

Gatekeeping [DRAFT]

Initial Brief

Incoming Transmission

Source Identifier: Zeitgeist-Aspexx-Botanist Joint Pentagonal Civilisation Research Collaboration Initiative

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

Subject: Asteroid Research Expedition

Message Begins

The ZAB-JPC-RCI has now triangulated the position of the gate-bearing asteroid previously reported in Issue #1 of the Initiative's Journal, and we are preparing a ship-borne expedition to the location. We hope this expedition proves an invaluable augmentation to our existing research efforts, especially as gate-borne expeditions have recently proved intractable (see Issue #3 article "Continued Unexpected Aggression of Asteroid Guardians").

In the spirit of open research and collaboration, capable explorers and researchers are invited to join us on what will no doubt be an exciting and profitable expedition. We are particularly seeking combat-capable individuals to spearhead exploration efforts and keep the still-agitated facility defences at bay.

Prospective participants should contact Curious Direction, Elegant Solution, or Ninth Truth for further details and to register interest.

Message Ends

Characters

- [Budding Leaf](#) - Alex ET
- [Delicate Harmony](#) - Mike
- [Gathering Flow](#) - Phil

Summary

- Following the events of [Five There Were](#), a shaky alliance of Aspexx, Zeitgeist and the Borderland Botanists set out to investigate the 'asteroid' discovered on the previous mission. Two ships - the *Starlight Ebbing* and the *Unquiet Journey* - transport a variety of interested scientists from all factions, including the Party.
- Budding Leaf brings along their small piece of Hive IV
- After arrival, the party take a brief shuttle trip around the asteroid to see what it looks like from all sides, as well as investigating whether there are any alternative routes in apart from the open-to-space damaged rooms discovered by the Pentagonal Gate, since those currently appear to be full of angry rockwork.

- Sadly, there are not.
- The party do however discover that the 'asteroid' is even more clearly a constructed item, easily spaceship-size, made entirely of rock, in a pentagonal prism shape. At the gate chamber end of the prism there is some damage, leading to the broken open rooms. At the other end of the prism there is what appears to be massive blast damage - while there might once have been openings here too, the rock appears to have been melted and reformed in a huge explosion, leaving no way in.
- While flying around having a look, the party are also given various pieces of equipment deemed necessary - space suits, glow sticks and a summary of all research papers to date published about the Pentagonal Civilisation (over half of which have party members as authors...)
- The party, accompanied by Elegant Solution from Aspexx and Dr East Wind from Zeitgeist, enter the asteroid through the room adjacent to the gate chamber, which had the large metal mural in it - fighting off several waves of rockwork to do so.
- Heading into the undamaged chambers, they find some Crypt Monitors and a Crypt Cleanser attempting to maintain a large room whose walls are full of doors. The rockwork's programming is clearly a little confused, but they continue to do their jobs, spraying nasty spores into the vacuum of space and scanning ERROR whenever they have a chance. The party knock them down and then mostly ignore them thanks to Gathering Flow's Versatile Barrier. With this respite, they are able to investigate the doors on the walls and work out:
 - This appears to have been some kind of cryo chamber
 - The wall capsules contain organic pentapodal bodies, which are not as decayed as one would expect given the likely age of the facility, but which do not appear to be revivable to the party's understanding.
 - The party stare at these for a while, attempt to interface with the cryo maintenance system to understand its status, and consider various inadvisable options, but eventually decide not to further interface with the dead bodies of another species and leave for the next chamber
- Here, they find a variety of statues, and some other curious things.
 - Against two adjacent walls, statues of 5 pentapodal people
 - These have colour coding: one with a purple halo, one orange, one teal, one royal blue, one pink
 - Against the opposing (single) wall, a slightly larger statue of one pentapodal person
 - This one has a black halo
 - In the middle of the room, a spherical metal orb depicting a planet. One of the landmasses on the planet looks a lot like Kylal's northern continent (give or take a little continental drift), but the other one is in a position where Kylal has no southern continent...
 - Two strange piles of what appears to be dormant fungal growth in different positions on the floor
 - Budding Leaf, with their strong interest in flora and ability to communicate with fungi, investigates these. They are able to deduce:
 - These were the bodies of two pentapodes, sprawled on the floor in positions that do not look intentional. The fungus is related to the spores that the Crypt Cleanser was spraying, and has grown all over the bodies and consumed them until there was no nutrition remaining, since when it has been dormant.
 - On the wall behind the black halo statue, a smear of fungal growth across the wall. Budding Leaf surmises it might have grown on blood, smeared on the wall. Comparing the smear with one of the reference papers containing Pentagonal sigil 'translations' from shipheart interpretations during [Beneath The Surface](#), this is growing in a pattern which roughly matches the shape of the sigil meaning 'No Further Advice'.

- Further consulting this research paper, the party find that the sigil above the door of this room means 'Continuation', but they have no translations available for the sigils on the bases of the various statues.
- In the next chamber (sigil-title 'Renavigation'), they find a single, central, large chair carved with swirling patterns (similar to the mural's depiction of space). There is also a black metal circlet with a central black gem, apparently abandoned on the floor near the chair.
 - The party are very cautious around these, particularly the circlet, taking it in turns to consider touching and then deciding not to.
 - Budding Leaf (does anything with Hive IV?)
 - Gathering Flow calls Endeavour and asks it whether it can tell them what the circlet is. It takes one look and says, although it's never seen one in person before, that looks a lot like what it believes people generally refer to as 'ship heart relics.'
 - This does not encourage the party to engage with the circlet
 - Delicate Harmony takes his courage in his hands and, surrounded by so much of their ancient workings, opens his mind to the pathways and workings of the Pentagonal Civilisation, becoming aware of their workings and how to copy their work.
 - From the various knowledge he gains, he shares that the pentagonal civilisation did not create technology through science, but through the efforts of 'Bright Ones' and 'Heroes' who created marvels together. He strongly suspects that 'Bright Ones' were, or were similar to, ship hearts.
- Eventually, they decide they have to try picking the circlet up, and do so
 - Immediately, they find themselves pitched into a strange type of vision, where the circlet has become a person huddling on the floor, and figures which look like the black-haloed statue from the previous room start attacking, directing and shouting at both the players and the circlet-being in a fairly overwhelming and confusing fashion. As the players try to talk to the circlet-being, it cries about knowing it wasn't able to do everything, or being asked to do too much, as the vision repeats a few times, narrowing the black-clad figures down to one, who eventually commands "Now Jump!" and the vision ends.
 - The party are reluctant to initiate any deeper connection to the ship heart relic in the circlet, but speculate that perhaps ordering a ship heart to attempt some kind of faster-than-light jump of a spaceship - something still impossible with current technology apart from by passing through Aspexx gates - led to the disaster that clearly happened here.
 - Before they can discuss their new knowledge much further, however, a Custodian arrives. It appears vaguely hostile, but with his new knowledge, Delicate Harmony is able to communicate with it directly, and explain that the party is not hostile and is just trying to understand things. This appears to work, until suddenly the Custodian becomes enraged, sharing a vision of the Pentagonal Gate by the entrance hole being bodily winched out of the side of the asteroid by Aspexx staff. Uh-oh.
 - A hasty discussion ensues, with Elegant Solution attempting to defend Aspexx's actions for science, before Gathering Flow calls down an Intervention from Endeavour to move the party, Elegant Solution, East Wind and the Custodian all back to the gate chamber
- In the gate chamber, chaos ensues. The party arrives to find the gate, attached with heavy-duty metal cables to an Aspexx shuttle, being towed out into space. Two Aspexx commandos standing in the room seem surprised by the party's arrival, but ready to fight to rescue Elegant Solution from any untoward expressions of annoyance. The Custodian ends up half-blocking the exit to space, but still angry and willing to fight all bipedal annoyances.
 - To try not to lose the gate, Gathering Flow deploys her Between Heartbeats ability to cause time outside the encounter to move incredibly slowly (or time inside to move incredibly fast: who can tell?). This quickly turns into a practical physics & philosophy

problem when one of the Aspexx guards is PUSHed out into space past the Custodian and continues to move at speed towards the edge of the encounter.

- One by one, the party and the Aspexx employees (Elegant Solution and her remaining guard-commando) also all somehow decide that throwing themselves into space - in the direction of the gate on its tow-cable - is the smartest thing they can do right now. They end up either clinging onto either the (currently inactive) gate or the cable, depending on their self-yeeting skills. The fight continues, except now in zero-G and all in a line.
- Meanwhile, it is observed that the Aspexx commando now reaching the edge of the Between Heartbeats bubble is, at least, not ripped to shreds as they start to rejoin normal-speed time. They don't look like they're *enjoying* it, though.
- Also meanwhile, shuttle engines are rather unpleasant to be hanging onto a cable behind. Everybody takes some quantity of upsetting BURN.
- With no way to easily cut the cable, Gathering Flow attempts another Intervention to move the party and the gate back onto the asteroid.
 - This... is a choice.
 - The party hear Endeavour asking them to fight on its behalf, and no other request.
 - They enter the normal, white, empty space where shipheart quarrels get resolved, and there is no-one else there to fight.
 - This means they can't resolve the quarrel the way one usually would - if there even is a quarrel? But something odd is definitely going on.
 - Following his insights about Bright Ones and ship hearts earlier, Delicate Harmony realises that the gate must in some way be a ship heart, or something similar, that would usually get a chance to agree or disagree with another ship heart messing with its stuff. The chance exists, in the form of the empty psychic space, but the agreement or lack of it seems to be what's missing.
 - There appears to be no easy way to resolve this situation. Gathering Flow asks Endeavour's advice and is told that maybe she should think carefully about what she's doing when calling down powerful things like Interventions.

Aftermath

- Bullet points of what characters did in the aftermath of the mission

Consequences

- Breakdown of consequences for characters - rewards, effects, contacts.
- Also mention any wider consequences for the world

All Characters

- Consequences

Character 1

- Consequences

Character 2

- Consequences

Be sure to add tags for the characters

[mission](#), [character 1](#), [character 2](#)

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