

# STARWARDEN

## ADARA'S PROMISE

## Kavak Narrative Design

### Narrative Requirements

This planet is the second which the player will visit, but the first in which they'll come across non-natural structures.

The first planet (Torusus) will be where we establish the main throughline of the narrative: family dynamics, mission to find Voel, current state of Fyrael society/SOLUS etc.

This means that Kavak will be the first opportunity we'll have to fill in some of the backstory that is very important to the climax of the game. The Fyrael's past, mos-AI-[c] and so on. Because of this and the fact that we've got a very limited number of locations in which to tell all our story, we need the planet to have been an ancient Fyrael planet.

Narratively this means that a temple complex is unsuitable for the planet, as the Fyrael didn't worship anything in a way that would lead to them building temples and a religious complex wouldn't lend itself to telling the backstory we need.

We need buildings that speak to the Fyrael's past and which can do heavy narrative lifting (environmental storytelling, collectible lore etc.), which suggests a more technological set of buildings.

We don't need to change the conceit behind the level - we still have an archeological dig etc. - but the buildings being dug need a different purpose.

### Who lived there?

The Fyrael lived there during their flight from mos-AI-[c] at the end of the Fracture War.

They were coming to the realisation that their rampant consumerist society was what was killing them, but they had not yet embraced the philosophy of balance with nature (The Ratio) that marks their current societal principles.

## When did they leave, and why?

They left during the final struggles in the Fracture War (tens of thousands of years ago).

They left because mos-AI-[c] found them and they needed to abandon the system, destroying the Rubicon gate (which led to the Xaan system) behind them. This destruction failed, hence why the player can get there.

This was a quick abandonment, but also an organised one. It took months, but evacuating an entire solar system's worth of people in months would have still been as fast as they could do it. This ad-hoc evacuation meant that they didn't have time to erect new buildings to manage it, and had to repurpose ones that already existed, so the larger industrial buildings the player encounters will have evidence of the evacuation overlaid on their original use - painted arrows and signs on walls showing the way to embarkation points, processing areas etc. clearly being later additions to the structures.

## What are the man-made structures the player encounters?

The central dig site - currently the Temple. This will need to be reworked to become a tech facility: a large manufacturing plant which would have included assembly lines, a foundry, design offices etc.

Satellite buildings on the periphery of the central hub building (which could include the admin buildings, design studio and so on)..

Smaller domestic dwellings for the workers around the central hub building.

The central hub building will need to have archeological dig buildings/tents/equipment. Other buildings *can* have this too, but the central building is the one that will require the most of this strand of environmental storytelling.

## What is the architecture like?

It's high tech. The Fyrael were a galaxy-spanning species with FTL travel capabilities and even Rubicon gates which made travel between systems instantaneous, not merely faster than light. This would be reflected in their buildings.

However, even though their tech level would mean that they'd not need to adapt anything to take account of Kavak's environment, they were beginning to see the error of their

consumerist ways, and advances towards The Ratio were being considered and so - more for fashion than any need at that point - their architecture did reflect adaptations towards a more sustainable eco-friendly design. At least on the outside.

That meant that in general buildings were lower, had thicker walls with small windows on sunny aspects, had interior spaces like courtyards/sahns, cloisters, water features, flat roofs with seating areas etc.

Think high tech adobe buildings/arabic architecture, but with Fyrael stylings.

Also, given the extremely rocky nature of the environment of Kavak, there will have been buildings set into cliffs/rock walls for the thermal insulation properties.

The exception to this style would be the central building. That would be the hub of this complex, and have the most importance. It would be where most of the Fyrael in this area worked, so would have needed to be spacious enough to accommodate hundreds, if not thousands, of people. This building would be much taller than the surrounding buildings, emphasising its importance, and also the hubris of the Fyrael. It would be highly decorated and stylised, totally eschewing any environmental considerations, almost defiant against the planet's natural conditions.

## What are the story strands we're telling on this planet?

We're telling three separate stories:

1. Adara's journey (and the player's)
2. Voen's dig experience
3. Part of the backstory of the Fyrael

## Area Narratives

### Landing Area - Start To Facility

This is a 'back way' into the facility, winding down through a canyon before climbing back up to the Facility entrance.

Adara has chosen to land there because the Facility itself - where she knows she has to go to retrace her mother's steps - is visibly populated with SOLUS troops, and given the hostile welcome she received on jumping into the system, she doesn't want to just land next to the Facility and try to gain access.

Because this is a more covert way of accessing the Facility, the landing area will be largely hidden from other parts of the level, with only one small 'vista' showing the level's main point of interest - the Facility hub.

A small building, mostly ruined, is behind and above the landing area. It's accessible via an advanced traversal route, requiring the suit power that Adara gains in this level.

When the player accesses it eventually, they will discover that the building was a house.

Routes from the landing area to the Facility's entrance will need to take advantage of Adara's agility and traversal prowess, as she's making her way through largely 'narrow' crevices (while still being wide enough for camera control!).

There are no SOLUS troops in this section of the level, and no evidence of Voen's expedition. There are ruined sections of ancient Fyrael architecture, as they are dotted around the whole level, but these are so destroyed by rockfalls, erosion and the general passage of time that there's no easy way to tell what buildings they made up. The buildings don't seem to have been built here originally - the ruins have fallen from the top of the canyon, where they were presumably a continuation of the built-up area that is hinted at by the lone building in the landing zone.

We don't see true goo streams in this section, but small trickles of it stretch between puddles, and head into rocks, evidencing how extensive the goo's hold on the planet is. In places the goo seems to have eaten the rock itself, forming larger pools in the middle of wide arena-type openings in the rock canyons.

## The Facility

This is a former production plant which originally included offices, research labs, material storage facilities, a foundry, assembly lines, cafeteria, warehouse and so on.

When the Fyrael discovered that the goo had begun to colonise the system and realised that mos-AI-[c] had discovered them, plans were made to evacuate the system on an ark ship, and the Facility was repurposed into a staging and evacuation centre due to its large size and already functioning communications infrastructure.

There wasn't time to entirely retrofit the whole complex, so instead wayfinding signage was overlaid on the existing walls/floor in order to help civilians find their way to the transports that would take them to the ark ship embarkation points.

In addition, many of the offices were converted hastily into makeshift living quarters for Fyrael who didn't live in the immediate area, but had already had to evacuate due to the spreading goo.

Much of the facility has been destroyed either by the rockfalls/general passage of time and the depredations of the goo, but enough has remained sealed to be of interest to the xeno-archeological dig that Voen was heading.

Adara enters the Facility through a previously-sealed undiscovered doorway, but as she makes her way into more explored territory, she begins to see evidence of not only the dual

use the ancient Fyrael made of the facility, but also of goo colonisation, of the archeological expedition, and of clashes between the goo monsters and SOLUS agents.

The main exterior of the Facility (the entrance leading to the Desert area) is where the archaeological expedition made their entry into the Facility, so this door and area need to show extensive evidence of this - archaeological debris, abandoned equipment and so on, where the expedition stored their stuff before they pulled out when they decided the goo was too much of a threat.

Instead of the actual archaeologists, the entrance area instead contains SOLUS agents, who have been deployed to attempt to eradicate the goo, and capture samples of it for SOLUS to study and eventually use.

## The Desert

The Desert was once a large corporate plaza/park for the workers at the Facility to gather and relax in. It had grass lawns and playing fields etc., all of which has been destroyed by the encroaching sands over the millennia. There were also smaller buildings, corporate sculptures, paved squares with seating, covered pathways (even millennia ago Kavak's sun was merciless) and so on. It was much like a larger Fyrael version of the outside space of the Microsoft Commons complex:



Over time, almost all of this has been eroded or destroyed by a combination of time, tectonic activity and the goo monsters' activities, but some evidence of the original purpose can still be detected.

This area is under heavy SOLUS occupation, and is the location of the archaeological expedition's base camp. This base camp has been abandoned because of assaults by goo monsters. The equipment and tents etc. have been left behind, along with SOLUS agents who are defending it.

The balance of activity here (in terms of dressing) is weighted heavily in favour of the SOLUS expedition. There is heavy evidence of the SOLUS expedition's activities, but nothing (aside from the ruins) to suggest anything of the ancient Fyrael's use of the area.

This area will be rich in evidence (audio logs/written reports/whatever we decide to use) of Voen's expedition, and will do a lot of the backstory exposition of this narrative strand, so the tents etc. will need to be large enough for Adara to enter and explore. They don't need to be multi-roomed structures, but will need to be accessible by the player.

## The Cliffs

The Cliffs section of Kavak has only appeared recently, in geological terms. It's actually a canyon, rather than a sea cliff or an escarpment, and was formed by strong tectonic activity opening up a gorge through the landscape, with ledges, outcrops and platforms at multiple heights on both sides of the canyon.

The Cliffs formed by the new canyon cut through a residential area of the ancient Fyrael inhabitants of Kavak, with lots of the buildings falling down to the bottom of the new canyon, but with the occasional house still partially intact, perched precariously on the cliff platforms and on the rim of the top of the cliffs.

The Cliffs have been totally unexplored by the archaeological expedition of the SOLUS corporation, as they concentrated on the Facility (since that's where most of the ancient Fyrael technology was) and then were forced to evacuate by the goo monsters.

The Cliffs layout will make extensive use of Adara's dash suit. The player will be encouraged by the level design to explore the Cliffs section immediately after gaining the suit, so it will be the area where the player masters the abilities they've gained. Cliff platforms will therefore need to reflect this and offer a lot of parkour opportunities as well as environmental platforming sections that require use of the dash suit to complete.

This section is filled with abundant evidence of the black goo. It courses in rivers and streams along the bottom of the canyon. There are 'goo falls', and a large goo lake that are deadly to the player and need to be traversed using parkour. This section is where the player begins to see much more evidence of the goo (assuming they follow the intended progression path), so the goo monsters are also extremely common here, leading to multiple combat arenas.

## The Caves

A large cave network runs underneath the level, mostly situated under the Desert and Facility areas, but also partially under the cliffs. These are a natural feature - formed through speleogenesis rather than by the Fyrael or the goo - and originally had a much larger accessible area. The earthquakes that have formed the Cliffs section have destroyed much of the cave network, leaving only the section that Adara can access.

Many rockfalls mark places where other cavern entrances were, and a lot of these entrances are now also colonised by black goo, with streams running in and out of them. Also, the floors of many caverns have partially collapsed, leaving platforms that Adara must traverse where there was once unbroken ground.

The goo lake in the Cliffs section drains into The Caves, with this leading to continued need for Adara to avoid environmental obstacles and goo streams/pools. Goo monster presence here is high, and SOLUS presence is totally absent.

The Caves is where the ancient Fyrael group who were dedicated to the emergent Ratio philosophy met (they were secretive about it because of the discrimination they faced from the dominant consumerist Fyrael), and Voën has left a breadcrumb trail of her own writings/recordings for Adara to find, detailing her discoveries, theories and her plans to escape the SOLUS corporation and the planet, telling Adara (and the player) where in the system to go next to find her.