



## MYSTERY IN THE MINES

THE AETHER CORE

The characters wake from a long rest, having all received the same vision. The broken phrase, “My worthy chosen... my chosen worthy?” clings in the back of their minds, along with images of misty caverns, doors, and a rickety, old service elevator that goes down into the center of *Chrysalea*. When inquiring where the mysterious location might be, the characters are told of a service elevator that leads to the Aether Core or Taos’ Station, a mine used to extract *aether* closest to its source. **Taos Openda** (see appendix A) has the elevator monitored closely, is aware of their arrival, and allows them to enter at the behest of **Emphor** (see appendix A), whom Taos can hear using his *Pathin*. He shows them the basic mining operation and his construct, **First** (see appendix A), provides general details and safety tips. The mines are a place that changes deliberately and misleads, full of unseen traps

and terrors. Taos does not inform the characters of these obstacles so as not to interfere with Emphor’s objective of determining whether the party is worthy of carrying out his plan to devour *Chrysalea* during the ignition of the *Peerless Arc*.

While in the mines, the characters might pick up scraps of lost treasure, encounter unusual creatures, or be tricked by illusions. Once the characters realize the truth of the mines, that there is no danger save the danger created by their own choices, a path becomes clear, and the characters discover a door. When in the door’s proximity, the characters hear the voice from their vision (Emphor) and receive crucial information about a way out of *Chrysalea*. Now meeting the characters after proving themselves to Emphor, Taos escorts them back to the service elevator, sending them back to *Chrysalea Prime*.





*Will the characters prove themselves worthy to Emphor, or will they become embroiled in strife with the creatures and illusions of the Aether Mines?*

#### ABSTRACT

**A Shared Vision.** The characters receive a vision about the mines and go down to Taos' Station to investigate.

**Arrival at Taos' Station.** Once in the mines, the party meets Taos, who is expecting them, and learns about the history of the mines, meets his constructs, and is set loose to explore.

**Into the Unknown.** The party works their way through traps, creatures, and illusions to navigate through the mines and discover the exit, the door.

**More Questions than Answers.** The characters learn more about the purpose of their vision and are deemed worthy by Emphor to carry out his plan. Taos sends the party back to Chrysalea Prime.

## A SHARED VISION

### BACKGROUND

From the moment **Taos Openda** (see appendix A) took on the mines, he has heard the voice of Emphor. Aether mining was a task too difficult and too plebeian for most seeking elevation and status. The few willing departed once rumors of the station master's apparent "madness" began to spread. Abandoned with a great task, Taos created his construct **First** (see appendix A) for companionship and to help ground him in reality. Through First, he came to realize that the voice was real, and he could only hear it through his Pathin. After many years, Taos realizes that aether is sentient, though he does not understand Emphor's true nature. To harvest a living thing surely means that it will die, and either way death is inevitable. Taos posits that the destruction of Chrysalea is certain whether the Peerless Arc is ignited or not. He believes his only purpose is to continue to play the part fate has dictated. When the characters arrive, Taos believes they are a sign that the end of times is near. He is aware that the door in the mines leads to a way out, but the path takes you to the Aether Core, and he has never been able to open it. In order to get through the door, the characters' motives must be true: to help Emphor devour the world, including Chrysalea and themselves.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

While all of the characters are asleep, read or paraphrase the following:

In the distance, an old, rickety service elevator can be seen, slowly descending downward and humming with energy. The elevator car hovers above a twisting network of caverns ominously lit by a familiar glowing blue radiance. A cold, omnipotent voice whispers into the dark, "My worthy chosen... my chosen worthy?"

The broken phrase echoes repeatedly as a blanket of gold smoke obscures the visions and shifts to a new setting. You're in the caverns, overwhelmed and confused as you frantically try to find a way out.

Around a jagged rocky bend, a towering set of ornate double doors recessed into a roughly hewn stone wall comes into view. The intricate stonework appears otherworldly as the opening pulsates with aetheric energy. The voice intensifies, now repeating a single word: "Worthy... worthy! ... worthy? ... worthy." Then, suddenly, it silences as you abruptly awake in a cold sweat.

The characters wake up, having experienced this vision simultaneously, which may prompt them to visit the mines in one of the following ways.

- Curiosity may lead the characters to ask around so they can explore the region themselves.
- Should they speak of these caverns or the elevator leading to them, many would assume they are speaking of Taos' Station, and those reasonably tied in with the city can point the characters towards the park where the elevator is believed to be.
- On subsequent nights, the characters experience similar visions each time they sleep. These visions become progressively broader, showing Taos' Station, the elevator, and even the park where the elevator is hidden. These visions keep occurring until the characters investigate further.
- The players may be visited by someone they know well and are friendly with (an NPC such as Queen Lillius or Glider Primarine). With the reputation they have acquired, the NPC will make a passing (and coincidental) comment about whether the players have had reason to explore the Aether Core yet, and if not, Taos would likely be very interested in meeting with them.
- A friendly faction leader may send the characters on a mission to perform reconnaissance around the Aether Core as they believe the characters run little risk of being kicked out.

To sweeten the deal, individual NPCs can pay each character 50-100 gp. The entrance to the mines is a service elevator located in a nameless park at the center of Chrysalea Prime.

In this park, the service elevator is disguised as the centerpiece of a raised flower bed. The park was built by Queen Lillius to camouflage the logistics of the mining operation. If the characters are unaware of the elevator's exact location, they notice it with a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check.

When the characters enter the elevator, read or paraphrase the following:

The elevator makes unsettling grinding and churning noises as it descends, seeming like a crucial bolt or pulley might break at any moment.



## FEATURES:

- The elevator is 7 feet tall and made of petrified wood. It has a single lever inside, without any light source, and its mechanical parts are rusted green.
- Pulling the lever down causes the elevator to lower into the hidden shaft. Once the elevator is fully lowered, a stone door closes over the exposed opening as a safety feature. It retracts when the elevator raises.

Taos has built a trap into the elevator so the pulley stops halfway down if activated from the surface. He can then manually raise or lower it at his discretion. To notice the elevator trap, the characters must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. To disable the trap, the characters must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity or Intelligence check using either thieves' tools or tinker's tools.

On a success, the characters are lowered all the way down. On a failure, the elevator plunges 30 feet, and upon crashing, each character inside takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. If the characters do nothing, the trap activates, and then after a tense minute, Taos lowers them the rest of the way down.

### TAOS OPENDA

CHRYSALEAN ELF, MINING ENGINEER, HE/HIM

**Personality** Surly, apathetic, calculating.

**Physical** Waifish frame, waist-long braids, dark circles around the eyes.

**Longings** To find peace in death or newfound hope in a dreary life.

**Factions** Scientist

*"All creatures are doomed from birth."*

### FIRST

CONSTRUCT, HELPER, THEY/THEM

**Personality** Cheerful, caring, artificial intelligence.

**Physical** Short, wooden, humanoid. Clearly an outdated model, but well-maintained.

**Longings** To help Master Taos and his guests.

*"You are in need of assistance. Allow me."*

## ARRIVAL AT TAOS' STATION

When the characters arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

The elevator lets out into a large cavern, the ceiling illuminated with lanterns powered by aether, their pale blue casting the space into artificial twilight. Overburdened mining carts move on automated rails, pausing at rows of massive machinery built into the ground and ceiling. Slate-gray constructs of varying sizes and shapes operate drills, transport materials, and perform innumerable complex tasks. And in the center of this orchestra of efficiency and chaos sits a sleek stone tower.

### TAOS' STATION FEATURES

**Ceilings.** The ceilings in the mine are 100 feet tall.

**Walls.** The cave walls are made of dense, dark stone.

**Light.** The large lanterns hanging high above the ground illuminate dim light across the space.

**Floor.** Taos' Station is only a portion of the mine, which stretches on for hundreds of feet. The room is as wide as the ceiling. All areas of the mine are inaccessible without Taos.

**Tower.** In the center is a stone tower, 50 feet tall with a wide, 30-foot circular top. Cloudy glass windows wrap the exterior of the topmost structure. The tower is where Taos runs his operation and lives. The interior is surprisingly lavish, furnished by Queen Lilius as an attempt to raise Taos' spirits. It has a stone elevator that can only be activated by Taos' Pathin.

### MEETING TAOS

The characters enter Taos' Station, nestled within a centralized portion of the aether mine. **Taos Openda** (see appendix A) emerges from the tower and asks them why they've come (this is mostly a formality, as Emphor has already informed Taos of his intention to test the characters). A character with a passive Perception of 12 or higher notices that he does not seem surprised by their presence.

Taos, having no relationship with the characters, will only share information he deems necessary for them to accomplish their purpose in the mines: prove themselves as worthy to Emphor. Overtime, as Taos sees their worthiness develop, he may be more open to sharing privileged information with them.

After acquainting himself with the characters, Taos will ultimately summon First (see appendix A) and escort the characters into the central tunnels of the aether mine, which he unlocks using his Pathin. In the scant wisdom he imparts, he urges the characters to overcome the dangers of the mines, forge their path ahead, and prove their worthiness. He grants the characters ample time to explore the mines with First but cautions them that their worthiness hinges on unwavering determination. Once their trial commences, there is no reprieve. Should they wish to exit the mines, they must revalidate their worthiness starting from square one.

#### WHAT TAOS WILL DISCUSS:

- Upon hearing the characters recall their shared visions, Taos will find excitement in their recollection as very rarely does “it” communicate with others aside from him nowadays (without going into what “it” is, being Emphor).
- Taos understands (from his own conversations with Emphor) they are to be tested in the mines and is willing to facilitate this trial (though is unwilling to share details regarding why he knows or who is testing them).
- Taos has a wishbone-shaped device (his Pathin) with several gauges on a wide handlebar that he stores in his tower. He wheels it out to unlock the mines for the characters.
- Taos knows the worthiness status of the characters at all times (in the eyes of Emphor), and will facilitate their testing while ensuring they will not be killed.
- Taos has several constructs around the aether mines to help him with the operation. He is more than willing to have both **First** and **No** provide aid to the characters as they traverse the mines.
- He is happy to ally himself with the characters once they have been deemed worthy.

#### TAOS' SECRETS:

- Taos knows Emphor's name and that he is sentient. He currently believes Emphor is the superior element of aether (not knowing his true origins as a star being).
- Taos is the only one capable of using his Pathin, a one-of-a-kind item. His sister (Queen Lillius) initially used it to find saturated aether deposits, bringing her to what is known today as Chrysal Lake (since the Pathin sought out this exact mine).
- After the explosion of the old Peerless Arc, he has been searching primarily for the plasma form of aether, which is a much more efficient source of power for the new Peerless Arc project. This is the secret defining characteristic of the new Peerless Arc compared to the old.

- Taos is incredibly smart, wise, and yet also anxious and very lonely. He doesn't show this off directly upon interacting with the characters, but after Orrien abandoned the drill site, and Taos experienced many dangers of the mines, he created First (his first construct) to provide medical and emotional aid as needed, strengthening his mettle and mental fortitude.

#### MEETING THE CONSTRUCTS

**First** (see appendix A) is a helper construct and Taos' first creation. When Taos first took over the mine, he encountered the dangers of the mines firsthand, developing debilitating anxiety and panic attacks from the voices and hallucinations he experienced. First was created to administer medical and emotional aid and helped Taos develop healthy mental toughness. While largely unsentimental, Taos is very attached to and protective of First.

#### INFORMATION ABOUT FIRST AND NO:

- **Taking Action:** First can answer questions, use the actions in their stat block, and act according to their helpful personality. First follows the party but can't lead them anywhere. If the party is lost, First can tell them the cardinal direction they need to go to return to the mine entrance.
- **Asking Questions:** Characters can access First's database by asking questions containing a relevant keyword. First's language capabilities are limited, and follow-up questions do not provide additional context.
- **Redacted:** Some of First's database has been redacted leading up to the ignition of the Peerless Arc. This was ordered by Queen Lillius.
- **Observant Automaton:** When in proximity to a trap, a blue light on First's arm starts blinking. If asked why, they will state that danger is near.
- **Weight:** First weighs 120 pounds.
- **Oh No:** No is Taos' second creation, a large brute of a construct with four arms. No was made from the scrap of a broken drill and can climb any surface of the mine using its drill attachments. Graceless and loud, No remains in hibernation the majority of the time, but can deploy at a moment's notice anywhere across the mine to protect Taos, First, or anyone else deemed an ally of them.



## DATABASE

When the characters ask First a question or to identify something, First will respond to them with the following information. If First is unable to answer a question, they provide a basic definition (see “Door” as an example).

- **Aethermites:** “Aethermite. Aberration. Tiny swarms of creatures that come from and feed off of aether. Aethermites travel subterraneously, nesting in inactive drilling and extraction holes. Their venomous bite can cause swelling, disorientation, and temporary hallucinations.”
- **Constructs:** “Construct. There are 378 active constructs working the mine; 70% are in excavation, 18% transportation, 11% logistical operation, and 1% original functions.”
- **Door:** “A movable structure used to close off an entrance, typically consisting of a panel that swings on hinges or that slides or rotates.”
- **First:** “First. Hello, I am here to help. I can assist you by providing information or aid to nearby organic lifeforms. I am one of two original designs created by Master Taos and the first of 378 active constructs currently in the mine.”
- **Mine:** “Mine. The entire mining operation is 1.2 kilometers deep and over 3 kilometers wide. The mine harvests vast amounts of aether, totaling [redacted] tons each year.”
- **Original:** “Original. First, medium helper construct. Function, to assist. No, large defense construct. Function, to defend.”

- **Peerless Arc:** “The Peerless Arc Project. 938 years ago, the original project called the Peerless Arc began. Ending in catastrophe, the scientists [redacted] were punished severely for their failure. The New Peerless Arc design was conceived largely based on the scientific findings of [redacted], Master Taos, and [redacted] under the guidance of Queen Lillius. While Master Taos has no official capacity on the project, the mine provides [redacted] percent of the [redacted] for the New Peerless Arc Project.
- **Plasmoid Ooze (Em):** “Ooze. An ooze consisting of diluted plasmatic aether combined with merqua. Exposure to high amounts of plasmatic aether is known to cause blindness and deafness. Sentient life form. Nonhostile.”
- **Taos:** “Taos. Master Taos is a Chrysalean elf, male, and has been stationmaster since the mine was first erected. He has successfully provided all of Chrysalea with aether for [redacted] years.”

### FIRST TACTICS

When in combat, First defaults to its *Emotional Intelligence* action to offer support to friendly creatures in need. First uses its multiattack if attacked or asked.

### NO TACTICS

When in combat, if summoned by another creature, No gets close enough to use its Defense Protocol and prioritizes protective actions. Otherwise, it uses its *multiattack* and then *neutralize*.

## INTO THE UNKNOWN

Once **Taos Openda** (see appendix A) brings the characters into the mine, he will retreat to his tower, keeping an eye on their progress as the doors close behind them, shutting them, and **First** (see appendix A) in the mines. Throughout the trial, Taos keeps a watchful gaze over the cavern. Should he see danger developing, he activates **No** (see appendix A) to defend First and the characters.

### MINE FEATURES

**Entrance/Exit.** The mine is accessed through a 10-foot tall, 6-foot wide steel door that has been magically locked. The door can only be opened using Taos’ Pathin. A button nearby within the mines can be used to alert Taos.

**Ceilings.** The mine ceilings start about 20 feet high and increase to 40 feet high deeper into the area.

**Light.** The mines are dimly illuminated by hanging lanterns and aether deposits. Characters can see up to

15 feet in front of them, with the remaining distance obscured by darkness unless specified.

**Straight Shot.** The portion of the mine running down the center is a direct route toward the secret door (area C4). If the characters are not worthy, Taos activates a trap to deter them from taking it (see Traps below).

**Secret Door.** The door the characters saw in their vision is located at the far end of the mine (area C4). It is made of cooled, hardened, light-blue liquid aether and cannot be seen or opened without Emphor’s permission (see Worthiness below).

**Illusions.** A high concentration of aether in one place has unusual effects. Characters might hear distant voices or see something run past them out of the corner of their eye (see Hallucinations below).

**Emphor.** To encourage the characters to explore more of the mine, Emphor might draw them toward dangers or treasure using illusions, sounds, and fragmented visions.

## EXPLORING THE MINES

As the characters navigate through the twisting caverns of the central aether mines, they will undoubtedly encounter complications as they work towards proving their worthiness. Upon proving themselves worthy, the dangers of the mines are tempered and the secret door will be revealed to them. Once the characters have proven their worthiness and navigate to area C4, proceed to **More Questions Than Answers**.

### WORTHINESS

Emphor's test is designed to distract the characters, creating adverse situations that, with enough focus, can be overcome. Emphor's goal is to see if the characters can avoid distraction and follow through on his plan to ignite the New Peerless Arc. **To become worthy, the characters must collectively accrue 12 worthiness points.**

Once the characters become worthy, traps within the mines are no longer active, and the light level rises to bright, with Emphor boosting the aether lanterns. At this time, the lanterns will also pulsate in the direction of the secret door (area C4) and he shares a vision with the character of the secret door and its location, guiding them directly to it.

The following are ways the party accrues worthiness points:

- Discovering an aether extraction site, activating a trap, or finding treasure (1 point)
- Breaking out of a hallucination/illusion or disabling a trap (2 points)
- Repairing damaged extraction equipment with a DC 12 Dexterity check (3 points)
- Surviving a combat encounter or discovering Em, the Maddening Ooze (4 points)
- Befriending Em, the Maddening Ooze (6 points)

#### D6 HALLUCINATIONS

- 1 The floor beneath you is slowly crumbling into a black void. You are **frightened**.
- 3 The most beautiful garden you've ever seen starts to grow on every surface of your body. You are **stunned**.
- 5 You are surrounded by enemies, and your party is dead at your feet. You are **enraged** and must use your action to make an attack against a creature on your turn; otherwise, you attack yourself.

### TRAPS

Traps can be found almost anywhere in the mines. When the characters navigate between forks in the pathway or from dead ends in the cavern, roll 1d6. Traps are present on an even-numbered result. If a trap is present, roll 1106 to determine which is encountered on the Trap Encounters table below.

To notice a trap, the characters must succeed on a Wisdom (Perception) check against the trap's DC. Traps can be appropriately disabled or avoided once noticed by succeeding an appropriate check with a DC equal to the trap's DC. For traps that require a saving throw, the DC of the saving throw is equal to the trap's DC.

### AETHERMITES

**Aethermites** (see appendix A) are tiny swarms of creatures that come from and feed off of aether all throughout the mines. Aethermites travel subterraneously, nesting in inactive drilling and aether extraction holes. They mostly retrieve bits of aether unretrievable by Taos' tools, so he leaves them be. Their bodies are so concentrated with aether that they can be used as a small energy source. Aethermites are largely harmless, but their venomous bite can cause swelling, disorientation, and temporary hallucinations.

### HALLUCINATIONS

Hallucinations are experienced by an individual and are only visible only to that creature. Hallucinations can be caused by a trap or an aethermite bite and last for one minute. You may use the table to determine the effects or create your own. When a hallucination ends, the condition associated with the hallucination ends unless specified.

#### D6 HALLUCINATIONS

- 2 You flicker in and out of consciousness as your life, from birth to death, flashes before your eyes. You are **incapacitated**.
- 4 Your least-liked creature in the room becomes intensely interesting to you. You are **charmed** by them.
- 6 You are in a sinkhole and slipping down into the ocean floor. You suffer from **1 point of exhaustion**. This exhaustion does not go away once the hallucination ends.

#### D10 TRAP ENCOUNTERS

**1 Darkness (DC 20).** You step on a pressure plate that plunges this section of the cavern into magical darkness. This darkness persists over the next hour before dispersing.

**3 Hallucinatory Dart (DC 15).** Upon entering the area, darts shoot out towards two random creatures walking through. Those creatures must succeed a Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (2d4) piercing damage. Within the next minute, they also suffer from a hallucination.

**5 Mimic (DC 12).** You see a glowing chest that's actually a **mimic**.

**7 Aetheric Resonance (DC 16).** An intense harmonic resonance is triggered across all of the aether deposits in the area. Each creature must succeed a Constitution saving throw or be deafened for the next 10 minutes.

**9 Rocks Fall (DC 12).** The smallest disturbance of the ground causes the supports in the mine of this area to cave in. Each creature must succeed a Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a successful one. Regardless, this cavern section has caved in and cannot be traversed (with the characters on a side that does not trap them in the mines).

#### D10 TRAP ENCOUNTERS

**2 Aethermite Bite (DC 12).** You fail to notice a lone **aethermite** (see appendix A) crawling on the first person to enter the area, who receives a *disorienting bite*.

**4 Blinding Light (DC 8).** The aether lanterns in the area briefly light up due to a strong aetheric flare of raw energy. Everyone must succeed a Constitution saving throw or be blinded for the next 10 minutes.

**6 Pitfall (DC 10).** This 1-foot pit has a cover constructed from material identical to the floor that hides tiny poisonous spikes beneath it. A creature that steps on this cover must succeed a Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) piercing damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage.

**8 Boulder Trap (DC 10).** When the group enters the area, someone trips a tripwire that releases boulders stored within the ceiling above them. Each creature must succeed a Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (4d4) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a successful one.

**10 Powder Trap (DC 14).** A thin tripwire launches a small sling of finely powdered aether. The first person entering the area must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or erupt in a coughing fit for 10 minutes. During this time, they are incapable of meaningful communication and has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

#### BLIND NAVIGATION

To offer the players the experience of exploring this mine blind, consider describing what their characters see within each fork of the pathway as they explore the area rather than present a map of the mines to them, suggesting they record their path as they move through. Alternatively, revealing small sections of the map at a time is another way to invoke a similar experience.



## EM, THE MADDENING OOZE

When Taos first began working in the station, he dug a bit too far in Emphor's direction, resulting in a leak of diluted plasmatic aether that, combined with merqua, blinded and deafened him. Half senseless, Taos ordered his constructs to dispose of it. To this day, they cannot explain where it is, and Taos has dismissed the matter. Unknown to him, the ooze itself has taken on a life of its own and gathered a crust of dirt and debris that has hidden its piercing glow over time. The ooze feeds on whatever it finds—mostly aether—as it wanders through the mine. It appears most often near Emphor's door, as some form of rudimentary intelligence reminds it that once there was more, the thoughts fleeting as though in a dream. It is meek and only hostile when threatened. It communicates by telepathically sharing its feelings, usually those of hunger, fear, or curiosity.

- **Friendly.** If befriended, Em might follow the characters, lead the characters to nearby treasure, or squeeze into aether extraction sites to eat any aethermites near the characters.
- **Interactions with First.** Em is familiar with First and regards them as a friend. During combat, First registers Em as a creature in emotional distress and attempts to soothe it using their song and the **Assistance** action if it is hurt.

### EM'S TACTICS:

Em begins combat with a *psychic shriek* and follows up with its multiattack until it deems it safe to disengage. If Em goes one round without receiving attacks, combat ends, and Em is successfully soothed. If Em is killed, First refuses to respond to the characters for the rest of the adventure.

## TREASURE

Treasure found in the mines is largely leftover items potentially used by miners or scientists from hundreds of years ago, as well as items that have trickled down to the Subsurface over time. When the characters find treasure (marked on the map) that is not the treasure in areas C2 and C3, roll 1d10 and consult the Treasure table below to determine what they find.

### AETHER DEPOSITS

Several substantially large aether deposits can be found all throughout the mines (marked on the map). As the characters move through an area with one of these deposits, they can spend 10 minutes collecting the loose aether around the drill for use in aetherforging (see "Aetherforging" on page 293). If they take this time, have them roll twice to see how many units of aether they are able to pick up around this drill.

It is possible for a swarm of **aethermites** (see appendix A) to be feeding on the deposit as the characters approach. To determine if one of the six aether extraction sites on the map has aethermites, roll a d4. On a 4, the swarm is present.

### IF IT ALL GOES WRONG

Should the party all fall unconscious, they wake up in Taos' living quarters thanks to the quick actions of First and No. The party can attempt to return to the mine and continue searching. Alternatively, they may receive visions containing the information from a desperate Emphor closer to the ignition of the New Peerless Arc.

### D10 TREASURE

- 1 A functioning Chryselean lute.
- 3 A handheld aether mining drill Taos might be interested in retrieving (and would pay 60 gp as a reward).
- 5 A tattered, waterlogged *spell scroll* containing the *freedom of movement* spell.
- 7 An aetheric formula (see "Aetherforging" on page 293).
- 9 A satchel containing very fine, coarse blue stone that functions as *dust of sneezing and choking*.

### D10 TREASURE

- 2 A leather-wrapped *potion of superior healing*.
- 4 A *bag of holding* containing an aether cache (see "Aetherforging" on page 293).
- 6 A beautiful set of carved, circular stones representing each of Chryselea's domes.
- 8 A *leaflet gridone* loaded with 15 gp.
- 10 A small metal locket containing a portrait worth 25 gp.



## MINE LOCATIONS

The following are distinct locations the characters can reach when navigating this section of the aether mines.

### C1. MINE ENTRANCE

The mine stretches out ahead of you, the sound of distant drilling and the smell of tilled soil filling the warm cavern. Unlike Taos' Station, the mine is without order, moving naturally with the striations of the land, stone and dirt carved out of necessity, like the interior of an anthill.

Upon entering, characters with a passive Perception of 14 or higher recognize that there is a draft coming from their left. Should the characters follow it, they find treasure in the lower area.

### C2. EM'S LAIR

The ground ahead is covered in a thin, sticky residue. Half-dissolved excavation equipment sits in gloopy stacks, and a shiny object sits at the bottom of the pile.

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (History or Nature) check can determine that this is the lair of an ooze. The residue has traces of aether, indicating the creature feeds on it. After the characters discover Em's lair, on a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, they notice Em staring at them from around the corner. If noticed, Em attempts to disengage and flee. If Em is not encountered here, they appear in other areas.

**Treasure.** The shiny object is a Miner Kit containing a *spell scroll* containing the *light* spell, a *potion of healing*, and an *aether detector*.

### C3. BLOCKED CHAMBER

With the damaged equipment removed, the sealed chamber smells like sulfur and stagnant air. A pool of water sits in a corner due to a slant in the ground.

To enter this area, a character must succeed on a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to move the damaged equipment. Alternatively, they can repair the motor functions on the equipment so it moves itself out of the way. A DC 15 Dexterity or Intelligence check using tinker's tools fixes the equipment. An aether rock worth 100gp formed from the pressure of the equipment sitting with mined aether dislodges once it moves.

The bits and bobs that have trickled down from the surface lie in the puddle. The party finds 150 gp in sellable gems, machine parts, and two pairs of *station miner's goggles*.

### STATION MINER'S GOGGLES

*Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)*

These stiff leather-framed goggles feature a set of aether-infused lenses that never get dirty, scratched, or cracked. While wearing these lenses, you gain the following benefits:

When you make a Wisdom (Perception) check, you can roll 1d4 and add the number rolled to the check.

Your passive Perception score is increased by 5.

### C4. SECRET DOOR

If the characters arrive without yet proving themselves worthy to Emphor, read or paraphrase the following:

You arrive at a small dead end within the mine, housing nothing more than wet stone, a musty smell, and tracks for the aether drills sprawling in nearly every direction.

This secret door is magically hidden from the characters until they are proven worthy to Emphor (hidden from divination magic and creatures who can see through illusions). Once the characters are worthy and arrive at this location, proceed to **More Questions Than Answers**.

### AETHER DETECTOR

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

This gadget detects aether sources. The sound increases in volume based on closer proximity and can detect aether sources up to 50 feet away and through solid objects.



A TOPOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF  
**THE AETHER MINE**

W I T H I N W I T H

IN  
THE  
MINE  
AND  
THE  
MOUNTAINS



60 FEET