

Orbital Decay

Initial Brief

>>>KETER-X-579.6-1

>>>The novel lifeform candidate designated KETER-X-579.6-1 was first reported by the crew of the Slingshot Asteroid Miner on asteroid MX9784-6255 who described it as "like some weird fungus growing all over the [...] place". Its existence has yet to be verified. Some[who?] have cast doubts on the possibility of extant life existing on an asteroid.

#This article is a stub. You can help the Galactic Cooperation Technological Zeitgeist Research Department by expanding it. Contact your nearest research representative on [Research Ship *Endeavour*] to participate in expeditions.

Characters

- [Budding Leaf](#) - Alex
- [Wretched Export](#) - James

Summary

- Following a report of an unidentified fungal lifeform from an asteroid mining ship, *Slingshot*, Budding Leaf and Wretched Export are dispatched by Prof. Blistering Quarry of the *Endeavour* to investigate.
- After a rough docking during which their shuttle sustained significant damage, the pair reach the *Slingshot* which is anchored to what is technically a comet, not an asteroid. The landing bay is empty except for two mining bots. Someone seems to have programmed the bots to destroy any organic lifeform that isn't on the crew roster. With some quick thinking, Wretched Export manages to add himself and Budding Leaf to the crew roster and the mining bots stand down.
- On the lower decks, Export and Leaf meet the *Slingshot* crew who are keen for the fungus to be destroyed so that they can complete mining operations before the comet's orbit decays and it crashes into the sun. Beyond the mine airlock, they encounter some strange mushrooms growing out of the mycelium, which turn out to be hostile. Some appear to be copying speech and Export theorises that this might be an early sign of intelligence.
- Deeper into the comet, his hypothesis is confirmed by contact with some mushrooms which appear to speak. Communication is hampered by some significant cultural differences but it is established that these mushrooms are part of a fungal collective whole and they are amenable to being relocated before the destruction of the comet. With the aid of the *Endeavour*, Export and Leaf arrange to take a mushroom ambassador on a tour of the Keter system in search of a new home.
- Leaf repairs the shuttle but their rerouting of power systems results in completely inverted controls. They leave a deep gouge in the shuttle bay floor of the *Endeavour* when they land on their roof. The shuttle maintenance team is not happy.

- An early setback occurs on a remote Sirutan island when the mushroom is eaten by crabs but is able to pass on knowledge spores to Leaf and asks them to complete the tour in its stead. On Mytene, an apparently ideal abandoned mine still contains security turrets which cause a mine collapse. En route to Kylal, a group of pirates with a fake shuttle distress beacon attempt to steal from the *Endeavour* but are caught when Export spots their subterfuge. Beneath the ice of Kylal, they meet an enthusiastic botanist but the local flora proves unhappy about the presence of foreign fungal spores. Finally, after a run-in with thieves on Ace's World, Export negotiates a profitable offer for ACE.
- In the conference room of the *Endeavour*, the options are debated but ultimately the choice of location falls on Export and Leaf who elect to relocate the fungus to Mytene.
- Returning to the comet, they find that one of the miners has taken it upon themselves to destroy the mushrooms. A tense standoff occurs while Export holds off the miner and Leaf communicates with the mushrooms to explain the plan to them but war is averted.

Aftermath

- Budding Leaf and Wretched Export help the fungus and its mushrooms get established on Mytene. Leaf coordinates with the Myteneans, researchers and the mushrooms. There are a lot of dull meetings as arrangements are drawn up transferring land control from the Industrial corps to the Societal Corps and then leasing space to the researchers from the Zeitgeist and Borderland Botanists, granting land in perpetuity to the fungus and designating it as an area of Special Cultural and Scientific Importance. Meanwhile, Export takes the lead on the ground, assessing the terrain and the threat of local wildlife.
- Leaf conducts laboratory analysis on the mushroom samples. They are able to identify the comparative nutritional benefits of different electromagnetic wavelengths to the fungus, as well as some interesting evidence about the way in which the fungus is able to so rapidly produce adapted mushrooms. There are fascinating implications for controlled evolution in other sapient lifeforms, though that would require years, if not decades, of further study and the navigation of many ethical dilemmas. This also solidifies their unwanted status as *the* fungus expert on the *Endeavour*.

Consequences

- The species, *Fungus sapiens* is relocated on Mytene in a former mine on the edge of shipheart range. A joint Zeitgeist-Borderland Botanists research station is set up nearby to study and communicate with the fungus.
- The following is an IC document from the Zeitgeist database and is freely available to be known by any character:

Fungus sapiens

Fungus sapiens is a sapient fungal species discovered on a comet in the Keter Borderlands star system, originating in the unexplored Upsilon Tau K825 system. There is only one known member of the species, currently resident on the planet Mytene in the Keter Borderlands.

Description

While the fungus itself is a single species, it is able to produce a variety of semi-independent mushrooms adapted to specific purposes. Most notable are the ambassadorial mushrooms which grow to around 1-2m in height and have a wide convex pileus (cap) which contains specially adapted lamellae (gills), capable of producing sound by expelling air through them. Different sounds are produced in distributed areas of the cap which allows the mushroom to produce speech. Another mushroom, known informally as the copy cap, appears to be a primitive learning body, capable of mimicry of observed behaviour and sounds. The copy cap has a parabolic cap and a narrow stem which branches into a secondary cap used as an appendage. Other mushrooms include defensive entities such as the puffball launcher, a mushroom with a cylindrical cap, capable of launching an explosive ball of spores. Variations have been observed the ability to spray an acidic liquid which runs through veins on the cap.

Origin

An analysis of the trajectory of the comet designated MX9784-6255 indicates an origin in the Upsilon Tau K825 system, 4.8ly away from the Keter Borderlands. K825 is unexplored but long-distance analysis has not indicated any planets in the habitable zone. It has been deemed unsuitable for terraforming by Aspexx. However, a large asteroid belt exist between the inner planet K825b and the first of two gas giants, K825c. A hypothetical fifth planet, K825f, may once have existed and been destroyed by a planetary-scale cataclysm which could have resulted in the comet and the *Fungus sapiens* being expelled from K825.

Diet

Fungus sapiens has the ability to sense the full electromagnetic spectrum of radiation and draws sustenance from specific wavelengths. It is theorised that the species was able to survive the long journey between systems in a dormant state, consuming background cosmic radiation.

Discovery and Relocation

The first report of *Fungus sapiens* came from the Slingshot asteroid mining ship and was verified by a research team from the Galactic Cooperation Technological Zeitgeist Research Department ship, Endeavour, led by noted botanist Budding Leaf and their research assistant, Wretched Export. Due to the imminent destruction of the comet MX9784-6255 on which the species was discovered, resulting from orbital decay toward the Keter star, the decision was taken to relocate the *Fungus sapiens* to a remote location on Mytene.

Budding Leaf

- 3 Clout with Zeitgeist or *Endeavour* (or 1 Clout with another faction)
- Residual fungal knowledge spores which retain a few memories of the fungus collective and also permit Leaf limited sensory communication with mushrooms via mycelium.

Wretched Export

- 3 Clout with Zeitgeist or *Endeavour* (or 1 Clout with another faction)

[mission](#), [budding leaf](#), [wretched export](#)

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Last update: **2022/04/24 17:46**

