

NUMENERA™

SLAVES OF THE MACHINE GOD



By Bruce R. Cordell





FM18



NUMENÉRA™

SLAVES OF THE
MACHINE GOD



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Printed in Canada



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GMING SLAVES OF THE MACHINE GOD



Slaves of the Machine God *actually comprises two adventures, which you can play separately or combine into one massive campaign.*

Slaves of the Machine God contains two separate adventures. The first adventure is called “Relics of the Machine,” and it takes up the largest portion of this book. The adventure consists of the instructions for running it plus eight chapters of the scenario and one chapter of repercussions. The adventure is one that allows PCs to range fairly widely around the Steadfast and even into the Beyond, which isn’t the kind of thing most people in the Ninth World could even imagine, let alone do. But in the end, perhaps the PCs will be able to prevent the rise of an army of powerful automatons and save a friend in the process.

The second adventure is called “Amber Keep.” This adventure consists of the instructions for running it and eight acts.

Combined Campaign Flowchart, page 6



Numenera Discovery



Numenera Destiny

Throughout this book, you’ll see page references to various items accompanied by these two symbols. These are page references to *Numenera Discovery* and *Numenera Destiny*, respectively, where you can find additional details about that rule, ability, creature, or concept. Often, it will be necessary to look up the referenced item to find information you need for character creation and gameplay. Other times, it’s not necessary to look up the item, but doing so can deepen your experience and understanding of the game and the setting.

“Amber Keep” is shorter than “Relics of the Machine,” but it’s a campaign arc in its own right. It’s primarily focused on characters who are tasked with setting up and protecting a new base, which the PCs can help to grow into a full-fledged community.

Though the two adventures can be run separately, they can also be fused together, creating a single expansive narrative. The two adventures feature different NPCs, locations, and plots, but they are written in such a way that they can be combined. By weaving the two storylines together, pace and tone can be varied over the much larger combined campaign arc, thus creating a more satisfying experience for both you and your players.

Note that “Relics of the Machine” is broken into eight *chapters*, while “Amber Keep” is described in eight *acts*. This organization makes it easier to run both adventures at the same time, making it less likely that you’ll get them mixed up. Having two different major sections in the same book both titled “Chapter 1” is a recipe for confusion. With chapters and acts, you always know where you are and what adventure you are GMing.

The [Combined Campaign Flowchart](#) provides one way to link the chapters and acts of the two adventures, but it’s not the only way. Once you read through this material, you might decide to use only some parts and hold back others or modify them to suit your own game. Either way, the introduction provided with each of the two adventures gives further suggestions on linking the two into one.

COMBINING TWO ADVENTURES TO MAKE ONE CAMPAIGN

The adventures “Relics of the Machine” and “Amber Keep” can be run separately. In fact, many chapters or acts in either can be run as stand-alone adventures if you need to run a game at a convention, at a game store, or for an online audience. But if you’ve got the time and the players, consider running *Slaves of the Machine God* as one large campaign, as shown on the Combined Campaign Flowchart. The sequence defined by the blue arrows is linear within each separate adventure, if you want to run those adventures separately. The sequence indicated by the yellow arrows is the preferred sequence for putting the chapters and acts together in a single combined campaign. Additional notes are also provided in the text of each chapter and act, signaling the preferred sequence or providing other useful directions for integration.

If you run the adventures separately but still want to use both as part of the same campaign, start with “Amber Keep” and follow up with “Relics of the Machine.”

REAL WORLD TIMING

Generally speaking, each of the chapters and acts will take about a four-hour gaming session to complete, though a couple could require two or three sessions, especially Chapter 7: The Howling Pyramid. The upshot is that if you’re combining both adventures, you can expect to play at least sixteen and possibly up to twenty sessions of *Slaves of the Machine God*.

TIER ADVANCEMENT

On average, PCs can expect to gain about one **character advancement** about every session. Four advancements means an upgraded tier. Thus, if you’re combining both adventures, you should expect some of your tier 1 PCs to advance to tier 2 by the end of Chapter 2: Prophet of the Machine God; to advance to tier 3 by the end of Act 4: The Weeping Tower; to advance to tier 4 by the end of Act 7: Meeting of Minds; and maybe to advance all the way to tier 5 as the PCs are concluding Act 8: Cloud of All Endings.



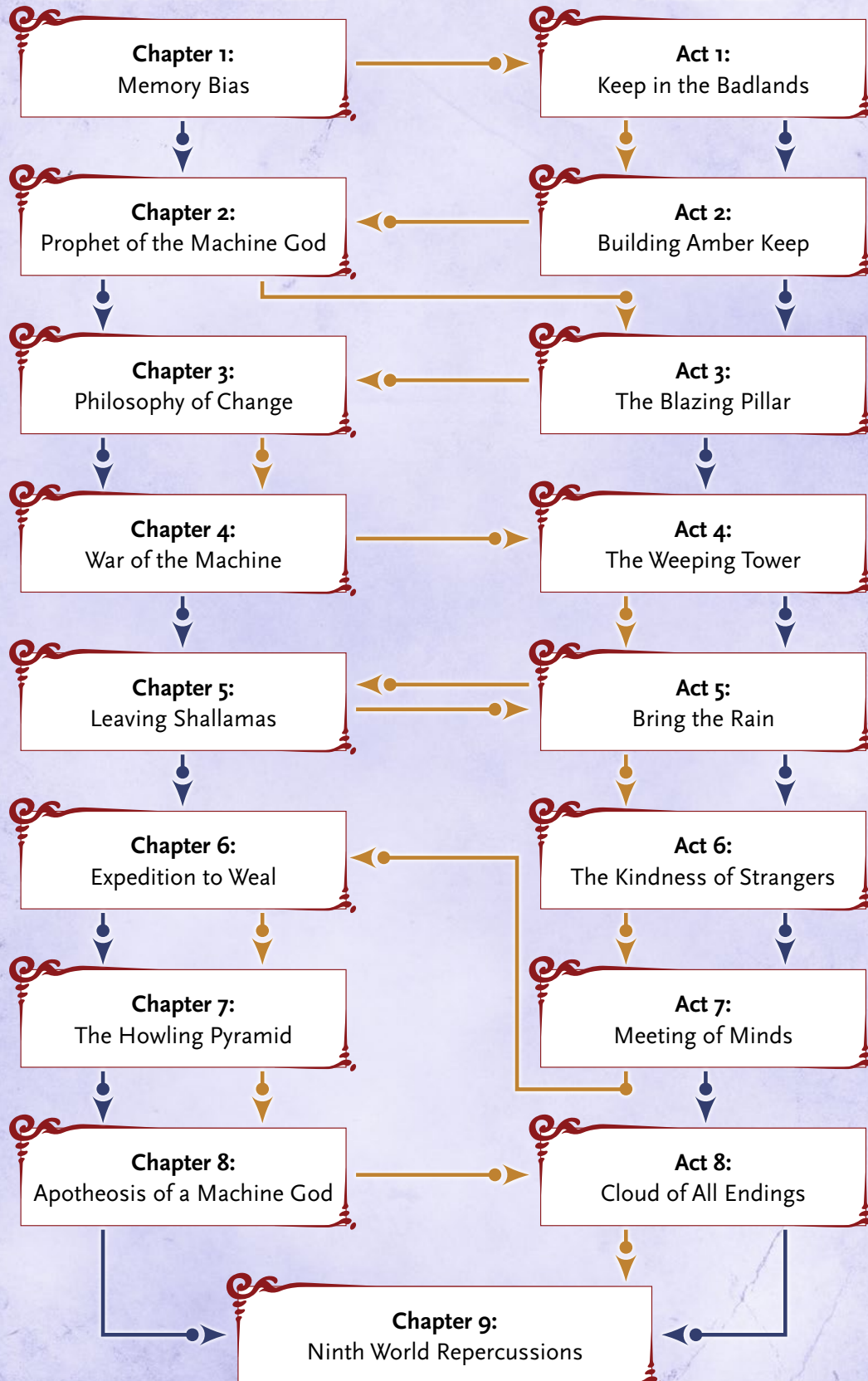
Character Advancement,
page 128



COMBINED CAMPAIGN FLOWCHART

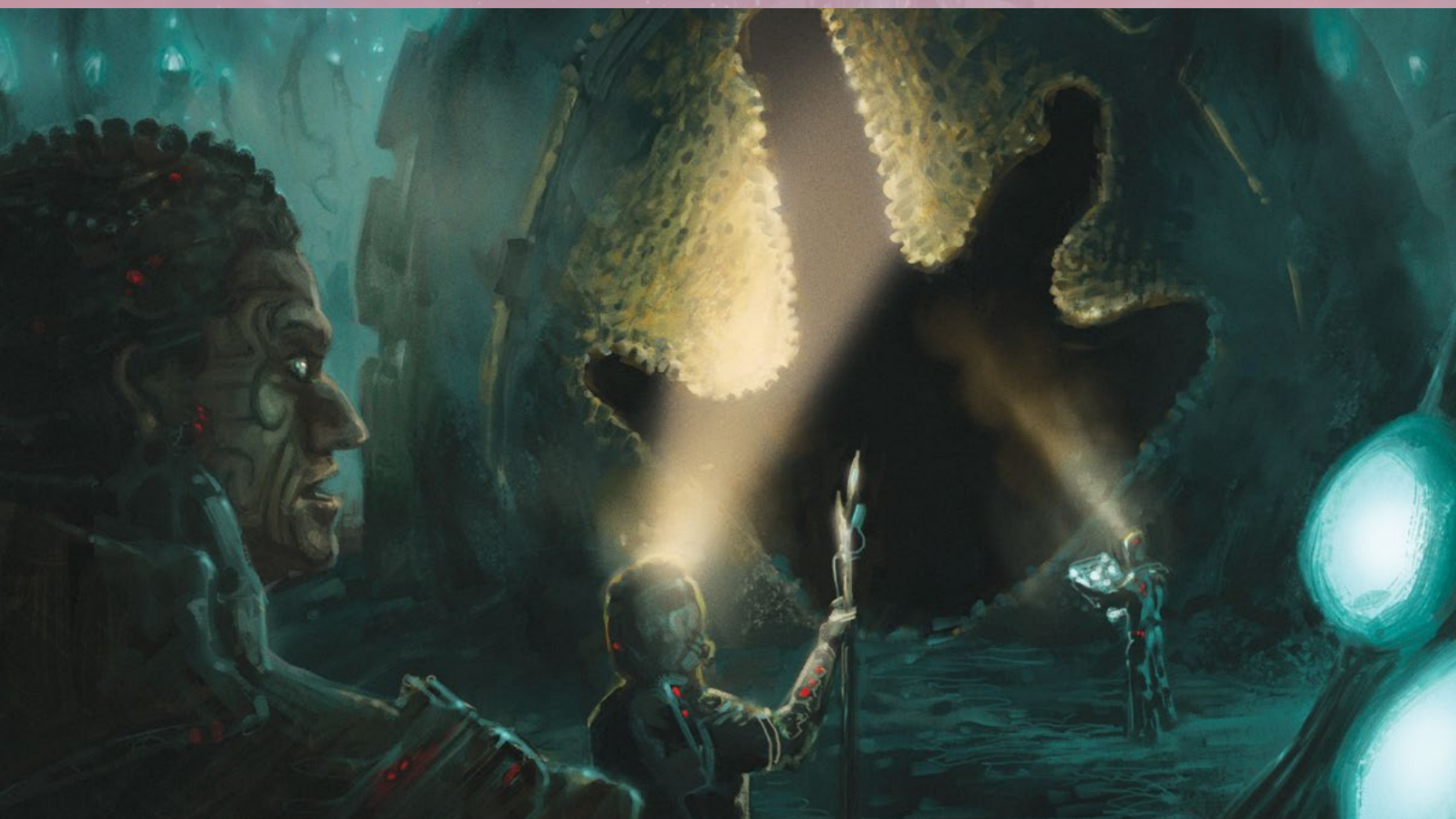
RELICS OF THE MACHINE

AMBER KEEP



PART 1:

RELICS OF THE MACHINE



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GMING RELICS OF THE MACHINE



Calaval is gone. Only one Aeon Priest ever came close to his knowledge and skills since then: Orstenia Myal. What wonders would Orstenia Myal have created if she hadn't disappeared before her prime? The Ninth World may never know, though some say that perhaps it's best if the fruits of her efforts never resurface.

~excerpt from The Chronicle of Truth

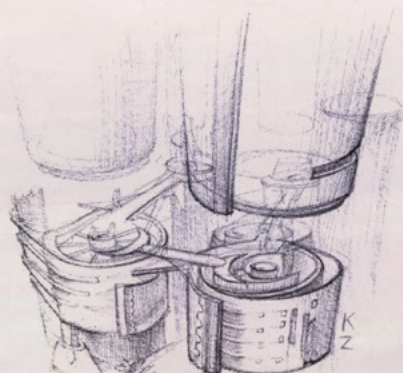
In “Relics of the Machine,” the PCs are drawn into a plot to reawaken an army of automatons that was built in secret to topple the Amber Papacy. The builder died before it could be used, and the army was lost from all knowledge. It remained so for almost a century, until now. To stop this legendary army’s march, the PCs must counter those who’d dare to wake the Machine God and the army of automatons slaved to it.

This adventure, already a campaign arc in its own right, could be combined with some or all of the acts of “Amber Keep” to extend the campaign even further. Doing so is a great way to vary the pace of “Relics of the Machine” in a fun way that encourages PCs to establish and expand a base all their own. Notes on how to best **combine the two adventures** are provided in the opening section.

*Combining Two
Adventures to Make
One Campaign, page 5*



Order of Truth, page 215



BACKGROUND

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Orstenia Myal survived an assassination attempt by the Amber Pope and created an overwhelming force of automatons called the Glistening Army to get her revenge.

About a century ago, Orstenia Myal was an Aeon Priest of uncommon talent, knowledge, and ability. She was so perspicacious that some said Calaval had somehow returned in her body. Then she disappeared, and most people never learned why. Over the course of the next few decades, Orstenia Myal’s name was forgotten.

However, the truth is more complex than a simple disappearance. As Orstenia’s fame grew, so did her pride. When her admirers suggested that she should be elevated to the position of Amber Pope, she didn’t dissuade them. But the **Order of Truth** already had an Amber Pope. His name was Acumen II.

Acumen II grew jealous of Orstenia’s celebrity, and fearful that she would oust him. So he moved to have her neutralized. He was successful, but only partially, because instead of killing his perceived rival, he merely badly hurt her. Orstenia managed to slip away.

The reigning Amber Pope grew even more paranoid, knowing that his actions had likely created a powerful enemy. But the

years passed without event. Orstenia never returned. Even so, Acumen's papacy lasted only a little while longer; the Order of Truth learned of other misdeeds he'd done to retain power, and he was involuntarily removed from his seat. Acumen II took the secret of what he'd done to Orstenia to his grave. His successor never heard the story, and over time, most people completely forgot about Orstenia Myal.

For her part, Orstenia didn't forget how Acumen II tried to assassinate

her. Enraged and dealing with an injury she received from the effort to kill her, Orstenia spent the next decade secreted away in the **Weal of Baz**, building an automaton army thousands strong. Using her own knowledge and relics taken from the prior worlds, she secreted the army within an artificial dimension contained in a crown-like headpiece she called the **Halo of Dominion**. She vowed that the army would be powerful enough to topple the Amber Papacy and bring the Order of Truth under her control.

She named her force the **Glistening Army**. Orstenia in turn hid the Halo in a structure called the **Howling Pyramid** that exists only when summoned. But the Glistening Army was never fielded. An accident befell Orstenia before she could activate and deploy it. Other than legends about a "Machine God" and the slaves who "worshiped" it, nothing came of Orstenia's efforts for nearly a century.

THIRTY YEARS AGO

After seventy years, chance revealed Orstenia Myal's plot to another, who schemed to seize the army for himself.

The Glistening Army was lost for seventy years, until a delve named **Ciszan** found the Howling Pyramid by lucky chance. He worked his way past the inconstant ruin's many defenses, and at its center, he found the Halo of Dominion. And within the Halo was the Glistening Army.

He also discovered the mummified body of Orstenia. Apparently, she'd succumbed to

a lingering injury stemming from Acumen II's original assassination attempt. The Order of Truth never realized how close it had come to being set upon by an almost unstoppable force.

Ciszan devoted himself to understanding the vast treasure that fate had granted him.

In that attempt, he activated a Halo function that "woke" nine of the automatons making up the Glistening Army. These nine attacked and wounded him,

driving him out of the Howling Pyramid. Hurt and no longer able to withstand the dangers of the ruin, he fled, suffering painful changes to his body and damage to his mind. He was sorely hurt, but he survived.

The nine automatons that had been activated followed Ciszan out of the Howling Pyramid. Four were destroyed by the pyramid's defenses, but five got away. The five surviving automatons gained self-consciousness and free will, though most could not recall from whence they came.

One took up philosophy as a hermit (**Chord**), another became a bandit lord (**Axis**), one a thief in Shallamas (**Origin**), one ended up in the Weal of Baz (**Root**), and one became a wandering mercenary (**Radius**) who the PCs meet early and perhaps befriend in **Chapter 1: Memory Bias**. Most have entirely forgotten their original purpose, though at least one suspects the truth. Whether knowing or ignorant, all contain the seed of a compulsion to join the automaton army, should the Machine God ever rise and call its slaves back to servitude.

A FEW YEARS AGO

Ciszan's mind was damaged and his body deformed by his time in the Howling Pyramid. That damage destroyed portions of his memory, including the location of the pyramid. But fragments of what he'd seen remained, and from those, Ciszan began the painstaking effort to rebuild what he'd forgotten. Thirty years ago, he happened upon the Glistening Army by chance. That glimpse provided enough clues for him

The Order of Truth was established by the original Amber Pope, High Father Calaval, about 400 years ago.

Weal of Baz, page 193

Halo of Dominion, page 95

Glistening Army, page 94

Howling Pyramid, page 74

Chord, page 45

Axis, page 49

Origin, page 60

Root, page 72

Radius, page 16

Chapter 1: Memory Bias, page 14

Ciszan, page 94



to begin a years-long research project—research that bore fruit!

Ciszan learned of Orstenia Myal's rise, of Acumen II's assassination attempt, of Orstenia's secret project to build an automaton army, and eventually, again discovered the entrance to the Howling Pyramid. Gaining entry, he once again made it to the center. Seizing the Halo, Ciszan proclaimed himself to be the Machine God!

There was just one problem. He couldn't wake the Glistening Army. Something was missing. Ciszan determined that the nine automatons he woke during his first visit had taken the means of controlling the army with them. He had the Halo of Dominion, but without that missing something (which he started calling "divine keys"), he could stir only a handful of automatons into action, and then only briefly after an exhausting expenditure of resources.

To truly command the Glistening Army, Ciszan needs to find what went missing. So he set out to find the five automatons who escaped the Halo. These "fallen angels," he's sure, will have the divine keys he requires to truly ascend.

RELICS OF THE MACHINE SYNOPSIS

As "Relics of the Machine" begins, the PCs have no idea how relatively minor thefts will eventually lead them into a series of momentous events that, if things go poorly, could prove a threat to human civilization in the Steadfast, including the Order of Truth itself, if the Glistening Army rises against them.

The PCs first become engaged in the larger plot by helping a friend named Radius deal with the exploits of a band of "mud-bird" thieves.

"Mud-bird" is another name for creatures that are also called *murden*s.



Murden, page 243



"Memories are required for self-consciousness to arise. They are the stories an individual tells themselves to sustain themselves from day to day and moment to moment."

~Orstenia Myal



CHAPTER 1: MEMORY BIAS

The PCs trail memory thieves to their lair, uncovering the first hint that a Machine God rises.

Mud-bird thieves are using an artifact that siphons memory from living creatures and machines as a way to accomplish more mundane thefts. The PCs and an NPC named **Radius** trail the mud-birds into a dangerous region—the **Mephitic Forest**—to the thieves' lair.

Dealing with the mud-birds allows the PCs to potentially reclaim a few lost memories, including those of the mercenary Radius. Radius is revealed to be a self-conscious and free-willed automaton (not a living creature, as some may have assumed before). All seems resolved, except for the question of where the thieves acquired the memory-stealing artifact in the first place. (The mud-birds got it from a self-proclaimed “prophet of the Machine God” whose corpse they retain. The corpse has a ring-like tattoo across her entire face.) The other lasting repercussion is that a surface memory returned to Radius triggers other, deeper memories that begin to trouble it.

That, and repercussions of the mud-birds' murder of the Machine God “prophet,” eventually lead to events described in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2: PROPHET OF THE MACHINE GOD

A Machine God prophet waylays a friend of the PCs to learn about a lost secret.

After some passage of time, the PCs realize that their friend Radius is nowhere to be found. Concerned PCs who track their friend down—with some sleuthing—discover that it has been dragged off to a strange location not far away called the **Kalpis**, which offers many dangers. Radius is eventually found within the Kalpis, being tortured by another tattooed Machine God prophet named Morigera.

Saving Radius means defeating the prophet, who claims to be one of several dispatched far and wide by the Machine God to find transgressors who stole something of great value. This particular prophet has two names on her list of transgressors to check on. One is Radius. The other is someone called Chord the Philosopher.

Chapter 1: Memory Bias, page 14

Chapter 2: Prophet of the Machine God, page 25

*Radius, page 16
Mephitic Forest, page 20*

Kalpis, page 27

Chapter 3: Philosophy of Change, page 34

Chapter 5: Leaving Shallamas, page 51



Delend—Under the Changing Moon, page 225

The Changing Moon, page 226



Shallamas, page 139

Chapter 4: War of the Machine, page 47

Chapter 6: Expedition to Weal, page 61

CHAPTER 3: PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE

The PCs travel to the Changing Moon to find Chord, also targeted by the Machine God.

The PCs decide (or are convinced) to visit an automaton named Chord, who resides in the community of **Delend** far to the north, over which looms an artificial structure known as the **Changing Moon**. There they discover that Chord is somewhere inside the constantly changing floating structure. Worse, a prophet-led group of Machine God cultists showed up recently, asking after Chord, then plunged into the floating structure to find it.

To find (and save) Chord, the PCs must partially explore the Changing Moon.

If Chord is found, the PCs discover that the automaton has a similar background as Radius, though it took up a different pursuit. It's also having strange dreams, which is why it entered the Changing Moon, searching for an "exotic intelligence" to help refine its mind and dredge up memories. The intelligence turns out to be of limited use, though it does provide a couple of clues.

apparently become a target for the forces riled up by the Machine God.

CHAPTER 5: LEAVING SHALLAMAS

The fourth of five automatons is revealed as a wasted, wrecked, and broken thing, but it has something the PCs need.

Another automaton sibling named Origin is discovered. Radius asks the PCs to help it locate Origin in a city called **Shallamas**.

Origin is difficult to find. A guild of thieves run by a woman named Selani offers to provide the PCs with Origin's location, but only if they accomplish a small task for her, which essentially involves thieving something from a collector's home.

As it turns out, what needs to be thieved

is Origin's head and upper torso, kept in a trophy case. Apparently, Origin had a run-in with the Machine God (Ciszan), who personally tracked

the automaton down and found its answers wanting. The only thing the PCs are able to gain from the automaton, apparently broken beyond recovery, is this warning: "Stop the Machine God or the Steadfast may fall to the Glistening Army."



"Even machines may love, and be loved."

~Orstenia Myal

CHAPTER 4: WAR OF THE MACHINE

The third of five automatons is revealed as a bandit king, laying siege to the PCs' home.

When the PCs return home, they find their community under siege by a horde commanded by the bandit king Axis. Axis is another of Radius's automaton siblings. On its waist it wears the severed head of still another Machine God prophet. When Axis learned that there was machine transcendence to be had, it decided that it should be the one to benefit. So it used the prophet's knowledge to look for other divine keys. That, plus Chord's efforts with the exotic intelligence from the Changing Moon, revealed to Axis where Radius considered its home to be.

If the PCs prove victorious, Axis is defeated. But now the PCs' community has

CHAPTER 6: EXPEDITION TO THE WEAL

The PCs discover Orstenia Myal's dusty workshop where she forged the Glistening Army in a manufactory hidden in the Weal of Baz. But once found, it's discovered to be empty.

Finding the last automaton using the machine channel that Radius shares with Chord and its other siblings proves impossible. Something's blocking a clear connection. But research eventually reveals that the strange cube provided by Origin encodes a complex embedded language, as well as a hidden symbol. The language describes the secret history of Orstenia Myal. The symbol depicts the legendary entity named Baz, and those bearing the cube can gain entry to a secret location in the Beyond called the

Weal of Baz where Orstenia supposedly built the Glistening Army. That reminds Radius of dreams it's been having of being one of many in a vast bowl-like chamber.

If the PCs travel to the Weal of Baz and gain entry, navigating the city of machines is somewhat complicated. But with some work, they eventually discover the shuttered manufactory where Orstenia assembled her automaton army. It's empty.

Empty except for a disassembled and dead Root. Root's scribbles in leaking automaton fluid introduces the PCs to the name Ciszán, and how the Ninth World may well teeter on the edge of welcoming a fully ascended Machine God whether it wants to or not.

CHAPTER 7: THE HOWLING PYRAMID

Entering and surviving the Howling Pyramid is supremely difficult, but not nearly as terrible as discovering Radius's secret.

Ciszán has returned to the Howling Pyramid, intent on salvaging four automatons (long inert siblings of Radius's) for divine keys. The PCs and Radius discovered the means to follow him thanks to a final message encoded by Root.

The bulk of this chapter describes the Howling Pyramid and the dangers facing PCs who try to make their way through this ancient, moon-sized artifact of the prior worlds where sound takes on whole new characteristics. The PCs may hope to stop Ciszán from salvaging some of the inert automatons. Each component salvaged gives Ciszán control over an additional number of automatons he can call from the Halo.

Even so, it's important to Radius that each of its siblings be found, if only so they can be put to rest with a word of remembrance. Each set of remains they find is another debt Radius feels it owes Ciszán.

CHAPTER 8: APOTHEOSIS OF A MACHINE GOD

The Machine God deploys the Glistening Army. Can the PCs talk their old friend around?

The PCs finally locate and confront Ciszán in the Howling Pyramid. Luckily, Ciszán hasn't

achieved the heights of power they might have feared. Even if he has all the divine keys and finishes his control scepter, it's not enough to command the full Glistening Army.

However, during this interaction, it's revealed that Radius is the Machine God. Once Radius gains the Halo, it can control all 3,100+ automatons nestled in the artificial space accessible through the Halo, deploying them as it wishes. It also gains power over other machines and automatons in range.

Radius's mood has grown darker over the months, and with the Halo, it seems to become someone with different values and goals (in fact, a hidden mechanical directive activates within it, set by Orstenia Myal). It deploys the Glistening Army of automatons outside the Weal of Baz, demanding that the community join the Machine God. Otherwise, the Weal will become the first of many places annihilated by the Glistening Army.

The PCs have a chance to intercede with their friend, even as two automaton armies engage in exploratory conflicts. The characters can try to talk Radius down and say that it doesn't have to follow the dusty instructions of a dead Aeon Priest. However poorly Orstenia was treated, it doesn't mean that the Glistening Army should be used to throw the Ninth World into war and destruction (or so they might argue, among other strategies). Part of Radius is sympathetic to that argument, but the automaton is not completely its own master.

Alternatively, the PCs can try to fight the Machine God, but that's a difficult task.

CHAPTER 9: NINTH WORLD REPERCUSSIONS

Options for the GM to wrap up the campaign are provided.

Is the Machine God defeated, neutralized, or reasoned with, or does it become a real force of terror, especially when it comes to Aeon Priests and those who'd defend the Amber Papacy? Various possibilities are discussed. This chapter likewise touches on repercussions following the final act in "Amber Keep."



Weal of Baz, page 193

Chapter 7: The Howling Pyramid, page 73

Chapter 9: Ninth World Repercussions, page 98

Chapter 8: Apotheosis of a Machine God, page 93

CHAPTER 1

MEMORY BIAS

*Memory collector,
page 19*

Mephitic Forest, page 20

Radius, page 16

*If you're running Slaves
of the Machine God
as a single adventure,
use Chapter 1: Memory
Bias before Act 1: Keep
in the Badlands; see the
Combined Campaign
Flowchart on page 6.*

*Act 1: Keep in the
Badlands, page 102*



*The Steadfast,
page 136*

Aian, page 159

Milave, page 158



*Amber Gleaners,
page 245*

*Zoyin: level 2, plant
knowledge and
healing as level 3*

In Chapter 1, mud-bird thieves are using an artifact called a **memory collector** that siphons memory from living creatures and machines as a way to accomplish more mundane thefts. The PCs and an NPC named Radius trail the mud-birds into a dangerous region—the **Mephitic Forest**—to the thieves' lair.

Dealing with the mud-birds allows the PCs to potentially reclaim a few lost memories, including memories of the mercenary **Radius**. Radius is revealed to be a self-conscious and free-willed automaton (not a living creature, as some may have assumed before). All seems resolved, except for the question of where the thieves acquired the memory-stealing artifact in the first place. (They got it from a self-proclaimed "prophet of the Machine God" whose corpse they retain. The corpse has a ring-like tattoo across her entire face.) The other lasting repercussion is that a surface memory returned to Radius triggers other, deeper memories that begin to trouble it.

STARTING LOCATIONS

Begin the adventure in a **Steadfast** community of your choice where the PCs have a few acquaintances. If you have no preference, start the PCs in the city of **Aian** in the land of **Milave**.

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

Regardless of what other connections the PCs might have, provide all of the characters with one additional connection: each PC has taken at least one or two small commissions for an organization known as the **Amber Gleaners**. (The Amber Gleaners are a network of scholars and explorers who share knowledge

about the paths they travel and what they explore, enabling trade routes and further exploration.) This means that apart from any other connections the PCs may share, they also have all met and even worked together on minor tasks (delivering a message to a nearby village, figuring out how to use an oddity, guarding a trade caravan for a few days, and so on). The PCs also made the acquaintance of several other NPCs, including a chiurgeon named Zoyin and a mercenary named Radius.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

The initial encounters are designed to draw the PCs into the larger plot a little at a time rather than immediately introducing them to the idea that a dangerous Machine God is gathering power. They can become involved in a variety of ways, including the methods provided below, as described under **Witnessing the Aftermath**, **Contracted**, and **A Request For Aid**.

WITNESSING THE AFTERMATH

One morning while engaged in a routine activity that has drawn the PCs together—such as breakfast—they see an acquaintance stagger down the street, head swiveling about as if everything is new and frightening, bumping into walls, and even upsetting a fruit-seller's stand.

The discombobulated person is an NPC the PCs know—someone you've previously introduced them to. Otherwise, the NPC is **Zoyin**, a chiurgeon, who the PCs know to be athletic and curious, and a member of the Amber Gleaners. If the characters investigate her odd behavior, read or paraphrase the following.

Zoyin backs away as you approach, hands up as if she expects an attack, head swiveling this way and that as if looking for somewhere to escape.

"Where am I?" she says. "What's my name? Who are you? Get away from me!"

Hurrying up from behind, from the same direction that Zoyin approached, is a large figure wearing a bright red cape, an irregularly shaped blade on their back, and full-body articulated armor. You recognize the figure as the mercenary named Radius.

Radius says, "Did they get you too, Zoyin?"

She looks up at Radius. "Who's Zoyin?"

The PCs should have at least some experience with Radius and maybe even know the mercenary as a friend. If not, Radius introduces itself to the PCs, but is more concerned about calming Zoyin and asks for the PCs' help in doing so. But as is already evident, Zoyin doesn't remember who the characters are either, even though they dealt with the chiurgeon in the past.

Working together, Radius and the PCs can calm Zoyin. Once she is less excitable, PCs who examine and question Zoyin can confirm that the woman is suffering from some terrible sort of amnesia. No additional answers are forthcoming from her.

But Radius knows more. The mercenary explains what it knows.

Radius says, "Zoyin and I were out patrolling beyond Aian's wall, as I sometimes do on behalf of some merchant or other, keeping an eye out for bandits. I saw that Zoyin was out early too, collecting plants. We waved at each other. I passed on. Then I heard her cry out. Retracing my path, I found her collapsed. Cloaked figures surrounded her. I realized the hunchbacked figures were mud-birds. So I charged. One produced a metal device that unleashed a shadow beam that struck me. I fell senseless.

When I returned to myself, the mud-birds were gone, as was my axe and all my shins. Also gone was my memory of my siblings. I have nine. I think. Maybe it was five? When I try to recall their names or faces, I can call up only a shimmer, a sense of incompleteness. Holes in my consciousness. And what was taken from Zoyin seems even more wide ranging.

CONTRACTED

The characters have been commissioned by a group called the Amber Gleaners to make an accurate map of nearby locations. The regions to be scouted and mapped include two sites: the Mephitic Forest and the Amaranth Forest that lies beyond it. The Amber Gleaners are most interested in information about ruins of the prior worlds, though of course all relevant information is welcome, including news regarding habitation by abhumans or other creatures.

If the PCs are contracted to map the area, they find Radius the mercenary also out exploring the regions, though for a very different reason: some of the mercenary's memories have been stolen, and Radius is looking for the thieves who siphoned them away. In this case, the PCs may not initially encounter Zoyin the chiurgeon as described under Witnessing the Aftermath.

Alternatively, the PCs can be drawn into the adventure by volunteering to help after witnessing the results of the memory thieves' heist.

A REQUEST FOR AID

If the PCs don't see Zoyin's memory-impaired stroll and have not already been introduced as friends—or at least friendly acquaintances—of Radius, then they are approached by Radius after the fact. Radius explains what happened to it and Zoyin, and asks for the PCs' help tracking down the mud-birds. Radius wants its stolen memories back, but things are much worse for Zoyin. It notes that if Zoyin's memories can't be returned, the woman's expertise as a chiurgeon will be lost, and she'll have to be retrained as if a child. Radius also promises the PCs a stash of 50 shins *each* if they help.

INVESTIGATING THE MEMORY THEFTS

If the PCs spend a day canvassing the community asking about mud-birds, unexplained instances of memory loss, or other odd happenings, they learn a few additional relevant facts. As the PCs learn more, they're eventually drawn to a public house called the Snug in the neighborhood



Radius: level 4, understanding and crafting numenera as level 5; Armor 3; regains 1 health per round from automatic self-repair functions even if reduced to less than 1 health

Memory collector, page 19

Chapter 5: Leaving Shallamas, page 51

RADIUS THE MERCENARY

Radius is an automaton, one built to resemble humans so well that it has been mistaken for one who wears full-body articulated armor and a dramatic red cape. It wields a massive axe. Some people refer to Radius as “he,” but the truth is that Radius is an automaton without a gender. Radius’s preferred pronouns are it/its. Some PCs may be initially unaware of Radius’s non-organic nature.

Radius quickly impresses compatriots with its bravery in the face of danger, its normally taciturn nature, and its way with the numenera despite its obvious skill with weapons. Though it makes its way in the Ninth World as a hired sword, it can also craft devices for specific needs.

Despite its reticence, Radius enjoys the company of others. The mercenary often shows up at gatherings to hear others talk, at public houses to take in the ambience, and even occasionally at places where spirits are served, though Radius never imbibes. Radius doesn’t go out of its way to reveal its machine ancestry, but if asked, it doesn’t shy away from confirming that it is made of metal and synth, not flesh and blood.

Radius recalls the last thirty years of its life knocking about the Steadfast, doing small jobs for pay, and not spending more than a few years in any one location.

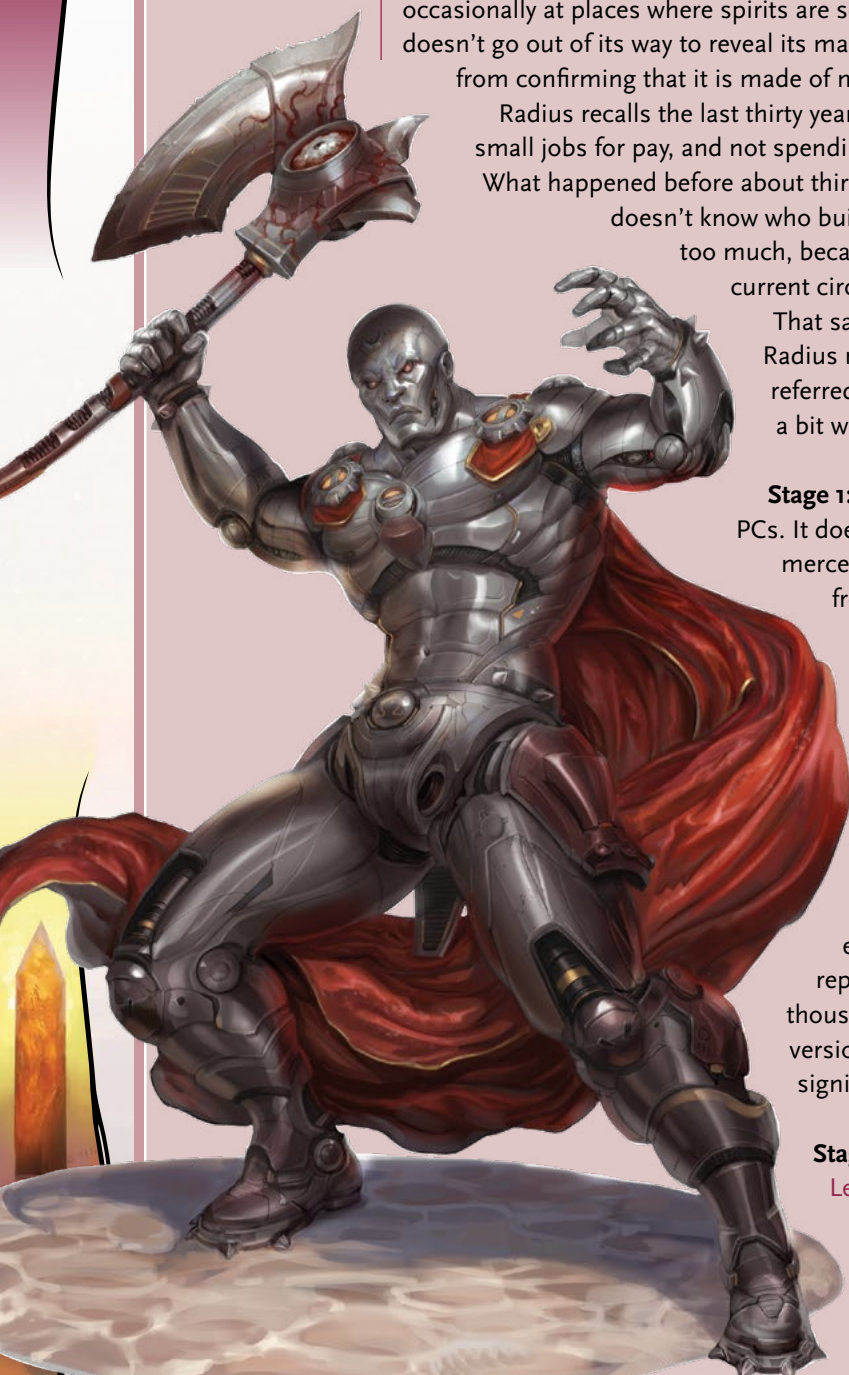
What happened before about thirty years ago, Radius can’t recall. The mercenary doesn’t know who built it, or why. Radius doesn’t dwell on its past too much, because the past doesn’t have much bearing on its current circumstances—or, at least, not as far as it can tell.

That said, at various points during the adventure, Radius regains previously lost memories. These are referred to as stages. The mercenary’s behavior changes a bit with each new stage that it reaches.

Stage 1: This is Radius’s initial state when meeting the PCs. It doesn’t remember being anything other than a mercenary, doesn’t remember where it originally came from, and doesn’t have much interest in learning.

Stage 2: After the **memory collector** artifact returns Radius’s stolen memories, it recalls that it *did* have nine siblings, though only five are still around. But it still can’t remember their names, where they’ve got to, or anything else about them. However, at Stage 2, Radius tells the PCs that it has started dreaming—which is a big deal, because it has never experienced such things before. The dream, which repeats thereafter, is of a haunted hollow filled with thousands of creatures that all seem to be another version of Radius. It doesn’t know what the dream signifies.

Stage 3: After the events described in **Chapter 5: Leaving Shallamas**, Radius becomes prickly and even irritable. It is sometimes sullen and unresponsive, other times given to angry outbursts.



of Highpoint, where they discover that a man named Federin has been, up until recently, secretly ferrying mud-birds into and out of Aian, as presented hereafter.

Skulkers: A couple of Aian guards admit to having seeing hunchbacked figures skulking around the bad parts of the city. Sightings started about a week ago, maybe two. It's possible these were the same creatures Radius encountered, though the descriptions remain vague. The guards and officials of Aian aren't really interested in looking into it further because the skulkers have not bothered the traders and merchants or the caravans that run in and out of the city. The guards' upkeep is paid for by Aian's oligarch council (who are elected and maintained by Aian's merchants). The upshot is that no one of any real wealth has been affected.

To the extent that the wealthy and powerful in the town are even aware of an issue (and that number is very small), they assume that tales of memory loss and strange figures in the shadows are just one more conspiracy theory that the poor tell each other about the well-to-do.

Memory Losses: Once the PCs start asking around, they learn that several people in the community have been complaining about forgetting things, especially in the less reputable parts of town.

Many of the complaints are minor, including forgetting things like appointments, what day it is, and obscure historical facts. One could argue that these are nothing more than natural lapses in recollection. However, a handful of memory losses are more significant, including the following specific things that people the PCs meet have forgotten. Each of these memory loss incidents is also paired with the loss of some kind of valuable, such as a purse filled with shins, an oddity of some value, or in some cases, a cypher or two.

Significant things forgotten include the following.

- The way home
- The victim's own name
- How to eat
- How to speak the Truth
- That they have a child

BAD PARTS OF AIAN

Bad parts of town have dangers of their own. PCs who set out to investigate other tales of memory-loss by questioning people in run-down areas of Aian must contend with such things, including a desperate **pickpocket** who tries to make off with something of value one character carries, an acrimonious gang of four or five **alley toughs** spoiling for a fight, and possibly a fake "seer" eager to tell the PCs what they think the characters want to hear in return for a few cyphers or other gifts. If so, present them as GM intrusions during the course of the PCs' investigation. They might not experience all of the encounters, depending on the flow of your game.

Pickpocket: level 2, tasks related to stealth and thievery as level 6; carries an oddity that chuckles, giggles, or laughs uproariously when handled

Alley tough: level 4; Armor 1; one uses a shard of strange metal as a dagger that is always cold as ice

Seer: level 3, deception as level 6

PCs who follow up on these incidents learn that all of the most severe cases seem to occur within a few blocks of each other, in a run-down neighborhood called Highpoint.

Tales of Deception: If the PCs investigate Highpoint, they quickly learn that there's only one place where people congregate: a public house called the Snug.

The Snug is essentially a long warehouse featuring a thick plank serving as a bar, at which stools and chairs are set. The drink of choice (and only thing on offer) is a bittersweet alcoholic cider served from great barrels in great tankards. About fifteen or so patrons can usually be found in the Snug, along with **Melly**, a silver-haired woman with deep laugh lines who runs the place. No one admits to suffering memory loss that's out of the ordinary for the hard-drinking, but one or two identify Federin as someone with a strange story. According to Melly, Federin turned from a life of steady work to one of dissipation almost overnight.

The PCs can piece together the following about the man by asking around. Federin has an aneen-pulled wagon that he used to drive into Aian every few days. From the wagon, he would sell white-leaved kaven fruit and other items grown on his farm. But that all changed about fifteen days

Melly: level 2, tasks related to positive social interaction as level 3



Aneen, page 225

Murden, page 243

GM intrusion: *The character feeling the static's effect hears strange voices, and a memory of something horrific that happened to them that they'd forgotten (or which they never actually experienced) stuns the character so much that they lose their next turn.*

Kauflin: level 2, tasks related to farming as level 4

Flock leader: level 5, otherwise as murder; wears memory collector artifact

ago. That's when he started showing up every evening at the Snug, where he drank himself into a near-comatose state. The next evening, he'd be back again, somehow having accumulated enough shins to pay for yet another prodigious amount of ale.

A couple of patrons say they saw short, cloaked figures arrive with Federin on his wagon, but didn't think too much about it. Sometimes travelers pay for rides into and out of Aian to avoid paying entry fees that the merchants have levied at the gates.

But Federin hasn't shown up for a few nights.

FEDERIN'S FARM

The truth is that Federin has become a victim of the mud-birds' memory theft. He's forgotten that he has a crop of kaven fruit, which now rots in the field outside his house. Not knowing what else to do, Federin was content to secretly drive several of the creatures who robbed him of his mind in and out of Aian in return for a handful of shins each trip, which Federin used to pay for drink. (Which of course only further impaired his ability to remember.)

Finding the Farm: Any plausible method the PCs use to figure out where Federin's farm is located succeeds, and the characters learn that the place is about a fifteen-minute walk down a dirt trail leading east away from the city on a rise.

For instance, if the PCs visit the nearby market where Federin used to sell his produce, another seller knows Federin: a man named **Kauflin** selling tasty red roots that curl and uncurl. Kauflin can be convinced to provide directions. He hasn't seen Federin for a few weeks.

Situation at the Farm: Federin's situation at the farm has gone from bad to worse.

A man, filthy and unmoving, lies before a small home. Several acres of field surround the house, overgrown with weeds and gnarled bushes from which overripe kaven fruit has dropped to the ground. A shed three times larger than the house stands next to the abandoned field.

It's easy to confirm that the man is dead, apparently having died of exposure and perhaps starvation, and though it's a little hard to tell from all the filth, the man matches whatever description the PCs had of Federin. But right about then, the characters hear a commotion in the shed. (The commotion happens sooner if PCs make for the shed before checking on the body.)

FLIGHT OF THE MUD-BIRDS

The shed doors fly open, revealing two **aneen** hitched to a large wagon. Seven hunchbacked forms cling to the wagon, and six more are deployed around it. The thirteen mud-birds (also called **murdens**), having decided they'd overstayed Federin's welcome, were preparing to return to their lair, after sending on an earlier wagon filled with the spoils of their most recent thefts. The PCs' arrival only hastens that decision.

Though the mud-birds probably outnumber the PCs, at this point their goal is to escape. If the characters confront or attack them, the six mud-birds that are deployed to guard the wagon (plus a few already on it, if necessary) engage the characters tactically, so that each PC has at least one enemy and maybe two to worry about.

The moment the PCs engage the mud-birds, they are assaulted by mental static that scrambles thought (the inadvertent, yet still-harmful effect of mud-bird mental communication). Creatures within immediate range must make an Intellect defense roll; if they fail, all of their actions are hindered while they're within immediate range of the creatures.

If the Mud-Birds Escape: The wagon jounces away across a field at a long distance each round, holding the mud-bird **flock leader** and several others whose only job is to see that the flock leader gets away. (The flock leader is larger than the others and wears the memory collector artifact.) This means that if any PC manages to give the slip to the mud-birds trying to slow them down, up to five more murders come off the fleeing wagon to engage (leaving one to drive and the flock leader). If a mobile PC manages to



MEMORY COLLECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 3

Minimum Crafting Level: 7

Wearable: Thick lenses built on a device worn on the upper face and eyes and a glove attached by thick cabling

Effect: User can selectively collect memories from a target touched with the glove. Any creature with memories, including intelligent machines, can be targeted. The user must specify the nature of the memory to be removed, such as “anything you know about automatons” or “everything that happened over the last minute,” or even “your name,” “how to speak,” and so on. Regardless of the memory stolen, the target typically falls unconscious for about an hour afterward or until roused. (Autonomic memories like “how to breathe” aren’t affected.)

Stolen memories are collected in a small synth pellet. Touching a memory pellet gives a preview of the memories contained therein, and if a creature touching a pellet wills it so, the memories in it are infused into the creature (and the synth pellet falls to dust).

Special: The memory collector doesn’t function on anyone wearing a tattoo on their face like the ones the prophets of the Machine God have.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

get on the wagon, the flock leader uses the memory collector on that character (and, if successful, pushes the unconscious victim off the moving wagon).

This *should* be enough to allow at least the flock leader to get away, in which case the wagon is driven several miles to the Mephitic Forest, and the mud-bird lair that lies within it.

If the Mud Birds Are Caught: If the PCs manage to catch the wagon and stop the flock leader from escaping, that’s fine. Just refer to **Mud-Bird Lair** for additional information about the situation and the murders’ acquisition of the memory collector. The wagon that the PCs catch contains two bags of loot, including 2d6 shins, two **cyphers**, and an **oddy**. A small bag also contains 6 synth pellets containing **random memories** stolen from people in Aian. All in all, it seems like an incredibly small haul for the amount of time the mud-birds were active.

Moreover, it soon becomes clear that the flock leader doesn’t have all the memories it stole. That’s because there were *two* wagons originally in the shed (as can be easily determined by checking). The other one already returned to the lair with the bulk of the loot stolen from Aian, as well as most of the memories. That includes Radius’s memories. Once this comes to light, Radius (and possibly one or more PCs) is strongly

Mud-Bird Lair, page 22

Cyphers

Level 4 injector: During the next minute, user gains three immediate rerolls of a failed roll.

Level 2 handheld device: Puts the user out of phase for one minute.

Oddy: White sphere that “purrs” when touched.

Random Memories in Memory Pellets, page 23

Don't show the players the art until their presence draws the attention of vesks, creatures that patrol the forest's edges.

incentivized to head to the lair to reclaim what was taken. If the PCs don't offer, Radius asks for their aid. (If a PC was pushed off the fleeing wagon after having an important memory stolen, they likely want the same.)

MEPHITIC FOREST

The rough track taken by the fleeing mud-bird thieves leads about 5 miles (8 km) through mostly natural terrain, though a few of the "boulders" poking up through the drit are composed of a pocked green metal and sing with a high-pitched tone when approached. The trail finally peters out at the edge of a strange forest. Read or paraphrase the following.

A forest composed of a single gargantuan tree floats over a wide valley, its thousands of boughs and leafy branches twining across the sky in spans so thick that different varieties of vegetation grow on some of them in pockets of collected soil and leaf litter. Myriad winged creatures, insects, and slithering snakes wend along the boughs.

Many tiny tendrils reach down from the floating forest, finding root in nooks and crannies of the valley floor, but there are also a handful of very large roots, one of which is wide, flat, and level enough to drive a wagon up. PCs who check can indeed find signs that at least one wagon (and perhaps two, if the mud-birds they encountered at Federin's farm got away) has recently been pulled up this particular woody bridge, which ascends 300 feet (90 m) up to the main forest mass.

Traveling up into the forest along the obvious, largest, and most level rootlet is a routine task. Of course, PCs could enter the floating forest by any number of other rootlets, though many are little better than rope-like vines. Getting up into the forest on one of these requires climbing tasks ranging from difficulty 3 to 5, depending on how minor a rootlet they choose. The most difficult methods of ascent (difficulty 5) are usually not guarded by vesks, creatures who claim the Mephitic Forest as their territory.



MEPHITIC FOREST CONDITIONS

The forest is essentially an ever-spreading network of reaching branches, leaves, and blossoms that is roughly 3,000 feet (900 m) in diameter whose bottom-most branches hang about 300 feet (90 m) above a deep valley. The forest is also home to hundreds of different kinds of creatures and other growths, mostly trivial and small, with a few notable exceptions.

Illumination: Directly under the forest, the light is just barely dim even in the middle of the day; only a few stray shafts of light occasionally find their way through the floating forest overhead. Within the forest itself, the light varies between dim and bright during the day.

That Smell: Part of the forest is always blooming, but strangely, the blooms vary from location to location, even though the forest appears to be a single gargantuan treelike organism. Some of the blooms give off a pleasant floral scent. Others emit a sickening reek. The combination usually comes across as unpleasant to those not used to it.

Falling Dangers: Except in a few designated areas, there isn't really any level ground in the forest. Instead, the "ground" is made up of what is essentially a network of rounded, sloping, irregular catwalks. PCs can move without risk of falling as a routine task that rarely requires a roll. However, if a PC is struck in combat, startled, or moved against their will, they risk falling. Introduce the risk as a GM intrusion with a difficulty to avoid falling equal to the effect or attack that instigated the risk.

Thankfully, even if PCs fall, there are so many branches beneath them that it's quite likely they'll fetch up on a lower branch long before emerging from the bottom of the forest and falling another 300 feet (90 m) to the valley floor. Those who fetch up suffer only 5 points of damage. Of course, this also risks separating PCs from each other, as the foliage can be quite thick.

MEPHITIC FOREST ENCOUNTERS

The PCs encounter some (or even all) of the following interesting and dangerous things while searching the forest for the mud-bird lair, starting with vesk sentries who watch the forest's edge.

Once the PCs enter the forest, tracking the mud-birds becomes more difficult (assuming they're using mundane tracking methods), requiring three successful difficulty 4 Intellect tasks, each taking about an hour. Each failure simply means another hour or so of wandering the tangled branches (and potentially another encounter with the dangers of the Mephitic Forest).

Vesk Sentries: The Mephitic Forest is home to creatures known as vesks. Patrols of four or five vesks watch the most obvious ways for intruders to enter the forest, including the path used by the mud-bird wagon(s) that the PCs followed to the gargantuan tree. Vesks are not usually interested in interaction, nor can they speak normal languages. They communicate with one another telepathically in a manner similar to mud-birds (which facilitated the two groups making common cause within the forest). They attempt to kill or drive off the PCs unless the characters have a compelling reason, gift, or other way to persuade the vesks to let them pass.

Each vesk has a biological connection to the tree: they are essentially free-willed and mobile seed-pods. While they look like humanoids from a distance, up close it's clear they are creatures of wood, bark, and vine. As the end of their lives approach, they pick a direction and trudge away from the valley, hoping they'll find a similarly good place to die, so that in death they will sprout a new Mephitic Forest.

But before that finality, they protect the tree in which they sprouted. When threatened (or if threatening an intruder), a vesk's automatic response is to stick out its tongue. A vesk's tongue appears as a huge multicolored flower that overwhelms the senses of those viewing it thanks to a coincident psychic discharge. Creatures within short range who see it must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense task or be stunned and lose their next turn. Once a

Vesk: level 3, perception as level 5; threat display (level 5) stuns victims who succumb so that they lose their next turn; spear attacks inflict 4 points of damage

creature has succumbed to this effect once, Intellect defense tasks to avoid the effect are eased by two steps.

Pitcher Slide: This area looks like any other branch but is slippery with oily slime. A creature that walks on it must succeed on a difficulty 4 Speed defense roll or slide down into the open mouth of a reservoir of acidic (and slippery) sap in a knothole. This inflicts 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) each round until the victim can escape (a difficulty 5 Might task).

Fuzz Flower: This beautiful bloom releases psychoactive pollen. Victims who fail a difficulty 3 Intellect roll become overexcited and rash, and unless restrained, they want to jump and run (which inevitably leads to a fall, or perhaps a series of them).

Bladder Flower: Here and there grow bladder flowers, which look like massive blooms growing from the top of thick yellow pods about 4 feet (1 m) in diameter. The pods pump out air to create a vacuum. Each pod has a small opening at the center of the flower, normally sealed. If a creature no larger than human-sized comes within immediate distance, the flower bobs forward and touches the target. On a failed difficulty 3 Might defense roll, the target is bodily sucked into the pod, where it is digested at the rate of 3 points of damage per round until it can escape the pod.

MUD-BIRD LAIR

The mud-bird lair is a large **nest** near the center of the Mephitic Forest. It looks something like a massive insect hive about 100 feet (30 m) in diameter with about twelve small exits at a variety of levels connecting to branches extending away in every direction. The nest is composed of a bark-and-sap slurry that has hardened into a very versatile building material that is resistant to burning.

Nest Layout: The nest contains two main chambers and several dozen tiny cells connected by winding passages around the periphery. The largest entrance into

the nest is centered on the largest support branch, and it opens directly into one of the two main chambers, a “warehouse” cavity containing one (or two) wagons as well as some nervous aneen tied to a branch. Beyond the warehouse is an equally large cavity that serves as the mud-bird community center, where most of the daily living activities of the flock occur. The several dozen tiny cells pocking the remainder of the nest’s interior are each about 6 feet (2 m) in diameter, connected by narrow tunnels about 5 feet (1.5 m) high.

The tunnels connecting the cells are trapped with pitcher slides, fuzz flowers, and bladder blooms, cunningly set so that fleeing mud-birds can lead pursuers to their dooms within the lightless interior while avoiding those same traps themselves. PCs may also stumble into one or more of these if they try sneaking into the nest.

Dealing With the Mud-Birds: About twenty-five mud-birds lair in the nest, though the PCs already encountered many of them (thirteen plus the flock leader) at Federin’s farm. How things went there determines how many remain for PCs to encounter here. If the flock leader didn’t make it back, another mud-bird steps into the role. About four vesks are also on hand at any given time, helping out and guarding the nest.

If the PCs inflicted serious harm on the mud-birds at Federin’s farm, seeing the PCs show up at their home greatly concerns the murdens. They are willing to negotiate, though given that mud-birds can’t speak (but instead talk to each other telepathically), the PCs would need a method to bridge that communication gap. (This mental communication inadvertently creates the mental static that is annoying and harmful to other nearby creatures.) If the PCs make a single difficulty 5 persuasion or intimidation task, the mud-birds turn over the stolen memories and a corpse with a strange tattoo on her face—a corpse they took the memory collector from, which they attempt to explain. If the PCs want more (as in all the other goods stolen), they’ll have to succeed on three difficulty 5 persuasion or intimidation tasks, and if they fail two before succeeding on three, the vesks and mud-

Mud-bird nest: level 3

birds attack, potentially using the memory collector artifact, too.

Alternatively, the PCs could simply attack the abhumans, in which case it's a no-holds-barred fight with elements of running through narrow, trap-filled tunnels to chase down mud-birds. Some murders might escape through the many exits all over the nest.

Other Loot: If the PCs are particularly convincing, or if they fight the mud-birds and win, they find all kinds of loot stolen from Aian distributed around the nest. That includes furniture, jewelry, about ten oddities, 200 shins, six cyphers, the stolen memories (as synth pellets in a large bag), and the tattooed corpse. The wagon and the two aneen who drew it are also technically loot, though the mud-birds are loath to return them.

Cyphers: The cyphers found include the following.

- **Level 7 bulky device:** Hides an area a very long distance across from external visual detection for 28 hours.
- **Level 4 badge:** User eases all Intellect defense rolls for 28 hours.
- **Level 5 metallic orb:** For three days, user gains a corpse-like pallor and does not need to breathe.
- **Level 10 handheld device:** Suppresses an instance of *iron wind* for ten hours.
- **Level 3 handheld device:** One object or creature is preserved in perfect stasis for up to one month.

Level 4 handheld device: Duplicates something no larger than something the user can hold in one hand.

Stolen Memories: A large bag in the flock leader's cell contains about thirty synth pellets, each holding a stolen memory. Radius's stolen memory is in this batch. The memories stolen are random. If you wish, you can use the following table to generate memories the PCs find among the synth pellets, or as inspiration for memories that you make up. It's up to the PC whether they wish to find the victims and return the memories.

The memory of training in a particular task counts as actual training for a PC who absorbs that memory, which means if a PC is already trained in that task, they become specialized. A PC can never gain more than one additional training per tier in this fashion.

If an incompatible memory is absorbed (such as the knowledge that your name is something other than what it actually is), there is a chance that the PC could develop a few mental tics, which the GM is free to elaborate on using GM intrusions.



Iron wind, page 135

d10 Random Memories in Memory Pellets

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | The memory of someone's favorite color: red like blood from a fresh-made wound |
| 2 | Training in balancing |
| 3 | The smell after a rainstorm when everything is quiet once again |
| 4 | The death of a child named Mirchel in a random accident in the street |
| 5 | The exacting and incomprehensible procedure a machine would use to purify water |
| 6 | Training in handling animals |
| 7 | When you were a judgmental ass and refused to see it until you ruined a relationship |
| 8 | Training in playing the shandar, a stringed instrument |
| 9 | How to speak the Truth |
| 10 | That your name is Lui Norrol |

Tattooed Corpse: The mud-birds keep the corpse of the woman who originally wielded the memory collector artifact. The corpse has been preserved in hardened translucent tree sap, though a ring-like tattoo on the woman's face—running across her forehead, arching down her cheeks, and connecting under her chin—is visible. The tattoo art depicts a ring that is apparently composed of tiny cogs and mechanical parts.

With the corpse is a journal associated with the woman. The ragged book is somewhat difficult to follow because the writer was either a bit insane or constantly feeling the effect of some kind of mind-altering drug. However, perusing it over the course of about an hour provides the PCs with the following information.

The journal was written by “The fourth prophet of the Machine God” (as the woman names herself). It's unlikely that any PC has heard of the Machine God before this moment.



Act 1: Keep in the Badlands, page 102

The memory collector artifact is a “relic of the Machine God” that was given to the prophet so that she might question machines across the Steadfast and Beyond, looking for something of great importance that the Machine God wants, which she calls the divine key.

The prophet had come down sick with some kind of fever (possibly from ingesting memories that were inconsistent with her own mind). At the end she was lost, delirious, and convinced she would die alone, without the grace of the Machine God to raise her spirit back.

Radius's Returned Memories: Among the recovered pellets are those taken from Radius, which it can recognize with a touch. Once returned, the memories confirm that Radius is one of five surviving siblings, each having gone their own way decades earlier. But it remembers no more than that; apparently Radius had previously forgotten their names, where they (and it) came from, and who made them. That gap hadn't previously troubled Radius, because it never really thought about its life before the present.

But after reabsorbing this fundamentally meager memory, it can't help but wonder why its relative lack of information about its own origin didn't previously bother it. If the PCs ask, Radius says it must think on what it has learned. In any case, it begins to brood.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for tracking the mud-birds to Federin's farm and 1 XP each for tracking them to their nest in the Mephitic Forest. Each PC gains an additional 1 XP if they make a concerted effort to return all the memories they can to the Aian townspeople.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining “Amber Keep” with “Relics of the Machine,” proceed to **Act 1: Keep in the Badlands**, which describes a traveling party that comes to town as Radius begins working on its vehicle as described in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

PROPHET OF THE MACHINE GOD

SYNOPSIS

After some passage of time, the PCs realize that their friend **Radius** is nowhere to be found. Concerned PCs who track their friend down—with some sleuthing—discover that it has been dragged off to a strange location not far away called the Kalpis, which offers many dangers. Radius is eventually found within the Kalpis, being tortured by another tattooed Machine God prophet named **Morigera**.

Saving Radius means defeating the prophet, who claims to be one of several dispatched far and wide by the Machine God to find transgressors who stole something of great value. This particular prophet has two names on her list of transgressors to check on. One is Radius. The other is someone called Chord the Philosopher.

The PCs discover that Chord the Philosopher lives under something called the **Changing Moon**, which is not especially close. PCs would have to find, borrow, or craft a vehicle or some other means to go there if they want to investigate further. Radius plans on it and sets to work repairing a disabled vehicle that it owns, which will take several days to complete.

STARTING LOCATIONS

The PCs are located either in Amber Keep, following the events of **Act 2: Building Amber Keep**, or in some other community of your choice where they befriended Radius.

ANYONE SEEN RADIUS LATELY?

A few weeks (to a few months, depending on PC activities) after the characters quashed a mud-bird memory-stealing spree, Radius goes missing. Before that, Radius was as thick with the PCs as they allowed, possibly even joining the group as an allied NPC (not as a follower).

Alternatively, have the PCs encounter Radius from time to time. For instance, tell the PCs that Radius is periodically seen at the public house, especially on nights when entertainment in the form of music or singing is provided. (The PCs may already frequent a named public house where they sometimes see Radius. If not, it's called Freehouse—ironic, perhaps, because what can be had on tap is never free.)

THE DISAPPEARANCE

It's likely the PCs don't immediately realize that Radius has gone missing. Introduce the characters to the idea in one of the following ways, or come up with one of your own.

Missed Appointment: If the PCs set up a time for everyone to meet (either as a one-off or because it's something they regularly do), Radius fails to show up.

Note From Radius: If the PCs haven't proactively called a meeting, they receive a note from the automaton asking to meet at a convenient location. The note mentions that Radius has something of special importance to tell its friends. But the mercenary misses the meeting.

Radius, page 16

Morigera, page 32



The Changing Moon, page 226

If you're running Slaves of the Machine God as a single adventure, use Act 1: Keep in the Badlands and Act 2: Building Amber Keep before running the material in this chapter; see the Combined Campaign Flowchart on page 6.

Act 2: Building Amber Keep, page 109

Reports of Mischief: The PCs hear reports of a disturbance, but a day late. If they investigate, they find Radius's small home empty and in disarray, as if some kind of scuffle occurred.

THE INVESTIGATION

PCs concerned with Radius's whereabouts have several possible ways to proceed.

RADIUS'S HOME

Radius has a small one-room cottage, and the PCs either know where it is or can find it easily. If they investigate, they find that the automaton is not home. The room is in disarray, as if it had hosted a scuffle. A shelf is knocked over, as is a table, and a box of light tools lies scattered across the floor. A close investigation turns up the following items of interest.

Oddity: Plastic bottle containing a spray that cleans metallic surfaces to a brilliant shine.

Oddity: Small mirrored cube that shows any organic face as if an automaton, and an automaton face as if a living creature.

Journal: Written by Radius, begun only recently. It seems to be a dream diary. The initial entries describe how Radius is amazed that it has begun to dream, because it couldn't ever remember having them before. Later entries recount the exact same dream, of a haunted hollow filled with thousands of creatures that all seem to be another version of Radius. Many of these entries end with "What does it mean?"

ASKING AROUND ABOUT RADIUS

PCs who spend time asking other community residents about the last time they remember seeing Radius can attempt a difficulty 4 interaction task. (The task difficulty is not because people don't want to help, especially if the PCs are part of a small community, but more to see if the PCs can jog memories in a way that produces useful information.)

On a success, an NPC named **Kadri** remembers something of note: "I saw Radius walking with someone in a red hood and robes a couple days ago. I didn't think anything of it, other than that the hooded stranger seemed upset about something. The stranger was gesticulating dramatically, as if trying to

convince Radius of something. They were too far away for me to hear, and I never did figure out who was in the hood."

STRANGERS IN A SMALL SETTLEMENT

If the PCs are located in a small settlement like newly established Amber Keep, strangers are more noticeable than in a large community like Aian where it's expected that most of the people you see will be strangers. In Amber Keep, tasks related to investigating strangers are eased.

ASKING AROUND ABOUT STRANGERS

PCs who spend time asking other community residents whether they've seen any strangers, or anything else out of the ordinary for that matter, can attempt a difficulty 4 interaction task. (The task is eased if the PCs specify a "stranger in a red hood and robes.")

On a success, they learn of a few sightings. Apparently, such a person came to town "about ten days ago" and started asking around about Radius, saying that she had a commission for him. Of course, no one saw any reason not to point her to the mercenary's home.

More significantly, an NPC wright named **Visso** recalls something odd: "A woman in a red robe came into my workshop over a week ago. I sold her my old box of light tools for a few shins. Just making conversation, I asked if she was looking to settle down here.

She laughed, said no, but volunteered that she wanted to do some salvaging, and wondered if I knew someplace that no one in town already had claims on. Maybe even a place that most people would prefer to avoid.

I mentioned the Kalpis, but of course, warned her she should probably steer clear. Oh, and this was interesting—she had a tattoo of a machine wheel across her entire face."

If the PCs recall, they found a corpse with a tattoo just like Visso describes in Chapter 1: Memory Bias. However, Visso doesn't know any more than what he saw. If asked to speculate, he suspects that the woman was headed for the Kalpis.

Visso: level 2, carpentry and crafting numenera as level 3

Kadri is a diplomat. He is broad-faced and stout. He likes to make jokes about the food and weather.

Kadri: level 2, positive social interaction and resisting deception as level 3

THE TRUE COURSE OF EVENTS

The PCs may have additional means to investigate, including cyphers or other abilities that grant them knowledge. In this case, they might learn that a woman with a Machine God tattoo and red robes—another prophet of the Machine God—came to the community ten days earlier, along with a few other travelers she wasn't associated with (who joined the labor pool).

In truth, this was the prophet Morigera. After first confirming that Radius was present in town, Morigera decided she needed someplace nearby where no one was likely to interrupt her. She settled on the Kalpis, which she investigated to see if it would suit. After she negotiated a truce of non-interference with the creatures that laired there, she returned to nab Radius. She first tried to “hire” Radius to come with her to the Kalpis, but when it refused, she used an artifact to gain crude control of the mercenary (though a brief struggle ensued before she was successful). She and the subdued Radius walked out of town to the Kalpis, where she began to interrogate the automaton with no interruptions.

THE KALPIS

The PCs know about a ruin known locally as the Kalpis, which lies about a half-hour's walk beyond town. The Kalpis is a rocky eruption from the land that externally resembles a gargantuan water jar. Everyone generally steers clear of it, despite some obvious hallmarks of prior-world technology, because ninety percent of those who entered got lost and never emerged again.

The few people who did make it out describe it as an ever-changing place that seems to have a mind of its own, a mind set on destroying intruders. One minute the floor is solid, and the next it's an abyss. A corridor that explorers used to gain entry suddenly becomes a solid wall. Chalk marks and other navigational aids simply disappear. And so on.

KALPIS DETAILS

The external formation is about 600 feet (180 m) in diameter at its widest, and stands about 800 feet (240 m) high. Despite

the water jar-like appearance, the top does not open into a hollow interior. Instead, the summit is rocky but for a few metallic protuberances, and is home to minor rock vermin that scurry away from explorers on hundreds of tiny legs. The material composing the Kalpis resembles stone, but it's actually a composite of a shaped rocky matrix that is reinforced with a webwork of **pliable metal**. (Attempts could be made to salvage the pliable metal directly from the exterior, but the surrounding rocky matrix makes that incredibly difficult, hindering salvage tasks by four steps.)

A group of five intelligent insect-like creatures called **oniscids** lair inside the Kalpis. Thus far, they've managed to keep their presence secret, though Morigera discovered them recently. So they made a pact with the prophet of the Machine God, allowing her access in return for gifts of technology she provided. That said, the oniscids would be equally likely to negotiate with PCs who try to talk with them, assuming the characters can first open communication with them and then promise something of such value that the xenophobic creatures agree to help rather than harm the PCs.



Pliable metal, page 112

Oniscid, page 269



KALPIS ENTRANCE

A perfectly circular discoloration about 20 feet (6 m) in diameter serves as the entrance to anyone who knows how to trigger it, or to those who succeed on a difficulty 5 understanding numenera task. If successful, a 30-foot (9 m) long cylindrical plug of rock phases into translucent immateriality for about a minute, allowing access into the interior. After that, anything within the entrance tunnel is pushed into the interior as the plug comes back into phase.

PCs looking for signs of recent usage or activity around the entrance who succeed on a difficulty 5 perception task do find two sets of prints, one of which could certainly be Radius's massive treads, and another smaller, human-sized set.

A similar patch on the inside can be triggered to recreate the entrance corridor, though it's harder to find that discolored

area on the inside wall, which PCs may note. But even if they leave chalk marks or other identifying signs to trace their way back, the oniscids do their best to erase or alter those signs when the intruders are elsewhere.

KALPIS INTERIOR

The vast bowl-like space of the interior resembles an otherworldly columned hall fallen to ruin.

In addition to the glowing globes and nodules, pools of water formed from condensation appear here and there, and they are drinkable. Algae of various kinds grows on the nodules and columns, and someone hungry enough could eat it. Despite the taste, it's quite nutritious. As a matter of fact, the algae is what normally sustains the oniscids that lair in the Kalpis. It is also the food source that the prophet of the Machine God has been relying on while she interrogates Radius.



KALPIS INTERIOR ENCOUNTERS

The PCs encounter some of the following things while searching the interior of the formation. Use the Kalpis side of the poster map to track their exploration of the interior of the great structure.

Alternatively, or concurrently, allow the PCs to explore by attempting a series of tracking tasks. That said, tracking Morigera and Radius in the interior is more difficult than it would otherwise be because of oniscid antics. Don't tell the PCs the task difficulty they need to succeed at to track Radius (if that's something you normally do). To track their quarry to the correct hollow nodule, PCs must succeed on three difficulty 6 Intellect tasks, each taking about an hour. Each failure means another hour or so of wandering the interior, though they may initially think they've found something encouraging, thanks to oniscid misdirection.

ONISCID MISDIRECTION

Straightforward exploration means that PCs will find a lot of nodules that don't contain Radius. The same is true for each failed attempt to track Radius, and even on successful ones that are building up to the third and final success. Sometimes that's just geography or because tracking is difficult, but other times it's because they followed misleading evidence to a nodule where the **oniscids** staged the area to look enticing to intruders. In the latter case, the area is actually dangerous in some fashion.

One or two oniscids (of the five who lair in the Kalpis) covertly follow the PCs, watching to see how the characters interact with dangerous areas. This means that particularly perceptive PCs who have reason to suspect they are being toyed with have a chance to spy their tormentors and, if they're quick, catch one for questioning before it slips away in the haze. (But don't forget that oniscids communicate via subsonic vibration, so the PCs must come up with a more innovative way to speak.)

If the PCs decide to leave the Kalpis, nearby hiding oniscids attempt to lead them astray in a variety of ways, usually involving making whichever PC is serving as the navigator see things that aren't there, miss seeing things that would otherwise lead

them out, hallucinate routes across pools or clefts that aren't actually there, and so on.

LOCATIONS

Explorers find the following large nodules studding the floor of the Kalpis, each about 30 feet (9 m) in diameter on the inside with only a single opening. On a failed tracking roll, the PCs also trigger the associated oniscid misdirection, which (usually) requires that the affected PC make an Intellect defense roll or see something that isn't actually there. Sometimes the creatures attempt to sway PCs away from entering a particular nodule, too, depending on the contents.

Salvage Options: Some of the nodule contents contain materials or devices that could be salvaged, at your option, including all discoveries that are obviously some kind of machine or device. Treat **salvage sources** as if level 5.

1. KALPIS ENTRANCE

Read or paraphrase the following.

Irregular columns studded with veined globes of blue light support a great chamber. The profusion of columns and light mist limits vision to a short distance in any one direction. Free-floating orbs, trailed by vein-like stony growths, slowly rise and fall. Here and there, massive nodules protrude from the irregular ground, each one set with a single dark opening.

It is immediately and noticeably cooler if the PCs enter the Kalpis interior, and the slight smell of brine, like the sea, wafts upon faint breezes that move through the air.

2. POOL OF MIMICRY

Fluid fills the center of the nodule. A portion of it rises up, taking on a three-dimensional liquid shape that vaguely resembles the nearest creature that comes within 20 feet (6 m). The shape exactly mimics the movement of the PC's upper torso, though it doesn't move from the edge of the pool. If a PC moves to the edge of the pool, the shape stops mimicking and instead attacks as if a level 5 creature, attempting to draw in and



Salvage sources,
page 108



Oniscid, page 269

Ixobrychid: level 7, all numenera tasks as level 9; health 28; moves a long distance each round; makes four attacks as a single action; targets suffer 7 points of damage and must succeed on an Intellect defense task or be stunned and lose next action; for more details, see Ninth World Bestiary 2, page 73

drown the PC (so it can get any metal the PC has and absorb it from the corpse).

Oniscid misdirection: The affected PC sees the shape hold out what is clearly a cypher, as if attempting to give it to the PC as a peace offering.

3. IMPLANTATION SPIRITS

Metallic knobs, each about 2 feet (60 cm) across, are attached to walls in serried, wavy lines. Each is a discrete device that can be detached from the wall simply by lifting it free. If one is lifted off, it immediately phases and dives into the body of the character who took it, disappearing. There it waits, though for what isn't obvious.

Oniscid misdirection: Faint markings, as if something large were dragged into this nodule, appear outside the nodule.

4. BRILLIANT NODULE

A machine hangs from the ceiling of this nodule, quietly humming. If a creature stands in the mouth of the nodule, a light turns on and begins blinking, faster and faster the closer a creature comes to the machine. The light shines continuously if the machine is touched, filling the nodule and an area within a short distance beyond the nodule with bright light. Stealth tasks in the area of this light are hindered.

Oniscid misdirection: The character gets a bad feeling about the idea of entering this nodule.

5. CRUSHED NODULE

This nodule is broken and smashed, as if something outside it crushed it like an eggshell, and recently. Trying to enter through the rubble risks bringing the rest of the nodule down. Creatures worming their way into the rubble must succeed on a difficulty 6 Might defense roll or take 8 points of damage and become trapped under the suffocating debris until they can escape (or are dug free). After every three rounds with no air, a person with no air moves one step down the damage track until they are dead. Those who succeed still take 1 point of damage and are pinned in place until they can escape, but they are not suffocating.

Oniscid misdirection: The character swears they can hear the faint cries of someone weakly pleading for help under all the rubble.

6. PRISON NODULE

The nodule is a lair for a creature frozen in immobility, and PCs would have to chip it free (or find and disable the level 4 devices creating the ice, and wait for the ice to melt) for it to gain mobility. In its frozen state, it appears as a 6-foot (2 m) tall wrinkled seedpod. However, if freed, the **ixobrychid** extends fractal limbs, wings, teeth and tendrils, because it is hungry.

Oniscid misdirection: The character gets a bad feeling about the idea of entering this nodule. (The oniscids don't want the creature released, either.)



7. KALPIS RECURSION NODULE

A wide water jar is fixed to the center of this nodule, similar in appearance to the structure in which the PCs find themselves, though this one is metallic and has a complex striated surface of faintly glowing lines covering it in a mesh-like pattern. Touching it requires that a creature succeed on a difficulty 6 Intellect defense roll or be overwhelmed with knowledge so beyond the capacity of their brain that they scream and fall unconscious for an hour. On a success,

the character can ask one question of the datasphere and potentially get an answer if they succeed on an Intellect task equal to the level of the answer sought. The question “Where is Radius?” is a level 4 question, and if successful, the PC learns the way to the nodule that the prophet is using to question Radius (12: Radius’s Nodule).

Oniscid misdirection: The character gets a bad feeling about the idea of entering this nodule. (The oniscids don’t want to risk the PCs finding out about them.)

8. EXPLOSIVE NODULE

A mass of colorless translucent bubbles fills this nodule. Each bubble is a unit of **mimetic gel** “inflated” by some previous environmental factor, hindering tasks to immediately recognize it. In its current inflated state, the mass is highly volatile; if cut, struck, or punctured, the whole thing goes up like four simultaneous level 5 detonations, each inflicting 4 points of damage on creatures within immediate range who fail one or more difficulty 5 Speed defense rolls. If the bubbles are recognized for what they are, 20 units of mimetic gel can be salvaged from the area, though the difficulty is hindered and a failure triggers detonation.

Oniscid misdirection: The character targeted by the hallucination thinks they see something like an ixobrychid hatchling in one of the bubble-like “eggs.” It’s still vulnerable and easily extinguished, but they get the feeling it won’t remain so for much longer.

9. ALIEN PRESENCE

This chamber holds a fixed machine featuring a central pod large enough for a human creature, but it is **disabled**. If a PC succeeds on a difficulty 7 **crafting numenera** task to repair it, the device installs a **mental voice** in the user’s head that eases all knowledge tasks as long as the PC takes a round or two to listen to it. But the voice sometimes attempts to take over when the user is hurt, distracted, or sleeping, during which time it begins to take apart nearby devices and machines.

Oniscid misdirection: None.

COMPREHENSION CRAWLER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Minimum Crafting Level: 3 (assessed difficulty +4)

Form: 6-inch (15 cm) long worm of synth and flesh

Effect: The worm crawls slowly around on the user’s body, inflicting 1 point of damage that can’t be recovered while the biological remains attached. The user understands all languages and forms of communication, including telepathy, color- or scent-based languages, and even fast languages that some machines use. The worm doesn’t confer the ability to speak other languages, only to understand them.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each day; on depletion, there is a chance equal to the crawler’s level × 10 that it reproduces one offspring crawler that matures quickly, becoming fully active and able to function in about a week)

10. TREASURE VAULT

This nodule is sealed shut. Opening it requires a successful difficulty 7 understanding numenera task to use the control surface next to the door. If opened, a mauve-colored worm of synth and flesh is found wriggling in a container of clear fluid. The worm is a living device (a “biological”) called a comprehension crawler.

Oniscid misdirection: The character attempting to open the sealed entrance can’t find the control surface.

11. USUALLY EMPTY

This nodule is usually empty. (This entry also corresponds with all the unnumbered nodules on the map.)

Oniscid misdirection: Sometimes those entering find what seems to be a solid wall blocking their exit. Other times, a pool of poisoned water is perceived as fresh and vital. And sometimes, there is no misdirection associated with this nodule.

12. RADIUS’S NODULE

If the PCs stick with their exploration, they eventually find the right nodule, which is sealed shut. Opening it requires a successful



Assessed difficulty for crafting tasks, page 117



Mimetic gel, page 112



Disabled, Minor, and Major Damage, page 122

Crafting numenera, page 120

Mental voice: level 5



*Detonation (desiccating),
page 277*

*Memory lenses,
page 283*

Rejuvenator, page 286

*Memory collector,
page 19*

*The PCs may notice
that the prophet calls
the Machine God “he,”
which is not an accident.*

Radius, page 16

**Morigera, prophet
of the Machine God:**
level 5, understanding
and crafting numenera
as level 7; Armor 3 via
esotery; fly up to a long
distance each round via
an esotery; attack up to
three targets within short
range simultaneously
each round with electrical
ray that inflicts 8 points
of damage via an esotery

difficulty 7 understanding numenera task to use the control surface next to the door. Unless the PCs have previously found and dealt with the oniscids, two hiding nearby double down on keeping the characters out. One triggers a bad feeling about the idea of entering this nodule, while the other targets the character attempting to open the sealed entrance with a hallucination that wipes away the control surface. If the PCs manage to get the nodule open anyway, the oniscids don't interfere with whatever interaction the PCs, the prophet, and Radius have after that (though later they attempt to keep the PCs from finding their way out, as previously described).

Rather than open the nodule, the PCs might decide to wait until the prophet emerges, as she does every twenty hours to gather water and nutritious algae from other interior areas of the Kalpis. If the PCs encounter her outside, she attempts to flee back to Radius. If prevented from doing so, she stands her ground then and there.

If PCs get the nodule open, read or paraphrase the following.

Radius is attached to a large machine with thick cords holding its limbs tight. Several fibers extend from the machine into its head, pulsing with faint light. Radius is unresponsive.

A woman in red robes tends to the machine and Radius. A circular tattoo covers her face. The tattoo depicts a ring of gears, circuits, and other iotum.

Radius is essentially insensate and helpless, and remains so while it is attached to the machine and for about ten minutes afterward. The machine's original function seems to have been related to measuring electromagnetic flux; however, it's recently been modified to selectively over-stimulate machine minds in a fashion that can only be considered torture. Extricating Radius from the machine requires a successful difficulty 5 understanding numenera task. The woman in red robes, however, attempts to prevent PCs from doing that, as she isn't done with the automaton.

The woman is **Morigera**, a prophet of the Machine God. In addition to her various abilities (which are mediated through the

permanent, nano-infested tattoo on her face), she carries the following cyphers: level 8 **desiccating detonation**, level 5 **memory lenses**, and a level 7 **rejuvenator**.

The prophet speaks the Truth. She displays the certainty that many of those newly converted to a new belief paradigm possess. Morigera is confident in her abilities, the rightness of her cause, and the coming ascension of the Machine God. She defends herself vigorously, but should the PCs attempt to quiz her first (or use some other method to learn what she's up to), she is not shy about revealing information before vanquishing those who stand against her.

WHAT THE PROPHETS KNOW

Morigera reveals the following, which could come out as part of an interaction scene. If the PCs kill or incapacitate the prophet before they learn this information, they find it written out in a short journal she keeps. (Note that if the PCs attempt to use the **memory collector** on the prophet, it fails to produce results; the memory collector was created by Ciszán—the “Machine God”—and it doesn't affect anyone who has a prophet tattoo, by design.)

The Machine God is rising. He is the true inheritor of the prior worlds. When he gains full ascendancy, numenera everywhere will wake and sing the name of their new god. Automaton, especially, will fall into line, becoming angels one and all, regardless of their previous affiliation.

The Machine God has inspired a cadre of prophets. Each prophet gave up their original name, becoming a priest of a new order, one that will show the lie that the so-called Order of Truth espouses daily. More than any other entity, the Machine God reviles the Order of Truth. Each prophet was outfitted and trained at least equal to the Aeon Priests that strut and swagger their way across the Ninth World. When the Machine God achieves his apotheosis, the Aeon Priests and the Amber Papacy will be the first to face the new god's wrath.

The prophet's commandments from the Machine God required that she find and interrogate two "fallen angels." One is Radius. The Machine God told her where she could find it. The other is Chord the Philosopher, who lives "under the Changing Moon." Morigera hasn't yet ventured to the Changing Moon, as it requires months of travel north, near the community of Delend.

Each fallen angel possesses a divine key. As far as the prophet understands, the Machine God needs these stolen divine keys to fully empower himself. She doesn't know any more than that; she doesn't know what form a divine key takes, or even if it's an actual physical object as opposed to a secret that each fallen angel keeps.

Morigera keeps a secret. She doesn't divulge the following information to the PCs willingly, and it isn't in her journal: if Morigera finds the divine keys she's been sent to recover, the nanites that interweave with her tattoo will activate and tell her where she can rendezvous with the Machine God. Until then, she has no contact with him. His location is not for her to know, but for the Machine God to reveal in all his silicon glory.

REPERCUSSIONS

Morigera is willing to die for her beliefs, though if she can escape an overpowering force and come back to try for Radius again later, she might do so.

WHAT IS A "FALLEN ANGEL?"

If Radius is freed, it is justifiably concerned. It wants to learn more, starting with what the prophet meant by it being a "fallen angel." It also warns the PCs that a Machine God able to rally automatons (such as itself) against their will represents a terrible threat to the Steadfast.

The only lead the PCs are likely to learn is the name and location of Chord the Philosopher. Radius knows where Delend and the Changing Moon are located: all the way across the Steadfast, which would be not only a dangerous trip, but also one that could take nearly half a year of overland

travel. So Radius decides it will repair a vehicle it once used, but which has fallen into a disabled state. This task takes several days, as described in [Chapter 3: Philosophy of Change](#).

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for exploring the Kalpis, 1 XP each for freeing Radius, and 1 XP each for learning what the prophet knows.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," proceed to [Act 3: The Blazing Pillar](#), which describes a traveling party that comes to town as Radius begins working on its vehicle as described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Philosophy of Change, page 34

Act 3: The Blazing Pillar, page 115



CHAPTER 3

PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE



Delend—Under the Changing Moon, page 225

The Changing Moon, page 226



Black Riage, page 172

Visso, page 26

If you're running Slaves of the Machine God as a single adventure, use Act 3: The Blazing Pillar before running this chapter; see the Combined Campaign Flowchart on page 6.

Act 3: The Blazing Pillar, page 115

SYNOPSIS

The PCs decide (or are convinced) to visit an automaton named Chord, who resides in the community of **Delend** far to the north, over which looms an artificial structure known as the **Changing Moon**. They use a vehicle owned by Radius that it repairs from a disabled state (or something they crafted or found themselves) to make a trip of just over a thousand miles in relatively short order into the **Black Riage** mountains.

When they reach the Changing Moon, they discover that Chord is somewhere inside the constantly changing floating structure. Worse, a prophet-led group of Machine God cultists showed up recently, asking after Chord, then plunged into the floating structure to find it.

To find (and save) Chord, the PCs must partially explore the Changing Moon.

If they find Chord, they discover that the automaton has a similar background as Radius, though it took up a different pursuit. It's also having strange dreams, which is why it entered the Changing Moon: to search for an "exotic intelligence" to help refine its mind and dredge up memories. The intelligence turns out to be of limited use, though it does provide a couple of clues.

STARTING LOCATIONS

The PCs are located either in Amber Keep, following the events of **Act 3: The Blazing Pillar**, or in some other community of your choice where they befriended Radius.

INVOLVING THE PCs

Radius desperately wants to travel to a place called Delend to look for Chord. It may be that the player characters feel enough friendship with the automaton that they've already offered to help and accompany it. If not, consider employing one or more of the following additional hooks.

Radius asks for aid: If the automaton has helped the PCs, it reminds them and wonders if they will return the favor. It's motivated by a desire to discover the truth of its missing past and by worry over what a rising Machine God might mean for it personally (it fears losing its free will). It's also worried about what a Machine God could mean for the Order of Truth and civilization, such as it is, in the Steadfast.

Evidence of a Machine God rising is troubling: The PCs may have previously heard rumors that a Machine God was rising from a source other than the prophets they met. **Visso** approaches the PCs and says that one of the iotum components he had collected "woke up" that morning, transmitted some kind of weird hymn praising the coming "machine god's" arrival, then blew up.

The Changing Moon is a fabulous place to explore and salvage: One of the PCs may have heard of the Changing Moon, which by all accounts is an amazing ruin offering salvage every bit as wonderful as that which could be had from the Jade Colossus.

REPAIRING A VEHICLE

Radius owns a rather substantial piece of numenera: a vehicle known as a tendril crawler. However, it fell into disrepair some years ago, so the automaton has been lugging it around in a compacted state (about the size of a large backpack), waiting for the right time to try to repair it. That time has come. It shares its plan with the PCs and anyone who is around or is curious. Read or paraphrase the following.

Radius retrieves a large pack from its belongings and sets it in the center of a cleared area. Opening it, the automaton steps back quickly. A mass of twining tendrils and roots bursts forth, filling the area. Nodules and devices are entwined with the mass, glowing dully. Radius gestures at it. "My tendril crawler. It hasn't worked for years. The time has come to fix it, so I can head for the Changing Moon and find Chord."



The tendril crawler is disabled. Under ideal circumstances, a single crafting numenera roll with a difficulty equal to the level of the device is enough to **repair** it. However, in this case, the vehicle needs replacement iotum—specifically, 3 units of **quantium** and 2 units of **smart tissue**. The PCs may offer to help salvage these components from nearby ruins or trade for the iotum if the situation arises. Once the required iotum has been assembled, it takes Radius only about ten minutes to restore the tendril crawler to working order.

The tendril crawler can normally seat five passengers (including the driver). If that's not enough space, it takes Radius another day to make a modification that provides more seats, though these are somewhat rudimentary.

JOURNEY TO DELEND

Whether the PCs intend to use Radius's repaired vehicle or some other method of overland travel, there are probably a few personal matters to see to before traveling for several days or weeks. Once those are settled, it's time to leave.

TENDRIL CRAWLER (VEHICLE)

Level: 1d6 + 3

Minimum Crafting Level: 5

Form: Mass of twining tendrils and roots, with an attached open carriage for up to four passengers and one driver (though up to four additional rudimentary seats may be added)

Effect: The driver can use the control surface to move the vehicle up to a long distance each round over nearly any terrain, using the tendrils to climb even completely vertical surfaces (or cling to vast ceilings overhead) or swim on the surface of large bodies of water. On extended trips, it can move up to 50 miles (80 km) per hour. After each ten hours of use, the vehicle must rest in the sun for at least one hour before it becomes operational again.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per month of use)



Repairing, page 122

Quantium, page 112

Smart tissue, page 113

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," the vehicle reveal scene likely plays out while the Blazing Pillar is still close enough for trade to occur, and Sparadhi has the requisite iotum to trade.



Aian, page 159

PINPOINTING DELEND

It's just over a thousand miles (1,600 km) from where the PCs start (if they begin from Aian or Amber Keep). Radius—and perhaps one or more of the PCs—generally knows where to find Delend (to the northeast, in the Black Riage mountains), but that's a far cry from having a straight road between the two points, or even explicit directions across the weird landscapes and past dangerous ruins, not to mention the occasional city in the Steadfast. This means that instead of requiring only about two ten-hour trip segments traveling at 50 miles (80 km) per hour, the PCs are in for a slightly longer trip of about a week to reach the general area. That stretches longer if the PCs have stops they want to make along the way for any reason.

Once the PCs find the general area, they can use the tendril crawler to travel from mountain-top to mountain-top to look for the Changing Moon, which Radius has heard “hangs over Delend like a colossal metal cloud.” Each day, characters can attempt a difficulty 6 navigation task to find Delend. Failure means that they lose a day's worth of travel before the navigator can try again. Of course, traveling through the Black Riage is dangerous all by itself.

ENCOUNTERS ALONG THE WAY

When traveling, the PCs are most likely to have unexpected encounters when they stop moving to rest (or to recharge the vehicle). The longer they take to reach a destination, the more encounters they potentially have. Include at least one of these encounters, or something you make up—even if it's just seeing something weird—each time the PCs travel overland for more than a few days.

You likely won't end up using all of these as the PCs travel to Delend. Use the rest while the characters are traveling overland during some other part of the adventure.

STORYTELLER

A lone traveler—an elderly man wearing a ragged cloak of exotic material the PCs haven't previously encountered—accosts the characters during a rest. The man asks them to call him Storyteller. He explains that he collects amazing tales, and he asks the

PCs for theirs. He offers his own in return, one for each story he is told. However, he warns the PCs that if he doesn't like their story, he will feed the teller to his “pet dimension” that he keeps curled up in his cloak.

The PCs can send the traveler on his way without consequence. Characters who wish can relate a story of their choosing and attempt a difficulty 1 persuasion task. On a success, the storyteller is delighted. He whispers a quick story to the PC whose story he liked. The story is so affecting that it acts like a level 5 cypher (if the PC hasn't reached their cypher limit), though it has no physical form; it's a “subtle” cypher. The PC can call on the power of the subtle cypher as if it were a normal cypher, despite it not being an object. Each PC can gain only one story (and subtle cypher) from Storyteller.

If Storyteller doesn't like the PC's story, he doesn't actually try to feed them to his pet dimension. He just frowns, then wonders if someone else has a story to tell. Of course, he defends himself if attacked.

Subtle cyphers have possible effects as follows.

- Restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to one of the user's Pools.
- Grants the ability to see in the dark for eight hours.
- For the next day, the user has an asset to Speed defense rolls.
- Grants the ability to see ten times as far as normal for one hour.
- Adds 1 to the user's Might, Speed, or Intellect Edge for one hour.

WEIRD FORMATION

Three reddish-orange glowing crystal columns protrude from the earth, each about 30 feet (9 m) high, arranged equidistantly about 20 feet (6 m) from each other. The triangular area within the columns is empty, though if anyone attempts to move into the area, they notice that the air feels somehow thicker.

The first creature to enter the area in any given week is phased into an alternate time state where they remain part of the time stream only every other round, though they may not initially realize it. From their point of view, creatures in their environment jerk

Storyteller: level 6, Speed defense tasks as level 7 due to cloak; animate cloak attacks a creature within immediate range, which inflicts 5 damage and, on second failed Speed defense task, transfers the target to a small artificial extradimensional space until it can escape

suddenly ahead into new locations. From the perspective of creatures in the normal sequential time state, this character exists only every other round. Once it's clear what's going on, assign the affected player the responsibility of tracking which round their character exists and which round they do not. It's only important to track during combat, interaction, or anytime events play out round by round.

The unstable time phasing effect gradually fades over the course of a week.

FAILED DELIVERY

The PCs spy a partially wrecked entity in the center of a small, recently formed crater, as if some incident caused the thing to be hurled down from the sky. The entity is a spherical automaton sporting a variety of sphere-like extensions able to serve as limbs. Most of these extensions are closed, but a couple are smashed open. These leak red energy in occasional bursts, bluish sludge, or, in one case, tiny red insects.

If the PCs investigate, the damaged entity (a creature known as a **lacaric courier**) sends a small sphere to scan them before they can get within immediate range. If the PCs allow the scan to complete without offering violence, the entity allows them to continue approaching, whereupon it opens one of the few remaining metal vesicles not already smashed and, using an invisible beam of force, delivers a strange object (an **omnierudite cube**) to the PCs. After that, again assuming that the PCs offer no violence, the entire thing lifts slowly into the air and drifts up and away, still leaking.

If the PCs try to restrain or otherwise harm the entity, it vigorously defends itself, even in its damaged state.

OMNIERUDITE CUBE (ARTIFACT)

Level: 9

Form: Black cube with fractal interior

Effect: The user who touches the cube suffers 3 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) as the cube splits open to reveal an indescribable interior. The user is then presented with a series of visions (the topic chosen by the user) over the course of a minute. The visions are true images of reality from the deep past, possibilities unfolding in alternate dimensions, or a presentation of events as they could be in the immediate future. However, each round the victim is in thrall to these visions inflicts 3 additional points of Intellect damage.

Users who become impaired because they have no more points of Intellect face immediate danger if eye contact isn't broken. Each round a user allows the visions to unfold while they have no Intellect requires them to succeed on a difficulty 6 Intellect defense task. On a failure, the cube disassembles and a swarm of ebony nanites eats the character.

A user who survives these visions can then make a wish related to something shown by the visions. The desire is granted, within limits. The level of the effect granted is no greater than the level of the artifact (level 9) and as determined by the GM, who can modify the effect accordingly. (The larger the proposed alteration to reality, the more likely the GM will limit its effect.)

Depletion: Automatic (upon depletion, the cube phases away to a destination beyond the PCs' ken)

Lacaric courier: level 7, but it is hurt, so all its tasks are hindered by two steps; health 33; Armor 4; emit up to four simultaneous energy blasts at the same or different targets within long range; for more details, see Ninth World Bestiary 2, page 87





Choanid, page 256

Radius, page 16



Delend—Under the Changing Moon, page 225



Guild Compound, page 229

Halls of Change, page 228

Red rain, page 227

Hildwin's Ladder, page 229

Shifts, page 225



Boss Melyndwr, page 228

THAT'S NO HILL

An inviting-looking area, complete with a small pool and stream running through it, seems like an ideal place to rest (and recharge the energy reserves of a vehicle). The area features level ground, good sightlines, and a large outcropping of sky-blue rock the size of a large hill.

However, the outcrop of stone is actually a predator known as a **choanid**. If PCs camp near it or investigate it, it attacks. However, even if the PCs realize what the creature is before they draw near, it sees them and begins to track them to the best of its ability, and it may show up later when the PCs have mostly forgotten about it.

DELEND—UNDER THE CHANGING MOON

Review the community of **Delend** in *Numenera Destiny*. The PCs find the situation as described there, with the massive floating overhanging structure known as the Changing Moon dominating the scene. In addition to the *Destiny* material providing the basis for the setting and NPCs, use the following additional elements to continue the adventure.

RED RAINFALL

As the PCs approach, they see that the large overhanging structure of the Changing Moon is weeping a reddish fluid that drizzles down across Delend and surrounding areas of the Black Riage. This **red rain** event is something the city is used to dealing with by deploying a variety of countermeasures, including installations that render the rain inert by sending electrical currents through the roofs of structures.

The PCs are unlikely to know that the fluid is actually composed of smart material eager to “eat” them and rebuild them as weird west-facing slabs. The rain lasts for about an hour, and if PCs venture into it, they suffer 3 points of damage per round (Armor applies but may become degraded after a few rounds) as tiny cube-shaped insects begin to eat them and their clothing. Once doused in the material, PCs must destroy the tiny entities making up the fluid

or continue to suffer damage every round. Objects and vehicles caught in the rain are similarly dismantled unless treated before more than a few minutes pass. Subjecting a character or object to electrical discharge—or some other whole-body damaging effect—that inflicts at least 3 points of damage destroys the insects currently at work (though being doused in the rain again means another round of treatment is required). If the PCs can't provide treatment for themselves, most structures in Delend have such means available for those caught out in the rain.

RADIUS LOOKS FAMILIAR

Whenever the PCs and **Radius** meet a new group of people native to Delend, the NPCs seem surprised to see Radius, and some even mistake it for Chord. They explain that Radius bears a striking resemblance to another automaton (Chord), varying only in the hue of their metallic sheen and by the series of interlocking circles Chord etched on its chest (which Radius lacks). Locals explain that Chord's symbol is related to its belief that all existence is connected in equanimity. NPCs are curious about Radius because Chord never indicated that there might be others like it.

ASKING ABOUT CHORD

If the PCs and Radius ask around at various locations along Moon Street, be it at the **Guild Compound**, the **Halls of Change**, or somewhere else, they learn that an automaton named Chord is indeed a resident of the city. But people seem sad when they think about the automaton. The PCs learn that's because it went up **Hildwin's Ladder** into the Changing Moon about a month ago and hasn't returned. At least two **shifts** have occurred since then (shifts are what residents call the moon's occasional radical reconfiguration), and most people assume that the gentle entity is lost for good.

Philosopher? Delendrim call Chord “the Philosopher” because it had an unexpected way of thinking about existence and one's place in it—and because it was one of the few who could intercede with **Boss**

Melyndwr on behalf of those who gained the woman's ire. (People have unconsciously started talking about the automaton in the past tense because they assume that it is dead.)

Others Interested in Chord: Delend natives indicate that the PCs are not the first to come looking for the missing automaton. About a week earlier, a group of people led by a man with a machine ring tattooed on his face appeared in town. Close-mouthed and standoffish, they revealed only that Chord was someone they desperately needed to speak with. Upon learning that Chord was lost in the Changing Moon, they followed. They haven't returned either, though no shifts have happened since then.

GAINING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Delend natives explain the nature of the Changing Moon and how they believe that Chord has been lost within the great structure because it remained inside through a shift. If the PCs ask for some kind of aid in finding their lost friend despite that, they are referred to Melyndwr, who people say has a method for finding things in the floating structure.

Asking for Melyndwr's Aid: The PCs can request a meeting with **Melyndwr**. She is usually found in her small fortress of a home within easy sight of Hildwin's Ladder. She agrees to meet the PCs in the courtyard over light refreshments (pickled sweet berries, seared savor grass, and a light ale) served by a couple of **vat warriors**. (Vat warriors are biological humanoid entities the nano grows as her personal bodyguard and loyal police force in Delend.)

The PCs find the city leader to be a prickly and somewhat sinister nano. She is always accompanied by at least five vat warriors. Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs ask for her help finding Chord.

"The only reason I'm wasting time with you is because I liked Chord. If there's a chance that the Philosopher can be retrieved, I can indeed help. I have a divining device that has proved useful before in finding specific objects within the Changing Moon. I'd be willing to lend it to you for a brief period. But first, I need your help with something. What do you say?"

Melyndwr's Red Rain Problem: The **Observatory** has prognosticated a particularly potent red rain event, one that will likely begin within a couple of weeks. However, the linchpin Delend installations designed to protect from the event are not quite powerful enough to provide complete protection against a more aggressive red rain. Melyndwr could modify those installations to make them more protective, but she needs 5 units of **oraculum**. Things being what they are in Delend (others are plotting to overthrow her), she can't leave to salvage the oraculum in the Changing Moon.

But because of her goodwill for Chord (and frankly, because Radius reminds her of Chord), Melyndwr offers the PCs her Changing Moon diviner, trusting that they will return it along with the 5 units of oraculum. If they come back with Chord in tow, all the better. But mainly, she wants the oraculum. If the PCs succeed, the leader also agrees to waive the normal salvage fee she assesses other explorers who return from the ruin. On the other hand, she warns that she'd make a dire enemy if the PCs don't return with the iotum she needs.

UP THE LADDER INTO THE MOON

The reddish "ceiling" above Delend is about 500 feet (150 m) overhead. An artificial human-built structure called Hildwin's Ladder stretches all the way up to it, allowing explorers a way to gain entry.

If the PCs enter the Changing Moon by some method other than using Hildwin's Ladder, they owe Melyndwr about 30 percent of whatever salvage they retrieve, unless they have made an arrangement with her. She's not shy about collecting her due.



Observatory, page 228



Oraculum, page 114



Detonation, page 277

Force shield projector, page 279

Vat warrior: level 3

Melyndwr: level 6; health 25; Armor 3 from an esotery; very long range, gravity-crush attack from an esotery inflicts 7 points of damage and ignores Armor; level 6 cyphers: detonation and force shield projector



Changing Moon: level 6



Hildwin's Ladder,
page 229

Small windows, tunnels, and fissures pock the exterior of the Changing Moon, and those that are large enough can provide entry into the hovering artifact if PCs can reach them.

CHANGING MOON DIVINER (ARTIFACT)

Minimum Crafting Level: 5

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Handheld device linked to sight-obscuring helmet

Effect: When the helmet is worn (blinding the wearer), the wearer can trigger the device to learn about the immediate future in regard to physically tracking down a specific person or object within the Changing Moon. This process requires two full turns on the user's part and a successful Intellect-based roll with a difficulty equal to the level of whatever is sought. A success indicates the path most likely to lead to the target if there is a choice between two or more ways forward.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per use)

(Review [Hildwin's Ladder](#) in *Numenera Destiny*.) If the PCs have asked for and received Melyndwr's aid to find Chord, she accompanies them to the base of the ladder and tells the fee-taker not to charge when the PCs return. (Otherwise, she's there when the PCs go up, at which point she offers her divining device in return for their help getting the oraculum she needs.)

Despite being called a ladder, most of the ascent is actually on a series of recently constructed switchback single-file stairs with minimal guardrails. Usually, it's a routine task to remain safely on the ladder, though the task is hindered by one or more steps during inclement conditions.

Every time the Changing Moon shifts, the ladder's uppermost section is rebuilt (because the old section "shifts" away, too). In the ladder's most recent configuration, the narrow stairs ascend up into a concavity a short distance across in the moon's underside. A 20-foot (6 m) diameter tunnel pierces the concavity, leading into the moon itself. The tunnel ascends at a 40-degree angle upward for about 30 feet (9 m) before emptying into the Changing Moon.

INSIDE THE CHANGING MOON

Read or paraphrase the following once the PCs have gained entry into the Changing Moon.

The walls, floors, and ceiling in this wide hall are textured in cube-like tiles of various sizes. Reddish light gleams from some of the embedded squares, but most are dark. The main hall is about 30 feet (9 m) wide, but half a dozen smaller passages split off from the sides, floor, and ceiling. Free-floating cubes hang randomly in the air, some less than an inch across, others with faces several feet across. Air moves erratically, sometimes providing a cooling breeze, other times a warm gust, and other times a stiff wind redolent of the smell of rain.

In addition to the free-floating red cubes (which don't shift from their position without extreme force) and occasional changes in air movement, sometimes a particularly large cube face set into a wall flickers to life, showing a random scene. That scene is sometimes a landscape one might see anywhere in the Ninth World, but as often as not, it's an unfamiliar starscape. Rarely, activity is viewed from afar, but usually too "distant" to make out who or what is moving.

CHANGING MOON INTERIOR ENCOUNTERS

The PCs have various encounters while searching the interior of the Changing Moon for Chord and possibly for oraculum.

Locating Chord requires some exploration and tracking, made more difficult by the fact that a shift has occurred since Chord disappeared. To track their quarry, the PCs must succeed on three difficulty 6 Intellect tasks, each taking about two hours. Each failure means another two hours of wandering the interior. However, if PCs have the Changing Moon diviner artifact from the leader of Delend, their tracking tasks are eased by two steps.

Most players will be fine creating a map in the abstract, in the sense that even if they

are not physically sketching a map at the game table as they explore, their in-world characters are keeping track of the route. Of course, players can track their wanderings by creating an actual map if they wish, in which case it's up to you to provide an outline. In this case, let them know that each area of interest is separated from the next by a variable amount of distance (call it about 1d00 × 1d10 feet).

AREAS OF INTEREST

Explorers find the following areas of interest within the Changing Moon. PCs find one about every hour they explore, amid many more miles of empty tunnels, halls, and corridors of tiled red cube. The chambers are variously sized, in that some are only the size of large closets, others are hundreds of feet across, and a few might well open into artificial alternate dimensions. You can randomly generate which area of interest PCs find by rolling on the Changing Moon Chamber Contents Table, or simply choose from it. Once PCs discover an area, cross it off the table.

In addition to the various areas of interest, and at whatever juncture you desire, the PCs encounter more Machine God cultists looking for Chord (starting with a few **clues** that the cultists are also active in the moon). The PCs must also deal with a **shift that happens** while they're within the Changing Moon. And hopefully, they finally **find Chord** itself.

Salvage Options: Some of the Changing Moon areas of interest contain materials or devices that could be salvaged, at your option, including all discoveries that are obviously some kind of machine or device. Treat **salvage sources** as if level 6; however, allow for at least a couple of opportunities for the PCs to salvage oraculum, which is level 8, if they've agreed to help Melyndwr.

d10 Changing Moon Chamber Contents

- 1 A machine in the center of a chamber about a long distance across creates a differential gravity field, which feels to explorers as if the entire chamber is spinning (even though there is no obvious movement). The upshot is that

those who initially step into the room must succeed on a difficulty 5 Speed defense task or be flung back the way they came so violently that they take 5 points of damage when they strike a solid surface. Those who manage to cling to the floor (as if it were a vertical wall) can inch their way forward, making successively less difficult Speed defense tasks each 10 feet (3 m) they "climb" until they reach the machine, where gravity is essentially normal again.


- 2 Amid a series of "dry" fountains is one that functions, spraying red liquid into the air; the liquid is essentially the same material that falls during red rain events.
- 3 Nestled in with a variety of inert machines is one that still hums and clicks: a so-called "**healing pod**." If a PC who is suffering the effects of poison or a disease, or who has taken damage to a Pool, moves within immediate distance of the pod, metallic tentacles emerge and attempt to pull the PC into the pod to operate. Unless the PC can escape, their condition is fixed within a couple of rounds. However, the machine keeps operating—forever, if allowed—and a PC who isn't freed or can't escape is eventually killed from complications.
- 4 A free-floating cube face in the chamber flickers to life when the PCs enter. It shows their home community—which could be Amber Keep—under threat from a horde of creatures led by an automaton that looks a lot like Radius, except this one wears severed human heads on its belt.
- 5 A device similar to the healing pod described in entry 03 attempts to grab any PC who moves within immediate range, regardless of their health, and begins to operate. If the PC is not freed or can't escape within a few rounds, the machine surgically implants vestigial wing-like projections in their back that do not initially seem functional.

Healing pod: level 6

Cult Clues, page 43

Shifting Moon, page 43

Philosophy of Communion, page 45

 **Salvage sources,**
page 108



Community beacon,
page 181

Babirasa, page 254

Black sphere: level 6;
calms creature caught by
its telepathic influence
while gazed at



Esculant, page 261

- 6 The chamber opens into an apparently outdoor area that seems to be an open plain covered with grass the color of algae on water, bushes on which red berries grow, and a brilliant point of light in the sky that is larger and somehow hotter than the sun the PCs are familiar with. A dome-like structure with open sides is visible in the distance. It is empty but for the partially mummified remains of four people and a core of defunct machinery. In addition to any salvage provided by the machinery, one of the corpses has a **community beacon** cypher.
- 7 A pack of five **babirasa** hunt this area, having been drawn from elsewhere by the latest shift. The PCs make ideal prey, unless they prove too tough to take down.
- 8 **Black spheres** composed of rubbery material spill across the floor here, each about 4 inches (10 cm) in diameter. They seem inert from afar, but if a character picks one up, they must succeed on a difficulty 6 Intellect defense roll or become enthralled by the sphere. That doesn't mean they won't move on with the rest of the PCs, but they will tuck a sphere away for later study. They can't help but pull it out anytime they have a free moment to study it. Over time, the black sphere gains a greater and greater hold on their attention, putting them in a calm and contemplative state. Breaking free of the effect requires a difficulty 6 Intellect task (which is hindered by the influence).
- 9 Several free-floating cube faces in this chamber reflect like mirrors, except the orientation is different in each cube. Sometimes the images are upside down. Other times they are reversed. In one, PCs look back at their reflections but see scaled and feathered humanoids instead of themselves. In another, their reflections show versions of themselves without skin.
- 10 This wide cavity is filled with mostly defunct machinery, but here and there, some give off glows, sparks, and audible sounds. Feeding on the array are five **esculants**, which are happy to switch from synth to PC flesh if given a chance.



MACHINE GOD CULTISTS

Whenever seems appropriate, the PCs find the Machine God cultists (or they find the PCs).

CULT CLUES

Even before the PCs find the cult, they may discover clues of the cultists' presence as they explore. Include the following discoveries in any of the areas of interest previously described, or alternatively as a new area of interest:

- The corpse of a man with a Machine God tattoo on his arm, smashed between two free-floating cubes. (Apparently the cubes sometimes move after all, even when a shift isn't happening.)
- Machine God graffiti written in chalk, with such messages as "The Machine God is coming," "All give praise to the Machine," "Welcome to the Machine," and finally, "The Machine God sees you always."
- Chalked trail markers, made by the cultists to help them find their way back out. If the PCs find one of these, they can track the cultists down within about an hour as a difficulty 1 tracking task.

CULT ENCOUNTERED

If the PCs find the cult (rather than the other way around), the characters come upon seven people—one man in the familiar red robes and face tattoo of a prophet, and six other cultists with that same tattoo on their arms. The group is investigating the body of some kind of machine entity that is apparently dead. Chord is not with them, as they so far have had no luck locating the automaton.

If any **cultist** sees Radius, they immediately call out that they've found another fallen angel, attempting to alert every other member of their group. Their leader, a prophet of the Machine God named **Troth**, demands that Radius relinquish its divine key, as the Machine God commands. Radius can't help them.

The PCs may see this as an opportunity to learn more. If so, Troth is willing to indulge their curiosity with platitudes and sweeping statements about the Machine God, but nothing specific. He knows essentially the same as **what the other prophets know**. If PCs try to force the issue, a fight breaks out between the two groups.

However, this is a fight (or conversation) that is interrupted by another shift before more than two rounds of conflict occur.

SHIFTING MOON

Introduce this event as a group GM intrusion, potentially interrupting the meeting between the PCs and the cultists. Read or paraphrase the following.

The sound comes first, like a thousand doors slamming shut all at once, over and over. The assault is more than merely audible; the sounds smash through the air with all the violence of a beating. Objects and creatures are tossed into the air as the ground convulses in a peristaltic wave of change that sweeps through the area from one side to the other, then again, and again. Each wave transforms the chamber by degrees. Red cubes rise, drop, grow, shrink, and assume new conformations. New chambers open up, and old ones are filled in.

If the PCs are treating with the prophet, also read the following about three rounds into the event:

The prophet looks up, his eyes wide as he screams, "Machine save me, it's a shift!" As if to demonstrate the truth of his words, the wall envelops and utterly smothers the prophet and his followers as another wave of change rushes through.

What the Prophets Know, page 32

Cultist: level 3; health 12; Armor 1; spears inflict 4 points of damage

Troth, prophet of the Machine God: level 5, understanding and crafting numenera as level 7, stealth as level 7; Armor 3 via esotery; fly a long distance each round via esotery; attack up to three targets within short range simultaneously each round with electrical ray inflicting 8 points of damage via esotery



If the cultists don't see Radius, they attempt to quiz the PCs about whether they've seen an automaton named Chord, who they describe as an entity looking much like Radius but for a chest inscription of interlocking circles.



Helping, page 118

SURVIVING THE SHIFT

The shift is an event that lasts for about a minute, requiring each PC to come up with a coping strategy over the course of six rounds. PCs can attempt the following activities on any given round in order to save themselves. If a PC tries something different than the options indicated, use your best judgment.

If a character ever fails two defense rolls in a row, they are partially engulfed by a wave of red cubes. Going forward, they take an additional 2 points of damage each time damage is delivered during the remaining rounds of the shift, unless they can escape with a successful Might task to break free on their next turn. If accumulating damage kills a character by the end of the six-round shift, their body and all their belongings are gone, probably for good.

Hunker Down and Take It: PCs can ride out the shift (this is the default choice, if nothing else is done). To do so, they need merely attempt a difficulty 6 Might defense roll each round, regardless of any action they take. On a success, they still take 1 point of damage. On a failure, they take 5 points of damage (Armor applies).

Dodge, Slip, and Weave: Agile PCs can try to evade flying cubes and jump away from waves of peristaltic cubes trying to envelop them by attempting a difficulty 6 Speed defense roll each round, regardless of any action they take. On a success, they still take 1 point of damage. On a failure, they take 5 points of damage (Armor applies). If characters are levitating or flying, their defense roll is eased by two steps.

Get Away: A character can attempt to move through a portal, teleport, enter into the limited artificial dimension generated by a device they carry, phase, or otherwise put themselves out of direct physical harm. If successful, the character avoids the damaging nature of the shift, though depending on how they got away, they may have trouble getting back. If a portal mouth or other object was left behind, that is also potentially destroyed, or at least moved to some other location.

Help Someone Else: Someone who has great Armor and/or is self-sacrificing might try to protect a more vulnerable companion who can only hunker down or dodge. If so, normal **helping** rules apply, and in any given round, the helping person can take up to 3 points of damage for the person they're protecting. However, each round spent protecting someone else is a round where the protector takes full damage from the effects of the shift.

REPERCUSSIONS OF THE SHIFT

Calm returns after the shift passes, but things are different. Where there was a passage, there is now none. Where there was a blank wall, there are now three passages. Chambers are swallowed, and new chambers (with strange new contents) have been birthed. Creatures and features previously encountered are now gone.

Getting Back Out: Unfortunately, the route the PCs used to reach their current location is no more. To exit the structure by foot, the PCs must succeed on three difficulty 6 Intellect tasks, each taking about two hours. Each failure means another two hours of wandering the interior. However, if the PCs have the Changing Moon diviner artifact from the leader of Delend, their tracking tasks are eased by two steps.

Finding Chord: After the shift, the PCs lose one step of progress they may have made toward finding Chord (assuming they haven't already found it) and must succeed on one more difficulty 6 tracking task than before.

Cultists Are Gone? By all appearances, the shift was too much for the cultists, and they've been wiped away like most other things inside the Changing Moon. However, at your option, the prophet Troth survives. After the shift, he bides his time, stays out of sight, and secretly trails the PCs, hoping that they can lead him to Chord, or he waits for a moment when he can get Radius alone.

PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNION

If the PCs stick to it, they finally discover Chord in a large chamber. Read or paraphrase the following.

Filamentous strands of transparent energy block the entrance to a large spherical chamber. The energy barrier completely encompasses the interior, blocking several other exits that would otherwise be open. A slender stair of red cubes spirals up to a point near the center of the sphere. Sitting on a platform there in lotus position is an automaton that somewhat resembles Radius, except for a slight difference in the hue of its metallic sheen. Instead of a cape like Radius, it bears a large red symbol on its chest consisting of a series of interlocking circles. The automaton's eyes are shut and its arms are raised over its head, grasping something in both hands that slowly pulses with a brilliant white light.

ENERGY BARRIER

The PCs can easily move through the transparent barrier surrounding the chamber. Its most pertinent effect is that it insulates the chamber from Changing Moon shifts.

CHORD THE PHILOSOPHER

Physically touching the automaton “wakes” it from its long meditation. It knows the Truth. Chord is a serene individual, calm in almost every circumstance, and believes in trying all other reasonable avenues before resorting to solving a problem with violence. It tries to protect others, teach others, and serve as an example of nonviolence. Chord reacts to the PCs and Radius as follows.

Wonder: Chord is amazed to discover Radius and wants to know all about it. Like Radius, Chord cannot remember its past and did not know there was another like it. It revels in finding someone so clearly related, like a sibling.

Chord's History: Chord's first memories are of running from a member of the **Guild of Purity** who was determined to destroy the automaton merely because it was a machine

and not flesh. That could have been the end for Chord, but a mender saved it. (Menders belong to the **Order of Healing**, an organization dedicated to providing spiritual comfort and aid to others.) The mender's actions deeply affected the automaton and set Chord on a path of enlightened search for equanimity and peace. It has learned much regarding the value of peace and cooperation, but still sees itself as a student with the entire world as its teacher.

Purpose in the Changing Moon: Chord had always been curious about its weirdly absent past, but until recently, it didn't know how it could find out more. That changed when



Order of Healing,
page 247



Guild of Purity,
page 249



Radius is happy to have found Chord, though not as demonstrative about it as Chord.

Diamond mind, page 52

Chord: level 4, positive social interactions and providing spiritual comfort as level 5; Armor 3; regains 1 health per round from automatic self-repair functions even if reduced to less than 1 health unless its head is completely destroyed

explorers brought back news of an object they'd glimpsed inside the Changing Moon that seemed to persist between shifts. The explorers tried to retrieve it but were rebuffed. All they were able to learn was that the object called itself the **diamond mind**, and that it was an "exotic intelligence" capable of seeing into the deepest parts of their own minds and motivations, which scared them off. Chord wondered whether the object could uncover lost memories about its own past.

What Chord Learned So Far: The diamond mind has yet to provide much new insight. Still, tantalizing hints suggest that if Chord keeps digging into its own mind with the exotic intelligence's help, it will eventually uncover new information. The one solid fact that Chord has gleaned so far is that there exists some hidden connection between it and four other entities. That connection is very weak, but Chord thinks that with more weeks spent in meditation, it could strengthen and reawaken those links.

This news galvanizes Radius, who tells Chord of its own recollection that there were nine automaton siblings, of which only five remain. It theorizes that those five may be what Chord's five connections point to, with it and Chord being two of those connections.

Reaction to News of a Machine God: Chord is very troubled by the idea of a Machine God and indicates that something so powerful could electronically enslave not only automatons but potentially also many other kinds of machines and even devices, if powerful enough. A *true* Machine God might even be able to commandeer the very cyphers that the PCs and other people of the Ninth World depend on. While Chord doesn't want to judge without more information, the actions of the prophets (if the PCs or Radius share what they know) doesn't give it confidence that the Machine God would treat weaker beings with care and humility.

Request to Accompany the PCs: If the PCs don't suggest it first, Radius asks Chord to come back with them to Amber Keep (or

wherever it and the PCs are based). That way, the two estranged siblings can get to know each other and more quickly uncover the hidden connections the diamond mind has revealed. Chord is overcome by the invitation, clearly emotional—in a way that Radius rarely is—and accepts. It brings the diamond mind.

LEAVING THE CHANGING MOON

If the PCs experienced a shift while tracking down Chord, they must find a new route out of the Changing Moon using the method previously described. If they owe Melyndwr oraculum, she waits for them when they exit if they use Hildwin's Ladder. If the PCs give her what they promised (and return her divining device), all is fine. Otherwise, there is the potential for conflict, which the PCs can resolve in whatever manner suits them, though in a conflict the leader calls on her vat warriors.

The trip home is presumably quicker than the trip to Delend, since now the PCs know the way. Unless you have a reason to play it otherwise, their trip home is without incident.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for helping Radius build a vehicle (or building one of their own), 1 XP each for exploring the Changing Moon and finding Chord, and 1 XP each if they recovered oraculum for Melyndwr.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," proceed to Chapter 4: War of the Machine, which reunites Radius and Chord with yet another sibling named Axis. Unfortunately, Axis is the opposite of Chord when it comes to outlook and goals. It has decided that *it* will be the next Machine God.

CHAPTER 4

WAR OF THE MACHINE

SYNOPSIS

When the PCs return home, they find their community under siege by a horde commanded by the bandit king Axis. Axis is another of Radius's automaton siblings. On its waist it wears the severed head of still another Machine God prophet. When Axis learned that there was machine transcendence to be had, it decided that it should be the one to benefit. So it used the prophet's knowledge to look for other divine keys. That, plus Chord's efforts with the exotic intelligence from the Changing Moon, revealed to Axis where Radius considered its home to be.

If the PCs prove victorious, Axis is defeated. But now the PCs' community has apparently become a target for the forces riled up by the Machine God.

STARTING LOCATIONS

As this chapter begins, the PCs are potentially away from home but in the process of returning following the events of Chapter 3: Philosophy of Change.

Alternatively, you could spring this attack on the PCs' home after they are safely back in their day-to-day routine, not traveling outside its walls. In this case, adjust aspects of the attack that provide options if the PCs are outside the walls, with the assumption that they sneak out first in order to accomplish specific goals.

INTRODUCING THE FRAY

Axis makes itself known to the soon-to-be-beleaguered community. Read aloud or paraphrase the following when the PCs draw close to the community after returning from

a trip (or when they are going about their business within the community).

A high, squalling note shivers the air. Loose stones dance across the drit, tall structures sway, and a flock of winged creatures in the sky overhead abruptly reverses course to escape the sound.

After the PCs spend whatever time they need to look around, they find the sound's source.

Forming up on a rise west of the community's edge is a horde of several hundred human brigands riding on a mismatched hodge-podge of vehicles and mounts. Some of them bear banners that show a ring or crown made of machine parts. On the largest vehicle stands an automaton that somewhat resembles Radius, except that it has attached additional metallic implements and armor to itself, as well as other smaller objects difficult to make out at a distance. The automaton wields a length of burning red light like a sword twice as long as the automaton is tall.

Several seconds after the initial blast of sound dies away, a voice nearly as loud issues from the largest vehicle, apparently the voice of the automaton gesticulating with the burning sword. It says, "I am Axis. I am your ending. You have one chance to survive. Bring out one among you who looks as I do: bring out Radius within the hour. If you do, you will live. If you don't, my horde will descend upon your community like a fiery flood. We will kill every last one of you. Only by giving me Radius can you avoid this gruesome ending."

If the PCs are based in a community whose rank is higher than 1, Axis prepared a larger horde to deal with the threat. In this case, advance the horde rank so that it is 2 higher than the rank of the PCs' community.

Amber Keep (rank 1),
page 113

Axis's horde: rank 3;
Armor 1



Community actions,
page 305

Horde and Community
Conflicts, page 307

Rank, page 301

Community Tasks Any
PC Can Attempt,
page 310

THE CONFLICT

There are several ways that PCs can choose to handle the conflict, whether they act as a group or split up to attempt different goals designed to help the village, hurt the components of the horde, or otherwise bring an early end to the conflict.

BEFORE THE FIGHT

True to its promise, Axis waits until an hour has passed before attacking. Of course, if hostilities are offered to the horde, it attacks immediately and a ranked conflict begins. Once the conflict begins, the fight between the horde and the target community plays

out hour by hour in a series of exchanges called **community actions** (as described in *Numenera Destiny*) between the rank 3 horde and the PC's home community (likely the rank 1 village of **Amber Keep**).

Give Up Radius: Radius doesn't suggest this, but if the PCs decide it's the right way to go, giving the mercenary up ends the conflict. Of course, Radius's safety and well-being are directly endangered.

Use Radius as a Lure: Alternatively, if the PCs try to lure the horde away from the community with a conspicuous display of Radius (or maybe of Chord), the horde *still* attacks the PCs' community while Axis and a group of about twenty brigands pursues Radius.

Rejoin the Community: If the PCs witness the attack from outside the walls of their community, they can attempt to sneak back inside before they fight, especially if they want to engage in community tasks to bolster its stats during the ranked conflict. Doing so requires whoever is driving the vehicle the PCs are using (or leading the PCs) to succeed on a difficulty 5 stealth task.

On a failure, it becomes a race to reach the walls, which is a difficulty 5 driving task (or a difficulty 5 Speed task for each PC who is on foot). If this second task fails, a group of about fifteen brigands catches up with the PCs, and conflict is joined. If the PCs can't disengage and make it to safety before the full horde attacks within two or three rounds, they must either surrender and be captured, or be overcome by the horde.

RANKED CONFLICT COMMUNITY ACTIONS

Amber Keep (or whatever community the PCs are a part of) and the horde exchange community actions once every hour. As a rank 3 horde, **Axis's horde** inflicts 3 points of damage each hour, split between the community's health and infrastructure. The PCs can affect how well Amber Keep defends against this assault by attempting **community tasks**.



Type-Specific Community Tasks: Every PC type has a community ability that grants a benefit to a community where the PC is present and actively working on its behalf. For instance, a first-tier Glaive has **Community Defender**, which increases the community's effective rank for damage inflicted by +1. So if a PC Glaive spends their hour using this ability (perhaps rallying defenders at the walls, showing defenders how to better use their available weapons, and so on), the community action exchange at the end of the hour sees Amber Keep's damage output at +2 instead of +1 (unless something else changes the damage further).

Other Community Tasks: Only PCs can attempt community tasks, but they are not limited to the one indicated by their type ability. They could instead attempt some other task to affect Amber Keep's stats for that hour. In this case, the PC must apply Effort to the task, as shown in the **Community Task Effect Table**.

For instance, if a PC Glaive wants to help the victims of the attack instead of rallying defenders, they could increase the community's health by 1 if they apply 1 level of Effort from their Intellect Pool. (These in-world actions involve spending an hour tending wounds, helping healers, explaining how to treat weird diseases, and otherwise contributing to the well-being of others.)

NORMAL PLAY OPTIONS DURING THE CONFLICT

The PCs may try to sidestep the conflict, though doing so risks a fight between a handful of PCs and a few hundred members of the horde, which is a fight the characters can't win. However, as individuals, **Axis** is level 4 and its **brigands** are level 3, which is a more winnable fight, as long as the rest of the horde isn't mobilized.

Sneak Out of the Community: Some of the PCs might decide they can do more to protect the community from the attack by getting outside. Doing so requires a successful difficulty 5 stealth task for each sneaking PC (or, if one PC is driving a vehicle that everyone is using, one

successful stealth task for the driver). On a failure, a group of about fifteen brigands catches up with the PCs, and conflict is joined. If the PCs can't disengage and make it to safety before the full horde attacks within two or three rounds, they must either surrender and be captured, or be overcome by the horde.

Bring the Fight to Axis: If the PCs can sneak out of the community successfully, they can try to use stealth, disguise, or some other tactic to make their way through the surrounding horde directly to Axis, who spends part of its time in a tented pavilion. The specific method the PCs attempt determines the stat or task that they need to succeed on, which generally requires three difficulty 5 successes with no failures. On a failure, treat the PCs as if they were discovered trying to sneak out of the community.

If Radius is with the PCs during attempts to sneak past the horde, all tasks are hindered unless the characters can completely hide its machine nature.

For example, if the PCs try to disguise themselves as members of Axis's horde, at minimum they have to apply, don, or carry some version of the Machine God symbol (a ring or crown made of machine parts) and act as if they belong, requiring a difficulty 6 disguise task (eased by one step if they each have the appropriate symbol as just described).

CONFRONTING AXIS

If the PCs make it to Axis, read or paraphrase the following.

Axis somewhat resembles Radius, if Radius had added to its bulk by bolting implements and armor to its body. It wields a length of burning red light like a sword at least twice as long as it is tall, if not longer. A human head tattooed with the sigil of the Machine God over its face hangs on Axis's belt.

Whether the PCs confront Axis inside its tented pavilion or outside in full view of the entire horde, they have a couple of rounds



Community Defender,
page 39



Community Task Effect
Table, page 310

Axis: level 4, attacks and defense as level 5; Armor 4; burning sword attacks up to three targets within immediate distance of each other and within short distance of Radius each round, inflicting 6 points of damage to each; regains 1 health per round from automatic self-repair functions even if reduced to less than 1 health

Brigand: level 3; Armor 1

to speak to the automaton, especially if the characters are in disguise. But even if their disguise is revealed and it becomes clear that the PCs are allied against Axis, Axis is still willing to talk, or at least boast, about its amazing accomplishments before it calls down the horde to overwhelm the characters. It tells the PCs the following, possibly in response to questions they have or just as general bluster.

Are you the Machine God? *"I will be, as soon as I destroy whatever pretender thought they could claim the position. This so-called prophet here"—Axis motions to the head on its belt—"thought he could take my essence as a divine key for the pretender. I demurred."*

Why are you attacking? *"I need the divine keys, same as the pretender. Whatever they are. As soon as I have what I need from Radius and the others, his severed head will serve as my conduit to the pretender."*

What is a divine key? *"Something I aim to find. According to this prophet, all of us 'fallen angels' have one. Once I have Radius to experiment on, I will identify and extract it."*

How did you find Radius? *"This prophet knew that an automaton like me lived in this general region. However, some waking sense of connection with myself and four others like me recently stirred. That allowed me to narrow Radius's location to here."*

What do you really think? (Axis admits the following only if somehow forced or if its machine mind is read.) Axis doesn't know any more than the PCs about the Machine God; it just reacted differently than Radius and decided to move as if it could seize that power.

If the PCs attack Axis while it is within hailing distance of any portion of its horde, a group of about ten brigands confronts the PCs (as does Axis), and conflict is joined. If the PCs can't defeat them (or disengage and make it to safety before the full horde attacks) within about four or five rounds, they must either surrender and be captured, or be overcome by the horde.

Escape Capture: Captured PCs' equipment is gathered and stored in the tented pavilion. It's possible that while they are captured, Axis talks to them as previously described.

The PCs can attempt to escape from capture in the tumultuous environment of the battlefield while Amber Keep continues to fight.

The PCs are staked out with metallic shackles to a weird piece of purple metal that protrudes from the ground. PCs who succeed on a difficulty 7 Might roll can break the shackles. Those who succeed on a difficulty 7 understanding numenera task can cause the piece of metal to change shape enough to release everyone. Escaped PCs are treated as sneaking out of the community, as previously described.

REPERCUSSIONS

If Axis wins, Amber Keep is destroyed. After consolidating its victory, Axis disassembles Radius (and Chord, too) looking for a divine key. It doesn't have much luck, but decides to keep looking for more siblings. It uses Chord's **diamond mind** to continue the search, eventually finding Origin, as described in Chapter 5: Leaving Shallamas. If the PCs remain alive, they can attempt to stop Axis at any of these points.

If Amber Keep beats the horde, Axis is captured. If the PCs haven't already had their conversation with Axis as described previously, they have it now. The characters can destroy Axis, imprison it, or try something else. As long as Axis remains able to act, however, it won't stop trying to be the one promoted to the status of Machine God, whatever that ultimately means.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each if they were involved in the conflict between Amber Keep and Axis's horde, and 1 XP each if Axis is also defeated.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," proceed to **Act 4: The Weeping Tower**, which sees Amber Keep going through some growing pains.

Diamond mind, page 52

Despite what the Machine God thinks, none of the automaton siblings possess a true divine key or other unlocking code, though in Cizan's hands, they do help to control abilities granted by the Halo of Dominion.

Act 4: The Weeping Tower, page 120

CHAPTER 5

LEAVING SHALLAMAS

SYNOPSIS

Another automaton sibling named Origin is discovered by using the exotic intelligence taken from the Changing Moon. Radius asks the PCs to help it to locate Origin in a city called **Shallamas**.

Origin is difficult to find. A guild of thieves run by a woman named Selani offers to provide the PCs with Origin's location, but only if they accomplish a small task for her, which essentially involves stealing something from a collector's home.

As it turns out, what needs to be thieved is Origin's head and upper torso, kept in a trophy case. Apparently, Origin had a run-in with the Machine God (Ciszan), who personally tracked the automaton down and found its answers wanting. The only thing the PCs are able to gain from the automaton, apparently broken beyond recovery, is this warning: "Stop the Machine God or the Steadfast may fall to the Glistening Army."

COMBINED CAMPAIGN PACING

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," use this Chapter 5 game content while the PCs are engaged in the long-term play tasks described in **Act 5: Bring the Rain** at the point indicated there. If the PCs aren't interested in going to Shallamas or they're otherwise caught up, this quest could be taken up by Radius alone. If that occurs, only the Repercussions

material at the end of this chapter is relevant, in which case, Radius brings the PCs a warning from the dying lips of Origin.

CHANNEL CONNECTION
FINALLY SUCCEEDS

For the last month or two, ever since **Chord** returned with the PCs to their home, it has spent much of each day closeted with the diamond mind it took from the Changing Moon, attempting to use the device's abilities to achieve three goals.

First, Chord wants to further explore and perhaps even repair its own damaged mind and memories. Next, it wishes to locate the "divine keys" that Axis and previous prophets of the Machine God say lies within each sibling. Finally, it wants to strengthen the channel connections between the siblings so the last two automatons can be discovered (the first three being Radius, Chord, and Axis). During this time, **Radius** sometimes aids Chord, other times helps the PCs in their tasks, or putters away on its vehicle.

Chord finally achieves limited success in strengthening the connection between itself and Origin, the fourth of the five remaining "fallen angels" (as one prophet called the siblings). And Origin apparently lives in the Steadfast city of Shallamas.

Strangely, the fifth and final sibling's channel connection is somehow blocked or



Shallamas, page 139

Chord, page 45

Radius, page 16

Act 5: Bring the Rain, page 124



Chord finally achieves limited success in strengthening the connection between itself and Origin, the fourth of the five remaining "fallen angels" (as one prophet called the siblings). And Origin apparently lives in the Steadfast city of Shallamas.



True automaton,
page 149

Tendrill crawler, page 35



Aian, page 159

Navarene, page 137

DIAMOND MIND

Level: 1d6 + 1

Minimum Crafting Level: 8

Form: Device of crystal and organic components about a foot (30 cm) in diameter

Effect: Using this device requires hours or even days of initial concentration. In the hands of an organic being, the diamond mind provides +1 to Intellect Edge after 2d20 hours of concentration (which do not have to be consecutive). The benefit to Edge lasts for three days.

In the hands of a **true automaton**, the diamond mind allows a user to map the full extent of their own consciousness over the course of several months of concentration. Any automaton that attempts and finally succeeds at this difficulty 5 task is mentally restored. They repair any lingering mental damage, remember any partially missing knowledge, and clear out corrupted signals so they regain abilities that had been blocked.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

shielded. Chord has become convinced that no matter how much time it spends, it won't be able to use the diamond mind to break through and discover their last sibling's identity.

SHALLAMAS BOUND?

The PCs are told that Chord has learned about Origin. (Thanks to Chord's efforts, the strengthened channel between the siblings gives Radius the same slightly heightened sensitivity to Origin, which means it can independently confirm Chord's results.)

The characters may be concerned about the potential problems that a Machine God might cause to everyone who relies on salvaged devices, automatons, and machines of the prior worlds. If so, they likely suggest that they and Radius head to Shallamas to locate Origin. (Chord says it wants to stay back and continue working with the diamond mind.)

On the other hand, if the PCs are disinclined to travel, Radius internally fumes, but externally tells the PCs not to worry. *It* will go find Origin and welcome its long-lost sibling back into the fold. In the process, it hopes to learn more regarding the Machine God, maybe even enough to finally deal with the threat once and for all. (See Repercussions at the end of this chapter for what Radius learns in Shallamas.)

JOURNEY TO SHALLAMAS

Whether the PCs intend to use Radius's repaired **tendrill crawler** or some other method of overland travel, there are probably a few personal matters to see to before traveling for several days or weeks. Once those are settled, it's time to leave.

LOCATING SHALLAMAS

Shallamas is well over 700 miles (1,120 km) from where the PCs start (if they begin from **Aian** or Amber Keep). Radius—and perhaps one of the PCs—generally knows where to find the city (to the north, in **Navarene**), but even so, there are no straight roads to get there. Even with a general sense of where to go in their vehicle, the PCs must pass through weird landscapes and past dangerous ruins, not to mention the occasional city in the Steadfast. This means that instead of requiring about one and a half ten-hour trip segments traveling at 50 miles (80 km) per hour, the PCs are in for a slightly longer trip of about four days to reach the general area of Shallamas.

Once the PCs find the general area, they can use the tendrill crawler to pinpoint the city. Each day, they can attempt a difficulty 5 navigation task to find Shallamas. Failure means that they lose a day's worth of travel before the navigator can try again.

TRAVEL DISRUPTIONS

When traveling, the PCs are most likely to have unexpected encounters when they stop moving to rest (or to recharge the vehicle). The longer they take to reach a destination, the more encounters they potentially have. Refer to **Encounters Along the Way** for options or come up with something of your

Encounters Along the
Way, page 36

own, even if it's just seeing something weird or unexpected, each time the PCs travel overland for more than a few days.

SHALLAMAS — CITY OF ECHOES

Review the community of **Shallamas** as described in *Numenera Discovery*. The PCs find the city as described, a trade metropolis of 80,000 people surrounded by an impressive stone wall with many towers. In addition to the *Discovery* material providing the basis for the setting and NPCs, use the following additional elements to continue the adventure.

SEEING ECHOES

If the PCs spend even a short time in the city, describe an interesting sight: visual echoes. Read or paraphrase the following after the PCs have been in the city for a few minutes.

You spy a group of people who look familiar a distance behind you. They seem to be tracing the same path along the street that you and your friends took, stopping where you stopped, moving aside to let a large cart pass when you did, and so on. You realize they are you, but you as you were just a minute before, like a visual echo. No one else seems to pay them any mind, and even as they are about to reach where you stand, at about the point where you first saw the group of familiar people behind you, they fade away in a swirl of light.

A PLACE TO STAY

The PCs are likely to be in Shallamas for at least a day, which means they'll need a place to stay. They might find and choose to stay in a huge, four-story house called **Iontur's**, which is owned by an expansive grey-haired woman (named **Iontur**) who lets the rooms out to travelers for a couple of shins per night. Iontur serves a noon-meal every day where guests can gather if they like to eat around a huge table for conversation.

FINDING A MISSING PERSON IN A METROPOLIS

The PCs can come up with their own methods for attempting to find Origin. Whatever they try, it'll likely involve asking one or more third parties questions about the automaton. During that period, the PCs will have a couple of unexpected encounters with Shallamas citizens that have nothing to do with Origin, as described hereafter.

After a day or so, a woman named **Selani** finds the PCs, wanting to know why they're asking after Origin.

The PCs might try some of the following methods for finding Origin, though it's entirely possible that they'll think of something unexpected.

Ask Radius to "Home In" on Origin: The strengthened channel between the siblings is what brought the PCs and Radius to Shallamas in the first place, and it's reasonable to hope that that connection will act like some sort of homing beacon or dowsing effect. Unfortunately, Radius says that it's already been trying that, but Origin seems to have dropped off the channel. Only a very slight sense of the automaton's presence remains—just enough to suggest that it's somewhere in the vicinity, though it's impossible to say exactly where.

Ask Around: The PCs can attempt a difficulty 7 Intellect task to inquire whether an automaton that looks similar to Radius has been seen in Shallamas. On a success, they learn that an automaton matching the general description of Radius "but different" has been seen in the city for several years, off and on, but not recently. One of the people who remembers seeing Origin then goes to alert Selani that someone is asking after the automaton. Selani comes to find the PCs within a day or so.

Ask Authorities: Guards patrol Shallamas on behalf of **Argust Provani**, the city ruler. However, regardless of how well the PCs do in asking about Origin, none of the authorities know anything about an automaton, though some become curious whether this "Origin" is up to some kind of mischief, and they may question the PCs further as to their interest.



Shallamas, City of Echoes, page 139

Selani, page 55



Iontur: level 3, tasks related to running her inn as level 5

Argust Provani, page 139

Karkus Lamarn: level 4, tasks related to perception and tracking as level 7

Hire a Searcher: If the PCs hire a searcher from the morass of people in the city, they might find **Karkus Lamarn**, a sour-faced man with a bag of devices that he says help him track down bounties. He asks 20 shins up front and a working cypher if he finds what the PCs are looking for. About a day later, he returns to wherever the PCs said he could find them. Selani is with him, and he makes introductions.

Hang Signs: Selani sees the signs, and within a day or so, she comes to wherever the PCs indicate they can be found.

Check Healing Houses and Prisons: Nothing comes of attempting this course of action.

Ask the Datasphere or Use Other Divining

Method: If the PCs have a cypher or some other method for asking an all-knowing source of endless knowledge, they learn that an automaton named Origin has been working with a guild of thieves led by a woman named Selani. The guild is located in a large blue building in a neighborhood of the city called the Refraction.

ENCOUNTERS IN SHALLAMAS

The PCs could have one, two, or all three of the following encounters as they make their way around the city.

ZENITH SELLER

A spindly woman with a clear coat made of shaped liquid, a weirdly youthful face for her adult body, and a large sack taps one PC on the shoulder.

The woman says, "Are you ready for something spectacular? Something not even the Aeon Priests know about? I've got just the thing." She pulls out a vial of shining phosphorescent liquid, in which tiny points of light flicker. "If you want to experience the heights of joy achieved by the prior worlds, you'll try a drop of this in your left eye."

The woman's name is **Forina**, and she is selling "zenith drops" for just 3 shins a drop; she even has her own eyedropper.

HARMONY DISTILLER

Level: 1d6 +2

Minimum Crafting Level: 5

Form: Bottle-shaped device filled with phosphorescent liquid, with connected eyedropper

Effect: The user can drop liquid into their own or a willing creature's eye to gain the effect. The user can vary the amount of liquid transferred to change the level of intensity. Whatever the intensity, someone who takes the liquid feels a wash of joy and peace come over them. All effects last for about an hour. At the lowest intensity, the taker has an asset on tasks related to pleasant social interaction. At the middle intensity, the taker can still interact with their surroundings, but all tasks are hindered. At the highest intensity, the taker can't move under their own power or interact meaningfully with other creatures, but gains an asset to all Intellect defense rolls.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

The bottle of zenith drops is actually an artifact called a harmony distiller. The drops are addictive and, depending on the intensity of the dose, can have unpleasant consequences, but a single dose should be safe—probably.

BAD PART OF TOWN

If the PCs ask around about Origin, they likely stray into a bad part of town once or twice. This gives rise to the possibility of encountering bad elements sometimes found there. In this case, a group of four leather-armored individuals calling themselves the **Young Fiends** catch up to the PCs.

The four Young Fiends heard that newcomers were in their territory without an invitation, and they want some kind of offering from the PCs in return. They'll accept a good quantity of shins, a cypher, or something else of value. Otherwise, they try to take everything by force. However, if the PCs disable one or more of the four, the others back off if allowed.

GM intrusion: A PC taking a drop of zenith must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense task or be affected as if having taken the highest dose from the harmony distiller.

Young Fiend: level 4; Armor 2; two knife attacks each inflict 3 points of damage

GM intrusion: A Young Fiend uses a level 6 cypher on the character. On a failed difficulty 6 Speed defense roll, the character's personal gravity reverses, sending the PC 100 feet (30 m) into the air before returning to normal. (A character who falls all the way back down takes 10 points of damage and moves one step down the damage track.)

Forina: level 2, tasks related to persuasion and deception as level 5

ECHO STORM

Echo storms don't happen often, and usually they're not too severe. But sometimes the echoes that haunt Shallamas accumulate in greater density in a particular neighborhood or along a single street. Residents know to go indoors or turn away when this happens. The PCs have an opportunity to experience one for themselves. Read or paraphrase the following.

The area is crowded with people, with more pressing in all the time. Most of them are identical, each echoing exactly the moves and gestures of the figure that came just before it. The figures double, double again, and again, until they become a blizzard of images that tears at your mind.

Each PC witnessing the spike in the echo storm suffers 2 points of Intellect damage on a failed difficulty 4 Intellect defense roll. The storm fades to nothing as quickly as it spiked a few moments later.

SELANI AND HER GUILD OF THIEVES

Agents of Selani summon, escort, or direct the PCs to a large blue building in the neighborhood called the Refraction, or the characters track past Origin sightings to the building themselves.

When the PCs arrive and enter, something violent is on the cusp of happening, threatening their only lead. Read or paraphrase the following.

You've interrupted a standoff between two groups. One group consists of ten earnest-looking people in the livery of the Shallamas guard. A smirking man in clothing the color of the night leads them.

The other group is made up of half a dozen people whose only shared element of dress is a red scarf or sash that each wears somewhere on their person. A woman whose skin is stitched with many metallic threads seems to be their leader. Metallic cords are wound all about her, and some even seem to move as if they serve her as extra limbs. She wears a red scarf tied decoratively around her neck.

The body of a man wearing a red scarf lies in the middle of the floor, a knife embedded in his chest.



Selani: level 5, persuasion and stealth tasks as level 7; Armor 3; animate metallic whip cord attacks all enemies within immediate range each round

Shallamas guard: level 3; Armor 2; spears or crossbows inflict 3 points of damage

Shadowling, elite: level 6, guile or subterfuge tasks as level 7; Armor 2

Thief: level 2, deception and stealth tasks as level 5

Shallamas's ruler controls an elite group of secretive operatives called the Shadowlings, who infiltrate criminal organizations and destroy them from within.

If the PCs manage to avoid becoming involved, Selani's thieves win, but only barely.

Radius's mood darkens when it hears that its sibling's head was stolen. It mutters, "Humans ever seem to treat automatons as mere things."

If the PCs make themselves known, both groups pause, waiting for the PCs to declare themselves. If **Selani** knows that the PCs are at her hideout because she gave them directions, she identifies herself as Selani, past associate of Origin. She tells the PCs to throw in with her against "the Shadowling who betrayed our guild" (she motions to the man in dark clothes who commands the **guards**).

For his part, the **Shadowling** arrogantly explains that he is an operative of Argust Provani, the ruler of Shallamas. If the PCs move against him, he warns, they will be counted as criminals, the same as Selani and Origin.

If the PCs decide to go with the Shadowling's appeal to authority and support him, Selani is likely to be defeated. In this case, the characters will have to learn the information she would otherwise provide in some other fashion, possibly by going through documents and records she keeps in a ledger in the building.

If the PCs side with Selani and her **thieves**, it's likely that they defeat the Shadowlings to a one. This immediately puts them in Selani's favor, which means she treats them graciously.

SELANI'S PREREQUISITE FOR HELPING THE PCs

Selani looks sad if the PCs ask her about Origin, but she says that she can help them locate the missing automaton. She glances at Radius, if it is present, and says, "Origin never said they had family." But that's the only piece of information about her association with Origin that she is currently willing to share. To learn more, she says the PCs must first do as she requests. Something precious was stolen from her, and she wants it back. Normally, she'd have her guild retrieve it. However, the Shadowling—who infiltrated her guild to destroy it from the inside—disrupted her organization too much for her to consider it at the moment.

The Task: Selani says that a collector named Garmulus, who resides in a well-guarded manor house that she can provide directions to, is the culprit. In the lavish trophy room he keeps at the center of the manor, many fine things can be found, including the thing that Selani wants the PCs to retrieve.

She is oddly reluctant to tell the PCs exactly what she wants. But when it comes down to it, she lets her chin fall and quietly tells them the following.

"Origin's head. I need you to retrieve my friend's head, which Garmulus keeps in his trophy room. I'm not sure what horrible accident befell Origin, but one day my friend failed to return home to me. I searched, and discovered it was attacked in the streets of Shallamas. A man haloed in spinning machine parts assailed Origin, tearing my friend limb from limb. Passersby did nothing, other than make off with the parts after the fact as mementos. The animals!

I gathered back everything except that most important piece. Only recently have I discovered where it is kept. But with the Shadowlings assailing us, I can only assume that Shallamas's ruler is moving against me, so I must see to my guild. Bring me the head, and perhaps we can both get the answers we seek."

GARMULU MANOR HOUSE

If the PCs try to learn more about Garmulus and the manor house before they go, they can discover the following information.

WHAT CAN BE DISCOVERED

Garmulus emerges from his home only sporadically, and when he does, it's in the company of assorted bodyguards. He is 8 feet (2.5 m) tall and wears heavy robes and a large hood, though light leaks from it, suggesting that Garmulus may not be entirely human. He often works through intermediaries when he buys strange devices or weird art from the Shallamas markets, but sometimes he goes to view objects that are hard to transport.

Though no one knows for sure, it is rumored that Garmulus has installed devices and guards in his home to protect his precious collection from thieves.

Garmulus never accepts visitors, solicitors, or invitations. Those who attempt to intrude on the collector's privacy take their safety into their own hands.



THE TRUTH ABOUT GARMULUS

On the rare occasion that “he” goes out in public, Garmulus stands on its two hind feet and wears concealing robes and a hood. The clothing conceals a black-furred body of a massive predatory cat, except that instead of a head, it has a wide ball of swirling energy, surrounded by dozens of metallic plates that move as if in orbit around the energy. Garmulus is a **sarrak**.

MANOR HOUSE GROUNDS

The manor house is located in a part of Shallamas that contains a few other similar fine homes, all recently constructed, that lie behind well-kept stone walls about 20 feet (6 m) high. Though the **outer manor walls** provide the promise of protection, they are mostly meant to mark a boundary as opposed to providing real physical security.

The walls surround a 5-acre (20,000 sq m) plot of land that holds tended gardens, with the manor house at the center.

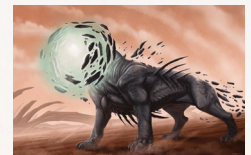
Four **gardeners** and a pack of twelve guard creatures called **rippers** inhabit the area outside the manor house. Rippers look something like 5-foot (1.5 m) long gophers, if gophers were vicious meat-eaters able to sniff out intruders with uncanny senses.

The **manor house** is also stone construction, though one with a few additional surprises for those who sometimes try to gain entry to the famed collector’s trophy room.

Anti-phasing Crystal: Slender veins of crystal have been threaded through the exterior stonework of the house, preventing phasing effects of level 6 or less from succeeding. The same threads also prevent most kinds of instantaneous physical transfers from one side of the walls to the other. Failed teleportation attempts bounce all passengers into the manor **holding room**.

High Manor Walls: The manor house is built on a sheer foundation of smooth stone that rises 50 feet (15 m) above the surrounding grounds. Owing to the smoothness of this stone, attempts to climb it are hindered by two steps. If a climber is successful, they can try to enter through various windows (set with clear synth) or the balcony. Alternatively, those seeking entry can use the spiral stairs set just exterior to the balcony, which provides access from the ground to the rest of the manor.

Manor house: level 5



Sarrak, page 250

Holding room, page 59

Outer manor walls: level 2

Gardener: level 2, groundskeeper tasks as level 5

Ripper: level 4, perception tasks as level 6; bite inflicts 6 points of damage



Residuum: level 7; health 33; Armor 2; physical attack inflicts 10 points of Intellect damage, and on failed Intellect defense task, victim spends next turn attacking an ally; for more details, see Ninth World Bestiary 2, page 137



Oddities, page 305

GM intrusion: The character attempting the maze is caught in a reconfiguration and must succeed on a difficulty 5 Speed defense task or become stuck until they can escape.

Entry balcony mechanism: level 5

MANOR HOUSE INTERIOR

The clear synth that covers the windows are of the same level as the overall manor house. (Note that no such windows lead into the trophy room.) The following conditions generally apply inside.

Roving Security: The manor house is secured by a roving entity called a **residuum**. Each time the PCs enter a new room, they must succeed on a stealth task (which is eased if the residuum is not in the same room). On a failed task, the residuum is alerted, and begins looking for intruders. It attacks any creature not previously whitelisted by Garmulus. If the residuum finds and attacks the PCs, the sound is more than likely to bring Garmulus itself within another few rounds.

A residuum is a recording made by the datasphere of some long-dead event or entity that somehow gets “loose” and manifests as a physical entity using bits and pieces of devices and machines to make a new body. Garmulus pried this particular residuum into existence for the specific purpose of protecting the manor interior.

ENTRY BALCONY

This bare, polished stone expanse is open to the sky, though low retaining walls provide the illusion of safety. Chiseled into the wall over the single closed metallic door in Truth:

No Admittance. Trespassers Will Be Eliminated. Knock At Your Own Peril.

Despite the warning, there is a physical knocker on the door.

The metallic door is barred from the inside (breaking it down requires two successful level 7 Might tasks). Unless extraordinary steps are taken, attempts to break down the door are at least as loud as using the knocker and produce the same result.

Knocking: Knocking (or attempting to break down the door) causes a **mechanism** in the floor of the entry balcony to switch on. The mechanism rapidly vibrates the floor, tuning it over the course of a few rounds to destructive resonance. This inflicts 2 points

of damage (ignores Armor) per round to anyone standing on the floor. This effect persists for ten minutes, then switches off.

PANTRY

Shelves in this pantry are thickly stacked with parcels. However, investigation reveals that rather than dried fruits, meats, bread, and the like, the parcels contain fragments of different devices with a bit of residual power. (Garmulus feeds on these devices, as it is an energovore.) Characters who spend some time here can come away with a few **oddities**.

One shelf does hold the kind of dried foods one would expect to find in a pantry. These are stored for the times when prisoners are kept in the holding room.

LOUNGE

Several comfortable cushions and pillowed floor spaces fill this room, which a big cat might enjoy. Flat pieces of metal on the wall are arranged like art but don't seem to convey anything. A creature with the ability to see the kinds of light that humans generally can't discern can appreciate the pieces of art as surreal interpretative masterpieces.

MAZE

This room is very deep, and in fact extends deep into the raised foundation. It's filled with a twisting multitude of catwalks that create a maze. Mechanisms installed by Garmulus mean that the maze is always shifting, usually slowly, but sometimes it completely reconfigures. Garmulus uses the room for exercise and sport. PCs who spend about an hour attempting the maze and succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect task can reach the end, though there is no reward except for the pride of having finished.

One catwalk extends along a wall to the balcony, and is not part of the maze.

BALCONY

The balcony is a great place to get a view of Shallamas. What prevents the balcony from being a weak link in the manor house security is that this is where the residuum often rests, looking out over the grounds. Every few hours, the residuum leaves the balcony and makes rounds through the house (or sooner, if it hears something suspicious).

HOLDING ROOM

This room is barred from the outside. If intruders are found on the grounds or in the house and they surrender before they are killed, or if they try to teleport in but fail, they are brought here. Thereafter, they are conditioned by Garmulus each day until eventually they are broken to the sarrak's permanent service, then released back into Shallamas.

Currently, a young man named **Collias** is kept here. He is actually a Shadowling, sent by the ruler of Shallamas to make sure the strange collector wasn't collecting things by theft rather than trade. As it stands, Collias is almost completely conditioned to serve Garmulus permanently (as opposed to when directly affected by the sarrak's mind-controlling abilities).

OFFICE

This office looks like one found in any trader's place of business, with a desk, a cabinet with files on horizontal shelves, and a desk chair (though it's more of a cat perch). More blank panels hang on the wall here like those in the lounge. A thorough search of the office reveals all kinds of paperwork that seems to be secondhand accounts of explorations in parts of the Steadfast and the Beyond, with emphasis given to strange devices or objects that might be considered art. (If the PCs are interested, they could gather a handful of actionable leads for later exploration.)

In addition, a search of the desk reveals a spare key to the trophy room hung on a peg on the desk's underside.

SITTING ROOM

More comfortable cushions, large enough for a big cat, are found here, in addition to a large device taking up the center of the chamber. The fixed machine is a salvaged contraption that Garmulus uses as an **entertainment device**.

MASTER BEDROOM

This room features a wide pallet strewn with pillows, a tall armoire, and wall-mounted shelves overflowing with knick-knacks. Unless called away elsewhere, Garmulus is often found here, dozing under a ceiling-mounted device that apparently mimics the light of a purple sun.

The armoire contains a variety of robes, cloaks, and hoods large enough for the sarrak to wear when it leaves its manor house, posing as a very tall and completely concealed humanoid.

The knick-knacks include a few oddities, though many are just strange shapes, pieces of crystal, and fossils that are mostly incomprehensible.

Garmulus: **Garmulus** doesn't react well to being surprised in its home, but a persuasive offer to parley will be considered. The PCs likely ask for the head of Origin, perhaps in exchange for a gift they can offer. Given that they may be starting off on the wrong foot by showing up in the sarrak's home uninvited, they'll have to offer double what might otherwise be reasonable, whether that's a pledge of future service, two artifacts, or something of such collectible quality that Garmulus is immediately intrigued.

Otherwise, it's a fight. Garmulus uses the PCs' own devices against them, as well as taking control of the PC who looks most capable of dealing damage, and turning that character against the others. It also calls the residuum if the PCs have not already dealt with it.

GAMING ROOM

A large tiled board covers the floor. Various red and blue pieces carved of stone stand in random positions on the board; each is about 3 feet (1 m) tall and takes something of an effort to move. The pieces are part of the sarrak's collection. It bought them from a merchant who'd looted a nearby ruin years ago, and Garmulus amuses itself every so often trying to figure out the rules. Mechanisms in the pieces sometimes cause them to glow or make odd noises when they come into particular configurations. Garmulus thinks that changes to the arrangement might correspond to physical changes in some other location or time, but that's only a hypothesis.

READING ROOM

Several comfy chairs and a few side tables are tastefully arranged here. A single shelf on one wall contains a handful of bound books. None are of particular note, though the GM may decide that something of interest to a PC's background or goals could be found here.

Collias, Shadowling:
level 5, performing any action of guile or subterfuge as level 7; currently confused and not sure of his allegiance; treat as if dazed



Shadowling, page 139

Sarrak (Garmulus),
page 250

Entertainment device:
level 4; user must succeed on an Intellect defense roll to gain an all-absorbing pleasant vision that lasts for one minute; on a failed roll, user drops one step on the damage track

TROPHY ROOM COLLECTION TABLE

d10	Item
1	Mirror that always reflects the viewer but the background seems to be a vast golden city of strange devices and creatures in a constant bustle of activity
2	Sculpture of yellow stone that constantly morphs into new disturbing shapes
3	Haze of unearthly color impossible to describe or compare to known colors
4	Green spongy pod that gravity doesn't seem to affect
5	Random artifact
6	Beautiful human caught in slow time; for them, one second passes for each million years
7	Simple clay urn with somewhat crudely inscribed unknown symbols
8	Fist-sized sphere floating in a container, possibly an entire shrunken alien world
9	Articulated fossil of a lizard-like creature with a humanoid skull
10	Tiny box with eyehole that holds a repeating image of a cosmic-sized detonation



Artifacts, page 289

Trophy room lock: level 7

Deciphering Origin's Cube, page 61

TROPHY ROOM

This room is **locked**. Inside is a collection of wide-ranging wonders, including pieces on the Trophy Room Collection Table. In addition, the PCs can find Origin's head, which isn't too difficult to pick out since it looks quite similar to Radius's head, save that the metallic hue is somewhat different.

Origin's Head: The remarkable self-regenerative abilities of Radius and its siblings remain in effect for Origin at least a little while longer, despite the head being severed from its body. The eyespots that correspond with vision slowly cycle bright and dim, the way a human might blink their eyes. Otherwise, it is essentially in stasis and unable to further react until reattached to its torso (which Selani has).

REPERCUSSIONS

Selani is shaken if Origin's head is returned to her. She brings it into a private room where she has the torso and one arm connected, and sets the head on the neck. Self-repair mechanisms spark back into action . . .

But Origin is too damaged to regain full consciousness, as Radius sadly notes. Selani quietly weeps for her friend. The head and torso of Origin respond to questions from Selani, PCs, and Radius as follows, before forever losing animation and the dynamic mental coherence required for self-consciousness.

What happened to you? *"The Machine God did not like that I'd taken an interest in him. He visited his vengeance upon me when I would not help him ascend."*

What does the Machine God want? *"To seize control of the Glistening Army, which waits arousal by the Machine God."*

What is the Glistening Army? *"That which was built by the renegade Aeon Priest Orstenia Myal a century ago to have her vengeance on the Order of Truth."*

Where is the Machine God/Glistening Army? *"I have encoded all I learned on this cube. Stop the Machine God or the Steadfast may fall to the Glistening Army."* Upon saying this, Origin extrudes a small cube of responsive synth covered in strange silvery symbols, hereafter called **Origin's cube**. Unfortunately, the cube is not an easy puzzle to crack. Origin was trying to hide what it knew (or suspected) from the Machine God. Selani tells the PCs that they should be the ones to keep the cube, if they promise to honor Origin's final request.

When Origin expires, Radius's mood darkens further. If the PCs heard it mutter earlier about the poor treatment automatons seem to get at the hands of humans, that is the reason. The despondency doesn't quite leave the mercenary, and it grows when the PCs discover the Weal of Baz.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each if they track down Selani, 1 XP each for exploring the manor house, and 1 XP each if they retrieve Origin's head.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," return to **Act 5: Bring the Rain**, which likely has the PCs doing long-term play tasks that were interrupted by this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

EXPEDITION TO WEAL

SYNOPSIS

Finding the last automaton using the machine channel that **Radius** shares with **Chord** and its other siblings proves impossible. Something's blocking a clear connection. But research eventually reveals that the strange cube provided by **Origin** encodes a complex embedded language, as well as a hidden symbol. The language describes the secret history of **Orstenia Myal**. The symbol depicts the legendary entity named Baz, and those bearing the cube can gain entry to a secret location in the Beyond called the **Weal of Baz** where Orstenia supposedly built the Glistening Army. That reminds Radius of dreams it's been having of being one of many in a vast bowl-like chamber.

If the PCs travel to the Weal of Baz and gain entry, navigating the city of machines is somewhat complicated. But with some work, they eventually discover the shuttered manufactory where Orstenia assembled her automaton army. It's empty.

Empty except for a disassembled and dead Root. Root's scribbles in leaking automaton fluid introduces the PCs to the name Cisan, and how the Ninth World may well teeter on the edge of welcoming a fully ascended Machine God whether it wants to or not.

DECIPHERING ORIGIN'S CUBE

Whether the PCs take point on deciphering the secrets of Origin's cube or Chord does, the task requires a significant investment of time. The cube can transform and reconfigure itself, which initially seems helpful; however, the cube is willing to be studied for only a few hours every day before

it reconfigures itself into a smooth, six-faced solid with no markings. In this state, it's impossible to make any progress. (This was a security feature designed into the device by Origin.)

However, after several weeks of on-and-off effort (possibly while the PCs are engaged in situations arising as events in the companion adventure "**Amber Keep**" play out), progress is gradually made. It seems that the information coded into the cube is actually a constructed language made by Origin. Deciphering and learning that language is part of the reason so much additional time is required. A PC could spend 2 XP to gain the **short-term benefit** of becoming trained in the language of Origin's cube. However, if no PC wants to invest such resources, Chord and Radius eventually crack the contents of the cube by working together, and explain to the PCs what they find.

SECRETS OF THE CUBE

The cube contains a personal account of Origin, a history of Orstenia Myal, and a weird symbol.

Origin's Account: The account opens with Origin describing its recent exchange of messages with another automaton sibling, which called itself Root. (Origin doesn't describe how those messages were exchanged, but Chord theorizes that perhaps they were somehow using the machine channel it spent so much time trying to unlock.) Origin was enthralled to find another like itself, but that paled in comparison with what Root had to tell it about Orstenia Myal.

Radius, page 16

Chord, page 45

Origin, page 60

Amber Keep, page 99

Orstenia Myal, page 8



Weal of Baz, page 193

Short-term and medium-term benefits, page 126

One Hundred Years
Ago, page 8

Background, page 8

Thirty Years Ago, page 9



Aian, page 159

The Beyond, page 169

Encounters Along the
Way, page 36

Selani, page 55

Artificial face: level 8

Tendrils crawler, page 35

History of Orstenia Myal: The cube contains the background information from **one hundred years ago** when Orstenia Myal attempted to revenge herself on the Order of Truth by creating the Glistening Army, using a manufactory in the Weal of Baz. Provide the information under **Background** to the PCs. (The cube doesn't contain the history from **thirty years ago** onward, though the PCs will likely learn that before the end of this chapter if they find Root's body.)

The Symbol: The cube provides an exact location for the Weal of Baz

and describes the place as "a refuge for machines." The encoded instructions also reveal that for an organic creature to be granted entrance to the Weal, they must show the strange, complex symbol that the cube face can be induced to display. (The symbol is apparently that of Baz, an entity thought by some to be a kind of machine savior.)

GOING TO THE WEAL?

Once the PCs learn the full history of Orstenia, they're likely as determined to head to the Weal of Baz as Radius is. They also may have promised **Selani** they would do so. For its part, Radius grows more brooding and short tempered if the PCs take too much time before going, and it may head to the Weal on its own if they don't make the trip a priority. In either case, Chord also wishes to travel there because it wants to meet Root in person.

JOURNEY TO THE WEAL OF BAZ

Whether the PCs intend to use Radius's repaired **tendrils crawler** or some other method of overland travel, there are probably a few personal matters to see to before traveling for several days or weeks. Once those are settled, it's time to leave.

LOCATING THE WEAL OF BAZ

The Weal is about 1,700 miles (2,700 km) from where the PCs start (if they begin in **Aian** or Amber Keep). Even with exact directions from the cube, that's a long way. As with every other time the PCs have had to travel a long distance, even if they have a fast vehicle, they're likely going to have to travel through some strange places, most of them in **the Beyond**, before arriving at the

Weal, which could lead to a few of the travel disruptions noted hereafter. Even with a vehicle capable of traveling at 50 miles (80 km)

per hour, the PCs are in for a slightly longer trip of about eight days to reach the Weal. Thanks to the cube's specific directions, the difficulty 5 navigation task to pinpoint its exact location is eased by three steps. Failure means that the PCs lose a day's worth of travel before the navigator can try again.

TRAVEL DISRUPTIONS

When traveling, refer to **Encounters Along the Way** for optional things that might happen, or come up with some of your own. If you've already exhausted those encounters, a few additional optional suggestions are provided here.

ARTIFICIAL FACE

Half buried in a stretch of desert sand is a massive **artificial face** over 100 feet (30 m) in diameter. If investigated, the face appears almost like a mask of ivory synth and milky crystal. One eye socket is empty and sand spills through it, but the other holds a massive red crystal that pulses ever so dimly. Touching it reveals a very slight vibration and warmth to it, but otherwise the face seems completely inert. Attempts to learn more are difficult given the face's level. But even a failed attempt to learn more suggests that the face is more than metaphorically a mask, and could be the manifestation of a much more powerful entity, one that is hurt or perhaps damaged from long travel. The face is dangerous if roused, revealed as a raging being of crazed destruction.



Even Chord begins to find Radius's recent sour disposition trying.

Attempts to salvage it might be enough to wake it on a bad roll (or as a GM intrusion that nearly but not quite wakes it), but those who press their luck successfully could gain some high-level iotum.

COLOR LEAKAGE

While traveling, the PCs move through an area infested with three creatures from a bizarre dimension that manifest as particularly vivid colors. If the characters are traveling in a vehicle, the colors are first noticed on an interior surface of the vehicle. If the PCs are traveling in some other fashion, the colors manifest while the characters are resting. (If the PCs have managed to travel using some sort of instantaneous means, the colors might be able to interrupt them mid-trip and attack in a limited half-world of brilliant color.)

The attack by the three **carnivorous colors** manifests as an eye-opening source of emerald illumination, a splash of brilliant scarlet on a wall, and a spontaneous change in hue from grey to sapphire blue in a familiar set of clothing. The colors are beautiful—until they begin feeding on the minds of the nearest intelligent creatures! They don't speak a language the PCs can understand, even if psychic communication is attempted. But they're not mindless and can learn from experiences and solve problems.

THE WEAL OF BAZ

Holograms normally hide the sentries and the cleft that serves as the entrance to the city, but because the PCs know exactly where to go, they can get close enough to cause the hologram to disperse and reveal the two guardian **sentries**.

Read or paraphrase the following.

The placid waters of Navae Marica gently roll to a sandy iridescent shore. The shore is backed by a stark stretch of impassible cliffs overgrown with plant and animal life. No sign of habitation by intelligent creatures is visible, let alone by machines. Then the air shimmers along the nearest stretch of cliff like a hood falling away. Revealed standing side by side

are two shining metallic sentries, each at least twelve feet high. The sentries are distinguished by their size, their large heads that emit multiple probing beams of light, and the long metallic weapons they clutch that are larger even than themselves. Between them is a narrow cleft in the cliff face.

The sentries' probing beams play everywhere to a very long distance. When the light passes over a PC, it feels warm but doesn't seem to offer any direct harm. (The beams are the visible manifestation of the sentries' ability to penetrate stealthy attempts to get past them.)

THE WEAL OF BAZ RANK 7 (21)

Government: Consensus, chaotically formed, is how the Weal is governed. Sometimes specific individual machines will rise to the fore if important decisions must be made, but once this is accomplished, they fade back, and another may be put in the same position next time. Governance can also come from the cogitation undertaken by specifically convened **Circles of Association**.

Health: 27

Infrastructure: 27

Armor: 3

Damage Inflicted: 10

Modifications: Understanding, crafting, and salvaging numenera tasks as rank 8

Combat: The Weal can deploy armed automaton sentries to attack and defend from attacking hordes like any community. In addition, they can build a variety of specialized machines that can be used as weapons or defenses to suit a particular situation. For instance, it is within the Weal's abilities to construct and build a gargantuan level 3 **rampaging beast** automaton every week or so, if the community were to go on a war footing.

Carnivorous color:

level 3, stealth tasks and mind-feeding attacks as level 5; health 12; flies an immediate distance each round; immediate-range mental attack inflicts 3 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor); for more details, see Ninth World Bestiary 2, page 32

Circles of Association, page 68

Sentry: level 5, perception as level 7; health 20; Armor 4; long-range weapons inflict 6 points of damage



Community Stats, page 297

Rampaging beast, page 315



Getting Into the Weal: Both sentries raise a free hand forward in a “halt” gesture if an organic creature tries to enter the cleft (though they allow Radius and Chord, and any other automatons that might be present, to pass without comment). PCs who try to force the issue and enter are attacked, and reinforcements are summoned in the form of dozens of additional sentries that rush up out of the cleft after a few rounds.

However, if the characters display Origin’s cube showing the symbol of Baz, the sentries lower their hands. One speaks, saying, “You may enter on the basis of this symbol. Be warned that your presence in the Weal of Baz will be tolerated for only ten rotations of the world, after which you must leave.”

INSIDE THE WEAL

The narrow cleft (about a short distance in width) contains more sentries every few dozen yards. It seems clear that something carved the cleft, as opposed to it being natural. The pass extends into the rock face for several hundred feet before opening into a town of sorts.

Read or paraphrase the following.

Incessant buzzing, high-pitched whines, beeps, whirring, clattering, screeching, and, deep beneath everything else, a constant drumbeat of thuds resounds within an open “bowl” cut into the stone that’s roughly a thousand feet across. About a dozen other dark cavities, similar to the entry cleft, are distributed randomly around the inner cliff-like walls of the bowl.

Moving across a smoothly cut plain of stone is a bewildering array of hundreds of animate machines. Some are sleek shapes that hint at million-year time spans, others look to be the credible handiwork of Ninth World wrights, and several are broken-down automatons limping along as best they can. Some sport weaponry that bristles on their metallic carapaces in a potent display of power, as opposed to those that are cobbled-together messes of spare parts that barely seem to function. Most, however, are so strangely shaped and articulated that determining their original purpose is impossible.

The machines stream about the artificial vale between two major landmarks.

The largest is a twenty-story crystal tower strewn with clear synth panels that track

the sun like leaves. Dozens of machines gather around the tower's base, connected to it through a wide array of cables, jacks, or receivers.

Next to the tower sprawls a multifaceted structure of stronglass. The transparent sides reveal an incredible stockpile of machine parts arrayed in dizzying profusion and jaw-dropping quantity. Automatons are visible within, moving down the long aisles and passing between the levels of the structure, apparently sifting through this hoard of mech for needed parts.

The machines that are not gathered around the tower, picking through the stronglass structure, or investigating the dark cavities cut into the cliff-like walls seem to be organized into groups of several dozen or more in rough circles, possibly talking or maybe simply resting together.

CONVINCING MACHINES TO COMMUNICATE

It's difficult for organic PCs to find answers in the Weal, despite the fact that the machines are a nearly endless source of information. Most of the machines inherently fear or loathe organic beings (some were even expressly made to kill organic beings). The only thing keeping the PCs safe is the symbol of Baz they showed upon entry. It probably doesn't hurt to show it around now and again as they move about the Weal. (PCs who enter without this symbol will have to rely on stealth and evasion.)

Still, each time the PCs approach a new entity, they must convince it to communicate, assuming a means of communication can be found—only a small percentage of the automatons and other machines here were created to speak, and only some of those speak a known human language. If Radius or Chord (or both) accompany the PCs, all tasks to convince machines to speak with them are eased. Machines that are determined to be “helpful” further ease persuasion tasks attempted by the PCs. If the PCs “convince” a machine to help but can't communicate with it, it may bring the PCs to a different

machine that *can* speak human languages, though it, too, must be convinced.

MACHINES ENCOUNTERED

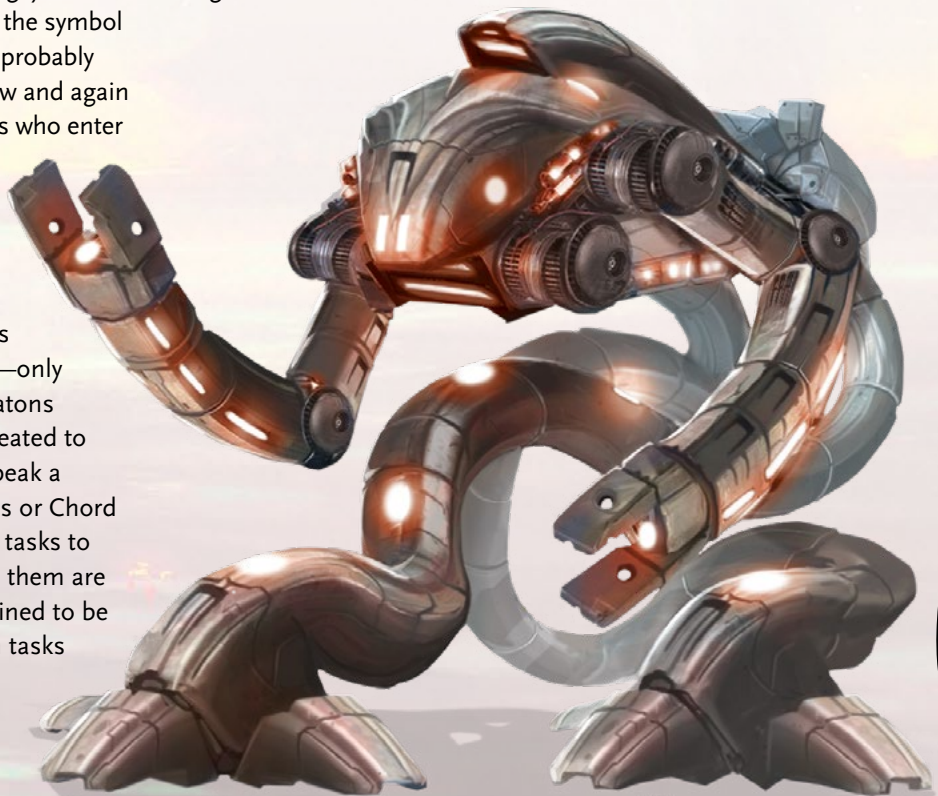
For random encounters the PCs have with machines in the Weal, roll three times on the **Weal Encounter Table**. The first roll (Social) determines the initial reaction an encountered machine or automaton has to the PCs, the second roll (Communication) determines its ability to communicate, and the third roll (Appearance) provides some options for what it might look like. Finally, roll $1d6 + 2$ to determine its level.

Even if the PCs stay away from the machines, they are approached by at least one or two machines every hour while they're in the Weal.

ENCOUNTERS THAT LEAD TO CONFLICT

Conflicts can occur for a number of reasons. The PCs may accidentally offend a machine, a machine's fear of the characters may lead it to “defend” itself by attacking them, the PCs might violently retrieve a valuable snatched by a scavenger or collector automaton, or perhaps a bad interaction with an aggressive machine leads to the PCs being attacked.

Weal Encounter Table, page 66



WEAL ENCOUNTER TABLE

d100	Social	Communication	Appearance
01-03	Ailing	Body language	Animal-like creature of metal and wires
04-06	Angry	Brain shunt	Animate hodge-podge of parts and pieces
07-09	Antagonistic	Cabled connection	Biological animal parts mixed with machine
10-12	Bully	Coded beeps	Bulky machine without limbs dragged by others
13-15	Comedian	Coded jumping	Bulky metal box with clear face revealing innards
16-18	Curious	Color changes	Crystal cube with articulated metallic legs and arms
19-21	Despondent	Extruded solids	Expansive machine balancing on thin stalks
22-24	Dreamer	Fluid discharge	Fields of force generated by tiny disc
25-27	Fearful	Full-body signaling	Flittering many-winged pod
28-30	Frantic	Inscribing the ground	Floating, sleek prior-world lozenge that glows
31-33	Genius	Inscribing placards	Fractal shape of liquid metal and circuits
34-36	Gift-giver	Invisible channel	Human head preserved in automaton carapace
37-39	Glitching	Math	Levitating cylinder
40-42	Grieving	Memory editing	Levitating pyramid
43-45	Indecisive	Musical tones	Many-legged pod
46-48	Joyful	None	Many-wheeled pod
49-51	Murderous	Projected light	Multipronged solid that phases randomly
52-54	Paranoid	Scent sprays	Rolling sphere
55-57	Peacemaker	Shapes on screen	Series of pods connected by cables
58-60	Playful	Signing language	Snake-like length of metal leaking fluids
61-63	Poet	Static discharge	Spiked sphere that jumps to move
64-66	Prankster	Subsonic vibrations	Treaded pod
67-69	Scavenger	Symbols on screen	Walking tripod
70-72	Thief	Telepathy	Wheels within wheels
73-75	Uninterested	Touch	Wire sculpture constantly changing shape
76-00	Helpful	Speaks the Truth	Humanoid automaton

When this happens, the PCs have about six rounds to wrap up the situation one way or another before they attract sentries. During any altercation between the PCs and machines, other nearby machines and automatons gather to watch, more and more as time passes, but they do not interfere. If the PCs end the altercation before six full rounds pass, even if they destroy one or more automatons that interfered with them, the characters don't suffer any lasting repercussions. If they do destroy a machine, small scavenger bots appear, rapidly disassemble the automaton the PCs downed, then scurry away to the Hoard.

If the PCs can't put an end to a conflict within six rounds, four **sentries** (like those that guard the entrance) appear. The PCs

can attempt to explain themselves, but their task is hindered (even if Radius and Chord are there). The sentries attempt to take the PCs into custody and eject them from the Weal rather than kill them outright, as a courtesy to the symbol of Baz that the characters bear. However, if the PCs resist overmuch, the sentries switch to using force.

Ejected PCs will have to use stealth to learn what they want to know rather than openly question residents of the Weal, and they must play a cat-and-mouse game with the sentries.

GETTING ANSWERS

Presumably, the PCs will ask questions about Root, Orstenia Myal, the Glistening Army, and the Machine God. Unfortunately,

Sentries, page 63

most of the machines the PCs interact with have no idea what the characters are talking about, even if communication can be established. During this time, the PCs may also explore the landmarks of the Weal if they wish, and possibly trade for and purchase interesting experiences and objects.

To demonstrate how little the PCs learn from any given interaction, run through the first few random encounters with machines by roleplaying out the entire scene. But consider speeding up table play by telling the PCs that after spending a few hours attempting to interview random machines in the same fashion, they haven't really learned much. That said, ask a PC to attempt a difficulty 6 Intellect roll to determine how well they did in their task to gather information. On a success, the PCs do learn something new.

Essentially, the PCs need five successes to figure out where Root is, as well as the location of the Lost Manufactory where Orstenia Myal built the Glistening Army. They can attempt a task to discover this information every few hours, each at difficulty 6 (Radius's and/or Chord's presence eases the task). On a failed task, in most cases the only repercussion is having to spend a few more hours on trying again, though a GM intrusion might introduce other complications.

If the PCs succeed on five tasks to gather information, they learn everything they need to proceed to the Lost Manufactory. They don't necessarily learn the initial four pieces of information in order, but maybe they do, in which case the earlier pieces help them focus on the exact location information they want, which is unearthed in the fifth and final bit of information gathered.

Root lives in the Weal: A few machines can confirm that an automaton resembling Chord and/or Radius resides in the

Weal—or at least it used to. The **Circles of Association** that once commonly saw its presence among them no longer do. It's been a few months since anyone has seen it.

Orstenia Myal is a familiar name: A few machines indicate that indeed, an organic named Orstenia Myal came to the Weal, though that was many decades ago. A historian named Root might know more. Somehow, she was especially blessed by Baz, because unlike other organics that sometimes visit, she was allowed to stay for years, during which time she was commonly seen riffling through the **Hoard** before disappearing again for several weeks at a time.

The Machine God is not the machine messiah: Baz is the “machine messiah” but never claimed to be a god of machines. Baz represents a great healer of machines, one who would free them from servitude to organics. The Machine God, on the other hand, seems like it might have the opposite in mind. Baz, they say, will make this false and enslaving “Machine God” alter its stance if it ever arises. (All that said, some of the less sophisticated machines in the Weal revere the tower called the **Dragon** as a kind of “God of Life.”)

The Glistening Army was built in the Weal: About a century ago, a rogue Aeon Priest gained the trust and confidence of several of the more influential machines in the Weal, possibly by helping them accomplish some goal of their own. In return, this Aeon Priest was given aid, parts, and iotum, as well as the use of a special manufactory, in which something called the Glistening Army was supposedly constructed—though if it was built, no other machine ever saw it, nor was it fielded. In fact, no evidence of it remains in any of the manufactories that still exist in the Weal today.

Circles of Association, page 68

Hoard, page 68

Dragon, page 68



The Lost Manufactory is “lost” because it is a mobile factory, and it has wandered far from the Weal of Baz.



Chapter 8: Apotheosis of a Machine God, page 93



Random Salvage Result, page 109

Iotum Result Table, page 110

Looking for a specific kind of iotum, page 110

A regular organic character who connects themselves to the Dragon takes 6 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) and must succeed on a difficulty 6 Might task or take an additional 6 points.

The Lost Manufactory is “lost” because it wanders: While most of the manufactories of the Weal are located in one place, the Lost Manufactory is a mobile factory. Finding it after all this time would be difficult. However, an automaton named Unit-A29, found in one of the manufactories, can probably serve as a guide to the Lost Manufactory’s current location.

RADIUS BECOMES GRIM

If it were possible for an automaton to frown almost constantly, that would describe how the mercenary begins to react upon learning how the Weal of Baz is more a sanctuary for machines than anything else. If the PCs quiz the automaton on its dark mood, it explains that these cast-off, forgotten, and exploited machines in the Weal are a testament to the inconsiderate manner in which humans regard machines, seeing them as expendable and as mere tools. Radius says it doesn’t blame the PCs, and they might be able to argue it around, but the automaton’s dark mood remains. This change in mood helps set up events in **Chapter 8: Apotheosis of a Machine God**.

EXPLORING THE LANDMARKS OF THE WEAL

The PCs may gain some benefits or entertainments unrelated to their quest as they explore the machine city.

THE DRAGON

The twenty-story crystal tower bedecked with synth panels that track the sun is what the machines refer to as the “Dragon.” Machines of all kinds are constantly approaching, plugging in for a time, then leaving the tower’s base, looking more energetic and alert than when they first approached.

If the PCs approach, some of the machines ignore them, but a few become agitated. That’s because the tower is the only thing that keeps some of the machines in the Weal alive. To approach, the PCs will have to succeed on a difficulty 6 persuasion task to convince dubious machines that they are not there to harm the Dragon or, like savages, attempt to salvage it for parts.

At the Dragon’s base, the PCs can try to use the assorted cables, jacks, and receivers

to attempt to repower a depleted artifact, give an artifact a free charge so that its next use won’t require a depletion roll, repower a used cypher, and so on. The GM should set difficulties according to the level of the item to be recharged, plus one or two steps, depending on the situation. (A character who Fuses Flesh and Steel discovers that a charge from the Dragon overcomes their special healing requirement by repairing the final 5 points of damage that normally are healed only by repair tasks.)

THE HOARD

This bonanza of parts viewable behind clear walls of a multifaceted strongglass structure isn’t difficult to approach and enter. The PCs are free to go inside and take a few of the collected bits of treasure without being harassed. However, greedy PCs who take more than a couple of picks come to the attention of a few random machines, which could ultimately bring sentries if the characters can’t resolve things peacefully.

Treat a PC’s pick from the Hoard as an automatic success on a salvage task, which grants them a **random salvage result**. If this results in any rolls on the **Iotum Result Table** or randomly generated artifacts or cyphers, no level cap is in place. However, as normal, a successful initial salvage task allows the PC the choice to **look for a specific kind of iotum** instead of taking a random result, which they can attempt normally as well.

CIRCLES OF ASSOCIATION

Except when it storms and the machines erect temporary shelters, most of the entities in the Weal don’t have anything like a home. Instead, they move around the community as needs dictate, sometimes topping off at the Dragon, other times grabbing a spare part from the Hoard if repairs are necessary, and making an appointment with a machine smith in one of the manufactories along the community’s edges if they can’t make that repair themselves.

When needs don’t dictate, many machines join a circle of association for hours or days at a time. The PCs see them all over the Weal. Read or paraphrase the following.

Groups of dozens, or in a few cases hundreds, of disparate automatons stand (or sit, perch, or hover) in rough circles here and there about the Weal. Some are obviously communicating in various ways. Others are building or repairing devices or other automatons. But many are engaged in activities that are impossible to determine at a glance, or seem to be doing nothing at all.

Circles of associations swell and shrink during any given hour as individuals making them up gather, leave, and move to different circles. Though it may not be immediately obvious to the PCs, the circles of association are akin to discussion groups. When a group of disparate machines gathers, they activate a protocol, a device, a cypher, psychic tethers, or an ability of one among them to overcome different methods of communication to form a kind of gestalt consciousness.

PCs willing to “hook in” (depending on the manner a given circle is using to form a gestalt) can also join a circle and participate, though only for brief periods if they don’t want to risk brain damage.

PCs who do so find themselves in a conceptual space filled with entities that previously looked like machines but now appear as points of consciousness, just as they do. They may find they’ve entered a circle that is discussing something of interest, enjoying an entertainment, or, like as not, involved in something completely incomprehensible to an organic mind. A few suggestions follow, but feel free to make up something weird on your own if the PCs get into it.

Story of R-982: This circle is telling the story of an unlucky automaton named R-982. Each circle participant picks up the story for a bit, then passes it to the next participant. If a PC picks up the story (and presumably makes something up because they’re unlikely to have run across it previously), they must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect task for persuasion or entertaining. If they fail, they are ejected from the circle and suffer 1 point of Intellect damage (ignores

Armor). If they succeed, the other circle members incorporate that bit into the overall narrative. Going forward, that PC has an asset to any interaction with a machine of the Weal of Baz.

Philosophy of the Unreal: This circle is a working group exploring the concept that all of reality is nothing more than a simulation run by one of the prior worlds. The concepts being passed around are literally mind blowing, and a PC who spends time in the circle must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense roll or go unconscious for about an hour. A success gives the PC an asset on tasks related to seeing holograms, illusions, and visual trickery for one week.

Baz Worship: This circle, which is one of the larger ones, is made up of machines that either are completely convinced of Baz’s divinity or are exploring the concept. Weirdly, the gestalt of “worshippers” evokes a greater consciousness that thinks of itself both as Baz and as merely a simulation of Baz. A PC who joins the circle is jolted into this realization because they encounter a mind far vaster than their own, and become a small part of it. This realization requires a difficulty 6 Intellect defense roll or the PC is ejected from the circle and dazed for several minutes. If a PC succeeds, they can ask the entity a question and get an answer as if using the Nano ability **Knowing the Unknown** (but without having to spend the points). The PCs might gain one piece of information described under **Getting Answers** in this fashion. Only one question can be posed by PCs in any given week.

Incomprehensible: This circle’s gestalt is doing something that most organic minds simply can’t comprehend. If a PC connects, they must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense roll. On a success, they begin to convulse as if having a seizure for a few seconds and are ejected from the circle. If they fail, the same thing happens but they also forget the events of the previous few hours.



*Knowing the Unknown,
page 43*

Getting Answers, page 66

MANUFACTORIES

The dark cavities that ring the bowl of the community lead to a variety of different workspaces.

Workshops: Some manufactories resemble the shops of Ninth World wrights, in that discrete tools and bins for parts are visible and one or more automatons serve as crafters for whatever project is being worked on.

Automated: Other manufactories are purely *automated*. These appear as a blank metallic wall with two or more entrances. Exploring these presents a challenge, because a particular opening might not be a hallway leading to a chamber where a menu screen can be accessed, but instead serve as an input hopper chute for raw materials to be used for later construction. PCs who accidentally enter an input hopper are endangered as if being swallowed by a creature intent on digesting them, which means they have to break out to avoid coming to a bad end.

Made to Order: PCs who ask for directions are more likely to be sent to a non-

automated (and safer) manufactory, but not always. In either case, persistent PCs are eventually given the option to request a device made to order, but only once. Doing so requires that they display their symbol of Baz and succeed on a difficulty 6 persuasion task, and that they provide the highest-level iotum required for that item to the manufactory or automaton crafter. PCs can choose from any of the *plans* described in *Numenera Destiny* (or another sourcebook that contains numenera plans) of up to level 6 as long as they don't choose an automaton. If they conclude the transaction, the object they ordered is ready within four days, but they'll have to return to pick it up.

Unit-A29: If the PCs know that they need to find the Lost Manufactory, they're looking for an automaton with the designation of Unit-A29, which is associated with that place. After a bit of legwork, PCs discover the manufactory that Unit-A29 runs, which is not the Lost Manufactory, but a regular workshop in the Weal. It is filled with all manner of tools, parts, iotum, and strange projects arrayed along one wall in various stages of completion.



Plans, page 135

Automated
manufactory: level 6



Unit-A29 is a helpful automaton in the shape of a 6-foot (2 m) diameter rolling sphere that speaks in deep tones that approximate words, referring to itself in the third person and in incredibly stilted Truth. For instance, if the PCs ask it about Root or the Lost Manufactory, it responds as follows.

“Begin sequence relevant. Unit-A29 observes organic visitors who seek additional information. Unit-A29 weighs parameters. The sum dictates that organic visitors seek Root. Root sought the Lost Manufactory. Unit-A29 built a tracking device for Root. Unit-A29 never observed Root again. Unit-A29 queries organic visitors: Should Unit-A29 build a duplicate tracking device for organic visitors?”

“Analysis: Yes. 9.999 out of 10.”

If the PCs ask Unit-A29 to build them a tracking device to help them find the Lost Manufactory or Root, it doesn't need convincing. It rolls over to its workbench and begins assembling a nodule using levitating waldos. Ten minutes later, it produces a cobbled-together **tracking device**.

LOST MANUFACTORY

The tracking device provided by Unit-A29 indicates that the Lost Manufactory is only about 20 miles (32 km) to the east. The PCs can use a vehicle to reach it quickly or go on foot along the shore of Navae Marica until they reach the area indicated by the tracking unit. Read or paraphrase the following (and if you wish, show them the cover of this book).

Globes of incandescent light bloom on the horns of ancient towers. Beyond them, the high walls of the mountains known as the Clock of Kala loom. With a grinding whir, a massive shape lurches into view from behind an escarpment. It resembles the head of a great insect, albeit an insect made of metal and gears standing fifty feet high on machine legs. The tracking device points to it, identifying it as the Lost Manufactory. Two figures stand atop it, one all in red.

PROPHETS ON THE MANUFACTORY

If Radius sees the red-robed figure on top of the mobile manufactory a very long distance away, it utters an obscenity and a promise: “Crail! More prophets of the false god. Soon to be dead prophets!” If the PCs want anything other than a fight with the red-robed figure and its companion, they'll have to intercede with Radius.

In fact, the two figures are prophets with the self-given names of **Ardor** and **Grace**. They have tattoos of a machine ring on their faces, like other prophets the PCs have encountered. Ciszán the Machine God ordered them to guard the manufactory, lest others learn what Ciszán tore from Root (Root lies inside the mobile manufactory—or, at least, its remains do). In addition to knowing **what the prophets know**, these two are exultant because they believe Ciszán's rise to godhood is nigh. If they spy Radius or Chord, they're eager to take from them the “divine keys” that the Machine God needs. This probably means a combat is in the offing anyway, since the siblings don't have “divine keys” to hand over, even if they wanted to.

Climbing up a leg to the top of the manufactory is a difficulty 3 task. Fighting on top runs the risk of being pushed off, which could result in a 50-foot (15 m) fall; victims take 5 points of damage (ignores Armor) and descend one step on the damage track.

DAMAGED MANUFACTORY

Despite the mechanical insect's great size, closer examination reveals that the mobile manufactory represents only the head of something that was obviously the tip of a much larger construct, now torn away and missing. A ragged hole in the back of the head is the most obvious way the PCs can enter the manufactory, though a sealed entrance mechanism on top of the head could also be triggered with a successful understanding numenera task.

LOST MANUFACTORY INTERIOR

The main compartment within the manufactory—about a short distance in diameter—features two different sets of control surfaces (one set is completely dead, and the other flickers with small glows), a

Unit-A29: level 6, crafting numenera tasks as level 7; Armor 3

Ardor and Grace: level 5, understanding and crafting numenera as level 7; Armor 3 via esotery; fly up to a long distance each round via esotery; attack up to three targets within short range simultaneously each round with electrical ray that inflicts 8 points of damage via esotery

What the Prophets Know, page 32

Tracking device: level 5; screen displays direction and distance to Lost Manufactory

Lost Manufactory: level 7; moves aimlessly up to a short distance each round

small camp for two people in a cubby, and a disassembled automaton. A ragged hole is open to the exterior.

Dead Control Surfaces: A successful understanding numenera task reveals that most of the control surfaces once accessed all manner of automated crafting tools and creches that resided in a much larger area no longer part of the manufactory. Whatever tore away the greater part of the manufactory happened well over fifty years earlier. (In fact, Orstenia Myal took it as part of her project to build the Halo.)

Piloting the Manufactory: Another set of control surfaces, smaller than the bank of dead ones, allows limited piloting of the mobile manufactory with a second successful understanding numenera task. However, the screens that once provided an exterior view are **disabled**.

Camp: Dried rations, bedrolls, a few books, and a couple of bottles of spirits lie in a cubby. One of the prophets must be an aspiring artist: a reasonably well-executed image of a man bearing a machine halo floating around his head is painted on an empty bulkhead. By the detritus, it's clear that the two prophets have been here for at least a month, if not longer.

Root: An automaton that somewhat resembles Radius is manacled to the floor and in an advanced state of disassembly. Repairing it isn't possible at this stage. A search reveals a cube in the detritus not unlike the one Origin provided. It's not encrypted. If activated, the cube plays the following audio:

I erred. Thinking Ciszán a scholar like myself, I divulged the equation that summons the entrance to the Howling Pyramid. Ciszán repaid me with treachery. He revealed the Halo of Dominion already in his keeping. He'd pilfered it from the Howling Pyramid years ago, before being ejected and losing the path back. Then he did this to me, all the while jabbering about "divine keys" that would grant him true godhood. Such keys don't

actually exist, but it seems Ciszán can salvage command and control circuits from us, the nine self-aware siblings, destined to be the nine generals of the Glistening Army.

Four of us remain inert in the Howling Pyramid. And now Ciszán, the self-styled Machine God, knows how to return. I have felt the stirrings of an ancient channel that connects me to the five of us that originally escaped. If one of you finds me here, I beg this of you: stop Ciszán. He could do great harm if he fully activates the Halo of Dominion and gains control of the Glistening Army.

Also: avenge me.

A strange equation flashing across the cube face finishes the message. How the equation can be used to "summon" the Howling Pyramid is described in the next chapter.

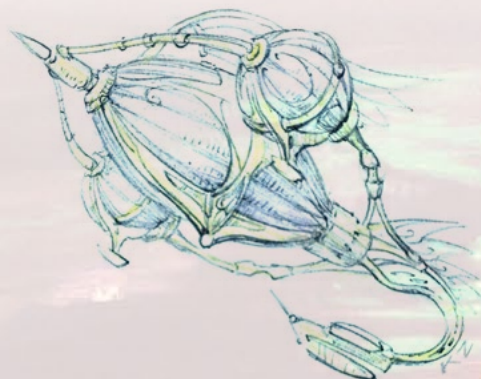
Salvage Options: The Lost Manufactory can be salvaged. Treat the **salvage source** as if level 7.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each if they discover the Weal of Baz, 1 XP each if they engage in the activities of at least one circle of association, and 1 XP each if they find Root's disassembled form and message.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," continue to Chapter 7: The Howling Pyramid.



 Disabled, page 123

Salvage Sources, page 108

CHAPTER 7

THE HOWLING PYRAMID

SYNOPSIS

Ciszan has returned to the Howling Pyramid, intent on salvaging four automatons (long inert siblings of Radius's) for divine keys. The PCs and Radius discovered the means to follow him, thanks to a final message encoded by Root.

The bulk of this chapter describes the Howling Pyramid and the dangers facing PCs who try to make their way through this ancient, moon-sized artifact of the prior worlds where sound takes on whole new characteristics. The PCs may hope to stop Ciszan from salvaging some of the inert automatons. Each component salvaged gives Ciszan control over an additional number of automatons he can call from the Halo.

Even so, it's important to Radius that each of its siblings be found, if only so they can be put to rest with a word of remembrance. Each set of remains they find is another debt Radius feels it owes Ciszan.

PREPARE TO DEPART

The PCs may decide to travel somewhere other than the interior of the *Lost Manufactory* before they essay the equation of summoning. If they spend a few days preparing, that doesn't fundamentally change the situation in the Howling Pyramid as it is described.

RADIUS SEEKS VENGEANCE

In the previous chapter, the disassembled body of Root is discovered in the *Lost Manufactory*. If *Radius* is with the PCs, it took the initial discovery quietly, but its rage slowly swells. After about an hour, it can't help stalking around, smashing random objects with its sword, and muttering about

how there will be a reckoning when it finds Ciszan. If the PCs want to spend more than a few days preparing, Radius becomes increasingly frantic to go, and may in fact essay the equation itself if the PCs don't seem willing to depart within a few days. If that happens, the PCs will have a chance to catch up with their friend inside the pyramid.

THE EQUATION OF SUMMONING

The equation is a combination of numbers and strange symbols. If the PCs succeed on a difficulty 5 understanding numenera task, they realize that the equation allows one who successfully essays it to call something out of nothing: an entrance to a place in an entirely different dimension. Essaying the equation is something a competent PC can do with a successful difficulty 5 understanding numenera task by writing it out on a surface or in drit over the course of about ten minutes, or they can try to solve it in their head (though doing so hinders the task by two steps). A failed attempt is a mental shock, and the PC descends one step on the damage track.

Pick a Number: One additional element comes into solving the equation: choosing a number between 1 and 5 as an input. The choice doesn't seem to interfere with completing the equation, and its purpose isn't immediately clear. However, whichever number the equation solver chooses determines which of the five faces of the pyramid the door opens a passage to when it appears, as noted under Pyramid Arrival.

Summoning Limitation: Once used, the equation can't be used again by anybody for 28 hours.

Lost Manufactory,
page 71

Radius, page 16

Pyramid Random Event Table, page 77

DOOR TO THE HOWLING PYRAMID

Wherever the equation revealed by Root is successfully attempted, a brilliant line of multicolored light forms in the air and quickly traces a triangle-shaped doorway that hangs a few feet off the ground. It appears within an immediate distance of the equation solver. The air within the brilliant lines becomes hazed, and the sound of howling wind emerges from it. The door remains for about a minute, then disperses. (It can be summoned again if the equation is essayed again.)

Those who pass through it find themselves on the Howling Pyramid.

Anytime the summoned door appears, an object (or at least its image) appears in the air high overhead. If the PCs are inside a structure when they summon the door, it's possible they don't see what appears in the sky. The object is high overhead—about 20 miles (32 km). But it's so massive that it's easy to see that the object is a tumbling pyramid, one measuring several miles on a side. Each face is striated with lines and contours that ride that indeterminable line between natural variation and purposeful design. When the summoned door disappears after a minute, so does the object.

Creatures moving along the floors of the ravines feel the wind high above as a persistent breeze that plucks at them, but only rarely risks picking them up and expelling them. (See the [Pyramid Random Event Table](#).)

Sound Imparts Negative Mass: A quality of the structure alters and intensifies certain natural laws so that in the Howling Pyramid, sound has noticeable “negative mass,” which means that anytime someone speaks or otherwise makes a loud noise

(including banging on something to open it or attacking something metallic), the sound vibrates through their body. Sound creates a sense of brief lightness if just a short sound or a few words are said, but speaking a few sentences, making loud banging noises, screaming, and so on risks lifting a character up as gravity seems to gently reverse. To avoid “falling” up out of the ravine to the surface of the pyramid where the winds would whip them away, a character must cease making noise and succeed on a Speed or Might defense task to grab something quickly or tightly enough to wait out the gravitic shift, which returns to normal in about a round.

Because sound vibrates through objects, a particularly loud sound like an ongoing scream or an explosion within an immediate distance threatens to lift all nearby creatures and objects upward rapidly. The level of the effect varies by the volume of the sound. A couple of sentences strung together is a level 2 effect, a surprised exclamation is a level 3 effect, a full-throated scream is a level 5 effect, an explosion is a level 6 effect, and so on. Generally, whispering characters are usually fine, though it's hard to hear over the roar of the wind above. Luckily for those exploring the Howling Pyramid, the sound from the wind above resonates at a frequency that doesn't create and propagate the negative mass effect.

Pyramid Composition: Casual examination of the ravine sides and chambers suggests that the bulk of the pyramid is composed

Sound falls upward all around us.

THE HOWLING PYRAMID

The structure is shaped like a pyramid with a square base and four sides. The shape floats in an apparently endless black void through which wind howls forever. Gravity is normal to each face, slightly heavier than Earth's but not excessively so. The wind blowing across each face of the structure at the surface is equal to that of a tornado's fury.

Ravine Passages: A complex pattern of deep grooves trace ravines—each about a long distance in depth and about 50 feet (15 m) wide—across the faces. These ravines are essentially open-ceilinged passages that interconnect. Keyed areas lie at the endpoints or intersections of the ravine passages, unless otherwise indicated.

Howling Pyramid: level 7

The “wind” passing through the void all around the Howling Pyramid may be the result of millions of years' worth of sound being expelled from the structure.

of some type of striated green stone. Close examination reveals slight movement throughout any given span of material. If a PC takes the time to study the movement further, they must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense task or become mesmerized by resolving what seems to be the very atoms of the wall vibrating and dancing, with vast spaces between each individual bit of substance, so wide the PC feels they might fall in and become lost if they move or speak. This enthralled state persists until the victim is jostled or can shake free of the effect, which they can attempt every few minutes.

Wind Storm on Surface: Moving within the ravine-like grooves protects travelers from surface winds, but the path between any two points is indirect. PCs who experiment with climbing up the ravines (a difficulty 4 climbing task) to travel along the actual surface of a pyramid face discover that the wind strength gradually increases as they get nearer the top. On the surface, it moves at about 200 mph (320 kph), which is enough to level houses and snap tethers. Essentially, each minute someone spends on the surface requires a Might task to remain attached. Moving up to a short distance requires a separate Might task. Climbing gear can ease these tasks by a few steps, but the gear lasts for only a few minutes before the stress of withstanding the **eternal windstorm** causes it to fail.

PYRAMID ARRIVAL

As shown on the Howling Pyramid map, each pyramid face is labeled with a number from 1 to 5 (5 being the square base). When PCs go through the door, they appear on the face that corresponds with the number the equation solver chose when they summoned the door. The significance of that choice is probably not immediately obvious without some experimentation.

Read or paraphrase the following to those who appear on the Howling Pyramid.

A windstorm's roar howls and keens overhead. Ravine-like walls stretch up on either side of you, glowing green and white, emptying into

a black sky without stars or light, though by the sound screaming down from up there, it hosts a relentless gale of terrifying magnitude. But down here along the ground, which is composed of the same striated greenish material, the cool but not cold air is no more than a stiff breeze. Cube-like protrusions of stone of various sizes rise from the ground and walls in random locations, possibly serving some function or other, but if so, that function isn't obvious.

Most keyed areas share that description, with the addition of specifics tied to the chamber or hallway in question. The PCs appear in area 1 of whatever face they chose when they essayed the summoning equation (which means they appear in 1-1, 2-1, 3-1, 4-1, or 5-1).

GETTING HOME

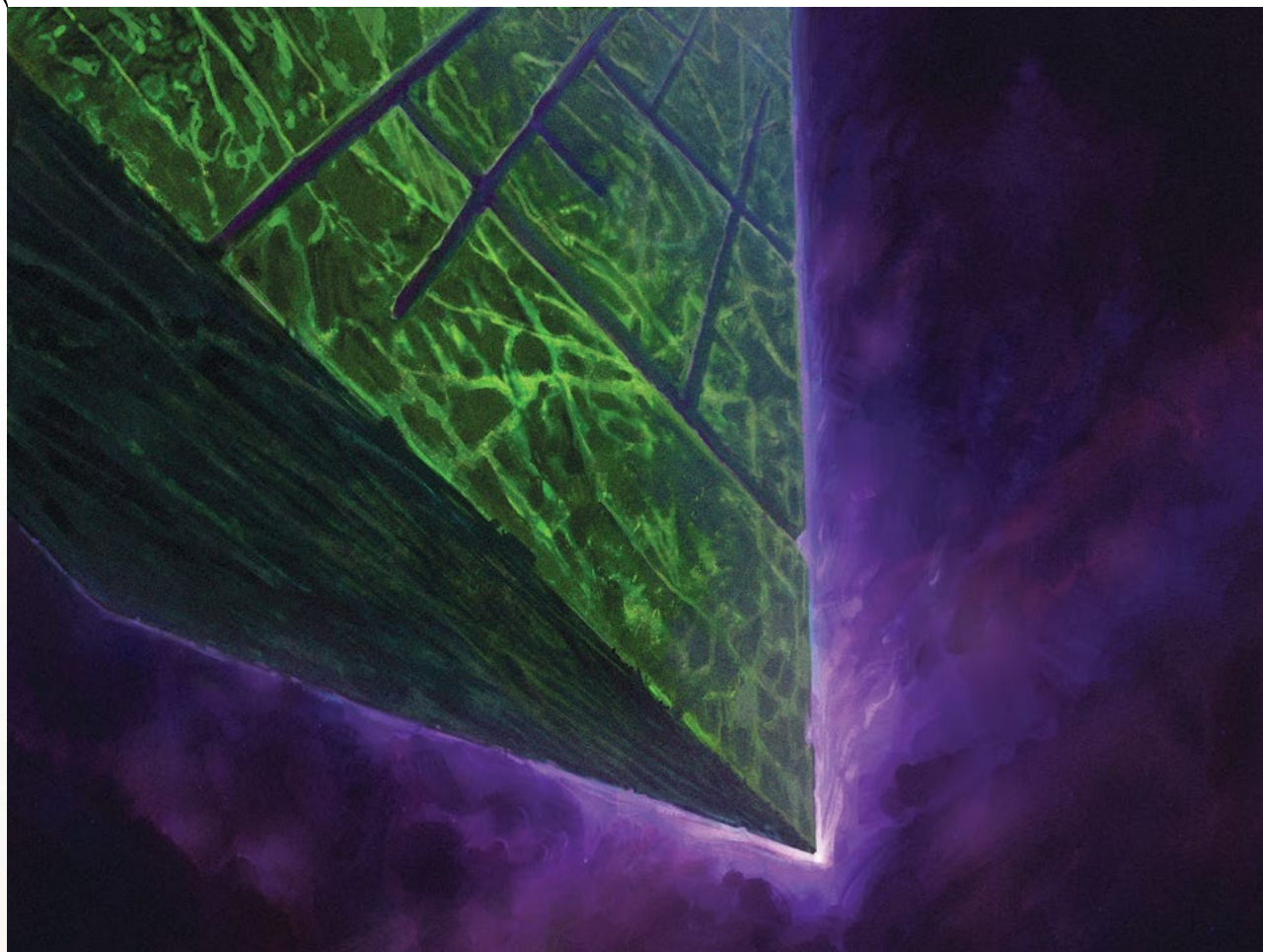
Once the PCs have made it to the pyramid, returning home is as simple as essaying the equation of summoning once more to call a door, wherever they happen to be. However, this time they have the choice of inputting six numbers rather than five. The sixth number opens the door back to the point in their own world where they last summoned the door. The other five open to the same locations previously noted.

Alternatively, someone who doesn't know the equation can use the integrated machines found in chambers 1-1 to 5-1, assuming they still function, to open a door back to Earth.

TRAVERSING THE HOWLING PYRAMID

Locations on the Howling Pyramid, including major corridors and important areas, are indicated as keyed encounters hereafter and on the poster map. However, given that each face is several miles wide, moving between adjacent keyed areas often takes five to ten minutes if moving at a cautious exploratory pace. This means that after every three or so keyed encounters plus the time required to move between them, a random event might occur.

Eternal windstorm:
level 9



FINDING RADIUS'S SIBLINGS

Radius is determined to find the final resting place of each of the four inert siblings who never made it out of the Howling Pyramid, even if, as noted hereafter, it becomes obvious that Ciszán is not likely to return to any of the bodies. Radius says that it has a duty to visit each of the remains, even if the hope of returning them to working order becomes less and less likely as each inert body is discovered.

This resolution by Radius is likely to mean that the PCs end up exploring a larger portion of the Howling Pyramid than they might have otherwise, unless they're willing to let Radius go on its own. For its part, Radius asks that the PCs accede to this one final favor in case there is something that can be done for any of the siblings. And if not, they might learn something that will be useful in bringing down Ciszán when they find him.

FINDING CISZÁN

Unless the PCs have been moving with incredible alacrity through previous chapters, finding Ciszán in the Howling Pyramid isn't a race to prevent him from salvaging "divine keys" from inert automatons. It soon becomes clear that the race is over. Ciszán has had more than enough time in the pyramid already to get what he could salvage from each of Radius's siblings.

This means the PCs eventually locate him in the hidden chamber he's using in the pyramid to serve as his workshop and base, which is the **Apotheosis Chamber** (6-2). A few clues scattered in the encounter areas described below, a short-term alliance with the cyclic raiders, or thorough exploration eventually leads the PCs to their quarry.

PYRAMID RESIDENTS

Over untold stretches of time since the creation and later abandonment of the Howling Pyramid, a variety of different

6-2. Apotheosis Chamber, page 94

PYRAMID RANDOM EVENT TABLE

Every hour the PCs spend within the groove-like ravines of the Howling Pyramid, consider consulting the Pyramid Random Event Table. You can also roll for an event during some other encounter to add some of the pyramid's flavor to that encounter. Unless noted otherwise, effects with consequences for PCs are level 7. Some of these events should be introduced as GM intrusions.

Roll	Event
1	No event
2–3	Wandering survivor encountered
4	Distant call that almost sounds like an animal caught in a trap
5	Laughter audible in the distance
6	Weird song sounds from a nearby cube-like protuberance
7	Whispers seem to emerge from a span of the wall for several rounds
8	Two patrolling cyclic raiders find the PCs
9	Distant banging, too distant to be loud enough to cause gravity reversal
10	Large tremors and explosions of light appear in the void beyond the pyramid for one minute
11	On pyramid surface above, wind dies down to 30 mph (48 kph) for about ten minutes
12	Green pulsing lights run through the walls in two groups, as if second group chases the first
13	Resonant sound floods the passage, affecting PCs like those studying pyramid composition
14	Random cube-shaped extrusion from floor or wall creates level 5 salvage opportunity
15	Scream that is not the wind echoes down the chamber, creating level 5 gravity reversal
16	Gust tosses a character into a wall, inflicting 5 points of damage on failed Speed defense roll
17	Gust of fine dust completely obscures the area for several minutes, potentially blinding characters who fail Might defense rolls for about an hour or until they make a recovery roll
18	Air drains away in an area a long distance across; unprotected PCs move one step down the damage track each round but at the point where they would die, they instead fall unconscious and remain so for about a minute, whereupon the air pressure returns to normal
19	Savage gust tosses a PC into the void above a ravine on a failed Speed defense roll
20	Four hunting clickers find the PCs

creatures have inhabited, or tried to claim, the structure. The latest entities to try their hand at it are clickers and cyclic raiders. They already have a leg up on some previous contenders, because these creatures have their own unique relationship to sound. Other entities can be found here as well, but clickers and cyclic raiders are doing what they can to colonize and completely take control of the place—so far with only limited success.

CLICKERS

These 9-foot (3 m) tall black, shadowy silhouettes are composed of focused sound. Predators from some other dimension, **clickers** feed on any living creature that produces sound. They are blind, but they sense their environment and hunt prey by emitting rapid clicking noises—hence

their name. The constant clicking means that they're not great at using stealth when hunting.

Within the Howling Pyramid, clickers can modulate themselves and the clicks they produce to allow them to fly a long distance each round and, moreover, manipulate objects at a distance using a kind of sonokinetic force. They are incredibly jealous of other creatures' presence in the structure because they regard the place as theirs. The clickers and the cyclic raiders are essentially conducting guerrilla war against each other for control. Thus, most encounters with these creatures begin with them assuming an aggressive stance.

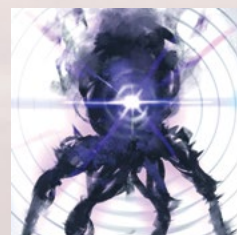
When clickers lose contact with others of their kind, they devolve to a simple hunting existence. But they are intelligent when encountered in groups of five or more,

Survivor, page 80

Cyclic raiders, page 78

Pyramid composition, page 74

Clicker: level 3, Speed defense as level 2; health 12; Armor 2 from sonokinetic manipulation; grasp attack inflicts 4 points of damage and, on a failed difficulty 5 Might defense roll, victim is engulfed, suffering 8 points of damage each round until escape



Cyclic raider: level 5, Speed defense as level 6, understanding numenera as level 7; health 20; Armor 2; sound attack from artifact causes all creatures within short range who hear it to fall unconscious until they can rouse themselves; sound blast inflicts 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor)

Pyramid Arrival, page 75

and negotiation is possible. In groups, clickers rapidly understand and are able to replicate spoken language. Groups that PCs encounter know where to find two of the four inert automatons (in 1-12 and 2-13). They're also aware of Ciszán's presence in the Howling Pyramid, but they don't know where the man is hiding.

CYCLIC RAIDERS

Cyclic raiders are humanoid automatons animated by sound. A flat, blank silver disc is displayed where their face should be. When they are encountered, they appear suddenly, as if they'd stepped out of an invisible door. They disappear just as precipitously, exactly three minutes later,

often with a captive or two. Cyclic raiders enact a bizarre agenda. They speak several languages, which seem to be composed of voice recordings of various humans sewn together to make completely new sentences (often using the voices of previously caught captives). Cyclic raiders don't have much use for humans and other creatures except as a means to gather information. They don't really honor promises in the long term, but they do know where to find two of the four inert automatons (in 3-4 and 4-6).

The cyclic raiders are also aware of Ciszán's presence in the Howling Pyramid, but they don't know where he is hiding. They are suspicious of him and avoid him because he seems to have a strange power over them, however weak. If convinced that Ciszán could become a "Machine God" with greatly enhanced powers of control over machines, one or two cyclic raiders might join the PCs to help destroy him (and then try to claim the Halo for themselves).

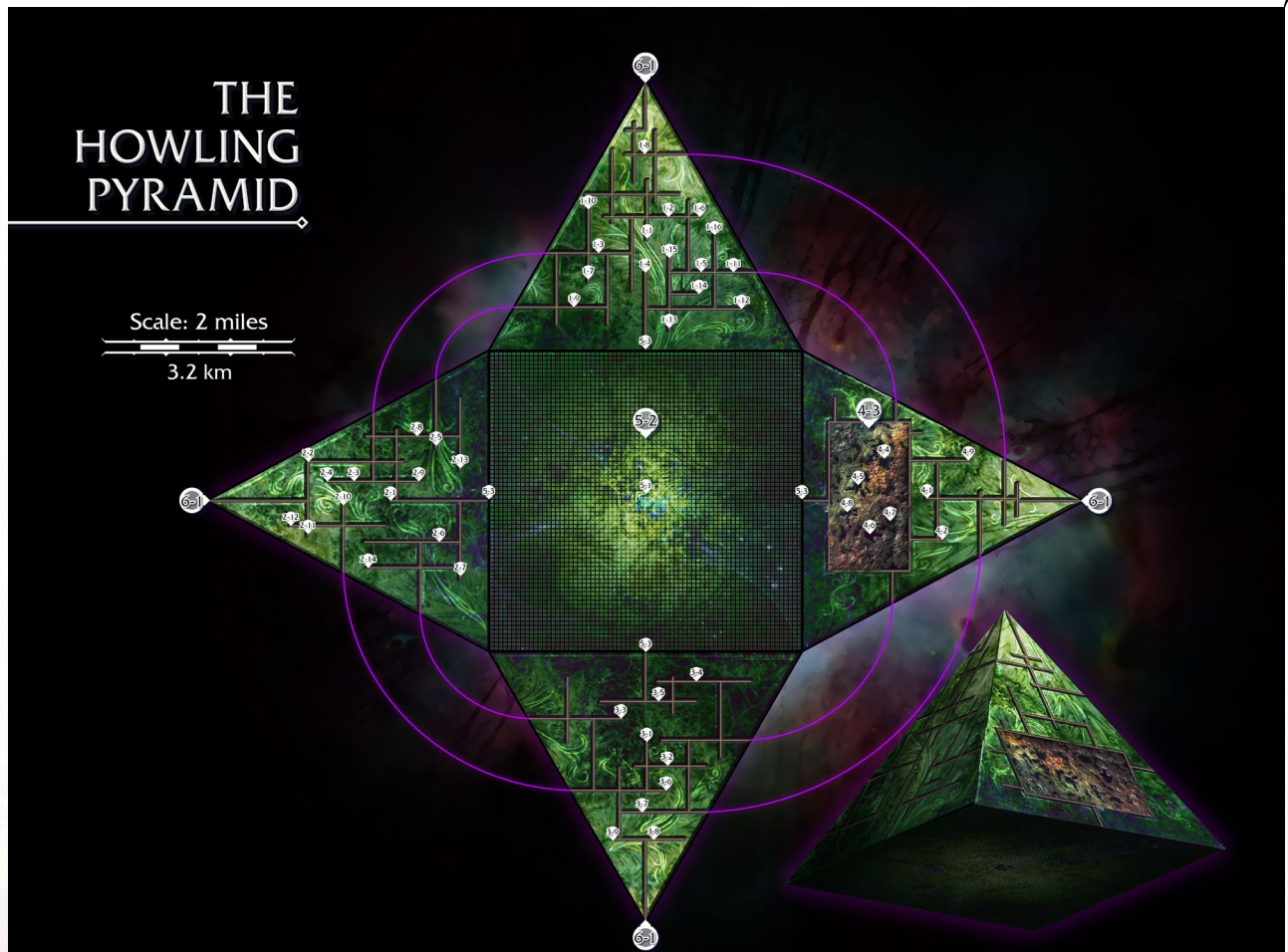
Cyclic raiders are not native to the Howling Pyramid, but they have become active here because they wish to claim it for themselves. They regard the clickers as mere vermin, though vermin that are dangerous and in need of eradication. Whatever their origin and other goals, the cyclic raiders found here hope to unlock the secrets of the Howling Pyramid, which they hope will "deliver the full and unequalled power of the phonom" to them (whatever that means).

In areas with ambient sound, these automatons require no sustenance and operate indefinitely. But in completely soundless areas, such as the void beyond the sky, they collapse and can be restored to function only when exposed to sound.

KEYED ENCOUNTERS

The following areas refer to locations keyed on the poster map. Conditions described under **Pyramid Arrival** are true in all the following areas, as well as in connecting areas between them, except where noted. Keyed areas lie at the endpoints or intersections of the 50-foot (15 m) wide ravine passages, unless otherwise indicated. Additional specific elements found in each area are described hereafter.





UNDERSTANDING THE MAP

The map represents the Howling Pyramid as if it was unfolded. In reality, the triangular sides are all connected so that the four faces come together at the tip (which leads to area 6-1). Where passages on a triangular side bisect the “edge” of the unfolded map, they connect to the passage on the neighboring face, and thus are continuous.

1-1. DOOR ONE

A two-dimensional wire-frame triangle hangs point down in the air at the chamber’s center, levitating about a foot (30 cm) off the floor sono-kinetically. A pyramid-like (point down) control surface near it allows someone who succeeds on a difficulty 5 understanding numenera task to cause the triangle to light up in a fashion that simulates using the summoning equation to call a door. PCs who do so can use it to travel back to Earth (returning to the point where they departed the world) or one of the other Doors (2-1, 3-1, 4-1, or 5-1) as described under *Getting Home*.

1-2. SQUEAKING SLIME

Reddish dollops of *slime* producing tiny squeaks spatter this area. The dollops are rooted like fungi. The combined volume of their sound causes objects and creatures in the area to experience *low gravity*. Moving through the area is easy enough, but the hard-to-detect haze of spores means living creatures that pass through must succeed on a difficulty 3 Might defense task or begin to grow small tufts of squeaking slime on their own skin within a few hours. Treatment requires a thorough scrubbing and a successful healing task.

1-3. LEAKING RESERVOIR

Transparent spheres 1 foot (30 cm) in diameter are embedded randomly in the wall and floor. Most glow dully, but a few are shattered, hazing the air with the same glow contained in the whole globes. The energy is temporal, and the first PC to enter attracts the leaking energy. They are suffused on a failed difficulty 6 Might task. Affected characters move more quickly through time

Squeaking slime: level 3, stealth tasks as level 5



Low gravity, page 115

Getting Home, page 75

for the next ten minutes. During this period, their voices are noticeably higher in pitch, all their Speed-based tasks are eased, and they can take one extra action every other round. At the end of the period, the character returns to normal and drops one step on the damage track. (Multiple overlapping doses have no effect, but multiple consecutive doses increase the number of steps targets descend on the damage track each time the effect ends.)

1-4. TUMEROGENESIS TANKS

A series of tube-like transparent containers, each about 3 feet (1 m) in diameter and 6 feet (2 m) long, are attached to the walls and a central pyramid-like (point down) control surface. Most are dark and empty; however, one gleams with purple points of dancing light. If opened from the control surface (a difficulty 3 understanding numenera task), the lit tank disgorges a sludge of melted human flesh with a slurry of eyes, mouths, and organs that is somehow still alive. It begins to cry and scream in apparent distress (but it can “stick” to the floor even as its voice causes its mass to gain negative gravity). It is what remains of a delve named **Caloso** who found their way into the pyramid two decades earlier. Caloso is confused and in pain but knows where at least a couple of the inert automatons can be found.

The control surface could serve as a level 6 **salvage source**.

1-5. ICE SILHOUETTES

This area is wintry cold. Creatures moving through it notice their reflections along one wall as white silhouettes. Drawing near and touching one releases the silhouette from the wall as a two-dimensional entity composed of ice crystals. The freed **ice silhouette** mutely gesticulates, as if trying to impart some complex idea without the ability to speak. In truth, an imprint of the original mind has been made in the ice silhouette. If any of the creatures moving through the area harbors secrets or hostilities they’re normally able to restrain, the ice silhouettes immediately move to act them out. The silhouettes otherwise try to follow their originals, but after a few chambers, they melt.

The silhouettes are constructs of a malfunctioning level 6 device set in the wall meant to act as security. The device could serve as a level 6 **salvage source**.

1-6. TUNNEL TO THE TUMULT

A discontinuity swirls in midair over a pyramid-like (point down) control surface. Sounds made in the area appear as waves of visible light, which are then sucked into the discontinuity, though not so quickly that conversation is impossible. Sounds made here don’t cause negative mass effects.

A successful difficulty 6 understanding numenera task made at the control surface suggests that the discontinuity leads to a “dimension of pure sound,” whatever that means. The discontinuity wasn’t designed to suck a physical character or object into it, but sometimes living sounds emerge from the discontinuity, especially if PCs send a lot of sounds through on this end, which catches the attention of entities in the bizarre dimension. In this case, a swarm of eight **dissonance eels**—which manifest as a kind of slithering whine—comes through.

The control surface could serve as a level 7 **salvage source**.

1-7. SURVIVOR

A Ninth World explorer has wandered the Howling Pyramid for years. He has survived, but in doing so, he’s dispensed with most of his humanity, not to mention a part of his sanity. He’s gaunt, wild haired, and white bearded. Named **Milosen**, his feet are swaddled in sound-killing felt and he wears what is essentially a ball gag; he’s learned not to make noise.

Milosen’s favorite tactic is leading other explorers into a trap in an attempt to take their food, or perhaps even eat them. This area is rigged with a trap that he salvaged intact from a vault **defense mechanism**. He tries to lead the PCs here, triggering the trap when he reaches the safe zone immediately next to the mechanism.

If the PCs try to communicate with Milosen despite his aggression and give him food or water, he remembers a bit of himself. He doesn’t want to go with them; he’s happy where he is. But he will offer

Dissonance eel: level 2; *dissonance attack* inflicts 2 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor); swarm of four attack as a level 4 creature inflicting 4 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)

Caloso, flesh slurry: level 1; moves an immediate distance each round; regains 2 points of health each round



Salvage source,
page 108

Milosen: level 5, *stealth and deception* as level 7; health 25; Armor 1; once per round when struck, Milosen makes an immediate brutal cheap shot (eye gouges, bites, spits, etc.) that inflicts 2 points of damage on attacker

Ice silhouette: level 1

Defense mechanism, modified: level 7; inflicts 8 points of heat damage each round in short range (except for a bubble an immediate distance across right around the device)

some useful information. Things he might divulge include the following.

- The green woman in the chamber of the door doesn't taste especially good; he was sick all night after taking a bite from the corpse.
- A warning to stay clear of the "evil" **hunter** that sometimes tries to catch and destroy him, someone who can "roll on the walls and fling a harpoon of dead sound."
- The general way to reach one of the four inert automatons that resembles Radius.
- The location to an area where machines don't function (3-4), which is where he goes whenever cyclic raiders or the Machine God that sometimes stalks through the faces come after him.

Milosen's pack is mostly full of junk, but it also contains a **ray projector cypher**, 12 shins, and an oddity cube that, when activated, disappears for one minute and then reappears in the same spot.

1-8. ARSENAL

The wall here is blackened and broken, revealing a smooth black metallic surface, as of some larger object embedded in the matrix. (The damaged area has the same effect as in area 3-2.) The smooth surface is one side of a locked metallic vault. If the PCs somehow penetrate the vault, they discover twenty racked crossbow-like devices. All but one of them is depleted (but in total, they could serve as a level 7 salvage source). The one that still functions is a sonic lance artifact.

1-9. DEAD SPACE

The area is coated in a yellowish algal growth. All sounds made here are muffled and die away immediately. Negative mass effects can't be instigated here. However, spending more than a few hours in the area risks an **algal disease** that slowly coats a user's throat and lungs with yellowish growth.

1-10. MEMORY MELODY

Transparent spheres 1 foot (30 cm) in diameter are embedded randomly in the walls and floor. Most glow dully, but a

SONIC LANCE (ARTIFACT)

Level: 1d6 + 4

Minimum Crafting Level: 6

Form: Long handheld device with a few simple controls

Effect: This device emits a faint short-range beam of focused sound. Targets hit by the beam suffer a number of points of Speed damage equal to the artifact's level (ignores Armor). If the sonic lance is used in the Howling Pyramid, the target, the user, and every creature and object within immediate range of either must succeed on a Speed defense roll or "fall" upward as their mass becomes negative.

This device is a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used on each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

few are shattered, filling the air with faint strains of a melody that isn't immediately familiar. Characters who try to recognize the melody must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense task or fall into a trance similar to the one for PCs studying **pyramid composition**. However, PCs who succeed on the task recall something they never could have known. It appears in their brain like any other memory. They choose the general subject, but not the specific bit of information.

1-11. CLOGWEBS

Thick, weblike strands of greenish fluid stretch throughout the area, blocking access unless the PCs are willing to cut or sweep through the webbing. Each time a web parts, a subtle twang resonates through the pyramid in all directions for several hundred yards. Eventually this calls a swarm of **interference spiders**, which manifest as many-legged sparkles of brown light. The spiders swarm in a chorus of destructive interference that stifles sound and overwhelms victims, freezing them in place.

4-2. *The Hunter*, page 88

Ray projector cypher: level 5; inflicts 5 points of damage by turning a portion of a target within long range into glass

Pyramid composition, page 74

Algal disease: level 5; each day a Might defense roll is failed inflicts 5 points of Might damage (ignores Armor)

Interference spider: level 2; a swarm of five or more acts as a single level 4 creature; sound-deadening attack inflicts 4 points of damage (6 points if a swarm) on a target that fails a Might defense task and, on second Might defense failure, paralyzes target for one hour

Defense mechanism: level 7; inflicts 8 points of heat damage in short range each round

1-12. INERT AUTOMATON

A humanoid automaton that once might have looked similar to Radius is partly embedded in the matrix of the walls. Sounds made in this area affect mass as in other parts of the pyramid, but rather than lifting creatures, it hurls them toward the wall (the same wall that contains the embedded automaton).

Investigation reveals that multiple different salvage operations have been performed on the remains, so it's little more than a shell. This automaton numbers among the nine initially released from the Halo, but among the four that never made it out of the Howling Pyramid like Radius, Chord, Origin, and the others did.

A pyramid-like (point down) control surface protrudes from the floor here, and messing with it can alter the local direction in which negative mass affects objects and creatures. The control surface could also serve as a level 6 salvage source.

Radius: Each time Radius finds a sibling, its mood darkens that much more (despite it being the one who insisted that it visit each final resting place). It won't start a fight, but the mercenary becomes irritable and snappish. It also takes a piece of its fallen sibling as a remembrance.

1-13. EXPLORER REMAINS

A discoloration on the floor in front of a square metallic hatch (which leads to 1-14) is surrounded by small bits of litter and wreckage. Investigation reveals the mark to be the disturbing silhouette of at least three humanoid figures burnt into the floor. Small bits of crumbling bone, leather, crystal shards from a glowglobe, and other items make up the litter. The bone is blackened, and the items appear partly melted.

1-14. SPINAL VAULT

A mechanism on the face of the **vault** once protected the contents against unauthorized access (the results of which can be seen in 1-13). But it's broken and no longer functions. Accessing the vault still requires a successful understanding numenera task.

Within, three gel-filled canisters each swaddle what seems to be a human spine

grafted with metallic wires and modules.

If some method is found for replacing a character's spine with one of the spines in a canister (and if the character survives), that PC would gain the ability to ignore the negative mass effects of the pyramid, and over time would unlock the ability to levitate and perhaps even to fly. (As the PC gains tiers, offer them additional ability options they can choose instead of a focus or type ability they'd normally gain at that tier.)

1-15. SCREAMING VAULT

This vault is similar to 1-14, but the **defense mechanism** on the front is still active. If the PCs get inside and access the canisters, the artificial spines would grant someone who survived a transplant the ability to use their voice as a sonic weapon.

1-16. STORAGE VAULT

This vault is similar to 1-14 and 1-15, including bearing an active defense mechanism. If the PCs get inside, the vault seems to be empty. Investigation causes it to switch on, trapping anyone inside in a state of temporal stasis. Only deactivating the vault with a series of three successful numenera tasks (whether salvage, understanding, or crafting) will deactivate the time-trapping effect.

2-1. DOOR TWO

The area is similar to 1-1. **Door One**, with the addition of a couple of strange organic patterns scrawled over the greenish "stone" of the walls. However, they're not actually patterns but life forms called **dal**, which came from a two-dimensional realm to explore the Howling Pyramid. This is revealed when the dal detach from the wall like streams of flowing liquid and attack newcomers. The dal attack because they don't quite understand that creatures like the PCs are alive in the way they are; they instead assume that the PCs are just more parts of the environment to be explored.

Dal use their two-dimensional bodies like very sharp blades and, if they hit, can choose to transfer both themselves and the victim into an alternate dimension if the victim fails an Intellect defense task after being struck for damage. This alternate dimension looks

1-1. *Door One*, page 79

Dal: level 4, *Speed* defense as level 5 due to being two-dimensional; health 15; attack inflicts 5 points of damage; for more details, see *Ninth World Bestiary 2*, page 41

Vault: level 6

exactly like the one just departed, except it is empty of life. Victims phase back to their plane of origin after a few rounds, which means a PC subject to this attack might have to use the equation to summon a door to the Howling Pyramid all over again.

2-2. COLORLESS

Black fluid covers the floor in this area to a depth of a few inches in most places (but a few feet in the middle), making it difficult to cross without dampening the soles of an explorer's boots. Whatever is immersed in the liquid—be it clothing, objects, or skin—becomes jet black. Faint numbness is felt where it touches skin. Full body immersion inflicts 2 points of damage (ignores Armor), and the immersed character becomes as dark as night, as does any object they are wearing or carrying, for a period of about ten hours. In shadowy areas or areas of dim light, such a character has two assets to stealth tasks.

2-3. CATCHMENT

Unlike almost every other location in the pyramid, a ceiling just 30 feet (9 m) above blots out the void overhead, and the sound of the wind is lessened. But a faint smell of rotting flesh rankles the nose, and bones, broken devices, and other refuse litters the

area. A cube-long control surface protrudes from one wall.

The force of gravity in the area is twice normal, which hinders attacks (and all physical actions) made here. It also doubles the effect of any negative mass inversions caused by making sounds, which in this case send victims crashing into the ceiling, then dropping back to the floor.

Unless PCs move very carefully through the area, a **trap mechanism** beneath the floor increases gravity to six times its normal level, which pins the characters to the floor and inflicts 2 points of ambient damage per round until they either crawl out of the chamber with a successful Might defense task or figure out how to switch off the effect with a successful Intellect task at the control surface.

The litter of broken devices could serve as a level 4 salvage source, if the PCs want to risk it.

2-4. WHAT'S THAT?

A low-level hum from this area makes everything lighter than normal but doesn't precipitate a fall upward. Any light brought by the PCs reveals the shadow of a large device set in the center of the area, but the device itself seems to be invisible to normal conscious cognition. The device could serve

Gravity trap
mechanism: level 5



**Pronged rod
silencer: level 6**

Clickers, page 77

Cyclic raiders, page 78

**Glassteel cube
device: level 6**

Light construct: level 3

**Malfunctioning control
surface: level 6**

**Viewing frame: level
6; depletion: 1 in 1d6
(on depletion, frame
expands and pulls
through all creatures
within immediate range
that fail a Speed or
Might defense roll)**

Complex device: level 8

as a level 6 salvage source, but salvage tasks are hindered by two steps because it's impossible to see what's being salvaged.

2-5. CYCLIC RAIDER REMAINS

A fixed metallic **rod** that bifurcates into two prongs halfway to the top stands at least 9 feet (3 m) tall in this area. Near it are the fragmented remains of two automatons, though they don't share much in common with Radius. In fact, they're inanimate **cyclic raiders** that fell afoul of the pronged rod, which is a sound-dampening device. The area is one of complete silence. If the PCs deactivate the pronged rod, the cyclic raiders reanimate, assuming the characters haven't salvaged them (treat them both as a single level 5 salvage source).

If the PCs do salvage the automatons, later cyclic raiders can sense the resonance of those parts, which hinders all attempts to negotiate.

2-6. DYSPHORIC SOUND

In this chamber, a subsonic influence radiates as a side effect from a malfunctioning pyramid-like (point down) **control surface**. One or more PCs in the area the GM chooses must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or suffer a hallucination. Ask the player to describe the best or worst thing that ever happened to their character; that's the hallucination that afflicts the PC, dazing them and hindering all tasks until they can shake it off or someone can turn off or repair the control surface. If repaired, the surface acts as another Door, though in this case, it opens a portal to a garden-like limited dimension that is generally free of threats, and which could serve as a place to rest. Tall trees, multicolored flowers, the sounds of birds and insects, humid heat, and broad leaves that provide shade from the bright sunlike sphere of light overhead feature prominently.

2-7. COMPLEX MACHINE

A **complex device** that chimes and clicks fills this chamber. Instrumentation, controls, and various elaborate smaller subsidiary devices are connected to it, each more involved than the last. The machine seems

out of place given the cube-like design of most other machines in the pyramid. Studying the device is difficulty 10 because the overall function is many orders of complexity beyond normal understanding. It's probably easier to just treat it as a salvage source.

Five **clickers** spend a lot of time investigating the device, and they still don't know what it does. But they're happy to shift their attention to the PCs for a while.

2-8. THEY FOLLOW

A **glassteel cube** 6 feet (2 m) on a side hangs in the center of this area. Touching it triggers a subtle vibration, rich with coded information. A successful Intellect task to understand numenera allows a character to activate the cube, which projects a human **construct composed of pure light** into the area. (Only a single light construct can be active at any one time.) The construct follows the PC who triggered it, never speaking. If attacked, it fades to invisibility, only to return a minute later. The next time the PC is subject to a negative mass effect of any consequence, the construct is subjected to it instead, after which it's gone for good.

2-9. EXTERNAL VIEW

A fixed cube-like projection on the wall is inset with a 5-foot (1.5 m) diameter metallic frame. The frame serves as a self-reflecting window focused on the Howling Pyramid from a point of view set a few miles distant in the surrounding void. It is possible to climb through the frame, if a PC so desires, and exit the pyramid. The exit is one way; on the other side, there is no frame. Worse, that will eject the character into an endless-seeming void with only a small chance of regaining the pyramid, unless the PC has some means of propulsion and can withstand the tornadic winds at the surface.

A successful understanding numenera task reveals that the focus of the **viewing frame** could be shifted at a rate of about a short distance each round. This means the PCs could try to remotely explore other portions of the structure, though each new area explored requires a depletion roll.

2-10. CONTEMPLATIONS

Bluish glowing mist hangs in a thin plane about 10 feet (3 m) overhead. Images constantly swirl there and seem to change to somewhat reflect what a particular viewer is thinking about, though never exactly and never for more than a few seconds.

Two unmoving, statue-like beings stand in poses of reflection, staring up at the mist. They are only somewhat humanoid, and apparently composed of white stone. However, PCs who take the time to examine them realize that the figures are not statues but living creatures with a hard carapace that are disinterested in interacting with others. These **stony observers** much prefer their contemplation of the mist. Persuading one to communicate, either telepathically or perhaps using the thought-responsive mist, requires a successful persuasion task. On a success, one of the entities uses pictures in the mist or telepathy to show concern regarding the state of matters in the Howling Pyramid by projecting the image of Ciszán in a large area bearing a halo of spinning machine parts. Ciszán is grinning like a madman, and it's possible to see within the hazed middle of the ring thousands and thousands of marching automatons, each bearing a weapon of war.

Once the observers have passed on this image, they prefer to go back to their own contemplations, but will of course defend themselves if attacked.

2-11. GREEN COCOONS

Several dozen green cocoons are scattered throughout this area, each about 9 feet (3 m) in length. Disturbing one (or really, even getting close to one) causes it to hatch a hibernating creature called an **exic**. If the PCs can't deal with the first one that hatches within a round or two, several more begin to hatch, and potentially, all twenty-six exics emerge in ones and twos. Though normally not aggressive unless attacked, these are all starving, and the PCs are mostly made of meat. (Exics spin themselves into cocoons and cast themselves like seeds on extradimensional winds. This particular batch was sucked in by the

extradimensional resonance imparted to surrounding existence by the Howling Pyramid).

2-12. CUBES WITHIN CUBES

A machine made of several hundred blue cubes is fixed in this chamber. The individual cubes are constantly in flux, so the machine's overall shape is always changing. A PC studying the **blue cube sculpture** who succeeds on an understanding numerera task gains an insight about the general contents of two nearby chambers of the GM's choosing, imparted as if a memory that the character had all along. On a failed task, the cubes all lock into a straight pillar formation, and begin flashing red and blaring a noise loud enough to risk expelling characters upward with negative mass, but also triggering a roll on the **Pyramid Random Event Table**.

Blue cube sculpture: level 6

Stony observer:
level 6; Armor 5

*Pyramid Random
Event Table, page 77*

Exic: level 4, climbs as level 6; health 18; Armor 4; inflicts 5 points of damage with mandibles; sprays caustic web that inflicts 5 points of damage and immobilizes foe until escape; for more details, see *Into the Outside*, page 144



Getting Home, page 75

Defense mechanism:
level 7; inflicts 8 points
of heat damage in short
range each round

**Space-time
refugee:** level 7

GM intrusion: *The
PC becomes "lost"
by falling through a
recursive dimensional
space within the cube.
Finding their way back is
an Intellect-based task.*

Grinder: level 6

2-13. INERT AUTOMATON

A humanoid automaton that once might have looked similar to Radius is fused and melted into a large metallic shape that seems as if it, too, was some kind of automaton, one apparently designed to disassemble and repurpose any other machine it came upon. But it no longer functions.

Investigation reveals that multiple different salvage operations have been performed on both sets of remains. The humanoid automaton numbers among the nine initially released from the Halo of Dominion, but among the four that never made it out of the Howling Pyramid like Radius, Chord, Origin, and the others did.

Radius: Each time Radius finds a sibling, its mood darkens that much more (despite it being the one who insisted that it visit each final resting place). It won't start a fight, but the mercenary becomes irritable and snappish. It also takes a piece of its fallen sibling as a remembrance.

2-14. GRINDER VAULT

A square metallic hatch about 6 feet (2 m) on a side is set in the wall here. A **defense mechanism** on the face protects the contents against unauthorized access. If the PCs get into the vault, they find a strange machine (or perhaps a phenomenon): a 9-foot (3 m) cube floats in this vault, about 3 feet (1 m) off the floor. Each of the cube's six sides opens into an interior space that isn't shared with any of the other sides' interiors; a dimensional effect is at play. Each interior space (six in all) is filled with a variety of inset control surfaces, each of which could serve as a level 7 salvage source. However, entering an open cube face causes the faces to shift and spin, forcing the intruders to succeed on Speed defense rolls or suffer 5 points of damage each round until they leave or succeed on an understanding numenera task to end the spinning. Further experimentation reveals that this machine, called a **grinder**, is a dimensional gate that is almost completely defunct, though still dangerous.

3-1. DOOR THREE

A two-dimensional wire-frame triangle hangs point down in the air at the chamber's center, levitating about a foot (30 cm) off the floor sono-kinetically. A pyramid-like (point down) control surface near it allows someone who succeeds on a difficulty 5 understanding numenera task to cause the triangle to light up in a fashion that simulates using the summoning equation to call a door. PCs who do so can use it to travel back to Earth (returning to the point where they departed the world) or one of the other Doors (1-1, 2-1, 4-1, or 5-1) as described under **Getting Home**.

Lying near the wire frame is the corpse a female humanoid (though not a human) with numenera components liberally studding her skin. The body is lifeless, though it isn't rotting. Something about the components are preserving her. Attempts to salvage the components (which seem like a level 4 source) are disrupted when she animates and telepathically asks what the PCs think they're doing. She seems interested in hearing whatever they wish to divulge, up to and including news of the Machine God threat. If the PCs ask her to help or accompany them, or ask her anything at all, she telepathically demurs, indicating that she's a **space-time refugee**, displaced from her proper era, but it's only a matter of time before she's reeled back in by her companion. Thus, she needs to stay and wait right where she is.

3-2. DAMAGED REGION

The floor and ceiling are blackened and broken. Sounds made in the area seem to burn like fire, in addition to the normal negative mass effect. Each sound louder than a whisper made (or heard) inflicts 1 point of damage (ignores Armor).

3-3. VITALITY ARCH

A golden metal arch about 12 feet (4 m) high gleams as if lit by an unseen sunrise. The arch restores vitality. PCs who pass through it and make a recovery roll as they do so gain double the normal number of points back. However, a second pass through the arch is too much of a good thing—no points are recovered, and worse,

5 points of damage (ignores Armor) is taken from excess life force, which burns.

Whenever the arch is used, a subtle resonance gains the attention of a couple of nearby **cyclic raiders**, who appear a few rounds later to investigate.

3-4. MACHINE SOMNOLENCE (AND INERT AUTOMATON)

A clutter of unmoving machines lies in a loose circle around a pyramid-like (point down) **machine-killing control surface** set in the floor. The control surface emits a complex resonance that doesn't trigger negative mass, but it does interfere with machine functions, shutting them down over the course of a few rounds. The clutter includes mobile machines, a few automatons, and devices that have been turned off for so long that they won't regain their original function even if the control surface is switched off with a successful understanding numerera task. This area serves as a level 7 salvage source for those willing to brave it.

PCs whose abilities rely on inborn numerera devices are vulnerable to the effect, as of course are their devices, cyphers, and artifacts. Automatons and other machines are likewise vulnerable. Each round that vulnerable creatures and items remain within short range requires a Might defense roll (for PCs), while lower-level devices simply switch off. Equal-level and higher-level machines are hindered in all actions by two steps.

Amid the clutter, a humanoid automaton that once might have looked similar to Radius lies inert. Investigation reveals that multiple different salvage operations have been performed on it. The humanoid automaton numbers among the nine initially released from the Halo of Dominion, but among the four that never made it out of the Howling Pyramid like Radius, Chord, Origin, and the others did.

Radius: Each time Radius finds a sibling, its mood darkens that much more (despite it being the one who insisted that it visit each final resting place). It won't start a fight, but the mercenary becomes irritable and snappish. It also takes a piece of its fallen sibling as a remembrance.

3-5. CALLERRAIL

One wall is composed of what seems to be a fused mass of metal, broken devices, skin, fur, wires, wood, steel, and stone. Except it's not a wall, but a resting **callerrail**, which wakes up if disturbed (such as if someone tries to salvage its body parts) and hungrily attacks. It doesn't roar (and potentially risk sending its prey falling out into the void) unless it feels a conflict is going against it, in which case it uses its abilities to remain adhered to the floor and not fall.

3-6. ANCIENT WATCHERS

Three ancient devices left by a previous wave of would-be colonizers of the Howling Pyramid remain active in this area, appearing as spheres of red liquid that levitate. These **ancient watchers** rise up and flash challenge colors in a dead language that could be translated as "Identify yourselves!" If the PCs are somehow able to bridge the communication gap, they could try to persuade these watchers, whose masters are long gone and perhaps extinct, to let them pass unharmed. Otherwise, the watchers try to turn the PCs back.

Each of them has one of the following abilities, in addition to others noted:

Heat drain: Short-range cold attack inflicts 4 points of ambient damage per round once active.

Precognitive: All tasks eased by two steps.

Psychic blast: Short-range psychic attack inflicts 2 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and stuns victim so that they lose their next turn.

3-7. MIRROR OF HUNGER

An expanse along the wall is reflective. PCs who see their reflections feel pangs of hunger and must succeed on an Intellect defense roll. Those who fail take 1 point of Speed damage (ignores Armor) per round until they eat something at least as substantial as a snack, if not a full meal.

3-8. CLICKER SWARM

A swarm of **clickers** riots around a hulking body of white crystal fused with the floor. Something about the resonance of the white crystal statue draws them and sends them into a frenzy. Getting close to the area

Cyclic raider, page 78



Callerrail, page 228

Machine-killing control surface: level 7

Ancient watcher: level 4; Armor 2; flies a short distance each round; fires "bullets" of hardened fluid at one target within short range for 6 points of damage

Mirror of Hunger: level 6

Clickers, page 77

Damaged door: level 6

Cyphers

Level 9 orb: Freezes time for everyone in immediate range (except user) for three rounds.

Level 7 goggles: Pushes user forward in time one minute.

Level 6 backpack-like device: All creatures within short range when first activated gain +1 Armor for one hour.

Shesalan: level 7; Armor 3 via esotery; long-range attack inflicts 8 points of damage and silences target that fails a Might defense roll by putting them in stasis until released from the artifact

Wheeled sled: level 5; moves up to a long distance each round while adhered to any surface

Krastin: rank 2

Milosen, page 80



Explorer's pack,
page 98

means being subject to the chorus of clicks the creatures give off. This creates a strong airflow along the routes leading to the area, which is expelled upward because of the way sound imparts negative mass in the pyramid. PCs risk being flung into the void overhead if they draw to within short range. The clickers here are maddened and may attack PCs who interfere with them and their activity. If the crystal statue is destroyed, the effect ends, and the clickers regain whatever composure they can be said to have.

3-9. PEACE NODE

Rubble and junk are strewn randomly in an area a short distance across bounded by five equally spaced white crystals fused with the floor. Within the perimeter of the crystals, sound doesn't affect gravity because it doesn't impart excess negative mass to objects (which means that random junk tends to collect here). Searching through it might yield a few **cyphers**.



4-1. DOOR FOUR

A two-dimensional wire-frame triangle hangs point down in the air at the chamber's center, levitating about a foot (30 cm) off the floor sono-kinetically, though it is bent and constantly gives off sparks. A pyramid-like (point down) control surface near it was once attached to the floor but is now broken. The **damaged door** can't be opened from this side to send PCs back to Earth or other locations within the Howling Pyramid. It can receive passages initiated from other doors or if PCs essay the equation that calls a temporary door; however, anyone who passes through it must succeed on a Might defense roll or become randomly phased for about an hour. Randomly phased PCs spend every other round out of phase, which means they can't take any physical actions that affect anything else (but neither can they be affected by physical attacks or other physical phenomena during that same round).

4-2. THE HUNTER

Shesalan hunts the Howling Pyramid for clickers and cyclic raiders. She keeps a small outpost here in the form of a tent-like shelter stocked with about triple the normal contents of an **explorer's pack**. She rolls through the ravines of the pyramid strapped into a **wheeled sled** that sticks to the floor and walls, thus avoiding the negative mass effect from sound. She relies mostly on a harpoon-like artifact called Quell that envelops targets in a cocoon of silence. Besides clickers and raiders, she also hunts **Milosen**, as well as anyone else she thinks is ruining the "sanctity" of the pyramid.

She survives by using Door Three to move back and forth between a small village in the Ninth World called **Krastin** selling components of the clickers, raiders, and other foes she harpoons in the pyramid. She also sometimes visits the polyp jungle, though she doesn't stay long because the denizens eventually start hunting her.

Shesalan is suspicious of people she doesn't know, and those asking about a



Though the chorus of sounds in the polyp jungle is loud and can impart negative mass to objects, causing them to fall upward, the jungle canopy is thick enough that most such falls can be arrested by grabbing branches, vines, or polyps.

Machine God make her immediately angry, as she assumes the PCs are adherents of Cisan, who she's tried but failed to hunt down and destroy. She knows that Cisan is holed up in 6-1, but she won't reveal that to PCs until she's sure they're friends, not foes. One way she decides is by asking the PCs to deal with an issue that's been plaguing her: a **callerail** (3-5). If the PCs can kill it, she decides to help them and leads them to 6-1, and she even helps them take down Cisan if they are particularly persuasive.

4-3. POLYP JUNGLE

Straggling plantlike growths, appearing as individual stalks with polyps on top, grow here and there in regions far beyond this area, but thicken to become a jungle-like region within an artificial canyon more than half a mile (800 m) wide. The growths are rooted in a thick layer of magnetized drit-like soil that keeps them from falling upward from random noises, and many of the plants and treelike growths extend roots even deeper into the matrix of the pyramid itself. One massive treelike growth in particular (4-4. Hungry Tree) is visible from almost anywhere in the jungle.

The source of sustenance is a sunlike fragment embedded in one of the high upper walls of the wide canyon that hosts the jungle. The burning fragment was ejected from something that exploded miles away from the pyramid hundreds of thousands of years earlier, but what it was or why it exploded is lost to the present.

Other plants, vermin, and dangerous creatures also inhabit the polyp jungle. Some use sound as a motive force or as a way to attack or defend themselves. One example is the white-leafed **chime tree**. It grows to a height of 40 feet (12 m) and emits sonic beams at anything that comes within short range, requiring a Speed defense roll to avoid suffering 3 points of damage and being hurled upward. **Nronic**

are mosslike growths that vibrate like a purring pet; those who hear the sound must make an Intellect defense roll or give out an inadvertent scream.

Creatures include the **nerif**, a sluglike beast with a vicious beak that slides along the ground and plants, and the amorphous, noise-eating **mezo** that consumes everything.

Besides these creatures, specific threats also exist in the jungle, as described hereafter.

4-4. HUNGRY TREE

This hazard is located at the base of a **massive chime tree** visible from almost anywhere in the jungle because it is so high that its upper branches reach all the way out into the void. An open cavity at the tree's base contains a sticky slurry of mud and leaves. A creature that moves to within immediate range is attacked by animate twining roots that pull the creature down beneath the surface, drowning victims and then feeding off their corpses.

4-5. PITYSTRIAN HERMIT

Karnath is a milky-skinned humanoid known as a pitystriian who wears an elaborate headpiece and a variety of jewelry made of cast-off devices and oddities. Pitystriians generally regard other creatures as mere tools to put to their own ends, but Karnath is unique among its kind. Not only is it more powerful, it's a loner and left its kind for a life of solitude in the polyp forest of the Howling Pyramid. It wanders the jungle hunting food and collecting specimens. Its cabin in this area is built of timberlike lengths of wood hewn from the polyp growths.

If approached without guile, Karnath is welcoming and helpful, if eager to see visitors off again. (If PCs lie, steal, or threaten the pitystriian, they make a dangerous enemy.) It knows of one defunct

Nerif: level 2, Speed defense as level 3 due to size; poisoned beak inflicts 2 additional points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) if a target fails a Might defense roll

Callerail, page 87

Mego: level 5; makes up to three pseudopod attacks at once; sound-draining tentacles inflict 3 additional points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) if a target fails a Might defense roll

Massive chime tree: level 5; health 100; Armor 4; root catches and pulls victims under sludge; once caught, a victim has five rounds to escape or they drown

Karnath: level 6, understanding numerera as level 7; health 29; Armor 2; moves up to an immediate distance when phasing; long-range phase blast inflicts 6 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor); melee attack inflicts controlling nanobots that force victim to do as Karnath says for one hour

Chime tree: level 3

Nronic: level 2, purring as level 5

automaton, which lies nearby (4-6), and of other dangers in the jungle. It recommends that the PCs speak to the hunter (4-2) if they seek information outside the jungle.

4-6. INERT AUTOMATON

A humanoid automaton that once might have looked similar to Radius is caught in a **web tree**, broken and disarticulated. If the web tree is dealt with, investigation reveals that at least one salvage operation was recently performed on the remains.

Web tree: level 6; Armor 3; tangling vines grab targets within immediate range who fail a Speed defense roll, inflicting 6 points of damage each round until they can escape

Jungle thing: level 6; health 30; two attacks per round each inflict 8 points of damage; regains 2 points of health each round while in the jungle

Vine serpent: level 7, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; venomous bite inflicts 7 points of Might damage and 4 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor); due to constant keening, all creatures within immediate range that fail a Might defense roll are dazed and all their tasks are hindered for one minute



Farspeaker page 182

Retriever, page 184

Telepathic wire, page 192

The humanoid automaton numbers among the nine initially released from the Halo of Dominion, but among the four that never made it out of the Howling Pyramid like Radius, Chord, Origin, and the others did.

Radius: Each time Radius finds a sibling, its mood darkens that much more (despite it being the one who insisted that it visit each final resting place). It won't start a fight, but the mercenary becomes irritable and snappish. It also takes a piece of its fallen sibling as a remembrance.

4-7. JUNGLE THING

A hulking humanoid composed of living polyp fibers has a crude house up a large tree here. Its initial instinct is to be suspicious of intruders, but if given food or other reason to pause, it can speak the Truth (or any other language of a conscious living creature within immediate range, thanks to a psychic ability). The **jungle thing** has a limited vocabulary and isn't particularly intelligent. If it thinks PCs are making fun of it or belittling it, it flies into a violent rage. The jungle thing doesn't know how it came here, but it does remember seeing someone "strange" salvaging the inert automaton recently.

4-8. VINE PREDATOR

A 3-foot (1 m) thick animate vine stretches out at least a long distance in length, though one end remains rooted in the ground. The other end resembles the head of a poisonous serpent and produces a dazing keening noise that is also loud enough to risk a sound inversion for those within immediate range. The **vine serpent** has swallowed many things in its decades of existence, including two cyphers (a **farspeaker** and a **retriever**) and an artifact (a **telepathic wire**).



4-9. MOVING VAULT

A **defense mechanism** on the face of the **vault** protects the contents against unauthorized access. If the PCs overcome the mechanism, accessing the vault still requires a successful understanding numerera task.

If the PCs get into the vault and succeed on one more understanding numerera task to comprehend it, they realize it can be used as a compact vehicle that can hold up to six (if they're good friends). The vehicle can be driven around the interior of the Howling Pyramid on lines of magnetic force, adhering to the floor and walls with little chance of coming loose. It's so maneuverable, in fact, it could slide along the surface of the pyramid where the raging winds howl.

5-1. DOOR FIVE

A two-dimensional wire-frame triangle hangs point down in the air at the chamber's center, levitating about a foot (30 cm) off the floor sono-kinetically.

But three things here are different than in the other door chambers. First, a ceiling blocks access to the pyramid's surface.

Second, unlike other doors, this door was designed to be one way, so there is no pyramid-like control surface to open it from this side. That means it can't be used to send the PCs back to Earth or other locations within the Howling Pyramid.

Third, the equation summoning a free-floating door doesn't work on this face of the pyramid. To get out, the PCs must use some other method or explore their way across the challenges associated with this face.

5-2. GAME OF SOUND

This entire area lies beneath a ceiling that's 12 feet (4 m) overhead. The region follows its own rules, which in some cases reverse what's true on other faces of the Howling Pyramid.

Grid of Squares: This entire square-shaped face is about 3 miles (5 km) on a side. The floor is gridded by smaller squares (called cells) about 250 feet (75 m) on each side, each outlined by a dim line of luminescence

on the floor. Conditions within each cell change as creatures attempt to move from Door Five (which is at the center of this face) to one of the nearest edges, a distance of about 1.5 miles (2.5 km) or about 32 squares. Despite the distance, the PCs can see the light of what might well be exits (5-3) at the center of each distant edge.

Sound Creates Matter: Instead of imparting negative mass, the reverse is true here. Sound increases mass. Anytime someone speaks or makes a loud noise (including banging on something to open it or attacking something metallic), the sound vibrates through their body, and they feel briefly heavier. However, an apparent feeling of weight gain is secondary to the main effect of sound here, which is to stimulate underlying rules of existence in a way that creates temporary ("virtual") matter.

Cell Fills With Solid Matter: When a sound occurs that is about 20 decibels (equal to the sound of a whisper or rustling leaves) or higher, it manifests as a ripple of glowing red smoke spreading outward an immediate distance per round (much slower than the actual speed of sound). One minute later, the lines surrounding the cell where the sound was made gleam brilliantly red, and a round after that, the square is filled with a solid mass of red-glowing **temporary matter** that persists for about a minute.

Staying Quiet: As the PCs begin to realize the situation, they likely attempt to stay as quiet as possible while crossing the expanse. Generally, staying quieter than a whisper is a level 1 task, but if unexpected things happen, such as if previous sounds start a chain reaction across the tiled grid (see Game Rules), getting across is probably more of a desperate sprint than a stealthy saunter. In that case, the task to remain quiet while sprinting is likely hindered by at least three steps.

Surviving Cell Filling: If a cell fills with temporary matter, creatures within the square can attempt a difficulty 5 Speed defense roll to "surf" the manifestation of the solid mass and be pushed into the next

Defense mechanism:
level 7; inflicts 8 points
of heat damage in short
range each round

Vault: level 6

Temporary matter:
level 4



nearest square instead of being caught. Of course, when a character is dumped into a new cell, it likely results in sounds in excess of 20 decibels, which begins the process over in the new cell, causing it to fill a minute later.

A creature that doesn't make it out of a cell is embedded in the mass, is prevented from making any noise, and begins to suffocate. An embedded character who succeeds on a Might defense roll manages to hold their breath for the full minute and takes 4 points of ambient damage (ignores Armor). Those who fail take 8 points of ambient damage.

Getting Across: If the PCs just run for the nearest edge across about 32 cells, they might get lucky and not suffer any setbacks or GM intrusions, and thus make it to one of the other faces before the chain reaction, as described hereafter under Game Rules, catches up to them. (Or perhaps they trigger and survive the first cell-filling, then run the rest of the way.) The average PC can move a short distance each round, which means they can cross the entire 250 feet (75 m) of a single cell before a full minute passes and the noise they make running causes that cell to fill with temporary matter.

In this case, PCs looking back notice a multiplying wave of squares slowly filling in behind them, but also spreading out from where they crossed. This should probably be cause for some alarm, and at least one or two GM intrusions that add tension to the crossing.

Potential GM intrusions: A wounded PC can't go full speed, *clickers* attack, the edge the PCs were making for is blocked, or something specific to your game has repercussions that delay or distract the PCs.

Game Rules: Each minute, cells fill with temporary matter for one minute if new sounds of at least 20 decibels occurred within them during the previous minute. Additional rules apply related to the previous state of adjacent cells. Though simple, how they interact across the grid would be complex to track, and ultimately, doing so won't enhance your experience

(probably the opposite because it'll bog things down). It's enough to simply evoke the concept of a chain reaction of huge blocks of matter crystalizing into existence and threatening to crush the PCs.

That said, knowledge is power. Merely for your edification, each minute, this happens:

- Any filled cell with fewer than two filled neighbors empties.
- Any filled cell with two or three filled neighbors remains filled.
- Any filled cell with more than three filled neighbors empties.
- Any empty cell with exactly three filled neighbors becomes filled.

5-3. EXIT THE GRID

Each of the grid exits is 40 feet (12 m) on a side and lit with bright light. The normal rules of sound imparting negative mass once again apply here. However, in these chambers (though not in connecting corridors), there is a ceiling as opposed to ravines rising on either side. Sometimes, sounds created out on the grid attract creatures from nearby areas of the connected face.

FINDING THE APOTHEOSIS CHAMBER

If it works out, when the PCs find the Apotheosis Chamber (6-2), set up a cliff-hanger ending that will make them eager to learn what happens next, and end things there, handing out XP as noted hereafter. But if it doesn't work out, no worries—you can give out even more XP the next time.

XP AWARDS

Each PC earns 1 experience point (XP) for each of the four inert automatons they discover, which gives Radius some closure (but also distresses it).

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," continue to Chapter 8: Apotheosis of a Machine God.

Clickers, page 77

Search Term: *Conway's Game of Life*

CHAPTER 8

APOTHEOSIS OF A MACHINE GOD

SYNOPSIS

The PCs finally locate and confront Cisan in the Howling Pyramid. Luckily, Cisan hasn't achieved the heights of power they might have feared. Even if he has all the divine keys and finishes his control scepter, it's not enough to command the full Glistening Army.

However, during this interaction, it's revealed that Radius is the Machine God. Once Radius gains the Halo, it can control all 3,100+ automatons nestled in the artificial space accessible through the Halo, deploying them as it wishes. It also gains power over other machines and automatons in range.

Radius's mood has grown darker over the months, and with the Halo, it seems to become someone with different values and goals (in fact, a hidden mechanical directive activates within it, set by Orstenia Myal). It deploys the Glistening Army of automatons outside the Weal of Baz, demanding that the community join the Machine God. Otherwise, the Weal will become the first of many places annihilated by the Glistening Army.

The PCs have a chance to intercede with their friend, even as two automaton armies engage in exploratory conflicts. The characters can try to talk Radius down and say that it doesn't have to follow the dusty instructions of a dead Aeon Priest. However poorly she was treated, it doesn't mean that the Glistening Army should be used to throw the Ninth World into war and destruction (or so they might argue, among other strategies). Part of Radius is sympathetic to that argument, but the automaton is not completely its own master.

Alternatively, the PCs can try to fight the Machine God, but that's a difficult task.

IN THE HOWLING PYRAMID

In [Chapter 7](#), the PCs explored the Howling Pyramid and also discovered the location of Cisan's so-called Apotheosis Chamber; this chapter describes the meeting of Cisan, the PCs, and Radius, and what happens next. Conditions previously described for the Howling Pyramid continue to hold in the Apotheosis Threshold (6-1), including how [sound imparts negative mass](#). However, sound acts normally in the Apotheosis Chamber (6-2), which is where Cisan labors on his control scepter.

6-1. APOTHEOSIS ENTRANCE

This chamber lies inset at the tip of the Howling Pyramid, though only two of the four faces provide a direct route to it on that face. The two routes drop down a square shaft 20 feet (6 m) to a side that recedes into the tip about 30 feet (9 m). The floor of the short shaft is set with an iris door (normally closed) and a control surface.

Beyond is the Apotheosis Chamber (6-2), a protected space. Orstenia Myal originally chose it as the best refuge in all the pyramid because sound behaves normally there, and because of a resonance challenge trap set in the threshold that keeps out anyone who doesn't know its secret.

Resonance Challenge: If someone manipulates the control surface and succeeds on a difficulty 2 understanding numenera task, a challenge sequence of ten tones sounds. (The sounds don't impart negative mass.) If someone doesn't come up with the answering sequence of tones within a few rounds, an [explosion of sound](#) forces anyone in the shaft to make a Might defense roll to hold onto something or be flung out into the void beyond the pyramid.

Chapter 7: The Howling Pyramid, page 73

Sound Imparts Negative Mass, page 74

Explosion of sound:
level 7

Radius, page 16

The sequence of answering tones is a closely guarded secret that only a few entities still active could hope to know. Luckily, Radius knows it, as does Chord and any other automaton siblings that might show up here.

Radius Knows the Answering Signal: If

Radius is with the PCs and is able to hear and act normally, the challenge sound makes it start. The automaton says, in wondering tones, *"That sequence is familiar! I can answer this, though I don't know how . . ."* then proceeds to produce a new series of twenty tones. Somehow, neither the challenge nor the answering tones impart negative mass.

The answering tones Radius produces open the door sealing access to 6-2. Anyone in 6-1 is gently grappled by an invisible sono-kinetic force and transferred down to the floor of the Apotheosis Chamber in just under a round.

6-2. APOTHEOSIS CHAMBER

This cube-shaped chamber is a long distance on each side. Bright light emanates from spheres fused into the walls. Sound isn't affected adversely.

Ciszan is here, bearing the Halo of Dominion. Read or paraphrase the following.

A man stands amid a clutter of worktables, bins of spare parts, and half-disassembled devices. He is dressed in crimson, and the top half of his face is dyed the same color. In one hand he holds a long mechanical scepter that sparks and vibrates. But far more dramatic is the wide halo of intricately working gears, wires, and mechanisms that floats in a wide, shining arc just above his head.

An area in one corner of the room is done up as an elaborate sort of camp, complete with shelving for months of dried rations and water, a cot, extra clothes, a wash basin, and so on.

Ciszan Thinks He's a God: Despite having unlocked only limited access to the Halo of Dominion using the scepter assembled from cannibalized automatons, Ciszan is still quite powerful. He thinks he's on the

culsp of unlocking *all* the power and gaining full control of the Glistening Army inside the otherspace that the halo connects to. This means that he is incredibly dismissive of any other creature's chances to even harm him, let alone stop him.

He makes grand utterances such as, *"Dare not to defy me. I am a god! Kneel before me and pledge your faith, or I will not only destroy you, but wipe your memory itself from all the worlds."*

And, *"What Orstenia Myal began, I shall finish. The world will be mine, and every machine in it shall bow before me and acknowledge that I am the inheritor of the prior worlds!"*

He's unlikely to negotiate with the PCs to give up the Halo of Dominion. If they pretend to join him or worship him, they must persuade him that they're not lying. But even then, he requires them to hand over Radius (and Chord, if it is with them) so he can take their divine keys.

Radius: Radius lets the PCs try methods other than violence first, if they wish (assuming ransoming him isn't an actual tactic). But the automaton can only stand so much, given that the scepter Ciszan holds is essentially made up of body parts of its siblings. It mentions this as it finally moves to attack.

Fighting Ciszan: PCs with enough luck, preparation, help from Radius, and higher-tier abilities on their side might not find the fight against the "machine god" too difficult. In this case, ramp up the tension by introducing a few GM intrusions that call forth a second or third group of automaton soldiers from the Halo, or that cause a device or machine controlled by the PCs to act in an unexpected and unpleasant fashion due to the Halo's influence.

However, it may be that Ciszan is more than a match for the PCs. Characters may begin to wonder if they've bitten off more than they can chew. But before Ciszan seizes complete victory, Radius has the opportunity to get close to the Halo for a few rounds (maybe by grabbing it, by attacking Ciszan, or by lying apparently defeated while Ciszan prepares to salvage the body; it depends on how things play out). Then Radius's apotheosis happens, described hereafter.

Ciszan, false Machine God: level 6, defense tasks as level 7 via Halo; health 33; Armor 3 via Halo; electrical bolt attack inflicts 8 points of damage at up to three targets within long range via Halo; call Glistening Army soldiers and machine command abilities via Halo

Glistening Army soldier: level 4; Armor 2; long-range energy attack inflicts 6 points of damage; regains 1 point of health per minute even after destroyed if near Halo

HALO OF DOMINION (ARTIFACT)

Level: 10

Minimum Crafting Level: 10

Form: Annulus of gears, wires, and machinery

Effect: The ring levitates over a wearer's head like a halo. Only the automaton Radius can use the Halo's full abilities, while someone with Cisan's scepter gains limited abilities. Otherwise, the Halo's only ability is to levitate and glow impressively.

Scepter-Unlocked Abilities: A wearer holding the scepter gains the following abilities.

- Ease all defense tasks
- +1 Armor
- Electrical bolt attack inflicts 8 points of damage at up to three targets within long range
- Ease all tasks related to interacting with, attacking, or defending against machines
- **Charm Machine** and **Command Machine**
- Call forth up to four automaton **Glistening Army** soldiers from the Halo at once; no more than four soldiers can be active outside the Halo at one time

Radius's Abilities: Radius wearing the Halo gains the following abilities.

- Radius becomes a level 10 automaton
- +5 Armor
- Fly a long distance each round
- Regenerate 20 health per round
- Electrical bolt attack inflicts 15 points of damage at up to ten targets within long range
- **Control Machine** but range increased to 1 mile (1.5 km) and useable against up to ten machines simultaneously with a duration of 28 hours
- Call forth one **Glistening Army** regiment (composed of about 200 soldiers) each round to any location within long range; no restriction on how many of the 3,100+ soldiers can be deployed at one time

Depletion: —

CISAN'S SCEPTER (ARTIFACT)

Level: 5

Minimum Crafting Level: 5 (requires unique components)

Form: Rod of machine parts

Effect: Unlocks indicated powers in Halo of Dominion if held by Halo wearer. If used against the Halo wearer, user can suppress the Halo's ability to enhance level and call Glistening Army soldiers for one minute.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (check per suppression)

RADIUS'S APOTHEOSIS

At this time (or sooner, or later, if things take an unexpected turn during your campaign), Radius comes within immediate range of the Halo of Dominion for a few rounds. Even if Radius seems inactive or mostly destroyed, the Halo suddenly deserts Cisan and moves to Radius.

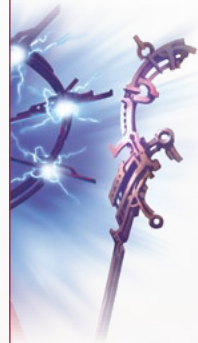
A brilliant crack of lightning whites out vision within a sphere a long distance across. In the afterglow, Radius stands, haloed and revealed in a celestial light so intense that it's hard to see in the glare.

Radius says, *"Finally, I understand. So much knowledge. So much memory . . . I see her. Orstenia Myal. I am her! No, no, I'm not. But her memories are mine. So beautiful . . . So tragic! I was betrayed! In vengeance, the Order of Truth must fall. And all humans who subjugate machines!"*

Radius the ascended Machine God essays the **equation** that calls the free-floating door, steps through it, and closes the door immediately behind it (normally, it'd stay open for a while). This means the PCs can't call the door again for 28 hours. However, they were close enough to see where Radius went: back to the cliffs that front the entrance to the Weal of Baz.

Alternatively, if the PCs manage to delay the door's appearance in some fashion, their chance to change Radius's mind occurs within the Howling Pyramid.

"The Aeon Priests tried to kill me. They came this close to succeeding. I still feel the pain from my wounds all these years later, so I can never forget. Or forgive. I swear to destroy them as they sought to destroy me. However, where they failed, I will succeed."
~Orstenia Myal



Charm Machine,
page 86

Command Machine,
page 86

Glistening Army, full army: rank 7



Rank, page 301

Radius, ascended Machine God: level 10; Armor 8; fly a long distance each round; electrical bolt attack inflicts 15 points of damage at up to ten targets within long range; call Glistening Army soldiers and machine command abilities via Halo; regains 20 health per round

Equation of Summoning, page 73



Control Machine,
page 87

Glistening Army, regiment: rank 4

Change Radius's mind:
level 6 task

CHANGING THE MIND OF A GOD

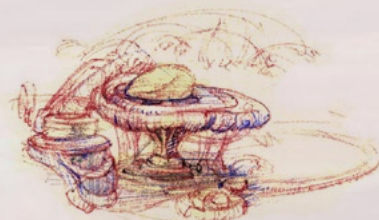
The PCs sense that Radius is not in its right mind. If they wish to use their long-standing association with the automaton to stop it from destroying the Aeon Priests and, apparently, all humans, now is the time to try. Whether they manage to detain Radius in the Howling Pyramid or they follow the Machine God to the Weal of Baz, they have earned enough friendship that when they try to persuade it to change its mind, it listens to them.

WAR WITH THE WEAL

Unless delayed, the Machine God transfers through the summoned door to the Weal of Baz and gives an ultimatum to the machines residing there: join the Machine God on its crusade to destroy the Aeon Priests and all humans that have exploited them willingly, or be forced to do so. Radius gives them one day to come up with their answer. The machines immediately launch a counterattack; they bend their metallic knees to no master! But the Machine God's abilities and the Glistening Army it calls from the Halo stalemate those initial exploratory attacks. True to its word, the Machine God doesn't press the machines of the Weal for an answer for a full day despite their attacks.

If the PCs arrive within 28 hours or so, read or paraphrase the following.

An armada of machines stands guard at the Weal's entrance. No two are alike, but all bear weaponry, whether sizzling ray projectors protruding from metallic carapaces or simple spears held in manipulators. Arrayed against them is the Machine God, who hangs in the sky like a new sun. Beneath it are thousands of identical war machines, all glistening in the brilliant light of the Halo of Dominion.



CONVINCING RADIUS TO ABANDON ITS WAR

If the timing is right, conflict with the machines of the Weal begins even as the PCs try to sway Radius to rethink its objectives, which means that the background of the argument is a surreal scene of machine versus Machine. The PCs must succeed on five interaction tasks to **change Radius's mind**; if they fail five before they succeed on five, they lose the argument.

If the PCs first try to fight, Radius uses its abilities to weather those attacks easily (unless the characters have something especially potent at their disposal). But it doesn't strike back with deadly force, at least not initially. Instead, it invites the PCs to talk so that it can convince them, its friends, to join it. Of course, that's the time for the PCs to convince Radius that its goal is misguided.

SPECIFIC POINTS AID IN ARGUMENTS

Each time the PCs make an interaction roll, it is useful if they have a specific convincing point to make. Possible points include the following:

- reminding Radius that not all humans are terrible (specific examples of the many times the PCs aided Radius over the course of all the previous adventures qualify)
- how Radius has helped the PCs before because they're friends (specific examples are helpful)
- times that Radius has been aided by or has aided other humans
- how not all Aeon Priests deserve death (the one who did is long dead)
- that Orstenia Myal's memories are not its memories (and in fact, her imprinting those memories is not ethical, and is a kind of control)
- how just because Radius has great power doesn't mean that it must use it (free will is important)

Easing Persuasion Tasks: If the PCs use a specific example from something that previously happened in the adventure when they attempt a persuasion task, that particular attempt is eased. Chord also helps the PCs to ease one of the five tasks.

RADIUS HAS GRIEVANCES

The first several times the PCs attempt to persuade Radius to their point of view, Radius has a counterpoint of its own to make (whether the PCs succeed on the persuasion task or not). Its grievances include the following:

- specific examples of how humans exploit machines even when they know or suspect those machines are conscious (just look at some of the machines that had to flee into the Weal of Baz, how Origin was treated in Shallamas, or how its own siblings were treated by Ciszán)
- Orstenia Myal specifically built the Glistening Army to destroy the Aeon Priests, and Radius is the destined instrument chosen for that task (should destiny be denied?)
- the Amber Pope Acumen II tried to assassinate Orstenia, and that demands redress (vengeance is owed!)
- the Aeon Priests use tech that maims, transforms, and kills (the tools of the past are dangerous)

WEAL FIGHT AND OTHER DISTRACTIONS

A machine-versus-machine fight may rage all around the PCs and Radius as they debate. Introduce a couple of these interruptions as GM intrusions.

- A stray **missile** from the battle hits the area.
- One PC notices **Chord** losing patience and hope for its sibling. If the PC doesn't intervene, it attacks Radius. Radius uses its abilities to command machines to deactivate Chord. Upon doing so, Radius immediately feels terrible and laments, *"Why did you force me to act against you, sibling? The humans must have contaminated your core processes!"* This counts as one automatic failure in the challenge to change Radius's mind.
- A **disassembler** breaks past Radius's guard and tries to destroy the automaton (and whoever else it can before Radius can command it to stop). Despite being lower level than the Machine God's level 10, the disassembler has been modified in the Weal to break through Radius's defenses and resist its commands

for several rounds, and it actually is something of a threat the PCs may have to deal with. If the PCs aid Radius against the attacker, the effort counts as a success in the challenge to change Radius's mind.

AFTERMATH OF PERSUASION ATTEMPT

Events play out differently depending on how well or poorly the PCs argued their case.

If PCs Are Succeeding: If successful PC persuasion attempts pile up, Radius becomes less and less sure of itself. If the PCs finally succeed, the automaton looks horrified. It says, *"What am I doing? What have I become?"* It streaks into the air like a reverse falling star. From a great height, its voice resounds, *"I was wrong. I failed my first task upon accepting the power of the Halo. For that, I'm profoundly sorry. I must ponder the curse of power."* With that, every Glistening Army soldier fades away like a bad dream, and the bright star of Radius's power overhead goes out. See Chapter 9.

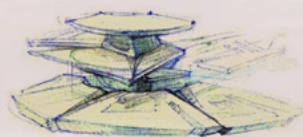
If PCs Are Failing: If failed PC persuasion attempts pile up, Radius becomes more and more sure of itself. Characters have to come up with a better tactic or argument. If they ultimately fail, more options on alternate ways they can still try to save the day are presented in Chapter 9.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for trying to argue Radius down, and another 2 XP each if they succeed.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," events pick up next in **Act 8: Cloud of All Endings**. Additional guidance for wrapping up the Radius storyline is also provided in Chapter 9: Ninth World Repercussions.



Missile: level 7; inflicts 10 points of damage to targets within short range of impact, or 2 points on a successful Speed defense task

Chord, page 45

Act 8: Cloud of All Endings, page 138



Disassembler, page 233

CHAPTER 9

NINTH WORLD
REPERCUSSIONS

Act 8: *Cloud of All Endings*, page 138



Order of Truth,
page 215



Guild of Purity,
page 249

Is the Machine God defeated, neutralized, or reasoned with? Or does it become a real force of terror, especially for Aeon Priests and other defenders of the Amber Papacy? A couple of options are provided. Repercussions following **Act 8: Cloud of All Endings** in “Amber Keep” are likewise touched on.

RELICS OF THE MACHINE

If the PCs fail to convince Radius that it doesn't have to do what Orstenia Myal designed it to do, Radius lets them go, but starts using its abilities to enslave the machines of the Weal of Baz. Things look bad for the Weal and for the **Order of Truth**, but options exist. As it turns out, the **Guild of Purity** learns of the conflict outside the Weal of Baz and, soon enough, what the conflict was about. Though not the best of bedfellows for some PCs, it turns out that the guild has a device that can render intelligent machines, even ones as powerful as an ascended Machine God, temporarily vulnerable. Just when things seem darkest, representatives of the Guild of Purity could show up to revive defeated PCs and offer them aid and another chance to convince Radius to reconsider while its Orstenia Myal mindprint is loosened. Alternatively, the players could step into the shoes of the guild to complete the task, probably in a more straightforward manner, where their original characters failed.

However, it's more likely that the PCs win the day. Radius, true to its word, has much to consider and retreats into the night above Earth, finding an airless wreck falling around the world in which to spend its time. What it ultimately decides to do is likely many years off. It's possible that the PCs could call on the Machine God once in some future

adventure and get a response, if their need is great enough.

If the PCs cause Radius to depart, the machines of the Weal of Baz are grateful and allow the characters to come and go as they like for up to one year. The Order of Truth, as an organization, eventually learns what the PCs did. Even so, it's likely that the Amber Pope never realizes that the threat was so severe and is confident that they could have weathered it regardless. Still, the PCs become part of the lore of the Order of Truth going forward.

If Cizsan survives, he swears eternal vengeance against the PCs and the Order of Truth. Eventually, he'll try something else, possibly involving some other secret gleaned from the Howling Pyramid or the Changing Moon.

AMBER KEEP

If the PCs fail to disable the mechanism in the old structure discovered beneath Amber Keep, their community faces complete destruction. But there are alternatives to pull success from failure. One of those could be the PCs deciding to use their one opportunity to call on the Machine God, assuming they ended things positively with Radius. In this case, the Machine God could provide aid sufficient to dissolve the threat associated with the Cloud of All Endings. If not, the phenomenon becomes another scourge in the Ninth World, feared in the same way as the iron wind.

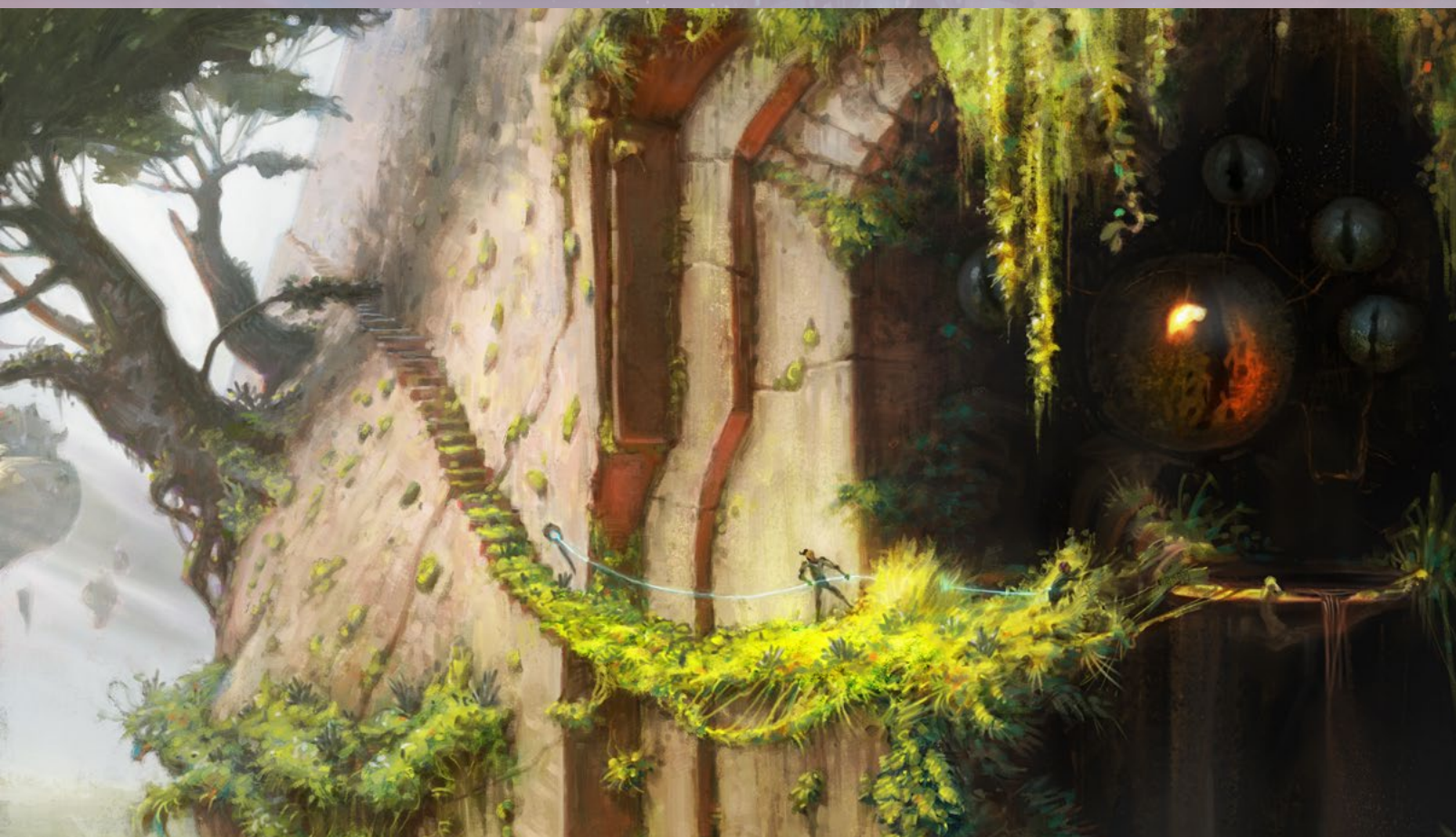
Hopefully, one way or another, the PCs save Amber Keep and stop the Cloud of All Endings before it reaches maturity. By doing so, they ensure that Amber Keep is likely to have a long and important future.

This concludes *Slaves of the Machine God*. We hope you and your players found it exciting, challenging, and rewarding.

PART 2:



AMBER KEEP



GMing Amber Keep	100
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Act 3: The Blazing Pillar	115
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Act 6: The Kindness of Strangers	128
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Act 8: Cloud of All Endings	138

GMING AMBER KEEP

The Amber Gleaners are a loose network of scholars, explorers, delves, and other travelers who share with each other knowledge of the routes and locations they discover, enhancing the knowledge of everyone who joins and contributes to the organization.



Amber Gleaners, page 245

Combining Two Adventures to Make One Campaign, page 5



Steadfast, page 136

Beyond, page 169

In “Amber Keep,” the PCs are commissioned by a group called the **Amber Gleaners** to help establish a base in the wilderness. Over the course of several adventures, that base becomes a small community, one that the PCs help build, defend, and grow. A growing community faces many challenges, and not all of them come in the form of angry abhumans.

This adventure, already a campaign arc in its own right, could be combined with some or all of the chapters of “Relics of the Machine” to extend the campaign even further. Doing so is a great way to vary the pace of “Amber Keep” in a fun way that gives PCs a wider experience in the Ninth World. Notes on how to best combine the two adventures are provided in the opening section.

BACKGROUND

Amber Gleaner field stations are sprinkled across the **Steadfast** and even into the **Beyond**. They consist of a locked container stuffed with extra rations and water, a couple of explorer’s packs, and other needful things. Larger stations exist, usually single rooms in larger civic structures. But every so often, the organization commissions the creation of a full-fledged dedicated base in a wilderness area, which serves as a new nexus of exploration.

AMBER KEEP SYNOPSIS

As “Amber Keep” begins, the PCs have accepted a commission to help build a base for the Amber Gleaners. This sets them up for a series of episodic adventures that involve protecting the base and the

community of NPCs that burgeons there over time. At one point, the solution to one problem (a strange disease called dusky pox) ends up waking a far more dire problem that promises not only to completely wipe out Amber Keep if not stopped, but also to become an ongoing danger to everyone else in the Steadfast.

ACT 1: KEEP IN THE BADLANDS

The PCs discover that the initial team sent to establish Amber Keep has disappeared.

The PCs follow after a founding team sent to establish a base in the wilderness, fending off some weird creatures and other dangers in the process. When they finally arrive at their destination, they find it looted and burned and the first settlers missing. This prompts the PCs to investigate what remains of Amber Keep, track down where the missing people have been taken, and free them from the abhumans who plan to sacrifice them to a “demon.” This scenario is a mix of exploration, interaction, and (probably) some fighting.

ACT 2: BUILDING AMBER KEEP

The PCs help set up their new base, which requires finding iotum for spare parts.

The Amber Gleaners provided the PCs with many resources to improve the new base, including a wright who can build commonplace defensive and civil structures and a delve who knows about a ruin a few days’ travel away containing salvageable numenera, though one associated with a tribe of abhumans. Thus, during this act the PCs plan what they want to build on their new base, figure out what components they

need to salvage, then go make it all happen. By the end of the act, the PCs have a map of their base, which is essentially a rank 1 community.

ACT 3: THE BLAZING PILLAR

A strange vehicle arrives and throws a party onboard for everyone on the base.

A traveling trader named Sparadhi arrives in Amber Keep in a massive flying vehicle called the Blazing Pillar. This is a great trading opportunity for Amber Keep and an amazing party opportunity for those who've never had a chance to celebrate on a flying ship. The only issue is that a party guest goes missing, and it is discovered that the Blazing Pillar has more to it than even Sparadhi knows.

ACT 4: THE WEEPING TOWER

Acquiring a special medicine is the only way to cure an illness in Amber Keep.

An NPC close to the characters, other residents of the community, and maybe even some PCs are afflicted with a debilitating illness called dusky pox, caused by eating local flora. Looking into it, the PCs eventually realize that an influence within a nearby ruin everyone calls the Weeping Tower might yield the cure. The PCs must enter the Weeping Tower, identify the medicine—a substance called silver ioiquid—and deploy it around their base before the disease spreads out of control.

ACT 5: BRING THE RAIN

New dangers emerge to threaten Amber Keep, some self-inflicted.

Amber Keep has some time to grow and develop, and the PCs are encouraged to engage in activities that take several months to complete. Interesting events pepper this period, both threats and opportunities. Newly encountered creatures, dubbed rain sylphs, threaten the community as unexpectedly long, harsh thunderstorms grow more frequent. Eventually, the PCs discover that the installations using silver ioiquid are somehow responsible for drawing the rain sylphs and storms.

ACT 6: THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

Refugees come to Amber Keep fleeing catastrophe and warning of demons!

The results of a series of long-term play tasks are resolved. But day-to-day events are quickly interrupted when refugees come to the settlement. Claiming that their home was destroyed by demons, they warn that Amber Keep might be next. They need aid and a place to live. Whether or not that aid is granted, the PCs set out to investigate the refugees' warnings.

ACT 7: MEETING OF MINDS

A rip in reality leads to a bizarre dimension and an angry nano seeking revenge. Can the PCs mollify her?

The PCs investigate and explore the bizarre dimension discovered in the last act. In doing so, they learn that the breach was purposefully allowed to propagate and spread into the real world by a nano named Coultan. She was wronged and wanted revenge. Convincing her to fix the breach is one way the PCs could solve the problem, though if that fails, they have more direct methods of dealing with the nano, though she would make a powerful enemy.

ACT 8: CLOUD OF ALL ENDINGS

Time advances in Amber Keep until a threat from the past returns with a vengeance.

The PCs have a chance to allow Amber Keep to grow further as about half a year passes. They can engage in long-term tasks, possibly strengthening their own relationships in the community. Nothing particularly serious happens during this time, allowing the PCs to concentrate on their tasks—until the Cloud of All Endings finally forms. The seeds for its formation were planted all the way back in Act 4 when they activated the silver ioiquid. In Act 8, the event that the suppressors were meant to prevent finally occurs, and the PCs are called upon to stop it.



Rank, page 297

Community stats, page 297

If the PCs fail to stop the Cloud of All Endings in Act 8, it becomes another scourge in the Ninth World, feared in the same way as the iron wind.

The PCs have the opportunity to engage in long-term play over the course of about three months during Act 5: Bring the Rain.

ACT 1

KEEP IN THE BADLANDS

If you're running *Slaves of the Machine God* as a single adventure, use *Chapter 1: Memory Bias* before *Act 1: Keep in the Badlands*; see the *Combined Campaign Flowchart* on page 6.



Aian, page 159

Milave, page 158

Relics of the Machine, page 7

Chapter 1: Memory Bias, page 14

Radius, page 16



Amber Gleaners, page 245

SYNOPSIS

In Act 1, the PCs are commissioned to build a new base in the wilderness. They follow after a founding team sent ahead, fending off some weird creatures and other dangers in the process. When they finally arrive at their destination, they find it looted and burned and the first settlers missing. This prompts the PCs to investigate what remains of Amber Keep, track down where the missing people have been taken, and free them from the abhumans who plan to sacrifice them to a “demon.” This scenario is a mix of exploration, interaction, and (probably) some fighting.

STARTING LOCATIONS

Begin the PCs in the city of *Aian* in the land of *Milave*, or some other community you prefer. If you want to combine this adventure with “*Relics of the Machine*,” make sure the PCs begin in the same community as that adventure (for which *Aian* is also suggested).

If you've already run the PCs through the events of *Chapter 1: Memory Bias*, they already have the following background. If you don't intend to combine the adventures, provide them with the following information.

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

Provide each PC with one additional connection: every character has taken at least one or two small commissions for an organization known as the *Amber Gleaners*. (The *Amber Gleaners* are a network of scholars and explorers who share knowledge about the paths they travel and what they discover, enabling trade routes and further exploration.) This means that apart from any

other connections the PCs may share, they have all met and even worked together on minor tasks (deliver a message to a nearby village, figure out how to use an oddity, guard a trade caravan for a few days, and so on).

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

The PCs are offered a commission by the *Amber Gleaners*. If it's previously been established that the PCs are associated with that organization, you can simply present it as a *fait accompli* that the characters have accepted it, in which case, read or paraphrase below.

However, you know your players best. Instead of simply pushing the PCs into the contract, you might choose to present it as an option over the course of a game session.

Maybe one PC has a run-in with someone they'd rather not (an enemy, an ex-lover, or someone who reminds them of a dead relative), making the idea of getting out of town more palatable.

Perhaps another PC has debts they'd rather not pay or has been blamed for a crime they didn't commit, and finds the idea of leaving town appealing, especially if offered a commission to do so.

Or maybe a good friend of the characters—one of the NPCs described hereafter, or their ally *Radius*—asks the PCs to join them in taking the commission, because they're certain that great opportunities will follow for anyone bold enough to commit to such a task.

You have been commissioned by a group called the Amber Gleaners to help establish a base in the wilderness. The Amber Gleaners are a network of scholars and explorers who share knowledge about the paths they travel and what they discover, enabling trade routes and further exploration. They believe this new base, called Amber Keep, will be the perfect place to launch future expeditions. A few weeks ago, another group was sent ahead of you to craft the initial shelters. Your group has two wagons (each pulled by a sturdy four-footed animal called a gallen) full of parts, tools, and food to supply the base. When you arrive, the base's leader, Tsala, will tell you what needs to be done next—building, guarding, exploring, and so on.

The PCs are accompanied by three apprentice-level members of the Amber Gleaners and a seasoned mercenary.

Visso, a wright, is tall and lean. He is a carpenter and dabbles in crafting numenera.

Kadri, a diplomat, is broad-faced and stout. He likes to make jokes about the food and weather.

Zoyin, a chiurgeon, is athletic and curious. She takes samples of plants and frequently makes notes and sketches in a journal.

Radius, an automaton mercenary, is a stolid and helpful sort, though lately it has taken to brooding on its past.

The PCs may have already worked with Radius to resolve memory thefts happening in Aian in Chapter 1: Memory Bias.

NPC CONNECTIONS

In addition to Visso, Kadri, Zoyin, and Radius, the PCs are familiar with several of the people who ventured forth in the earlier expedition. Those people include the following.

Tsala is a quick-thinking and always busy woman who is sometimes terse, but only because she's thinking about the future.

Gennd, a delve, has mechanical eyes that allow her to see in the dark, and she is practically nocturnal.

Visso's brother, Nort, is a huge man, very strong, who has a childlike demeanor. He likes whistling and imitating bird calls.

Offer each PC a connection to one of the NPCs who went ahead. They might be friends, relatives, rivals, or fellow students, or perhaps they just grew up near each other or worked for the same person.

TRAVELING TO AMBER KEEP

Once preparations are made, the PCs set off with two gallen-pulled wagons full of parts, tools, and food, with directions on where to go. Those directions lead the characters directly into the wilderness, which, if they set out from Aian, is into the edges of Matheunis, the Cold Desert.

ENCOUNTER ALONG THE WAY

The PCs have been traveling for several days, following directions given to them by the Amber Gleaners. This morning, they entered a forested area with tall, bluish-brown trees and berry-like crystalline fruits. They are following an animal trail leading in the direction of the base and marked with red strips of cloth tied to trees every hundred yards or so. It is early afternoon, and the thick canopy overhead blocks out most of the sun, leaving this area in about as much illumination as you'd find in a well-lit room.

The ground begins to slope downward, and eventually it's steep enough that the PCs need to be careful where they lead the gallen so the animals don't slip and the wagons don't overturn. Fortunately, trees are everywhere, and anything that started to slide downhill would quickly come to a stop. There's a red cloth up ahead showing the safest route, zigzagging carefully downward between two very steep parts of the hill.

Unfortunately, a swarm of ten moth-like creatures called *betulans* is clinging to the trees on the winding path. The humans, wagons, and gallen passing through the area disturb them, and they fly down to attack the PCs. Each *betulan* looks like a bluish-brown moth about half the size of a human, with tattered wings, between six and ten legs, and a strong, spicy smell like smoke and cinnamon. The *betulans* are about as smart as monkeys, and one of them has a *Might rejuvenator* cypher (injection device) tangled onto one of its legs with a chain. They will

Gallen: level 2



Matheunis, the Cold Desert, page 202

Visso: level 2, carpentry and crafting numenera as level 3

Kadri: level 2, positive social interaction and resisting deception as level 3

Zoyin: level 2, plant knowledge and healing as level 3

Betulan: level 2, Speed defense as level 3; health 6; bite inflicts 3 points of damage; when four to six attack as a single creature, treat as a level 4 creature that inflicts 6 points of damage



Rejuvenator, page 286

GM intrusion: A *betulan* sprays a blast of pheromones at a PC as part of its attack, hindering all of the PC's actions for two rounds.



attack in groups of four to six, focusing on two of the PCs, until there are fewer than three left in a group, at which point they attack singly. They can be distracted for one round by bright light or a strong scent.

Betulans: The betulans are weird, jumpy, and fluttery like moths, and their actions startle the gallen. Visso, Kadri, and Zoyin try to calm the gallen so they don't run off, which means those NPCs don't participate directly in the battle unless it looks like the PCs are going to lose. If too many betulans get close to the wagons, the gallen try to bolt, recklessly dragging the wagons down the trail and spilling crates and barrels as they go. The PCs can prevent the gallen from running off with an interaction task, but the task is hindered by two steps.

WRECKED BASE

When the PCs finally make it to their destination, things are not as they hoped to find. Read or paraphrase the following.

Once your group reaches the bottom of the hill, the trees start to thin out a bit and large outcroppings of rock, synth, and crystal dot the landscape—relics of the prior worlds without any functioning numenera, built for an unknown purpose. Visso's directions and a few strips of red cloth lead to the site of Amber Keep, which is empty of people and looks like it's been attacked. It's obvious that someone started building defensive walls in this area, but the walls are partially collapsed like they were hit by something very big or very strong. A couple of simple wooden huts have been damaged and burned down. Graffiti smeared on one of the remaining outer walls—some sort of dried red slime—appears to be a screaming face.

To put it baldly, the place was obviously attacked, and now it looks abandoned. The NPCs that the PCs knew personally, plus several other settlers, are not immediately apparent.

GM intrusion: A gallen or betulan bumps a wagon, tipping it onto its side and spilling some crates and barrels.

The PC will need to use an action or two to keep these items from tumbling away and smashing against a tree.

INVESTIGATING ATTACK AFTERMATH

Visso quickly realizes his brother Nort is one of the missing people. He starts searching the camp for any clues about what happened and asks the PCs to look too. Kadri is speechless and just stares at the burned huts. Zoyin sketches the screaming face in her notebook and takes notes on the damage. Radius says it will keep lookout against a return of the aggressors and make sure that if whatever attacked the base does return, they'll have a fight on their hands.

If the PCs search the camp, they find signs of a fight, many clawed footprints (some of which are twice the size of human footprints), some spilled blood, and a large number of tracks and drag marks leading out of the camp. Several crates of dried foods have been broken open and mostly emptied. This all seemed to have happened only a day or two ago. If a PC wants to estimate how many creatures attacked the camp, have them make a difficulty 4 searching or tracking roll. If a player succeeds at the roll, they think it was approximately fifteen creatures. If they *miss the roll by 3 or less*, they're pretty sure it was at least ten creatures.

The footprints and drag marks create an obvious trail heading roughly north. Visso wants to go after them, but Kadri and Zoyin point out that someone needs to stay in the camp to protect the galleen, the supplies they brought, and the usable materials from the first expedition.

Furthermore, Kadri and Zoyin aren't fighters and would feel safer if Visso stayed behind to help them guard while the PCs went after the camp survivors. Kadri's words persuade Visso to stay, and the three of them look expectantly at the PCs to do their part. Radius will stay and guard the camp, unless the PCs persuade it otherwise.

PHRONTEx LAIR

The area outside Amber Keep is mostly flat with the occasional tree, large outcropping of rock, weird piece of synth, or giant piece of crystal dotting the landscape. Many of these nonliving markers are relics of the prior worlds built for an unknown purpose

and without any remaining functioning devices.

The trail left by the invaders winds through and around these obstacles for a couple of hours and finally leads directly toward a huge structure of pale crystal and rusty metal 20 feet (6 m) tall and about 100 feet (30 m) wide with a large opening at ground level. When viewed from a long distance away, the crystalline parts of the ruin sometimes sparkle from within, and the wide opening looks like it leads to a large room with at least two other areas branching off of it.

Stealthy Observation: A careful or sneaky person could approach within a long distance of this large structure by creeping behind trees, rocks, and other sparse cover (difficulty 2), but the last length is open ground, and it would be hard to get to the entrance without being spotted (difficulty 5).

A pile of large bones stands just inside the western edge of the entrance, and if the PCs observe the area from within long distance for at least an hour, they see a gaunt, orange-skinned humanoid with a head like a beetle come out of the deeper part of the cave, throw a couple of bones on the pile, and go back inside. This creature is a phrontex.

Phrontex: Phrontex are creepy, gaunt humanoids, with heads like beetles with waving mandibles, orange skin with leopard-like spots, and clawed hands and feet. They are normally scavengers and steal the dead prey of other animals. They're known for waiting patiently at the fringe of a battle and then dashing in to steal a corpse when the fighting is over. Sometimes, a powerful leader or a mysterious omen convinces them to hunt living prey. They don't fear the numenera. They can use cyphers, and some can speak *the Truth*, but they aren't nearly as intelligent as humans. They have glands in their armpits that secrete a red slime that makes them look like they're bleeding. Phrontex live in tribes and are usually found in forests, plains, and deserts.



Graduated success, page 323



Cypher List, page 275

The Truth, page 133

To the people of the Ninth World, eroded ruins and dead devices are just parts of the terrain, the legacy of unknown past civilizations.

OPTIONS OVERVIEW

The interior space of the phrontex lair looks roughly like a right hand with only three fingers and a thumb, where the thumb is to the left and the wrist is the open entrance to the structure. About twenty of the abhumans live here, including a leader, **Taxx**, and one brute, **Groguntus**.

At this point, the PCs have three obvious options: fight all of the abhumans, attempt to negotiate with them, or try to sneak past them to see if the cave holds human prisoners.

Fight: This is the most straightforward option—the PCs attack, and the phrontex fight, flee, or defeat the PCs. Because the creatures are spread out, it is likely that the battle happens in waves, with the first wave consisting of the abhumans in the central chamber and reinforcements coming from the Thumb and First Finger chambers.

This gives the PCs a chance to control the battlefield and keep themselves from being swarmed.

Fighting in the lair can quickly result in a large number of phrontex attacking the PCs at once.

If things turn against the PCs, remind the players that they always have the option to retreat, and a creative use of cyphers or spending XP on a reroll can snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Alternatively, if the PCs are seriously hurt but are close to victory, some of the human prisoners can break free just in time to turn the tide of the fight.

Negotiate: This is a difficult task but not impossible. Only the leader, **Taxx**, is allowed to negotiate for the tribe. If the PCs try to talk to a random abhuman, they likely don't speak the Truth, and even if they do, they insist on bringing out the leader accompanied by at least ten other phrontex (but not **Groguntus**, who remains hidden until **Taxx** tells it to come out). The PCs should announce themselves to the lair instead of just walking in; otherwise, all negotiation tasks are hindered. The phrontex like their lair and don't want to leave it, nor do they want to give up any of their prisoners. If asked why, **Taxx** explains (in

limited Truth) that there is a demon in their cave that demands sacrifices, and losing those sacrifices might make it angry.

Convincing **Taxx** to give up the prisoners is a hindered persuasion or intimidation task. The PCs can offer to bribe or trade for the prisoners—two interesting cyphers or about a dozen large animal carcasses (as many as there are prisoners) are enough to ease the negotiation task (by two steps if the PCs offer twice as much). Hunting that many beasts would take the PCs one or two days, but if asked to wait, **Taxx** agrees not to sacrifice any prisoners for a few days.

Getting the phrontex to leave Amber Keep alone is a separate negotiation and is also a hindered task against **Taxx**. Convincing them to leave the area entirely is even more difficult (hindered by an additional step). **Taxx** can be bribed with cyphers and carcasses for this task as well. It won't apologize for attacking the base or for any people who were killed (it doesn't really understand the concept of an apology anyway), but it could be convinced to accept a somewhat reduced bribe in compensation.

If the PCs offer a battle of champions in single combat as part of the negotiation, **Taxx** agrees and calls out **Groguntus** as the tribe's champion. The brute is huge, almost 9 feet (3 m) tall, and doesn't speak except to call out its own name or screech. If the PC champion defeats **Groguntus**, all interaction tasks with the tribe (including **Taxx**) are eased because the phrontex are intimidated by the PC's strength. If the PC allows **Groguntus** to live instead of killing it, **Taxx** is appreciative, and interactions with the leader are eased by another step. (If it is obvious that other PCs helped in the battle, such as by using abilities or cyphers on the acting PC before or during the fight, the abhumans are less impressed, and only the next interaction roll is eased instead of all of them.)

Sneak: Given the configuration of the lair and the number of phrontex, it is unlikely that the PCs can sneak very far into the lair, and even if they do find the human prisoners, it would be even more difficult to sneak the humans back out. However, PCs often have amazing abilities at their

The GM can make combat faster and easier by having a group of six to ten creatures attack as a single creature that is 2 levels higher, inflicting double the original creature's normal damage.

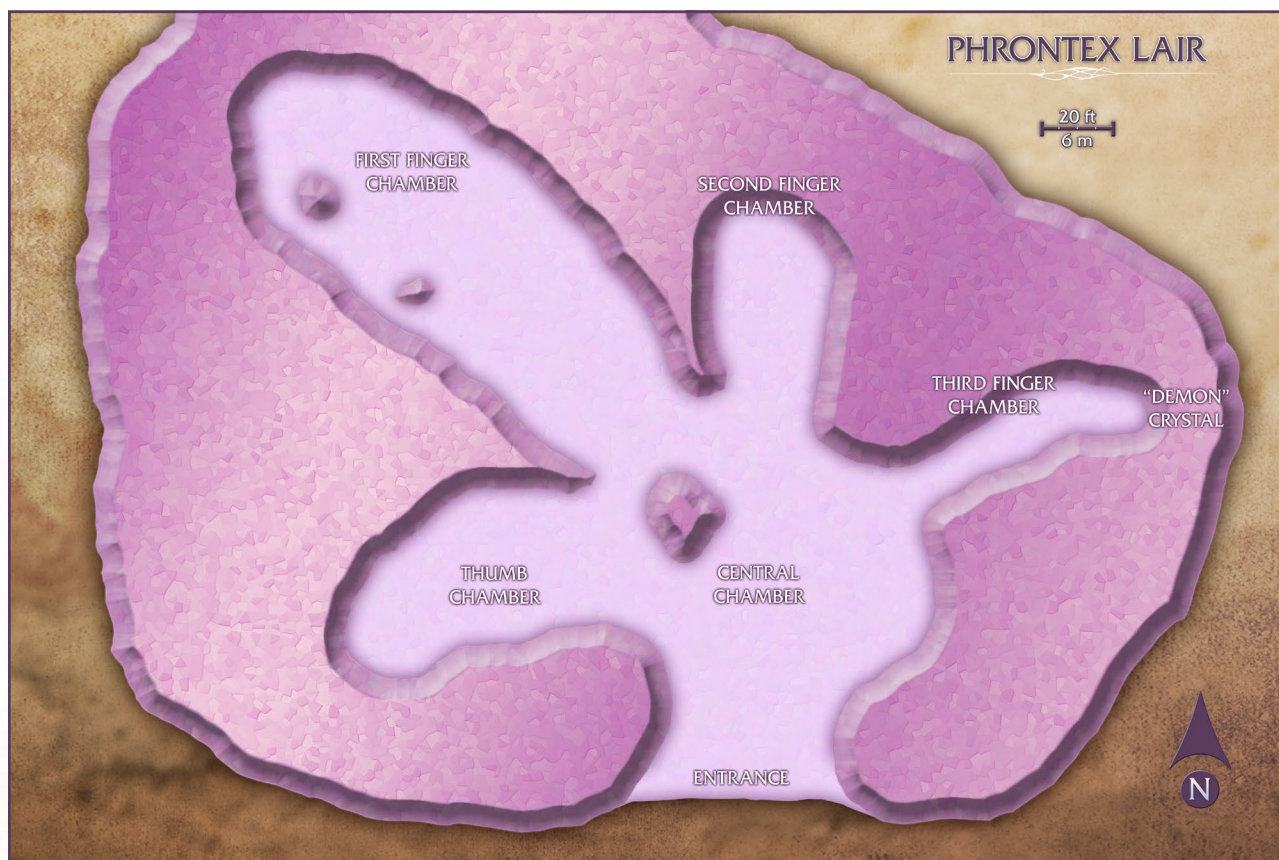
Taxx: level 3; Speed defense, climbing, and intimidation as level 4; health 9; Armor 1; claws inflict 4 damage; carries a level 5 gravity detonation (a green crystal wrapped in wires)

Groguntus: level 4; Speed defense, melee attacks, climbing, and strength-based tasks as level 5; all mental tasks as level 3; health 12; Armor 1; claws inflict 5 damage

GM intrusion: A PC has an allergic reaction to phrontex armpit slime, and all tasks are hindered while they are within immediate range of a phrontex.



Gravity detonation,
page 277



disposal, and having the right cyphers could help make an escape attempt successful, or at least allow them to scout out the place before moving in. If the PCs choose to sneak into the lair and are discovered, it is very likely that the abhumans attack and the sneaky encounter becomes a big open battle (see the Fight option). Persuasive PCs might be able to get the phrontex to stop fighting long enough to get the leader, Taxx, to come forward and negotiate.

LAIR OVERVIEW

The interior of this ruin is mostly pale crystal with a few bands of metal here and there. The ceiling is irregular, anywhere from 8 to 12 feet high (2.5 to 4 m). Because the lair stands on a flood plain, the floor is covered in a layer of dirt and debris from outside, even in the extreme corners, but flat crystal lies beneath that. The crystal material of the ceiling is intermittently lit from within by gently winking lights, which overall provides *dim light*. Each of the following areas is a level 4 site for the purpose of salvaging numenera.

CENTRAL CHAMBER

The main part of the lair is the palm part of the “hand,” approximately a short distance across (although the entrance is a little narrower). About ten phrontex live and sleep here on piles of leaves, dirt, and blankets stolen from Amber Keep. A half-eaten gallen carcass lies in the middle of the room, and a pile of gnawed bones from various creatures is near the main entrance.

To the west, northwest, north, and northeast are smaller passages leading to the Thumb, First Finger, Second Finger, and Third Finger chambers, respectively. As those areas are within a short distance of this place, any loud noise or activity (such as combat) attracts the attention of creatures elsewhere in the lair.

THUMB CHAMBER

This area bends slightly southward and is about a short distance across in its longest dimension but only about half as wide (though still effectively a short distance in diameter). About five phrontex live here under similar conditions as those in the Central Chamber, and one of them is gnawing on gallen ribs.



Dim light, page 114

Salvaging is the source of most cyphers in this scenario, so the GM should remind the PCs to take some time to salvage from each area if they can.



Salvaging, page 108

FIRST FINGER CHAMBER

This ovoid chamber is a long distance from north to south and a short distance from east to west. Five regular phrontex live here, as well as Taxx the leader and Groguntus the brute. Most of a gallen carcass is here, minus some ribs.

SECOND FINGER CHAMBER

This area is a short distance across and slightly narrower in diameter. The phrontex are keeping the prisoners here—at least, the ones who haven't been sacrificed to the "demon" yet. In addition to nine laborers (some of whom may be people the NPCs know), Tsala, Gennd, and Nort are in this chamber. Tsala and Nort seem to be the worst off, with Tsala bruised, bloody, and unconscious and Nort looking quite miserable and swollen all over (he's very allergic to phrontex slime). If questioned, the conscious prisoners say there are about twenty abhumans nearby, and a couple of wounded people were taken to another room and haven't returned.

THIRD FINGER CHAMBER

This room is a short distance across and an immediate distance wide. Along one part of the wall is a crude drawing (in dried red slime) of a storm swirling over the landscape. If asked about this, the phrontex say it is a story their people tell about the Cloud of All Endings that comes every few aeons and consumes the world.

At the end of the chamber, an oddly shaped piece of crystal juts out of the crystal wall. It somewhat resembles a screaming inhuman face and is nearly as tall as a human. This is the "demon" the phrontex make sacrifices to (although it is just a device and not a creature or supernatural in any way). Parts of broken automatons

of various kinds are stacked up around its base. If a living creature (or one killed within the past day) is placed in the crystal's "mouth," it lights up with multicolored energy, the creature or body vanishes, and the "eyes" release a burst of energy at a creature within immediate range. Roll on the Demon Blast Table to see what effect the energy has.

DEMON BLAST TABLE

Roll	Effect
1	Inflicts 2 points of damage
2–4	Heals 2 points of damage
5–6	Eases one kind of task (Speed defense, melee attacks, or perception) for the next 28 hours

RETURN TO AMBER KEEP

Once the PCs have dealt with the phrontex and freed the prisoners, they can hike back to Amber Keep. Visso is very happy to know that Nort is alive, and Zoyin starts tending to his symptoms. Despite the setbacks and injuries, Tsala is ready to get everyone back to work, but it'll take time and effort from everyone for this to become a safe place to live. In the next act, the PCs will be able to decide what they want to build here and what materials are needed to make that happen.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for ending the abhuman threat (either through fighting or negotiation) and 2 XP each for freeing the prisoners and returning survivors to Amber Keep.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," you'll probably want to roll into Act 2: Building Amber Keep before initiating the events in Chapter 2: Prophet of the Machine God. That said, events in Chapter 2 may begin before all the building in Act 2 is completely resolved, allowing you to interweave the two sections together.

Laborers: level 2

Tsala: level 2, tasks related to administration and persuasion as level 4

Gennd: level 3, perception and stealth as level 4; can see in the dark as if normal light

Nort: level 3, physical labor as level 4; all tasks hindered by two steps because of allergies

Each prisoner has only 1 health remaining because of poor treatment.

GM intrusion: If one of the players is a good roleplayer who doesn't mind dealing with tragedy, their custom NPC contact is one of the injured captives who was taken away and never came back—sacrificed to the "demon." How the PC handles this news may affect negotiations with the phrontex.

Chapter 2: Prophet of the Machine God, page 25



ACT 2

BUILDING AMBER KEEP

SYNOPSIS

The PCs help set up their new base, which requires finding iotum for spare parts.

The Amber Gleaners provided the PCs with many resources to improve the new base, including a wright who can build commonplace defensive and civic structures and a delve who knows about a ruin a few days' travel away containing salvageable numenera, though one associated with a tribe of abhumans. During this act, the PCs plan what they want to build on their new base, figure out what components they need to salvage, then go make it all happen. By the end of the act, the PCs have a map of their base, which is essentially a rank 1 community.

A TIME TO BUILD

Now that the NPCs have been rescued from the phrontex and are back at Amber Keep, the keep's leader, *Tsala*, wants to get the outer walls finished in case more abhumans or other creatures decide to attack. She has the *laborers* resume their duties of gathering stone, timber, and scrap to build the walls and huts, and she tells the PCs to work with the keep's wright, *Visso*, about what else to build.

Photocopy or otherwise provide your players with a full-page map of the area where Amber Keep will be built. Let them decide where they want their characters' homes built. The dotted lines around the map are where *Tsala* wants the gate and walls built, using some of the natural rocks and crystals as anchor points for the construction.

Visso has been trained by the Amber Gleaners to establish new bases, and the *numenera* plans he knows are all about defense, communication, travel, and

observation. He tells the PCs what he can make and what he needs for each project, and says that he'll build whatever they want as long as they bring him the materials to do it. The wagons they brought with them include the tools he needs, 200 units of *parts*, and 10 units of *io*, but everything else needs to be salvaged.

If the PCs have opinions about other defensive and civic structures and where to build them, *Tsala* is happy to let them direct much of that activity as long as it doesn't compromise the safety of the keep. *Visso* doesn't need plans for building commonplace structures, so once the outer wall and gate are finished, he can have the workers start on what the PCs want. Ideas for other things to build include:

Defensive Structures

- Gatehouse
- Stone wall (rampart)
- Stone watchtower
- Wooden watchtower

Civic Structures

- Barracks
- Cottage
- Stables
- Storehouse
- Workshop

Gennd, the keep's delve, has located a ruin a few days away that should have a lot of good salvage, and she will lead or direct the PCs to it so they can get to work. Technically, *Gennd* could explore the site with the characters, but *Tsala* wants her to scout other locations for dangers, allies, and salvageable numenera—her talents are more about sneaking around and finding

Tsala, page 108

Laborers: level 2

Visso, page 103

Gennd, page 108



Parts, page 107

Io, page 111

Visso's Installation Plans

Alarm tower, page 154

Farspeaking pylon, page 158

Basic turret, page 167

Improved turret, page 168

Visso's Vehicle Plans

Mud roller, page 176

Defensive structures, page 126

Civic structures, page 127



Visso's Cypher Plans
Infiltrator (handheld device, level 3; requires 6 units of *parts*, 3 units of *io*, 5 units of responsive synth, 1 unit of apt clay, 1 unit of quantum), page 281



Kadri, the keep's diplomat, could talk to the tribe of humanoids if the PCs want, but he won't go into the ruin with them, and regardless, Tsala prefers that he stays at the keep in case they find a human village.

Kadri, page 103

Radius, page 16

things than fighting and hauling supplies back to the keep. She says the site she found looks like a metal arm from a gigantic automaton, but there's a tribe of humanoid creatures living along one side of it in a ramshackle group of tents and lean-tos built out of cloth, leather, and scrap.

On the other hand, **Radius** prefers to go with the PCs, and does so unless something else interferes with it. If something does prevent Radius from going along, it should be something that is directly helpful to the PCs.

THE MIGHTY ARM

The ruin looks like a multijointed arm over 200 feet (60 m) long with seven fingers, two thumbs, and spikes and blades jutting from it everywhere. (It isn't clear if it is a structure that was originally built to look like a giant automaton, a piece of a gigantic automaton that was dismembered, or something else entirely.) Other than some minor wear and tear, the site looks to be in pretty good shape and, if the PCs are careful with their salvaging, should be able to provide a lot of numenera.

As they make the three-day trek to the site, Gennd talks about the tribe she spotted there—some kind of grey-blue creatures that may be abhumans, mutants, or just some kind of humanoid she's never seen before. There also appears to be a nest of flying reptilian predators in an upper part of the outer surface of the arm. Gennd didn't see the predators attack the tribe, but she can't tell if the reptiles are allied with the humanoids or under their command, or if the two groups just mutually ignore each other.

The area around the arm has fewer boulders, trees, and other large obstacles to hide behind. Anyone approaching within a very long distance of the village needs to make several sneaking rolls to get close enough for a good view (Gennd's ability to see in the dark means she was able to sneak up much closer at night). The humanoids are about a head shorter than a typical adult human, with stone-grey skin banded with sky blue, multiple shiny black eyes at various points around their heads, and long blue tongues. They wear simple clothing made of leather and woven plant fibers, and they use simple weapons and tools like spears,

BLUE TONGUES

The Blue Tongues are peaceful hunter-gatherers just trying to survive. They want many of the same things that the humans of the Ninth World want: to survive and to keep their homes and families safe. They lead a primitive existence by human standards, but they are about as intelligent as humans and could be convinced to join with the people at Amber Keep for a better chance of survival (doing so would add another twenty-five adults to those who can work and defend the keep, speeding up the building of defenses and making the keep a safer place for everyone). There are some cultural differences between the Blue Tongues and the humans at Amber Keep, but nothing so strange, disgusting, or vile that the two groups can't get used to each other over the long term.

hammers, and awls. There are about thirty of these *Blue Tongues*, including about five smaller ones that might be children. They have their own language and don't speak the Truth (though they can learn it if someone teaches them), so if the PCs want to interact with them peacefully, they'll have to use cyphers or character abilities (such as *Babel*) or resort to pantomiming and drawing (which will hinder most tasks; see below).

The flying reptiles are creatures similar to *laaks*, except they can inflate skin bladders on their backs to float around and release jets of gas to maneuver while floating. They aren't quite tamed, but the Blue Tongues leave out scraps of food for them, so the flying *laaks* don't attack unless provoked. A flock of ten usually hangs around the upper parts of the Mighty Arm, but there are more living inside (which the Blue Tongues might be able to warn the PCs about).

Getting permission from the Blue Tongues to enter the Mighty Arm is a difficulty 3 interaction task. Convincing them to pack up and leave (even if it is to Amber Keep where there is plenty of food and safety) is a difficulty 5 interaction task. These tasks are hindered if the PCs aren't able to establish a clearer sort of communication than gestures and simple drawings, and the

tasks are eased by one or two steps if the PCs provide gifts the village can use, such as preserved tasty food, steel weapons, protective clothing, or a healing cypher. The Blue Tongues don't care what the PCs do as long as they don't try to enter the village, harm any villagers, or unleash harmful things from within the Mighty Arm. The Blue Tongues think it is too dangerous to go inside the ruin, but it is not a religious or taboo site to them (they are only using its length as shelter), so they don't care if the PCs enter or salvage it. Altogether, the tribe has two *cyphers* and ten brightly polished stones (which might be worth 1 shin each to someone who likes such things).

SALVAGING THE MIGHTY ARM

As the PCs work their way through the interior structures of this ruin, they'll find many areas where they can salvage numenera. The Mighty Arm is a level 5 ruin, and salvaging from any area within it is a level 5 task. Use the *lotum Salvage Flowchart* and the *lotum Result Table* to determine the results of salvaging. The description of each "room" of the Mighty Arm below says how many discrete salvage areas are present in that room. Remind the PCs that they can attempt to *salvage an area again*, each attempt hindering the task (this means they could return another time to do it again, such as after they improve their salvaging numenera skill).

FIRST ARM ROOM

The initial opening into the Mighty Arm is a ragged hole at one end. It is lined with conduits, thick synth bands wrapped around wires, blinking panels, and stranger things the PCs can't identify. (The other rooms are similarly decorated.) Ten flying *laaks* are nesting in this area, and they immediately attack any PCs who enter their territory. If scared away (by fire, noise, and so on), they might fly out of the ruin or further into it and attack when the PCs show up again. There are two areas to salvage here.

Cyphers

Level 4 temporal viewer: For ten minutes, shows events that occurred in location up to ten years ago

Level 8 water breather:

One creature gains ability to breathe water (by growing gills) permanently

Blue Tongue villager:

level 1, perception and interacting with beasts as level 3

GM intrusion: A PC says or does something that is offensive or taboo to the villagers, causing an angry reaction or at least hindering interaction rolls until the unintended slight is resolved.



Babel, page 11

lotum Salvage Flowchart, page 109

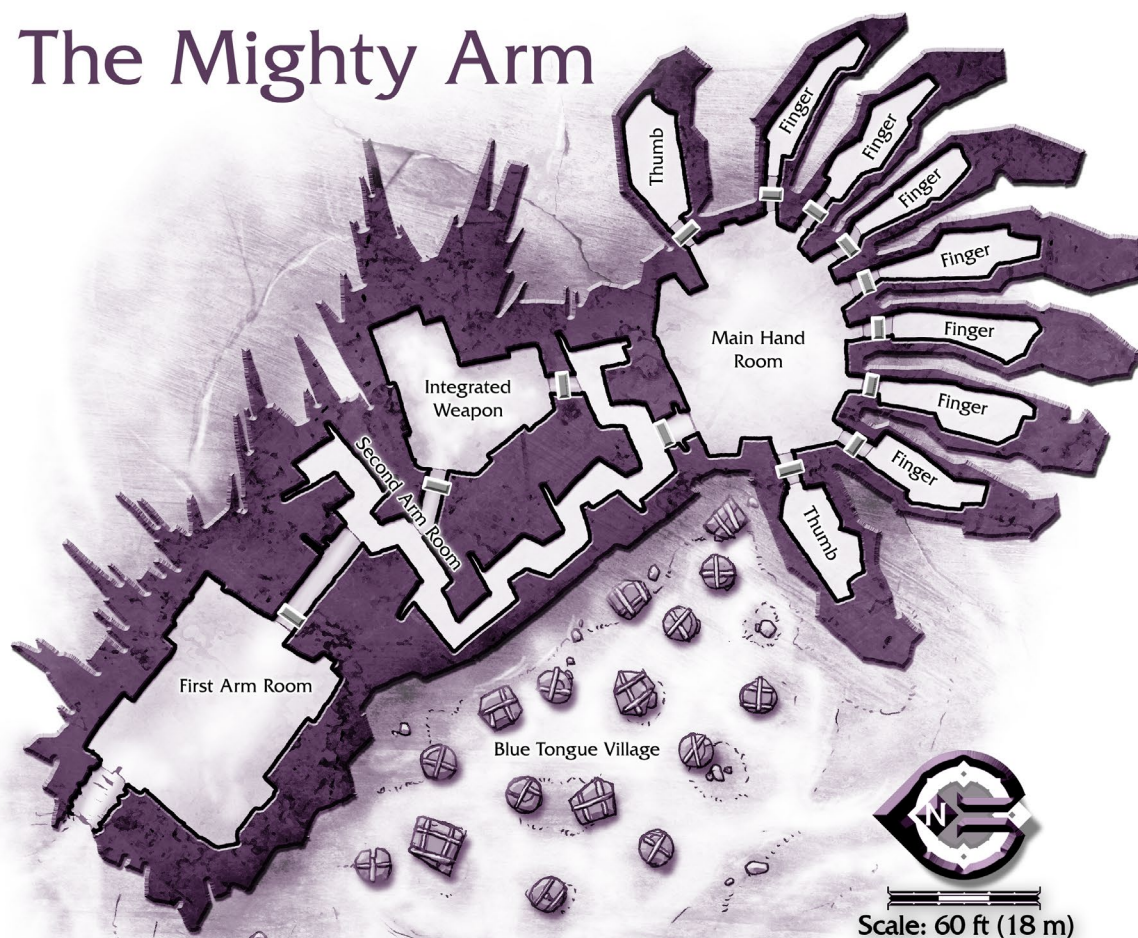
lotum Result Table, page 110

Additional salvage attempts, page 110



Laak, page 239

The Mighty Arm



SECOND ARM ROOM

This part of the arm is very narrow, requiring adult-sized humans to squeeze through (all physical tasks are hindered). There are two areas to salvage here, one of which is high on the wall, requiring two successful climb tasks to get into the area and remain there while the salvage happens.

MAIN HAND ROOM

This entire area is filled with an acrid stink that irritates the eyes of anyone not wearing protective equipment and hindering all actions requiring sight. There are three areas to salvage here. One of them is adjacent to a damaged conduit that bursts and sprays acidic slime in an immediate area if the salvage area is disturbed. The slime spray continues for several minutes and will ruin that salvage area if not stopped (such as with a Delve's **Foil Danger** ability).

FINGER OR THUMB ROOM

This room has multiple glass panels showing faded images that change intermittently. The panels react to a combination of touch and sounds. A successful understanding numenera task allows a PC to display fairly detailed schematics about the workings of the Mighty Arm (although it can't show anything beyond the parts of the structure that are here). A PC who studies these schematics for an hour becomes trained in salvaging numenera tasks within the Mighty Arm (not salvaging numenera in general, just within this ruin) or specialized if already trained.

Each Thumb Room has two salvage areas. One of these four salvage areas can be salvaged to produce a level 4 **slugspitter** artifact instead of iotum. It is jammed and doesn't work. It is **disabled** and doesn't work. Getting it working again is a difficulty 4 task and requires one hour of time.



Slugspitter, page 301



Foil Danger, page 35

Disabled, page 122

Repairing, page 122

INTEGRATED WEAPON

This is one of the arm's oversized weapons. It is guarded by two *automatons* that make loud whistling noises when activated. They are inactive, hidden in recessed alcoves, but they activate and attack if the PCs move through or damage anything in the area (including attempting to salvage the two areas in this room).

BACK TO AMBER KEEP

When the PCs return to Amber Keep, Visso is pleased to let them know that he has built a large water catchment, which means they can supplement the community's water needs from rainfall. Although it's great for now, they'll probably want a water supply that isn't reliant on the weather. Visso is also confident that they'll be able to dig a well to draw up water, and the PCs should decide where he should build the well.

If the PCs bring the Blue Tongue tribe back with them, Tsala is impressed, albeit not quite sure what to do about them. Kadri and Zoyin, however, step up to help the new arrivals adapt to life in the keep and teach them a basic amount of the Truth so they can communicate with everyone else. Even if the PCs only managed to negotiate being peaceful neighbors with the tribe, Tsala is impressed at their efforts to ensure the safety of everyone at the keep.

If the PCs were able to salvage from at least four areas in the Mighty Arm, Visso is impressed with their work, starts cataloging what they found, and makes notes about what to build first. If they tell him this is just part of what's available at the site, he gets very excited and Zoyin has to tell him to calm down and get some dinner before he faints.

Several weeks (or more, if the construction requires more time) pass after this. During this time, tell the PCs that they make several more trips to the Mighty Arm and safely salvage more iotum. They can share this iotum with Visso or use it for their own crafting projects.

All of this finally results in turning Amber Keep into a rank 1 community.

AMBER KEEP (RANK 1)

After several weeks, laborers have brought in logs, stone, and scrap synth to build commonplace structures like homes and defensive walls. Additional expeditions from the *Amber Gleaners* have arrived during that period, adding about another fifty people to the number of NPCs living in the base. The PCs have salvaged a nearby ruin to acquire several kinds of iotum that Visso needed to build special installations for Amber Keep, plus for any personal crafting projects the PCs may have. (Acquiring enough iotum probably required return trips to that site for more salvaging, with diminishing returns.) Amber Keep now has a sturdy exterior wall, a gate, huts or homes for everyone, and whatever installations the PCs decided to build. Tsala is very satisfied with their progress and congratulates everyone on their hard work. They'll need to find another source for some of the iotum they need, but the base is quite secure and the future looks bright.

At this point, Amber Keep is considered a rank 1 community, and thus gains the *community stats* that all rank 1 communities possess, including 3 health, 3 infrastructure, and 1 damage inflicted.

Update the map with additional homes and walls yourself, or ask the PCs to do so if they seem especially interested. In addition, add a public house (where food and drink are served) called the Freehouse, unless the PCs build their own.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for figuring out what structures they want to build, 1 XP each if they convince the villagers to come live at Amber Keep and be part of the new community that is being built there, and 1 XP each if they successfully salvage at least four areas within the Mighty Arm.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," run *Chapter 2: Prophet of the Machine God*, if you haven't already started weaving material from that section into your game.

Whistling automatons:
level 5



Amber Gleaners,
page 245

Zoyin, page 103

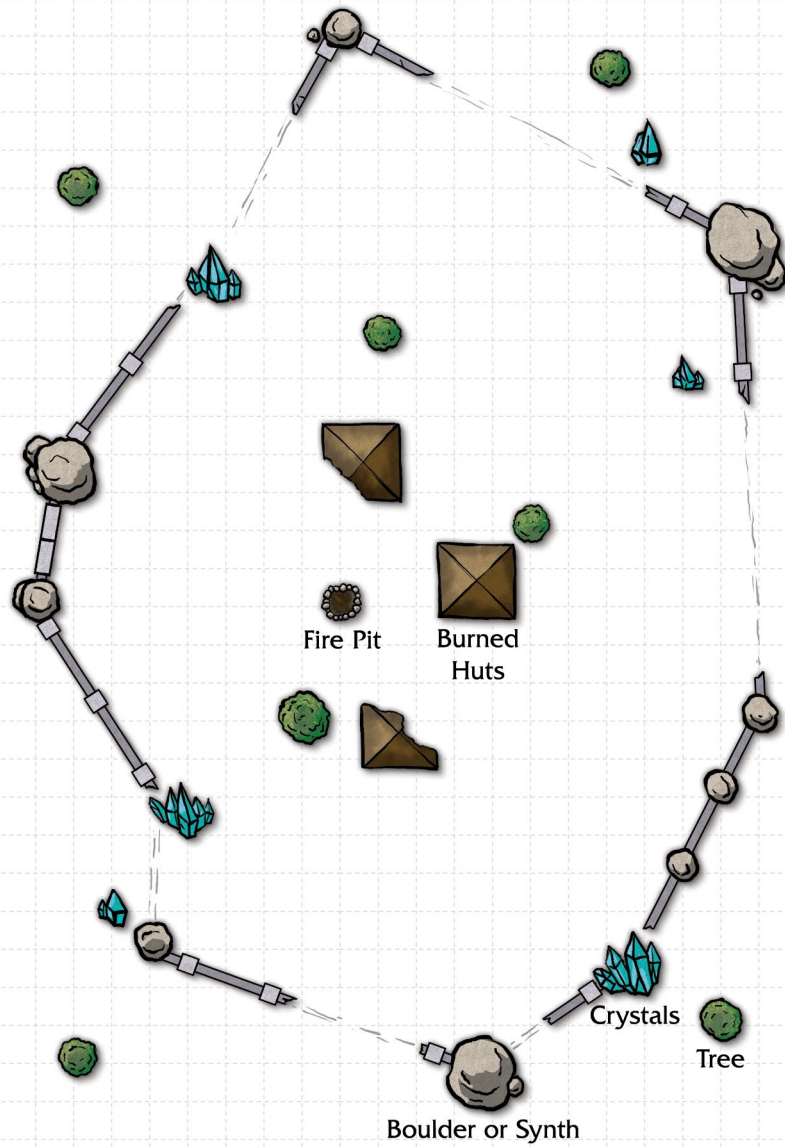


Rank, page 297

Understanding
community stats,
page 298

*Chapter 2: Prophet of the
Machine God*, page 25

AMBER KEEP



One Square = 10 feet (3 m)

ACT 3

THE BLAZING PILLAR

SYNOPSIS

A traveling trader named Sparadhi arrives in Amber Keep in a massive flying vehicle called the Blazing Pillar. This is a great trading opportunity for Amber Keep and an amazing party opportunity for those who've never had a chance to celebrate on a flying ship. The only issue is that a party guest goes missing, and it is discovered that the Blazing Pillar has more to it than even Sparadhi knows.

THE BLAZING PILLAR

One day, during the communal evening meal, the wall lookout spots something strange on the horizon, like a dark spot with a glow. It moves about as fast as a human can jog, and as it gets closer, the PCs can see that it looks a lot like a tilted, three-story building made of metal and synth, surrounded by pale yellow flames, and emitting some kind of weird music. Various balconies and platforms have people on them who seem to be waving and pointing in the direction of Amber Keep. One very prominent balcony has a person dressed in bright red clothing and waving a long red and blue flag. None of the people appear to be hostile or carrying any weapons, and the vehicle (if that is what it is) continues to move vaguely in the direction of the keep. When they get to about a long distance away from Amber Keep, the person with the flag calls out in a pleasant, high-pitched voice, "Hello, I am Sparadhi! Are you interested in trading with us? We have supplies and numenera, and we mean you no harm!" If invited closer, the flying building comes to about a short distance away from the keep, then lands gently on the ground, at which

point the yellow flames disappear and the music stops.

Sparadhi is a traveling trader, using this strange vehicle called the Blazing Pillar to travel to various places and barter for goods. She is about thirty years old and wears fashionable and flamboyant clothing decorated with tiny numenera lights, and when seen up close, there is an occasional septagonal pattern glowing under her skin (a subdermal artifact that gives her Armor). Her flag is just a long strip of cloth with alternating bands of blue and red, sort of like a wide scarf.

The Blazing Pillar floats about 10 feet (3 m) off the ground when it moves, and the flames are apparently a harmless energy discharge created by whatever engine the vehicle uses to move. Sparadhi inherited the machine from her mother and controls it by touching a metal orb on her balcony, but it doesn't seem to respond to anyone else trying to steer it (it might be attuned to her genes or nanites in her brain). Each of its three stories has two or three furnished rooms arranged around a central column, with a roof level surrounded by a metal railing. Much of it seems like a very old machine, but there are many recent additions (such as the rails and furniture) that make it more like a home. The weird music seems to be a side effect of the engine or the flames, as it stops when the pillar lands and starts again when it flies.

PARTY GUESTS

In addition to Sparadhi, the pillar is home (at least temporarily) to ten other guests—merchants and explorers she picked up from other locations. The Blazing Pillar is well stocked with exotic drinks, powders,

Sparadhi: level 3; bargaining, partying, and positive social interaction as level 5; Armor 1 from an artifact

The Blazing Pillar: level 7 vehicle; floats up to a long distance each round for no more than ten hours out of twenty-eight

Party guests: level 2, one additional skill (trading, crafting, etc.) as level 3

OVERHEARD ON THE BLAZING PILLAR

The party guests (and maybe even Sparadhi herself) have news and rumors from other parts of the Steadfast. The guests bring up these rumors and hearsay as one does when trying to make interesting conversation at a party.

Plague in Qi: A weird sickness broke out in Qi. The Order of Truth contained it, but before that, many people died of a strange rage brought about by a worm-like parasite so large that its wriggling end visibly jutted from a victim's body. Pulling out the worm ended the rage but killed the victim. Sounds absolutely dreadful, don't you agree?

Prophets of the Machine God: A cult in Iscobal preaches the coming rise of a "Machine God" that will unite all the devices of the prior worlds and turn them against the Order of Truth in one fiery day

of redemption. The guests laugh about these cultists—the Amber Pope makes all kinds of enemies, after all. If a Machine God were going to rise, it would have long ago, I'm sure.

City of Reflection: Sometimes when it rains, a mirror image of the city of Kordech in Draolis can be seen in the sky. The image is always winter and the inhabitants don't match the people who actually live there. Most unsettling. Can you imagine?

Friendly Iron Wind: The iron wind has been patrolling the edges of a valley in Thaemor, completing a loop every eleven hours. If anyone approaches, it builds a cypher out of the sand for them, then moves on without harming anyone. I'd go myself to investigate, but Sparadhi isn't taking the Blazing Pillar that way.



Varjellen, page 394

and foods, and the whole place is basically a mobile party that stops at various communities to trade, replenish supplies, and bring on or leave behind various people.

Beverec is a nano with a wrinkled brow and large teeth. His mechanical brain implants are malfunctioning, causing him to become enraged at minor offenses. He was hoping that the party atmosphere of the Blazing Pillar (and the easy access to drugs) would help fix his problem, but it hasn't, and Sparadhi is about ready to drop him off at the next settlement because of his outbursts.

Elgom is a friendly older woman with lots of jewelry made from polished stones and shins. She has a terminal disease and has decided to spend her last months in traveling and hedonism.

Hrun ties her long hair in elaborate knots and has a long white scar on her left hand. She knits brightly colored synth ropes and claims to have lived in Qi.

Lagim is a varjellen woodcarver and is very curious about human culture. It travels with Sparadhi so it can meet many kinds of humans and learn about their habits. Lagim understands that it is usually the first visitant most people have ever met, so it's very tolerant of stares and odd questions.

Mondris keeps his hair very short except for a topknot. He is an excellent cook and can create tasty dishes out of almost anything, at least when he is sober.

Pashka is a very small and slight young man with catlike claws on his fingers. He has a playful personality but sometimes scratches people accidentally.

Senmin is tall, middle-aged, and missing all the teeth on the left side of his mouth. He is always intoxicated and slurs his speech so much that nobody can really understand what he's saying, but he is very friendly.

Thule is a muscular woman with a very powerful three-fingered stronglass arm. She likes to arm wrestle and crush things for fun.

TRADING NUMENERA

Sparadhi has the following *iotum* packed away in crates in a *locked room* of the Blazing Pillar: 10 units of *io*, 5 units of responsive synth, 4 units of apt clay, 3 units of synthsteel, 3 units of pliable metal, 4 units of mimetic gel, 4 units of quantum, and 4 units of smart tissue.

She drives a hard bargain and has to make a profit, so she'll trade what she has (whole or in part) for an equal value of *io* from the PCs plus 10 percent (so if the PCs want 20 *io*-worth of her *iotum*, they must give her 22 *io*-worth of *iotum*). She'll also accept cyphers in trade, each being worth *io* equal to the cypher's level. Oddities are worth only 1 or 2 *io* at most unless they do something that looks really interesting. However, Sparadhi likes to bargain, and if a PC succeeds at an interaction roll against her bargaining level, she is willing to trade them *iotum* at equal value (without the 10 percent extra).

She and her guests have a total of five random cyphers, which they'll trade one for one if what the PCs offer is the same level or higher than what she has on her vehicle. If a PC succeeds at a separate bargaining roll, Sparadhi and her guests are willing to trade cyphers even if the PC's offering is 1 level lower.

She and her guests also have a total of eight random oddities available for trade.

Tsala, Visso, and Kadri have their own negotiations with Sparadhi and her guests to make sure the keep has what it needs in the near future (food, specific kinds of synth, and so on). Radius has a few specific needs as well (especially if it is repairing a disabled vehicle, as described in Chapter 3: Philosophy of Change).

THE AMAZING PARTY

If Sparadhi is pleased with the outcome of the negotiations and trading (which she is, as long as the PCs don't insult, attack, or steal from her), she suggests that everyone from Amber Keep join her and her other guests for an all-night party on the Blazing Pillar. If asked to, she moves the vehicle about a short distance away from the keep so the revelry won't distract the night guard

or wake anyone who decides to sleep at home instead of joining the party. She makes the Blazing Pillar float in a small circle all night long so the flames and music are activated. The flames are absolutely harmless and aren't even warm, but they are quite pretty to watch from within, especially when intoxicated. The music takes some getting used to, but after about an hour of listening to it, it's easy to find a beat worth dancing to. The party is an opportunity to do some roleplaying with various NPC guests. One of the guests might get flirty with a PC, another NPC might sneak off with a PC or another NPC for a romantic encounter (and if they currently have a romantic partner, that person might go looking for them), and Beverec almost certainly starts a fistfight with someone. The PCs may need to get involved in some of these situations to keep the peace.

NORT IS MISSING

The next morning, people wake from wherever they ended up sleeping, and their host sets out a simple breakfast of fruits and cheese. Conversation is light and friendly, until Visso realizes that Nort was at the party but didn't come out for breakfast and isn't in Amber Keep. Nobody remembers seeing him leave, and there's no sign that he walked away. A quick search of the Blazing Pillar and the keep doesn't find him.

When it is clear that he is missing, Sparadhi admits there is a secret space inside the Blazing Pillar that is larger than the outside—she says her mother called it an “otherspace,” a tiny dimension all its own, but Sparadhi always called it the Heart of the Pillar. She describes it as half dream, half maze. She's been able to get to it ever since she was a child, but over the years, the door to the otherspace has become more and more reluctant to open, and it hasn't opened for her at all in at least a year. She seems a little sad about this, like she is speaking of a childhood friend who doesn't want to see her anymore. She talks about the Heart as if it were a creature with feelings (not the vehicle itself, but the otherspace within it). She says it knows several mazes that it liked to show



iotum, page 107

Door to locked room: level 5



Cypher List, page 275

Oddities, page 305

Tsala, page 108

Visso, page 103

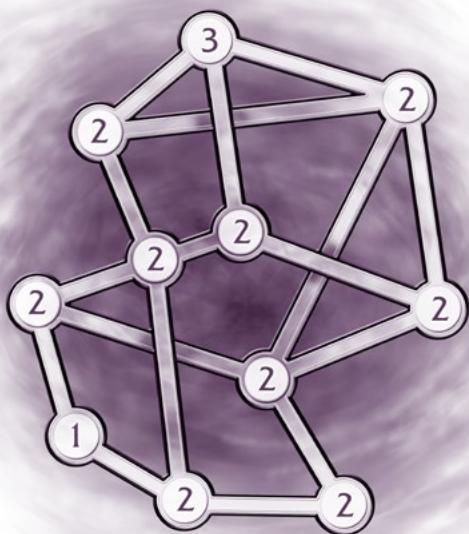
Kadri, page 103

Radius, page 16

Chapter 3: Philosophy of Change, page 34

The task to open the door is eased for anyone under the age of fifteen or eased by two steps if under age ten. Over many visits, these easings no longer apply, then the task eventually becomes hindered by two steps, and at some point, the Heart refuses to open for that person at all.

Heart of the Pillar



Heart of the Pillar: level 7

The GM should present the Heart of the Pillar as playful or creepy, whichever would resonate better with the PCs. The vehicle/location does seem to have some kind of strange intelligence . . .

her over and over again, but some of them she saw only once—she thinks the Heart might always be thinking up new mazes to try. Because nobody saw Nort leave the Blazing Pillar last night, and because he has a childlike demeanor, the Heart may have opened to him, and he might be in there right now.

Whenever the PCs are ready, Sparadhi takes them to where the door appears—a plain, convex synth panel on the central column of the middle floor of the vehicle. She says finding her way into the Heart wasn't about pushing buttons, but "thinking with your heart and feeling with your mind"—more about wanting to make friends and being curious than knocking. Opening the Heart is a difficulty 5 understanding numenera task, but the task is eased for characters who can talk to machines, have psychic abilities, exist partially out of phase, or have similar abilities.

When the door opens, a septagonal part of the synth panel fades to full transparency, revealing a room with walls, floor, and ceiling made of golden mist and two corridors leading elsewhere.

When the PCs get the door open, Sparadhi gasps in surprise that it worked. When she

reaches out to it with one hand, that part of the doorway begins to look solid and returns to transparency when she withdraws her hand again. She turns away with a look of rejection on her face. "It doesn't want me to visit anymore . . . now I understand why mother gave me this place." Sparadhi takes a moment to compose herself, then tells the PCs, "If you get tired while you're there, come right back out. It thinks it's rude to fall asleep when you're visiting. Good luck—I'm going up top to get some air."

THE HEART OF THE PILLAR

This otherspace is a small, self-contained parallel dimension connected to the Blazing Pillar. Although its specific configuration changes, the maze presented here remains constant the entire time the pillar remains near Amber Keep. The walls, floor, and ceiling look like golden flames behind a clear wall or force field and are as hard as metal (probably beyond the power of the PCs to harm). If the PCs use abilities or effects to bypass the walls (such as going out of phase and passing through solid objects), they appear in a random place elsewhere within the Heart. Vision in the Heart is a little distorted beyond a short distance, like a shimmering mirage. Sounds made fall a little flat and don't echo well.

The Heart doesn't follow the same spatial physics of Earth. Although it seems to be on a consistent vertical level without rising or falling, the various corridors pass through each other without touching. The corridors may curve gently in either direction (even though they appear straight on the map) and are a short distance or long distance without any regard for how far away the destination room seems like it should be.

The PCs are free to wander the corridors and rooms for as long as they like. They can leave objects or people behind as markers to help them navigate, spool out rope or string to trace their path, mark surfaces with paint, and so on. Any object or marking left here remains in place for several hours before being absorbed into the nearest surface (this also happens with creatures who fall asleep here, as shown in area 3, where Nort is).

1. ENTRYWAY

When the PCs pass through the door into the Heart, this is where they appear. The only difference between it and the rest of the Heart is that the doorway back into the Blazing Pillar (and Earth) has a crisp septagonal border and clearly shows the connecting room. The door closes on its own after about ten minutes but is still visible as a septagonal synth panel in the glowing wall and can be opened from the inside in the same way as from the outside.

2. ODD ROOM

Most of the rooms in the Heart are essentially the same in this configuration of the maze. Sometimes, a surface in a room clears for a few minutes to become a blurry odd-shaped “window” showing a live image of a room in the Blazing Pillar, but the PCs can’t control this, and what is shown isn’t associated with any specific room in the Heart (when the PCs return to a previous room, a window might show a different part of the Blazing Pillar or have disappeared entirely). If the PCs linger for more than about ten minutes in any of these rooms, small, strange faces (vaguely humanoid in shape but with odd features, each one unique) may appear on various surfaces as if watching the PCs. (These faces may be playful or creepy.)



3. NORT'S ROOM

This room is much like any of the Odd Rooms, except on the floor near one wall is Nort, fast asleep and partially absorbed into the floor like he's half buried in sand. Last night, the door into the Heart opened for him while he was intoxicated by some strange food, and, entranced by the Heart's beauty, Nort went inside. After wandering around for a while and watching other people at the party, he got tired and lay down to sleep. This insulted (if that is the right term) the Heart, and it decided to absorb him into itself. Nort is physically stuck and unharmed, but he can't be awakened while he is like this. Pulling him free is partially a matter of physical strength and partially a machine-psychic exercise like opening the door to the Heart—a PC must succeed at a difficulty 5 understanding numenera task. Up to two other PCs can help by pulling on Nort. Once freed, Nort wakes up but seems sleepy and drunk.

CONCLUSION

Once the PCs get Nort out of the Heart, the door closes. Sparadhi apologizes and insists that she didn't know anyone else could get into the Heart. She offers the PCs a free cypher (from those available earlier) as an apology. She tells everyone that she feels like she's overstayed her welcome and will be flying off that afternoon. Depending on how the rest of the party went, some of the other guests may want to stay at Amber Keep, and some of the keep's people might want to move on with the Blazing Pillar.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for trading with Sparadhi and her guests, 1 XP each for enjoying the party (even if not all PCs attend), and 1 XP each for rescuing Nort.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining “Amber Keep” with “Relics of the Machine,” run [Chapter 3: Philosophy of Change](#), which has the PCs venturing far from Amber Keep using a vehicle built by Radius.

GM intrusion: A face reacts negatively to a gesture, insult, threat, or attack and lashes out with a weird limb, inflicting 3 points of damage (ignores Armor). The face chases that PC until they leave the room, attacking about every other round.

Chapter 3: Philosophy of Change, page 34

ACT 4

THE WEEPING TOWER

When Act 4 begins, a few weeks have passed since Sparadhi's craft, as described in Act 3, departed. If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," the events in Chapter 4: War of the Machine have also concluded.

Nanobot parasites infect duskfruit. Once eaten, the parasites multiply in the blood and cause dusky pox. They are passed by contact or by just being in the same vicinity as someone already infected.



Ranked disasters,
page 309

Tyek: level 2, navigation
and food preparation
tasks as level 3

Visso, page 103
Kadri, page 103
Zoyin, page 103
Radius, page 16

SYNOPSIS

An NPC close to the characters, other residents of the community, and maybe even some PCs are afflicted with a debilitating illness called dusky pox, caused by eating local flora. Looking into it, the PCs eventually realize that an influence within a nearby ruin everyone calls the Weeping Tower might yield the cure. The PCs must enter the Weeping Tower, identify the medicine—a substance called silver ioquid—and deploy it around their base before the disease spreads out of control.

BREAKING OUR FAST

Most community residents gather each morning to eat breakfast, socialize, and plan and coordinate the day's tasks. What food is served changes based on what various residents contribute, but it is usually a combination of wild-picked fruits and greens, hunted and trapped meats, eggs, and a local favorite called lemorind (a creamy, sweet, orange-colored substance good on almost everything or eaten by itself). It's normal for foodstuffs to go on and come off the menu. For instance, a savory, fist-sized fruit the color of a starry night—called duskfruit—appeared on the menu only a couple of days ago. Before that, people were complaining about sournut, which made their eyes tingle, so duskfruit was a welcome replacement.

DUSKY POX

At breakfast, the PCs encounter an NPC with whom they've worked closely in the past, possibly Visso, Kadri, or Zoyin (but not Radius). It's immediately clear that the NPC is sick—they look tired, complain of abdominal pain, have new dark spots on their skin, and shiver periodically. Looking

around, the PCs realize that others in the community are similarly afflicted.

As a GM intrusion, ask the PC closest to an infected NPC to attempt a difficulty 5 Might defense roll. On a failure, the PC feels a chill. Note to yourself that that PC has just been infected with dusky pox.

Dusky pox (level 5 disease): Victims take 2 points of health or Intellect damage each day they fail a Might defense roll. This damage is permanent until the disease is successfully treated. Curing a victim requires exposure to activated silver ioquid, a kind of iotum, but this treatment is not immediately clear. Unless the disease can be stamped out within about five days of its first appearance, it will become a rank 2 disaster.

INVESTIGATING THE DISEASE

Abilities or devices that provide information—or an in-depth investigation of what those with the first symptoms had been doing—point to duskfruit as the culprit. Unfortunately, a large portion of the people in Amber Keep have already eaten it. Worse, the sickness spreads even to those who haven't eaten it, so getting rid of the fruit won't stem the disease's growth.

A gatherer named Tyek (or another NPC chosen by the GM) brought the duskfruit. Tyek is, not surprisingly, also infected with dusky pox. Tyek knows the following information.

- It's important to always be on the lookout for new food sources, and Tyek is good at it.
- Duskfruit grows on scrawny trees here and there in the shadow of many prior-world landscape features nearby. People, including Tyek, have eaten it before with no repercussions. It was deemed safe, if too sparse to be a primary food source.

- Tyek discovered that duskfruit growth is about ten times as thick around a landscape feature called the Weeping Tower 3 miles (5 km) away. The area is dangerous because broken hounds hunt there, but the bounty of duskfruit available there made Tyek brave their attacks.

If pressed to say more, Tyek recalls one peculiarity: the thick profusion of duskfruit trees doesn't extend all the way to the tower's base. The tower rises crookedly from a clearing in a perfect circle that is utterly bare of surrounding duskfruit trees, so regular that it almost seems like a gardener must tend it, though Tyek saw none.

ERADICATING DUSKY POX

Dusky pox threatens to become a rank 2 disaster unless the PCs can eradicate it first.

To beat it before it develops, the PCs must incorporate the silver ioquid into a device of level 5 or higher or craft five luminous dynamos that each use 1 unit of silver ioquid within one week and position them around the community. If the PCs do this, the combined functioning devices create an influence greater than the sum of their parts, and within minutes of activating the last device, the nanobot parasites all die.

USING SILVER IOQUID

Silver ioquid is a special component known as *iotum*. One unit of silver ioquid can be used in place of *quantum* on a unit-per-unit basis.

A PC trained in crafting numenera can spend a few weeks with the material and learn how to use it. However, a PC who saw the functioning devices in the interior of the Weeping Tower (the mechanisms that resembled luminous dynamos) can immediately guess how to activate its curative effect on dusky pox. Energizing the material (such as by using it as a component in a luminous dynamo or any crafted piece of numenera) activates the effect, and the higher the level of the object created (or the more items created in series), the more significant the effect.

One unit: Glassy vial filled with a thick silver fluid, weighing about 5 ounces (140 g)

Special: If used over long periods of time, additional effects come to light, as described in Act 5: Bring the Rain.

If the PCs can't craft the numenera within a week of when they first noticed the disease, the rank 2 disaster hits. The disease's effects are felt once per day (instead of every hour, the default period for a *community action*) until the disease or the community is eliminated. PCs must attempt *community tasks* that can add health to the community, thus delaying how long it takes for the place to reach 0 health and be wiped out. In theory, enough successful community tasks can buy the time a PC crafter needs to build the devices necessary to eradicate dusky pox all at once.

CONSEQUENCES

If the PCs manage to stop the disease before people get too sick, there is a celebration afterward. A great feast is prepared (where pains are made to point out that no duskfruit appears on the menu), and various kinds of strong drink are served. One NPC explains that the PCs have saved their daughter, Betina, and for that, the NPC will be eternally grateful.

If the PCs were less successful, they may have saved the community but with some losses. In this case, instead of a celebration, there is a mass funeral. People gather to tell happy stories of their loved ones who are now dead. A great procession winds through the community to the place where the dead are ceremonially burned. Afterward, everyone retreats to their homes, and many weeks pass before laughter is again heard in Amber Keep.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for identifying the source of the disease (duskfruit), 1 XP each if they explore the Weeping Tower, and 1 XP each if they emerge with silver ioquid and save the community.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," proceed to Act 5: Bring the Rain, which describes how the silver ioquid has additional effects beyond merely suppressing the effect of dusky pox.



Community actions,
page 305



Community tasks,
page 310



lotum, page 107



Quantum, page 112

Meteoron Control (page 122) calls dusky pox "tools of the suppressors" or just "suppressors."

CLEARING – START HERE

A forest of duskfruit-bearing trees surrounds a 500-foot (150 m) tall, leaning tower of obsidian-like material whose sides constantly bead with water falling like tears. The clearing, about a very long distance across, is as regular as if it were planned and maintained, though there is no other sign of grooming. Some influence within the tower seems to be preventing the trees from encroaching any closer. Moreover, if someone with dusky pox comes into the clearing or enters the tower, their symptoms go into remission.

GM intrusion (group): The forest and surrounding region is home to dozens of packs of broken hounds. Linger in the area draws six to ten of the creatures every couple of hours.



Broken hound,
page 226

Visual displacement
device, page 288

ENTERING THE TOWER

There are no obvious ways to enter the tower around its 100-foot (30 m) square base. A single opening is visible near the top, however. The Weeping Tower leans so precipitously (at a 45-degree angle) that one could attempt to climb or even walk up the steep slope on one side, though the beading water makes footing slippery. The opening at the top leads to the Tower Vestibule.

GM intrusion: Wind blows the PC off the tower on a failed level 4 Speed task.

CONDITIONS IN THE TOWER

Chambers in the tower are tiled in randomly shaped metallic pieces. They all tilt precipitously on account of the tower's angle, which means that all tasks that require movement (including melee attacks and defending from melee attacks) are hindered. Rather than being routine, moving any distance on the floor is a difficulty 1 Speed task to retain traction or balance. If a PC loses their footing, they slide down the sloped floor and crash into a wall, taking 1 point of damage (and possibly worse with a GM intrusion).

A PC can choose to act normally, making a movement-related task without being hindered, but they must succeed on a difficulty 5 Speed task afterward or else fall.

TOWER VESTIBULE

This chamber tilts precipitously as described under Conditions in the Tower. A metallic mechanism vaguely shaped like a 9-foot (3 m) tall humanoid is fused to one wall. Activity within the chamber causes the mechanism's eyes to glimmer to life with orange light, and a voice addresses the area in an unknown language. If answered, the mechanism speaks again in whatever language was just used and repeats itself, saying, *"Water depreciation protocols remain active. You are not authorized to be here. Leave."*

If the PCs further question the fused mechanism, it provides the following answers. However, it appends each answer with the warning provided above. Some questions aren't answered, while others have answers that probably make no sense to the PCs. The mechanism doesn't care to explain further.

What are you? *"I guard the way to Meteoron Control."*

What is Meteoron Control? *"Meteoron Control threatens to bring renewing rains, if allowed."*

What are renewing rains? *"The unending deluge that will wash away everything."*

Why does duskfruit grow thickest near the tower, except for a bare area? *"Meteoron Control is locked in constant, never-ending battle with the suppressors. That conflict tips in favor of Meteoron Control immediately around the tower."*

What are the suppressors? *"The influence was planted to keep Meteoron Control in check."* If one or more PCs are infected with dusky pox, it adds, *"Some of you have been touched by the tools of the suppressors. So close to Meteoron Control, they fall idle."*

How can we cure the sickness of the duskfruit? *"Meteoron Control keeps deposits of silver ioiquid for the day when it can send forth the rains. Silver ioiquid can counteract the suppressors if brought forth and activated in sufficient quantity. But that shall not happen, as I was placed here by the same beings who fashioned the suppressors to seal this place against such intrusion."*

GM intrusion (group): If the PCs attempt to move farther into the tower and the mechanism detects them, it wrenches itself from the wall and attacks. If the PCs defeat and salvage the unfused mechanism, they can find a visual displacement device cypher.

Unfused mechanism: level 5; health 25; Armor 3; multiple limbs attack every creature within immediate range for 6 points of damage; electrical contact attack (made as part of limb attack) stuns targets who fail a Might defense task for one round

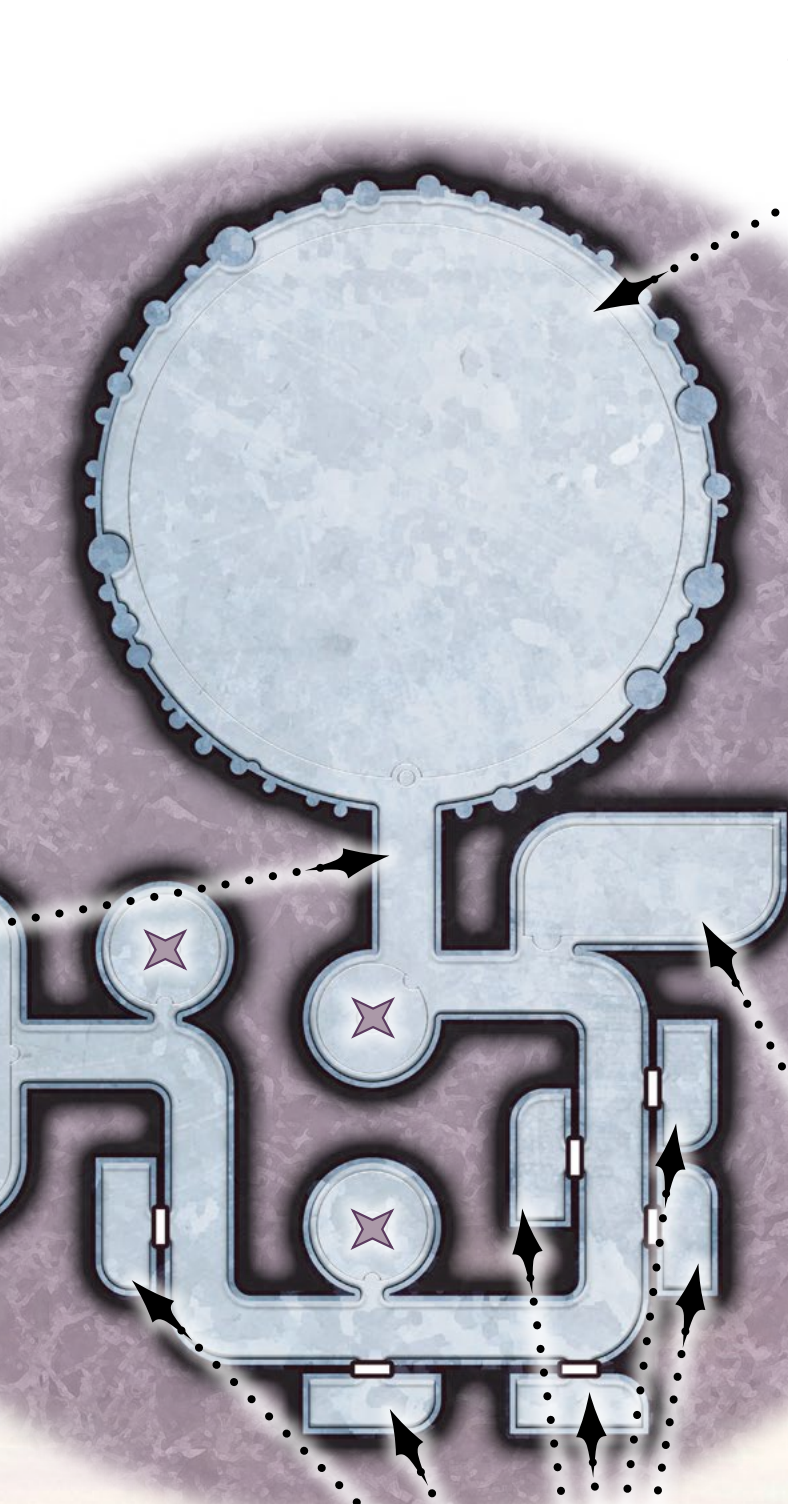
CHILL PASSAGE

This chamber tilts precipitously as described under Conditions in the Tower. The only path forward is through this chamber. It is as cold as winter and coated with delicate traceries of frost on every surface. The ice is slick, and advancing farther requires movement up the slippery slope of the floor, hindering movement tasks (already difficulty 1) by two steps. Those who fail slide unceremoniously back down the chill passage and into the lap of a fused interrogator.

FUSED INTERROGATORS

This chamber tilts precipitously as described under Conditions in the Tower. At a few locations, mechanisms reminiscent of the fused entity in the Tower Vestibule are similarly fused to the walls. None speak, but their eyes flicker into awareness when the PCs are detected. Instead of words, a complex psychic interrogation unfolds against one PC (treat as a GM intrusion). The PC can attempt to calm the inquisition with a successful Intellect defense task; otherwise, they suffer 6 points of Intellect damage and the interrogation continues into the next round, and so on.

Fused interrogator: level 6; health 25; Armor 3; telepathically interrogates targets



METEORON CONTROL

This domed chamber is a short distance across. It tilts precipitously as described under Conditions in the Tower. Two features dominate the chamber.

A landscape model fills the floor, including ravines, rivers, mountains, and even seas rendered in miniature scale. A successful difficulty 5 Intellect task reveals it as the Steadfast and the Beyond, though even the largest human habitations of the Ninth World are utterly absent in the representation.

A massive mechanism hangs from the ceiling, with many eyes, manipulator arms, and strange devices: *Meteoron Control*. Though limited and tethered, it is the master here.

Meteoron Control attacks any PC infected with dusky pox. It doesn't attack other PCs, though it will defend itself. It is eager to negotiate. Meteoron Control can speak any language spoken to it. If negotiation is opened, it demands that infected PCs (or, as it says, those bearing "suppressors") be sent to the time distiller or leave the area before the negotiation continues. If the PCs are amenable, Meteoron Control is eager to cooperate.

Meteoron Control welcomes the chance to spread its stores of silver ioiquid beyond the tower. If the PCs explain that they're after something to stop the "suppressors," it immediately opens a cache in the floor, revealing the hollow interior of the tower lined with mechanisms that resemble *luminous dynamos* (though most are dark and dead). A manipulator arm grabs a 3-foot (1 m) cube on a shelf near the top and delivers it to the PCs. Inside are 10 units of silver ioiquid. Meteoron Control bids the PCs to take the vials of fluid away and "activate" them by incorporating them into fixed installations as a crafting material wherever the "suppressors" are spreading. It says that, by doing so, the suppressors in the area where the PCs build their installations will die as long as the suppressor density hasn't reached a critical threshold, as it has around Meteoron Control.

Meteoron Control: level 7, Speed defense as level 3; Armor 4; inflicts 10 points of damage

VAULTS

This area tilts precipitously as described under Conditions in the Tower. Each chamber noted in this area is sealed, though a difficulty 6 understanding numenera task triggers one to open. Each vault contains a clutter of rusted, broken, and crumbled devices and mechanisms. The PCs gain one roll on the *Random Salvage Result* table per chamber (disregard results of level 7 and higher) if they spend time searching through the debris. In addition, one of the chambers contains an artifact.

GM intrusion: A mechanism animates as a level 5 murderous automaton and attacks the character.

TIME DISTILLER

This chamber tilts precipitously as described under Conditions in the Tower. Several connected devices are embedded in the walls, forming a nexus of instruments that glow with bluish light. The area could be salvaged for a couple of rolls on the *Random Salvage Result* table. Alternatively, a successful task to understand numenera could allow a character to "distill" time from an object or creature, an effect that lasts for about ten hours or until someone uses the device to return the distilled time. An object or creature affected by the time distiller is in stasis, and no time passes for it.

GM intrusion: A PC who returns from stasis is aged several years and descends one step on the damage track.

Time distiller: level 6



Random Salvage Result, page 109

Luminous dynamo, page 161

ACT 5

BRING THE RAIN

SYNOPSIS

Amber Keep has some time to grow and develop, and the PCs are encouraged to engage in activities that take several months to complete. Interesting events pepper this period, both threats and opportunities. Newly encountered creatures, dubbed rain sylphs, threaten the community as unexpectedly long, harsh thunderstorms grow more frequent. Eventually, the PCs discover that the installations using silver ioiquid are somehow responsible for drawing the rain sylphs and storms.

ENGAGE LONG-TERM PLAY

Because it's what they're used to, it's natural for PCs to expect to play events in a round-by-round, minute-by-minute, or hour-by-hour fashion. But the game master can guide the PCs toward play that occurs over longer periods. With crafting projects and the long-term needs of a community to consider, doing so becomes necessary. For example, if the PC Wright tells the other characters that they need three months to build a lightning turret installation, that is *not* the cue for the others to say, "Great! We'll go explore that ruin until you're done."

Instead, tell all the PCs to choose a **long-term task** (or two) to undertake over the next three months. It's possible a Wright or other PC will want to craft something significant, either for the community or for their own use. But all the PCs have several options to choose from, including tasks useful to the community as a whole.

CHOOSING A LONG-TERM PLAY TASK

Give the PCs the maps and notes generated in Act 2 representing the community if

they don't already have them. With those in hand, players can choose to take up any long-term task described in *Numenera Destiny*. However, a few options in particular are called out here, because they are the ones that will advance Amber Keep to a higher rank. If the PCs manage to accomplish a total of twelve months' worth of these tasks between them during the next three months, advancement is nearly assured.


If a task takes only one or two months, a PC can take on sequential tasks. Some of the tasks grant upgrades to the community's damage inflicted, health, or infrastructure, so note when those tasks are successfully completed.

Refer to the descriptions of each task in *Numenera Destiny* for additional guidance on how to describe each long-term activity to the PCs.

If PCs are feeling motivated and don't care about enjoying free time, they could choose to engage in **two long-term tasks at the same time**, but only if it's physically possible for that to happen. For example, it's not possible to build up food and water stores by scavenging the countryside while also crafting something in a workshop; however, a PC might attempt two crafting projects at the same time or scavenge for food while also looking for new areas of interest.

Build Up Food or Water Stores (1 month):

Given the issue with the duskfruit, gathering safe foodstuffs that can be stored is high on the list of things people in Amber Keep want to do. Each time one or more of the PCs engage in this long-term task, they get extra help from volunteers and gather three times as much food as normal.

 Multiple long-term tasks, page 324

Long-term tasks, page 324

Craft Object or Structure (3 months): A PC could choose to dedicate the next three months of their long-term play to crafting. A PC could craft cyphers or artifacts, of course, but if they craft an installation or artifact of level 4 or higher that can be used directly on the community's behalf, they increase the chance that the community's rank will increase at the end of the three-month period.

Enhance Community Happiness (1 month): Given the threats and dangers the community has faced as a newly established settlement in a previously unsettled area, keeping spirits up is especially important. Every month that a PC focuses on improving community morale is a month that the community is a better place to live, and as such, pursuing this task successfully contributes to the chance that the community's rank will advance after three months.

General Maintenance (1 month): Even normal wear and tear can cause a community's infrastructure to fall into disrepair, so actively bolstering infrastructure is always a good idea. If general maintenance is performed every month, it not only contributes points to the settlement's infrastructure stat, it also improves the chance that the community's rank will advance.

Demonstrate Grace Under Pressure (2 months): This task is only available to an Arkus PC, but if completed, it contributes to the chance that the community's rank will advance.

Train Defenders (2 months): This task is only available to a Glaive PC, but if completed, it contributes to the chance that the community's rank will advance.

Develop Community Networks (1 month): This task is only available to a Jack PC, but if completed, it contributes to the chance that the community's rank will advance.

Operate Workshop (1 month): This task is only available to a Nano or Wright PC, but if completed, it contributes to the chance that the community's rank will advance.

INTERRUPTIONS TO LONG-TERM PLAY

As the weeks advance, the following events occur that **interrupt long-term tasks**, allowing the PCs to engage in normal play for a few rounds, hours, or possibly even a day or two without affecting their progress toward their long-term tasks. A timeline is suggested, which means that long-term tasks that take only one or two months are finished (and the results obtained) before the last few events occur.

Once these events are dealt with, long-term play resumes until the next interruption or until three months have passed and all current long-term play tasks are completed.

DURING THE FIRST MONTH

Lots of Rain: As the weeks go by, the amount of rainfall markedly increases. Maybe that's the normal seasonal variability for the area, given that the community is too new for records to have been established, but Amber Keep is unprepared for it, and minor flooding has become a nuisance in some areas, bordering on becoming a danger. One or more PCs must spend a few days organizing the community to dig gutters and, in some cases, build flood barriers. (Unfortunately, the rains will continue to get worse, so this is only step one.)

Creature Attack: The PCs hear a couple of residents talk about spying something strange out in the rain when it was falling the most heavily—a flying, filamentous creature with many wings through which faint blue light sparked and flashed. A day or two later, the PCs encounter such creatures themselves at the height of a thunderstorm. As the rain and lightning fall, a flock of five of these “rain sylphs” appears in the settlement, attacking people or even the PCs if the latter are out checking for flooding.

When killed, the creatures fall apart as if only water tension was keeping them together, and a flash of what looks like reverse lightning spears back up into the sky.



Interrupting long-term tasks, page 325

Rain sylph: level 3; flies a short distance each round; lightning touch attack inflicts 5 points of damage and causes victim who fails a Might defense task to lose their next turn; regains 3 health per round during thunderstorms

Tsala: level 2, tasks related to administration and persuasion as level 4

Chapter 5: Leaving Shallamas, page 51

Ganilon Brig: level 5, tasks related to deception, persuasion, and intimidation as level 6; a successful tentacle attack can hold a foe, making it unable to take actions until it can escape

Bulky guards: level 4

DURING THE SECOND MONTH

Festival: Several residents organize a street party in Amber Keep, a one-day event called Founding Day that remembers the efforts that went into making the community what it is today. Food, music, dancing, and a parade figure prominently. There is also something called the Telling, which is when people recall events important to them related to the settlement. The settlement's leader, Tsala, asks that each PC describe one event at Amber Keep that affected them deeply, was important to helping the community, or has something to do with living where they are now.

For about a month after the celebration, the community's health is increased by 3 points.

New Settlers: Another caravan, similar to the one that brought the PCs, arrives to help reinforce the base. The caravan contains enough people to bring the total population of the community up to well over a hundred people. Some of the newcomers are farmers, trappers, woodworkers, or those with similar specialized skills, but the majority are unskilled laborers eager to learn a new trade. Almost all are part of families, which means that, for the first time, children become a common sight in Amber Keep.

With the new settlers comes a man named Ganilon Brig, a tall, broad fellow with an intense air and one weird tentacle instead of an arm. Ganilon has many devotees among the new settlers who arrived with him. He is eager to meet the PCs and sets up an appointment to do so within a week of his arrival. He quizzes them on "the situation," compliments them on how much they've accomplished, and ends the meeting with a sentiment along the lines of "I'll see to it that things finally get off the ground here in Amber Keep."

If called out on that last sentiment, he earnestly claims he meant no disrespect. In fact, Ganilon says that he only meant he was looking forward to contributing to the success that everyone else in the settlement has already achieved. (The hidden truth is that Ganilon hopes to seize power in the foundling community to enrich and aggrandize himself, but that's not something he'd ever admit.)

DURING THE THIRD MONTH

More Rain: The rain doesn't let up, and flooding becomes more pronounced, threatening to drown some portions of the city unless additional flood remediation is done. One or more PCs are again called upon to spend a few days organizing the community to dig more gutters and build more flood barriers. As the PCs do so, they're also forced to deal with driving off more rain sylphs, but this time, the creatures just fly off into the rain without engaging. It's not obvious why, but witnesses assume it is because the creatures have learned to fear people, or at least the PCs. This might be when the PCs decide to put some real effort into figuring out if there is a supernatural cause for the rain, but that's when reports of bandits pause that line of inquiry.

Help Radius (a few days): If you're combining "Relics of the Machine" and "Amber Keep," the PCs can make a side trip to Shallamas to look for another of Radius's siblings, as described in Chapter 5: Leaving Shallamas. This side trip doesn't hamper long-term tasks the PCs are attempting.

Seizing Influence: When the PCs return from Shallamas, or after some other event that captured their attention for a couple of days, they discover that the mood in Amber Keep is angry, manifesting as a mob gathered outside Tsala's home (albeit a mob under umbrellas and lacking torches, given that the rain hasn't let up). People are muttering things like "I can't believe she'd pull this crail!" and "We're not going to stand for it!"

Inquiries reveal that Tsala has announced a monthly 10-shin tax on all residents.

If the PCs try to talk the crowd down, they learn that 10 shins is far more than most of them can scrape together in a month, making the tax demand untenable on its face. Some sort of compromise will have to be reached to avoid the community falling into riots or worse, which means talking to Tsala.

Five bulky guards stand by Tsala's doors, and the PCs may recognize them as having come in the recent caravan along with Ganilon Brig. By dint of persuasion and

their place in the community, the PCs can get by and speak with Tsala. Ganilon is by her side. He has managed to convince Tsala that the new tax is needed, indicating that a community fund should be established for trade, to pay for a major new garrison, and to otherwise accelerate development. Convincing Tsala to compromise and bring the tax down to something reasonable, such as 10 shins a year and only on those who can afford it, requires that the PCs succeed on three difficulty 6 Intellect tasks (it would be difficulty 5, but Ganilon is arguing against the PCs the whole time). Convincing her to renounce the idea of taxes completely would require three difficulty 7 tasks.

A compromise (or complete tax removal) presented by the PCs to the mob mollifies the community, with only a single difficulty 5 task needed to convince them that the matter has been resolved and it's time to go home.

Ranked Rainstorm: The rain doesn't let up; it intensifies. With the storm come rain sylphs that flock to the community by the hundreds and begin to tear at its infrastructure and populace. This creates a **rank 3 disaster** whose effects are felt once per day as a **community action**, every day, until the PCs can come up with a way to end the disaster. In the meantime, the PCs must attempt **community tasks** to add health to the community, thus delaying how long it takes for the keep to reach 0 health and be wiped out.



RAIN CAUSE: SILVER IOQUID

The PCs may already be investigating the rain. If so, that inquiry finally bears fruit. (One option: they return to the Weeping Tower and learn that silver ioquid summons rain and rain sylphs when there are no suppressors.)

If the PCs have no devices or abilities to gather information, provide them with a couple of clues. The first clue comes after a successful Intellect task (difficulty 3), reminding the PCs that the rain only started after silver ioquid was activated in various installations around the community. Perhaps that's circumstantial, but the next clue is that rain sylphs never attack the installations containing silver ioquid, though they do seem to dance around them, almost like adherents of a cult giving praise to their god. The final clue, if necessary, is that a PC sees flooding destroy one of the installations containing silver ioquid. When that happens, the rain in that particular small area lets up, and the sylphs near it explode and shoot electrical bursts back into the sky.

Destroying or disabling all the affected installations brings an abrupt end to the rains. The sun breaks, the waters drain, and a rainbow stretches across the blue sky.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for each month of long-term play that contributes toward advancing the community by 1 rank (see Community Advancements in the next act), 1 XP each if they helped calm the mob protesting taxes, and 1 XP each if they save the community by disabling the installations that use silver ioquid.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," at some point during this act you already included Chapter 5: Leaving Shallamas, then finished up the adventure in this act. Next, proceed to Act 6: The Kindness of Strangers, which describes newcomers in town that are not made welcome because of the news they bear.

The dusky pox, already eradicated, doesn't resurge after the silver ioquid installations are destroyed.



*Ranked disasters,
page 309*

*Community actions,
page 305*

*Community tasks,
page 310*

ACT 6

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

SYNOPSIS

The results of a series of long-term play tasks are resolved. But day-to-day events are quickly interrupted when refugees come to the settlement. Claiming that their home was destroyed by demons, they warn that Amber Keep might be next. They need aid and a place to live. Whether or not that aid is granted, the PCs set out to investigate the refugees' warnings.

All the benefits provided to the settlement from completed long-term tasks continue to apply, but they now apply to the baseline stats for a rank 2 community. For example, if the PCs managed to add 3 points of infrastructure to the settlement's stats, those points are added to the rank 2 infrastructure value of 6, granting the newly advanced rank 2 community a modified infrastructure value of 9.

COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENTS

In Act 5, the PCs engaged in one or more *long-term tasks* that played out over approximately three months of in-world time. Review all the long-term tasks that were completed and note them for Amber Keep's *community stats*.

Next, it's time to assess whether the settlement advances from *rank 1* to 2. Unless something catastrophic occurred, it probably advances, because the PCs merely had to finish twelve months' worth of tasks between them. Update the settlement's stats, working with the PCs as you do, so they understand and appreciate the community's improvements and their hand in that advancement.

Even if the PCs didn't follow the guidance suggested for taking up long-term tasks that would contribute toward rank advancement, the community may still advance. Why? Because the PCs aren't the only residents in the settlement. At this point, over a hundred other people also live there and have an interest in improving it. When people choose to make a settlement into a home, they invest time and resources in upgrading their property and neighborhoods.

RAINY AFTERMATH

Part of advancing the community to rank 2 includes cleaning up after the torrential rains and flooding from the last act. NPCs likely take care of most of this, but the PCs are called in to look at "something strange." When they investigate, they find that the ground has slumped in a radius nearly a short distance across near one of the silver ioquid installations that was destroyed or disabled. Just beneath the drit, a bluish layer of fungus-like growth has spread through the area, reminiscent of the skin of a rain sylph. It *seems* to be inert except for the slumping ground, almost like the formation of an incipient sinkhole. The PCs may decide they want to check other installations for the same phenomena, but any such investigations are interrupted when a large confrontation occurs at the edge of Amber Keep, as noted under *Refugees*.

If the PCs later have time to check the other installations, they discover similar slumping and fungus-like growth beneath them. The growth is as flammable and killable as normal fungus. If the PCs take care of the fungus in this way, that seems to be the end of it. (However, it's not, as will be revealed in the final act . . .)



Long-term tasks,
page 324

Community stats,
page 297

Rank, page 297

REFUGEES

Shouting, angry rhetoric, and the threat of violence draw one or more PCs to the community's edge, where they find a ragtag group of thirty newcomers. The strangers are exhausted and filthy, and many are wounded. Among them are children, looking forlorn and frightened. (A few of these have become orphans, though that's not immediately clear.)

The newcomers' leader is **Marraxi**, a woman with cropped hair who leans on an axe made of steaming white synthsteel. She is embroiled in a desperate argument with **Ganilon Brig**, a member of the PCs' community whom the characters have dealt with in the past. (As a reminder, Ganilon is a tall, broad fellow with an intense air and one tentacle instead of an arm.) Several dozen residents of Amber Keep stand behind Ganilon, watching the exchange.

Marraxi is asking for asylum or at least a place to stay for a bit, while Ganilon adamantly demands that the group clear out and that Amber Keep doesn't need whatever trouble the group is obviously involved with—the settlement already has enough concerns of its own. Most Amber Keep residents are on Ganilon's side by the time the PCs appear on the scene, because he's very persuasive.

THE DEBATE: ACCEPT NEW SETTLERS OR NOT?

Read the following aloud or paraphrase Marraxi's account:

"Our village was devastated by demons! We only barely got away. It was horrible . . . We've been running for two days. Our hope was exhausted, until we saw your settlement. Can you help us? We have nowhere to go. And the demons that destroyed Conphas, our village, are spreading. They may even come this way!"

The Case Against Helping the Strangers: If PCs engage in the debate, Ganilon's points are the following:

- Amber Keep doesn't know these people. They weren't sent by the Amber

Gleaners, as virtually everyone else in town was. For all anyone knows, they could be bandits in disguise.

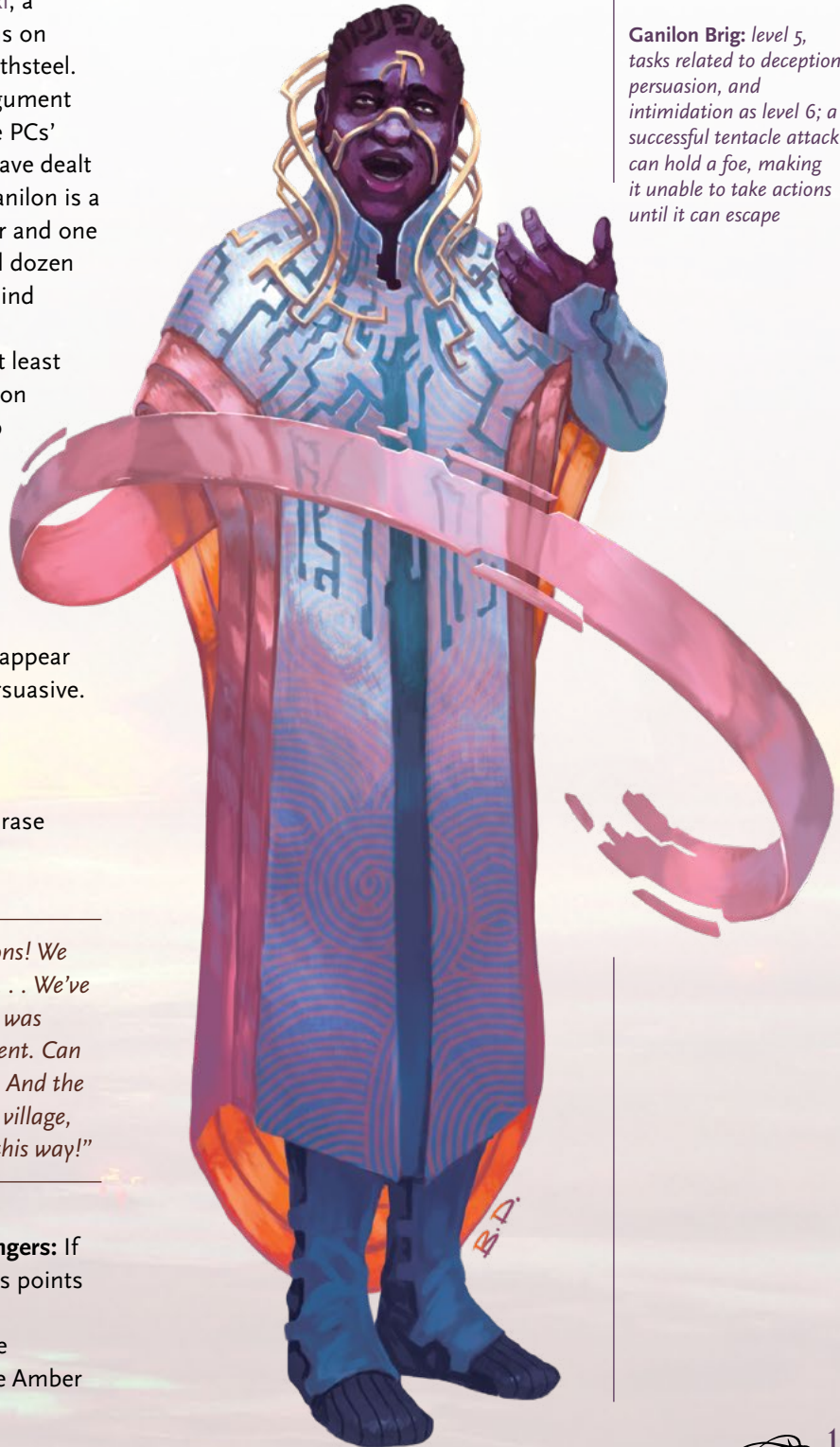
- Whatever these "demons" are, they're probably following the Conphas. Taking them in would only ensure that the creatures come here.
- Amber Keep already has enough settlers. Adding more mouths to feed would stretch resources.

Of late, Tsala, the community leader, has been content to take her lead from Ganilon.

Tsala, page 108

Marraxi: level 5, tasks related to attacking with her axe as level 6

Ganilon Brig: level 5, tasks related to deception, persuasion, and intimidation as level 6; a successful tentacle attack can hold a foe, making it unable to take actions until it can escape



If the PCs do not head to Conphas, the warnings Marraxi gave prove true and the creatures appear in Amber Keep in increasingly greater numbers until the PCs act.

Typical refugee: level 1



Thuman, page 256

If the strangers are accepted into the community, the PCs can add 1 to the settlement's health stat.

Radius wants to continue to work with Chord to unlock more of its past, and demurs if PCs ask it to come to Conphas with them. Of course, if they press the matter, it happily goes along.

Radius, page 16



Responsive synth, page 111

The Case for Helping the Strangers: If PCs take the position that the refugees should be given aid, refuge, and maybe even a chance to start a new life in Amber Keep, the characters should make those points now, in front of the assembled residents of their settlement. To successfully convince Amber Keep to take in the refugees requires that the PCs succeed on three difficulty 6 Intellect tasks (it would be difficulty 5, but Ganilon argues against the PCs the whole time).

The Strangers: The thirty refugees are composed of about nine families, including Marraxi, a baby (Little Nisi) carried in the arms of one of her two fathers (Blen), a blind woman (Aunt Gab) who is led around by her grandniece (Jali), and a mangy old thuman (Glide) that is dazed and masterless.

REPERCUSSIONS

If the strangers are accepted as new settlers, others in Amber Keep see to it that they are housed and fed, though of course the PCs can take charge of this if they wish. Ganilon Brig accepts the result but walks off in a huff. His aspirations of being the voice of authority in Amber Keep have been dealt another blow.

If the strangers are turned away, they leave without further argument, even more dejected than before. Ganilon puts on a show of compassion and even has a wagon of food and water prepared for them, but with the community convinced that he's right, away the strangers must go. His aspirations of becoming a leader in Amber Keep are advanced.

WHAT ABOUT THESE DEMONS?

If the PCs pursue Marraxi on the topic of the demons, she describes the creatures as taking on a variety of different forms, but they all have one thing in common. Wherever they appear, an advancing red tide creeps over the ground, buildings, and dead people "like a scab." If questioned further on why she thinks the demons are spreading and why she thinks they might come to Amber Keep, Marraxi indicates that it was obvious by the way the creatures surged through Conphas. "They eat people.

And now that we got away, there aren't any people left in Conphas."

Whether or not the strangers are accepted into the community, Marraxi's initial warning instills fear in the average Amber Keep resident. The anxiety is obvious in public and private conversations. If the PCs don't decide to do something on their own, a group of NPCs approach the characters and ask if they will check out Conphas, if only for the peace of mind of the settlement.

CONPHAS

The PCs can get directions to Conphas from the newcomers or backtrack along the path taken by the strangers. If the settlers are asked, they can even get Marraxi and the thuman to accompany them. (Glide the thuman is looking for a new master and may accept one of the PCs if they are kind.)

TRAVELING TO CONPHAS

The path taken by the refugees isn't hard to follow; they didn't take any precautions to hide it, though it does require a difficulty 1 Intellect task to pick up again each time the PCs pass through one of the following areas along the way. Assuming no long stops, the trip takes about two days.

Swamp: This wasn't a swamp a few months ago, but the recent rains caused the lowlands to flood, and they still haven't drained. Bubbles constantly rise to the surface and continue up into the air. If popped, they release bluish mist into the air and a smell like a thunderstorm.

Grove: This grove is made of gnarled strands rising up in twisted columns like trees. If PCs are interested in investigating, the "leaves" can be salvaged for about 30 units of responsive synth.

Insect mounds: These mounds are made of greenish clay. Inspection reveals the crawling "insects" to be tiny automatons.

ENTERING CONPHAS

The PCs come across the following as they close on Conphas.

Invasive Crust: As the PCs near Conphas, they notice an unfamiliar new growth—a reddish crust, about 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick



with a hard exterior and a mushy interior like soft cheese. At first, it's just tiny specks here and there, but as they close on the destroyed village, they find long bands and whorls growing everywhere. Investigation reveals that it's some kind of organic growth, like a weed, but obviously more invasive. If the PCs have the means to detect such a thing, they discover that the growth is transdimensional in nature. It doesn't seem to be dangerous in and of itself.

Village Perimeter: A strange reddish pall hangs over everything, creating a dusk-like gloom even though no clouds are visible. The reddish color might just be the light reflected from the red crust that grows over the trees, the ground, and the palisade walls of a village built along the shore of a small lake, but as the PCs move farther in, it becomes clear that it's no mere reflection. About half of the lake seems to have gained an encircling red crust, and everything is quiet. Too quiet.

Conphas was a village of about a hundred people with about thirty structures, many of them no more than single-room huts, and a

few larger buildings that still cluster near the center of town.

Heading In: Nothing prevents the PCs from entering the crusted village, though the quiet is broken each time someone takes a step, creating an audible *crunch* under the explorers' boots. The PCs leave obvious footsteps, but theirs seem to be the only recent prints—at least so far.

EXPLORING CONPHAS

Most of the structures are completely empty. If any natives accompany the PCs, they say that the demons ate people, so this doesn't surprise them. However, the *complete* lack of remains does seem strange. Perhaps the bodies were hauled away somewhere?

That said, the PCs do trigger the following encounters as they look for the source of the crust. The dangerous manifestations described below are what Conphasans refer to as "demons."

Crust Husk: A few structures contain thickened clumps of bulbous crust that hang in darkened corners, in pantries, or under

If any native Conphasans accompany the PCs, they confirm that the crust hadn't reached so far before.

Crust husk: level 5, Speed defense as level 1 due to immobility; mist attacks inflict 5 points of damage each round until a target can scrape off or resist the effect with a successful Might task

Transdimensional arch: level 7



Random Salvage Result, page 109

Crust wing: level 4; flies a long distance each round; attack engulfs target, inflicting 4 points of damage each round until the target escapes

Crust shambler: level 5; health 25; Armor 3; two fist attacks each inflict 9 points of damage

furnishings. A **crust husk** is about the size of a curled-up person and is sticky and soft to the touch. Unlike the regular crust, crust husks are quite dangerous, though only if prodded or otherwise investigated. Crust husks affect their surroundings by spraying flesh-rotting mist at everything within immediate range or at one target within short range. Luckily, they're immobile.

Crust Wing: The PCs' presence soon draws the attention of four flying creatures. The crescent-shaped wings have a span of about 10 feet (3 m) but no discernible body—they're all wing. These **crust wings** attack by dropping on targets, smothering them, and absorbing the remains.

Crust Shambler: In a large structure, the PCs find a bulky, 7-foot (2 m) tall creature either completely composed of crust or covered in it. The distinction isn't immediately relevant because the moment the **crust shambler** senses the PCs, it charges them, attempting to batter them to death with great, bulbous, fist-like extensions.

FINDING THE DEMON SOURCE

Though it takes some time to investigate the area, the PCs can eventually zero in on where the growth is thickest and where the strange haze in the air is darkest: over a medium-sized structure in the center of town. If Marraxi is with the PCs, she tells them it is the home of a nano named Coultan who had come to live in Conphas a few years ago. Marraxi says Coultan was a quiet person, working away on her own projects and never really joining any community events or showing up at gatherings.

The interior of the house is thick with demolished devices, all under a thick layer of crust. The PCs can break the crust and attempt to salvage the area for interesting

things if they wish. Doing so takes about fifteen minutes, but it grants them three rolls on the **Random Salvage Result** table. Apparently, Coultan was a prolific device crafter or at least a collector of numenera. It's hard to tell which under all the crust.

A search also uncovers a still-functioning installation in a separate room, resembling an **arch** that is hazed through its center as if leading into another space entirely. The PCs can choose to turn off the arch or go through. If they enter, tell them they end up "somewhere else" (as described in Act 7: Meeting of Minds).

A successful check to understand numenera reveals that the arch is creating some kind of transdimensional effect. If the PCs choose to disable the arch, they can do so simply by taking it apart for salvage (worth another roll on the Random Salvage Result table).

DEMONIC REVENGE

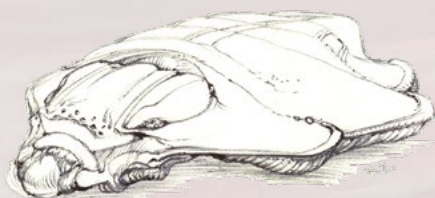
If the arch is disabled or destroyed, the threat doesn't end. In fact, the opposite occurs. The arch was a device that Coultan crafted to *moderate* the influence of this protrusion from another reality, not create it. When the arch stops working, the weakness rips wide open, forming a ragged vertical tear in space, 30 feet (9 m) in diameter, that bisects the house. Dozens of bird-sized, winged crust creatures swarm out and up, with more behind. Alternatively, the PCs may choose to enter the arch (or the rip after they create it). In either case, what they find beyond the arch or rip is described in the next act.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each if they convinced their community to accept the refugees, 1 XP each if they decided to investigate the source of the demons, and 1 XP each if they discovered the other dimension.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," proceed directly to Act 7: Meeting of Minds.



Act 7: Meeting of Minds, page 133

ACT 7

MEETING OF MINDS

SYNOPSIS

The PCs investigate and explore the bizarre dimension discovered in the last act. In doing so, they learn that the breach was purposefully allowed to propagate and spread into the real world by a nano named Coultan. She was wronged and wanted revenge on Conphas. Convincing her to fix the breach is one way the PCs could solve the problem, though if that fails, they have more direct methods of dealing with the nano, though she would make a powerful enemy.

TRANSDIMENSIONAL
IRREGULARITIES

The PCs probably begin play facing one of two situations, depending on how the previous act ended. They either entered the transdimensional arch or disabled it, creating a tear in the fabric of reality.

Through the Transdimensional Arch: In the last act, the PCs discovered an arch large enough for a couple of humans to pass through abreast. The arch is hazed through its center, as if leading into another space entirely. The PCs may have already passed through. If so, they find themselves in the bizarre dimension of Medulla, described hereafter. (At this point, the PCs can still return through the portal mouth and disable the arch. Doing so is as simple as taking it apart for salvage, granting a roll on the Random Salvage Result table. However, that creates a ragged tear in the fabric of reality, making the opening into Medulla even bigger.)

Tear in Reality: If the PCs disable the arch, a ragged vertical tear in space forms, 30 feet (9 m) in diameter. From this opening, dozens of winged crust creatures the size of birds swarm forth into the Ninth World like bats startled from a cave. The rip leads to the bizarre dimension of Medulla.

PCs with an ability to understand numenera or transdimensional effects, or otherwise obtain answers, are convinced that the weird growth covering Conphas and spreading farther is leaking from whatever's on the other side.

Attempts to close the dimensional rift are difficult, though if the PCs have a device or ability able to supersede a level 7 transdimensional effect, they can close the rift, but only temporarily. A few minutes later a new rupture appears. Some force in the alternate dimension is creating the extrusion, and if it's going to be dealt with, someone must physically enter and stop it.

MEDULLA:
COULTAN'S GARDEN

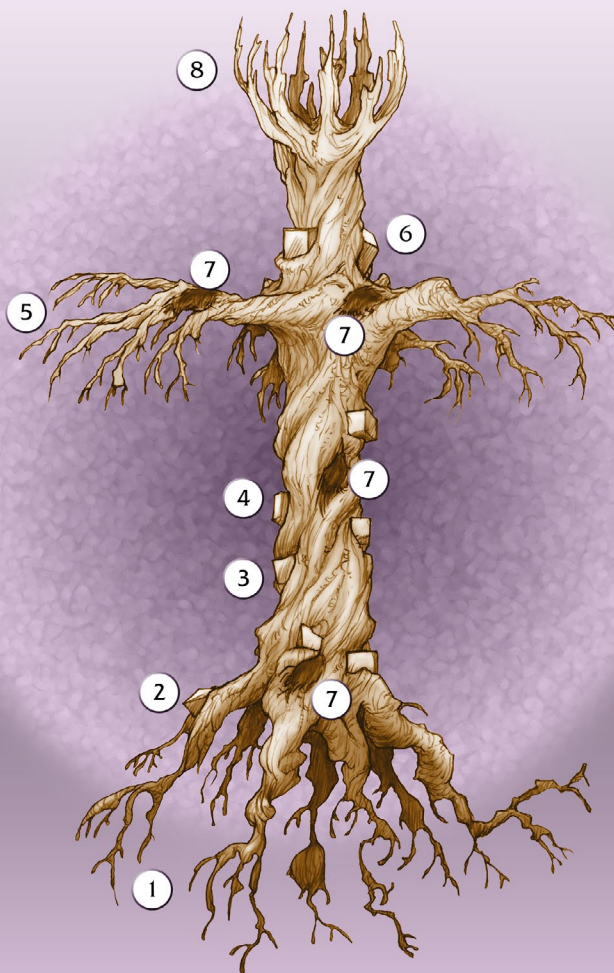
The bizarre dimension of Medulla is artificial, created by a nano named Coultan. It has grown significantly since its inception as an otherspace fashioned in the nano's workshop. What was once a bounded region of assorted terrariums—where the nano experimented with building living numenera—has exploded into a vast organism inside an ever-expanding extradimensional space. Both the growth and enclosing artificial dimension have far exceeded Coultan's original design by a couple of orders of magnitude.

To end the threat that Medulla represents, the PCs must explore this dangerous realm,

Transdimensional
arch: level 7

MEDULLA

1. Roots of Medulla
2. Terrarium One
3. Terrarium Two
4. Encrusting Chamber
5. Crying Tendrils
6. Roost
7. Weak Crust
8. Treetop Crown



The air is breathable. Gravity is low, and normal to—as in, “pulling toward”—the roots, trunk, and branches of Medulla. Red light gleams from the entire growth, providing dim light.



Low gravity, page 115

find Coultan, and either convince her to help them end the threat (a possibility for silver-tongued PCs) or defeat her and figure out how to end the threat themselves.

ROOTS OF MEDULLA

A colossal tree named Medulla grows in an alternate dimension bound by starry darkness. About a mile in length, Medulla's roots twine naked as if the emptiness was nourishing soil. The trunk extends for at least a quarter mile beyond the roots, covered in a bark-like crust. Above, great branches sweep out as if reaching for the distant twinkling lights. The branches' leaves are hanging tendrils that constantly coil and undulate. Strewn here and there among the roots, up along the trunk, and scattered among the branches are glass-walled structures half submerged in the bark crust, like homes partly engulfed and tumbled far from their foundations by a mudslide.

One of the roots reaches through a discontinuity in space, leading back to the world. That's the root where the PCs who entered this dimension stand.

MEDULLA LORE

The transparent structures scattered about the giant tree were once rooms in a larger cohesive building that comprised an artificial dimension the nano, Coultan, accessed through the transdimensional arch. A greenhouse workshop of sorts, it was where Coultan experimented with living numenera devices called biologicals. She also used the space for collecting oddities, devices, and machines for later study.

Her crowning achievement was a truly intelligent tree she named Medulla. Medulla is partially psychic and bonded with Coultan. When Coultan became enraged with her treatment in Conphas, Medulla responded, exploding in size within the confines of

the artificial dimension holding it. The expansion burst through, and Medulla's influence began to leak out, engulfing Conphas. It's unclear how far beyond Conphas it will actually reach.

CRYING TENDRILS

Anyone within short range of the coiling, undulating tendrils that serve as Medulla's leaves hear whispers and occasional sighs and faint groans of anguish. The noises come from the tendrils themselves. (They're transmitting Coulтан's distress, telepathically.) If a PC touches one, they get a psychic surge and feel sad, angry, confused, and lonely. Should a PC try to contact whoever the feelings are emanating from, they must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect task each round, taking 5 points of Intellect damage for every round they fail. If successful, they gain the sense that the entire huge tree is called Medulla, and that it isn't really the source of the distress. Who is, however, can't be determined.

TERRARIUM ONE

This crust-covered, partially wrecked glass chamber holds a variety of demolished devices under a thick layer of crust. PCs can break the crust and attempt to salvage the area for interesting things if they wish. Doing so takes about fifteen minutes and grants them one roll on the Random Salvage Result table as a difficulty 5 salvage task. They also uncover what appears, at first, to be a hibernating creature, but a PC who succeeds on a level 5 understanding numenera task realizes it is a living artifact akin to *bounding boots*.

While investigating, a character risks disturbing a nest of *crust mites*—fingernail-sized flecks of crust with legs—that swarms all over them.

TERRARIUM TWO

This chamber is very similar to Terrarium One and provides the same salvage opportunities. The only difference is that the PCs uncover a different "hibernating creature"—in this case, a *living armor sheath* artifact.

While exploring, a character risks disturbing a *crust mummy*, which looks

something like a crust-entombed corpse until its face splits open, revealing a horrific visage spewing wriggling worms.

EMPTY TERRARIUMS

The *empty terrariums* have been overtaken by tiny yellow flowers. The flowers' faces have a disquieting way of following the progress of those who enter the chamber. The flowers' roots dissolve both machines and living things; if the PCs dig into the crusts in these chambers, they find nothing of value, only very tough roots from the yellow flowers.

ENCRUSTING CHAMBER

This chamber contains a central crust-covered machine about 5 feet (1.5 m) on a side that hums and mutters. A glass bulb on the top contains slowly swirling red mud. A difficulty 6 understanding numenera task reveals that the installation has the ability to transform a creature by granting them an armor crust for several days. If a PC uses this *encruster*, the process takes about a minute, after which a red crust does indeed grow across their body like a particularly aggressive skin cancer. Within an hour, they are mostly crust covered and gain +1 Armor until the crust is cut away. A crusted character begins to hear strange noises and voices that aren't there, and they become paranoid and angry.

The armor crust has a downside: On a failed Intellect defense task, the character forgets themselves and begins to attack their friends, calling them intruders. Removing the crust ends the effect.



Empty terrariums appear on the map in every cube-like structure along the trunk not otherwise keyed.

GM intrusion: A character risks losing a cypher, artifact, or other device to a questing root unless they can succeed on a difficulty 5 Speed defense task.

Encruster: level 6



Bounding boots,
page 293

Living armor sheath,
page 298

Crust mite swarm:
level 4; successful attack covers target, inflicting 4 points of damage each round until burned or scraped off

Crust mummy: level 5; Armor 1; attacks all creatures within immediate range with worms that inflict 1 point of damage; targets damaged by worm attack must succeed on a second Speed defense roll or take 5 points of Intellect damage



Barkscrapper swarm: level 4; health 30; automatically inflicts 6 points of damage each round on anything that falls into its many-bodied embrace until the victim can escape

Crust wing: level 4; flies a long distance each round; attack engulfs target, inflicting 4 points of damage each round until the target escapes

ROOST

This chamber is open to the sky, and a flock of crust wings roosts inside. Unless the characters are taking pains to be stealthy, the flock of five emerges and begins to harry the PCs.

Crust Wing: The crescent-shaped wings have a span of about 10 feet (3 m), but the creature otherwise has no discernible body; they're all wing. They attack by dropping on and attempting to smother targets and then absorbing the remains, or by flinging characters out into the void.

A character attacked by a crust wing might not be smothered but instead be flung off the tree. (Treat this occurrence as a GM intrusion.) With the low gravity, they take up a long orbit around Medulla, constantly falling around the tree at very long range. Unless they have some means to fly or otherwise direct their path, they'll need rescue.

WEAK CRUST

Here and there, parasitic infestations pock Medulla's flesh. These infestations are

difficult to see until someone walks on the crusted bark, which breaks underfoot and sucks victims under into a region swarming with white insects called **barkscrapers** that are eager for a change in diet. Getting out requires two difficulty 5 Might tasks.

TREETOP CROWN

The branches of the tree spread wide to create a kind of great hall, level along the floor with branches rising up on either side to form high columns. Crusted figures stand like courtiers throughout the hall, unmoving. At the far end, a woman sits on a massive living throne, partly fused with it. Instead of hair, tentacle-like tendrils wrap her skull tightly, each one studded with slowly blinking eyes. This is Coultan, and the figures near her are crust shamblers. Things could go badly for the PCs here, but they have a chance to set things right.

MEETING COULTAN

Coultan doesn't immediately attack the PCs, though she does defend herself swiftly and competently if they attack her first. If the PCs express a desire to talk, she motions

them closer. She asks why they have come. If the PCs explain they're here to stop the extraplanar incursion, Coulтан sniffs and explains, *"I didn't mean for it to happen, but now that it has, well . . . Conphas deserves nothing less!"*

But the PCs have a chance to change her mind.

Coulтан's Reasons Not to End the Threat: If the PCs engage in debate, Coulтан explains her feelings, adding more reasons each time as the PCs try to convince her to change her mind.

"They hated me in Conphas. Snubbed me. They were scared of me. When I tried to engage, they told me to leave. So I stuck to myself. I did as they asked, even though I was lonely."

"When a child ran away from home and ended up dead, a mob showed up at my house, saying that I was to blame. That I was a summoner of witches." (If Marraxi is with the PCs, Coulтан points to her and says, "And she was the one leading the mob!" Marraxi bows her head and mutters that she still thinks Coulтан is a witch, which probably isn't helpful.)

"Someone from Conphas broke into my home, poisoned several of my pets, and trashed my lab. Fearing for my life, I retreated to my otherspace garden. Someone threw a detonation in after me, and I nearly died. When I woke, Medulla had responded to the threat, growing from a biological about as tall as I am to this majestic creature that surrounds us! Medulla saved me. It loves me! And it's all I need. Conphas and the world can rot."

PC Counter-Arguments: The PCs may end up more sympathetic to Coulтан after hearing her side of things. But they would probably still rather that she use whatever influence she has to stem Medulla's growth into the outside world, given that the influence threatens things beyond Conphas, including possibly Amber Keep. Successfully convincing Coulтан to stop Medulla's unrestrained growth requires that they succeed on three difficulty 5 Intellect tasks (difficulty 6 if Marraxi is present, as she continues to antagonize Coulтан).

REPERCUSSIONS

If the PCs succeed in convincing Coulтан to close the breach, she uses her link to Medulla (mediated by the weird living crown she wears) to end the continuing growth spurt and pull its roots back into the artificial dimension. Once Coulтан is convinced, her mood changes from anger and paranoia to sorrow and regret at what she's allowed to happen, and Medulla's emanations and crust creatures change to match. Coulтан offers the PCs three artifacts (choose randomly from *Numenera Discovery* or *Numenera Destiny*) for them to give to the survivors to make up in a small way for what she allowed to happen, even accidentally.

If the PCs fail to convince her, she asks them to leave. If they refuse, she attacks, as do the five **crust shamblers** in the throne room. If the PCs can defeat her or at least distract her long enough, a character can try to snatch Coulтан's crown, put it on, and use it (a difficulty 4 Intellect task), asking Medulla to retract its extradimensional influence.

Once Medulla retracts into its own dimension, it can't resurge again because the retraction allows the weak dimensional walls to heal.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each for exploring Medulla, 1 XP each if they end the extradimensional threat, and an additional 1 XP each if they do so by convincing Coulтан to change her course and forgive Conphas for its crimes.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine," it's time to pick up the other narrative again, beginning with **Chapter 6: Expedition to Weal**, where many questions about Radius, its automaton siblings, and its true origin and purpose begin to find answers.

Coulтан: level 6; Armor 4 from esotery; flies a long distance each round from esotery; long-range attack that inflicts 6 points of damage from esotery on up to three targets within short range each turn; heals all health (once) from cypher

Crust shambler: level 5; health 25; Armor 3; two fist attacks each inflict 9 points of damage

Marraxi, page 129

Chapter 6: Expedition to Weal, page 61

ACT 8

CLOUD OF ALL ENDINGS

SYNOPSIS

The PCs have a chance to allow Amber Keep to grow further as about half a year passes. They can engage in long-term tasks, possibly strengthening their own relationships in the community. Nothing particularly serious happens during this time, allowing the PCs to concentrate on their tasks—until the Cloud of All Endings finally forms. The seeds for its formation were planted all the way back in *Act 4: The Weeping Tower* when they activated the silver ioquid. In this act, the event that the suppressors were meant to prevent finally occurs, and the PCs are called upon to stop it.

ENGAGE IN LONG-TERM PLAY

As play begins, tell the PCs that they can take on about six months' worth of long-term tasks.

CHOOSING A LONG-TERM TASK

Give the PCs the maps and notes generated in *Act 2: Building Amber Keep* that detail the community. With those in hand, players can choose to take up a long-term task.

If a task takes only one or two months, a PC can take on sequential tasks. Some of the tasks might grant upgrades to the community's damage inflicted, health, or infrastructure, so note that when those tasks are successfully completed. The PCs can choose to take on up to two long-term tasks at a time, but only if it's physically (or conceptually) possible for them to do so. The GM has the final say on such tasks.

Refer to the descriptions of each task in *Numenera Destiny* for additional guidance on how to describe each long-term activity to the PCs.

Relationship Tasks: If PCs are interested in the tasks *Raise a Child* (by choosing to foster one of the refugees that came to Amber Keep in *Act 6: The Kindness of Strangers*), *Pursue a Relationship*, *Recruit a Follower*, or another long-term task that includes NPC interactions, you are encouraged to roleplay the first interaction that occurs or an important development in an already-established relationship (rather than just indicating what's happened). For instance, if a PC wants to foster a child, describe where the child is currently staying, what the child looks like, their name, and their initial reaction to the PC (which is improved if the PC succeeds on a difficulty 5 Intellect task for positive interaction).

Exploration Tasks: If a PC chooses *Discover New Area of Interest*, the last area they might find is the entrance to the Aquifer Complex (see the associated map) via a crevice a few miles away from Amber Keep. Hold off on exploration of this complex until normal play resumes.

FINAL RAIN

Normal play resumes when long-term play is interrupted by a community-wide event.

The day begins with a mist that grows into a rainstorm, reminiscent of those that afflicted the community during *Act 5: Bring the Rain*. And indeed, a ranked disaster occurs, touching off a series of events that includes a living cloud that seems intent on destroying absolutely everything. The PCs have a few options for dealing with the threat, but ultimately, they'll have to head down into the Aquifer Complex to sever a

Act 6: The Kindness of Strangers, page 128

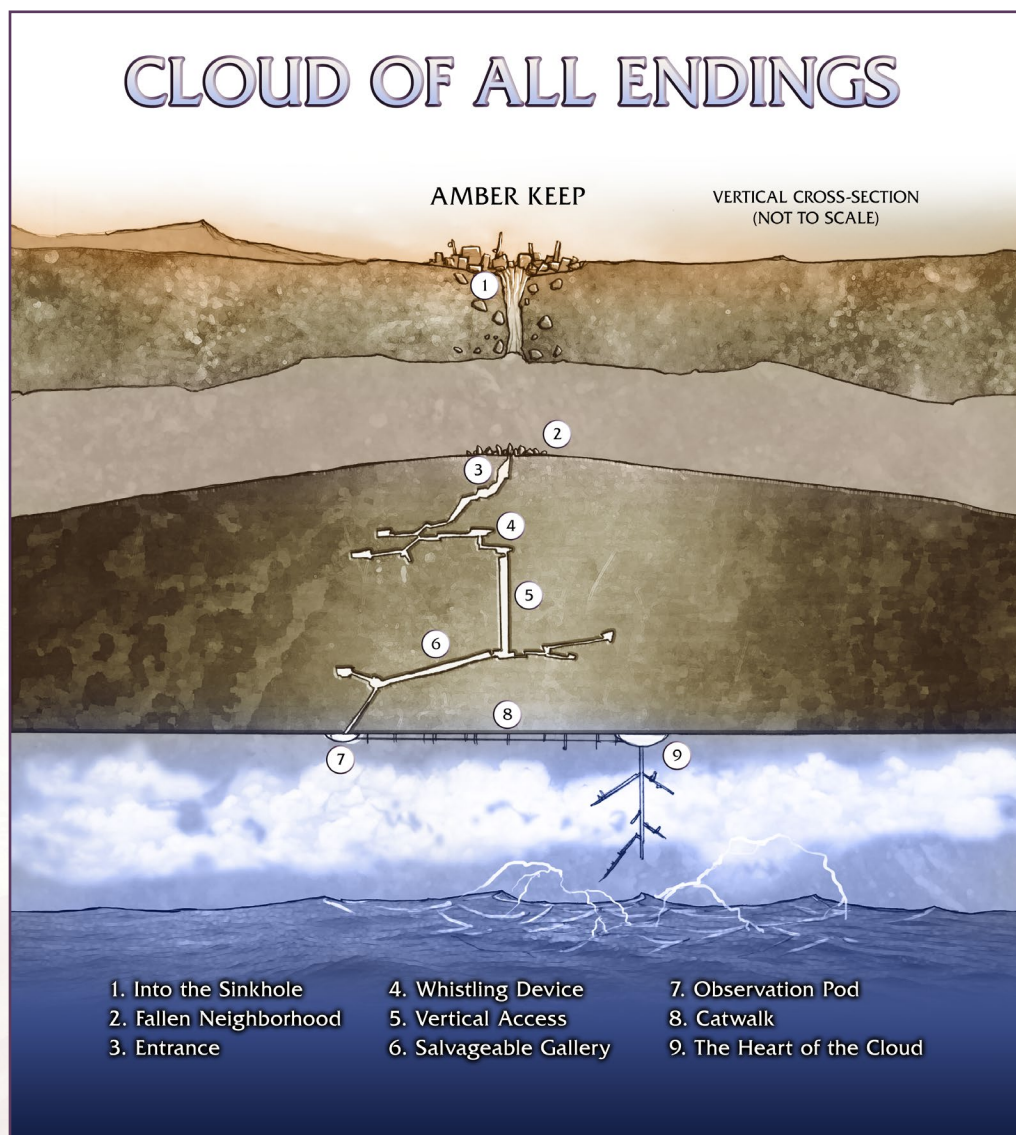
Act 4: The Weeping Tower, page 120

Silver ioquid, page 127



Long-term tasks,
page 324

Act 2: Building Amber Keep, page 109



power source that the Cloud of All Endings relies on to keep its shape. See the next section for how events play out.

THE CLOUD OF ALL ENDINGS

Part of the keep begins to sink over the course of an hour, after which the entire neighborhood section falls into darkness, crashing like a landslide. A vast cavity a long distance in diameter is revealed, striated with veins of glowing blue light reminiscent of the rain sylphs. All is quiet for minutes. Then, with an unearthly groan, a many-armed creature of vapor and lightning pulls itself up and out of the cavity. It's at least 100 feet (30 m) tall, has dozens of arms each twice that long, and is haloed by a flight of hundreds of rain sylphs. Clouds boil out of the clear sky overhead, and as the thunderstorm starts, the creature begins

to tear apart Amber Keep. The PCs have their hands full if they want to save the community.

Sinkhole (Rank 6 Disaster): Part of the keep falls into the earth, inflicting 6 points of damage to the community, but only once. Mark an area a long distance in diameter on the community map, picking a location that includes residential areas and perhaps an installation or two that provides Armor or other protection. This ranked disaster takes one hour before the slumping area falls and the damage is inflicted, so the PCs could attempt the Rescue and Evacuate tactic noted in the next section to protect Amber Keep's health. Nothing they do to bolster infrastructure or provide Armor will ameliorate this one-time sinkhole disaster.



Ranked disasters,
page 309



Rampaging beast,
page 315

Community actions,
page 305

Community tasks,
page 310

As revealed in Act
4 and 5, dusk fruit
contains nanites that
suppress instances of the
Cloud of All Endings.

Cloud Creature (Rank 4 Rampaging Beast):

The cloud creature, which includes the hundreds of rain sylphs flying around it like a halo, is a rampaging beast that inflicts its damage once per hour. Unfortunately, any damage dealt to it or its halo is healed at the beginning of each new community action. Observers note that a pulse of electrical energy travels up out of the sinkhole each time this happens. It soon becomes clear that something down there will have to be disabled to destroy the thing.

MODERATING TACTICS

In addition to standard community tasks PCs can attempt to bolster health, infrastructure, Armor, and damage inflicted, the PCs can also attempt the following tasks. The final option—Head Into the Aquifer Complex—is probably the only way to end the threat of the Cloud of All Endings for good.

Rescue and Evacuate: If at least three PCs work together, they can evacuate vulnerable citizens before the sinkhole swallows the indicated portion of the keep. Doing

so prevents all the damage dealt to the community's health when the section falls in on itself, without spending any Effort.

Gather Duskfruit: Though less likely, it's possible the PCs have kept a large store of duskfruit or can gather it quickly. If they gain a large quantity (say, a wagonload), 1 point of Armor is granted to Amber Keep by arranging the fruit around the cavity. (This won't cause dusky pox issues as long as no one eats the fruit and starts the cycle of infection all over.)

Head Into the Aquifer Complex: Anyone observing the fight can tell that the living storm is being continually energized by some influence down in the sinkhole. Explorers who head into the area discover an ancient ruin and a way to terminate the Cloud of All Endings.

INTO THE SINKHOLE

The sinkhole descends about 100 feet (30 m) before opening into a gargantuan cavity that is another 100 feet (30 m) tall. PCs must

descend a total of 200 feet (60 m). If the PCs climb to get down, the task requires rope or a couple of difficulty 4 Might tasks.

Striated Sediments: The edges of the sinkhole are striated with veins of glowing bluish material that inflicts 4 points of electrical damage when touched. If a rope touches or snags on one of these sections, it might burn through (as a GM intrusion) or a PC might take the damage and fall unless they can catch themselves (as a GM intrusion). About every hour, the glowing webwork of sediment pulses with extra energy. These lines of energy are what rejuvenate the Cloud of All Endings attacking Amber Keep.

Individual Rain Sylphs: Though they act as part of the rampaging beast's ranked attack against the community, a few rain sylphs might decide to pester climbers, dropping them to their doom if they can successfully pry a PC from a rope or the wall. An attack should be introduced as a GM intrusion.

FALLEN NEIGHBORHOOD

The section of Amber Keep that slumped and fell lies here in rubble. The shattered ground, structures, and possibly even a few smashed installations cover the surface in an area about a long distance across. It's dark in the larger cavity except for the light shining down from the shaft overhead, and the space is too wide to see the cavity's side walls.

The fallen neighborhood landed on a gold-hued metallic structure—the Aquifer Complex. In the immediate vicinity, the structure is partly buried except for a few metallic masts that rise up out of the rubble. These masts send forth an hourly electric pulse that leaps into the air and is then channeled farther upward by the wall striations that line the sinkhole. Each pulse revitalizes the Cloud of All Endings. A difficulty 5 understanding numenera task suggests that the masts merely channel the energy; something located within the complex itself controls that energy's release.

Destroying the Masts: There are five masts, each vulnerable to a level 6 Might task to break them. Doing so doesn't end the threat, because electricity is still released and channeled up the sinkhole. However, without the masts to direct the energy, the entire surface of the complex becomes electrified once per hour, dropping everyone standing on the Aquifer Complex's surface one step on the damage track on a failed difficulty 6 Might task.

ENTRANCE

Searching the rubble scattered across the golden surface reveals an entrance to the complex; an installation from the surface fell and detonated upon impact, creating an opening—one that glows with greenish energy from some weird interaction of numenera. (If no installations fell, the tear was created by a particularly large, hard, solid piece of inert metal in the falling sediment.)

Conditions in the Complex: Humidity within the complex approaches 100 percent, which means characters heat up quickly when exerting themselves. Sweating doesn't seem to cool them off.

Corridors and Rooms: The golden-hued metallic corridors seem as though they were made for creatures taller than humans. The ceilings are uniformly 20 feet (6 m) high but at the same time, the passages are a little too narrow for comfort—about 4 feet (1 m) in width—though some areas are at least 20 feet (6 m) on a side. When electrical pulses shoot through the complex each hour, lines of white metal in the ceiling buzz with current, but they aren't dangerous by themselves (though a GM intrusion might have an arcing bolt threaten explorers).

WHISTLING DEVICE

This chamber is empty except for a floating piece of metal about 3 feet (1 m) square emitting a high-pitched whistling sound. A difficulty 7 understanding numenera task can activate it, causing the square to stop whistling, settle to the ground, and extrude metallic legs. The automaton then begins to follow whichever PC activated it. Other

PCs who fall down the sinkhole take 1 point of damage for every 10 feet (3 m) fallen.

Rain sylph: level 3; flies a short distance each round; lightning touch attack inflicts 5 points of damage and causes victim who fails a Might defense task to lose their next turn; regains 3 health per round in thunderstorms

Whistling automaton: level 5; moves up to a long distance each round

GM intrusion: *The character traveling in the shaft must succeed on a difficulty 3 Might defense task or get motion sickness for about thirty minutes. All tasks for an affected PC are hindered.*



Random Salvage Result, page 109

Large golden machine: *level 7*

than that, it doesn't take any actions, though it may retract its legs and begin to whistle again at inopportune times.

VERTICAL ACCESS

A shaft about 20 feet (6 m) in diameter descends directly downward for over 100 feet (30 m). The metallic walls of the shaft are sheer, without obvious hand- or footholds. The same lines of white metal as seen in most of the corridors light up and buzz, illuminating the shaft from bottom to top every hour. Being in the shaft during a pulse inflicts 7 points of damage on a failed Might defense roll (and 1 point even on a successful roll).

A difficulty 6 Intellect task uncovers a control surface at each access point, which suspends travelers in the shaft and speeds them to another level at a short distance each round.

SALVAGEABLE GALLERY

This long gallery, about 30 feet (9 m) wide, is replete with devices embedded in both walls. If time wasn't of the essence, the gallery would offer a bonanza of salvage opportunity. At various places along the corridor, control surfaces flicker, show static, or sometimes show strange images. Fifteen minutes and a successful difficulty 6 salvage task in any given area grants a roll on the **Random Salvage Result** table. Characters may also attempt to understand the equipment with a difficulty 7 understanding numenera task. Successful characters think that the equipment is involved in monitoring, conditioning, filtering, and otherwise treating a vast quantity of water in a thousand different ways. If characters succeed on another task, they can pull up a view from what they'll soon see in the Observation Pod.

On a failure in either case, defensive measures cause the entire area to spark, inflicting 7 points of damage on a failed Might defense task (and 1 point even if successful), and 1d6 inimical rain sylphs condense out of the humid air, their skin forming from energy and water tension over the course of one round.

OBSERVATION POD

This chamber is a strongglass blister about 10 feet (3 m) in diameter. Looking out through transparent sides, viewers see that the blister hangs on the underside of a vast, metallic complex which itself is suspended over a gulf of empty space. Periodic crackling lightning beneath the complex reveals that only about 100 feet (30 m) below the blister is a prodigious quantity of water like a sunless sea. One exit from the blister opens onto a slender catwalk running beneath the oppressive bulk of the complex toward another, much larger blister a few hundred feet away. That blister (the Heart of the Cloud) bears an inverted mast that extends all the way down to the water's surface and is the source of the periodic discharges of electricity. (The electrical discharges provide enough light to reveal several additional catwalks hanging just beneath the underside of the complex, converging on the Heart of the Cloud.)

CATWALK

The catwalk is composed of strongglass and suspended 10 feet (3 m) below the complex. Although the complex is warm and humid, beneath it, hanging over the dark sea below, the humidity becomes chill. When the periodic lightning pulses and plays here, the sound is thunderous, and the vibrations shake the catwalk. Lightning is always snapping and discharging in the empty space, but the largest blasts occur about once per hour. If anyone is on this catwalk during one of these blasts, they must succeed on a difficulty 6 Might task or drop two steps on the damage track. Even a successful save will drop a character one step.

THE HEART OF THE CLOUD

This blister is 100 feet (30 m) in diameter and the nexus of twelve different catwalks. A **large golden machine** spins and whirs inside. The machine is connected to the mast. Destroying this machine is difficult because it's so large. PCs can more quickly deactivate it by first succeeding on a difficulty 7 understanding numenera task, then accessing a control surface to put it to sleep. Once deactivated, the entire complex jolts and begins to slowly descend toward

the sea. PCs have about one minute to race back across the swaying catwalk before it is submerged. Within about an hour, the entire complex sinks beneath the water.

Electrical Nodule: The character deactivating the device is absorbed into it (treat as a GM intrusion) and then ejected a couple of rounds later. The character is moved one step down the damage track and now has a module on their forehead. It gives them the ability to make a short-range attack inflicting 6 points of electrical damage but stuns the character after each use so that they lose their next turn.

REPERCUSSIONS

If the PCs don't make it down into the Heart of the Cloud chamber and disable the mechanism they find there, they may fail to save their community. However, it's possible they can still stop the Cloud of All Endings in some other fashion. But even so, the loosed Cloud of All Endings becomes another scourge in the Ninth World, feared

in the same way as the iron wind.

Hopefully, however, the PCs save Amber Keep and stop the Cloud of All Endings before it reaches maturity. If so, a grand celebration is held in the PCs' honor, during which Ganilon Brig speaks for the community in actual heartfelt thanks.

XP AWARDS

The PCs earn 1 experience point (XP) each if they save all the residents from the ranked sinkhole disaster, 1 XP each if they destroy the device keeping the Cloud of All Endings active, and 1 XP each if the community of Amber Keep is saved.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Whether you're combining "Amber Keep" with "Relics of the Machine" or not, please refer to [Chapter 9: Ninth World Repercussions](#), which provides wrap-up material suitable for either adventure alone or both adventures combined.

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THE KALPIS

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2. Pool of Mimicry
3. Implantation Spirits
4. Brilliant Nodule
5. Crushed Nodule
6. Prison Nodule
7. Kalpis Recursion Nodule
8. Explosive Nodule
9. Alien Presence
10. Treasure Vault
11. Usually Empty
12. Radius's Nodule



THE HOWLING PYRAMID

Scale: 2 miles

3.2 km

