

Traveler's Guide to the Galaxy

Vol. 003

Siron II



*Necromancers
of the Northwest*

STARFINDER
COMPATIBLE



Credits

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Siron II

Volcanic planet rich in minerals, but highly unstable.

Diameter: $x1/2$; **Mass:** $x1/6$

Gravity: $x5/8$

Atmosphere: Thin

Day: 28 hours; **Year** 3.5 years

The second planet in the Siron system, Siron II is a small and inhospitable planet that is largely devoid of organic life. Wracked by frequent seismic activity and covered with volcanoes, visiting the planet is highly dangerous; however, Siron II is rich in rare and valuable minerals, which has resulted in various mining operations throughout the years, both legal and illegal. Although it doesn't drive nearly as many people to Siron II as mining does, the planet's unique tectonic activity, as well as a few ruins from what appear to be an extinct indigenous population, also bring a variety of scientists and archaeologists to the planet in search of new discoveries.

Currently, Siron II is controlled by a transplanetary corporation called Bella Cose, which claims to own the rights to the entire planet. Bella Cose maintains a number of city-sized, mobile mining rigs that slowly wander the planet's surface, pausing for a few days or weeks at a time to collect precious ore and minerals, which are then processed, collected, and shipped off for use elsewhere.

Although not made to be aesthetically pleasing, the city-rigs are nonetheless an awesome sight to behold, as the massive vehicles crawl across the landscape on ten pairs of massive, spider-like legs. These legs are retracted into the bottom of the city-rig's hull when not in use, allowing it to lower itself to ground level, from which massive drills on the underside of the rig can dig initial mining shafts, which are then expanded on by crews of robot miners, overseen by skilled technicians. Because the majority of the actual labor is done by robots, the massive rig-cities often contain only a few dozen actual people, all of whom are Bella Cose employees. Most of those aboard the rigs are either technicians and engineers who keep the robots and machinery functioning correctly, geologists who conduct surveys and perform statistical analysis to determine where to direct the city-rigs, or security personnel.

While Bella Cose's claim to Siron II has never been successfully challenged legally, they have been challenged practically. Tiny, illegal mining operations crop up on the planet with relative frequency, flying under the radar of Bella Cose's planetary security. Lacking the scale and equipment of the city-rigs, these operations are often highly dangerous even without the risk of being caught: the planet's unpredictable and violent seismic activity is very punishing on amateur miners, and the toxic surface atmosphere and lack of water make for very low chances of survival should something go wrong. On top of these dangers, Bella Cose proves quite aggressive in defending its claim if it detects any unauthorized mining, and anyone caught doing so has their equipment and vehicles seized,

and are fined heavily, with anyone unable to pay the fine being forced to work it off in dangerous mining labor. Still, a skilled team with an accurate geological survey chart can potentially mine a fortune in just a few days, ensuring that people keep making the attempt.

While most geologists who study Siron II are on the payroll of Bella Cose, and are primarily interested in finding pockets of valuable ore and helping the city-rigs avoid natural disasters, some geologists are drawn to the planet for more purely scientific reasons. The exact cause of the planet's instability is hotly debated, but ultimately unknown. Based on estimates of the planet's age and mineral composition, it would generally be expected to have settled into a much more stable state. Scientists wishing to study the planet can receive permits from Bella Cose, allowing them to bring teams to perform field research, and occasionally the corporation even funds a few of these experiments itself, but the company not only keeps a very close eye on researchers, but has been accused on several occasions of interfering with the research. Further, a clause in the contract for obtaining a permit gives Bella Cose the right to prevent the work from being published, a right it has exercised on more than one occasion.

Outside of the Bella Cose mining rigs, there isn't much on the planet that could be considered hospitable. Siron II is devoid of any indigenous organic life, although it is home to a strange species of animated, crystalline structures, known by visitors to the planet as Sironian killer crystals. Officially referred to as *harmonicae medietatis mineralibus magnis*, heavy lobbying by Bella Cose has prevented these crystals from being classified as living beings, although no one who has ever encountered one has much doubt on the subject. The crystals are highly aggressive and incredibly dangerous, although this was not always the case, and prior to the last 30 years or so, the strange crystals typically remained stationary unless they were damaged. Now they are far more active, and in a few cases even seem to be actively seeking out mining rigs and assaulting them, unprovoked.

The one draw that the planet has besides mining and geological research is archaeology. Although few in number, the planet is dotted with a handful of ancient ruins, belonging to an unknown civilization. The ruins are estimated to be roughly 3,000 years old, and heavily feature stone megaliths, although there is currently some debate amongst scholars as to whether the megaliths were actually a common feature, or if they are simply the only structures to have survived on the inhospitable planet for so long. As with everything else, access to the ruins is rather strictly controlled by Bella Cose, and there have been only a few research teams allowed over the years. The question on everyone's minds regarding the ruins is whether they belong to an extinct, indigenous population, or whether they were left by visitors to the planet, and, in either case, what caused their creators to vanish?



Settlements

Siron II possesses little in the way of traditional settlements. The following are major population centers on the planet.

Crystal Cavern: Officially referred to as dig site 112-396-C, this large cavern was uncovered by miners a decade or so ago, completely by accident, in the course of standard mining operations. It is, by far, the largest gathering of Sironian killer crystals recorded to date, and estimates place thousands of the things in the cavern. There are also reports, difficult to verify, of crystalline structures, leading some to believe that the cavern is actually some kind of city, though Bella Cose deals harshly with such rumors.

Epsidiron: These ancient stone ruins, named for a large obelisk which appears to bear the same word in a dozen different languages, the only known one of which is Elven, have been uninhabited for years. Bella Cose sent two teams to investigate the ruins, both of which had little of note to report, although one of the expeditions had a casualty rate of over 50%, which the company did its best to hush up. It is currently the site of an unauthorized archaeological dig, which has so far managed to avoid intervention by Bella Cose.

PORC-2: Short for Primary Operations and Refueling Center, the unofficially nicknamed "Pork 2" is the largest of the various mobile mining rigs that wander the planet. Over ten times larger than the next-largest rigs, it is actually able to take those smaller city-sized machines aboard in order to repair and refuel them. The entire

mobile base is also capable of space flight, and is one of a fleet of six maintained by Bella Cose, although it is the only one of its class currently in the Siron system.

System

The Siron system consists of a total of three planets and five moons, all of which orbit Siron, a relatively small red star. Lacking any intelligent life, all of the planets in the system are simply referred to by the system name and their number in order from the sun.

Siron I: This tiny, barren planet is completely devoid of atmosphere, and routinely reaches temperatures of 700 degrees Fahrenheit. Because of the harsh conditions, only cursory surveys of the planet have been performed, and so far they have turned up nothing of note, although a few unconfirmed reports indicate that it may be being used as a base of operations for a group of pirates.

Siron III: Rather small for a gas giant, this planet rests over ten times as far from the system's sun than Siron II. Frigid and lifeless, the planet is home to three moons, all of which are also barren. The third moon was once home to a rather short-lived hydroponics research colony, which attempted to use unique chemical compounds found in Siron III's atmosphere to grow supercrops. The experiment ended suddenly and without explanation, and the base was abandoned. Rumors state that there were no survivors, although these claims are usually dismissed as crazy conspiracy.

SIRONIAN KILLER CRYSTALS

This spiky, translucent crystalline outgrowth bears few traditional signs of life, although it does emit a constant humming noise, and a faint blue-green glow seems to emanate from within.

SIRONIAN KILLER CRYSTALS

CR 8

XP 4,800

N Large

Init -2; **Senses** blindsight (thought) 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE HP 99

EAC 17; **KAC** 18

Fort +9; **Ref** +7; **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities harmonic resonance, refract beams;

Immunities fire, ooze immunities; **Resistances** acid 5, bludgeoning 5, cold 10, electricity 10, piercing 10, slashing 10

Weaknesses vulnerable to sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., burrow 20 ft.

Melee slam +15 (1d12+10 B)

Ranged focused light +13 (1d10+8 F)

Special Attacks detonation

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +12)

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 18), *mind link*

3/day—*force blast* (DC 19), *mind thrust* (2nd level; DC 19), *see invisibility*, *shield other*

1/day—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *synaptic pulse* (DC 20)

STATISTICS

Str +2; **Dex** -2; **Con** +6; **Int** +0; **Wis** +2; **Cha** +4

Skills Mysticism +21, Physical Science +21

Languages Aklo (can't speak); telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, cluster (3–6), or colony (7–12)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Detonation (Ex) A Sironian killer crystal that has been reduced to less than 20 hit points begins to glow with a pulsating red inner light and emit a humming sound. At the beginning of its turn each round thereafter, there is a 20% chance that the crystal detonates, dealing 4d10 points of fire and piercing damage to each creature within 30 feet. A DC 18 Reflex save halves this damage. A Sironian killer crystal also detonates when slain, but the detonation is much less powerful than if it detonates on its own, dealing only 2d10 points of fire and piercing damage.

Harmonic Resonance (Ex) Whenever a Sironian killer crystal suffers 5 or more points of sonic damage from a single attack, it unleashes a pulse of harmonic energy. Each creature within 20 feet suffers 2d6 points of sonic damage and is sickened for 1 round. A DC 18 Fortitude save halves the damage and negates the sickened condition.

Refract Beams (Ex) Whenever a ranged attack targeting a Sironian killer crystal's EAC misses by less than 5, that attack becomes refracted by the Sironian killer crystal's body, and redirected. The Sironian killer crystal makes a ranged attack with a +11 bonus. If the attack hits, the effect is identical to the attack that initially missed the Sironian killer crystal.

Ecology

Natives of the volcanic planet Siron II, Sironian killer crystals are the planet's sole indigenous life form—although, officially speaking, they aren't actually recognized as being "alive." These strange creatures look much like any other crystal formation, albeit far larger than most. They do not have hands, eyes, or mouths, and nearly every aspect of their biology (if one can even call it that, for an ambulant crystal) remains a mystery to modern science. Even such basic questions as whether or not the things have structures resembling internal organs has proven difficult to say with certainty, due to their tendency to detonate when severely damaged.

A Sironian killer crystal in motion can be a disturbing sight the first few times it is witnessed. The crystals do not have limbs or joints in the traditional sense, and rather than moving by normal means, they appear to rapidly grow in a particular direction, their body dissolving behind them as it breaks down into raw materials that then reform at the front. The eyes of a watcher are drawn to the way tiny crystal facets form and grow on the front of the creature, which can make it easy to underestimate how quickly the crystals are actually able to move.

If the crystals were not almost universally hostile to all other forms of life, this movement might be considered beautiful and even serene to watch, but as it is, the disorienting nature of the movement only serves to make the crystals even more deadly.

The extent to which the Sironian killer crystals possess any kind of culture or traditional intelligence is unclear. While there have been numerous documented cases of large groups of Sironian killer crystals being found in close proximity to one another, there are also numerous examples of killer crystals that seem perfectly content to operate on their own. The crystals have no known language, although some have theorized that the mysterious inner light that they generate may be used as some kind of communication method, based on the color, intensity, and frequency of the light pulses. Unfortunately, the crystals' hostility has prevented any dedicated attempts to test this theory.

In truth, almost all information about these crystalline creatures comes from the Bella Cose corporation, a conglomerate that claims the entire Siron II planet, and conducts heavy mining operations there. With access to the planet heavily restricted, it is only mining teams and the few heavily-chaperoned research teams allowed by the corporation that ever interact with these creatures. In recent years, there has been increasing speculation on the galactic internet that the corporation may be suppressing information about the crystals, possibly including knowledge that they may actually be sentient; something which, if true, would challenge the company's claim over the planet. This has led to demands for Bella Cose to allow independent study of the killer crystals, although, to date, the movement remains small enough for the corporation to easily ignore.

Table: Technological Items

Name/Model	Level	Price	Hands	Bulk	Capacity	Usage
DIS-Sifter	11	12,000	-	10	-	-
Scaffolding foam	7	1,500	-	L	-	-
Seismographic alarm	5	1,200	-	L	8	1/3 hours
X-ray mine	4	800	-	L	-	-

Technological Items

The following section presents a number of new mining-related technological items.

DIS-Sifter

This metal container is roughly three feet tall, four feet long, and two feet wide, and bears a simple control panel on the outside. The interior of the lid is fitted with an array of scanners and powerful lasers that can be adjusted to very specific frequencies, allowing the DIS-Sifter to disintegrate all matter held within it, except for those matching certain profiles. Commonly used in mining operations to sort valuable minerals from worthless rock and dirt, most DIS-Sifters come pre-programmed to be able to detect and preserve a variety of different valuable minerals, as well as all forms of organic matter larger than 2 inches in any given dimension. However, an hour of work and a successful DC 30 Computers check allows the DIS-Sifter's security protocols to be overridden, allowing for alternative scanning protocols to be entered. Programming a DIS-Sifter to identify a particular type of material requires an hour and a DC 20 Life Science or Physical Science check, depending on the material to be identified. Setting a DIS-Sifter to scan its current contents and disintegrate everything not fitting one or more of the profiles that have already been created for it takes only a standard action, and it takes the DIS-Sifter 1 minute to perform this function.

Scaffolding Foam

The ultimate in quick and dirty construction, scaffolding foam is used as a fast and effective way to shore up tunnels, allowing mine shafts to be dug much more quickly, with minimal risk of collapse. Stored in a spray-can roughly a foot tall and three inches in diameter, the foam can be sprayed up to five feet by depressing a button on the canister, and each canister contains enough scaffolding foam to fill a 10-foot cube.

The foam is sticky, adhering to any surface that it comes into contact with, and hardens over the course of 10 minutes, after which time it becomes strong and sturdy, if incredibly brittle. A 1-foot-square column of scaffolding foam can support up to 2 tons of weight. However, the

foam is incredibly brittle, allowing it to easily be damaged by impact: it has hardness 8, but only 1 hit point per cubic inch. Scaffolding foam is generally sprayed along the walls and ceilings of mining shafts in order to prevent collapses, but is occasionally used in construction work, although such construction is usually deemed unsafe, and is often illegal.

Although rare, accidents occasionally occur involving scaffolding foam adhering to living creatures. In such cases, the foam can typically be scraped off as a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity. Even if the foam is allowed to harden, because of its brittle nature, a DC 20 Strength check is sufficient for a creature to free itself from encasement in the stuff.

Seismographic Alarm

These relatively compact metal rods are roughly three feet tall, and feature a metal spike on one end, to allow them to more easily be driven into rocks and soil, while the other end features a small, dome-like apparatus containing a digital readout, some simplistic controls, a red light and a speaker. The rods contain delicate seismometers and gyroscopes that allow them to detect movement within the earth, providing a brief advance warning before the effects of any seismic activity are felt.

In order to be effective, a series of at least three seismographic alarms must be inserted into the ground no less than 500 feet apart from one another, and each must be activated using the controls on the top end of the rod. As long as they are active, there is a 30% chance that they will detect any seismic activity that will occur within 500 feet of any of the sensors, and produce an alarm (audible through the speakers on each device, and visible through the red warning light) 1d4 minutes prior to any earthquakes or similar seismic activity. For each additional seismographic alarm used beyond three, this chance increases by 5%, to a maximum of 50% for a total of seven seismic alarms. If seismographic data for the region over the last decade or more is available and fed to the seismographic alarms, the chance further increases by 25%.



Seismographic alarms can also detect the presence of burrowing creatures within 500 feet. This requires a successful Perception check made by the seismographic alarm against the burrowing creature. An array of three seismographic alarms has a +10 bonus on Perception checks made in this way, with this bonus increasing by +2 for each additional sensor in the array.

A seismographic alarm can also be synchronized to a comm unit or computer, allowing it to transmit its readings to a remote location.

X-Ray Mine

Used for surveying potential dig sites, these single-use metal discs are roughly six inches in diameter, allowing them to easily fit in the palm of the hand. An X-ray mine can be activated as a full-round action by placing it firmly against a solid object (three strips of industrial-strength adhesive on the underside of the mine allow it to be easily placed on vertical surfaces), and holding down a button on the top of the mine for several seconds. When activated, the X-ray mine takes an X-ray photograph of the surface it was placed against, viewing everything in a 60-foot cone. The X-ray can see through any amount of stone or dirt, but is not able to pierce metals or plastics. The photo taken by the X-ray mine can be viewed by removing a data chip from the mine and inserting it into a comm device or computer capable of displaying photos.

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Mysteries of the Red Planet

The second planet in the Siron system, Siron II is a small and inhospitable planet that is largely devoid of organic life. Wracked by frequent seismic activity and covered with volcanoes, visiting the planet is highly dangerous; however, Siron II is rich in rare and valuable minerals, which has resulted in various mining operations throughout the years, both legal and illegal. Although it doesn't drive nearly as many people to Siron II as mining does, the planet's unique tectonic activity, as well as a few ruins from what appear to be an extinct indigenous population, also bring a variety of scientists and archaeologists to the planet in search of new discoveries, as well as to study the planet's infamous killer crystals.

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