

ORDER AMONG THE STARS

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 5TH TO 6TH LEVEL

PATHFINDER
COMPATIBLE



**AVERN
ALES**

ORDER AMONG THE STARS

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ORDER AMONG THE STARS IS A Pathfinder second edition adventure for four to five characters of 5th to 6th level, optimized for a party of four 5th-level characters. A renowned observatory in the city of Bharzul has been infiltrated

by a rogue gearling from the Regulated Realm, which has seized control of the observatory's clockwork stewards and locked down the facility. The astronomer trapped within is unable to counter the methodical invader and its reprogrammed guardians. Can the party intervene to prevent the enforcement of absolute order? This adventure is set in the city of Bharzul in the Cartosia campaign setting, but the names of people, places, and locations can be changed to adapt the adventure to any high-fantasy urban environment with an association with clockwork or mechanical elements.

BACKGROUND

Nestled at the base of the lofty crags of the Sundered Peak Mountains, the Stonecipher Observatory has stood for centuries as a bastion of astronomical study. Its intricate clockwork mechanisms and precise celestial instruments, crafted by the skilled hands of its dwarven architects, have mapped the heavens with a precision unmatched in Cartosia. At the heart of the observatory lies the Astral Mechanism, an astrolabe of unimaginable complexity designed to unlock the cosmic patterns of the stars.

On a clear night, guided by the celestial knowledge stored in generations of star charts, the astronomer Cri attempted to align the Astral Mechanism with the subject of her latest research; an enigmatic, distant constellation. In an unintended flash of mechanical resonance, the Mechanism tuned into the precise frequency of the Regulated Realm, the plane of absolute order and machinery. For a matter of moments, a transient gate was opened, bridging the Material Plane to the realm of perfect cogwork.

Unknown to Cri, a rogue entity from the Regulated Realm had been waiting for such an occurrence. This entity, Tetras, belonged to a species of mechanical beings known as gearlings. Tetras was an anomaly, having developed an unusual sense of curiosity that set it apart from the other gearlings, who were defined by their unyielding adherence to order. This curiosity led Tetras on a path of independence and eventually to the Material Plane through the temporary gate. A matter of moments was all Tetras needed.

Driven by a desire to extend the perfect order of the Regulated Realm to the Material Plane, Tetras seized control of the observatory's clockwork guards, reprogramming them into methodical enforcers of its new regime. Cri was

forced to retreat, locking herself in the relative safety of her quarters.

Now, Tetras orchestrates its grand design from within the heart of the observatory, using the Astral Mechanism to calculate a celestial alignment that would permanently open a gate to the Regulated Realm. If successful, the mechanical harmonics of the Realm would cascade across the Material Plane, bringing forth an era of ruthless order and predictability. The observatory's keeper is trapped and its purpose subverted. The astral clocks tick away relentlessly, marking the seconds until Tetras brings its chilling order to the world. Can the party intervene successfully in time?

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are numerous reasons the party may be called to address the situation at the Stonecipher Observatory. A few of these reasons are outlined below:

Silent Scholars. The Stonecipher Observatory, known for its regular dispatches of celestial reports and knowledge, has fallen ominously silent. A friend in the local scholar's guild requests the party to check on their colleague Cri at the observatory, and offers to compensate them for their trouble.

Familiar Heroes. The party has earned the respect of the Academia Arcana, a prestigious institution dedicated to magical and scientific study. The Academy, having received a distress signal from the observatory, calls upon the party to investigate. The promise of rare arcane knowledge or a generous purse of gold (about 400 gp) awaits upon their success.

The Broken Clock. The Grand Clock of Bharzul, which was synchronized to the celestial time kept by the Stonecipher Observatory, has suddenly gone haywire. The city's engineers are baffled, and communications efforts to the observatory have been ignored. The party is asked to investigate.

CRI THE ASTRONOMER

Behind the locked door of her quarters within the facility is Cri, an accomplished astronomer and master of the observatory. Sometimes, Cri is accompanied by an assistant, but she was alone at the time of Tetras' arrival. She is identifiable by her auburn hair that constantly escapes its bun, adorned haphazardly with an eclectic collection of stargazing tools. Sporting thick, round glasses that magnify her emerald eyes, Cri is known for her spontaneous, sometimes chaotic approach to her work. She has a quick laugh, a warmer smile, and a love for sharing her celestial knowledge. Her language is rich with astronomical metaphors and she tends to punctuate her sentences with

an enthusiastic point of her finger, as if she is plotting constellations in the air. Cri can explain the following to the characters:

- During her latest research, she attempted to align the facility's Astral Mechanism with a distant constellation.
- The Mechanism must have aligned with a previously unknown frequency, as a strange creature stepped through an appearing portal.
- The creature introduced itself as Tetras, a gearling from the Regulated Realm, and explained that it was going to use the Astral Mechanism to open a permanent alignment between the two planes.
- When Cri expressed fear and disagreement with Tetras, it turned the facility's clockwork stewards against her. She tried to flee, but Tetras somehow locked the exterior doors. She instead retreated here, to her quarters, where the clockwork stewards for whatever reason did not attempt to continue following her.

Cri is eager to accompany the party throughout the observatory, but is a non-combatant who will do her best to stay safe from danger. She uses **astronomer** statistics (*Pathfinder GameMastery Guide*).

GENERAL FEATURES

The Stonecipher Observatory is a two-story building of white stone and polished metal. On clear nights, the cyclopean lens of its telescope can be seen peeking through the plates of the observatory's grand brass dome. A stately balcony extends from the west side of its facade, providing views of the surrounding city. In the aftermath of Tetras' arrival, the observatory has plunged into a discombobulated state as the forces of order and chaos clash within it.

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The observatory is constructed primarily from marble and is accented with gleaming metal fixtures. Ceilings vary in height but average at about 15 feet, while the walls are adorned with constellations and celestial symbols. The floors are of the same white stone, smooth and polished to a shine.

Doors. Doors within the observatory are heavy iron, designed to withstand both the test of time and potential invaders. They bear the emblem of a gear intertwined with a star and are built with a balance of artistry and security. These

emblems glow softly with purple light, a byproduct of the observatory's generator which the doors are powered by, which facilitates a system of arcano-steam power generation unique to the observatory. The doors are powered by the observatory's generator and their emblems glow softly with purple light, a byproduct of the observatory's unique system of arcano-steam power generation. When opened, they slide into the walls rather than inward or outward. Unless stated otherwise, doors throughout the observatory are locked and can be opened with the master key carried by Cri or three successful DC 22 Thievery checks. This check can be repeated, but a critical failure triggers the door's arcane defense mechanism.

FORCE TRAP HAZARD 4

Magical, Trap

Stealth DC 25 (expert) to notice magical runes inside the lock

Description The lock magically resists tampering

Disable DC 22 Thievery (trained) to drain the runes harmlessly

AC 20, **Fort** +14, **Ref** +8

Hardness 12, **HP** 50 (BT 25); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

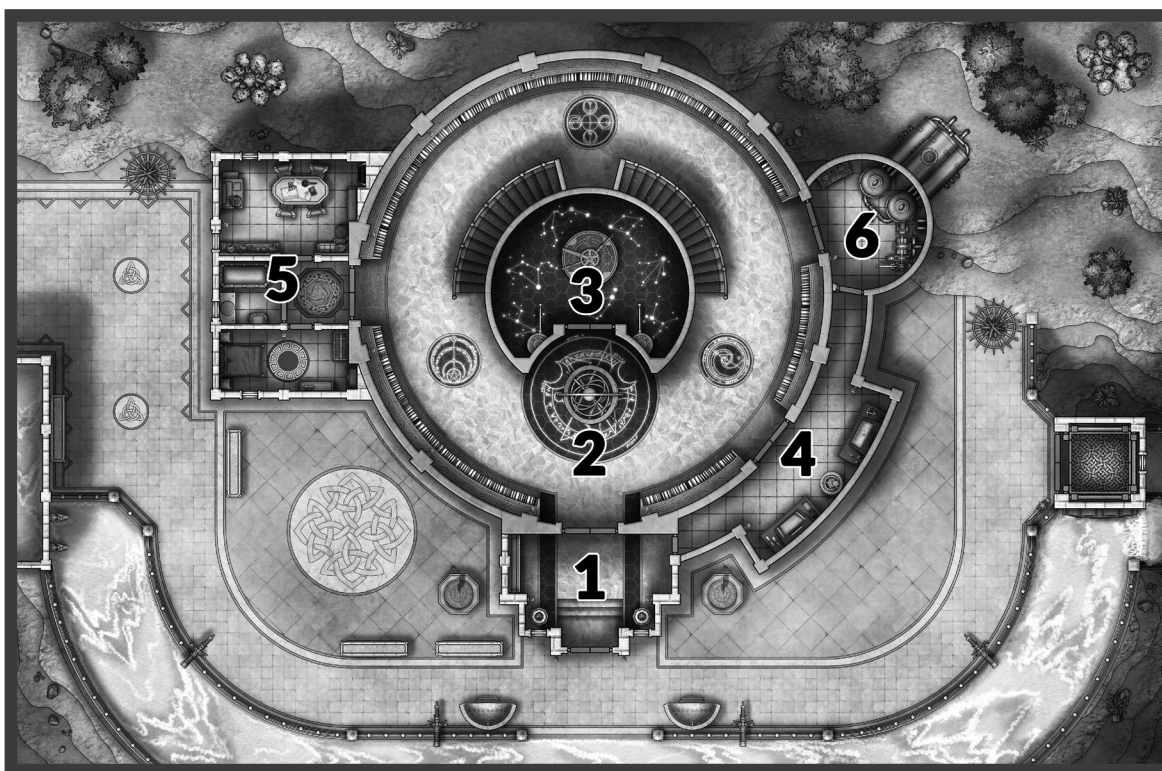
Force Blast ⚡ (evocation, force); **Trigger** A living creature enters Area 12. **Effect** A creature critically fails a Thievery check to Open the Lock or an Athletics check to Force Open any door in the observatory. Effect A blast of magical force deals 5d6 force damage to creatures in a 5-foot burst centered on the triggering lock (DC 21 basic Reflex save).

Reset The trap draws power from the movement of the heavens to reactivate at dawn, dusk, noon, or midnight (whichever comes next).

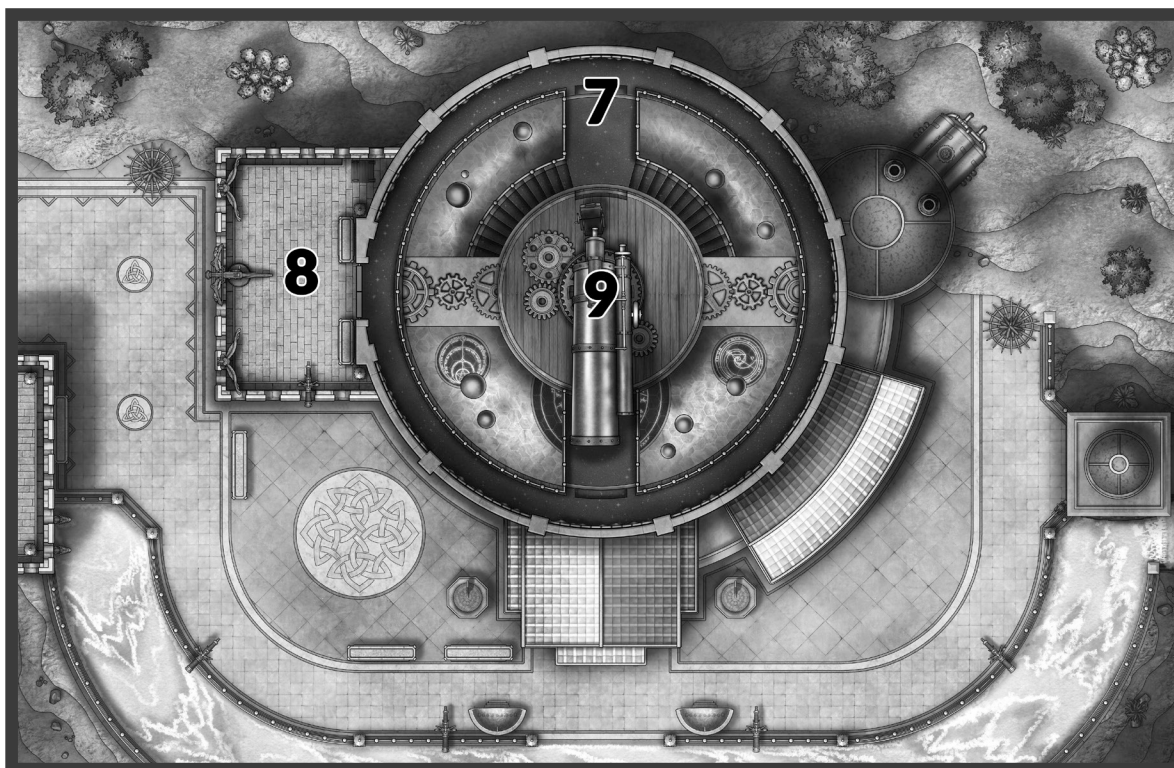
Light. Everburning torches mounted in brass sconces throughout the observatory ensure that it is well-lit at all hours.

Regulation Fields. The temporary alignment with the Regulated Realm has caused pockets of regulation fields to appear throughout the observatory. These fields interrupt the free-flowing nature of the Material Plane and impose a deterministic order on actions taken within them. While inside the observatory, the party will notice a subtle shift in their perception. The air seems unusually still, almost stagnant, with dust particles floating in geometric patterns. The usual background noise of the world seems muted,

OBSERVATORY FIRST LEVEL



OBSERVATORY SECOND LEVEL



replaced by a low, harmonious hum that resonates with steady rhythm. Shadows cast in these fields appear sharper, and the movement of light more predictable.

Creatures within these fields might experience a strange sensation, like persistent déjà vu, or as though they could predict their own actions moments before they occur. Their movements might feel more mechanical, their thoughts more structured. A sword swing follows a perfect arc, a spell is cast with an uncanny precision, and even a random thought seems to follow a distinct pattern. This effect can be disorienting, especially for those who rely on instinct and spontaneity. However, for those with keen minds, these fields provide an opportunity to perceive and manipulate the very fabric of causality. When a creature first enters the observatory, they must make a DC 20 Recall Knowledge check to perceive and predict the imposed order using Arcana, Occultism, Religion, or Regulated Realms Lore. The outcome of this check affects their subsequent checks (including attacks and saving throws, but not flat checks) while within the observatory in the following ways:

Critical Success The creature successfully discerns the patterns imposed by the Regulated Realm, allowing them to use this to their advantage. They can roll twice and take the higher roll for their first check each round. This is a fortune effect reflecting the character's keen understanding of the deterministic nature of the field and their ability to manipulate it.

Success The creature perceives some of the deterministic laws at work. They can roll each check as usual. This reflects a basic understanding of the regulating effects, enough to act normally within it.

Failure The deterministic order overwhelms the character. They must roll twice and take the lower result for their first check each round. This is a misfortune effect reflecting the character being bound and disoriented by the overwhelming forces of order within the observatory.

A creature may repeat this roll every time they enter a new area of the observatory in continued attempts to improve their understanding of the regulation fields. A creature cannot be subject to the effects of a lower understanding level than one they have previously achieved. Every subsequent failure, however, causes the character to take 2d8 nonlethal mental damage. For example, a creature who initially rolls a 21 and achieves a basic understanding of the fields and which then rolls a 13 in an attempt to master their understanding takes mental damage but maintains their current understanding level.

Regulatory Pressure. The influence of the Regulated Realm increases by the minute, and the temporary instability caused by the realm of law spilling into the chaos of the Material Plane can wreak havoc on the minds of creatures. For each hour a non-construct, non-aeon creature spends in the unstable environment of the observatory, they must succeed at a DC 18 Will saving throw or take 2d8 nonlethal mental

damage as their senses and train of thought are assaulted by the warping of reality.

The following areas are keyed to the provided map of the Stonecipher Observatory:

I. ENTRANCE HALL

Bright blue flames burn in two braziers mounted on marble pedestals in this entrance chamber. A pair of double doors exit to the north, and a smaller door exits to the east.

The braziers, like the torches throughout the observatory, are everburning. Expected guests to the observatory would usually be greeted in this chamber by Cri.

2. CELESTIAL RECORDS

This circular chamber stretches out before you, ringed by towering bookshelves that hug the curvature of the room. Each shelf is densely packed with dusty tomes, scroll cases, and astronomical charts, their spines neatly aligned. The floor is of smooth white stone, polished to a sheen and reflecting the faint light that fills the space. In the center of the room is an intricate brass orrery, a miniature replica of the cosmos, suspended in ceaseless, silent rotation. Beyond the orrery is a set of double doors, their intricate design suggesting particular significance. Other sets of doors exit to the east and west.

Much of the pages in this room are dedicated to the recording of celestial movements, which have been kept for the entirety of Bharzul's history. A casting of *read aura* or similar magic reveals an aura of enchantment magic emanating from the orrery, the many rings of which rotate independently to model celestial movements.

Moderate Encounter: Clockwork Stewards. A number of clockwork stewards assist Cri at the observatory. These humanoid-shaped constructs of gears, cogs, and levers carry out tasks such as cleaning, record maintenance, document retrieval, and, should it ever be required, defense. Where a face would be on a living creature, a panel of crystal provides a window to the inner workings, illuminating the darkness with a soft, ghostly glow. An intrusion by a being such as Tetras, however, is not something the clockwork stewards are able to defend against. In fact, their mechanical nature makes them vulnerable to interference from the Regulated Realm, and they have turned against Cri as they obey the orders of their new master. A steward (use animated armor statistics from the *Pathfinder Bestiary*) and a senior steward (use giant animated statue statistics except Large size) patrol this chamber and immediately attack any intruders. The stewards fight until they are destroyed, but do not pursue any creatures that maintain a break in line of sight for at least four rounds. If the party flees into another room of the observatory and closes the doors behind them, the stewards will not pursue.

Adjusting the Encounter. If the party is 6th-level or has five PCs, there is also an **animated statue** (*Pathfinder Bestiary*) defending the stewards (add two if both are true).

Treasure: Master Key. A character who Investigates the body of the master steward and makes a successful DC 18 Crafting check or DC 20 Arcana check notices an array of tools embedded into its right arm. The steward can extend and manipulate these tools to suit the task it has been assigned. One of these tools is a master key that unlocks every door throughout the observatory that retains power. This key can be removed from the body without damage with a successful DC 18 Crafting check or two DC 20 Thievery checks to Disable a Device. A failed check removes the key but gives it the broken condition and prevents it being used until it is Repaired (DC 20); a critical failure leaves it embedded and gives it the broken condition, or destroys it if it was already broken.

Finding the Manual Override Instructions. Somewhere in this room, a slip of aged parchment scribbled with generator override instructions has been tucked into a forgotten maintenance and operation manual for the observatory. If the party has noticed the unpowered doors to the Astral Mechanism and has spoken to Cri (see 'Cri the Astronomer' section) and decided to Search this room for the manual override instructions, a successful DC 25 check is required to locate the instructions. Characters can also find it by Investigating using Astronomy Lore (DC 23). Each check represents 15 minutes of searching through shelves and documents. This check can be repeated, but time is of the essence—as the regulatory pressure (see 'General Features' section) within the observatory is continuous.

3. ASTRAL MECHANISM

Not only are the doors to this chamber locked, but Tetras has used its regulating presence to deliberately interfere with the facility's generator, diverting power away from the doors so that it is less likely to be interrupted in its efforts to create a permanent alignment. Opening the doors will require restoring the generator to its proper functioning. A character who makes a successful DC 17 Crafting check or DC 19 Arcana check to Investigate can recognize that these doors, unlike the others throughout the facility, have lost access to power.

Cri knows that manually overriding the generator is likely to restore power to the doors. If Cri is accompanying the party, she recalls that tucked away in the Celestial Records room is a document detailing the manual override instructions for the generator, which include manipulating the control panel's buttons and levers in long and complex order. Cri knows that this document exists, but doesn't know exactly where (see 'Finding the Manual Override Instructions,' page 5).

When the party enters the room, read aloud:

A hemispherical room sprawls before you. Its walls, floor, and curved ceiling are coated in meticulously detailed star charts, displaying a myriad of shimmering celestial bodies. Dominating the center of this cosmic panorama is a grand astrolabe. The intricate contraption stands proudly, its brass arcs and dials reflecting the stellar patterns surrounding it. A hulking figure of clockwork composition stands before the astrolabe, guiding its mechanisms with slow, gradual movements.

The clockwork figure guiding the astrolabe is Tetras (see page 8). At over seven feet tall, its form is entirely composed of precisely interlocking gears, pistons, and plates of gleaming, cold iron, each piece moving in perfect synchrony with the others. In contrast to its mechanical nature, Tetras' optics flicker with an intelligence and determination that's unsettlingly human, producing a vivid, blue luminescence that bathes the surroundings in an ethereal light. It normally communicates in Utopian in an oddly melodic series of whirrs, clicks, and low hums, but can articulate Common or any other language fluently through a built-in voice modulator. Tetras does not immediately engage with the party unless attacked, it takes its time before turning away from the astrolabe to address them. Tetras will take the same approach it took with Cri, by offering to explain its motives and giving the party the opportunity to commit themselves to not getting in its way.

Non-violently convincing Tetras that its motive is illogical and to stand down and return to its home plane is possible, but difficult. Doing so requires using well-reasoned arguments in an influence encounter (see the Subsystems chapter of the *GameMastery Guide*).

Severe Influence or Combat Encounter. Tetras gives the party five 5-minute influence rounds (25 minutes) to see reason before he attacks to drive them off.

Adjusting the Encounter. If the party is 6th-level, increase the Discovery and Influence DCs each by 1 and there is an **animated statue** (*Pathfinder Bestiary*). The final Influence threshold is equal to the number of player characters if there are more than 4. If there are 5 player characters, there is a steward defending Tetras (use **animated armor** statistics from the *Pathfinder Bestiary*).

Once Tetras has been destroyed or convinced to return to its home plane, the effect it was having over the observatory ceases immediately.

4. CHART DISPLAY

This hallway expands into a narrow alcove. Two elegant desks rest within this space, their surfaces meticulously organized, showcasing a collection of celestial charts that map out distant constellations and far-flung galaxies. Scattered among the stellar blueprints is a medley of unusual tools including telescopic lenses, gleaming sextants, and intricate compasses.

Charts and tools are put on display in this corridor for public viewing, which occurs during designated visiting times. Clockwork agents present in this corridor keep watch to ensure none of the material is pilfered or disturbed.

Trivial Skill Encounter. The two clockwork spies (*Pathfinder Bestiary 3*) hiding behind the desks do not engage in combat, but if the party leaves them alone and doesn't Avoid their Notice, one goes to notify Tetras of their presence.

5. CRI'S QUARTERS

This living area is divided into three rooms; one for meeting and meal preparation, one for sanitation, and another for sleeping.

Behind the locked door that leads to the bedroom is Cri (see 'Astronomer Cri' section).

6. GENERATOR

This space is dominated by a massive contraption, its purpose unmistakable: a generator. Two sizable brass vats are connected by a baffling tangle of gears, levers, and pipes. To one side, a control panel bristles with a variety of buttons, switches, and levers, each marked with a runic symbol or numbered sequence. Around the room, metallic conduits trace paths along the walls and floor, humming with barely restrained energy. The air smells of ozone, and the low thrum of contained power fills the room.

The Astral Mechanism and telescope require large amounts of power to function appropriately. The observatory's arcano-steam power generation system is unique in Bharzul; the work of one of the city's founding engineers. Because the power generation method proved exceedingly difficult to replicate without the engineer's specific experience, it never developed past the prototype that powers the observatory.

Power can be routed to the doors of the Astral Mechanism room in one of a few ways:

Manual Override. If the party has found the manual override instructions (see 'Finding the Manual Override Instructions' section, page 5), then following those instructions to manually override the generator and restore its default functioning is simple.

Divert Power Mechanically. A character who Investigates the control panel and makes a successful DC 22 Arcana or Crafting check can interpret its mess of symbols, buttons, and levers to correctly identify which sequence of commands to enter in order to restore power to the Astral Mechanism doors. This check can be attempted no more than twice, as two failures to enter the correct sequence will cause the control panel to lock out any further input for a 24-hour period to prevent further tampering.

Divert Power Manually. A character who Searches the conduits within the room and makes a successful DC

18 Perception check can notice that the conduits can be physically redirected in a precise manner to reroute power to the Astral Mechanism doors. The conduits, weighty and rigid, can be redirected with a successful DC 23 Athletics check to Force Open or a DC 23 Thievery check to Disable a Device. These checks can be repeated until success, but each failure triggers a short circuit, sending a blast of arcano-steam throughout the room. Each creature within the room during a short circuit takes 2d8 fire damage (DC 19 basic Reflex save).

7. GALLERY

This narrow gallery of purple carpet runs along the perimeter of the observatory's second level, overlooking the celestial records hall below.

8. BALCONY

Two life-sized brass statues of eagles are perched atop the battlements of this balcony, their wings frozen in mid-flight. Between them, a ballista is mounted against the wall, its formidable presence standing as a silent guardian over the observatory and the surrounding city. A humanoid-shaped construct of gears, cogs, and levers stands near the doors to the observatory.

Many buildings in Bharzul double as strategic defence locations in case of assault against the city, and the observatory is no exception, though the populace is lucky that the ballista perched atop its balcony has never needed to be fired. In the northeast corner of the balcony is a trapdoor which connects to Cri's quarters below; a defensive weakness of the building. The trapdoor, though locked, is not powered by the facility's generator and can be opened much easier than the rest of the observatory's doors. It can be opened with a successful DC 16 Thievery check or a DC 21 Athletics check to Force Open.

Moderate Encounter: Clockwork Steward. The construct standing silently on the balcony is a senior steward (use giant animated statue statistics except Large size) that surges to life and attacks any creatures present on the

balcony for longer than a single round. It fights until it is destroyed, or until the balcony is clear of threats.

9. TELESCOPE

A raised platform claims the center of the gallery. Commanding the platform is the observatory's centerpiece: a massive telescope of brushed metal and gleaming glass. Its robust cylinder structure stretches upwards, while myriad smaller gears and devices cluster around its base, allowing meticulous adjustments for celestial exploration.

The engineers throughout the city of Bharzul claim apocryphally that the Stonechiper telescope is the most accurate that has ever existed. Cri spends much of her time within the observatory here, gazing up at the heavens.

AFTERMATH

If the party was successful in destroying Tetras or convincing it to return to its home plane, the threat of incursion from the Regulated Realm is extinguished and the observatory and city of Bharzhul are safe. Cri thanks the party profusely, and offers to petition to the city authorities for the party's recognition and a 400 gp reward in exchange for their service to the populace. She is also sure to make note of the alignment which opened the temporary rift to the Regulated Realm, and sets to work on a series of calculations to determine if there may be other alignments that might pose similar problems in future.

If, instead, the party was unsuccessful in dealing with Tetras, it is only a matter of days before a semi-permanent portal is established between the Material Plane and the Regulated Realm. Gearlings and other agents of order begin to pour through and demand intervention, with the fate of the city of Bharzhul hanging in the balance.

TETRAS CREATURE 8

Unique, LN, Large, Aeon, Inevitable, Monitor

Variant weak zelekhut (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2*)

Perception +16, darkvision

Languages Celestial, Infernal, Utopian; truespeech

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +17, Regulated Realm Lore +14, Diplomacy +14, Survival +16 (+19 when tracking)

Str -5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

Truespeech Tetras can speak with and understand any creature with a language.

Discovery DC 16 Regulated Realm Lore, DC 21 Perception, DC 24 Religion, DC 26 Crafting

Influence Skills DC 19 Astronomy Lore, DC 21 Crafting (offering to repair flaws in the machine), DC 23 Diplomacy, DC 27 Deception, DC 29 Performance

Influence 2: Tetras realizes that not everything might be as it thinks. It becomes flat-footed, takes a -2 circumstance penalty to initiative checks, and remains flat-footed even if combat begins until the start of its second turn.

Influence 4: Tetras realizes its plan doesn't make sense, and it immediately prepares to return itself to its home plane.

Resistances The creature can't fathom there being anything harmful about the influence of its home plane. Any argument from the immediate nearby harm alone increases the check's DC by 2.

Weaknesses Tetras is leery of the influence of the mortal world on its own workings, and the first hint that its own thoughts have been made disorderly by the disorder of the world it has been thrust into automatically grants 1 Influence Point.

AC 26; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +18, **Will** +16; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 160; **Immunities** death effects, disease, emotion, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** acid 10, chaotic 10

Attack of Opportunity ⤴

Speed 40 feet

Melee ✦ fist +19 (lawful, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+5 bludgeoning plus 2d4 electricity and 1d6 lawful plus Knockdown

Divine Innate Spells DC 26; **5th** locate; **4th** clairaudience, clairvoyance, dimensional anchor, dispel magic, paralyze (×2);

Constant (6th) true seeing

Rituals DC 30; **3rd** geas

Double Attack ✦✦ Tetras makes two Strikes, each targeting a different creature. Each Strike counts toward its multiple attack penalty, but the penalty doesn't increase until after it has made both attacks. If Tetras subsequently uses the Knockdown action, it affects all creatures it hit with Double Attack.

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