

It's been a rough few weeks for you and your band. Or maybe more like a couple of bad months. Or to be totally accurate, just a really horrible few years. Backstabbing managers, double-booked venues, stolen equipment, spacevan breakdowns...honestly, it feels like you just haven't been able to catch a break for the past half-decade. But next year, it's all going to turn around. You can feel it. You're finally going to hit the big time, and all of your hard work is going to pay off. Next year, for sure.

But before the new year comes, you have one final gig to play to close out this year. Booked by your previous manager, it's a shitty gig at a backwater satellite-hotel located on the southern edge of the Dead Magic Zone. But it pays, and honestly, you can't afford to turn down anything right now.

Your ancient space van limped into the docking bay of the Rose Ring Inn earlier this morning, where you were greeted by the events coordinator, a tall and gangly half-elf man with slicked-back hair and a small beard. He introduced himself as Menos, cut you a credit-check for half of your rate, and led you to the performance space.

Have the PCs introduce their characters at this point, as well as what instrument/role they play in the band.

The Rose Ring Inn has definitely seen better days, what once was probably a glamorous vacation destination now seems to peddle mostly in pensioners and retirees. The station's once-grand Neoclassical decorations and embellishments have tarnished and chipped, the fine paintings that line the halls depicting great warriors and sweeping space battles have faded and yellowed, and the entire satellite smells vaguely of burnt rubber. As Menos leads you to the dining hall, you pass multiple groups of elderly couples shuffling along the station's well-worn red carpets, gossiping loudly about family matters and what to have for dinner. You notice most of them are gnomes and humans, but with the Rose Ring Inn's proximity to both the Hegemony of Man and the Gnomish Flotilla, you suppose that's not too surprising.

Finally, you arrive at the dining hall. Menos opens a set of huge gilded doors, revealing a room that was probably magnificent when it was first built, but now is pale, faded, and smoke-stained. The dark green walls are adorned with huge paintings depicting the landscape of dozens of alien worlds, flanked by marble statues and tall urns. Golden crown moulding runs along the entire room, and the ceiling is covered in an elaborate and stylized mural of a solar system, with an enormous sun at the center orbited by a dozen or so planets. A crystalline chandelier hangs from the center of the "sun", casting a dim yellow light over the entire room. 50 or so small tables, each with a few chairs, are spread out throughout the room, and a large bar is set up on the left side, where a Vect stands, cleaning glasses. But the centerpiece of the room is the raised stage set on the far side, flanked by plush red curtains and backlit by an awe-inspiring sight: a massive window that spans the entire width of the room that offers a stunning

panoramic view of the roiling red star that the Rose Ring Inn orbits and peers into the deep space of the Dead Magic Zone beyond.

Menos points to the stage. “Supper starts at 4 PM, you’ll need to be fully set up before then. You’ll go on during coffee. Our guests don’t like a lot of excitement, try and keep it mellow. The green room is through that door, you can wait in there until it’s time to perform. If you need anything, ask Eights.” He gestures towards the Vect, and then turns to leave. “Oh, and I’ll cut you the rest of your check after the show.” With that, Menos leaves the dining hall, sweeping a hand through his greasy hair.

At this point, the PCs can set up on stage, explore the station, and/or just wait until it’s time to perform. Eights can provide them with some basic info about the station, but he just started working here a month ago, so isn’t that well-informed. He used to work as a mechanic before deciding what he really wanted to do was be a mixologist, and he’s been having a hard time getting work with almost no relevant experience. He was originally hired to be an understudy to the Rose Ring Inn’s primary bartender, an ancient orc named Gnoz, but the orc passed away two days after Eights was hired.

The green room is small and cramped, empty except for a couple of leather couches that have clearly seen better days. The green plush carpet on the floor is scarred with cigarette burns, and the striped wallpaper is covered in years’ worth of graffiti.

At 4 PM on the dot, you can hear the chatter of voices and scrape of chairs as vacationers begin to fill the dining room, and the smell of cooked meats and roasted vegetables begins to waft into the room, mingling strangely with the burnt rubber smell.

Eventually, you hear a brief second of humming as the dining room’s PA system is activated, and a tired voice starts to speak. “All the way from outer space, please put your hands together for tonight’s entertainment...these guys.” There’s a brief smattering of polite applause, and then expectant silence.

The dining room is surprisingly packed, and scanning the crowd, you see that it’s mostly elderly humans and gnomes seated in groups of two or three, with the occasional young family thrown in here and there. As you walk out on stage, the dining room’s lights dim, and there’s another round of polite applause.

Assign each PC a descriptor of the song they’re about to perform (name, genre, tempo, and subject), and ask them to all write them down and then reveal them simultaneously. Depending on how much synergy there is, then have them all make Performance checks with Advantage, Disadvantage, or just flat.

No matter how well the performance goes, the crowd’s reaction is fairly tepid, with some scattered polite applause. Have the PCs perform the activity again for their second song, and also have them all attempt a Perception check with Disadvantage. If any of them succeed, they

notice a small and extremely distant flare or explosion in space behind them about halfway through the song.

Suddenly, klaxons and alarms begin to ring out through the station, and people in the crowd shout and scream, pointing at the huge panoramic windows behind you. You turn to look and see, in horror, a flaming, corkscrewing missile heading straight for you. As the crowd begins to get up and flee the room, a robotic voice begins to speak. "Proximity alert, proximity alert. Incoming missile. Defensive protocols activated. For your safety and ours, please remain where you are." Red lights begin flashing throughout the dining hall as the vacationers scramble for the exits, but are stopped in their tracks as huge bulkheads slam down over the doors. Before you can react, a heavy fire curtain drops down from the ceiling, separating the stage from the rest of the dining room, as the rocket screams ever closer.

Give the PCs a chance to each attempt one action before impact.

Your efforts were seemingly in vain, as the missile slams directly into the expansive windows, sending deadly shards of reinforced glass scything across the stage as a bizarre craft screeches across the ground for a dozen feet before coming to a stop, smoking and smoldering. Almost instantly, a shimmering force field seals the shattered window, and emergency extinguishers kick on, flooding the stage with fire-suppressant foam.

It takes a few moments for the foam to clear away, but when it does, you're finally able to see the object that impacted the station: a long metal cylinder, ten feet long and painted bright red, covered in scorches and blast marks. One end is dominated by a large rocket engine, while the other is a slightly rounded cone, with a red flashing light on the end. A seam runs along one side, clearly outlining a hatch of some sort, though you can't see any way of opening it from the outside.

The PCs can attempt DC 10 Technology checks, if they succeed, they recognize that this is clearly an escape pod of some sort, though the tech level seems fairly primitive. In fact, with a DC 12 Arcana check, the PCs realize that this ship doesn't use magitech at all, and is designed similar to gnomes vessels. With a DC 15 Technology or Athletics check, the PCs can manage to open up the pod, revealing its contents.

There's a hiss as the pod's hatch slowly opens, and cold air rushes out, condensing into thick fog as soon as it escapes. Various blinking lights within the tube cast a dim illumination over its passenger: an elderly human man, maybe 60 or 70 years old, with stark-white hair and a matching beard. He's dressed in a bright red and white pilot's suit, which is clearly slightly strained over his expansive midsection, and has a matching red cap atop his head. He seems to be unconscious, and his face is covered in scratches and soot, as if he just escaped a battle of some sort.

The PCs can wake the man up using any healing spell, or with a DC 13 Medicine check. He seems fairly roughed up, and is badly wounded. In fact, any healing magic only does minimal healing to him (treat all dice rolled as 1s).

The man's eyes slowly open, and he looks around, clearly still a little dazed. "Oh, oh my. Where...where am I?"

The man, who still seems very confused, introduces himself as Saint Nicholas, and says he's a guardian of the worlds within the Dead Magic Zone. He tells the PCs that he was greatly wounded when his ship was ambushed by invaders into the Dead Magic Zone who seek to defeat him and the rest of the guardians. He tells the PCs that his wounds can't be fully healed by their magic, and instead he relies on something called the "holiday spirit", a force that surrounds and binds all living things during certain times of the year. Nicholas can tell the PCs are musicians, and says that if they can learn about the true meaning of the holidays, they could broadcast a song using the station's comms system that would spread holiday cheer across the sector, healing Nicholas and allowing him to return to the Dead Magic Zone and fight these invaders. However, his strength is waning, so the PCs must discover what the holiday spirit means for themselves, while keeping his presence a secret, in case those who are after him have followed him to the station.

"I can feel examples of the holiday spirit all over this station. It's here, but it's weak. You must find out what the holiday spirit means for yourselves. Now please, if you put me back in my pod, I must rest..."

The fire curtain finally lifts and two station engineers dressed head to toe in fire suits stand there, extinguishers at the ready. When they see that the fire is out, they shrug, spray you lightly with foam, and leave. A moment later, Menos rushes into the room, his eyes scanning the room as he surveys the damage. "It seems like you're unharmed, how fortunate. Our technicians are still analysing damage from that impact, but unfortunately until we've completed our investigations, security protocols dictate that the station must remain locked down. It should only take 12 or so hours, so if you were interested in completing your concert perhaps you could do so during tomorrow's breakfast service. Otherwise, you are free to leave after the 12 hours have elapsed, with our contract incomplete. In the meantime, feel free to use any of the facilities here, and any charges you incur will be automatically deducted from the bank account we have on file for you. Thank you, and have a good evening." Menos bows hastily, and makes his way out of the dining hall, passing a couple of dwarves carrying construction equipment on his way out.

The Rose Ring Inn is a tall, vertically-oriented space station, with a docking bay at its very base, four "petals" that make up various amenities (dining hall, gambling hall, spa/gym, and theatre), the shape of which gives the Inn its name, and the bulb at the top where the vacationer's rooms are, along with a small command and control station that handles communication, local air traffic control, and other technical tasks. This is all connected by a collection of elevators that run up the central shaft, and requires room keys to get access to the rooms (or a security key to reach the command and control station).

The PCs are free to visit any of the amenities on their quest to discover the true meaning of the holidays. Each area is easy enough to access, connected to the central spire's great room.

The Rose Ring Inn's great room serves as the crossroads between the station's four amenities, and is quite grandly decorated, in shocking contrast to how dingy the dining hall was. The entire ceiling is a glittering glass dome, the warm red light of the station's roiling sun washing over everything. Ten golden elevator tubes rise up through this dome, leading upwards to the hotel's rooms, and downwards towards the docking bay where your ship is parked, along with dozens of others. The floors are polished white marble inlaid with flecks of gold and silver, and red carpet radiates out from the central elevators to the four amenity stations that form the petals of the Rose Ring itself. The dining hall, where you just came from, is directly behind you. The gambling hall is the petal to your right, the spa the petal to your left, and the theatre is situated directly across from you. Menos said you were free to use any of the public areas of the station, so where do you want to go?

Gambling Hall:

The inside of the gambling hall is dark and smells strongly of cigar smoke. A few slots machines sit on one side of the room, largely ignored, next to a small bar that is, improbably, manned by Eights, the Vect who was working in the dining hall. A few gamblers are watching a space horse race being broadcast on the TV above the bar, grimacing or cheering as the results come in, but most of the patrons are arrayed at three tables in the center of the room where a card game of some sort is being played. You also notice a pair of halflings dressed in station security uniforms playing a game of darts in the far side of the room, laughing and chatting as they take turns throwing and drinking beers.

The "ideal" lesson for the PCs to learn here is that money isn't everything, and that the halflings (who are quite poor) are having more fun than the people betting on horse races (who are very rich).

Spa:

You step into the spa petal, and find yourself in a stark and humid white marble room. A young human attendant sits at a desk in front of several wooden doors. You can feel her eyes quickly scan you before she speaks. "Tsch, yeah? You here for a treatment or what?"

The spa offers several services: steam rooms (separated by gender), massages (solo or couples), mud bath, and a salt-water soak. Each service costs 5 credits.

The young woman nods and presses a button, and one of the doors opens behind her. "Yeah, changing rooms are just through there. Change into your robes and then come back here, k?"

Whatever service the PCs take, the lesson they should learn is that it's important to care for yourselves during the holidays too, and not get so stressed and caught up in trying to please everyone else.

Theatre:

The theatre is appointed much in the same way as the dining hall was: an overwhelming feeling of faded glory and bygone greatness. Badly faded posters in the lobby advertise star-studded shows that once came through the Rose Ring Inn, and a towering archway that leads into the theatre itself is covered in flaking gold paint. An elderly orc man sits inside a tiny ticket booth, watching you expectantly. A small marquee over his head advertises the current performer in residence: 'Wiffin, the Amazing Juggling Space-Squid'. Nearby, a human couple is arguing loudly, while their child stares, wonder-struck, at a poster depicting an Amoeboid riding a motorcycle inside a flaming sphere.

The poster depicts the death-defying stunts of Thorn, a famous Amoeboid who died about 50 years ago (eaten by a space-kraken while trying to jump over it's nest on rocket-powered rollerblades). The couple is arguing about missing their flight to their next vacation destination due to the lockdown. The father wants to bribe the station's security agents, while the mother wants to just wait and hope they can catch the next flight.

Tickets for Wiffin's show cost 2 credits each, and the next show starts in 20 minutes. If the PCs buy tickets, they enter the auditorium and find it almost completely empty, save for three Avia-Ra children sitting in the front row, cheering loudly, and an elderly elf sitting near the back, squinting through a pair of opera glasses.

The "correct" lesson the PCs should learn is to never lose their sense of child-like wonder.

Docking Bay:

The golden elevators descend through the station's stem, down to the docking bay where you first arrived. The doors slide open, and you see a chaotic scene, with dozens of the hotel's guests down here, attempting to convince station security to let them leave. A large near-human man with cat ears is clearly in charge here, and he stands stoically, arms crossed, shaking his head slowly at the complaints, pleading, and bargaining being hurled at him by the crowd. Behind him, arrayed on a complex system of mobile platforms, you can see hundreds of spaceships of all shapes and sizes, all grounded by the station master.

With a DC 14 Perception check, the PCs can spot their space-van, situated in the top right corner of the expansive room. Getting up there would require sneaking past the station master, as well as a good bit of climbing. In addition, once the PCs enter the ship storage area, they're hunted by a band of six space-rats (represented here as reskinned Neogi, without their Enslave ability).

NEOGI

Small aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d6 + 12)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Skills Intimidation +4, Perception +3

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Undercommon

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Mental Fortitude. The neogi has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened, and magic can't put the neogi to sleep.

Spider Climb. The neogi can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Multiattack. The neogi makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Enslave (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The neogi targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the neogi for 1 day, or until the neogi dies or is more than 1 mile from the target. The charmed target obeys the neogi's commands and can't take reactions, and the neogi and the target can communicate telepathically with each other at a distance of up to 1 mile. Whenever the charmed target takes damage, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Command and Control Room:

To access this area, the PCs will first need to succeed on a DC 17 Technology check to hack the elevators and give them access to the area.

After some tinkering, a previously un-illuminated button on the elevator's controls suddenly lights up, giving you access to the Rose Ring Inn's command and control room. The elevator begins to rise, up through the glass dome over the main hall and past the station's "bulb" that makes up the guest rooms, up to the very top. Through the elevator's transparent ceiling, you can see a small spherical room, about 40 feet around, with a large antenna dish on top. The elevator slides up into this sphere, and into total darkness.

The Command and Control room is manned by one person: a Githyanki named Hyant. He has truesight, so he usually works in total darkness, as it helps him concentrate. He will not allow the PCs to use the station's broadcast systems for any reason, and will defend himself if attacked.

GITHYANKI GISH

Medium humanoid (gith) , lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (Half Plate)

Hit Points 123 (19d8 + 38)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws CON +6, INT +7, WIS +6

Skills Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Senses Passive Perception 16

Languages Gith

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The githyanki's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: mage hand (the hand is invisible)

3/day each: jump, misty step, nondetection (self only)

1/day each: plane shift, telekinesis

Spellcasting. The githyanki is an 8th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The githyanki has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): blade ward, light, message, true strike

1st level (4 slots): expeditious retreat, magic missile, sleep, thunderwave

2nd level (3 slots): blur, invisibility, levitate

3rd level (3 slots): counterspell, fireball, haste

4th level (2 slots): dimension door

War Magic. When the githyanki uses its action to cast a spell, it can make one weapon attack as a bonus action.

Actions

Multiattack. The githyanki makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 18 (4d8) psychic damage.

The dining hall is slowly filling up as guests arrive for brunch, and Nicholas's rocket sits behind you, undisturbed from when it first arrived.

There's a burst of energy, and the pod's engines suddenly kick to life, blasting fire across the stage. A few people in the crowd cheer, no doubt thinking this is part of your show's pyrotechnics. Encouraged by the display, you really pour your heart into your performance.

Bad End:

The pod suddenly explodes, showering the stage and dining room with burning-hot debris. Diners dive for cover as chunks of rocket shoot past them, and red scraps of fabric rain down on you as you look at each other in disbelief. A small handwritten note drifts through the air, slightly scorched on the edges, before coming to rest atop the drum set. "Thank you for all your help (name of band). I couldn't have done it without you. As my thanks to you, here are the keys to a new spaceship. May you find much success in your future. Signed, Saint Nicholas."

Good End:

The pod's engines fire with all their strength, and the rocket rises up and begins to zip around the room, building up speed before smashing once again through the recently-repaired

panoramic window behind the stage. This time, you're prepared, and knowing that Nicholas might depend on it, you keep playing as the emergency field shimmers over the window, sealing up the breach. The crowd are on their feet now cheering, and as you play the last few notes of your song, you swear you can hear a laughing voice echoing out across space: "Ho ho ho! Thanks so much, (name of band)! Enjoy your new ride!" You can only watch in amazement as a set of keys for a brand-new top-of-the-line Avia-Ra transport materialize before you, spinning in the air for a second before falling to the ground. "Happy holidays! Ho ho ho!"