that isn't an Aklo glyph marks the bottom.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Physical Science check can tell the metal is nothing they've ever seen; it likely requires some kind of advanced technology to create and to write on. The symbol is likewise a mystery, though the PCs might find further examples of it and similar symbols in further adventures. If the PCs discover the note after they learn the *Chimera* is a fake starship, this note has less of an impact, so perhaps give them time to open the sealed box before starting **Event 12**.

EVENT 12: CHIMERA'S END (CR 4)

After the fight with Yox—and time to talk with the pirate, search the cargo area, and open the relic box—a strike force attacks the gray research facility housing the *Chimera*, forcing the observers to abandon their posts. One gray issues a self-destruct order to the simulation. Fortunately for the PCs, as important clones, they lack the built-in

measures that cause NPC clones to succumb to the self-destruct order, so the PCs remain intact. The *Chimera* and other clones on board aren't so lucky.

A massive explosion rocks the *Chimera*. Microcharges explode in the brains of any living NPCs, killing them instantly. If such NPCs are with the PCs when this happens, such as a captive Yox, the PCs see the NPCs spontaneously fall dead. As they flee, the PCs also run across the bodies of First Mate Pahir or any other NPC you care to use in this way. No signs of violence mar any of these corpses.

However, a larger explosion booms, leaving no time to carefully examine the bodies. A computerized voice chimes in over the intercom, calmly stating, "Hull breach detected. Abandon ship. Repeat, abandon ship. Please proceed to the escape pods in a calm and orderly fashion."

The PCs know the *Chimera* has a set of escape pods near the aft. If any PC left something important somewhere (such as their quarters), they have just enough time to fetch it. Otherwise you should hurry the PCs along, by blocking passages to other sections of the ship with explosions, debris, or fire. As they move through the ship's corridors, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices safety gear in one of the corridors, including an emergency case with a basic medkit, crowbar (a type of manual tool; *Starfinder Armory* 131), a basic handaxe (*Armory* 8), and a fire extinguisher.

Hazards: As the PCs rush to the escape pods, further explosions throughout the ship make the journey hazardous. Each PC must attempt a series of Reflex saves and skill checks to avoid being battered about and harmed by the aftermath of these detonations.

First, an explosion causes several pipes lining the hallway to burst, spewing caustic engine chemicals into the corridor the PCs are passing through. Each PC takes 3d6 acid damage (Reflex DC 14 half).

Second, part of the hallway ahead of the PCs buckles, making it difficult to pass. Each PC must succeed at a DC 15 Acrobatics or Athletics check to quickly squeeze through this area. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Strength check can push some of the debris out of the way, granting every PC a +2 circumstance bonus to the check, but that PC gains the fatigued condition after bypassing this obstacle. Each PC who fails the Acrobatics check takes a -2 penalty to their Reflex save against the next hazard because the fire had time to spread and grow more intense, making it difficult to traverse. If the PCs seek a route around this section of corridor, they find one, but the slowdown causes the whole group to take the penalty as if they failed to squeeze through this area.

Third, the PCs pass through a section that is on fire and the only way to approach the escape pods. A PC leaping through the flames takes 3d6 fire damage, but a successful DC 14 Reflex save halves this damage. A fire extinguisher or some other creative way to suppress the flames grants

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a +4 circumstance bonus to each PC's Reflex save. The fire keeps renewing itself, so putting it out completely isn't possible in the time the PCs have.

Story Award: For reaching the *Chimera*'s escape pods, award the PCs 1,200 XP.

CONCLUDING THE
ADVENTURE

Reaching the escape pods bay, the PCs can bundle into individual pods and activate the controls. When they do, read or paraphrase the following.

The pods tremble as their thrusters fire and the tubes holding them within the *Chimera* release their clamps. A brief moment of weightlessness precedes the g-force of the rocketing pod. The *Chimera* falls away through the small transparent aluminum window in the pod. Rifts pepper the hull, and smaller explosions continue to rip through the vessel.

However, instead of the darkness of space, a cavernous room surrounds the *Chimera*. Thick cables, some of which are on fire, suspend the ship in the center of this

vast chamber. The walls and ceiling of this space, barely visible in the firelight, are corrugated metal surfaces. A wide window high up on one wall provides a view of an empty control room, the glow of a few monitors dimly illuminating it. Massive pistons attach to the *Chimera*'s underside, clearly built to move the ship as if it were in flight or suffered some impact. A tube has been attached to the ship's forward airlock, where the pirates boarded the *Chimera*.

Among all this fakery, the explosions continue to blow the *Chimera* apart. The escape pods lurch as bands of metal suddenly eclipse their windows. After a massive boom and a tremor, a whooshing sound accompanies the feeling of fast horizontal movement.

The pods are being whisked across the gray research facility to an emergency drop-off station. There are no controls within the false escape pods that allow the PCs to change their destination, and any attempt to remotely hack a pod's guidance system is met with the same curious geometric symbol found on the note within the Professor's silver box. The PCs have no choice but to go along for the ride.

Where the PCs eventually end up and the various dangers they face there are covered in the next installment of The Threefold Conspiracy Adventure Path, "Flight of the Sleepers."



MYSTERY ADVENTURES

"You see, Mrs. Braintner, only you have knowledge of the rare poison that was found coursing through Count Correndo's veins, only you were seen leaving the hedge maze on the night of the crime, and only you were aware of the last-minute change to the count's will in which you wouldn't have received a solitary credit. You had the means, the opportunity, and the motive. Those are the facts, and there's no use in saying otherwise. Therefore, only you could have committed this heinous murder! Ghenkins, if you would be so kind as to escort this cold-blooded killer to the police hovervan waiting outside?"

—excerpt from the popular weekly holovid
"Detective Death"

Within the science fantasy setting of Starfinder, characters have the opportunity to battle evil horrors and explore strange new vistas throughout the galaxy. Many problems can be solved with a handy blaster or a well-timed spell, but not every adventure's villain is a destructive warlord, twisted machine, or rampaging beast. Some work from the shadows, pulling the strings of a vast conspiracy, or perform their foul deeds behind the anonymity of a disguise to confuse and confound any who might stop them. Sometimes, the villain's plot isn't as obvious as it first seems or is a smokescreen operation for a much larger scheme. All of these scenarios can be classified as mysteries.

A mystery adventure involves the player characters engaging in an investigation to discover the culprit of a crime or other underhanded activity, following clues and interrogating suspects until the evidence points to one or more culprits. Such an adventure need not involve a locked-door murder, although that is one of the more popular examples of the genre. Mysteries can be structured around other crimes where the offender isn't immediately obvious, such as theft of either physical goods or information, destruction of property, and abduction. Alternatively, a mystery might comprise a shady activity that isn't necessarily illegal but that the PCs have a vested interest in uncovering or stopping, such as learning the true identity of a mole within an organization or locating the individual who posted an embarrassing holovid about them on the infosphere.

Often, a mystery adventure doesn't include as much combat as an exploration of an ancient temple or a jaunt through gang-controlled city streets. That doesn't mean that a mystery adventure lacks action, however. As the PCs come closer to exposing the culprit, they might have to chase someone through a crowded marketplace, get into a scuffle with a hostile witness, or survive an attempt on their own lives!

Researching an obscure topic, solving an esoteric riddle, or asking around to find a reclusive contact are problem-solving activities rather than full-blown mysteries. Such activities might be part of a mystery, though. Good mysteries can't be solved with one successful skill check or divination spell. They usually require a synthesis of several pieces of information, like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. All the pieces might not be required to understand what the puzzle looks like, but one piece alone is a question that's likely to be impossible to answer.

A MYSTERY'S THREE PILLARS

Whether the mystery occurs on a high-tech space station or in a colony settlement on a backwater planet, the culprit has a means, motive, and opportunity to commit the crime. Some suspects might have one or two of these elements. However, the true criminal must have all three.

MEANS

A suspect has the means to commit a crime if they are physically able to do so. Could they reliably fire a pistol to

kill the victim with one shot? Are they dexterous enough to reach the only window that showed signs it was forced open? Do they have the knowledge to be able to create a malignant computer virus?

Some crimes are simple enough that all suspects could conceivably have the means to commit them. Other times, the means by which a crime was committed are unknown or indefinite. In such cases, discovering the culprit's motive and opportunity become even more important. However, knowing that a suspect couldn't possibly have had the means to perpetrate the crime is probably the easiest way to eliminate them from the list.

MOTIVE

A suspect's motive for committing the crime should be compelling enough for them to want to break the law or at least act outside norms. Might they inherit a large estate when the victim passes away? Are they trying to keep the victim from revealing a devastating secret? Did they fly into a fit of rage at the mention of some past misdeed?

No criminal acts without a motive, even if the motive has little connection to reality. Money and love are common motives in classic mysteries. Motives might abound in a mystery adventure, and should in a good one. Then, it's up to the investigators to determine which of the possibilities is strong enough to warrant the perpetrator's actions.

OPPORTUNITY

A suspect has the opportunity to commit a crime if they could have been at the location of the crime at the correct time. Were they having dinner with a large group of people at the time of the incident? Did they redeem a fare for public transportation in a city hundreds of miles away? Do the security logs show them entering the restricted building before the crime occurred?

Most perpetrators try to have an alibi for when the crime happened. It's important for it to seem like they had no opportunity to perform the deed. Investigators need to sort through the alibis to discover which are true.

PLAYING MYSTERIES

As a player, when you realize your PC is in a mystery adventure, likely when the first body turns up, you can help yourself and your fellow players by leaning into the role of investigator. The following tips aid in this process.

TRACK INFORMATION

Your main goal and primary obstacle in a mystery adventure is information. You likely have a roster of suspects, each with their own personality and history with the victim. Take notes about your suspects and what you know about them, keeping in mind the three pillars of a mystery. Is this suspect capable of committing the crime? Are they motivated to commit the crime? Were they actually anywhere near

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the scene of the crime? In other words, did they have the opportunity?

You might also want to draw a map of the relationships between the suspects and the victim, as well as each other. By consulting this big picture, you might spot a motive that has previously eluded you. See the Establish Relationships section of Running Mysteries below for a way this map might work out. The GM probably has one too.

Keep a separate list of the physical clues you've found so you don't forget an important piece of information. When you find a new clue, you can compare it to this list to see how it relates to other evidence you've already discovered. Connections between the clues might make themselves apparent when you analyze the list.

In addition to helping you solve the mystery, your records can help you along in other ways. If the adventure runs multiple sessions, you can refresh your perspective by going over the evidence before each session—that way you won't forget an important clue because of the time between games.

SEARCH EVERYWHERE

You need to look everywhere for clues, especially at the scene of the crime. Perhaps a bullet casing fell behind a heavy piece of furniture, or maybe the victim hid some clue to their killer by typing a final message on a datapad. Culprits sometimes attempt to obscure evidence, especially anything that might directly incriminate them, but they aren't always successful. Perhaps the culprit forgot to clean a spot of blood from their shoe, or maybe the supposedly deleted security footage can be partially restored. If you have the time and access to a place, search it thoroughly!

TRUST NO ONE

Assume each of your suspects is lying about something, even if that person is someone you know and like. In a mystery adventure, everyone has their secrets, though they might not be directly related to the crime. By drawing out these secrets, you might uncover a new alibi that clears a suspect or discover the motive of an unlikely culprit. However, try not to fall into paranoia and baseless accusations. Such behavior can cut off your access to suspects, making your investigation much more difficult. Instead, a kind word, false assurances, or a bit of flattery might net you more information than you think.

USE ABILITIES

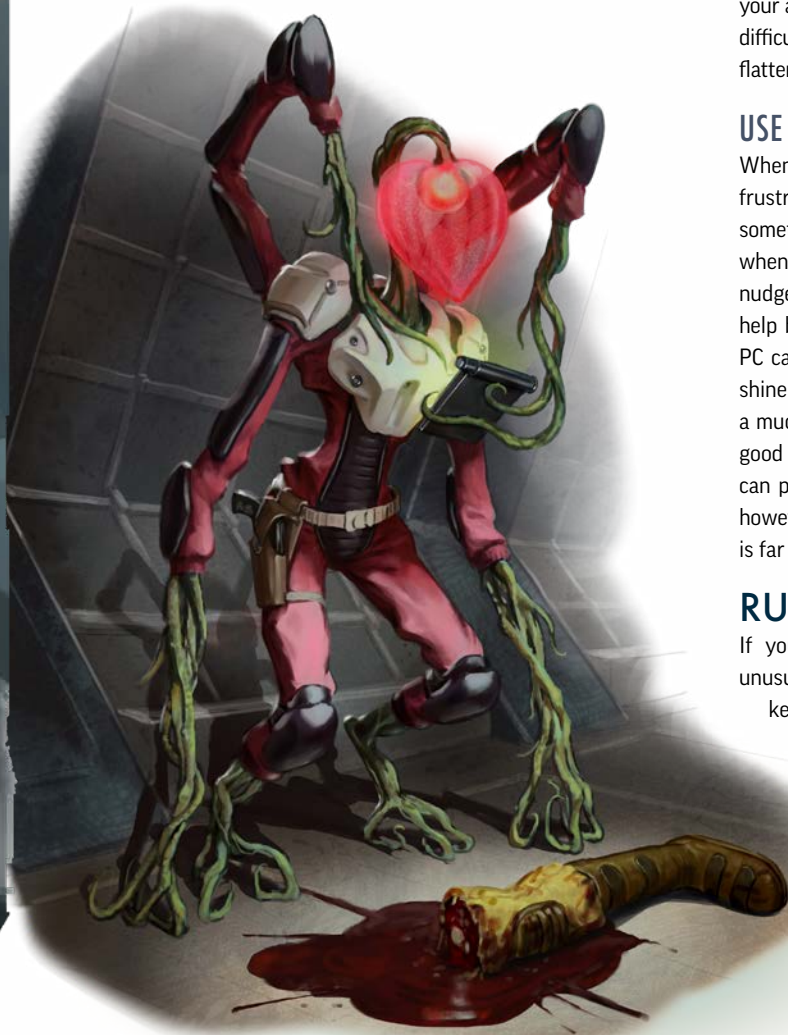
When you become stuck in a mystery, it can be very frustrating. You might think you have all the clues, but something just doesn't add up. Hopefully, your GM notices when the session starts grinding to a halt and can give you a nudge in the right direction. But if you think you need some help before that, don't be shy about asking your GM if your PC can attempt a check or try an ability or spell that might shine some light on the mystery. Your PC is likely to have a much more experienced eye than you do, and a check is a good way to simulate putting the pieces together. Some spells can provide unexpected clues. Try not to overuse this help, however. You might find that solving a mystery on your own is far more satisfying!

RUNNING MYSTERIES

If you are the GM, mystery adventures provide you an unusual challenge. You likely have to juggle a cast of NPCs, keeping their alibis and motivations straight. Here are a few elements to consider as you prepare to run your mystery adventure.

ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS

Even if you are running a published adventure, it helps to sketch out the relationships between the victim and the suspects. Place the victim's name in the center, surrounded by the names of possible suspects. Draw lines



connecting the victim to each suspect, and draw connections between suspects if they have a relationship. Label each line with the nature of the relationship. For instance, if one suspect is the brother of the victim, you should write just that on the line connecting the two. In addition, write each suspect's motive and alibi, noting whether the alibi is true, under their name. In addition, include a few words describing the NPC's personality so you can more easily roleplay interactions with them. Include any other comments you think you might need. Don't try to fit all the information about the mystery onto this map, however.

Keep your relationship map handy, perhaps clipping it to your GM screen. You can refer to it with a glance when questions arise or when you need to improvise a scene between the PCs and one of the suspects. You will likely need to use other notes or to refer back to the prewritten adventure for the description of the crime scene, the locations of evidence, and so on.

STAY FLEXIBLE

Mystery adventures are usually more free form than other scenarios. The characters have a crime that needs investigating, a list of suspects that need questioning, and perhaps some locations to search for clues. Sometimes the suspects are confined to a small area, such as a starship traveling through the Drift or moon base cut off from the rest of the system by an ion storm, which makes it easier to keep track of the suspects at any given point. Other times, the PCs must seek out the suspects, perhaps in their residences in a bustling metropolis or while they perform their duties on a large space station. In any case, the players have the opportunity to pursue whatever leads they have in any way they see fit. A player might come up with a theory about the crime and fixate on it until it's proven false, ignoring all other avenues of investigation until then.

All of this is to say that you need to be flexible as to where the players are going to take the adventure. In an exploration of a haunted space hulk, you might need to keep in mind what the PCs can find in the next few chambers. In a mystery investigation, you have to hold the entire picture of the crime in your brain. Remembering the details of the incident and the motivations of the NPCs, including the culprit, allows you to improvise when you must.

Your ability to be flexible is important when the PCs' investigation begins to stall. If it looks like your players are growing frustrated with the way the evidence is piling up or running dry, you might want to spice things up with a little action that ultimately moves the plot forward. Starfinder is, after all, a game of laser pistols and mystical powers. Perhaps throw in a few ruffians the culprit hired try to warn the investigators off the case. When interrogated, these toughs disclose a vague description of who paid them off, narrowing the suspect list. Perhaps a piece of industrial equipment "accidentally" malfunctions, putting the PCs in grave danger.

Examining the wreckage reveals a crumpled napkin from a bar the culprit frequents. Such a scene can jump-start an investigation, breathing new life into the adventure.

Similar scenes can be used to help your players get back on track when they start chasing dead-end leads. Red herrings are a staple of the mystery genre, but they introduce the possibility of leading players too far in the wrong direction. If it looks like your players are spending too much time on the wrong suspect, an action scene can bring in a piece of evidence that pulls the PCs off this false scent.

Ensuring that your PCs find enough clues can head off such problems before they begin.

PROVIDE CLUES

In a good mystery novel, movie, or TV show, clues form a trail. Each clue leads the detective to the next until the investigator has that flash of inspiration that lets them solve the case. However, a mystery adventure needs to operate on a different scale. Since you aren't in control of the PCs, you have few guarantees that the PCs can find all the clues. You also have no assurance the clues might lead players to the correct solution. Therefore, ensure that clues are an abundant resource.

A good rule is that for every important piece of evidence you think is necessary for the PCs to solve the crime, you should provide at least three ways for the PCs to discover it. For example, you want the PCs to know that the murderer killed their victim in a fit of rage. First, the state of the crime scene and forcefulness of the blows that killed the victim should be one indicator. A PC who succeeds at a Medicine or Perception check should notice the clue. Second, one of the other suspects might mention the culprit's temper. A PC who succeeds at a Diplomacy check might prompt the NPC to relate an incident where the culprit engaged in an attack similar to the crime. Third, the PCs might stake out the culprit and spot that person venting irritability on a computer display, but doing so might require a successful Stealth check to avoid the culprit's notice (which causes them to behave more calmly in front of observers).

With three avenues leading to the same piece of information, you help ensure the PCs can find it no matter what kind of skills they have and what methods of investigation they use. The PCs might also discover the same information in multiple ways. Doing so confirms the validity of that clue and likely stresses its importance. That reinforcement, in turn, helps lead the investigators to the right solution.

Equally as important is avoiding using a single clue as a focal point of an investigation, unless the clue is easy to find and essentially ends the investigation. If the PCs need a specific piece of evidence to proceed from an earlier point, they might not find what they need and the adventure can stall. You might be able to get away with such a design if the clue is dramatic, such as catching the culprit in the act of a second murder, but such reveals must be used sparingly in a campaign of mystery adventures.

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Alternatively, you can reserve an all-important clue so that it appears wherever the PCs do their most thorough searching. In such a case, you are guaranteeing the evidence is found. This is where being flexible comes in handy, especially if you need to alter the adventure to fit your group.

GIVE CONFESSIONS

When the players have pieced together all the clues and confronted the correct suspect, they deserve a denouement that makes all their work worthwhile. At this crucial moment, the culprit should confess to the crime in a dramatic fashion. This narrative element works in television and movies, after all! Whether it's a tear-choked admission of accidental guilt or a gleeful declaration that they would do it all again if they had the chance, a full confession puts a neat little bow on the adventure. Often, given the action-adventure nature of Starfinder and depending on the nature of the culprit, a climactic battle ensues. You can use the confession to fill in any holes in the investigation, perhaps accompanied by the NPC's smug gloating.

With the culprit's confession, the PCs can be sure they have accused the correct suspect, clearing up any lingering doubts they might have about any leaps of logic they made. Even if the players have ironclad evidence, such an end to the adventure can be a cathartic moment that allows the PCs to cleanly move on to the next part of the campaign... unless any loose ends are part of an overall mystery in which the PCs are entangled!

On the other hand, if you are running a grittier, morally gray type of game, you might want to hold off on the confession and explore what happens after the accusation and the suspect's arrest. Are the PCs members of a law enforcement organization, or did they call one in? What are the laws on the planet or space station where the crime was committed? Could the culprit, even if clearly guilty, walk away free from the repercussions of their actions?

Such aftermaths fall more under the genre of legal thriller than the mystery genre, though the two share some aspects. The PCs might be tasked with performing further investigations once the culprit's legal representation begins muddying the water with false witnesses and coerced testimony. The PCs could uncover other crimes or start digging into cold cases where the culprit was a possible suspect but was never caught due to lack of solid evidence, leading to further mystery adventures.

All these vagaries assume the culprit is a person of wealth or influence, or otherwise has the resources to corrupt the legal process.

Although this article doesn't present any specific advice for describing what happens in the aftermath of a mystery adventure, you can adapt the advice given to help you craft other compelling scenarios full of intrigue and deception!

PLAYER OPTIONS

Most investigators can benefit from taking ranks in skills such as Perception and Sense Motive. Feats such as Skill Focus and Skill Synergy can shore up those skills. The following feats and spells can also aid intrepid sleuths.

FEATS

These feats grant new avenues for picking up clues.

DILIGENT SEARCHER

Your ordered mind allows you to thoroughly search an area in less time.

Prerequisites: Perception 1 rank.

Benefit: You gain a +1 insight bonus to Perception checks. In addition, you can take 20 on a Perception check to search in only 5 times the usual amount of time, meaning it takes only 5 minutes for you to exhaustively search an area no more than 20 feet by 20 feet.

Normal: It takes 20 minutes to exhaustively search an area no more than 20 feet by 20 feet.

INTUIT RELATIONSHIPS

You can quickly sense relationships between others and use that knowledge to manipulate them.

Prerequisites: Perception 1 rank, Sense Motive 1 rank.

Benefit: After 1 minute or more of interaction with or observation of two or more creatures, you can attempt a Sense Motive check to intuit the relationship between or among those creatures. If you don't understand the language they are speaking, you take a -5 penalty to the check. The DC is equal to 10 + the highest Bluff skill bonus among the creatures or 15 + 1-1/2 × the highest CR among the creatures, whichever is higher. If you succeed at this check by 5 or more, for the next hour, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks against the creatures when you use their relationship as part of the interaction. The GM decides if the bonus applies. If you fail the check, you can't attempt to use this benefit on the same creatures again until you gain another rank in Sense Motive.



MEMORABLE COERCER

You know how to use coercion to change people's minds without suffering the consequences.

Prerequisites: Intimidate 1 rank.

Benefit: You gain a +1 insight bonus to Intimidate checks. In addition, when you successfully use Intimidate to bully an opponent, the target must attempt a Will saving throw once the intimidation wears off. The DC is equal to 10 + your number of ranks in Intimidate. If the target fails this save, their attitude toward you becomes indifferent and they won't report you to any authorities.

Normal: The target of a successful Intimidate check to bully is unfriendly to you after the duration of the attitude change ends.

SENSE ASSUMPTIONS

You can easily intuit a person's preconceptions.

Prerequisites: Sense Motive 1 rank.

Benefit: You gain a +1 insight bonus to Sense Motive checks. In addition, you can attempt a Sense Motive check to discern some of another person's assumptions after 1 minute of conversation, allowing you to assess the difficulty of lying to them. The DC of this check is equal to 10 + the target's Bluff skill bonus or 15 + 1-1/2 × the target's CR, whichever is higher. If you succeed, you learn whether you would take a penalty to Bluff checks when attempting to convince that target of one falsehood of your choice related to the topic of conversation. If you fail by 4 or less, you learn nothing. If you fail by 5 or more, the target realizes you are trying to glean information from them. You can retry this check, but the DC increases by 5 for each previous failure on this check against that target.

SPELLS

These spells can help uncover more evidence to solve almost any mystery or create a greater one.

ALTER CORPSE

School necromancy

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range touch

Targets one corpse

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

You cause a corpse to change to suit a narrative you choose. This spell can hide or create clues about how the corpse ended up in its current state, from closing wounds to evaporating chemicals in the cadaver's system. However, the changes cannot be major, such as removing or restoring a limb, or stripping flesh from the skeleton. The spell is also unable to change the corpse's identity.

Anyone who examines the corpse can attempt a Perception check (DC = 10 + your caster level) to notice that the corpse's condition (or lack thereof) seems manipulated, but success doesn't allow the observer to determine what the corpse

looked like before this spell was cast. Closely examining the corpse with a successful Medicine check (DC = 15 + your caster level) not only reveals what a successful Perception check does, but also reveals what the corpse looked like before this spell was cast.

BUILD TRUST

School divination

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Targets one creature

Duration 1/day level; see text

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You get a sense of the best way to interact with the target to encourage positive regard toward you. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Charisma checks, Charisma-based skill checks, and Sense Motive checks you attempt when interacting with the target. In addition, when you fail a Charisma check or Charisma-based skill check when interacting with the target, you can reroll the check as a reaction. However, if you attempt the reroll, the target receives a new saving throw against the spell. Taking hostile action against the target automatically ends the spell.

GLIMPSE OF TRUTH

School divination

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range personal

Duration 1 round

This spell functions as *true seeing*, except as noted above.

METICULOUS MATCH

School divination

Casting Time 10 minutes

Range touch

Targets two objects

Saving Throw Fort negates (object); **Spell Resistance** yes (object)

You compare two similar items and know if they are identical to one another or not. The spell can indicate an identical match, a categorical match, or no match. For instance, blood samples are identical if they are from the same creature. They are categorical if they are from the same species. No match exists if the blood samples are from different species or if one sample is stage blood.

Alternatively, you can compare dissimilar items and know if they have a potential relationship. For instance, you can compare a creature's tooth against a bite mark and know whether that creature could have caused the bite mark.

This spell is fallible. An identical match can result from comparing items that are duplicates of one another. For instance, a knife might have an identical match with a stab wound if an identical knife was used to inflict the wound. Identical twins might have identical blood or tissues.

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"You want to know why you're here? Imagine you're a brain, yeah? But no eyes, no ears, just sittin' warm and cozy in your skull with nothin' but imagination and pixie sparkles to keep your attention. You'd never need to see how mean the real world is. How it can chew you up and spit you out. That's great for some. But me? If something is about to go pear-shaped, I want to know. I like to see the bullet coming. And that's what we do, kid. We're not soldiers. We're not heroes. We watch and we listen, and when we see the bullet coming, we tell the brain when to get out of the damn way."

—Donlaia Sekk on Training Day 001

Subterfuge is the exacting scalpel to warfare's indiscriminate shrapnel. And in a galaxy where superweapons can wipe out entire planets, a careful hand is infinitely more useful for achieving practical goals. Even the most noteworthy interstellar conflict in recent memory—the war between the Veskarium and the Pact Worlds—lasted only 5 years before both sides shuddered at the mounting cost and devastation of open conflict. But the so-called Silent War—focused mainly on smaller skirmishes and espionage—lasted ten generations, as dedicated spies and agents on both sides faced off to uncover the other power's secrets, sabotage their efforts, and sway the direction of their politics.

Espionage encompasses a number of tactics. A nation conquered by placing loyal entities on its throne without a drop of spilled blood can immediately turn its engines of commerce to fill your pockets. Quietly bribed researchers can grant you access to scientific knowledge. Magical scrying sensors can overhear state secrets. Deep cover agents can live among the enemy populace for years and find work within government and security organizations. The ultimate goal of espionage is to take what your foe can't afford to lose—knowledge, resources, loyalty from their populace, or the lives of key figures—while knowing exactly how they will respond.

Many of the galaxy's military organizations have at least one espionage branch, as do seemingly legitimate companies, such as the Aspis Consortium, though most of their spying is on other companies. Among the Pact Worlds, the Ops branch of the Stewards is the most prominent, gathering intelligence and undermining internal and external threats to the system's peace. During the Silent War, their primary duty was to face off against the Veskarium's Division of Disloyal Organizations, which operated as a counter-intelligence arm with sweeping authority. Much of the time, the division actively recruited and supplied Pact World dissidents to cause internal strife. Since the war's conclusion, both organizations have pivoted to focus primarily on smaller, internal threats and terrorist groups, but maintain their own agents within their allies' numbers "to be safe." The Corpse Fleet's intelligence branch, the Mindcrimes Division, is among the greatest current threats to the Stewards, operating a widespread network of informants across the Pact Worlds to keep tabs on ongoing security efforts. The Mindcrimes Division relies heavily on enchantment and divination magic to coax already-dissatisfied undead fringe groups into acting on the Corpse Fleet's behalf on Eox and other worlds.

Within the Vast, the Azlanti Star Empire stands as the dominant espionage power thanks to the ingenuity and magic of the Cerulean Order, a secretive organization that answers directly to the Aeon Throne. Most of the citizenry of the Star Empire believe the Cerulean Order isn't much more than a fever dream of conspiracy theorists, but the group is all too real. With vast resources and little accountability, the order excels in various forms of brainwashing—simple psychology, magical hypnosis, or cybernetic brain implants—to establish

sleeper agents within alien populaces where obviously Azlanti operatives would be too obvious. The Swarm conducts its own gruesome form of intelligence operation as well, though that process on physically restraining targets and extracting secrets from their brains—effective, but hardly subtle.

Intelligence organizations often rely on a small number of talented agents and freelancers to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks. The following options help player characters infiltrate and overcome threats with subterfuge rather than force of arms.

ENVOY OPTIONS

While most envoys excel at standing out, those engaged in espionage must learn to blend in and make themselves seem harmless. Their gift of seeming at home in any crowd is especially useful when they need to remain unobtrusive and deflect the blame for their own actions onto those around them. Other envoys can predict and exploit their enemies' tactics.

ENVOY IMPROVISATIONS

The following envoy improvisations use the standard rules for envoy improvisations (*Core Rulebook* 61) and use the standard envoy icons to define language-dependent, mind-affecting, and sense-dependent improvisations (*Core Rulebook* 62).

1st Level

An envoy of any level can choose the following envoy improvisations.

• Frustrating Target (Ex)

You duck and weave around an opponent in close combat, making it difficult for others to draw a bead on you. Once per turn as a move action, choose a significant enemy you are adjacent to. All other enemies take a -1 penalty to attack rolls against you until the beginning of your next turn, as long as you are still adjacent to the designated opponent.

At 6th level, you can spend 1 Resolve Point as a reaction when an enemy other than the designated opponent attacks you to make that enemy roll twice on a single attack and take the worse result, as long as you are still adjacent to the designated opponent. Both of these rolls take the -1 penalty imparted by this ability.

4th Level

You must be at least 4th level to choose the following envoy improvisations.

• Infuriating Target (Ex)

You move with skill and grace in combat, using others as living shields. When you use frustrating target, you also gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Reflex saving throws against area effects as long as you are still adjacent to the designated opponent. If your designated opponent is also within the

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OTHER CLASSES, OTHER OPTIONS

The options presented here are just some of the ways a character can focus on stealth and espionage. The operative class, especially the ghost, hacker, and spy specializations, is probably the most obvious way to create such a character. However, certain envoy expertise talents, such as altered bearing and cunning disguise, and technomancer magic hacks, such as quick scan and diviner's tap, also make for good espionage tactics. Feats such as Shot on the Run and Unfriendly Fire allow a character to be nimble and tricky in combat. There are several more options in the *Starfinder Character Operations Manual* to help customize a character even further.

same area of effect, it takes a -2 penalty to their Reflex save. You must have the frustrating target improvisation to choose this improvisation.

At 8th level, you can spend 1 Resolve Point as a reaction whenever you attempt a Reflex save against an area effect to have that area expand to encompass your designated opponent, as long as you are adjacent to it. The opponent's Reflex save takes a -2 penalty.

• Exactly as I Would Have Done (Ex)

Your keen tactical mind predicts when and where an ambush would be ideal so you aren't surprised when enemies exploit the same strategy. You aren't flat-footed during a surprise round.

At 8th level, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to share this benefit with one ally you could have reasonably warned of the attack at the last minute; this application of the improvisation is a language-dependent, mind-affecting, sense-dependent effect.

EXPERTISE TALENTS

You can select the following expertise talents to hone your ability to assume false identities or blend in.

• Biometric Implants (Ex; Disguise)

You have small implants that make microscopic alterations to your DNA, allowing you to attempt a Disguise check in place of Computers or Engineering to defeat biometric locks. If you have access to another creature's biometric data, you can duplicate it automatically and open biometric locks keyed to them.

• Reasonable Excuse (Ex; Bluff)

You can speak with such conviction that you earn the benefit of the doubt even under outlandish circumstances.

When caught in a compromising situation that clearly indicates your guilt or would initiate combat, you can attempt an immediate Bluff check before initiative is rolled to lie and absolve yourself, but you must forgo your expertise die on this check. A successful check will stop an outbreak of violence as long as you (and anyone with you) is cooperative with those you are lying to (for example, leaving a restricted area or handing over stolen property you happen to "find"). You cannot use this ability to escape consequences for violence and other overtly hostile actions.

MECHANIC OPTIONS

While few mechanics are skilled in stealth and social manipulation, they are invaluable allies in any covert endeavor. Even machines talk—if you know how to listen.

MECHANIC TRICKS

These mechanic tricks (*Core Rulebook* 70) provide the most reliable support a mechanic spy could ask for, allowing them to push technology to the limit or exploit its weaknesses.

2nd Level

You must be 2nd level or higher to choose these mechanic tricks.

• Attentive Tampering (Ex)

You have a soft touch and naturally conceal signs of your tampering. Do not increase the DC of Engineering checks to hide your attempts to disable a device.

• Concealed Device (Ex)

In a process that requires an hour of uninterrupted work, you can hide a non-consumable piece of technological gear inside a larger technological object (something of higher bulk). For instance, you can conceal a personal comm unit inside a pair of hoverskates (*Starfinder Armory* 104) or a detonator inside a basic medkit. The concealed item easily passes casual inspection, but someone using a scanner or performing a close inspection can discover it with a successful Perception check (DC = 10 + your total Engineering skill modifier – the concealed item's bulk [minimum 1]). Both devices retain their normal functionality and require their own batteries, but if the concealed device requires a skill check to use, the user takes a -2 penalty to that skill check. You can't conceal weapons or armor or conceal items in weapons or armor.

Starting at 5th level, you can conceal the functional parts of a technological item or a ranged weapon inside a technological object of the same size, as long as that object is at least 1 bulk. For instance, you can conceal an azimuth laser pistol inside a large-enough musical instrument (*Armory* 105) or a pulsecaster pistol inside a beacon. Concealing a weapon in this way imposes a -2 penalty to attack rolls with that weapon and reduces its range by half.

This requires an additional hour of work and an amount of UPBs equal to 10% of the concealed item.

In either case, do not combine the bulk of the two devices; only the higher bulk counts toward a character's bulk limit.

• Implant Ghost (Ex)

As a standard action, you can attempt to hack into the cybernetics installed in a creature you can see within 60 feet with a Computers check (DC = 15 + 1-1/2 × the target's CR). If you succeed, choose one of the target's cybernetic implants; your exocortex forms a secret wireless link to that augmentation, allowing you to record what it experiences. You can see what a cybernetic eye sees, hear what a cybernetic ear hears, copy the data a datajack downloads, or track the movement of a cybernetic hand (potentially learning combinations or keystrokes). You can maintain this link until your target moves more than 500 feet from you, you fall unconscious or asleep, or you choose to end it (this takes no action). You must have an exocortex to learn this trick.

8th Level

You must be 8th level or higher to choose these mechanic tricks.

• Implant Glitch (Ex)

When you successfully hack into a creature's cybernetics using implant ghost, you can instead choose for your exocortex to broadcast garbage signals to the chosen implant, inflicting deleterious effects, depending on the system in which the implant is installed. If the implant is installed in an arm, hand, or brain, the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls. If the implant is installed in the ears or eyes, the target takes a -4 penalty to Perception checks. If the implant is installed in a foot or leg, the target takes a -2 penalty to Reflex saves, and if the implant is installed in any other system, the target takes a -2 penalty to Fortitude saves. A different penalty can be imparted at the GM's discretion. Once established, this link lasts 1 round for every mechanic level you have, unless the target moves more than 100 feet from you, you fall unconscious, or you choose to end it (this takes no action). You must have an exocortex and the implant ghost mechanic trick to learn this trick.

DRONE MODS

The following drone mods (*Core Rulebook* 76) help some espionage-focused mechanics disguise their drones. You can choose these mods at any level.

• Lifelike Appearance (Ex)

Your drone is fitted with a natural-looking synthetic skin and additional cosmetic accessories to make it appear to be an appropriately sized animal. Recognizing the drone

as anything but a normal animal requires a successful Engineering or Life Science check (DC = 10 + your total Engineering skill modifier).

• Transformation Matrix (Ex)

Your drone can transform into a second form that resembles an ordinary inanimate object of one size smaller. Taking this smaller form or returning to its normal form is a standard action. The drone retains its senses in this form and can move at half speed (though this would likely reveal its true nature) but loses access to its other mods and weapons. You choose the object the drone can transform into when you select this mod but can change it any time you rebuild your drone. A Small drone becomes a Tiny object that weighs approximately 1 bulk (such as a metal briefcase), and a Tiny drone transforms into a Diminutive object of light bulk (such as a datapad). A transformed drone automatically passes



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casual inspections but can be identified as suspicious with close inspection and a successful Engineering or Perception check (DC = 10 + your total Engineering skill modifier). This mod can be installed in only Small or Tiny drones.

• Unobtrusive Chassis (Ex)

Your drone looks like a mundane domestic drone (*Armory 101*) of the same size. With 10 minutes of work, you can alter cosmetic aspects of your drone's appearance to make it look like other domestic drones in a local building or area. Your drone gains the unobtrusive envoy expertise talent but uses your total Engineering skill modifier to determine the DC to notice it.

SOLDIER OPTIONS

Soldiers often play support roles in intelligence work, lurking nearby in case anything goes wrong while hoping desperately nothing does. The best espionage soldiers are the ones that can avoid notice until they launch into swift and deadly action.

GEAR BOOSTS

The following gear boosts (*Core Rulebook 111*) help soldiers carry the tools of their trade without arousing suspicion.

• Close at Hand (Ex)

You have a practiced ease with smuggling weapons. You gain a +2 bonus to Disguise checks to hide the fact that you are wearing armor and to Sleight of Hand checks to conceal weapons on your body. You can draw a concealed weapon as a move action or, if you have the Quick Draw feat, as a swift action.

• Discreet Armor (Ex)

You can attempt to conceal the fact you are wearing armor by removing the bulkiest pieces and dressing carefully. Doing so takes 10 minutes of work for light armor and 1d3×10 minutes of work for heavy armor and reduces the Armor Class bonus by 1 for light armor or 3 for heavy armor (to a minimum of +0). You can't conceal power armor in this way. Then, roll a Disguise check (with a -4 penalty if you are concealing heavy armor). This sets the DC of the Perception checks of anyone observing you to notice you are wearing armor. If you are physically searched, the searcher gains a +4 bonus to the check. It takes the same amount of time to return your armor to normal.

FIGHTING STYLES

The following fighting styles (*Core Rulebook 112*) emphasize discretion and mobility.

Pistol Dancer

A soldier's familiar rifles and heavy weapons are often too obvious for discreet work, but pistols are easily concealed

and, in the right hands, elegant engines of death. The pistol dancer combat style teaches you to wield small arms to devastating effect while moving with precision to sidestep the usual tactics employed by other gunfighters.

Small Arm Tango (Ex) 1st Level

- You learn to treat a pistol as an extension of your body. Sleight of Hand becomes a class skill for you. You can reload a small arm as a swift action, and you can wield a small arm in melee combat as if it were a battleglove with an item level equal to or lower than your soldier level.

Staccato Strut (Ex) 5th Level

- When you make a full attack with small arms and target a different creature with each attack, reduce the penalty to each attack by 1.

Ricochet Waltz (Ex) 9th Level

- When you fight defensively, double the bonus to your Armor Class against attacks from small arms and longarms.

Pistol Pirouette (Ex) 13th Level

- As a full action when you are wielding two or more identical small arms, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to fire them all simultaneously to shoot at all creatures in a burst centered on you with a radius equal to one-quarter the weapon's range increment. This otherwise duplicates the effect of an automatic weapon (*Core Rulebook 180*).

Choreography of Death (Ex) 17th Level

- You gain a cumulative +2 insight bonus to damage rolls for every previous successful ranged or melee attack with a small arm in the same combat, to a maximum bonus equal to half your soldier level. The bonus doesn't reset if you miss with an attack, but it does if you didn't spend the previous round attacking with a small arm.

Silent Slayer

The silent slayer fighting style focuses on lurking quietly in the shadows and striking in close combat without warning. You train heavily in the use of melee weapons and light armor, pushing both beyond their normal limits, and eventually learn to fade away as quickly as you emerge.

Claws of the Shadow (Ex) 1st Level

- Stealth becomes a class skill for you, and when you strike silently, you disorient your opponent. When you successfully attack a target from hiding with a melee weapon with the operative weapon special quality, that target is off-target until the end of its next turn.

Darting Shadow (Ex) 5th Level

- You gain Mobility as a bonus feat. If you already have Mobility, you instead gain Spring Attack as a bonus feat.

Fading Shadow (Su) 9th Level

- As a move action, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to vanish in a whirl of shadows and teleport yourself to any point within 30 feet that you can see. This counts as a diversion, as if you had just successfully used the Bluff skill, so you can immediately attempt a Stealth check to hide with only a -10 penalty. Starting at 15th level, if you have the Spring Attack feat, you can use this ability to teleport, make a single melee attack against an opponent within reach, and then teleport away. The total distance you move between both teleports cannot exceed 30 feet. Like with Spring Attack, you can't attack a foe that is adjacent to you at the start of your turn.

Severing Shadow (Ex) 13th Level

- Any melee weapon you wield gains the wound critical hit effect. If it already has the wound critical hit effect, it gains the severe wound critical hit effect. If a weapon already has a critical hit effect, you can apply either the critical hit effect from this ability or the weapon's normal critical hit effect when you score a critical hit.

Weeping Shadow (Ex) 17th Level

- Your unexpected attacks leave targets devastated and erratic. When you hit an opponent with a melee attack who was not aware of your presence, it is frightened for 1d4 rounds. If you score a critical hit, the target is instead panicked for 1d4 rounds. The target can attempt a Will saving throw at the end of each round to remove the frightened or panicked condition (DC = 10 + half your soldier level + your key ability modifier).

TECHNOMANCER OPTIONS

With their mastery of the technology that all the galaxy depends on, technomancers fit easily into the world of high-tech espionage and sabotage. They excel at misdirection and mind games using computers and spellcraft.

MAGIC HACKS

These magic hacks (*Core Rulebook* 120) focus on subterfuge.

2nd Level

You must be 2nd level or higher to select these magic hacks.

- All-Access Enchantment (Su)**

As a standard action, you can expend an unused spell slot to erode the internal security of a computer system you can touch. You reduce the DC to hack the computer by an amount equal to the level of the spell expended for the duration of a single attempt to hack the computer. If you have used all-access enchantment on a computer and fail a Computers check to access it, you can spend 1 Resolve Point

as a reaction to avoid activating a single countermeasure of your choice.

- Subtle Spells (Ex)**

You can disguise your spellcasting to confound onlookers. If you succeed at a Sleight of Hand check (DC = 10 + 5 × level of spell being cast) while casting a spell (this requires no extra action), choose a different spell of the same level and school as the one you are casting. An onlooker who succeeds at a Mysticism check to identify the spell you are casting believes the disguised spell to be the other spell you chose unless their result exceeds the DC by 10 or more. A spell with an obvious effect (such as *explosive blast*) will immediately disabuse of the onlooker of their false assumption. You can't actually eliminate all signs of

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spellcasting, so security footage may still reveal you as the source of dangerous magic.

Starting at 5th level, you can spend 1 Resolve Point to automatically succeed on the Sleight of Hand check. When you do so, the onlooker takes a -2 penalty to a Mysticism check to identify your spell and the DC to counter your spell with *dispel magic* or *greater dispel magic* increases by 2.

5th Level

You must be 5th level or higher to select these magic hacks.

• Arcane Virus (Sp)

You can program a virus into a technological item or weapon that delivers a spell effect, similar to the effects of a spell gem, on the next individual to use the item. This process requires an uninterrupted minute of access to the item. You can create only an arcane virus of a spell you know that has a range of at least short and affects at least one target or has an area of effect, and you must expend an unused spell slot of the level of the spell you are programming into the virus. All of the spell's variables are determined by your technomancer level at the time of its creation, and any decisions regarding its effect (such as with *command*) must be set when the virus is created. The arcane virus affects only the creature that triggered it, even if the original spell would affect more than one creature. An arcane virus remains active until it is triggered, until it is disabled, until you decide to end it as a standard action, or for 1 day per your technomancer level, whichever comes first. While the arcane virus is active, you cannot recover the used spell slot until the virus is triggered or deactivated. A user can detect an arcane virus before it is triggered with a successful Computers check (DC = 15 + your technomancer level + level of the spell) and disable it with a second Computers check (DC = 20 + your technomancer level + level of the spell).

• Private Hologram (Su)

When you cast a *holographic image* or *holographic terrain* spell, you can choose to adjust the illusion's magical frequency to make it visible only to you and a single target of your choosing within range who you can observe. You can spend 1 Resolve Point to instead make the illusion perceivable to a number of targets equal to your technomancer level. A private hologram can be seen by any effect that allows someone to see invisible creatures.

11th Level

You must be 11th level or higher to select this magic hack.

• Arcane Spyware (Sp)

As a standard action, you can spend 1 Resolve Point while touching a single technological item (including a weapon or a suit of armor) and infect it with a sly program that seeks out a

user's secrets on your behalf. The spyware can be instructed to attack the very next user or remain dormant, waiting for a specific target. The spyware lasts for a number of hours equal to your technomancer level or until it is activated, at which point it targets the user as per *mind probe* with a caster level equal to your technomancer level. The duration of this effect is 1 minute per level and the spyware can attempt to extract information only once per minute. The spyware is subtle, but a user may notice it each time it attempts to extract a memory with a successful Perception check (DC = 15 + 1-1/2 × your technomancer level), and the spyware can't continue to target a user who puts the item down or walks away. You are aware of the spyware's activity and what information it extracts, and you can direct its line of questioning, as long as you are within 1 mile of the infected item.

SPELLS

The following spells can alter the minds of unwitting targets or create a loyal surveillance drone.

HACK WETWARE TECHNOMANCER 2-5

School divination

Casting Time 1 round

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Targets one living creature

Duration 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

If the target fails its saving throw, you form a link between their mind and a computer you touch at the time of casting, allowing you to hack their brain as if it were a computer to examine or manipulate memories and implant suggestions. Each round this spell is active and you are within range of the target, you can take a standard action to attempt a Computers check to hack their brain and gain certain information, depending on the level of the spell. For the purposes of this spell, a living mind has a tier equal to one-half the target's level or CR (minimum 1) and has an alarm countermeasure that immediately alerts the target creature if you fail a Computers check, allowing them an immediate additional Will saving throw to end the spell.

2nd: When you cast *hack wetware* as a 2nd-level spell, you can hack the target's mind to gain general access to their thoughts, fears, and desires. If you are successful, you gain access to one of the following: the target's current surface thoughts, the target's most pressing current fear, or the target's most pressing current desire. On following rounds, you can attempt additional Computers checks to learn other pieces of information.

3rd: When you cast *hack wetware* as a 3rd-level spell, it functions like the 2nd-level casting of the spell, but you can also hack the target's mind to gain deeper access to their secrets and memories. Such information is partitioned behind a mental firewall, which increases the DC to access it by 2 or the target's Wisdom modifier, whichever is greater.

If you are successful, you gain access to a single piece of secret information the target knows (such as a passcode or the location of a hidden panel) or a specific memory (which can be no longer than 1 minute); a memory shows exactly what the target experienced from their perspective, so it might lack context. You can save the information or memory to your computer to retrieve later.

4th: When you cast *hack wetware* as a 4th-level spell, it functions like the 3rd-level casting of the spell, but you can also hack the target's mind to send it false sensory data. If you are successful, you can determine the sights, sounds, and smells the brain receives, creating an illusion only the target can perceive, similar to a 4th-level *holographic projection* spell. The target can attempt a new saving throw when it interacts with these impressions to recognize them as false, but this doesn't immediately end the effect. The impressions last for as long as the spell does, but you must attempt additional Computers checks to alter them in subsequent rounds.

5th: When you cast *hack wetware* as a 5th-level spell, it functions like the 4th-level casting of the spell, but you can also hack the target's mind to implant a subconscious command that can be activated at a later time. If you are successful, you can state a course of activity similar to that of a suggestion spell and a trigger, such as a static image or a code phrase. This ends the *hack wetware* spell, but the subconscious command remains in the target's brain for a number of days equal to your technomancer level. The next time the target perceives the trigger, it performs the suggested course of action as best it can if it fails another Will saving throw. For every 5 your Computers check exceeded the DC, the target takes a cumulative -2 penalty to this saving throw. The command can be triggered only once.

MEMORY LAPSE MYSTIC 1

School enchantment (mind-affecting)

Casting Time 1 move action

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Targets one living creature

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw Will negates;

Spell Resistance yes

You inspire a moment of confusion that causes a creature to forget what occurred over the last round if it fails its saving throw. If you have failed a skill check against that target since the beginning of your last turn, you can attempt that check again without a penalty (if you have the appropriate number of actions remaining), or simply avoid the normal consequences of that failed skill check. If the target was in the middle of a task that requires longer than a single round to accomplish, it must begin again. If you target a creature casting a spell with a casting time of 1 round or longer, they must attempt a second Will save to continue casting the spell or the spell fails.

A creature you have injured in the last hour gains a +4 circumstance bonus to its Will saving throw.

PROWLING JUNKBOT TECHNOMANCER 4

School transmutation

Casting Time 1 round

Range touch

Targets 1 bulk of inert electronic equipment

Duration 1 minute/level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell functions as the *handy junkbot* spell, but instead creates a stealthy drone that can investigate and spy, transmitting what it sees back to you. A prowling junkbot is Tiny, its EAC and KAC are each equal to 12 + your caster level, and it has a number of Hit Points equal to one tenth of your own (but no Stamina Points). It has a land speed and a climb speed of 30 feet. It can accomplish all tasks described in the Computers, Perception, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth skills, as well as the disable device task of Engineering, is considered trained in those skills, and has a total skill bonus in each equal to 3 + your caster level.

A prowling junkbot is treated as if it were using a hacker's kit when using the Computers skill and an engineering kit when using the Engineering skill. A prowling junkbot has low-light vision and darkvision with a range of 60 feet, and it telepathically transmits everything it sees and hears to you or a computer terminal you touch as part of the original casting of the spell. Images and sound transmitted to a terminal can be recorded.



THE CHIMERA MYSTERY

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PART 2: THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

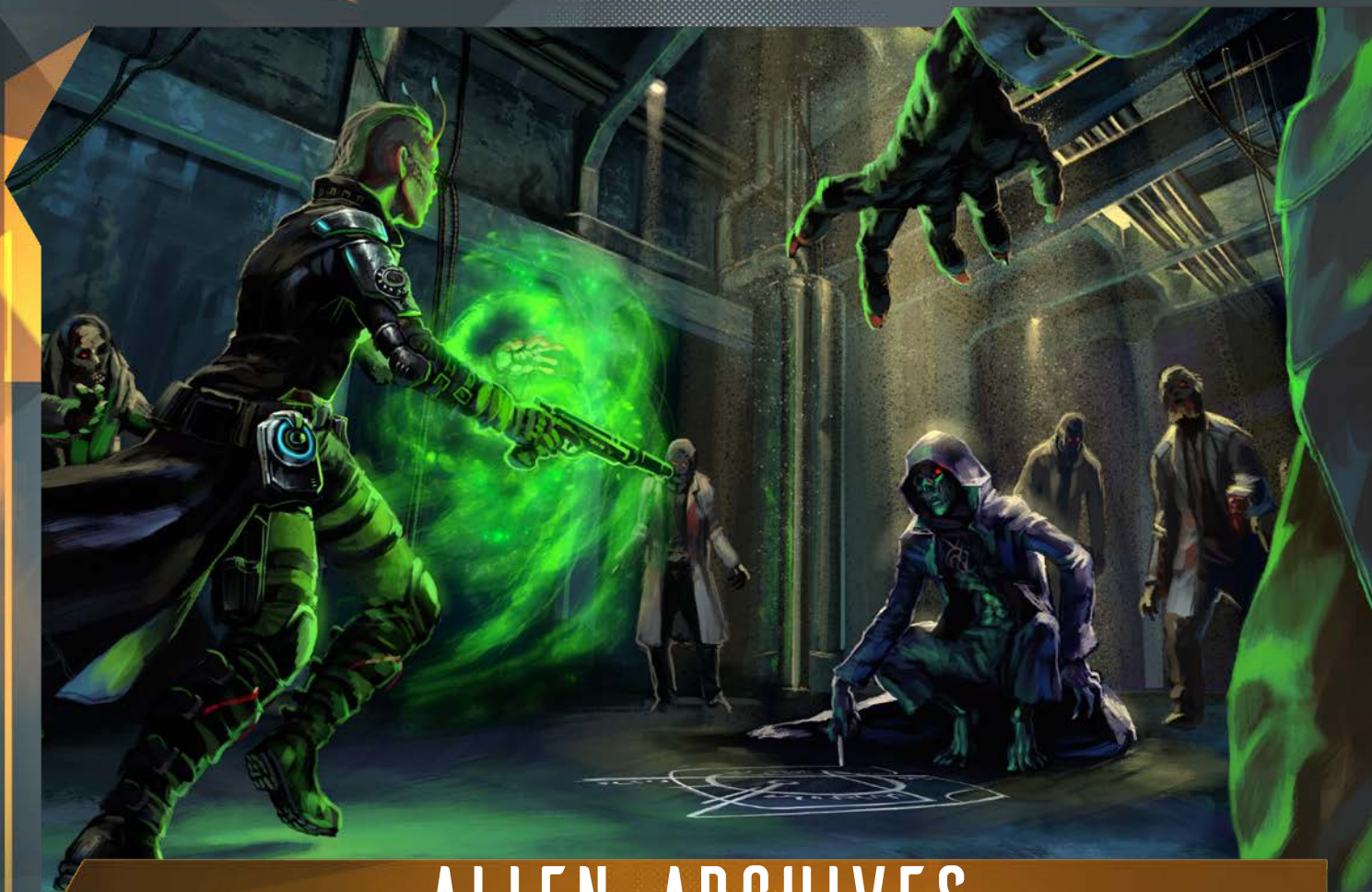
PART 3: CASE CLOSED

MYSTERY ADVENTURES

IN FROM THE COLD

ALIEN ARCHIVES

CODEX OF WORLDS



ALIEN ARCHIVES

“Marrax and I noticed the smears of blood on the floor right away. They seemed to form some kind of pattern or maybe words in a language I never seen before. Someone stepped forth from the shadows. It looked like Professor Ko, but her clothes were tattered and there was some kind of symbol carved into her chest. She shuffled forward and grabbed Marrax and slashed at his shirt with long nails. I panicked and ran out of there. But Marrax’s wounds began to shift and glow, and it was like he was moving through tar... I’m sorry, I left him screaming in the dark.”

—Report from Lonthis Vens, janitor at Qabarat University of Xenoarcheology and Xenoanthropology

AANUNG-AN

CR
4XP
1,200

LE Medium undead

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., blindsense (thought) 30 ft.;**Perception** +10**DEFENSE**

HP 43

EAC 15; **KAC** 16**Fort** +3; **Ref** +3; **Will** +9**DR** 5/magic; **Immunities** undead immunities; **SR** 15**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (Su, perfect)**Melee** claw +8 (1d4+4 S plus grab)**Offensive Abilities** ritual scar**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 4th; ranged +8)1/day—*inflict pain* (DC 17), *mind thrust* (2nd level, DC 17)3/day—*command* (DC 16), *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *fear* (DC 16)At will—*ghost sound* (DC 15), *telekinetic projectile***STATISTICS****Str** +0; **Dex** +1; **Con** —; **Int** +5; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +3**Skills** Athletics +10, Intimidate +15, Mysticism +15, Stealth +15**Languages** Aklo, Common, up to three others; limited telepathy 30 ft.**Other Abilities** unliving**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary or circle (1 plus 3–5 occult zombies)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Ritual Scar (Su) An aanung-an that starts its turn grappling a creature can attempt to carve a ritual scar into its victim's body as a standard action, afflicting it with potent magic. The aanung-an attempts a Mysticism check (DC = 20 + target's level or CR). On a success, the aanung-an renews the grapple, and the target takes 1d6+4 slashing damage as the aanung-an claws a symbol into its body. The target must then succeed at a DC 15 Will saving throw or suffer one of the following effects of the aanung-an's choice: *bestow curse*, *slow*, or *suggestion*. These effects function at the aanung-an's caster level. Certain aanung-ans might inflict different or unique effects with this ability, at the GM's discretion.

Aanung-ans, sometimes called the occulted dead, are rare undead creatures that rise from the corpses of those who died while performing vile and malignant occult rituals. Rising as gangly, emaciated corpses attired in ritual trappings, aanung-ans wield obscure lore in service to unknowable agendas. Some scholars theorize that aanung-ans are somehow linked to one another and are attempting to enact a galaxy-wide ritual, though none agree on their final goal. Conjecture runs from summoning an eldritch horror from beyond space and time to snuffing out all life in the blink of an eye.

While aanung-ans are almost always solitary, rumors persist of individual aanung-ans raising small cabals of zombies to function as bodyguards and servants. Such aanung-ans are likely very powerful spellcasters with sinister schemes.

AANUNG-AN TEMPLATE GRAFT (CR 4+)

Any creature that dies while performing dark rituals for evil purposes risks rising again as one of the occult dead.

Required Creature Type: Undead.**Suggested Array:** Spellcaster.

Traits: Blindsense (thought) 30 ft.; ritual scar (see above); Mysticism as a master skill.

Suggested Ability Modifiers: Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma.

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AERIAL DEVIL

CR
2

XP
600



N Small animal

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +7

DEFENSE

EAC 13; **KAC** 15

Fort +5; **Ref** +7; **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities bewildering velocity, bullet eater, evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (Ex, perfect)

Melee bite +7 (1d6+3 P; critical bleed 1d4)

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +12 (+20 to fly), Stealth +7, Survival +7

Feats Spring Attack

ECOLOGY

Environment cold and temperate forests

Organization solitary, pair, or cloud (3-8)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bewildering Velocity (Ex) After moving at least 30

HP 22

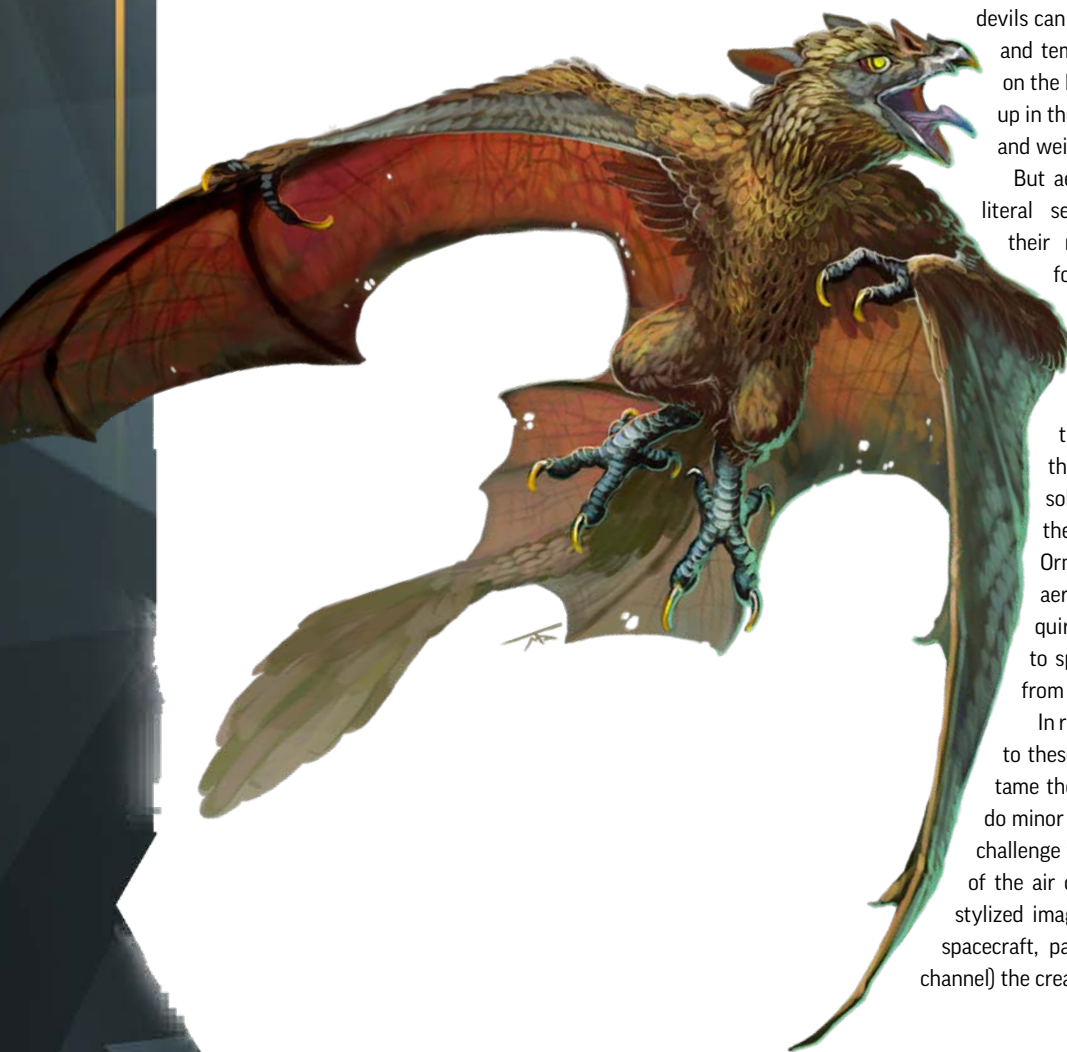
feet, an aerial devil gains concealment until the start of its next turn.

Bullet Eater (Ex) When an aerial devil would be hit by a ranged attack against KAC, it can attempt to pick the projectile out of the air with its beak as a reaction. The aerial devil attempts an Acrobatics check (DC = the result of the successful attack roll). If successful, the aerial devil takes no damage. The aerial devil must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed. An aerial devil can't eat ammunition from incredibly large ranged weapons (such as starship's mass driver cannon).

Aerial devils are birdlike animals with leathery wings and strong, hooked beaks. These creatures are consummate carnivores, their small frames belying their large caloric requirements. Aerial devils attack in small groups, taking turns swooping in and tearing at their victims until the creatures fall, at which point the feast begins in earnest. Thanks to their aerodynamic shape and wing structure, aerial devils can reach incredible speeds. They prefer cold and temperate woodlands (such as those found on the Brethedan moon of Marata) and nest high up in the trees. A typical aerial devil is 3 feet long and weighs a surprisingly light 10 pounds.

But aerial devils are not, in fact, devils in the literal sense. Instead, these creatures gained their moniker from loggers working in the forests inhabited by these creatures. They are considered dangerous pests, as they are sometimes driven to attack conservationists, hikers, tourists, and anyone else who might threaten their nests. Aerial devils have developed the impressive ability to pick incoming solid projectiles out of the air and crush the munitions in their vicious beaks. Ornithologists have yet to discover when aerial devils developed this evolutionary quirk, though not for lack of trying; it is easy to spot scientists who study these creatures from their missing digits and scarred faces.

In rare cases, those who live in close proximity to these little bundles of fury have been able to tame them to a limited degree and train them to do minor tricks. If an aerial devil is kept well fed—a challenge to be sure—it can learn to pick bullets out of the air on command. Some fighter pilots have a stylized image of an aerial devil stenciled onto their spacecraft, paying respect (or perhaps attempting to channel) the creature's impressive flying ability.



BARGHEST

CR
4

XP
1,200



LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful, shapeshifter)

Init +6; **Senses** blindsense (scent) 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +10

DEFENSE

HP 50

EAC 16; **KAC** 18

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

DR 5/magic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +13 (1d6+8 P) or

claw +13 (1d4+8 S; critical bleed 1d4)

Ranged azimuth laser pistol +11 (1d4+4 F; critical burn 1d4)

Offensive Abilities feed

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)

1/day—*charm monster* (DC 14), *dimension door* (self only),

fear (2nd level, DC 13)

At will—*flight* (2nd level), *nondetection*

STATISTICS

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

Skills Bluff +10, Intimidate +10, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +10

Languages Abyssal, Common, Goblin, Infernal

Other Abilities change shape (goblinoid or wolf)

Gear basic lashunta tempweave, azimuth laser pistol with 2 batteries (20 charges each)

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or cult (1 plus space goblin tribe)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Shape (Su) Each barghest has only one specific goblinoid form and one specific wolf form.

Feed (Su) A barghest can devour a nonevil humanoid's corpse as a full-round action. Once per month, if the creature consumed is of a level or CR no more than 2 lower than the barghest's, the barghest gains a growth point. When the barghest gains 2 growth points, its CR increases by 1, with commensurate changes to its statistics. Barghests that increase their CR sometimes gain additional spell-like abilities, changing into what is known as a greater barghest at CR 7.

Barghests are lupine outsiders that exist to spread fear and feed upon humanoid heroes. Cunning and disciplined but utterly self-centered hunters, barghests shun chaos. However, legend says the goddess of monsters, Lamashtu, freed the first barghests from the kennels of Hell. The greatest among them still live in a section of the Abyss they claim as their territory. Goblin belief holds that the strongest of these barghests helped create goblinkind in time immemorial. Evil goblins, therefore, revere barghests as wicked hero-gods.

These fiends hunt and kill good-hearted humanoids to feed on the spiritual energy left within the corpses of such foes. Although a barghest might slay the innocent or weak, and even eat such prey, it gains the growth-inducing nourishment it seeks only from worthy opponents. Barghests commit atrocities to attract the attention of such would-be champions before murdering and devouring them, growing in size, magical power, and social standing with each success.

Masters of deception, barghests can transform into goblinoids or wolves at will. They use such forms to remain beneath notice to travel incognito or until ready to pounce. A typical barghest is 6 feet long and weighs 200 pounds. When it gains power, a barghest also gains size. The mightiest among them are twice the size of their lesser kin.



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ALIEN ARCHIVES

WOLDS

CARGO CREEP

CR
4

XP
1,200



N Medium aberration

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +10

DEFENSE

EAC 16; **KAC** 17

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

Defensive Abilities molecular mimicry; **DR** 5/–

Weaknesses vulnerable to acid

HP 46

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee tentacle +10 (1d4+5 B)

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

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +10 (+18 when climbing), Disguise +15 (+19 when imitating an appropriate material), Stealth +15 (+19 when in an appropriate environment), Survival +15

Languages Common (can't speak any language)

Other Abilities compression

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or pod (3–5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Molecular Mimicry (Ex) As a standard action, a cargo creep

can alter its physical composition to match a material within reach of its tentacle. When it does so, it gains a specific benefit and a vulnerability to a specific energy type based on the material. In addition, the cargo creep gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Disguise and Stealth checks when attempting to imitate or hide among that material, such as disguising itself as a metal plate in metallic form or hiding among plants in vegetation form. A cargo creep can match one of the following materials and can revert back to its default flesh state as a move action. The above cargo creep begins in its flesh state.

Flesh: When a cargo creep touches the flesh, fur, scales, or other skin covering of a creature, it gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Reflex saving throws and a vulnerability to acid.

Metallic: When a cargo creep touches worked metal, it gains DR 5/adamantine and a vulnerability to electricity.

Mineral: When a cargo creep touches natural, non-worked minerals such as stones and gems, it gains a +1 circumstance bonus to KAC and a vulnerability to sonic.

Synthetic: When a cargo creep touches material like fibers, plastics, and polymers, it gains a +1 circumstance bonus to EAC and a vulnerability to cold.

Vegetation: When a cargo creep touches natural plant matter (including that of plant creatures) or worked wood, it gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Fortitude saving throws and a vulnerability to fire.

The exact origin of cargo creeps is a mystery, though those who have seen them understand they are nuisances to crews of transport ships, especially those carrying the types of perishable goods that cargo creeps find delicious. A cargo creep vaguely resembles a cephalopod, with four large eyes and five tentacles that it uses for locomotion. The unusual cells in its skin allow a cargo creep to mimic any sort of material with uncanny accuracy, almost down to its molecular structure.

This allows a cargo creep to hide almost anywhere and easily slip into cargo holds in search for food. A cargo creep is generally quick to hide or flee at the first sign of danger, except when cornered, at which point it strikes out at anything that gets too close.



ONI, SPIRIT

CR
2XP
600

LE Tiny outsider (native, oni)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect magic*;**Perception** +7**DEFENSE**

HP 20

EAC 14; **KAC** 16**Fort** +1; **Ref** +6; **Will** +4**Defensive Abilities** fast healing 2**OFFENSE****Speed** 10 ft., fly 30 ft. (Su, average)**Melee** bite +8 (1d6 P) or

gore +8 (1d6 P plus oni venom)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 2nd)1/week—*contact other plane*1/day—*command* (DC 11), *invisibility* (self only)At will—*psychokinetic hand*Constant—*detect magic***STATISTICS****Str** -2; **Dex** +4; **Con** +1; **Int** +1; **Wis** +1; **Cha** +2**Skills** Acrobatics +12, Bluff +7, Mysticism +7, Sense

Motive +7, Stealth +12

Languages Common**Other Abilities** mask symbiosis**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary, pair, or rack (3-12)**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Mask Symbiosis (Ex) A spirit oni can be worn as a mask by a willing Small or Medium creature. While wearing the oni in this way, the wearer can see through the oni's eyes and speak through its mouth, although the wearer retains its own senses and voice. The oni grants its wearer a +2 insight bonus to Perception checks. The spirit oni remains a separate creature and must detach from the wearer's face (as a move action) if it wishes to take any action of its own (including attacking or using a spell-like ability).

ONI VENOM**Type** poison (injury); **Save** Fortitude DC 11**Track** Charisma (special); **Onset** 1 round; **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds**Effect** progression track is Healthy—Weakened—Impaired—Pliable; pliable is the end state.**Cure** 2 consecutive saves

While most oni transition from their spirit state to a physical form on their own, spirit oni are instead forced into their lesser forms through the work of evil spellcasters. These spellcasters perform a unique ritual that allows them to draw

upon an unmanifested spirit and bind it to a unique mask. These masks are key to these rituals and are usually crafted with fearsome and fiendish visages that resemble typical oni faces. If the spellcaster's ritual is successful, a spirit oni enters the mask and transforms it into an animated, living creature bound to the spellcaster.

The ritual to create the spirit oni robs the oni of the opportunity to ever coalesce into a humanoid form on its own and effectively traps it in the mask indefinitely. This leads many spirit oni to develop foul tempers and act abrasive toward others, including their masters. A spellcaster will often make use of their spirit oni's harsh nature by wearing the outsider as a mask to appear more intimidating. In cases where intimidation fails, such a spellcaster can then unleash the spirit oni against their foes. If a spirit oni's master dies, the oni is left to fend for itself and is free to live its own life. Spirit oni are cowardly and dishonorable creatures, however, and are usually quick to seek out other oni in hopes that these new masters would grant the spirit oni positions of power that befit their larger-than-life personalities.

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OF WORLDS

PROOG

CR
1/2

XP
200



N Tiny ooze

Init +3; **Senses** blindsight (life) 60 ft., sightless;

Perception +4

DEFENSE

HP 13

EAC 10; **KAC** 12

Fort +4; **Ref** +0; **Will** -2

Immunities acid, ooze immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee pseudopod +6 (1d6+1 B)

Space 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +4, Disguise +9, Stealth +4

Other Abilities mimic object, mindless

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or swarm (150–350)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

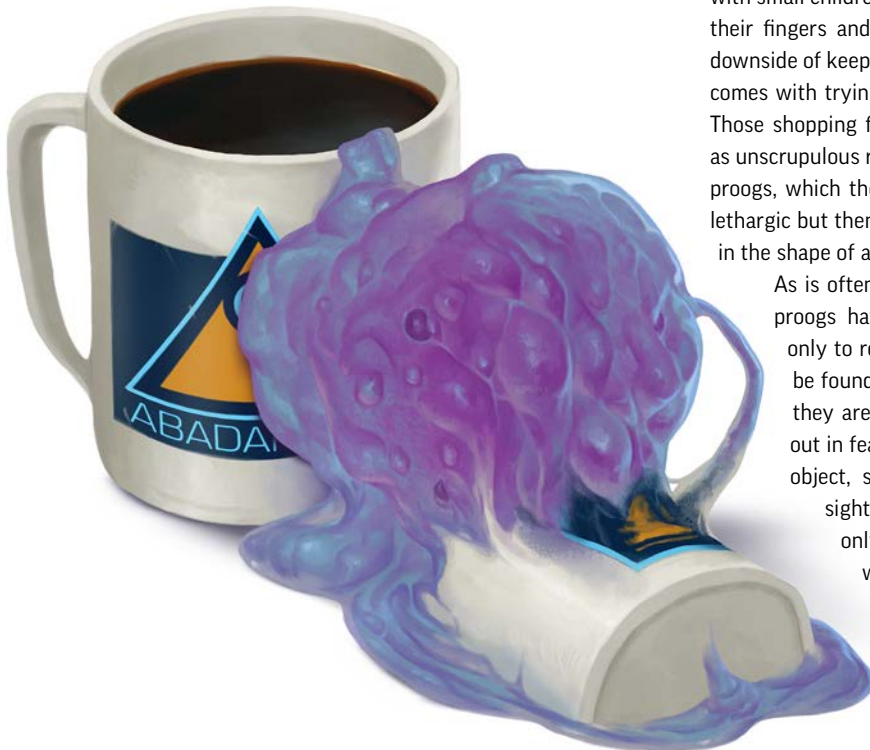
Mimic Object (Ex) A proog can look like any solid object of 1 bulk or less that it comes into contact with. It can't imitate such an item's function, moving parts, or the like. A creature that closely examines a mimicking proog can determine its true nature with a successful Perception check, but the proog gains a +10 bonus

to Disguise checks when imitating an object in this manner.

While sapient creatures throughout the galaxy consider most oozes to simply be disgusting monstrosities, the tiny proog is relatively harmless—at its worst a minor pest, and at times a pleasant companion or pet. According to records (or more precisely, the lack of records) proogs were first discovered, or possibly created, during the Gap. Today, they are known mostly as novelty companions, due to their diminutive size, gentle attitude, and ability to transform into small objects. Proogs can mimic objects with exact precision even though they have no eyes or other visual sensors, although scientists are still uncertain on how the oozes do so. Some believe proogs have psychic abilities, but others insist proogs are able to quickly analyze objects on a molecular level before adopting the new shape.

Regardless of the facts of a proog's biology, retailers are happy to sell them as pets, and a proog is perfectly content to be toted around in a small bag and fed the occasional table scrap. Proog companions (*Starfinder Alien Archive* 3 145) are surprisingly affectionate toward their masters and are easy to train, able to perform simple transformation tricks during which they adopt the shape of various small objects as instructed by their owners. Proogs are especially popular with small children, who delight in sliding the oozes through their fingers and watching them change colors. The only downside of keeping a proog companion is the nuisance that comes with trying to find a proog after it has misbehaved. Those shopping for a proog pet should be wary, however, as unscrupulous retailers have been caught selling imitation proogs, which the merchant insists are merely sleeping or lethargic but then are later discovered to be molded gelatin in the shape of a common household object.

As is often the case with small designer pets, many proogs have escaped their owners over the years only to reproduce in the wild. Untamed proogs can be found in a variety of environments, and though they are relatively harmless, they sometimes lash out in fear. A wild proog will transform into a small object, such as a coffee mug, and hide in plain sight. There it will remain for hours at a time, only moving to feed off discarded garbage when it is alone and unobserved. However, a proog's ability to mimic is not perfect, and their telltale sheen sometimes gives them away. Wild proogs are often discovered when they are accidentally dropped and, instead of shattering, the injured ooze scurries away to hide.



ROBOT, INCAPACITATOR

CR
3

XP
800



N Medium construct (technological)

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

Perception +8

DEFENSE

HP 40

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

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

Defensive Abilities integrated weapons, unflankable;

Immunities construct immunities

Weaknesses vulnerable to critical hits, vulnerable to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +12 (1d6+7 nonlethal B plus grab)

Ranged integrated voltaic anchor pistol +10 (1d6+3 nonlethal E; critical bind^{AR}) or stickybomb grenade I +10 (explode [10 ft., entangled 2d4 rounds, DC 12])

Offensive Abilities exploit advantage

STATISTICS

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

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +13, Intimidate +8

Languages Common

Other Abilities unliving

Gear voltaic anchor pistol^{AR} with 2 high-capacity batteries (40 charges each), stickybomb grenades I (2)

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or gang (3–8)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Exploit Advantage (Ex) When an incapacitator robot hits an entangled creature, it deals that target extra nonlethal damage equal to its CR (3 extra damage for most incapacitator robots).

Incapacitator robots are built to restrain and subdue, so they are popular among bounty hunters who want to bring quarry back alive and also among security forces with safety concerns. Their large, padded fists strike hard but focus on getting a subduing hold on targets and are designed to deal no lasting damage. When forced to deal with targets at a distance, the robots hurl stickybomb grenades to slow down their marks while closing to melee range. Barring that, integrated shock pistols allow the robots to use jolts of electricity that cause muscles to seize up. Specialized programming allows the robots to strike at a hampered target's weak points.

Most models of incapacitator robot are shaped like hemispheres balanced on four articulated legs. Two to three arms used for striking and grabbing jut from the hemisphere's top surface, along with an integrated weapon on a rotating turret. A single sensor bar runs the entire circumference of the robot's body and can see in every direction at once. These models stand about 5 feet tall, 5 feet long, and 5 feet wide. They can weigh up to 1 ton.

Some manufacturers build incapacitator robots, especially those used in public sectors, to have a more humanoid appearance. These may have friendly faces and a layer of soft, cushioning material enclosing the robot's frame. Sometimes colloquially referred to as "hugbots," these models can envelop their targets in a crushing embrace that can squeeze the breath (and consciousness) out of almost any living creature. The typical "hugbot" is about 7 feet tall and weighs 750 pounds.



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MYSTERY ADVENTURES

IN FROM THE COLD

ALIEN ARCHIVES

CODEX OF WORLDS

CODEx OF WORLDS

GADRAVEL

Planet of Ghosts

Diameter: $\times 3/4$; **Mass:** $\times 3/4$

Gravity: $\times 1-1/3$

Location: Near Space

Atmosphere: Thin

Day: 52 hours; **Year:** 523 days

By the time explorers affiliated with the Pact Worlds first came across the lonely, haunted planet of Gadrael on the frontier of Near Space, it was already an ancient graveyard. The trench-like scars across Gadrael, visible from space, hint at an ancient destruction wreaked by some unknown force or super weapon that also wiped out every living thing on the planet. In the decades since its rediscovery, the unquiet spirits of Gadrael's slaughtered populace have swallowed a dozen scientific research expeditions and countless opportunists and explorers. Scavengers come in search of forgotten technology or unclaimed plunder, while pirates seek refuge among the silent streets of abandoned cities, hoping to shake off pursuit by bounty hunters. Those who alight on the planet's surface and leave within an hour or two often escape with fantastic riches and intriguing components of baffling alien technology. Those who linger too long are devoured by the ghosts and remain on the planet for a torturous eternity.

Gadrael is the solitary world orbiting the star now identified as Iolanchee. Ruined temples at the center of several of the planet's cities seem to be dedicated to a small pantheon of unknown deities associated with the sun and Gadrael's four moons, now all gone. A jagged, spinning shard

of the largest of these satellites still orbits dangerously close to Gadrael's surface, while the other three crashed into the planet untold eons ago—presumably in the same cataclysm that devastated Gadrael—to carve the deep chasms that mar the landscape. Very little atmosphere remains, leaving Gadrael prey to countless meteorites and comet strikes that further push the planet toward oblivion.

In addition to these many craters, Gadrael's surface shows signs of being the center of a terrible conflict: constructed fortifications and trenches crisscross ancient battlefields, and pieces of technology that many believe came from engines of war litter the city streets. No one is certain if the populace fought among themselves or were conquered by an outside force. Beyond obscure illustrations in a few scattered texts whose strange characters defy translation, Gadrael's history has been lost. That said, anyone who ventures to the planet's surface soon gets to meet Gadrael's former inhabitants.

Gadrael's unquiet dead appear as floating, alien skulls cloaked in mantles of darkness. Under ordinary conditions, they seek only to consume the life force of visitors and add them to their undead legions, but scattered reports of unusual behavior toward explorers who bear *aeon stones* hints at an intriguing possibility regarding the doomed planet's fate, and the entity that may have delivered it. The ghosts of Gadrael treat anyone bearing an *aeon stone* with great reverence, and obey anyone with more than three *aeon stones* as if they were a great leader or even a god. Word of this unusual behavior has started to circulate among the criminals of Near Space, and more and more ships are venturing there every year with malicious intent.



NEXT MONTH

FLIGHT OF THE SLEEPERS

By Owen K.C. Stephens

After they escape the *Chimera*, the heroes find themselves trapped within a bizarre research facility. As they struggle against weird technology and runaway experiments, the heroes run across a group of elite Stewards agents who recruit the heroes to help them. In so doing, the PCs uncover a little truth and a lot more questions in need of answers!

THE ENIGMATIC GRAYS

By Vanessa Hoskins

The faction of the Unseen known as the grays seem content to observe and occasionally experiment on the other sapient species of the galaxy. But what is their ultimate goal?

FRINGE SCIENCE

By Leo Glass

While mainstream science focuses on provable answers, fringe science dares to ask the questions that many believe are foolish or patently absurd. This article presents a handful of these disciplines, as well as the results of their experiments!

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THE CHIMERA MYSTERY

CAMPAIGN OUTLINE

PART 1: BUILDING A MYSTERY

PART 2: THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

PART 3: CASE CLOSED

MYSTERY ADVENTURES

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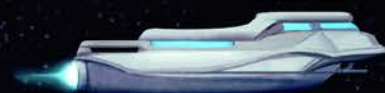
SANJAVAL PALANQUIN

MAP KEY

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Bridge | 12. Dining hall |
| 2. Secret passage | 13. Airlocks |
| 3. Crew quarters | 14. Guest quarters |
| 4. Ladders to middle and upper decks | 15. Escape pods |
| 5. Ladders to all decks | 16. Smuggler compartment |
| 6. Forward cargo airlocks | 17. Engineering |
| 7. Port cargo hold | 18. Incinerator |
| 8. Starboard cargo hold | 19. Power core |
| 9. Auxiliary gunner stations | 20. Drift engine |
| 10. Gym | 21. Thruster access |
| 11. Galley | |

MIDDLE DECK

PROFILE

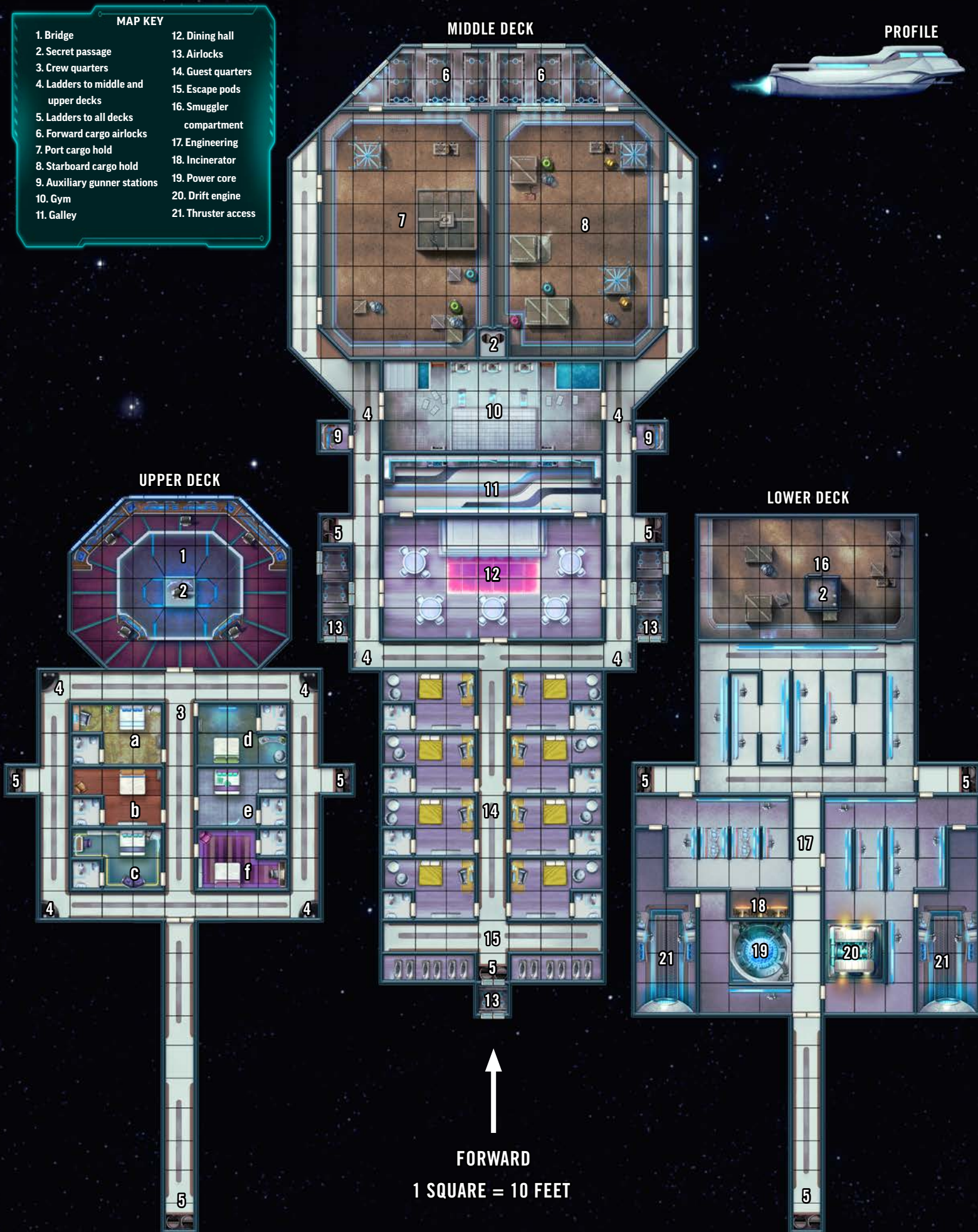


UPPER DECK

LOWER DECK

FORWARD

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET





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