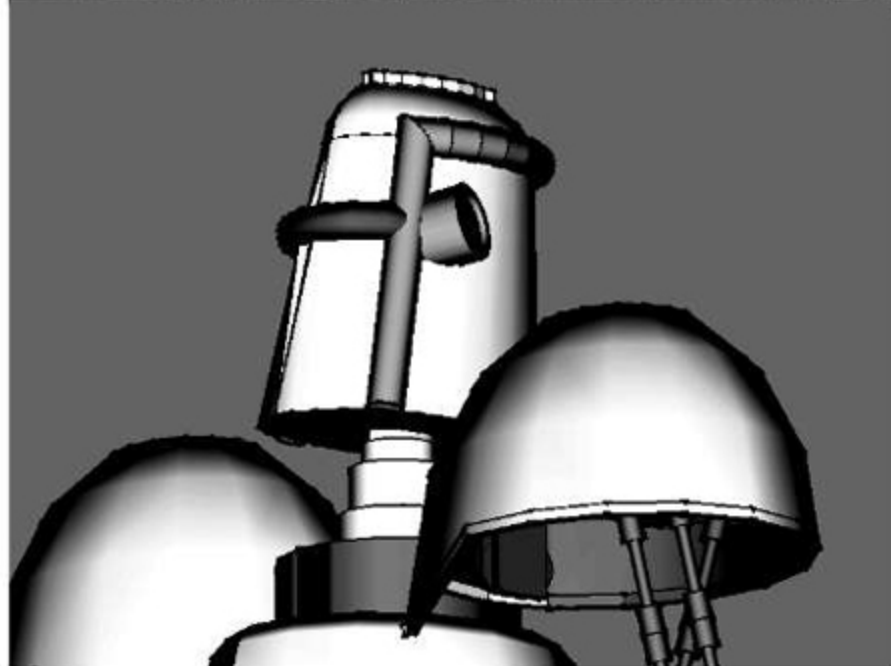
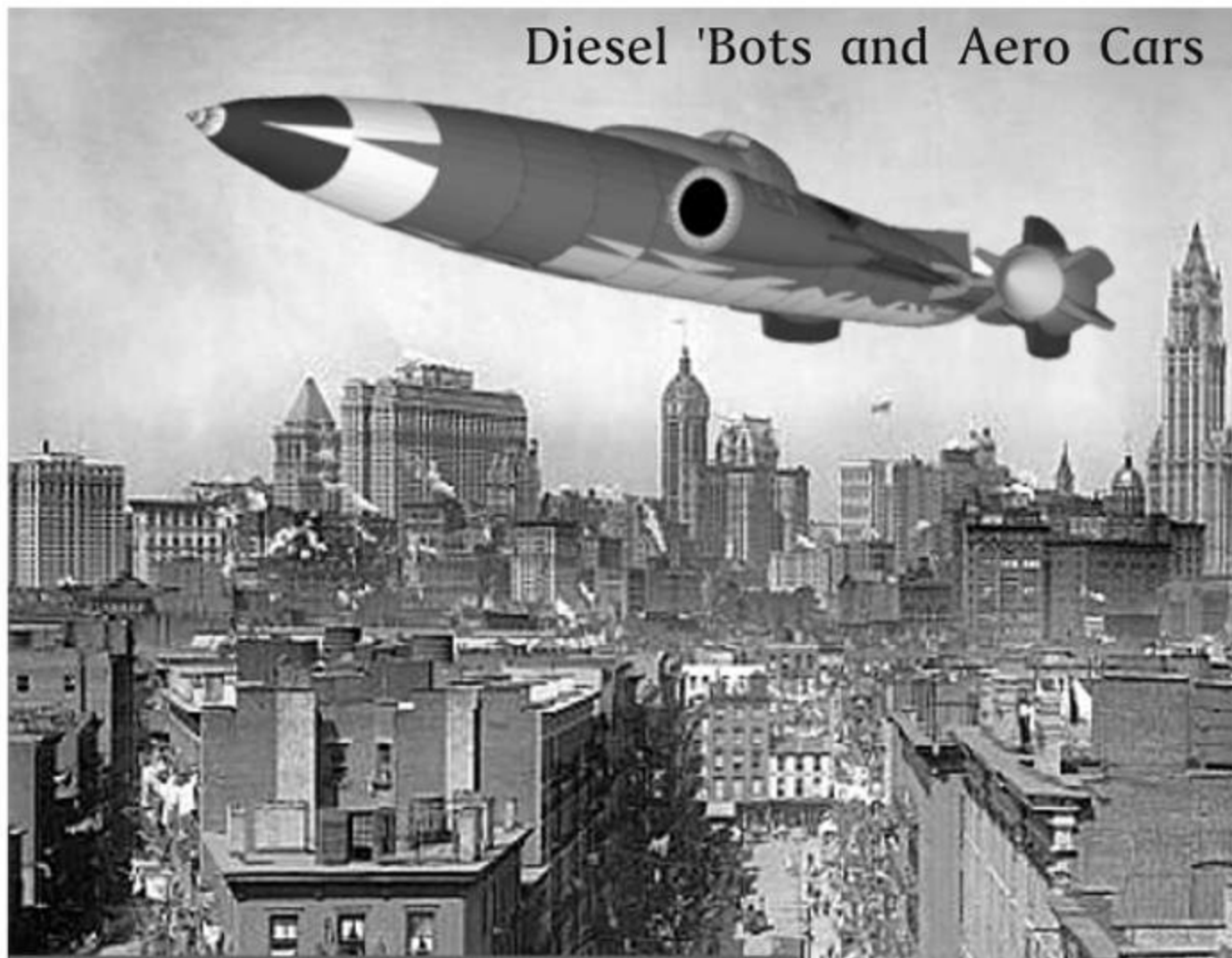


World Guide: Zaonia

Diesel 'Bots and Aero Cars



A SF Setting Book for
Old School 2d6 OGL Systems



**Surreal
Estate
Games**

World Guide: Zaonia

Written by Robert Garitta

A Setting Supplement for Cepheus Engine or Old School
Classic 2d6 OGL Systems

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This book is dedicated to my friends.You know who you are.

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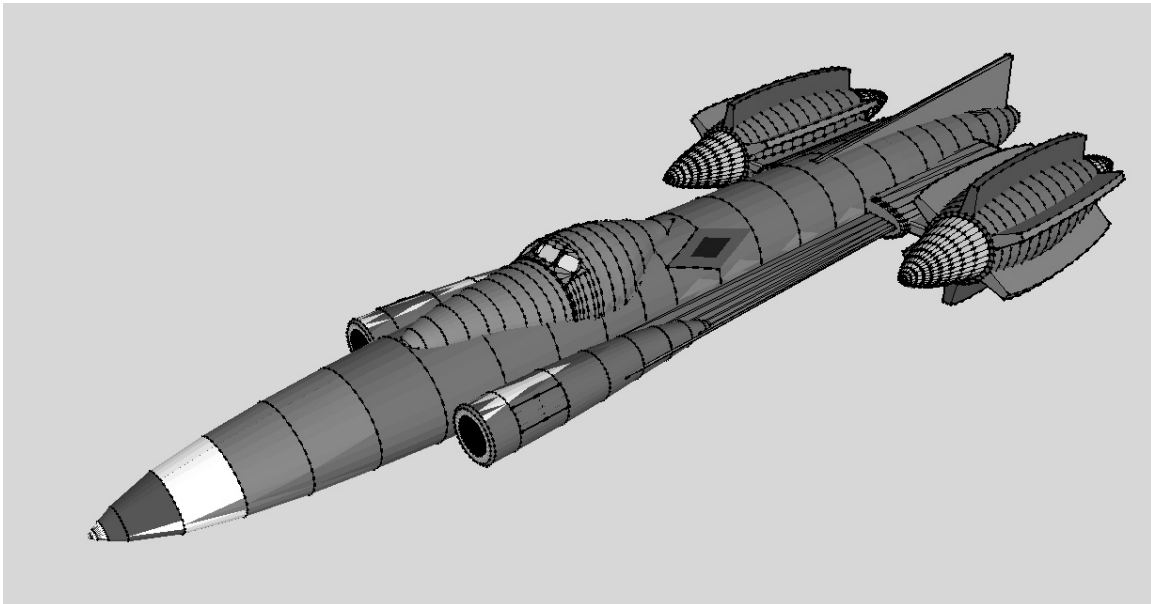
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Introduction

The idea of barbarians in space turns up quite often in science fiction. It also means many things from sword swinging warriors in commandeered ships they do not understand to technologically advanced conquerors who care nothing of culture and civilization to mercenaries uplifted to fight a modern war.

So called 'barbarians' on Earth are responsible for many innovations in history. The Mongols revolutionized warfare with coordinated cavalry and archery tactics. The Scythians wielded swords that were so well forged they cut through the armor of Roman Legionnaires like butter. The Vikings had incredibly advanced metallurgy as well.

In the end barbarians seem to be people who care less for how YOU do things than getting them done. They are outsiders, strange to your ways and usually new on the scene and for story purposes able to create far more chaos than their development would otherwise indicate.



Does anyone else see the similarity to player characters?

I present the Zaonians. They are barbarians. They wield mighty shotguns and revolvers, listen to stories around the vacuum tube radio and think analog wristwatches are pretty neat. They can be allies or hindrances or cunning opponents. The choice is yours.

Robert Garitta 2016

The author would like to express his thanks to the Zaonian Chamber of Commerce for providing the image in glorious black and white used here.

The System



Zaonia

The System (The Four Sisters and the Three Numberless Broods.)

(Note names are translated to galactic Standard in *italics*.)

The Zaonian System is more properly called the Portokali System after the primary single star (nicknamed 'Kali or *Orange*'). Portokali is approximately 5 billion years old and a stable star.

Primary Portokali Type K0 Star Effective temperature 5300°C. Luminosity .42 Sol Mass .81 Sol. No unusual characteristics. The inner limit for Portokali is .16 AUs. Within this limit radiation and solar wind can cause equipment to malfunction and limit EVA

.16 AU PB Chovali (*Embers*) The innermost orbit contains a planetoid belt. There is some evidence that these are the remains of a planet that was destroyed by a collision with another body. It is very poor in metallics though there are some exotic crystals that are rarely found. A very few belters ply their trade here. Most here are on the run, in exile or not welcome at a more populous, richer belt.

Before the Flame Out there were solar power stations producing minute quantities of antimatter for various industrial uses. Rumors persist of hidden caches of antimatter (that would be incredibly valuable). Most of these rumors are just wishful thinking since any antimatter cache would have had to keep functioning for two hundred years or longer. All these stations are long abandoned and looted.

The main asteroid is the subdwarf planet Big Chovali. The rest of the group is called the Ember belt for its proximity to the primary. Chovali has a small aid station (little more than life support spares, food, some repair gear, and a transmitter). Two other aid stations orbit in Chovali's trojan points.

Big Chovali is tidally locked to the primary. There is some water ice to be found on its dark side though generations of belters and frugal traders have found the easily reached deposits and mined them for fuel.

.46 AU Syntrofos (*Companion*) Syntrofos is a small gas giant near its sun or in archaic terms a hot Neptune. Refuelling from it is best left to the professionals and several enterprising merchants and pilots have picked up on this. A small constellation of Scout Couriers is constantly skimming fuel from the turbulent atmosphere and bringing it to a subsidized merchant modified to serve as a tanker for unstreamlined ships. The fuel cost is the same as the starport but without the long wait (see Starport section). Various other merchants come by to provide services of all sorts (running the full range of legality.) Recently the starport authority, tired of losing fuel sales to their competition has cut their

fuel prices 10%. They've also reported the Happy Gas Passer Corporation LLC, for harboring smugglers and pirates leading to several patrol raids that proved no wrongdoing.

.8 AU (C885655 Ag Ri 123) Zaonia (Zao - *Life*) & .7 to 1.26 AU Nuzon (Nuzon either New Zaon or Non Zaonians) share a complex double planet relationship. While binary planets are rare but known these are usually separated by a few radii's distance and tidally locked. In this case Nuzon occupies an elliptical orbit that passes very close to Zaonia periodically. Nuzon and Zaonia are in orbital resonance with Zaonia completing three orbits for every two orbits of Nuzon. Periodically Zaonia and Nuzon pass within a few million kilometers making travel between them very easy.

Every one and one half revolutions of Zaonia (115 standard days or 138 local days) the two planets close to 3.5 million kilometers of each other. The inner and outer gas giants help keep this orbital relationship stable but there is evidence that Nuzon and Zaonia passed much closer in the past, interfering with Zaonia's seismic processes and disrupting its magnetic field. Nuzon might have once been a moon of Fouros that was lost to the system's sun when Fouros entered the system and was captured or when it spiralled in after forming.

Zaonia and Nuzon have no natural satellites.

Nuzon's elliptical orbit gives it a much more hostile climate than Zaonia and it was never a primary target to settle.

1.6 AU PB The Syntrim (*Debris*) Belt is an unremarkable collection of stony and carbonaceous asteroids. There are a few metallic asteroids as well but people looking to get rich usually go elsewhere. Some belters stop over to try their luck from time to time but the motherlode (if any) still waits to be discovered. There are abandoned aid stations and mining facilities as well but they are all stripped clean and open to vacuum.

2.56 AU SGG Foruros (Sentinel) Foruros was once a popular stopover before the Flameout. It boasted a type C starport that many traders used, bypassing Zaonia entirely and just stopping over for fuel. Foruros has an incredible ring system and some yachtsmen and charter flights pass through to take in the view.

4.96 AU PB The Cryoz (*Cold*) Belt is atypical having about a dozen subdwarf planets (up to 1000 km) orbiting in it. The planetoids all have icy mantles and several have subsurface oceans. There are a few ice volcanoes as well. Any survey results before the Flameout were lost but some initial surveys show this may be a rich area for mining and development. Its potential is limited by the remoteness to Zaonia.

Adventures Off Zaonia

Need a quick hook for a party while you frantically read the rest of this book? Roll Away!

1D6

1- Ship in distress (and no insystem patrol!) Roll for type:

- 1-Smuggler
- 2-Free Trader
- 3-Plrate (fake distress call)
- 4-Military Ship
- 5-Scout Ship
- 6-Belter

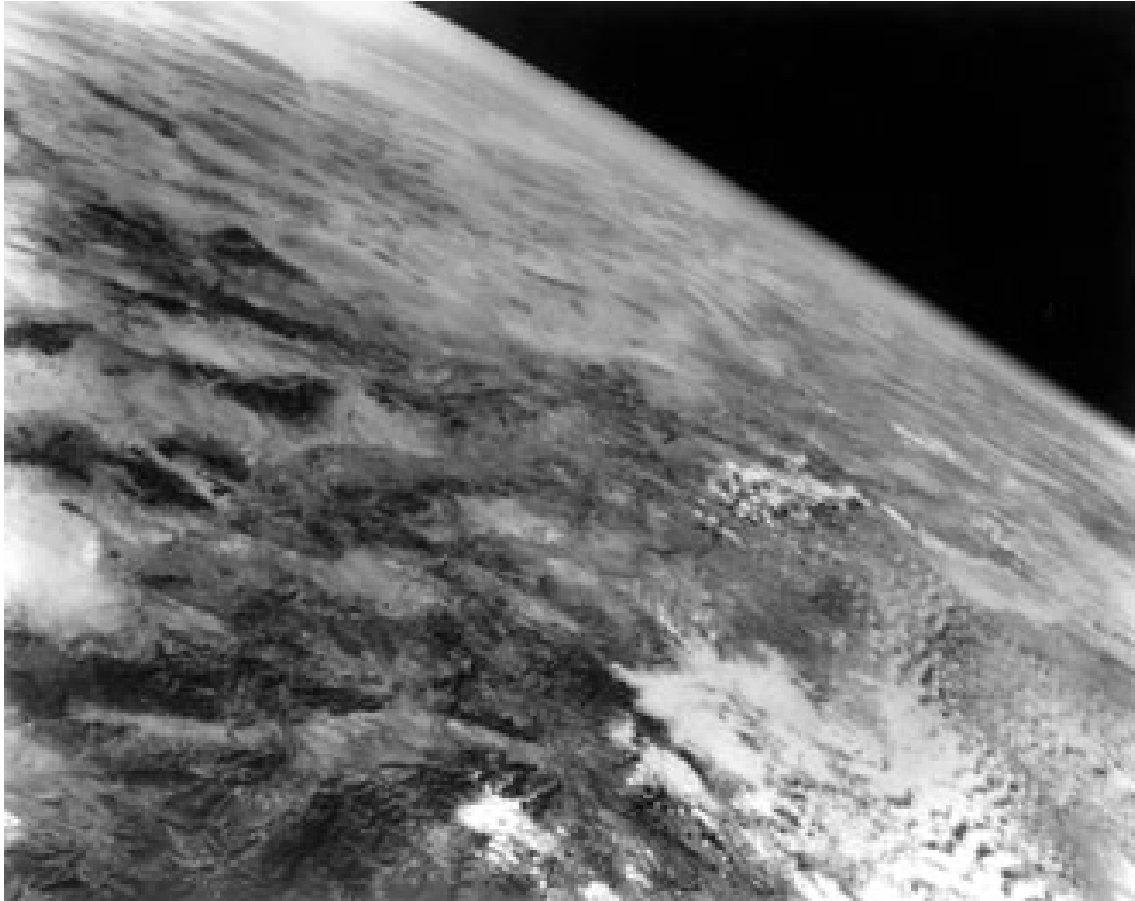
2- Salvage: an old station or derelict looks promising!

3- Socked In: a brutal storm has caused the starport to hold all landings

4- Vacc Market: a trader wants to do some duty free swapping. fuels spares or less practical items.

5- Debris: Trader(s) dropped empty cargo modules or other trash in orbit. Make a Pilot roll to avoid.

6- Disount Fuel: a tender in orbit offers to unload some unrefined fuel for 50 cr. a ton.



Geology and Geography



Zaonia

Geology and Geography

In most respects Zaonia is an ordinary terrestrial planet (which is to there isn't much that will kill you without warning). It has most common minerals (such as iron, aluminum and copper) in abundance supporting an industrial society. Fissionables and rare earths are as rare as on most planets.

Zaonia has a molten metal core covered by a silicate crust, like most Earth like planets. Its magnetic field, however, is in a state of flux. As the North and South poles are in the process of reversing several transient magnetic poles are forming and dissolving. As a result magnetic compasses are very unreliable and most long range navigation is done using sun, stars and sextants or gyro compasses. The magnetic effects can interfere with radios and other electronics.

In particular the 'West Pole' is very unstable waxing and waning in power and moving several kilometers a day. Electronics are very unreliable in its area. In local slang 'Going West' means embarking on a foolish or insane mission. West Pole-ish jokes are often told about people living in the area (but are considered rude or racist).

Most of Zaonia is arid or semi-arid. It has a many mountain ranges with fertile valleys. Major settlement is in one large valley called the Saddle that runs for two hundred kilometers and varies between ten and fifty kilometers in width. The Saddle lies between two ranges running roughly East to West called North Ridge and South Spur. The Saddleback River runs the length of the valley formed by numerous smaller rivers and streams from the mountains.

The Zaonian soil supports most staple crops used in colonization efforts. The local biosphere is rated as Terran Compatible. Most native flora and fauna is edible and somewhat nutritious (travelers are cautioned that native life finds humans the same.)

Agriculture is the major industry in the valley. There are factories and industry that supply local needs but few manufactured products for export. Farming produces a large surplus of crops that the Zaonans export. Hemp is a major cash crop for its use in food, textiles, paper, and medicine. Some people even smoke the stuff.

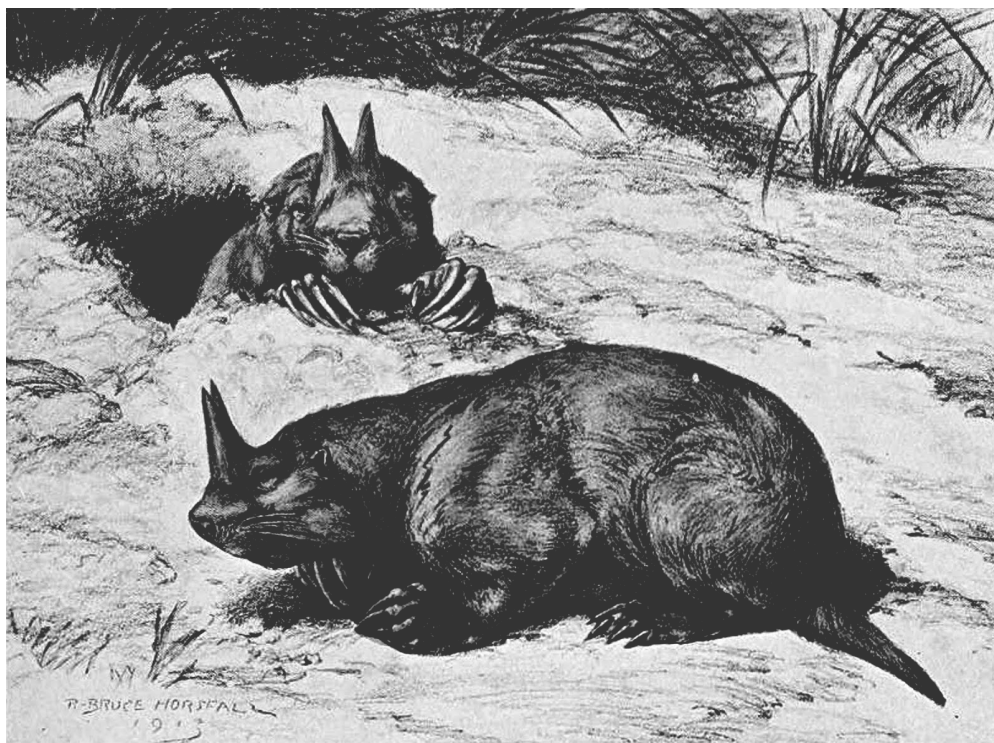
The valley is tectonically stable (like most of Zaonia). Flooding is a worry, especially when Nuzon begins its closest approach. Nuzon exerts considerable tidal forces on Zaonia and half the time the close calls come at springtime when the rivers are already swollen with melted snow from the mountains.

Beyond the Saddle local terrain is drier and rockier with many areas of broken and chaotic terrain that might have originated from passes of Nuzon in the past that were much closer and resulted in heavy seismic activity. The area immediately south of the South Spur Range is a badlands with little water or plant life called the Oldback. Few species brought by the original colonists have intruded in the Oldback and they face fierce competition from the native species. A rail line supports several factory towns with polluting industries but these are relative close to the few streams running south from the mountains. The Survey Service has begun studying the effects of pollution on the area.

The local day is 20 hours long. It gets dark fast and the quicker rotation and denser atmosphere can create dangerous winds and storms fast (see Atmosphere and Hydrosphere).

The Great Pole Survey

The fluctuating magnetic poles were studied on and off over the years. Several Scout missions investigated them and it's a popular subject for local scientists. the magnetic field flux has affected sensitive equipment (ironically such as map boxes and inertail compasses). It's been known to make robots and and comuters act irrationally at times as well and affect radio transmissions. It can provide a little on the spot annoyance or complications to a mission or car trip. The Department of Geology provides four reports a day on the position of the poles to let people plan their navigation accordingly. The locals are ever on the lookout for simple solutions to complex problems and have simplified navigation for aircraft in the Saddle Valley by constructing large reflective arrows with numbers painted on to let pilots find their position easily.



Wiseguys (or crooks) occassionally move the arrows causing aircraft to land at the wrong location for pranks or robbery. A magnetic storm can also ground lifter vehicles.

Native drop bears in the Oldback. They are not bears and do not drop.

Nuzon

Nuzon (0104(IIIb) E653555-4 Ag R) shares the Portokali system with Zaonia (0104 (IIIa) C885655-5 Ag Ri). The two are considered sister worlds in a type of double planet system. Rather than sharing an orbit around the star and being very close and tidally locked (in other words the same side always facing the other world) the two share orbital resonance.

Nuzon has a day of 26 hours. Its orbital distance ranges from 0.85 A.U.s to 0.5 A.U.s. It completes an orbit in 183 standard days or 169 local days.

Nuzon orbits 'Kali twice for every three orbits Zaonia makes. Its orbit is more eccentric taking it further away and closer to the primary than Zaonia's nearly circular orbit. There is some evidence that Nuzonia's orbit changed several hundred million years ago due to the gas giant Syntrofos entering the star system or moving closer in due to tidal forces. The exact history is still unknown and unlikely to be researched anytime soon given the low technology and capitalist nature of space travel in the system.

Nuzon's perihelion or closest approach should render it an uninhabitable desert, while its farthest approach or aphelion should freeze it and kill all life. This is not the whole picture. The southern hemisphere of Nuzon experiences winter when the planet is at perihelion, and its summer at aphelion and this keeps the southern hemisphere livable.

Nuzon Average Temperatures

	Aphelion	Perihelion
Average	263°K/-10°C	344°K/76°C
	Northern H.	Southern H.
Summer	402°K/129°C	316°K/42°C
Winter	218°K/-55°C	308°K/34°C

Nuzon is a small terrestrial world with a metal poor crust. It's surface is dotted with ancient extinct shield volcanos. Its small size has caused it to lose much of its atmosphere and water. It is a dying world in some respects but the death still take longer than the lifespan of the human race.

Some people (especially from Zaonia) find the thin atmosphere distasteful and take several weeks to adjust to it, suffering bouts of dizziness. Make an Routine (+2) Endurance roll to avoid dizziness if undertaking strenuous activity. The roll becomes Average for people from planets with dense atmospheres. This condition lasts for 4d6 days. Reduce the duration by the effect of every roll the character makes. Medical skill can be added to the roll if the medic is monitoring

the character and administering various medicines to help their system cope. Halve the duration of the condition if being treated by a character with Medic-3.

While Nuzon has little surface water it does have huge reserves of underground water in permafrost and aquifers. This water is crucial to the survival of human life since the surface water is often mineral laden and undrinkable without distillation.

Nuzonia held a research outpost before the Collapse investigating ways to engineer fast growing plants. The planet was chosen for its remoteness and lack of value in case of unforeseen outcomes to the genetic tinkering. With the Collapse, the research facility was abandoned. The fate of the personnel was never determined. Legends of enigmatic dwellers deep in the desert persist.

The modern Nuzoni settlers fled Zaonia during the Time of Things Going to Hell. The Nuzoni swore they were exiled. The Zaonians insisted they fled stealing the last working shuttle then broke it. Considering the size of the populations in question it's more likely the settlers came to Nuzon in the hope someone might survive starvation and raiders.

Living in the planet's southern hemisphere was rough. The seed stores and supplies of the research facility proved priceless in setting up underground farming and greenhouses. People moved into the underground base and began expanding its tunnels and digging deeper.

Most of the colony's needs were met by raising bamboo, the main plant studied. It grew fast and could even be raised outside with sufficient irrigation. Bamboo could be used in producing textiles, paper, food and charcoal to burn for energy. The entire economy revolved around the plant. Chemical compounds were extracted from the plants as well for use in dyes, medicine, food and industry.

Despite some animosity towards Zaonia, Nuzon is still behind it in joining the interstellar community. It also knows that as a small colony of a few hundred thousand it is very vulnerable to a pirate raid or other disaster and that the closest help would come from Zaonia.

Oddly enough despite their disputes Nuzon has a similar form of government to Zaonia. Their Administrators were elected based on technical expertise in keeping people (and yes, bamboo) alive on an unforgiving world. Winters are still pretty rough.

The settlers (s. Nuzon, pl. Nuzoni) are more reserved and calm than their Zaonian cousins. They survived by working together. Cooperation and manners are highly regarded. Their obedience to authority (especially the Administrators) borders on being genetically engineered. Violence and even arguments are frowned upon.

Nearly everything you see or eat or otherwise use on Nuzon is made of or contains bamboo. Besides a number of unmodified species there are dozens of plants gene modded to produce food or desired chemicals. This is in stark contrast to the crude domes or cave tunnels people live in. Every home has weaving (from bamboo fibers): tapestries, rugs and drapes often made by the occupants. The winter is a long boring time for many of the farmers and handcrafts are one way to pass the time. ONE item: slide rules have started a craze for archaic computation devices and is becoming a popular trade item.

There is limited electrical power, used chiefly for lighting in homes and the underground agricultural warrens. Power for generators comes from windmills and burning bamboo. Bamboo is heated gradually to turn it to charcoal. The coal is either burnt above ground or used to manufacture fuel cells. Solar power is also an important part of energy production during the spring and summer months. Light is reflected onto reservoirs of mercury or other liquids boiling them and using the steam to turn turbines.

The majority of Nuzon is unexplored and untouched. Most of it is also poisonous due to salts and perchlorates in the soil. Fresh water is a prize and usually must be produced (distilled over bamboo charcoal or with sunlight). Charcoal is also exported to worlds like Inerze that just do not have the space to raise plants to burn but still enjoy a cozy fire.

The Zaonians and Nuzoni were isolated for decades and Nuzon still remains an exotic and mysterious locale to the Zaonians. Add to this the fact that most offworlders never leave the spaceport or the warrens around it. There are now dozens of smaller communities making their own way in the world, cut off by distance or perhaps in a self imposed exile.



Atmosphere and Hydrosphere



Zaonia

Atmosphere and Hydrosphere

The Zaonian atmosphere is rated as dense with 1.25 standard atmospheres of pressure. Ships coming from worlds with a thinner atmosphere will usually increase air pressure gradually during the voyage to minimize passenger discomfort on landing. Most of the time the air pressure is not a problem. The air is an oxygen rich mix.

Due to a slight axial tilt and the equatorial location of Saddle Valley weather doesn't vary much by seasons. The average planetary temperature is 285oK or 12oC, somewhat cool. Winters are usually wet with snow confined to the mountains. Summer and spring have plenty of warm days with locals taking breaks to work on their tans (which is hard with a type K primary!)

The fluctuating magnetic poles provide many beautiful aurora displays in the evenings. While the weather is cooler over all the shorter nights mean the temperature doesn't get a chance to drop as much as on some worlds.

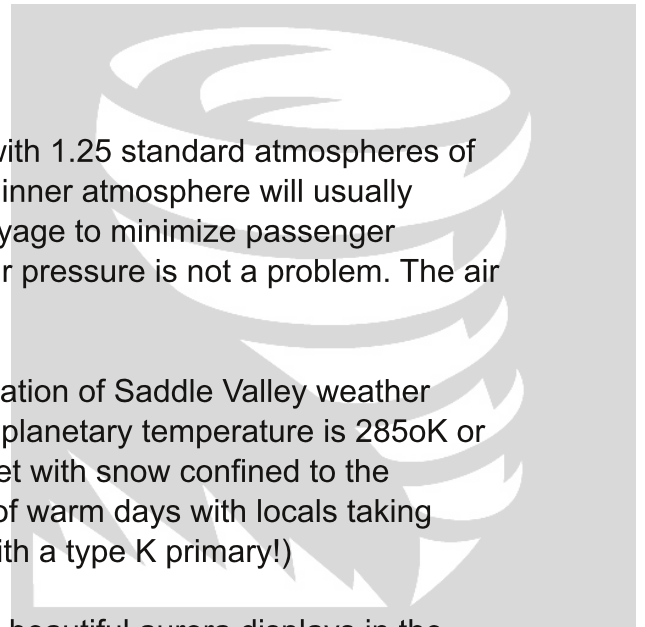
In autumn and winter it rains almost daily. The rains give way in midspring. These rains can produce flooding near mountains and in some areas of the arid regions a dry wadai can become a short lived raging river. The dense atmosphere is capable of holding a lot of water and generating impressive rain storms and winds.

Zaonia is half water. Most of this water is in shallow and salty seas. Before the Flameout there were seaside settlements but as desalinization plants failed the people moved to the Saddle or similar areas fed by freshwater streams.

There is concern that ruins near these seas will become havens to smugglers. They are far from the settled areas and have ready access to water. Smugglers or pirates are bad enough, but any lax refueling procedures could also bring invasive offworld life. While the locals have no plans to expand into these ghost towns anytime soon they like thinking about the future and having a thriving (and profitable) fish population is preferable to a mass of fungi, mold and deadly bloatfish.

The Survey service does send a team to take samples from the seas annually, especially areas near old settlements to monitor this. It's also a great way to check for illegal operations.

The seas and coastal areas have returned to the wild after the Flameout and provide many sites for fishing or hunting. Occasionally a noble or billionaire will land their yacht there to enjoy the scenery or hunt or a free trader will try to refuel on the cheap.



The Cruel Seas

Modern Zaonians are not sea travellers. This is despite the many ruins along the coasts that may hold valuable salvage. Offworlders may find opportunity or danger. The middle of the ocean is also an excellent location for a hidden installation for whatever evil plot you'd need. The Saddleback River does empty into the sea and there are a few ocean going crafts so hidden bases might not remain hidden forever. Offworlders might also be hired to investigate such outlaw installations (or to make supply runs for them if they're that sort)



A local engineer shows up his latest invention: the hydrocycle.

Sturm und Drain

Due to its dense atmosphere and rapid rotation weather can change quickly on Zaonia. Add to this that the thick atmosphere can hold more water than a standard atmosphere and you have the potential for huge rains. This is usually not a concern in the settled areas or cities where drainage is planned for. In less settled areas rivers or streams flood and become difficult to cross. In the hills and mountain areas the lack of drainage can cause floods that will swamp an ATV. Piloting aircraft through a storm can put a few hairs on your chest.

Most local pilots want none of this and land when a storm is coming. This might save a party from angry pursuers if they want to brave the storm. Piloting tasks will be at least at a -2 DM or more.

As they say in the Survey; if you see the locals running try to keep up!



Culture and History

Zaonia

Culture and History

The original colonists of Zaonia were pure strain humans. No genetic modifications were deemed necessary to survive and thrive on the hospitable world. Today they are divided into three major ethnic groups. The South Bank people are slight of build and shorter than average with dark hair, eyes and olive skin. The Urban folk living in the main cities are taller and fairer skinned with some blonde haired and blue eyed people among them. The North Bank people are taller, heavier and swarthier than either of the other two groups. In modern times all three groups interact and intermarry and consider their ancestry secondary to their being Zaonians.

The South Bank people are the oldest group on Zaonia and named the planet after their form of worship: Zaoism, a reverence for all life and living to their fullest potential.

Today over a million people live in Saddle Valley (or just the Saddle.) There are three major cities, Zaoprym (the Capitol), North Branch and South Spur. almost 100,000 people live in Zaoprym and another fifty thousand in each of the smaller cities. Numerous towns and farms dot the river banks and the feeder streams and rivers. Settlements thin moving away from the river banks and there is little habitation in the foothills and mountains.

Zaoprym itself is on a large island in the middle of the Saddleback with numerous bridges spanning the river. Most of the planet's light industry and assembly takes place here. Heavier industry has moved south of the mountains into the Oldback.

The ground port is located on a large island west of Zaoprym. A subway and bridge service the starport. The subway is a holdover of the pre-collapse era that was put back in service with electric trains replacing mag-lev service. There are other abandoned subways that were connected to the port tunnel but these were closed off pending exploration and inspection.

Zaoprym is a cosmopolitan city with many visiting offworlders. The locals try to be as hospitable as possible (many think this involves neon signs.) They need the offworlders' credits.

The Zaonians are proud of their job rebuilding their cities and world (they're proud of nearly everything to hear them talk). The locals have a reputation of being pushy, argumentative and gruff that they completely deserve (especially the city dwellers.) They are also helpful, hardworking and eager to learn.

Arguments are a way of life. The ability to win an argument (or a brawl) is well regarded. Offworlders are cut some slack. Arguments that would turn nasty on many other cultures are viewed by the locals the way a runner views his daily exercises and fieldwork: a way to keep in shape for the real contests to come. In an argument insults fly (good insults and witty banter are admired).

The locals realize they are surrounded by more populous and advanced worlds. It is not in their character to roll over or appear humble. If Zhaonians can't win a fight they either bluff or appear too crazy to bother provoking. Knuckling under or caving is a disgrace.

Despite their rude reputation most Zaonians will always take a minute to stop what they're doing to help or just talk to someone. For example, if you ask for directions you will get them, even if the local doesn't know!

Small talk is a good way to head off an argument. Starting a conversation about the weather or a sports team is a good way to kill a few minutes and then segue into what you're really after.

The inhabitants of Zaoprym do their best to create a bright and entertaining city for travelers. Some of their attempts to appear technologically advanced are laughable by offworlder standards, for example a mobile phone that fits in a backpack (that is usually carried by a servant) or an offworld robot brain bolted into a hulking steel body powered by a diesel engine. Other attempts are regarded with surprise or even awe. Most spacers take the ground port tour their first time on planet. The operations room with it's horde of technicians computing orbits and tracking them on a huge orrery or series of clear plastic domes with grease pencils amazes them. People with computers often forget what people without computers can do.

Other sights for offworlders are the Zaonoplex showing flatscreen black and white films (the *Ghouls of the Underworld* serial film is very popular), the Automat is a popular eating spot with offworld dishes available (many offworlders think robots are involved in the food preparation because of the title), and there are regular historical tours (those are more popular since they removed the bodies of mercenaries taking place in the Uprising from strategic locations.)

Recent expeditions beyond the Saddle and into the Oldback indicate that there is a large and very scattered population in the wild areas of the planet. Some are clans from abandoned towns who survived the Collapse by living off the land.



An autogyro) prepares to deliver mail and supplies to a trading post in the Oldback.

Others are prospectors, hermits or outlaws from the Saddle or offworld. Traveling outside the Saddle is not done lightly. Estimates of 100,000 to another million people may be living in the wilds.

Armed parties are leaving the Saddle more and more to explore ruins, prospect for valuable minerals or hunt exotic animals. They are learning that the Oldback locals also give you directions even if they do not know the way!

History: Pre-Collapse

Government records indicate the initial settlement of the 'Kali system was in the inner zone and geared towards building solar arrays to produce antimatter economically. The industrial workers eventually brought their families and settled them on Zaonia. Merchants and service providers followed and a farming co-op began raising food locally. Belters began mining ore in the inner and medial belt for industrial use.

The Flameout changed that. Jump Drives began catastrophically malfunctioning ushering in the Sunless Day. No wide scale space travel for decades while jump space stabilized. Several ships docked at the main antimatter storage nodes exploded and created an chain reaction visible on Zaonia early one morning.

Cut off from the rest of the universe, the workers and settlers left in system moved their people and resources to Zaonia to attempt to turn it into a self sufficient colony. Like many worlds, they had depended on interstellar trade. Despite the rich growing conditions they imported most of their food. Now they began retooling industry to produce fertilizers, farming implements and pesticides. It was a race, and not everyone thought they could win. Many settlers went to Nuzon where there was an agricultural research station to salvage what they could for Zaonia's agricultural efforts but their ship broke down leaving them and the research base personnel stranded on the inhospitable world.

Technology levels fell for decades. When the Polity began sending scout ships out to renew contact with their member worlds Zaonia was in late Tech Level 4. Nuzon had similar development. Though they started with a higher technology level the inhospitable climate was more of a struggle to survive.

Resurgence

Over the years since star travel resumed Zaonia had many visitors, not all friendly. More troubling was the influx of offworld weapons and vices.

When systems and infrastructure began failing government was assumed by the engineers and professionals tasked with maintaining industry and farming. Eventually they formed the Order of the Flaming Sword, dressing their government with the trappings of nobility. Despite these trappings the Tech Knights (as the common citizens called them) were chosen by a vote in the districts they represented. They could be impeached if many of their constituents called for it or called out by other knights for incompetence or corruption. Duels were by pistol as they were still civilized.

The Tech Knights soon banned offworld technology. There were exceptions. Cyberware or medical technology was allowed on humane grounds. Salvaged technology from local wrecks or ruin was allowed after the Knights examined it. Devices using exotic materials: drugs for example were allowed.

While progress slowed the Zaonians remained independent financially and if there were a disaster they were sure they could maintain anything they built. That was important to them. Only a fool used a machine they couldn't understand at least the basics of.

The period of rebuilding was marred by several short intense wars. Some Knights set themselves up as warlords in more remote regions and these Scorch Knights were dealt with. A few still exist in old ruined cities and fortresses. Rumors of their treasure hoards persist.

The Remnants were more dangerous. As technology fell apart scientists or engineers would use low passage berths to sleep a few decades until things got better and they could take over. A few of them wake up every few years, even now. The Zaonians quickly learned to deal with threats who had higher levels of technology. The Remnants remain a threat simply because there is no way to be sure they've all reanimated.

Interstellar Trade and the Beginning of Prosperity

As interstellar trade resumed and more ships passed through Zaonia had a problem. It was now a rich agricultural world and numerous traders stopped there to buy food for other less bountiful worlds or just to refuel on their way. Many of these traders had forged identities to hide the fact they were skipping on their bank payments. Others came representing companies well known and favored by the Zaonian government for offworld exporting. They refuelled using the company credit lines (and resupplied their ships) passed bad checks or paid with counterfeit credits and left never to be seen again.

The banks that had mortgaged the ships that were skipping were not pleased.

The companies that set up credit lines and savings accounts were not pleased.

The local merchants and starport authorities who were stiffed regularly were not pleased.



The Tech Knights, who based their rule on their control and use of technology, were made to look like idiots. High technology was just too good at copying documents their local technology could not discern.

One of the knights, Sir Cuthbert, had traveled offworld in his youth and had a membership in the Outreach Association. He used it to travel to a nearby spaceport and spoke with other members. The Outreach Association did not like when a world's commerce and star travel died.

Aero pilot preparing to take off.

They sent Sir Cuthbert to the bank. Sir Cuthbert returned several months later with a number of binders. The binders and the paper sheets inside had to be specially ordered and cost nearly as much as his passage. He resolved to bring his own stationary next trip.

Everyone mortgaging a ship has to submit proof of identity. That consists of retina imaging, fingerprints, DNA and finally they sign off on the loan the old fashioned way. Banks are very traditional.

Zaonia didn't have the technology for retinal or DNA scans. Importing offworld gear would erode the nobility's authority. Fingerprints could be faked with high tech prosthetics well enough to fool the locals. So the Zaons began checking signatures.

Handwriting is very hard to fake. People who use thumbprints and eye scans for ID don't know that. In fact, the banks only saw the signatures as a tradition. But the Zaons wrote quite a lot by hand: letters, legal forms, sometimes whole books! They also had a few graphologists who were very good for forensic work. They gave them new jobs at the starport and waited. As soon as someone came along with a ship that was listed as mortgaged (or even not) his handwriting was checked against bank records. By the pros.

They might hack and fake ship IDs and transponders and licenses but faking a signature on demand was too hard. They'd mess up their sign in sheet or sign a bad check badly and get busted on the way back to their ship. The better writing analysts could tell from changes in signatures whether the signers were nervous or ill or under the influence which certainly interested the local creditors. Scams dropped to tolerable levels.

The banks got several ships that skipped payments repossessed. They were happy.

The companies saw the license poachers jailed. They were happy.

The local merchants had a reasonable chance of being paid. They were happy.

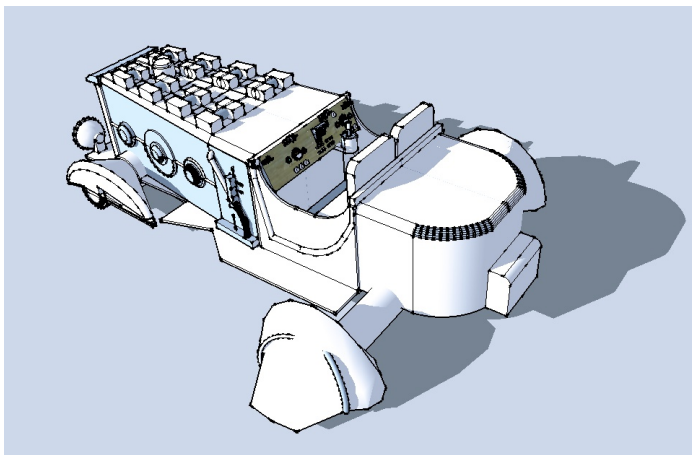
The nobles seized several ships that were owned outright by their captains and began outfitting them as a small trade fleet for exporting handcrafted local wares.

They were happy.

What did the nobility export?
Illuminated manuscripts and even stationary.

Writing things down is one of the most secure forms of data entry.

This aero was built to serve as a taxi for prominent wealthy citizens.



Speaking Zaonian

Old Zaonian is related to Old Earth Greek. It is seldom spoken outside of university literature courses and religious functions. The locals speak Galactic Standard but with some grammar differences and a lot of idioms. The following exchange is typical:

Original

What do you say?

How's by you?

You just looking or fixing to spend?

Smokes wiseguy.

In my wheelhouse. How's?

What's the damage?

Four bits.

I'm not looking to buy the store.

Ah applesauce!

I was born at night, not last night! It's a gouge.

Smoke a lick of rope; why don't ya!

Shaddap!

Same to you likewise!

Aaaaah SHADDAP!!

Translation

Good morning

Hello

What can I do for you?

I'd like to buy some cigars please.

Certainly. Are these satisfactory?

Certainly. How much are they?

A quarter credit each.

That price must be erroneous.

It is correct.

Do I look gullible? These are deci-credit cigars at best.

I take umbrage at that. You may take your business elsewhere.

That is of no import to me. Good day

And you as well.

I said good day sir!

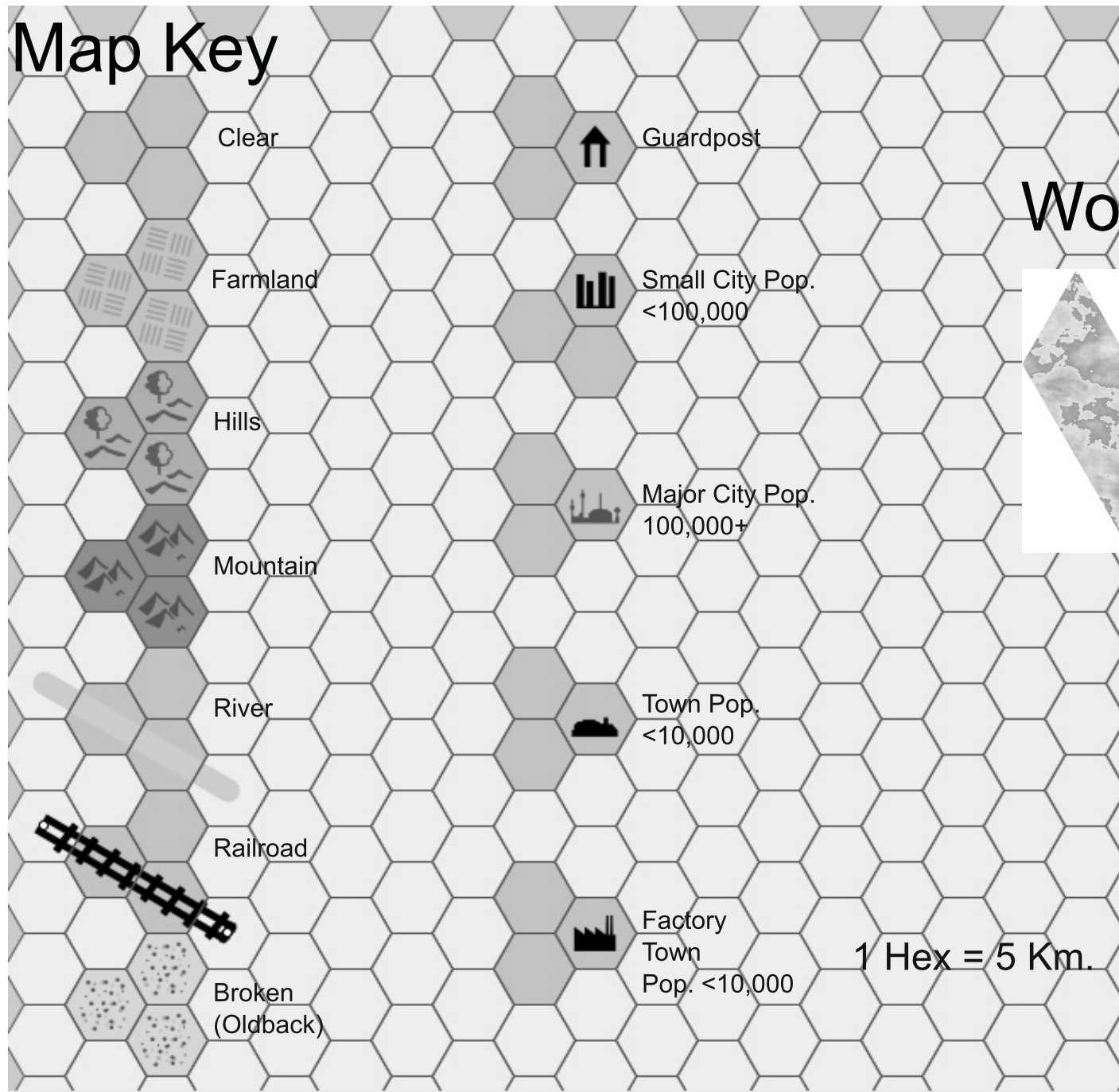
Note that while the two were engaged in this heated discussion the sale was made for the indicated amount. The lady left, apparently happy, with the purchase of several cigars.

It is strongly suggested visitors hire a local to deal with such exchanges until they've witnessed a few.

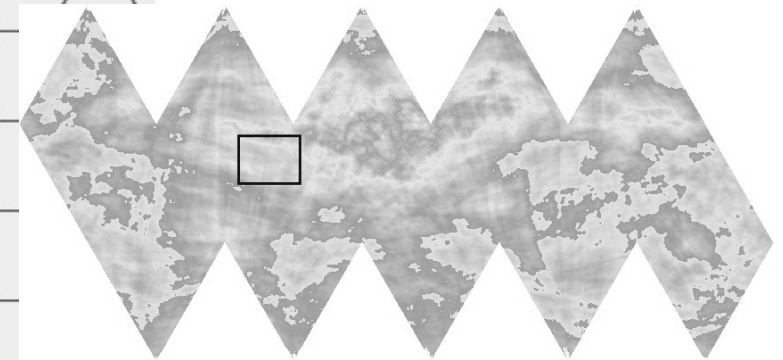
Northern Ridge



Map Key



World Map



The Banking System

After putting a stop to fraud the Tech Knights saw more opportunity for economic growth. In an interstellar polity that had all manner of cyber crime their security was an order better than most worlds simply because it did not rely on computers. The First Bank of Zaonia worked on a system of handwriting. People who were recognized customers had their signatures filed and simply signed for things. That was the first level of security. The second level of security involved established handshakes, photos, mannerisms and yes passwords ... that were spoken to confirm identity.

No hacker could break the system. Any impersonations would require a master forger, who was also expertly disguised, and managed to learn memorized passwords and recognition cues from the customer. That was a tall order for most.

The subsector nobility noticed and began making deposits in the banks in the form of precious materials. Lock boxes were used to hold various secrets: letters for blackmail, contracts for unholy business alliances, family heirlooms, and artifacts.

Zaonia now had a defense against offworld invasion. Any would be conquerors would have to deal with their depositors, who were not, the sort to let their valuables fall to others.

Raids were the problem. The security forces had rifles and submachine guns. Manpower was there. They could mass a lot of men at bank vaults. That wasn't good enough. Raiders with battle dress would probably have surprise and high energy weapons.

Worse, high energy cutters could get them into the best vault the locals produced in a few minutes. Offworld experts agreed. The biggest most massive bank the Zaonians could produce would fall to a determined force of offworld mercenaries.

The locals could hire mercenaries with high tech weapons to guard their bank but that involved offworld technology which the local technocrats did not produce. This would undermine their expertise and authority and what would keep the mercenaries from looting the bank themselves or looking the other way when bribed?

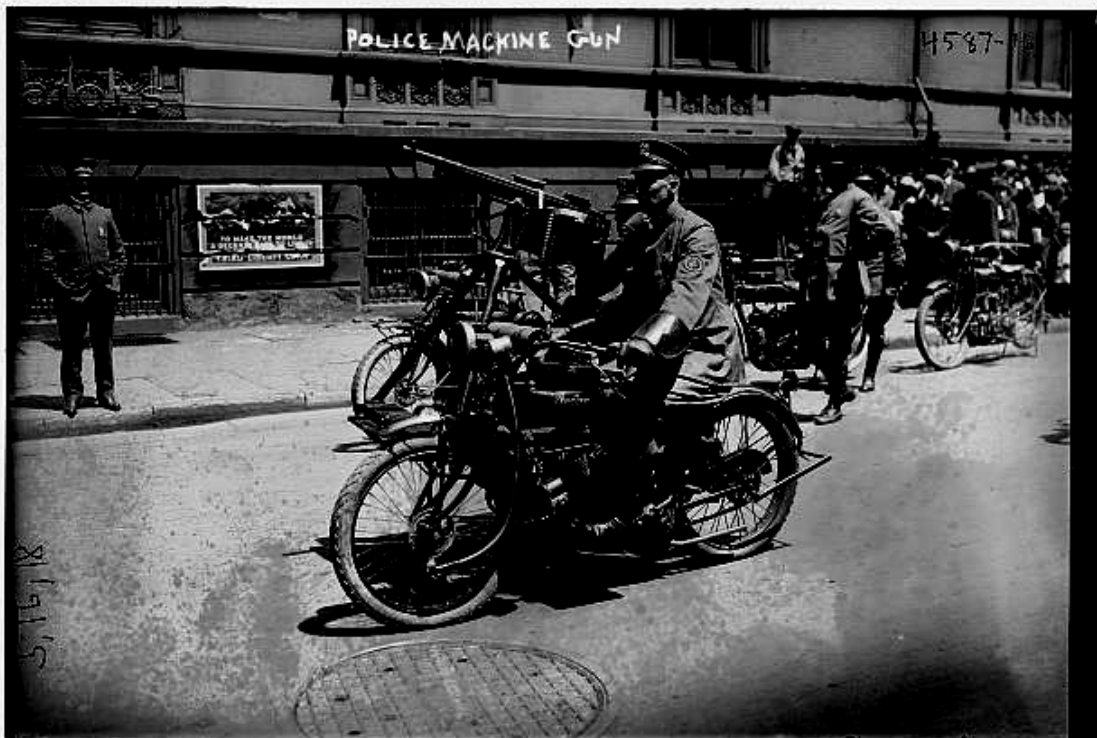
So the locals built not one vault but many. Small ones. They were still guarded pretty well. They all had smaller but hardened steel walls. Most of them were empty.

Armored cars shuttled between the banks daily. Most of them were empty but the few held valuables shuttled between vaults on time tables known to only a few.

specific route of many. If anyone did hit the right bank or armored car that schedule writer would have hard questions asked. The schedule writers included watermarks specific to each armored vehicle crew. Any photocopies could be tracked to the person who lost or sold them.

Raiders could hit a bank. They would be shot at by a number of guards. The hail of bullets would be too risky unless the raiders had battledress and still be risky even then. After fighting these defenders the raiders would open the vault, which could be empty. Ditto for the armored cars.

Eventually the locals dug an underground roadway system. With access to the banks to allow the cargo transfers to occur out of sight. The banking/safe deposit business was taking off. It became a major planetary industry between, security, excavation, construction, maintenance, tank manufacture, and administration. A few raids got squashed quickly. Most of them hit the wrong bank or the wrong car or had a tunnel collapse on them. Oh yes: the tunnels were boobytrapped. Offworlders could make a suit of armor that could laugh at bullets, but no one made armor that stood up to a couple of tons of rock.



This officer of the Zaoprym Municipal Police has duty combining two Zaonian passions: motorcycles and machineguns. Bank robbers take note!

The Uprising

The Zaonians were secure. The Prince Admiral of Facesos, the Plague Ministers of Inerze, and the recluse roboticists of Zerar were all customers of their banking system. Anyone invading and disrupting the security of their valuables would face their wrath.

The Prince Admiral of Facesos, the plague ministers of Inerze, and the recluse roboticists of Zerar didn't give a deuce about the fate of Zaonia, just the security of their valuables. A change of power that did not endanger those valuables was no concern to them.

So when a young engineer who spent much of his life offworld, decided to make a push for power he first assured those off worlders he would respect their property (and in fact give them better rental rates on vault space). Needless to say he told them this about the time his offworld mercenaries commenced to land at the starport and Zaoprym.

The usurper was on a budget. Battledress troopers were few. They seized the starport and secured the communications. The rest were troops with cloth armor and laser rifles who expected to wage a quick campaign of shock and awe.

The Zaonians could not build one radio jammer that scrambled enemy chatter across many frequencies, but they could and did build a lot of jammers and keep them hidden away in their tunnels. Their forces used telephone lines and signal flares and carrier pigeons in some cases.

They didn't have the camouflage armor and orbital sensors the invaders had but they mounted a series of counter attacks on the starport from their tunnel system. When the battledress commandos tried to root the locals out of the tunnels they faced a storm of heavy machine guns, flamethrowers and demolition charges. The last straw was the armored cars the Zaonians had in the tunnels to transport valuables. It turned out bullet proof didn't mean you could laugh at an armored car parked on your chest. They mutinied when they figured that they would run out of commandos before they ran out of tunnels.

On the surface the invaders faced a bombardment that turned out to be sand canisters modified to fire from artillery. Their laser weapons were now degraded so badly they had less range than the rifles the locals carried. The invaders did not have heavy weapons. The usurper didn't want to wipe out the planet he'd rule and well, he did have those pretty lasers and battledress commandos!

The usurper discovered the sand canisters were fired from a couple of destroyers off the coast. The powermonger demanded the landing craft commanders go airborne and shoot the destroyer up.

The commanders, having seen the way the invasion was going stuck to the letter of their contracts and said 'No!' That turned out to be very fortunate for them as they would have met the submarine with the offworld missile turrets (that was still very hush hush.)

The Usurper tried to tell everyone the other Tech Knights had used offworld munitions. The sand canisters were a starship's weaponry for gosh sake! Sir Cuthbert explained it away as a naturally occurring crystal, not manufactured, merely polished. What the heck. They played fair (so to speak) with all other tech. The submarine with the missiles was still a secret.

The Zaonians then turned to their depositors and explained that the rates were going to stay the same.

No harm, no foul. The customers merely had stayed out of an internal dispute. That was fine. Zaonia was an honorable society. One less than honorable might put photocopies of a number of sensitive documents they were entrusted with onboard their small fleet of freighters to distribute to several interested parties should anything happen to their government. The off worlders thought copying documents required a computer. In fact carbon paper astounded some of them when they came visiting.

As for the starport and capital that took a little repair work. It was awhile before they took the shot up and mangled battledress suits off the perimeter wall. They wanted to make sure people got the message.

The particulars of the Usurper and the Usurper's fate is left up to the individual referee. If you need an idea for a rumor or adventure roll away!

- 1- The Usurper was captured and continues to runs the remains of his followers from behind bars.
- 2- The Usurper was a front for offworlders trying to take over Zaonia.
- 3- The Usurper escaped and continues to plot from his hidden base which is
 - 1- an abandoned warehouse
 - 2- a cavern in the mountains
 - 3- a lair on the Oldback
 - 4- on Nuzon
 - 5- in another star system
 - 6- in the abandoned subway tunnels below Zaoprym
- 4-The Usurper is alive but badly injured and needs offworld care to recover.
- 5- One of the former followers is imitating the Usurper.
- 6- An agent of an offword power uses technology to create the illusion the Usurper is alive to control his organization.

Zaonia: Conference Central And the Voynich Agency

Besides all the so called legal banking business handled across borders and even worlds there are all manner of deals that no one in their right minds would ever call legal. Selling guns, bombs, and sex are all legal on some worlds, but none of these are legal on EVERY world if you get my drift.

Bad people need to record their deals and sometimes transcripts to indicate exactly what was said. A voice transcript can cause you severe trouble. A talk to text system is needed. The audio files can be examined for speech patterns and voice characteristics. Someone smart enough to make and secrete a copy of an audio file probably is smart enough to make several such copies and give them to various people for release upon their death.

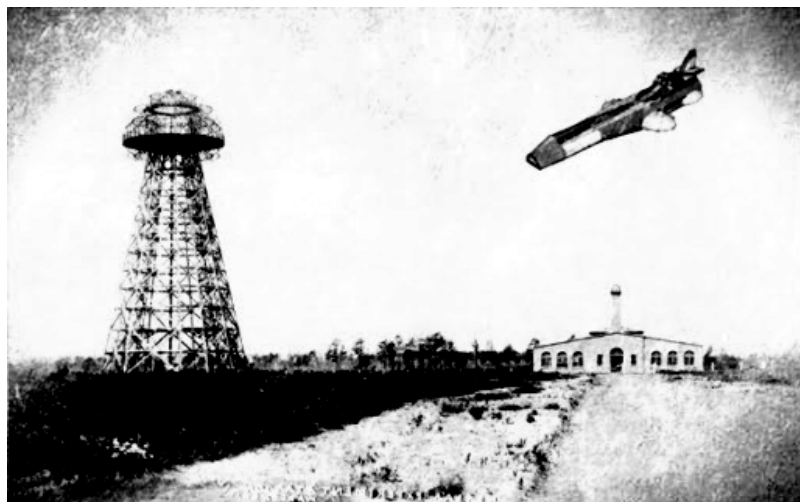
Enter the Zaonians! Written records already put the brakes on forgery and fraud in their cluster. It seemed only fair that they do something for the crooks now (for a fee of course). Now they set up a system to record discourses of various types in great speed and and accuracy ... with stenography!

The people interested in having their meetings transcribed would be brought to a secluded conference chamber. The recorders could in fact be ordered from several agencies with complete anonymity and ignorance of both parties to insure their honesty and impartiality. The stenographers would take dictation during the meeting using shorthand then typed out the transcripts. No voice files to incriminate. Accurate recordings of vital matters and agreements were made. Best of all: no evidence to identify the parties in a court of law.

When the banking guild set up an agency to license and monitor stenographers they added additional procedures, such as the stenographers using several newly constructed systems of phonemes for their note taking. Previously they used a more or less accessible writing system that could be discovered on library systems because it was commonly used in the past. The extra benefit of phonetic writing was the stenographers no longer had to know the language of the parties meeting. They could record it in their notes and type it up using a phonetic

alphabet system common in the cluster. The original notes would only be of use to another agency scribe who knew the writing system. Computer scans of handwriting were also notoriously difficult to decode.

The Voynich Agency was in business!



An aero with Tech Knights inspect a radar installation.

Diversification

Near Zaonia lies the planet INERZE (B997A84-C 2 Hi In Cp 124). Inerze is everything that Zaonia isn't. Overcrowded, high tech, and governed by a bureaucracy that accomplishes little.

Inerze (usually spelled in capital letters) would be a ready market for a small agricultural world. But a transport fee of 1 cr. per kilogram (1000 cr. per ton) made many staples more expensive than locally grown products (we're talking algae, and fungi -an acquired taste but cheap). Shipping to Inerze was by intermediaries after the first Inerzan Flu hit Zaonia increasing costs. Then the bureaucrats began adding licensing fees and taxes.

Shipping plain old 'taters was not going to see much profit.

The Zaonians weren't quitters or stupid. They already arranged loans to get their own subsidized merchant ships. They had to find a market for this fleet. They began exporting hemp.

They weren't trying to get anyone high. They raised the hemp for food and paper to make books. They began exporting paper and books to Inerze. The bureaucrats and a tiny wealthy fraction loved notebooks. It was a super secure place to put notes in (especially if you had a locking cover with a self destruct and a DNA reader). They saw how the Zaonians had profited with their knowledge of handwriting and it became a fad among them.

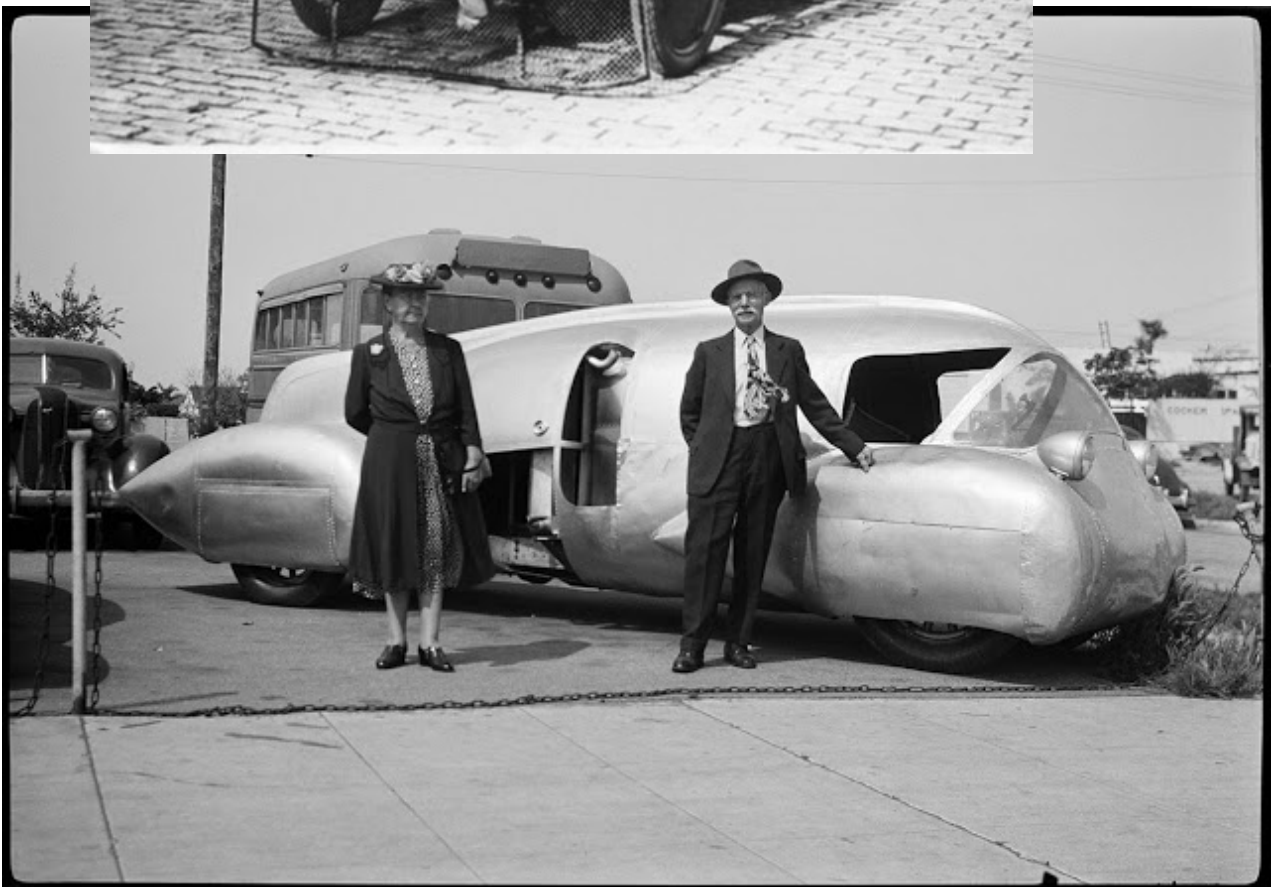
The Zaonians also sold barrels of hemp slurry that could be converted to food or paper. It also made a paste you could get high on or bake into a brownie. The laborers working with it and doing clean up learned that. It came as a surprise to the bureaucrats but anything that kept the laborers mellow was a good thing. Pretty soon many locals began buying the slurry and turning out lovely brownies and other foodstuffs everyone liked.

When the Zaonians heard what the Inerzans were doing with their hemp slurry they did a facepalm over meeting people more resourceful than *they* were (the labor class at least). They then had a good laugh and increased the price of the slurry. The Inerzans paid without batting an eyelash.

The elite had their secure notebooks. Subsidized merchants had a commodity they could sell. Everybody could have brownies fairly cheap. Everyone was as close to happy as spacers, politicians and grunt laborers could be.

Then some character on Inerze set up a filter and got some viable seeds from the slurry and after a little experimenting began growing his own hemp. The increase in it led to sluggish, unproductive workers and more industrial accidents. Inerze's government decided they needed to get a handle on this and then slapped

an embargo on Zaonian imports. All imports. The Zaonians were left with a small merchant fleet with nothing to ship and loans to pay back, and cargo containers full of hemp paper and slurry that Inerze had contracted for but was not buying. An economic crisis was looming and the Zaonians prepared for a trade war.



*(Top) The locals are proud of their motor vehicles but giving way to a pedestrian is seen as a loss of honor. Presenting the pedestrian catcher to avoid loss of life or just give a pal a lift.
(Bottom) This couple is showing off their handcrafted automobile.*

Encounters



Zaonia

Encounters

Biology

Zaonian and terrestrial biology are very compatible. Most plants and animals are at least partly edible. Unfortunately this means humans and their domesticated animals are edible and even tasty!

The system is about 5 billion years old and life evolved a long time. There is no evidence Zaonia ever developed intelligent life. But paleontology is not a priority to the locals. Life on the planet has had to make due with the gradual drying of Zaonia as water seeps into the crust and is taken out of the water cycle. The little research done on climatology and the Primary indicate it is undergoing a gradual cooling over millions of years. This might be due to the disruption that affected Nuzon's close passes.

Arthrammals

As a result of the cooling most larger life forms evolved temperature regulating features and share similarities to terran mammals. In particular local arthropods continued evolving, growing larger in the denser oxygen atmosphere. Over the eons the arthropods, locally called 'pods, grew, developing lungs and an endoskeleton to support their weight. They have thicker legs and more complex eyes but still resemble terran insects and crustaceans, only with fur and teeth in some cases! Some pods also give birth to live young and carry them in one or more pouches or on their backs.

Aviammals

Aviammals are the further development of birds, or possibly a lateral move. They have teeth in some cases, prehensile toys in others and are very intelligent. They also birth live young in some cases (mainly the non-flying species).

Local mammals usually are hexapods. Some resemble quadrupeds due to their medial or forelimbs atrophying for undetermined reasons. Many are similar to terran marsupials with pouches to carry their young. In some species males and females have pouches and share in rearing young.

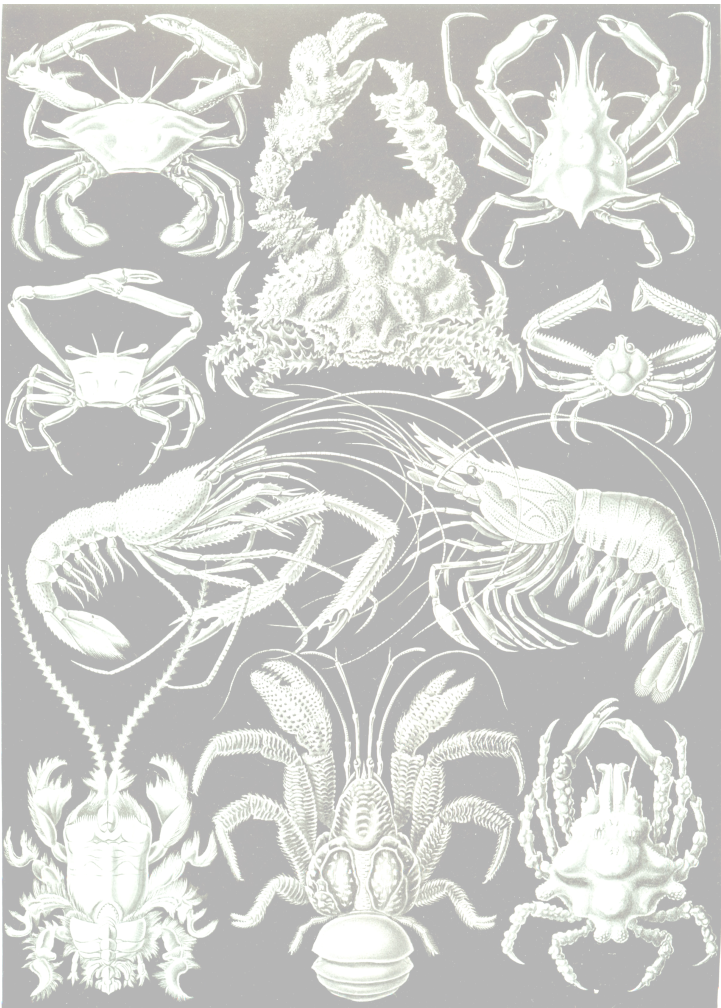
Transplanted Species

Settlers brought many terran species with them. Sadly most of them did not survive the Collapse and hard times. Pigs, dogs, and cats still exist in small numbers. The Zaonians have domesticated some native species for meat and work. You might see a local walking a meter tall nesting bird on a leash or a giant furry crab!

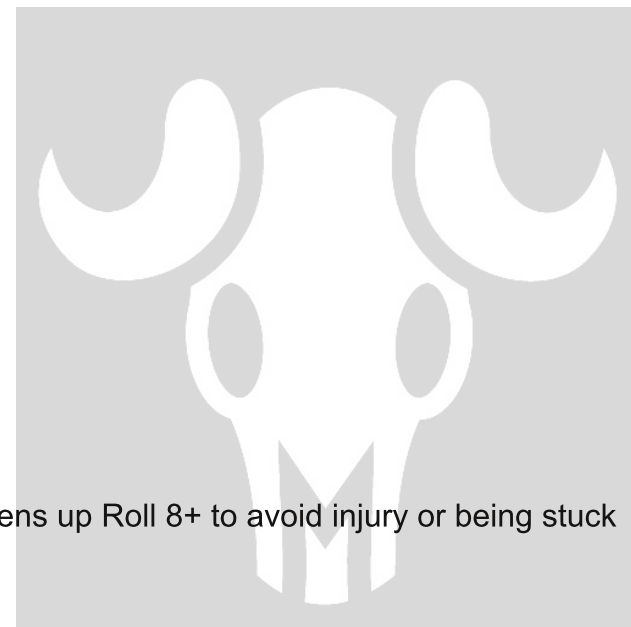
Animal Name Generator

If you're stuck for an animal name roll a few times on this table for inspiration to get a name with a Zaonian feel. Or just mix the qualifers whatever way yu want. You bought the book after all.

1d6	1d6	Qualifier	Alt. Qualifier	1d6	1d6	Type
1-3	1	Razor	Wadii	1-3	1	Claw
1-3	2	Night	Howling	1-3	2	Beak
1-3	3	Mud	Fanged	1-3	3	Tooth
1-3	4	Scare	Reaver	1-3	4	Bear
1-3	5	Long	Scaled	1-3	5	Dack
1-3	6	Silky	Pick a Color	1-3	6	Crawler
4-6	1	Spiny	Striped	4-6	1	'Pod
4-6	2	Water	Spotted	4-6	2	Crab
4-6	3	Drop	Tree	4-6	3	Tail
4-6	4	Dire	Nesting	4-6	4	Slink
4-6	5	Rock	Blood	4-6	5	Wing
4-6	6	Slippery	Butter	4-6	6	Mucker



World Zaonia (The Oldback)						Terrain Type		Rough	
2d6	# App	Subtype	Kg	Move	UPP	Weapons	Armor		
2	1d6	Carrion-	6	F1	141055	Teeth/Thrasher	1D6	0	
3	2d6	Gatherer	6	F1	111068	Teeth	1D6	1	
4	3d6	Intimidator	25	W1	5B7159	Claws/Teeth	1d6	2	
5	2d6	Gatherer	1	W2	111077	Claws/Teeth	1D6	2	
6	2d6	Filter	1	F0	145086	Hooves/Horns	1D6	5	
7	2d6	Intermittent	1	F1	111078	Hooves/Teeth		2	
8	3d6	Intermittent	1	F1	16106B	Hooves		8	
9	3d6	Pouncer	6	W2	5D61B9	Claws +2		0	
						Teeth +2	1D6		
10	Unstable ground- the ground under a character's feet or a party's ground vehicle opens up Roll 8+ to avoid injury or being stuck (Survival or Driving skill + Dex mods to avoid.)								
11	2d6	Chaser	200	W2	A8B067	Claws +2		0	
12	3d6	Killer	1	F1	1711GA	Teeth +1	1D6	1	

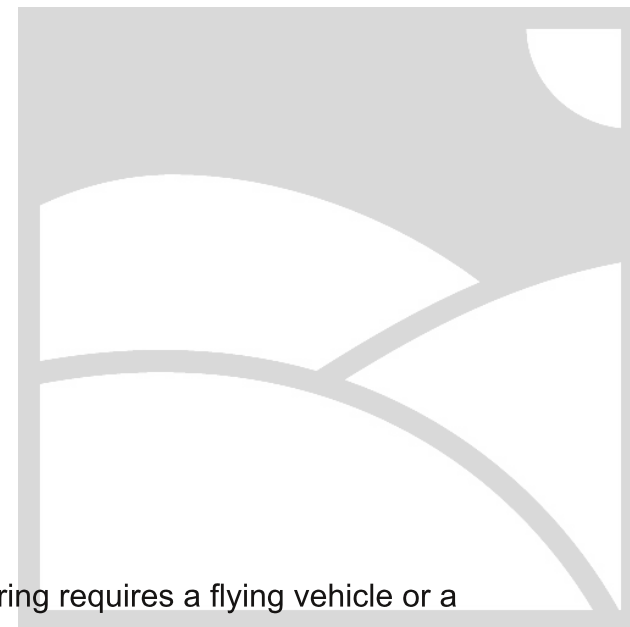


Special Encounters

#6 Spiny Blobs (aerofauna): a mass of small balloon shaped floating animals. They generally drift with the wind eating wind borne insects. Blobs have horns studding their bodies they typically keep retracted until threatened when they extend them with great force. They have a thick tentacle anchor that counts as hooves they can whip with surprising force. Some farmers tether them to fences around their houses or livestock pens.

#9 Drop Bears (pseudo mammal): soft, cuddly and cute and able to eat their weight in meat and blood every day. Native to the Oldback, the Drop Bears dig and camouflage dozens of holes leading to interconnected burrows. Intruding on this territory while bring a dozen of the little razor toothed beasts coming, jumping out of their holes, biting or clawing and then dropping back in a hole almost before you can attack. Drop bears have Recon 1 or 2 and Athletics 1. They also receive a -2 to be hit around their burrows. Oldback natives typically carry torches they shove in the nearest hole to smoke the little pests' tunnels and send them running. Tear gas and smoke grenades are also popular for this.

N/S.Hill	Country	Terrain Type		Hills			
2d6	# App	Subtype	Kg	Move	UPP	Weapons	Armor
2	3D6	Carrion-Eater	25	W3	5DB149	Teeth 1D6	1
3	2D6	Gatherer	25	W3	6A70A6	Claws/ Teeth +1 1D6	1
4	3D6	Carrion-Eater	3,200	W3	A5G099	Teeth 1D6	7
5	4D6	Eater	12	W3	38408C	Teeth+1 1D6	0
6	4D6	Grazer	12	W2	3750BD	Hooves 1D6	1
7	4D6	Grazer	12	F3	4A516C	Horns 1D6	4
8	4D6	Grazer	6	F2	5860DC	Hooves 1D6	4
9	2D6	Chaser	100	W4	7AG198	Claws +1 1D6	0
10	Ruins- A home or other building from earlier times reached by a personal lifter. Entering requires a flying vehicle or a Difficult (-2) climb (Survival or Athletics, Strength).						
11	2D6	Pouncer	200	W2	9F7096	Claws +2 1D6	2
12	1D6	Trapper	25	W0	6AA0C4	Stinger 1D6	7



Special Encounters

#3 Belfrois (pseudo mammal) Belfrois are enormous and thickly armored scavenger with thick skin. They roam the hills in packs of about ten. A pack may take up an area of several square kilometers, keeping in touch by howls and keening. When one of the belfrois on the flanks or on point encounter a dead or dying animal they begin to howl summoning the rest. While the creatures' main weapon, their teeth, is not particularly formidable their great size and thick skin make them difficult to put down. Belfrois will eat anything organic and not moving. They have pushed down wooden buildings and devoured them stick by stick. They are also fond of motor oil and will overturn a car to get at the oil pan. Fortunately they are nocturnal, sleeping during the day in a tight circle with the herd members facing out. However, one of the few living things they will eat are the spiked crawlers. They keep the number of this pest under control.

#12 Spiked Crawler (plant) The spiked crawler's main body resides in a pit in the center of what seems to be lush grass. The grass is part of the crawler and wraps around feet and vehicle axles that try to cross it. This halves movement and may stop it for a round (throw 8+ to avoid Survival, Strength or Driver, dexterity as appropriate). The crawler's stingers are actually retractable claws that extend from the 'grass' to impale victims. The average spiked crawler takes up a 10 meter square patch. The largest found was 25 meters in radius.

Northern Ridge or Southern SpurTerrain Type Mountains							
2d6	# App	Subtype	Kg	Move	UPP	Weapons	Armor
2	2D6	Carrion-Eater	100	W1	66A096	Teeth/ Horns 1D6	5
3	1D6	Hunter	100	W1	CAB085	Teeth +2 2D6	5
4	3D6	Reducer	200	W1	9D6099	Thrasher 1D6	3
5	3D6	Gatherer	12	F1	26607A	Claws+1 1D6	0
6	5D6	Intermittent	50	W1	BJ717F	Hooves	3
7	2D6	Grazer	100	W2	AA40A8	Hooves/Horns 1D6	3
8	3D6	Grazer	50	F2	5B908A	Hooves	1
9	1D6	Chaser	12	F2	1A21C5	Teeth +2	0
10	Wreckage- a wrecked lifter decades or centuries old is discovered in a remote ravine.						
11	3D6	Killer	100	W3	2E917A	Claws/Teeth +2	2
12	2D6	Trapper	3	F1	222046	Claws/Stinger +1	0



Special Encounters

#2 Mountain Bel (pseudo pachyderm) Mountain bels are cousins of the belfrois of the hills. Unlike their enormous cousins bels consume only dead animals. Two of their lower teeth have grown outward to become tusks (similar to horns. Bels have thick skin and require heavy firepower to down quickly but usually leave live animals and people alone unless feeding or threatened.

#6 Spiny Cliff Pod (arthrammal) Spiny cliff pods or just cliff pods are eight legged arthromals) that roam cliffs and ravines seeking foliage. They are fond of a vertical stampede. A herd will release their hold on a cliff to drop, pulling in their legs and sense organs for safety. Cliff pods dropping onto a character do double damage for the first round of combat. If surprised and attacked at close range they often grab their attacker and throw themselves off a cliff. Many times two or more cliff pods will cooperate in in throwing a predator to its doom (8+ to avoid, Athletics, Strength modify. Up to 1d3 cliff pods can team up to bring down a human with a -1 for each cliff pod after the first.

World Zaonia (Saddleback Banks) Terrain Type River

2d6	# App	Subtype	Kg	Move	UPP	Weapons	Armor
2	3D6	Carrion-Eater	400	A1	H8E079	Teeth 2D6	2
3	3D6	Gatherer	3200	W1	D6N14B	Claws/ Teeth +1 2D6	4
4	1D6	Intimidator	200	A2	AE70B3	Teeth/ Claws 1D6	4
5	3D6	Eater	500	A2	S5F0AA	Claws/ Teeth 3D6	6
6	2D6	Grazer	100	W3	D8A06D	Hooves/Horns 2D6	3
7	3D6	Grazer	1600	W2	N2G08A	Horns 3D6	6
8	4D6	Grazer	100	W2	D8A05D	Hooves 2D6	4
9	3D6	Pouncer	800	W1	96D1D9	Teeth +1 1D6	3
10	Scout survey or research team- an offworld research team is studying native life a/o pollution of the river and the effect on native life.						
11	3D6	Chaser	1	F2	18A0E9	Claws/ Stinger +1 1D6	0
12	1D6	Chaser	12	W2	4D41A5	Teeth +2 1D6	0



Special Encounters

#6 Horned Leapers (arthrammal) Leapers are crablike creatures that walk around on four legs. Their foreclaws have developed into spearlike weapons. Despite their formidable natural weapons, leapers usually use their phenomenal speed to escape predators. This changes during mating season (Fall) when males fight for dominance and humans look like practice for the real fight!

#9 Water Reaver (arthrammal) Reavers have at least Recon-1 and are a deadly predator that hides among the tall grasses and ferns in some areas of riverbanks. Reavers have lost their claws (except for hypertrophied stumps) but have deadly multiple mandibles that can rip into prey. They often attack with surprise in which case the effect of their attack roll is added to the damage done.

#11 Spotted Snatcher (arthrammal) Snatchers or snatches are related to the water reavers but are smaller and have been domesticated. Their skin is covered with soft fur and the creatures are surprisingly friendly when fed and raised from birth (at the risk of a few nipped fingers). Zaonians use them to control vermin and guard their houses similar to canines and felines on Old Earth.

World Zaonia Terrain Type Clear

2d6	# App	Subtype	Kg	Move	UPP	Weapons	Armor
2	4D6	Reducer	200	W	6CA18E	Teeth 1D6	2
3	3D6	Gatherer	1	W	15116A	Claws/ Teeth 1D6	4
4	3D6	Intimidator	200	W	88D09A	Teeth/Claws 1D6	4
5	2D6	Hunter	6	A2	174076	Claws/Teeth 1D6	6
6	2D6	Grazer	3	F2	2720AD	Hooves/Horns 1D6	3
7	3D6	Grazer	12	W2	264077	Horns 1D6	6
8	3D6	Grazer	400	W4	B4H0DA	Hooves 2D6	4
9	2D6	Killer	25	W3	7840874	Teeth +1 1D6	3
10	Brush fire- Fires are common given the high oxygen content of the atmosphere. This will delay ground travel by 1-6 hours or days as it's avoided. Aircraft may fly over it.						
11	3D6	Chaser	50	W4	4G71B9	Claws/ Stinger 1D6	0
12	2D6	Killer	50	W2	7CA0A8	Teeth +2 1D6	0



Special Encounters

#Feral Orcs (mammal -transplanted) Pigs were brought to Zaonia by the original colonists. Several breeds prospered until the Collapse when the colonists decided they were not worth the resources to raise solely for meat. Some of the orcs escaped to the wild where they survive to the present. Wild orc meat is a local delicacy and the rich as well as irate farmers organize orc hunts. There are two hundred kilo plus specimens and a 400 orc that remains unconfirmed.

#9 Rush Devils (animal) Rush devils are swift and brutal killers of the grasslands. They travel in packs and will make coordinated efforts to bring down prey. They have no fear of humans and will often attack unprovoked. Their jagged razor sharp beaks inflict deep wounds and a pack will often move to wound prey and then chase it till it bleeds to death. One bird in the group will take the lead and move in for

Social Encounters

Social encounters can be some of the most harrowing or rewarding a events an adventurer experiences (go watch I, Claudius if you doubt me). All the standard encounters (Cepheus Engine page 188) can be used with little modification. Encounter 32, maintenance robots is changed to a single robot. As there are only about 20 on the planet this robot is probably tasked with something important and/or running into difficulty if it is away from the starport.

Nobles can be considered to be the very rich or Tech Knights. Peasants (36) can be migrant workers. The referee should determine what the guards (24) are guarding: typically a bank.

Typical Tech Knight

UPP 78788A Cloth Armor Revolver or Automatic Pistol. If trouble is expected they carry rifles and SMGs.

Skills- Slug Pistol 1, Slug Rifle 1, Melee 0, Tracked or Wheeled Vehicle 1, Leader 1.

Typical Squire

UPP 979669 Cloth Armor, Rifle or SMG. Automatic Rifle or Assault Rifle is trouble is expected.

Skills- Slug Rifle 1, Melee 1, Tracked or Wheeled Vehicle 1, Recon 1.

Typical Police Officer

UPP 877767 Mesh Armor, Revolver. Automatic Rifle or Assault Rifle if trouble is expected.

Skills- Slug Rifle 1, Melee 1, Wheeled Vehicle 1, Streetwise 1.

Sir Cuthbert (Bert) Age late 60's Noble

UPP 8A478B Armor Cloth. Carries a special service revolver.

Skills Admin-1 Bribery-1 Carousing-1 Computer-1 Electronics-1 Leader-1 Medic-1
Slug Pistol-2 Slug Rifle-1 Streetwise-0 Wheeled Vehicle-1

Color: Sir Cuthbert (who prefers to be called Sir Bert) is the lead troubleshooter for the Order of the Flaming Sword. Besides being a skilled electrician he has deadly aim with a revolver. His particular service revolver does 3D6 damage and is 50% heavier and five times the cost of regular revolver. Sir Bert is usually in charge of any dirty dealings the Tech Knights have and would surely be interested in say an obstreperous group of offworlders seeking to stir up trouble.

It is widely known (and always left unsaid) that he has some dirt on everyone.

The chief exceptions to this are the Mayor and Jose Pierre Gutman. This causes him no end of annoyance. With Professor Elevator's expulsion from the Order of the Flaming Sword Sir Bert, the madman's mentor at one time has the job of bringing him in. So far he hasn't come close and the few minions he's caught have not given him any meaningful information.

Professor Elevator (Eli Abutor) Age Early 60's Noble
UPP 6A4C8B Armor Cloth with Reflect. Carries a laser pistol or submachine gun.

Skills Admin-0 Bribery-1 Carousing-2 Computer-2 Leader-1 Mechanic-1 Medic-1
Slug Pistol-1 Slug Rifle-1 Streetwise-0 Wheeled Vehicle-0

Color: Eli Abutor is a former Tech Knight who believes the current regime is a bunch of Fascist posers who are barely competent to fix a toilet or change a fuse let alone run a planet. He feels their restrictions on technology are merely to preserve their authority and line their pockets.

Assuming the identity of Professor Elevator he set about robbing and antagonizing the Tech Knights at every turn. His harassment has always stopped well short of murder and over the years the various Orders have come to respect him for his abilities and in some cases wish for his parole and rehabilitation. When Eli left the order he bid adieu to his young daughter: Ranna Morrigen. Communication between the two is rare and short (he doesn't want to incriminate her in anything and she doesn't want him caught.)

He has unreserved joy for her choice of Jose Pierre Gutman, a budding mad scientist in the Professor's view, for a lover and companion.

Dame Ranna Morrigen-Abutor Age 34 Noble
UPP 5B875B Armor Cloth. Carries an Automatic Pistol and has used an ACR.

Skills Admin-0 Animals-0 Athletics-0 Carousing-1 Computer-1 Gambling-0
Leadership-1 Liaison-1 Melee Combat (Fist)-1 Slug Pistol-2 Slug Rifle-1 Wheeled Vehicle-0

Color: Dame Ranna Morrigen is one of the youngest Tech Knights. Her loyalty to the Order of the Flaming Sword is unquestioned which is pretty good considering her father is Eli Abutor: Professor Elevator. Ranna has tried to get her father to end his evil ways and work things out with the Order before it's too late to no avail. During the uprising Ranna killed several offworld mercenaries and was blinded in her right eye from bullet fragments. When the planet isn't being invaded she deals with labor safety issues, hearing grievances and helping to prevent accidents and health hazards. This makes many businessmen dislike her. She is one of the most popular Tech Knights with the ordinary citizens.

Despite her reputation as a tough lady and a troubleshooter Ranna is very vivacious and friendly socially. Her work on safety issues has required her to work with Mayor Burns whom she is genuinely fond of. Some people have said she's the only one keeping the Order from whacking him. Mayor Burns has said he's taken this into account and plans to step up his smoking and drinking so there's no chance he'll outlive her.

Ranna has started seeing Jose Pierre Gutman and is romantically involved.

Mayor Louie "Hizzoner" Burns Former Drifter, Bureaucrat. Age 56
UPP 653B8A Armor None. Normally unarmed.
Skills Computer-1 Grav Vehicle-1 Jack of All Trades-2 Mechanics-0 Melee
Combat (Fist)-0 Recon-0 Slug Pistol-0 Streetwise-0 Tactics-1 Zero G-0

Color: Louie Burns is the son of a Zaonian and an offworld pilot. He and his family left Zaonia in his youth and he traveled for over forty years before returning home and embarking in politics. Burns made his money as a systems analyst for various settlements and has a keen mind that excels at thinking outside the box. His sole vice is his cigar smoking, unless he happens to be drinking in which case that's his sole vice.

Despite his success in politics (he is the first mayor elected without the endorsement of the Tech Knights) he remains a straight talking, gruff and often argumentative old coot. His gruff demeanor is especially obvious in his dealings with the police (who did not support him). Despite this he treats his citizens as fairly and considerately as he can afford.

Cassandra 'Sissy' Bobeck late 20's Drifter, Psionic (criminal)
UPP 566987 Armor None. Normally unarmed. May carry a Body Pistol or Psionic drugs.

Skills Admin-1 Advocate-1 Bludgeoning Weapon-0 Mechanic-0 Recon-0 Slug
Pistol-0 Streetwise-0 Wheeled Vehicle-0

Psionic Strength-A Telepathy Skill-A Note Sissy has mastered the art of 'conference calling' She can read the thoughts of two people at Close range and use send thoughts to let them communicate. This requires rolls for reading each mind and a single roll to send thoughts. It costs 9 strength points and lasts about a minute. Non-psionics experience this as a face to face meeting.

Color: Sissy Bobeck fled her world to avoid persecution as a psionic human. Stowing away on many ships she eventually secured working passage as a Steward and bookkeeper. She was hired by Mayor Burns after she reached Zaonia and quickly was promoted to run his Public Relations Department. She is invaluable as his assistant in formulating budgets and getting legislature passed. The Mayor has come to view her as a daughter in fact if not name and is

grooming her as his replacement. Her dating Glen Twoomey is a sore spot for him.

Only Sir Cuthbert knows she is a psionic and has criminal charges. He was giving her citizenship on condition she spy for him as needed. Cuthbert thought he'd lucked out when she got a job in the Mayor's office but was dismayed to learn the Mayor is unique in always saying what is on his mind and being ruthlessly truthful (considering that, the fact he ever won an election is a miracle but he somehow makes it work.) She's torn between revealing Sir Cuthbert's plans and losing the Mayor's respect.

Jorge Pierre Gutman Age 30 Drifter 3 terms
UPP 965AA7 Armor None. He has carried an ACR he smuggled in at times.

Skills Computer-1 Electronics-0 Engineering-2 Grav Vehicle-1 Jack of All Trades-1 Mechanics-0 Medic-0 Melee Combat (Fist)-0 Recon-0 Slug Rifle-0 Space Sciences-0 Streetwise-0 Zero Gee-0

Color: Little is known of Jorge Pierre Gutman's past. He has admitted he was studying to become a naval architect (and receive his doctorate) when he was forced to leave school due to health reasons (it is hard to stay healthy shot full of holes.) The same health reasons are thought to be behind his leaving his homeworld and traveling as a drifter for more than a decade. Once on Zaonia he salvaged an old grav vehicle and managed to get it flying again. Worse it had several improvements over the aeros flown and built by the Tech Knights. Not being a dimwit he plays down the abilities of his aero (equivalent to a normal air raft). Gutman advertises his services as Zaonia's only flying taxi (The Open Sky Air Taxi LLC.) The name was suggested by Mayor Burns after Gutman constantly put off slapping a roof on the hack (he makes do with a tarp) citing more important projects. He remains on constant call by the Mayor for various errands as well as for advice on a variety of engineering issues.

Dame Ranna Morrigen was taken with his gentle demeanor and intelligence almost immediately and he with her direct and forceful manner. The two make an unlikely couple but seem to have the power to last.

Steen Prigo Age 42
UPP 565987 Armor None. Revolver carried (when he has a payroll)

Skills Admin-1 Streetwise-0 Slug Pistol-0 Avocate-0 Steward-2 Mechanic-0

Color: Steen Prigo is the owner and manager of the Zaonia Automat, a popular eating spot in Zaoprym. Despite the title the Automat is not run by robots. Instead vending machines dispense a variety of hot and cold foods as well as beverages. Prigo is a widower and has little social life as he works to expand his empire of

eateries (“Hey one restaurant can be an empire!”) He has numerous contacts in the business community and many offworlders find his establishment fun and economical. This is the place to go to for rumors.

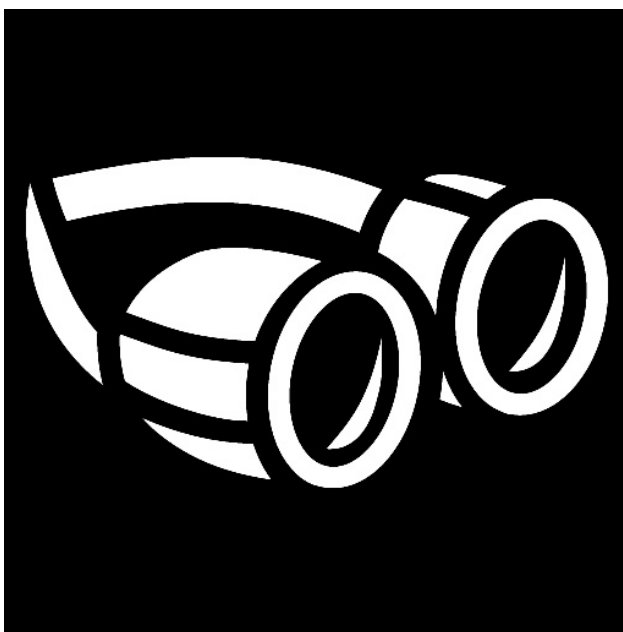
Police Sergeant Galen ‘Two Gun’ Twoomey
UPP AA5747 Armor Jack or Mesh (sometimes Glitter Suit or Exo Suit).
Automatic Pistol, club and Shotgun (if he’s riding in a prowler car).

Skills Animals-0 Athletics-2 Admin-0 Carousing-0 Computer-0 Gambling-0
Wheeled Vehicles-1 Battle Dress-0 Slug Pistol-1 Slug Rifle-1 Bludgeoning
Weapons-1 Natural Weapons (Fists)-1 Gunnery (Machine Gun)-1

Color: Galen Twoomey lost his parents at a young age and left school to support his brothers and sisters. He had a promising career in wrestling before a badly injured knee got him thrown out. The knee belonged to his chief rival. Galen tried to become a bank guard, failed the exams and became a beat cop. He rapidly rose to the rank of sergeant. Twoomey often gets high risk assignments such as apprehending dangerous off worlders or tangling with the Elevator Gang (that’s when he gets the really good armor.) He usually then shoots his mouth off and is pounding a beat on foot as punishment until he’s needed again.

His nickname comes from his rookie days. He held the Sewer Mook gang at bay with two empty pistols, bluffing the crooks till the rest of his squad arrived.

Twoomey is a rough man who prefers direct action. You can disrespect him. Insulting his badge or his world will get you a baton wrapped around your head a free trip through the nearest window. He has deep respect for those with an education especially the Tech Knights. He has had a long running feud with the Mayor over his constant opposition to the Tech Knights and liberal policies. Twoomey is currently dating Sissy Bobeck, much to the Mayor’s disgust.



Twoomey is the cop to use if player characters are riding roughshod over the locals or not quiet about their skullduggery. He's not stupid or suicidal and has no problem calling for back up (and he will get it.) But he will never give up and go out of his way to bust characters for criminal acts.

The Government



Zaonia

Government

Before the collapse a bureaucracy ruled Zaonia behind a facade of elected leaders. As technology collapsed this bureaucracy proved shockingly unable to cope with the shortages and emergencies. The only relic of this regime was the Planetary Health and Safety Bureau.

The HS was fortunately also one of the the last bureaus to remain operational. When you were making repairs and allocating resources that saved people's lives they became incredibly loyal to you. This was the origin of the so called Tech Knights. As crises mounted the Bureau imposed martial law and became the government.

They quickly realized there were not enough engineers, soldiers and scientists to run the whole planet (even with the population shrinking). They established a system of elected officials to keep society functioning day to day while they dealt with the day to day crises. The Mayor (always capitalized) of Zaoprym was the supreme elected official.

The Health and Safety inspectors began to take their new power seriously and renamed themselves The Ministry of Health and Safety which pleased no one. The Mlnistry was divided into sub groups: Order of the Flaming Sword (electricians), Order of the Shining Flow (radio and television technicians), Order of the Viaduct (water and sewage systems) and many others. The Order of the Flaming Sword was the largest and most powerful. The locals kept calling them Tech Knight and that name stuck.

In modern Zaonian society the Tech Knights are nominated by other members of the order. Nominees are chosen by public demand, in recognition of services rendered and (let's be honest) for political reasons.

Nominees must pass a grueling interrogation by senior Knights, pass physical and mental tests and finally a combat training period to identify the truly driven. Only those with the highest scores are inducted into the Order and presented with the traditional chrome service revolver

The service revolver is for more than show. A Knight is expected to be able to defend themself and the planet. Feuds or arguments can be solved by mortal combat. Ordinary citizens assaulting Knights can be dealt with immediately (technically a Knight could shoot a citizen for insultings but this is usually resolved with a cutting remark or a poke in the eye.

Appointment to the Order is for life usually. A Knight guilty of a felony, corruption or found incompetent in the handling of their duties can be expelled. In the old days they could be called out for a gun duel by a Knight questioning their honesty or competence. Censure was denying the Knight their privileges pending

an investigation and possible expulsion. Expulsion can be demanded by a popular vote called by a mayor and is taken seriously by the Order. They value the goodwill and trust of the people.

The Ministry is responsible for the operation of vital services such as electricity, gas, and water. They also deal with planetary defense and restricting offworld technology.

The Collapse was caused when technology failed from lack of spares and supplies. Offworld technology that they couldn't produce or maintain is not allowed to be imported. The exceptions are for planetary defense or other urgent need (laser rifles could be bought offworld), humane reasons (a person could go offworld to receive cybernetic parts for medical reasons and they would be allowed though implanted weapons would not!) An exception is always made for technology involving exotic materials found offworld so bonded superdense metal could be used in various products (if you can find it). This definition gets pushed a lot by the Knights when people do not realize the unobtainium is manufactured and not found and they feel they could get away with it.

The government has its detractors as well. Many want to limits on the power of the Knights or to eliminate them entirely. They've formed the Progressive Party. Some take more extreme measures and perform criminal acts against the Knights or to make people question their competence and rule.

Some criminals (usually referred to as super villains or arch criminals by the press) seek to use offworld technology or copies of it for their own gain.

Finally some Tech Knights have gone rogue when faced with censure or expulsion. These are referred to as Scorch Knights. They often flee to hideouts in the mountains or even the Oldback to set up bandit kingdom they rule as warlords, using their superior weapons to cow or recruit the locals.



*Senior Tech Knight of the Order of the Flaming Sword
(Electrician's Local 303) Slr Cuthbert in full regalia.*

The Law



Zaonia

Law Level

Zaonia's Law Level is 5: moderate. This allows people to own and carry rifles and shotguns outside their homes.

Rifles and shotguns are allowed because all adult Zaonians are expected to aid in planetary defense. All adult males and most women are members of the planetary militia and may be called up in times of war or other emergency. Despite it being legal a person carrying a rifle down a city street would be noticed and soon stopped by a policeman with a bigger gun.

Citizens who demonstrate need may be issued handgun permits. Tech Knights are required to carry a service revolver or automatic pistol. Patrol cars often have a shotgun and a rifle or submachine gun onboard.

Police are the armed security forces of the civilian government and at the disposal of their mayor. The Tech Knights have their Squires: basically the army and secret service. Squires are given the best local equipment: automatic and assault rifles, cloth armor or better and electronic sights and communicators you don't need a wheelbarrow to move around. There is no small amount of animosity between the two forces.

In addition to the police and Squires, the banking system has numerous guards equipped to police standards. There are also many private security firms with permits allowing submachine guns.

Besides foot cops and guards Zaonia's banking district has numerous armored cars. Police armored cars have light and heavy machineguns and there are rumors of heavier weapons.

In a clear division of duties the Squires no longer are authorized to operate armored cars but fly a number of unique lifters and autogyros.

Many Squires and Knights make use of equipment and weapons salvaged from offworlders who broke the law and were arrested or worse. This includes battledress, laser weapons and laser communicators. These are allowed for planetary defense. A less well known exception are the personal computers using a secure server and encrypted wifi that senior Knights use to stay in touch and coordinate their efforts. Usually these computers are disguised as ornate and gaudy bracers.

Offworlders are allowed to use their own vehicles and weapons (longarms only unless arrangements for handguns are made in advance) with the proper permits and the promise to take the gear with them when they leave.

Psi Psection

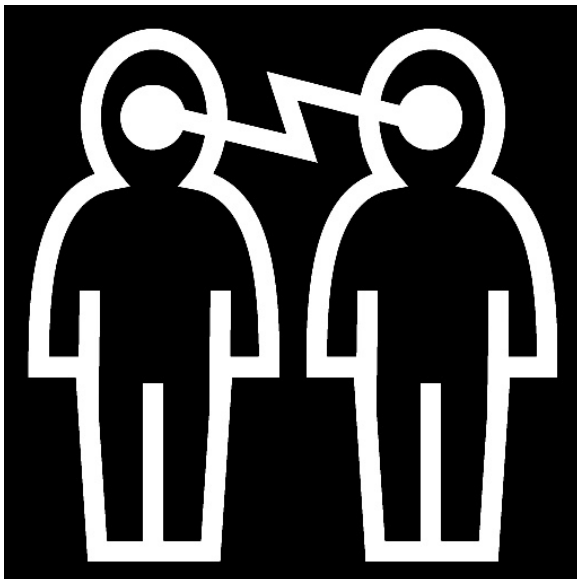
Psionics is legal. Psionic citizens have some restrictions. There are psionic cops. As the history said Zaonia is nearby the highly populated world Inerze. With its ten billion people Inerze has some 10,000 raw talent psionics at anytime and most likely several psionic institutes or at the very least mentoring systems for psionics. While it is not illegal to be psionic on Inerze legal and safe are two different things. Inerzan police and security can't everywhere. Personal weaponry is rife as is crime. A psionic who is blatant about their ability can be made to disappear (and we're not talking teleportation or cloaking themselves).

With several thousand psionics there were a few hundred who decided to try life on Zaonia. While they received their own district to live in on the same island as the ground port their movements are not restricted and following a probationary period the new citizens expect to be allowed to live where they choose.

Meanwhile the police are not shy about advertising they have several psionic cops. While out and out reading or probing a person's mind is not admissible in court these officers have managed to anticipate crimes using empathy, clairvoyance and precognitive powers. Building home made psionic shields is a major illegal business.

The number and identity of the psionic police is kept secret from the public to maximize their effectiveness. It is known a lot of their work is done around the ground port (which is an easy commute) in customs when they aren't needed for more urgent cases. Psionics after all is not a form of technology.

While psionics is legal on Zaonia it is not legal for civilians to possess psionic boosters, an important distinction for offworld psionics to make.



Mad Men and Militants

One of the chief functions of the Tech Knights is the control of dangerous technologies. This usually means anything from offworld. In practice between offworld surplus and hard work the locals can build up to TL7 as bleeding edge

technology. Any weapons beyond TL 5 require a temporary permit and are limited to long arms. Any technology above TL 7 is usually reserved for the Tech Knights or for offworld visitors. This doesn't sit terribly well with some people. Thus we have any number of scientists, engineers and tinkers copying or modifying offworld tech (sometimes with hilarious results. But usually tragic). These progressives amount to revolutionaries out to destabilize the rule of the Tech Knights and allow free import of all gadgetry.

They are referred to locally as mad scientists, arch criminals and supervillains (the Zaonian press is not known for its restraint using offworld technology in acts of vandalism, revolution and some common robbery to fund their operations.

Professor Elevator is the premier villain of the age (just ask him!) After salvaging an old but functional robot brain he created the Elevated Man, a humanoid robot build on telescoping sections he could transport easily. The Professor, a former Tech Knight, was charged with supervising civil engineering projects and planned for his life of crime by building a number of safe houses, hideouts and escape tunnels throughout Zaoprym. The Elevator gang clashed with the police several times always managing to escape and winning the respect of the public for their skill, refusal to harm innocents, and ability to harass the Tech Knights.

A number of master criminals have appeared in recent years claiming to have slept through the Collapse in frozen sleep and preserved stores of high technology weapons and gear. These criminals are out to eventually conquer Zaonia (to hear them talk). Many are also frauds.

Outlaws

Some Tech Knights have gone rogue after facing censure or expulsion for crimes. Fleeing to the Oldback or even further they've set themselves up as petty kings in ruined cities and oppressed the few locals with their weaponry. These Scorch Knights are dealt with whenever the Tech Knights can spare the expense and men.

Smugglers

Smuggling is a way of life on Zaonia. The planet faced several embargos recently. Smuggling goods was one way to raise a cash. When embargos end smugglers usually hang around and find other cargo. The Zanians know they need the smugglers and fine the ones they catch (or look the other way). In return the smugglers avoid drugs, guns (above TL 5), and slaves.

Zaonia has nothing like a planetary defense system or sensor system (except in the Saddleback Valley). There are plenty of places for a ship to land unseen, unload and boost before anyone can respond.

Local Gangs

Having a theme is a two edged sword. It shows you're a cut above other criminals in daring and executing jobs. It helps you recruit top notch help. It also makes you easier to catch.

In general crooks do not want to be caught. Their themes will be as broad as possible. there's no mastermind out to swipe all the doorknobs in town of just rob people who wear slouch hats. Most themse extend no further than the gang's look and codenames. Theme criminals are very careful to avoid any kind of capital crimes: kdnapping, rape and murder are right out again because they run a greater risk of being caught. On the other hand they often get more cooperation from their victims who know they won't be hurt if they follow instructions.

After entering the mansion of the dowager Prigo, for example, Professor Elevator noticed her robot assistant was malfunctioning. He questioned her and determined it was not providing her medication according to schedule. He paused in his orbbery to reprogram and reset the robot, make sure the lady was medicated properly and then stole her antique gold elevator cage and some jewelry she gladly handed over to him.

When the lady passed a way a few months later Professor Elevator sent flowers and is rumored to have attended the services in disguise.



The Gasser Gang. These outlaws in the service of a renegade scientist used sleep gas to knock out a five block area in North Fork City then looted three banks and a jeweler. They remain at large. (No relation to the Happy Gas Passer LLC of Synforos.)

Technology



Zaonia

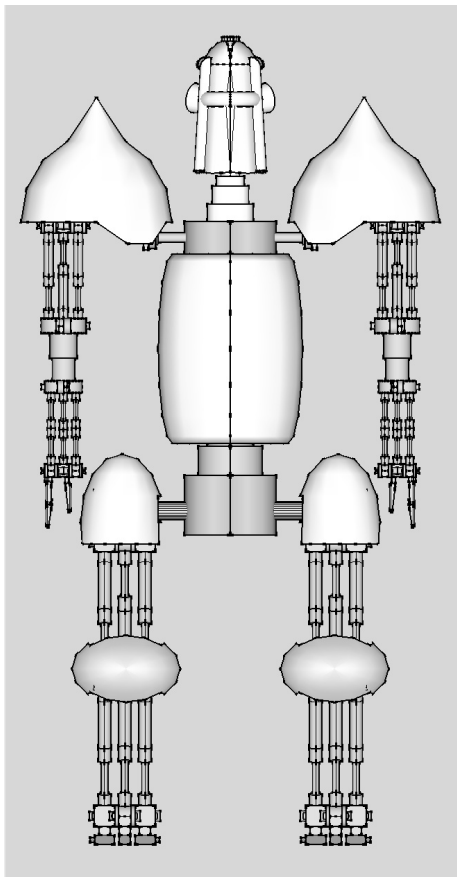
Technology

Tech Level 5 is described as: Industrial Widespread electrification, telecommunications and internal combustion.

A shorthand description of the era would be Old Earth ca. 1920's to 1940's. They drive gas and diesel powered vehicles and fly monoplanes. At least in the major cities, nearly everyone has a phone and a radio, while televisions exist they are for the wealthy and usually part of a communications device. Buildings are dressed up with electric and neon lights (marquees displaying news headlines are very popular in squares and other gatherings. Movies are a popular form of entertainment (a starport based firm actually transfers offworld digital media onto film and vice versa.) Music is recorded on vinyl records and sometimes magnetic tape for professional broadcasts and entertainment.

Libraries are very well regarded. There are (dead tree) books, newspapers, and magazines everywhere. You'd think a little planet like this didn't have enough news to support more than one periodical but three are thriving.

The reliance on printed media makes research difficult, especially for offworlders used to their interwebzz and the instant gratification of a computer. Groups trying to go through local records may find themselves running into a wall as they decode local filing systems, physical shift through stacks of books or pore through old newspapers (they might be baffled by the black smudges on their fingers too.)



Beyond the Saddle people have to make do with radio communications, there are no phones beyond the few factory towns.

Civilians (and police) are usually stuck with TL 5 gear. The police use SMGs and shotguns and usually wear Jack armor. Squires have access to TL 6 gear and are outfitted with Cloth armor and auto rifles. The rules are thrown out for the bodyguards of Tech Knights. They use captured offworld armor and use captured weapons (lasers are a favorite.) These troops are almost never encountered randomly and never are far from the Knight assigned to them.

Typically local diesel bots use robot brains from offworld or rarely scavenged from old ruins and locally built bodies.

There are two things Zaonia has that Old Earth in the 1930's did not. First they have their historical documents (which they put on paper before all the databases died) telling of advanced scientific theories and technology. Many times it's enough to know something can be done to be able to do it yourself. Second, they have access to advanced equipment from other worlds which they often try to back engineer.

Around the ground port TL 7 gear is in use, offworld imports or local copies. Local gear can be -1 or -2 to use. Most offworlders don't know what to make of a mobile phone the size of a backpack or a ham radio without an electronic display. A few hours or days of use will offset this penalty.

Hybrid technology is an area that gives the Tech Knights and many offworlders fits. In the Oldback and beyond is wreckage of a Tech Level 10-12 culture. Many times parties of enterprising locals score a lucky find in ruins or wrecks. Robotic brains are especially prized. A TL 12 brain could last for decades in its armored casing, long after the robot's body was reduced to trash. Old tech brains are merged with new mechanical bodies

Aeros are every low tech kid's dream: flying cars! While air rafts and lifter technology is normally introduced at TL 8. Despite this there are lifter vehicles (or aeros as the locals call them) on Zaonia. This falls into the 'sometimes knowing something can be done is enough to let you do it.' Barely. .

Lifter technology was developed after radiation research indicated several discrepancies in the way some electronics were affected by gravity. The research



into the how and why took incredibly sensitive instruments only available at TL 8 or higher. In the case of Zaonia there were records of lifters and their construction and operation principles. Vacuum tubes and crude transistors were used in place of the fluid circuits and superconductor loops used in standard lifters.

Buy a monocycle and cut your tire costs in half!

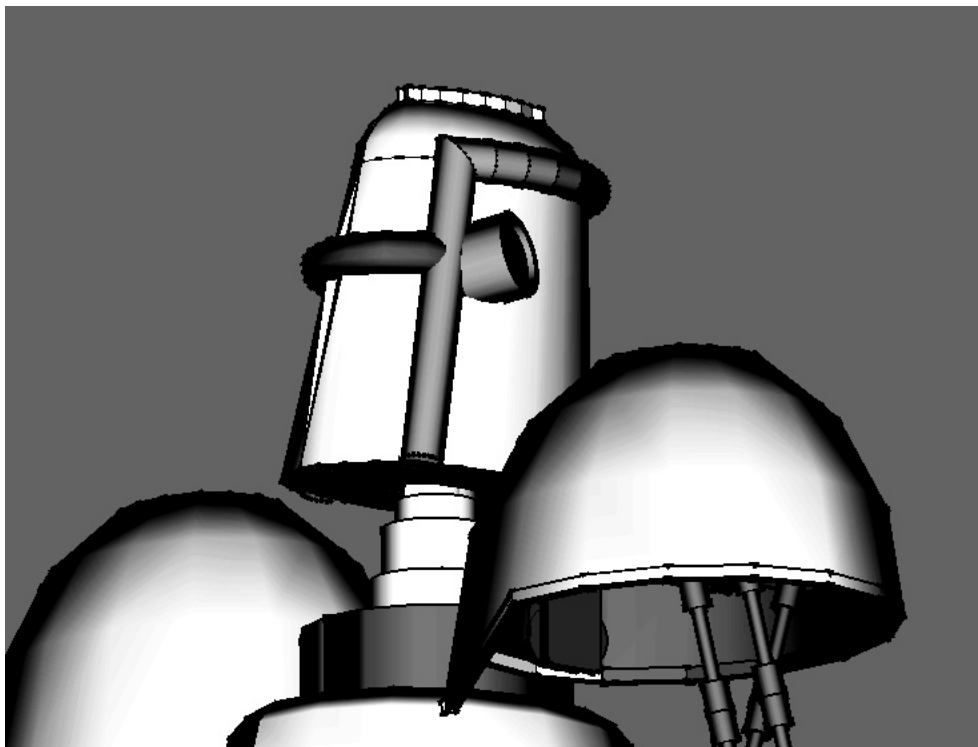
TL 5 aeros have a number of problems the standard models do not. First power is an issue. At TL 8, it's stored in superconductor loops. On Zaonia crude (often explosive) lithium batteries are substituted.

Another problem is waste heat. The cruder gravitics put out nearly as much heat as an idling jet engine.

In game terms instead of flying for days an aero will fly for hours, if that. They are double the displacement of a standard air raft to account for extra batteries and cooling fans and have only half the crew capacity (typically one or two) and capacity for a couple of hundred kilos of cargo. Top speeds vary from 200 to 300 kph. Agility is typically +1 but can vary by a lot depending on the builder.

The lithium batteries are a severe problem in combat or even with rough usage. Any shots hitting an aero's drive have a 1 in 6 chance of starting a fire. If a fire starts the aero will explode in 1d6 rounds doing 6d6 damage to any passengers.

Diesel Bots (the nickname comes from bemused offworlders) are TL 12 robotic brains in locally produced bodies (to minimize the amount of offworld tech introduced and downplay it). Robots are just too darned useful to do without in some applications. In game terms use the cargo or repair robot s(Cepheus Engine page 73-74). Price is tripled and armor halved. In addition Dexterity is reduced by two.



The Elevated Man built by Professor Elevator. Don't let the silly names fool you. Tick him off and he'll throw a car at you. (Photo from wanted poster 50,000 cr. reward.)

Dynaplanes are also known as gyroplanes, gyrocopters or autogyros offworld. The local name comes from the major producer: Dynamic Aviation's brand name. Auto gyros use a forward mounted propellor. An unpowered rotor spins due to airflow and generates lift in place of fixed wings. Treat autogyros like helicopter except they're TL 5 and can't hover. They can make landings in very small areas (typically they need 30 meters or so of clear ground). Young rich Zaonians who envy the aeros of the Tech Knights often replace them with dynaplanes.

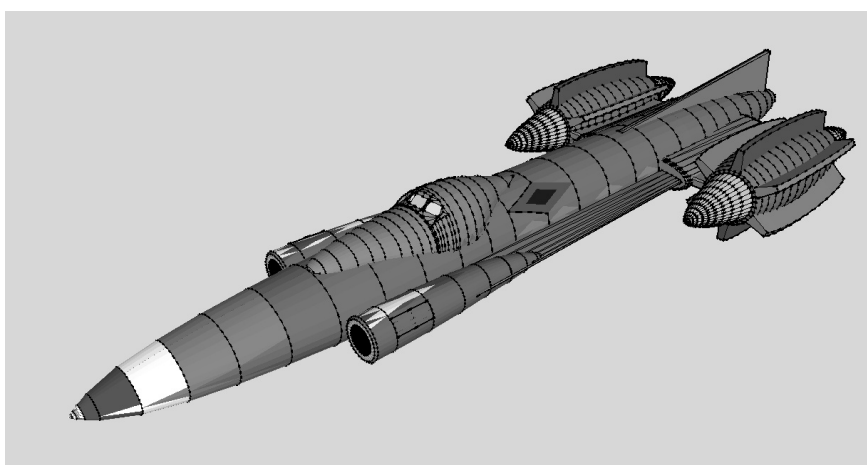
Dragonflies are experimental devices using painstakingly crafted TL 7 parts. A Dragonfly is a backpack helicopter. The backpack actually is more of a seat. Dragonflies cost 50,000 cr. They do not allow true flight but a wearer can use it to run (in a series of great assisted leaps) or clear one story buildings. A Dragonfly can also be used as a parachute in a pinch from up to one hundred meters. It has 0 agility. While using a Dragonfly the user is at -1 for dexterity related tasks including firing weapons.

Dragonflies use Zero-G skill. This is despite the fact that most Zaonians do not have that skill (another reason they're dangerous). They are noisy, shake the wearer like the dickens and only have enough fuel for a half hour of use tops. The locals also use them for some police and rescue work.

Armor

Mesh armor is typically the best armor a Zaonian can obtain and that if they're military or police. There are a couple of exceptions to this. After the Uprising the Tech Knights acquired a few dozen suits from the Usurper's mercenaries. A round dozen of these could still afford some protection. The rest were losses armor wise but their muscular enhancement systems did work. Armor was replaced with Mesh and steel plating (sometimes shards of super dense ship plating was used.) These suits are not for sale but provide protection of 9 and all the other benefits of battledress.

Some suits of battledress were almost total losses but their muscular enhancement systems were salvageable. After replacing the armor with Mesh or



cloth these rigs possessed enough strength to allow the wearer to perform amazing feats and were prized by scouts, spies and not a few criminals (who scavenged some gear in the clean up).

The latest long range aero built by the Tech Knights to investigate areas beyond the Valley. With a speed of 360 kph and a flight time of 10 hours it can reach areas 3000 km. distant and perform photo reconaissance.

Exo-Armor: Battledress has some amazing features. Wearing it doubles your strength, makes you tireless for most purposes and sharpens your senses. Oh bullets bounce off it with little effect too. Getting back to the muscular augmentation, a lot of that power is taken up lugging that armor, life support and oversized batteries around. It wasn't long before someone with a badly damaged suit replaced the armor with some ballistic cloth, swapped the battery for a smaller, lighter power pack and scrapped the life support systems. The resulting armor was equivalent to Cloth but tripled the wearer's strength and with some tweaks allowed him to leap 2 meters vertically or 3 meters horizontally and run at triple speed. The exoarmor is not available commercially, but can be customized. It costs the about the same as a regular suit of battledress if bought new. A suit of battledress can be modified for 50,000 cr. In practice the suit operators often have their strength further augmented with Combat Drug or the Psionic power of Awareness to truly frightening levels.

Lasers are a popular weapon for cowing low tech natives. In mainstream interstellar society they enjoy a brief window of supremacy at TL 9 before Reflec and Ablative armor make 'bring a laser to a gun fight' almost suicidal. Zaonians do not do cowing however and came up with the following suit to level the field against offworlders.



Glitter Suit- Armorers took Mesh armor and coated it with sandcaster ammunition. The result was similar to ablative armor but only half as effective (half the minus to hit or half the damage subtracted depending on the system you use). A glitter suit is usually only available on Zaonia or a similar world and costs double that of ablative. They can often be snuck through customs at high tech worlds. While wearing Reflec or Ablative would raise some questions.

Hi-Jack- The native scavengers, called belfrois have skin that is nearly invulnerable to bullets. Naturally about five minutes after the first human brought down one of the beasts (legend has it they used a rocket launcher) they thought of making the hide into armor. HiJack armor has a protection of 3 but reduces the Strength and Dexterity of wearers by one each.

A brave local (not the inventor) straps on an experimental Dragonfly and prepares to take flight. Sort of.

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