HYPERLANES

The Celadon Caravan

HYPERLANES

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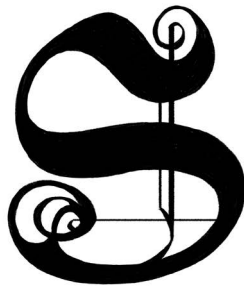
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Introduction & Overview

The Celadon Caravan is a three-part extended adventure for **HYPERLANES**. It's intended for characters of 1st through 5th level, serving as an introduction to several kinds of adventures you can run with **HYPERLANES**.

Our extended adventures are divided into 3 acts, like a standard play or movie script. Each act increasingly ratchets up the stakes and features a different style of play. They are:

Act 1: The Coils. The PCs gets caught up in a disaster threatening the Caravan. Clues indicate a terrorist threat and ancient alien technology somehow related to the Caravan's past. The tail ship must be rescued from an enslaved alien entity.

Act 2: The Past. The success on the tail ship leads the crew on a chase to find a set of temporal anomalies scattered throughout the ships, threatening the future and past of the Caravan. At each location, clues hint that the terrorists are recovering technological artifacts from the innards of the Caravan itself.

Act 3: The Confrontation. The distraction of the probability bombs may have given the terrorists the time they need to make their escape. Only the crew of PCs can stop them and recover the technologies they have pilfered.
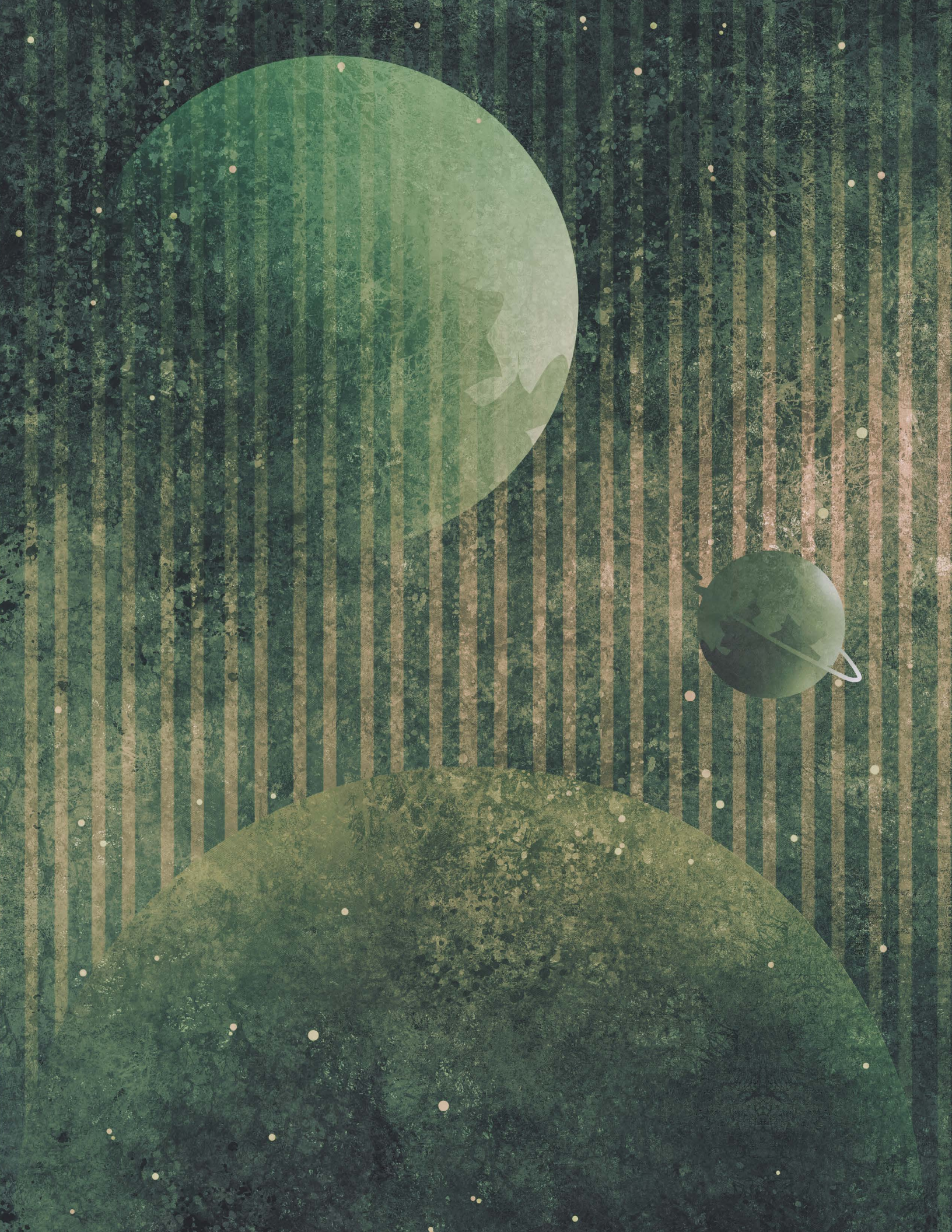
Act One: The Coils

Our adventure begins with the PCs aboard the tail ship – the *Garsedo* – of an interstellar Caravan, already dealing with many crises. The group most likely boarded the Caravan at their last port, a rowdy starbase called *Vilece-1*.

Little do they know, a cult of religious terrorists has infiltrated the Caravan and placed an ancient alien creature on their ship. The creature, a **Sundrath Serpent**, is syphoning off energy for the terrorists' nefarious purposes. This will be revealed when the PCs quickly run into related trouble.

The Caravan

The Caravan is a group of seven ancient cities, each capable of interstellar hyperspace travel. Sleek and pale green, they are said to be older than any of the dominant governments in the galaxy. The ships of the Caravan are slow and lumbering, but solidly built. The Caravan has a single hierarchical leadership structure, headed by the **Primelder**: a person elected from among the eldest members of the various species that call it home.

The largest of the seven city ships is *Astimos*, and it is where most of the leadership make their home. Most executive functions of Astimos are controlled from the Narthex, a control room adjacent to the ship's computer cores. The smallest ship, where our story begins, is the *Garsedo*. It is a vessel used primarily as a power backup for the Caravan.

The Caravan serves an important role in this section of the galaxy. It serves as a home for refugees, a means of trading goods between planets, and a hub to bridge between many disparate cultures. Criminals and their like also find the Caravan to be of great use. It is among the best places to find underworld contacts, smuggle goods, and connect with members of political resistance networks.

You are encouraged to begin the game with a side story involving one PC's Background. They may have an old friend or contact interested in having a drink at the cantina, or a clandestine meeting in the lower holds just before the chaos begins. The contact may serve as a useful source of information in the latter Acts of this adventure or might tie in with your larger campaign.

It can be useful to give clues as to the age of the Caravan. The technology is foreign even to trained engineers. The resident maintenance personnel only know how to keep it functioning. They do get the sense that the Caravan was once used for military operations, probably thousands of years ago.

The Crises

As the story begins, the PCs become aware of several problems – some bordering on emergencies – occurring on the ship. Ideally, these will make the group curious and cause them to investigate or lend a hand. Feel free to introduce problems one through five in any order, but six should be the last.

First: The ship's lights begin to flicker and pulse. This will continue in rolling blackouts for seconds at a time for the rest of the Act. Feel free to impose disadvantage on some sight based checks at random intervals (perhaps roll a d4 before those rolls and give disadvantage when you roll a '1').

Second: A high alert alarm goes off, with claxons and a voiced emergency message telling everyone to strap themselves down in case of gravity loss. The recording is in the soothing voice of the Caravan's leader, **Primelder Avarada**. Characters will have heard of her, so this is a good time to foreshadow her importance for later by having one or more PC recognize her voice from the various media terminals around the Caravan.

Third: After a few moments, the Caravan pulls out of hyperspace (or whatever faster-than-light mechanism is used in your game). The entire Caravan begins to drift in the darkness of space with no nearby sun. A DC 10 Science skill roll indicates that the problem seems to be caused by the power fluctuations. A DC 15 Perception check tells them that the sound of the engines has greatly reduced and that there's a new rumble coming from the bowels of the ship.

Fourth: The PC with the highest Wisdom score (roll off in the case of a tie) experiences intense déjà vu for several seconds before the feeling passes. For the rest of the adventure, this character has advantage on rolls related to interaction with temporal anomalies. Their brain has somehow attuned itself to the time altering devices placed throughout the Caravan (which will mostly become relevant in Act 2).

Fifth: Though the PCs may not immediately notice, communications go down on the ship. This is true of both internal comms and handheld radios. The jamming appears to be raw data pumped out of the ship on all frequencies and channels. A DC 15 Investigation roll reveals the data is old communications and stored files from the residents of the *Garsedo*.

Sixth: A viscous stream of yellowish gunk is spewing out of the cracks in an elevator door. Upon opening the door, they find the remains of a ship engineer. Their body has seemingly been eaten away by the toxic gunk. See the Informational Residue sidebar for details.

At this point, the PCs may wish to contact members of the ship or Caravan's leadership. Unfortunately, the leadership is not easily found and communications remain nonfunctional throughout the ship. This is exacerbated by the many ongoing crises, and so the leaders are spread all over. The PCs are encouraged by guards and other ship crew to do what they can to investigate strange things themselves, with the suggestion that those who assist the wellbeing of the Caravan are often greatly rewarded by the wise Primelder of the fleet. If the PCs are of a more criminal bent, it can be insinuated that other, more nefarious leadership figures would also smile upon the aid.

If the PCs follow the elevator down, they find that much of the underbelly of the ship has this strange gunk spread across it. The trail can be followed easily enough to a disused area of the engineering section of the *Garsedo*, and to an electronics room there. Beyond the door can be heard a noise between a crunching and a crackling, coupled with the sound of large machines powering down.

The Switchboard

A malfunctioning sliding double door is the only entryway, which must be pried opened with a DC 20 Athletics roll or somehow destroyed (it has 50 HP). Upon entering this two-story room, the PCs have the distinct feeling that they have gone back in time. They haven't, but the technologies within have a rustic quality which, while coherent with the style of the ship and the rest of the Caravan, seems a bit broken down in these conditions.

The center of the room is dominated by a short circular dais with a central column of electronics at its center. Wound around the column is a dark, sleek, snake-like creature with eyes that crackle with electricity. This is the **Sundrathi Serpent**.

The rest of the room is filled with old information technologies, mostly racks of crackling electricity moving high volumes of data around. The electronics room is tied in with the nearby power cores for the ship, and a DC 15 Repair Tools roll indicates that this is the likely source of the ship's power problems.
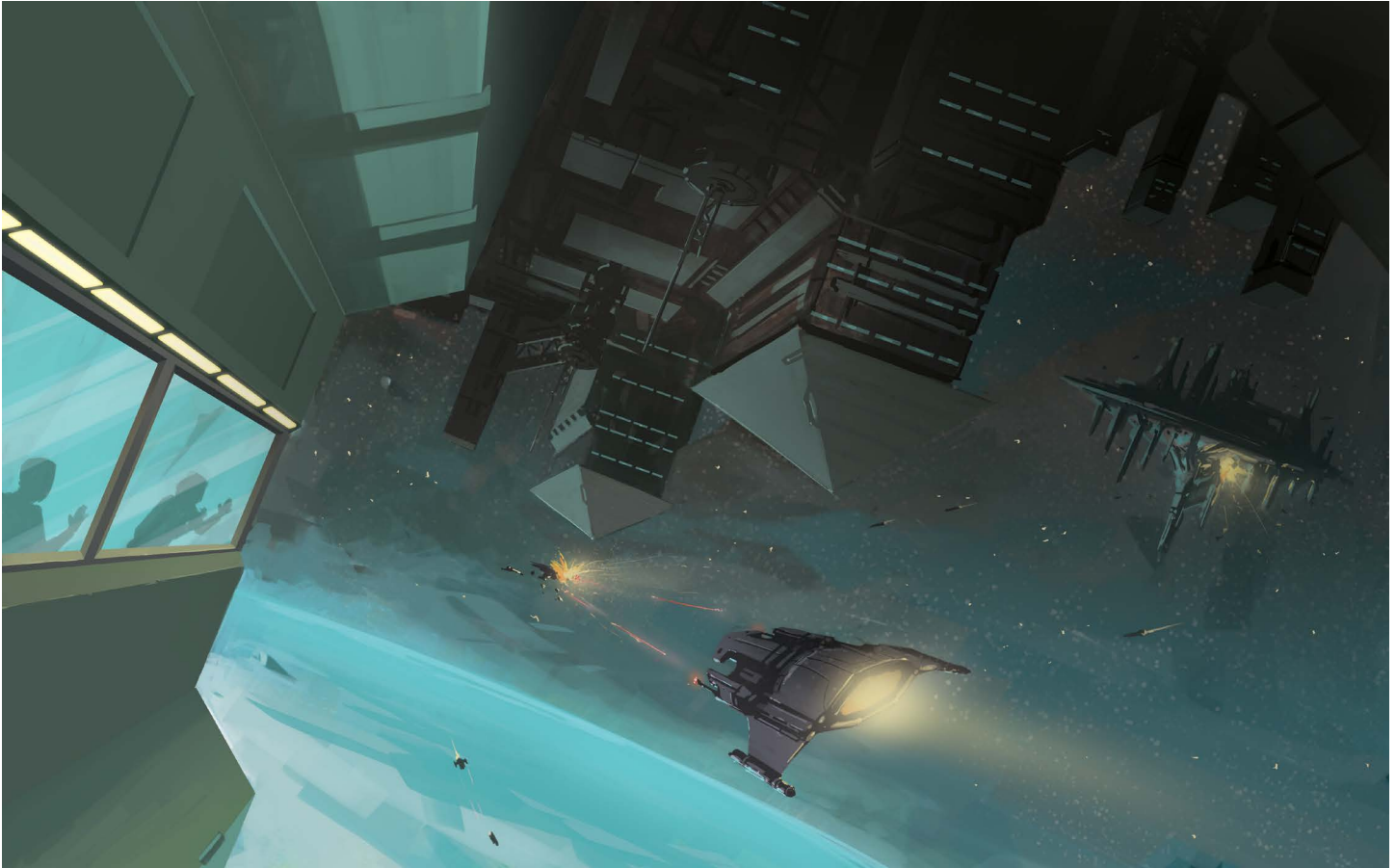
Informational Residue

The yellow gunk found by the players is the result of energy and information harvesting that the Sundrath Serpent is conducting in the bowels of the ship. As it leeches power and data from the communications nodes, the residue is deposited on flat surfaces and pools on the floors. This has been going on for nearly a day, so there's gunk all over the ship at this point. It is most concentrated near access ways to the lower decks.

Squares containing large quantities of the gunk count as difficult terrain. A character ending the round prone in one of these squares takes 1d6 points of acid damage and feels as though an important memory has been forgotten.

A DC 15 Investigation or Science check reveals the nature of the gunk: a chemical residue that once stored information on a quantum level; a byproduct of high tech data equipment being disrupted by something biological.

Battle with the Serpent: A 700 XP Encounter

The Sundrath Serpent begins to uncoil from around the central column as soon as it sees the PCs enter the room, taking a space on the dais. It tends to stay on the dais during the battle, if possible, lashing out with its Data Strike attacks when the intruders come near. The serpent is in a sort of conditioned trance and is unwilling to negotiate in any way.

Should the PCs stay to the safety of the edges of the room, the serpent will speed out after them and attempt to coil around (grapple) whichever PC has the most visible information technology on them (computers, security tools, etc.). It then hits with its Information Overload attack.

Characters may predict the serpent's vulnerability (Hypnotized) if they watch for psychological conditioning or other mental controls. The serpent is under the control of the terrorists, but will ultimately succumb to the will of nearly anyone it sees as a potential master. This could also grant PCs advantage on some Charisma skill rolls, such as Intimidation.
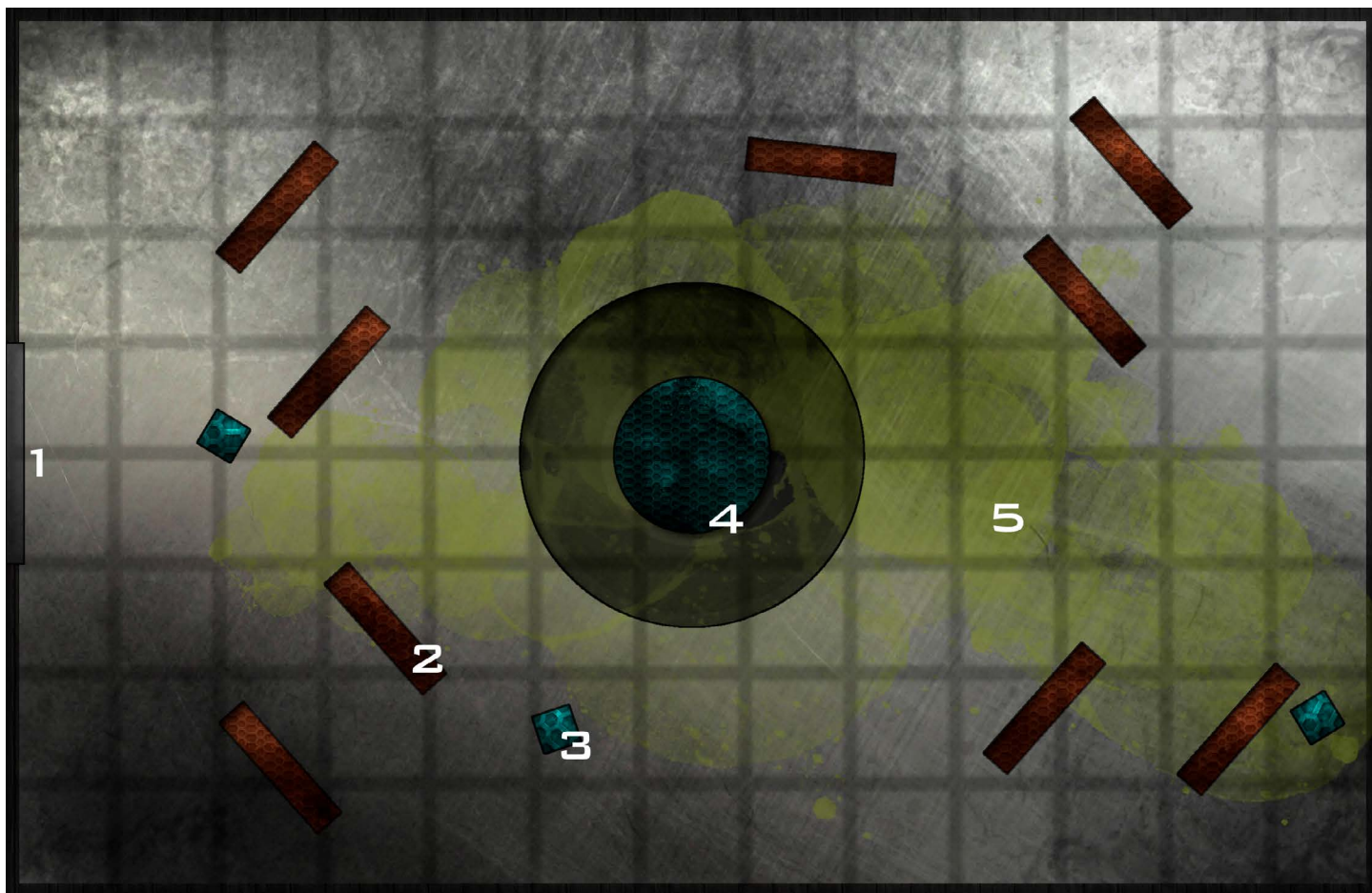
Sundrath Serpent

Brainwashed serpent from another time. Quite possibly the last of her species.

Big 1/2, Dark Dwelling 1/2, Vulnerable 1
   Chaotic Evil   Beast

Size Large   **Speed** 30ft

CR 3   **XP** 700   **AC** 15   **HP** 120

Proficient Roll +5   **Unskilled Roll / Initiative** +3

Attacks 2

Skills   Athletics   **Passive** 13

Saves   Dexterity

Attacks

Information Overload. Melee attack, +5 to hit, dealing 1d8+3 psychic damage on hit as the target absorbs too much data from the nearby communications arrays.

Data Strike. Ranged attack against a target within 5 feet of a data rack, +5 to hit, dealing 1d10 electricity damage on hit as a bolt of electricity arcs from the machine.

Vulnerability   Vulnerable to electricity damage.

Hypnotized. Vulnerable to all damage dealt by PCs with a Charisma score of 12 or higher.

Map Key

1   **Malfunctioning Double Door.** HP 50. DC 20 Athletics roll to dislodge.

2   **Data Racks.** The Sundrath Serpent makes its Data Strike attacks against characters within 5 feet of these. Can provide half cover.

3   **Maintenance Terminals.** At one of these terminals a PC may attempt a DC 15 Security Tools or Repair Tools roll to shut down the Data Racks so that the serpent may no longer make its Data Strike attacks.

4   **The Data Column.** A column of information tech from floor to ceiling. The serpent begins coiled around this column but quickly moves to one of the squares on the low dais that surrounds it. Provides up to full cover.

5   **Yellow Data Gunk.** Squares that are more than half covered in this residue (on the map) count as difficult terrain and at the end of the round all prone characters in these squares besides the Sundrath Serpent take 1d6 acid damage and lose an important memory.

The Sundrathi

The creature coiled around the central data column is a member of a species that is thought extinct by those few scholars even aware of their history. The Sundrathi once had an empire spanning many star systems, but they died out long ago in a nameless war. A DC 20 Science roll or a DC 15 History roll will recognize this creature as a Sundrath Serpent.

The serpents are sentient, but their method of communication is so nuanced that few could comprehend their messages. This serpent is capable of angrily projecting thoughts at others telepathically (if that exists in your setting), but a true negotiation is not possible. The serpent has been heavily conditioned by the cult that placed it here to fight and destroy at all cost. It will ultimately fight to the death.

The Sundrathi possessed many unusual technologies. They explored dark and maddening areas of science that led them into time manipulation and the ability to store and absorb information in raw energy. They claimed to have learned a way to listen to the universe itself by making their minds become one with time. Some say they didn't really die out in a war, but that that their religious-scientific practices lead to a literal dead end.

This serpent bears a strange mark: a brand seared deep into its scaly flesh. A History roll against DC 15 will reveal that this is the mark of a cult called the Athmerath, an old word that roughly translates to "Seers of the Dawn." If the History roll scored a 20 or higher, the PC learns that this cult dates to the time of the Sundrathi Empire, when a group of humans were taken as slaves by the serpents. They also learn that Athmerath was a reference to the dawn of time, and that the slaves were said to have seen the moment of the big bang through the Sundrathi experiments.

Aftermath

Once the serpent is defeated, the PCs have a moment to catch their breath. The room can be looted for 200 credits worth of ancient repair parts, which would sell for 500cr if the right collector were found later. If you're feeling generous, this is also a location that might hold a Superscience item or two for the taking, particularly if a DC 20 Investigation roll is passed.

Should the PCs examine the serpent's body, a Medicine skill roll against DC 15 reveals that the serpent had previously been badly branded, beaten, and otherwise tortured. It also reveals that the serpent had some physical connection to the data in the central column when it had been coiled there. If the roll adds up to a 25 or higher, the character also learns that this serpent is literally from the past; that it had travelled forward through time thousands of years.

With the death of the serpent, the communications on the ship are no longer disrupted. Within a few minutes the group is contacted by **Primelder Tereca,** the leader of the Caravan. She asks that they take a shuttle from a nearby hangar to meet with her on the lead ship, the *Astimos*. She'd like to speak to adventurers with their skills to help solve some of the problems afflicting the Caravan, and she's willing to pay.
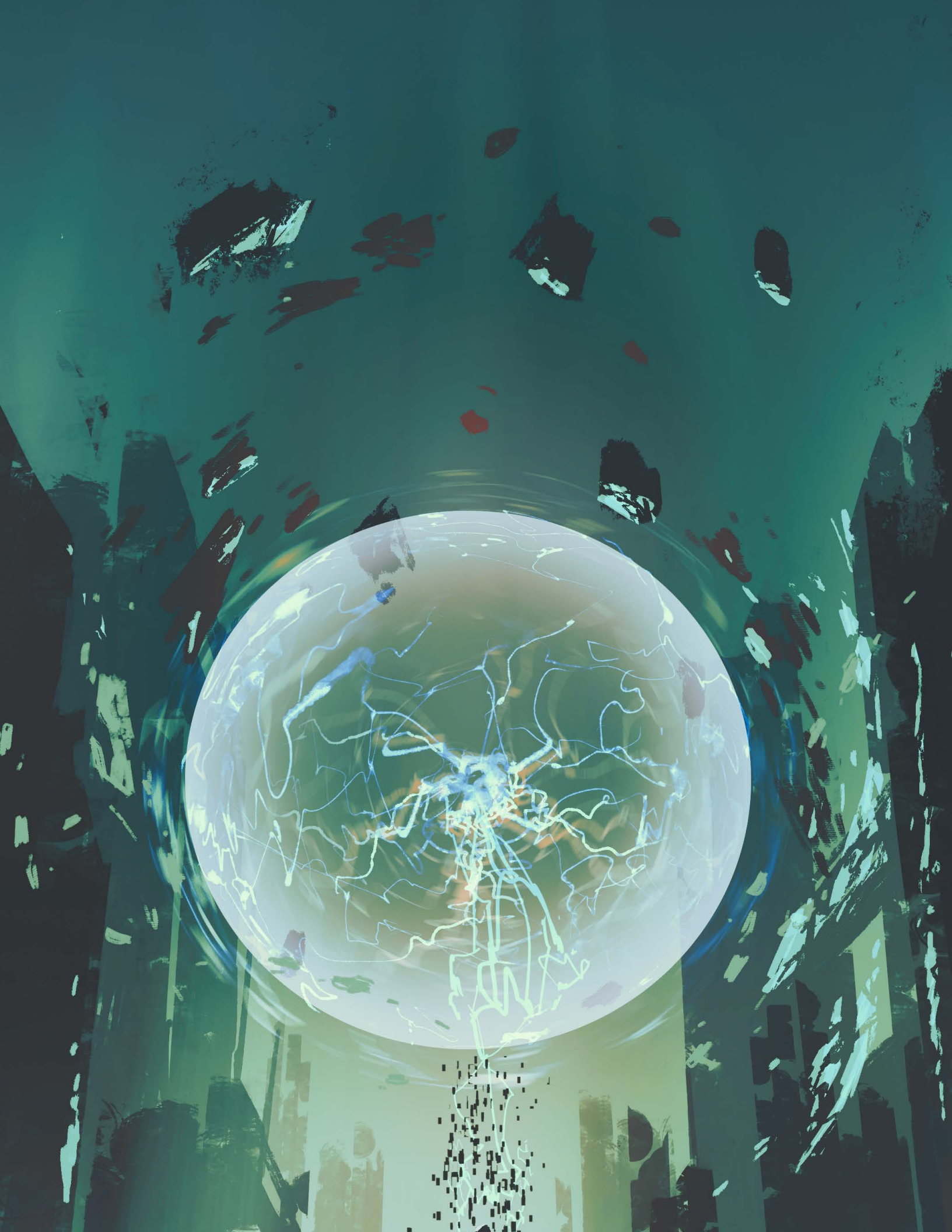
Act Two: The Past

The PCs may take a shuttle or their own ship out to the *Astimos*, the foremost ship of the Caravan. As they approach, they will see that the hulls of the fleet are not as they once looked. Whole sections are seemingly new, as once pale green patches are now gleaming and brassy. This is nowhere more true than the Astimos.

The *Astimos* is both the largest and most important ship of the Caravan, more like a flying arcology than a flagship. The party docks at a central ring of landings nearest to the central control deck, known as the Narthex. As the PCs make their way to the Narthex, they will clearly notice that the chaos of the *Garsedo* was not limited to there. Though communications have been restored by the PCs land, there are momentary lapses in power every few minutes that even occasionally shut down artificial gravity for seconds on end.

The PCs have been specifically called to the Narthex, which overlooks the massive, chilled computer cores that run the ship. The scene is one of pandemonium, as the leadership and technical personnel of the *Astimos* are shouting over one another. Once the PCs are able to either quiet the din or find their way through it, they will be delivered into the presence of the **Primelder**. This individual, the leader of the entire Caravan, is an aging human named Tereca, who is presently dressed in an emerald green jumpsuit.

Tereca explains that while the group did battle with the serpent, the rest of the Caravan was rocked by strange explosions that have reversed time in several dozen areas. Old technologies appear new again and parts of the fleet that were once designed for military purposes seem to have their old weapons installed.

She says that her people are overwhelmed dealing with all the mayhem this has caused, and furthermore are trying to fix the damaged hyperdrive systems. The **Primelder** asks that the PCs seek out the technology reclamation center here on the *Astimos* to find an old science vessel that the Caravan bought for parts a few months ago. It's possible the ship's sensors will be able to better detect the temporal anomalies, which may lead to a solution for the strange changes affecting the ships. She's willing to offer them each 500 credits (or whatever is reasonable in your setting) if they can solve the problem. In addition, they can keep what remains of the ship when the trouble has passed.

Into the Boneyard

Assuming the PCs take the offer, they're directed to a maintenance wing devoid of life. The area is a cluttered mess, and little of it looks useful or even operable. However, after looking around they will find a large ovoid chamber filled with broken down machines and teeming with small robots armed with cutting lasers.

Repair Robot

A tiny, beat up repair drone, lancing out with a welding laser.

Little 2, Robot 1, Vulnerable 3 Lawful Good Robot

Size Tiny **Speed** 30ft

CR 1/2 **XP** 100 **AC** 17 **HP** 20

Proficient Roll +4 **Unskilled / Initiative** +2

Attacks 2

Skills Repair tools **Passive** 12

Languages Galactic Common (understand only), Robotic Binary

Attacks

Cutting Laser. Melee attack, +4 to hit, dealing 1d4+2 heat damage on hit.

Robot. Immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition. Does not eat, drink, or sleep.

Vulnerability Vulnerable to electricity damage.

Isolation. Vulnerable to all damage when more than 30ft from another Repair Robot.

Partnership. Vulnerable to all damage once Scrapper is defeated.

It is quickly apparent that one robot is organizing the others. There stands a robot easily the size of a house, sending repair and recycling droids back and forth, glaring down with three glowing, amber eyes. It rudely introduces itself as "Scrapper," and will frequently interrupt anything the PCs are about to say.

If given the opportunity, Scrapper will pontificate on the weakness of organic life and the many reasons the "meat things" should go back up to the comfortable world of humans. It does not stop its work to speak, continuing to dissect robots and large appliances with its many metal chopping arms.

Though generally offensive and impatient, **Scrapper** does attempt to help the party find the ship they're looking for. However, it does so primarily to get them to leave its space. It conveys that the ship was put somewhere in the starship spare parts pile.

Scrapper

Wide and tall, with three cold glowing eyes.

Big 3, Dark Dwelling 1, Robot 1, Vulnerable 1, Wily 1 Lawful Good Robot

Size Gargantuan **Speed** 30ft

CR 6 **XP** 2,300 **AC** 13 **HP** 120

Proficient Roll +5 **Unskilled / Initiative** +3

Attacks 2

Skills Investigation, Perception, Repair tools **Passive** 13

Languages Galactic Common, Robotic Binary

Attacks

Chopping Arms. Melee attack, +5 to hit, dealing 1d8+3 slicing damage on hit.

Remote Welding Laser. Ranged attack, +5 to hit, dealing 1d10 heat damage on hit.
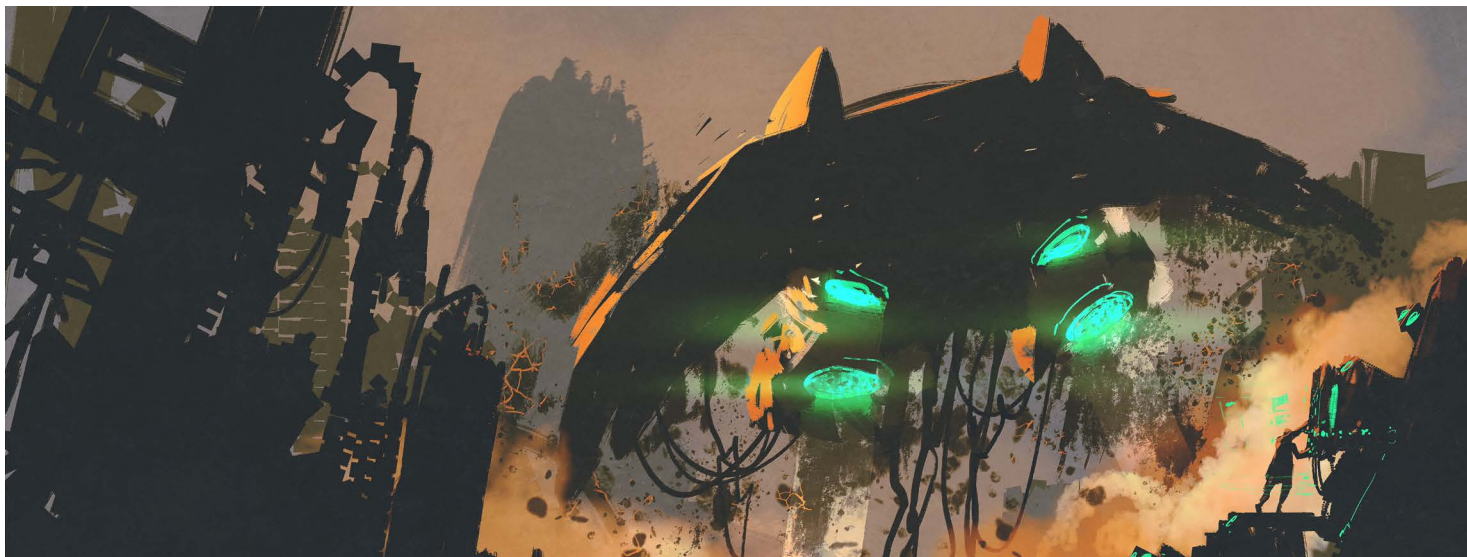
Gambits Tricks: *Breaking, Mending*

1st-3rd level (3 slots/day): *Analysis, Personal Shield, Quick Fix*

Robot. Immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition. Does not eat, drink, or sleep.

Vulnerability Vulnerable to electricity damage.

Territorial. Vulnerable to all damage when outside the Boneyard.

The Coherence

The Coherence is an aging science vessel with a storied history of investigating unusual phenomena. Though it was initially commissioned as a government research vessel, the ship was eventually sold to a private firm seeking exotic mineral sites for exploitation.

The last and longest serving crew were almost exclusively scientists and engineers, documenting much of what they surveyed. The interior of the ship has the feel of a carefully maintained library, with the smell of old plastic and oiled machinery.

Side quests relating to The Coherence could come from exploration of the ship's extensive databanks, which seem to have recorded every detail of every event the vessel was involved in. Though it takes hours to comb through these databases, any curious techie or scientist likely gets the feeling this ship has information on odd locales throughout the sector. Example data include:

• The location of an abandoned space station that is near the end of a decaying orbit around a star.
• The colloquial name (though not the location) of a system containing a violet world supposedly covered in scientifically useful fungi: The Fireflower system.
• The last known coordinates of the pirate treasure ship Lost Love; a vessel that is said to be haunted by the souls of its first crew.
• The location of a black hole which appears to be turning into some other kind of anomaly, and that has somehow given birth to a small moon covered in life.

Rebuilding Coherence

Finding the science vessel will take success in an Investigation skill roll against DC 15. If the PCs fail to find it, **Scrapper** will eventually come over and show them to it. It will, however, lose whatever little respect it had for the team in the process.

The ship is called the "*Coherence.*" It is rounded and coppery in color, with an oily rainbow finish. The sensors can only be used from space, so the ship will need to be moved from the scrap pile and repaired for flight. Doing so will take the following steps:

• **Hauling the ship out of the pile**. This will simply take convincing **Scrapper** to assist (a DC 13 Persuasion roll) or scrounging up some other large piece of machinery to do the job (Investigation DC 15 to do so).

• **Repairing the fuselage.** This part will take longest: roughly 2 hours of welding and testing. It's a DC 20 Repair Tools roll, with each additional roll adding an hour to the work time.

• **Fixing the engines.** The ship's engines are in severe disrepair. Thankfully, there are plenty replacement parts nearby. The job takes about an hour and a DC 15 Repair Tools roll made with advantage due to the surplus parts. Additional rolls add 15 minutes to the job.

• **Calibrating the sensors.** This is a Science skill task that simply takes time (roughly half an hour). Due to power distribution issues, it can only be begun once the engines are up and working. If no one in the party is proficient with Science, **Scrapper** is willing to find an academics robot for the task, but this puts the old machine on edge. Any major disruption to its workflow beyond this and it may become enraged, calling upon 5 of the **Repair**

Robots to assault the party until it feels they are sufficiently punished for their foolishness.

If the PCs have not checked in within 4 hours, the **Primelder**'s assistant **Bren** will contact them on comms and make sure they're getting the job done . More disturbances have been happening and there have been reports of armed men on the *Astimos*.

Once the ship is ready, it can be guided to the nearest hangar and launched into space. The *Coherence* is an agile ship that responds readily to the touch of its crew. The computers on the ship appear a bit outdated, but they were once the top of the line. Everything that the ship does is logged in excruciating detail, as was once the fashion where it was made.

The Coherence

Aging science vessel, bristling with added guns.

Hyper 1, Nimble 1, Resistant 1, Vulnerable 1

Size Medium   **Speed** 6 squares (FTL, space)

CR 13   **XP** 10,000   **AC** 17   **HP** 250

Proficient Roll +10   **Unskilled Roll / Initiative** +5

Gunnery Stations 4

Skills (typical NPC crew)   Investigation, Perception, Science, Stealth   **Passive** 18

Saves   Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence

Cost   175,000 Credits

Battle Stations

A. Gunnery, Piloting, Sensors

Fore Laser Cannon, 4/8 square range, +7 to hit (+2 bonus for PCs), dealing 2d10 heat damage on hit.

Provided Gambit: *Lose the Tail*

B. Engineering, Sensors

Provided Gambit: *Observation*

C. Gunnery

Aft Laser Cannon, 4/8 square range, +7 to hit (+2 bonus for PCs), dealing 2d10 heat damage on hit.

Provided Gambit: *Spray Fire*

D. Gunnery

Starboard Laser Cannon, 5/10 square range, +7 to hit (+2 bonus for PCs), dealing 2d10 heat damage on hit.

Provided Gambit: *Dead Aim*

E. Gunnery

Port Laser Cannon, 5/10 square range, +7 to hit (+2 bonus for PCs), dealing 2d10 heat damage on hit.

Provided Gambit: *Dead Aim*

Resistant   Resistance to radiation damage.

Vulnerability

Sensor Dish. Vulnerable to attacks on my sensor dish (attacks are at a disadvantage to hit that particular spot).

Finding the Devices: A 600 XP Encounter

Once calibrated and activated in space, The *Coherence*'s sensors will indicate three locations. These sites, each emanating temporal distortions, appear to be the source of the Caravan's disturbances. They also appear to be external, existing in space rather than aboard ships, so the *Coherence* is in the best position to get to them quickly.

Pinpointing each location takes a successful DC 15 Investigation roll by someone at the sensors station or a DC 20 Perception roll by anyone looking out one of the windows. The sites all appear to be large brass devices attached to the hulls of ships, emanating pulses of deep green, and very much visible, energy.

Each device has the following stats:

Temporal Device

Complicated brass machine from another age.

Deadly 3, Resistant 1, Slow 3, Vulnerable 1

Size Medium   **Speed** 0 squares (stationary object)

CR 1   **XP** 200   **AC** 13   **HP** 30

Proficient Roll +4   **Unskilled Roll / Initiative** +2

Attacks 2   **Passive** 12

Saves Constitution, Intelligence, Strength

Attacks

Temporal Cannon. 7/15 square range, dealing 1d8 force damage on hit. Those hit must succeed in an Intelligence save or become incapacitated for 1d6 rounds, or until a successful save is made on their turn. This applies to both vehicles hit by this attack in space, as well as characters hit in personal combat.

Resistant   Resistance to electricity damage.

Vulnerabilities   Destroyed if somehow separated from the ship I am mounted to.

The Anomaly Sites

The Spire (site A). The tallest spire of the Drenedon (one of the larger population ships in the Caravan).

The Weapon (site B). A weapon that appears to have appeared on the Senedes (a ship that normally projects a protective shield over the small fleet).

The Hangar (site C). Just outside a ship repair hangar on the underside of the Astimos. This one is not detected until the other two are dealt with.

The Spire

The device attached to the *Drenedon* is surrounded by a powerful, invisible energy barrier. The PCs can learn this with a DC 15 Investigation roll or a DC 20 Perception roll. It will also become apparent if the PCs attack the device with energy weapons, from which it has complete immunity. Destroying it while aboard the *Coherence* will most likely require demolishing the spire itself,

which has an AC of 12 and 50 HP.

While active, the device sends out a temporal pulse affecting living things within 1 space square, or 1000 feet if a spacewalk is employed. When living characters come within range become instantly confronted with a vision of a likely death they may experience in the future. If the players are all up for it, the DM should feel free to go into quite a bit of detail on the nature of this demise. Upon receiving this vision the character must succeed in a DC 10 Wisdom save or suffer disadvantage on rolls for actions which require courage for the next hour.

Ultimately, the PCs must find a way to either destroy the device or to stop it from drawing power from the spire. Once the device is cut off from the spire, its shield powers down and it may be destroyed by any means.

The Weapon

A glistening weapon appears at the center of the anomaly on the Caravan ship *Senedes*. It is made of the same materials as the fleet, but brand new. This weapon is a powerful energy turret under the control of the device here, granting it the following attack: **Ancient Cannon Blast.** 5/10 square ranged attack, +7 to hit, dealing 3d10 force damage on hit. Vessels struck by this attack are pushed away 3 squares.

This anomaly is quite powerful and the ship around it changes before the PCs' very eyes, becoming newer and better armored. Each round, roll a d4. On a roll of '4' the anomaly creates another weapon nearby, adding another gunnery station (and thereby another attack per round) to the device here.

The Hangar

The device here is not easily seen, placed somewhere within a large repair hangar on the *Astimos* ship.

The hangar is open, but filled with smaller ships, old robots, and equipment. Landing inside will be impossible, but a successful DC 15 Flying Vehicles roll by the pilot will land within 50 feet of the site without a collision, allowing for a spacewalk (see below) into the hangar.

Spacewalks

Coherence is equipped with 8 simple space suits that fit over light or medium armor, so a spacewalk is certainly possible once the craft has landed. This is perhaps the most suitable way for PCs to both deal with the devices and not cause damage to the Caravan, but that needn't be readily apparent to the PCs. The suits have magnetic boots allowing for normal movement along the ship and jetpacks that grant a fly speed of 10ft when in zero gravity. However, they're meant as emergency suits and as such have only 2 hours of oxygen.

PCs may not use these suits to fly inside the Caravan if the artificial gravity is on, including inside the repair hangar.

Upon passing through the energy field that separates space from the atmosphere and artificial gravity within the hangar, it becomes clear that something is amiss. Every 10 seconds or so a

pulse of energy is released from a corner of the large room, filling the entire area with green light. More worrisome, this light seems to somehow alter the structure of the ship. The walls, floor, and ceiling become newer and less tarnished with each burst.

Crossing the 100 foot-long room, the PCs find a stripped down version of the devices they've been tracking. It has harvested for parts, but is somehow still functioning. An Investigation roll vs. DC 15 reveals that the parts missing were largely protective in nature: armor plates, a shield generator, and a small power core.

This device can be destroyed easily (it has only 10 HP currently and an AC of 10), and the PCs may wish to do so soon. it appears to be leaking an unknown type of radiation without its shielding. At the top of each round, living creatures within the hangar must succeed in a Constitution save or take 1d6 radiation damage.

Back Into the Astimos

Once the last device is dealt with, it becomes clear that someone recently forced open a nearby set of automatic doors. The metal doors bear the imprints of hands, as though someone with super-human strength separated them with raw power.

All signs indicate something big made its way from this hangar into the rest of the *Astimos*. At this point, the lights on the ship go out. Red, emergency lighting soon goes up, and the artificial gravity turns off. The player characters find themselves floating in the dark with the knowledge that something dangerous is prowling the *Astimos*.
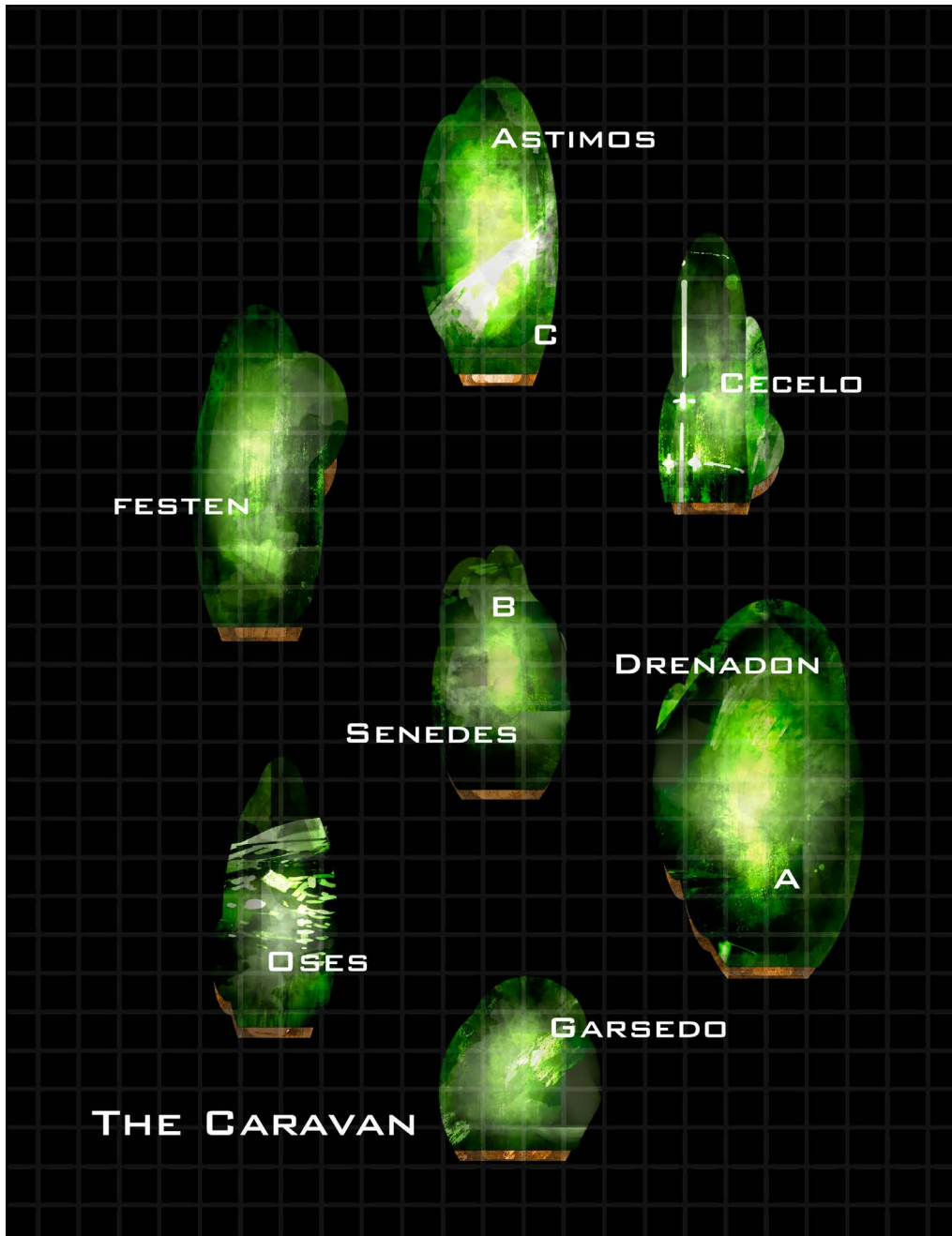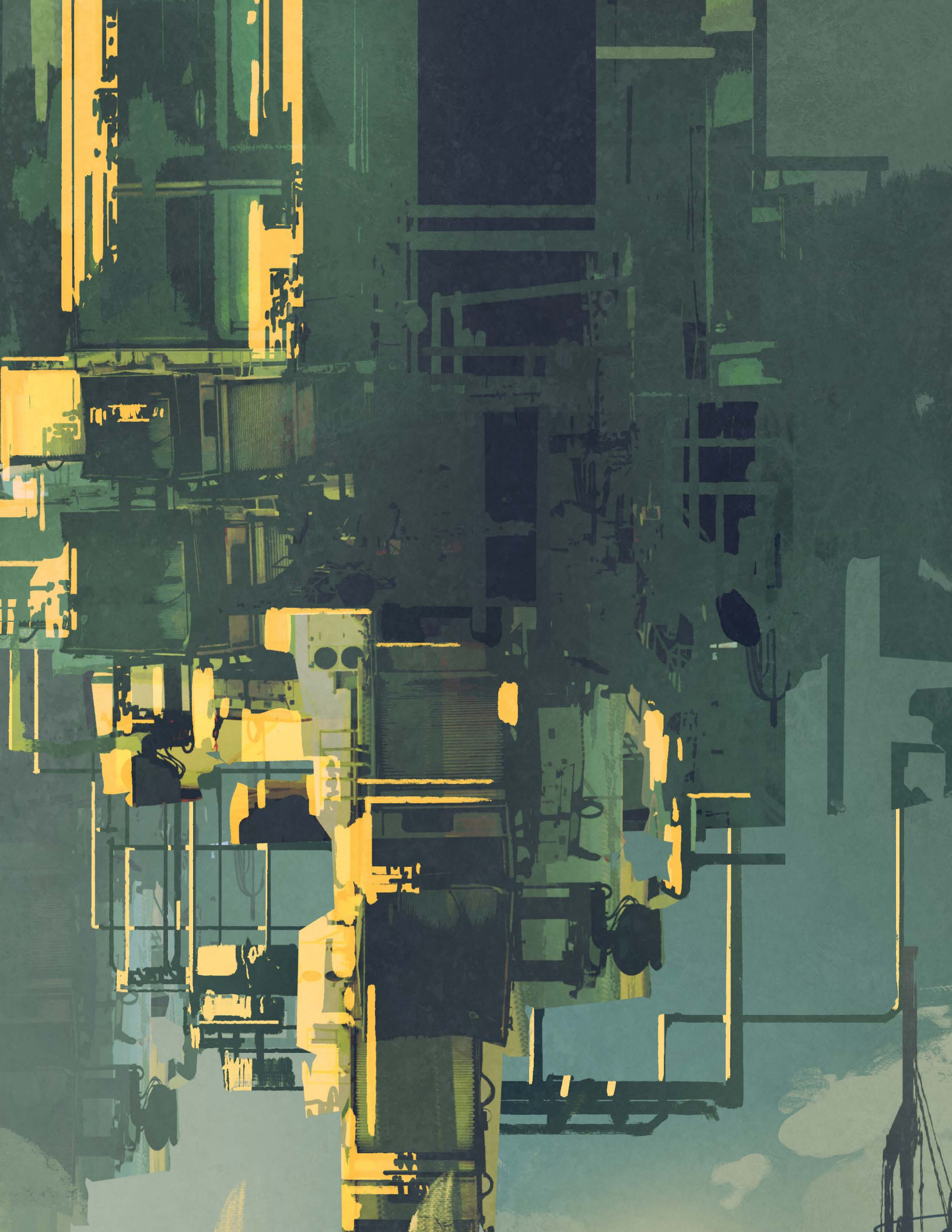
Act Three:
The Confrontation

The PCs can easily make out footprints in the metal deck plates of the ship, leading down a major corridor. With the main lights and gravity out, the ship is difficult to operate in. Be sure to use the zero-g rules from the **HYPERLANES** corebook (pg4), as well as the normal rules for fighting in low light conditions. The gist of the zero-g rules is that physical actions are made with disadvantage. If you'd rather combat weren't slowed down by this, you can have power and gravity restored before the first encounter, as the terrorists fiddle with the controls of the station.

Down the main corridor, it becomes clear that the changes to the ship caused by the time dilations are more than superficial. Entire sections of the massive vessel appear to have come forward from an earlier time, and present sections and residents seemingly gone forever. Though there is no evidence that the temporal manipulations are continuing, so much of the ship has been changed that the interior feels more like a warship than a metropolis. Hallways are cleared of debris and have a brassy gleam to them. Few alcoves, advertisements, or other unnecessary fixtures remain. Portholes and viewscreens are replaced with bare walls and the rare metal pipe or electronic access point.

Hidden Leaders

As they explore the now heavily altered city-ship of *Astimos*, the PCs are contacted by the **Primelder**. She and a few of her top advisors are currently hiding, holed up in a secure room. She asks that the PCs meet with her, as she is not willing to detail tactics over the radio. Her directions are intentionally cryptic, so that the terrorists won't be able to learn her hideout.

Finding the Primelder and her allies will require someone in the group to succeed in a DC 15 Intelligence roll. Should the PCs fail to do so, their bumbling allows **Brother Cenethrax** to find and ambush them (see The Straggler encounter). If **Cenethrax** is defeated in this way, his mind slaves become conscious of their surroundings and point the way to the hideout, having come from there recently.

When the PCs make it to the hideout, they are carefully let in and a heavy door is sealed behind them. The dark room is filled with the grim faces of the city's leadership as they cling to the walls in the zero-g. They've all lost friends today and fear that they may never get their home back.

The **Primelder** explains that much of the ship has reverted to some earlier period, seemingly displacing or killing off thousands of its inhabitants. Similar occurrences happened on the other ships and these changes seem to have been caused by the temporal anomalies that the PCs helped deal with. There's evidence that the time alterations brought forward old weapons of war from way back when this fleet was used as part of the Sundrathi military.

She says she's worried that the caravan may now be used as a powerful weapon in the terrorist's plans. The caravan's current location in space is not far from key military and civilian routes.

The **Primelder** thinks the terrorists have made off with some of those old weapons and are attempting to take full control of the fleet through the Narthex, which they have taken over. She believes they are still breaking through the computer security there, but will soon have control. She pleads with the PCs to go in and take them out. "I've never seen weapons like this, and the time control these people possess is terrifying. We must stop them! You must stop them."

She offers the following information to help:

• The Narthex has a structural weakness: if you enter the ship's computer core below the Narthex, you can climb up to the window and break through. That way you don't need to get through the security doors. Getting into the computer core merely requires an engineering passkey, which she provides. They just need to float up the two stories and break through the rather weak window.

• One of the terrorists seems to be piloting a massive suit of power armor. Watch out.

• The terrorists have hostages in the Narthex with them.

• It is possible to cause the Narthex to detach from the rest of the ship, allowing it to simply float off into space. This severs the Narthex's ability to control the ship and fleet. This can only be done from the central console on the Narthex. She's willing to let the PCs know the command sequence for this, so long as they promise to only use it as a last resort.

The other holdouts in this room have a few weapons (pistols, rifles, clubs, etc.) that they're willing to share if anyone is in need. However, being mostly administrators and technicians, they're not all that willing to run off into the fight.
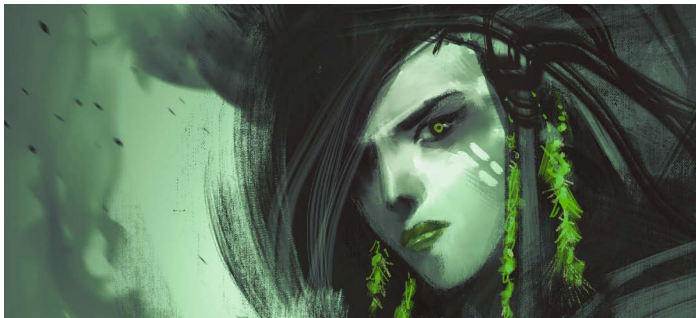
The Straggler: A 450 XP Encounter

The party runs into one of the terrorists, **Brother Cenethrax**, while moving through the ship. He's on a mission to gather more hostages, doing so with a staff that has the power to put people into a dream state. When in such a state, the hostages are force fed visions of the traumatic dawn of the universe. He is followed by two such hostages, who merely stare blankly into space and follow his general instructions (follow, stop, etc.). The hostages will not assist him in battle.

At the moment, **Cenethrax** is strolling through the corridor, seeking more people to enslave and bring back. Once he sees the PCs he will attempt to stun as many of them as he can with his staff and then attempt to escape to a nearby maintenance shaft.

Once **Brother Cenethrax** is defeated, his mind altered slaves come to their senses and describe the things they've seen, unprompted:

"I have seen through time to a moment before moments. I tasted the first matter and energy, I felt time and space come from nothing. A shiver down my spine heralded the formation of suns, black holes, and other stranger things."

The DM should feel free to elaborate with details better fitting the historical events of this particular fictional galaxy.

Critically, if the PCs haven't learned of the terrorist cult's takeover of the Narthex and their attempt to control the fleet through it, the former mind slaves will provide them with this vital intel. They'll imply that the **Primelder** will be incredibly generous to them if they can stop this madness.

Brother Cenethrax

A hooded figure bearing a metal staff and laughing maniacally.

Harmful 1, Vulnerable 1, Wily 1   **Neutral Evil Humanoid**

Size Medium   **Speed** 30ft

CR 2   **XP** 450 **AC** 13   **HP** 50

Proficient Roll +5   **Unskilled Roll / Initiative** +3

Attacks 2

Skills   Deception, Tool Use: Ancient items   **Passive** 13

Saves   Intelligence

Attacks

Staff of Visions. Melee attack, +5 to hit, dealing 1d6+3 bludgeoning damage on hit and the target must succeed in an Intelligence save or become Incapacitated for 1d6 rounds, or until they succeed in an Intelligence save on their turn.

Gambits   **Tricks:** *Distraction, Liar's Tongue*

                  1st-3rd level (3 slots/day): *Fool's Gold, Play Dead, Survivable Surrender*

Vulnerability   **Lonely.** Vulnerable to damage from foes Brother Cenethrax finds attractive (one specific PC in the party chosen by the DM).

The Computer Core

Splayed beneath the Narthex is the massive, primary computer core of the ship. It occupies a tall metal room 150 feet on a side, filled with humming electronics arranged in long aisles. Two stories above it is the Narthex, inside of which is the terrorist cell and its hostages. The Narthex looks down on the core from a 30 foot-wide window etched with intricate, circuitous designs.

Map Key

1   **The Computer Core.** 20 feet below the window over-looking it from the Narthex.

2   **Narthex Window.** AC 10, HP 10.

3   **Large Auotmated Doubledoors.** DC 20 to open with Security tools.

4   **The Bomb.** See sidebar for details.

5   **Contol Consoles.** The command for releasing this area from the ship may be entered here, if the codes for doing so were acquired from the Primelder. It takes 1 action to do so. Once the code is entered it takes 3 full rounds for the Narthex to separate, after which time it will have no more control over the ship and simply drift in space.

**6**   **Gun Turret.** Used by **Sister Exefion** to deal 1d12 heat damage during combat.

Entering the core is easy if the PCs met with the **Primelder**, as she provided the security code . Otherwise the Security Tools roll to break through the lock code is DC 20. To enter the Narthex they'll need to destroy the window, which has 10 hit points and an AC of 10. The shards of glass remain floating or flying if zero-g is still in effect, so anyone crossing the location of the broken window must make a DC 10 Dexterity save or take 1d6 slashing damage.

The computer core is quite hot. Anyone touching the massive databanks must succeed in a DC 10 Constitution save each round they do so, taking 5 heat damage on a failed roll.

Battle in the Narthex: A 1200 XP Encounter

Entering the Narthex is relatively easy through the computer core. Doing so by way of its security door is a bit harder, requiring a DC 20 Security Tools check to succeed. Because the terrorists inside are actively working to update security codes, this roll is made with disadvantage. Breaking down the door is essentially impossible without vehicle scale weaponry.

The Narthex contains three terrorists and six hostages. The hostages are arranged along the walls. The terrorist cultists are each working at the computer consoles, frantically trying to break through the ship's highest levels of security.
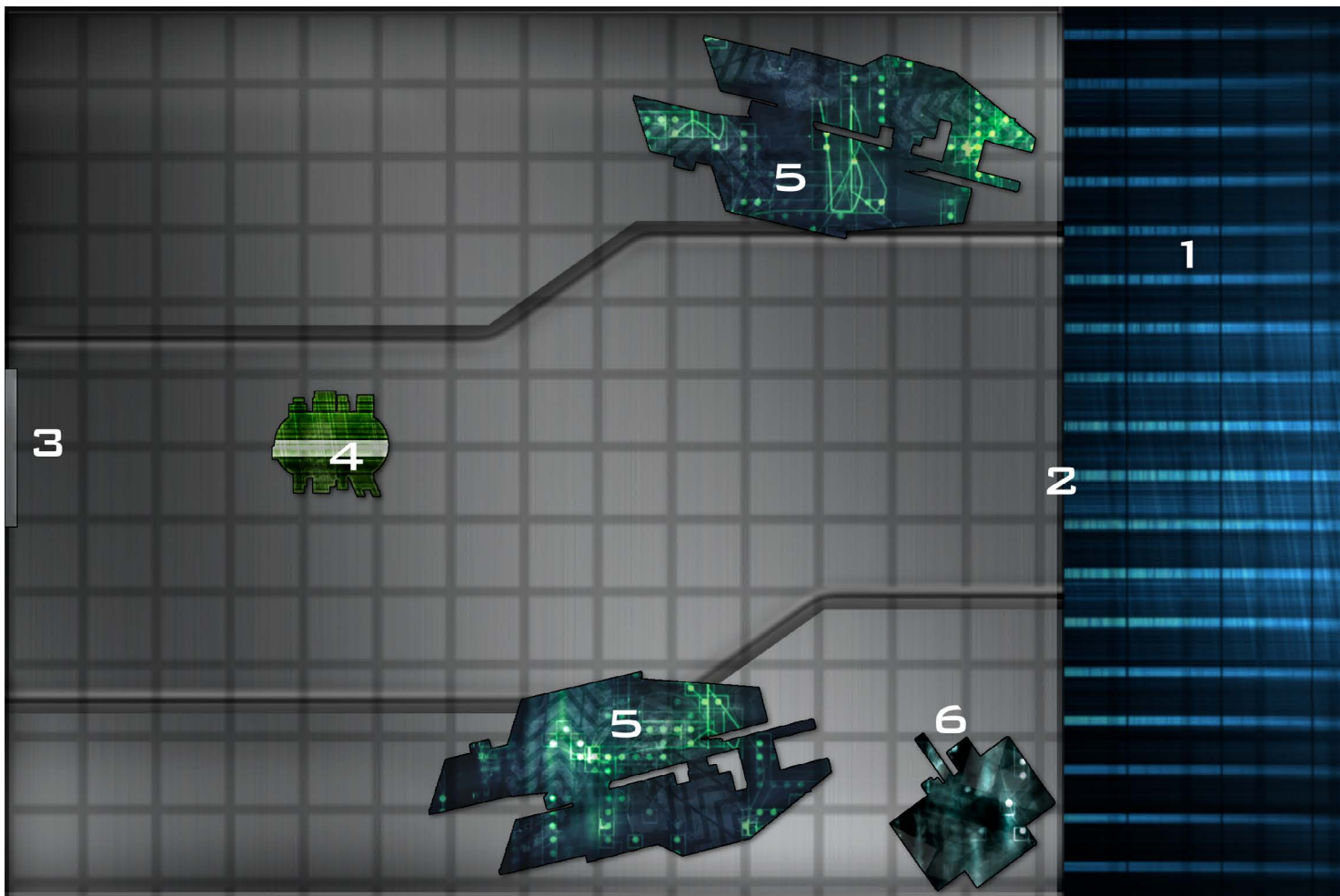
Once the PCs enter or otherwise interact with the room, the terrorists spring into action. Each wear simple green robes and a stylish metal mask. **Brother Sesaal** immediately begins executing hostages. No roll is made to do this, he simply kills one as an action on his turn. **Sister Exefion** uses the computer terminal she's at to control a laser turret which deploys from the northeast corner of the room (using her Hack Weapon gambit). **Brother Basidon**, still in his massive power armor, engages in melee with whoever is closest to him.

Whichever terrorist is last to be taken down surrenders once the other two are out of the picture. They explain that the group belongs to a massive cult, known as the Athmerath, or the Seers of the Dawn. They spread enlightenment to the sentient species of the galaxy by opening their minds to knowledge of the dawn of the universe.

They employ a small, yet powerful arsenal of time altering technology, acquired through access to the ruins of the old Sundrathi Empire worlds. This technology is used to induce visions and to bring forward in time more and more useful technology from the past. They had intended to turn this Caravan back into a war fleet, but the quick work of the heroes seems to have stifled their plan so they resigned themselves to simply enlightening its remains population through a massive temporal explosion.

Brother Basadon

A hulking figure in a makeshift power armor suit.

Controlling 1, Tough 1, Vulnerable 1 Chaotic Evil Humanoid

Size Medium   **Speed** 30ft   **AC** 14   **HP** 70

Proficient Roll +4   **Unskilled Roll / Initiative** +2

Attacks 2

Skills   Athletics, History **Passive** 12

Saves   Strength

Attacks

  Pike Strike. Melee weapon attack, reach 10ft, +4 to hit, dealing 1d6+2 heat damage.

  Power Suit Slam. Unarmed attack, +4 to hit, dealing 1d6+2 bludgeoning damage on hit and the target is knocked back 15 feet.

Vulnerability   Technology Reliant. Vulnerable to all damage if his power suit is disabled in any way.

Brother Sesaal

A charismatic leader with the will to enforce the cult's edicts.

Nimble 1, Vulnerable 1   Neutral Evil Humanoid

Size Medium   **Speed** 30ft   **AC** 14   **HP** 30

Proficient Roll +4   **Unskilled Roll / Initiative** +2

Attacks 2

Skills   Persuasion, History   **Passive** 12

Saves   Charisma

Attacks

The Bomb

In the center of the room is a large makeshift bomb, throbbing with green energy. The terrorists have been waiting to gain access to the full fleet's security before setting it off, as they want to maneuver all of the ships close together before the blast. They now realize those plans may need to be altered. Should one of the terrorists become close to death, they'll attempt to set off the bomb. This requires an action and the terrorist must be next to the bomb.

If the bomb explodes, everyone (including the terrorists) must immediately make a Wisdom save against DC 20. Failure indicates that the character is stunned for 1d4 rounds as they witness the dawn of time.

Feel free to have some fun with aftereffects of this vision. Some characters may even change Alignment or Background at this point, if they are particularly affected.

  Energy Pistol Execution. Ranged 40ft/120ft weapon attack, +6 to hit, dealing 1d8 heat damage on hit. Critical hits on a 19-20.

Vulnerability   Monologue. Vulnerable to all damage while in the middle of speaking.

Sister Exefion

A tech-covered engineer.

Vulnerable 1, Wily 1   Lawful Evil Humanoid

Size Medium   **Speed** 30ft   **AC** 13   **HP** 30

Proficient Roll +4   **Unskilled Roll / Initiative** +2

Attacks 2

Skills   Investigation, Tool Use: Security tools   **Passive** 12

Saves   Intelligence

Gambits   **Tricks:** *Hack Weapon, Computer Intrusion*

    1st-3rd level (3 slots/day): *Trace Source, Virus*

Attacks   Laser Turret (used via her Hack Weapon gambit). Range 75ft/500ft weapon attack, +4 to hit, dealing 1d12 heat damage on hit and catching any flammable objects on the target on fire.

Vulnerability   Pride. Vulnerable to all damage for one round after she fails an attack roll.

Wrapping Up

Upon their success, the PCs are contacted by the **Primelder** and heralded as heroes. They are rewarded with 1000 credits each, the *Coherence*, and perhaps a Superscience item or two from the time altered areas of the ship (DM's discretion). The Caravan has been kept from its usual timetable, so the **Primelder** is willing to divert the fleet to nearly any nearby system the players wish to go.

In future adventures, the Caravan might show up as a location to hide out or pick up supplies, or as yet another victim of larger galactic forces. Its mobile nature means you can drop it out of hyperspace at any time you please, and player characters may seek it out nearly anywhere it may wander.