

ESPER GENESIS

HEROIC SCI-FI ROLEPLAYING

STORMFALL



EGCC 01-09



ESPER GENESIS:
**CRUCIBLE
CORPS**



EPISODE NINE OF
**SHADOW
OF THE
ZEPHYR**



STORMFALL

Part Nine of the Shadow of the Zephyr series.

Answering a mysterious call left behind by a familiar ally, the team infiltrates an abandoned military research base where they must survive a final showdown with the rogue faction of a megacorporation and their deranged ringleader.

A 4-Hour Adventure for 5th to 10th Level Characters

Optimized for APL 6

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Stormfall*, an Esper Genesis™ adventure, part of the official Esper Genesis Crucible Corps™ organized play campaign, and the *Shadow of the Zephyr*™ storyline season.

This adventure brings the characters to a desolate moon in a remote sector of the galaxy. Within a clandestine stronghold, Laris Baludan and his rogue faction, Stormdark, hold Selexi Sunfire as their prisoner.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 5th to 10th level characters** and is optimized for five characters with an **average party level (APL) of 6**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Mikar Presan, a computer scientist, developed a sorium-powered digital device with unintended capabilities. Nicknamed the “Zephyr”, the device used a self-evolving computer code that could control and rewrite any other programmed device in the galaxy. Presan hid key portions of the code away from his ambitious partners for fear of the chaos they would unleash upon the galaxy. He then vanished, while his partners used Presan’s software to found what is known today as the Zephyr Corporation.

Laris Baludan, the new CEO of Zephyr Corp, has recently used the company’s resources to build Stormdark, a rogue faction of corporate shadow operatives. They performed secret, deadly experiments to rebuild the secret Zephyr code. Baludan is a spy for the Shadow Technocracy, the true masters behind Baludan’s operations. Determined to evolve into technological overlords, the Technocracy will stop at nothing to reconstruct the elusive master code.

Through the result of many vile experiments, Baludan’s goal is nearly achieved, but he is missing a key fragment of the code. He believes it to be integrated into the cybernetic implants worn by Selexi Sunfire, the galaxy’s famous pop icon. Baludan discovered her to be the daughter of Mikan Presar, a fact still unknown to Selexi herself.

Stormdark attempted to abduct Selexi, but failed to recover the code fragment (see EGCC01-04 *Secrets in Silver*), Selexi has been in hiding under the protection of her allies, Garland and Arisa Angel (see *Dramatis Personae*). They hoped to lay low long enough to gather more resources to face Baludan. However, Stormdark’s reach is vast, and the singer’s location did not stay secret for long.

Baludan’s elite soldiers, the Obsidian Knights, struck the safe house, taking the trio unaware. Arisa and Selexi were captured in the assault, and Garland disappeared, presumed dead. Before she was captured, Selexi managed to message her associate, a galactic trader named Rhona.

Upon receiving the message, Rhona, discovered the pair had been taken to Stormwatch, Baludan’s clandestine military research complex. With the help of an automaton, Alfred 3020, she devised a plan to rescue Arisa and Selexi. To be successful, however, they’re going to need help.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

This adventure allows the characters to choose their own path in Selexi’s rescue. While Rhona and Alfred 3020 set the team on a path, there are several points where they may deviate from the plan or be required to make critical decisions before proceeding to the next step.

The adventure is broken down into five parts:

Part 1. The Mission. The party meets with Rhona and learns where Selexi and Arisa are being held.

Part 2. The Journey. The party is smuggled to Phadus 5 aboard a smuggler’s freighter.

Part 3. The Approach. Reaching the moon, the party makes their way across the hostile landscape.

Part 4. Entering Stormwatch. The party enters the military research complex and makes their way through to Laris Baludan’s lab.

Part 5. Center of the Web. In the bowels of the base, the party encounters Laris Baludan, who has transformed himself using the secrets stolen from Selexi’s implants.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins with the party arriving at the Eclipse nightclub on the *Pel Tavarica* space station. They have each received messages through various covert means from Rhona. The messages are marked as urgent, but say nothing more except to ask them to meet her at her club.

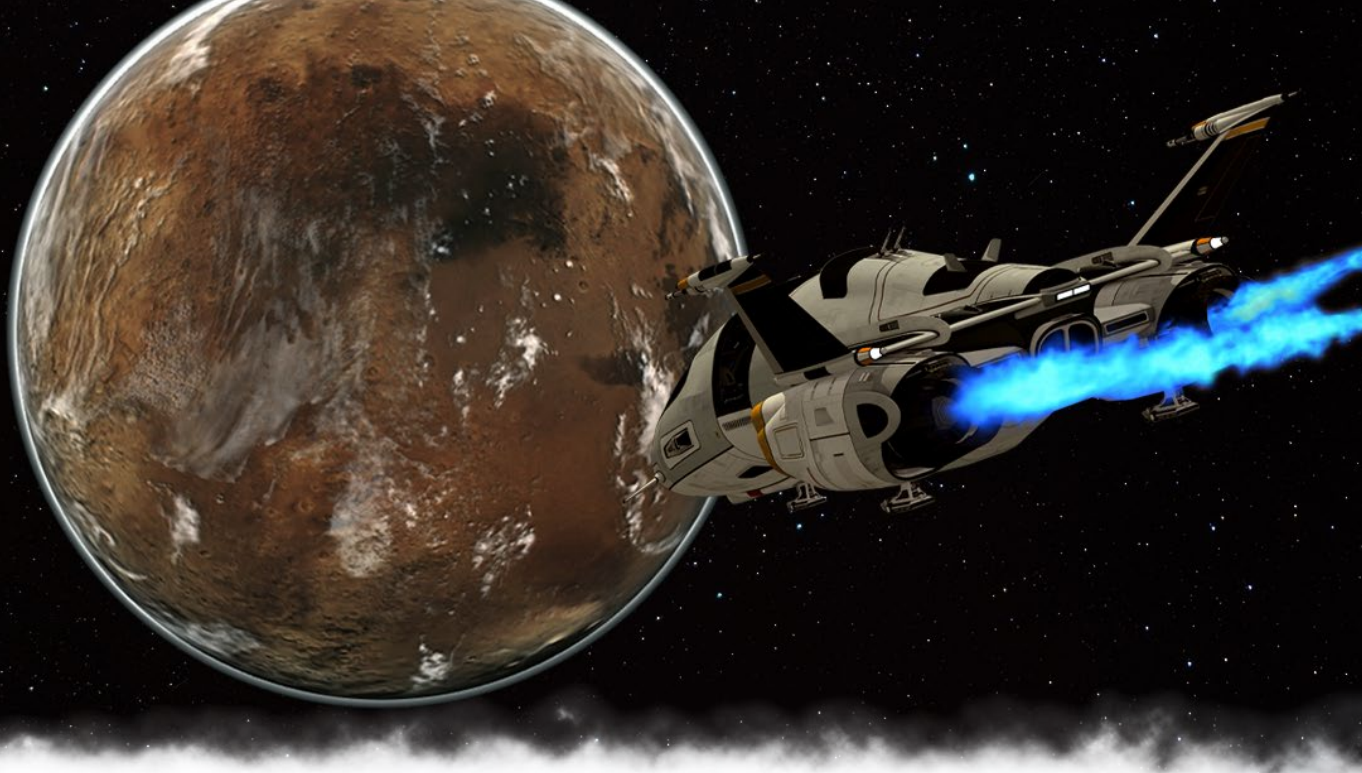
In for a Penny. After the last few jobs you’ve been engaged with, you were looking forward to a little down time. But when you received an emergency call from Rhona, somehow you knew that this endeavor wasn’t over just yet.

Hired Talent. Though you have not met Rhona before, you’ve become known as an accomplished troubleshooter. Checking out the source of this message reveals that the bartender is looking for reliable and capable hands for some undisclosed mission.

STORY LINKS

If this adventure is being used as a follow-up to EGCC01-08 *Altai Media Presents...* the characters have learned of Stormdark’s connection to the Shadow Technocracy. While plans to frame the characters for the assault on the Bastion was thwarted, they have yet to directly confront Baludan or his technocrat masters.

If the characters have played through all of the previous *Shadow of the Zephyr* adventures, the NPCs and events described in the Adventure Background should be familiar to them. It should also make an easy adventure hook, as the characters are directly involved with these events. Refer to the *Dramatis Personae* section at the end of the adventure and adjust the interactions with the NPCs based on the characters’ familiarity with them.



U.C.C.H.3Y/2U.C.H PART 1. THE MISSION U2H.P.3U.C.H.3C.U.3

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

When the characters arrive at the Eclipse nightclub, early in the day, the club is empty of staff and patrons. Rhona and Alfred 3020 wait for the party to arrive, along with an older man, who the party does not recognize.

Should the party introduce themselves to the older man, he introduces himself as Rufus Drake, but suggests that the characters, “wait for the lady to fill ye in” before sharing much information. He then returns his attention to his drink.

MISSING FRIENDS

Rhona pours herself a drink and then explains that Arisa and Garland had brought Selexi Sunfire to a safe house. They had hoped to lay low long enough to gather information and allies for their next move against Stormdark (feel free to use the information in the Adventure Background if necessary).

However, Rhona explains that the group was discovered and Selexi was taken. She then plays a recorded transmission from a database. The sound of automatic gunfire and shattering glass is loud, but Selexi can be heard, shouting over the din.

“I don’t know how, Rho, but they found us. Fragging Stormdark found us! Garland’s down, he’s not moving. I think he might be dead!”

Selexi grunts and you hear her exchanging gunfire with her attackers, “... frag! Arisa is hit! I don’t know how much longer we”

The recording ends with a loud crack. Rhona provides the following information:

- The message was sent a week ago.
- The attackers burned the safe house to the ground and left nothing to track.

Rhona has people looking into how the safe house was uncovered, but has no leads yet. If characters offer to help, she will gladly work with any contacts they can provide, but they have something else in mind for the characters to handle.

THE RESCUE PLAN

Once Rhona has explained the information they have about the attack, Alfred 3020 emerges from a side room to explain the plan they have prepared (Characters who played through EGCC01-01 *Basilisk Rendezvous* first encountered Alfred during its rescue on Euria 7).

Whether or not the characters know or have dealt with Alfred before, they notice the automaton’s manner as short, even borderline rude. It appears to be highly agitated by this situation, but won’t reveal why.

Alfred explains that Garland, a SIM hacker, left it access to a backdoor into Zephyr Corp’s data centers, and that it has been searching for any information on where they may have taken Selexi and Arisa.

Alfred tells them that one day after the attack, a squad of Obsidian Knights escorted Baludan and “two unnamed prisoners” to a secret facility codenamed Stormwatch.

STORMWATCH

Neither Rhona nor Alfred have much information about Stormwatch, but they relate the little they have learned:

- Stormwatch is an abandoned facility located on the fifth moon of the gas giant Phadus in the Gaedan system.

- No one is entirely clear as to who built the complex.
- The installation is built into the side of a mountain, with only the hangar exposed.
- It's not a Zephyr Corporation facility, although the company records indicate that one of their survey teams came across it about a year ago.

The nature of the base isn't entire clear, but the limited information that Alfred acquired suggests that:

- It was some sort of military research complex.
- Experiments were performed at the base to enhance creatures through both genetic manipulation and cybernetic enhancement.
- Most of these experiments would not be condoned under current galactic law as defined under the Sorium Accords.

PHADUS 5

Phadus 5 is a rocky moon with a harsh atmosphere that is breathable, however, long-term exposure is not recommended.

Additionally, the upper atmosphere is exceptionally turbulent. This not only make approaches difficult, but it disrupts electronic transmissions. Radar and other scanning technologies are significantly limited.

The Obsidian Knights escorting Baludan had requisitioned several ships, as well as a pair of satellites intended to boost communication through the upper atmosphere.

FACTION MISSION: SHADOW CIPHER

The name "Stormwatch" is one that a Shadow Cipher agent would recognize. Rumors and fragmented records hint about a military base used for strange experiments. Tales range from soldiers being fitted with experimental cybernetics to stories of genetically engineered war beasts.

The Shadow Cipher would be interested in any data regarding the research work performed at this site.

THE RAFAELA

Surveys of the moon's surface are limited, but it is clear that the hangar is the only access point, and that if the doors are closed, it is not be possible to access the base with the tools available to the party.

So, the plan is to leverage stealth. Rhona has arranged for the party to be smuggled onto the surface on a ship called the *Rafaela*. If Rufus Drake hasn't introduced himself, he does so now.

Drake is an old, cantankerous freighter pilot who grins a lot while chomping on a cigar (which he never lights while "on duty"), or swilling something dispensed from a device holstered on his belt.

Drake explains that the *Rafaela* has been modified to be "less noticeable" to people who are looking for it. Drake explains that "it's often helpful when some of his cargo is ... "missing paperwork".

The *Hyperlance*, an experimental starcruiser, is also part of the plan. Balduan and his agents attempted to steal

it in the past (see EGCC01-02 *Crisis at Pel Tavarria*). Its computer systems contain code similar to those stored in Selexi's implants, and they will certainly be watching for it. Using it is a critical part of the plan. The automaton will pilot the ship with a small crew and distract any patrol ships while the party performs their rescue.

ROLEPLAYING ALFRED 3020

If asked about its demeanor, the automaton explains that its self-aware programming continues to evolve.

However, there is more to it than that. Its programming is imprinted with the personality of Selexi's father, Mikar Presan. It is determined that no one must ever learn of this, else Zephyr Corp will seek to use its core to recreate Mikan's work.

But bearing the persona of its creator, its become agitated by Selexi's predicament. It knows It needs the characters to save its "daughter" and can be short with those who seem as if they are not along with the plan. If Alfred is pressed, a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check, he reveals this, but swears the characters to secrecy.

- *Personality:* I feel awkward and out of place everywhere I go. I just want to be acknowledged as a person.
- *Ideal:* Emotions and logic are tools that can empower each other, rather than get in each other's way.
- *Bond:* I am my own secret. Keeping that secret safe keeps my "daughter" and family alive.
- *Flaw:* I'm easily offended when referred to like an object.

Regardless of the characters' connection to this scenario, Rhona offers 500 cu to each character, payable on mission completion. The party has two hours to prepare and gather gear they need for the mission.

Characters can convince Rhona to increase the payment by 250 cu with a successful DC 14 Charisma (Perception) check. If the character's check result is 17 or higher, the offer increases another 250 cu. (to a maximum of 1,000 cu.).

WHAT IS THE HYPERLANCE?

Players who have not played in previous *Shadow of the Zephyr* adventures may be unfamiliar with the *Hyperlance*. This experimental ship was liberated in EGCC01-02 *Crisis at Pel Tavarria*.

Some characters may wish to be on the *Hyperlance* during the mission.

Remind them that the *Hyperlance* is very recognizable and will not land on Phadus 5. The *Rafaela* on the other hand is heavily modified and is ideal for this mission. Rhona also refuses an offer to use the characters' ship, if they happen to own one.

While modifying the *Hyperlance* to avoid detection could be possible with the correct tools, resources, and talent ... the party does not have the time to perform this work.

Be clear that a character aboard the *Hyperlance* would be unable to participate in the majority of this adventure.

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

The approach to Phadus 5 does not go as planned. The party must make a choice between sticking to the plan and coming to the aid of the *Hyperlance*.

RIDING ON THE RAFAELA

The *Rafaela* is an old light freighter that has seen better days, but Rufus Drake keeps it in working order. Drake's success as a smuggler stems from his ability to hide from most sensor systems. While there have been some modifications to the ship's systems, Drake's success is largely due to his method of navigation.

He calls this "running silent". Once he enters a system, he generates an engine pulse, and then kills the engines and most of the systems on the ship. This causes a strange blip on most sensor systems, but the *Rafaela* drops off most sensor systems at this point.

Traveling in a ballistic path across a star system is something most pilots would consider insane and suicidal, as there are any number of gravity wells and debris fields that could be along the ship's path. Drake scoffs at those concerns and claim it's just a matter of "threading the needle".

Drake's bravado is supported by the fact that the *Rafaela* has some of the best sensors money could buy. (Although it is not clear whether he paid full price for them.) Even at lower power, they warn the pilot of hazards along the ship's course with plenty of time for the ship to alter its path.

Characters succeeding on a DC 14 Wisdom (Mechanics) check notice numerous impacts along the front of the ship, which has been reinforced. The ship's sensor don't pick up everything, and during travel, passengers may hear the ship pass through dust clouds and the like.

They may also notice several sets of blaster burns along the ship. Some are cosmetic, others look like they have been patched over. If asked, Drake mentions that occasionally, freighters run afoul of pirates.

ROLEPLAYING RUFUS DRAKE

Rufus has been a smuggler longer than most of the characters have been alive. An old human, he makes his way through life staying under the radar. But he usually has a grin on his face, teeth clamped around a cigar.

He wears up a beat-up cowboy hat, which covers an unruly mass of blonde hair. While he does seem to drink a lot, he is rarely impacted by it, continually riding that line between sobriety and inebriation.

Most of the ship's systems are jury rigged so that Drake can operate the ship with just himself and a large construction drone named TekMite.

Unfortunately, the drone is too large to move through many of the corridors, so it stays in the cargo hold and

engine room. It has a limited vocabulary, and breaks long silences by asking "Would you like to play chess?" (TekMite has been programmed to be a horrible chess player).

Still, the *Rafaela* proves reliable. Characters who had taken the opportunity to survey the outer side of the ship notice that it appears to have several blaster scars along it. If asked, Drake remarks that there was an incident with some pirates who didn't care for the passenger he was carrying.

THE PATROL

The trip from the Crucible takes about 5 hours. During that time, the party is free to explore the *Rafaela*. The ship has seen better days, as its captain frequently falls short on the funds needed to properly repair something. But it runs smoothly, aside from occasional pings and bangs caused by elements of whatever dust cloud or debris field the ship is passing through. ("Nothing to worry about! She can take it!")

About an hour out from Phadus 5, red lights blink on the pilot's console, signaling several ships are on an intercept course towards the *Hyperlance*.

Alfred 3020, acknowledges detection of the approaching ships and accelerates past the *Rafaela* to intercept them. "Save my daughter!" it shouts over the comm as the *Hyperlance* charges toward the starfighters.

As the party watches the *Hyperlance* begin to engage the Zephyr Corp ships, Drake fires a single engine burst to drive the freighter to its final approach towards the moon.

OPTION FOR EXPANDED PLAY

If you are not playing in a time-constrained environment, you can introduce a space combat encounter. By the number of ships engaging the *Hyperlance*, it becomes clear that if the party doesn't intervene, Alfred and the ship will be destroyed.

Taking on a few of the enemy fighters would even the odds but would also drastically change the flow of the rest of the adventure, as the base defenders will know they are there.

If the characters choose this path, refer to **Appendix G: Expanded Play**.

LANDING THE SHIP

Once the *Rafaela* hits the turbulent atmosphere of Phadus 5, the sensors immediately go dark and several control panels along the corridors spark and explode. The ship also begins to lurch, and anyone not secured is bounced around. Characters on the bridge are able to see the rocky terrain as they burst through the dark clouds that envelop the moon.

Once through the worst of it, Drake makes his way toward the hidden landing site.



PART 3. THE APPROACH

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes

Phadus 5 is largely rocky and barren with water only found in caves beneath the surface.

Its orbit around Phadus is also erratic, which may have been the reason the base was originally abandoned. The tidal forces of the gas giant pull on the surface of its moon, causing its landscape to shift, crack, and change.

The atmosphere is breathable, but smells vaguely of rotten eggs due to an excess of sulfides in the air. Lightning continually flashes through heavy clouds in the upper atmosphere causing disruption to long range sensors.

Stormwatch's sensors rely on satellites to monitor the surrounding sector, but are largely useless for monitoring the moon's surface.

During the moon's day cycle, the surface is dimly lit. Any sunlight reflected from the gas giant is hazy, giving the moon a sense of hellish twilight. At night, the darkness is pierced repeatedly by the dim lightning echoing in the cloud cover above.

HIDDEN LANDING SITE

Assuming the party stuck to the plan, and allowed the *Hyperlance* to distract the base's defenses, the *Rafaela* lands at the designated site. This site is in a wide ravine

about 6 miles away from Stormwatch. This location is far enough away from the base to avoid detection, but close enough that the party should be able to hike to the base within two hours.

As the party prepares to disembark, Drake begins some repairs to the ship. He informs them that he'll stick around for 12 hours or until someone shows up. ("If that's you, fantastic! If it's not ... well, I'm not going to be much good to you if the ship gets taken.").

He'll also tell the party that if they need a fast pick-up, he's charging extra and they'll need to give him 3 minutes to get to them.

GENERAL FEATURES

The area has the following features.

Light. During the day, the light of the Gaedan star dimly illuminates the cloud cover, giving the sky a hellish glow. At night, it is completely dark, with only the crackle of lightning arcing through the clouds giving any sense of up or down.

Smells and Sounds. A slight smell of sulphur is present in the air.

Terrain. The ground is treacherous, and characters must pick their way around the outcroppings of rock and cracks in the ground.

TRAVELING ACROSS PHADUS 5

The ground of Phadus 5 is cracked and rocky. Characters who succeed a DC 12 Survival (Wisdom) check, or who can leverage relevant background knowledge soon realize that the moon is under continual stress from the gas giant's gravity. The landscape is continually changing because of this. The maps that the party has of the area were gleaned from a survey less than a year old, but are already inaccurate.

The party must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check to maintain a course toward Stormwatch. Failure indicates that the party becomes lost halfway to the base and must make another Survival check in order to regain their bearings.

LOCAL WILDLIFE

The party's arrival has gone unnoticed by Stormwatch, but not by the native creatures. Large lizard-like creatures can be seen wandering the rocky landscape. In many ways they resemble bearded dragons, but are much larger, and often reach 10 feet in length.

These **phaedan lizards** are highly aggressive and see the party as prey if the party allows themselves to be seen.

It is possible for the party to subdue one of these creatures, as they only travel in groups of two or three. The lizards can be avoided with a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) check. Characters proficient in Survival gain advantage to this check and may grant advantage to the roll of one other companion.

THE CRACKED PLAIN

Along the path, the characters encounter an obstacle. What was originally a clear plain has eroded, exposing a large cavernous region underneath a thin shell of rock. This shell of stone stretches for what appears to be miles in each direction.

The party is alerted to this danger by the large holes that clearly honeycomb the surface. At many points, the holes simply lead into darkness, or into areas which appear impassable.

In one location, a chamber can be spotted below. Most of the chamber is filled with dark, oily water, but a narrow bridge of rock provides passage across. The party has two choices:

CHOICE ONE — CLIMB DOWN

Descending into the lower cavern is simple enough, but traversing the bridge comes with a challenge.

Much of what appears to be water and sludge are sentient ooze-like creatures called **sludge creepers**. There is one creeper in the water for each party member present. The creepers surround the center of the bridge and do not attack until the first character has passed that threshold.

- If the party attempts to sneak across the bridge, each character must make a DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) check to successfully cross the bridge without alerting the creepers.
- If the creepers are alerted to the characters' presence, they attack the next character to cross the bridge.
- If the party does not attempt to sneak, the creepers attack the first character to cross.

As you reach the center of the bridge, parts of the slimy water rear up, and rush toward you!

STAT BLOCK CHANGES

Use the sludge creeper stat block provided in appendix C, with the following changes:

Modify the Split Reaction

- **Split.** When a creeper that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new jellies if it has at least 10 hit points remaining. Each new creeper has hit points equal to half the original creeper's, rounded down. New jellies are one size smaller than the original creeper. The smaller creeper's attacks now add 1d4 lightning damage to their attacks and their speed increases to 25'.

Add the Following

- **Natural Camouflage.** The sludge creepers have Advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in any body of water or mud with a 15-foot diameter or larger.

CHOICE TWO — CLIMB ACROSS

Characters can make a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check to identify a path across the honeycombed rock.

To heighten the suspense, GMs may choose to have the character make the Survival check as the first character crosses. Failure on the check means that the party has chosen a path which collapses under their weight, dropping the first person who crosses and anyone within 5 feet of them to the lower cavern.

The fall causes 3d6 points of damage, and alerts the creepers, which immediately attack.

XP Award: If the party successfully bypasses the creepers, each character receives 500 XP.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the party has passed through this challenge, they reach Stormwatch.

PART 4. ENTERING STORMWATCH

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

The top level of Stormwatch is the only one accessible from the outside. The entrance to the hangar is more than 100 feet wide, more than large enough to accommodate the egress of the three starfighters that were launched to intercept the *Hyperlance*, and a personnel shuttle which is still present. There are also three ATVs (ground transports) present as well.

THE HANGAR'S DEFENSES

If the party followed the original plan, and did not alert the base to their presence, the hangar is empty except for a pair of **armored drones**. They only pose a threat to the party if they can sound an alarm, which they attempt on their first turn should combat begin. If an alarm is sounded, then the Obsidian Knights become aware of the party's presence (see "Stormwatch - Second Level").

THE SHUTTLE

Baludan's personal shuttle is fully functional and very well appointed, but the systems are locked down. The system controls are encrypted with an unrecognizable form of technology and can't be accessed without Baludan's personal keychip.

COMPUTER CONSOLES

At the south end of the hangar are computer consoles that manage the hangar's operations.

Once the party has secured the hangar, they can access the base schematics, and possibly learn two pieces of information with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Computers) check.

- The first is that a large amount of power is drawn from a laboratory on Level 4.
- The second is that the Obsidian Knights have not reclaimed the entire base. Power and security has not been restored to several sections of the base and is possible for the party to travel to the laboratory through those areas. The door on the right brings the party through the abandoned sections of the base, while the left door brings them through the areas controlled by the Obsidian Knights.

FREIGHT ELEVATORS

The freight elevators at the south end of the hangar lead to the second level of the base. Both elevator cars are currently parked on the second level, which is as far down as they go.

Prying the elevator doors open requires a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check and the 30-foot descent requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

Power has only been restored to the eastern elevator, so that car can be used by anyone.

STORMWATCH – SECOND LEVEL

The Zephyr Corp technicians were immediately put to work, restoring power to the computer systems. Their first order of business was to identify the labs that had the equipment Baludan required.

While they were successful, there were some unexpected consequences. The power generators were already operating at low levels, maintaining several stasis pods. Two of these pods held a pair of genetically engineered and cybernetically enhanced beasts.

The creatures were intended to be a mated pair but were never allowed to cohabitate. Now, they have the run of the place, and have been preparing for the birth of their brood.

The Obsidian Knights are aware that something has been unleashed on the western side of the level, which is why they have not attempted to expand their footprint any further.

GENERAL FEATURES: EASTERN SIDE

The hallways and rooms within the base have been cut from the stone of the mountain. Grey ceramic panels and floor tiles give the corridors a sterile look.

Light. Fluorescent lights flicker in the hallways.

Smells and Sounds. A slight ammonia-like smell is present in the air.

GENERAL FEATURES: WESTERN SIDE

The escaped experiments have destroyed many of the stasis pods on the western side of the base.

Terrain. Shattered glass and stasis pod fluid has been tracked across many of the tile floors.

Light. The complete darkness in this area is only broken by the occasional spark from one of the many broken monitors.

Smells and Sounds. The faint scent of spoiled food emanates from the spilled stasis pod fluid.

INACCESSIBLE LOCATIONS

Many of the labs and chambers are inaccessible. Given enough time and resources, a team of determined individuals could eventually access these chambers.

However, accessing this area is beyond the scope of the adventure, and would likely take more time than the party has available to them.

LOCATION 1: FREIGHT ELEVATORS

As noted above, the western elevator (1A) is without power.

LOCATION 2: HALLWAY

If the remaining Obsidian Knights are aware of intruders, they are located here. Portable barricades are staggered along both sides of the wall. These barricades are bolted to the walls and provide three-quarters cover for the Knights.

The Obsidian Knights in this area are made up of two **mercenaries** and an **alterist**. They are led by Corporal Cyrax (a **heavy assault trooper**).

LOOT

Cyrax carries an *impact heavy rifle* fitted with a *beam emitter* mod. The mercenaries carry credchips holding a total of 750 cu.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove the alterist. Cyrax uses the **veteran** stat block.
- **Weak:** Remove the alterist.
- **Strong:** Add a **mercenary**.
- **Very Strong:** Add a **mercenary** and an **alterist**.

STAT BLOCK CHANGES

Corporal Cyrax uses the **heavy assault trooper** stat block with the following changes:

Corporal Cyrax's wields an *impact heavy rifle* equipped with a *beam emitter* mod.

Replace **Corporal Cyrax's Micro-cannon** and **Concussive Burst** actions with the following:

- **Impact Heavy Rifle. Ranged Weapon Attack:** +7 to hit, range 100/500 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage
- **Beam Emitter (1/day).** Cyrax discharges a laser beam from his rifle in a line 120 feet long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LOCATION 3: COMMAND CENTER

The lab that the Obsidian Knights have commandeered as a base of operations is a prime example of organized chaos. Panels on the walls and ceiling have been removed, exposing conduits, which in turn have been wired to provide network access and power.

Many of the monitors and terminals have been moved to the north side of the lab to act as their security operations center.

If the remaining Knights are not aware of the party's presence, they are located here. Many of them watch the monitors that display the demise of the *Hyperlance*.

While most of the equipment and supplies were removed long ago from this appropriated lab, several of

the larger devices have been stripped. Characters who succeed on DC 14 Intelligence (Medicine) check recognize their relevance to cybernetic and genetic enhancements.

DEVELOPMENT

In the corner of the room is Arisa Angel. She's bound with restraints and gagged. She appears to have been injured, likely through interrogation, but it has not robbed her of her fire. Her eyes glare with fury.

Upon being freed, Arisa thanks the party and explains that their safe house was hit hard with no warning. As far as she knows, Garland is dead, but knows that Selexi was taken to the levels below by Laris Baludan.

She describes Baludan as being almost gleeful as he inspected Selexi's implants. She overheard Baludan speaking with his agents, stating that the data from Selexi would be useless if extracted. Due to the nature of her cybernetics, Selexi herself is the device needed to utilize the Zephyr code.

Arisa strips the gear from one of the Knights and arms herself. With her injuries, use the **mercenary** stat block. She currently has 15 hp and her hit point maximum is 40 unless her wounded state is healed with a *minor remedy* talent or similar effect.

WHAT'S ON THE MONITORS?

If the party investigates the command center, they quickly realize that the remaining Obsidian Knights were monitoring the demise of the *Hyperlance*. The monitors show a feed of the wreck of the *Hyperlance*, floating dead in space, already caught in the gas giant's gravity well.

FACTION MISSION: SHADOW CIPHER

The consoles can be used to access several encrypted data libraries several of which are labeled with headings suggesting they are experimental research.

The encryption level will take significant resources to crack, but copying these data files will significantly improve a Shadow Cipher's operative standing within the organization.

LOCATION 4: WAREHOUSES

Multiple locations fit this profile

Though all the materials in this area have been removed, the rows of shelves and racks clearly indicate this area was used to store equipment.

LOCATION 5: ABANDONED LAB

Multiple locations fit this profile

Like the lab commandeered by the Obsidian Knights, these labs have been largely gutted.

In areas where power has been restored, the Shadow Cipher faction mission can also be satisfied from one or more of these locations.

Clever characters may also be able to leverage system access for other purposes as well.

LOCATION 6: OFFICES

Multiple locations fit this profile

These rooms look as if they were used as offices, workspaces and conference rooms.

LOCATION 7: THE NEST

Several large stasis pods line the wall. Each look like they held creatures two to three times the size of a human. The windows of these stasis pods have been shattered, covering the floor with a sticky viscous fluid. Equipment and pieces of the room itself have been piled into the center of the room, forming a macabre nest.

Within the nest are several large eggs, as well as the carcasses of other experiments, which were ripped out of their stasis pods. Each egg is a golden color, each standing over 6 feet tall and mottled with unique crimson patterns.

When the Zephyr Corp technicians arrived, they restored power to sections of the base. However, as they did so, they inadvertently cut power to the system which kept the two subjects suspended in their stasis pods.

These creatures began their lives as the same phaedan lizards that the party encountered on their way to Stormwatch. However, they were genetically and cybernetically enhanced. While their forms have been significantly altered, they retain their “beards”. Players may notice those crested ridges and connect them to the lizards they saw in the wild.

Once they freed themselves from their stasis pods, the beasts have been scavenging in this half of the base, tearing other experiments from their stasis pods to feed upon them, and to prepare meals for their brood.

While the beasts normally rest in this room with their brood, they immediately investigate any noise the party makes.

Should the party be able to access any of the base’s records, they discover that these two creatures were dubbed “bioroids”. Originally native to this moon, these lizards were genetically altered and cybernetically enhanced before being placed in stasis.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak** or **Weak**: Remove a **bioroid spawn**.
- **Strong**: Add a **bioroid spawn**.
- **Very Strong**: Add two **bioroid spawns**.

Any attack on the egg that inflicts more than 5 points of damage breaks the egg and kills the creature within.

DEVELOPMENT

Each of the creatures have several metal plates embedded in their flesh with their identification code (“Bioroid C-89478” and “Bioroid C-89201”).

An inspection the two Bioroid bodies reveals to a character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Medicine) check that these creatures underwent numerous surgeries.

FACTION MISSION: SHADOW CIPHER

Acquiring a sample from the carcass of one of the bioroids or one of their eggs satisfies the Shadow Cipher faction mission.

LOCATION 8: ELEVATORS

The party should have learned that Laris Baludan is on Level 4, but if they have missed this information, the GM is encouraged to offer them clues (for example, the dust on all but one of the buttons suggests it has been used recently), or suggest that they use the consoles to get more information.

At the far end of the base are a pair of elevators that descend further into the base:

- Power has only been restored to the eastern elevator.
- The door to the western elevator can be forced open with a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.

Climbing down is treacherous. A falling character plummets until they hit the elevator car, which is several levels below. This fall inflicts 22 (4d10) damage.

OTHER LEVELS

The elevator can bring the characters to any of the various levels of the complex.

These areas have no power to them, so if your characters insist on checking them out, use your imagination in describing what they see, but these areas are outside the scope of this adventure.

Many of the vault doors may be sealed as well, which may allow you to limit the exploration of curious characters.



U.K.7Y/7C.U.C.H PART 5. CENTER OF THE WEB U.2.H.F.9.7.U.C.H

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Deeper within the Stormwatch complex, the party encounters Laris Baludan, who has completed his transformation into a Synthantic. With telepathic control over the bioroids created here, he intends to elevate himself the the status of his technocrat masters.

GENERAL FEATURES

The hallways and rooms within the base have been cut from the stone of the mountain. Grey ceramic paneling and floor tiling give the corridors a sterile look.

Light. Florescent lights flicker in the hallways.

Smells and Sounds. A slight smell of ammonia is still present in the air. The hum of powered machinery can be heard from the main lab.

Regardless of which elevator the party uses to descend, the hum of powered machinery likely draws them to the main lab on this level.

Power has been restored to much of this level, and characters who choose to investigate the labs find many of them in the same state as the ones on Level 2. The only equipment which seems to have been left behind by the original occupants is the machinery built into the base itself.

LOCATION 9: LARIS BALUDAN'S LAB

This is one of the main labs in the complex, and while there are three others like this, Baludan has chosen this one as it is closest to the surface.

Once power was restored to this area, Baludan ordered the Obsidian Knights to remain above. He has developed a paranoia against anyone else interfering with his ascension into greatness.

Only the five technicians he brought with him were allowed on this level. Four of these technicians lie dead on the floor of the control room, shot by Baludan in cold blood when the machines were ready.

The fifth, a weaselly little dendus named Algryn, isn't sure whether to believe Baludan's words ("I always liked you ... there will be a place for you in all this"), or if he plans on killing him after the process is complete.

Algryn is in the control room when the characters arrive, armed with the pistol that Baludan shot his peers with.

Unfortunately, he did not think to reload it, so it only has two shots left. If the party does not surprise him, he wildly fires the pistol while shrieking. After a moment, he realizes the gun is empty and flings himself to the ground and begs for his life.

When the party reaches the control room, they see that the small chamber is part of a large lab. Beyond the static arcing across protective force screens, the party sees several large stasis pods standing erect in the center of the chamber. The center pod opens, its bifold doors spreading to reveal the transfigured form of **Laris Baludan** attached to a mass of cables.

Characters who have seen vids of Baludan recognize his face, though it is elongated and streaked with cybernetics. The rest of his body is not recognizable. While his skin retains the metallic grey typical of an ashenforged, it is chitinous, and veins of light intermingle with cyborg implants. Metallic hands flex as the cables decouple from his body, and the air around him sparks and sizzles.

ROLEPLAYING LARIS BALUDAN

The Zephyr Corp executive had always been a paranoid megalomaniac, convinced that the people around him were plotting his downfall.

His endless machinations, along with the demands of his techno-overlords had finally led him to suffer a psychotic break. He imagines all those around him as traitors and threats. Arisa's betrayal and the characters' continual interference only cement these delusions.

In addition, the process of his transformation, combined with his new telepathic link with the bioroids has driven him completely insane. He believes to have become a god, superior even to the Technocracy he so desperately wished to become part of.

- **Personality Traits:** I fear those who would pull me down. Only the power I seek can save me from them.
- **Ideals:** All others were destined to serve me.
- **Bonds:** Without power over others, I will fall.
- **Flaws:** They're out to get me. Anything you say will only convince me of that.

Baludan taunts the party, freely explaining that he was able to pull the secrets that Mikan Presar hid within his daughter's cybernetics. Even the ghost of him he left behind in his useless automaton couldn't stop it from happening.

He loudly exclaims that he has a new army of creatures to command, and as they spread to other worlds, they shall become an unconquerable army.

SETTING UP THE ENCOUNTER

Baludan and the other stasis pods are currently on the other side of a force field. The party can disable the force field by dealing 50 points of damage to one of the two generators on either side of the chamber. They can also disable a generator with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Mechanics) check. Allow whatever actions they attempt to be successful, but it takes at least a round or two to be successful.

During this time, allow Baludan to monologue, and describe the other stasis pods opening. The bioroids that emerge are smaller than the two that the party may have encountered before (Location 7: The Nest), but they are outfitted with cybernetics clearly intended to enhance and control them.

If the party does not blast their way through, Baludan drops the shields on his own, and engages the party, eager to flex his new power. He is accompanied by two **bioroid broods**.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

Very Weak or **Weak**: Remove a **bioroid brood**.

Strong: Add a **bioroid brood**.

Very Strong: Add two **bioroid broods**.

TACTICS

Baludan controls these beasts through a mental link. If pressed hard in the fight, his fear radiates through that link, and the beasts may switch targets to defend him.

If Baludan is killed before his minions, they enter a frenzied rage and attack the individual who killed Baludan. They move toward the target regardless of whether or not they provoke opportunity attacks from other creatures. In addition, they gain the additional feature:

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the Synthantic gains advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

DEVELOPMENT

Once Baludan has been defeated, the party can extract Selexi from the stasis pod next to Baludan's.

Her cybernetic implants have been wired into the stasis pod's systems in such a way that she cannot be extracted without destroying the stasis pod.

Likewise, Baludan destroyed his stasis pod when he emerged to face the party. Unfortunately, this means that it is not possible to reverse engineer the process that Baludan used to evolve himself.

Loot. Baludan's coat can be found at a nearby lab terminal. In the pockets, the party finds the following.

- A keychip needed to activate the systems for the shuttle in the hanger bay. The shuttle is a short-range transport with no stardrive. It can't be used to leave the system, but the characters can use it to rendezvous with Drake and the *Rafaela*.
- The second is a credchip that provides access to a small private account containing 1,000 cu.

EPILOGUE

After Baludan's defeat, the characters and Arisa are left to recover Selexi and bring her safely off-planet.

SELEXI'S RECOVERY

Selexi is unconscious once removed from her stasis pod and remains so for 1d4 hours.

When revived, she is exhausted and confused. Her memories of the incident are fragmented and she only remembers pieces.

She does recall snippets of a man ... one who was important to her, but she can't remember who it was. She remembers walking on the beach as a little girl, his hand in hers. She remembers pain, and his voice trying to calm her, telling her it will be alright.

If anyone reminds her that this is not the first time she has been taken prisoner, she scowls at that person and growls, "I ... know!"

THE HYPERLANCE

The ship did not survive the encounter with Baludan's starfighters. Its remains were pulled into the gas giant's gravity well. If the party chose to assist the *Hyperlance* in the battle, the ship and Alfred's fate are described in appendix G.

ALFRED'S LEGACY

Rhona meets the party at a predefined location.

Upon hearing of Alfred's demise, Rhona admits that the automaton's plan included its own suicide mission. Aside from Selexi, Alfred and the *Hyperlance* held the last vestiges of the Zephyr code. Their destruction was Alfred's only means of permanently eliminating the threat posed by the Shadow Technocracy.

Resigned, Rhona hands Selexi a data chip. "Alfred left this for you when we got you back. I ... think it wanted to make sure you knew why it did what it did."

The data chip contains a message from Alfred 3020, explaining that her father imprinted his personality onto Alfred's programming. The automaton apologizes for keeping this secret, as it was the only way it could keep her safe from her father's enemies. It hopes that she will forgive it and her father, and think of them both fondly. So long as the characters weren't rude or threatening toward Selexi, she shares this information with them.

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and CC serial number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

PLAYER REWARDS

Consider the following when calculating player rewards.

EXPERIENCE

Total up all experience earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat.

For non-combat experience, the rewards are listed per character.

COMBAT AWARDS

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
Alterist	450
Bioroid Brood	700
Bioroid Spawn	200
Heavy Assault Trooper	1,800
Laris Baludan	1,800
Mercenary	700
Phaedan Lizard	450
Sludge Creeper	450

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Successfully evaded the Sludge Creepers	500
Successfully rescued Selexi	500

The minimum total award for each character participating in this adventure is 3,000 experience points.

The maximum total award for each character participating in this adventure is 4,000 experience points.

LOOT

The characters receive the following loot, divided as evenly as possible amongst the party.

Cubil values listed for gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

LOOT AWARDS

Item Name	Cu. Value
Rhona's payment	500, 750, or 1,000
Baludan's credchip	1,000

Permanent items are divided according to a system detailed in the *Esper Genesis Crucible Corps Campaign Guide*.

ENHANCED ITEMS

The following items can be found during the adventure.

Impact Heavy Rifle. This description for this weapon can be found in Appendix F.

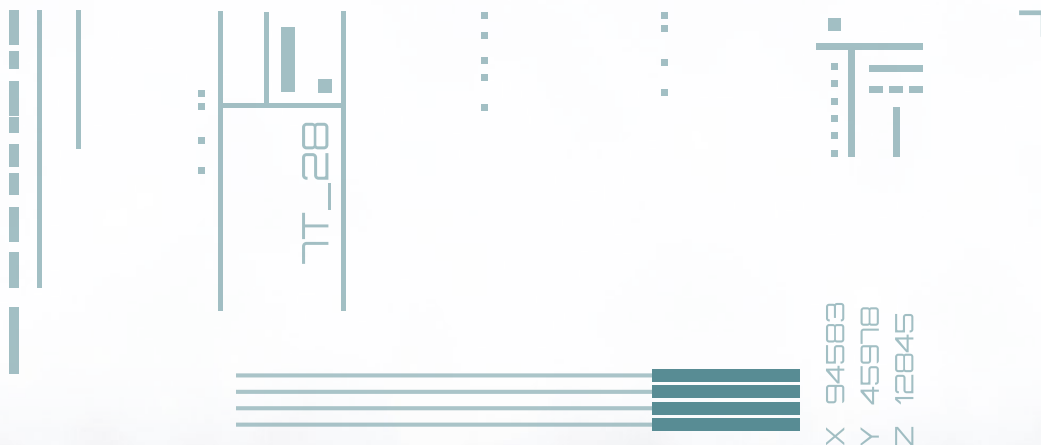
Beam Emitter. This description for this mod can be found in Appendix F.

RENOWN

Each member of the Shadow Cipher receives one renown at the end of this adventure if they collected information regarding, or samples of, the bioroids created in the military laboratories.

GM REWARDS

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn GM Rewards as described in the *Esper Genesis Crucible Corps Campaign Guide*.



APPENDIX B. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

ALFRED 3020 (AHL-FRED)

An android imbued with a self-aware AI that is commonly referred to as a “machina”. It has spent the last few years being hunted by forces searching for the encrypted data stored in its mainframe.

To this point, it has claimed that it still hasn’t adjusted to its rapidly evolving mind and persona. But in truth, the personality of Selexi’s father, Mikar Presar, has been imprinted on his programming.

ARISA ANGEL (AH-REE-SAH AYN-JELL)

Former head of Zephyr Corps “Obsidian Knights” team, Arisa was been the corporation’s ace-in-the-hole when it came to solving problems.

Learning of her of her employer’s darkest secrets changed her views. She betrayed the organization and has chosen to act as a guardian to Selexi Sunfire

RHONA (ROW-NAH)

Owner of the Eclipse night club on the Pel Tavarica space station.

She is a former agent for Silrayne Defense and now works as a go-between for various underworld contacts.

She reaches out to the party when her colleague is attacked while protecting Selexi at a safe house.

LARIS BALUDAN

(LAH-RISS BAH-LOO-DAHN)

Former CEO of the Zephyr Corporation.

Laris’s desire to be either the creator or progenitor of the most important things in the universe has pushed him over the edge of sanity. His paranoid megalomania has only been heightened by his transformation.

RUFUS DRAKE (ROO-FUSS)

Pilot and owner of the *Rafaela*, a smuggler by trade.

He typically has a cigar in his mouth, although never lit “when on duty”, and frequently dispenses drinks for himself from a small contraption on his belt.

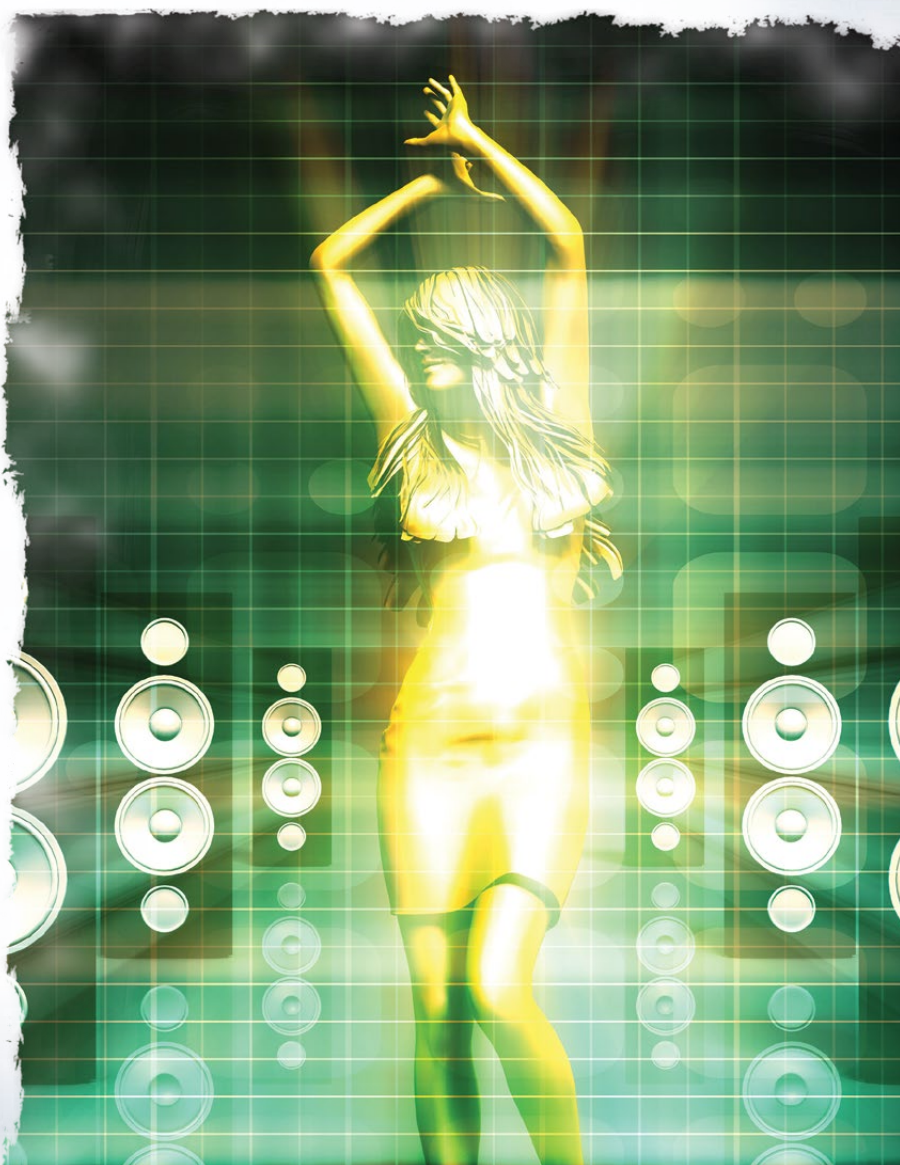
He’s very comfortable taking risks, but doesn’t like it when other people take them.

SELEXI SUNFIRE (SEH-LEK-SEE)

Pop music icon of the Silrayne Arc. Operates on the SIM under the codename Metal Siren.

Over the past year, a number of systems activated within her cyborg implants, some beyond her control and coupled with strange flashes of memories that aren’t hers.

She’s fierce both on and off stage, having no problem sporting her fiery attitude and passion for her work.



APPENDIX C. THREAT STATISTICS

ALTERIST

Medium humanoid (any), any alignment

Armor Class 11 (PSD), 14 with protection field

Hit Points 44 (8d8+8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	10(+0)

Skills Insight +3, Perception +3, Lore +6

Senses Passive Perception 13

Languages any one language, usually Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Energy Harvest. Once per turn whenever the alterist damages a creature with a talent of Rank 1 or higher and the creature's hit points is reduced to zero, the alterist regains hit points equal to twice the rank of the talent.

Esper Talent. The alterist adept is a 6th level channeler. Its channeling ability is Intelligence (save DC 12; +4 to hit with channeling talents).

Prime (at will): blast, dark conduit, push, tricky fingers

Rank 1 (4 slots): distortion, fire lance, primal fear, protection field

Rank 2 (4 slots): disruption wave, phase shift, stasis field

Rank 3 (3 slots): celerity, singularity

ACTIONS

Combat Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Source: Game Master Basic Rules, p17

ARMORED DRONE

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (reinforced armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	3 (+4)

Skills Athletics +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages –

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Charge. If the drone moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a ram spike attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Ram Spike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Rifle Mount. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 50/150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Source: Core Manual, p284



BIOROID BROOD

Large monstrosity, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (7d8 + 14)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+2)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The bioroid has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The bioroid has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the bioroid's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Lightning Blast (Recharge 5-6). The bioroid unleashes electricity in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

BIOROID SPAWN

Large monstrosity, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The bioroid has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The bioroid has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the bioroid's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bioroid makes two attacks with its claws.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw against disease or become poisoned until the disease is cured. Every 24 hours that elapse, the creature must repeat the saving throw, reducing its hit point maximum by 5 (1d10) on a failure. This reduction lasts until the disease is cured. The creature dies if the disease reduces its hit point maximum to zero.



DURASTEEL MECHAROID

Large automaton, neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Computers +3, Perception +4

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses infravision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

Languages ALOMU

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Charging Attack. If the mecharoid moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a slam attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the mecharoid can make one kick attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Spike Launcher. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Shockwave (Recharge 5–6). The mecharoid unleashes a spiral of crackling, high-voltage energy in a 30-foot cone. Each target in that area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) lightning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. In addition, a creature that fails their save is stunned until the end of their next turn.

HEAVY ASSAULT TROOPER

Medium humanoid (any), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (centurion)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +6, Con +6

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Brave. The mercenary has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

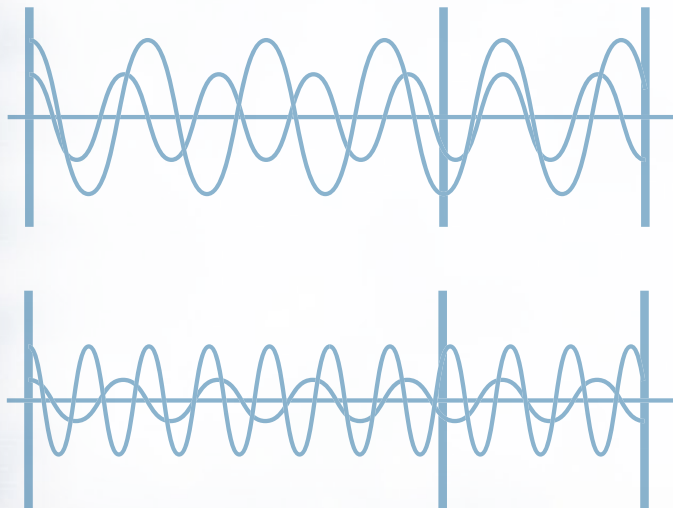
ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mercenary makes three melee or two ranged attacks.

Double-Bladed Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Micro-cannon. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) force damage

Concussive Burst (Micro-cannon). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 50/150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) force damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.



LARIS BALUDAN, SYNTHANTIC

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +6

Skills Computers +4, Mechanics +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Nesieve

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Forged Resistance. Baludan has advantage on saving throws against poison, as well as to resist being charmed or paralyzed.

Esper Powers (Technomancy). Baludan is a 10th-level esper. His forging ability is Wisdom (save DC 14; +6 to hit with esper powers). He has the following techniques prepared.

Prime (at will): *deflect elements, electric surge, sonic burst*

Rank 1 (4 slots): *intercept directive, laser blast, sensory jammer*

Rank 2 (3 slots): *assault drone, enhance weapon*

Rank 3 (3 slots): *attack pattern, personal sentry*

Rank 4 (3 slots): *lightning ring, tractor beam*

Rank 5 (2 slots): *mass mend, mechanical stasis*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Baludan makes two melee attacks.

Plasma Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) radiant damage plus 13 (3d8) fire damage.

Proton Beam (Recharge 5-6). Baludan fires an energy beam in a 40-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) radiant damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

MERCENARY

Medium humanoid (any), any alignment

Armor Class 14 (light trooper)

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

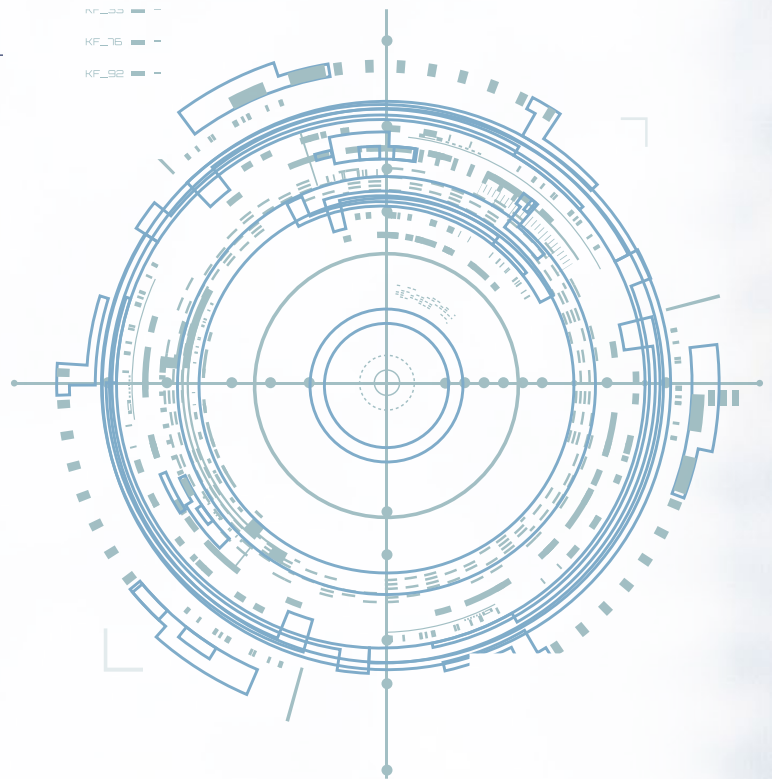
Second Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the mercenary can regain 20 hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mercenary makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Longblade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Short Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 70/210 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage





PHAEDAN LIZARDS

Large beast, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d10 + 16)

Speed 50 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	5 (-2)	11 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Drake

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

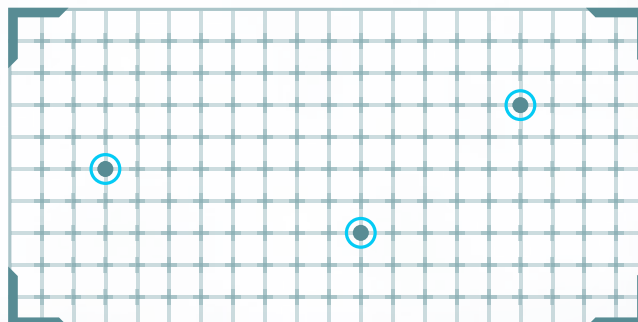
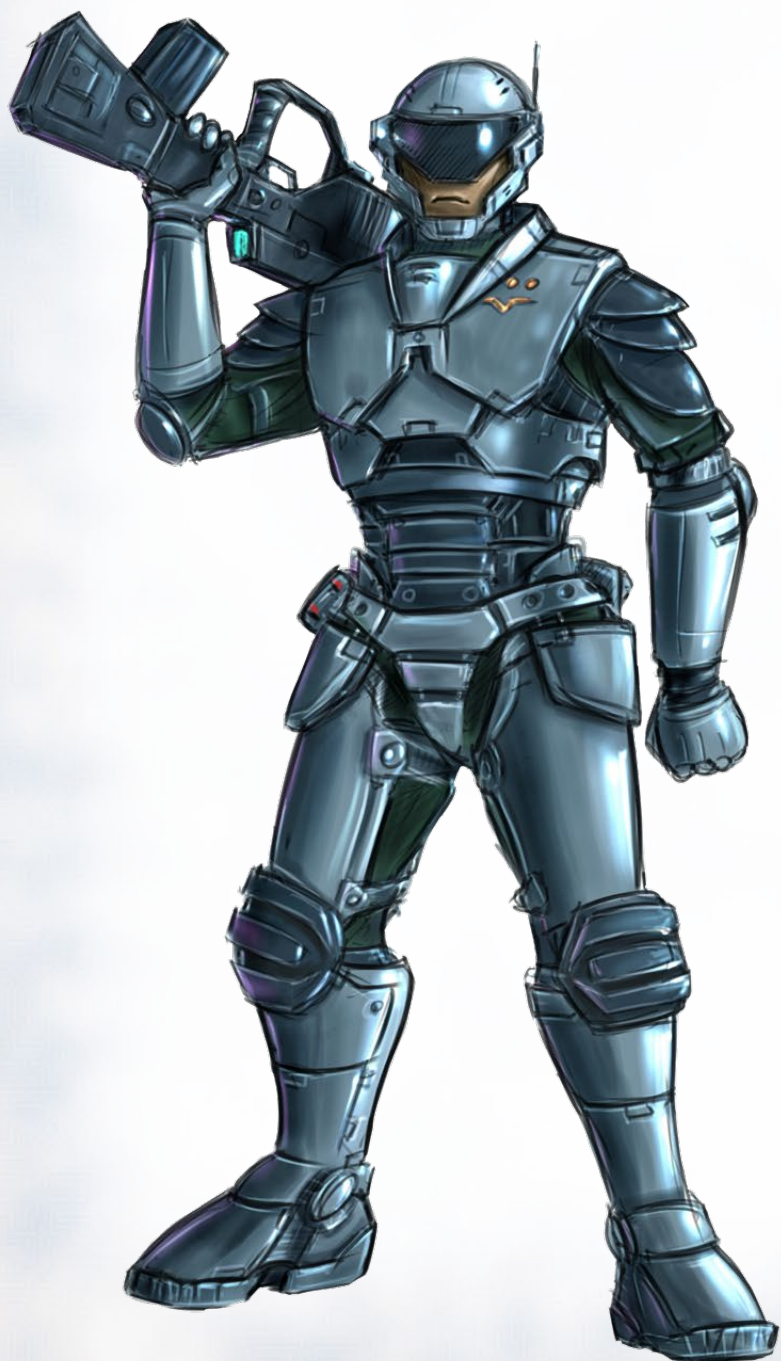
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5–6). The lizard uses one of the following breath weapons:

Fire Breath. The lizard exhales fire in a 20-foot line that is 5 feet high. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Blight Breath. The lizard exhales cloud of molecular corrosion in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. This damage cannot be healed until 1 minute has passed.



SLUDGE CREEPERS

Large primordial, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	6 (-2)	14 (+2)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances acid

Damage Immunities lightning, slashing

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Amorphous. The creeper can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Spider Climb. The creeper can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) acid damage.

REACTIONS

Split. When a creeper that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new jellies if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new creeper has hit points equal to half the original creeper's, rounded down. New jellies are one size smaller than the original creeper.

VETERAN

Medium humanoid (any), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (centurion)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Skills Athletics +4, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The veteran makes three melee attacks or three ranged attacks.

Longblade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

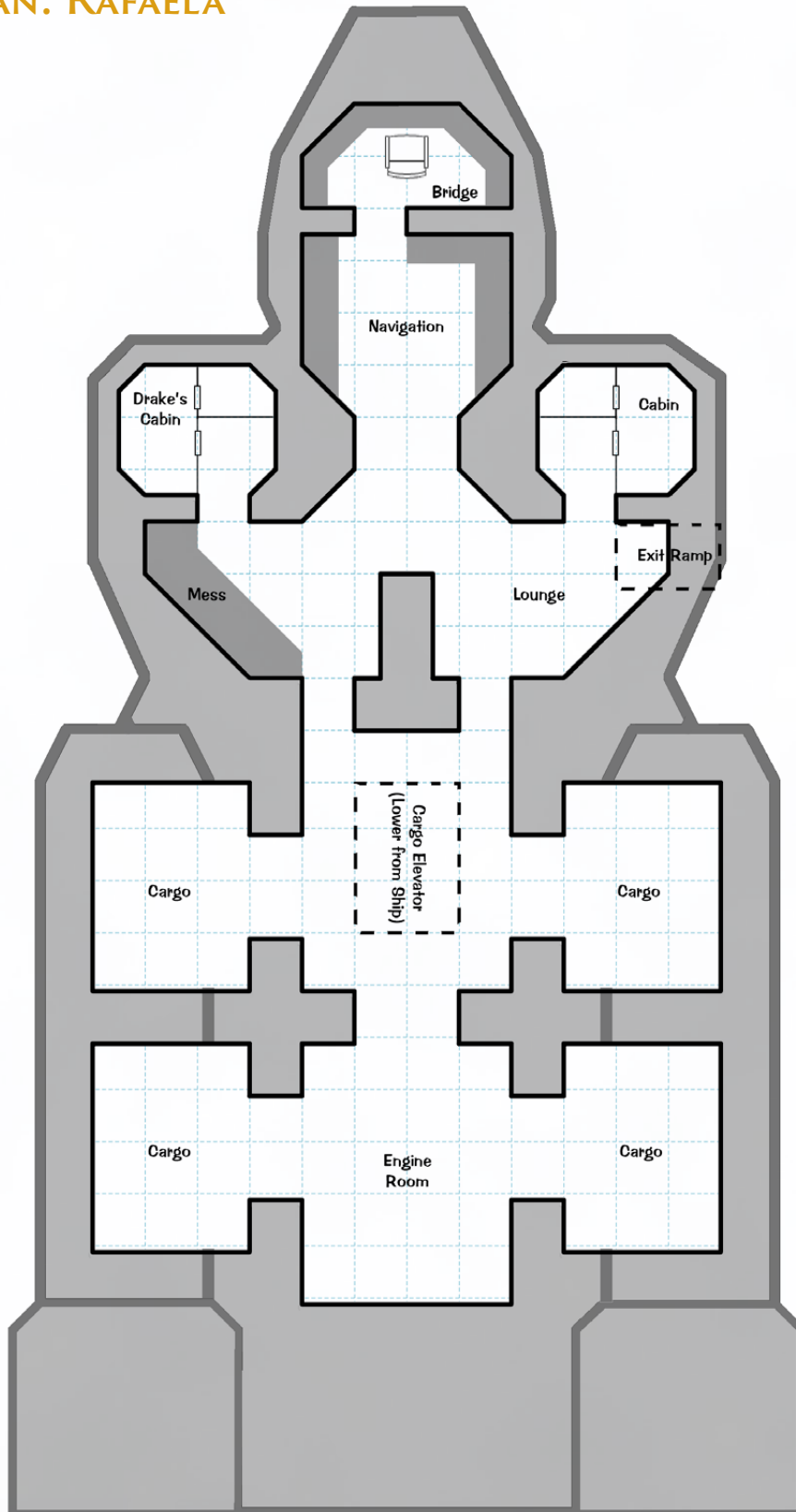
Heavy Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 50/250 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Burst Fire (Recharge 5-6). The veteran fires a spray of bullets in a 10-foot cube area within 80 feet of it that it can see. Each target in that area must succeed on a DC 12 burst save or take 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

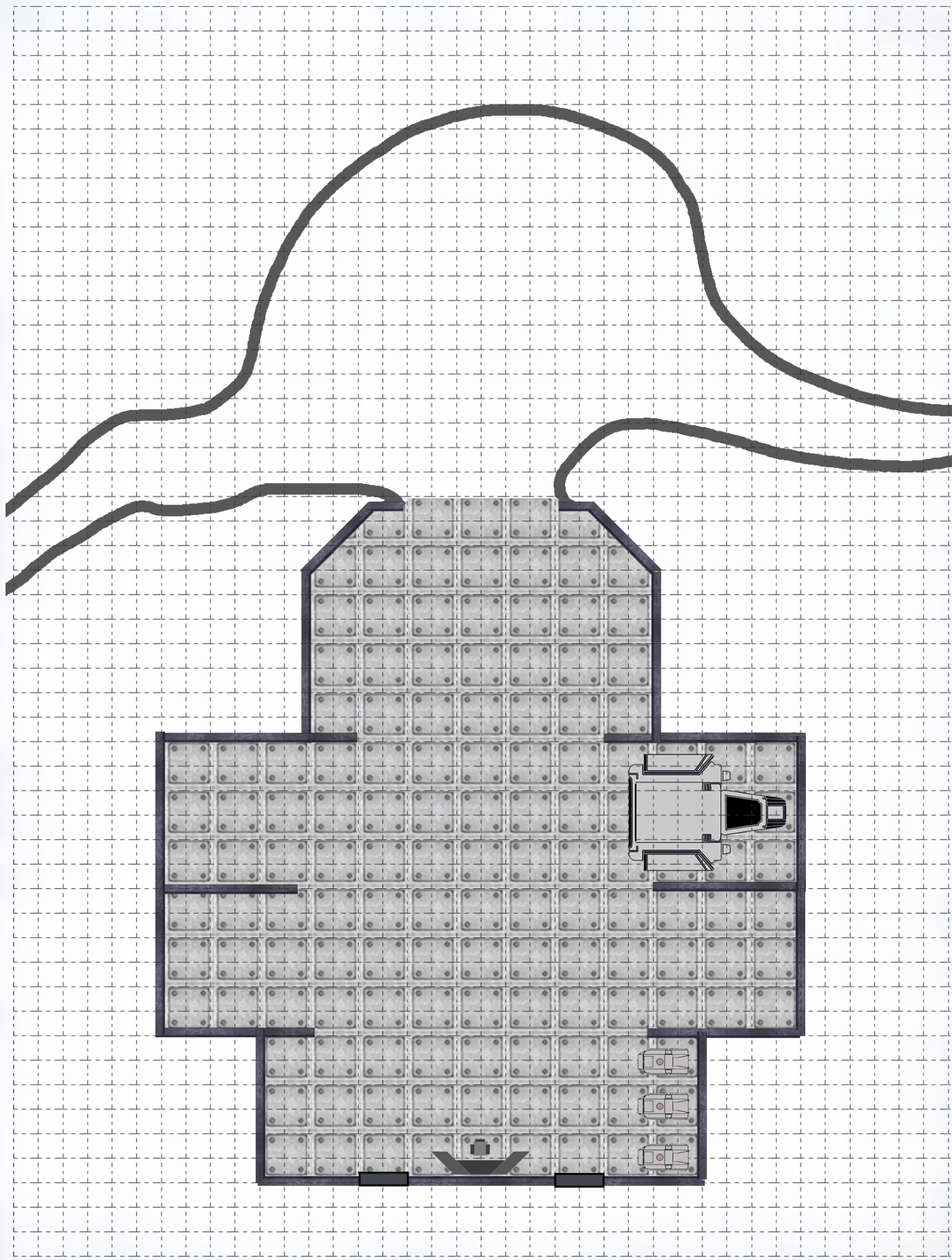
Throw Grenade (3/day). The veteran throws a grenade onto a point it can see within 60 feet of it. Each creature within 10 feet of that point must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (5d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.



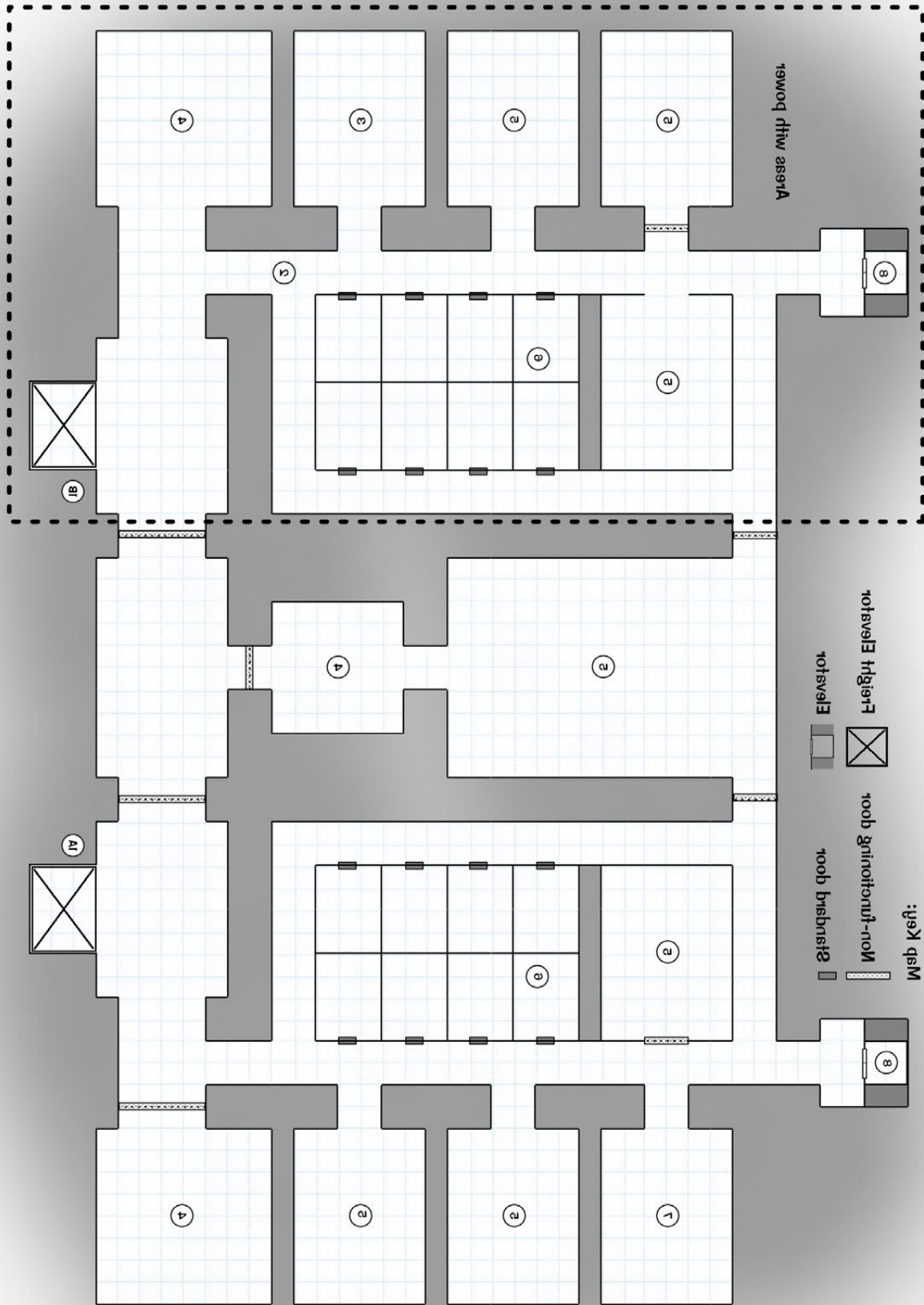
FLOOR PLAN: RAFAELA



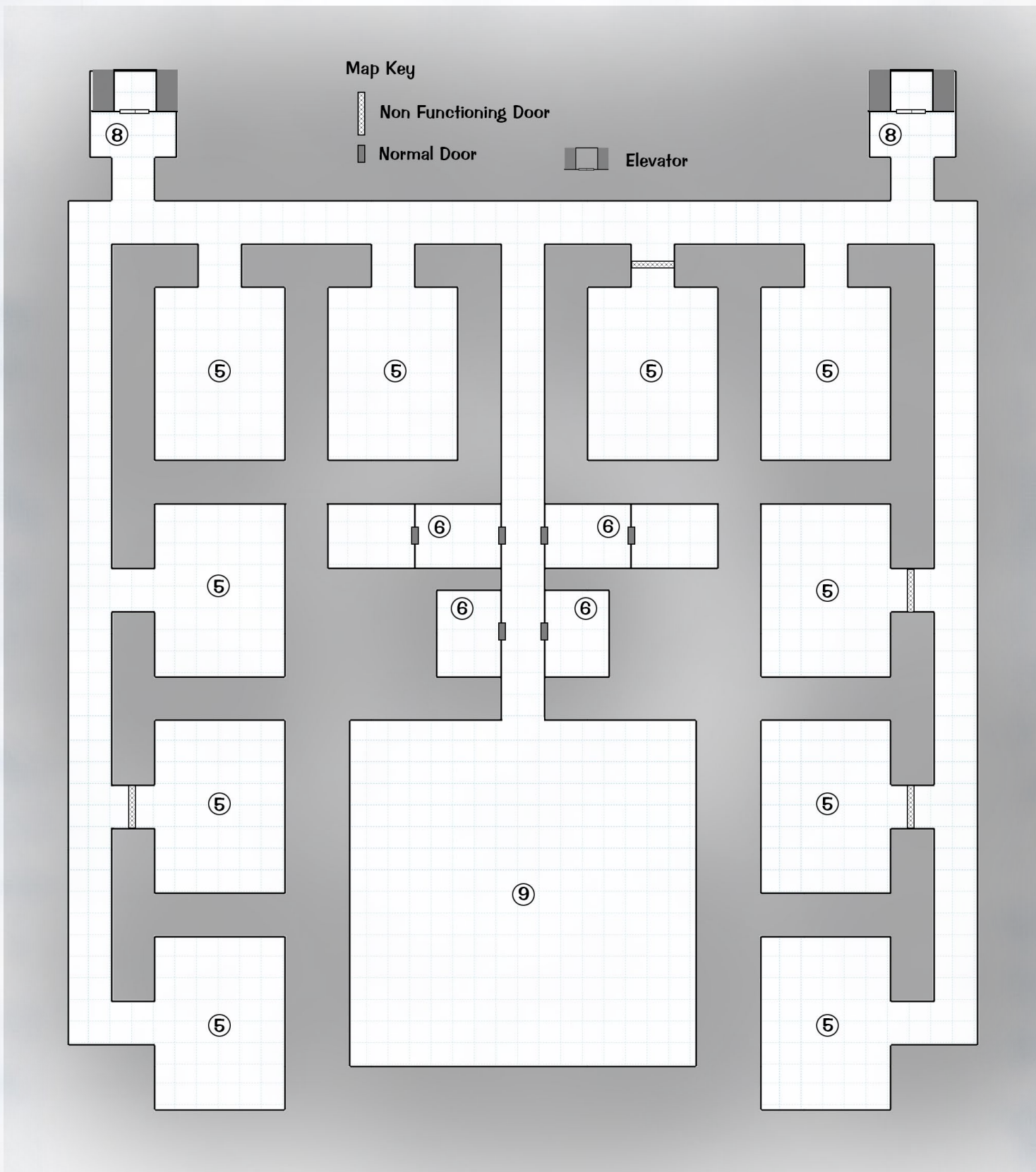
APPENDIX — FLOOR PLAN: STORMWATCH HANGAR



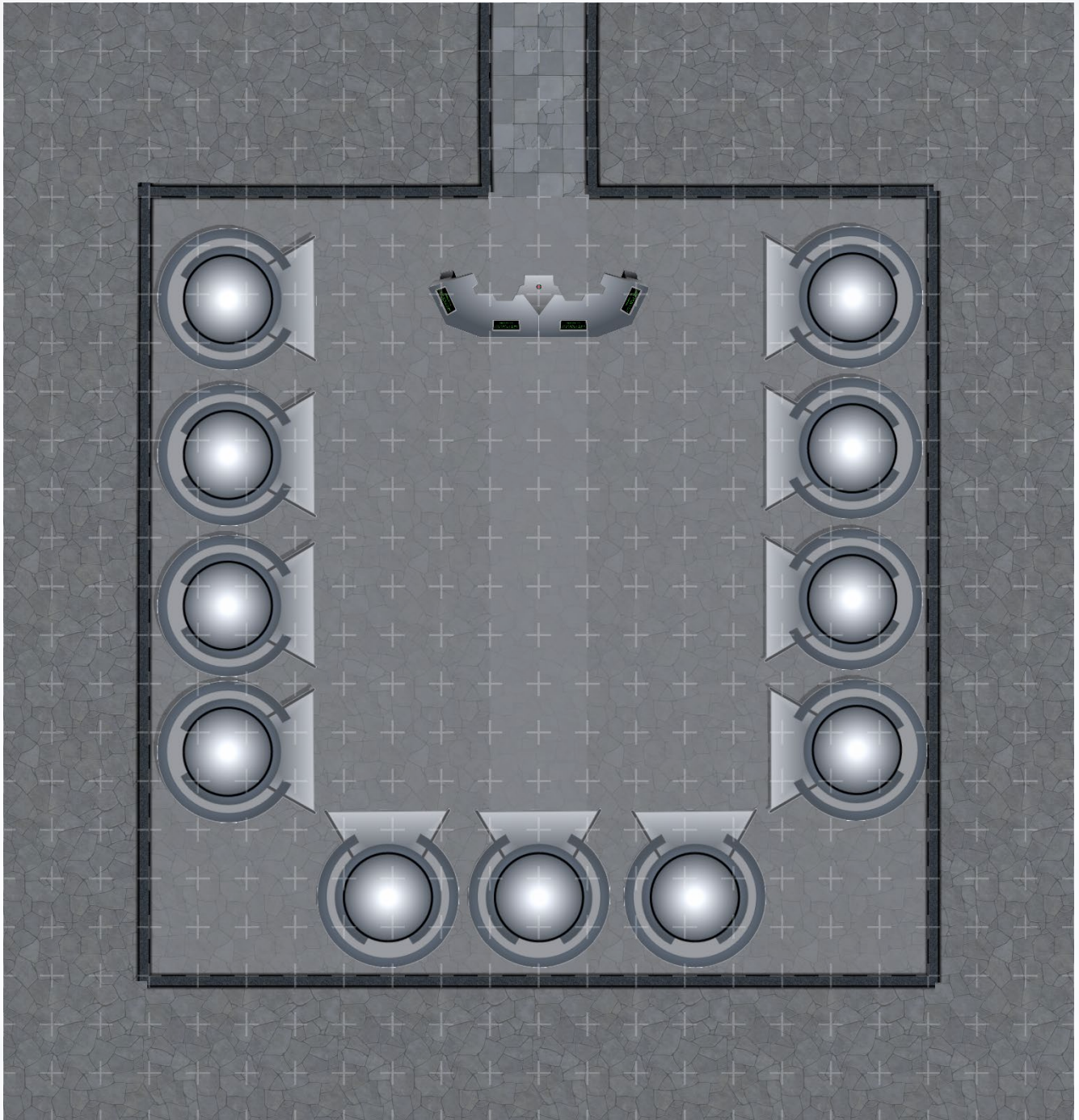
APPENDIX — FLOOR PLAN: STORMWATCH LEVEL 2



APPENDIX — FLOOR PLAN: STORMWATCH LEVEL 4



APPENDIX — FLOOR PLAN: BALUDAN'S LAB



Consider the following advice when running this adventure.

RUNNING FOR CRUCIBLE CORPS

This adventure is designed for five to seven 5th to 10th level characters with an APL of 6.

Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure when being run for organized play.

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure provides suggestions to make adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for.

You're not bound to these adjustments — they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should adjust the adventure difficulty, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding 0.5 or greater up; rounding 0.4 or less down). This is the group's APL.

To approximate the party strength for the adventure, consult the following table.

DETERMINE PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very Strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

PLAYING THE GAME MASTER

As the Game Master, your role is to present and narrate a fun and immersive experience for yourself and your players.

When running these adventures, please keep the following in mind:

Be Prepared. Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself during your session, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC, or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure's appendices and threat entries.

Be a Part of the Group. Always remember that you are not the enemy of, nor are you competing with any of the players. Your job is to present and run the adventure, encounters, adversaries, and story while maintaining flow of events. You also get to play any other persona in the adventure that are not the player characters.

Encourage the Dialogue. Always introduce yourself to players you don't know and encourage them to do the same for both themselves and their character. Gauge the experience level of your players (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep with the Flow. While you are the authority on the rules and encounters, it is really your players that provide the catalyst to make the story go. Their actions and decisions should affect how you run encounters, while your method of presenting the story influences their decisions. This circular relationship allows everyone to be involved and have as much fun as possible. Use the rules as a tool to move the story rather than delay it. The best game masters use the rules in a fair, impartial, and consistent manner for every single player in their game. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players in order to keep things moving.

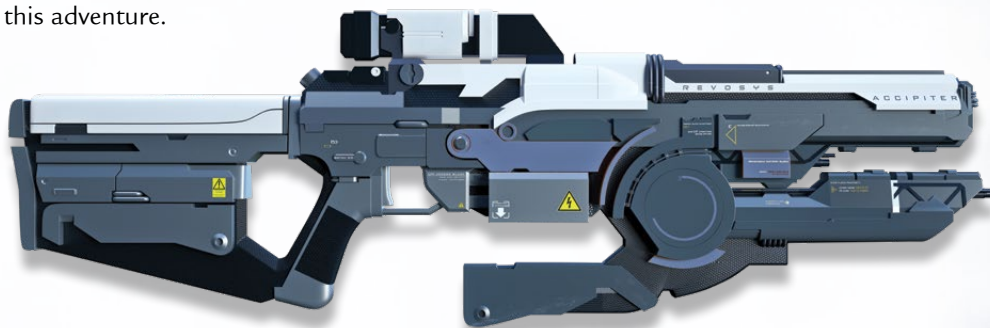
The following items can be found in this adventure.

IMPACT HEAVY RIFLE

Weapon (melee, ranged), uncommon

You gain a +1 to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon.

Corporal Cyrax took excellent care of this weapon, upgrading it with black leather grips and a custom stock. The only blemish on the weapon are the letters SD carved into the casing.



BEAM EMITTER

Mod (ranged weapon, ammunition property), uncommon

While this module is attached, you can use your attack action to discharge a laser beam from your weapon in a line 120 feet long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 radiant damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one.

After using this mod, its power supply is depleted and you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.



If your players choose to assist the *Hyperlance* on its approach to Phaedra 5, the *Rafaela*'s sensors pick up two **heavy bombers** that have been masking their drive signatures and looking to silently flank the *Hyperlance*. Alfred doesn't appear to have detected them and will likely be blindsided while the *Hyperlance* takes on the other approaching starfighters. Taking those bombers out should even the odds, but will drastically change the flow of the rest of the adventure, as the base defenders will know they are there.

SPACE COMBAT

The *Rafaela* uses the stat block for a Light Freighter, which can be found in both the Basic Rules and the Core Rules.

The party can either replace Drake and TekMite as the Pilot and Technician, or leave them in place and use their abilities. (As a pilot, Drake has a +3 Dexterity modifier and a +2 Wisdom modifier. As a technician, TekMite has a +3 Intelligence modifier and a +2 Wisdom modifier).

To succeed in defending the *Hyperlance*, the *Rafaela* must defeat both heavy bombers. Alfred tells the characters that the *Hyperlance* can handle the rest, and that the party should head down to the surface before they close the hangar doors.

Should the party insist on continuing, they must contend with a **heavy striker** that breaks off from the attack on the *Hyperlance* to deal with them.

ENGAGING THE ENTIRE PARTY

A freighter is typically crewed by a maximum of 4 people. With groups of more than 4 characters, this may cause some of your players to feel left out. Here are a few options which may help you to engage the remaining players.

- The *Rafaela* doesn't normally require a captain or co-pilot role, but these may be added optionally for players to act in this capacity.
- If multiple players are left out, in the first round of combat, the gunship launches a boarding pod that strikes the *Rafaela*. The remaining players must deal with boarders. Aboard the pod is 1 **mercenary** for each player who does not have a ship role.

The party and GM may also come up with other interesting ideas on how to involve all of the players at the table.

DEVELOPMENT

The battle can end in one of two ways — either the party loses, or the party wins:

THE PARTY LOSES THE BATTLE

If the *Rafaela* is reduced to 0 hull points, they are shot down. Panels on the bridge begin to spark and explode as the systems begin to fail.

Drake will dash back onto the bridge and attempt to push the pilot out of the chair. The ship will then crash onto Phadus 5.

The *Rafaela* then crash lands several miles away from the base. The party must now contend with the encounters in **Part 3. The Approach**.

Additionally, the Obsidian Knights will have fortified the hangar, and the party will have to fight their way in.

THE PARTY WINS THE BATTLE

When the party has defeated the ships opposing them, read the following.

With the bombers down, the *Hyperlance* seems to be holding its own, though it appears to be severely damaged. Your comm flickers on and Alfred's voice blares out over the speakers.

"Get to the hanger, NOW," it shouts, "before we lose our window!" The *Hyperlance* turns toward the last fighter, firing up its thrusters into full burn. "This is the best way," Alfred says solemnly. "It's the best for her."

Using its state-of-the-art boosters, the *Hyperlance* smashes headfirst into the last heavy striker, causing an explosion that engulfs both ships.

Feel free to allow the characters to involve themselves in the situation as they choose, but there should be no way for them to stop the *Hyperlance* from being destroyed. This is Alfred's intent and was planned all along (see "Epilogue").

THE HANGAR DEFENSES

- Adjust the description of the hangar from **Part 4. Entering Stormwatch** as follows:
- The 40 foot high hangar bay door has descended only 10 feet. When Zephyr Corp arrived, they had to forcibly open the doors, and the mechanism used to close the doors has broken.
- If the *Rafaela* crashed, two of the ATVs are not present. A group of Obsidian Knights are out looking for the wreckage. (Note: Their untimely return during the party's attempt to gain access to the Stormfall base's hanger entrance could be one way to increase the difficulty of this overall mission.)

- The armored drones are positioned at the top of each path leading down to the ground. They will alert the Obsidian Knights of the party's presence (either by detecting them or by suddenly being destroyed.)

The hangar is protected by additional forces consisting of a **mercenary**, a **durasteel mecharoid**, and two **armored drones**.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Very Weak: Remove the **durasteel mecharoid** and add two **mercenaries**.

Weak: Remove the **mercenary**.

Strong: Add a **mercenary** and an **armored drone**.

Very Strong: Add two **mercenaries** and two **armored drones**.

CHANGES TO LOCATION 3

Depending on the outcome of the space battle, one of two scenes may be shown on the monitors in the Obsidian Knight's command center (part 3, location 3).

THE PARTY LOST THE BATTLE

If the *Rafaela* was shot down, the scene shown on the monitors remains unchanged — the wreck of the *Hyperlance*, floating dead in space, already caught in the gas giant's gravity well. A heavy striker is methodically firing on the crippled ship.

THE PARTY WON THE BATTLE

Although the party was able to defeat the reinforcements, the *Hyperlance* was destroyed due to Alfred's sacrifice. The wreckage of the ship is already caught in Phadus's gravity well and there is no saving the ship.

Quick-thinking characters may consider contacting the *Rafaela* to see if Drake can investigate the wreckage to see if Alfred may have survived the wreck. Drake, however, responds that it would be too dangerous and he would probably not be able to make it out.

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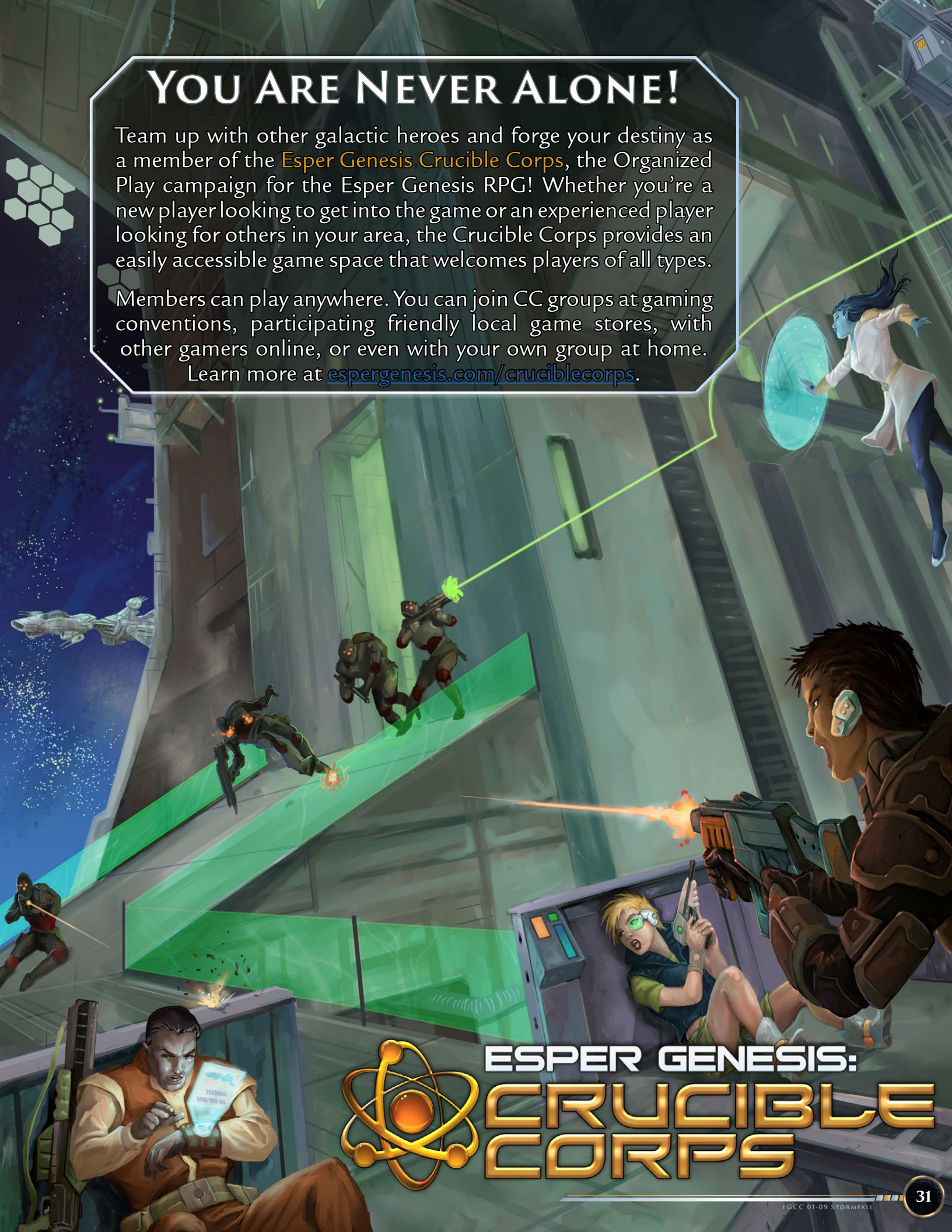
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