

# Ritual

## Initial Brief

After that is Ritual, a Medium Threat mission for Delicate Harmony and additional appropriate characters. The circlet has more to show you. Assemble at the ZAB-JPC-RCI base on Kylal to receive enlightenment.

## Characters

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

## Summary

- Delicate Harmony receives indications from the gem in the diadem retrieved from the Pentagonal asteroid ([gatekeeping](#)) that it wishes to share more information with him, to show him something of its history, or maybe the history of the civilisation? Delicate Harmony agrees to receive whatever information it wants to share, and Budding Leaf comes along too into some kind of vision of the past, or the gem's memory of it.
- The party experience a strange vision of a rainbow, distant far away from them, which seems like the target they are aiming for. However, they are repeatedly thwarted in their attempts to reach it by strange beings who radiate strange sensations and cause problems in their actions:
  - An entity that looks large and spherical, and exudes a feeling of great weight, which pushes the party around
  - An entity that seems cold and static, and slows down anyone who comes near it
  - A double entity, somewhat pentagonally prismatic in shape which repeatedly explodes, knocks everyone down and then rejoins to do it again
  - A small, sad entity which makes the party intermittently feel lost or absent
- The party defeat all of these and reach the rainbow, which fades away, leaving only a representation of the gem itself. It seems sad and frustrated that they haven't managed to understand exactly what it meant by all of this, and asks them if they have any better way to create a truer, less metaphorical communication channel which will allow them to interrogate its knowledge more cleanly.
- Exiting the vision, the party are surrounded by scientists eager to learn what they've learned - Ninth Truth, East Wind and others are all present. They have a number of helpful ideas to propose, but the best comes from a resident of the *Firebrand* who suggests the use of a holodeck - after all, hasn't a holodeck been used to extract memories from a ship heart relic at least once before? That rumour had certainly gone round the *Firebrand*...
  - There is a small delay to discuss just how extremely banned from the *Firebrand*'s holodeck Budding Leaf is, and whether they can be disguised. Or think of another holodeck in system. Eventually it's just decided that Delicate Harmony should take the lead in any discussions with the *Firebrand* holodeck's management...
  - They head to the *Firebrand*, where luckily the holodeck sysadmins have gone for lunch, and a bored secretary waves them through so long as they sign a form promising not to

do anything too stupid (with examples). They do this, and Delicate Harmony tinkers a wired connection between himself, the gem and the holodeck to aid the communication and connection between all of them.

- Inside the holodeck, they are first greeted by a training simulation which walks them through a variety of scenarios to teach them correct behaviour. Multiple of these seem to have been generated by Budding Leaf's previous adventures in this holodeck, including:
  - Whether to insert data drives picked up from hackers into this holodeck
  - How to behave if you meet a simulated person who you know died a horrible traumatic death in reality
- Then, however, they enter the 'real' simulation.
  - At first, they see two figures who do not seem to notice them: a pentapodal person talking to what is recognisably a ship heart. They are exchanging reassurances that the plan is ready to go, that the 'others' are all ready too in their locations, and confirming consent that they both want to go through with it.
  - On agreeing this, the party receive a call from a ship heart, and the scene snaps into a holodeck-approximation of a ship heart psychic encounter. The pentapodal figure is now aware of the party, and deeply surprised by their presence.
  - However, he accepts the party's assurance that they are there to help, and quickly gives them instruction on what they need to do:
    - The other being here is a representation of the ship heart, its power and its personality;
    - They need to help push the power of the ship heart into the permanent shape the ship heart has set for it, while keeping the personality back
    - The logic of this is explained as: the personality knows what's impossible, but without the personality, the power of the ship heart may be capable of doing things that appear impossible
    - After Delicate Harmony has got over absorbing this revelation, the fight begins in earnest. The 'personality' of the ship heart seems to want to join the party and their new pentapodal friend, but it has no weapons nor abilities. The 'power' of the ship heart doesn't mind being pushed around by the players, but doesn't want to let the personality go - at any opportunity, they try to call it back to it.
    - The party are able to slowly shepherd the 'power' towards a pentagonal-shaped socket in the opposite wall, which appears intended for this purpose. It is a tough fight to get there, and the pentapodal hero goes down once but is healed by Budding Leaf. Delicate Harmony asks permission to Harvest the pentapodal hero, which he is confused by but agrees to - this gives Delicate Harmony the ability to forcibly pull the 'power' away from the 'personality' and into the 'socket,' while standing in the socket himself.
    - As the power is forced into the socket, the scene fades out, leaving a vision of the pentapodal hero curled on the floor of the original room, now containing a recognisable Gate and some rockwork creatures. He appears to once again be unaware of the party, but is sobbing lightly (yet happily?) and holds a blue gem in his hand which he did not have before. When Delicate Harmony attempts to interfere with this gem, he clutches it tightly like it is the only thing he is currently focused on.
    - A blaring alarm starts to go off, indicating that someone outside the holodeck is about to pull them out. The party eventually follow their training, stop interacting with the scene and wait for extraction
- The *Firebrand* holodeck sysadmins have *questions*. As does a ship's mystic, running in with the news that Firebrand (the ship heart) felt *something* weird and what was that, oh and also now it's paying attention what's that it can sense in Budding Leaf's pocket?

- The party quickly extract themselves from the Holodeck and depart the *Firebrand*.

## Aftermath

- Delicate Harmony sends out a system-wide message covering a lot of what has been found out, particularly asking for those who are interested in Gate creation and options to come for a discussion. The information shared with the hackers by Stellar Glory regarding Aspexx's procedure to make Gates has also made its way around the system by now. This results in a large group discussion between Delicate Harmony, Gathering Flow, Budding Leaf, Iron Cold and Faulty Banks, plus a few others who drop by, about the pros/cons of the various options for recreating gates. In summary:
  - It is agreed that Aspexx leading unknowing people to their death is bad, although maybe if all the startouched involved were volunteers it might be ethically okay?
    - During this discussion, Gathering Flow corroborates the information Stellar Glory sent out
  - The fact that Aspexx's IP and brand reputation damage has now been spread all around the system causes some concern of the 'would they rather just wipe out the whole system before letting us reconnect to the rest of the galaxy' variety, too.
  - However, there are also some significant drawbacks perceived with the 'Pentagonal method' of gate creation, too:
    - This method requires multiple ship hearts which potentially already have to have some kind of strong connection with each other, and which fully consent to the process - certainly the five which formed the Pentagonal Gates appear to have had a long association while their respective Startouched worked together. The only known similar connection in system is between Endeavour and Hive IV, and no-one is sure a) that they would even care or b) whether Hive IV would be a suitable shipheart for this kind of thing.
    - There is also no known way with this method to essentially 'teleport' the other end of a Gate where you want it: the Gates will come into being in the positions the shiphearts are at the point the process happens. This means no connection back to the rest of the galaxy for a long time, although the captain of the *Unquiet Journey* does volunteer their services in that matter - apparently the peripatetic Fleet 19 ship was already having internal discussions about whether they wanted to move on from the Keter System by striking out into the black on their own anyway. They reckon it would take 50-60 years to get back to the Fjenix system while towing whatever a new Gate ends up looking like - a long time, but not an impossibility.
    - There is also some discussion of 'is it even worth reconnecting? The Keter System is self-sufficient now', but most people are interested in exploring all Gate options fully before making that decision.
- After these discussions, Delicate Harmony takes charge of sending out two system-wide messages:
  - One to all the shiphearts in system, asking if any would be willing to consider doing something like this
  - One to all the startouched in system, confirming the information the hackers leaked and asking if any startouched would be willing to step forward anyway to sacrifice themselves for the sake of re-creating a gate

## Consequences

- The system-wide messages start to receive interest, not only from individuals but also from planetary and galactic governments. A day or two later, the Galactic Cooperation send out a system-wide message asking for all polities, corporations, powerful individuals and ship heart representatives who have interest in these matters to gather aboard the *Firebrand* for a discussion.

## All Characters

- +3 Clout with one of either Zeitgeist or Botanists, for new scientific knowledge gained.
- Gain access to all the levels of the [Star Hearted](#) tree which they meet the criteria for.

## Delicate Harmony

- MkII on the wiring-yourself-and-a-circlet-into-a-holodeck gets you, essentially, a circlet with electrodes. This enables a deeper ability to communicate directly with the diadem gem itself - it can now talk to you fairly easily and even project occasional static images for you to look at while you are wearing it. If you connected yourself and it back into a holodeck you would expect get the same level of simulation veracity you achieved on the *Firebrand*.
- Synthesis with the holodeck-enabled Harvest of the pentapodal high-powered startouched gives you a strong innate sense of how he saw ship hearts and their capabilities. You feel that, together with your Total Perspective Vortex, this will let you clearly evaluate the options for recreating any part of what the Pentagonal civilisation powered through ship hearts. This might let you understand, for example, what kind of connection might exist between two or more ship hearts, and what you think could be achieved with that connection. Side effect 1: you are now absolutely certain that the 'Pentagonal method' cannot split a single ship heart (or send half a ship heart to another system) in the way Aspexx plan to - it relies on the connections between two or more ship hearts, and it does not extract any power from the ship heart, merely forces all the power into a new form. Side effect 2: You feel the part of the Pentapodal person you synthesized insisting that its name was/is Alytoth, and now you feel you might involuntarily respond if that name were called.

## Budding Leaf

- You are besieged with many scientists begging you to write up more papers soon.

[mission](#), [delicate harmony](#), [budding leaf](#)

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