

## 0,0 - Noma Core

### 0,1 - Lowing Hollow

This squat, domed structure contains long tubes, each of which has a huge fan at the end and an automatic iris doorway at the other. The tubes are of varying diameter and have different wind speeds. Operation of the fans creates a lowing chorus that can be heard as far away as adjacent sectors. The purpose of these wind tunnels is unclear, but a character trained in Engineering or Piloting can tell the passages are large enough for aerodynamic testing.

### 0,2 - The Gallery

In a bizarre approximation of an art gallery, display screens cycle through generated artwork, while daises hold sculptures that collapse into polyfluid only to reshape themselves into new forms. The works bear little resemblance to any known art, but aspects are familiar to those of common species of the Pact Worlds. Looking at any piece is like staring at pieces of several almost-familiar creatures, objects, and landscapes as if through a kaleidoscope. A small number of protocite speakers periodically tour the gallery, pausing to observe each work for the same amount of time before moving to the next. Although this observation period is exact on a given "tour," it changes during each visit.

### 0,3 - Possibilities

An apparently stone metropolis, at the center of which stands a metal building with a crystal globe in every room. Looking into each globe, one can see different hexes that are not currently on the map - as well as other things. In one globe can be seen a Noma that exists at the center of an infinite web of bubbles stretching off in all three dimensions; in another the entire city is liquid polyfluid, and massive shapes slide past one another, occasionally breaking the surface; in another, the structures are made of living flesh - the creatures that move through the streets can only be described as improbable; in another a being of fire sits atop a basalt throne, polyfluid spinning itself into flesh-like concubines and twining itself around the being in an orgiastic frenzy; in another the city is unfolded into at least five spatial dimensions, making it difficult to understand what is seen; in another beings with ten limbs float above the city streets, and everything they touch begins to rot and melt.

## 1,0 - Glass Houses

A series of bungalows, reminiscent of some planets' suburban co-living structures, stands within this sector. However, the street side of each "home" is made of transparent material. Protocite speakers dwell in the structures, divided into groups of varying numbers of individuals configured in disparate ways, like families, couples, or other cohabitants. The individuals perform various tasks, including some leaving the area for other activities, in a 24-hour cycle, including rest periods. None act like they are aware of being visible or of being able to see into the other groups' "homes."

### 1,1 - Concealed Colossus

Visible behind the facade of an otherwise normal-looking windowed skyscraper is an enormous, smooth walled silo, hundreds of feet tall. The structure has four ground entrances

that lead to enormous elevators. These conveyances go only to the top of the structure, where a single opening allows access to visitors and a stream of sunlight. Hanging from struts and scaffolding within the silo is a half-constructed protocite colossus, so large that it dwarfs some of Noma's other structures. A character trained in Engineering or Physical Science can discern the colossus is shielded like a starship and seems likely to be resistant to solar forces. However, it doesn't have any weapons.

Whether the city has ceased developing the colossus, and for how long, is as unclear as what purpose the construct might serve if ever completed. Given its hidden location and massive size, the project might have begun as a response to an external threat the city sensed. This massive construct's continued existence could be an efficiency measure. Noma's AI might not want to start over the next time a similar protocite is called for.

## 1,2 - Chains

At the vertices of this hex stand six towers roughly two hundred feet high. Between them stretched taut, are immense chains, many of the links ten feet long at least, but every chain is of unique size. Depending from the chains are towers of varying sizes and shapes that stretch almost, but not quite, to the ground. Protocites clamber along the chains far above the ground.

## 1,3 - The Difference Engine

This hex is constructed using manual computation - a huge analog computer of gears, flywheels, pistons, and springs, of immense and terrible complexity. Input is slotted into great ports at the vertices on "control rods," thirty foot long tubes of polyfluid inscribed with commands etched at the nano scale, read by the machine and converted into data. What program this computer might be running is known only to the Noma AI.

## 1,4 - Noma's Mouth

Bizarre angular spires jut from smooth pools of viscous liquid, like raindrops frozen on impact. In this area, a large circular pit, several hundred feet wide, is filled with enormous grinding plates similar to those reclaimers use to chew up material Noma designates for recycling. Dozens of empty polyfluid canals extend from the pit's fringes. This place was once a major reprocessing center. The "mouth" is still used when Noma directs a gigantic protocite or other mobile experiment to throw itself in.

## 2,0 - Blasting Grounds

At the edge of the city, the Blasting Grounds sector seems devoted to producing technology that can survive direct contact with the forces inside a star. Deducing this fact requires traveling to the sector's center through layer upon layer of tall, semicircular shielding. A character trained in Engineering, Physical Science, or an appropriate construction related Profession can tell, after seeing several shields, that the structures radiate out from a central point to form concentric shells. At that center is a large, scorched platform topped with a thin layer of hot siccattite. The shields separate the platform from the rest of the city. Characters trained in the aforementioned skills can comprehend the purpose of this arrangement. Periodically, a protocite journeys to the platform or protocite speakers place an immobile construct there. Then, after any helper protocites leave, Noma's bubble exposes the platform to

the sun for a time in a narrow beam, not unlike the Sun-Setting Sector event in the adventure (see page 29). When the bubble closes and the site cools, either protocite speakers return to collect the remains or reclaimers emerge to clean up. Heat-sink protocites also collect and disperse excess heat.

#### 2,1 - The Tree

A series of dozens of inverted brutalist ziggurats connected and suspended through organically twisting branches of superstrong polyfluid. The whole thing may resemble an actual city on some far off world, or be a fever dream of the Noma AI

#### 2,2 - Perspective

Viewed from different angles, this hex can appear a myriad of different ways. All of the objects possess quirks of scale that makes the hex difficult to navigate - streets narrowing into nothing, immense fire hydrants, tiny buildings that are actually enormous, etc.

#### 2,3 - The twist

A modern city, but every structure is “tiered.” At intervals of roughly one meter, every single structure, lamppost, “tree,” and anything else are rotated 12 degrees along the center axis. This gives the hex a strange, spiraling appearance. Interiors similarly shifted, with no apparent regard for accessibility or even safety.

#### 2,4 - The Twins

Bizarre cubist skyscrapers and streets (identical to 2,5)

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#### 3,0 - Zero G

Clusters of polyhedrons are lumped together here, floating immovably in an otherwise zero g environment (see Ender’s Game battle school).

#### 3,1 - The Cube

Rising two hundred feet into the air, this hex appears to be a normal city that has had an immense cube dropped into the middle, with no regard for streets, building boundaries, or anything else. Buildings simply stop at its wall, and closer examination reveals that the buildings are seamlessly merged into the cube wall. The cube itself has no obvious way in, but inside is an immense lattice of irregular struts at eye-twisting angles.

#### 3,2 - The Fountain

In the center of this plaza, an abstract sculpture forms a basin. Shimmering, silvery liquid dances around the sculpture like a bizarre fountain. If asked, SOL-653 can identify the “fountain” as an artistic and experimental data-dispersal system. Tiny information gathering robots in the liquid scan nearby entities, then fly away to randomly redistribute the data. The protocite has no way of knowing the nanobots are dangerous to the PCs, so it provides no warning

26 Mandrake  
21 Robot - 56  
19 Pollux  
17 Yotta

Artisanal robots encounter

### 3,3 - The Melt

This entire sector appears to have been directly exposed, however briefly, to the full intensity of the sun. Buildings are warped and bent in extreme angles, partially collapsed, and pocked with bubbles, as though the metallic structures flash boiled and then resolidified within moments. Noma has deigned neither to entirely erase the sector by cordoning it off and fully exposing it to the sun, nor to send in reclaimers to return the ruined structures to polyfluid. The most likely explanation is that this area is a transitional stage in a long-term test.

### 3,4 - Spectrum's Reach

This conical tower has an internal ramp that spirals up its interior, and opaque floors and ceilings horizontally divide it into levels. The walls of each level allow in exactly one wavelength of electromagnetic radiation and don't allow it to pass back out again. Most floors are completely dark. However, several floors of colored visible light can be found near the top of the structure. One high floor is reddish and filled with extreme heat. Farther up, ionizing radiation floods several floors, starting at low radiation and proceeding up to severe

3,5 - Hovering platforms and obelisks of solid rock suspended on some kind of antigrav network, in apparently random configurations.

### 3,6 - Film Set

Every building here is open on at least one side, but fully furnished. Every building is surrounded in a scaffolding of camera and microphone tech. Inside the structures, the protocites act out elaborate scenarios, though without the ability to hear them it is impossible to tell what these narratives mean, if anything. The cameras are always rolling, uploading an immense amount of footage to Noma's core.

### 4,1 - Endless

This hex is like a twelve story airport or mall - hard to navigate, recursive, devoid of personality. From what appear to be counters, protocites offer resource cubes to one another, who carry them to other places before dropping them into recycling bins. Possibly an experiment into consumerism.

### 4,2 - The Stacks

This coliseum-sized manufactory is dedicated to creating struts, similar to the framing beams used on many worlds for large structures. Reclaimers deposit polyfluid into huge hoppers, which begins a complex process. Several miles of conveyors wind through countless stations, where struts are extruded, cut, shaped, reshaped, polished, and deposited in neat stacks. Protocites configured with forklift-like protuberances then sort and stack the struts in vast warehouses, according to some kind of arcane system, building a new warehouse as each one fills. A character trained in Engineering or a supply-chainsavvy Profession realizes a significant and increasing amount of polyfluid is tied up in these stacks. This reserve might serve a future plan, or the facility may have become caught in a loop of pointless production independent of Noma's AI. As the PCs arrive, their presence causes the AI to become aware of this resource sink and begin sun-setting protocols.

#### Sun-setting sector encounter

#### 4,3 - The Raft

This hex contains water - to a depth of about three feet. The structures here are replicas of sailing ships from across history. Metal and wooden vessels "bob" side by side in artificial currents. The ships have been reproduced down to the individual strands of fiber in the ropes, threads in the sails, and fuel in the tanks. Traversing the Raft is possible via gangplanks of various materials stretched between the ships. Here and there, large stone pillars rise high out of the water, resembling Lovecraftian effigies. Reclaimers stalk this area, and attack anything that approaches the effigies. This may be contamination from Directive: Null.

#### 4,4 - The Assembly

This broad, round amphitheater-like plaza is host to the Assembly, one of the regular events in Noma. Following a timetable known only to the city's AI, 256 speaker protocites from all over the city periodically assemble here, in a rare example of such creatures leaving their assigned sectors. They arrive at exactly the same time, ringing the plaza in a crescent and facing inward. These protocites remain for several hours, silent and inactive the entire time, before they return to their home sectors, peeling off from the group one at a time. A character trained in Computers, Culture, Engineering, or a Profession involving organizing workers can infer this activity might be a remnant of a time when Noma's first speakers were issued commands in person. Therefore, the Assembly might be composed of protocites still following a defunct protocol, waiting for instructions that will never come.

#### 4,5 - Reclaimer Manufactory

This manufactory resembles the machine forges of Aballon and is of outsize importance to Noma. A large number of the city's reclaimers are produced here. The manufactory's complex assembly line produces the constructs, scaling the speed of the process to accommodate the city's needs. As many as several reclaimers can be produced each hour, but the manufactory usually produces only one every 24 hours. This place could further prove that some deeper connection exists between Noma and Aballon. The freshly built Reclaimers exiting the building have provided a steady stream of resources for the protocite hulk to add to its body.

#### 4,6 - The Market

Four aluminum towers rise from its walls flanking seven gates with spring-operated drawbridges that span the moat whose water feeds four canals which cross the city, dividing it into nine quarters, each with three hundred houses and seven hundred chimneys. The protocites that occupy this space appear to be engrossed in "trade." Each quarter has a different "good" (all of which are identical resource cubes). The protocites have an elaborate "trade" network in which these "goods" move, and the Noma AI alters their value based on arcane mathematical experiments into economics.

#### 4,7 The Proof

This appears to be an insanely tangle of angles and light. The structures are constructed according to completely alien geometry, to demonstrate an obscure mathematical proof.

#### 5,2 - The Mirror

This hex appears to be a Bytopia-like mirrored up and down plane, where all buildings have an identical corresponding structure in the "up" plane. All protocite movements are mirrored as well. Only the PCs are not represented in the mirror - the "up" plane proves to be a holographic copy, but the illusion uses hardlight and altered gravity - the layers meet at the pinnacle of a large ziggurat, where gravitational anomalies make it seem as though gravity reverses at the midpoint to allow progress into the "up" plane, but in fact those who do so are simply returning to the base of the "down" plane's ziggurat.

#### 5,3 - The Tower

A gleaming tower surrounded by thousands of shanty huts. The Speaker dwells in the tower, and laborers bring "tribute" to the speaker like medieval serfs. The tower is full of helically interwoven spiral staircases, all of which are occupied by laborers waiting in line to present their "tribute." None of them speaks, and the "tribute" appears to largely be reclaimed garbage and scraps of polyfluid constructs. These are then disposed of in a giant grinder like the Mouth, recycling them into the city.

#### 5,4 - Panopticon

Modern Looking skyscrapers, streets, and lampposts. Shops with inventories (all of which are merely polyfluid replicas of real goods), restaurants, apartments, and offices. All windows are actually one-way mirrors facing in. All the doors lock from the outside.

#### 5,5 - The Shifting City

The structures composing this sector are on tracks built into the ground on a massive grid. Each edifice moves constantly, albeit at a pace of only several inches per hour. As a result, the sector's layout shifts continually, with alleys becoming avenues and areas exchanging locations. Remaining in one place for any length of time can be disorienting for sapient creatures, as their surroundings shift gradually yet undeniably.

#### 5,6 - Cross Section

Thin slices of more normal structure have been interspersed and spliced together, filled with a hodgepodge of buildings, where some seem to be vertical slices of preexisting structures, as though they were cut out from a modern city on some alien world and slotted into place next to other equally out-of-place edifices.

#### 5,7 - The Hive

Here, odd sky bridges connect globular mounds similar to those that social insects on other worlds build. There are no protocites currently in this sector.

#### 6,3 - The Stairs

This hex is formatted to resemble a modern city, with all the buildings traversable only by staircases on the exterior of the buildings. Most of the structures are between fifteen and thirty stories in height, with one seventy-story structure in the dead center, clad in so many interwoven staircases that they resemble scaffolding. Protocites march up and down the staircases.

#### 6,4 - Fractals

These structures are made of bizarre tessellating three dimensional fractals.

#### 6,5 - Machine Reef

Structures and lighting in this sector mimic a biological reef, the violet light providing some relief from the yellows and oranges of the sun. A trained Engineer can tell that, instead of being built out from a skeletal frame, the reef-like edifices are formed from countless small, jagged, rudimentary shapes sutured together with flexible strands. Although the structures are in open air, their design seems centered on principles of fluid dynamics. A character trained in Engineering, Life Science, or Physical Science can tell these buildings would indeed serve well as an undersea complex.

#### 6,6 - Sorting Grounds

In this large warehouse, scores of simplified protocite speakers (CR 1/2; no parse or sensory overload abilities) interact with metallic gray cubes about half their size on a flat floor. Seen from far enough away, the chaos might seem to have some order; tracking the actions of any individual robot reveals that the programming is very simple. Each construct wanders in a random direction until it encounters another robot, an obstacle, or a cube. Each robot has different criteria for what to do next, whether it's stopping for a specific time, turning in a new direction, dropping a cube if it's holding one, picking up a cube if it has none, and so forth. Watching a robot long enough reveals the cycles of its behavior. Given sufficient time, most metallic cubes might make their way into a single organized pile. Hours later, they might be scattered across the warehouse in a seemingly random arrangement. Other speakers wander the floor like impartial overseers, while a reclaimer patrols the perimeter, devouring any smaller protocite that ceases functioning.

#### 6,7 - Shiver Shell

This structure is shaped like a nautilus shell, a spiraling series of chambers that grow smaller and smaller as they curve in toward a tiny central chamber. The temperature in each

chamber, starting from the largest and proceeding inward, is colder than the last, until the final chamber, which comes within a fraction of a percent of absolute zero. Multiple speakers are frozen solid in the inner chambers, each leaning toward the next chamber as though struggling to proceed when their movement was arrested. A character trained in Engineering or Physical Science realizes the speakers closer to the center have modifications designed to insulate them from the cold. All have had their data cores removed.

#### 7,4 - The Ruins

The buildings in this sector appear to be the ruins of an incredibly ancient city (Sivv). Closer inspection reveals the “ruins” to be pristine fabrications, crafted to deliberately look old. Here, bands of protocites act out conflicts over “resources,” all of which appear to be purposeless boxes similar to those being sorted in 6,6. The protocites will ignore PCs unless they interact with the “resources,” at which point they’ll attack.

#### 7,5 - The City and the City

Two distinct architectural styles (one boxy and brutalist, the other arched and vaguely North African) are represented here. Large sections of the hex are all in one style or all in the other, with “contested” areas a mix of both. As the party traverses the hex, they can witness reclaimers breaking buildings of both styles down into polyfluid, and laborers constructing new ones. There does not appear to be rhyme or reason to this process.

#### 7,6 - Plaza (Landing Site)

#### 7,7 - Citadel of Bones

Built in imitation of a Necropolis, examination of the bones demonstrates that they are artificial creations of Polyfluid. The hex is extremely detailed, and every object is designed to mimic fitted-bone construction. The houses and buildings are furnished with more faux-bone items, creating the illusion of a “normal” medium-density town - most buildings are four to six stories high, but several large spires resembling spinal columns jut seemingly at random from the neighborhoods.