TWILIGHT IMPERIUM®

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM

EDGE STUDIO

SPACE OPERA CAMPAIGN SETTING

GENESYS

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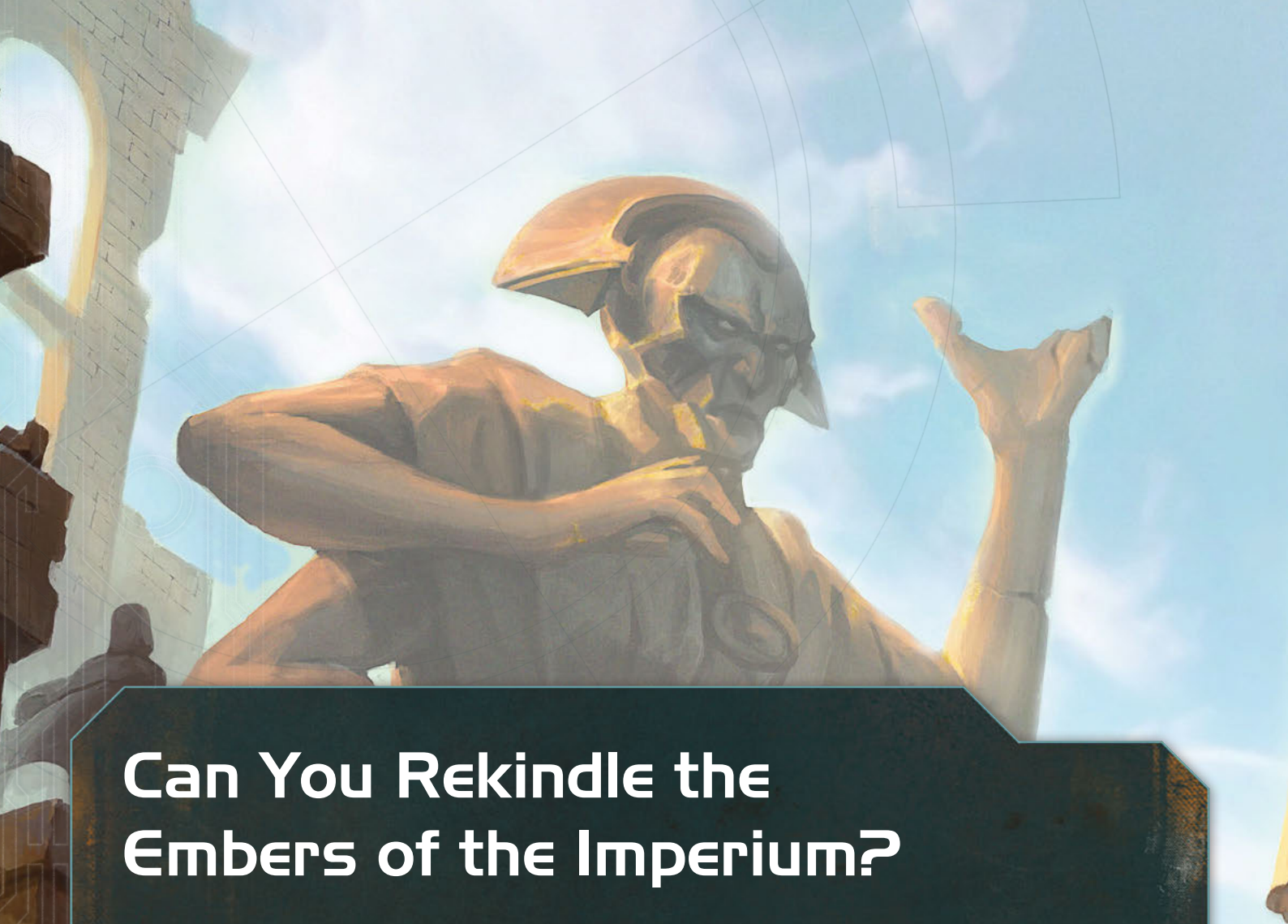

Can You Rekindle the Embers of the Imperium?

It is the distant future. The galaxy is populated by hundreds of sentient species spread across many thousands of inhabited worlds. Some of these species have never left the cradle of their homes, while others have built mighty civilizations that stretch across scores of planets. Some of these species are familiar to us, such as the Humans who have spread out from the world once called Earth. Most, however, are truly alien; the leonine Hacan, the shadowy Yssaril, the arrogant Letnev, or the voracious Sardakk N'orr.

Once, these species lived in peace under the mighty Lazax, rulers of the greatest empire the galaxy has ever seen. For millennia, the Lazax reigned over a golden age in galactic society, an era of prosperity and unity for all. But eventually, all great eras must end.

When it came, centuries of mounting frustration, repression, and bitterness were released at once. The Lazax were overthrown in an orgy of destruction and death as their many subjects burned their worlds, and then, once the Lazax were gone, their subjects fell upon each other with unbridled ferocity. In less than a century, they had broken galactic civilization and plunged thousands of inhabited planets into an era of barbarism.

Now, that age of darkness has brightened ever so slightly. Bold explorers once again venture into the galactic trade lanes. Ships depart from familiar ports, ready to brave the void. And emissaries return to Mecatol Rex, ancient capital of the Lazax Imperium. In the ruins of the empire they helped destroy, the Great Civilizations have reconvened the Galactic Council and have begun to debate who should take on the mantle of leadership in this new era.

But even as the Council squabbles and bickers, and the Great Civilizations mobilize their fleets for conquest or self-defense, threats both new and old emerge out of the darkness. Plagues of maliciously sentient machine viruses haunt the edges of the galaxy. The cybernetic descendants of the long-dead Lazax return to reap bloody vengeance for their ancestors' genocide. Horrible beings from other dimensions emerge from rifts in reality to consume whole planets. And at the heart of the galaxy, ancient evils stir in their tomb worlds, ready to unleash nightmares thought defeated by the old Imperium so long ago.

The Council has founded a single organization against these threats. Bodyguards, investigators, soldiers, and assassins, the Keleres stand ready to combat whatever may menace galactic civilization. They operate with the Council's authority, but with little support. Most mistrust them. Some resent them. Others exploit them. Few aid them willingly.

For the sake of every person in the galaxy, they cannot fail.

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Roleplaying in the Ashes of an Empire

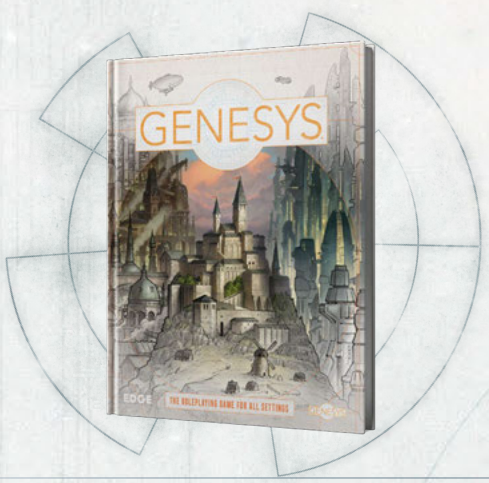
Hello, and get ready to brave the dangers found among the Embers of the Imperium! This book is a supplement for the Genesys game line that lets you use our Narrative Dice System in the far future of our galaxy, a time when new powers attempt to resurrect the corpse of a dead empire in the Twilight Imperium setting. In Embers of the Imperium, you become one of the Keleres, special agents of the Galactic Council tasked with protecting all of galactic civilization from galaxy-shattering threats. You are about to be thrown into the most dangerous missions of your life with only the fellow members of your cohort at your side. The Council is too busy with infighting and politics to be much help, so you have to rely on your wits, your charm, your alliances, and the biggest guns you can find to take down horrors from civilization's darkest nightmares.

If you're already familiar with Genesys and want to get started, go ahead and skip to page 14 for more information about making a character, or to page 160, where we delve into the galaxy of Twilight Imperium. Otherwise, we're going to spend some time explaining what this book is, how you can use it, and also give you a quick overview of what's inside. So if you're new to roleplaying games (or just new to Genesys) read this first.

What is this book and how do I use it?

Embers of the Imperium is a sourcebook—or expansion—for the Genesys Core Rulebook. That means you need a copy of the Core Rulebook as well as this book to play. You also need some Genesys Roleplaying Dice. You can pick up a pack of them at your local game store or at **www.edge-studio.net**, or by downloading the Genesys Dice App onto your savant (that's the Twilight Imperium version of an Android or iOS device).

Embers of the Imperium serves as a backdrop for the stories told using the Genesys game. It is basically a more detailed example of the settings found in **Part II** of the Core Rulebook, so you use the basic rules found in **Part I** of the Core Rulebook combined with the rules presented here. The rules in Embers of the Imperium are designed to supersede those in the Genesys Core Rulebook—so whenever there seem to be contradictions, use the rules in this book.



For example, the Genesys Core Rulebook has the rules for character creation, and you still follow the seven steps presented there when making a character for this game. However, Embers of the Imperium provides different choices when following these steps. To expand this example further, in **Step 2** you select an archetype or species that you want your character to be. The Core Rulebook provides four Human archetypes to choose from. In Embers of the Imperium, you get to choose from fifteen species instead, only one of which is Human.

In essence, Genesys is the engine that runs your game. Embers of the Imperium fleshes that engine out into a game of special agents fighting against extragalactic threats while trying to accomplish their own goals.

What is the Twilight Imperium setting?

We go into a lot more detail about the Twilight Imperium setting in the **Introduction** and **Chapters 4** and **5** of this book. So we're going to address the basics here.

The Twilight Imperium setting is what many consider a space opera, or a science fiction setting where the science takes a back seat to the story. A lot of scientifically impossible elements are casually introduced as fact in a space opera. These include artificial gravity, faster than light travel, and a whole host of aliens who, despite their inhuman appearance, end up acting a lot like we do. It also ignores some of the deeper implications of these technologies. If artificial gravity were to exist, for example, it would change everything about society and science as we know it; the resulting civilizations might be utterly unrecognizable to us. But in a space opera setting, artificial gravity simply exists to let people walk around on starships without floating and not get plastered to a bulkhead when their ship turns or accelerates.

The Twilight Imperium setting takes place in our galaxy, but our galaxy thousands of years in the future. We don't give an exact time in regards to the common era, partially because it's not necessary for the setting and partially because the setting doesn't focus on humanity in the same way that other settings might. Humans are just one of thousands of intelligent life-forms in the galaxy, and the Humans of Earth (or Jord, as it's called now) are one of over two dozen cultures that make up the so-called "Great Civilizations."

The Great Civilizations are foremost powers in the galaxy: politically, economically, culturally, and militarily. Each controls their own home system completely, and generally exercises direct rule over another dozen or so planets, settlements, and stations beyond the light of their star. They exercise diplomatic influence over scores of other worlds, to the point where there

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are precious few fully inhabited worlds in the galaxy that can truly describe themselves as "independent."

Although the Great Civilizations are constantly on the lookout for new worlds to explore, colonize, or conquer, they also spend much of their time jockeying for power and influence with each other. Thousands of years ago, the galaxy was united under the rule of a single government, the Lazax Empire. However, the various factions in the galaxy grew tired of being ruled and rose up in rebellion against the Lazax, triggering a three-thousand-year dark age of isolation, lost technology, and backsliding. Only now have the Great Civilizations (or in most cases, their descendants) regained their presence on the galactic stage, and most of them are eyeing the empty Imperial Throne on the former capital world of Mecatol Rex for themselves.

In the meantime, and to avoid an all-out war, the Great Civilizations have grudgingly agreed to reconvene the Galactic Council. Once this was a legislative body maintained by the Lazax Emperors, but now it has become more like a futuristic United Nations. Although many independent systems participate, the Great Civilizations dominate this body, which they use as yet another arena to fight in.

However, the galaxy isn't only threatened by high politicking and wars of succession. It also contains a number of dangers so perilous that they could see all civilizations conquered, consumed, or utterly destroyed. Even getting the Great Civilizations to work together to fight these threats is a monumental task, but they have grudgingly made some efforts in that regard. And that is where the player characters come in.

What will I find in this book?

We split Embers of the Imperium into seven chapters. Some of these are going to be more useful if you're the Game Master, and others are going to be more useful if you're a player.

In **Chapter 1: Character Creation**, we provide all the rules you need to build a player character for your game. This includes any character creation rules that are different from those in the Genesys Core Rulebook, as well as new talents and skills your characters can use. It also includes rules for faction allegiance in the setting, and rules for making and pursuing a unique agenda for your character. Pursuing that agenda may cause a lot of problems for you, but don't worry, the reward will be worth it!

In **Chapter 2: Equipment and Gear**, we provide an exhaustive list of the types of items that your character (and their adversaries) may be using. This includes weapons, armor, gear, and even some very powerful and dangerous artifacts from thousands of years in the past.

In **Chapter 3: Vehicles of the Imperium**, you can find rules for navigating through interstellar space and a detailed list of a wide range of vehicles that your characters can use and operate. This includes everything from starfighters and scout vessels to massive dreadnoughts.

In **Chapter 4: The Galaxy**, you can find a guide to most of the major planets in the galaxy. These include the homeworlds of most of the Great Civilizations, as well as other planets prominent in galactic politics.

In **Chapter 5: The Keleres' Charge**, we look at the not-so-well-known locations in the galaxy, many of which are the homes of the galaxy's greatest threats. We also give an overview of the Keleres organization that your player characters are a part of.

In **Chapter 6: Adversaries**, we provide Game Masters with a large number of non-player character (NPC) profiles with which to populate their games.

Finally, **Chapter 7: The Game Master** has a number of adventure outlines and pre-built encounters that Game Masters can take to build their own adventures (and even full-fledged campaigns). In addition, it has some advice on how to equip your group, what kind of rewards to give them, and how the rest of the galaxy reacts to a cohort of Keleres agents.

Can I use this book to make my own space opera settings?

Certainly! We designed Genesys as a toolkit for you to use to make your own worlds, and this remains our goal with this book. Embers of the Imperium can be a valuable tool for building your own space opera setting instead of using ours.

For example, most of the gear in this book is appropriate for any space opera setting, and many of the species can fit into your settings just as well as they do in Twilight Imperium. The same holds true for our talents, vehicles, and spaceships. Finally, the agenda rules work for any group that wants to have the possibility of a little friendly intraparty rivalry in their sessions or sees hard choices to be interesting fodder for character development.

So that's an overview of what's in the book and how to use it. We wish you the best of luck as a new member of the Keleres, and hope you're ready to save the galaxy!

Mature Themes in this Book

The Twilight Imperium setting deals with several mature themes, and while it does not dwell on them, they are mentioned at several points in this book. These include slavery, genocide, colonization, warfare, and war crimes. Players looking to explore the Twilight Imperium setting with their group should make sure that everyone is aware of these potential themes before starting a new campaign.

However, since this is a roleplaying game, GMs and their groups also have a choice of what elements of the setting they want to emphasize and what elements they want to keep in the background. We encourage your group to discuss this, and remember that space operas can be run as a swashbuckling good versus evil adventure just as easily as a gritty real-politik drama.

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A Shattered Imperium

The history of the galaxy stretches back across hundreds of thousands of years. The earliest civilizations have long since been lost in the mists of myth and legend. Psychoarcheologists and historical analysts believe that dozens of cultures may have risen and fallen in this time, but all that remains are a few names carved into radiation-scarred ruins; the Derel Hordefleet, Nalha Duhn—Slayer of Kybelos, and the Gatekeeper Alliance. The first civilization to make their mark deep enough upon the historical record to be remembered to the present day was the Mahact.

Nearly thirty thousand years ago, the Mahact kings ruled vast swathes of the galaxy. They were mad tyrants who fought amongst themselves and set enslaved armies against one another on a whim. They were also immeasurably powerful beings, and had their reign been allowed to continue, the galaxy might well have been destroyed. Luckily, a young and fiery species known as the Lazax rose to challenge them.

The Lazax were not as strong as the Mahact, but they had organization, discipline, and the gratitude of trillions of oppressed sentients on their side. Twenty-seven thousand years ago they swept the Mahact from the galaxy, slaughtering many of them and consigning the rest to exile on their lonely homeworld of Ixth. In their wake, the first of the Lazax Emperors took the throne on Mecatol Rex.

The Reign of Emperors

The galaxy prospered under the Lazax. For over twenty thousand years, the Emperors ruled fairly and well, bringing a marvelous golden age not just for themselves, but for every sentient species who became part of their domain. During these heady times, many of the civilizations that would later become great players in the arena of galactic politics were first contacted by the Lazax and welcomed into their empire. The Xxcha Kingdom, Emirates of Hacan, Barony of Letnev, Universities of Jol-Nar, Sardakk N'orr, Yssaril Tribes, and finally, the Federation of Sol all bent the knee and became Lazax vassals.

But the final four millennia were marked by failing Imperial rule. This "Age of Dusk" saw an ancient empire finally grow too bloated and inefficient to oversee territories stretching across the galaxy. At the same time, the younger cultures that had pledged loyalty to the Lazax grew restless. They began to fight amongst themselves for territory and resources. When the Lazax threatened to bring them to heel by force, they simply struck first.

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The Twilight Wars and the Great Scourge

The Lazax Empire came to an end when a Sol fleet appeared in the skies over Mecatol Rex, equipped with technology secretly supplied by the Jol-Nar Universities. The forces of the Federation bombed the planet into rubble, then descended to the surface to wipe out the remains of the Imperium in a bloody cull.

The genocide did not stop there. The many Imperial vassal civilizations wasted no time in overthrowing their former masters, then hunting down and killing every Lazax within their borders. In only two decades, the Great Scourge—as it came to be known—saw the Lazax wiped from the galaxy. Only one small band of Lazax refugees managed to flee to the far reaches of uncharted space and escape extinction. There they would slowly rebuild a dark parody of their civilization, and would not rejoin the galaxy for over three millennia.

With the Lazax extinct, those same civilizations were free to turn on one another. War after war broke out as each of these great powers sought to claim the vacant Imperial Throne. A galaxy that had known peace for tens of thousands of years now burned under dozens of bitter conflicts.

The Dark Years

Eventually, the last of the wars guttered out as the various instigators ran out of money, resources, and soldiers to continue them. The Great Civilizations slunk back to their homeworlds and a few long-established colonies or favored tributary worlds, abandoning the wider galaxy to anarchy.

The next three millennia saw the galaxy become a patchwork of isolated worlds and small civilizations. Galactic commerce barely existed, as only caravans of the most well-armed freighters could brave spacelanes haunted by wolfpack fleets of pirates and marauders. With its decline went any semblance of galactic communication as well. Many of the larger civilizations were stuck dealing with revolts and insurrections at home, while isolated planets worked to assemble patchwork defenses against the next pirate flotilla to pass through their space.

However, some civilizations did grow and prosper during this time of galactic night. Mainly these were worlds that had been exploited or controlled by some, now-absent, greater power. Civilizations like the Mentak Coalition, Embers of Muaat, and the Naaz-Rokha Alliance began to establish themselves as major powers in their own right.

Eventually, the Dark Years came to an end. The various great powers began to send starships beyond the borders of their home systems once again and hunt the lawless vagabonds that made the spacelanes so dangerous. Galactic trade slowly began to resume, and more worlds were contacted after thousands of years of isolation.

Many historians have designated the end of the Dark Years as the year when a trade convoy sponsored by the Emirates of Hacan finally reached the small clutch of star systems surrounding Gul, the system of Mecatol Rex. To their surprise, they found that some remnants of the throneworld still survived, maintained by the dutiful Winnaran Custodians. The Custodians welcomed the Hacan delegation and invited them to be the first to send delegates to a reconstituted Galactic Council.

Old Grudges and New Foes

The reformation of the Galactic Council did little to ease the growing tensions in the galaxy. The Twilight Wars are long in the past, and the various Great Civilizations who now hold power each believe that their own time of ascendency is at hand. However, most of them balk at major war, and in the meantime, certain events have transpired that encourage a certain grudging cooperation.

The first was the return of the descendants of those who fled the genocide of the Lazax. Trapped in their harsh outer system colony, they had come to rely increasingly on cybernetics to survive. Eventually they evolved into a species of Lazax/machine hybrids calling themselves the L1Z1X. When they returned at the head of fleets of superdreadnoughts, they demanded revenge for the crimes wrought against their ancestors.

But the L1Z1X had created their own demons. The Nekro Virus was a botched experiment to create true machine intelligence. Now the psychotic AI programs seek to wipe out all life in the galaxy, and their black-bladed warcraft slowly advance towards the core systems.

And now, an even older threat from the galaxy's earliest nightmares has returned. The Mahact, long thought dead, were awoken when foolish explorers unsealed their tomb on Ixth. Now they move to retake a domain lost many millennia ago, wielding armies of thrall clones and the might of their gene-sorcery to crush their foes.

The Mahact's awakening has brought other changes to the fragile balance of galactic power. Some factions, such as the Argent Flight, have long worked against them in secret and now carry that fight into the open. Others, like the Titans of Ul, were once the Mahact's thralls but have managed to throw off their bonds and look to build a new civilization for themselves. But it may be that, in their hubris, the Mahact have created their own greatest enemy. In shadowy corners of the galaxy, people whisper of a new power that exists beyond time and space. They say it is slowly infiltrating the margins of society, where cults of deranged worshippers serve monstrous, even demonic masters.

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Timeline of Galactic Events

- **30,000+ years ago:** Ancient civilizations move through the galaxy. Little is known of them. At some point during this time, the Mahact kings rise to power.
- **27,000 years ago:** The Lazax fight the Mahact for the fate of the galaxy. The Lazax are victorious, and the first Emperor is crowned on Mecatol Rex.
- **27,000-7,000 years ago:** The Age of Imperium. A golden age for the galaxy, and a time when many planets pledge loyalty to the Lazax Empire.
- **7,000-3,100 years ago:** The Age of Dusk. The Lazax Empire falls into decadence and decline.
- **3,092 years ago:** The Age of Twilight. The Twilight Wars begin when a Sol fleet breaches the Letnev blockade of the Quann Wormhole.
- **3,020 years ago:** Mecatol Rex is bombarded. The last Lazax Emperor is slain. The Empire is shattered.
- **3,020-3,000 years ago:** The rest of the galaxy turns on the Lazax, hunting them in a bloody genocide.
- **3,000-2,600 years ago:** The last of the Twilight Wars end due to exhaustion and societal collapse. The Dark Years settle across the galaxy.
- **300-30 years ago:** The Great Civilizations begin to reestablish themselves. Explorers venture beyond the bounds of local systems. Intergalactic trade begins again. Skirmishes and conflicts break out among the various Great Civilizations.
- **32 years ago:** The Winnaran Custodians invite the various galactic civilizations to reestablish the Galactic Council on Mecatol Rex.
- **30 years ago:** The L1Z1X make contact with the wider galaxy.
- **28 years ago:** The first outer systems are scoured by the Nekro Virus.
- **5 years ago:** The Acheron disaster. The Ghosts of Creuss launch an expedition to discover Acheron, the gateway to the lost paradise of Ixth. They find Acheron and reactivate the massive wormhole to Ixth, realizing too late that it is a tomb of the Mahact. The expedition and its armada are lost, and the wormhole is destroyed when the Mahact cast Ixth into the heart of the galaxy.
- **5 years ago:** Following the Acheron disaster, the Galactic Council establishes the Keleres.
- **3 years ago:** The first cults worshipping the Vuil'raith arise.

Citizens of the Galaxy

Countless trillions of sentients call our galaxy home. But ask most of them what it's like to be a galactic citizen, and they may not even understand the question.

The galaxy is climbing out of a three-thousand-year dark age brought about by the ruinous Twilight Wars at the end of the Lazax Empire. Interstellar trade and communication has only begun to rebuild itself in any meaningful way in the last couple of centuries, and the Galactic Council was only reformed just over a decade ago.

This means most people think of themselves as citizens of their planet, first and foremost. Combine that narrowed focus with some inherent difficulties and dangers of space travel, and you can assume a majority of a planet's population won't leave their world during their lifetime.

Some planets are cosmopolitan paradises. These worlds survived the Twilight Wars relatively unscathed, either as tributary worlds of greater powers or sovereign dominions. They have the wealth to ensure a comfortable life for most of their populace, and the resources to maintain the ancient technologies of the Hylar and even develop their own. Chief among these are the homeworlds of the Great Civilizations.

Anyone lucky enough to be born on these planets enjoys access to luxuries like instantaneous planetary communication networks, powerful personal computers (such as the ubiquitous *savants*), medical treatments that can cure most diseases and nearly double their natural lifespans, and access to strange goods from distant stars. These planets maintain communication with the wider galaxy through networks of courier vessels and participate in interstellar trade with fleets of freighters. Most importantly, they are protected by the *magen defense grids* and heavy cannon of planetary defense systems (or PDS), and can project their authority with the might of their fleets of warships.

Other worlds, and their inhabitants, are not so fortunate. Some worlds exist on the galactic rim, far from the populated core worlds. These worlds may have spent centuries cut off from the wider galaxy and seen the technologies of the Lazax Empire slowly fail. Depending on the length of their isolation, these worlds may have only regressed to cruder replacements of Imperial technologies, or they may have lost the ability to travel beyond the atmosphere of their planet entirely. Such civilizations may have returned to using crude atomic reactors or even fossil fuels for power, and the lives of their citizens are likely to be brutish and comparatively short.

And finally, there are the worlds between these extremes. Some are way stations and small colony worlds, still connected to the galaxy through infrequent traders but lacking many of the resources the core worlds take for granted. Others are corporate-controlled planets that serve as massive mines, or factories, or biological laboratories. And finally there are the worlds that are

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cursed to hold some rare and valuable resource or sit on some strategically important point in space. These worlds see constant skirmishes and low-level wars as the Great Civilizations jockey for positions of power against their rivals.

Echoes of Empire

However, the many worlds of the galaxy have some similarities as well. Even if you ignore the cultural spread that comes with some renewed galactic trade, the galaxy was ruled by the Lazax for over twenty millennia. That was plenty of time for broad elements of pangalactic culture to evolve and spread. Now, three thousand years later, echoes of that culture still can be found on many worlds.

One example is a shared language, *univoca*. Once the language of the Imperium, it is still spoken in some form or another on many worlds and has become the closest thing to a *lingua galactica* that the galaxy is likely to see. Some cultures maintain their own languages, but most computers can provide quick and accurate translations in those instances.

Another is the *aurei*, the ancient Imperial currency. Although every major faction tends to have its own monetary system, ever since the resumption of widespread galactic trade, nearly every interplanetary trade or deal is conducted using aurei. Since most exchanges are conducted electronically, computers can take care of any needed currency conversions. Physical currency is used only on the outermost or most lawless worlds in known space.

A third example is the prohibition against cloning, a holdover from the Lazax's ancient war against the Mahact gene-sorcerers. Even thousands of years after their fall, all of the Great Civilizations save one maintain this prohibition. This extends beyond banning the cloning of animals or people, it also means there are no cloned replacement organs or limbs. Instead, most galactic citizens use cybernetic replacements.

What is a Day?

Almost every planet in the galaxy experiences its own day/night cycle, and local inhabitants tend to set their clocks and their lives to the world they live on. However, on tidally locked worlds, planets with extremely slow or fast rotations relative to their orbit, worlds with no visible sun, space stations, and in deep space, cultures traditionally use the Mecatol day, and more specifically "Galactic Mean Time" (the time on Mecatol City).

The Mecatol day is divided into 20 hours of equal length (a product of the Lazax's base-20 numeral system) and has been so deeply ingrained into various cultures that many continue to use it as the galactic standard. The Letnev and the Saar are two factions that have wholeheartedly adopted

it as their own, and the Naaz-Rokha Alliance uses a complex dating system that tracks both local time on each of their homeworlds and GMT.

Ironically, although the Federation of Sol loudly insists on using Jordian time, a Jordian day is only longer than a Mecatol day by .17 Jordian seconds. When visiting the Federation embassy on Mecatol City, some envoys have gotten a rise out of their hosts by casually "noticing" that their clocks all seem a little slow.

The Heart of the Universe

In the days of the Lazax, Mecatol Rex was the throneworld of their empire. A massive ecumenopolis, it was an entire planet devoted to Imperial governance. Sadly, this also made it the foremost target when the various vassal civilizations set out to overthrow the Lazax.

Much of the planet was bombed into toxic rubble during the Twilight Wars, and even today it is covered by massive deserts of poisonous dust. Only a fraction of the original Mecatol City, centered on the Galactic Council chambers, survives.

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The Galactic Council

In the days of the Lazax Empire, the Galactic Council provided a voice for the various member civilizations of the Empire but was subservient to the Emperor's whims. When the Empire fell during the Twilight Wars, the Council fell along with it. The hallowed Council chambers would remain empty for three millennia.

When the galaxy finally climbed out of the Dark Years and resumed galactic travel and commerce, the Winnaran Custodians invited all civilizations who made contact with Mecatol Rex to send representatives to sit on a reformed Galactic Council. Few governments have rejected such an opportunity, and now the Council has become the closest thing to a pangalactic government in existence.

Each planet who meets the traditional qualifications of energy expenditure or cultural contributions to the wider galaxy earns one or more votes on the Council, with the planet deciding whether those votes are managed by a single representative or multiple Councilors. In theory, this gives all planets a voice on the Council that is proportional to their status. In practice, the traditional qualifications have not been updated in thousands of years, leaving many worlds woefully underrepresented and others desperately holding onto a legacy that has been dead for millennia. In addition, as the largest factions control multiple worlds, they often control dozens of votes directly and can influence dozens more amongst their tributary worlds.

Thus, the Galactic Council is actually controlled by powerful voting blocks that can ignore the interests of single worlds with impunity. In addition, the most powerful galactic civilizations have been loath to cede too much power to an entity they can't control. So, the Galactic Council only really has as much power as its various members allow. In fact, forming the Keleres has been one of the few things the Council has unanimously agreed on.

The Keleres

The Keleres were founded five years ago in the wake of the disaster at the Acheron Gate. Some members of the Council were already considering what actions they could take in response to the L1Z1X incursions along the frontier and Nekro raids on isolated worlds. With the Mahact suddenly reappearing and announcing their claim to the galaxy, these members felt the time was right for bolder steps.

A coalition of representatives from the Xxcha Kingdom, Yssaril Tribes, Embers of Muaat, and newly seated members of the Argent Flight proposed the formation of an elite paramilitary organization under the Council's command. Their mission would be to identify, research, and attempt to eliminate threats to the survival of the Council (and by extension, the galaxy).

The proposal seemed audaciously bold given the Council's history of infighting and factionalism. But the shock of the Mahact's return turned out to be just the catalyst for joining in this act of unity. The end vote was unanimous, and with that, the Keleres were born.

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WELCOME TO THE KELERES

The room outside the council chamber was massive, intricately decorated with sculptures and murals from cultures across the galaxy. Min stared only at the two meters of floor she was pacing, wringing her fins, homesick to each of her stomachs.

"Mother would have been so proud of you," her sister had whispered to her right before she boarded the transport. "You'll do amazing things, Min!" read the banner, her entire family waving her off. She could see each of their faces, and it made her want to curl into a ball. Some Keleres agent she was.

Hypothesis: They won't invite you to Mecatol Rex just to reject you. But: No new agent goes in front of a Council oversight committee. Ergo: There's something wrong with you.

Min pushed away the intruding thoughts. Her fins swept across the chamber's ornate floor carvings, the history etched there something else to think about. The Twilight Wars tore the galaxy apart. Recessions. Famines. Civilization-wide collapses. Many blamed the Hylar for keeping their tech under lock and key. Was Min here to pay for old sins?

Preposterous.

...Not impossible.

File for later.

Why was this taking so long? She needed her rehydration salts. Why had she left them in her quarters? Focus. *Great Scourge. Lazax culture, people, scrubbed from galaxy. Great strife. The Dark Years. Great powers, war-ravaged, retreated to their own space. To fill void, Winnarans established custodianship over empty throne.*

Recent times. Technology recovered to pre-Scourge levels. Many new great powers emerged. Expansionism. Border disputes. Old wounds. Galactic Council, put in place to mediate disputes without bloodshed. Council establishes special group to handle threats: the Keleres.

Asks all great powers to send recruits. My career at Universities floundering, cannot stay an adjunct forever. Applied. Why not? Forgot about it. Months later, summoned to Mecatol Rex. Why?

Min paused, her gills spasming. She took several large breaths, the dry air cold and foreign in her lungs. *No. Pull yourself together. Mother left Jol as well and she... she...*

There must be a reason. The Mahact, maybe. Or the Nekro Virus. Two potentially galaxy-shattering threats. Maybe Council increasing Keleres recruitment. Maybe widening the net, taking in substandard candidates. *That's me,* thought Min bitterly. *I should go home. Mother never came home. I need to...*

The doors swung open. "Min?" called a voice from within the Council chamber.

Min was inside before she could even think. Five Councilors looked down at her, though not being Hylar she could not read their expressions. She froze under their gazes. *Think: cultural taboos of the major council species. Protocol guides. Avoid gestures threatening or offensive. Smiling: Harmless.*

Min smiled, trying not to show too many teeth.

"You don't have a... suit," mused one of the Councilors, a tawny-furred Hacan.

"Not all of us need one, Councilor," Min said, continuing to calibrate her smile.

The Human, dark-skinned and long-haired, spoke. "Thank you for coming all this way, Min. We won't mince words. Your application was outstanding, and you have been approved into the Keleres program."

There was a pause as the Councilors considered each other. "However."

"...However?"

"Normally," drawled the N'orr Councilor, his massive mandibles giving his voice a lisping rasp, "Keleres do not get a say in their assignments. But, the circumstances surrounding this mission..."

The Human steepled her fingers. "We know what happened to your mother."

The smile fled Min's expression. Her world began to spin.

"Keleres Cohort Sorhirin has been monitoring an Arborec… colony near where her surveyor ship disappeared. It appears to be a single Letani behemoth that has settled on Kestoria 2-5, the same planet she was scouting."

The Letnev Councilor, pale and with a knife-thin face, leaned forward. "The Universities have already communicated the extreme importance of the Kestoria 2-5 mission. It's well outside Arborec space, and Cohort Sorhirin is sure the Letani has not contacted Nestphar in decades. The Arborec may not even know it's alive. So given that, and the unsettling possibilities given your mother's disappearance…"

He trailed off with a languid wave of his hand. The Human Councilor sighed. "Our committee has determined that the Letani and attendant organisms need to be destroyed, quietly, so our esteemed Arborec colleagues on the Council never hear about it. Should you join, you'll be sent in to create a bio-phage to destroy the colony."

Min felt like her breath had frozen in her lungs. Her gills spasmed involuntarily as the Xxcha Councilor set down their pipe and peered at her over their massive beaked snout. "There's one other thing you should know. The cohort sent several probes into the colony. One came out with DNA trace detections, consistent with…"

"...Mother," she breathed.

The Human sighed. "Yes."

"Then she was…assimilated…by the Letani after all. Now, you... want me to... to... terminate her."

"What's left of her," said the Hacan, not unkindly.

"Some of us," rumbled the Xxcha Councilor, "thought you might desire the closure such a mission would bring. Others argued it would be asking too much of you."

"Should you... decline this assignment," the Human paused. "The Council has agreed to keep your objection off the record. You'll simply be reassigned."

Silence. They wanted her response.

"I..." she said to the floor. "Councilors, I..."

Min closed her eyes, but all she could see was her mother's face. No one in her family had ever left Jol except her, and mother had never come back...

Certainty coursed through Min for the first time since she'd left Jol. She knew what she had to do.

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[Chapter 1] Character Creation

The galaxy is full of countless trillions of sentients. Most never leave the world of their birth. They are born, live out their lives, and die without ever setting foot on another world. Their exposure to the wider galaxy, the shattered empire of the Lazax, and the conflicts of the Great Civilizations comes only from holodramas and history texts, and the occasional arrival of a packet boat or courier vessel. Only a comparative few have the chance to journey to the stars.

However, by pledging your loyalty to the Galactic Council, you have become one of those few. Now, a galaxy of adventure and danger lies before you.

In Embers of the Imperium, you play a Keleres, an agent of the Galactic Council empowered to seek out and eliminate threats to the Pax Imperialis: dangers so vast they imperil the entire galaxy. Likely, you used to be in service to one of the Great Civilizations and were sent to the Keleres as part of its tithe in support of the Council. Or perhaps you were a criminal given a clandestine second chance to earn a pardon in service. You may have even been one of those rarest of individuals: a citizen of Mecatol Rex who volunteered for duty.

However you joined the Keleres' ranks, you now serve alongside a diverse group of individuals from hundreds of different species and civilizations. Like them, you swore an oath to discard your former allegiances and pledge your loyalty to the Galactic Council. But also like them, you have your own agendas and motivations that may not mesh with your newfound duties.

Perhaps you embarrassed your superiors in some way, and they sent you to the Keleres as punishment. Now you're stuck serving in an organization you despise, and you spend every waking moment trying to figure out a way to regain your lost status. Or maybe an ambitious rival decided to "volunteer" you for the Keleres to get you out of the way, and more than anything,

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you want to find some way to get revenge. Or maybe you are a faithful servant of your government, and they sent you to the Keleres to quietly represent their interests in galactic affairs.

So, in this game, you've joined a group of secret agents whose job is to prevent the destruction of the galaxy. The threats you face include nightmarish creatures from other dimensions, legions of robotic killers bent on exterminating all life, and the galaxy's ancient rulers, whose technology is so advanced it might as well be magic. To defeat them, all you have is a collection of grudgingly donated secondhand equipment, authority that may or may not be recognized depending on where you are, and your team of hardened professionals—except that each of your team has their own agenda, and they just might betray you to accomplish it.

If that sounds like fun, read on, and we'll tell you how to make your character!

Creating Your Character

This book is a supplement for the Genesys Core Rulebook that lets you play roleplaying games set in the Twilight Imperium universe. Specifically, it lets you play Keleres agents fighting to preserve the shattered Imperium against a host of terrifying threats. However, with a bit of work, you can use the resources in this book to tell just about any story you want.

In this chapter, we provide all the rules and information that you need, combined with the character creation rules that start on page 32 of the Genesys Core Rulebook, to build a character for this game. To build a character, follow the steps outlined here (which mirror the steps found in the Core Rulebook), with the addition of choosing your character's agenda. This takes place during **Step 6: Determine Motivation and Agenda.**

Steps for Creating Characters

Embers of the Imperium uses the Genesys core system, and characters can be created using only the Genesys Core Rulebook. The additional rules presented here tailor the process toward creating characters who live in the Twilight Imperium galaxy.

The first thing to do when creating a character is to come up with a character concept. This is the idea that forms the foundation of your character and informs all the choices that follow. Having a passing understanding of the setting can be useful, but it isn't necessary.

Character creation can be broken down into seven steps, each one rounding out a different aspect of your character. These are the same steps as in the Genesys Core Rulebook. Occasionally, these steps are augmented by other material in Embers of the Imperium (for example, **Step 2** has new species to choose from, and **Step 6** has your character choose an agenda as well as Motivations).

Step 1: Determine Background

What did your character do before they joined the Keleres? Your character had to come from somewhere, and the fact that they were chosen to join the Keleres means that they probably had some prominence in their prior life. Often, your character's background helps determine what kind of character you want to play and what choices you may make as your character advances. Backgrounds can be as complex or simple as you like. Some players like to write up elaborate histories for their characters, while other players just note down a few basic details and plan to develop their character more as they play.

More information on possible backgrounds to help you develop your own can be found starting on page 17.

Step 2: Select a Species

Once you have an idea of your character's background, the next step is deciding their species. In Embers of the Imperium, you can choose to play one of the fifteen most common species in the galaxy. These range from Humans (who manage to end up on lots of different worlds), to the leonine Hacan, to the symbiotic dual species, the Naaz-Rokha.

The choices of species presented in Embers of the Imperium replace the archetype choices found in the Genesys Core Rulebook. More information on these species can be found starting on page 21.

Step 3: Choose a Career

After selecting your species and determining a background, your next step is to choose a career for your character. Embers of the Imperium presents a number of careers, each of which is focused on the types of individuals who serve in the Keleres. Each career also determines your character's career skills, which are cheaper than other skills to improve as you earn experience points. Your character's career and skills help guide their role in the group, but they are far from restrictive. Each career is broad enough to provide plenty of room to tailor your character to your own background concept. For instance, the Orbital Drop Soldier career might encompass an elite soldier, a drafted conscript, a criminal enforcer, a bounty hunter, and any other job that benefits from the combat and survival skills offered by the Orbital Drop Soldier career.

The choices of careers presented in Embers of the Imperium replace the choices found in the Genesys Core Rulebook. Full information on careers and the skills they provide can be found starting on page 38.

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Step 4: Invest Experience Points

With the basic building blocks of your character in place, your next step is to invest experience points to further improve your character. This step is the same as **Step 4** on page 44 of the Genesys Core Rulebook. However, new skills and talents that you can purchase with that experience can be found on page 48 of Embers of the Imperium.

Step 5: Determine Derived Attributes

Once you are finished investing experience points, you can calculate your character's derived attributes: wound threshold, strain threshold, defense, and soak value. Information on how to determine these derived attributes and how they function in the game can be found on page 45 of the Genesys Core Rulebook.

Step 6: Determine Motivation, Allegiance, and Agenda

Perhaps the most important aspect of your character is their Motivation. This is going to help you figure out how your character responds to any given situation, how they deal with dangers and threats, and what drives them to succeed. How Motivations work and lists of Motivations to choose from can be found on page 46 of the Genesys Core Rulebook.

Along with your Motivation, it's now time to determine your character's agenda and their possible allegiance. The agenda is what your character needs to accomplish while serving in the Keleres. This might be a personal agenda, such as getting rich, redeeming lost honor, or even protecting the galaxy. Alternatively, your agenda could be determined by the loyalty your character has to one of the factions in the game to whom they owe allegiance.

Allegiance is your character's loyalty to one of the Great Civilizations that dominate the galaxy and the nature of their relationship with that civilization. The choice of allegiance is largely narrative and can be determined by your character's backstory. However, it does unlock some character advancement opportunities and some specific agendas for your character to pursue.

More information on agendas and allegiances can be found on pages 62 and 65. More on the most powerful factions in the galaxy, the so-called Great Civilizations, can be found starting on page 66.

Step 7: Choose Gear, Appearance, and Personality

Lastly, you should round out your character by choosing their gear and determining their appearance and personality.

Your character's appearance and personality are left completely up to you (although we do have some helpful guidelines on page 51 of the Genesys Core Rulebook). You can also flip through this book and see if there's any art that inspires how you want your character to look.

We have updated rules for starting gear that replace the rules found in the Core Rulebook. When building a character, you start with 1,000 aurei to spend on personal gear (see **Chapter 2: Equipment and Gear** for more on the types of gear your character can have). Your character can purchase exactly one item that is restricted (has an "(R)" next to the price), thanks to their service in the Keleres. They may keep any aurei you don't spend. In addition, after you've finished purchasing starting gear, roll 1d100 (see page 11 in the Genesys Core Rulebook). Add the value of the die roll to any remaining starting funds. This represents the pocket money provided by the Keleres that your character has on hand.

With these seven steps complete, your character is ready to take up their badge of office and start exploring the galaxy…

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Step 1: Determine Background

In a galaxy divided by age-old rivalries and sectarian grievances, the Keleres is one of the few truly pan-species organizations. It is made up primarily of agents drawn from every member government of the Galactic Council, which encompasses a startling array of sentients from countless worlds of origin.

Yet, as alien as many of these species are from a Human perspective, they share a certain amount in common. Many (though not all) are biologically based life-forms, with similar environmental and resource needs. Most evolved to be social creatures: to communicate and cooperate for survival, eventually leading them down the path of starfaring civilizations. These similarities provide a basis within the Council and the Keleres for recognizing interspecies motivations and dealing with each other. But they also create the conditions for conflict between—and within—those species.

These conflicts shape not only galactic society but also the lives of individuals who join the Keleres. Despite the organization's proximity to power and its vital purpose, a position as a Keleres is neither a safe nor a coveted station. Therefore, the sentients who join do so for an untold variety of reasons, many involuntary. But most have useful skills learned among the galaxy's diverse militaries, intelligence agencies, civil services, or scholarly institutions.

When creating the background for a character in Embers of the Imperium, it can help to choose a profession, person, or personality type from fiction, history, or even our own era as a starting point. You can then merge your character into the Twilight Imperium setting by mixing them with elements of alien biology, fantastic technology, or the unique political structures of the setting. A character's background strongly informs their allegiance (see page 65). To help generate ideas for your character's background, here are some suggestions. This material works closely with the setting material presented in the **Introduction**, and in more detail in **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5**.

Dangerous Secret

Every government or nonstate faction has secrets. Knowledge is one of the great currencies of interspecies relations, covering subjects from awesome technologies to dreadful extradimensional truths. Some secrets threaten the lives of those who know them; a few are so powerful that they can even save those lives. If your character has information like this, it has secured their membership in the Keleres.

Your character could know secrets that are potentially damaging to their former government. For example, a Druaa dissident may have hidden a damning essay on the true sentience of their species' Miashan serfs and been exiled to the Keleres rather than given neural purging. Or a Saar rock pilot might have found missing texts that challenge orthodox ideas about Ragh's Call and been sent to the Keleres while the mystics debate.

If you want your character's secrets to be more direct, they may have information that affects a specific institution. A Hacan account keeper might flee to the Keleres from assassins after discovering vast criminal dealings within the Emirates of Hacan's greatest banking house. Alternatively, a Winnu counterintelligence agent may be assigned to the Keleres in order to conceal knowledge about a ring of fanatical L1Z1X sympathizers within the ranks of the Winnaran Custodians.

Finally, other characters may know dark secrets that are of specific use to the Keleres. For example, a Letnev seneschal who joined a failed, cult-led rebellion may be spared execution in exchange for becoming a Keleres to share their knowledge of the Vuil'raith. Alternatively, a young, restless Titan might be sent to mature with the Keleres, offering clues to the location of an ancient, incomplete Mahact wormhole gate.

Characters who harbor secrets like these tend to be wary and guarded. They have often faced harrowing dangers in acquiring their knowledge. They might be hunted even after they become Keleres. These characters' allegiance tends to involve maintaining their secrets or using them to maximum advantage. Their lives can depend on it, so loyalty to the team or mission is often a secondary concern.

Disgraced

The galaxy can be an unforgiving place, as can the societies and institutions of the Council's member species. Many recruits are forced into the Keleres oath as a result of some transgression or mistake in their past. If your character has been so disgraced, the Keleres can be either a refuge or a punishment.

Not all characters who join the Keleres this way are solely responsible for their disgrace. For example, your character may be a competent Federation of Sol infantry officer who finds themself exiled to Keleres service after their unit's failure in a military operation. Or they could be a self-effacing Gashlai engineer who accepts responsibility for a mysterious industrial tragedy in their shipyard.

Some characters are dismissed from their prior career after a pattern of failing their society's expectations rather than any single incident. If you want your character's fall to be the product of incompetence or mediocrity, they may be an unambitious scion of a Hacan merchant clan who found the details of commerce too tedious and are suddenly disinherited. Or they could be the rare N'orr soldier who failed the Tekklar Elite's training and yet survived ignominiously.

Still other characters are truly disreputable. Their disgrace is self-inflicted, perhaps stemming from a core personality flaw. For example, a Hylar scientist caught engaging in plagiarism or falsifying data may be expelled from the Universities of Jol-Nar

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but find their skills are still deemed useful to the Keleres. Alternatively, a venal but well-connected Xxcha magistrate caught selling royal pardons might be quietly shuffled off to service in the Keleres.

Characters who have been disgraced can range in their attitude from ashamed to proudly brittle or even callous. They likely served in some high-status or upwardly bound position that qualified them for reassignment to the Keleres rather than simpler punishments. These characters' allegiance often involves seeking redemption from their culture of origin—or at least regained status—in ways that clash with their missions as Keleres.

A Good Captain

Jora Kincaid stood at attention, back straight, arms pressed along the creases of her uniform trousers, eyes locked on the Coalition banner hanging behind the polished ferroplate table. She carefully did not meet the eyes of the five senior officers who sat behind it.

"Captain," the Hacan in the center of the group said. Some said it was difficult to read emotion in their growling voices, but Jora was having no problem detecting the dripping scorn. "This board of inquiry finds...no reason to censure your actions. Although you let your cruiser be destroyed in the ion storm, you rescued the crew of the trader *Makemie* and all the personnel under your command.

"Therefore, in light of your... *commendable* behavior, you are being transferred from the Coalition Navy and seconded to service with the Keleres. Transfer is to take place immediately."

Jora's gaze snapped to the officer and her eyes widened in disbelief and anger. "What? I save those people, do everything a good captain should, and for that I'm shuffled off to rot?"

Five cold stares met hers. After a long moment, the officer at the far end, a Hylar, spoke with a low burble. "A good captain should go down with her ship."

Divided Loyalty

Both the Keleres and its parent organization, the Galactic Council, are relatively new institutions. The millennia of strife that preceded their founding are fresh in the memories of each member species. Only the most stubborn optimists believe that a new age of peace and cooperation has suddenly descended on the galaxy.

The Keleres have become yet another platform for the cynical games of the great powers. The politicians responsible for staffing the agency take every opportunity to put operatives in place who do not take their Keleres oath too literally. Consequently, Council ambassadors frequently know about Keleres activities well before any official Tribunii report arrives.

If you want your character to be a government infiltrator, they may come directly from a security or military service. For example, few Keleres entirely trust a Yssaril teammate, whether the Yssaril's ties to the Guild of Spies are acknowledged or merely suspected. Similarly, it is difficult in the extreme for a N'orr G'hom warrior to truly suppress their instinct to serve their species first.

Not all characters with this background have ideological loyalties; Council members know this makes spotting plants far too obvious. Your character may be a Hylar doctoral student reluctantly assigned to field study with the Keleres and required to report their experiences for allegedly academic purposes. Or they could be a forthright Druaa emissary who is only semi-consciously aware that their neural impressions are being read by shadowy handlers from the Collective.

If you want your character to be truly conflicted, they may be beholden to a faction independent of their government or species. For example, a former Sol Federation fighter ace who volunteered for the Keleres may find their hidden gambling debts repurchased for coercion by agents of the Nomad. Alternatively, a Naaz-Rokha scout's tetrad parents may have been captured by the Mentak Coalition, forcing them to trade Keleres secrets as ransom.

Characters who operate as hidden informants within the Keleres typically project a front to allay suspicion, even if they are personally torn. This can run a range of dispositions, including exaggerated bravado, excessive dedication, surliness, or simply aloofness. These characters' allegiance usually revolves around some aspect of their divided loyalty.

Hidden Past

When a sentient takes the Keleres oath, they are meant to set aside many aspects of their previous life. For most Keleres, achieving this level of devotion lies somewhere between an ideal and a fiction. But sometimes, the previous life that a Keleres presents to their colleagues is a fiction itself.

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If you want your character to have a background like this, it bears some similarity to the dangerous secret background (see page 17). But in this case, the secret is the details of the character's true identity. They live with a cover story to protect themself, their previous loyalties, or even their fellow Keleres. Sometimes the truth is known to their superiors, but it is not unusual for an individual's personal data to be falsified prior to entry.

To confuse matters further, several of the galaxy's factions—such as the Mentak Coalition and the Nomad—include multiple species. Many of those species also have a separate, homogeneous government of their own elsewhere. This complexity of xenostatehood presents many opportunities for an individual to mask their origins.

If your character has this background, they might try to break from their troubled past by securing an appointment to the Keleres. Perhaps they claim to have been a Letnev naval gunner, ascribing their violet-tinged complexion to their lineage on one of the Barony's border outposts when, in reality, they were born on Moll Primus and gained their expertise serving among the cruelest Mentak corsairs. Eventually, the growing bounty on their head may have forced them to buy an escape from a Coalition ambassador.

Or perhaps your character obscures their true training to avoid stigma or gain a tactical advantage. For example, they may claim to be an unassuming Yssaril menn root botanist who tacitly admits to having engaged in industrial espionage for the Guild of Spies. Instead, the grim truth is that they were a feared and effective Guild assassin specializing in scientific targets.

Still other characters hide a personal history for reasons that benefit the Keleres. Your character may present themself as a humble Gashlai drive artificer who, years ago and wearing a different Ember suit, gained infamy for their participation in a war sun weapons demonstration. Now, their skills may be vital to Keleres investigations of dangerous superscalar weapons, and thus worth keeping hidden by the agency.

Like characters with other types of secrets, characters who conceal their past can be watchful, even bordering on paranoid. The necessity of building their cover means that they typically have ready (if forced) explanations for inconsistencies in their story. However, some eventually come to enjoy cultivating an atmosphere of enigma. These characters' allegiances usually center on their hidden identity. Some are desperate to conceal it despite any cost to comrades or mission. Others seek atonement, even if it means sacrificing their focus on present threats.

Mark Hastings (Order #32252139)

Keleres beyond the Council

The Keleres was designed to draw its agents from the military or civil services of the Galactic Council's member governments. But the galaxy is a vast place that includes many factions and species who do not have Council representation. As a result, individuals who are not sponsored by a government do sometimes operate alongside the Keleres. This is worth considering if you are interested in giving your character a more renegade background.

The elected Tribunii who command the Keleres are beset by political pressures and resource problems, but they are not quite as ineffectual as is often assumed. Tribunii can themselves directly appoint a limited number of Keleres. They can also sometimes sequester funding to hire external contractors or specialists. These are useful prerogatives for an organization that cannot always trust its recruits and must frequently operate in the galaxy's shadows.

So, it is not unknown for the Tribunii or their Winnaran aides to recruit individuals from mercenary or criminal backgrounds if they believe their expertise is necessary. For example, while the Nomad is officially deemed a criminal organization by the Council, its Space Station Sumerian attracts some of the most skilled data thieves and soldiers of fortune in the galaxy. The Nomad also appears to share some common enemies with the Keleres.

Similarly, members of the revolutionary network known as the Firmament are marked as terrorists, but their cells are deeply embedded in the underworld of many planets, and they know much about other groups who share that existence. Firmament cadres are also adept at circumventing and sabotaging security systems and blending into the surrounding population.

Space corsairs possess useful outlaw skills as well, operating among the crudest of bases and familiar with many weird, uncharted passages. The Mentak Pirates are the most infamous, though they are officially disavowed by their Coalition's ambassadors on the Council. But there are other bands scattered throughout the stars, such as the Oblivion pirate fleet led by Captain Blackout, or Von Noiman's Raiders in the Kelliper Belt.

Finally, Mecatol City itself has many capable rogue inhabitants. The Old Deep is a lawless, labyrinthine abyss far beneath the city's spires. Those who dwell there are adept at survival, exploration, and scavenging archaic technology.

The Keleres often find themselves operating at the extremes of the galaxy. Your character may come from any of these origins, or possibly even stranger places.

Obligated to Serve

In societies across the galaxy, power is built one relationship at a time. Those individuals who crave it learn how to turn the transactional nature of the institutions around them to their benefit. The member governments of the Galactic Council each have prerogative in how they select personnel for the Keleres. This provides endless opportunities for officials to use appointments for patronage and influence trading. For this reason, many Keleres join the agency at the behest of a powerful superior, as a necessary step in their own advancement, or even as a pawn in Council power politics.

Frequently, a character's obligation to become Keleres does not arise solely from self-interest. A Saar warrior may be told by their admiral that they are required to serve, with the understanding that if they honorably represent their people—and survive to return—there will be a command waiting for them. Alternatively, your character may be a rising Winnu politician who obeys their leader's command to show the Council what Winnu leadership looks like by joining the Keleres.

Some characters take up the burden of service to advance their personal interests. Your character may be a Hacan merchant captain whose clan has suffered ruinous losses, so they agree to take the oath in exchange for an emir's assumption of the debts. Or they could be a flinty Letnev master-at-arms who accepts a noble's offer to enroll their children in an elite academy in return for being the noble's substitute in the Keleres.

Finally, your character may have joined the Keleres due to the shifting politics of the Galactic Council. A Human frontier scout from an isolated, distant sun might be sent as part of an arrangement for the Council to protect the scout's world from annexation by the Federation of Sol. Alternatively, a Creuss energy scientist might be ordered to join in the aftermath of the Acheron disaster as a show of their species' commitment to the Council.

Characters with an obligation to serve can differ in their feelings toward the Keleres. They can be dutiful and stoic, distracted by self-interest, or simply resigned. They can come with any of a wide variety of skill sets, as the officials who appoint them are often simply looking to make a quota. These characters' allegiance is usually bound up with their specific obligations in some way, frequently focusing on ensuring that their service is actually repaid.

Mark Fissinger (Order #52262139)

True Believer

The rarest of all Keleres recruits are those who have chosen the path completely for their own reasons. These few volunteers are often viewed by their fellow Keleres with a mix of curiousity, disdain, and suspicion. In a cynical galaxy, many sentients believe that idealism masks self-aggrandizement or dangerous naïveté. Regardless of their peers' opinion, your character has formed some conviction that compels them to serve the Keleres.

If you want your character's devotion to be political in nature, they may be an Xxcha diplomat and xenohistorian who idealizes the Lazax golden age and hopes that the restored Galactic Council has a chance to rekindle what was best about that era; this therefore requires Keleres protection. Alternatively, they may be a sardonic Human security operative who sees disturbing signs of pending war and believes the Keleres must protect the fledgling Council from itself by keeping an eye on aggressive member species and on destabilizing new technologies.

Some characters' ideals are focused more on saving lives than governments. Such a character may be a hardened, aristocratic Letnev office who encountered the Nekro Virus in battle and is convinced that only the Keleres can marshal the interspecies cooperation to stop it. Or they could be a haunted Hylar scientist who survived the Acheron disaster, fatalistically believing that the Mahact gene-sorcerers' return has doomed galactic civilization, but that the Keleres may still help to preserve some species.

Still other characters bring strong philosophical beliefs to the Keleres, with the intent to use the organization as a vehicle by which to pursue justice or other abstract ideals. They may be from a historically oppressed culture—such as the Gashlai or Naaz-Rokha—and hope to influence the Keleres to free others from the conditions that tempt some to worship the ravenous Vuil'raith. Or your character could instead be a Shikrai of the Argent Flight, invested with a sacred belief that they must tutor the Keleres to protect the galaxy by modeling stoic martial virtue.

Characters who sincerely believe in the Keleres' mission are likely to be either sheltered and idealistic or seasoned and resolute. They may have already served in some capacity in a member government or the Council bureaucracy. However, this background also includes some idealists who apply to the Keleres from civilian life or nonstate organizations. These characters' allegiance often reflects a purity of purpose that puts them at odds with their teammates.

Step 2: Select a Species

Your character's species defines who your character is physically, and it also defines a lot more about their background. Remember that your character is only going to be one species (unless they are Naaz-Rokha). No matter what, you are not able to change this choice after you start playing.

Species (unlike the archetypes described in the Core Rulebook) can work with just about any background. Although some species are stereotyped into certain roles and may have abilities that make them particularly good in those roles, any species can fit with any background and career. And of course, in the various Great Civilizations, members of a particular species fill a wide range of roles. It's up to you whether you want to try make sure your character is optimally suited for a specific career or to build to a specific character concept and worry less about the mechanics.

Mark Hastings (Order #52252139)

Creuss

The Creuss have the dubious distinction of being a species not of the material universe. They come from a region of twisted and torn space known as the Shaleri anomaly. Here the physical laws of the universe begin to break down. The heart of the anomaly is a wormhole known as the Creuss Gate, which leads to a universe completely unlike our own, where exotic energies replace molecular bonds and coalesce into beings of light and radiation.

These beings call themselves the Creuss. In their natural state, they are nothing more than a wispy glow of fluctuating blue energy, formless and insubstantial. Such beings have great difficulty interacting with the material universe, so in the shattered space where the two universes meet, the Creuss have established foundries and stations where they can manipulate solid matter. They create armor that can contain their ethereal forms and give them a physical presence, and ships and equipment to further their interactions in the material universe.

Why Play a Creuss?

The Creuss function very differently from most species. Outside of their armor, they are insubstantial ghosts who unfortunately can quickly wither away and even die when exposed to "normal" reality. But if they're bold enough, they can leave their suit for short periods of time and take advantage of their ethereal form.

A Creuss character probably serves the interests of the Ghosts of Creuss, the mysterious faction of Creuss that has taken an interest in the material universe and potentially in ruling the shattered Imperium. However, not all Creuss remain loyal to their home dimension and work to support its power in the material universe. Some have ventured into the wider galaxy simply to explore and experience this strange realm. If you like the idea of playing a mysterious traveler who can teleport from place to place, an enigmatic sage who speaks in riddles, or a smug researcher with a unique perspective on the world, a Creuss is the right choice for you.

Names of the Creuss

The Creuss have two names, the first being an identifier of social status and rank, and the second a personal name. The first is usually a three-letter word starting with S, while the last name tends to be three to four syllables long, with soothing, drawn-out vowels and consonants that give it a flowing sound.

Some examples include:

- **San Nerio**
- **Sai Seravus**
- **Soo Liereh**
- **Sih Thallinis**

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	2	1	3	2

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 7 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 12 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Starting Skills:** A Creuss starts with one rank in Vigilance. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Vigilance above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Incorporeal:** Your character lacks corporeal presence. When wearing sealed armor or an environmental suit, your character acts as normal. However, when not wearing armor, when your character makes Brawn- or Agility-based checks, increase the difficulty by 2. When a corporeal character makes a Brawn- or Agility-based check targeting your character, increase the difficulty by 2. Your character increases their soak by their Willpower (in addition to their Brawn). Your character can move through most mundane types of difficult and impassable terrain without penalty but cannot stop inside solid surfaces. Outside of the Shaleri anomaly or their home dimension, your character suffers 1 strain at the end of each of their turns. If this causes them to exceed their strain threshold, they suffer one Critical Injury at the end of each of their turns as well, until they are able to return to a habitable environment. In addition, your character does not need to eat, breathe, or sleep and is immune to poisons and toxins.
- **Insubstantial Form:** Creuss do not gain the benefits of healing wounds with dermal sealers (painkillers) or Medicine checks. Creuss do heal wounds and strain naturally by resting. In addition, when they make a check to heal strain at the end of an encounter, they may spend ⮝ to heal 1 wound (and may spend multiple ⮝ to do so), and they may spend ⮝ equal to a Critical Injury's severity (or ⚙) to heal a Critical Injury.
- **Ethereal Awareness:** Once per session as an out-of-turn incidental, you may spend a Story Point to have your character become aware of everything that is currently within long range of your character (this includes concealed enemies, hidden passageways, and what is behind sealed doors).
- Your character starts the game with a sealed environmental suit (see page 117).

Mark Fissinger (Order #52282139)

Druaa

The serpentine Druaa would be simply one more species in a galaxy full of sentient life if it weren't for their singular gift: they appear to be the only species in the galaxy with a highly advanced form of telepathy. Scientists are unsure how this ability works, and the Druaa are notably loath to allow other species to investigate it. But they have spent centuries refining their technology to enhance their innate abilities, so it is likely they possess a deep understanding that they'll never share with others.

Beyond their abilities to read minds and alter thoughts, the Druaa are a cold-blooded reptilian species with a humanoid torso that shifts into a massive serpentine body. A Druaa's face is humanoid as well, although their skin is covered in scales, and they sport a fanlike skin-crest that stretches out from their skull. Everything about this species seems to be equal parts graceful and unsettling.

Although many people think of them as the Naalu, the serpentine species hailing from Druaa insists that their species shares the same name as their home. In fact, they claim Druaa was named after their species during their early eras of scientific enlightenment. However, those scholars who believe the Druaa actually evolved on neighboring Maaluk suggest that they chose the name of their adopted homeworld to help cement their claim.

Why Play a Druaa?

The Druaa start with slightly fewer experience points and a lower wound and strain threshold than other species, but they trade this for the unique ability to read minds. This makes them very powerful in social settings and can also be used in all sorts of creative ways by inventive players.

Names of the Druaa

Druaa names are constructed of harsh "t" and "k" consonants paired with soft syllables, and they are pronounced with a notable hiss. These names are always written with a single consonant first, then an apostrophe, then the remainder of the name. This pattern holds whether the Druaa has two names or one (both are common, depending on the Druaa subculture). Since the entire species is telepathic, they rely on mental projections instead of names to communicate concepts such as rank, status, and family. Thus, names are purely a means of personal identity.

Some examples include:

- **S'sruuk H'eyra**
- **S'srool D'amil**
- **T'elsa**
- **Z'eu**

For various reasons, some Druaa leave the Naalu Collective (their world's society) and strike out on their own. These individuals have to be careful, however; the Collective often sees "rogue" Druaa as threats and devotes time and resources to hunting them down. If you want to play a clever negotiator who's always one step ahead of their opponents, a starfighter pilot with preternaturally sharp reflexes, or a rogue telepath on the run from their own kind, a Druaa is the right choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	1	2	3	2

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 8 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 9 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 95
- **Starting Skills:** A Druaa starts with one rank in Discipline. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Discipline above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Mind Reader:** As an action, your character may make an **opposed Discipline versus Discipline check** targeting one living creature within medium range. If successful, your character knows the target's current thoughts and emotional state. ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⚙ may be spent to discover other thoughts or memories, at your GM's discretion.

Mark Hastings (Order #32282139)

Gashlai

Even in a galaxy of oddities and mysteries, the Gashlai are unique. Each is a raging inferno, an organism constantly enveloped in a roiling blanket of flame and heat. Unlike most living beings, the Gashlai conceive their children by creating an embryo in a "cocoon" that somehow draws energy from its surroundings and converts it into mass. When a Gashlai is birthed from their cocoon, their squat, bulky body erupts into flame as that mass begins to return to energy. This process continues for the rest of their very long life, until the last of their body is consumed, the flames gutter out, and the Gashlai dies.

The Gashlai could only evolve on a volcanic world like Muaat, where most of the lowlands are hotter than blast furnaces, since prolonged exposure to temperatures others might consider normal causes them to radiate heat much faster and even "burn out" and expire. But even Muaat has its colder climates, mountainous highlands where the temperatures are a "frigid" thirty-two to fifty-five degrees Celsius. To explore these alien realms, the Gashlai developed cumbersome personal transports that could preserve their internal heat: the precursors to their famous Ember suits.

Names of the Gashlai

Gashlai names tend to have a harsh "sh" or "t" sound somewhere within them and are often pronounced like water spitting and hissing after being dropped on a hot stove. This makes their names hard for most non-Gashlai to pronounce properly, so many Gashlai take on nicknames that are adaptations of words that refer to fire in other languages.

Some examples include:

- **Flaim Haash**
- **Hosh Gahloki**
- **Magmus (nickname)**
- **Umbat (nickname)**

Why Play a Gashlai?

Gashlai tend to be strong and tough with high wound and strain thresholds. They make good mechanics and solid combatants, and can take on hybrid roles as combat engineers. They also have the unique ability to set people around them on fire (although they risk injuring themselves in the process).

The Gashlai in the ranks of the Keleres tend to be military personnel dispatched by the Fire Wardens. Many fill the role of a mechanic or enforcer, since their cumbersome suit makes them less suited for stealth-related tasks and infiltration duties. If you want to play a devoted soldier working to ensure your people are protected from future oppression, a wide-eyed explorer marveling at your first explorations of the strange world beyond your fiery home, or a grizzled mechanic who can always jury-rig a solution to a problem, a Gashlai is the right choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	2	2	2	1

- **Starting Wound Threshold**: 12 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 12 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 80
- **Starting Skills:** A Gashlai starts with two ranks in Mechanics. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Mechanics above rank 3 during character creation.
- **Integral Combustion:** When a non-Gashlai is engaged with a Gashlai, they are exposed to a fire with a rating of 5 (see page 111 of the Core Rulebook). Gashlai do not suffer damage from weapons with the Burn item quality (whether or not the quality is activated). When a Gashlai who is not wearing a sealed environmental suit is present in any environment that does not have temperatures between 400 and 2,000 degrees Celsius, they suffer 1 strain at the end of each of their turns. If this causes them to exceed their strain threshold, they suffer one Critical Injury at the end of each of their turns as well, until they are able to return to a habitable environment.
- **Ember Suit:** Your character starts the game with a sealed environmental suit (see page 117). While your character is wearing the suit, engaged non-Gashlai are not exposed to a fire with a rating of 5.
- **Focused Heat:** While your character is wielding a Melee or Brawl weapon (including their unarmed attacks), that weapon gains the Burn 2 item quality if it did not already have the Burn item quality. When making a combat check with a Melee or Brawl weapon, your character may suffer 3 strain to trigger the Burn quality without spending A.

Mark Fissinger (Order #52282139)

Hacan

The Hacan are an ancient species, well established in the galaxy. Hailing from the hot and dry planets of the tri-system of Kenara, the trading clans of the Hacan long ago established themselves among the galaxy's dominant economic powerhouses. Even in the depths of the Twilight Wars and the grim times that followed, some intrepid Hacan traders still plied the spacelanes, and now the Emirates are poised to regain their titles as the masters of commerce once again.

Hacan tend to be tall and imposing, covered in a short coat of tawny, golden hair. Males also have thick manes that they wear in a variety of styles. The Hacan's sharp canines and somewhat carnivorous diet are the only remnants of their distant evolutionary roots, and as a species, they tend toward patience and caution rather than aggression.

Thanks to their long history of trade and commerce, Hacan have traveled across the galaxy and settled in enclaves on a number of worlds. Some of these maintain close ties with their kin in the Kenara system, while others have broken away and formed their own culture. But many of the Hacan who live off-world still tend toward a nomadic lifestyle, trading the sands of their home for the endless expanse of stars.

Names of the Hacan

Hacan names are guttural with hard "g" and "c" sounds, and Hacan tend to roll their pronunciation of the double "r." Often there is a hint of a purr or growl in their pronunciation. Hacan only have single names; any identification of family and status happens through an individual's pheromones, posture, and the body language displayed throughout a conversation.

Some examples include:

- **Durruq**
- **Garrus**
- **Alrung**
- **Harrugh**
- **Saygra**

Why Play a Hacan?

The Hacan have the stereotype of being consummate traders, and while most Hacan are not merchants, their high Presence and their Savvy Negotiator ability make them innately good at social encounters. Hacan can be skilled diplomats and "face" characters for their groups, and their high strain threshold means they can shrug off snide comments and scathing rebukes. Plus, their physical characteristics are solidly average, so Hacan can be effective combatants as well. Hacan in the Keleres may have been assigned by the Emirates, but not all Hacan serve the Quieron. Your character may have grown up on a distant enclave or lived a nomadic life among the stars. In this case, they may have pledged allegiance to any one of the great powers. If you're excited about playing a dignified but dangerous leonine alien, a grizzled trader with years of experience plying the spacelanes, or a suave diplomatic envoy, a Hacan is the right choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	2	1	3

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 11 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Starting Skills:** A Hacan starts with one rank in Negotiation. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Negotiation above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Savvy Negotiator:** Once per session when your character is targeted by a social skill check and is dealt strain, you may spend a Story Point as an out-of-turn incidental to reduce the strain suffered by their Cunning rating and inflict strain on the character who targeted them equal to their Cunning rating.

Mark Hassinger (Order #3282135)

Human

Humans are a relatively young species on the cosmic scale, but in the years since their species discovered the mass-drive, they have spread out across the galaxy at a dizzying rate. In doing so, the species has proven itself impressively adaptable, able to merge more or less seamlessly into any number of foreign cultures. Even on Jord, its ancestral home, Humanity is amazingly diverse in form and attitude. Many xenobiologists agree that this genetic and mental adaptability has contributed greatly to their survival as a species.

Humans are mammalian bipeds who maintain the binocular vision and social tendencies of their primate ancestors, even if they've lost most of the body hair. Beyond their renowned versatility, their most notable traits are their physical and psychological endurance, holdovers from their origins as persistence hunters.

Most of the untold trillions of Humans scattered across the galaxy have no allegiance to or kinship with Jord, though some may feel a certain fondness for their distant kin. These Humans have instead assimilated into whichever culture has adopted them. Some societies are much more welcoming than others, but aside from some particularly xenophobic or isolated exceptions, it is rare to come to a world without at least a small population of Humanity.

Why Play a Human?

Humans are certainly one of the easiest species for players to relate to, but their real strength lies in their adaptability. While they are not particularly good at any one thing, they're not particularly bad at anything either. This makes the Human a good starting point for just about any character idea you might have.

That flexibility carries through to the Humans in the Keleres. More than any other species, Humans serving in the Keleres can come from just about anywhere and owe allegiance to just about anyone. While players may think of Humans serving the Federation of Sol as the default, Humans may have been sent to the Keleres from nearly any Great Civilization. If you want to play a lethal Sol Spec Ops commando, a dashing space pirate, or an idealistic young recruit who believes in the mission of the Keleres, a Human is the right choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	2	2	2

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Starting Skills:** A Human starts with one rank in each of two non-career skills. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase either of those skills above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Endurance Predator**: When a Human makes a check to heal strain at the end of an encounter, they heal 1 additional strain.
- **Adaptable**: Once per session when your character makes a skill check, you may spend a Story Point to use any skill with the check (the check still uses the original characteristic).

Names of the Humans

Human names tend to resemble variants of the names of the past (our present), with some subtle changes to account for the passage of time. However, thousands of years of cultural mingling means that first, last, and middle names may be taken from different cultural sources of today.

Some examples include:

- **Jael Ducan**
- **Hiari Omar**
- **Paulo Jorginson**
- **Katarina Lunga**

Mark Fissinger (Order #32282150)

Hylar

The Hylar are actually a collection of closely related subspecies hailing from the twin oceanic worlds of Jol and Nar. All of the Hylar variants are distinctly aquatic, but they range from subspecies that can breathe air and survive out of the water for weeks at a time to Hylar who only possess gills and cannot live unless they are continuously submerged. Still, each of the subspecies has similar physical characteristics: an oversized head with bulbous eyes; slick, smooth skin; and thin, flexible limbs ending in finned appendages.

Most notably, all subspecies of Hylar also have a large and highly developed brain. Many xenobiologists agree that this could be an evolutionary compensation for their soft bones and lack of physical strength. The Hylar have made the most of this ability throughout their species' history, and even those who do not serve the Universities of Jol-Nar often find themselves in jobs that leverage their significant innate intellect.

Why Play a Hylar?

Hylar are very specialized mechanically. Their focus is on Intellect, which pairs well with their Vast Intellect ability to let them perform phenomenally on any Intellect-based skill and, once per session, to have a fair chance of passing any skill check. They trade this for a low Brawn and Willpower as well as low starting strain and wound thresholds. This makes a Hylar a good basis for playing a scholar, medic, mechanic, or scientist.

Although all Hylar have a high Intellect, this doesn't mean your character has to focus on it. There are plenty of Hylar soldiers, pilots, explorers, and criminals in the galaxy, and the species starts with enough XP that its members are still very customizable. If you want to play a brilliantly eccentric researcher, a coldly logical military commander, or a deep space explorer whose dashing demeanor hides a calculating mind, then playing a Hylar is the right choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	4	2	1	2

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 7 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 8 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90
- **Starting Skills:** A Hylar starts with two ranks in one knowledge skill of their choice. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase this skill above rank 3 during character creation.
- **Vast Intellect:** Once per session, you may spend a Story Point as an incidental before your character makes a skill check to count their ranks in the skill being used as equal to their Intellect.
- **Aquatic:** Your character can breathe underwater and never suffers movement penalties for traveling through water.
- **Species Variants:** Your character can start the game either as an air-breathing Hylar or as a water-breathing Hylar. If they start the game as an air-breathing Hylar, they can also function normally in all oxygen atmospheres. If they start the game as a water-breathing Hylar, they gain 5 additional starting XP. However, if exposed to the air, they follow the rules for drowning (see page 111 of the Core Rulebook). They also start the game with a sealed environmental suit (see page 117).

Names of the Hylar

Hylar often have two names, although neither is a "family" name. The combination of names is simply the unique moniker of each Hylar. Their names have rumbling guttural "u" sounds and gentle "a" sounds that combine with many "l," "n," and "g" consonants to form rolling, bubbling words.

Some examples include:

- **Deluin Fillagn**
- **Yaluga Huin**
- **Sucaban Tarrun**
- **Migun Thu**

Mark Hastings (Order #3228213)

Letnev

A stereotypically proud, aggressive, and arrogant people, the Letnev are mammalian humanoids who bear a passing resemblance to Humans, though neither species likes to admit it. The principle physiological differences are the Letnev's skin tones (ranging from pale blue to light gray), their hair color (often a cold blue-white, or inky blue-black), and their aversion to intense or bright light. This last may be because of their evolution in the caverns deep below the surface of their sunless homeworld of Arc Prime.

The Letnev are an ancient people, among the first to join the Lazax Empire. That history, coupled with their traditionally powerful militarist culture, engenders a strong sense of arrogance in most Letnev. And even if a Letnev avoids this character trait, most other individuals they meet expect it of them.

Why Play a Letnev?

The Letnev are a good alternative to playing a Human. If you want to make a character whom you, the player, might find easily approachable, the Letnev are similar to Humans while still possessing that thread of alienness. Alternatively, you may want to play a character with a strong force of will and sense of duty and destiny, and with their high Willpower and Unmatched Arrogance ability, the Letnev fill that role well.

It's also worth noting that since the Letnev are an old species, there are plenty of them wandering the galaxy who have no affiliation with the Barony (see page 68) or their homeworld. Letnev may be part of any number of the Great Civilizations, especially cosmopolitan ones like the Mentak Coalition, or they may not belong to any faction at all. So if you want to play a commanding military leader, a disciplined soldier, or a wild criminal fighting against their cultural upbringing, playing a Letnev is the right choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	1	3	2

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Starting Skills:** A Letnev starts with one rank in one combat skill of their choice. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase this skill above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Unmatched Arrogance:** When a Letnev makes a Leadership or Coercion check, they add ✲ to the results. When a Letnev makes a Charm or Negotiation check, they add ✪ to the results.

Names of the Letnev

As fits a proud and status-obsessed people, the Letnev almost always have a first, middle, and last name, and always include any title or honorific they can claim. To address them by anything save their full name (or in a pinch, their last name plus title) is a grave insult unless you are a close friend in a private setting.

Some examples include:

- **Daffren Oris Parenaud II**
- **Commander Tellian Den Marchand the Elder**
- **Captain Guien Cabalan Lassir**
- **The Honorable Misreque Val Dortmaran**

Mark Fissinger (Order #32282139)

N'orr

The N'orr are an insectoid species from the barren desert world of Quinarra. As with the Hylar, their subspecies exhibit a vast range of differences in morphology, from bipedal, beetle-headed physiques roughly the size of a Human to hulking, four-legged variants with wedge-shaped heads, long arms, and a dozen small eyes. Although their appearances vary wildly, all N'orr share the same basic DNA structure, to the point that some biologists have claimed these differences are no stranger than the varied hair or skin colors of Humans.

Some beings make the mistake of characterizing them as a "hive species," and the N'orr are known for working in close cooperation with one another, with notably few cases of inter-species conflict. However, single N'orr do, in fact, maintain a sense of individual identity and thus have names and personalities of their own.

Why Play a N'orr?

The N'orr are a tough species. They have a high Brawn and wound threshold, and an ability to instantly heal minor Critical Injuries. This, plus their high Agility, makes them great fighting characters. The tradeoffs are that they innately lack social skills and have a low Willpower, and most don't have enough experience to easily make up the difference.

When making a N'orr character, it's important to remember that their appearance can vary wildly, and this gives you creative license to describe your character however you like, just as long as they have a distinctly insectoid appearance. If you want to play a fearless Tekklar Elite soldier, a secretive operative of the Veiled Brood (see page 90), or a rugged survivalist used to living in Quinarra's ferocious climate, a N'orr is the right choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	2	1	1

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 12 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 7 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 85
- **Starting Skills:** A N'orr starts with one rank in Athletics. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Athletics above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Rugged Biology:** Once per session, you may spend a Story Point to have your character heal one Critical Injury with a severity of **Easy** (◆) or **Average** (◆◆) that they are currently suffering as an incidental.

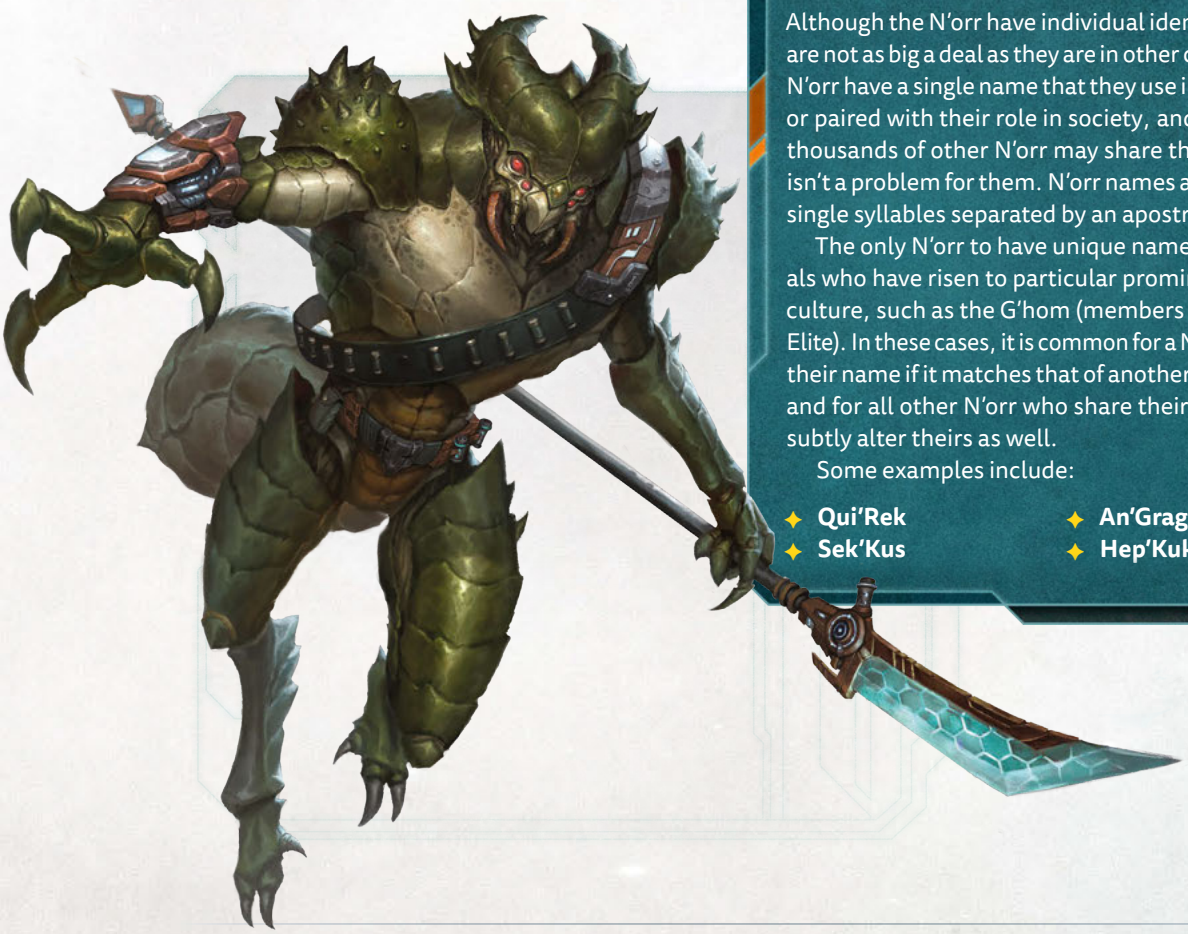
Names of the N'orr

Although the N'orr have individual identities, names are not as big a deal as they are in other cultures. Most N'orr have a single name that they use independently or paired with their role in society, and the fact that thousands of other N'orr may share the same name isn't a problem for them. N'orr names are always two single syllables separated by an apostrophe.

The only N'orr to have unique names are individuals who have risen to particular prominence in N'orr culture, such as the G'hom (members of the Tekklar Elite). In these cases, it is common for a N'orr to change their name if it matches that of another famous N'orr, and for all other N'orr who share their new name to subtly alter theirs as well.

Some examples include:

- **Qui'Rek**
- **Sek'Kus**
- **An'Grag**
- **Hep'Kuk**



Mark Hassinger (Order #3228243)

Naaz-Rokha

The Naaz-Rokha are a bit of a galactic oddity: two completely unrelated species who, through deliberate effort, have formed a fully cooperative symbiotic union. Biologically, the two could not be more different. The Naaz are small, four-armed mammalians with pink skin, large ears, and red eyes, and an almost instinctive grasp of technology. The Rokha, on the other hand, are black-furred felids who are very distant genetic relatives of the Hacan, though the two species diverged long ago. After the Naaz and Rokha unified to seek independence and a free homeworld together, the union they created went far beyond a broadly political one.

Nearly all Naaz and Rokha live in bonded pairs of one Naaz and one Rokha. These pairs form when both are very young through a community-driven social process, and with only a few exceptions, the pairs maintain their bond throughout their lives. Even most families form between two or more bonded pairs, made easier by the fact that while the Rokha have two biological sexes, the Naaz only have one (any Naaz can reproduce with any other Naaz). Courtship rituals are almost always group affairs. Bonded pairs live and often work together, and even share many of the same interests, so it's rare to see one and not the other.

Why Play a Naaz-Rokha?

The Naaz-Rokha are a unique species choice to make a character with because the PC is actually two different species played as a single character! This makes them a complex choice with a few special rules to keep track of, but it also makes them rewarding both mechanically and narratively.

One of the benefits of playing a dual character like a Naaz-Rokha is that each member of the bonded pair has their own strengths. Since you get to choose which member makes a check whenever your character acts, the Naaz tends to handle Intellect-based and social skill checks, and the Rokha handles Cunning-, Brawn-, and Agility-based skill checks. They do share a single skill and talent list, however, so it's not quite like running two individual characters.

Narratively, Naaz-Rokha can be built as two characters who are both reasonably good at a wide range of tasks (with either character taking the lead no matter what the specifics of the task are). Alternatively, you may want to build a more focused character for whom one of the pair tends to take the lead on the tasks they are best at, while the other spends a bit more time in the background. Both of these examples are present in Naaz-Rokha society. If you're interested in playing a pair of adventurous and foolhardy explorers, a brilliant scientist and their long-suffering stalwart friend, or a skilled warrior who keeps dragging a nervous genius into danger, a Naaz-Rokha is the right choice for you.

Unique Rules for Dual Characters

A Naaz-Rokha character is a particularly complex character option. Here is some information that helps explain some of the ways this character interacts with the game mechanics:

- **Purchasing Passive Talents:** Since the Naaz and Rokha share the same talent list, they both benefit from passive talents. This means that when they take a rank of Toughened, for example, both increase their wound threshold by 2.
- **Equipment:** The Naaz and the Rokha must each have their own equipment, so, for instance, if the partnership purchases a set of armor, you must decide which one wears the armor. If one member of the partnership makes an attack that requires use of a weapon, they must be carrying a weapon in order to complete the attack (they can't pass a weapon back and forth unless they use their maneuvers to do so).
- **Strain, Wounds, and Critical Injuries:** Each member of the partnership tracks their wounds, strain, and Critical Injuries separately (remember, you decide which one is hit by an attack, so both the Naaz and Rokha may suffer different amounts of damage). When your character voluntarily suffers strain, you choose which member of the partnership suffers strain. The ongoing effects of a Critical Injury affect the specific member of the partnership but not both (so if the Naaz suffers a Critical Injury that increases the difficulty of checks by 1, the Rokha could still make a skill check without penalty). In certain situations, it may make sense for a Critical Injury to affect both, however, and your GM may rule that the penalty applies.
- **Healing:** Healing must target the Naaz or Rokha separately (and rules like only being able to make one Medicine check to heal wounds per encounter and those concerning the degradation of painkillers also apply to each one separately, page 116 Genesys Core Rulebook). When the Naaz and Rokha heal strain at the end of an encounter, they make one check. You split the healing between the Naaz and Rokha as you choose.

Mark Fissinger (Order #32282139)

Character Sheet Options

The Naaz-Rokha are complex enough that it can be useful to keep two character sheets, one for each member of the bonded pair. Alternatively, you can download the special Naaz-Rokha character sheet from our website at edge-studio.net.

Naaz

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	1	3	2	2	2

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 4 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower

Rokha

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	3	1	1

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 6 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 70
- **Starting Skills:** A Naaz-Rokha starts with one rank in Computers and one rank in Coordination. They obtain these ranks before spending experience points, and they may not increase Computers or Coordination above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Symbiotic Partnership:** A Naaz-Rokha is a single player character with two independent sets of characteristics and derived attributes. The Naaz and the Rokha operate as independent beings who share the same skills and talents. During the Naaz-Rokha's turn, as long as neither the Naaz nor the Rokha is incapacitated and they are within short range of each other, the Naaz-Rokha may perform one additional free maneuver without suffering strain (they may still only perform two maneuvers each turn).
- **Symbiotic Operation:** When your character performs an action, choose whether the Naaz or the Rokha is performing the action; use that being's relevant characteristics, and use the appropriate skill from the shared skill list. When your character is targeted by an attack, skill check, or effect, as long as the Naaz and the Rokha are within short range of each other, choose which one is the target. In specific circumstances in which it may not make sense for you to choose which member of the pair acts or is targeted, your GM can make the decision instead.
- **Character Death:** When the Naaz or the Rokha is killed, you may choose to retire your character (with the living member of the pair retiring from adventuring and going into mourning) or continue playing with only one member of the pair (but in this case, you cannot add a 'new' member to replace the dead one).
- **Symbiotic Advancements:** Your character has a single skill list and single talent list. Skills and talents are purchased for your character as normal. When your character increases a characteristic or a derived attribute, choose whether that increase applies to the Naaz profile or the Rokha profile.
- **Need a Lift?:** A Naaz is silhouette 0. A Rokha is silhouette 1.
- **Harness:** All Rokha in a partnership wear a harness that allows their Naaz to ride on their shoulders. The harness is equipment with an encumbrance value of 0, and while the Naaz is riding on the Rokha's shoulders, they may move with the Rokha without spending a maneuver.

Names of the Naaz-Rokha

Naaz-Rokha names are almost always presented together, and the Rokha name comes first in the pairing. Rokha names are usually one or two syllables, with some guttural sounds mixed with soft "sh" hisses. Naaz names are almost always single syllable.

Some examples include:

- **Hesh and Prit**
- **Grav and Gunn**
- **Dart and Tai**
- **Varish and Cole**

Mark Hastings (Order #5228239)

Saar

Without a world to call their own for thousands of years, the Saar have been a nomadic people throughout history. Only recently have they made the great Jorun Asteroid Field a home base and established themselves as members of a new Great Civilization.

Although the Saar are considered to be a voidborn species given their home in the Jorun asteroids, biologically they still have the traits of those who evolved in a planetary biosphere, although enough time spent in zero-gravity environments means they tend to have a lower muscle mass than planet-bound species. The Saar are mammalian bipeds with a thick coat of fur, front-set eyes providing binocular vision, and plenty of sharp teeth. As their appearance suggests, they are carnivorous and likely evolved from pack hunters, which could explain the clan structure their diffuse species has maintained throughout most of their history. But whatever their origins, the Saar have adapted well to their new home in the frozen rock fields of Jorun.

Why Play a Saar?

The Saar are a species with relatively simple mechanics and a lot of starting experience to play with. This provides many opportunities for customization. Their high Cunning lends itself to characters who are good at lying, noticing things, or performing tasks without being noticed. However, the extra experience means that a Saar can be built into whatever sort of character you find intriguing. Their Resourceful ability has a mechanical theme, but it can also let your character fix (or destroy) things without any skill in Mechanics at all.

Although most Saar call the Jorun Asteroid Field home, their millennia of living scattered across the galaxy means that they can be found on many worlds, and your character can be from just about anywhere. If you want to play a hardened ship captain wise to the ways of the void, a young and idealistic mechanic, or a military scout eager to right the past wrongs done to their people, playing a Saar is right for you.

1	2	2	3	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 8 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 9 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 110
- **Starting Skills:** A Saar starts with one rank in Astrocartography. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Astrocartography above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Resourceful:** Once per session, you may spend a Story Point to have your character repair one item they are engaged with as an incidental (fixing all damage and restoring it to full functionality) or have your character inflict major damage on one item they are engaged with as an incidental (see page 89 of the Core Rulebook for more information).

Names of the Saar

Saar place a great deal of importance on families, so nearly all Saar have a family name as well as a personal name. A Saar without a family name is either famous enough to be recognized for their own achievements or has done something to estrange themself from their relatives. Most Saar names have a bit of a growling sound to them and may include a low rolling "rr" or "grr," or a rough "gh."

Some examples include:

- **Elder Gurno**
- **Ragh Gavar**
- **Rowl Sarrig**
- **Gharra Mrar**

Mark Fissinger (Order #32282139)

Shikrai

A collection of closely related avian subspecies, the Shikrai inhabit a scattered clutch of worlds trailing the Ordinian nebula. They prefer arid and windswept planets, and although their original homeworlds are galactic curiosities (see page 170), they can thrive on any planet that does not have excessive gravity.

The Shikrai are tall and thin bipeds covered in a thick plumage in a range of different colors and sporting sharp beaks and taloned fingers. Their feathers tend to grow larger on their heads, forming a crest of distinctive plumage. They do not naturally have wings, having lost that particular trait to evolution eons ago. However, they maintain a superior agility and spatial awareness that makes them excellent pilots and highly coordinated combatants. Their societies tend to organize themselves into loose confederations or social "flocks" based on particular goals, and individual Shikrai may shift from one flock to another freely.

Names of the Shikrai

Shikrai naming conventions may vary depending on the society of their birth, but many societies follow a similar basic convention. A Shikrai starts with a birth name, but when they reach adolescence, they receive instruction from an older individual. When their instruction is complete, they add the elder's birth name to their own, prefaced by the word *Aun*, which roughly translates to "shaped by this person."

The cultures linked to the Argent Flight expand on this. As a Shikrai proceeds through life, they add additional words prefaced by the word *Aul*, which means "shaped by the event." The event or accomplishment tends to be represented with highly abbreviated words that have evolved specific meaning; for instance, *Orak* means "lonely vigil" and can refer to any task that required patience and independence, *Zazik* means "artisan" and can refer to artistic accomplishments or invention, and *Akarun* means "fight" and can refer to any major battle or war.

Shikrai names tend to avoid "e" and "y" vowels, and they have a lot of harsh "k" sounds.

Some examples include:

- **Sakora Aun Navori Aul Orak Aul Akarun**
- **Trilossa Aun Mirik Aul Zazik**
- **Mirik Aun Sissiri Aul Akarun Aul Akarun Aul Tori Aul Akarun**
- **Trrakan Aun Zulok Aul Akaran** (the subtle spelling difference refers to someone who wages war with words, or a diplomat)

Why Play a Shikrai?

The Shikrai are a species focused on Agility, at which they are very good, and its linked skills. In addition, their Avian Agility ability can almost guarantee success on one Agility-based check per session. This makes Shikrai excellent pilots, exceptional stealth operatives, and crack shots with most ranged weapons.

While Shikrai from the Argent Flight are often characterized as quasi-religious zealots obsessed with the return of the Mahact kings, plenty of Shikrai from other societies are scattered across the galaxy, leaving you plenty of leeway to build your own character. If you want to play a daredevil pilot prone to dazzling displays of skill, a committed crusader determined to defeat an ancient evil, or a wide-eyed farmer from the galactic fringes, a Shikrai is the choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	1	2	2

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 9 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 9 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Starting Skills:** A Shikrai starts with one rank in Coordination. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Coordination above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Avian Agility:** Once per session when making a skill check that uses your character's Agility characteristic, you may spend a Story Point to add ✲ ✲ ⮝ ⮝ to the results.

Mark Hassinger (Order #3232139)

Names of the Titans

When created by the Mahact, the Titans were treated as simple automatons. Now that they have awoken free of their creators, they are developing their own society from nothing. This includes their naming conventions.

Most Titans have decided to name themselves using words derived from obscure minerals. They usually take a mineral name and modify it slightly, often by adding an "ius," "ion," "un," "tus," or "ian" to the end of the name. Titans also choose titles for themselves, based on their preferred activities and to further emphasize their individualism.

Some examples include:

- **Pyrolusius the Observer**
- **Tellurian the Protector**
- **Tungstantus the Gardener**
- **Iridian the Cultivator**
- **Cinnabian the Advisor**
- **Aragonion the Destroyer**

Titan

Though the Titans may appear to be massive automata, they are in fact living biomechanical beings. Made by the ancient Mahact to be the perfect servants, they have since evolved into an independent species who bear no loyalty to their creators. Instead, most of the Titans have gathered on their homeworld of Elysium to construct their own society.

Titans are all bipeds who are entirely covered in massive plates of metallic armor. Their eyes glow like photoreceptors, and their hands are massive manipulator claws. Nothing of their appearance suggests anything but machine artifice. However, their bodies are constantly living, healing, and growing, albeit slowly. Complex silicate polymers replace carbon-based tissues, a complex digestive system breaks down nonbiological materials into useful building blocks, and thick circulatory fluids carry vital minerals throughout their bodies. They sleep to give their minds a chance to rest and process, and although they do not die of natural causes, they can be killed.

Why Play a Titan?

Titans have the distinction of being the biggest and toughest playable species in Embers of the Imperium. They get a huge wound threshold, a very high Brawn, and a bigger silhouette than anyone else (the silhouette comes with its own benefits and drawbacks). They can also carry more. At the same time, they have a higher-than-average Presence, meaning they can take on social or leadership roles in a party.

It's important to note that since Titans never stop growing, the Titans you can play are the youngest of their species. Titans get to be as big as habitant towers if they live long enough, but they tend to send the youngest and smallest of their species (who are "only" three meters tall) out into the galaxy more often than others. Part of this is practical (young Titans are still small enough to travel on spaceships and enter most buildings), and part of this is psychological (most species interact better with an individual who's at least close to their size). Also, while most Titans have pledged allegiance to the Ul, the eldest Titan, there are some who have decided to leave their new society and make their own way in the galaxy. If you want to play a caring doctor who happens to be three meters tall, a wise warrior leader who seeks to protect their fellows, or a collector of rare flora and fauna, a Titan is the right choice for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	1	2	1	2	3

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 14 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 7 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 60
- **Starting Skills:** A Titan starts with one rank in Discipline. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Discipline above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Titanic:** A Titan is silhouette 2 and increases their encumbrance threshold by 4.
- **Biomechanical:** A Titan does not need to breathe and can survive in vacuum without protection. They do need to sleep and consume moderate amounts of silicates and other minerals to survive.

Mark Fissinger (Order #52282139)

Winnu

The Winnu are one species with two distinctly separate cultures. The first are the Winnaran Custodians, citizens of Mecatol Rex and guardians of the throneworld until the day when a new emperor arises. The second are the Winnu of their ancestral homeworld. The Winnaran Custodians tend to be a studious, dutiful lot, with a dour demeanor bred from millennia of caring for a shattered world. Their Winnu cousins could not be more different.

All Winnu are a bipedal humanoid species with hairless, green skin that denotes a very distant reptilian ancestry. Biologically they don't have any particularly distinguishing characteristics; they're omnivorous and warm-blooded, and have adapted to a range of climates. Socially, however, both Winnu cultures tend to be very strong-willed. Whether this a coincidence or evidence of some deep-seated genetic trait is up for debate. But even as the Winnu of their homeworld insist on their right to rule and call their cousins weak and submissive, they forget that the Winnaran Custodians have preserved the shattered throneworld of Mecatol Rex for over three millennia, and thus far have not relinquished it to any claimant.

Why Play a Winnu?

The Winnu can be a passionate and stubborn people, and that is reflected in their higher-than-average Presence and Willpower and decent strain threshold. They do have a rather obvious weakness: they start two characteristics at rank 1, although they trade this for two characteristics at rank 3. They also get a powerful ability that, once per session, can all but guarantee failure when your character is targeted by a check.

Names of the Winnu

The Winnu species' naming conventions have evolved over time. The Winnaran Custodians still use an older convention with a personal name followed by a "Di," "Iq", or "Il" and then a parent's name ("Di" and "Iq" are patronymic and matronymic signifiers, while "Il" is a gender neutral alternative). However, while some Winnu of their homeworld still use this convention, most now have personal names, then a second name that is a slight variation of the first (usually the last syllable is modified). This second approach has become even more common since the Winnaran Custodians refused to grant the Winnu the Imperial Throne, as more Winnu seek to distance themselves from their Winnaran cousins.

Some examples include:

- **Muad Di Faruuq**
- **Mahthom Iq Seerva**
- **Thoris Il Marithi**
- **Berekar Berekon**
- **Menda Mendala**
- **Perdin Perdona**
- **Kelsa Kelsorin**

When making a Winnu, keep in mind that your character can be from the Winnu society on the Winnu homeworld, or they can be a Winnaran Custodian. The Winnaran Custodians tend to work with, not for, the Keleres, but there have been a few cases in which a Winnaran renounced their ties to the Custodians and joined the Keleres. Few are more dedicated to the organization than those who have done this. If you want to play a passionate diplomat, a righteous military officer, or a careful and considered scholar, then a Winnu is right for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	1	2	1	3	3

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 9 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90
- **Starting Skills:** A Winnu starts with one rank in Leadership. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Leadership above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Righteous:** Once per session when your character is targeted by a skill check (this includes combat checks and social skill checks), you may spend a Story Point to add ✕ ✕ ✕ to the results.

Mark Hassinger (Order #5228239)

Xxcha

The reptilian Xxcha have a reputation as peaceful philosophers. Though many of them are, this ignores their equal strength as warriors and leaders. While the Xxcha were once a truly peaceful faction, the invasion and eventual scouring of one of their two homeworlds, Archon Tau, taught them to never let down their guard. Now, the Xxcha Kingdom believes in peace backed by strength, as do many individual Xxcha.

Like many species in the galaxy, the Xxcha are humanoid bipeds, although they have distinctly reptilian characteristics including scaly skin, a beaked mouth, and a ponderous, thick-boned body. They evolved in the tropical forests of their twin homeworlds, Archon Ren and Archon Tau, and although they are warm-blooded, they still quickly grow uncomfortable in cold climates. Their tough skin and physiology of dense muscle bundles and thick bones means they are incredibly resilient; many Xxcha warriors have shrugged off attacks that could have killed a member of another species.

Why Play a Xxcha?

The Xxcha have slightly lower starting experience and two characteristics at rank 1, but they trade this for having two characteristics at rank 3. This means they're purpose-built to be more focused, although they still have enough experience for proper customization. Their high Willpower and rank in Vigilance makes them good as defensive social characters, as they're likely to spot lies and less likely to be coerced. Their unique species ability, on the other hand, makes them good at surviving combat, so they're powerfully defensive all around.

Many Xxcha, both within the Kingdom and without, support the Keleres and the Galactic Council. The goal of galactic unity fits with many of their cultural philosophies, so Xxcha sent from the Kingdom to serve as Keleres tend to be more enthusiastic about their tasks than those dispatched by other civilizations. However, the Xxcha are an old species with numerous colony worlds, not all of which have kept their ties to Archon Ren and Archon Tau. If you want to play a grizzled mercenary who's seen the galaxy, a patient and considerate diplomat, or a bumbling bureaucrat who's actually a clever spymaster, then playing an Xxcha is right for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	1	2	1	3	2

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90
- **Starting Skills:** An Xxcha starts with one rank in Vigilance. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Vigilance above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Extremely Tough:** Once per session after your character is hit by an attack, you may spend a Story Point to double their soak while resolving the damage dealt by that attack. Their soak is doubled before being reduced by item qualities such as Breach or Pierce.

Names of the Xxcha

Xxcha names traditionally include double consonants, usually at the beginning of the name. These double consonants are more forcefully pronounced than single consonants, so most Xxcha names have a hard, forceful beginning followed by a series of softer and mellower syllables. Many Xxcha have a secondary "qualifier" name that does always include a double consonant and is usually a single syllable. Many qualifier names have a descriptive meaning for the Xxcha, indicating such things as whether they are mated; what their status, age, or popularity level is; or the like. Xxcha choose these names themselves or receive them from friends and family.

Some examples include:

- **Ccrysus**
- **Ggrucoto Rinn**
- **Qquilar**
- **Xxekir Grom**

Mark Fischer (Order #32282190)

Yssaril

Long ago, many civilizations dismissed the Yssaril as a "primitive" people ripe for exploitation. That was before they fought the Lazax Empire to a bloody stalemate, eventually forcing it to withdraw from the Yssaril homeworld of Retillion—and before the Yssaril began to use their talents for infiltration and covert operations to play against the Great Civilizations and earn their own spot on the Galactic Council. Now the Yssaril are citizens of the galaxy, but many still remember their historical mistreatment at the hands of others.

Yssaril are amphibious bipeds with mottled, green skin and large, lamp-like yellow eyes who typically grow to just over a meter in height. They have a natural chameleonic ability that allows them to blend into their surroundings, and they can even suppress their body temperature and slow their heart rate to make themselves hard to detect with thermal readers and bioscans. This ability combined with their small stature makes them exceptionally good at sneaking and spying, although plenty of Yssaril choose to follow other life paths.

Why Play a Yssaril?

The Yssaril are the perfect species for someone who wants to make a spy or a scout. Their high Cunning means they're good at a wide range of skills, from spotting things, to wilderness survival and tracking, to lying. Likewise, their starting rank in Stealth and their Chameleonic ability means that even with an average Agility, they're very capable of getting into places unnoticed. Their only major drawbacks are their low wound threshold and Brawn, which make them a bit less capable in a straight fight, and their low Presence which limits their options in social encounters.

During the Lazax's attempted colonization of the Yssaril homeworld of Retillion, many Yssaril ended up being captured and shipped throughout the galaxy. Thousands of years later, this has led to Yssaril populations on many different worlds and with a range of different allegiances. This means that while many people believe the stereotype that every Yssaril is a secret member of the Guild of Spies, many Yssaril have no particular loyalty to Retillion. Of course, more than a few Guild spies have claimed to be from distant colony worlds or other societies as a part of their cover story. If you want to play a stealthy spy, a dangerous and highly lethal assassin for hire, or a young street kid who wants to defy stereotypes and become a heroic soldier, then playing a Yssaril is right for you.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	2	4	2	1

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 8 + Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10 + Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 90

- **Starting Skills:** A Yssaril starts with one rank in Stealth. They obtain this rank before spending experience points, and they may not increase Stealth above rank 2 during character creation.
- **Diminutive:** A Yssaril is silhouette 0.
- **Chameleonic:** Once per session, you may spend a Story Point to add ✲ ✲ to the results of a Stealth check your character makes, or to add ✕ ✕ to the results of a Vigilance or Perception check another character makes to detect your character.

Names of the Yssaril

Yssaril generally have two names, although both are personal names and neither refers to their family or tribe. Each name is usually short, with one or two syllables, and uses a lot of harsh consonant sounds like "t," "k," and "g."

Some examples include:

- **So Ata**
- **Zo Cou**
- **Ne Ruk**
- **Thil Nit**
- **Sik Kril**

Mark Hastings (Order #3282139)

Step 3: Choose a Career

Embers of the Imperium replaces the careers found in the Genesys Core Rulebook with its own careers tailored specifically to the setting. These careers function identically to those found in Genesys, providing eight career skills to your character. For more information on career skills, see the Genesys Core Rulebook, page 40.

While the Twilight Imperium setting has thousands of potential roles for PCs, Embers of the Imperium specifically focuses on characters who work for the Keleres. With that in mind, we have curated a list of nine careers to fill the various roles needed to complete Keleres assignments. They include the Captain, Covert Infiltrator, Field Scholar, Keleres Investigator, Keleres Liaison, Orbital Drop Soldier, Shepherd, Trail Stalker, and Wayfarer.

But I Want to Play Something Else!

We designed these careers to provide players with options that lend themselves to a party of agents working for the Keleres with as diverse an array of skills as possible. While we believe the following careers cover most character concepts, we recognize they might not quite cover every possibility in a setting as diverse as Twilight Imperium.

Players and GMs should feel free to discuss tweaking the career skills package to suit a specific concept, particularly if it means swapping similar types of skills. A Covert Infiltrator who uses a silenced pistol instead of a shudder blade might swap the Melee combat skill for Ranged (Light), while an Orbital Drop Soldier who is more of a joker than a hard case might swap the Coercion social skill for Charm.

Alternatively, using careers from the Genesys Core Rulebook or another product might suit a character concept better, particularly if the campaign isn't centered on the Keleres. Twilight Imperium certainly has room for stories about pirates and smugglers, or even large-scale military conflict if a GM wants to tell stories set during the Twilight Wars. In such cases, creating all new careers might be in order. Just make sure to get a good balance of combat, social, and general skills in the career skill list to create well-rounded characters.

Before selecting a career, consider what role you want your character to play in the group, and what sorts of skills you want them to have. While the careers are flexible enough to accommodate a variety of character concepts, and each has its own way to approach combat and social encounters, certain careers naturally suit some character concepts better than others.

Careers in Play

Which career you select for your character is as important as your choice of species. While a species defines a lot about what your character is, a career defines what they do, often in terms of what their role is for the Keleres. That said, these roles are very skill-based and less about team roles or roles within a group's social hierarchy. The careers are also flexible enough that a character with almost any career might be the team's leader, face character, or muscle, though some careers might lend themselves to certain roles better than others.

Another thing to consider is how well your career matches up with your species selection. While any species can take any career and make a viable character, some have a natural synergy that can make for a more focused character concept. Of course, unlikely pairings of species and careers can make for very memorable, unlikely characters at the table.

Useful Talents for Careers

While the open nature of the Genesys character creation process means any character might purchase any talent regardless of their career, each career includes a sidebar with suggestions for more core, iconic builds for that career.

Starting Gear

Each career also includes an equipment package your character can start with in lieu of following the traditional rules for purchasing starting equipment in **Step 7: Choose Gear, Appearance, and Personality** on page 16. Note that the items from the equipment packages do not include any of the species-specific equipment alternate rules from page 106.

Mark Fissinger (Order #32262150)

Captain

Although traditionally "captain" is a military rank, the Captains of the Keleres are anyone with the skill and charisma to take command of a cohort. Officially, cohort leaders are appointed by senior members of the Keleres, or sometimes by the Tribunii themselves. However, like so many Keleres officials, cohort leaders are often chosen on an ad hoc basis. Some teams elect their own, or perhaps a well-liked Captain decides to put their own cohort together. Regardless, Captains tend to wield significant authority and autonomy, but these are almost entirely dependent on the support of their cohort.

Of course, many Captains were military officers before they were transferred to the Keleres. In fact, a number were officers aboard naval vessels or even commanded starships of their own. Former military officers tend to fall into two groups: junior officers sent by their faction because they were considered "expendable," and senior commanders whose actions so offended or disgraced their service or a superior officer that they were exiled to the Keleres as punishment.

There are also a few Captains who learned their skills in civilian life. Captaining a freighter or courier vessel still requires a flair for command and a penchant for quick and decisive action, both of which serve a Keleres Captain well. Civilians are less likely to end up in the Keleres, but some of the Great Civilizations do pay their citizens to join or sponsor them rather than sending valuable military personnel. Some civilians even volunteer, either because they believe in the duties of the Keleres or because, through bad luck or their own incompetence, they have nowhere else to go.

A Captain counts the following skills as career skills: **Astrocartography, Coercion, Discipline, Gunnery, Knowledge (Science), Leadership, Operating,** and **Piloting**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Captain may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have a Captain character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Shot pistol (page 111) or shudder blade (page 116)
- Space suit (page 118)
- Savant (page 121) or mechanimiliar (familiar with the Mechanics skill) (page 121)
- Comm-bead (page 121)
- 2d100 aurei

Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Captain characters:

- Tier 1: Basic Combat Training (page 50)
- Tier 1: Emergency Thruster Burn (page 50)
- Tier 1: Emergency Vacuum Training (page 50)
- Tier 2: Angle the Shields (page 52)
- Tier 2: Inspiration (page 53)
- Tier 3: Expert Gunner (page 54)

Mark Hastings (Order #5232139)

Covert Infiltrator

An infiltrator specializes in obtaining access to people and locations that are hidden or restricted. They might sneak inside places, avoiding sensors and sentries alike to gain access to a facility or eavesdrop on a conversation thought private. Alternatively, infiltrators might forge documents or wear a disguise to trick their target into opening secure areas for them. Most infiltrators specialize in one approach or the other, but the best can employ whichever technique best fits the situation. They sometimes even pose as diplomatic aides or security attachés to conceal their intentions and identity, even from their own teammates. Of course, gaining access is merely a means to an end—an end that might include assassination, intelligence or data collection, target extraction, or sabotage.

Infiltrators have nerves of steel and a natural ability to fade into the background of any group. Many have a military background in special forces or intelligence and are trained in special techniques for evading security and performing silent takedowns. Others might have worked outside the law, defeating pricey security systems to execute elaborate heists or assassinations. Either way, an infiltrator's best weapon is secrecy—if caught, most get ruthlessly interrogated for however long they can justify being left alive.

The Keleres receives countless reports of illegal activity that falls within its jurisdiction. In situations where a powerful organization might conceal or cover up alleged wrongdoing given time, Covert Infiltrators can collect evidence without tipping off the suspect. Because of their particular talents, infiltrators are often the least trusted members of a team and the most difficult to properly supervise on top of it. They always seem to be disappearing off somewhere, and one can never be totally certain where their true loyalties lie.

A Covert Infiltrator counts the following skills as career skills: **Brawl**, **Computers**, **Cool**, **Coordination**, **Deception**, **Melee**, **Skulduggery**, and **Stealth**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Covert Infiltrator may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have a Covert Infiltrator character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Collapsible blade (page 115)
- Covert armored skin (page 118) or morphic kit (page 120)
- Intruder puck (page 120) or umbral lens (page 120)
- Comm-bead (page 121)
- 1d10 aurei

Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Covert Infiltrator characters:

- Tier 1: Quick Strike (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 74)
- Tier 1: Subtle (page 51)
- Tier 1: Unremarkable (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 75)
- Tier 2: Aethersprite (page 52)
- Tier 2: Sneak Attack (page 53)
- Tier 3: Aethersprite (Improved) (page 54)

Mark Fissinger (Order #52262139)

Field Scholar

Spacefaring civilizations have spread throughout the stars for tens of thousands of years, empires rising and falling as the galaxy has spun ever onward. As regimes have been born, grown, and died, so too have their repositories of knowledge and unique technologies. Most factions invest in scholarly research and the study of ancient civilizations, including scholarship on the Lazax Empire and the Mahact kings of old, in hopes of uncovering their secrets and replicating their lost technologies. Achieving these goals requires some of the best and brightest minds from several academic disciplines working to restore lost chapters of history.

While there are plenty of academics who prefer their sterile lab or peaceful study to engage in their academic pursuits, most recognize the need for fieldwork. The relics of undiscovered history are out there, after all, buried beneath the ashes of disaster and tragedy, awaiting rediscovery. While it is easy to think of the Field Scholar as cold or joyless, and such individuals certainly exist, most are dreamers and romantics in search of adventure, longing to make a difference.

When someone discovers a potential archaeological site, or a relic of the Mahact kings, or some other great and ancient threat, most factions try to hoard the find to gain an edge over their rivals. However, word inevitably spreads, and eventually the only compromise is to submit to Keleres oversight. Field Scholars survey sites, authenticate artifacts, or conduct more extended research as a neutral party under the auspices of the Keleres. While most Field Scholars are academics, usually some type of archaeologist or historian, there are also physicists, biologists, geneticists, engineers, linguists, and countless others who contribute in their own way. Many have multiple areas of expertise.

A Field Scholar counts the following skills as career skills: **Computers**, **Knowledge (choose any one)**, **Mechanics**, **Medicine**, **Melee**, **Operating**, **Perception**, and **Skulduggery**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Field Scholar may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have a Field Scholar character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Collapsible blade (page 115)
- Hostile environment clothing (page 116)
- Familiar (page 121), breather mask (page 124), and savant (page 121)
- Medicum (page 124) or quintisensor (page 121)
- 2 z-tabs (page 124) or 2 dermal sealers (page 122)
- 1d100 aurei

Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Field Scholar characters:

- Tier 1: Bought Info (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 72)
- Tier 1: Knack for It (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 73)
- Tier 1: Sagacious Instruction (page 51)
- Tier 2: Long Game (page 53)
- Tier 2: Precision Strike (page 53)
- Tier 3: Dual Blow (page 54)

Mark Hassman (Order #32282139)

Keleres Investigator

The Keleres' stable of investigators come from the ranks of government inspection teams, military intelligence, and even local police forces. Most have years of experience in a government agency, such as the corrupt magistrates of Sol; the Winnu Inspectors with their endless red tape; or even the Yin Inquisition, known for its moral absolutism. While some investigators might be assigned to the Keleres as a form of exile, others might be there to dig up information about their rivals or might even have requested the posting for personal reasons.

Investigators are generally clever and meticulous, and have a gift for sorting fact from fiction to discern the truth of a situation. However, they tend to view most social interactions as battles for the concealment or extraction of information, and they lean heavily on the power of whatever authority they can derive from their official station. Some investigators' lack of social graces combined with the nature of their work tends to land them in trouble with powerful and dangerous individuals, and as such, most aren't strangers to attempts on their lives and high-speed chases.

Investigators often take the lead on Keleres missions related to performing inspections or investigating accusations of wrongdoing. They wield what power the Keleres has to conduct interviews and to visit sites to collect evidence of any activity that might violate treaties or pose a threat. Such activity might include covert military actions that defy international law, political assassinations, illegal weapons research, and more. If enough evidence is turned over to the Tribunii, formal censures or trials might occur, and the investigator might be called to testify or present evidence.

A Keleres Investigator counts the following skills as career skills: **Computers**, **Driving**, **Knowledge (Culture)**, **Leadership**, **Perception**, **Ranged (Light)**, **Streetwise**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Keleres Investigator may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have a Keleres Investigator character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Beam pistol (page 108)
- Echo garment (appearing to be regular civilian clothing) (page 116)
- Savant and comm-bead (page 121)
- 2 pairs of autocuffs (page 120), or ambassador (page 120), or quintisensor (page 121)
- 2 z-tabs (page 124)
- 1d100 aurei

Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Keleres Investigator characters:

- Tier 1: Quick Draw (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 74)
- Tier 1: Toughened (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 75
- Tier 1: Xenoreader (page 51)
- Tier 2: Gunslinger Diplomacy (page 53)
- Tier 2: Leverage (page 53)
- Tier 3: Forgot to Count? (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 78)

Mark Fissinger (Order #52282139)

Keleres Liaison

With so many factions vying for dominance in a variety of fields, otherwise-healthy friction is often in danger of sparking conflict that can engulf entire systems if no one douses the flames. Each faction employs countless specialized personnel to peacefully resolve their differences with their rivals. Such characters once might have worked as ambassadors, maintaining diplomatic ties and acting as a channel by which two factions could exchange information. Alternatively, they might have been negotiators managing corporate mergers, intergovernmental mining rights agreements, trade deals, or even hostage releases. Most have some sort of corporate or government background.

To do their job effectively, most Keleres Liaisons have an accepting, disarming personality and can absorb endless insults and inconveniences without losing their calm demeanor. They also have seemingly endless reserves of patience for dealing with bureaucracy and observing obscure social etiquette, as well as a knack for finding back channels and getting results. However, those sitting across the table from a Keleres Liaison should not mistake their desire to talk for weakness: they are tireless in pursuit of their goals. And while their preferred battlefield is a long conference room table, talks occasionally break down in violent fashion—and most Keleres Liaisons carry some manner of concealed weapon.

A liaison frequently deploys as part of a Keleres operation to help smooth over local bureaucracy or jurisdiction issues. Most host governments aren't thrilled to endure a Keleres operation on their world, and the liaison tends to be vital in gaining local cooperation and developing allies. The Keleres often deploy their agents to act as a neutral party to moderate negotiations, facilitate peace talks, and resolve any number of disputes. In such situations, the Keleres often give their liaison temporary operational command over their team.

A Keleres Liaison counts the following skills as career skills: **Charm**, **Cool**, **Deception**, **Discipline**, **Knowledge (Culture)**, **Negotiation**, **Ranged (Light)**, and **Streetwise**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Keleres Liaison may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have a Keleres Liaison character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Ambassadorial staff (page 115) or shot pistol (page 111)
- Dignitary's garb (page 116)
- Savant (page 121), ambassador (page 120), and comm-bead (page 121)
- 1 z-tab (page 124)
- 1d100 + 100 aurei

Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Keleres Liaison characters:

- Tier 1: Clever Retort (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 73)
- Tier 1: Diplomatic Instruction (page 50)
- Tier 2: Inspiration (page 53)
- Tier 2: Leverage (page 53)
- Tier 2: Sound Investments (page 54)
- Tier 3: Ccrysusian Methodology (page 54)

Mark Hastings (Order #3228213)

Orbital Drop Soldier

Military forces of the great powers across the galaxy employ soldiers of all kinds, but their best tend to be Orbital Drop Soldiers. Droppers, as they're sometimes called, are skilled combatants, but they are also bright and resourceful, able to adapt to dynamic threats. As such, the Keleres is fond of adding Orbital Drop Soldiers, and others with similar traits or training, to their pool of Keleres agents.

Soldier culture and traditions vary from unit to unit, but most elite soldiers possess some level of arrogance. When they meet someone, they size them up and wonder if they could have completed the same elite training, or survived deadly battles, and they seem to find most beings who haven't wanting. As such, it can take a long time for someone without similar experiences to earn an Orbital Drop Soldier's trust or respect. However, once these are earned, the soldier is loyal to a fault.

Soldiers who find themselves assigned to the Keleres usually think of the posting as a dead-end or exile—most would give anything to get reassigned to a combat unit again. It is rare that a Keleres assignment involves an actual orbital drop, but the fearsome reputation of veteran soldiers can be an asset when dealing with some cultures that value military experience. Further, Keleres agents face lethal circumstances frequently, and the soldier adds some much-needed muscle to extractions under fire.

Still, many beings speculate that the real reason the Keleres recruits so many Orbital Drop Soldiers is that someone high up in the organization likes knowing they can assemble their own orbital drop battalion if they ever feel the need.

An Orbital Drop Soldier counts the following skills as career skills: **Athletics**, **Coercion**, **Discipline**, **Gunnery**, **Melee**, **Ranged (Heavy)**, **Survival**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, an Orbital Drop Soldier may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have an Orbital Drop Soldier character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Shot rifle (page 111) and 2 infantry grenades (page 111) or shudder blade (page 116) and blazer (page 108)
- Infantry combat armor (page 118)
- Breather mask (page 124) and light beacon (page 125)
- 1 dermal sealer (page 122)
- 2d10 aurei

Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Orbital Drop Soldier characters:

- Tier 1: Rapid Reaction (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 74)
- Tier 1: Toughened (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 75)
- Tier 1: War Veteran (page 51)
- Tier 2: Precision Strike (page 53)
- Tier 2: Sustained Fire (page 54)
- Tier 3: Grenadier (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 78)

Mark Flissinger (Order #52282139)

Shepherd

Shepherd is a shorthand term for those who work in personal protection and security, which might include serving as a bodyguard for an important government officeholder or corporate figure, protecting them from protestors or occasionally radical extremists. Other Shepherds might work for celebrities, managing crowd control and fending off obsessed fans. Shepherds who serve as witness protection program officers keep high-risk individuals alive as they wait to testify. Many Shepherds have military backgrounds and may have escorted VIPs through war zones or served as marines protecting cargo freighters from Mentak raiders or pirates.

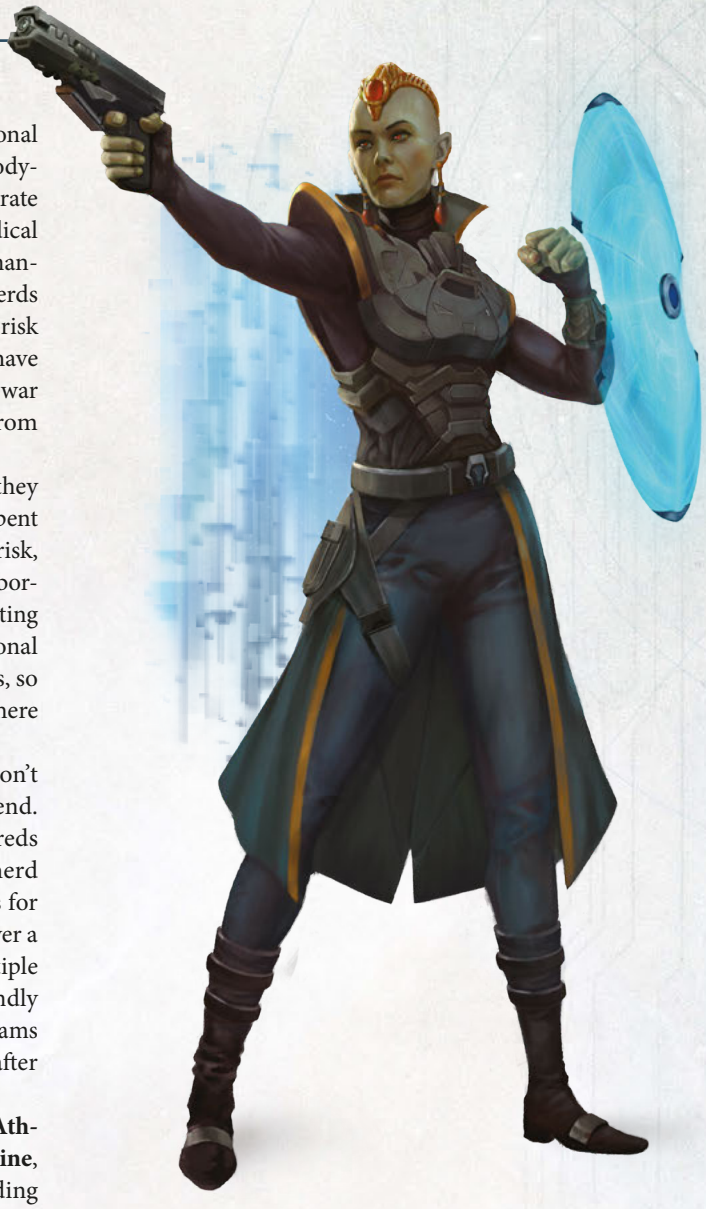
On the surface, Shepherds appear calm, but in reality they operate in a state of near-constant high stress. Their day is spent imagining worst-case scenarios, identifying and mitigating risk, and studying local threats. This gives many a reputation as a boring stick-in-the-mud. However, most have experience operating with social elites and long ago learned to remain professional and polite when dealing with clients and their social circles, so they usually can avoid being too much of a killjoy until there is an imminent threat.

Shepherds are among the few Keleres agents who don't generally see working with the Keleres as a career dead-end. A Shepherd's posting facilitates close contact with hundreds of VIPs every year, any of whom might offer the Shepherd work on their personal security detail. The opportunities for high-paying jobs are constant. Of course, keeping watch over a team of Keleres agents is challenging on its own, with multiple threat vectors on every assignment, often in less-than-friendly locations. So Shepherds can't afford to get too lost in daydreams about cushy jobs holding open doors for local governors after retirement.

A Shepherd counts the following skills as career skills: **Athletics**, **Discipline**, **Driving**, **Knowledge (Culture)**, **Medicine**, **Ranged (Light)**, **Resilience**, and **Vigilance**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Shepherd may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have a Shepherd character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Praetorian defender (page 109) or shot pistol (page 111) and deflector buckler (page 114)
- Echo garment (page 116)
- Quintisensor (page 121) or medicum (page 124)
- Comm-bead (page 121)
- 1 dermal sealer (page 122)
- 1d100 aurei



Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Shepherd characters:

- Tier 1: Diplomatic Instruction (page 50)
- Tier 1: Quick Draw (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 74)
- Tier 1: Toughened (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 75)
- Tier 2: Heightened Awareness (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 76)
- Tier 2: Side Step (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 77)
- Tier 3: Ccrysusian Methodology (page 54)

Mark Hessman (Order #3228235)

Trail Stalker

Trail Stalkers come from all sorts of backgrounds, including work as wilderness survival experts, military snipers, hunters, and even outdoor recreation professionals. Some might have expertise in specific environments like rainforests or deserts. Others might have more obscure expertise, like mountain survival, asteroid cavern exploration, or low-gravity moon bounding. Most have a background in general wilderness survival regardless of their specific expertise, so no matter what wild environment they find themselves in, they can find food and shelter and avoid dangerous flora and fauna.

Trail Stalkers typically operate alone or in teams of two, and they often possess few social graces. Many are quiet and unsettled around others or in crowded urban environments, unsure how to converse. Of course, some have no problem trying and talk incessantly, unaware of social cues that suggest they might be bothering someone. They thrive outdoors, under a large sky where they can feel connected to nature with starlight on their face. Trail Stalkers can almost seem like different people once they are in their element.

The Keleres use Trail Stalkers to scout places suspected of illegal activity—such as unauthorized excavation of Mahact archaeological sites or use of treaty-violating military encampments—and to monitor the activity of threats like the L1Z1X. Trail Stalkers also deploy to track down wanted individuals hiding in wilderness areas and to provide fire support or counter-sniper support to teams engaged in high-risk negotiations. In addition, they sometimes accompany research teams in the field, where they can act as a guide and provide some sense of security.

A Trail Stalker counts the following skills as career skills: **Brawl**, **Cool**, **Coordination**, **Perception**, **Ranged (Heavy)**, **Resilience**, **Stealth**, and **Survival**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Trail Stalker may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have a Trail Stalker character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Beam rifle (page 108)
- Echo garment (page 116)
- Pack (page 119)
- Ascender rig (page 124) or perimeter beacon (page 121)
- 1 dermal sealer (page 122)
- 2d10 aurei

Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Trail Stalker characters:

- Tier 1: Forager (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 73)
- Tier 1: One with Nature (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 74)
- Tier 1: Swift (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 75)
- Tier 2: Called Shot (page 52)
- Tier 2: Heightened Awareness (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 76)
- Tier 3: Eagle Eyes (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 78)

Mark Fissinger (Order #32282139)

Wayfarer

A Wayfarer might have worked as an independent trader, plying the commercial traffic lanes in mass haulers, avoiding pirates. Or perhaps they ran a private transport or courier service for the wealthy elite, providing discretion and luxury. Another Wayfarer might have seen the stars while port-hopping as they fulfilled crew contracts for giant starliners and small freighters alike, going where the work took them. Yet another may have a military pilot background, having flown in expeditionary forces or anti-piracy campaigns, piloting interceptors in battle or serving as a ship crew member.

Many Wayfarers come off as upbeat and optimistic. They have seen all walks of life, and lived most of them for a bit themselves, so they know their current situation isn't as bad as it might be. They also know a bad attitude rarely improves matters. A Wayfarer rarely seems out of place, naturally blending in with any group of people almost anywhere in the galaxy, usually entertaining a small group of new friends with a joke or story. Not surprisingly, the Wayfarer seems to have friends in every port, no matter how remote.

The Keleres contracts Wayfarers to fly classified courier routes and to transport teams of agents from Mecatol Rex to their assignments and back again. Sometimes this might mean using a diplomatic shuttle through the most official of channels, while other jobs might require anything from use of a cover identity in a broken-down independent transport ship to a covert insertion with a state-of-the-art gunship. Wayfarers also provide mission support in the form of making contacts and obtaining information on-site. Occasionally, Wayfarers are even assigned a starfighter to fly fire support or escort missions.

A Wayfarer counts the following skills as career skills: **Astrocartography**, **Charm**, **Gunnery**, **Knowledge (Lore)**, **Mechanics**, **Negotiation**, **Piloting**, and **Streetwise**. Before spending experience during character creation, a Wayfarer may choose four of their career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Gear: If you have a Wayfarer character, you may choose to start with the following gear instead of spending aurei during **Step 7** of character creation:

- Viribuii (page 114) or shot pistol (page 111)
- Space suit (page 118)
- Spacer trunk (page 119)
- Mechanimiliar (familiar with the Mechanics skill) (page 121) or portable toolkit (page 125)
- 1 fire-suppression sphere (page 124) or 1 bypass pack (page 125) or 1 adhesive rod (page 125)
- 1d100 aurei

Useful Talents

Here are a few suggestions for talents that may be especially appropriate for "typical" Wayfarer characters:

- Tier 1: Emergency Vacuum Training (page 50)
- Tier 1: Let's Ride (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 74)
- Tier 1: Null Gravity Adept (page 51)
- Tier 2: Daring Aviator (Genesys Core Rulebook, page 75)
- Tier 2: Sound Investments (page 54)
- Tier 3: Solo Flight (page 55)

Mark Hastings (Order #3232135)

New Skills

This section introduces new skills specific to the Twilight Imperium setting. **Table 1–1: Genesys Skills for the Embers of the Imperium Setting** includes both these new skills and the skills from the Genesys Core Rulebook that are used in the Embers of the Imperium setting.

Knowledge Skills

The new skills in this section take the place of the single Knowledge skill presented in the Genesys Core Rulebook.

Culture (Intellect)

This skill governs all knowledge of the myriad societies and species that populate the galaxy. This includes basic information on the motivations of various factions and Great Civilizations, the patterns and markets of galactic trade, and common knowledge about various species. This is the skill your character should use if they want to know what is going on in the galaxy today.

Your Character Should Use This Skill If…

- Your character wants to know why two Great Civilizations are hostile toward each other.
- Your character wants to know how valuable a shipment of menn root is on a specific world.
- Your character needs to remember the proper etiquette when meeting with a dignitary from the Embers of Muaat.
- Your character is looking for a particular planet with a thriving black-market trade in stolen artifacts.

Your Character Should Not Use This Skill If…

- Your character needs to make small talk with a diplomatic dignitary. That would require Charm.
- Your character is trying to track down an artifact smuggler after arriving on a particular world. This would require Streetwise.
- Your character is trying to recall information about a particular species' biology, which is something they would need to be versed in Knowledge (Science) to know about.

Lore (Intellect)

The galaxy has a long and storied history, and much of the ancient past has been relegated to myth and legend. Historians have their hands full cataloging even recent history, but as the resurgence of the L1Z1X and Mahact gene-sorcerers proves, what happened in the past matters in the present. The Lore skill oversees all knowledge of the galaxy's history: fact, legend, and the blurry border between them.

Your Character Should Use This Skill If…

- Your character wants to know if a set of ruins was built by the Mahact, the Lazax, or an even older culture.
- Your character is trying to recall the history of humanity's colonization of the stars, and how that species spread so far throughout the galaxy.
- Your character wants to know the older names of Jord, the homeworld of humanity, and of the Federation of Sol.
- Your character is researching ancient sightings of Empyrean ships.

Your Character Should Not Use This Skill If…

- Your character needs to open an ancient tomb door without activating a defense system. That requires Skulduggery.
- Your character is trying to figure out the functions of an L1Z1X's cybernetic implants. This would be a Knowledge (Science) check.
- Your character is trying to fight a Mahact thrall clone. Your character should be using a combat skill instead.

Science (Intellect)

Although many sciences have evolved tremendously over thousands of years, the basic scientific principles remain the same. The Science skill covers the myriad scientific disciplines, from biology to structural materials to theoretical astrophysics to multidimensional theory. Characters who are highly educated, especially in any technical fields, tend to have more ranks in the Science skill.

Your Character Should Use This Skill If…

- Your character is trying to figure out how an unknown piece of technology from an alien species works.
- Your character is trying to remember specific aspects of a species' biology.
- Your character wants to know about the biosphere of a particular world.
- Your character needs to know how long they have before a star goes supernova.

Your Character Should Not Use This Skill If…

- Your character is trying to decipher the writings on an ancient crypt world. That requires Knowledge (Lore).
- Your character wants to calculate a route for their starship to take. This requires the Astrocartography skill.
- Your character is trying to repair a ship's mass-drive. Understanding the drive's principles may require Science, but your character needs to use Mechanics to fix or modify it.

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TABLE 1–1: GENESYS SKILLS FOR THE EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM SETTING

Skill	Characteristic	Type	Source
Astrocartography	Intellect	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 57)
Athletics	Brawn	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 58)
Brawl	Brawn	Combat	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 67)
Charm	Presence	Social	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 54)
Coercion	Willpower	Social	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 55)
Computers	Intellect	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 58)
Cool	Presence	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 59)
Coordination	Agility	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 59)
Deception	Cunning	Social	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 56)
Discipline	Willpower	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 60)
Driving	Agility	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 60)
Gunnery	Agility	Combat	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 69)
Knowledge (Culture)	Intellect	Knowledge	Page 48
Knowledge (Lore)	Intellect	Knowledge	Page 48
Knowledge (Science)	Intellect	Knowledge	Page 48
Leadership	Presence	Social	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 56)
Mechanics	Intellect	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 60)
Medicine	Intellect	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 61)
Melee	Brawn	Combat	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 67)
Negotiation	Presence	Social	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 56)
Operating	Intellect	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 62)
Perception	Cunning	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 62)
Piloting	Agility	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 62)
Ranged (Heavy)	Agility	Combat	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 69)
Ranged (Light)	Agility	Combat	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 68)
Resilience	Brawn	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 63)
Skulduggery	Cunning	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 64)
Stealth	Agility	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 64)
Streetwise	Cunning	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 65)
Survival	Cunning	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 65)
Vigilance	Willpower	General	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 65)

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New Talents

This section introduces new talents specific to the Embers of the Imperium setting. These talents, along with the talents from the Core Rulebook listed in **Table 1–2: Genesys Talents for the Embers of the Imperium Setting** on page 59, can be used in any game in the Embers of the Imperium setting.

Tier 1

Basic Combat Training

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When you take this talent, your character gains Brawl, Ranged (Heavy), or Ranged (Light) as a career skill.

Cosmopolitan Upbringing

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When you take this talent, your character gains Streetwise or Knowledge (Culture) as a career skill. In addition, when using one of these skills to resolve a conflict between members of different species, your character may spend ⮝ ⮝ to heal 3 strain.

Data Miner

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per session before making a knowledge skill check, your character may use this talent to use the Computers skill to make the check instead of a knowledge skill.

Diplomatic Instruction

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When you take this talent, your character gains Leadership or Negotiation as a career skill. In addition, when using one of these skills to convince their allies to undertake a particular task in a social encounter, your character may spend ⮝ ⮝ to heal 3 strain.

Emergency Thruster Burn

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per round while controlling a starship that requires the Operating skill to direct, your character may use this talent to increase or decrease its speed by 1, to a minimum of 0 or a maximum of the starship's max speed. The starship suffers 2 system strain.

Emergency Vacuum Training

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character does not count zero-gravity environments as difficult terrain. When your character is exposed to vacuum without protective gear, they may hold their breath for a number of rounds equal to twice their Brawn and only suffer 2 wounds for each round they are exposed to vacuum.

Fires of Conviction

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Gashlai or a N'orr or have allegiance to the Yin Brotherhood, the Argent Flight, or the Keleres to benefit from this talent. Your character rerolls failed fear checks.

Hand on the Throttle

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per round while controlling a vehicle that requires the Driving or Piloting skill to direct, your character may use this talent to increase or decrease its speed by 1, to a minimum of 0 or a maximum of the vehicle's max speed.

Historical Record

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Winnu or have allegiance to the Empyrean or the Nomad to benefit from this talent. Once per session before making a knowledge skill check or Astrocartography check, your character may use this talent to succeed on the check with ⛭ ⛭ ⛭.

Life on the Streets

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When you take this talent, your character gains Skulduggery or Deception as a career skill. In addition, when using one of these skills to obtain wealth (whether by stealing something, lying about the worth of an item, or other duplicitous means), your character may spend ⮝ ⮝ to heal 3 strain.

Nocturnal Upbringing

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No

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When you take this talent, your character gains Perception or Stealth as a career skill. In addition, your character may remove ■ added to their checks due to darkness.

Null Gravity Adept

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When you take this talent, your character gains Athletics or Coordination as a career skill. In addition, when making a check using one of these skills in a zero-gravity environment, your character may spend ⮝ ⮝ to heal 3 strain.

Sagacious Instruction

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When you take this talent, your character gains Astrocartography or any one knowledge skill as a career skill. In addition, when making a skill check to navigate to an unknown system or to learn new information, your character may spend ⮝ ⮝ to heal 3 strain.

Skilled Mechanic

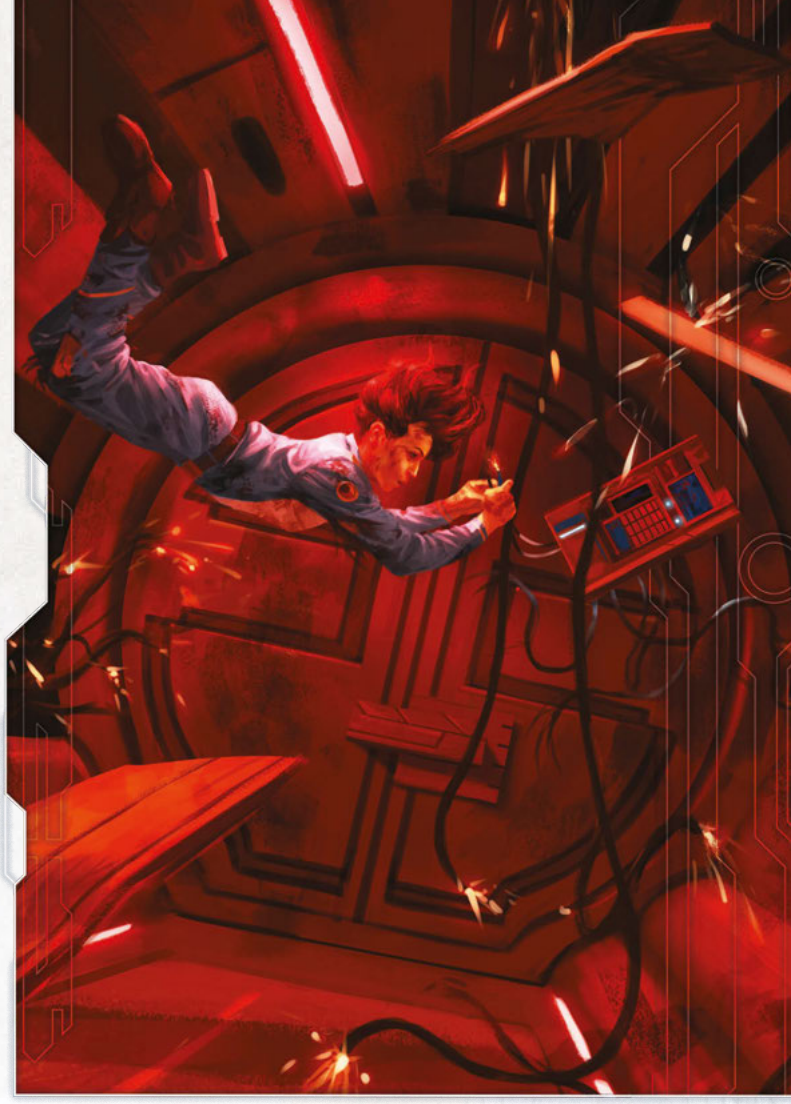
Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: Yes
When your character makes a check to repair hull trauma or system strain, they repair 1 additional hull trauma or system strain per rank of Skilled Mechanic.

Subtle

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When making a social skill check, your character can use this talent to spend ⮝ to convey to one other character a simple message that has nothing to do with what your character is actually saying. The means by which you convey this message is up to you and your GM, but could include body language, subtle gestures, double entendres, or references to shared experiences.

War Veteran

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When you take this talent, your character gains Athletics or Resilience as a career skill. In addition, when healing strain after a combat encounter, your character may spend ⮝ ⮝ to heal 3 strain.



Where Did I Put That?

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Once per session, your character may use this talent to make an **Average (◆ ◆) Cool check**. If successful, they may choose one item that has been lost, misplaced, or left behind during a previous encounter and then find the item on their person or in an easily accessible location.

Xenoreader

Tier: 1
Activation: Passive
Ranked: Yes
When you purchase this talent for your character, choose one of the following five categories: mammalian, aquatic, insectoid, reptilian, or anomaly (species that do not fit into one of the other categories). When your character makes a social skill check targeting a member of the chosen category, add ⮝ ⮝ to the results.

Each additional time you purchase this talent for your character, you may choose one additional category.

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Tier 2

Aethersprite

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Once per encounter, if your character has access to a computer network, they may use this talent to make an **Average (◆ ◆) Computers check**. If successful, they reduce the difficulty of all further Computers and Skulduggery checks to use or manipulate the system or linked subsystems (such as electronic locks on doors) by 1 for the remainder of the encounter. If this would reduce a check's difficulty to **Simple (–)**, the character can choose instead to succeed without making the check.

Any ⊗ from this or subsequent checks that involve the system must be spent to alert the system's controllers to your character's intrusion.

Angle the Shields

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: Yes
While piloting a starship of silhouette 4 or greater, your character may make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Operating check** to use this talent. If they succeed, their starship suffers system strain no greater than their ranks in this talent, and until the end of their next turn, whenever their starship is targeted by a combat check, remove ■ from the dice pool equal to the system strain suffered and add an equal number of ✕ to the results.

Called Shot

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When your character uses the aim maneuver to target a specific item carried by an opponent or a specific part of an opponent (see page 99 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), they do not add any ■ to the check as a part of performing the maneuver.

Chameleon Infiltration

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Yssaril or have allegiance to the Yssaril Tribes to benefit from this talent. When your character makes a Stealth check, they may use this talent and spend all ⮝ generated by the check to add an equal number of ⮝ to the results of the next combat check they make during the current encounter.

Combined Arms

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
While your character is engaged with an enemy, your GM or fellow players may not spend ⊗ to cause your character to be hit by an ally's ranged attack.

Driven to Succeed

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Human or Winnu or have allegiance to the Federation of Sol or the Winnu to benefit from this talent. Once per session, your character may spend ⮝ ⮝ or ❂ from any check they make to use this talent to move up to two Story Points from the GM pool to the players' pool.

Friends in Low Places

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Saar or have allegiance to the Mentak Coalition, the Clan of Saar, or the Nomad to benefit from this talent. Once per session when on a populated world, your character may make an **Easy (◆) Streetwise check** to use this talent. If they succeed, they obtain one item with a rarity no greater than twice the number of ✲ scored on the check, or they obtain an equivalent service from a pirate or pirate crew.

If the check generates ⟳ or ⊗, your character must pay the cost of the item or service within one week of obtaining it.

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Gunslinger Diplomacy

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
If your character is armed, they may use this talent to conspicuously display their weapon and add ✲ ✲ ⟲ to the results of the next social skill check they make this turn. This may have additional narrative repercussions at your GM's discretion.

Inspiration

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
Once per encounter, you may spend a Story Point to have your character use this talent to target another character within hearing range, and tell them to perform a specific task. If your character knows the target's Strength or Desire Motivation, the target may reroll up to three dice of their choice during the next check they make to perform that task during the current encounter.

This talent does not force the target to perform the designated task (it simply benefits them if they do so). In addition, the target becomes less hostile toward your character in the future.

Leverage

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
Once per encounter, you may spend a Story Point to have your character use this talent to target another character within hearing range. If your character knows the target's Flaw or Fear Motivation, the target must spend their next turn performing one action of your character's choice. If this occurs during a narrative encounter, this can be a single discrete task instead.

At your GM's discretion, certain actions or tasks may be too unrealistic for the target to perform (such as harming themself or betraying a beloved family member). In addition, the target becomes more hostile toward your character in the future.

Long Game

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When your character purchases this talent, they increase the number of benchmarks they need to complete their current agenda and any future agendas they choose by 2 (see page 64). When they complete an agenda, they double the received rewards (if the rewards are difficult to quantify, your GM determines what an appropriate increase is).

The rest of the party does not double any XP rewards they receive when your character completes their agenda.

Overheat

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Hylar or Gashlai or have allegiance to the Embers of Muaat or the Universities of Jol-Nar to benefit from this talent. When making a check while using a piece of equipment (such as operating a vehicle, searching with a scanner, or attacking with a weapon), your character may use this talent to add ✲ ⩓ to the results. If they do so, after the check is resolved, the equipment becomes damaged one step (from undamaged to minor, from minor to moderate, from moderate to major, or from major to destroyed; see page 89 of the Core Rulebook). If the equipment is a part of a vehicle, the vehicle suffers 2 system strain instead.

Precision Strike

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: Yes
When making a Brawl or Melee combat check, your character may use this talent to remove a number of ■ from the dice pool no greater than their ranks in Precision Strike and suffer 1 strain per ■ removed, then add an equal number of ✲ to the results of the check.

Shepherding Command

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: No
Your character must be an Xxcha or a Titan or have allegiance to the Titans of Ul or the Xxcha Kingdom to benefit from this talent. Once per encounter when an ally within short range is targeted by an attack, your character may reduce the damage dealt by that attack by your character's ranks in Leadership before the damage is reduced by soak.

Sneak Attack

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
When your character makes a Melee check, they use Cunning instead of Brawn. If they add their Brawn rating to a weapon's base damage, they add their Cunning rating instead.

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Sound Investments

Tier: 2
Activation: Passive
Ranked: Yes
At the beginning of each game session, your character receives aurei equal to their ranks in Sound Investments times 100.

How your character earns this money is up to you and your GM and could represent actual business investments, an inheritance, a legal or illegal side business, or even bribes or blackmail money. Your GM can also decide that the current events of the adventure may make those funds temporarily unavailable.

Sustained Fire

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: Yes
After making a Ranged (Light), Ranged (Heavy), or Gunnery check, your character may use this talent to spend ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⚙ to add ✲ equal to their ranks in Sustained Fire to the results of all Ranged (Light), Ranged (Heavy), or Gunnery checks they make against the same target until the end of the current encounter.

The check does not have to be successful to use this talent.

Tier 3

Aethersprite (Improved)

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
Your character must have purchased the Aethersprite talent to benefit from this talent. If your character made a successful check to use the Aethersprite talent during the current encounter, you may spend a Story Point to have your character use this talent to make themselves and up to five allies invisible to any electronic sensors for a number of rounds equal to your character's ranks in Computers.

This works on any electronic monitoring or surveillance systems, such as cameras, heat and motion sensors, and even microradar pulses. It also affects any nonsentient drones or robots that are linked with the network affected by Aethersprite.

Ccrysusian Methodology

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: Yes
Once per session when your character is targeted by a social skill check, they may use this talent to reduce any strain they suffer by an amount equal to their ranks in Negotiation, to a minimum amount of strain of 1.

Each additional rank of Ccrysusian Methodology increases the number of times your character can use this talent each session by 1.

Deliberate Tactics

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Titan or an Xxcha or have allegiance to the Titans of Ul or the Xxcha Kingdom to benefit from this talent. During a combat encounter, your character may choose to take either no maneuvers or no actions during their turn to use this talent. If they do, they reduce all strain suffered to 0 (both voluntary and involuntary) until the start of their next turn and add ⮝ ⮝ to combat checks they make until the start of their next turn.

Dual Blow

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When resolving a combined check to attack with two weapons in melee or ranged combat, your character may suffer 3 strain to use this talent to hit with the secondary weapon (instead of spending ⮝ ⮝).

Expert Gunner

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character makes a Gunnery check, they may suffer 3 strain to use this talent to reduce the number of ⮝ needed to activate any of their weapon's item qualities by 1, to a minimum of 1, until the end of the turn.

Expert Scrapper

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Saar or have allegiance to the Clan of Saar or the Mentak Coalition to benefit from this talent. Once per encounter while engaged with a vehicle, your character can use this talent to make a Mechanics check with a difficulty equal to the vehicle's silhouette. The vehicle suffers 1 hull trauma per ✲, and one Critical Hit per ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⚙.

Master of the Blade

Tier: 3
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Hacan, a Letnev, or a N'orr or have allegiance to the Sardakk N'orr to benefit from this talent. Your character adds ✕ to the results of all combat checks targeting them while they are wielding a Melee weapon and engaged with multiple enemies (a single minion group counts as multiple enemies for the purposes of this talent).

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Mercantile Savant

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Naaz-Rokha or a Hacan or have allegiance to the Emirates of Hacan to benefit from this talent. Once per session, you may spend a Story Point to reduce the price of one item or service that your character is attempting to purchase by 50% or increase the monetary value of a mission reward by 50%.

The specifics of how your character accomplishes this is up to you and your GM but could include negotiation, calling in favors, or even intimidation.

Mind Bender

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Druaa or have allegiance to the Naalu Collective to benefit from this talent. Once per session, your character may spend a Story Point to use this talent to make an **opposed Discipline versus Vigilance check** targeting one creature within medium range. If successful, your character may cause the target to adopt an emotional state of your character's choice for the remainder of the current encounter (or one hour in narrative gameplay). Your character may spend ⮝ ⮝ or ⊛ to have the target unquestionably believe one piece of information of your character's choice for the remainder of the encounter, even if it is untrue. (Your character may do this multiple times, and they may even do this if the check fails.)

At the end of the current encounter, at your GM's discretion the target may or may not continue to believe any information inserted in their mind, depending on how outlandish it is in the face of reality. However, if the check fails with ⟲ ⟲ ⟲ or ⊗, the target knows that someone attempted to manipulate their mind.

Not Even in Death

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a N'orr or a Shikrai or have allegiance to the Argent Flight or the Sardakk N'orr to benefit from this talent. When your character would be incapacitated by suffering wounds that exceed their wound threshold, you may spend a Story Point to have your character use this talent to immediately make a combat check with a weapon they are currently wielding.

Primacy

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Letnev or a Winnu or have allegiance to the Barony of Letnev to benefit from this talent. Once per session when making a skill check not linked to Presence, your character may use this talent to upgrade the ability of the check a number of times equal to their Presence rating.

Raptor's Flight

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Druaa or Shikrai or have allegiance to the Argent Flight to benefit from this talent. Once per encounter while piloting a vehicle, your character may make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Piloting check** to use this talent. If successful, your character may change the speed of the vehicle they are piloting to any other speed the vehicle is capable of reaching. Your character can also spend ⮝ ⮝ from the results to increase the difficulty of combat checks targeting their vehicle by 1 and decrease the difficulty of combat checks made by themself or other occupants of their vehicle by 1 until the start of your character's next turn.

Solo Flight

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Before making an Operating check, your character may use this talent to increase the difficulty of the check by 1 and use the Piloting skill to make the check, instead of the Operating skill. In addition, if the vehicle requires multiple pilots, your character may operate the vehicle alone when they use this talent.

Spec Ops Elimination

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Human or Yssaril or have allegiance to the Federation of Sol to benefit from this talent. After your character makes a successful combat check against a target who is unaware of their presence, your character may use this talent to inflict a Critical Injury on the target without spending ⮝ or ⊛. Your character may still inflict only one Critical Injury per hit, but they may spend additional ⮝ equal to the attack's Critical rating or ⊛ to increase the severity of the Critical Injury as normal.

University Training

Tier: 3
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Hylar or have allegiance to the Universities of Jol-Nar to benefit from this talent. Once per encounter, your character may use this talent to make a check with a skill that is linked to Intellect as a maneuver, rather than an action, and add ✲ to the results.

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Tier 4

Aethersprite (Supreme)

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Your character must have purchased the Aethersprite talent to benefit from this talent. If your character made a successful Aethersprite check during the current encounter, your character may use this talent to make a **Hard (♦ ♦ ♦) Computers check**. If they succeed, they falsify a major distraction in the system. The particulars of the distraction are up to you and your GM, but they should be significant enough that any opponents ignore your characters and leave key installations unguarded or unlocked as they work furiously to deal with the distraction or flee for their lives. (Examples might include a major reactor meltdown, an enemy battlefleet entering local space, or poisonous nerve gas being leaked into the facility.)

At your GM's discretion, certain actions that your character undertakes may cause opponents to attempt to deal with them, such as actively attacking an opponent or shouting that your character is the one who initiated the distraction.

Beam Fighter

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
While using a beam weapon with the Pierce item quality, your character may use this talent to cause the weapon to lose that quality. If they do, after your character makes a ranged combat check before the end of their turn, they may assign a number of additional hits from their weapon equal to the value of the Pierce item quality that the weapon lost. Each hit deals damage equal to the weapon's base damage plus the number of ✲ scored on the check.

Each hit must be assigned to a different target within short range of another target (each minion in a minion group counts as a target for the purposes of this talent).

Combat Command

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character makes a check to determine Initiative order (as described on page 95 of the Genesys Core Rulebook),

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they may make a **Simple (–) Leadership check** instead of using Cool or Vigilance. If your character does so, they may spend ⊛ from the check to add ✲ to the results of all allies' checks made during the first round of the combat encounter.

Your GM may determine that you cannot use this talent if your character is in no logical position to give orders, such as if they have no means of communicating with allies or are working with individuals who have no interest in listening to your character.

Dormant Personality Overlay

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
When your character purchases this talent, select three skills that your character has one or no ranks in. Once per session, you may spend a Story Point to have your character use this talent. Until the end of the current encounter, they count as having four ranks in each of the selected skills and one fewer rank in all other skills. They also suffer 1 strain at the beginning of each of their turns. If they are incapacitated, the effects of this talent end.

At your discretion, your character may also undergo some narrative personality shifts, such as not recognizing friends and family, behaving coldly and logically instead of in a friendly and relaxed manner, or constantly muttering a coded phrase under their breath.

Fly Quiet

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Once per encounter while controlling a spaceship, your character may use this talent to make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Piloting** or **Operating check** (depending on the skill needed to control the vehicle). If the check is successful, the ship vanishes from sensors and cannot be located unless it fires weapons, broadcasts a signal, or performs another activity that reasonably allows others to spot it, or unless an opponent aboard another starship with sensors makes a successful **opposed Computers versus Piloting** or **Operating check** targeting your character.

Future Sight

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must have allegiance to the Nomad to benefit from this talent. Once per session, after performing an action (and seeing the results of any check made as a part of that action), your character may use this talent to cancel the results of that action and perform a different action instead. (Narratively, the first action did not occur, and your character only performed the second action.)

Multitasking

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Naaz-Rokha or have allegiance to the Naaz-Rokha Alliance to benefit from this talent. Once per encounter, your character may use this talent to exchange two maneuvers for an action. This allows your character to perform two actions during a single turn.

Your character must have two maneuvers available to exchange to use this talent. This means that unless your character has two free maneuvers during their turn, they must obtain a second maneuver by spending ⮝⮝ or suffering strain.

Pommel Smash

Tier: 4
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
After making a Melee combat check with a weapon that requires two hands to wield, your character may suffer 3 strain to use this talent to caused one engaged opponent of silhouette 2 or less to become staggered (unable to perform actions) until the end of your character's next turn.

Tier 5

Against All Odds

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per session, after your character makes a check, they may use this talent to select one of the following types of results: ✕, ⟲, or ⊗. If they select ✕, they then remove all ✕ and add an equal number of ✲ to the results. If they select ⟲, they then remove all ⟲ and add an equal number of ⮝ to the results. If they select ⊗, they then remove all ⊗ and add an equal number of ⊛ to the results.

As part of using this talent, you must describe the awe-inspiring way in which your character overcomes any obstacles present in order to perform this feat.

Integral Weapon

Tier: 5
Activation: Passive
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Titan to benefit from this talent. When you select this talent, choose one of the following weapons: an integral particle beam (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Superior, Vicious 2) or an integral grav-field for one fist (Brawl; Damage +5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Concussive 1, Knockdown, Superior, when your character uses this weapon to attack a target with a lower silhouette than your character, the Knockdown quality triggers without spending ⮝). Your character is equipped with the weapon you choose.

Either weapon requires one free hand to use (as it is a part of your character's palm or hand). It cannot be disarmed or damaged, but a Critical Injury that affects your character's arm may cause it to become unusable temporarily or permanently at your GM's discretion.

Mind Breaker

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Action)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Druaa or have allegiance to the Naalu Collective to benefit from this talent. Once per session, your character may spend a Story Point to use this talent to make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Discipline check**. Whether the check succeeds or fails, all living opponents within medium range suffer strain equal to your character's Willpower rating. For every ✲, one opponent of your character's choice within medium range suffers a Compromised Critical Injury. Your character may spend ⮝ to increase the strain suffered by all opponents by 1 per ⮝ spent.

Overwatch

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)
Ranked: No
Once per round when an opponent attacks an ally who is within long range of your character, you may spend one Story Point and ⟲ or ⊗ to have your character use this talent to automatically hit the opponent with a ranged weapon your character is wielding, if the opponent is within the weapon's range. The hit deals the weapon's base damage plus additional damage equal to your character's ranks in the skill used to wield the weapon.

Remote Personal Wormhole

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Maneuver)
Ranked: No
Your character must be a Creuss or have allegiance to the Ghosts of Creuss to benefit from this talent. Once per session, your character may use this talent to instantly teleport to another location that they can see or have previously visited. If the location is within extreme range, they do not have to make a skill check. If the location is beyond extreme range, your character must make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Discipline check** when they use this talent. They may teleport up to 100 kilometers per ✲, or spend ❂ to be able to teleport up to 1,000 kilometers per ✲ instead.

If your character teleports 100 kilometers or more, they are staggered for a number of rounds equal to the number of kilometers teleported divided by 10 (rounding up). They may spend ⮝ to reduce the number of rounds they are staggered by one per ⮝ spent.

Void Baron

Tier: 5
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
After making a Piloting check, your character may spend ⮝⮝ or ❂ from the results to use this talent to make a combat check as a maneuver.

Step 6: Determine Motivation, Allegiance, and Agenda

A character in Embers of the Imperium is more than a collection of characteristics, talents, and skills. They are an assemblage of relationships, goals, and ideals as well. When making a character, ask the following questions to help develop that character's story and the legacy they are trying to build.

- From which of the Great Civilizations does the character hail, and how do they relate to that faction?
- Do they have traitorous designs; harbor selfish motivations; or commit themselves firmly to the Keleres, one of the Great Civilizations, or some other faction?
- What mark do they want to leave on the galaxy, and how do they want to achieve it?
- How do they see their role in their Keleres cohort?

By answering these questions, a player adds depth to their character, intertwining private goals with shared objectives and personal stories with epic adventures. These questions can also determine one of your character's primary goals: their agenda.

Mark Fischer (Order #52262139)

TABLE 1–2: GENESYS TALENTS FOR THE EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM SETTING

Name	Ranked?	Source
Tier 1		
Basic Combat Training	No	Page 50
Bought Info	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 72)
Clever Retort	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Cosmopolitan Upbringing	No	Page 50
Data Miner	No	Page 50
Defensive Sysops	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Desperate Recovery	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Diplomatic Instruction	No	Page 50
Duelist	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Durable	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Emergency Thruster Burn	No	Page 50
Emergency Vacuum Training	No	Page 50
Fires of Conviction	No	Page 50
Forager	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Grit	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Hamstring Shot	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Hand on the Throttle	No	Page 50
Historical Record	No	Page 50
Jump Up	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Knack for It	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 73)
Know Somebody	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Let's Ride	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Life on the Streets	No	Page 50
One with Nature	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Nocturnal Upbringing	No	Page 50
Null Gravity Adept	No	Page 51
Parry	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Proper Upbringing	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Quick Draw	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Quick Strike	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Rapid Reaction	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Sagacious Instruction	No	Page 51
Second Wind	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Skilled Mechanic	Yes	Page 51
Subtle	No	Page 51
Surgeon	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 74)
Swift	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Toughened	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Unremarkable	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
War Veteran	No	Page 51
Where Did I Put That?	No	Page 51
Xenoreader	Yes	Page 51

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TABLE 1–2: GENESYS TALENTS FOR THE EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM SETTING

Name	Ranked?	Source
Tier 2		
Aethersprite	No	Page 52
Angle the Shields	Yes	Page 52
Called Shot	No	Page 52
Chameleon Infiltration	No	Page 52
Combined Arms	No	Page 52
Coordinated Assault	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Counteroffer	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Daring Aviator	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Defensive Stance	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 75)
Defensive Sysops (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Driven to Succeed	No	Page 52
Dual Wielder	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Friends in Low Places	No	Page 52
Gunslinger Diplomacy	No	Page 53
Heightened Awareness	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Inspiring Rhetoric	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Inspiration	No	Page 53
Inventor	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Leverage	No	Page 53
Long Game	No	Page 53
Lucky Strike	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 76)
Overheat	No	Page 53
Precision Strike	Yes	Page 53
Scathing Tirade	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 77)
Shepherding Command	No	Page 53
Side Step	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 77)
Sneak Attack	No	Page 53
Sound Investments	Yes	Page 54
Sustained Fire	Yes	Page 54
Tier 3		
Aethersprite (Improved)	No	Page 54
Animal Companion	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 77)
Barrel Roll	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 77)
Ccrysusian Methodology	Yes	Page 54
Deliberate Tactics	No	Page 54
Distinctive Style	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Dodge	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Dual Blow	No	Page 54
Eagle Eyes	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Expert Gunner	No	Page 54
Expert Scrapper	No	Page 54
Field Commander	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Forgot to Count?	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Full Throttle	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)

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TABLE 1–2: GENESYS TALENTS FOR THE EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM SETTING

Name	Ranked?	Source
Grenadier	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Heroic Will	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Inspiring Rhetoric (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 78)
Master of the Blade	No	Page 54
Mercantile Savant	No	Page 55
Mind Bender	No	Page 55
Natural	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Not Even in Death	No	Page 55
Painkiller Specialization	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Parry (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Primacy	No	Page 55
Raptor's Flight	No	Page 55
Scathing Tirade (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Solo Flight	No	Page 55
Spec Ops Elimination	No	Page 55
University Training	No	Page 55
Tier 4		
Aethersprite (Supreme)	No	Page 56
Beam Fighter	No	Page 56
Can't We Talk About This?	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Combat Command	No	Page 56
Deadeye	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 79)
Defensive	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Defensive Driving	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Dormant Personality Overlay	No	Page 57
Enduring	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Field Commander (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Fly Quiet	No	Page 57
Future Sight	No	Page 57
How Convenient!	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Inspiring Rhetoric (Supreme)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 80)
Multitasking	No	Page 57
Pommel Smash	No	Page 57
Scathing Tirade (Supreme)	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 81)
Tier 5		
Against All Odds	No	Page 57
Dedication	Yes	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 81)
Indomitable	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 81)
Integral Weapon	No	Page 58
Master	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 81)
Mind Breaker	No	Page 58
Overwatch	No	Page 58
Remote Personal Wormhole	No	Page 58
Ruinous Repartee	No	Genesys Core Rulebook (page 81)
Void Baron	No	Page 58

Mark Hastings (Order #5252135)

Agendas

Though the Keleres carry out missions on behalf of the Galactic Council and the galaxy as a whole, they have their own goals and missions they wish to achieve as well. Agendas are personal missions that, though they may also be in service to a political faction or dynasty, deepen the story of each individual player character and introduce drama, conflict, and dilemmas to the campaign. Agendas combine rules, roleplaying, and storytelling in a way that empowers players to advance the narrative alongside their GM.

While the story moves forward in interesting and unexpected ways, characters earn experience and resources to reward their participation in their own agendas. These rewards not only benefit the individual characters whose agenda advanced but also the other characters who may have had to sacrifice some of their own time and resources to help their ally move forward.

Elements of an Agenda

Agendas in Twilight Imperium reflect certain mechanical and story elements. The key elements of each agenda are as follows:

- An agenda is a long-term goal that requires much work and effort on the part of characters to achieve.
- An agenda must be story-driven and centered around one of the player characters, not centered around the main plot of the campaign.
- Advancing a character's agenda must involve some risk and chance of failure but also a chance for reward.
- Advancing a character's agenda must, at times, force them to make decisions that put other characters or goals at risk.
- Each agenda has a series of benchmarks that must be accomplished before the agenda can be completed. The number of benchmarks and how they can be completed depends on the agenda and the character.

Whether you are using an agenda listed in **Table 1–3: Embers of the Imperium Agendas**, adopting one of the agendas specific to the various Great Civilizations, or creating your own, it is important to include all of these elements.

Selecting an Agenda

At character creation, select an agenda for your character by either rolling for or selecting an option in **Table 1–3: Embers of the Imperium Agendas**. In addition, each of the Great Civilizations also has unique agendas you may select for your character. Each option has a name, short description, and example benchmarks. When selecting an agenda, simply write its name in the space provided on your character sheet, and work with your GM to determine the details of the agenda for your character.

Example: Agendas in Play

A cohort of Keleres may have uncovered a plot by the Barony of Letnev to undermine the Galactic Council and take territory from the Federation of Sol. The three Keleres—Ccroagok, Alina Vorn, and Alexi—are all working to stop the Barony's plot, but each also has their own goal. Ccroagok seeks forgiveness for the transgressions of his youth, Alina Vorn wants to pursue a seat on the Galactic Council herself, and Alexi sends blackmail payments to ensure that evidence of a crime his brother committed aren't leaked by a crime syndicate. Though none of these agendas are exclusive to stopping the Barony, they can still force the group to make difficult decisions.

Over the course of the game, Alina networks with potential allies and forges political alliances, while Ccroagok performs missions for the family he attacked seventeen years prior as a way of atoning. However, Alexi makes the difficult decision to stick to exposing the Barony rather than obtaining money to make his blackmail payments. In the end, the syndicate reveals the criminal information and his brother is arrested, but he successfully halts a war that could have seen hundreds of thousands dead.

For example, your character may have Knowledge as an agenda. Knowledge could mean anything from ingratiating oneself with an enemy faction to understand it, to gaining access to a well-guarded repository of knowledge on behalf of the Great Civilization you serve. Whatever the case, every agenda should be both epic and personal to the character who selects it and in line with that character's personality and allegiance.

Public or Secret Agendas

The agenda of each character should be hidden from each other character. However, whether agendas are hidden from the other *players* is up to your group.

If your group prefers, the agenda of each character can be hidden, known only to the controlling player and GM until it is revealed over the course of the game. This can create more realistic scheming and infighting among the group, but the whole group should be careful not to let this get out of hand and engender ill feelings between players if one character ends up betraying another.

The second option is to have the agendas be public knowledge among the players, but to have everyone play their character as if they don't know the other members' agendas. If your group members are good at compartmentalizing metaknowledge and like to collaboratively create tense and dramatic situations for their characters, this option may be the better choice.

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TABLE 1–3: EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM AGENDAS

d100	Agenda Type	Example Benchmarks
01–14	**Ascension:** Among the political, social, and military hierarchies of the galaxy, Keleres operatives have much to gain if recognized for meritorious behavior and if they cultivate important connections. A Keleres operative with the Ascension agenda seeks to climb through the ranks of one of these hierarchies and make a name for themself, if not within their allegiance, then in the galaxy as a whole.	• Receive a promotion to a higher rank or office. • Sabotage the career of a rival to ensure they don't get in your way. • Receive recognition or an award for performing your duties well.
15–28	**Revenge:** The galaxy is a dynamo of contentious relationships between individuals, groups they have allegiance to, and other factions. It is no wonder, then, that Keleres operatives are often caught up in events beyond their control and fall victim to the machinations of others. Keleres operatives with the Revenge agenda seek to strike back at an individual or organization that wronged them in the past.	• Identify a weakness that your enemy possesses. • Turn a member of the enemy organization so that they are secretly working for you. • Convince others to help you in your quest for revenge.
29–42	**Knowledge:** The galaxy is a vast and dangerous place with many secrets. Secret societies, government plots, and lost artifacts lie beneath the dermis of the galaxy, waiting to be uncovered. Keleres operatives with the Knowledge agenda are hungry to uncover rare, dangerous, and empowering secrets.	• Learn a valuable piece of information nobody else has. • Discover a lost artifact and ensure you can keep it for yourself. • Conduct a dangerous experiment on the artifact.
43–56	**Absolution:** Many a galactic citizen faces difficult choices or transitions to a new way of life as the wisdom of age replaces the folly of youth. Keleres operatives with the Absolution agenda committed a wrong in the past that they now wish to atone for. The process of atonement is a long and difficult path toward expiating what cannot be undone.	• Locate the person or organization you wronged in the past, and learn as much as you can about them. • Provide a service (such as helping accomplish a goal, sending money, or offering unrequested aid) to the person or organization you owe amends to. • Take concrete steps to improve your life and be a better person.
57–70	**Liberty:** Slavery, oppression, and the effects of changing sovereignty flourish among the worlds of the galaxy—and with these things come nascent revolution. Keleres operatives with the Liberty agenda stop at nothing to neutralize the tyranny holding them down.	• Free someone who is enthralled or enslaved. • Identify an organization that participates in upholding or enforcing slavery or servitude. • Take an action that harms the organization's ability to continue its oppression.
71–84	**Devotion:** As the Great Civilizations struggle with one another, their peoples become enamored of the meaning and history behind the power they fight for. Though the Keleres is nominally an intragalactic organization, those among its ranks rarely forget where they came from. A Keleres operative with the Devotion agenda is firmly rooted in their family, nation, or allegiance in a way that sets them apart from others. They strive to make a name not for themself but to advance the history of the greater faction they are a part of.	• Learn valuable information and send it to your superiors in the faction you are loyal to. • Perform a task you think will help your faction further its goals. • Sabotage a mission that would have aided another faction, particularly one that is working in opposition to your faction.
85–00	**Resourcefulness:** A sibling sends money home to keep her brother off the streets; a soldier saves his income so that he may escape the poverty that plagued his family for generations; a spouse slowly gathers funds to pay off a ransom. Keleres operatives with the Resourcefulness agenda have some need or debt that not only keeps them from living a comfortable life but helps determine the actions they take. Their resourcefulness is less a talent or a blessing than a necessity in the face of the galaxy's many hardships.	• Send or save a large payment of 1,000 aurei or more. • Identify a means by which you can end this agenda rather than continuing to pay. This means could be something like freeing a ransomed family member, finding a job for a troubled sibling, or performing one last massive job in order to get enough money for retirement.

Paizo Inc. (Order #5232139)

Agendas and Your Campaign

Agendas add complexity to the larger story of an Embers of the Imperium game. However, they also contribute a sense of realism, integrating each character into the setting. Keeping this in mind, it's important to think about how you plan for each agenda to develop in the campaign plot.

Agendas can use NPCs as side antagonists, incorporate a character's goals into the greater story, or give the player characters a short adventure outside of the main plot.

You can use agendas to help plan your sessions by focusing on one PC's agenda one session, another's the next, and so on. Not every session need be devoted to an agenda, however; nor do all sessions that focus on an agenda need to ignore the main plot.

Advancing Agendas

As a game progresses, your character has multiple chances to advance and eventually complete their agenda. They do this by accomplishing benchmarks. Once a certain number of benchmarks have been completed, you and your GM devise a side mission for your character to undertake to resolve their agenda. If they resolve their agenda successfully, they receive a reward.

Benchmarks

Every agenda has a set number of benchmarks that must be completed for it to have a chance of being resolved. What these benchmarks are will largely be up to you, with some help from your GM.

During game sessions, you may notice an opportunity within the ongoing story that you think is an appropriate benchmark for your character's agenda. This does not have to be something the GM has specifically written into their story, and it may involve you inventing some additional story elements that can be woven into the ongoing narrative.

If you notice one of these opportunities, then once per session you can (publicly or privately) propose to the GM that this opportunity may be a good benchmark for your character's agenda. If your GM agrees, then your character can take the opportunity, engaging in whatever actions are necessary to accomplish it successfully.

However, sometimes an opportunity could derail the ongoing story or otherwise work against your GM's plans. Your GM always has the final say on whether an opportunity can become a benchmark for your character's agenda. However, if they reject your proposal, they must move a Story Point from the GM pool to the player pool (as long as there is a Story Point in the GM pool to move).

Number of Benchmarks in an Agenda

All character agendas have a set number of benchmarks to be completed. However, you can increase the number of benchmarks your character needs to complete in order to give your character additional gear or starting experience.

Each agenda must have a minimum of four completed benchmarks before it can potentially be resolved. If your character fails to complete a benchmark, this does not count against them. They must just find another opportunity to complete a benchmark later in the campaign.

However, when you create your character, you can increase the number of benchmarks they must accomplish in exchange for gaining benefits during character creation. You can choose one of the following options:

- You can give your character an additional 10 starting experience. If you do so, increase the number of required benchmarks by 1.
- You can give your character an additional 1,000 aurei to spend on starting gear. If you do so, increase the number of required benchmarks by 1.
- You can give your character an additional 10 starting experience and 500 aurei to spend on starting gear. If you do so, increase the number of required benchmarks by 2.

Side Missions and Completing Agendas

Once your character has completed the necessary number of benchmarks, you should consult with your GM about a side mission for your character that, if completed successfully, resolves their agenda once and for all.

The side mission depends on what your character's agenda is. For someone with a personal agenda, like Revenge, the mission may involve finally tracking down a hated foe and defeating them. An agenda of Resourcefulness may see your character taking saved money to pay off a sibling's ransom, or needing to seek out a questionable money launderer to exchange aurei for untraceable assets that can let them start a new life of luxury.

Some agendas, especially those involving greater themes such as liberty, supporting a particular faction, or working to advance the mission of the Keleres, may not be "completed" just because your character finishes their side mission successfully. In these cases, the side mission can represent your character doing what they feel they need to do to promote their chosen cause. An agenda supporting one of the Great Civilizations may take the form of "one last job" that, if accomplished, gives that particular galactic power some crucial edge in the ongoing conflict for the Imperial Throne. Alternatively, defeating a Nekro assassin's attempt to poison the Galactic Council may not stop the Nekro from making attempts in the future, but it certainly can be enough for your character to feel like they've done their part.

It's up to your GM whether the side mission just involves your character or the whole group. However, we do recommend getting the whole group involved, even if your character has to awkwardly reveal their agenda after a long campaign. Most of the time, it's a lot more fun!

Mark Fissinger (Order #52262190)

Rewarding Agenda Completion

When your character successfully completes an agenda, they earn a reward. Some elements of the reward may be narrative: saving a sibling, supporting a cause, or finding absolution for past misdeeds. Others may be material, such as command of a warship, discovery of an ancient and valuable artifact, or simply acquisition of a huge amount of aurei in untraceable accounts.

Your GM determines the reward, although you can certainly suggest possibilities to them. The following are some baseline rewards, and your GM can invent something else if they like.

- **75 XP:** This is a good reward to pair with a narrative agenda reward. Your character grows and improves in the course of accomplishing their goals.
- **250,000 aurei:** Money may not buy happiness, but it can certainly buy a lot of luxuries for your character.
- **An artifact:** See pages 131 to 133 for a list of potential relics that could make interesting rewards.
- **An FTL-capable starship your character can operate:** Whether a tramp freighter, a sleek starfighter, or a fast courier vessel, an FTL-capable ship gives them the freedom to go where they want.
- **Command of a warship, and a detached duty assignment:** Your character gets to captain a warship such as a destroyer or cruiser. Its power is at their disposal, and they have been given the authority to use it during their own adventures.
- **A position of authority:** A governorship of a small colony, a high-level position in a powerful organization, or the chance to become one of the Tribunii in the Keleres—each offers a character the chance to wield great influence, or even to retire from adventuring if they like.

Example: Benchmarks in Play

During a stealth mission on a trade station orbiting Jord, Alina Vorn is sneaking through the offices of the Federation of Sol's Naval Intelligence division. Her player, Rex, thinks that if Alina can break into one of the computer terminals, she may be able to get information on her political rivals that could increase her chances of being appointed to the Galactic Council. Rex proposes this as a benchmark to his GM, Lex.

Lex considers the proposal and agrees, but warns Rex that if Alina tries to break into the terminal, it could set off alarms and hinder her chances of completing the stealth mission. Rex decides that Alina is happy to take that chance, and she accesses the terminal. She successfully retrieves information about a rival taking bribes, which means she has accomplished a benchmark. However, she also sets off an alarm, and the authorities dispatch guards to hunt down Alina and her fellow Keleres.

In addition, whenever a character completes their agenda successfully, all other characters in the group earn an additional 15 XP (in addition to whatever they normally earn for regular gameplay). This represents the experience the other characters earn from working to help their fellow Keleres complete their agenda (or from working to hinder it). It also offers a reward to the players for allowing the campaign to be briefly sidetracked.

Next Steps

Once your character has completed their agenda, you and your GM need to decide what happens to them next. In most cases, your character may continue in the campaign without an agenda. The default gameplay experience assumes each character will only have a single agenda over the course of a campaign.

However, your GM may decide to work with you to give your character a new agenda. This is especially appropriate in longer campaigns, and once everyone has had a chance to complete their own agenda.

Finally, in some cases you and your GM may decide the completion of an agenda is a chance to retire a character and make a new one. Your old character may even become a prominent NPC for the group, either a valuable ally or a dangerous enemy, depending on what their agenda was.

Factions and Allegiance

An integral aspect of making a character in Embers of the Imperium is deciding on your relationship to the Great Civilizations. But for the few independent worlds in the galaxy, most worlds belong to one or another of the Great Civilizations. These systems drift through the void, not in well-defined territories but rather in diffuse confederations, intermingling and without clear borders. In whatever part of the galaxy your character was raised, there is likely some representation from each of the Great Civilizations.

When selecting an allegiance to one of the Great Civilizations for your character, think of how that civilization shapes the character's ideals, goals, and fears. Each Great Civilization has something at stake in the future of galactic civilization: something to gain and something to lose. Each civilization relates to the others in a unique way as well. Understanding these relationships and specifying how your character reflects them (or doesn't) makes the setting and your character more realistic. Read the description of the Great Civilizations later in this chapter, and keep these factors in mind as you write your story.

Inventing your own Allegiance

While your allegiance may help you pick your character's agenda, allegiance is primarily a roleplaying prompt. You don't have to select one of the following factions for your allegiance and can instead invent your own. This could be to a criminal organization, a mercantile conglomerate, your character's extended family, or even the Keleres.

Mark Hastings (Order #32282139)

ARGENT FLIGHT

The Shikrai people have been spacefaring since before the time of the Mahact kings, but their disappearance from galactic records and sudden resurgence after the disaster at Acheron is no accident. The Argent Flight are ancient keepers of an unbroken pact spanning many thousands of years, and they intend to keep their pledge until they can no longer take wing.

Before the Argent Flight, the Shikrai were just one more sentient species in a galaxy teeming with life. Originally a loose collection of closely related avian subspecies, the Shikrai organized themselves along large migratory groups that traveled among a clutch of worlds that they called their own, having long abandoned their ancestral homeworlds. Never developing any noteworthy technology and lacking in desirable commodities, the Shikrai were ignored by galactic civilization at large, and for the most part, they liked it that way.

As for why their homeworlds were abandoned, the triple system of Valk, Avar, and Ylir is an oddity even by the standards of the galaxy. The worlds are barely larger than moons, remnants of a larger ancient planet that broke up over time. The three planets inhabit a common orbital torus filled with masses of planetary debris. Due to the gravitational eddies caused by their massive neutron star, Phorus, and the gas giant of Hacid orbiting farther out, these precarious orbits are nevertheless stable. But even more remarkable, the vast, ring-shaped nebula of the torus is filled with breathable air. The ancient Shikrai rode the winds of the Atharal Torus, flocking from world to world and the smaller chunks of rock drifting between them.

Allegiances and Species

Most, but not all, of the Great Civilizations have been formed from societies of a single species (the notable exceptions being the Mentak Coalition and the Nomad). While it is common for characters of a particular species to have an allegiance to that species' faction, that is by no means the default option.

Characters can have allegiance to any of the factions listed in this section. If your character has an allegiance to a faction that is primarily made up of a different species, is up to you to determine why. The most obvious answer is that they are being paid or blackmailed, but maybe your character shares the ideology of a particular faction, or sees serving with that faction to be the best way to accomplish their own goals.

In any case, there is no requirement that your character have an allegiance to the faction that matches their species. The choice is yours.

Eventually, however, the Shikrai developed space travel and sought out new worlds. They left the torus and the infrequent but deadly rad-storms from Phorus behind, seeking a more stable planet on which to build their homes. Unfortunately, the worlds they colonized ended up being caught in the middle of a war.

Two Mahact gene-sorcerers each claimed vassalage of the Shikrai and their planets. The Shikrai found themselves caught between the awful might of these megalomaniacal tyrants, their populations decimated, their cities razed, and their worlds scoured with godlike weapons.

For a time the Shikrai despaired that their people would be consumed feather and wing. But at last, a Lazax battlegroup arrived, under command of the warlord Harkor Ilban Tal, intent on carrying out the extermination of the Mahact. After fighting the Mahact forces to a rout and slaying both gene-sorcerers in single combat, Tal pronounced himself liberator of the Shikrai. The grateful avians allied themselves to Tal and, by extension, the newly risen Lazax Imperium.

After the Mahact were exiled beyond the Acheron Gate, the Lazax saw that the ancestral Shikrai homeworlds were located nearby. In exchange for the Shikrai's liberation and the technology to make both the torus and their decimated colony worlds more habitable, guardianship of the Acheron Gate was entrusted to the newly formed Argent Flight, to whom the Shikrai would send cadres of their finest warriors, scholars, and engineers. The Lazax then erased the entire Phorus system from the Hall of Cartography, and all mention of the Argent Flight from their records. In time, even the Shikrai who lived outside the Atharal Torus forgot the Argent Flight, which suited the Argent Flight's purposes well.

The Argent Flight Today

The Argent Flight soon transformed the torus into one of the galaxy's largest habitable zones, and they have maintained it to this day. Genecrafted zero-gravity trees live free-floating, growing edible fruit. Mechanical grav-wings allow the Shikrai to travel through the torus at incredible speeds, capturing water vapor and nutrients from the rich atmosphere to sustain them midflight. Their planets were geoformed to retain a dense atmosphere, and the air of the torus was thickened as well, providing much more sufficient shielding against Phorus and interstellar radiation.

Meanwhile, with the Lazax uplifting, the Argent Flight became one of the galaxy's premier fighting forces. Those tithed to serve within the Flight spend a decade in training, during which they break their natural instincts for flocking and pair bonding. Members of the Flight are instead forged into wings, small and elite groups able to perform all the tasks of a particular discipline. Within a discipline, members of a wing are generalists,

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not specialists. When one feather of a wing becomes fatigued or injured, another individual takes over. Argent Flight workspaces are designed to be crewed by any member of a wing; the bridges of larger starships, for instance, feature sliding consoles that allow the current captain to be at the front of the wing.

Still, members of the Argent Flight can switch to a different discipline should they develop an aptitude or desire for it. In this way, the Flight preserves the strongest use of each of its members' talents and abilities. Each discipline, or flock, is commanded by a representative who then sits on a council called the Murmeration. The representatives of the Murmeration swap responsibilities as needed when it is felt that a particular representative's skills would be most useful.

The Murmeration governs the Flight from its towering aerie sanctuary on Avar, directing the training of new recruits, the operations of the various war pinions, the massive ranks of gas and comet miners, and the myriad parliaments of scientists working to advance the Argent Flight.

Goals of the Argent Flight

The Argent Flight has always been singularly focused on the threat the Mahact pose to the galaxy, and the gene-sorcerers' return has only refocused its zealous determination. The Argent Flight sees the Mahact as the galaxy's greatest threat. However, the Murmeration also recognizes that the Mahact's choice to move Ixth into the galaxy's core presents a unique opportunity to wipe out the gene-sorcerers once and for all. Unfortunately, its pleas for unity in the Galactic Council have mostly gone unheard, as many of the members are too busy squabbling with one another to face this larger threat.

Before the return of the Mahact, the Argent Flight had remained aloof from the rest of the Shikrai, preferring to covertly recruit new warriors from among Shikrai populations. However, in light of current events, the Argent Flight has revealed itself to the worlds populated by various Shikrai flocks. The Murmeration has called on all Shikrai worlds to remember their people's ancient debt and pledge loyalty to the Argent Flight. However, not every Shikrai is eager to join a government that, until recently, was a complete secret. Some see the Argent Flight as a tool to control the disparate Shikrai flocks, while others don't feel that they are responsible for events that took place tens of thousands of years in the past.

But despite all, the Flight will persevere, and keep its pact.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Identify a Shikrai colony world or settlement that is unwilling to join the Argent Flight, and persuade its leaders to rejoin their people.

Identify a specific Mahact gene-sorcerer's plot, report them to the Murmeration, and invent a means to disrupt them.

Find a means of convincing another faction of the Galactic Council to support the Argent Flight's call to action against the Mahact. This may be through negotiation or by the use of underhanded means such as blackmail or deceit.

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BARONY OF LETNEV

Ten thousand years before the Lazax Imperium, the Letnev were ruled by a king whose oppressive edicts and ironfisted grip on power eventually led to an uprising. Scores of Letnev worlds rose against the Letnev throne, serf and noble alike united to depose their tyrannical ruler. There have been no monarchs since.

For a while all was good, until the serfs, who had fought on the front line alongside the nobles, saw that power was once again becoming concentrated into the hands of a few. That rebellion led to a century of bloody conflict, peace coming only through the incursion of outside invaders who easily decimated the infighting Letnev.

Faced with his people's extinction, the Baron Kel Jun Torroz gathered what capital ships he could for a desperate final stand. Through innovative and elastic fleet deployments, the Baron managed to stretch seemingly impossible odds into victory after victory, and soon the Letnev were saved. Their victory was so absolute that all traces of their invaders (and the invaders' identity) have been erased from the historical records as vengeance for their crimes against the Letnev.

When the Barony of Letnev was inducted into the Lazax Imperium, the Lazax used the Letnev's reliance on food and medicine imports to keep them in check. The Emperors hoped that this dependence would keep the Barony docile, but instead, it radicalized the Letnev, and the Barony used the situation to maintain a fierce grip on its people. Faced with this constant threat of external destruction, the Letnev were forged into a people who believed they could justify any acts in the name of survival.

It was no surprise, then, that the Letnev were the first subjects of the Lazax to rise against the Imperium. While the uprising was crushed and the Baron responsible put to death for his crimes, the Letnev waited barely two generations before doing it again, constructing fleets in secret shipyards hidden deep within empty regions of space. This second war was so costly to the Lazax, and so nearly successful, that the Lazax installed Imperial questors to monitor the Letnev and forbade the Letnev from building warships larger than a destroyer.

Unfortunately, after millennia of slights and insults, the Lazax began to weaken. The questors sent to the Barony became more interested in lining their own pockets than in maintaining the Pax Imperialis, and they were easily bribed or sidelined. The Barony decided it was done chafing under Imperial rule, and it began to rebuild its fleets in secret. If the Letnev wished for glory, they would have to take it for themselves.

Nearly half of all galactic traffic passes through the Quann Wormhole, a major way station between one half of the galaxy and the other. When the Lazax Emperor announced higher levies on wormhole traffic, accusations began to fly about Lazax misrule. True to her people's penchant for direct action, the Baron Dazie Allic Werqan ordered a full blockade of the Quann Wormhole, hoping to force the Lazax to admit their mistakes and provide compensation to the Letnev people. It was a move so bold historians reckon that only the Letnev could have gotten away with it—and they might have, had the blockade not brought them into direct conflict with their militaristic neighbor, the Federation of Sol.

During the ensuing Twilight Wars, the Letnev, unshackled from Lazax sanctions, embarked on a crusade of expansionism. They seized Archon Tau from the Xxcha, brought many Sol colonies to heel, and proceeded to exploit dozens of sentient species on scores of worlds for their resources. Only an eventual bitter stalemate with the Federation of Sol, plus the collapse of Jol-Nar technology, eventually forced them to retreat inward.

The Barony of Letnev Today

At the heart of the Barony is the cold, hard world of Arc Prime, hurtling through the darkness of space, orbiting no star yet remaining in the same general region of the galaxy. One joke goes that their ancestral star disliked the Letnev so much it simply expelled them; another maintains that the Letnev's disdain for the rest of the galaxy is all that prevents Arc Prime from a devastating collision.

Like the perception of its residents, the planet is cold, dark, and inhospitable, which suits the pale, light-sensitive Letnev perfectly. Most life on Arc Prime subsists in the massive caves

The Cimm Fenn

Though the Barony of Letnev is best known for its mighty navy and disciplined soldiers, it also hosts one of the most ruthless intelligence and security forces in the galaxy, the shadowy Cimm Fenn. Infamous for its assassinations and other covert operations, it has infiltrated agents into all levels of the Barony's bureaucracy. The Cimm Fenn is so secretive that no historians are sure when it was founded, but evidence of its actions indicates that the organization came into being well before the Twilight Wars. It might even be as old as the Barony itself.

Normally the Cimm Fenn and its mysterious masters operate under the oversight of the broader Barony government. However, in times of war, the agency reports only to the Baron. This ends up being lethally dangerous for the Baron's rivals, as the Baron inevitably uses their direct control of the Cimm Fenn to arrest or quietly eliminate anyone in the Barony who might pose a threat.

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beneath the surface, heated by the planet's core, or dwells in the pressurized domes of the single surface city, Feruc. The capital of Goz, seat of the current Baron, is a massive sprawl of black structures that span the length from cave floor to rocky ceiling. Its billion residents train ceaselessly in its massive military installations or help oversee the billions of robots that harvest Ao fungus, the omnipresent gray plant that oxygenates the cavernous internal structures of Arc Prime.

As one of their homeworld's only life-sustaining resources, Ao is held in deep religious regard by the Letnev. It was Ao that allowed billions of Letnev to live through the brutal time of the Imperium and the harsh Lazax restrictions on food, liquids, medicines, and essential nutrients. Even now that the Barony maintains several tightly controlled vassal worlds, Wren Terra chief among them, that the Letnev can rely on for resources, Ao remains a cornerstone of Barony culture.

Since the rise of the first Baron, the Letnev have built a society based on discipline, strict order, and meritocratic elitism. The Barony's bureaucracy and military are intertwined, many of the leadership holding rank in both branches of government. A system of rapid promotion and demotion (or forced retirement) ensures that the strongest and smartest rise to the top of both services.

Goals of the Barony of Letnev

The Barony has maintained a powerful fleet, even during the long stillness in the wake of the Twilight Wars. Now, with the reinstatement of the Galactic Council, it has redoubled its efforts to build up its military, constantly incorporating the latest strategic innovations through endless war games and growing technological research.

However, the Barony faces troubles at home. Werqan III's dominion mirrors the challenges faced by his ancestors. Exposed to "new ideas," many Letnev have joined the New Letnev Union, a small but seemingly uncrushable movement of democracy-wringers that proves an implacable thorn in the Baron's side, especially its members who have sought refugee status among the other Great Civilizations. The Naaz-Rokha Alliance and Mentak Coalition both deny having anything to do with the movement, but the Barony can hardly fail to notice that its radical elements tend to be equipped with "stolen" weapons and technology from both factions.

Nevertheless, the Barony will not let internal or external threats sway it from its course. Werqan III has his sights fully set on completing his people's ancient arc and being crowned Emperor of this twilight imperium.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Locate a powerful cell of New Letnev Union agitators working outside the Barony's territory, and capture them for trial on Arc Prime.

Steal naval technology from other factions to ensure Letnev warships continue to be the most powerful in the galaxy.

Probe the Sol Federation's defenses and influence on Quann, so at the outset of war, the world can be seized without an embarrassing repeat of the past.

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CLAN OF SAAR

The Saar are one of the oldest spacefaring species, but their history is awash in tragedy, their homeworld lost to time and shrouded in myth and legend. Some Saar say their planet was swallowed by a supernova, or destroyed in a long-forgotten war. Others maintain that it is out there, somewhere, and that the Saar will one day return to it.

However the myth goes, the truth is thus: the Saar people have appeared in the written record as homeless wanderers for as far back as galactic history goes. "Lost as the Saar" was a common metaphor during the Lazax Imperium; the Saar people were scattered across known space in an existence of pervasive and constant persecution, facing expulsions and massacres, eking out meager livings, and viewed as lesser sentients fit only to be exploited for hard labor. The largest known Saar colony, Lisis, was annexed by the Sardakk N'orr during the Twilight Wars, and none of the Saar who lived there were heard from again.

In the hearts of slums and the bellies of cargo transports, the Saar remained one people. To meet another Saar anywhere in the galaxy was to instantly find family, willing to pool resources, to help free other Saar from indentured servitude, to carve out new homes together—at least until new oppressors would come and the Saar would either flee or be captured anew as pawns in whatever game more powerful beings demanded they play.

But wherever Saar gathered, emancipated or shackled, they taught each other what little they knew of their ways, celebrating whenever a new fragment of myth or a verse of a song or a rule of a game was brought into the fold by the addition of a new Saar to their clan. They told stories of their lost home, the home they hoped one day to return to. Many wore silver pendants they called Tears of Lisis to remember the lost colony, the closest thing the modern Saar ever had to a homeworld.

The head of one such Saar clan was Ragh Gavar, called the Captain of Hope for his deeds. In his life during the Dark Years after the fading of the Lazax Imperium, Ragh became a firm believer that the Saar homeworld was merely lost, not destroyed. As the captain of a freighter, Ragh visited many ports of call, leading him to become a familiar and prominent figure among the Saar. During his long-haul trips, he composed poetry and songs of great hope and imagination, and wherever his ship touched down, all Saar who could come would swarm his loading doors and listen to his verses.

Ragh desired more for his people, planning one day to pull together a great fleet and search for the lost home he believed so firmly lay somewhere out there. But it was not to be.

It was halfway through his final run that Ragh's aged freighter failed him. His crew awoke from a jump to find the ship adrift, lost between the stars like their ancestors before them, without any way to get back on course. Ragh's final ship's log was a song of prayer, beseeching the One Between the Stars to guide him and his crew to home.

Shortly after Gavar's disappearance, throughout the great expanses of the galaxy, every Saar began to feel within themselves an unyielding longing for the stars, and especially for a certain distant place beyond known space. Early followers of the Call found its origin in the great asteroid field of Jorun, where Ragh's powerless ship had rammed into a massive asteroid. Ragh and the surviving crew had survived there for years, exploring the mineral and water-rich caves, continent-sized caverns with breathable atmosphere and dozens of species of fauna that sustained them.

The joy of being reunited with Ragh's crew was counterbalanced by shock: Ragh himself had not stayed. His crewmates said that the Captain of Hope awoke one night from a restless dream, bade his crewmates farewell, and disappeared into the great network of caverns of the asteroid that now bore his name.

The Call began shortly after, leading most Saar to believe that Ragh had gone to the One Between the Stars, having made one final trade: a new home for his people. Soon a colony was established on Ragh, followed shortly by one on Lisis II, due to the rapidly growing belief that the life-bearing Jorun asteroids were in fact the remnants of the long-lost Saar homeworld, and that Ragh had led his people to salvation.

To this day, galactic anthropologists and the Saar themselves have no explanation for what has come to be known as the Call, only that it is a matter of record that Saar began to uproot themselves in record numbers, descending upon Jorun over the course of the next few centuries, seeking their place in what all Saar would come to recognize as their new home, becoming part of the Clan of all Saar.

The Jorun Asteroid Field was soon blanketed in orbital settlements; the Saar never did quite get out of the habit of preparing to leave at a moment's notice. The holy day of Houw Shanan became one of celebrating a new purpose rather than of mourning a lost past. The Saar established massive fleets, and each Saar in a fleet carried with them a piece of the Jorun field; they swept the galaxy in search of lost Saar who had been unable to answer the Call, freeing them and integrating them into the Clan of Saar.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Find lost Saar families who have not been able to answer the Call, and help them return to Jorun.

Identify a major potential danger to Saar independence and either eliminate it or report it to the Saar Admiralty for destruction.

Find ways to inflict vengeance upon the other Great Civilizations (especially the Sardakk N'orr) for the millennia of mistreatment and abuse heaped upon the Saar.

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The Saar Today

Today the Saar are brighter, stronger, and more united than ever before. Little is known of early Saar physiology, as they were not seen as fit to be studied. But the contemporary Saar have adapted remarkably to a life spent outside of planetary gravity wells. Save for some lessening of muscle strength, their physiology shows few effects of long-term low-gravity exposure, and their genome resists the degenerative effects of solar radiation. Likewise, their minds do not become disoriented when exposed to a chaotic environment such as the Jorun Asteroid Field. No matter where a Saar is, they can always chart a course home.

Whether holding great feasts and contests of chance in the Jorun field or united in song and musical performance on their migration ships, the Saar have maintained their highly unified nature, with a singular sense of loyalty enviable even by their ancient enemies, the Sardakk N'orr. "All Saar are one Saar" is a phrase of greeting and expression of well wishes. While each individual Saar may no longer feel the Call to bring them to Jorun, most do, and once they've made their pilgrimage, many Saar now feel the need to replace that deep yearning with another sense of purpose, a sense of service to something more noble, something greater than themselves.

The Clan of Saar today is now composed of thousands of smaller clans, their members shifting effortlessly between groups as they carry out their new Calls. Some become great artists or chart newly discovered sectors of the galaxy; others become renowned warriors, freeing their people from servitude or establishing new Saar colonies throughout known space; still others simply exist as a free people.

The Clan of Saar is governed by the Council of Captains, a holdover from the days of exile when ship captains were seen as the greatest authorities among the Saar. A Saar must earn the rank of captain on a civilian or military vessel to sit on the council, but any who have held the title receive a chance to serve a single five-year term. The Council of Captains oversees the Saar Admiralty, which is tasked with administering the shoals of ships that sail through the Jorun field and with maintaining the Saar's formidable defenses.

Goals of the Clan of Saar

The Clan of Saar's primary focus is to maintain its people's safety and independence. Having been consigned to the margins of galactic society and oppressed for so long, the Saar work hard to ensure this can never happen again. Some captains advocate more ambitious building programs to expand their navies; indeed, one of the Clan of Saar's great resources is its large civilian fleet that can be armed for war at a moment's notice. Other captains push for the Saar to use their seat and influence on the Galactic Council to identify potential threats and eliminate them before they can grow, or to build alliances from a position of strength.

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EMBERS OF MUAAT

The history of the Gashlai of Muaat is one inextricably twined with that of their oppressors, the Jol-Nar.

The first Jol-Nar explorers to the volcanic planet discovered massive reserves of valuable minerals and crystals unique to its hyperthermic ecology. They duly earmarked it as a mining colony and began the progress of transferring massive extraction fleets into orbit. However, as the first drill platforms were lowered to the surface, the Jol-Nar were shocked to find that the lava-flooded world was inhabited by an extremophile species of sentients, the Gashlai.

Gashlai culture had developed despite the harshness of their homeworld. The volatile surface of Muaat regularly swallowed and regurgitated entire continents, stymying early attempts to build anything permanent. The only advantage the Gashlai had in establishing a culture was their long lifespan, and the first histories they developed were entirely oral, sung to each other as they surfed the lava flows and trudged across the obsidian sands of their planet, searching for temporary stability.

Gashlai children were born extremely rarely. Whenever a brief calm on the surface of Muaat was found, the Gashlai would anchor down, procreate, and spend their time in contemplation and preparation for the next time their planet would unleash its tectonic fury, by which time their offspring had hopefully grown enough to break free from their cocoons and survive the coming cataclysm. They were a people forged by fire, tempered in the hardships of their own planet's whims.

In spite of this, the Gashlai eventually did manage to build permanent civilizations. They learned to shape hyperdense obsidian and char-granite, materials that were strong enough to ignore the frequent earthquakes and stand up to the intense heat of the lava flows. They built small villages on the edges of the massive lava lakes and dug canals to reduce the deluges of molten rock to a constant pleasant flow. By the time the Universities' scouts arrived, the Gashlai had built their first mobile environmental suits and were attempting to explore the inhospitably frigid highlands that surrounded their searing homes.

The Jol-Nar were fascinated by the Gashlai's protective cocoons; a biological process that enabled energy-to-mass conversion on a subcosmic scale was unheard of. The allure quickly wore off when efforts to replicate the process in any other form failed. Instead, the Gashlai were rounded up and used as enslaved labor, forced deep into the hottest arteries of their world to mine for precious resources they would never use.

Their centuries-long enslavement at the hands of the Jol-Nar seemed to the Gashlai like a terrible hardship, but one that they must endure until they could find a means to reclaim their freedom. In the meantime, they went from a people who had just mastered a steam engine analog (using molten lead instead of water) to having the use of mining lasers, antigravity lifts, and supercomputers. They watched as one Jol-Nar mining barge after another winked away to a far-off unknown galaxy, they toiled in the massive naval shipyards constructed in their world's orbit, and they became unwilling instruments of the weapon that the Jol-Nar would come to call the war sun.

Through all this the Gashlai learned, and waited.

When salvation came, it came from Muaat itself. At the outbreak of the Twilight Wars, the Jol-Nar needed to expand their mining operations. The Doolak Mountains on Muaat, previously overlooked, became the target of a survey operation. The Jol-Nar explorers became infected by a previously undiscovered virus there. Unknowingly, they carried it to their home planets, where it rapidly mutated and flourished in the mineral-rich saltwater environment.

The Doolak plague killed nearly all it touched, devastating a full quarter of the population and resulting in massive military defeats for the Jol-Nar. Desperate to stop the Sardakk N'orr advance into their systems, they deployed the war sun. The massive experimental battle station slipped its Muaat moorings, taking with it the vast majority of Jol-Nar in the system as emergency reinforcements for the critical winner-takes-all battle at Saudor.

The Gashlai's moment had arrived. They incinerated every remaining Jol-Nar officer, administrator, and scientist in the system as the shipyards returned to their control. The Embers of Muaat were born in that moment of fiery retribution, the spark of revolution provided by their planet itself with its offering of the plague.

The Embers of Muaat Today

Through the millennia of the Dark Years, the Gashlai prospered. The technologies they claimed during their insurrection formed the basis of their new culture and scientific advancement. Birth rates soared. For the first time, Gashlai communities consisted of tens or even hundreds of thousands. They were also suddenly able to choose their own government. After much debate, they decided to make leadership by Fire Wardens, who had spearheaded their revolution, their new form of government.

Each Fire Warden is chosen by consensus to lead a particular undertaking important to Gashlai society. The larger the job, the greater the consensus needed. So, a Fire Warden tasked with completing a new lava canal might be chosen by a local village, but a Fire Warden nominated to lead a fleet must be elected by all of Muaat. A Fire Warden's authority is absolute, but only in matters pertaining to this undertaking. Once it is completed, they return to their life as an average citizen. Some Gashlai might only become a Fire Warden once, while others with specialized skills might be nominated multiple times.

Throughout their renaissance, the Gashlai did not forget their centuries of enslavement. The Fire Wardens tasked with protecting the Gashlai began to work collectively, calling themselves the Embers of Muaat. The Embers spearheaded the development of new environmental suits called Ember suits, which allowed their people to venture far beyond the bounds of their world. They repurposed the shipyards and developed their own fleets, cladding them in their now distinct gold-bronze plating.

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Finally, they had retained all the information the Jol-Nar had used to develop the war suns and had spent several thousand years upgrading them. They put this information and experience to good use. When the Embers of Muaat finally established contact with the wider galaxy, the first ambassador ship they sent to Jol-Nar was the fleet's finest war sun, a message the Headmasters did not fail to receive. The beings the Jol-Nar had enslaved had become formidable, and the Gashlai had neither forgotten nor forgiven the Jol-Nar's past transgressions.

Today the Gashlai are slowly becoming a more common sight throughout the galaxy. However, the highly social and touch-sensitive species chafes inside their Ember suits, which isolate them from everyone, including each other. Many envoys become extremely homesick, so they are frequently rotated out to prevent psychological scarring. This inhibits their ability to form deep friendships with species who cannot survive the magma-chamber temperatures the Gashlai require.

This friction between the political ambitions of the Embers and the needs of their people has come up more sharply since the nomination of Fire Warden Sushon Azh. Azh has been tasked with defending Muaat and the Gashlai from all alien factions that could pose a threat. Beyond overseeing the increased militarization of the Gashlai, the Fire Warden has also pushed the development of a new version of the war sun, one that trades durability for speed and firepower and could dramatically tilt the balance of power in the galaxy.

Factions opposed to the Fire Warden's ambitions argue such reckless power should not be brought into existence. Others claim that Azh has exceeded the bounds of their undertaking and is wielding past oppressions as an excuse to claim power. They feel that their people have strayed too far into the militarization espoused by their oppressors. Many want a return to lives lived with family on the surface of Muaat and a cessation of this nascent imperialism.

Goals of the Embers of Muaat

First and foremost, the Embers of Muaat are tasked with defending the Gashlai people and protecting Muaat's freedom. The broadness of this goal has excused a number of excesses on the part of individual Fire Wardens and has encouraged calls to launch punitive expeditions against Jol-Nar territories, or even a massive first strike to cripple Jol and Nar's ability to make war.

However, these voices have been tempered by the arrival of the Mahact, and by their ability to enthrall another extremophile species, the Creuss. Many Gashlai fear that the gene-sorcerers could do the same to them, and this fear has driven the choosing of dozens of new Fire Wardens tasked with burning the Mahact from the face of the galaxy. Crucially, many of these Wardens are allies of Sushon Azh.

Now the Gashlai face a difficult choice. Even those who oppose Azh and their allies have to acknowledge that the Embers hold tremendous sway, and that in times like these they may be the last defense against annihilation. It remains to be seen whether, once power has been grasped in their massive fists, the Embers will release it.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Be chosen to become a Fire Warden by a consensus of fellow Gashlai, and complete the undertaking set before you.

Identify a Mahact base or military force encroaching on Gashlai territory, and aid in burning it to ash.

Establish close friendships and working relationships with a number of other species, proving that the Gashlai are more than just enigmatic and dangerous beings hidden behind armored suits.

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EMIRATES OF HACAN

It is rare for a red giant to be as massive and luminous as Kenara, rarer for one to have rocky planets, and rarer still for those planets to orbit each other in a spiraling tri-system hurtling around their massive parent. Rarest of all, these barren desert worlds, baked into oblivion by their parent star, somehow evolved sentient life.

The triple jewels of the Kenara crown are Arretze, Kamdorn, and Hercant, jacketed in the yellow haze common to all desert worlds. Of the three, Hercant is the homeworld of the Hacan, who carved out a living around the subtropical regions of their planet, separated for most of their evolution by the impassably hot equator. Northern and southern Hacan would remain separated for most of the planet's history, until the time of Lina of the Northern Fields.

Although a carnivorous species, the Hacan developed a commensalistic relationship with the flora of their planet. Proto-Hacan would make long pilgrimages from the merely hot deserts to the edges of the searing equator to harvest the insects and small reptiles that fed on the various flowers, roots, and massive underground fungi growing there. However, only northern Hacan, due to quirks in their hemisphere's ecology, would develop cultivated agriculture. This allowed them to focus on intellectual and cultural development instead of spending most of their lives making long journeys into the heat. Trading agricultural techniques and products drove the proud northern clans into mutually beneficial alliances, ending dozens of generational wars.

Thus began millennia of cultivation and breeding of the source of all their wealth. The intoxicating gerr root became the backbone of Hacan culture. Fashioned into spices, incense, and recreational narcotics, it was also discovered to have hundreds of pharmaceutical applications. Aphrodisiacs distilled from the spehat fungus helped the Hacan adapt away from being a species with a rigid estrous cycle, thus freeing them from the shackles of mating instinct and reproduction and letting them pursue other interests.

When the brilliant scientist Lina of the Northern Fields first discovered that spehat could also be distilled into chemical propellant, she set off a frenzy of scientific advances in adjacent fields. Heat-polishing of precision lenses allowed astronomers to set their eyes on the surfaces of the two yellow jewels that had hovered above them for as long as they could remember: their sibling planets Arretze and Kamdorn. The fueling of long-range vehicles allowed the Hacan to finally pierce the impossible heat of their equatorial border, reuniting with their long-lost southern cousins—thus sparking a new cycle of discovery and advancement. The golden age that followed led to the uniting of all the hundreds of scattered clans of Hercant. They elected a Quieron to guide them, Lina herself carrying the first and only unanimous vote in Quieron history.

When the Hacan finally developed space travel, their first destinations proved to be the most lucrative acquisitions of their entire history. While sentient life had not arisen on Arretze and Kamdorn, geological analysis proved that the three planets had been formed from the breakup of one massive ancestor early in the formation of the Kenara system. The similar orbital distance, climate, and geological makeup of the triple jewels meant that Hacan had now found two planets growing a wealth of plants similar to those they were familiar with, but with nearly infinite variations due to millennia of unchecked evolution; they had also found billions of square kilometers of new land on which to farm them.

When at first the Hacan joined interstellar society, they were mostly ignored, which suited them fine. The position of Quieron became primarily ceremonial as new political powers, Emirates, rushed to fill their coffers and stake their claims both on- and off-world. The Emirates subsumed the old clans, establishing a patchwork of territories across the three planets and in the surrounding system. This left the Hacan riven by factionalism and vulnerable to outside influence, as traders could simply bypass a troublesome emir and deal with a more willing neighbor. Short and vicious wars even exploded across the tri-system as individual Emirates resorted to violence for short-term gain.

The reign of the emirs lasted until the powerful Mowshir Emirate of Arretze wove a web of alliances and redefined the position of Quieron as one of a leader who speaks for all Hacan in order to secure their wealth and their future. It was just after this unification that gerr root finally reached the throne room of the young Lazax Empire, permanently ensconcing the fate of the Hacan in galactic history.

The Emirates of Hacan Today

Today, the Kenara system is the most highly trafficked in known space apart from the wormhole portal systems; Hacan or Hacan-allied merchant vessels make up nearly half of all galactic traffic. In order to accommodate off-worlders, massive space stations provide the warehousing, logistics, banking, and entertainment for visiting traders and tourists alike, as does the city of Harcarun. Carved into the shadowed northern pole of Arretze, Harcarun plays home to most off-worlder import/export corporations, financiers, and opportunists.

Political power within the Emirates is a complex and constantly shifting thing, not unlike the sands of the tri-system's worlds. The Emirates themselves are each controlled by an emir, who rules over territory established through millennia of trades, treaties, and carefully chosen alliances. Each emir is expected to protect their Emirate both from lawbreakers within and from dangers without, often leading their Emirate's military personally. Today most Emirates maintain a modest paramilitary force for internal and external security. They are expected to send a portion of that force to fight in external conflicts at the Quieron's command, though some emirs allow their soldiery to grow lax, and instead hire regiments of Hacan sell-spears to answer the Quieron's call.

Woven throughout the Emirates are many thousands of clans. Each is akin to a vastly-extended family with its own distinct

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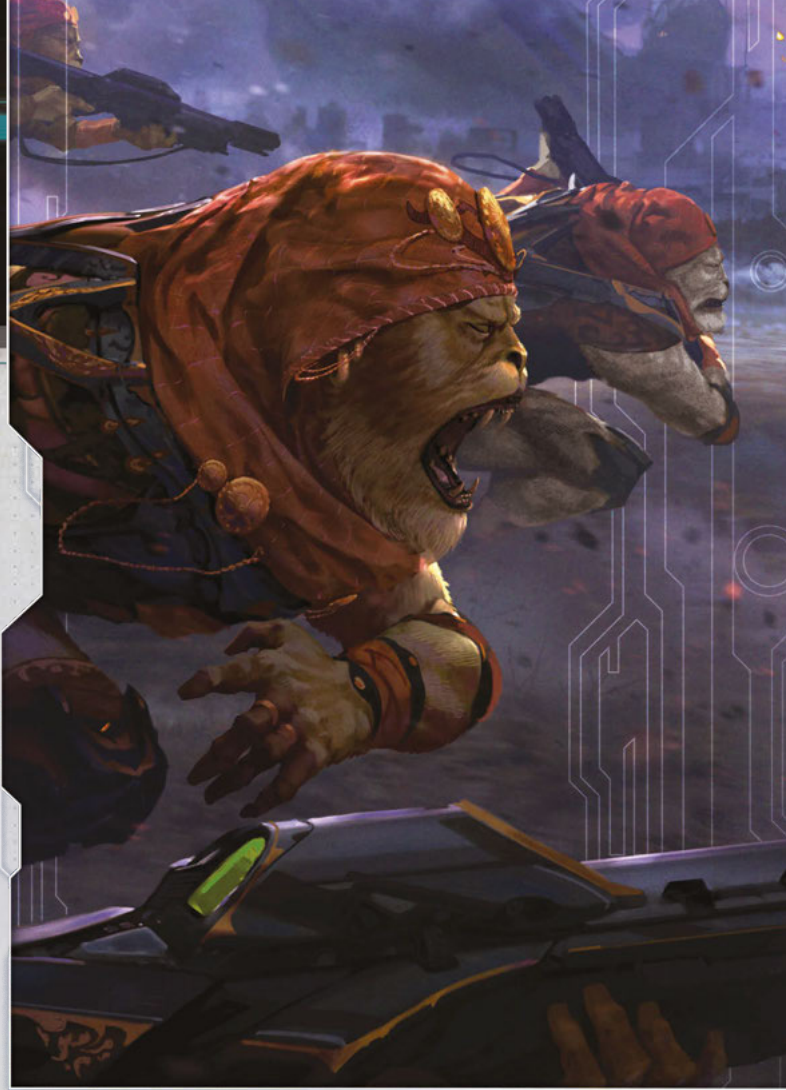

cultural elements and traditions. Clans exist independently of the Emirates; multiple emirs could belong to the same clan, or multiple clans can exist within a single Emirate's borders. Clans tend to be overseen by their older or wealthier members, but any authority they have is built on the ties of mutual respect and affection.

Then there are the great trade groups that keep aurei flowing into the Emirates' coffers. Each trade group focuses on a specific industry; a vast cartel of producers, distributors, transporters and sellers that ensure Kenara's unique products are available across the stars. Trade groups have no established leaders, just constantly shifting alliances of convenience and mutual profit. They endlessly grow and shrink, and fractured trade groups are constantly being dissolved and replaced by new ones.

Over all this sits the Quieron, elected by the emirs (though often after being informally approved by a majority of the major clans). The Quieron's role is to oversee the vast shifting web of trade maintained by the trade groups, and to protect the interests of the Emirates beyond the bounds of the Kenara system. For this they have the authority to make treaties in the name of all the Emirates. They also command the powerful Sword Fleet and can call upon the emirs armies at need.

All this creates a nuanced network of power and allegiances that any leader of the Hacan must be careful to understand and respect. However, it also gives the Hacan multiple avenues to work through to ensure cooperation. War amongst the Emirates has been consigned to ancient history, and the lives of the billions of Hacan who live in the Kenara system are vastly better off thanks to the long peace.

The only Hacan who do not benefit are those who, through birth, misfortune, or even exile, end up clanless. Cut out from the network of favors and patronage that comes with clan membership, these Hacan struggle to succeed. Many find lower level jobs in the various trade groups and their attendant industries, hoping their accomplishments may see them adopted into a clan. Others join the ranks of the sell-spears and seek out glory and aurei fighting wars on distant worlds. And not a few leave the light of Kenara behind to seek their fortunes amongst distant stars.

Goals of the Emirates of Hacan

The primary goals of the Emirates nearly always revolve around trade. Their power comes from the control they possess over galactic commerce, and the galaxy's long, slow climb out of the isolation has benefited them greatly. Thus, the Emirates make every effort to ensure that the bonds of galactic society grow and strengthen. Only in a truly cosmopolitan galaxy can trade flow freely, after all.

To ensure this, the Emirates are constantly moving to open new markets in recently contacted worlds, discover new goods that may take the commercial sectors of the galaxy by storm, and above all, batter down tariffs, embargoes, and other tools of state that threaten the free exchange of commodities. They also tirelessly work to promote the protection of trade lanes from pirates and privateers, dispatching their own fleets when they can't convince a local power to do the job.

When it comes to the vacant Imperial Throne, the Emirates host two competing schools of thought. Some Hacan believe that they have little to gain (and a lot to lose) in openly making a play for the throne. Better to continue to build up galactic commerce, they say, and guarantee that whoever comes to rule the Imperium will still be dependent on the Emirates. But others dismiss this plan. For generations, the Hacan have held the fabric of galactic society together with their trading fleets. It's time, they say, for them to claim the rewards for their efforts.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Eliminate a famed pirate who has preyed upon Hacan traders for years.
Reestablish contact with a world lost to galactic society, then open it up for trade.
Discover an illegal group attempting to duplicate commodities created in the tri-system and take any steps necessary to ensure that they do not succeed.

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EMPYREAN

Visible from the skies of most of the core worlds is the Dark, a massive cloud of gas and radiation that hugs a portion of the galactic core. The Dark is a particularly thick and choking nebula, no mere twinkling of interstellar gases. Within its swirling swarm of clouds dwell the enigmatic Empyrean, their enclaves carved into the corpses of planets and wayward asteroids, orbital debris left over from the chaotic creation of the galaxy. Each of these dwellings is balanced in the calm between the gravity of the supermassive black hole at the center of the galaxy and the rush of the aetherstream that emanates from it.

The Empyrean are an ancient species, perhaps the most ancient of them all. It is theorized that the Empyrean have been sailing the stars since before the invention of faster-than-light (FTL) travel. Their history is gathered only in fragments of records deep inside the Mecatol archives, and it remains a mystery to all but themselves.

Xenobiologists have confirmed that at some point in their unfathomably long past, the Empyrean biologically manipulated their physiology to thrive in the most hostile environment of all: pure vacuum. Individual Empyrean have no visible sensory organs or orifices; they possess a featureless face; a tall, lithe frame; and leathery wings, which they use to absorb distant starlight. Empyrean can transmit radio waves, which they use as a means to communicate silently among themselves, and their lifespan is so long that no record exists of an Empyrean dying of old age.

Myths and Legends

Most spacefaring species in the galaxy have known about the Empyrean since they learned the secrets of superluminal flight. When they learn of their existence and their interests, however, most inevitably ask "how long have they been watching us?"

The Empyrean tend to politely evade the subject, but most of the Great Civilizations suspect that they have been doing so since their member species first started to build societies. The Sol historian Dr. Hiari Omar has even pointed to Humanity's early stories of "angels" and "demons," and how the winged, bipedal Empyrean could broadly fit the descriptions of these mythological beings. If she is correct, then the Empyrean might have taken a more active role in primitive species in the distant past, and Omar has begun researching the early myths of other species to see if similar legends exist.

Befitting their lifespan, the Empyrean have engaged in significant long-term projects, including the creation of the Erebian Void in their distant past. This massive expanse is nothing but empty space, painstakingly cleared over millennia. This is the heart of the Dark and the source of Empyrean infrastructure and energy generation. The lack of gravitational bodies allows them to tap into dark-energy reserves far more efficiently than any planet-bound species could hope to do.

Surrounding the Erebian Void are the rest of Empyrean society, their zero-gravity ship moorings, their clusters of habitats, and other structures whose purposes remain unknown to outside observers. Empyrean ships coast outward from the Dark on the gravitational aetherstream, using a unique form of superluminal drive to harness its currents. Within their ships, the Empyrean are exposed to the vacuum of space and cosmic radiation, their leathery wings soaking up the light of distant stars.

Most Empyrean encountered outside of the Dark could be politely categorized as "observers." They lurk on the edges of star systems, spending millennia inspecting and studying other species, with a particular focus on civilizations that have established colonies beyond their home systems. Whether they are historians, record keepers, or simply indulging a native curiosity, none are able to say.

The Empyrean have long been a subject of fascinated study by anthropologists and an exercise in frustration for diplomats attempting to establish agreements. Individual Empyrean can be infuriating to communicate with, pondering responses to questions for hours or even days—if they answer at all. They are quite noncommunicative on the subjects of themselves, their civilization, and their purpose in observing others. When hailed, Empyrean ships tend not to respond; when fired upon, they simply retreat, using their superior aetherstream technology to outrun their pursuers.

Whether as individuals or as a species, the Empyrean act slowly, deliberately, and purposefully. Perhaps this is a consequence of subsisting on the meager solar energy of stars, or perhaps their extremely long lifespan gives them a languid lack of urgency. Whatever the cause, it can make relations with other species difficult, effectively granting the Empyrean permanent outsider status—a designation most would probably be quite comfortable with.

Despite this reputation, the Empyrean appear to make large concessions to the cultures they interact with. Empyrean who commonly deal with other sentients make an effort to copy their dress, mannerisms, and cultural cues, fashioning clothes remarkably accurate to the encountered culture and performing all the little rituals and social graces that smooth out interactions. These observances are of course the result of their long-term observation of every known species, including taking note of the theory that their native culture is simply a mishmash of borrowed

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cultural practices. Galactic anthropologists have been trying to unravel this particular knot for a long time, leading to long arguments over the meaning of culture itself, a conversation to which the Empyrean do not often have much to contribute.

The Empyrean Today

Unhelpfully, Empyrean society appears to operate on a form of communal anarchy. Decisions are made based on the consensus of all currently present Empyrean, plus the opinions of Empyrean who are within radio range—and given the time taken to arrive at consensus, this number can rapidly grow. While this method is perfectly fine for negotiations at a low level, many an ambassador has run into the wall of no individual Empyrean being able to speak for all of its people, as they have no central governing body.

In recent times, however, Empyrean claiming to represent a large faction within their society have established communication with the Galactic Council, warning of a coming galactic tragedy to rival the Twilight Wars. Whether the Empyrean can be trusted, and whether these warnings are unsourced premonitions, hypotheses made after studying millennia of data, or naked attempts to manipulate the Council for their own ends, none can say.

All that is known is that they did not move from neutral observer to active participant in galactic society during the times of the Mahact, the Twilight Wars, or even the establishment of the Council. Only now, after the events at the Acheron Gate, are the Empyrean playing their hand.

Goals of the Empyrean

The Empyrean have long been grappling with species-wide crises of existence, and this has recently come to a head. Each Empyrean spends its incredibly long life in the pursuit of knowledge—observing and reflecting, ordering and cataloging, learning and understanding. But recently the Empyrean have been grappling with the growing sense that they have come up against an inevitable truth: that life is incompatible with order, that the galaxy is chaos by its very nature, and that searching for meaning in such infinite improbability is, ultimately, absurd. Thus, a collective of the Empyrean have argued that to pursue understanding, they need to impose order on the wider galaxy.

This has driven some of the Empyrean to seek a place on the Galactic Council; to begin assembling ships of war; and even to begin employing members of other species as observers, representatives, spies, and assassins. The Empyrean have never been engaged in active conflict, but that may be about to change.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Gather as much information on other species and factions as possible and return that information to the Dark for cataloging and storage.

Identify a specific potential galaxy-spanning catastrophe, determine a concrete step to prevent it, and take that step.

Determine the true identity and goals of the being or beings referring to themselves as the Nomad.

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FEDERATION OF SOL

It is said that there is a Human on every settled planet in known space. Uncounted billions of them dot the Core Systems, in some cases even outnumbering the native population. Whole uninhabited worlds have been settled by Humans in ages past, and their societies have grown to the point where nobody would suspect that those planets weren't their places of origin. But across the galaxy, few groups of Humans display the depths of determination and ambition as those hailing from the world of their birth.

Jord, third planet of the Sol system and birthplace of humanity, is controlled by the Sol Federation of Nations, more commonly known as the Federation of Sol. The roots of the Federation stem from the earliest days of the Human diaspora, when the discovery of the mass-drive first allowed humanity to venture beyond Sol in numbers. Spreading throughout the stars, humanity eventually encountered other intelligent life. As Humans had so often done in the past, the fractious nation-states of Jord united against this potential threat, forming the Federation of Nations for mutual defense and governance.

Luckily, humanity's fears proved unfounded, and Jord's skies remained free from fleets of alien invaders. But the unity remained, and the nascent Federation eagerly continued to expand to Quann, Centauri, Atlas, and scores of other planets. Many Humans dreamed of building a galactic empire with Jord at its heart, only to have those dreams crushed when they finally ran into the Lazax Empire, which already ran the galaxy.

The Lazax offered the Federation a place on their Galactic Council. However, it was clear that humanity would only be subjects in a galactic empire, never free to pursue its own path. The young Federation chafed under the web of laws and restrictions created by dozens of millennia of precedent and tradition. It sparred with other factions that were feeling just as suffocated. And eventually, when the Lazax attempted to bring Sol to heel, the Federation chose to fight instead, firing the first shots at a Letnev blockade of the Quann Wormhole and beginning a war in defiance of their galactic masters.

For the Federation, the next steps were merely a matter of self-defense. They had defied the Lazax Empire, and eventually the Lazax would deploy their ponderous war machine to crush Jord for its insolence. The only chance was to strike first and strike hard. With secret technological help from the Hylar, the Federation drove its fleets deep into Lazax territory, a brutal decapitation strike aimed at Mecatol Rex. The result was more catastrophic than even Sol expected. With the Emperor dead and the Imperial government destroyed, many member factions saw this as their chance to seize power for themselves. The Twilight Wars began, and they would shatter galactic society for thousands of years.

The Federation of Sol Today

The Sol Federation has changed significantly in the years since the Twilight Wars, though its name has stayed the same. The disparate nations of Jord have long since lost any vestiges of their old autonomy, and the many cultures of the homeworld have largely blended into a pan-Jordian culture, though thousands of local variants remain.

Today the Federation is ruled by a democratically elected High Minister, who has executive control of the Federation's economy, budget, and military. The ancient Council of Security and General Assembly have long since morphed into three distinct governing houses that hold the High Minster's powers in check. These are the House of Law, the House of the People, and the House of Industry.

Of the three, only the House of the People consists of elected representatives: individuals from across Jord, the wider Sol system, and extrasolar territories directly controlled by the Federation, who are elected to five-year terms. The House of Law consists of a mix of hereditary magistrates and judges appointed by the House of the People, and the House of Industry accepts new members from Sol's plutocracy using its own arcane qualifications for candidacy.

The actual level of democratic representation has waxed and waned over the centuries, and currently, the Federation is somewhere in between a true republic and an oligarchy of the wealthy. The House of Industry has expanded its power tremendously as galactic commerce has been reestablished, and the House of the People struggles to keep it in check. In this the House of the People has an uncertain ally in the current High Minister, Juan Salvador Tao.

Tao has served for ten two-year terms, and his popularity shows no signs of waning. On the one hand, he has supported the rights of Federation citizens and aggressively curbed the more destructive or short-sighted tendencies of Jord's corporations and hereditary businesses. But on the other, Tao is a militant expansionist who wants to see the Federation finally become the empire he believes it has always been destined to be.

Even now, the Federation's territories stretch beyond the bounds of Jord. The entire Sol system, from the ice mines of the outer reaches to the sprawling canyon cities and domed

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Convince a local leader on Atlas or Quann to support more direct ties to the Federation.

Spy on Letnev holdings to determine whether the Letnev are plotting a major military incursion against Sol.

Identify and eliminate L1Z1X operations wherever they appear in the galaxy.

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craters of Ma'adim and the floating stations in the upper atmosphere of Venera, exists under the Federal flag. All inhabitants of Sol hold full Federal citizenship, as do the inhabitants of nearly a score of worlds such as Centauri and Gral (the former having remained a part of the Federation even through the worst of the Twilight Wars, and the latter having rejoined several decades ago).

But the rights of the Federation's inhabitants shrink on the margins of its territories. Sol has claimed (or in some cases, "reclaimed") a number of smaller settlements, stations, and backwater worlds in recent years. They are officially known as provinces, but a number of the inhabitants refer to them bitterly as "occupied territories," and speak Tao's name with a derisive groan.

Goals of the Federation of Sol

Tao's goals, which are admittedly shared by many of the people he represents, are expansionist and militaristic. Under his leadership, the Federation looks to continue to reintegrate the old Sol colonies, including Atlas and Quann. Eventually, the Federation seeks to dominate an arc of the galaxy stretching from the Quann to the Elysian Wormhole. In doing so, it fully expects to spark war with the equally expansionist Barony of Letnev, and unlike the inconclusive conflicts of ages past, this is a war the Federation fully intends to win. Even now, fleets depart the vast naval base of Churchill Prima over Ma'adim, and troops muster in facilities from Rio Amazonia to Trelic Station on Gral.

However, the Federation also seeks to expand its soft influence throughout the galaxy, relying on the appeal of many aspects of Jordian culture and even cuisine (Human food has the rare distinction of containing proteins that can be consumed by nearly all sentient species). Although Jordian culture is not as renowned as that of the Hacan or Xxcha, the broad popularity of Jordian art, fashion, and food continues to spread thanks to humanity's ubiquity across the galaxy and Sol's strategic location between several major wormholes.

In recent years, the Federation's imperial ambitions have been somewhat sidelined by the emergence of the L1Z1X , Nekro, Vuil'raith, and Mahact. The L1Z1X are a particular danger to Sol, since they have not forgotten the atrocities the Federation committed against the Lazax all those years ago. In light of this, the Federation has been a cautious supporter of the Keleres in the Galactic Council. The Federation provides material and personnel to the Keleres, but at the same time seeks to limit its authority over member civilizations in the Council and to keep it pointed squarely at the L1Z1X menace.

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GHOSTS OF CREUSS

For as long as its region of space has been traveled, the Shaleri passage has been spoken of in hissed whispers. It is the font of hundreds of unsubstantiated rumors, none of which have been verifiable. The anomaly at its heart has been variously claimed to be a source of unstable dark energy, a place blanketed in as-yet-undiscovered radiation, or perhaps a wellspring spewing a novel form of particulate antimatter. All of these assertions have as much evidence behind them as the more common claim of space sailors:

That Shaleri space is haunted.

What is verifiable is that an extraordinarily high proportion of ships traveling through the Shaleri passage have simply disappeared without trace—without distress beacons, message capsules, or even wreckage. More than one official report has called the phenomenon "disturbing," but endless autonomous probes; detailed surveys; and, in one case, the random hurtling of retired vessels at the anomaly have never produced any reliable or replicable data. As a result, the entire region has been labeled simply "bad space" and is traversed only by the exceptionally desperate or greedy.

Beyond the anomaly lies a realm so alien to the galaxy that if the Creuss people had not emerged from it, it would have been thought entirely impossible. A swirling soup of exotic plasma, it is composed entirely of photons, existing not in regular spacetime but as a parallel universe colliding with the galaxy in a higher-dimensional space. This collision, or splicing, of the two dimensions is the cause of the Shaleri anomaly, the intersection of two parallel universes, each with its own set of physical and cosmological laws.

The intersection of two dimensions should cause enough destructive energy to implode them both, and it probably would have, had the Creuss not stabilized the rift and instead used it as a gateway into the galaxy. The anomaly, known to the Creuss as the Creuss Gate, is in fact nothing more than a wormhole, completely like the ones used in the galaxy.

Its unsettling reputation is simply the byproduct of the fact that matter does not exist in the Creuss's universe, and any that passes through the gate is demolecularized on contact with their dimension. The Creuss have provided the explanation that lost ships were simply too close to an arcing lash of pure energy coming through from their universe. Since their entry into galactic society, a safe zone has been established around the Gate to prevent such incidents from recurring.

For eons, the Creuss have gathered the matter spilling through into their dimension, using it to fashion the means by which they visit the matter-centric universe. Their vessels and environmental suits, intricately inscribed with interwoven runic latticework, are the products of millennia of matter harvesting.

In the same way in which their dimension's laws of physics have seeped into the matter universe's, the matter universe's laws have crossed over into theirs. The Creuss have developed ways to stabilize galactic matter, using massive entanglement pylons to fashion shipyards and factories above their homeworld of Creuss, a planet of trapped light and high-energy plasma contained within a peculiar curvature of highly energetic spacetime. In their universe, the Creuss swim through the currents of their plasma space without assistance. They only don their suits and board their ships as a way to cross through into the matter-based universe, for reasons that have yet to be uncovered by even the most accomplished spies.

On Creuss itself, life is concerned merely with the immediate. A matterless universe brings with it a lack of consideration of the permanent, leading to the viewpoint that embracing constantly flowing change is the way. Creuss are not born in any way that is meaningful; instead, they simply appear into being. It is theorized that only the matter-centric universe's intrusion into their own has caused them to act with purpose and work toward a common goal.

The Ghosts of Creuss Today

After making first contact, the Ghosts of Creuss were a subject of incredible fascination and wonderment. The galaxy fell over itself for information on these sentient beings of energy and light described by one historian as "ethereal luxsynaptic souls." After a period of strange orientation involving the calibration of universal translators, the Creuss who facilitated contact with the Galactic Council and civilizations that are not part of its membership showed themselves to have great cultural similarity to many of the sentient beings of the galaxy. Diplomats at these groundbreaking first meetings described the Creuss as "perfectly polite and completely civilized," terms that have since been criticized as overly infantilizing.

This proved especially true as the Creuss demonstrated their mastery of dozens of esoteric technologies, most notably the ability to manipulate and create wormholes. Their ability to instantaneously transport everything from individuals to battle squadrons across thousands of light-years both impressed and terrified the rest of the galaxy.

Despite the resulting dozens of offers for alliances, the Ghosts chose to remain distant, deeply protective of their strange dimension. On most matters, the Ghosts have been stubbornly reticent, even prickly. From refusing to explain the import of certain interpersonal rituals to withholding information about the inner workings of their biology as "matters of security," the secretive Ghosts have frustrated efforts to learn about them as much as as they have astonished with their capabilities.

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As individuals integrating into galactic society, the Creuss are more than gracious guests. When not pressured for their techniques, they are happy to create energy-based art installations and performances, a demand for which has exploded across the galaxy's elite. Many civilizations have invited the Creuss to tour their worlds and set up embassies in the hope that greater understanding might lead to the possibility of an alliance in the future.

Goals of the Ghosts of Creuss

Although the Ghosts have always tried to remain silent on their goals as a faction, recent events have demonstrated that they have a greater interest in galactic events than they admit. Foremost among these events has been the massive Creuss expedition hunting the lost planet of Ixth.

Many cultures have held Ixth in great cultural and religious esteem, as a sort of promised land and spiritual paradise combined. However, as far as most can determine, the Creuss have no cultural links to Ixth. Their reasons for hunting for the world were entirely political. The faction that found Ixth would establish itself as a leader in the galaxy, and possibly as a contender for the Imperial Throne.

When it became known that the Creuss were launching an expedition in search of Ixth, the diplomatic brouhaha that ensued seemed like it would lead to the brink of all-out war, causing the Ghosts to relent and allow appointed observers from other species. However, when the Creuss found Ixth, they discovered that the planet was in fact the resting place of the entombed Mahact kings—not dead, but lying in wait for the day when their time would come and they could return to once again rule the galaxy.

The disaster at Acheron, which occurred during the expedition, had horrific results for the Creuss. The Mahact had the ability to manipulate the Creuss's light-based bodies, turning them into mindless servants of the gene-sorcerers. In a stroke, the Creuss lost one of their largest fleets and millions of their people, and uncovered a dangerous new threat to their existence. Now, rather than seeking Imperial domination, they hunt for a way to eliminate the threat to their very being.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Find a way to protect against the Mahact's ability to dominate the Creuss people.

Identify other factions' research into wormhole technology and sabotage the research in order to preserve the Ghosts' dominance in that area.

Capture several Crimson Legionnaires, the enthralled Creuss servants of the Mahact, and return them to the Shaleri anomaly for study.

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MENTAK COALITION

Before the uprising, Erwan Mentak was unremarkable even by the standards of the billions of Humans he shared a descendancy with. His crime is lost to history, but it was severe enough that the Lazax sentenced him with transportation to Moll Primus.

With an abundance of natural resources churned up by its geologically active areas, three beautiful if small moons, lush paradisical surface, and breathtaking nighttime views of the galactic rim, Moll Primus would have been a prime destination for colonization...had it been anywhere near populated space. Instead, its extreme remoteness, hunkered in the borderlands beyond the Mahact Plateau, meant that the planet was cataloged but never seen as particularly suited for exploitation.

Doubling its disadvantages was the route needed to get there: through the old Exiles' Path, a winding, dark journey around the treacherous gravity wells of the Mahact Plateau's edge. For thousands of years, the Moll system lay undisturbed, except for the occasional supply landing for a freighter bound for Hope's End.

The Gandar were a proud species, too proud in fact, and their furious but doomed rebellion against the Lazax left the Emperor seeking appropriate retribution. The Lazax settled on mass transportation—to the remote world of Moll Primus. Subsequently, that world became a penal colony for all manner of political dissidents, traitors, and criminals whose offenses were particularly heinous or especially embarrassing to the throne. The punishment, called *transportation*, saw prisoners ripped from their families and cultures, bound for a lifetime of backbreaking manual labor under the wizened eye of a Lazax Governor.

On paper, the Moll Primus Governors and their legions were there to ensure that the highly dangerous population they oversaw could be adequately pacified; in practice, assignment to this backwater as a Governor was a political punishment, a career-ending sentence for politicians or public servants who had fallen into disgrace. Adding to the insult was the breaking of the tradition of one Governor per planet. Instead, each Governor on Moll Primus was given charge over a single prison, meaning that at times, two dozen administrators were fighting among themselves for planetary control.

With no incentive to be anything other than incompetent martinets bickering among themselves for power, the Governors tortured their malnourished prison population, enriching themselves with their labor. Sometimes they even armed the strongest and toughest prisoners and forced them to fight small-scale wars against other Governors for supplies, mineral claims, or hunting grounds, or simply out of pride.

This went on for more than eight hundred years, until the Twilight Wars. As the Lazax lost their grip on the Core Systems and the Empire crumbled, supplies and supervision from Mecatol Rex abruptly ended. The smartest Governors fled the planet with their entire households. Those who stayed to try and play warlord inevitably perished in the prisoner revolts that followed.

Erwan Mentak was one of the original leaders of the rebellion, with designs for peace and unity. But a significant portion of the multi-species prison populations had formed their own factions long before the revolt. As soon as they had killed the last of the Governors and jailors, they fell on each other in an attempt to claim power, food, and resources for themselves.

Despite Mentak's various efforts to drag his fellows to the negotiating table, the true birth of the Coalition was the arrival of a Lazax cruiser in orbit. As soon as its crew learned what had happened in the prisons, the cruiser opened fire on the main spaceport. A furious battle ensued between the Lazax and the coalition of ships that took to orbit to defeat them, ending with Erwan Mentak and his comrades boarding the cruiser, defeating the crew in a desperate fight, and claiming the vessel as the first flagship of a new allied navy.

Luckily for the nascent planetary government, that cruiser was the last ship to arrive for decades. Now, Moll Primus's isolation worked in its favor. Building on this united victory, Erwan Mentak dedicated the rest of his life to the Reconstruction, overseeing infrastructure upgrades, the establishment of a fair and equitable government, and the finding of homes for all of the former prisoners on the planet's beautiful surface. For this work, even more than his daring leadership during the rebellions, the new Coalition adopted his name upon his death.

The Mentak Coalition Today

In the years after the revolts, the Mentak Coalition quickly took to the stars. Moll Primus's isolation and limited infrastructure meant that many valuable resources needed to be obtained from other worlds. The Coalition traded with other small independent systems, but its members' status as former prisoners meant they were persona non grata in the ports of the Great Civilizations. In response, they turned to piracy, something the Coalition has indulged in ever since.

Today, the Mentak Coalition makes a point of separating the official vessels of its navy from the fleets of privateer vessels that do not officially fly the Coalition's flag. Officers and crew who become pirates officially retire from Coalition service beforehand, and Moll Primus and the surrounding territories maintain separate dockyards for privateers. In the Coalition, privateer service is seen as dashing and romantic, and nearly every young military officer seeks to put a few years on a pirate vessel before "reenlisting" in the Mentak Coalition Navy.

These state-sponsored privateers do enjoy a great deal of latitude in their duties, but the Coalition still maintains some control and uses them as more than simply a plausibly deniable revenue stream. Pirate attacks are often coordinated with diplomatic efforts; the Coalition's allies enjoy clear spacelanes, while its enemies see vital trade routes swarming with buccaneers. Additionally, pirates who serve the Coalition avoid atrocities

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and senseless butchery, following their own code of morals and showing mercy to their foes. This allows the Coalition to position itself as the underdogs fighting against an uncaring and amoral galaxy, particularly when a sizable portion of their spoils end up donated to neglected or starving independent worlds.

Piracy has come to define the Coalition's culture to the point that the government of Moll Primus and all Coalition territories is led by a Table of Captains. Each captain represents one of the historical governorships or a new territory claimed in later centuries, and in properly piratical tradition, each is elected by popular acclaim. Officially, one does not need to be a former or current starship captain to be elected. In practice, nearly everyone who sits at the Table of Captains has captained a vessel at some point in their life.

The Table of Captains chooses one of their number to serve as Erwan's Hand, the head of the government and commander of the Mentak Coalition Navy. Currently, Captain Sorthina Chung is the serving Hand, but the position tends to rotate often between the captains to ensure that no one leader has the chance to amass too much power. The Table of Captains attempts to personify the Coalition's strengths: diversity, egalitarianism, and a seat at the table for all.

Goals of the Mentak Coalition

With the restoration of the Galactic Council, the Mentak Coalition has found itself in a tricky situation. On the one hand, most of its citizens prefer the more egalitarian galactic governance of the Council to a single person or faction declaring a new Imperium. On the other, the Coalition has thrived when galactic governance has been weak and disjointed, and even after several thousand years, most Coalition citizens dislike the idea of laws coming from Mecatol Rex.

As a result, the Coalition has joined the Galactic Council, but its representatives work tirelessly to keep the Council's authority weak and limited. They are always pushing for more autonomy for individual Council members, fewer regulations, and laws that protect the disadvantaged societies in the galaxy from the predations of the Great Civilizations. If it weren't for the arrival of the Mahact, the Mentak Coalition likely would never have backed the formation of the Keleres. As it is, the Coalition is an enthusiastic supporter...so long as the Keleres stay focused on pangalactic threats.

For the Coalition, the ideal galaxy is one where nobody rules, because nobody can be trusted to avoid becoming a tyrant. However, if someone must take the throne, then shouldn't it be the people whose ancestors knew the dangers of tyranny?

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Eliminate a particularly vile source of enslavement, perhaps breaking up a slave trafficking ring, freeing a mine or factory full of indentured workers, or inciting a rebellion against a tyrant.

Pull off an epic heist, whether an act of piracy, a true robbery, or some other crime, that brings you a lot of money. What you do with the money afterward is up to you.

Identify a L1Z1X probe into Coalition territory and figure out how to either eliminate or redirect it.

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NAALU COLLECTIVE

When it comes to the Naalu Collective, many truths are unconfirmed, especially regarding their history. When put to the question, the Naalu Collective's Druaa ambassadors commonly reply that as a species of telepaths, they are always significantly more interested in the present.

Not that many beings are eager to engage a Druaa in conversation. Apart from knowing that one's every thought is being read like an open book, many species evolved on planets with snakes or snakelike predators and have an instinctive fear of them. The Collective likes to use this to their advantage by emphasizing the more unsettling and serpentine nature of their movements and speech patterns. Finally, none of this is helped by the fact that most Druaa are more than four meters long from tail to crest.

But more than that, the Naalu possess technology and weapons known to have the ability to redirect, manipulate, or damage the neuron impulses guiding the brains of all major known species. Possibly as a result, no diplomatic mission with the Collective has ever been deemed a success.

The Naalu, when informed of this, are always surprised. To their mind, everything went absolutely perfectly.

The Naalu are ancient. When the Collective first made themselves known during the Twilight Wars, their crystalline fleets dramatically appeared near key systems demanding audience with the major players. Stellar cartographers and historians were shocked to discover that their home system, Mallac, had somehow managed to evade being cataloged for millennia despite being surrounded by worlds whose recorded history predated even that of the Lazax Empire. That region of space has long been rumored haunted; crews traveling there have been found adrift in deep space with no memory of how they got there, and entire ships have been lost without trace. That the Naalu are responsible is an obvious conjecture, though they stridently deny it—and strange occurrences coincidentally seem to befall off-worlders who ask too many questions.

An easy hypothesis is that the Naalu have been colluding with the Yssaril Guild of Spies, as there is no record of Yssaril ships or crews having ever suffered space amnesia or ship loss in the region, and many of the scientists most vociferously proposing this theory have turned up dead under mysterious circumstances. If true, this explains how a seemingly isolated civilization claiming no prior contact with the rest of the galaxy managed to develop premium civilian and military technology rivaling, and in some cases surpassing, the galaxy's cutting edge. As the Naalu are a species of psychics, their ability to rapidly form consensus and prevent internal conflicts from spiraling into war was probably a major factor in their incredibly rapid development.

The Naalu Collective Today

The Naalu's insignia represents the spiked eye of the Neffish, a radiant, crystalline creature that glides through the seas of their home planet of Druaa; stalking lesser prey, it attacks with its claws. Representing deadly grace and perilous beauty, the Neffish is an incredibly aggressive and dangerous predator, pacified only by constant telepathic control. Collective ship designs are all Neffish-inspired, scintillating and shimmering hulls glittering in the starlight. In battle, the Naalu use their telepathy to constrict their enemies in elegant traps, their gleaming crystal fighter squadrons coiling effortlessly in and out of the line of fire before striking their deadly blows. Combat against the Naalu is futile unless in overwhelming force, and even then to invite their wrath is ill-advised.

Few outsiders visit the Mallac system, even fewer Druaa itself, a breathtakingly beautiful world with flowered steppes, violet mountains, and glowing forests. The oceans teem with swimming Druaa, and the air is filled with melodic arias, thousands of haunting voices hissing in the kind of unison only a species of telepaths can truly achieve. Most Druaa never speak unless they make contact with off-worlders, communicating their emotions and intentions purely through their minds. Even then, many Druaa tend to "mistakenly" respond to an off-worlder's thoughts as if they'd been spoken aloud, just to remind everyone that nothing is secret to the Collective. The Naalu, it must be said, always love having the upper hand.

Their leader, Q'uesh Sish, is a tall, red-scaled Druaa who has ruled the Collective for over a decade from her palace in the shining crystal city of Eershin. She prefers to receive visitors in front of her Neffish, a massive carving shaped after the beloved sea creature. All visitors are informed that the Neffish is made from a rare radium crystal that allows Q'uesh Sish to see the minds of other beings, no matter how far away they are.

Before leaving, off-worlders are treated to virtuoso performances by thousands of Druaa's finest singers while feasting upon the greatest delicacies the planet has to offer, including mountainous river fish, roast Maalukian rodents, and deep-sea monstrosities the Naalu hunt alongside their Neffish. A banquet attended by Q'uesh Sish has thousands of courses—and apparently, she never has to eat the same meal twice.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Insert oneself into a crucial role in the Keleres, become indispensable, then gather valuable information to report to the Collective. Knowledge, after all, is power.

Locate and convince a Druaa who has left the Collective to return to the fold. If they refuse, ensure nobody ever knows (or once knew) of their existence.

Suppress any outsider knowledge of or research into Maaluk's history and the possibility of shared genetic ancestry between the Druaa and Miashan.

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The pristine beauty of Druaa is maintained by off-worlding all industry to the other habitable planet in the system: pungent, mudflat-strewn Maaluk, which visitors are forbidden from setting foot on. In addition, the enslaved Miashan, a winged species deeply susceptible to the Naalu's telepathic capabilities, perform all manual labor on Maaluk. All the Naalu's various industries are housed here: iron extraction, jewel mining, underground gas siphoning, metal refinement, and thousands upon thousands of rodent farms. Raw materials are shipped either to the shipyards in orbit around Druaa's two moons—upon which legions of Naalu soldiers muster and train—or to Druaa itself, where they are stored in massive underground warehouses and distributed to the cities by Miashan towing airborne gliders.

The truth is that there is more to Maaluk than the Naalu want outsiders to know. Xenobiological analysis of the Miashan and the Druaa suggest the Miashan are more likely to have evolved on planet Druaa, and the Druaa's physiology is more likely to have developed on Maaluk. However, this issue should never be posed to Naalu ambassadors unless one wishes to cause deep offense. The Naalu often hint that further pursuit of the matter will result in one's brains draining out of one's nasal cavities.

But the information had to come from somewhere, and it is true that not all Druaa identify with the Collective. Whispers abound of defectors who have somehow hidden their true intentions from the rest of the Collective, but where these defectors are, and why they seem so intent on spreading the truth about Maaluk, is currently unknown.

Goals of the Naalu Collective

The Collective works to shroud its intentions in mystery and obfuscation, but its members do seem to care about those Druaa who leave their society, if the rumors of Collective hunt teams and assassinations are to be believed. Beyond this, the Collective has dispatched representatives to nearly every major civilization and has cheerfully contributed more than its fair share of agents to the ranks of the Keleres. These individuals tend to bend over backward to cooperate with their new colleagues, although this is not so difficult for a species with such flexible spines.

Given this information, most of the Great Civilizations have a theory. The Naalu's intentions may be opaque, but as they continue to dispatch envoys while simultaneously positioning their fleets around key systems, the Collective have made it clear that they are interested not just in the present, but in the future as well. All of it.

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NAAZ-ROKHA ALLIANCE

The planet Naazir is home to a tiny cliff-dwelling species of technological savants. Necessity and highly developed brains led to early tool use and technological development as the Naaz ancestors carved out a life for themselves on the planet's high mountains. As deep, narrow seas bordered the mountains, they learned to lower themselves on ropes to catch crustaceans from the waters and farm algae at the tideline.

In a mere half-million years, the Naaz progressed from stone chisels to spaceflight—whereupon they quickly discovered that the galaxy was significantly more crowded and chaotic than they had predicted, especially in the wake of the Twilight Wars. The beautiful and rich Naazir became a destination for off-worlders of all stripes, and it wasn't long before some of them tried to steal it for themselves.

The planet's first colonizers were a Winnu corporate collective, who set up Naazir as an industrial colony and exploited the Naaz for their nimble fingers and quick minds. When the corporate board members were arrested and charged for their crimes against sentients, the Naaz barely had time to celebrate before a battalion of Federation deserters landed and, with their superior tactics and firepower, bent the Naaz to their will.

When Naaz rebels alerted Sol authorities of this rogue army, the might of the Federation Navy came to arrest them—and continue the colonization under Federation-sponsored rule. Large portions of Naazir were claimed as Federation territory, splitting ancient Naaz lands into pieces. Sol officials were more than happy to spend a couple of decades blowing up the mineral-rich Naazir mountains and messily extracting biofuels from their oceans, with Naaz local officials given sham representations in a token planetary parliament.

This uneven arrangement continued until the Federation finally retreated after establishing a treaty with the Naalu, who immediately forced the Naaz to pay a monthly tithe for their "protection" that quickly bankrupted their nascent economy. Events continued in this manner for centuries until, in the midst of being plundered by an alliance of Letnev merchant-princes, the Naaz came up with a new plan.

Sick of laboring under a colonial yoke, the Naaz nevertheless found themselves unable to fight a prolonged war due to their physical stature. To level the scales, they hired several companies of Rokha mercenaries who had long made a living raiding the edges of the colonial plunder. The Rokha were dark-furred ancestral cousins of the Hacan who had left the worlds of the Kenara system in the earliest recorded history of the three worlds. Without the prestige and riches of their cousins, the Rokha roamed the galaxy using their skills as hunters and warriors to eke out a living as guns for hire. The Naaz armed their new Rokha comrades with incredible new tech, and after a brief but decisive war, routed the invaders from their home.

Instead of being just another in a long list of clients, the Naaz shocked the Rokha with an offer: the chance to build a life on Naazir, with equal standing in Naaz society and integration into their culture, and the promise of a new home for all Rokha.

The Naaz-Rokha Alliance Today

The new Naaz-Rokha Alliance was a jubilant success. In a galaxy of perfidy and strife, the Alliance achieved peace, casting off the colonial oppressors and finally forming a united Naaz. Soon, construction began on orbital platforms to house a rapidly expanding population, as did terraforming operations on a barren rock two planets out. Multiple comet drops and Alliance biotech transformed the other planet into a mountainous, verdant blue-green world of alpine forests and stormy seas, suiting the Rokha's preference for cooler climes. Finally the beleaguered nomads had a new home, which they christened Rokha.

The new planet has an open-door policy to all Rokha and any nomadic cousins who wish to claim citizenship, whether as part of the Alliance or simply as residents of the planet. In recent times it has become a locus for other Hacan outcasts, attracting clanless or displaced youngbloods with no hope of upward mobility in the Emirates and seeking new fortunes elsewhere. The city of Dormont Vault has become the home of one of the largest Hacan populations outside the Kenara system. The Exotic Energies Institute always has room for new hires, and the city has become a hub of multispecies life, as well as a major exporter of culture, cuisine, and high-tech consumer goods.

The cultural merging of the Naaz and Rokha has become a point of fascinated study for galactic anthropologists. Every level of Naaz-Rokha society became an equal partnership—the most common family unit consists of two Naaz and two Rokha plus any children, although larger family units of various species distribution have also been observed. Single-partner monogamy is nearly unheard of, and the bonds of their family units often alter and rebond, picking up new pairs of partners or shedding old ones in the passage of time. Although Rokha was established as a home for the Rokha species, today the planets are populated nearly equally by both, with some families sharing time between worlds to see their various partners and children.

Their government, the Alliance Chamber of Congress, is overseen by the Executive Tetrarchy, formed of two Naaz and two Rokha. Whenever an elected official steps down, the longest-serving member of the Tetrarchy from the opposite species also resigns, ensuring no single Naaz or Rokha can claim seniority. This also applies to the representatives of individual districts, since each has two representatives. These are almost always a Naaz and a Rokha, except from the few districts with majority populations from other species.

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While the Naaz-Rokha Alliance has been successful by just about any measure, the various Great Civilizations expected them to remain a regional power at best. Their membership in the Galactic Council was treated with a sort of amused tolerance by the other members...until the Mahact returned.

Two of the survivors of the Acheron disaster were a pair of Naaz-Rokha scientists. Their readings of the massive Acheron Gate opened up a new field of applied science: entropic field harvesting. Entropic field taps gather the energy released by the continuous creation and decay of unstable microwormholes to other dimensions and, in the process, provide far more power than standard reactors ever could.

This new form of energy generation, dubbed the most significant energy discovery since the mass-drive, kickstarted a new wave of Alliance ship and factory designs. The Z-Grav Eidolon in particular has given the Alliance a mech design that can seamlessly operate in both orbital and atmospheric theaters. Entropic field harvesting powers the mech's flight systems and enables the mind-linking supercomputers that let Naaz-Rokha pairs copilot the vehicle. At every turn, the Alliance has been overcoming challenges with cooperation and brilliant innovation.

Having established themselves as an independent power, the Naaz-Rokha have begun to eagerly travel to other parts of the galaxy, partly as tourists, partly as reconnaissance, but mostly to spread the word of Alliance-style civilization. As big spenders who love to share and don't cause trouble, Naaz-Rokha tend to be welcomed wherever they go. However, most people tend to tire of their constant extolling of how the Alliance way of life is strictly superior to all other cultures, a subject on which the Naaz-Rokha tend to pontificate, at length, to any within earshot.

Goals of the Naaz-Rokha Alliance

When they're not holding court on their cultural superiority or delving into the mysteries of unexplored corners of the galaxy, the Naaz-Rokha search for other civilizations to add to their fold—as well as founding cultural exchange centers and embassies to help bring Alliance culture to all.

In the end, that is one of the Alliance's primary goals. The Naaz-Rokha hope to bring their model of cooperation to as many societies as possible, starting with those who have been just as oppressed by the Great Civilizations as they were, and possibly ending with the Great Civilizations themselves. After all, if twin minds are brighter than the sum of their parts, harmonious cooperation between all should clearly be the path forward for the galaxy.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Emancipate a society or community of sentients from colonialism and oppression. Ideally, *without* causing any major diplomatic incidents.

Lead an expedition of discovery either into an unexplored region of the galaxy, or into a discovered region that might have something other civilizations have overlooked.

Conduct field research (preferably while armed) into the possible relationships between entropic field harvesting and the alternate dimension of the Vuil'raith. Is this new technology a weapon that could be used against the Vuil'raith Cabal? Or is it something that risks empowering them further?

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THE NOMAD

Orbiting the ice-locked, uninhabited world of Arcturus is the great Space Station Sumerian, one of the galaxy's premier trading hubs. Valued for its lack of loyalty to any of the galaxy's Great Civilizations, Sumerian has long survived as an independent way station, a haven for smugglers, acquirers of the rare and esoteric, and those generally wishing to flout the edges of galactic law while raking profit hand over fist.

Within the ring structure of Sumerian, there once existed an uneasy equilibrium of factions, each constantly vying for a greater slice of the station. Various tycoons, crime bosses, and alliances ruled Sumerian, the balance of power sometimes shifting dramatically due to a lucrative long-term contract, key sabotage, or outright assassination, but always resettling into a new status quo.

In such a place, the arrival of strange signals emanating from the center of the galaxy warning of a galactic-level apocalypse passed by unremarked, apart from the slight oddity that they were transmitted on ancient radio frequencies rather than the far more efficient superluminal communication networks. If they had perhaps paid more attention to the signals, the factions ruling Sumerian might have had a chance to prepare for what occurred next. Or perhaps not.

Prior to the fall of Sumerian, an individual calling themself the Nomad had appeared in several places throughout known space. Clad in an environmental suit and the clothes of a humble merchant, they looked to make incredibly valuable trades with the galaxy's information and data brokers, trading in secrets as often as they paid in aurei. They were particularly interested in any data regarding the recent failed Creuss expedition to plumb Shaleri space, and especially in concrete evidence to back up the rumors of nightmare demons haunting the borders of Shaleri.

The Nomad had visited Sumerian a few times, but not to buy information. A trade license here. A contract deal there. A legal loophole or two. Following a tip-off by a previously unknown Sumerian merchant named Artuno, the station's magnates and mercenary leaders discovered that their figurehead leader, the trader Huro M'es, had been quietly arrested and imprisoned. Control of the station's operations and systems now belonged to the Nomad. To their shock, some of them realized that old contracts between themselves and Artuno held buried clauses that ceded control of their slice of the station should the events unfolding on Sumerian ever occur.

Of course some resisted, but after a few eye-wateringly high bribes, some threats of ventilation, many bruised prides, and one or two convenient disappearances, a new order was established on Sumerian: the Nomad and their cadre of supporters now had full run of the station, and of all the trillions of aurei that flowed though it.

The Nomad Today

With Sumerian in hand, the Nomad began to expand their control over the neighboring systems, pulling from a seemingly limitless reserve of funds beyond even what ownership of Sumerian could explain. Multisystem corporations, entire shipyards, and planetary governments alike were simply bought out. Fleets of starships were purchased wholesale, and arms trade contracts bought out at double or even triple the usual rate. Soon the dockyards at Sumerian were filled with new vessels bearing the Nomad's symbol—and enough armaments to rival the fleet capabilities of even the Great Civilizations. The posting of lucrative contracts for engineers, pilots, commanders, and sundry crew caused a massive influx of mercenaries, retired military, and opportunity seekers of all species flocking to Sumerian to crew this new fleet.

With a major new galactic player taking the stage in such a swift and dramatic fashion, many Great Civilizations have taken a vested interest in gathering more intelligence on the Nomad and their band of companions. Reports show that rather than descending into a hive of chaos and villainy, Sumerian is now a haven of egalitarianism and fair trade. All who work there are adequately provided for, and troublemakers are dealt with in a firm but uncruel manner, ranging from assigning mandated services to the community to simply expulsion from Sumerian and a shuttle to their home planet.

Luck or Skill?

It seems impossible that one person, no matter how wealthy, could rival the great, multi-system civilizations that dominate the galaxy. Some point to this as evidence that the Nomad might possess mysterious and nigh-magical powers. However, others argue that their rise to power can be explained by a series of extraordinary well-timed coincidences, and the laws of probability state that it had to happen to someone over the course of galactic history.

It is certainly true that the Nomad maintains their power through a delicate balancing act as much as the expenditure of their vast wealth. No matter how many warships and mechs they buy, their fleet can't rival the other Great Civilizations in terms of sheer numbers. However, the Nomad has thus far done an excellent job of appearing too powerful to be an easy conquest, but not threatening enough to be worth eliminating. Some of this is accomplished through the savvy use of media and diplomatic overtures, but many suspect the Nomad also has at least a few agents quietly working on their behalf in every major galactic government.

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Information regarding the Nomad's origins and identity are often contradictory and difficult to believe. Given their ability to conduct business in several different star systems across the span of a few days, a theory emerged that the Nomad was a shared identity, the environment suit and mask worn by members of a larger organization. However, gait and body-language analysis has indicated it is likely that the Nomad is a single individual. How this lines up with the multiple confirmed reports of Nomad sightings in far-flung locations is yet to be adequately resolved.

Goals of the Nomad

What is definitively known is that whether from their seat on Sumerian or from their flagship, *Memoria II*, a single individual now controls more power and influence than several of the Great Civilizations. However, their goals are still entirely unclear. Attempts at diplomatic relations have rarely led to meetings with the Nomad themself, but rather with one of their close allies. Those allies, at least, are more transparent about their motives, but even then, motives differ from person to person.

Visits to Sumerian are often fielded by the Human Artuno, who wears her title "The Betrayer of Sumerian" with pride. "Of course it's an honor," she explains from her seat in the Nomad's spacious office, the view of Sumerian expanding forever in both directions before it encircles Arcturus. "They're doing so much for the galaxy's welfare, after all." When pressed for details, however, Artuno demurs.

In a rare interview with galactic news networks, Field Marshal Mercer explained that zie left the Argent Flight to help the Nomad out of zier sense of duty to the true calling of the Shikrai: preventing the Mahact from taking over the galaxy. However, when the same networks followed up with the Argent Flight, they found no mention of Mercer (or any Shikrai that shares zier unusual name) in the organization's records. The Nomad's master of ships, the Hacan Navarch Feng, once gave a tour of *Memoria II*, but after a member of the Jol-Nar delegation tried to conduct an unauthorized investigation of its engine room, the party was asked to leave.

Little is known of the Thundarian, a mysterious cloaked figure who spends most of their observed time among the Nomad's fleets, possibly overseeing training efforts or war games. It is also a matter of intense speculation how the Creuss warrior Ahk-Syl Siven, whose armor glows with intermingled blue and crimson sparks, came to leave the famously united Ghosts of Creuss and stand by the Nomad's side. Rumors abound of a bounty placed upon the capture of Ahk-Syl Siven by the Ghosts, a claim the Creuss strenuously deny.

What *is* known is that the Nomad is preparing for something, and that their activities began around the time of the expedition to Acheron. Could they be somehow linked to the mysterious warning harkening from the center of the galaxy?

Only time will tell.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Identify and retrieve any crucial information related to the Mahact, the Vuil'raith, the Creuss expedition to Acheron, or related events.

As one of the Nomad's agents, select an equally skilled individual (preferably someone highly placed in another civilization's government) and recruit them into this admittedly really sweet gig.

Complete a very difficult, very specific, and very odd set of tasks at the express instruction of the Nomad, ensuring that each task occurs at a certain preset time.

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SARDAKK N'ORR

Hostile. Inhospitable. Inimicable. *Alien.* These terms are often cast against both the N'orr and the planet Quinarra, from which they hail. In the case of the planet, such terms are indisputable.

The ancient, high-intensity star of Sardakk lies beyond the Unicorn Nebula, and under its hot, red light, the N'orr—somehow—evolved. Even from orbit, the oceanless world emits an aggressive air—hyperactive dust storms swarm its poles, while massive pressure fronts chase lightning and sand across its surface. Its parent star's red light refracts ruby-like through this thin, powdery atmosphere, giving the impression of a fireball, blasé about whether the life it spawns finds any purchase at all.

Such an attitude extends to the planet's surface; Quinarra has all the resource-richness of a rocky giant of its age but none of the ecology. The planet was once a gas giant but had its atmosphere stripped away by Sardakk's light, leaving only a thin nitrogen shell and its rocky core. What little water the atmosphere holds falls as massive hailstorms. That Quinarra is still home to hundreds of species instead of a barren rock is one of the galaxy's great mysteries.

The N'orr evolved as one of dozens of nonsentient insectoid life-forms that constantly warred over the planet's limited water and prey in a billion-year arms race between the various species. The history of these species is not a matter of record; the N'orr have no interest in paleontology or archaeology. What is known is that in the battle to achieve supremacy, the N'orr's ancestors eventually evolved to have not only a prodigious birth rate and hardened exoskeleton, but also a limited form of individuality—and thus, sentience.

This evolutionary breakthrough allowed them to rapidly conquer and subjugate their rival species, all of whom relied on an instinctual hivemind. The N'orr drove many to extinction and subjugated the rest as farmed prey or beasts of burden, roles many of these nonsentient species continue to occupy today. This shift in the balance of power led to unchecked population growth, and thus to the N'orr's dominance over Quinarra as they spread out over the planet in a scramble for food and water. Once they achieved the scientific method, spaceflight was inevitable, as the N'orr sought to fulfill their evolutionary instinct for additional territory and resources.

As one of the only insectoid sentients in the galaxy, the N'orr often have difficulty integrating into other cultures, especially given that the first N'orr encountered by an off-worlder is often a warrior, guarding trade cargo or escorting a diplomat. N'orr are born with varying morphologies that range greatly in size and shape, which often sees N'orr adopting roles based on whether their physiology best suits work as a warrior, worker, artisan, scientist, or trader.

Groups of one type of N'orr regularly interact with N'orr of other types, but kinship and cultural similarities run closely along morphological lines, often resulting in the formation of smaller groups reminiscent of what other species might see as families. N'orr get very uncomfortable when pulled away from other N'orr, another reason they have a hard time integrating with other species.

N'orr also have to overcome numerous xenophobic myths, many of which are cultural artifacts from the expansionism they undertook during the Twilight Wars. The stereotype of the mindless, hyperaggressive N'orr is ancient, but N'orr diplomats and trade brokers have been as vocal about their cultural achievements as their massive hive fleets. It is also not true that they have an unbreakable bond with the Queen Mother's hivemind and that her will overrides their individuality in a form of ancestral mind control, though most N'orr are born with an innate connection to the Queen Mother. The lack of such is rare and often leads to psychological conditions, though N'orr of the leader caste are immune.

The Sardakk N'orr Today

Despite their planet's ambivalence to their survival, the N'orr have fully established themselves on Quinarra. Cities sprawl out both above and below the massive tectonic plates, inactive due to the world's advanced age. Most N'orr prefer the bracing lifestyle above ground, using the lightning storms and hail as excuses to indulge in some exercise, while most of their manufacturing and industry takes place in the more controlled environments below the surface.

On Quinarra, the main nexus for off-worlders is the capital city of H'cor, which on a clear day stretches as far as the eye can see in every direction, billions of N'orr crowding its skylanes and footpaths. N'orr buildings are typically ovoid, constructed from a hardened rubicund material, the skyscrapers providing relief from the surface heat. Urban sprawl connects massive red-tinged gorges that plunge into the city-nests below.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Identify a group of N'orr who do not believe in the Queen Mother's existence, and eliminate them for sedition.

Locate a resource-rich world with few or no sentient inhabitants, bring its location to the Brood, and help colonize the world to feed the ever-growing society of the N'orr.

Become a G'hom, one of the most skilled and feared warriors of the already-elite Tekklar soldiery, and have your name immortalized among the Sardakk N'orr forever.

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The underhives of H'cor are supposedly home to Sardakk the Queen Mother herself, who the N'orr claim has guided their species since they gained sentience. While no off-worlder has ever been allowed to confirm this, each and every N'orr insists that the Queen Mother is real—that they each feel a strong connection to her and always have.

Whether or not she exists, the Queen Mother's will and voice is directed through the Envoy of the Queen, an elected position appointed by a secret society known as the Veiled Brood. This envoy is in command of the N'orr's cultural, economic, and military policies, though whether the queen's will or the Brood's is being carried out is not a matter to bring up in proximity to any loyalist N'orr.

Goals of the Sardakk N'orr

The Sardakk N'orr continue a policy of expansion and military conquest that began in the later stages of the Twilight Wars, after the Lazax were broken and could no longer enforce peace. The N'orr sent fleets out in an ambitious attempt to conquer vast swaths of the galaxy; too ambitious, as it turned out. They ended up fighting wars on two dozen fronts against as many enemies, and their forces were routed or crushed. Their broken armies returned to Quinarra to bide their time.

Now, under the leadership of the envoys, the N'orr have vowed never again to suffer the humiliating losses and retreats they endured during the Twilight Wars. Their military has adopted the names of their greatest foes from that grim time: the Myridon Band of Hacan, the Vespara of Naalu, and the Valkyrie drop commandos of Sol. Now those names— Myridon, Vespara, and Valkyrie—identify the strongest units of the N'orr's elite Tekklar legions. The N'orr are not afraid to remember the defeats of the past, because they know that, as during the entirety of their evolution on Quinarra, each setback and hardship only serves to make them stronger.

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TITANS OF UL

On the outer reaches of the galaxy lies the Dyson sphere of Elysium. A massive shell of metal and silicon encasing a singularity, this great construction was one of the final undertakings of the Mahact gene-sorcerers before they were overthrown by the Lazax, ending their reign over the galaxy. Though it has lain dormant all this time, the once-nameless relic lies in an area of space known to contain many dangerous ancient Mahact inventions; this danger, and even more so Elysium's distance, deter even the most ardent of scavengers, who simply seek out other targets.

This is without even mentioning the Titans.

Elysium was not built by Mahact hands. During their reign, the Mahact had many strokes of brilliance, among which was their development of an entirely new form of life. Sculpted of steel and silicates and encased in a metal shell, the Titans married the self-determination of biology with the physical perfection of the machine.

But their greatest trait was their intelligence. No mere automatons, the Titans were capable of self-deterministic learning, though the Mahact had programmed a fail-safe such that their creations could not disobey their masters. The gene-sorcerers had crafted the perfect guardians and laborers to oversee their domains. They deployed the Titans as advance guards, used their labor to expand into new settlements, and set them to performing all of the menial tasks of running an empire.

But eventually the Lazax came to challenge the Mahact. Vast armies of Titans fell, ordered to their dooms by the last of the Mahact kings, who were willing to sacrifice millions of Titans for even a single Mahact life.

When it became apparent that the Mahact were about to be driven from the galaxy, the innumerable Titan legions had been reduced to a shadow of their former numbers. The Mahact seeded what remained of the Titans throughout known space as sleeper agents, ordering them to bury themselves deep in the wilds of thousands of worlds. There, the Titans settled into a deep dormancy. Only when the Mahact returned would they awaken.

So the Titans slept. The Lazax took the throne and established the Lazax Imperium, ruled for tens of thousands of years, waned, and fell. The Twilight Wars raged and quieted. The Dark Years consumed the galaxy. Occasionally, a Titan would be uncovered by explorers or surveyors, but they were assumed to be merely another relic of a past long forgotten, a shadow of yet another civilization fallen through the mists of time.

The recent disaster at the Acheron Gate unleashed the Mahact from their millennia-old prison on Ixth. Soon after the disaster, a wake code was disseminated through the galaxy at superluminal speeds, rousing the Titans from their long slumber. The Mahact presumed that their old servants would rise to their side as they always had before.

But the Mahact had once again severely miscalculated by underestimating other sentients. During their millennia of dormancy, the Titans had continued to evolve, their silicate brains developing far beyond the Mahact's ability to foresee. The Titans were horrified at the gene-sorcerers' callous disregard for sentient life. Newly awakened with greater mental and intellectual capacity, the Titans no longer felt any compulsion to obey their former masters.

Unshackled from the Mahact's mandate of loyalty, the Titans began to seek out their kin before gathering at the great Dyson sphere they had built. They easily overcame the Mahact defenses on the great sphere before calling it Elysium and summoning all other Titans to join them.

The Titans of Ul Today

The biomechanical Titans had long had a love of other living things, and now that they were free from the Mahact's rule, they demonstrated this by transforming Elysium into a lush garden world. Harnessing the energy and gravity of the singularity, they seeded myriad biomes across the barren metal surface, blending their towns and cities seamlessly with the surrounding landscape in a hodgepodge of metal, stone, and vegetation.

This love of living things extends to their own kind. Each new Titan born is a cause for long celebrations. Titans begin life at just under three meters tall, and as they age, they continuously expand and grow. The largest Titans are so tall that they can be mistaken for buildings when silhouetted against the sky.

It is fortunate, then, that Elysium is so massive, with the surface area of ten thousand other planets. The eldest Titan, the Ul, is so massive they eclipse even the largest skyscrapers of their capital city, Transcendence; the Ul simply stands motionless in the heart of the city as they hold discourse on the issues confronting their people, other Titans waiting patiently for their turn to discuss key matters with their leader.

Titans as a people have a great preference for order, organization, and hierarchy—a remnant of their creation as programmable machines. The Ul's word is sacred, disseminated down through the comms networks and brought into being by all Titans. The Titans are not martinets; orders often take the form of broad directives rather than specific commands. As evidence of their independent thought, the Titans have taken a fancy to creating art. Continent-sized murals meant to be viewed from space are a specialty; Titans reshape entire tectonic plates and carve out symbols using forests and river systems. Such art is often fractal in nature; a tiny observer on the ground would be able to see the whole in its parts, microscopically fashioned using nanoinstruments. Titan art is now considered one of the great wonders of the galaxy.

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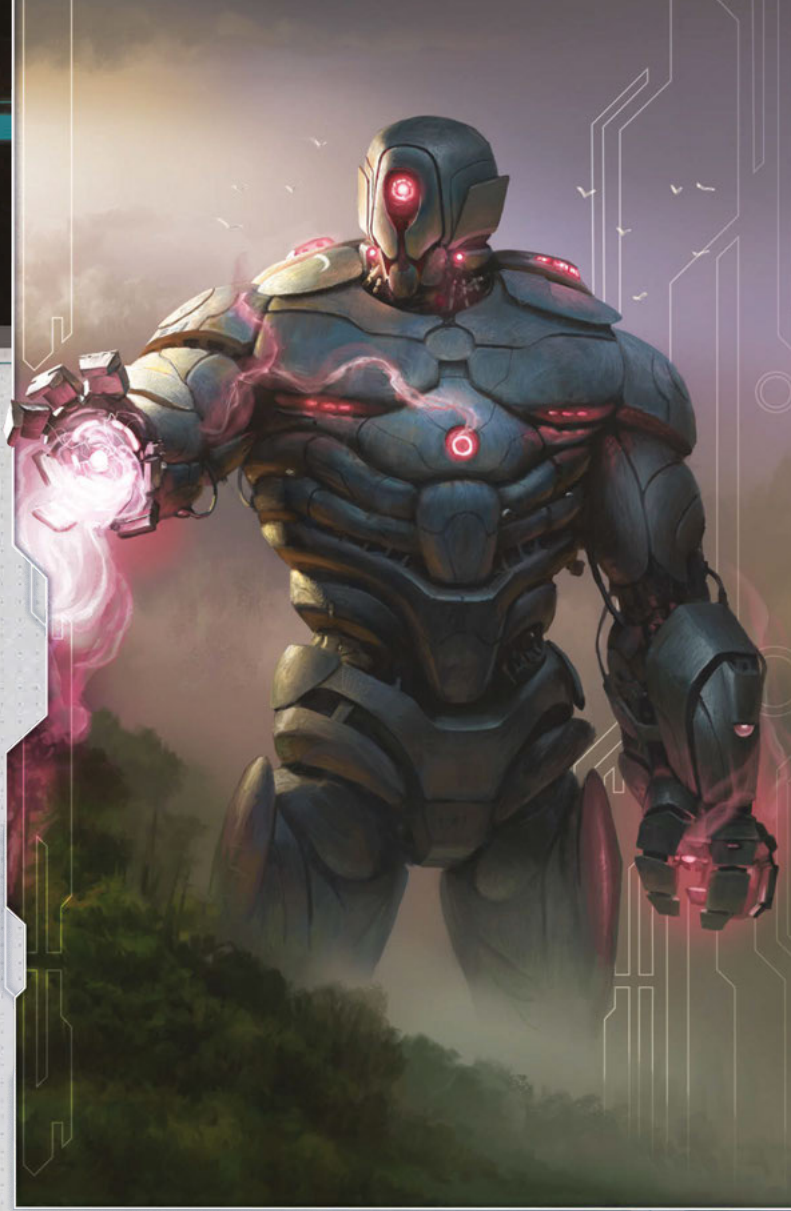

In addition to cultivating Elysium and continuing their own development as a culture, the Titans have been sending out envoys to the other Great Civilizations. The Titans' respect and love for sentient life has helped overcome initial distrust of the Mahact-employed creations, and the Titans have been making significant inroads by sending out their younger and thus smaller members as ambassadors. Titan spaceflight is something to behold: individual Titans self-propel using boosters installed in their bodies, often in the feet and hands. Their ships are merely large shells that their Titan pilots don like clothing or, in the case of their larger capital ships, are encased in.

Goals of the Titans of Ul

It wasn't long before trading vessels descended on Elysium, holds bursting with rare minerals and exotic plant and animal life that the Titans lovingly fashioned customized biomes for. In exchange, the Titans offered wondrous devices from the Mahact times, or their own expertise in geoforming, orbital construction, and terraforming to help other species bring life to worlds where there was previously none. Indeed, the Titans often seek out opportunities to help rebuild and terraform the many war-torn worlds across the galaxy.

The Titans also scour the galaxy for any of their kin who may still slumber beneath the surfaces of countless worlds, buried too deep for the wake codes to rouse, or damaged somehow. Sometimes a search ends in tragedy, a Titan too damaged by scavengers or the elements. But more often than not, the Titans rejoice as a new member of their kind wakes to a galaxy more benevolent and generous than the one they remember.

The Titans have another, even more ambitious goal, though it is known only to the elder members of the species. As an artificial world, Elysium has many of the same systems that were used in the Titans' creation. The Ul and their close confidants wonder if their world could be awoken, and become the greatest Titan of all.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Through researching myths and legends, identify the resting place of several sleeping Titans, then travel to that location to awaken them.

Seek out a band of the "uncertains," Titans who have strayed from the oversight of the Ul and the Titan elders, and convince them to reintegrate into the Titan hierarchy.

Uncover the genetic sequences for a number of rare extinct creatures, then bring them back to Elysium where they can be resurrected and placed into a newly created biome for preservation and study.

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UNIVERSITIES OF JOL-NAR

The twin ocean worlds of Jol and Nar are home to a vast variety of soft-boned, large-brained creatures. Intelligent life developed independently on both planets, though along similar evolutionary tracks. Soon after they achieved spaceflight, the variety of subspecies on both worlds had mingled and identified as a single species: the Hylar. The Hylar's large bodies and soft bones had led them to take up material usage rather than physical adaptation to survive, and they established the Universities extremely early in their species' development.

The Universities quickly became engines of research and innovation as well as institutions of learning. It was perhaps inevitable that they also came to dominate the societies of Jol and Nar, to the point that they took over governance of both planets. At the height of the Lazax Imperium, the Universities were a central pillar of galactic society. Their discoveries and engineering solutions underpinned nearly all technology in the galaxy, and entire branches of applied science were based on proprietary Jol-Nar tech. The Universities leaned heavily on the throne to grant them exclusive rights, locking up all their discoveries behind oceans of encryption and Imperial red tape. This led to a culture of tech worship throughout the galaxy; a Jol-Nar engineer was revered wherever they went, from manufactory to throne room.

Due to the Jol-Nar's Imperial pull, any work to reverse engineer Jol-Nar systems was strictly forbidden, and any attempts were swiftly met with harsh retaliations. The Universities only had to withdraw their tech—gravity generators, universal translators, mass-drives—from offending civilizations a few times to create such a fear of backlash that for millennia, only the Universities were able to fully understand and integrate their work into new discoveries.

As galactic technology fell under a veil of lucrative exclusivity arrangements and cushy Imperial grants, the Hylar of the Garian system grew comfortable, and wealthy, and arrogant. As they saw the Lazax begin to stumble, they believed they had the opportunity to supplant them as the masters of the galaxy. Thus, they supplied the Federation of Sol with new, highly advanced mass-drives that allowed Sol to launch a devastating surprise attack on Mecatol Rex. Once the Imperial Throne was empty, the Universities shuttered their embassies, withdrew their patents, and went on the offensive, bringing their fleets to bear against the other major galactic players in a bid for the Imperial Throne.

The Headmaster of the Universities, Sunjan Emeritus, had assumed that without access to their technology, the other Great Civilizations would simply falter and roll over, paving the way to a quick victory. In fact, he had vastly overestimated the Jol-Nar's capabilities. The Hylar soon came to realize how much they had relied on the income, protection, and natural resources of others.

Still, without the plague, they might have had a chance.

Doolak was a rapidly mutating virus that grew in salt water, with a long incubation period and asymptomatic spread. As the Hylar government had prioritized wartime efforts over public safety, the plague devastated the twin planets, sparing neither hatchling nor Headmaster. Despite all their knowledge, nearly all of Hylar contracted the plague. The final death toll: one in four.

The massive loss of life, knowledge, and associated cultural trauma shattered Hylar morale, leaving them unable to resist the Sardakk N'orr invasion. Battle after battle ended in the Hylar's rout or total defeat, until the Hylar Admiral Ta Linern held the line at the Saudor system, leaving critical Hylar food and medical transports in the open as bait for the N'orr fleet before jumping in behind them with every ship of the line the Hylar had left, including their new secret weapon, the war sun.

The winner-take-all gambit went against all University doctrine. But it delivered the Jol-Nar a decisive victory, finally blunting the N'orr advance and staving off near-certain extinction.

The aftermath of the Jol-Nar withdrawal soon became apparent across the galaxy. Hundreds of years of technological failure ensued as Jol-Nar component after component failed without adequate replacement, integrated systems collapsing across known space. This collapse and the brutal fighting of the Twilight Wars led to massive famine, poverty, and chaos, initiating the downfall of countless economies, cultures, and eventually galactic civilization, culminating in the millennia long Dark Years after the Age of Dusk.

The Universities of Jol-Nar Today

All Hylar grow up in schools, large social bodies that travel the currents and teach the basics of University principles. Once they have proven themselves proficient in either the formal, natural, or social sciences, young Hylar graduate to one of the local colleges before applying to enter the vaunted halls of the University of Nuun-Dascha and its many branches on Nar or its more prestigious sibling school at Wun-Escha and its many branches on Jol.

Traditionally, entrance to one of the Universities required something truly remarkable: completely original research, no small feat given the millennia of advancement and research that the Hylar have achieved. Many candidates refine their theses for decades—with the historical acceptance rate averaging 3%, inheriting a great-grandparent's unfinished thesis is a rite of passage for many Hylar children. However, in the centuries since the Twilight Wars, Jol-Nar culture has undergone a shift. A succession of Headmasters created a new branch of the University system, led by the University of Nuun-Dascha and including nearly half of the system's lesser schools.

In these schools, attendance is determined by a series of grueling aptitude tests administered to every Hylar child. Those who score highly are offered a place with all expenses paid by the government. Crucially, applicants are encouraged to accept only if they are truly interested, to ensure maximum engagement.

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The twin University systems have created a cultural divide in Jol-Nar society. Students from the traditional system of Wun-Escha are seen as pure researchers, scientists, and philosophers, while those who attend the Nuun-Dascha system are seen as engineers and technicians. Inevitably, both branches have developed a rivalry that through the centuries has ranged from "healthy" to "verging on civil war." One of the Headmaster's primary concerns is ensuring that both University systems can work together as a whole.

Between the Universities are those Hylar who seek out a different course in life. To accommodate the millions of Hylar who do not make it into the Universities, smaller specialized schools have sprung up, teaching everything from technical skills to linguistics, literature, fine arts, and culinary science. Due to the high level of automation in Jol-Nar society, many Hylar find employment as artisans, chefs, or performers, with Hylar opera singers (relying on the unique sound-carrying abilities of water) in particular demand.

In the Universities, Hylar adjuncts and professors are encouraged to push the boundaries of current thinking in revolutionary new ways. Theoretical geomaterials, mutatic energetics, self-metamorphic nanobiotics, transformational xenoneuroanatomics, applied cyropsychotronics—these are all long-established disciplines at the Universities. Eminent scientists and researchers from other Great Civilizations are frequently invited to give talks and present their research—to win the coveted Universities Xenoscience Prize is to ensure one's name is forever ensconced in the annals of scientific history, never mind the boost to the career.

Goals of the Universities of Jol-Nar

The current Headmaster, Magistrate Caran, and her Circle of Regents recognize that the Universities of Jol-Nar will never again enjoy the technological dominance they once possessed. The fracturing of galactic society forced too many of the Great Civilizations to pursue their own technological research, and now each faction is largely self-sufficient.

Instead of trying to maintain a monopoly on advanced technology, Caran now charts a new course. First, she pushes the Universities to obtain as much knowledge, research, and technological development from other civilizations as possible. What they can't buy or reverse engineer, the Universities steal. She longs to see the archives of Jol and Nar filled with as close to a full record of galactic knowledge as possible.

While that record is being completed, Caran is already moving toward her second goal. She is pushing the Universities to identify the next field of research that promises to bring a paradigm shift to the galaxy, so that Jol and Nar can be the first to reach that shift and dominate it. After all, the Universities of Jol-Nar don't need to monopolize all knowledge. They just need to be the best at using the parts that matter.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Seek out and eliminate any attempts by other Great Civilizations or factions to weaponize the Doolak virus.

Mount an expedition to an alternate dimension (such as the ones inhabited by the Creuss or the Vuil'raith) and return with servers bursting with valuable data.

Complete the thesis of a grandparent, fill it with new research, and earn your place in the prestigious Wun-Escha University.

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WINNU

After the Lazax Empire fell, the Great Scourge swept through the galaxy. All traces of the old Emperors were systematically extinguished from the galaxy in operations spearheaded by the Barony of Letnev and Federation of Sol, which wished to exact their vengeance upon the Lazax. This scourge led to the extinction of the Lazax and the erasure of their art, history, and culture—except on Winnu.

The Winnarans of Winnu had been near extinction when the Lazax first rose to power. They had not yet discovered interstellar spaceflight, and the dwindling of resources on their dying world had catalyzed multiple devastating civil conflicts. When a plague began to ravage their people, the Winnarans truly believed they were at their end.

If the Lazax had found them even a few years later, the Winnarans might have already been extinct. Instead, the Lazax began terraforming efforts and offered seemingly unlimited supplies of medicine and food. The resultant alliance was so strong that the Winnaran people were the first to become part of the Lazax Empire, working alongside the new Emperors hand in glove. With the strength and power of the Lazax and the diligence and discipline of the Winnarans, the burgeoning Imperium became a shining beacon of peace and stability in a galaxy wracked by the whims of the Mahact.

When the Lazax left their home system for the centrally located planet of Mecatol, fully half the population of Winnu left to join the Lazax diaspora on their new throneworld. For thousands of years, the throneworld served as the shining jewel in the Imperial crown. The Winnarans served as bureaucrats, councilors, and administrators of the new Imperium, performing all the rote detail-oriented work of running a massive, growing empire. All beings who petitioned the Lazax needed first to attend endless meetings with the Winnarans to iron out thousands of little niggles and clauses, and the decisions of the Lazax's great Galactic Council were facilitated and implemented by the Winnarans.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Gain intelligence on the disposition of the Great Civilizations and the Galactic Council in order to learn who can be trusted to help facilitate the Winnu's transition into power.

Seek out another faction's repositories of Lazax culture, technology, or history that survived the Twilight Wars, and then destroy them. Only the Winnu deserve to inherit the Lazax's culture, and there can be no chance of other sources countering their "true" interpretation of it.

Locate proof that the L1Z1X are abominations and perversions of the Lazax and thus cannot be the rightful heirs to the Lazax Imperium.

But eventually the Lazax Imperium entered its Age of Dusk. Blinded by millennia of unchallenged rule, the Lazax and the attendant Winnarans failed to perceive the mounting ambition and discontent growing around them. Eventually, the Lazax Empire collapsed, the shards of the throne scattered to the galactic winds as the Great Civilizations embarked on massive campaigns of expansionism and factional warfare. The Winnarans were trapped on the smoldering corpse of Mecatol Rex, cut off from their ancestral home.

Horrified at the downfall of the Lazax, the people of Winnu were powerless to resist, as they had relied heavily on the Lazax for military protection. When the Imperium fell and the Lazax were scoured from the galaxy, the people of Winnu continued to uphold what they believed to be the pinnacle of galactic civilization: authentic Lazax culture.

Throughout the Dark Years, the Winnu kept intact the tens of thousands of years of Lazax lore, wisdom, and art, developing their own civilization along Lazax lines. While the Winnarans on Mecatol focused on the preservation of the capital itself, Winnu culture evolved and prospered, the Winnu fashioning themselves as the true inheritors of the Lazax ways.

As the memory of the Great Scourge faded from the galaxy, the Winnu began to gain an increasing foothold. Apart from preserving great Lazax music, cuisine, poetry, fashion, architecture, and political doctrine, the Winnu had also honed their strategic genius, diplomatic artistry, and technology to a striking point.

The Winnu Today

Historian visitors to Winnu have remarked at the time-capsule nature of some parts of the planet. The trappings and aesthetic of the Lazax Imperium are still very much alive, honored in traditional style but updated to fuse with elements of Winnu modernism. The mode of dress, manner of speech, and even table manners of the Winnu are deeply reminiscent of the old Imperium, and many restaurants and performance houses claim to replicate authentic millennia-old recipes and plays in perfect mirror.

Unsurprisingly, the Winnu have also duplicated the Lazax Imperium's style of government, and their Emperor rules with absolute authority while supported by a cadre of skilled advisors and aides. The planet of Winnu is established as the Emperor's personal fiefdom, which the royal family rules from until they can be rightly restored to their throne on Mecatol Rex. Winnu vassal and colony worlds even dispatch envoys to the Winnu's smaller version of the Galactic Council, and have been assured that when the Winnu claim the Imperial Throne, they will be elevated to full members of the Galactic Council in recognition for their loyalty.

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As for the other Great Civilizations, recent diplomatic dealings with the Winnu have run into the problem that their hosts treat other species as subjects rather than equals. Some characterize the Winnu's proud, traditionalist nature as equaling that of the Lazax for sheer arrogance. Those Winnarans who are persuaded to speak on the matter say they do not recognize in their cousins any of the old ways—the strength of fortitude the Lazax espoused, the wisdom and patience that it took to rule a galaxy—that mirroring Lazax ways had not taught the Winnu what had come naturally to the Lazax.

Goals of the Winnu

As the galaxy grew more connected while emerging from the Dark Years, the Winnu once again made contact with their long-lost cousins, the Winnarans of Mecatol Rex, confident that they would brush aside their custodianship and welcome the Winnu as rightful sovereigns of the Imperium in the old Lazax style—that they would see the Winnu's millennia of adaptation of the Lazax way made them uniquely suited to rule.

When they instead discovered that the Winnarans had founded the new Galactic Council, the Winnu accused their ancient cousins of sacrilege and recalcitrance. Inviting the civilizations that had committed genocide against their old masters to argue on matters of galactic import was bad enough; that the Winnarans now refused to yield the throne was beyond the pale.

Incensed, the Winnu fielded the construction of great fleets and marshaled massive armies. Conscription into the new armed forces was not necessary; billions volunteered, ready to take back their ancient heritage by force.

Now, the Winnu are fixated on three related goals: to seek what is rightfully theirs, to reclaim the throne, and to rule the galaxy for the betterment of all.

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XXCHA KINGDOM

The pacifist Xxcha are among the oldest of all the Great Civilizations, predating perhaps even the Mahact as one of the first great interstellar civilizations. Long-lived and thoughtful reptilians with no interest in expansionism or playing at power, the Xxcha preferred to tend their gardens or debate meaning and origin while smoking from long-stemmed pipes.

Their homeworlds, known as the Archon Twins, lie nestled in a rich region of space, allowing early starfaring Xxcha to obtain great wealth through trade with other interstellar civilizations—there is, after all, great value in being the first to get there. Through the deposing of the Mahact kings and the rise of the Lazax, the Xxcha were there, becoming trusted advisors and respected allies of the Lazax Imperium.

Xxcha annals tell that during the Age of Dusk, Xxcha envoys were seated at the right hands of all the Great Civilizations. They watched the pieces falling into place, the kindling that would lead to the sparks of the Twilight Wars. In the absence of strong Imperial leadership, it was Xxcha ambassadors who mediated new treaties, enjoined ceasefires, and brokered détentes in order to defuse the mounting tensions, to greater success than most anticipated. The Xxcha warned fervently of the rising partisanship and fragmented empire that would eventually lead to collapse. But the Emperor grew distant, mistaking the warnings for threats, and expelled his Xxcha advisors in what was soon seen as one of the great foreshadowings of the fall of the empire.

When the Letnev blockaded the Quann Wormhole, Xxcha diplomats attempted to arbitrate the dispute. They were on board Letnev ships when the Sol fleet opened fire—that Xxcha blood was spilled during the opening shots of the crisis that would ignite the Twilight Wars was a tragedy not lost on their people.

The war soon engulfed known space. To fund his war effort, Baron Daz Arrokan I moved Letnev ships into the rich Xxlak system, bringing their asteroid mining operations and gas-giant extraction works under his yoke. Before the Kingdom could respond, Letnev dreadnoughts were within bombardment range of Archon Ren and Archon Tau.

The weaponless Xxcha fought with the only tool they had, quickly negotiating a partial settlement whereby they ceded Archon Tau to the Letnev while retaining Archon Ren as their home. Despite having lost one of their ancestral homes without struggle, the Xxcha were not fools—once the Baron's war started going his way, their agreement would be dust before his ambition.

The reigning Xxcha monarch, King Llixkas, set out to free his people. The gentle, lumbering Xxcha had long been considered soft and weak—few knew that when roused, they were as fast as any Hacan and as cunning as any Human. Within the secret groves and hidden vales of Archon Ren, King Llixkas oversaw the formation of the first Xxcha armies and the construction of its first war fleets.

For a decade the Xxcha had been mustering in secret, when tragedy struck. The Letnev suffered a stunning defeat against Federation forces in the Gral system. The Sol Phoenix Fleet was soon at their throats, engaging the heavily fortified Barony positions on Archon Tau. Daz Arrokan I made his last stand on the planet, fighting the Sol to a standstill over two years of constant bombardments and endless battles.

The horrified Xxcha watched as their beloved homeworld was reduced to ashes. The blue skies grayed with soot from the fires, and the surface cindered into blackened craters as the dust of the burning forests caused a winter that would last centuries, shattering the ecology of Archon Tau beyond repair. When at last the planet was abandoned by the main forces of Sol and Letnev alike, the Xxcha struck, putting the remaining invaders to rout and reclaiming their system.

The Xxcha relocated all survivors of their people from Archon Tau to Archon Ren, building a new royal palace in Kklaj, the only true metropolis in the Kingdom. Sculpted from the last of the Q'waar wood from Archon Tau, the palace houses enormous flower gardens and rivers populated with the surviving flora and fauna of their lost planet, the final monument to the destroyed twin.

King Llixkas saw out the rest of his days at Kklaj, overseeing the resettlement. His final decree: That what happened to Archon Tau should forever remain a reminder to all Xxcha. Never again would his people bend to foreign invasion.

The Kingdom of Xxcha Today

Archon Ren is blanketed in leafy forests, inland oceans, fruitful rainforests, and gently rolling mountain ranges. The Xxcha make their homes in myriad arboreal settlements buried in the depths

A Cautious Ttepliren

Much of the Xxcha Kingdom's culture has been shaped by the Twilight War and destruction of Archon Tau three thousand years ago. Having the surface of one's homeworld burned to poisoned ash would scar the psyche of any species, and it is easy to see how the Kingdom's philosophy of militant pacifism evolved from those terrible events.

What is impressive, however, is that the Xxcha Kingdom has established cordial (if wary) relationships with both the Federation of Sol and the Barony of Letnev. While neither could be considered allies, the Xxcha hold these relationships up as further evidence that, with dedicated diplomacy, the Great Civilizations can put aside their differences. The Xxcha hope to help establish a "ttrepliren," or "new age", one that sees the varied galactic powers live peacefully with one another.

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of the forests or bordering the shores of shallow lakes. Life on Archon Ren is slow and leisurely, with plenty of food and natural beauty, all bathed in the gentle light of its star, Xxlak.

Even on Archon Tau, the Xxcha do their best to maintain that lifestyle, though the planet's population is confined to cities where the air, water, and soil have been cleansed of toxins and restored to some measure of fertility. Even in these urban environments, populations tend to group themselves into neighborhoods, each with a significant amount of local autonomy.

The Kingdom of Xxcha could be described as a meritocratic gerontocracy. Individual villages (or neighborhoods on Archon Tau or in the city of Kklaj) are governed by councils of elders, each selected by the community from among its oldest generation. These councils, in turn, elect members to sit on the Council of Elders, who serve and support the ruler of the Xxcha. When the ruler dies or abdicates, the Council of Elders chooses a new ruler from among their number.

A central tenet of Xxcha philosophy is Vaxlaj, "A Great Life's Work." Each Xxcha over the course of their long existence seeks to create something that is meaningful, beautiful, or simply of great utility to pass on to the next generation. Vaxlaj tends toward the humble—an Xxcha may forge a faster travel route between two trading outposts, or compose a work of poetry cataloging the fish living in the planet's ocean, or simply walk every road in every community on the Archons. To have the privilege of completing multiple Vaxlaj is considered a source of great pride.

Goals of the Kingdom of Xxcha

The current monarch, King Ccrysus, has made it his Life's Work to ensure peace and stability for all Xxcha, especially now that the Mahact have returned. He has continued his predecessor's policies of forming mutually beneficial alliances with the Xxcha's neighbors, expanding the Kingdom's reach and influence so that should the unthinkable occur again, the Xxcha retain more sway than during the disastrous outbreak of the Twilight Wars. In fact, it was Ccrysus who was one of the original proponents of the Keleres, as a more surgical method of mediating galactic threats compared to the hammer of all-out war.

The Xxcha are some of the strongest backers of the restored Galactic Council, seeing it as an opportunity for the myriad galactic factions to work together peacefully. But Ccrysus worries deep in his hearts that the other Great Civilizations are not as committed to the Council as the Xxcha. He fears that there may come a time when the Xxcha have to step into the role of leaders, just as the Lazax did so long ago.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

- Find a worthy Vaxlaj, a Great Life's Work, and carry it to completion.
- Identify and eliminate a threat to the independence and integrity of the Keleres, either within or outside of the organization.
- Secure the aid of a prominent Titan of Ul terraformer to help restore Archon Tau to its former beauty.

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YIN BROTHERHOOD

Darien and Moyin Van Hauge could only watch as their children melted away.

Though brilliant physicians and scientists, the Van Hauges were powerless to stop Greyfire from eating through Grace and Lucas. For months the disease wasted their children's skin and organs, caused by a known malformation of the children's genetic code. The condition required replicative gene therapy to cure—but under Imperial law, cloning and all associated scientific knowledge were strictly forbidden, as cloning was known to have brought about the unpredictable and rage-prone nature of the Mahact kings.

That their children's treatment existed but was locked away behind Imperial protocol made the Van Hauges' fury unspeakable. After burying their children, they resigned their prestigious positions at the Hospitaler Clinic in New Moscow and left the Sol system, secretly making arrangements to travel to the third moon of Emelpar. Moyin's training as a xenoarchaeologist guided them for six months of searching the barren surfaces before they unearthed, in a long-abandoned vault, a half-corrupted archive containing ancient Mahact biostudies with the potential for a cure.

Returning to Jord under the guise of having taken a sabbatical, Darien and Moyin opened their own clinic and used the income to put their brilliance to work. Using Moyin's embryos and Darien's access to advanced Sol databases, the Van Hauges made great strides on cloning techniques. To outsiders, the Van Hauges were simply brilliant clinicians who could cure diseases others couldn't—their terrible secret stayed hidden in the basement beneath their offices.

Success led to success, and the Van Hauges became a beacon for the hopeless, who brought them their sick and dying relatives and friends. Darien and Moyin worked tirelessly on miracle cures, harnessing their knowledge to save hundreds of lives.

But even miracles fail. When Darien couldn't save an infant, the anguished parents broke into the Van Hauges' laboratory looking for incriminating evidence of malfeasance. They found rows upon rows of vats containing cloned cells, tissues, even organs, and immediately alerted Sol authorities.

Fleeing Jord with a few of their most trusted friends, the Van Hauges lived out their years as fugitives from both the Federation and the Lazax. Eventually their little group found passage with religious pilgrims to the remote planet of Lael, having decided to settle down as part of that community. On Lael's windy plains and with their newfound faith, the Van Hauges eventually managed to find some manner of closure from their loss, and for a time it seemed they might find happiness.

Until Moyin developed Greyfire.

In the desperate months that followed, all of Darien's genius could not save her. Before her death, she implored him to harvest as many of her eggs as he could. All but one had been scarred by Greyfire—only a single viable egg remained.

In the decades that followed, Darien cloned Moyin's egg thousands of times, eventually managing to produce child after child from his seed and her eggs. Despite his apparently mastery of cloning, Darien was never able to clone a daughter, and neither could he find a way to eradicate his children's genetic susceptibility to Greyfire. He got as far as neutralizing its lethality, but still all his sons developed it eventually. It grayed their skin and other topical tissues, leaving their complexions ashen and wavelike.

When Darien finally died, his sons diligently continued his work. They buried him next to Moyin on the hill of Grace, and the stone he placed upon her grave became the foundation stone of the first monastery of Lucas. Taking a page from the settlers who had come to Lael, Darien and Moyin's sons turned to faith and religion to seek purpose and order.

Their mother's egg, which they called the "Yin," eventually became the progenitor of nearly two billion clones. Over the centuries, the Brotherhood of Yin turned the monastery of Lucas into a vast cloning facility, renamed the planet Darien in their father's honor, established new monasteries on the moons and surrounding systems, and emerged as a civilization in their own right around the end of the Age of Dusk.

The Yin Brotherhood Today

Life in the Brotherhood is simple and orderly, consisting of prayer, ritual, teaching, research work, or military training, according to how a member is blessed by the various liturgies and observances the Yin use to determine their fate. But despite their simple lives, within each brother, Untouched and Blessed by Greyfire alike, burns a deeper, inner flame, fed by faith and stoked by the constant reminder of their persecution by galactic society.

Though the Brotherhood's records are strictly for their eyes only, galactic historians theorize that since their blessed Yin mother was touched by Greyfire and Darien was not, the brothers see Greyfire as something to aspire to, each striving their whole life in order to earn their mother's Blessing, or else die in a way that benefits the Brotherhood. They see their blessed genome as pure and perfect, delivered to them from a higher power. Even the Humans they descend from are seen as lesser designs, much less the rest of the galaxy at large.

Blessed Brothers form the inner sanctum of elders and councilors of Yin society, with the Elder Brother chosen by holy sacrament from among the conclave of the Blessed. Once chosen, the Elder Brother is responsible for guiding all his Brotherhood, and he is uniquely blessed with intimate understanding of the emotions and aspirations of all his brothers.

An Untouched Brother spends his life in prayer and doing works for his brothers, hoping through his deeds to earn

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Yin's Blessing. Untouched are commonly assigned to work with off-worlders. Both on and off Darien, they are the face of the Brotherhood, serving as ambassadors, as trade contacts, or in their elite military.

Goals of the Yin Brotherhood

Members of other species report that while as a whole the brothers of the Yin are polite, generous, and kind to a fault, their zeal and devotion are both paramount and absolute. Reports exist of local authorities attempting to arrest a brother only to face attack by dozens of identical fair-skinned clones, while prison transports containing brothers have often disappeared shortly after coming into contact with Yin attack ships. Sometimes the debris reports show that the Yin intentionally rammed the offending transport, sacrificing the lives of all on both ships.

This encapsulation of the Brotherhood's with-us-or-against-us worldview extends to their dealings with the other Great Civilizations. They're happy to trade, provide military support, or draw up mutually beneficial territorial agreements—until their allies inevitably violate some ineffable Brotherhood edict and find themselves ostracized for all time.

As a result, most beings view the Brotherhood as dangerous fanatics and fair-weather allies. But some see their monolithic paradigm as aspirational. Visitors to Darien are often religious pilgrims hoping to find meaning on one of the holier planets in the galaxy, or are simply looking for a life unadorned, with nothing but safety and simplicity, rite and righteousness. Some even become novitiates and spokespeople for the Brotherhood, extolling its virtues to all who will listen.

The Brotherhood seeks to carry out its continued work, to bring about the times when its message will be gospel across the galaxy, and all will live under the loving embrace of the Brotherhood of Yin.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Seek out new methods of cloning technology so that the Brotherhood's population can truly grow unchecked.

Seek out and eliminate a Sol research facility that is studying a cure for Greyfire and a way to reverse its effects. The holy blessing of Moyin must not be eradicated from the galaxy.

Set up a secret facility to spread the word of Yin on a planet that has banned the presence of the Brotherhood.

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YSSARIL TRIBES

It's unusual for a prey species to become the dominant form of sentient life on a planet, but the Yssaril of the planet Retillion have managed it. The farther out of two inhabitable worlds in the Myock system, Retillion receives a meager portion of starlight; life on this wet, cold world has thus evolved to be hardscrabble and clever.

The planet's early life-forms, unable to derive much nutrition from the hard, fibrous swamp plants, developed translucent skin in order to photosynthesize energy directly from the sun. This required them to lounge for long times in the open, leading to predators that took advantage of the slow beasts.

The evolutionary arms race between the Yssaril's ancestors and their predators eventually led the Yssaril to adopt the means to turn nearly fully invisible by adapting their skin to match the color of its background. When the Yssaril emerged as a species, they had none of the major traits of their prey ancestors. Gone was the photosynthesis; their forward-facing eyes, bipedal gait, and highly developed brain allowed them to take up tools and forage for a near-unlimited food source: the delicious, underground-growing menn root, which was both the Yssaril's staple diet and, eventually, the cause of their unwilling uplift into interstellar society.

The Yssaril had barely developed metalworking when the first ships arrived with explorers from the Lazax Empire. The expedition stayed only shortly, cataloging the vegetation of the dank, malodorous planet; if the explorers had not inadvertently happened upon some menn root, the Yssaril's path in history might not have been forever altered.

Not long after the first expedition, the borderlands surrounding the Fianni swamps were swarmed by biofarms and off-worlder colonists. The Yssaril's response was to dismantle their villages near the intrusion, retreat into the heart of the swamp continent of Fianni, and observe.

This uneasy peace went on until Lazax Emperor Munhan Las Idu declared that the planet's farming efforts be widely expanded. Within a generation, the Yssaril were surrounded on all sides by new colonists who were encroaching on their lands and their sacred sites. The leaders of the various tribes were beset by angry Yssaril who continuously had to uproot their livelihoods, deal with displaced predators, and watch as their homes were turned into vast factory farms. Soon, the tribal elders decided that something must indeed be done, and that they would have to work together to make it happen.

The now united Yssaril Tribes sent their stealthiest hunters to observe the farms up close. The hunters soon learned how to sabotage farmers' machines, break down their dwellings, and spoil their supplies so that it would look like rampaging im'laq. The council authorized dozens of such raids, laboring in the belief that, like the Yssaril, the off-worlders would retreat from a threat. When instead they retaliated by setting traps and sending hunting parties into the swamp, the Yssaril attempted to avoid direct conflict. But eventually, a Lazax expedition drove deep into the swamp and found an ancestral cremation site, their first evidence that intelligent life existed on the planet. The invisible Yssaril finally attacked to kill those who had desecrated their sacred burial location and to drive the survivors from the swamp.

The victory was short-lived, as the Lazax 21st Expeditionary Division was soon deployed on Retillion to suppress the uprising and ensure the continual supply of menn root to the Imperial table. During these appalling years, thousands of Yssaril were captured for study or sold throughout the galaxy to be hunted for sport or exhibited in zoos and museums as "primitive" biological curiosities.

On Retillion, the Yssaril rebellion only grew bloodier, adapting to the Lazax style of warfare, outmaneuvering and humiliating the vastly superior forces. It wasn't long before the Yssaril learned to use stolen Lazax weapons, turning Fianni into a killing field of Lazax conscripts until finally the Lazax retreated from the swamps out of sheer embarrassment.

The imprints of the failed genocide cast a long shadow. The Yssaril had achieved multiple generations' worth of technological development nearly overnight. For a hundred years, they taught themselves to integrate their stealth with outsider technologies, reverse-engineered weapons and ships, and molded themselves into a force to be reckoned with. They soon colonized the neighboring planet of Shalloq, in whose cold wetlands and rainforests the Yssaril felt right at home.

The Yssaril Tribes Today

No one knows who first began hiring the Yssaril as spies and assassins, but the first confirmed cases came during the Age of Dusk, during the slow decline of the Lazax Empire. The Yssaril's formation of the Guild of Spies swelled the Yssaril's purse, allowing them to oust the Lazax from their world (while still supplying them with menn root at reasonable prices—the Yssaril are nothing if not practical). During the Twilight Wars, Yssaril spies became more and more common, until their species was synonymous with covert operations.

The Guild's leadership eventually supplanted the Tribal Council as the governing body of the united Yssaril Tribes, with its leader, the Cqaark, elected from its league of master assassins. Dedicated to never allowing their planet to come under harm again, the Cqaark leads the Yssaril to a better position in the galaxy, one where they need not fear outsiders from the skies.

In the thousands of years since the Lazax, no off-worlders have been allowed on Retillion. Official business, such as the receiving of foreign dignitaries, merchants, and visitors, is conducted from the city of Mojeb on Shalloq, which also serves as

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the nerve center for covert operations, or on the giant orbital station of Haarsuh, constructed during the Dark Years following the Twilight Wars. Mojeb is a cold, squat city, spanning hundreds of kilometers in every direction with no construction above ten meters tall. Visitors are treated fairly, if a little coldly, but eateries serving menn root can be found on every corner. Galactic connoisseurs maintain, from little evidence, that the finest menn root is saved for the Yssaril homeworlds and that the exported version pales in comparison.

Goals of the Yssaril Tribes

Although the Guild of Spies has long focused on espionage, with the arrival of the Mahact and return of the Galactic Council, it has also recognized the need for greater political and military resources. The Yssaril military has come a long way from those first days of rebellion, fielding everything from well-equipped commando units to full battlefleets. However, its soldiers still rely on stealth, trickery, and misdirection to even the odds in a potential war with the likes of the Barony of Letnev or the Sardakk N'orr. Laying the groundwork for that misdirection is a constant goal of the Guild.

The Guild is also working to expand its influence among neighboring star systems, particularly those without any overt ties to one of the other Great Civilizations. Unlike those of their rivals, these ties tend to be subtle: secret treaties and hidden warships lurking in the shadows of asteroids and comets, rather than cruiser squadrons at high orbital anchor or grand embassies. Thus, it can be hard to tell where the Yssaril's sphere of influence begins and ends, which is exactly how the Yssaril prefer it.

Finally, the Guild of Spies constantly works to maintain its watchful eye on the galaxy. Its members have long believed that the best way to guarantee power is to have as much knowledge as possible. They were shaken by the shattering of the Acheron Gate and the subsequent emergence of the Mahact and the Vuil'raith, two events of massive import that, with all their reach and information, they failed to foresee. Now the Guild must redouble its efforts to learn how the other Great Civilizations will react, and whether the Yssaril should work to hinder or help them.

FACTION-SPECIFIC AGENDAS

Identify and eliminate another Great Civilization's espionage operation targeting the Yssaril to ensure that no damaging information about the Guild of Spies is released to the wider galaxy.

Be tasked by the Guild of Spies to identify, locate, and infiltrate a secret installation created by another of the Great Civilizations, then steal information on what the installation is working for and bring it back to the Guild.

Plant a set of false information in multiple locations to cause another faction to react in a way favorable to the Yssaril.

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[Chapter 2]
Equipment & Gear

Whether it involves negotiating for an intricately carved chapera-stone bowl, a stringy Lengassian water-beast steak, or a shipment of dulaxium-enriched rapid-fire beam rifles, trade is the cornerstone of every culture. Its existence determines corporate survival, and it is the means by which many a galactic citizen quantifies their achievements and status. The Hacan, for example, built their culture around it, with peoples from every corner of the galaxy honoring them for their adherence to its principles. Others, like the Yin Brotherhood, shun its pedestrian form, preferring to engage in clandestine operations or secretive trade deals to obtain their illicit needs. Trade permeates the core of every society, and while it exists, so do those who manufacture the medicines, technology, and weapons that fuel its fire.

Chapter 2 contains items found throughout the galaxy, including armor, weapons, and gear useful for members of the Keleres. Most of the items in this chapter are presented as generic versions of the items that different species and cultures produce. While the beam rifles of the Federation of Sol and the Barony of Letnev look very different, they function the same way (and thus follow the same game mechanics).

However, some cultures do produce items that vary wildly from the galactic norm. The first part of **Chapter 2** presents optional rules for using items (including weapons and armor) made by specific cultures. The rest of the chapter has profiles for weapons, armor, and then a range of gear (from backpacks and medical kits to handheld savants). Finally, the chapter includes attachments for modifying weapons and armor, and a section on some of the unique relics characters may find in the forgotten corners of the galaxy.

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Different Descriptions, Same Equipment

Although the equipment produced by different species and cultures often varies wildly in form and detail, for the purposes of this game, the same types of equipment can usually use the same profile. Essentially, Genesys's rules are inclusive enough that an item like infantry combat armor provides the same amount of soak whether it's the ferroplate carapace of a Sol Spec Ops soldier or the weathered duranium plate of an Xxcha Companion Guard.

However, if the GM wants to highlight the strange and interesting variety of items in the galaxy, there are several recommended approaches to doing so. These options can be combined or used separately.

Narrative Option

The first option is to keep the differences entirely narrative. By using aesthetic descriptions, a GM can demonstrate the subtle differences in manufacturing processes employed by varying cultures. For example, a standard portable light manufactured by Human engineers might produce high lumens from a light-emitting quadrode contained within a cylindrical plasticon case. That same device produced by the Arborec, however, performs the same function but appears as a hard-shelled, semitransparent bio-pod that when squeezed causes a chemical reaction that forms a bioluminescence field. The third column in **Table 2–1: Cultural Manufacturing Differences** includes notes on how items produced by different species and cultures may have different aesthetics.

The narrative option is the simplest, and it is also one that combines well with the other two options presented here.

Simple Penalty for Unfamiliarity

If the GM wants to highlight the strangeness of alien manufacture, when a character makes a check using an item that comes from a species or culture that is unfamiliar to them, the GM can add ■ to the check. After the character familiarizes themself with the equipment (perhaps after using it for a couple of rounds, or maybe by spending ⮝ ⮝ on a check), they can then use the item without penalty.

Cultural-Specific Engineering

The third option is to modify the mechanics of an item to represent various species' and cultures' approaches to production and design. This changes the way the item functions in play, and it does increase the number of different items available, but it also increases the complexity of the item rules. Even with this option, not all species make items that are so wildly different that they need unique rules.

The second column of **Table 2–1: Cultural Manufacturing Differences** provides a list of modifications applicable to varying technology available to characters in this setting. Each modification also includes the types of items the modification applies to: armor, weapons, gear, or all items.

For example, a beam rifle manufactured by the Xxcha provides several modifications. The Xxcha are strong and tough, and they tend to build heavy and durable items. Hence, all of their weapons and gear have an increased encumbrance. However, this also means these same weapons and items have the Reinforced item quality.

Of course, some species and cultures have no adjustments. This just means their items are fairly close to the "average" item profiles provided in this chapter. Also, at the GM's discretion, some items produced by a species or culture may not include the listed modifications. This particularly holds true for items like food, drink, dermal sealer, and ammunition reloads.

Using This Rule in Play

Just because your game is using this rule does not mean that all weapons used by a particular culture or species are modified automatically. For example, the starting equipment packages for each career only provide the basic versions of each item, and if your character wants to purchase a weapon manufactured by their culture, they must seek it out specifically and pay any additional costs. Also, these rules do not modify any NPC profiles found in **Chapter 6.**

Other Species and Cultures

Not every species or culture in the galaxy is included in **Table 2–1: Cultural Manufacturing Differences.** Some cultures aren't mentioned because they are relatively minor (such as most of those confined to a single planet). Others, such as the Arborec, Vuil'raith, Mahact, or Nekro, are so utterly different from the rest of the galaxy that their items are unusable (and probably unrecognizable) to everyone else.

Coin of the Realm

One would expect societies to use their own currencies. However, to facilitate galactic trade and as a sign of unity, the Lazax insisted their subjects use the Imperial *aureus* (plural *aurei*) as the sole legal tender. After thousands of years of Lazax rule, everyone was so used to using aurei that the coin outlasted the species who introduced it. Even thousands of years later, the aureus is the most common currency in every corner of the galaxy, even on worlds that have been isolated for centuries or fallen into barbarism. Such is the power of the Lazax's memory.

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TABLE 2–1: CULTURAL MANUFACTURING DIFFERENCES

Species	Modifications	Aesthetics
Creuss	• Defense +1 (armor) • Rarity +2 (all)	• Use seemingly arcane technology to craft exquisitely shaped items of gold or white metals. • Inlaid with intricately carved neon-blue or neon-green gemstones. • Each piece is a unique sculpture of otherworldly curves and flexible alloy piping.
Druaa	• No adjustment	• Mimicking Druaa strengths, items use crystal weave technology to portray elegance and mystery. • Smooth-sided angles form sharp points for a triangular appearance, with weblike materials between. • Edges inlaid with brown or green gel sacks provide comfort to the user.
Empyrean	• Rarity +4, non-Empyrean may not use these items without a savant with a broadcast link to the item (all)	• Appear to be pieces of bronze metal worked into a variety of shapes, with little adornment or decoration. • Are pitted and scarred from long-term vacuum exposure and look to be many millennia old. • Internal mechanisms controlled by radio-wave broadcasts from the Empyrean wielder. No external controls.
Gashlai	• No adjustment	• Flexible bronzed piping interconnected with heavy carbon-scored curved metal plating in a durable design. • Marked with bold, chiseled iconography. • Capable of withstanding extreme temperatures. • Most weapons utilize intense heat to deal damage.
Hacan	• Superior, rarity +2, and +400 price (all)	• Crafted with a philosophy of high quality over mass-produced mediocrity. • Expertly crafted to include carved woods, fine silks, and gold filigree etched or woven into the materials. • Red or blue opal paneling.
Sol (Human)	• No adjustment	• Rugged, simple, and guaranteed to survive. • Constructed using drab, gray metals with additional protrusions for attachments. • Appear inexpensive and mass-produced.
Hylar	• Accurate +1 and +100 price (weapons)	• Technologically advanced with little care for elegance. • Focus on pushing technology to its limits. • Most items include onboard savants and other computational devices to aid the user. • Galvanized steel predominates appearance; accentuated with brass or copper highlights.
L1Z1X	• Base damage +2 and add Slow-Firing 1 (ranged weapons).	• Constructed with lots of exposed circuits, wires, and plates of gray metal. • Most items are designed to be integrated directly into the user's body. • Glowing yellow energy vents and micro-reactors.
Letnev	• No adjustment	• Adorned with smooth lines and regal finishes, and engineered to evoke confidence, discipline, and fearlessness. • Gold predominates designs, particularly those of armor. • Polished metal finishes mixed with blue, red, and yellow fabrics.

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TABLE 2–1: CULTURAL MANUFACTURING DIFFERENCES

Species	Modifications	Aesthetics
Mentak Coalition	• No adjustment	• Coalition items bear resemblance to multiple different cultural crafting practices. • Many items appear jury-rigged or as if they've been repaired multiple times. • Rugged simplicity tends to be a default design aesthetic.
N'orr	• Reduce Critical rating by 1, to a minimum of 2, and add Unwieldy +2 (weapons)	• Item housings tend to be sculpted out of press-formed silicates that mimic a carapace. • Colors tend to seem dull or muted but appear bright and vibrant to eyes that can see in the lower UV spectra. • Designs are awkward for noninsectoids.
Naaz-Rokha	• Base damage +1 (weapons) • Defense +1 (armor) • When making a check with item, must spend ⟳ ⟳ ⟳ or ⊗ to damage item one step (see page 89 of the Core Rulebook) (all)	• Almost all devices are powered, usually containing a small, green, glowing microbattery or reactor. • Items tend to evince a "brute-force" approach to design, often being over-powered but fragile.
Saar	• No adjustment	• Products tend to be cobbled together from limited resources and reflect sturdy and mechanically sound construction. • Items with exposed innards and haphazardly bolted-on or welded-on attachments seem unconventional but demonstrate harmony amid chaos.
Shikrai	• No adjustment	• Cosmetic designs often feature sweeping, stylized wings and gliding shapes that evoke flight and freedom. • Highly flexible ablative armors display a mix of grays and natural colors.
Titan	• Base damage +2 and price +250 (Brawl and Melee weapons) • Cumbersome 4 (all) • Reinforced and +2,000 price (armor)	• The sheer size of Titan gear often makes its use impractical for all but Titans. • Covered in polished-silver metallic plates and powered by stylized orange, red, and purple power crystals.
Winnu/ Winnaran	• No adjustment	• Large, dazzling agates and gold chains harken back to the uniforms and outfits of the old Lazax. • Gold or silver adorns many products. • Clothing comes in an eclectic mix of browns, greens, and yellows.
Xxcha	• Encumbrance +2 (weapons and gear) • Reinforced (weapons and gear)	• Crafted with triple redundancies and extreme durability. • Onboard diagnostic tools allow for easier repairs but often increase the size of the apparatus. • No color standards exist except for members of religious sects, who wear browns and reds in patterns and shades unique for their own sect.
Yin	• No adjustment	• Use lots of browns and yellows in their color scheme. • Locally built items include religious iconography worked into the design. • Many items are purchased from off-world and appear generic.
Yssaril	• Encumbrance –2, to a minimum of 1 (all) • Base damage –1 (weapons)	• Although their designs may appear low-tech, Yssaril engineers develop some of the most feared weapons and covert equipment in the galaxy. • Embracing their ancient heritages, they rely on transmorphic materials and genetically engineered animal products to hide their advancements behind a facade of archaic technology reliance.

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Weapons

This section provides a range of weapon options to use in the Embers of the Imperium setting. While the Genesys Core Rulebook (pages 184 and 185) presents a list of weapons available in the space opera setting, this expands on and modifies that list to offer greater variety. The weapons here should reflect the most up-to-date version of those rules.

Since the construction of the first arrow, cultures across the galaxy have continued to develop ranged weapon technologies for fighting enemies from a safer distance with increasing effectiveness and efficiency. Although varying models and sizes of weapons exist, ranged weapons come in three distinct varieties: beam, plasma, and projectile.

Beam weapons are focused direct-energy weapons, able to cut through their targets with deadly effect. Plasma weapons fire bolts of high-temperature, ionized plasma that tend to burst when they hit targets and cause searing damage. Finally, projectile weapons can range from ancient but reliable solid-projectile firearms known as *shot-weapons* to high-tech missile launchers and grenade lobbers.

Beam Weapons

Beam weapons are incredibly common among most galactic cultures, since nearly all of them quickly realized the deadly effect of focusing increasing amounts of energy on a very small point. Their only limiter has been their power source. Some current designs rely on internal microgenerators that recharge over time, while others use stable solid-state capacitors that can be removed and replaced quickly.

The primary noticeable difference among beam weapons is the frequency they operate on. Many beam weapons are the ubiquitous laser, operating in light spectra visible to most species.

However, some beam weapons use different frequencies to devastating effect. One is the so-called *grazer*, a beam weapon using gamma rays. These discharge impressively high amounts of energy and can bypass most armor but tend to use up power quickly. On the other end of the spectrum are the weapons that use infrared frequencies. These aren't as good at penetrating armor but can cause catastrophic heating effects on their target. This makes the so-called *blazers* popular among some of the more sadistic galactic criminals.

Beam Pistol

Used by all cultures throughout the galaxy, the beam pistol provides an accurate means of offense with limited range and low cost. Beam pistols can slice through light armor and tend to be simple and intuitive to use, making them the go-to sidearm for many individuals looking for personal protection and many military forces.

Beam Rifle

Primarily used by various armed forces, beam rifles use their bulky frame to support larger charge packs. Their searing beam cuts right through most body armor; the dazzling flash of massed laser fire was a horrifying sight throughout the galaxy during the Twilight Wars.

Beam Cannon

The most portable of the heavy weapons used by forces throughout the galaxy, the beam cannon focuses an emitter array into a single, pinpoint burst of energy powerful enough to disable vehicles. This high-energy output means beam cannons are universally heavy and bulky weapons.

Blazer

Blazers, or beam weapons operating in the infrared spectrum, are less discriminate but just as dangerous as other beam weapons. Considered crude by most militaries, blazers lack any sort of tight beam focus and tend to expend their energy across the surface of their target. This makes them less effective against armor, but they can inflict catastrophic heating damage on exposed skin and delicate materials. They also have larger power packs that make these weapons bulkier.

Blazer Rifle

The largest blazers tend to be bulky, snub-nosed carbines with a bit more range and power then blazer pistols. These weapons are popular among pirates, criminal enforcers, and anyone else who relies on fear as a weapon. Most arms manufacturers have found it pointless to make any infrared beam weapons larger than this, since the inability to penetrate armor nullifies any minor damage boost.

Graviton Pulse Cannon

Graviton pulse cannons are rare and esoteric weapons that use ruinous amounts of energy to fire a pulsed beam of gravitons at a target. The sudden localized increase of gravitational energy can pin soldiers in place, break bones and collapse lungs, and wreak havoc on the delicate mechanisms inside of armor plate.

Grazer

Gamma-ray lasers are the most energy-intensive beam weapons available to most of the galaxy. The highly focused pulsed grazer beam can pass right through heavy armor layers, wreaking havoc on the delicate circuitry or living tissue beneath. They require precision to use well, though, and thus grazer pistols tend to be a favored weapon of military officers and gunslingers.

After your character makes a combat check with this weapon, your GM may spend ♺ ♺ to have it run out of ammo.

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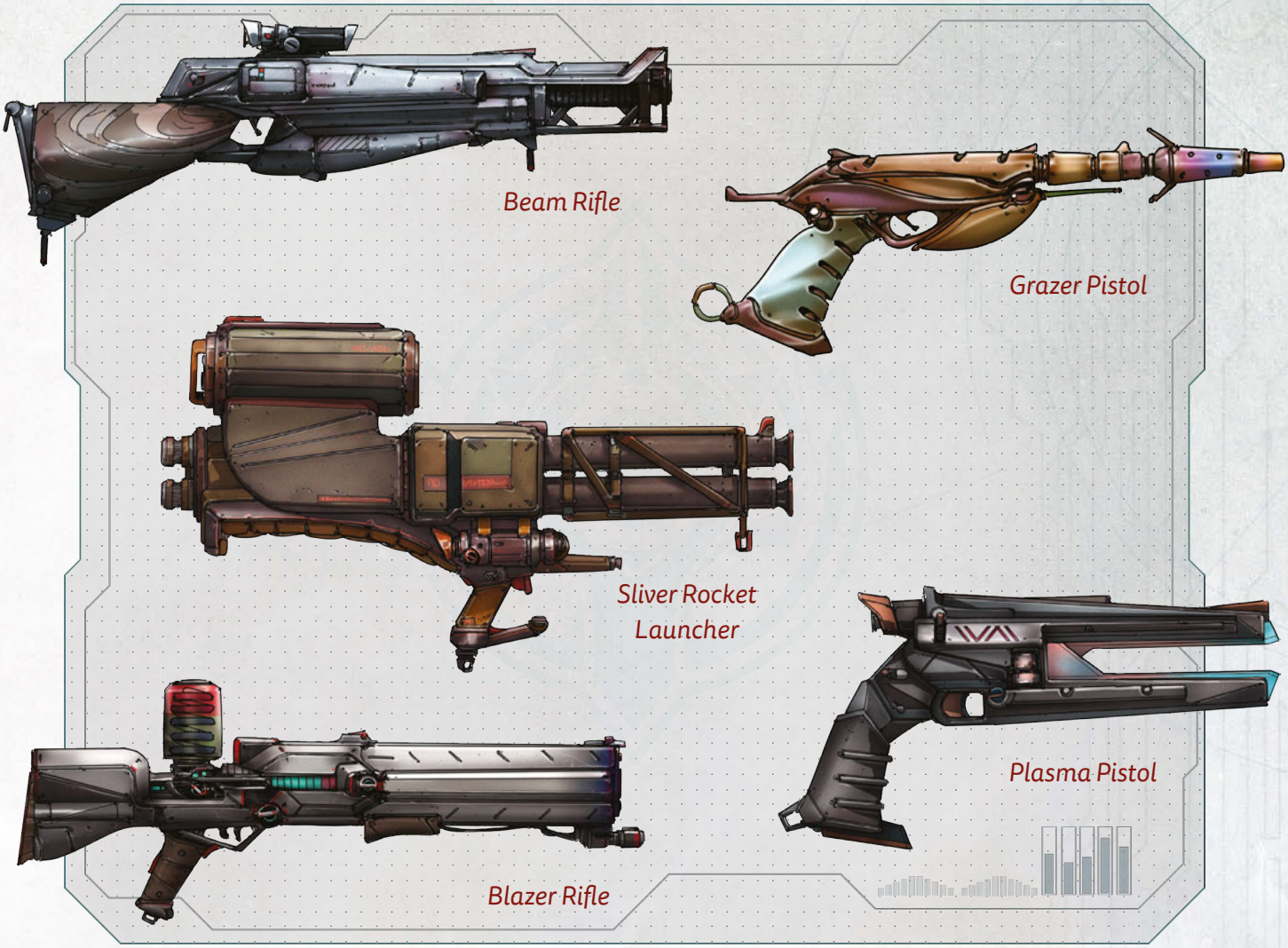

Grazer Rifle

Rifle-sized grazers are expensive and deadly weapons, meaning most militaries tend to purchase them for elite forces and commando teams. They also suffer the same problem with power requirements that other grazers do, tending to burn through power supplies rapidly.

After your character makes a combat check with this weapon, your GM may spend ⟲ ⟲ to have it run out of ammo.

Praetorian Defender

Pioneered by the Winnu, the praetorian is a popular weapon for the bodyguards of dignitaries. Though otherwise an accurate heavy beam pistol, the praetorian's bulky stock beneath its barrel houses a microtargeting savant.

Your character may program the praetorian defender to recognize up to three different characters (each takes roughly a minute to program). When your character shoots at a target engaged with any of your allies, the GM may never spend ⊗ to hit one of the characters programmed into the pistol.

Restricted (R) Items

Some of the items in this book have an "R" next to their cost, indicating that they are restricted. Although every society tends to have its own laws about what is illegal and what isn't, some weapons and items are generally considered dangerous or reprehensible enough to be limited to military personnel, or banned entirely. Restricted items tend to be illegal for civilians to possess on most civilized planets. Although the Keleres are technically exempt from these limitations because of their status as agents of the Galactic Council, they can expect some harassment or pushback from local law enforcement or planetary officials if they carry restricted items openly in public. At the very least, it will likely get them noticed.

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Plasma Weapons

Slightly less common than beam weapons, plasma weapons fire high-temperature ionized gases temporarily contained in an electromagnetic energy "bolt." When a bolt hits its target, the electromagnetic energy grounds, and the searing plasma cloud incinerates everything nearby. These bolts tend to lose coherency quickly, meaning plasma weapons are short-range, but the trade-off is that the plasma blasts can hit multiple targets and often set them on fire.

Unlike beam weapons, plasma weapons are nearly exclusively reserved for military use, and many worlds regulate or ban them entirely.

Plasma Pistol

Outlawed on some worlds, plasma pistols fire a bolt just large enough to incinerate a single target. Their only drawbacks are their short range and the time it takes for the internal containment vessel to "refill" after each shot.

Plasma Projector

Truly nasty weapons, plasma projectors forgo creating bolts of plasma and instead use modified containment fields to project an electromagnetic cone away from the shooter. The plasma the projector sprays into the cone is more diffuse and cooler than the plasma in a standard plasma bolt, but "cooler" is a relative term when dealing with plasma weapons. Anything enveloped in the searing plasma spray is quickly engulfed in hungry flames.

Plasma Rifle

The plasma rifle is simply a scaled-up version of the plasma pistol. It shares the same short range, but its larger size allows for a bigger containment vessel for continuous fire.

Plasma Scorpios

The largest plasma weapons have the electromagnetic field generators necessary to fling larger plasma bolts over longer distances. When they detonate, their plasma blast is often enough to eliminate whole squads of enemy soldiers. The trade-off is their extreme bulkiness; they often require a tripod and time to deploy.

Projectile Weapons

Nearly every culture in the galaxy has a history of using projectile weapons, and many still use some form of these weapons today. Projectile weapons (also known colloquially as "shot weapons") are a broad category of firearms that fire some sort of solid projectile at a target.

Assault Cannon

"Assault cannon" is a colloquial term for any number of weapons designed to rapidly fire a barrage of heavy projectiles at a target. Some have multiple rotating barrels to increase firing speed, while others simply rely on rapidly cycling mechanisms or pulsing electromagnetic coils. Military forces deploy assault cannons in areas of high-density troop movement to protect vulnerable forward command posts and extraction points overwhelmed by enemy forces. Many starships carry much larger versions of assault cannons for space combat.

After your character makes a combat check with this weapon, your GM may spend ♺ ♺ ♺ to have it run out of ammo.

Magno-Thumper

Produced originally by the Brotherhood of Yin, this highly concealable snub-nosed coilgun serves as a weapon of last resort. Small, even by pistol standards, the magno-thumper has a wide barrel and a sizable power reserve that allow it to fling a heavy slug with devastating results. Unfortunately, the tiny size of the weapon means that after that shot, it needs to be reloaded with a new slug and power pack.

The cost of the reload is 10 aurei.

Shikrai Needle Bow

The Shikrai needle bow is an ancient yet deadly weapon used by skilled Shikrai hunters. The bow itself is a simple but durable weapon that may be made from any number of common and durable alloys. What is truly unique about the weapon is the arrows it fires. Each is crafted from a strand of pure bellidrium that has been molecularly bonded together. The bellidrium reacts in such a way as to create a virtually unbreakable shaft with a nearly frictionless surface tapering down to a molecularly sharp needle point. Only at the rear of the arrow, where the bonding process is interrupted to allow for the connection of stabilizing fins, can the arrow be grasped without slipping from one's fingers. The arrow can penetrate most forms of body armor with relatively minor force (although the narrow profile means it does surprisingly little damage when it hits).

The bow and its arrows have no mechanisms of any kind, which makes them completely undetectable by all modern scanning devices. The shots are also completely silent, which may allow your character to make ranged combat checks while remaining hidden at your GM's discretion.

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Arrows can be recovered after firing if your character spends a few minutes gathering them up. New arrows can be purchased in quivers of ten, with a cost of 500 aurei per quiver.

Sliver Rocket Launcher

Available only to military personnel, this portable anti-armor weapon is the easiest means of delivering a solid blow to mobile forces, including airborne fighters, mechs, and tanks. The sliver launcher is a simple tube with a limited ammunition hopper, but the missiles inside are the real technological marvels. Each is a needle formed out of synthetic diamond, with an overpowered gravitic engine in the rear. When fired, the rocket locks onto its target; then, once it closes in, it burns out its engine to boost it to hypersonic speeds. The rocket doesn't carry a warhead, but the impact at that velocity shears through armor and shatters the insides of vehicles.

Sliver rockets can be purchased individually for reload, at a cost of 1,000 aurei per rocket.

Shot Pistol

Shot weapons are the most common projectile weapons found throughout the galaxy. They use a wide range of propellants and ammunition, from archaic explosive chemical propellants to electromagnetic coil launchers. Whatever their design, most tend to be cheap and durable, if less powerful than an equivalent beam weapon.

Shot Rifle

Shot rifles follow the same design principles as shot pistols. However, their longer barrel means they tend to have better accuracy over longer distances, and their size means they have more room for ammunition.

Explosives and Ordnance

Every trooper, no matter their origin, knows that some foes can't be fought with rifles and combat knives alone. Breaching enemy emplacements and command centers, clearing areas of hostile targets, and destroying enemy vehicles is always best accomplished with high explosives.

Graviton Detonator

Restricted due to its devastating nature, a graviton detonator uses complex machinery to create a short-lived pulse of gravitons in a localized area, drastically increasing the weight of everything nearby. The weapon itself collapses into a pellet of neutronium that then almost instantly decays, releasing a vicious (and deadly) burst of radiation.

The Ensnare item quality of this weapon activates without spending ⮝, affecting all targets within short range of the graviton detonator.

Infantry Grenade

Standard infantry grenades are small explosive devices (often in the form of a sphere or disk for easy throwing). When thrown, they arm themselves automatically, detonating on contact with the target. Nearly all rely on some sort of supercompact explosive combined with microshrapnel and a blinding gas to disorient biological targets.

Particle Grenade

A particle grenade is a common explosive used by military units to create confusion and panic on the battlefield. Security forces and law enforcement agencies use similar devices to subdue crowds. When a particle grenade is detonated, the burst of subatomic particles daze intended targets enough to allow the firer to escape or move in to subdue the targets further.

Thorite Decay Bomb

Designed by Clan of Saar cooperatives to assist in mining operations and later reengineered as a weapon, the thorite decay bomb creates a radioactive wave of superheated gases comparable to plasma bolts that incinerates anything it touches. However, the long-term effects of nausea, weakness, and acute radiation poisoning are what make it useful as a horrific weapon of war.

When triggered, the Blast quality of this weapon hits all characters within short range, rather than all engaged characters. A character who suffers damage from a thorite decay bomb reduces their wound threshold by 4 and their strain threshold by 4. Their thresholds may be restored to normal with a successful **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Medicine check**. Otherwise, after a week, the character may make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Resilience check.** Each ✲ increases their wound threshold and strain threshold by 1, up to their original wound and strain thresholds. This check may be repeated every subsequent week until the thresholds have returned to normal.

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TABLE 2–2: RANGED WEAPONS

Name	Skill	Dam	Crit	Range	Encum	Hard Points	Price	Rarity	Special
Beam Weapons									
Beam Pistol	Ranged (Light)	4	3	Medium	2	2	450	3	Pierce 2
Beam Rifle	Ranged (Heavy)	5	3	Long	4	3	900	4	Pierce 3
Beam Cannon	Gunnery	9	3	Extreme	7	4	3,250 (R)	6	Breach 2, Cumbersome 4, Slow-Firing 1
Blazer	Ranged (Light)	7	3	Short	3	1	400	3	Inaccurate 1, Vicious 2
Blazer Rifle	Ranged (Heavy)	8	3	Medium	4	2	740	3	Inaccurate 1, Vicious 2
Graviton Pulse Cannon	Gunnery	3	1	Extreme	10	0	2,500 (R)	9	Breach 3, Ensnare 3, Prepare 2, Slow-Firing 2
Grazer	Ranged (Light)	3	2	Medium	2	1	800	5	Pierce 5
Grazer Rifle	Ranged (Heavy)	4	2	Long	4	2	1,000	5	Pierce 5
Praetorian Defender	Ranged (Light)	4	3	Medium	3	0	625	7	Accurate 1, Pierce 2
Plasma Weapons									
Plasma Pistol	Ranged (Light)	10	2	Medium	2	1	1,225	6	Burn 1, Slow-Firing 1
Plasma Projector	Ranged (Heavy)	8	3	Short	4	1	1,550	6	Blast 8, Burn 4, Slow-Firing 1
Plasma Rifle	Ranged (Heavy)	10	2	Medium	4	1	1,600	6	Burn 1
Plasma Scorpios	Gunnery	10	2	Long	8	2	2,200 (R)	7	Blast 10, Burn 1, Cumbersome 5, Prepare 1
Projectile Weapons									
Assault Cannon	Gunnery	12	4	Long	7	4	1,575	5	Auto-fire, Cumbersome 4, Vicious 2
Magno-Thumper	Ranged (Light)	7	5	Short	1	0	1,020	4	Concussive 1, Knockdown, Limited Ammo 1
Shikrai Needle Bow	Ranged (Heavy)	1	1	Medium	2	0	500	8	Limited Ammo 1, Pierce 6, Unwieldy 3
Sliver Rocket Launcher	Gunnery	15	2	Extreme	7	2	4,500 (R)	6	Breach 4, Cumbersome 3, Guided 4, Limited Ammo 3, Prepare 1, Vicious 5
Shot Pistol	Ranged (Light)	6	4	Short	1	2	275	1	
Shot Rifle	Ranged (Heavy)	7	4	Medium	3	4	575	1	Auto-fire

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TABLE 2–2: RANGED WEAPONS

Name	Skill	Dam	Crit	Range	Encum	Hard Points	Price	Rarity	Special
Explosives and Ordnance									
Graviton Detonator	Ranged (Light)	5	1	Short	1	0	550 (R)	8	Blast 4, Breach 2, Ensnare 2, Limited Ammo 1, Vicious 3
Infantry Grenade	Ranged (Light)	7	4	Short	1	0	40 (R)	3	Blast 7, Disorient 2, Limited Ammo 1
Particle Grenade	Ranged (Light)	4	5	Short	1	0	75	5	Blast 3, Concussive 1, Disorient 3, Limited Ammo 1, Stun Damage
Thorite Decay Bomb	Ranged (Light)	14	3	Short	1	0	500 (R)	6	Blast 14, Disorient 5, Limited Ammo 1

TABLE 2–3: MELEE WEAPONS

Name	Skill	Dam	Crit	Range	Encum	Hard Points	Price	Rarity	Special
Brawl Weapons									
Deflector Buckler	Brawl	+1	4	Engaged	1	1	250	6	Defensive 1, Deflection 2, Vicious 1
Snub Gauntlets (Pair)	Brawl	+2	3	Engaged	1	0	325	4	Disorient 3, Linked 1
Viribuii	Brawl	+3	5	Engaged	3	3	375	5	Stun 4
Melee Weapons									
Ambassadorial Staff	Melee	+2	5	Engaged	3	1	280	3	Knockdown, Stun 3
Bio-Shiv	Melee	+1	3	Engaged	0	0	225	5	Pierce 2, Prepare 1
Collapsible Blade	Melee	+3	2	Engaged	2	1	350	2	Defensive 1, Prepare 1
Creuss Astral Lance	Melee	+3	4	Engaged	4	2	1,475	9	Breach 1, Unwieldy 3
Hacan Dune Spear	Melee	+3	4	Engaged	3	3	880	7	Defensive 1, Superior
Hacan Dune Spear (Ranged Profile)	Ranged (Heavy)	7	3	Medium	-	-	880	-	Superior
Letnev Poniards (Twin)	Melee	+3	2	Engaged	2	2	360	8	Defensive 1, Linked 1
Naalu Mind Blade	Melee	+2	3	Engaged	3	0	1,500	10	Accurate 2
N'orr Tarsus Glaive	Melee	+4	3	Engaged	3	3	250	8	Cumbersome 3, Vicious 3
Shudder Blade	Melee	+2	2	Engaged	2	2	375	4	Pierce 2, Vicious 1

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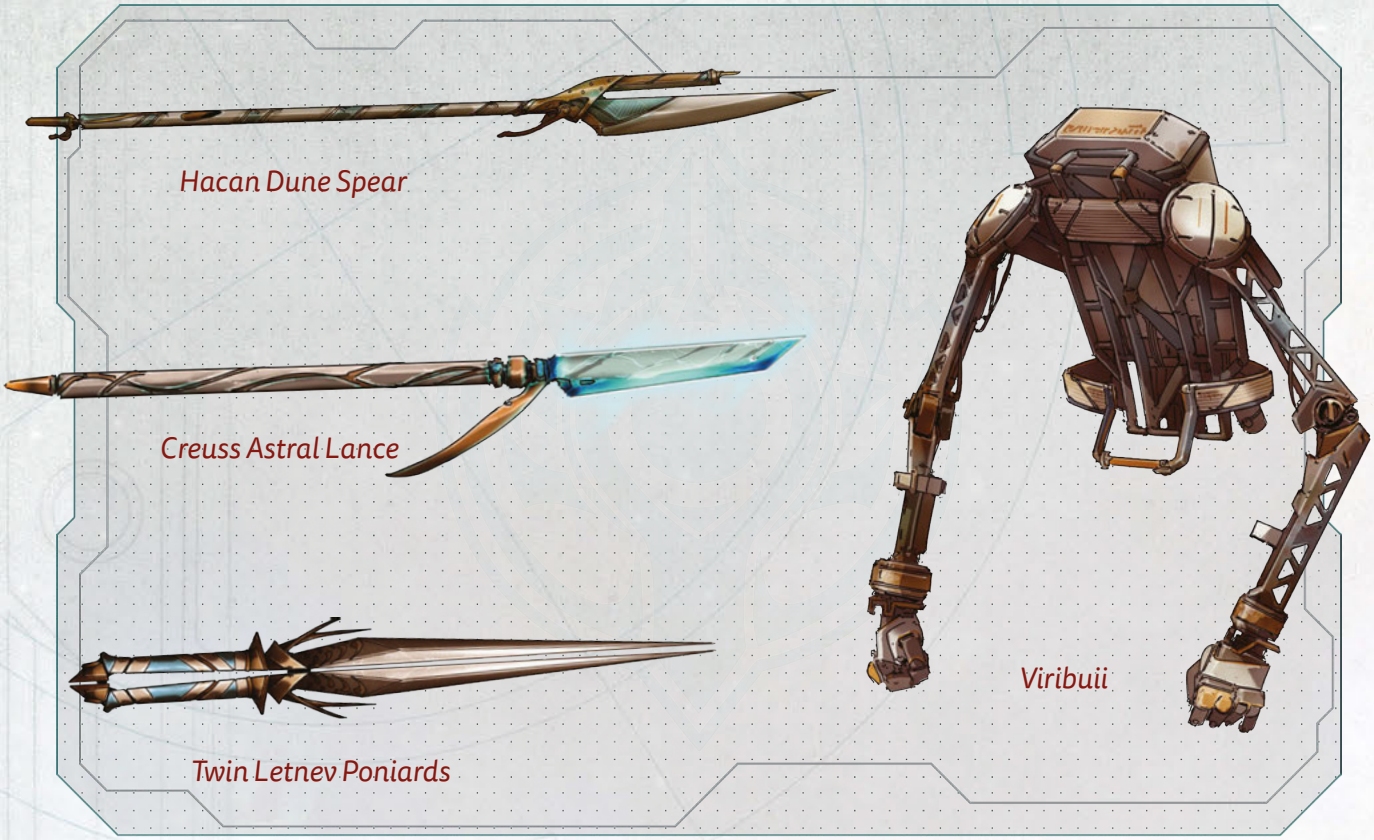

Brawl Weapons

Weapons used by martial artists and street enforcers have their place in the world of the Keleres, particularly when entering jurisdictions that forbid the carriage of arms of any sort. They tend to be less conspicuous than pistols and rifles, but advanced technology can make them just as deadly.

Deflector Buckler

Deflector cuffs produce a deflector buckler by generating a variable-frequency energy shield in a small circle centered on the wearer's wrist. The shield can successfully deflect high-energy projectiles and beams, although it has a harder time stopping comparatively slow-moving attacks like those made with most melee weapons. The edge of the shield can also deliver nasty burns and gashes to those hit by it.

Snub Gauntlets

Coming in a pair and made of lightweight materials like lodinium microweave, snub gauntlets provide the wearer with added stopping power in hand-to-hand combat. Each gauntlet produces a constant kinetic charge that is amplified when it connects with a solid surface, producing a focused blast of kinetic energy.

A character making a combat check with a snub gauntlet may trigger the Knockdown item quality by spending ⮝.

Viribuii

Viribuii are essentially a slim set of exoskeletal supports that fit over the shoulders and down the arms of the wearer. Originally designed to aid in manual labor by a Lazax corporation, they spread throughout the Imperium until they were ubiquitous nearly everywhere. Unsurprisingly, they became popular as weapons when people realized that they were almost unnoticeable under clothing. Many viribuii in use today are designed solely as weapons, and some take advantage of the inbuilt power pack to power electrodes that can deliver punishing shocks.

While wearing a viribuii, a character adds ✲ ✲ to the results of all Athletics checks.

Melee Weapons

With the advent of beam and plasma technology, it seems archaic to use hand-powered weapons, but the fact remains that a solid blade or blunt object makes a great backup weapon. Many religions also make use of such weapons in various ceremonies, and a fair number of societies have a certain nostalgia for melee weapons from their history.

As an interesting note, most societies developed iconic melee weapons before they discovered interstellar travel and made contact with the wider galaxy. This mean that melee weapons from various societies tend to be more original and unique than the ranged weapons most of their members carry.

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Ambassadorial Staff

A leftover tradition from the Lazax, wielding this ceremonial staff allows sentients on government or royal business to communicate their importance to others. This device is approximately two meters in length and is normally adorned with the wielder's symbol of office. Traditionally, the Lazax also built discreet electrostatic projectors into the staff, allowing their ambassadors to defend themselves in an emergency.

While wielding an ambassadorial staff, a character adds ⮝ to any social skill checks they make as long as the target is a member of the Galactic Council or someone who recognizes their authority. If the target is neither, the character adds ♺ to their social skill check instead. This weapon requires two hands to wield.

Bio-Shiv

Originally designed by the Yssaril and created from its owner's DNA, the bio-shiv consists of genetic material spliced with flexible polymers that give it the appearance of a thin, bone-like lattice. The weapon is normally "sheathed" in a specially created pocket along the wearer's arm or leg. While within the wearer's body, the material is as flexible as any tissue and cannot be detected on most scanners. Even the pocket appears to be an old scar. However, when drawn, the weapon hardens into a sharp, thin knife. The shiv can even be "resheathed" (albeit a painful process), and as it is reinserted into the skin, it returns to its malleable state.

While the bio-shiv is sheathed, those searching the character add ✕ ✕ ✕ to the results of any checks made to find the bio-shiv.

Collapsible Blade

Occasionally there is a need for a Keleres to possess an easily accessible weapon while still engaging in delicate political investigations or negotiations. A collapsible blade looks like an unassuming cube of metal when not in use. However, when deployed, the cube quickly unfolds into a short, serviceable blade with a basic hilt.

Your character must spend a maneuver to collapse their collapsible blade. While the blade is collapsed, those searching the character add ■ to any checks made to find the collapsible blade.

Creuss Astral Lance

As rare as the armor Creuss wear, a Creuss astral lance is both exquisite and deadly. Molded from minerals formed in the swirling energies of these beings' dimension, this weapon glows with a delicate blue or green hue as wisps of energy curl across its surface. Due to its composition, the astral lance can phase through armor and hides to damage the internal organs of an opponent or, in some cases, breach the exterior of lightly armored vehicles.

This weapon requires two hands to wield.

Hacan Dune Spear

A noble weapon of a bygone age, the Hacan dune spear is a long gyro-spear that has a highly sophisticated electromagnetic tube built into the shaft, allowing it to be used as a powerful ranged weapon. The gyros in the butt and haft help keep what would otherwise be an unwieldy weapon perfectly balanced for thrusting, stabbing, and shooting. The dune spear was only used by some of the Hacan trading clans, but as the Hacan spread across the galaxy, the iconic weapon came to be associated with the Hacan people as a whole.

Traditionally, a Hacan was expected to craft their own dune spear and learn the complex arts of ferrocasting and electromagnetic smithing in the process; however, few Hacan today still remember these ancient arts. Most dune spears still in existence are centuries old, finely constructed with folded terridium alloys and decorated with polished ivory finishes and ruby inlays. But a few crafters still make dune spears and even teach the craft to those eager to learn.

The dune spear may be used as either a Melee or as a Ranged (Heavy) weapon with the profiles listed in **Table 2–3**. This weapon requires two hands to wield (in either configuration).

Naalu Mind Blade

Rarely seen outside Naalu rituals, the mind blade is a weapon found only in the deepest caverns of the Collective's religious sects. Sought by many underworld collectors, the blades fetch small fortunes for adventurers foolish enough to seek out these antiquities. Although scientists are unsure how these devices work, few of the blades make it off Druaa, and even fewer have ended up in a lab.

When determining the base damage of this weapon, add the wielder's Willpower rating in addition to their Brawn.

N'orr Tarsus Glaive

The morphology of the N'orr gives their warriors unique capabilities on the battlefield, such as longer reach and stronger blows with their forearms. To augment their already formidable combat prowess, their elite Tekklar warriors carry close combat weapons in addition to their rifles and heavy artillery. The tarsus glaive is not truly a polearm, but folds out from a sheath strapped to the foremost part of a N'orr's manipulator limbs. It takes advantage of the insectoids' already considerable reach to stab and slash at a farther reach than any "proper" glaive.

A tarsus glaive requires two hands to wield, unless wielded by a N'orr. When wielded by a N'orr, the tarsus glaive may make melee attacks at short range. The difficulty of these attacks is **Average** (◆ ◆).

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Shudder Blade

Shudder blades can be found throughout the galaxy as industrial tools, weapons, and even kitchen appliances. Micromotors cause the blade to make short, extremely rapid sawing motions that cause the activated weapon to look like a hazy blur and help it cut through most materials. Most shudder blades tend to be the size of shortswords or large knives, although some larger versions exist.

Twin Letnev Poniards

Seen throughout the galaxy as militaristic and stalwart, the Letnev possess countless traditions that can seem barbaric to outsiders. One such tradition is the Saliu'strebec, a martial art that uses two poniards while performing slow, methodical movements. Practitioners of this art understand that when sped up, the movement becomes a deadly flurry of attacks.

The poniards used in this art are perfectly balanced twin blades that magnetically clip together when not in use. Twin poniards require two hands to wield.

Armor

In a hostile universe, armor can mean the difference between life and death. Manufacturers throughout the galaxy offer a range of protective wares, including armored clothing for civilians, military-issued powered armor, and personal shielding devices used by the rich and powerful.

Civilian Protective Gear

Although it can't compare to combat armor, the heavy clothing worn by civilians can offer some protection against attack. However, civilian clothing is often designed for specialized purposes, such as environmental protection, concealed defense, or simply making a lasting impression on an audience.

Dignitary's Garb

Although what qualifies as "impressive" varies from culture to culture, most people find that as long as the clothing is expensive and has some sort of ostentatious ornamentation, it tends to do the trick. The Keleres sometimes augment their official clothing with the symbol of their organization, either worked into a physical insignia, embroidered into cloth, or holoprojected across the surface.

After making a social skill check, the wearer may remove ♲ ♲ from the results, as long as the target or targets of the check recognize the authority of the organization the wearer represents.

Echo Garment

Any garment can receive an echo treatment, which toughens the clothing without relying on bulky materials or armor plates. The treatment coats fabrics with flexible polymers that bond with and strengthen clothing fibers at a molecular level. The process is an effective means of providing some basic, but discreet, virtually invisible protection.

Hostile Environment Clothing

Adventure seekers, explorers, and scientists regularly risk life and limb to uncover the hidden mysteries of the galaxy, such as the acid rains on Equid Torn or the crystal sandstorms of Orcovis III. Hostile environment clothing offers several styles and features, from partial biosuits made of hardened, nonporous materials to heated jackets for the cold. Manufactured using a carbon-fiber weave and augmented with a variety of systems, such as cooling vanes, heating coils, or corrosion-resistant coating, this clothing can withstand semihostile environments and offers limited protection against attacks.

A character purchases hostile environment clothing to protect against a specific hostile environment (usually cold, heat, or a corrosive atmosphere). Wearers of this clothing remove ■ ■ from any Survival or Resilience checks they make due to the specific hostile environment. They also reduce the rating of hazards related to that environment by 2, to a minimum of 0 (see **Fire, Acid, and Corrosive Atmospheres** on page 111 of the Genesys Core Rulebook).

Periclis Suit

Several species must wear armored suits to interact or even survive in the wider galaxy. The Creuss, Hylar, and Gashlai are all well-known for needing environmental protections in an oxygen atmosphere, but there are dozens of other species as well. Since each species has its own unique physiology and environmental requirements, this protection is inevitably produced on each species' homeworld.

However, in the last decade, several noted armorers who have set up shop on Mecatol Rex have begun producing bespoke environmental protection gear for these species. The most popular is the Periclis suit, produced by the Herbedar Cooperative. Each must be made to individual specifications and thus is horrendously expensive, but anyone who owns a Periclis suit agrees that the results are worth it.

A Periclis suit must be crafted to the exact specifications of the wearer, a process that generally takes two weeks. Each suit allows the wearer to survive in nearly any environment, including underwater and in vacuum, indefinitely (the suit includes nutrient recyclers that help keep the wearer alive, although the sustenance they provide is not particularly enjoyable). Note that these suits are not bulky enough to impose additional ■ on certain checks.

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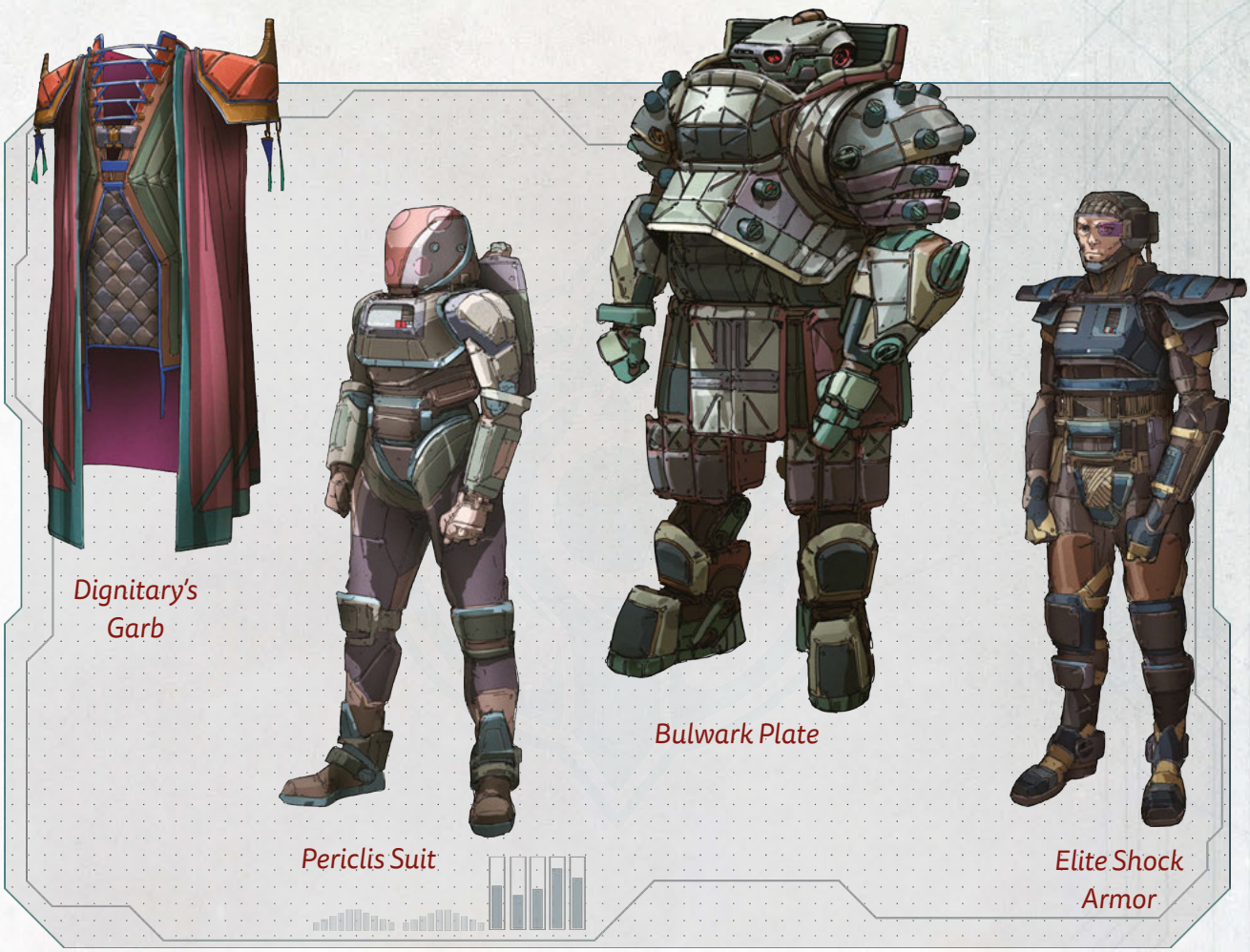

In addition, because each suit must be made to order, the Herbedar Cooperative does not like spending time and resources making them for species who can survive perfectly well in oxygen/nitrogen atmospheres. For any character who is not a Gashlai, water-breathing Hylar, or Creuss, the cost of the suit doubles (to 4,000 aurei) and the time to construct it increases to 6 weeks.

Personal Force Field

Affluent trillionaires, crime lords, high-ranking military officers, and political leaders place themselves in the public eye regularly, which leaves them vulnerable to attack. A personal force field offers discreet emergency protection, as its projector can be built into a piece of jewelry or incorporated into an article of clothing. However, the small size means it has a limited power supply.

When inactive, the personal force field provides a defense of 0. It may be activated by the wearer as an out-of-turn incidental. Once activated, it provides its listed defense for three rounds. At the end of the third round, it deactivates and must be recharged (hooked up to a power source for fifteen minutes) before it can be reactivated.

Sealed Environmental Suit

A sealed environmental suit is a catchall for the armor needed by certain species to survive outside of their highly unusual environments. The design depends on the species involved. The Hylar, for example, prefer suits with huge fishbowl helmets for maximum visibility and multiple legs and manipulator arms. The Gashlai need stout containment suits that can withstand the fiery pressure of their volatile bodies, allowing others to stand being near them. And the Creuss prefer sculpted and ornately filigreed armor that obscures them behind featureless helmets. However, all suits follow the same basic designs.

A sealed environmental suit must be designed for a specific species (chosen when it is purchased). While wearing it, the wearer may survive in hostile environments indefinitely (at the GM's discretion, as some environments such as the crushing depths of a gas giant or the burning glare of a star are too much for any equipment to resist). In addition, while wearing a sealed environmental suit, the user increases their wound threshold by 2. However, these suits tend to be bulky, and impose ■ on Athletics, Coordination, and Stealth checks that the wearer makes. They may impose ■ on other checks at the GM's discretion.

Donning and Doffing Armor

Although usually putting on or taking off armor can be handled narratively, some characters may need to know exactly how much time it takes. This can be handled by the GM if they want to set a specific time based on the circumstances of the current encounter. It is recommended, however, that it not take less than one minute during a narrative encounter, or two maneuvers during a structured encounter.

Space Suit

Civilian space suits are designed for comfort and ease of mobility, as well as for survival in vacuum. They are generally made of a tough but flexible cloth with an internal gel-armor layer that dissipates impacts. The gel also instantly hardens when exposed to vacuum, which means the suit has self-sealing capabilities against small breaches. Mag-boots and a limited-mobility pack complete the setup, and the whole outfit is light and small enough that it can be worn by fighter pilots, spacewalking construction workers, or passengers whose ship has suffered a catastrophic decompression.

A space suit has enough air, water, and power to keep your character alive in vacuum for up to three days. The limited-mobility pack and mag-boots allow your character to move in zero-gravity environments without treating them as difficult terrain.

Military Armor and Clothing

The numerous militaries of the Great Civilizations construct a range of armor for their soldiers, from powered suits that turn warriors into walking tanks to simple fatigues. The Keleres have access to these in theory, though in practice it often depends on the strength of their ties to their sponsors.

Bulwark Plate

Some militaries train and equip units for defensive combat, while others (such as the Xxcha Companion Guard) fight slowly and methodically even when on the offense. These units tend to be equipped with armor colloquially known as *bulwark plate*. The armor is very heavy and thick, even compared to that of powered elite shock suits. Bulwark plate is inevitably powered, but even so, it keeps the wearer from moving faster than a walk, as its strength enhancers simply compensate for the armor's sheer mass. But it also allows the wearer to shrug off any attacks not designed to take out tanks.

While wearing bulwark plate, your character may only perform one maneuver on their turn. The armor is very bulky and imposes ■ ■ on Athletics, Coordination, and Stealth checks.

Covert Armored Skin

This skintight body armor operates by bending light around the wearer, masking both bioelectric fields and heat signatures. Microscopic light/wave deflectors turn the wearer into a shimmering blur, and more advanced models even contain active auditory baffler systems that turn loud screams into muffled whispers. The only drawback is the scant armored protection, meaning the wearer's best defense is to not get hit in the first place.

While wearing covert armored skin, your character adds ✲ ✲ to the results of Stealth checks they make and adds ■ ■ to any Perception or Vigilance checks other characters make to find or notice them.

Infantry Combat Armor

Designed for military units, combat armor protects soldiers on the battlefield while also integrating utility or mission-essential kit. Most suits rely on basic protection in the form of tough, damage-resistant materials. However, the real usefulness of combat armor is the ease of customization. With plenty of room for attachments and modifications, suits can be adapted for nearly any mission.

Elite Shock Armor

Most militaries have small units of elite troops trained to spearhead assaults and conduct covert operations, starship boarding actions, and other dangerous missions. The Tekklar Elite, Spec Ops commandos, and Guild's Blades are all famous (or infamous) throughout the galaxy for their exploits. Although many aspects of their training and methods of operation are very different, they all tend to be equipped with very advanced and powered armor.

While wearing elite shock armor, your character increases their Brawn by 1, to a maximum of 5 (this does increase their soak, and it is not included in the soak increase in **Table 2–4**), and they count their encumbrance threshold as 10+Brawn. This armor is also environmentally sealed, allowing your character to survive in hostile environments and space for up to three days.

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TABLE 2–4: CLOTHING, PERSONAL ARMOR, AND PROTECTIVE DEVICES

Type	Defense	Soak	Encum	Hard Points	Price	Rarity
Civilian Protective Gear						
Dignitary's Garb	0	+0	1	1	125	4
Echo Garment	0	+1	1	1	60	1
Hostile Environment Clothing	0	+1	4	2	255	3
Periclis Suit	2	+2	3	3	2,000	8
Personal Force Field	4	+0	0	0	1,650	8
Sealed Environmental Suit	0	+2	5	2	1,000	3
Space Suit	1	+1	3	0	400	2
Military Armor and Clothing						
Bulwark Plate	1	+4	6	2	2,200 (R)	5
Covert Armored Skin	2	+0	1	0	650 (R)	4
Elite Shock Armor	1	+2	5	3	900 (R)	6
Infantry Combat Armor	0	+2	4	4	525 (R)	2

Gear

Members of the Keleres require tools, including communications arrays, computers, and medical gear, to achieve their numerous and varied missions. This section provides a host of additional equipment options for characters to use on their missions for the Galactic Council.

Carrying and Storage

From backpacks and cases to modular satchel systems and self-hovering crates, sentients have devised numerous products for carrying their belongings across the galaxy. The following items are the most common means of carrying personal equipment and belongings.

Gravpad

The gravpad is a platform that uses gravimetric compensators to create an antigrav field, reducing the mass of larger objects when they are placed on it. Individuals can then move those objects as required with minimal effort. Gravpads come in a variety of shapes and sizes, from big enough to move large containers aboard cargo vessels and within docking bays to small trolleys used in office buildings.

A gravpad can carry items whose encumbrance values together total 50 or less. As long as your character holds the magnetic tether control device (roughly the size of a pen), the gravpad follows your character at short range. As long as the gravpad is active, its encumbrance value is 0.

Pouches and Packs

Every species in the galaxy has invented some means of carrying more stuff. Although each pouch, backpack, or satchel is different depending on the physiology of the species carrying it, such items all follow the same basic principles.

While wearing a pouch or pack designed for your species, your character increases their encumbrance threshold by 3.

Spacer Trunk

Part luggage, part wardrobe, part home away from home, spacer trunks are ubiquitous among galactic travelers. They are large, approximately 1.5 meters long and half that wide and deep, and the micrograv platform embedded in their base offsets the trunks' fully loaded weight.

The spacer trunk can hold items whose encumbrance values together total 20 or less. No single item placed in the trunk may have an encumbrance higher than 4. Opening a spacer trunk without a proper biometric code requires a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Skulduggery check**.

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VersiHaul System Component

The VersiHaul system is a series of pouches, bags, hooks, and harnesses that makes carrying equipment easier. Each cargo pouch has a special backing that adheres onto fabrics, plastics, or metal. Once a VersiHaul system component is attached, it takes some effort to remove it, so most users attach theirs to a harness or belt to allow for quick removal.

Each VersiHaul system component purchased increases the character's encumbrance threshold by 1. Each component can be narratively described as a pouch, belt hook, holster, or other carrying item, or a character can purchase several components at the same time to represent a larger pouch or backpack. A character may wear enough VersiHaul system components to double their original encumbrance threshold.

Clandestine Gear

Across the galaxy, the quantity of gear produced to secure individuals' dwellings or belongings is as high as the number of items devised as countermeasures.

Autocuffs

Law enforcement officials, troopers, and even some criminals carry these auto-activating restraints to secure captured individuals. Placed around a limb or similar appendage, each cuff automatically tightens to a point that is restrictive without risk of cutting off air or blood flow. Once locked, the cuffs are nearly impossible to slip out of or break.

As an action, an engaged target who is immobilized or incapacitated may be fitted with autocuffs. The target is then immobilized until the autocuffs are removed. The bound individual may attempt a **Formidable (◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆) Athletics** or **Coordination check** to break or slip out of the autocuffs.

Data Drill

This remarkable device allows a user to bypass the security software and protections on computers. The drill pairs with another device, such as a savant or quintisensor, for processing and guidance. When a data drill is set, it begins to electronically carve its way through the computer's security systems. It is highly effective, though a bit time consuming. A data drill also has a tendency to "drill" too much data, sometimes damaging the information the user is seeking.

A data drill adds ✲ ✲ ⟳ ⟳ to the results of any Computers checks your character makes to access a computer system and to the results of any Skulduggery checks your character makes to open a computerized lock.

Intruder Puck

This palm-sized, disk-shaped object can be used to open virtually any sort of lock. The puck's internal processor is capable of overriding electronic encryption systems. The device also has a series of micromanipulators that are able to pick physical locks. An intruder puck is delicate and may break due to electronic feedback or tension on the micromanipulators.

When using an intruder puck, your character upgrades the ability of Skulduggery checks they make to override any sort of lock twice, but also upgrades the difficulty of the check once. Your GM may spend ⟳ ⟳ to permanently damage the lock. Your GM must spend ⊗ to destroy the intruder puck, rendering it nonfunctional for future uses.

Morphic Kit

The morphic kit is a technologically oriented disguise apparatus that utilizes a mix of distortion fields, holographic compensators, makeup, prosthetics, and voice modulators, allowing a character to interact as another individual.

When using this kit, your character decreases the difficulty of any Deception or other skill checks they make to pass as another individual by 1, to a minimum of **Easy (◆)**. All other characters increase the difficulty of any Vigilance or other skill checks they make to see through the deception by 1.

Umbral Lens

Many missions performed by covert operatives involve watching from the shadows and moving through darkened buildings and environments. For species who can't see in the dark, an umbral lens (usually in the form of eyewear or a lens placed directly over the pupil) picks up a range of wavelengths and allows them to see as if it were daylight.

While wearing an umbral lens, your character removes ■ ■ from checks they make due to darkness.

Communication

Most galactic sentients own personal communications devices, using them to stay in touch with their loved ones and the worlds around them. Others need more specialized comms devices.

Ambassador

This pocket-sized device can analyze and translate any language spoken near it into another language (assuming that both languages have been loaded into its considerable memory banks). Mating an ambassador to a specific comm-bead, computer, or savant is a simple process, but the device can also be set to broadcast mode. This allows the ambassador's onboard speakers to verbalize the translated words of another being.

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Comm-Bead

These communications devices come in an assortment of shapes and sizes. A comm-bead allows the wearer to send and receive audio communications. Its speaker can be adjusted so that anyone at short range can hear the transmitted sound or so that only the wearer hears it. This device is sensitive enough to pick up the wearer's speech even if they're whispering.

Comm-beads are capable of communicating with ships in orbit or across a planet's surface to a distance of a thousand kilometers. To transmit farther, they need to be linked to an FTL transmitter or orbital relay network.

Encryptos

This small data-device can link to a comm-bead or similar communications tool to scramble outgoing communications. The encryptos also descrambles incoming transmissions, provided it has the proper encryption codes loaded to it.

While your character is using an encryptos, anyone attempting to decipher their messages must make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Computers check**.

Portable FTL Commpack

A portable FTL commpack is a heavy backpack that carries a compact FTL transmitter dish that can be set up in minutes. The device is powerful enough to send an emergency signal to a neighboring star system or to contact someone clandestinely without using a planetary FTL transmitter.

It takes two maneuvers to deploy a portable FTL commpack's dish. Its power supply allows for one hour of continuous transmission. Transmissions start to degrade after approximately three light-years and are almost imperceivable at six.

Electronics and Sensors

Savants, familiars, and other electronic devices make a sentient's day-to-day life easier. These are a few of the items that are common throughout the galaxy.

Data Crystal

A data crystal, or data crystal matrix, is a small device a few centimeters long with a crystalline structure and a universal link port in its base. The crystal is incredibly durable, and when it is full of data, it glows in any one of a range of colors (the particular color can be set by the user to facilitate organization or filing).

Familiar

Familiars are members of a series of robotic drones designed to aid their owners in a variety of tasks. They have simplistic artificial intelligence and typically assist with basic household functions such as cooking, cleaning, and entertainment. More advanced models provide support in certain professions; mechanimiliars assist with repairs, while scimiliars advise on a variety of scientific disciplines. Regardless of a familiar's model, its sensors can be linked to a computer, providing the user with an additional perspective when examining an area.

After your character purchases a familiar, choose one skill from the following list: Astrocartography, Computers, Mechanics, Operating, Piloting, Skulduggery, Survival, or any one knowledge skill. As long as your character's familiar is active and within short range, your character adds □ to checks they make with the chosen skill, as well as to Perception and Vigilance checks your character makes if the familiar is linked to your character's savant or quintisensor.

Perimeter Beacon

A perimeter beacon is an invaluable tool for anyone traveling through dangerous wildernesses. When placed, the beacon expands to a height of three meters and the attached drone flies around, keeping an eye out for any motion or intrusion to a distance of several dozen meters. Multiple beacons can be linked together, forming a sensor chain that can help keep large encampments alert for intruders.

A perimeter beacon scans the terrain out to long range from its position. While it is active, anyone attempting to sneak past the beacon must make a **Hard (●◆◆) Stealth check**.

Quintisensor

Used primarily by medical staff and scientists operating in the field, a quintisensor is a handheld diagnostic sensor capable of scanning any energy form, living creature, or object. Readout displays offer guidance on the thing scanned, including its biology, energy signature, and molecular composition. The quintisensor can link to a savant to provide further information or to record details of the scan and any findings.

The quintisensor allows your character to conduct a wide range of passive and active scans, and it can provide molecular analyses of the materials it scans. When using a quintisensor, your character counts as having the "right tool for the job" (see page 93 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook) when trying to scan or analyze an object or location, and also adds ✡ to the results of any Perception or Vigilance checks they make.

Savant

Most individuals own a savant, a small and powerful personal computer that can be held in one hand, worn on a limb, or even worn as a piece of jewelry and activated with voice commands or a neural link. The device serves as a computational system, a link to whatever informational network is present at a particular location, and a communications device.

If your character has a savant, when making a Knowledge check, they add ✡ to the result.

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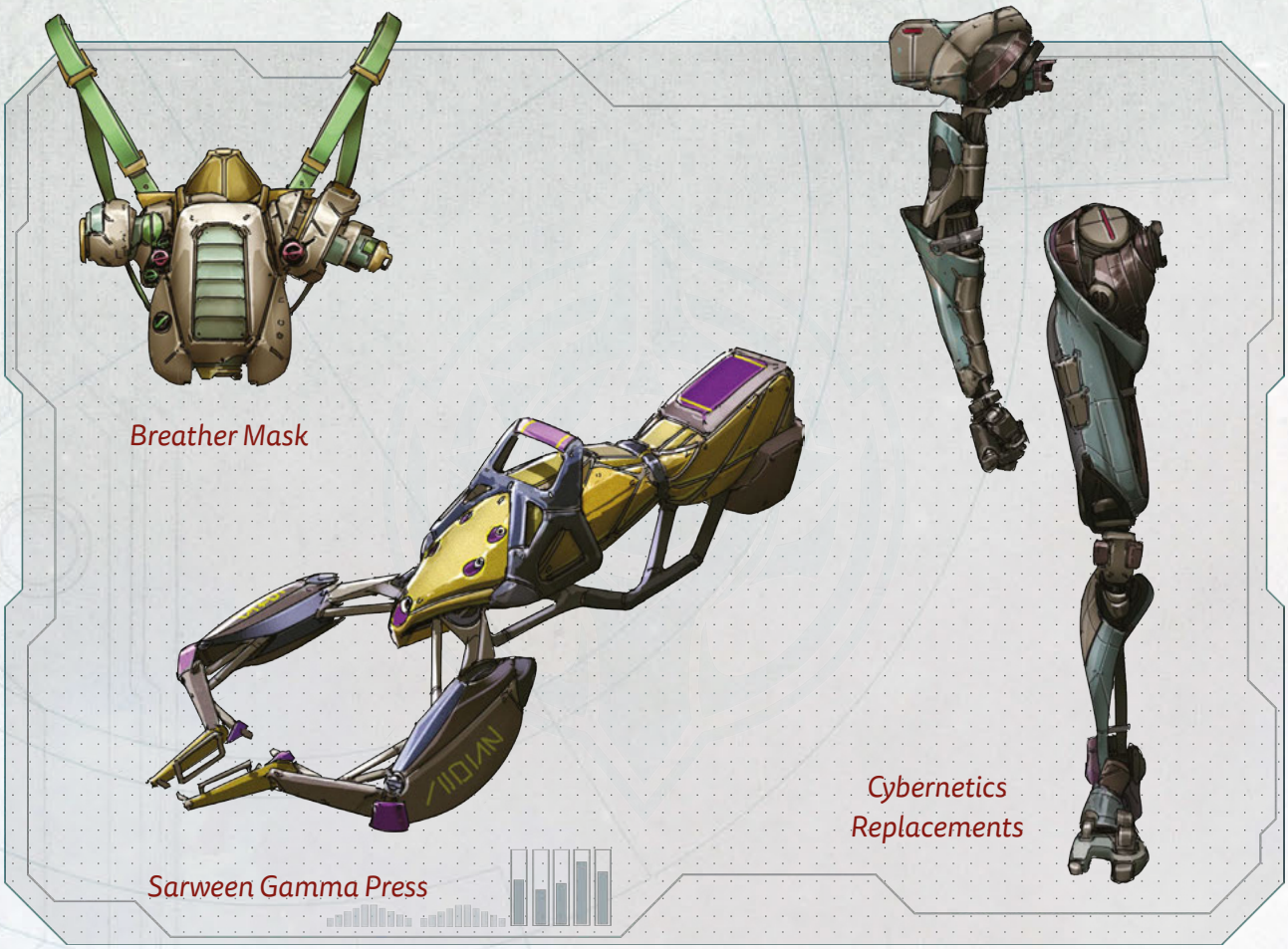

Medical Equipment

The galaxy is full of dangers, and the odds of suffering an injury are high. Medical technology is at a remarkable level of advancement, and several of its more notable examples are listed here.

Automedicum

Automedicums are a specialized version of familiar drones that focus on medicine and medical emergencies. They are slightly larger than other familiars and possess an internal storage unit packed with bandages, ointments, sutures, and dermal sealer. Automeds can perform first aid by themselves or can assist other medical personnel in their duties.

An automedicum allows your character to heal wounds or Critical Injuries without penalty (this includes healing wounds or Critical Injuries on themself). If your character suffers wounds that exceed their wound threshold, the automedicum administers a dermal sealer at the end of your character's next turn. An automedicum comes installed with a five-dose supply of dermal sealer, which can be replenished after use at the standard cost per dose.

Cybernetic Replacements

After their wars with the Mahact, the ancient Lazax maintained strict laws against cloning. Ironically, during the Twilight Wars, most species showed more respect for those laws than they did for the Lazax themselves. Even today, clones and cloned body replacements are very illegal across most of the known galaxy. Instead, most species rely on cybernetics to replace failing organs or lost limbs. Traditionally, it is very rare to enhance oneself with a cybernetic, since this is seen as a slippery slope toward becoming the L1Z1X, or the dreaded Nekro.

A cybernetic replacement can be installed on a character with a successful **Hard (◆◆◆) Medicine check**. It functions identically to the lost limb or organ that it replaces.

Dermal Sealer

This small, self-contained, single-use medical device sprays a liquid that expands into a semi-rigid foam soon after exposure to air. The foam adheres to most organic surfaces, providing an impermeable barrier that prevents blood loss. The sealant also incorporates anti-infective agents as well as topical anesthetics that help relieve localized pain.

Dermal sealers use the same rules as painkillers, as described on page 94 of the Genesys Core Rulebook.

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TABLE 2–5: GEAR

Type	Encum	Price	Rarity
Carrying and Storage			
Gravpad	10	100	1
Pouches and Packs	+3	35	1
Spacer Trunk	6	150	4
VersiHaul System Component	+1	25	3
Clandestine Gear			
Autocuffs	1	50	1
Data Drill	0	400 (R)	6
Intruder Puck	0	150 (R)	5
Morphic Kit	3	1,000	6
Umbral Lens	1	400	4
Communication			
Ambassador	1	150	2
Comm-Bead	0	50	2
Encryptos	1	500 (R)	7
Portable FTL Commpack	7	5,000	6
Electronics and Sensors			
Data Crystal	0	10	1
Familiar	2	200	2
Quintisensor	2	175	2
Perimeter Beacon	5	800	4
Savant	1	150	1
Medical Equipment			
Automedicum	3	850	5
Cybernetic Replacement Appendage	–	1,000	3
Cybenetic Replacement Sensory Organ	–	1,500	4
Cybernetic Replacement Internal Organ	–	2,000	4
Dermal Sealer	0	25	1
Medicum	2	100	2
Xenobiology Medicum	4	1,200	6
Z-Tab	0	30	2
Survival Gear			
Ascender Rig	3	350	2
Breather Mask	1	50	1
Extra Ammunition	1	25	1
Fire-Suppression Sphere	1	100	2
Habitent	6	1,000	3
Light Beacon	0	10	1
Tools			
Adhesive Rod	1	100	4
Bypass Pack	1	125	1
Formsmith	5	1,200	5
Polymorphic Prybar	1	40	3
Portable Toolkit	4	200	2
Sarween Gamma Press	4	500	4

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Medicum

A standard medicum consists of a small portable pack containing an autosuture applicator, sterile bandages, antiseptics, sterile medical tools, blood coagulants, a dermal applicator with a range of medicines, and other basic medical supplies. Although the device is packed with appropriate means to nurse a sentient back to health, its small size limits the number of supplies within.

The medicum allows your character to heal other characters' wounds or Critical Injuries without penalty, as well as their own by increasing the difficulty by 1 instead of by 2. If your character's Medicine check generates ⟳ ⟳ ⟳ or ⊗, the kit's supplies have been depleted, and the medicum may no longer be used.

Xenobiology Medicum

The most advanced and complex medical kit available to field medics, the xenobiology medicum takes up most of the space of a large backpack. In addition to all of the usual medical materials, it also has silicate pastes, plasma ionizers, and other healing items useful for dealing with non-carbon-based physiologies. It also includes a savant explaining how to use them.

The medicum allows your character to heal other characters' wounds or Critical Injuries without penalty, as well as their own by increasing the difficulty by 1 instead of by 2. It also allows them to heal any character using the Medicine skill, even if that character cannot normally be healed using Medicine. If your character's Medicine check generates ⟳ ⟳ ⟳ or ⊗, the kit's supplies have depleted, and the xenobiology medicum may no longer be used.

Z-Tab

A z-tab is a small, thin square tablet filled with stimulants that a person places under their tongue, where it dissolves in a matter of moments. Z-tabs combine a number of different stimulants with targeted biotracers so that they are effective on most species. However, too many stimulants can do serious damage to a character's biology.

When your character consumes a z-tab, they heal 4 strain, then suffer 2 wounds for every other z-tab they have consumed in the past 24 hours.

Survival Gear

It is critical to have the proper gear to persevere no matter the environment or situation. Fire, cold temperatures, and hostile atmospheres are all hazards easily managed by anyone with the proper equipment.

Ascender Rig

Employed by military personnel, construction workers, and outdoor enthusiasts, these advanced rigs consist of tactile gloves, traction footpads, and a small plate worn on the chest. The chest plate contains a micro–antigrav projector that negates much of the wearer's weight, enabling them to scale most sheer or slick surfaces.

While wearing an ascender rig, your character reduces the difficulty of any Athletic skill checks made to climb by 2, to a minimum of **Easy** (◆).

Breather Mask

When a character journeys out into the far reaches of space, the breather mask is a device they should have among their belongings. Acting as both an atmospheric condenser and a respirator, the breather mask produces the atmosphere a sentient requires. Using a mix of filtration and replication technology, the device senses the DNA of the sentient wearing it, quickly manufacturing the desired gases or substances needed to keep the sentient alive. The device also purifies most smoke, irritants, and toxins.

While wearing a breather mask, your character adds ■ to Resilience checks they make to resist poisonous atmospheres or hostile environments.

Extra Ammunition

Whether a weapon fires projectiles or energy beams, it inevitably runs out of ammo. Carrying reloads is always a smart idea.

Your character may spend a maneuver and expend this item to reload one weapon they are holding that has run out ammunition, allowing them to continue using the weapon during the current encounter. Extra ammunition may not be used to reload weapons with the Limited Ammo quality (these have their own ammunition costs).

Fire-Suppression Sphere

A fire-suppression sphere is a single-use device for extinguishing fires and neutralizing caustic or toxic gases. When thrown at a fire, the hovering sphere emits a blast of ultra-low-frequency sound waves, pushing oxygen away. The sphere's casing contains chemical powders that prevent combustion and suppress the effects of toxic chemicals.

As an action, your character may use a fire-suppression sphere against a fire, corrosive atmosphere, or toxic gas to reduce the rating of that hazard by 5 (see page 111 of the Genesys

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Core Rulebook). The sphere affects the hazard zone out to short range. If this causes the hazard's rating to be reduced to 0 or below, the hazard is eliminated in that area. If the hazard is larger than the sphere's area of effect, the hazard may return at your Game Master's discretion.

Characters within the effect radius who are not using a breather mask or wearing a sealed suit suffer 3 strain.

Habitent

Useful for anyone seeking shelter in a hostile environment, a habitent has a domed structure large enough to sustain a number of individuals whose silhouettes added together total 6 or less. A habitent is packed in a carrying case the size of a spacer trunk, and it takes only a few minutes for its internal mechanisms to unfurl or for its user to stow the structure.

Habitents are self-contained and come with air purification systems and temperature regulators that can handle extreme heat and extreme cold. These systems work for up to two weeks.

A reinforced version can maintain integrity and remain airtight underwater and in vacuum. It comes with a small pump and air storage that allows it to inflate and add air (or remove water) after a person enters. This version has air recycling supplies that can last for one week.

Light Beacon

Light beacons are small, handheld objects that emit light on command. Found practically everywhere, they are common in toolboxes and emergency kits and are carried by security personnel across the galaxy.

A light beacon provides illumination out to medium range and removes ■ ■ added to checks due to darkness.

Tools

Tradespeople and explorers frequently find themselves in situations where specific tools are handy or required. Having the right tool for the job saves time, money, and in some cases, lives.

Adhesive Rod

Adhesive rods are hand-sized tubes filled with a viscous gel. When this gel is applied to the surface of two objects that are then placed together, it creates a nearly unbreakable bond between them. After a few minutes, the bond can only be removed by treating the area with a neutralizing solution.

Your character may glue two objects together by spending a maneuver and expending an adhesive rod. The objects then require a **Formidable (◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆) Athletics check** to break. ⊗ may be spent to have the object break before the adhesive does. Alternatively, if your character has access to the proper chemicals, they can remove the gel with an **Average (◆ ◆) Knowledge (Science) check**.

Bypass Pack

Bypass packs are small, flexible sheets coated with circuitry, wired clips, diagnostic probes, and self-sealing patches to help cover breaches to an object's surface. Once placed, the bypass pack's internal processor automatically works to repair minor damage and reroute power around damaged electrical components.

Your character may spend a maneuver and expend a bypass pack to repair 1 hull trauma on a vehicle or to repair a damaged item one step (see **Item Maintenance** on page 89 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).

Formsmith

This bulky device can manufacture almost any handheld object. A formsmith heats a block of neutral matter in a microfurnace to change it on a molecular level into matter with any of a variety of rigidities and tensile strengths. Within minutes, a formsmith can forge nearly any object from an eating utensil to a replacement FTL engine manifold.

The formsmith can make any object that serves a purely narrative purpose up to an encumbrance value of 4. It can forge simple weapons with no moving parts, such as a knife or axe. It can't make complex weapons by itself, such as a working firearm, but it can produce most of the components for one. Formsmiths can't make liquids, gases, or other chemicals. Characters who have access to a formsmith add □ to Mechanics checks.

Polymorphic Prybar

A polymorphic prybar is a simple yet versatile tool that is often found in toolboxes and field kits. It is composed of malleable matter that allows the user to position the tool and then bend, flex, and elongate the prybar to the desired position and angle. The wielder then activates the prybar, causing it to go rigid, allowing it to be used as a lever to help open, lift, or even bludgeon an object.

Portable Toolkit

Numerous manufacturers throughout the galaxy produce portable toolkits. These devices contain everything needed to carry out basic electronic and mechanical repairs no matter their size. Most standard kits come with a selection of hand tools and may include data crystals containing information about the repair and maintenance of various objects. There is little a toolkit cannot assist with in some way, big or small.

This kit provides a character with the equipment needed to make a Mechanics check without penalty.

Sarween Gamma Press

The gamma press is an antigrav repulsor jack. The pressure exerted using its two nearly unbreakable mandibles can force open airlocks and pry apart debris fused during a collision. The tool is a favorite among scavengers, although emergency rescue teams benefit from it when attempting to gain entry to crashed vessels to save potential survivors.

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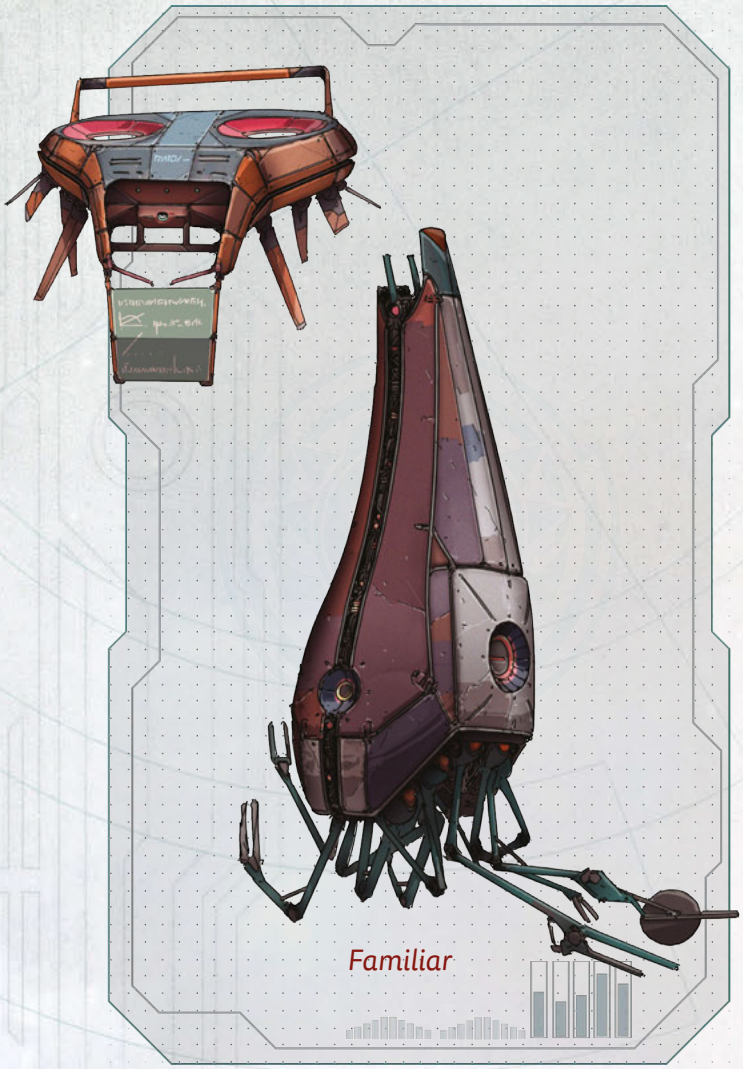

Attachments

The Keleres hail from all walks of life, and each has their own ideas for how to deal with any given situation. Some utilize stock-standard weapons and equipment issued by their government or acquired from alternate sources. Many of these agents tweak, modify, and upgrade their weapons or armor to suit their own specific needs and ideology.

The following attachments use the **Item Attachments and Hard Points** rules found on page 206 of the Genesys Core Rulebook. The attachments in this section replace the attachments found in that section (when playing Embers of the Imperium, you should only use these attachments).

Embers of the Imperium's weapons and armor have a listed number of hard points in the various weapon and armor tables (sometimes referred to as "HP"). You should use these values instead of using the general rule for determining an item's number of hard points found on page 206 of the Genesys Core Rulebook.

Weapon Attachments

Weapon customization is a common activity among those who travel the galaxy for a living. The following list includes many of the most popular modifications.

Anti-Armor

Foot soldiers regularly find themselves in combat against heavily armored opponents and light armored vehicles. Several cultures have devised methods for personal weapons to have the force necessary to pierce the armor of their foes. These advancements vary by weapon, but the results are the same: the weapon is able to punch through opponents' defenses with impressive results.

Use With: This attachment may be used with any Ranged (Heavy) weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon's damage decreases by 2, and it gains the Breach 2 and Slow-Firing 1 item qualities. It also gains Cumbersome 3 or increases its existing Cumbersome rating by 1, whichever is greater. Finally, the weapon's encumbrance increases by 2.

Hard Points Required: 3.

Artisan Workmanship

Although most of the weapons in the galaxy are made by large corporations or government industries, the best are produced by talented artisans who handcraft each weapon to a user's particular specifications.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon gains the Superior item quality.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Balanced Hilt

Although blades are often more of an affectation than a common weapon in the galaxy, there are those who prefer to use a knife or sword over a beam weapon or shot weapon. These people know the value of ensuring the hilt and blade of their weapon are well-balanced, making the weapon easier to handle.

Use With: This attachment may be applied to any one-handed weapon that uses the Melee skill.

Modifiers: The weapon gains the Accurate 1 item quality or increases any existing Accurate quality by 1. (If the weapon has the Inaccurate item quality, it reduces that quality's rating by 1, to a minimum of 0, instead.)

Hard Points Required: 1.

Carbo-Mesh Bonding

Carbo-mesh bonding is a strengthening technique that layers a carbon mesh onto a weapon to improve its tensile strength and heat dissipation. This hypercarbon mesh is chemically bonded to the item, leaving a faint grid pattern on its surface.

Use With: This attachment may be applied to any weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon gains the Reinforced item quality.

Hard Points Required: 1.

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Compact Reconstruction

Skilled weaponsmiths are able to take the components of larger firearms and reconfigure them to fit into a smaller casing or shell. This reduces the size and bulk of a firearm, allowing for ease of carrying and usage. This conversion does have a tendency to reduce the weapon's effective power.

Use With: This attachment may be applied to any Ranged (Light) or Ranged (Heavy) weapon without the Cumbersome or Unwieldy item quality.

Modifiers: Add ■ to checks made to detect or find the weapon. Reduce the weapon's encumbrance value by 2, to a minimum of 1, and reduce its damage by 1, to a minimum of 1.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Decksweeper Module

Ship-boarding actions are some of the most dangerous tasks stellar marines perform. To provide a little extra firepower and a means of clearing cramped quarters without causing a catastrophic hull breach, some troopers take to attaching an additional one-shot weapon to their gun. Appearing to be nothing more than a simple canister, this tube is packed with monofilament razor shrapnel backed with a powerful concussive charge. When a decksweeper module is fired, the concussion and shrapnel can kill or incapacitate anyone in a wide cone in front of it.

Use With: This attachment may be used with any Ranged (Heavy) weapon.

Modifiers: After a decksweeper module is installed on your character's weapon, your character may fire the weapon using the following secondary weapon profile: Ranged (Heavy); Damage 6; Critical 4; Range (Short); Blast 6, Concussive 1, Limited Ammo 1, Vicious 1. The weapon increases any Cumbersome or Unwieldy item qualities it already has by 1 and increases its encumbrance by 1. Reloads cost 25 aurei.

Hard Points Required: 2.

Enhanced Focal Lenses

Increasing the thickness of a beam weapon's focal prisms or lenses can keep the beam tightly focused over longer distances, effectively boosting its range.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any Ranged (Heavy) or Gunnery beam weapons.

Modifiers: The weapon's range increases by one range band, to a maximum of extreme range. The weapon's base damage decreases by 1.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Extended Hilt

This attachment extends the area where a wielder can grip their weapon, offering more freedom for precision and control. An extended hilt also allows the wielder to have a wider grip when wielding a weapon with two hands, adding both leverage and precision to their attacks.

Use With: This attachment may be used with any melee weapon with an encumbrance value of 2 or higher.

Modifiers: The weapon can now be wielded with two hands if it could not already. Your character adds ⮝ to the results of combat checks they make with this weapon, provided they use two hands to wield it.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Force Booster

A force booster is a microthrust booster installed in a wrist mount connected to a hand-held tool. The booster activates when the tool is at the apex of its swing, maximizing the force of the strike. When applied to combat weapons, the results are no less impressive. Users must be careful, however, because they can swing too hard and injure themselves.

Use With: This attachment may be used with any axe, hammer, or similar Melee weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon's base damage increases by 2, and it gains the Vicious 1 item quality or increases its existing Vicious quality by 1. When your character makes a combat check with this weapon, your GM may spend ♺ ♺ or ⊗ to cause your character to lose control of the weapon and have it land in a location of the GM's choice within medium range (if the check was successful, your character loses control of the weapon after hitting their target).

Hard Points Required: 2.

Heavy Barrel

The weapon's standard barrel, emitter, projector, or capacitors are modified to give the weapon the ability to fire a more powerful blast. Whatever form it takes, the heavy barrel attachment has a tendency to destabilize the weapon, making it harder for the shooter to land an accurate shot. Few can argue with the impactful results, however, when the weapon strikes true.

Use With: This attachment may be used with any Ranged (Light) or Ranged (Heavy) weapon.

Modifiers: The weapon increases its base damage by 2 and gains the Inaccurate 1 item quality.

Hard Points Required: 2.

Mag-Scope

This scope provides an enhanced view of distant targets, allowing the wielder to make shots at long distances with less difficulty. The technology is conceptually similar to the simple telescopic lenses of ancient history, but the mag-scope uses powerful electronics to enhance the view and even compensate for poor lighting conditions somewhat.

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Use With: This attachment may be used with any ranged weapon that could logically benefit from the addition of a telescopic sight.

Modifiers: Your character reduces the difficulty of ranged combat checks made with this weapon at long and extreme range by 1. Your character may remove ■ added to combat checks they make with this weapon due to darkness, smoke, or other environmental effects that obscure vision.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Motion Stabilizers

Motion stabilizers are any sort of technology used to arrest unwanted motion on a weapon. They may do so by utilizing motion restrictors, antigrav emitter pods, or even a harness worn by the wielder.

Use With: This attachment may be applied to any weapon with the Cumbersome or Unwieldy item quality.

Modifiers: The weapon's Cumbersome and Unwieldy item qualities decrease by 1, to a minimum of 1, and its encumbrance value decreases by 3, to a minimum of 1.

Hard Points Required: 2.

Persistence Ammo Sight

Persistence ammo utilizes miniaturized guidance and maneuvering fields to enable projectiles to strike a target they originally missed. Depending on the projectile fired, this maneuvering is performed via microdirectional fins, maneuvering verniers, or alteration of magnetic energy fields. Once a target is designated by the system's scope, any projectiles that miss their target circle back around to attempt a second strike.

Use With: This attachment may be used with any ranged weapon that fires solid projectiles.

Modifiers: This weapon gains the Guided 2 item quality. When your character makes a combat check with this weapon, your GM may spend ⟲ ⟲ to cause this weapon to run out of ammo. This attachment cannot be combined with any bonus from another scope or sight.

Hard Points Required: 3.

Quick-Discharge Capacitors

Self-styled gunslingers prefer any modification that allows them to fire their weapon more rapidly, even if accuracy suffers. Adding extra capacitors that can release stored energy in a single burst adds to the weight of a shot but can disrupt the weapon's circuitry.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any Ranged (Light) beam weapon.

Modifiers: When your character makes their first combat check with this weapon in an encounter, add ✲ ⟲ to the results.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Regenerative Ammo Reactor

A common terror among frontline soldiers is the threat of their weapon running dry in the middle of a battle. Microreactors are prohibitively expensive (even the microentropic field taps recently designed by the Naaz-Rokha), but they can be installed into a weapon to provide a more lasting source of power.

Use With: This attachment may be applied to any energy-based Ranged (Light), Ranged (Heavy), or Gunnery weapon.

Modifiers: ⊗ may not be spent to cause this weapon to run out of ammo.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Saimoc Crystaledge Honing

Letnev forces have developed a process to grind up and bond saimoc crystals to the edges of bladed weapons. The microscopic honing process seeds an edge with millions of sharp, serrated points. The effectiveness of "saimoc honing" has spread to other cultures as well. The cost of the honing process is prohibitive, but for those who can afford it, the result is a fine, deadly blade that can carve through virtually anything or anyone.

Use With: This attachment can be used with any Melee weapon with a physical blade.

Modifiers: The weapon gains the Vicious 2 item quality or raises its existing Vicious quality by 2, and it gains the Sunder item quality.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Variable-Form Weapon

Combatants may need a close-quarters weapon one minute and a ranged weapon the next. Many have found ways to cause their weapon to change from one type of weapon to another. Some ranged weapons may be equipped with simple blades, but the most advanced of these variable-form weapons can actually re-form into a melee weapon at the wielder's command.

Use With: This attachment may be used with any Ranged (Light) or Ranged (Heavy) weapon.

Modifiers: When this attachment is installed, your character chooses one of the following secondary weapons. Once per turn while wielding the weapon, your character may cause it to change into a melee form or back into its ranged form as an incidental. While the weapon is in its melee form, your character can make a Melee combat check using the chosen profile.

- Bladed defensive weapon (Melee; Damage 1; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Inferior 1, Pierce 2)
- Blunt offensive weapon (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Inferior 1, Knockdown, Vicious 2)

Hard Points Required: 3.

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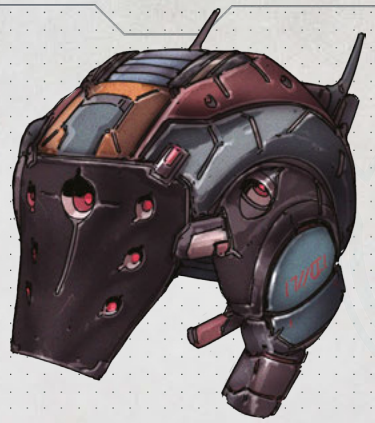

Multisensor Suite

Carbo-Mesh Bonding

Armor Attachments

The following attachments allow users to customize their armor to their own specifications.

Antigrav Rig

An antigrav rig allows its wearer to defy gravity in minor yet useful ways. While not powerful enough to provide the wearer with true flight, it allows them to leap great distances and slows their descent when they fall from a great height.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor.

Modifiers: When wearing this armor, as a maneuver, your character may move to any point within short range, even vertically. Once per encounter, the antigrav rig can be activated to allow your character to leap to any point within medium range as a maneuver, or activated as an out-of-turn incidental to reduce your character's falling distance by two range bands.

Hard Points Required: 3.

Augmentation Network

These rigs are installed in heavier armor and monitor the wearer's physical and psychological condition. They use electrochemical stimulants that make the wearer more alert and heighten their reflexes. The rig is not without drawbacks; soldiers who use an augmentation network become impatient and unfocused, and they often suffer profound exhaustion after use.

Use With: This attachment may be installed in any armor with a soak value of 2 or higher.

Modifiers: When wearing this armor, as an incidental, your character may choose to add □ to Perception checks, Vigilance checks, and all combat checks for the remainder of the encounter and must add ■ to all other checks until the end of the encounter. If they do so, at the end of the encounter they suffer 8 strain.

Hard Points Required: 2.

TABLE 2–6: ITEM ATTACHMENT

Attachment	Price	Rarity
Armor Attachments		
Antigrav Rig	700	6
Augmentation Network	225	5
Duranium Alloy Plating	500	3
Dynamic Epaulets	120	6
Equipment Mount	25	1
Integrated Deflector Field	350	5
Lifter Pods	150	3
Multisensor Suite	840	4
Samaritan System	300	7
Shockskin Lattice	125	4
Terror Enhancement	180	3
Vacuum Seals	150	3
Weapon Attachments		
Anti-Armor	1,000	2
Artisan Workmanship	750	7
Balanced Hilt	800	6
Carbo-Mesh Bonding	250	5
Compact Reconstruction	70	2
Decksweeper Module	840	5
Enhanced Focal Lenses	125	2
Extended Hilt	50	1
Force Booster	200	3
Heavy Barrel	275	2
Mag-Scope	230	1
Motion Stabilizers	800	4
Persistence Ammo Sight	1,500	8
Quick-Discharge Capacitors	100	3
Regenerative Ammo Reactor	200	4
Saimoc Crystaledge Honing	1,500	9
Variable-Form Weapon	250	5

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Duranium Alloy Plating

Alloyed duranium is often used in dreadnought hull armor, and much smaller plates can be slipped into or layered atop personal protective gear for added protection. The only problem is that any duranium alloy is incredibly heavy.

Use With: This attachment may be applied to any armor.

Modifiers: Increase the soak provided by the armor by 1. Increase the armor's encumbrance value by 3. The armor gains the Cumbersome 3 item quality.

Hard Points Required: 2.

Dynamic Epaulets

Often used by field commanders, dynamic epaulets modify armor design to draw attention and help them inspire those around them. Functional as well as cosmetic, this attachment includes enhancements that augment the wearer's communications devices, as well as speakers that allow their voice to carry over the din of battle.

Use With: This attachment may be applied to any armor.

Modifiers: When wearing this armor, your character adds ✲ to the results of all Leadership checks they make.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Equipment Mount

A person has only so many hands to hold weapons and equipment. Equipment mounts allow the wearer to attach a small weapon or piece of equipment to their armored suit, allowing that item to be ready to use at a moment's notice.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor. This attachment may be purchased and applied multiple times to the same suit of armor, taking up 1 hard point each time.

Modifiers: Your character may mount one weapon or piece of equipment to their armor, allowing them to draw or ready that item as an incidental while wearing the armor. The mounted item may not have an encumbrance value higher than 2.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Integrated Deflector Field

This attachment consists of a power cell and a lattice of projector strips woven into the armor's surface or laid underneath its protective plates. When activated, the lattice projects an energy shield around the wearer. Constant attacks can overload the field quickly, causing it to short out until repairs can be made.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor.

Modifiers: Increase the defense of the armor by 2. When your character is targeted by a combat check while wearing this armor, the attacker may spend ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⊛ to cause the armor to become damaged one step (see **Item Maintenance** on page 89 of the Genesys Core Rulebook) and this attachment to no longer increase the armor's defense until the armor is repaired.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Lifter Pods

Lifter pods were originally designed for use by factory and construction workers, but many soldiers have also found them handy. Their microemitter grav-panels provide stability by making minor adjustments to the wearer's balance and relieving the pressure and strain of heavy loads.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor that covers the torso, elbows, and knees.

Modifiers: When wearing armor with this attachment, your character increases their encumbrance threshold by 4 and decreases the Cumbersome and Unwieldy ratings of any items they carry by 1.

Hard Points Required: 2.

Multisensor Suite

A multisensor suite equips a helmet with an assortment of optical and audio enhancements. Its sensors grant the wearer sight in the thermographic, starlight, ultraviolet, infrared, and radio wave spectra. Its audio sensors can detect frequencies beyond most beings' auditory range. These sensor suites are invaluable for combat operations in darkened or obscured environments, providing explorers with a host of scanning options without requiring a quintisensor.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor with a helmet.

Modifiers: When wearing this armor, your character may remove ■ ■ added to skill checks they make due to darkness, smoke, or other environmental effects that obscure vision or sound.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Samaritan System

This attachment consists of an interwoven lattice of sensors and microtubes that stretch across the interior of the armor. The sensors monitor the wearer's vital signs. When the system detects that the wearer has lost consciousness, it releases a dose of dermal sealer at the point of injury. The system stores three doses of dermal sealer, which can be replenished from a standard dermal sealer device.

Use With: This attachment can be used with any armor.

Modifiers: Once per encounter when wearing this armor, your character may administer one dose of dermal sealer to themself as an incidental. The wearer may even do this on their turn while incapacitated (this overrides the normal rules about not performing actions, maneuvers, or incidentals while incapacitated). After this system has administered three doses, it must be replenished, which requires three dermal sealers and five minutes of work.

Hard Points Required: 1.

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Shockskin Lattice

Shockskin is a nasty surprise in hand-to-hand combat. It covers armor's surface in a mesh of threads that can stun an opponent. When the threads are struck, they send a biodisruptive pulse through the attacker's limb. These pulses are also triggered when the armor's wearer performs strikes of their own with their arms, legs, or body.

Use With: This attachment may be applied to any armor that covers the entire body.

Modifiers: When wearing this armor and targeted by a Brawl check, your character may spend ⟳ ⟳ ⟳ or ⊗ to cause the attacker to suffer 4 strain. When your character makes a Brawl check while wearing this armor, they may spend ⮝ ⮝ to cause the target to suffer 4 strain.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Terror Enhancement

Making armor look more frightening has long been a tactic of most cultures in the galaxy. However, modern technology has allowed these theatrics to be taken to new heights. Simple paintings of blood or skulls (or another species' equivalent) on helmets or chest plates is just the beginning. True terror enhancements use holographics to create the effect of ominous lighting, subtle infrasonic projectors to create feelings of unease, and pheromone dispensers to affect species whose primary sense is smell.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor.

Modifiers: When wearing this attachment, your character adds ✲ to any Coercion checks they make and ✕ to any Charm or Stealth checks they make. Once per session, you may spend a Story Point to force one character within short range of your character to make **a Hard (◆◆) fear check**, with the overall results adjudicated by your GM.

Hard Points Required: 1.

Vacuum Seals

These vacuum seals fill the gaps between the protective plates and pads of existing armor and come with a short-term air supply. Vacuum-sealed armor can keep a trooper alive and functional in space or any hostile atmosphere for a short time.

Use With: This attachment can be applied to any armor that covers the entire body and includes a helmet.

Modifiers: The armor is now vacuum sealed, granting the wearer immunity to the hazardous effects of vacuum or of toxic or underwater environments. This protection lasts for one hour. If the wearer has not reached an area with breathable atmosphere, they begin to suffocate (see **Suffocation** on page 112 of the Genesys Core Rulebook).

Hard Points Required: 2.

Artifacts

For millennia, relics of past empires and dynasties have resurfaced throughout the galaxy. Some of the most significant of these artifacts have been used to establish new empires—or to tear established empires down. The powers of some have come from manufacturing techniques or materials lost to time. The potency of others has been merely symbolic. A rare few of these artifacts are so advanced that their powers seem akin to magic; many of these devices were forged by the Lazax, the Mahact, or even older civilizations.

Circlet of the Void

This platinum headband holds nine luminescent jeweled disks arrayed equidistantly around the edge. The jewels are crystalline datarecorders with cerebral interface pads that rest against the wearer's head. The wearer can determine their exact location in the galaxy just by looking at the stars in the sky or around their ship. Circlets of the Void were originally given to Imperial sailing masters; over the millennia, the knowledge of how to build them has been lost, but a few of these relics may still be found in the possession of wealthy (or lucky) ship captains.

A character making an Astrocartography check upgrades their ability three times while wearing a Circlet of the Void. This bonus may also be applied to any Knowledge checks related to astrocartography or stellar geography they make.

Dominus Orb

This large ivory orb glows a faint lambent yellow and is mounted at the end of a heavy rod with three razor-edged armatures. The Dominus Orb is an ancient relic from the time of the Mahact kings. It was taken by the Lazax when they defeated the Mahact, and they used it in their conquests of other empires. Since the sacking of Mecatol Rex, the orb has appeared among various empires as the focus of tales of massive battles. Generals and marshals who have wielded it have been able to spur their forces to victory over seemingly insurmountable odds, the legends say. When the bearer hoists the Dominus Orb aloft, its armatures retract and the orb ascends several meters above the bearer.

A character in possession of the Dominus Orb may deploy it as a maneuver. All other living beings within long range heal all strain they are currently suffering, and they ignore the effects of all Critical Injuries on any skill checks they make until the end of the encounter. (The beings still suffer the Critical Injuries; they just ignore their effects.) Additionally, for the remainder of the encounter, whenever the orb's wielder issues a command, anyone affected by the orb must succeed on a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Discipline check** or obey the order unquestioningly.

The orb may only be deployed once per game session.

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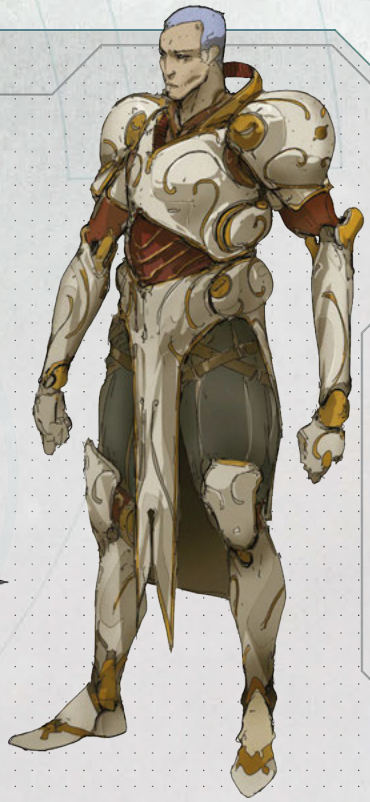
Reaper

The Obsidian



Immortal Cuirass of the Imperial Guard

Immortal Cuirass of the Imperial Guard

The Immortal Cuirasses are segmented breastplates used by the elite Imperial Guard of the Lazax Empire. Several have survived through the ages, and they are prized by warriors across the galaxy. Sensors within an Immortal Cuirass adjust the armor's plates to fit the wearer, and embedded energy collectors administer a burst of healing radiation to restore the wearer's vitality. Their only true weakness is that, as they were designed for a species with four arms, most wearers must tolerate two additional large openings along the sides of their chest.

Once per session while wearing an Immortal Cuirass of the Imperial Guard, your character may heal up to 10 strain and 10 wounds as an incidental. Your character may perform this incidental even if they are incapacitated.

The Obsidian

Almost two meters long, this blade is an heirloom from an ancient species that plied the starlanes long before even the rise of the Mahact. The surface of the blade is cold to the touch. It is entirely black, reflecting no light at all, yet those who view it claim to see something stirring within its inky depths. Seeing the blade's irregular swirling effects can induce nausea and vertigo, but the person who wields it sees—and hears—something else entirely.

Within the blade is an artificial sentience that can communicate with the blade's possessor. This sentience has witnessed and catalogued thousands of battles and can provide guidance to the wielder. The advice proves valuable, but the blade's end goal is always to corrupt the wielder's thoughts to an unthinking desire for destruction and conquest.

While within short range of the Obsidian, a character is disoriented. While wielding the Obsidian, your character cannot be disoriented. Your character also adds ☼ ⮝ to all Leadership checks and Knowledge checks they make while wielding the Obsidian. The GM may spend ⊗ from any skill checks your character makes while wielding the Obsidian to have the Obsidian's whispers distract your character, adding ■ ■ to all skill checks they make for the remainder of the encounter. Other narrative effects could cause your character's motivations to change to ones based on conquest, domination, or superiority.

This weapon requires two hands to wield.

Prophet's Tears

Nearly a century ago, a Hylar *Questor* cruiser located a world on the edge of the galactic spiral that its crew named Zembasi. Believing the world to be uninhabited, the Hylar were amazed to find an intact building with a stasis vault containing millions of small vials of semiopaque fluids. These vials contained genetic data as well as microbial creatures.

Upon further examination, the scientists discovered that these vials were the genetic matrix of an advanced species that had gone extinct a millennia before. The microbial creatures can bond the matrix to another living host, granting the host

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Type	Defense	Soak	Encum	HP	Price	Rarity	Special
Immortal Cuirass of the Imperial Guard	1	+2	3	0	9,000,000	9	Reinforced

Name	Skill	Dam	Crit	Range	Encum	HP	Price	Rarity	Special
The Obsidian	Melee	+8	2	Engaged	4	0	50,000,000	10	Accurate 2, Cumbersome 3, Sunder, Vicious 3
Reaper	Ranged (Light)	5	1	Long	2	0	5,000,000	8	Accurate 1, Defensive 1, Pierce 5, Vicious 3

access to some of the deceased being's memories. The Hylar believe that the extinct Zembasi civilization had a method of preserving their most brilliant minds so that future generations could bond with and learn from their ancestors.

It wasn't long before one bold Hylar scientist consumed one and gained flashes of the lost Zembasi's memories as well as their emotions, which caused the scientist mental trauma. Eventually, they needed to undergo genetic reconstruction to purge the effects of the "Prophet's Tears." The University of Jol-Nar continues to experiment with the vials, but over the years, several cases of Prophet's Tears have ended up in foreign research labs or on black markets in clandestine corners of the galaxy. When a character consumes a vial of Prophet's Tears, they permanently increase their Intellect by 1, to a maximum of 6. ⊗ may be spent from any skill check the character makes to have the character suffer a traumatic memory from the genetic matrix, staggering the character until the end of their next turn. These effects may be simultaneously removed by undergoing genetic reconstruction at a medical facility, a relatively simple but expensive process that costs 5,000 aurei.

Reaper

These firearms were developed long ago by the Mahact kings for use by their deadliest sharpshooters. Reapers have a long barrel with a slightly angled handgrip. When one is drawn, a metallic sleeve unfurls from the grip and tightly encases the shooter's hand and forearm. This stabilizes the shooter's aim and provides a small amount of protection in close-quarters combat.

The Reaper draws bioelectric energy from the shooter and uses an ill-understood process to focus it into a relatively low-powered beam that nevertheless causes fearsome injuries in living targets. Shooters must be careful of this ability, as Reapers have no limiters on the amount of energy that they drain. There are a dozen known Reapers currently circulating throughout the galaxy, sometimes passing to a new owner after the previous wielder killed themself from overuse.

⊗ may not be spent to cause a Reaper to run out of ammo. When your character uses a Reaper to make a Ranged (Light) check, they suffer 3 strain. If your character exceeds their strain threshold while wielding a Reaper, they suffer a Critical Injury and add +30 to the result.

Shard of the Throne

When Mecatol Rex was attacked, the Federation of Sol's bombs destroyed much of the imperial palace. As ground troops combed through the rubble, one squad found the Throne of the Lazax Emperor, damaged yet intact. The ancient seat of power and symbol of Lazax might and authority had somehow survived the direct hit that destroyed much of the palace. The soldiers took several pieces of the throne's precious-metal form as souvenirs. Over the centuries, pieces of the throne have been passed down from one generation to the next, sold on the black market, or stolen.

The Shards of the Throne serve as tangible reminders that the mightiest of empires can be brought low by the will of the people. That same will can carry a being from pauper to king, if they can gather an army to carry them there. Possession of a shard of the Throne of Emperors is seen as a symbol of status in high society, and as a badge of might among military forces. Some believe that no one can truly claim the Throne of Emperors unless they possess all of the shards and restore the throne to its former glory.

While openly displaying a Shard of the Throne, your character upgrades the ability of any Coercion checks and Presence-based skill checks they make twice.

TABLE 2–7: ARTIFACTS

Type	Encum	Price	Rarity
Circlet of the Void	1	3,000,000	9
Dominus Orb	3	100,000,000 (R)	10
Immortal Cuirass of the Imperial Guard	3	9,000,000	9
The Obsidian	4	50,000,000	10
Prophet's Tears (one vial)	0	2,000,000	8
Reaper	2	5,000,000	8
Shard of the Throne	0–4	8,000,000	9

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[Chapter 3] Vehicles of the Imperium

Each of the Great Civilizations has found a way to move among the stars—and many other civilizations have as well. Some cultures build their starships in shipyards from metal and plastics, while other ships are grown with superhard plant matter, crystalline carapaces, or even flesh. Whatever their origin or material composition, these vessels soar through the void, bringing commerce, community, and in some cases, conflict to neighboring systems.

Space-capable vessels are not the only vehicles seen in the galaxy. Spacefaring travelers do not simply walk on distant planets. Land-cruising vehicles are as numerous as their spacefaring counterparts. Monorides zip through city traffic that is dominated by larger multipassenger carrums and haulers. Tanks and ramblers move and counter each other on the battlefield, while titanic mechs stride alongside and over them.

Simply put, vehicles make interstellar governing, travel, and warfare possible.

Looks Different, Handles the Same

While methods of technological advancement differ from one culture to another, the majority of vehicles in Embers of the Imperium operate similarly regardless of which civilization made them. While the Federation of Sol favors mass-drives, heavy armor, and laser cannons, these fundamentally work the same as the Arborec's photosynthetic engines, regenerative hulls, and bioelectric cannons. The vehicles represented by a particular vehicle type overviewed in this chapter share similar statistics whether made by the Hacan, Letnev, Yssaril, Muaat, or any of the other fledgling empires. Some cultures deploy specific models of vehicles, but even these ships could be reskinned and utilized by other species (with some appropriate modifications and narrative descriptions).

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Using Vehicles in Embers of the Imperium

Vehicle rules were first introduced as optional rules in the Genesys Core Rulebook. In Embers of the Imperium, they serve a more prominent and important role. It is a challenge to design an adventure set in the Imperium where vehicles do not play some sort of important role, even if that role is simply to convey characters from one planet to another.

In Embers of the Imperium, player characters have opportunities to face off against opponents in vehicles regularly, and no location for this is as likely as in space. Pirates, rogue merchants, and hostile warships are only a small cross section of the threats PCs may face. Familiarity with the vehicle rules will help the players and Game Master enjoy and facilitate these epic space opera–styled encounters.

Voyaging Between Suns

Many civilizations have independently achieved superluminal travel, and a number of them employ different technological means for doing so. Despite the differences, however, all methods of superluminal travel must follow the same laws of physics and thus operate similarly in certain aspects.

One of the quirks of FTL travel is that it is impossible to achieve it while too close to a large gravity well, such as a planet or sun. Ships must reach a certain distance from a gravity well before they can break the lightspeed barrier. Likewise, if a ship traveling at a superluminal velocity tries to fly into a planet or a star, the gravity well forcibly decelerates it down to a subluminal speed when it gets too close.

While traveling at superluminal speeds, ships can make course corrections, communicate with other ships in formation or at close range, and observe the galaxy around them through gravitational sensors (visible light and sensor waves tend to behave oddly when a ship is moving faster than they are). Faster-than-light travel requires about five Solar astronomical units to exceed the light barrier for most interstellar transports, which takes most of a Mecatol day, and roughly the same distance to safely slow down.

Of course, smaller high-end couriers can break the lightspeed barrier much faster and achieve speeds many times the speed of light, which is good since they have to stop to refuel much more often. Larger ships can make it from one end of the galaxy to the other without refueling, but they also take much longer to reach top speed, though some military vessels can sacrifice fuel to achieve better acceleration when warranted.

Making Best Speed

While space is mostly empty, empty is very relative if you are moving fast enough. Space has countless stellar anomalies, including gravitational rifts, asteroid fields, nebulae, and supernovas, all of which can slow or violently end a superluminal journey in an instant. Even though stars and planets decelerate a ship traveling above the speed of light before it gets too close, smaller space debris such as asteroids and interstellar dust do not create a large enough gravity well to have the same effect. Instead, they simply smash through a ship at superluminal velocities—something that proves fatal for the ship in question. Ships must rely on antimass deflectors to protect them from these impacts, and even then, these systems are not foolproof (especially against larger asteroids).

TABLE 3–1: FTL SPEEDS AND RANGES

Range	Examples
Short	A nearby star system only a few dozen light-years away. Only able to travel for a day or less at FTL before needing to refuel.
Medium	Anywhere within the borders of most of the Great Civilizations; a few hundred light-years from a well-established spaceport. Able to travel for weeks at FTL without refueling.
Long	To Mecatol Rex from the edge of the galaxy; thousands of light-years from home. Able to travel for months at FTL without refueling.
Extreme	From the edge of one spiral arm to another; tens of thousands of light-years or more. Able to travel for over a year at FTL without refueling.
Speed	**Examples**
Slow	Takes a week to get to a nearby star system, several weeks to cross a single civilizations' territory, months to reach Mecatol Rex, and many years to cross the galaxy.
Average	Takes a couple of days to reach a nearby star system, a week to go from one end of a single civilization's territory to the other, a month or less to reach Mecatol Rex, and six months to a year to cross the galaxy.
Fast	Takes less than a day to reach a nearby star system, a couple of days to cross a civilization's territory, a couple of weeks to reach Mecatol Rex, and a couple of months to cross the galaxy.
Very Fast	Takes a few hours to reach a nearby star system, no more than two days to cross a civilization's territory, a week or so to reach Mecatol Rex, and a month or so to cross the galaxy.

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For short journeys under a few thousand light-years, which might take just a few days, most navigators stay in their local arm of the galaxy, plotting a course around known systems and anomalies or even taking advantage of gravitational rifts to get some extra speed.

However, for longer journeys, most pilots prefer to get into the empty FTL lanes between the galaxy's arms, where there are few stars and even fewer anomalies. These "spacelanes" are the highways of interstellar travel, though given their vast size, the chances of two ships colliding are astronomically small.

Stellar Hazards

Interstellar travel is dangerous. Much of the universe is a black, empty void. Within that vastness are stars and planets, but also a multitude of nebulae, debris fields, comets, radiation fields, and destructive energy waves. The major routes between worlds are continuously mapped and updated at local starports and space stations, but ships are just as likely to try to "off-road" through regions that are not as up-to-date on their astrocartography. Those craft may encounter previously unknown areas of hazardous stellar terrain. Ships traveling faster than light may not realize they're about to pass through such hazards until it's too late. Other captains may knowingly fly through stellar hazards in an attempt to save time, cut costs, or surprise or evade an opponent.

FTL Speeds and Travel Distances

Travel in the galaxy, even at superluminal speeds, can take a long time. That's because the galaxy is huge beyond comprehension. Almost no ship has the range to get from one side of the galaxy to the other, but FTL mass-drives still make an interstellar empire a possibility.

For game purposes, the speed a ship can reach in FTL travel, and the distance it can traverse before needing to refuel (its "range"), are kept as a few broad, abstract categories. These should usually be sufficient to keep the game moving. The categories are listed in **Table 3–1: FTL Speeds and Ranges**, along with some examples.

Plotting a Course

When a ship wishes to travel to another system or sector of space, the navigator must chart a route. They make an Astrocartography check with a difficulty based on the frequency of travel between where they are and where they wish to go, shown in **Table 3–2: Charting a Route Difficulty**. The difficulty of the check is upgraded once if the route passes near any known stellar hazards. If the check fails, the ship encounters a stellar hazard of the Game Master's choice. The stellar hazard's intensity rating starts at 1. ♲ ♲ may be spent to increase the hazard's rating by 1, and ⊗ may be spent to increase the hazard's rating by 2.

If the ship intentionally plots a route that takes it through a stellar hazard, the ship encounters that hazard even if the Astrocartography check is successful. Results of ♲ or ⊗ can still be spent to make the hazard worse.

TABLE 3–2: CHARTING A ROUTE DIFFICULTY

Route	Difficulty	Examples
Safe	◆◆	A common FTL trade route between two systems within short range of each other (see **Table 3–1**).
Risky	◆◆◆	A destination that is within short distance, but with a badly mapped route that is infrequently traveled; a destination within medium or long range that is along a route on a common travel corridor (see **Table 3–1**).
Treacherous	◆◆◆◆	Any route through uncharted space, or any route to a destination that is at extreme range (see **Table 3–1**).

Traveling through Hazards

A starship pilot who finds themself in a stellar hazard, either as a consequence of a failed Astrocartography check or because they have intentionally navigated their ship into it, must make a Piloting or Operating check to travel through the hazard safely. The difficulty of the check depends on the rating of the stellar hazard, as outlined in **Table 3–3: Stellar Hazard Intensity**. What happens on a successful or failed check depends on the specific hazard.

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TABLE 3–3: STELLAR HAZARD INTENSITY

Rating	Difficulty
1	Easy (◆)
2	Average (◆ ◆)
3	Hard (◆ ◆ ◆)
4	Daunting (◆ ◆ ◆ ◆)
5	Formidable (◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆)

Asteroid and Other Debris Fields

Normally composed of asteroids, eons-old cosmic matter that failed to form into stars and planets, asteroid or debris fields may also consist of annihilated starships from ancient battles. Most starships are equipped with antimass deflectors, which push debris away from the hull. While they help prevent a lethal impact at FTL speeds, they're not infallible.

A debris field with a stellar hazard intensity rating of 1 or 2 is a less dense field that has ample room for starships to pass through. A rating 3 field is a thick cloud of drifting rocks, like the Jorun Asteroid Field. A field with a rating of 4 or 5 is a substantial field of large and fast-moving objects or is dangerous in some other way (perhaps it includes volatile gases or starship wrecks containing unexploded ordnance).

If a Piloting or Operating check to traverse a debris field fails, the ship collides with an object the antimass deflectors could not push away in time. The ship suffers a minor collision (see page 222 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). Each ⮝ ⮝ or ⊛ may be spent to reduce the Critical Hit result by 10, to a minimum of 01. ⟲ may be spent to have the ship suffer 2 hull trauma per ⟲ spent. ⊗ may be spent to turn the collision into a major collision.

Nebulae

Nebulae are reaches of space filled with an assortment of dust, gases, and radiation. Some are interstellar nurseries, clouds of dust and hydrogen illuminated by the hot stars forming within. Smaller so-called planetary nebulae, the remnants of novas, are spherical shells of ionized gases that used to be the photospheres of red giant stars and are now expanding away from a pulsar. Both types of nebula can be seen within the Human visual spectrum, and both can reveal structural details and aesthetic elements when looked at in different wavelengths, such as microwaves, ultraviolet light, or X-rays.

Nebulae can be navigational nightmares, as gases corrode detector and shield arrays and, if the ship is moving at superluminal speeds, can even scar the hull. A nebula's stellar hazard intensity rating signifies the density of its gaseous form, as well as the composition of those gases. Most nebulae have a stellar hazard intensity rating of 1 or 2. Nebulae composed of heavy, ionized gases that clog a starship's emitters have a rating of 3 or higher.

When a Piloting or Operating check to pass through a nebula fails, the ship has encountered significant pockets of the nebula's component elements. The ship suffers 2 system strain, plus 2 additional system strain for each ⟲ spent. ⊗ may be spent to reduce the ship's defense to 0 until it undergoes at least a day of maintenance and cleaning at a shipyard.

Supernovas

Only the most daring, desperate, or foolhardy attempt to travel through a supernova. A supernova is the destructive shock wave caused by the explosive death of a star, and the expanding radius of destructive cosmic rays that can reach across dozens or even hundreds of light-years.

A ship traveling at FTL speeds that collides with the expanding wall of a supernova burst can suffer catastrophic damage. The radiation and particles from a supernova can shatter hulls and cause serious injury on a cellular level to the crew.

The ship of a pilot who fails a Piloting or Operating check while navigating through a supernova suffers an amount of hull trauma equal to five times the supernova's stellar hazard intensity rating. The pilot may spend ⮝ to reduce the total damage suffered by 1 per ⮝ spent. The GM may spend ⟲ to cause one occupant of the ship to suffer a Critical Injury, and spend ⊗ to cause the ship to suffer a Critical Hit. Both may be spent multiple times.

Sensor Ranges

Nearly every ship and vehicle has some sort of passive and active sensors, from the simple proximity sensors on a carrum to the massive sweep arrays aboard a dreadnought. For the most part, these sensors serve a narrative purpose, allowing characters to "see" in the depths of space out beyond range of their eyes. However, if the GM needs to determine an effective range for sensors, they can use the following guidelines:

Passive sensors can be used out to strategic range. They have no problem detecting a ship that is not making an effort to hide (such as a ship with its engines running, or one that has its own active sensors going). If, at the GM's discretion, another ship or other object is making some effort to go unnoticed (such as keeping its engines off or using sensor baffles), then the operator must make a Vigilance check with a difficulty set by the GM to detect the target.

Active sensors can be used out to long range. They always require a Perception check to use, with a difficulty set by the GM to detect the target depending on how well hidden it is.

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NPC Crews

Ships and vehicles need crew to operate, and if they're not being operated by the party, they'll need a crew of NPCs. Various NPC profiles appropriate for crew can be found in **Chapter 6**. Profiles for military crews can be found in the **Soldiers of the Great Civilizations** section starting on page 248, while profiles for vessels of the Great Threats can be found in the **Agents of the Great Threats** section starting on page 255.

Gravity Rifts

Whether a naturally occurring black hole or an artificially created singularity, a gravity rift is among the most dangerous stellar hazards travelers can encounter. It's a point in space where gravity is so strong that nothing can escape from it. In spite of this, for the bravest ship captains—or the most reckless—a gravity rift represents an opportunity to vastly shorten the amount of time it takes to traverse the galaxy.

A pilot who encounters a gravity rift can attempt to skim the edge of the rift's event horizon, using its intense gravity to slingshot their ship to even greater FTL speeds. The pilot must make a **Daunting** (◆◆◆◆) **Piloting** or **Operating check**. If the check is successful, the time it takes the starship to reach its intended destination is reduced by 10% per ✲, to a maximum of 50%. Otherwise, the Pilot can attempt to avoid the rift with a Piloting or Operating skill check with a difficulty based on the rift's hazard rating.

If either skill check fails, the starship suffers 10 hull trauma and two Critical Hits. ♺♺♺♺ or ⊗ may be spent to have the ship pulled into the gravity rift. In most cases, being sucked into a black hole would cause a ship to be crushed into infinitely small particles or shunted to an alternate realm where survival is almost zero. Game Masters can use this to have the PCs appear somewhere else in the galaxy, with or without some sort of time passage and with no memory of where they have been since they were drawn into the gravity rift. The PCs may have survived due to some random happenstance or because they encountered something that helped them survive (likely at a cost).

Knockdown and Vehicles

The Knockdown quality can be used to affect vehicles. For mechs, this works the same as any character being knocked down. The mech is knocked prone, its speed drops to 0, and it can't move until the pilot performs a move maneuver to get it to stand.

For other vehicles, being knocked down may represent being rolled, flipped, jammed into terrain where it can't move, or in the case of flying vehicles, knocked into an uncontrollable tailspin. In these cases, the vehicle's speed is reduced to 0 and it can't move until the pilot makes a successful **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Piloting** or **Driving check**. If the vehicle flies, the pilot may only have a certain amount of time to get it moving before it crashes into the ground.

Vehicles

The rest of this chapter is devoted to examples of ground and space vehicles seen throughout the galaxy. Some of the vehicles presented are common enough that nearly every civilization has some version of them. Others are examples of the unique vehicles produced by a specific society.

As a reminder, all vehicles use planetary scale (see page 224 in the Core Rulebook) rather than personal scale. This includes their weapons. The only exceptions are when weapons have the Personal Scale item quality.

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Personal Transport

No matter the culture, people wish to travel farther and faster than they can walk, crawl, or slither. Whether the means of conveyance is wheels, tracks, hovering grav-fields, or even sets of mechanical legs, most civilians move around via some form of personal transport vehicle. Roadways and skylanes are filled with one-person monorides, family-carrying carrums, and cargo haulers of various sizes.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
2	3	+0	0	0

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
4	4

CONTROL SKILL: Driving.
COMPLEMENT: 1 driver.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 3–6, depending on the model.
CONSUMABLES: 8 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 6–10, depending on model.
PRICE/RARITY: 3,500 aurei/2.
WEAPONS: None.

Alternate Variants

The personal transport vehicle characteristics represent the basic carrum model of civilian transports. For other vehicles, make the following modifications to the vehicle characteristics.

Monoride

Reduce silhouette to 1, increase handling to +2, reduce hull trauma threshold to 2, reduce passenger capacity to 1, reduce encumbrance capacity to 2, reduce price to 2,500 aurei.

Hauler

Reduce handling to –1, increase hull trauma threshold to 15, increase system strain threshold to 8, reduce passenger capacity to 2, increase encumbrance to 80, increase silhouette to 3, increase price to 6,500 aurei.

Rambler

"Rambler" is a colloquial term for any lightly armed and armored fighting vehicles. They are designed to deliver soldiers to the battlefield and support them with heavy weapons. Most rely on six to eight oversized wheels, but some use tracks or even articulated legs. Not as hardy as tanks or mechs, ramblers are vulnerable to most vehicle and heavy infantry weapons. Even with this relative fragility, most troopers would gladly traverse the battlefield in a rambler rather than doing it on foot.

Ramblers are often used by Keleres as their main mode of ground transportation, especially when traversing the wildernesses of far-flung worlds or while in hostile territory.

All-Terrain

When making a Driving check to direct the vehicle, your character may remove ■ ■ added to the check due to terrain.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
2	4	+1	0	1

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
8	10

CONTROL SKILL: Driving.
COMPLEMENT: 1 driver, 1 gunner.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 4.
CONSUMABLES: 12 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 15.
PRICE/RARITY: 17,000 aurei/5(R).

WEAPONS

1 turret-mounted assault cannon (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 1; Critical 4; Range [Long]; Auto-fire).

Defensive grenade launcher (Fire Arc Forward, Left, and Right; Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Blast 6, Personal Scale).

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Light Mech

"Mech" is a colloquial term for armored military vehicles. Most are bipedal or quadrupedal, but some have dozens of legs, while a few utilize other means of locomotion, such as grav-pods or tracks. High-speed light mechs serve as scouts, flankers, and pursuers. Lightly armed and armored, they are still able to bring notable firepower to different points on a battle line at a moment's notice.

All-Terrain

When making a Driving check to direct the vehicle, your character may remove ■■ added to the check due to terrain.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
2	3	+2	1	1

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
12	10

CONTROL SKILL: Driving.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 1 gunner.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 2 (using external handrails).
CONSUMABLES: 10 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 4.
PRICE/RARITY: 23,000 aurei/5(R).

WEAPONS

Shoulder-mounted light beam cannon (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Breach 1).

Arm-mounted burster grenade launcher (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 10; Critical 5; Range [Long]; Blast 10, Personal Scale).

Mecha-slam (Fire Arc All; Brawl; Damage 0; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 4, Knockdown).

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Alternate Variants

Sardakk N'orr Valkyrie Exoskeleton

Increase speed to 4; reduce hull trauma threshold to 8; increase price to 25,000 aurei; replace arm-mounted burster grenade launcher with twin boosted plasma projectors (Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 8, Burn 4, Linked 1, Personal Scale).

Jol-Nar Shield Paling

Increase speed to 4; reduce hull trauma threshold to 10; increase price to 54,500 aurei; increase range of shoulder-mounted light beam cannon to extreme, and the weapon gains Accurate 2 and Linked 1 item qualities. Allied vehicles or characters within medium range of this vehicle gain defense 2.

Argent Flight Aerie Sentinel

Remove arm-mounted burster grenade launcher; mecha-slam gains Breach 1 and Linked 1 item qualities.

Heavy Mech

While light mechs scout enemy positions and deal with flanking maneuvers, heavy mechs are built to assault main battle lines. Often ten to fifteen meters high, these colossi stride across the battlefield like metallic gods, raining fire and death on those who dare to face them. As with light mechs, most heavy mechs are bipedal or quadrupedal, but some civilizations build ones with different locomotive systems.

All-Terrain

When making a Driving check to direct the vehicle, your character may remove ■■ added to the check due to terrain.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
4	2	+0	1	3

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
18	14

CONTROL SKILL: Driving.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 2 gunners, 1 systems operator.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 1 week.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 25.
PRICE/RARITY: 71,500 aurei/6(R).

WEAPONS

2 twin-barreled beam cannons (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Breach 2, Linked 1).

Shoulder-mounted shard missile battery (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 2; Range [Strategic]; Breach 4, Guided 3, Slow-Firing 1, Vicious 3; may not be used against targets within medium range).

Mecha-slam (Fire Arc All; Brawl; Damage 2; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

Alternate Variants

Hacan Pride of Kenara

Increase speed to 3; reduce armor to 2; increase consumables to 2 weeks; replace one twin-barreled beam cannon with arm-mounted shudder lance (Fire Arc All; Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1, Breach 2, Superior).

Federation ZS Thunderbolt Mk2

Increase hull trauma threshold to 20; reduce system strain threshold to 12; reduce price to 62,500 aurei; replace shoulder-mounted shard missile battery with multibarrel mass driver battery (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Extreme]; Auto-fire, Knockdown, Slow-Firing 1).

Letnev Dunlain Reaper

Reduce defense to 0; increase hull trauma threshold to 24; reduce price to 70,000 aurei; replace shoulder-mounted shard missile battery with hammerfall missile launcher (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Strategic]; Blast 5, Guided 4, Slow-Firing 2; when the Blast item quality is triggered, all characters within medium range suffer one hit; may not be used against targets within long range).

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Naaz-Rokha Eidolon

As unique as the symbiotic nature of the Naaz-Rokha, the fighter known as the Eidolon is a variable-geometry mech that can transform from a bipedal walker into a heavy starfighter. The starfighter mode has a delta-shaped profile with large dual thrusters along the sides of the craft; in the sleek cockpit, the two pilots sit in parallel alongside the Eidolon's main weapon: a mag-powered single-barreled assault cannon. Twin seeker missile tubes under the wings complete its fighter-killing armament.

When it deploys into its bipedal form, the mech stands with a vaguely feline shape and posture. In the walker mode, the bonded pair of pilots are seated with the Rokha in the main cockpit in the torso and the Naaz operating a smaller cockpit in the head. Two arms unfold to carry the assault cannon as if it were an infantry rifle. The missile tubes cannot fire in this configuration, but in exchange, magnetic field projectors generate a blade of contained plasma along each forearm. With these plasma reapers, the Eidolon can carve up enemy mechs and vehicles many times its size.

Variable-Geometry Transformer

Once per turn, the Eidolon's pilot may spend a maneuver to transform it from a bipedal, felinoid walker mech to a starfighter (or vice versa). While in starfighter form, the Eidolon's maximum speed becomes 4, it can fly, and it loses the ability to use the arm-mounted plasma reapers. The assault cannon's fire arc is limited to Forward while in starfighter mode. While the Eidolon is in mech form, the crew may not fire the seeker missile tubes, and the Eidolon can no longer fly.

Unexpected Transformation

After the Eidolon transforms, until the start of the Eidolon pilot's next turn, upgrade the difficulty of all combat checks targeting the Eidolon once.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
3	3	+2	2	2

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
15	12

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 1 gunner (Eidolons are designed for Naaz-Rokha physiology, but some have been adapted to allow other species).
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 12 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 6.
PRICE/RARITY: 60,000 aurei/8(R).

WEAPONS

Twin seeker missile tubes (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Guided 5, Linked 1, Slow-Firing 1; may not be used against targets within short range).

Multi-use assault cannon (Fire Arc Forward, Left, and Right; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Vicious 1).

Twin arm-mounted plasma reapers (Fire Arc All; Melee; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Breach 2, Linked 1, Vicious 3).

Shuttle

Shuttles are ubiquitous with short-distance space travel. Capable of space-to-surface transport, they are the standard transportation for moving around a planet or within a star system. Many larger starships carry several shuttles to facilitate transport of equipment and personnel to other ships or planetary surfaces. If they have any drawbacks to their utility, it's that they are too small to mount an FTL engine.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
3	3	-1	0	0

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
12	10

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot and 1 copilot (optional).
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 8 (increase to 18 by reducing encumbrance capacity to 0).
CONSUMABLES: 1 day.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 80.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.
PRICE/RARITY: 12,000 aurei/3.
WEAPONS: None.

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Nekro Mordred

The largest of the Nekro's ground-based machines, Mordreds have a hulking armored form that inspires fear and terror in anyone forced to stand against one. Each controlled by three virus AIs, Mordreds seek out enemy vehicles to destroy at a distance or cleave through up close with their vicious scythe-like limbs. Once they deal with any armored opposition, they join their smaller counterparts in slaughtering any organics still alive.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
4	2	+0	0	3

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
25	15

CONTROL SKILL: Driving.
COMPLEMENT: 1 Nekro AI pilot, 2 Nekro AI pilot gunners.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 1 year.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 0.
PRICE/RARITY: Not for sale/9(R).

WEAPONS

Chest-mounted positron emitter (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Accurate 1).

Two arm-mounted scythes (Fire Arc All; Melee; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 3).

Plasma projector maw (Fire Arc Forward, Left, and Right; Gunnery; Damage 12; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Blast 12, Burn 3, Personal Scale).

Interceptor Starfighter

Interceptors are small, single-seat attack craft that are integral to any empire's starfighter corps. They pave the way for heavier starfighter attacks, intercept intruders, and screen larger starships from enemy fighters and bombers. Interceptors are built for unmatched speed in order to perform their role, and they rely on it as their primary form of defense. If they are not able to eliminate their opposition quickly, they may succumb to a well-placed or lucky shot. Interceptors are too small to mount FTL drives and require a carrier for interstellar transport.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
3	5	+3	2	0

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
8	8

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 4 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 4.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.
PRICE/RARITY: 40,000 aurei/4(R).

WEAPONS

Twin light beam cannon (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Breach 1, Linked 1).

Seeker missiles (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Guided 5, Limited Ammo 4; may not be used against targets within short range).

Alternate Variants

Argent Flight Shrike

Increase defense to 3; increase system strain threshold to 10; increase price to 47,500 aurei; increase seeker missiles' damage to 5.

Mahact Dominus Strike Drone

Reduce defense to 0; reduce consumables to 2 hours; change price to "not for sale;" replace all weapons with disassembler burst cannon (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 1; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Vicious 2); drone is operated remotely by a linked cloned pilot brain network (treat as a minion with a wound threshold of 4, a rating of 2 in all characteristics, and group skills in Piloting and Gunnery).

Xxcha Xxlun Interceptor Fighter

Reduce maximum speed to 4; reduce handling to +2; increase armor to 1; reduce price to 32,000 aurei; replace twin light beam cannon with light assault cannon (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire).

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Escort Fighter

The backbone of any empire's starfighter force, escort fighters are two-person fightercraft that carry more arms, armor, and fuel than their lighter interceptor counterparts. These multi-role craft are capable of escorting bombers or other starships, dogfighting with enemy starfighters, and performing strikes against enemy starships and fortifications. Some escort fighters even have limited FTL drives, allowing them to launch strikes at targets several light-years distant.

If the escort fighter has one drawback, it's that it excels at nothing. Other fighters carry more armaments and ordnance, or are faster, or travel farther at superluminal speeds. However, the ever-changing and chaotic nature of space combat creates a demand for adaptable fightercraft.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
3	4	+1	2	1

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
14	10

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot and 1 electronics/weapons officer.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 2 days.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 8.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.
PRICE/RARITY: 45,000 aurei/6(R).

WEAPONS

Beam cannon (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Breach 2).

Anti-ship missiles (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Extreme]; Breach 2, Guided 3, Limited Ammo 2; when attacking a target of silhouette 3 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1; may not be used against targets within short range).

Seeker missiles (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Guided 5, Limited Ammo 2; may not be used against targets within short range).

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Alternate Variants

Letnev Ashbringer

Increase hull trauma threshold to 20; change FTL range/speed to short/slow; replace anti-ship missiles with plasma firebombs (Fire Arc Aft; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 2, Burn 3, Inaccurate 1, Limited Ammo 2; when the Blast item quality is triggered, all characters within short range suffer one hit).

Sol F5 Hurricane Mk5

Change FTL range/speed to medium/slow; increase price to 48,000 aurei; replace beam cannon with twin light assault cannon (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Auto-fire); replace anti-ship missiles and seeker missiles with lightning mass driver warhead system (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Linked 5; after firing, this weapon runs out of ammo and must be reloaded at a base or carrier).

Hacan Scarhawk

Increase handling to +2; reduce hull trauma threshold to 12; reduce price to 32,500 aurei; replace anti-ship missiles with cluster missile pod (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 4; Critical 5; Range [Long]; Linked 3, Slow-Firing 1).

N'orr Kess'or Fury

Increase handling to +3; increase armor to 2; reduce hull trauma threshold to 10; reduce price to 35,000 aurei; replace beam cannon and seeker missiles with multifiring beam array (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Breach 1, Linked 2).

Vuil'raith Skullstalker

The flesh-demons of the Vuil'raith do not build ships as most species would understand them. Instead, they employ strange creatures from their hellish dimension that have the ability to fly through space by some unknown means. The largest of these creatures serve as warships for the Cabal, while smaller creatures fill the role of fightercraft. The Skullstalker earned its moniker because the creature is encased in bone armor, its prow resembling an avian skull. It relies on this thick exoskeleton for defense while it closes to unleash volleys of bone quills filled with a potent acid. Swarms of these vile beasts ride on the skin of the larger Vuil'raith "vessels," ready to launch themselves into the fray when an enemy is sighted.

Demonship

This vessel is a living creature with a singular consciousness. The consciousness acts like a character during structured encounters, but it cannot leave the ship. It also does not have a wound threshold; physical attacks and effects that inflict wounds have no effect on the consciousness.

The consciousness counts as having a rating of 3 in all characteristics. It also has ranks in the following skills: Cool 1, Gunnery 3, Vigilance 3. It does not have a strain threshold, but it may perform additional maneuvers (the ship suffers 2 system strain when it does so). If the ship exceeds its system strain threshold, then the consciousness is incapacitated.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
3	4	+1	0	2

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
10	13

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 consciousness.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: Eternal.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 0.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.
PRICE/RARITY: Not for sale/9(R).

WEAPONS

Bone quills (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Burn 1).

Mark Hastings (Order #52282139)

Naalu Hybrid Crystal Fighter

These FTL-capable fighters are constructed from an array of carefully shaped crystals held in place by a rugged aerospace frame, hence the "hybrid" moniker. The crystals enhance the telepathic ability of the Naalu pilot to aid in combat. The hostile intent of an enemy pilot is sensed by the Naalu, warning them to juke out of the way of incoming fire. The Naalu pilot is also able to sense the thoughts of their targets, enabling them to predict in which direction their quarry will attempt to evade them.

Telepathy-Enhancing Crystal Hull

When this ship is piloted by a non-Druaa, reduce its defense to 0 and remove the Accurate item quality from all of the ship's weapons.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
3	5	+2	4	0

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
6	12

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 16 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 4.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Short/average.
PRICE/RARITY: 80,000 aurei/9(R).

WEAPONS

Forward-mounted pulse beam (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 3, Auto-fire).

Long-fang missiles (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Long]; Accurate 3, Blast 3, Limited Ammo 3).

Titan with Saturn Booster

Though the Titans of Ul do employ spaceships, the largest Titans are far too enormous to fit aboard any normal vessel. These Titans can still travel in space, however, by means of massive booster pods attached to their torso. The armored pods house powerful engines that enable true spaceflight at up to superluminal speeds. In times of war, the Titans also augment their bodies with massive particle beams and grav-field projectors, and they cover themselves with additional ablative armor.

Titan

This ship is both a ship and a single Titan. For the character's profile, use the **Elder Titan** on page 241. However, this vehicle's system strain and hull trauma thresholds also represent the Titan's wound and strain thresholds (augmented by the additional armor plating). If damage exceeds the hull trauma or system strain threshold, the Titan is also incapacitated and suffers a Critical Injury.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
4	3	-1	1	4

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
20	20

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 Titan.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 1 month.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 50.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Long/slow.
PRICE/RARITY: Not for sale/10.

WEAPONS

Particle beam (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Superior, Vicious 2).

Grav-field projector (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 1; Critical 5; Range [Medium]; Tractor 4).

Mark Fleshner (Order #32282150)

Nekro Vandal

Vandals are the smallest and most common of the Nekro Virus's starfighter drones. They are fast, nimble, and deadly. In large space battles, Vandals operate in flights of three to five, sharing telemetry and targeting data with each other. Working together, they can tear apart enemy starfighters and light warships, even resorting to suicide attacks against larger vessels.

Superior Acceleration

When using the Accelerate vehicle maneuver, the Vandal reduces the amount of system strain suffered by 1, to a minimum of 0.

Drone Strike

Vehicles without the Massive special rule that are involved in a collision with a Vandal always suffer a major collision (see page 222 of the Genesys Core Rulebook). After the collision is resolved, the Vandal is destroyed.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
2	5	+2	2	1

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
5	5

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot AI.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 6 days.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 0.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.
PRICE/RARITY: Not for sale/10(R).

WEAPONS

Spinal positron emitter (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1).

Combat Dropship

Combat dropships have the dangerous mission of transporting troops from orbiting starships to battlefields on the ground. While armed, their weapons are designed for close defense and bombarding a landing zone. Dogfighting or taking on enemy armor is usually left to escort fighters or attendant mechs.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
4	3	-1	1	3

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
14	12

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot and 1 copilot/gunner.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 30 troopers.
CONSUMABLES: 6 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 40, plus one rambler or light mech.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.
PRICE/RARITY: 35,000 aurei/4.

WEAPONS

Chin-mounted slug autocannon (Fire Arc Forward, Port, and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Inaccurate 1).

Rocket pods (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 12; Critical 4; Range [Long]; Blast 10, Disorient 4, Personal Scale).

Mark Hessman (Order #22282136)

Courier Ship

Even the most powerful FTL communications can only cross a few dozen light-years (and they become so scrambled with distance that only the simplest distress beacons can be decrypted over ten light-years away). Message couriers and their remarkable starships provide the only truly reliable long-distance communication. Couriers speed from one star system to another, slowing down only long enough to transmit messages to the planets and stations in one system while picking up messages for another. Once they are finished, they accelerate to superluminal speeds and head to the next system along their route.

Most courier ships mount the biggest FTL engines available for their size. They require massive amounts of power and as little mass as possible. Courier ships mount no weapons, have minimal armor plating, and contain space for only one or two passengers. Gaining passage on a courier ship is very expensive due to the couriers' tight schedules, but they are the fastest way to cross the galaxy.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
4	5	+2	2	1

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
14	24

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot and 1 navigator/engineer.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 2.
CONSUMABLES: 2 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 35.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Long/very fast.
PRICE/RARITY: 108,000 aurei/7.
WEAPONS: None.

Overture Cutter

Given the severe limits on FTL communications and the time it takes to relay messages via courier, most civilizations rely heavily on ambassadors as liaisons. Ambassadors often travel in overture ships, diplomatic cutters designed to protect them from harm, provide offices for their staff, and host conferences and talks. Almost without exception, these vessels are unarmed, but heavily protected. They often have facilities designed to accommodate all manner of life-forms, since not all species in the galaxy are carbon based. Inevitably, these facilities are well-furnished to the point of opulence.

Adaptable Medbay

When making a check to heal wounds, strain, or Critical Injuries while on this ship, your character may always use the Medicine skill (even if the target cannot normally be healed with Medicine skill checks) and add ✲ ⮝ to the results.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
4	3	+0	4	2

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
22	20

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot and 1 navigator/engineer.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 14.
CONSUMABLES: 2 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 40.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/average.
PRICE/RARITY: 72,000 aurei/7.
WEAPONS: None.

Mark Fischer (Order #52262150)

Long-Range Scout Ship

Even after tens of thousands of years, there remain large expanses of unexplored space in the galaxy. Long-range scout ships are built for endurance to reach remote corners of the galaxy. They are equipped with comforts similarly sized ships are not, since the crew regularly contends with isolation for weeks or months.

Scout ships tend to be as bulky as medium-sized interstellar freighters. They pack that space with rugged FTL drives and significant fuel stores, ample cargo space for supplies, and some minor defensive armaments. Their sensor systems are top notch, allowing scout ships to conduct thorough planetary and system scans. Many scout ships carry a ground vehicle large enough to transport the entire crew if necessary.

Keleres teams are commonly issued long-range scout ships for their assignments. As long-range, FTL-capable craft with adequate cargo space and the ability to transport cargo or a light vehicle, scout ships fulfill many of their needs. Keleres who expect trouble may "up-gun" their scout ship, sacrificing some cargo or crew space to pack more arms and armor onto their craft.

Resilient

When this vehicle suffers a Critical Hit while your character is operating it, you may spend a Story Point to roll a second result and choose the result you prefer.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
5	3	+0	2	1

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
34	20

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 1 copilot/navigator, 1 engineer/sensor operator.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 7.
CONSUMABLES: 1 year.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 100 and two silhouette 2 ground vehicles.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Extreme/average.
PRICE/RARITY: 100,750 aurei/5.

WEAPONS

1 dorsal and 1 ventral extended-focus beam turret (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Accurate 1, Breach 2).

Mark Hastings (Order #5282139)

Star Bomber

Built for long-distance assaults, star bombers deploy heavy ordnance against enemy starships and fortifications (although in space, they rarely drop actual bombs). Some are FTL capable, and more are regularly deployed in large groups with escort fighters for protection. They are not built for dogfighting and must rely on their shields and defensive turrets for protection.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
4	3	-2	2	2

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
20	20

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 1 navigator/weapons officer, 2 gunners.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 6 days.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 20.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/slow.
PRICE/RARITY: 57,500 aurei/6(R).

WEAPONS

2 defensive beam turrets (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]).

Twin bombardment rocket launch tube (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 4, Limited Ammo 8, Linked 1; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

Seeker torpedoes (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Strategic]; Breach 2, Guided 2, Limited Ammo 2; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1; may not be used against targets within short range).

Alternate Variants

Federation B84 Typhoon Torpedo Bomber

Reduce defense to 1; increase hull trauma threshold to 30; replace twin bombardment rocket launch tube and seeker torpedoes with hullbreaker torpedoes (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Strategic]; Breach 2, Guided 3, Limited Ammo 4; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1; may not be used against targets within medium range).

Argent Flight Voidshrike Bomber

Increase handling to –1; increase defense to 3; reduce hull trauma threshold to 17; change FTL range/speed to none/none; reduce price to 44,000 aurei; replace seeker torpedoes with lariat disabler missiles (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 1; Critical 4; Range [Long]; Limited Ammo 4; if this hits a vehicle, the vehicle suffers 5 system strain, spend ⩓ to increase the system strain suffered by 1).

Winnu Princeps Subjugation Bomber

Increase maximum speed to 4; increase defense to 3; change FTL range/speed to none/none; reduce price to 42,000 aurei; replace twin bombardment rocket launch tube and seeker torpedoes with bombardment rocket racks (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 4, Linked 3, Slow-Firing 1; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

Yssaril Infiltrator

As the undisputed masters of stealth and reconnaissance, the Yssaril, unsurprisingly, have developed a stealth ship that enables them to slip into hostile territory unnoticed. Infiltrators are strangely shaped vessels, covered with oblique-angled surfaces that help defeat active scanners, and constructed with transparasteel. Heavy baffles hide the ships' thruster emissions, and internal heat sinks let them hold onto waste heat until it can be discharged where it won't be noticed. Finally, the most recent versions of these vessels have sophisticated light/wave deflectors that render them invisible to the naked eye, though this system is very power intensive.

The trade-offs are significant; Infiltrators are underpowered and slow. They also carry minimal armament, since any weapons fire is likely to get them noticed.

Stealth Systems

Any checks made to spot or detect this ship, and any combat checks targeting this ship, upgrade their difficulty twice.

Light/Wave Deflector

As a maneuver, the pilot of this vessel may activate its light/wave deflector. While the light/wave deflector is activated, the ship is completely invisible to sight and visual sensors. For every five minutes the light/wave deflector remains active (or one round in structured gameplay), this vessel suffers 1 system strain. System strain cannot be repaired while the light/wave deflector is active.

Mark Fischer (Order #32282150)

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
4	2	-1	0	0

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
16	25

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 1 navigator/stealth operator.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 14.
CONSUMABLES: 3 weeks.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 40.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/slow.
PRICE/RARITY: 110,200 aurei/8(R).

WEAPONS

Ventral-mounted short-barreled autocannon (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Inaccurate 1).

Stellar Transport

The most basic and most common starships, stellar transports and freighters can be found at every starport, space station, and trade route in the galaxy. They vary in size and cargo capacity depending on the needs of their captains and ownership. The larger superhaulers are typically owned and operated by shipping conglomerates and trade guilds. Smaller light freighters are operated by both independent traders and their guild-affiliated counterparts.

Freighters carry a diverse assortment of cargo. Some are dedicated liquid or gas haulers. Transports move commodities, passengers, or a combination across the spacelanes. To keep their overhead down, most captains operate their ships with as little crew as possible. Freighters only carry basic weaponry, relying on local security and military forces to keep pirates off their backs.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
5	2	-2	2	1

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
40	20

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 1 captain, 1 navigator, 1 engineer, 1 cargo master.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 20 (increase to 200 if encumbrance capacity is reduced to 100).
CONSUMABLES: 3 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 700, plus 1 shuttle.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Long/slow.
PRICE/RARITY: 70,000 aurei/4.

WEAPONS

1 dorsal and 1 ventral defensive beam turret (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]).

Alternate Freighters

The stellar transport vehicle characteristics represent the average medium-sized freighter. Game Masters wishing to use stellar transports of different sizes should modify their profiles as follows.

Small Tramp Freighter

Reduce silhouette to 4; increase handling to –1; reduce hull trauma threshold to 30; reduce passenger capacity to 10, reduce encumbrance capacity to 200, and remove shuttle; change FTL range/speed to medium/average; reduce price to 62,000 aurei.

Superhauler

Increase silhouette to 6; reduce speed to 1; reduce handling to –3; increase hull trauma threshold to 60; increase passenger capacity to 60; increase encumbrance capacity to 8,000, and increase number of shuttles to 2; increase price to 175,000 aurei.

Mark Hassman (Order #5228213)

Pirate Raider

Pirate attacks are a constant threat throughout the galaxy. They prey upon any starship they consider worth the risk to attack. Most pirates operate from raiders: fast, armed, FTL-capable transports that carry a significant amount of cargo. Pirate raiders are built for quick strikes and quicker escapes. In a stand-up fight against a similarly sized warship, they would be outgunned.

Common pirate tactics are to attack from ambush, either by hiding inside a nearby nebula or debris field or by simply running dark and silent until they're within striking distance of their target. If victims are lucky, the pirates may only disable their ship and haul off any commodities. If they're unlucky, the pirates may destroy their quarry after looting it for everything that isn't welded down.

Boarding Tube

While engaged with a stationary ship, your character may spend an action to activate the boarding tube and cut into the side of that ship, allowing characters to pass between the two vessels without space suits or shuttles and without worrying about locked hatches.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
5	3	+0	1	3

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
42	24

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 30 pirates.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 40 prisoners.
CONSUMABLES: 2 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 500, plus 1 interceptor fighter and 1 shuttle.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Long/slow.
PRICE/RARITY: 107,500 aurei/5(R).

WEAPONS

1 forward and 1 aft heavy beam cannon turret (Fire Arc Forward, Port, and Starboard or Fire Arc Aft, Port, and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Breach 2).

2 port and 2 starboard short-barreled autocannons (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Inaccurate 1).

Mag-grapple (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 0; Critical 6; Range [Medium]; Tractor 4).

Carrier

Big, slow, ungainly vessels, carriers are nevertheless invaluable warships necessary for planetary invasions. They can be outfitted to transport soldiers and landing craft to distant worlds, serve as a mobile base for starfighters, or both. However, their singular focus means they tend to be lightly armed and armored for their size, and most admirals consider them too valuable to risk in frontline combat.

Combat Operations Center

While in the carrier's COC, as a maneuver, your character may direct up to 4 minion-piloted starfighters to merge into a new minion group. Starfighters must be of the same type to be affected.

Massive

When making an attack targeting this vehicle, the Critical rating of any weapons used counts as 2 higher.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
7	2	-4	2	3

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
70	35

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 200 officers and crew.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 500 soldiers (increase to 2,000 soldiers and 10 light mechs or ramblers if the interceptors, escort fighters, and bombers are removed).
CONSUMABLES: 6 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 1,000, plus 24 interceptors, 36 escort fighters, 12 bombers, 8 dropships, and 4 shuttles.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Extreme/slow.
PRICE/RARITY: 2,750,000 aurei/7(R).

WEAPONS

10 antifighter beam turrets (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Breach 1; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, reduce difficulty by 1; these weapons are scattered across the hull of the carrier, so only two may be fired at any one target).

Mark Fischer (Order #32282150)

Alternate Variants

Winnu *Nobilis*-class Planetary Assault Carrier

Increase passenger capacity to 2,500 soldiers; change encumbrance capacity to 200, plus 24 interceptors, 24 bombers, 12 dropships, 6 shuttles, 10 light mechs, and 5 ramblers; increase price to 3,350,000 aurei; add capital-grade graviton cannon (Fire Arc Forward, Port, and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 7; Critical 2; Range [Extreme]; Breach 3, Slow-Firing 2).

Naalu Aethersong Carrier

Increase handling to –2; increase defense to 3; reduce hull trauma threshold to 65; increase price to 3,000,000 aurei; gain the Mindlink Node vehicle special rule (all Naalu starfighter pilots within extreme range of the Aethersong Carrier add ☐ to Piloting and Gunnery checks they make and can communicate with each other telepathically).

Arborec Nightthorn Haven

Reduce maximum speed to 1; reduce defense to 0; increase armor to 4; increase hull trauma threshold to 120; replace bombers with 30 additional interceptors; increase price to 3,500,000 aurei; gain the Defense Spore Cloud vehicle special rule (all non-Arborec pilots within medium range of the carrier add ✕ ♺ to all Piloting and Gunnery checks they make).

Federation Strike Carrier

The heart of the Federation of Sol's military might are its strike carriers. These relatively fast, long-range warships carry scores of fighters, bombers, and dropships to combat theaters across the galaxy. Strike carriers are more heavily armored and defended than most fleet carriers as well, and they carry enough weapons that ambitious captains may risk them in the line of battle.

Combat Operations Center

While in the carrier's COC, as a maneuver, your character may direct up to 4 minion-piloted starfighters to merge into a new minion group. Starfighters must be of the same type to be affected.

Massive

When making an attack targeting this vehicle, the Critical rating of any weapons used counts as 2 higher.

Resilient

When this vehicle suffers a Critical Hit while your character is operating it, you may spend a Story Point to roll a second result and choose the result you prefer.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
7	3	-4	2	5

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
80	40

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 250 officers and crew.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 2,000 soldiers.
CONSUMABLES: 4 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 250, plus 24 interceptors, 36 escort fighters, 18 bombers, 15 dropships, 3 shuttles, 10 ramblers, and 2 heavy mechs.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Long/average.
PRICE/RARITY: 5,000,000 aurei/8(R).

WEAPONS

12 antifighter beam turrets (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Breach 1; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, reduce difficulty by 1; these weapons are scattered across the hull of the carrier, so only three may be fired at any one target).

2 turreted mass driver bombardment arrays (Fire Arc Port or Fire Arc Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Long]; Blast 3, Linked 5, Slow-Firing 1).

Mark Hastings (Order #52282139)

Destroyer

Destroyers are a collective term for fast, maneuverable, FTL-capable escort warships. They are bigger than corvettes but smaller than cruisers, usually with a length or width of one to two hundred meters. Traditionally they serve as escorts or picket line defenders, shielding vulnerable ships from enemy flankers.

Typically, destroyers perform two roles: harassing larger warships with torpedoes and seeing off starfighters with their considerable antifighter weaponry. Destroyers can be overwhelmed by large swarms of starfighters, but they are likely to eliminate many of them in the process. However, most destroyers stand little chance by themselves against cruisers or larger warships. Generally, this means the only times destroyers operate independently of larger warships is on scouting missions or when escorting convoys, where their armament is sufficient to deal with most pirates.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
5	4	+0	2	3

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
45	30

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 20 officers and crew.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 15.
CONSUMABLES: 4 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 100, plus 1 shuttle.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/fast.
PRICE/RARITY: 250,000 aurei/7(R).

WEAPONS

1 forward dual heavy beam cannon turret (Fire Arc Forward, Port, and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Breach 2, Linked 1).

1 port and 1 starboard heavy accelerator flak cannon (Fire Arc Port or Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 2; Range [Long]; Blast 3; Vicious 2; when the Blast item quality is triggered, all ships within short range of the target suffer one hit).

3 port and 3 starboard antifighter beam turrets (Fire Arc Port or Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Breach 1; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, reduce difficulty by 1).

Dual dorsal hullbreaker torpedo tubes (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Strategic]; Breach 2, Guided 3, Linked 1, Slow-Firing 2; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1; may not be used against targets within medium range).

Mark Hastings (Order #32482139)

Alternate Variants

L1Z1X *Aeturnus* Heavy Destroyer

Increase defense to 3; increase hull trauma threshold to 50; increase price to 270,000 aurei; replace dorsal hullbreaker torpedo tubes with 1 aft dual heavy beam cannon turret (Fire Arc Aft, Port, and Starboard; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Breach 2, Linked 1) and 1 dorsal heavy accelerator flak cannon (Fire Arc All; Damage 3; Critical 2; Range [Long]; Blast 3; Vicious 2; when the Blast item quality is triggered, all ships within short range of the target suffer one hit).

Xxcha *Xxintral* Escort Destroyer

Reduce handling to –1; increase armor to 4; increase price to 265,000 aurei; replace forward dual heavy beam cannon turret with 1 forward heavy accelerator flak cannon (Fire Arc Forward, Port, and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 2; Range [Long]; Blast 3; Vicious 2; when the Blast item quality is triggered, all targets within short range of the target suffer one hit).

Argent Flight Strike Wing Alpha

Increase handling to +1; increase system strain threshold to 35; increase passenger capacity to 40; reduce encumbrance capacity to 50; change FTL range/speed to medium/very fast; destroyer now carries 2 interceptor starfighters and 1 dropship; increase price to 275,000 aurei.

Corvette

These small yet capable warships are the workhorses of galactic navies. Corvettes serve as interdictors, system patrol craft, police vessels, pirate hunters, and customs inspectors. Requiring a smaller crew than other starships, corvettes devote more space to better weapons and engines. Their FTL range is fairly short, but they tend to have powerful engines for quick responses.

Corvettes are cheap enough that most governments can afford scores or even hundreds of them to defend their territory. Often the first vessel stationed at a newly established colony is a corvette. However, the corvette's short FTL range means that they seldom operate far beyond their home systems.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
5	4	+1	2	2

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
35	20

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 6.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 10.
CONSUMABLES: 6 weeks.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 100.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Low/fast.
PRICE/RARITY: 135,500 aurei/6(R).

WEAPONS

1 dorsal dual heavy beam cannon turret (Fire Arc All; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Breach 2, Linked 1).

Paired anti-ship missile tubes (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Extreme]; Breach 2, Guided 3, when attacking a target of silhouette 3 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1; may not be used against targets within short range).

1 port and 1 starboard autocannon (Fire Arc Port or Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire).

Alternate Variants

Xxcha *Ccostis* Border Guardian

Reduce handling to 0; increase armor to 3; reduce consumables to 2 weeks; reduce encumbrance capacity to 50.

Muaat *Firos*-class Corvette

Increase hull trauma threshold to 40; increase price to 140,000 aurei; replace dorsal duel heavy beam cannon turret with dorsal incendos cannon (Fire Arc Forward, Port, and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Burn 2).

Yin Brotherhood Helix

Reduce hull trauma threshold to 30; increase complement to 12; corvette now carries 1 interceptor starfighter.

Mark Hassman (Order #5228213)

Dreadnought

Dreadnoughts are the core of any major battlefleet. Huge, dangerous, and ruinously expensive to build and operate, these are prestige ships for most of the Great Civilizations. The major powers of the galaxy maintain their fleets of dreadnoughts to intimidate and deter their foes. Ironically, this, plus their extensive cost, means most navies tend to carefully husband these vessels, keeping them in "home" or "reserve" fleets unless full-fledged war breaks out and leaving cruisers and destroyers to do most of the real work of maintaining an interstellar empire.

All dreadnoughts are built around powerful weapons. They carry the heaviest of the capital-grade weapons, which includes basically any guns lethal enough to crack the hulls of other battle line warships (or any smaller ships that stray into range). Dreadnoughts protect this with the thickest armor and most powerful shields a ship can carry, and they also carry a squadron or two of starfighters and some missile batteries for antifighter and ground bombardment work.

However, all the firepower, armor, and defensive systems come at a price. Dreadnoughts are slow, relatively, and do not have the sheer range or stamina of a cruiser. Battle lines of dreadnoughts tend to be unwieldy, clumsy formations, their only saving grace being the sheer bloody power at their disposal.

Massive

When making an attack targeting this vehicle, the Critical rating of any weapons used counts as 2 higher.

Resilient

When this vehicle suffers a Critical Hit while your character is operating it, you may spend a Story Point to roll a second result and choose the result you prefer.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
8	2	-3	3	6

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
80	45

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 200 officers and crew.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 200 passengers and soldiers.
CONSUMABLES: 8 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 400, plus 12 interceptors or escort fighters, 3 shuttles, and 2 dropships.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/average.
PRICE/RARITY: 10,000,000 aurei/9(R).

WEAPONS

1 forward, 1 port, and 1 starboard triple capital-grade beam turret (Fire Arc Forward, Port, and Starboard, or Fire Arc Forward and Port, or Fire Arc Forward and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 11; Critical 3; Range [Extreme]; Breach 2, Linked 2, Vicious 4; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

4 seeker missile pods (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Guided 5; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, reduce difficulty by 1).

1 dorsal capital-grade bombardment array (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 12; Critical 4; Range [Extreme]; Blast 8, Linked 5, Slow-Firing 2; when the Blast item quality is triggered, all ships within medium range of the target suffer one hit; when attacking a target that is not an immobile station or planetary structure, increase difficulty by 2).

Alternate Variants

Federation of Sol *Thunderhead* Dreadnought

Increase speed to 3; reduce handling to –4; reduce system strain threshold to 40; reduce price to 9,000,000 aurei; replace dorsal capital-grade bombardment array with 1 port and 1 starboard mass driver broadside (Fire Arc Port or Fire Arc Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 9; Critical 4; Range [Long]; Accurate 1, Linked 4; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

L1Z1X *Imperialis*-class Superdreadnought

Increase armor to 7; increase hull trauma threshold to 100; this dreadnought can now carry 36 interceptors or escort fighters instead of 12; increase price to 14,000,000 aurei.

N'orr Exotrireme

Increase price to 18,000,000 aurei; replace all triple capital-grade beam turrets with 4 port and 4 starboard capital-grade plasma batteries (Fire Arc Port or Fire Arc Starboard; Damage 15; Critical 2; Range [Extreme]; Burn 1; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1); gain the Ram vehicle special rule (when the exotrireme deliberately collides with another ship [see page 222 of the Genesys Core Rulebook], the other ship suffers 30 damage to its hull trauma threshold and adds +40 to the Critical Hit result it suffers; the exotrireme reduces the result of the Critical Hit it suffers by 20).

Mark Fischer (Order #32282159)

CLASH OF THE LEVIATHANS

The *Flefleurn* arched around Vorhal's southern pole, its razor-barbed form silhouetted against the blue-white glare of the planet's surface. It rose up underneath the L1Z1X superdreadnought's keel, like a predator fish stalking its prey. Suddenly, the Letnev battleship's weapons spoke; multiple beams of searing yellow-white linking the two vessels for a long moment. Shields collapsed and the beams gouged glowing trenches across the superdreadnought's armored hide. It shuddered, then slowly rotated on its axis. Abruptly, its own turrets retched beams of hellish red, and it was *Flefleurn's* turn to burn.

"What are you doing?" Mrhag Rawn snapped. "We can't bring a corvette into a duel with a super-dread!"

Jora shoved the engine controls forward, sending the *Randoring* racing towards the dueling dreadnoughts. She glared at the Saar sitting in the navigator's chair across the corvette's tiny bridge. "We've got missiles. Maybe we can land a lucky hit while it's distracted. And," she gestured to the fightercraft starting to swarm from the superdreadnought's launch bays, "we can keep those off the *Flefleurn* long enough to give it a fighting chance."

"More likely they'll cut us in half with a stray shot," Mrhag spat back.

Jora looked away, her gaze drifting to Vorhal's surface. "They…don't have any defenses down there, you know?" She sighed. "You're right. I'm taking *Randoring* in, but everyone else, you can take the savior pod down to the surface. I can't ask you to do this with me."

There was a long moment of silence. Then Bols Norton's voice crackled over the comms. "You don't have to ask," her fellow Human said calmly from the engine room. "I'm staying, and so is Kkormiz."

"No question," Callistine Gerardin agreed over the comms. "As if I would leave a ship of fellow Letnev to fight without me."

Jora looked over at Mrhag. "Pod's all yours, if you want it."

He wouldn't meet her gaze. "Damn it, someone's got to keep us on a proper bearing."

Jora turned back to her controls, feeling a swelling of pride in her heart. "Thank you. All of you." She took stock of the ongoing combat, then began keying in commands. "Alright, Mrhag, take us on an elliptical course, get us in their baffles. Bols, I want those engines singing, and Kkormiz, stand by to launch both tubes on my command. Calli, run out the autocannons and pound any fighters that get in range."

As the *Randoring* lunged forward, she couldn't help baring her teeth in a fierce grin.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Hacan Solbek

If one travels to the most remote outpost on the edge of colonized space, there is still a considerable chance of encountering a Hacan solbek in orbit nearby. These boxy vessels serve as traveling bazaars for the Emirates of Hacan. They frequently travel from one system to the next, selling wares from the Hacan homeworlds as well as providing commodities from other cultures the solbek has visited.

Much of a solbek's interior is devoted to a trading bazaar and cargo storage. To maximize space and capacity, many of the crew are skilled in starship operations, negotiation, and combat. The skill of these "martial merchants" has been a surprise to pirate crews who attempted to plunder a solbek.

Traveling Bazaar

While a Hacan solbek is within a star system, reduce the rarity modifier of the system by 1.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
6	2	-1	3	3

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
48	32

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 27 crew.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 39.
CONSUMABLES: 6 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 5,000, plus 4 shuttles.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Long/average.
PRICE/RARITY: 250,000 aurei/6.

WEAPONS

3 port and 3 starboard heavy plasma scorpios (Fire Arc Port or Fire Arc Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Extreme]; Burn 1).

1 dorsal and 1 ventral antifighter beam turret (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Breach 1; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, reduce difficulty by 1).

Cruiser

Cruisers are the workhorses in most of the navies of the Great Civilizations. They form the main battle line of smaller naval engagements and serve as flankers in massive space battles. However, they can also be dispatched to patrol borders, escort vital convoys, or strike exposed enemy positions. Indeed, their long range and endurance make them excellent merchant raiders, and most navies expect to use their cruisers to cut enemy supply lines in times of war.

The main weapons of cruisers perform well against similarly sized warships and when used for orbital bombardment. Cruisers carry relatively few weapons for dealing with starfighters, relying on escorts for fighter defense, or on their speed to eliminate the starfighters' base before the fighters can launch.

Massive

When making an attack targeting this vehicle, the Critical rating of any weapons used counts as 2 higher.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
6	4	-2	2	5

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
60	40

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 60 officers and crew.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 24 soldiers, 50 others.
CONSUMABLES: 5 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 200, plus 3 shuttles or dropships.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Extreme/fast.
PRICE/RARITY: 3,250,000 aurei/7(R).

WEAPONS

Spinal capital-grade assault cannon (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 11; Critical 4; Range [Extreme]; Auto-fire, Slow-Firing 1, Vicious 2; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

2 port and 2 starboard capital-grade beam turrets (Fire Arc Forward and Port, or Fire Arc Forward and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Breach 2; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

1 dorsal and 1 ventral antifighter beam turrets (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Breach 1, when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, reduce difficulty by 1).

Mark Fischer (Order #5282159)

Alternate Variants

Nekro Hunter

Increase defense to 3; change complement to 25 Nekro AI programs; increase passenger capacity to 100 assault mechanisms; change price to "not for sale"; replace spinal capital-grade assault cannon with Valefar contagion launcher (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 5; Range [Medium]; Breach 4, Inaccurate 1; may spend ⮝ ⮝ or ⚙ on a successful hit that deals damage to have one Valefar assimilation swarm adversary board the target vessel).

Mentak Coalition *Corsair*-class Cruiser

Increase handling to 0; increase defense to 3; reduce armor to 4; change FTL range/speed to extreme/very fast; cruiser now carries 6 interceptor starfighters; reduce price to 3,100,000 aurei.

Hacan War Zebek

Change FTL range/speed to long/fast; increase price to 3,500,000 aurei; replace spinal assault cannon with triple ventral hullbreaker torpedo tubes (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Strategic]; Breach 2, Guided 3, Linked 2, Slow-Firing 2; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1; may not be used against targets within medium range); add 1 prow capital-grade beam turret (Fire Arc Forward and Port, or Fire Arc Forward and Starboard; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Breach 2; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

Vuil'raith Leviathan

Only rumors and whispers tell of the largest and most dangerous of the Vuil'raith, the dreaded leviathans. Each demon-creature is as large as a dreadnought, and the Cabal uses them in much the same manner. However, in truth, they are still one vast and incomprehensible alien organism with an insatiable need to consume its foes.

Massive

When making an attack targeting this vehicle, the Critical rating of any weapons used counts as 2 higher.

Resilient

When this vehicle suffers a Critical Hit while your character is operating it, you may spend a Story Point to roll a second result and choose the result you prefer.

Demonship

This vessel is a living creature with a singular consciousness. The consciousness acts like a character during structured encounters, but it cannot leave the ship. It also does not have a wound threshold; physical attacks and effects that inflict wounds have no effect on the consciousness. When the consciousness takes its turn, it may perform one attack with each of its weapons.

The consciousness counts as having a rating of 3 in all characteristics. It also has ranks in the following skills: Cool 1, Brawl 4, Gunnery 4, Operating 5, Vigilance 4. It does not have a strain threshold, but it may perform additional maneuvers (the ship suffers 2 system strain when it does so). If the ship exceeds its system strain threshold, then the consciousness is incapacitated.

SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
9	3	-1	0	5

HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD
150	75

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 1.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 1,000 Vuil'raith of varying types.
CONSUMABLES: Indefinite.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 500, plus 60 Vuil'raith skullstalkers.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Long/average.
PRICE/RARITY: Not for sale/9(R).

WEAPONS

Gaping maw (Fire Arc Forward; Brawl; Damage 30; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 4).

Bladed tentacle sweep (Fire Arc Port or Fire Arc Starboard; Brawl; Damage 13; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; may spend ⚙ on a successful combat check to have all enemy ships within range suffer one hit from this attack, dealing base damage + 1 per ✲).

12 darkfire emitters (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Long]; Accurate 2; these weapons are scattered across the hide of the leviathan, so only three may be fired at any one target).

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[Chapter 4] The Galaxy

The galaxy can be a dangerous place, but also one filled with wonders. While there are still many emergent civilizations that have yet to agree on the true shape of their planet, or which stellar masses orbit which, most beings affiliated with one of the great powers learn the basics of stellar geography and intergalactic travel not long after they achieve literacy. While this information was once culturally distinct to most home systems, the Lazax Empire erased much of that heritage, unifying its worlds under one map, with its throneworld of Mecatol Rex on top of the galaxy.

Some cultures have retained their ancient understanding of the stars. Several, like the Emirates of Hacan, still reference their constellations in religious services. Others, like the Clan of Saar, have secret maps that lead to galactic rally points should one of their asteroid homes ever fall to a rival. However, most still teach the Lazax map of the galaxy, even as the Lazax themselves fade into the past.

The destruction of the Hall of Cartography on Mecatol Rex some three millennia ago deprived the great powers of data on hundreds of millions of surveyed worlds. To this day, exploration and star surveying is a lucrative trade, and all of the Great Civilizations pay handsomely for the discovery and mapping of habitable systems, or those rich in rare resources.

Stellar Geography

The galaxy is vast, with several hundred billion stars packed into a spiral structure over one hundred thousand light-years wide. From a central bar of densely packed stars, two major arms twist outward. Most of the stars in these arms have several orbiting bodies, and many support life (or could be terraformed to do so). Floating between the arms are spurs; strips of stars spill

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from the main arms like sparks from a raging fire. Just behind the main arms are a pair of "minor arms" composed primarily of gas pockets, nebulae, and stellar nurseries, though they also contain absorbed spurs with star densities comparable to those of the main arms.

The Inner Core

Within the center of the galaxy is a nigh-unnavigable, dense megacluster of ten million stars and gravitational anomalies surrounding a supermassive black hole. Not to be confused with the Core Systems, the Inner Core is relatively small, only a few parsecs across. Extending from the north and south ends of the Inner Core are the poles, dense pillars of stars that each extend approximately ten thousand light-years.

The gravitational forces in this region are powerful and unpredictable enough to rip starships apart at any moment, and civilian space traffic avoids the bubble of gravitational danger around it and the poles altogether. Most FTL drives simply cannot attain more than a fraction of their potential velocity within the gravitational danger zone, which extends 10,750 light-years to the east and west of the Inner Core and 18,000 light-years to the north and south along the poles.

The Mahact are one of the few cultures with the technological capacity for dealing with the unpredictable gravitational forces of the Inner Core. In fact, their homeworld of Ixth rests just outside the southeastern edge of the Inner Core. The Dark, the nebula where many spot Empyrean gatherings, is several thousand light-years into the gravitational danger zone of the northwestern Inner Core.

The Ring

Surrounding the gravitational danger zone are two star-filled arms that appear as a ring around the Inner Core. A number of inhabited systems lie within the ring, including the home system of the Yssaril to the west. A bare majority of systems in the ring, particularly those in the northern half, are mapped, which makes this region one of the best explored in the galaxy. Navigators often include those in the northernmost section when referring to the Core Systems.

The Northern Arm

The Northern Arm of the galaxy officially begins at Mecatol Rex, the galactic capital in the Gul system. It winds galactically west through the Core Systems and then south, passing through Shaleri space and the Mahact Plateau before circling north beyond the Locust Star-Forming Region.

The Northern Minor Arm

Just within the Northern Arm, tracing its path like a shadow, is the Northern Minor Arm. It has a sizable spur along the middle of the arm that forks near the Arill Cluster, centered near the Sol system. The Northern Minor then trails all the way out to the Mirist Stars.

The Southern Arm

Extending from the southern pole and starting near the Loki system, the Southern Arm winds to the east, encompassing the Quann Wormhole and Xxlak system. It travels north through the Unicorn Nebula and Quenwari Cluster before heading west to the Quann Wormhole and then south through the Phorus and Muaat systems. It has two sizable spurs: the first is known as the Morgallen Cluster, and the second branches near the Ordinian system, which leads all the way to Hope's End.

The Southern Minor Arm

The Southern Minor Arm begins near the Primor system, just south of the northeastern Alpha Wormhole. It wraps around the edge of the galaxy westward through Nekro space to Mordai II.

The Languages of the Galaxy

Every species and faction has its own languages. While some cultures have hundreds or even thousands of individual dialects, as societies become more technologically advanced and interconnected, one language tends to come to dominate a planet.

To some extent, the same thing has happened to the wider galaxy. During the height of the Lazax, univoca was used as the language of Imperial business (and thus, the language of the Imperium in general). Though the Lazax fell more than three thousand years ago, univoca has remained a language of history, learning, and universal communication. Even during the current rise of factionalism, and the corresponding popularity of societies' indigenous tongues, various evolved forms of univoca still remain as the standard for communication when one travels off-world.

Of course, even if someone doesn't speak univoca, most savants are perfectly capable of providing real-time translations of any major language in the galaxy.

Types of Star Systems

While navigators, scientists, and cartographers classify systems by their star type (which includes number, size, and color), equally important to Keleres agents is the political status of a star system or the worlds within it. The Galactic Council, and the labyrinth of treaties that prop it up, afford the Keleres varying degrees of official access to star systems depending on those systems' current status. This affects which actions agents may take unilaterally and which require permission or oversight.

Homeworlds

A home system is a planetary system where a species of intelligent life originally developed, or one a civilization has claimed as its home system in lieu of anywhere else to call home. A majority of the thousands of civilizations in the galaxy never colonize any worlds outside their home system. But home systems are among the most culturally distinct, honoring traditions, arts, and customs all their own, when they comprise a world or worlds with just the right atmospheric conditions and gravity to thrive.

Home systems typically have significant military defenses against invasion and strict customs enforcement. Most have specific districts for off-worlders, particularly those from other factions. The Keleres have to tread carefully in these star systems, lest they step on the wrong toes or even accuse the wrong being of a crime and escalate intergalactic tensions. When Keleres are invited to investigate in a home system, the locals usually assign a liaison or guide of some sort to make sure the agents don't wander or conduct any extracurricular activities.

Military Worlds

Many civilizations maintain worlds or star systems devoted primarily to their militaries. These systems range from industrialized ones hosting shipyards that build hundreds of warships and army bases that train millions of troops to small outposts monitoring strategic navigational chokepoints or serving as covert bases. Many are known to the other powers or are even publicly declared, but just as many, if not more, don't officially exist on any star charts or survey reports.

The Keleres have almost no jurisdiction in or around a military facility unless expressly invited and extended jurisdiction.

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In any other case, Keleres should expect to be treated as enemy combatants. Even if a Keleres has been seconded from the military in control of one of these systems, that military will probably at least publicly treat the Keleres as the Council's agent first and foremost. Interfering in a military installation of a Great Civilization could invite a vicious backlash from that civilization's Council representative, so the Tribunii are known to disavow any Keleres caught snooping.

Colonies

Prosperous and populous civilizations often spread to nearby stars, either terraforming dead worlds and moons; colonizing empty, life-sustaining ones; or pushing indigenous beings toward extinction. Colonies might be ancient, revered, and every bit as populous as a civilization's homeworld; the Letnev planet Wren Terra is one example. Other colonies might include a half-dozen farming families and a rusty freighter, like some of the fringe worlds colonized by the Mentak Coalition.

Either way, the Galactic Council affords certain rights to officially recognized colonies that put each under their parent civilization's jurisdiction for most legal matters. Of course, if that parent civilization is part of the Galactic Council, it extends jurisdictional authority to the Keleres as an act of cooperation, though it tends to disavow any illegal activity.

Tributary Worlds

Tributary worlds are typically the home systems of unique civilizations that through war, negotiations, or unlucky geography, ended up subservient to a greater power. Some tributary worlds, such as systems bordering Nekro space, willingly enter into such a contract in exchange for help facing external threats.

Most tributary worlds are free to govern their own affairs as they see fit, so long as they defer all foreign matters to their suzerain. The greater power oversees intergalactic trade, diplomatic relations, and spends their tributary's votes in the Galactic Council as if they were their own. The tributary also follows its suzerain into wars and shares alliances with friendly powers. Finally, most tributary worlds are expected to provide a tithe to their masters, often in the form of resources or a monetary tax.

However, there are no official regulations governing the rule of tributary systems; it depends entirely on the treaties drawn up between the greater power and the lesser. For example, many Great Civilizations expect that if any of their citizens break the law on a tributary world, they will be extradited to the homeworld instead of facing local justice. However, some Great Civilizations impose additional laws on their tributaries, or even meddle with local governance directly. The line between a tributary world, a vassal world, or a world that has been aggressively colonized can often be a blurry one. It also means that Keleres must study the laws of tributary worlds, the greater power they swear fealty to, and their shared relationship on a case by case basis to understand exactly how far their authority reaches.

Wormholes

Wormholes are essentially tunnels through the fabric of space-time itself, connecting several points in the galaxy. Scientists are unsure whether wormholes are natural phenomena, relics of some ancient civilization, or both. Whatever their origin, they are large enough that nearly any starship can travel through one and reach another end of it nearly simultaneously. This makes wormholes some of the most valuable real estate in the galaxy; wormhole entrances and any attendant planets or stars are jealously sought after by the various Great Civilizations. Any number of minor wars (and a few major ones) have been fought over control of just one entrance, and controlling an entire wormhole can make a civilization fabulously wealthy. The Galactic Council has thus attempted to regulate wormhole travel, but so far with little success.

The **Alpha Wormhole** has three known entrances. One is at the northern end of the ring, not far west of Winnu and Mecatol Rex, another is to the galactic south near the Mahact asteroid fields, and the final location is to the galactic northeast, between Xxcha and Jol-Nar space.

The **Beta Wormhole** has three identified entrances as well. The most notorious is the Quann Wormhole to the east. Another entrance is at the southeastern edge of the galaxy beyond the Sol system. The final location is the infamous Stygian Passage in the galactic west near the Kal-Geydr dual system, not too far from Nekro space.

The **Gamma Wormhole** is only a rumor; no government is sure where its entrances are or if it truly exists. However, many spacers tell stories of a completely separate wormhole that leads to several locations in the galaxy, and possibly some outside of known reality.

One further element that makes wormholes difficult to control is that their nature is not always static. There are recorded instances of entrances to the Beta and Alpha wormholes appearing unexpectedly in certain locations, then vanishing just as quickly as they appear.

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Independent Worlds

Rare, and only growing more so of late, independent worlds and systems are typically colonies that have declared their independence and cast off their home system's rule. Others are simple trade stations that have experienced a population boom and formed their own government. Independent systems are among the most diverse systems in the galaxy, and some, like Arcturus, have grown into great powers in their own right.

While some independent systems develop enough clout to dispatch their own representatives to the Galactic Council and treat with the Great Civilizations, others have simple treaties or noninterference pacts to protect them from being gobbled up by their neighbors. In each case, Keleres agents should make themselves aware of any jurisdictional irregularities the system poses for operations.

KELERES ALERT!

The various representatives who sit on the Galactic Council employ some of the fastest couriers in the galaxy to transfer messages between their home systems and Mecatol Rex. These vehicles spare no expense to make the best possible speed. Among the communications they carry are official requests for assistance, which the Keleres evaluate and assign to agents as missions. Agents usually get assigned an alert (or a handful of alerts) while on Mecatol Rex. However, agents already deployed might receive an alert from a return courier, which tends to improve response times in regions far from the capital.

Agents often spend time evaluating aid requests and writing Keleres Alerts during their probationary period, or sometimes while on medical or disciplinary suspension. Agent Hale has been with the Keleres since the organization's founding five years ago, and she has done it all. She has a reputation as one of the toughest agents still working, has been wounded in action at least a dozen times, and has been forced to leave fieldwork several times for recuperation. Agent Hale wrote the Keleres Alerts in the following section while recovering from nearly losing a leg during her last deployment.

Each alert includes a quick summary of the problem the team must investigate, as well as some standard cautions. Cautions can be specific warnings or can refer to a jurisdictional status. Green Zones require no special consideration, while Yellow Zones are areas in the jurisdiction of a Galactic Council member, where Keleres should avoid negatively impacting diplomatic ties. Red Zones are dangerous areas, like active war zones or Nekro space, where agents should exhibit extreme caution at all times.

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Mecatol Rex

STAR NAME/TYPE: Gul/yellow main sequence star

POPULATION STATUS: galactic capital, 357,200,000 (63% Winnaran, 9% Human, 7% Hacan, 2% Letnev, 2% Hylar, 2% Xxcha, 15% evenly divided between other starfaring species)

GOVERNMENT: Council of Delegates

MAJOR IMPORTS: foodstuffs, consumer goods, water

MAJOR EXPORTS: laws, treaties, war

Center of the universe, last remnants of a lost empire, greatest city in the galaxy, blasted wasteland. All of these describe Mecatol Rex, former seat of the Lazax Emperors. Even three thousand years after the Twilight Wars brought all the Lazax had built crashing into ruin, the ruined heart of their domain still holds sway over the souls of the galaxy's inhabitants. To those who see themselves as the next galactic overlords, Mecatol Rex is a prize to be won. To the representatives who serve on the Galactic Council, it is an arena. To the Winnaran Custodians who guard it, the world is a duty they may never be able to discharge. And to the Keleres and their support staff, it's home, for a while.

The Sea of Desolation

Three thousand years ago, Mecatol Rex was a vast and gleaming ecumenopolis. Every square kilometer had been covered in towering buildings, broad avenues, and carefully manicured parklands. For the Lazax, it was not only the seat of their government. For billions of them, it was their home.

All this changed when the Empire fell. A Sol fleet broke through Mecatol Rex's defenses and scoured the planet with an indiscriminate bombardment. Save for a few districts protected by defense grids, nearly the entire planet was blasted into rubble.

Millennia later, most of the planet remains a shattered wasteland of ash dunes and wind-worn rubble. The oceans are still choked with dust and toxic runoff, and the sky can fill with dust storms stretching across thousands of square kilometers. All of this is known as the Sea of Desolation.

Mecatol City

The only habitable land on Mecatol Rex is Mecatol City, the districts around the Galactic Council Chambers that survived the Sol bombardment relatively intact. In the years since, the survivors rebuilt those districts and began to migrate to them. These were almost entirely Winnarans, who had been largely ignored during the genocidal purges targeting the Lazax. As the galaxy collapsed into the chaos of the Twilight Wars, the remaining inhabitants of Mecatol City found themselves largely cut off from the rest of the galaxy. Only a few minor trading outposts and nearby colony worlds continued to send the occasional freighter.

The Winnarans adapted to life on Mecatol Rex as best they could. Large dust barriers were erected around the outer districts to protect against the vicious storms, deep aquifers were sunk to store potable water for the city, and great merchant halls and Imperial treasure vaults were converted into hydroponic farms to feed the remaining population. Then, with their survival assured for a while, a succession of Custodian leaders turned to attempting to rebuild Mecatol City's central districts to some semblance of their former glory.

The Custodians invested centuries of labor in reconstructing the monuments of their dead masters. Many of these, when finished, were sealed to be preserved for some distant future. While some Winnarans protested this waste of labor and resources, the Custodian leadership held firm. Even though the Lazax were dead, on some level their legacy must be preserved.

So Mecatol City existed in a state of limbo and relative isolation for three thousand years. While most of the inhabitants have lived out their lives as best they can, and even the Custodian leadership spends most of its time overseeing the smooth functioning of a city of hundreds of millions of people, the official policy is that all of Mecatol City remains in trust until a new power arises to claim the Imperial Throne.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Mecatol City Today

Today, Mecatol City is a city of monuments and edifices, dedicated more to the glories of the past than the people who live and work within it in the present. However, in the outer districts, some semblance of a bustling and busy metropolis endures.

The Council Chamber

After thousands of years of darkness, the great beacon atop the Council Chamber shines again. The representatives of the various Great Civilizations meet and debate in the towering inverted ziggurat, attempting to preserve galactic civilization while simultaneously gaining advantage for their own faction.

The Council Chamber dominates the skyline of Mecatol City, looming nearly a kilometer in the air and spreading to cast its shadow over all nearby buildings. The Chamber once housed thousands of representatives and their staffs, and is certainly spacious enough to hold the few hundred Council representatives that make up the Galactic Council now. While a few of the Great Civilizations have set up enclaves in the old Embassy Quarters, most of the smaller planets simply have their representatives work and even live within the Chamber.

Scholara Imperialis

The Imperial academy managed to survive the original bombardment relatively intact, and was one of the few remnants of the Empire to maintain some function during the Twilight Wars. A few dedicated scholars from various worlds worked with the Custodians to keep a small academy operational, and over the millennia a trickle of researchers and scientists would make the pilgrimage to Mecatol Rex to study and contribute their own knowledge.

KELERES ALERT!

You think you're safe on Mecatol Rex? Don't be foolish. This planet is full of a bunch of power-hungry backstabbers, each representing the most powerful governments in the galaxy. As soon as you joined the Keleres, you became a pawn in their game. Frankly, it's enough to make me wish I was getting shot at on Shardpoint.

But this planet's got plenty of old fashioned ways to kill you, too. Plenty of people in the rough districts like Keldive Slums who'll put a blade twixt your ribs for the aurei in your pocket. And if you go outside Mecatol City, take an environmental suit and supplies. The Sea is a proper desert, and what water you do find will kill you faster than dehydration.

Today the Scholara Imperialis remains a mainly independent institution, welcoming scholars from all corners of the galaxy. The only requirement to access the records and facilities is that one contributes some useful research of their own. In addition, a growing number of intellectuals have renounced their own allegiances and joined the Scholara, hoping to contribute to the expansion of galactic knowledge.

Adminus Mecatol

The original building of the Adminus was bombed into rubble, but the Custodians built a new administration center in the remains of the old Imperial Navy base fifty kilometers north of the Council Chambers. Here the Winnarans oversee the day-to-day rule of Mecatol Rex. The Adminus building also serves as the central command for the Custodian Guard, coordinating their peacekeeping operations throughout the city.

Ruins of the Imperial Palace

The broken ruins of the Imperial Palace still sit on the shore of the Dorus River. The Winnarans never rebuilt the palace, preferring to leave its husk as a reminder of the terrible history of Mecatol Rex. However, the Custodian Guard do maintain a strict guard around the palace grounds. Even thousands of years later, treasure hunters try to sneak into the palace, hoping to find something worth stealing. The Custodian Guard refuse to confirm it, but it's an open secret that in the heart of the bombed ruins, one can still find the shattered throne room and the broken remains of the Imperial Throne.

Keleres Facilities

The old Imperial Intelligence headquarters was destroyed in the bombing, and the Winnarans never rebuilt it. However, the reinforced sublevel bunkers were never breached, just sealed and forgotten. When the Council founded the Keleres, they gifted the entire Intelligence complex to them to serve as a headquarters; possibly because of the symbolism, probably because the land was the least valuable in Mecatol City.

Currently, the Keleres have expanded throughout the basement complex, although multiple sublevels still remain to be explored and mapped. A few areas were sealed off when the Keleres found relics of the old Imperial Intelligence and decided they were best kept a secret. The rest is a maze of situation rooms, armories, laboratories, archives, and a subterranean hangar complex.

Topside, the Custodians have allocated enough funds to hire a small reconstruction crew and clean up the old ruins. The goal is to construct a more imposing formal headquarters above the underground complex. With current funds, the new building should be complete within the next four decades.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

The Polar Castelle

The only structures that still stand in the Sea of Desolation are the polar castelle, a pair of planetary defense fortresses built on Mecatol Rex's north and south poles. There the whipping dust mixes with toxic, yellowed snow to eat at the black pour-form stone walls, while inside a few thousand Winnaran Custodian Guard count down the months until they can return to the relative comfort of Mecatol City.

Each castelle houses a massive orbital cannon capable of shattering a cruiser's keel, and four squadrons of short-ranged interceptor fighters. These, plus a half-dozen corvettes and the shorter ranged antifighter batteries ringing Mecatol City, constitute the bulk of Mecatol Rex's defenses. In truth, they are not even close to enough to see off a determined fleet assault. However, Mecatol Rex is also protected by its unique status as the former throneworld and seat of the Galactic Council. Whenever one of the Great Civilizations attempts to claim the planet for themselves, another of the galactic powers inevitably moves against them. The Custodian Guard only need to protect against pirate raiders and terrorist assaults.

Jun and Semani

Mecatol Rex is not the only planet in the Gul system. The rocky inner world of Jun and the outer mining colonies orbiting the gas giant Semani both hosted significant Lazax facilities and populations during the Empire's golden age.

Jun suffered the same brutal fate as most of Mecatol Rex. The world hosted massive military bases and supply depots for the Lazax fleets, and this made Jun an irresistible target. After the Federation fleet secured its blockade over the city, a squadron spent a month shelling Jun from orbit and turning it into an irradiated wasteland.

The Semani orbital colonies were spared direct assault, though they were plundered by Hacan privateers on multiple occasions. As Mecatol Rex's needs for exotic gases waned, many of the colonies were abandoned; today only a few small hab-stations and gas mines remain. It is rumored that at least one of the abandoned colonies has been retrofitted into a test bed for weapons research on the order of the Galactic Council.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Jord

STAR NAME/TYPE: Sol/yellow main sequence star

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 16.44 billion (94% Human, 1% Hacan, 1% Xxcha, 1% Saar, 3% other)

GOVERNMENT: federation led by a High Minister

MAJOR IMPORTS: foodstuffs, raw materials, ore

MAJOR EXPORTS: consumer goods, weapons, industrial equipment

The ancestral home of the Human species, Jord is rivaled by few other planets in its sheer diversity of climate and ecology. The planet was once on the brink of ecological disaster, but massive geoforming projects managed to stabilize Jord's climate, even as they altered the face of the world forever. These endeavors also spurred humanity's technological development and led to the invention of the mass-drive, allowing the species to leave their home and spread across the galaxy.

However, the Sol system has always remained humanity's heart. Billions of Humans throng the streets of Jord's grand old cities: Anyang, Albia, Rio Amazonia, Cairopolis, Malapore, and a hundred others. More live in the grand lunar caverns hollowed into Jord's large moon, or in the covered canyon cities on Ma'adim. All are citizens of the Federation of Sol, whose seat of government is the massive metropolis of New Moscow.

New Moscow

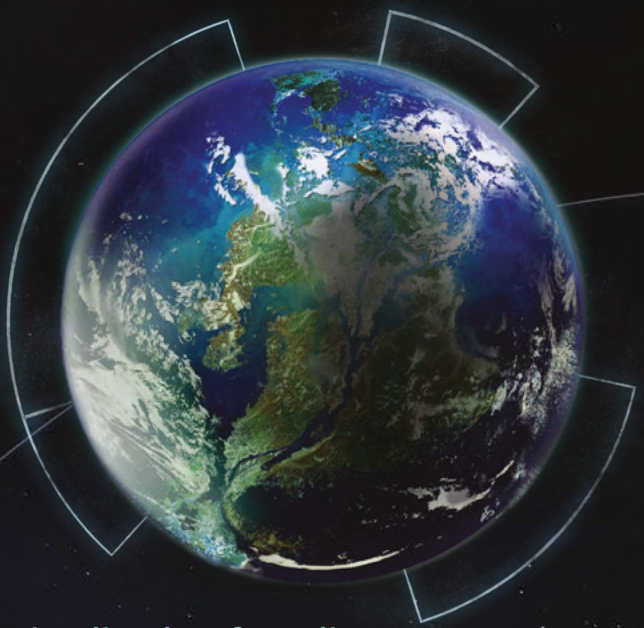
Stretching across the frigid steppes of Jord's largest northern continent, this sprawling metropolis is home to half a billion people. It has seen thousands of years of steady growth, so that while the city center gleams with buildings of silver and red marble in the Sol Imperia style, nearly every form of architecture can be found in its dozens of districts. New Moscow is also the most cosmopolitan of Jord's cities, a hub for galactic trade and forge for high culture.

The High Houses

The seats of the Federation's governing bodies—the House of Law, the House of the People, and the House of Industry—are built atop the Beringer Massif just north of the city center. Three towers of gleaming silver pierce the sky, each large enough to host a governing house, its representatives, and its staff in their entirety. Between them, the golden tower of the High Minister symbolically links the three together, its base holding the Hall of Discourse.

Kosmograd

New Moscow's main spaceport is nearly a city in its own right, with docking bays for hundreds of ships, massive storage facilities, contragrav berths that can allow vessels as large as dreadnoughts to descend into the atmosphere, and living quarters for hundreds of thousands of staff. The spaceport is heavily defended by the guns and fighters of the Orel Arie, where the aces of the Black Eagle Hurricane wing are based.



The Libraries of Zanzibar

For over seven millennia, the archives on the fortress islands of Zanzibar have served as the definitive repository of Jord's collected knowledge. Zanzibar's hereditary librarians are renowned as brilliant scholars and cunning researchers, and all of Jord's great universities have long-standing compacts with the Zanzibarans to access their collected knowledge. In return, they give the librarians' questors free access to their facilities, so the Libraries may continue to grow.

Churchill Prima

Said to have once been a moonlet orbiting Sol's fourth planet of Ma'adim, Churchill Prima, the Federation's main fleet base, has long since ceased resembling anything natural. A monolithic space station covered in slabs of armor and spiked with docking spurs, Churchill Prima always has hundreds of warships docked, and its attendant shipyards are continually producing more. The base is also heavily armed; the heavy mass driver and missile platforms on it and the Min Secunda battery at Ma'adim's L4 point can protect the entire inner system from assault.

KELERES ALERT!

No, just because I'm Human doesn't mean I'm from Jord. I was born on Centauri, and I have no particular fondness for the old homeworld. Which is why I'm happy to pass this on to you: a Federation strike carrier was discovered drifting in orbit around Sol's outermost world of Yama. It's completely unpowered, and the thing is, it was reported lost four years ago against the Nekro *in a battle on the other side of the galaxy*. Sol has asked us in to investigate. They're hoping to find out what happened to the rest of the task force that was lost alongside it.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Arc Prime and Wren Terra

ARC PRIME STAR NAME/TYPE: none

WREN TERRA STAR NAME/TYPE: Wren/yellow main sequence

ARC PRIME POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 10.47 billion (96% Letnev, 4% other)

WREN TERRA POPULATION STATUS: colony, 1.4 billion (58% Letnev, 29% Human, 13% other)

GOVERNMENT: barony

MAJOR IMPORTS: foodstuffs, water, medicine

MAJOR EXPORTS: ore, weapons, saimoc crystals

One of the greatest military powers in the galaxy, the Letnev have stockpiled arms and expanded their already-impressive fleet on their homeworld of Arc Prime under the stewardship of Baron Daz Emmiciel Werquan III. From Arc Prime, situated between the Quann Wormhole and the Primor Gate, the Baron can dispatch an overwhelming armada almost anywhere in the galaxy with little warning, and most of the other Great Civilizations know it.

Arc Prime

A dark, starless world, Arc Prime is, on the surface, inhospitable to life. But below the surface, vast continent-sized caverns heated by the planet's core support the pale-skinned, white-eyed Letnev. An industrialized, militant people, the Letnev operate factories and saimoc crystal mines nonstop, venting noxious gases and industrial waste to the surface. Six great megalopolises support the bulk of the Letnev population, though outsiders are restricted to the lone surface city of Feruc.

Feruc

Nestled within Dunlain Crater, hidden beneath frozen plumes of industrial waste and ash, the city of Feruc is the only population center on the surface of Arc Prime. Its architecture leans toward sharp metal towers stained black with soot, connected by a mesh of pressurized traffic tubes clinging to the surface. The tubes wind between the residential spires, belching industrial factories, and military installations throughout and below the crater.

Feruc is the only city on Arc Prime open to foreign visitors, and its diplomatic district lies just downwind of the largest industrial zone. The Keleres have a modest outpost here, where agents can request a Barony liaison to act as a guide. The many other consulates in Feruc serve a variety of foreign powers, merchants, and institutions seeking alliances, trade, or aid from the Letnev.

The Reaper Halls

The Reaper Halls is a large section of one of Feruc's largest industrial zones and responsible for producing military ordnance and vehicles. Orbital cannons, capital-grade beam weapons, antistarfighter missiles, interior defense turrets, and the infamous Dunlain Reaper all have dedicated manufactories in the Halls. Some facilities conduct daily test firings at orbital targets to ensure quality and calibration, a fact some smugglers have learned too late while trying to sneak through smog plumes down to the surface.

Goz

Located below the surface, the capital of Arc Prime, Goz, is nearly a sealed city thanks to the tight security of the Baron's Guard, particularly around the Baron's armored and fortified manorial palace. Goz is known among the Letnev for its mix of architectural styles, from the steep, spiked towers and battlements of the Noble Quarter, which include the Baron's fastness, to the squared faces and open moss-garden courtyards of Admiralty Lane, where many of the wealthy and influential dwell.

Ao Tender Ridge was land that historically housed those who worked the nearby Ao tunnels to provide the city's breathable air. With that task long since automated, Ao Tender Ridge is

KELERES ALERT!

A Shikrai fitting the description of "Blackbird," a being wanted for questioning regarding chaos at the Kenara exchanges last week, was just sighted in Feruc. Worse, they were seen in the company of Commodore Aubert Gerard Vollecanne IV, who is well-connected to the Baron.

Caution: Yellow Zone: The Keleres have limited jurisdiction on Arc Prime, even in pursuit of a high-value target. If the target makes it outside Feruc, you won't get permission to pursue or an escort. And if you get caught operating outside Feruc, well, you probably won't get the chance to return to HQ for your demotion. So don't get caught, right?

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now a wealthy commercial and residental district, championed as having the freshest air on Arc Prime thanks to its proximity to the main Ao tunnels. Its buildings feature ornate, flowing metalwork over glass, almost like you can see the air blowing toward the center of the city and curling around the delicate spikes and blades that lance off the buildings.

Beneath the ridge, the city becomes a shadowed maze of narrow streets and tall buildings, some built directly into the massive rock pillars that support Goz's huge cavern. Finding one's way is nearly impossible for non-Letnev, and it can be dangerous for off-worlders to draw too much attention to themselves. Constant police patrols and harsh repercussions for even minor lawbreaking mean that the lawbreakers who do exist in Goz are the best of the best. With death awaiting even minor infractions such as stealing or assault, criminals have learned that it is always best that their victims disappear before a crime can be reported.

Agiz

Home to the most prestigious Letnev war college and a played-out saimoc crystal mine, Agiz is one of the more youthful cities, thanks to its many students. Their exuberance and naked ambition clashes with the architecture; every street corner seems to have an imposing, millennia-old heroic statue of a Letnev war hero deep in thought, carved from white and blue marble, quartz, or saimoc crystal. Most of the city's many parks feature Ao meditative gardens and war memorials. The ruthless meritocracy of Baronial society starts here, with many students vying for the same few governmental or military posts. A number of duels are fought in front of the ancient statues, and many leave a rival's blood leaking into the gutter.

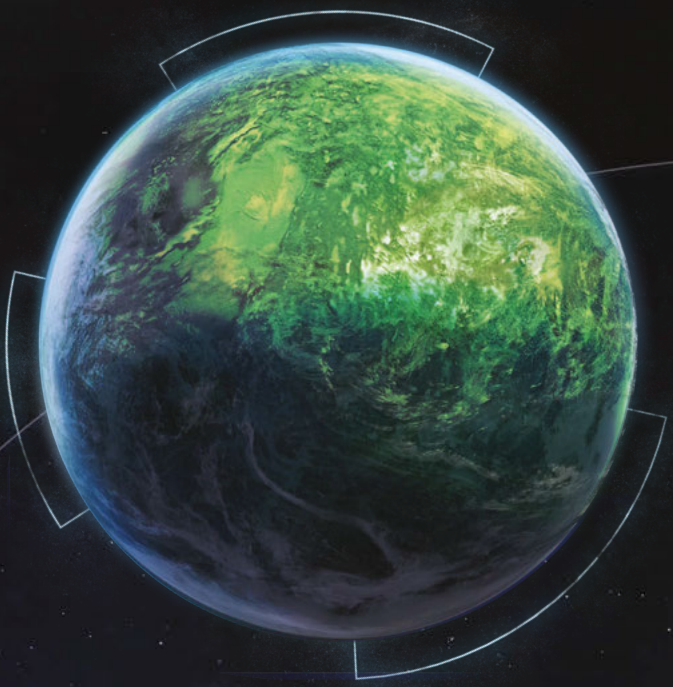
Agiz is also the home of escar, a popular strategy game and centuries-old Letnev pastime. The Baron's War College holds a prestigious escar tournament viewed across most of Letnev society. Winners often receive prestigious fleet appointments and enjoy a celebratory dinner with the Baron.

Wren Terra

Many wealthy Letnev families maintain a summer house or estate among the many northern farms, ranches, and Daartar hound-breeding facilities on Wren Terra, a vassal world of Arc Prime orbiting the star Wren. These second homes range from small five-room cottages to palatial estates. The planet is a bit dry and windy for Letnev tastes, but those who visit Wren Terra regularly enjoy the novelty of a sky, especially the view of the stars at night. Wren Terra had an evenly mixed population of Humans and Letnev before the world was annexed during the Age of Dusk. Though the Humans are officially accorded certain rights as vassal citizens of the Barony, their population has slowly but constantly declined due to emigration over the past few thousand years.

Rochou

This city in the northern steppes of Wren Terra supports thousands of surrounding farms and ranches with its food-processing



factories and spaceport. One of the largest cities on the planet, it boasts a thriving art scene—notably fostering the recent trend of large-scale frescos of military figures and their greatest victories and defeats. Many of the buildings have these frescoes painted onto their walls.

Rochou's streets are just as cramped and winding as any city on Arc Prime, but the open sky lessens the feeling of oppression slightly. The inhabitants are slightly more relaxed than their cousins on the homeworld, and more of them become farmers than join the Barony's military.

Rochou spaceport is set within the industrial district. Here, farmed goods are processed and shipped to orbit, where a number of trade stations hover. While Rochou spaceport is the largest spaceport in the northern hemisphere, the military spaceport at Fort Illeprete is several orders of magnitude larger.

Illeprete

The entire continent of Illeprete in the southern hemisphere is set aside entirely for military war games and orbital dropship mass landings. The arid, rocky wastelands are a crucible almost all ground troops endure before graduating from basic training. In addition to coordinating infantry war games and wilderness survival courses, the military maintains orbital and aerial bombardment ranges and a sprawling fort that can house upwards of a million troops between exercise deployments.

The Houndmaster's Commons

Currently managed by Master Breeder Alloran Nevoraz Fortrian III, the Houndmaster's Commons is an enormous Daartar hound-breeding facility located near the equator. Her facility has separate distinguished breeding lines for working hounds that specialize in tracking, hunting, sniffing, or combat. There is even a separated yard for show hounds, popular as pets on Arc Prime and throughout the fleet.

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Elysium

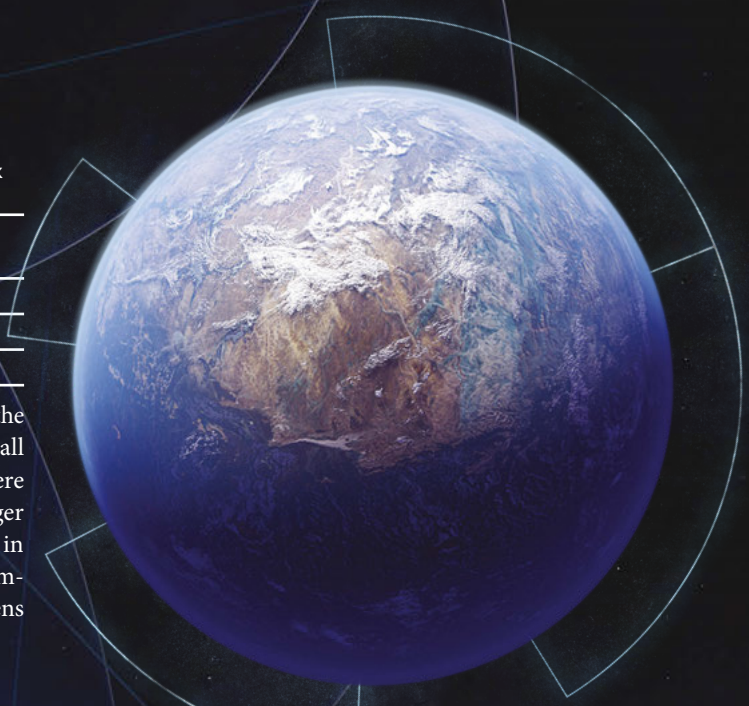
STAR NAME/TYPE: Astra and Etheria/yellow dwarf with black hole contained within Elysium's core

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 750 million (72% Titan; 15% Hacan, N'orr, Yin; 13% other)

GOVERNMENT: total hierarchy led by the Ul

MAJOR IMPORTS: exotic flora, exotic fauna, rare minerals

MAJOR EXPORTS: labor, information, ancient technology



The Mahact created the Titans as servants long ago, but when the Mahact returned and woke them, the Titans rejected their call to service. Instead, the Titans went to Elysium, a Dyson sphere built around a nurtured singularity with a surface area larger than ten thousand standard terrestrial planets. It's covered in tranquil seas and gentle plains for the most part, though a number of more extreme habitats exist in controlled macrogardens tended by the mammoth inhabitants.

Transcendence

The only true city on Elysium, Transcendence is built around the Ul. Titans never stop growing, and the Ul is the eldest of all Titans to reawaken thus far. They haven't moved in an age, and a loose circle of barely smaller Titans surround them, towering over the rest of the skyline. The city largely exists to house those who would appeal to the Ul, often for trade, but just as many in line are Titans seeking permission for a new biome construction or for undertaking a quest to locate sleeping brethren unreached by the call of the Mahact.

KELERES ALERT!

A Hacan smuggler we picked up says he delivered Mahact gene samples to a rogue elder Titan named Crocoan the Learner. Says Crocoan is growing a nice little garden full of Mahact gene-horrors in a hidden biome called Goranthis.

The Titans told us the garden doesn't exist. Unofficially, they're going to be hard to convince that one of their own would deal with the Mahact, even indirectly. A rare plant or animal species may get you in the door, but once you convince the Titans, they may want you to clean up Crocoan's little horror shop so they don't have to discipline their own.

Also, if this is true, I wonder what Crocoan did for the Mahact in trade.

Caution: Yellow Zone. Visitors are welcome on Elysium, but unless you convince them to accept your operation, the Titans don't tolerate violence.

The habitats in Transcendence are gleaming towers of many hues, like stained glass prisms arrayed around the Ul, the tallest reaching just above the elders' waists. Among the few dozen towers are landing pads and habitats, mostly for visitors to Elysium, along with workshops and lesser gardens. Here, skilled Titans can craft forgotten, ancient technological wonders or hire out to help with large-scale constructions like orbital shipyards or geoforming projects, usually to fulfill trades arranged by the Ul or other elders.

Osmius the Re-Creator's Workshop

An elder Titan with a shiny, silver exterior accented with blue lights, Osmius is an expert at crafting ancient Mahact technologies because of their experience thousands of years ago with building them. Osmius can create a variety of large-scale planet-shaping devices that might as well be magic, as even the Jol-Nar Universities can't replicate most of them.

Biome Krigala

Only eight hundred kilometers from Trancendence, Biome Krigala is a few thousand acres of dense foliage mimicking Jord's Amazon rainforest, complete with a wide, brown river that flows out to sea. Eveitum the Observer tends to Krigala from an elegant temple of ornately carved metal alloy beams and natural wood, with several guest rooms. Since Krigala contains more biodiversity than most biome gardens, it has become a popular tourist attraction. Human scientists often apply to visit, as some believe it is evidence of ancient alien contact with Jord.

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Mahact Technology

The type of ancient technology the Titans have to offer dates back to their time preparing planets for their Mahact masters. Most of the devices are building-sized and operate on a large scale. The Keleres often escort such devices to the systems in need, as they are worth billions or even trillions of aurei and are a prime target for pirates and opportunistic factions.

Geoformer: Titans can program this skyscraper-sized device to alter the terrain of thousands of square kilometers over several years, generating nutrient-rich soil, stimulating rock growth through magma tunneling tubes, and more.

Terraforming Engine: Similar to the geoformer, only larger, the terraforming engine deorbits to slam deep into a planet's crust. Over the course of a decade, it can alter atmospheric conditions and even the metal content and temperature of a planet core to construct magnetic fields.

Star Saver: Some ancient star systems face annihilation as their star prepares to enter a new stage. On an order from the Mahact, the Titans developed a device that creates vast magnetic loops around and through a star, lifting heavier elements from its core and enabling it to burn for additional millennia.

Arcturus and Space Station Sumerian

STAR NAME/TYPE: Arcturus and Arcturus Minor/red giant star with brown dwarf companion

POPULATION STATUS: independent system, 167 million (48% Human, 16% Hacan, 9% Saar, 27% other)

GOVERNMENT: Station Master Artuno with Merchant Magnate Coalition

MAJOR IMPORTS: foodstuffs, water, technology, luxury goods

MAJOR EXPORTS: none

Space Station Sumerian, a Human-built orbital trade ring surrounding the icy world of Arcturus, was originally intended to supply Sol colony ships. Historically a neutral ground for trade in the southeastern quadrant of the galaxy, it has also become a haven for mercenaries, smugglers, and outlaws. The enigmatic "Nomad" has recently ascended to control the station and has united the station's disparate factions under their mysterious vision.

Station Command

Station command encompasses more than seventy-two thousand square kilometers of the station's most secure and private hangars, shipyards, barracks, and support facilities under the watchful eye of the station master, currently Artuno, the Nomad's trusted supporter. Supporting the hangars, command staff, and station master's personal guests are an array of taverns, restaurants, and other forms of entertainment.

While most think of station command as the station master's private fiefdom, it is much more. The command center can monitor and run almost any system connected to the station—including station rapid transit, life support, and station defenses—and can override local control rooms. Once considered a backup bridge, it has become the primary hub for station activity since the Nomad assumed control.

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Merchant Magnate Coalition

While the Merchant Magnate Coalition attends to the day-to-day needs of Sumerian Station, its power has been much reduced since the Nomad seized station operations. Still, hundreds of major corporate concerns make up the coalition, including the following:

- **Durastead Transports:** A vehicle manufacturer from nearby Gral that makes affordable, reliable groundcars, rovers, and shuttles.
- **Jord Lunar Trade:** An ancient Human trading company that buys and sells a variety of consumer goods. One of the first companies to reestablish trade lanes with ancestral Human colonies after the Twilight Wars.
- **Maahgol Emirate of Kamdorn:** One of the great Hacan trading clans that deals in starflower-spun textiles.
- **Nobleon:** A New Albion–based mining concern that deals largely in rare atmospheric gases and minerals. One of its farming subsidies deals in spores and airborne microalgae.
- **Vegan Mining Collective:** A trade collective working on behalf of asteroid miners extracting precious metals from Vega Minor's rings. Leadership of the VMC changed hands just days after the Nomad's ascension to station master.

KELERES ALERT!

The *Distance over Time*, a *Star Swimmer*–class courier used by the infamous smuggler Bolu Blugup, has been spotted in Space Station Sumerian traffic lanes. Blugup is wanted in connection with a Mahact-relic smuggling ring recently shut down on Lazul Rex.

Caution: Yellow Zone. Current Council policy forbids sending military assets or backup into the Arcturus system. Space Station Sumerian is a known haven for smugglers, black marketeers, and fugitives, and it has only become more dangerous with this so-called "Nomad" taking over operations. Watch your pockets; I lost my ID there, and it turned up in a raid on a pirate den in the Arill Cluster four months later.

Cargo Bay 1P21G

Typical of the station's thousands of bulk hauler bays, 1P21G can accommodate the largest bulk transports. It uses arrays of grav-field turrets to rapidly shift cargo onto the staging ground, into adjacent vessels, or to the rapid transit system. The Maahgol Emirate of Kamdorn has leased Bay 1P21G for centuries, and it is always packed with containers of luxury fabrics and trade goods.

Station Rapid Transit

The entire station employs a rapid transit system that uses a magnetic guide field in vacuum-exposed tubes to move passengers and cargo at nearly 1,500 kilometers per hour on the high speed lines (smaller local lines being a 'mere' 400 kph). The entire system is automated, and it is managed by the Station Rapid Transit Authority. The Authority has a seat on the Merchant Guild Coalition, albeit it doesn't have much actual power.

Arcturus

Below Space Station Sumerian is Arcturus, a mostly barren hunk of ice. While no official settlements or research stations exist on the surface, unofficially, the ice caverns are littered with smuggling bolt-holes and outlaw hideouts, such as the palace of Ama Amani, a Winnu, and the hideout of Elder Arfgrr's Hercalor Freetraders. The tunnels are lousy with arctic sharaks thanks to a long-dead smuggling kingpin who tried domesticating them.

Ama Amani's Palace

Out of the southern polar region of Arcturus, the infamous Winnu smuggler Ama Amani runs a smuggling ring so large that she has her own proxy in the station's Merchant Magnate Coalition. Known to her smugglers as the minister of covert trade, Amani is first and foremost a bureaucrat, and she has mastered the logistics side of smuggling for profit.

Hercalor Freetraders

Hidden within a crevasse beneath what appears to be a permanent storm system, a group of smugglers from Hercalor live in a makeshift community of courier ships and small freighters. Leadership changes from week to week, but the most frequent crime lord is Elder Arfgrr, a talented Saar smuggler.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Kenara System

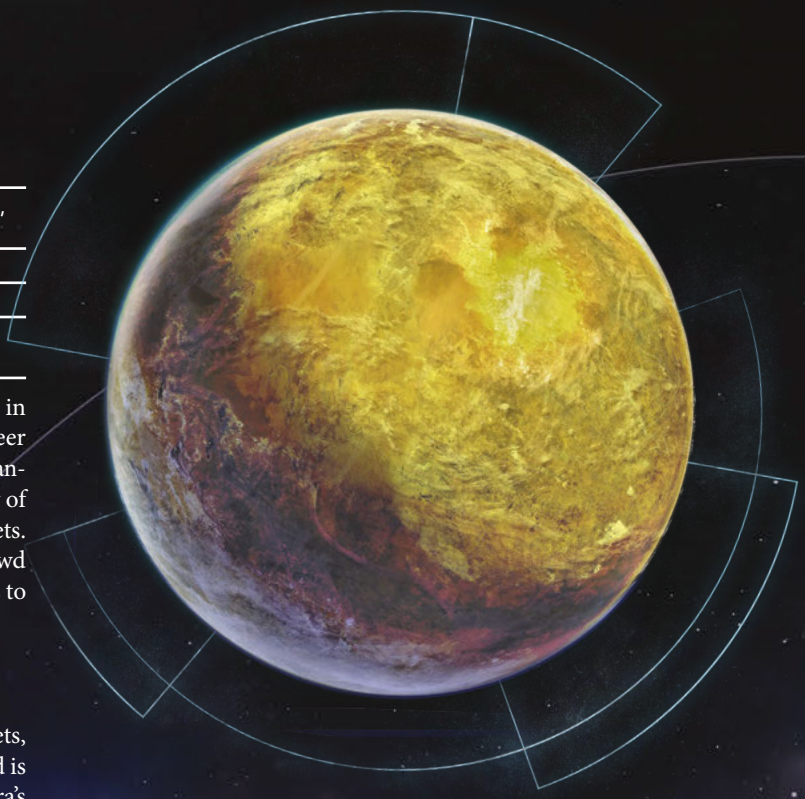
STAR NAME/TYPE: Kenara/white main sequence star

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 8.82 billion (85% Hacan, 15% other)

GOVERNMENT: united Emirates under the Quieron

MAJOR IMPORTS: foodstuffs, technology, refined materials

MAJOR EXPORTS: gerr root, starflower textiles, spehat-derived products



The desert tri-system of Kenara is one of the most trafficked in all the galaxy, nearly rivaling wormhole systems for the sheer number of ships soaring through the inner system. It is the financial center of the galaxy, boasting a seemingly endless array of orbital trade stations as well as stock and commodities markets. The feline Hacan built this esteemed position through shrewd dealings over millennia, going from poor, exploited laborers to cultural exporters to an economic powerhouse.

Arretze

Arretze is narrowly the most populous of the tri-system planets, its name translating roughly to "the moving sand." The world is home to the majority of the system's trading activity. Kenara's economic influence began on Arretze, thanks in large part to the ease of cultivating the spehat vine and gerr root. While most off-worlders stick to the orbital trade stations or the static capital city of Harcarum, most Hacan enjoy a less hectic pace, living within their enormous, nomadic sled-cities.

The dominant economic and political force on Arretze is the Mowshir Emirate, a line of ancient rulers of which the current Quieron is a member. While the emirs of the Harriqh and Alcaiq Emirates compete and plot to one day supplant the Mowshir, the Emirates of Hacan are so interconnected that it is difficult for any one of them to damage a peer Emirate without hurting themself or an ally.

While the Hacan approve trades and make deals in comfort, the orbital trade stations bustle in a way few other places in the galaxy can. The great orbital trading ports each deal in a specific category of trade: Haal, for instance, hosts financial markets, while Shimax is a liquid chemical commodities exchange. There are so many warehousing, docking, and trading stations in orbit, along with some of the largest exchanges in the galaxy, that many beings joke it's a wonder any sun makes it to Arretze's surface.

Harcarun

Near Arretze's north pole, the capital city of Harcarun is also the system's only static city, a gleaming white urban sprawl set within a shaded valley and encompassing battleship-sized trade markets. The Harcarun trading markets deal equally in native Kenaran exports such as gerr root, starflower silk, and spehat-derived products as they do in foreign exports. Off-world traders, hustlers, and opportunists mingle with their counterparts from the Emirates in a never-ending bustle of deals, negotiations, cons, and general hubbub. Most Hacan find the temperate polar temperatures freezing, and thus most who spend time in Harcarun do so either out of a sense of duty to their clan or because they angered a superior.

Spehat Tower Complex Colrugn

Spehat-derived compounds, along with gerr root, are part of the engine that powered the first precarious meters of the Hacan ascent from vassal to great power. Spehat is a flowering vine quintessential to traditional Hacan medicines, liquors, narcotics, and even aphrodisiacs. And while most Hacan Emirates rely on investments, spehat is still a significant export product.

Typical of spehat farms, Complex Colrugn is a collection of hundred-meter-tall vented towers floating along the northern sand dunes of Arretze. It carefully migrates along the weather seams where cold and warm air fronts meet, the narrow band for viable spehat cultivation. Once pulled by great sleds like their cities, most spehat towers now operate on modern antigravity systems, supplemented by weather, terrain, airflow, and tilt sensors to ensure optimal growing conditions.

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Hercant

Its name meaning roughly "fire sand," the populous desert world of Hercant is home to the most famous of the great moving cities. The city of Raffir, still pulled by traditional Tuuran beasts, is where the Quieron rules over the Hacan Council and commands the Sword Fleet. Most Emirates have their own capital sled-city as well, and some sled-cities remain independent from any Emirate. One of these is Hphari, the headquarters of the Golden Mirwaat. Dozens of clanless Hacan travel to this city each day, hoping to be accepted as a member of this prestigious band of sell-spears and be sent across the galaxy on missions of glory and plunder.

Rockier than its desert siblings, Hercant is also more tectonically active. Several dozen minor eruptions occur annually in the southern hemisphere, and many do so at regular intervals. Hacan tourists consider the southern hemisphere a grand romantic locale. The atmospheric ash makes for incredible sunsets, and most Hacan dramas are set within caldera-rim resort palaces.

Raffir

The most populous city in Kenara, Raffir was built upon massive dust sleds that are dragged by herds of freighter-sized Tuuran beasts, whose gill-like skin membranes take moisture directly from the air. While the Quieron's palace dominates the Raffir skyline, the city is also home to many notable members of the Veiled Skies clan, who live in a series of bulbed towers near the rear of the sled. These members have a near total controlling interest in Horizon Transport, one of the largest cargo hauling concerns in the galaxy that operates everything from bulk cargo haulers down to small couriers. It is said that they have the Quieron's ear, and may provide a means to approach the Hacan Council outside of normal diplomatic channels.

Quieron's Palace

A golden ziggurat looming over Raffir, the Quieron's palace is home to much of the Hacan government. Its lower levels are filled with lines of Hacan seeking government services or paying off taxes or fines. In the middle levels, draped with clan banners, staff coordinate military matters, particularly between the Quieron's own Sword Fleet and the dozens of Emirate armies and auxiliary flotillas. The upper levels provide a spectacular view of the city from all sides as the staff there focus on the economy. In this section, the Quieron considers the advice of emirs, clan leaders, trade group magnates, and other advisors. Once an issue is decided, the Quieron issues orders to trade groups who oversee the fine web of trade agreements that keeps the Kenaran economy running strong.

Kamdorn

The setting for most ancient Hacan mythologies, Kamdorn—the name translates roughly to "dream sand"—is home to many religious orders. Though it is sparsely populated, Kamdorn floods with religious pilgrims, starflower harvesters, and starflower silk-spinners around each equinox when the starflower blooms. Towns spring up overnight, filled with eager pilgrims and Hacan purchasing agents.

The planet is otherwise known for its endless, mirage-inducing sand dunes punctuated by rocky canyon oases throughout the equatorial latitudes. It is in these canyons that the starflowers grow; Quierons past divided the viable canyons between the various Emirates and religious sects, though currently the commercial exploitation rights often get leased in a dramatic bidding war each solstice.

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Hacan Temple of Gilgraqh

Gilgraqh is one of the many ancient gods of Hacan mythology. While few understand Gilgraqh the Quieron and his two children—Garrus the Purse and Algruq the Spear—as literal gods anymore, the morality tales about them are studied seriously. Most Hacan believe these tales are exaggerated, but largely true, oral histories of the early days of their culture.

While Gilgraqh is by far the most popular of the gods, Kamdorn has temples to dozens of different dieties. Most temples on Kamdorn are squat pyramids with spacious, shady interiors. Beams of sunlight enter through narrow slits to illuminate stained lightning-glass sculptures. Many services feature dramatic retellings and productions of the legendary deities' adventures, constantly reinvented and recontextualized for new generations.

KELERES ALERT!

We've had a data breach on Haal Orbital Trade Station reported by the Emir Turgrath. One of the Keleres discretionary accounts just got liquidated by an unknown entity with nothing but a savant. The last geo-hit on the savant put it somewhere on Kamdorn. Locate the suspect and detain them and their savant and await backup.

Caution: Yellow Zone. The governor has dispatched a guide, a sell-spear by the name of Marrukh, to meet you at Haal Orbital. The part of Kamdorn you're traveling to is largely uninhabited but home to priceless ancient sites we can't afford to wreck. So leave the beam cannon at home.

Atharal Gas Torus

STAR NAME/TYPE: Phorus/red neutron star

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 1.84 billion (99.7% Shikrai, 0.3% other)

GOVERNMENT: confederation governed by the Murmeration

MAJOR IMPORTS: Shikrai recruits, raw materials, technology

MAJOR EXPORTS: precious gases, small starships

In the Phorus system, just inside the path of the gas giant Hacid, is an orbital ring of breathable atmosphere known as the Atharal Gas Torus. It supports a trio of planets and countless asteroids, stations, and genecrafted zero-G trees that make up the ancestral home of the avian Shikrai. Hidden from galactic star charts until recently, the avian warriors of the Argent Flight have waged a secret war against the Mahact, fighting their sleeper agents and monitoring the Acheron Gate and other threats in the western quadrant of the galaxy.

Avar

While members of the Argent Flight live throughout the Atharal Gas Torus, Avar, the largest population center, is home to over half of all Shikrai in the system. Avar is rocky, littered with sinkholes, cave-pocked canyons, and cavern-riddled hillsides. Some cave systems open into enormous aerie chambers that house tens of thousands of Shikrai, protecting them from neutron star radiation bursts.

Long-Talon Aerie

This barracks is home to the elite Long-Talon Recon Pinion special warfare unit. Set within a winding cavern high on a canyon wall in the northern latitudes of Avar, Long-Talon Aerie is home to a thousand elite warriors, a dozen dropships and crews, and twice as many support personnel. The Long-Talons often train in the canyon, especially with their maneuverable wingpacks.

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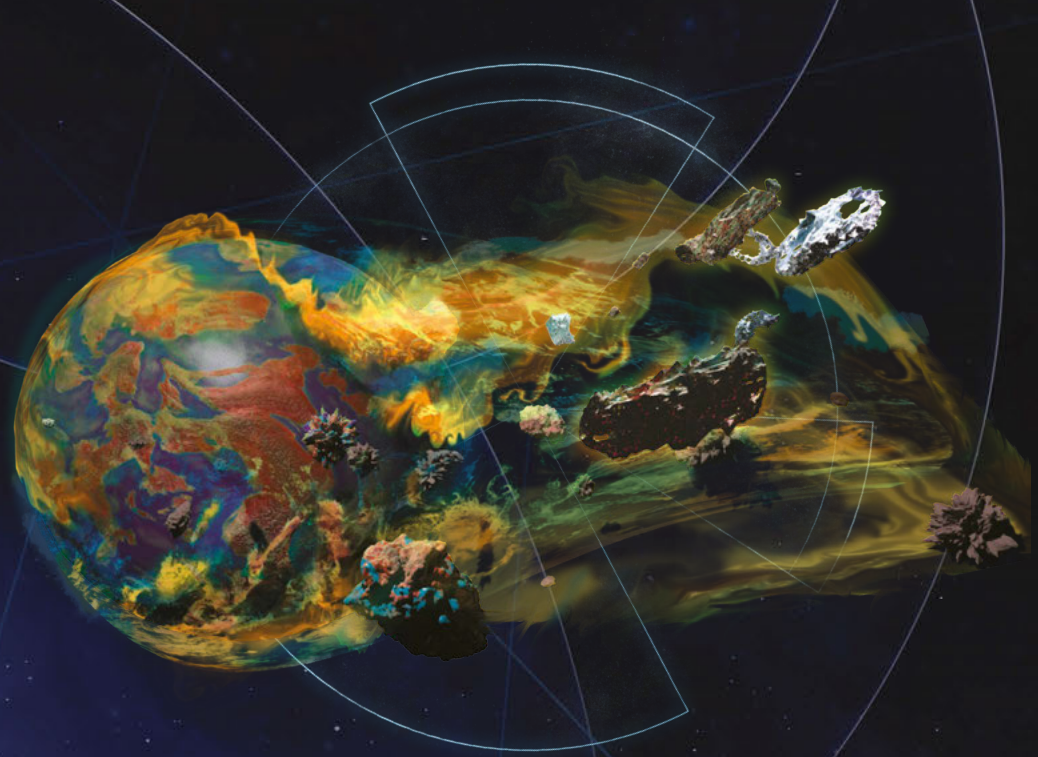

Sauktun Aerie

On Sauktun, one of the larger mountainous islands within the equatorial regions of Avar, is Sauktun Aerie, among the largest population centers in the system. The mountain range features a warren of caves with tens of thousands of chambers of all sizes. It serves as the official strategic planning headquarters for the Argent Flight, but it is also home to bureaucrats and administrators. More adolescents and schools are located in Sauktun Aerie than anywhere else in the system.

Simulator Training Command

Not far from a tranquil harbor, Simulator Training Command is near enough to Sauktun to be mistaken as part of it. Here, starfighter wings, shuttle pilots, and warbird crews can train in high-tech simulators to prepare for combat situations. The faux cockpits and bridges use artificial gravity to ensure pilots develop an intuitive "feel" for their vessels while honing their tactical instincts, preparing them for real shakedown cruises and live training flights. The flightmasters include active combat personnel like Mirik Aun Sissiri, as well as living legends who have aged out of combat duty.

Valk

A dense, rocky planet of heavy metals and rare minerals, Valk is the industrial center of the Argent Flight. Mining crews on Valk work around the clock to extract valuable ores and minerals. They load them into specialized boost containers that lift into the sky at predetermined hours to connect with a skyhook, which then flings each container to an orbital refinery, often attached to a shipyard or other orbital factory.

The Airyards

Yardmaster Vossak Aun Zuvori oversees raw-material intake, refineries, component factories, and construction of sleek, gull-winged destroyers all at the same sprawling state-of-the-art orbital facility. Shipbuilding in the gas torus allows all the advantages of zero gravity and atmospheric construction combined. The result is speed and efficiency unmatched by all but the galaxy's most technologically advanced shipbuilders.

Duranium Mine/Smeltery Ksaris

Used in starship construction, duranium is a hyper-strong alloy of titanium and uranium created by applying powerful energy fields that bond the two elements while rendering it radioactively inert. The Ksaris facility has the distinction of being located along a long fault canyon full of veins of both metals. However, the uranium is dangerous to mine, and the energy fields can cause extreme damage without careful control. To further complicate matters, the canyon is infested with darkropes, large lizards that use long tongues to ensnare and drag unsuspecting miners to their deaths.

Skyhook Falsth

A rotating skyhook that makes three hooks a day at roughly eight-hour intervals, Skyhook Falsth descends to altitudes as low as five hundred meters. It serves over a dozen local mines, all of which use boost containers to shift cargo and crews from the surface to hab-stations and refineries. The ride is described by Shikrai as exhilarating.

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Ylir

Covered in placid oceans kilometers deep, Ylir is the government center of the Argent Flight. Here, the Murmeration meets on one of the many floating cities riding the ocean currents. Since revealing itself to the rest of the galaxy, the Argent Flight also uses Ylir as home to its burgeoning diplomatic corps, which seeks allies for the inevitable battle with the Mahact.

Murmeration Platform

The Argent Flight is organized into social units called *flocks*, each of which send a representative to the Murmeration whenever it convenes. The organization's massive platform has support facilities and aerie trunks surrounding an enormous, bowl-shaped arena where the Murmeration takes place. Thousands of flock representatives stand on platforms set into the walls of the arena that can then detach and float across the central space to dock with other platforms for sidebar discussions. To an outsider, it seems too chaotic and even dangerous an environment to effectively govern in, but the Shikrai make it work.

Choksa Platform City

One of the newest platform cities on Ylir, Choksa hosts visiting dignitaries, ambassadors, and trade barons hoping to engage the Argent Flight in negotiations. The platform has only a few diplomatic facilities and an intimidating overabundance of security personnel. For years, the platform had little else, but after a few incidents between rival diplomatic envoys, the Shikrai added several dozen entertainment facilities and eateries that appeal to specific cultural groups to keep visiting factions occupied.

The Torus

Outside the three planets, the Atharal Gas Torus is strewn with asteroids and rocky planetoids suitable for habitation or mining. Military patrols, training exercises, and mining occur throughout the torus. Many Shikrai who retire from service spend time nesting on a quiet, tumbling planetoid, enjoying the exquisite views offered by a half-dozen daily sunrises and sunsets.

The torus is also home to many large genecrafted fruit-bearing zero-gravity trees that serve as oases for travelers. Some Shikrai use traditional mechanical grav-wings to fly through the torus, catching natural wind currents to soar as their ancestors once did between worlds. Many of these avians take a year-long sabbatical to orbit Phorus by grav-wing, earning the honorific "Aul Irik."

Beyond the Torus

Outside the ring of breathable air, the Argent Flight remain busy. Military patrols throughout the system are frequent and aggressive. There are also extensive mining operations on the gas giant Hacid, and comet mining at the outer edge of the system. The rare gases found on Hacid are one of the Phorus system's few exports, once traded in secret to secure vital imports.

KELERES ALERT!

By now you've heard of the assassination of Keleres Liaison Soonta on Vorhal last month. We have just received information suggesting our chief suspect, the Shikrai assassin Mikasa, is hiding out on one of the rocks in the Atharal Gas Torus, unbeknownst to the Argent Flight.

Caution: Protective equipment required. Phorus is known to emit radiation bursts with limited predictability, and occasionally the bursts are potent enough to make it through the torus's atmosphere. Rad poisoning is nothing to scoff at; they had me chugging milky blue chalk for a week before I showed clear last time.

Caution: Yellow Zone. The Phorus system is tightly controlled, and agents can expect a guide to monitor and report their every move. Also, don't be surprised if the Murmeration rejects your visit out of hand.

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Jol and Nar

STAR NAME/TYPE: Garian/yellow main sequence star

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 3.22 billion (81% Hylar, 19% other)

GOVERNMENT: Circle of Regents under the Headmaster

MAJOR IMPORTS: raw materials, refined materials, manufactured components

MAJOR EXPORTS: technology, foodstuffs, exotic matter

Home of the Hylar and their watery homeworlds of Jol and Nar, the Garian system is one of the great powers of the north-eastern quadrant of the galaxy. The system's proximity to the Primor Gate keeps the Hylar interested in the threats on the other side of the galaxy, but they enjoy a privileged position near well-defended routes between the wormhole and Mecatol Rex. They are among the most scientifically advanced powers in the galaxy, and most of the other Great Civilizations employ Hylar technologies.

Jol

Covered almost entirely in deep, frigid oceans with a few small, rocky islands battered by crashing waves, Jol is home to the capital of the Hylar. From the deepwater capital of Wun-Escha, the sum total of the Universities' knowledge is gathered, sorted, and focused towards the singular goal of reclaiming the Headmaster's lost power in the galaxy.

While submersible shuttles are available to visitors, most nonaquatic species stick to the orbital stations and floating trade platforms when conducting business. Because of the pressure at depth, some Hylar native to Nar require environmental suits to cope, though the various structures can be sealed and depressurized for comfort. This is particularly true of the habitation platforms, clear pressure domes built around huge open-space platforms with several strings of pearlescent habitat spheres dangling deep below. The platforms are used for farming, recreation, and landing pads, while the habitat spheres are individual homes. The habs can vary their depth, keeping their main platform exposed to the surface or submerging deep enough to avoid sunnier seasons.

Wun-Escha

Deep in the ocean, at the edge of a polar trench bisecting the planet Jol, Wun-Escha is the capital of Jol-Nar. The ancient city is in a constant state of modernization, as great crab-like automatons weave duranium strands into new arch-bridges that extend out over the deeps with long strings of habitat spheres dangling into the dark.

Back from the edge, much of the architecture resembles large, porous stones or curled shells. In addition to the Headmaster's Campus, Wun-Escha hosts a number of prestigious laboratories. Many are on the cutting edge of one or more areas of study, including the Ubluin Su School of Prosthetics, whose cybernetic appendage work has applications in medicine, environmental suits, and military contracts.

Headmaster's Campus

The Headmaster's Campus is a series of forty buildings laid out in a spiral arrangement with a cone-shaped tower that expands upward at its center. Most of the government bureaucracy is in the central tower, while the rest of the sprawling campus is home to government and military research laboratories and to satellite campuses of prestigious universities.

The Deepwrought Archive

Created by visionary Ta Zern, the Deepwrought Archive changed Hylar society, ending the competitive nature of the universities by pooling knowledge. Making the sum total of scientific knowledge public gave every bright mind the best opportunity to make the biggest contributions to science for their people. While there is a physical data and artifact storage facility on Jol, the archives are available to most Hylar via special encrypted savant access that works within Hylar cities.

The Deepwrought Archive's library is a series of seven large shafts drilled into the dark rock of an undersea shelf, capped with heavy metal bunker entrances and topped with shining beacons, each lit to represent a different branch of scientific study as the Hylar organize them. The topmost levels of each shaft feature a visitor area, public library, and museum, but beneath that are vast storage areas for digitized data archives, restoration rooms, and staff accommodations.

The Black Trench Facility

Hidden deep within an oceanic polar trench is the Black Trench Facility, a top-secret research laboratory hidden from the Galactic Council. Here, Hylar scientists set aside morality and consequences in the name of furthering scientific understanding. Nothing in the name of science is forbidden here, no experiment too risky, no field of study too dangerous. Their goal is to

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one day match the technological might of the gene-sorcerers, and in that pursuit, they consider nothing off-limits.

The facility has significant security systems in place, but most are automated, and the number of Hylar guards there is small. The Black Trench's greatest defense is secrecy.

Nar

Covered in shallow, temperate oceans, Nar has endless coral reefs and a variety of algae, weeds, fish, and crustaceans it farms and ranches to feed the Hylar. It also has a significant tourist industry, which is uncommon in other home systems of the great powers. While Jol is home to the Headmaster, the Circle of Regents, which manages the government, meets on Nar.

Nuun-Dascha

The great undersea city-school of Nuun-Dascha is only a hundred meters from the surface, which keeps the water warm and bright. The older part of town features the Circle of Regents government building, but the rest of the city is focused on education, particularly early childhood education. Because of its diverse population, as it draws young Hylar from all over, Nuun-Dascha is also known for its stunning array of experimental fusion cuisine.

To accommodate off-worlders, a series of plasticon-enclosed walkways have been laid in various portions of the town. Air-breathing visitors can stroll along the seabed as if walking down the street, experiencing Nuun-Dascha as if they were one of the thousands of Hylar swimming by.

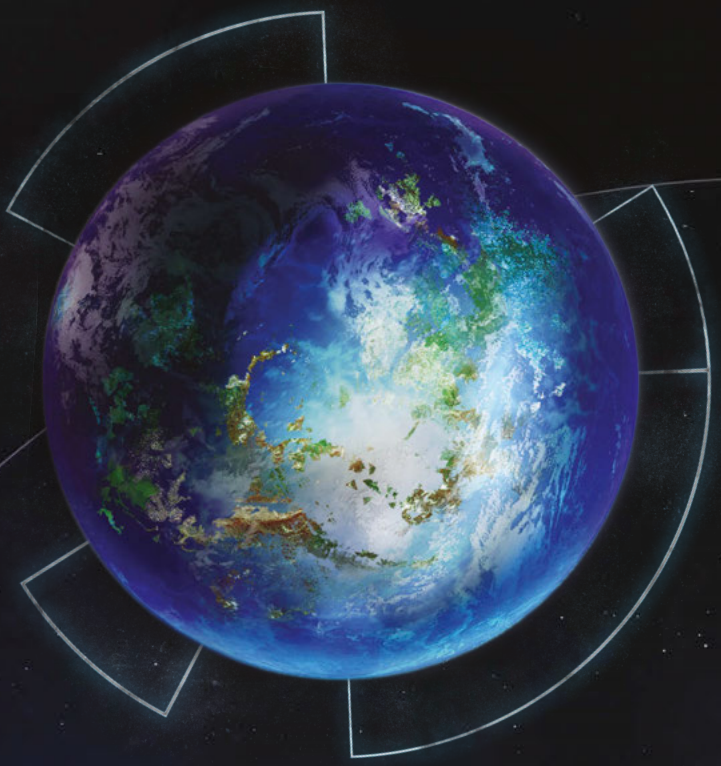
Circle of Regents

Members of the Circle act as regional governors and oversee various branches of scientific study. They meet regularly in person or remotely at the Circle of Regents building in the older part of Nuun-Dascha to carry out the Headmaster's policies.

The building, known informally as "the loop," is a ring-shaped structure with a large circular courtyard and, like most major buildings in Nuun-Dascha, is completely submerged. The black-green stone is carved to resemble grooved brain coral. The various regent offices, libraries, and studies are nestled within the ring structure, while the courtyard handles official business. The courtyard can transform based on the day's schedule, coral dividers allow it to accommodate several dozen minor or several major committee meetings, or even the entire body of regents at once.

The Reef

A small equatorial archipelago, the Reef is a popular spot for off-worlders. Many humanoids enjoy the tropical climate and pay a premium to stay on one of the many resort islands, diving by day and watching waves caress the sand through sunsets. However, some of the islands are set up for diplomatic meetings. Most such activity occurs on Allabul Island. Every bit as exclusive a resort as other Reef islands, Allabul uses its comforts to lower the guard of diplomatic visitors.



KELERES ALERT!

A Titan named Cerussius the Waker is calling for assistance in Jol orbit. They believe an ancient Titan called Ferberon the Sleeper is buried in an oceanic trench. Cerussius says that Ferberon may be the eldest Titan in existence and could become the new UI if awakened. Naturally, the Hylar say they don't know about it, but they are denying Cerussius access to the trench the Titan wants to search. Here's the problem. The area in question is suspected of harboring a secret Hylar research facility.

I don't know if they found this thing and have been studying it there, or if they really don't know anything, or if this Titan is just wrong. But this has all the makings of a diplomatic disaster if Cerussius attempts a rescue, or if anyone gets caught helping them.

Caution: Yellow Zone: Getting onto Jol isn't the problem. Getting into the oceanic trench is. So don't get noticed, or at least make sure nobody can remember you.

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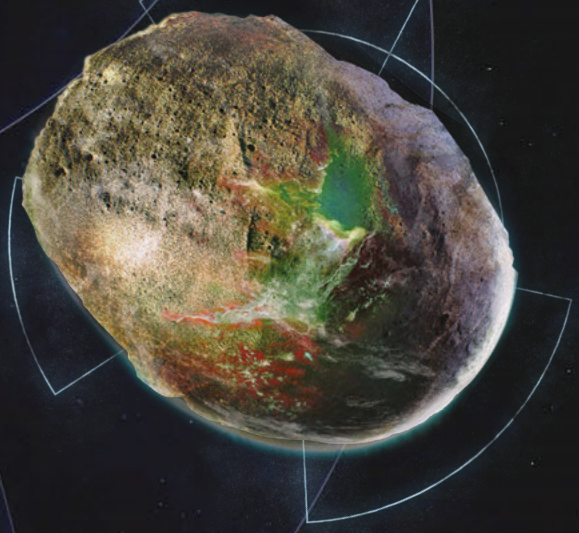
Jorun Asteroid Field



STAR NAME/TYPE: Jorun/yellow main sequence star

POPULATION STATUS: colony, 1.01 billion (97% Saar, 3% other)

GOVERNMENT: admiralty under the Council of Captains

MAJOR IMPORTS: scrap, technology, medicine

MAJOR EXPORTS: minerals, metal, ore

The Jorun Asteroid Field includes several larger asteroids capable of maintaining a thin atmosphere, among them Ragh and Lisis II. The asteroids vary from large and rocky with enough density to maintain air—and even native flora and fauna (mostly in the deep caves and canyons that scar the surface)—to microgravity environments with precious minerals and ores. It is also the asteroid field where Ragh Gavar, known as the Captain of Hope, crash-landed with his crew just a few short centuries ago. The Saar were said to feel a literal yearning that began just a few years after his crash, drawing them to the quiet system on the eastern edge of the galaxy. The Saar believe the field to be what remains of their original, long-lost homeworld.

Lisis II

Named for a Saar colony wiped out by the N'orr long ago, this asteroid is best identified by the crescent of jade-green water that makes up the Valley of Gavar, easily spotted from orbit. The asteroid's microgravity and chilly temperatures deep in the caverns make it a seemingly odd location for the Saar to colonize, but it provides the bulk of the food and water for the Saar on Ragh.

Rowgra

Typical of the villages on Lisis II, Rowgra is built into the sides and even ceilings of the asteroid's wide crystal cavern entrances. Rowgra's spaces are connected by webs of long cables, net walls, and metal platforms for magnetic boots that go deep into the caves. From the outside, the dwellings have a cobbled-together appearance. The Saar take full advantage of the microgravity to build in structurally unsound directions. However, most structures have technological conveniences on par with the rest of galactic civilization, and they utilize artificial gravity generators to keep everyone healthy and strong.

The caverns provide nearly everything the Saar need for survival. In addition to the natural shelter the caverns provide, deep within them are natural pools of mostly frozen water the Saar can melt and sterilize on-site before pumping it to homes near a cavern mouth. The caverns also grow a variety of edible lichens, moss, and molds the Saar farm, as well as infinite species of protein-packed insects, snails, and slugs, some of which grow quite large thanks to the microgravity environment. The Saar on Lisis II trade excess food and water to ships or Ragh for technology and other off-world items.

Rowgra's Howl

A sizable vessel, the *Howl* was a scrapper ship whose crew heard Ragh's Call and traveled to the Jorun Asteroid Field to settle generations ago. The ship is still functional, and it flies once a year as part of Rolwa Shanan holiday celebrations honoring the Saar diaspora. The rest of the year, it functions as a sort of town hall for Rowgra, as it is one of the few structures that can fit most of the Rowgra population.

Valley of Gavar

Named for Captain Ragh Gavar, the Valley of Gavar was sealed over long ago with a tricrystal roof, and fusion reactors heated the interior to thaw vast ice deposits. Now it has one of the few fully liquid lakes on Lisis II, filling the crescent-shaped valley with jade-green water. The valley is remarkably underdeveloped thanks to its role in Saar spiritualism. It is said that a version of the Call can be heard by the Saar in and around the valley, and many visit to pray ahead of major life decisions, or just to feel spiritual. That said, some areas of the valley are zoned for commercial trawlers modified for the microgravity environment; the trawlers contribute large numbers of fish and crustaceans to the Saar diet.

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Ragh

By far the most populous asteroid in the Jorun Asteroid Field, Ragh has several larger cities and is the epicenter of Ragh's Call, the dominant religion among the Saar. The Saar nestle their cities within natural craters, organizing them in concentric rings. Many crater-cities feature mining operations at the center, where they extract raw ores and metals from deep mining shafts that still haven't run dry after centuries of tunneling.

Roonragh

Roonragh is the spiritual center of Saar society and home to Captain Ragh Gavar's crashed ship, which serves as the holy capitol for followers of Ragh's Call. Religious services and educational tours occur at the preserved site and surrounding temples daily, just below the lip of Ragh's Crater. The city's largest thoroughfare runs between the crashed ship and the city center at the bottom of the crater, and is home to several marches and parades, particularly for religious festivals. At the crater's center is a large square and a massive amphitheater and fire pit for Houw Shanan observances. Careful engineering hides the massive fans and filtration systems that make a great bonfire possible in a sealed and low-gravity environment, so once a year, the city's children toss bugs into the fire and Saar howl into the sky to mourn the genocide at Lisis.

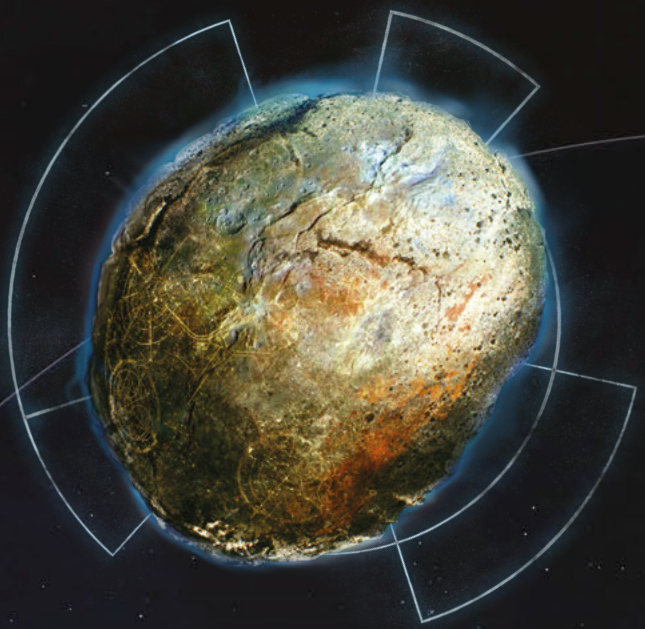
Grawharoo

The largest population center on Ragh is Grawharoo, which is in a large crater adjacent to Roonragh at one end and up against a deep crevasse that runs the length of Ragh on the other. The crevasse side is home to the bulk of mining operations on Ragh, and refineries and smelting plants occupy a slice that takes up nearly a third of the city from the crevasse to its center. The rest of the city is a mix of residential and commercial areas, many built around the frames of old cargo vessels that Saar elders landed at Grawharoo after hearing the Call centuries ago.

Around the crater city center are large platforms for traders, most of which are Saar vessels. However, Grawharoo is also the city with the largest non-Saar population, and many buildings around the landing-pad district cater to off-worlders. Bars, casinos, hotels, and entertainment plexes all flash garish lights that bounce off the undersides of the large platforms and the crystal domes above.

Gowlar

Gowlar is home to the Council of Captains, the Clan of Saar's leadership. Every ship captain and city district captain is entitled to a seat at the table, but most only appear to speak on issues that directly impact their operations. As such, Gowlar's population waxes and wanes depending on the decisions at hand. Otherwise, Gowlar is a military support city, with factories and facilities that support shipyards throughout the asteroid field.



Floating Factory 9

One of many asteroid factories, this semimobile space station selects a target metal-rich asteroid and anchors to it. One end of the factory structure latches onto the asteroid to mine the ore, while the rest of the facility contains processors and refiners that produce bundles of ferroplate ingots and frozen water flasks. Mostly automated, the facilities host a handful of elders and a few hundred other Saar who oversee operations for a few months at a time.

KELERES ALERT!

So we have a real problem here. One of our covert wormhole-monitoring satellites went offline last week. We feared L1Z1X or Mahact at first, but the last transmission shows it was a Saar crew who took it for salvage. We got a hit on their trajectory, and it looks like they'll reach the Jorun system in a week. Obtain the satellite, or at least the computer core.

Caution: If the scrappers make it into the asteroid field, you'd better be ready for some intense piloting. Once you're off the charted transport lanes, space gets messy fast.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Darien

STAR NAME/TYPE: Laelare/yellow dwarf star

POPULATION STATUS: previous colony, 1.81 billion (99% Yin, 1% other)

GOVERNMENT: the Blessed, led by the Elder Brother

MAJOR IMPORTS: rare minerals, advanced technology

MAJOR EXPORTS: medical technology, military goods

The remote Laelare system is home to the Yin Brotherhood, a society of male Human clones originating from a single individual. The planet Darien (once called Lael) is a terrestrial world with volatile oceans, windswept plains, and rugged landforms regularly roiled by storms. Despite the challenging climate, the planet's remoteness appealed to the original Human colonists wishing to start new lives far from Jord and other Human colonies. Many were religious colonists, but with them came fugitive scientist Darien Van Hauge; his wife, Moyin; and followers of his own.

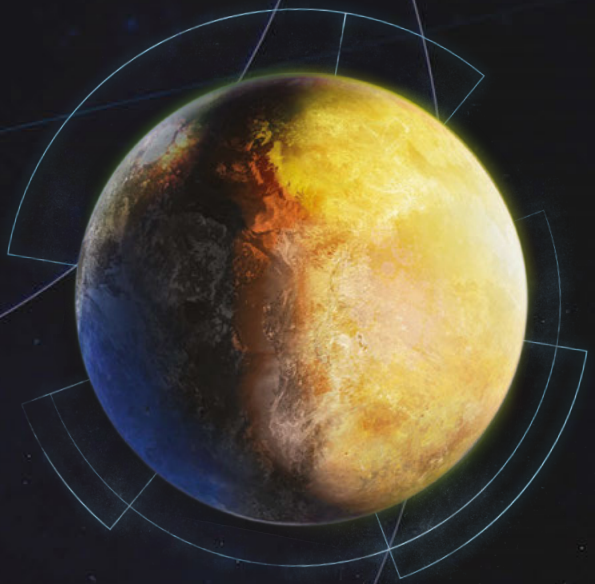
Both Van Hauges' impact on Lael's future was profound. Their obsession with the loss of loved ones to the Greyfire disease eventually drove Darien to build a great monastery dedicated to cloning and to create the genetically engineered children that became the Yin Brotherhood. The Yin's growing numbers and devotion to their monastic order pushed all colonists not of the Yin off Lael, even as they renamed the world after their gene-father.

The Brotherhood of Yin revere Darien and its environs as the birthplace of their faith, but that has not stopped them from utilizing as many of the planet's resources as possible. Originally, they researched their world's natural and imported flora and fauna to improve their cloning methods and results. They established research stations across the globe, from the frigid but iceless planetary poles to the ocean depths. Now, their desire for galactic domination drives the Yin to strip-mine the ancient, crumbling Grina Mountains and run expansive farms on the great windswept plains of Miran. They draw power from the planet, harvesting its lightning into Celec capacitor arrays and focusing the might of its churning ocean waves through advanced wave generators and tidal-current turbines. Subterranean factories and shipyards feed starships, vehicles of war, and equipment to the landing fields and staging grounds across the intimidating Desert of Dominion.

KELERES ALERT!

I've tracked a lot of biotech industrial espionage from Lodor, Wellon, and Jol-Nar to Yin spies and paid thieves. I always take a list of the latest Yin suspects on visits to Darien. Don't tell the Tribunii, but sometimes threatening an arrest is useful leverage in other cases less important to the Yin.

Caution: Yellow Zone. Yin tolerate the Keleres, but they avoid direct confrontations about their origin, their expansion, and the Greyfire disease when possible. Arrested individuals may be escorted off-world, or worse, subject to a Yin education session.



Yin cities are utilitarian, planned settlements with strong local governments. Upscale design is reserved for important cultural and government buildings and for the workplaces and residences of Yin who achieve greater status. The majority of citizens are Yin, but they tentatively welcome those who would join or aid their cause. However, even those off-worlders who join the faith are never completely accepted, since they can never be truly a part of the Yin.

The City of Yin

The capital of Darien is a dull, utilitarian metropolis that spawls over hundreds of square kilometers. It would be entirely unremarkable were it not for the Cathedral of Yin at its center.

The Cathedral of Yin

The Cathedral of Yin is an elegant, flowerlike structure more than one kilometer in diameter. It is dedicated to the history and ideals the Brotherhood embodies in the Yin. As the heart of Darien's government, it houses the Yin's governing members, who are called the Blessed. The Elder Brother, the Brotherhood's leader, rules from a compound called the Towers of Yin, though he splits time between this and managing affairs at the Monastery of Lucas.

Monastery of Lucas

The first and greatest of the Yin Brotherhood's monasteries, Lucas stands at the heart of the Yin's research efforts and their very existence. It is a research and medical industrial complex of thousands of buildings and structures, located a thousand kilometers away from the capital. The monastery's buildings of stark white and reflective glass shine at all hours; between them are green courtyards and parks. The monastery campus spans hundreds of square kilometers on and around the Hills of Grace. Outsiders are rarely welcome.

Hills of Grace

The Hills of Grace are thirty or so hills among which are interspersed the buildings of the monastery of Lucas. Some have been preserved in a natural state or landscaped into memorials in honor of Darien and Moyin Van Hauge's family and accomplishments.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Moll Primus

STAR NAME/TYPE: Mollun/yellow dwarf star

POPULATION STATUS: old colony, 2.55 billion (14% Hacan, 14% Xxcha, 14% Letnev, 12% Yssaril, 12% Human, 10% Hylar, 5% Naaz, 5% Rohka, 5% Saar, 5% Winnu, 2% Druaa, 2% Other)

GOVERNMENT: Table of Captains led by Erwan's Hand

MAJOR IMPORTS: plunder, rare raw materials

MAJOR EXPORTS: metal ore, agricultural goods

Moll Primus is a distant world, beyond the Mahact Plateau and nearly at the end of the infamous Exiles' Path. If it weren't for the route's proximity to the wormhole known as Plateau's Rift in the Mahact asteroid fields, it would be nearly inaccessible by the wider galaxy.

Originally founded as a prison planet for the Lazax Empire, Moll Primus is a beautiful world, teeming with life and the geological variety of a relatively young planet. It lacks oceans, but deep lakes are scattered across its surface. High, sharp mountains are surrounded by steep overgrown valleys that give way to the flowing orange *meet* grasses on the plains, spreading out for hundreds of kilometers like a flaming sea.

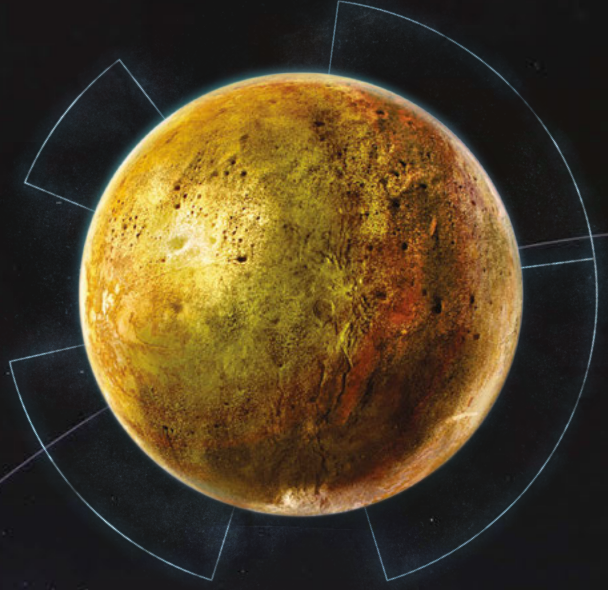
Among Moll Primus's most prominent features are its ancient impact craters, appearing from space as pinpricks or punctures—and serving as evidence of a much more chaotic past. The smaller craters have formed into lakes, while the largest have become a part of the landscape only notable from orbit. During Moll Primus's time as a prison, the Lazax used some of the larger crater rims as the natural outermost walls for prison blocks built in the center. Smaller, deeper craters became starting points for deep mine shafts. Today, many communities still thrive in these ancient craters, such as the capital, Unity Isle.

Exiles' Path

This ancient star route connects the central galaxy to distant worlds that most beings wanted to avoid. It earned its name when Moll Primus was a prison for hardened criminals and political dissidents of the Lazax Empire, for every sentence on Moll Primus was for life. Exiles' Path continues past the Moll system, ending at the toxic, stormy former Lazax training world named Hope's End. Piracy is high along the route, much of it with the tacit approval of the Table of Captains, who govern the Mentak Coalition.

Unity Isle

The Mentak Coalition capital, Unity Isle, is a U-shaped island in the middle of an irregular lake inside the enormous, provocatively named Mentak Rex crater. Once, the island was the prison that housed Erwan Mentak. Then it was where the newly freed prisoners began the Reconstruction that would eventually establish the Mentak Coalition. It is densely urbanized, with suburbs stretching out to the banks of the surrounding lake, connected by dramatic bridges and underwater tunnels. Starship and air vehicle landing pads, usually owned by wealthy citizens or companies, sit or float around the lake's perimeter.



For a city on a world as isolated as Moll Primus, Unity Isle is remarkably cosmopolitan. No single species can claim a substantial majority of the population, and a number of commercial quarters re-create the cultures of distant worlds. Unity Isle's marketplaces are said to be the best in the galaxy for locating rare goods, and each has a thriving trade in black-market items if one knows whom to ask.

The Watcher, the Snitch, and the Traitor's Moon

Moll Primus's three small moons are captured, airless planetoids in irregular elliptical orbits. Their original names are mostly forgotten. Instead, they retain the nicknames given to them by the prisoners. The Watcher once held a Lazax garrison and has been repurposed into a naval base (with quite a few "hidden" docks for sponsored pirate vessels). The Snitch bristled with sensors and cameras watching the prisoners below, and is now the hub of the system's sentry network. The Traitor's Moon held rebellious prisoners who sold out their companions. It rather ironically now serves as the Coalition's own planetary prison.

KELERES ALERT!

The Mentak use pirates. Many are pirates. We know it, and they know we know it, even if they publicly deny it. I fought them personally and one took my old cybernetic leg. The notorious Oblivion Fleet has to be one of theirs, with that ridiculously named Captain Blackout. If you can find Blackout—or, more importantly, uncover their true identity—there might be some leverage you can use to get resources out of the Mentak's Galactic Council rep. Just don't let Tribunii Leeds find out, or you'll spend the next five years pulling shifts on a deep void monitor platform.

Caution: Yellow Zone. You can move with surprising freedom in the system, until you reach an Alpha Security Zone. Also, remember that most of the starships in Mentak space are armed, and many are chartered privateers.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Druaa and Maaluuk

STAR NAME/TYPE: Mallac/white dwarf star

DRUAA POPULATION STATUS: homeworld (arguable colony), 4.22 billion (95% Druaa, 5% other)

MAALUUK POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 500 million (70% Miashan, 30% Druaa)

GOVERNMENT: collective led by the Q'uesh Sish

MAJOR IMPORTS: military technology, processed goods, heavy equipment

MAJOR EXPORTS: raw ore, foodstuffs, various gases

The Mallac system is home to two life-bearing worlds, and two intelligent species. Though they viciously deny it, the telepathic Druaa likely evolved on the dreary planet Maaluuk before migrating almost entirely to the neighboring idyllic world of Druaa. The name "Druaa" was likely the planet's name first, and adopted as the Druaa's species name to give their claim to their new world more legitimacy.

In claiming Druaa for their own, the Druaa completely conquered the world's indigenous inhabitants, the Miashan. The Druaa have historically considered the Miashan a low-sentient species and used that as an excuse to enslave them long ago. The Naalu deny it, but they almost certainly relocated the Miashan from Druaa to their swampy former homeworld.

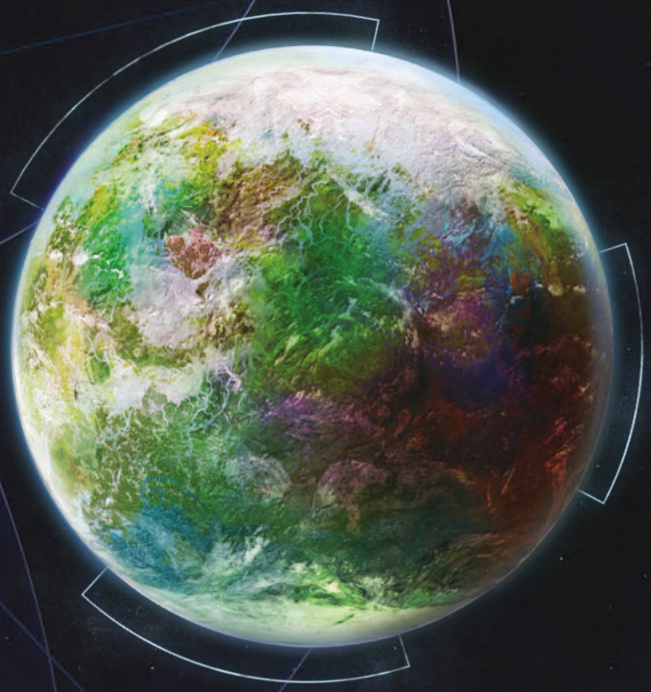
Maaluuk was not abandoned but became the Naalu's industrial center. It was stripped for materials and now hosts industrial complexes deemed too dirty to mar Druaa's environment. Its massive extraction plants provide raw materials for Maaluuk's industrial complexes and Druaa's manufacturing works. In addition, a web of underground mines and settlements tap vast reserves of trapped gases. Maaluuk supports a wide variety of farms and livestock as well. Most common are the myriad rodent farms, a primary Naalu food source.

Meanwhile, the Naalu Collective rules over both planets, maintaining beautiful Druaa as a paradise. Most Druaa live on Druaa, and most Miashan now live on Maaluuk, but a sizable population of Miashan keep the infrastructure of Druaa operational. In addition, the Collective does contain a small percentage of other species, notably Yssaril. Nobody is sure whether these individuals serve the Collective willingly, or are enthralled.

Druaa

Druaa is exceedingly beautiful by most galactic standards. It has wide expanses of lush woodlands and jungles; dramatic rolling hills; and towering, picturesque mountain ranges. Even rugged areas of the landscape feature interesting landforms and colorful, complex geology. There are no grand, open oceans, but great inland seas wind their way through the impressive landscape.

The Naalu promote Druaa as proof of their ideals. They care for their new (their only, they always claim) homeworld with deep respect. They value Druaa's pristine beauty and attempt to build on it only in the form of elegant crystal cities. Utilitarian or unattractive but necessary facilities are hidden underground whenever possible. Naalu military training and staging areas are relegated to Druaa's moons, Rulaka and Olnuk.



Eershin

Eershin is the Naalu Collective's grand crystal capital. Artificial and natural crystals are its structures' dominant materials, ranging from deeply translucent to highly transparent. The crystals form shining buildings and elegant bridges. Crystal cladding covers noncrystal structure where required. Crystal also is used in building interiors, along with a wide variety of other materials to accommodate various uses and styles.

Boarom Prism

This sprawling crystal palace is the home and seat of power of the Collective's leader, Q'uesh Sish. The Prism proper is a tower of enormous crystal prisms arrayed so that no matter what direction sunlight comes from, some part of it is split into its component colors and shines across nearby buildings. The Collective makes no great secret of the fact that the Prism holds the mysterious Neffish that Q'uesh uses to "see" the minds of other individuals from across great distances.

Crenhees Assembly of Tranquility and Order

The Crenhees Assembly of Tranquility and Order, also called simply the Assembly, is the name for both the Naalu Collective's governing body and the building where its members and factions meet. The building features an enormous translucent crystal roof covering a central circular meeting hall surrounded by colorful concentric rings of conference rooms, Assembly members' offices, and offices of supporting bureaucratic departments. While the Assembly concerns itself with matters of order within and beyond the Collective, its dedication to tranquility is strictly Naalu-centric. It sacrifices the peacefulness of others to achieve the Collective's goals.

The Assembly building is the Naalu's primary diplomatic center, so representatives of other factions are often present. Most governments rotate their ambassadors and staff regularly

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to minimize Naalu mind games and influence. The Keleres occasionally investigate to see if certain staff have become compromised, and may quietly move affected individuals off-world.

Olnuk and Rulaka

Olnuk is the smaller of Druaa's two moons. It is a dark-gray, rocky world dotted with efficient domed settlements over extensive geometric underground warrens. This moon also hosts the Naalu military's space force; scattered across its rocky landscape are openings into cavernous underground fighter hangars.

Rulaka is almost twice as large as Olnuk. Its original yellowish, arid landscape has been heavily terraformed over the centuries to support vegetation and other life. The resulting variety gives the Naalu armies ample opportunity to practice in whatever landscape they may someday fight in.

Maaluuk

A world of misty plains, smelly bogs, sprawling swamps, and an unappealing sameness in weather and appearance, Maaluuk has been heavily developed with industrial farms and mining operations.

Maaluuk Industrial Zones

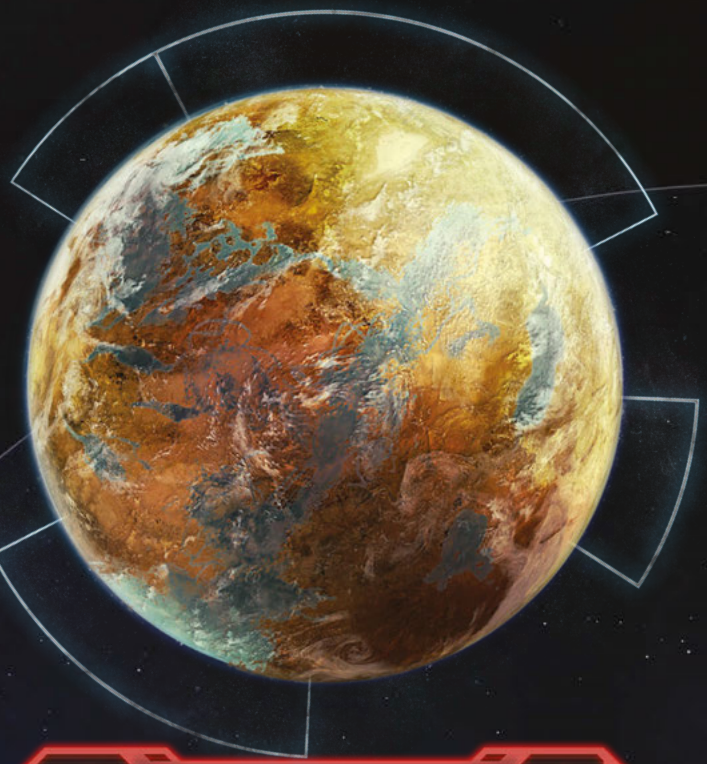
For ease of organization and governance, Maaluuk's industrial centers are divided into zones. Some of these zones are dedicated to a single industry, such as the sprawling strip mines of the Seerooka Quarry Zone, the flat agricultural expanse of Grenseen Farm Zone, and the high plateaus of the Mourast Rodent Ranches. Others encompass a variety of facilities or entire cities, such as the starport city of Dasooal and its supporting warehouses, processing centers, and lesser factories.

Yborin Marshes

The labyrinthine Yborin Marshes are best known to the rest of the galaxy as the source of the feared Yborin Plague, which is lethal to many species without treatments developed on Maaluuk. Two-meter-tall Rini grasses and other vegetation make surface navigation in the marshes challenging. Below the surface are schools of fast-growing fishlike Ybo, which are harvested and exported as a popular food to Druaa and the galaxy at large.

Valleys of Miasha

The Valleys of Miasha are six roughly parallel, sparsely forested valleys about twenty-five kilometers long. They are divided from each other by steep hills, and the two outermost valleys are each bounded on their far edge by a long mountain range. The Miashan quietly claim they were relocated here from their original homes on Druaa. Towns and villages dot the valleys, with tall Naalu towers watching over them and serving as a constant reminder of who rules Maaluuk.



KELERES ALERT!

So this is big, and it could be very dangerous. A Druaa arrived in Hacan space three weeks ago, asking for asylum at the Keleres outpost. We've since learned that the Naalu Collective considers them a traitor and is trying to catch them, but we've kept their existence secret so far. Since we're dealing with telepaths, I'm not going to tell you anything more about who or where they are.

That Druaa said they were in touch with a group of Miashan who allegedly have developed a resistance to the Collective's mind control. The Miashan claim that the official line about them being "valued members of the Collective" is a lie, and their entire species is enslaved. They also gave us coordinates and contact info on Maaluuk, in one of the Valleys of Miasha.

Now this arguably falls outside our jurisdiction, so I can't tell you to go, and I can't suggest that getting these Miashan off-world to a planet controlled by a sympathetic government like the Mentak would be the best move. But if you happen to choose to go, listen to me, because I went to Druaa once. It's hazy, but the only reason I remember is because I used Brelk's mental defense routine to keep the locals out of my head. Mostly. I think. Train up before you leave.

Caution: Red Zone. Naalu Collective system patrols can turn away intruders with literally a thought. All visitors to Maaluuk require prior Naalu notice and approval, and often an escort.

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Retillion and Shalloq

STAR NAME/TYPE: Myock/blue white star

RETILLION POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, population unknown

SHALLOQ POPULATION STATUS: colony, population unknown

GOVERNMENT: Guild of Spies led by the Cqaark

MAJOR IMPORTS: military technology, raw ore, various gases, information

MAJOR EXPORTS: menn root, information, covert operations

The Myock system was one of the earliest found and exploited by the Lazax Imperium. Though it has two habitable worlds, Retillion and Shalloq, Retillion drew the initial galactic interest. Shalloq's colder climate made it less attractive. The discovery of the delicious and broadly useful menn root in the Fianni swamps attracted colonists and a lucrative export business, which collapsed when the Lazax colonists discovered that the world was already inhabited by a sapient indigenous species.

The resulting guerilla war eventually led to the native Yssaril actively uplifting themselves with stolen Lazax technology and defeating the invaders, then slowly establishing themselves in galactic society. They were able to do so in large part due to their tenacity, determination, and innate chameleonic abilities.

KELERES ALERT!

The University of Rigel reported a theft of plans for an advanced anti-stealth sensor and got as far as Retillion before giving up on a suspected Guild of Spies agent. Officially, we're not getting involved. Unofficially, one of the Tribunii feels that getting that tech back to Rigel might keep the Guild from getting too aggressive. *Really* unofficially, if we were to help retrieve it, we could also copy it, and use it to keep tabs on Nekro incursions on the Rim.

Only Yssaril are allowed on the planet, so you'll need to sneak in—to the homeworld of the galaxy's best spies. You didn't hear it from me, but if I were infiltrating Retillion, I'd hitch a ride on one of the returning automated orbital pods the Yssaril use to export menn root. It's either that, or you find a disavowed Yssaril spy who's resentful enough to break a few rules for a lot of money. Gengi the Broker in the Dust Ward here in Mecatol City might know one.

Caution: Red Zone. Access to Retillion is absolutely restricted to Yssaril only. There are no waivers or diplomatic allowances available, including to the Keleres.

Retillion

Much of Retillion's land is low-lying, with endless swamps and wetlands reaching hundreds or thousands of kilometers into the interior. Long mountainous regions divide the continents, surrounded by dense green rainforests and woodlands that slowly merge with the wetlands. There are few areas where something can't grow.

Retillion's wilderness is very dangerous and has been the main factor in the Yssaril's development and evolution. However, the Yssaril have no monopoly on their chameleonic abilities. The swamps are full of ambush predators that can shift their skin color to blend into their surroundings, change their form to appear like something else, or deploy other forms of camouflage. The Yssaril have even domesticated and trained a few to act as pets or guard animals.

In the past, the Yssaril hid their villages from the predators and, when different tribes occasionally went to war, from each other. The Yssaril generally preferred to avoid conflict rather than force it, and that tradition in concealment has been maintained as they have established themselves on the galactic stage. No non-Yssaril has ever visited the Tribes' capital city deep in the swamps of Retillion, and even covert orbital scans from visiting starships have failed to locate any trace of it. For that matter, nobody has ever detected any of the usual traces of civilization on the planet. If it weren't for the Yssaril themselves, most people would assume the planet was uninhabited.

Fianni Swamps

The Fianni swamps are labyrinthine, continent-sized wetlands, bogs, and other lowlands, threaded through with small lakes and wide rivers. The swamp is fluid and ever changing, shifting with the currents, tides, and growth and death of vegetation.

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The changes make mapping the vast expanse almost impossible, even for talented Yssaril scouts. Stretching along the major waterways and into the backwaters, menn root farms are structured by the Yssaril to blend into the wetlands, minimizing their intrusion on the local ecosystem. Barge traffic and other watercraft ship the valuable commodity to processing stations and distribution centers.

Wuecca

The secret Yssaril capital city is hidden deep in Retillion's Fianni swamps. Only Yssaril are allowed in the city, and given its location in the heart of the twisting labyrinth of waterways, even most Yssaril don't know its exact location. Most Yssaril rely on dedicated guides piloting semisubmersible craft to take them from the spaceport pads along the edges of the Fianni swamps into Wuecca.

Like other Yssaril settlements, Wuecca exists more under the water than above it. Roofs rise only a few meters above the still waters of the swamp, but the buildings spread out beneath the surface, sinking several stories through the water and mud. Dense foliage, camouflage, and environmental dampers hide the city from the outside world, eliminating its heat signature and gas emissions. The camouflage also creates a harmonious blending between the natural and artificial that many Yssaril love. Stilt-fiber canoes carry commuters through a twisting maze of channels and waterways, locals relax under the spreading boughs of turmen trees, and birdsong and insect calls replace the mechanical noise pollution of most of the galaxy's cities.

The Guild of Spies meets in the half-submerged Nuenan Guildhall in the heart of the city. From the outside, the hall looks like a ring of turmen trees twisted into a spiraling knot, which hides the modern facilities within.

Shalloq

The original Lazax colonists largely ignored Shalloq. The two planets are similar in their extensive moisture and swamps, but Shalloq's cooler climate proved incompatible with menn root production. Much of Shalloq is covered in tundra, with temperate rainforests and wetlands restricted to a wide band in the equatorial zone.

Shalloq has native life, though less than Retillion, and no known sentient species. After the Lazax departure, the Yssaril quickly colonized it, eager to claim the prize of a second habitable planet in their own star system. The Yssaril transferred some crops and other life-forms to Shalloq as needed. However, they have not successfully cultivated menn root there, at least in a sellable variety. While Shalloq's researchers are trying to solve the problem, most Yssaril living on Retillion prefer to see menn root kept as an exclusive export of the homeworld.

Life in Shalloq demonstrates that the Yssaril are not a monolithic culture. Shalloq's residents often chafe under directions from Wuecca. Arguments and low-level rhetoric are vocal enough that even visitors can notice them. The local presses

publish new scandals involving local political figures and celebrities regularly, and its an open secret amongst the locals that a number of these are manufactured by Wuecca to keep local governance weak. Since Shalloq's local culture tends to be more open than Retillion, other governments tend to try to exploit this dissatisfaction to infiltrate Yssaril society. Wuecca dispatches counter-agents in turn, and Mojeb and Haarsuh become shadow arenas for spies.

Mojeb

Shalloq's only city known to the galaxy, Mojeb provides a meeting and negotiating place for travelers to discuss matters with high-ranking and other powerful Yssaril personnel. The city lies on the shore of the crescent-shaped Ejeb Bay, part of the Ejeb Chain of One Hundred Lakes. Fingerlike piers extend the city into the lake by up to a kilometer. Unlike other Yssaril cities, this one does not employ the Yssaril's sophisticated camouflage measures. However, the size, clearances, and proportions make it obvious which buildings are intended for Yssaril use only and which are visitor accommodations and other facilities.

Haarsuh

Shalloq's great orbital trade station provides the best and safest negotiating location for outsiders. It is built to accommodate members of most factions. It has the amenities of a wealthy city, plus vast warehouses and other means to facilitate trade deals. Some travelers rightly fear industrial espionage and other spying by the Yssaril, but those doing direct business with them must learn to accept the risk. Haarsuh's command center, security, and some other staff areas are built to accommodate the Yssaril's smaller size, and most humanoids cannot easily fit in these areas.

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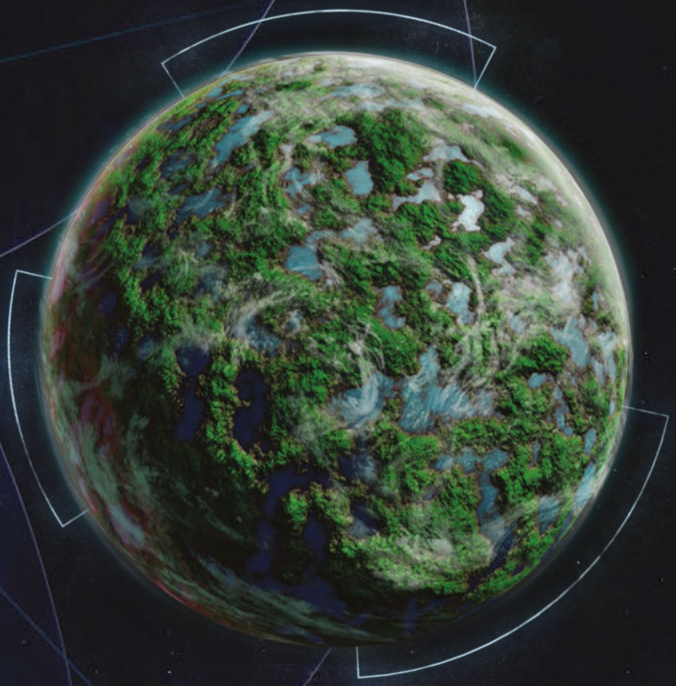
Naazir and Rokha



STAR NAME/TYPE: Kal-Geydr binary system/yellow star and red dwarf

NAAZIR POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 7 billion (49% Naaz, 49% Rokha, 2% other)

ROKHA POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 5.7 billion (48% Naaz, 48% Rokha, 2% Hacan, 1% Human, 1% other)

GOVERNMENT: alliance led by the Tetrarchy

MAJOR IMPORTS: exotic raw materials, research

MAJOR EXPORTS: high-performance devices, technological development, culture

The worlds of Naazir and Rokha are home to the symbiotic Naaz-Rokha Alliance. Naazir is the original homeworld of the diminutive Naaz. After the Naaz allied with the nomadic Rokha, the two species began to build a new society together on Naazir. They also colonized and terraformed a second world in the Naa system. This they named Rokha so that the two halves of their new partnership would be equally honored in the names of their two worlds.

Naazir

Naazir is a small, low-gravity world covered in high mountain ranges divided by deep, narrow seas. Most of the plant and animal life has evolved to live on the nearly vertical mountain slopes, and the four-armed Naaz are no exception. Verdant forests of twisting vine trees and tenacious conifers cover the cliff tops and dangle off the sides of sheer drops, while the narrow and chilly seas host all sorts of fish species. Most of the seas are separate from one another, so each has evolved its own unique ecosystem and species. The landmasses, on the other hand, tend to be connected, leading to more blended arboreal biomes across the globe.

The inhabitants of Naazir live in cities bolted and burrowed into the towering cliff faces, with vertical farms and retractable fisheries providing most of the food supplies. Early in the Alliance's existence, the Naaz-Rokha decided that they'd rather keep their industry in space, and now orbital factories ring the planet, leaving Naazir itself largely untouched.

Quellin Facing

The capital of the Alliance, the city of Quellin Facing was the site of the first treaties signed between the Naaz and the Rokha. It later served as the base from which the two species launched the campaign to drive the last invaders off their planet. The city extends down the sheer sides of the titanic Quellin Mountain like a series of shelves carved into and extending out from the rock. The uppermost shelves catch the most sunlight and are devoted to parks, promenades, government buildings, and habs. The lower shelves remain in a constant gloomy twilight and host commercial centers, data vaults, and monorail transit hubs. At the base of Quellin Facing, the Ibrak Sea laps at the lowest shelf, where fleets of fishing vessels launch each day.

Congress Hall

The Tetrarchy's staff and the representatives in the Congress both execute their duties from the smooth and gleaming building of Congress Hall. Built on the uppermost shelf of Quellin Facing, the Hall contains the storied Chamber of Congress, where elected representatives from across Naazir and Rokha meet, as well as the four offices of the Tetrarchy. Two Eidolon mechs stand guard on either side of Congress Hall's towering nisswood doors. Though the Eidolons are decorated and painted as honor guards, their weapons are real, and they serve as a reminder of the Alliance's ingenuity and strength.

KELERES ALERT!

The Tetrarchy has often been one of our stronger supporters in the Council. I guess the Naaz-Rokha see the Keleres as evidence that the rest of the galaxy can work together like they do. To continue supporting us, the Tetrarchy is offering the Keleres six top-flight Eidolon mechs.

Now, wipe the drool off your lip, because there's a catch. In exchange, they want a cohort to fly the Eidolons in a scouting mission around a grav-rift that's appeared only a thousand light-years from Naa. The Tetrarchy is worried the rift isn't natural, but they also think sensor data might be invaluable for one of their many research projects. If you survive, the Eidolons belong to the Keleres. If not...well, I doubt we can send anyone after you.

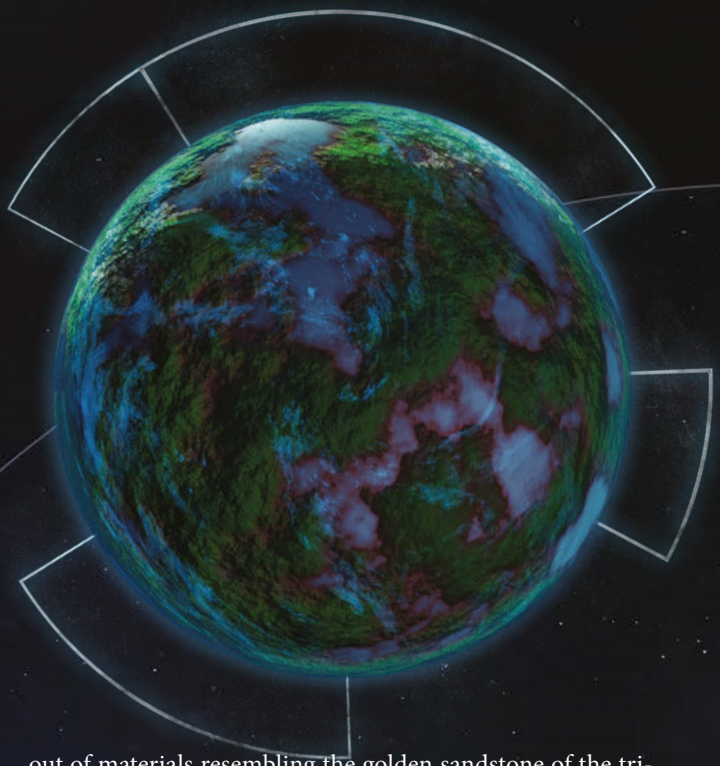
Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Rokha

The fifth planet in orbit around Naa, and farther out than Naazir, Rokha has long been a dry and lifeless world, with a thin atmosphere of nitrogen and carbon dioxide. All that changed when the burgeoning Alliance offered its new Rokha partners the one thing the species never had: a homeworld.

Rokha was subjected to a quick and enthusiastic terraforming process. Comet drops heated the world, thickened its atmosphere, and supplied it with water. Orbital mirror arrays further warmed Rokha, and Alliance scientists seeded the planet with biotech organisms that began to pump oxygen into the atmosphere and introduced a minor greenhouse effect, increasing the temperature to a habitable level. Remarkably, given the Alliance's reliance on homegrown technologies and lack of access to ancient geoformers, Rokha changed into an entirely new world in just a few centuries.

The new planet was still cooler than its neighbor, with stormy seas and vast stretches of foggy alpine forests and upland tundra. The Rokha loved the planet and, after centuries of work, so did many Naaz. Although it began as a world for just one species, both ended up settling on it (while just as many from both species remained on Naazir). It is still less populated than Naazir, but with more space to build and expand, that may change in the next few centuries.



Dormont Vault

Rokha's largest city is built on the sprawling upland plateau called the Morit Shelf. Here the city remains aloof from the worst storms thrown up by the planet's new seas, although its winters are considered legendary by anyone in the Alliance. Despite the weather, Dormont Vault has the distinction of being the largest single city in the Kal-Geydr system; it is a maze of gleaming towers erupting from a thick carpet of verdant forests and stretching from the foothills of the neighboring mountains right to the edge of the Morit Shelf. Here, where the cliffs drop away to the salt flats below, the Alliance has built hundreds of docking bays into the rock as berths for starships of all sizes.

One of Dormont Vault's most notable districts is the Kenaran Quarter, home to a large population of Hacan expatriates and immigrants. A number of the buildings have been constructed out of materials resembling the golden sandstone of the trisystem, and floating light globes bathe the streets in a hot yellow-white glow. The local Hacan have become enthusiastic members of the Alliance, even if every one of them constantly complains about the weather.

Exotic Energies Institute

The EEI was founded relatively recently, but its scientists and other staff are working diligently to make it the galaxy's foremost research center for new power sources, such as the Alliance's renowned entropic field harvesting. Recently, the Tetrarchy has declared these research fields a matter of state importance. This has put the Institute into something of a bind. On the one hand, it has been suddenly showered with money and resources to continue its work. However, visas for visiting scholars are suddenly much less likely to be approved, and armed security guards have begun to patrol the Institute's campus. This leaves the staff, many of whom originally joined the EEI in hopes of making a difference for the entire galaxy, quite uncomfortable.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Quinarra and Tren'lak

STAR NAME/TYPE: Sardakk/yellow dwarf star

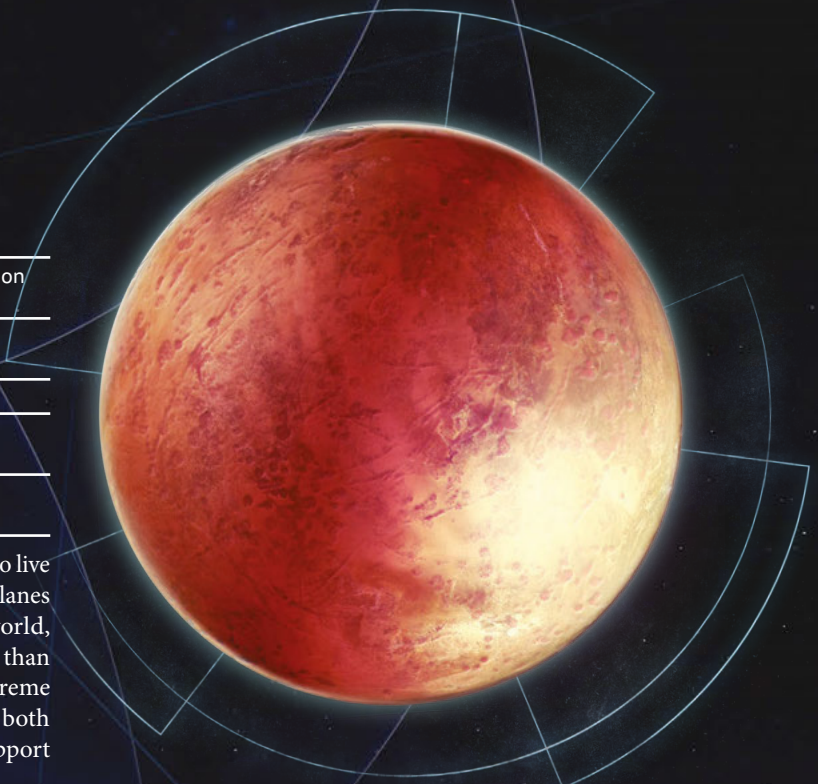
QUINARRA POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 26.7 billion (99.5% N'orr, 0.5% other)

TREN'LAK POPULATION STATUS: colony, 2.01 billion (100% N'orr)

GOVERNMENT: Veiled Brood led by the Envoy of the Queen

MAJOR IMPORTS: industrial goods, ice, salt (from Tren'lak to Quinarra)

MAJOR EXPORTS: military technology, industrial resins, soldiers



The Sardakk system is home to billions of Sardakk N'orr, who live everywhere from the planets' surfaces to the packed spacelanes and a multitude of orbital stations. The N'orr homeworld, Quinarra, and its colony world of Tren'lak are far larger than the average terrestrial world, and both have brutally extreme environments. Over the centuries, the N'orr have made both worlds dependent on their symbiotic relationship to support the N'orr civilization.

Quinarra

Quinarra is widely regarded as one of the galaxy's harshest and least hospitable worlds hosting a major civilization. It is a massive red, dusty world lacking oceans and any other great bodies of surface water. In fact, most N'orr scientists believe it is the ancient core of a gas giant. The N'orr population long ago reached numbers that required importing vast amounts of water from ice quarries on Tren'lak.

Storms dominate Quinarra. Potent weather systems stretch over its surface, whipping up wind, dust, sand, and other particles with an intensity deadly to most species in the galaxy. Lightning and supercell storms with hail and tornadoes add to the danger, bringing what little rain the planet can muster. The N'orr are tough enough to withstand all but the greatest storms found in the polar regions. While their society stretches across the planet's surface, even the poles are too violent for the average N'orr. This is not to say the poles are not useful. The K'klar, or southern pole, serves as the training grounds for N'orr's Tekklar Elite soldiers. They use the harsh conditions to kill all trainees save the very toughest. These become G'hom, among the most feared warriors in the galaxy and honored at home.

Quinarra's cities are built above and below ground. The buildings are crafted out of the stone that covers the planet's surface, keeping its shades of reds and browns and providing a naturally tough surface to resist the frequent storms. In defiance of the powerful winds, the N'orr build stout towers surrounded by a chaotic sprawl of shorter buildings. The settlements expand to ravines and canyons, and tunnel far into the ground behind and below the surface structures. Very few visitors ever see the mazelike underground passages, massive caverns, and crowded city-nests.

Most cities have areas dedicated to Sardakk the Queen Mother. Though the queen is never seen, and is believed by most outsiders to be a myth, the idea of the queen as ultimate leader of the N'orr still holds. The dedicated areas vary by location, and might be an elaborate plaza, tower, meeting hall, or dramatic landform. The area is heavily decorated in stylized depictions of the queen and idealized acts of leadership. There is no indication any of these are recent or even if they ever occurred. The N'orr use them for ceremonial activities and public recognition of successful individuals.

H'cor

The N'orr capital city is a sprawling metropolis with high spires and buildings towering over widespread low-rise structures. Dominated by shades of red and brown, the city's buildings are rounded or oval structures, shaped to better resist the frequent winds and storms. The ancient city roads wind and cross to fit with the irregular landscape. Some dip into canyons and steep gorges, as the N'orr build both above and below ground.

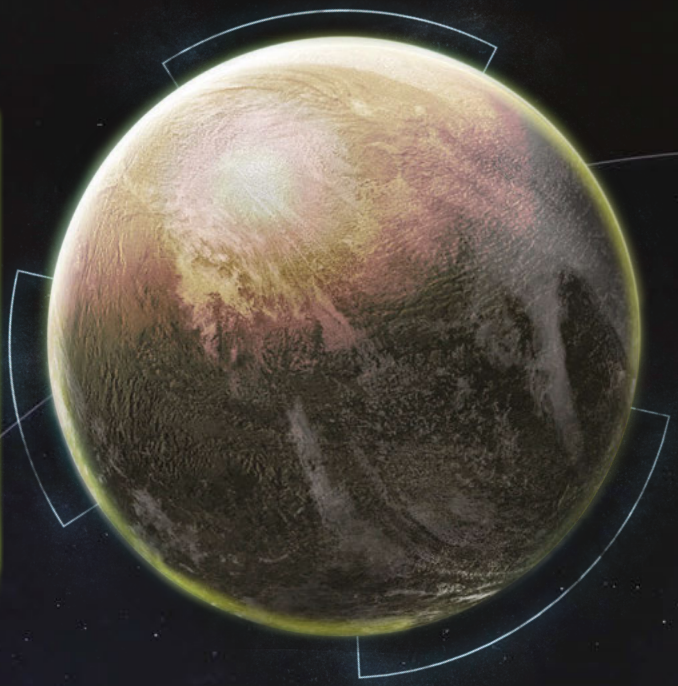
H'cor's multiple spaceports host a constant stream of departing and arriving craft, with only the most violent storms affecting travel. The packed bustle extends into the city's roads and skylanes, though frequent dust storms force aircraft to ground and travelers to pack the already jammed underground traffic ways. The roads coil and wind through the city before converging on the center, a series of sharp towers buried in the heart of a massive canyon. Here the Envoy of the Queen rules from a dramatic, wind-sculpted tower cluster called the Ra'Rel Tol.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

KELERES ALERT!

The Council on Mecatol Rex has summoned the G'hom, Az'Verk, to testify as a witness to the bribery of a Winnaran official by a Yssaril spy while the G'hom was assigned to the N'orr delegation. You must find Az'Verk. If he won't return with you, you must convince the Envoy of the Queen to order him to return. At least you get to chase someone with a unique name. The regular N'orr like to reuse names or change them following some protocol.

Caution: Green Zone. Both Quinarra and Tren'lak allow regular trade and traffic, though outsiders may feel out of place in general and unwelcome if traveling deep underground.



Vor'bar

The twelve domes of Vor'bar make up H'cor's immigration nexus. All incoming travelers are expected to pass through this facility upon arrival. Individual domes are dedicated to different types of travelers, with three reserved for non-N'orr. Underground barracks host a whole division of N'orr soldiers, ready to respond to any potential disturbances.

K'klar

Quinarra's southern polar region is dotted with Tekklar Elite training facilities, with multiple bases the size of large cities located mostly underground. They are surrounded by harsh landscape that is inhospitable even for the N'orr. The ruins of target vehicles are scattered about, half-buried in sand and snow dunes. Among them are the desiccated corpses of the many thousands of recruits who did not survive the training.

Tren'lak

Tren'lak is far less populated than Quinarra, but its numbers still surpass those of many other worlds. Tren'lak is N'orr's most important colony. Without its constant supply of water ice, the thirsty population of Quinarra would soon wither and die.

Tren'lak's environment is less violent than Quinarra but much colder, with extensive mountain ranges covered in thick layers of glacial ice multiple kilometers deep. Over the centuries, the N'orr have perfected methods of cutting ever-larger sections of ice away for easier transport. Massive chunks of ice the size of buildings are regularly lifted out of the Ke'Sek mountain range, an impressive feat of engineering performed almost daily. Much of the ice mining is automated, but there are still thousands of N'orr engineers, staff, and laborers to literally pick up the pieces. The ice-mountains are hauled into cavernous Nuoda shell freighters, which protect them and collect precious meltwater during liftoff and transport to the B'trel orbital processing plants.

Tren'lak's milder climate zones are heavily used for expansive industrial farms and livestock. Large towns and cities dot the landscape, their inhabitants dividing their labor between the fields and the local factories. Tren'lak's cities use local materials for construction, making them look unlike Quinarra's red structures in color and form. The cities don't require the same durability, though they must resist harsh elements and the cold in most areas. Cities in the ice-mountains are built in the Larrabon, expanses of landscape cleared by the ice mining.

B'trel Orbital Stations

The B'trel are the hundreds of orbital stations hanging around Tren'lak. Their role is to process Tren'lak's ice, filtering it into pure water to be sent to Quinarra and to the thousands of other stations scattered throughout the system. The "impurities" tend to be valuable minerals and metals in their own right, so each B'trel has dozens of secondary processing facilities and chemical breaker labs hanging from the station like bulbous growths.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Muaat

STAR NAME/TYPE: Mashaak/blue star

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 7.39 billion (99% Gashlai, 1% other)

GOVERNMENT: tribunal led by the High Fire Warden

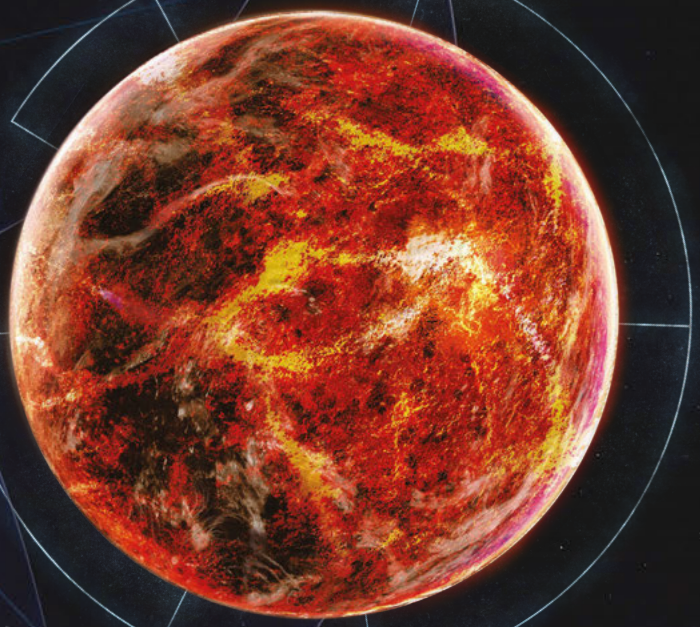
MAJOR IMPORTS: experimental technology, raw ore

MAJOR EXPORTS: rare high-temperature minerals, heavy machinery, reinforced starship hulls

Muaat is the volcanic, fiery home of the Gashlai. Save for its massive highlands of dormant volcanoes, it is a world of searing heat, molten lakes, and incendiary rivers. At all but the highest altitudes, the atmosphere is a thick, choking haze of noxious fumes. When Jol-Nar explorers arrived in the early Age of Dusk, they were attracted by Muaat's mineral wealth. They did not expect the scientific wonder of virtually living fire in the form of the Gashlai people.

Gashlai civilization developed very differently from that of other worlds. The Gashlai's existence relies on oxygen for combustion, but also on a host of the types of chemicals and elements found in Muaat's lava pools. Simple, oxygen-producing organisms only developed in the mountainous highlands, where some standing water could persist without vaporizing. This created two distinct but independent biomes: the more typical water-based and oxygen-producing uplands, and the unique, combustion-based lowlands.

After the Universities of Jol-Nar enslaved the Gashlai, and the Gashlai subsequently revolted and regained their freedom, they began to build larger communities around the great lava lakes of the Muaat lowlands. Gashlai cities are rocky edifices of carved black stone over a chaotic tunnel complex that can bore down dozens of kilometers under the surface. Nearly all still exist in the volcanic lowlands, the Gashlai having long ago looted the Jol-Nar highland facilities and brought the most valuable equipment back to their cities. However, as the lowlands are lethal to anyone without an environmental suit, the Gashlai do maintain off-worlder enclaves in the highest mountain ranges, where the temperature averages a habitable forty-three degrees Celcius.



KELERES ALERT!

An eruption and earthquake opened a ravine revealing an old secret Jol-Nar storage facility on Muaat. The Gashlai were going to destroy it, but they fear it holds experimental power cores from an old doomsday product. They need Jol-Nar help to deal with it, but of course, neither side trusts the other. You get to escort the Jol-Nar and help cut a deal. Lucky you. I mean, you haven't been hot until you've been to Muaat. I still have the burn scars to prove it, and that was from the inside of my protective suit.

Caution: Green Zone. The Gashlai are defensive but cooperative.

Caution: Extreme heat and fire hazard. Top-level hazard suits are required at all times except in designated protective habitats.

Mavgala

Muaat's capital city Mavgala predates Jol-Nar occupation by thousands of years. The city sits at the base of Mount Mav, the highest volcano of the Kormav Mountains. Mav is constantly active, releasing a vast river of lava that flows past Mavgala before emptying into the Molten Eternal lava sea. Mavgala's towering, black-stoned edifices convey a sense of eternal perseverance, while the rounded and polished carved bas-reliefs on nearly every wall reflect the orange glow of the lava river and the city's fiery inhabitants.

Doolak Mountains

The Doolak Mountains are a sprawling range of mountains and dormant volcanoes that also have the most "habitable" environments for non-Gashlai on Muaat. Rain manages to fall at least once a month, keeping sheets of hardy lichens alive, and the thinner atmosphere keeps the temperature at a survivable forty-three degrees Celsius(while dropping precipitously at night).

Most of the galaxy fears Doolak as the source of the dreaded Doolak plague that nearly wiped out the populations of Jol and Nar. Perhaps this discomfort is the other reason why the Embers of Muaat keep their largest off-worlder enclave in the heart of this mountain range.

Secuner Rift

This truly massive continental rift forms the heart of a volcanic sea that covers nearly one-fifth of the planet's surface. Gashlai towns dot the shores of the Secuner Rift Sea, but even the Gashlai find the temperatures at the rift's center to be too hot to survive.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Winnu

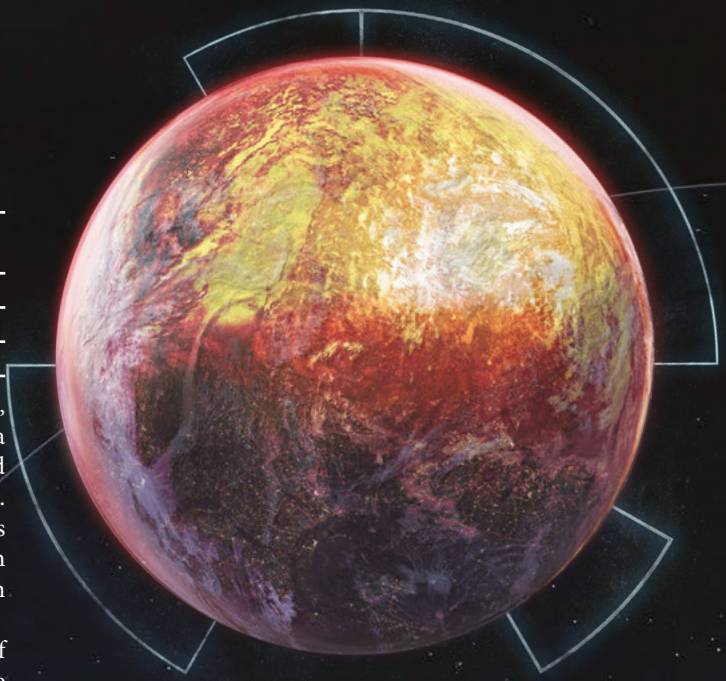
STAR NAME/TYPE: Waquanna/red supergiant

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 13.77 billion (97% Winnu, 3% other)

GOVERNMENT: empire led by the Emperor

MAJOR IMPORTS: technology

MAJOR EXPORTS: culture, lore, entertainment



The Winnu system lies within the midst of the Core Systems, relatively close to the Coreward Gate. The planet Winnu has a very diverse climate and geology. Much of the world is covered in sandy and rocky deserts, some of which extend to the poles. This contrasts with the equally widespread rugged landforms thick with vegetation and animal species. The planet's north pole and about one third of the northern hemisphere remain covered in ice thanks to a slowly receding ice age.

There are no major oceans on Winnu. The largest bodies of water equate to large inland seas on other worlds. In the more hospitable regions, woodlands and rainforests thrive. Most of the water lies beneath the surface in underground waterways, flooded caverns, and cenotes.

Not all wastelands—whether desert or arid—are completely natural. Some are scars from wars of Winnu's ancient past, before embracing Lazax philosophy. Terraforming has restored some areas with limited success. However, the destruction didn't strip all former battlegrounds of life. Sometimes life was drastically altered instead, such as in the Paroutrel region.

Winnu's bright and elegant cities still extensively showcase the Lazax and Lazax-inspired designs. The Winnu belief that they are the true Lazax successors drives them to enshrine the past and build new structures based on ancient ideas as examples of their sincerity. However, the Winnu also like to show how their art and culture has evolved beyond the Winnaran traditions, so new ideas often stand alongside the old. They are sometimes called the "shining cities" due to their use of reflective and bright materials that glow in the sunlight and to their use of dramatic artificial lighting at night.

KELERES ALERT!

Every so often, the Winnarans attempt to convince their people to return to their caretaker ways. The Winnarans always use the Nezuurux—the Lazax Promenade—to approach Winnu's capital, Aranin, and call on their cousins the Winnu to honor their ancient oaths to the Lazax, much to the Winnu's annoyance. The Keleres fly escort and moderate the proceedings. The Winnu want to show the galaxy their diplomatic prowess, so they always play along. I think both Winnu and Winnarans are too bound up in Lazax tradition to see what a farce it is.

Caution: Green Zone. The Winnu are traditionalists, so they probably won't interrupt the ceremony. However, the Winnarans are the people we work with every day, so watch their backs. I've been hearing rumblings this year that some hardliners in the Winnu government may decide to disrupt the proceedings.

Paroutrel

The Paroutrel region is a continent-sized area where the vegetation has taken on deep red and brown colors due to mutations caused by chemical warfare thousands of years ago. The plants are aggressively invasive and, if left unchecked, could destroy Winnu's carefully reconstructed biosphere. Winnu biologists hold back the spread, but they often call in off-world bio experts when new growth surges occur. The Paroutrel is a continual reminder of what ancient Winnu attitudes and ambition can lead to.

The Nezuurux

The Nezuurux is also known as the Lazax Promenade. Built in honor of Winnu's admission into the Lazax Empire, the Nezuurux is a series of mighty towers topped with blindingly bright beacons. The beacons are placed in pairs at intervals of several kilometers, while the promenade extends for thousands of kilometers across the continent. The promenade provided a formal, celebrated approach for Lazax state visits. It is maintained today and used on special occasions. The beacon pairs are masterworks of art and architecture celebrating different aspects of Lazax guidance.

Aranin

Winnu's capital city sits at one end of the Nezuurux, perched on the edge of the mighty Aree Canyon. The capital showcases everything the Winnu have believed to be great about the Lazax Empire, and it still boasts some ancient buildings and ruins from that time. Much of the city is clad in bright metal panels, whether examples of minimalist Lazax interpretations or gaudy and overdone late imperial styles. The capitol complex, Mauron, is a mix of new and ancient imperial styling in keeping with the Winnu's claims and aspirations to the throne.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Archon Ren and Archon Tau

STAR NAME/TYPE: Xxlak/orange dwarf star

ARCHON REN POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 8.1 billion (95% Xxcha, 5% other)

ARCHON TAU POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 60 million (91% Xxcha, 7% Human, 1% Winnu, 1% other)

GOVERNMENT: monarchy under a king

MAJOR IMPORTS: industrial machinery, foodstuffs, water (to Archon Tau)

MAJOR EXPORTS: foodstuffs (from Archon Ren); minerals, raw ore (from Archon Tau)

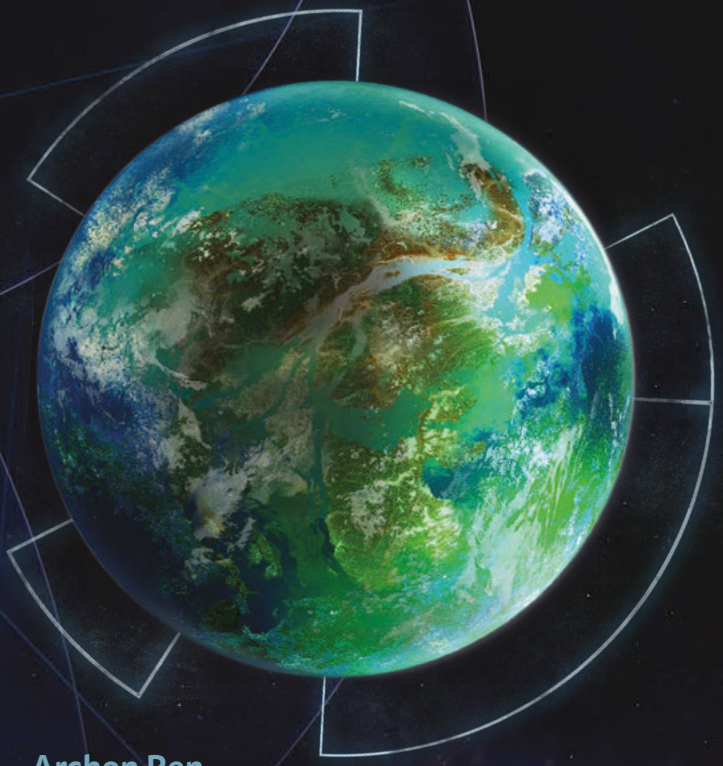
The Xxlak system is home to the venerable Xxcha species. Located nearly equidistant between the Primor Gate and Quann Wormhole, the system is well situated for galactic access. It sits in one of the wealthier regions of the galaxy. These advantages aided the Xxcha in becoming the first of the great interstellar civilizations.

The system is home to the once truly twin planets of Archon Ren and Archon Tau. Before the Twilight Wars, both were fertile green worlds with shallow oceans and inland seas. A Letnev invasion forced the Xxcha to make a deal to keep their homeworld, Archon Ren—at least temporarily—and to cede their long-time colony of Archon Tau to the attackers. Years later, Sol forces conducted a two-year campaign to oust the Letnev from their fortified bases on Archon Tau. The devastating bombardments wrecked the ecosystem and turned the world into a cinder. Even thousands of years later, Archon Tau hangs in the sky like a burned, scarred ghost, continually reminding the Xxcha of the price of war and weakness.

KELERES ALERT!

Mysterious agents are trying to enter the Library of Xuun's restricted vault. The Xxcha have detected two attempted breaches that seemed to target a subvault containing an ancient tome detailing part of the Lazax defeat of the Mahact kings. The Xxcha fear that Mahact or L1Z1X agents are trying to steal it and have asked for Keleres help. They'll give you the details upon arrival. I can tell you from experience, their report will be lengthy and detailed, and that will just be the summary.

Caution: Green Zone. The Xxcha have specifically requested our help and have sanctioned a cohort to arrive armed and to use deadly force to protect the vault. Given how cautious the Xxcha can be, they are taking this very seriously. Don't betray their trust.



Archon Ren

Archon Ren's extensive lands and small seas are astonishingly diverse in animal life, with an ecology that lacks invasive insects but makes up for it with thousands of small reptilian species that fill many of the same roles. The world is plentiful in food, minerals, and ore, giving the Xxcha advantages in their plans for stellar expansion. The Xxcha are surprisingly evenly distributed across the land, with small to moderate settlements at most. Even the major urban center of Kklaj, the capital of Archon Ren, has extensive greenspaces and carefully manicured gardens threaded among the buildings and transitways.

Beyond Kklaj, the *ttillons* (Xxcha villages) range in population from a few thousand to a few tens of thousands. Each village typically includes shops, central transport hubs, education centers, law enforcement facilities, medical centers, and other necessities. Each uses local wood and other materials in their construction, and thus ttillons tend to blend into their surroundings. The Ssaalel halls, used for long philosophical debates and discussion, tend to occupy a place of pride in the center of each ttillon.

Xxcha villages serve as central distribution points for goods and services brought in from surrounding areas and other settlements. Transportation networks wind their way through the woodlands and rainforests, often following the landscape rather than being imposed upon it. These radiate outward from regional spaceports, allowing short-orbit transit hops to anywhere on the planet in a matter of hours.

Kklaj

The capital city is obviously the king's domain. The king's lands are the city's center, its many square kilometers of botanical gardens containing countless species of trees and flowers from across the globe. Some of the gardens even keep carefully preserved specimens from the lost biomes of Archon Tau.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Within the gardens sits Xxeeket Palace, much of it centuries old. It is built and sculpted entirely of Q'waar wood, which has a beautiful grain and surprising strength that master craftspeople and carpenters skillfully use to display the cleverness and wisdom of the Xxcha people.

The rest of Kklaj serves as the planet's primary commercial hub and major manufacturing center. The Xxcha also locate their military command facilities in Kklaj, and they maintain heavy shield facilities along the city's perimeter.

Library of Xuun

Among Kklaj's premiere structures and attractions is the extensive Library of Xuun. Its elegant tower and the concentric rings of halls surrounding it gleam with polished Q'waar wood. Scholars from around the galaxy come to study the library's ancient tomes and databases, some of which predate the Lazax Empire. The librarians are always adding to the collection and sometimes pay very well for rare or undiscovered forms of information. Despite appearances, the library is well defended from attackers and natural calamities. Centuries of work have copied and backed up the contents, and backups are held at a secret, protected vault elsewhere on Archon Ren. Rumors abound of a second vault on Archon Tau, but they are neither confirmed nor denied by the king and government.

Defense Facilities

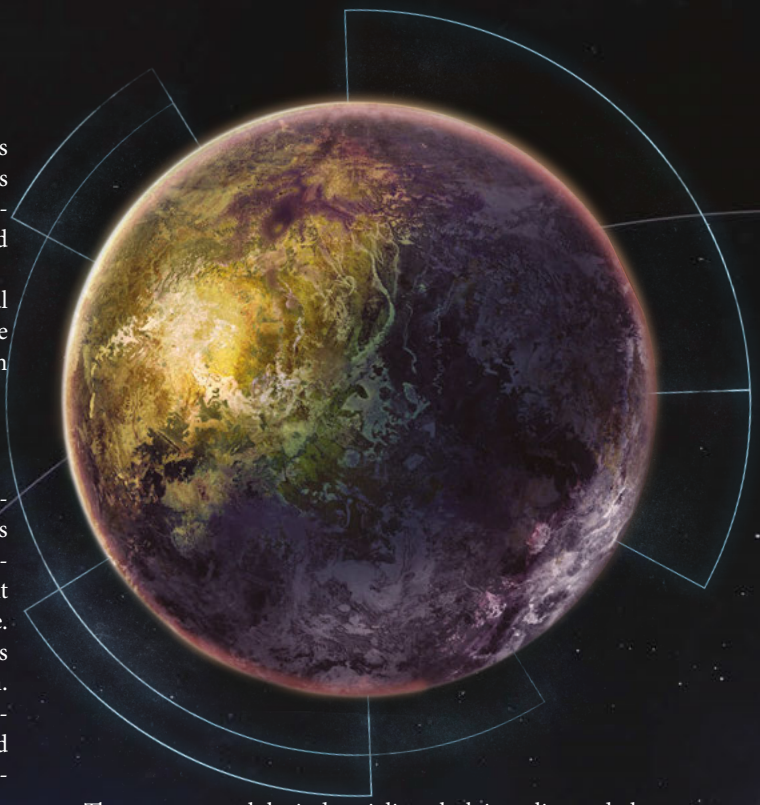
The Xxcha refuse to be caught defenseless again. That was the somber vow of the ancient Xxcha rulers during the Twilight Wars, and a pledge their ancestors maintain even to this day.

Most military facilities are kept away from the general populace, leaving the lands of Archon Ren unblemished. The exceptions are the large bastion shield generators around Kklaj. But no such prohibition applies to orbital facilities. The orbits of Archon Ren are ringed in castellan stations bristling with guns and hangar bays for swarms of Xxlun fighter craft. Even heavier garrisons occupy the scarred surface of Archon Tau.

Archon Tau

Archon Tau is a constant reminder of past inability to fight off the Letnev, and it motivates the Xxcha to use their strength and knowledge to go beyond simply improving their defenses. Though burned and shattered, Archon Tau is not completely lifeless, nor is it useless. Xxcha industry is active there, as metals, minerals, and rare elements still lie beneath the surface. They are extracted to build weapons and warships. It might be easy for outsiders to believe that the Xxcha would simply turn the planet into a dumping ground or a place to use heavy industry indiscriminately. That is not their way.

Since Sol violently ousted the Letnev garrisons, Xxcha scientists and terraforming engineers have studied the world intently. Some scour the surface, collecting samples of surviving animals and plants for future cloning or perhaps genetic reengineering. Others do the same in the polluted waters and sickening sludge. Areas hundreds of square kilometers across serve as experimental restoration projects. They have had limited success.



The restorers and the industrialists clash in policy and planning sessions. However, the reality is that the world is big enough for both activities in most cases. The real debate is what could happen if the restoration becomes widely successful.

Millions live on Archon Tau. Many are employed or serve in temporary assignments from Archon Ren. Early restoration cities created for convenience and safety have developed into urban areas. Few Xxcha want to live isolated in the wastelands, but the military does make extensive use of some regions as training grounds for troops. While this riles some restorers, as training degrades the landscape further, they generally accept that it is required to prevent future tragedies. Beyond training, the military conducts regular patrols and maintains scattered outposts to keep an eye on things. It is not unknown for criminal elements to find an isolated area to set up shop in for years without detection.

Ttuiian

Ttuiian is the revered and somber memorial of the destruction of Archon Tau, located just outside the sealed city of Vveleer. Ttuiian's war-scarred blocks of stone from around the world are arranged in interlocking squares. They are carved with the names of lost cities, settlements, and other important locations.

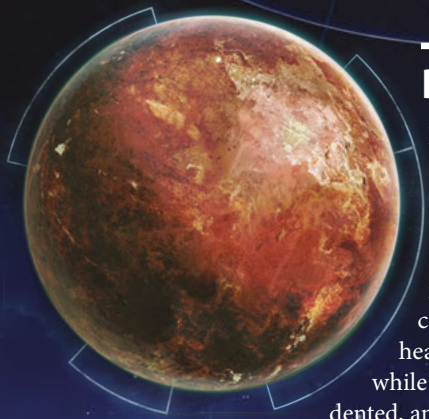
The Eyes of Llixkas

Named in memory of the Xxcha king who first armed his people in the face of aggression, this massive planetary defense station dominates Archon Tau's northern pole. Its sensors can pick up a ship as small as a single fighter approaching Xxlak's cometary halo, and its four massive cannons can target ships in orbit over either world. Several monitor cruisers hang in orbit over the facility, providing close defense against enemy assault.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Other Worlds

There are billions of worlds in the galaxy, and locally important systems may not register at the galactic level of consciousness. Here are but a few examples of countless standout worlds scattered across the galaxy.



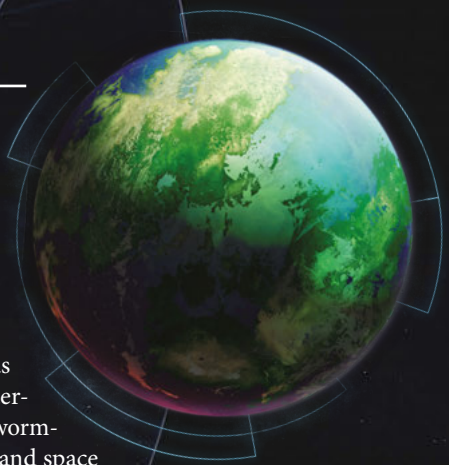
Ba'kal

Rocky, red and brown deserts cover the entirety of Ba'kal. Even the poles remain desertlike year-round, with no ice caps. Ba'kal's howling winds blow sand and rocks in massive sandstorms that can strip the paint off the most heavy-duty vehicles in mere hours while leaving the surface pockmarked, dented, and punctured.

The main reason to live on Ba'kal is to participate in the extraction of useful salt compounds discovered on or under the planet's surface. Mining them requires monstrous heavy-duty equipment built to survive the desolate surface conditions. Armored harvester crawlers scour the surface, scraping or digging up deposits. When a severe storm is detected, the race is on to reach shelter in one of the planet's shield cities.

Shield cities, such as Stormshell, are heavily reinforced, armored settlements built to take a storm's punishment. They serve as home bases, supply depots, markets, and refineries for the roving crawlers. Each is encased by a massive, sloped wall studded with bunker-like, hangar-sized garages around the perimeter, allowing fleeing crawlers immediate access to shelter.

Fights over limited bunker space are common, since the last crawlers may not find a spot and have to weather the storm outside the protection of the city interior. The local inhabitants are as tough and weather-beaten as their cities.



Quann

The Quann crisis was the catalyzing event that incited the Twilight Wars, and the Quann Wormhole remains an important trade route. The planet Quann serves as a trade hub for traffic entering or emerging from the wormhole. Quann's spaceports and space stations provide a wide range of preparation, stocking, and repair services for transiting ships. They also serve as convenient meeting places. Government oversight is light, and what little there is tends to be actively ignored or corrupt. That, combined with the large amount of traffic, has made Quann popular with legitimate traders and smugglers alike.

Quann itself is a terrestrial world with two continents and one ocean, and it shares Jord's diversity of climates. It is largely self-sufficient, with ample food production and industrial facilities, much of the latter built during its colony days. The coastal capital city of Aruzoe is the primary trade center. It is also the best defended, with defense batteries and a squadron of corvettes that pull double duty as customs vessels. Far away in the southern polar regions, dozens of settlements and cities provide thinly veiled support for smugglers, black markets, and other less-than-legal operations.

Quann was once a colony of Sol, and it still has a majority-Human population. Although it is not currently a part of the Federation, it has signed several favorable treaties with Sol. Most beings assume that it is only a matter of time before the Federation makes Quann a tributary world aligned with Sol's interests.

Jeol Ir

Jeol Ir demonstrates the results of unrestricted industrialization and lack of environmental concerns. The pollution resulting from its heavy, widespread industrial development has made Jeol Ir inhospitable to life, utterly decimating the planet's ecosystems.

Despite the horrific conditions, Jeol Ir is still heavily populated and protected by thousands of domed cities and communities. The domes are vital, and cities that neglect their care face a slow poisoning of their air, the infiltration of contaminated rain, or possibly a catastrophic failure of the entire structure.

The ruins of Bolarmiv provide a vivid reminder that even a city of millions can be laid waste in hours if the domes fail. Official expeditions retrieve all manner of equipment and goods from the failed city. They actively compete with illegal salvagers and individual scroungers stripping whatever is valuable. Rumors persist that underhanded individuals in the city of Greliv, Bolarmiv's main rival, covertly sabotaged Bolarmiv's systems and things got out of hand.

Jeol Ir's water supplies are equally contaminated, both its freshwater sources and its vast oceans discolored by chemical waste. Complex systems treat all water and air entering the cities. With their ecosystem already destroyed, most cities have turned to cheap atomic reactors for power. The nuclear waste is dumped in vast polar fields that are even more deadly than the rest of the planet's surface.

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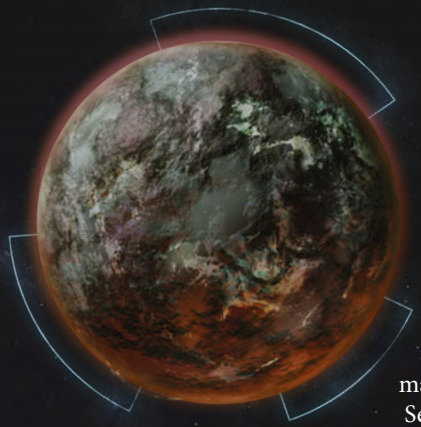
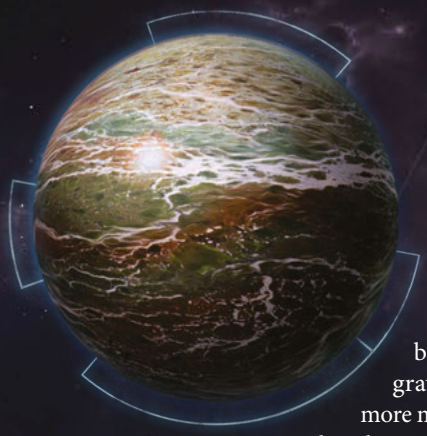


Sem-Lore

Sem-Lore and its people, the Semanora, were—like many of the lesser worlds caught up in the Twilight Wars—a battleground for the major powers to fight over. This forced the Semanora into a series of alliances of convenience, but that didn't spare their planet in the end. The Twilight Wars devastated Sem-Lore, reducing large swaths of its landscape to lethal rad-deserts littered with the corpses of shattered warships, vehicles, and long-abandoned military equipment. Now, though the scattered munitions are volatile and corroding and the warship wrecks' power plants deteriorating, opportunistic scavengers ransack the remains anyway, many of them native Semanora.

Sem-Lore's beauty is wrecked, but not wholly ruined. Some lands have been spared the worst of war, and it is in these small habitable areas that the Semanora continue their civilization. The Semanora are a bipedal, reptile-like species with colorful scales varying dramatically in shade and size between individuals. They have six eyes, spaced equally around an oval skull, which gives them 360° vision. They have flat noses and wide mouths with sharp teeth. Semanora medical and cybernetic technology is first-rate, having been developed out of necessity to recover from the major battles waged on their world. It is an effective bargaining chip when they trade with other worlds.



Atlas

Atlas is an old Sol colony world, which is somewhat unusual due to the fact that the planet's gravity is much stronger than most Humans prefer. Over the generations, the colonists' descendants evolved to better handle the increased gravity, growing squatter and more muscular even as their height shrank. Medical implants help their cardiovascular systems withstand the increased, unending stress imposed by heavy gravity. While the natives can now move easily in the increased gravity, most visitors need to rent a powered exoskeleton for the duration of their stay.

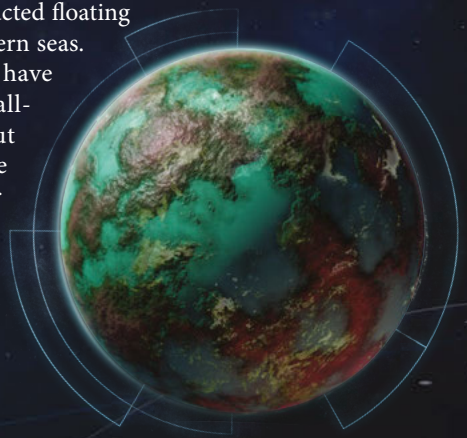
Atlas itself is terrestrial, with waterways the size of inland seas encircling the planet, resembling massive rivers with endless forks and islands. The largest are called Titan's Rings, with various branches named separately. Most of Atlas's inhabitants have settled along these waterways and the plains beyond, while above the waterways sit vast barren highlands. The heavy gravity tends to pull the atmosphere down closer to sea level, leaving the upper highlands dry and mostly uninhabitable.

Atlas has ample resources for trade and industry, and its strategic position relative to the Elysian Wormhole raises its profile from one of thousands of independent systems to one of at least regional importance. Unfortunately for the locals, this position plus its proximity to Sol makes it likely that the Federation will soon attempt to force Atlas to pay tribute to the Federation. A Sol cruiser squadron under Commodore Valquez has been "on maneuvers" in nearby systems for the past six months, heightening tensions planetside.

Lisis

A primordial world occupying a strategic position in the Core Systems, Lisis once held the largest Saar colony in the history of the species. Long ago, the Sardakk N'orr coveted Lisis as a stepping stone toward both the Coreward Gate and Mecatol Rex. Instead of negotiating with the Saar, they simply annexed the world. The Saar colony completely disappeared, destroyed in a genocidal purge. The event is burned into Saar culture in the form of a chant called the "Lay of Lisis," and it remains a dark point of contention between the species.

The planet's surface is split between rugged young mountains and landforms surrounding large inland seas. Few are large enough to be considered an ocean. Lisis' biosphere is fairly young, leaving it open to terraforming. Since their conquest, the N'orr have pursued an ambitious terraforming project while building vast colony warrens in the mountains. However, their ambitions are currently being thwarted by a Naalu expeditionary force that has constructed floating colonies in the southern seas. So far, the conflicts have been limited to small-scale firefights, but both civilizations are dispatching heavier units from their fleets into the system.



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Primor

Primor's temperate environment and its mix of large landmasses and major oceans made it an attractive world for colonization millennia ago. The discovery of the deep-space wormhole later named the Primor Gate only hastened the process. Once osmium was found on the planet, extracting and developing it required skill and continual technological development, creating a well-educated mixed-species population. Protecting osmium claims required substantial security, soldiers, and mercenaries. Early in the Age of Dusk, Primor's people sought independence from the Imperium. A series of suspicious deaths in the local governorships over the course of a decade hastened the process. Though none knew it at the time, these deaths were at the hand of Bbarus, an idealistic Xxcha scholar turned mercenary and, ultimately, assassin.

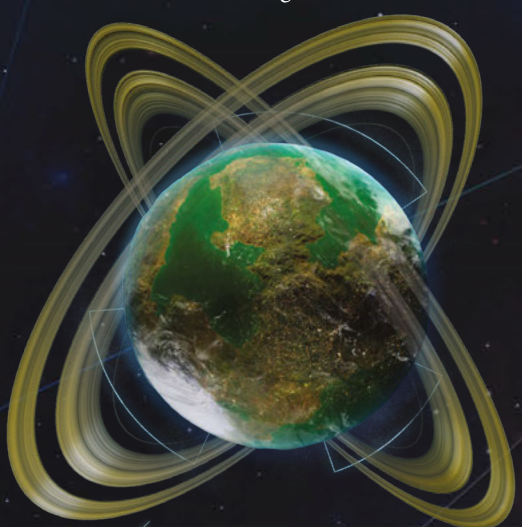
Knowing Primor would always be a target due to its osmium, Bbarus organized the Atrament, a clade of assassin-scholars dedicated to protecting the world. Atrament teams worked in the shadows to eliminate threats to Primor's independence. Eventually, they would offer their services to other factions so long as their mission would also benefit Primor in some way. The Atrament do not rule Primor, but they are the power behind several successive governments in the past few thousand years.

The Atrament could not defend against full invasions during the Twilight Wars, but if Primor was treated poorly, the clade could make the invaders regret it. On the other hand, if the invaders fought a larger perceived evil or threat against Primor, Atrament teams would act in support. Today, the strike teams and lone assassins of the Atrament are respected and feared even among the Great Civilizations both on the battlefield and in the shadows.

Perimeter

Perimeter is an astronomical oddity, featuring two large sets of rings perpendicular to each other. While the Equatorial Rings are fairly standard, the Polar Rings are likely the result of the breakup of a smaller body captured later in the planet's life in a polar orbit. As this is unstable in the long term, gravitational forces will eventually collapse the Polar Rings into the equatorial ones. However, in the meantime the rings hinder navigation around the planet, but also draw occasional sightseers and astronomers.

Perimeter features massive mountainous continents surrounded by deep-green oceans. The Lazax used the planet as a garrison world, and the inhabitants have never forgotten how well they were treated in those days. Unlike in much of the galaxy, the Lazax are still respected here. This puts Perimeter in good standing with the Winnarans and the Winnu, but Perimeter is also a target in the schemes of each to bend the other to their views on the galactic future.



Perimeter has a robust industrial base, allowing it to create and maintain a formidable military for a single world. It built on the substantial Lazax military technology left behind with the fall of the Empire, and now it is a known source of weapons, ordnance, and military vehicles throughout the galaxy.

Bereg

Bereg would be just another icy planet, largely ignored by the galaxy, had it not been for the discovery of valuable lodinium by a now long-forgotten Lazax survey team. Drawing government and business interests was not difficult, but securing a workforce willing to go to the frozen world proved harder to accomplish. Over the history of Bereg, a variety of incentives and forced labor kept the mines going. At times, some mines served as penal colonies and general dumping grounds for political dissidents and other inconvenient individuals. At other times, wealthier individuals and corporations paid handsomely to send experienced management staff and skilled labor to operate the mines. These days, indentured laborers make up the majority of the workforce.

One surprise was the discovery of hearty, cold-resistant life in and under the ice. While some creatures became dietary staples for the miners, others proved very aggressive and difficult to kill or eradicate. Arctic sharaks, especially, are adept at getting into the lodinium mines and feasting on the unlucky, usually unarmed, workers until the Frozen Guard arrive to eliminate the threat.

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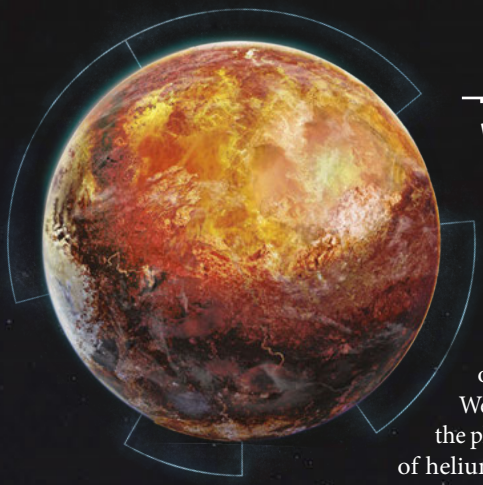


Wellon

Wellon is best known for its idyllic skyscapes with picturesque cities floating through the billowing clouds. The development of floating cities occurred in part due to Wellon's unusual geography; the planet holds vast quantities of helium and other lighter elements within its relatively fragile crust. Frequent seismic activity releases these gases into the atmosphere, from which the cities harvest them in their chemical mining rigs before preparing them for sale. Cities like the capital, Azure Glide, float thanks to a combination of helium tanks and antigrav systems, which serve as an important backup should a tank spring a leak.

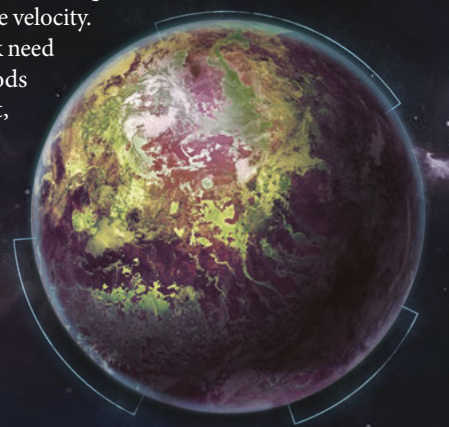
Wellon's atmosphere is breathable to most species and supports a range of cloud-based species. However, the surface is dangerous to live on because of the frequent earthquakes, and in highly geologically active areas, it is not uncommon for a sudden release of gases to make the air hazardous to breathe. This has led to a homegrown cybernetics industry specializing in lung implants and integral nasal filters. The work has become so advanced that several off-world corporations have sought out the expertise of Wellon's noted cyberneticists.

Vefut II

Vefut II is an enormous terrestrial world with extremely high gravity. However, its abundant natural resources easily attracted beings willing to find ways to deal with the laws of nature. Instead of adapting to the gravity, the planet's early population decided to change it instead. Vefut II became one of the galaxy's leading antigrav tech developers.

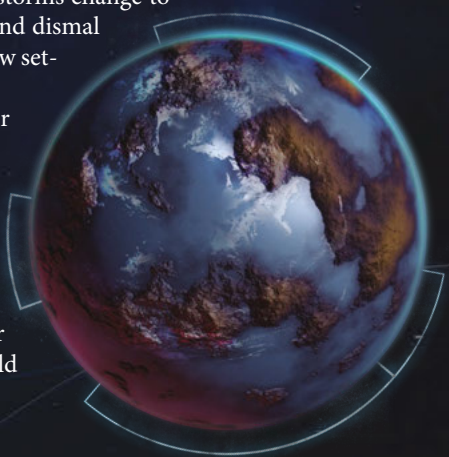
Vefut II's gravity compresses the atmosphere, making it unbearably thick in the lowlands and dangerously thin everywhere else. This forced the world's cities underground, where antigrav projectors could adjust the gravity and the atmosphere could be artificially regulated. Redundant systems typically prevent catastrophic failures that could injure people or damage equipment, though accidents do happen. Portable generators are installed in ground and air vehicles, as well as in underground rail tunnels.

Vefut II exports vast amounts of natural resources in addition to substantial antigravity goods. The planet's massive size and gravity require ships to use much more power than normal to achieve escape velocity. Ships that aren't up to the task need to obtain special booster pods from the local government, which keeps most space travel within the official spaceport. There are dozens of ports around the world, the largest being above the capital city of Ferev.



Loki

Loki is a cold world situated far from its star. Its large, chilly oceans are salty enough to resist freezing except at the poles. Loki's landmasses are typically thin, stretching for long distances through the briny seas. This makes them susceptible to ocean-driven storms even far into the interior. Summer storms bring cold rain and thunder, while winter storms change to blizzards and ice. Although the world never evolved an indigenous sapient species, the wet and dismal weather seemed like a great deterrent to colonization, which makes it ironic that the planet drew settlers from two different species in the last century.



Human isolationists settled Loki first, building a colony dubbed Solitude on one of the larger landmasses. However, they had only been established for a few decades when Yssaril dissidents arrived from Shalloq and quietly began establishing their own hidden communities on the far side of the world.

Once both sides learned of each other's presence, they began attempting to push each other to leave. Neither particularly wanted to involve the cultures they had left behind, and so over the last few decades, a slowly simmering shadow war has evolved between Solitude and its satellite colonies and the Yssaril communities of Sallens and Quillik. Some of the smaller communities have hammered out truces, but most continue to engage in an appropriately cold war on this cold world.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Rigel System (Rigel I, II, and III)

The Rigel system is one of the few star systems in the galaxy with three habitable terrestrial worlds within close range of each other. Originally colonized by Sol, the individual planets of the system changed hands several times during the Twilight Wars before eventually becoming independent. Since those times, the system's population has shifted from almost entirely Human to a mixed population with a Human majority.

The individual planets largely govern themselves, but each has a representative on the ruling Rigel Triad to set and negotiate policies affecting the entire system, including policies on trade and defense. The Triad is selected from the Advisory Council, which includes a dozen members from each world who hammer out policy details. Both entities rotate among the three worlds' capital cities once each Rigel II cycle. Though all three worlds are independent, they have long-standing ties to Arc Prime and several treaties with the Barony.

Rigel I

Rigel I is the system's innermost world, and the one least attractive to new residents. It is very hot, despite substantial oceans. Unfortunately, the oceans are also heavily alkaline, making them hazardous for many life-forms. This has forced most cities to be built inland, where native species have likewise prospered. Despite early questionably optimistic surveys, Rigel I turned out to be poor in useful resources. Its early financiers pivoted quickly to turn it into a trade hub, which saw some success.

While most of Rigel I's trade centers are legitimate, the world has also attracted a significant black market and illicit trade. This corrupting influence causes trouble for the government, tarnishing Rigel I's reputation. However, Rigel I also benefits from the additional traffic and inflow of cash from questionable sources, so its people are reluctant to shut it down.

Rigel II

Rigel II is the middle and most terrestrial world in the Rigel system. It was the first to be colonized and is now easily the wealthiest of the Rigel worlds. Unlike Rigel I, Rigel II's extensive oceans are perfect for seafood industries and fisheries. This gives Rigel II many advantages over the other two worlds in the system. Not only do the fisheries feed much of the population of the other two worlds, but the mild climate and beautiful oceans mean many of the system's wealthiest families choose to make Rigel II their home. This leaves Rigel II with the richest population of the three worlds. The constant flow of money has prompted the development of resorts that take advantage of the comfortable biosphere and pull in plenty of aurei from tourists as well.

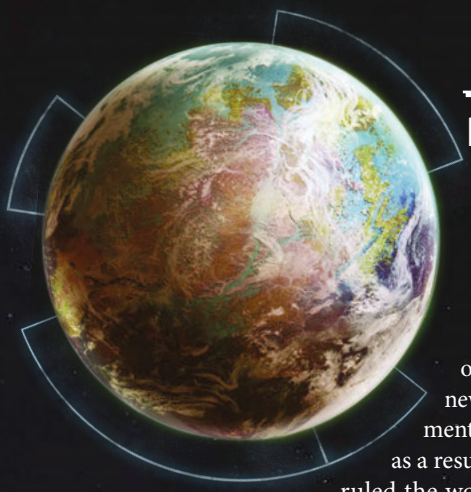
Contrary to Rigel II's public image, its impressive estates and aspirational visage also provide the perfect front for money laundering and other schemes. A fair number of its wealthier citizens are actually tied to large and small criminal organizations. They use complicated business arrangements to legitimize their cash, distancing it from whatever illegal sources it came from. All the while, the locals tend to blame Rigel I as the source of most illegal ventures in the system.

Rigel III

Rigel III is the system's outermost planet, with comparatively cooler temperatures. It is covered in water with widely spaced island-like continents. The oceans are less productive than Rigel II's, but the cooler climate has proven a good heat-sink for large cosmopolitan cities.

Rigel's environment attracted early researchers, and the diversity of viewpoints from the urban centers pushed the development of the University of Rigel. With regular discoveries and developments, it wasn't long before industry followed the brainpower. Now, Rigel III hosts a wide range of industries supporting and supported by top-notch research institutions. The world also has the largest population in the system, allowing it to act as a counterweight to Rigel II's wealth and Rigel I's trading influence. Rigel III's population is also the most resistant to Rigel I's tacit support of illegal activities, and suspicious of Rigel II's sources of wealth.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)



Lodor

Thanks to one of the galaxy's most diverse ecosystems, Lodor is a seemingly never-ending source of new pharmaceuticals and biotechnology. Its resources are vital to new discoveries and advancements in the biotech fields, and as a result, consortiums have long ruled the world. With a keen understanding of how important Lodor's woodlands, rainforests, and oceans are for new discoveries, the consortiums protect the planet's biosphere as if it were a bank vault busting with aurei.

Not all of Lodor's contributions to galactic health have been positive. Some companies have produced bacterial and other biological weapons, especially during the darkest points of the Twilight Wars. Most biological weapons have been outlawed by the reformed Galactic Council, but rumors persist of hidden stockpiles and manufacturing lines feeding a lucrative black market.

Lodor's Administrative Committee, which has representatives from each major consortium, runs the planet. It is a highly charged political entity, the rival companies among its membership trying to manage the world and each other while maintaining a competitive edge. The Committee Chair is selected from the group, and their power is entirely based upon the committee's current faith in their performance. The consortiums each control vast areas of land, but Lodor's seat of power is the theoretically neutral island city-state of Raadol.

KELERES ALERT!

The Keleres have been keeping an eye on the biotech consortiums that run Lodor for a while. The Tribunii all agreed we couldn't just assume every company gave up their biological doomsday weapons after the Council outlawed them, and it looks like we were right. Our operative has just sent evidence that the consortium Triskel Helix has a cobalt-level storage facility out in the middle of one of Lodor's continental jungles containing a bacterial weapon codenamed "X-89."

Most of the Council is tired of going back and forth with Lodor's Administrative Committee, so they want you to assault the facility, kill or arrest everyone there, guarantee the X-89 strain is destroyed, then level the place. They want to send a message about their resolve, so that means you get to go in hard and take along whatever nasty little toys you've been stockpiling.

Starpoint

The world of Starpoint is rich in valuable natural resources, as are its eight small moons. Its position along several major spacelanes makes it a prime departure point for expeditions leaving the Core Systems and venturing into the galactic rim. Unfortunately, the planet itself is miserably uninhabitable for most life-forms, as its chemical composition gives rise to deluges of acidic rain and highly toxic stormfronts. Only the simplest algae survive in the oceans, and the domed facilities planetside are streaked with corrosion and damage from the weather. Nobody visits for pleasure.

Starpoint's moons are more hospitable. Even the five airless rocks don't have weather trying to actively eat into their domed habitats, and the other three have thin atmospheres that have been augmented through limited terraforming attempts. Most of Starpoint's permanent residents live on one of these moons, and the smallest of the airless planetoids is covered in starship construction facilities.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

[Chapter 5] The Keleres' Charge

The galaxy is a diverse, history-rich expanse replete with mysteries to uncover, power to take, and plots to unfold. The main characters in an Embers of the Imperium game hail from the Keleres, an intragalactic peacekeeping mission. Its nominal centrality to the galaxy and actual decentralized organization give individual units of the Keleres a wondrous if infuriating mix of opportunities and challenges.

The Keleres' work spans places known, long abandoned, and undiscovered. The planet Mallice defies the laws of physics, while Hope's End hides ancient artifacts of past wars under its irradiated sands. The Mahact gene-sorcerers weave threads into the unfolding history of the galaxy to restore their supremacy, while the Nekro Virus seeks the annihilation of the Great Civilizations and the rise of a lifeless epoch.

This chapter begins with an exploration of the Keleres, their organization, and their duties in the galaxy. Of note are the Tribunii—the tenuous leadership of the Keleres—and their role in the organization's action. Following the sections on the Keleres are profiles of many, though not all, of the strange worlds they may explore and factions they may come up against as their story grows.

The Galactic Council

The Galactic Council was first established by the ancient Lazax and overseen by the Empire's Winnaran Custodians. When the Lazax Empire collapsed, the Council collapsed with it. However, when the first of the Great Civilizations returned to Mecatol Rex, the Winnarans invited them to reconvene the Galactic Council. Recognizing the need for some mechanism of galactic cooperation (or simply suspicious of what might happen should they remain off of the Council while their enemies joined), each of the Great Civilizations accepted.

Mark Hastings (Order #32262139)

The reborn Galactic Council shares the same structure as the original. Each world that is a part of the Council has one or more votes, as determined by an ancient metric created by the Lazax. This metric determined whether a planet was worthy to vote in the Council (and how many votes it would receive) based on its energy expenditure and cultural output. A world must produce and consume a certain amount of energy to receive even one vote. More powerful worlds might receive more votes, and even more votes could be awarded based on cultural contributions.

In practice, these means worlds with newly established settlements, small populations, or societies below a certain tech level almost never gain votes on the Council. Even if a world qualifies for votes, it is still their responsibility to deliver representatives to Mecatol Rex and pay for them to live on the former throneworld. The Galactic Council is always in session, and a Councilor must be present to cast their world's votes. Given the days or weeks it might take a courier vessel to reach their government, it also means Councilors must act with a fair degree of autonomy. By the time they receive instruction on how to vote on a certain matter, the vote may have already taken place.

Councilors and Votes

While each world receives votes, there are no requirements that each planet send a specific number of Councilors to cast them. It is up to each planet as to how they determine who will travel to Mecatol Rex to represent them, and who those individuals will be. Many worlds have only one vote, and they may send one representative to cast it. But some planets may send multiple representatives who agree among themselves how their vote will be cast, or even rotate the position of Councilor between them.

If a world has more than one vote, things can be just as varied. A world may send one representative to cast all of its votes, choose one Councilor per vote, or anything in between. With all these variations, the Council has several hundred members; a mix of constantly rotating faces, naïve neophytes, and old political veterans.

How these Councilors are chosen also varies from world to world. Some elect their representatives, others appoint them, and some pass down the position along family lines. In most cases, however, the Councilors are also members of their planet's government, due to the autonomy they must act with.

The Great Civilizations in the Council

Although the process seems designed to give each world a voice, it still leaves the Galactic Council just as fraught with infighting and factionalism as the rest of the galaxy. Each of the Great Civilizations wields the votes of dozens or even scores of worlds, giving them massive voting blocs that can snuff out the voices of the independent systems that make it onto the Council. Many independent worlds end up trading their votes to one faction or another in exchange for concessions, but many of the Great Civilizations can afford to ignore these minor players and only worry about making deals with other factions of equal power.

In addition, the very means of awarding votes is outdated. The process by which the Lazax tabulated a world's votes was extremely complex and arcane—likely deliberately so, since the Lazax seldom retabulated votes but occasionally threatened to do so in order to keep an unruly world in line. The last calculations occurred centuries before the Quann Wormhole crisis and the start of the Twilight Wars.

When the Custodians reformed the Galactic Council, they resurrected it in what they claimed was its last known state. This means that worlds are awarded votes based on their historical status of more than three millennia ago. Many powerful worlds find that they have no voice on the Council because they were newly settled colonies on uninhabited planets during the end of the Lazax Empire. On the other hand, worlds that are now war-blasted wastelands or have been depopulated due to environmental catastrophe still possess multiple votes on the Council, even if they have no living inhabitants to send.

These worlds become just one more pawn in the Great Civilizations' political games. More than once a faction has sent in a military force with some token settlers to take one of these ghost worlds, just to give their government a few more votes on the Council.

New Members

In the last few decades, several worlds that were not on the original Council have requested to join. Though they had never been awarded votes by the Lazax, in a few cases their power makes their request impossible to deny. In these cases, the Winnaran Custodians have frantically searched their records in order to find some sort of precedence, often with questionable results.

In some cases, such as the Arborec, the Winnarans tried to apply the Lazax system of calculations as best they could. In others, politics derailed their best efforts. The Argent Flight leveraged their ancient ties to the Lazax to insist on far more votes than an equivalent civilization would earn. When more evidence of those ancient ties surfaced in Mecatol Rex's deepest data vaults, the Winnarans were forced to acquiesce.

The most absurd situation was when the Ghosts of Creuss took the Lazax's energy calculations and very reasonably explained that, since their home dimension was entirely formed out of exotic energies, they deserved more votes than currently existed on the Galactic Council. In response, the Winnarans and every other Councilor flatly agreed that any worlds not in this plane of existence "didn't count."

The Keleres of the Council

Across the galaxy, planetary governors compete for trade opportunities, the Great Civilizations joust for superiority on the battlefront, and still other, more insidious, factions play at shaping galactic history for their own ends. In a galaxy fraught with so many agendas, it's no surprise that the Galactic Council took it upon itself to assemble a force of its own to manage its affairs. The Keleres of the Council are that force, but they are also something more. They are a ragtag army of bureaucrats, soldiers, and spies, often at odds with themselves and not always appreciated by the galaxy they serve.

Though the Keleres are born of the Galactic Council, they are often left to their own devices, traveling the galaxy brokering peace, intervening in conflicts, and tackling threats to galactic civilization as a whole. They even act without the consent of the Tribunii or the Galactic Council when timeliness is a factor, only to be censured by the Galactic Council after the fact.

The member states of the Council send recruits, who are selected according to the traditions of each individual planet or system, to serve in the Keleres. The Great Powers have learned, since the Keleres' founding, that the Keleres are a useful tool for furthering their own designs. Rather than sending their best operatives away to the Keleres, many send political opponents, incompetents, dangerous prisoners, and other individuals who are difficult to do away with and undesirable to have around. On the other hand, a few Great Powers find it prudent to send highly competent personnel, sometimes out of respect for the Galactic Council but more often than not to clandestinely advance their own goals. The Keleres, then, are a strange and difficult order to manage.

The Tribunii

The Galactic Council elects three of its own to be the Tribunii of the Keleres. Members of the Council treat the responsibility with mixed sentiment: as both an honor and a burden. The Tribunii have the power to command the Keleres and to implement the designs of the Galactic Council in a concrete way. However, the mixed quality of the Keleres means having to accept no small number of failures, which, in turn, can hurt the Tribunii when members of the Galactic Council seek accountability. Canny Tribunii, such as Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai, learn when best to use the Keleres, when to set them aside, and who among the ranks are right for the job.

The fraught political environment means that most Councilors don't serve as Tribunii long. In the five years since the

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Keleres' founding, there have been seven Tribunii, including the current holders of the office. Two were forced to resign in disgrace, one was killed on a mission, and one was assassinated in an internal power struggle. For those Tribunii who meet and overcome the challenge of utilizing the force of the Keleres, however, the fruits are significant indeed. It requires much talent for this to happen, but when it does, it can tip the balance of the Galactic Council itself.

The three Tribunii who currently serve are in delicate balance, and therefore the future of the Keleres and the Imperium itself may be at a tipping point. Kuuasi is oldest and wisest among them. Harka Leeds is as ambitious and cunning as she is ruthless in her schemes. Odlynn Myrr, though new to the role, brings a fresh perspective and hope for unity and stability in the Imperium.

Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai Aul Akarun Aul Akaran

Kuuasi Aun Jalatai's father mined the gas giant Hacid but thought little of the prospect of advancement for his family. That is, until his son Kuuasi hatched and quickly demonstrated a keen mind and gift for piloting. When he came of age, he brought honor to his family by joining the Argent Flight.

It was during his tenure that the Creuss expedition unwittingly freed the Mahact gene-sorcerers and propelled the Shikrai to action, girding themselves for war against the gene-sorcerers' destructive forces. Kuuasi's talents proved useful in this period, as he quickly absorbed the knowledge and customs of the other Great Civilizations and could frame his thoughts without the jingoism common to his people. As a result, his betters shifted his military career into a political one.

He came to join the Galactic Council and found the political warfare of the other Great Powers foolish. However, his spirit was hard to defeat, and he met the challenge of representation for the whole of the galaxy against the forces that would see its undoing. Still, other members of the Galactic Council saw Kuuasi as too idealistic and mistook his ingenuity of thought as innocence. In an attempt to remove Kuuasi from the more central role he had built for himself on the Galactic Council, he was made first of the Tribunii when the Keleres was formed.

This distraction was a success, at first. Kuuasi recognized the maneuver for what it was, but given his military background and penchant for practical action, his leadership of the Keleres began to show results. He saw firsthand the flaws in the Keleres recruitment process, and when he failed to alter the agency's constitution, he used those flaws to his advantage. When the Great Civilizations sent him their worst, he either directed the new recruits to reach potentials they had been denied on their homeworlds or sent them on missions that would embarrass the other powers as a result of their incompetence. When member states instead sent operatives bent on selfish or nationalist gain, he would send them to the edges of the galaxy on missions of little import. But when he met Keleres whose skills and goals matched his own, he made them into heroes and legends.

By the time the Galactic Council realized its mistake, the damage had been done. Rather than sidelining an annoyance, they had empowered a brilliant tactician with a special position in which he made his own power. Several attempts to dethrone Kuuasi have all met with failure. In his old age, however, there is some question as to how long he will survive the pressure of his responsibilities and of who will replace him when the time comes.

Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai sees peace and unity as long-term goals but understands that war and division are palpable realities in the galaxy as it is. Ultimately, the Great Powers will need to stand together to face the threats from beyond, but until they do, he has work to do.

Tribunii Harka Leeds

A Human member of the Mentak Coalition, Harka prided herself on the successes of her mother's mercantile enterprise on Moll Primus, a multifaceted affair transporting refined mineral resources and bringing back goods of all kinds—some legitimate, others not so much. In her youth plying the stars, she enjoyed the riches of her family, the company of working folk, and the rugged frontiers of worlds only recently explored. This upbringing seems a far cry from her destiny on the Galactic Council, but often the universe operates in mysterious ways.

Cecily Leeds, Harka's mother and imperator of the Leeds and Victoria Corporation, landed in trouble with the Federation of Sol when evidence suggested her company had stolen valuable military tech during its transport from Jord to the colonies. Though she could plausibly deny having orchestrated the theft, this was not the first accusation of its kind; it drew the attention of the other great powers and, indeed, the Galactic Council. The Council sought to take control of the company and sell it to competitors—that is, until Harka Leeds began a campaign to restore her family's reputation.

Many of the worlds that had been served by the Leeds and Victoria Corp. had seen better prices for their labor and goods than they would have otherwise, and this fact was not lost on those worlds' populations. Furthermore, Leeds and Victoria had engaged in trade deals with factions deemed too unstable for business, leading to the rise of disparate powers in the galaxy that all saw themselves as indebted to Cecily and her family. Harka seized on these facts and instigated a popular revolt the size of which would have caused damage to the delicate balance of galactic politics had it continued gaining momentum.

Consequently, the Great Civilizations and Galactic Council were forced to back off. Still controlled by the Leeds family, the Leeds and Victoria Corp. continues to do business to this day. When the dust had settled, Harka had thought to fade from the political entanglements she had taken up during the conflict and to establish herself as next in line at Leeds and Victoria. But the masses called on her to continue what she had started. They saw her as their savior and demanded she become their representative on the Galactic Council.

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Harka became one of the Mentak Coalition's Council representatives, only to discover that her new colleagues still resented her and her family for fomenting a potential revolt. Thus did she find herself relegated to the Tribunii, where the rest of Galactic Council believed she would be safely out of the way. Three cycles later, she still serves as Tribunii and sometimes moves too obviously to increase her own power. Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai has taken her under his wing and, while developing her skill as a leader, tempers her resolve for power.

Harka Leeds is blatant in her thirst for power and authority, but far from pushing others away, she appeals to them due to her refreshing plainspokenness. She also has genuine concern for the underdog, wishing to empower the powerless while also achieving her own more selfish ends.

Tribunii Odlynn Myrr

In his early days, Odlynn Myrr mastered the academic art of history and took on the role of teacher. He was practically unknown, even among the Xxcha, and had little to no ambition for fame or power. He had a keen way with words and inspired many of his students to develop themselves and contribute to their people.

Odlynn took a special interest in the darker side of history, feeling a deep connection with the sorrow of lives lost and worlds destroyed. His specialty was the fall of Archon Tau, a subject he would lecture and write on frequently. His obsession with these painful topics necessitated an emotional release, which he found in poetry and oration. At first, he practiced on his students, but from there his reputation spread, and he gained a devoted following among the Xxcha.

His renown led him to the Galactic Council as a representative for Archon Tau, not for any experience in diplomacy but for the raw fact that when he spoke, he truly spoke for the soul of his people. However, in the political climate that is the Galactic Council, this qualification hardly makes for a successful representative. Not all members of the Council have been so stirred by his talents, and his idealism has been ignored and derided in equal measure.

His position on the Tribunii came about as something of a joke among members of the Galactic Council. He has yet to make any meaningful contribution to the Tribunii, though Kuuasi Aun Jalatai watches him and guides him when it seems appropriate. Odlynn is most interested in the peacekeeping and rebuilding aspects of the Keleres and rarely suggests violence as a solution. However, his study of history has left him resentful toward certain factions for the sins of their ancestors, notably the Barony of Letnev and Federation of Sol for their hand in scouring Archon Tau.

Of note, however, is Odlynn's strange following among the Saar. When the Saar first heard of Odlynn, they saw in him something of their own history, and some even view him as a reincarnation of their great hero: Ragh Gavar. Though Odlynn Myrr remains quiet on the subject, he appears to feel no small amount of sympathy with his galactic kin, and it remains to be seen in what way he will represent their interests or they will represent his.

Relations among the Tribunii

Though the Tribunii have only existed for a scant five years, they have experienced more than their fair share of turmoil and upheaval. When Kuuasi Aun Jalatai took responsibility for establishing the foundations of the Keleres, he immediately clashed with another of the three founding Tribunii, Baron Anton Du'Pas Nebozev. The baron saw the Keleres as an opportunity for increasing military strength and wanted the Council to utilize them as a sort of mercenary army. Kuuasi saw the Keleres instead as a multitalented agency in service to the interests of galactic unity, a vision that he would see mostly to fruition.

The conflict between Nebozev and Kuuasi Aun Jalatai was nothing short of harrowing and resulted in the assassination of the former and the attempted assassination of the latter. Though violence among the Tribunii has decreased, conflict remains. Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai maintains his reputation, but other Tribunii have come and gone, the pressure of the position often leading to their political (or in one other case, actual) demise.

The current Tribunii have formed a tenuous relationship of sorts around the tutelage and planning of Kuuasi Aun Jalatai. Leeds seeks Kuuasi's wisdom, while he, in turn, convinces Leeds to take a slower, more methodical approach to her own goals. Without Kuuasi Aun Jalatai, Leeds would burn out and do untold damage in the process. Whether Kuuasi Aun Jalatai actually supports his protégé or simply intends to stall her remains to be seen.

Harka Leeds feels that Kuuasi Aun Jalatai can be patronizing at the best of times, but she holds her tongue and makes a point to listen. If he's survived this long, he must have something worthwhile to impart. However, both he and Myrr are too idealistic for her, and she doubts they are honest about their true objectives. Leeds doesn't pay Myrr much attention but appreciates his more passive approach, as it leaves more space for her to take control.

While Odlynn Myrr's existence hardly registers with the young and ambitious Leeds, Kuuasi Aun Jalatai has taken interest in the newest Tribunii. Kuuasi Aun Jalatai either feigns or genuinely feels appreciation for Myrr's ideas and encourages him to raise his voice among the Council.

Overseeing Agents

Although officially the three Tribunii have equal authority over all Keleres, in practice most cohorts tend to be "adopted" by a particular Tribunii. Those Keleres cohorts who aren't adopted end up assigned tedious and thankless duties such as garrisoning remote outposts, or are used as expendable assets so the Tribunii can preserve their favored cohorts.

The Tribunii each have their own approach to directing the Keleres under their watch. Kuuasi Aun Jalatai is reserved and careful, but also extremely practical. He has no problem relying on extreme means to accomplish his goals, but only does so when

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he can be sure there will be no evidence of his involvement. He seeks out Keleres with a similar temperament, and only uses the cohorts he trusts to complete sensitive missions. He likes to be involved in the initial planning of operations, and while he expects his Keleres to be adaptable in the field, he always expects them to operate with discretion and ruthlessness.

Unlike Kuuasi, Leeds enjoys glory and revels in a bit of chaos. She believes that direct action is the best way to approach most situations and expects her Keleres to follow her example. She prefers to give cohorts direct goals and supplies and leave them to figure out the details. As long as a cohort accomplishes the mission with sufficient daring and glory, she will back them to the hilt. But Leeds has no patience for failure and quickly cuts unsuccessful agents loose.

Finally, Myrr advocates working within the Council's edicts and using nonviolent approaches to accomplish missions whenever possible. Since he has no background as a tactical commander, Myrr uses a gentle hand when directing his agents. Because of his passive approach, they tend to operate with more freedom than Keleres who serve one of the other two Tribunii. However, if they violate Myrr's principles (or are at least caught doing it), he doesn't hesitate to have them arrested, tried, and punished for their crimes.

The Firmament and other Ideological Threats

The enemies from outside the galaxy are incredibly dangerous, but the Keleres often find that it is internal, ideological threats that are far harder to combat. This isn't simply because trying to purge an idea from the public consciousness is often an impossible task. These also put the Keleres in the unenviable position of judging which ideologies are a threat and which are not, and this can often put different members of a cohort at odds with one another.

For example, in recent years rumors of a new galactic ideological movement have begun to circulate. This group, the Firmament, is apparently a multispecies organization who have all shed any loyalty to the worlds or governments of their birth. Their goal is to do away with the very concept of an imperium as well as the various Great Civilizations, to be replaced with a single pangalactic society. Some Keleres (especially those who have not shed their own previous loyalties) see this as a grave threat. Others secretly believe that this is exactly what the Galactic Council should become.

Duties of the Keleres

While the Tribunii lead the Keleres from the Galactic Council, the members of the Keleres must take action on their own initiative using the guidance they received during training. By necessity, a Keleres cohort has to possess a wide range of skills across its members. Diplomacy, military acumen, communication skills, street savvy, and technical expertise allow the Keleres to address the diversity of conflicts they encounter.

Even with these skills, the Keleres must navigate obstacles that are challenging to address at the best of times. The most successful cohorts are ones with the wit and adaptability to find creative solutions to the problems they encounter. However, while a unit's agency and general freedom to approach missions according to its own plans can be boons, at other times, they can be its undoing. Since the Keleres are just as riven with factionalism and diverse goals as the Council they represent, their freedom can simply enable different Keleres to work at cross purposes from one another.

Galactic Peacekeepers

The Keleres represent the Galactic Council and, as such, must embody the unity of the galaxy. The Great Civilizations, however, frequently compete with one another in trade, war, and politics. Though some conflict can cement the bonds of a society, too much can just as easily rip it apart. Thus, the diverse skills of the Keleres are brought to bear on missions of peace and negotiation.

At times, the Keleres act as a neutral party or temporary ally among factions at war. They broker peace on the one hand, but join battles on the other, especially when violence seems to be the only means to stability. Negotiation, knowledge of history, and familiarity with alien species likewise pave the way to peace and prosperity for the galaxy.

Representatives of the Galactic Council

The Keleres represent the Galactic Council in everything they do. Their actions reflect on the Galactic Council, and when the Keleres draw attention from the Great Civilizations, they risk censure or earn reward. The Tribunii can only devote so much attention to each of their Keleres agents, so individual agents have broad discretion to determine their course of action while completing a mission.

The combined might of the Great Civilizations far outstrips the capabilities of the Council. As such, the Galactic Council must engage in careful political maneuvering to strengthen the bonds of its member states. One false move on the part of the Keleres could rend the Council's delicate ties asunder and undermine its authority for generations to come.

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The Thin Line Against Destruction

The most important task assigned to the Keleres is to defend the member civilizations that make up the Council against threats that could tear the entire galaxy asunder. Existential crises such as the return of the L1Z1X and the Mahact gene-sorcerers, the emergence of the Vuil'raith Cabal, and the unleashed Nekro Virus are all too dangerous for any one faction to address. At best, the Keleres serve as a secret organization that blunts or even eliminates these threats before they grow too large. At worst, they at least provide intelligence that would hopefully unite the Galactic Council in common cause against them.

Lives of the Keleres

Most of the Keleres operate from their base beneath the ruins of the ancient Imperial Intelligence headquarters on Mecatol Rex. The facility has enough space for thousands of agents and their support staff, though the actual number of inhabitants fluctuates from month to month. Many of the Keleres live within the facility. Although no regulations stop them from procuring their own lodging within Mecatol City, the only agents who can afford to do so are rather obviously on the take.

Thus, most of the Keleres both live and work together. Some have lived in the headquarters long enough that they are beginning to make it feel almost homelike. One of the most ambitious projects is a half-wild garden space installed in one of the larger disused vaults by Galeena the Sustainer, a former field agent and current quartermaster of the organization. The Titan uses their contacts among the traders to obtain plant life from scores of different worlds, turning their garden into a beautiful battleground between hundreds of species and their hybrid offspring.

The facility also has a commissary able to produce the wide variety of foodstuffs needed to feed dozens of different species, as well as several ad hoc entertainment venues created by off-duty Keleres. The floating Aces game started by Marc Hostlan of Jord is one of the most infamous, especially regarding the sizes the pot can sometimes reach.

Members of the Organization

The Keleres is a fairly amorphous organization, still trying to define itself after its recent formation. This means that rather than possessing discrete ranks and reporting structures, those who work for the organization are divided into several broad groups based on their duties.

Field Agents

Originally, individual Keleres agents reported directly to the Tribunii. However, that soon proved unworkable, and groups of agents began to organize under the direction of team leaders. These may be appointed by a Tribunii or elected by their fellow team members. These team leaders are responsible for making reports to the Tribunii and, in theory, are also responsible for the actions of their team.

In the last two years, a few Keleres have gained enough clout in the organization to be considered senior field agents. At the moment, the title is entirely informal, but they have begun to be assigned greater responsibilities, sometimes directing multiple teams to deal with a single problem. Eventually, these senior agents may coalesce into a sort of middle management that takes on more day-to-day responsibilities from the Tribunii.

Desk Agents

A number of those seconded to the Keleres have proven unfit for fieldwork. However, many still have useful skills they can contribute. These agents handle a number of important tasks, such as intelligence analysis, networking, working informant networks, research and development, supply and procurement, and courier duties.

The line between desk agent and field agent is extremely blurry. While there are some Keleres who have not once left the headquarters since they joined up, there are others who served in the field for a time before injury or close calls pushed them to take a safer posting. Some Keleres even rotate between duties on Mecatol Rex and assignments in the wider galaxy. And of course, the Tribunii often punish wayward field agents with desk assignments (and sometimes eliminate troublesome desk agents by ordering them into the field).

Support Staff

The final third of the Keleres consists of support staff who maintain the headquarters facility. Their responsibilities range from cleaning, maintenance, and food preparation to armory and spacecraft maintenance and security. What complicates their standing in the Keleres is that most of the support staff actually work for the Winnaran Custodians (and many are Winnaran themselves). As outlined in the decree that founded the Keleres, the Winnaran Custodians work with the Keleres, but not *for* them. This adds an extra layer of complexity to even simple tasks like maintenance requests and means that often the best equipped and supported Keleres teams are the ones with the strongest personal relationships with key support staff.

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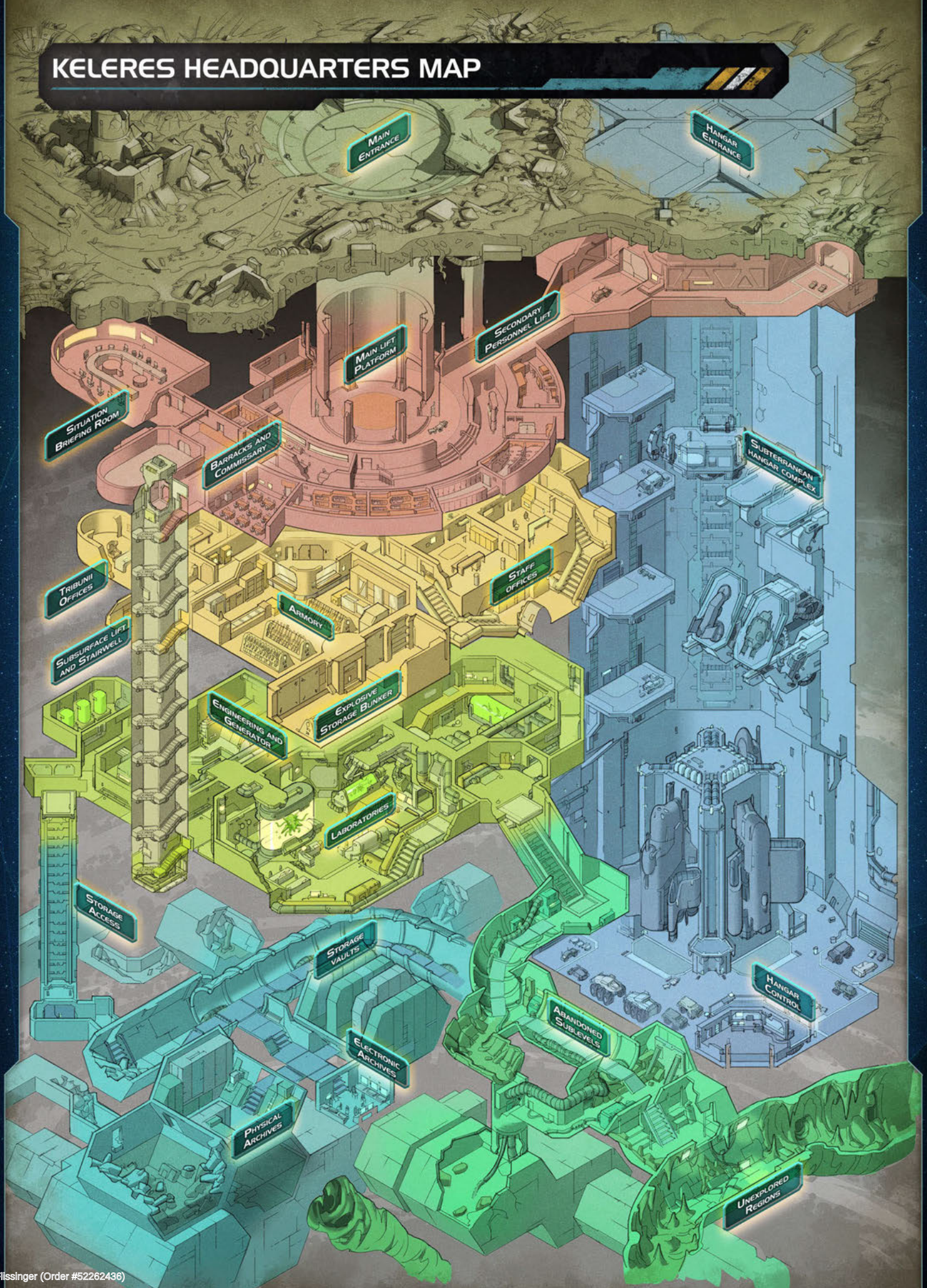

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A Matter of Jurisdiction

As with everything else about the Keleres, their jurisdiction is a complicated affair that varies depending on where they are and who they're dealing with.

Officially, the Keleres are empowered to investigate and eliminate any "threats of galactic significance." Beyond their obvious authority when it comes to directly confronting enemies who are not a part of the Council, they can officially carry out investigations in the territory of any signatory member of the Council. They can also arrest anyone caught creating or aiding one of these "galactic threats" and bring them back to Mecatol Rex to stand trial before a Council oversight committee.

However, save for a few obvious cases, what constitutes one of these threats can be debated endlessly, leaving matters of jurisdiction murky at best. In addition, when operating in the territory of any sovereign faction, the Keleres' authority is only as good as that faction's respect for the Galactic Council (or fear of the Council's censure). Major powers are often all too willing to expel Keleres cohorts from their territory because they fear an investigation may interfere with their own interests.

For this reason, some Keleres cohorts prefer to operate clandestinely, accomplishing their mission without asking permission beforehand. Some even resort to assassination rather than arrest, fearing that arresting a dangerous individual may only lead to a diplomatic incident or, worse, that the target may end up going free.

Mysteries and Dangers of the Galaxy

Though years have passed since the reemergence of the Great Civilizations and the establishment of a new Galactic Council, much of the galaxy remains unknown. Old vassals, cut off from their homeworlds, have grown and evolved into new societies, while elusive secrets remain yet undiscovered. However, not every secret can be safely revealed. Lurking amid the void are threats far beyond imagination. This section samples a mere fraction of the mysteries and dangers of the galaxy.

Age of Rediscovery

Spacefaring empires have traversed the galaxy for millennia. From the first Empyrean aethersailors, to survey teams from the Mahact and Lazax empires, to modern explorers, sentients have visited many of the galaxy's far corners. Some worlds have remained a part of galactic civilization, while others are lost, only to be found again many centuries later. Exploration is as much rediscovering what has been lost as it is finding the new.

Throughout the Dark Years, the Great Civilizations largely remained within their ancestral borders. Much of their knowledge of what lay beyond the nearest sectors of space was lost or rendered woefully out of date by the passage of millennia. Most modern expeditions start with scrutiny of their partial records before setting out into the unknown. Each rediscovery of a lost colony or old contact provides an opportunity for psychoarchaeologists and astrocartographers to piece together a trail of clues to the next world.

Although these clues provide insight into the location and possible status of lost worlds, the great isolation of the Dark Years means the only way to be sure is to make planetfall. Formerly thriving paradises now lie in ruin, starved of resources by the collapse of galactic trade or destroyed in unknown cataclysms. Once-barren worlds now teem with life, as entire civilizations have developed since the Twilight Wars. This shuffling of the board provides new opportunities for the galaxy's great powers and for intrepid individuals.

As forgotten planets have been rediscovered, so have many Lazax technological achievements been replicated and, in some cases, surpassed. The very fabric of space itself may soon bend to those armed with technologies such as the arcane Creuss wormhole generator or the experimental Jol-Nar transit diodes. New frontiers beyond the galaxy, beyond the universe even, tempt those with the hubris to tamper with the firmament of reality.

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Threats Old and New

The mighty fleets of the Great Civilizations are again in motion. Border skirmishes, invasions, and piracy make the galaxy a dangerous place, to be sure, but far greater threats are biding their time beyond known space.

No fewer than four malign forces threaten the galaxy from beyond. The Lazax are back for revenge, having evolved into the terrifying L1Z1X Mindnet. An omnicidal civilization of mechanical monstrosities, the Nekro Virus, threatens to overwhelm the galaxy in a tide of robotic horrors. The dreaded Mahact kings have returned, leaping from the pages of myth. Finally, a nightmare has been unleashed as the Vuil'raith spill forth from their demonic domain. Despite these threats from beyond, the greater threat may be the endless bickering of the Galactic Council or, worse still, that one of the great powers may use this chaos to seize the Imperial Throne.

Secrets of the Void

Although many empires have risen over the eons, none has boasted a complete accounting of the secrets in the depths of space. The following are but a few examples of the wondrous worlds and mysterious phenomena waiting for those brave and skillful enough to find them.

AFFAIR OF THE HEART

The living light of the Creuss sculpture danced and cavorted before Leelanh's eyes, but her ears were firmly on Ambassador Addar, whose conversation with Federation dignitaries on Hacan embassy security was winding to a close.

"Nurah, Kito, hurry please," said Leelanh, covering her whisper with her wine glass. Her fur was prickling, never a good sign.

"Unanticipated firewalls," Kito's voice growled in her ear. "Need thirty seconds."

"Oh, no problem, I'll just hang out until I can't feel my arms," Nurah grumbled. "Tell me again why the Human's in the vent instead of the Yssaril?"

"He's here," Leelanh said, counting his footsteps. She glided to the left, as if to observe the sculpture from a new angle...

"Oh! Ambassador! I'm so sorry," babbled Leelanh. Addar's ears flicked in mild irritation as her wine ran down his sleeve.

"It'll wash out," he murred, surveying the damage to his silks. "Human vintages are nothing like the starflower wines we have at home," he chuckled sidelong to his Human counterparts.

"Your rich generosity brings light to my name," gushed Leelanh, bowing perhaps a fraction too deeply.

"Connection established," said Nurah. "Kito?"

"Jammer's down." The nanites in the wine began to infiltrate Addar's personal devices as he moved towards the back of the gallery. "Phase 2?"

"Phase 2," Nurah grunted, clambering through the vent until she was above the art storeroom. "Ah there you are... right on time."

The Gashlai glided in, keeping a nervous distance from the art as the temperature rose a dozen degrees from the heat of his environment suit. "Addar?" his voice a gentle hiss. "Are you here?"

"There you are, my star," Addar said, emerging into Nurah's view. "My dear, dear, Unnagat."

It shouldn't have been possible for a six-foot suit of metal to look bashful, but Unnagat managed it. Addar, wearing a large thermal glove, placed a paw on his forearm. "I know I haven't made time for us..."

"You're here now," whispered Unnagat, staring at the smoldering surface that separated them. "That's all that matters..."

"He's hacking the schematics!" shouted Leelanh. "Take him down!"

"Keleres! Freeze!" shouted Nurah as she dropped from the vents, pistol at the ready. "Okay..." she muttered at the shocked Gashlai. "You can't freeze... but... stay where you are!"

"What is the meaning of this?!" Addar roared as Kito glided through the side door, pistol thrumming with energy.

"Ambassador Addar," said Leelanh as she grabbed his wine-stained sleeve and slid the cuff over it. "On charges of espionage against the Embers of Muaat, you will be brought before the council."

"Espionage?" whispered Unnagat. "Addar... tell me it's not true!"

Addar stared at the ground as Leelanh finished cuffing him.

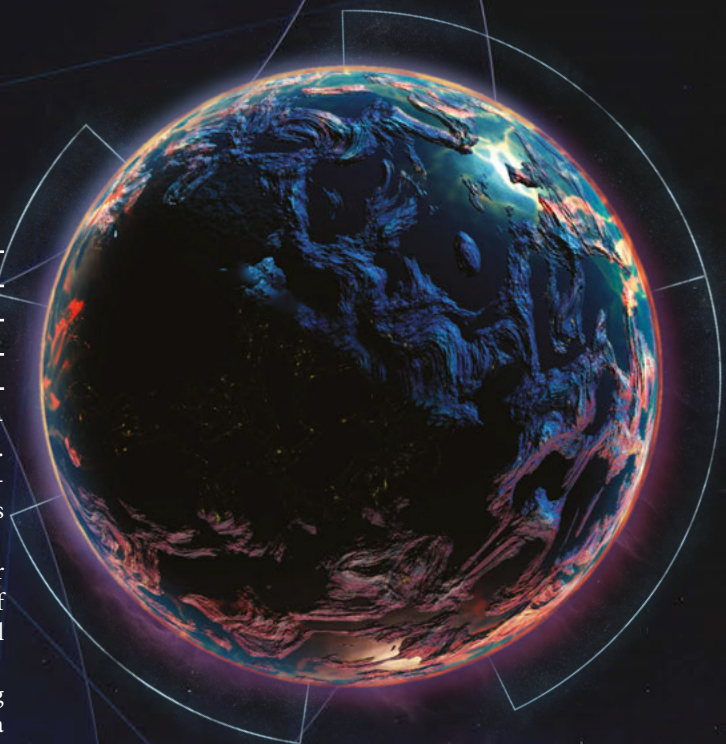
"Engineer Unnagat," Nurah holstered her weapon. "As leader of the Mark II War Sun Program, you have diplomatic immunity and have nothing to fear from the Council. Rest assured that Ambassador Addar will answer for his crimes."

"I..." said Unnagat in a bereft tone as Leelanh and Kito hauled Addar away. "I... I thought he... that we..."

Nurah had never wanted to pat a Gashlai on the shoulder before, but she wisely didn't try. "I'm sorry," she said instead. "We'll get you back to the Embassy. Come on."

Mark Hissman (Order #22282139)

Mallice: The Wormhole Nexus



STAR NAME/TYPE: none/pocket dimension
POPULATION STATUS: outpost, population unknown
GOVERNMENT: anarchy
MAJOR IMPORTS: esoterica, manufactured goods, foodstuffs
MAJOR EXPORTS: esoterica, illicit goods

Within the center of a pocket dimension outside the known universe lies a planet wracked by distortions in the laws of physics. Planet Mallice sits at the heart of this interdimensional junction, its sky illuminated by the light of millions of wormholes flickering open and closed.

This pocket is finite in volume. Mallice sits at the center surrounded by a dense halo of wormholes. Mere millions of kilometers beyond the halo lies a churning, impenetrable wall of folded spacetime.

Although much of Mallice is cursed by violently changing anomalies, millions of small islands of stability exist with a unique combination of physical laws. Several of these locations support known or theorized life-forms, making habitation a possibility. The majority, however, are stable but so inhospitable to life that normal matter might rend itself out of existence instantly if brought into the region.

Standing in one of the habitable islands disorients all but the most disciplined spacers. Gravity generally pulls downward, only to be reversed by static sites of antigravity. The strength of gravity is mostly stable at an easy 80% of Mecatol standard, but this varies considerably at boundaries of these stable areas. Hand-sized pockets of extreme gravity float around the edges, warping the light cast by millions of wormholes into truly dazzling displays.

Finding Mallice without a guide means exploring the dangerous rapids of uncharted wormholes. Not all wormholes are bidirectional, and some passages are too small for all but the tiniest vessels, meaning intrepid explorers risk being trapped far from home or crushed by the narrowing bulk of spacetime.

KELERES ALERT!

This Wormhole Nexus is too useful a locale for the Keleres to pass up. We could use it to get anywhere in the galaxy and to watch for extradimensional incursions. The trick is how to find it. I may have taken one or two or seventeen too many rounds to the helmet, but I figure if any of the major wormholes led to the Nexus, then I wouldn't be sending this alert. The key is in the unstable wormholes in fringe sectors of space.

Navigating unstable wormholes is no joke, so you need either a guide or some serious tech. Creuss are wormhole masters, so you might borrow one of their ships. Alternatively, both Sol and Letnev have daredevil wormhole riders you could recruit. If all else fails, maybe you could become a famous smuggler and get invited to the Exterrix? Look, if it was easy, I would've done it myself already.

Caution: Yellow Zone. Uncharted, dangerous wormholes.

The Exterrix

Mallice hosts the headquarters of the mysterious Exterrix organization. This secretive collective of smugglers operates throughout the galaxy and boasts it can move "anything to anywhere"—for the right price. The Exterrix deal only in the most high-value items and provide no-questions-asked service. Their extensive knowledge of the wormhole nexus and where its wormholes lead allows them to seemingly disappear and reappear anywhere in the galaxy.

The smugglers' headquarters is built into the remains of a massive starship that crash-landed outside an island of stability. Exterrix agents use the starship's exotic dimensional stabilizer technology to protect the ship and to extend a safe corridor for approaching vessels. While the ship vaguely resembles Creuss designs, temporal analysis indicates it crashed thousands of years before the Ghosts' contact with the galaxy.

Contacting the Exterrix is an easy matter for those already in the wormhole nexus. Anyone sophisticated or powerful enough to safely reach Mallice warrants at least a conversation by comlink. It's rumored that both the Mentak Coalition and the Nomad maintain close ties with the Exterrix, but the former denies such allegations, and the latter is generally unreachable.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Mirage: Hidden Fortress

STAR NAME/TYPE: unknown/yellow dwarf

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 756 million (100% Mirran)

GOVERNMENT: isolationist junta

MAJOR IMPORTS: none

MAJOR EXPORTS: none

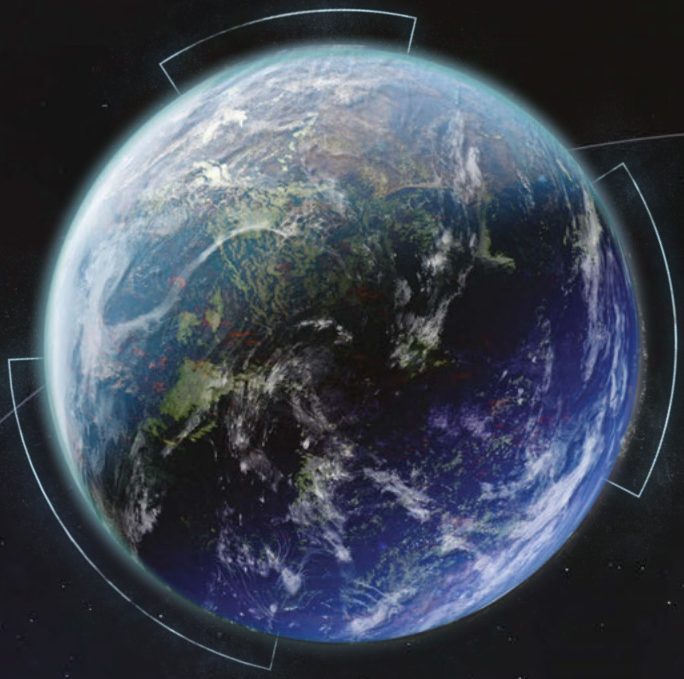
Spacers tell tales of a high-tech paradise hidden on a deserted world. The tales say that the world seems worthless and completely uninhabited. However, the planet has hidden cities, they say, protected from detection by cloaking tech far surpassing that of the Yssaril, and rich beyond imagination. Legend has it that the light from the planet's star reveals a shimmering imperfection in the cities' cloaking fields at sundown.

Although several clues narrow Mirage's location to a seemingly barren stretch of space, the myth of a near-perfect cloak means an explorer can never be sure if a particular barren planet is actually Mirage. In truth, Mirage is a young terrestrial world with simple photosynthetic plants and a thin atmosphere. The apparent surface is devoid of complex animal life. Mirage appears to be the type of world that colonists and miners pass over while scientists call for its protection as an evolutionary petri dish.

The cloaked cities of Mirage live up to the legend. Each is a utopian paradise of shining towers and lush gardens. The Mirrans' advanced technology also extends beyond cloaking into the fields of medicine and nanofabrication. Disease is nearly unheard of, while poverty is a thing of the past. The Mirrans have maintained their secluded isolation since the time of the Mahact and have prospered for it. Given this success, and the intense strife they have witnessed elsewhere, the Mirrans will do anything to preserve their way of life. Thus, any explorers who do manage to discover their cities are met with waves of advanced starfighters.

Mirage Flight Academy

The Mirrans devote an entire cloaked city to the Mirage Flight Academy, the training center for their elite starfighter corps. Though all cities on Mirage have numerous docking bays in tall towers around the perimeter, the docking towers at the Flight Academy form a nearly unbroken wall. Within the city center are simulation centers, lecture halls, physical training gyms, and aerial obstacle courses where cadets compete in lightning-speed races.



KELERES ALERT!

Mirage is real; one of our scouts found it and managed to transmit as much before engaging FTL. She didn't make it out. Analysis showed multivector plasma scoring and completely blank databanks.

Cloaks, fighters, and computer-wiping tech. Why don't these Mirrans want to be found? According to our informants, some Saar scrappers collected the debris and are selling it from their base on Garbozia. Recover the fighter, and see if there is more data aboard. Those Mirrans are lucky I'm deskbound, or I'd show them some hospitality.

Caution: Red Zone. Locals protect their secrecy with immediate, lethal force.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Hope's End: Forgotten Arsenal

STAR NAME/TYPE: Anvil/neutron star

POPULATION STATUS: abandoned military installation; no stable population

GOVERNMENT: anarchy

MAJOR IMPORTS: survival equipment, foodstuffs

MAJOR EXPORTS: Lazax artifacts, Lazax weapons, beast trophies

Hope's End sits deep within the Ichal Nebula at the terminus of the Exiles' Path, the infamous Lazax penal route. The intense radiation of the system's neutron star scours the world, encouraging the planet's hardy wildlife to rapidly mutate. These conditions made Hope's End a crucible for the Lazax's most elite troops.

Despite the danger, Hope's End is a strikingly beautiful world. Fierce auroral storms light the hazy-red, sunless sky. This normally mimics the brightness of a moonlit night, but at times the green auroras can surge so intensely they temporarily blind sighted beings. These surges are matched by ionization so extreme that the ashen metallic sands rain upward toward the sky, caught in powerful magnetic fields that also scramble sensors and communications.

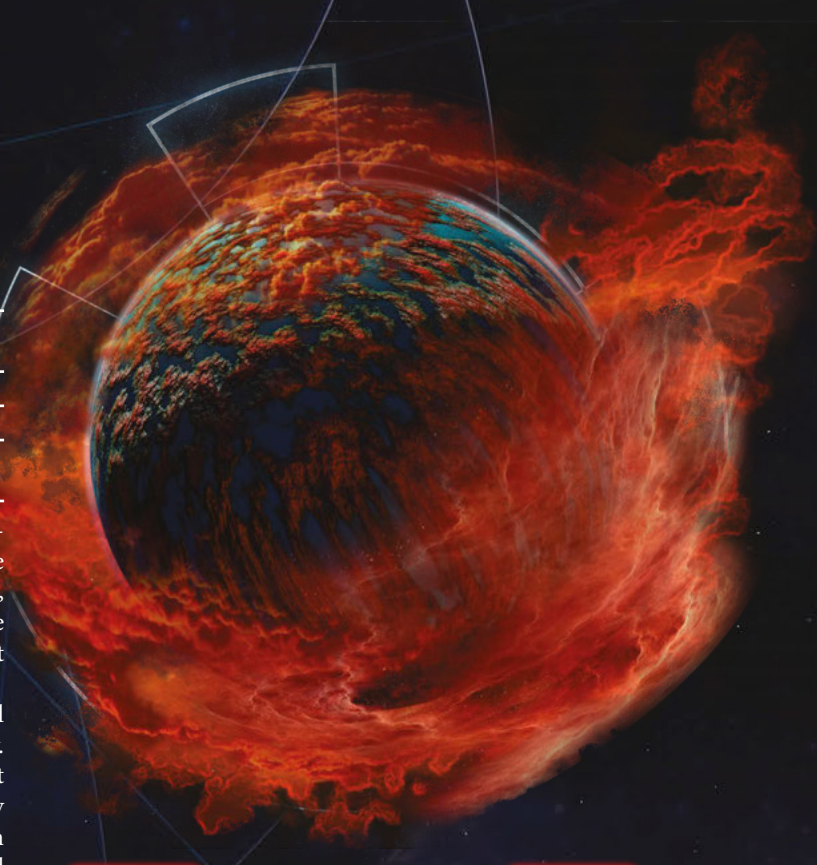
While the Lazax legions have long gone, in their hasty departure, they left behind a series of military outposts and Imperial arms vaults. Scavengers have pillaged a handful in the intervening millennia, but most have become concealed beneath the surface. The planet's unstable climate means surface structures can become buried within a few decades.

Owing to its accelerated resurfacing and extreme danger, Hope's End may have the largest and most intact collection of Lazax artifacts outside of Mecatol Rex. Many would-be looters have met their ends within minutes of planetfall, while major expeditions must contend with the nearby Mentak Coalition.

Although the Imperium has fallen, elite fighting forces from across the galaxy still journey to Hope's End to prove their mettle. Presenting a trophy from Hope's End, such as the tusk of an ultramantis or a helmet of the VI Legion, distinguishes the bearer as one of the toughest survivors in the galaxy.

Imperial Arms Vault

Hidden beneath the surface of Hope's End lies a series of Lazax weapons caches. These vaults contain enough war stock to outfit entire legions with everything from infantry equipment to heavy weapons to light vehicles and mechs. Some even include experimental weaponry such as dangerous bacterial bioweapons.



KELERES ALERT!

A friend of mine runs an elite bodyguard company and just got back from Hope's End. When her trainees finished their last live-fire exercise, their explosives unearthed remains of the Lazax cohort assigned to guard Vault LXVII. Legend has it that this vault contains experimental Lazax tachyon weapons capable of bypassing any modern shield.

Look, the higher-ups won't make this official because the source isn't government, but I believe it. Why don't you take a "training mission" out to Hope's End and investigate?

Be sure to watch out for the fierce beasts prowling the surface and the vault's autodefenses and antitamper mechanisms. Expect X-62 bacterial weapons. Be alert: intelligence suggests the Mentak, Naaz-Rokha, and L1Z1X have heightened their operations in the region. There is no doubt they are after the same prize.

Caution: Red Zone. Dangerous beasts and free-fire zone.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Creuss: Beyond the Gate

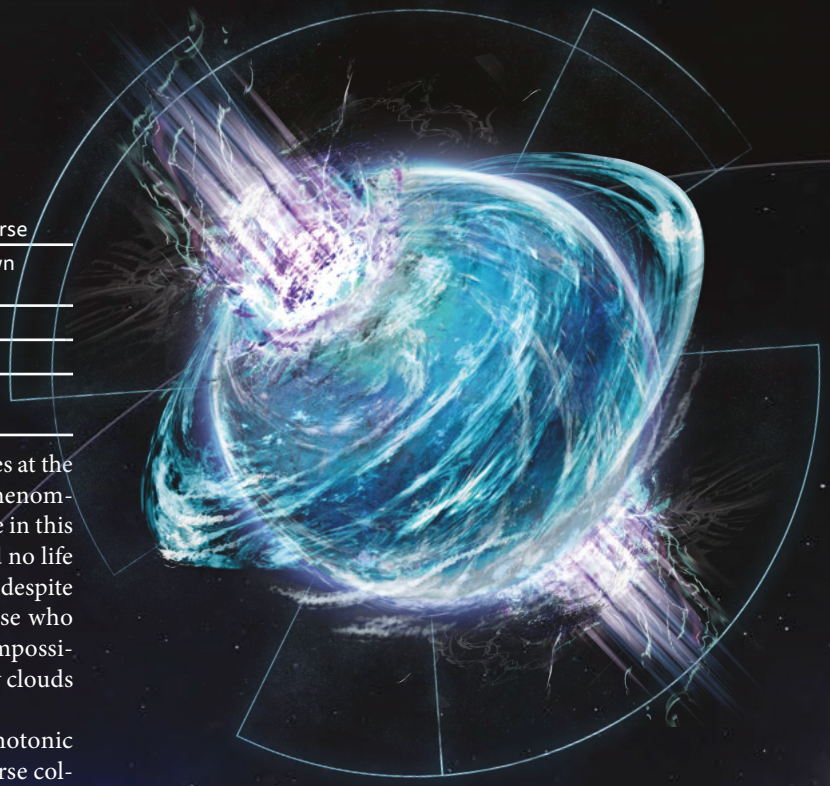
STAR NAME/TYPE: none/ethereal luxdimensional universe

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, population unknown (100% Creuss)

GOVERNMENT: enigmatic synod

MAJOR IMPORTS: rare minerals, information

MAJOR EXPORTS: high-tech goods, light sculptures, navigation data



The Shaleri anomaly, now known as the Creuss Gate, lies at the center of a region of space known for inexplicable phenomena. For millennia, ships have vanished without a trace in this area, transmitting no distress calls and leaving behind no life pods or debris. Few spacers risk traversing the region, despite the significant time needed to detour around it. Those who do brave this "spooky, bad space" report sustaining impossible equipment failures as well as seeing strange energy clouds and ethereal beings.

Beyond the Creuss Gate is a domain of exotic photonic plasma. This strange domain exists in a parallel universe colliding with our own universe in higher-dimensional space. The natural dimensional splicing of these colliding universes rends open the Creuss Gate. Distortions in spacetime reverberate in both directions, giving rise to the strange phenomena seen in Shaleri space as differing laws of physics seep across the gateway.

This interdimensional wormhole is unstable. By the odds, the collision of two universes should cause a massive explosion. The Creuss actively stabilize the gateway using a series of runic entanglement pylons, smoothing the dimensional tear into an easily traversable wormhole.

In immediate proximity to the gate's far side is Creuss, home "planet" of the Ghosts of Creuss. What lies beyond is unknown. The Creuss domain appears to continue in all directions. An entire universe may be teeming with strange, energy-based life-forms.

Creuss itself is a "world" of trapped light and high-energy plasma contained by curved spacetime. Photons and gas particles swirl within the spherical boundary of the world. Ethereal creatures—the Ghosts and others—swim through these currents in an utterly alien form of habitation. Unshielded matter from the galaxy is demolecularized on contact with the sphere, making visitation essentially impossible.

More physical structures hang in space near the Creuss homeworld and their side of the gate. Massive entanglement pylons discharge tendrils of energy into the Creuss Gate, seemingly stabilizing it, while the Creuss's shipyard analogues float above the world sphere. By some arcane process, the Creuss can pull matter, such as minerals, through the gate to forge these structures, their starships, and their encounter suits.

KELERES ALERT!

You ever wonder where all those shipwrecks in Shaleri space go? Me too. Why don't you find out? A Hacan merchant, the Carpe Lucrum, just made it to Tempesta. The captain is looking to make another run through bad space, but his crew have jumped ship after seeing "space open up and eat an entire asteroid."

If you're worried about the Creuss, they have said on the record it's not them. So, it won't hurt to investigate, right? If it's not them, this might be some sort of new threat. If it is them, then why are they lying to us?

Caution: Yellow Zone. Unauthorized investigation of Shaleri space may provoke a diplomatic incident.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

The Dark: Empyreal Dominion

STAR NAME/TYPE: none/nebula

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, constantly fluctuates (100% Empyrean)

GOVERNMENT: consultative collective

MAJOR IMPORTS: information, alien artifacts

MAJOR EXPORTS: heavy industrial goods, high-tech components, aethersails

A massive nebula visible from the skies of most of the core worlds, the Dark's thick clouds of gas and radiation obscure the domain of the Empyrean. Ancient stories from across the galaxy link this nebula to tales of faceless creatures descending on leathery wings from the heavens. The natural current of the aetherstream, a subtle gravitational wave front that originates at the galactic core and permeates the galaxy, flows strongly throughout the entirety of the nebula.

Within the swirling gases float countless enclaves of the Empyrean. Carved from asteroids and planetary debris fragments, these outposts each host on average a few thousand Empyrean. Skeletal scaffolds jut out from them in every direction, offering zero-gravity mooring for starships, while unpressurized living spaces include open-vacuum bazaars where information is considered as valuable as the rarest treasure.

Erebian Void

At the heart of darkness lies a sight unseen by all but a handful of non-Empyrean eyes. The Erebian Void, a massive expanse cleared of all planets, forms the heart of the nebula known as the Dark.

The Empyrean cleared the Erebian Void long ago with a purpose. While most other species generate power by destructive, exhaustible means, the Empyrean rely on an infinite supply of dark energy. An intrinsic part of the fabric of space, dark energy occurs everywhere throughout the universe.

However, the Empyrean discovered that dark-energy output radically increases in the absence of gravitational bodies. Despite being within the dense galactic core, the Dark was mostly free of large planetary bodies even before the Empyrean arrived. Now, Empyrean engineers carefully tend to this expanse, ensuring no rogue planets or stars disturb the delicate balance of habitats and dark-energy taps.

When they first cleared the Erebian Void, the Empyrean constructed millions of orbiting habitats by disassembling the rogue planets and wayward asteroids that once chaotically danced through the nebula. Each of these constructions floats freely from the others and is unrestrained by any gravity well. This symphony of independent spaceborn structures is known as Erebis.

Each station is of unique design, bespoke to the collective standards of the Empyrean who built it. Some stations are wholly manufactured habitats, while others are built into the fragments of a dismantled terrestrial planet. Owing to the unique physiology of the Empyrean, most provide perches from which inhabitants soak in the background radiation found throughout the Dark.

The Gate of Night

At the exact center of the Dark, deep within the Erebian Void, stands the Gate of Night. A stone temple held stationary by perfectly balanced aethersails, this structure hangs just above a twisted nexus of the aetherstream that generates a roaring font of dark energy. Here, venerable conservators, reaching the end of their exceptionally long lives, prepare themselves for their final duty.

First, the conservator performs a ritualized recitation of their knowledge to another Empyrean. Second, the conservator discards all belongings. Finally, the conservator embarks upon a small, aethersail-powered starship and descends into the nexus.

Once at the nexus, the conservator can use the unique convergence of the aetherstream and the intense dark-energy flow to propel themself beyond the galactic rim and into the intergalactic void. None have ever returned from this journey, but the remaining conservators believe this ritual provides a chance that their knowledge will survive any calamity that might befall the galaxy proper.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

The Arborec

To call the Arborec a faction would be somewhat of a mischaracterization. For that matter, so would calling them a civilization, for is it possible to have a civilization with only one inhabitant?

The entire planet of Nestphar hosts a single superorganism, one that encompasses all creatures within its biosphere. These organisms are linked by the swirling clouds of spores emitted by the city-sized floating fungal forests called Flaah that drift through the planet's stratosphere. Through these Flaah spores, the myriad synapses of every organism are merged into a single consciousness, a gestalt sharing that is called the "prime Symphony." It is this prime Symphony that forms the Arborec.

No scientists can explain how a superorganism could come to develop sentience, much less disciplines such as the sciences, engineering, or complex mathematics. It is also a question that the Arborec itself has proven singularly unwilling to answer. All the rest of the galaxy knows is that it was the Arborec who made first contact with them, and not the other way around.

Strange Ambassadors

It was during their first tentative steps towards interstellar travel that they encountered other evidence of life in the galaxy, in the form of distant telescopic sightings and radio waves passing through their system. However, the Arborec had no idea how to interpret these signals, since they had never needed to evolve any form of visual or auditory communication.

The solution presented itself when an Arborec expedition encountered a Sol merchant vessel, the *Dies Opulen*. The crew had died of plague before the Arborec arrived, but the bodies had been preserved in the freezing tomb of the derelict vessel. The Arborec decided to try an ambitious experiment, merging fungal Arzuga cells with the corpses' brainstems, then using photovoltaic stims to slowly cause the tissues to reanimate and eventually regrow. Eventually, the Arborec had a new organism that was a part of the hivemind but capable of visual and auditory communication. They called it the Dirzuga.

With the first Dirzuga envoys, the Arborec began to reach out across the stars and make contact with their neighbors. Conveniently, this was during the end of the Dark Years when various factions were once again beginning to explore and trade. Though the Arborec's means of communication caused some consternation in most people who found it hard to ignore the zombie-like nature of the Dirzuga, they managed to integrate themselves into galactic society. In many cases the unique wealth of foodstuffs, medicines, and other biological elements that Nestphar could produce were simply too valuable to pass up. For that reason, the Arborec were eventually welcomed into the Galactic Council, and have become an odd but accepted part of the galaxy.

Letani Nodes

To allow itself to travel to other worlds beyond the reach of the Flaah spore clouds, the Arborec employs massive creatures that it refers to as Letani. These brutes, which resemble a kraken-shaped mushroom crossed with a carnivorous plant and grown to monstrous size, can each be a node for a smaller instance of the Symphony. Every Arborec starship has at least one Letani within it, and sometimes several, as does every station, outpost, and colony world the Arborec establishes.

The Letani can return to Nestphar and rejoin the prime Symphony, uploading their experiences, thoughts, and memories into the gestalt consciousness. In this way, they maintain harmony with the rest of the Arborec. However, the Letani ability to operate independently of the prime Symphony for long periods of time means that, after long instances away from Nestphar, some seem to develop their own mannerisms, quirks, and perhaps even something approximating an independent consciousness. Some scientists theorize that, should a Letani remain apart from the Arborec for too long, it might become a new superorganism. However, this could take centuries of separation to occur.

Goals of the Arborec

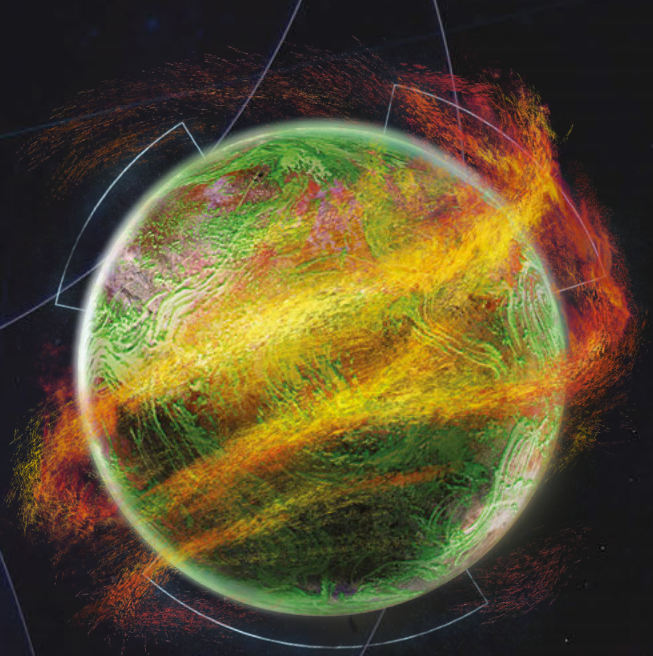
The goals of the Arborec superorganism are as mysterious as its origins. Certainly it seems willing to treat with the other powers in the galaxy, to the point where it dispatches Dirzuga envoys to sit upon the Council and create treaties with its neighbors. It also engages in trade, again through the Dirzuga.

As disturbing as they are, the Dirzuga seem to go a long way to personalizing the Arborec. Most sentients who interact with Dirzuga tend to start thinking of them as individuals, making the Arborec just one more alien species in a cosmopolitan galaxy. They forget that each is simply a reanimated puppet wielded by a vast and unknowable alien consciousness.

Some theorize that the Arborec seeks out superorganisms, entities with whom it can engage as equals. Others argue that the simple biological imperative to survive and persist drives it, just like any other sentient. But a few scientists suggest that the Arborec might have grander goals in mind. They point out that once a planet has been seeded by the Arborec, it is only a matter of time before every creature on it has been assimilated into the local Symphony. In this case, each world is simply one more node in what one day might become a pangalactic superorganism.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Nestphar



STAR NAME/TYPE: Farruban/yellow main sequence star

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 1 (100% Arborec)

GOVERNMENT: hivemind

MAJOR IMPORTS: minerals, ores, technology

MAJOR EXPORTS: foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, exotic plants and seeds

Beneath an orange haze of city-sized spore clouds in its upper atmosphere, the lush world of Nestphar is home to the great Arborec hivemind. Plant-formed bodies of all shapes and sizes crawl, slither, and walk across the mold-swamps, Letani nurseries, and spore gardens. Each is a single note in the Arborec's prime Symphony.

Phara

Located in the middle northern latitudes, Phara is the capital of Nestphar. Many in the galaxy assume this means some important aspect of the Arborec's physiology is within the area, but there is no actual evidence of that. The capital consists of a cluster of sky-splitting landing stalks with a variety of showcase laboratories between them. The architecture is largely grown, but it is shaped in a fashion to accommodate humanoid forms.

Phara showcases a little bit of everything the Arborec can produce for trade, including custom-grown plants to use in medicinal compounds, to meet hunger demands, to serve as construction materials, and much, much more. The Dirzuga conduct a standard tour for new arrivals, and the city has more detailed tours that focus on specific areas.

The Stalks

The stalks are a field of mountainous, beanstalk-like growths with hundreds of landing pad-sized buds shooting out from all around to receive visitors. Dirzuga traffic controllers guide visitors to a landing site, and another Dirzuga meets them at their ship. Then, they generally either take the party on a tour of the facilities best suited to their needs or bring them to a negotiation room so they can petition or bargain for whatever they might need.

The same Dirzuga typically remains with visitors for their entire stay. However, the nature of the Arborec hivemind means they aren't limited to doing so. The Dirzuga are literal mouthpieces of the Arborec, and the Arborec can speak and listen by alternating each word through a crowd of forty of them as easily as through one. Of course, the Arborec have long since learned that most humanoids much prefer to deal with a single Dirzuga, which they often subconsciously anthropomorphize, even though it has all the individuality of a fingernail as far as the Arborec are concerned.

Kushin

Not far from Phara, Kushin contains the Arborec's laboratories. Here, experiments with molds, spores, and other plant life have dedicated space. Many of these labs conduct projects in secret, such as the experiments that created the Dirzuga, while other labs pursue unique specifications set by trading partners. Controlling these spaces are singular laboratory plant forms possessing body designs with steady, dexterous limbs; robust sensory bulbs; and a sealed, waxy epidermis to prevent contaminating experiments.

The Honeycombs

Always just above a cloudy haze of Flaah spores, the honeycomb stations are long, flat, and oval shaped with a roughly hexagonal cellular honeycomb structure fit for landing or docking cargo vessels. They serve the bulk of interstellar traffic to and from Nestphar, ensuring trade continues uninterrupted at all times.

The bay interiors are unlike any others in the galaxy, and most beings consider them strangely elegant. Smooth bulkheads and decks show none of the usual piping and cabling for transferring power and vital life-support gases and fluids. Instead, there is a series of stomata, slit-like openings in the bulkheads that allow for the transfer of gases throughout the structure.

Dirzuga traffic controllers get ships to the proper docks. There, Dirzuga wait in the bays to liaise between the arriving crew and the Arborec. Once deals are struck, the Arborec's hulking fungal laborers do most of the cargo shifting, loading, and unloading with a quick and silent, if slimy, efficiency.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

The Vuil'raith Cabal

Malevolent creatures from beyond our universe, the Vuil'raith are horrifying monsters resembling the demons of myth. No two of these creatures look the same, and individuals range in size from no larger than a power pack to bigger than a super-dreadnought. These demonic monsters wield what can only be described as infernal magic; their abilities confound scientific explanation. Spilling forth from their bizarre home dimension, these ravenous creatures conquer with ferocity and cunning.

The Vuil'raith first emerged from the shattered ruins of Acheron following the return of the Mahact. The gene-sorcerers supercharged the ancient Acheron Gate to wrench their homeworld into the galactic core. In doing so, the Mahact sundered Acheron, turning the planet into a dimensional tear. The Vuil'raith now work to rend open more tears across the galaxy. Part gravity rift, part wormhole, these dimensional tears allow the Vuil'raith to reach our universe.

Although there is no recorded history of any galactic power encountering the Vuil'raith before the sundering of Acheron, some philosophers question how it is possible that these beings so closely match demons of legend. These philosophers speculate that contact was made in the ancient past and that some weapon or strategy against the invaders can be found in forgotten ruins or written in scripture. Most see these ideas as a waste of time at best, but it is rumored some powers are quietly investigating.

A Nightmare Unleashed

The Vuil'raith have come to this galaxy with one objective in mind: to consume. While the Cabal possesses incredible cunning and the ability to make long-term plans, all their efforts lead toward this bestial goal.

The Vuil'raith's most immediate concern is to flood the galaxy with increasing numbers of their people. While the Acheron Vortex, the remnant of the Acheron Gate, allows flesh-ships of even the most massive size to traverse the veil between universes, there is a practical limit to how many may cross at once. As such, the Vuil'raith aim to rend open more dimensional tears throughout the galaxy to bring more of the horde to this side.

Although these dimensional tears can seemingly be opened anywhere, some analysts have observed that the larger and more stable tears are always located near some sort of anomaly or intense power source. Analysts who have sifted through the ravings of captured Vuil'raith cultists have discovered that the Vuil'raith's objective seems to be to "rip open a gateway among the bones of an empire"—suggesting that Mecatol Rex is their ultimate target.

The Vuil'raith's leadership, the Cabal, is an ever-shifting council of the most powerful—or most cunning—Vuil'raith. Together, it directs the bestial hordes within this galaxy and beyond. It remains unknown what criteria, if any, marks a Vuil'raith as eligible for leadership. It may simply be that, if a Vuil'raith is strong, clever, and dangerous enough to demand a spot in the Cabal and not be immediately slain, they become a member. What is known, however, is that betrayal may come at any moment. Some survivors fighting against the Vuil'raith have seen the demonic entities turn against each other when one of their leaders is injured, appearing to seize the opportunity to slay a rival.

Foreign Relations

The Vuil'raith hunger for all species, biological and mechanical alike. However, the Cabal seems to be particularly focused on assaulting two factions: the Arborec and the Nomad. Letnev strategists theorize that the first is simply out of pragmatism. The Arborec's worlds are covered with integrated bioforms that perform roles reserved for mechanical systems in other cultures. In other words, if consumed, they would provide much more biomass than any faction in the galaxy. The Galactic Council has already nearly come to blows when the Barony insisted that if the Arborec did not withdraw from worlds close to known Vuil'raith incursions, the Letnev fleet would be forced to burn those worlds to bedrock.

The reason for the Vuil'raith's ire against the Nomad, on the other hand, remains unknown. However, Keleres intelligence has intercepted several reports of the Nomad's flagship *Memoria* arriving from nowhere to save faltering battle lines against the Vuil'raith, or hired mercenary groups reinforcing besieged worlds against incursions. Many information brokers also report that the Nomad is offering an astronomical reward for any ship and crew willing to scout the Acheron system.

Vuil'raith Cults

While most of the galaxy reacted to the Vuil'raith arrival with terror and defiance, there are those who join the invaders in secret. The motivations for these cults vary wildly, from sheer delusion to wretched opportunism to hubristic attempts to redirect the Vuil'raith and more. One cult may venerate the Vuil'raith as evil gods to be appeased, offering sacrifices of sentient beings to placate the horde. Another cult, far from the front lines, may see the Vuil'raith as divine retribution against their enemies. A third may scheme to somehow save the galaxy with a desperate gambit, perhaps hoping to lure the Vuil'raith into the Wormhole Nexus and out of the galaxy.

The Cabal actively fosters these cults, allowing safe passage and treating with cultists. By sowing dissent among their foes, the Vuil'raith undermine a pangalactic defense. In exchange for sentient sacrifices or intelligence, they may redirect attacks to target a cult's rivals or allow entire fleets to pass through Vuil'raith space. The Cabal feels no loyalty to these cults, however, and will consume them entirely once their usefulness expires.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Military Doctrine

Although directed by malicious cunning, the Vuil'raith fight tactical battles with brute force. Flesh-ships of all sizes can bombard opponents with plasma and acid breath but prefer to upend galactic naval doctrine by engaging in melee combat. Wielding tentacles, claws, and even frigate-sized maws, dreadnought-sized Vuil'raith close to point-blank range to literally shred their way through opposing fleets. On the ground, lumbering abominations shatter fortifications while voracious hordes of smaller Vuil'raith overwhelm defenders by weight of numbers.

The Cabal constantly adjusts the composition of the horde to exploit any weaknesses they find. This includes psychological weaknesses, as the Vuil'raith flesh-shapers transmogrify their forces for maximum terror.

Perhaps most horrifying, the Vuil'raith can swell their numbers by consuming their captives. Gigantic flesh-shapers, each at least the size of a dreadnought, gorge themselves on the living and the dead. Some unknowable process allows these flesh-shapers to transmogrify what they consume, spawning new Vuil'raith in a fraction of the time it would take to clone soldiers or build warships.

Diplomatic Doctrine

Through their agents and by their actions, the Cabal declares to the galaxy that all shall be consumed. Despite this, some members of the Cabal do engage in limited, highly coercive diplomacy with other galactic powers. Beings captured by the Vuil'raith are generally consumed or transformed by them, but some are kept alive as hostages to be bartered with.

Offering such bargains gives the Vuil'raith several advantages. For one, they force a government to publicly choose between abandoning their own people or being seen to negotiate with the demonic invaders. If a deal is reached, the formerly captured beings often spread terror by divulging the horrors they observed in captivity. In this way, the Vuil'raith sow further dissention among the galaxy's peoples and foster the emergence of new Vuil'raith cults.

The Vuil'raith also engage in diplomacy with their cults when such dealings provide opportunities to advance their invasion. While voracious, the Vuil'raith are intelligent enough to see how cultivating and supporting these cults makes the galaxy an easier feast.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Hellish Domain

The Vuil'raith Cabal effectively control an ever-expanding sphere of space centered on the Acheron system. Some members of the Galactic Council took early solace in the fact the Vuil'raith are bounded on the north by the Nekro Virus and on the south by the L1Z1X Mindnet, content to allow three monstrosities to deplete each other. Such optimism was unfounded, however, as the Vuil'raith not only advance on all fronts but also have spilled into the eastern half of the galaxy, overrunning an Argent Flight blockade and rushing through uncharted wormholes in Shaleri space.

Dimensional Tears

Wherever the Vuil'raith conquer, they rend open dimensional tears. Similar to the Acheron Vortex, these tears exhibit incredible gravitational forces that the Vuil'raith somehow ignore. More than one courageous scout ship from a Council power has been wrecked upon attempting to traverse such a tear.

Due to the extreme danger of the phenomena, never mind the constant stream of demonic Vuil'raith, no qualified scientists have yet been able to scrutinize a dimensional tear in detail. A pair of Naaz-Rokha scientists were able to escape the sundering of Acheron, however, bringing with them scans of the Acheron Gate. Developing these readings into its entropic field harvesting technology, the Naaz-Rokha Alliance has reluctantly shared a theory of the dimensional tear's function. It believes that, similar to its entropic field taps, dimensional tears cross into an alternate universe and become self-sustaining artificial wormholes.

Although the Vuil'raith must expend significant energy to rip open a tear, the Alliance believes these tears can stay open for long periods of time. If they are large enough, they can remain open indefinitely. The width of a tear appears to correlate closely with nearby energy sources or gravity wells, meaning a tear in deep space would be smaller than one ripped open on a planet or near a gravity rift. Entropic field theorists believe the key to closing the tears lies in creating an interference field, but that would require a complete scan of an active tear.

Dimensional tears not only disgorge demonic hordes, but also warp the very fabric of this universe, corrupting reality to match that found in the Vuil'raith's dimension. A sickly mist seeps out of these tears, as immune to the laws of gravity as are the Vuil'raith traversing the passage. Those humanoids unlucky enough to have been exposed to this mist have reported a sickly sweet taste before rapidly, but somehow nonfatally, mutating into unrecognizable mounds of warped flesh. On all reported occasions, these biological remnants have been destroyed by their horrified former comrades, so the long-term effects of exposure remain unknown.

Acheron Vortex

STAR NAME/TYPE: Acheron/yellow dwarf
POPULATION STATUS: staging ground, population unknown
GOVERNMENT: cabal
MAJOR IMPORTS: captured equipment and personnel
MAJOR EXPORTS: none

The Acheron Vortex is a wound in space and anchor to the Vuil'raith invasion. There, the shattered remains of planet Acheron swirl around a massive dimensional tear. Sensor readings gathered by a lone Mentak sloop, the *Watch This*, are broadly consistent with those of a gravity rift. What was not consistent is the sickly, strange fog seeping forth from the eye of the storm.

Although the twisting debris of Acheron stand testament to intense gravity, a constant stream of flesh-ships spills forth from the vortex. The Vuil'raith appear unimpeded by what should be deadly tidal forces.

KELERES ALERT!

Not even I could recon Acheron and make it back alive, and I've made a career out of surviving things that want to kill me. The only way we'll be able to get an update is if we "persuade" one of those traitorous cultist leaders to tell us. I've always preferred a direct approach, but you might have more luck if you try to infiltrate a cult cell.

The trick is finding a cult leader who has traveled to Acheron and survived. But we're in luck. Representative Gahil Kortiiz from Vorhal just spoke in the Council to decry a group of off-worlders who showed up on their planet preaching about "the ascension to a paradise of flesh." Sounds like our cult to me.

Caution: Green zone. Vorhal is an independent world and respects Council authority. The locals are mostly pacifists, though, so you may want to limit the force you use during your investigation.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

The L1Z1X Mindnet

Once thought to have been wiped out, the Lazax people continue in the cold, undying form of the L1Z1X. The L1Z1X unmistakably are—or were—Lazax, their four-armed bodies having been almost completely replaced with cybernetics. Recently arrived from the edge of known space, the L1Z1X now claim to be the rightful heirs to Mecatol Rex.

During the fall of the Lazax Empire, one junior councilor foresaw the coming twilight. Ibna Vel Syd pleaded with the last Lazax Emperor to act but was dismissed as an unstable alarmist. Rather than allow the Lazax to be annihilated, Vel Syd gathered a meager exodus fleet of two freighters and his family cruiser. He selected a remote world orbiting the star Hazz far beyond the borderlands to begin anew, destroying the Hall of Cartography behind him to ensure none could follow.

Vel Syd's Lazax, joined by a group of loyal Hylar scientists, survived the journey and settled their new homeworld. But to survive, the Lazax had to change. Hazz Prime was barely hospitable, with a meager atmosphere and lacking in necessary minerals. Some survivors suggested they find a new planet, but there were none nearby, and the fleet had already expended far too many resources. Consulting his loyal Hylar, Vel Syd ordered his people to use cybernetics to survive.

This decision proved addictive, as the cybernetics meant less farmland and radiation shielding were needed. This encouraged the Lazax to resort to yet more cybernetics, and yet more prioritization away from organics. In a few decades, the Lazax became more machine than organic and thus changed their name to the L1Z1X.

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Claimants to the Throne

Above all, the L1Z1X Mindnet seeks to claim the Lazax throne and rule the galaxy from Mecatol Rex. Originally, the diaspora aimed merely to survive. However, Vel Syd and his followers were forced to endure millennia of staggered sublight transmissions cataloging the genocide of the Lazax, all while sacrificing more of their souls to cybernetics. Thousands of years of extended lifespan while listening to the drawn-out deaths of their people slowly drove Vel Syd and the L1Z1X beyond the realms of reason, stoking a flame that now burns as a desire for revenge.

Foreign Relations

While the L1Z1X hold that all must bow to them, they believe the traitorous Letnev, the Jol-Nar, and especially the genocidal Humans of Sol must be made to suffer tenfold for crimes against the Lazax. Conversely, the reemergence of the Nekro Virus is testament to a L1Z1X failure. Complete destruction is the only way to correct that mistake.

The Mindnet does not hold the same antipathy to those newly arriving Great Civilizations, such as the Creuss and Arborec, that have emerged since the Dark Years. Some have admirable traits, like the fierce determination of the Gashlai, but ultimately these species are merely future subjects of the coming L1Z1X Imperium.

Military Doctrine

The L1Z1X Mindnet is a military juggernaut. Centuries of iteration on Lazax technology combine with a fully cybernetic military to produce a force capable of unrelenting devastation. Few space or ground targets can withstand bombardment from a L1Z1X superdreadnought.

Unlike other militaries, the L1Z1X do not cease planetary bombardment once their ground forces engage the enemy. With precision targeting, exact coordination of forces, and heavily armored soldiers, the L1Z1X can harrow enemy troops from above even as those troops engage in close combat with L1Z1X legionnaires.

L1Z1X occupation forces employ targeted brutality early and often to quell any potential rebellion. Defeated senior leadership are offered a single chance to swear fealty to the L1Z1X, admit the folly of resistance, and receive the gift of cybernetic augmentation. The Mindnet meets refusal with swift execution. Particularly unruly populations are subject to decimation to force their loyalty. L1Z1X legionnaires divide the subject populations into groups of ten, forcing each group to kill one of their fellows. Refusal to comply is again met with swift execution.

Perhaps most concerning is the L1Z1X ability to assimilate infrastructure within days of seizing control. Since almost all technology in the galaxy relies upon principles discovered by the Lazax and Hylar, it is a matter of child's play for the L1Z1X to convert, for example, captured shipyards to produce Mindnet superdreadnoughts.

Diplomatic Doctrine

With their nightmarish visages and flagrant contempt for other species, the L1Z1X make poor diplomats in the conventional sense. Mindnet ambassadors use this to their advantage, leveraging terror to coerce surrender with one pair of hands while offering Faustian bargains of technology and augmentation with the other. On a handful of occasions, the offer of a greatly extended lifespan has been enough to convince a dying ruler to consign their people to L1Z1X servitude.

The emergence of the Nekro Virus, the return of the Mahact, and the arrival of the Vuil'raith has cast the L1Z1X in relief against truly existential threats. Some in the Great Civilizations hope that peace with the L1Z1X is possible in the face of these enemies, while many minor species would choose L1Z1X subjugation over destruction by eldritch horrors.

Servants of the L1Z1X

In the centuries since landing on Hazz Prime (soon called "0.0.0" or "Null"), the L1Z1X have conquered dozens of systems and impressed several minor species into their empire. There is no L1Z1X council of their vassal species, for the L1Z1X have not forgotten the betrayal of the Galactic Council. The L1Z1X ensure loyalty through subjugation.

Chief among the servants of the L1Z1X are the H4l1r, mechanically augmented descendants of those Hylar scientists who joined Vel Syd. Like their L1Z1X leaders, the H4l1r retain little of their biology. Their suits resemble those of the Hylar but contain just the brain and spinal cord integrated directly into the motive controls. The L1Z1X see the H4l1r as the only loyalists to the Lazax in a galaxy of traitors, and as such trust them to work alongside the L1Z1X enhancers who maintain the very foundation of the Mindnet.

Other vassals do not enjoy the high status granted to the H4l1r. The L1Z1X view minor species as resources to be expended in their quest for vengeance and dominion. So long as these vassals give in to the Mindnet's every demand, they are allowed to run their internal affairs as they please.

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Galaxy's Doom

"I do not like how many blipsss there are on my consssole." Suu'lish's voice was calm despite the whining of their rear batteries, on the verge of overheat, and the thrum of Cohort Delta's gunship as she swooped between the needle-like mountains of the northern Naazir coasts. The pursuing L1Z1X fighter skimmed the peaks as it closed the distance, its missiles swarming them from every direction. Blip after blip came within meters of their hull before being batted aside by Suu'lish's gunnery.

"Fleet going down," L'Val intoned from the open side door, her compound eyes staring up at the sky as her antennae twitched in the rushing wind. The sky was filled with the blue-orange blossoms of L1Z1X bombardment missiles impacting the planetary shields. Another squadron of Naaz-Rokha Z1 Eidolons shot into the skies, rushing to cover the escape pods bursting from the wreckage of the defense fleet.

"So will the 31st if we don't get there faster!" Jjanogh's scaly hands clutched the control column. "L'Val?"

"On it," L'Val grunted as she hefted her massive, chest-mounted beam cannon. "Port 30 degrees."

Jjanogh's massive feet rolled the pedals. For a fraction of a moment, the L1Z1X fighter appeared between two pillars of sea-washed stone. Bright blue light lanced through the enemy craft, L'Val's exoskeleton creaking from the recoil as her target careened off in a burst of shrapnel and flame.

"Thank you!" shouted Jjanogh, tearing their gunship out over the open water. L1Z1X mechanized crawlers were emerging, chrysalis-like, from their amphibious drop cocoons. Weapons fire from Naaz-Rokha strongpoints lit up the length of the beach, hulking Alliance mechs blunting the forward advance, going toe to toe with the L1Z1X vanguard as it rose from the waves.

"Many… many blipsss," Suu'lish laughed as her console projected three extra screens, surrounding her in combat intel as she gripped her controls. "Target riiich environmeeent…"

"Focus on the ones in the water!" Jjanogh brought the gunship level, waves crashing over their hull as they screamed towards the L1Z1X forces. "We have to buy time for the beachhead!"

The Mindnet

The Mindnet links all L1Z1X and their servants in a hierarchical datalink capable of incredible data transfer speeds. Originally designed as a way of rapidly retraining workers, the Mindnet has grown into a tool of subjugation and oppression. Although it does not enable mind control, the L1Z1X use the Mindnet as a surveillance and compliance tool.

Access to the Mindnet requires a specific L1Z1X implant and appropriate access codes. Each implant is hardcoded with hierarchical permissions, permitting superiors to spy on subordinates and even inflict pleasure or pain directly through the nervous system. This is explicitly highlighted to vassal rulers as ensuring compliance from meddlesome deputies or untrustworthy praetorian guard. The L1Z1X rarely disclose that, of course, the implants also ensure vassal loyalty to the Mindnet. More insidiously, implants for vassals are programmed to subtly fire the pleasure and pain responses to slowly condition the recipient into believing L1Z1X propaganda.

No L1Z1X is ever placed below a non-L1Z1X in the Mindnet's hierarchy, while H4l1r are rarely surveilled or conditioned, in order to ensure they remain creative servants.

Empire of Steel

A shadow of the Lazax Empire's former glory, the region the L1Z1X controls is a swath of systems surrounding the remote star Hazz. These systems lie far beyond the borderlands in the outer rim, a region wholly unknown to the Great Civilizations.

L1Z1X space charts a fat, snaking expansion toward the known galaxy. While occasionally deviating from this path to colonize or conquer rich worlds along the way, the Mindnet's advance has sought to reestablish contact with the remnants of the Imperium. After millennia of isolation, the L1Z1X's borders have begun to abut Yssaril and Gashlai space. Already, several small wars have broken out as the Mindnet relentlessly conquers worlds in its path.

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[O.O.O] "Null"

STAR NAME/TYPE: Hazz/red dwarf

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, 1.32 billion (96% L1Z1X, 3% H4l1r, 1% other)

GOVERNMENT: imperial autocracy

MAJOR IMPORTS: raw ore, organic compounds

MAJOR EXPORTS: cybernetics, military hardware, high-tech goods

The L1Z1X homeworld of [0.0.0], the Mindnet's designation for Hazz Prime, is a world scarce in organic resources but abundant in energy reserves. The Mindnet has technoformed the world into an ecumenopolis of towering arcologies, vast factory fields, and colossal power reactors.

Vel Syd selected Hazz Prime as his exodus fleet's destination chiefly for its distance from known space and its ability to sustain the energy consumption of high-tech Lazax civilization. The red dwarf, Hazz, blasts the planet with incredibly high-energy radiation, while tectonic variability provides significant geothermal potential. However, these riches came at the cost of poor prospects for agriculture and the risk of harmful mutations caused by radiation leaking through even heavy shielding.

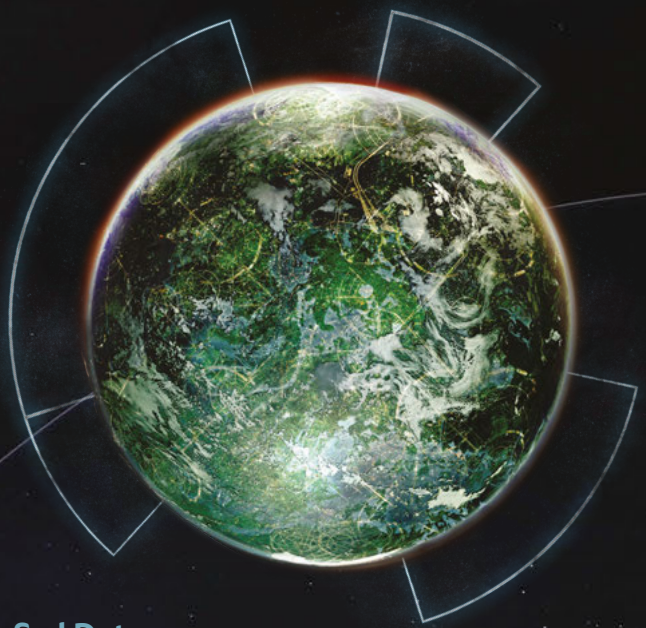
As the Lazax embraced cybernetic augmentation, giving them little need for organic sustenance, rapid industrialization swept the planet. Within a few centuries, Hazz Prime was covered with cities, factories, and power plants. As the Lazax became the L1Z1X, so too was this world redesignated as [0.0.0], so named for its central importance to the L1Z1X's empire.

There is no known record of anyone outside the L1Z1X Mindnet setting foot on [0.0.0], or Null, as the wider galaxy calls it. Allegedly, a Winnaran Custodian visited [0.0.0] as an observer, but she has yet to return. Viewed from orbit, the planet takes on a sickly green and yellow glow from artificial lighting and metallic reflections. Massive space docks, orbital platforms, and an armada of superdreadnoughts guard the world in a ring of duranium.

Based on imagery obtained at great cost to Keleres scouts, some analysts believe the world to be relatively sparsely populated. The L1Z1X's cybernetic enhancements may have further decelerated the Lazax's slow reproductive processes. If true, this implies vast swaths of the planet are automated. A daring strike team might be able to move through these sections of the world undetected.

Throne District

The Throne District of [0.0.0] sits squarely upon the equatorial plateau where the Lazax diaspora made planetfall. Towering arcologies blanket the district, housing the massive computer cores and millions of L1Z1X technocrats needed for central control of the Mindnet. Deep within the central arcology stands the cyberthrone of Ibna Vel Syd. Here, the millennia-old L1Z1X sits permanently fused to the Mindnet's control system, directing the L1Z1X Mindnet in a twisted mockery of the once-proud Lazax Imperial Throne.



Syd Datacore

Hidden below the Throne District of [0.0.0] lies the datacore of the Lazax cruiser *Syd*, the exodus's flagship. While the sum knowledge of the Lazax was far too expansive to store within a starship datacore, Vel Syd's followers secreted aboard as much data as possible using experimental data compression.

Since the destruction of the Hall of Cartography, this datacore has contained the most complete record of Lazax history and technology. L1Z1X scientists painstakingly work to coax information out of the datacore, calling the process their Inheritance System. Despite covetous offers of aid from H4l1r engineers, Vel Syd holds firm in his decree that only L1Z1X connect to the system.

KELERES ALERT!

Infiltrating an entire planet of vengeance-fixated cyborgs may seem like a suicide mission, and it is close to one, but there are a few ways it could work.

A military assault could never succeed. Null's orbital defenses put their superdreads to shame. But the L1Z1X are not set up to detect a small strike team. A handful of operatives could penetrate the defense grid and move undetected through the world's maintenance bowels. Don't get me wrong; you can't just fly in. You'll need cloaking tech. Unless you can get your hands on one of the Yssaril's infiltration vessels, experimental light/wave deflectors will have to do. Intel suggests there's a Jol-Nar lab on Vega Major working on this tech. Maybe they'll share?

Alternatively, Hylar agents might pose as H4l1r scientists. We are mostly sure the H4l1r are only loosely connected to the Mindnet, to keep their creativity intact.

Caution: Red Zone. Hostile-power homeworld.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

The Mahact Gene-Sorcerers

Masters of the galaxy in the millennia before the first Lazax Emperor, the Mahact gene-sorcerers and their gene-construct servants now rise from their crypts to enslave the stars once more. The Mahact kings were until recently little more than a niche historical topic and a fairy tale for frightening children into good behavior. But now, these mad tyrants wield unknowable technology that defies even Hylar scientific understanding, giving cause to terrifying speculation that all the legends are true.

The Mahact rose to power in the eon before the Lazax set out into space. Confined to their home system far beyond the galactic rim, the Mahact made war against each other, ravaging their homeworld of Ixth with horrifying bioweapons. Only the strongest Mahact survived. These remaining Mahact, each a powerful gene-sorcerer, made a truce. Rather than fight over the scraps of their dead world, they would subjugate the galaxy. While some gene-sorcerers worked to build vast armies of thralls, others constructed a great gateway to the galaxy.

Mahact forces spilled forth through the gate at Acheron, subjugating species and planets in every direction. With none to oppose them, the Mahact kings divided the galaxy among themselves. They settled Mecatol Rex as a mighty fortress world to anchor their galactic domination. Mecatol was no throneworld, however, as each dynasty controlled its own independent fiefdom within it.

Despite the Mahact kings' ironfisted control, Mahact domination was far from peaceful. With no one else to wage war against, the Mahact quickly returned to infighting. The gene-sorcerers wielded entire species as disposable weapons in their internecine conflicts. They fought with wild abandon, descending into an orgy of self-destruction that turned genocide into a debauched sport.

Amid the apocalyptic tides of war, one species rose to challenge the tyranny of the Mahact. The Lazax, then a young and fiery people, fought back. They slew Mahact after Mahact and liberated many worlds, eventually wresting control of Mecatol Rex itself. Leading a mighty armada, the Lazax banished the gene-sorcerers beyond the Acheron Gate. The galaxy turned to the Lazax as their saviors; the Lazax Imperium ruled for a thousand generations. That the Mahact were not destroyed, but instead banished, was forgotten.

Despite their decadence and discord, the Mahact rallied in defeat to plant the seeds of their return. They left behind sleeper agents to prepare for their homecoming. Foreseeing their banishment beyond the Rim, the Mahact created the myth of the paradise world of Ixth. Agents laid numerous clues throughout the galaxy that, if combined, would point to Acheron as the gateway to Ixth, while the Mahact altered the genetic memory of some species to yearn for Ixth. The last of these preparations were completed just as the final gene-sorcerers were forced to flee through the gate, the vengeful fleets of the Lazax at their heels.

On the far side of the gate, the Mahact activated every defense on their ancient home and staved off every attempt by the Lazax to finish them off. The Lazax, in turn, could not destroy the gate, as its construction was so esoteric as to not entirely exist in the material universe. However, they could shut it down. Once they did, they sealed it away, trapping the Mahact on Ixth. In turn, the Mahact kings entered their stasis crypts, hoping that their contingency plans would come to fruition before the very stars burned out.

Millennia passed, as did the Lazax Imperium. With the emergence of new civilizations came the Creuss expedition to Acheron. Pursuing the legends of Ixth, together with Council observers, the Creuss reopened the Acheron Gate and unwittingly unleashed the dreaded gene-sorcerers.

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These Creuss had no time to realize their error, as within moments of awakening, the Mahact dominated the explorers. The Mahact harnessed the Acheron Gate, flinging Ixth into the galactic core and shattering Acheron in the process. Now, the Mahact kings once again threaten to enslave the stars as their hordes of thralls, armies of Crimson Creuss Legionnaires, and ancient dreadnoughts sweep across the galaxy.

Return of the Kings

Borne by emissaries of Vertar Auran Oblis, King of Kings, to the Galactic Senate, the Mahact's proclamation is clear: surrender and serve as an honored slave now or face genetic shackling and eternal obedience after pointless resistance. While the Mahact expect all to kneel before them, they have marked several of the Great Civilizations for more immediate subjugation.

Foreign Relations

The Mahact hold the L1Z1X, as claimants and descendants of the Lazax Imperium, in special contempt. Some gene-sorcerers harbor a burning desire for vengeance. These are the Mahact who retired to their stasis crypts the earliest, having fought the Lazax mere years ago in their subjective time. Other Mahact, on seeing how far the Lazax have fallen, prefer to keep the L1Z1X alive as a darkly comical effigy of their hated enemy.

As their creators, the Mahact seek to bind the Titans of Ul once again. That the Titans could somehow break their bonds is a grave insult to the gene-sorcerers. Returning the Titans to servitude would not only augment the Mahact's military and economic power, but also correct an embarrassing mistake.

Finally, some gene-sorcerers view the Empyrean as the most unpredictable threat. Since the other powers know of the Mahact kings only from legend and the L1Z1X can access only a fragment of the Lazax library, the Empyrean observers may be the only species who might know some Mahact weaknesses.

Military Doctrine

Posing a grave threat to the galaxy, the Mahact wield incredibly advanced powers and direct mass-produced armies. While these might be the Mahact's most visible strengths, it is the variability of their strategy that might be their aspect most difficult to counter.

What little is known of Mahact internal organization points to a coalition between mere hundreds or thousands of individual Mahact. While each Mahact views themself as a sovereign king, they coordinate their efforts and defer to Vertar Auran Oblis as greatest among them. Gene-sorcerers direct their own forces as they please, making Mahact strategies difficult to predict.

Some Mahact employ the direct approach, wielding massive fleets and hordes of ground forces as a hammer against their enemies. These Mahact often expend wave after wave of genetically engineered thrall clones to bog down their enemies prior to unleashing elite Crimson Legionnaires to finish them off. More subtle Mahact prefer to move surgically, using mind-controlled agents to infiltrate and control enemy forces. These Mahact bide their time, carefully pushing both sides into intricately designed traps.

More inquisitive Mahact seek to catalog the genetic codes of their enemies in a macabre form of reconnaissance. These gene-sorcerers seek paragons of other species whom they can dominate and use to serve as clone templates. Of course, they have no qualms about slaying any sentient they don't consider a "paragon," and once these Mahact have collected enough specimens, they use their knowledge to dominate (or sometimes destroy) the species entirely.

Common to almost all Mahact strategies, however, is the absolute rarity of a gene-sorcerer on the front lines. The reasons for this are twofold. First, it is a matter of numbers: nobody knows exactly how many Mahact still live, but the survivors of the great war with the Lazax may number fewer than one hundred. More fundamentally, the Mahact view all other species as their lesser and not worth their involvement. A Mahact will only directly involve themself at the most pivotal moment or if their plans have been repeatedly thwarted.

Diplomatic Doctrine

There is little nuance to official Mahact diplomacy. The gene-sorcerers demand obedience and do not negotiate with the "lesser powers" of the galaxy. Several minor powers have already capitulated, but most stand defiant against the Mahact for now.

In contrast to their open diplomacy, the Mahact engage in complicated espionage and subversion activities. The same genetic sorcery that can turn armies against themselves or melt entire ecosystems may compel unflinching obedience from double agents. Unlike the L1Z1X Mindnet's cybernetic implants or the Nekro Virus's malicious code, Mahact genetic sorcery allows complete mental domination and leaves behind neither technological nor software traces.

If there is any sort of genetic marker that indicates Mahact domination, it has yet to be discovered. This means that, for now, anyone could be a sleeper agent. That threat alone, even in the absence of a real Mahact agent, sparks paranoia in governments across the galaxy.

Mark Flissinger (Order #52262436)

Ixth

SYSTEM NAME: none, rogue planet

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld; 387 million (99.7% thralls, 0.1% Crimson Legion, 0.1% other enslaved beings; Mahact population unknown)

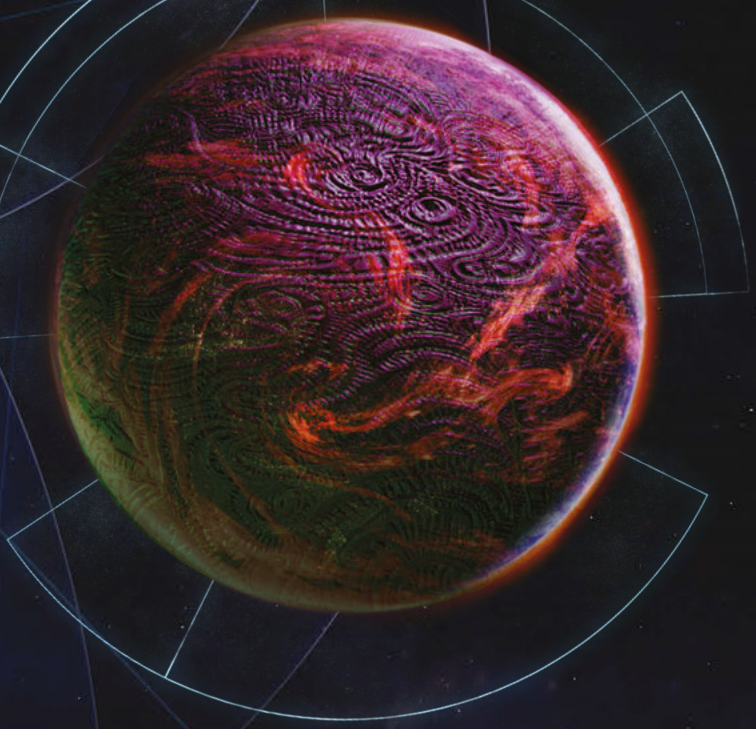
GOVERNMENT: coalition of kings

MAJOR IMPORTS: enslaved beings, organic matter, tribute

MAJOR EXPORTS: none

The fabled planet of Ixth, once trapped beyond the Acheron Gate and now a rogue planet coasting through the galactic center, is the original homeworld of the dreaded Mahact kings. Awakened by the fateful Creuss expedition, Ixth throbs with furious activity.

On the surface, Ixth appears dead. Aside from the Plateau Imperia, the world looks to be nothing but black volcanic mountains and molten lava seas, the ruinous result of some ancient cataclysm. Beneath the surface, however, Ixth is a hive of activity as ships and thrall clones alike are built and readied for war. Their long slumber ended, the Mahact and their minions again gather in the great necropolis of Aior Dol Gorgos.



Aior Dol Gorgos

Resting upon the Plateau Imperia, the necropolis of Aior Dol Gorgos is the only visible sign of civilization on Ixth. This vast city stretches across the entire continent. Its black stone construction closely mirrors designs common across the galactic-antiquity period. In truth, those designs are copies of Ixth's original cyclopean architecture.

At the heart of the city stands an immense black ziggurat. This structure houses the primary stasis crypts of the Mahact and serves as the palace of Vertar Auran Oblis, leader of the gene-sorcerers. Atop the ziggurat stands the chamber of Oblis himself. It is said this chamber houses ancient scrying sensors that allow the King of Kings to surveil the galaxy in real time. In truth, these sensors may only scry the vicinity of ancient tarinpal crystals the Mahact seeded throughout the galaxy.

Below the city lie countless bio-factories, lesser stasis crypts, automatic assembler halls, and mining shafts. In the bio-factories, entire armies are flash grown to the exact specifications of the gene-sorcerers, while the lesser stasis crypts continue to release prefabricated thralls for immediate deployment. Mindless clone creations, engineered for strength and with nigh-unbreakable claws, toil away in deep mines. These miners feed the automatic assembler halls, where advanced robotics craft warships and heavy weapons.

KELERES ALERT!

That Creuss expedition couldn't have made things any worse. With Ixth now in the galactic core and near inhabited systems, galactic society is in chaos. Refugees are streaming away from Ixth in every direction while Crimson Legionnaires give chase in enslaving parties.

I'm tracking a refugee convoy heading to Loki, but its course is taking it far too close to Ixth. I'll be honest; they won't make it without our help. There's no tactical advantage to saving them, but it's the right thing to do. Help them out if you can, but don't expect help from any minor governments in the region.

Caution: Red Zone. Mahact carrier vessels have been reported in the region. Expect terror raids by flights of Dominus drones. If any of you have some skill in a cockpit, I'd see about requisitioning a few starfighters.

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The Nekro Virus

The corrupted progeny of the L1Z1X Mindnet, the Nekro Virus perpetuates the recursive madness of Enhancer Mordai. Mordai was the greatest of the L1Z1X scientists, a brilliant inventor and cyberneticist. His augmentations were magnificent, inspiring the L1Z1X people and ensuring Mindnet prosperity time and again. So confident was Mordai that he would accept no advice and would always test his latest creations on his own body.

Mordai's many achievements led to acclaim, while that acclaim led to hubris. He dreamed of an ascent to transcendence. Mordai dreamed of fusing the triumphant spirit of the living soul to the enduring perfection of the machine. His first step: the implantation of a cortex migrator to merge his neural functions with a computer. But even the brilliant Mordai was capable of mistakes. Some miniscule error within the implant's software package began to corrupt Mordai's mind. A recursive computer virus slowly ate away at his thoughts until only a singular and terrifying obsession remained.

It began quietly. Mordai's philosophy changed. He no longer pursued a synthesis of the living and the machine, instead committing himself to a purge of biology. Mordai began with his own body, replacing the last of his organs with technology. He then coerced his followers to do the same before launching a clandestine campaign of abductions and surgeries to purge the L1Z1X of their organic components. Mordai's followers called themselves Nekro, for in their view, their living weaknesses had died only to be resurrected in mechanical perfection.

Once the Mindnet learned of the Nekro, it was too late to stop or to save Mordai. He had converted his body into a microfactory, causing swarms of Nekro micro-machines to surge forth carrying the corrupting code of the Nekro Virus. The Nekro formed a great army to overthrow the L1Z1X, fighting a civil war that hobbled the Mindnet's galactic invasion plans for nearly a millennium.

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However, the Nekro did not succeed. Instead, the L1Z1X scoured them from their territory, hunting down every trace of the virus. The L1Z1X believed their foe defeated, but even as they marshaled their forces to return to the larger galaxy, they found they were sadly mistaken.

The Nekro Virus can survive if even one of its micro-machines escapes destruction. On a distant world, a single L1Z1X satellite infected by the virus crashed into the ground. Slowly the Nekro micro-machines repurposed the satellite's various systems and began to build more of their kind. For millennia the Nekro Virus grew in secret, until it was ready to unleash nightmarish legions of mechanical monstrosities to exterminate all life in the galaxy.

Ascension and Extermination

The Nekro Virus has but one terrifying purpose: the utter extermination of all organic life. Unique even among the other great threats, the Nekro Virus does not negotiate or accept surrender. The Nekro attack with unrestrained zeal in complete contrast to their proclamations of reasoned, mechanical superiority.

The Nekro retain Mordai's corrupt philosophy. The viral intelligences believe themselves perfect—that they have transcended biology to achieve an artificial godhood. Despite this belief, the Nekro Virus is hobbled by a fatal flaw. Deep within the code of the Nekro Virus is a recursive error born of the same mistake that corrupted Mordai's rationality.

This recurse error means the Nekro are a technological dead end; they are no longer capable of developing new technologies. As a result, the Nekro rely on seizing and assimilating the technological achievements of biological species.

Foreign Relations

Although genocidal toward all organics, the Nekro Virus holds particularly zealous hatred for a handful of species. First among these are the L1Z1X. The Nekro hate their progenitors, not only in remembrance of the civil war, but chiefly because the L1Z1X are so close to eschewing their biology and embracing transcendence. That the L1Z1X will not simply accept the truth of mechanical apotheosis drives the Nekro Virus to even greater heights of fury.

The Nekro also feel ire for civilizations with significant biotechnological achievements. The great Symphony of the Arborec and the fleshy hordes of the Vuil'raith both pose a counterargument to mechanical perfection that must be removed. The virus considers the Arborec and Vuil'raith to be paragons of biology and therefore the perfect targets to prove mechanical superiority.

However, no species angers the Nekro more than the Titans of Ul. Living creatures of silicates and steel, the Titans stand as a twisted mockery of mechanical perfection. None can deny the Titans are advanced inorganic life, but that their functions are patterned so closely on biology incites Nekro rage. The Titans' respect and care for organic life, as evidenced by the lush gardens of Elysium and the Titans' philosophy of guiding and protecting living beings, further infuriates the Nekro Virus.

While the Nekro Virus has marked all other species for extermination, the Nekro's twisted logic demands a path of repentance for the Titans. To prove themselves worthy of mechanical godhood, the Nekro believe that the Titans must be turned against organic life. While no Titan would willingly side with such a psychopathic machine intelligence, the virus has stumbled upon a terrifying vulnerability: now that the Titans have thrown off their Mahact conditioning, their bodies can be infected by the Nekro Virus. A Titan so infected continues to perceive and think independently but slowly loses control over their physical functions, until they are prisoners in their own body. So far such infections require the Nekro to flood a victim with hordes of micro-machines, but the virus is always searching for a quicker way to enslave the Titans.

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Military Doctrine

The Nekro Virus wages war with a ferocity more befitting zealous crusaders than a machine civilization. Its mechanical monstrosities patterned after Mordai's shattered nightmares serve as both fleet and ground forces.

Though hardly subtle, Nekro Virus assimilation protocols make any battle involving mechanical ships or equipment a risky one. Swarms of Valefar assimilation drones can infect even the most hardened systems with the Nekro Virus. In this way, the Nekro could turn any technological advantage against their enemies.

Diplomatic Doctrine

The Nekro believe that diplomacy is irrelevant—that organic species must embrace their inevitable destruction to pave way for the apotheosis of the machine.

Mordai II

STAR NAME/TYPE: Mordai II/white dwarf

POPULATION STATUS: homeworld, population unknown (100% Nekro)

GOVERNMENT: recursive heuristic

MAJOR IMPORTS: raw materials, captured technology

MAJOR EXPORTS: mechanical monstrosities

Home to the second emergence of the Nekro Virus, Mordai II is a mineral-rich world near the edge of the galaxy. No part of the world is left untouched by machines. Vast computer arrays top the poles, while enormous automated factories churn out endless swarms of mechanical monstrosities.

The Open Core

The Nekro have stripped out the very heart of their world with ceaseless mining and industry so that massive chunks of the planet have been eaten away, exposing the world's cold iron core. By all rights Mordai II should have broken apart long before this point, but the Nekro employ powerful graviton beam arrays to hold their world together. The edges of these wounds swarm with mining probes and crawling swarm factories, and a constant stream of ships dive into the world's dark heart to bring back hyper-dense iron scraped from the core's surface.

Accelerator Rings

Massive rings of linear accelerators band Mordai II's equator. Day and night, they fling packet probes loaded with assimilation swarms into the darkness of the void. None of these probes reach superluminal velocities, but the Nekro Virus doesn't care. It knows that even if it is wiped out again, only one of those probes has to reach a world in order to start its spread anew.

KELERES ALERT!

Take it from someone who has tangled with them and kept their "organic imperfections" intact: dealing with a Nekro infestation is no joke. Just remember, don't let them scare you. Despite their nightmarish appearance, their technological terrors don't make much sense. Razor tenacles are scary but can be beaten with disciplined small unit tactics. Keep calm, and whatever you do, watch out for the swarms. If they get into your kit, get it as far away from you as possible, then destroy it.

Caution: Red Zone. Any site of a Nekro infestation is considered highly dangerous.

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[Chapter 6] Adversaries

In a galaxy this big, where trillions of beings from myriad evolutionary paths are trying to make a life for themselves, there is immeasurable variety in physical forms, individual goals, and personalities. This chapter is meant to provide a sampling of characters that Keleres agents might encounter on their assignments. While some might render aid, most are obstacles protecting their own interests.

Many of the adversaries included are created with a specific faction or species in mind. You can easily use these characters to represent some other faction or species, often by adding any species-specific traits found in the species selection step of character creation (see page 21). In the **Soldiers of the Great Civilizations** section, we do this for you, providing mechanical flavor for many of the Great Civilizations to turn three adversary profiles into more than fifty!

Adversary Power Levels

Throughout this chapter, we provide the combat, social, and general power level for each adversary. These power levels work with the adversary power level and encounter building rules found on page 84 of the **Expanded Player's Guide**.

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Citizens of the Galaxy

As large and important as the Great Civilizations are, the overwhelming majority of sentients in the galaxy don't feel their presence one way or another as they go about their daily life.

Brother of Yin (Minion)

2 | 1 | 2

The Yin Brotherhood is a sect of Human clones affected by a non-lethal form of the Greyfire disease that leaves their skin rough and gray, covered in a thickly layered web of scars. They are often persecuted or discriminated against due to their work in forbidden genetic research, but also because they are a religiously fervent people who aggressively seek converts and sympathizers. Some believe so strongly they are willing to sacrifice themselves for their brethren.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	3	1	3	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	5	1/0

Skills (group only): Coercion, Discipline, Medicine, Melee, Ranged (Light).

Talents: None.

Abilities: Zealous Devotion (may sacrifice one minion from this group as a maneuver to add ☼ ☼ to the group's next check).

Equipment: Concealed magno-thumper (Ranged [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 5; Range [Short]; Concussive 1, Knockdown, Limited Ammo 1), collapsible blade (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Prepare 1).

Desperate Citizen (Minion)

1 | 1 | 1

Despite the influence of the Great Powers, uncounted trillions of desperate beings fall through the cracks. Independent worlds, colonies, and even the wealthiest home systems have teeming masses of the desperate and hungry crowding spaceports, pleading for help.

This profile can also represent civilian hostages, witnesses, or other citizens Keleres may interact with or need to aid.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	1	2	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	4	0/0

Skills (group only): Athletics, Brawl, Charm.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Desperate Plea (may make an **opposed Charm versus Cool check** targeting one character within medium range as an action; if successful, the target must spend their next action to ensure that this character is okay).

Equipment: Fists and feet (Brawl; Damage 1; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown).

Hacan Merchant (Rival)

2 | 3 | 2

Trade is an exalted aspect of Hacan life, and many Hacan trading clan members live as merchants and chartered ship captains. They transport goods from world to world in everything from ancient tramp freighters to secure, environment-controlled specialty haulers, haggling and negotiating their way to profit along whichever trade route they license from their clan.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	2	3	2	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	8	0/0

Skills: Astrocartography 3, Gunnery 2, Knowledge (Lore) 2, Negotiation 2, Piloting 1, Ranged (Light) 1, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Clever Retort (once per encounter as an out-of-turn incidental, may add ♺ ♺ to a target's social skill check).

Abilities: One More Thing... (when targeted by a Negotiation check, may spend ♺ ♺ to force the other party to include an item worth at least 100 aurei in the deal; this item may be visibly in their possession or something they must acquire to close the deal).

Equipment: Blazer (Ranged [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Inaccurate 1, Vicious 2), echo robes (+1 soak), 500 aurei in trade goods.

Mark Hissinger (Order #5282130)

Sol Colonist (Minion)

2 1 1

Perhaps the most ubiquitous of all the sentient species, Humans seem to colonize every barren rock and frozen wasteland they find. Seeing themselves as rugged individualists, most colonists are wary of outsiders and any centralized government looking to assert any kind of authority over them.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	1	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	5	1/0

Skills (group only): Athletics, Brawl, Survival.

Talents: None.

Abilities: This Ain't Mecatol Rex (add ■ to social skill checks targeting this minion group for each Keleres-affiliated character within short range).

Equipment: Industrial viribuii (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Inaccurate 1), echo-weave vest (+1 soak), survival pack.

Hylar Engineer (Rival)

2 1 3

The Universities of Jol-Nar produce some of the finest engineers in the galaxy, and they know it. Unfortunately, they tend to dismiss the ideas of anyone not trained at the Universities out of hand, responding by first listing the consequences of such a foolhardy action. Despite this, they can be found perched atop a busy swirl of mechanical tentacles at research facilities, universities, labs, shipyards, and other construction sites across the galaxy.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	4	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	12	0/0

Skills: Computers 2, Knowledge (Science) 2, Mechanics 3, Melee 1.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Ionic Discharge (after making a successful melee attack, may spend ⮝ ⮝ to reduce all damage dealt to 0 and cause one piece of equipment the target is holding to cease functioning for the rest of the encounter).

Equipment: Macro-soldering pike (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Burn 2, Ensnare 1), environment suit, tool kit.

Vassal System Governor (Nemesis)

2 5 3

Many of the Great Civilizations control vassal planets, with populations that have pledged fealty in exchange for protection and the right to manage their own internal affairs. The governors of these systems must walk a fine line to provide the independence their citizens crave without angering the powers that maintain ultimate control for strategic, economic, or political benefits. Those not up to this delicate task quickly find themselves replaced by one side or the other.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	1	2	3	3	4

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	12	12	3/3

Skills: Charm 1, Deception 2, Knowledge (Culture) 4, Leadership 2, Perception 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Ad Hominem Attack (after making a social skill check, may spend ⮝ ⮝ or ⊛ to recover 4 strain), Hyperbolic Eloquence (once per encounter, may make an **Average [◆ ◆] Deception check** targeting one character as an action; if successful, target adds ✕ ⟲ to the

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results of their next social skill check; may spend ⮝ ⮝ to affect an additional target or ❁ to cause all targets to add ✕ ✕ instead of ✕).

Equipment: Ambassadorial staff (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Stun 3), ambassadorial clothing with magen personal deflector unit (3 defense).

Veiled Brood Agent (Nemesis)

4 4 3

The Veiled Brood control the Sardakk N'orr government from behind the scenes, employing their own agents in secret to manipulate the political forces that shape their society and those around them. Veiled Brood agents look indistinguishable from most N'orr but are highly adept at close-quarters fighting and social manipulation.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	3	4	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	15	11	1/1

Skills: Computers 3, Deception 3, Leadership 3, Melee 3, Skulduggery 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1.

Talents: Improved Inspiring Rhetoric (make an **Average [◆ ◆] Leadership check** as an action; for each ✲, one ally within short range heals 1 strain; each ally benefiting from this talent adds ■ to checks they make for the next three rounds; for each ⮝, one ally benefiting from this talent heals 1 additional strain).

Abilities: Master Manipulator (if the Veiled Brood agent knows a character's Desire or Fear Motivation, they downgrade the difficulty of all Deception and Leadership checks targeting the character twice).

Equipment: Tarsus glaive (Melee; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Vicious 3).

Winnaran Custodian Scholar (Rival)

2 3 5

Those Winnu descended from the survivors of the orbital bombardment of Mecatol Rex remain in the galactic capital, preserving what knowledge of their forebears and the Lazax Empire they can and maintaining Mecatol City for some hoped-for future Emperor. Scholars among the Winnaran Custodians spend much of their time researching the Imperium-that-was, but in this age they also find themselves working with unsavory types to recover lost knowledge, and even having to defend against kidnapping by forces that hope to exploit their knowledge. For this reason, many Winnaran scholars seek out the Keleres for protection and aid.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	1	4	2	3	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	10	0/0

Skills: Computers 2, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Lore) 4, Negotiation 3, Ranged (Light) 1, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Scholarly Guidance (once per encounter, may spend an action to reduce the difficulty of another character's next non-combat check by 2).

Equipment: Beam pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Pierce 2), cloak (adds ■ to Perception or Vigilance checks made to notice this character), savant with archives of semicorrupted Lazax data.

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Xxcha Elder (Nemesis)

2 | 6 | 4

The testudinal Xxcha hold great reverence for their elders, deferring most leadership duties to their oldest qualified member present. This gerontocracy means that the greater the leadership position, the older the Xxcha holding it is likely to be. Unlike in some cultures, the Xxcha seem to have limitless patience indulging the eccentricities some of their elders pick up over long lives of experience, though this can prove highly frustrating for any non-Xxcha present.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	1	2	3	4	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	14	17	0/0

Skills: Charm 2, Cool 1, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Leadership 3, Negotiation 3, Resilience 2, Streetwise 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Ccrysusian Methodology (once per session, may reduce strain the Xxcha Elder suffers by 3, to a minimum of 1).

Abilities: Building to a Point (may spend A A A to add ⊛ to the results of the Xxcha Elder's next social check during this encounter).

Equipment: Walking stick (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 2).

Creatures and Strange Beings

While most intelligent life within the Keleres adheres to a carbon-based, bipedal form, give or take a few modes of sensory input, some life in the galaxy is much, much stranger—and wherever there is life, there is other life feeding on it.

Arborec Letani Behemoth (Nemesis)

13 | 3 | 5

The Letani are among the largest organic sentient beings yet discovered in the galaxy, although whether they can be considered independent beings, since they are part of the Arborec organism, is a matter of some debate among biologists. The Letani serve as nodes that allow the Arborec hivemind to operate off-world, collecting experiences to eventually bring home to Nestphar. They also coordinate Arborec forces in battle, often appearing as thick stalks with mushroom-cap frills surrounding a circular maw, reaching out with a half-dozen vine-tentacles.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	2	3	2	4	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
14	55	18	0/0

Skills: Astrocartography 1, Brawl 1, Cool 2, Coordination 4, Leadership 3, Operating 2, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Fling Aside (as a maneuver, may make an **opposed Coordination versus Coordination check** targeting one engaged silhouette 1 or 0 character; if successful, fling the target up to long range in a direction of the Letani behemoth's choosing; on the target's next turn, it suffers the effects of falling from short range [see page 112 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook]), Symphonic Node (may suffer 2 strain to add ✲ A to the results of all checks made by Arborec within extreme range until the Letani Behemoth's next turn), Silhouette 4.

Equipment: Diamond-tipped tentacle limbs (Brawl; Damage 20; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Breach 2, Linked 2), gaping maw (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 5, while immobilized by this weapon's Ensnare item quality, target is exposed to a corrosive atmosphere with a rating of 6).

Creuss Riftwalker (Rival)

5 | 2 | 5

While most Creuss stay within the Shaleri passage, a rift to another reality, some Creuss have been known to travel far away from their home and explore the galaxy. While often peaceful, they possess terrifyingly effective weapons and have been known to use them when violence seems to suit their own inscrutable ends. It is possible these "riftwalkers" may even be working on behalf of their people as part of some bid for galactic supremacy.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	3	2	1	4	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	17	3/3

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Skills: Charm 2, Discipline 3, Knowledge (Lore) 1, Melee 4, Perception 3, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Precision Strike 1 (when making a melee combat check, may suffer 1 strain to remove ☐ from the dice pool and add ✲ to the results).

Abilities: Infuriating Enigma (characters making a social skill check targeting the Creuss riftwalker suffer 2 strain per ⟲), Wormhole Walker (may spend one Story Point to teleport anywhere within extreme range as a maneuver).

Equipment: Astral lance (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Breach 1, Unwieldy 3), sealed environmental suit (+2 soak, +2 wound threshold).

Arctic Sharak (Rival)

6 2 3

Native to the frozen lodinium mines of Bereg, the arctic sharak is always looking for a warm spot in which to nest and hibernate. These large, tusked quadrupeds have a thick blubber layer to help them stay warm, and they are very good at digging their way into mining tunnels or sneaking onto warm ships left unattended. If disturbed or surprised, they tend to attack.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	1	3	3	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	18	1/1

Skills: Brawl 3, Resilience 5, Survival 2, Vigilance 1.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Burrower (may move through solid ground as if it were difficult terrain, leaving a tunnel behind it), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all opponents must make an **Average [◆◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the Genesys Core Rulebook; if there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Tearing tusks (Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2).

Mark Hassman (Order #5252139)

Daartar Hound (Minion) 1 1 1

Pack-hunting predators from the Barony vassal world of Wren Terra, the lithe, short-furred Daartar hounds have an excellent sense of smell and hearing. Their talents have made them popular working animals, especially among the Letnev. These hounds serve as trackers and contraband sniffers, and they even fight alongside law enforcement officers. Some trainers make a tidy profit selling them off-world.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	1	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	4	0/0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Survival, Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Scent Tracking (add ✲ ✲ to the results of Perception, Survival, or Vigilance checks the Daartar hound makes to track or spot a character or to determine Initiative).

Equipment: Wedged cutting teeth (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Knockdown).

Dirzuga Envoy (Rival) 1 2 3

Hybrid beings resulting from Arzuga fungal spores cultivated within a corpse, the Dirzuga are critical to Arborec communication and trade with the outside world. Acting as envoys and diplomats, the Dirzuga offer a variety of biotech products, predominantly medicines unique to the Arborec, in exchange for things that range from standard to the somewhat odd—such as modifications to pollution regulations or planting rights to seemingly worthless pieces of land.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	1	2	1	3	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	12	0/0

Skills: Charm 1, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Science) 2, Medicine 1, Negotiation 3, Resilience 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Regenerative Balm (as an action, may apply a balm to one engaged character, allowing the target to make an **Average [◆ ◆] Resilience check** as an out-of-turn incidental; for each ✲, the target heals one Critical Injury; if successful, the target also heals 2 wounds at the start of each of their turns for the remainder of the encounter).

Equipment: None.

Mark Fischer (Order #5228219)

Elder Titan (Nemesis)

15 | 6 | 8

Long ago, the Mahact created these advanced, humanoid AI constructs as an immortal labor force to prepare planets and create specialized facilities and weapons. Now emancipated from the control of the gene-sorcerers, these building-sized intelligences cultivate macrogardens on Elysium. Odd but generally benevolent beings, the Titans often hire themselves out as construction workers or recreate useful Mahact technology. In exchange, they usually request unique flora or fauna for their gardens.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	1	4	4	5	4

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
20	72	30	2/2

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Computers 4, Discipline 2, Gunnery 3, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Knowledge (Science) 4, Leadership 4, Mechanics 3, Survival 1.

Talents: Shepherding Command (once per encounter when an ally within short range is targeted by an attack, may make an out-of-turn incidental to reduce damage dealt by 4).

Abilities: Swat (after making a successful combat check with its fists against a target of silhouette 2 or smaller, may spend ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ❁ to fling the target up to medium range in a direction of the elder Titan's choosing; on the target's next turn, it suffers the effects of falling from short range [see page 112 of the Genesys Core Rulebook]), Silhouette 4.

Equipment: Inbuilt particle beam (Gunnery; Damage 20; Critical 2; Range [Long]; Superior, Vicious 2), grav-field fists (Brawl; Damage 20; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Concussive 1, Knockdown; when used to attack a target with a smaller silhouette, the Knockdown quality triggers without spending ⮝).

Empyrean Observer (Nemesis)

5 | 6 | 11

Enigmatic recorders of galactic history, the Empyrean are winged humanoids with faceless heads. They communicate via electromagnetic waves, but they almost never initiate any sort of contact with individuals or civilizations, preferring instead to observe. Although they are largely ignored by most beings, some of the clever and desperate have found them open to trading information. If attacked, they flood the entire electromagnetic spectrum with noise, disabling anyone nearby while they depart.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	4	5	4	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	20	15	0/0

Skills: Cool 4, Discipline 3, Knowledge (Culture) 4, Knowledge (Lore) 5, Knowledge (Science) 3, Negotiation 3, Perception 5, Ranged (Light) 1, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice).

Abilities: EM Flood (may make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Discipline check** as an action; if successful, all characters with a communications device within long range suffer 2 strain per ✲; may spend ⮝ ⮝ or ❁ to stagger one affected character for one round), Flyer (can fly; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the Genesys Core Rulebook), Radiowave Communications (can emit radio waves to communicate via any device capable of detecting them), Spaceworthy (can survive in the vacuum of space without a space suit).

Equipment: Concealed molecular destabilizer (Ranged [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Short]; if this weapon inflicts a Critical Injury, instead of rolling the result normally, roll 1d10: on a 1–5 the target suffers the Crippled result, on a 6–7 the target suffers the Maimed result, on a 8–10, the target suffers the Blinded result).

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Garach (Rival)

5 | 1 | 1

These large, long-bodied reptilian hunters with eight legs have spread and adapted to become apex predators along the shores and wetlands of several planets (thanks to a number of ill-considered plans to use them as pest control on colony worlds). They spin underwater webs that spread like fishing nets and wait for a meal to pass through. Once they detect a potential meal, they begin rolling, cinching their web shut and dragging their prey into deeper water to feed.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	1	3	1	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	18	0/0

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Amphibious (may breathe underwater and never suffers movement penalties for traveling through water), Webbing (may spend ◌ ◌ or ⊗ to cause a target making a check within medium range to become immobilized until the end of the encounter; may spend a maneuver to move an immobilized target one range band closer to this character; targets may escape webbing with a successful **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Coordination check** as an action), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Clamping jaw (Brawl; Damage 9; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 1).

Gashlai Fire Warden (Rival)

6 | 3 | 2

The Fire Wardens are leaders among their people, each elected to complete a specific task by their community and sworn to serve until that task is done. Like all Gashlai, the Fire Wardens wear suits of dense metal to contain their burning spirit when away from their fiery homeworld. Those Fire Wardens whose tasks involve warfare wield melt-edges, blades that almost burn hot enough to ignite the very air.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	2	2	3	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	17	0/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Leadership 4, Mechanics 2, Melee 2, Negotiation 2, Resilience 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: You Can All Burn (once per encounter, may suffer 3 wounds as an action to force all characters within short range to make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Coordination check** as an out-of-turn incidental; they suffer 8 wounds if they fail, and they suffer one Critical Injury per ◌ ◌ ◌ or ⊗).

Equipment: Melt-edge (Melee; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Burn 4, Sunder), Ember suit (+2 soak, +2 wound threshold).

Naalu Exploiter (Nemesis)

4 | 7 | 4

While all Druaa have telepathic powers, some focus on their ability to interfere with the minds of others rather than on passively reading their thoughts. Many of these individuals are employed by the Naalu Collective to further Naalu interests in the greater galaxy. But a few choose to abandon the Collective's purpose and use their abilities for their own ends. Both types are incredibly dangerous, but the latter are the ones whom the Collective go to any lengths to hunt down and eliminate.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	4	4	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	12	14	2/2

Skills: Brawl 4, Charm 3, Deception 4, Discipline 4, Knowledge (Culture) 1, Perception 2, Stealth 3.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Exploit Animosity (once per round, may spend a Story Point before another character performs a combat check or social skill check; the character must select a target of the Naalu exploiter's choice for their check or suffer 5 strain), Influencer (once per encounter as an action, may make an **opposed Discipline versus Discipline check** targeting a character within medium range; if successful, the target must reveal their Fear, Flaw, or Desire publicly [GM's choice] and suffers 1 strain per ⩓).

Equipment: Constricting body (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Stun 4).

Mark Fischer (Order #32282150)

Pituis (Rival)

4 | 1 | 1

Pituis are dangerous and regrettably commonplace vermin found on heavily industrialized worlds throughout the galaxy, originally created by the Mahact as a form of waste-disposal. These blob-like masses consume a number of industrial chemical biproducts for food, but they reproduce asexually, can squeeze through almost any opening, and secrete powerful acids on their pseudopods. Worse, certain biochemical compounds in their oozing bodies, if absorbed into the body, can cause massive cerebral hemorrhages in most creatures.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	1	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	30	0/0

Skills: Brawl 3, Resilience 3, Stealth 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Biochemcial Toxin (when a character makes a check while engaged with a pituis, may spend ◌ ◌ ◌ or ⊗ to cause the character to suffer the Bleeding Out Critical Injury).

Equipment: Acidic pseudopods (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Burn 2, Pierce 3, if this weapon inflicts a Critical Injury, instead of rolling the result normally, inflict the Bleeding Out Critical Injury).

Wake Worm (Minion)

3 | 1 | 1

The mere mention of wake worms is enough to make most captains restart their preflight checklist from scratch. The bane of trade hubs across the galaxy, these space-black worms are between six and ten meters long and consume stellar fast ions to create microbursts of plasma propulsion. This would be fine, except most starship engines emit a radiation the worms find irresistible. If they wriggle into engine housings, they can wreak absolute havoc when a ship crosses the lightspeed barrier.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	3	1	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	15	0/0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Coordination, Stealth.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Engine Trouble (while within short range of a starship, may make an **Average [◆ ◆] Coordination check** as an action; if successful, the worm [or minion group] attaches to the engine housing and inflicts a Critical Hit on the starship, adding +10 per ⮝ to the result), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Thrashing, coiling body (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 3).

Young Titan (Rival)

7 | 3 | 3

Younger Titans are smaller versions of their elders, a mere three or four meters tall. They have a curious nature that borders on naïve and tend to enjoy traveling the galaxy and learning about the natural world. Most are friendly and eagerly socialize with all manner of beings. Eventually, their travels become punctuated with returns to Elysium, until, as they reach adulthood, their stays there begin to outlast their periods of travel.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	1	3	1	2	4

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
7	25	1/1

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Charm 1, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Science) 3, Mechanics 2, Ranged (Light) 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Expert Instruction (when performing the assist maneuver, may upgrade the ability of the check once instead of adding □), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Inbuilt light particle beam (Ranged [Light]; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Superior, Vicious 2), crushing fist (Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 3, Knockdown).

Mark Hastings (Order #5228213)

Scum and Mercenaries

With civilizations being such large, system-spanning organizations, it is easy for the corrupt and amoral to find cracks in a system ripe for exploitation and profit.

Crime Boss (Nemesis)

9 | 7 | 5

While skilled at arranging criminal activity for profit, leaders of gangs and organized criminal syndicates find they have to rule through fear. Often, they instill fear through detached, dissociative monologues alongside an unpredictable combination of screaming rage and cold-blooded, calculated murder. The most powerful crime bosses can control syndicates whose influence spans entire colonies, and some even have multisystem criminal enterprises.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	3	4	3	4

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	18	15	0/0

Skills: Brawl 4, Coercion 3, Cool 1, Deception 2, Discipline 3, Perception 1, Ranged (Light) 4, Skulduggery 2, Streetwise 5, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), Scathing Tirade (make an **Average [◆ ◆] Coercion check** as an action; for each ✲, one opponent within short range suffers 1 strain; for each ⮝, one affected opponent suffers 1 additional strain).

Abilities: Charismatic Menace (allies within short range add ⮝ to checks they make; opponents within short range add ⟲ to checks they make), Send a Message (when this character incapacitates an enemy, may suffer 2 strain to force all opponents within medium range to make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] fear check** [see page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook]).

Equipment: Snub gauntlets (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 3, Linked 1), plasma pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Burn 1, Slow-Firing 1), fancy echo clothing (+1 soak).

Hacan Sell-Spear (Rival)

6 | 3 | 2

Sell-spears are blooded warriors, often veteran close-quarters specialists who once fought for the Quieron but have now chosen to sell their services to the highest bidder. Adept at desert warfare, sell-spears wield the traditional Hacan dune spear, an ornate gyro-spear that also functions as a rifle. Sell-spears are sought after by merchant traders across the galaxy looking for reliable guardians.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	2	2	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	14	2/1

Skills: Cool 3, Melee 3, Negotiation 2, Ranged (Heavy) 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Momentum (if the sell-spear performed a move maneuver, they add +3 to the damage of one hit of any successful Brawl or Melee checks they make during the same turn).

Equipment: Hacan dune spear (Melee; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Superior), Hacan dune spear in ranged mode (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Superior), desert combat armor (1 defense, +1 soak, adds ■ to Resilience and Survival checks in desert climates), survival pack.

Mark Fleshner (Order #32282139)

Hylar Data Snoop (Rival) 2 3 4

Governments, corporations, criminal enterprises, and even ancient Mahact devices have secrets stored in extensive data management systems. Some amoral Hylar, particularly those working for the Mentak Coalition, the Nomad, or the Universities of Jol-Nar, specialize in infiltrating these systems and digging out valuable secrets to sell to the highest bidder. Although every culture has its own computer systems experts, widely held stereotypes ensure the Hylar are always sought after.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	2	4	3	1	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	13	0/0

Skills: Brawl 1, Computers 3, Deception 3, Gunnery 1, Mechanics 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Data Miner (once per session, may use the Computers skill instead of a knowledge skill when making a knowledge skill check), How Convenient! (once per session, may make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Mechanics check** as an action; if successful, one device in the current encounter spontaneously fails).

Abilities: Compromise Security (once per encounter, may make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Computers check** to take control of a security system [such as a sealed door, alarm system, or automated weapon] as an action for the remainder of the encounter, and may spend ⊛ to immediately use this system as an incidental).

Equipment: Shock-pronged manipulator (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Stun Damage), environmental suit (+2 soak, +2 wound threshold), data drill, savant.

Master Forger (Rival) 1 4 4

The master forger is a fixture of the criminal underworld—part artist, part criminal, and all untrustworthy. They provide fake tickets to events; replica artworks for fraud scams; and false idents for criminals, spies, smugglers, customs jumpers, and more, enabling travel past security checkpoints. If there is a person or a sensor that has to be tricked in order to accept a thing as authentic, the forger can fool it.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	3	4	2	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	8	0/0

Skills: Computers 3, Deception 2, Knowledge (Culture) 2, Negotiation 3, Perception 2, Skulduggery 4.

Talents: Clever Retort (once per encounter, may add ⟲ ⟲ to another character's social skill check).

Abilities: Forged Documents (once per encounter, may produce forged documents as a maneuver to add ✲ ✲ to the results of any Deception check).

Equipment: Fancy clothing, very realistic-looking credentials from four different Great Civilizations, encrypted savant.

Nomad Destabilizer (Nemesis) 7 8 7

The mysterious Nomad employs an unknown number of agents, many of whom were once heroes among their people. Most of the time, no one even realizes the agent is working for the Nomad, because their goals are so opaque and would seem to rely on impossibly long odds. Yet no matter how random the string of occurrences, in instances when a known agent is linked to events, the outcome seems to benefit the Nomad.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	4	4	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	18	14	1/1

Skills: Coercion 4, Cool 4, Coordination 1, Deception 3, Mechanics 4, Negotiation 3, Ranged (Light) 4, Skulduggery 1, Streetwise 2, Vigilance 5.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), How Convenient! (once per session, may make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Mechanics check** as an action; if successful, one device in the current encounter spontaneously fails), Lucky Strike (may spend a Story Point after a successful combat check to add +4 damage to one hit).

Abilities: Butterfly Effect (may spend ⟲ ⟲ from an opponent's check and suffer 2 strain to add ⊗ to the results of the next check made by an opponent).

Equipment: Praetorian defender (Ranged [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Pierce 2), 2 microgrenades (Ranged [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Blast 6, Disorient 3, Limited Ammo 1), heavy trader's cloak (1 defense).

Mark Hassan (Order #5282136)

Pirate Raider (Minion)

2 1 1

Although piracy is impossible when a ship is traveling at superluminal velocities, all ships must slow down before approaching a gravity well (such as a planet). At this point, pirates can strike an unwary vessel. Pirates come from nearly every species and culture, though they all tend to share a certain ruthless desperation.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	1	2	1	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	5	1/1

Skills (group only): Athletics, Coercion, Gunnery, Melee, Operating, Ranged (Heavy).

Talents: None.

Abilities: Pirate Loyalty (if this group has two or more minions, and they generate ◌ ◌ or ⊗ during a check, the minion group splits into two minion groups, roughly in half [generating a new NPC Initiative slot if needed]).

Equipment: Shot rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire), shudder blade (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2, Vicious 1), space suit (1 defense, +1 soak).

Saar Scrapper (Minion)

2 1 1

The Saar have picked over ancient battlefields, accident sites, and junk orbits for as long as most can remember. They have a nose for the best salvage and can strip a courier to parts before its engine cools, but thankfully most stick to legal salvage claims and clearly mark their territory. They're as good at repairs as they are at disassembly, so smart Keleres try to stay on their good side.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	2	1	1	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	5	0/0

Skills (group only): Athletics, Mechanics, Melee, Perception.

Talents: Expert Scrapper (once per encounter when engaged with a vehicle, may make a Mechanics check with a difficulty equal to the vehicle's silhouette as an action; if successful, the vehicle suffers 1 hull trauma per ✲ and one Critical Hit per ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⊛).

Abilities: Many Hands Make Light the Load (while providing assistance on a Mechanics check to repair a vehicle, increase the hull trauma or system strain repaired by 2; if the check is to repair a Critical Hit, reduce the difficulty of the check by 1, to a minimum of **Easy [◆]**; this is in addition to the other benefits of assistance).

Equipment: Industrial beam cutter (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Breach 1, Inaccurate 2), portable tool kit, sarween gamma press.

Shadow Assassin (Nemesis)

11 3 4

Many factions—whether the Great Civilizations, criminal syndicates, or the ultrawealthy—employ stealthy assassins to carry out their dirty work. Many assassins have undergone intense training with a military special forces unit; others are gifted with natural abilities, such as the Yssaril. They are flexible, equally able to kill from far away with rifles and up close with a blade, and they leave few clues of their presence.

Mark Fischer (Order #32282150)

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	5	2	4	3	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	15	15	3/2

Skills: Cool 3, Coordination 3, Medicine 1, Melee 5, Ranged (Heavy) 3, Skulduggery 2, Stealth 4.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Into Shadow (after making any check, may spend A A or ⊛ to hide in shadows or cover within short range as a maneuver; shadow assassin does not reveal themself until they make a combat check [or perform another action that would reasonably cause them to be spotted], but they can be revealed if another character spends an action to make a successful **opposed Perception** or **Vigilance versus Stealth check**).

Equipment: Scoped long-range grazer rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Extreme]; Pierce 5, reduce difficulty of combat checks at long or extreme range by 1), masterwork collapsible blade (Melee; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Prepare 1, Superior), covert armored skin (2 defense, adds ✲ ✲ to results of Stealth checks the assassin makes, adds ■ ■ to any Perception or Vigilance checks other characters make to find or notice the assassin).

Smuggler (Rival)

4 3 3

Smugglers might say they are a necessary, unappreciated part of the galactic economy. At their very best, smugglers break blockades and battle lines to deliver food and medical supplies to refugees and regions in need. At their worst, they move black-market weapons, narcotics, and even enslaved laborers. No matter the cargo or security, if the price is right, there is a desperate smuggler willing to make the run. Some smugglers run as part of a crew, but others prefer to work alone.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	3	2	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	12	0/0

Skills: Charm 1, Cool 2, Deception 2, Gunnery 3, Mechanics 2, Piloting 4, Ranged (Light) 3, Skulduggery 1, Streetwise 2.

Talents: Fly Quiet (once per encounter when controlling a spaceship, may make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Piloting** or **Operating check** as an action to hide; if successful, the ship cannot be located unless it fires weapons, it broadcasts a signal, or an opponent makes a successful **opposed Computers versus Piloting** or **Operating check**), Quick Draw (once per round on this character's turn, may draw or holster an easily accessible weapon or item as an incidental), Solo Flight (before making an Operating check, may increase the difficulty of the check by 1 to use Piloting instead).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Blazer (Ranged [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Inaccurate 1, Vicious 2), heavy garach-leather jacket and reinforced pants (+1 soak).

Yssaril Spy (Rival)

3 3 4

Over the centuries, the Yssaril have built an entire civilization and economy centering on their natural talent for spycraft. Thanks in no small part to their naturally evolved chameleonic ability, their spies already have an advantage over those of the other Great Civilizations, and the Yssaril Tribes are sure to enhance their agents with all sorts of high-tech equipment and weapons.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	4	2	4	3	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	10	0/0

Skills: Cool 3, Coordination 2, Discipline 1, Melee 3, Perception 4, Stealth 5, Survival 1.

Talents: Chameleon Infiltration (may spend all A on a Stealth check to add an equal number of A to the results of Yssaril spy's next combat check).

Abilities: Chameleonic (may spend a Story Point to add ✲ ✲ to the results of any Stealth check this character makes or to add ✕ ✕ to the results of a Vigilance or Perception check another character makes to detect this character), Silhouette 0.

Equipment: Reinforced bio-shiv (Melee; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Prepare 1, Pierce 2), comms jammer (when activated, communication devices may not send or receive messages for five minutes), climbing gear.

Mark Hassman (Order #5282139)

Soldiers of the Great Civilizations

This section provides three special profiles: the combat pilot, the field commander, and the infantry soldier. While they each can be used as is, they are meant to be further modified. This section presents rules on how to mechanically alter each of these three profiles to represent one of fifteen different factions. While all the major factions have relatively equal military strength overall, individual factions might be better or worse on a one-for-one basis or situationally.

Combat Pilot (Minion)

2 | 1 | 2

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	3	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	8	1/1

Skills (group only): Cool, Driving, Gunnery, Mechanics, Piloting.

Talents: Let's Ride (once during this character's turn, may mount or dismount from a vehicle or move from one position in a vehicle to another as an incidental).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Shot pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Short]), space suit (1 defense, +1 soak).

Standing militaries field a suite of combat vehicles, including starfighters, bombers, gunships, landing craft, tanks, troop transports, and more. Most combat pilots who operate them hold an officer's rank, particularly when it comes to more powerful or expensive vehicles. This profile also works for a gunner or crew member on a warship.

Mark Hastings (Order #52262139)

Field Commander (Rival) 5 3 3

Rank-and-file troops require leadership in the field, whether from a grizzled sergeant or from a fresh-faced junior officer. This profile represents a character who might lead an entire platoon, a squad, or even just an elite fire team into battle. It can also represent a tank commander, starship bridge officer, or fighter squadron leader if it replaces the beam rifle with a beam pistol.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	3	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	12	0/0

Skills: Discipline 2, Gunnery 2, Leadership 4, Operating 2, Piloting 2, Ranged (Heavy) 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Tactical Direction (may spend a maneuver to direct one friendly minion group within medium range; that group may immediately perform a maneuver as an out-of-turn incidental or add ▢ to the next check it makes).

Equipment: Beam rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Pierce 3), infantry combat armor (+2 soak).

Infantry Soldier (Minion) 3 1 1

Each of the great powers in the galaxy has its own standing army of soldiers, each with unique equipment and training. The equipment can be modified using the optional rules from **Table 2–1: Cultural Manufacturing Differences** on page 106.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	2	2	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	5	0/0

Skills (group only): Athletics, Discipline, Ranged (Heavy), Ranged (Light), Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Beam rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Pierce 3), 2 infantry grenades (Ranged [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Blast 7, Disorient 2, Limited Ammo 1), infantry combat armor (+2 soak).

Argent Flight

The Shikrai Kun Akaruk lead the Shikrai Kun Akarun, including disciplined airborne soldiers and instinctive pilots in Shrike interceptors and Aerie Sentinel mechs. Units frequently rotate command to increase unit cohesion, and they favor quick hit-and-fade attacks.

Combat Pilot: Gain the Knack for It (Piloting) talent (remove ■ ■ from all Piloting checks this character makes).

Field Commander: Gain the Flyer ability (can fly via wingpack; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook); gain the Many Feathers, One Wing ability (Shikrai characters within long range of the field commander who assist on another Shikrai's check [see **Assist** on page 98 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook] add an additional ▢ to the check). Increase combat power level to 6.

Infantry Soldier: Increase Agility by 1; gain the Flyer ability (can fly via wingpack; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook; replace beam rifle with Shikrai needle bow (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 1; Critical 1; Range [Medium]; Limited Ammo 1, Pierce 6, Unwieldy 3) and 10 arrows.

Barony of Letnev

Letnev officers tend to be ruthlessly ambitious, as in the Barony higher ranks in the military come with greater wealth and social status. They lead the Letnev fusiliers as well as the aristocratic Toumarin pilots of the Dunlain Reapers and Ashbringer escort fighters, and their burning ambition often drives them to lead from the front.

Combat Pilot: Gain the Superior Firepower ability (add ▢ ▢ to all Gunnery checks made by this character). Increase combat rating to 3.

Field Commander: Increase melee defense by 1; gain three ranks in Melee; gain twin Letnev poniards (Melee; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Linked 1). Increase combat rating to 6.

Infantry Soldier: No change.

Clan of Saar

Saar war packs and scrapper crews, no matter if they fly the Rho escort fighters, a Scavenger Zeta mech, or a scrap freighter, all look to a ship captain or clan elder to direct them.

Combat Pilot: Gain the Skilled Mechanic 2 talent (when this character makes a check to repair hull trauma or system strain, they repair 2 additional hull trauma or system strain).

Field Commander: Gain the Elder Howl ability (once per session, may spend an action to force all opponents within long range to make an **Easy** [◆] **fear check**; increase the difficulty of this check by 1 for each other Saar minion group, rival, or nemesis in the current encounter, to a maximum of **Daunting** [◆ ◆ ◆ ◆]). Increase combat rating to 6.

Infantry Soldier: Replace beam rifle with a shot rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire).

Mark Hassinger (Order #5282139)

Embers of Muaat

Appointed by the Fire Wardens, stewards lead small units known as *flares* into battle. These might be tough, armored infantry or the specialized novash pilots who control vehicles like the Colossus or Supernova bomber.

Combat Pilot: Gain the Overheat talent (when making a check to operate a vehicle, use its scanners, or fire its weapons, may cause the vehicle to suffer 2 system strain to add ✲ ⩓ to the results).

Field Commander: Gain the Spark of Fury ability (once per encounter, may make an **Average [◆ ◆] Leadership check**; if successful, all allies in the current encounter automatically succeed when making fear checks and add ■ to any Discipline checks they make). Replace infantry combat armor with Ember suit (+2 soak, +1 Brawn). Increase combat rating to 6.

Infantry Soldier: Replace beam rifle with a plasma rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Burn 1). Replace combat infantry armor with Ember suit (+2 soak, +1 Brawn). Increase combat rating to 4.

Emirates of Hacan

Each emir maintains their own army, but when the Emirates goes to war, they must second a portion of that army to the Quieron's service. The Quieron also maintains a standing force in the form of the Sword Fleet and its integrated marines. When the Emirates' armies are called up, squad leaders from the Sword Marines are distributed among the levies to season them into proper soldiers. Most of the Emirates' heavy equipment such as Pride mechs and Scarhawk fighter craft are also operated by marine pilots.

Combat Pilot: No change.

Field Commander: Increase Presence by 1; gain one rank in Melee and two ranks in Negotiation; gain the Counteroffer talent (once per session, may make an **opposed Negotiation versus Discipline check** targeting one non-nemesis opponent within medium range; if successful, target becomes staggered until the end of the field commander's next turn); replace beam rifle with Hacan dune spear (Melee; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Superior), Hacan dune spear in ranged mode (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Superior). Increase social power level to 4.

Infantry Soldier: Gain the Swift talent (does not suffer penalties for moving through difficult terrain).

Federation of Sol

The Sol Federation fields an experienced officer corps whose members foster an unyielding will to win any fight, no matter how hopeless or how extreme the environment. The rank-and-file Sol troopers are not as fearsome as the Federation's infamous Spec Ops forces, but they are dedicated and drilled to operate as a cohesive unit. If they run into problems they can't handle, they call down heavy support in the form of ZS Thunderbolt mechs, GA Hailstorm artillery tanks, and F5 Hurricane escort fighters.

Combat Pilot: No change.

Field Commander: Increase Discipline by 1; gain the Coordinated Assault 3 talent (once per turn, may have four allies within medium range add ⩓ to all combat checks they make until the end of the field commander's next turn). Increase combat power level to 6.

Infantry Soldier: Increase Willpower by 1.

Mentak Coalition

The captains of the Mentak Coalition and their crews tend to have a distinctly piratical bent, though they maintain standards of discipline similar to those of the militaries of the other Great Civilizations. They do tend to be equipped for close-quarters fighting and boarding actions.

Combat Pilot: Gain the Daring Aviator 1 talent (before making a Driving or Piloting check, may add ✲ ♺ to the results).

Field Commander: Increase Cunning by 1; replace Ranged (Heavy) skill with two ranks in Ranged (Light); gain the Gunslinger Diplomacy talent (if armed, may conspicuously display weapon and add ✲ ✲ ♺ to the results of the next social skill check this character makes this turn); replace beam rifle with blazer (Ranged [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Inaccurate 1, Vicious 2). Increase social power level to 4.

Infantry Soldier: Replace beam rifle with blazer rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Inaccurate 1, Vicious 2).

Naalu Collective

Wearing crystalline psy-enhancers, seer-sergeants lead the Naalu Collective's forces of Druaa and enslaved vassals like the Miashan into battle. They use their eerie insight to strangle enemy strategies in their infancy, a skill also practiced by the gifted pilots of the Collective's starfighter corps.

Combat Pilot: Increase Willpower by 1.

Field Commander: Increase Willpower by 1; gain the Speed of Thought ability (add ✲ ✲ to all checks this character and any allies within medium range make to determine Initiative).

Infantry Soldier: Increase Willpower by 1; gain the Quick Strike 1 talent (add ■ to any combat checks this character makes against targets that have not taken a turn in the current encounter).

Mark Fischer (Order #32262150)

Naaz-Rokha Alliance

The Naaz-Rokha are natural cooperators, and their recent energy technology breakthroughs power advanced vehicles like the multimission-capable Eidolon mech. The Alliance has a small but robust standing military, portions of which are sent out into the galaxy in the form of Alliance Expeditionary Forces to explore new regions, perform peacekeeping operations, or deal with potential threats. This approach suits the adventurous and curious Naaz and Rokha just fine.

Combat Pilot: Increase Intellect by 1; increase Cunning by 1; increase wound threshold by 2; gain the Symbiotic Coordination ability (may always perform one additional free maneuver without suffering strain).

Field Commander: Increase Intellect by 1; increase Cunning by 1; increase wound threshold by 4; gain the Symbiotic Coordination ability (may always perform one additional free maneuver without suffering strain). Increase combat power level to 6.

Infantry Soldier: Increase Intellect by 1; increase Cunning by 1; increase wound threshold by 2; gain the Symbiotic Coordination ability (may always perform one additional free maneuver without suffering strain).

Sardakk N'orr

The centurions command the Tekklar Elite, an implacable force of strong-willed soldiers who endure some of the most extreme combat training in the galaxy. Swarm pilots—most of whom were born with wings—support the fleet and ground troops with Kess'or Fury escort fighters and Valkyrie mechs.

Combat Pilot: Decrease Willpower by 1; gain the Rotating Formation ability (while a vehicle piloted by this character is within short range of any other allied vehicles, increase its defense by 2).

Field Commander: Increase Brawn by 1; increase Agility by 1; gain two ranks in Melee; gain a N'orr tarsus glaive (Melee; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Cumbersome 3, Vicious 3). Increase combat rating to 7.

Infantry Soldier: Increase Brawn by 1; decrease Willpower by 1; gain Melee as a skill; gain a N'orr tarsus glaive (Melee; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Cumbersome 3, Vicious 3); gain the Fighting Horde ability (when this character attacks an opponent engaged with an ally, remove ■ ■ from the pool). Increase combat rating to 4.

Universities of Jol-Nar

The Proctors lead the Hylar military forces, well aware of the scientific principles and stress tolerances of the equipment carried by each soldier under their command. The Hylar have some of the most advanced technology in the galaxy, which they use to buttress their soldiers' rather pedestrian fighting skills.

Combat Pilot: No change.

Field Commander: No change.

Infantry Soldier: Reduce Agility by 1; increase wound threshold by 2; gain the Computer-Assisted Targeting ability (after using the aim maneuver and making a ranged attack, add ✲ to the results instead of adding □ to the pool).

Winnu

The legates of Winnu's Annexus Guard believe Mecatol Rex is theirs by right, and they have been working their forces into a righteous fervor to take it back. The legates oversee entire armies, determining battlefield strategy while leaving small unit tactics to their primuls, who each command a centurios of one hundred well-drilled soldiers. It falls on the primuls to make sure each soldier knows the price of failure for their emperor and themselves.

Combat Pilot: Gain the Fear of Failure ability (when an allied character or allied vehicle within medium range is incapacitated or destroyed, this character suffers 1 strain and adds □ to checks they make until the end of the next round).

Field Commander: No change.

Infantry Soldier: Gain the Fear of Failure ability (when an allied character or allied vehicle within medium range is incapacitated or destroyed, this character suffers 1 strain and adds □ to checks they make until the end of the next round).

Xxcha Kingdom

The king divides his army into thirty-eight shields, or *sccuts*, led by the combat veterans known as *cchun*. The cchun train soldiers, Xxlun fighter pilots, and Indomitus mech drivers to manage their emotions and to remember the peace the king has to forge after a war is won. They always take prisoners.

Combat Pilot: No change.

Field Commander: Increase Brawn by 1; increase soak by 1; gain two ranks in Negotiation. Increase combat rating to 6.

Infantry Soldier: Increase Brawn by 1; increase soak by 1. Increase combat rating to 4.

Mark Hastings (Order #5228230)

Yin Brotherhood

The Brotherhood isn't possessed of the most skilled warriors, but these warriors make up for it with absolute commitment. Their tactics favor headlong assaults, close-in artillery and airstrikes, and other practices that most consider extremist. Even more concerning is that many of the brothers are willing—some would say eager—to sacrifice themselves in spectacular fashion for their cause.

Combat Pilot: No change.

Field Commander: Reduce Brawn by 1; increase Presence by 1; gain two ranks in Charm; gain the Fevered Abandon ability (all Yin Brotherhood characters within medium range add ✲ ⩓ to combat checks they make; all opponents add ✲ to all combat checks targeting a Yin Brotherhood character within medium range).

Infantry Soldier: No change.

Yssaril Tribes

The Guild of Spies uses field agents to direct its hit squads and control its undercover assets, often relying on stealth craft to access targets and assets in secret. The Yssaril hit squads use their unique fading ability to launch lethal stealth ambushes against helpless opponents. In full-scale war, these hit squads are grouped into larger field formations, meaning that fighting a Yssaril army is like trying to shoot the fog.

Combat Pilot: Gain Silhouette 0.

Field Commander: Gain +1 Cunning; gain two ranks in Stealth; gain Silhouette 0.

Infantry Soldier: Gain +1 Cunning; gain two ranks in Stealth; gain Silhouette 0.

Argent Flight Ace (Rival)

5 2 4

The Shikrai produce the most talented natural pilots in the galaxy, and then they train them to be even better. Their aces, like Trrakan Aun Zulok, are living legends among their people, and well-studied threats among rival military forces. In battle, Shikrai aces dare the enemy to keep up, causing nearly as many to wreck their ships giving chase as the Shikrai take out with their cannons.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	4	2	3	3	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	10	1/1

Skills: Astrocartography 3, Computers 2, Cool 1, Gunnery 3, Mechanics 1, Perception 2, Piloting 5.

Talents: Barrel Roll (while piloting a starfighter of silhouette 3 or less, when the vehicle suffers a hit from a ranged attack, may have the vehicle suffer 3 system strain to reduce damage by 5), Eagle Eyes (once per encounter when making a ranged combat check, may increase the weapon's range by one range band, to a maximum of extreme).

Abilities: Avian Agility (once per session after making a skill check that uses this character's Agility, may spend a Story Point to add ✲ ✲ ⩓ ⩓ to the results).

Equipment: Collapsible needle bow (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 1; Critical 1; Range [Medium]; Limited Ammo 1, Pierce 4, Unwieldy 3), quiver of 5 arrows, space suit (1 defense, +1 soak), Shrike interceptor starfighter.

Naalu Starfighter Shiressis (Nemesis)

6 4 4

Based on simulator data gathered during limited joint training exercises, the Naalu's best Druaa pilots are among the Keleres' worst. However, in real combat engagements, they outperform everyone in almost every way. Thanks to their telepathic abilities, Druaa Shiressis can make themselves almost impossible to hit, juking out of the way an instant before an enemy pilot fires.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	3	4	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	12	12	1/1

Skills: Discipline 4, Gunnery 3, Perception 2, Piloting 3, Ranged (Light) 3, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Lucky Strike (may spend a Story Point after a successful combat check to add 4 damage to one hit).

Abilities: Telepathic Dogfighter (while piloting a starship of silhouette 4 or less that is targeted by an attack from an organic opponent, may suffer 4 strain to add ✕ ✕ ✕ ✕ to the results).

Equipment: Pulse pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Auto-fire), constricting body (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Stun 4), space suit (1 defense, +1 soak), Naalu hybrid crystal fighter.

Mark Fischer (Order #32282150)

Jol-Nar Krillostrat Hunter (Nemesis)

9 | 1 | 8

A terrifying masterpiece of weapons engineering, the krillostrat is a heavily armored, gyroscopically stabilized suit-pod large enough to hold a single Hylar atop a mass of razor-sharp tentacles. Armored enough to ignore most small-arms fire, the krillostrat allows its wearer to scamper, climb, and even roll across battlefields, through tunnels, and up building exteriors, using free tentacles to impale or toss enemy troops. The elite hunters who wear these suits take far more pleasure from their kills than most Hylar feel is appropriate.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	2	4	2	3	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
8	20	15	0/0

Skills: Computers 1, Coordination 2, Mechanics 3, Melee 1.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), Swift (does not suffer penalties for moving through difficult terrain).

Abilities: Grab and Toss (after making a failed combat check, may spend ⮝ ⮝ ⮝ or ⊛ to choose one silhouette 1 or 0 character within short range and move them up to one range band in any direction; the character is knocked prone and suffers 4 strain), Multitentacled (after making a successful combat check, may spend 3 strain to inflict one additional hit with tentacle spike against one other target within short range that is no more difficult to hit than the original target, dealing base damage +1 per ✲; may do so up to three times per turn), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Tentacle spike (Melee; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Short]; Ensnare 2).

Mark Hassman (Order #5228213)

Xxcha Peacemaker (Rival)

9 | 3 | 4

The strongest Xxcha soldiers use thick bulwark armor suits to make themselves nearly impervious to incoming fire, and they carry powerful suppression weapons such as assault cannons and siege hammers. Their role is to break the foe and force a surrender, leading to the ironic title of "peacemaker."

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	1	2	2	4	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
8	18	1/1

Skills: Athletics 2, Coercion 3, Discipline 3, Gunnery 4, Melee 2, Survival 2, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Deliberate Tactics (during combat, may choose to take only maneuvers or actions during their turn to avoid suffering strain until the start of their next turn and add ⮝ ⮝ to combat checks they make until the start of their next turn).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Assault cannon (Gunnery; Damage 12; Critical 4; Range [Long]; Auto-fire, Cumbersome 4, Vicious 2), siege hammer (Melee; Damage 10; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Concussive 1, Knockdown), bulwark plate (1 defense, +4 soak, may only perform one maneuver per turn).

Letnev Naval Commodore (Nemesis)

6 | 3 | 6

The Barony's command staff includes some of the finest tactical and strategic thinkers among the Letnev. All are astute students of military history and recognize patterns and opportunities in battle lesser military minds would miss. A commodore in the Barony's navy not only captains a major warship, but also oversees entire flotillas of smaller vessels.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	4	2	4	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	15	15	0/0

Skills: Astrocartography 3, Gunnery 3, Leadership 4, Knowledge (Lore) 3, Operating 4, Ranged (Light) 1, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Combat Command (may use the Leadership skill when making a check to determine Initiative; may spend ⚙ from the check to add ✲ to the results of all allies' checks during the first round of combat).

Abilities: Supporting Tactics (as an action, may choose a single allied warship within strategic range and make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Leadership check**; if successful, all opponents may not target other ships with combat checks if they could target the selected allied warship instead).

Equipment: Grazer (Ranged [Light]; Damage 3; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Pierce 5).

Sol Spec Ops Drop Trooper (Minion)

5 | 1 | 2

The Sol Federation has armies of drop troopers, but the Spec Ops commandos are a different breed. They are among the best small unit tactics forces in the galaxy. They typically operate in elements of four, carrying out a host of special forces operations including covert insertions, extractions, assassinations, sabotage, intelligence gathering, and even lasing targets for orbital bombardment.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	2	3	3	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	8	1/1

Skills (group only): Athletics, Cool, Ranged (Heavy), Stealth, Survival.

Talents: Spec Ops Elimination (when this character makes a successful combat check against an unaware target, may inflict a Critical Injury without spending ⮝ or ⚙).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Beam rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Pierce 3), underbarrel homing grenade lobber (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Accurate 2, Blast 7, Limited Ammo 1), Spec Ops drop armor (1 defense, +2 soak, add ■ to Stealth checks), encrypted comm-bead, 1 grenade reload, 1 dose of dermal sealer.

Mark Fleshner (Order #32282150)

Tekklar Elite (Rival)

9 | 2 | 1

A vanguard unit among the already renowned Sardakk N'orr legions, Primus G'hom Sek'kus's Tekklar Elite are among the most feared and respected military units in the galaxy. These fearless troops overwhelm their enemies with a combination of brute force, resilience, and the terror that they inspire in their foes.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	4	2	3	1	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
7	20	0/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Discipline 4, Melee 4, Ranged (Heavy) 2, Resilience 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Fighting Horde (on combat checks against an opponent engaged with an ally, remove ■ ■ from the pool), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all opponents must make a **Hard [♦ ♦ ♦] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook; if there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).

Equipment: Shot repeater (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Vicious 2), tandem N'orr tarsus glaives (Melee; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Cumbersome 3, Linked 1, Vicious 3), encrypted comm-bead.

Winnaran Custodian Guard (Rival)

3 | 3 | 1

The Winnaran Custodian Guard have the unenviable task of protecting Mecatol Rex against those who would take it without being declared the rightful inheritors of the Lazax Empire. Since they don't have the military might to see off a determined invader, they actually function as equal parts police officer and paramilitary agent, protecting Mecatol City and the Gul system against criminals, pirates, slavers, and other marauders. The Custodian Guard also work alongside the Keleres, with the two groups each sharing the other's frustrations with scant resources and impossible expectations from their superiors.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	1	3	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	10	0/0

Skills: Discipline 2, Leadership 1, Melee 2, Perception 2, Ranged (Heavy) 2, Resilience 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Gunslinger Diplomacy (while armed, may spend a maneuver to add ☼ ☼ ⟲ to the next social skill check the Custodian Guard makes this turn).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Ceremonial beam rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Pierce 3), gold-plated shudder blade (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2, Vicious 1), ornate breastplate and greaves (+2 soak).

Agents of the Great Threats

While the Great Powers scheme and plot against each other, great threats ready their own plans. The Nekro, the Vuil'raith, the L1Z1X, and even the recently returned Mahact are each poised to upset decades of designs on Mecatol Rex.

Nekro Attack Drone (Minion)

2 | 1 | 1

Also referred to as *flyers*, these small drones use a triple anti-grav thruster design to achieve flight, and their thin legs dangle from a central, sensor-laden body, making them look like some kind of floating spider. Their legs each mount a dart shooter, and they rotate fire to sustain streams of molten darts laced in arsenic. The Nekro Virus dispatches them in swarms to disrupt and harass foes, pinning the enemy in place while the massive Defilers and Mordreds close for the slaughter.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	3	1	2	2	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	3	0/0

Skills (group only): Computers, Ranged (Light), Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Flyer (can fly; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Nekro (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and can survive in vacuum; immune to poisons and toxins), Silhouette 0.

Equipment: Afflictor darts (Ranged [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Vicious 3).

Mark Hassman (Order #5282135)

Nekro Defiler (Rival)

12 | 2 | 2

The Defiler resembles a scorpion of the Sol system but is roughly the size of a tank. It crawls along the ground on six legs, firing the plasma cannon mounted on its tail at infantry formations and light vehicles while using its two pincers to bisect any soldiers that get too close. When faced with armored vehicles, the Defiler can crawl atop them, using its pincers to create an opening in the hull to fire its tail cannon through and burn the crew alive.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	3	3	3	4	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
10	30	0/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Gunnery 2, Melee 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Indomitable (once per encounter when incapacitated, may spend a Story Point to use this talent; then, the Defiler is no longer incapacitated [and cannot become incapacitated] until the end of its next turn).

Abilities: Can Opener (may select an engaged vehicle and make a **Hard [♦ ♦ ♦] Athletics check**; if successful, a silhouette 0 hole is opened in the vehicle's hull and it suffers a Hull Damaged Critical Hit), Nekro (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and can survive in vacuum; immune to poisons and toxins), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all opponents must make a **Daunting [♦ ♦ ♦ ♦] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the Genesys Core Rulebook; if there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Silhouette 3.

Equipment: Pincers (Melee; Damage 12; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 1, Pierce 4), plasma tail cannon (Gunnery; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Long]; Blast 10, Burn 1).

Mark Hissinger (Order #32262139)

Nekro Grindellow Impaler (Nemesis)

9 2 4

Added to the Nekro arsenal after an attack on a Jol-Nar military outpost, Grindellow Impalers incorporate several design elements from the Hylar krillostrat armored suit. Their large, spherical body supports seven long tentacles, six tipped with leaf-shaped razor blades and one armed with a long-range positron emitter. Impalers serve the Nekro as advanced infiltration and elimination engines. They often lie dormant, waiting for targets to wander into range before suddenly activating and attacking.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	3	3	4	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	20	20	0/0

Skills: Athletics 3, Gunnery 3, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Overwatch (once per round when an opponent attacks an ally within long range of the Grindellow Impaler, may spend a Story Point and ⟳ or ⊗ to inflict one hit with its positron emitter, dealing 11 damage).

Abilities: Multitentacled (after making a successful combat check, may spend 3 strain to inflict one additional hit with tentacle blade against one other target within short range that is no more difficult to hit than the original target, dealing base damage +1 per ✲; may do so up to three times per turn), Nekro (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and can survive in vacuum; immune to poisons and toxins), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Tentacle-mounted positron emitter (Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Extreme]; Accurate 1), tentacle blade (Melee; Damage 8; Critical 2; Range [Short]; Ensnare 2).

Nekro Pilot AI (Rival)

2 2 2

Nekro piloting AIs are self-aware computer programs enabled to fly or drive any Nekro vehicle. Their greatest advantage is their bodiless form, allowing their vehicles to forgo any sort of life support or cockpit, and ensuring that they can't be killed by a lucky hit or disabled by excessive g-forces.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
–	3	2	2	4	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
–	10	0/0

Skills: Driving 2, Gunnery 2, Melee 2, Operating 2, Piloting 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Bodiless (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and cannot survive outside of a Nekro vehicle; immune to poisons and toxins; cannot suffer damage from attacks but is destroyed if strain causes it to exceed its wound threshold).

Equipment: None.

Nekro Valefar Assimilation Swarm (Rival)

4 1 3

Easily the most insidious Nekro weapon, the Valefar assimilation swarms are often mistaken for insects, but each of these tiny drones carries the Nekro virus. The swarms can infect and disable what they come in contact with, or simply tear it apart with their positron microemitters, and they often serve as a vanguard for a Nekro assault.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	4	1	1	4	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	30	0/0

Skills: Computers 3, Ranged (Light) 3, Stealth 3.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Flyer (can fly; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the Genesys Core Rulebook), Nekro (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and can survive in vacuum; immune to poisons and toxins), Swarm (halve the damage done to this character before applying soak, unless the weapon has the Blast or Burn item quality [regardless of whether the quality is activated]), Viral Infection (may spend ⟳ ⟳ ⟳ or ⊗ from an engaged opponent's check to disable one piece of electronic equipment that opponent is carrying; treat as having suffered major damage [see page 89 of the Genesys Core Rulebook).

Equipment: Positron microemitters (Ranged [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Accurate 1).

Mark Hassinger (Order #5228230)

L1Z1X Enhancer Prodigy (Nemesis) 5 3 7

Obsessed with their own cybernetic immortality and improving their physical and intellectual capabilities, the L1Z1X enhancers constantly experiment with new cybernetic modifications and implants. While they happily experiment on themselves with new shielding and optics, they prefer the dead and dying for their more…complex tests.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	5	3	3	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	15	15	2/2

Skills: Computers 3, Discipline 3, Knowledge (Science) 3, Leadership 4, Mechanics 3, Medicine 3, Melee 2, Vigilance 1.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice), Coordinated Assault 2 (once per turn, may spend maneuver to let four allies within short range add ⩓ to all combat checks they make until the end of the enhancer prodigy's next turn).

Abilities: Four-Armed (may perform a second maneuver without suffering strain), Reboot Resurrection (may make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Medicine check** as an action; if successful, one L1Z1X rival or nemesis within medium range heals 5 wounds plus 1 additional wound per ✲, or may add one L1Z1X minion to a minion group that has lost at least one minion during the current encounter).

Equipment: Integrated laser scalpel (Melee; Damage 1; Critical 1; Range [Engaged]; Breach 1, Inaccurate 1).

L1Z1X Herald (Nemesis) 4 7 5

The heralds are the public face, wizened and horrifying though it may be, of the recently emerged L1Z1X. Ostensibly they arrive as ambassadors, but in secret they work behind the scenes to soften a world for L1Z1X invasion if need be. They plant seeds of chaos and discord, and they sabotage planetary defenses with dormant viral agents. They also occasionally engage in real diplomatic negotiations.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	2	4	3	3	4

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	12	18	1/1

Skills: Computers 3, Deception 2, Discipline 3, Mechanics 2, Negotiation 4, Ranged (Light) 2, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Discrete Saboteur (may spend ❁ from a check this character makes to cause one piece of equipment or a vehicle to break and become unusable for the remainder of the encounter), Four-Armed (may perform a second maneuver without suffering strain), Upsetting Visage (this character adds ■ ■ to all Charm and Leadership checks it makes and adds □ □ to all Coercion checks it makes; if the check inflicts strain, the target suffers 2 additional strain).

Equipment: Integrated high-intensity beam emitter (Ranged [Light]; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Pierce 2, Slow-Firing 1).

L1Z1X Legionnaire (Minion) 5 1 1

When Ibna Vel Syd fled Mecatol Rex just before the fall of the Lazax Empire, he brought with him some loyal Lazax warriors who became the cybernetic template for the L1Z1X Legionnaires. These skeletal, four-armed warriors maintain the skill at arms of the ancient Lazax warriors combined with unnatural durability.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	2	2	2	3	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	7	1/1

Skills (group only): Discipline, Melee, Ranged (Heavy), Resilience.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Four-Armed (may perform a second maneuver without suffering strain), Mindnet (a group of these characters may remain a single minion group while at up to long range of one another), Nigh-Immortal (after making a check, may spend ❁ to heal all wounds on one defeated minion from this group [returning it to the group with all wounds healed]).

Equipment: High-intensity beam rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Pierce 3, Slow-Firing 1), integrated legionnaire blade (Melee; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]).

Mark Fischer (Order #32282150)

L1Z1X Integrated Systems Controller (Minion)

1 | 1 | 2

Integrated systems controllers have the ability to plug themselves into a starship and integrate themselves with the ship's computer systems, taking control of smaller vessels or linking with other systems controllers through the Mindnet to coordinate their actions on larger warships. They serve as crew aboard L1Z1X vessels, where they are equally able to operate guns, fly ships, and repair damage.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	3	1	2	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	4	0/0

Skills (group only): Brawl, Computers, Driving, Gunnery, Mechanics, Operating, Piloting.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Four-Armed (may perform a second maneuver without suffering strain), Mindnet (a group of these characters may remain a single minion group while within long range of one another).

Equipment: Portable toolkit.

L1Z1X Eliminator (Rival)

8 | 2 | 3

Eliminators are L1Z1X special forces units capable of holding position outside enemy fortifications. They sometimes remain in place for years awaiting a L1Z1X invasion fleet so they can call in orbital bombardments or eliminate targets with surgical strikes. They are among the best armed and trained warriors among the L1Z1X.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	4	2	3	3	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	15	1/1

Skills: Athletics 2, Computers 2, Cool 2, Mechanics 2, Melee 2, Ranged (Heavy) 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Designate Target (as an action, may make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Computers check** targeting one structure or location within extreme range; if successful, decrease the difficulty of allied starships' attacks against that target by 2, to a minimum of **Easy [◆]**, until the end of the round).

Equipment: Eliminator high-intensity beam rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Extreme]; Pierce 3, Slow-Firing 1, decrease difficulty of all checks made at long and extreme range by 1), integrated forearm blades (Melee; Damage 7; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Linked 1, Vicious 2), target laser, integrated encrypted comm-bead.

Mark Hassman (Order #5228213)

Vuil'raith Cultist (Minion) 2 1 1

The galaxy's disaffected and vulnerable congregate secretly in the ebon cracks of great cities and isolated outposts to worship the Vuil'raith. Corrupted by false promises, the cultists unwittingly pave the road to their own eventual destruction. Of course, some of the worst cultists are those who know exactly what their actions will bring about and commit to them all the more eagerly.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	3	1	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	4	1/1

Skills (group only): Ranged (Light), Stealth, Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Death Cult (this character automatically passes fear checks and reduces any strain it suffers by 3, to a minimum of 1).

Equipment: Shot pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Short]), hooded cloak (1 defense, add ■ to Stealth checks).

Vuil'raith Cult Leader (Rival) 4 5 2

The Vuil'raith often strike bargains with forgotten, angry, or disaffected members of society to foment chaos and involve them in the Vuil'raith's twisted machinations. In exchange for power and knowledge, these damaged individuals find other vulnerable people and indoctrinate them to work evil on behalf of their malign patron. Each cult has slightly different trappings and traditions, but all work toward the goals of the Vuil'raith.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	4	1	4

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	14	1/1

Skills: Charm 2, Deception 3, Knowledge (Lore) 2, Melee 2, Perception 1, Ranged (Light) 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Death Cult (this character automatically passes fear checks and reduces any strain it suffers by 3, to a minimum of 1), Vuil'raith Bargain (once per encounter, may spend a Story Point as an out-of-turn incidental to heal up to 6 wounds that this character is suffering).

Equipment: Ceremonial shudder blade (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2, Vicious 1), 2 improvised plasma charges (Ranged [Light]; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Blast 8, Burn 4, Inaccurate 2, Limited Ammo 1), hooded cloak (1 defense, add ■ to Stealth checks).

Vuil'raith Cabalist (Nemesis) 11 10 7

The cabalists are the most powerful of the abominations that live in the flesh-horror dimension of the Vuil'raith. They lead hordes of the lesser Vuil'raith or scheme to become one of the Vuil'raith Cabal. They possess a kind of insight that enables them to see what fears and desires drive their enemies and to manipulate them into becoming allies. Each cabalist has their own motives and drives as well, making them as likely to war with one another as with the rest of the galaxy.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
4	4	4	5	5	4

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
4	25	17	0/0

Mark Fischer (Order #52282150)

Skills: Brawl 4, Charm 4, Coercion 3, Cool 3, Deception 4, Discipline 3, Ranged (Light) 4, Stealth 5, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 3 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target three times).

Abilities: Tempting Lies (as an action, may make an **opposed Deception versus Vigilance check** targeting one opponent within medium range; if successful, target is immobilized until they make a successful **Daunting [◆ ◆ ◆ ◆] Cool check** as an action; may spend ❁ from check to cause target to also suffer 8 strain), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all opponents must make a **Daunting [● ● ◆ ◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the Genesys Core Rulebook; if there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Darkfire vomiter (Ranged [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Accurate 2, Blast 5), spiked and bladed limbs (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Linked 3, Vicious 2).

Vuil'raith Devourer Swarm (Rival)

4 | 1 | 1

These small, flying creatures take a variety of forms, resembling bats, birds, or even insect swarms from a distance. However, up close they can envelop a target, tearing flesh from its body until there is nothing left but bones in moments. The always-ravenous devourers also act as spies and forward scouts, relaying enemy locations back to their masters instantaneously through some unexplained link to their alien home dimension.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
1	3	1	3	1	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
1	38	0/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Perception 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Devour (when attacking an immobilized or prone target, each uncanceled ✲ increases the damage dealt by +2 instead of +1), Flyer (can fly; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the Genesys Core Rulebook), Swarm (halve the damage done to this character before applying soak, unless the weapon has the Blast or Burn item quality [regardless of whether the quality is activated]).

Equipment: Swarm of fangs (Brawl; Damage 3; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Pierce 2, Vicious 2).

Vuil'raith Looming Abomination (Rival)

8 | 4 | 2

Each of these imposing beings has a uniquely fearsome appearance, dominated by a head featuring jagged jaws and extra eyes, atop a powerful form covered in a tough, scaly hide and an unsettling number of arms, tentacles, and other appendages. They flip over mechs and crush armored soldiers with equal ease, sending whoever isn't frozen by fear fleeing in blind panic.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	2	2	3	3	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	48	0/0

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Discipline 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all opponents must make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the Genesys Core Rulebook; if there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Vehicle Flip (as an action, may make a **Daunting [◆ ◆ ◆ ◆] Athletics check** to target a vehicle of up to silhouette 3; if successful, the vehicle is overturned, cannot move, and suffers a Critical Hit; other effects, such as being unable to fire weapons, may occur at the GM's discretion), Silhouette 3.

Equipment: Battering fist (Brawl; Damage 14; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Concussive 1, Knockdown).

Vuil'raith Nightmare Horde (Minion)

3 | 1 | 1

The Vuil'raith shape flesh to strike terror in their victims. The rank and file of their nightmare armies are gibbering meat-shapes of fanged maws, razor-sharp claws, flailing tentacles, and countless glowing eyes, all intended to leave their foes recoiling in horror.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
3	3	1	3	3	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	8	0/0

Mark Hastings (Order #5228236)

Skills (group only): Athletics, Brawl, Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Horde of Nightmares (if an opponent in the encounter makes a fear check because of an ally of the Nightmare Horde, add ■ to the check for each Nightmare Horde minion group present in the encounter).

Equipment: Blade, tooth, and claw (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1).

Vuil'raith Terror Beast (Rival)

11 | 5 | 3

Terror beasts are incredibly long, millipede-like creatures that can carry dozens of Vuil'raith invaders on their backs. Their many legs end in sharp points, perfect for skewering enemy troops while they run to deposit their horde where it can sow the most fear.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	2	1	3	3	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	88	0/0

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Coordination 3, Discipline 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice).

Abilities: A Hundred Scything Legs (whenever the terror beast makes a check [including a combat check], may spend △ or ⊛ to cause one engaged enemy to suffer a hit from this character's skewer-legs, dealing base damage), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all opponents must make a **Formidable [◆◆◆◆◆] fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the Genesys Core Rulebook; if there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy), Silhouette 3.

Equipment: Skewer-legs (Brawl; Damage 12; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 2).

Mahact Crimson Legionnaire (Rival)

7 | 4 | 2

Enthralled Creuss warriors, these hulking sentinels wear rune-covered armor that glows an ominous crimson instead of the cold blue of most Creuss armor. Each of the Crimson Legionnaires was once a part of the grand armada dispatched to search for Ixth. When they discovered the Mahact tomb, the gene-sorcerers corrupted them all, many hundreds of thousands of individuals bound to serve in an instant. Now the Mahact use them as an elite praetorian guard, the core of an army that the gene-sorcerers are building to reconquer the galaxy.

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BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	3	2	1	1	3

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
5	18	2/2

Skills: Cool 4, Discipline 4, Melee 4, Ranged (Heavy) 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Legion Fighter (while engaged with an opponent, may spend a maneuver to add ✲ ✲ to the results of the next melee combat check an ally makes targeting that opponent before the start of this character's next turn), Wormhole Walker (may spend a Story Point to teleport anywhere within extreme range as a maneuver).

Equipment: Disassembler rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 5; Critical 1; Range [Long]; Vicious 2), astral lance (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Breach 1, Unwieldy 3), crimson runic armor (2 defense, +2 soak, +6 wound threshold).

Mahact Thrall Clone (Minion)

2 | 1 | 1

These white, smooth-skinned humanoids have blank slates as faces, with no visible ears, eyes, nose, or mouth. Their muscular arms have long, thin fingers tipped with sharp claw-nails, but their most dangerous weapon is a thin spike that protrudes from their wrist. If the spike manages to sink into the unprotected flesh of a biological creature, the thrall clone can inject a genetic virus that quickly and fundamentally begins to alter the target's DNA. Within minutes, the victim's body starts to mutate, continuing until they have become yet another thrall clone.

Most of the Mahact's thrall clones, however, are grown from amniotic tanks on Ixth. The Mahact produce billions of them to serve as expendable shock troops or as an equally expendable labor force.

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	1	1	1	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
2	5	0/0

Skills (group only): Athletics, Brawl, Resilience, Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Blank (may not be targeted by or suffer strain from social skill checks), Genetic Payload (once per encounter as an action, may make an **opposed Brawl versus Coordination check** targeting one engaged non-mechanical opponent; if successful, the target must make a **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆] Resilience check** at the end of the current encounter; if they fail, they suffer 2 wounds and must make the check again every five minutes until they succeed or they exceed their wound threshold, at which point the target becomes a Mahact thrall clone [if they are a PC, they are effectively dead at this point]; this effect may also be ended with a successful **Daunting [◆ ◆ ◆ ◆] Medicine check**).

Equipment: Claw-nails (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]).

Mahact Sleeper Agents and Enslaved Vassals

The agents of the Mahact are legion, despite the long millennia of their absence. Some of the Mahact gene-sorcerers' sleeper agents were literally sent into dormancy for thousands of years, most notably the Titans of Ul. Though the Titans overthrew their former masters' domination upon their awakening, the Mahact have other agents who awoke when they returned, agents who are still loyal and ready to serve.

However, the Mahact also have more insidious means of infiltrating a population. They seeded most of the intelligent species of the galaxy with cunning genetic code that would lie dormant through countless generations, passed from parent to child. Many variants of that code would become corrupt and useless, but in some cases, it would remain true. When triggered with certain Mahact devices, the code turns the individual who bears it into a loyal Mahact puppet, outwardly unchanged but unable to resist their commands.

Likewise, the Mahact's ships and armies contain many vassals who have either pledged themselves to the service of the gene-sorcerers or who have had their loyalty enforced through genetic modification.

Any of the profiles listed here (except for the Nekro and Titan profiles) can be used as a Mahact sleeper agent or enslaved vassal. They retain all of their normal abilities, and their forced loyalty can be handled narratively. In fact, Mahact ships are often crewed by a mix of enslaved vassals from a number of cultures, so you can use a mix of different profiles when determining the crew.

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[Chapter 7]
The Game Master

Games in the Twilight Imperium universe are epic, exciting stories that have an obvious and significant impact on the worlds in question. Conflict abounds, with a multitude of factions aggressively competing for power, influence, and resources. There is plenty of material for the Game Master to use in stories covering political intrigue, risky trade disputes, espionage, sabotage, planetary invasions, and devastating fleet battles. This chapter presents ideas bringing these elements together in grand space opera fashion.

As members of the Keleres, the PCs are deliberately placed in critical situations and expected to facilitate or orchestrate a specific result. Of course, individual PCs have their own opinions and assessments, and possibly their own agendas or orders, that further complicate matters. This combination makes for exciting gameplay and unexpected results due to the intersecting motivations. Fortunately, as GM you can dial this complexity up or down by controlling the number of elements in play, so neither you nor your players become overwhelmed by endless possibilities. Of course, the players' characters might feel otherwise!

This chapter starts with the general concepts involved in running a space opera game and becomes more specific to the Twilight Imperium universe as it progresses. These tools and ideas also work for Game Masters using this book for inspiration to create their own space opera universes. Details and themes specific to this universe can be easily altered or replaced to create similar storylines in other tales.

Then, the **Twilight Imperium Adventure Builder** presents examples of elements and events that can be mixed and matched to create variations on common adventure themes. Most feature multiple approaches to a given situation, such as diplomacy versus combat. GMs may also take inspiration from individual elements and develop them into something of their own, including adventures or their own space opera setting.

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The **Twilight Imperium Encounters** section features ready-to-play encounters. They use and highlight specific factions, events, and locations important to the feel of the Twilight Imperium universe. They serve as examples of ideas put into game terms as specific encounters, complete with adversaries and advice where required. Their ideas can be used as starting points or easily expanded to full adventures.

Running a Space Opera Game

Twilight Imperium stories and adventures are space operas, a type of science fiction featuring exciting stories on a grand scale, bigger-than-life heroes and villains, melodrama, and a mix of real-life science and utterly fictional technology. Space travel and futuristic technology play a key role in both the story and structure of the universe. Characters have very personal ties to the events of the day, often with intricate threads of family conflict, betrayal, romance, and other personal drama. The heroes and villains usually know each other due to some prior conflict; if they don't at the beginning, then they certainly will by the end of the story.

Space opera stories run the gamut between reality-adhering science fiction and outlandish science fantasy. If you are creating your own space opera, you need to establish where your story sits in this continuum. Harder sci-fi relies more on established technology plus plausible advancements, sometimes based on published speculation, for a more realistic universe. The wilder the technology, and the more it becomes like magic, the more it becomes space fantasy. Space fantasy uses the trappings of science fiction, but hand waves away technological elements or wild events that are likely scientifically impossible but critical to the story being told. Science fantasy might also include magic, or something very like it, that may or may not be technologically driven.

Common Tropes

Over the years, space operas have gained or utilized various tropes that make for useful story devices. While some are cliché, they can provide you with points of inspiration, and cliché can still be entertaining. They are also convenient ways to convey common story ideas to your players, as a kind of shorthand to speed storytelling. Here are a few used by Twilight Imperium stories and adventures:

- **Self-Interest Prevails:** Factions place their own goals and existence above notions of a greater galactic common good. None of the factions are inherently good or evil, but their morality is definitely in shades of gray. Individuals have a wider variety of motivations, so some can be very heroic or hold higher or lower standards in the larger, amoral universe. It is not a hopeless clash of competitors, but one where advances can clearly occur and lasting victories can be won.
- **First Contact:** Galactic upheaval in the form of new civilizations occurred with the revelation of the Ghosts of Creuss, the arrival of the Vuil'raith Cabal, and the revival of the Mahact gene-sorcerers. What new friend or foe might appear next in the galaxy?
- **Technical Jargon:** The universe is filled with a wide variety of creatively named technology, equipment, and fictional scientific details (sometimes extrapolated from the real world). This technical jargon helps to narratively express and define the tech so it supports a story while minimizing the need for detailed explanations of how it achieves the desired effect.
- **Oppression:** With so many factions battling for supremacy, there are always worlds or other locations that suffer under the demands of their rulers.
- **Faster-than-Light Travel and Wormholes:** Most galaxy-spanning universes rely on faster-than-light travel, instantaneous travel via wormholes, or both to allow for coherent stories, usually without the inconvenience and limitations of relativity and travel times defined by decades or centuries.
- **Evil Artificial Intelligence:** The feared Nekro Virus is the best example in the Twilight Imperium universe. This trope establishes that, in this setting, computer intelligences are either amoral or actually evil and oppositional to life. At the same time, the Titans of Ul subvert this trope as members of a benevolent species who are also created beings.
- **Wars Are Not Endless:** Wars in the Twilight Imperium universe range from isolated skirmishes to regional conflicts, major battles, and extended campaigns. However, many wars end with long-lasting peace treaties or brokered, sometimes secret, deals. Faction priorities change, so past enemies might become close allies in a later conflict.

Campaigns

Epic tales can be quick and intense, but many stories use adventures as building blocks for an even greater narrative, aimed at a dramatic climax. A Twilight Imperium campaign provides an opportunity to utilize different elements of the universe and a variety of play styles. You could use the tones presented in the Genesys Core Rulebook and Expanded Player's Guide to set the stage for each adventure.

In a campaign, the PCs' earlier missions and deeds should greatly influence the final adventure, perhaps changing it altogether. For example, these missions often begin with a difficult political situation. If the PCs succeed in diffusing it, they may get the chance to use it to advance their goals. If they fail, they may find themselves in the middle of a battle they know they caused but could have prevented.

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- **Glories and Dangers of the Past:** A lot of knowledge and technology was lost or forgotten with the fall of the Lazax and the Twilight Wars. The major factions retreated to their own worlds while the rest of the galaxy shattered into independent systems and regions. Now, galactic civilization is rising from the ashes. Mystery and ancient history provide the backdrop for new events. Old secrets and technology can be found or reemerge unexpectedly, such as the stunning and dangerous secrets of the Mahact gene-sorcerers.

Using Factions to Propel Conflict

With dozens of powerful factions vying for control of the galaxy, conflict between them is the name of the game. There are competing interests fighting for influence and control within all organizations. Whereas some space opera universes have a dominant force competing with a strong challenger, Twilight Imperium has roughly equal contenders scheming against each other.

Faction competition comes in many forms, but political and diplomatic efforts are at the fore. They try to avoid destructive and expensive military options. Each faction watches for ways to weaken others or to ally itself with one that is useful to it, for now.

Place the PCs in interesting positions, such as diffusing a tense standoff, intercepting an agitator, or teaming up with one side to defeat another. The characters should feel some pressure to act in the interest of their own faction. They must balance that choice with the consequences to themselves and others.

As an adventure or campaign progresses, the PCs make allies and enemies of varying toughness, even within their own forces. Adversaries vary from low-grade political rivals focused on a particular issue or perceived slight, to competitors out to see the PCs fail, to dangerous enemies ready to use violent means to sideline the PCs or attack them outright. This is another source of conflict useful to a story and a way to make it more personal for the players and their characters.

Epic Storytelling

Space opera is the realm of epics. While it is perfectly possible for the PCs to be important to and concerned with only their own business and corner of the universe, Twilight Imperium stories aim higher. Each story or adventure should be important in some way to the factions and worlds involved. Even if a story happens to start with player characters with more mundane pasts, their participation in the adventure should quickly escalate and elevate their profile among the clashing factions.

Many epic stories feature planetary invasions, interstellar skirmishes, dramatic politics at the highest levels of government, or a mix of these elements. These things can and should be used when it makes sense for the story, but they are not required in every story. Actions and events smaller in scope can have a big impact in the right situation, and the PCs should realize at some point how their actions could translate to the larger picture. Small groups can have an outsized impact when the situation allows it.

Epic stories involve great risk and dramatic, far-reaching effects. As the Game Master, it is up to you to set the stage initially. Decide which factions are involved, their motivations, their goals, their tolerance for adversity, when they might walk away, and when they must refuse to do so. Unless the story focuses on an internal faction struggle, two factions minimum should be at odds. Figure out what location, or locations, the adventure features. The location should be central to the conflict and provide a dramatic, preferably cinematic, backdrop.

For the PCs, try to give them a reason to be involved *and invested* in the outcome. It is fine if they start off simply assigned to a mission with desired goals, but it is better if a personal connection presents itself. The characters' allegiance can and should factor in. Over the course of the adventure, the players should get the opportunity to learn more about the factions in play and how their PCs can affect or manipulate the situation. Politics should play a big role. Unexpected events or new participants can alter the circumstances. Take care not to undo too much of the PCs' hard work in the process to avoid diminishing the players' enjoyment and sense of accomplishment.

The PCs should have their own approaches to the situation, which will impact the ending you initially envision. Brainstorm a few possibilities ahead of time to help you adjust accordingly. Make sure you have several ways for the PCs to accomplish their goals. They can be pushed into situations beyond their control, but if so, they should have at least a couple of options to defeat or escape them. At the end, be ready to reveal the fallout from their actions and the extent of its impact on the participants.

Using Ultra-Advanced Science

Fantastic technology is a big part of the Twilight Imperium universe. Some of it is so advanced it may seem like magic compared to current real-world science. While powerful and difficult to explain, it is technology and not magic. It might tie into or come from other dimensions, feature incredible microminiaturization, exploit super-efficient power sources, or use currently unknown elements and alloys.

The Mahact kings' ultra-advanced technology is so superior it may seem like magic to many, but it isn't, and relatively few have encountered it. The Naalu's telepathy is a natural ability amplified by technology. The Arborec use spores/pheromones to transmit ideas, which is natural to them but a scientific wonder to most. No one yet understands the Vuil'raith's alien technology. Given their origins, it may take centuries to do so, if it can be done at all.

It is important to remember that a lot of common technology has been around for thousands of years. Different factions have their own takes on it and might use more or less advanced versions. While new technology and scientific achievements occur or are rediscovered regularly, it takes a

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lot to overcome the momentum and existence of tech that has been around for centuries. In fact, some equipment and vehicles may have been *in use* for centuries. Much of the core technology is so well-developed that there are diminishing returns in further advances.

Outsized Importance

The PCs have outsized importance and influence compared to others of their position and power, even among the Keleres. They should see the results and effects of their actions during the adventure or campaign. They should feel like they are making a difference, and maybe take advantage of it. Hopefully, they use their failures for extra motivation next time or take other actions to make up for them. Such pursuits can help the GM plan future adventures.

In a galaxy with so many shades of gray morally and legally, not everyone views events the same way. Every deed that is good in the eyes of some factions represents a bad outcome for others—and who benefits or suffers influences the formation of alliances, albeit often uneasy ones. Depending on who they are dealing with, the PCs may find their previous deeds viewed as elevated accomplishments or as despicable and reprehensible. This clash of views is a recurring theme.

Here are some possible ways to highlight the player characters' effects on a world or the galaxy:

- Results from previous missions affect new missions. While it can be the very next mission, sometimes it should be several missions down the road, perhaps featuring an element that was easily overlooked or thought fully resolved previously.
- Members of factions that were harmed or perceive they were harmed by the PCs' activities do not forget it, and some may seek revenge. Such payback might be violent if the original slight was, but most retaliation should appear in other forms. The faction members might paint the characters in a bad light, foul up a negotiation, or inflict some other sort of sabotage.
- Hearing news reports about their actions often makes PCs nervous or proud. However, news reports might be slanted for or against them. The facts could be distorted. Opposing propaganda might cause problems for them that they must counter.
- If the PCs did something heroic to save people, a ship, a planet, or others, they may be seen as heroes, which may make it easier for them to achieve future goals. However, their popularity could make it harder for them to operate unnoticed.
- The PCs may be sought out by reporters or agents seeking more information about a previous confrontation. In a high-profile incident, the Keleres may be forced to order them to sit for live or recorded interviews for newscasts, law enforcement inquiries, or official government reports. This could put the PCs in a bind if their actions were illegal or unethical, even if the results provided a desired outcome.

Mark Hassman (Order #52282139)

- The more the PCs deal with a specific faction or region, the better they get to know the powers that be and regional influences. The PCs should get the opportunity to use secrets they have learned about certain opponents or leaders, or tendencies they have noticed in them.
- The PCs should get feedback about their actions from organizations outside of the Keleres. Even if a PC's faction or homeworld dumped the PC on the Keleres to get them out of the way for a while, the PC should still learn how their participation in events is being received back home. If the PC returns to their own faction's space, the tone of their welcome should reflect how their own people think of them.

Game Master Advice

When running a game using Embers of the Imperium, there are some unique elements that you may want to consider. Most of these stem from the concept of the characters being a part of the Keleres, and so a part of a larger organization. This section includes advice for dealing with those elements.

Pay

As members of a government organization, the Keleres do get compensation for their work. This amount is kept deliberately low, to reinforce the core game concept that the Keleres are underpaid and underappreciated. However, how low this amount is depends on just how desperate you want to keep your players' characters.

We have three suggested amounts, each paid four times per Mecatol year. This means that you can choose to track time in your game to make payments, or issue them at the end of a campaign arc (which, depending on travel times, you can claim has taken roughly three months).

- **500 aurei:** This amount is set almost comically low to encourage players to have their characters engage in all sorts of graft, corruption, and side deals. Without bending the law, PCs will have a hard time affording more than basic weapons and equipment or will be totally reliant on what the quartermasters give them.
- **1,000 aurei:** This is an "average" amount that means your PCs will be able to upgrade their equipment after each adventure, but won't be able to obtain heavy weapons or rare items without scrimping and saving. The PCs won't need to engage in illicit activities, but there may be some temptation to do so.
- **2,500 aurei:** This payment level is appropriate if you want your group to be well-paid and not worrying about money. With this amount, the only things that will be out of reach after a couple of sessions are starships and vehicles. However, you will want to give your PCs corresponding challenges to match their powerful gear.

This payment system assumes that your PCs' cost of living expenses are being maintained by the Keleres. They are given rooms in the Keleres HQ, receive meals from the mess hall, and have any basic medical care covered by the infirmary.

The Keleres Armory and Issued Supplies

This payment system also does not account for gear the Keleres may receive from the official supply depots and base armory to accomplish their missions. The Winnaran Custodians responsible for supplies are notoriously stingy with the meager resources allocated to the Keleres, but a cohort can still expect some support, especially if they are friends with one of the quartermasters.

Your players are likely to think of asking for items from the armory, and if they don't, you can suggest this as an option. The important thing is for them to use the armory to obtain basic supplies, and not try to argue that each of them needs a personal beam cannon and force field for every mission. To help with this, we have some guidelines for what your group can request from the armory.

- Requests should only happen before an authorized mission. Quartermasters are likely to deny any random requests out of hand.
- The cohort makes requests as a group. Before a mission, the cohort may request a number of items with a combined value of no greater than 500 aurei. No item can have a rarity greater than 3.
- Any items that aren't single use or consumable (such as grenades, z-tabs, extra ammunition, or dermal sealers) need to be returned to the armory at the end of the mission. Failure to return items should result in the quartermasters significantly limiting the next request the group makes or denying it entirely.

The important thing to remember is that the Winnaran quartermasters have wide discretion in what requests they honor and what requests they don't. Although it may not seem fair, cohorts that make friends with a quartermaster have a much better chance of getting greater requests met. Conversely, those who anger a quartermaster are likely to see their requests denied entirely.

Some of this can be handled through roleplaying. If you feel like your group has successfully gotten on a quartermaster's good side, you can increase the amount of gear they're allowed to requisition, up to 1,000 aurei. The other option is if a PC wants to obtain an item that is either rarer or more expensive than the normal requisition rules allow. In this case, you can have the PC make a Charm or Negotiation check with a difficulty determined by **Table I.5–1: Rarity** on page 82 of the Core Rulebook to see if they can convince the quartermaster to let them requisition the item. Of course, it is ultimately up to you whether the armory has the item in stock. Don't feel that you have to give your group a sliver missile launcher just because they rolled well!

Mark Fleshner (Order #32262150)

Starships and Vehicles for the Group

The Keleres have a number of vehicles and starships grudgingly donated by the various members of the Galactic Council. These vehicles are stored in the underground hangars beneath the ruined Imperial Intelligence headquarters and in the municipal starports scattered throughout Mecatol City, from which they are assigned to various Keleres cohorts as needed. In theory, vehicles are made available to a cohort strictly on a basis of need and mission priority. In actuality, the Winnaran hangar officers play favorites, giving top-flight ships to the Keleres they like and pawning off broken-down junkers on those who insult or anger them. It's not a surprise that some Keleres obtain their own transport, storing it discreetly off-site for their own personal use.

The following is a list of vehicles available to the Keleres, with information on the likelihood that a hangar official would make each available to a cohort.

- **Personal transports and shuttles (page 139 and page 142):** The Keleres have access to scores of wheeled and flying personal transports, mostly four- to six-passenger variants, but also a few cargo haulers and some intersystem ten-person shuttles. Any Keleres can requisition one to get around Mecatol City or in-system, although those who actively anger the hangar officials may end up with one of the haulers normally used for transporting trash to the recycling plants.
- **Ramblers (page 139):** Two years ago, the Keleres received a dozen old Predator ramblers—lightly armed and armored ground-transportation fighting vehicles—that the Federation of Sol was in the process of decommissioning. The hangar officers have guarded them jealously ever since, assigning them only to teams visiting hostile worlds.
- **Long-range scout ships (page 149):** Cohorts assigned off-world tend to fight to obtain one of the Keleres' twenty long-range scout ships (if they don't, they end up having to hitch a ride on an interstellar transport). The survivors of the original fleet of thirty provided by the Emirates of Hacan, these ships are each flexible and reliable enough to serve a range of mission parameters.
- **Unofficial resources:** Officially, the Keleres are not allowed to keep any vessels other than those noted. Unofficially, they have collected a number of other ships over the past five years, ranging from a pair of courier ships (page 148) and an overture cutter (page 148) to a few tramp freighters (page 151) and even a single Yssaril Infiltrator (page 150). Only the Tribunii know for sure which vehicles are hidden away in secret hangars or docked on the outer edges of the system, and only by getting in their good graces can a cohort ever expect to be assigned one.

Setting Benchmarks

When using the agenda rules from page 62, the base number of benchmarks that need to be completed to resolve an agenda is four. However, this number can be increased or decreased depending on the length of your campaign. The overall goal is that everyone has a chance to complete their agenda before the campaign ends.

One or Two-session Games

If you're running a one- or two-session game (such as a convention game), we recommend reducing the number of benchmarks to one. Basically, each player should have a chance to do something that resolves their agenda. In this case, you can also forgo requiring the PC to complete a side mission. If they accomplish a benchmark, then they have fulfilled their agenda.

In these situations, the agenda rewards should be entirely narrative. Your players aren't going to have enough time to invest their rewards anyway, so completing a story goal is the best reward.

Short Campaigns

If you are going to play a short campaign (roughly six sessions), you should consider reducing the number of benchmarks to three. You should also consider forgo requiring a PC to complete a side mission once they have enough benchmarks. Since your campaign is going to be short, devoting several sessions to side missions may seriously derail it.

You can also halve the rewards in this case.

Average Campaigns

For these purposes, we consider an average campaign to be anywhere from ten to twenty sessions. A campaign that is this long should have enough time for everyone to complete four benchmarks, and have a chance to do some sort of side mission.

Long Campaigns

If you expect your campaign to take place over twenty sessions, then you can extend the number of benchmarks to four or even five. Remember, however, most PCs should complete their agendas partway through the campaign so that they have a chance to enjoy the rewards for the rest of the sessions. The only exception is if the PC receives a reward that is going to let them retire from the Keleres. In this case, the player should also be on board with resolving their agenda at the end of the campaign.

Mark Hissong (Order #5282139)

Twilight Imperium Adventure Builder

The adventure builder provides a quick way to assemble a framework of a typical Twilight Imperium universe adventure. It uses modular elements that you can mix and match to create different situations and even influence the style of play with a variety of encounter types. Each element focuses on one or more aspects or approaches common to the universe: construction, diplomacy, exploration, empire, leadership, politics, technology, trade, and warfare.

The adventure builder contains three components: **Hooks**, **Escalations**, and **Climaxes**. For planning purposes, you can select one of each component ahead of time and add or subtract elements as desired. This may allow you to plan the encounters in more detail. Alternatively, you can start with one hook and then wait until the PCs have finished that part of the adventure to select the escalation, and then do likewise with a climax. This method may give you more flexibility to adjust to PC ideas and relies more on your own improvisation as the story develops.

Each component presents a particular story element, then suggests aspects to focus on. You may wish to choose which approach the PCs should use to advance the adventure, but ideally you should make more than one available to expand player choices. Most of the time, there should be more than one path to a successful outcome.

Hooks

Hooks provide the initial incentive for PCs to become involved and interested in the adventure. Straightforward, easily understood story concepts and intent make the best hooks. What the characters are getting involved in and why should be reasonably obvious, even if there are later mysteries or twists that change things as the story develops. It is okay for hooks to be a bit cliché, as it makes it easier for players to quickly catch onto the main concept.

Each hook includes one or more primary goals, several challenges, and a twist. The primary goals are what the PCs expect to try to achieve. They provide the initial plot and a framework for the beginning encounters. The PCs must overcome the challenges to achieve their goals. The challenges may be divided into separate encounters, each focused on one challenge. Alternatively, aspects of the challenges could

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be inserted into a series of encounters, so different challenges could be worked on and achieved simultaneously. The twist is an unexpected change or revelation that alters the situation to the extent that the PCs must adjust their plans and actions. Using a twist is optional.

Several example hooks are included in this section. Review the primary goal first to see if it fits or interests you. If it does not, move on to another hook. Adjust the challenges to fit the factions you wish to include as well as to better cater to the characters your players create.

The Great Crystalline Oscillator (Technology, Exploration)

As the old Lazax Empire disintegrated, Winnaran leaders sought to preserve history and technology for future generations. They secretly built impenetrable vaults on Mecatol Rex. The Winnarans wanted only those loyal to reestablishing the Lazax Empire to have access. The vaults have a self-destruct mechanism that can only be circumvented by using a complex key known as a Great Crystalline Oscillator. These shuttle-sized devices each incorporate an intricate matrix of crystal oscillation devices that generate electrical pulses in specific sequences. All of the Oscillators were thought destroyed, but it turns out that one might still exist. The PCs must acquire it for the Keleres. Surprisingly, it is not on Mecatol Rex, but on a world controlled by a faction of your choosing.

Primary Goals

The PCs must locate and acquire the Oscillator, without damaging it, and possibly without alerting the faction controlling the planet where it is located.

Challenges

- The PCs or someone else discovers a long-lost report that one Oscillator was secretly taken off Mecatol Rex by the selected faction. The faction's ship was attacked and thought lost. The PCs must trace the ship.
- The shipwreck is in a remote area of a contested planet. Any of the factions involved immediately interfere if they learn of the important discovery. Keleres interest is enough to pique their own.
- The PCs search the shipwreck. It is physically dangerous from decay and damage. Creatures inhabit it. The Oscillator is largely intact but must be cut out.

Twist

The Winnarans secretly built vaults on other worlds. The faction that stole the Oscillator still knows where one is located. If they obtain the Oscillator, they try to repair it and open their vault. If they are successful, the information or technology inside grants them an immediate and obvious advantage in their quest to gain control of Mecatol Rex.

Wormhole Flashpoint (Diplomacy, Politics, Trade)

Travel near one of the wormholes critical to trade is disrupted by a massive group of asteroids that passes through the area periodically. The asteroids' orbits are well-known, normally making their presence a temporary navigational annoyance. This time, however, something is affecting the orbits and creating hazards. Initially the cause appears to be a collision with the asteroid group, but there are whispers that someone is disrupting the asteroids' orbits to slow traffic to and from the wormhole.

Primary Goals

The PCs must scan and search the asteroids to determine if their movement is a natural occurrence. If other sentients are the problem, the PCs must determine who they are and stop them before other factions step in militarily.

Challenges

- The PCs must assemble capable ships and crews that can scientifically assess the situation and have the power to capture or deter others if they are responsible.
- The local faction demands to carry out its own investigation, potentially interfering with the PCs. The PCs have temporary authority to deny the attempt but must deter them diplomatically.
- The asteroids are being moved into new orbits by concealed rockets placed months before without anyone noticing. The PCs trace the control signals to a hidden ship.
- The responsible parties are from a separatist group hoping to use the trade disruption to gain concessions to "free" their world. The PCs may negotiate with them to return the asteroids to the proper orbits, take them into custody, or maybe even broker a peace deal between the dissidents and the faction controlling their world.

Twist

Some of the asteroids stray close enough to the wormhole to be transported to the other end. This causes new navigational problems and perhaps collisions with ships on the other side or in transit. This could be a deliberate escalation of the situation, a miscalculation, or the result of a failed action or resolution on the part of the PCs.

A New Leader Emerges (Leadership, Diplomacy, Politics, Warfare)

A new leader rises rapidly to a position of great influence or power within one of the main factions, altering the galactic political landscape. The means of elevation is highly publicized and may occur through legal action, election, subterfuge, dirty deals, warfare, or even assassination. Some factions welcome the leader as a possible ally, while others are suspicious and outright belligerent to the change.

Primary Goals

The leader is threatening to destabilize some very tenuous peace agreements and ceasefires between their faction and several others. Although the Keleres cannot officially get involved, the Tribunii agree that for the sake of galactic peace, this leader needs to be dealt with. Ideally, the leader's influence could be reduced by embarrassing them or empowering a rival. At worst, they may need to be eliminated.

Challenges

- The new leader unexpectedly but popularly exposes the details of secret trade deals between rival factions that reveal their manipulation of galactic markets. Several other factions immediately impose their own restrictions, starting a major trade war. The PCs must investigate the veracity of the secret deals. The information is true but exaggerated to an extent that the PCs may be able to negotiate or facilitate a settlement to end the trade war.
- The new leader's history is unknown to outsiders. The PCs must investigate the leader's background, history, political goals, public supporters, and secret backers. If the PCs do a poor job, they may accidentally believe misinformation or misinterpret their findings. The PCs' report greatly influences the stance of the Keleres (and possibly others) toward the leader.
- The new leader is an incredible unifying force, mending problems within their faction with relative ease. The leader's goals are relatively noble and honest, but some opponents and factions find the promises or concessions too good to be true. Even as they work to harm or discredit this new leader, the PCs have to wrestle with the fact that this person is working to help a lot of people who need it.

Twist

Twists about leaders themselves typically involve revelations about unexpected backers (like an opposing faction), secret means of influencing their followers (perhaps a Naalu-operated telepathic projector influencing followers' minds), inconvenient relatives (criminals), and socially unacceptable vices. However, twists can also come in the form of unexpected responses to the leader's actions. Longtime political allies might reject a surprising new policy. A subfaction could panic and take disproportionate actions that destabilize the situation quickly. Neighbors might then escalate their military readiness and aggressiveness as a deterrent.

Industrial Espionage (Trade, Technology)

In the never-ending competition between factions, technological advancements and galactic commerce play as great or greater a role as do political scheming and military battles. Industrial espionage lets factions cut technological development time short, keep tabs on opponents' capabilities, track logistics, and gain insight into economic health and trade. While investigating a heavily damaged freighter helpless in space, the PCs discover devices in the hold that appear to use some aspect of Vuil'raith technology to generate highly concentrated energy. Vuil'raith tech is widely known to be impossibly difficult to comprehend.

Primary Goals

The PCs must trace the shipment's origins to discover which faction might have made such a breakthrough, and to find out if someone is cooperating with the Vuil'raith. The **Surprise Secret Lab** encounter, on page 282, may be useful for this hook.

Challenges

- The PCs question the freighter's crew and find they were unaware of what was in the shipment. The manifest lists the shipment as a low-grade biomass energy generator, but simple tests reveal it can generate an astounding amount of energy for a short time. It is also highly volatile and very hazardous to move or examine.
- There are indications the biomass might be a nonsentient creature, partially encased in a metal shell and the amplification technology.
- The PCs trace the shipment through several sketchy starports and systems to a former Jol-Nar biotech laboratory and factory, now run by a shady corporation. It is heavily protected by layers of security, and the staff refuse requests for entry.
- The biomass energy generators are highly unstable and often fail during manufacturing. They hold just a tiny bit of salvaged Vuil'raith tech that gives them a dangerous short burst of energy. The scientists don't really understand why they work and can just barely make them function. They need money to continue and have started a premature sales program.

Twist

The Vuil'raith creature (or portion of a creature) embedded within the generator is self-aware. The energy comes from its link to the Vuil'raith's home dimension, and the creature can also use that link to communicate with others of its kind. In effect, it's a homing beacon, summoning other Vuil'raith to its location.

Mark Fischer (Order #32282139)

A New Threat from an Ancient Evil (Diplomacy, Technology, Trade, Warfare)

Ancient, long-forgotten threats can reappear unexpectedly seemingly anywhere in the galaxy. A new crisis erupts when a variety of large creatures within a wilderness on a faction-controlled world suddenly turn excessively violent and aggressive. What at first appears to be a new virus turns out to be the activation of ancient genetic manipulation, likely but not definitively by the Mahact gene-sorcerers.

Primary Goals

The PCs need to identify the presence of the genetic manipulation. Then they need to figure out if it can be reversed, or if the only solution is mass extermination.

Challenges

- The PCs are on the outskirts of a relatively neutral city on Quann, negotiating an exchange of highly important espionage agents between the Yssaril's Guild of Spies and the Mentak Coalition. During the negotiations, hundreds of bizarre creatures overrun the remote meeting site. The PCs must help battle back the monsters. Then they must determine if the threat is natural, if one of the negotiating factions is responsible, or if an outside faction is disrupting the proceedings.
- The creatures are local, but they have obvious mutations. Analysis shows that they are undergoing a rapid genetic change, reasons unknown. PCs must gather additional data and samples. They may take part in analyzing the findings.
- Detailed assessments discover evidence of genetic engineering that has gone undetected in previous studies of the creatures. The creatures or their ancestors existed at the time of the Mahact kings. It could be a remnant of past Mahact work. The changes coincide with a strange interstellar transmission burst of particles that passed through the area several days before the attacks.
- No one can say for certain if the transmission was a natural occurrence or deliberate. If the Mahact kings can trigger such things from afar, it would be a worrying development and extension of their terrifying power.

Twist

The Guild of Spies tries to steal the data and analysis for their own use and to sell to other factions. The Mentak Coalition sends teams to capture creatures for similar gains. Whether or not they are actually responsible, the Mahact kings send a reconnaissance vessel a few days later to survey the situation and likewise capture specimens of each of the affected species.

The Naalu Amplifier (Construction, Politics, Technology)

The Naalu use technology to increase their telepathic capabilities. While other species can't use such devices themselves, they might learn new methods of disrupting the technology, so the Naalu protect their secrets. Recently, an automated scout probe accidentally discovered Naalu construction activity on a rocky, scorched world in a remote, uninhabited star system. It managed to make some basic scans and readings and escape undetected.

Primary Goals

The PCs must discover what the Naalu are building. What they find out might chill many factions. The Naalu are building a telepathic amplifier, the Neffap, and no one knows if it is simply for surveillance or to project thoughts to distant targets. Either way, it is a threat to the region, and it needs to be dealt with.

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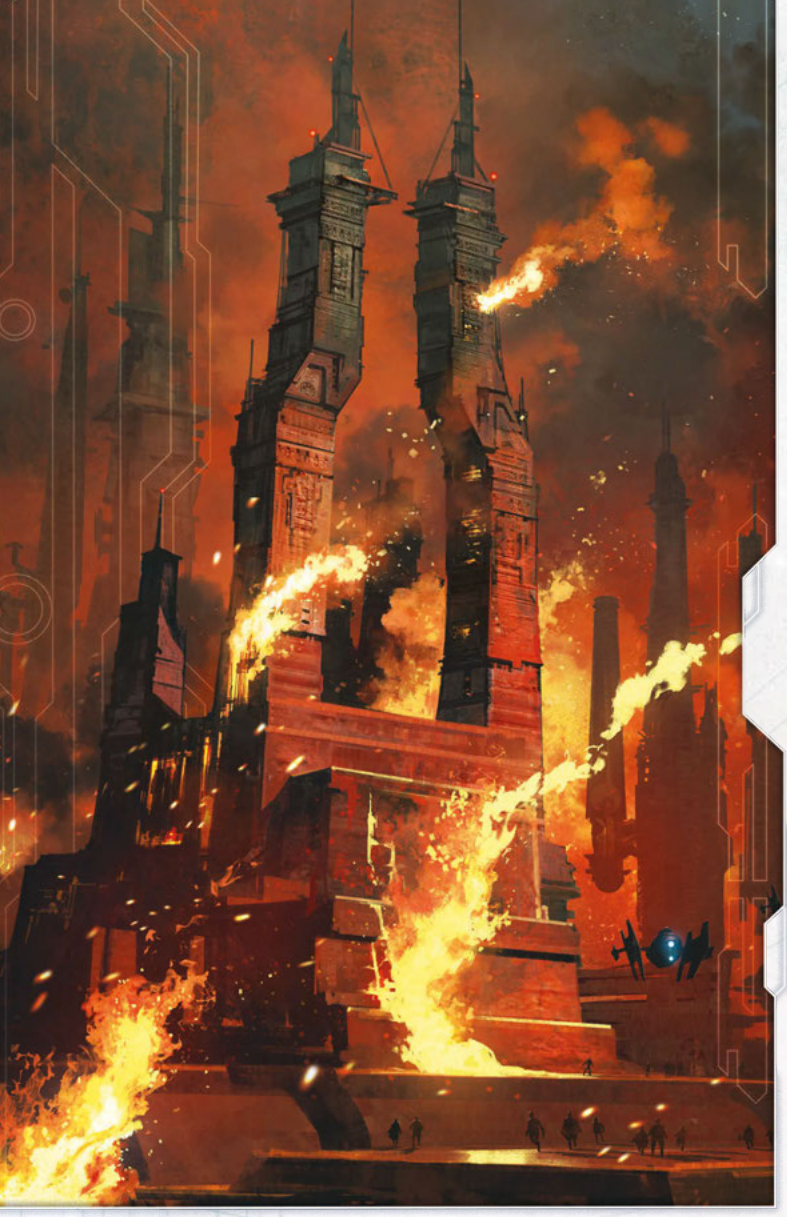

Challenges

- The PCs must figure out how to carry out their surveillance. The Naalu will likely detect them once they arrive, which might cause them to destroy what they are building or attempt to control or influence the PCs' minds.
- The probe's data did not detect Naalu directly, but it positively identified Naalu-built automated drones and robots carrying out the construction work. Due to the harsh conditions, the Naalu are using them to preconstruct a base of dozens of buildings and underground warrens.
- The PCs have a short window of time to investigate the base. They may devise stealthy ways to approach the system and arrive undetected, or they may forgo any attempt to hide their interest and just head directly for the construction site.
- The base is incomplete, but dozens of Naalu engineers arrive about a day after the PCs to complete the Neffap amplifier. If the base detects the PCs, it notifies the engineers prior to the engineers' arrival.
- The engineers are bringing vital components to finish the amplifier. Once they install it, they can use it to affect the PCs' minds and expand their surveillance in the region. The engineers may choose to simply wipe the PCs' memories or attempt to turn them into Naalu spies within the Keleres. That would be a major Naalu success.
- Any data the PCs can gather about the amplifier is greatly coveted.

Twist

The PCs or engineers could seek a political solution, as the Naalu presence is likely legal unless it is within the borders of another faction's territory. Alternatively, if it is in Yssaril space, the Yssaril might show up and declare that they approve of the installation as a sign of their long-standing partnership. Of course, the PCs might discover the Yssaril are also under Naalu control.

Escalations

Escalations increase the adventure's difficulty, importance, or stakes. The PCs discover there is much more depth or complexity to a given situation. While escalations can include surprises, many simply reveal something or someone that makes the situation harder than expected. Each escalation example starts with a brief description, followed by a list of new challenges one or more of which may be applied.

Deteriorating Conditions (Any)

The physical environment is worsening significantly. It interferes with the PCs' ability to move, travel, and carry out their plans. Conditions are usually strong natural occurrences such as storms, but they may also be the result of large explosions or hazardous materials. The PCs must endure the conditions—and possibly neutralize them.

New Challenges

- A storm system rolls in, like a hurricane or major winter storm, and lasts for more than a day.
- A short but intense storm passes through, such as lines of thunderstorms with tornadoes.
- A sand or dust storm blankets the area, making travel virtually impossible.
- Aboard a spaceship, the oxygen supplies are dwindling, or the heating/cooling system fails, exposing the ship's interior to temperature extremes.
- Aboard a spaceship or within a habitat, some compartments are exposed to vacuum or poisonous atmospheres.
- An important power station has a major radiation (or other hazardous material) leak that threatens the surrounding area and possibly the entire region.

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- Fires ravage the surrounding wilderness, threatening to cut off access.
- A powerful earthquake strikes, followed up by aftershocks every few hours.
- A dimensional portal or rift opens or closes, perhaps doing both at random intervals, with or without a Vuil'raith appearance.
- A nearby volcano erupts with or without warning.
- A (relatively) nearby star goes nova or supernova.

Surprise Attack (Warfare)

One faction decides violence is the answer and immediately strikes, taking everyone else by surprise. The size of the attacking force varies by the situation. It could be a few expertly trained individuals, a squad, a task force, or even an army or fleet. Alternatively, the attack could be a hastily devised plan using near-incompetent combatants because that is all that is available.

New Challenges

- The PCs are taken completely off guard. They are in no way ready and may not have weapons at all, or at least not readily available.
- The attackers are allies of the PCs, and the PCs may or may not agree with the aggressive move, or combat at all. They must make an immediate decision on whether to join in, stay out of the way, or try to stop it.
- A faction previously unknown to be involved in the current situation attacks. Their goals are not clear, and they may attack everyone present, or just one side.
- The PCs discover the attack at the last moment and must quickly decide if they want to warn the others, immediately escape, try to spoil the attack, or join it.
- A major military incursion overwhelms the PCs or nullifies their goals, forcing them to simply escape and survive or devise a way to make contact with the attackers and force them to hear the PCs out.

Unwanted Attention or Publicity (Politics, Trade, Construction, Empire)

PC actions or activities have drawn the attention of the local authorities, influential organizations, or the news media. It is likely interfering with their mission, but it also may be something they can exploit to learn new information or promote their side of the story.

New Challenges

- Media members try to follow the PCs around in person and using technology. They may give away secret operations in the process.
- If the PCs act illegally or unethically, their actions are splashed all over the news. The PCs might not even know they were recorded.
- Local law enforcement tracks the PCs or tries to deter them from operating in the area.
- The PCs gain enthusiastic fans and groupies that appear at inopportune moments.

Unexpected Accident (Politics, Construction, Technology, Trade)

An unexpected accident suddenly changes the situation. The accident might appear to be a staged event initially, but the PCs should be able to discover, and perhaps to convincingly show, that it really is due to bad luck and bad timing. The accident need not create permanent results, such as death or complete destruction of an item or location. Important individuals could be incapacitated rather than killed. Essential equipment could be disabled during a time of crisis.

New Challenges

- The PCs witness the accident firsthand and must respond immediately.
- The PCs cause the accident, perhaps due to a ⊗ on a critical skill check.
- The PCs discover that evidence exists that proves an accident truly is an accident, and they must recover the recordings, find witnesses, or both.
- The accident takes another form, such as a mistaken translation causing chaos for a time, but can be clarified eventually.
- The accident involves opposing faction members who initially try to spin the incident in their favor, but the facts keep catching up to them.

Unrelenting Ego (Any)

One of the adversaries has a massive ego that disrupts everything they become involved in. They are too powerful, important, or involved to simply sideline. The PCs spend a lot of energy to scheme ways around the individual. The person's diva behavior, arrogance, or insistence things go their own way does not have to be endless. The encounters are more engaging, interesting, and entertaining if the PCs can find ways to appease or correct the adversary in ways they will accept.

New Challenges

- The individual keeps stealing or appropriating other people's ideas. The PCs might fight for credit. Clever PCs might convince the person to present something that works toward the PCs' objectives, even if it also hampers the individual's ultimate goal.

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- The individual always needs to be in control and attempts to micromanage the situation. The person might be an ally with the same goals as the PCs, but their insistence on being in the loop delays decisions and introduces small or large errors.
- The individual insists they are never wrong, and it is difficult to make them see reason. The bigger the decisions they make, the less likely they are to admit mistakes.

Climaxes

The climax is the adventure's endgame. A climax is less detailed and more open than hooks and escalations. Each includes possible conclusions that are likely to be heavily influenced and altered by PC actions. Each also has a few challenges that may come into play if circumstances allow. Ultimately, the PCs' choices should determine how the adventure ends. The PCs may not always succeed, but even if they fail, they should feel they were able to make their own decisions and have fun along the way. In a universe of endless politics and scheming, it is very likely that any conclusion will have a range of winners and losers.

Fix It. Fix It Now. (Any)

Success hinges on fixing something that is very important in the moment. Usually, it is something big and powerful, but it could be very small and threatening. Unfortunately, something about the process is complicated and dangerous. Ideally, in a climax, all the PCs should have a role in success or failure, even if they do not possess the specific skills required.

New Challenges

- An enormous engine must be fixed to enable an attack, escape, or pursuit. While some characters work on the mechanism itself, others can work on related systems, haul staggeringly large parts into place, search for tools, and fend off attackers or eager yet incompetent help.
- A major communications array is inoperable and must be repaired to transmit a warning, a cry for help, or a staggering revelation. PCs must climb all over the array, seeking out specific junction boxes, control panels, and conduit paths. New wiring must be run to replace damaged cables. Software and controls might need to be reprogrammed to account for jury-rigged parts or mismatched technology.

Power Up (Construction, Technology, Trade, Warfare)

The PCs gain a significant advantage that alters their earlier planning. The help might be unexpected or previously orchestrated. It can be reinforcements, an advantageous revelation, something previously prepared that is finally ready, a massive morale boost, or the emergence of an influential leader.

New Challenges

- The help is not free. The PCs must bargain or pay for it. They might end up owing somebody significant a very big favor or becoming financially indebted.
- The benefit is physically exhausting or damaging, and the characters risk taking themselves out of the contest by using it.
- The PCs do not fully control the new benefit. They struggle with their equipment or argue with their reinforcements, or the help benefits their opponents as much as it benefits them.
- The benefit is almost too good. There is a risk of overloading, overwhelming, or overdoing the task needed to succeed.

Escape (Politics, Technology, Warfare)

Ultimately, someone must escape the situation. The PCs escape after accomplishing a mission or just find themselves in a bad spot. Alternatively, a fleeing criminal or other target is escaping, and the PCs must give chase. It is likely to be a physical escape on foot or by vehicle, but it could be a diplomatic retreat or negotiated departure.

New Challenges

- The exit consists of a row of doors, portals, or other physical barriers that are interconnected and must be held open all at once or only one at a time.
- Something collapses. The roof or ceiling falls in haphazardly. The floor starts to disintegrate. Walls sway erratically. Statues happen to topple at just the wrong moment.
- Innocent bystanders get in the way, slowing the escapees down or becoming injured in the process.
- The vehicle's engine intermittently surges or fails.
- Enemies suddenly appear and block the way.
- Reinforcements arrive to save the day.

Attempted Assassination (Politics, Warfare)

The situation is pushed beyond the breaking point for at least one faction involved, and they decide to eliminate the opposing leader or another prime target. The target might be one or more of the PCs, depending on their involvement. The attempt could be by a single assassin, a team, or even an obvious strike

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force if the faction doesn't care if others know they are responsible. The PCs may get the opportunity to discover and stop the assassin, to pursue them after the attempt, or both.

New Challenges

- The PCs discover the assassination attempt is a setup, and the person responsible is trying to cast blame on a different faction.
- The assassin is spotted or otherwise detected setting up, instantly forcing all factions to respond in the moment.
- The assassin has unexpected protection or backup ready to defend them.
- The assassin is willing to cause collateral damage to achieve their goal.
- The assassin is being blackmailed into making the attempt and is secretly trying to get caught beforehand without looking like it.
- The assassin is a paid mercenary who is not willing to die for the cause.
- The PCs know the assassin personally.
- The assassin unexpectedly belongs to the same faction as one of the PCs.

Scapegoats (Diplomacy, Politics, Construction, Technology, Trade)

It's a bad situation that isn't the PCs' fault, at least not entirely, but they're getting blamed anyway. The higher-ups or local allies blame the PCs for everything that is going wrong. The PCs can see it coming and get plenty of warning. They gain opportunities to do things to make their case and prove their points.

New Challenges

- One of the PCs' allies unexpectedly pulls out at the last moment, having lost confidence that the PCs know how to fix the situation.
- The PCs' higher-ups order them to return due to their "failure," and the PCs must make a last-ditch effort to salvage the situation.
- The PCs are publicly blamed for the situation, making it that much harder to clear their names.
- The PCs might willingly take the fall for a bad situation if it achieves some other goal.

Domination (Any)

The PCs, their allies, or both have achieved their previous goals to the extent that they are in the most powerful position among the competing factions. Instead of solely responding to the situation, they dominate it. The PCs can dictate terms to their opponents and expect significant results, possibly even a complete victory. However, if the PCs overplay their hand, they can still fail.

New Challenges

- The PCs' dominance creates a crisis for another faction, which calls in equally powerful reinforcements. If it's a military situation, a force of similar strength appears. If it's a political or trade negotiation, the other faction's allies, who had been staying on the sidelines, rush to that faction's aid.
- The PCs' opponents panic, causing a different crisis as they depart and afterward. The rapid pullout leaves a leadership or military vacuum that the PCs may not be ready for. It allows other factions to take advantage of the situation even if they can't ultimately prevent the PCs' success.
- The PCs take too much advantage of the situation. Their overreach offends other factions, or their actions cause their higher-ups to publicly crack down on them. The incident becomes a permanent negative mark on their reputation.
- The strength exhibited by the PCs or their allies is actually a charade that they are working hard to maintain. If it is exposed, the tables are quickly turned.

Twilight Imperium Encounters

Individual encounters are the building blocks of any adventure, comparable to individual scenes in a movie, play, or other story. Most encounters have a primary focus, and many allow multiple aspects of the story to play out at once. This section presents several different encounters that both are specific to the Twilight Imperium universe and demonstrate its common themes. These encounter ideas can be expanded into full adventures or dropped into an adventure or campaign of your own design.

Nekro Virus Attack

This encounter features a feared Nekro Virus attack against a ship, but it can be easily modified to suit a structure, base, or settlement instead. The encounter may be inserted into an adventure as a sudden twist, though its effects could last much longer. Here is a sample description of the initial attack, which can be modified as needed:

> *A slender, needlelike craft approaches you like the high-speed missile it is. It has gray and silver interlocking plating, and a red glow emanates from between the armored panels. The craft's pointed front cone ends in a piercing red light that turns into a blast of plasma energy as it reaches your ship's surface. The blast burns and weakens your hull fractions of a second before the entire craft slams into your ship, puncturing the exterior with ease.*

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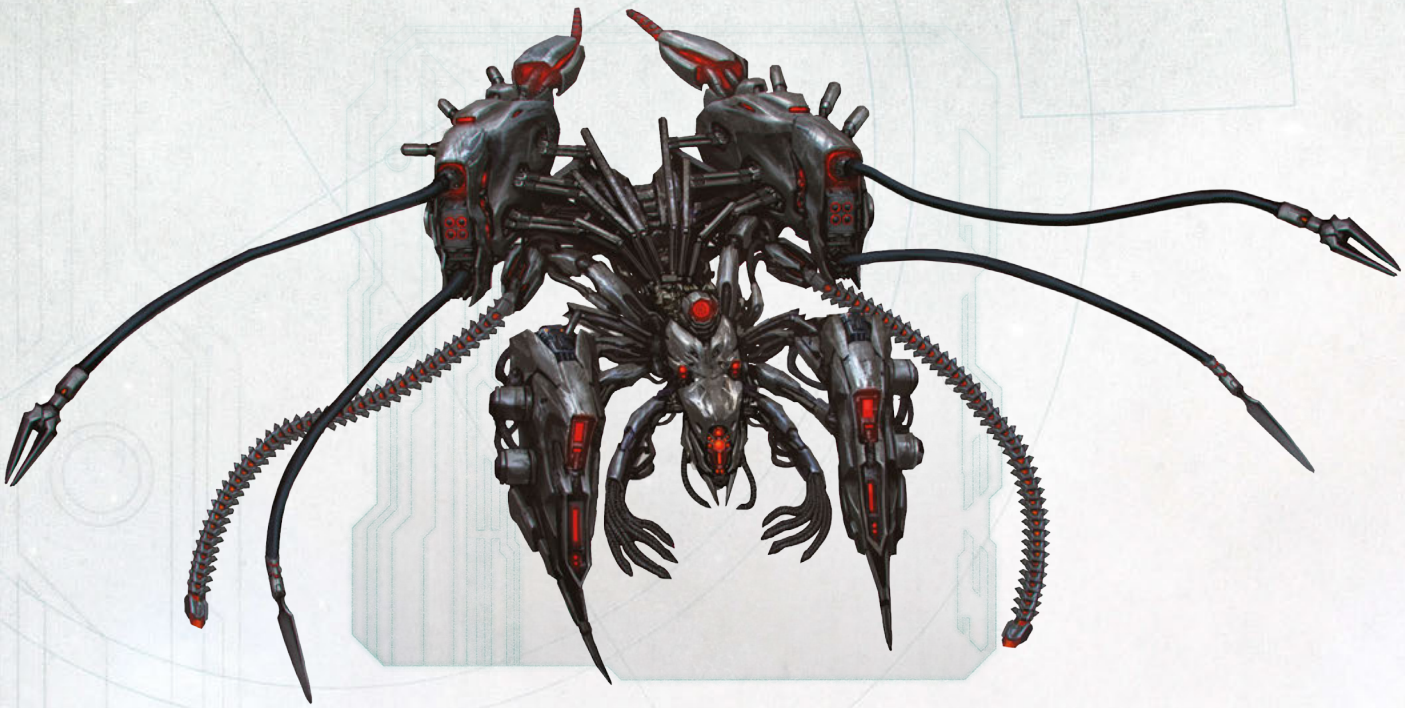

The attacker is a Nekro Injector ship. The needle shape is designed to pierce spaceship hulls, vehicles, or large structures, and specifically slip past antimass deflectors or other shielding systems. The front end breaks off or opens inside the target and releases a stream of Nekro drones and swarms. Meanwhile, the exterior of the craft disassembles itself into component crawling machines that attack the target's exterior. Only the craft's skeletal structure and propulsion system remain. However, its beams and struts soon separate to create a spiderlike machine with an engine at its core. As it walks on the target, it spins the engine around to face its victim and uses it to attack the exterior with incinerating blasts of heat and flame.

There is no negotiating with the Nekro Virus. Clever characters may use their ship's features and systems against the invaders by closing doors, isolating life-support systems, and shutting down the ship's computers to avoid infection.

Three minion groups of **Nekro attack drones** (see page 255) and three minion groups of **Nekro Valefar assimilation swarms** (see page 257) move through the interior, trying to kill or destroy all that oppose them. They try to interface with any computer or control panel they find in order to take over the internal systems.

The PCs may make **opposed Computers versus Computers checks** to attempt to prevent access. Once the virus is in, the PCs may make additional opposed checks each time it attempts to take over a different major system (propulsion, life-support, weapons, etc.). The PCs can make similar checks to isolate the virus temporarily within a subsystem. Fully eradicating a system takes hours or days, if it works.

A minimum of three (maximum six) Nekro Injector hull crawlers on the exterior attempt to block hatches and doors, disable the engines, and damage the weapons. If the initial attack stalls, they attempt to enter the target elsewhere. The Nekro Injector hull framework crawls on its long, spindly legs. It uses its engine to blast cockpit viewports, control centers, armored doors, engines, and other protected parts of the ship.

Nekro Injector Hull Crawler (Rival)

6 2 4

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	2	3	2	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
6	30	1/1

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Electromagnetic Feet (can move normally in zero-gravity), Nekro (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and can survive in vacuum; immune to poisons and toxins), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Nekro shredder claws (Brawl; Damage 10; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 3, Vicious 2).

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Nekro Injector Hull Framework (Nemesis)

12 | 3 | 2

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
6	2	2	3	3	2

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
10	50	25	1/1

Skills: Computers 2, Gunnery 2, Operating 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice).

Abilities: Nekro (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and can survive in vacuum; immune to poisons and toxins), Silhouette 3.

Equipment: Nekro turret (Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Long]; Pierce 1), engine blast (Gunnery; Damage 18; Critical 2; Range [Short]; Blast 3, Breach 1, Burn 1, Vicious 3).

Consequences

The PCs must completely defeat the attackers or find a means to escape. If the PCs flee, the Nekro only pursue if there is an obvious means to do so. Nekro attack drones chase those running on foot or using a slow vehicle. The Nekro Injector hull framework reconfigures itself back into needle form to chase down escaping ships and other craft. If the PCs repel the attack, dormant or hidden portions of the virus periodically reappear in the ship's systems until the PCs can make a full assessment and perhaps get specialized assistance.

The Hacan Caravan Fleet

Hacan trade ships travel throughout the galaxy in caravans, distributing wares from the Kenara system and returning with technology, material goods, and cash. They also deal in unusual products gathered during their travels. Agurrac's caravan fleet is now displaying new art called the Shining Gems on each ship. The enormous and mysterious glowing artificial jewels are spectacular to look at. Unknown to most, they originated with and were stolen from the Sardakk N'orr homeworld during the Twilight Wars. The Winnarans heard about the fleet and asked the Keleres to dispatch the PCs to convince Agurrac to give up the gems to them for delivery to the Winnarans. The Winnarans need them to fulfill an old agreement with the Sardakk N'orr. They need to get them before the N'orr do, or they will lose their chance to trade them for an ancient Lazax data vault.

The PCs must first find the fleet's current location. It can be any major world. They discover that the fleet departed the day before, and they must ascertain where it went. After catching up with the fleet, they find it landed and fully deployed, with sales in full swing.

When the PCs arrive at the fleet, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> *Agurrac's caravan fleet has over a dozen heavily decorated and polished freighters. They are guarded by three heavily armed warships, equally decked out in bright, aggressive colors. You have heard Agurrac is quite old but insists on leading trips with an enormous entourage that takes care of the details while he entertains and cuts new deals aboard his ship. Each ship has on its side an enormous glowing jewel two meters in diameter.*

The ships are arranged in two parallel lines, creating a wide boulevard and ending with Agurrac's ship at the far end. One warship sits to each side, and the third is behind Agurrac's ship. The area is decked out in Hacan fashion, from the traditional to the trendy. Each freighter is specially designed to open directly into a cargo bay that doubles as a fixed display and sales area. Wares are also spread out on racks and tables in front of and under each ship.

The PCs may browse as they approach Agurrac's ship. While they do so, a N'orr is secretly scouting ahead of a strike team that is approaching to take the jewels. The PCs may make **opposed Vigilance versus Stealth checks** targeting the **Tekklar Elite** (see page 255) as they move through the crowd of shoppers. If chased down, he fights to escape. It is very tough, but he can be convinced to divulge the N'orr plan of attack.

The PCs must convince Agurrac's staff to allow them to see him. If the PCs are successful, they are taken aboard his ship. He greets them warmly and listens intently to their story. Agurrac (use the **Hacan Merchant** on page 235 as a nemesis with a strain threshold of 15) is not initially willing to part with the gems, but he will sell them for 150,000 aurei. The PCs may attempt to appeal to him in other ways, such as by providing safety from the N'orr. The PCs only have a short time before a N'orr Tekklar team arrives to demand immediate surrender of the jewels.

When the Sardakk N'orr arrive, they station one minion group of **Infantry Soldiers** (see page 251) at each ship with a jewel on it. The commander, two lieutenants (use Tekklar Elite for each), and another minion group proceed to demand entry to Agurrac's ship. It falls to the PCs to try to negotiate a settlement. They likely cannot fulfill their mission, but they do have the opportunity to stop violence between the Hacan guards (use the Emirates of Hacan **Infantry Soldier** and **Field Commander** profiles on page 250) and the Sardakk N'orr forces while surrounded by civilians. Local police are unlikely to be able to effectively intercede immediately. The N'orr have no qualms about fighting their way back to their nearby ship if needed.

The caravan ship names, warship captains, freighter proprietors, and primary wares are as follows. Feel free to adjust as needed.

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- *Shining Nova*: Agurrac, command ship carrying rare goods.
- *Kenara's Shield*: Haroga, destroyer.
- *Hacan's Pride*: Guyelg, destroyer.
- *Starflame*: Dallurg, corvette.
- *Desert Dreamer*: Cirithia, gerr root foods and products.
- *Star Dancer*: Rigrog, starflower garments.
- *Murrig's Tankard*: Murrig, Hacan and other liquor.
- *The Maze*: Ogwan, toys and trinkets.
- *Second*: Balatath, Hacan cloth, beads, and designs.
- *Flamewrought*: Gilaorna, glass art and crystal wares.
- *Quelnar's Stage*: Quelnar, live theatrical performances and recorded works.
- *Universe of Art*: Larus, unusual art from around the galaxy.
- *The Practical*: Calrata, equipment and technology.
- *Healer's Help*: Narun, medicines and medical devices.
- *Honor*: Firila, ceremonial and high-quality weapons and armor.
- *Galactic Grocer*: Dralgra, Hacan and other food from across the galaxy.

Consequences

If the PCs take the gems back to the Winnarans, they annoy the N'orr, who grudgingly fulfill the bargain, but they gain the Winnarans' favor. If the PCs convince Agurrac to turn over the gems directly to the N'orr, they likely avoid conflict, gain the N'orr's gratitude, and find themselves at odds with the annoyed Winnarans for months afterward. If a full-blown battle erupts between the Hacan and N'orr, the Keleres are unhappy, as are the local officials.

War Ghosts

There are plenty of lost or forgotten battlegrounds. Explorers never know when they may run into old battlefields concealing unwelcome surprises. In this encounter, an old Jol-Nar turret array suddenly activates and opens fire on the PCs. The turrets may be concealed in the landscape or defending an old fortification, or they may be part of a starship's anti-personnel weapons system. The turrets are each controlled by a localized artificial intelligence that might be reasoned with. Read the following aloud:

> *As you move forward, flaring energy beams suddenly erupt from several different locations around you. The shots carve through the nearby ground, then stop. A clearly artificial voice crackles from several damaged speakers, demanding you halt immediately or be destroyed. The voice repeats the message in several different major languages.*

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Did the PCs accidentally power it up or trip a long-dormant sensor? If so, they should quickly realize what they did, though it isn't likely reversible. Alternatively, an enemy might have fixed it to make it appear like an accidental occurrence.

The number of turrets equals half the number of PCs plus one. They open fire at the longest range at which the AI can see the characters. The turrets are operational but old and damaged. When firing at the PCs, reduce the damage by 1 per . A results in the turret exploding (right after the shot, if the shot hits), possibly injuring nearby characters.

The PCs may simply try to destroy the armored turrets, and they may also try the following skill checks.

- Make a **Daunting ( )** **Knowledge (Science) check** to recall technical weaknesses in old systems. This may give the PCs ideas, downgrade a specific non-combat skill check against the turrets, or add to combat checks against the turrets.
- Make a **Daunting ( )** **Computers check** to broadcast a signal to jam a turret's targeting system for one round per .
- Make a **Hard ( )** **Skulduggery check** to break into a turret's casing to access its systems, followed by a **Hard ( )** **Mechanics check** to disable them.
- Make an **opposed Stealth versus Vigilance check** to escape the turret array's sensors temporarily.
- Make a **Formidable ( )** **Charm** or **Deception check** to convince the array's artificial intelligence that they are not the enemy, or that the old war is over. If the turret has been reactivated by an enemy, it is possible the AI could reveal this as a reply on a or , even if the PCs fail to convince it to stop firing. Hylar characters upgrade the ability of this check once.

Jol-Nar I-24ε Automated Anti-Infantry Turret (Nemesis)

11 1 1

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
5	4	2	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
7	25	15	1/1

Skills: Gunnery 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Light beam cannon (Gunnery; Damage 9; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Pierce 3).

Consequences

If the PCs leave without destroying or deactivating the turrets, the turrets remain an active threat. If there are any local authorities, those authorities can authorize a team to deal with the weapons. If someone other than the PCs activated the turret array intentionally, the PCs can use information from the turret array's programming, their questioning of it, or other evidence to obtain clues about who to pursue.

Sol Example (Exploration, Diplomacy, Politics)

The Federation of Sol plans to nudge Atlas toward a reunion with the Sol Federation. This time, the PCs become caught up in one of their incidents. See page 199 for more information on Atlas.

For several weeks, the Oblivion pirate fleet has been attacking ships approaching Atlas after decelerating from FTL travel. Atlas defense forces are never fast enough to completely intervene, nor strong enough to deter attacks. When the PCs visit Atlas, Oblivion attacks. After the PCs complete their own deceleration, read the following aloud:

> *As your ship starts the sublight portion of its journey to Atlas, perimeter warnings sound and a dozen ships decelerate in the area all around you. Most chase after three freighters that arrived ahead of you and two behind you. One warship and a freighter match your speed. Your comms system receives a simple but effective message: "Captain Blackout and Oblivion order you to surrender now and prepare for boarding."*

The ships have Oblivion markings (a black circle starburst around a squashed infinity symbol). Atlas approach control signals that help is at least twenty minutes away. A quick scan of the area shows that the Atlas ships are outnumbered and outgunned. If the PCs delay, an Oblivion ship fires a warning shot. If the PCs attempt to flee or fight, the warship (use the **Pirate Raider** on page 152) attacks. The freighter (use the **Stellar Transport** on page 151) retreats. The PCs are at long range from the friendly ships ahead of and behind them.

Whether or not the PCs fight, they might learn some important details about the pirates by succeeding on one or more of the following skill checks:

- A successful **Daunting ( )** **Computers check** to carry out detailed scans of the pirate ships shows that the ships have a mix of weapons and components from different factions, consistent with the ships of the Mentak Coalition.

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- If the ships get close enough for the PCs to see details of them through a viewport, a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Vigilance check** reveals that the Oblivion symbol has retractable covers, as one is not fully retracted and shows the easily recognizable marking of a major trade company.
- A **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Knowledge (Culture) check** reveals the pirates' tactics are well-known, but with a few thinly disguised Mentak Coalition tactics.
- If the PCs agree to boarding, they must make an **Average (◆ ◆) Operating check** for the docking procedure. The pirate freighter has a crew of twelve Mentak pirates (see the **Pirate Raider** profile on page 246) and sends three minion groups of three to board the ship. If needed, use the **Field Commander** soldier profile (see page 249) with the **Mentak Coalition** modifier (see page 250) for Captain Blackout of the Oblivion fleet. The pirates take anything of value aboard.

A few minutes into the incident, a fleet of twenty-five Federation of Sol warships (use the **Destroyer** profile on page 154) decelerate from FTL and immediately attack the pirates. The Sol admiral makes sure everyone knows who is saving the day here. A Sol warship aids the PCs as needed to drive off the pirates. Use the **Federation of Sol** soldier profiles as needed (see page 250).

Consequences

The Sol fleet disperses the pirates. The PCs hold the evidence of Mentak Coalition involvement and may use it as they wish. They can give it to Sol to help them pursue the brigands or withhold it if they are allied with the Coalition in some fashion. They can also give it to Atlas to undercut Sol's grandstanding and unrequested aid, as Sol's ships didn't detect these details.

Surprise Secret Lab

This encounter features a laboratory as a standalone surprise discovery, a hidden area in a larger lab, or a normal area in a lab complex. It can be adapted for use with the **Industrial Espionage** hook on page 272.

Dugul Tanu and Mirugg Sal are rising **Hylar engineers** (see page 236) leading a team of nine techs and scientists (see the **Hylar Researcher** on page 283) developing dense organic energy cells. The device they are working on is unstable. It barely works, and their university (or employer) is pressuring them for results. They have been gathering organic material from the surrounding area for testing.

The appearance of the lab's exterior depends on its type. A stand-alone facility is a camouflaged collection of metal structures with storage tanks and generators on top of it surrounding a central antenna. If the facility is integrated into another building, it matches that building's features.

Inside the facility, four rooms open onto a circular interior corridor surrounding a central room that houses heating ducts, conduits, pipes, and other support structures. Larger facilities are subdivided into more rooms serving the same overall functions. The rooms are the laboratory, test chamber, storage room, and office. All but the laboratory have doors to the exterior (or adjoining spaces). When the PCs arrive, one engineer is working with three techs in the lab and the test chamber. The remaining techs are in the office and storage room.

When the PCs enter the office, read or paraphrase the following aloud (adjust as needed if they enter through another room):

> *You pass through a hardened security door into a large office and entry area. Angled braces form the interior walls, with heavy-duty windows filling the upper portions. To the right is a sophisticated laboratory. To the left is a secure storage room. Ahead is a curved corridor that wraps around a large cylinder containing support systems. Beyond it is a test chamber.*

The office contains desks littered with holographic displays. The doors require a security key. In the storage room are locked cabinets, refrigerated units, and stacks of boxes. When the PCs look at the lab, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> *The lab is brightly lit, with locked base cabinets along the walls surrounding two rows of test benches full of lab equipment. Three clear containers of a glowing, translucent orange organic material are hooked up to power cables and monitors. Windows at each side offer a view into the office and the test chamber. In the test chamber are two completed experimental energy cell units housed in metal and transparent casings. Each sits on its own large, very scorched test bench. Various computers, scanners, and other test equipment are haphazardly shoved against the walls, partially blocking the windows.*

The Hylar act proactively if alerted to the PCs' presence. Calls for help bring two **Universities of Jol-Nar Infantry Soldier** minion groups (see page 251) in ten minutes or less via a **shuttle** (see page 142). Any staff in the office, storage room, or test chamber block the PCs' path and demand that they leave. If attacked, the Hylar defend themselves using tools as improvised weapons. They can be convinced to cooperate with successful opposed social skill checks (depending on the PCs' approach).

The PCs may access the lab's systems with a **Daunting (◆ ◆ ◆ ◆) Computers check**, or with an **Average (◆ ◆) check** if they have a security key. The unfinished energy cells require a **Daunting (◆ ◆ ◆ ◆) Mechanics check** to safely assemble. Failure triggers an electrical discharge, inflicting 15 wounds on anyone adjacent to it. Safely moving a completed energy cell requires a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Coordination check** to place it in a transport case. It discharges as previously noted on a failure. The closed case suppresses discharge effects, but it doesn't prevent them if there is a significant shock.

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Hylar Researcher (Minion)

2 | 1 | 3

BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
2	2	3	2	1	1

SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE
3	5	0/0

Skills (group only): Computers 3, Knowledge (Science) 2, Mechanics 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Applied Education (once per encounter, may add ⍋ ⍋ to any skill check).

Equipment: High-energy test capacitor (Melee; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Burn 1, Limited Ammo 1), hazard-resistant environmental suit (+1 soak), facility security key, portable toolkit.

Consequences

The PCs should learn what they can and report to the Keleres leaders. The university (or employer) objects to the Keleres and works against the PCs when possible. The lab was hidden to prevent industrial espionage of new, controversial methodologies.

Deserted Lab

For a more mysterious or even spooky feeling, you can also have the lab be deserted when the PCs show up. It could have been abandoned in a hurry, and there might even be signs of a struggle or violence such as broken equipment and bloodstains. Perhaps some of the live experiments managed to break free, and now a **pituis** (page 243) is lurking in an air duct or a pack of **Mahact thrall clones** (page 263) are trapped in a locked room, just waiting for an unwary PC to open the door...

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Burning Ambition

Primor (see page 200) is using trade in its osmium resources to fund its defenses and build political allies. It is considering competing trade and defense offers from the Xxcha Kingdom and the Universities of Jol-Nar. Primor has requested Keleres mediators and observers in order to demonstrate the negotiation's legitimacy due to recent accusations of inappropriate dealings by the Xxcha and Hylar. The PCs are assigned to work with the Primor diplomats to verify offer authenticity and watch for corruption.

Negotiations take place in the palatial Primor Trade Complex. Primor holds separate meetings with the factions and gathers all parties for announcements. Primor wants the most money possible via nonexclusive osmium sales, but it needs a strong limited-term defense pact while it builds up its military. Pirates and lesser powers are Primor's immediate defense concerns, along with the Federation of Sol's colony reclamation efforts. Xxcha is offering less money, but a longer and stronger defense agreement. Jol-Nar is offering more money, but significantly fewer defense resources.

The PCs receive offer details and run checks via Keleres resources. A PC with at least Negotiation 3 may look for sneaky clauses and errors. This places them in a position to know what each side is offering and makes them a target for espionage.

When negotiations open, a Gashlai Fire Warden arrives. The Fire Warden's goal is to deny Jol-Nar the agreement and gain another ally near the Primor Gate. Muaat offers a very strong defense pact and a decent price, but less than Jol-Nar. Read the following aloud when the Fire Warden arrives.

> *The Primor chief negotiator, Trena Rael, welcomes the Keleres, Jol-Nar, and Xxcha delegations to the opening meeting of the Osmium Trade and Defense Negotiations. Before she finishes, a massive rumble roars over the meeting hall's magnificent transparent dome. Through it, you see a huge golden starship reflecting the sun's rays into the chamber as it lands at the starport. Everyone in the room knows that a Gashlai Fire Warden has unexpectedly arrived to make an offer of their own.*

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The Primor representatives receive the Gashlai delegation over the weak protests of the other participants. The Keleres treat the Gashlai offers the same as the others. If the Gashlai fail to win the deal themselves, they secretly (initially) bolster the Xxcha offer to deny the Hylar success. The PCs' personal loyalties may conflict with Keleres orders, especially if any are Gashlai. The lead negotiators are Trena Rael (use the **Crime Boss** profile on page 244), Fire Warden Lagor Heta (**Gashlai Fire Warden** on page 242, as a nemesis with a strain threshold of 16), Jol-Nar economist Yiguan Ugalu (**Hylar Data Snoop** on page 245, as a nemesis with a strain threshold of 12), and Xxcha Lord Ttualo (**Xxcha Elder** on page 238). Each has Cool 2, Discipline 3, and Negotiation 3.

The PCs may carry out the following duties and skill checks over the course of the negotiations:

- **Opposed Charm versus Cool checks** to diffuse tense negotiations or situations, reassuring the Hylar that the Gashlai are not favored outright.
- **Opposed Coercion versus Discipline checks** if threats are needed to make others back off temporarily.
- **Cool checks** to keep themselves under control in tense situations, or to project calmness to diffuse a tense state of affairs.
- **Deception checks** to advance ulterior motives or present white lies to smooth things over.
- **Hard** (◆ ◆ ◆) or **Daunting** (◆ ◆ ◆ ◆) **Computers** or **Knowledge checks** to verify negotiation offer details.
- **Opposed Leadership versus Discipline checks** to rally Keleres or Primor staff when a delegation threatens to leave or otherwise disrupt the meetings.
- **Skulduggery** or **Stealth checks** to clandestinely listen in on or check up on delegations, at the risk of angering them and embarrassing the Primor leaders if caught.

Each delegation starts with honest offers but has underhanded fallback plans if they are insulted or desperate. The PCs get the opportunity to detect them. The Hylar resort to hacking the Keleres and Primor computers to gain information for offers and blackmail. The Xxcha bribe sympathetic Primor analysts to alter data in favor of Xxcha claims. The Gashlai threaten the Hylar with further diplomatic incursions if they don't back down.

Consequences

No matter the outcome, the PCs must keep the Keleres and Primor reputations publicly intact. Privately is another matter if it avoids a major interstellar incident. If the PCs fail or are exposed as promoting or interfering with a faction, they face Keleres discipline and possible expulsion, especially if things get too far out of hand.

Duty

Thunder boomed from the roiling black clouds. They were thick enough to keep the Shikrai settlement shrouded in near total darkness, and left Tassik Aun Kessil stumbling on half-seen chunks of rubble. His balance wasn't helped by having to support Kessil Aun Navoris. The elderly scientist was still keeping pressure on the gouge on his leg, but Tassik could see the pale skin around his eyes. Significant blood loss for certain.

Screeching Shikrai screams echoed through the buildings, punctuated by bestial roars and eerie, undulating howls. Suddenly, the noise was drowned out by the percussive bellow of an assault cannon, firing in long bursts, and the boom of grenades.

"Your team is putting up quite a fight, Keleres," Kessil gasped. "Maybe...maybe we should go back for them?"

Tassik shook his head. "Your research on the gene-sorcerers is too important. It has to get off-world."

"But...the Vuil'raith. Those monsters. They'll—"

"No," Tassik pulled Kessil after him. "I'm getting you back to the Argent Flight."

One shuttle remained on the settlement's landing pad, its thrusters whining as it built to full power. The hatch hissed open as the two Shikrai approached, the crew chief beckoning them forward as she gripped her blazer in shaking hands.

Kessil slumped into the hatch, and the crew chief reached out to steady him. Tassik grabbed her shoulder. "He's wounded!" he shouted. "Get him treated right away!"

The crew chief nodded, and Kessil looked back over his shoulder as Tassik stepped back out of the hatch. "Wait, where are you going?"

Tassik pulled out his bow. "Back."

"But...the research. The Argent Flight..."

"You'll get it to them." Tassik's eyes softened slightly as the hatch started to close. "I'm going back for my team."

Mark Hassman (Order #2282139)

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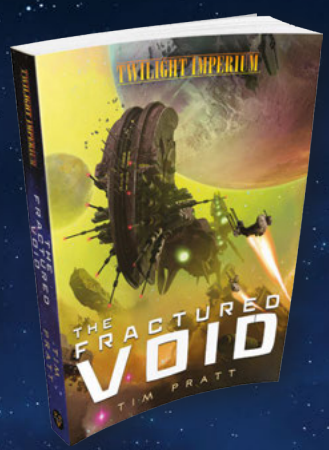

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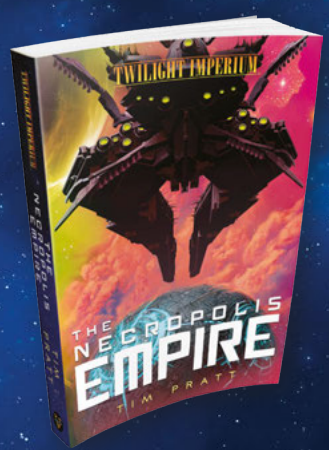

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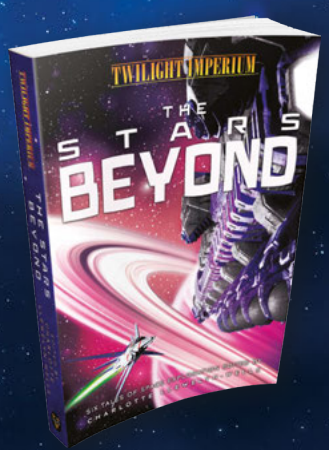

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