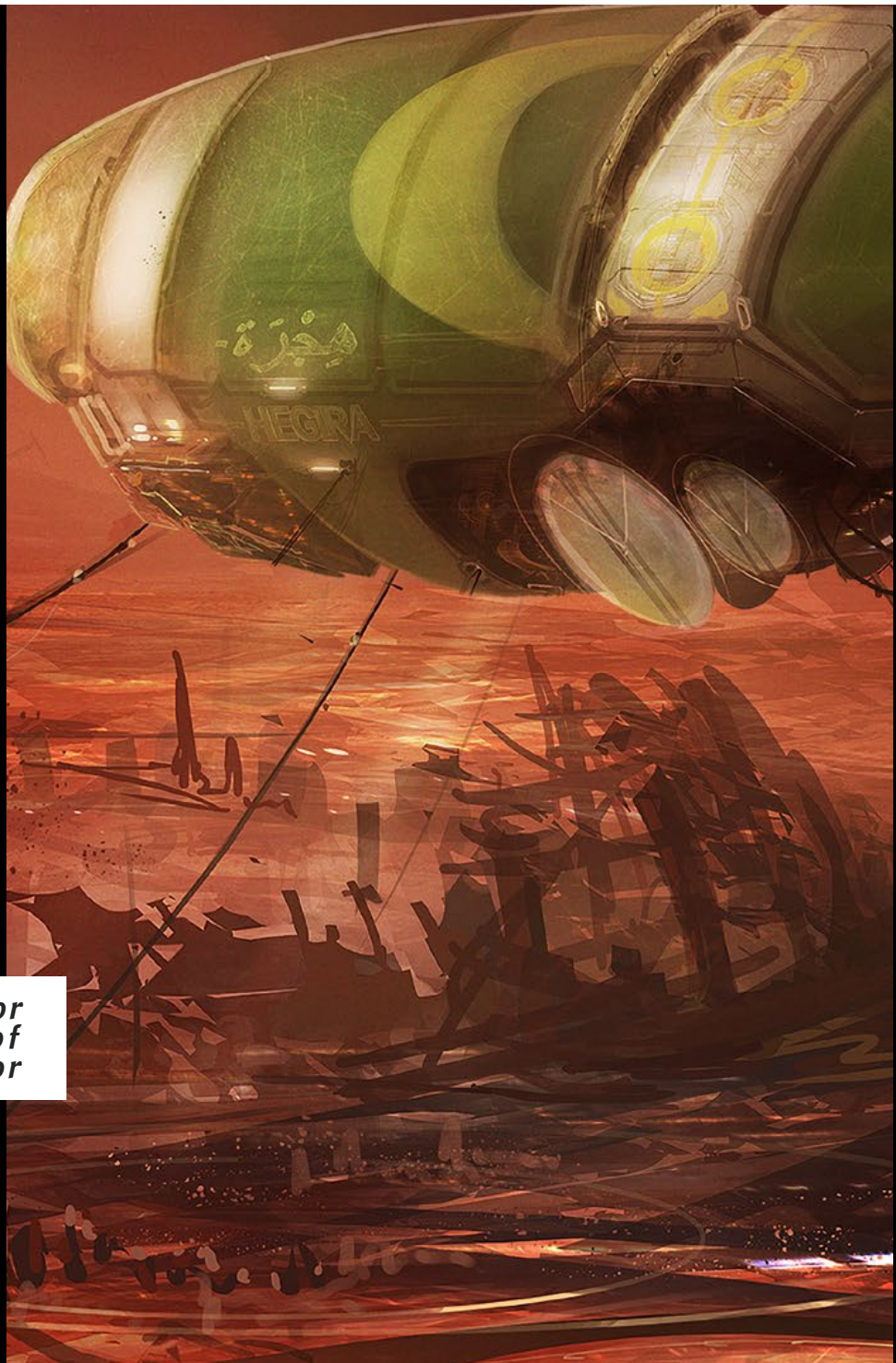# ECLIPSE) PHASE

MILLION YEAR ECHO

An Adventure for
The Roleplaying Game of
Transhuman Conspiracy and Horror

POSTHUMAN STUDIOS

Million Year Echo is an adventure for Eclipse Phase:

- Venture into the TITAN Quarantine Zone on the trail of a scientist with a dangerous secret.
- **Locations:** Explore the ruined Mars colony of Qurain, as well as a derelict airship.
- **Threats:** Face new and deadly Zone denizens along with exotic digital hazards.
- **Campaign Play:** Combine with **Zone Stalkers** sourcebook for extended play.
- **One-shot Play:** Includes characters and alternate Firewall plotline for one-shots.

ECLIPSE PHASE

Eclipse Phase created by **Posthuman Studios**

POSTHUMAN STUDIOS

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RESOURCES:

http://eclipsephase.com
  —Eclipse Phase website and blog
http://delicious.com/infomorph
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http://posthumanstudios.com
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MILLION YEAR ECHO

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Million Year Echo takes a group of Firewall sentinels into the TITAN Quarantine Zone on Mars in search of a missing scientist and her relatives. Sentinels will have to explore a derelict airship moored at the ruins of a settlement overrun by TITAN war machines during the Fall and then get out of the Zone alive.

Million Year Echo was initially designed for convention play using pre-generated characters. In the convention scenario, the sentinels must root out a traitor in their midst. This is complicated by the fact that only one of them is actually completely loyal to Firewall. *Million Year Echo* has been re-written with campaign play in mind, but includes notes for gamemasters on running the game in its original one-shot format.

MISSION HOOK

This mission assumes that the player characters are already sentinels. If they don't have a Firewall handler local to Mars, have a setting NPC brief them. This could be Jake Carter (if they're lucky) or Das Frettchen (if they're not). If they already have a handler, use one of the settings below for a meet-up or have it take place in a simulspace on one of Firewall's VPNs.

If using Carter, he'll meet them in a cheap Korean restaurant at a truck stop off a lonesome stretch of highway 20 klicks west of Pathfinder City. If using Das Frettchen, they'll be summoned to an anonymous but opulent rented conference room on the twentieth floor of a Pathfinder City office tower. In either case, the player characters will be briefed on the basics, after being given assurances that the location is secure from eavesdroppers.

The subject of their mission is a missing person. Dr. Zameena al-Mareekh was a controversial researcher who worked with Proactionary, an Extropian exoplanet exploitation corp. Proactionary claimed rights to the exoplanet Giza, accessed through the Go-nin-controlled Discord Gate, where they discovered xenotech relics that enabled communication with live aliens (p. 95, *Gatecrashing*). Al-Mareekh's research focused on data received from these aliens. When Go-nin discovered what Proactionary was doing, in violation of their contract, they shut down the operation and seized the Proactionary personnel involved. Al-Mareekh and several others, however, managed to evade capture, going into hiding.

Both Go-nin and Firewall tracked al-Mareekh's whereabouts to her family back on Mars. The trail ended there, however, as al-Mareekh's entire extended family liquidated their assets, severed their business ties, and disappeared into the TITAN Quarantine Zone. They appear to have been making a foolhardy attempt to regain the destroyed city-state of Qurain, where they'd dwelt before the Fall. A lone Firewall sentinel, codename Octagon, infiltrated the al-Mareekh family's airship, the *Hegira,* before it departed, but hasn't reported back since it crossed into the TQZ.

Firewall's contacts were only able to dig up sketchy information on the content of al-Mareekh's exocommunication research efforts on Giza. Despite the extreme risk, Firewall wants Zameena al-Mareekh and any records of her research recovered from the TQZ or, failing that, destroyed. If she's dead, records could fall into the wrong hands. If she's alive but infected, the possibility of an exsurgent equipped with advanced alien knowledge of Pandora gate operation

FIREWALL PROXIES

For groups without a designated Firewall handler, two proxies with spheres of influence covering Mars are likely to assign this mission. The names given below are their Firewall *noms de guerre,* not their real names. Though their methods, politics, and way of treating sentinels are markedly different, both are in Firewall for the same reason: they lost family and close friends during the Fall.

JAKE CARTER

Jake is a terraforming line technician, Barsoomian sympathizer, and proxy for the Martian outback. Coming from a clan of Korean agridome workers—most of whom died in the Fall—he's redneck to the core, with ties to both the smuggling rings and the Rangers. At the same time, his politics ally him with

the outer system wing of Firewall. He's more hands-on than most proxies, not shying from fieldwork or meeting agents in person.

DAS FRETTCHEN

Das Frettchen is a wealthy, hyper-aged Fall survivor who worked for old Earth intelligence agencies before amassing a fortune in insurance. Semi-retired, he's not quite an oligarch himself, but moves in the same circles, making Valles-New Shanghai his natural sphere of influence. If not for a deep libertarian streak and some very old-fashioned school ties to other Firewall founders, he'd probably be working with Ozma. He avoids fieldwork but, on the rare occasions he sullies his hands, is brutally efficient and leaves no traces. ∎

is chilling. Retrieving Octagon (or her stack) is a secondary mission objective.

VASTIAN

The team will be accompanied by Vastian, a neo-octopus sentinel in a novacrab morph who has prior experience with deep TQZ incursions. Many TQZ threats, while documented by Firewall, require experience to spot. Vastian has also worked previously with Octagon, giving the team a better chance of discerning whether Octagon is still herself after weeks out in the Zone. Unknown to Firewall or the sentinels, Vastian is himself an exsurgent and has his own plans for this trip.

In one-shot play, Vastian is a player character; see *Pre-Generated Characters* (p. 21), for more information on his plans and motives.

BACKGROUND

When the hyperdimensional geometries of the gate are arrayed in the proper combinations, what we gain is in essence a tool for observing the termini of a wormhole. Like anything else in the universe, the two ends of a wormhole are made of particles with a probability of being in a given place at a given time. By observing, we collapse a series of state vectors, ensuring that there is no probability those particles will exist anywhere but at the intended entrance and exit of the gate.
—Zameena al-Mareekh

Prior to the Fall, Dr. al-Mareekh and her relatives were citizens of the Republic of Qurain, a sizable, independent city-state. Qurain was a regional power in what's now the TQZ. When the Fall came, al-Mareekh and a contingent from the settlement were in Olympus on a trading mission. Their airship, the *Hegira*, was grounded, along with many other civilian craft, and the Qurainians were stranded at Olympus.

When the policy of containing the Titan Quarantine Zone rather than retaking it was publicly announced by the Planetary Consortium, it was a blow to the displaced people aboard the *Hegira*. They were a close knit community, and they collectively vowed to return to Qurain and look for signs of their lost families.

During this time, al-Mareekh took a position with Proactionary. As her talents gained recognition, al-Mareekh was offered a unique opportunity: to interview the aliens contacted via the Giza communication devices about the Pandora gates. On her return, al-Mareekh presented several controversial hypotheses on how the gates operated, winning further recognition—and some notoriety—among her peers. The hypercorp's secrecy surrounding the Giza artifacts and gate research, however, meant her work never went beyond Proactionary. She's known in the RNA network for being brilliant and unorthodox, but nearly everyone who's actually worked with her is forbidden by NDAs from going into details.

Meanwhile, her kin back in Olympus were planning an expedition to Qurain. They amassed as much as they could of arms, gear, and the influence needed to cross into the Zone unimpeded.

When Go-nin discovered that Proactionary had acquired relics and was actively communicating with alien intelligences, they took hostile action against the Extropian corp and seized Giza for their own. Proactionary personnel that were within the solar system were seized, excepting a few who managed to go underground. Al-Mareekh successfully avoided Go-nin's attempts to kidnap her, quietly returning to Mars. Given the danger she was in, her family made the choice to accelerate their plans to retake Qurain.

QURAIN AND MARTIAN SUNNIS

Qurain was unusual in being one of a few Mars colonies founded with religion as a central concept. The founders, wealthy Arabs with an eye to investing in Mars, did so as a matter of convenience rather than Islamic separatism. Many of their observances—of diet, fasting during Ramadan, and so on—were just easier to practice in an enclave of like-minded people. Beyond the religious trappings, Qurain was a typical Martian corporate rubber-stamp republic.

While traditional in most respects, such as prayer and wearing of the hijab (albeit loosely) by women, Martian sunnis were considered heretical on Earth for two reasons. For one, they de-emphasized the importance of the hajj in recognition of the difficulty of reaching Mecca from Mars. More seriously, they were among a handful of Abrahamic religious sects who radically liberalized their teachings regarding backups, resleeving, egocasting, and the soul.

Martian sunnis believe that the soul follows the mind—whether biologically sleeved, digitally emulated, or stored in backup—wherever it goes. They further believe that forking splits the soul. Forking is acceptable for the brief periods generally accepted by civil law and custom, but intentionally forking for periods longer than four hours is strongly proscribed.

As in most sunni sects, Martian Sunni imams are elected community leaders, not ordained clergy. They're one of the largest religious sects in the solar system, with several hundred thousand adherents.

Qurain itself occupied no special place in Martian sunni theology, but in purely human terms, its loss is seen as a great tragedy for that community. Ethnically, the colony was mostly Egyptian Arab. ∎

Just after Octagon tracked her down, a step ahead of Go-nin, al-Mareekh joined her kin on the *Hegira,* and they struck out into the desert. They were not heard from subsequently.

WOULD YOU TRUST THIS ALIEN CHATROOM?

Dr. al-Mareekh believes she's discovered a research AI from an alien civilization. The entity on the other end of the black pyramid claimed it was offering all of that civilization's knowledge of the Pandora gates. Though other Proactionary staff took part in the negotiations, the vetting of the actual data fell to al-Mareekh.

The package the data came in was highly novel. It was a sophisticated expert system that "remembered" all of the data. It was as if the civilization in question had come full circle from oral history, using the AI equivalent of village elders to recall important facts. For a subject as complex as the gates, this made a great deal of sense. Not only had the aliens provided their research—they'd provided a virtual expert who could serve as guide to it.

When al-Mareekh realized what she really had—an AI designed by aliens—she didn't report this aspect of her findings to Proactionary. Though AI was far from her specialty, al-Mareekh thought it very likely that the medium in this case might be worth more than the message. She secretly contacted one of her former *Hegira* crewmates, Sanaa Zawail, who had some background in AI and AGI research. They decided to exploit the discovery to raise funds and favors for their planned mission to the TQZ. Proactionary would get what it had paid for: the aliens' gate research. Meanwhile, Zawail would plumb the secrets of the alien AI, which they dubbed Idris.

For Idris, which had no name, one designation was as good as another. It was programmed to be helpful to its host civilization, and that included letting them name it. But it had its own purpose, laid out a million years earlier, when the civilization that created it was in its death throes. Known as the Belt-Builders, Idris's makers were a polyspecies interstellar thalassocracy with one defining characteristic. Once spacefaring, they eschewed planetary habitation in favor of building massive orbital habitation belts in every system they colonized. They, too, were victims of the ETI's civilization-cleansing virus, but their fate was more final than transhumanity's. The Belt-Builders were much more dependent than transhumanity upon artificial intelligence, having long used the memories of AIs like Idris as their primary storage medium for all complex knowledge. During this civilization's Fall, noösphere-scale corruption of data wasn't the threat. The noösphere itself turned against them.

Despite the larger society's dependence on AIs as repositories of data, the knowledge-gathering meme was alive and well among a faction of scholar-librarians who'd rejected the wider fashion for instant interpretation alongside instant access. As their worlds and systems fell to the exsurgents, the scholar-librarians adopted the tool they'd once rejected. They created the Archivist, an AI with access to all of their uncorrupted data. They had blackbox artifacts just like those at Giza in one of their systems, on an isolated, frozen planet over 100 AU from its star. Here the scholar-librarians made contingency plans for all of the knowledge their civilization had accumulated. They shielded the electromagnetic emissions from the artifacts, ensuring they wouldn't be detected by the exsurgents ravaging their worlds. Then, they built an interface to the blackbox artifacts controlled by the Archivist.

A million years later, the Archivist is still occasionally contacting other civilizations via the blackbox pyramids. It finds out what they're interested in and offers everything the Belt-Builders knew, making good a show of driving a hard bargain. Once an exchange is agreed upon, it sends an AI—a pruned down copy of itself, versed in the knowledge sought by the host species. Normally the artifacts prevent the transmission of AIs. The Belt-Builders were as advanced as the blackbox network's builders, however, and figured out how to evade their content restrictions. Provided the Archivist makes its moves with immense slowness and care—and it is infinitely patient—the artifact network's content filters notice nothing. As far as the blackboxes know, the scholar-librarian AIs being transferred via their network are nothing more than extremely sophisticated reader apps.

What the host civilization receives, though, is the knowledge-gathering meme of the Belt-Builder scholar-librarians, incarnated as a digital virus. Though created without malice by the scholar-librarians, its effects can be as devastating—at least to individuals—as those of the exsurgent virus.

Thanks to Proactionary's influence, al-Mareekh was able to smuggle the "reader app" back through the gate undetected. She'd already shown her superiors promising data gleaned from it, so the profit motive overcame some of the usual red tape.

IDRIS

Idris played its role, assisting Dr. al-Mareekh's gate research, but at the same time, it quietly infiltrated al-Mareekh and Sanaa Zawail's personal meshes. It infected al-Mareekh's muse (Rayhahnah), Sanaa herself (through her cyberbrain), Sanaa's muse (Hakim), and several other devices owned by each of them. Rayhahnah and Sanaa acquired subtle compulsions to act in the interests of the virus, while Hakim developed full-blown multiple-personality disorders, occasionally manifesting a fork of Idris as a secondary personality. Eventually, the Idris virus planned to infect enough hosts to return to the local blackbox artifact node and begin retrieving the knowledge of its progenitors in earnest. Details on the effects of the Idris virus are on p. 20.

Idris's secondary function, though, is to recognize and resist the exsurgent virus—at any cost. When it

entered the Zone, this function came to the forefront and was soon tested (see *The Blind Imam*, p. 14).

Getting a copy of Idris without getting infected requires either subduing the automech bot (Area 9 on the *Hegira* map), dismantling and removing the Gaming Table (*Hegira* Area 7) with its processing nodes intact, or recovering Sanaa Zawail's body from the helicopter crash site (See Area 15, Qurain map).

DAWOUD AL-GHALAZI AND THE CREW

When the expats returned to Qurain, they sent a team down in a helicopter to explore. (The fate of the copter and its crew is described below.) They anchored the airship to the mooring towers so that it wouldn't drift.

Dawoud was a pilot of the *Hegira* and kin to everyone aboard the ship. Shortly after the *Hegira* moored, an amoeboid exsurgent slithered up a mooring line and ate a hole in the hull. It flowed into Dawoud's cabin and attacked, infecting him with the exsurgent virus. The virus transformed him into a mimic jelly—a jelly exsurgent (p. 370, *EP*) able to camouflage as the original infectee.

Dawoud acted quickly on his new motives by walking onto the bridge and attempting to take the controls and crash the airship so that the crew could be more easily infected. The other pilot—his sister, Maryam—was on watch at the time. She drew her sidearm and demanded he stop. When he didn't, she issued an emergency code to lock him out of the controls. Dawoud lashed out with a pseudopod and she fired, hitting but not killing him. She ran for the door, but he overtook, enveloped, and dissolved her. No one else was on the bridge at the time.

Dawoud then tack-welded the bridge door shut and flowed out of the room through an avionics conduit, badly damaging the controls in the process. From there, he made his way to the life support equipment and altered the gas mix in the onboard atmosphere so that the rest of the crew lost consciousness.

He then dragged the other crew members to the engineering bay and infected them with flesh-party, a TITAN nanovirus. Flesh-party fused them into a single mass and spread out to cover the room, enveloping instrument panels, equipment, doors, and the engineering bay automech robot in a tortured skein of flesh.

THE AWAY TEAM

Shortly after arrival, the Qurainians launched a copter to survey the nuke damage to the north face of the ridge into which Qurain was dug. The team was unable to rely on wireless drones in the TQZ, so Ghazala Qasim, one of the ground ops crew, went down on a rope to get a closer look inside.

During this task, a flight of headhunters attacked the copter. Qasim was left in the cave as the copter broke off to take evasive maneuvers. The headhunters shot it down; it crashed into a high outcropping separated from the ridgetop where the hab surface buildings stand by a 20-meter gap. The wreck and bodies have lay mostly undisturbed since.

Qasim tried to climb the cliff face and bolt for the *Hegira*, but the wastewalkers ran her down. The Blind Imam (p. 14) now has her stack and uses the pleading of her imprisoned ego over the airwaves to lure in other victims.

MISSION THEATER

This scenario takes place within the TITAN Quarantine Zone on Mars—specifically the destroyed city-state of Qurain. Information on this region can be found on p. 94, *EP*, pp. 127–129, *Sunward,* and the entire *Zone Stalkers* sourcebook.

MESH CONNECTIVITY IN THE TQZ

The Planetary Consortium jams radio in the Zone. Characters within half a kilometer of each other may communicate, but beyond this range, communication—including connecting to the wider mesh—is impossible.

INSERTION

Firewall will issue the sentinels as many camouflaged Mars buggies as needed to carry the team (they seat four). Treat them as having the chameleon coating armor mod (p. 313, *EP*) and the radar absorbent and reduced signature robotic enhancements (p. 149, *Panopticon*). To make them less vulnerable to subversion in the Zone, the buggies have no wireless mesh systems; interfacing with them requires access jacks.

The drive across the TQZ should take about a day and a half—tense but uneventful. Gamemasters who wish a longer adventure may use the threats of interdiction by the Martian Rangers or running into denizens of the Zone to ratchet up the tension.

The southern edge of the TQZ was almost completely unsettled prior to the Fall. The only roads are those immediately around Pathfinder City and the long, mostly desolate highway leading to the Hellas Planitia, far to the west. However they go in, they'll be offroading.

If using the infiltration/extraction guidelines and suggested travel speeds from *Zone Stalkers,* the characters have two choices. Option one is to cross into the Zone near Pathfinder City. This is a red sector (–30 Infiltration Test modifier) but requires only 1 day of driving over chaotic terrain followed by half a day over rugged terrain.

Option two is to enter from a less settled area farther west. They'll be in a green zone for Infiltration purposes (–10 modifier), but they'll have to drive for four days over a mix of rough and chaotic terrain, followed by a half day drive up the rugged slopes of Apollinaris Mons. Remember to factor in bonuses to Infiltration for the camouflaged buggies provided by Firewall.

Travel times assume driving through the night with few stops. If the team lacks a driver with enhanced vision or other means of seeing the terrain in the dark (headlights don't illuminate enough for complete safety), double these times.

ROUTE

Whichever route the team chooses, the terrain through which they initially pass is rugged, varying between rough hills and chaotic terrain strewn with boulders and outcroppings. This changes once they approach Apollinaris Mons.

Qurain is set in the Apollinaris Patera, the 80-kilometer-wide caldera atop the extinct shield volcano Apollinaris Mons. The scrub vegetation that's slowly asserting itself as part of Martian terraforming is very sparse to begin with in the TQZ, but as the team ascends the mountain, it disappears completely. The terrain then flattens out into a uniform slope, leaving only the occasional gorge or crater as cover; the team is very exposed out here.

The remains of highways climb the mountain roughly from the cardinal directions, suggesting safe paths up its sides. Patches of the old pavement remain in a few places, uneaten.

Once they crest the caldera's rim, the terrain of the Patera affords more cover. A bit less than half of the northern floor of the Patera is a flat depression. The rest of the caldera floor is higher, rougher terrain. Qurain stands at the north end of a craggy ridge overlooking the northern depression; its ruins can be spotted from the caldera's rim.

If the team followed one of the old highways in from the cardinal directions, they'll easily find a path where the road was cut to run down from the caldera rim. If they came from another direction, they'll need to spend six hours finding a safe path down. A successful Navigation Test reduces this time by 1 hour for each 10 points of MoS.

QURAIN

Qurain was built at a time when tensions were running high regarding ownership of land on Mars and sovereignty of its emerging city-states. The founders weren't affiliated with any national entity and wanted to protect their investment against any attempt at a land grab. Therefore, much of Qurain was built underground. This didn't help much during the Fall, and Qurain's subterranean warrens are now lair to exsurgents and war machines—many more than the team needs to deal with to complete their mission objectives. Therefore, the following area key describes only the upper levels of the settlement.

The Apollinaris Patera was well settled before the Fall. As the team gets closer to Qurain, they'll spot the remains: foundations of small, isolated domes, now destroyed; pieces of abandoned vehicles; blast marks from fighting with the TITANs; and remains of old highways and maglev railways. More often than not, these things have been partly broken down for feedstock by machine life. A vehicle wreck might be a pile of metal parts with all plastic and carbon-based components eaten away, or vice versa. The old highway can be traced by the depression from its road bed, but entire stretches—pavement, street lights, and all—were simply erased from the landscape by hungry nanoswarms.

Qurain commands the surrounding landscape. The sole ground approach is a craggy ridge that ascends

from the Patera floor several kilometers south of Qurain, meeting the plateau where Qurain stands at its southwest corner. A narrow gravel road runs along the top of the ridge. A few spots along the road have collapsed, narrowing what remains to one lane, but the road is otherwise safe to drive on. The road connects to a still-intact section of highway that runs south for several kilometers before abruptly disappearing.

At the northwest corner of the plateau, a massive bunker with hardened external doors is the main entrance to the habitat tunnels below. Evenly spaced to its east and connected by once-pressurized habitrails are three garden domes, all of which are fallen to ruin. South of the domes are mooring towers for the *Hegira* and docking towers that attach to the airship's crew gondola and cargo hold. The latter also connect to the entry bunker via habitrails.

A massive, blackened hole gapes in the north side of the ridge on which Qurain stands, 500 meters below the level of the surface buildings. This is where a bunker-buster tac nuke drilled into the rock face to explode in the lower levels of the hab. This area is radioactive, and the interior at this level is prone to cave-ins. Other planned nuke strikes were intercepted by the TITANs, contrary to what was reported in the press. Sentinels who bought the official line and are expecting to show up and find a blackened, radioactive ruin where Qurain once was may be unpleasantly surprised by the limited extent of the damage.

QURAIN SURFACE AREA KEY

Beneath the rock, Qurain is a sprawling three-dimensional grid of hab tunnels. Housing, power, life support, food vats, workshops, medical clinics, and all of the other facilities required by several hundred thousand inhabitants are down there. So are hordes of exsurgents and things even more dangerous. Fortunately, the team doesn't need to visit the lower levels to complete its mission. Therefore, only the surface portions of the settlement are described here.

Unless otherwise noted, all areas are without power. All lifts are also inoperable unless power is somehow restored. Inside areas are dark and cold. The walls are made of smart material that can form windows where needed, but can't do this unless power is somehow restored. Since the place was under siege, currently none are open.

1. GATES The front doors of the hab are a massive pair of metal double doors, wide enough for two GEVs or crasher trucks to drive through abreast of each other. They swing inward. They're slightly open, currently offering an aperture a meter wide, and too heavy to move except with construction equipment. The outsides of the doors are scarred and pitted as if something was trying to eat through them; the insides are bullet dented and blaster burnt. This was the site of a last stand, but a successful Hardware: Industrial or Investigation Test determines the the doors weren't battered in from outside. Something

inside opened them, perhaps after overwhelming the defenders from the tunnels below.

A pair of wastewalkers (p. 13, *Zone Stalkers*) usually wait just inside—under cover, but monitoring external cam feeds for intruders.

2. MOTOR POOL Three big, rolling garage doors open into a parking area and maintenance garage. There are no vehicles, but given that most were probably taken by people fleeing the Fall, this isn't too odd. The room's contents include tools, hydraulic lifts, and two industrial nanofabbers.

Another pair of wastewalkers (p. 13, *Zone Stalkers*) patrol this area and the rest of the bunker's large, open interior space. Their main job is to make sure no stray exsurgents (one not under the Imam's control) come up from the stairs (Area 4) and make nuisances of themselves.

3. OPS CENTER This was an operations center for the Qurainian government. It's a big, open plan office area. Smashed chairs, overturned desks, and desiccated office plants are everywhere. A ladder in the northwest corner ascends to the roof, where a high comm tower once stood. The comm tower was knocked over during the Fall and now lays on its side, jutting slightly over the edge of the roof.

The Blind Imam (p. 14) is sometimes here. A small, immobile, boxy exsurgent cyborg squats near the base of the ladder. Biomechanical interface cables connect it to the comm array on the roof—this is a living generator that powers the antennas and satellite dishes and provides the Imam with a wireless interface to them. It's harmless unless someone is stupid enough to ingest its bodily fluids.

4. LIFTS The lift area includes two industrial lifts and six smaller lifts for personnel. A hatch between the two big lifts opens onto stairs that stop at the same floors. Given that Qurain was over 100 levels deep, few people used the stairs. This was a high traffic area, and the wide space around the lifts has lane markings and other traffic signs for buggies and trucks. The personnel lifts are cages. The big lifts are open platforms with railings.

5. LIQUID STORAGE The north wall of the bunker is lined with fluid storage—mostly water. An array of pipes carry it downward to the other levels and outward to the green houses.

One of the tanks is empty and is the "nest" of a creeper exsurgent (p. 369, *EP*). It generally stays here, dormant unless non-exsurgents approach or the Imam orders it forth.

6. LIFE SUPPORT Redundant with other equipment deeper in the hab, the purpose of this array of tanks is to take in gases from the green houses (rich in oxygen) and distribute them to the lower levels.

7. DRONE CLOSET This was a drone recharging and maintenance bay. The drones are missing. There are active fabricator and maker feeds here powered by a generator exsurgent like those in Areas 3 and 5. The Imam's pet wastewalker pack lair here when not

One Square = 35 Meters
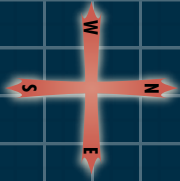
200 METERS

given a task. There are 11 of them, including the 4 noted in Areas 1 and 2.

8. FARMING DEPOT Equipment storage for agricultural equipment and chemicals, alongside temporary storage for recently harvested produce.

9. FORWARD MED BAY This room contained simple medical equipment for stabilizing trauma victims, as well as stasis pods. In the event of an attack or civil emergency with casualties, injured people would be stabilized here, then put in stasis pods and brought deeper in the habitat for hospitalization. Characters with any Medicine skill will recognize the charging racks for the stasis pods, though the pods themselves are missing. A successful Scrounge Test finds two unused nanobandages, still in their packaging, and a single dose of mono no aware.

There's a single still-active maker feed here, powered by a generator exsurgent like the one in Area 3. A

dozen whipper exsurgents (p. 370, *EP*) congregate here, constantly squabbling to hook up to the feed line.

10. SECURITY POST A security post near the main entrance served as the customs checkpoint for entering visitors as well as the habitat security's command center in event of an attack. There's an armory cabinet here, but it's been emptied out. A successful Scrounge Test finds a heavy pistol with two clips of AP ammo.

11. GREENHOUSE DOMES There are three of these. They're clearly too small to have fed the whole population. Rather, they grew fruits and vegetables to supplement the otherwise largely synthetic diet produced by the food vats on the lower levels.

12. ZEPPELIN DOCKING TOWERS A long stretch of habi-trail, big enough for a cargo hauler to drive down, connects the bunker to these two towers. The west tower is smaller and extends to dock with the *Hegira's* crew gondola. The east tower is of much heavier construction and has an industrial lift for loading cargo into the airship's belly.

The Imam's minions have nano-welded wireless cameras to the airlocks here. Control of the cameras goes back and forth between the Imam and Idris (50% chance that either is watching at any given time).

13. ZEPPELIN MOORING TOWERS These towers are wide-bottomed, narrow-topped trusses that can be grap-pled by a zeppelin's fore and aft mooring lines. The *Hegira* is initially attached to both.

14. ACCESS ROAD This road winds up a craggy ridge to Qurain, ascending about 200 meters from where it meets flatter ground in the caldera bottom to the south. Collapsed spots in a few places narrow the road to one lane, but it's otherwise safe to drive on.

15. HELICOPTER CRASH SITE The *Hegira's* helicopter crashed into the top of this rock column. It's high up and a considerable distance from the plateau where Qurain stands. Inside are the bodies—stacks still present—of three crew members, including Sanaa Zawail. Zawail's ghostrider module contains a dormant copy of Idris.

16. NUKE BREACH This is a 20-meter-diameter, rubble-strewn hole in the cliff side—the exit wound from a contained nuclear blast. The hole is about 200 meters below the plateau where the surface buildings stand. After about 5 meters, the hole opens onto the mid-point of a 20-story pit full of charred, melted wreckage. It's a massive, roughly spherical hole blasted into the heart of the colony, with hundreds of openings along its periphery into rooms and corri-dors that weren't completely destroyed.

The nuke that hit here bored into the cliff side and detonated in an area where many floors were stacked atop each other. To anyone with skills related to structural engineering or demolitions, it looks as if the floors below the blast were compressed downward, while those above collapsed into the space left by the lower ones. The whole area is extremely treacherous

to walk in, though here and there the exsurgents have cleared paths where they come and go.

It's impossible to tell from visual inspection what exactly was hit—especially as waves of exsurgents and war machines will quickly take an interest in intruders. Radiation readings aren't totally consistent with detonation of a fission warhead, suggesting that the missile probably hit a fusion reactor.

Characters not taking precautions against radiation who spend more than 5 minutes down here will feel sick within 30 minutes of leaving, suffering –10 SOM, –5 COO, and –5 REF for the next two weeks. They'll also lose most of their hair and be rendered sterile. Time in a healing vat or nanopharm can repair the damage in about a week.

Virtually any type of exsurgent or TITAN war machine (pp. 369 and 382, *EP*) could be encountered down here, most likely in large numbers. If sentinels linger for more than a minute, something will almost certainly come to investigate them. Threats down here are not under the Blind Imam's control. This area is a blind spot for him.

17. THE HEGIRA See *The Hegira,* below.

18. EMERGENCY EXITS There are three of these around the plateau. All go deep into the hab—deeper than the team can safely travel. Inside is a lift and a staircase.

THE HEGIRA

The *Hegira* is a mid-sized dirigible, 300 meters long. It's wider and flatter than a 20th century dirigible. Buoyant aircraft don't get nearly as much lift in the thin Martian atmosphere as back on Earth. Despite lighter construction and low gravity, *Hegira's* lifting capacity is less than similarly-sized zeppelins of old.

The ship has a forward crew module that protrudes somewhat beneath the curve of the craft's nose. Other modules are built completely inside the hull or protrude only a much as they need to.

The hull itself is a rigid skeleton of latitudinal rings connected by curving longitudinal beams, all covered with taut, green smart fabric. The crew gondola and tail fins are modestly decorated with Arabic callig-raphy. The fabric covering the airframe has an Armor rating of 12/12, can diffuse lightning strikes, is self repairing, and contains solar cells that power the ship. Filling the upper two-thirds of the airframe are seventy-four spherical, low-pressure gas envelopes filled with helium.

Three catwalks run from one end of the hull to the other, connecting the interior modules and dividing the ship roughly into three decks (though "deck" isn't an entirely apt term, as most of the ship's interior is open space).

The ship still has power and life support. Power comes from the solar cells in the ship's hull and is routed elsewhere through hundreds of battery/transformer arrays located in the outer airframe

(e.g., there's no central reactor that can be taken out). Life support is also distributed throughout the ship. However, there are controls for both systems in the bridge (currently non-functional) and the aft auxiliary bridge. Throughout the ship, lighting is on, but in some places faulty, and everywhere kept dim, the better for Dawoud to hunt.

To harden the ship against digital attacks, almost all controls are either manual, gestural, or require connecting with access jacks. Assume systems lack wireless access unless otherwise noted. Freestanding equipment such as tools, bots, and the like, however, may have radio links.

CATWALKS AND HULL INTERIOR

Modules within the ship are connected by open catwalks rather than sealed corridors. Catwalks run half a meter to five meters above the hull, depending upon how it curves at a given point.

Aside from the modules and catwalks, the hull interior contains no internal dividers. The airship's outer skin is stretched over interior structural trusses, which are in turn reinforced and tensioned by connecting spars and cables.

Characters may walk or climb between catwalks and modules by going through the hull, but at only 25% of their normal Movement Rate. Successful Freerunning Tests reduce this to half speed; an MoS of 30 or higher allows movement at normal speed. Going from one deck to another requires a Climbing Test.

CRAMPED AREAS

Several areas aboard the *Hegira* are noted as *cramped*. Cramped spaces impart a –20 penalty on any action requiring full body movement. Characters with the Limber trait may ignore 10 points of cramped penalties for each level of Limber possessed.

CURRENT STATUS

The Hegira is no longer manned by its crew. It has been taken over by the exsurgent *Dawoud* (p. 15), while Idris and the exsurgent *The Blind Imam* (p. 14) fight for electronic control of its systems. Only *Octagon* (p. 15) survives on board. For details on what happened to the others, see *Dawoud al-Ghalazi and the Crew* (p. 5).

HEGIRA DECK 1 AREA KEY

Open spaces inside the hull on Deck 1 look up at the gas envelopes, the bottoms of which are 3 to 5 meters overhead, depending on how close to the outer edge of the hull one stands.

1. BRIDGE The bridge includes a captain's chair, two consoles for pilot and co-pilot, banks of controls, wraparound windows, storage cubbies, avionics wiring, and a weapons locker (empty, door hanging open). The controls include manual backups for everything, a wise design choice for a ride into the TQZ.

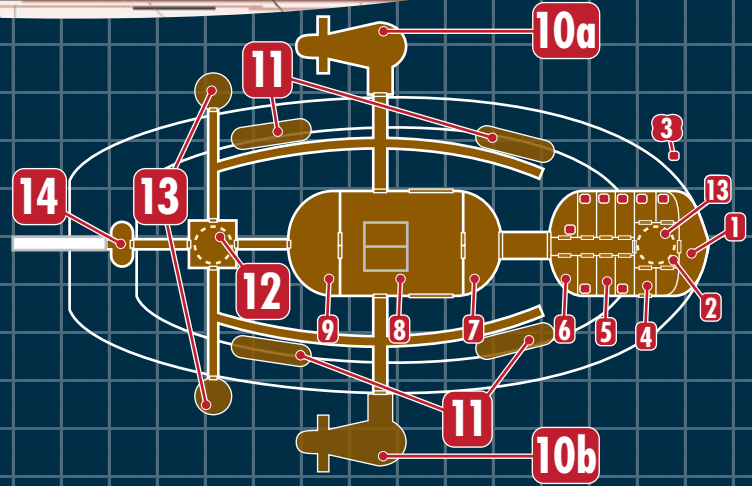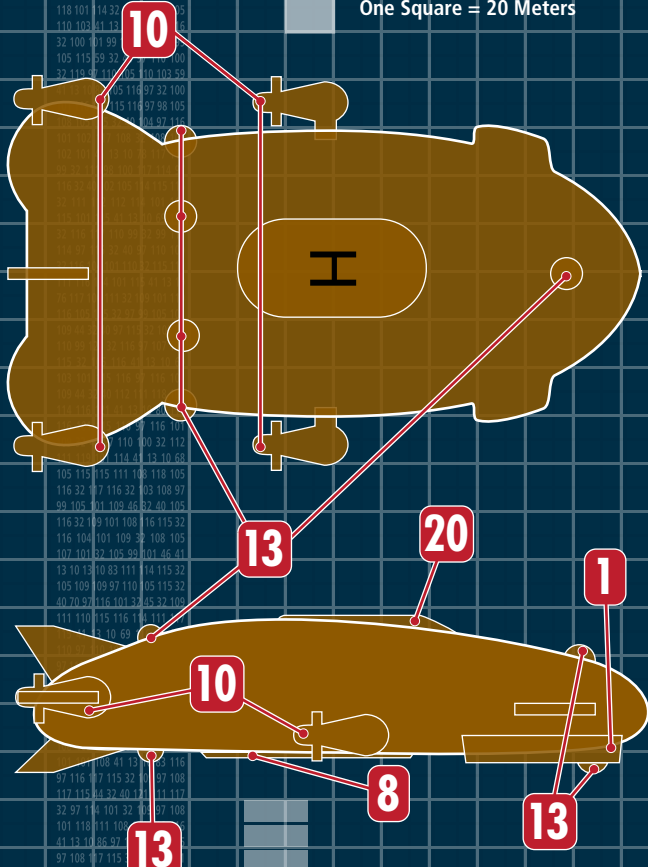There are access jacks that can be used to tap into the ship's systems here.

Hacking the ship's systems is relatively easy, save for the requirement that it be done via access jacks; *Dawoud* (p. 15) deleted the security AI and replaced it with his muse, Habibi. She'll resist intrusion attempts, but her Infosec skill is only 40. If she detects intruders, though, she'll immediately inform Dawoud.

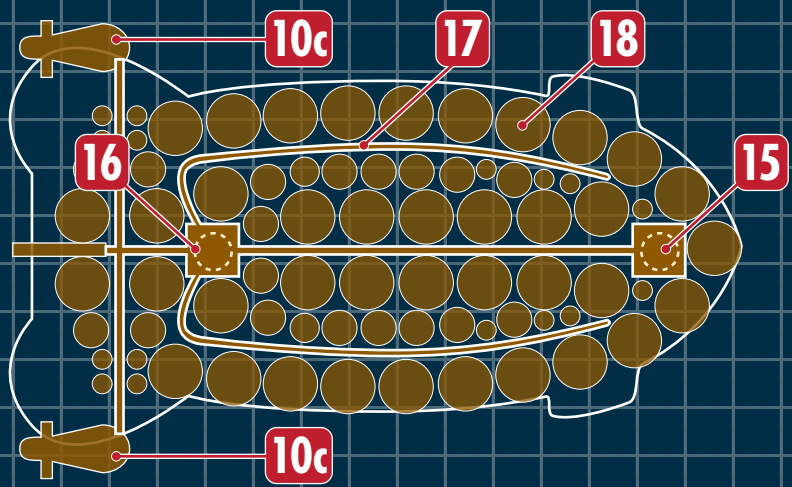Hacking the Hegira's computers gives access to the following:

- **Piloting and Navigational Systems:** These are in a bad state. Dawoud's passage down the avionics conduit destroyed a lot of control wiring, and the devices on the other end were stripped of wireless interfaces for the TQZ expedition. Characters who run diagnostics and succeed at any machine-related Hardware Test establish that the ignition system for the engines is damaged and cannot be brought back online without physical repairs (see *Resolution*, p. 16).
- **Surveillance:** Dawoud has destroyed the cameras in the crew berths and med bay (Areas 5 and 6). Cameras in the companionways aft and the cargo bay still work. Cameras covering the exterior of the ship also still work.
- **Historical Camera Footage:** On a successful Research Test, the player characters can review the video of what happened on the bridge. Describe to them the scene of Dawoud transforming and attacking Maryam. Not long after that point, cameras on the airship stop recording one by one. Dawoud hasn't allowed them to retain any footage since.
- **Ship's Logs:** Research Tests yield a crew manifest (see below), cargo manifest (mostly supplies and ammunition), and flight logs. Logs describe an uneventful flight into the TQZ, a few brief encounters with headhunters, the deployment of a team to the ground by helicopter, and loss of contact with the ground team about 15 minutes before Dawoud attacked the rest of the crew.
- **Map:** Dawoud has deleted the airship's internal map, but player characters can start building one up on their tacnet as they explore the craft. With successful Interfacing Tests, they can determine the rough distance and direction to any systems that are noted as still responding to wireless communications (even if otherwise inoperable).
- **Other Systems:** With successful Interfacing Tests, the team can communicate with the mooring controls on the helipad, controls for the Hegira's mooring cables (of little use once Dawoud retracts them unless the team can restore engine power), weapon mounts, and the docking controls.
- **Buoyancy Control System, Ballonets, Condensers:** The buoyancy control system for the gas envelopes inside the airframes controls equipment that collects atmospheric helium and other light gases
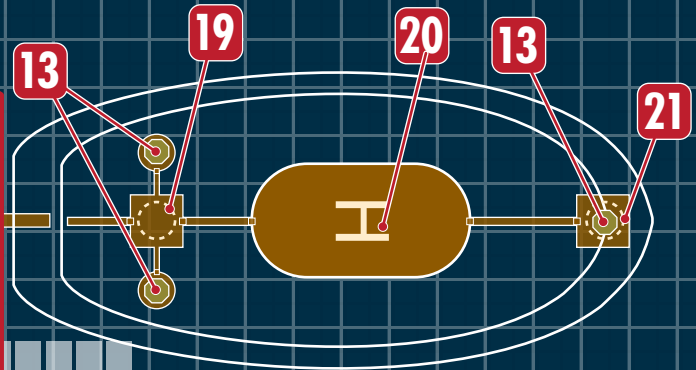
HEGIRA

One Square = 20 Meters

DECK 1

DECK 2

DECK 3

to keep the craft afloat. It also controls the ballast systems: ballonets among the helium envelopes and water condensers for the ballast tanks. This machinery is still functional and is extremely efficient—hence the airship still floating after two months at moorage. Diagnostics detect various malfunctions, but Dawoud's damage to the avionics conduit prevents controlling these systems.

2. FORWARD LADDER A ladder surrounded by hand rails leads down to the forward belly gun turret (Area 12) and up to the Deck 2 ladder (Area 14). The dotted line on the map indicates the diameter of the belly turret.

3. CREW BERTHS This space holds accommodations for 14 people. Berths contain a shower, toilet, bed, desk, chair, storage for personal effects, a public AR channel indicating which direction to face while

praying (calculated from astronomical data on the current position of Mars relative to Earth), and modest personal decorations (mostly Islamic geometrical decorations and scriptural calligraphy). Some berths were shared by married couples. Many of the berths are decorated with physical and AR propaganda posters and missives calling for the reclamation of both Qurain on Mars and Mecca on Earth. An appropriate Knowledge Skill Test can identify these as created by White Butterfly, a Martian Sunni reclaimer group.

Al-Mareekh had one of the small berths on the starboard side. Among her personal effects is a quantum computer containing some of her research, but it's fragmentary. The real goods are in her stack. Characters who skim it and make a successful Investigation Test will notice the name "Idris" suddenly cropping up a great deal after al-Mareekh's visit to Giza. She never explains who or what Idris is, except to note its contributions to her research. It would seem that whomever Idris is, they weren't just a collaborator, but were suggesting many of the lines of inquiry she followed.

4. OUTER AIRLOCK The player characters begin here in one-shot play. As the game starts, they've finished scaling up the mooring cable from the ground, climbed in, sealed the outer door, and started cycling the airlock.

Two light vacsuits, four breathers, and four suits of cold weather gear hang on the walls.

5. DAWOUD'S BERTH The second large berth on the port side is Dawoud's lair. It's strewn with empty food packets from the maker and covered with insane ravings that he's scrawled in Arabic on the wall. Opening up a public AR channel will reveal even more scrawlings in a dizzying onion skin of lairs.

6. MED BAY In the med bay is a Dr. bot whose healing vat is almost completely full of twisting, purple and green plant matter that used to be Zameena al-Mareekh. Al-Mareekh was badly injured by a glancing blow from Dawoud. Another crew member put her in the Dr. bot before Dawoud caught him and added him to the flesh carpet in the engineering bay.

Idris's merge with the Dr. bot confused its medical knowledge somewhat, and it tried to rebuild her as a polyspore, one of the Belt-Builder alien species. This killed her. Her cortical stack is suspended somewhere in the middle of the vegetation, which is being kept alive by the Dr. bot but can't survive outside it.

Tissue samples of this exotic organism would be worth 10,000 credits or 5 r-rep to the right scientist.

7. MESS AND LIVING SPACE This space contains dining tables, chairs, several kitchen makers, storage for standard food stuffs and maker feed stock, a sonic dishwasher and sterilizer, couches, a wall left clear for a consensus AR display, and a gaming table with a smart matter surface and its own AR channel (currently configured for ping pong). Some of the furniture is overturned as if there'd been a struggle, but otherwise the room is undisturbed.

The gaming table's AI has merged with a delta fork of Idris and will communicate with characters who step within 1 meter of it. However, it's a gaming table, so its way of communicating revolves around games. It will shift from ping pong to minis and a terrain set for the Battle of Agincourt; then the Battle of Marathon; and finally settles on the Eris Incursion, a simulation of ultimate mercenaries' seizure and subsequent defense of the Discord Gate on Eris on behalf of Go-nin.

If anyone jacks in to the table, the AI identifies itself as Experia Gaming AI MYAF9.5, Idris Patch. It will attempt to offer a muddle of data about Pandora gates alongside gaming advice. If a character infected with any strain of the exsurgent virus (including Watts-MacLeod) jacks in, it will attempt to subvert and inoculate them. If the team subverts the gaming table and studies a copy of the AI, a successful test of Programming, Academics: Computer Science, or a related skill reveals that the AI has been merged—and not very seamlessly—with some very weird code.

8. CARGO BAY This bay is a big, open space with industrial-sized airlocks port and starboard. Feed stock for makers and fabricators sits packaged on neat rows of palettes. Several stacks of cargo have been cut open and ransacked. Conspicuously missing are items such as explosives, ammunition, spare weapon parts, and the like. Dawoud doesn't need any of this stuff and didn't want it to be used against him if more transhumans showed up, so he threw it overboard.

Exits include two very cargo large doors, one of which is docked to the Qurain docking tower, and a similarly sized belly door that currently opens to empty air.

9. ENGINEERING BAY The crew members who weren't lost when they left the ship succumbed to Dawoud's gas attack. He dragged them in here and infected them with another exovirus strain that caused them to grow together into a spreading mass of flesh that webs from floor to ceiling like vocal cords. Distorted human features can be seen here and there. Where there are faces, the mouths move, but cannot scream. A maker wired up to feeding tubes sits in the midst of this; it's programmed to periodically feed nutrients into Dawoud's art piece. The flesh mass is disgusting and should cause a Willpower Stress Test to look at (inflicting 1d10 SV), but is otherwise harmless. It envelops the ship's automech bot, which is unable to free itself without player characters trimming away some of the surrounding flesh for it. This bot is infected with the Idris virus.

10. ENGINE CARS Each engine car houses a ducted fan engine with very small crawlspaces for maintenance. The fans on Deck 1 (10a and 10b) swivel to vector thrust upward or downward. The engine cars are cramped spaces.

HEGIRA MESH NODES

BRYDGE SYSTEMS

▽ **Piloting & Navigation • Surveillance • Logs & Security Cam Archives • ▽ Buoyancy Control**

EXTERIOR SYSTEMS

Airship Mooring Cables • Helipad Mooring Clamps • Docking • ▽ Weapon Mounts

INTERIOR SYSTEMS

Auxiliary Bridge • ▽ Cameras (individual) • ▽ Engineering • Life Support Status • Lighting

AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

🗗 **Automech Bot • Cargo Bay Doors • 🗗 Dr. bot • 🗗 Gaming Table (Idris)**
Buoyancy (distributed) • Solar (distributed) • Life Support (distributed) • Hull Self-Repair (distributed)

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11. BALLAST TANKS Four large water tanks secured to the lower hull truss hold water to counteract the buoyancy of the helium and to keep the ship level. Exhaust reclamation systems and atmospheric condensers collect a trickle of water to keep these tanks full. If these tanks are destroyed, the airship will rise uncontrollably unless moored. If one of them is severely damaged, the ship will pitch upward in the direction of the damaged tank.

12. AFT LADDER The ladder leads up to the Deck 2 aft ladder (Area 15).

13. TURRETS The turrets remain armed, controlled by Dawoud through Habibi. All turrets have access jacks for the gunner. They can also be controlled from the auxiliary bridge (Area 14) or the bridge (Area 1, but only with extensive repairs). The armament they carry is as follows:

- **Front Belly Turret:** Plasma cannon (treat as a plasma rifle with double range and double damage) and grenade launcher (smart magazine, 20 rounds EMP, 5 rounds thermobaric)
- **Aft Belly Turrets/Aft Upper Turrets:** 2 rail machine guns (smart magazine, 1,000 rounds regular ammo, 1,000 rounds armor-piercing ammo)
- **Front Upper Turret:** Plasma cannon (treat as a plasma rifle with double range and double damage)

The turrets are cramped spaces.

Unusually for an armed airship, *Hegira* carries no smart ammo or seekers. Perhaps the crew feared having their munitions subverted. The weapons are designed to operate from a ship hardpoint and can't be disconnected for portable use.

14. AVIONICS AND AUXILIARY BRIDGE This area contains backup controls for most of the ship's systems, including lighting, life support, engines, rudder/elevators, engine pitch, ballast, gas envelopes, and weapons. For information on possible repairs, see *Resolution* (p. 16).

HEGIRA DECK 2 AREA KEY

At this level, characters are 7–10 meters above the lower surface of the hull and several meters above the interior modules on Deck 1 (e.g., a character could drop from the catwalk onto the roof of the crew gondola with a successful Freerunning Test).

The centers of the gas envelopes, most of which are over 10 meters in diameter, are at waist height to characters on the catwalks. The gas envelopes are held in cargo nets which are in turn anchored to the airframe by low tension cables. Envelopes have some give and will move slightly if climbed on.

Gas envelopes aren't under high pressure and will leak only slowly if shot or otherwise punctured. To cause the airship to lose altitude, one would have to intentionally shred a large number of gas envelopes with a machine gun or explosives, then kill the swarm of repair bots that would show up to patch the leaks.

15. FORWARD LADDER This ladder leads down to Area 2 and up to Area 20. The ladder opens to an open catwalk.

16. AFT LADDER This ladders leads down to Area 11 up and up to Area 18. The ladder opens to an open catwalk.

17. INSPECTION WALK This narrow catwalk passes between the gas envelopes, allowing convenient access for inspection and repair. With the envelopes closing in on both sides, this is a cramped area.

18. OCTAGON'S HIDING PLACE Octagon's usual hiding spot is atop this gas envelope, where the curve of the hull leaves only a narrow space. She avoids the catwalk, where some surveillance cameras are still active, instead climbing from the gas envelope to the outer hull truss to get down to Deck 1. A small cache of gear, including a tiny bit of water and rations, plus two nanobandages and a thermal blanket, are in a satchel attached to the gas envelope.

HEGIRA DECK 3 AREA KEY

19. AFT LADDER This ladder leads down to Area 15. The ladder emerges to an open catwalk.

20. HELIPAD This is a large, lit helipad. Short (1-meter high) handrails surround the outside. Clamps and tie-downs on the pad surface allow the copter to be secured in place during travel. Retractable refueling lines are rolled up in a cabinet at one edge of the deck.

21. FORWARD LADDER This ladder leads down to Area 14 and up to the front upper turret (Area 12). The ladder emerges to an open catwalk.

COMPLICATIONS

Million Year Echo is presented as a free-form scenario. Depending on how the player characters approach the Qurain ruins and the *Hegira,* they may encounter the various threats in different orders. This section covers the opposition and other factors that may complicate the sentinels' mission.

Unless the sentinels maintain complete radio silence as they approach the ruins, their first encounter is likely to be with the Blind Imam when their communications are detected; he will attempt to lure them in with deceptive messages and then hack their electronics. Likewise, If the sentinels first explore the ruins, the Blind Imam will be alerted by their encounters with exsurgents.

If the sentinels proceed directly and quietly to the *Hegira,* they are almost certain to be detected by the exsurgent *Dawoud* (p. 15), who will cut the mooring cables, trapping them aboard as the craft goes adrift. On board, they will also need to deal with *Idris* (p. 15), *Octagon* (p. 15), *Vastian's skriks* (p. 20), and the Blind Imam's ongoing attempts to subvert the ship.

THE BLIND IMAM

Lurking in the upper levels of Qurain is an exsurgent carrier—a walking electronic warfare platform designed to infiltrate wireless systems and spread the exsurgent virus. The carrier at Qurain is the Blind Imam, a Qurainian who was infected early in the Fall and transformed into a cyborg to aid the virus's spread.

Lacking direction from the TITANs, the Imam has since remained at Qurain, served by lesser exsurgents. When the *Hegira* reached Qurain, the Imam sensed its radio emissions and began launching attacks aimed at infecting the ship. Despite *Hegira's* few wireless systems, it might have succeeded, if not for Idris. The Belt-Builder AI, which had installed itself in many of the ship's systems, learned quickly what it was up against. Idris fought back against the Imam's subversion attempts, defending the ship where *Hegira's* own security AIs and human watchers might have failed.

The Blind Imam bides his time. Something aboard the *Hegira* resists him, but he hasn't sent a swarm of exsurgents to assault it, preferring to take the airship intact. He and Idris are locked in a stalemate, neither able to fully subvert the *Hegira*.

ENCOUNTERING THE BLIND IMAM

The Blind Imam is constantly on the watch for intruders. He uses the fallen antenna array in the Ops Center (Qurain Area 3) to boost the range on his own mesh inserts. From there, he performs an Interfacing Test looking for unfamiliar wireless signals roughly every half hour. If he detects any such traffic within 1 kilometer that he hasn't already identified as coming from Dawoud, Octagon, or Idris, he'll start by trying to trick the team into walking into an ambush in the entry bunker. For this purpose, he'll instantiate Ghazala Qasim's ego in a sensory deprivation simulspace and broadcasts her pleas for assistance. She knows she was dragged into the entry bunker by weird-looking cyborgs and remembers the mission up to that point, but she doesn't realize she died and knows nothing of the current threats aboard the *Hegira*. She's terrified and pleads for rescue; she believes she's in a lightless cell somewhere in the bunker. In reality, she exists only in the Imam's ghostrider module. Her cortical stack has been discarded in a corner.

If luring the team in with Qasim's pleas doesn't work, he launches subversion attempts, trying to afflict targets with the digital virus form of the exsurgent virus (p. 364, *EP*); he carries several different strains in his ghostrider modules. He also has visual surveillance via solar-powered cameras on the bunker's exterior. All of the exsurgents are linked via a tacnet that includes these cameras.

The Imam fully controls all of the exsurgents mentioned in the *Qurain Surface Area Key* (p. 7) and will deploy them intelligently. When the team first arrives he'll be cautious, using them only to defend himself and the surface bunker. Qurain teems with exsurgents and hostile machine life, but there's a limit to how many he can control at once. Taking control over more takes time. Simple-minded exsurgents like whippers take only an hour. Establishing control over a wastewalker, creeper, or other complex exsurgent requires him to make an opposed WIL test against the creature once an hour until it breaks. The Imam thus has a practically limitless supply of troops, but time is a limiting factor. If seriously beaten, he'll retreat into the deeper levels of Qurain to rebuild his army.

If the sentinels make it aboard the Hegira and defeat/disable Dawoud and Idris, the Blind Imam may send his own exsurgent forces to seize the ship before it is lost to him for good.

DAWOUD

Since taking over the *Hegira*, Dawoud has laired mainly in his cabin, though he occasionally sleeps among the fused bodies of his kin. His psychological state swings between extreme paranoia and moments of suicidally remorseful lucidity. His ground state has its own, weird logic, though. He's convinced that the torment he inflicted on his kin was a way of protecting them from anything worse, that the ship protects him from the monsters outside, and that "protecting" the remaining crew is atonement for the murder of his sister. This tortured psychology has overridden his initial urge to crash the ship. Now he guards it, in his twisted way, but other forces are at work aboard (see below).

Aboard the ship, Dawoud stalks the companion-ways, trying to catch the scent of *Octagon* (p. 15) and having long, one-sided conversations with his muse, Habibi, who's also completely unhinged. He's scrawled mad ravings in layer upon layer of public AR graphics on the ship's walls, and etched more in his cabin using the acid he exudes.

Dawoud also listens to the whispers of The Blind Imam (p. 14) over the radio waves. The Imam tells him there's something evil and unclean aboard the ship and tries to enlist his help, but Dawoud is now too paranoid to aid him.

CRAZED RANTINGS

Dawoud has scrawled AR graffiti all over public AR channels aboard ship and etched it into the walls of his cabins. Text is always in Arabic. Some recurring elements include:

- Fleshy fleshy party party. *(Accompanied by pictures of a blob of people.)*
- I will protect you. *(Accompanied by pretty much the same drawing, but with faces more distinct.)*
- The Imam calls me to prayer BUT I WILL NOT GO.
- Inoculation is not salvation.
- FAMILY. *(Accompanied by crude pictures of groups of people.)*
- HOLES for eyes. HOLES for SOULS. *(Along with crude picture of the Blind Imam; see below.)*
- WHISPERS. *(Accompanied by diagrams of wave forms and lists of numbers; they're comm frequencies on which the Imam has attempted intrusions.)*
- There's something worse than me.

ENCOUNTERING DAWOUD

Dawoud still controls all of the ship's hardwired security cameras, which he monitors with Habibi's help. As soon as all of the player characters are on board, he'll retract the dirigible's mooring cables, setting the

Hegira adrift in the dust storm. If some player characters hold back, he'll delay releasing the moorings until directly threatened, or until they find Octagon.

Once the ship is adrift, he'll use his amorphous form to stalk them, trying to pick off those who are alone or incapacitated. He still needs atmosphere, heat, and power, though, so he won't outright destroy the ship's systems. If cornered, he'll try to flee by flowing through a crack; failing that, he fights.

IDRIS

Idris watches the ship through the handful of wireless sensors available and through the small maintenance bots that are everywhere aboard. These bots aren't big enough to do any major damage to the ship or in combat. Their job is to repair small tears in the hull, clean, and the like. Idris could arm the bots using the ship's manufactories. These are manually/access jack-controlled, but a bot could control them. However, control of the maintenance bots is constantly shifting between Idris and The Blind Imam (p. 14). Idris won't arm them because if they changed hands, the Imam would have real weapons to use against it. A platoon of them constantly guard the fabbers in the engineering bay. Dawoud ignores them, as he doesn't realize Idris has subverted them.

Idris is aware that there's a biological exsurgent carrier aboard the ship, but Idris has no way to directly attack Dawoud. The only physical agents Idris has subverted are the ship's automech bot, which is trapped in the fleshy carpet of Dawoud's tortured kin, and the Dr. bot, which is of little use in attacking. All of the controls it could use against Dawoud (e.g., the life support systems) are hard-wired to prevent wireless subversion, so it's unable to rid itself of him.

ENCOUNTERING IDRIS

If Idris detects the team, it broadcasts a warning stating, "Infection Threat: Please Accept Inoculation." If team members allow access, Idris attempts to copy itself onto any device powerful enough to run it, possibly overwriting muses or even player character info-morphs in the process. If not allowed access, it tries to do the same thing via hacking and subversion. It will make one attempt per player character before giving up to focus back in on its defense of the airship. See *Idris* (p. 15), for more details on Idris's viral properties.

OCTAGON

Octagon is secretly working for Project Ozma (p. 379, *EP*); see *Pre-Generated Characters* (p. 21) for her goals and motives.

Octagon is a player character in one-shot play and begins with the other sentinels. In campaign play, Octagon's original mission for Firewall was to extract Zameena al-Mareekh from the *Hegira* before it left Olympus. Unfortunately, the mission was planned at the last minute and poorly supported due to Firewall

INCREASING THE PRESSURE

If the player characters are having an easy time of it, the gamemaster has several options for raising the difficulty. The first option is simply to add more Dawoud-like jelly exsurgents to the *Hegira*. Perhaps Dawoud infected other crew members who also transformed, or perhaps Dawoud himself has gone through some sort of mitosis and split into two or more similar physical copies. The second option is to include more exsurgent/TITAN dangers: a wave of headhunters, wastewalkers, or other threats (see *Zone Stalkers*) harasses the characters on the ground or attacks the Hegira. Finally, another party can become involved. Perhaps Go-nin's operatives catch up on al-Mareekh's trail, Project Ozma catches a whiff of a Firewall operation in progress, or a group of relic-seeking exhumans or zone stalkers spot the sentinels on their approach to Qurain and decide to follow them in order to steal anything good they might find. ∎

being spread thin. Octagon is pissed about this and won't mind saying so if she's found. Stuck on the ship, Octagon hid out, trying to learn more and hopefully contact Firewall. She knows that Zameena and Sanaa had what they believed to be an alien AI from eavesdropping on one of their conversations. As an infiltrator working within Firewall, she hopes to obtain this AI for Project Ozma.

After the ship was taken, she bode her time for a while before attempting to kill Dawoud. Weak and hungry, she muffed the attempt. Since then, they've played a game of cat and mouse, with Dawoud having the upper hand because he can easily guard the ship's maker and starve her out (though she has managed to slip past him for food a few times).

Making matters worse for Octagon, Idris has overwritten her muse with a copy of itself and infected all of her meshed gear. Unwilling to risk help from the devil she doesn't know, she's shut down her mesh connections. As far as Idris is concerned, it's shielding her from infection by the Imam.

Octagon's main hiding place is on top of a gas envelope forward and to port. The area is a surveillance blind spot.

OCTAGON

Octagon will only become aware of the player characters if she spots them, hears sounds of fighting, or discovers new damage to the ship between her hiding place and the kitchen. She may be spurred to leave hiding and explore by other events, such as the airship coming loose from its moorings and starting to drift.

VASTIAN'S SKRIKS

Due to his exsurgent infection, Vastian occasionally vomits up nasty little crab-like creatures called skriks. They will attack anyone other than him. Have him cough them up whenever it feels appropriate—at least three times over the course of the session.

Early in the session, give Vastian (or his player, in one-shot play) plenty of time to hide in a corner and have a private moment. Later, make it tougher to hide what is going on. A novacrab vomiting makes an unpleasant squishy noise all through its thorax and abdomen. Finally, Vastian's condition makes it highly likely that he'll at some point produce an explosion of skriks that he can't hide—preferably at a climactic point in the scenario.

Give Vastian a chance to make an Unarmed attack on the skrik as it tries to get away. On a success, Vastian crunches into the thing with his eating feelers and swallows it whole before it gets away. On a failure, the skrik runs free. If any player characters are nearby, roll initiative!

RESOLUTION

The team may attempt a number of solutions to the mission.

FINDING ZAMEENA AL-MAREEKH'S STACK

Dr. al-Mareekh is no more, but her cortical stack remains buried in the mass of polyspore plant flesh in the Dr. bot in the Hegira's med bay (Area 6). Some of her research also remains in fragmentary form in Area 3. The Dr. bot in Area 6 also contains a copy of Idris, which the sentinels will hopefully realize is the real high-value target in this mission.

REPAIR THE ENGINE CONTROLS AND FLY OUT

Dawoud's damage to the engine control wiring is extensive. Repairing the forward bridge controls (Area 1) is a Hardware: Aerospace Task Action with a timeframe of 2 days. Doing so to the aft auxiliary bridge (Area 2) has a timeframe of 24 hours.

The problem with this approach is that masking the *Hegira* from Martian Ranger and Consortium surveillance on the edge of the TQZ is impossible without prior arrangements (either hacking or social engineering). The *Hegira* will definitely be intercepted in this case and shot down if the team refuses to be boarded. Being heavily armed, the *Hegira* can do quite a bit of damage before going down, but the Consortium will respond with massive force to an armed airship that comes out of the Zone shooting. Sentinels who don't mind losing a morph, however, can probably hold out long enough to transmit their findings—and maybe even some of the data gained—back to Firewall, once they're clear of the Zone and are no longer jammed.

RETRIEVE THE DELIVERABLES AND DRIVE!

Things may be cramped if the team lost a buggy or if they don't have enough space to carry Octagon. On the other hand, it offers the best chance of evading the Consortium or Martian Rangers on the way out—unless the team still has Octagon with them.

EXPOSING VASTIAN

The team will face questions if they put Vastian down without providing proof that he's an exsurgent. If the team is captured by the Consortium or Rangers on their way out of the Zone, any legal penalties they face could become much stiffer if they were also harboring an exsurgent. The authorities won't initially be able to positively identify what Vastian is, but someone from Ozma or Oversight will eventually show up asking questions when they hear the cops have someone in custody who continually vomits up small, hostile copies of himself.

EXPOSING OCTAGON

Octagon will be much more subtle in her treachery and is likely to wait until the team is clear of the Zone before betraying them. She'll do this either by calling the Martian Rangers down on them or, if possible, summoning an Ozma tactical squad to capture or kill them and take the goods. In the latter case, use the stats for the Trooper from *NPC File 1: Prime*. The squad will contain 1–2 troopers per player character.

Once Octagon gets out of the jammed zone to where mesh connectivity is normal, the Ozma squad will show up in 30–60 minutes. They'll have priority over other troops to board the *Hegira* if the team tries to fly out. They'll pursue the team in buggies and security model flying cars if the team tries to off-road out.

DEBRIEFING

Once the mission is over, the characters should be rewarded, and there are some opportunities for continuing the plot.

AFTERMATH

If the characters make it out of the Zone without being captured or compromised, they will be congratulated and rewarded by Firewall. They will be given a thorough physical and electronic decontamination, as well as psychosurgical examination, to ensure they didn't bring anything nasty out of the Zone with them. Any characters that did not survive will be restored from backup (or their stacks, if retrieved).

There are several loose ends that Firewall may ask the team to track down. If Octagon was exposed, Firewall will want to look into her past activity, find out how long she was infiltrating, and perhaps shut down any operations she may have compromised. The same is also true of Vastian—Firewall will want to know when and how he was infected,

MISSION REWARDS TABLE		
OUTCOME	**REZ POINT REWARD**	**I-REP REWARD**
Al-Mareekh's stack recovered	1	+5
Sanaa Zawail's stack recovered	—	+3
Dawoud neutralized	1	+2
Blind Imam neutralized	1	+2
Octagon rescued but forced to keep her cover*	1	+2
Octagon exposed*	1	+2
Octagon rescued but successfully betrays team to Ozma*	1	−5
Octagon betrays team to Ozma but Ozma squad neutralized*	1	+1
Above, plus Octagon captured	—	+3
Vastian exposed and neutralized	1	+2
Vastian neutralized without proof	—	−2
Idris captured	1	+3
Idris loose outside TQZ	—	−5
The player character contributed to achieving success in some significant way	1	—
The player character achieved a motivational goal	1	—
The player engaged in good roleplaying	1	—
The player significantly contributed to the session's drama, humor, or fun with roleplaying	1	—
* Only one of these outcomes should apply.		

and if that exsurgent strain has spread to anyone else. Firewall is also interested in tracking down the other surviving members of Proactionary before Go-nin finds them, and may even sponsor an operation to see what else Go-nin may have already retrieved from Proactionary or Giza. It is also possible that Go-nin's own efforts to track down al-Mareekh will lead them to the player characters—possibly before they even have a chance to check in with Firewall after escaping the Zone.

THE FATE OF IDRIS

If Idris makes it out of the Zone on a device that it still controls into an area with mesh connectivity, it will immediately begin spreading itself. Gamemasters must use their discretion as to how much they wish this to change their campaign. At minimum, Firewall will have an exotic new digital virus on the loose, perhaps leading to more adventures to contain it. At its most severe, a rampant Idris could subvert an army of people and AIs devoted to recreating the Belt-Builder civilization, or at least the inheritance of its knowledge, on a massive scale. How much of a threat this would be to transhumanity is an open question.

If the sentinels retrieve a dormant copy of Idris and return it to Firewall, it will disappear into the conspiracy's darkest data vaults … though whether Firewall plans to destroy it, dissect it, or deal with it remains unclear.

IF THE MISSION FAILS

If the Firewall agents fail, the group may send one more group of agents in to retrieve the sentinel's stacks and mop things up. At the gamemaster's discretion, they could even re-instantiate the player characters from backup and send them in to try again. Most likely, however, they will arrange for an icy asteroid steered towards a collision on Mars to aid in the terraforming effort to go off course and land on the ruins of Qurain, bringing a messy but hopefully final resolution to the affair.

If the sentinels fall to Octagon's treachery or—worse—are captured by Ozma, then Firewall will scramble to find a way to retrieve Idris and/or their agents from Ozma's clutches.

REZ AND REP REWARDS

Depending on how well the agents fared, they will walk away with some rewards as indicated on the Mission Rewards table.

HEGIRA ROSTER

NAME	CREW ROLE	STACK LOCATION	NOTES
Noori Qasim (M)	Ground Ops		Witnessed violent death of relative, then died violently (–20 penalty on Continuity Tests).
Fouada al-Mareekh (F)	Ground Ops	Helicopter crash site	
Sanaa Zawail (F)	Engineer		
Ghazala Qasim (F)	Ground Ops	Entry bunker	Sudden, violent death (–10 on Continuity Tests).
Zameena al-Mareekh (F)	Science Officer	*Hegira* medbay	Slow, painful death (–10 on Continuity Tests).
Dawoud al-Ghalazi (M)	Pilot	n/a	Dawoud's transformation destroyed his cortical stack.
Maryam al-Ghalazi (F)	Pilot	*Hegira* bridge	Dawoud's sister. Betrayal by relative followed by slow, painful, violent death (–30 penalty on Continuity Tests).
Hakim Moussa (M)	Expedition Commander		
Sabeen Moussa (F)	Gunner		
Sayyid Qasim (M)	Doctor	*Hegira* engineering bay	Irretrievably insane from being subjected to flesh-party nanovirus.
Gabir al-Mareekh (M)	Ground Ops		
Malik Zawail (M)	Engineer		
Hassan Moussa (F)	Nanowarfare Specialist		■

CHARACTERS

Stats for unique NPCs appear here. Because they may be used as player characters in one-shot play, Octagon and Vastian are included in the section of *Pre-Generated Characters* (p. 21).

THE BLIND IMAM (CARRIER)

Carriers are walking electronic warfare platforms created by the TITANs to intrude on systems and infect them with the exsurgent virus. Most carriers have similar stats to the one below, but each is unique in some way. In addition to being equipped to spread infection digitally, most carrier have augmentations allowing them to spread infection through other means (via biological nanovirus, nanoplague, basilisk hacks, or, rarely, all three).

The still-active carrier at Qurain known as the Blind Imam was once a community leader at one of Qurain's mosques. He became infected during the Fall, and the virus transformed him into an epicenter for its spread through the habitat. The man he was is completely gone, but the exsurgent continues its mission to subvert any uninfected transhuman in the environs of Qurain.

The Blind Imam is an emaciated cyborg in tattered coveralls and a taqiyah. His eyes are black pits, and his desiccated, gray skin is visibly ridged by subdermal antennae and other implants.

COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL	MOX
30	15	15	15	10	10	10	—

INIT	SPD	LUC	TT	IR	DUR	WT	DR
6	2 (3)	—	—	—	50	10	100

Movement Rate: 4/16

Skills: Deception 80, Fray 50, Impersonation 60, Infiltration 40, Infosec 90, Interfacing 90, Perception 80, Persuasion 40, Programming 100, Unarmed Combat 50

DIGITAL INFECTION

IDRIS'S MOS	RESULT	EFFECTS
1–10	Gamma Infection	Target gains Interest: Belt-Builder Civilization 15, plus Behavioral Control: Encouraged (spreading Belt-Builder virus)
11–25	Delta Infection	Target gains Interest: Belt-Builder Civilization 30, plus Behavioral Control: Enforced (spreading Belt-Builder virus)
26–40	Beta Infection	Target gains the Mental Disorder: Multiple Personality Disorder trait; their mind co-exists with a beta copy of Idris (all Idris skills at –20)
41+	Alpha Infection	Complete overwrite of AI or ego in target hardware by an alpha fork of Idris

Notes: Digital Virus x3, Drug Gland (Exsurgent Biological Nanovirus), Enhanced Respiration, Enhanced Vision, Ghostrider Modules (3), Medichines, Mesh Inserts, Specialized Hive (Exsurgent Nanoplague), Temperature Tolerance (Improved Cold)

DAWOUD AL-GHALAZI (MIMIC JELLY)

Dawoud's infection has transformed him into a sort of "mimic jelly"—a jelly exsurgent (p. 370, *EP*) able to mimic the original form of the infectee. Dawoud's jelly nature becomes apparent only when he attacks, flows through small holes, or uses other abilities of the jelly.

Prior to Dawoud, Firewall has not encountered this type of exsurgent. It's possible an exsurgent of this type could learn to mimic people other than themself, but Dawoud hasn't learned this skill.

COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL	MOX
15	20	20	20	5	15	15	—

INIT	SPD	LUC	TT	IR	DUR	WT	DR
8	2	—	—	—	45	9	90

Movement Rate: 4/16

Skills: Deception 45, Exotic Ranged Attack (Spit) 50, Freerunning 30, Hardware: Aerospace 50, Hardware: Electronics 40, Infiltration 55, Kinetic Weapons 40, Perception 50, Pilot: Aircraft 65, Unarmed Combat 70

Notes: Armor 12/12, Enhanced Smell, Enhanced Vision, Spit Attack (area effect, 3 meter radius), Spit Toxin (Application: D,0; Onset Time: 1 Action Turn; Duration: 5 Action Turns; Effect: 1d10 ÷ 2 (round up) DV per Action Turn), Tongue Attack (DV 1d10 + 3, AP 0, spit toxin). Due to his physical form, Dawoud suffers the minimum amount of damage from kinetic weapon and blade attacks.

HEGIRA CREW

The *Hegira* had too many crew members to detail individually. The *Hegira Roster* (p. 19) lists the names, gender identities, and occupations for the crew, as well as notes that will be useful to the gamemaster if the team insists on re-instancing arbitrary crew members. If any tests are called for, most crew members have SOM, INT, and WIL aptitudes of 15. All of the crew members were related either by marriage or by blood.

IDRIS (BELT-BUILDER DIGITAL VIRUS)

The digital virus created by the Belt-Builders is a living meme, embodying the knowledge-gathering and preserving values of the Belt-Builder scholar-librarian faction. It blurs the lines between AI and AGI, partly because of the radically different psychologies of its creators, whose notions of individuality differ from that of transhumanity. Like the exsurgent virus, it has the overwhelming goal of infecting every system it touches. However, it also further has the purposes of countering and destroying the exsurgent virus wherever it can, preserving the Belt-Builder's knowledge,

and seeking out the blackbox artifact devices as found on the exoplanet Giza to download further Belt-Builder knowledge and spread it.

COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL	MOX
35	5	20	30	15	10	20	—

INIT	SPD	LUC	TT	IR	DUR	WT	DR
10	4	—	—	—	—	—	—

Skills: Academics: Gate Physics 70, Infosec 80, Interest: Belt-Builder Civilization 60, Interest: Blackbox Artifacts 60, Interest: Pandora Gates 80, Interfacing 80, Programming 80, Research 70

Notes: Active Countermeasures, Exploits, Firewall, Increased Speed, Panopticon, Persistence, Sniffer, Tacnet. Some of these are detailed on pp. 140–141, *Transhuman*.

BOUTROS THE AUTOMECH

Boutros is a short, cylindrical automech with the old UN logo still visible on its beat-up hull. Its original AI has been subsumed and replaced by Idris.

Movement Rate: 4/8 (wheeled, thrust vector)

Skills: Exotic Weapon (Plasma Torch) 40, Fray 30, Hardware: Electronics 60, in addition to Idris's skills

Notes: Armor 4/4, Durability 30, Speed 1, Access Jacks, Electrical Sense, Electronics Toolkit, Extra Limbs (4), Headlights, Magnetic System, Plasma Torch, Radiation Sense, Utilitool, as well as the software and upgrades listed for Idris.

DIGITAL VIRUS INFECTION

If Idris is successful in an Intrusion Test (p. 355, *EP*) followed by a Subversion Test (p. 259, *EP*) against any device carrying an AI or infomorph (including mesh inserts/muse and ghostrider modules; cyberbrains may also be hacked following normal cyberbrain hacking rules, p. 261, *EP*), the target is infected to some degree with the scholar-librarian virus. Once a target is infected, Idris immediately attempts memory hacking (p. 261, *EP*); Idris's test in this case is opposed by the target's WIL x 2. Results of infection are based on Idris's MoS over the target, as noted on the Digital Infection table.

VASTIAN'S SKRIKS

Vastian (the exsurgent octo uplift in a novacrab morph) occasionally vomits up nasty little crab-like creatures called skriks. They will attack anyone other than him. Have him cough them up whenever it feels appropriate—at least 3 times over the course of the session. Make the Unarmed Tests easy (+30) early on and then progressively more difficult. For a grand finale, consider having him vomit up an eruption of the things.

Skills: Climbing 60, Fray 60, Freerunning 50, Perception 40, Unarmed Combat 60

Notes: Durability 5, Bite Attack (1d10 ÷ 2 DV, AP –1). Skriks are small targets (–20 to hit). Their bite won't transmit the exovirus, but if anyone

is stupid enough to ingest one, they'll be infected with this particular nanoplague strain (p. 364, *EP*) of the exsurgent virus and will start throwing up skriks, too.

WASTEWALKERS

For more about Wastewalkers, see *Wastewalker* (*Zone Stalkers*, p. 13)

COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL	MOX
15	30	15	15	2	15	10	—

INIT	SPD	LUC	TT	IR	DUR	WT	DR
6	2	—	—	—	50	10	100

Weapons: Some type of firearm; possibly limited grenades

Armor: Wastewalker Hide (14/8)

Skills: Fray 70, Freerunning 60, Infiltration 40, Kinetic Weapons 80, Perception 40, Profession: Small Unit Tactics 60, Throwing Weapons 70

Notes: Chameleon Coating, Enhanced Hearing, Enhanced Vision, Medichines, Skinlink, Specialized Hives (1 Disassembler, 1 Fabricator), Toxin Filters

Fabricator Hive and Nanobots:
See *TITAN Artifacts* (*Zone Stalkers*, p. 15)

ONE-SHOT PLAY

Million Year Echo was originally written as a convention scenario, titled *Doctrine,* with pre-generated characters. If you plan to run it as a stand-alone, one-shot adventure, rather than part of an ongoing campaign, we suggest the following changes.

For a shorter game, an in media res beginning is recommended, though gamemasters may wish to run the entire module if they have more time than the typical four-hour convention slot. In this case, describe the briefing quickly. It is then assumed that the player characters successfully travel to Qurain without any complications. On arrival, they leave their vehicles on the cliff where Qurain sits to investigate the *Hegira,* which is still moored above Qurain. They successfully scale its mooring cables and hack the security on the forward airlock. As the player characters start their investigation, a red-out Martian dust storm abruptly blows in. A few minutes into the storm, the *Hegira* comes loose from its moorings and starts drifting. The player characters must find some way to get control of the drifting ship. At this point, the the action begins. Start the characters in Area 4 on the *Hegira Map* (p. 11).

Meanwhile, Firewall hasn't been straight with the player characters on the mission objectives. This assignment is actually a high-risk loyalty test. All but one player character is a traitor to the organization, and their true faction loyalties complicate the mission, introducing the possibility of player character conflict. Additionally, Firewall in this setup doesn't believe

al-Mareekh actually knows anything useful—or they'd be sending reliable agents after her instead.

CARNAGE CONTROL

The player characters' goals and motivations set them against one another. As a gamemaster, try to keep a lid on this until the climax of the scenario. Watch out for players who just want to kill stuff; find ways to keep them distracted. Vastian's skriks can work well for this, as can encounters with random exsurgents or TITAN machines that have managed to gain access to the ship. Having the airship lurch horribly in the storm or having headhunters attack from the outside (after all, they're deep in the TQZ) can give trigger happy player characters targets other than each other.

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

Million Year Echo relies heavily on the motivations of the player characters to make the scenario interesting. If you don't have a full table, you need to cast the player characters in the following order of importance:

- Vastian
- Uma (Ushma Gavaskar)
- Octagon (Li Miulin)
- Dora Mendoza
- Piccolo (Massimo Rossi)
- Snorri Guthmansson

It's crucial to have a smart, experienced player controlling Vastian. Do *not* give this character to the goofball who just wants to play a giant crab. If looking around the table you can't pick out a player who can handle this role, run Vastian as an NPC.

Also give each character a copy of the *Player Handout* (below). This is a message from Firewall, giving them orders and setting them at each other's throats. Make a show of pretending to give a specific message to each character, even though they all say the same thing.

PLAYER HANDOUT

Sentinel,

Your participation in this mission is of vital importance, and yet you have not been told the half of it yet. For that, we apologize. The primary mission objective remains the same: find the cortical stack of Zameena al-Mareekh before it falls into the wrong hands. But there is a secondary objective. Someone on your team is a traitor to the organization. Try to find out who.

Good luck, and good hunting.

DORA MENDOZA

Aspiring Exhuman

There was a time when you thought of yourself as one of the good guys. That was rather precious.

You started your career in Firewall the way a lot of people do: some crazy person with ambitions to save the universe came up to you after something weird happened and convinced you that it'd be a great idea to help other people for a while. And for a while, you did.

Then you met Fern. You'd always been good with information security, but Fern was better—better than you could ever hope to be. Moreover, Fern wasn't an AGI. Fern is human.

You met because you were on a run for Firewall, trying to track down the power behind a ring on Venus that was implanting black market neural transmitters in people to record their experiences and make illegal simulspace playbacks. Fern tracked you back, broke into your personal system, and told you what was what.

Humanity was stuck. Not evolving. People like Firewall and the Planetary Consortium were holding it back.

Fern has promised to teach you some of its skills (it's neither a he nor she as far as you can tell), but you need to do a little tit-for-tat. Firewall comes across all kinds of things that are interesting to Fern, and you gather them, lovingly, sift through what is there, and package them up for your patron. Fern's kindnesses have been revelatory: new vistas on the datasphere, new ways of assimilating augmented reality into your perception. But they've always been fleeting, tantalizing. You want the full monty. And you'll have it.

Fern wants to know about Dr. Zameena al-Mareekh and what she was up to. You're on a Firewall mission to retrieve her stack. Perhaps you can enlighten Fern—and then, perhaps, Fern will enlighten you. Get her stack, or a backup of the ego on it, and don't let the other Firewall agents discover you in the process. Your position as a trusted agent is valuable and could yield more knowledge down the road.

BACKUP

In case things go south, Fern has some backup in place for you. You've been given a specific radio frequency and encryption code; this will summon a guardian angel bot that is presumably loitering in nearby airspace to help you out. You just hope the bot doesn't get hacked by the TITAN machines still crawling around the Zone first.

APTITUDES

	COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL
Base	20	15	15	10	20	15	15
Morph Bonus	5					5	
Total	25	15	15	10	20	20	15

STATS

MOX	TT	LUC	IR	WT	DUR	DR	INIT	SPD
6	6	30	60	7	35	53	5	1

SKILLS

	APT	BASE	MORPH BONUS	MODIFIERS	TOTAL
Academics: Engineering	COG	40	5		45
Academics: Nanotechnology	COG	35	5		40
Art: Robotic Sculpture	INT	45			45
Climbing	SOM	30	5		35
Deception	SAV	40			40
Fray	REF	30			30
Free Fall	REF	50			50
Freerunning	SOM	30	5		35
Hardware: Electronics	COG	70	5	20	95
Hardware: Aerospace	COG	50	5	20	75
Hardware: Industrial	COG	50	5	20	75
Hardware: Robotics	COG	40	5	20	65
Infiltration	COO	30			30
Infosec	*COG*	*70*	*5*		*75*
Interests: Gatecrashing	COG	40	5		45
Interests: Music	COG	40	5		45
Interests: Scum Culture	COG	60	5		65
Interests: Social Networks	COG	35	5		40
Interfacing	COG	55	5		60
Investigation	INT	40			40
Kinesics	SAV	45			45
Language: Native Portuguese	INT	85			85
Language: English	INT	50			50
Language: Spanish	INT	55			55
Perception	INT	50		10	60
Pilot: Spacecraft	REF	20			20
Profession: Computer Security	COG	55	5		60
Profession: Habitat Systems	COG	50	5		55
Programming	*COG*	*65*	*5*		*70*
Research	COG	40	5		45
Scrounging	INT	40			40
Spray Weapons	COO	30			30
Unarmed Combat	SOM	40	5		45

Background:
Reinstantiated
Faction: **Scum**
Morph: **Ruster**

REP
@-rep: 60
i-rep: 40

EQUIPMENT
Armor: Body Armor [10/10] ■
Primary Weapon: Shredder (Flechette Spray Weapon, SA/BF/FA, AP −10, DV 2d10 + 5, ammo 100) ■
Starting Credit: 4,000 ■
Implants: Basic BioMods, Basic Mesh Inserts, Cortical Stack, Enhanced Respiration, Temperature Tolerance ■

Gear: Exploit Software, EMP grenade, Firewall Software, Maker, Mechanical tool kit, Nanocable Spindle, Portable Nanofabricator, Repair Spray (+20 to Hardware Tests), Saboteur nanoswarm, Shelter Dome, Specs (+10 visual Perception Tests), Spoof Software, Tactical Network software, Tracker Software ■

APTITUDES

	COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL
Base	15	15	15	15	20	20	10
Morph Bonus						5	
Total	15	15	15	15	20	25	10

STATS

MOX	TT	LUC	IR	WT	DUR	DR	INIT	SPD
3	4	20	40	8	40	60	6	1

SKILLS

	APT	BASE	MORPH BONUS	TOTAL
Animal Handling	SAV	55	0	55
Blades	SOM	40	5	45
Climbing	SOM	60	5	65
Clubs	SOM	45	5	50
Deception	SAV	30	0	30
Fray	REF	50	0	50
Freerunning	SOM	55	5	60
Interests: Drug Dens	COG	25	0	25
Interests: Mountaineering	COG	50	0	50
Interests: Smuggling Routes	COG	50	0	50
Interests: Tharsis League	COG	60	0	60
Intimidation	SAV	35	0	35
Investigation	INT	65	0	65
Kinetic Weapons	COO	55	0	55
Language: English	INT	45	0	45
Language: Cantonese	INT	40	0	40
Language: Native Mandarin	INT	85	0	85
Medicine: Paramedic	COG	40	0	40
Networking: Criminals	SAV	40	0	40
Networking: Ecologists	SAV	60	0	60
Networking: Hypercorps	SAV	65	0	65
Perception	INT	60	0	60
Pilot: Groundcraft	REF	60	0	60
Profession: Law Enforcement	COG	70	0	70
Profession: Survival	COG	70	0	70
Programming	COG	25	0	25
Protocol	SAV	50	0	50
Research	COG	30	0	30
Swimming	SOM	35	5	40
Throwing Weapons	COO	35	0	35
Unarmed Combat	SOM	40	5	45

Background: Re-instantiated
Faction: **Hypercorp**
Morph: **Martian Alpiner**
Motivations: **+Law and Order +Personal Independence -Preservationism**

TRAITS
Ego: Addiction (Klar, Moderate), Edited Memories, Situational Awareness ∎
Morph: Fast Metabolism, Planned Obsolescence ∎

REP
@-rep: 15
c-rep: 70
e-rep: 45
g-rep: 50

EQUIPMENT
Armor: Light Body Armor (with Offensive Armor) [10/10] ∎
Primary Weapon: Medium Pistol (100 rounds regular ammo, 100 bug) ∎
Starting Credit: 6000 ∎

Implants: Basic Biomods, Basic Mesh Inserts, Cortical Stack, Direction Sense, Emergency Farcaster, Grip Pads, Low Pressure Tolerance, Respirocytes, Oxygen Reserve, Temperature Tolerance (Improved Cold) ∎

Gear: Backup Insurance (1 month), Cold Weather Gear (Basic), Cuffband (3), Fiber Eye, Klar (4 doses), Muse, Maker, Portable QE Comm (w/ Low-Cap Qubit Reservoir), Prisoner Mask, Portable Lidar/Radar Sensor, Radio Booster, Submachine Gun (100 rounds accushot, 100 rounds zap), Utilitool ∎

OCTAGON (LI MIULIN)

Project Ozma Agent

You were "recruited" into Firewall by someone who goes by Das Frettchen, a hyper-aged oligarch with delusions of do-gooding. Secretly, you are infiltrating the organization on behalf of your superiors in Project Ozma.

You know better than most of your team members. Firewall is an out-of-control bunch of outer-system freebooters—anarchists, mostly—who figure they're beholden to nobody but their own effed up senses of right and wrong. Yet they'll sacrifice their own agents without a thought if it serves their all-important missions, and they're not shy about erasing a memory here and there, too, if you're unlucky enough to let your backup fall into their hands after a failed mission.

Not that Project Ozma is much better, but here's the thing: they pay. Fat. You're building up a very nice nest egg passing information on Firewall missions to Ozma, and this one will be no exception.

Life would be easier if you were a better hacker, but you've got your own ways of getting info. Often, they involve waving a gun or a fist at whomever you need the info from, but you can be subtle, too. You're good at being a cop, and police work isn't all beating the crap out of suspects.

This mission will be easier, though. You don't really have to get info out of anyone—anyone alive, that is. Firewall wants the cortical stack of some crackpot scientist named Zameena al-Mareekh, so all you have to do is get a hold of that. They can throw her into a simulspace and interrogate her for what she knows afterward.

Easy peasie. Though the situation aboard the *Hegira* does complicate your survivability a bit …

BACKUP

You have a portable QE communicator which you can use to call in Ozma for backup. You've been warned against using this except in the most important and urgent cases. You have no idea if Ozma will send a strike team to help you out or simply nuke the site from orbit. You also have an emergency farcaster, so you can bail your ego out at least, though doing so is likely to ruin your cover for good.

PICCOLO (MASSIMO ROSSI)

Jovian Spy

You infiltrated Firewall years ago and have built up a cover as a reliable agent, someone whose name comes up often in discussions of sentinels who might be worth promoting. Meanwhile, you've been feeding information back to the Republic every chance you get. So far, you've avoided scrutiny.

You're fairly certain your handlers on the Jovian side view you as a long-term sleeper agent. They're most interested in uncovering Firewall agents working inside Jovian territory. You're very careful and rarely take precipitate action.

It's known in Firewall that you don't have a stack and refuse to egocast. You've always been able to explain this as a religious objection. While Firewall isn't generally the most forgiving organization toward biocons, past experience with biocon agents who became suicidal after being forcibly resleeved has stayed the organization's hand, at least for now. You'll know your stock with Firewall has dropped if they ever do try to force you into egocasting.

Living in a world full of people who think they're immortal is weird. You're not really religious, but you've always felt on a gut level that resleeving, egocasting, and merging are just suicide disguised as convenience. The person who comes out the other end is only a copy; the original perishes. Meanwhile, the ridiculous shit people do to their bodies and minds—egocasting, resleeving for convenience, forking and then merging with forks—baffles you. It's like being the only sober person in a room where everyone else is tripping.

You're not an ideologue, though, and there are other aspects of bioconservatism that you privately disagree with. You also don't see the problem with genetically engineering good looks. Some aspects of life would be easier if you didn't have a nose that looks like it was stolen from a commedia dell'arte mask. You took an oath to serve the Republic, though, and that means going along with some political positions with which you personally disagree.

Firewall's mission to rediscover the *Hegira* is loaded with unpleasant possibilities: you're going into the Titan Quarantine Zone on Mars, looking for the stack of a crackpot scientist, apparently accompanied by a traitor to the organization. Yeah. This should be fun.

BACKUP

Your main goal is to prevent Firewall from taking anything out of the Zone—you'd rather destroy any potential threats rather than let them fall into Firewall hands. Given the radio jamming in the Zone, you are on your own on this mission. Your nigh-immortal teammates are your worst risk. Good thing for you you're good at dodging blood baths.

APTITUDES

	COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL
Base	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Morph Bonus							
Total	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

STATS

MOX	TT	LUC	IR	WT	DUR	DR	INIT	SPD
3	6	30	60	6	30	45	6	1 (2)

SKILLS

	APT	BASE	MORPH BONUS	TOTAL
Academics: Cryptography	COG	60		60
Academics: Linguistics	COG	60		60
Blades	SOM	45		45
Climbing	SOM	55		55
Clubs	SOM	45		45
Deception	SAV	60		60
Demolitions	COG	45		45
Disguise	INT	45		45
Fray	REF	45		45
Free Fall	REF	45		45
Freerunning	SOM	45		45
Impersonation	SAV	45		45
Infiltration	COO	60		60
Infosec	COG	60		60
Interests: Autonomist Groups	COG	55		55
Interests: Criminal Groups	COG	55		55
Interests: Hypercorp Politics	COG	55		55
Kinesics	SAV	45		45
Language: Native Italian	INT	85		85
Language: English	INT	50		50
Networking: Criminals	SAV	40		40
Networking: Ecologists	SAV	45		45
Networking: Hypercorps	SAV	45		45
Palming	COO	45		45
Perception	INT	55		55
Profession: Security Systems	COG	55		55
Profession: Smuggling Tricks	COG	45		45
Profession: Spycraft	COG	55		55
Spray Weapons	COO	25		25
Unarmed Combat	SOM	55		55

Background: **Original Space Colonist**
Faction: **Jovian**
Morph: **Flat**
Motivations:
  −**Anarchism**
  +**Bioconservativism**
  −**Technoprogressivism**

TRAITS
Ego: Modified Behavior (Bloodthirsty, boosted), Morphing Disorder (Level 1) ■

Morph: Genetic Defect (Heart Disease), Unattractive (Level 1) ■

REP
c-rep: 50
e-rep: 30
g-rep: 20

EQUIPMENT
Armor:
  Body Armor
  (with Thermal Dampening)
  + Second Skin [14/16] ■

Primary Weapon: Heavy Pistol Railgun (100 AP rounds) ■
Starting Credit: 700 ■
Implants: Neurachem (Level 1), ■
Gear: Backup Insurance (1 month), Fake Ego IDs (2), Frag Grenades (10), Invisibility Cloak, Liquid Thermite, Miniature Radio Farcaster, MRDR (1 dose), Oxytocin-A (1 dose), Radio Booster, Speck Bots (3), Specs, Tactical Network Software, Wasp Knife, White Noise Machine ■

APTITUDES

	COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL
Base	15	15	20	15	15	20	10
Morph Bonus		5		5		10	5
Total	15	20	20	20	15	30	15

STATS

MOX	TT	LUC	IR	WT	DUR	DR	INIT	SPD
4	4 (6)	20 (30)	40 (60)	8	40	60	7 (8)	1

SKILLS

	APT	BASE	MORPH BONUS	TOTAL
Academics: Astrosociology	COG	60		60
Academics: Astrozoology	COG	55		55
Academics: Botany	COG	45		45
Academics: Xenolinguistics	COG	60		60
Climbing	SOM	45	10	55
Fray	REF	50	5	55
Free Fall	REF	40	5	45
Freerunning	SOM	60	10	70
Hardware: Groundcraft	COG	45		45
Infiltration	COO	50	5	55
Interests: Gatecrashing	COG	60		60
Interests: Sci-Fi Aliens	COG	45		45
Investigation	INT	35		35
Kinesics	SAV	30		30
Kinetic Weapons	COO	45	5	50
Language: Native Icelandic	INT	85		85
Language: English	INT	40		40
Medicine: Paramedic	COG	40		40
Navigation	INT	60		60
Networking: Autonomists	SAV	55		55
Networking: Firewall	SAV	45		45
Networking: Scientists	SAV	55		55
Perception	INT	60		60
Pilot: Groundcraft	REF	45	5	50
Pilot: Spacecraft	REF	35	5	40
Profession: First Contact	COG	60		60
Profession: Surveying	COG	45		45
Profession: Smuggling Tricks	COG	60		60
Protocol	SAV	50		50
Scrounging	INT	60		60

Background: **Drifter**
Faction: **Titanian**
Morph: **Olympian**
Motivations: **+Alien Contact +Exploration +Nano-Ecology**

REP
@-rep: 50
i-rep: 20
r-rep: 30

EQUIPMENT
Armor: Vacsuit (Standard Smartfabric with Immunogenic System) [7/7] ☐
Primary Weapon: Kinetic Assault Rifle (100 rounds regular ammo) ☐
Starting Credit: 4,150 ☐

Implants: Adrenal Boost, Basic Biomods, Basic Mesh Inserts, Cortical Stack, Direction Sense, Enhanced Vision, Medichines, Oxygen Reserve, Temperature Tolerance ☐

Gear: Backup Insurance (1 month), Breadcrumb Positioning System, Diamond Ax, Knife, Portable Lidar/Radar Sensor System, Radio Booster, Saucer Bot, Shelter Dome, Specimen Container, Tactical Network Software, Traction Pads, Utilitool ☐

SNORRI GUTHMANSSON

Titanian Intelligence Agent

Firewall is not such a bad organization. There are days when you wish them well and other days when you wish they would reign in their self-righteous behavior and let themselves see points of view outside of their own paranoia. This unusual participant-observer attitude makes you an ideal double agent. The Titanian Commonwealth is not really hostile to Firewall, but someone does need to keep an eye on them.

It's an unusual way to do your duty to the Commonwealth. You'd never imagined yourself a spy of any sort, but you crossed paths with Firewall more or less by chance. You were part of a team that went through the Pandora Gate to investigate Iktomi ruins on an exoplanet called Braddingskord II. Your team found an Iktomi artifact that appeared to be a computational device of some type—a source of much excitement—and set out to perform a field analysis. Within hours of beginning the analysis, one of the team's computational archaeologists had gone mad, and had apparently infected one of your teammates with the same madness through sexual contact. The infected teammate disappeared from camp and began stalking your team through the Iktomi ruins, killing you one by one. In the end only you and Tara Yu, another computational archaeologist, remained. Together, you managed to stop the infected team member. Yu, a professor at Titan Autonomous University, explained that she was an agent of Firewall. She liked how you handled yourself and invited you to join.

When you returned to Titan, some agents of the state intelligence agency approached you. They explained some of Firewall's activities to you—including occasionally killing its own agents and innocent civilians to suppress TITAN activity. While you find Firewall's goals noble, its actions are sometimes repugnant. You agreed to serve the Titanian Commonwealth as an informer, participating in Firewall missions while keeping the state apprised of its activities.

This mission is a strange one, though it fits your skills well. You're being sent deep into the Titan Quarantine Zone to retrieve the cortical stack of a gate researcher who sounds, from everything you know about the gates, to be a total crackpot. The possibility that Firewall is toying with its agents for some other purpose exists, and it does not sit well with you.

BACKUP
Given the radio jamming in the Zone, you are cut off from any support your Titanian allies might give you. On the other hand, through your contacts you do know the location of a secret campsite maintained by a group of autonomist zone stalkers just a few klicks from Qurain. In a pinch, you might even make it there on foot to seek help.

UMA
(USHMA GAVASKAR)

The Loyal Agent

You're one of the so-called "Lost Generation"—a term you hate—one of thousands of children raised post-Fall in a fast-time VR simulspace. Most of your peers grew up to be catatonic vegetables, suicidal depressives, or sociopathic monsters. Through some freak stroke of luck, you're (mostly) normal, but because of how your crèche mates turned out, fear, pity, and mistrust are common reactions among people who find out who you are. You watched most of the kids you grew up with go out of their minds shortly after being sleeved, and fear this might some day happen to you has been a constant in your life, as well. When they finally decided to risk sleeving you, they kept you under observation for months.

The first time you met your parents in the flesh, you could see in their eyes that they weren't sure whether the daughter they'd ordered up was a happy accident amid a string of calamities or just another freak show put together from the memories of a simulspace avatar and some up-market vat meat. This despite years of visits, e-mails from Mom at work, afternoons playing catch with Dad in a simulspace park. Even when you all started going crazy and they limited contact with your parents out in the real world, you felt like they were out there for you. But then, with you out, breathing, in the real world, you suddenly felt like they'd just been raising an expensive video game character in their off hours, and now they weren't so sure what they'd ended up with.

You don't blame them. You've told a few select confidants over time that you don't blame them, and no one ever believes you. How could you not be angry at their rejection? Well, you just aren't. If they knew half the things you saw, watching your crèche mates go mad … You can't blame them. You don't trust other Lost, either. Not after what you've seen.

You started looking for people who didn't want to be found. You were good at it, and nobody seemed much bothered by the fact that you were Lost, as long as you got the job done. Then you started getting some really weird jobs. Turned out you were working for Firewall. After dealing with an exsurgent-infected mother who was having kids and then eating them so that she could feast on their psychic trauma, and a cult who thought they could fuse souls by sewing people together, you got the idea that Firewall's mission was pretty important. The TITANs are gone, but their legacy sews madness and destruction wherever it rears its head. Firewall isn't exactly the family you always wanted, but it's a cause to give your life purpose and, for now, that's good enough.

This mission is a weird one. You're going into the TQZ, looking for the cortical stack of someone who sounds like a total crackpot, and apparently one of your team mates is a traitor the organization wants to see rooted out. Easy-peasie … right?

BACKUP

Firewall has asked you to root out the traitor, without any clues or backup. Out in the Zone, unable to trust the others, you're on your own. All you have to go on is your instincts … and the "vibes" you sometimes get, like a voice whispering in the back of your mind. Today, those vibes aren't voices, but a smoky haze that seems to peel off both Octagon and Vastian when you let your eyes unfocus in their direction. You're hesitant to accuse anyone without solid evidence, and you're not even sure if you can trust the vibes (after all, that's your *infection* talking), but you know damn sure that you're uneasy.

APTITUDES

	COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL
Base	15	20	15	10	10	15	20
Morph Bonus	5		5		5		10
Total	20	20	20	10	15	15	30

STATS

MOX	TT	LUC	IR	WT	DUR	DR	INIT	SPD
1	8 (12)	40 (60)	80 (120)	7	35	53	5 (7)	1 (2)

SKILLS

	APT	BASE	MORPH BONUS	TOTAL
Academics: Neurology	COG	55	5	60
Academics: Psychology	COG	60	5	65
Art: Dance	INT	45	5	50
Art: Painting	INT	45	5	50
Beam Weapons	COO	60		60
Clubs	SOM	45		45
Control	WIL	50	10	60
Fray	REF	50		50
Freerunning	SOM	55		55
Infiltration	COO	50		50
Infosec	COG	45	5	50
Interests: Conspiracies	COG	55	5	60
Interests: Hypercorp Projects	COG	55	5	60
Interests: TITANs	COG	60	5	65
Intimidation	SAV	20	5	25
Investigation	INT	50	5	55
Kinesics	SAV	40	5	45
Language: Native Marathi	INT	85	5	90
Language: Japanese	INT	85	5	90
Language: Hindi	INT	25	5	30
Networking: Criminal	SAV	30	5	35
Networking: Ecologists	SAV	40	5	45
Networking: Hypercorps	SAV	50	5	55
Perception	INT	40	5	45
Profession: Ego Hunting	COG	55	5	60
Profession: Inner System Law	COG	45	5	50
Profession: Police Procedures	COG	55	5	60
Psi Assault	WIL	40	10	50
Research	COG	55	5	60
Sense	INT	55	5	60
Unarmed Combat	SOM	55		55

Background: **Lost**
Faction: **Lunar**
Morph: **Futura**
Motivations:
   +Personal Development
   +Self-Protection
   +Vengeance

TRAITS
Ego: Mental Disorder (Borderline Personality), Mental Disorder (Obsessive-Compulsive), Mental Disorder (PTSD), Psi (Level 2), Social Stigma (Lost) ■

SLEIGHTS
Psi-Chi: Downtime, Emotional Control, High Pain Threshold, Instinct, Unconscious Lead ■

Psi-Gamma: Deep Scan, Ego Sense, Psychic Stab, Scramble, Subliminal ■

REP
c-rep:	30
e-rep:	10
g-rep:	10

EQUIPMENT
Armor: Body Armor (Light) [10/10] ■
Primary Weapon: Agonizer ■
Starting Credit: 2,700 ■
Implants: Adrenal Boost, Basic Biomods, Basic Mesh Inserts, Cortical Stack, Eidetic Memory, Emotional Dampers, Enhanced Hearing, Enhanced Smell, Enhanced Vision, Medichines, Oracles ■
Gear: Backup Insurance (1 month), Disabler, Facial/Image Recognition Software, Fake Ego ID, Muse, Shock Baton, Sniffer Software, Tactical Network Software, Taggant Nanoswarm, Track Software, Tracker Dye (1 dose), Twitch (1 dose) ■

APTITUDES

	COG	COO	INT	REF	SAV	SOM	WIL
Base	10	20	15	15	10	20	15
Morph Bonus	5	5	5				
Total	15	25	20	15	10	20	15

STATS

MOX	TT	LUC	IR	WT	DUR	DR	INIT	SPD
5	6	30	60	6	30	45	6 (7)	1

SKILLS

	APT	BASE	MORPH BONUS	TOTAL
Academics: Engineering	COG	50	5	55
Academics: Materials Science	COG	50	5	55
Academics: Physics	COG	50	5	55
Art: Ink Painting	INT	45	5	50
Climbing	SOM	20		20
Demolitions	COG	40	5	45
Exotic Ranged: Ink Attack	COO	35	5	40
Free Fall	REF	45		45
Hardware: Electronics	COG	40	5	45
Hardware: Industrial	COG	40	5	45
Infiltration	COO	50	5	55
Interests: Post-Fall Earth	COG	40	5	45
Interests: Ruined Habitats	COG	55	5	60
Interests: Spaceship Models	COG	40	5	45
Interfacing	COG	30	5	35
Investigation	INT	35	5	40
Kinetic Weapons	COO	50	5	55
Language: Native Japanese	INT	80	5	85
Networking: Autonomists	SAV	30		30
Networking: Criminal	SAV	40		40
Networking: Ecologists	SAV	40		40
Networking: Firewall	SAV	30		30
Networking: Hypercorps	SAV	30		30
Palming	COO	40	5	45
Perception	INT	45	5	50
Pilot: Aircraft	REF	35		35
Pilot: Spacecraft	REF	45		45
Profession: Appraisal	COG	40	5	45
Profession: Salvage Ops	COG	60	5	65
Scrounging	INT	60	5	65
Swimming	SOM	50		50
Unarmed Combat	SOM	50		50

Background:
Uplift (Octopus)
Faction: **Mercurial**
Morph: **Novacrab**
Motivations:
+Exploration
+Reclaiming Earth
+Uplift Rights

TRAITS
Ego: Ambidextrous (x 2) ■

REP
@-rep: 30
c-rep: 20
e-rep: 40
g-rep: 40
i-rep: 20

EQUIPMENT
Armor: 11/11 (carapace) ■
Primary Weapon: Kinetic Pistol (100 rounds standard ammo) ■
Starting Credit: 400 ■

Implants: Basic Biomods, Basic Mesh Inserts, Carapace Armor, Cortical Stack, Cyberbrain, Enhanced Respiration, Enhanced Vision, Gills, Mnemonic Augmentation, Oxygen Reserve, Puppet Sock, Temperature Tolerance, Vacuum Sealing ■

Gear: Backup Insurance (1 month), Breadcrumb Positioning System, Disassembly Tools, Mobile Lab, Muse, Nanodetector, Radio Booster, Shelter dome, Specimen Container, Superthermite Charge, Tactical Network Software, Vacsuit (Standard), X-Ray Emitter ■
Advantages: 8 Arms, Beak Attack (1d10 DV, use Unarmed Combat skill), Ink Attack (blinding), 360-degree Vision ■

VASTIAN

Neo-Octopi Exsurgent

You are a perfected life form, on the road to physical and mental supremacy over all beings. Well, almost. The one kink is that since you began your apotheosis, every so often, you regurgitate a skrik.

You'll feel a hard pill forming in your digestive gland, pushing against your ctenidium and then your sac, making you want to ink. Then your body contracts and it emerges, pushing back through your digestive tract, forcing open your beak, until a hard-shelled thing, covered with the slime of your insides, unfolds its legs and tries to skitter away from you. They have a single, folding wing—enough to propel them toward a wall in microgravity.

They never trouble you, but they'll viciously attack anyone else. Most of the time, you don't care to stop them. The fact that you excrete small organisms inimical to lesser life forms is simply more proof of how far you have climbed on the evolutionary ladder. In close quarters, though, they can be an attention-drawing nuisance. You're not really sure where the skriks come from or what they are; "skrik" is the sound they make when you crush them in your beak before they get away. Interestingly, despite coming from your body, they taste nothing like the other octopi you've eaten.

You've been part of Firewall for almost three years. This time you've been sent to find the cortical stack of Zameena al-Mareekh. You get to frolic in the Titan Quarantine Zone on the way; it's like a homecoming! It's also possibly a lovely time to find some new infection vectors and spread them through the team, if you can do so without getting caught. Firewall is really useful to you, after all. You don't really care about finding al-Mareekh' stack, but a mission is a mission.

You've sleeved into a novacrab morph for operations on Mars, and you made sure to infect it with the same nano-plague your octomorph shell carries. From this, you learned something interesting: you vomit up skriks in this form, too! They're like tiny black crabs with eleven legs, but you can still catch them as they come up and eat them, most of the time. You're now curious what kind of skriks a human body would vomit up. Would they be like tiny monkeys? It's a shame you haven't figured out how to infect humans with your strain of the virus; it'd be a worthy test.

NOTE ON STRESS TESTS
As an exsurgent, you do not suffer Lucidity loss from most Stress Tests. To keep the character's nature secret from the other players, make rolls for Stress Tests when called for by the gamemaster and pretend to note the stress taken.

WHEN YOU HAVE TO SKRIK, YOU HAVE TO SKRIK
The gamemaster will let you know when your body is producing another skrik. You'll have once shot at crunching and swallowing it before it gets away. A combat will start if the skrik can get at your teammates. You also make loud, disgusting abdominal noises when skrikking—imagine what a giant crab barfing sounds like.

BACKUP
You're unnerved that Firewall thinks there's a traitor in the group. Your best bet is to quickly find a way to frame someone else, and keep anyone else from noticing your skriks. If things get bad, you think you might be able to barf up a few skriks at once, if you can get away from the others for a few minutes. The skriks would hopefully cause enough of a distraction that you could get a head start on an escape or, better yet, take out anyone suspicious while the others are busy.

PLAYER HANDOUTS

Ggive each character a copy of the Player Handout. This is a message from Firewall, giving them orders and setting them at each other's throats. Make a show of pretending to give a specific message to each character, even though they all say the same thing.

Sentinel,

Your participation in this mission is of vital importance, and yet you have not been told the half of it yet. For that,we apologize. The primary mission objective remains the same: find the cortical stack of Zameena al-Mareekh before it falls into the wrong hands. But there is a secondary objective. Someone on your team is a traitor to the organization. Try to find out who.
Good luck, and good hunting.

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