

Five There Were

Initial Brief

Incoming Transmission

Source Identifier: Ninth Truth, Borderlands Botanists

*# Destination Identifier: TE3-Firebrand#Her Glorious Command#Starlight Ebbing#Muse IX#Unquiet Journey#**

Subject: Explorers Wanted

Message Begins

You know the drill by now: the Borderlands Botanists would like some help exploring some tunnels on Kyal.

Events from a few months ago have opened up some new tunnels in the Pentagonal ruins that we and Zeitgeist have been researching, and we'd like to know what new insights about this mysterious civilisation these tunnels might yield. Our initial investigations indicate that there might be some danger to exploration, so we'd like some backup before we go any further.

Interested participants should meet me in Kyholt for further briefing. This is Kyal: dress accordingly.

Message Ends

Characters

- [Delicate Harmony](#) - Mike
- [Gathering Flow](#) - Phil

Summary

- The party meets in Kyholt, where Ninth Truth explains what he wants - following the events of [Internal Error](#), when Aspexx employees broke through into the gate chamber from a previously-blocked Pentagonal tunnel, there is a possibility to explore more of these tunnels and learn the mysteries of the Pentagonal Civilisation. However, there is also a distinct possibility of Aspexx still being down those tunnels, and Ninth Truth wants to avoid a Diplomatic Incident, so is hiring a party to go in first before letting any overly-keen Borderland/Zeitgeist scientists loose down there.
- Ninth Truth first sends them into Kyholt to meet up with Undulating Current, a Zeitgeist scientist who has designed some experimental breathing filters which can help people avoid the horrible effects of the spores often encountered in Pentagonal tunnels - for a little while, anyway. While picking these up, the party also meet Cold Boot, a disgruntled local who's suspicious of Aspexx, and particularly suspicious of Elegant Solution, an Aspexx employee who's recently been hanging around Kyholt trying to get access to the gate - indeed, Elegant Solution also approaches the party and asks them if they would escort her through to the gate.

- The party agree to this, though keeping an eye on her, but Ninth Truth is unimpressed when he finds her investigating the gate's surroundings, and promptly bears her off to his office to show her all the excellent public research which has already been done on the gate so she can read that instead. The party are shoo-ed in the direction of the tunnel they're supposed to be going down.
- Inside the tunnel, all is much as would be expected by anyone who has entered a Pentagonal ruin before: it's a tunnel, cross-section of an inverted pentagon, carved out of rock. The party walk down it quite a long way before turning a corner and encountering some hostile rockwork, which attacks. Delicate Harmony is able to draw on previously-gained abilities to partially control rockwork, and they are able to disable/destroy the rockwork creatures before they do too much damage.
- Another long walk further on, following what appear to be a number of footprints in the dust (though most pointing towards Kyholt, as though more people came this way than later went back), the tunnel turns again and enters what appears to be a broken decontamination chamber (similar to some previously encountered). This one also, however, contains an Aspexx-branded communicator, an Aspexx uniform jacket and a key stamped with the Aspexx logo, all apparently dropped by someone else coming this way. The party leave the communicator behind as Gathering Flow's pilot beacon is blinking - and, at the end of the tunnel, they encounter a handy 'Decay starts here' sign left on the wall by someone else - but pocket the key for later use.
- They walk another long distance along featureless tunnels, until eventually they start to notice a feature - small pentagonal mosaic tiles, in five different colours (blue, green, orange, pink and purple) start to appear along the walls, increasing in frequency/density as the party proceeds along the tunnel. It becomes clear that these are leading somewhere - at a junction, the tunnel turns at a corner, but ahead is a dead-end pentagonal room containing a) several mosaic artworks and b) a lot of rather poisonous spores floating in the air.
- The party use their breathing apparatus, and their own skills, to enter the room, study the mosaics, make sketches of them and discuss their suppositions. Broadly speaking, these are the obvious facts of the room:
 - This room looks old, and well-used - the mosaics appear somewhat worn as though by being touched or brushed past.
 - There are three areas of mosaic - an initial diptych of two simple images, a tetrptych of some more complex scenes, and a final huge single image.
 - All images feature five five-limbed creatures and the five colours of the mosaic tiles, each one seeming to be linked to one creature.
- The party is unable to spend as long as they might like staring at these images, due to the spores, but they make notes and sketches to pass on to Ninth Truth at the completion of the mission (see Aftermath below for details of what knowledge is now publicly available).
- Continuing onwards, the party are aware that this is now a very long trek they have been on. How far they now are from Kyholt is underscored when they reach an area where seismic or glacial activity has actually split the land apart, and the tunnel now has a several-meter gap and an offset, with a rope across (apparently left by Aspexx) and ice surrounding the break. Ice which is full of cavern worms. Both characters have ways to get across the gap without difficulty, but run into problems when the cavern worms attack ferociously. Luckily they are finally able to fend them off and continue on their way, only slightly worse for wear.
- Following the tunnels (and the footsteps) further, the party eventually end up in a very surprising location - another Pentagonal Gate room. It looks a lot like the ones they have previously encountered, except that in this one there's an Aspexx specialist on a communicator call in an ops tent. The party get the specialist's attention, and everyone asks questions about what everyone else is doing here. It turns out that Aspexx, despite suffering significant losses of the fighting troops sent here with the scientists to protect them, have managed to find this

chamber with a dormant gate in, establish an operational base here, and then sneak through to the Kyholt base to try to investigate the operational gate there. They were foiled in really investigating it, but in the months since have finally got to grips with the gate controls enough to get it activated a few weeks ago. The specialist indicates that in fact there's an Aspexx scientist through the gate at the moment, exploring what's on the other side - but before the party follow, she points them at a pile of spacesuits next to the gate. Because the other side of this gate is, somewhat unexpectedly, in space.

- Also before they step through, Delicate Harmony interfaces with the gate - which very much impresses the Aspexx specialist. Harmony learns that this gate is connected to one other, and was not actively aware of the two other gates which Harmony has interacted with - the Hive IV gate and the Kyholt gate - but now is.
- On the space side of the gate, the party find themselves in another pentagonal gate chamber, recognisably similar to those they have seen elsewhere, except that this one is missing two walls and a chunk of ceiling, through which there is only space. This does not look intentional. There are rockwork creatures here but, as is usual when entering a gate chamber from the gate, they appear to view the party as friendly and do not attack.
- With a bit of observation of the strength of light from the star, plus Gathering Flow's startouched abilities, the party conclude that they seem to still be in the Keter system, but likely right on its edge - perhaps within an asteroid belt that encircles the system further out than the (previous) location of the Orion gate.
- The party also observe another mural, this one in a different art style and looking much newer (or at least, untouched by regular passers-by). It appears to be made of metal on rock, and seems to show an elongated pentagonal shape among stylised stars and galaxies.
- Working together, the party manage to anchor each other enough for Gathering Flow to lean outside the missing walls to see what they can see. What she sees is - beyond the jagged edge of broken rooms and walls like the edge of this room - a smooth, flat surface, with a vertex to another surface at an angle that implies this whole thing might be one huge, broken, pentagonal prism. In space.
- Before they can explore further, they are interrupted by a panicked Aspexx scientist, who appears to have met a rockwork Custodian and somehow upset it. All the rockwork comes to attention and identifies the party plus scientist as hostile. A hasty retreat is beaten back through the gate to the Kyal side.
- Discussion of all this exciting new knowledge with the Aspexx scientist is cut short by the specialist, who says they were on the communicator with Elegant Solution when the call suddenly cut off, after noises of violence which imply Elegant Solution was- attacked? grabbed? had nebulous bad things happen to her? The Aspexx employees go into total meltdown at this, panicking because Elegant Solution is the daughter of someone Very Important in the Aspexx hierarchy, and they can't be the people who lost her, and how can they possibly get to Kyholt quickly enough, it's hours through the tunnels and-
- -Delicate Harmony points out that the gate is now connected to the Kyholt gate.
- Aspexx are, once again, impressed by Harmony's understanding of and connection to the gates, and happily accept Harmony's offer to switch the gate's direction. However, they do then look awkward about the idea of charging through the gate into Kyholt while armed and being Aspexx - they appear to be just as keen as Ninth Truth to avoid any potential diplomatic incidents. The party agree to go through on their behalf, find out what's happened to Elegant Solution and get her back.
- What has happened is that she has been kidnapped, by Cold Boot and a few friends. They appear to be trying to get information out of her about what Aspexx knows about the Orion Gate explosion, with strong overtones of 'Aspexx caused the explosion didn't you.' Elegant Solution appears confused and sad about this line of questioning and/or the ZAPs they keep taking from an electrified weapon, but doesn't seem to have any information to give over. Once

the party manage to break down the door, they deal with this pretty quickly, disarming the attackers and rescuing Elegant Solution and a piece of equipment she had with her. Cold Boot, meanwhile, throws a smoke grenade and attempts to escape, but is caught.

Aftermath

- It turns out Elegant Solution had a signal beacon with her, which she was trying to find a way to get to the 'Aspexx gate' (as no-one has come up with a better term for it yet) without having to take it through decay. If she gets it to the asteroid, then *Starlight Ebbing* can trace it and find the asteroid for further investigation.
- The party generally agree that they can work with Aspexx - and help negotiations and collaboration between Aspexx and Zeitgeist/Borderland Botanists in exploring the Pentagonal gates - with a few conditions:
 - Locations of gates must be made public when they are found
 - Gate researchers from all factions are given access to all gates (within reason e.g. it is safe to access a given gate)
 - There are *some questions* to be asked of Elegant Solution to make sure they want to collaborate (with Gathering Flow using Reality Sense to check that these answers are not lies):
 - Q: Was the Kylal gate system responsible in any way for the Orion gate explosion?
 - A: Not as far as Aspexx is aware (true)
 - Q: Was the pentagonal civilisation known about before the system was terraformed?
 - A: No (true)
 - Q: Was the gate network known about before the system was terraformed?
 - A: No (true)
 - Q: Are there any other places the pentagonal civilisation is known about?
 - A(1): Well yes obviously, the installation on Hive IV... (true)
 - A(2): Oh, you mean outside the Keter System? No. (true)
 - Overall it seems that Aspexx do not know any more about the Pentagonal gates than anyone else, but are very interested in gate technology generally so started paying attention after the gate to Hive IV was found.
 - Aspexx want to work with Delicate Harmony having seen how the gates could be manipulated, so all of the above is broadly agreed to, although there is a feeling that Aspexx will never publish everything they find unless they are carefully made to do so - and that they are maybe not sharing everything they know currently, either.
- Delicate Harmony also pushes for a cross-faction effort to find 3 more gates which they have hypothesized should be on Kylal, although it is unclear where the hunt for these should begin. Certainly one of the murals implied the gates might be spread evenly over the planet, but the two that have now been located are much closer than that - barely a day's trek apart. Maps are consulted and angles plotted as to where other gates might hypothetically be if they were at the same distance from each other as the two already found and (presumably) arranged as vertices of a pentagon, but there is some consternation as it is realised one of those would be in a position where there is no bedrock, only ocean below the ice, and another would be close enough to Kylal Core Settlement that it ought to have been found already if anyone was looking....
- Gathering Flow is intrigued by the idea that the pentagonal asteroid might have been a spaceship of sorts, and maybe with a ship heart in it could be a functional spaceship again? She suggests that maybe Endeavour could be the ship heart for the job, which the Zeitgeist researchers seem 50/50 enthused/concerned about as an idea.

- Delicate Harmony, after thinking about the asteroid some more, shares a possible concern/avenue of investigation with the Gate Research Team: we know that the Pentagonal Gates have some slightly shipheart-y aspects or effects, e.g. no Decay in their immediate vicinity. The gate on the 'spaceship' asteroid is in the asteroid belt that orbits out past the position of the Orion Gate. Is it possible that interference between this and the Orion Gate is what caused its destruction?
- The party also hand over their sketches of the mosaics in the room full of spores:



- plus some of their speculations upon them such as:
 - The pentagonal civilisation might have had triangular heads? or not.
 - The pentagonal civilisation really liked these five colours - blue, green, orange, pink and purple - but it's unclear what exactly they meant.
 - The pentagonal civilisation appears to have fought others, and to have spread out across a whole planet - possibly Kylal although the landmasses are not a perfect match for the modern-day planet.
 - This could imply, as above, that there might be five gates in total on Kylal.

Consequences

- Aspexx, Zeitgeist and the Borderlands Botanists are cautiously collaborating on the investigation of the Pentagonal Gates.
- With the Kyholt gate and Aspexx gates now connected, Aspexx take their beacon through to their research area, but without Delicate Harmony's help it takes a few weeks for the combined research group to understand the gates well enough to redirect/reconnect one to the asteroid gate, whereupon Aspexx take the beacon through and start trying to triangulate its position from the *Starlight Ebbing*.

All Characters

- +3 Clout with one of Zeitgeist or the Borderland Botanists
- +1 Clout with Aspexx

Delicate Harmony

- +1 Clout with Aspexx: essentially status gained for having gate knowledge

- From the Synthesis ability, an attempt to become just a little bit Cavern Worm results in the following:
 - Once per encounter, you may call SLOW. However, when you do, bringing the cavern worm's icy blood to the surface is not without consequence - you also take a 3-second SLOW.

Gathering Flow

- No additional consequences

[mission](#), [delicate harmony](#), [gathering flow](#)

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