The background is a rich, multi-colored starry sky. It features a dense field of stars in various colors, including bright blue, white, and yellow. A prominent feature is a diagonal band of orange and yellow light, possibly representing a nebula or a star-forming region. The bottom edge of the image is defined by a jagged, black silhouette that resembles a mountain range or a torn piece of paper.

Through the Gate of Flesh

Carl Niblaeus

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Acknowledgements

Playtesters at GothCon XLII.

Cover

Adapted from an image by the European Southern Observatory, portraying the heart of the Milky Way.

Image credit: ESO/B. Tafreshi (twanight.org)

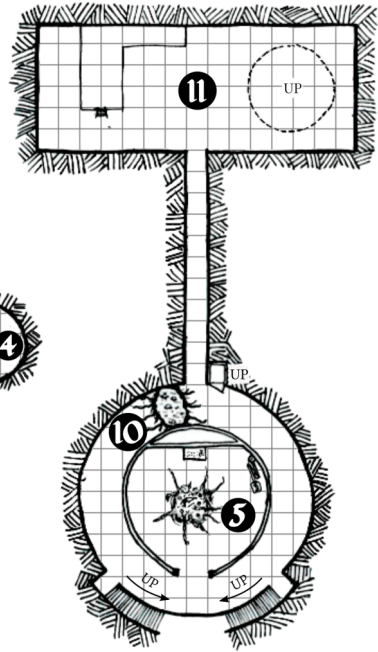
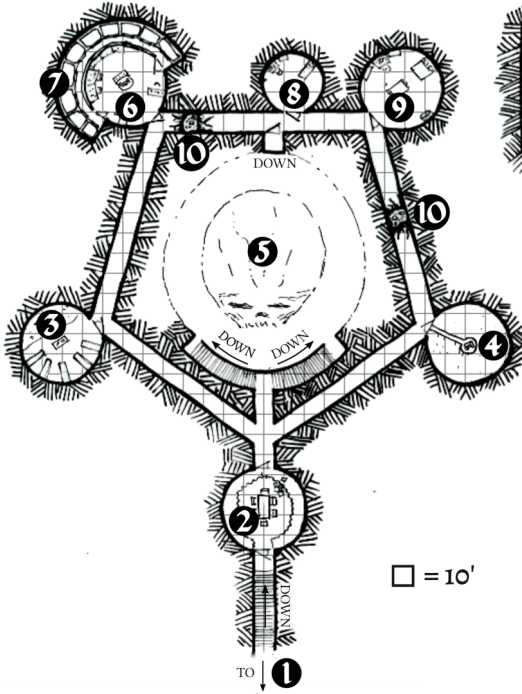
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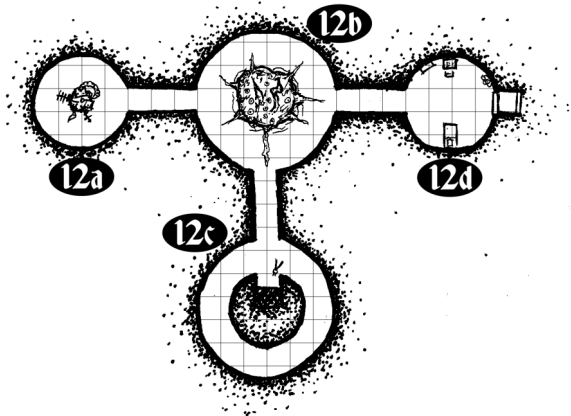
Upper level

Lower level



□ = 10'

Baikal



1. Outside entrance (not on map)
 - Five statues around large sphere
 - Pressing bronze disks on sphere reveals entrance to below
2. Reception room
 - Drapes along walls, table, boxes
 - Gold wire (500 sp) in hidden box
3. Freezer room
 - Dark energy barrier in doorway
 - Shelves with frozen body parts
 - Cyborg *Eltanin*
 - Deactivated CLONES
4. Stellarium
 - Rotatable chair with helmet on platform, can contact stars
 - Small crystals in walls in shape of stellar constellations (2400 sp)
5. Portal nexus
 - Portal, fleshy mass
 - Movable chair
 - Mural, press sun to open secret space with platina cylinder (5000 sp)
 - Spindly antennae in domed ceiling
 - Control panel (north wall), controls chair and force fields in doorways
6. Biomechanical workshop
 - Virtual reality operating suit
 - Two doors to cell corridor
 - Tools, rubble and a surgery table
7. Cells
 - White sterile small spaces
 - Creatures in two of them (clone *U* and tentacled ELLIPSOID)
8. Paxillos living quarters
 - Dusty desk with neat stack of notes
 - Bed (trapped box with *mind-switching helmets* underneath)
9. Astrodeæ's living quarters
 - Dark energy barrier in doorway
 - Doomsday clock on wall.
 - Empty desk, bookcase with a few books (*Chronicle of Astrodeæ the Great*).
 - Hidden switch behind bed opens secret space under floor with necro-capsule and spellbook
10. Pool of abominations
 - Slowly bubbling, oozing acid pools
 - When standing next to, 4 in 6 risk per turn that MAJOR or MINOR ABOMINATION emerges
11. Space port
 - Large hangar for space vessels, raised platform to west with ladder
 - 40' diameter shaft in ceiling to east, 100' up to surface, 1d6 SPACE PIRATES stand guard
- 12a. The beacon
 - Weird flesh-machine, four GRUNTS
- 12b. Portal nexus
 - Portal, fleshy mass, six GRUNTS
- 12c. Plasma chamber
 - Torus shaped room with furnace, *Paxillos* is here
- 12d. Living quarters
 - Bed, desk with drawings
 - Spacesuit hanging on wall, airlock to planet outside

Introduction

THIS OLD SCHOOL adventure is my take on the “wizard’s tower” type of adventure, with the “tower” here in the form of a science fantasy laboratory filled with oddities to investigate, wherein a vengeful portalist with an interest in biomechanics is preparing for a magical power grab. The adventure is written with the *Lamentations of the Flame Princess* ruleset in mind, but can easily be ported to other OSR games.

Background

SEVERAL centuries ago three portalists reigned over a great empire that spanned several stellar systems in the great, yawning Cosmos. The oldest one of them, *Astrodea*, was famed for her expertise in biomechanics, excelling in the creation of incredible abominations of nature. As time passed, the three divided the empire between them and ruled ruthlessly over their respective realms. But then one day, the two younger portalists conspired to betray *Astrodea*, conquering her kingdom and leaving her powerless to die on a distant planet on the edge of the galaxy.

Astrodea retreated to one of the portalists’ long forgotten biomechanical laboratories situated deep within a mountain in the woods on the edge of civilisation on the forsaken planet. She brooded in the darkness, performing horrible biological experiments over the years, always with only one goal in mind—revenge. Aided by the constructs *Paxillos* and *Eltanin*—her “children”—she planned for her vengeance, aiming to exploit the magical force that the

rare alignment of the stars brings. Many years ago she sent *Paxillos* to the distant planet *Baikal* by the star *Aldebaran* to build a beacon that will magnify her strength on the day the stars are right. She then went into hibernation to gain strength until that day.

A few days ago, she awoke and began preparing for the day of her vindication. She is now nearer her goal than ever before.

A local group of adventurers and curious about the dark hole in the woods (leading down to the space port) near the clearing with the ancient statues recently entered the laboratory, eager for fame and riches. Only *Pyk* survived. Even more recent is the arrival of the *Tundra Crew*, a rough crew of space pirates looking for treasure.

Rumours

1D6 RUMOUR

- 1 Something horrible in the hill is responsible for many abductions throughout the years.
- 2 Astrologers all say the same thing—the stars are lining up and a cataclysm is nearing.
- 3 A long time ago, three portalists ruled the area without mercy, they will soon return to reclaim their lands. Very soon.
- 4 A group of vicious space pirates have landed in the woods, they’re up to no good.
- 5 There is a God living under the mountain in the woods.
- 6 Valuable metals can be plundered from old mechanical machines somewhere under the mountain.

Important characters

A PART from *Astrodea* herself there are a few other important characters appearing in the laboratory. These are *Astrodea's* creations, *Eltanin* and *Paxillos* and the pirates and their captain. *Astrodea* and the cyborgs are all gendered in their descriptions below but in principle beyond the concept of binary gender. They furthermore do not have to eat as they are continuously feeding on energies harvested from the magical web that spans the Cosmos.

Astrodea

When she had made sure that she had prepared as well as she possibly could, *Astrodea* climbed into her necrochamber and rested until a few days ago. She has now just left for Baikal to check that *Paxillos* has not failed his task of constructing an amplifying beacon (the truth is, he is not quite done).

Astrodea is quite mad but hides this well and appears cordial and calm. However, as the time of the ritual draws nearer she becomes more nervous and, if allowed to continue talking, the madness starts to shine through. It becomes clear that she is convinced of her own greatness and finds it completely obvious that she is destined to become the benevolent ruler that will make the galaxy great again.

She would most of all like her creations *Eltanin* and *Paxillos* to serve as her close advisors when she rules the galaxy. She desperately wants *Eltanin* to abandon her resistance and will immediately forgive her if she does. *Paxillos* she treats just like the loyal servant he is.

She is usually accompanied by 1d6+4 mindless CLONES that help her with simple tasks.

ASTRODEA – *survivor, mad, desperate*
 HD 8, AC 12, MV 40, ML 11, ATK ceremonial dagger (1d6) and (1d6)

PREPARED SPELLS *teleport, charm monster, dimension door, clairvoyance, haste, hold person, audible glamour, invisibility, levitate, mirror image, comprehend languages, mending, sleep, summon*

CLONES – *pale, confused, apathetic*
 HD 1, AC 12, MV 30, ML 7, ATK unarmed (1d4)

Eltanin

When *Eltanin* realised that she was neither machine nor human and how *Astrodea* in her laboratory created life at her own whim over and over, with no regard for its sanctity, she was disgusted. She attempted to stop *Astrodea*, but when she failed in her attempts, she was trapped in the freezer room. *Astrodea* did not have the heart to kill *Eltanin* and imprisoned her behind a black semi-transparent force field with the hope that she would one day atone for her wrongdoings. However, *Eltanin* has not changed her views and is still convinced that she is a horrifying experiment that should not exist. Regarding *Paxillos*, she will attempt to convince him to stop *Astrodea*. She is not against allying with the pirates.

She does not have full knowledge of the laboratory and only fleeting memories of a dark room shaped like a skull, where there should be a control panel to release her. She does not know how to travel through the portal or how most of the objects in the lab function.

Eltanin is half machine, half human. The machine half of her body is equipped with a glowing red eye and a cybernetic arm that can cause serious damage.

ELTANIN – *cyborg, idealistic, pleading*

HD 3, AC 15, MV 40, ML 8, ATK scalpels (1d6) or wrench (1d8) and eye laser (1d8, ranged)
PREPARED SPELLS *ESP, magic missile, sleep*

Paxillos

The responsible *Paxillos* has always followed all his mother's instructions. He landed long ago on the barren planet of *Baikal*, orbiting the star *Aldebaran*, where he is preparing for the moment when the stars are right and his mother-creator will reclaim her reign over the galaxy. He loathes *Eltanin* for her treachery and is fully loyal to *Astrodea*.

PAXILLOS – *cyborg, responsible, loyal*

HD 4, AC 12, MV 40, ML 11, ATK glowing pliers (1d8, additional 1d3 burn damage on failed save vs paralyse) or (1d6)
PREPARED SPELLS *hold portal, mending, sleep, stinking cloud*

The Tundra Crew

While on the run from the *Galactic League*, the *Tundra Crew* heard about the laboratory in a shady dive bar on a nearby asteroid and immediately set off to find it and plunder any valuables they could find.

The pirates are an infamous group of notorious no-gooders who roam the galaxy and stop for nothing in their hunt for trea-

sure. They are led by the twisted brute *Tunguska Slim* who is most known for his habit of cutting out the teeth of his defeated enemies, wearing the teeth on a leather string around his neck. *Slim* enjoys singing bluesy tunes of his own creation with a raw, growling voice.

The pirates have entered the lab by descending with ropes down the shaft in room 11. Their spaceship is parked in the woods nearby.

SPACE PIRATES – *brutal, opportunistic*

HD 2, AC 14, MV 30, ML 8, ATK blaster (1d6, ranged) or vibrablade (1d6)

TUNGUSKA SLIM – *bluesman, pirate, cruel*

HD 5, AC 14, MV 30, ML 10, ATK blaster (1d8, ranged) or hammer (1d10), SPECIAL once per day, if reduced to zero or less HP, may rise after one round with 1d10 HP

Timeline

THE TIMELINE below is optional, and a suggestion for when certain events in the adventure take place. If anything is done to hinder any event, the appropriate changes should be made.

| TURNS | EVENT |
|-------|--|
| –6 | <i>Astrodea</i> goes to <i>Baikal</i> to check that all is in order. |
| 0 | The PCs enter room 2. |
| 3 | The <i>Tundra Crew</i> arrive. |
| 6 | <i>Astrodea</i> returns from <i>Baikal</i> . |
| 12 | <i>Paxillos</i> returns from <i>Baikal</i> . |
| 18 | The stars align and <i>Astrodea</i> performs the ritual in room 5. |

In the beginning of the adventure, *Astrodea* and *Paxillos* are not in the lab. When she returns, *Astrodea* will spend most of her time in the library (3 in 6 probability), checking the last details before the ritual but she can also be encountered in her own room (1 in 6), in the workshop (1 in 6), or outside the freezer room, trying to talk sense into *Eltanin* (1 in 6). She is always accompanied by 1d6+4 CLONES. *Paxillos* will spend his time in either the library (3 in 6), his own room (1 in 6) or the workshop (2 in 6).

If you're not using the time-line, you can for example place *Astrodea* in room 5 or 9 (possibly hibernating in her necrocapsule). Use the ritual if you like or skip it entirely.

The laboratory

DEEP under a mountain in the forest is the laboratory that *Astrodea* has lived in since the betrayal of her former allies. It is a cold and dark place, carved out of the mountain, where dusty rooms are connected by dark stone corridors.

The corridors in the lab are 10' wide and the doors are solid metal. The doorways of rooms 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9 can be blocked with magic force-fields that block all physical objects. These fields are controlled with the control panel in room 5. **There is an elevator which connects the two levels**, specifically the northernmost corridor of the upper level to the hall with the portal nexus on the lower level. It simply goes up or down at the press of a button.

For random encounters, roll 1d6 at the end of each turn. On a roll of 1, the following turn starts with an encounter. If the PCs make excessive noise it triggers an immediate roll.

Random encounters

For further descriptions and stats, see the appendix or last page of the adventure.

| 1D6 | ENCOUNTER |
|-----|--|
| 1 | <i>Pyk</i> , a local adventurer, afraid and in search of an escape from the lab [HD 2, AC 14, MV 40, ML 7, ATK sword (1d6) <i>or</i> rapier (1d6)] |
| 2 | 1d4 idle and weak-willed CLONES, wandering around confusedly in the laboratory |
| 3 | 1d6 MINOR ABOMINATIONS from one of the pools (room 10) |
| 4 | One MAJOR ABOMINATION from one of the pools (room 10) |
| 5 | 1d6 exploring SPACE PIRATES headed by captain <i>Slim</i> |
| 6 | <i>Astrodea</i> , on her way to or from the library performing the last preparations (reroll before turn 6) |

Detailed map key

1. The entrance

In the middle of a clearing in the woods stands a spherical statue surrounded by five statues depicting robed figures holding what appears to be scientific tools. The five statues face the sphere in the center of the clearing and are placed in a pentagonal pattern. Worn stone paths lead from each statue to the neighbouring statues as well as to the center of the clearing, like the spokes of a wheel. Between two of the statues a larger path goes from the edge of the clearing to the sphere in the center. A long time ago the areas between the paths were

well trimmed flowerbeds with rare flowers and herbs, today the more mundane plants of the woods have overgrown them.

The sphere is large, 5' in diameter, and seems to be a night sky map. The constellations however, are unfamiliar. Three positions on the sphere are marked with small circular bronze disks, that can be pressed.

If the three disks are pressed simultaneously, the spherical statue is raised 5', revealing a dark opening with a staircase leading down in the dark. **The stairs continue down for 300'.**

The statue returns to its original position after one turn. There is a lever on a wall in the reception room below that will raise it again.

2. Reception room

This 40' circular chamber is the room where interested guests to the laboratory were greeted. It has been neglected for many years, only occasionally used as a storage room. Six armchairs, once beautiful but now ragged and decayed, stand around a rusted and heavy metal table. Tattered red satin curtains line the walls, hiding the two doors into the room. A couple of boxes and barrels stand in the room.

If the PCs search the boxes in the room they find tattered pieces of clothing, some metal tools and a couple of bottles of spoiled wine.

If the PCs look behind the curtains, they find a lever on the west wall that raises the spherical statue on the surface if pulled, as well as a hidden box containing a few rolls of gold wire worth 500 sp.

3. Freezer room and Eltanin

A dark barrier of energy covers the entire door opening. Through the semi-transparent barrier a room can be gleaned.

After a few moments, a shape approaches the force-field in the doorway from inside. This is *Eltanin*, who can finally beg for help after being trapped for so long. Her red eye glows in the darkness.

Nothing, including magical effects, can pass through the force wall. However, it can be disabled by turning a switch on the control panel in room 5.

The 40' circular room is kept at constant freezing temperature. It is a storage room for organic material needed in biological experiments. As such, it contains shelves with sheets of skin, vials of frozen blood and various assorted organic objects and body parts hanging from the ceiling. A couple of deactivated clones stand frozen in the room behind a transparent drape.

4. Stellarium

A 2' wide stone bridge leads to a small platform in the center of a completely spherical 40' diameter chamber. On the platform is a large chair with a mounted helmet. Small crystals in walls, floor and ceiling of the room glisten like stars and create a replica of the entire night sky. The chair can be rotated in all directions (even straight down) using a control panel on one of the armrests. There are belts in place to strap a person, preventing them from falling down. On the chair's backside is a jumble of wires.

If a PC sits down in the chair and presses a button on the control panel, sharp and thin spikes in the helmet shoot into the neck and spine of the person and the spell *contact outer sphere* is triggered, with the contacted entity determined by the direction in which the chair is pointing. Currently the chair is rotated to face the star *Aldebaran*.

Aldebaran has a 65% chance of a true answer and a 20% risk of possession by a demonic entity from between the planes.

If a PC starts to remove the crystals, it takes six turns to get all of them, assuming that they can somehow all be reached, and the total value is 2400 sp.

If the wires are removed from the back of the chair it stops working. The wires are worth 600 sp and can be plundered in two turns with a 3 in 6 risk per turn of an electrical shock of 1d4 damage.

5. Portal nexus and library

Stairs lead down into a enormous hall with a huge 70' diameter hollow metal skull in the center. The skull has an opening through the mouth that opens up into a roughly spherical 70' diameter room on the inside of the skull. In the center of the inside room is a 20' wide tentacled abomination of flesh, resembling a hundred persons torn inside out and merged together, with a horrible smell emanating from it. **This is the portal nexus**. Next to it is a pedestal with a knife and a metallic plate.

Up to a height of 20', the walls of the inner room are covered in murals showing a group of three robed figures standing in a dark and alien setting below a starlit sky with an eclipsed sun shining faintly over the land-

scape. One of the figures holds a cylinder-shaped object towards the sun.

Between heights 20' to 40' the dark stone walls are covered in shelves of books. They can be accessed with the moving chair (see below). The books are about anatomy, biology, portal magic, the flora and fauna of other planets and similar topics.

There are two alcoves in the eyes of the skull, each with a reading table.

The top 10' of the room arch together in a dome that is decorated with murals of distant stars and planets. An antenna-like contraption hangs from the center of the domed ceiling that looms far above.

Behind the portal nexus is a movable chair, attached to the wall with a mechanical arm. Next to it, directly opposite the room's entrance, is a **control panel set against the wall**.

If the eclipsed sun in the mural is pressed inwards the control panel on the north wall slides left and reveals a 3' wide hidden space behind it. A rectangular-shaped open box is mounted 30' up on the wall inside the space. Wires lead up through the floor, along the wall, through the box and all the way up to the antenna in the ceiling. In the box is an 2' long cylindrical shining metal object, **the platina cylinder** (see appendix). This works like a catalyst, strengthening the magical power that *Astrodea* can extract from the ritual at time when the stars are right. It is worth 5000 sp.

If the platina cylinder is removed, an alarm starts sounding in the lab, attracting the attention of those present in the laboratory. PCs who are at that moment in the secret space behind the wall are teleported to one of the locked cells next to the work-

shop, without the cylinder, which drops to the floor before teleportation. The alarm continues until the cylinder (or something very similar) is reinserted. Without the cylinder the energy that *Astrodea* can extract from the final ritual is greatly diminished and she will do everything in her might to get it back if it is lost.

The portal nexus

Tentacle-like appendages reach out from the fleshy mass and probe randomly everywhere around it, while dozens of glimmering eyes continuously scan all directions. There is a pedestal next to it with (usually) an ornate knife and a small metallic plate with two symbols etched into it. **If *Astrodea* is on Baikal, the knife is not present.** The monstrosity in the room is in fact a portal that draws its powers from the demonic god *Varhu*. One can travel through it using any sharp object.

To travel through the portal, one carves the symbol corresponding to the travel location into the flesh of the portal with a sharp object, an opening then appears. Climbing into the opening leads after a short crawl—not recommended for the claustrophobic—out of a similar fleshy mass on the other side, covering the traveler in unmentionable alien bodily fluids.

The symbols on the plate represent the laboratory and Baikal. If it suits the referee's campaign, the portal can also be connected to other places around the Cosmos.

If the symbol carved is not one of the two on the plate, or no particular symbol at all is carved, a person climbing into the emerging opening can hear faint atonal music from horrible alien instruments and there is a sense of impending doom. If the person

continues to crawl, they are drawn out into the cold, dark void, near the great swirling mass that is the demonking *Varhu*, with death by suffocation very likely. A save vs paralyse is allowed to avoid this.



The lab



Baikal

The moving chair

The mechanical arm that connects the chair to the wall can extend vertically and horizontally so that the chair can reach the whole room. The throne-like chair is constructed of dark metal with a tangled mess of wires on the back, some of them gold. The chair has a red satin seat, a reading table on one armrest and a control panel on the other, with controls to move the chair. The chair can also be controlled with the panel on the north wall opposite the entrance.

If the controls are tinkered with, the chair starts moving.

If the wires are removed from the back of the chair the chair stops working. The gold wires have a total value of 600 sp and can be plundered in two turns with a 3 in 6 risk per turn of an electrical shock of 1d4 damage.

The control panel

On the wall opposite the entrance is a control panel with six switches and steering controls for the mechanical arm controlling the moving chair. Four of the six switches currently point upward, and **the two rightmost ones are turned downwards.**

If the steering controls for the moving chair are messed with, the chair starts moving.

If a switch is turned to point downwards, it creates a black, semi-transparent force wall blocking completely one of the doorways in the laboratory. The switches control from left to right: the doorway of the library (this room, room 5), the reception room (room 2), the stellarium (room 4), the workshop (room 6, only the main door, not to the cells), *Astrodea's* living quarters (room 9) and the storage room where *Eltanin* is trapped (room 3). Turning a switch to point upwards negates the effect.

6. Biomechanical workshop

Mounds of rubble, odd scientific instruments and regular tools are scattered on large tables and shelves along the walls of the circular 40' diameter room. In the middle of the room is a large suit-like thing with a helmet on a rotating platform, but with the suit seemingly cut in half vertically so that one can put torso, arms and head in it. In front of the suit is a large control panel on a big machine that reaches from the floor to the ceiling and has a large switch on its side. In the suit's helmet is a screen. This virtual reality surgery machine is connected through hidden wires to a large set of tools in the walls of the cells.

If a PC turns the switch on the machine's side, the screen in the helmet lights up and a humming noise is heard from the machine powering the suit. The diagnostic and surgical tools in the walls of the cells can now be controlled by operating the control panel in front of the suit.

Two doors open into a corridor that curves along the outer wall of the workshop, with doors to the cells.

If a PC searches among the things in the room, roll once per turn on the table below:

| 1D10 | OBJECT |
|------|---|
| 1 | An <i>energy crystal</i> , powers the mind switching helmets (see room 8, appendix), value 500 sp |
| 2 | 1d3 test tubes of substance that regenerates organic material, each healing 2d3 hit points |
| 3 | 10' of metal wire, worth 100 sp |
| 4 | In total 10 pounds of magnetic space ore, stuck together |
| 5 | A piece of space-time mineral (see appendix) |
| 6-10 | Nothing of interest |

7. Cells

Ten cells can be accessed from the corridor that circles around the workshop. Most of them are empty and sterilised, but **in two of them there are forgotten specimens** that have lain neglected for many years. In each cell, a large set of diagnostic, surgical and other types of tools are hidden behind panels in the walls that can be controlled with the suit in room 6.

Each cell can be unlocked from the outside with a button on the wall next to the door.

In one cell is a humanoid with light grey skin and pitch-black eyes. It is the first one of the clones that *Astrodea* has constructed to use as assistants in the laboratory. Unlike the other clones, this one has both a sense of self and a weak will. It has named itself *U*. *U* is severely mutilated after many years of experimentation and is currently hibernating due to a lack of food, but will awake if touched, begging for something to eat.

Another of the cells houses the **ELLIPSOID**, an alien creature with seven tentacles attached to an ellipsoid central body. It is hyper-intelligent and quickly learns to deal with even the most complex of tasks. However, being nonsentient it only acts like a biomechanical machine, and does not understand concepts that require consciousness. It will interpret most acts as acts of dominance or warfare. It feeds on electromagnetic fields and is now severely malnourished. Its only way of communicating is to change its skin colour rapidly.

U – *absent-minded, hungry, confused*
HD 1, AC 12, MV 30, ML 9, ATK fist (1d4)

ELLIPSOID – *levitating, observing, weird*
HD 2, AC 14, MV 50, ML 10, ATK 3 tentacles (1d6) or energy blast (1d10)

8. Paxillos' room

In this 30' circular room are the private quarters of *Paxillos*. It contains a simple bed, a desk with a chair and a cabinet with a few robes hanging in it. The bed is neatly made and on the desk is a small case with a pen, a vial of ink and a stack of meticulous notes covering the building of various electronic equipment and diary entries describing the greatness of *Astrodea* and of the power she will soon wield, and references to an *Eltanin* who is referred to as a "shameful traitor" who does not "deserve to serve their great mother".

There is a locked wooden chest under the bed, electrically trapped (1d8 damage to the careless). Inside the chest is an *energy crystal* and a pair of helmets that are connected to a

small box by larynx-like transparent tubes. Upon close inspection, sharp needles can be found on the inside of the helmets. In the box is a small compartment. These are the *mind-switching helmets* (see appendix), that can switch the minds of the people wearing them if an *energy crystal* is inserted in the compartment in the box.

9. Astrodea's room

A dark energy barrier covers the entire door opening. Nothing can pass through it but it can be turned off with the control panel in room 5. Behind it is a circular 40' chamber with a large bed on the wall opposite to the door. There is a desk by the western wall with a couple of bookcases next to it. The rest of the room is decorated as a combined living room, office and bedroom.

On the wall above the desk hangs what looks like a clock, with three hands all pointing very near what is usually the noon position. The clock obviously does not show time however, as can be immediately understood by the many strange symbols that are on its face in place of numbers. It instead shows the time remaining until the alignment of the stars. Each turn one of the three hands moves slightly towards the noon position, the movement of the other two hands is too small to see in less than ten turns.

The bookcase contains a few dusty books. One of them, entitled *The Chronicle of Astrodea the Great*, tells the story of a great and benevolent ruler named *Astrodea* who was betrayed by her close assistants (with their names covered with ink) in a despicable coup. The book then describes how *Astrodea* will "soon get her revenge" and "once again, rule the galaxy in splendid magnificence".

There is a hidden switch behind on of the legs on the bed, that opens a secret door to a small space under the carpet in the middle of the room. In the space below is a *necrocapsule* set against the wall. If correctly handled, the user can hibernate in it in an undead state for centuries. Incorrectly handled there is however no guarantee that it works and it may very well trap and suffocate a person inside. **Also in the secret space is Astrodea's spell book**, on a pedestal opposite the *necrocapsule*. It contains all the spells she, *Paxillos* and *Eltanin* currently have prepared and 1d10 additional random spells.

10. Pool of abominations

These pools have appeared in the years when *Astrodea* has been hibernating. When the portal nexus was left unsupervised, the hellish nether-plane, ruled by the great demon sultan *Varhu*, gradually leaked into the laboratory. The pools are the embodiments of these leaks. They are roughly 10' wide with the edges rising up 3' from the floor. In them, a thick, oily fluid bubbles slowly. Vein-like roots extend into the walls and ceiling around them which creates the feeling of being inside the belly of an alien organism when standing near a pool.

While a person is present by a pool or if the pool is disturbed, there is a 4 in 6 risk per turn that this attracts one or more abominations that crawl out of the pool (with 4 in 6 risk of 1d3 minor abominations and 2 in 6 risk of one major abomination).

The pools are acidic, causing 1d6 damage to someone who dips a body part in one. Doing this also attracts abominations (4 in 6 risk of 1d3 minor, 2 in 6 risk of one major).

11. Space port

In this huge 120' by 50' hall, a raised platform can be seen in the western part of the room. In the eastern part of the room distant sunlight shines down through a 40' diameter circular shaft in the ceiling. A rope hangs down from the shaft. **1d6 SPACE PIRATES from the Tundra Crew stand guard by the shaft** while the rest of the pirates scout ahead in the laboratory. There is a 3 in 6 chance that their captain *Tunguska Slim* is here. Vines and roots reach down from the shaft into the hall and after years of neglect the metal floor and walls in the hall are covered in roots, fungi and moss.

If the PCs climb the rope in the shaft, they reach the woods above after a climb of 100'.

To the west, a ladder leads up onto a raised platform where wires and engineering tools are scattered. Tracks on the floor below reveal that heavy vessels have been moved back and forth in the room. The hall has been used as a hangar for the spacecraft that *Paxillos* built after *Astrodea's* specifications.

SPACE PIRATES – *brutal, opportunistic*

HD 2, AC 14, MV 30, ML 8, ATK blaster (1d6, ranged) or vibrablade (1d6)

TUNGUSKA SLIM – *bluesman, pirate, cruel*

HD 5, AC 14, MV 30, ML 10, ATK blaster (1d8) or hammer (1d10), SPECIAL once per day, if reduced to zero or less HP, may rise after one round with 1d10 HP

The beacon on Baikal

OUT in the cold Cosmos, the rocky planet *Baikal* revolves slowly around the red star *Aldebaran*. It was chosen by *Astrodea* as a good spot for a beacon that will amplify the strength of the ritual. Therefore *Paxillos* was sent to Baikal many years ago to construct the beacon. Out of the spaceship he built a small space station on the planet's surface and with *Astrodea's* help a portal nexus was constructed to allow travel to the laboratory.

If you are running with the time-line, **Astrodea is on Baikal in the beginning of the adventure**, to check that all is in order before the ritual. To finish the beacon, **Paxillos is in dire need of magnetic material**, something he will not dare tell *Astrodea*. 10 pounds is sufficient. If he obtains this, he will immediately melt it down in the plasma chamber and construct long, spindly metallic arms that he mounts on the beacon in room 12A. This takes three turns.

The walls, floor and ceiling of the space station are constructed of a transparent material that looks like glass but is almost unbreakable. The only door to the planet outside is the airlock in room 12D.

BAIKAL – The planet is an uninhabited ice-cold, rocky place with large areas covered in methane lakes and rivers. The atmosphere is hostile and unbreathable. During the day, *Aldebaran* shines across the planet's surface with a reddish glow, providing some relief from the freezing cold nights. The planet is often covered in greenish clouds that every now and then release a rain of methane upon the barren landscape.

12A. The beacon

The room is circular with a conical roof that extends into a funnel-like top with a covered opening. In the middle of a room is the beacon—a large machine with spindly antennae reaching for the conical opening. The bulk of the machine consists of a clutter of wires, antennae, cables and boxes both made of metal and of organic material. **Four GRUNTS are in the room at all times**, guarding the machine. If it is destroyed, it weakens the strength of the final ritual.

GRUNTS—*small, robotic, relentless*

HD 1, AC 15, MV 50, ML 12, ATK railgun (1d8, ranged) or hydraulic spike/chainsaw (1d6)

12B. Portal nexus

A fleshy mass similar to the one in room 5, functioning in the same way. **Six GRUNTS are in the room**, guarding the portal.

When the PCs leave the room 1d6 of the GRUNTS will follow and observe them as they walk around.

Travel through the portal is performed in the same way as described in room 5. However, there is no knife or metallic plate with symbols present here.

GRUNTS—*small, robotic, relentless*

HD 1, AC 15, MV 50, ML 12, ATK railgun (1d8, ranged) or hydraulic spike/chainsaw (1d6)

12C. Plasma chamber

This torus shaped room circles around a circular plasma chamber in the center. The plasma chamber is a magically powered oven that melts almost any material.

If you are using the timeline, **Paxillos is standing in the room in the beginning of the adventure**, wearing a thick heat suit and holding a piece of metal into the glowing plasma chamber with a pair of large tongs.

PAXILLOS – *cyborg, responsible, loyal*

HD 4, AC 12, MV 40, ML 11, ATK glowing tongs (1d8, additional 1d3 burn damage on failed save vs paralyse) or (1d6)

PREPARED SPELLS *hold portal, mending, sleep, stinking cloud*

12D. Living quarters

A room with a simple bed and a small desk. There is a door to an airlock that leads out onto Baikal. On the desk are drawings of the machine in room 12A. **In the room is also a space suit** hanging next to the airlock.

Ending the adventure

A FEW turns before the doomsday clock strikes twelve and the stars align, *Astrodea* will want to start preparing the last details for the ritual in room 5. She will double-check that all wires are correctly connected to the platina cylinder, that the antenna is properly calibrated and check some last things in some of the books. As the time nears, **she will use every power she has to remain unimpeded**, in the room, if possible assisted by *Paxillos* and CLONES, for example using the doorway force-field to block intruders.

At the time of the ritual she will *levitate* to float between the portal and the antenna. The antenna sparks and the ceiling starts to swirl. A vertical ray of compact darkness shoots from the antenna straight into

Astrodea. The ray annihilates the rock above the room and can be seen shooting up from the mountain many miles away. At the same time a wave of dark energy spreads out in all directions at a rate of 100' per round, completely oblivious to any matter in its way. Anyone hit by the wave is affected by a *charm person* spell towards *Astrodea*.

If the beacon on Baikal is working, the platina cylinder is in place and noone attempts to stop *Astrodea*, the dark wave continues for millions of miles, with the result that *Astrodea* starts to form an empire filled with friendly slaves in the local stellar system and begins preparing for revenge against her former allies. Those opposing her are sent to the prison mines on the ice-cold planet *Yagavar* at the edge of the stellar system to dig for precious minerals.

If either the beacon on Baikal is not working or the platina cylinder is removed, the effect will be much weaker. The *charm person* now only goes out to a radius of 1000'. *Astrodea* may cause some problems in the local area but will not be able to defeat her enemies. She naturally blames the PCs for the failed ritual and temporarily redirects her desire for revenge towards them.

When hit by the dark energy, regardless of the ritual's strength, *Astrodea* transforms into a 20' tall hooded figure with the head in the shape of a metallic skull and tendrils of dark energy probing constantly around her. She retains her spell-casting ability.

ASTRODEA, TRANSFORMED – *power-hungry*

HD 10, AC 14, MV 80, ML 12, ATK 4 dark tendrils (1d20), dark wave (all in 10' circle save vs magic or receive random mutation)
Immune to physical damage

Appendix

Bestiary

Clones

These pale, naked humanoids are some of *Astrodea's* more primitive constructions. She often takes parts of them to use in other experiments, resulting in some of the CLONES being stripped of limbs or skin. They are unintelligent and can only rarely speak and have no conscience, acting more like biological machines.

CLONES – *pale, confused, apathetic*
 HD 1, AC 12, MV 30, ML 7, ATK unarmed (1d4)

Grunts

These are small semi-autonomous robots that *Paxillos* have constructed to help him on Baikal. They are unique in appearance but all roughly dog-sized. They parse orders through an advanced voice recognition system with the result that only *Paxillos* can order them around. They are typically armed with melee weapons such as hydraulic spikes or chain saws and ranged weapons like railguns or lasers.

GRUNTS – *small, robotic, relentless*
 HD 1, AC 15, MV 50, ML 12, ATK railgun (1d8, ranged) or hydraulic spike/chainsaw (1d6)

Major pool abomination

The things that slip through the pools from the nether-plane are monstrous mindless creatures that drone through the Cosmos in search for warm flesh to consume. Most beasts are of a smaller variety but occasionally a larger and more lethal creature slips through a pool. They pose a significantly more dangerous threat than their minor counterparts.

Their appearance is often unique as they are designed and constructed by the great *Varhu* himself to spread his corruption throughout the Cosmos. Generate them using the tables on the opposing page. They start out at HD 5, AC 12, MV 30, ML 12, this can be changed by entries in the tables. A few pre-generated examples are presented.

MAJOR ABOMINATION – *lethal, monstrous*
 Starts out at: HD 5, AC 12, MV 30, ML 12

Minor pool abomination

The MINOR ABOMINATIONS are a category of smaller creatures from the nether-plane with lesser power. They have a varied appearance but most are mindless, slime covered creatures with suckered pseudopods that long for pulsating bodies to ensnare. Some glide through the air several feet above the floor, others crawl forth with a snakelike slither. They bite sharply with multitudes of small sharp-biting teeth in gaping maws, or hit hard with their tentacles.

MINOR ABOMINATION – *demonic, devouring*
 HD 2, AC 12, MV 20, ML 11, ATK 2 tentacles (1d4) or bite (1d6)

Generating a major abomination

To generate a major abomination, roll 1d4 once for each of the three tables below.

1D4 FORM

- 1 Crawling, eel-like (MV +10).
- 2 Insectoid, multiple arms/legs (MV +20, AC +4, HD -1).
- 3 Shapeless slime (HD +2, AC -2).
- 4 Levitating (AC +2, MV +10).

1D4 ATTACK (1)

- 1 Gaping maw (1d8, swallow on successful attack, 1d4 acid damage each round until escape, starting next round).
- 2 Large mandibles (1d8, grapple on successful attack and crush next round for 1d6).
- 3 Slithery pseudopods (2 attacks at 1d6 each).
- 4 Energy ray (1d10).

1D4 ATTACK (2)

- 1 Magnetic pull (save vs breath weapon or magnetic object(s) drawn into monster's flesh for all in 10' cone, 1d4 damage to retrieve or escape).
- 2 Poisonous sting (1d6, save vs poison or additional 1d6).
- 3 Beaked appendages (2 attacks at 1d6 each).
- 4 Bite with sharp teeth on wriggling tongue (1d8).

If two dice show the same number, read off the corresponding entry below:

2D4 SPECIAL EFFECT

- 1 Telepathic, demands servitude to the great *Varhu*.
- 2 Can shoot out 2d3 acidic body parts (ranged attacks, 1d6 each), twice per day.
- 3 Ensnares a PC in its body on a successful attack, the PC becomes grappled.
- 4 Mind devourer, can absorb 1d4 intelligence from one PC each round.

If all three dice show the same number, read off the corresponding entry below:

3D4 SPECIAL EFFECT

- 1 Breath weapon (1: plasma, 2: fire, 3: gas, 4: slime), 2d6 for all in 20' cone (save vs breath weapon halves damage), twice per day.
- 2 Regenerate HP equal to damage caused.
- 3 Successful attack transforms the affected body part into dark slime (victim loses 1d4 constitution).
- 4 Telekinesis (can move 1 object of max 150 lb per round up to 30').

MAJOR ABOMINATION (1) – *levitating, slithering appendages, poison sting*

HD 5, AC 14, MV 40, ML 11, ATK 2 pseudopods (1d6) and poison sting (1d6, additional 1d6 on failed save vs poison)

MAJOR ABOMINATION (2) – *insectoid, biting tongue, energy ray*

HD 4, AC 16, MV 50, ML 11, ATK energy ray (1d10) and bite with tongue (1d8).

SPECIAL *Mind devourer*. Can absorb 1d4 intelligence from one PC each round.

MAJOR ABOMINATION (3) – *eel-like, gaping maw, magnetic*

HD 5, AC 12, MV 40, ML 11, ATK bite and swallow (1d8, victim swallowed, 1d4 additional damage per round until escape) and magnetic pull and breath weapon (2/day)

SPECIAL *Magnetic pull*. Any magnetic object wielded or worn in a 10' cone is pulled into the monster's body on failed save vs paralyze. 1d4 damage from the monster's crushing body to retrieve object or break free.

Plasma breath weapon. Twice per day, 2d6 damage on all in 20' cone (damage halved on successful save vs breath weapon).

and the button pressed while two persons are wearing the helmets, sharp needles are pushed into the heads of the helmet-wearers while bodily fluids are pumped through the tubes. This is accompanied by violent pain (save vs magic device or become unconscious for 1d6 minutes). After a minute or so, the persons wearing the helmets have switched minds. All physical abilities (strength, dexterity, constitution) now derive from the new body while mental abilities (wisdom, intelligence, charisma) come from the original one.

Nothing prohibits the switching of minds between a human and other forms of living creatures.

If a person attempts to switch minds and there is no-one wearing the other helmet, the person's mind is trapped in the machine upon a failed save vs magic device and the person becomes a mindless drone. The trapped mind returns to a body if the machine is used again with one person wearing a helmet. If the machine is used with two persons with another person wearing the other helmet, there is a fifty percent chance to switch place with the trapped mind instead of the other person. Should the trapped mind remain in the machine after a second use, it is forever lost.

One *energy crystal* is enough for three transfers with the helmets.

Otherworldly objects

Mind-switching helmets

A pair of helmets connected to a box by larynx-like transparent tubes. On the inside of the helmets are small, sharp needles. There is a button on the box and a small compartment. An *energy crystal* needs to be inserted into a compartment for the helmets to function. If a crystal is inserted

The platina cylinder

A 2' long platina cylinder filled with strange markings that Astrodea has constructed to help steal and harvest magical energy from the great demon-sultan *Varhu*. It can act as a catalyst of magical effects. If held when using a spell or similar magical effect, it doubles the effect of the spell (for spells

where this is not applicable it has no effect). However, there is a 10% risk that *Varhu's* cosmic gaze turns towards the user. This leads to nightmares and visions of a enormous swirling mass with a black void in the center. Hallucinatory spiral patterns appear more and more often in the user's everyday life (especially if the cylinder continues to be used), and if unhindered the user becomes completely obsessed with spirals and a slave to the will of *Varhu*, unable to serve any other higher purpose.

Furthermore, for each spell where the cylinder is used, there is a 20% risk that a portal similar to the oozing pools of room 10 will appear in the vicinity of the user. It stays open for 1d6 days and continuously spawns the abominations described above. The effects are cumulative, risking the attraction of *Varhu's* gaze and the appearance of a pool for every spell where the cylinder is used.

Space-time mineral

The space-time mineral looks like a transparent emerald green piece of carbon. If one draws a closed curve, e.g. a circle, on a surface and another curve on another surface, these points in space become connected and function like a portal. The surfaces inside the curves becomes wavy and diffuse and some of the things on the other side of the portal can be glimpsed. Multiple portals can be connected but random choice determines which portal one exits from in that case. The mineral piece is large enough to draw 10 human-sized curves.

Quick reference

ASTRODEA – *survivor, mad, desperate*

HD 10, AC 12, MV 40, ML 11, ATK ceremonial dagger (1d6) *and* (1d4)

PREPARED SPELLS *teleport, charm monster, dimension door, clairvoyance, haste, hold person, audible glamour, invisibility, levitate, mirror image, comprehend languages, mending, sleep, summon*

ASTRODEA, TRANSFORMED – *power-hungry*

HD 10, AC 14, MV 80, ML 12, ATK 4 dark tendrils (1d20) *or* dark wave (all in 10' circle save vs magic *or* receive random mutation)
Immune to physical damage

CLONES – *pale, confused, apathetic*

HD 1, AC 12, MV 30, ML 7, ATK unarmed (1d4)

ELLIPSOID – *smart, observing, weird*

HD 2, AC 14, MV 50, ML 10, ATK 3 tentacles (1d6) *or* energy blast (1d10)

ELTANIN – *cyborg, idealistic, pleading*

HD 3, AC 15, MV 40, ML 8, ATK scalpels (1d6) *or* wrench (1d8) *and* eye laser (1d8, ranged)
PREPARED SPELLS *ESP, magic missile, sleep*

GRUNTS – *small, robotic, relentless*

HD 1, AC 15, MV 50, ML 12, ATK railgun (1d8, ranged) *or* hydraulic spike/chainsaw (1d6)

MAJOR ABOMINATION – *lethal, monstrous*

Starts out at: HD 5, AC 12, MV 30, ML 12

MINOR ABOMINATION – *demonic, devouring*

HD 2, AC 12, MV 20, ML 11, ATK 2 tentacles (1d4) *or* bite (1d6)

PAXILLOS – *cyborg, responsible, loyal*

HD 4, AC 12, MV 40, ML 11, ATK glowing pliers (1d8, additional 1d3 burn damage on failed save vs paralyse) *or* (1d6)

PREPARED SPELLS *hold portal, mending, sleep, stinking cloud*

SPACE PIRATES – *brutal, opportunistic*

HD 2, AC 14, MV 30, ML 8, ATK blaster (1d6, ranged) *or* vibrablade (1d6)

TUNGUSKA SLIM – *bluesman, pirate, cruel*

HD 5, AC 14, MV 30, ML 10, ATK blaster (1d8) *or* hammer (1d10), SPECIAL once per day, if reduced to zero or less HP, may rise after one round with 1d10 HP

U – *absent-minded, hungry, confused*

HD 1, AC 12, MV 30, ML 9, ATK fist (1d4)

»And one day, when the stars align and great powers older than our Cosmos gaze onto our swirling galaxy, then, the great Astrodea will again rule our empire in splendid magnificence!«

—The Chronicle of Astródea the Great

SOMETHING STIRS within a mountain on a forgotten planet somewhere in the vast Cosmos. Legends talk of a God living in the mountain, a God that has recently woken up again. Some of the inhabitants of the abandoned planet instead whisper of a mad wizard who has returned to the area. And among the elders there are still some who remember the disappearances and abductions many, many years ago.

In the dark woods on the mountain there is a strange clearing surrounded by ancient statues, that only bold adventurers dare investigate. What will they find?

Through the Gate of Flesh is a science fantasy adventure for old school roleplaying games, intended to be used with low-level characters. It details a wizard's biomechanical laboratory filled with odd objects, peculiar creatures and weird monstrosities to interact with.

STOCKHOLM
KARTELL