



KINETOFAYETOPHOBIA

That's all there was to it. The solar system was going to hell in a hand-basket.

It's funny the thoughts that occurred when being chased by dozens of tentacles that kept bursting out of the walls and floor, one by one. Each lashed out at Anastasia, trying to gain purchase on some part of her body to do only god-knows-what.

The wriggling, sour-smelling, slimy, boneless limbs brought out a primal fear in her, the kind that makes the back of your legs go numb and your knees go rubbery. The kind Anastasia had to choke back with every last shred of her will if she wanted to live through this madness.

Right, left, right - it didn't matter anymore. In her panic she'd totally forgotten the layout of this tragic little building stuck deep in the Martian outback. She hoped desperately to find another door out, so that the thing might get caught up in the building long enough for her to get clear.

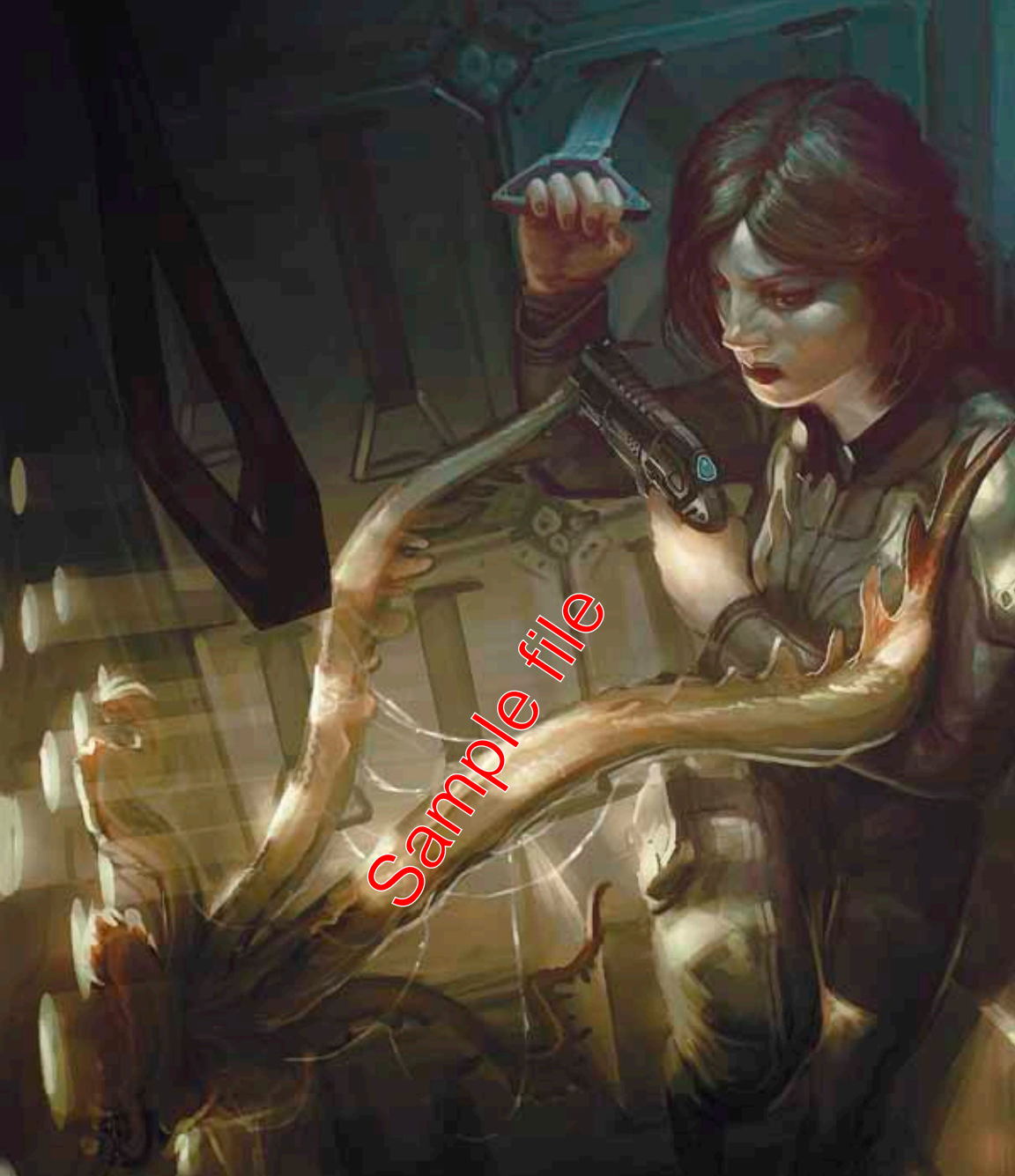
Charging through the only door she could see, her only way forward, it was marked storage. Looking around, this was probably the last door she wanted. There was no other way out. The room was filled only with storage lockers, but that wasn't the worst of it. The doors to the lockers weren't solid - they had holes in them.

No time to lose, Anastasia did the one thing she could. She grabbed the biggest locker she could find, way towards the back, and dove into it. Fortunately, she could lock the door by putting her hand through one of the holes. She didn't figure the thing was smart enough to work a digital lock.

Her Bandit pistol wasn't going to do much when the time came, but it was all she had. The thing had already claimed her Blizzard submachine gun back outside. She looked frantically around the container for anything that might help, but there was nothing. Then, she froze.

The first slender tentacle gently wormed its way through one of the holes, about hip height. It probed its way through, cautiously but deliberately. The second wasn't far behind, this one much thicker than the first. It could barely push its way through, but barely was enough. The fear gripped Anastasia again, much worse this time. She grabbed hold of a cargo strap, just to help keep her from collapsing.

More tentacles followed, backlit by the lights of the storage room which poured through the holes. She hoped they weren't going to notice her - hoped against all hope - but she knew better. In a few seconds the probing monstrosities would zero in on her and rip her limb from limb. If she was lucky.



Sample file

One of the larger tentacles inched its way towards her. The tip touched her uniform and slowly slithered its way up. If terror hadn't already paralyzed her, the smell would have made Anastasia vomit. Another came from

the other side, closer every moment. The command came from her brain to fire the gun, but something short-circuited the thought en route.

This was a hell of a way to die.