

Beneath The Surface

Initial Brief

EXPLORERS WANTED

Enthusiastic explorers are sought for an expedition into the depths of the stone catacombs beneath the surface of the recently established foothold on the planet of Hive IV. Expect danger, mystery, and possibly even valuable treasures - come prepared!

Explorers will be compensated for their contributions by the Zeitgeist Experimental Keter Exploration Division!

Characters

- [Blind Rising](#) - Susannah
- [Blue Five](#) - Emmarose
- [Lizard Wizard](#) - Paola
- [Stellar Glory](#) - Tamsin

Summary

- The party meet on Kylal by the Kyholt-Beachhead gate where they are briefed by Dr East Wind, a Vyixian archaeologist from the Zeitgeist Experimental Keter Exploration Division who explains the mission: to enter the unexplored levels of the Beachhead installation and find out what's down there. The party and Dr Wind discuss the current state of the Beachhead and its stone guardians, and Blue Five is very interested to try to communicate with the stone guardians but is unable to do so as they communicate in their own method.
- They head into the depths and encounter new five-limbed stone guardians that prove hostile. These ones - designed with blades and armour - are more aggressive than the ones they've met but the party dispatch them and Blue Five augments one of their shields into shielding for themselves. In doing so the pentagonal and five-sided patterns of the place get into their mind a bit and they become enthused by the number five at the same time that their Mystic companion calls down an Intervention to allow them to communicate with the Pentagonal beings.
- They continue through a decontamination shower - avoiding being decontaminated - and descend down into the depths. As they go they find the desiccated remains of one of the pentagonal species clutching a tablet. When they take the tablet they are suddenly set upon by Decay which they fend off before reading the carved tablet using their Ship Heart given ability to comprehend:
 - New Information
 - Objective Achieved
 - Sleep Eternally
 - Sacrifice Worthwhile
 - No Further Advice

- They push on, solving a puzzle that seems to tell the story of the five-limbed species turning other species into themselves, and descend into a large chamber where there are spindly five limbed creatures tending to a large pentagonal box in the middle. There are five doors to the room, including the one they came through, and they find they are all sealed save for the one they entered through and one ajar at the other end of the room. The doors are labelled:
 - Decontaminate (their way in)
 - Continuation
 - Resuscitation
 - Deliberation (the way forward)
 - Renavigation
- They enter Deliberation and become part of a simulation of a planet waging war on other planets. They recognise none of the planets but their planet is victorious. As the simulation ends they find themselves speaking to a very large stone guardian that refers to itself as the Custodian and is confused about where and when it is, and the status of its work (“Custodial” in nature). The party tiptoe around the fact they've not arrived at “the initial destination” as the Custodian calls it, and determine that the Custodian calls the planet of Kylal its home and that the crypts contain the ancient civilisation's members as “passengers” of the planet being moved to another star system over a very long period of time. Upon giving up the information that the planet has not in fact reached its destination proper yet, the Custodian decides to awaken “the Supervisor” for further instructions.
- The party continue to press the Custodian for information as they also call in Dr Wind for advice. Dr Wind is flustered and unsure and's only idea is that because this isn't *on* Kylal it may in fact be fine to proceed. They eventually roll a die to see whether they advise opening the sarcophagus or not, and suggest opening it. During the call, Blind Rising reads out the inscription and the Custodian becomes concerned by the mention of “No Further Advice”.
- The Custodian describes “No Further Advice” as terrorists who have acted and, seemingly, succeeded in their sabotage. The Custodian becomes even more concerned with reviving the Supervisor and enlists the party to help as the systems come online. The party attempt to interfere with the sarcophagus but its systems are beyond their successful sabotage. They help open the sarcophagus but when it opens the resident falls out very much dead and has been for some time. The party attempt, with partial success, to avoid the clouds of toxic spores that emanate from the sarcophagus and take the treasures clutched in the supervisor's hands (a brass orb and an ornate knife) before the sarcophagus begins to decay and attack them.
- The party fend off the Decay and consult with the Custodian who is horrified to discover that Decay occurred. It refers to the Decay as “the problem” and insists that its owners had eradicated it. It determines need for further Deliberation and asks the party to leave so it can secure its facility. It refers to Blue Five as their means of future access and then sends them on their way.
- Back at the base camp in Beachhead the party can see only the lower facility is now sealed off by the Custodian, not the whole place, and debrief to Dr Wind about the mission. They realise they can now talk to the Stone Guardians but as they do the ability starts to fade, so Blind Rising infodumps everything possible onto it. Dr Wind is fascinated and takes the “enlightened” Crypt Guardian off for further investigation.

Aftermath

- A full report is given to the Zeitgeist Research Department on what occurred - Blind Rising in particular notes that organic specimens were found below from the precursor civilisation and encourages them to head down to investigate. However, when the ZRD attempts to do so, they find that the lower levels of the facility have been sealed off and expect it will take considerable

force to reopen them.

- Rising reports back to King Valiant in Fableland by letter to give information on what occurred. Valiant is, as Rising suspected, intrigued by the idea that Decay could be properly banished and urges Rising to find out more. Rising researches non-Cooperation civilisations to find information on the Decay to see if the notion of treating it as “a problem” has been encountered before in Galactic history. Rising finds very few records pre-War (as is usually the case) but notes that the Vyixians used to refer to its existence as “Fate”, while the Ziline and Qiate have very old records suggesting implication that the other was responsible (“the Damp”, and “the Rot” both being given as names from a jungle-dwelling set of species).
- Stellar Glory takes the orb retrieved from the sarcophagus to ZRD experts to see if she can work out what it is and whether it's worth anything. Research into it shows it can open up when doing so it emits a small glowing pulse roughly once per second. This is surely an antique metronome of some sort (worth 3 Clout if sold) or could be used as a Pilot's talisman. Glory proceeds to attempt to find out information on Ship Hearts in system that she feels called to - she eliminates the possibilities of Ship Hearts she is aware of by ticking them off, but becomes increasingly certain that there are several other Ship Hearts hidden in the system that she - and the Cooperation - are unaware of... Finding and pinning these down though, that could be tricky, but research into the topic brings up a group known as “The Hole Gang” on Siruta who seem to be avid Ship Heart hunters.
- Lizard Wizard seeks help recovering from the beating and cursing he received during the mission, and while doing so investigates the effect that the spore clouds have had on his lungs. He finds that the spores have infected him with some sort of hitherto unknown parasitic mycelium which, if he's careful about cultivating, could be used to great effect (at risk to his lungs). He gains access to the [Exofauna Symbiote](#) experimental ability tree, where the spawned creature is a cloud of spores.

Consequences

- The lower levels of the Beachhead are inaccessible without significant force being brought to bear.
- The Custodian of the Beachhead Crypt is aware of the existence of Decay.

All Characters

- +3 Clout with the Zeitgeist Research Department OR +1 Clout with any other Faction of your choice.

Blind Rising

- +3 Clout with Fableland

Stellar Glory

- Ancient Metronome: either sell for +3 Clout with a faction of your choice, or keep as a Pilot's Talisman.

Lizard Wizard

- Access to the [Exofauna Symbiote](#) tree where the symbiote is a living cloud of spores.

[mission](#), [blind rising](#), [stellar glory](#), [blue five](#), [lizard wizard](#)

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