



RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

From the Keeper's Vaults came they, say I,
From the Keeper's Vaults down deep.
Though eager hands might stretch with greed,
The centuries of sleep
Do draw from blackest Orv
What mortals shan't perceive.
Be twice wary of the tears
From eyes that cannot weep.
Of hope, place naught, place naught, say I
On seeds you cannot reap.
And of such gifts, it's best, say I,
To let the Keepers keep.

—Azlanti verse written during the Age of Destiny, author unknown

In the primordial ages before the dawn of humanity, the ancient and alien races that stole upon Golarion wove potent magic into numerous artifacts whose sheer grandeur and immense power provided them the capability to shape the world. While the *Onyx Key* plays a vital role throughout the Ironfang Invasion Adventure Path, and in this adventure in particular, it is just one of many strangely magnificent relics hidden away by the enigmatic xiomorn race. The xiomorns transformed immense subterranean caverns into fantastic new realms known as Vaults, forging artifacts from rare materials that existed only in the most isolated regions deep below Golarion's surface. The most powerful xiomorns are therefore known as the Vault Builders, and they used these powerful relics themselves or passed them down to the lower xiomorn caste, the Vault Keepers. These artifacts gave sentience to stone, threaded biological properties into water and crystal, and transformed darkness into various forms of useful energy. Formed of multidimensional shapes perceptible to few races other than the xiomorns, the true structures of these artifacts are still incomprehensible to the younger humanoid races.

Many xiomorn artifacts are massive in size. The xiomorns constructed huge mechanical apparatuses with the appearance of alien insects; their spindly limbs, fitted with chisels, picks, shears, and other tools, aided the xiomorns in growing and sculpting the realms within the Vaults. When these gigantic devices outlived their initial purposes, met with some mishap that caused them to malfunction, or simply proved too inconvenient to relocate, the xiomorns abandoned them. Virtually none of these titans still function. Other races that encounter these long-immobile mechanisms usually mistake them for bizarre insectile statues or the decaying exoskeletons of titanic, long-dead mantises.

To aid navigation of their expansive subterranean empire, xiomorns erected numerous way stations in the form of towering three-sided obelisks. These obelisks projected long-range psychic beacons, which the xiomorns believed that they alone could perceive. The stations also provided visitors with basic provisions, healing, magical transportation, and temporary bio-enhancements. Xiomorn operators could manipulate the obelisks' psychic auras to send complex messages, enabling a vast communication network throughout the planet. The xiomorns did not anticipate that the other advanced race to inhabit Golarion, the aboleths, could eavesdrop on these psychic communications. After the xiomorns realized the extent of aboleth psychic power, they also discovered that the aboleths had been secretly raiding the obelisks for supplies. The xiomorns permanently shut down the way stations, but a rare few still sputter with psychic energy or contain forgotten caches of treasure.

A significant number of early xiomorn artifacts focused on either manipulating their crystalline seeds

or providing additional means of expanding their vast empire. As with the *Onyx Key*, abstruse devices allowed xiomorns to establish gateways to realms hidden deep beneath the surface or sequestered within the Plane of Earth. Such artifacts provide GMs with numerous opportunities to draw the PCs into long-term explorations of the midnight depths of Orv or the Inner Planes.

As the xiomorns expanded their subterranean empire and broadened their experiments to incorporate other creatures they encountered, conflict with other races increased. To assist in the skirmishes that the xiomorns seemed to be facing on every front, as well as with the wide-ranging wars against the aboleths, the xiomorns turned away from building artifacts that helped to improve their Vaults or assisted with travel. Instead, they focused on artifacts designed to control and defend passages from invaders, gather intelligence on their enemies, and demonstrate overwhelming might in key clashes. These artifacts were often hastily created by the Vault Keepers; without the wisdom of the Vault Builders to guide their design, these artifacts were frequently as dangerous to their creators as to their enemies. One of these devices, a doomsday device that triggered prematurely, created the poisonous radioactive wasteland in the Vault now known as the Black Desert.

The xiomorns were constantly stretched thin between warring with the aboleths, maintaining control over their immense Vaults, and keeping their unstable artifacts from slipping into enemy hands. In the end, when the xiomorns were forced to flee Golarion or risk extinction by the aboleths, they left many of their dangerous artifacts behind. Although the xiomorns once protected these artifacts with powerful wards and traps, the long march of years has weakened these safeguards.

Not all Vault Keepers fled Golarion, although far too few remain to continue the vast experiments into life and evolution established by the Vault Builders ages ago. The remaining Vault Keepers use the artifacts created by their forebears to maintain their Vaults as best they can. Other artifacts have been stolen away by the aboleths or discovered by the more recent races to occupy Orv, such as drow, urdefhans^{B2}, and even fortunate explorers from the surface. The wonders created by the Vault Builders permeate any adventure in Orv, whether in the nature and shape of the Vaults, the carefully established evolution of its denizens, or the fabulous artifacts used to shape life and wage war there.

The four artifacts below typify artifacts of xiomorn origin. While their construction seems strange by contemporary standards, each item has a comprehensible purpose and provides its owner with remarkable powers. These items can be used to draw PCs deeper into the mysteries of Golarion's ancient past or to assist them in their goals for the future.

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BESTIARY

CUBIC SPIRAL

This towering, blocky formation of gleaming semitranslucent crystal spirals up to a height of 20 feet. Six narrow holes of different diameters pierce the crystal spiral: three on one side of the artifact and three on the opposite side. A third face contains jagged stripes, and the fourth side sprouts several tiny clusters of minerals.

CUBIC SPIRAL		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT none	CL 20th	WEIGHT 20 tons
AURA strong (all schools)		

The *cubic spiral* regulates the environment around it when directed by a knowledgeable operator. Shallow gouges on one side of the block serve as a bed in which up to 20 tiny clusters of cubic minerals blossom and grow. Plucking a cluster is a standard action, and plucked clusters regrow on the relic in 1 month. Plucked clusters have no powers of their own, but inserting a cluster into one of the six holes in the *cubic spiral* as a standard action activates one of the artifact's functions. Once a user activates a function of the *cubic spiral*, the function remains active until complete (if a limitation is specified below), until the user commands the artifact to cease its function, or until the user is no longer within 1,000 feet. Except for the diminution function, the *cubic spiral* can engage in only one function at a time.

Diminution (front facing, smallest hole): The *cubic spiral* shrinks to any size between its full size and 1 foot in height, as commanded. The weight of the artifact decreases proportionally with its height; at its smallest size, it weighs 150 pounds.

Drill (front facing, middle hole): This function activates only if the *cubic spiral* is at its smallest size. The *cubic spiral* spins and pushes its way relentlessly in an indicated direction, boring an 18-inch-diameter hole into solid objects at a rate of 10 feet per round. The *cubic spiral* can bore through any material with a hardness of less than 20. Creatures can move easily out of the way of the spinning artifact, but those that don't take 20d6 points of slashing damage (no save). The user indicates a maximum distance when this function is activated, up to 1,000 feet. Once it has reached this distance, or if it cannot proceed to the full distance, the *cubic spiral* returns to the user through the borehole.

Slide (front facing, largest hole): The *cubic spiral* slides rapidly in an indicated direction at a speed of 100 feet per round. This movement need not be along the ground, as the artifact can slide through the air or across water. The *cubic spiral* deals 20d6 points of bludgeoning damage to creatures and objects in its path (Reflex DC 20 negates). If it's not at its full size, reduce the damage dealt by 1d6 for each foot smaller than its full size. The user indicates a maximum distance when this function is activated, up to 1,000 feet. The *cubic spiral's* slide stops at the end of this distance or if it encounters a wall or other impassable object. If airborne at the end of its slide, it falls but takes no damage regardless of the distance fallen.

Temperature Regulation (rear facing, smallest hole): The *cubic spiral* radiates waves of heat or cold to adjust the temperature within 1,000 feet. The user indicates a temperature between -20° F and 140° F, and the artifact maintains that temperature within the area.

Tornado (rear facing, middle hole): The *cubic spiral* spins quickly in place, creating an effect like a stationary tornado (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 439) within 100 feet and creating severe winds within 1,000 feet.

Vacuum (rear facing, largest hole): The *cubic spiral* destroys all air adjacent to it each round. Creatures adjacent to the artifact can't speak, use breath weapons, cast spells with verbal components, or do anything else that requires breathing. If the *cubic spiral* is in a sealed chamber, air-breathing creatures in the chamber eventually suffocate.

DESTRUCTION

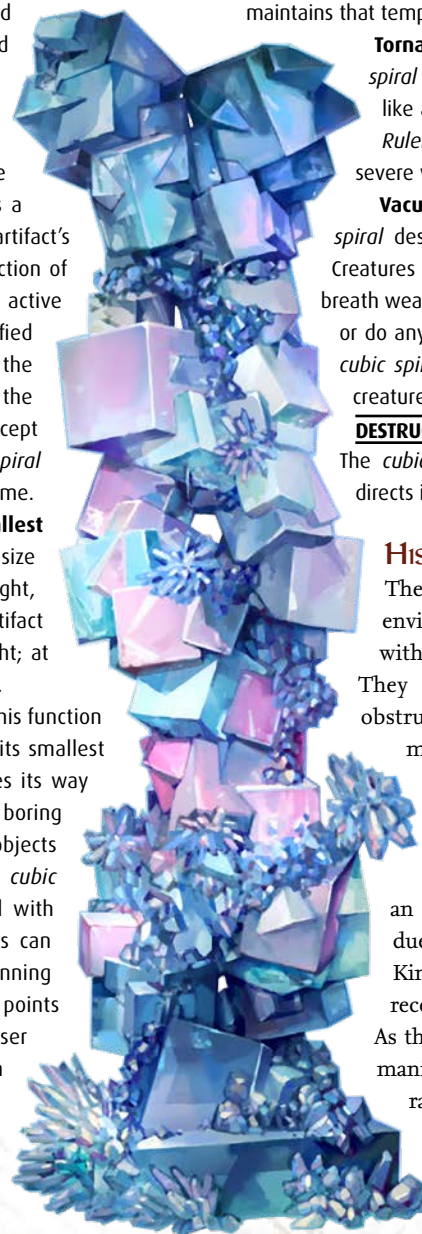
The *cubic spiral* is destroyed if a mindless user directs it to use its drill function on itself.

HISTORY

The xiomorns used *cubic spirals* as environmental regulation mechanisms within their underground realms. They also employed the relics to create obstructions in subterranean tunnels to manipulate their enemies' movements.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The *cubic spiral* could be devastating if it falls into the wrong hands, such as an expansionist urdefhan clan, tyrannical duergar, or agents of Ayrzul, the Fossilized King, and the PCs might be asked to recover the artifact from hostile forces. As the *cubic spiral* is ancient, it might begin manifesting its powers spontaneously and randomly, even when still lost in the depths of Orv, requiring the PCs to reset it in order to save endangered allies or the entire ecosystem of Golarion's expansive Darklands.



EARTH'S EYE

This small, circular geode is about the size of a gold piece and broken open on one side to reveal azure and amaranthine layers of crystal. These strata scintillate with a faint glow.

EARTH'S EYE		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT headband	CL 18th	WEIGHT —
AURA strong transmutation		

The *earth's eye* is a small geode that resembles a crystalline eye that sparkles brilliantly. When the *earth's eye* is worn on a headband and positioned in the center of the forehead, it creates a mental bond between the wearer and all natural, unworked stone within 200 feet. By concentrating, the wearer can alter this stone in the following ways. These changes are permanent but are too gradual to damage most creatures and objects.

Calcific Alterations: The wearer pulls mineral-rich moisture through the stone to create stalactites, stalagmites, and similar rock formations. These formations are the same type of stone as the surrounding area, and they appear to be seamless, natural growths. This change requires 1 full round of concentration for each 5-foot square affected.

Create Habitat: The wearer draws forth a natural spring or pool of clear water, causes edible molds or fungi to sprout, or opens narrow vents that bring in fresh air from elsewhere. This change requires 1 full round of concentration for each 5-foot square affected.

Crystalline Forms: The wearer transforms stone into translucent crystal. Sighted creatures can see through up to 30 feet of translucent crystal; thicker crystal is too cloudy to see through. The wearer can also transform nonmagical crystal into ordinary stone. This change requires 1 minute of concentration for each 5-foot square affected.

Reduce Stone: The wearer can remove stone entirely, but the resulting open space appears natural. Anything previously supported by stone that was removed entirely—such as a cavern ceiling—collapses. This change requires 1 minute of concentration for each 5-foot square affected.

Stone Tell: The wearer can cause a 5-foot-square area of stone to ripple slightly, displaying momentary images of creatures and objects that have touched, used, or passed by the stone. This functions as *stone tell* but works only on natural stone. This requires 10 minutes of concentration.

The *earth's eye* does not function when in natural sunlight.

DESTRUCTION

A mortal wearer must use the *earth's eye* to entomb herself entirely within stone, with no open space within 200 feet other than the space the wearer occupies. The wearer

must then cast *flesh to stone* on herself to merge with the surrounding earth, destroying herself and the *earth's eye*.

HISTORY

The *earth's eye* is an old xiomorn artifact used to shape the earth and create various habitats before the race discovered the *Vault Seeds*. Even in the distant past, when the xiomorns first came to Golarion, they already considered the *earth's eye* to be embarrassingly primitive, much too slow and crude for their expansive experiments. They have since made efforts to collect all primitive artifacts of this type and destroy them, as well as to hunt down any existing records of the existence of *earth's eyes* and eliminate them.

Although the terrain created by the *earth's eye* appears to be natural, xiomorns can identify stone modified by the artifact at a glance. It is unclear how xiomorns are able to perceive this difference, since such alterations don't radiate a magical aura and are not apparent to most other means of detecting such changes. While few creatures ever come across even one of these artifacts, xiomorns postulate that there are likely still several *earth's eyes* in existence, as they were common in the early days of xiomorn planar exploration. For those who know of their existence, *earth's eyes* are a tempting quest object.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Though the *earth's eye* produces gradual benign effects, unscrupulous users can cause trouble with it, creating adventure opportunities for the PCs. For example, PCs operating in a large city might be asked to investigate recent surges of monsters arising from the sewers. The PCs find that the sewers have been extensively transformed into natural caverns, displacing the prior sewer residents. The changes have been wrought by a clan of wererats using the *earth's eye* to tunnel beneath bank vaults in the city to prepare for a single night of robbery. Alternatively, the PCs might uncover the entrance to an ancient tomb in subterranean caverns but require rest or supplies before venturing in. A band of rival adventurers learns of the discovery and enters the tomb before the PCs. This group finds the *earth's eye* within the tomb and immediately begins using the artifact to turn the area into a death trap of concealed pits and dangerously unstable stalactites.

Recovering the *earth's eye* causes the PCs only more difficulties, particularly if they are careless or flagrant in its use. As xiomorns consider the artifact to be something of an embarrassment, one of the few remaining Vault Keepers might send its servants, such as elementals or pechs^{B2}, to recover it so that it can be destroyed.

Vault of the Onyx Citadel

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BESTIARY

TENTACLE OF THE VAULTS

This thin rubbery tentacle is 8 feet long and reeks of an alchemical preservative. The base of the tentacle appears to have been torn from a living creature, and both ends are fitted with decorative crystals.

TENTACLE OF THE VAULTS		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT none	CL 20th	WEIGHT 8 lbs.
AURA strong (all schools)		

The *tentacle of the Vaults* is an artifact fashioned by the xiomorns from an aboleth tentacle to aid in their wars against the piscine masterminds. The tentacle is 8 feet in length and too rubbery and flexible to carry comfortably; humanoids find it more convenient to wear the *tentacle of the Vaults* wrapped around the waist like a belt or over the shoulder as a sash, but no matter how the tentacle is worn, it does not occupy a magic item slot. The tentacle's owner can cast *dispel magic* and *remove disease* each five times per day.

The tentacle's primary power activates when its owner tosses it onto the ground and speaks a command word as a standard action. The tentacle animates, transforming into a construct with the statistics listed in the paragraph below until the owner commands the construct to return to an inanimate tentacle as a free action. The construct obeys and serves its owner. It understands all languages spoken by its owner but does not speak. If the construct is destroyed, the artifact reverts to an inanimate tentacle that can be used again at a later time. The *tentacle of the Vaults* can be animated for up to 1 hour each day. This time does not need to be consecutive, but it must be used in 1-minute increments.

When animated, the *tentacle of the Vaults* has the statistics of a Medium animated object (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 14) with a hardness of 20, the grab special attack, and the following special abilities.

Aboleth-Bane Aura (Su) A magical aura extends in a 20-foot radius centered on the construct. All creatures within the aura, including the construct, gain a +8 bonus on attack rolls and melee damage rolls against aberrations. Any creature subject to a compulsion effect immediately receives another saving throw to break free from the effect (if one was allowed to begin with) when it enters the aura and at the start of its turn each round that it remains within the aura.

Dispel Illusion (Sp) As a swift action, the construct can cast *dispel magic* (CL 20th) on an illusion spell within 100 feet. This ability does not count against the number of uses of *dispel magic* granted by the artifact.

DESTRUCTION

If the *tentacle of the Vaults* is soaked in the necromantic fluids from the Vault called the Land of Black Blood and then used to cast *remove disease* on a mythic aboleth (*Pathfinder RPG Mythic Adventures* 178) within 1 day, the mythic aboleth permanently loses its slime ability and the artifact is destroyed.

HISTORY

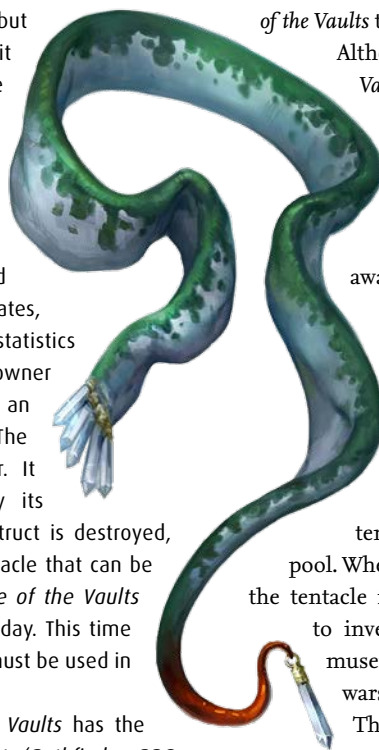
When the Vault Builders first came to subterranean Golarion to construct the Vaults and begin their experiments, they were geographically distant from the ancient aboleth empire, and the two groups rarely interacted. As the xiomorns expanded their massive Vaults to include entire oceans, however, conflict with the aboleths was inevitable. The xiomorns created a number of devices to aid in this struggle, including the *tentacle of the Vaults* torn from the body of a mythic aboleth.

Although the xiomorns used the *tentacle of the Vaults* against their aboleth foes for many years, it was eventually lost. While few humanoids understand the power and history of the artifact, aboleths remember the hated weapon and strive to recover it so it can be hidden away or destroyed.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The PCs might hear about the *tentacle of the Vaults* from a refugee from a besieged dwarven mining colony; she explains that skum overran the colony after an odd rubbery tentacle was discovered at the bottom of a pool. Whether or not the PCs help break the siege, the tentacle is gone. The PCs might later be hired to investigate a series of break-ins targeting museums and libraries with collections about wars between prehistoric inhuman races. The PCs can discover that the perpetrators are minions of a powerful aboleth seeking information about an artifact called the *tentacle of the Vaults*. Ultimately, the PCs hear of a secret auction involving a rubbery sculpture of mysterious origin in a coastal town, such as Riddleport. The auction is a hoax organized by an infamous criminal, although the criminal genuinely has the *tentacle of the Vaults* and does not realize that she is setting herself up as a target for the aboleth and its minions.

Should the PCs obtain the *tentacle of the Vaults*, their lives are likely to become considerably more fraught, as both the xiomorns and the aboleth are highly motivated to get it back—the aboleth pursues it out of pique that such a humiliating weapon against its race exists, and the xiomorns out of desire to reclaim this powerful tool that might help them subdue and humble their ancient foes.



SPEAR OF SHARDS

This weathered spear of lightweight metal is topped with a slender shard of pale crystal that pulses with a soft amber glow. Set underneath this crystal head is a ring set with seven small teardrop-shaped crystals that glow with a similar amber light; five settings on the ring are empty. The haft is engraved with a complex pattern that seems at times to shift and reform itself.

SPEAR OF SHARDS		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT none	CL 18th	WEIGHT 10 lbs.
AURA strong divination		

The *spear of shards* is a +6 returning wounding spear created by the Vault Keepers to guide them through the convoluted passages between Golarion's Vaults and to keep dangerous subterranean creatures at bay. The large crystal composing the spear's head is mounted on a 5-foot shaft of lightweight metal that swirls with a complex pattern that every so often appears to shift. A ring designed to fit a dozen smaller teardrop-shaped crystals connects the base of the spear's head to the shaft, although only seven of the 12 sockets contain a crystal. Each of these smaller crystals is about an inch long and angles slightly outward on one side of the ring to act like barbs when the spear is lodged deeply in flesh. Each of these crystals pulses with a warm amber light. Any xiomorn within 1 mile of the *spear of shards* is automatically aware of its presence, as well as the distance and direction to the artifact.

Each of the smaller crystals is attuned to a different Vault beneath Golarion. When the wielder of the *spear of shards* rhythmically taps one of these smaller crystals as a full-round action, the spear identifies the path to the attuned Vault and can direct its wielder unerringly to the Vault, as per *find the path*. This effect lasts until the spear reaches the attuned Vault or until the crystal at the head of the spear is tapped in the same manner. The five missing crystals are lost but, if rediscovered, could be attached to the *spear of shards* and reveal the way to their attuned Vaults as well.

The *spear of shards* has sufficient intelligence to remain staunchly loyal to its xiomorn creators. If wielded by a non-xiomorn, it either refuses to provide directions or intentionally provides erroneous directions to keep the wielder away from the Vaults. If used by a non-xiomorn in combat, the *spear of shards* damages the wielder rather than the target on any attack roll that is a natural 1, as a *cursed backbiter spear*. When the *spear of shards* is used by a non-xiomorn in combat against a xiomorn, any attack roll other than a natural 20 results in an attack against the wielder instead. A non-xiomorn can use the Use Magic Device skill to emulate a xiomorn and trick the *spear of shards*, but the DC of this check is increased by 10 (to DC 35) to reflect the spear's suspicion.

DESTRUCTION

If a creature born in sunlight convinces the *spear of shards* to guide him to all 12 of the Vaults represented by the crystals ringing the spear's head (which would require discovering and reattaching the missing crystals), the artifact is destroyed.

HISTORY

Although the Vault Builders are powerful, they are not omniscient and did not automatically know the path from one Vault to another. Working together, 12 high-ranking Vault Builders created the *spear of shards*, each affixing a single crystal to the spearhead's ring and attuning the artifact to the location of those Vaults over which they held charge. The politics over who was to keep the spear and how its use was to be allotted immediately became fraught, and five of the creators removed their crystals from the artifact in protest. In the ensuing upheaval, these five stones were lost—or perhaps intentionally carried elsewhere. The seven remaining creators managed to come up with an alternate solution to make the *spear of shards* function, but the solution drained the life force of one of the creators each time it was employed. The Vault Builders used it only three times before deciding to lock it away and keep its existence and history secret.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The PCs might learn that an unknown entity has been murdering and mutilating xiomorns, hoping to use pieces of the rare creatures to activate the *spear of shards*. These murderous actions incite turmoil throughout Orv, and the PCs must stop these attacks before the xiomorns decide to respond with long-dormant doomsday weapons within the Vaults to eradicate the assassin. Killing the assassin puts the *spear of shards* into the PCs' hands, but with the xiomorns already on edge, the PCs might make further enemies by keeping the fickle and arrogant artifact.

Instead of finding the *spear of shards*, the PCs might come across one of the crystals lost from its ring and not realize they hold the key to finding a lost Vault. The PCs soon become the targets of a cabal of drow assassins who want to murder them and steal the crystal. These drow either have the *spear of shards* or know where to find it, and they understand how to use it. If the PCs can turn the tables on these wicked assassins and compel the *spear of shards* to provide them with directions, they open the way to a new Vault with its own adventures.

Should the PCs succeed in retrieving the *spear of shards*, the xiomorns are unlikely to allow the relic to remain in the hands of lesser creatures—especially given their records of its activation without the five missing shards, which might cause it to draw on the xiomorns' life force. If the PCs obtain one or more of the shards, ambitious xiomorns will most likely attempt to seize them.

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