

TWILIGHT IMPERIUM[®]

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

WAR FOR THE THRONE



EDGE
STUDIO

SPACE OPERA ADVENTURE

GENESYS



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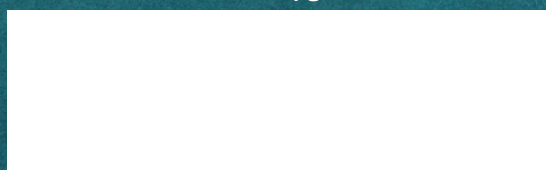
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The War for the Throne Begins!

Welcome to the TWILIGHT IMPERIUM, and a galaxy in flux. For generations, the Great Civilizations have tested their strength against each other, their goal the vacant seat of power on Mecatol Rex, once capital of the fallen Lazax Empire. Now, a faction more ancient and terrible than the Lazax themselves threatens to reclaim that seat of power and seize control of the galaxy.

In WAR FOR THE THRONE, a Mahact king, Vesh Nil Qor, makes his play for ultimate power. He intends to rule even over the other Mahact kings, and to build an empire of thralls obedient to his absolute sovereignty. Mahact gene-sorcery can turn even loyal soldiers and diplomats against their own factions, and so the Galactic Council has commissioned a weapon to negate this fearful power. Vesh Nil Qor intends to bring his fleet to Mecatol Rex, claim this weapon for his own use, and take over the galaxy.

The Galactic Council is divided in the face of peril and ill-prepared for an imminent invasion. The fate of the galaxy hangs in the balance, and the actions of a small group of Keleres might tip that balance, either saving the galaxy from Mahact rule or condemning it to Vesh Nil Qor's domination.

Using This Book

This book is designed to be used alongside the GENESYS Core Rulebook and EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM. WAR FOR THE THRONE contains everything you need to run an adventure that sees your players face some of the most terrifying threats in the galaxy and beyond. In the course of play, the player characters (PCs) risk Nekro infestation, narrowly escape the Vuil'raith, and foil the plans of a Mahact king. If they fail, it's not only their lives on the line but the fate of the entire galaxy.



The Game Master

Since the purpose of this book is to provide an adventure for a Game Master (GM) to run for a group of players, the reader is assumed to be the GM. Therefore, “you” refers to the GM. The only exception is in the read-aloud text, when it refers to the PCs.

This adventure is divided into three acts, which are further divided into episodes. Each episode consists of related encounters and the supplemental background information you need to run them (and sometimes additional encounters the PCs’ actions might prompt). Each episode is a discrete incident within the overall story, with its own immediate conflict. An episode should usually take a single game session to complete.

As always, you should let the players lead and give a reasonable chance of success to any plan they concoct—prioritize drama and fun over “realism.” Options for alternative approaches are given where possible, but players should be accommodated when they think outside the box, and the adventure adapted as necessary.

Background Information

If players aren’t familiar with the universe of TWILIGHT IMPERIUM, it’s worth giving them a quick rundown ahead of play. After all, it’s common knowledge on most worlds that the Lazax once ruled a vast empire that encompassed much of the known galaxy, that many factions of the galaxy fought over control of that empire after they fell, and that Mecatol Rex is the symbolic and political center of intergalactic power.

For players who have played through the free adventure ASHES OF POWER, WAR FOR THE THRONE should not be played as though they have just returned from their mission on Herool’s Truce; rather, it should be set some time later. Where PCs’ actions during the previous adventure might make a difference to current play, a note or sidebar highlights this. While PCs need not have played ASHES OF POWER, the incidents at Herool’s Truce do occur before WAR FOR THE THRONE. If you or the players need a summary of events, see the **Herool’s Truce** sidebar on page 6.

The Story So Far

Roughly a year ago, an unremarkable Hylar scientist named Nal Ruga left the Universities of Jol-Nar to seek out his fortune elsewhere in the galaxy. He made it as far as Perimeter before his funds ran out and he was forced to find work in a local shipyard's design division.

There, Nal Ruga met Tola Aun Krala, a young Shikrai engineer and a prodigy in her field, freshly arrived from the Phorus system. The two struck up an unlikely friendship predicated on their mutual status as outsiders on a strange world. However, when Ruga explained his passion—theories of exotic energy waveform propagation—Tola recognized its practical possibilities. She reached out to her contacts in the Argent Flight and suggested they could use the research to produce a weapon that would reverse the effects of Mahact gene-sorcery.

The Argent Flight saw the possibilities as well but, at the same time, realized they did not have the resources to build such a weapon. In fact, they doubted any of the Great Civilizations did. So, they took their idea to the Galactic Council. The Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai was a strong proponent of the project, as were most Councilors (especially when the Winnaran Custodians suggested the best strategic place for such a device would be over Mecatol Rex).

Ruga and Tola were both appointed to lead the project, and then the Council voted to relegate all further associated matters to a newly created subcommittee, the innocuously named Council Subcommittee on Extraordinary Studies. For security, the project would be handled only by the subcommittee, and the full Council would not receive any updates until it was complete.

Subluminal Speeds

If the PCs visited Herool's Truce in the previous adventure and failed to stop the Lazax device (or chose not to), then travel to and from Mecatol Rex is nearly impossible. To use this adventure, you will have to adapt it so that it takes place on a specific faction's homeworld, and that faction should be the one building the Ordinator.

Herool's Truce

Recently, a group of Keleres traveled to the planet Herool's Truce, where they found a ruined Lazax facility containing an ancient and dangerous device. The L1Z1X intended to activate the device and use it to slow the advance of the Mahact, destroying the planet's inhabitants in the process. Fortunately, the Keleres foiled their plans. The Lazax device has since been examined, and some of this ancient technology has been incorporated into the Synaptic Ordinator.

The Synaptic Ordinator

For the next year, the project (dubbed the "Synaptic Ordinator" by Ruga) began to take shape over Fors, the largest moon orbiting the gas giant Semani in the far reaches of the Gul system. Under the direction of the Winnaran Custodians, Ruga and Tola assembled a team of scientists and engineers to build the device, and their work is very nearly complete.

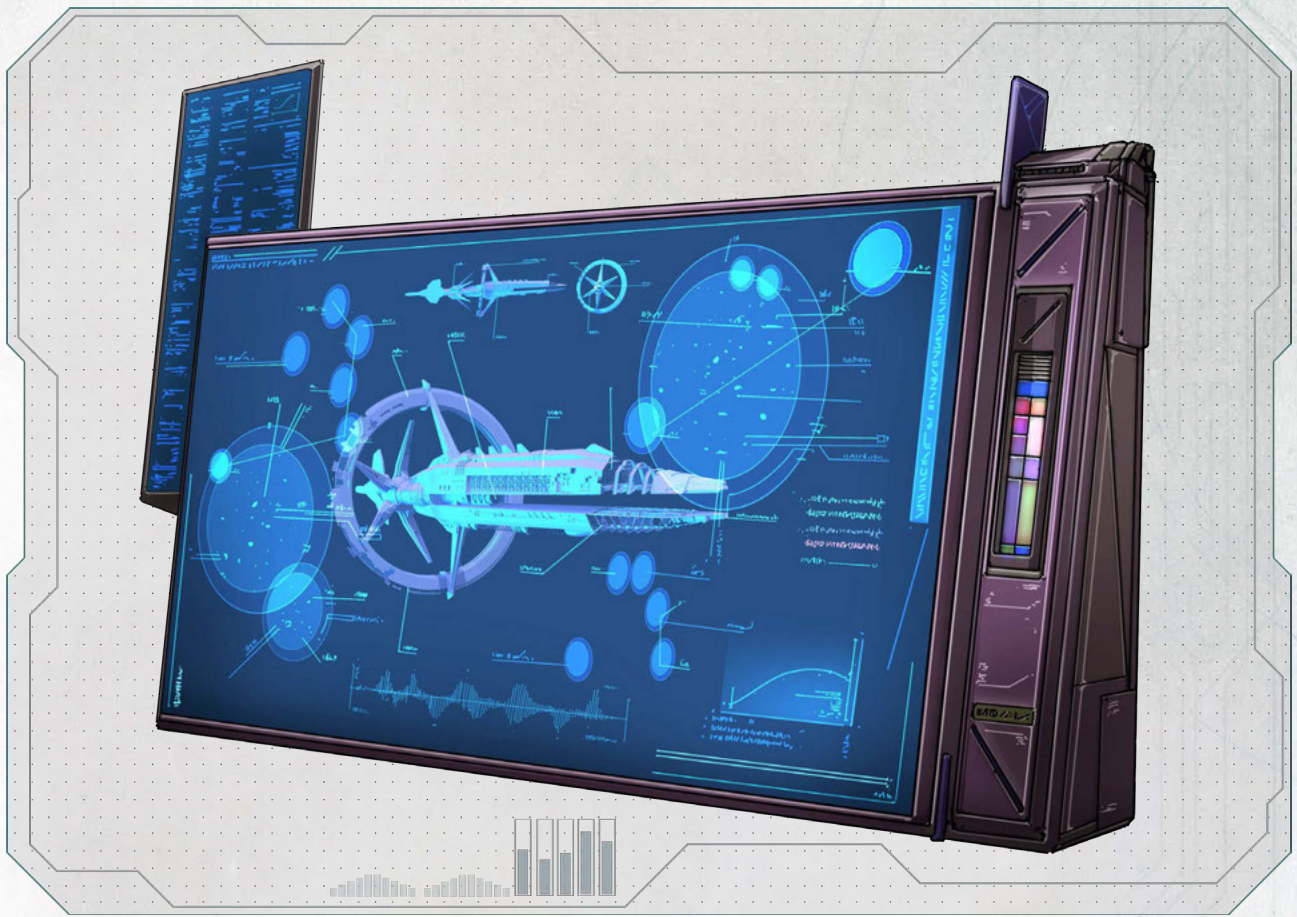
The Synaptic Ordinator is a massive, self-propelled space station as big as a war sun. Its main "weapon" is an exotic energy projector that, when triggered, can reverse the effects of Mahact genetic indoctrination in an omnidirectional burst that can reach over a hundred million kilometers. It cannot affect those turned into thrall clones or subject to some of the Mahact's more powerful and precise forms of subjugation, but it can free most of the so-called genetic "sleeper agents." These individuals are susceptible to long-distance indoctrination because of genetic markers the Mahact added to the genomes of their ancestors many millennia ago.

This project's potential is enormous. One firing of the Synaptic Ordinator can rewrite the genetic coding of an entire world, ensuring that no unwitting fifth column of traitors and saboteurs emerges should the Mahact attack. However, its very nature presents an unanticipated threat as well.

The Mahact's Plot

Vesh Nil Qor is a Mahact gene-sorcerer who doesn't just want the Mahact to reclaim their ancient kingdom, which the Lazax stole from them millennia ago. He wants to reign supreme over all the galaxy, including his fellow Mahact. To this end, he has cultivated a spy in the Galactic Council, and through this he has learned of the proposal for the Synaptic Ordinator.

Rather than plotting the device's destruction, Vesh Nil Qor suspects that its genetic manipulation properties could be used to amplify his gene-indoctrination powers on a grand scale. He has ordered his spy (referred to throughout this adventure as "the Traitor") to secure a position on or near the subcommittee overseeing the Ordinator's construction. When the device is nearly complete, he plans to have the Traitor obtain and send him its schematics.



He believes the schematics will reveal the means by which he can adapt the Ordinator to enhance, rather than nullify, his powers. Then, he intends to attack Mecatol Rex with his own personal army and fleet to seize the Ordinator. Once it is in his grasp, he will use it to gain control over the entire planet of Mecatol Rex—as well as any forces sent to stop him. Soon he expects to control a burgeoning kingdom with the throneworld at its heart, and once he has built more Synaptic Ordinators, the rest of the galaxy will be his as well.

The Current Plot

Whoever the Traitor is, Vesh Nil Qor has been very careful to keep their allegiance a secret. To that end, all communications with the Traitor have been passed through an enthralled Saar named Ralga Woll. Woll keeps a Mahact communications orb that can send and receive messages instantaneously over vast distances, and Vesh Nil Qor uses this to pass orders to his thrall. Woll, in turn, uses her scouting ship to travel to Mecatol Rex and pass the messages on to the Traitor.

Although the communications orb is fantastic technology that breaks many accepted laws of physics, it has certain limitations. Chief among them is the small amount of information it can receive and the exotic radiation it emits. Continued use on Mecatol Rex (as opposed to the backwater world of Shardpoint, where Woll lives) would undoubtedly lead to the Traitor's detection and discovery. Worse, even if the Traitor manages to smuggle the plans for the Synaptic Ordinator off Mecatol Rex and to Woll, the orb is incapable of transmitting such a large amount of data.

As a result, to deliver the schematics, Vesh Nil Qor has provided the Traitor with another means: an automated probe, roughly the size of a heavy starfighter, that can be loaded with the information and sent from Mecatol Rex to his holdings deep in the galactic core. Having received the probe from Woll, the Traitor has hidden it in an abandoned orbital warehouse around Mecatol Rex, where it awaits the arrival of the schematics.

Superluminal Communications

Although faster-than-light communications are possible in the TWILIGHT IMPERIUM setting, they operate under severe limitations. The superluminal communications of nearly every major faction degrade rapidly over interstellar distances. Video or holographic imagery corrupts into a flashing haze after a few light-years, while audio transmissions may make it two or three times as far if the sender is lucky. Very simple signals such as distress beacons can reach even further, but at that range, the only information they can convey is that the sender is in some sort of trouble.

This means that the Mahact communications orb is a wondrously rare piece of technology. Even the Mahact can only build a few examples of their communications orb, and this is another reason Vesh Nil Qor has entrusted it to Woll rather than give it to the Traitor directly. Woll can oversee multiple plots on Vesh Nil Qor's behalf, and ultimately even the Traitor is expendable.

Once activated, the probe will use its superluminal drive to follow a preprogrammed course to a star system deep in the core, where Vesh Nil Qor awaits it. Most of the Great Civilizations have never created an automated spaceship or probe capable of traveling such long distances, and even the high technology of the Mahact had limits. Specifically, the probe can only travel along a preprogrammed route and has to stop periodically to recharge its drive from its micro-singularity reactor. During the days it spends floating in space while its drive accumulates power, it is particularly vulnerable.

The Traitor has no choice but to trust that the probe will not be intercepted during its journey. However, as a last resort, they have added a string of Nekro virus coding to the probe's security features. If someone without the proper decryption codes accesses the probe's database, the coding will unleash the Nekro into their computers, giving the interceptor far more dire problems to worry about than mere stolen schematics.

Just before the adventure begins, the Traitor has obtained the Ordinator's blueprints, programmed them into the probe, and launched it. However, during a stop in deep space to recharge its drive, the probe was detected and intercepted by a small Xxcha listening station. The Xxcha accessed the probe's database and, in doing so, infected their station with the Nekro virus. The virus killed all of the station's staff, and the probe departed, eventually reaching its rendezvous with Vesh Nil Qor's flagship deep in the galactic core. Now Qor is beginning to study the data, looking for a way to subvert the project to his needs. However, neither he nor the Traitor realize that the Xxcha station managed to download a copy of the probe's message before it was overrun by the Nekro virus.

Adventure Summary

This section offers an overview of WAR FOR THE THRONE that you can keep in mind while running the adventure. Important details are mentioned here, and each act begins with a more in-depth summary of its events.

It is worth noting that as the adventure progresses, more variables come into play, and the consequences of the PCs' actions on the story become more apparent. This overview contains details that should apply regardless of which approaches the PCs take. Nevertheless, keep in mind that any details can be changed to suit the adventure you want to run, as long as the PCs still gain enough clues or incentives to follow the adventure through to its conclusion and everyone can enjoy the play session.

Act I: The Ordinator Unveiled

The PCs set out on a mission to investigate Ccrysus, a listening station that turns out to have been overrun by the Nekro virus. On the station, they learn that certain schematics have been sent to a location deep in the galactic core and within Mahact space. The station has detected suspicious signatures approaching from that area. The PCs take this troubling information to the Galactic Council and learn that the schematics detail the Synaptic Ordinator project. This secret project is essentially the building of an anti-Mahact weapon, designed to free sentients from Mahact control.

The PCs are then sent to the Ordinator construction site to establish whether or not security there has been compromised. There, they learn that the Traitor is within the Council itself (or close to it—the identity of the Traitor is up to the GM; see **The Traitor** on page 9). Before the PCs can act on this information, the Ordinator is sabotaged, and they are framed for the crime. The true saboteurs flee to Shardpoint, a trading outpost on a frozen moon. The Council denounces the PCs as traitors to the galaxy and issues warrants for their arrest in every allied system.

Act II: Fugitives from Justice

In Act II, the PCs travel to Shardpoint, following either the saboteurs or the clues they uncovered at the Synaptic Ordinator's construction site. Shardpoint is part of the Mentak Coalition, though it lies beyond Coalition space, and therefore it is one of the few places the PCs can safely go while they are considered outlaws. Although the Mentak Coalition has seats on the Galactic Council, other factions' arrest warrants are largely ignored here. Unfortunately, Shardpoint is being surreptitiously taken over by a Vuil'raith cult. While the PCs search for evidence to clear their names and prove the Traitor's crimes on Mecatol Rex, the cult traps them on Shardpoint and proceeds with plans to open a portal to the Vuil'raith dimension. The PCs have to escape, and they may need to take on or even join the cult before they can get away.

The Traitor

The Traitor is an agent recruited by Vesh Nil Qor. Unlike most of the Mahact's vassals, the Traitor is a willing ally to the Mahact gene-sorcerer. For whatever reason, they have decided to throw their lot in with Vesh Nil Qor, and that dedication makes them far more dangerous than any indoctrinated thrall.

The identity of the Traitor is a mystery for the PCs to solve. To ensure the mystery remains a mystery (and can't be spoiled), you get to choose who the Traitor is. Before play begins, review the NPC profiles in **Appendix B: Adversary Profiles** and choose one to be the Traitor, or create a new NPC for that purpose. The following NPCs are particularly well suited, as they have the authority to advance the Traitor's goals and are likely to interact with the PCs the most. Each profile description also includes a reason why the NPC might join forces with the Mahact.

- ◆ **Chamberlain Raan Di Sanal** (page 109)
- ◆ **Councilor Galrud** (page 108)
- ◆ **Councilor Shane Lehmann** (page 110)
- ◆ **Personal Aide Nadia Ngoy** (page 111)
- ◆ **Councilor Ozanne Sabin Carbonneau** (page 113)
- ◆ **Lieutenant Tellis Martelan** (page 107)
- ◆ **Councilor Kkasan Gen** (page 112)
- ◆ **Vadanus the Councilor** (page 115)
- ◆ **Councilor So'Cil** (page 114)

The situation can be further complicated by choosing or designing an NPC who has some personal significance for the PCs. For example, if one of the PCs is from the Emirates of Hacan, then Councilor Galrud might hope to make them an ally, whereas he would instantly dislike a PC from the Mentak Coalition. This is the case whether Galrud is the Traitor or not, but if he is, then his prejudice takes on greater significance.

Act III: The War

When the PCs escape Shardpoint, they begin Act III, in which they return to Mecatol Rex to set the record straight and reveal the Traitor's treachery. On their return, they learn that the Mahact fleet is expected at any moment, leaving them little time. While the fleet heads straight for the capital, the Mahact king has set his sights on the Ordinator, which is on its way to Mecatol Rex. Using the space battle as a distraction, Vesh Nil Qor attempts to take control of the device.

While the Mahact fleet battles the allied forces, the PCs must defend the Ordinator, deal with the Traitor, and perhaps even face Vesh Nil Qor himself. This is a pivotal point that could change the course of the galaxy forever. If the PCs succeed, they save the galaxy and prove themselves heroes. If they fail, they doom the galaxy to fall under the rule of Mahact kings once more.

Episodes

Each portion of the adventure is broken up into multiple episodes. An episode is a discrete section of the ongoing narrative containing one or more encounters. Your group may complete an episode in a single session, or it may take multiple sessions to complete a single episode. Some particularly short episodes could even finish in an hour or less, letting your group move on to the next.

Each episode starts with a synopsis of its events and contains a brief section outlining what your PCs should complete by the end of the episode. Then it proceeds into the encounters.

Encounters

Encounters are portions of the adventure focused around significant story elements. What begins and ends an encounter is ultimately up to you, but typically encounters are either **structured** (broken up into rounds, turns, and such) or **narrative** (describing events and actions without worrying as much how long they take or tracking rounds and the economy of actions and maneuvers).

More can be found on encounters in **Chapters 6** and **7** of the Core Rulebook. It's just important to remember that at the end of each encounter, your players have a chance to roll for their characters to recover strain, and any "once per encounter" abilities can be used again. The end of an encounter is a narrative and mechanical pause, allowing your players and their characters a moment to catch their breaths and prepare for the next phase of the adventure.



[Act I]

The Ordinator Unveiled

In this part of the adventure, the PCs undertake a mission to investigate why an Xxcha deep-space monitoring station has gone silent. In the course of their exploration, the PCs discover the first clues pointing to a conspiracy to hand the throne of Mecatol Rex over to the Mahact. Significant investigation is necessary to reveal the full import of these data scraps, but before the PCs can begin, or even report their discovery, they must fight for their lives against the ravaging Nekro constructs.

After the PCs return to Mecatol Rex and make their report, they learn more about the superweapon at the heart of the conspiracy: the Synaptic Ordinator. The design of this space station-sized device is based on the Lazax technology recovered from Herool's Truce, and on poorly understood concepts

reverse-engineered from studying thralls to the Mahact's gene-sorcery. The PCs encounter some unexpected resistance to further investigating the suspicious transmissions from the monitoring station.

In the final episode, the PCs travel to the Synaptic Ordinator, still under construction, to investigate the source of leaked information about it. There, they find evidence of treachery within the Galactic Council itself. They also encounter saboteurs within the Ordinator crew.

Before the PCs can report any of their findings, the Traitor frames them for the sabotage of the Ordinator. Now hunted by their fellow Keleres, the PCs must continue their investigation without support and hounded by former allies.

Episode O: Mission Briefing

In this episode, the PCs are assigned what seems like a routine mission: investigate a deep-space monitoring station that has gone silent. This episode offers different options for getting the PCs involved, covers the assignment and chances for the PCs to equip themselves, and provides information on traveling to the station.

Episode Goals

This episode serves to draw the player characters into the adventure. Thus, the goals are simple: brief the PCs on their mission to Monitoring Station Ccrysus, equip them with any gear they might need, offer background information on the station, and ensure they have a means of transportation. In addition, if the PCs do not have an established point of contact in the Keleres, this episode provides a default option in the form of Keleres Senior Supervisor Matir Iq Matir.

By the end of this episode, the PCs should have:

- ◆ Received the mission to travel to Ccrysus Station to determine why it is no longer in contact with Mecatol Rex.
- ◆ Learned about Ccrysus Station's history and purpose, and how it is involved with the Keleres and the Xxcha.
- ◆ Established a rapport with their supervisor and heard that they need to report to Mecatol Rex with whatever they uncover.
- ◆ Learned about the impending threat of the Mahact gene-sorcerers, particularly a gene-sorcerer named Vesh Nil Qor.

Getting the PCs Involved

The simplest way to get the player characters involved is to give them the mission as an official assignment. It can be conveyed through Matir Iq Matir or the group's own personal patron (likely one of the three Tribunii, but potentially another senior Keleres). Or the group's patron could make Matir their point of contact.

Other options depend on the group's makeup:

- ◆ If the group includes any Keleres with allegiance to the Titans of Ul or the Argent Flight (or any Keleres who are particularly concerned about the Mahact gene-sorcerers), news that a deep-space monitoring station that, among other things, keeps an eye on areas of Mahact control has failed to report in should raise concerns that the Mahact may be making a move.

- ◆ If the group includes an Xxcha or a Keleres with allegiance to the Xxcha Kingdom, the Xxcha Councilor can pass information about Ccrysus Station to that PC and then formally request they be given the assignment.
- ◆ If the group includes any Keleres with allegiance to the Barony of Letnev or the Federation of Sol, a member of that faction's Council delegation can reach out to the PCs and request they find a way to be assigned to the mission. Both the Barony and the Federation would appreciate a chance to see the inside of a highly advanced deep-space monitoring station operated by a potential adversary.

Mission Briefing (Social Encounter)

The PCs are called to receive their mission briefing in Keleres headquarters, located in the basements of the old Imperial Intelligence headquarters on Mecatol Rex. The Imperial Intelligence building was largely destroyed in the bombardment of Mecatol Rex three thousand years ago and was never rebuilt by the Winnaran Custodians. However, the labyrinthine basements remained relatively unscathed. When the Council formed the Keleres, the Winnarans suggested this location as their base.

The tunnels of the upper sublevels have been mostly restored, and PCs are likely to have been living there on the base between missions. (For more information on the home of the Keleres, see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 167.) Unless you use one of the story hooks from **Getting the PCs Involved**, the PCs are summoned by their patron or supervisor to a briefing chamber near the center of the complex. When the group answers the summons, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

You hustle down corridors packed with purposeful field agents, yawning desk operatives heading back to their bunks, and Winnaran Custodians with dour expressions and eyes fixed on the screens of their savants. Finally, you duck down the western anterior passageway and into a plain room with dull-gray permacore walls. The only furniture is a long and heavily dented ferroplate table surrounded by equally battered and unpadded chairs.

Senior Supervisor Matir Iq Matir sits at the far end of the table, flanked by an Xxcha whose garments single them out as part of the Xxcha Kingdom's diplomatic mission in Mecatol City. Not a Councilor, but perhaps an aide? As you enter, Matir nods in greeting. "Keleres, thank you for coming," she says and gestures to a chair. "Please, sit."

Once the group sits, Matir introduces her companion as Ddradik Tik, a senior cultural attaché from the Xxcha Kingdom's delegation to the Galactic Council. She says "cultural" with an extremely dry tone, and anyone in the group can make an **Easy (◆) Knowledge (Culture)** or **Vigilance check** to realize that Ddradik is likely an intelligence agent for the Kingdom. For his part, Ddradik offers a quiet greeting and otherwise lets Matir speak. She makes a few haptic gestures to her savant, and a holographic map of the galaxy appears above the table.

As she delivers the briefing, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Matir gestures, and the galaxy map expands to focus on the galactic core. A blinking blue light appears at the base of the northern spiral arm. "Mecatol Rex," she says. She gestures again, and an amorphous red blob appears deeper in the core. "And this is the approximate location of lxth.

"I'm guessing it comes as no surprise that the Keleres have been keeping the Mahact homeworld under observation as best we can. However, the last two cohorts to try and penetrate Mahact space never returned. I've been told that the intelligence agencies of the other Council members have had similar problems." She glances at Ddradik, who nods.

"Thus, six months ago we supported the Xxcha Kingdom in building a number of monitoring stations along the likely axis of advance between lxth and the Gul system." A series of green lights appears in a loose web. "As of yesterday, the deep-space monitoring station Ccrysus has missed its last two routine check-ins. The Kingdom's delegation here on Mecatol Rex has asked us to investigate. You leave in four hours. Any questions?"

Matir and Ddradik answer questions as best they can. The following are some likely queries and their answers. Ddradik tends to let Matir take the lead, only interjecting after she finishes speaking to make small clarifications.

Why aren't the Xxcha investigating themselves?

The monitoring stations are much closer to the Gul system than to the Xxcha's home system of Xxlak. The stations send their reports directly to the Xxcha delegation on Mecatol Rex, who then forward them to Xxlak via a weekly courier vessel. The Xxcha likely will send a patrol to investigate, but it may be a week or more before they can respond.

What is the station's purpose?

Ccrysus Station's charge is to spot any approaching Mahact fleet and warn Mecatol Rex. Although Matir doesn't say this, any character with a military background also knows that these stations provide a means for the Xxcha Kingdom to respond quickly if another of the Great Civilizations tries to lay claim to Mecatol Rex, and they could even serve as forward bases if the Xxcha make a bid for the Imperial Throne themselves.

How do the stations send reports to Mecatol Rex?

The stations are too far away from Mecatol Rex (and each other) for direct superluminal communications. Instead, the stations use powerful transmitters to send simple status reports—nothing more complicated than "all clear" or "alert"—to a message buoy in the center of the network. Every two days, an ultra-fast courier vessel arrives at the buoy to retrieve the status reports and take them to Mecatol Rex. This means that the last "all clear" was sent from the station six days ago.

What do you think happened to Ccrysus Station?

Matir and Ddradik both suspect that the silence may be due to a simple technical malfunction. The truth is, the network is operating at the very limits of superluminal communications. A small breakdown could leave Ccrysus without enough power to send the "all clear" message. Given the station's powerful sensor equipment, Matir and Ddradik also believe it unlikely that a Mahact fleet could sneak up on the station and destroy it before the station sent out a warning.

However, protocol does dictate that a ship be sent to investigate after two missed messages.

What do we do when we get there?

If the station has suffered a technical malfunction, then Matir wants the PCs to find out what went wrong, how long it will take to fix it, and anything else the station commander, Captain Ssoro, feels a need to report.

If something more serious has occurred, Matir wants the PCs to investigate and learn as much as possible before reporting back. Of course, she does want to make sure they do report back, so she expects the PCs to use their best judgment in determining when to return.

Equipping and Preparations

Once the PCs have their orders, they have four hours to prepare before they depart. They can use this time to pursue any activities that may advance their agendas, obtain equipment they are likely to need, or gather more information on the Mahact or Ccrysus Station.

Agendas

Completing this mission may also count as a benchmark for any agenda that involves supporting the Keleres, defending the interests of the Xxcha Kingdom, or fighting the Mahact (or, as the PCs find out later, fighting the Nekro Virus). In addition, if someone has an agenda involving gathering intelligence or learning about the capabilities of rival powers, they could use their time aboard Ccrysus Station to steal Xxcha communications or the station's technical specifications.

Outfitting

This is an official mission, so the PCs are entitled to request up to 500 aurei's worth of gear from the Keleres armory. As described on page 268 of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, no item can have a rarity greater than 3.

Since the mission involves investigating a deep-space monitoring station, the quartermaster on duty recommends choosing from among space suits, dermal sealers, bypass packs, polymorphic prybars, and comm-beads. With successful negotiation, they may also provide data drills or intruder pucks. They advise strongly against taking explosives such as infantry grenades.

Transportation

To travel to Ccrysus Station, Matir provides the PCs with one of the Keleres's long-range scout ships, the *Amberlight*. One of the *Tradewind*-class scouts provided to the Keleres by the Emirates of Hacan, the *Amberlight* has been modified with faster superluminal drives at the expense of some of its range and endurance. You can find the ship's profile on page 100.

If the PCs have their own ship, Matir lets them use it instead. However, they do need a vessel with at least medium-range FTL capability to reach their destination.

Gathering Information

If the PCs want, they can spend some of their time learning as much as they can about Ccrysus Station or the Mahact. They can also investigate other potential dangers they may encounter in the galactic core. Both tasks can be accomplished by browsing the Keleres archives (either directly or remotely through a savant).

Learning more about Ccrysus Station or the current threat that the Mahact pose requires an **Average (◆◆) Knowledge (Culture) check**. Researching the galactic core requires an **Average (◆◆) Knowledge (Lore) check**. If they succeed, you can provide the PCs with any of the following information. The more they succeed, the more information you can provide.

Ccrysus Station

- ◆ The station is a standard *Scutum*-class monitoring outpost used extensively by the Xxcha Kingdom's military and scientific communities. It looks like a flattened sphere approximately three hundred meters in diameter, with a forest of sensor masts and communication antennae projecting from the apex of the dorsal side.
- ◆ The station has a complement of twenty-five, including a small security detail.
- ◆ The sensors are powerful enough to detect a single ship traveling at superluminal speeds within ten light-years, and a fleet far beyond that.
- ◆ The station has no weapons but is heavily armored. In the event of an attack, the crew is expected to send a distress call, then evacuate via a pair of small shuttles and hope that a friendly fleet arrives in time to rescue them.

The Mahact

- ◆ The Mahact were an ancient threat thought destroyed by the Lazax tens of thousands of years ago. This turned out to be untrue. A foolhardy expedition by the Ghosts of Creuss awakened the Mahact, who somehow moved their homeworld from beyond the rim of the galaxy right into its heart.
- ◆ The Mahact are rumored to be powerful gene-sorcerers and have access to technology that seems akin to magic.
- ◆ When the Mahact returned, the Council saw them as a threat to every civilization in the galaxy. They created the Keleres specifically to combat the Mahact and other pan-galactic dangers.
- ◆ Little is known about the Mahact's activities over the past five years, as recon patrols that stray too close to their territory tend to vanish. They have skirmished with several other civilizations, but so far, none of the Mahact have made a concerted effort to conquer one of the Great Civilizations or to take Mecatol Rex.

The Galactic Core

- ◆ The core of the galaxy is a dense mass of old and large stars, roiling nebulae, and twisting gravitational anomalies. The very center, known as "the great heart of the galaxy," is a gigantic, rapidly spinning singularity.
- ◆ The core is bathed in enough stellar radiation to make it largely uninhabitable. Although modern starships can withstand it, the closer one gets to the core, the less populated space becomes.
- ◆ Besides the Mahact, it is also believed that the mysterious Empyrean make their home in one of the thick nebulae near the core.





Episode 1: The Silent Listener

Ccrysus is one of the Xxcha's five deep-space monitoring stations built to provide early warning against mobilizations toward Mecatol Rex by the Mahact or other major powers. The network of stations is widely spread in deep space between Mecatol Rex and the core worlds—so widely that no station is in direct contact with any other.

Traveling to the Station

The superluminal trip to Ccrysus is uneventful, and it should take two days if the PCs' ship has an FTL speed of fast or very fast. A speed of average means it takes three days, and a speed of slow means it takes four.

The PCs should make a single **Average** (◆◆) **Astrocartography check** to plot the most direct course. If they succeed, they reduce the number of days the trip takes by one. If they fail with ☹☹, they increase the number of days by one instead.

The Story So Far

Six days before the PCs are sent to investigate, Ccrysus detected a superluminal spaceship decelerating from FTL speeds within range of the station's two shuttlecraft. The station commander dispatched one of the shuttles with several crew to investigate.

What they found was an autonomous probe drifting in the middle of deep space where it had stopped to recharge its drive from its micro-singularity reactor. Its technology was clearly highly advanced and beyond the capabilities of most of the Great Civilizations. The shuttle crew took the probe in tow and brought it back to the station. There, they left it in the void while the station's crew began to study it.

Through careful analysis of the probe's computer systems and the trajectory it had been following, the crew determined it had been traveling from Mecatol Rex to a location deep in the galactic core. Soon after, they discovered the information stored in the probe's databanks: data on a top-secret project directed by the Galactic Council.

Unfortunately for Ccrysus Station, the Traitor who sent the probe also included a trap to eliminate anyone who might intercept it. Encoded within the data was a dormant copy of a self-replicating program captured from the Nekro Virus. The program had originally been brought to Mecatol Rex for careful study, and at some point the Traitor had contrived to obtain it.

Eventually the Traitor stored it in the probe's databanks, knowing that if anyone but the intended recipient attempted to access any of the data there, the dormant programming would awaken.

The Traitor counted on the replicating Nekro code following its core directives and attempting to kill all sentients it could reach, which was exactly what happened. When the crew accessed the databanks, they unwittingly gave the Nekro code a pathway into their systems, from which it slowly began to infest the station's computer network. First it shut off communication systems; then it began to take control of station systems. By the time the Xxcha crew realized what had happened, the Nekro programming had taken over automated fabricators in the machine shop and engineering section, and was turning parts of the station into hordes of assimilation drones.

As the station succumbed to the Nekro virus, the probe floated serenely outside of the station. Eventually its drive recharged, and it left for its rendezvous with its master in the core.

Back at Ccrysus Station, the Nekro AI—dubbed Kkraakon by the late Xxcha crew—lurks in the cold dark and drinks in the data from the station's still-functional sensors even as its mechanical minions strip the station for resources. Soon, nothing recognizable will be left of the station, though Kkraakon will incorporate the powerful sensor systems into its own form.

Episode Goals

This episode serves to introduce the greater mystery at the heart of **WAR FOR THE THRONE**, as well as to kick things off with a tense and exciting situation. Because the players shouldn't know what their PCs haven't yet learned, it's important for you to keep in mind the episode's true goals while the players focus on their mission as they understand it.

By the end of this episode, the PCs should:

- ◆ Learn of the existence of the Synaptic Ordinator project.
- ◆ Learn that someone is leaking information about the project to an unknown recipient at a destination deep in the galactic core (see **Essential Information**, page 25).
- ◆ Discover that the probe came from Mecatol Rex.
- ◆ Learn about gravitational signatures consistent with a large number of Mahact ships gathering deeper in the core but outside Mahact space.
- ◆ Destroy the Nekro AI Kkraakon, or at least escape in order to report their findings.

Deep-Space Monitoring Station Ccrysus

Ccrysus is a standard Xxcha *Sccutum*-class monitoring station. Each station is equipped with powerful long-range sensors, their purpose being to ensure enemies do not take the Xxcha Kingdom off guard. Due to the limitations of long-range communication, most data is stored on-site, while the station broadcasts a simple “all is well” signal to a central relay station at regular intervals.

The Nekro AI, Kkraakon, is currently dismantling, consuming, and repurposing the raw materials of the station. It has found the powerful sensors of interest and has taken a more meticulous approach than the Nekro are typically known for to study the station's systems as it consumes them. As a result, the hull is still largely intact, along with the computer systems. What remains of Ccrysus includes several notable locations, as well as hundreds of meters of ductwork, maintenance shafts, and corridors.

Bridge

The station's bridge is located next to the engineering bay and well armored. The rectangular chamber has one end covered with holographic projections to allow the bridge crew to monitor systems throughout Ccrysus. The only major system not linked to this network is the self-destruct system, which is accessible through a trapdoor-style access hatch behind the captain's command seat.

The captain and a number of crew made their final stand here, as plentiful signs of violence attest. Alongside the scars of weapons fire, bloodstains and a few desiccated corpses remain. Any Nekro constructs disabled in the fighting were quickly reassimilated.

Although many consoles suffered damage in the combat, some are intact enough for the PCs to access the station's computer network (see **Access Denied**, page 24).

Self-Destruct Control Bay

The self-destruct system is housed in a cramped chamber below the bridge. The controls here are hard linked to the main reactors several decks below. This fully contained system serves as a safeguard against hacking, and the manual controls help prevent accidental or unauthorized activation (see **Destroying the Station**, page 31).

Engineering Bay

Ccrysus Station's heart is its engineering bay, located deep in its interior. This large chamber is partitioned by interior bulkheads. The station's fusion reactors are primarily monitored by computer. The most commonly serviced components are physically accessible from the engineering bay, but much of the engine structure is shielded and accessible only via cramped (by Xxcha standards) maintenance tunnels.

The Nekro have fully or partially dismantled a number of systems they have no use for, including life support. To return these systems to functioning status would require resources and time the PCs do not have.

Deep-Space Sensor Monitoring Bay

The station's primary sensor systems are accessible from the bridge and other key computer terminals. This monitoring bay, however, is the only place with the specialized systems to properly display and interpret the complex readings of the station's long-range sensors. The bay accommodates ten crew tasked with reviewing the collected information and organizing it for storage in the data archives.

Data Archives

The long-range sensors collect a huge amount of data, all of which is stored for potential use in future scientific or military applications. The archives' vast computer stacks hold this data.

The Nekro AI, Kkraakon, has settled in the archives to absorb their bounty of information while its minions continue to systematically dismantle the station.

Security Station

Ccrysus Station's small security force was never intended to repel determined boarders, but only to enforce rules and regulations among the crew. The security station had only small arms and could mount scant defense against the horror of the Nekro swarm. The constructs have stripped the bay down to its support frame, leaving little clue as to its former purpose.

Shuttle Bay

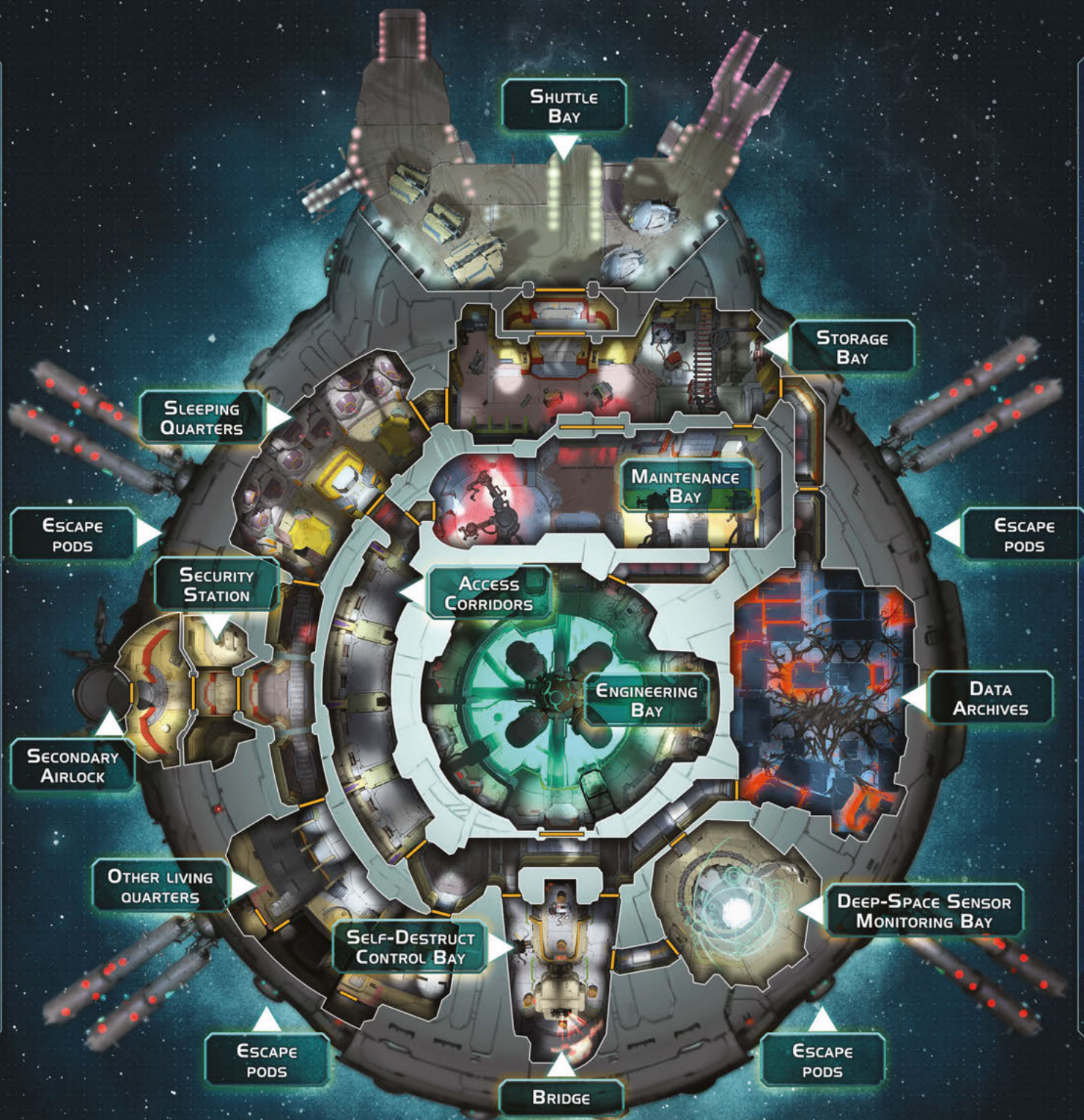
This bay normally houses two shuttles to help transfer goods and personnel from other ships and for emergency evacuation. However, they have limited supplies and no superluminal drives. One shuttle has had its life support and other auxiliary features stripped out, but it still has functional engines and navigational systems. Theoretically, it could still fly. The other shuttle has been entirely stripped to feed the replicating Nekro.

Escape Pods

Ccrysus's escape pods are scattered across its perimeter to ensure that crew at any duty station, cabin, or common area can quickly reach one. The Nekro disabled the pods' launch systems as soon as the virus breached the station's network, before the crew even knew there was cause to evacuate. The Nekro have since dismantled many of the pods, while others remain in place or hang loosely in their skeletal launch cradles, the surrounding sections of station hull and decking stripped away.

CCRYsus

DEEP-SPACE MONITORING STATION



Storage Bay

The storage bay previously held provisions and spare parts. Nekro constructs have swept through, however, leaving little intact. Dry rations and loose foodstuffs float haphazardly, disregarded when the Nekro consumed their storage containers.

Life-Support Arteries and Maintenance Tunnels

Ventilation ducts run throughout Ccrysus, connecting every corridor and chamber to the life-support systems (which the Nekro have disabled). Maintenance tunnels also thread horizontally and vertically throughout the station, providing access to various systems and serving as an emergency route between bays and decks. Beings and creatures of silhouette 1 or smaller can move through either type of passage, treating it as difficult terrain.

Cold Welcome

Ccrysus Station is set in deep space, light-years from any stars. When the PCs arrive in its vicinity, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

As your ship decelerates from superluminal speeds, the tangled mess of curdled red and blue light resolves itself into the familiar glow of starlight. This far into the core, the stars are so numerous that your ship is bathed in a warm glow from all directions. Ahead, Ccrysus Station is a dark silhouette against the glow. As you move closer, its shape—a rounded disk with a thick forest of spines protruding from one side—becomes clear. You see no signs of battle damage, but you can make out spaces where plating has been removed, leaving dark, checkered gaps across the outer hull.

Sensors find no signs of life, although such readings are notoriously unreliable, particularly for heavily armored ships and stations. Scans indicate life support is not active: instruments show that the interior is not pressurized, and the temperature is far below the minimum tolerance for most intelligent species.

As with those for life signs, these readings are sensitive and do not necessarily give a complete picture. Scanners can only penetrate the outermost sections of the station at best, and the situation may be different in some interior sections. (It's not, but these limitations of ships' sensors are common knowledge to any Keleres or other spacefarers.)

If the PCs hail the station, they receive no acknowledgment. There are no survivors of the Xxcha crew. The Nekro now controlling the station, of course, receive any transmissions the PCs send. This doesn't necessarily alert the AI in charge, but communications reach any subordinate machine Kkraakon has tasked with monitoring local transmissions (see **The Nekro Awake**, page 27). However, if the PCs broadcast any type of threat or other extreme statement, you should scale the Nekro response appropriately.

State of the Station

The Nekro virus has fully infected Ccrysus Station, with the important exception of the self-destruct system. That system is isolated from all others to preserve it as a last resort should the crew lose control of the station. Since they have substantial control, the Nekro can observe the PCs through cameras and other security systems. These systems are limited in their coverage, however, so the only action guaranteed to alert the Nekro is accessing a computer terminal (see **Access Denied**, page 24).

As the PCs can observe, parts of the station have been dismantled. In the case of hull and deck plating and common technological systems, the Nekro aren't particularly careful about their process, but neither does their destruction look like battle damage. There are, however, signs of violence scattered throughout the station, in places where crew put up a fight. Because the Nekro attack with a variety of weapons, some quite vicious, the slaughter has left behind blood, gouges and holes in metal, and other evidence. Even more telling, the dead bodies of Xxcha crew may be found in sections that are still sealed against vacuum.

One clue the PCs won't find is any disabled Nekro construct. Although the crew managed to take a few down with them, the Nekro quickly repaired any damaged units or stripped them for parts.

An unseen danger is lurking throughout the station. The computer systems are infested with Nekro hunter code. This poses a serious threat to the PCs, particularly anyone relying on technology to keep themselves alive—like anyone using a space suit. The curiosity Kkraakon shares with its subordinate creations grants the PCs some small advantage, as the virus is content to infect their technology without immediately disabling or repurposing it. This could even give the PCs an opportunity to detect the virus and take preemptive action.

Perhaps the greatest threat comes from the possibility that the Nekro might infect the PCs' ship, thus compromising their escape route and their access to long-range communications.



Nekro Infection and Propagation

Infection by the Nekro Virus is a very real threat to anyone battling against it. In this adventure, the player characters are likely to be at risk before they even know what they are facing. The following rules and guidance provide a starting place for resolving infection, but you should apply them only as fits the pacing of your game.

The Nekro Virus is an utterly destructive force, and the player characters are probably relying on technology to keep them alive during their mission. Make sure the story comes first, and don't let a chance infection bring the PCs to an unsatisfying and untimely end.

Any item or cybernetic implant that interfaces directly with a Nekro-infected system or Nekro construct is at risk of infection. If a PC with a relevant item or implant makes a check to interact with an infected system, you can spend ☼ or ☼ ☼ ☼ from that check to spread the infection to the item or implant.

Additionally, you can also spend ☼ from any checks made by a Nekro construct while engaged with a PC for the same effect.

Nekro virus infection (as it affects a PC or their gear) has three stages. On any check the character makes using the infected item or implant, you can spend ☼ ☼ ☼ or ☼ to advance the infection to the next stage. The effects of each stage are cumulative. In addition, an infected item or implant can spread the infection to other tech systems as described above, including spreading it to the character's (other) cybernetics.

Stage 1: An infected item adds ■ to all checks that involve it. (For instance, use of a computer to access data on an infected device suffers this effect.) An infected implant adds ■ to all checks the character makes.

Stage 2: An infected item upgrades the difficulty of all checks that involve it once. An infected cybernetic upgrades the difficulty of all checks the character makes once.

Stage 3: An infected item becomes totally unusable for its intended purpose, operating instead under the drive of the Nekro to spread the virus. Cybernetic implants rebel against their owner: you can spend ☼ ☼ ☼ or ☼ from any check the infected character makes to have them suffer one Critical Injury.

Curing the Infection

The Nekro Virus is tenacious, but it is possible to cure it before a host technology is utterly consumed and repurposed. Ccrysus Station itself is far beyond such measures, but the PCs should have an opportunity to treat their own infected gear and (especially) cybernetics. Another option, of course, is to destroy the infected technology—although this may not be an option for certain cybernetics.

Purging the virus from an infected system requires a successful **Hard (◆◆◆) Computers check**. (Don't forget to apply any modifiers for the stage of infection.) Whether the check succeeds or not, ☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹ may be spent to spread the infection to any devices used in the process.

Entering the Station

The *Sccutum*-class station has a single primary airlock for interfacing with visiting ships and several secondary airlocks intended for maintenance or emergency use. In addition, the PCs could enter through one of the gaps in the hull.

Due to the station's extensive damage and the lack of crew to provide assistance, docking with the primary airlock is not as routine as it normally would be. Docking requires the ship's pilot to make an **Easy (◆) Piloting or Operating check**. Failure causes the ship to suffer 3 hull trauma and alerts the Nekro that they have visitors. You might spend ☹ or ☹ from the check to inflict strain on passengers or even disable a particular ship-board system.

Because there is no atmosphere within the station, none of the airlocks are able to properly cycle—as flashing red warning lights announce. To override the safety features and open the interior doors, a character must succeed on an **Average (◆◆) Computers or Mechanics check**, or they can make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Athletics check** to force the doors. Alternatively, if a PC carries an appropriate tool, such as a polymorphic prybar or sarween gamma press (see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 125), they can open doors without checks.

The rents in the hull provide the easiest access to the interior—if the PCs are willing to undertake a short space walk. Regardless of how the PCs enter the station, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The inner hatches slide open, and you see the interior of Ccrysus Station. Only a few emergency lights seem to be operational, leaving most of the antechamber on the other side of the airlock shadowed in thick pools of darkness.

A rack of space suit docks lines one wall; the suits are all missing save one with a ragged hole punched through the visor. Beyond the chamber, a sudden burst of sparks briefly illuminates the corridor, and what looks like a spray of projectile holes in the wall.

Investigating the Empty Shell

The PCs must decide how to go about investigating the station using the map provided (see page 18). The Nekro have made substantial changes to the station's layout through the process of dismantling it, which should pose some challenge to the PCs. How closely you want to adhere to the maps and focus on physical layout during exploration is up to you. A more narrative-driven approach, focusing on the encounters and sites of interest the PCs encounter, is just as valid as a map-driven crawl through the station.

The PCs' exploration should be tense and fraught with perils real and imagined. Although the station is not truly derelict and even still has power, the players should get the feeling of exploring a ghost ship. Although life support is the obvious concern, other systems and functions unnecessary for the Nekro constructs should also be nonfunctional.

Nekro Awareness

The Nekro presence on the station might not attack immediately upon detecting the PCs, but that doesn't mean the PCs' arrival lacks consequences. In nearly every circumstance, when a Nekro machine becomes aware of the PCs, that knowledge spreads almost instantaneously throughout the Nekro network. As a result, the Nekro become more alert to further PC activity, even when not directly observing the PCs.

Once the Nekro become aware of the player characters' arrival, you can represent their heightened alertness by adding ■ or more to Vigilance checks and other checks they make to detect the PCs or their actions. Likewise, add ■ to Stealth checks and similar checks by the PCs. You could also spend a suitable number of ☹ or ☹ from just about any check the PCs make to have the Nekro react suddenly and aggressively. Additional results should depend on how much of a threat the Nekro perceive the PCs to be, and on the relative success of any prior actions the PCs took to hide their presence and activities.

Creating Atmosphere (in Vacuum)

We recommend going for a distinct horror atmosphere in this part of the adventure. The Nekro Virus itself is suitably horrifying, but the players should feel the tension well before they find proof of what happened. They should feel a mounting sense of dread as the PCs explore the seemingly abandoned station and find evidence of recent violence and death.

A good way to create atmosphere is by appealing to the players through their characters' senses. Here are some ideas to inspire you. You might include a lot of details right up front to set the mood, or you might find it more effective to let them trickle out during the course of exploration.

- ♦ **Sight:** The absence of primary lighting is notable, since the Nekro have disabled such unnecessary functions. Emergency lighting may bathe certain corridors and decks in dull red or yellow, while others are completely dark. Nearby terminals might suddenly flicker to life or go dead.

The PCs almost certainly have portable light sources, thermal imaging, or other tools to enhance visibility. These all have their limitations and quirks, which you can play on to build uncertainty and suspense.

The PCs can see many signs of violence left from the sudden onslaught that wiped out the Xxcha crew: bloodstains, blast marks, dents and gouges in the deck plating and bulkheads, damaged machinery, and even bones or corpses.

Remember that most of the station is hard vacuum at this point—blood might be frozen, corpses desiccated or ruptured, and so on.

- ♦ **Sound:** Vacuum is silent, which can be quite off-putting for most species. Remind your players that all they can hear is the sound of their own breathing and the

radio transmissions of their colleagues. Of course, some species may have a different experience, and vibrations can still travel through the decks, so some sounds might be felt as much as heard.

The monotonous silence can be punctuated with the occasional inexplicable static howl over communicators, the grinding of distant machinery, and even the rumble and screech of metal as the station comes apart at its joints.

Such sounds are distorted and strange, and a reminder of the instability of the PCs' surroundings. Tailor the sensory details to the PCs and players, and take a moment to consider what makes it creepiest for everyone!

- ♦ **Smell and Touch:** The majority of species require an enclosing space suit to function in this environment, limiting their other senses. Of course, this confinement can be unnerving in itself. The smell of lab-fresh oxygen or recycled air, depending on the suit design, is distinctive and unusual. The inability to touch things directly makes for a level of uncertainty that can, again, be disconcerting.

There are also the more direct signs of Nekro involvement: the sight of grotesquely dismantled or repurposed machinery, red lights or fleeting shadows of Nekro drones passing by the ends of corridors, and so on. Sprinkling these details in as the PCs get closer to their confrontation can help build the suspense and mystery. If this leads any players to the conclusion that the Nekro Virus is involved, that should scare them even more!

Finally, you can use the rules for darkness and concealment (see page 110 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook) to reinforce the dark, ominous atmosphere in the station.

Moving throughout the Station

The station is in no condition for living humanoids, so simply getting around requires time and caution. It's bad enough that the Nekro have shut off life support and artificial gravity, but they have also proceeded to dismantle and repurpose the station without regard to accessibility. Entire sections that once joined two bays might be removed, wiring exposed, plasma conduits venting radiation, and whatever else you think of.

Whether you handle these issues narratively or require skill checks to proceed or avoid harm is a matter of both pacing and challenge. If you prefer to quickly get to the plot, revelations of this episode and the confrontation with Kkraakon, you can use these descriptive details to set the scene and build tension. If you want to challenge the PCs and handle exploring the station in more detail, you might require checks to safely navigate some impediments.

TABLE 1-1: SPENDING ☹ AND ☹ ON THE STATION

Result	Possible Effects
☹	One of the station's interior lights flickers and goes out. Unless the characters have their own light sources or can see in low-light environments, they add ■ to certain checks due to darkness (see page 110 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).
☹ ☹	If the character is in zero gravity, a tumbling piece of debris drifts into them, throwing them off balance. The character loses their free maneuver on their next turn.
☹ ☹ or ☹	A localized portion of the artificial gravity fails, leaving the character and anything within short range of them in zero gravity.
☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹	A conduit running along the wall or ceiling explodes, venting boiling coolant into the area. Until the end of the character's next turn, everything within short range of them is exposed to a fire with a rating of 5 (see page 111 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). After that, the coolant dissipates into the vacuum.
☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹	A piece of wreckage shifts and collapses suddenly, a terminal spits sparks, or a looming shape is visible out of the corner of the eye before suddenly vanishing. Whatever happens, it startles the PC enough that they must immediately make an Average (◆ ◆) fear check (see page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).
☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹	Something goes terribly wrong with the artificial gravity in the area, throwing the character across a room or down a side corridor. The character is moved to a new location within short range of their original location, and they suffer a short-range fall (see page 112 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).
☹	If the character is wearing a space suit or environmental suit, the suit is significantly breached by a ragged shard of metal, flying piece of debris, or stray shot. Until the character (or an ally) makes a successful Average (◆ ◆ ■) Mechanics check to patch their suit, they suffer the effects of vacuum (see page 111 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook).

You can throw as many hazards and obstacles at the PCs as you like; just make sure each one feels impactful. Remember, a failed check shouldn't halt the PCs, so the plot still progresses. Also, if hazards or areas of zero gravity start to feel mundane, you can still use the results from **Table 1-1: Spending ☹ and ☹ on the Station** to create the feeling of operating in a hazardous environment without requiring additional checks.

Vacuum

The entire station is depressurized, and unless a PC doesn't need to breathe, they need some sort of sealed environmental suit or space suit. If they don't have one, they suffer the effects of vacuum, as explained on page 111 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

Zero Gravity

Artificial gravity has failed in parts of the station. These areas may be small, such as a junction between two hallways, or whole mess halls or cargo bays. Zero-gravity areas count as difficult terrain when a character moves through them, as described on pages 110 and 111 of the Core Rulebook. You can designate any of the areas on the station as zero-gravity environments.

Hazards

As the PCs explore the station, they may encounter hazards they have to actively avoid. These may include an exposed power conduit whipping back and forth, a damaged capacitor that explodes when the PCs get too close, a loose ceiling panel that suddenly collapses, or even a Nekro booby trap.

When you have a PC encounter a hazard, assign it a difficulty (we recommend either **Average [◆ ◆]** or **Hard [◆ ◆ ◆]**). The character then must make a Coordination or Resilience check (whichever makes the most sense for the hazard) with the difficulty set by the difficulty of the hazard. If the character fails the check, they suffer a number of wounds equal to the check's difficulty and strain equal to ☹ generated.

Spending ☹ and ☹ from Other Checks

Dangers from the environment can also strike when the PCs are in the midst of other activities. Whenever a PC performs a skill check, you can decide to spend ☹ or ☹ from the check on **Table 1-1: Spending ☹ and ☹ on the Station** if you think the results fit with the PC's activity. This table can also be used in combat encounters with the Nekro.

Access Denied

The PCs eventually access the station's computer systems. As on most starships and stations, Ccrysus's onboard computers automatically log activity and store any audio, text, or other records manually entered by crew. This is common knowledge, and you can tell your players that their characters would know this if they don't think of it themselves.

With the notable exception of the self-destruct system, the station's computer systems are all networked, so the same data is available from nearly every computer terminal. However, the Nekro constructs have dismantled many terminals as they slowly cannibalize the station. This provides a plausible justification for extending the PCs' search for a usable terminal if you think it's appropriate for the story's pacing.

Once the PCs find a working terminal, gaining access to the system requires an **Average (◆ ◆) Computers check**. If the PCs fail this check, they must either find a crew member's credentials (these could potentially be found on a crew member's corpse) or make another attempt with data drill (EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM, page 120).

If all else fails, the PCs can access this information from the computer systems on the station's bridge. These computers have constant access to the station's systems, and since the bridge was the heart of the station and guarded by security, the terminals don't have the same electronic protection. So if the PCs get to the bridge, they can access the computer systems without a check. It's important that the PCs find the information about the intercepted message, so if they give up trying to access the computers, ⚠ or ☹ can be spent to suggest that the bridge systems would be easier to use.

Networking

A PC who gains access to the station's computer network immediately knows something is wrong. Constant and inexplicable errors frustrate attempts to navigate the systems, while data is garbled and corrupted.

Making matters worse is the reason behind all this corruption: Nekro presence within the network. Unless a character with appropriate expertise takes pains to conceal their presence in the system, the Nekro quickly notice their access.

How the Nekro respond should depend on what they know about the PCs and whether they have had any prior encounters. The Nekro may be content to observe the PCs' activity while attempting to conceal their own presence. In this case, the PCs could make an **Easy (◆) Computers check** specifically to look for signs of digital intrusion or for another explanation for the network's condition. Success reveals that a computer virus of some sort has infected the system.

If they don't take specific actions to check, you should let players spend ⚠ or ☹ from subsequent Computers checks they make to notice that someone (something) else is in the system with them. (Try to play this revelation for tension, to advance the atmosphere of horror.)

If the Nekro are already wary of the PCs as a potential threat, they could take a more active response to the PCs' network presence. At your discretion, Kkraakon makes an **opposed Computers versus Computers** check against the PC accessing the network. If Kkraakon succeeds, the PC is booted from the network, and the terminal or access port shuts down to prevent further access.

However, keep in mind that the PCs must find certain information on the network to lead them into the next part of the adventure (see **Essential Information**, page 25). We recommend waiting and having Kkraakon try to boot them out just after they find the information they need.

While the PCs are in the network, they have access (possibly behind further security, at your discretion) to nearly any data the station might reasonably have. There are few topics that are particularly relevant to the adventure.

The Station's Demise

Although it is important for the adventure plot that the PCs find records of the Traitor's transmissions, their initial reason for accessing the station computers is most likely to learn more about what has happened to Ccrysus and its crew. What they can find on this matter is spotty and incomplete, mostly automated recordings by onboard systems that weren't immediately compromised. In other words, you don't have to reveal immediately that the Nekro Virus is behind it. You can use this information to build further tension with hints at a horrible, swift, and implacable threat.

The attack was sudden, and there is no record of the station's defense weapons activating. PCs who investigate the station's logs also note that six hours before the attack began, the station's sensors detected a small vessel decelerating from superluminal speeds less than half a light-year from the station. Logs note that one of the station's short-range superluminal shuttles was dispatched to intercept it, and returned an hour later with an unidentified probe in tow.

The probe was left outside the station, and space-suited crew members made frequent trips between station and probe. The logs also disclose that information was taken from the probe and brought aboard the station. The information taken can be stored in another part of the records, or in a separate system only accessible on the bridge if you want the PCs to continue exploring before being able to access it.

Soon after the probe's data was brought aboard Ccrysus, systems recorded localized bulkhead damage and energy discharge consistent with weapons fire, then hull breaches and the malfunction of key systems such as life support as the Nekro began dismantling the station. Some key systems began to flicker on and off seemingly at random.

Finally, four hours after the attack began, the station sensors recorded the probe powering up its drive and leaving, soon accelerating to superluminal speeds.

Captain's Log

Several audio messages recorded on the bridge still linger in the memory banks. The computer recorded them as outgoing transmissions, but appended data confirms they never left the station. The quality of the recording is poor, full of static and with plentiful gaps. Considering the state of the network and the actions of the virus, it's fortunate that any of the messages survived.

Should the PCs choose to play the messages, two are recoverable. The first concerns a message the probe carried. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"This is Captain Ssoro. Six hours ago...intercepted a probe traveling from Mecatol Rex toward the core...can't believe it either, but it seems completely autonomous...contains large message in its databanks.

"Message is encrypted...but there appears to be an underlying coded pattern in the data...if we can decrypt the pattern...maybe able to read the message. Otherwise, we will send...to Mecatol Rex in...standard report."

The second message is even more garbled than the first. Read or paraphrase the following:

"This is Captain Ssoro of the Xxcha Navy...final transmission from Ccrysus Station. We are under attack by...virus is in all our systems...a trap hidden in the probe's data...replicated in our systems when we tried to crack the code. Now it's taking over...the fiends have reached the bridge...about to breach...If anyone reads, do not attempt rescue. Repeat, do not attempt...danger of...too high!...begin self-destruct ignition, and I pray it destroys all trace of this—" There is a horrible gurgling scream, and the message ends.

Essential Information

At some point while the PCs are in the computer network, they find some suspicious data not clearly related to the trouble at hand. This could be a result of asking the right questions or spending Δ or $\otimes$, or it could occur just because they have found everything else they need. It's essential that the PCs find this information in order to kick off the true plot of the adventure, so make sure it happens before they leave the station!

Ccrysus Station's first red flag was its interception of the probe traveling from Mecatol Rex toward the galactic core. Autonomous superluminal probes that can travel multiple light-years are a level of technology an order of magnitude above that accessible to the various Great Civilizations.

Although the probe was of unknown technology, the data within it used standard programming languages common to most of the galaxy. In addition, the data was encrypted, and the encryption used is not standard to Xxcha systems but is employed exclusively to protect sensitive communications of the Galactic Council. Winnaran Custodians worked with Jol-Nar technicians to develop the method, which is still considered experimental. The PCs recognize it as a Council cipher automatically. Luckily, as Keleres, they have the key to unlock the cipher.

Digital Duplicity

The PCs can get a good idea of the message the encrypted data conveys by briefly examining it. Of course, they may want to back up the information to a portable device for further study (and as an important clue!). If the PCs are worried about infecting their systems with a computer virus, they know that they can copy the message to a savant that has its transmission abilities disabled. This allows them to access and study the message without worrying about infecting their ship with Kkraakon 2.0.

Since the Keleres have the key to the cipher, they can read the message. As it turns out, since they have the key, they also access the message without triggering the dormant Nekro code within. The transmission consists of a partial technical readout of a space station and a set of astrocartographic coordinates. The station consists of a large central hub with five sections radiating from it, and a ring around the midsection.

To find out more, the PCs can make an **Average (◆◆) Knowledge (Science) check** or **Hard (◆◆◆) Mechanics check** to analyze the space station. Success reveals that the station is larger than a superdreadnought and that the entire structure exists to support a massive energy projector housed in the central hub. If the PCs spend **▲▲** or **⊗**, they deduce that the projector is omnidirectional (it blasts energy in all directions) and fires a pulse of exotic energies. Nothing else can be determined with a quick examination, and the PCs are interrupted by the Nekro Virus if they take too much time studying the data (see page 27).

The PCs can also make an **Easy (◆) Astrocartography check** to recognize that the coordinates are located on the outer reaches of the Gul system. This is the location of the outer planet of Semani.

It Gets Worse...

The other useful piece of information is another set of coordinates: the coordinates the probe was traveling toward. The PCs can make another **Easy (◆) Astrocartography check** (or spend **▲▲** or **⊗** from the earlier check on the coordinates in the Gul system) to determine that the probe's trajectory meant its destination was a minor star system (catalog number: 57629BXR-79y67) roughly a hundred light-years deeper in the core.

Although this is far beyond the range of standard sensor systems, the *Scutum*-class stations are equipped with extremely sensitive detectors calibrated to detect the exotic energies emitted by starships traveling at superluminal speeds. After Ccrysus Station's shuttle intercepted the probe, Captain Ssoro ordered his station's crew to focus its detectors on system 57629BXR-79y67, and the detectors continued to function and record readings even as the station was overrun by Kkraakon.

The readings do not require any check to interpret because the computer systems analyzed them automatically. Over the past six days, over a dozen large vessels have decelerated from superluminal speeds into system 57629BXR-79y67. Worse, the energy signatures of these decelerations match the signatures of FTL drives used by Mahact warships. The gene-sorcerers appear to be massing a fleet of starships in this system.

The detectors are, of course, spotting the massing attack fleet of Vesh Nil Qor. The distance is too far to figure out anything else, but given the presence of the Mahact, the PCs can make an **Easy (◆) Knowledge (Lore) check** to remember that the Mahact are said to have mysterious and highly advanced technology. If anyone had the ability to communicate instantaneously over long distances, it would be them.

What If the PCs Don't Access the Computers?

This is an understandable precaution if the PCs suspect Nekro involvement or some other sort of cyber threat. However, it's very important for the adventure that they learn about the covert message and the Mahact staging area! Here are two alternative means of getting the information to the players:

- ◆ The PCs discover an Xxcha corpse that had been trying to reach the escape pods. Although the body has been savaged by Nekro assimilation drones, the Xxcha lived long enough to shove a data crystal into the pod and write "Council" on the deck next to it in her own blood. The crystal contains the message and the captain's recording.
- ◆ A close call with a Nekro construct could lead to an attempted infection through the Viral Load ability (see page 105). Even if the process is interrupted, portions of the message may be left in the PC's gear. The message could show up when the PCs are checking over their equipment after leaving Ccrysus Station.

Session Expired

If the PCs haven't already attracted the Nekro's attention, poking around in the computer network unavoidably does so. They have a limited amount of time to explore and find the captain's log and encrypted message before the Nekro constructs go into action. After the PCs have had enough time to learn the information they need to know, have any of the PCs keeping watch (or not otherwise working on the computer systems) make an **Average (◆◆) Vigilance check**. If the check is successful, the PCs know something is coming before they see it. When the Nekro activate, they do so all at once. The PCs' scanners detect movement and energy signatures—but no life signs—all around and moving toward them.

If the check fails, the first the PCs know about the awoken Nekro is when they are attacked by a group of **Nekro assimilation drones** (see page 105).

The Nekro Awake

Monitoring Station Ccrysus is now the domain of a horrific Nekro Virus artificial intelligence. Dubbed “Kkraakon” by the Xxcha crew in their final hours, this entity is in the process of subsuming the entirety of the station into its being. In the process, it has fabricated numerous Nekro machines, both to facilitate this work and to defend itself against any threats that may arise. Regardless of the PCs’ intentions, Kkraakon perceives them as a threat.

How soon the Nekro AI becomes aware of the PCs depends on how careful they are to evade attention. Kkraakon is connected to nearly every subsystem within the station (with the notable exception of the self-destruct system, as described on page 17). But this does not grant it unfailing awareness of everything that happens within the station, any more than a person is aware of everything happening inside their body. In fact, much as a Human body’s immune system begins fighting off an infection before the Human notices any symptoms, it’s entirely possible for the PCs to engage in combat with individual Nekro constructs without Kkraakon necessarily becoming aware.

This is all to say that you don’t need to rush to this episode’s conclusion just because the PCs make some noise. The Nekro Virus has a lot going on as it assimilates an entire space station and its crew. Kkraakon may take little or even no notice of the PCs until they prove themselves to be a threat. However, once the PCs have the information they need to drive the adventure story, you can put the pressure on them. Once the Nekro intelligence awakens to the danger the PCs pose, it can set all its minions and powers toward destroying them.

They’re Coming Out of the Walls (Combat Encounter)

Once the Nekro Virus begins its attack, the PCs should have only moments to prepare before the first wave of tech monsters is upon them. Impress upon the PCs that their scanners indicate that many more hostiles are beginning to awaken and move around the station. It should quickly become apparent that destroying every Nekro construct in the place is not a feasible plan!

However, the first encounter should be a more manageable number of drones. If the PCs notice the approach of the Nekro assimilation drones (see **Session Expired**, page 26), read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, your helmet’s display screen bursts into life. Your suit sensors are picking up movement throughout the station—and, more urgently, just down the corridor from your position. You see shadows sliding along the corridor walls before horrors of blackened metal and glowing red optics boil around the corner and fly at you, sharpened mandibles clicking with anticipation!

If the PCs did not manage to notice the approaching Nekro assimilation drones, read or paraphrase the following instead:

Suddenly, your helmet’s display screen bursts into life. You have a moment to notice the motion sensors going wild before a portion of the bulkhead next to you explodes, and a horde of black-bladed mechanical monsters boils from the gaping hole!

If the PCs spotted the approaching Nekro, the drones appear down a corridor at medium range from the PCs, and players roll to determine Initiative. If the PCs did not spot the approaching Nekro, the drones erupt out of a wall next to the PCs. Players roll to determine Initiative, but the drones start the encounter engaged with the PCs, and each PC must make an **Average (◆◆) fear check** as an incidental at the start of that PC’s first turn.

The Nekro attack as two minion groups of four **Nekro assimilation drones** each (see page 105). If you have the **EXPANDED PLAYER’S GUIDE**, you can make use of the rules for power levels (see page 84 of the **EXPANDED PLAYER’S GUIDE**) to gauge how dangerous this encounter is for your group, then add another minion group or subtract a minion from each group to make it harder or easier. The drones fight until they are destroyed.





Hordes of Horrors

Once the PCs have overcome the first attack of assimilation drones, you need to make it clear to your players that their characters will face unending waves of drones unless they accomplish what they came to do and leave. The best way to do this is to have more movement appear on their sensors, indicating that things are active across the station. You can reinforce this by mentioning ominous scuttling and chittering sounds vibrating through the deck, the rumble of distant machinery, and more systems randomly blinking on and off.

If your players don't seem to be taking the threat seriously, or they are moving slowly, you can send another wave of two minion groups of four assimilation drones each to attack them. However, wading through countless encounters with the same drones is likely to get old fast, so additional attacks should be limited. As long as the PCs keep moving, you can hint at Nekro constructs scuttling around the station but keep them one step behind the PCs.

If the PCs do decide to continue taking on the rest of the Nekro in a straight fight, then you can swarm them with drones. Begin the encounter by adding one new minion group of four **Nekro assimilation drones** within medium range of the PCs at the beginning of each round. At the top of the third round, have one of **Kkraakon's tentacles** (see page 105) erupt from a ventilation duct and join the attack, and then add two more tentacles at the beginning of each subsequent round. Hopefully this is enough to get the point across to your PCs, and they retreat. If not, Kkraakon is capable of sending infinite waves of minions against them until they die.

Confronting Kkraakon

Kkraakon lurks in the data archives, drinking in years' worth of information about Xxcha space and its neighboring regions. The PCs might complete this episode without directly confronting the Nekro AI. Alternatively, they could discover it in the course of thoroughly exploring the station, or during a concerted effort to track down the source of the Nekro infection. Kkraakon cannot physically move, embedded as it is in the station. If the PCs wish to deal with the AI directly, they must track it down (see the **Kkraakon** profile, page 106).

The PCs could use any of several methods to attempt to locate the core of the Nekro force. Portable scanners such as a quintisensor or familiar with scanner could detect and track the radio signals that carry Kkraakon's orders to its subordinate Nekro constructs. The scanners might also detect the unusual and distinctive energy signature of the AI construct itself. PCs who risk logging into the computer network again can hone in on Kkraakon using the station's systems. These sorts of technical approaches require a savant or data drill and an **Average (◆◆) Computers check**. Characters who attempt to discern and follow the AI's trail of physical destruction can do so with a **Hard (◆◆◆■) Survival check**.

Tentacles of the Kkraakon (Combat Encounter)

As the PCs get closer to the data archives, they should encounter **Kkraakon's tentacles** (see page 105). The Nekro construct has built robotic tentacles for itself that stretch throughout the station. Some are nearly fifty meters long. They worm their way through corridors and vents, and the PCs may think they are pipes or conduits before they spring to life and attack.

The PCs should have at least one encounter with Kkraakon's tentacles before they find Kkraakon. The best location is in a passageway leading toward the data archives. Before combat begins, one PC can make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Vigilance check** to notice that some of the conduits running along the ceiling are flexing and moving slightly. If the check succeeds, each PC may add ■ to their Initiative check, and they begin combat at short range from the tentacles. If the check fails, each PC instead suffers ■ on their Initiative check and begins combat engaged with a tentacle.

Each tentacle is treated as a separate adversary, and the number of tentacles should be equal to the number of PCs.



The Monster's Lair

Kkraakon has hollowed out the data archives into a round chamber. The monster lurks at its heart, looking like a writhing knot where dozens of its tentacles meet.

All but the most well-equipped and experienced PC groups should have little chance of defeating Kkraakon in a straight fight. Additionally, vast swarms of Nekro constructs are converging on their location to assist, or possibly avenge, their master. There is also the matter of the Nekro virus itself—the station is thoroughly infected and beyond saving. This should all be clear to the PCs, not to dictate their actions, but to let them make an informed decision about what to do. If you need to,

remind the players that their characters have a duty to report what they have discovered about the Synaptic Ordinator and the apparent espionage taking place.

The PCs might decide to simply escape, to use the station's self-destruct system, or to neutralize the threat in some other way. As always, you should let the players lead and give a reasonable chance of success to any plan they concoct—prioritize drama and fun over realism.

Fighting Kkraakon (Combat Encounter)

Kkraakon is at the heart of the chamber it has carved out of the data archives. The room is large enough that the center of the chamber is at medium range from the walls. The space is currently in zero gravity, so it counts as difficult terrain for the PCs. Kkraakon's tentacles and the assimilation drones do not count the environment as difficult terrain.

If the PCs find some way to approach Kkraakon stealthily, they begin the encounter facing Kkraakon and four tentacles hanging from the ceiling at equally distant points. If they do not make any attempt at stealth, they begin the encounter also facing a minion group of four assimilation drones hovering next to Kkraakon.

Kkraakon doesn't move, but it attacks the closest PC each turn with its arsenic pulsar. If the PCs engage it, it uses its Tentacle Whip ability to move as many PCs away from it as possible (even suffering strain for a second maneuver), then shoots the nearest PC with its arsenic pulsar. The tentacles try to immobilize the PCs before they engage Kkraakon, and Kkraakon has no qualms against shooting targets engaged with its own tentacles; if it destroys a tentacle, it can always regrow more later.

At the beginning of the third round and fifth round, a new minion group of four assimilation drones arrives from elsewhere on the station and joins the combat. At the start of the sixth round and every round afterward, a minion group of five assimilation drones arrives instead.

If the PCs manage to destroy Kkraakon, the drones cease attacking and moving. However, the PCs can see lights still blinking on them, and on the tentacles running through the station. A successful **Easy (◆) Knowledge (Lore) check** or **Hard (◆◆◆) Computers check** reveals that the drones all still have the Nekro virus within them and, given enough time, could become operational and attempt once again to assimilate the station. The only ways to prevent Kkraakon's return are to ensure every bit of Nekro code is purged from the system (an incredibly time-consuming task) or to blow up the station.

Destroying the Station

Before departing Ccrysus Station, the PCs might engage the station's self-destruct system. Whether this is to destroy Kkraakon or to contain the infection that pervades the station's systems, it's a good—and arguably necessary—choice.

The characters can access the self-destruct system's compartment through the bridge (see page 17). To safeguard against digital intrusion or computer-disabling EMPs and similar attacks, the *Scutum*-class station's self-destruct system is entirely mechanical. To activate it, an operator must manually pivot three high-tension handles to level open the hatch concealing the ignition handle. Once the system is primed, the engines begin a catastrophic sequence that results in an explosion more than adequate to annihilate the station. The process takes approximately ten minutes.

Hopefully, the PCs have an escape plan in place before activating the self-destruct sequence. If their own ship is compromised, the shuttle bay is close enough to the bridge to provide an option (see **Shuttle Bay**, page 17). Escaping in time should be tense but ultimately achievable.

Since the GENESYS rules do not track precise distances or times, you have a lot of leeway to pace the PCs' escape for maximum tension. You might throw another wave of Nekro assimilation drones at the PCs, or have them encounter a hazard created by the station's overloading systems (see page 23). Alternatively, if the PCs have already defeated Kkraakon in a (no doubt suitably tense) combat encounter, this could serve as more somber denouement for the episode.

Parting Shots

If the PCs have an armed ship and you want to give them a chance to engage in some space combat, you can have Kkraakon make one final attack on the group as they attempt to flee the station (assuming they haven't killed Kkraakon already). The Nekro launches the last operating shuttle (now under Nekro control) and attempts to ram the PCs' ship. Use Kkraakon as the pilot, and the collision rules from page 222 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook.

Disassembled Alpha Shuttle

3	3	+1	0	1
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
HT THRESHOLD		SS THRESHOLD		
10		8		

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.

COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot (or Nekro AI).

PASSENGER CAPACITY: 10.

CONSUMABLES: None.

ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 150.

FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.

PRICE/RARITY: Worthless/not for sale.

WEAPONS: None.

Additional Rules

Ramming Speed

When the disassembled alpha shuttle deliberately collides with another ship (see page 222 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), both ships suffer 5 hull trauma and add +30 to the Critical Hit results they suffer.

Vulnerable

All successful combat checks targeting the disassembled alpha shuttle add ♠ ♠ to the results.

Episode 2: The Centers of the Galaxy

Whether they destroy, flee, or deal otherwise with Ccrysus Station, the PCs should now be headed back to Mecatol Rex to report not only on the result of their mission, but on the surprising revelations from the station's computer. In this episode, after reporting their findings, the PCs learn more about the Synaptic Ordinator project and the risks of the information leak. With evidence of a Mahact fleet massing for an attack, it is vital that the PCs uncover and deal with the treacherous threat to the project. After learning more about the project, it should be clear to the PCs that the best place to begin their investigation is at the Ordinator itself.

During this episode, the PCs should also hear about rising unrest throughout the galaxy. In particular, a number of civilizations have seen a swell of insurrection, often aligned with apocalyptic belief systems. The Galactic Council is only beginning to understand the nature and extent of the threat posed by the Vuil'raith, and these rumors foreshadow the PCs' personal experience to come in Act II.

Episode Goals

In this episode, the PCs return to Mecatol Rex, home of the Galactic Council and the headquarters of the Keleres. The PCs' duty as Keleres is clear: report on their discovery of a breach in Council security and begin an investigation into the matter.

By the end of this episode, the PCs should:

- ◆ Debrief their mission to Ccrysus Station.
- ◆ Report their discovery of the leaked technical readout of the Synaptic Ordinator and of the Mahact energy traces.
- ◆ Learn more about the Synaptic Ordinator.
- ◆ Suspect a traitor within the project.
- ◆ Decide to begin their investigation at the Synaptic Ordinator.

Returning to Mecatol Rex

Although the PCs have the information that can lead them to the Synaptic Ordinator, their duty is first to return to Mecatol Rex and make their report to Matir Iq Matir and Ddradik Tik. The journey back takes the same amount of time as the journey out, but if the PCs want to speed it up, you can use the guidelines in the **Traveling to the Station** sidebar on page 16.

Debriefing (Social Encounter)

When the PCs return to Mecatol City, their first order of business should be to report their findings. Matir Iq Matir and Ddradik Tik (or the PCs' patron if they received their mission from someone else) have received word of their return and are waiting in Keleres HQ for their report. If the PCs sent ahead information on their findings, the two are waiting at the landing bay instead. Once the PCs arrive, they hustle them to a secure briefing room and insist on a full report.

After the PCs have delivered their report, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

When you finish your account of the events at Ccrysus Station, you see that Ddradik Tik's usually bland demeanor has been replaced by a cold grimness. "Thank you, Keleres," he says. "I apologize, but I must get word to my government immediately."

He stands and leaves the briefing room without another word. Matir watches him go, and then turns back to you. "Well, I expect the Kingdom will dispatch a naval task force to investigate the wreck without delay. They should be sufficient to deal with any remnants of this Nekro infestation."

"What I'm concerned about is where the infestation came from. And more importantly, what are the message's implications and why does it seem to have been sent straight to the Mahact?" She thinks for a moment, then nods to herself. "I believe this needs to be brought to the Tribunii immediately. Do not tell anyone about this until I've had a chance to do so, understood?"

The PCs have a chance to ask Matir questions before she ends the briefing. However, there are only a few topics she's willing to address.

What is going to happen with Ccrysus Station?

Matir explains that as the station is an Xxcha Kingdom military outpost, further investigations are the Kingdom's responsibility. However, given the Keleres's remit, she'll recommend that the Tribunii send an operative stationed on Archon Ren to accompany the task force. Because of the message they found on the station, it is vital that the PCs remain on Mecatol Rex.

Do you know who made this probe?

Matir doesn't, and she tells the PCs that nothing immediately matches the probe in their databases. This, plus the probe's advanced technology, tells her that it probably was made by one of the more advanced galactic factions, such as the Titans of Ul, the Empyrean, the Jol-Nar, or the Mahact. Given the probe's destination, the Mahact seem a likely culprit.

How did the Nekro virus get into a message sent from Mecatol Rex?

Matir looks especially troubled, but she admits that, under the Council's oversight, the Custodians do have samples of the Nekro virus securely stored for study. This is something else she needs to discuss with the Tribunii, because the only people with access to it are high-ranking Winnaran Custodians, the members of the Galactic Council and their trusted aides, and high-ranking Keleres.

Can we find out more about the Synaptic Ordinator?

Absolutely not. In fact, Matir doesn't know anything about the Ordinator either, but she won't admit it.

What about the Mahact fleet massing in the core?

Matir nods, and admits that is a grave concern. However, it is an issue she'll have to bring up to the Tribunii, who will likely have to bring it before the full Council. She mentions that the various Great Civilizations will have to agree to send ships to deal with the threat, since the Council and Keleres don't have a fleet of their own.

What should we be doing?

Matir reassures the PCs that they're not in any trouble and that until she contacts them again, their time is their own. It is early afternoon on Mecatol Rex when the PCs arrive, and she doesn't expect to have any further orders for them until tomorrow.

What If the PCs Travel to Semani First?

It is possible that your players will decide to travel directly to the Synaptic Ordinator. However, since the PCs do not have clearance from the Galactic Council (and are not supposed to know anything about the project at all), any attempt to travel to the Ordinator attracts the Winnaran Custodians's attention. A pair of Custodian Guard starfighters intercept the PCs' ship in the Gul system as they approach Semani, where the Ordinator is located. The starfighters order them to turn around or be fired upon, and the PCs should know that their authority as Keleres does not give them command over the Winnaran Custodians.

If the PCs try to force the issue, the Custodian Guard eventually, after many warnings, opens fire on their ship. Unfortunately, this does end the adventure (as the PCs end up dead or in prison awaiting sentencing and likely expulsion from the Keleres). Therefore, it is important that you make it clear that the Custodian Guard are not going to be persuaded or coerced into letting the PCs through (nor should they, since they're defending a top-secret project!).

Downtime

Once the PCs finish the debriefing, they have the rest of the day and evening to spend as they wish. This is a good chance to return any requisitioned gear to the Keleres armory, get medical attention for any lingering injuries, pursue their own agendas, or simply relax.

If any of the PCs were attempting to complete a benchmark for their agenda by gathering information at Ccrysus Station, the evening is a perfect time to ensure that information is dispatched to their contacts in their own faction. Alternatively, a PC with an agenda involving understanding or research may spend the evening learning more about the Nekro or Mahact. If a PC has an agenda involving defeating the Mahact or Nekro specifically, they may complete a benchmark by compiling more information on the Nekro infestation and sending it with Ddradik Tik, or by researching the best way to defeat the Mahact.

If any of the PCs are still suffering from persistent injuries, they can also visit the Keleres medical bay. The staff on duty can make a Medicine check with an ability of (🟡 🟡 🟢 🟦) to attempt to heal wounds or Critical Injuries. Each PC can benefit from one check.

Secrets at the Top

The next morning, the PCs receive a summons from Matir in the form of a message sent to their savants. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"Keleres, I have spoken to the Tribunii about your discovery at Ccrysus Station. Apparently we have stumbled across a top-secret project initiated by the Galactic Council. Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai has summoned us all to a meeting of the Council subcommittee responsible for this project at 1000 GMT. I will meet you at the north plaza entrance to the Council Chambers."

1000 GMT (Galactic Mean Time) is the equivalent to noon in the twenty-hour Mecatol day. This gives the PCs roughly four hours to prepare themselves and travel to the Council Chambers, the massive inverted ziggurat in the heart of Mecatol City where the Galactic Council meets.

Given their position as Keleres, you can give your players some information that their characters would know automatically. First, Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai is one of the three Tribunii who oversee the Keleres. All Tribunii are members of the Galactic Council who are elected by their peers to the position, and Kuuasi is a Shikrai who was originally a Councilor for the Argent Flight. He was also one of the three original Tribunii from the Keleres's founding five years ago, and the only one still serving. For more about Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai and the Tribunii's fearsome attrition rate, see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, pages 206 to 208.

Second, the Galactic Council is a large organization with hundreds of members. To manage the numerous matters that demand its attention, it often forms subcommittees with specific remits. Subcommittees can be nearly any size, but they generally range from five to twenty Councilors.

Getting to the Council Chambers from Keleres HQ is a simple process. If the PCs are on good terms with the hangar-bay quartermasters, they can requisition a civilian hover carrum and drive into the heart of Mecatol City. Otherwise, they can take a vac-train into the city. Either takes roughly an hour.

The Council Chambers

Once the PCs arrive at the Council Chambers, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

You step onto the plaza surrounding the Council Chambers and stare up at the cyclopean building rising above you. The chambers are a massive inverted ziggurat looming oppressively over your heads and reaching nearly a kilometer into the sky.

From your vantage point, you can't make out the famed plasma beacon that burns from the chambers' top, announcing that the Council has been reconvened. But you can see one of the towering statues of "Imperator Lazax" that adorn each of the ziggurat's four corners, offering an eternal benediction to those who pass beneath its gaze.

You make your way to the north entrance, where you see Matir waiting alongside Kuuasi Aun Jalatai and a couple of Keleres assigned as the Tribunii's bodyguards. Matir waves you over, and when you arrive, Kuuasi cocks his head and looks you up and down. "Thank you for attending," he says in a soft, trilling voice.

Matir and Kuuasi lead the PCs inside, through multiple security checkpoints staffed by the Custodian Guard. Eventually they make it into a large lift that whisks them to a middle level of the chambers, where they travel down an unremarkable and unadorned hallway and are ushered into a conference hall paneled in pale *gella* wood. One end of the hall is dominated by a hemispheric rostrum with space for six Councilors and their aides. The rest of the room has seats for an audience, but the only people present are the Councilors, their aides, and an older Winnaran Custodian standing to one side.

The Hearing Begins

The PCs, Matir, and Kuuasi enter and stand in front of the rostrum. Kuuasi's bodyguards remain outside. Once everyone is inside, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The doors to the hall hiss shut, and an elderly Custodian steps forward, leaning on his staff of office. "Hear all," he croaks. "The Council Subcommittee on Extraordinary Studies is now convened. This session is sealed." He weakly strikes the floor with his staff, and you see the blue flicker of baffle fields flash across the walls and doors. The room is now shielded against sensors and electronic communications.

The Winnaran continues. "I am Chamberlain Raan Di Sanal, assigned to aid this subcommittee in their duties. These," he gestures to the rostrum from left to right, "are Councilors Galrud, Shane...Lehmann, Ozanne Sabin Carbonneau, Kkasan Gen, Vadanus..." He trails off, pausing until the last Councilor, a hulking N'orr, snaps their mandibles in irritation. "Ah, yes, So'Cil. Councilors, I give you the Keleres cohort who investigated Ccrysus Station."

These are the six Councilors of the subcommittee. **Galrud** is a venerable Hacan male with a thick silver mane and tawny fur going to gray, wearing robes of purple starflower silk bedecked with jewels. Anyone can recognize that he is displaying enormous wealth. He has no aides present.

Shane Lehmann is a young Human male with tawny-beige skin and a red hair, wearing a finely tailored blue suit. Any Humans recognize that this is someone who puts a great deal of money and effort into his appearance. A middle-aged Human woman with deeply tanned skin and brown hair cut into a braided crest stands behind him, occasionally whispering in his ear. This is **Nadia Ngoy**, Lehmann's skilled aide.

Ozanne Sabin Carbonneau is a Letnev of indeterminate age with the weathered features of a skilled military veteran. They have closely cropped blue-black hair and a conspicuous scar running down their cheek and under their left eye. Their clothing appears to be a military duty uniform with rank and unit insignia removed. A young male Letnev sits stiffly behind Carbonneau, never seeming to move. This is **Lieutenant Tellis Martelan**, military attaché to Carbonneau.

Kkasan Gen, a middle-aged female Xxcha, appears small and slightly built for her species. She wears the burgundy and purple robes of a Xxcha diplomat and has a single familiar hovering over her shoulder to keep notes.

Vadanus the Councilor is a young Titan, which means they are "only" three meters tall and built like an armored mech. Their body is covered in armored plates the color of lead and copper, with a soft-green glow emanating from the joints between their limbs. Their head is dominated by a single eye that glows with the same emerald hue. They are alone.

So'Cil is a hulking, six-limbed (four legs, two arms) N'orr with light-green skin and a wedge-shaped head with a dozen tiny black eyes. Any N'orr (or anyone who's fought them) recognizes that he belongs to a particularly combat-focused subspecies. He is alone.

A New Mission (Social Encounter)

Normally, the PCs (along with nearly all of the Keleres save the Tribunii) would not be told about the Synaptic Ordinator. However, with the obvious evidence of a leak, Tribunii Kuuasi has asked for an emergency meeting of the Subcommittee on Extraordinary Studies. His goal is to get the subcommittee to agree to grant the PCs access to the project so they can hunt down those responsible for the leak.

Kuuasi wants the PCs to do the job because they already know about the project, so using them is less of a security risk. More importantly, the canny old Shikrai wants the PCs to argue for their involvement themselves. He figures this will demonstrate their dedication, but it also gives him more deniability if the PCs fail.

After the PCs are introduced to the Council, Kuuasi begins the argument. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The Tribunii steps forward, feathers flattening in deference. "Honored Councilors, none appreciate the importance of this project's secrecy more than I. Thus, when I was told by these brave Keleres that they had recovered plans of the project on a destroyed station, and that those plans had been transmitted deep into the galactic core, I became gravely concerned.

"Clearly, there is a traitor somewhere in this project. We—" he sweeps his taloned hand in a broad gesture that encompasses all of you, "—feel that these Keleres, having already learned of the project, are the best ones to hunt down the leak and seal it before more harm is done. This cohort has volunteered to depart on this mission immediately, should you give your permission."

Of course, the PCs have not had a chance to volunteer for this mission, since they haven't spoken to Kuuasi before now. However, if any of the PCs start to protest, Kuuasi shoots them a significant glance and subtle gesture that clearly says *don't argue with this right now*.

Not that the PCs have much chance to argue, because immediately after Kuuasi's speech, the six Councilors erupt into an argument. It is immediately clear that three of the Councilors are at least nominally supportive of Kuuasi, while three are against the idea.

It is up to you which three Councilors support the idea, and which three disagree with it. If you have chosen a Councilor as the Traitor, then that Councilor should be against allowing the PCs to investigate. If you have chosen one of the Councilor's aides as the Traitor, then the aide's Councilor should be against it.

(If you chose Raan Di Sanal as the Traitor, then while he doesn't participate actively in the encounter, he makes comments throughout supporting the Councilors who don't want the PCs to be involved, and he bangs his staff and shouts for order when the PCs speak.)

Running the Encounter

This encounter can be run as a structured social encounter or as a narrative social encounter. If you take the narrative route, it is up to you to determine when the PCs' arguments have swayed the three oppositional Councilors enough that they agree to send the PCs to investigate. You should still require the PCs to make a check, and there should be at least one successful social skill check targeting each oppositional Councilor.

On the other hand, if you decide to run this as a structured social encounter using the rules starting on page 118 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook, here are some guidelines for the encounter.

- ♦ The primary opponents for the PCs are the three oppositional Councilors. The PCs' goal is to force them to compromise (by inflicting strain equal to half their strain threshold) or capitulate (by inflicting enough strain to exceed their strain threshold). The PCs must get all three oppositional Councilors to compromise, or two of them to capitulate.
- ♦ Compromise means that the Councilor grudgingly agrees to the idea, but does not support it. They take no further part in the argument but clearly aren't happy about the situation. Capitulation means that the Councilor becomes an ardent supporter of the PCs' investigation (note that the Traitor will never actually become an ardent supporter, but if their strain threshold is exceeded, they give up and pretend to support the idea).

The PCs do have allies in this fight, in the form of both Kuuasi and the three supportive Councilors. You don't have to make checks for these allies, but you can have them aid the PCs during the encounter. This aid has mechanical benefits, but it should be narratively described as them arguing with their colleagues or agreeing with a point the PCs make.

- ♦ During each of the rounds of the social encounter, each of the supportive Councilors can do one of the following: they can cause the PCs to heal 1 strain each by supporting their arguments, or they can cause the oppositional Councilors to suffer 1 strain each by arguing with them directly.
- ♦ During each of the rounds of the social encounter, Kuuasi backs the arguments of one of the PCs. This adds 1 to any check the PC makes as part of that argument.

In addition, as the PCs debate the Councilors, they can spend 1 from their checks to learn more about the Ordinator. Information about it can also be revealed as part of a question or discussion if it makes sense for the narrative. Here are some points about the project that the PCs might wonder about.

What is the Synaptic Ordinator exactly?

The Synaptic Ordinator is a defense system, a device capable of stripping away the unnatural genetic code that compels victims to serve the Mahact. This gene-curse appears in seemingly random sentients across the galaxy, and scientists suspect that it was seeded into their ancestors when the Mahact ruled countless millennia ago. These sleeper agents typically aren't even aware of it, but the Mahact can turn them into loyal thralls over vast distances. When complete, the Synaptic Ordinator will allow the Council to free such thralls from the Mahact's dominance, and it can blanket an entire world and nearby space when used.

If the PCs Don't Convince the Subcommittee

It is possible that the PCs will fail to convince the subcommittee to send them on the mission. However, this doesn't end the adventure!

If the PCs fail, Kuuasi graciously agrees to the subcommittee's decision and leaves with the PCs in tow. As soon as everyone is outside the Council Chambers, he tells the PCs that he is going to send them to the Synaptic Ordinator construction site anyway. He gives them clearance to get onto the station and answers any additional questions they have about the project.

This also means that when the PCs are accused of being traitors at the end of Act I, they have clearly violated the Council's orders.

As the PCs saw in the blueprints, the Synaptic Ordinator is also a very large device, larger than a Jol-Nar war sun. It has means of propulsion, but it is slow and lightly defended for its size.

How does the Synaptic Ordinator work?

The radiation emitted by the Synaptic Ordinator is carefully keyed to purge the Mahact signature from victims' genetic code. (In a way, this is a form of gene-sorcery, though crude by Mahact standards—a massive space station is required to undo what a Mahact sorcerer can do with a flick of the wrist.) Lazax technology recovered by a Keleres cohort on Herool's Truce was vital to progressing the project. The rediscovered Lazax methods were the key to accelerating electromagnetic waves to superluminal speed while preserving coherency and effect.

Why are you so concerned about the possibility of a Mahact invasion when there are so many other threats out there?

It is clear that the return of the Mahact poses an existential threat to the Galactic Council and all civilizations. Not only are the military applications of their gene-sorcery profound, but they have demonstrated an ability to subvert the will of other sentients. On the expedition that so tragically awoke the Mahact, even the Council's own appointed agents reappeared as loyal "emissaries" of the gene-sorcerers. This example is most distressing because there was no observable change in their appearance. None of the Great Civilizations's military forces can fight the Mahact so long as each soldier, each commander, each general is a potential Mahact thrall.

Who's in charge of the Ordinator Project?

The Council devised the plan based on the proposals of Dr. Ruga and Chief Engineer Tola, who designed the device using ancient macro-technology schematics provided by the Titans, specifically Vadanus the Councilor. When complete, the Synaptic Ordinator will be crewed and maintained primarily by Winnaran Custodians because its primary purpose is to defend Mecatol Rex.

Why did the Council agree to this?

Getting the Council to approve it was a monumental task, only accomplished because of the goodwill the Titans have engendered among many Council factions and the promise that the Ordinator would defend Mecatol Rex specifically. Each faction in the Council also hopes to gain access to the technology after the Ordinator is complete, potentially building their own Ordinators to protect their own homeworlds from the Mahact.

Who knows about the project?

The project is known only to the Council, certain highly placed officials in the Council members' governments, the Tribunii, and the scientists and technicians involved. None of the Councilors want to admit the possibility that they or their aides might be the leak, so they assume it must be someone working on the project.

Where is the Synaptic Ordinator?

Construction is occurring over Fors, the largest moon orbiting the gas giant Semani, in the far reaches of the Gul system. The completed station will move into orbit over Mecatol Rex to protect the capital.

What about the Mahact fleet massing near system 57629BXR-79y6?

The Councilors agree that this is a significant concern, and the full Galactic Council will discuss the threat this very afternoon. The full Council doesn't know about the specifics of the Ordinator, but Vadanus the Councilor notes that it is fortunate that the Ordinator is so close to completion. Councilor Galrud makes a point of thanking the PCs for their efforts, while Councilor Carbonneau pessimistically remarks that the Ordinator isn't finished yet and might not be ready in time. At this, Councilor Lehmann proudly mentions that he has already dispatched word to Jord and expects the Federation to dispatch any nearby forces to help in the defense. The other Councilors react with various degrees of annoyance at this posturing.

The Traitor's Agenda

The Traitor attempts to cast doubt on the likelihood of an approaching Mahact fleet, pointing out that the signal may not truly be of Mahact origin at all, and even if it is, it could be some sort of listening station or defense system of theirs. The Traitor also raises other issues, even those that might already have been discussed: why did the Nekro take Ccrysus Station and not simply destroy it? Why didn't the Xxcha act sooner to investigate? And what about the multiple reports of a rise in doomsday cults and civil insurrection among worlds across the galaxy? This last question should receive a response from the other Councilors, as there has indeed been a worrying uptick in doomsday cults.

The Traitor's purpose is twofold: to draw out the debate, and to play down the Mahact threat. However, keep in mind that the identity of the Traitor may alter their questions and tactics. They are unlikely to cast doubt on the motivations of the Xxcha if they are Xxcha themselves, for example. This is not necessarily out of loyalty, but because to imply disloyalty to their own species might arouse suspicion.

When it becomes clear that the Synaptic Ordinator is the priority, the Traitor changes tack and instead speaks out against the proposed mission. Rather than sending Keleres to the construction site, they suggest the subcommittee should lock down the site completely, increase security, and prepare a military defense before the potential attack.

The Traitor only agrees to sending the PCs if the Traitor is overcome during the social encounter, and then only because it would be more suspicious to keep arguing.



Other Leads

Before the PCs travel to the Synaptic Ordinator, they may choose other avenues to investigate. The following are some notes to guide you if the PCs want to pursue tangential investigations.

- ♦ **Origins of the Mahact Probe:** The PCs may try to narrow down the origins of the Mahact probe. The obvious places to ask would be the polar castelle that defend Mecatol Rex, since each fortress has a powerful sensor suite. If the PCs contact one of the castelle, the duty officer informs them that the fortress' scanners register a great deal of incoming and outgoing traffic in the system. When they search their records, they find several superluminal acceleration signatures that could have been from the departing probe, but there is no way to trace their origin other than "somewhere in the Gul system."

Origins of the Nekro Virus: The player characters may also try to figure out where the copy of the Nekro virus laced into the message came from. Kuuasi can tell them (or they can make a successful **Hard [◆◆◆] Knowledge [Lore] check** to know) that a secret Custodian lab studies the virus somewhere in the Sea of Desolation on Mecatol Rex. Only high-ranking Keleres (not the PCs) can visit, but the PCs can obtain the visitor logs. Besides a number of Keleres agents, a group of Councilors visited the lab a month ago on an inspection tour. These included the Traitor and two other Councilors from the subcommittee of your choice, plus Councilor K'alasha S'amur from the Naalu Collective and Councilor Gulan Sua from the Universities of Jol-Nar.

Episode 3: Under Construction

In this episode, the PCs travel to the Synaptic Ordinator construction ring to begin their investigation. One of the many technicians or scientists involved in the project may be the leak, and establishing who sent information to the Mahact would reassure the currently mistrustful Councilors, as well as neutralizing a dangerous security breach.

The Ordinator is being built in the orbit of Fors, one of Semani's moons, in the far reaches of the Gul system—the same system as Mecatol Rex. Traveling there should be quick and uneventful. While it's assumed the PCs travel in the same ship as before, if it sustained damage, they might ask their handler for the use of another similar ship.

The Story So Far

Three weeks before Ccrysus Station intercepted the FTL message, the Traitor began visiting the Synaptic Ordinator. Their goal was to get Dr. Ruga to give them a copy of its schematics. However, they assumed that showing up once, demanding the schematics, and never returning would be suspicious. So instead, they arranged for a series of visits under the guise of inspecting the work on the Synaptic Ordinator for fraud and budget overruns. The schematics were one of the many things they requested during one of their visits.

Two days after sending the FTL message, the Traitor was contacted by Pilip Coleridge, the captain of a freighter, the *Crimson Coin*, that had just arrived from Shardpoint. It turned out that Coleridge and his crew had been hired by Vesh Nil Qor's agent, Ralga Woll. The Mahact wanted to delay the Ordinator's completion to give him time to assemble his fleet. Coleridge's job was to sabotage the Ordinator and delay its construction (but not destroy the station).

The Traitor bribed Den Il Marsil, the Ordinator's security chief, with a significant number of Mentak Coalition credit chits (nearly as valuable as aurei on many worlds and hard to trace). Marsil didn't know Coleridge's plans (thinking this was just a smuggling drop-off), so he allowed Coleridge and his crew to take up residence in the docking bay dormitories aboard the station while their ship was being unloaded.

When the PCs arrive, Coleridge is within a day or so of completing his sabotage arrangements. Unbeknownst to Marsil, when the PCs arrive, the Traitor contacts Coleridge with new orders: in addition to the sabotage, make sure the PCs don't leave the station alive.

Episode Goals

The PCs should begin their investigation at the Synaptic Ordinator in whatever way they prefer. However they proceed, they should ultimately discover certain information pointing at the Traitor's identity.

By the end of this episode, the PCs should:

- ◆ Find out about the Traitor's unscheduled visits to the Ordinator.
- ◆ Discover that the Traitor obtained detailed schematics of the station.
- ◆ Learn the Traitor bribed the security chief to ensure Coleridge's ship bypassed security checks, and that Coleridge's ship came from Shardpoint.
- ◆ Encounter the saboteurs.

The Synaptic Ordinator

The station consists of a massive central hub circled by a large ring, with five flat, hexagonal sections radiating from just behind the ring, somewhat resembling a flower in bloom. The central hub houses the weapon system's primary engineering. The radial sections serve two functions. The dorsal surface is reflective, the entire structure effectively forming a parabolic antenna. This serves to protect the crew from the fantastic and dangerous energies as much as to direct the energies. The underside of each section contains the vast gene-data banks used to program the device. Finally, the ring that surrounds the station houses the crew quarters, cargo bays, and hangar bays.

The construction facilities orbit the moon Fors, where mines abandoned after the fall of the Lazax have been reopened to provide raw materials. These facilities anchor the configurable scaffolding that allows for zero-gravity construction. They also house offices and bunks, though as construction is almost finished, many crew have relocated to their permanent facilities aboard the station.

For a map of the station, see page 90-91.

Engineering

The engines of the Synaptic Ordinator are comparable to those of any spacefaring vessel of similar size. The station's design allows for repositioning, both to counter Mahact attacks and to evade enemies. However, the station is equipped only for subluminal travel at this time. Adding superluminal drives is a complex and difficult process that may happen at some point in the future.

Gene-Data Banks

The Synaptic Ordinator is the first system of its kind, and while the weapon is immense, its effects are delicate. In order to safely strip the Mahact code from the DNA of any sentient species, the Ordinator relies on massive computer banks of genetic sequencing information, and on even more complex computers to communicate the necessary information to the focusing array.

Central Computer Core

The Synaptic Ordinator's main computer core is buried in the heart of the station, near the primary reactor. A single hatch leads to a spherical room with a lone column rising one meter in the center. The entire room is actually the core: hidden wall panels conceal massive processors dedicated to running the station's systems. The column is the core's access terminal.

Primary Reactor

A powerful fusion reactor generates the immense radiation necessary to maintain signal coherency and effectiveness over great distances. When the Ordinator fires, it draws nearly all of the reactor's power. At other times, the reactor is more than sufficient to power the engines and all of the Ordinator's other systems.

Bio-Wave Focusing Array

The Ordinator's bio-wave focusing array serves as an advanced targeting system; it is designed to translate a simple instruction (such as one targeting a particular location) into a specific sequence of pulses to safely remove any Mahact influence on targeted sentients. This is a difficult and precise component of the overall weapon, since the object is to neutralize the Mahact threat without causing adverse effects. The array must take into account the physiologies of different species, the number of individuals at the target site, and various other factors that might turn this anti-Mahact weapon into something universally dangerous. A particular challenge, which Dr. Ruga has been working on personally, is how to ensure it can't be manipulated for a more sinister purpose.

Ring

The busiest and most populated part of the Ordinator, the ring is where most of the workers and station crew are staying. It contains the bunkrooms, cargo bays, security, and docking bays. Numerous storage areas containing provisions, construction materials, and safety equipment occupy much of the rest of the ring. This is where the PCs can interact with the project's scientists and engineers, and where the saboteurs are busy unloading cargo into an empty storage area.

Bridge

This large control center sits in the prow of the Ordinator. Although far from the crew ring, it is positioned safely within the main hull of the weapon. The officers on the bridge are responsible for the health and safety of everyone on the station and for the completion of the project. None of them are directly involved in the building of the Ordinator, and officers are kept deliberately in the dark about its inner workings. Their primary mission is to ensure that, once completed, the weapon reaches Mecatol Rex. If the PCs visit the bridge, **Captain Pad Di Teret** (see page 116) answers their questions.

Cargo Bays and Docking Bays

The ring around the outside of the Ordinator has a series of cargo bays spaced equally throughout. They are used for supply storage and, currently, to house construction machinery. Each bay is a large, two-story affair with gantries running along the long walls about four meters up.

There are also two docking bays, each halfway around the ring. The docking bays are large enough to each house a dozen starfighters or several larger transports. However, most of the cargo ships dock externally at hatches around the docking bays, as they are too large to comfortably fit in the docking bays.

Security Station

The security station is the domain of **Den Il Marsil**, the Win-naran security chief (see page 117), who has a private bunk nearby. He knows nothing about the weapon except that he must ensure its safety. Answering to the bridge, security here comprises a larger force than usual for a station of this size, due to the nature of the project.

The security station is crewed at all times by three officers, who monitor the station's communications and security systems. They maintain contact with the bridge, and Den is subordinate to the officers there. The very presence of the PCs creates more work for the security officers, who answer questions begrudgingly, and Den resents the very idea that the security on his station might be compromised.

The security officers are all **Custodian velites** (see page 107).

Arriving at the Station

Traveling to the station requires several hours aboard a starship, likely the ship that the PCs used to travel to Ccrysus Station. The trip is simple and does not require a check. As the PCs approach the gas giant Semani and its moon, Fors, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

As your ship slips past the blue-green bulk of Semani, its surface churning with vast storms, you begin to make out a pale spot of light in the distance. It soon grows into Fors, a large moon with a cracked and shattered surface of mingled water ice and stone. As you grow closer, you can see blinking lights in orbit around the moon and the glow of engines. Then, rising above the horizon like a second moon, the vast bulk of the Synaptic Ordinator comes into view.

The station consists of a huge central cylinder with five massive hexagonal panels radiating from its flanks. As it turns to face you, they almost remind you of the petals of a metal flower, the cluster of antennae sprouting from the cylinder's end taking on the role of stamen.

As soon as the PCs see the Synaptic Ordinator, a pair of starfighters moves to intercept their ship. The fighters are operated by the Custodian Guard and are part of the protective force assigned to the Ordinator.

At this point, the PCs can choose whether to announce themselves and their mission or attempt to use some sort of deception to gain entry to the Ordinator.

Legitimate Entry

If the PCs inform the Custodian Guard of their identity, they are admitted directly into the Ordinator. They dock in one of the Ordinator's landing bays, then are escorted to the Ordinator's bridge. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The Ordinator's bridge is a white, gleaming space with smooth, curving consoles and a series of wide viewscreens displaying the star field around the station. The effect is spoiled somewhat by the scattering of open panels displaying half-connected wiring, conduits running everywhere, and stacks of tools in the corners.

An elderly Winnaran of the Custodian Guard steps forward as you enter. "I am Captain Pad Di Teret," she says tersely. "I am informed you are on Council business?"

Captain Teret (page 116) treats the player characters seriously, but she is obviously preoccupied with getting the Ordinator up and running and is very short with them as a result. She does say that she doubts her security would be lax enough to allow a leak, but that as Keleres empowered by the Council, the PCs are welcome to conduct their investigation wherever they wish. She also assigns her aide, **Lieutenant Silsa Il Senashor** (page 116) as their guide.

Lieutenant Senashor is as helpful as possible but will not assist the PCs in doing anything he deems could put the Ordinator in danger. If such a thing were to occur, he would report to the captain immediately. As it is, he reports the PCs' actions to the captain in nightly status updates.

Deceptive Entry

The PCs can attempt to sneak into the Ordinator using some sort of ruse. You can allow your group to try any idea that seems reasonable, but the most logical ploy is pretending to be a supply vessel. The Ordinator receives a steady stream of supply and transport ships carrying construction materials, delicate and exotic components for the array, and of course food, fuel, and new and returning staff.

If the PCs attempt to deceive their way onto the Ordinator, they must make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Deception check** when first approached by the Custodian starfighters. If they succeed, they are escorted to a freight dock. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

With a hiss, your ship's hatch slides open, revealing a chaotic scene. The docking bay is full of construction crews, the whine of sarween gamma presses and beta cutters, and the flickering light of plasma welders. In front of you, three harried-looking Custodian velites, or paramilitary Custodian soldiers, beckon you forward impatiently.

"Alright, let's go," one says. "Identification, clearance orders, and cargo manifest, please."

To fool the guards (**Custodian velites** profile, page 107), the player characters must make an **opposed (◆◆) Deception versus Vigilance check**. Add ■■ if they have nothing to back up their story (fake IDs, forged orders, or a plausible cargo). If they do have something, add ■ to their check instead.

If they fail, the velites detain them, using force if necessary, and the PCs end up in the security station, where they are interrogated by Security Chief Den Il Marsil. If they succeed, they are allowed into the cargo bays and dormitories adjoining the bays, but no farther. If they want to get into the rest of the station, they have to do so stealthily (see **Stealth Entry** on page 42).

Finally, if they succeed with ☒, they get in, but their arrival is noticed by Pilip Coleridge, who identifies them as a potential threat.

Stealth Entry

The third way to gain entrance to the Ordinator is to approach it without being noticed and sneak aboard. The patrolling starfighters and Ordinator crew are on the lookout for exactly this sort of incursion, making it the most difficult and dangerous option.

To pilot an evasive course, the PCs must make a successful **Daunting** (◆◆◆◆■) **Piloting or Operating check**. If they fail, they are spotted by Custodian starfighters. If they succeed but the check generates ☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹, they drift too close to a patrol of starfighters, which then make an **Average** (◆◆) **Computers check**; if successful, they spot the PCs' ship.

The Custodian starfighters are **Accipiter interceptors** (see page 102). There are three of them, each piloted by a **combat pilot** (see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 248). They operate as a single minion group. When they spot the PCs, they order them to immediately power down their engines and weapons and surrender. If the PCs do anything else, they attack. They also summon two additional minion groups of three interceptor starfighters each, which arrive at the beginning of the second round and third round at extreme range.

If the PCs manage to bypass the starfighter patrols, they can adhere their ship to one of the radial petals of the Ordinator. They then need to open a passageway into the hull, either by cutting into it with a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Mechanics check** or hacking one of the airlocks with a **Daunting** (◆◆◆◆) **Computers check**.

Inside, they must avoid patrols of two to four **Custodian veles** (page 107) via **opposed Stealth or Deception checks**. The payoff for all this difficulty is that if they arrive secretly, the PCs have the opportunity to pass simply as additional workers in this busy station. After all, that's what the saboteurs are doing.

Investigating the Leak

Once the PCs have gained access to the Synaptic Ordinator, they need to begin their questioning. The following investigation is designed to be somewhat open-ended, so it is presented as a series of leads for the PCs to investigate, along with the clues that result. These clues can be discovered in any order, but eventually they should engender a strong suspicion of the Traitor's identity. Also, if the PCs begin suspecting Pilip Coleridge early on, you should have a confrontation prompt the saboteurs to act (see **Sabotage!**, page 45).

Much can be learned through straightforward questioning, using Leadership or even Coercion, if the PCs are acting openly. If they are being covert, it probably means eavesdropping and subtly pumping workers for information with skills like Perception and Deception, or possibly Charm.

An overheard conversation between a worried Dr. Ruga and the engineer Tola Aun Krala could reveal some of Ruga's dealings with the Traitor, while covertly accessing the station's

systems might yield evidence that the Traitor made unofficial visits there, and that Coleridge's ship docked without undergoing proper security procedures. A search of Den II Marsil's bunk reveals a suspicious number of Mentak Coalition credit chits.

Finally, most of the clues offer up a certain number of names of Councilors and aides but point to no specific individuals. Since the Traitor is your choice, we've left the identities of the other Councilors up to you. You may want to determine this beforehand, but the most important thing is that the Traitor's name is the one that keeps showing up.

Dr. Ruga and Chief Engineer Tola

No matter what direction the PCs take their investigation, it is likely that they will want to meet with the two project heads, Dr. Nal Ruga and Chief Engineer Tola Aun Krala.

More information on the pair's collaboration to create the Synaptic Ordinator can be found on page 6. The PCs can approach Ruga and Tola separately or together; the two are often in the labs or computer core collaborating on the final tweaks to the Ordinator's construction.

The Brains of the Operation (Social Encounter)

You can run an encounter with Ruga and Tola as a structured social encounter, or simply as a narrative social encounter. If you run it as a structured encounter, getting Ruga and Tola to compromise (by causing each to take strain equal to half their strain threshold) convinces them to cooperate with the PCs. Getting Ruga to capitulate (by causing him to accumulate strain greater than his strain threshold) gets him to confess his secret fear of the Ordinator's weakness (see **Clue: Weaponized Weakness**).

At this point, with the project nearly complete, both are incredibly busy. Ruga treats any interruptions to his work as a strange nuisance. He has better things to do, and he says as much loudly and often. Tola, on the other hand, tends toward suspicion. Her background in the Argent Flight means she is very aware of how dangerous the Mahact are, and it makes her highly protective of Ruga and the Ordinator.

If the PCs accuse Ruga of being a traitor, she aggressively flies to his defense. If they accuse her, she laughs off their accusations as absurd. Likewise, Ruga sees Tola as a brilliant mind and his intellectual equal, and he sputters indignantly if the PCs accuse her of treason. However, if they level any accusations at him, he becomes quiet and withdrawn because of his guilt over the Ordinator's weakness.

Clue: Weaponized Weakness

Ruga is not a traitor; he is merely a busy scientist. However, he has a secret: he knows the Ordinator has the potential to be used as a weapon by the Mahact. He has been trying to



perfect the bio-wave focusing array to ensure the Ordinator's use cannot be reversed, but he cannot guarantee it. He confided this to Vadanus the Councilor when the Titan visited the site, but the Councilor decided to withhold that information from the Council because endless debate would hold up construction. (Or, if Vadanus is the Traitor, the reason they ordered Ruga to stay silent was to keep the weakness available for use by their master.)

While Ruga does not want to see construction halted, he is concerned. All he can do is make it as difficult as possible to reverse his work on the array, so that only someone with intimate knowledge of the Ordinator could invert its purpose and make it work for the Mahact.

Clue: Suspicious Visitor

Tola mentions that the Ordinator has had a number of visitors in the past month as the project has neared completion. These have included all three Tribunii and every member of the Subcommittee on Extraordinary Studies. However, some of the Councilors or aides have been visiting more often than others.

If the PCs force Tola to compromise during a structured social encounter, or if they make a successful opposed social skill check against Tola in a narrative social encounter, Tola admits that she and Ruga barely met with the Tribunii, but that four of the Councilors and/or their aides have been present on multiple occasions, and each has spoken with Ruga and herself several times. The identity of these individuals is up to you, but one should be the Traitor.

Clue: Copied Schematics

If questioned, Ruga freely admits that he has made copies of the Ordinator blueprints on several occasions at the request of various important individuals. He cannot remember for whom, however.

Clue: No Access to Keleres Laboratories

If the PCs followed up on the origins of the Nekro virus coding, it can prove a solid way to establish Tola and Ruga's innocence. Neither has ever heard of the Keleres lab studying the virus, and both insist they haven't been off the Ordinator in months. This is backed up by station logs and by Captain Pad Di Teret.

A False Lead: Rurug and Croto

If the PCs ask any workers on the station whether they've seen anyone suspicious, the workers direct them to a pair of Xxcha laborers, **Rurug** and **Croto** (see page 117). Despite their willingness to work and easy laughter, the two are mistrusted by their fellow workers and keep to themselves. Even other Xxcha on the station consider them threatening. If the PCs look into the pair, they find they both have a military background.

The truth is, Councilor Kkasan Gen has sent them as her personal undercover operatives. They are to keep an eye on the construction site and report back trouble. If the PCs spend time investigating them, the Xxcha can actually be helpful, directing them to a clue they haven't yet found. However, if the PCs are aggressive in their questioning, the pair are offended and reluctant to help.

If Councilor Gen is the Traitor, then Rurug and Croto might not be such a false lead after all, and can fight alongside the saboteurs (see **Sabotage!**, page 45).

Station Systems

Other valuable clues can be found in the station's computer systems. The station has three separate computer networks. The first comprises the collective peripheral networks accessible throughout the station that control localized functions, such as doors, sensors, steering systems, and defensive weaponry. The second network is the gene-data banks attached directly to the Ordinator device that modify the pulse. And the third is the core network that controls the primary systems: engines, reactor, and primary weapon ignition.

Accessing these systems is not structured into an encounter, since your players may gain access in any number of ways and during other encounters.

- ◆ **Peripheral Systems:** These may be accessed from anywhere on the station, but the easiest access points for the PCs are the bridge and the docking bays. If the PCs are there openly as Keleres, the captain gives them access to whatever peripheral systems they want. If, however, they snuck aboard, they can access the computer systems by making a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Computers check**.
- ◆ **The Gene-data Banks:** These can only be accessed directly in the gene-data bank rooms. Getting access requires that the PCs make an opposed social skill check versus Captain Teret, Dr. Ruga, or Chief Engineer Tola, as those areas are highly sensitive. Alternatively, the PCs can break in with a **Daunting** (◆◆◆◆) **Skulduggery check** to disable the door systems. However, there are no clues to the Traitor's identity in these systems.

- ◆ **The Computer Core:** The PCs can only access the computer core if they force Dr. Ruga, Chief Engineer Tola, or Captain Teret to allow them entrance (those are the only three with the access codes), or if they make a successful **Formidable** (◆◆◆◆◆■) **Skulduggery check** to disable the door systems. The three can only be convinced if they're forced to capitulate during a structured social encounter or are convinced through similar effort during a narrative encounter.

Clue: A Frequent Visitor

The Traitor has made many visits to the site, more than any other Councilor. The PCs can discover this by accessing either the bridge logs or the docking bay logs. Sorting the arrivals requires an **Average** (◆◆) **Computers check**. If they are successful, give the PCs the names of the four Councilors or staff (including the Traitor) who have visited the site more frequently than anyone else. If they generate at least ☼☼☼, give them only two names (one of which is the Traitor).

They can also spend ▲▲▲ or ☼ to note that the Traitor's visits have been the most frequent in the past four weeks, or to learn that two days after the FTL message was sent (roughly a week ago), a transport vessel named the *Crimson Coin* was misfiled in the system as a construction vessel cleared to remain at the station indefinitely. Only someone with a high security clearance could have arranged this.

Clue: Schematics

The Traitor requested schematics of the Synaptic Ordinator that match exactly with those transmitted from Ccrysus. The Traitor received these from Dr. Ruga, who suspected nothing when the Traitor claimed this was for the Council's reference.

If the PCs gain access to the computer core and make a successful **Easy** (◆) **Computers check**, they can determine the number of times the Synaptic Ordinator schematics have been downloaded: five instances over the past six months. Four of these have been by Dr. Ruga, and one by Chief Engineer Tola. They can also spend ▲▲ or ☼ to discover that six weeks ago, the schematics were altered slightly. Those alterations appear on the copy that was transmitted over FTL, and the blueprints have only been downloaded once since then, by Dr. Ruga. The doctor, ever absentminded, isn't sure who he downloaded them for. However, he offers up three possibilities, one of which should be the Traitor.

Station Security

The other place the PCs are most likely to discover clues is station security, and the person who is most likely to reveal them is Security Chief Den Il Marsil. Chief Marsil oversees the station's Custodian velite detachment and generally operates out of the security station.

If the PCs have come to suspect Chief Marsil of wrongdoing, they can confront him directly through either a structured or narrative social encounter. Alternatively, they can try to sneak into the security station and search for evidence.

Bad Cop, Worse Cop (Social Encounter)

The only way the PCs can question Chief Marsil is if they reveal their authority as Keleres. If they attempt to question him under some sort of disguise, he dismisses them impatiently, or if the PCs hint that they suspect him of doing something underhanded, he calls on his velites to arrest them and throw them into the brig.

If the questioning takes place in the security station with Chief Marsil surrounded by subordinate velites, add ■ ■ to all checks the PCs make. However, if they bring a higher authority along, such as Captain Teret, do not add those ■ ■.

If Chief Marsil is forced to compromise during a social encounter (accruing strain equal to half his strain threshold), he offers to cooperate in exchange for immunity for any crimes and at least 1,000 aurei. If he capitulates (exceeds his strain threshold), he tells the PCs anything they want to know.

Clue: Hidden Bribe

The Traitor bribed Den Il Marsil to let Coleridge's ship bypass security checks, and Coleridge delivered the promised bribe credits to Den Il Marsil when he arrived. The Coalition credit chits (worth 2,000 aurei) that Marsil received originate from a particular trading post controlled by the Mentak Coalition but well beyond the vague boundaries of Coalition space: Shardpoint. That the credits were printed there is clear from an **Easy (◆) Knowledge (Culture) check**. With bonus successes or the presence of an ex-Coalition PC, the PCs might note the code on the coins, S358TW, an authorization code that any Coalition official could use to identify the vendor who printed the credits.

The credits are hidden in Chief Den Il Marsil's office, tucked in the back of one of his locked desk drawers. If the PCs have to get the desk open, it requires an **Average (◆◆) Skulduggery check**.

It should be noted that the use of physical currency is rare in TWILIGHT IMPERIUM, but it is a practice that continues within the Mentak Coalition—particularly in transactions between traders who do not trust each other or are suspicious of so-called “untraceable” accounts.

Clue: Late Additions

Pilip Coleridge and his ship, the *Crimson Coin*, arrived roughly a week ago. Marsil “misfiled” the information on Coleridge's cargo ship so that the ship was registered as a construction vessel, rather than a cargo vessel, allowing it and its crew to remain at the station indefinitely. There is no record of the usual security procedures being carried out, though it is recorded that the ship came from Shardpoint. Before the saboteurs act, it is important that the PCs learn the ship came from Shardpoint, a trading post that is part of the Mentak Coalition, though it lies beyond the outskirts of Coalition space.

Den Il Marsil knows that the Traitor personally contracted Coleridge and told him to ensure the *Crimson Coin* could remain at the Synaptic Ordinator for as long as possible. However, Marsil is worried about angering the Traitor, so if he makes a deal with the PCs, he tells them that he doesn't know the Traitor's identity because Coleridge paid the bribe. Only if he is forced to fully capitulate does he reveal the Traitor's identity, and even then, he has no proof.

Sabotage!

Pilip Coleridge and his crew are armed with modest explosives, with which they intend to cause chaos, ensuring a delay in the Ordinator's completion. The Traitor is giving the Mahact fleet time to assemble and reach the capital before the Ordinator is repositioned.

The Traitor has warned Coleridge to ensure Dr. Ruga is not harmed in the explosion but considers anyone else expendable. In addition, the Traitor has contacted Coleridge since the PCs' arrival. Coleridge is instructed to ensure the PCs are caught up in the chaos, the idea being that they will either die or be implicated. The rest of the plan remains the same, though if the PCs appear to be onto them, the saboteurs are forced to act quickly.

When the PCs have learned enough, or their actions force the saboteurs to act, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The station shakes with the force of an explosion. The lights flicker out, and there is a second of darkness before the emergency lights blink on, accompanied by earsplitting sirens. Somewhere, metal creaks and grates, as though the Ordinator were about to burst apart. You see several Humans, Winnu, and Saar running from the adjoining cargo bay. All are wearing worker coveralls, but they are also carrying sidearms and heavy satchels. When they see you, they open fire!

Fighting the Saboteurs (Combat Encounter)

This encounter can take place anywhere, but the default location is a cargo loading bay near where Coleridge's ship, the *Crimson Coin*, is docked. The saboteurs are attempting to escape back to their ship when they run into the PCs. Since their secondary mission is to eliminate the PCs, they attack.

The encounter includes Coleridge and two minion groups of three saboteurs each. If there are four or more PCs, the size of each minion group should be increased to four.

At the end of the second round (or at the end of the first round if more than half the saboteurs have been eliminated), a team of four **Custodian veles** (page 107) emerge near Coleridge.



Read the following aloud:

Four velite guards burst into the cargo bay, shot carbines raised. Without missing a beat, Coleridge screams, "Thank the void! The Keleres are shooting us! I think they set off a bomb or something!"

The guards know Coleridge, and they know Den Il Marsil cleared him. They start by shouting at the PCs to drop their weapons and surrender. If the PCs can't convince the velites that Coleridge's crew are the saboteurs, they start shooting at the PCs.

If the PCs look like they're going to take down the guards, Coleridge and the remaining saboteurs attempt to flee. Coleridge even leaves his crew behind to distract the PCs to save himself.

The PCs should already be aware that Coleridge's ship (a **pirate raider**, see page 152 of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*) came

from Shardpoint, a Mentak Coalition outpost. If they don't know about the outpost, they could pursue Coleridge, question an injured member of his crew, or insist the guards check on the crew's origins when they protest their innocence.

Escaping the Station

The PCs might fight off the guards and flee, or they might stay and attempt to prove their innocence. Fortunately, in the chaos, the station's full forces have not yet mobilized against them, so the PCs can successfully do either. Ultimately, the Traitor is going to have them accused of treason, but at this point they can still persuade their captors to let them go. After all, they are here on Keleres business, while Coleridge's ship was never properly processed. You can make their escape as difficult or easy as suits the players, but it is important that the PCs get off the station and travel to Shardpoint for the next part of the adventure.

Interlude: Burned

Once the PCs leave the station, news of the sabotage reaches the Council, and the Traitor immediately ensures the PCs are implicated. The PCs' ship receives a transmission, sent out to all Keleres, stating that the PCs have betrayed the Council and are to be detained. Worse, a galaxy-wide warrant is being issued for the PCs' arrest. This severely limits their options. When they receive the message, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"These rogue Keleres agents are traitors to the Council and the galaxy. Consider them extremely dangerous. We are transmitting all relevant details now and will be issuing warrants to all signatory members of the Council for their arrest. Cohorts Aleph, Corzina, and Sadak, move to intercept them near Semani."

The PCs are now wanted criminals, falsely accused of treason against the Council and Keleres, and must determine their next action. They cannot return to Mecatol Rex without evidence to prove themselves innocent. The Traitor is influential, and it's unlikely they would receive a fair trial. They may wish to investigate Shardpoint, from which Coleridge's ship originated. Even if the PCs don't see Shardpoint as the next logical step in their investigation, to pursue the ship hoping to catch the true crooks could clear their names.

Shardpoint is several days' travel away, giving the PCs time to patch up any wounds and plan their next moves. If they are trying to catch Coleridge's ship, you can narrate a chase in which they must work to keep him within range of their sensors. However, he's had a head start, and they can't get close enough to fight. If they lose sight of Coleridge's ship,

a successful **Easy (◆) Perception check** reveals that it was badly repaired sometime in the past. It's leaking radiation, leaving a trail the PCs can follow. Alternatively, an **Average (◆◆) Astrocartography check** could let them deduce his destination from his course.

Friends in Need

It's not by chance that the PCs happened to receive the transmission about their "treason." As soon as the PCs were identified as criminals, the Keleres would have precluded them from receiving such information. However, Tribunii Kuuasi believes they are innocent, and although he cannot help them openly since they are accused of treason, he tries to help them subtly.

If the PCs look further into the source of the transmission, an **Average (◆◆) Perception check** reveals Kuuasi's personal code signature in the relay. If the PCs haven't yet decided to go to Shardpoint, you can even have the PCs and Kuuasi speak directly, and Kuuasi can encourage them to flee Gul system until he can see about clearing their name. He can even ask if they have any leads they can follow up on in the meantime.

Political Machinations

Depending on the identity of the Traitor, their ability to so swiftly implicate the PCs may seem unlikely. However, the Traitor has had time to earn favors from all the right sentients, including important Councilors and even Keleres. The PCs now have a powerful enemy.



[Act II]

Fugitives from Justice

In this part of the adventure, the PCs visit Shardpoint, an outpost in Mentak Coalition space, to find proof against the Traitor or catch Coleridge's crew and clear their names. In their attempts to achieve these goals, they explore Shardpoint and uncover some of the outpost's hidden mysteries, including a Vuil'raith cult.

Unlike the first part of the adventure, this section is designed to be open-ended. Using the map, the PCs can explore where they wish. Some of these encounters provide the PCs with clues or evidence to progress their goals. Others are side quests that reveal the secrets of Shardpoint, allow the PCs to make new allies and enemies, and seed future adventures.

Some key events occur to drive the adventure forward. A bounty hunter called **Ragrak** (see page 122) catches up with the PCs soon after they arrive. Whether she attacks at once or stalks them, waiting for an opportunity to strike, depends on

the PCs' movements—and your preference. Then there's the storm that provides cover for the disabling of the PCs' ship, which occurs before they attempt to leave.

As soon as the PCs identify the Traitor's Mahact contact, **Ralga Woll** (see page 118), they may decide to confront her. The Traitor has warned her about meddling Keleres. Searching her hideout reveals physical evidence of a Mahact connection and incontrovertible proof of the Traitor's identity.

The Vuil'raith cult secretly operating on the outpost (led by Bridget Lee and her staff) can't allow the PCs escape. The cult knows nothing about the Mahact threat, but the PCs' investigations threaten their secrets. The fight against the Vuil'raith serves as an exciting conclusion to this part of the adventure, and it is a climax best saved for when the PCs are preparing to leave.

Episode 4: Arrival at Shardpoint

Shardpoint outpost is located on a cold, snow-swept moon of the same name. The landscape is blinding white and the snow dunes ever-shifting in the howling winds. It seems an unlikely place for a trading post, but the temperature is perfect for certain cargoes, such as medicines that need to be kept below freezing, and foodstuffs that must be preserved until a suitable buyer can be found. Others come for the food—the hot root broth is famous. Visitors are welcome and are treated as potential customers, no questions asked.

The Story So Far

A year ago, the explorer and artifact hunter Ralga Woll embarked on an expedition to uncover ancient Mahact artifacts. Ever since the Mahact's return, the market for their artifacts has grown exponentially. However, instead of wealthy collectors of curios and museums of galactic history, the buyers now tend to be government intelligence agencies and powerful corporate interests.

Woll decided the best place to find Mahact relics was deep in the heart of the galaxy. She also figured that the Mahact's resurgence meant other artifact hunters would be scared away from the most valuable sites. She didn't expect to encounter the Mahact themselves.

Above the planet 68631BXM-74y63, Woll found an ancient Mahact orbital fortress. Unfortunately for her, the fortress had once belonged to the gene-sorcerer Vesh Nil Qor, and the Mahact had returned to reclaim his holding. Woll was aboard the fortress when she was captured by his minions. Qor used his gene-sorcery to turn her body against her and eliminate those troublesome elements of her brain that allowed her free will, shaping Woll into a helplessly obedient thrall under his command. At his behest, she returned to her ship and killed her unsuspecting crew. Then she piloted her ship, a long-range scout ship named the *Knight Icaran*, back to her home on Shardpoint.

Vesh Nil Qor planned to use Woll as a disposable pawn to coordinate his clandestine operations in the far reaches of the galaxy. To accomplish this, he gave Woll a Mahact communications orb, a wondrous device that circumvents the scientific laws prohibiting superluminal communications over vast distances. However, the device has several significant limitations. It can communicate only with other orbs, it can send and receive only limited amounts of information (the equivalent of short conversations), and it emits powerful (and easily detectable) bursts of radiation when activated.

This made Shardpoint the perfect staging ground for Woll. She already had a presence on the moon: a secure warehouse where she could be expected to remain for long periods of time. The locals were used to a collection of motley individuals—Woll's clients—visiting Woll at random times. And the moon's limited infrastructure meant it lacked any of the detection equipment that could pick up uses of the communications orb.

Woll has since gotten a part-time job serving drinks at a local canteen. The locals assume her failed mission has crushed her spirit, but in fact, the job makes it easier to make contact with mercenaries. She has spent the last year coordinating covert operatives to carry out missions for Vesh Nil Qor, as well as ensuring that vital information is sent back to the Mahact. None of her hires have learned who they have actually been serving with their actions.

Woll's greatest coup has been aiding her master in recruiting the Traitor. She is the primary means of communication between the Traitor and Vesh Nil Qor, sometimes sending messages to the Traitor via proxies and at other times visiting Mecatol City herself. It was during her last in-person visit that she brought the Traitor the automated probe that would eventually carry the schematics of the Synaptic Ordinator. The probe stayed hidden in an abandoned orbital warehouse over Mecatol Rex until the Traitor obtained the schematics.

A week before the Traitor sent the schematics to Vesh Nil Qor, the gene-sorcerer contacted Woll and told her to hire mercenaries to infiltrate the Ordinator and sabotage it. Woll hired Pilip Coleridge and his crew, although she only ever met with Coleridge. They received an advance payment of 100,000 aurei for their mission, with the promise of four times as much upon completion.

Now, a day before the player characters are to arrive on Shardpoint, Coleridge arrives ahead of them. He immediately finds Woll and demands the rest of his payment. Instead, Woll kills him and dumps his body in the recycler. She believes that killing Coleridge severs the only link between his deeds and her.

Without their captain, Coleridge's remaining crew are growing increasingly desperate. They aren't sure if the captain has tried to flee with the money or if he was killed by his contact. They are torn between trying to find out who his contact was and simply cutting their losses and heading off-world.

What happens if Coleridge dies?

If the PCs have managed to kill Coleridge already, the adventure can proceed very similarly to the way it is laid out here. You'll need to remove a couple of clues, but enough still exist to lead the PCs to Woll.

If the PCs captured Coleridge and can get him to talk, then the first part of Act II can proceed faster, since the PCs know Woll's identity. In this case, just make sure to strand the PCs on Shardpoint and introduce the Vuil'raith cult quickly enough to get them entangled. The story still works if the PCs capture or kill Woll, search her warehouse, and then get trapped dealing with a diabolical cult for a couple of sessions.

Episode Goals

In this episode, the PCs begin to discover Shardpoint's secrets and use the clues discovered in Act I to identify the Traitor's contact here.

In this section of the adventure, the PCs should:

- ◆ Identify Ralga Woll as Coleridge's employer (and therefore the Traitor's contact).
- ◆ Learn that Bridget Lee is important here, but has not earned the trust of everyone in the colony. If PCs are suspicious of her, so much the better.
- ◆ Uncover evidence of the Vuil'raith cult. This is unexpected, and ultimately unrelated to the overarching adventure.
- ◆ Find a means to repair their ship when it is inevitably damaged.

Shardpoint

The outpost of Shardpoint is located on a moon of the same name, orbiting the gas giant of Kirostraz. The star system is less than a hundred light-years from the Primor Gate. The location is removed from major trade routes but close enough that nearly any ship setting off from Primor, the Garian system, the Xxlak system, or Mecatol Rex could reach it.

Within the Mentak Coalition, Shardpoint has a reputation as the place to go for anything odd or unique, and traders detour here if they have clients seeking unusual goods. These might be specific items that need to be "retrieved" from an archive or museum, or artifacts for a collector interested in forgotten civilizations in unknown space. Shardpoint is also home to traders of illegal technologies, and rumor has it that caches of experimental weapons stolen from labs on Jol-Nar might be found hidden out in the snow beyond the outpost's boundaries.

There is no official leader or police force on Shardpoint. Many sentients come and go: traders looking to sell their goods, treasure hunters recruiting crews, bounty hunters needing repairs, and outcasts seeking work. The residents and regulars, who know the code, keep the others in line. The vendors, tavern owners, engineers, hired guns, and other sentients who make their base here share the power and responsibilities of running Shardpoint between them. An unspoken hierarchy exists, however, with Bridget Lee, who runs air-traffic control, clearly at the top.

While the hierarchy shifts and changes as people come and go, Lee remains first among equals. This is partly because of her wealth; until she arrived, Shardpoint was primarily used as an exchange point for illegal cargoes. Since she built proper landing bays and a reinforced air-control tower, employed engineers to service the ships, and provided insulated housing for her permanent staff, Shardpoint has gone from being a little-known moon used by smugglers to a busy trading hub and growing colony.

The Mentak Coalition

Even if the PCs aren't members of the Mentak Coalition, they are likely aware of the Coalition's reputation. Referred to by outsiders as a culture of pirates and criminals, terms never heard on Shardpoint (unless a fight ensues), the Coalition is nevertheless an influential galactic power. As the founders were once incarcerated as criminals, there is a natural libertarian streak among its citizens.

The ruling Table of Captains consists of experienced commanders whose reputations ensure they keep their positions. More on the Mentak Coalition can be found on pages 82 and 83 of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*.

Anyone who obeys the code and doesn't make trouble is welcome, their past forgotten. A certain level of petty crime is deemed acceptable, but steal the wrong thing, or from the wrong sentient, and that welcome wears thin. Everyone here is armed. Any major trouble, and Lee's staff appear—but she'd never send them to interfere in a dispute between residents, only defend them from outsiders.

The Climate of Shardpoint

Shardpoint is a frigid moon. The temperatures climb above freezing only for a few weeks when Kirostraz's orbit takes it close to its parent star. Otherwise, it permanently remains a howling expanse of snow and ice. This hostile climate is amplified by Shardpoint's orbit around its parent world in addition to its rotation: regular days can be interrupted by planetary eclipses that send the temperature plummeting.

Even when the weather is at its mildest, most sentients require insulation or protective clothing to go outside the structures for any length of time. At night, the cold can quickly prove deadly.

Finally, the sharp shifts in temperature from the constant eclipses cause massive ice storms to blow up across the wastes. During such storms, no one can safely take off or land on Shardpoint, though some of the more daring captains make the attempt. Looted wrecks dotted across the moon are all that's left of the ships of those that failed.

Ghost-Roots

Fauna are scarce on Shardpoint due to the outpost's temperature; the moon's breathable atmosphere is mostly due to subcrustal microbial slow life that lives in subzero conditions. However, there are patches where ghost-roots burrow under the moon's rocky crust, absorbing minerals and metals. Early visitors to the moon introduced these plants to harvest precious metals, and many of the residents still cultivate them.

In the wild, only a single white stem, thin as a grass blade, marks a root's location. For those lucky enough to find one in the snow, a root can be exchanged for about 100 aurei, depending on its size. Of course, it must be drawn out from the rock first, requiring a successful **Average (◆◆) Athletics check**. If a harvester does not succeed on the first try, the root snaps and becomes impossible to remove until the upper part regrows, months later. Within the border of the port, however, any roots the PCs find belong to someone, and harvesting them might cause trouble.



The Shardpoint Code

Shardpoint is an isolated outpost only nominally part of the Mentak Coalition. It is well beyond the vague boundaries of Coalition space, but its proclaimed allegiance (plus its unappealing climate and utterly non-strategic location) keep the nearer Great Civilizations from gobbling it up.

This isolation means that even by the relaxed standards of the Coalition, law and order are nonexistent here, save a few simple rules that all visitors must follow. While these are generally unspoken rules, if the PCs look likely to break any, locals are quick to set them right. Enforcement is carried out by groups of armed locals.

- ◆ Never put the colony at risk. This covers causing damage to essential buildings and bringing any type of trouble to the colony (in the form of law enforcement, biohazards, or anything in between).
- ◆ While fights are tolerated, murder is frowned upon. It puts off traders and their customers, so any killing must be discreet and justifiable. Past indiscretions or the breaking of laws elsewhere is not considered suitable justification—sentients come here to leave their past behind.
- ◆ Trade agreements can't be broken, though they are malleable. Anyone who gains a reputation for dishonesty loses their welcome.



BRIDGET
LEE'S HOUSE

LANDING
PADS

AIR-CONTROL
TOWER

POWER
STATION

SHARPOINT
CANTEEN

WAREHOUSES

MARKET
SQUARE

LONGHOUSE

R'ALI'S
BAR

WAREHOUSES

INCINERATOR

SEWER
TREATMENT

SHARPOINT
THE MENTAK OUTPOST

Locations

Most of Shardpoint remains an empty, frozen moon. Apart from the occasional shady payoff or trade, not much happens out there in the snow, and the landscape appears empty. In truth, many caves and crevices lie hidden by that blanket of white. Gathered together while the storms rage outside, the local residents share drinks and exchange strange tales of monsters lurking in the frozen wastes.

Most of the adventure activity is confined to Shardpoint the colony, although the PCs may make an excursion into the snow (see **Exploring the Wastes**, page 65). You can encourage the PCs to use the map of Shardpoint to plan their investigations and explorations. Note that gravity at Shardpoint is slightly weaker than the PCs are likely used to, but not enough to require a mechanical effect, and the atmosphere is breathable.

Environmental Effects

The moonscape outside of the settlement proper is all difficult terrain due to the extreme cold and the thick snow (see page 110 of the *GENESYS Core Rulebook*). In addition, all actions performed outside suffer ■■ due to the cold (hostile environment clothing can alleviate this by removing ■■).

Further, at night, during an eclipse, or during one of the ice storms, the cold and wind become truly lethal. For every fifteen minutes a character spends outside, they must make a **Hard** (◆◆◆■) **Resilience check** (the ■ being added due to the cold). Failure means the character suffers 2 wounds and 2 strain, plus 1 additional strain per ☼.

Note that even hostile environmental clothing doesn't protect characters from making this check, although it does remove ■■. Some species—specifically the Gashlai, Creuss, and Titans—are immune to the cold because of their unique biology. Everyone else needs to seek shelter.

The Cult's Plans

Unbeknownst to the PCs and most of Shardpoint's inhabitants, a doomsday cult that worships the strange alien menace known as the Vuil'raith lurks in their midst. Led by the de facto leader of the settlement, Bridget Lee, the cult has been planning to use esoteric machinery to summon the monstrosities into Shardpoint, where they can slaughter the locals.

Some location descriptions include information about how the locale in question figures into the cult's plans; this is presented separately from the location's general information. More on the cult and its plots can be found on page 69.

Landing Pads

All the official landing pads on Shardpoint are owned by Bridget Lee, though some pilots have built makeshift ones of their own for personal use. Lee rents some out to regular captains at a reduced rate to maintain favor with the locals, but most she hires out to visitors for a docking fee.

The pads are large, open-air squares made of a rough metal alloy that can be heated to clear away ice and snow. They are always clear enough that ships can land safely, the exception being during storms. They are large enough to accommodate ships up to the size of small freighters (vessels of silhouette 5 or smaller). The pads can be lowered a few meters into the ground. This provides ships with some protection from the howling winds, though they are still partially exposed to the elements.

Currently, four ships are docked at Shardpoint.

- ◆ *Crimson Coin*, Coleridge's **pirate raider** (see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 152) has arrived less than a day ahead of the PCs.
- ◆ *The Brightness of Dawn*, a **small tramp freighter** (see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 151) owned by the currency trader Craag, remains there unless he needs to travel off-world.
- ◆ *Arrow*, a light freighter (see page 100) owned by Kash, a lonely Rokha, has been on Shardpoint for several days while he looks for work.
- ◆ *Knight Icaran* is Ralga Woll's **long-range scout ship** (see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 149).

The Cult's Plans

Whenever the PCs visit the landing pads, a number of Lee's staff are present, conducting maintenance or repairs, or simply standing guard. For Lee's staff, use the **Shardpoint cultist** profile (see page 119).

Air-Control Tower

The air-control tower is barely three stories tall, which is still taller than the other buildings of Shardpoint. This is because the constant winds and frequent storms make taller buildings more costly to reinforce. Two of Lee's staff are in the tower at all times, monitoring the ships that come and go. Seen from above, the tower is heavily reinforced, almost like a fortress guard tower.

The tower's ground floor contains a garage with refueling pumps (Shardpoint stocks a variety of fuel to service ships from most of the Great Civilizations); repair trailers; and lockers containing equipment for securing, de-icing, and repairing ships.

The Cult's Plans

The top of the tower points to where the cultists intend to tear reality and let the Vuil'raith into Shardpoint. This is also where the machinery is stored for opening the portal (see **The Cult's Machine**, page 73). The machinery is kept in plain sight in the tower's ground floor storage level, alongside all the other equipment.

The Longhouse

This enormous, two-story warehouse is more solid and insulated than most Shardpoint buildings, and it is unique in that it has a roof made of transparent plasticon, and lots of windows running along the walls. These are situated above the many doors that lead outside, but viewing platforms can be reached by ladders. Most of the time the Longhouse is full of vendors, who pay Bridget Lee a small fee to set up their stalls here. The result is a bustling space where visitors shop, safely protected from the moon's cold and biting winds, and can enjoy the luxury of natural light. Any locals hoping for a position on a ship or a temporary job fixing up a visitor's ship, gear, or crew, frequent the Longhouse.

In times of emergency, or particularly fierce storms, the locals gather together here. It's not that the Longhouse is more protected than their homes, though its central position can feel safer, but it's large enough to house the whole community, and there is safety and warmth in numbers. Lee has even installed blast-proof doors that can be used to seal the Longhouse's entrances in case of a serious emergency.

The Prophet's Booth

The booth of Moran of the Tenth Creche of the Fourteenth Generation doesn't actually have a name (and no brother of Yin would commit the heresy of calling themselves a prophet). But the locals gave Moran the nickname due to his habit of proselytizing, and it has since stuck.

Moran has served as Shardpoint's only source of medical care for the last decade. Despite his firmly held religious convictions, his helpful attitude and reasonable prices for treatments mean he's accepted by the locals. He sells some curatives and medical supplies at his booth, but he is gone half the time making house calls.

Moran sells dermal sealers and z-tabs (see **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**, pages 122 and 124) at their standard price. He will also heal injured characters for a fee. He charges 25 aurei if the character is suffering wounds less than half their wound threshold, 50 aurei if the character is suffering wounds greater than half their wound threshold, 50 aurei to heal **Easy** (◆) and **Average** (◆ ◆) Critical Injuries, and 100 aurei to heal **Hard** (◆ ◆ ◆) and **Daunting** (◆ ◆ ◆ ◆) Critical Injuries. If a character is incapacitated or suffering a Critical Injury that may kill them, however, he treats them at no charge.

The Cult's Plans

At least one of Lee's staff of cultists is present in the Longhouse at all times, whether they're fixing something, posing as an engineer-for-hire, or hawking wares alongside the other vendors.

Serious Deals

For high-value or high-risk goods or services, visitors are directed not to the Longhouse or market but to one of Shardpoint's bars. Secret meetings between long-term allies occur behind closed doors, but for traders dealing with unknown customers, the semi-privacy of a booth at the Shardpoint Canteen or a dark corner at R'ali's is considered the most appropriate venue.

Anything the PCs might need could be available to purchase at one location or another on Shardpoint. If they lack anything they require for this adventure, such as hostile environment clothing (see page 116 of **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**), it should be possible to find it somewhere on Shardpoint.

The Market Square

This outdoor area near the center of Shardpoint is where traders set up their stalls when they can't get a place in the Longhouse. Usually this is because they can't afford the fee, or they've upset Bridget Lee in some way. There are those, like **Jot Gah** (see page 120), who choose to sell at the Market Square because they mistrust Lee's "generosity." Most traders set up their booths back-to-back, and many have portable heaters that customers might linger at to warm up, though some of these are nothing more than buckets with fuel burning inside. The square is within view of the Longhouse windows, and Lee's staff can occasionally be seen keeping an eye on the competition. The market is quickly abandoned when night sets in.

A vast range of items are sold here, everything from secondhand mass-drive focus rings to z-tabs (see **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**, page 124), but they tend to be lower-value or more dangerous items than those in the Longhouse. Items here can cost 25% less than their normal cost, but have the Inferior item quality (see page 88 of the **GENESYS Core Rulebook**).

The Warehouses

There are many warehouses at Shardpoint ranging from sturdy, reinforced permacore structures to cheap, boxy structures made of quick-welded ferroplate panels. All of them tend to be half-buried in drifting snow. If the PCs investigate the warehouses, they could find empty ones or ones full of unmarked boxes, and they might encounter traders trying to sell the contents, or angry locals who catch the PCs snooping inside. A few warehouses have been repurposed, bounty hunters might keep their captives locked inside a warehouse, and some warehouses are used to grow food.

In addition, a couple of warehouses have been converted into living quarters. One serves as a hostel for travelers, run by Lee's second-in-command, Nikon Jones. Ralga Woll also lives in another of the warehouses (see **Woll's Hideout**, page 66).

The Cult's Plans

Two warehouses in particular are owned by Nikon Jones, serving as the cult's base of operations (see **Investigating the Cult's Base of Operations**, page 71). There is nothing in or around these warehouses to implicate Lee directly, and the base is almost exclusively for the use of the lesser cultists. However, Lee does occasionally hold clandestine meetings in them—particularly when there are new recruits.

R'ali's Bar

As sentients come and go, R'ali's is hardly exclusive to locals, but strangers quickly find that one has to earn one's seat in this bar. Most of the patrons are local residents or familiar visitors, the smugglers and mercenaries who do regular business with said locals. This is where the seediest deals are made, and it's perhaps the most violence-tolerant public building at Shardpoint. R'ali is the law here, and he doesn't mind cleaning up after a fight, as long as he has time to invite bets on the outcome first.

R'ali is an ex-captain and longtime resident of Shardpoint, and he claims to have the ear of the Table of Captains. He was running a version of this bar before Lee arrived and built her first landing pad. He knows a lot more about what's going on around Shardpoint than he lets on, doesn't trust Lee, and is keeping an eye on Woll.

For **R'ali's** profile, see page 119. If you need a profile for the patrons, use the **smuggler** profile (see **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**, page 247).

Shardpoint Canteen

This is principally a clean, albeit a bit shabby, eatery catering to visitors, but locals come here when they have a few extra aurei to spend. It's the home of Shardpoint's famous hot root broth, made from the local ghost-roots once their metals have been harvested (leaving the roots shredded, pulped, and easy to cook with). Consuming root broth warms, heals, and provides a pleasant relaxing effect for most sentients (see **Root Effects**).

The bar at the far end of the Shardpoint Canteen sells drinks: a combination of a spirit distilled by some enterprising locals and whatever liquors happen to have been brought in from off-world that week. Ralga Woll often serves here. The Saar is silent and unwelcoming, but the owners consider her presence extra security against trouble. The owners, Humans Nadaliea and Omira Malhotra, live and work in the kitchen and living areas out back. Relatively new to Shardpoint, and unaware of the looming threats, they can be represented by the **Sol colonist** profile (see **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**, page 236).

Root Effects

Most organic sentients can safely consume ghost-roots once their metals have been extracted, but the drink does have a muted relaxing effect. Any character who consumes a whole pot of ghost-root broth over a ten-minute period heals all strain they currently suffer. However, they add  to any Intellect- or Willpower-based checks they make for the next hour. Drinking small amounts or gulping it down quickly in the midst of other activities mitigates both effects.

Power Station

Shardpoint's main, but by no means only, power source is a primitive facility that harnesses the energy of the planet's core to generate power for the entire colony. Situated at the eastern border, the power station is a large, solid dome with attached turbine facilities. The turbines are powered via geothermal shunts, and while the energy is cheap, the steam pumped up from the moon's core is corrosive and tends to eat through the turbine blades.

When the turbines are down, backup power is automatically provided by power crystals locked away inside the station. Bridget Lee holds keys to the power station, and it's usually her staff who replace the turbine blades and check the crystals. There is no official charge for using this power, but residents often drop off surplus supplies with Lee as "gifts."

Root Fields

Many residents grow foodstuffs in small batches to use or sell, and the Canteen raises a large crop inside a warehouse, harvesting both vegetables and modified meat-matter. Most crops are grown suspended in bio-bags with portable UV heaters and a thin layer of nutrient gel to feed their trailing root systems. The ghost-roots are the only crop that reliably grows in the frigid Shardpoint environment, and many residents have small root fields, often marked out with colored cables, in the vicinity of their homes.

The ghost-roots serve a double purpose. The roots survive by drawing both minerals and metals from the soil, so root farmers extract the metals to use or sell as raw materials. The mineral-rich roots provide nutritious food that is edible—if not palatable—to many sentients. This crop would be a lucrative business, but the roots grow slowly, and the metal-extraction machinery is expensive. There is only one working machine on Shardpoint at the moment, and that belongs to R'ali, who charges farmers a fee to use it. No one makes a living solely as a root farmer, but as the roots require little maintenance, many long-term residents grow them for the extra income.

Sewer Treatment

Small waste-disposal systems are dotted around Shardpoint, and the waste is all piped to the sewer treatment plant at the western border of the colony. This squat little complex is vital for the health and well-being of the residents. The processed matter from the individual systems arrives in liquid form and, within the treatment plant, is separated into drinking water, nutrient gel for bio-bags, and fuel. The last is piped directly to the Incinerator.

The Incinerator

In the cold of Shardpoint, heating is indispensable, so the residents don't rely on a single source of heat. The Incinerator is large enough to burn the colony's waste, and the heat produced is funneled through the larger buildings and building clusters, reducing the workload of the other heating systems. The Incinerator is available for use by anyone: it's a simple case of lifting the grill and dropping waste into the flames below.

On the occasion of a resident's death, their body may end up here, too. This depends on their known wishes, as some prefer to be carried out across the surface of the moon and buried in the snow.

Bridget Lee's House

From the outside, Bridget Lee's residence is the most impressive building on Shardpoint after her air-control tower. A large domed structure with several smaller nearby buildings that house her staff, the building appears to have enough space for several rooms.

Lee does not welcome visitors into her house, and her staff are the only ones to step inside. If the PCs gain entrance, they find a cavernous space with minimal facilities: a sleeping cot, a few clothes in a storage container, and a portable power crystal-fueled heater. Lee evidently lives here but has not made herself at home.

The Cult's Plans

Nothing is immediately apparent in Bridget Lee's residence that suggests a connection to the Vuil'raith or offers any hints about Lee's former life. Underneath a large rug on the floor, however, is the hidden entrance to a bunker. This small underground room contains monitoring and recording equipment that is connected to the air-control tower's systems. The PCs might assume that Lee uses this to spy on the inhabitants of Shardpoint, but in fact, the equipment has not been used since it was installed. When her cult conducts their ritual to admit the Vuil'raith, Lee intends to watch from here. She plans to record the event, obtaining more footage of the powerful beings she idolizes, just in case anything goes wrong and she needs to restart her cult somewhere else.

The Main Players

The following list of Shardpoint residents and visitors covers the NPCs with whom PCs are most likely to interact in this part of the adventure. It's a busy colony, so you can feel free to create supplementary characters.

Profiles of these characters can be found in **Appendix B: Adversary Profiles** (starting on page 105).

- ◆ **Bridget Lee** makes her living renting landing pads on Shardpoint and is head of the local Vuil'raith cult.
- ◆ **Lee's crew** of mechanics, technicians, and air-traffic control staff can be represented by the **Shardpoint cultist** profile.
- ◆ The smuggler and operative **Pilip Coleridge** appeared in Act I.
- ◆ **Ralga Woll** is controlled by the Mahact and is the Traitor's contact on Shardpoint. She serves drinks in Shardpoint Canteen.
- ◆ **Ragrak** is a bounty hunter the Traitor sent to kill the PCs.
- ◆ **Kash** is a local pilot offering his services for hire.
- ◆ **R'ali** is the owner of R'ali's Bar and knows everyone on Shardpoint.
- ◆ **Jot Gah** is a local trader who sells goods in the Market Square.
- ◆ **Moran of the Tenth Creche of the Fourteenth Generation** is a doctor for hire who works in the Longhouse.

The following minor characters can be represented by generic profiles in **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**:

- ◆ **Craag**, the Hacan vendor who printed credits for Woll, can be found in the Longhouse (use the **Hacan merchant** profile in **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**, page 235).
- ◆ **Kraik**, a Hacan, is Craag's bodyguard (use the **Hacan sell-spear** profile in **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**, page 244).
- ◆ **Nikon Jones**, Lee's second-in-command, helps run both the settlement and the cult (use the **Vuil'raith cult leader** profile in **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**, page 260).
- ◆ **Nadaliea** and **Omira Malhotra** are the owners of Shardpoint Canteen (use the **Sol colonist** profile in **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**, page 236).

Strangers at Shardpoint

When the PCs arrive at Shardpoint, either they are on Coleridge's tail, in which case tracking him down may be their first priority, or they are investigating the source of Del Il Masil's bribe.

Once they've spoken to Lee, allow the PCs to examine the map of Shardpoint (see page 52), and let them choose where to begin their search, using NPCs to prompt them as necessary. The discoveries in this episode can be made in any order and in whatever way best suits the PCs' playstyle.

Arrival

The PCs can reach Shardpoint without trouble if they're heading straight there. If they're chasing the saboteurs, Coleridge has enough of a head start that they can't catch him, but even if he evades the PCs' sensors, they can trace his freighter with standard grav-sensors as long as they stay less than a day or so behind him (see page 47). Either way, you can narrate the voyage quickly and get the PCs safely to their destination.

When they arrive, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

As you decelerate from superluminal speeds, the vast purplish bulk of the gas giant Kirostraz looms ahead, surrounded by its clutch of moons. One moon stands out, a pearly white orb nearly the size of a planet in its own right. Your ship can detect signals from its surface: this must be Shardpoint.

As your ship approaches, your comms system activates. "Unknown vessel," a bored voice drawls. "This is Shardpoint settlement. Identify yourself."

Despite a galaxy-wide arrest warrant, whatever answer the PCs give, true or not, Shardpoint's air-traffic control directs them to an available landing pad. Landing at the settlement does not require a check.

Alternatively, if the PCs wish to arrive unnoticed or avoid the docking fee, they may attempt to land somewhere in the snowy landscape. They'll have to avoid Shardpoint's sensor systems by approaching from the far side of the moon, then flying low toward the settlement and setting down twenty kilometers out. As long as they have insulated gear for traipsing through the subzero atmosphere, they can then travel to the settlement on foot. The combination of approach and landing requires a **Hard (◆◆◆) Piloting or Operating** check. If the PCs fail, they have a rough landing and approach. Their ship suffers 1 system strain (plus 1 for each ⚙), and each PC suffers the same amount of strain.



New in Town (Social Encounter)

Whether the PCs walk into town or use the landing pads, Bridget Lee welcomes them when they arrive. No ship arrives on the moon without her knowledge, even far out in the snow beyond the outpost's border. She appears to be friendly and helpful. She can answer the PCs' questions and directs them wherever they wish to go, as well as warning them (politely) not to cause trouble.

As an option when Lee spots the PCs, read or paraphrase the following:

A stout figure approaches across the blinding white of the snow, wrapped in layers of fur. "Welcome to Shardpoint!" she says. "I'm Bridget Lee, in charge of air control. Come on, let's have a drink and warm up."

She leads you across the snow to the base of a three-story tower next to the landing pads. You enter to find a small office, with a pot of something steaming on a heater coil in the corner. Lee pours some into a set of cups and passes them around. It appears to be some kind of malty broth.

"Whatever troubles you've had, they're behind you now. Long as you don't make trouble, you're welcome to stay as long as you like. Given how quiet it is, I'll give you a deal: 20 aurei a day to land here, plus 100 aurei for refueling."

The broth is hot root broth (see page 55), and Lee is happy to let the PCs relax long enough for them to benefit from its effects as they chat. It should be apparent that Lee is an important member of the local community. The following are some answers to questions the PCs may have.

Who are you, and what's your role here?

Lee explains she's the head of air control at Shardpoint, so she owns and runs the landing pads. She acts casually, but it should be apparent that she has a great deal of self-confidence. A successful **Easy (♦) Vigilance check** reveals that she believes she is the closest thing the moon has to a mayor.

Lee is also the head of the local Vuil'raith cult, but of course she doesn't tell the PCs that!

Have you been here long?

She mentions that she used to be a freighter captain in the Mentak Coalition, but gave that up long ago to settle down among friends.

Can you tell us about Shardpoint?

Lee explains Shardpoint is a Coalition-affiliated settlement that tends to govern its own affairs. She answers any questions the PCs have about Shardpoint (see the information starting on page 50). She recommends that they talk to Nikon Jones about

Running the Investigation

Apart from deciding when to bring in the bounty hunter, stage the storm, and ultimately open the portal to the Vuil'raith, you can let the players take the lead at Shardpoint. There's a lot to explore, and plenty of ways to uncover the information necessary to progress the investigation. Don't let the text constrain the adventure; if the players are very close to a clue, or if they go in a different direction that inspires you to link events together in an unexpected way, go with it. The investigation should be entertaining and somewhat challenging in its own right, but the point is to allow the PCs to reach their goal: to leave Shardpoint with knowledge or evidence that implicates the Traitor, restores their position as Keleres, and enables them to prevent the Mahact from taking over the galaxy.

a place to stay if they don't want to sleep on their ship, and she explains that his hostel only charges 10 aurei a night per person. She also recommends visiting the Longhouse if they want to buy anything (glossing over the Market Square).

If the PCs ask about purchasing Mentak Coalition credit chits, she points them to Craag in the Longhouse.

We're looking for a Human named Coleridge. Have you seen him?

Lee is happy to answer questions about Coleridge, since his activities have nothing to do with her cult's plots. She says he landed here less than a day ago, and she's not sure where he is. However, his ship is docked on one of her landing pads, and she's seen some of his crew about.

As Lee tells the PCs this, have her make an **opposed Vigilance versus Deception check** targeting the PC doing the most talking. If she succeeds, she realizes the PCs are after Coleridge, and she warns them to not start causing trouble or shooting up her landing pads. If the PCs tell her they are Keleres, she just laughs and says that is just fine, but if they cause too much trouble in Shardpoint, they'll be answering to her and her people. Secretly, she flags the PCs as a potential danger and starts keeping an even closer eye on them.

Following Coleridge's Trail

Unless the PCs have moved particularly quickly or other events conspire to delay Coleridge, when they arrive on Shardpoint, Coleridge is in the midst of being murdered.

When the PCs arrive, they find Coleridge's ship on a nearby landing pad. If they investigate, they find it locked and sealed. Trying to enter requires a **Hard (◆◆◆) Skulduggery check**, and the PCs would be easily spotted during the day. When night falls, they can make the attempt with more secrecy. If the PCs ask any of the ground crew, an **Easy (◆) Charm check** reveals the location of Coleridge and his crew.

When they arrived, the crew disembarked and headed for R'ali's Bar. However, Coleridge went to the Canteen. Coleridge was looking for Woll, and though he greeted the owners and had himself a quick drink, once he saw Woll wasn't serving, he headed to her home.

Unfortunately for Coleridge, Vesh has ordered Woll to kill Coleridge in case he knows too much. As Coleridge enters her warehouse, she shoots him with her grazer pistol just as the PCs are bringing their ship in for a landing. She hides the body in a corner under some tarps.

Woll intends to throw his body in the Incinerator next time there's a storm to cover her tracks. Since Coleridge was the only person in his crew to meet her, she expects the trail to run cold at that point. However, Coleridge did share some information about his contact with his crew. It's not enough for them to identify Woll, but it could be helpful to the PCs.

Confronting Coleridge's Crew (Social Encounter)

Even if the PCs killed all the saboteurs aboard the Synaptic Ordinator, Coleridge still had two crew members aboard his ship. These two individuals are his pilot, a female Saar named Grarsh Mrowl, and his ship's cook, a male Letnev named Corshain.

With Coleridge dead, command of his ship falls to Mrowl. She remains with the surviving crew at R'ali's Bar all day and the following night. If Coleridge hasn't shown up by that point, they begin searching the settlement for him. However, the PCs are likely to track down Coleridge's crew before that point.

Confronting Coleridge and his crew can be tricky. The crew are well aware that attacking the Ordinator put them on the wrong side of what passes for galactic law, and they are quick to use Shardpoint's declared neutrality to their advantage. They don't try to start a fight with the PCs, but they are quick to call on the aid of any locals who happen to be around.

If any locals are present, they immediately and vocally tell the PCs to back off under threat of violence. Getting the locals to leave the PCs alone requires a successful **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Coercion check**, which can be reduced to **Hard (◆◆◆)** if the PCs appear particularly well armed and threatening.

If no locals are present, the PCs can attack the remaining crew or try to threaten or convince the crew to surrender and perhaps even help them find Coleridge. Reasoning with the crew only works because of Coleridge's absence, leaving them to wonder if he's abandoned them or has ended up dead. The PCs can accomplish this with a successful **Average (◆◆◆◆) Coercion check** or **Hard (◆◆◆◆) Charm check**. Offering to pay them at least 200 aurei each for information removes ■ from the check, and offering at least 400 aurei each removes ■■. Telling the crew that the PCs won't attempt to arrest them or pursue them for their crimes decreases the difficulty of either check by one (to a minimum of **Simple [-]**).

You can also run this encounter as a structured social encounter, combining the remaining crew into a single minion group with a shared wound threshold for tracking strain. Getting the group to compromise means they will give up their information as long as they can accompany the PCs and take lethal revenge on whoever killed their captain (and then loot their belongings for what the crew are owed). Getting the crew to capitulate means they share what they know and leave Shardpoint, never to return.

What the Crew Knows

Coleridge told his crew that the person he met was a female Saar who bothered him a bit because of her quiet, withdrawn nature. It was hard to imagine her getting worked up or excited about anything.

In addition, the crew noticed that Coleridge always met with his contact at the Shardpoint Canteen, so they've determined that whoever this person is, they probably work at the Canteen or are a regular there.

Following the Credits (Social Encounter)

Woll had Mentak Coalition credit chits for the bribe printed by a Hacan vendor called Craag, who operates at a particularly large booth in the Longhouse. He has a loyal Hacan bodyguard named Kraik at his side. They can be represented by the **Hacan merchant** and **Hacan sell-spear** profiles in *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, pages 235 and 244. When night falls, the pair eat at the Canteen before heading to one of Lee's landing pads and retiring to *The Brightness of Dawn*, their **small tramp freighter** (see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 151).

Craag is not popular at Shardpoint. He only appeared after Bridget Lee put the port on the map, and while his business of literally printing money is technically legal, many find it suspect. Craag lends credits to those in need but charges extortionately high rates.

If the PCs investigate Den Il Marsil's bribe, anyone they ask about printing credits readily sends them to Craag, and the number on the credits matches his license number. Craag keeps meticulous records of all his transactions on his personal savant, and he backs them up on his ship. It would be unprofessional of him to tell the PCs who had the credits printed from their account, but he is open to negotiation.

This encounter can be run as a structured or narrative social encounter. If you run this as a structured social encounter, then Craag compromises by offering the information the PCs want if they pay him 5,000 aurei (or provide something of equal or greater value as collateral). If he capitulates, then he provides the information without asking anything in return.

Craag does not respond favorably to attempts to threaten him, and he gains confidence from having Kraik watching his back. Add ■ to any Coercion checks targeting Craag. However, he is susceptible to bribes, so offering him a small payment of at least 200 aurei adds ■ to any Negotiation or Charm checks targeting Craag.

What Craag Knows

When Craag checks his records, he sees that he issued the credits to Ralga Woll roughly a month ago.

The Bounty Hunter

After the PCs flee to Shardpoint, the Traitor does not stand idly by. Instead, they hire a Hacan bounty hunter named **Ragrak** (page 122) to hunt the PCs down and kill them. Ragrak was working on Mecatol Rex, but as soon as she gets the job, the Traitor sends her out after their quarry. Ragrak arrives on Shardpoint roughly eight hours after the PCs do.

Ragrak lands out in the wastes and hikes in to the settlement, then immediately seeks out the PCs. However, she is cautious and patient, so she doesn't attack right away. She wants to kill the PCs out of sight of the locals, particularly Lee and her staff. Whenever she is in the same area as the PCs, you can have one of them make a **Hard (◆◆◆■) Vigilance check**. Success means they notice Ragrak paying particular attention to them, although she leaves before they can confront her.

The Traitor did tell Ragrak that Woll is a potential ally, so if the PCs attack Woll where Ragrak can see them, Ragrak joins in the fight. Ragrak is not too proud to flee if a fight turns against her, and will wait to attack again later. She could potentially be a thorn in the PCs' sides for some time.

The Hunter's Prey (Combat Encounter)

The most likely scenario is that Ragrak sneaks up on the PCs when they are moving between the settlement's buildings at night or when nobody else is around. Ragrak uses buildings, the snow, and her stealth skills to get close to the PCs. Her plan is to lob a particle grenade into their midst to disorient or even concuss them, then follow up with her customized pistol to finish them off.

When Ragrak makes her approach, have her make an **opposed Stealth versus Vigilance check** targeting the PC with the highest Vigilance. Add ■■ to her check if the PCs have spotted her at least once already. If she succeeds, combat begins with Ragrak in some sort of cover (a snowdrift or some boxes piled next to a building, for example) and at short range from the PCs. If she fails, combat begins with Ragrak in the open and at medium range from the PCs.

As noted, Ragrak begins by throwing a particle grenade at the largest cluster of PCs. She then backs off and shoots at them from medium range if possible. If the PCs attempt to rush her, she uses her One Step Ahead ability to move away or to slow them down with another particle grenade. If she suffers wounds greater than half her wound threshold, she attempts to flee so she can attack again later.

Defeating Ragrak

If the PCs defeat Ragrak and take her alive, they can question her. Ragrak is willing to share information if she thinks she can exchange it for her life. She's not a coward, but she is a professional and doesn't see any reason to die for a client. If need be, she is willing to pay the PCs up to 700 aurei in Coalition credit chits, which is all the money she has on hand.

Ragrak does not know the identity of the Traitor, but she was contacted on Mecatol Rex. The Traitor said to use a particular frequency to communicate when the job was done and to send images to prove the work was completed. In return, Ragrak would receive a transfer of 50,000 aurei.

Because the frequency is for a regular comms system, it only works on or in orbit around Mecatol Rex. It can also be tracked.

Episode 5: The Storm

After the PCs have been on Shardpoint for some time, a massive storm sweeps in and forces the entire settlement to lock down. This storm can happen at any point that is convenient for your story, but an optimal time is after the PCs have completed some of their investigation into Pilip Coleridge's contact on Shardpoint (either before or after they confront Ralga Woll). The narrative purpose of the storm is to trap the PCs on Shardpoint long enough for the cult to become a serious threat, alerting the PCs to its presence.

Episode Goals

This episode is fairly short, and the goals are relatively simple:

- ◆ Trap the PCs on Shardpoint by damaging their ship.
- ◆ Get them to suspect that something sinister may be going on here beyond Coleridge's contact.
- ◆ Offer another clue to finding Ralga Woll.

The Storm Hits

If the PCs are outside but within the settlement as the storm approaches, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The bitter wind begins to pick up, sending gusts of snow swirling around you. You look to the western horizon and see towering banks of dark clouds.

"Hey!"

You turn and see one of the locals, heavily bundled in survival gear.

"Unless you have a death wish, I recommend you get inside! If you don't have a place to stay, head for the Longhouse! That's where most of us go in a storm!"

The storm will hit the settlement in fifteen minutes. The PCs have the option of following the locals into the Longhouse to take shelter, trying to reach their ship and riding it out, or hunkering down in another building. They also might try to move around outside during the storm, but that could prove dangerous. See **Environmental Effects**, page 53.

Riding Out the Storm

The residents of Shardpoint are used to such storms. Gathering in the Longhouse is part of an unofficial protocol, almost tradition, in the settlement. The locals use the opportunity to share a drink, socialize, or shop at the stalls.

If the PCs shelter inside a building, read or paraphrase the following:

The wind crashes against the walls, and its howling reaches such a pitch it sounds like something screaming out there in the dark.

If the PCs are sheltering in the Longhouse, also read or paraphrase the following:

The Longhouse is densely crowded, and you find yourselves pressed against a western wall. There, the viewing windows reveal flashes of lightning, though eerily, you can't hear thunder over the shrieking wind. The lightning seems fiercest to the north, and the wind rushes that way too, as balls of ice crash into the windows and scatter across them sideways. It's as though everything's drawn to the north.

If the PCs climb up to the viewing platform, they can get a better view of the storm outside. If they do so and have not already confronted Ralga Woll, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Standing at the window, you have a clear view of the storm raging outside. Just visible in the flickering lightning, you see what appears to be a figure moving through the storm. As you look closer, they appear to be dragging something big behind them.

What Happens during the Storm

The PCs are witnessing Ralga Woll disposing of Coleridge's body, but visibility is poor. The sighting might prompt them to investigate the area later and work out what they've seen.

Outside, a group of Lee's staff led by Nikon Jones use the storm as cover for a ritual. The cultists want to test their machine by summoning a Vuil'raith monstrosity as practice for their future larger summoning. Near the landing pads, they open a dimensional tear large enough to summon a **Vuil'raith**

raging horror (see page 121). The raging horror rampages across the landing pads for a few minutes, damaging the ships parked there. Then it grabs a couple of cultists and drags them screaming through the tear before it seals.

Bridget Lee, meanwhile, spends the storm in the Longhouse. If the PCs are in the Longhouse, she runs into them at some point and greets them, offering them a drink from a sealed beverage container containing more ghost-root broth. She makes small talk with the PCs for a few minutes. If the PCs remark on the storm, the surprising amount of lightning, its focus north of the Longhouse, or the figure they saw in the window, have them make an **opposed Vigilance versus Deception check** (◆◆◆).

Lee shrugs and gives a noncommittal answer, such as how she's never been much of a meteorologist, or how some Shardpoint residents have more guts than common sense and may be out wandering in the storm (even though Ralga Woll is not part of Lee's cult, Lee assumes the figure the PCs saw was one of her cultists, and she tries to wave it off). If the PCs were successful on their check, they can see that Lee knows more than she's letting on. If they failed but with ▲▲▲, they can still tell she's nervous about something. Either way, Lee soon makes her excuses and drifts into the crowd.

Assessing the Damage

As the storm clears, Shardpoint's inhabitants and the PCs have a chance to assess the damage to their ships. All the ships on the landing pads have suffered some amount of damage. The *Crimson Coin* and the *Knight Icaran* have fared the worst, their mass-drive tubes and hulls pierced through in several places. Their repairs will take several months and require shipments of specialized spare parts. *The Brightness of Dawn*, *Arrow*, and the PCs' ship are not damaged as badly, but they still require substantial repairs before they will be spaceworthy again. Only Ragrak's *Pride* is still flight capable, since it was hidden in the wastes, but the bounty hunter keeps this information to herself.

A successful **Easy** (◆) **Perception check** reveals that the storm isn't what damaged the ships, while ▲ or ⊗ may be spent for the PCs to notice claw marks on some of the vehicles, a strange gelatinous residue on the snow nearby, and, under the snow, scorch marks that look disturbingly like footprints. Snow may have melted and refrozen in odd, spiked formations, something you can literally have the PCs trip over if they fail to notice the other clues.

Making Repairs

Unfortunately for the PCs, the fully stocked repair facilities on Shardpoint are entirely controlled by Bridget Lee and her cult. As soon as the storm clears and everyone can assess the damage to their ships, Lee approaches each shipowner and offers to begin repairs. She gives a quote for repair times and costs for each vessel; besides the *Crimson Coin* and *Knight Icaran*, the other ships will take four or five days to repair. She asks for

What if the PCs are aboard their ship or left their ship in the wastes?

If the PCs are safely inside their vessel, the summoning happens when the storm is particularly violent. Describe the intensity of the storm, but mention that the group seems to be in the heart of a maelstrom of lightning, causing their ship's sensors to blank out. Then describe a horrible banging and scraping on the ship's outer hull. By the time the PCs get outside to check on their ship, the damage has been done and the Vuil'raith has left through the dimensional tear, which then closes.

If the PCs left their ship in the wastes, then it escapes damage. They have the option to leave Shardpoint as soon as their business with Woll is complete. However, this guarantees that the cult will complete its much larger summoning, and the Vuil'raith will wipe out the station in a few days.

2,000 aurei to repair the PCs' ship, although she only asks for a quarter of the payment in advance and is willing to extend a line of credit for the rest.

If the PCs pay for Lee to make repairs on their ship, she of course has her staff drag out the repairs for the next four days, until she is ready to begin her grand summoning. The PCs can attempt to make the repairs themselves if they are mechanically inclined. An **Average** (◆◆) **Mechanics check** reveals that the damage is not quite as extensive as Lee claimed and should take three to four days to fix. (This is still long enough to ensure the PCs get caught up in the final plans of the Vuil'raith cult.)

The Vuil'raith inflicted 10 hull trauma and 10 system strain on the PCs' ship, as well as a **Hard** (◆◆◆) Critical Hit to their superluminal drive. They need to repair at least half of the hull trauma and system strain for their ship to be spaceworthy, and they need to repair the Critical Hit to be capable of FTL travel (see pages 228-230 of the Core Rulebook). You can have the PCs make the checks at the start of their repairs. ▲▲▲ or ⊗ can be spent to speed up the repairs, but you should still ensure that the Vuil'raith cult strikes just before the repairs are finished (see page 74).

Other Repair Options

If the PCs can't make the repairs themselves and don't trust Lee's staff to do the work, they can turn to **Kash** (page 119), a lone Rokha pilot who also happens to be a competent mechanic. Kash's priority is repairing his own ship, the *Arrow*, but he'll repair the PCs' vessel if they offer 1,000 aurei. The PCs can use



an **opposed Negotiation versus Negotiation check** (●) to try to decrease the cost or get him to work on their ship first.

Kash repairs their ship fully, but it takes him six days to do so. This is a good option for ensuring the PCs have a working ship for the Act III of this adventure, but it also means they will be on Shardpoint for the cultists' ritual.

Confronting Bridget Lee

If the PCs confront Bridget Lee, she assures them that such storms happen and are out of her control. She laughs at any mention of claw marks, as there is no animal life on the moon, and she scoffs at any other clues, asking the PCs not to provoke any of the superstitious captains or bartenders of Shardpoint. If any of the PCs are suspicious of Lee, you can have them make an **opposed Vigilance versus Deception check** (● ● ♦). Success reveals that, while she is not lying about the lack of animal life on the moon, she is definitely hiding *something*.

Listening for Rumors

The cultists the Vuil'raith raging horror dragged through the dimensional tear were from among Lee's staff, and the locals do not immediately notice they are missing. However, Lee soon invites some residents to take over empty accommodations within her staff complex. These buildings are insulated and heated beyond what many residents can afford. They are

new recruits to her cult, but that doesn't stop them from bragging about their sudden good fortune in the bar or the Shardpoint Canteen.

Evidence in the Snow

If the PCs saw a figure in the snow, or if they search for clues west of the Longhouse, have them make an **Average** (♦ ♦) **Perception check**. While the storm has swept away any footprints, there's a slight indentation in the snow where something heavy was dragged from one of the warehouses (Woll's hideout) to the Incinerator. The fires are too fierce for them to find the body, but the Incinerator is where Coleridge ended up. If this clue encourages the PCs to investigate the hideout, see **Woll's Hideout**, page 66.

Monster Hunting

If the PCs deduce there may be monsters on Shardpoint despite Lee's claims, they may decide to investigate the snowy wastes beyond the colony's borders. If they decide to do so, see **Exploring the Wastes**, page 65.

Episode 6: Confronting Woll

All the evidence the PCs turn up should lead them to Ralga Woll (see **Following Coleridge's Trail**, page 59). Woll is the Traitor's contact with the Mahact, and after killing Coleridge, she suspects someone is going to be pursuing him. If she is discovered, she is compelled to fight to the death. Although the PCs likely won't get a chance to question her, in confronting her, they should find some evidence that proves their innocence and condemns the Traitor.

Episode Goals

In this episode, the PCs can act on their suspicions and gather solid evidence to prove their case against the Traitor. They also have an opportunity to learn more about the Vuil'raith cult.

In this section of the adventure, the PCs should:

- ◆ Find the communications orb in Woll's hideout; this is proof of the Mahact's connection to the Traitor.
- ◆ Find the evidence of the Traitor's betrayal that Woll stored as potential blackmail in case the Traitor double-crossed her.
- ◆ Investigate the Vuil'raith cult and possibly take action against it. If the PCs neglect to do this, the cult moves forward with its plans.

An Easy Lead to Follow

If the player characters fail to follow any of the previously provided information, get sidetracked investigating Lee and uncovering the cult's operation, or attempt to leave Shardpoint without evidence, R'ali approaches them to ascertain their motives. If the PCs seem trustworthy, he shares his suspicions about Woll.

R'ali's Appeal (Social Encounter)

This encounter is most likely to occur in R'ali's Bar, but R'ali can accost the PCs at any location if necessary. When he approaches the PCs, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

A hissing cough draws your attention. "Hey, you're the newcomers who have been poking around, right?"

You turn and see a thin, serpentine Druaa. The heavy coat he's wearing can't hide the scars on his head crest or his coiling lower body, or that the last foot of his tail seems to be a dull gray segmented cybernetic. He nods to you. "Name's R'ali, I'm the one who owns R'ali's Bar. What's your game, heh?"

R'ali considers himself a guardian of Shardpoint, and if he's unaware of the Vuil'raith cult, it's only because he's been busy carefully watching Woll. He's been suspicious of her ever since she returned alone from her last job a year ago.

R'ali wants to enlist the PCs' help in investigating Woll, but first he wants to find out who they are and what their business is. If the PCs answer truthfully, then they just need to make an **Easy (◆) Charm check** to convince him that they're trustworthy. However, the PCs may not want to blow their cover, in which case the check is **Hard (◆◆◆) Deception check** instead.

Once the PCs have R'ali's trust, he explains his concerns. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

R'ali sighs with a sibilant hiss. "I've known Ralga for years. Not friends but—well, in a settlement like this, you get to know everyone. And we usually get along just fine.

"But a year ago, she came back from a job gone bad. Her entire crew died, and she was different after that. I know losing your mates can mess with your head, but it was like she was a whole other person. Hardly talked to anyone, kept to herself, vanished for days or weeks on her ship..."

*R'ali shrugs. "I assumed just standard shady dealings, but then she starts buying up explosives, military-grade stuff you'd use for sabotage. Then a few weeks ago, all the bombs vanish from their storehouse the same night that ship, the *Crimson Coin*, takes off for Mecatol Rex. Now it's back, and you're on its tail."*

R'ali's motivation is to avoid getting Shardpoint mixed up in anything dangerous, and any trouble that comes out of Mecatol Rex could be quite dangerous indeed. So all he asks in return for his information is that the PCs investigate Woll, but leave the rest of Shardpoint out of their business.

Exploring the Wastes

If the PCs hear locals talking about monsters out in the snow beyond the colony's borders, or if they found the claw marks at the landing pads after the storm, they may decide to explore the snowy wastes. While this won't shed any light on the Mahact thrall, Woll, it does provide evidence of the Vuil'raith cult.

Only Lee and her cultists refuse to admit the possibility of life beyond primitive plant and bacteria on the moon. For other residents who hear howling during storms—and may have lost crewmates out there in the snow—the monsters are real enough to warrant warning strangers about. If the PCs ask around, they're told stories of huge creatures with more eyes and mouths than any beast should need, crawling around near some ice caves south of Shardpoint.

The monsters that residents claim to have seen are actually Vuil'raith the cult have brought through during trials of their machine. If the PCs set out for the caves, they encounter a **Vuil'raith flaming monstrosity** (see page 121) lurking in one of the caverns.

Monster in the Caves (Combat Encounter)

It is a five-kilometer hike to the ice caves. When the PCs arrive, they find themselves at the base of a towering ice cliff. Caverns riddle the base of the cliff. The PCs can make an **Average (◆◆) Perception check**. If they succeed, they spot torn and bloodied cultist robes and a broken dagger with a stylized eye on the hilt, half-buried in the snow in front of one of the caves. (This is the remains of one of Lee's cultists who got too close to the Vuil'raith when they tested their machine.)

The cave is entirely carved into the ice, and starts as a passageway roughly ten meters long and wide enough for two people to walk abreast. Eventually it broadens into a larger chamber roughly twelve meters in diameter. As the PCs walk, have any with a light source or low-light visibility gear make an **Easy (◆) Perception check**. If they succeed, they notice that the cave and chamber have been melted into the ice by some sort of intense heat.

When the PCs arrive in the chamber, they notice another tunnel running off the far side at medium range from their entrance. If they approach, they notice a sulfurous scent and warmer air coming through the tunnel. If they get within short range of the tunnel, the **Vuil'raith flaming monstrosity** surges out and attacks (see page 121).

Results of the Encounter

If the PCs kill the flaming monstrosity, its body begins to self-immolate until nothing is left but greasy black sludge. However, the PCs can make an **Average (◆◆) Knowledge (Science) check** to deduce that this life-form is not native to this moon (the moon doesn't have any other life forms nearly as advanced). They can also make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Knowledge (Lore) check** to suspect that this might be a Vuil'raith.



Ralga Woll

Ralga Woll (page 118) seems an insignificant member of the community, just another sad character making her way on this desolate outpost. In fact, the PCs might be more likely to suspect Lee of being the thrall at first and overlook Woll.

Woll can typically be found at Rali's Bar or in the Shardpoint Canteen, where she speaks little and serves with a blank expression. The rest of the time, she's in her warehouse listening to the whispers of her orb in case of messages, or carrying out her orders. If the PCs ask about Woll, any resident might tell them the story of how she lost her crew and has never been the same. If the PCs interact with her, have them make an **Average (◆◆) Vigilance check** to notice how her voice remains at an even pitch at all times, and how her eyes don't dart around inspecting her surroundings like most people's would. In fact, the physical structure of her brain has been recreated through genetic sorcery so that she's not really the same person she once was.

If the PCs suspect Woll and confront her, she immediately attacks. She fights even if vastly outnumbered: see **Breaking and Entering**, page 66.

Woll's Hideout

If the PCs don't confront Ralga Woll while she's working in the Canteen, they are most likely to confront her at the warehouse where she lives.

Woll used to use the small warehouse to store goods before selling them. The building is a single large room with several rows of shelves. Many of the shelves still have crates of supplies and artifacts of dubious value on them.

The back third of the warehouse has been cleared into a makeshift living space. Although Woll used to rent a small apartment when home on Shardpoint, once enthralled, she decided to forgo the apartment as an unnecessary waste of resources. Now she spends her evenings in these squalid conditions, waiting for her next set of orders.

The warehouse has a large hatch entrance with a smaller single door alongside it. The hatch is welded shut, and the door is locked. Opening it requires a successful **Hard (◆◆◆) Skulduggery check**. In addition, the door is rigged with an alarm. If the check generates ☹ ☹ or ☹ ☹, or if the PCs decide to break down the door using explosives or brute force, the alarm alerts Woll wherever she is.

Breaking and Entering (Combat Encounter)

This encounter can begin in either of two ways: Woll might be inside her warehouse when the PCs enter, or they might break in while she is away but risk possibly triggering the alarm and alerting her.

If Woll is in the warehouse and the PCs manage not to trigger the alarm, have your players make an **opposed Stealth versus Vigilance check (◆◆◆)** to try to sneak up on her. If they fail, or if the alarm triggers, Woll has a couple of minutes to grab weapons and prepare herself. If the PCs take Woll by surprise, she has to spend a maneuver to grab each weapon beyond her collapsible blade. The weapons include a plasma pistol, a shot carbine, and a pack of five jury-rigged demolition charges.

If Woll is outside the warehouse, she returns as quickly as possible (several minutes after the PCs try to enter). She attempts an **opposed Stealth versus Vigilance check** targeting the PC with the highest Vigilance to sneak into the warehouse behind the PCs. If she is successful, she retrieves her shot carbine and attacks the PCs from cover at short range. Add ☹ ☹ to her Initiative check to represent her taking the PCs by surprise.

From the front of the warehouse to Woll's sleeping area is medium range. Everything in her sleeping area is at short range from everything else. There are plenty of things that people can take cover behind. In the sleeping area, the bed and a gutted heating unit both provide defense 1 if someone takes cover behind them. If someone hides behind the shelves in the warehouse, they gain defense 2 instead.

Woll has installed a lot of traps in her warehouse. You can deploy them against the PCs by spending ☹ and ☹ to trigger them when the PCs make checks. (Don't spend this when Woll makes checks, since she knows where the traps are.) See **Table 2-1: Woll's Traps**.

TABLE 2-1: WOLL'S TRAPS

Result	Possible Effects
☹ or ☹	A trip wire stretched between two shelves catches the character's lower appendages, causing the character to fall prone.
☹ ☹ or ☹ ☹	An extremely thin wire dangling from the ceiling has live current running through it. The character brushes against it, and the jolt of electricity inflicts 4 strain and causes them to become disoriented until the end of the encounter.
☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹ ☹ ☹	A floor panel collapses around the character's leg, dropping them into a small pit. The character is knocked prone and immobilized until they make a successful Average (◆◆) Athletics check to pull themselves free.
☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹	One of the boxes contains a small proximity mine. It explodes, inflicting 10 damage on the character and any other characters they are engaged with.

Her genetic rewiring forces Woll to fight to the death. If she would otherwise become incapacitated, she uses her Last Gasp ability (see page 119). This is a particularly grim element of the Mahact's gene-sorcery and should be used to emphasize just how evil and dangerous the Mahact are. However, if your group is uncomfortable with this topic, you may want to skip this ability and just have her die if she becomes incapacitated instead of ending her own life.

Results of the Encounter

By the end of the encounter, it should be obvious that Woll was acting under some sort of compulsion. She keeps her blank-eyed, impassive expression the entire time, never making any noise even if injured. An **Easy (◆) Knowledge (Science) check** reveals that this level of control isn't possible with any known technologies, but it is certainly something the Mahact could do. That's why the Council is building the Synaptic Ordinator, after all!

Most of the artifacts in the warehouse are either bulky items such as stone bas-reliefs valuable only to a museum, or obvious forgeries. However, there are several items that are both valuable and portable. You can have the PCs make an **Easy (◆) Perception check** to find one item per ✨.

- ◆ **A Lazax figurine:** About ten centimeters tall, this figurine of the Lazax Emperor Irsul the Just is sculpted from gold and platinum, with a molecular treatment that makes it resistant to damage. It is worth 5,000 aurei.
- ◆ **A pair of ancient Letnev poniards:** These weapons are roughly five thousand years old and exhibit exceptional workmanship. Age has made them brittle and useless as weapons, but a collector would pay 3,000 aurei for the pair.
- ◆ **Coins from a dead world:** This small bag of forty-one coins was found on the dead world of Kiris-11, former home to a society that wiped itself out with crude atomic weapons before its world's discovery by galactic explorers. Kiris artifacts are fairly common in the galaxy, but the metal coins are each worth 20 aurei to a collector, or 10 aurei to an average person.
- ◆ **Name plaque of a Sol colony vessel:** A relic of the first Human diaspora, this twenty-centimeter square titanium plate was once affixed to the bridge of the *Legacy of New Cairo*. Nothing in the crate indicates what happened to the ship or where the plaque was found, but it could fetch 200 aurei from a collector, or 10,000 aurei from a museum on Jord.

The PCs should also find another clue to Coleridge's fate. Coleridge's starflower-silk coat is balled up on Woll's bed. The coat is stained with Coleridge's blood, and there are slashes in the material that were made with Woll's collapsible blade.

Finally, there is a safe inside the damaged heating unit next to Woll's cot. The safe is normally opened with a retinal scanner, but it can also be opened with a **Hard (◆◆◆) Computers check**. Two valuable items are inside it. The first is a data crystal containing a recorded conversation between Woll and the Traitor, as well as other evidence of the Traitor's guilt. The second is the Mahact communications orb.

Evidence of Treachery

The memory chip contains a recording of the conversation in which Woll convinced the Traitor to betray the Galactic Council and become a willing agent of the Mahact. The specifics of the conversation are up to you to determine, depending on who you selected as the Traitor and what their motives are.

The chip also contains some additional proof of the Traitor's culpability. This proof could include things such as financial records of bribes, records of all the times Woll traveled to Mecatol Rex to visit the Traitor, and a log of the orders she provided to Coleridge to give to the Traitor.

The evidence here is enough to exonerate the PCs and convict the Traitor, provided they can get it back to Mecatol Rex. Ironically, Woll kept it as insurance against the Traitor breaking their deal and disavowing Vesh Nil Qor. Since the Traitor wasn't enthralled, she felt she might have to resort to blackmail to ensure the Traitor's cooperation.

The Mahact Communications Orb

The second item is the communications orb the Mahact king gave to Woll. A round sphere made of a glass-like substance surrounded by plates of dark metal, its workings are a mystery even to Woll. The device is affixed to a stand made of an unknown metal alloy and carved with ancient Mahact script. It is a wonder of high technology in that it allows visual and voice communications across the galaxy instantaneously.

The PCs should recognize Mahact technology without making a check. Figuring out what it is, however, is more difficult. Woll was given precise instructions on how to use it, but she will never tell the PCs. If the PCs want to inspect it or try to activate it, have them make a **Formidable (◆◆◆◆) Knowledge (Lore) check**. Success means they activate it or learn exactly what it is. Even if they fail, they can spend ▲ ▲ ▲ or ☸ to speculate that it's some sort of communications device.

In any case, this confirms that Woll was an agent of the Mahact. Spend ☸ ☸ or ☸ to inflict 4 strain on the characters, as they stare too long into the sphere and find themselves briefly entranced by the dancing lights in its depths or suffer a shock of cold as some of the sphere's strange energies discharge.

The King Speaks

The communications orb also offers a chance to introduce Vesh Nil Qor to your players as the main villain. At any point during the rest of Act II of this adventure, you can have the orb suddenly activate as Vesh Nil Qor tries to contact Woll. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

You glance at the device and suddenly pause. The shifting lights in the orb seem to be growing brighter, and the blue-black depths begin changing to a deep red.

Suddenly the orb flashes, and you find yourself staring into a swirling mass of stars surrounded by a crimson lambency. The room around you appears to darken, and although you can't explain why, you feel a presence in the orb, studying you.

Then, a voice, one deep and foreboding as the empty void, echoes in the space around you. "I am Vesh Nil Qor, magister of the eight-cubed secrets and King of the Mahact and this galaxy. You are not my thrall. Speak your name—that I may know you."

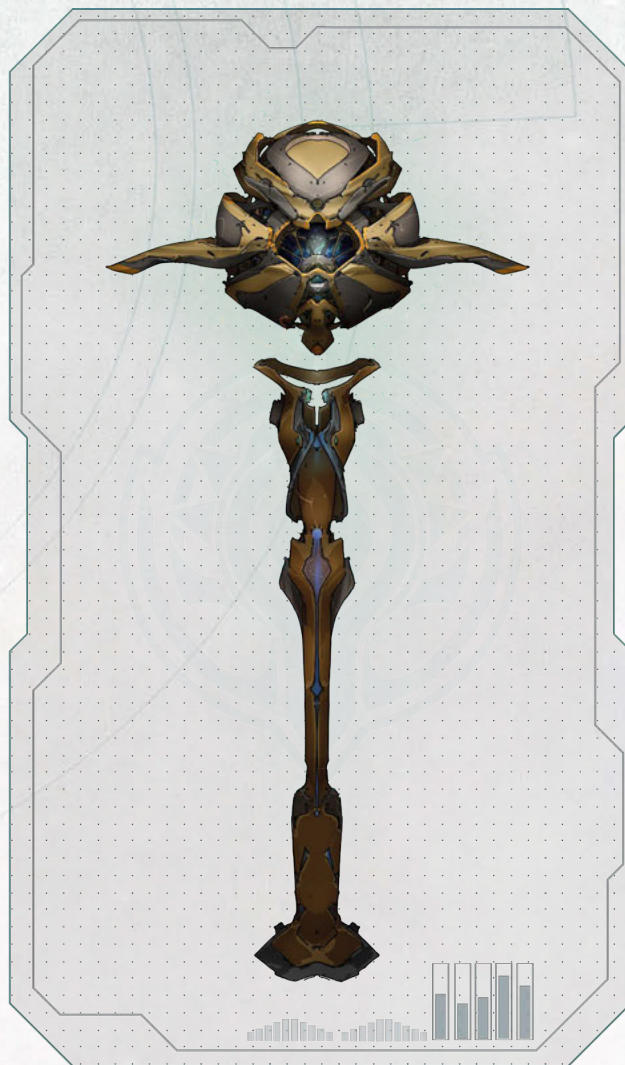
At the beginning of the conversation, have each PC make a **Hard (◆◆◆) fear check** (see page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook). Even through a communications device, Vesh Nil Qor is a terrifying individual. The conversation with the PCs should be brief. Vesh Nil Qor is exceptionally arrogant and sees anyone who is not a Mahact as almost completely irrelevant. If the PCs do not answer, he insists one more time that they speak, then says, "Very well," and ends the communication.

If the PCs do identify themselves or try to engage the Mahact in conversation, you should ensure that Vesh Nil Qor's arrogance is on full display. The Mahact quickly realizes the PCs must have killed Woll, and although he is angry about it, it is the anger of being inconvenienced.

Vesh Nil Qor is not worried about the PCs interfering with his plans, since he already has the schematics for the Synaptic Ordinator. So after the PCs have a chance to speak, he cuts them off. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"Enough." The Mahact's voice booms through the room. "You have inconvenienced me, but I will give you one chance. Pledge your loyalty to me, and I will spare your minds when you become my slaves."

The adventure assumes the PCs reject this offer. If they accept in good faith, they likely doom the galaxy to being subjugated by Vesh Nil Qor, and that is outside the scope of this adventure. They may try to lie to the Mahact and pretend to join him.



Unfortunately, one element of Vesh Nil Qor's incredibly advanced tech is the ability to detect lies based on voice patterns and microexpressions. If the PCs make the attempt, the Mahact insists they stare into the communications orb and repeat their promise of allegiance. After they do so, he growls, "You lie."

Once the PCs reject Vesh Nil Qor's offer (or attempt to deceive him), read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Vesh Nil Qor's voice freezes you in place. "Very well," he growls. "When we meet again, I shall reduce your bodies to wizened and twisted husks. And you shall be fully aware to experience the horror of your fate." You hear a sudden crack, and the crimson glow vanishes. The orb is dark once again.

Vesh Nil Qor sees no reason to use the communications orb again and cuts it out of his communication network.

Episode 7: The Vuil'raith Cult

The presence of the Vuil'raith cult is unrelated to the PCs' reasons for being at Shardpoint, but it nevertheless threatens them and their plans. The cult's plan is simple and terrible. Using a machine developed by Bridget Lee (but inspired by Vuil'raith technology disseminated into parts of the galaxy by other cults), it intends to rip open a major portal to the Vuil'raith's alien dimension. This will allow numerous Vuil'raith flesh-demons to attack Shardpoint, consuming everyone there.

Bridget Lee chose Shardpoint for a reason. Here, she has been able to bolster a community and recruit many cultists to her cause, with the promise of more potential recruits arriving daily. It's a central-enough location to act as a staging post for further invasions, but isolated enough and inhospitable enough that she can literally trap victims here at will.

The cult is almost ready to complete Lee's plan. In the air-control tower, it has hidden a device that weakens the fabric of reality just enough to let the demons squeeze through. Cult members have practiced a few times, making small, temporary breaches, and have let a few monsters through into the snowy wastes of Shardpoint. The portal opened at the landing bays is the first one they've activated within the colony.

As the cult runs the air-control tower and loading bays, it can effectively keep everyone grounded during the Vuil'raith invasion. The Longhouse's function as a meeting place in emergencies means the cult will be able to trap many of the residents there, leaving them at the mercy of the demons.

The cultists think this will earn them favor among the highest ranks of the Vuil'raith. Only Lee and her second-in-command, Nikon Jones, suspect that the cultists may also be killed or taken back to the Vuil'raith's hellish dimension in the process. Both plan to take refuge in Lee's underground bunker during the attacks, just in case their suspicions prove correct.

Each member of the cult has their own reasons for joining: some are simply in awe of the sheer power of the Vuil'raith, while others might be afraid to refuse when Lee approaches them. Lee, who appears wealthy, successful, and generous, is the cult's leader on Shardpoint, and residents who trust her are more likely to be taken in by her spiel.

Lee may even attempt to recruit the PCs if they seem likely candidates. If the PCs deliberately or inadvertently appear to be wealthy outcasts in need of purpose, Lee can approach them, at the GM's discretion. See **Joining the Cult**, page 72.

The Cult's Message

The cult's message, as relayed by Lee, is that the systems that imprisoned the Mentak Coalition's ancestors are still in place. The Table of Captains is playing along, pandering to the Galactic Council rather than considering what the Coalition really needs. The Council punishes those who step out of line, and people are forced to obey, so the current system makes them no better off than when they suffered under the Lazax. The Table of Captains are hypocrites, too weak to let the Coalition thrive and take its rightful place in the galaxy. Once a great power claims control of a new empire and unites others, it will come for the Coalition, whose ways it's never respected, and throw hardworking traders and smugglers in cells all over again. The only way to prevent this is to harness a power greater than any other in the galaxy.

Episode Goals

In this episode, the cultists' plans reach fruition, and the PCs have to deal with them one way or another. The PCs must attempt to stop the cult or escape Shardpoint.

In this section of the adventure, the PCs should:

- ◆ Definitively establish the existence of the cult and who is behind it.
- ◆ Prevent the cultists from opening the portal, close it if they do, or escape the Vuil'raith and save themselves.
- ◆ Leave Shardpoint in order to return to Mecatol Rex.

Investigating the Cult

The first step in defeating the Vuil'raith cult is to definitively establish its existence. By now the PCs should at least suspect something strange is going on, and they may have figured out that it involves the Vuil'raith (if they investigated the wastes, see page 65) and, depending on how they interacted with her during and after the storm, **Bridget Lee** (see page 120). Now it's time for them to determine exactly what's going on and how to stop it.

Luckily for the PCs, investigating the cult and stopping it can be conducted simultaneously. At this stage, they can't simply accuse or arrest Bridget Lee without risking the ire of the entire community of Shardpoint. Most of the inhabitants don't realize that Lee is up to something, and they are likely to believe her over some troublemakers from off-world. That means the best ways to investigate the cult are to either infiltrate and investigate Lee's house or to follow her staff when they are behaving suspiciously and discover the cult's secret ritual chamber.

Cult Numbers

At this stage in the adventure (and after having lost a few members to ill-planned summoning attempts), the cult consists of twenty-three members. Fifteen of these are Lee's staff, and six are other inhabitants she has recruited (use the **Shardpoint cultist** profile on page 119). The other two are **Bridget Lee** herself (page 120) and Nikon Jones, her number two (use the **Vuil'raith cult leader** profile in *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 260).

Investigating Bridget Lee

Speaking to Lee directly doesn't uncover anything the PCs haven't already learned. She steadfastly denies there are any dangerous predators on Shardpoint, pleads ignorance to anything the PCs bring up, and claims she just wants to get their repairs done as quickly as possible. If any of the PCs make a successful **opposed Vigilance versus Deception check** (◆◆◆◆) (add ◆◆ if they've caught Lee in a lie before), they can tell Lee is lying. But if they accuse her of lying, she grows angry, insists they are delusional or paranoid, and leaves their company as quickly as possible.

Once she is away from the PCs, Lee orders Jones to prepare for the ritual the following day (see page 73). She also tells her cultists to arm themselves and be ready for the PCs to attack them.

If the PCs ask around about Lee, they may have more luck getting information about her. The PCs can speak to anyone in Shardpoint who doesn't work directly for Lee, making **Average** (◆◆) **Charm**, **Deception**, or **Coercion checks** depending on their approach. Each successful check can let them learn one of the following points:

- ◆ Although the common story is that Lee used to be a smuggler captain, there's a rumor she used to serve in the Federation of Sol's armed forces before some personal loss caused her to leave.
- ◆ Lee has been here for the past five years. She took over the landing pads from the previous owner, a Winnu named Bekar Bekarson, after he died in a tragic landing pad accident.
- ◆ Most of Lee's staff either were drifters traveling through Shardpoint when Lee offered them a job or are off-worlders she brought with her.
- ◆ Lee's best friend, Nikon Jones, is a Human who emigrated from Jord several decades ago. He's always been embittered about the Coalition, possibly for financial reasons. Likewise, the rest of her closest friends on Shardpoint tend to be people who have suffered some sort of loss or seem dissatisfied with their life.
- ◆ Lee and her friends seem to keep to themselves. They also spend a lot of time in a warehouse complex owned by Jones.
- ◆ A few of Lee's friends and a couple of her staff have vanished in the past six months. When asked, Lee simply says they chose to leave Shardpoint for new opportunities.

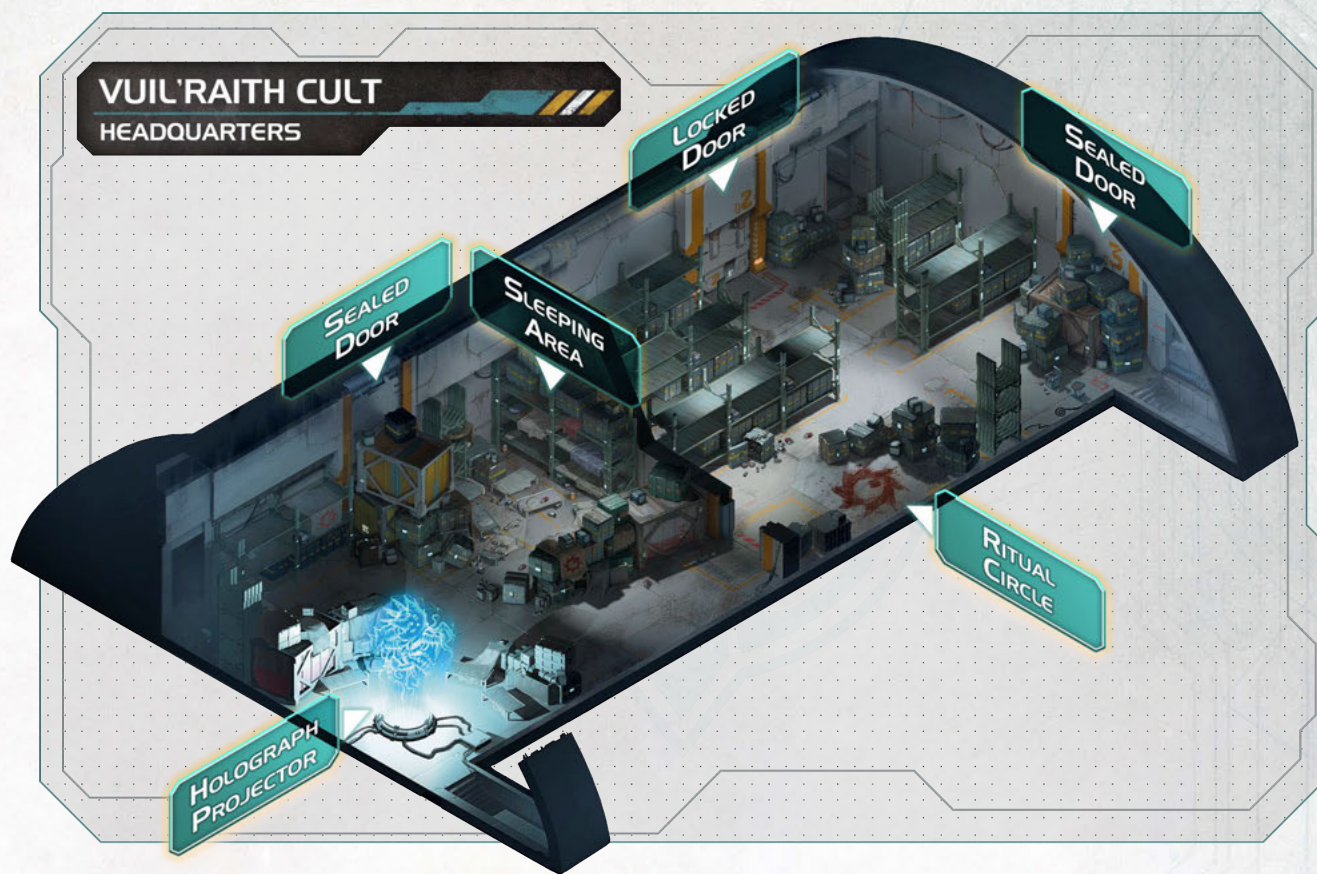
Investigating Bridget Lee's House

As described on page 56, Lee's residence is a large dome attached to several smaller domes. Each dome has an exterior entrance; Lee's is guarded by a single member of her staff (represented by **Shardpoint cultists**, page 119).

If the PCs want to try to sneak into Lee's dome while she's not around, they must find their way around the guard on duty and then defeat the door lock with a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Skulduggery check**. Once they get inside, they find the dome is a single large room with minimal facilities. However, if they make a successful **Daunting** (◆◆◆◆) **Perception check** and spend several minutes searching the place, they find the hidden hatch in the floor that leads to Lee's observation bunker.

The bunker is small, a single room with space for two or three people. Its only furnishings are extensive monitoring and recording equipment picking up images from all over the settlement.

If Lee learns that the PCs have discovered her hidden bunker, she sends Jones and two minion groups of four **Shardpoint cultists** each (see page 119) to eliminate the PCs wherever they are. At the same time, she begins preparations to open the portal immediately.



Investigating the Cult's Base of Operations

The pair of warehouses the cult adopted as its base of operations are situated in the northeast and belong to Nikon Jones, Lee's most trusted subordinate. This is the center of the cult's activities, where the ceremonies admitting new recruits are conducted and general meetings take place. These ceremonies typically occur during the lunar night, and the PCs may notice a number of individuals flocking to the warehouses on these occasions.

These warehouses share a side wall, and all the doors except for one have been welded shut and barricaded by piles of shipping crates on the inside. The remaining entrance is always locked and guarded by a pair of cultists. The two cultists hide among the first row of cargo containers just inside the main door. The door's lock is not particularly complex but does require an **Average (◆◆) Skulduggery** check to open.

Inside, the walls of the first warehouse have been insulated with black sound-damping foam, leaving them soft and spongy to the touch. Toward the rear of the warehouse, the crates have been hauled away to leave a large space. The cult has painted the red outline of a sunburst in the center of this space, with a second circle off-set from the center. A complicated series of arcane and mathematical symbols runs around the perimeter.

A successful **Average (◆◆) Knowledge (Culture)** check identifies some of the arcane symbols as adapted from various religions scattered throughout the galaxy. A **Hard (◆◆◆) Knowledge (Science)** check identifies the mathematics as relating to the theoretical field of interdimensional physics (▲▲▲ or ⊗ further reveals that the mathematics pertain to wormhole formation).

To the right of the ritual circle, a smaller door leads into the adjoining warehouse. Here, the crates have been used to partition the space into several "rooms." One is a makeshift sleeping area for some of Lee's more devoted (or destitute) cultists. The other is a sort of temple. More mathematical and religious symbols are painted on the walls, and a holoprojector in the room's center surrounds the temple's perimeter with flickering images of fleshy monsters with teeth, tentacles, and far too many eyes.

Attacking the Cult's Warehouse (Combat Encounter)

Unless the PCs come up with some ruse to trick the cultists into abandoning their temple, or are stealthy enough to sneak into and out of the warehouses without being caught, they encounter cultists in the temple and are forced to fight.

First, however, a single minion group of two **Shardpoint cultists** (see page 119) guards the entrance to the first warehouse. This pair attacks any non-cultists who enter (adding ■ to checks they make to determine Initiative because of their hidden ambush positions). If they have a chance to act, they use a maneuver to signal their allies in the temple in the second warehouse.

Inside the second warehouse are two minion groups of three cultists each, and Nikon Jones. Jones signals Lee and the rest of the cult about any intrusion, and the cultists take up ambush positions. They wait until the PCs are just inside the second warehouse, then open fire with their weapons.

Nikon Jones leads the defense with the fanaticism of a true zealot. In addition, at the end of the second round of any combat with the second-warehouse group, a third minion group of four cultists arrives from the outside and attacks the PCs from behind.

Lee's observation bunker has feeds from cameras in the cult's temple. If she sees her cult losing the fight, she tells her remaining cultists to begin opening the portal immediately.

Joining the Cult

The PCs might try to learn more about the cult by pretending to join it. They can only do this if Lee hasn't caught them searching her home or attacking the warehouse temple.

The first step is to convince Lee that they are interested in joining her cult. This requires approaching Lee with a fake motive and making a successful **opposed Deception versus Vigilance check** (◆ ◆ ◆). If the PCs' check is successful, Lee is still slightly suspicious, but she tells them to come to the warehouse immediately for an initiation ceremony that night. If the PCs fail the check, Lee still tells them to come to the warehouse, but she intends to kill them during the ceremony.

The Ritual (Social or Combat Encounter)

Recruitment rituals are always conducted during the lunar nights, when cultists gather to welcome their new initiates. If the PCs join the cult, they are kept inside the cult's warehouse until night falls. Then, the cultists gather, wearing hooded cloaks to hide their faces, and Lee herself appears to conduct the ceremony. The PCs are surrounded.

Read or paraphrase the following:

As Lee moves to stand before you, the holoprojector whirs into life. Suddenly the walls and ceiling are covered with writhing tentacles, pulsing bundles of flesh, and piercing, alien eyes. Lee lifts her hands and speaks in a loud voice: "No longer need you fear death! The great Vuil'raith acknowledge no life or death! These states are insignificant! There is more than time! More than space! Let the Vuil'raith show you their reality. The paradise of flesh awaits!"

The cultists take up the chant, whispering it: "*The paradise of flesh awaits!*" Lee presents the PCs with ritual knives marked with the symbol of the cult: a stylized eye. All the cultists own these knives, and they draw them now as the PCs accept theirs. Then Lee tells the PCs that they must mingle their blood in a foretaste of the Vuil'raith's flesh paradise. The cultists each make a shallow cut on their hand or manipulator appendage and then press it into the bleeding hand of the cultist next to them.

The PCs must do the same with the cultists, ideally while screaming the chant. This requires each PC to make a **Hard (◆ ◆ ◆) Deception check**. If a PC fails the check (or if they failed to deceive Lee earlier), Lee points her knife at them and tells her cultists, "*These ones have failed the test of faith! Rend their flesh so it will never pollute the paradise!*"

At this point, four minion groups of four cultists each are surrounding the PCs, together with Lee and Jones. The cultists immediately move to attack with their knives and other weapons.

Successful Deception

If the PCs succeed at their deception, Lee now considers them her subordinates, and any cultist at any time might give them instructions. Before the portal opens, the cultists expect the PCs to prove their worth. This may mean recruiting another member from among the residents of Shardpoint, bringing valuable information to the cult (such as the knowledge that Woll is a Mahact thrall, and therefore a threat), or any other task the cult would benefit from. If the PCs prove themselves, Lee explains the cult's plans to open a portal and gives them a role to play: setting explosive charges that will blow off the Longhouse's roof at the critical moment.

Taking on the Cult

One way or the other, three days after the storm, Bridget Lee and her cult begin their grand summoning. What happens next depends on how proactive the PCs have been.

If the PCs Did Not Investigate the Cult

If the PCs don't want to bother to try to destroy the cult, or if they conducted a fruitless investigation, they likely end up stuck on Shardpoint when Lee finally enacts her plan and opens the portal to summon the Vuil'raith flesh-demons. Then the PCs are stuck fighting the entirety of the cult and whatever demons show up, which could be a very deadly series of fights. The only way the PCs could escape without having to fight is if they landed their ship in the wastes or if they have access to Ragrak's vessel.

The Cult's Plan Revealed

When Lee decides the time has come to open the portal, the following things happen:

- ◆ Air control forbids any ships to leave, claiming a storm is coming.
- ◆ Four cultists drag the summoning machine out of the air-control tower and activate it. They remain with the machine.
- ◆ The atmospheric disturbance mimics a storm, and Lee calls for residents to gather in the Longhouse.
- ◆ Two cultists close the doors to the Longhouse and remain outside to ensure no one leaves.
- ◆ All the outpost's power is routed to the cult's machine, plunging the residents into darkness.
- ◆ Four cultists (or the PCs, if they've earned the cult's trust) climb onto the roof of the Longhouse and set charges to blow off the roof. Once they're clear, the charges detonate and the roof flies off in the rising winds.
- ◆ The portal begins to open, and Vuil'raith begin to slip through.
- ◆ The rest of the cultists gather around the Longhouse, chanting and brandishing their knives, while Lee and Jones hide in her basement observation bunker to watch from afar. Depending on previous events, there should be fifteen cultists in three groups of five, plus the four cultists guarding the machine and the two cultists guarding the Longhouse's doors.
- ◆ The first Vuil'raith surge through the open portal and attack the Longhouse's interior. Use the **Monster Fight** encounter on page 74. If anyone attempts to escape the Longhouse, they are attacked by the cultists outside.

The Cult's Machine

The cultists who originally conscripted Lee gave her a small device that emits the correct frequency to break through into the Vuil'raith dimension. Lee has managed to get ahold of equipment to power and amplify this device enough to open a proper portal. The cultists have been testing it in advance of their big plan and intend to siphon all the power from the outpost's power station through the machine in order to create a large, permanent portal. Their machine is located among the equipment stored in the air-control tower. Without a cultist's explanation, it would take a successful **Hard (◆◆◆) Knowledge (Science) check** to identify it as a transmitter and guess at its use.

Eventually, if the summoning machine is not destroyed, more Vuil'raith come through the portal. They first attack everyone in the Longhouse, then once those people are dead, they attack the cultists and anyone else in Shardpoint. The Vuil'raith rampage for a full day before withdrawing and destroying the summoning machine. Eventually, only Lee and Jones are left alive to sneak off-world and restart their cult elsewhere.

If the PCs Investigated the Cult

If the PCs discovered the cult and attempted to destroy it, Lee rallies the remainder of her cultists (whoever survived the previous encounters) and attempts to open the portal as quickly as possible. However, having derailed parts of the cult's plans gives the PCs a more favorable chance at victory.

First, the PCs may have eliminated some of the cultists in combat at the warehouse temple (or possibly at Lee's residence). This helps even the odds slightly. More importantly, the PCs have likely found concrete evidence of something terrible going on. This is enough to convince some of Shardpoint's inhabitants, such as **Kash** (page 119), **R'ali** (page 119), **Moran** (page 120), and even **Kraik** and **Craag** (represented by the **Hacan merchant** and **Hacan sell-spear** profiles in *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 244), to join the PCs in fighting the cult. If Ragrak is alive, she too is willing to fight alongside the PCs in the face of this existential horror.



The Cult's Plan Interrupted

It is possible that the PCs could take out Lee, Jones, and most of their cult before they are able to activate their portal machine. If so, good for the PCs! They should find some records (maybe journals or audio recordings) in Lee's bunker that explain her terrible plan so they learn just how fortunate they've been.

But if Lee or Jones is alive, trying to activate the portal as a last-ditch effort becomes the remaining cultists' priority. Then, the following things happen:

- ◆ Lee, Jones, or both (if alive) retreat to her bunker.
- ◆ All of the remaining cultists drag the summoning machine out of the air-control tower and activate it. They remain with the machine.
- ◆ The cultists point the machine's transmitter toward the Longhouse and activate it as well, creating an open portal above the Longhouse.
- ◆ The first Vuil'raith surge through the open portal above the Longhouse. They land on the Longhouse's roof. However, with the roof intact, the demons quickly lose interest and start to randomly spread out across Shardpoint

looking for victims. The PCs might attempt to eliminate one or more of the Vuil'raith, or they might run into them while trying to get to the cultists' machine. In either case, use the **Monster Fight** encounter below.

- ◆ If the PCs attempt to attack the machine and shut it off, use the **Shutting Down the Machine** below.

Monster Fight (Combat Encounter)

The first of the Vuil'raith to emerge from the portal is a **Vuil'raith raging horror** (see page 121). This encounter can happen anywhere in Shardpoint if the PCs are actively involved in stopping the Vuil'raith cult, or in the ruins of the Longhouse if Lee has been able to complete her plan.

As soon as the PCs get within long range of the Vuil'raith, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The ground shakes as something lumbers through the snow and debris toward you. You catch glimpses of bulging, muscled arms, razor claws, a bulky form the size of a starfighter, and rows of serrated shark's teeth. Then it roars and starts to charge at you.

The raging horror attacks the PCs, always taking the quickest route toward the nearest PC in order to get to grips with them as soon as possible. In addition, at the end of the first round of combat, a single **stringer flock** (page 121) descends from the sky and attacks a PC not engaged with the raging horror.

Even if the PCs defeat these monsters, more may come through the portal. Feel free to have them fight additional raging horrors, stringer flocks, or **Vuil'raith flaming monstrosities** (page 121) if they don't quickly move to shut off the machine.

Shutting Down the Machine (Combat Encounter)

The heart of the cultists' plan is the machine they are using to summon the Vuil'raith. They know they need to protect it until enough demons have entered the settlement. The Vuil'raith, for their part, may seem like animals, but a strange sentence burns inside their minds. They understand that the machine that created the portal must be protected lest their connection to their home dimension be destroyed.

This means that once the ritual begins, the PCs will have to destroy the machine to shut down the portal. Also, the portal will be defended by both Vuil'raith and cultists.

The machine is set up on one of the empty landing pads. It is large—roughly the size of a four-person ground transport—and heavily armored. However, its size means the cultists can't hide it behind anything.

The machine is guarded by one minion group of four **Shardpoint cultists** (page 119), or if this is a last-ditch effort, it is guarded by however many cultists are left alive. They spread out around the machine, forgoing cover to shield it with their

own bodies. A **stringer flock** (page 121) also hovers over the machine. Finally, a **Vuil'raith flaming monstrosity** (page 121) lurks behind the air-control tower.

If attacked, the cultists remain in place and use their ranged weapons to attack their opponents (if out of range, they move close enough to attack, but they try not to get too far from the machine).

The stringer flock always remains with the machine and only attacks if an enemy moves to engage the machine. Finally, the flaming monstrosity waits for enemies to engage the cultists, then tries to attack from the flanks.

Destroying or Disabling the Machine

The machine is tough but not indestructible. If the player characters have powerful ranged weapons, they may attempt to destroy it from afar.

The machine has a wound threshold of 25 and a soak of 10. It is silhouette 3, so all silhouette 1 or 0 PCs decrease the difficulty of their ranged attacks targeting it by 1. However, as long as the stringer flock surrounds it, it has a ranged defense of 2.

The machine can also suffer Critical Hits. If it suffers a Critical Hit, do not roll on the Critical Hit table. Instead, the machine becomes damaged one step (as per the **Item Maintenance** rules on page 89 of the **GENESYS Core Rulebook**). If the machine becomes unusable, the portal shuts down.

If the machine is destroyed or becomes unusable, a burst of pale, purple energy erupts from it. The energy emanates directly from the Vuil'raith dimension and is incredibly dangerous for living beings. Any NPCs within short range are reduced to quivering, boneless mounds of flesh (needless to say, this kills them instantly).

If a player character (or, at the GM's discretion, an important NPC) is within short range of the machine, they must make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Resilience check**. If they fail, they immediately suffer the Gruesome Injury Critical Injury (see page 115 of the **Core Rulebook**), as some part of their body becomes warped and mutated.

The machine can also be shut down manually. If a player character can get close enough, they can turn it off safely with an **Average (◆◆) Computers check**. However, the machine could still be reactivated.

Lee's Rage

Although Bridget Lee hopes to remain out of harm's way in her bunker, if the PCs look like they'll manage to shut down the machine, her anger and fear at failure drive her to take matters into her own hands.

If at least half of the defenders are dead, the PCs have reached the machine and are shutting it down, or the machine has suffered wounds equal to half its wound threshold (or two Critical Hits), Lee and Jones leave their bunker and join the fight.

Both behave more carefully than their cultists, using cover and engaging from range. But their overriding goal is to reach the machine and repair it or turn it back on. They are fanatical enough to fight to the death.

The Aftermath

If the PCs manage to shut down the machine, they still have to deal with any Vuil'raith in the settlement. However, Shardpoint's population is heavily armed. To speed the story along, you can narrate the settlement's survivors banding together to take out the last of the Vuil'raith and any remaining cultists.

Unfortunately for Lee and Jones, part of their plan assumed that the Vuil'raith would kill everyone in Shardpoint, giving them plenty of time to salvage one of the starships, make any needed repairs, and then fly it off-world. Provided the PCs defeated the Vuil'raith, this plan is now ruined. At your discretion, if Lee and Jones are still alive, you can have them flee into the wastes or go down in a bloody last stand against the PCs and the cult leaders' enraged former neighbors.

It is unlikely that the PCs can capture Lee or Jones alive, but if they manage to do so, the cult leaders remain defiant, screaming curses and threats at the PCs. The rest of Shardpoint wants to execute them immediately for their crimes, but the PCs may be able to convince them to leave the two to official Mentak Coalition justice, or even to let the PCs take them back to Mecatol Rex for a thorough interrogation. The latter requires a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Leadership or Coercion check**, but add   if the PCs were very heroic in defending Shardpoint.

Any interrogation of Lee is outside the scope of this adventure, but it could be a good hook for a later campaign.

Interlude: Back to Mecatol Rex

With the cult (hopefully) defeated and the evidence linking the Traitor to the Mahact in hand, it is time for the PCs to return to Mecatol Rex.

Depending on events, they can either finish repairing their own ship, hire Kash to transport them back, or even hitch a ride with Ragrak or take Ragrak's ship (depending on how things went with the bounty hunter).



[Act III]

The War

In this, the final part of the adventure, the PCs leave Shardpoint behind. They return to Mecatol Rex, attempt to clear their names, and reveal the Traitor's connection to the Mahact. They learn that the Mahact fleet is heading straight for the capital and is expected to arrive within hours. Fortunately, thanks to the information the PCs gained on Ccrysus, a fleet is already assembling to counter the attack.

If they manage to clear their names, the PCs have a key role to play in the battle, as the Galactic Council charges them with helping to defend the Synaptic Ordinator, which is on its way to Mecatol Rex. If all goes well, the PCs begin this portion of the adventure as wanted fugitives, but by the end are hailed as heroes.

The final act of this adventure is more linear than the previous part, but the PCs still have plenty of opportunities to chart their own course. In the first section of Act III, they arrive on Mecatol Rex and likely use the proof they found on Shardpoint to clear their names and accuse the Traitor of treason. Then, as the allied fleet prepares to defend Mecatol Rex, the Mahact Vesh Nil Qor launches his attack. His fleet decelerates into the system and attempts to isolate the Synaptic Ordinator. The Council forces have a chance of winning, but only if the PCs can stop Vesh Nil Qor from taking the Ordinator. If he succeeds in capturing it, the Mahact eventually reverses the Ordinator and uses it to enthrall the crews of all the warships in the region.

During the adventure's climax, the PCs must board the Ordinator and reclaim the weapon. This is incredibly dangerous for the PCs, but it is also a rare opportunity. In order to take control of the Synaptic Ordinator, Vesh Nil Qor has had to slip aboard personally. This gives the PCs the opportunity not only to defeat the Mahact's forces, but also to kill Vesh Nil Qor.

The Mahact Plan

The PCs might have guessed Vesh Nil Qor's plan. If they questioned Dr. Ruga in the first part of the adventure, they may have learned that the bio-wave focusing array could be used to transform the Ordinator from a weapon to use against the Mahact to one that could be used by Vesh Nil Qor's people. It's also likely the PCs know the Traitor sent plans revealing this information to a Mahact king.

If the PCs have not deduced Vesh Nil Qor's plan, they can still recognize that the Ordinator should not fall into his hands. Then when the Mahact makes his move to take the Ordinator, the PCs should still be motivated to stop him. Once aboard the Ordinator, they can run into Dr. Ruga, who warns them of what Vesh Nil Qor is trying to do.

Covering All Eventualities

This part of the adventure is written with the assumption that the PCs go to Mecatol Rex first and then to the Ordinator, the most obvious scenario. The PCs may decide to go to the Ordinator first instead. However, if they try to do so without clearing their names, they risk ending up fighting the Custodian Guard who are protecting it.

The best way to run this eventuality is either to have the PCs sneak aboard the Ordinator and hide until Vesh Nil Qor's forces attack and try to take it, or to have the PCs captured and imprisoned aboard the Ordinator until the attack begins. This option means the PCs skip the chance for a space battle, but if they stop the Mahact, then they clear their names by default.

Episode 8: Chaos at the Capital

In this episode, the PCs have the opportunity to present their case before the Galactic Council and clear their names. As they do so, the Mahact fleet is on its way to Mecatol Rex, and the Councilors have worked themselves into a panic. The Synaptic Ordinator has just been completed but is still at the outer edges of the system, and the fleet of allies currently assembling to protect the capital isn't as large or as organized as could be hoped. In sum, tension is high, and nerves are frayed.

The Council remains divided, with some—including the Traitor—even playing down the seriousness of the Mahact threat. The PCs may be the only ones who have the full picture of how vital the Ordinator really is, but at least some of the Council still see them as outlaws. The PCs can try to present their evidence to the Council to clear their names and implicate the Traitor, but time is short. If they take this approach, the Traitor attempts to flee. The PCs may seek out the Traitor first and drag them before the Council. If they do not, the Traitor confronts the PCs at the Ordinator.

Episode Goals

These goals are not necessary to complete by the end of the episode, but completing them now gives the PCs an advantage later. Clearing their names is relatively easy, but persuading the Council to believe them regarding the Traitor's role takes time, and it gives the Traitor time to attempt escape.

By the end of this episode, the PCs should:

- ◆ Persuade the Council of their innocence.
- ◆ Reveal the Traitor's identity and prove the Mahact connection.
- ◆ Confront the Traitor.

Approaching Mecatol Rex

When the PCs' ship decelerates from superluminal speeds in the Gul star system, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The drive groans, and you hear your ship creak around you as it decelerates from superluminal speed. Ahead you see the bright dot of Gul and the smaller dot of Mecatol Rex to one side. Your sensors pick up large numbers of ships in orbit around the planet, with the signatures of warships from numerous Council factions. It looks like the Council has assembled an allied force, probably in response to the Mahact threat. Unfortunately for you, some of those ships must have detected your arrival, even if they don't know who you are yet.

If the PCs have decided to return to Mecatol Rex and speak to the Council, they can choose to approach openly and express their intent to clear their name, or they can attempt to approach stealthily. Unfortunately, the number of allied warships orbiting Mecatol Rex means they cannot sneak onto the planet (unless their ship has advanced stealth tech, like a Yssaril Infiltrator). However, they can reach out to Matir Iq Matir or Tribunii Kuuasi Aun Jalatai and ask for aid.

Reporting In

Since Kuuasi was the one who contacted the PCs at the end of Act I and encouraged them to investigate Shardpoint, the PCs are likely to reach out to him in turn. Contacting him is fairly easy; they received his personal code when he sent the message to them at the end of Act I. Now that they are in the Gul system, they are easily within communications range of Mecatol Rex and can just message him directly.

Once the PCs send him a message, Kuuasi springs into action. He has been making plans in case the PCs figure out a way to clear their names and find evidence of the Traitor's identity. He sends the PCs his own personal clearance codes and tells them to proceed to Mecatol Rex via a very specific course. Whatever they do, they should not contact anyone else and should not respond to any hails from the allied warships.

As the PCs approach, they are shadowed by an Argent Flight destroyer, the *Kiashai*. The destroyer is operating at Kuuasi's behest, and it scans the PCs' ship before broadcasting to them and the allied fleet that the PCs are clear for landing. If the PCs try to message the *Kiashai*, it does not respond.

Once the PCs set down on Mecatol Rex (in a disused berth in one of the city's municipal spaceports), they find Matir, Kuuasi, and Cohort Corzina (a team of six heavily armed Keleres; see page 82) waiting for them. Kuuasi explains that he has arranged for a meeting of the Council Subcommittee on Extraordinary Studies without giving the subcommittee a reason. He expects the Traitor to be there, and he plans to use the PCs' evidence to accuse and publicly arrest the betrayer. He just needs the PCs' cooperation.

Provided the PCs agree, proceed to **Appearing before the Council** on page 79.

Public Accusation

Instead of reaching out to Kuuasi first, the PCs may decide to publicly announce their identity and demand an audience with the Council, or at least with the Subcommittee on Extraordinary Studies. Although this annoys Kuuasi because it ruins his plans to trap the Traitor, he makes sure the subcommittee receives the PCs' message and subtly encourages its members to hear the PCs out. The subcommittee agrees to an audience.

The PCs' ship is escorted to Mecatol Rex by a flight of very cautious Xxcha Xxlun interceptor fighters, who tell the PCs to follow their instructions exactly, or they will be destroyed. They have them set down in an isolated dock in one of the municipal spaceports, where the PCs are greeted by three **Winnaran Custodian Guard** (EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM, page 255) and two squads of five **Custodian velites** each (page 107).

The Custodian Guard insist the PCs surrender any weapons they are carrying, then escort them to the Council Chambers and the subcommittee. However, when they arrive, they find that the Traitor has already fled Mecatol City and is headed for the Synaptic Ordinator. Proceed to **Appearing before the Council** on page 79.

Custodian Guard

If the PCs land without the knowledge of the Council, they are still wanted criminals and must avoid patrols of Custodian Guard in the city. The Custodians are watching for the PCs and recognize them on sight unless the PCs conceal or disguise themselves somehow. If the PCs are caught in the city, their captors inform the Council of their capture at once. Then the PCs are escorted to the Council.

Stealth Insertion

Although the PCs cannot hide their arrival in the system, if they are riding in someone else's starship (such as if they hired Kash to take them back to Mecatol Rex, or if they commandeered a starship from someone else on Shardpoint), they have a chance to arrive unnoticed.

As the PCs approach Mecatol Rex, they are hailed by a Custodian corvette; one of its officers asks for their identity and reason for traveling there. A PC must make an **Easy (◆) Deception check** to avoid rousing suspicion. If they succeed, the PCs are directed to land in one of Mecatol City's municipal spaceports for a routine customs inspection. If they fail, they are still directed to the same location, but the corvette flags them as possible criminals and follows their ship down while contacting the customs officers.

Once the PCs set down, their ship is boarded by a pair of **Custodian Guard** (EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM, page 255) who are there to perform the customs inspection. The PCs must have already made some effort to disguise themselves to avoid being recognized immediately, and then they must make a successful **Average (◆◆) Deception check** to fool the Custodian Guard. If they fail, the Custodian Guard recognize their identity, and they are arrested.

The same situation happens if the corvette flags their vessel, except that the Custodian Guard are backed up by a squad of five **Custodian velites** (page 107), and the PCs must make a successful **Hard (◆◆◆) Deception check** to fool them. If the PCs fail, they are arrested.

After the PCs' arrest, they can try to get a message to Kuuasi or someone on the subcommittee. Even if the PCs do nothing, Kuuasi eventually learns of their arrest and gets them in front of the subcommittee. However, in both cases, the Traitor learns of their capture and flees Mecatol Rex for the Synaptic Ordinator.

If the PCs manage to sneak through without revealing their identities, they then might contact the subcommittee or Kuuasi, or they might even try to capture the Traitor on their own first.

To Catch a Spy (Combat Encounter)

If the PCs attempt to capture the Traitor, let them make the attempt! After all, they've worked hard to set this up. You will need to figure out some locations the Traitor frequents depending on their identity, but make sure the PCs have some options to get them alone.

If the PCs were able to get Ragrak's comms frequency, they can trick the Traitor into meeting them by pretending to be Ragrak. With a successful **Average (◆◆) Deception check**, they can get the Traitor to meet them in a municipal spaceport landing bay rented in Ragrak's name.

Alternatively, the PCs may contact Kuuasi or Matir and try to use them to locate the Traitor. Kuuasi does urge the PCs to return to Keleres headquarters so he can enact his own plan (see **Reporting In**, page 78), but the PCs can choose to go after the Traitor alone.

When the PCs confront the Traitor, the Traitor is protected by two loyal bodyguards (see page 126). The Traitor may offer the PCs rewards of aurei or power when their master takes over Mecatol Rex, but the adventure assumes they reject the offer, since to get to this point they already had Vesh Nil Qor threaten to turn them into tortured thralls.

Once combat begins, the Traitor tries to escape from the PCs and eventually flee off-world. The guards protect their boss at all costs.

Appearing before the Council

Whatever the circumstances, this meeting with the Council Subcommittee on Extraordinary Studies is the PCs' opportunity to present their case, explain what they've learned, and provide any proof they have managed to obtain. With the muster of the allied fleet over Mecatol Rex, the full Council is too preoccupied to deal with one rogue Keleres cohort. Therefore, the subcommittee has been tasked with dealing with them and reporting back.

When the PCs enter the conference hall, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The conference hall's appearance has not changed since you stood within it a few weeks ago. The atmosphere seems different, however: a faint whiff of fear and desperation emitted by a dozen different species permeates the air. The Councilors, their aides, and the various Keleres representatives all watch you step in front of the rostrum.



Stating Their Case (Social Encounter)

This meeting with the subcommittee is a social encounter in which the PCs' goal is to clear their names and implicate the Traitor. This encounter should be run as a narrative encounter, as the evidence obtained from Woll on Shardpoint is incontrovertible.

The main advantage the PCs have is that there is no actual evidence that they committed the treachery they are accused of. The Traitor relied on hearsay and their own authority to have the PCs charged. In addition, with the evidence from Shardpoint, the PCs should have an easy time proving the Traitor's guilt. This allows you to run this scene as a satisfying denouement for your players.

If the PCs wish to begin by stating their case, allow them to do so. However, at various points, have Councilors or their staff interrupt the PCs with some of the questions

detailed here. If the PCs prefer to let the subcommittee take the lead, have the Councilors instead start off by asking the questions here.

You can have a couple of Councilors and their staff ask most of the questions, with the others remaining silent. Ideally, at least one should be a Councilor who supported sending the PCs to the Synaptic Ordinator in the first place, and one should be a Councilor who opposed sending the PCs.

If you are not guilty of sabotaging the Ordinator, who is?

The Councilors have already discovered that Coleridge and his crew are the likely culprits, so if the PCs name Coleridge, the Councilors are more likely to trust them. If the PCs immediately name the Traitor, the Councilors become more defensive or confrontational.

If you are not guilty, why did you flee the system?

If the PCs say that they wanted to gather evidence to clear their names and find the true culprits, most of the Councilors find this reasonable and approve.

Did anyone help you when you fled the Ordinator?

If the player characters were helped by anyone on the Ordinator, the Council has learned this by now. If the PCs answer truthfully, this confirms the Councilors's suspicions and increases their trust. If the PCs lie, another Councilor breaks in, accusing the PCs of lying and claiming the Councilors already know the truth.

The other issue is whether the PCs mention Kuuasi's help. If they say that Kuuasi has been helping them, it makes the Councilors trust them even more, and the PCs can add 1 to any social skill checks they make until the end of the encounter. However, it angers Kuuasi, who fears his position will be weakened if he is found to have defied the Galactic Council.

How this anger manifests is up to you, but it should be something subtle, like the PCs finding their requisitions limited on future missions, or being assigned a worse starship. On the other hand, if they keep Kuuasi's involvement a secret, they should get some equally subtle but favorable treatment in return.

What have you discovered?

If the PCs inform the Council about the Vuil'raith cult they encountered, the subcommittee listens impatiently. The Mahact are the imminent threat, and it is information on this that the Councilors are hoping for. When the PCs talk about Woll, the Councilors are hanging on the edges of their seats.

The Traitor's Gambit

If the Traitor did not have a chance to flee before the PCs arrive and is in the conference hall, they recognize the danger of the PCs' return. However, they also realize that they can't flee the conference hall without confirming suspicions. Thus they decide to try bluffing in hopes that the PCs don't have any hard evidence with which to convict them. The Traitor vigorously participates in the questioning, always taking a skeptical approach or otherwise attempting to cast doubts on the PCs' answers.

Have you learned anything more about the Mahact threat we're about to face?

This gives the PCs the chance to talk about Ralga Woll and her communications orb, and to lead the conversation logically to the identity of the Traitor. They can also talk about their encounter with Vesh Nil Qor. Finally, if they learned that the Ordinator's systems can be reversed (possibly from their conversations with Dr. Ruga), this is the perfect time to let the Councilors know.

Making Checks

At certain points during the questioning, you can have the PC who is speaking make an opposed check targeting the Councilor who asked the question. Not every answer requires a check, and you should only have your group make three or four opposed checks in total. The nature of each check depends on the approach the PC takes.

- ◆ If they want to convince the Councilor of their sincerity and honesty, they should make an **opposed Charm versus Cool check**.
- ◆ If they want to appear calm and collected in the face of accusations, they should make an **opposed Cool versus Coercion check** (normally the PC would use Discipline, but what matters here is that they *appear* calm).
- ◆ If the PC wants to throw a questioner off their guard with a heated response of their own, they should make an **opposed Coercion versus Cool check**. This is particularly applicable if the PC has the chance to engage with the Traitor.

You can also call for other opposed checks depending on the circumstances.

When a PC makes a successful check, they come across as forthright, believable, and collected, and they can sense the Councilors's mood becoming less hostile toward them. If the PC fails, they come across as antagonistic or incompetent, and they add ■ to any additional social skill checks they make during this encounter.

The purpose of these checks is not to succeed or fail in convincing the Council of the PCs' innocence or the Traitor's guilt. The evidence they likely obtained earlier is irrefutable. However, if the PCs succeed on at least half of their checks, the Councilors form a favorable impression of them. The Councilors enthusiastically dispatch them to help defend the Ordinator and can become allies after the adventure is complete. In addition, if any of the PCs' agendas could be advanced by a favor from a Councilor (or simply by having a Councilor as an ally), you can count this as a completed milestone for them.

On the other hand, if the PCs fail over half of the checks, the Councilors consider them dangerous, hotheaded, insulting, or incompetent. They grudgingly send them to defend the Ordinator, and even if the PCs succeed, they have made a political enemy in the Councilors. Even worse, they have become a political liability to Tribunii Kuuasi, and he starts sending them on missions at the edges of the galaxy where they can't cause trouble for him.

Resolving the Encounter

Once the PCs have revealed the evidence and proved their innocence (and the Traitor's guilt), the subcommittee erupts in frenzied discussion. If the Traitor is present, Kuuasi snaps an order, and Cohort Corzina moves into action, grabbing and subduing the Traitor before they can escape or fight. The other Keleres haul the Traitor off to the Adminus Mecatol, to be held under the watch of the Custodian Guard until the Traitor can be tried by the Galactic Council. This will happen after the resolution of the current crisis.

Otherwise, the Councilors on the subcommittee apologize to the PCs (whether the apology is heartfelt or grudging depends on the PCs' conduct during the encounter). The Councilors are just congratulating the PCs on uncovering the Traitor when things take a turn for the worse. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly a door to the back of the hall opens, and a Win-naran aide runs in. He is holding a savant, and his green skin has gone an ashy gray. He opens his mouth to speak. "Worthy Councilors—"

A deep, howling alarm drowns him out. Blinking emergency lights snap on around the doorways, holomaps flaring up to display the nearest bombardment shelters. You recognize the tone of the alert all too well. An enemy fleet has entered the system. The Mahact have arrived.

Episode 9: Void War

With the arrival of the Mahact fleet, Vesh Nil Qor's endgame begins. In order to foil the gene-sorcerer, the PCs must take to the void in starfighters or heavier warships and join the fight against his fleet. Once they break through the Mahact lines, they have a chance to board the Synaptic Ordinator and defeat Vesh Nil Qor directly.

The Story So Far

The Synaptic Ordinator is on its way to Mecatol Rex but has not arrived yet. Right now, it's traveling through the interplanetary gulf between Mecatol Rex and Semani, escorted by a complement of starfighters.

Meanwhile, the Mahact fleet has decelerated from superluminal velocities just out of range of the allied fleet and Mecatol Rex's planetary defenses. The Mahact fleet and the allied fleet are roughly evenly matched at this stage. The orbital cannons located in the Winnaran Custodians's twin polar fortresses nudge the advantage toward the allies. But the possibility of enthralled double agents aboard the allied fleet sowing chaos and disruption could give Vesh Nil Qor a critical edge.

The Mahact gene-sorcerer's plan is elegantly simple. While the bulk of his fleet engages the allied fleet around Mecatol Rex, he intends to intercept the Ordinator with a small stealth ship. Vesh Nil Qor's goal is to board the Ordinator before the crew realize the threat and call for reinforcements or even scuttle the vessel. Then, using what he has learned from the Ordinator schematics, he will reprogram the main weapon to induce Mahact enthrallment rather than reverse it. At that point, he need only fire the weapon once, and Mecatol Rex and the allied fleet around it will be his.

Episode Goals

In this episode, the PCs need to determine that the main threat is not from the large and dangerous Mahact fleet, but from Vesh Nil Qor intercepting and taking over the Synaptic Ordinator. Then they have a chance to engage in some space combat as they attempt to reach the Ordinator before it's too late.

By the end of the episode, the PCs should:

- ◆ Recognize that the main assault is a feint, and that Vesh Nil Qor's main goal is to capture the Ordinator.
- ◆ If they have any skills in this area, take command of a squadron of starfighters or a cruiser and break through the Mahact fleet.
- ◆ Reach the Synaptic Ordinator with Cohort Corzina.

Cohort Corzina

Keleres Cohort Corzina is a group of six Keleres whom Tribunii Harka Leeds has personally groomed for combat operations. Given the severity of the situation, Leeds has seconded them to Kuuasi for the duration. Led by the Letnev Mercator Relinion, every member of Corzina is highly trained and heavily armed.

Cohort Corzina serves both a narrative and mechanical purpose in this adventure. Narratively, it exists to remind the PCs that they're not the only Keleres in the galaxy. When the threat to the Synaptic Ordinator becomes clear, it may seem odd if the PCs are the only ones sent to protect it. Corzina's presence makes the situation feel more realistic.

Mechanically, Corzina serves as a backup if the PCs are a less combat-focused group. If your PCs need help fighting, make sure Corzina participates in the combat encounters. If your PCs are fine on their own, Corzina can be sent to secure other parts of the Synaptic Ordinator.

The Situation in Orbit

With alarms blaring throughout the Council Chambers building, Tribunii Kuuasi steps forward and quickly discusses the situation in low tones with the Councilors of the subcommittee. After a moment, he and two of the Councilors (pick from between Councilors Carbonneau, Vadanus, and So'Cil, in case one was the Traitor) leave the hall, beckoning the PCs and Cohort Corzina to follow. Matir speaks briefly to Kuuasi and heads off on another task, and the remaining three Councilors head to the main Council Chambers.

The PCs are taken to a war room in the depths of the building. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

You step through an armored hatch guarded by a pair of Custodians and into a long, rectangular room. A shallow pit in the center holds a dozen computer terminals, while the raised section surrounding it holds two dozen more. All are crewed by staff wearing the uniforms of the Custodian Guard or the velites.

Above the pit glows a holographic map, easily five meters across, of the entire Gul system. You can see Mecatol Rex, with the scores of golden light codes denoting the allied fleet. Farther out, you see a nearly equal number of light codes in deep crimson: certainly the attacking Mahact. And yet farther away, in the gulf between Semani and Mecatol Rex, is one lone golden code.

Kuuasi and the Councilors move to speak to a high-ranking Custodian officer, giving the PCs a few minutes to take in the situation. The PCs can make an **Easy (◆) Leadership check** to get one of the staff to give them a brief rundown on what's going on. Alternatively, they can study the map and make an **Average (◆◆) Knowledge (Culture) check** to figure it out for themselves.

Disposition of Forces

The core of the Mahact fleet consists of five large dreadnoughts, each much larger and more powerful than the dreadnoughts of most of the Great Civilizations. Supporting them are four massive carrier vessels, potentially full of troops and starfighters, and twenty heavy cruisers. The fleet appears light on destroyers, with only a single squadron of four lurking in the rear.

The allied fleet is centered around the twin Xxcha dreadnoughts *Indomitable* and *Unshakable*, the N'orr exotreme *K'os Natok*, and the Yin *Sacracist*-class battleship *Herald of True Belief*, backed by the Sol strike carrier *Fury of Atlantia* and the Saar repair leviathan *Respite from Woe*. The remaining forces are eleven cruisers and fifteen destroyers from many different Great Civilizations and the six corvettes of the Custodian Guard.

As long as the PCs made their check successfully, they can see (or are told) that the Mahact fleet outguns the allied fleet, making the allied fleet cautious about leaving the cover of Mecatol Rex's orbital defenses. Even as they watch, the Mahact fleet begins a steady advance toward the allied fleet, dreadnoughts spreading out into a line abreast formation.

The other thing the PCs notice if they made their check successfully is that the isolated light code must be the Synaptic Ordinator, given its size and course. And based on that, they can also tell that the Mahact fleet's position pins the allied fleet in place and keeps any allied ships from reaching the Ordinator.

A New Mission

Once the PCs have had a chance to review the situation, Kuuasi and the two Councilors finish their discussions and return to them. Read aloud or paraphrase the following, switching So'Cil for another Councilor if he was the Traitor:

The hulking N'orr studies you for a long moment with his many black, bead-like eyes. "I trust you have reviewed the situation?" he finally asks, his voice a clicking rumble. He gestures to the hologram.

If the PCs say they have, he nods approvingly. If not, he hisses in frustration and explains the information found in **Disposition of Forces** quickly and impatiently. Then he continues:

"So Vesh Nil Qor's main goal is likely capturing the Ordinator, or at least destroying it before it can fire. If our fleet cannot reach the Ordinator to protect it, that leaves one option." You notice that while So'Cil's disposition seems just as abrasive as ever, he seems much more confident in the midst of a war.

"We must send a small force to run the blockade and protect the Ordinator from capture or destruction. Tribunii Kuuasi suggested that you and your colleagues," he flicks a forelimb toward Cohort Corzina, "would be the best choice to lead this undertaking. Do you accept?"

Assuming the PCs accept (if not, the adventure ends, and you'll have to decide if another group of Keleres could defeat Vesh Nil Qor), So'Cil offers them access to some spaceships to complete their new mission.

Spaceship Choices

The group has two different options, depending on their skill sets. Before deciding which one the Custodian Guard offers, consider your PCs' skills and interests.

Ride to the Ordinator

If none of your PCs have any skills or interest in piloting starfighters or larger warships in battle, use this option. The Custodian Guard gives the PCs a **combat dropship** (see *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*, page 147) with enough room for them and Cohort Corzina.

A flight of a dozen Accipiter interceptors from the Custodian Guard escort the dropship through the Mahact fleet and to the Ordinator. If the PCs are not in control of any of the ships, the flight should be handled narratively. Use the read-aloud text from the following sections to describe the flight, and have at least half of the Accipiters shot down and the combat dropship heavily damaged en route.

Starfighter Flight

If at least some of your PCs have piloting and void combat skills, particularly with starfighters and smaller ships, use this option. The Custodian Guard gives each PC who wants one an **Accipiter interceptor** (see page 102). The remaining PCs join Cohort Corzina in a combat dropship, with the PCs being able to pilot the dropship or operate its guns if they want. If you select this option, use the combat encounter **Carrier Strike** on page 85.

The Cruiser Artemiris

If some of the PCs have void combat skills that focus on operating larger ships in combat, use this option. The Mentak Coalition *Corsair*-class cruiser *Artemiris* was about to join the fleet action when its captain suddenly pulled out her sidearm and killed most of the bridge crew before being gunned down in turn. The captain was clearly a Mahact sleeper agent, but now the *Artemiris* has no command crew.

The PCs can take command of the *Artemiris*, while any PCs who are good with starfighters can still pilot an Accipiter interceptor (the *Artemiris* has room for six in its hangar bay). If you use this option, use the combat encounter **Cruiser Clash** on page 85.

Prepping for War

Once you have selected how your PCs are going to travel to the Ordinator, So'Cil gives them a brief description then dismisses them. The PCs and Cohort Corzina are rushed via underground vac-trains to the nearby Adminus Mecatol, the massive administration complex where the Winnaran Custodians and Custodian Guard run and protect the city.

Inside the Adminus Mecatol, the PCs have about thirty minutes to rest and gear up before either a shuttle can be readied to take them to the *Artemiris* and their starfighters, or a combat dropship can be prepped for takeoff.

During this time, the PCs can rest and recuperate from their previous encounter, they can rearm, or they can requisition some additional equipment. Each PC can do something different.

Resting and Rearming

If a PC chooses to rest and rearm, they heal all of their strain. They can also have the Custodians's armory in the Adminus Mecatol repair one of their damaged items and gain up to three single-use items such as infantry grenades, extra ammunition, dermal sealers, bypass packs, and z-tabs (see **Chapter 2** of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*).

Requisitions

A PC can choose to spend their time trying to get a rare and useful item out of the Custodians's armory instead. Use the requisition rules for obtaining rare or expensive items found on page 268 in **Chapter 7** of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*. The armory only has items with a rarity of 6 or less, but the PC may add  to their Charm or Negotiation check because there's a war on.

The PC must return the equipment to the Custodians's armory at the end of the adventure, and they are busy enough that they don't heal any strain.

Questioning the Traitor

If the Traitor was caught and arrested, they have been moved to the Adminus Mecatol. This means that instead of resting and rearming, a PC has a brief chance to question them.

The questioning should take the form of an opposed social skill check (depending on the tactics the PC chooses to use). If the PC succeeds, they either break the Traitor's will or convince them to cooperate temporarily (after all, the Traitor is watching their plans crumble around them). The Traitor reveals Vesh Nil Qor's plans to capture the Ordinator, reprogram it, and take control of Mecatol Rex. They also reveal that Vesh Nil Qor may attempt to take over the Ordinator personally.

Into the Fire

Once the PCs have completed preparations, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

You exit the atmosphere of Mecatol Rex just as the first shots of the void war begin. In the distance, you see the glitter of beam weapons firing in the dark, and the flash of explosions among the glare of lit drive tubes.

Your scanners show the whole picture: the Mahact fleet has begun a general engagement with its dreadnoughts in the lead. The enemy carriers are supporting the attack with swarms of drone fighters, while the cruisers are attempting to envelop and outflank the allied fleet. The allies' maneuvers seem clumsy and uncoordinated, ships from a dozen different navies trying to operate together.

The PCs either get into position to make their run through the fleet or reach the cruiser *Artemiris*, which is still in orbit over the planet. When they are prepared to join the battle, you can read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The battle is already starting to go badly for the allies. You watch starfighter squadrons struggling against the clouds of drone attack craft, and the defense screens of the twin Xxcha dreadnoughts flaring against the bombardment. A pair of allied destroyers attempt a torpedo run, only to find themselves bracketed by a Mahact dreadnought and sliced into glowing ribbons by its beam weapons.

But the Mahact are not having everything their own way. The immense Respite from Woe is proving to be much more than a repair vessel, as it hurls massive missiles from far behind the allied battle line. You see one of the enemy dreadnoughts shudder under their impacts, screens failing and debris erupting from its hull.

Mahact Mind Control

The captain of the *Artemiris* is not the only person vulnerable to the Mahact genetic coding that turns people into sleeper agents. As the orbital battle continues, be sure to add reports of allied soldiers suddenly turning on their comrades, or of acts of sabotage damaging ships or ground installations. This is a foreshadowing of what will happen if Vesh Nil Qor gets ahold of the Ordinator.

Carrier Strike (Combat Encounter)

If your group has decided to pilot a group of starfighters (either Accipiter interceptors or their own fighters), you should use this encounter. As the PCs' starfighter squadron begins its run through the Mahact fleet, they receive a plea for aid:

A message crackles over your comms. "Keleres squadron, Keleres squadron! This is the destroyer Kiashai. We've managed to draw off most of the drone fighters from one of the enemy carriers. You may have a chance to damage it, but hurry! We cannot last against their drones much longer!"

A quick scan of the battle reveals the carrier the *Kiashai* is referring to. The Argent Flight destroyer and two of its fellows had attempted to launch a strike on the carrier, only to be driven off by its squadrons of Dominus strike drones. Now the three destroyers are fighting for their lives against the drone attacks. However, only a few drones remain to protect the carrier.

Any of the PCs can make an **Easy (◆) Perception check**. Success reveals that the carrier is in the midst of landing operations and has opened several cavernous hangars and lowered its defense grid. This means it's uniquely vulnerable to the light weapons a starfighter carries.

If the PCs decide to attack the carrier, the encounter begins with their ships at extreme range from the carrier, which is not moving. Two minion groups of two Dominus strike drones each (plus one additional minion group of two if the party controls five or more starfighters) are between them and the carrier, at long range from the PCs.

The strike drones move to engage the PCs as they approach. If any PCs move past the drones and toward the carrier, the carrier opens fire with one of its antiaircraft turrets at each PC (the rest are shooting at other targets). At the beginning of the third round of combat and every other round thereafter, the carrier launches another minion group of two Dominus drones.

To attempt an attack on the open hangars, a PC must make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Piloting check** while at short range from the carrier. If they succeed, they become engaged with the carrier and cannot be targeted by the carrier's weapons until the end of their next turn. Also, all ranged attacks they make until the end of their next turn count the carrier's armor and defense as 0 and ignore the Massive vehicle special rule. You can use the following to describe what they are doing:

You weave between massive shield plates and communications masts, only meters from the carrier's outer hull. Ahead looms one of the open hangar bays. You line up your fighter and squeeze the trigger, pumping shot after shot into the unprotected space.

If the carrier suffers hull trauma equal to or greater than half its hull trauma threshold or suffers a Critical Hit with a severity of **Hard (◆◆◆)** or greater, it increases its speed to 2 and attempts to flee. Even if the PCs don't destroy it, it recalls its drones and moves away from the battle. In this case, read the following:

The burning carrier heels out of line and pulls away, its swarms of drones swooping after it in response to frantic recall signals. Not only do the Kiashai and its fellow destroyers get a chance to take a breath and go on the offensive, but your scanners show the battle shifting in favor of the allies as a full quarter of the Mahact fighter strength is withdrawn.

The PCs may now proceed to the Ordinator, a flight that takes roughly twenty minutes.

Cruiser Clash (Combat Encounter)

If your group has decided to take charge of the cruiser *Artemiris*, use this encounter. As the *Artemiris* maneuvers to avoid the worst of the fighting and make a run for the Ordinator, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The deck of the Artemiris shakes under your feet as a few stray shots impact the screens of your defense grid, but it appears you're avoiding the worst of the fighting. "Captain!" You see the cruiser's sensor operator look up. "I'm picking up an enemy cruiser on our scopes. It looks like they used that debris field as cover to slip around our battle line. They're engaging the Respite from Woe!"





Any PC with void experience can look at the display and see that the enemy cruiser has avoided the main allied battlefleet and has gotten in close to the Saar repair leviathan. The cruiser has moved within minimum range of the *Respite from Woe*'s missiles, and the leviathan does not have much weaponry that is effective at close range.

However, the enemy cruiser is near the course set by the *Artemiris*. A successful **Easy (◆) Astrocartography check** reveals that the PCs could intercept the enemy cruiser without losing much time from their mission. More importantly, they may be able to cut across the cruiser's sterns as they're focusing on attacking the *Respite from Woe*.

If the PCs decide to engage the Mahact cruiser, one should make an **Average (◆◆) Operating check**. If they succeed, the PCs are able to close on the enemy cruiser from the stern, where the cruisers are particularly vulnerable. If the PCs fail, they close on the enemy cruiser from the side instead.

The encounter begins with the cruiser at extreme range from the *Artemiris*, and at long range from the *Respite from Woe*. The cruiser is moving toward the *Respite* at speed 1. A single flight of three Dominus strike drones (one minion group) is escorting the cruiser at short range from it.

The Mahact cruiser remains facing the *Respite* to fire on it with its spinal antimatter bombards. Unfortunately for the Mahact, this means they can only engage the *Artemiris* with their starboard-facing weapons (or aft-facing weapons if the *Artemiris* gets in behind them). The three drones move to engage the PCs as soon as the PCs begin firing on the cruiser.

The Mahact cruiser is focused on destroying the *Respite*, so it does not change positions at first and continues directing the majority of its weapons at the Saar ship. You do not need to make checks for those attacks; you can just describe the attacks narratively.

However, if the PCs deals damage equal to a quarter of the cruiser's hull trauma threshold, it breaks off its attack and moves to engage the *Artemiris*. If it suffers hull trauma equal to or greater than half its hull trauma threshold or suffers a Critical Hit with a severity of **Hard (◆◆◆)** or greater, it breaks off and attempts to withdraw at top speed.

At the end of the fifth round, if the cruiser has not been destroyed or driven off, it destroys the *Respite*. If not, the *Respite* stays in the fight:

As the Artemiris pulls away, you pick up a message from the Respite from Woe. "Thanks for the assist, Artemiris," a low voice growls. "Now we'll make it worth it."

The Respite seems to pause for a long moment, as if catching its breath. Then all its launchers speak at once, sending a flock of massive void missiles hurtling toward the Mahact dreadnought. Its screens down, its close defense weapons disabled, the dreadnought takes the full fury of the barrage along its flanks. The massive warship reels, wallowing in the void before secondary explosions blow out its drive core and leave it a smoldering wreck.

Breaking Through

However the encounters go, unless the PCs' ships are completely destroyed, they make it through the Mahact fleet and on to the Synaptic Ordinator. However, their actions may have shifted the course of the battle slightly in the allies' favor.

If the PCs successfully destroyed or drove off the Mahact carrier, the Mahact fighter strength weakens drastically, and the allied fighters are able to go on the offensive. The *Fury of Atlantia* launches a bomber wing that manages to cripple one of the Mahact dreadnoughts, allowing the allied capital ships to deal the killing blow.

Likewise, if the PCs protected the *Respite from Woe*, its missiles end up destroying one of the Mahact dreadnoughts. Either way, the Mahact lose one of their ships of the line, and you can read aloud or paraphrase the following:

With the destruction of one of the Mahact dreadnoughts, along with a carrier and several cruisers, the battle seems balanced on a knife's edge. The allied fleet is starting to find its stride and cooperate, but it has taken heavy losses. Near the last position of the Herald of True Belief, you see only an expanding cloud of gas and debris, and a quarter of the allied cruisers and destroyers have been crippled or lost. It seems like only steady fire from the heavy guns of Mecatol Rex's polar fortresses are keeping the Mahact from closing.

However, if the PCs did not accomplish either of those goals, read the following instead:

The battle looks grim for the allied fleet. None of the Mahact's ships of the line have been destroyed, and as you watch, the Herald of True Belief staggers and comes apart under the concentrated barrage of two Mahact dreadnoughts. For one of the ships, the victory is short-lived. The K'os Natok, burning in a dozen places, accelerates out of the battle line and rams into the enemy dreadnought. The two burning hulks spin away, crushed into a fatal embrace.

Even with the K'os Natok's sacrifice, you see flights of Mahact strike drones and bombers braving the fire from Mecatol Rex's polar fortresses and plunging toward Mecatol City. It's clear that without the Ordinator being used to stop them, Vesh Nil Qor's fleet could crush the allied forces and take Mecatol Rex.

Episode 10: Ordinator Under Siege

In this episode, the Synaptic Ordinator is under threat, and the Council has charged the PCs with defending it from the Mahact and escorting it to its new position. The Mahact king, Vesh Nil Qor, is himself on his way to the Ordinator, and the Traitor may be too, if the PCs have not dealt with them yet.

The Story So Far

The construction of the Synaptic Ordinator is complete, and it was already on its way to its new position in orbit of Mecatol Rex when the Mahact fleet began its approach on the capital. Cautious with the Lazax-derived technology, the scientists on the project have recommended that the Ordinator move slowly and steadily to its new position. Since the Ordinator isn't a fast-moving vehicle anyway, the trip from Semani's moon, Fors to Mecatol Rex will take four days.

Dr. Ruga and Chief Engineer Tola are traveling with the device as scientific advisors for the crew. Since there has been no opportunity for large-scale testing, Ruga has warned that using the Ordinator is risky. However, should the Council become aware of Mahact mind control affecting the battle, they are prepared to activate the device.

Meanwhile, Vesh Nil Qor is aware that the Ordinator is being moved and knows the device is most vulnerable at this point. He has launched his attack on Mecatol Rex to distract and pin the allied fleet in place while he claims the Ordinator for himself. To reach the Ordinator, he leaves his fleet in a cloaked Mahact assault carrier with a cadre of his finest thrall warriors.

Episode Goals

The PCs' primary mission is to bring the Ordinator safely to the capital. When Mahact forces attempt to seize the Ordinator, the PCs must try to stop them. If the PCs fail, they may have to make the decision to destroy the Ordinator in order to keep it out of Vesh Nil Qor's hands. Destroying the Ordinator may result in the Mahact taking Mecatol Rex. But failing to do so may result in their taking over the galaxy.

By the end of this episode, the PCs should:

- ◆ Reach the Ordinator and secure it.
- ◆ Prepare to defend, destroy, move, activate, or abandon the Ordinator.
- ◆ Drive Vesh Nil Qor and his forces from the Ordinator or destroy the king himself.

Back at the Ordinator

Although Coleridge's sabotage delayed its completion, the construction crews were able to get the Ordinator finished and sent off to Mecatol Rex. At that point, the construction workers were transferred off the station via shuttles, as were most of the velites who were providing security.

The remaining hundred velites stayed on to protect the station until the Ordinator arrived at the capital. They are packed into the Ordinator's cramped living spaces with the station's regular Custodian crew and Ruga and Tola's small civilian science team. Unfortunately, the Ordinator's only other defenses are a series of short-range antfighter beam weapons and a flight of six Accipiter interceptors.

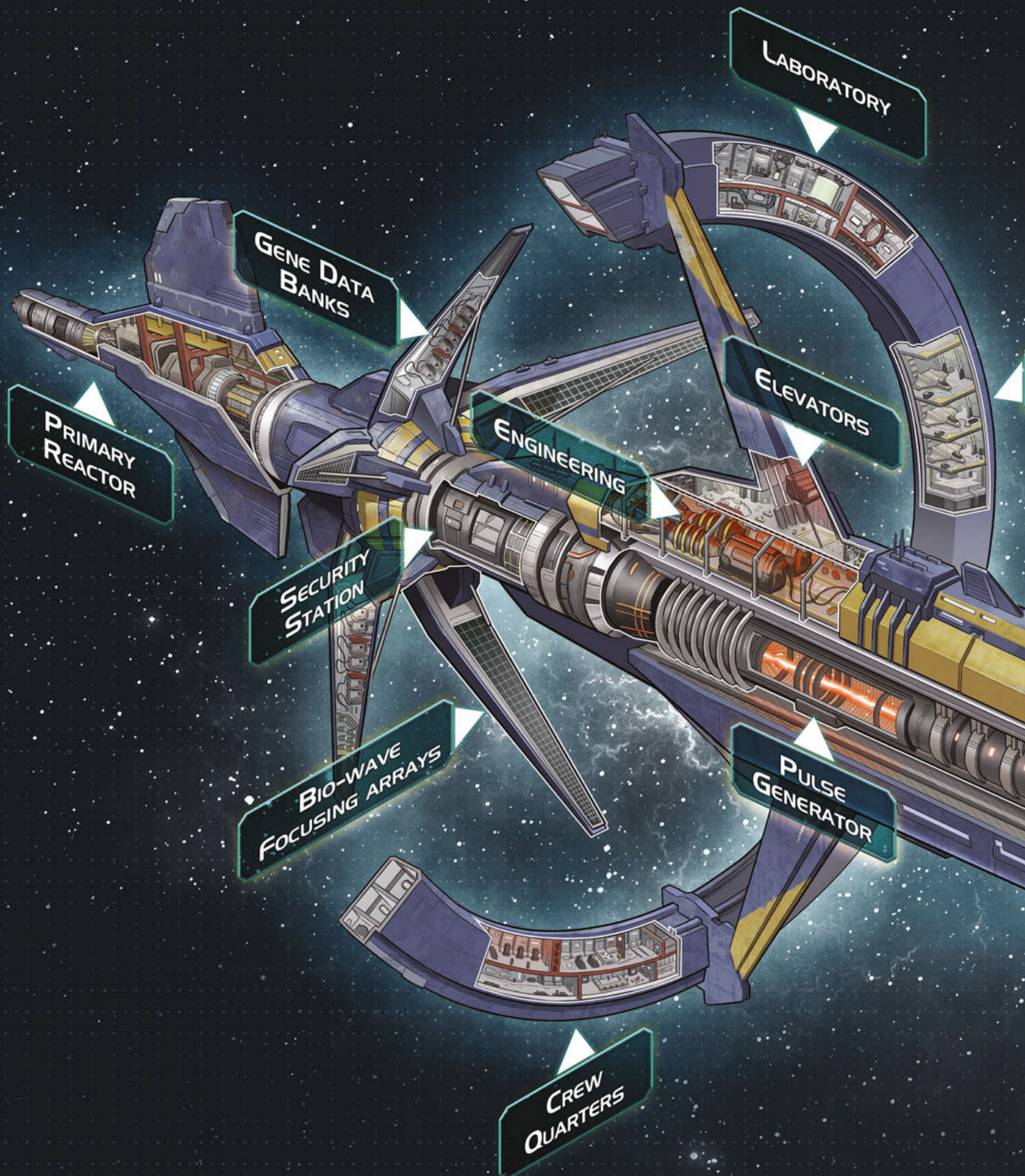
Captain Pad Di Teret (page 116) is still the highest-ranking officer on the Synaptic Ordinator. She is in an unusual situation, having to defer to Dr. Ruga for advice on the Ordinator. The captain is committed to her mission, and though she values the lives of her crew, getting the Ordinator safely to Mecatol Rex is her primary goal.

Boarding the Ordinator

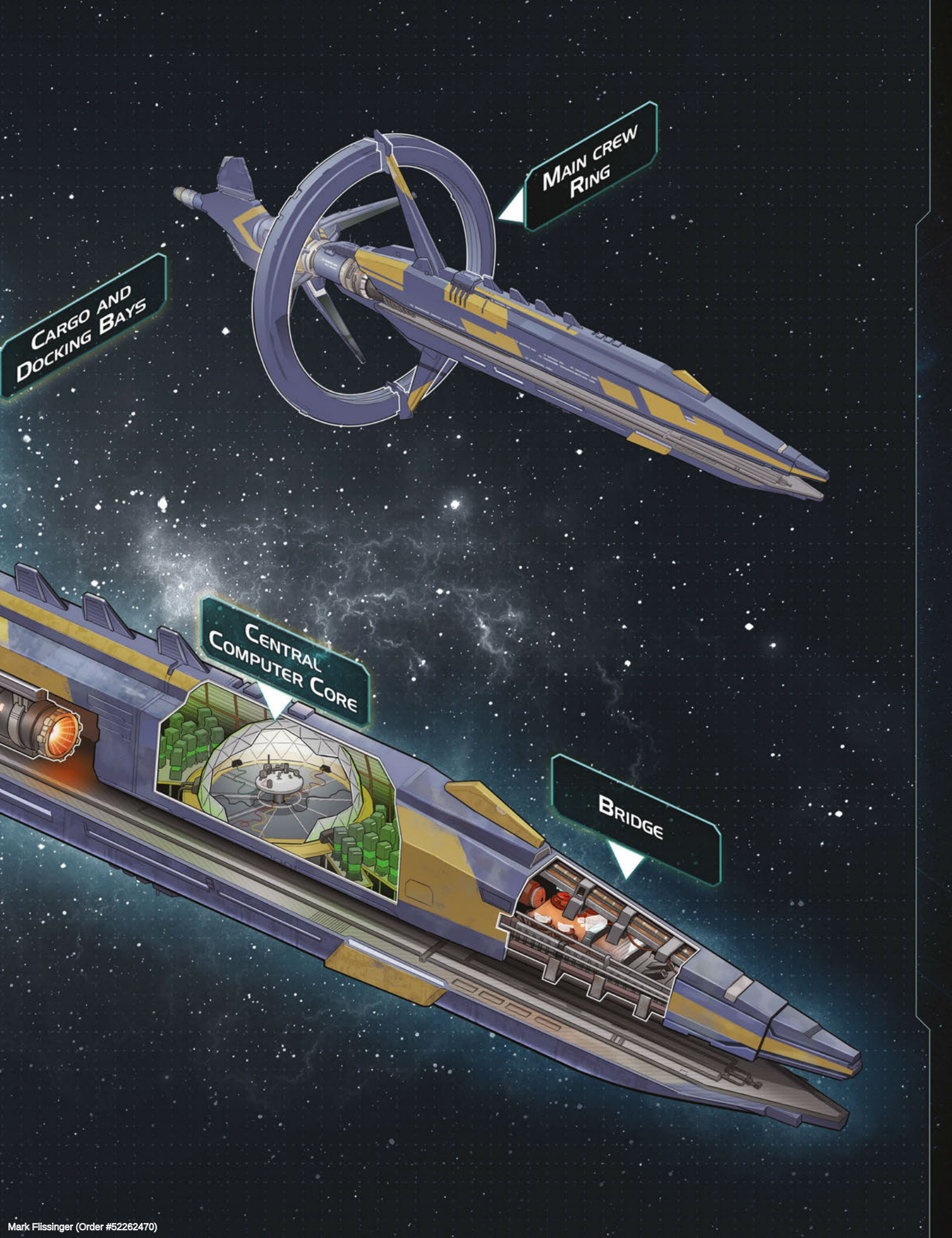
This portion of the adventure assumes that the PCs went to Mecatol Rex to clear their name with the Council. If they chose not to do so, the adventure may need to be adapted accordingly. In this case, we recommend the PCs arrive at roughly the same time that Vesh Nil Qor does, so they can board the Ordinator during the chaos.

Otherwise, the Council has informed the Ordinator crew that the PCs are coming to protect it and make sure it reaches Mecatol Rex safely. As the PCs approach the Ordinator, Captain Pad Di Teret contacts them and asks them to land in one of the two main hangar bays. Cohort Corzina also boards the Ordinator. Any NPC starfighters (as well as the cruiser *Artemiris* if the PCs came in it) remain around the Ordinator to protect it from attack.

Once the PCs board, the captain greets them in their docking bay. She explains that the remaining velites have been stationed around the Ordinator in case of a boarding attack, but they are spread thin. Based on conversations with Ruga since the PCs were last aboard, Captain Pad Di Teret has become increasingly worried that the Mahact's goal is to board and capture the Ordinator. She asks if the PCs will aid in the defense of the Ordinator while she maintains command from the bridge.



SYNAPTIC ORDINATOR



CARGO AND
DOCKING BAYS

MAIN CREW
RING

CENTRAL
COMPUTER CORE

BRIDGE

The Traitor's Gambit

If the Traitor escaped Mecatol Rex and reached the Ordinator, they still have one part to play in the climax of the adventure. When the PCs speak to Captain Pad Di Teret, she says that the Council notified her about the Traitor after they arrived on the Ordinator. She dispatched a squad of velites to hunt down the Traitor, but she had just lost contact with them when the PCs arrived. She then requests that the PCs find and deal with the Traitor.

This is when the Traitor strikes:

Suddenly, alarms cut through the background sounds of the hangar bay. The deck rumbles beneath your feet. Captain Pad Di Teret looks shocked, then turns to Lieutenant Silsa Il Senashor. "Those aren't hits! What in the void is going on?"

The lieutenant checks his savant, and his face turns a waxy gray. "Those...those are our guns, Captain! Someone's activated them, and they're firing on our own escorts!"

Captain Pad Di Teret turns to you. "Damn! The Traitor must be in the gun room! Go deal with them; I'll try and get control from the bridge!"

The Traitor and their loyal bodyguards have broken into the gun room, killed the operating crew, and set the guns to fire on the escort fighters (and on the *Artemiris*, if present). The gun room is a three-minute transit-tube ride from the PCs' current location. However, in that time, any fighters outside the Ordinator that are piloted by NPCs are destroyed. If the *Artemiris* is present, the cruiser suffers heavy damage and is forced to break off and retreat.

The gun room is a rectangular space. Weapon-control consoles line one wall, while the rest of the room is clear except for a holographic plotting table for observing battles and calculating firing solutions. When the PCs arrive, they find the six regular crew killed at their stations and the Traitor and their bodyguards firing the guns.

Confront the Traitor (Combat Encounter)

The Traitor and their remaining loyal bodyguards (a single minion group of three) are located away from the PCs at the far end of the room, which is at medium range from the entrance.

When the PCs first enter, you can have the Traitor exchange a few words with them. At this point the Traitor doesn't have much to hide, so they can be as chatty as you want. However, the Traitor knows that their only way out of this mess is to kill the PCs and escape, so eventually the situation devolves into a fight even if the PCs don't attack immediately.

When combat begins, the loyal bodyguards take cover (defense 1) behind the holographic table and shoot at the PCs. The Traitor spends the first round shooting or smashing the weapon-control consoles, then joins in fighting the NPCs. The only other cover in the room is among the weapon consoles along one of the walls (defense 1). All of the adversaries fight until killed or incapacitated.

If the PCs capture the Traitor, they may have an opportunity to conduct an interrogation. See the sidebar **Questioning the Traitor** on page 84.

Contingency Plans

Once the PCs are aboard the Ordinator (and after they've dealt with the Traitor), they have a few minutes to discuss contingency plans to stop Vesh Nil Qor from taking the Ordinator. Any discussions will likely involve Pad Di Teret; Ruga; Tola; and Mercator Relinion, the commander of Cohort Corzina.

This is an opportunity for the PCs to be creative, so you should consider any suggestions that seem like they could work. This section includes a list of the limitations the PCs are working under, some suggestions for actions they could undertake, and the principal NPCs' reactions.

Limitations

Any plans must consider three major limitations.

- ◆ The Ordinator has no superluminal drive, so the PCs cannot flee with it to a different star system.
- ◆ The Ordinator's reactor signature and sheer mass means it is impossible to hide to active military scanners, especially those available to the Mahact fleet.
- ◆ After the PCs break through the Mahact lines, the fighting grows more intense. No other allied ships can break free of the fight and reach the Ordinator.

Possible Plans

The PCs could pursue any of the avenues presented here, in addition to what they might invent themselves.

- ♦ The Ordinator's drive could be overcharged so that the super-weapon reaches Mecatol Rex's orbit much faster. The danger is that overcharging the drive could destroy the engines, leaving the Ordinator drifting helplessly.
- ♦ The velites could be repositioned to defend the three most important points aboard the Ordinator: the bridge, the reactor, and the bio-wave focusing array control room, giving any boarders free rein over the rest of the ship but providing a better defense for these key areas.
- ♦ The Ordinator could be prepared for firing now, before it reaches Mecatol Rex. The superweapon has not been properly tested, so nobody knows exactly how well it will work. However, if fired in transit, it should have enough range to hit the Mahact fleet. It also requires a long time to charge between firings, so firing it before Vesh Nil Qor takes control would prevent him from using it right away.
- ♦ The Ordinator's reactor could be rigged for self-destruct to scuttle the superweapon and keep it out of the Mahact's hands.
- ♦ The gene-banks could be destroyed. This keeps the weapon from being used by either side, but it does not destroy the Ordinator. Re-creating the gene-banks would take five or six months of intense work.

NPC Reactions

Here is how the major NPCs react to these plans. You can also use this information to determine how these NPCs react to other plans the PCs invent.

- ♦ Captain Pad Di Teret has orders to deliver the Ordinator to the Council and intends to see them through. She is a practical military commander, however, and is willing to take some risks. She supports overcharging the drive to reach Mecatol Rex faster, firing the weapon sooner, and destroying the gene-banks (since the weapon itself will still be intact). She objects to redeploying the velites (she does not like the idea of giving up large areas of the Ordinator without a fight) or destroying the Ordinator.
- ♦ Dr. Ruga is entirely focused on keeping the Ordinator safe and intact. He has no problem redeploying the velites and reluctantly agrees to overcharging the engines. He doesn't want to fire the weapon without proper testing, out of fear something might go wrong, and he vehemently opposes destroying the Ordinator or the gene-banks.

- ♦ Chief Engineer Tola is a bit more pragmatic than Ruga but has similar priorities. She also has no objection to redeploying the velites and reluctantly agrees to any plans to destroy the gene-banks or fire the Ordinator (she is reasonably confident that firing the Ordinator, whether it works or not, won't damage the weapon). She is against overcharging the engines (safe operating parameters exist for a reason) and, of course, is entirely against destroying the Ordinator.
- ♦ Mercator Relinion is a thoroughly pragmatic soldier. His orders from Tribunii Kuuasi are strict, and he agrees with them wholeheartedly: do not let the Ordinator fall into Mahact hands. He is cautious about overcharging the engines, because that might leave everyone aboard helpless. However, he supports all other options. What's more, if the PCs try to destroy the Ordinator or gene-banks and one of the other characters attempts to stop them, Relinion and his cohort are prepared to detain or even kill anyone who gets in the PCs' way.

Accomplishing these Plans

No matter what the PCs do, at least one of the prominent NPCs is going to disagree. Have the PCs make an opposed social skill check to convince them to cooperate.

Setting these plans in motion does not require many checks, especially since the PCs have the Ordinator's crew to help them. However, you may have one of your PCs make a single check and use the results to see if their plan is implemented well or poorly.

- ♦ Overcharging the drives requires an **Average (◆◆■) Operating check**. If the check fails with ☹ ☹ ☹, then the drives suffer damage and must be repaired. Directing the repairs requires a **Hard (◆◆◆) Mechanics check** and takes four hours (▲ ▲ or ⌚ can be spent to reduce the time).
- ♦ Redeploying the velites optimally requires a PC to make an **Average (◆◆■) Leadership check**.
- ♦ Preparing the Ordinator for firing requires an **Easy (◆) Mechanics check** to redirect power from the reactor to the weapon and then a **Hard (◆◆◆) Computers check** to prepare it for firing. Failure means the weapon must be reset and cannot be fired for several hours, while ☹ ☹ may mean the charging process or programming takes longer (meaning the weapon may not be ready for firing until a suitable critical climax).
- ♦ Rigging the reactor for self-destruct requires a **Hard (◆◆◆) Mechanics check**. Failure means the PCs cannot override the safeties and set it to blow.
- ♦ Destroying the gene-banks does not require a check, as long as the PCs are willing to spend twenty to thirty minutes in the gene-banks' halls smashing everything they can find.

The King Arrives

Once the PCs have reached the Ordinator, have had a chance to talk to Dr. Ruga, and have encountered the Traitor (if they didn't do so in the last episode), Vesh Nil Qor's forces arrive to assault the Ordinator.

If the PCs are on the bridge, read the following. Otherwise, the PCs can receive the information from the bridge on their savants.

New alarms start whooping, signaling enemy vessels approaching. Captain Pad Di Teret whirls towards her sensor officer. "What is that?"

"Enemy ship, Captain!" the sensor officer shouts. "Close, and closing fast!"

"How did you miss that?" she snarls.

The sensor officer looks horrified. "It must have been some sort of stealth tech, Captain. It's the size of a destroyer, but those energy readings are like nothing I've ever seen."

To capture the Ordinator, Vesh Nil Qor has left his fleet and taken a stealth vessel loaded with his elite troops. The **Mahact stealth ship** (see page 104) uses technology that is rare and complex enough that even the Mahact can only build a few, and Vesh Nil Qor only has one. But it is undetectable by sensors except at short range, allowing Vesh Nil Qor to reach the Ordinator without anyone noticing.

Initial Assault

If the Traitor managed to get aboard the Ordinator and destroy its escort fighters, the stealth ship pulls alongside the Ordinator and extends an assault boarding tube. Vesh Nil Qor dispatches his troops into the interior under command of his lieutenant, **Thrall Prime** (see page 124). Once most of the defenders are dead, he boards the Ordinator.

If, however, the Traitor was captured or killed on Mecatol Rex, the Ordinator's defenses remain intact. Although Vesh Nil Qor expected that his stealth ship would be powerful enough to defeat those defenses, he did not count on the extra ships the PCs brought with them in the form of escorting Accipiter interceptors or the cruiser *Artemiris*.

Those additional defenses force the Mahact into a more desperate assault. The stealth ship closes with the Ordinator, taking punishing fire all the while. When it gets close enough, the ship launches flights of boarding pods before it is finally destroyed by the incoming fire. In this scenario, Vesh Nil Qor joins his soldiers in the initial assault. He also is committed to taking the Ordinator or dying in the attempt.

Once the Mahact forces are aboard the Ordinator, desperate fights break out between the **Mahact assault thralls** (see page 123) and the defending velites. Depending on where the PCs are in the Ordinator, they may be caught up in the fighting. However, they soon receive an urgent summons to the Ordinator's bridge, where Thrall Prime is leading a vicious assault.

Assuming the PCs are able to defeat Thrall Prime, they still must then deal with Vesh Nil Qor. The Mahact king personally attacks the gene-banks and the control center for the bio-wave focusing array. He takes Dr. Ruga hostage, makes changes to the Ordinator, and attempts to fire the weapon and take control of Mecatol Rex and the allied fleet.

Depending on what actions the PCs took, Vesh Nil Qor may find his plans hampered or even foiled. The following section depicts three major combat encounters the PCs are likely to become involved in: the initial assault, Thrall Prime's attack on the bridge, and finally, Vesh Nil Qor's attempt to take control of the weapon and fire it. The section after that that describes how the PCs' prior actions may change these events.

You will need to combine these encounters and modify them to fit with the PCs' actions during the earlier parts of the adventure. If your party is not particularly combat capable, you may not even want to pit them against the Mahact king (at least if they make an effort to avoid him). We recommend reading over this portion of the adventure and making these decisions before playing, as this part is not as easy to improvise.

Initial Assault (Combat Encounter)

If the PCs are somewhere in the Ordinator other than the bridge or gene-banks, they may get caught up in the initial assault and fighting between the Mahact assault thralls and the velites.

Down the hallway from your group, you see a squad of velites taking up positions around a sealed hatch at the end of the hall. Before you can take any action, the hatch explodes in a shower of sparks and flames. Armored, white-skinned figures pour through the hatch, firing bolts of crackling golden light into the panicking velite troopers.

This encounter can take place anywhere on the station. It assumes that the player characters are at one end of a wide corridor and the combat is happening at the other end. The fighting begins between one minion group of four **Custodian velites** (page 107) and two minion groups of four **Mahact assault thralls** (page 123) each. Both the velites and the assault thralls are at long range from the PCs' location, and they are at short range from each other.

The assault thralls start by shooting at the velites, then move to engage them in close combat. They try to use their Genetic Payload ability to force the survivors to join their ranks. If the PCs move to join the fight, one group of thralls moves past the velites to attack the PCs directly. If the PCs are having an easy time dealing with the thralls, a third group of four thralls shows up at the end of the second round, entering through the open hatch.

Thrall Prime Attacks the Bridge (Combat Encounter)

Soon after the assault begins, Thrall Prime leads a squad of Mahact assault thralls in an attempt to capture the Ordinator's bridge.

If the PCs are on the bridge, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

A panicked shout draws your attention to the main entrance at the rear of the bridge, just before the armored hatch glows red, then white-hot, then collapses in a puddle of slag. An armored figure wearing a baroque environmental suit steps through the dripping molten metal. The armor reminds you of a Gashlai Ember suit but has clear signs of Mahact technology worked into its systems. Any questions as to this individual's allegiance are banished when they casually raise a gauntlet and incinerate the closest crew member in a gout of flame.

Thrall Prime (page 124) immediately attacks. They are not interested in talking with anyone or negotiating, just in killing everyone on the bridge. Behind them, a single minion group of five Mahact assault thralls also works to kill the crew as quickly as possible.

The bridge is a large semicircular room. The main entrance is in the center of the flat rear wall, while banks of control consoles and massive holographic viewscreens stretch around the curved forward wall. The captain's podium is in the center of the room. Nine crew members (use the **combat pilot** profile, page 248 of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*), **Captain Pad Di Teret**, and **Lieutenant Silsa Il Senashor** (page 116) are on the bridge.

Thrall Prime directs their attacks against the PCs or other armed troops if present, and then attacks the bridge crew. The assault thralls attack the bridge crew with no regard for their own safety.

If the PCs Are Elsewhere

If the PCs are not on the bridge, they receive a panicked message that the bridge is under attack. If they choose to respond, they arrive just as Thrall Prime strikes down Pad Di Teret with their melt-hammer, killing the captain. Only two of the bridge crew and Silsa Il Senashor are still alive.

The King Attacks the Control Center (Combat Encounter)

As the assault progresses across the Ordinator, Vesh Nil Qor makes his final move. No matter how Thrall Prime does in attacking the bridge, Vesh Nil Qor takes his four **Crimson Legionnaires** (page 262 of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*) and attacks the gene-banks. His goal is to attempt to seize of the control systems for the bio-wave focusing array, implement his programming so that the Ordinator will enthrall sentients rather than free them from Mahact bio-programming, and then fire it.

If the PCs are on the bridge after dealing with Thrall Prime's attack (or elsewhere responding to the various thrall incursions), they receive a message from Dr. Ruga.

Your comms crackle, and you hear Dr. Ruga's panicked voice. "Keleres! Hurry! The king...he's here! He's attacking the gene-banks! I think he's after the Ordinator controls—" The message cuts out in a blurt of static.

The gene-banks are built into each of the panels of the bio-wave focusing array. Each of the main corridors from the gene-banks leads down into the central structure of the Ordinator, where the control center is located.

The control center is a massive cylindrical room. Hatchways to the various gene-banks are spaced equidistantly around its edges, interspersed with three hatches leading to two lifts and one emergency access tube that links it with the rest of the station. In the center of the room is a platform about five meters across and four meters high, reachable via a pair of spiral staircases that wrap around it. Along the platform's perimeter are the holographic haptic controls for firing the bio-wave focusing array.

When the player characters arrive in the control center, they find Vesh Nil Qor standing on the platform, manipulating the controls. Dr. Ruga lies shaking on the platform next to him, bands of golden metal circling his arms and neck. There are also several dead crew members scattered around. At the base of each of the staircases is one of the king's Crimson Legionnaires.

You step into the silvery control chamber, and you immediately see the towering figure of the Mahact king, Vesh Nil Qor, standing atop the control platform, his long crimson cloak billowing amid the storm of holographic displays.

Vesh Nil Qor turns to look at you, and you see the light of distant stars burning in his hooded face. His voice booms through the chamber. "So, the fools who thought to defy me have saved me the trouble of hunting them down," he says. "You are fortunate that I am too busy with bringing all you hold dear under my domination."

He gestures, and two Creuss Legionnaires, their armor shining with a baleful crimson glow, step out from the shadows of the staircases leading up to the platform. "Kill them," he says, then turns back to his work.

The Crimson Legionnaires advance on the PCs, attempting to engage them with their astral lances. If there are four PCs present, a third Crimson Legionnaire steps out of a personal wormhole at the top of the platform (using their Wormhole Walker ability) and engages the PCs at range. If there are more than four PCs present, two Crimson Legionnaires appear at the top of the platform instead.

At first, Vesh Nil Qor continues working on the controls while his bodyguards attack the player characters. However, if at least two of his bodyguards are slain, or anyone attacks the Mahact directly, he leaves the controls and attacks the PCs himself.

If Vesh Nil Qor suffers two Critical Injuries or wounds greater than half his wound threshold, he attempts to flee back to his stealth ship while spending an additional maneuver each round to drag Dr. Ruga with him (but he will leave Dr. Ruga behind to save himself if he needs both maneuvers to flee). If his stealth ship was destroyed, however, he would rather die than accept that he is fallible. In that case, he fights to the death.

How the PCs' Actions Influence Events

Depending on what the PCs did earlier in the adventure, you may need to modify the preceding encounters.

- ◆ If the PCs successfully sped up the Ordinator to reach Mecatol Rex earlier, the Mahact assault occurs as the weapon is flying through the thick of the space battle. You can add descriptions of explosions rocking the Ordinator, although both sides try to avoid targeting it directly. Just before the final encounter begins, the PCs receive reports of Custodian troops boarding the Ordinator and overwhelming the thralls. The stealth ship, if still intact, is destroyed by the orbital defenses. This traps Vesh Nil Qor on the Ordinator.
- ◆ If the PCs redeployed the velites to protect the most important parts of the Ordinator, the velites help defend the bridge and the control room when they're attacked. If the PCs aren't on the bridge when it's attacked, the velites defend it long enough for the PCs to respond before Captain Pad Di Teret and the bridge crew are killed. When Vesh Nil Qor attacks the control room, the velites defend it long enough for Dr. Ruga to escape. In both encounters, a minion group of two velites can still be alive when the PCs show up to help them.
- ◆ If the PCs prepared the Ordinator for firing, they can have Dr. Ruga fire it before Vesh Nil Qor reaches the control room. If they do so, the Ordinator eliminates the genetic reprogramming from the various sleeper agents scattered throughout the allied fleet. The fleet immediately starts cooperating better without the interference from the sleeper agents. In addition, two of the Mahact cruisers are crewed by enthralled spacers captured by the Mahact, and both of those cruisers surrender immediately. The war swings in the allied fleet's favor. The pulse does not affect Thrall Prime, however. When Vesh Nil Qor reaches the control room, he is unable to fire the Ordinator until it recharges, which takes roughly an hour. This gives the PCs more time to deal with him.
- ◆ If the PCs rigged the Ordinator for self-destruct, they can trigger the self-destruct from the main reactor and avoid encountering Vesh Nil Qor or Thrall Prime. It is up to you whether the PCs encounter either of these characters as they try to escape, but if they do, you can run the encounter as a chase as the PCs flee to a shuttle.
- ◆ If the PCs destroy the gene-banks, Vesh Nil Qor realizes that the Ordinator is useless after he reaches the control room. If he can flee to his ship, he does so, taking Dr. Ruga with him. (It's up to you whether the PCs have a chance to intercept him before he reaches the stealth ship.) If he can't flee, he kills Dr. Ruga in a rage, then goes to hunt down the PCs for foiling his plans.



Denouement

Vesh Nil Qor's death or retreat marks the end of the adventure. If the Mahact king has stolen away Dr. Ruga, there is a chance he'll strike again at a later time, but for now the allies celebrate a victory.

If Vesh Nil Qor is slain, his fleet falls into disarray and becomes easy prey for the allied fleet. Two of the cruisers are piloted by enthralled spacers of various species, and they immediately surrender. The allies mop up the rest of the Mahact forces with few losses. Soon, the other Mahact gene-sorcerers descend on Vesh Nil Qor's territories and holdings and claim them for themselves.

If Vesh Nil Qor is defeated but escapes, the Mahact fleet falls back. It suffers heavy losses in the process, but eventually the surviving ships (roughly half of the original fleet) accelerate to superluminal speeds and flee to the galactic core.

The Council and the Allies

In the aftermath of the attack, the Council and its various factions take stock of their losses. Depending on the results of the adventure, the allied fleet may have lost as little as a third of its cruisers and destroyers, the *Herald of True Belief*, and the *Unshakable*. If things went worse, they may have also lost the *Respite from Woe* and the *K'os Natok*, and as much as two-thirds of the cruisers and destroyers.

Likewise, if the battle went well for the allied fleet, Mecatol Rex is spared direct assault or bombardment. However, if the allied fleet suffered heavy losses, flights of Mahact strike drones strafed and bombed the city, causing thousands of civilian casualties.

Finally, if the PCs destroyed the Ordinator to keep it from the Mahact, many on the Council do not approve, but as the galaxy is saved, the PCs are still hailed as heroes. Overall, the Council members are glad to give the people of Mecatol Rex and the governments of their various civilizations something to celebrate after the threat of invasion.

The Awards Ceremony

A week after the battle, the Galactic Council votes to hail the PCs and several others as "Heroes of the Empire." The Lazax Emperors originally bestowed this honorific on those who had done the Empire a great service, and although it has not been awarded since the fall of the Empire three thousand years ago, the Council agrees to resurrect it to honor the Keleres's service. The vote to do so is unanimous; given that the PCs stopped the Mahact from capturing Mecatol Rex and killing or capturing the Galactic Council, even Councilors who hate the PCs can't vote against them publicly.

The awards are presented in a lavish ceremony in the main Council Chamber in front of the whole Council. The PCs are all recipients, and at your discretion, the members of Cohort Corzina, Captain Pad Di Teret, Dr. Ruga, and Chief Engineer Tola can all be additional recipients. Select the NPCs you feel proved particularly heroic, as the award should feel somewhat exclusive.

When the ceremony begins, the PCs and any other individuals receiving the award stand on a stage in the heart of the circular Council Chamber. The award can also be bestowed posthumously; if any of the recipients are dead, holograms of them stand in a line with the PCs.

Vesh Nil Qor's Victory

If the Mahact won, Vesh Nil Qor lands on Mecatol Rex. He makes his way to the Council Chambers, enthraling, transforming, or obliterating everyone in his path. Some guards fight bravely; others attempt to flee. If he activated the Ordinator, then some sentients are already under his sway when he arrives, the device enhancing his control.

Either way, nothing slows him down. A Mahact king rules the galaxy once more, and he must prepare to negotiate with his brethren who also claim the right to rule, or else defend his rule from them. King of Kings Vertar Auran Oblis may very well consider Vesh Nil Qor's actions a challenge to his supremacy, and the two kings may fight over the throne for many years to come.

As you stand in a line in front of the full Galactic Council, Custodians blow a clarion call on golden horns from each corner of the chamber. Flanked by a dozen Custodian Guard in ceremonial armor, a delegation of five Councilors, randomly selected for this honor, steps forward. As your names are read to the watching audience, the delegation members each approach you and place around your neck a heavy lazurite medal embossed with the Imperial sunburst.

Once the last of you has received your medal, the delegation turns to the rest of the Council. Their amplified voices echo across the chamber. "We present to you these heroes of the Empire!"

Further Rewards

The PCs are all public heroes, and this gives them plenty of clout. Each of the PCs completes another milestone toward their agenda. It is assumed that whatever their agenda is, they can use their additional influence to come closer to completing it.

Assuming they remain in the Keleres, the PCs are also promoted to senior agents. This gives them an additional stipend (increase their normal stipend amount by half) and additional authority in the organization. As long as they didn't anger Tribunii Kuuasi (see page 80), they are sent on more important and prestigious missions as well. If they did anger the Tribunii, they find themselves sent on a slew of formal missions with plenty of ceremony but little actual importance.

The PCs may receive further rewards at your discretion. However, depending on how much they angered individual members of the Galactic Council, they may also have made powerful enemies. All of these could be potential hooks for future adventures.

The Cruiser *Artemiris*

If the PCs took command of the *Artemiris* and used it to great effect, Tribunii Leeds uses her influence as a Councilor from the Mentak Coalition to convince the Coalition to donate the cruiser to the Keleres.

This gives the Keleres a powerful resource to call upon. It can serve as a transport and support vessel for your PCs' cohort in future adventures. However, if one of your PCs has an agenda that involves assuming command of a large vessel, they could be made captain of the *Artemiris* as the reward for completing their agenda.



The Limitations of the Ordinator

The potential power of the Ordinator is immense, but it is a complicated and untested device. After it is used, there are scores of elements in the weapon that break and need to be repaired, taking weeks of work. In addition, it has no superluminal drive. This means for now, it is restricted to the Gul system and is not something that can be sent to purge Mahact influence from the galaxy or used offensively against the Mahact gene-sorcerers.

In the long run, of course, the Ordinator could become the Keleres's most powerful weapon against the Mahact.

Appendix A: Starships and Vehicles

This appendix offers profiles of the more noteworthy starships in **WAR FOR THE THRONE**. Specific named vessels are listed by name; other ships are listed according to their faction allegiance.

Amberlight

This *Tradewind*-class scout vessel has been heavily modified from its original design. The most significant change has been the replacement of the superluminal drives, giving it a very respectable speed when traveling faster than light. In exchange, the *Amberlight*'s range and endurance have been halved, but it serves as a credible quick-response vessel for the Keleres.

Enterprising mechanics have also heavily retrofitted the ship's small internal hangar, allowing it to carry a single ground vehicle, starfighter, or shuttle.

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.

5	3	+0	2	1
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
HT THRESHOLD		SS THRESHOLD		
34		20		
WEAPONS				
1 dorsal and 1 ventral extended-focus beam turret (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Long]; Accurate 1, Breach 2).				
CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.				
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 1 copilot/navigator, 1 engineer/sensor operator.				
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 7.				
CONSUMABLES: 6 months.				
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 100 and either one silhouette 2 ground vehicle or one silhouette 3 starfighter or shuttle.				
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/fast.				
PRICE/RARITY: 125,750 aurei/5.				

Arrow

This small freighter should be flown by a pilot and copilot, but after losing Bitt, his partner, Kash prefers to fly alone rather than replace him. The *Arrow* can carry a party of six comfortably, as well as cargo. The ship has a pair of guns but limited maneuverability, and Kash struggles to fly and shoot without a passenger's help. Both these weapons are poorly maintained but functional, and the ship is also fitted with an integrated structural reinforcer that provides a small level of resilience in a fight.

Kash usually limits his flights to short ones, unless he knows he has a willing copilot on board in case of trouble. However, the *Arrow* does have faster-than-light capability, and in the days when he flew with Bitt, Kash flew all the best (and most dangerous) trade and smuggling routes across the galaxy.

4	4	-1	0	1
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
		HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD	
		29	14	

WEAPONS

Unfocused forward beam projector (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 5; Range [Medium]).

Damaged beam turret (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Inferior).

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.

COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot, 1 copilot.

PASSENGER CAPACITY: 6.

CONSUMABLES: 2 weeks.

ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 100.

FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/average.

PRICE/RARITY: 45,000 aurei/4.

Pride

Pride is a long-range star bomber that Ragrak has modified for transport and hunting. Removing the anti-ship weaponry gave her room to make significant modifications. Now *Pride* suits Ragrak's career perfectly: small enough to pursue targets through asteroid fields or into the docking bays of large stations (a trick she's almost pulled off twice), fast enough to catch most transports, and carrying enough firepower to take out small military vessels.

While lacking much in the way of defense, this ship is fast and maneuverable, and Ragrak has installed extra fuel reserves that allow her to remain on a trail for a long time before having to refuel.

4	4	-1	0	2
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
		HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD	
		18	14	

WEAPONS

Forward beam array (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Breach 2, Linked 3).

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 inflicted by 1).

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.

COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot.

PASSENGER CAPACITY: 5 (with restraints for captives).

CONSUMABLES: 1 month.

ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 45.

FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/average.

PRICE/RARITY: 82,000 aurei/10(R).

Custodian Accipiter Interceptor

The Accipiters are a storied breed of interceptors developed at the end of the Lazax Empire. When the Winnaran Custodians were left to try to protect the remains of Mecatol Rex, they gathered as many of these starfighters as they could. During the centuries of isolation that followed, they did their best to keep them functional. Eventually, as Mecatol City's industry and commercial centers were reestablished and rebuilt, the venerable Accipiters were retired, and new models of the starfighter were developed. But the name endured.

The Accipiter Mark 40 is a blisteringly fast starfighter. Its short range (since Accipiters seldom venture far beyond Mecatol Rex's orbit) allows it to carry heavier armor and weapons than most interceptor variants. Although Accipiters are exclusively produced for the Custodian Guard, a few have ended up in the hands of favored Keleres.

3	5	+2	2	1
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
		HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD	
		10	8	

WEAPONS

Triple light beam cannons (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Breach 1, Linked 2).
Iacios rockets (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Accurate 2, Limited Ammo 2).

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: 1 pilot.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 3 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 4.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.
PRICE/RARITY: 52,000 aurei/7 (R).

Mahact Dominus Strike Drone

These small Mahact craft fly in formation and coordinate their attacks in order to take out targets larger than themselves. Each is controlled remotely by a cloned pilot brain aboard their carrier.

Drone Uplink

Each Dominus strike drone is piloted remotely by a cloned brain: a minion with a 2 in all characteristics and a wound threshold of 3. If the drone's carrier is destroyed, it ceases fighting and attempts to dock with the nearest Mahact vessel within extreme range. If there are no available Mahact vessels, it self-destructs.

3	5	+3	0	0
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
		HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD	
		8	8	

WEAPONS

Disassembler burst cannon (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 1; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Vicious 3).

CONTROL SKILL: Piloting.
COMPLEMENT: None (remotely operated).
PASSENGER CAPACITY: None.
CONSUMABLES: 3 hours.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 0.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: None/none.
PRICE/RARITY: Not for sale/8 (R).

Mahact Excubius Carrier

The Excubius looks like a massive bident covered by slabs of armor. The armor plates split in places, allowing sensors, weapons, and launch bays for drones and landing craft. Though these gaps are necessary, they are also one of the carrier's few weak points. A skilled pilot might be able to weave between the gaps and inflict massive damage from inside the vessel's armored hide.

Massive

When making an attack targeting this vehicle, the Critical rating of any weapons used counts as 2 higher.

7	2	-3	1	4
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
		HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD	
		65	30	

WEAPONS

10 antfighter disassembler cannons (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 1; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Vicious 3; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, decrease difficulty by 1); these weapons are scattered across the hull of the carrier, so only two may be fired at any one target).

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.

COMPLEMENT: 6 officers, 150 servitor clones.

PASSENGER CAPACITY: 5,000 thrall clones and 100 cloned pilot brains.

CONSUMABLES: 1 year.

ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 200, plus 200 Dominus strike drones and 20 dropships.

FTL RANGE/SPEED: Extreme/average.

PRICE/RARITY: priceless/9 (R).

Mahact Tyrannus Heavy Cruiser

The Tyrannus are relentless, oppressive vessels, their gold and black armor slabs creating an imposing double-prowed silhouette. Although these ships are categorized as cruisers by the various Great Civilizations, the Mahact do not use them in traditional cruiser roles. Since Tyrannus are slow, heavily armored, and not incredibly maneuverable, the Mahact tend to surround the cores of their fleets with formations of them.

Though these vessels cannot go toe to toe with a dreadnought, two or three of them might be able to take an enemy ship of the line down. Besides, no gene-sorcerer ever travels aboard them, so the Mahact consider them largely expendable.

Massive

When making an attack targeting this vehicle, the Critical rating of any weapons used counts as 2 higher.

6	2	-1	3	5
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
		HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD	
		65	36	

WEAPONS

Spinal antimatter bombard (Fire Arc Forward; Gunnery; Damage 14; Critical 2; Range [Extreme]; Blast 10, Vicious 3, Slow-Firing 1; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

1 dorsal capital-grade disassembler turret (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 1; Range [Long]; Vicious 3; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

1 port and 1 starboard capital-grade disassembler turret (Fire Arc Forward and Port or Forward and Starboard; Gunnery; Damage 8; Critical 1; Range [Long]; Vicious 3; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, increase difficulty by 1).

1 dorsal and 1 ventral antfighter disassembler cannon (Fire Arc All; Gunnery; Damage 2; Critical 1; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Vicious 3; when attacking a target of silhouette 4 or smaller, decrease difficulty by 1).

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.

COMPLEMENT: 3 officers, 75 servitor clones.

PASSENGER CAPACITY: 25.

CONSUMABLES: 1 year.

ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 100.

FTL RANGE/SPEED: Extreme/average.

PRICE/RARITY: Not for sale/8 (R).

Mahact Stealth Ship

This destroyer-sized, gold-colored, angular ship is equipped with a metacloak device. The device is nearly a perfect stealth device, making the ship detectable only within a few hundred kilometers (point blank range, in astronomical terms). At longer distances, it seems to baffle any sensors, including the naked eye. This Mahact technology is currently beyond the comprehension of most scientists, and the Universities of Jol-Nar would willingly spend a fortune just to get a glimpse of it.

This ship is heavily protected but does not have any weapons. Its only role is to deliver its passengers safely to a location.

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 the other ship, allowing characters to pass between the two vessels without space suits, shuttles, or worrying about locked hatches.

Metacloak Device

The metacloak device may be activated or deactivated as a maneuver. While this device is active, the ship may not be seen, detected, or targeted by ships or characters who are not within medium range of this ship.

5	4	+0	4	4
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
		50	30	
		HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD	

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 1 officer, 25 servitor clones.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 200 assault thralls, 20 boarding pods, 10 additional passengers in luxury.
CONSUMABLES: 1 year.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 250.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Medium/average.
PRICE/RARITY: Unique/10 (R).
WEAPONS: None.

Artemiris

The *Artemiris* is a consummate example of the Mentak Coalition's *Corsair*-class vessels. It is a fast, long-range vessel ideal for independent raiding or flanking strikes on the edges of a battle fleet. It was operating near the galactic core on a "commerce protection mission" when the call went out from the Council for vessels to protect against the imminent Mahact invasion.

Captain Rurio Tolkan made the decision to join the forces marshaling at Mecatol Rex. Unfortunately, he did not know

that his genetics made him susceptible to becoming a Mahact sleeper agent. When he was "activated" by Vesh Nil Qor's genetic subversion, he killed his senior officers before being slain.

Massive

When making an attack targeting this vehicle, the Critical rating of any weapons used counts as 2 higher.

6	4	+0	3	4
SILHOUETTE	SPEED	HANDLING	DEFENSE	ARMOR
		60	40	
		HT THRESHOLD	SS THRESHOLD	

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 Forward and Starboard; 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 antfighter 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, decrease difficulty by 1).

CONTROL SKILL: Operating.
COMPLEMENT: 60 officers and crew.
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 24 soldiers, 50 others.
CONSUMABLES: 5 months.
ENCUMBRANCE CAPACITY: 200, plus 3 shuttles and/or dropships and 6 interceptor starfighters.
FTL RANGE/SPEED: Extreme/very fast.
PRICE/RARITY: 3,100,000 aurei/7 (R).

Appendix B: Adversary Profiles

The following NPCs represent the characters PCs are most likely to interact with during **WAR FOR THE THRONE**. However, as always, GMs should feel free to add more and can include NPCs from **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM** or create new ones. Some of the NPCs here have agendas that can be used to inspire further adventures, and most NPCs can be adapted for use in other adventures as desired. Those characters most likely to play the role of **Traitor** in **WAR FOR THE THRONE** have this stated in their descriptions, and you should decide on the Traitor's identity before play begins (see **The Traitor** on page 9).

Many of the NPCs have a species listed in their profile. If a profile doesn't have a species listed, it is because the profile is generic and could represent most species. In addition, some of the named NPCs have motivations listed to enhance social encounters.

The NPCs are arranged by adventure location for ease of use. GMs can also add NPCs from **Chapter 6: Adversaries** of **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**; for example, **Nekro attack drones** and **Nekro Valefar assimilation swarms** might infest Monitoring Station Ccrysus, while **Hylar engineers** could be hard at work at the Synaptic Ordinator construction site.

Listening Station

This adventure encounter begins without any NPCs at all, as the atmosphere and suspense take center stage. Then, when the PCs encounter the Nekro Virus, they enter combat with a terrifying and merciless foe.

Nekro Assimilation Drone (Minion)

Made from parts of Ccrysus station, these drones are camouflaged while they remain on the station. Serving as infiltration units, they scrounge tech from their surroundings to build themselves, keeping their bodies small and light and using gravpads to fly. Also having created simple projectile weapons, these units fire sharp metal shards torn from the interior walls of the station.

2	3	1	1	4	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
3		3		0/0	

Skills (group only): Computers, Melee, Ranged (Light), Stealth, 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, Viral Load (may spend ☉ from a combat check to infect one item or cybernetic implant carried by an engaged enemy with the Nekro virus: see page 20).

Equipment: Scrap-dart launcher (Ranged [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire), rotating blades and cutting devices (Melee; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1).

Kkraakon's Tentacle (Rival)

4	1	2
---	---	---

These robotic tentacles run through the station, extending out of ventilation ducts and holes carved in the walls. They can stretch and retract far enough that they can "move" in an encounter.

4	4	3	3	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
6		8		0/0	

Skills: Brawl 2, Cool 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Nekro (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and can survive in vacuum; immune to poisons and toxins), Viral Load (may spend ☉ from a combat check to infect one item or cybernetic implant carried by an engaged enemy with the Nekro virus: see page 20).

Equipment: Tentacle tip (Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Knockdown).

Kkraakon (Nemesis)

7 2 3

Kkraakon is a powerful Nekro AI that has assembled itself inside the station. Its body is now a mass of writhing tentacles twisted through the station's innards, leading to a central processing stack in the heart of Ccrysus's old data archives. The processing stack is the only part of the construct that is vulnerable; its tentacles can just be reconstructed.

5	1	3	3	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
3	24	20	0/0		

Skills: Computers 3, Cool 2, Piloting 4, Ranged (Light) 4, Vigilance 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Immobile (may not spend maneuvers to move), Nekro (does not need to breathe, eat, or drink and can survive in vacuum; immune to poisons and toxins), Tentacle Whip (as a maneuver, may force one engaged opponent of silhouette 1 or smaller to move to short range of Kkraakon and suffer 2 strain), Viral Load (may spend ☼ from a combat check to infect one item or cybernetic implant carried by an engaged enemy with the Nekro virus: see page 20).

Equipment: Arsenic pulsar (Ranged [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire, Vicious 3).

Mecatol Rex

Mecatol Rex is an important and bustling place despite the inhospitable atmosphere of the rest of the planet. Traditionally, this is the seat of the greatest power in the galaxy, and as the Galactic Council meets here, its position is more than symbolic. The selection of Councilors and aides gives you a selection of potential Traitors to choose from (see **The Traitor** on page 9).

Although each of the Councilors and aides is armed, this is in case you choose them as the Traitor and they end up fighting the PCs (which is a possibility). Unless a weapon is obviously ceremonial or integrated into their body, they do not carry it in the Council Chambers.

Keleres Senior Supervisor Matir Iq Matir (Rival)

2 3 2

Matir was originally a Winnaran Custodian assigned to support the Keleres, but three years ago she chose to fully join the Keleres as a support agent. Her connections with the Custodians, penchant for organization, and tolerance for paperwork quickly saw her promoted to senior supervisor, reporting directly to the Tribunii.

2	2	3	1	3	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
2	12	0/0			

Species: Winnaran.

Motivations: Strength (Thorough), Flaw (Unimaginative).

Skills: Cool 2, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Culture) 2, Knowledge (Science) 1, Leadership 2, Ranged (Light) 1, Vigilance 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Standard-issue shot pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Short]), supervisor's uniform, savant.

Ddradik Tik, Xxcha Kingdom "Cultural Attaché" (Rival)

3 3 3

Tik has been serving on Mecatol Rex as part of the Xxcha Kingdom's delegation to the Galactic Council for the last two years. He purports to be a cultural attaché, but he is actually a senior clandestine operative for the Kingdom, and his bland exterior hides a sharp mind.

3	1	3	3	3	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
4	14	0/0			

Species: Xxcha.

Motivations: Strength (Devious), Flaw (Devious).

Skills: Brawl 4, Cool 3, Deception 3, Discipline 3, Knowledge (Culture) 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Precision Strike 1 (when making a Brawl or Melee combat check, Tik may remove  from the pool and suffer 1 strain to add  to the results).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Fists (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown), diplomat's tunic, savant.

Winnaran Custodian Veles (Minion)

 2  2  1

Beyond the Custodian Guard, who protect the Galactic Council and enforce the laws of Mecatol City, the Custodians maintain a small paramilitary force known as the *velites*. These officers have less training and worse equipment than the Guard, but they bulk out the Custodian forces with additional numbers. Velites help staff the polar castelle, run police patrols in Mecatol City, crew the antifighter batteries surrounding the capital, combat riots and civil unrest, and in theory, can be called up to defend Mecatol Rex in the event of an invasion. The velites also include a substantial non-Winnaran contingent recruited from Mecatol City's diverse population, and a number of retired velites can be called up if needed to form a reserve.

To staff and guard the Synaptic Ordinator, the Custodians have dispatched nearly a thousand velites to the construction site. There they operate under the command of Den Il Marsil.

2	1	2	1	3	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
3		6		0/0	

Skills (group only): Athletics, Discipline, Melee, Ranged (Heavy), Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Shot carbine (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire), shock baton (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Stun 3, Stun Damage), reinforced uniform (+1 soak), comm-bead.

Winnaran Custodian Guards

The Custodians provide security for Mecatol Rex and, specifically, the Galactic Council. The protectors of the Council Chambers are the well-prepared and equipped Custodian Guards, who are trained to serve as law enforcement officers, paramilitary warriors, and bodyguards.

If you need profiles for the Custodian Guards on duty in the Council Chambers, use the **Winnaran Custodian Guard** on page 255 of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*.

Lieutenant Tellis Martelan (Rival)

 3  1  1

Lieutenant Martelan is an ambitious young officer whose goals are usually whatever is best for the career of Lieutenant Tellis Martelan. He hopes to serve under Councilor Carbonneau just long enough to earn valuable commendations back home, then be transferred to a posting on Arc Prime, where he can continue his career rise.

Martelan is not likely to be the Traitor, but if Carbonneau turns out to be the Traitor, he could prove to be a valuable resource. An opportunity to expose his superior and claim credit for Carbonneau's capture would be a perfect way for him to earn renown.

2	2	2	2	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
2		12		0/0	

Species: Letnev.

Motivations: Strength (Diligence), Flaw (Amoral).

Skills: Brawl 1, Deception 1, Discipline 1, Ranged (Light) 1, Stealth 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Plasma pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Burn 1, Slow-Firing 1), comm-bead, savant.



Councilor Galrud (Nemesis)

3 3 2

Galrud, a silver-maned and gray-furred representative of the Hacan, wears scarlet-dyed starflower silk and jewels mined from all corners of the galaxy. He has a knack for guessing what other sentients want before they even know it themselves, and he sometimes rewards those who lend their voice to his in debates. He encourages his fellow Councilors to believe that he's only interested in trade routes and amassing wealth, but he has a personal agenda.

When Galrud's mane was still dark, his entire business was decimated by a Mentak Coalition raid. Though his fortunes have risen again since, he has nursed his hate for many years. He hopes to maneuver the Coalition's representatives off the Council, have their enterprises outlawed, and ultimately see the entire Coalition destroyed. His desire for revenge is a potential motive for becoming the Traitor, if the Mahact offer to empower him to destroy the Mentak Coalition.

2	2	2	4	2	3
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
2	11	14	2/1		

Species: Hacan.

Motivations: Desire (Revenge), Fear (Poverty), Strength (Charming), Flaw (Greed).

Skills: Cool 1, Deception 1, Negotiation 3, Skulduggery 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Parry 2 (when this character suffers a hit from a melee combat check, after damage is calculated [but before soak is applied], they may suffer 3 strain to reduce damage suffered by 4).

Abilities: Savvy Negotiator (once per session, when Galrud is targeted by a social skill check and is dealt strain, may spend Story Point to reduce strain by 4 and inflict 4 strain on the character who targeted him).

Equipment: Electrum-plated scimitar (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Superior), heavy desert robes (defense 1), savant, assorted gifts including gerr root for sharing during private audiences.

Chamberlain Raan Di Sanal (Nemesis)

2 3 2

Stooped under the weight of his coronet of office, his skin more gray than green, Raan serves as one of the Council's chamberlains. He is somewhat old-fashioned and considers the maintenance of Lazax traditions a sacred task. In response, many of the younger Winnarans treat Raan Di Sanal with a respectful fondness, as though he himself is a tradition to be preserved.

Occasionally the chamberlain loses his train of thought midsentence, or makes mistakes, which his colleagues put down to his age and quickly forgive. However, he has a growing fondness for gerr root, and it is the overuse of this intoxicant that is addling his mind. This addiction, his secret shame, leaves him vulnerable to bribery and blackmail. He could even be the Traitor, if a Mahact agent detected his weakness.

1	1	3	2	1	4
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
1	7	12	3/3		

Species: Winnaran.

Motivations: Desire (Preservation), Fear (Exposure), Strength (Experience), Flaw (Addiction).

Skills: Charm 2, Knowledge (Culture) 2, Knowledge (Lore) 2, Leadership 1, Negotiation 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Prestige of Position (before targeting Raan Di Sanal with a social or combat check, a character must suffer 2 strain).

Equipment: Staff of office (Melee; Damage 3; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Stun 3), coronet of office, personal force field, comm-bead, savant.





Councilor Shane Lehmann (Nemesis)

1 2 1

Young, ambitious, and untested, this representative of Jord used his family's wealth to buy his way into this important position. Lehmann has grand hopes of leading the other Councilors from Jord and the wider Federation of Sol into a new time of peace, with him ruling the Council in all but name. He talks down to everyone, but he's sheltered and ignorant, and he panics at the first sign of trouble.

The rest of the Federation's Councilors found it politically difficult to remove Lehmann, so they installed someone they could trust by his side. Nadia Ngoy appears to be Lehmann's long-suffering personal assistant, but it is her vigilance and political savvy that protect Sol's interests. Lehmann "forgets" her true role when it suits him, treating her with the contempt he does all his servants, but deep down he knows he cannot succeed without her.

Although the gullible Lehmann could theoretically be the Traitor, he is better suited for use as a red herring. His assistant could easily utilize him as a scapegoat to deflect suspicion from herself.

2	2	1	2	1	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
2	10	12	0/0		

Species: Human.

Motivations: Desire (Fame), Fear (Obscurity), Strength (Wealth), Flaw (Ignorance).

Skills: Brawl 1, Deception 1, Knowledge (Culture) 1, Negotiation 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Do Me a Favor (once per encounter as an action, Lehmann can ask another character to perform a task or fulfill a request of his choosing; if the character agrees, they must perform the specified task or request, and then they receive 1,000 aurei by the end of the session; if they disagree, they suffer 6 strain).

Equipment: Angry punch (Brawl; Damage 3; Critical 5; Range [Engaged], Knockdown), comm-bead, fancy robes, savant, variety of currencies for bribes.



Nadia Ngoy, Personal Aide (Nemesis)

2 2 2

Nadia Ngoy is brilliant, hardworking, and ambitious. Had she been born into wealth like Lehmann, she would be a Councilor herself, or something better, and she knows it. She has not forgiven her superiors for saddling her with Lehmann and sending her far from other, better roles within the Federation. However, there are benefits to working behind the scenes, and she has made potentially useful contacts among the staff and guards, as well as among the Councilors themselves.

Underappreciated and embittered, Ngoy dislikes Lehmann enough to play the role of Traitor just in order to pin it on him. She feels little loyalty to the Federation and is alert for lucrative opportunities elsewhere. Used to acting discreetly on behalf of Lehmann, she may be tempted to use the skills she's learned to benefit the Mahact.

1	2	3	3	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
1	11	16	0/0		

Species: Human.

Motivations: Desire (Ambition), Fear (Failure), Strength (Cleverness), Flaw (Resentment).

Skills: Charm 1, Deception 2, Knowledge (Culture) 2, Negotiation 2, Ranged (Light) 1.

Talents: Subtle (when making a social skill check, Ngoy may spend A to convey a simple message to one other character of her choice who has nothing to do with what she is currently saying).

Abilities: Quick Thinker (remove all ■ from checks targeting Ngoy, unless she has at least one wound).

Equipment: Concealed dart-caster pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Vicious 1), comm-bead, savant.



Councilor Kkasan Gen (Nemesis)

4 4 2

This Xxcha Councilor was considered small and weak among her own, treated with gentle but infuriating pity growing up. On Mecatol Rex, as one of the senior Xxcha representatives of the crown, she feels powerful. She likes the way others must look up to her and enjoys surprising sentients with her knowledge of their various customs and etiquettes, a result of many hours spent researching for her position. Gen walks the halls with no guards in attendance, as she is proud of being able to defend herself.

Growing up, Councilor Gen idolized Tribunii Odlynn Myrr, whose lectures she learned by heart before she finally had the opportunity to meet him. She had hoped to impress him with her ideas, but he has only spoken to her briefly and reluctantly. She believes the Keleres are underutilized and could be a more influential force, but the Tribunii would not be convinced.

After her initial disappointment, Councilor Gen resolved to be ready to replace him as Tribunii one day. With this goal in mind, she makes what alliances she can among the other Councilors and looks for opportunities to prove her suitability for the role.

Councilor Gen is ambitious and keen to prove herself. She could be the Traitor if she's been convinced that Mahact King Vesh Nil Qor will raise her people up and make her their hero.

3	1	3	2	3	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
4	14	12	0/0		

Species: Xxcha.

Motivations: Desire (Ambition), Fear (Weakness), Strength (Adaptable), Flaw (Recklessness).

Skills: Brawl 3, Charm 1, Cool 2, Knowledge (Culture) 2, Negotiation 3, Perception 1.

Talents: Ccrysusian Methodology 2 (twice per session when targeted by a social skill check, may reduce strain suffered from that check by 3, to a minimum of 1).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Trained close-combat fists (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Linked 1), comm-bead, savant.

Councilor Ozanne Sabin Carbonneau (Nemesis)

5 2 4

This Councilor from the Barony of Letnev stands stiffly and talks rarely, but misses nothing. The Barony sent an officer who could take advantage of any opportunity to gather information and give the Barony an advantage. Councilor Carbonneau is a seasoned veteran, fully trained in infiltration and subterfuge. They wear their hair cut short, revealing the single straight scar down their left cheek as though it were a badge of greater honor than any that decorate their uniform. They gained the scar in their first battle as a young officer, when they were the only survivor of a Nekro attack.

Councilor Carbonneau is prim yet polite, but their dislike of other species has grown to the point that they are a potential Traitor—as long as they have received assurances that their faction will be spared. While they do not feel particular loyalty to individual sentients from the Barony, they are loyal to the Barony as a whole.

2	3	3	4	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
2	9	14	2/1		

Species: Letnev.

Motivations: Desire (Dedication), Fear (Failure), Strength (Loyalty), Flaw (Intolerance).

Skills: Brawl 1, Computers 1, Cool 2, Deception 2, Discipline 1, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Sneak Attack (when making a Melee check, use Cunning instead of Brawn, and add Cunning instead of Brawn to the weapon's base damage).

Abilities: Inscrutable (characters must spend an additional A when trying to learn Carbonneau's motivations).

Equipment: Twin Letnev poniards (Melee; Damage 7; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Linked 1), comm-bead, savant.



Councilor So'Cil (Nemesis)

5 1 1

Councilor So'Cil is always complaining about everything. He turns up late for meetings, during which he taps his forelegs together for attention, and he audibly clicks his mandibles in agitation whenever a Councilor voices an opinion he disagrees with. He seems to deliberately antagonize everyone, and he obviously dislikes being on Mecatol Rex. However, this is all mostly a front to hide the fact that he feels lost here, and inadequate in the role he was assigned.

When he was young, So'Cil was a promising warrior and leader. However, he failed to pass the test to become a Tekklar Elite.

Worse, he miraculously survived. Unsure what to do with him, the Veiled Brood ordered him to go to Mecatol Rex to become the most junior councilor of the Sardakk N'orr delegation. He arrived there recently, and the delegation decided that he would best serve the Sardakk N'orr's interests on the Subcommittee on Extraordinary Studies, given his military experience.

If So'Cil is the Traitor, it's because Vesh Nil Qor has taken advantage of his feelings of inadequacy and shame, eliciting such a feeling of self-loathing that So'Cil would willingly betray everything he holds dear.

3	3	2	2	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
4	15	9	1/1		

Species: N'orr.

Motivations: Desire (Glory), Fear (Humiliation), Strength (Courageous), Flaw (Irritability).

Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Melee 3, Perception 1, Survival 1, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Master of the Blade (add X to the results of all combat checks targeting So'Cil while he wields a Melee weapon and is engaged with multiple enemies).

Abilities: Rugged Biology (once per session, spend a Story Point to heal one Critical Injury with a severity of **Easy** [♦] or **Average** [♦♦] as an incidental).

Equipment: Ceremonial tarsus glaive (Melee; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Cumbersome 3, Vicious 3), duranium-inlaid carapace (defense 1, +1 soak), savant.



Vadanus the Councilor (Nemesis)

8 2 2

The Titan hierarchy chose Vadanus as one of their representatives for their curious mind and compassionate nature, but also for their young age (they're still small enough to interact with other species with relative ease). Vadanus is proud of their posting, but arguments and aggression unsettle them, and sometimes they can't face the long, tense, Council meetings. Since their arrival on Mecatol Rex, they have been struggling with feelings they never had among their own, like frustration and anger. They can't understand why the other Councilors won't simply agree to choose peace over war, or back the Ordinator project, because it seems like an obvious defensive device.

If Councilor Vadanus is the Traitor, it's because the Mahact promise to bring peace and order to the galaxy. Councilor Vadanus had only just been "born" when the Titans began their long sleep and has no recollection of the tyranny of the Mahact.

5	2	3	1	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
7	19	11	0/0		

Species: Titan.

Motivations: Desire (Consensus), Fear (Conflict), Strength (Compassion), Flaw (Naïveté).

Skills: Astrocartography 1, Charm 1, Computers 2, Discipline 1, Knowledge (Science) 2, Mechanics 1, Negotiation 1.

Talents: None.

Abilities: 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), Earnest (inflicts 1 additional strain when inflicting strain with a social skill check; suffers 1 additional strain when suffering strain from a social skill check), Silhouette 2.

Equipment: Integral grav-field fist (Brawl; Damage 10; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Concussive 1, Knockdown, Superior; when used against a target of silhouette 1 or smaller, Knockdown may be triggered without spending A).



The Synaptic Ordinator Construction Site

When the PCs visit the Synaptic Ordinator construction site, they may want to question workers and scientists alike. Profiles are provided here for this purpose, along with saboteurs suitable for the concluding battle or chase.

Captain Pad Di Teret (Nemesis)



This Winnaran officer comes from a long line of dedicated military heroes, and her only fear is of failure. She expects perfection from her bridge crew and from herself. She's had to settle for mediocrity from the Ordinator crew and security team but has been able to accept this by setting her bridge crew apart. She believes she should have been given more autonomy in this posting, and she privately resents the Traitor for their regular visits and interference in the Ordinator project.

3	3	3	2	4	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
3	14	14	0/0		

Species: Winnaran.

Motivations: Strength (Dutiful), Flaw (Pride).

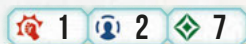
Skills: Discipline 3, Gunnery 2, Leadership 4, Operating 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Sustained Fire 3 (after making a Ranged [Light], Ranged [Heavy], or Gunnery check, may spend A A A or ☉ to add ✨ ✨ ✨ to the results of all ranged combat checks Captain Pad Di Teret makes until the end of the encounter).

Abilities: Righteous (once per session when targeted by a skill check, Captain Pad Di Teret may spend a Story Point to add ✕ ✕ ✕ to the results).

Equipment: Comm-bead, officer uniform, savant linked to Ordinator command protocols.

Chief Engineer Tola Aun Krala (Nemesis)



Tola Aun Krala is from the Argent Flight, a young, genius Shikrai engineer who gets frustrated at other people's mistakes (and makes enemies when she tells them so). However, she works closely with Doctor Ruga, whom she has a genuine affection for and knew before the project. She is ever-aware of the Mahact threat and sees it her duty to ensure the Synaptic Ordinator is a success. As the project's chief engineer, she oversees much of the physical construction of the project.

Tola Aun Krala is naturally suspicious and unlikely to dispense information willingly. In fact, if she saw Doctor Ruga being questioned, she might go to his aid. As their work is so important, she believes secrecy and tight security are called for, and she dislikes visitors to the site, especially curious ones.

2	3	4	2	3	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
2	12	12	0/0		

Species: Shikrai.

Motivations: Desire (Victory [over the Mahact]), Fear (Failure), Strength (Adaptable), Flaw (Anger).

Skills: Astrocartography 2, Computers 4, Knowledge (Science) 3, Mechanics 5, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Clever Retort (once per encounter, may add ☹ ☹ to another character's social skill check), Skilled Mechanic 5 (when making a check to repair hull trauma or system strain, repair 5 additional hull trauma or system strain).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Comm-bead, tool kit.

Lieutenant Silsa Il Senashor (Rival)



A junior officer on the Ordinator project, Silsa Il Senashor serves as a trusted, if unimaginative, aide to Captain Teret. His first loyalty is to the captain, and his second is to the Custodian Guard. If assigned as a liaison to the PCs, he dutifully keeps the captain informed of their actions.

2	3	3	1	3	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
2	12		0/0		

Species: Winnaran.

Motivations: Strength (Dutiful), Flaw (Unimaginative).

Skills: Discipline 2, Leadership 1, Operating 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Shot pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Short]), comm-bead, officer uniform.

Doctor Nal Ruga (Nemesis)



Doctor Ruga left the Universities of Jol-Nar when his application for tenure was rejected for the fifth time. At the time, he was working on waveform propagation in exotic energy states, and although it was all highly theoretical and very dubious, it turned out to be the basis for the Synaptic Ordinator project.

Work on the Synaptic Ordinator is ambitious and exciting, and Doctor Ruga lives for it. If anyone were to put the project in jeopardy, he would protect it with his life. He is quiet and humble and collaborates effectively even with the more difficult scientists on the project. He has never been adept at communicating with sentients outside work, but with scientists and engineers, he always feels they speak the same language, even when they don't.

1	2	5	2	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
1	7	9	0/0		

Species: Hylar (air-breathing subspecies).

Motivations: Desire (Knowledge), Fear (Failure), Strength (Patient), Flaw (Timid).

Skills: Astrocartography 1, Computers 4, Knowledge (Science) 5, Medicine 1.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Impenetrable Mind (add X X to the results of any social skill check targeting Ruga, unless the character making the check has at least 3 ranks in a knowledge skill or an Intellect of 3 or higher).

Equipment: Comm-bead, savant full of theoretical and unintelligible notes.

Rurug and Croto, Laborers (Minion)



Rurug and Croto are Xxcha from the same nest and work best together. They are veterans of many brawls and battles, in which they fought side by side, and they would be identical but for Rurug's larger appetite. Both serve Councilor Gen, but they are currently keeping their true role secret while working as laborers to keep her abreast of progress made at the site. Some staff here look down on them as they perform menial tasks, but the opinions of eccentric scientists don't bother them.

As these brothers are not who they claim to be, PCs may suspect them when searching for traitors or saboteurs. However, they would never work for the Mahact and would be offended to be accused of such. If Councilor Gen is the Traitor, and they see evidence of such, they will work against her. Otherwise, they follow her orders loyally.

The two brothers always form a single minion group of two minions.

4	1	2	2	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
6	8	0/0			

Species: Xxcha.

Motivations: Strength (Underestimated), Flaw (Blunt).

Skills (group only): Brawl, Deception, Discipline, Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Brothers in Arms (as long as neither Rurug nor Croto is incapacitated, their minion group can spend a maneuver to add A A A to the next check the group makes during the current turn).

Equipment: Viribuii (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Stun 4), heavy work suits (+1 soak), comm-beads.

Security Chief Den Il Marsil (Rival)



The Winnaran security chief is weary of his work. The bridge crew look down on him, his security officers are reluctant to serve under him, and the scientists and workers at the site seem to think he and his officers are in the way, although their presence is for their protection. It's no wonder he took a bribe.

2	2	2	3	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
4	14	0/0			

Species: Winnaran.

Motivations: Strength (Courageous), Flaw (Greed).

Skills: Brawl 1, Coercion 1, Deception 1, Ranged (Light) 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Beam pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Pierce 2), particle grenade (Ranged [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Blast 3, Concussive 1, Disorient 3, Limited Ammo 1, Stun Damage), reinforced security uniform (+2 soak), comm-bead.

Saboteur (Minion)

3 1 1

Pilip Coleridge's crew of saboteurs vary widely, as he has hand-picked each for their variety of useful skills. He has a crew of ten that includes a competent pilot, a skilled shooter, a brilliant but disgraced biochemist, and a celebrated chef. However, the following stats can be used to represent his crew as a group. These are mercenaries who have been paid to sabotage the project by a contact in the Mentak Coalition, and they don't comprehend the terrible forces they are ultimately working for. They do want to get out alive, so if they find themselves facing unlikely odds, they flee.

3	3	2	3	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
3	6	0/0			

Skills (group only): Brawl, Mechanics, Ranged (Light), Skulduggery.

Talents: None.

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Concealed beam pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Pierce 2), viribuii (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 5; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Stun 4), black-market improvised demo charge (Ranged [Light]; Damage 12; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Blast 6, Limited Ammo 1, Prepare 2), coveralls, toolkit.

Pilip Coleridge, Saboteur Leader (Rival)

6 2 2

Captain Pilip Coleridge is a Human of business and dresses as such, in a too-large starflower-silk coat liberated from a Hacan trader. Someone asks him to transport goods discreetly, end a life prematurely, or obtain information illegally, and he'll get it done—for the right price. He doesn't ask questions, and he doesn't keep records or leave behind evidence.

Pilip Coleridge was a member of the Mentak Coalition once, and he maintains links and contacts, but his only loyalty is to his crew. Their loyalty to him must be absolute in turn, and anything less is swiftly and viciously dealt with.

2	3	2	3	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
4	16	0/0			

Species: Human.

Motivations: Strength (Ruthlessness), Flaw (Greed).

Skills: Charm 1, Melee 2, Negotiation 2, Ranged (Light) 2, Survival 3, Vigilance 1.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Roguish Luck (when this character is targeted by a combat check, remove all  from the check before rolling).

Equipment: Concealed plasma pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Burn 1, Slow-Firing 1), black-market improvised demo charge (Ranged [Light]; Damage 12; Critical 4; Range [Short]; Blast 6, Limited Ammo 1, Prepare 2), collapsible blade (Melee; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Prepare 1), concealed echo-weave body armor (+2 soak).

Shardpoint Outpost

This part of the adventure sees the PCs searching for the Traitor's Mentak Coalition contact on Shardpoint. This Coalition outpost is populated by merchants and pirates, and it is secretly also home to Vuil'raith cultists. It's the sort of place where many sentients of all types come and go.

Ralga Woll, Explorer (Nemesis)

9 1 1

This golden-haired Saar is well-known as a fearless explorer and pilot. Since returning from her last expedition over a year ago empty-handed and alone, she has been quiet and withdrawn. This is the Traitor's thrall contact in the Coalition, who's waiting to be told what to do. She no longer has any free will, and she cannot be reasoned with, coerced, or threatened. She also is far tougher than her appearance suggests, because her conditioning forces her to ignore pain. If cornered, she fights to the death.

3	2	2	2	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
4	25	15	1/0		

Species: Saar.

Motivations: Only the word of Vesh Nil Qor.

Skills: Astrocartography 1, Brawl 2, Melee 3, Piloting 2, Ranged (Heavy) 3, Ranged (Light) 3, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Directly Controlled (Ralga ignores the effects of all Critical Injuries with a severity of **Easy** [♦] or **Average** [♦♦], and all social skill checks targeting her automatically fail), Last Gasp (while carrying improvised demolition charges, may spend a Story Point to have charges detonate when Ralga becomes incapacitated; all characters within short range suffer a hit dealing 10 damage and must succeed on a **Hard** [♦♦♦] **Resilience** check to avoid receiving a Critical Injury).

Equipment: Collapsible blade (Melee; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Defensive 1, Prepare 1), echo tunic (+1 soak). If Ralga is in her warehouse, she also has the following weapons: plasma pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 10; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Burn 1, Slow-Firing 1), shot carbine (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire), demolition charges (Ranged [Light]; Damage 10; Critical 3; Range [Short]; Inaccurate 1, Limited Ammo 2).

R'ali, Owner of R'ali's Bar (Rival)

3 2 3 2

R'ali is loyal to the Mentak Coalition and protective of Shardpoint. A Druaa dissatisfied with life on Maaluk, he searched for opportunities elsewhere in the galaxy. During a scrape with Hacan traders when a deal went bad, his tail was injured, and the muscle grafts left him heavily indebted to a crew of Mentak smugglers. He spent the next decade paying off that debt—and learning to make a fast profit in illegal trade, developing skills he still uses now that he's settled on Shardpoint. R'ali is well respected in the colony, and one of the few beings suspicious of Bridget Lee. He might have uncovered the cult himself if he weren't busy watching Ralga Woll.

3	2	2	3	3	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
3		15		0/0	

Species: Druaa.

Motivations: Strength (Patient), Flaw (Distrustful).

Skills: Brawl 1, Discipline 1, Negotiation 2, Streetwise 3, Vigilance 1.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Mind Reader (as an action, may make an **opposed Discipline versus Discipline** check targeting one living creature within medium range; if successful, learns the target's current thoughts and emotional state).

Equipment: Constricting body (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 2, Stun 4), dirty apron, flask of spirits.

Kash, Pilot (Rival)

3 1 1

Kash is a lonely Rokha pilot who pines after Bitt, a Naaz who was his partner and best friend for many years. He has a deep hatred of the Federation of Sol because it was during a battle with a Sol ship that Bitt died. However, deep down he blames himself. He has never told anyone, but during the battle he was knocked out, and when he woke, Bitt was crushed under him. He lives for revenge against the Federation, and he pilots a slovenly (but cheap) ship for hire in the meantime. His ship, the *Arrow*, is his home and livelihood.

3	3	2	1	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
4		13		0/0	

Species: Rokha.

Motivations: Strength (Hatred), Flaw (Hatred).

Skills: Astrocartography 2, Mechanics 3, Negotiation 1, Piloting 2.

Talents: None.

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Shot pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Short]).

Shardpoint Cultist (Minion)

3 1 1

Vuil'raith cultists are dangerous enough when desperate and destitute. The cultists on Shardpoint are organized and work with purpose, drawing strength from Bridget Lee's enthusiasm and funds.

2	2	2	3	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
3		4		0/0	

Skills (group only): Melee, Ranged (Heavy), Stealth, Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Death Cult (succeeds on all fear checks; reduces any strain suffered by 3, to a minimum of 1).

Equipment: Shot rifle (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Auto-fire), concealed cultist knife (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]), thermal hooded uniform (+1 soak, remove ■ ■ from checks required due to extreme cold)

Bridget Lee, Merchant (Nemesis)

7 3 3

The common story on Shardpoint is that Bridget Lee was a successful smuggler who settled into a semiretirement. Actually the leader of a Vuil'raith cult, she arranged for the previous owner of Shardpoint's landing pads to die in an accident, then took over.

Unknown to most residents in Shardpoint, Bridget Lee is Sol ex-military, and she retired from the rank of commander after a long and successful career. She left Sol behind because her children followed in her footsteps but died in action, just like their father. Alone, she lost her faith in the Federation and left to wander the galaxy in search of meaning. What she found was the Vuil'raith, whose awe-inspiring power and tempting promises have given her something new, and apparently immortal, to believe in.

Though articulating exactly what the Vuil'raith showed or promised her is impossible, her enthusiasm and natural leadership abilities have amassed her an extensive following. The wealth she accumulates from newly recruited cultists helps too.

4	2	3	3	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
5	15	15	0/0		

Species: Human.

Motivations: Desire (Ascendence), Fear (Loneliness), Strength (Spiritual), Flaw (Fanaticism).

Skills: Astrocartography 1, Brawl 4, Charm 1, Deception 2, Leadership 2, Negotiation 2, Piloting 1, Ranged (Light) 2, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target twice).

Abilities: Death Cult (succeeds on all fear checks; reduces any strain suffered by 3, to a minimum of 1), Zealous (once per encounter, may reroll a check; if the check fails, this character suffers 3 wounds).

Equipment: Grazer (Ranged [Light]; Damage 3; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Pierce 5), snub gauntlets (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 3, Linked 1), heavy echo-weave clothing (+1 soak).

Jot Gah, Trader (Rival)

2 1 2

This Yssaril equipment trader has a permanent stall at Shardpoint. He sells an assortment of useful aboveboard items and supplies, such as food, ammunition, and tools, as well as under-the-table goods including stealth equipment. He's also keen to buy and sell information once his trust is earned. He's always willing to give better deals to other Yssaril, as well as to any sentient who appears to be at a disadvantage. He is deeply loyal to the Coalition, and he is secretly planning to one day infiltrate a Barony prison camp and rescue his old partner. Whenever he meets a sentient from the Barony, he tries to befriend them in the hope of getting inside information.

1	2	2	3	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
2	9	0/0			

Species: Yssaril.

Motivations: Strength (Loyalty), Flaw (Greed).

Skills: Negotiation 2, Perception 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Vigilance 1.

Talents: Sneak Attack (uses Cunning instead of Brawn on Melee checks, and adds Cunning instead of Brawn to a weapon's base damage).

Abilities: Favorable Bias (characters with allegiance to the Yssaril Tribes or the Mentak Coalition add ✨ ✨ to Negotiation and Streetwise checks targeting Jot Gah), Silhouette 0.

Equipment: Bio-shiv (Melee; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2, Prepare 1), echo-weave vest (+1 soak).

Moran of the Tenth Creche of the Fourteenth Generation (Rival)

1 2 4

This brother of Yin serves as the doctor for Shardpoint. He charges very reasonable prices for his services, as he sees it as a chance to help others, but he is known to preach to patients at length about the glories of the Yin and about the rest of his religious beliefs. Moran appears a typical brother of Yin in all respects, including his rough, gray skin and hairless, but otherwise Human, features.

2	2	2	2	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	M/R DEFENSE			
2	10	0/0			

Species: Human (Yin clone).

Motivations: Strength (Compassionate), Flaw (Naïveté).

Skills: Cool 3, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Science) 3, Medicine 4.

Talents: Surgeon 4 (after making a successful Medicine check to heal wounds, heals 4 additional wounds).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Well-stocked xenobiology medicum (may heal any character using the Medicine skill, even if that character cannot normally be healed using Medicine).

Vuil'raith Raging Horror (Rival)

 7  3  3

This silent, girthy creature seems to be all bulky arms and grasping hands. It crawls on its clawed fingers, moving surprisingly swiftly for its size, and can climb over even slick ice with ease.

4	2	2	3	3	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE		
5	40		0/0		

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Discipline 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: All-Terrain (ignores penalties for difficult terrain, and may move normally up vertical surfaces or upside down on ceilings), Silhouette 3, Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental [Core Rulebook, page 243]; for multiple sources of fear, opponents make only one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).

Equipment: Clawed hands (Brawl; Damage 9; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 1, Vicious 1).

Vuil'raith Flaming Monstrosity (Rival)

 6  2  2

This leathery, four-footed beast constantly expels heat and thick smoke, which means few see more than its glowing yellow eyes in the fumes. It has eight eyes, set all around its orb-like head so that it's never caught unawares, and large jaws in its midsection that consume any victims that get too close.

3	3	2	3	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE		
4	30		0/0		

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Discipline 2, Ranged (Light) 2, Stealth 1, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Foul Fumes (biological characters beginning their turn within short range must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **Resilience check**; if they fail, they are staggered until the end of their turn and suffer 1 strain per ☹), Silhouette 2, Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental [Core Rulebook, page 243]; for multiple sources of fear, opponents make only one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).

Equipment: Belching flames (Ranged [Light]; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Medium]; Blast 7, Burn 3), flaming jaws (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Burn 3).

Vuil'raith Stinger Flock (Rival)

 4  1  1

These tiny Vuil'raith are headless winged creatures with spikes protruding from their neck and wingtips. Each long spike is razor-sharp and hollow, so that the creature can drain its victim's fluids. A swarm of stingers can drain someone's blood in minutes, then flit off looking for their next meal.

1	3	1	2	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE		
1	20		0/0		

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Perception 2, Stealth 1.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Fluid Drinker (after inflicting damage with a successful Brawl check, the stinger flock heals 1 wound for each wound it inflicted), Flyer (can fly; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook), Swarm (halve the damage dealt to this character before applying soak, unless the weapon has the Blast or Burn quality [regardless of whether the quality is activated]).

Equipment: Vicious sting (Brawl; Damage 2; Critical 2; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 4).

Ragrak, Bounty Hunter (Nemesis)

9 3 2

Ragrak, a Hacan bounty hunter on the PCs' trail, takes great pride in her hunting abilities. Believing there are more efficient ways of making money than trading, she looks down her nose at the Hacan merchant consortiums. She prefers to buy her equipment from a Yssaril trader, Jot Gah.

Ragrak received her commission to kill the PCs from the Traitor, but she asked no questions, so she doesn't know the Traitor's name or purpose. She is supposed to take evidence of her work to Ralga Woll in order to collect the bounty. She certainly doesn't know that she's inadvertently working for the Mahact, and for the ultimate destruction of the galaxy as she knows it. If this were brought to her attention, her allegiance might shift.

4	3	2	2	3	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
6	20	15	1/1		

Species: Hacan.

Motivations: Desire (Wealth), Fear (Failure), Strength (Confidence), Flaw (Pride).

Skills: Brawl 1, Coercion 3, Gunnery 2, Piloting 2, Ranged [Light] 3, Skulduggery 2, Stealth 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once), Quick Draw (once per turn, may perform a maneuver as an incidental).

Abilities: One Step Ahead (once per round after an opponent performs an action or maneuver, may spend one Story Point to perform an action or maneuver as an out-of-turn incidental), One with Her Ship (when piloting the *Pride*, may suffer 2 strain to add ✨ to the next Piloting or Gunnery check this character makes this turn).

Equipment: Customized heavy beam pistol (Ranged [Light]; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Pierce 2, Superior), 3 particle grenades (Ranged [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 5; Range [Short]; Blast 3, Concussive 1, Disorient 3, Limited Ammo 1, Stun Damage), reinforced gloves (Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Disorient 4, Knockdown), elite shock armor (defense 1, +2 soak).



Mecatol Rex and Synaptic Ordinator

The third part of the adventure begins with the PCs returning to Mecatol Rex and the Synaptic Ordinator. The PCs may face off against the Traitor, and even against Mahact King Vesh Nil Qor himself. As well as the profiles below, you will need to use the **Mahact Crimson Legionnaire** profile, and you may want to use the **Mahact thrall clone** profile, both found on pages 262-263 of *EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM*.

Mahact Assault Thrall (Minion)



Even more dangerous than the thrall clones of the Mahact, assault thralls are grown by Vesh Nil Qor to lead attacks on the armies of the various Great Civilizations. They are slightly tougher than standard thrall clones, with plates of bony carapace armor. They are armed with disassembler beams to fight at range.

3	2	1	1	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
3		5		0/0	

Skills (group only): Athletics, Brawl, Ranged (Heavy), 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 the assault thrall succeeds, 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 5 minutes until they succeed or they exceed their wound threshold, at which point the target becomes a Mahact assault thrall [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: Disassembler beamer (Ranged [Heavy]; Damage 5; Critical 1; Range [Medium]; Vicious 2), claw-nails (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]).

Mahact Servitor Clones (Minion)



Servitor clones are gestated in mass tanks by the Mahact to handle much of the basic work of running their kingdom. These blank-featured bipeds are often used where other civilizations would use robots or familiars. They can be programmed with a variety of skills, and the Mahact consider them completely expendable. These servitor clones have been created to operate starships.

When crewing Mahact starships, assume all weapons and systems are operated by minion groups of three servitor clones.

2	2	1	1	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
2		3		0/0	

Skills (group only): Computers, Gunnery, Mechanics, Operating.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Blank (may not be targeted by or suffer strain from social skill checks).

Equipment: Tool kit.

Thrall Prime (Nemesis)

8 1 1

It took some work for Vesh Nil Qor to sufficiently adapt the genes of this Gashlai, but he has created a loyal subject of impressive power and intellect. This, his principal thrall, is his most fearsome and loyal warrior. Their armor is a modified Ember suit, which allows them to move freely while bringing their prodigious combat prowess to bear.

3	2	4	3	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
5	17	15	1/1		

Species: Gashlai.

Motivations: Strength (Single-Minded Service), Flaw (Single-Minded Service).

Skills: Discipline 1, Melee 3, Ranged (Light) 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: Focused Heat (when making a combat check with a Melee or Brawl weapon, may suffer 3 strain to trigger the Burn quality without spending A A), King's Champion (takes two turns per round and generates two Initiative slots: one is determined by the usual Initiative order; the other is always first).

Equipment: Focused flame projection (Ranged [Light]; Damage 8; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Blast 8, Burn 2), flaming melt-hammer (Melee; Damage 8; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Burn 2, Concussive 1), Mahact-made modified Ember suit (defense 1, +2 soak).



Mahact King Vesh Nil Qor (Nemesis)

12 7 5

This Mahact king considers himself superior to his brethren, including their current ruler, Vertar Auran Oblis. He wants to lead the way when the Mahact retake the galaxy, and to ensure he rules over the other Mahact kings. His pride and haste may be his only weaknesses, or perhaps these traits will ensure his victory and domination.

Most sentients who encounter Vesh Nil Qor are either destroyed or fall under his power, so he is not used to being opposed. As he believes all other sentients are his inferiors by far, he treats them as disposable. He is incapable of feeling remorse or demonstrating mercy.

4	2	5	3	5	4
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
6	25	25	0/0		

Species: Mahact.

Motivations: Desire (Galactic Domination), Fear (Failure), Strength (Brilliance), Flaw (Arrogance).

Skills: Astrocartography 2, Coercion 3, Computers 4, Deception 2, Knowledge (Lore) 2, Mechanics 3, Melee 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 3 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target three times).

Abilities: Enthral (on a successful Brawl or Melee check, may spend $\Delta \Delta \Delta$ or $\otimes$ to enthrall the target; see **Enthralled** on page 126), Genetic Activation (once per round, may spend a Story Point as an out-of-turn incidental to trigger latent genetic reprogramming in one minor or unnamed NPC in the current encounter; that NPC immediately becomes an ally), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, opponents must make a **Hard** $[\Delta \Delta \Delta]$ fear check as an out-of-turn incidental [Core Rulebook, page 243]; for multiple sources of fear, opponents make only one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).

Equipment: Mahact staff (Melee; Damage 12; Critical 1; Range [Engaged]; Concussive 1), energy absorption field (when hit by an attack that generates $\Delta \Delta \Delta$ or $\otimes$, may spend the results to heal 4 wounds or 4 strain).



Enthralled

King Vesh Nil Qor's Enthralled ability alters the DNA of the target, forcing them through vile manipulation of their very genome to become willing allies of the Mahact. Since this would render a PC unplayable, PCs who become enthralled must make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Resilience or Discipline check** as an incidental at the start of their next turn in an attempt to resist the effects. If they succeed, they suffer 5 strain but are otherwise unaffected. If they fail the check, they become willing allies of Vesh Nil Qor. The GM can take control of the player's character, or if the player is willing, they can continue to play their character as an ally of the Mahact.

However, if any of their allies are incapacitated, they can spend a Story Point to immediately attempt the check again as an out-of-turn incidental, as the adrenaline and emotions at the sight of their friend being injured or killed gives them a chance to override the control. You can provide other opportunities to remake the check at particularly stressful points as you see fit.

If Vesh Nil Qor is killed, all characters are no longer enthralled.

Enthralled Officers (Rival)

◆ 2 ◆ 2 ◆ 2

The ships of the Mahact fleet are commanded by officers of many civilizations who have had the misfortune of being enthralled and forced to serve their former enemies.

2	3	3	2	2	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
2		10		0/0	

Skills: Discipline 2, Gunnery 2, Leadership 3, Operating 2, Piloting 2, Vigilance 2.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this target once).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Uniform from their former civilization.

Traitor's Loyal Guard (Rival)

◆ 5 ◆ 3 ◆ 2

Depending on where the PCs encounter the Traitor, the Traitor may be protected by guards. These are not drawn from the Winnaran Custodian Guards who provide official protection for the Council; they are the Traitor's loyal personal security detail who have sworn to protect their charge to the death.

3	3	2	1	3	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
5		16		0/0	

Skills: Athletics 1, Cool 2, Discipline 3, Ranged (Light) 3, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Body Guard (as a maneuver, may suffer up to 2 strain to upgrade the difficulty of all combat checks targeting one ally engaged with the loyal guard a number of times equal to the strain suffered, until the end of the loyal guard's next turn).

Abilities: None.

Equipment: Praetorian defender (Ranged [Light]; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range [Medium]; Accurate 1, Pierce 2; ☒ may not be spent to hit the Traitor or other loyal guards when this character targets someone engaged with them), concealed combat armor (+2 soak), comm-bead.

Legion Protectors

Vesh Nil Qor is always in the company of several of his Crimson Legionnaires, who serve as his bodyguards and protectors. Their loyalty to him is absolute, to the point where they would die rather than see him suffer a blow.

When Vesh Nil Qor is hit by a ranged attack, you may spend a Story Point to have a Crimson Legionnaire within short range become the target of that attack instead.

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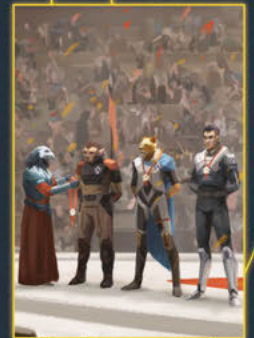
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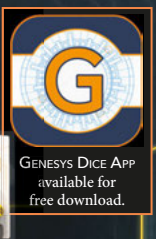
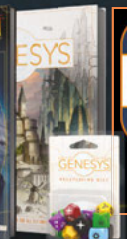


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