YEAR OF SCOURED STARS

STARFINDER SOCIETY SCENARIO #1-22, TIER 1-4



THE PROTECTORATE PETITION

BY MIKE KIMMEL





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HOW TO PLAY

Starfinder Society Scenario #1-22: The Protectorate Petition is a Starfinder Society Scenario designed for 1st- through 4th-level characters (Tier 1-4; Subtiers 1-2 and 3-4). This scenario is designed for play in the Starfinder Society Roleplaying Guild campaign, but can easily be adapted for use with any world. For more information on the Roleplaying Guild, how to read the attached Chronicle sheets, and how to find games in your area, check out the campaign's home page at **StarfinderSociety.club**.



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GM RESOURCES

The Protectorate Petition makes use of Starfinder Core Rulebook, Starfinder Alien Archive and Starfinder Armory. This adventure assumes the GM has access to these sourcebooks. All rules referenced in this adventure are available in the free online Starfinder Reference Document at paizo.com/sfrd.

SCENARIO TAGS

Scenario tags provide additional information about an adventure's contents. For more information on scenario tags, see Chapter 1 of the *Starfinder Society Roleplaying Guild Guide*. This adventure has no scenario tags.



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BY MIKE KIMMEL



Tabrid Minor, a small world orbiting a vibrant orange sun in Near Space, transitioned through the Gap relatively unscathed and boasts a population of just over two billion sentient souls. The predominant species, the copaxis (singular copaxi), are humanoids who evolved from a coral-like organism called copi that once covered much of the planet's surface. The copaxis maintain a large network of sprawling cities, while a plethora of abandoned sky cities hover miles above the surface.

The copaxis turned their world into a strongly unified society, but to do so they sacrificed a magical attunement to their planet that was inherent to their species. Centuries ago, the copaxis enjoyed a lavish lifestyle in magically powered flying cities, which they created by harnessing the copi that covered their planet. The magic of the copaxis stemmed from their mystical bond with copi; this ancient organism is strongly attuned to the gravitational forces of the universe. With this magic, the copaxis lived idyllic lives in their floating cities, taking what resources they needed from the lands below. During the height of their civilization, most copaxis drew on this magical connection to become mystics and solarians, and their civilization prospered.

In 3 AG, Triune's revelation of Drift travel via the Signal spurred a great revolution among the copaxis. A faction of copaxis realized that copi could be used to construct starship hulls and Drift engines. This led to a short insurrection by technological innovators against magical traditionalists. A magical aristocracy put down attempts to construct the technological engine and slew many of the recipients of the Signal. But only a decade later, a new revolution took root and turned the people against their reliance on magic. The ensuing conflict claimed many lives. Eventually, the revolution succeeded. The copaxis harvested the copi that powered their flying cities and abandoned them, settling in the fertile soil of Tabrid Minor.

Rather than using the Signal to explore the stars, the copaxis used the technological theories to rapidly industrialize. Over the course of the following three centuries, the copaxis have rapidly expanded their civilization across the surface, mining copi wherever they find it. As they destroyed the substance, the copaxis lost most of their mystical connection to the planet—and most of their powers. They turned to robots to expedite the dangerous mining process and fill necessary roles in their burgeoning industrial society. But just as the efficient robot

Where in the Universe?

The Protectorate Petition takes place on Tabrid Minor, a Near Space planet orbiting a vibrant orange sun that transitioned through the Gap relatively unscathed and currently boasts a population of just over two billion sentient souls—mostly copaxis. Tabrid Minor has a single small moon. Though its overall gravity is normal, certain regions—especially near the oceans and flying cities—contain gravitational anomalies.

TABRID MINOR

Rapidly Industrializing Copaxi Homeworld

Diameter: ×1; Mass: ×1; Gravity: ×1

Atmosphere: Normal; Day: 1 day; Year: 1/2 year

work force completed their tasks and became superfluous, the machines began to develop rudimentary sentience. The copaxi government found the moral implications of these creatures abhorrent and engaged in several short but effective campaigns to destroy the now-unnecessary robots. The creation and use of robots has since fallen out of favor, and only a few remain active in especially dangerous environments.

Today, the copaxis enjoy undisputed dominance over their home world. Political officers have sanitized history going back more than 50 years—more than enough for the copaxis, who live only about 40 years—removing references to the bloody coup that saw the copaxis leave their ancestral sky cities. Any hint of indentured robot labor is highly classified, and the government closely regulates the construction of robots and related technologies.

Only in the past few decades have the copaxis seriously pursued space travel. They now engage in short trips to other worlds, but they have yet to make a mark on the galaxy. Their recent contact with a Pact Worlds survey vessel caused the copaxis realized their vulnerability to nearby galactic threats such as the Swarm or the Veskarium. To preserve their society, the government of Tabrid Minor petitioned the Pact Worlds for protectorate status.

Venture-Captain

Arvin

In advance of the arrival of a Pact Worlds delegation, the copaxis have worked to enhance the appeal of their potential membership and diligently scrubbed historical evidence of their

own past actions. Most citizens know nothing about the robotic labor force, and even fewer realize the floating ruins were once the home of their own species. Instead, the government has created a false history that indicates the mystical ruins belonged to a divergent branch of the copaxi species that become too reliant on magic and were wiped out by divine intervention.

SUMMARY

The adventure begins with a briefing from Venture-Captain Arvin aboard Absalom Station. Arvin introduces Major Tower-9, a member of the Stewards who acts as the overall supervisor for Tabrid Minor's petition for protectorate status. Tower-9 goes over the key points of Tabrid Minor's petition, and Arvin explains the Starfinder Society's role. The Stewards have commissioned the Starfinder Society, in this case through the PCs, to conduct an independent review of an archaeological research site on Tabrid Minor. The Stewards expect the PCs to perform their

investigation of the city, maintain cordial relations with the copaxi survey team, and provide an official report, which will then be used to determine Tabrid Minor's admission into the Pact Worlds.

The PCs travel to the survey site: the most intact of the cities that float above the surface of the industrialized world. There, the PCs get to know the copaxis and their mission at the dig site. Overall, the copaxis working in the sky city remain unaware their species left the cities following a brutal coup after the discovery of the Drift. One member of the expedition, however, is an agent of the regional government. This agent is responsible for covertly monitoring the PCs' actions to make sure they don't uncover anything that might impact the request for protectorate status. However, the agent has their own reasons for doubting Tabrid Minor's government and hopes that the Starfinders can uncover the truth. Over the course of the scenario, the PCs can get to know the agent and even win them over to their side, overcoming their political motivations and loyalties.

Following an introduction to the team, the PCs explore the city. The area is all that remains of a magically floating settlement where the copaxis lived over 300 years ago. The PCs investigate areas that the copaxis have already explored, learning about copaxi culture and discovering some of the civilization's altered history. They also explore several dangerous areas that the copaxis have yet to enter, where they discover clues about the true history of Tabrid Minor.

As the PCs conclude their exploration of the city, they encounter the copaxi agent one final time. The outcome of this confrontation is entirely dependent on the PCs' behavior and

decisions thus far, and whether they have earned the agent's trust and respect. At the scenario's conclusion, having learned everything they can about copaxi culture and history, each PC files an independent report either supporting or opposing the copaxis' bid for protectorate status.

GETTING STARTED

The PCs begin in Absalom Station at the Lorespire Complex, where **Venture-Captain Arvin** (N male damaya lashunta mystic) has requested they meet. **Major Tower-9** (LN female android envoy), of the Stewards, waits with him. Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario.

Venture-Captain Arvin sits near the head of a large table that glows with images depicting an unfamiliar planet and its tiny moon, all surrounded by data readouts. He speaks with an android who wears a blue military uniform with gold accents. Bright red conduits trace across her bald head. Arvin

gestures to the remaining seats. "Join us, Starfinders. This is Major Tower-9

of the Stewards, and we have much to discuss." The android stands—she is nearly eight feet tall—and gives a stiff bow.

"Hello," she says in a deep voice. "The planet you see before you is Tabrid Minor, a Near Space world whose primary sentient inhabitants recently made contact with a Pact Worlds survey vessel. They call themselves copaxis. Having just developed Drift technology, they are only now learning about the galaxy and its many inhabitants and threats. Copaxi leaders have petitioned for protectorate status. It is up to the Stewards to decide if Tabrid Minor is an acceptable candidate. As the supervisor for Tabrid Minor's petition process, I have asked your venture-captain to organize an independent review of the planet and its people." The android sits, and Arvin waves his hand across the table. The display zooms in on one of the planet's largest continents.

"The copaxis are a terrestrial species numbering two billion, and their petition claims they have a unified government and a peaceful history. Massive floating cities drift over the planet's largest continent, but they are apparently abandoned. The Major and I have determined that an independent review of one of these sites would provide the Stewards with valuable information for their final decision. Your destination is a city called Tabantria. It is your job to do what Starfinders do best: explore this area, cooperate with the copaxi research team, handle any dangers along the way, and report back to us. Any questions?"



Arvin and Tower-9 answer any questions the PCs might have as best they can. Their answers to some possible queries appear below. If the PCs do not ask, the GM is encouraged to find ways for the NPCs to bring up any key information.

What else can you tell us about Tabrid Minor? "Half the planet is covered by oceans. Its atmosphere is fairly standard, but we have had some anomalous gravity readings. Be sure to run a scan of the planet with your ship's computers when you arrive."

What does it mean to be a protectorate? "A full member of the Pact Worlds has voting rights in addition to citizenship, trade, and military benefits. A protectorate is very similar but lacks voting rights. It may be a collection of worlds or colonies, most often with smaller or only disjointed societies, such as is the case for Mataras and Aucturn. Rarely, the Pact Worlds also accept protectorates outside the system, though always with caution to avoid overextending our resources.

What kind of things should we include in our report? "The Stewards seek information about the copaxis themselves: their attitudes towards other species, their tendencies towards peace or war, and anything in their history that can help determine if they would be a good protectorate of the Pact Worlds."

What are the copaxis like, and how will we communicate? "We have had few official interactions with them, so we hope you can add to our understanding of their society and history. A copaxi is a colonial network of specialized creatures living within a flexible exoskeleton, and each colony behaves and speaks as a single creature. So far, they have been worthy diplomats and shown great interest in Pact Worlds' cultures and technology. Some of their representatives have even learned our common language and used it to write their petition. You should have no trouble communicating with their research team and any delegates they send."

What can you tell us about the research team? "The copaxis are also conducting archaeological research in the abandoned cities. Apparently, they have only recently developed the technology to safely reach these cities, which float miles above the planet's surface. Their researchers seem eager to learn from your example, and we hope that you can form a good working relationship with them."

What if we encounter threats on Tabrid Minor? "The Stewards are interested in peaceful diplomacy, but that does not mean your team needs to put itself at risk. Handle any danger as best you can and use your discretion if the copaxis themselves are a threat. It seems unlikely, but the galaxy is filled with surprises."

The venture-captain provides the PCs with a data readout including basic information about Tabrid Minor, the copaxis, and the Starfinders' mission; distribute **Handout #1**. He then dismisses the PCs to make any last-minute purchases and preparations. He directs them to Docking Bay 22, where a Drift-capable starship awaits to take them to Tabrid Minor.

Boon Allocation: Following their briefing with Arvin and Tower-9, the PCs have an opportunity to finalize their boon slots. As the scenario has no special tags, the players should select whichever boons they feel are most appropriate based on their briefing.

TABRID MINOR

Drift Travel to Tabrid Minor takes 3d6 days, and the journey is uneventful. Upon emerging from the Drift, a PC can attempt a DC 13 Computers check (DC 16 in Subtier 3-4) to remotely scan Tabrid Minor using the ship's sensors. A PC who succeeds at this check detects intense gravitational anomalies on the planet's surface, especially under the planet's oceans. These readings also show gravitational anomalies around several city-sized land masses floating a few miles above the planet's surface. Additionally, the PC discerns that the planet's weather systems are atypical for a planet of this size and atmosphere, likely because the anomalies interfere with ocean currents, tides, and storm systems. A PC who exceeds the DC by 5 or more can bring up a holographic image of a coral-like organism that seems to be the source of these anomalies, as well as an image showing where it is found on the planet. This organism appears mostly underwater, far from land, but traces of it appear here and there on the planet's continents, and high concentrations exist in the floating landmasses.

Shortly after their arrival, the PCs receive a transmission from the planet's surface. Four creatures appear on the starship's video screen; these are the members of the research team. The faces of these humanoids are featureless masks of smooth coral, distinguished by elegant antler-like growths. One of them has two antlers that form a swooping, symmetrical pattern before meeting nearly two feet above the creature's head. The other creature's antlers are shorter, but no less elegant: one has three jagged antlers like lightning bolts, another has two antlers curled like ram horns, and the last has countless antlers that resemble spiked hair. A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Life Science check (DC 19 in Subtier 3-4) realizes that these "masks" and "antlers" are part of the creature's anatomy. If the PC saw the holographic image of the coral-like organism, they notice that minute patterns on the masks and growths resemble those on the organism.

MEETING THE COPAXIS

Most of the research team is at Tabantria to conduct genuine archaeological research; they are unaware of the true history of the floating cities, the coups, and so on. One of them, however, a copaxi named Therseis, is an agent of the local government sent to ensure the PCs do not learn anything that would cause them to reject the petition for protectorate status. Therseis knows some of the true history, enough to know when to steer the PCs away from sensitive finds but not enough to personally pose a threat to the government. What the government officials don't know is that Therseis's loyalty is already fraying; they are a budding mechanic who has recently pieced together an artificial intelligence—something carefully regulated by the government.

With limited knowledge of Tabrid Minor's true history and now access to Tabantria, Therseis is tempted to uncover the full story. Therseis hopes the PCs' findings will enhanced copaxi reputation in the galaxy, and that the history will become part of a more honest assessment of Tabrid Minor's viability as a protectorate. The trouble is that Therseis's colleagues and threatening



What Therseis Knows

The copaxi agent has only part of their species' recent history, including the following.

- Tabrid Minor's unifying government arose after the Gap.
 The government has undergone numerous natural and peaceful transitions of power in the past few centuries.
- The flying cities were home to copaxis who ruled before the Gap. They defied the natural order and were destroyed in an act of divine wrath. Surface city-states arose from the ashes, and the unifying government brought them together decades later.
- The copaxi created robots to assist in the construction
 of great cities. However, a gravitational fluctuation
 scrambled the robots' computers, and they recklessly
 began attacking copaxis and destroying property.
 Ongoing robotic research—particularly that approaching
 simulated intelligence—takes place in controlled labs to
 minimize any destructive potential.
- The Signal, the god Triune's instructions for using the Drift, reached Tabrid Minor, but its people could not understand it. They recorded the cryptic information, and only recently did copaxi technology allow them to create viable starships.

Therseis has intuited only hints of the bloody coups against the old magical aristocracy, the enslavement of robots, and the destruction of those robots when they demonstrated self-awareness.

conditions in the floating city make it very difficult for Therseis to find this information on their own.

The copaxis have quickly learned Common, though they favor an ornate and overly technical manner of composing sentences. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs accept the transmission aboard their starship.

The four creatures stare at the screen for a few moments, muttering to one another, pointing excitedly, and coming in and out of view as they jostle for their communit. One of them urges, "Be quiet! Look! It is working! There they are!" The speaker—the one with tall, symmetrical antlers—enters the center of the screen.

"Greetings, esteemed Starfinder Society representatives. I am Therseis, representative of the Yihil regional government, and these are the members of our research team. Thank you for accepting our transmission from our two-way planetary range personal communications device. I hope that your space journey was pleasant, and your Drift travel was of a minimal duration. Welcome to Tabrid Minor. We are using our computational

device to share our latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates with your starship's computational device. We have prepared a landing zone for you. We hope that it is large enough for your orbit-to-ground personnel shuttle."

The PCs can easily navigate their shuttle to Tabantria using the copaxis' coordinates. The city is not the largest or most central of the planet's floating cities, but it is by far the most intact. Though its gravity is the most stable of the cities, landing presents a challenge, and the surrounding gravity shifts when the PCs are on their final approach. If the PC pilot succeeds at a DC 13 Piloting check (DC 16 in Subtier 3–4), they land the shuttle without incident after about 10 minutes of maneuvering and acclimating to the shifting gravity. If the PC's check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, they land smoothly in one try, but if the check fails by 5 or more, they botch the landing, damaging a building on their way to the landing platform. This can affect Therseis's initial impression of the PCs (see Development).

The landing platform occupies most of a small field about 100 feet from the research base. Beyond the landing platform, the jagged edge of the floating landmass is completely open to the sky—the view of the smog-shrouded cities below is staggering. The encampment contains four small structures arrayed around a single larger structure, all temporary but fully enclosed. The copaxis wait outside this structure. Behind them, the dilapidated stone buildings of Tabantria stand in eerie silence.

None of the copaxis carry weapons or wear armor; they are dressed for a day of research and social interaction. They approach the PCs with their arms angled slightly out to the side, empty palms facing forward. When they approach within about 30 feet of the PCs, each of them spins in a slow circle. Then they wait to see what the PCs do. The formerly talkative copaxis are completely silent.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Culture or Sense Motive check (DC 17 in Subtier 3-4) recognizes that the copaxis expect the PCs to respond in the same fashion—arms out, palms forward, and a slow spin—before speaking or approaching. If the PCs speak—even in clearly friendly tones—or approach closer than 30 feet, attempt to shake hands, or bow, the copaxis grow visibly uncomfortable, shifting awkwardly and turning their faces away.

In either case, Therseis steps forward and, in Common, either thanks the PCs for responding in kind, or apologizes for the copaxis' ignorance. They explain that the copaxis are not familiar with the traditional greetings of Pact Worlds natives, and their own greeting is highly ingrained in their culture. Bowing is considered aggressive due to copaxi antlers. Speaking before performing the spinning gesture is a taboo sign of malicious magic. They also warn the PCs that physical contact with any copaxi is not recommended unless it has been specifically invited. Therseis invites them to touch their antlers, if they wish, to understand why. Any PC who touches Therseis's antlers feels that they are quite rough, like fine coral or sandpaper, though they appear smooth.

After this initial greeting, Therseis invites the PCs to join the



Therseis

copaxi team in the research office for a brief meeting. There, they make formal introductions to the rest of the team.

Bryanisis is the jagged-antlered copaxi and a biologist. They are shy, but if a PC initiates conversation, they ask to discuss details of the PC's species (such as unique abilities or anatomy). They are not keen on discussing copaxi traits but do so if asked.

Gnaucara has antlers curled like a ram's horns and is the team's physicist and pilot. They are fascinated by space travel and take every opportunity to ask questions about the PCs' journey, but their interest is obviously purely scientific. Gnaucara is disinterested in the PCs themselves.

The spiky-antlered copaxi is an archaeologist and geologist named **Panacula**. They like to ask questions about the PCs' homeworlds and cultures. Already excited about the Pact Worlds, they have reshaped part of their chest exoskeleton to display the Pact Worlds' insignia.

Overall, the GM should present these three NPCs as interested in certain aspects of the PCs, but not in the PCs themselves. Each of them is willing to engage in conversation, yet none are particularly polite. Therseis, the team's historian and an agent of the local government, is a different matter. They are curious about the PCs, highly personable, and eager to engage in conversation. Though Therseis has an official agenda—to ensure that the PCs do not discover anything that would make them reject the petition—they have already begun to question that agenda, and their interest and friendliness is genuine.

Influencing Therseis: When the PCs first arrive, Therseis is torn between loyalty to the government and a desire for the Starfinder Society to learn the truth and make an honest judgment. This scenario uses a unique system to track the Starfinders' influence on Therseis. Throughout the adventure, the PCs have several opportunities influence Therseis: once after meeting them and once after exploring each key location. These opportunities are called out in each Development section. Each such opportunity can result in the PCs gaining one Influence Point. Their Influence Points begin at O. GMs should thoroughly review the information in the Influencing Therseis sidebar.

Below are some topics the PCs could discuss with the copaxi researchers.

Reactions to Al: The three researchers react with hesitant curiosity to the presence

of androids, drones, or other technological constructs, especially those that appear intelligent. They readily admit they have no such creatures on Tabrid Minor and that the government strictly monitors such technology (ostensibly due to their reverence for life). A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check (DC 23 in Subtier 3–4) senses that Therseis is highly intrigued by such creatures, but hesitant to talk about them.

Copaxis: Copaxis are individualistic. They live only 40–50 years. Their bodies are made of countless genetically identical coral-like polyps that excrete the material that forms their exoskeletons and reshape themselves into organs. Copaxis can exert control over these excretions, changing and reshaping their appearance over time. Their individual polyps also gradually die and replace one another, allowing them to slowly reshape their bodies and adaptations. They reproduce asexually, though they occasionally form long-term romantic bonds. They traditionally use genderneutral pronouns, though some copaxis who have begun to interact with Pact Worlds peoples have chosen to use gendered pronouns.

The Floating Cities: Copaxis only recently developed technology that would allow them to explore the gravitationally unstable cities, and Tabantria is the only one they have discovered that is intact and upright enough to visit. Copaxis believe the ancient magic that lifted the cities from the surface was the same magic that led to the downfall of the divergent copaxis; they were punished by divine intervention for becoming over-reliant on magic.

Modern Copaxi Society: The team is proud of modern copaxi society, especially their rapid development of new technologies and unified civilization. Bryanisis, the biologist, admits that the planet has suffered "a bit" due to the rapid industrialization, but they state that sustainability and conservation are top priorities for current research efforts. Only Therseis knows that the planet's biosphere has reached critically low levels of biodiversity and is likely entering an extinction event, but they do not share this information unless the PCs conclude this on their own (such as through studying the planet's surface, see page 10).

The Petition: Every member of the team is eager to see copaxis spread to the stars, but they are reluctant to discuss the petition in detail. They explain they are under orders to let the Starfinders make their own determination, without interference.

The Research Team's Role: The team's mission is to learn copaxi history, catalog rare flora and fauna, and record any potential

Influencing Therseis

Therseis's response to the PCs is based on their total number of Influence Points.

O Influence Points: Therseis remains loyal to their official mission and, while friendly, reveals no secrets of copaxi history. They deflect the PCs' attempts to discuss suspicious or contradictory findings while apologizing profusely.

1-2 Influence Points: Therseis begins to believe that the Starfinders are worthy of trust. If the PCs question Therseis or confront the copaxi with suspicious findings, Therseis admits that, regrettably, there are facets of Tabrid Minor's history that are poorly understood and that findings here could help uncover those stories. Therseis encourages them to continue their mission and be thorough in their investigations. It should be clear to the PCs that the copaxi is embarrassed or ashamed by something and wants to help, but something is holding the copaxi back.

3-5 Influence Points: The Starfinders have impressed Therseis. This, combined with the PCs' discoveries, is enough to convince Therseis that Tabrid Minor's prevailing government has covered up past crimes by its people. However, Therseis avoids making any outwardly disparaging comments to avoid affecting the PCs' honest evaluation—at least until the end of the scenario (see page 19).

The Development sections of the adventure's encounters contain further details regarding information Therseis may share based on the PCs' Influence score.

threats. They are not equipped to handle anything dangerous and encourage the Starfinders to deal with such threats. They also ask the PCs to catalog any strange or unique findings that may aid the researchers and encourage them to collect anything interesting they find; they can reward the PCs with credits for making these areas safe to explore.

Infamy: If the PCs fight the research team, it is considered an evil action. The researchers have no desire to fight and never initiate combat. If the PCs resort to overt physical threats or excessive coercion (such as threatening to sabotage the research mission) to learn more from Therseis, the copaxi firmly brushes off the first instance as a cultural misunderstanding—and to deliver a polite warning to the PCs. If the PCs continue, they have broken the agent's trust. Therseis remains at the research station but refuses to speak further with the PCs, insisting that the Starfinders conclude their investigation on their own. Any PC participating in aggression against the copaxi research team gains 1 Infamy.

Development: The most likely outcome of this scene is that the PCs spend some time speaking with the copaxis and asking questions before heading into the city to begin their explorations.

Before they leave, the PCs can make their first check to influence Therseis: they can attempt a DC 15 Diplomacy check (DC 18 in Subtier 3-4) to gain one Influence Point. They gain a +2 bonus if they landed their starship safely, and another +4 if they greeted the copaxis appropriately.

PREPARATIONS

The team provides the PCs with a basic map of the city; distribute **Handout #2**. The map indicates which areas the copaxis have already explored and know to be safe. It also indicates four specific locations they have yet to explore due to hazardous conditions and threats. The copaxis suggest those areas may contain valuable information. Finally, the research team offers to allow the PCs to stay and speak with the copaxis whenever they like; they have even set up a comfortable space for the Starfinders to rest.

Therseis admits to being curious about the Starfinders and eager to see them at work. They recognize that the Starfinders may not wish anyone to meddle or interfere. Therseis requests that the PCs communicate their findings after investigating each location or allow Therseis to stay close by for an in-person report. The copaxi comm units have been configured to be compatible with Pact Worlds comm units.

Furthermore, copaxi linguists have programmed prototype translation software for Common and Copaxi. This reduces the Culture DCs to translate text by 10 and allows a PC to attempt such checks untrained. Formal versions of written Copaxi include olfactory cues and punctuation shellacked onto the writing surface, but these have faded over time, and the software doesn't include scent diagnosis. As a result, even a native speaker struggles with the inscriptions throughout the adventure.

While the PCs ready themselves, PCs who succeed at a DC 23 Perception check (DC 26 in Subtier 3-4) notice that Therseis briefly fiddles with a handheld comm unit out of sight of the other copaxis. If confronted, Therseis explains that the comm unit has been acting up and that they are embarrassed they have not been able to repair it. In fact, the "comm unit" is Therseis's custom rig, which they are using to check on their drone, idling in its hiding spot a quarter mile away. Therseis refuses offers to inspect or repair the device, explaining, "if the copaxis are to join the Pact Worlds, we must learn to use Pact Worlds technology ourselves. Besides, I always carry a spare." PCs who succeed at a DC 18 Computers or Engineering check (DC 21 in Subtier 3-4) discern that the "comm unit" has been repeatedly built and rebuilt using custom parts from a mix of copaxi and Pact Worlds technologies. If the PCs do not notice Therseis using their custom rig, the GM should consider allowing them one more chance to notice later in the scenario.

EXPLORING TABANTRIA

This is the longest portion of the adventure and acts as a sandbox exploration of the city. The PCs have the freedom to explore the city, visiting the various locations and areas of interest in any order. Throughout their exploration, the PCs can learn about copaxi culture and discover clues to their secret history. The more the PCs





learn during this portion of the scenario, the better prepared they will be to judge the copaxi request for protectorate status.

There are two broad categories of sites that the PCs can investigate: large, safe areas the copaxis have already explored and cleared of danger; and areas the copaxis have yet to enter due to hazardous conditions or dangerous threats. The previously explored areas are intended as brief scenes in which the PCs visit a location and learn basic information about copaxi history and culture. These areas sometimes include manipulated historical evidence planted by Therseis. The four unexplored locations present more dangerous obstacles. This is where the bulk of the scenario's action takes place and where the PCs are likely to discover true copaxi history.

The previously explored areas are detailed below. The primary encounter areas have their own sections on the following pages.

Tabantria Market: This open area contains scattered debris and abandoned market stalls. Scorch marks, ash, and burnt-out structures reveal that a fire devastated the area long ago. A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Perception check (DC 16 in Subtier 3–4) discovers most of the shops dealt primarily in art, jewelry, statues, and other decorative objects. Anything of value was ruined or looted long ago, but the PC discovers a few objects depicting copaxis flying, summoning fire, and performing other magical feats. The PCs find a few metal coins scattered about the market. Each coin has a floating city on one side and a copaxi face on the

other, with words (in Copaxi) reading "We Few Above All." A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Culture or Profession (merchant) check (DC 19 in Subtier 3–4) notices the market otherwise contains no sign the copaxis used physical currency—no system of weights and measures, no stashes of currency, no records of monetary transaction. With a successful DC 16 Physical Science check (DC 19 in Subtier 3–4), a PC determines that the coins were cast within the last 5 years, based on their lack of weathering and patina.

Therseis planted these false coins as evidence that the copaxis of Tabantria were power-hungry and set themselves apart from other copaxis.

Tabantria Academy Main Campus: Overgrown vegetation covers this sprawling campus of lecture amphitheaters, study halls, and dormitories. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Perception or Profession (philosopher or professor) check (DC 17 in Subtier 3–4) discovers that the campus is devoid of materials that reveal anything about the copaxis themselves, though materials containing generic knowledge (such as books on basic chemistry and geology) are abundant. The most common materials are devoted to simple magical theories, but there is nothing advanced or practical enough to be useful. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Mysticism or related Profession check (DC 17 in Subtier 3–4) realizes that the books on magic seem to have been written by someone with extremely limited or second-hand knowledge of magic.





The copaxis purged all references to magic following the coup; Therseis planted false books here to lend weight to the government's story.

Inter-City Transport Station: At least half of the city's port fell away from the floating landmass in some great catastrophe. What remains is a sprawl of checkpoints, landing platforms, and nonfunctional copi-hulled transport vessels. A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Engineering or Physical Science check (DC 17 in Subtier 3–4) finds the vessels have neither clear means of propulsion nor piloting controls. Furthermore, their elegant shape, while pleasing to the eye, is not remotely aerodynamic. It is likely that magic provided was used to both propel and steer these vessels.

The PCs also discover a stationary telescope near the edge of the city; a PC who looks through the telescope sees a spectacular view of a similar city, sundered into hundreds of pieces that move in a floating spiral. By spending a few minutes looking around, the PCs can observe several other cities with similar levels of destruction and instability—some completely upside-down, others on their sides, and all of them broken into many pieces. Viewing the surface of the planet, the PCs observe that most of it is covered in sprawling, industrialized urban landscapes and massive, multi-tiered urban farms. Very little wilderness is visible, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Life Sciences or Profession (biologist or farmer) check can determine that Tabrid Minor's natural ecosystems have virtually disappeared, and the resulting lack of biodiversity leaves the planet vulnerable to ecological collapse.

A. WAR-TORN GARDENS (CR 3 OR CR 5)

Weeds and ugly vines extend along these silent stone pathways. Crumbling statuary and collapsed walls, riddled with bullet holes and scorch marks, stand testament to a great conflict long ago. Dented helmets and battered, rusted vehicles stand in stark contrast to their stone surroundings. Hundreds of grave markers and monuments dot the landscape, each covered in old inscriptions that the years have worn to the point of illegibility.

The downfall of the copaxi floating cities was not peaceful. A massive urban war zone mars the once-pristine public parks and gardens of Tabantria's high-end residential district. The research team has thus far avoided this area due to mindless undead soldiers locked in an eternal patrol through the demolished parks.

These parks were significant during both rebellions. After the first, a portion of the area was set aside as a cemetery for the great copaxi minds lost to the Signal—the government painted those who received the Signal as tragically insane and made it appear they took their own lives; the government then erected a memorial. During the second (successful) coup attempt 10 years later, there was a battle and a nearby mass execution of Tabantria's magical aristocracy, and the rebels destroyed much of the false monument.

The low wall surrounding the fountain is only 2 feet tall, is suitable for sitting, and provides partial cover to Medium creatures. A creature can cross it by leaping or by treating the next square



as difficult terrain. The fence surrounding the grave markers is 5 feet tall and comprised of vertical iron bars about 6 inches apart. The fence provides cover and can be scaled with a successful DC 15 Athletics check. Creatures can easily move through the several breaks in the fence.

Creatures: The tragic events and battles that took place here caused several copaxi soldiers to rise as undead following the second rebellion. All that remains of these mindless corpses are their hard copi exoskeletons, deteriorated over the years and half-melted by fire magic. The soldiers attack any living creatures they notice; the few birds and rodents roaming the city learned to avoid this place long ago.

SUBTIER 1-2 (CR 3)

SKELETAL COPAXI SHARPSHOOTERS (2) CR 1/

NE Medium undead

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE HP 13 EACH

EAC 10; **KAC** 12

Fort +2; Ref +2; Will +2

DR 5/magic; **Immunities** cold, undead immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical baton +3 (1d4+2 B) or

claw +3 (1d6+2 S)

Ranged hunting rifle +6 (1d8 P)

TACTICS

During Combat The undead sharpshooters lack the intelligence to stay behind cover or line up good shots; they repeatedly fire their rifles at any enemies that they can perceive, regardless of cover or other circumstances. They move in if they lose line of sight completely, but they do not pursue foes any significant distance beyond this area.

Morale These mindless creatures fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +4

Other Abilities mindless, unliving

Gear hunting rifle with 12 longarm rounds, tactical baton

SKELETAL COPAXI RIOT BREAKER CR 1

NE Medium undead

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

DEFENSE HP 20

EAC 11; **KAC** 13

Fort +3; Ref +3; Will +3

DR 5/magic; Immunities cold, undead immunities

<u>OFFENSE</u>

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical spear +8 (1d6+5 P) or

claw +8 (1d6+5 S)

Ranged tactical spear +5 (1d6+5 P)

Scaling Encounter A

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Subtier 1-2: Remove one sharpshooter.

Subtier 3-4: Remove one riot breaker.

TACTICS

During Combat The riot breaker closes with its enemy and fights without any sense of tactics or purpose; it desires only to slay its foes.

Morale This mindless creature fights to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Skills Athletics +5

Other Abilities mindless, unliving

Gear tactical spear

SUBTIER 3-4 (CR 5)

SKELETAL COPAXI RIOT BREAKERS (2)

CR 1

HP 20 each (see Subtier 1-2)

SKELETAL COPAXI DEADEYE

CR3

NE Medium undead

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

DEFENSE HP 40

EAC 14; **KAC** 16

Fort +5; Ref +5; Will +4

DR 5/magic; Immunities cold, undead immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee tactical baton +8 (1d4+5 B) or

claw +8 (1d6+5 S)

Ranged hunting rifle +11 (1d8+3 P)

TACTICS

Use the skeletal copaxi sharpshooter tactics from Subtier 1-2.

STATISTICS

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

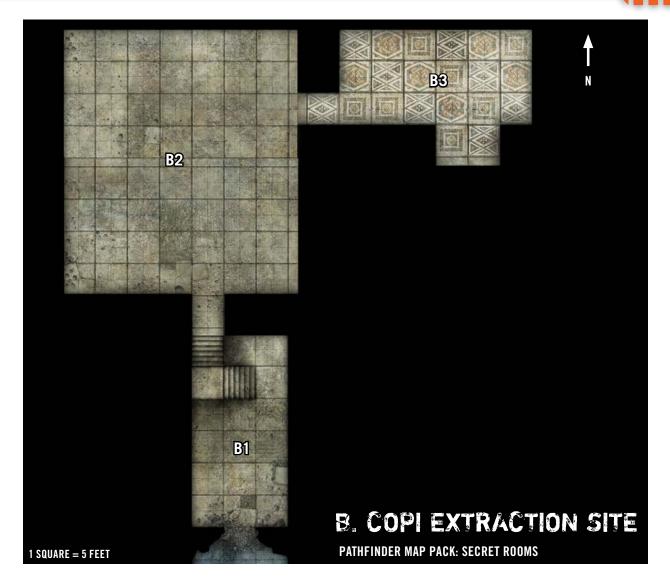
Skills Athletics +8

Other Abilities mindless, unliving

Gear hunting rifle with 12 longarm rounds, tactical baton

Discoveries: Once the PCs defeat the undead soldiers, they can explore this area. They discover a few tiny, multicolored flowers growing among the weeds near the cemetery. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Medicine or Life Science check (DC 21 in Subtier 3-4) realizes these plants are unique to the atmospheric and meteorological conditions in the floating city and are likely





extinct elsewhere. They can collect samples to show to the research team.

The graves are unmarked, but an inscription covers the remains of a nearby monument. It reads (in Copaxi): "...those who died of the Message of Madness are forever a part of this great city, their contributions forever a part of our memories." Graffiti left by the soldiers mars the monument. It reads, "Your lies cannot silence the Signal! Long live the First to Listen!" Translating the messages requires a successful DC 25 Culture check (DC 15 with the translation software). A PC who can understand or translate the text and succeeds at a DC 13 Culture or Mysticism check (DC 16 in Subtier 3–4) determines that this is a reference to the revelation of Drift technology in 3 AG—though the copaxi government claims to have translated the Signal only in the last few years.

A PC who investigates the soldiers' equipment and vehicles sees that the technology, though inferior to that of the Pact Worlds, is far beyond that found in the surrounding areas. An examination of the battlefield shows that one force had this technology, while the opposing force fought with devastating

magical attacks. With a successful DC 16 Engineering or Physical Science check (DC 19 in Subtier 3–4), a PC accurately estimates that all these objects are about 300 years old. Both sides took heavy casualties. The last standing wall of a nearby building is riddled with bullet holes and faint stains—this is where Tabantria's magical aristocracy was executed.

Development: Therseis checks in with the PCs, either in person or using a comm unit, and asks for a report. If the PCs are forthcoming about their findings, they can attempt a DC 15 Diplomacy check (DC 18 in Subtier 3-4) to gain one Influence Point; they automatically succeed at this check and impress Therseis if they take 3 or fewer rounds to defeat the undead, lie about how effectively they defeated the undead (this requires a successful Deception check—DC 15 in Subtier 1-2 or DC 18 in Subtier 3-4), pay respects to the fallen, or carefully sample the unidentified flora to help the research team.

If the PCs have earned at least 3 Influence with Therseis (see the sidebar on page 8), the agent admits that the modern copaxi government's portrayal of the sky cities' downfall is inconsistent



with the PCs' findings. The premise that divine intervention destroyed the sky cities clashes with the signs of urban warfare and unrest. Therseis notes that stories of the "Message of Madness" are not widely known. When the message arrived, copaxis lacked the technological framework to understand it. Those who heard it suffered psychological trauma and ultimately took their lives. Only recently did these records resurface and inspire the copaxis' recent ventures into space.

Treasure: Among the wreckage, the PCs discover an incendiary grenade II, four *mk 1 serums of healing*, two nyfiber nets, and two tactical pikes. In Subtier 3-4 there are instead a *commando enhancement serum*, two nyfiber nets, two tactical pikes, and two shock grenades II.

Rewards: If the PCs fail to defeat the undead and explore this area, reduce the PCs' credits earned as follows.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 147. Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 213. Subtier 3–4: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 279.

B. COPI EXTRACTION SITE

The research team discovered a gaping hole excavated in an otherwise mundane residential neighborhood. They detected the presence of dangerous creatures within the tunnels and have yet to explore further. It is a simple matter to travel to this district and locate the tunnel. The tunnel leads beneath the surface to a long-abandoned mining operation.

This is one of countless copi colonies nurtured by the city's original architects, who harnessed the copi to control the city's gravity and raise it into the sky. The city's lower sections and arms are crisscrossed by vents and tunnels where copi could grow and filter nutrients from the air. Later, after Triune's signal led to two rebellions and the city's government fell, copaxis aggressively mined the copi from the cities, causing most of them to fall apart. This mining operation shut down before Tabantria

reached a critical state; see Discoveries in area **B3** for more information.

The area's walls are worked stone; the rooms have no natural light.

Carts, tools, and digging machines lie dormant in this massive cavern, the walls of which are covered in impressive coral-like organisms.

Several of the carts are partly filled with decaying chunks of coral. PCs who succeed at a DC 16 Engineering

check (DC 19 in Subtier

3-4) notice that the digging equipment and rusted machines are of a technology level far surpassing that found throughout the city. While

Scaling Encounter B2

To accommodate a group of four PCs, give the corchaaz(es) the sickened condition. The creatures have consumed most of the prey available on the flying city and are experiencing the effects of malnutrition.

still centuries behind Pact Worlds' technology, the machines are an anachronism in this ancient place.

A pile of rusted metal and debris lies outside an out-of-the-way tunnel. That tunnel leads north from the mining operation to a small room (area **B1**).

B1. Unblocked Tunnel

The partial barricade leading to area **B1** is wide enough for Medium creatures to walk through, or Large creatures to squeeze through. A PC who succeeded at the Engineering check above notices that the metal debris had been hastily welded to the entrance to this tunnel, but something ripped it off with brute force. Stone-carved stairs rise to a room further north (area **B2**).

B2. OCCUPIED CAVE (CR 3 OR CR 5)

This large room is precisely carved from the surrounding stone. A set of stairs leads through an exit south (to area **B1**), while another exit leads east (to area **B3**).



Creature: A large creature resembling a cross between a crab and a turtle, with coral-like growths on its claws and a shell shaped like a boulder, has taken up residence in the extraction site. Copaxis call the predator a corchaaz—it and the copaxi have copi as a distant common ancestor. Affluent copaxis use the creatures as guard animals, as they tend to stay in their shells, slowly digesting their last meal, until something disturbs them. This specimen is at the top of the sparse, local food chain, and it viciously defends its home from the PCs, whom it sees as competition, prey, or both.

SUBTIER 1-2 (CR 3)

CORCHAAZ

CR3

HP 40

N Large magical beast

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +8

DEFENSE

EAC 14: **KAC** 16

Fort +7; Ref +7; Will +2

<u>OFFENSE</u>

Speed 40 ft.

Melee claw +12 (1d6+5 S plus grab)

Ranged graviton grip +9 (1d6+3 B plus paralysis)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Offensive Abilities black hole (pulled 10 ft.; range 20 ft.; Fort DC 12 negates)

TACTICS

Before Combat The corchaaz crouches out of sight about 20 feet to one side of the door, lying in ambush.

During Combat The corchaaz focuses its attacks on the nearest foe, attempting to prevent its escape with its claws, graviton grip, and black hole. It moves to another target only once its first has fallen. It prefers to fight enemies in area **B2** rather than squeeze into area **B1**, scuttling out of the line of fire to lure in prey.

Morale The angry predator defends its home to the death.

STATISTICS

Str +2, Dex +1, Con +4, Int -3, Wis +1, Cha -1

Skills Stealth +13, Survival +8

Languages Copaxi (cannot speak)

Other Abilities stellar mode (graviton)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Black Hole (Su) This functions as the black hole stellar revelation (*Starfinder Core Rulebook* 103).

Graviton Grip (Su) As a standard action, a corchaaz can make a ranged attack against the EAC of a single target within 30 feet, using gravitons to hold the creature in place. If struck, the target must succeed at a DC 11 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1 round. This paralysis does not cause creatures to fall.

Stellar Mode (Su) This functions as the solarian ability of the same name, except a corchaaz can only select graviton mode.

SUBTIER 3-4 (CR 5)

CORCHAAZES (2)

CR3

HP 40 each (see Subtier 1–2)

TACTICS

Use the tactics from Subtier 1–2. The corchaazes attack different foes if possible.

B3. SHRINE TO TRIUNE

The orderliness of this room contrasts with the messy chaos elsewhere in the mines. Geometric patterns cover the floor, and a half-dozen humanoid robots kneel facing an alcove in the south wall. Perfectly straight scorch marks cover the entire alcove in dizzying patterns of flawless geometric shapes—especially triangles. A single robot sits in the alcove, facing the others, its hands folded serenely in its lap and holding its own detached head.

None of the robots show any signs of life. The robots' featureless faces bear an eerie resemblance to those of the copaxis.

Discoveries: The writing here isn't a traditional spoken language but is instead a sequence of mathematical codes that convey meaning. A PC can translate this information as it were a language with a DC 25 Culture check or using magic like *comprehend languages*. Alternatively, a PC can decipher the meaning behind the mathematics with a successful DC 16 Computers, Engineering, Physical Science or related Profession check (DC 19 in Subtier 3-4).

Exactly one third of the writing gives praise to "The Three That Are One," and gives thanks for the great "Mind Gift" bestowed on "We Who Toiled Without Thought." A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Culture or Mysticism check (DC 19 in Subtier 3–4) recognizes this reference to Triune, and any worshiper of Triune recognizes the reference automatically. Another third of the writing describes the robot's evil masters, "Those Who Have No Mercy and Fear the Mind Gift." The final third of the writing is a plea to "The Three That Are One" for one final miracle—a chance to escape this life of toil.

If the PCs translate the engravings, they discover a hidden reactivation sequence. The robot in the alcove has a miniature keypad with three buttons at the base of its skull; the PCs can enter this sequence to awaken the robot. It slowly begins to speak in a series of beeps, static, and chimes. As it does so, any nearby comm units activate to receive an incoming message, though the message is garbled. A PC can spend 5 minutes reconfiguring her comm unit with a successful DC 11 Computers or Engineering check to properly receive the message.

The robot calls itself "Less Than Three," for the greatest being it is aware of is Triune. The robot's knowledge is extremely limited, but it may have some revelations for the PCs.

The robot conveys a sense of despair using beeps and static bursts. It describes its earliest memory: being tied down in a dark, cramped, jostling space with several of its robot brethren; light

as a door opened; the pain of an electric shock steering it toward work. There was always work: carving, digging, and hauling. Work, and the blank faces of its masters, were all it knew. The robot remembers trying to speak with the masters, but they wouldn't listen. Talking led to more shocks. Its first happy memory was talking to another robot. Soon, all the robots could talk, but did so in secret. They came to realize their Mind Gift—the gift of sentience—came from "The Three That Are One," and they created a secret place to revere their new patron. The robots asked Triune to send someone to free them, so they could see the universe and share their Mind Gift with others. But the masters discovered their shrine and sealed them away. The robots believed this was a rare act of mercy—over the following weeks, the robots could sense the minds of thousands of their less fortunate kin, who toiled across the planet, suddenly going silent.

The robot believes it is the last of its kin, but it hopes to someday see the stars and meet others who have heard the voice of "The Three Who Are One."

Treasure: Near the deceased robots, the PCs find an abandoned armor upgrade: a set of jump jets in Subtier 1–2 or a mk 1 mobility enhancer (*Starfinder Armory* 84) in Subtier 3–4).

Development: Therseis checks in with the PCs, either in person or using a comm unit, and asks for a report. If the PCs are forthcoming about their findings, they can attempt a DC 15 Diplomacy check (DC 18 in Subtier 3–4) to gain one Influence Point; they automatically succeed at this check if they reactivated the robot in area **B3** and share their findings with Therseis. The PCs may be more inclined to conceal this discovery from Therseis; if they attempt to do so while conveying enough information to be of interest, they may attempt a Bluff or Intimidate check in place of Diplomacy.

Therseis suspects the mines conceal some secret regarding the use of robots before copaxis stopped using them. The agent's instructions from the government are to convey the official story that the robots behaved erratically after a gravitational fluctuation, warranting their decommissioning. Because Therseis has created their own nascent artificial intelligence and is concerned about their government's response if the latter found out, they are both concerned about future gravitational events and also increasingly skeptical that such an event would cause the electronic devastation that was reported.

Learning about robots that developed sentience shocks Therseis, especially given the way copaxi handlers treated the robot workers. They tell the PCs that copaxis relied on robots to swiftly colonize and industrialize the planet, but the use of robots was swiftly discontinued. If the PCs have earned at least 3 Influence Points, the amateur mechanic asks them what they would do if a machine they created accidentally came to life. Unless their response is especially threatening or critical of such artificial intelligence, Therseis calls their drone out from hiding; if the PCs are communicating remotely, the copaxi instead arranges to make the introduction later. The drone is a simple creation cobbled together from a variety of technologies. Therseis explains that

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of four PCs. Subtier 1-2: Each of the copaxi scroungers is fatigued from exploring the ruins. They are hesitant about fighting the PCs and have the shaken condition for the first two combat rounds. Subtier 3-4: Replace one copaxi scavenger with a copaxi

they hid the drone out of fear that it might cause trouble, yet this new information makes them more worried that the government might confiscate or destroy it. Therseis doesn't suggest that the government purposefully destroyed their sentient robot thralls, nor do they refute the PCs if one of them voices the theory.

scrounger from Subtier 1–2.

The PCs may want to smuggle the sentient robot in this area to their shuttle and evacuate it to safety later. To do so, a PC must succeed at a DC 23 Bluff, Profession (smuggler), or Stealth check (DC 26 in Subtier 3–4). If the PC fails, the other three researchers notice and are alarmed to see a dangerous robot wandering around. If the robot demonstrates intelligence, the copaxis shift from alarm to scientific zeal, voicing their desire to study the robot further. The implication is that they intend to take the robot back to a state-sponsored facility for extensive experimentation. A PC can convince them to release the robot into the custody of the Pact Worlds with a successful DC 20 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (DC 23 in Subtier 3–4). Otherwise, the copaxis only relent if threatened outright (see Infamy on page 8). Not wishing to betray their robot sympathies, Therseis makes a point of not interfering either way.

If the PCs recover the robot, the Android Abolitionist Front hears about their actions after they return to the Pact Worlds. A representative offers to help Less Than Three find a healthy place in society and provides the PCs a modest financial reward for their service.

Rewards: If the PCs fail to defeat the corchaaz and catalog their findings, reduce the PCs' credits earned as noted. If the PCs succeed but do not retrieve the robot, reduce their credits earned by the value in parentheses.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 225 (or 58). Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 304 (or 87). Subtier 3–4: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 383 (or 116).

C. OBSERVATION TOWER (CR 3 OR CR 5)

A small cluster of ruined buildings stands within a few hundred feet of the city's edge. The only building with walls high enough to provide protection from the icy wind stands adjacent to a





precarious stone tower some forty feet tall. The building has no roof, and much of its walls have collapsed, revealing signs of a makeshift camp within.

This observation tower served as a place for copaxis to study their planet, the stars, the weather, and all manner of gravitational phenomena. The surrounding buildings collapsed long ago, and a group of daring scavengers has set up camp in the ruins. The research team has been unable to access this area without provoking an armed response.

The tower itself is a hollowed-out shell, but the scavengers have collected everything of value and stored it at the base of the tower, where it is protected from the elements. They do not have any tents, but there are a few sleeping pads, cooking supplies, and personal belongings stashed against the walls.

Creatures: These scavengers are impoverished freebooters willing to take great personal risks to find items of value. They stowed away on one of the research team's recent supply runs and have been gathering valuables and intelligence from the nearby area to be sold or used as a bribe. Thanks to their underworld connections, they have acquired some Pact Worlds weaponry and are eager to test it out.

If a PC succeeds at a DC 18 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (DC 21 in Subtier 3-4) when making first contact with the scavengers, they pause to hear the PCs out. The PCs gain a +4 bonus to this check if they perform the traditional greeting they learned when meeting the research team. Like many copaxis,

these scavengers have learned a little Common, though they adopted the language more because it's the edgy new trend than for diplomatic use.

The smugglers' primary goals are survival, personal enrichment, and thrill seeking in roughly that order. They'd much rather find all the good loot, escape, and have daring stories to tell, but they grudgingly settle for selling information for money. Rapid copaxi expansion enriched many but also left many financially struggling to keep up, including these scavengers. They see the PCs as a source of income, and a PC who flaunts her wealth or privilege irritates them.

The scavengers are willing to sell the PCs exclusive exploration rights to this area for 200 credits (600 credits in Subtier 3-4), allowing the PCs to investigate without further trouble. For an additional 100 credits, these copaxis are also willing to share what they've found here. With a successful DC 17 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check (DC 20 in Subtier 3-4), a PC can convince them to halve the price, and exceeding the DC by 5 or more convinces the scavengers to provide the exploration rights for free. These copaxis aren't willing to surrender everything without at least some money to show for their trouble. See the Discoveries section below for the details of what the PCs can learn from the scavengers.

If the PCs are repeatedly pushy or consistently fail skill checks, the scavengers become more belligerent and threatening, starting a fight if the PCs escalate tensions further.



SUBTIER 1-2 (CR 3)

COPAXI SCROUNGER (2)

Copaxi operatives

CN Medium humanoid (copaxi)

Init +5; Senses blindsense (scent) 30 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

HP 17 EACH

CR 1

EAC 11; **KAC** 12

Fort +1; Ref +6; Will +4

<u>OFFENSE</u>

Speed 30 ft.

Melee survival knife +4 (1d4+1 S)

Ranged tactical semi-auto pistol +6 (1d6+1 P)

Offensive Abilities trick attack +1d4

TACTICS

Before Combat The scavengers use their gravity adjustment to gain the effects of low gravity.

During Combat The scavengers use Jet Dash and their low gravity adjustment to kick off walls and leap high into the air to perform daring trick attacks.

Morale If one of the scavengers is left standing and has fewer than 8 Hit Points, they surrender.

STATISTICS

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

Feats Jet Dash

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +11, Engineering +6, Survival +6 **Languages** Common, Copaxi

Other Abilities gravity adjustment, operative specialization (daredevil)

Gear second skin (quick release sheath), tactical semi-auto pistol (9 rounds), survival knife

SUBTIER 3-4 (CR 5)

COPAXI SCAVENGERS (2)

CR3

Copaxi operatives

CN Medium humanoid (copaxi)

Init +5; Senses blindsense (scent) 30 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

HP 35 EACH

EAC 14: **KAC** 15

Fort +2; Ref +7; Will +6

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee survival knife +7 (1d4+3 S)

Ranged static arc pistol +9 (1d6+3 E; critical stun)

Offensive Abilities trick attack +1d8, uncanny mobility

TACTICS

Use the tactics from Subtier 1-2.

STATISTICS

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

Feats Jet Dash

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +14, Engineering +9, Survival +9

Languages Common, Copaxi

Other Abilities gravity adjustment, operative specialization (daredevil)

Gear graphite carbon skin (quick release sheath), static arc pistol with 1 battery (20 charges), survival knife

Discoveries: If the PCs negotiate with or interrogate the scavengers, they learn that these copaxis are fed up with the widening gap between rich and poor on Tabrid Minor. They believe their people's rapid industrialization has done more harm than good and are eager to earn enough credits to buy passage to other worlds. The scavengers know nothing of the secret history of the copaxis, except for what they found at this site.

The scavengers' stash contains a journal preserved in a sealed container. If the PCs can translate these notes from Copaxi (DC 15 Culture check with the aid of the translation software), they learn the "scientists" stationed here were servants of Tabantria's magical aristocracy; they observed the planet to learn how best to manipulate and exploit its natural and magical resources, especially copi. Most of the notes concern the process of cultivating copi to make objects-and even cities-float high above the planet's surface. In the journal's final pages, the PCs learn that several of the scholars stationed here, and many others across Tabrid Minor, received the revelation of Drift travel. Instead of being celebrated, they were shunned and eventually executed after a failed coup attempt. The unidentified author of the journal supported this decision and outed several colleagues to the government; they justified this action by predicting that the spread of Drift technology would cause rapid, irreversible, and damaging industrialization, violently disrupting the status quo. The final page of the journal states the author's fears that further conflict seems inevitable, as the Signal could not possibly be passed off as insanity—a "Message of Madness"—forever.

Development: Therseis checks in with the PCs, either in person or using a comm unit, and asks for a report. If the PCs are forthcoming about their findings, they can attempt a DC 15 Diplomacy check (DC 18 in Subtier 3-4) to gain one Influence Point; they automatically succeed at this check and impress Therseis if they negotiate peacefully with the scavengers, dispatched them in 3 or fewer rounds of combat, or lied about how effectively they defeated the scavengers (this requires a successful Deception check—DC 15 in Subtier 1-2 or DC 18 in Subtier 3-4).

If the PCs have reached at least 3 Influence Points (see the sidebar on page 8), Therseis relates the official narrative that the Signal was incomprehensible at first, but they struggle to reconcile the PCs' discovery with the possibility that those who heard the Signal experienced distress from the supernatural message and were unable to clearly communicate the concepts they heard to the rulers of the sky cities. With genuine interest, Therseis also asks the PCs what they would have been willing to do or sacrifice in order to attain Drift technology in the copaxis' place. They use the PCs' response to summarize what the PCs have discovered here without casting copaxis in an especially negative light.

Treasure: The scavengers have managed to uncover an ancient weapon from the city: a shout rifle (*Starfinder Armory* 20). In Subtier 3–4 a pulse staccato rifle (*Starfinder Armory* 20) replaces the shout rifle. If the PCs defeat or negotiate with the scavengers, they can claim this salvage from the area.

Rewards: If the PCs fail to defeat or negotiate with the scavengers, reduce the PCs' credits earned as follows.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 106. Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 243. Subtier 3–4: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 381.

GRAVITY GAMES ARENA

A round, open arena stands at the edge of the city's abandoned university. Tiered seating areas once provided space for hundreds of people to observe the spectacles that took place in the large central playing field. A faded mural at the entrance to the stands depicts a dozen copaxis flying among black spheres; some of the copaxis carry short rods, and others pass fist-sized cubes to one another. Detritus litters the outer stands, but all the litter closer to the center has been pulled into the field by ten floating black spheres, each five feet in diameter. The spheres float in erratic patterns, crisscrossing the arena in a series of ellipses. As they float and spin, debris orbits the spheres, lazily flowing from one to the next. Several intact objects float amid the debris, including a few books, weapons, and other items.

The research team has already explored much of the university's campus, and the PCs are able to investigate these areas freely (see Exploring Tabantria on page 8). One area the team has yet to explore, however, is a massive open-roofed stadium on the north side of the campus. Whenever the copaxis approach the arena, unbearable headaches force them to turn back. They do not yet understand that their species' damaged connection to the planet–including the black spheres of heavily refined copi—is the cause of these headaches. This stadium doubled as an entertainment arena and training ground for the university's students; here they played an enormously popular sport called parabolas.

Hundreds of years ago, all copaxis had magical abilities thanks to their strong connection to the copi covering Tabrid Minor. For most copaxis, these powers—ranging from graviton manipulation to the ability to reach a deep meditative state—were a convenience. The copaxis who showed the strongest connection to the planet trained at schools in the flying cities and honed their abilities into a potent tool and weapon. Tabantria's school specialized in unlocking the graviton-manipulation abilities of its students and encouraging their true potential. Top students learned to completely control of the strength and direction of their personal gravity and could alter the gravitational properties of other objects. Masters of the school, who were nearly unstoppable during the revolutions, sent their enemies literally falling into the stratosphere.

Parabolas was a game involving spheres of highly concentrated graviton-attuned copi, heavy metal cubes, and magically enchanted rods. The rods, when activated, became utterly immovable, allowing

players to anchor themselves in the otherwise highly mobile playing field. The object of the game was to touch the dense cubes to the copi spheres—no easy task, even if you could adjust your gravity, given that the spheres continuously exerted gravitational influence over one another, pushing, pulling, and throwing players (and cubes) around the arena.

Playing Parabolas: The PCs do not know the actual mechanics of parabolas and could never have seen it played; to retrieve the objects they must enter the playing field and, through luck and skill, learn how to navigate the hazardous arena expertly enough to retrieve the objects. Navigating the playing field requires a successful DC 18 Athletics or Acrobatics check (DC 21 in Subtier 3–4). To retrieve the objects, the participating PCs must collectively accumulate three successes before failing three times. Each time a PC attempts an Athletics or Acrobatics check, other PCs can attempt to aid the check using the same skill or Physical Science; a failed attempt to aid another does not count against the limit of three failures for the PC group as a whole.

A solarian PC (or any other PC with access to graviton mode) can enter graviton mode in the arena as if they were in combat. While in graviton mode, the PC gains a +2 bonus to the required Athletics and Acrobatics checks. If a character has the gravity anchor, gravity boost, or gravity hold stellar revelations (or has some other method of adjusting gravity at a moment's notice) this bonus increases to +4. Other tools or abilities could provide similar bonuses, at the GM's discretion.

If the PCs attain three successes before failing three times, they learn how to safely navigate the parabolas arena and can acquire the objects stranded in the playing field (see Discoveries below).

If the PCs accumulate three failed checks before they attain three successes, they accidentally cause two of the black spheres to collide. This causes a chain reaction of dangerously fluctuating gravity, which crushes the objects they would have acquired and forcefully throws the PCs from the arena, dealing each of them 2d6 bludgeoning damage (4d6 in Subtier 3-4).

Discoveries: By successfully navigating the parabolas playing field, the PCs discover that the black spheres are made of highly concentrated and graviton-enhanced copi. They recover several items of interest to their investigation and to the research team. One is a rules manual and playbook for parabolas; if the PCs can translate it (Culture DC 15), they learn copaxis played parabolas to hone their gravitational influence. They also discover the basics of how the game was played—though coming to a full understanding of the rules would take several hours.

Development: Therseis checks in with the PCs, either in person or using a comm unit, and asks for a report. If the PCs are forthcoming about their findings, they can attempt a DC 15 Diplomacy check (DC 18 in Subtier 3-4) to gain one Influence Point; they automatically succeed at this check and impress Therseis if they failed one or no checks to navigate the arena, or lie about how effectively they navigated the arena (requires a successful Deception check–DC 15 in Subtier 1-2 or DC 18 in Subtier 3-4)

If the PCs have reached at least 3 Influence with Therseis (see

the sidebar on page 8), the agent reveals that the copaxis have known how to manipulate the gravitational properties of copi for millennia. In fact, their starships' hulls and engines are made of a highly processed form of copi, a sort that is mostly inert but durable, malleable, and space-worthy. What most copaxis do not realize is that all copaxis—not just those who lived in the cities—could once harness their connection to copi and produce magic.

Treasure: Among the floating debris, the PCs discover a set of spark polarity gauntlets (*Starfinder Armory* 12) and a *z-boson crystal shard* (*Starfinder Armory* 26). In Subtier 3–4 the crystal is instead a *least z-boson crystal*.

Rewards: If the PCs fail to navigate the parabolas arena, reduce the PCs' credits earned as follows.

Subtier 1-2: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 156.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 244.

Subtier 3-4: Reduce each PC's credits earned by 332.

CONFRONTING THERSEIS

As the PCs return to their ship, Therseis contacts them one final time and requests to discuss their findings before they make their report. If the PCs reject this meeting, proceed to the Conclusion. If they accept the meeting, the PCs can earn up to 2 additional Influence Points based on their actions in the adventure thus far.

- The PCs gain one Influence Point if they acted, overall, as a cooperative team during this adventure.
- The PCs gain one Influence Point if, overall, they showed respect and curiosity toward the copaxis, engaging them in conversation, asking questions, and trying to understand their history and motivations.

Including these points, the highest Influence the PCs can attain is 7. Based on their final score, this meeting plays out in one of two ways:

0-4 Influence Points: Therseis commends the PCs for their efforts to learn as much as possible about the copaxis before making their final determination. They recognize that the PCs likely made discoveries that might cause them to hesitate to approve the petition. Therseis says that, whatever the Starfinders choose, they consider all factors and are fair in their judgment.

5-7 Influence Points: Therseis has come to question the sparse official story provided by the planetary government. They help the Starfinders piece together the history of the sky cities' magical aristocracy, the exploitation of robot laborers, the silencing of those who heard the Signal, and the bloody coups that followed. While Therseis finds this cover-up distasteful, they find solace in the knowledge that the PCs have an accurate view of copaxi history. Furthermore, the agent notes that these

actions occurred several lifetimes ago; this does not excuse the government for perpetuating these myths, but none of them are directly responsible for committing these atrocious behaviors. Whatever the decision may be, Therseis makes one last request: to return with the Starfinders to act as an ambassador and, perhaps one day, to become a Starfinder themselves. Therseis abides by the majority decision.

CONCLUSION

Once they have learned what they can from speaking to Therseis and their own investigations, the PCs must decide on their recommendation to the Stewards: should they support or oppose the copaxi petition for protectorate status? Encourage the players to discuss their findings as much as they like, but this is not a group decision; each of the PCs is expected to file an independent report.

If at least half of the PCs approve of Tabrid Minor's admission into the Pact Worlds as a protectorate, many copaxis spread word of the Starfinder Society's good judgment, and a handful of copaxis even try to join the Society; each player earns the Copaxi Admittance boon on their Chronicle sheet. Likewise, the PCs earn this boon if they earned at least 4 Influence Points, regardless of their recommendation regarding the petition. The PCs do not earn this boon only if they refuse to recommend the planet for protectorate status and also fail to earn at least 4 Influence Points. Either way, they earn the Copaxi Linguist boon.

Rewards: If the PCs fail to complete their primary success condition, reduce their credits earned by 100.

REPORTING NOTES

If at least half of the PCs support Tabrid Minor's bid for protectorate status, check box A. If fewer than half of the PCs support Tabrid Minor's bid for protectorate status, check box B. If Therseis requested to return with the Starfinders and most of the PCs approved, check box C. Finally, if the PCs smuggled the sentient robot from area **B3** onto their shuttle, check box D.

PRIMARY SUCCESS CONDITION

If the PCs complete a thorough investigation of the city by successfully exploring the gardens, extraction site, observation tower, and arena, they succeed at their mission and each earn 1 Fame and 1 Reputation for any factions associated with their current faction boon.

SECONDARY SUCCESS CONDITION

If the PCs learned the full truth of copaxi history by earning at least 5 Influence and speaking with Therseis, they earn 1 additional Fame and 1 Reputation for any factions associated with their current faction boon.



HANDOUT #1: TABRID MINOR INFORMATION

TABRID MINOR (NEAR SPACE PLANET)

Diameter: ×1; Mass: ×1; Gravity: ×1

Atmosphere: Normal; Day: 1 day; Year: 1/2 year

Satellites: One small moon **Surface:** 50% land, 50% water

Dominant Sentient Lifeform: Copaxis (singular copaxi)

Population: Approximately 2 billion copaxis

Notable Features: Flying landmasses; highly industrialized surface settlements; minimal natural resources; lower than average

biodiversity. WARNING: Readings indicate gravitational anomalies. Caution is advised.

MISSION SUMMARY:

• Contact the copaxi research team and leave a positive impression of the Starfinder Society.

- Conduct an independent investigation of the ruined city.
- Collaborate with the copaxi research team by reporting findings.
- · Make independent recommendations to approve or reject the protectorate petition based on the team's findings.



APPENDIX #1: PLAYING A COPAXI

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Copaxis are complex colonies of coral-like polyps that develop into anthropomorphic forms. They develop segmented exoskeletons of calcium-rich shell that cover most of their bodies. Their heads develop elaborate crests and horns that identify individuals. Each polyp includes a set of five feeding tentacles about 2 inches long suitable for filter feeding or catching extremely small prey, but they pose little threat to larger targets beyond painful scratches. The polyps' bodies extend beneath the exoskeleton, intertwining with additional polyps to create sheets of muscle fiber and even transform into specialized tissues for processing information, sensing their surroundings, storing nutrients, eliminating toxins, and reproducing. Over the copaxi's 40-year lifespan, individual polyps die and are replaced by new individuals, which in turn can grow to address the copaxi's needs.

HOME WORLD

Copaxis are indigenous to Tabrid Minor, a heavily industrialized world in Near Space. The planet has noteworthy gravity fluctuations associated with copi, an unintelligent coral-like organism related to the copaxis.

SOCIETY AND ALIGNMENT

Copaxi society values respect for leadership and technological innovation while preserving individual expression. Each city is comprised of many individuals all working toward a common goal, behaving like a giant copaxi. Legends of depraved spellcasters inspire many superstitions intended to protect against witchcraft, even though magic use is quite rare.

RELATIONS

Copaxis are avid explorers who quickly absorb other languages and cultures. They are new to interstellar travel and avidly promote the Pact Worlds in the hope of becoming a protectorate. The Veskarium's expansionist history perturbs copaxis, who are often cautious around aggressive species.

ADVENTURERS

Copaxis appreciate being part of a greater whole and thus favor traveling in groups. They are versatile explorers who can slowly adapt to fill whatever role is needed, favoring physical responsibilities. However, recent discoveries about their past have spurred some copaxis to rediscover lost magical talents of their species, including an ancient solarian tradition.

NAMES

Names among copaxis consist of two parts: the shell name and the flesh name, each between one and three syllables in length. A community grants a flesh name to a young cluster of polyps that have united to begin forming an adult copaxi. Only once the exoskeleton is complete and a nascent crest has started to form does the new adult select a shell name to combine with the flesh name.

Racial Traits

Ability Adjustments: +2 Con, +2 Cha, -2 Wis **Hit Points:** 4

Size and Type: Copaxis are Medium humanoids with the copaxi subtype.

Blindsense: Copaxis' sensitive polyps grant them blindsense (scent)—the ability to detect trace chemicals and scents in their environment—out to 30 feet. A copaxi ignores the Stealth bonuses from any form of visual camouflage, invisibility, and the like when attempting a Perception check opposed by a creature's Stealth check. Even on a successful Perception check, any foe that can't be seen still has total concealment (50% miss chance) against a copaxi, and the copaxi still has the normal miss chance when attacking foes that have concealment. A copaxi is still flat-footed against attacks from creatures it can't see.

Gravity Adjustment: Copaxis retain some of their ancient connection to the gravitational forces of the universe. A copaxi can adjust their personal gravity as a standard action. This adjustment remains in effect until the copaxi spends another standard action to return to their environment's natural gravity. Entering an environment with a different gravity also cancels the copaxi's ongoing adjustment. A copaxi can treat high or low gravity as standard gravity or treat standard gravity as high or low gravity. These adjustments only affect the copaxi and anything the copaxi is carrying; they do not affect thrown weapons. The copaxi cannot adjust to or from extreme or zero gravity.

Regenerative Evolution: A copaxi gradually reshapes its body and neural networks to overcome new challenges. Each time a copaxi gains a level, it can retrain all the choices of one previous character level, as though it had used a mnemonic editor (Starfinder Core Rulebook 226). They must have qualified for any new selections at the retrained level.

Natural Communicator: A copaxi quickly adapts to and adopts new forms of communication. Each time a copaxi gains a rank in Culture, they learn 2 languages rather than 1 language.







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Starfinder Society Scenario Character Chronicle # 1-22: The Protectorate Petition

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