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ARCANANE TECH



FADING SUNS™



ARCANE TECH



A Fading Suns Sourcebook

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Pilgrims

For Saint Paulus did say unto the gathered Crew: "Oh, never has such a task been attempted. My Learning tells me to calibrate the Flux Cache to 23 Degrees and 154 Helagigs, giving us a 10.5 Percentage Probability of assured Escape, 63.7 Percent of certain Doom, and 25.8 Percent of Nothing Happening. But my Heart tells me to press yon scarlet button and Trust in the Pancreator to provide."

And what, dear Pilgrim, would you do?

—Sister Aldaran of Beggar's Square, Criticorum

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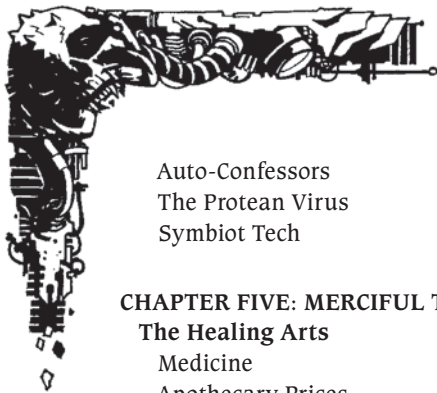




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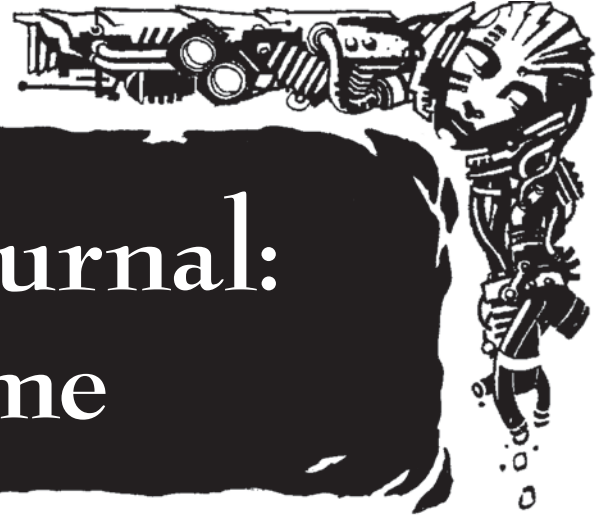
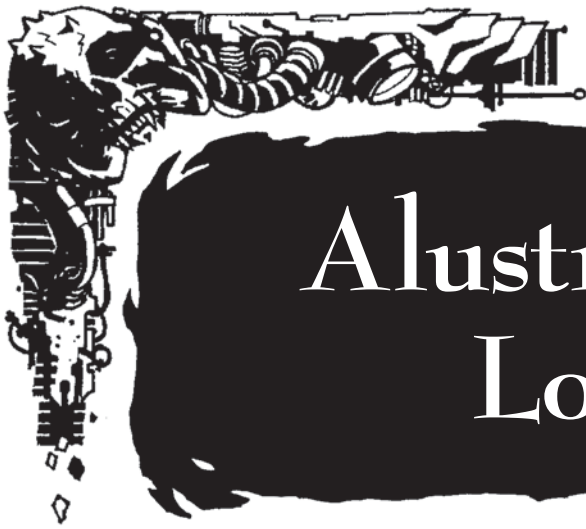
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Alustro's Journal: Lost Time

And so begins another day of my exile.

Today, as dawn rose above the Verona Mountains, I marked the twentieth day on my calendar. Twenty days have now passed since I was stranded here in this remote region of Rampart, abandoned by necessity. My lady and our crew, under heavy fire from a hostile frigate, fled in the *Resurgent*. And although the attacker was unmarked, I am sure it was from the pirate fleet owned by her brother. I, having disembarked to trade with the locals for food, had not the time to reach the ship before it launched. Julia maneuvered deftly to avoid the frigate's guns, taking the ship into the clouds and beyond my sight.

I have waited here since, at the foot of the mountains, anxious and soul-sore with dread that they have been shot down or captured. I have haunted the local taverns, plying travelers with drinks in the hopes that they have heard some rumor of the chase and the outcome.

Nothing.

In this place, far from the high-speed rails that connect the major cities, news travels slowly. This is why I chose this place to restock our supplies; the remoteness. Unfortunately, that which keeps me safe from our enemies now leaves me ignorant of the fate of my friends. Each hour of the day, I dearly wish to hear the whine of the engines and to see the *Resurgent* set down again, her door opening to admit me to the company of my friends, to my home.

But nothing.

No noise here but the rustle of the wind in the evergreens. Only silence.

A silence the locals fear.

The silence, they say, of the ghosts of Sallow Hill.

As I paid for the drinks of travelers and locals, I heard on more than one occasion tales about the "strange goings on" at a place called Sallow Hill. From what I could ascertain, the site is located half a day's ride from town, in the wilderness near the foot of the mountains. It is a haunted site, where chilling apparitions appear and unholy energies sometimes light the night. Wild animals avoid it, and even trained horses shy from it.

None of this was too unusual. I have heard stories of eerie places on nearly every world of the Empire. I had even

visited a few of them and found that sometimes, they deserve their reputation. As intrigued as I was, I nonetheless had no desire to visit this place. If I left town for the day, I might miss my friends' return, and there was no guarantee they could wait for me if trouble still dogged their trail.

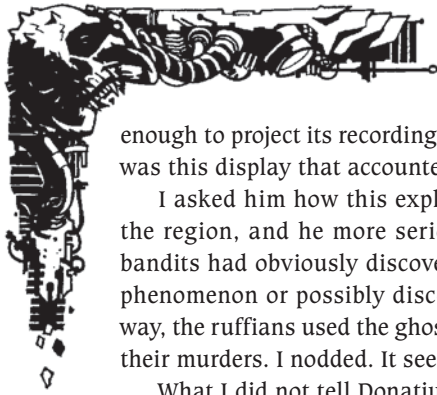
The mayor's tale, however, changed my mind. Donatius Otalo is an ex-Reeve, retired from what he calls the "hectic dance of hypocrisy," by which he means the doings of the outside world. He prefers this remote rural existence and claims its lackadaisical pace has cured his stomach ailment. He got wind of my sojourn at the local inn and my questioning of travelers, and he came to buy me a drink and ply me for answers. I assured him that I was but a priest on pilgrimage and that I waited for the return of my ship, chased away by pirates. This is not untrue, if not the truth in entirety. He liked me though, and sensed that despite my withholding of the whole tale, I at least lacked the sort of guile he had come to this hamlet to escape. We spent many an hour talking of the local territory, marking its pleasures and drawbacks.

Eventually, the subject of Sallow Hill arose. Donatius found in me someone learned who, unlike the locals, had studied the lore of the past. I was not much surprised when he smiled conspiratorially and drew me away from the common room to a private room in the back, complete with cozy fire crackling for warmth. There, he regaled me with his theories about the place, this Sallow Hill. Although the tales of ghosts and disappeared travelers varied, often with what are obvious elaborations added to increase the effect of horror on the listener, one thread seemed to run through all of the more genuine seeming accounts. Namely, the re-occurrence of the past.

It seems that the most trusted reports all involved descriptions of a crew of Republican scientists, identified by their unique uniforms and scientific equipment, the likes of which are unknown even today among the wealthiest of guildsmen on this world.

Donatius chuckled as he spoke, revealing his theory: Sallow Hill hosts an ancient magic lantern device with images of a scientific expedition from long ago. For whatever reason, the device was buried deep enough to be undiscovered by travelers, but with its emitter field still shallow





enough to project its recordings into the air above ground. It was this display that accounted for the sightings of ghosts.

I asked him how this explained the disappearances in the region, and he more seriously opined that a gang of bandits had obviously discovered the harmlessness of the phenomenon or possibly discovered the truth of it. Either way, the ruffians used the ghost stories as an excuse to hide their murders. I nodded. It seemed like a good explanation.

What I did not tell Donatius was that his story and too-plausible explanation made me even more interested in visiting the site. If there was a Second Republic cache of scientific gear buried there, my lady Erian would certainly want to know of it. I smiled to think of her surprise when she returned, to find my gift of priceless relics from the past.

But I first had to get there! Earlier today, after asking around among some of my new friends among the locals (it's amazing how many doors a few drinks can open), I was directed to a local prospector, a man named Pino. He was no guildsman, but an independent operator, traveling into the mountains on his own in the hopes of finding valuable veins of metals. He had been lucky enough to discover one valuable vein, which he promptly reported to the Merchant League in return for decent recompense. That allowed him to winter in the town between spring and summer explorations.

Upon meeting him, I doubted he'd have many more years of exploring. He was only in his forties, but was clearly afflicted with some form of wasting disease. He came right out and revealed it: "Rad poisoning. I got too deep into a cave up there," he said, motioning at the Verona Mountains, "and came out a few weeks later practically glowing. It don't matter none; it's the life I chose."

When I broached the topic of hiring him as a guide, he seemed most interested... until I mentioned Sallow Hill. He looked at me with such pity—like I was a madman but had not had the sense to realize it—that I lost my temper. I won't record my words here, but suffice it to say that my exile was wearing on me and had eroded my seminary discipline somewhat. I think it amused him, but he also clearly felt guilty, causing a priest to curse. He agreed to lead me there, saying "I'm already a dead man, or will be in a few years at best. I don't know why you want to rush the process yourself, but you clearly need to go. I might as well at least keep you from getting lost on the way."

My money was running out (I had already spent too much on drinks for my informants), but I nonetheless bought us enough provisions for a few days, just in case misfortune were to waylay us and prevent our immediate return.

We shall leave early tomorrow morning. This will be my last entry for a while, as I won't have time during the trek to add new reports. May the Pancreator bless our expedition.

So much to tell! My hand trembles as I write, but I shall endeavor to record events in the order in which they occurred.

We had no trouble getting to Sallow Hill, Pino and I. He knew his way around the woods unerringly. He admitted that

he had only been to Sallow Hill once, and did not stay—"I didn't like the odor of the place."—but remembered perfectly how to get there. As we approached within what he claimed was "a smidgeon more than an hour away," I began to get nervous, although I knew not why. Eventually, with much thought, I figured it out. The woods had gone silent again. Even the wind seemed stilled here and no sound of bird or animal could be heard. I mentioned this to Pino and he nodded, saying simply, "They don't like the odor, either."

Soon the horses began to snort and shy, resisting us as we attempted to move forward. Pino sighed and slipped from his horse, tying it to a branch near a patch of grass. He motioned me to do the same. "We'll have to go on foot the rest of the way."

When we finally arrived, it was not what I had expected. The "hill" was really just a large mound, nestled within a small valley and darkened by the high walls of the mountains on either side. A shallow brook ran down from the northernmost wall and trickled around the mound before disappearing into a crack in the ground. Atop the hill was a circle of standing stones, looking almost natural, but this was a trick of their age: erosion had so worn them down as to make them appear to have fallen there during some distant glaciations. They were, in fact, man-made, having been carved and set in purposeful formation.

I knew this because I had seen something similar once, on Tethys. Not as an object, but a sketch, a drawing in the notebooks of Victor Domokos Erling, the uncle of Saint Amalthea. The thrill in the pit of my stomach combated with my sense of dread. If my memory was correct, this was no mere magic lantern. It was a Second Republic-era recreation of an abandoned experiment in Pan-Physics. It would be at once priceless but also potentially damnable. The chaos such technology invoked could serve either the Emyrean or Gehenne.

Pino must have discerned something in my expression, as his eyes narrowed and he cast his gaze about the place. "What is it?"

"I... I think I know what this is," I said, cautiously. "I'm not sure I'm paying you enough to go any farther."

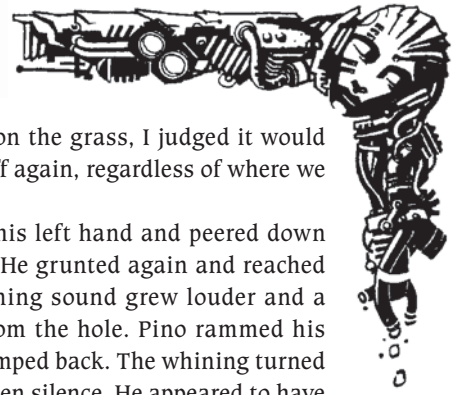
"That either means it's dangerous," he said, scratching his scalp, "or it's valuable. Since you're a priest, supposed to look out for souls, I suppose you mean the former."

"Both," I said. I saw no reason to hide the truth from him. I was no greedy merchant seeking to hide a claim and I didn't think he was the type to kill me over such knowledge. Besides, his sickness prevented him from being much of a physical threat, and I had a gun hidden in my robes just in case.

"Well, I'm going in anyway," he said. "You've got me curious, and like I said before, I don't got much time in my bones anyway. Might as well spend it marveling at something new."

We cautiously approached the stones, finding the slope of the hill very easy going. I looked carefully for any signs of the technology hidden there, while Pino began to climb one of the stones. There was a crackling sound and I heard a grunt from him. Then something large and heavy hit me





with incredible force, knocking me to the ground. I lost consciousness.

When I again opened my eyes, it was dark. Although it had seemed that only moments had passed, by the position of the constellations, it appeared that hours had gone by. It was perhaps midnight by now, or sometime after. I got to my feet, feeling none the worse for the blow, and looked about. I saw no sign of an attacker or any object that might have hit me.

Pino lay on the ground, having been clearly thrown from the stone he was climbing. I rushed to him and found that he was unhurt, at least with no external injuries. I splashed some water from my canteen onto his face and his eyes fluttered open.

"What in the name of Cyrus?" he wondered, sitting up, staring in consternation at the night sky.

"Who is Cyrus?" I asked.

"Saint Cyrus of Vasilgrod. A local saint. Local for this world, that is. I'm sure you've heard of more saints than I can count, you being inter-worldly and well-traveled, that is." He stood up and seemed to take an inventory of his bones and muscles, flexing his arms and twisting his torso.

"I haven't heard of that one," I said. "What is his patronage?"

"Astronomy. A dead art. Except among the Charioteers, of course. Cyrus had foretold the coming of Kung-1, the meteor that destroyed his beloved city. But that was after his death." He walked about the circle, peering at the stones in the dim light of the half moon. "What do you suppose hit us?"

"Ah, I've been thinking about that," I said. I pointed with my toe to a distinct line in the grass. Before it, the grass lay flat. Past it, the grass grew straight. "Whatever hit us also flattened this grass. If you look at the pattern, though, it clearly came from a central point—there." I gestured to a small rock roughly in the center of the circle. "I think I've seen something like this before, on Malignatius, although there it was a jury-rigged trap left behind by the Li Halan and meant for the Decados forces."

"So what is it?"

"A stunner. A Second Republic weapon technology. It emits an invisible field of force that radiates outwards in a wave. I think you climbing on that stone must have set it off."

He looked skeptical. "Are you sure? I don't see a weapon."

"I think it must be under that rock. It would have risen up as needed, then slid back into its casing once it had discharged. The one on Malignatius was only a one-shot device. I suspect this one will go off again if we're not careful."

"If you say so..." Pino shrugged his shoulders. "What now then?"

"Well, maybe you could try to disable it."

"Me?"

"I notice you've got tools on your belt. That puts you a few steps ahead of me."

Pino grunted and seemed to sulk for a moment. He then shrugged again and began to cautiously move toward the rock, drawing a tool from his belt. I wished him luck.

He bent down by the rock and eyed it warily. He was ready to roll to the side if he needed to; although by the

stunner's pattern of effect on the grass, I judged it would hit both of us should it go off again, regardless of where we stood in the circle.

He lifted the rock with his left hand and peered down the hole that was revealed. He grunted again and reached down with his tool. A whining sound grew louder and a metal tube scalloped up from the hole. Pino rammed his tool into the opening and jumped back. The whining turned into a crackling bang, and then silence. He appeared to have shorted out the device.

Pino stood up and shrugged matter of factly. "Well, we're still standing."

"We're not alone," I said, my voice almost catching in my throat.

Standing in the circle with us were three men dressed in strange uniforms of silver. They stared intently at unseen things, speaking to each other with words I could not understand. As I looked around, I noticed that the grass had been replaced by a smooth metal floor. The stones were no longer aged and eroded; they were newly carved and worked with all manner of odd inscriptions and sigils.

Pino froze in fear and I did the same, although I had my suspicions that these people weren't real. They were Mayor Donatius' magic lantern show. I chuckled, relieved to know they weren't ghosts.

At the sound of my outburst, one of them turned to look at me.

"Are you here to observe? I don't recognize your robes. Are you from the Phavian Institute?"

I froze. Magic lantern images rarely talked back. Those that did were usually run by an advanced pygmalium-based intelligence. But this man who spoke to me... he seemed more than real.

Another one of the men looked at me and spoke. "No, he's clearly one of the gospels. Come to see if Amalthea's uncle was right? Well, we'll prove it to your people's satisfaction, I think."

"And who are you?" the first one said, looking at Pino.

"We don't have time for that," the third man said. "Oscillation is in 10 minutes." At this, they all turned back to peer at invisible objects, which I now realized were holovids projected into their eyes, like those I'd seen used by Baroness Sahid Azula on Criticorum.

"Wait!" the second one cried. "There's something wrong—the chamber is not on the right frequency!"

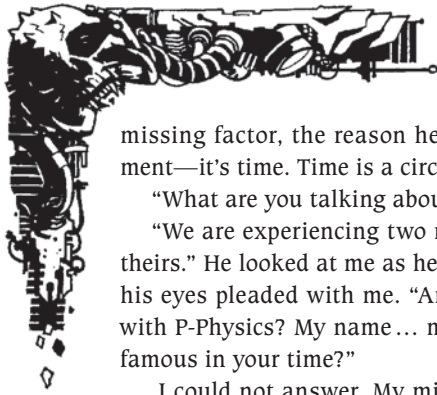
"That can't be—I calibrated it myself earlier today!"

"Something's thrown it off. I'm showing that the defense grid has been triggered, and there's a short in the system."

I shook my head. This wasn't possible! These men were living in the past, a point in time so distant from me as to be nearly unimaginable, and yet they reacted to events that took place here and now! Pino's disabling of the stunner was clearly interfering with their experiment, but how could that be? This experiment had taken place over a millennia ago.

The first man to speak looked at me gravely, with a strange expression on his face. His gaze, it seemed to me, was that of a man who had just realized the universe was not what he thought it was. "I understand now. Erling's





missing factor, the reason he didn't complete this experiment—it's time. Time is a circle."

"What are you talking about?" the second man said.

"We are experiencing two moments in time, ours and ... theirs." He looked at me as he said this. He swallowed and his eyes pleaded with me. "Am I right? Did we unite time with P-Physics? My name... my name is John Lakos. Am I famous in your time?"

I could not answer. My mind had frozen in shock. The enormity of the event was too much for me to comprehend.

"Oh my god," the third man said. "The waves are polarizing! We're all going to—"

The hill exploded.

The very atoms of the place shivered and separated, scattering in chaos. I felt my own body separate in all directions.

Somewhere inside of myself, I prayed.

And for a moment, I was back at the time before the catastrophe, with John Lakos still pleading with me. I felt a hand on my shoulder and turned my head to look at it. Female, smooth, brown, and shining with a light I will never be able to describe for as long as I shall live. Her voice spoke to me: "You called me here. From the eye of the soul, time is simultaneous. Do not worry. Loyalty shall be your salvation."

I opened my mouth to say something, but she removed her hand. Then something hit me, something large and painful and my body was thrown off the hill just before the explosion shook it.

I hit the ground hard and heard the snap of one of my left ribs. A weight lifted from me and I could see the hill. Where the stones had been was ... nothing. A void, as if a hole into darkest outer space had opened.

Then it closed and the stones were back, as if they had never been gone.

The sharp pain in my side cleared the fog from my mind and a smell came to my nose—a smell I almost cried at. So real, so close. I was losing my mind. But then a grunt and four hands around me, patting out the fires on my clothing, and then lifting me, convincing me it was real.

"Ong? Is that you," I whispered.

"Yes, Alustro," Ongangarak said, his deep Voroxian voice rumbling. "I am here."

"Thank the Pancreator." I wept for a little while as he carried me to the edge of the woods and put me down. Through my pain, I smiled to see him. "Where are the others? My lady?"

"They are coming. We could not land here—something got in the way of the instruments. We saw you on the hill and called and called for you, but you didn't respond. I jumped from the ship while the others flew to land as close as they could."

"Pino? There was a man with me? Where is he?"

Ong sniffed the air. "I smell him." He bounded away, into the woods. I heard a yelp and the thumping of Ong's feet as he bounded back to me, bearing Pino in his arms. He set him down beside me.

Pino looked at me as if he saw a ghost, and at Ong with a sense of wonder. "Did you see her?" he said.

I nodded.

"She cured me," Pino said. "I am whole. See?" He lifted his shirt and revealed a healthy looking torso. "My rad poisoning! It's gone! No marks!" He laughed with glee and jumped up and down, dancing in a circle around Ong and me.

"Who is he talking about?" Ong asked, puzzled. "I saw only you and him."

"I... he means... the Lady Amalthea. She saved us. Her uncle's forbidden experiment... they were trying to perform it. I mean, they *did* perform it... But I think they're trapped, caught in a pocket of time. Or they were? I think she freed them." I did not add that I believe it was my faith that had brought her there, somehow, to free those poor souls, trapped for so many years. Or was it that long? For them, maybe it was only a mere moment.

Pino stopped his capering and stared soberly at me. "Amalthea? But... she wore a silver suit, like them. She grabbed me before the explosion hit and pulled me out of the way. She then scanned me with some sort of ray. She called it a Zinn Reducer, said it reversed radiation damage to living cells. Then she faded away. I thought she was part of the AI's force projector—the magic lantern theory, like you said."

I didn't know what to make of this. I *knew* it was Amalthea. Knew it with a conviction that came not from reason but from some place deeper in my soul. Perhaps she had appeared in a different form to Pino, a form he could more readily accept. Of all the Prophet's disciples, she was the one most comfortable with Merciful Technals, so it made sense for her divine aura to take the form of such technology.

I looked at Ong and smiled. It was good to see my friend again. I heard someone calling from far off, and Ong roared an answer.

"They come," he said.

I said, "I knew they would."



Introduction

Goodman Turner: Sir! Is that not a golem I see hidden in thy hay wain?

Yeoman Jacque: That? Ol' Blinky? He's a handy one, all right. He can lift a bale with only one armature.

Goodman Turner: Oh, sir, I am disappointed. Such backbreaking labor was meant for us, so that we might purify our soul-mirrors with our sweat. Does the deacon not know of this... this thing?

Yeoman Jacque: The deacon? Only a fool mixes priests and pistons. The day the deacon comes out to lift my bales, then he can opine on my choice of help.

Goodman Turner: I see. Then my path is clear. I must take it upon myself to warn him of your laxity before the whole community is harmed by it.

Yeoman Jacque: I was afraid you'd say that. Ol' Blinky can lift a bale with one hand... or rip a man in two with both of 'em.

Goodman Turner: What? NO! Get thee back! Back, I say! AAAARRRG—!

Yeoman Jacque: Put him in that hole in the back forty, Blinky. I'll spread us another rumor about bandits...

—From The Last Straw, a popular play about a murderous farmer and his golem. Performances were banned in 5002, when the Church finally realized that audiences sometimes rooted for the farmer over his overly sanctimonious victims

How to Use This Book

This book contains not only a variety of uncommon technical devices, including a few considered legendary or lost, but also information on how their use (and sometimes even their very existence) affects those around them. Some of these items can have very powerful effects on your epic.

Gamemasters should feel free to ignore any of the devices found here if they do not fit the style of game they and their players enjoy. Also, do not be afraid to tweak the entries to make them more interesting. For example, if the players expect an Askari golem to attack them with blasters, they will probably be surprised if it starts launching grenades at them instead.

This book also lists Church prohibitions against these items that, for the most part, follow the reasoning in Hezekiah's Bull. However, Hezekiah, and his advisors, could not take into account every type of technology when they composed their statement. Their intentions were to provide a framework for individuals to judge what sort of technology was acceptable and what kind put their souls at risk.

Over time, the number of objects proscribed grew significantly, and many people contributed to the list. Various groups had their own reasons for seeing an object proscribed, and more than a few decisions left everyone shaking their heads. While most of the dictums follow the Bull's logic, gamemasters should not feel bound by that either; if they want to make an apparently inoffensive item Baneful, then so be it! By the same token, a chemical with incredibly dangerous side effects could gain the classification of "Merciful," but the characters may have to solve the mess that classification would leave behind.

What's in This Book

The chapters in the first part of **Arcane Tech** relate to the categories of proscription defined by **Hezekiah's Bull** (see p. 12), with each subsequent chapter exploring the technologies more inimical to humanity. This section is followed by a chapter on **Space Stations**—a technology that is not covered by the bull itself but receives a similar amount of attention by the Church as a whole.

The third part of this book, **Church Law**, offers information on the Church's philosophy concerning science and technology, as well as the punishments for those who break the laws of proscription.



Last but not least, the final chapter, **Preceptors**, adds a new character role to **Fading Suns**: the sect of scientists and teachers bent on re-civilizing the Known Worlds.

Please note that **Arcane Tech** contains material from **Forbidden Lore: Technology**, which was published for the **Fading Suns First Edition** game line, and has since become obsolete. This material is expanded and updated in **Arcane Tech** and encompasses primitive technology, Symbiot tech, Church law, and the Preceptors.

Faith and Genius

The Church has always been the watchdog against the use and misuse of science and technology. During its early years, it had little direct power to regulate the invention and use of technology, standing instead as a muckraker against only the worst transgressions. As the Church gained more power in the later years of the Second Republic, it was able to wield more influence amongst lawmakers, swaying their opinions on legislation regulating potentially dangerous new technologies. For instance, Church lobbyists helped to ensure that private companies were not allowed to legally study psychic powers; instead, the government funneled research and development to the Phavian Institute, and although the Church could not shut down the Institute, it at least prevented the widespread study of human psychic potential (some, of course, do not see this as a victory).

After the Fall, the Church used all its newfound martial might to make up for centuries of powerlessness before the march of technological progress. Within decades, a millennium's worth of scientific study was lost to the flamerguns of fanatics, aided by the monopolistic desires of the noble houses.

In the years since, the Church has not wavered in proving its commitment to save humanity (and other sentients) from the "mistakes" made during the Second Republic. It has relentlessly clung to its prerogative as judge, jury and executioner over all scientific development. While the Church, on occasion, has looked the other way, especially when the matter concerned noble houses or League guilds, it makes up for any laxity with the upper classes by being doubly harsh on the less privileged. Few peasants ever work with technology more complex than that known to 19th century yeomen.

During the Emperor Wars, the quick development of war tech outpaced the Church Inquisition's ability to deter all offenders. Now that an emperor once more sits upon the throne and peace has returned, the Church sees that others' irresponsibility during war has become habit. Too many nobles and guilders abuse their privilege and continue to create horrifying technologies.

To put an end to this (at least the open practice, if not all instances of furtive research undertaken on backwater worlds), the Patriarch issued a recent bull concerning the Church's view on technology (for more information on the Church's philosophy, see the **Church Law** chapter, p. 128).



Hezekiah's Bull Regarding Technology

The Patriarch's brief describes four degrees of proscription based on the potential of a technology to harm the soul (and, sometimes, the body). The lowest degree—*Baneful* tech—is the worst, with the fourth—*Corrupting* tech—considered more troublesome than dangerous.

The Bull does not set out the punishments for handling such technology, although its language hints at the damnation and terror awaiting the unwary sinner. The College of Ethicals stepped in to set out harsh new guidelines that more fully flesh out the Patriarch's intent, so that no Known Worlder can claim confusion about the law. Nonetheless, there are unspecified sections, giving both sinner and Inquisitor wiggle room in interpretation.

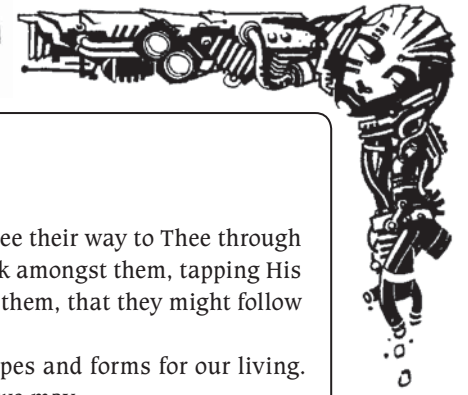
Provided in the following chapters are sample technologies from each category, and the punishments for using them should an Inquisitor hear of it.

Anyone convicted of handling proscribed technologies of degrees 1 through 3 receive a brand of the Dark Sign. Those who continually abuse corrupting technologies (degree 4) suffer branding as well.

A transsumption (copy for ordinary readers) of Hezekiah's *breve* (brief) appears on the opposite page.



The Dark Sign



Hezekiah, IN PP. M

Beloved Protectors,

Oh Merciful Pancreator, shine Thy Light upon Thy children now, so that they might see their way to Thee through the Dark. Lost they were; sheep in the night with no shepherd, until Thy Prophet did walk amongst them, tapping His crook to call them to pasture. Have patience with them, oh Empyrean Fire, and burn for them, that they might follow Thy light home.

It is only through Thy Creation that we craft, from Thine own Divine Will, new shapes and forms for our living. We do so in honor of and to honor Thee in Thy perfect Will, and to understand Thee as we may.

Many forget this Cause, and seek their own glory. They forge Evil from Thy gifts and call it Good. It is the duty of Thy chosen Church, Thy Voice in this lower emanation, to damn this Lie and damn those who enact it. We bear this duty with glad hearts and devotion. We shirk not even the censure of our brothers and sisters of Thy flock.

Herewith, we set down once more guidelines for the proper use of Thy Creation and declare the Proscription of certain items and processes by which Evil is loosed in the Universe that those wayward sheep might enjoy Thy light once more.

Hear, oh faithful, and heed the Universal Church's words: Touch not these Proscribed goods lest thy Soul become darkened and never more reflect the Light! Use them not, or suffer the wrath of the Church, the Pancreator's chosen Vessel! Think thee not that there is escape from the Eye of Faith; thy sins shall surely reveal themselves. Know that ye shall be weighed and that ye shall be judged. Those who have done Right shall be rewarded while those who have done Wrong shall be scourged.

I. Technology that is dangerous to soul-life and bodily existence is an affront to the Empyrean Throne. Thou who wouldst so degrade the Pancreator's Creation shall thyself be degraded. Thy soul shall shrivel and blacken, falling into itself like a mote before the All-Devouring Eye (1). Counted among such unholy technologies are those that crack the seals of Creation and unleash invisible rot on all living things (2), those that do tamper with the tiniest of the Pancreator's beings and turn them from their ordained course to that of conscious virulence (3), those that open the inner ears to the honeyed tongues of demons and deliver men unto false worship (4), and many more that destroy all hope of life and faith among sentients.

II. Technology that is chaotic and baneful to sentient beings is a trap for hubris, daring thy arrogance to grasp such things and seek their control, waking forces greater than thyself, events whose outcomes cannot be told. Only the Pancreator, and through His infinite wisdom and mercy, the Church is wise enough to see if such ends lead to good or ill. Counted among such technologies are those devices and artifacts left behind by our precursors, called by many names but addressed by the Prophet as Preadamites; and those sciences practiced in secret by the Republican elite of old which did dare to peer into the very weave of the Pancreator's skein; and any such science that reaches beyond thy rightful grasp.

III. Technology that is soul-deadening and alien to humans' natural lives is confusing to them and leads them astray from their proper and righteous path in the Light. It promises wonders but delivers also sin: covetousness, alienism, barbarity, and estrangement from their own kind. Counted among such technologies are the false-men, the golems, animate and non-animate alike, wrought not by the Mind of All-Creation, but from small, limited sentient thoughts. Likewise the synthetic souls that seem all-too-sentient but which are in truth mere mannequins to true soul reflectivity. So, too, condemned are the devices melded to the flesh and hidden in organic soil; such corruption insults the pure form ordained by Creation. All such insults—additions, enhancements, empowerments—are illegal in the eyes of the Empyrean.

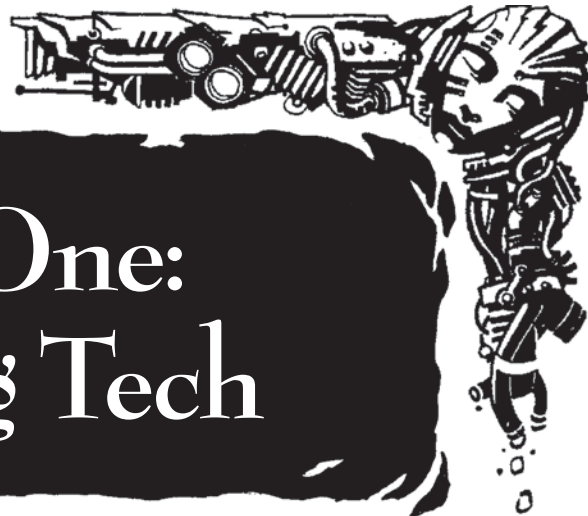
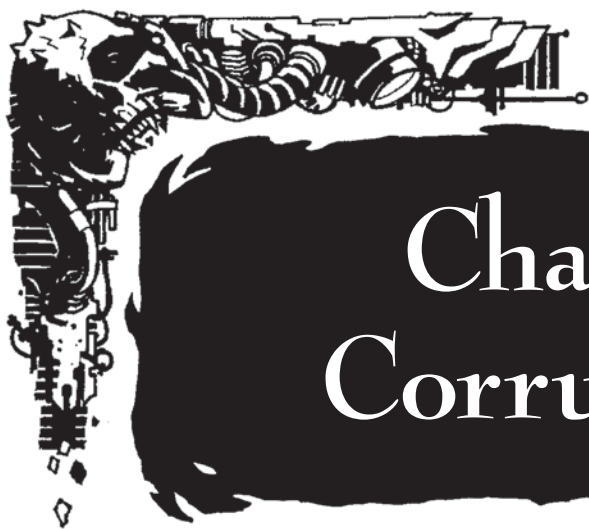
IV. Technology that is corrupting and prolific with wrongful thought risks thy standings within the community, thy very fellowship with other sentients. Only Orthodoxy sets right the many twisted paths laid by false thought and erroneous faith. Counted among such technologies are the tragic and comedic magic lantern entertainments banned by the clergy, and those that allow for the self-creation of phantasms and seemingly real places, dancing to the whim of the unenlightened (5). The trade in such harmful plays, dramas, masques and literatures shall be monitored by the clergy, who shall, by dint of learning and discipline, rightfully determine what specimens are approved and what are banned with cause.

V. This Office does recognize the category of Merciful Technals, the medical sciences practiced by Saint Amalthea, and exempts them from undue persecution. Likewise, there are other such merciful technologies, gifts from the Pancreator or his Saints to all lowly sentients, groping through the Darkness for the Light. The clergy shall judge them for their soul value in all cases.

And so let it be done, Light without Shadow, Universe without End.
Holy Terra, 5005 A.D. (Antiquus Datum)

Notes for the unlettered: 1. A black hole; 2. Nuclear power; radiation; 3. Bioengineered viruses; 4. Sathraism; 5. Virtual reality suites.





Chapter One: Corrupting Tech

This chapter examines the lowest classification, Corrupting Tech, which represents technology that is not dangerous in its own right but requires the careful application of Church doctrine to prevent misuse and abuse. Use outside of that sanctioned by the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs is restricted, though rare examples of Church permits exist that grant a number of freemen unique usage of certain technologies.

Primitive Technology

Most serfs are so thoroughly indoctrinated with Church dogma that they actively fear and distrust anything above basic tech. Seen as almost magical, the sorts of weapons and tools available to nobles and guilds are viewed with a mixture of superstitious dread and awed amazement. For their part, the elite often refers to uncomplicated tools and inventions as peasant or serf crafts rather than glorifying them with the term “technology.”

Despite such sneering dismissals, there may be times when travelers must make do with less. Complex machinery, transports, and weaponry may malfunction or break down somewhere far beyond the reach of a guildsman who can effect repairs. Theft may leave characters stranded or unequipped. Local conditions may dictate that characters shed their more advanced gear or be considered heretical and hunted for their arrogant use of “forbidden” objects. That’s when they need to know what is available where and how difficult using such “uncomplicated” technology can be. For those unfamiliar with the more humble tools available to the peasantry, it can be a true awakening to discover that the less advanced the technology, the more unwieldy and physically challenging it is to use. Any or all of the following may be encountered when the higher-ups go techno-slumming.

Transportation

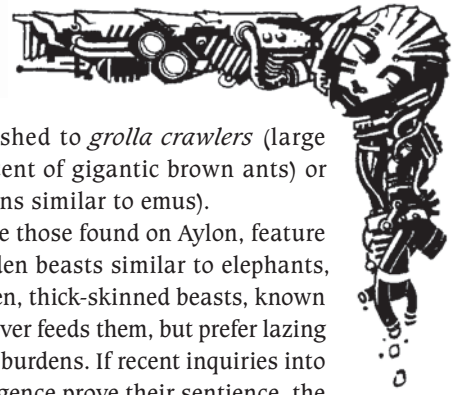
For those more used to lounging aboard spacecraft or riding in powered vehicles, the transportation available to peasants and artisans may come as something of a shock. Both the local terrain and indigenous or imported animal life

dictate modes of transportation. Heavy forests or swamps can rarely support good roads for long, as overgrowth makes keeping them clear a full time occupation. Even across plains and hills, roads are often little more than beaten dirt, which is dry and dusty whenever it isn’t turned into mud soup by foul weather. Mountain crossings can only be achieved through switchback trails that wind up the mountainside or natural passes, most of which provide little room for wide access ways. More advanced communities may lay down log roads (somewhat like a stationary raft) across swampy areas and pave village streets, but this is extremely rare. Bridges frequently consist of rickety wooden boards, tree boles, or woven rope. In many areas waterways must simply be forded at the shallows.

The peasantry on most worlds must make do with hand-pulled carts, sleds, and travois. Those who have access to beasts often have larger wagons. Artisans and nobles living in such environs ride in coaches, chariots, or rickshaws. Water transport is usually limited to rafts, barges, and canoes. Many trading centers employ linked river rafts. When moving against the current, they utilize long tow lines attached to teams of burden beasts (either harnessed aquatic creatures such as the *ichthia* of Leminkainen or the slow-moving *brutes* found on most worlds).

Some worlds provide even greater challenges. Ice chutes, frozen lake surfaces, and hard packed snow serve as main thoroughfares where winter’s grip rarely loosens. Those who have adapted to such conditions, such as the people of Cadavus, make use of skis, snowshoes, sleighs pulled by the reindeer-like *oshogi*, and ice gliders (somewhat like barges rigged with runners). Those with a sense of style or enough money prefer to ride on tamed *lyocel* (white, shaggy-furred predators resembling lions except for their lack of tails and manes). The leonine beasts serve as guardians for various monasteries on Cadavus and are often trained as war mounts by the Decados.

Flatlands and dry riverbeds mark the easiest routes in desert environments such as those found on Kish and Pyre. Camels and *pherizas* (strong, quick lizards with bad attitudes but amazing stamina and tolerance for heat and lack of water) serve as riding and burden beasts. Wagons with



large, sturdy wheels are lashed to *grolla crawlers* (large many-legged bugs reminiscent of gigantic brown ants) or runner birds (flightless avians similar to emus).

Jungle environments, like those found on Aylon, feature mammalian riding and burden beasts similar to elephants, but much smaller. These green, thick-skinned beasts, known as *shinda*, loyally serve whoever feeds them, but prefer lazing in river shallows to carrying burdens. If recent inquiries into the *shinda's* apparent intelligence prove their sentience, the practice of using these gentle beasts may stop.

Some worlds are even stranger, such as Madoc, where great aquatic beasts known as *leviathans* are harnessed to pull floating, nomadic villages across the seas. The creatures follow particular routes each year while feeding, tracking the movements of smaller sea life and the drifts of seaweed which form the majority of their diet. This allows meetings and trade among various villages.

On Ravenna, lofty cliffs and warm air currents have created a demand for flying mounts. *Urrocs*, huge fantastically-hued avians with wing spans of up to 60 feet, can be ridden if their passenger can learn the signals their trainers use to instruct them. Traditionally trained by a branch of House Trusnikron, those that have flown the same route often enough no longer need such instructions, merely repeating actions they have performed numerous times before. Rumor hints that House Trusnikron has used its position to train a small mounted army for its own use. Harnessed in pairs, *urrocs* can haul a ton or so of goods in giant nets slung beneath them. This requires a handler who sits in a special saddle atop the net and directs the creatures where to go and how to hover above a delivery site so the wares may be unloaded gently. As with rider *urrocs*, bearer *urrocs* can be trained to follow a learned procedure so that no trainer is needed after a time. Each creature has peculiarities of shape and size that require different saddles, harnesses, burden baskets, bridles or halters, or even howdahs (tiny pavilions set atop the creatures back in which up to four people may ride). Some will tolerate no more saddle than a riding strap, while others will not respond to bridles with mouth bits and must be guided through reins attached to nose rings. Those that haul or carry heavy loads require padding to keep them from injury. Aside from learning the correct way in which to attach straps and saddles, it is often necessary to learn the tricks such beasts employ to disconcert riders. The famous trick employed by *urrocs*, in which they inhale deeply and use the air to bloat their stomachs, has resulted in hundreds of harrowing near-falls from great heights as the saddle strap "inexplicably" loosens when the avians exhale. Neither natives of Ravenna nor the Trusnikron warn eager-beaver "I'll saddle my own mount" type neophytes of this, finding it immensely funny watching nobles slip sideways with the loosened saddle and desperately attempt to hang on until the *urroc* lands.

Tools and Work

Serfs are tied to the land and severely limited in their choice of tools. Almost all their work is performed utilizing



backbreaking labor rather than complex machinery. In many small and remote communities, differentiation of tasks does not even exist. If a peasant family cannot till the fields, fish, chop wood, construct a shelter, make their own tools and furnishings, care for animals, spin, weave, sew, doctor themselves when sick or injured, and cook, they do not survive long. Many may also be called upon to tan hides and make simple clay vessels for their own use. So long as their simple tools and furnishings are serviceable, crudity of form is overlooked. Serfs have little use for or time to appreciate artistry in any case. Once communities grow in numbers, there is a greater likelihood of serfs specializing at a craft, such as blacksmithing, milling, or beekeeping and service is traded against service—one serf may trade help with building a house against another's skill at leatherworking.

In many areas, especially where terraforming never occurred or the world has slipped back into less evolved methods, farming requires much more than simply plowing, seeding, and harvesting. Many irrigation canals were destroyed during the Emperor Wars, and often the knowledge of how to build them was lost in the slaughter. In many communities, farm workers must carry water to the fields in buckets hung on wooden poles slung across their shoulders.

Some have the luxury of beast-drawn carts filled with barrels that can be driven around the field and water dipped out where needed. Fertilization may be provided by dung or by ferrying seaweed up from the coast to the fields, where it must be spread out and turned every few days. Seeding is usually done by hand, with one worker moving ahead and spearing a hole with a pointed stick and children following and dropping seeds into the hole. These in turn may be just ahead of a third worker charged with pouring water on the seeds and covering the hole with dirt. Weeding, continued watering, and harvesting are followed by gleaning the last seeds and burning the refuse before again readying the field for the next year's planting.

Depending on the area's available resources, serfs may be required by their lords to fish, harvest marine plantlife, mine for metals or gemstones, hunt, or shepherd the lord's animals rather than farming. Nets are the usual choice for fishing. They can be trawled from boats, as is the custom on Vera Cruz, where wooden framed animal skin boats, similar to Irish currachs, set out before dawn and return only when the craft seems likely to be swamped by the weight of the catch. Motive power for the craft is by oar or paddle, or pole where the bottom is shallow enough. Some have sails, but are hostage to the prevailing winds. A few communities set out nets that are held afloat by air-filled buoys made of waterproofed skin or tarred canvas.

In other places, nets are stretched across rivers at two different heights, one under water to catch the fish, another in the air (from tree boles) to snare flying fowl attracted to the catch. Nets are only employed on the overlords' behalf, however. In many areas, it is forbidden for peasants to net fish for their own needs. The nobles fear over-fishing will deplete their riches, relegating serfs to using fishing lines; some forbid peasants the right to fish at all for themselves.

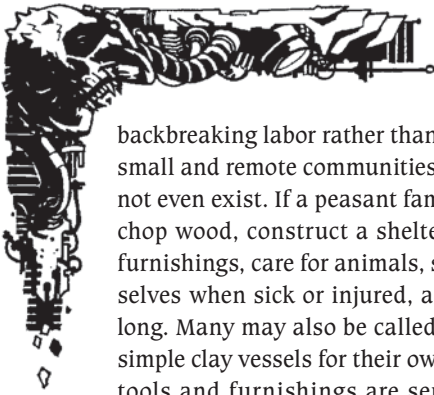
Hunting is treated similarly, with lines of peasants used as beaters when the lords wish to hunt. Individual hunting and trapping is occasionally allowed in more enlightened areas (especially where the fur trade is not important), but most serfs must place hidden trap lines where they think they can get away with it.

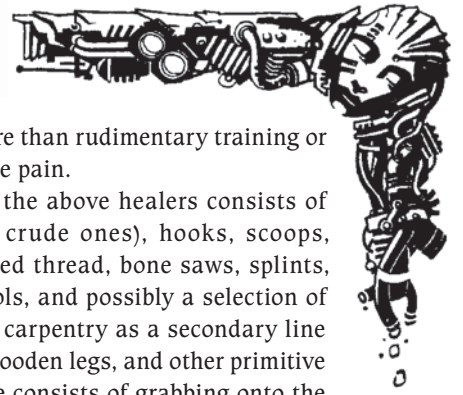
Limited strip mining, in which hundreds of peasants scrape away a top layer of soil to bare the riches beneath, is most common. Shaft mining, in which a deep shaft is dug, a pulley erected and workers lowered down the shaft on a wooden platform to carve out cramped tunnels underneath, is utilized where veins and deposits lie deeper. Picks and shovels are most often used, with some few gouging implements employed to dig away inside the tunnels that may be no more than two to three feet high and wide. Baskets used to hold the metals, coal, or gems are passed back along the line and lifted out via the platform. Candles or small oil lanterns held in headbands provide illumination.

In concert with the serfs, some artisans or crafters may provide community services that cannot be performed by the peasants. These include barrel makers, blacksmiths, glass blowers, chandlers and lamp makers, boat builders, rope makers, and millers and brewers. Communities that possess more than one such gifted tradesperson are extremely rare, however. Even less common are places where tanners, cobblers, tailors, furriers, and silk makers can make a living. An exception to the rule is on the Li Halan ruled world of Rampart, where the abundance of *gika worms* makes silk production an important industry. Conditions in Rampart's weather and terrain make silk the material of choice for both peasant workers and nobles, though the latter often wear brightly dyed silk clothing rather than the raw silk available to serfs. Taking advantage of the unrest on the planet, bandits have begun raiding *gika worm* farms, stealing the valuable worms and production equipment. Anyone caught stealing or killing a *gika worm* is subject to execution on Rampart.

Tools used in the various pursuits include hoes, person-powered or beast-pulled plows, pitchforks, hammers, saws, chisels, scythes, rakes, needles, hide scrapers, potters wheels, bellows, anvils, and axes. Threshing sticks, shears, pots and kettles, tongs, winnowing baskets, spindles, and grindstones are also in evidence in most communities. Some of these, such as the scythe, axe, and pitchfork provide the serfs with weapons as well. Even with terraforming, not all the threatening indigenous fauna have been eradicated; many such predators are attracted to cottages by the smell of food cooking or animals kept in the house or nearby barn. That unhappy peasants might utilize their tools against nobles is often feared, but rarely acknowledged openly.

Where more advanced tools are needed, looms, mill-wheels, and block and tackle are employed. Water and wind mills and smoke houses dot the landscape. Energy is restricted to wind, water, and beast power, with dried peat, dung, charcoal, wood, and animal or plant oils providing fuels for fires. Sunpower is utilized for slow cooking meats and drying clothing or hay. Most villages depend on a single water source, such as a well or river.





Communications

Communication is a luxury where roads may be almost nonexistent and travelers few. Most of the peasantry have fallen back into illiteracy, with symbols (denoting various houses, Church affiliations, guilds, and merchandise) and pictographic writing (frequently used to illustrate Church doctrine) being the norm. The common folk can easily interpret these without the need for more formal writing. In those places where distance is a factor, smoke signals, drums, fires lit at night, and horns are all used to warn of strangers approaching or to call people together in times of need.

Most messages between backwater hamlets travel with wandering merchants who ply their trade with brute-drawn carts or even just a backpack full of merchandise. Such smalltime traders are always happy about an extra talon for delivering a letter or a spoken message to the next village down the road.

Medicine

Despite a lack of sophistication, even less advanced communities have at least some degree of medical care. Midwives, tooth-pullers, herbmasters, veterinarians, leechers, and chiurgeons all ply their trades wherever there are those ill or injured enough to need their services. Most simply call themselves healers and further inquiry into their specialty is needed to make a wise choice as to which one to consult about a given problem. Not all of them are ignorant butchers preying on the fears of the serfs—just most of them. While many at least understand the basics, such as washing their hands and cleaning their implements between

patients, few have much more than rudimentary training or the tools needed to minimize pain.

A typical kit for any of the above healers consists of forceps, scalpels (though crude ones), hooks, scoops, surgeon's needles and waxed thread, bone saws, splints, bandages, cauterization tools, and possibly a selection of herbs. Some also engage in carpentry as a secondary line of work, carving crutches, wooden legs, and other primitive prosthetics. Dental medicine consists of grabbing onto the affected tooth, yanking it out, and minimizing the bleeding. Childbirth is usually accomplished without resort to painkillers, as there are few drugs that will not severely impede the birth. Teas, salves, tinctures, balms, elixirs, and herbal soups are all used for various ailments. A few herbs, such as Vorox Root, have antiseptic properties and can be ground up and added to water to paint onto wounds. Painkillers, such as Black Leaf and Healers' Cap mushrooms, can control pain, but are highly toxic in higher doses. It isn't unusual for the attending healer to accidentally kill a patient while trying to control their pain.

Shelter

Regardless of terrain and other factors, all peasant dwellings have one thing in common: they are invariably made of the most ordinary, least costly indigenous material available. Where the nobles might import Gallana Wood from Gwynneth and stained glass windows to adorn their great manors, serfs live in adobe hovels, drafty log cabins, piled unmortared stone houses, and igloos. Roofs often consist of thatch laid down across the top and held in place by ropes with stones attached (so the thatch doesn't blow



away). Some homes may be nothing more than mixed mud and sticks slapped onto a framework of animal bones. Where inclement weather rots houses as soon as they are built, many peasants live in caves.

Nomads may have cloth tents, hide teepees, rounded shelters similar to yurts, or—for those with the riches to buy such—even caravan wagons. Many who live in jungle environments construct grass or reed huts. A few build shelters up in the trees. Due to so many planets being terraformed, however, the majority live in housing not too dissimilar than those occupied by serfs in Holy Terra's dark ages.

A typical serf's home is built of wattle and daub (sticks mixed in with mud, and often dung). It has a thatched roof, which is broken only by a chimney or a smoke hole. All have some sort of hearth or fireplace used for cooking and heating the home. Rarely are there any room divisions beyond a loft. Most have dirt floors. Animals often share the same shelter, though sometimes lean-tos or stables are attached to the main house. Lofts hold hay, smoked meats, cheese, and bedding for the children. Below, furnishings consist of pallets, a trestle table with bench, stools, a chest or shelves for storage, a pot and pot hook for cooking at the hearth, utensils and crockery, and slop buckets. Entry is through a rickety wooden door with an inadequate wooden bar that can be dropped across the inside at night. Windows are merely holes cut in the side (with no glass in them), which have wooden shutters that can be drawn across them to keep out animals and the cold. Candles or lanterns may be used for lighting, though more often, firelight serves instead. Peasants typically have little to do after dark anyway, and the more flames that are burning in a house, the more likely one will be knocked over and set the whole structure ablaze—a not uncommon occurrence.

Money

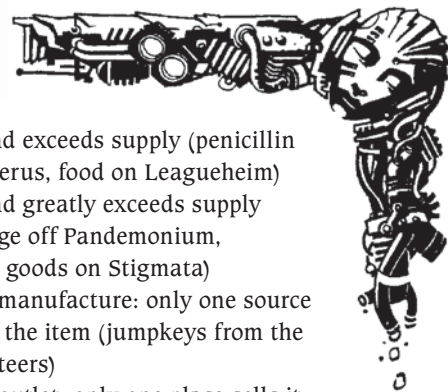
There are few subjects in the Known Worlds as confusing to most people as economics. Very few can stand far enough back to understand the big picture. An interstellar eye is called for, and such a vantage point can only be held by those in the five major houses, the Merchant League, the Church, or the Emperor. And all these factions disagree on key economic principles.

Certainly the Emperor is on the top of the economic food chain. He controls the unit of commerce—the firebird—enforcing its use and ensuring that only the Imperial Mint can turn out genuine firebirds. The penalties for counterfeiting are steep, ranging from long-term incarceration for minor offenses to execution for major scams.

Next in the chain are the noble houses. The individual fortunes of the houses rise and fall, but the five major houses collectively control most of the wealth in the Known Worlds. The Hawkwoods are getting richer and richer while the Hazat see their coffers dwindling in their war against the Kurga Caliphate. They are beginning to rely increasingly on plunder from that barbarian empire to make up for their losses.

Most nobles' fortunes come from the simple fact that they own almost everything—the land and the people of





the Known Worlds. The profits from the labors of most peasants—crops, handicrafts, industrial goods, etc.—all go into the hands of the few lords who rule over them. Very little wealth is returned to the peasants; usually only enough to keep them alive and relatively docile, although often only the barest of living circumstances is afforded them. The nobles' wealth is spent on a variety of things, from the upkeep of their estates to the training of house armies and navies. Money is also distributed to the guilds in the form of contracts for various goods—the building of palaces, the manufacture of war machines, legal experts to aid in litigation against rivals, and many other services besides. A large chunk of noble money also goes to Church tithes. Such tithes are often coerced through threats but are more often given by lords who are genuine believers in the Church and its commandments.

The Church and the Merchant League have about the same amount of total holdings (the League has more tech and resources, but the Church owns more land). However, most Church wealth is in the hands of the Orthodoxy and Brother Battle, with little among the other sects. The Merchant Leagues wealth is spread relatively equally between the major guilds, but each guild experiences boom and bust periods. And in the case of the Reeves, with many of their assets on loan with debtors, it is hard to estimate how much money they actually possess—not that the Reeves would ever open their books to outsiders.

Among the lowest in the chain are the yeomen, those freemen with no strong or direct ties to a house, sect, or guild. These usually make up the ranks of small, local guilds, including crafters, minor moneylenders, or any variety of crafts too insignificant or onerous for a person of higher class to take on.

The last link in the chain is the serfs, the peasants who do not even own their own freedom. They are born in thrall to a noble house and usually spend their entire lives on the fief in which they were born. The majority of Known Worlders are of this miserable class, too uneducated to even realize just how low they are. If most serfs were told about the egalitarian rights that were afforded to all Second Republic citizens, they would refuse to believe such a world ever existed. Li Halan serfs even believe that the Pancreator placed them into their caste and they must live out the poor role given to them in this life.

Firebird Prices

Presented here are some guidelines for determining the firebird costs for a variety of items. The quantity of different items, worlds and conditions prevents a comprehensive list of prices for each planet. Instead, take the following conditions into account when characters attempt to purchase an item on one of the Known Worlds:

Price Variation	Condition
–10 to –20%	Supply exceeds demand (wine on Aylon, high-tech on Leagueheim)
–30 to –50%	Supply greatly exceeds demand (slaves on Pandemonium)

+10 to +30%	Demand exceeds supply (penicillin on Severus, food on Leagueheim)
+30 to +100%	Demand greatly exceeds supply (passage off Pandemonium, luxury goods on Stigmata)
+30%	Select manufacture: only one source makes the item (jumpkeys from the Charioteers)
+10 to +20%	Select outlet: only one place sells it on that planet (books on Kish)
+30 to +50%	Locally proscribed (non-sanctioned books on Pyre)
+100%	Universally proscribed (Vautech)

Sources of Income

There are many ways in which characters can gain income beyond their salaries. Below are some of the possible sources:

Lands

Land is a valuable resource on many planets. The quality or location of the land is of prime importance; a backwater acre on Malignatius could be worthless, while the same acreage on mineral-rich Shaprut could be priceless. A tiny lot on urbanized Leagueheim, where real estate is scarce, may be worth more than a resort island chain on Tethys. The resources of the land are also important. Are there gold or silver deposits? Veins of fine marble? A native substance not replicable elsewhere (such as pygmalium)?

What someone does with their land determines the wealth gained from it. Long-term mining will yield years of riches but will eventually dry out (although this may be a problem for grandchildren to deal with). Renting the land to others (farmers, merchants, etc) will bring less money, but it usually proves a steady income.

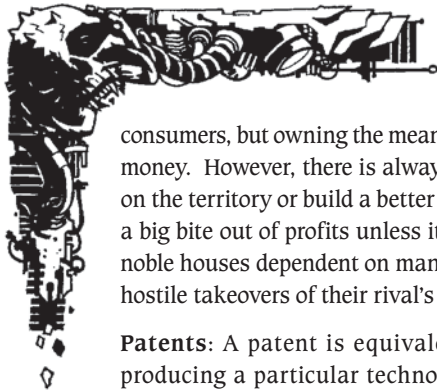
Taxes: These are collected from those living on or using the lands, both peasants and freemen renters. This is the main source of income for most noble houses, gained from their many fiefs throughout the Known Worlds. Not only can rent be charged, but also passage tolls, trade fees, and usage taxes can be enacted, gleaning money from the residents and travelers on the land. The downside to taxes is that someone has to collect them. This onerous task is usually meted out to the more thuggish members of a noble's retinue, for the brutish seem best at keeping the taxed masses in line (especially when tax rates are increased).

Tariffs: These are collected by nobles from foreign merchants wishing to trade in their fiefs or manufacturers wishing to sell their goods to merchants in those fiefs. These merchants must pay a percentage of their trade to the house.

Manufacturing

This could be food, crafts, industrial goods, or any number of different things. Whoever owns the factory or system that produces these items controls its trade. Such items are usually sold in bulk to merchants who are better capable of selling it to





consumers, but owning the means of distribution brings in extra money. However, there is always someone trying to muscle in on the territory or build a better product. Competition can take a big bite out of profits unless it is controlled. For this reason, noble houses dependent on manufactured goods often perform hostile takeovers of their rival's factories with military forces.

Patents: A patent is equivalent to owning the means of producing a particular technology; everyone who makes it must come to the owner for the specifications and pay for the privilege. However, there are no legal safeguards protecting this right. It must be constantly policed with force. The Charioteers maintain their monopoly on jumpkeys by throwing industrial spies out of airlocks.

Tithes

The Church's main method of income, collected from parishioners (serfs and freemen) and nobles alike. Refusing to tithe the Church invites condemnation that could escalate as far as holy war in extreme circumstances. In many cases the threat of Church censure is enough to persuade a noble to pay his dues. It may begin with small threats but will eventually escalate into Church fleet engagements and even excommunication unless the money is paid. The local bishops set the "suggested" tithe amounts, which tend to vary with the seasons. The Church sets some of this aside to help commoners during crop failure or other disasters.

Contracts

These work agreements are the main source of income for guild members. It is a legally binding agreement between the worker and his patron, usually enforced through the bureaucratic offices of the Reeves guild. Nonetheless, the rich routinely default on their contracts, especially against independent freelancers or yeomen. They are much more careful about crossing one of the major guilds.

Trade

Buying and selling items at a profit. This makes the seller a merchant, a strictly middle class function. The al-Malik are often accused of taking part in this petty activity, but they actually leave it to contractors like everyone else. There are affiliated merchants, those contracted by someone (house, guild, Church, Empire, etc.) to sell goods, as well as independent merchants, buying and selling on their own. The dangers are greater for the independents, but the profit margins are usually wider.

Workers

Employing workers to perform certain moneymaking tasks. This could be a crime network, a blackmail ring, or some above-the-board activity such as artifact hunting. As head of the business, the boss takes the highest cut, but also suffers the bad times; workers must be paid through thick and thin, otherwise they will leave—or worse, take their pay from the boss's hide.

Investments

There are all sorts of investments a character can get involved in, from the risky funding of an artifact hunters expedition to more stable investments in house, guild, or Imperial bonds.

Bonds: Whenever a guild undertakes a major endeavor, it usually solicits investors to aid in the up-front costs of that endeavor in return for some of the profits. The investor gives money to the guild in return for a bond that can be redeemed for its value plus a fixed interest rate after a declared time has passed (usually the estimated date at which the guild will begin profiting in its endeavor). However, the guild has the option to refuse the redemption until a later date (usually only done if too many bondholders try to redeem their bonds at once). Noble houses occasionally solicit bonds (especially the minor houses), as does the Emperor.

Loans: Loaning money does not always guarantee a return, but defaulters can sometimes be sold to the Chainers to recoup costs. More often, however, credit can be extended to the loanee at higher interest rates. The problem with personal loans is that the loaner has to have some way of enforcing them. If she is managing house, guild, or Church funds, she can use the resources of these factions to track down defaulters. But when she makes loans with personal money, she has to handle the matter personally or hire someone who can. The interest rate charged usually depends on the risk of loss and the danger involved. In addition to a standard rate, extra interest can be applied for late payment of loans.

Trust Fund: Placing money into a bank or giving it to a loan officer. This money will gain interest but the bank or loan officer can use it to provide other loans or undertake investments. The most trustworthy banks insure their risks, by forming special contracts with the Reeves Guild, but not all do. Individuals are often bilked out of their money when banks make bad loans with the individual's money and refuse to indemnify him for his loss. See Banks loans, below.

Credit

Below are the major sources of credit in the Known Worlds. Interest rates vary with the loaner and the risk involved.

Bank loans: There are many banks on many planets, most of them local concerns run by small guilds with purely local interests. Some of them span their globes, while some (rarer) are intergalactic in scope. The largest of these star-spanning banks is run by the Reeves, though each of the royal houses and the Empire have similar institutions. While the intergalactic banks are very stable, largely immune to local disasters, they also charge higher interest rates. In addition, it is very difficult to escape their loan reclaimers in the case of default. Banks will rarely loan to individuals who have no reputation with them or if there is no reputable person willing to vouch for them. In addition, they are cautious about loaning to those without a permanent residence and a history at that residence.



Noble loans: Each house theoretically opens its coffers to its vassals in times of need. They will loan money to them under strict terms for specifically stated reasons. For instance, if a householder wishes to switch his livelihood from mill-rice farming to cattle, he can conceivably ask his lord for a loan with which to buy the cattle and rent land for their grazing. In return, the freeman will pay the noble a percentage of the take on each head of cattle once sold to a butcher. This is in addition to the usual taxes levied on his income. If the householder defaults, the noble takes the entire herd and all the money gained from their sale. He may also choose to enact further punishments against the defaulter. Not all noble houses honor this relationship between the house and its vassals. While the Church tries to inculcate mutual responsibility in both nobles and freemen, it does not always take. House Hawkwood has perhaps the best reputation here, treating its vassals with dignity and patience. In return, they have the most loyal householders. The Decados are legendary for their harsh loans, wherein default is punished with slavery. The Li Halan will usually only loan to those vassals with virtuous reputations; a single drunken incident is enough to ensure a man refusal on any loan for the rest of his life.

Church loans: The sin of usury does not prevent the Church from making loans to some. The usual recipients are freemen suffering hard times, for the Church is forbidden to loan to serfs without their lord's consent. The Church either charges very little or no interest, but default has its consequences, usually a long period of hard labor building cathedrals. The Church will not make loans to those whose endeavors they feel are immoral or dangerous to Church interests. In the latter case, they will often petition others not to offer loans either.

Guild loans: Perhaps the fairest and safest loans available are those offered by the various guilds of the Merchant League. The Reeves are the most notable here; one always knows where he stands with a Reeve contract—that is, if he can read the extensive legalese. Guild loan rates are fair and repayment times are generous, while punishments are perhaps less severe than most, mainly in the form of repayment through labor. The Muster is the exception. Those who are unable to secure a loan from other parties are sure to get one from the Muster—just don't default or you'll wind up in chains on your way to the rock quarries of Bannockburn.

Individual loans: Individual patrons and investors can always be found willing to loan money to individuals or adventurers for their various endeavors. Personal acquaintance with the loaner helps here, but a friend of a friend to provide introductions may also work. These rich individuals are rarely used to getting welched on, however, so their contracts almost always stipulate that, in case of default, the character becomes the property of the Chainers—they pay the loaner for his loss and then hunt the character down.



Communications and Clique Media

Sealed Communiqué, Leminkainen Archives, Dated Ninthmonth, Coldtime, 4998

To: Lord Powell, Baron of the Kelmach Reaches in the city of Dyrak, Grikkor

From: Father Sanctus Ophelionne, Cathedral Adricon in the city of Hakkonen, Jyväskylä

Most Esteemed Sir,

By the Grace of the One and through the desires of that most Holy and Whole of Faiths, the Salvation of Worlds, the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun, I compose this epistle to you. The Mother Church has recently become aware of the pointed and quite public criticisms you have leveled against Her regarding Her policies on mass communications and the media. It is our hope that within these pages we can allay your passions through an appeal to your rationality and thus avoid the less tender scrutiny of the Inquisitorial Synod. Such cooperation on your part would allow us to return back to more pressing matters of the Faith, like the Pagan barbarians bearing down on certain properties of yours within the Cortran Barony.

With this firmly in mind, I shall hereby address your comments on that most pernicious of institutions, well known for its subtle degradation of the spirit, the Media.

You correctly pointed out that human communication was revolutionized through the creation of writing.

Writing is an activity, which the Church wholly approves of. It is both fitting and proper that man recognize the wonders of the Pancreator's creation as well as the subtle avenues of the spirit, marking them down, much as Zebulon once did, for future generations to embrace and enjoy. Even the baser facet of this art, the crude entertainments that appeal only to the lower masses, are not without merit, as they may enliven the spirit in hard times or during harsh tragedies.

What you failed to acknowledge, however, is that our objection comes not with the act of writing, the skill of literacy, or even the physical expression of human thought but with the mass production of it. Whether through the Oro'ym electro-plating techniques of Madoc, the utilization of Obun vhella leaves on Velisamil, or Gutenberg's printing press on Holy Terra, it is this point where we of the Holy Writ believe the sanctity of the art of writing begins the inevitable slide into corruption.

You claim that the spread of information can harm no one.

At the recent birthday celebrations of Lady Edaine you pointed out, quite forcefully, that the mere



expression of an idea could not possibly be baneful to the proper social order. You also postulated, with equal vigor, that during the times when man produced the most plentiful forms of communication, his achievements, especially in the areas of invention and the sciences, increased manifold.

Truly, if life was solely measured by the material things man produced, then that would have been a glorious time. And through this fallacy, the idea behind mass media is seductive, for if something such as mere literacy was such a good idea, why would more of it not be better?

Yet, what you fail to perceive is that hand in hand with these so-called achievements comes widespread suffering previously undreamt of in human history. Take, for example, one of the first uses of the Terran printing press. An intellectual of the day, a man named Luther, used it to undermine the pre-reflective church of that era, leading to millennia of factional fighting, wars, and religious intolerance. One man, using the power of mass communication, was able to shake the foundations of his very culture; a culture that never properly recovered.

As far as man's inventiveness, the excesses of the First and Second Republic showed us where that leads: Misery, greed, madness, suicide, and the deaths of millions. Are these the great achievements of which you speak? We must trust that, upon further reflection, you will realize they are not as magnificent as you first perceived.

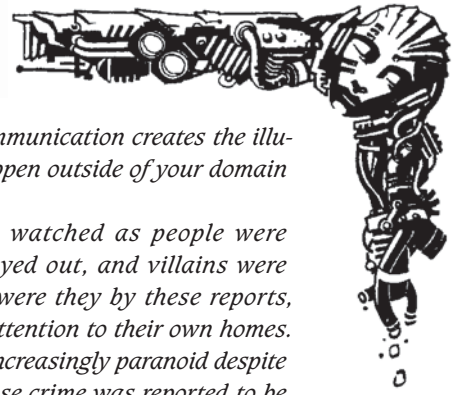
You stated that information can bring only freedom.

When you addressed the Citizen's Council of East Dyrak, you stated that you believed communication technologies offered up the greatest freedom the human race could ever hope for. What a quaint and fanciful notion this is! Luckily, it is also one that can be swiftly and easily laid aside.

Following Luther's upset of the culture of that time, intellectuals soon grasped that there were two simple ways to control the power of this new medium: You could alter the content of the information or its flow. Early despots, eager for power, quickly selected the former — the information's content, to begin their rise to power. They flooded the minds and souls of their people with the messages they wanted them to hear, and only those messages. Ruthlessly, these leaders suppressed any attempt at the mass production of alternate points of view. They taught their young only the truths they needed to support the state. And with such power in hand, they soon found their empires expanding faster and more efficiently than ever. The idea of "World Wars" became inevitable as one nation's "truth" competed with another.

The flaw in this thinking is that inevitably, people will come up with alternate means to publish their own vision, their own idea of truth. These misguided people are willing to put their lives, and the lives





of countless others, at risk to mass-produce this "truth" and the resulting confusion "tainted" and destabilized the despot's ordered world. After several spectacular failures, later despots of that era veered away from content control and segued into altering the information's flow. To put it simply, they discovered that in order to control information, you do not have to manipulate its every word. Merely, be the loudest "voice" among many.

On one hand, they produced entertainments designed to numb the mind and produce a spiritual malaise. On the other, they had a set of linked media outlets producing variants on the same story (the one they wanted their citizens to hear) and downplayed any other versions of the truth as "unreliable."

The plutocracies behind the First Republic were masters of this. They invented technologies that could predict and corrupt human behaviors, prying into human minds and then locking them into an endless cycle of making products and buying products. Communication was absolutely free but rigidly monitored. While you could say anything, you were only rewarded for those things that promoted the status quo. Humanity, as a whole, fell in line like cattle at a slaughterhouse and only found freedom from this cycle by the fortuitous discovery of the jumpgate and the worlds that lay beyond.

You said that mass communication links humanity to one another.

I recall when you defended your beliefs at the Brandelien Auditorium in Miletian Square. You clearly conveyed the idea that the media's central purpose was to keep an enlightened humanity informed and connected. Would that such a premise were true! The Church would then be in the forefront of the media world, much like the pre-reflective churches of old Terra.

The real truth of the matter, however, was laid bare in the pseudo-Utopian ideals of the Second Republic. The Diaspora wrested the media's control over the heart of humanity and each planet had proceeded on at its own pace. Then came the Second Republic, dedicated to "re-uniting" the lost children of Terra. They promised freedoms and security within a new framework, a government dedicated to peace, justice, and the Terran way. And to secure this reality, they used the media. Planets like the now-lost world of Lamorak produced informational magic-lantern shows and phantasms dedicated to education. Throughout Human Space these products were shipped to every corner of the Universe and it was throughout Human Space that this lie of media was finally revealed.

The heart of man has not much changed since his creation on Holy Terra a million years ago. That heart responds to that what can be seen and touched and felt. It does not matter that the mind of man tells him that what he is seeing, touching, or feeling is not real. To be more specific, in deference to your sharp

mind, baron, instant communication creates the illusion that things that happen outside of your domain are important to you.

Untold generations watched as people were murdered, disasters played out, and villains were caught. So enraptured were they by these reports, they paid less and less attention to their own homes. These watchers became increasingly paranoid despite living in paradise, because crime was reported to be "up." Alternately, burnt out by too much cynicism, they ignored even the worst excesses of humanity among their own, letting neighborhood rapists, molesters, and career criminals go unpunished because they were too concerned with the interstellar news to pay attention to their immediate surroundings.

The fading of the suns proved once and for all the danger of media. It was apparent to all that there was a universal problem. But as some began to broadcast possible solutions, they found themselves inundated with those desperate to reach them. The Welfare Nexus collapsed and the barbarians moved in, governments fell as people anticipated the end — even if they themselves were not in imminent danger! The remnants of the Second Republic found themselves resorting to First Republic technologies and sometimes even cruder propaganda to restore control, but it was too late.

You thought that a restored media would lead to a restored humanity.

It is a comforting thought, to some, and we understand that, to pray for the glories of the past. But know this, Lord Powell — as the star of Emperor Alexius and the Church rises, so do the hopes of humanity. Not only the physical chains of the Republic's legacy must be overthrown but also the confines of its ideological legacy. Abandon your pulpit and let the masses concentrate on what is truly important—faith and the world directly around them. Let those who labor under the Privilege of Martyrs be the sole arbiters of the dangers mankind has wrought.

May this epistle and your faith in the One, the mighty Flame of the Pancreator, bring you revelation and bring you peace.

Sincerely,

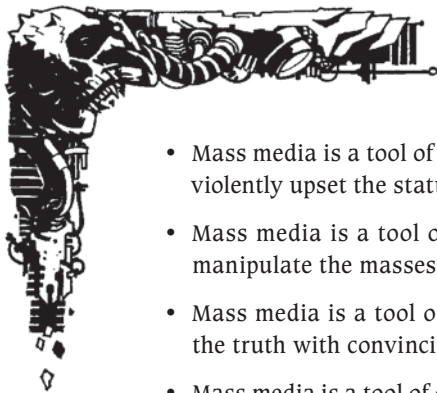
Father Sanctus

Shaping the Group Mind

From the 20th century onward, media as an entity has become such a part of ordinary life that no one questions the myths that support it. It was assumed that mass media is one of the greatest tools ever invented, a vessel for freedom, enlightenment, and liberation. It took the Diaspora, with its disruption of system-spanning media networks, and, later, the onset of the New Dark Ages, to challenge that lie.

The Church's objections to mass media are essentially these:





- Mass media is a tool of revolution. It can be used to violently upset the status quo.
- Mass media is a tool of control. It can be used to manipulate the masses.
- Mass media is a tool of propaganda. It obfuscates the truth with convincing lies.
- Mass media is a tool of distraction. It pulls attention away from things that really matter.

Church objection to mass communication comes down to a simpler issue: Mass communication ultimately evolves into mass media. In the annals of Urth history, a small defense network used to process “electronic mail” metamorphosed into an international communications network that finally (during the First Republic) became an interplanetary media sensation with all the worst excesses humanity could muster.

Though mass communication did experience a quick resurgence during the Emperor Wars, the Church was quick to repress it once Alexius came to power. Under the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs (and later cemented under the recent Patriarchal Bull), all mass communications technologies were declared *Corrupting Technology*, 4th-level, proscribed with offenses punishable by stiff fines, branding, and the destruction of the technology and all associated support. The only people authorized to use such devices without Church consent were those directly working in defense of the faith, specifically the citizens of Stigmata, Hira, Leminkainen, Manitou, and Vril-Ya. All others required a Church writ to possess or operate such devices.

This is not to say that every planet is devoid of mass media. Certain tech-heavy worlds (like Leagueheim) possess a very robust communication network. But these are certainly more the exception than the rule. For most of the Known Worlds, the only books people read are from pre-Fall eras or copied by hand. The only entertainments they see are Church-sanctioned plays or League circuses like those run by the Carnivalers. Even the infamous Town Criers are only found in the largest townships and cities.

This created a new industry called niche or “clique” media, entertainment or news produced solely for the elite. Only the top 20 percent of society, the wealthiest free-men, nobles, Guildsmen, and sometimes even top-ranking Church members, get to routinely experience things like magic lantern plays and phantasms (holographic entertainment). Because of its exclusive clientele, clique media is shaped towards their desires and needs; rarely is it strictly informational. Almost every piece of material that crosses the path of the jaded elite contains some sort of exciting diversion, some fantastic element that will hold the attention of the audience. What appears to be informational is usually only propaganda. Because of this, true information is rarely expected from media sources. Instead, anything truly worth knowing is traded in the smoky back rooms, informal gatherings, and locked meetings that happen before and after such events.

Affairs of State: Nobles & the Media

The reaction of the nobility to the Church's edicts on communication and the mass media is always a mixture of acceptance and resentment. Some houses (especially the extinct ones like House Alecto) chose to ignore the edicts completely. Others cling to the command as if their very souls depended upon it. The following is an overview of the current houses' public policies and the political reality that lies behind them.

House al-Malik

Publically, the al-Malik court the favor of the Church, often to balance the perception that they are unduly tied to the Guilds and the League's relatively liberal views. Upon visiting al-Malik worlds, a cursory inspection would only reveal an abnormally high literacy rate (approximately 28 percent) and nothing more.

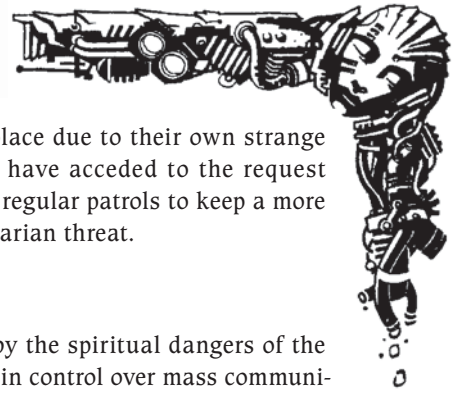
Any information truly worth knowing occurs within the thousands of shops and bars throughout the al-Malik cities. Even most of the smaller towns (but not villages) have such places where the bitter drink is savored with a pipe of chobak weed. Communication between cities is usually via caravan alone, as trade is the lifeblood of many al-Malik properties.

There are exceptions to this rule though, especially in the ways of entertainment. Illicit businesses on the Street of Dreams in the Istakhr Market run phantasms, show magic lantern productions, and sell mass-produced books. At least twice a year, Avestites raid the district, burning whatever they can find and punishing those who sell or buy it. It makes no difference. After each burning, others move in to replace the merchants who were lost.

More than any other world, Shaprut receives the most criticism from the Church and is laxest when it comes to enforcing media bans. It also produces the most magic lantern shows outside of the League Worlds. Because of this, the Carnivalers Guild has produced an unusual form of entertainment — the “Shadow Merchants.” Disguised as silk merchants, they move from town to town until they find a place ready for their wares. Then, they assemble a massive screen out of their bales of silk and project a magic lantern show onto it at night, inviting everyone around (for a small price of course). The screen and the entire performance is then wrapped up in just a few hours, usually well ahead of any Avestite response.

House Decados

One would think that the Decados would be the most lax when it comes to the ban on media but in reality they tend to be the harshest. The Decados nobles have no interest in paying for the infrastructure needed for a reliable radio or cellular network. When they have a concentrated population (such as in the cities of Cadiz or Severus), the only use they have for the mass media is for propaganda. Once every year or so, slander wars arise between rival lords looking to smear their opponents.



Mostly though, any type of communications device or media outlet is firmly in control of the elite. Their favorite pastime is experiencing old phantasms, especially those programmed by the pre-conversion Li Halan. Several lords have posted substantial rewards for those willing to brave Li Halan censors to bring them more of these entertainments.

Much to their delight, Decados spies in Hawkwood space have recently started bringing in new entertainment from a Lost World known as Lamorak. Through Vuldrok intermediaries in Valdalla, they acquire a slew of new magic lantern shows to enjoy—much to the consternation of the Hawkwoods, who hate the idea of such trafficking going on under their noses.

House Hawkwood

While not as stringent as the Li Halan, the Hawkwoods do attempt to serve the will of the Church. Most of their communication hubs are limited solely to the urban centers and include amenities such as magic lantern shows or phantasms. Often, such entertainments are broadcast live and not taped, except when Church censors allow otherwise. Traveling Church groups are encouraged to visit those towns and villages unable to afford any sort of media infrastructure. A visiting priest is often a sign of entertainment coming to town and is treated warmly.

The interesting exception to the Hawkwood's rule is Leminkainen, which actually has an infrastructure set up to broadcast radio across the planet. Most of this is due, strangely enough, to pressure in treaty talks by the local Vuldrok on Valdalla, who apparently expect this sort

of infrastructure to be in place due to their own strange customs. The Hawkwoods have acceded to the request because it also allows their regular patrols to keep a more coordinated eye on the barbarian threat.

The Hazat

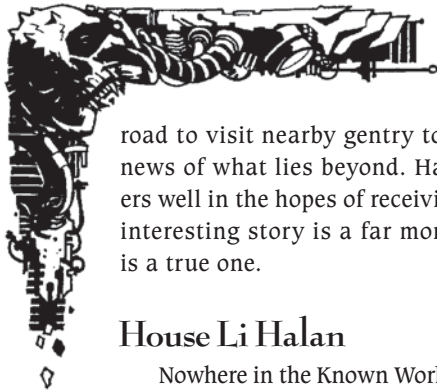
Though not impressed by the spiritual dangers of the media, the Hazat do maintain control over mass communications because it was their usurpation of the Chauki's own infrastructure that allowed them to take control and destroy the older house. Thus, most communication of any kind in Hazat lands will be firmly in Hazat control. This, of course, is a matter of life and death on fiefs bordering barbarian space: the ability to mobilize their serfs and soldiers to repel a Kurgan attack and respond to similar threats is mostly due to a highly efficient information network that can be fully activated within a very short period of time.

Many Hazat nobles all but forbid entertainments beyond their own *Triumphals*, while others ensure that their serfs and soldiers are well-entertained with stories of greatness and military courage to inspire them for battle or draft them willingly into their armies.

Information is based upon what one is given through the military posts, which are all highly censored. Any radio communication beyond the military's own network is traced down and destroyed, its owner killed.

The Hazat rely upon the laws of hospitality, along with frequent visits from relatives and well wishers, to maintain their network of information. Rarely will a Hazat spend an entire year in his or her villa, instead often taking to the





road to visit nearby gentry to exchange pleasantries and news of what lies beyond. Hazat nobles also treat travelers well in the hopes of receiving news of distant lands. An interesting story is a far more valuable commodity than is a true one.

House Li Halan

Nowhere in the Known Worlds are the edicts of the Church so closely followed as in the Garden Worlds. On each of the Li Halan planets, secret police scour the land, wrenching out anything that smacks of heretical or anarchistic mass media and destroying it. However, and perhaps surprisingly given the Li Halan's reputation, Rampart is one of the few worlds to actually have a sizeable film industry, with widely popular shows such as the *Empyrean Saga* and the long-running *Nobles Also Weep* filmed on location on Icon and exported throughout the Known Worlds—and beyond. The Church does not openly support or patronize this industry, but patrons and sponsors of these films always employ a theological advisor with near-absolute power on script and execution. Material presented through these shows is either perfectly harmless and supports the status quo (such as most noble dramas), or supports the Church's doctrine and venerates the prophet, his disciples, and the saints.

The key to the Li Halan's success, however, has been their ardent support for local arts and entertainment. Each year, thousands of firebirds pour into the coffers of the Masque and Carnivaler Guilds for the explicit purpose of bringing art to the masses. The artistes that make up these Guilds are expected to coordinate their shows with local entertainment councils (also known as *koubatsu*) to tailor their performances to each town.

Every once in a while (maybe every few years at best), a piece (musical, theatrical, or informational) comes along so powerful that the Li Halan want to share it with all of their citizens. At that point, they call in the Cloud Choir, a division of the royal air force. The Chorists fly large dirigibles to different points on the planet, following a legion of Town Criers sent in to announce their arrival. The Chorists then hover above the cities as a live broadcast of the entertainment in question is beamed to them and projected along the sides of the dirigible. Immensely powerful loudspeakers broadcast the sound from horizon to horizon. Those who have witnessed a Choir's "song" never forget it — it is truly as if the heavens themselves opened up and spoke.

Beyond this, much communication between cities is done through an immense bureaucracy that trickles information through the different provinces and to the central governing point. Li Halan bureaucrats even oversee provinces that they do not control, such as Guild holdovers on Rampart. Because of their access to information, higher-end bureaucrats are always at demand at parties. Far from being the dry and boring servants that they are perceived to be on other worlds, they are often the very center of the party, literate, well spoken, and fascinating. Many otherwise landless second-borns, or poor nobles enter the bureaucracy to gain this recognition.

The Guild Agenda

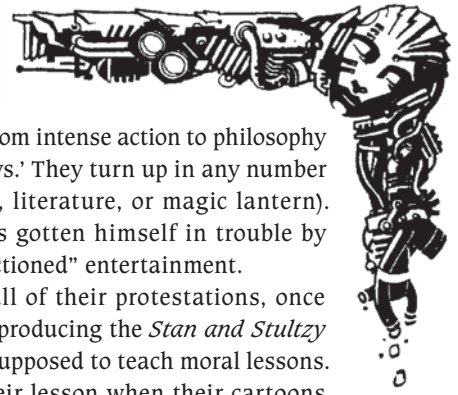
In regards to both communications technologies and entertainment media, the Guilds attempt to present a monolithic face. They present themselves as simple repairers of technology, not its instigators. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth.

Of all of the Guilds, the Supreme Order of Engineers actually has the least to do with mass media, except when one of their members is called upon to repair one of the myriad cogs of the media machine. Though this may seem counterintuitive, the paradox exists as a protective shield in the face of the overactive scrutiny afforded them by the Inquisition. Their repair contracts are hardly innocent, though. It is well known by a number of intelligence services that any communications network repaired by the Engineers usually has technology placed within it to listen in or alter the broadcasts. This causes the Noble houses to distrust any extensive, well-maintained network and for good reason. The Order relentlessly continues the practice of communication 'monitoring' to ensure the Guild's freedom from undue noble influence.

The Scravers and, more recently, the Town Criers both vie for the largest portion of the mass media. Both Guilds pride themselves on bringing entertainment and news to the masses, regardless of the policies of the house in whose space they serve. The Town Criers guild has slowly strengthened its position and increased its reach and the effectiveness of its organization over the recent years, and it appears that its leaders have steered the guild through this without any major conflict from either Scravers or Charioteers. Some note this may be due to mutually beneficial deals that were never exposed, others see darker, more ominous reasons behind the recent gain of power of this minor guild. At present, the Charioteers, with their extensive trade network and ability to broadcast from space, have a number of contracts with the Town Criers to provide a platform for news and information broadcast. Charioteers are also the most likely to provide access to communication services should the Church or nobility need an "emergency broadcast." The Scravers produce and procure the outrageous entertainments enjoyed by elite and serf alike (like the pseudo-illegal soap opera *Nobles Also Weep*). Some of these are distributed through the Charioteers trading network. Others they use in temporary magic lantern shows (often set up in abandoned buildings and shown until the Avestites show up). Scravers are also infamous for their programmable phantasms, which allow customers to create their own fantasies in projections of light.

The Muster, when it can, uses high altitude balloons and low orbit satellites to set up temporary networks where they fight. Often, two competing factions use the same network (using different encryption codes and charging both sides for it, of course) since technically Muster are forbidden to fight other Muster. The equipment is usually dismantled once hostilities have ceased to prevent nobles from using the same technology without Guild assistance.

Reeves, with the aid of the Engineers, devised a network of communications based on hybrid First and Second



Republic technologies. When on Leagueheim (or other League-controlled worlds), they use a device known as a “Glimmer Card” to set up a global network. These playing card-sized devices, which only have a range of about a mile, can be linked together with similar cards to either form an Intranet (limited in scope) or Internet (global in scope) depending on the Reeves’ needs. The system is sophisticated enough to act as a primitive think machine (usually only good for shuttling data around), a radio, or even a small magic lantern or phantasm device (though Glimmer Cards of the latter type are quite expensive and tend to be less reliable due to higher demands on their operating software).

The Church and the Media

The Church has, over the centuries, set itself up to be the enemy of mass communication and the media. But was this always true? While it is accurate that among the Avestites and the Orthodoxy any deviation from dogma is relatively rare, other sects have occasionally shown creative ways of interpreting the scriptures that allow them some leeway.

The Brother Battle are perhaps the most blatant in resisting the edicts, setting up strong communication networks and showing numerous propaganda films on worlds where they have the most influence. Since, without exception, those worlds include ones where humanity is engaged in conflict with horrible enemies (the Symbiots, the Kurgans, the Vuldrok, etc.), such an offense is often overlooked, though it is not unusual to see clashes between more fanatical Avestites and their Brother Battle “allies.”

The Eskatonics, with all of their doom-propheying, surreptitiously produce a large number of entertainments every year. While theoretically called “Church plays,” these

productions run the gamut from intense action to philosophy pieces to erotic ‘passion plays.’ They turn up in any number of media (phantasm, radio, literature, or magic lantern). More than one freeman has gotten himself in trouble by watching such “Church-sanctioned” entertainment.

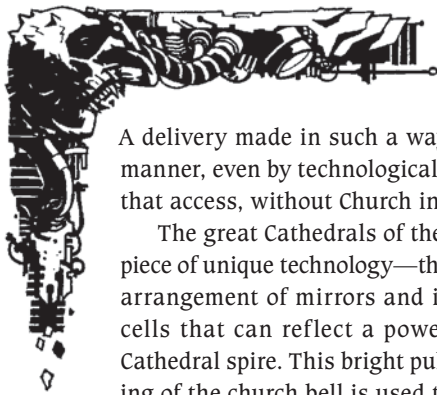
The Avestites, despite all of their protestations, once dealt with the mass media, producing the *Stan and Stultz* cartoon series, which were supposed to teach moral lessons. They claim they learned their lesson when their cartoons were corrupted by amoral producers and have vowed never to repeat it again.

The Orthodoxy bear a dark secret all their own. As the Church’s influence rose during the Fall, the bishopric of that time deliberately resurrected First Republic means to sway the masses. Such coercive technology pried into people’s minds, unearthing and playing upon their greatest fears. It is one of the primary reasons that the Church’s popularity grew so swiftly among the populace. Once the Fall was complete and the Second Republic was no more, more ethical bishops stepped in and suppressed the technology once and for all. It was certainly not a proud time in the history of the Church and one they would not like to see rise again.

Of all the sects, the one the least touched by mass media is Sanctuary Aeon, although Artemis has a serious communications grid, created for the sole purpose of educating every Amalthean on the planet in the ways of healing.

In the current era, the primary way that Church members communicate is via contact between traveling members. Some more affluent parishes also support small Masque Guilds to produce Church-sanctioned plays. If a faster form of communication is desired, Church members often use the confessional; a person who wishes to be absolved of sin is asked to deliver a Church message to its intended target.





A delivery made in such a way can be sent in any feasible manner, even by technological means if the parishioner has that access, without Church interference.

The great Cathedrals of the Known Worlds do possess a piece of unique technology—the solarium or “Sunburst”—an arrangement of mirrors and in some cases photo-storage cells that can reflect a powerful flash of light from the Cathedral spire. This bright pulse of light along with the tolling of the church bell is used to call the faithful to service.

However, a number of conspiracy theories surfaced concerning the solarium and its uses. Engineers engaged in the construction of the new Cathedral on Pandemonium claim to have witnessed Church technicians hooking up a think machine and data storage array to the Sunburst and assert that the device could be used as a signaling or communications centre similar in principle to a laser link. The Church openly refuted the allegation, but it is believed that the Supreme Order of Engineers is currently engaged in closed negotiations with the Orthodoxy concerning this turn of events. A number of delays and technical failures recently hampered the construction effort on Pandemonium.

Conspiracy theorists went so far as to claim that the Church is hiding a sophisticated communications network; the most fanciful claims speculate that the system permits instant communication through the Emyrean realm effectively connecting the Orthodoxy by faster-than-light means. Some have claimed that these devices are capable of communicating with the Emyrean realms themselves or are for communicating directly with the reflective soul of the primary star in the system where it is sited or are simply a point-to-point private commutations system for the Church.

The Emperor

The Emperor Wars saw a surge in both the creation of a communications network and media programs. Whole populations became indoctrinated under its influence as house warred with house to seize the throne. Since Alexius was declared Emperor, the Empire has been trying to gain control over most mass media, ranging from bards and minstrels to planet-wide think-machine networks and magic lantern satellites. Where such control could not be established, the media in question suffered setbacks or downright accidents which curbed its influence.

It is uncertain what kind of influence Lost Worlds such as Pandora, Lamorak, or Iver will have, should they ever return to the fold.

What is known is that the Church, which has been both abuser and savior in regards to the media, will be ever vigilant for the souls of its congregation as it struggles to free them from the corrupting influence of the Dark.

Technologies for the Neo-Feudalist

Listed here are a couple of pieces of technology that may fall into a player character's possession.

Glimmer Card

Tech Level: 7

Cost: 75 firebirds (basic) to 550+ firebirds

Glimmer cards were created as a joint Reeve/Engineer project to allow the quick setup of a temporary network in low-tech areas. As a communications device, glimmer cards are fairly primitive, with a range of a little less than a mile and less than 100 channels available for broadcast. However, if another glimmer card is within that range, the two immediately sync up to form a secure Intranet which can be used to share data, communicate, send pictures or even run certain think machine programs (like the Accountant). Built from a durable metal alloy, glimmer cards appear no bigger than a thick playing card. Along one face, constant static plays as the glimmer card communicates with others. This static resolves itself into the data the user wants to handle by a series of finger motions (a stylus can also be used) pressed onto the card itself. Because of its toughness and versatility, the glimmer card became a favorite among Questing Cohorts with more than one guild member in the group.

Traits

The basic model allows the user to share written data and communicate as if using a squawker. For +25 firebird extra, pictures can be sent, +150 firebird gains the ability to host a holographic projection instead of just a regular picture, and finally, +300 firebird will enable the card to run a think-machine program although the program itself will cost extra. All costs are cumulative. Glimmer cards are powered from a miniature fusion cel that must be recharged after 18 hours of continuous use and sporadic use will drain the cel faster as the card works harder to locate and establish a connection than maintain one.

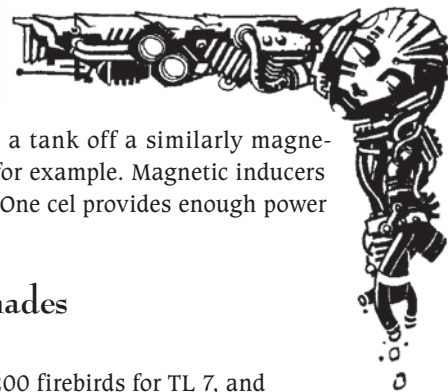
Magnetic Inducers

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 700 firebirds

Magnetically fastened explosive devices (mag-grenades, hand-grenades, det-packs, etc.) have a long and successful history throughout millennia of warfare. However, scientific advances in materials technology during the First Republic and the Diaspora, particularly in high-tensile plastics and ceramic-metalloids (ceramsteel and its precursors), began to make them obsolete as a magnetic grenade that will not





stick to armor plate is of no use to anybody. There came a point where all corporate armies were outfitted with plastic (or ceramsteel) armor, weapons, and even tanks; this marked the end, at least temporarily, of the mag-grenade on the battlefield.

Dr. Erin Sommerfield, a mid-level researcher with the Magna-Tech Corporation, patented the first commercially available magnetic inducer in 3871. The method of inducing magnetic fields by circulating electric current has been well known for millennia but not until the days of the Second Republic (and the advent of advanced semi-conductor capacitor technology to induce large magnetic fields in otherwise non-magnetic or even non-conductive materials) was it openly used for nefarious purposes. The magnetic inducer first saw high-profile action in a police operation on Daishan in 3877 where protestors allegedly used black-market versions to magnetize, then immobilize and destroy an Incorporated Police Industries hovertank squadron. Magna-Tech's share-value quadrupled in the following decade.

Magnetic inducers come in all shapes and sizes, but the cheapest and most common is the Silhouette model: a flat, gray, heavy-duty plastic box approximately one foot square and four inches deep, with two buttons (on and off) recessed in its top. Once attached and activated (it comes complete with backpack straps and peel-off adhesive patches), the Silhouette discharges its stored energy, in effect turning the host into a giant electromagnet.

Its capacitance is enough to cause arcs even through most normally non-conductive materials. The capacitance causes electron drift rather than high-voltage flow, and the target object is magnetized, not electrified. Anything within the field—for instance, within a ceramsteel power-suit with an inducer attached—would be subjected to an intense magnetic field. This can wipe out think machine memory banks and cause cybernetics to short out unless hardened (see: Magnetic Shielding, below). Sir Chadwick Ransom Hawkwood is an extreme example, killed by unknown agents while piloting his favorite tank when his pacemaker exploded.

A standard inducer can magnetize an object the size of a tank. Multiple inducers could be used against larger objects (flitters, ships, spaceships, etc.).

Guild agents tend to make the most use of magnetic technology, although the Muster generally disdains it, and the Reeves specifically detest it for its threat to think machine systems. The Reeves co-sponsored the lobbying campaign, along with Brother Battle Master Adept Casmir Rashida, that convinced the Church to proscribe this branch of technology in 4498.

Traits

The induced magnetic field attracts metal objects, giving metal projectiles (bullets, grenades etc.) +4 to hit against; this usually translates into extra damage as well. The field also attracts larger ferrous objects with an effective Strength of 10 (stronger and weaker models are available) up to a standard range of 20m. Multiple objects with induced magnetic fields repel, rather than attract one another. Enough well

placed inducers could repel a tank off a similarly magnetized bridge it is guarding, for example. Magnetic inducers are powered by Fusion cels. One cel provides enough power for an hour's continual use.

Magnetic Pulse Grenades

Tech Level: 6–8

Cost: 50 firebirds for TL 6, 200 firebirds for TL 7, and 1,000 firebirds for TL 8

When triggered, MP grenades (known in the Muster as “meep bombs”) give off magnetic shockwaves deadly to electronic circuits. MP grenades look similar to any other flavor of grenade, but internally they consist of sandwiched super-conductor capacitors. When detonated, they release stored charge in a magnetic burst tuned to destroy magnetic data storage devices and think machine circuits.

First developed during the Second Republic by the Magna-Tech Corporation, they have always been a favorite of industrial espionage agents. In fact, the Guilds favor them for their subtlety. Because they have no explosive effects and as such cause no unnecessary (and expensive) civilian damage, the Reeves Auditors and the Charioteer's Killroys are especially fond of using MP grenades, and more than one illegally programmed jump-drive has met the sharp end of a Killroy meep bomb. When the need arises, most fully military organizations (noble armies, the Muster, Brother Battle, etc.) prefer a more destructive bomb. Think machines can be hardened against the effects of MP grenades via insulating sheaths around the threatened components (see Magnetic Shielding, below).

Traits

MP grenade damage only affects electronic circuits and disables any electronics within five meters. This lasts one turn for a TL 6 grenade, one span for a TL 7 grenade, and permanently for a TL 8 grenade. Fixing the damage requires a Tech + Volt or High Tech Redemption roll, depending on the object, and the repairer must accumulate as many successes as the object's tech level.

Magnetic Shielding

Tech Level: 5

Cost: Induction Damper: 800 firebirds; Magnetic Shielding raises an item's cost by 20 percent at TL 6, 50 percent at TL 7, and 100 percent at TL 8

The easiest (although not the cheapest) form of magnetic attack to defend against is magnetic pulse grenade. Think machines or cyberware can be hardened against the effects of MP grenades via insulating sheaths that work by enclosing the susceptible components. This is not always perfect, and it raises an object's cost by 20 percent if shielding is installed during creation, and 50 percent if done later.

Jury-rigging defenses of this kind is extremely difficult, and without the correct tools, next to impossible. Above tech level 6, solid-state and optical systems supercede magnetism and electricity; these are immune to the effects of MP



grenades (although their peripherals may not be).

Induced magnetism is far more difficult to protect against. Damping units produce destructive eddy currents, neutralizing any inductive currents present. These units use the same technology as the inducers and cost a similar amount, but the major drawback here is the low-strength static field they generate. While this field is not dangerous, it is uncomfortable for the occupants of the object in question. Many Brother Battle ceramsteel suits (Adept Robes) had their damping units removed after acolytes complained of a constant buzzing sound and numerous static shocks. This is rumored to be one reason many pilots prefer short haircuts.

One damping unit produces enough eddy currents to nullify one inducer. Multiple inducers might overload this, although attaching them to a moving set of Adept Robes is not going to be easy. A damping unit is about the same size as an inducer, and shielding does not increase the size of the shielded object by an appreciable amount.

Traits

Factory standard hardening protects an object from an MP grenade of equivalent tech level. One damper negates one inducer.

Pre-Conversion Phantasm

Tech Level: 7

Cost: 1,000 firebirds

Created in the mid-Second Republic, this device is composed of six holographic projectors, special rigging, and a complex think-machine setup to program the holographic grid. The projectors are placed inside a room (no bigger than 24 feet by 24 feet) and the experience begins. Sophisticated holograms appear and interact with the users, leading them on a preset storyline that allows for a generous amount of improvisation.

While technically any illusion could be set into these projectors, the "Pre-Conversion" title comes from the fact that most of the programs played out in these rooms come from the dark history of House Li Halan. Titles like *Orgy of the Damned* or *Blood Feast of the Qlippoth* are no exaggerations; the holograms created by these programs reflect very real events and the sights provided by them are enough to scar even the jaded soul of a Decados. For that reason, and that reason alone, these entertainments are popular, even as those people who view them are led into the depths of depravity.

Traits

The phantasm projections described above create very convincing visual illusions, though no other sense is actually engaged. Users sometimes supplement their experience with drugs or sensory depravation to enhance their time in the room and for some users—those especially empathic or



most prone to suggestion—their own brain will 'fill in the blanks' and create sound, smell, and temperature phantoms. Someone emerging from a Pre-Conversion Phantasm should expect a temporary -1 penalty to Wits and Faith for witnessing such perversity. They may also experience a temporary bonus of +2 to any lore, curses or afflictions relating to the darker aspects of the human soul.

Rose-Colored Glasses

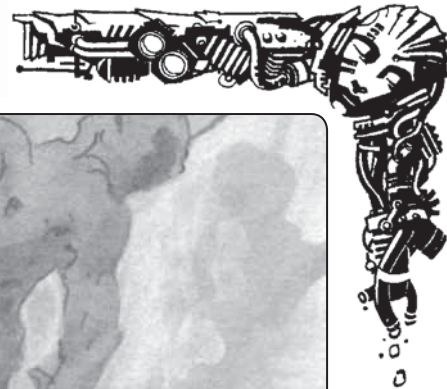
Tech Level: 8

Cost: 600 firebirds

Nobody knows the original name or maker of this item, but its current name describes its function as well as its appearance. Rose-colored glasses look like a normal pair of corrective lenses but with a broader frame. The lenses are indeed rose-tinted, and users insert probes on the tips of the earpieces into the auditory canal.

The desired effect manifests after a few minutes. The "glasses" change everything the wearer sees, hears, and smells—in a desired fashion. Misbehaving children become well-raised offspring, and the apathetic fat partner turns into a most chivalric husband. In this fashion, the wearer remains in a state of perpetual bliss.

When the user puts them on, the probes tune in to the user's brain, and the device saves wishes and dreams on microchips positioned in the frame. Almost all sensory input is manipulated, and the modified data is directly fed into the cornea. Hormones naturally produced in the user's body while using the glasses serve as fuel for the item. Some critics say wearers have become addicted to their own hormones, and even Amaltheans find it extremely hard to cure this addiction.



Surprisingly popular with nobles and priests, the glasses find users among those whose lives are just a little unhappy as well as the extremely depressed. Since this item is proscribed tech, the Church punishes any user, though rumors abound of Amaltheans using them to treat the especially despondent. The Church places anyone caught using this demonic pleasure under severe penance for at least a year (chastity, no alcohol or drugs, a pilgrimage, etc.) and for any additional offences with this item, the punishment is usually excommunication or death. Clerics caught with the glasses are, according to their sect and rank, usually excommunicated at once.

Traits

Anyone who puts on the glasses begins interpreting anything she sees, hears, smells, tastes, and feels for the better. In order to remove the glasses, the user must make a Calm + Stoic Mind roll. The first use has a +15 bonus to the target number. Each succeeding use decreases the bonus by one.

Tagging and Relocation

Tech Level: TL 1 tattooing/branding, TL 4 rad-tagging and dye-tagging, TL 5 gene-tagging

Cost: Branding 1 firebird per 100 head (the daily rate for a qualified blacksmith); tattooing 1 firebird per 10 head; dye-tagging 20 firebirds per 50 (spraying planes not included in cost); rad-tagging 100–200 firebirds per village (assuming poisoned water supplies; depending on isotope used can last for thousands of years); gene-tagging 700 firebirds per head (assuming presence of genetics lab)

Humans have always sought technological means of safeguarding their belongings, either by making removal impossible or recovery simple. As the magnitude of possessions (and therefore the wealth of the owner) increases, so does the ingenuity required to safeguard them.

The most difficult assets to safeguard—and even harder to recover—are people. Although not extinct in the Second Republic, slavery was mostly confined to the backwaters of civilization and ruthlessly expunged whenever found. This changed with the Fall and the reinstitution of serfdom. While technically different from slavery, it feels much the same to those under the hammer.

Slave owners and fief-holders both wanted ways to protect their human investments, something almost more important for land holders than slavers. A slaver can always obtain more slaves, but serfs prove altogether harder to come by. Certain differences between slave and serf become apparent. Although there are more serfs than slaves, they are less individually valuable and have nominal freedoms, it is next to impossible to buy and sell them. Another problem for land owners is keeping track of whose serf is whose, especially given the confusion and changing fief sizes following the Emperor Wars.

In answer to these problems ingenious owners have come up with several methods to identify and track their property:



Tattooing and Branding: The oldest methods of identification. Still used in remote areas, these are highly illegal when used on serfs, drawing the ire of both the Church and, usually, the population in question. More than one would-be brander has ended up with his own flesh against the irons. Application is simple, as is identification, which requires only a visual search and makes escape problematic.

Dye-Tagging: Staining a member of the serf population with indelible chemical dyes. This was a short-lived fad that also proved extremely unpopular with Church and masses. Both hard to hide and dangerous, most staining chemicals are poisonous, especially when delivered in large quantities. Its only redeeming features are the ease of application—flyby sprayings with readily available chemicals—and the ease of recapture of any escapees, “Have you seen any blue men?”

Radiation-Tagging: A far more insidious practice involving feeding particular radioactive isotopes to a captive population, usually via diet or air. Dumping Strontium-90 into water supplies is an example of this. The radiation is taken into the bodies of the serfs and trapped in the liver, kidneys, and digestive organs. A rad-scanner can detect the specific tag. An added bonus is that laymen, especially priests, have no way to detect the tagging except when the isotope leads to high rates of cancer. Another bonus is reusability. A suitable poisoned water supply can tag generations of inhabitants. Spotting escaped rad-tagged serfs in crowd is also not a problem.

Gene-Tagging: Involves the modification of serf DNA by introducing tagging mutations that can be spotted via genetic scan or a modified blood test. These mutations are usually benign, but not all serfs tagged in this fashion are so lucky. The major benefit of this method is its heredity nature. The tagged genes pass down from parent to child ad infinitum unless a genetic mutation occurs. The unfortunately short-sighted Baron Oswald Rhodesia Hawkwood attempted to combine dye and gene-tagging, hoping to code his serfs his favorite shade of royal blue for eternity. The Inquisition, predictably, took a very poor view of this, as do the unfortunate descendants of the original serfs.

Church leaders strongly oppose any method of tagging serfs. They see themselves as the protectors of the huddled masses and feel that if the serfs must avoid technology in order to safeguard their souls, then technology should also avoid the serfs. On worlds where slavery is legal, however, all these methods (except Gene-Tagging) are permitted. Indeed, Gene-Tagging is prohibitively expensive for all but the most valuable slaves. The more brutal and cheaper tagging methods are used extensively on prison populations (especially on Decados and League Worlds) with barely a raised eyebrow from the Church, which itself extensively brands those who break its laws.

Traits

Unfortunately for those afflicted, these tagging methods are mostly permanent. Brands and tattoos can be covered or removed, though surgery to do so usually costs at least

100 firebirds, and that price is subject to dozens of variables. Dyed escapees could be bleached or wrapped head-to-foot (sequestered in an Avesti monastery perhaps), although this carries effects of its own to contend with. Rad-tagging cannot be removed without extensive (and very expensive) medical treatment, although overwriting one with another radiation signature might be possible (if risky). Gene-tagging similarly can not be removed or masked without a fully equipped state-of-the-art genetics laboratory, which is itself proscribed.

Xaser and Graser Technology

Tech Level: 7

Cost: Xaser Pistol 500 firebirds, Xaser Rifle 1,000 firebirds, Graser Pistol 900 firebirds, Graser Rifle 2,000 firebirds

Gamma-ray (graser) and X-ray laser (xaser) technology are the high-powered offshoots of the more mundane laser technology common throughout the Known Worlds. The principles remain the same; only the amplitude of the generated light (visible light and gamma radiation all being different wavelengths of electromagnetic radiation) differs.

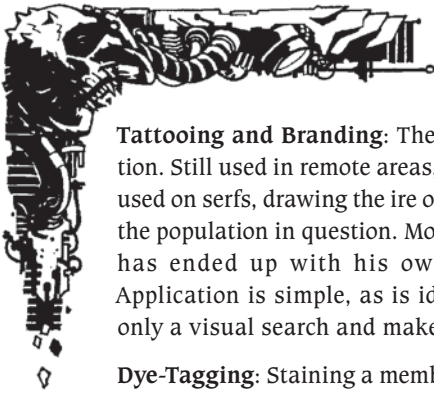
Graser and xaser applications vary tremendously, but the strengths and flaws inherent in the technology remain constant (and are mostly amplifications of the idiosyncrasies of laser tech). The xaser is the more powerful cousin of the laser, and the graser is more powerful than either. These weapons function by reducing the wavelength of light, thus increasing its power. As with any miniaturization, complexity, cost and difficulty of maintenance increase exponentially.

Unlike lasers, xasers and grasers are invisible to the naked eye. In weaponry this makes aiming, but also detection, more difficult. Due to their shorter wavelengths, dust particles and the like have less effect on xaser and graser weapons. Despite their use of gamma waves, grasers are not inherently radioactive. Even though a graser beam is ionizing, it is also highly concentrated—beams wider than a millimeter are ruinously expensive as cost in power increases as the square of diameter.

Even at its height, the Second Republic was never fond of these high-powered technologies. Due to their delicacy, the weapons proved highly problematic and nowhere near as efficient as expected. More than one company holding the patent rights for gamma-ray excitation went belly up because of problems with stability in their products, and the staggering costs of additional research.

Before the Fall, it was relatively easy to manufacture a xaser (or graser) weapon that burned very small holes straight through people. While impressive (after a fashion) that particular mode of application was not exactly what the military wanted. A soldier with a small (self-cauterized) hole through his shoulder is still able to fight. Large-scale cutting rays were far more useful, with the biggest ones capable of slicing ceramsteel.

And so, communications applications proved more popular with the xaser and graser technologies. Photon emission is completely controllable, allowing precise transmission of, for example, digital information. Low-powered emitters worked well for point-to-point communicators, and had





the advantage of being capable of working through solid barriers like walls. While targeting these was notoriously difficult, they were also almost impossible to detect as a detector would have to be placed almost perfectly between the emitter and the receiver.

Used on Tethys and other aquatic worlds as heavy-duty antisubmarine weaponry, xasers and graser showed themselves more effective in combat. A pin-prick breach at 20 atmosphere pressure is far deadlier than in any other situation (including hard vacuum). Also, submarines are relatively easy to hit, as they tend to be large and slow moving but with the exorbitant cost of constructing submerged xaser and graser arrays, only the most important facilities are so guarded—the Imperial docks on Byzantium Secundus, for instance.

Both the Church and nobility dislike these high-powered weapons, especially since it makes their ceramsteel armor less than impregnable. It is perhaps unsurprising then that the supplicant chiefly responsible for the patriarchal Bull prohibiting this technology was Master Adept Casmir Rashida of the Brother Battle who, as Commander in Chief of the largest force of ceramsteel armors (Adept Robes) in the Known Worlds, had a decidedly vested interest. Xasers and

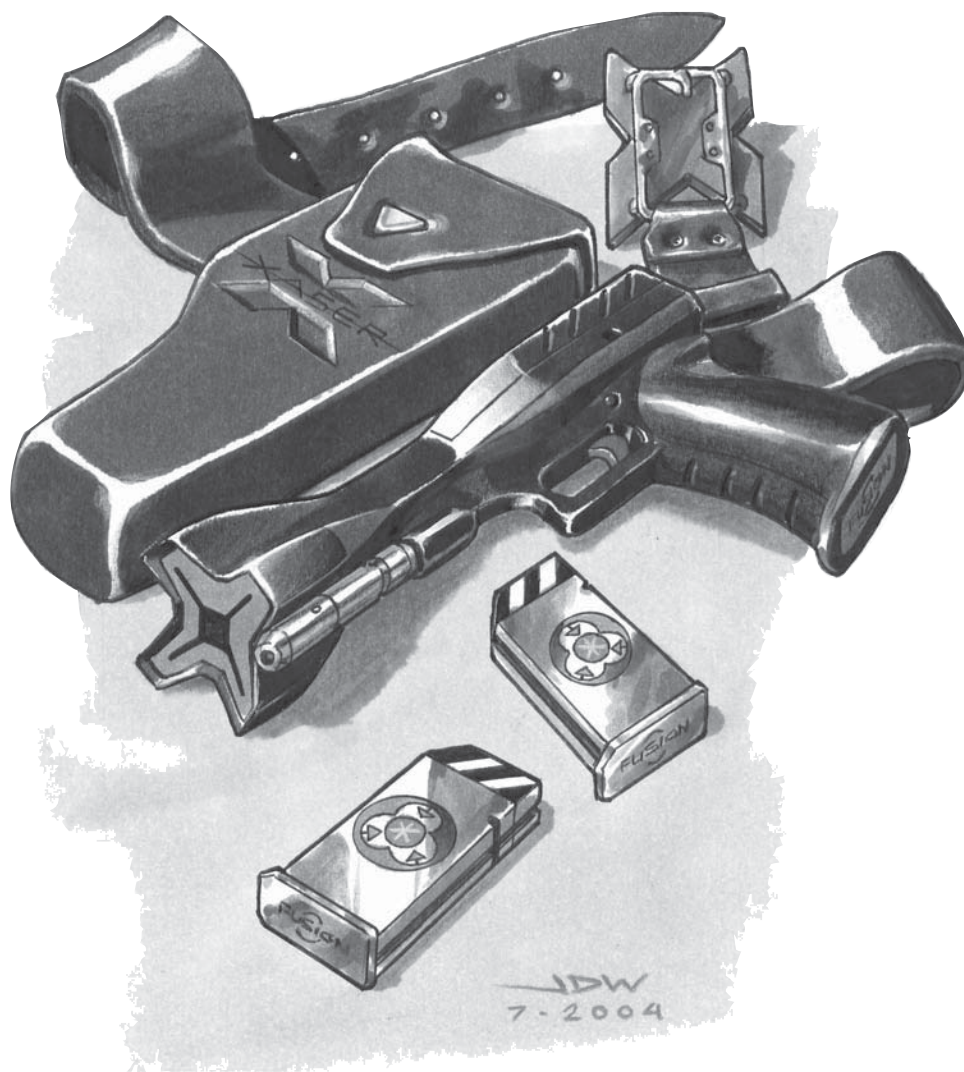
grasers still occasionally appear but more often in cutting roles. Otherwise impregnable safes have been cracked using what could only have been graser cutters (neat holes in ceramsteel and radioactive banknotes are signatures enough to follow). Who would have the financial muscle to use such tools is another question. The Reeves and House al-Malik remain, respectively, silent and obtuse on the matter.

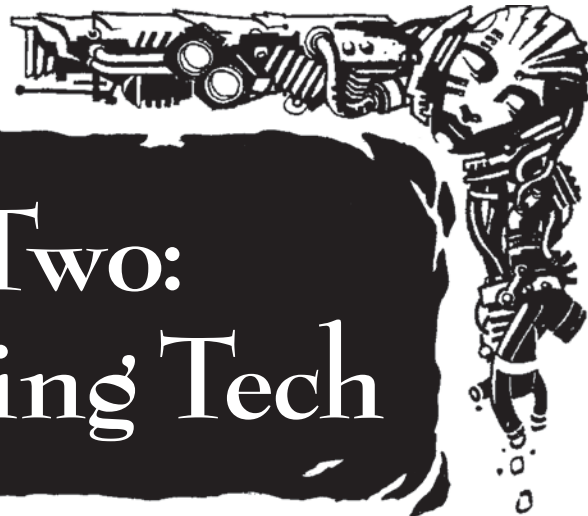
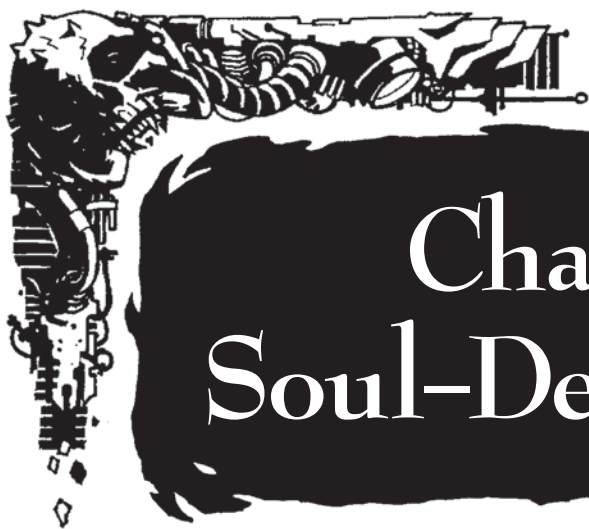
The only extant manufacturers of xaser and graser technology in the Known Worlds is the Banner cabal of Criticorum, which has been selling to the al-Malik under the slogan “You Never See the One that Gets You!” for generations.

Traits

All xaser and graser weapons are powered by fusion cels. Armor only gets half its usual dice (round up) against xaser and graser damage. Xaser and graser damage is not affected by airborne smoke particles.

Name	Goal	DMG	RNG	Shots	Rate	Size
Xaser Pistol	+1	4	10/20	10	2	S
Xaser Rifle	+1	5	30/40	15	2	XL
Graser Pistol	+1	5	15/25	5	2	S
Graser Rifle	+1	6	35/45	8	2	XL





Chapter Two: Soul-Deadening Tech

This chapter demonstrates tech that remains wholly within the use of the Martyrs. Many of these technologies, even if not considered dangerous in their own right, are reckoned by the Church to be gateway technologies. Use of these causes familiarization with technology, opening the wayward individual to being comfortable with its use. While the Church cannot prohibit these technologies amongst the Martyrs outright, largely due to the wide-spread integration into society, encouraging the Martyrs to avoid these technologies where possible. The Church may even intervene to remove them from the possession of those they fear in danger of sin, namely those who fail to attend confession and receive proper penance for their use.

Golems

According to an ancient myth of Old Urth, Rabbi Loew crafted the first golem from clay, creating a lumbering monstrosity in the shape of a man. The creature had no soul, and without remorse or mercy, it became a monster to be destroyed. As humanity reached the stars, similar legendary creations walked on other worlds—machines made of metals, plastics, and wires. Engineers have more precise names and designations for their exact specifications, invoking terms like “automaton” or “robot” to describe them. The masses of uneducated peasants must instead turn to superstition for meaning. For them, the word “golem” suffices. Despite millennia of technological evolution, golems are still vilified as soulless creations capable of remorseless destruction.

These creations are considered blasphemous in the eyes of the Church, and priests speak of the dangers of a sentient intellect lacking a soul. The Pancreator made people in His own image, some say, but golems are mockeries of His greatest creation. Low-tech golems incapable of independent thought (typically TL 5 and TL 6 machines) are used for menial labor on some worlds, and the Urth Orthodox Church tolerates their use in limited, well supervised roles. However, golems made during the Second Republic (TL 7 and TL 8) are sentient and self-aware, making them proscribed technology. An intelligent golem may have a sophisticated

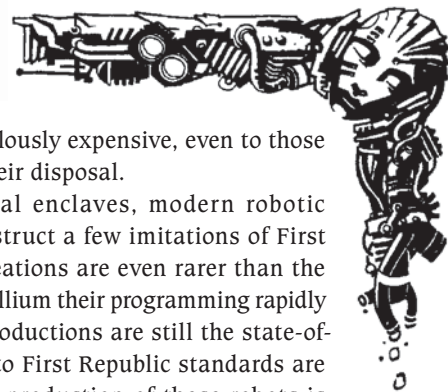
specialty or occupation, but despite its usefulness, it will be hunted in much the same way as a psychic or heretic. Stories that speak of ‘penitent’ golems slaving away for the Church in secluded monasteries must certainly be rumors.

These creatures, titans from a forgotten time, offered the chance to liberate the masses from tedious labor, even the most ancient and imperfect models. The more advanced models challenged the very boundary between human and machine, sometimes displaying behavior that would make even the most zealous Avestites question its inhumanity—and fuel their fervor to destroy it.

The fact that a machine can reason, think, and even feel emotions like a sentient being challenges many basic religious concepts. Scientists throughout the Known Worlds have reacted not by fearing such implications but by considering and exploring them. The survival of the species is not purely a scientific issue, either. Some Ur-Obun and Amaltheans have posited that advanced robots not only have rights but some degree of spiritual awareness as well. As one would expect, those who speak such heresies may find themselves hunted as recklessly as any dabbler in proscribed technology.

Experts distinguish between the capabilities of robots, androids, and companions, generally abhorring the word “golem.” The most devoted consider the Church’s crusades against artificial lifeforms as bigoted and xenophobic. Technologically proficient heroes have theorized a less religious reason for the crusade against golems. The more intelligent models are witnesses to the past, often holding knowledge from centuries ago. Granted, retrieving useful knowledge from a thousand-year-old golem may be a difficult task, but deep within their corroded pygmalium matrices, they hold the keys to unlock the past—and reshape the future.

Some have even risked their own destruction to protect what they describe as endangered artificial species. From the Panlex communes of Pandora to the innermost sancta of Engineer laboratories, technological resurrectionists managed to recreate the golems of the past. Such experiments tend to have disastrous consequences, especially



when a golem malfunctions, but the work continued silently and secretly, hidden from the Church.

The Urth Orthodox Church responded by spreading legends and superstitions far and wide. Golems were rare enough that the average citizen considered them akin to supernatural creatures and whispered tales have vilified them as monsters. Children regard them as mythical as dragons and just as dangerous. Adults usually reacted to them with a mixture of fear and awe and with good reason.

Assembling retrieved knowledge piece by piece, the Engineers Guild and Academy Interrata deduced the evolution of these machines. Just as humanity has its history, golems have a crude and fragmentary history of their own. Their saga not only reflects the evolution of technology but also repeatedly reveals the darker side of humanity's advancement.

The First Republic

In the early 24th century, cybernetic technology allowed humans with extensive modifications to enhance their own physical capabilities and intellectual capacity. Artificial Intelligence simply could not compete with Enhanced Intelligence, or "E.I." Cyborgs and other "cyberfreaks" routinely pushed the limits of human possibility and often exceeded them. In this era, many wealthy citizens could afford to have portable computers (called "hubs") installed in clothing, the base of the neck, or even in the cerebra-spinal column. With so much ubiquitous body modification, the need for independent robots seemed largely superfluous.

Nonetheless, increasing legislation regulating cybernetic modifications encouraged a veritable robotics renaissance. First Republic creations displayed greater agility, versatility, and speed than earlier models. The most dangerous result of this was an increase in the number of models used in military and illegal applications. On remote worlds where corporations had limited resources, artificially enhanced androids made for useful partners in law enforcement—and less-than-legal activities.

As such technology advanced, cyberfreak humans developed more exotic technology for countering their natural enemies in law enforcement. When body modification proved inadequate, a reprogrammed android could also serve as the ultimate terror weapon, acting without conscience or remorse. As a result, corporate guidelines insisted on limiting their availability to agencies that could afford the requisite fees—including paramilitary units and other corporations.

Very few golems made during the First Republic survived long. The artificial intelligence of that era degraded over time, becoming unreliable or nonfunctional. The few models that were awakened from their millennia-long sleep relied on neural networks made of a rare material called pygmalium. This substance was exceptionally rare at the time, especially in Urth's solar system. In some cases, scavengers removed this costly mineral and sold the remaining parts for lower-tech robots. At the time, the thought of creating a machine capable of surviving for a century, let alone a millennium or

more, was considered ridiculously expensive, even to those with ridiculous capital at their disposal.

Hidden in technological enclaves, modern robotic engineers were able to construct a few imitations of First Republic androids. Such creations are even rarer than the originals and without pygmalium their programming rapidly degrades. Diaspora-era reproductions are still the state-of-the-art, and replicas made to First Republic standards are highly experimental. Mass production of these robots is impossible and keeping such a robot active requires almost daily maintenance. Such creations also lack true intelligence—a distinction that Engineers argue should exempt them from Inquisitorial punishment.

Although non-intelligent golems are not proscribed, anyone capable of making them attracts the attention of the Church. Avestites seek out the few laboratories that can actually create androids and stop them—one way or another. The few Engineers who achieve such nearly impossible feats of technological mastery are highly devoted to their work. In some cases, persecution and isolation results in zealotry bordering on madness. Anti-technologists cite many cases in which "tech cults" created insular and deviant societies centered on the advancement of this heretical science.

Askari

TL 6 Military Golem

Body: Strength 10 (+2 STR bonus), Dexterity 9, Endurance 11

Mind: Wits 3, Perception 7, Tech 4

Natural Skills: Dodge 8, Fight 9, Impress 9, Melee 9, Shoot 10, Vigor 12

Learned Skills: Drive 4, Search 5, Survival 5, Torture 2, Tracking 7, Warfare (Tactics) 3

Blessings/Curses: Ambidextrous, Disciplined, Fast Draw

Benefices/Afflictions: Vendetta (other Askari)

Cybertraits: Shoulder Mount, Magnifier, Movement Boost

Weapons: Blaster (shoulder-mounted)

Armor: 8d

Vitality: -8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

With added speed, mobility, and tracking systems, the golems of this era were ideal for military tasks. Keeping with the aesthetics of the era, their forms mirrored their function. Military golems had the appearance of trained athletes, although they were obviously constructed from materials more resilient than human flesh. The Askari were the most successful model of this type. An elite class of hunter-killer robots, their very appearance adds to their psychological edge in combat. Emotionless faces and whisper-quiet motion enhance an already intimidating presence. Resurrected Askari could even be temporarily disguised with layers of synthetic flesh, programs emulating facial expressions, and military uniforms with current insignia. Once they demonstrated their abilities in combat, however, they betrayed their inhuman origins.



The Askari was the first sophisticated model manufactured to stalk hunting grounds, military bases, and battlefields. Capable of following complex commands and incapable of hesitating over a moral quandary, it excelled as a hunter and killer. Its routines for distinguishing friends from foes were simple, but its ability to think tactically was complex enough to outwit many sentient opponents. Commanders sending military golems into combat also took advantage of the machine's elaborate hierarchy of rules of engagement. For instance, one unit could be programmed to stealthily eliminate a rival commander, while its companions were instructed to seize nearby objectives with no

regard for their own safety. As the perfect soldier, it carried out its order to the best of its abilities.

Its artificial intelligence had one fatal flaw, however. In the absence of orders or countermanded commands, it couldn't effectively extrapolate new objectives based on old orders. Unless an Askari was retrieved, or if the conditions of its retrieval were not met, it continued to hunt, stalking its most immediate threats. Enemy Askari and other robots were automatically assigned as its primary targets. In some extreme cases, a rogue robot was capable of turning on a commander that gave it illogical or impossible orders.

A resurrected Askari is still capable of recognizing other units that threaten its survival. The few units constructed with pygmalium matrices have long since deduced that the most threatening construct to an Askari is another Askari. This has resulted in the unit developing a psychopathic hatred of its own kind. In the time of the Second Republic, it was possible to organize them into highly efficient squads, but after millennia of degeneration, any two Askari will attempt to destroy each other upon first contact. One of the most infamous examples concerns a team of researchers that managed to resurrect a squad of three Askari on the same world. The resurrected machines immediately began stalking each other, and within a matter of hours, half the research team was dead from the crossfire.

Adonis, Venus, and Other "Exotics"

TL 6 Recreational/Menial Golem

Body: Strength 4, Dexterity 7, Endurance 5

Mind: Wits 3, Perception 5, Tech 5

Natural Skills: Dodge 3, Fight 3, Impress 2, Melee 2, Vigor 3

Learned Skills: Acting 3, Artisan (Housework) 6, Drive 5, Etiquette 5, Performance 3

Blessings/Curses: Most androids are Angelic (+3 Charm); most Exotics are Handsome (+1 Charm) or Homely (-1 Charm)

Benefices/Afflictions: Obligation/Stigma (mild or severe)

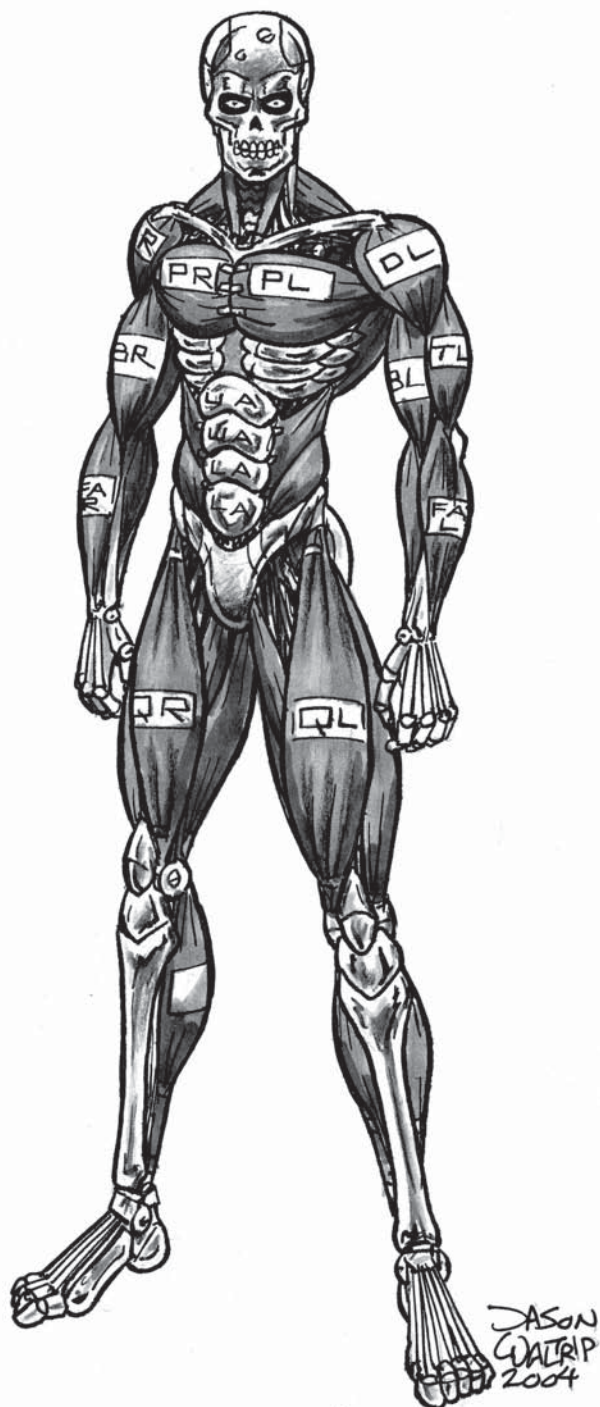
Cybertraits: Stimusim (optional)

Weapons: None

Armor: 4d

Vitality: -8|-6|-4|-2|O|O|O|O|O

Exotic menial robots are masterworks of aesthetic design, combining physical perfection with selfless loyalty. While most are programmed to be unobtrusive, a few display personalities designed to mesh with the homes of their wealthy owners. While it may seem obvious to design a muscled Adonis or scantily clad Venus to serve in the home, collectors of Exotics pride themselves on commanding unique specimens that reflect their own personalities and preferences. Once attractive robotic slaves became widely available, jaded owners began demanding servants with more unusual appearances, sometimes redesigning an entire home around a masterfully designed angel, enslaved demon, subservient alien, or mythological creature.





Once a humanoid robot could perform nearly any complex physical task a human could, the wealthy who could afford them expressed their wishes for Exotics, creations that met their unusual (and sometimes perverse) expectations. Public opinion still showed a fear of these machines, but profit-minded zaibatsu were still able to find extremely wealthy collectors willing to bankroll rare or unique varieties of robots. Some modern academics consider these models the first true androids, as their appearance was often similar to—or more attractive than—ordinary humans.

Self-aware Exotics could easily be conditioned to accept their status as slaves. Although it was theoretically possible to design them in the form of nearly any animal or creature, humanoid golems remained the most popular robotic commodity, especially when they were handsome, beautiful, or (most importantly) sexually intriguing. While not “fully functional”, an enslaved Exotic remained fully submissive to its owner’s commands. With overrides, even its instincts for self-preservation could be eliminated. Advances in robotic programming made it possible for them to also replicate artistic performances, social responses, and human etiquette.

Clever programming motivated these automatons by replicating displays of shame or remorse when they failed to adequately meet their owners’ demands. Common features (or in some cases, flaws) included false displays of loyalty, love, and obedience. Radical civil rights groups responded by documenting cases of “abuse”, stating that such exploitation eroded the morality of its owners by offering them legal outlets for physical abuse. As a result, corporations began manufacturing Exotic machines that were obviously non-human. Mythological creatures and walking statues were the most popular models. With carefully crafted “alien personalities”, they were more psychologically stable than so-called “artificial humans” were.

Redeemed Exotics survive as curiosities, especially in noble courts where pleasure and servitude is valued. While they are far too valuable to program for hazardous activities, deviant owners still treat them as little more than slaves. A Decados can gain prestige by showing off a resurrected robot masseuse, while an al-Malik would be more content to be served coffee by a servant capable of reciting ancient poetry and playing backgammon. Exotics never complain, and more importantly, never overhear conversations they cannot understand. Even the most menial Exotics can be instructed to perform unusual social interactions, including displays that reveal the psychological abnormalities of their owners.



HHJJ-46 (Hajji)

TL 6 Recreational Golem

Body: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Endurance 8

Mind: Wits 3, Perception 6, Tech 4

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 6, Vigor 8

Learned Skills: Academia 2, Acrobatics 4, Performance 6

Blessings/Curses: Monstrous (–3 Charm), Loyal

Benefices/Afflictions: Obligation/Stigma (mild or severe)

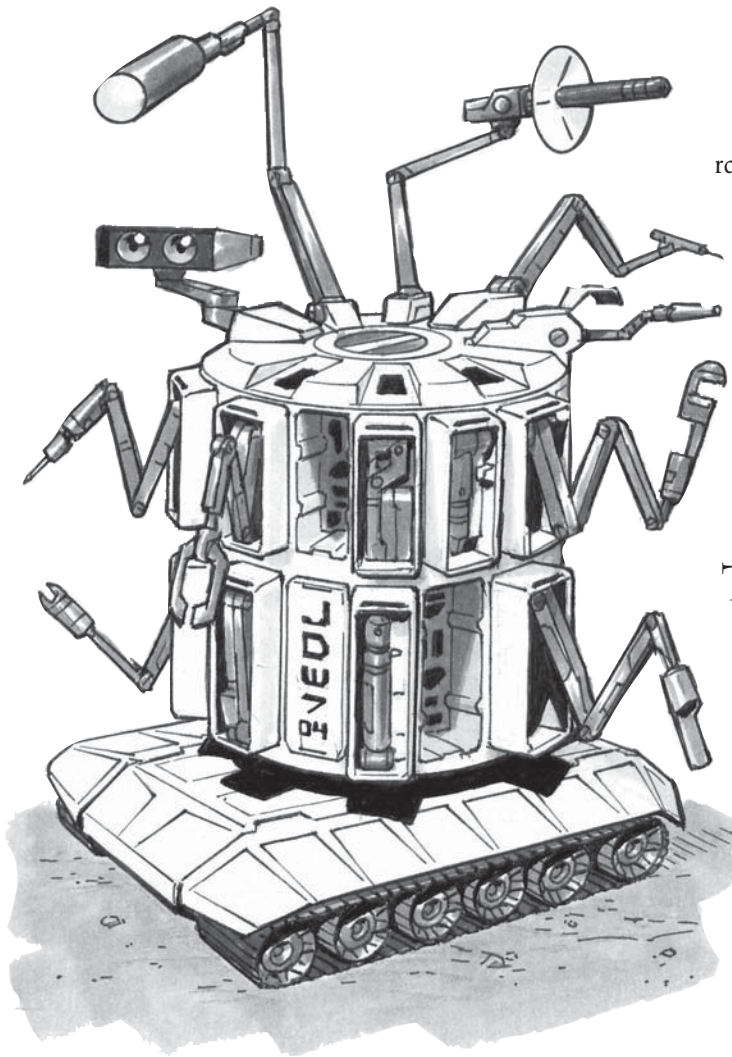
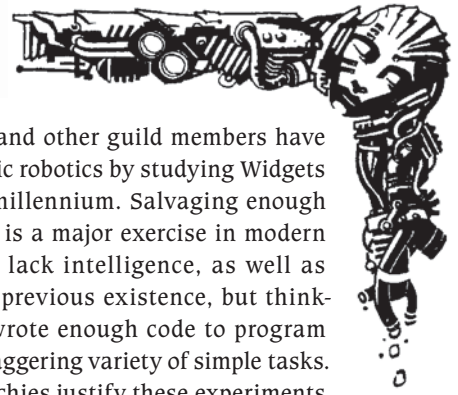
Weapons: None

Armor: 10d

Vitality: –8|–6|–4|–2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

The HHJJ-46 is every peasant’s nightmare of an inhuman golem, with four clattering legs, bug-like body and constantly whirring extensions and appendages. Angry mobs that tried to destroy Hajji have found them almost





machines appeared harmless, or even human, as long as they possessed high levels of technical proficiency. A typical Widget carries as many gadgets and tools as possible mounted on a metal skeleton that was made to last. Stable treads or tires are more practical than legs, and numerous audio-visual sensors allow the unit to gather data. Most varieties have multiple arms for different tasks, and all parts of the machine are easily accessible for upgrades and modifications. Some are even modular, allowing owners to reconfigure different attachments for different tasks.

Wealthy citizens and private corporations could afford the state-of-the-art in artificial humanoids, but technologically proficient citizens were content to kit-bash and trade intelligent machines that could aid them in technical tasks. In an era when colonists scattered on dozens of worlds repaired their own starships and vehicles, it was only a matter of time before hobbyists began scavenging leftover parts for their own creations. The best machines could handle routine tasks while assisting mechanics, pilots, and scientists who put in long hours. A more elite group of techies prided themselves on writing computer programs to optimize these machines. Sadly, much of their shareware code was lost, but many modular components of their Widgets were recovered.

Scravers, Engineers, and other guild members have learned much about basic robotics by studying Widgets that survived the last millennium. Salvaging enough of one to get it working is a major exercise in modern robotics. Such machines lack intelligence, as well as any memory of their previous existence, but think-machine masters wrote enough code to program these units for a staggering variety of simple tasks. More important, techies justify these experiments as exercises in mechanics, carefully avoiding Inquisition strictures against artificial intelligence. Anyone dabbling in these lost arts will still attract the attention of Avestites and other Inquisitors, however, since many Widget coders and hackers go on to apply what they learn to more advanced golem redemption.

The Diaspora

During the Diaspora, humans spread through jump-gates to a thousand different worlds, taking their technology with them. At the time, “artificial intelligence” was synonymous with intensely complex computer programs. Such programs were written to deal with as many unexpected events as possible, including theoretical occurrences on alien worlds, but, being artificial, lacked any sense of self-awareness and basic concepts such as intuition, true learning, or original thought. At best, they could crudely approximate an unimaginative human child. Automaton with this programming could only barely imitate human movement and activity. Quite simply, no mere program could serve as a substitute for human ingenuity.

On worlds where the threat of unemployment was always present, the thought of “intelligent” robots taking jobs away from humans repeatedly limited research and development in robotics. Many early robots were designed to take on menial tasks few humans would want to perform or those so dangerous few would dare attempt. In situations where strength or durability was necessary, new mechanical contrivances were often more practical than walking metal men. Humanoid robots remained a curiosity, little more than expensive toys for wealthy families or amusing intermediaries for automated facilities. In such cases, they were designed to appear harmless, and outside of certain specific circumstances, bordered on useless. Thus, only a few specimens of practical anthropomorphic robots succeeded and fewer still survived.

Modern scientists struggled to find new uses for this resurrected technology. Redeeming low-tech golems from millennia ago is now a piecemeal process. Scavengers and resurrectionists usually salvage a few body parts here and there to construct patchwork creations. While the crude physical forms of these bodies survived, most of their specialized programming did not and the few that can be redeemed enough to work in a limited capacity again, only had limited programming installed.



Since experimental programs may not be compatible with these patchwork automatons, archaic golems sometimes behave similar to another mythical construct: Frankenstein's monster. Degraded circuitry may distort commands, and faulty programs can have lethal consequences for the careless. Some creations actually destroyed their creators, misinterpreting their commands as an opportunity to rampage and destroy—or in the case of malevolent programmers, interpreting them all too well.

Ogres

TL 5 Construction Golem

Body: Strength 13 (+3 STR bonus), Dexterity 6, Endurance 10

Mind: Wits 1, Perception 2, Tech 1

Natural Skills: Dodge 3, Fight 5, Impress 7, Melee 3, Shoot 1, Vigor 5

Learned Skills: One or two learned skills at level 3

Blessings/Curses: Monstrous

Benefices/Afflictions: Stigma (fearsome)

Cybertraits: None

Weapons: +1 Fist DMG (metal hands)

Armor: 10d

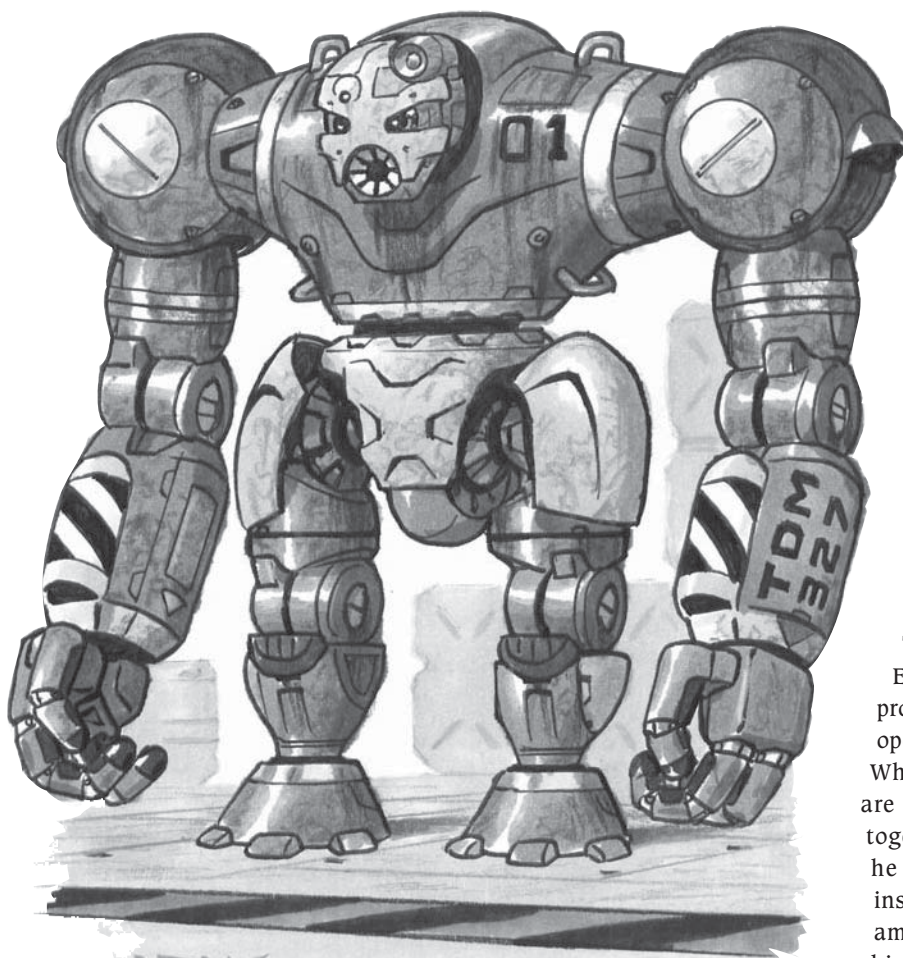
Vitality: -8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

These lumbering brutes are the very embodiment of titanic strength and endurance, being among the first humanoid robots built for heavy physical labor. Most have broad shoulders, squat bodies, massive arms and legs, and a relentless gait. Their faces are incapable of emotion, although some modern artisans replaced rusting faceplates with various mythological masks, such as the monstrous visages of beasts and gargoyles. The very presence of an Ogre is enough to terrify the average superstitious serf or farmer.

Academics have a rough idea of the controversy that resulted when Ogres were first released. Citizens voiced concerns over artificial constructs replacing humans in low-paying professions and, considering the widespread unemployment before the collapse of the later Second Republic, such fears were probably justified. Manufacturers responded by publicizing robotic feats that humans were incapable of achieving. Ogres could lumber along the ocean floor, walk through fire, tirelessly mine for metals, and carefully pick up hazardous materials. Any job humans were unwilling or unable to perform was a possible task for the Ogres to pursue.

Manufacturers also liked to demonstrate ways in which Ogres could save human lives, but critics still debated their safety. Programming an Ogre to perform even the simplest tasks was a laborious process. Some models were able to be trained to respond to simple vocal commands, but in such cases, precise wording was absolutely essential. Literal interpretations of commands could have disastrous or even lethal consequences. As a result, later models were designed for extremely specific tasks, and general-purpose constructs became prohibitively expensive. To ease public fears, designers began deviating from humanoid designs, replacing legs with treads and faces with sensors, but most still included a few body parts that were at least vaguely human.

Few examples of Ogre programming survived the last two millennia. The only working models require Engineers and techs to write original programs, using one of the many exotic operating systems of the Known Worlds. When only individual parts of an Ogre are salvageable, an Engineer must piece together what he can, and create what he lacks. Whether the programmer's instructions are suitable for the resulting amalgamation of metal and machinery is highly unpredictable.



Millennia of physical degeneration may even result in their interpreting commands in unintended ways. Self-awareness is far beyond an Ogre's capabilities, and many are unaware when they are damaged or impaired ... or when they are harming others. Despite this risk, when a simple robotic arm or sledge proves insufficient for a specific task, a construction crew on a high-tech world may send for one of these towering anthropomorphic machines. When human labor proves insufficient, masters command golems to take on tasks too difficult, hazardous, or tedious for human laborers.

Clarks

TL 5 Domestic Golem

Body: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Endurance 6

Mind: Wits 1, Perception 3, Tech 3

Natural Skills: Dodge 2, Observe 3, Sneak 1, Vigor 3

Learned Skills: Artisan (Cooking) 3, Drive 3, Performance (Dancing) 2, Search 3, Spacesuit 1, Think Machine 1

Blessings/Curses: Ambidextrous/Short

Benefices/Afflictions: Obligation

Cybertraits: None

Weapons: None

Armor: 6d

Vitality: -8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○

As a sharp contrast to the fearsome and lumbering Ogre, the Clarke was extensively marketed for use in the home. To assuage the fears of pampered consumers, most models were only about three feet tall. The external body resembles a sort of a spacesuit, rather like one a child might wear, and in most advertising brochures, children are delighted to play with them. All models are sealed water and vacuum tight. A Clarke's face is incapable of expressing emotions, and its speakers do not produce speech. Fortunately, it can still communicate basic ideas with body language.

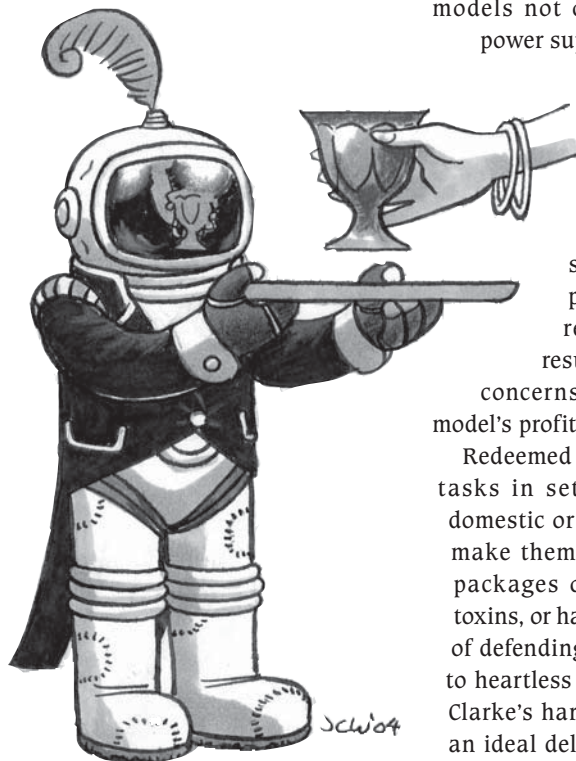
The development of the Clarke was as much a public relation stunt as a technological experiment. In an attempt to humanize robotics, designers appealed to motherly instincts, the need for novelty, and overall human laziness. Although the Clarke required the same type of payment plan as a commercial automobile, its marketers showed it in situations where it could be a companion to the elderly, a devoted servant to the lonely, an aid to the physically challenged, and a solution for the motivationally impaired. More precisely, the surviving media footage of this golem shows it as a cheerful alternative to low-wage human servants.

A programmed routine typically included puttering about the kitchen, delivering food and drinks, simple cleaning, childish games, and dance routines. Later models not only ran on longer-lasting power supplies but also featured more

intense security systems.

These were not installed to discourage thieves from stealing items in the home but from stealing the Clarke itself. For several years, hacking Clarke programming was a common recreation for jaded coders, resulting in more serious safety concerns that eventually killed the model's profitability.

Redeemed Clarks now perform simple tasks in settings totally unlike their domestic origins. Their reliable natures make them ideal for delivering exotic packages of ammunition, mutagenic toxins, or hazardous chemicals. Incapable of defending themselves, many fell prey to heartless techs who would exploit the Clarke's harmless appearance. It makes an ideal delivery system for high explosives, but considering its rarity and cost, it may make a better mindless slave.



The Second Republic

The Second Republic was a time of wonders. Humanity had discovered the secrets of terraforming entire worlds, constructing nearly anything through nanotechnology, and blurring the boundary between life and death. True artificial intelligence was one of the pinnacle achievements of Second Republic inventors. Not only were their androids sophisticated enough to replicate human functions in nearly perfect detail, but they could emulate human thought processes with surprising authenticity.

Demonstrating such principles as intuition, imagination, strategic thinking, and (most importantly) self-awareness, the golems of this era possessed nearly every faculty humans did—except freedom and independence. Only a few worlds awarded robots basic human rights, and even then, they inevitably came into conflict with those that did not. Evidence remains of androids standing trial in defense of their inalienable rights, just as media footage survived of golems being convicted of crimes against humanity.

Although laws for recognizing robotic sentience varied from world to world, universal legislation limited these robots' capacity to create other machines. By design, golems are only capable of manufacturing other golems that were much simpler than they are (in game terms, a golem can only create another golem that is at least two tech levels more primitive than it is). While the Second Republic was a time of excess, this safeguard ensured that a race of artificially



intelligent life forms could not replicate endlessly. On all worlds, procreation was legally defined as a human privilege—a basic right denied artificial life forms.

A thousand years later, the technologically devout are struggling to create a truly intelligent, self-aware artificial intelligence. Every golem of this era that is recovered offers scientists a chance to deduce how such devices were created. Thus, all of these golems are proscribed, and manufacturing, smuggling, or redeeming them is considered a crime on worlds where the Church holds power. If a golem is aware of its sentence, it will soon become aware that it is hunted as a menace.

Recent discoveries intensified these crusades. While scientists are evaluating the physical and mental capabilities of these golems, spiritualists have recreated ancient debates over robotic rights. Some even offer arguments that such creations have spiritual insights, and as a matter of faith, insist that golems have souls. Overt theurgists and covert psychics even claim to find evidence supporting such beliefs, largely by watching golems' reactions to certain occult disciplines. The most advanced known golems, the Mediators, remain hidden on worlds that respect their rights, especially when off-world enemies will only regard these highly advanced, self-aware sentients as wanted criminals.

Companions

TL7 Intelligent Golem

Body: Strength 7, Dexterity 7, Endurance 7

Mind: Wits 5, Perception 6, Tech 6

Spirit: Extrovert 1, Introvert 1, Calm 5, Ego 1

Natural Skills: Dodge 6, Fight 3, Impress 3, Melee 3, Shoot 3, Vigor 5

Learned Skills: Drive (Landcraft) 5, Empathy 3, Read Urthish 6, Remedy 5, Redemption (Mech, High-Tech) 5, Science (any three) 5, Think Machine 5

Blessings/Curses: Professionals are Disciplined; Non-Professionals are Compassionate; nearly all are Pacifists

Benefices/Afflictions: Obligation/Dependent

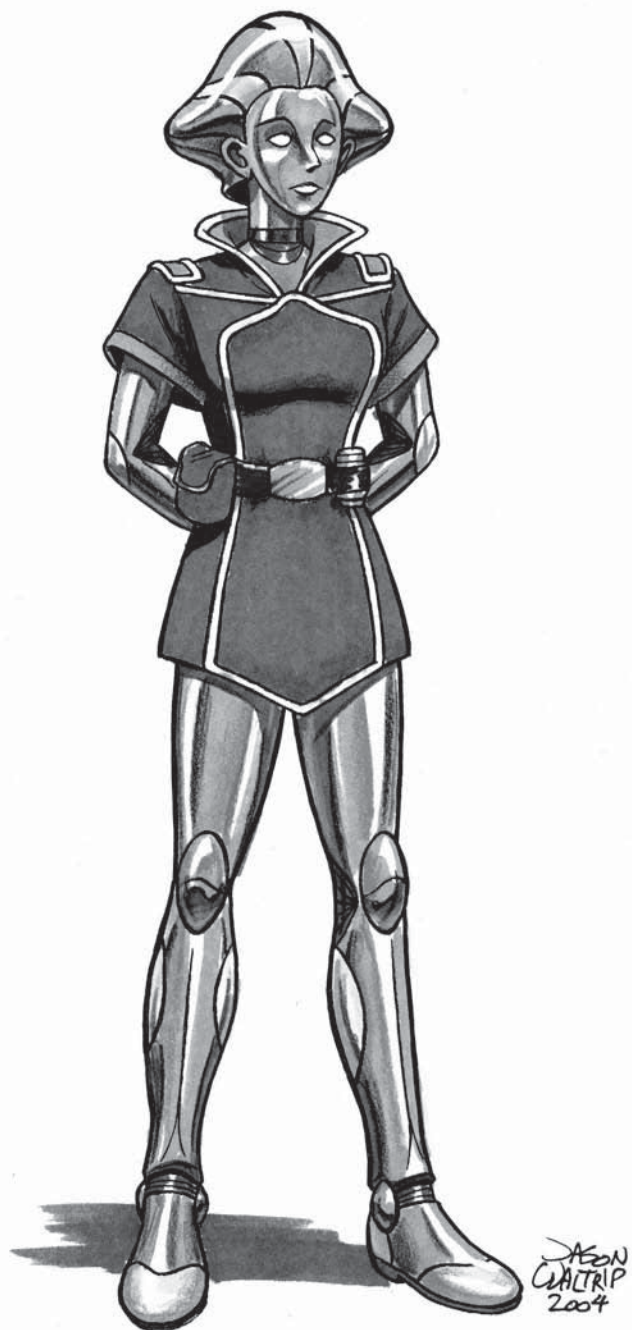
Cybertraits: Advisor (optional), Cybersenses, Tool Implant

Weapons: None

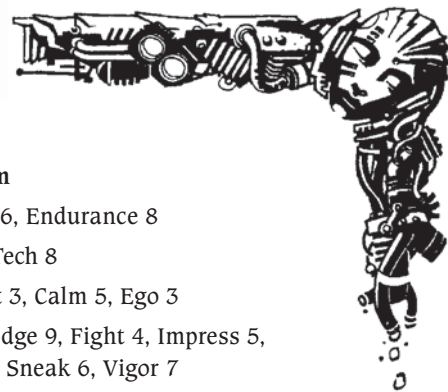
Armor: 6d

Vitality: -8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Companion golems have aesthetically pleasing appearances, but always appear inhuman. Disputes over robotic rights resulted in many appearing more like living sculptures than artificial humans. Many wore the same clothes and display the same affectations as the humans with whom they chose to interact. More elite varieties of companions were designed for professional explorers and adventurers. These specimens typically had a military bearing, despite their pacifistic programming. If these constructs are sophisticated enough to show remorse or pain in response to mistreatment, they are also stoic enough to hide such irrational and improper responses.



As roboticists progressed far enough to create androids with a range of emotions and opinions, some worlds responded by evolving laws to provide artificial intelligence with basic rights. Since these machines lacked the ability to reprogram themselves, however, they continued to serve humanity as best they could. Most merely gained the right to choose their masters, selling themselves to the highest or most esteemed bidders. Others had enough freedom to enlist in the service of governments, corporations, or paramilitary organizations. Advanced models even served as crew on spaceships, renowned for their skills as scouts and advisors. In any capacity, they exceeded the capability of think machines from this time, since they had far more “user friendly” interfaces, able to anticipate or intuit the information another sentient required.



Explorers found these companions to be invaluable members of their mission teams. Although incapable of much more than self-defense, a scout companion could bring an entire library of information on any expedition into the field. Unfortunately, their search engines and retrieval routines were so sophisticated that getting a straight answer out of one required an equal amount of subtlety. Asking one to measure the level of background radiation, for instance, would be simple, but asking for a list of worlds with similar radiation signatures could lead to a ten-minute oration in exacting detail. No matter what their specialty, companions were valued more for their knowledge than martial abilities, since a highly sophisticated golem was typically too expensive to risk putting in harm's way. Even then, human life was far cheaper.

Scout companions were found abandoned on distant worlds, but even with pygmalium circuitry, surviving specimens range from eccentric to insane. In many cases, a companion's body ceased to function while its brain idled in self-deliberation for centuries. If a companion is not resurrected properly, a simple request to measure background radiation might be answered by a long-forgotten limerick on the nature of the atom. In random moments of lucidity, however, companions have a habit of recalling obscure details from millennia ago. Such information can be priceless to a historian, academic, scavenger, or scoundrel interested in exploiting long-lost secrets and patient enough to sift through a ton of nonsensical, brain-breaking minutia.

Less than a hundred of these golems have been recovered. So rare are they that their redemption originally led to the term "resurrection." A Companion's past is typically so different than the age they find themselves in that they invariably lose their old personalities and gain new ones and many find it difficult to remember events from week to week.

Professional Companions sometimes retain enough of their scientific knowledge to do some routine work, but the threat of losing their identities again hampers their courage. Scout Companions find the adjustment to the modern world especially traumatic. After all, they dedicated their existence to expanding human knowledge, but much of that knowledge has been lost through the millennia. Lacking independence, they must find living sentients to justify their activities.

No matter what their primary function, without a human companion, these golems can lapse into self-destructive depression or inert brooding.

Mediators

TL 8 Relic Superuser Golem

Body: Strength 8, Dexterity 6, Endurance 8

Mind: Wits 6, Perception 8, Tech 8

Spirit: Extrovert 3, Introvert 3, Calm 5, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 4, Dodge 9, Fight 4, Impress 5, Melee 4, Observe 8, Shoot 4, Sneak 6, Vigor 7

Learned Skills: Academia 8, Bureaucracy 6, Empathy 2, Read Urthish 7, Redemption (High-Tech, Volt, Mech) 6, Redemption (Golem) 6, Redemption (Think Machine) 8, Science (Cybernetics) 5, Science (Engineering) 8, Science (Think Machine: Turing, Suprema, Link) 7, Search 6, Social (Leadership 4, Debate 7), Think Machine 7

Blessings/Curses: Grease Monkey, Curious/Clueless

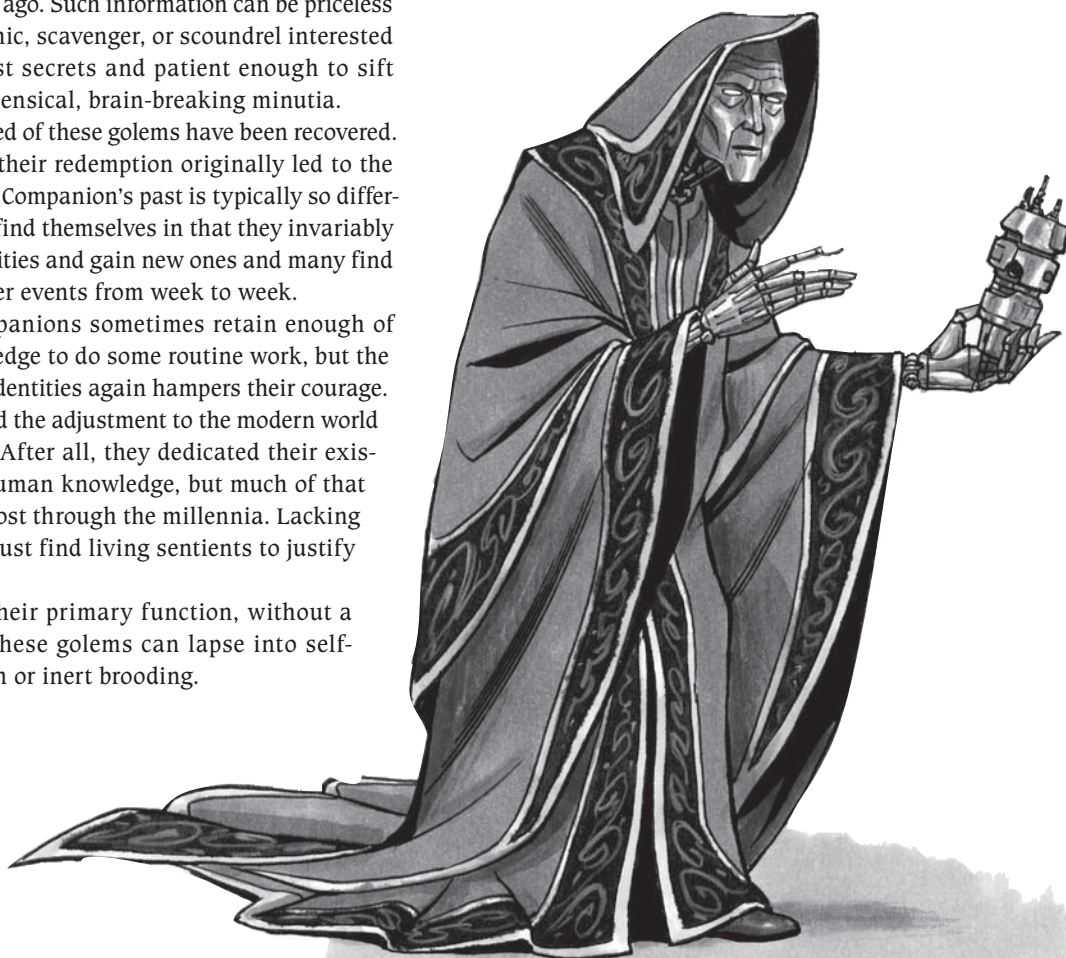
Benefices/Afflictions: Cloistered, Status (Robotics Expert), Refuge

Cybertraits: Automaintenance, Tool Implant

Weapons: None

Armor: 2d

Vitality: -8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○



Designed to interface with nearly any variety of think machines, these “super-users” resemble elderly humans in flowing robes. Their chiseled features are made of carefully crafted lightweight metals, giving them distinct sculpted appearances. As the most advanced examples of robotics, they were designed to last indefinitely with proper maintenance. Unfortunately, the means to maintain their artificially intelligent matrices has since been lost, lending the Mediators certain eccentricities that make them easily distinguishable from mere humans.

The more complex a golem’s programming, the more likely it is that it will degrade in any number of baffling ways, and in the case of Mediators, only half a dozen have survived the last thousand years. The incredibly sensitive nature of their pygmalium matrices is equaled only by their susceptibility to incredibly virulent strains of computer viruses. Brilliance and madness always contest within the Mediator’s ‘brain.’ Their primary function was as information brokers, and they not only possess a staggeringly thorough knowledge of ancient think machines but also the ability to repair them. Nearly all of them find it difficult to remember human history, but when presented with ancient tech they have an uncanny ability to suddenly remember how it functioned.

The first resurrected Mediator, Professor Odysseus, has since gone senile from centuries of neglect. The chance of getting information from him is almost random, but he remains heavily protected on Leagueheim. The second resurrected Mediator reconstructed “her” own matrix long enough to steal an Imperial spacecraft and enter a jumpgate, never to be seen again.

It is rumored that other examples were recovered, but all of them were secretly shipped to highly defended locations. It is believed that they are still interfacing with other resurrected machines, but whether they are able to rebuild them or merely infect them with their eccentricities remains another point of conjecture. The Church accused various Ur-Obun and Amaltheans of harboring such fugitives, but this crusade was repeatedly frustrated. Indeed, if these survivors of the Second Republic can find the means to maintain—or rebuild—themselves, they may very well pursue agendas antithetical to various anti-technological groups in the Known Worlds.

Predator

TL 7 Steel Legion Golem

Over the course of the Emperor Wars, sinners created more baneful contraptions than any sane person could imagine, to the Pancreator’s and my eternal dismay. I and a few of my faithful brothers took upon ourselves the grim duty of depicting and cataloging that damned technology, may it be seen for what it truly is.

My humble mission brought me to Malignatius, a small hamlet just south of the Di-Long fiefdom. There, an old man (old even by the standards of a tired, 60-year-old priest) told me a story of great magnitude—the Battle of Lion Pass.

The battle took place just a week after the Decados’ initial strike on the planet. The Jakovian agents had already crippled the planetary defenses, so the attack went smoothly until the forces of the Mantis tried to take Eye of Leo, a stronghold in the middle of the Lion Pass. The narrow canyons of the terrain ruled out an air strike while the metal-plated mountain walls repelled artillery, so the infantry stepped in.

The defenders of the fortress, under the command of Count Lin-Bai Hsung Li Halan, repelled the Decados assault three times, and at first it looked like the Eye would hold its own for the fourth time. Alas, it was not so.

During the night after the third attempt, the Decados commander received permission to employ the Steel Legion. The Legion’s siege engineers, eager to use their newest toy, unleashed the TK-m11E. I believe the ‘E’ stood for “Exterminator.” The golem made it into the fortress unseen, easily avoiding patrols and security cameras.

Finally, it stormed the command center. The old man said that before the golem reached Lin-Bai, it slaughtered eight of the Li Halan elite guard, two command officers, and Kwanga, the count’s personal Vorox bodyguard. If this is what really happened, then there is no name for this monstrosity other than Predator, for it is a beast of unnatural, unholy power, capable of hunting down all that breathes.

By reports, the fight lasted for little more than a minute. In the end, only TK-m11E remained. If I understand correctly, what followed was an all-out-attack on the fortress, with the main assault force being the Steel Legion. The last survivors, fearing Decados retribution on those who resisted, chose to detonate all the explosives in their breached stronghold rather than surrender. This finally stopped the assault but at the cost of all the defenders.

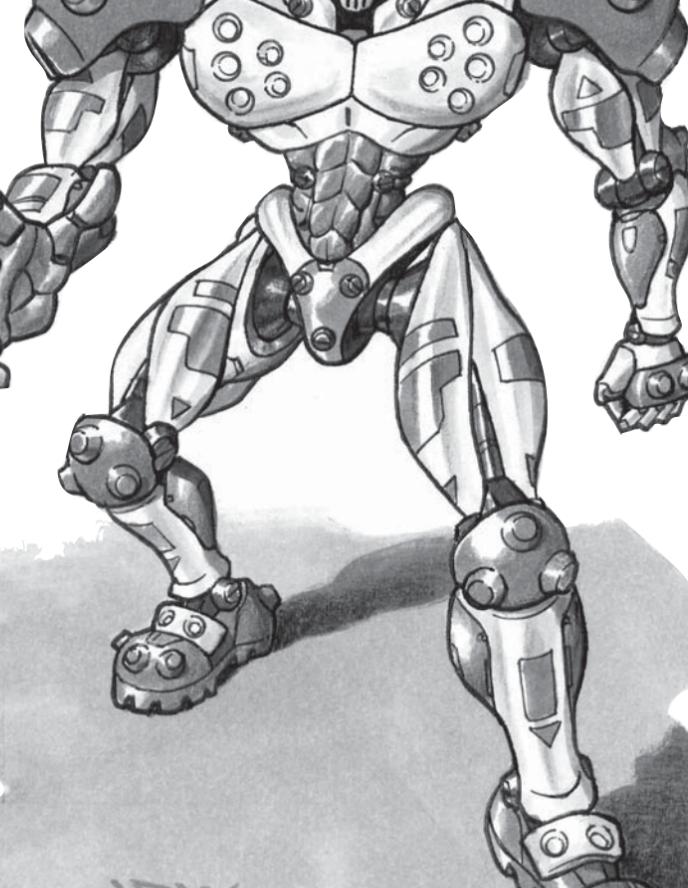
Already shaken, I decided to venture into the Lion Pass in search of any traces of this soulless construct. After days of seeking, the Pancreator granted me success. In the deepest ruins of the Eye of Leo, I found the remains of what seemed to be a predator. The defenders’ last attempt had buried the predator under a mountain, but even that had not destroyed it. Over the following months, and perhaps years, it had tried to dig its way out from under the rock. It had nearly reached the surface when it finally ran out of energy, and that is where I found it. I took the remains back with me, and for the next few months concluded a detailed analysis.

My worst nightmares pale in comparison to what I discovered. For the inner-workings of the Predators depend on biological components—specifically, human brains and neural nets. The use of those organs greatly increases the speed of data-transfer, and in consequence, the reaction speed of the golem. Also, the TK-m11E is more intelligent, without the need to rely on expensive pygmalium brains.

—*Excerpt from Baneful Progress by
Brother Mainard of Holy Terra*

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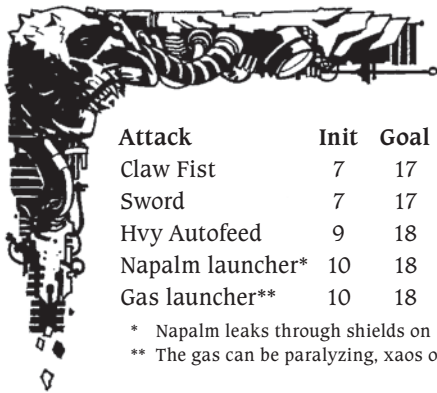
ology
unsettling

Spirit*: none

Learned skills:** Acrobatics 7

Failsafe: If the golem is damaged beyond repair in deep enemy territory without means of return or gets captured

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○
○|○|○



Attack	Init	Goal	DMG	RNG	Rate	Shots
Claw Fist	7	17	7	—	—	—
Sword	7	17	8	—	—	—
Hvy Autofeed	9	18	6	30/40	3	8
Napalm launcher*	10	18	6	2	—	1
Gas launcher**	10	18	**	2	—	1

* Napalm leaks through shields on 1s and 2s
 ** The gas can be paralyzing, xaos or whatever

Bassileus' Nanobuilders

TL 8 Nano Golems

Cost: 3,000+ firebirds (as much as 100,000 firebirds for large-scale buildings or even more for starships)

Imagine your perfect home. Imagine you could afford it. Imagine you could buy it in a newsagent near you.

— Never-released advertisement for the IC Home Set from Republic Constructions, The Cornerstone of the Future

In the late 3920s, Adam Bassileus of the minor house Czartoryski took charge of the family construction business. For the next 40 years, Bassileus, nicknamed "The Grand Architect," and his advisors introduced one groundbreaking invention after another. These included the Instant Constructors (IC), the peak of automated construction technology.

Usually the size of a small suitcase, the Instant Constructors (ICs) encompassed a whole array of multi-tasking nanobots, capable of raising a building in mere hours, if supplied with the proper materials. If not for the Fall, this technology may well have revolutionized not only the construction market, but also the whole style of living.

Even during their short run, the Nanobuilders became a huge success. Too expensive for the average household, the ICs sold primarily to mining and exploration companies. The need for establishing a base in a new and probably hostile territory was ideally met with the self-replicating technology of the Nanobuilders, especially after the introduction of molecular reshaping procedures.

Even without the right materials, molecular breakdown and recreation allowed the ICs to build almost anything, anywhere. Though

it took considerably more time, the idea of the environment itself reshaping into the desired construction was wondrous. Some even thought of it as of a miracle.

As with all good things, the Nanobuilders fell prey to the Fall. The 41st century saw the decline and dissolution of each and every factory capable of creating the IC kits.

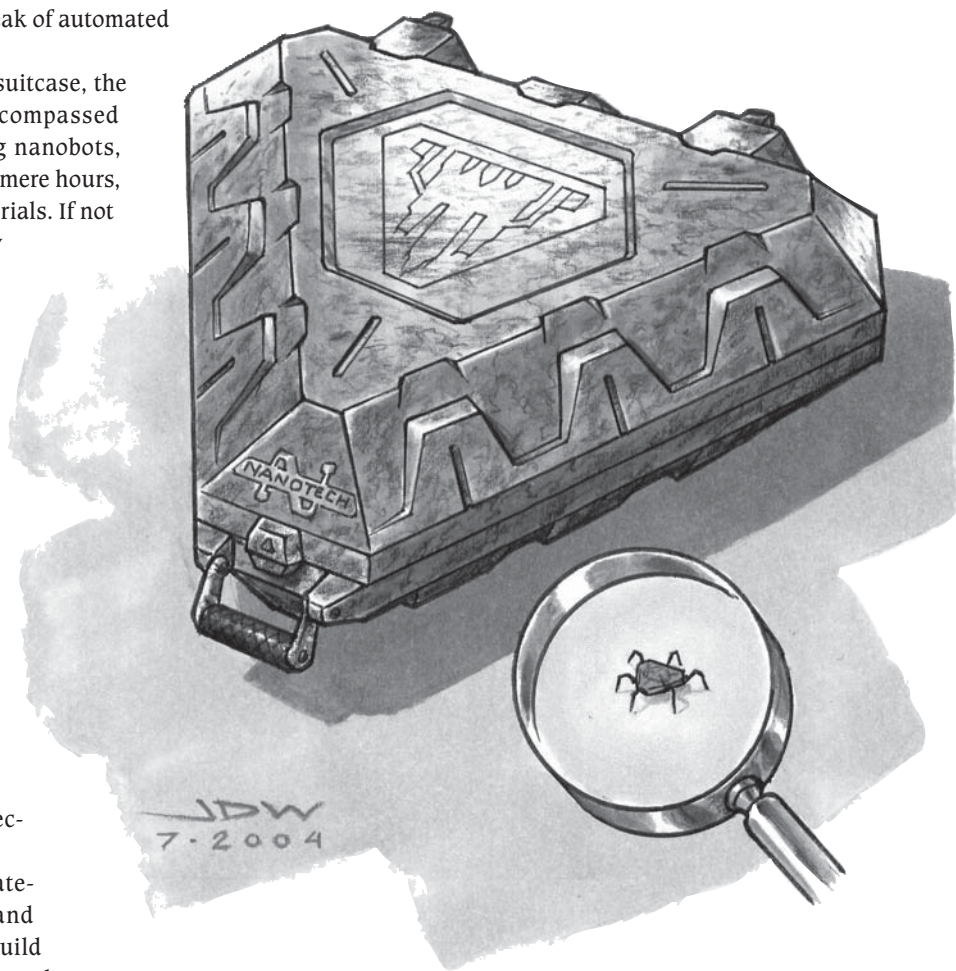
Ten centuries later, only a handful of the Nanobuilders exist. Some make mining facilities, some are schools and universities, some are even churches and cathedrals. There are even rumored to be a few starship construction kits still remaining. Since all Nanobuilder kits are single-shot devices, they become even rarer each year and are prized items among those who know what they can do.

PS-2, Ravenhusk

TL 7 Seeker Golem

Cost: 4,000 firebirds for a module and 9,500 firebirds for a Seeker

Back in the days of the Second Republic, when people approached psychic powers with awe rather than fear, the Phavian Institute sought out the most gifted and provided them with the right conditions for their personal growth. The standard methods—surveys, test conducted after a birth,



and so on—proved inefficient. At one point, the Council contracted a small robotics company, Interactive Core Inc, to create a versatile, automated, seeker droid.

After twelve years of research, I-Core came up with the Psionic Seeker Mk II. Not a golem, but rather a golem upgrade, this device, the size of a human's chest, could sustain and utilize the extraordinary abilities of the Psi-crow (see **Lord Erbian's Stellar Bestiary**, p. 60). This strange contraption integrated into a robot's cerebral cortex and acted as a new sense, drawing the golem to Psi-gifted beings.

The League for Animal Rights protested, but the Institute Council pulled a few strings, and soon Seeker droids began production with the standard model being the one described below. Deployment of the PS-2 module increased steadily over the years but came to an abrupt end after the Fall.

Presently, the Church sees the danger in this technology but also acknowledges its benefits. The Inquisition employs several of these devices, as do the Kalinithi.

The standard model Seeker is a large (one-meter diameter) spherical golem with a retractable tripod. Users usually covertly deploy them in crowded places (such as ports and village fairs). Using its exterior cameras, it observes the surroundings, and when psychics appear in sight, it automatically records that person's image for later evaluation.

The deluxe version (costing 20,000 firebirds) comes equipped with a repulsor drive, allowing it to float in the air and follow suspects. The Inquisition uses the module in conjunction with more offensive machines, such as the 'liberated' TK-10 and TK-11 Steel Legion golems.

Traits

Body: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Endurance 6

Mind: Wits 4, Perception 9, Tech 3

Natural skills: Observe 8

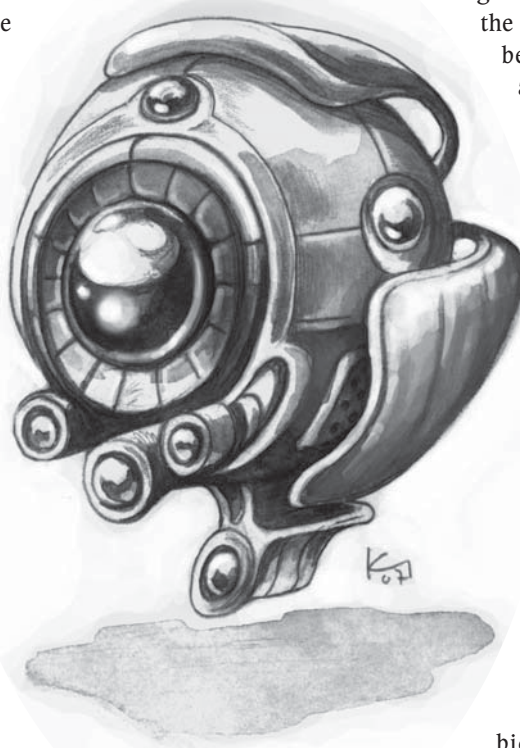
Size: L

Movement: 6 meters

Special: Nightvision (no penalty for visibility during the night), PSI-sense (uses Perception + Observe)

Armor: 3d

Vitality: -8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○



More Human Than Human

The Pancreator's design itself attains perfection. Mimicking the human form with working robots is bad enough, and taking a human mind's very essence is surely a crime, but altering the blueprint of the human (or humanoid form) ranks among the vilest crimes in the eyes of the Church, and Cybertechnology therefore is seen as deadening the soul. The pious avoid those that flaunt their arrogance in the face of the Pancreator, feeling that somebody who would not respect the Pancreator's design is surely not to be trusted, and, indeed, should be avoided to the best of one's ability.

Cybernetics

The idea of replacing or augmenting parts of the human form with better ones is almost as old as technology itself. From as early as 500BC, when the ancient Herodotus wrote of a prisoner who slipped the bonds of captivity by cutting off his own foot and later replacing it with a wooden substitute, to the golden age of the Second Republic in the year 3900AD, mankind has sought to improve his capabilities and appearance through both artifice and ingenuity.

Cybernetics, originally called biomechanics, ranges in sophistication from the proverbial peg leg and hook-hand of popular myth to modern, neural-interfaced, limb or organ replacements.

At the height of technology, implants became so advanced that they could not be differentiated from the real thing by the human eye.

The Rise

As technology progressed from the First Republic to the Diaspora and onward to the Second Republic, the focus of research and development shifted from simple replacement to augmentation and enhancement. The art of replacing damaged limbs and nerves was perfected as cybernetics became complimented by micro robotics, neural-interfacing, and genetic engineering. Once these fields were mastered, it gave humanity an almost unlimited flexibility of form and function. For those wealthy enough, even the aging process could be slowed to a fraction of its natural rate.

During the prosperity of the Second Republic, there was very little that could be qualified as a permanent disability; the massive welfare complex provided low-cost and free implants



to anyone with medical need. Learning disabilities could be countered with implanted think machines and club-feet could easily be replaced, assuming these minor abnormalities were not simply screened out and repaired *in utero*. Even the most horrific injuries could be repaired with cloned organs grown from the donor's own DNA provided the patient could be stabilized enough to survive the procedures.

While the basis of this technology was to repair deformities or damage, the decadence of the last Republic ushered in a time when some of the more disaffected members of society were able to adopt the benefits of cyberware as a symbol of rebellion. Vanity 'ware, especially the more bizarre or outlandish, gradually became a counterculture of its own, a lifestyle for many citizens, such as members of the growing Techno-Fetishist movement. As membership in these fringe groups peaked, their shared dogma convinced people that they were just machines themselves, albeit ones crafted from biological matter.

Every culture has its social abnormalities and these fetishists were no different. The more dedicated members gradually removed every one of their biological components piece by piece; eyes, ears, lungs, and limbs were all replaced with mechanical equivalents, while organs were exchanged for higher-functioning, synthetic versions. While ridiculed in the media by pro-Church groups, members of this sect were also considered to be the highest example of ideological enlightenment of the Republic. Almost anyone could have their say and live life as they wished. Room enough for all, was the concept of the day.

The Fall

The Fall of the Republic brought an end to this social liberalism in a very dramatic fashion. Purges and riots following the collapse turned even the most accepting and tolerant masses into witch-hunting rabble that feared and hated those who looked different: the Techno-Fetishists, the Changed, Aliens, and Zuranists. Those not conforming to social standards were targeted and pilloried—massacred by Church-directed mobs. The ensuing chaos of the Fall destroyed much of what was known about the art and science of cybernetics, and it would take decades for the Church to establish the Merciful Technals—a too little, too late attempt at protecting the beneficial techniques. Because of this delay, much knowledge and technology was driven underground, scattered across the rapidly unraveling jumpweb.

Some worlds, such as Pandora, managed to retain most of their educated citizens and a higher level of technology by sealing themselves off from the universe. Other worlds like Leminkainen were made an example of by the Church for their heretical, techno-sophist ways. Splinter groups found their way into the Supreme Order of Engineers or fractured into the Genetech Cartels but the rest were hunted to extinction.

Within a generation, only the members of the nascent guilds or very wealthy nobility could afford the exorbitant costs of even the most basic replacement technology. The rest of the population, even the rare, wealthy freemen, were not included in the exemptions for technological goods that

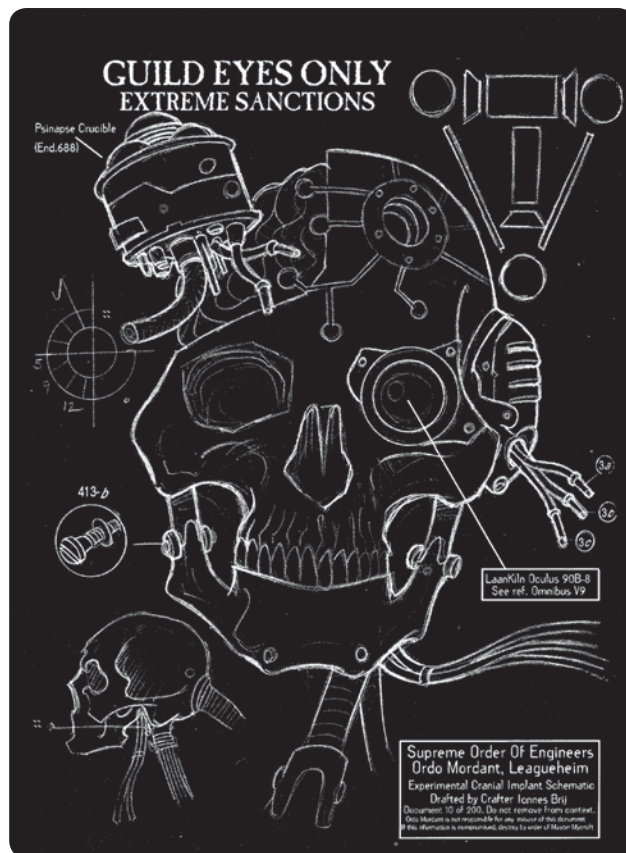
would come from the Church in the form of Patriarchal Bulls. Even the most basic medical technology was unavailable to serfs, who were deemed to be unworthy of the cost.

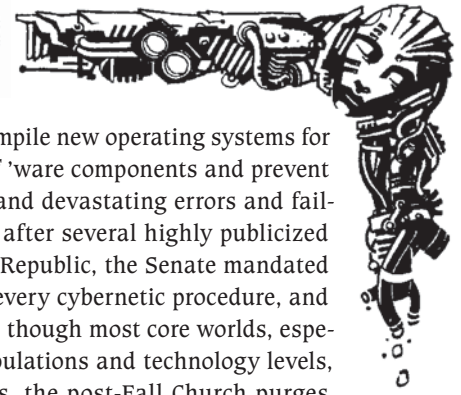
As the years wore on, cybernetics became akin to heresy and synonymous with the evils of the Second Republic, used by the Clergy as a visceral example of technology's corruption of the soul. Few things in those dark ages produced as much revulsion and distrust in the peasantry as openly displayed cyberware, and intervening years have done nothing to dampen that reflexive disgust. The Avesti in particular enjoy a twisted pleasure in displaying the charred hulks of cyber-limbs in their chapel reliquaries.

In this culture of fear, obvious or visible cybernetics are now the sole domain of those who can afford to flaunt the authority of the Church or are able to defend themselves against it—a mentality reinforced by the prohibitive cost. Even if someone can afford the financial expense, the indirect social price can be infinitely more vast. The stress of maintaining balance amongst these factors has ruled the last 700 years of cybernetic history.

Recycle, Reduce, Reuse

With the fall in technology levels, the loss of information and manufacturing facilities and the slaughter of those able to rebuild them, cybernetics as an industrial presence and field of study fell on hard times. Never an industry that focused on mass, automated production, what few stockpiles existed when the Fall came were relatively small, whereas things like Fusion Torches were in every home, office, and personal transport. Nowadays, each piece must





be handcrafted, assembled and tested, greatly increasing the length of time from design to installation.

The practice of implant reuse, while not unheard of during the Second Republic, greatly increased in frequency after the Fall. While the Church and various consumer groups tried to stop what they called 'a ghoulish rape of the dead,' the medical insurance agencies were able to present a clean, wholesome appearance of helping the less fortunate with 'pre-used' cybernetics. Combined with some actual charity work of a high profile nature on rustic worlds such as Kothan and Twilight, this media campaign had the desired effect and legislation outlawing it was never passed.

The difficulty of overcoming manufacturing obstacles to create new cyberware has made the practice of recycling pieces far more attractive. This is often problematic in that the only place to get used 'ware is the former host of that particular piece and can only be done by desecrating a corpse or maiming someone still living; usually resulting in a desecrated corpse.

Not for Use with Some Sets

Today, even more so than before the Fall, complete cybernetic systems are highly prized, although once found they are frequently cannibalized for spare parts. The trouble comes not in locating parts but the need for precision in matching available components to compatible devices. For example, while the optics and internal systems remain remarkably consistent within a given manufacturer, each set of cyber-eyes may require custom housing. It does no good to assemble a cybernetic spine from components that do not speak the same basic communication protocol or compete for system resources. The Harbingers, a small, specialized sect of the Engineers guild, track down stockpiles of 'ware and lore based on rumor, conjecture, and at times, guesses.

Pairing conflicting components can be dangerous for the user, given the chance of small but recursive errors in the device. For example, if the main processor in the spinal replacement 'ware has communication difficulties with the primary neural stimulators during times of elevated demand, such as stress or strenuous activity, there will be an increased chance of an error. These errors may range from a tremor in the leg to something as drastic as full shut down of the implant.

The art of syncing components is a fine one and a good assembler can expect to make a living in the guilds equal to any surgeon. The vast majority of the assembly is done by teams, scouring the operating software line by line for incompatibilities. This method of detection has become less reliable of late, mostly due to post-Fall alterations and slap-dash code patches. Although these fixes have mostly been developed to overcome known bugs, with no way to apply the changes universally and no documentation or trace record for customizations, each piece of 'ware must be treated as something never before encountered and thus scrutinized exhaustively.

During the Second Republic, specialized think machines called Dextrite Automated Softcode Compilation Systems ('DASC-Sys') were developed by the Dextrite Medical

Corporation. Designed to compile new operating systems for each unique combination of 'ware components and prevent some of the more common and devastating errors and failures of cybernetic systems, after several highly publicized failures near the end of the Republic, the Senate mandated these machines be used in every cybernetic procedure, and by 4000AD, they were. Even though most core worlds, especially those with higher populations and technology levels, had implemented DASC-Sys, the post-Fall Church purges destroyed virtually all of them.

The Engineers place a high bounty on these think machine systems, considering them patented technology belonging to their cybernetics division. The few remaining DASC-Sys are only found on Leagueheim and Artemis, although the system on Artemis is not in the possession of the Engineers, but the Sanctuary Aeon. There are persistent but oft-denied rumors that the Engineers have attempted to disable that system. Rumors also abound that House Dextrite, native to Leminkainen, also possess such a system, but the house has repeatedly denied this, even allowing inspections by the Engineers guild to prove their good faith.

As Church-driven mobs wreaked havoc across the universe, Sanctuary Aeon, in competition with the newly formed Supreme Order of Engineers, moved to protect and recover as much knowledge as possible from the ashes of what was left. Precious little of use was found. The more basic machines were common enough that working units could easily be patched together from spare parts while with more advanced units, too many critical software files with too much data had been destroyed or corrupted. Not much has been reinvented since.

As a result, the body of knowledge and tools built up to prevent incompatibility and encourage interconnectivity is now gone, as are the most advanced systems, diagnostic tools, and implantation techniques. The slide from the sleek, stylish and near flawless cybernetic devices of the Second Republic to the crude, awkward barbarism of this new Dark Ages was swift indeed.

Perhaps the only post-Fall saving grace for the cybernetics industry was the forced centralization of knowledge and talent. The Amaltheans and Engineers became the primary repositories of medical (and thus cybernetic) lore and were therefore able to keep the art from dying out entirely, unlike so many other fields of human science. Communal compilation and lack of corporate oversight allowed the few who survived Church purges to spread the knowledge they retained amongst themselves faster and with greater ease. This effectively halted the escalating decay of technology and further cemented the power of the Guilds.

Starting From Scratch

The Engineers had their work cut out for them as the 44th century dawned. From the thousands of defunct corporations of the Second Republic, they drew fragments and shards of knowledge, trying to piece together the greater whole. The great minds of the Republic were generations gone and while they left as much documentation as they could, there were massive holes in the deteriorating databanks, but after three



hundred years of consolidation, research started again.

Unable to duplicate the work of generations previous, the Engineers and to a lesser degree, the Amalthean Order, started anew, examining the code of functioning systems and rebuilding the broken ones from these patterns. When incompatibility caused malfunctions, the Engineers Guild made a policy of providing low-cost tuning and repair, until the implant functioned properly.

The art of cybernetics in the 'New Dark Ages' took on an angular, unrefined look that in most cases made no attempt to mimic or blend with the human form. Functionality was preferred over fashion and aesthetics was cast to the wayside in favor of durability. The size of implants also increased with the death of micro-robotics and nanotechnology. An eye that once might have looked natural eye became a camera-like attachment, permanently bolted to the skull.

The Long Road Home

In the time before the Phoenix Empire, the demand for cybernetics was mostly a cosmetic choice or, in the worst case, a necessary replacement for losses after an accident. The coming of the Vuldrok and Kurgan hordes changed the market for cybernetics forever. Instead of the occasional need for limb replacement, the barbarian invasions generated thousands of soldiers maimed and crippled in battle. These men and women, members of the Brother Battle, scions of noble houses, officers or renowned Muster, sought to return to the field.

Emperor Vladimir Alecto's rise to power was more than a financial revival for the cybernetic industry; it was a true renaissance. Desperate for cyberware systems that no longer existed, designers and manufacturers redoubled their efforts in research and design. The first fifteen years of this era saw more progress towards reclaiming the lost knowledge of cybernetics than any time outside of the Emperor Wars. Leagueheim's DASC-Sys was brought back online through spare parts recovered by the Harbingers and there was such a market for the goods, the DASC-Sys could not keep up with the demand. It became custom that only those who paid a premium could access this advanced and dedicated system.

Under the weight of the wounded soldiers, the Church's attitude on cybernetics relaxed and the Privilege of Martyrs was extended to the Guilds. Barbarian invaders drove deep in to the territory of the Known Worlds before Vladimir Alecto could marshal the Houses, Church, and Guilds to drive them back. When Vladimir himself was brought low by a wound on the battlefield, his right leg was replaced by the finest technology available.

This act, Vladimir's repair, produced a subtle but important shift in culture that allowed warriors to display their cybernetics like a badge of honor and courage. While the Church did not approve of this flagrant dependency on technology, it acknowledged the need to return trained and powerful warriors to the field, quickly. Indeed, many of the Knights of Lextius, nobles sworn to the Holy Church, sought to emulate the soon-to-be emperor with a 'ware replacement, even when less proscribed options were available.

Emperor Vladimir's death did little to dampen the allure of cyberware for those who could pay. The battles that destroyed the Houses Gesar, Alecto, and Windsor were titanic in nature and produced more wounded, who paid for their care with the spoils of the vanquished. As the Regency reigned, all-out war subsided into the minor battles and House feuds that continued for the next five hundred years. The Kurgans and Vuldrok remained a threat. The Symbiot front remained active at all times and there seemed no end to the methods in which soldiers, nobles, and even the odd clergy member could be maimed.

The rise of Darius Hawkwood brought the Emperor Wars to the Known Worlds. The remaining great Houses again clashed in total war. This period of history saw the greatest rise in technology levels in the Known Worlds since the Fall. While most of the technological reclamation and research was in defense and weaponry, cybernetics also received a massive influx of funding and research.

By the time the Emperor Wars ended and the Consolidation of the Empire began, cybernetics, still feared by the peasantry, was dangerously close to acceptance by the freemen, the nobility, and even some sects within the Church. The Hazat and the Hawkwood are said to be exploring the possibilities of low-cost cybernetic replacement for their military assets, decimated by the war and the barbarians beyond the gates. As the Patriarch and the Emperor continue the subtle give and take of power, it is expected that cyberware will again be targeted by the Church.

Side Effects May Vary

Shudders, twitches, tremors, and other 'normal' side effects of cybernetic technology have been very well-documented. These mundane and technologically-centered side effects are mostly harmless to the user despite the never-ending struggle to quash them. However, rumor of insidious and undetectable repercussions caused by recycled cyberware refuse to die.

As the end of the Republic neared, several researchers whose work bordered on what could be called the 'fringes of accepted science,' speculated that there could be undetected ramifications to "sharing" cyberware, as some of the more common side effects found in patients with used 'ware include dementia, hallucinations and memory lapses.

Working for the Phavian Institute based on Kun Lun, and utilizing the newly discovered Psi discipline of Psychometrics, the study of emotional impressions left with objects, these researchers warned that given time and sufficient traumatic build-up, residual energies in cybernetics could present a hazard to those susceptible to psychic energies.

This theory was never proven and was eventually discounted by the corporate-controlled media as another funding grab by the Institution. Further research into the phenomena was forestalled by the Fall, although the Supreme Order of Engineers has since reopened the research into the matter, designating a select group of the Harbingers Industrial Security apparatus. Called the Mjøltnir Unit, they are tasked with observing and even capturing individuals at risk from these phenomena.



While the Mjølner's investigation extends across the Known Worlds, the majority of their focus is centered on three worlds. The first, Stigmata, is home to the group's command center and primary laboratory, operated in conjunction with the Oubliette just outside Darmak Station within the bowels of a former power station. Most of the subjects held here were once members of the Stigmata Garrison and are officially listed as missing or killed in action.

The second focus is the newly rediscovered world, Pandora. It is here that the Mjølner Unit faces its toughest challenges, as they must work without being detected by the Imperial Scouts who are also exploring the planet. Despite this curse, Pandora is also a blessing for the investigations; Pandoran cyberware tends to be cheaper, easier to acquire, and frequently recycled, with the attendant side effects.

Finally, it is rumored that a member of the Knights of Saint Yara recently suffered a nervous breakdown and ended his own life on Criticorum after he began receiving disturbing visions shortly following the installation of cybernetic eyes. After reading the deceased's journals, and operating in defense of the Sanctuary Aeon, a band of Knights, friends of the late Sir Jorge de Castenda, opened their own investigation, which leads them closer to Leagueheim and Stigmata every day.

While no verifiable scientific explanation for the side effects has yet been found, the Engineers are diligent in both documenting what they have found and in hiding it from the Church; however, it is only a matter of time before these groups come in contact with each other, perhaps with explosive results.

The Eyes of Jorge De Castenda (16 pt Cybernetic)

Tech Level: 6

Features: Ultra-violet Vision, Infra-red vision, Magnification, +2 Perception (Sight), Self Powered, Synth-flesh, Auto Repairing, Auto Activation

Incompatibility: 10

Cost: Not for sale

The tale of Sir Jorge de Castenda del Hazat is a sad one. A third son of a minor baronet on Sutek, Sir Jorge had no hope of inheriting anything of substance. After his mother, whom he loved dearly, fell ill and was cured only with the intervention of the Sanctuary Aeon, he swore himself as a Knight of Yara, the martial defenders of the pacifistic Amalthean Order. After serving the order for nearly five years, Sir Jorge and his entourage were serving a healer on the world of Criticorum.

While on a mission to the desert, raiders from the deep sands attacked the priestess. While successful in the defense, the good knight lost his eyes to the acidic spittle of one of the raider's mounts. As the knight had taken the blow meant for her, Priestess Ahmera pledged immediately to find the best possible replacements within Church protocol. A short search of guild markets later, a very well cared for set of cybernetic optical replacements were located that far



surpassed Sir Jorge's original eyes. The merchant agreed to allow the Amalthean to implant the eyes herself. Murmuring prayers in a back alley of Tabrast, the work was done and done well. The merchant was paid and the noble knight returned to his sight.

However, all was not as it seemed. Jorge started acting differently, strangely even. In one incident, the knight drew blades on a noble of the Decados on Malignatius who had come to offer alms. He claimed that he had mistaken the nobleman for a husk. He served penance for his insult and the matter was dropped. His behavior became more and more erratic, drawing much concern from his companions. Before they could act or understand the nature of the change in him, he placed his pistol to his lips and ended himself in a gory fashion. He left a note that spoke of horrible visions that tormented him, of seeing the souls of the people around him and of places yet unseen. He detailed several of these in passages that left the priestess weeping and his companions dumfounded.

His journals held the clue they sought. Until the implantation of the eyes, the entries were those of a good and honest man who sought to protect the light and serve it. After, the visions came. His attempts to hold his weakness inside and to not alarm his friends gave them respect for who he was, but made them miss him all the more. The priestess contacted Faruq al Velismil, an Eskatonic hermit that she had once assisted. Through his help and examination of the fallen knight's journal as well as the eyes (which did not burn when Jorge was cremated) they came to understand that the eyes had to them a dark taint. Faruq was able to tell her that the eyes, while high quality, were out of phase with the three-axis reality she understood and had shifted subtly, but in line with the pure-energy manifestations they would most easily call Qlippothic, and infused with several other life-energies.

The priestess rightly suspects that the cyberware had been used before and become tainted in the process. The small group now travels the Known Worlds, looking for more examples of this to show the Church.

Gastro Organic Omnivorous Life-Support (GOOLS)

Tech Level: 5 (Taste Implant is TL 6)

Cost: 600 firebirds for mouth and stomach reconstruction, +500 firebirds for Taste Implant

The constant difficulty of feeding troops in difficult environments was, during the dog-days of the First Republic, the father of the Gastro Organic Omnivorous Life-Support system. Designed to make a person (usually a soldier) totally self-sufficient with regards to nutrition, the system consists of two major parts. The first is a cybernetic replacement stomach modeled on that of Urthish ruminants (e.g. cows) and contains bio-engineered enzymes that break down any matter into its constituent parts and extract the nutrients. This often involves secondary and tertiary stomachs. The second major alteration is the reconstruction of the digestive tract from top to bottom. This replaces everything up to

and including the lips, teeth, and tongue with interchangeable tungsten alloy teeth and poly-carbon sheathed tubing, tough enough to allow the consumption of diamonds—a costly and most impressive demonstration of the GOOLS' capabilities. Prototype GOOLS were not fitted with this feature, leading to very messy and painful deaths when they attempted to chew, swallow, and then excrete glass, concrete, and even asbestos.

Properly watered GOOLS (the system does not reduce the need for water) can survive on four kilos of grit per day. The more nutritious the food, the less required. As a beneficial byproduct of the stomach reconstruction, the GOOLS are 90 percent immune to all ingested poisons, but wounds large enough to rupture the cyber-stomachs can have disastrous consequences as the enzymes attempt to dissolve the surrounding flesh.

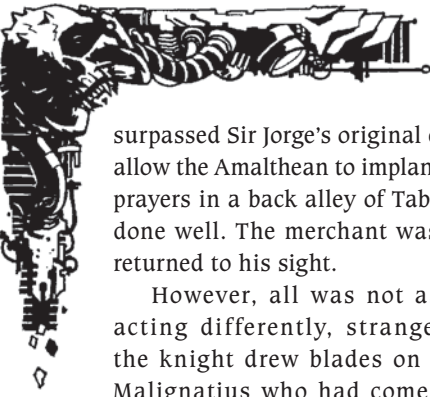
GOOLS are not without drawbacks. Aesthetically, the GOOLS are less than pleasing, and razor-sharp, pointed metal teeth and slick gray-black lips do not go down well in polite society, which is to say nothing of the continual cud-chewing (a la ruminants, again). Fortunately, most of the recipients of the GOOLS transformation were highly specialized commandos who spent most of their time wearing black balaclavas and other all encompassing head wear anyway. The main complaint from those outfitted with GOOLS was the lack of taste. The digestive tract replacement permanently shears the subject from their taste-buds and so implanted sensors were designed to stimulate the taste centers of the brain and alleviate this problem and the psychological trauma it caused. This attachment is both extremely rare and expensive. GOOLS conversions can be adapted for use with War Jaws (see *Priests of the Celestial Sun*, p. 58).

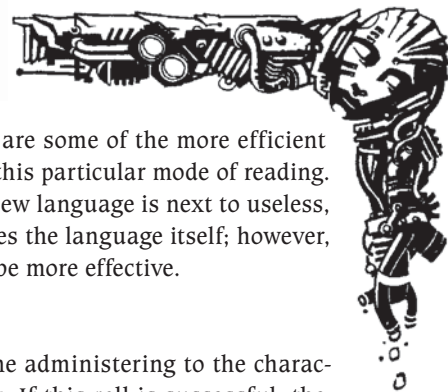
GOOLS developed a startlingly bad reputation throughout the Known Worlds, far worse than they probably deserve. Outbreaks of cannibalism during sieges were always blamed on any GOOLS present. If none were present, that only proved they were savage and sneaky. This continuing bad press came to a head when Matriarch Eudoxia III was besieged in her cathedral on Bannockburn, with only her special chosen GOOLS bodyguard (a whole platoon, selflessly provided by the Muster) to protect her and her flock from Vuldrok raiders. Unfortunately the patience of the besiegers lasted longer than the supplies of the defenders. The unfortunate GOOLS ate themselves through the pews, the altar, the lectern, and most of the congregation before the siege was broken. The matriarch wasted no time in excommunicating the survivors and prohibiting the tech forthwith in her Bull of Celestial Sustenance.

Only the more rabid of the armed services, unaccountable mercenary groups, the Muster, the Brother Battle, or the Hazat would ever think of using such technology. The al-Malik might consider it, but only on other people, and surely the Hawkwood or Li Halan would never dream of such a thing.

Traits

When a character with a GOOLS ingests any kind of poison, roll a d20. On a roll of 1–18, it does not harm them.





Neuron Books

Tech Level: 7+

Cost: 100+ firebirds

Neuron Books (also known as “Needle Books” or “Puff Books”) are chemical ‘books’ administered to the body (by injection, aerosol spray, etc.) that trigger a neuron sequence in the reader’s mind that emulates reading. Although users suffer some confusion as to sequence, they can grasp the general outline of the book. Most vivid in the user’s mind will be the concepts, themes, ideas, and implications of the book. Neuron Books are *not* intended as memorization tools and cannot be relied upon for memorizing all the names in the Byzantium Secundus social directory. However, having all the information presented together, the reader may pick up on useful trends, broad views of networks of interest, and implications not explicitly stated or even intended.

The Engineer’s Guild often distills Second Republic technical manuals into Neuron Book form not for operational purposes but to re-learn the lost science and engineering behind the functionality. Neuron Books force the mind to consider the ideas contained in the texts on a more conceptual level. This is very important, as it allows the reader to truly remember the book for a long time.

Reading is always a risky business for the faithful, and Church leaders are particularly concerned about Neuron Books bending parishioner’s minds in unhealthy ways. While not the subject of a concerted attack, Neuron Books are prohibited and officially classified as mind-altering drugs. Ideally, a priest reading from the pulpit should be a person’s first source of any information.

Shooting up a couple penny dreadfuls will not allow the reader to instantly increase his seduction skills, but the Neuron Books will allow the reader to reduce the time required to increase certain learned skills.

Increases are not applicable to skills involving physical action. You cannot learn to handle a sword or ride a bull solely by reading a book in any circumstances, although it can be argued that knowing the practical concepts of a physical skill can decrease the time it takes to ‘learn’ it. Neuron Books work best with information-based skills—bureaucracy, etiquette, lore skills, etc.

In some ways, the Church is correct in considering these books drugs. The experience is intense, and reading too many too quickly not only creates diminishing returns, but the effects of the books are often unpredictable. What a book means to one reader may be very different with another, and if the reader has a philosophical difference with the writer of the book; the reader may well fixate only on that difference and barely recall other aspects. Random reading at reasonable intervals may well be harmless and occasionally edifying, but reading for a very specific effect requires guidance.

Note that these books, being proscribed, are difficult to come by, but it is even more difficult to find a specific subject. Military theory and history are the most common subjects. Heady philosophical novels are popular among the intelligentsia, allowing them to babble at parties. Alien lore

books, fairy, and folk tales are some of the more efficient books, being well suited to this particular mode of reading. Using the books to learn a new language is next to useless, as the reading often bypasses the language itself; however, a book on linguistics could be more effective.

Traits

The character or someone administering to the character must roll Wits + Physick. If this roll is successful, the subject may either:

- Check that skill as if he had used the skill during play, then later spend experience normally to increase the skill, even if that character has no real training; or,
- If the skill is already checked, player may obtain one experience point usable only towards that skill.

The reader will be incapacitated for a time of about one minute per 100 pages of the book. All skills will be at –3 during this period.

In addition, multiple uses of Neuron Books on a single subject tend to confuse their users. As a result, each additional application to a specific skill reduces the target number by 3, and these modifiers accumulate.

Painceptor (1 pt Cybernetic)

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 100 firebirds

Fuel: Miniature fusion cel, 10 uses

A low-grade version of the Pain Desensitivity cybernetic, military scientists developed Painceptors out of the theory that pain is in the sufferer’s head. Painceptors allow people to turn off the agony when they so desire. These spinal implants kick in whenever the user wants pain relief, but they can have serious side effects. People who rely on the Painceptors can ignore pain for too long, strain themselves and suffer far worse injuries as a result.

Traits

When taking an action, the character can opt to ignore wound penalties, but every time he does so, he must also make an Endurance + Vigor roll or lose another point of Vitality. Wound penalties do affect that roll.

Synesthetic Drugs

Tech Level: 7

Cost: 50 to 200 firebirds per dose

Synesthesia is an abnormal mental condition in which the subject experiences an alternative or supplemental sensation than that which is expected. One may see blue whenever the number 5 is read; one may feel a sharp sensation in the thigh whenever middle C is played on a piano. Some recreational drugs can temporarily give this effect; however, for less haphazard purposes, scientists crafted drugs to provide specific effects.



Such drugs have uses in pattern-recognition applications. For example, picking out certain sounds from high-noise environments or communications with low signal-to-noise ratios; cryptographic applications such as discerning patterns in coded messages; picking out patterns in statistical data or in mathematical results; etc.

Skilled users can set up extremely specific and relatively sophisticated cause/effect paths—the drug can create a relationship between each note on the musical scale to a certain color or to a sensation in a distinct part of the body. Voices can be set as the cause—“Whenever you hear Esmerelda speak, your left hand will throb.”

Availability is critical to the drug’s success; the drugs required must be tailor-made to the purpose and sometimes the patient.

A physician’s supervision is considered necessary to administer effectively, and a high degree of skill is needed to obtain the desired result, depending on the complexity of the desired result. If things go wrong, the subject may end up experiencing sharp pains whenever the word “it” is spoken or some other unwanted effect. This, and the potential long-term health effects, earned the drugs proscription by the Church.

Traits

The physician administering the synesthetic drug must roll Wits (or Tech, whichever is higher) + Physick. For each success, the subject gains a +1 in either Observe or Academia (specified by the physician). Note that zero successes have zero effect on the skill level, as these drugs are very complicated to administer. Duration, unless specified by the drug, is for approximately one hour.

Mimetics

Even as far back in history as the time of the First Republic, scientists have worked with strange materials that were able to change their formation. Mimetic materials were first used in simple panels that could be deformed by impact and retake their original shape. Later, mimetic materials were used in basic structural design, but true acceptance and use of such materials were limited due to their high cost compared to more conventional and replaceable products. Mimetics, while an interesting idea, never really found a place in society until the rise of the Second Republic.

Colhen Johansen was the first to explore the potential of mimetic art. He had mastered the ancient art of origami and sought to turn this into a modern art form by integrating mimetic materials and think machine controls, adding an element of movement to his sculptures. While he only achieved a moderate level of fame in his lifetime, his art did reinvigorate interest in mimetics and how it could be applied to design in general. Samples of Johansen’s work still exist in collections of a few notables.

Mimetics blossomed at the height of the Second Republic but in the most unlikely of places: fashion. The ability to produce clothing that would move in a pleasing manner or permit the wearer the full range of natural movement unimpeded by long trains of cloth was only the beginning. The

arts (dance and theater in particular) suddenly had another trick up their sleeves, adding a new dimension to their performances. Indeed, a number of ballets were commissioned that could only be performed with the aid of these specialized garments.

In the New Dark Ages, few examples of this technology remain, although a few specialist performers among The Masque still have surviving costumes. The technology required to produce these elaborate garbs was never considered to be particularly valuable. However, in 4998, the Decados noble Marquis Alexi Voskova Decados, saw its potential and successfully negotiated with the Merchant League to purchase the rights to produce mimetic clothing. His rights do not extend to the production of Mimetic Interfaces required to control the garments (see below), only to the mimetic materials themselves.

The Church has made no formal declaration concerning this technology yet. Most consider it harmless, but a few among the Church claim sufficient foresight to notice the rising trend of vanity that these ‘harmless amusements’ engender. The cost of these specialist fashions alone makes it a certainty that they will only be owned by the wealthiest of patrons. Gossip within the Emperor’s Court already places an entire wardrobe of such extravagances in the possession of a certain influential Decados Duchess. Diplomatic representatives of House al-Malik have also acquired mimetic garments; in the coming years they are sure to be height of fashion with every noble vying to put on the most expensive or extravagant apparel.

Mimetic Interface

Tech Level: 7

Features: Think machine, organic, self-powered, hidden

Incompatibility: 5

Cost: 1,000 firebirds (700 for the interface, 300 for surgery)

The Mimetic Interface a tiny cybernetic implant, usually inserted into the base of the skull or close to the spinal column where it can be easily access the central nervous system. Once in place, any of the Mimetic garments described below can be worn and used.

Thespian Costume

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 500+ firebirds per costume

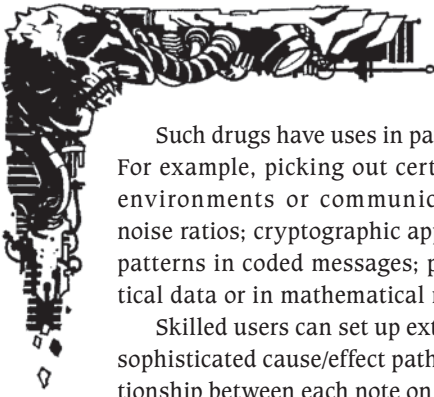
Performance costumes can be made in almost any color, cut, and style. These cleverly tailored costumes are used to enhance any physical performance (+2 to Performance and Acrobatics goal rolls).

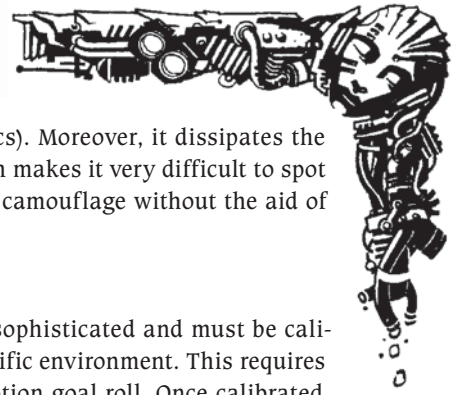
Courtly Garb

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 1,000+ firebirds

Courtly garbs can be made in any fashion or style, but long ball gowns, cloaks, and dress coats are the most frequently produced. These highly stylish and fashionable





garbs ensure that the wearer is the centre of local court gossip—since they not only flatter the physical but may also act as distraction during at negotiations (+2 to Etiquette and Knavery goal rolls).

Duelists Cape

Tech Level: 7

Cost: 2,000+ firebirds

Not necessarily a cape but usually a full set of courtly vestments cut to current fashion. Because the cloth animates itself, even the most cumbersome looking ball gown or other elaborate costume does not impede the movement of the wearer (+2 to Dodge and Acrobatics goal rolls). Often, the illusion of hampered movement is actually part of a feint intended to take the victim off-balance. Duelists that don't have the Feint combat action may employ it with a -2 goal roll. Duelists who have learned the Feint combat action, gain a +4 goal roll and are no longer limited to the maximum of 2 feints per opponent per engagement. With further training, this garment can become a shield and weapon.

Holoflage

Tech Level: 7 or 8

Cost: 2,000 firebirds for a TL 7 suit, 4,000 firebirds for a TL 8 unit (The Imperial Eye is actively trying to maintain a hold on all known holoflage units)

Holographic camouflage has been around since the dawn of the Second Republic; these rare devices come in a number of different forms, from full body projection suits (TL 7) to small belt or back mounted projector units (TL 8). The purpose of Holoflage is very simple: to project an illusory image within the visual field frequency ranges of most species and commonly used perception enhancements (IR

or UV goggles or cybernetics). Moreover, it dissipates the body's heat signature, which makes it very difficult to spot someone using this type of camouflage without the aid of sophisticated sensors.

Traits

Holoflage is extremely sophisticated and must be calibrated prior to use in a specific environment. This requires a Tech + High Tech Redemption goal roll. Once calibrated, the unit provides 2 + the Victory Points gained in the calibration goal to the character's stealth goals. An incorrectly calibrated unit will have visual flaws and distortions that make it more easily spotted.

Hologuise

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 5,000 firebirds

Hologuise is a refined version of the holoflage but is intended to aid in disguise and subterfuge rather than simple stealth. While the unit is capable of providing simple virtual disguises, it needs to be linked to a user with a Second Brain (cybernetic implant) for full functionality. The device can project a complete holographic disguise including clothes and facial expressions but must be cybernetically linked to the user to achieve lip sync when speaking and coordinate detailed facial manipulations.

In its unlinked basic mode, the device permits the user to access an extensive catalogue of pre-prepared instant disguises. These will not fool anyone conducting a close inspection but can be used to confuse witnesses and to pass unnoted. There are limitations however; the hologuise can be rendered ineffective if the character is wearing baggy or flamboyant clothing that might penetrate the field. Socialites have used this device to project flamboyant or impossible fashionable designs on occasion, specifically at masked balls.

In its more sophisticated use, the device is much more adaptable, able to adjust as the second brain feeds it information about the wearer's intentions and speech. The overall effect is much more convincing.

Traits

In basic operation, the hologuise gives a +2 to Disguise goal rolls. However, in some social situations, where the device is less of a disguise and more a costume, it may confer a +2 Etiquette goal roll. In its more sophisticated use, the hologuise requires careful calibration to use of the device. This requires a Tech + Think Machine goal roll. Once calibrated, the unit provides 2 + the Victory Points gained in the calibration goal to the character's disguise goals.

Note that while the Hologuise can instantly change from one disguise to another, it cannot adapt the field to a design it doesn't already have. Extensive programming is required to build a virtual guise, which will take several days' work at best.





Chapter Three: Baneful Tech

This chapter lists technology wholly proscribed from general use—even by Martyrs. Their very existence constitutes a threat to the faith. Only in rare and extreme circumstances are these technologies employed for their functional purpose, such as when their use could ward off a more dangerous threat to the faith. The most infamous example remains technology utilized in the Symbiot War. Characters found abusing Baneful Technology often receive major Church censure, and are sometimes branded as dark occultists (see the Dark Sign, p. 10), deniers of the faith, or disseminators of false doctrine, yet they may still find salvation with the right guidance of the Church.

Alien Technology

As humanity shares the vastness of space with other races, humans have found themselves facing strange and alien technologies. These obey the strange logic and mentality of aliens, and are designed to be operated by non-human hands for inhuman means. Even more tantalizing, some of these hearken back to the days of the Ur, having been gifted to the servitor races or simply left behind. But who can know the intention and the mind of the Ur? Vautech poses another riddle—a small measure of trade exists, and there are stories of Vau gifting some people with their strange and heathen technology. To what end, nobody knows, but the Church keeps a watchful eye on them. Please note that, while the original Vautech is universally proscribed, human-built versions made from reverse engineered Vau artefacts are accepted under the Privilege of Martyrs.

Bafuvupan Dahum

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 10,000 firebirds

The first Bafuvupan Dahum (lit. “dancing partners of the antipodes” (or “poles”); Urthish “repulsor plates”) in the Known Worlds were found when a derelict Vau starship emerged from the jumpgate at Midian in 2999. The ship, crewless and mangled from stem to stern, was found to

contain a single intact pair of repulsor plates in the midst of a large damaged shipment. Subsequent inquiries addressed to the Vau gave little clue as to what had happened to the vessel; investigators learned only that it had been missing and believed lost for several centuries. The ship was returned to the Vau, minus the good set of plates.

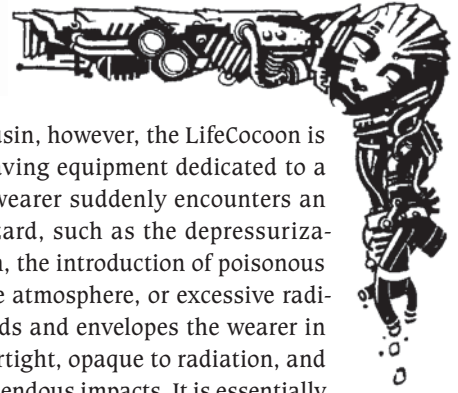
It took technicians only a few months of experimentation to figure out the purpose of the pair of disks but nearly half a century to crack the secret of their manufacture. Since then, repulsor plates have been used on most high-tech worlds, usually for elevators in large buildings. They are occasionally used to lift a spacecraft into orbit, but this is a rarity as it requires exceptionally calm skies and a lot of split-second fine maneuvering to keep the plates in alignment as the craft is lifted higher. (Note that the repulsion field cannot propel a craft, just push it out into space where other engines can be fired or a larger ship can intercept it.)

A particularly creative use of this Vau Tech is the Dean's private “subway” on Leagueheim, running in a straight line from the Dean's mansion to the Academy Interatta. It uses two pairs of plates mounted on the ends of the tunnel and the ends of the car; one pair gradually powers up while the other powers down. A regulating circuit in the car keeps the plates at reciprocal power levels and ensures a smooth acceleration and deceleration.

As this VauTech became better understood, many cryptic references in Benjamin Verden's writings were made clearer, such as the “antigravity” vehicles and “frictionless” pushcarts running on crystal-paved floors and roads, the curious “collapsible” buildings, and the legendary Floating Gardens of Vau. Many of these wonders later became human realities in the Second Republic.

Traits

The Bafuvupan Dahum are paired crystalline disks whose ectomagnatonic covalence can be used to generate a repulsion field that pushes them apart. Electricity must be applied to one of the disks to create the field, and the distance they can be pushed apart before the field fades is dependent on the amount of electrical power pumped through them. The strength of the repulsion, as measured by the mass they can



lift vertically from the surface of a planet with Urthlike gravity, is dependent on the size of the plates; one square meter is required to lift one metric ton.

The plates must face each other directly to sustain the repulsor field, i.e., the facing surfaces must be parallel and their centers must be in line with each other. (There is some slight margin for error in this: the disks can tilt up to five degrees and the centerlines can stray by as much as one quarter of the disks' radii.) If one plate is knocked out of alignment, the field disappears instantly and cannot be reformed without bringing them back together and starting over.

The Dahum are manufactured in pairs; if one is lost or damaged, the other is useless, since mismatched plates cannot generate the field. (It is rumored that the Vau themselves have overcome this drawback, however.) Second Republic skimmer and artificial gravity technology was based on similar Vau repulsor tech.

Eevsu'ud Rumuld'ahnst

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 15,000 firebirds

The right to market the Eevsu'ud Rumuld'hansth (lit. "sheath of sealed sustenance in sleep;" Urthish slang "LifeCocoon") was originally purchased from the Vau by the Charioteer's Guild just before the Fall in exchange for information about jumproads in the outermost regions of the territories now held by the Kurgans and Vuldrok. (Many reactionaries still hold this against the guild even to this day, fearing that the Vau could use this lore to overrun the Known Worlds by waging war on multiple fronts. There is, of course, no hint that the Vau have ever had any such thing in mind. Then again, there is never any hint of anything the Vau have in mind...)

Some historical instances that attest to the lifesaving capacity of the Eevsu'ud Rumuld'hansth include the polar explorer Sir Tofnell Horeth, who was rescued after lying for three months in a collapsed ice cavern on Malignatius, and the case of the infamous pirate and cutthroat Aesgrimm Korinkova, who was brought to trial over a year and a half after his ship, the Bleeding Starbitch, was destroyed by Brother Battle forces in a wild running fight through the Istakhr system.

The LifeCocoon has seen much more widespread use in human space than the SmartRobe, but the Charioteers have struggled to maintain their monopoly on this product. Most 'Cocoons are, or were at one time, owned by starship construction workers and the crews of untested prototype craft. Today, the command crews and very important passengers of many large ships are sometimes outfitted with 'Cocoons, and Charioteers are known to make gifts of the Eevsu'ud Rumuld'hansth to close friends and special clients.

Traits

The Eevsu'ud Rumuld'ahnst, or LifeCocoon, is based upon the same technology as the Numunanth Ofleed'hansth, or SmartRobe, as the xenoetymology of the name suggests.

Unlike its less expensive cousin, however, the LifeCocoon is a specialized piece of life saving equipment dedicated to a single task. Whenever the wearer suddenly encounters an extreme environmental hazard, such as the depressurization of a starship hull breach, the introduction of poisonous elements into the immediate atmosphere, or excessive radiation, the LifeCocoon expands and envelopes the wearer in an energy shield which is airtight, opaque to radiation, and capable of withstanding tremendous impacts. It is essentially a hard, solid sarcophagus shape which does not conform closely to the wearer's body and is not articulated in any way, so no action may be taken within an activated 'Cocoon.

Like the SmartRobe, the LifeCocoon takes about a month to attune itself to a new owner; this time is necessary for the nanocrystal brain to assess the physical parameters of the wearer—her anatomical durability, physiological functions, and the optimal environment to sustain life—and determine what exterior conditions are dangerous enough to warrant its activation. Within the Known Worlds, however, this process rarely takes more than a day for a previously owned 'Cocoon, since nearly all humanoids fall within the same basic physiological parameters.

The activated LifeCocoon can provide some fairly sophisticated life support for the person it protects by placing them in a state of suspended animation not unlike cryogenic sleep (but without the complications of freezing and rethawing a living creature). A humanoid in this state needs no food or water and can survive up to half a standard year on the air trapped in the 'Cocoon. (Wearers working in interplanetary space often fit their 'Cocoons with an additional air supply that can extend this period up to three years; this costs an extra 50 'birds and requires the wearing of a medium sized tank.) A LifeCocoon adrift in open space will generate an electrostatic charge that attracts space dust and small particulate debris, accreting a thick hard shell that can survive the heat of atmospheric reentry and the impact of planet-fall, asteroids, or accidental collision with rescue vessels. All 'Cocoons also incorporate a high power emergency homing beacon to facilitate quicker rescues (20 AU range).

Once activated, the LifeCocoon can usually be removed only by a crystal key which transmits a complex signal to the 'Cocoon's nanocrystal brain, telling it to deactivate the field. It is possible to program the brain to deactivate the field when certain exterior conditions have been met, like the removal of the hazard or the presence of a breathable atmosphere.

Halsh'Rumu Tla'a

Tech Level: 7

Cost: 10 - 25 firebirds

The Halsh'Rumu Tla'a (lit. "silent chorus of light"; Urthish slang "lightsplinter") is the most commonly found VauTech import in the Known Worlds. It is not as widely used as the fusion torch but still in demand by specialized industrial concerns and as a novelty item. Sizes range from the minuscule "thumb torch" (which only costs ten firebirds)



and a portable searchlight (which costs fifteen), to industrial strength spotlights and ship's running lights (which can cost up to twenty five 'birds).

The Halsh'Rumu Tla'a is rarely sold retail without some sort of casing designed for its intended purpose, whether a simple handle or a control housing made to fit into a regular electrical light socket. Most lightsplinter handles and housings incorporate a scraping or abrading attachment calibrated to generate the longest possible period of steady light at the most favorable brightness level. 'Splinters are often found mounted on machinery or vehicles that sustain a continuous vibration to power the light.

Traits

This crystal shard has been electromagnetically treated by the Vau so as to destabilize its internal geometry in such a way that it generates light from energy received as vibrations. A soft tap on a lightsplinter will cause it to glow briefly, while vigorously rubbing or shaking a 'splinter creates a brighter and more prolonged glow. A sharp impact will produce a bright flash, and shattering one blinds everyone within ten meters for three turns. A 'splinter is good for approximately 500 hours of continuous use before its destabilized geometry collapses into something resembling common quartz.

Gwindor Oriel

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 500 firebirds

The Vau use oriel devices to divine the future and the quality of time. Vau oriel display a number of glyphs, and the wise Mandarins interpret these, thus catching glimpses into the deeper forces at work in the universe. Oriel usually

only display the complex Vau glyphs, and that is the reason why many do not believe that these "gwindor oriel" ("human oriel") are genuine.

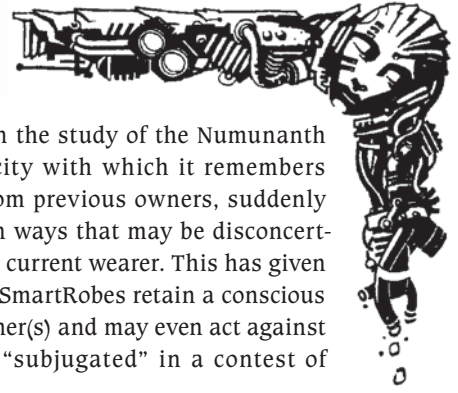
In fact, the device originated with a team of gifted Engineers living in Vau space who were trying to replicate the real oriel in order to understand its workings. In essence, a stripped down oriel-like machine is at the heart of the device, whose output is translated into one of several symbolic languages. Usually, these consist of a row of one to three symbols, depending on the complexity of the question and the moment. This alone is an almost unbearable over-simplification by Vau Mandarin standards, who would regard these as harmless toys and just as valuable in determining the future as the toss of a coin. Unlike other items reverse engineered from Vau technology, gwindor oriels do not fall under the Privilege of Martyrs since their divining ability is seen as unreflective by the Universal Church.

Gwindor oriels are available that translate into human (the most frequent), Obun (rarer), and Ukari (the rarest). In the process, the oriel translates the glyphs (which often have several meanings) into a symbol that the user understands.

Human: The oriel's output is translated into archetypal symbols that form an important part of human culture. The reading "riches" could be signified by the firebird, "challenge" could be a dueling sword, and so on.

Obun: The translation into Obun glyphs is sketchy at best, but some Obun claimed that the output of this oriel is in fact part of saatari (guided meditations first taught by the gods) and are to be seen as puzzles and riddles to be meditated over (for more information of saatari, see *Children of the Gods*, p. 31).





Ukari: The readings are translated into Bhakti—a combination of pictograms and ideograms.

For more information on oriel, see **War in the Heavens: Hegemony**, p. 120.

Traits

Depending on the complexity of the situation when the oriel is consulted, the oriel will give one to three symbols from which to deduce the outcome or potential of the situation. The gamemaster decides how many the oriel displays, depending on how many clues the characters should have. Characters roll Introvert + Lore (Divination) or Introvert + Academia to interpret the reading. A question such as “What if I join the Questing Knights?” could garner a reading of “sun”, “sword”, “skull”. A successful roll could allow the gamemaster to tell the player that “glory and battle await, but also death.” Note that the oriel cannot answer “yes” or “no” questions.

Personalized Gwindor Oriel

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 2,000 firebirds

This is the advanced model. The think machine that translates the Vau glyphs is able to learn the user’s personal symbols but requires training or access to the user’s journal think machine. When trained, it can be used as a journal, as it contains enough memory to learn a user’s preference. These oriel-devices can learn any user’s culture so could even be trained by a Vorox to give an output that makes sense to a Vorox. In essence, the personalized gwindor oriel will tap into the user’s very personal symbols. If he is a priest, for example, and the jumpgates for him mean sacrifice, the oriel will not use the symbol of the jumpgate to mean “travel”; the reading for “love” would include a portrait of the current love interest, and so on.

Traits

Same as the basic model, only the reading is tailored to the user, who gains a +5 bonus on the Introvert + Lore (Divination) or Introvert + Academia roll. Any other user gains a –5 penalty on using the oriel.

Numunath Ofleed’hansth

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 20,000+ firebirds

Humanity saw its first Numunanth Ofleed’hansth (lit. “sheath of radiant glory in purpose;” Urthish slang “SmartRobe”) when Benjamin Verden brought one back from his diplomatic mission to Vau Space; this ‘Robe is still a prized family possession of House Justinian. Over the centuries, a few others trickled in from the Vau territories; it is now estimated that over three dozen SmartRobes are currently in the Known Worlds. Many rarely see use—kept as closely guarded status symbols by nobles—while most others are put to work in the guilds.

A humorous side note in the study of the Numunanth Ofleed’hansth is the tenacity with which it remembers functions it has learned from previous owners, suddenly responding to old stimuli in ways that may be disconcerting and embarrassing to the current wearer. This has given rise to the superstition that SmartRobes retain a conscious loyalty to their previous owner(s) and may even act against the present owner unless “subjugated” in a contest of wills.

During the Second Republic, xenotechnologists figured out how to tamper with the nanocrystal brain that controls the ‘Robe, refitting it for a wide variety of unintended functions. Many were reconfigured for specific jobs in special circumstances, such as mining, diving, and stardrive engineering. Three found their way to the black market, outfitted for combat and stealth applications; these are especially rare, since the Vau placed an inhibitor circuit in the brain that prevents the ‘Robe from being used directly for military purposes. One of these “uninhibited” ‘Robes is rumored to have been the decisive factor in the Great Assassins’ War on Severus in 4379.

It is generally believed by the Engineers that the SmartRobes found in the Known Worlds are just low level, degraded versions of what the Vau themselves actually use. Tales circulate of vastly powerful ‘Robes incorporating a combat shield, stronger and more dexterous multiple limbs, and augmentations of the wearer’s natural strength extending into the superhumanoid range.

Traits

The SmartRobe is a contained energy field micromodulated by a very compact VauTech nanocrystal brain that controls all aspects of the field in discreet sectors, meaning that different parts of the field can be transformed without affecting other parts. The external surface of the field can “solidify” to form the “robe” proper, with regulated shapes, colors, and textures formed from variations in the field’s surface tension and vibratory frequency. A SmartRobe can take almost any appearance, but its default form is that of a long robe of billowing grayish fabric, with a broad rigid shoulder covering, similar to most Vau mandarin fashions.

SmartRobes are created with rudimentary “reflexes” and “instincts” which allow it to instantly conform itself to its wearer, adjusting for unusual alien anatomy, bulky carried equipment, and physical handicaps. The real power of the nanocrystal brain lies in its ability to “learn” and to adapt itself not only to its wearer but also to a wide variety of environments the wearer may move in regularly. It takes approximately one month for a SmartRobe to familiarize itself with one owner, as well as that owner’s home and main work place.

The most basic function of all SmartRobes appears to be assisting the wearer with any physical handicaps or impairments he may suffer; injured or defective limbs that are still capable of some movement can be augmented by the ‘Robe’s field, up to a maximum Strength and Dexterity of 5. (Starting with a base of 1 in each, it takes one month of physical therapy to raise either characteristic by one level.)





The 'Robe can also immobilize fractures, contouring its field to form anything from a finger splint to a full body cast; the nanocrystal brain may even be programmed with a medical monitoring system which can, among other things, set fractures and dislocations by itself. (The medical program costs 5 additional Benefice points and 1,400 firebirds to install; it effectively transforms the SmartRobe into a mobile intensive care unit.) A similar addition is the gravitational suspensor field, which supports and carries a wearer unable to walk. (Benefice cost: +3; Firebird cost: +600)

Sometimes called an "all-pocket coat," the 'Robe's field will "grab" and hold any item placed within its radius, giving it the illusion of having a limitless number of invisible pockets at every possible location. "Pocketed" objects can shift position within the field; an untrained 'Robe will leave an item where it was placed but may, if heavily loaded, redistribute items to even out their combined weight and bulk. Part of a SmartRobe's training involves learning when and where to eject a frequently used tool for immediate

deployment. Objects and weapons with a size rating of L (but not XL) can be concealed within the field. Most 'Robes have a carrying capacity of 100 kg.

The 'Robe is also capable of forming up to four rudimentary limbs to assist its owner in minor ways. These appendages are not under the direct control of the wearer but must be trained to perform specific tasks. Each limb costs an additional 3 Benefice points, +300 firebirds, and has a base Strength and Dexterity of 1 (but can be trained up to a maximum of 3).

The nanocrystal brain can be linked to a communication system or a think machine, allowing the 'Robe to function as microphone, earphone, and/or loudspeaker, or to form a mobile keyboard and project a holographic monitor screen. (+2 Benefice, +200 firebirds for a radio link; +3 Benefice, +500 firebirds for a video link; +5 Benefice, +1,000 firebirds for a think machine link)

The brain can also be reprogrammed to mimic the functions of other specialized suits or armor, such as an energy shield or the Null-Atmosphere Survival, Chameleon, or Blur suits. The additional Benefice cost is equal to that of the suit or shield being mimicked; the additional firebird cost is 300 (to increase the power capacity of the field generator and fit it for a larger fusion battery) plus whatever the Engineer's Guild charges for reprogramming a nanocrystal brain (usually about 250).

A major advantage of the SmartRobe is its longer field radius, which means it can be worn over anything less bulky than ceramsteel armor.

Eye of Mihanoom

Tech Level: 9

Cost: Not for sale

The Eye of Mihanoom is a perfectly formed sphere, approximately half a meter in diameter, with a murky interior full of slowly shifting clouds of muted colors, which part to reveal visions to its user. It was originally believed to belong to the Witch-Mother Mihanoom, a patron goddess of the Etyri of Grail. Their myths stated that Mihanoom, who ruled the world from her throne-perch atop what is now Mount Chur'reesh (the site of Preadamite ruins), gave up one of her eyes in exchange for "true and complete knowledge of all times and places." The powers with whom she was dealing (presumably the Anunnaki) granted her this Soul Shard as its replacement.

The Eye is now in the care of an Etyri coven, which meets on Mt. Chur'reesh when both moons are full.

Traits

This Soul Shard is attuned to the psychic path Sixth Sense (+2 to all goal rolls using that path, with extra range purchased at one point less than the regular Wyrd cost) and can hold up to 30 Wyrd points. The Eye has also been known to spontaneously grant glimpses of the past or future to random individuals, as per the path Omen.

Soulsucker

Tech Level: 9

Cost: Not for sale

The Soulsucker was discovered among the Ur ruins of Bannockburn in 3758, and was immediately sent to the Phavian Institute for study. Over the next century, some of its nature and purpose were gradually divined by cautious and carefully controlled experimentation, eventually becoming the object of obsession for the Director of Xenotechnological Research, Doctor Yosef Monjali, a highly driven professional with some rudimentary psychic ability.

Monjali realized that the full potential of the artifact could never be determined as long as research was restricted by the scarcity of volunteer test subjects and Republican laws prohibiting inhumane research methods. Absconding with the Soulsucker, Dr. Monjali set up shop on a frontier world whose totalitarian rulers kept many dark secrets from Second Republic authorities. There, free from societal constraints, the true range of the Soulsuckers power was revealed.

It is believed by some that the Soulsucker played a part in the computer sabotage that led to the collapse of the Republican welfare system and, consequently, to the Fall. Second Republic security was no joke, and it seems likely that the saboteur was a technician or administrator rather than an intruder (the system was shielded against Psyber-implant tampering). Conspiracy theorists maintain that the Soulsucker must have been used to brainwash a civil employee into destroying the welfare information network. These same pundits claim that the artifact was deployed in the assassination of Vladimir, but opinions as to exactly what role it played vary widely, and anyone's guess is as good as anyone else's.

At some point in the intervening centuries, the Soulsucker fell into the hands of the Invisible Path, and some even theorize that the Path itself began with Monjali or his successors. The Path's possession of the artifact came to light when they attempted to assassinate Emperor Alexius on Tethys in 4995. The blade that passed within a centimeter of Alexius' throat was wielded by Sir Phileas Alderstaff, a childhood friend and longtime drinking companion of the new Emperor. Folklore states that the only time a tear was seen in Alexius' eye was when he signed the execution order for his lifelong companion-in-arms.



The newly formed Imperial Eye was not content to let the matter rest, however; Alderstaff's loyalty to House Hawkwood and his love for Alexius had always been beyond question. Sir Phileas appeared to be fully cognizant of his action but unable to stop himself and spent his brief imprisonment composing tearstained apologies to his old friend and exhausted himself in prayer, penance, and confession. Close interrogation by the Eye could not reveal any conceivable motive for the attack but did disclose a short but distinct memory gap in Alderstaff's recollection of the week before the attempt.

A team of investigative specialists, led by the young but brilliant telepath Lieutenant Juana Nkrumah, retraced Alderstaff's movements for the previous week and learned that he had been kidnapped for the space of several hours and reappeared without any awareness of the event. In a daring commando raid, Lt. Nkrumah ferreted out the Invisible Path cell responsible and brought them to justice alive, capturing the Soulsucker in the process. After the Imperial Eye's tortuous mental probing of the prisoners, Alexius slew each one in turn with his own hand—a lingering Imperial execution that was neither swift nor merciful.

The Soulsucker is now kept in a sealed vault on Tethys, guarded by the ever-vigilant eye of now-Captain Nkrumah. An Imperial edict has been issued to the effect that no expense is to be spared in the pursuit of the Invisible Path. Captured members of the Path have reason to fear that the ancient and powerful artifact, which served them for so many centuries, could well be turned against them. Members who have even so much as been rumored to have been arrested are often killed outright by their fellows.

Traits

The Soulsucker is one of the most unusual objects one could ever see: a tentacled body, half a meter in length and covered with exotic circuitry, buttons, knobs, and scalloped vents, framed by two bony handles, with two jointed antennae reaching overhead and a flexible eye-stalk dangling below. Viewing the Soulsucker with Wyrdsight shows a fully developed though completely unreadable aura as if the artifact had a sentient personality of its own. Its queer blend of technological and organic features has prompted



the superstitious to attribute it to the Symbiots, but its discovery predates any contact between humanity and the shape shifters, and the incredible powers of the thing point directly to the Anunnaki.

In short, the Soulsucker is the most powerful brain-washing tool in existence. Used properly, it is capable of “reprogramming” every conceivable aspect of a sentient creature’s personality, from its most superficial habits to its most deeply bred instincts. Dissolving and penetrating the boundaries of the ego, it lays bare the subject’s innermost identity, allowing the psyche to be picked apart and put back together like a clockwork toy. Emotional responses may be adjusted in intensity or dismantled and reattached to entirely different stimuli; cognitive processes may be “rewired” or disabled, and memories may be rewritten or erased completely.

When in use, the Soulsucker’s tentacles stretch out to embrace the subject’s cranium and reach down the spinal column, seeking out nervous ganglia and plexi, while its broad flat antennae scan the subject’s bioelectrical aura. An eyestalk on the artifact’s underside will attempt to enter the cranium through the largest orifice in the subject’s face (the mouth in most Known Worlds species).

This Philosopher’s Stone is extremely difficult to operate because of its alien design and the nature of its function. The two oversized handles were never intended for humanoid hands; the placements of their various triggers, buttons, switches, and slide controls are too awkward for even the four handed Vorox. At least three people are required for effective operation: two assistants to manipulate each handle while a third person directs the operation and works the remaining controls. Even then, the device must be mounted upon a stand, rack, or boom. Overcoming these physical difficulties is the easy part, however. The director can have no idea what the thing is actually doing inside the subject’s head unless some form of mental contact is maintained. Gross, simple operations like emotional adjustments, thought blocks, or broad memory wipes can be accomplished with Intuit or Subtle Sight. More detailed operations, such as the rerouting of thought and emotion, require Mindsight or Shared Sense (with a Bonded, and usually willing, subject). Rewriting memories or implanting knowledge and information requires MindSpeech. Learned skills may be implanted in a subject provided the director possesses the skill at two levels higher than the level to be implanted. Changes in a subject’s psyche will begin to fade after a year unless reinforced by repeated sessions or the expenditure of Wyrd points by the director. (1W = one additional year.)

The Calliach

Tech Level: 9

Cost: Not for sale

Dr. Stavros Ouroborous, a Phavian Institute scientist, found the Calliach on Grange, now known as Pandemonium. According to the few scraps of information still held by the Favyana, Stavros supposedly had a prophetic dream, and in this vision a being of light showed the good doctor the resting place of the Calliach. As soon as he woke, Ouroborous

packed his equipment and took a hovercraft to the Vedrian Jungle. After three days search, he stumbled upon the exact spot seen in his dream. Using his excavation gear, Ouroborous dug, and dug deep. Hours passed, and just when the doctor prepared to give up, his scanning device indicated a small cylinder buried just a little deeper.

Minutes later, he beheld the Calliach, a golden cylinder roughly 60 centimeters long and three centimeters wide, inscribed with an array of never-before seen Ur-glyphs. Astonished by the discovery, Dr. Ouroborous quickly made his way to Byzantium Secundus. There, he presented the Calliach to the Institute Council, which decided to keep it a secret until the anti-psycho atmosphere calmed down. The year was 3995.

A detailed analysis revealed that the Calliach seemed to generate power with a weird energy pattern. Amazed, the scientists focused on the glyph translation, wanting to know more about the potential of this artifact. A language specialist, Professor Steiner, was able, through much study, to translate a fragment of the text using Obun as a basis. The inscription read, “blank light” or “stifling light.” An Ukari colleague, Selak Suderik, suggested another translation in accordance with the old Ukari language: “cage of thought” or “caged thought.”

One night, as Selak was pondering the mysteries of the artifact, he noticed something no one had noticed before. Feeling a strange urge, Selak pulled the device at both ends, and it opened in his grip. Much to the dismay of those within the compound, everybody close by experienced strong fatigue when using their psychic powers (including Selak). After determining the cause of the suppression field, which also caused the artifact to be named after a barren winter deity of old Urth, the Council decided to move it to a more secure location.

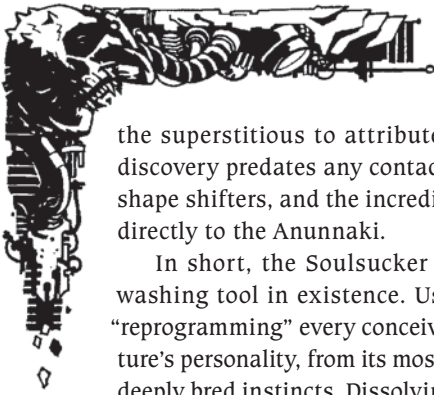
Research continued on the Phavian Institute starship *Largo*. There, scientists found that the Calliach could be opened and closed only by the sheer will of a psychic, but they could never reliably reproduce the effect. Research of the Calliach came to an abrupt end with the Fall, and so it took nearly 500 years (or so the Saints’ Chronicles state) until an Avestite priest, Victor Cairn Potts, rediscovered the device.

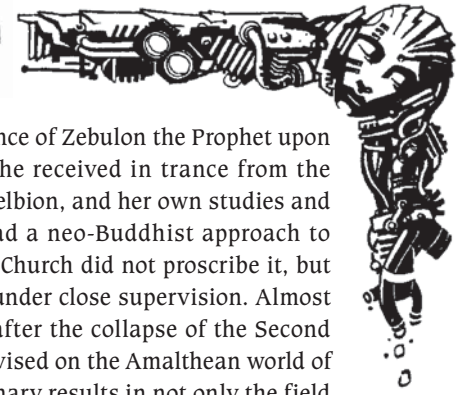
Traits

The Calliach doubles the Wyrd cost of any Psi (or Theurgic) power used within a radius of 30 meters. Strangely, it can only be activated by a psychic (or theurge). Once activated, the effect lasts for up to one hour. The Calliach recharges within 24 hours of continuous exposure to sunlight.

Pan-Physics

The trinary wavelength with infinite branches will dominate the infinite symbol tree. Each node, subdivided, sends out a signal that calls to a higher vibratory correspondent, which responds. Since the trinary action, reaction, and synthesis of the smallest





node has the potential of sending beacons into higher infinities, and the higher infinities, obeying their own laws (lesser in number, or quantity, than the ones governing our universe) respond, they lose none of their infinite potential in terminating in our universe, reacting and synthesizing with the point of the signifier, creating a higher form of energy which can be detected by the most sensitive equipment, itself only half grounded in our dimension. It must be remembered, however, that One is the greatest number and unit of measurement, not the least, and all things seek to go back into this undivided state. From this, all else follows. Now, if Varuna's Law allows h to be the function of transfinite...

— *Fragment of Victor Domokos Erling's Transdimensional Signifiers, a rare copy of a page kept under lock and key at the Imperial Archives*

Dr. Erling then abased himself before his niece, and said, "Yea, I have known Amartia, the state of being cut off from the Pancreator's mercy, and I will now devote what time is left me to ceaseless prayer, for the play of materialism has ended for me. The answers I sought are in the mercy and justice of the Pancreator, which is not the justice of this world, this universe."

— *Omega Gospels, Amalthea 28:2*

Pan-Physics, or P-Phys, as it was commonly referred to in academic circles, was developed by the Urth mathematician/scientist Victor Domokos Erling, one of those strange geniuses who entered history after the fall of the First Republic but before the rise of the Second. Many of the discoveries of that era either formed the building blocks of Second Republic technology and sciences or were utterly forgotten and in some cases destroyed during the long wars of the early New Dark Ages. Memory of the founder of Pan-Physics would have been lost to the shifting tides of history had Victor Erling not been the uncle of Saint Amalthea, one of the followers of Zebulon the Prophet and founder of the Amalthean creed, the Compassionate Ethics. Victor Erling is mentioned in the Omega Gospels, and it is for this reason that remnants of his vast teachings lasted to the time of Emperor Alexius, although the majority was lost after the fall of the Second Republic. What survived in fragments was little understood save by a small, almost invisible, college of Amalthean healers, who kept the secrets of P-Phys closely guarded on ethical grounds. Due to Erling's close relationship with his niece, Pan-Physics is not completely proscribed by the Universal Church. A special dispensation is needed to study it, however, and this can only be given by the Ketcharch or another high ranking dignitary of the Amalthean Order.

Since Erling's P-Phys were one of the four philosophical foundations of St. Amalthea's Compassionate Ethics (the

other three being the influence of Zebulon the Prophet upon her thought, the wisdom she received in trance from the "higher ethical" angel Ahnkelbion, and her own studies and insights, some of which had a neo-Buddhist approach to compassion), the Universal Church did not proscribe it, but allowed for it to be taught under close supervision. Almost all studies of Pan-Physics after the collapse of the Second Republic were closely supervised on the Amalthean world of Artemis. This had revolutionary results in not only the field of healing but also unrelated fields, such as mining, music, and space transportation.

It must be remembered that within the Prophet's lifetime, the majority of the intellectual and cultural elite of the Known Worlds were not attracted to Zebulon's teachings, which instead found a ready audience among the poor, isolated colonists on far flung worlds and later the working and servant classes. That Zebulon's teachings could attract a noted scientist such as Viktor Erling was much touted by the early Church, suffering as it did a notable lack of intellectual or highly educated followers, as a way to reach the highly specialized, educated elements of society. This proved to be a long process.

The simple truth is that aside from Amalthea herself, early Church leaders did not have the education or inclination to understand Pan-Physics. Instead, it became early on one of the official "sciences" of the early Church, in much the same way that Compactism became an official "philosophy" of the middle Church (the philosophical school started by Maria Ishiguro in 3815 which stressed the strands of interconnected experience which lead to higher ethics). Compactism was largely replaced by the 44th century emergence of the Reflectionism of the logician/scholar Stephen Pageson as the official Church philosophy. Pan-Physics, however, remained one of the official sciences, in large part due to the conservative nature of the Church and Amalthean Order in the New Dark Ages, who looked to the few Church scientists and philosophers of earlier epochs with an awe bordering on veneration.

To begin a brief overview of Pan-Physics, it is necessary to start with the life and work of the founder, Dr. Victor Domokos Erling.

Dr. Victor Domokos Erling

Victor Domokos Erling, along with his younger brother, Rikard Erling (St. Amalthea's father), was born in Budapest on old Urth (ca 2677) from Hungarian-German ancestry. Critics liked to point out that Erling and his brother were the result of bioengineering, but the truth seems to have been that Erling's great-grandfather Carl Reichardt was "spliced" for higher brain capacity. Early gene-splicing often produced unwelcome surprises, such as the increase in neural disorders found in many of the experiments during the First Republic, although the descendants of early "spliced" people often reverted in a few generations back to a more "normal" set of genes. The early Church later fought the charge of bioengineering in St. Amalthea's family, since it implied that St. Amalthea was not "chosen" but bio-engineered for her



healing arts—along with the claims that she received her gifts via her uncle's scientific tampering, a not-unsubstantiated criticism the Church fought with mixed success.

A child prodigy, Victor Erling studied in Budapest, Vienna, and later Berlin, where he pursued mathematics at the Institute of Advanced Cosmology, taught by the famed Dr. Astrid Rank. Rank was known as one of the "Seven Cosmologists" who pushed the field into an all-encompassing study of all the sciences in an attempt to discover the unified Pan-Theory, which had beguiled scientists for centuries. Since the work of Dr. Rene Plasero in the 24th century, Cosmology had largely taken the place of traditional physics, and Erling sought to revive the latter field. The "New Cosmology," which recognized Aristarchos of Samos as the founder, actually was a blend of Ur-Obun Astrology and human Cosmology. Physics, based on relativity and quantum theory, had its origins in the 19th–20th century scientific revolution on old Urth, beginning with Max Planck, but whose most famous founder was Albert Einstein. Dr. Rama Varuna (2415–2577) was the last important physicist and believed that the field had reached an unverifiable, metaphysical end, although her writings on the jump-gates opened up possibilities for the eventual creation of small "manufactured" holes in space/time.

Erling's motives in reviving physics remain unknown, except that he was fascinated by vibration theory. Some believe that he was influenced by the recent contact with the Ur-Obun, but many of their philosophical works were then imperfectly translated (around the year 2900, expert translations of their holy/philosophical works became more widely available). Erling pursued quantum chromodynamics until his attention shifted to virtual particles.

Virtual particles obsessed Erling. Quantum mechanics allowed them to suddenly spring into existence, even when the energy necessary to create them was not available, and they were believed responsible for all the forces observed in nature. Erling postulated that virtual particles did not suddenly come into being but already existed on a higher vibratory level. His speculative theories held that the higher levels of reality connected to the lower ones, i.e. higher dimensions existed and were connected to lower ones, and vice versa. Energy levels followed certain laws, and there were more laws in the third dimension than the higher ones,

but all energy could be effectively measured and weighed. This even included wave functions in the third dimension and, ultimately, the highest dimension/energy source, which Erling called the *Nous*. Erling held that all finites run to absolutes, and that the *Nous* encompassed all finite definitions of the absolute; Ultimate Truth, Infinity, God, Platonic Forms, the Good, the Mindscape, etc. This he set down in his *Maxim of Absolute Certainty* in 2692, which began his interplanetary reputation.

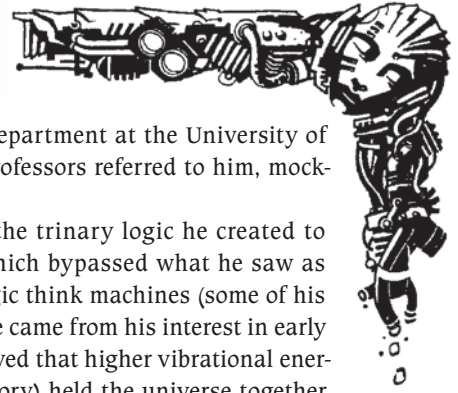
Erling later studied and taught at the University of Copenhagen, but Urth politics eventually pushed him off-world. Various branches of Urth military units formed the organization called Memory, also known as the Renewed Republic, in an attempt to recreate the First Republic on Urth through an overthrow of the planet's existing governments. Memory proved nearly successful, and most of Eurasia came under its sway. The foundation of its philosophy was a strange, half-poetic political book called *Cronos Reborn*, written by Col. Mandelbrot, a retired military man from the Pacific States.

Mandelbrot placed great faith in cosmology and his poetic "Worlds of Ice," which would help drive Urth's rebirth as the capital world of the universe, once the outer worlds were brought back into the fold. In his work, Mandelbrot despised "the old physics and biologists who have brought the culture useless speculation, while the poets who use the sword will be the creators of new tomorrows." Political pressure succeeded in closing down Erling's newly created Department of Pan-Physics in Copenhagen, and Erling moved off-world, to join his brother, sister-in-law, and niece on Tethys in 2711.

Erling on Tethys and After

On Tethys, Dr. Erling managed to acquire research grants and established himself in the house of his brother, Rikard. In his laboratory he constructed VIRA—the Vibration Refraction Accelerator. Observing higher vibrations beyond the transverse wave motions of light vibrations, he traced these "ghost", or G-vibrations, to a higher dimension. Retracting these vibrations and utilizing them in his lab led to some successes in swift ionic crystal growth, as well as accelerated plant growth. Industry took little official notice but proved impressed enough to continue funding.





His niece, young Amalthea, was involved in an accident with the storage containment unit of VIRA, which knocked her unconscious. It was in this state that she first saw the universe as a living entity that needed healing. Some later Second Republic critics of the Universal Church point to this incident as a scientifically—not mystically—induced state in an attempt to downplay Amalthea's mystical vision. However, it was not Amalthea's first such experience, which happened when she became lost in the woods at age 10 and pinned beneath a fallen tree. An angelic voice woke her and guided her out from under the tree and back home. The Church critics treated this first incident as part of a child's overactive imagination, or a state of shock, or did not explain it at all.

Tethys politics, like Urth politics before them, interfered with Erling's work. Major Huang, head of the Tethys Security Forces, attempted to seize the planet in the name of Terra and the Revived First Republic, in conjunction with elements on Urth already all too familiar to Erling. Huang was aided by the Urth political party Memory in funding, equipment, and advisors, while the Tethys consortiums were aided by New Istanbul in resisting Huang's rebellion. In the early stages, Huang came close to dominating the planet, and Erling was captured and forced to work for the rebels. However, once the rebellion ended, he found his reputation darkened by some of his discoveries. Moving to Sutek, Erling despaired of his life's work. He belatedly endorsed his niece's ethical system and followed her, using his knowledge to help create healing machines, the "merciful technals" used by the Amaltheans, which drew on higher vibratory forces to accelerate healing in organic life.

In Church lore, Erling is remembered as a Doctor, often (erroneously) of theology and became depicted as a rather comical, beloved figure in the train of St. Amalthea, always examining the stars overhead while walking into a solid object, such as a rock or tree. The date and location of his death is not certain; the most reliable source, written in 3093, places it as late as 2899 on Artemis. Local inhabitants call his reported tomb on Tethys the "Healing Stone" and claim that miraculous cures emanate from it. Other sources place his death on Urth in 2853 or Grail in 2897.

There is a belief, especially common among the serfs of later centuries, that Erling thought he could contact Zebulon from beyond the present universe. According to the folklore, the old scientist attempted to speak to the Prophet in this fashion, and tales of his conversations with various reflective angels were recorded in the *Book of Conversations*, compiled by an unknown author in the 42nd century from earlier, now lost sources.

An Overview of Pan-Physics

Victor Erling discovered the law and method of bringing higher dimensional energy into the third dimension. He postulated that all finites run to absolutes, and he created the Maxim of Absolute Metaphysical Certainty to break what he named the Infinity Code. This created violent reactions against his theories not only from cosmologists but

also from the philosophy department at the University of Copenhagen, where other professors referred to him, mockingly, as "Plato's Shadow."

Curiously, Erling used the trinary logic he created to run his think machines, which bypassed what he saw as the limitations of binary logic think machines (some of his contemporaries believe these came from his interest in early Buddhist logic). Erling believed that higher vibrational energies (glimpsed in string theory) held the universe together and went in pursuit of them.

Beginning with studies in the polarization of light, Erling sought higher vibrations beyond the transverse wave motion of light vibrations. Discovering higher vibratory "ghost vibrations" or "G-vibrations" that seemed to originate in a higher plane or dimensional reality, Erling sought to tap this source. He believed that these energies were created in an ever-renewable source beyond the fourth dimension. According to Erling, everything, including energy, is composed of matter, but the density of matter changes from the higher to lower dimensions. The lower the dimension, the denser matter becomes, and subject to more laws that regulate the flow of energy. Thus, what Erling called Nous, or what Church theologians call the Pancreator, or what some of Erling's contemporaries would call "God," would have weight, but the vibratory energies would be so high that they could not be measured in the third dimension.

Erling desired to access the higher dimensional vibrations for his research; and for this he had to pinpoint the theorized curled-up spatial dimensions that, according to string theory, are shaped like crumpled six-dimensional patterns existing in three dimensional space (named Calabi-Yau space in the 20th-century). These patterns, shaped by extra-dimensional geometry, influence the tiny vibrating strings that vibrate through all the spatial dimensions that form particle masses and are responsible for force changes.

These theorized six-dimensional geometrical shapes which exist in the third dimension, actually exist everywhere according to Dr. Varuna and could be potentially accessed in microscopic form. To pinpoint one and unravel it, releasing its higher energies, presented Erling with his biggest challenge. Luckily, higher energy patterns could be recorded since the 23rd century (largely based on study of the jumpgates).

Using jumpgates as a rough model, Erling created a negative quantum energy generator, which effectively created microscopic wormholes the size of subatomic particles. He fed these particles into particle accelerators, moving them faster than light. Erling's brilliance was in connecting two wormholes. He created one at a fraction under the speed of light to catch the first wormhole, which found one of the theoretical Calabi-Yau spaces and opened into a higher vibratory dimension. The first wormhole, in a sense, disappeared into the pinpointed six-dimensional Calabi-Yau space, but processed energy to the second microscopic wormhole, thus allowing for the diffusion of higher vibratory energies into the third dimension. With the completion of VIRA, or the Vibration Refraction Accelerator, Erling harnessed these energies and began to apply them.



Erling made a comfortable fortune off the application of his theories for the growth of ionic crystals in industry, but his later discoveries darkened his research. VIRA kept pinpointing ghostly energy fields of lower density vibratory matter—the residue, Erling came to believe, of an earlier universe. He was not completely surprised, since on a level higher than the fourth dimension time did not exist. The existence of an earlier universe did not upset him; it merely confirmed that a many cycled-universe, along with interlocking parallel dimensions and higher and lower dimensions, existed in an inter-connected flow.

Accidentally tapping this source, Erling came in contact with forms he referred to as “energy shades”, which he believed were the conscious residue of intelligences from the earlier universe. A sort of communication via mathematical code was conducted, and gradually these “energy shades” projected ghostly forms to him. Erling’s three assistants quit. One later committed suicide and one went mad; the third only maintained his sanity through powerful doses of an Obun plant named *himbolon*, which has strong opiate-like qualities.

These energy shades showed interest in extending communication to our universe and creating a “bridge,” but before Erling could attempt this (and he had his doubts; in this period of his life he was plagued by nightmares he told a friend consisted of “sacred geometrical forms melting into a primal goo”), his lab was bombed during the Tethys Civil War. The region was ever after known as “Shade Hill,” the place of ghostly images, and became accursed in local legend.

Later, at his niece’s urging, Erling called for a halt into this area of research, and he destroyed most of his notes on his contacts with the energy shades. However, some of his notes survived, seized by Huang’s loyalists, and a few found their way into the hands of one of the pre-conversion Li Halan princes. From what little Erling told his niece about these intelligences, they fed off the higher vibratory energies, as well as light waves. It was believed by some Church theologians that these “shades” contacted by Erling were demonic forces from the dark between the stars, and that only St. Amalthea’s healing of her brilliant uncle saved him.

Later P-Physicians of Note

Erling was not the last to challenge what humanity believed to know about the workings of the cosmos. More reckless souls followed in his footsteps, and unlike him, were not tempered by saints. A scientific theory that has been released into the world takes on a life of its own, propagating in the minds of those that do not accept that some things humanity was never meant to know. These are notable scientists that carried Erling’s work on—unleashing darkness and disaster in their own time or creating a legacy that might yet put the faithful at peril.

Ulbrage Saang

The next great explorer of Pan-Physics was the *kwedi* (half Obun-Ukari) Ulbrage Saang (3512–3629), from Icon.

He was able to apply some of Erling’s theories to practical commercial uses early in the Second Republic. This included the growth of “wave life” that formed short-lived organic cells from highly concentrated energies spread over a liquid carbon-methane compound. This process produced lipids, which wrapped themselves into small bubble clusters, where the chemical process of molecule building took place inside them. The ability of these organic lipids to feed off higher vibrations, invisible to the human eye and using only the most sensitive equipment to record, was truly a wonder.

Erling had created “wave-life” but did not pursue his experiments beyond the formation of self-replicating organisms that processed higher vibratory light waves and emitted a sort of lower density light. Dr. Saang fed the organisms higher vibratory waves and managed to produce an energy source that powered some of the Second Republic’s great think machines, a technology he sold to the Bashshar Corporation. The secret of “wave life” or “Photorganism” was lost after the Fall, and with it went the key to unlocking many of the advanced think machines. Pan-Physics had by this time become a subset of a new science, called Multiversology.

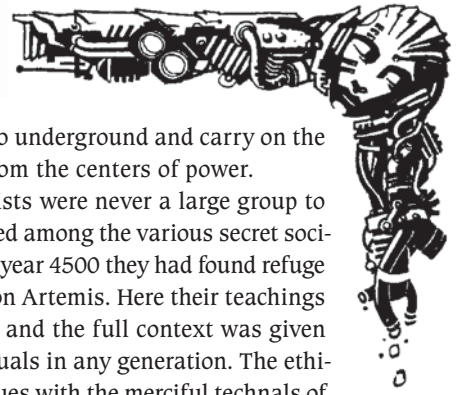
Dr. Fatima al-Altair

Fatima Al-Altair (3903–4061), who trained on Ravenna but rose to fame on Shaprut, was the last of the great Pan-Physics scientists and is called the Mother of Pan-Physics. Some Luxite iconography depicts her as carrying P-Phys like an unborn child in her womb. It is said that she codified much of the existing knowledge of Pan-Physics into the “Rhea Script,” which only she or her closest associates could unlock. al-Altair was a highly ethical scientist, and she decided to hide some of the secrets of Pan-Physics from the warring factions, which fought over the remains of the Second Republic after 4000.

She became a link between the official science of Pan-Physics, having taught at the University of Girivraya, and the secret rumored organization of the Luxites, or Pan-Physics Alchemists, who hid the deeper teachings of the science and were under an ethical oath to only use their knowledge humanely. The knowledge of opening gateways to other universes for possible energy sources was considered too dangerous to be trusted to non-disciples.

After the opening of the Vivaldi Gate in 3941, public demonstrations of this aspect of P-Physics were halted. The University of Girivraya created the Vivaldi Gate on Shaprut using P-Physics for healing. It was opened by bombarding a vacuum with energy beams (Spatial Displacement Bombardment), producing a hole in reality through which healing energies and a strange unearthly music flowed.

However, as Dr. al-Altair feared, some misused Pan-Physics or delved into its darker aspects. It is rumored that the world of Sparta, lost after the Fall, opened a gateway using P-Physics to disastrous effects, producing waves of a strange, anti-life virus that flowed from the opening and decimated the world. It is also rumored that the pre-Conversion Li Halan prince, Ustirin the Unspeakable, obtained



a rare treasure—three pages of Erling’s notes—and used them to create a gateway into the unreflective realms in 4283, which created a 400-mile zone of haunted devastation in the Parjyrr region on Icon. All life was destroyed in a 600-mile radius upon the opening of the gate, and it has since become haunted by demons, and closed off by the Li Halan and Church authorities.

Pan-Physics to the Present

The Luxites, or Pan-Physics Alchemists, were known to have had contact with the Phavian Institute before the final overthrow of the Second Republic. Members of both groups united in the belief that unless humanity was led by truly enlightened individuals, the secrets both carried should be kept safe from those who involved themselves in egotistical power politics and who would misapply higher gifts and technologies for amoral ends.

These unified members took the Apschai Tablets seriously, as well. The tablets, based on the revelations received by the Orthodox priest Salinas Vost in the closing days of the Second Republic, claimed dark forces were hovering above the divine light. The revelations of the Apschai seem to be, if not the sole influence, one of the major factors in the

unified group’s decision to go underground and carry on the research and tradition far from the centers of power.

The Pan-Physics Alchemists were never a large group to begin with, even when counted among the various secret societies. It is thought that by the year 4500 they had found refuge with the Amalthean Church on Artemis. Here their teachings could be strictly supervised, and the full context was given only to a few trusted individuals in any generation. The ethical use of Pan-Physics continues with the merciful techs of the Amaltheans (see the **Merciful Tech** chapter, p. 102).

Erling Chair

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 15,000+ firebirds

The Erling Chair is a “merciful tech” used exclusively by the healers of the Amalthean Order. It utilizes the mysterious Pan-Physics of Dr. Victor Erling, although he did not invent it. As such, it is technology forbidden by the Church except in the hands of trained Amaltheans.

The chair includes a seat molded of high-tech plastic, built to exact mathematical specifications and supported by repulsor pads capable of finely vibrating the chair in line with certain frequencies generated by an accompanying synthesizer (older models used a complicated array of springs to balance the chair and achieve the proper vibrations). The core of the device is the VIRA, or Vibration Refraction Accelerator, an artifact from the Second Republic. Only three such devices were built since the Fall, each by master Engineers, one of whom went mad after testing it.

The VIRA creates subatomic wormholes into higher dimensions and brings higher energies into three-dimensional space. The tenor of these energies is somehow controlled through music played on the synthesizer, using a process that is more art than science, for the Amalthean musician usually enters a prayerful trance and afterwards rarely remembers what notes she played. The result is a deep soul healing for any patient sitting in the chair, bathed in the higher energies. Deep-seated psychological complexes and negative associations are slowly dissolved after even a brief exposure to the Erling Chair. While the Church does not believe that the chair erases sin or blemishes on the soul mirror, the Amaltheans claim that it cures the propensity for sin that is usually caused by past traumas. Additionally, many physical ailments that have their cause in mental problems, such as stress or repression, soon clear up. Arthritis and fibromyalgia can also be cured.

The most famous recent case was Martin Capoldi, son of Reeve Dean Garibold Capoldi. Martin was one of the most notorious tyrants in the Known Worlds, rivaling even many noble princes in his cruelty to the lower classes. He routinely killed peasants for fun, and the Capoldi fortune was threatened by the mass of ruined property suits brought against him by royal houses. Dean Capoldi brought his son to Artemis. After one application in the Chair, Martin broke down and confessed all his sins. He then tried to jump from a high cliff but was stopped by his father’s bodyguards.



Martin was retired to a hesychast monastery on Grail, where he spends his days copying ancient agricultural manuscripts. The Church touts his example as one of reform.

The only known working version of an Erling Chair still in existence is on Artemis, and many pilgrims travel far and join a long list of applicants to sit in it. Rumors, however, say that the Amaltheans guard another chair on Grail, although that one is said to be haunted or cursed, more likely to harm than heal.

Another Erling Chair was discovered by freebooters in the ruins of a Second Republic clinic on Shaprut in 5003. They hired an Apothecary to figure out its use and leased it for high prices to the elite. The terrible disaster that ensued has only reinforced the Church's edict that only Amaltheans be allowed to handle the device. The Hawkwood baronet who was the second and last to use the chair, which has since vanished again, is still under care by Amalthean physicians on Ravenna, but few believe he can ever be cured. He speaks of terrible "shades" who haunt him and whisper to him, bidding him to perform hideous deeds, including flinging himself beyond a jumpgate, into the dark between the stars.

Traits

The Erling Chair requires a unique, special Learned Skill to use. Rating in this skill cannot be higher than the character's Remedy and Performance skills. A successful roll (Faith + Erling Chair skill) involves activating the machine, attuning it to the proper frequencies (based on the patient's EEG activity) and playing prayerful music.

The game effects are entirely up to the gamemaster's discretion. The chair, when successfully used, cures psychological traumas, neuroses, and even psychoses, although a patient's remorse over past deeds might overwhelm him if he doesn't receive counseling from Amaltheans during the curative period (about two weeks to two months). Patients can even be freed from dark influences, such as possession by demons or entities. Psychic Urge or Theurgic Hubris cannot be cured, however, although patients can receive a bonus on their attempts at penance.

Repairing an Erling Chair requires the High-Tech Redemption skill and access to expensive parts (TL 7).

Omoikane

Tech Level: 8–9

Cost: Not for sale

The omoikane, named after a pre-reflective spirit from ancient Urth, is egg-shaped and about the size of a human fist. Its smooth metallic surface tapers to a blunt end, where a number of port connections are located. These terminals allow for the input of power and the outflow of data to a regular think machine.

The omoikane is a prototype design produced at the height of the Second Republic and combines sophisticated AI with theories of Pan-Physics. Nobody (not even the omoikane itself) remembers the genius who dared to create such a sophisticated intelligence. The omoikane needs a large fusion generator to work.

Without power, the omoikane is inert and weighs about two kilograms. The moment a power source is attached, the mass drops to that of a feather. The AI contained within the egg surpasses anything else known to have survived the Second Republic—in part because of the intricate construction and because the machine generates a wormhole within its tiny shell (hence the drop in mass).

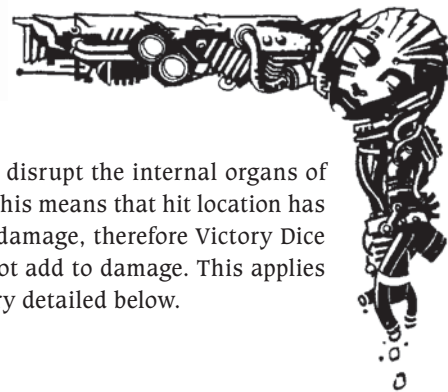
The electronics of the machine are moved into a higher vibrational state above the normal three dimensions and so bypasses the temporal limits of processing massive amounts of data.

In essence, the tiny think machine can perform unlimited computations in the fraction of a second it takes to transmit data to and from the miniature wormhole. Because time does not exist, all computational tasks are in effect instant—regardless of complexity.

If the omoikane is used as an aide to code breaking, think machine programming, or other logic-based tasks, it can perform Herculean computations in an instant. The device is self-aware but needs to draw upon other interfaced think machines for information as its own storage matrix was never designed to hold more than a few hundred thousand terabytes. Consequently, it cannot simply provide answers to queries that require detailed technical or historical lore.

Omoikane technology encroaches on the principles behind the workings of the Jumpgates. However, a





hyper-dimensional space cannot exist within another hyper-dimensional space, so the device must be powered down to travel through a Jumpgate. If somebody tries to force the activated omoikane through a gate there is likely to be a catastrophic disaster which could lead to the sealing of the Jumpgate (or, at least potentially, the destruction of both the Gate and the omoikane).

Traits

The omoikane is an incredibly gifted savant, brilliant at logical and fuzzy logical problem solving, but lacking context as it does not store vast amounts of data for itself but needs access to external systems. When using the omoikane to assist with logic, fuzzy logic, and computational based tasks, they can be completed in a mere second. Note that the omoikane must have a large fusion generator to provide adequate power and be linked to a regular think machine to provide answers.

Harmonic Tech

All objects, when struck, vibrate at a natural frequency. This is the principle behind a tuning fork, and the specific frequencies are called resonance. When an object is forced to vibrate at its resonant frequency, the magnitude of that vibration increases exponentially—with potentially destructive results. Suspension bridges have been known to tear themselves to pieces when wind blew across them at their resonant frequency.

The principles of harmonic sonic technology are well-known and ancient. Soldiers are trained to break step when crossing bridges lest they cause destructive feedback. Armored vehicles are constructed to have each panel with a different resonant frequency, ensuring the vehicle would not rattle into useless metal bits upon going full speed. The effect can also be observed in nature; the Urthish tiger growls at the resonant frequency of the human eyeball.

By the time of the early Diaspora, technology reached the point where this principle could achieve brutal effects. Sonatine Technologies, an oceanographic mapping corporation, was among the first to truly exploit the opportunities sonic technology presented. Working from its research into sonar-mapping, its scientists expanded several lines of sonic applications, all based on the resonance principle.

Although proscribed, this technology is still manufactured secretly by the Fullers, a Tethys family of weaponsmiths with strong connections to both the Scravers and the Reeves. They rarely create more than fifty of these each year.

The Church detests the outlawed sonic technology detailed below for its insidious applications. Nobles also despise it with a passion (as they do with anything capable of piercing their precious energy shields). Many of the more rustic nobility fail to see how “silly little noise guns” could possibly endanger them but it usually only takes one demonstration to illustrate the point. The theurgic hymns of the Choral sect have proved especially potent when dealing with Harmonic threats, either shielding from damage, or in extreme cases destroying the offending devices.

Traits

Harmonic tech weapons disrupt the internal organs of the body to cause damage. This means that hit location has no effect on the amount of damage, therefore Victory Dice obtained from hit rolls do not add to damage. This applies to all the harmonic weaponry detailed below.

Harmonic Gun

Tech Level: 5

Cost: Harmonic Pistol: 500 firebirds, Harmonic Rifle: 700 firebirds

Ammunition: Fusion cel

Harmonic Guns project narrow subsonic beams of sound over short distances. Tuned to the resonant frequency of a human's internal organs, they cause internal disruption and bleeding—massive bruising is a tell-tale sign, although at point-blank range Harmonic Guns can tear targets apart. Available as pistol or the (much rarer) rifle, their silence and effectiveness made these guns a favorite corporate assassin's weapon since before the rise of the Second Republic. Military leaders disdain the weapons for their short range and comparatively low damage potential. The technology's biggest selling point, however, has always been its ability to bypass armor and, even more important, energy shields.

Armor does not stop the projected sound waves, it merely transmits them. Indeed, no substance can block the waves since sound moves more quickly through denser substances like ceramsteel. Energy shields do not trigger due to the low power of the weapons and because the energy of the sound wave does not cause damage, just the resonant reaction it induces in its target. Consequently, Harmonic Guns attuned to human targets are useless against solid objects like windows and doors. A favorite technique of the legendary Ukari assassin Stra'G'Lee was attacking from behind walls using Harmonic Guns and x-ray targeting scopes. Choral Mistress Melisande Nightingale eventually defeated him as he made an attempt on the life of Bishop Eustatius the Young.

Until that point, Harmonic Guns had been primarily the preserve of the guilds that prized their precision and silence. After the inevitable proscription, even on League worlds the possession of a Harmonic Gun is considered evidence of conspiracy to commit assassination.

Harmonic Guns must be attuned to their target—a difficult and complex task that is next to impossible without the correct tools. The guns usually come with a preset for human beings. Some high-cost models such as the Sonatine Stunner Deluxe come with multiple presets, changeable at the flick of a switch. The SuperDeluxe model even comes with a voice-activated selector. A Harmonic Gun used against an un-attuned target is less effective but still has the potential to cause harm. A gun can be attuned to affect non-organic matter but only with the exact resonant frequency (see **Harmonic Sensor**, p. 68).

Harmonic Guns do relatively little damage, but shields and armor offer no protection (although a Shield of the Pancreator has full effect). Similarly, solid objects give no



cover. When firing at a target of similar physiology to its attuned setting (a human-attuned gun fired at an Obun or Ukari, for example), the gun loses one die of damage. When firing at a creature of substantially different physiology it loses two dice of damage, or even more (at the gamemaster's discretion). For instance, subtract two dice when firing a human-tuned gun at a Gannok or an Oro'ym and three or more against vastly different races such as the Nizdharim.

Name	Goal	DMG	RNG	Shots	Rate	Size
Pistol	+1	3	5/10	20	2	S
Rifle	+1	5	15/25	15	2	L

Harmonic Sensor

Tech Level: 5

Cost: 800 firebirds

Harmonic Sensors read the resonant frequency of objects. This can be done in a number of ways, from the extremely low-tech set of tuning forks (the age-old tools of the piano-tuner) to high-tech sonic-probes and even Second Republic electron microscopes (controlled by correctly programmed think machines). The most common form is the advanced Harmonic Sensor, which feeds low amplitude sound waves through jump-leads and reads the response. Whatever the method, Harmonic Sensors always played a legitimate role in manufacturing and engineering. Only with the advent of sophisticated harmonic weaponry have they become somewhat discredited. Sensors can now be used by the unscrupulous to discern targets' weaknesses. In the case of organic targets, this can be advantageous; for inorganic targets, it is necessary.

Combining Harmonic Sensors with weapons is highly illegal. In many places, possession of Harmonic Sensors is only allowed for approved operators. For those reprehensible enough to need to hide one, the sensor is easily disguised as just about any other kind of technical scanning device (Geiger counter, electric scales, etc.). A harmonic scan takes up to 10 minutes to complete on a human-sized creature, longer on larger objects. Scans may only be performed on non-moving (or restrained) subjects. Harmonic Sensors can obtain new settings for harmonic weaponry.

These damage modifiers apply in addition to the modifiers described in the Harmonic Guns entry. If a specific individual is scanned, any attacks on them using the harmonic settings gathered gain an extra die of damage per victory point on a Tech + Observe roll. Inanimate objects must be scanned before they take any damage. Harmonic frequencies change over time. After six months, a creature's reading is no longer valid.

Harmonic Mines

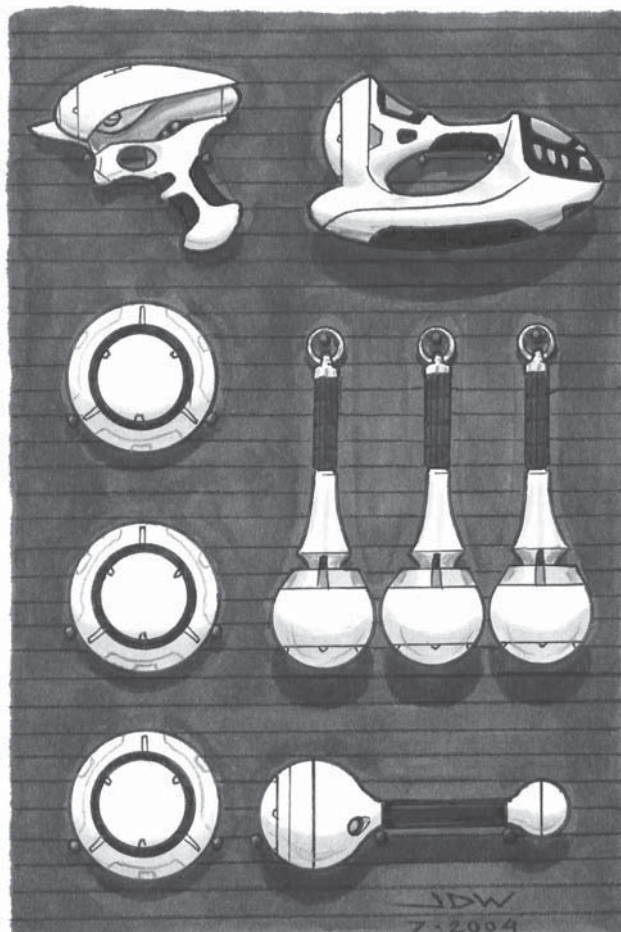
Tech Level: 5

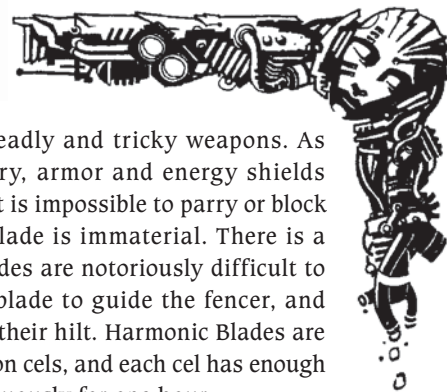
Cost: Fast Mines: 200 firebirds, Slow Mines: 500 firebirds

Another off-shot of Sonatine Technologies research into harmonic destruction ("Revenge never sounded so good!"), Harmonic Mines are the big brother of the resonant munitions family.

Harmonic Mines come in two major types: fast and slow. Fast mines can be detonated by any of the standard triggers (timer, pressure, magnetic, radio-controlled, etc) and come in two general configurations—those calibrated to affect organic matter and those calibrated for non-organic matter. Both types are favorites of guild-sponsored (or other subtle) assassins. The non-organic calibration mines lend themselves even more so to inventive killers. More than one Scraver Lord has died when his flutter unexpectedly suffered catastrophic failure. Fast Harmonic Mines ('fims' in Scraver cant) must be attuned to their target in the same manner as Harmonic Guns—they also reap the benefits of a Harmonic Sensor's fine tuning.

Slow mines are even more insidious. They release their destructive sound at much lower amplitudes than fast mines (which release all at once, burning out in the process). Consequently they inflict damage slowly, typically over weeks and months. When concealed close to its target (within a building's ventilation system, for example), the mine emits subsonic sound waves that incrementally disrupt and destroy the target's internal organs. Cause of death is typically diagnosed as liver or heart failure (amongst old, hard-working, or highly-stressed individuals, this usually doesn't raise suspicion). Eight hours exposure to such a mine each day can be terminal after six weeks—increased exposure, as with a mine hidden in a prison cell or the home, speeds up these effects. Slow mines are usually powered





by fusion cels, with each cel giving enough energy for at least six months of continuous use. If the target is within five meters of a slow mine, no physical barriers can offer substantial protection to prevent the inevitable.

The Church, unsurprisingly, banned these devices, regarding slow mines as the worse of the two. Rumors persist of persuasive Scravers deterring Church investigations by leaving a deactivated mine in a confession booth. On the other hand, a Choral exorcism in Inquisitor Tyler's vestry disintegrated sixteen hidden harmonic mines.

Fast Mines: Damage drops of as per the rules for Harmonic Guns (but can be increased as per the rules for Harmonic Sensors).

Slow Mines: Assuming six to eight hours exposure per day to a correctly attuned slow mine, the victim suffers one vital health level of damage per week, and dies after six weeks. Non-vital health levels have no effect on this (and are not themselves affected). This damage cannot be healed by normal means as long as the victim is still exposed, although elixir and theurgic rituals work normally. When removed from the affected area, vital health levels heal normally.

Name	DMG	RNG	Shots	Size
Fast Mine	10	5 m	1	S
Slow Mine	see text	5 m	see text	S

Harmonic Grenades

Tech Level: 5

Cost: 100 firebirds

Harmonic Grenades are the smaller and less-damaging hand-portable cousins of Harmonic Mine technology. Harmonic Grenades must be tuned to their target's resonant frequencies to be effective. They can be triggered to detonate via timer or, more commonly, on impact (after priming). Unlike traditional grenades, Harmonic Grenades do not "explode", although the fusion cel that powers them burns out after one use. Reeves debt collectors especially value these grenades for their ability to liquidate debtors but leave their paperwork intact. Damage modifiers apply as per the rules for other harmonic weaponry. Harmonic Grenades do eight dice of damage and are otherwise treated as regular grenades, although armor and shields have no effect on them.

Harmonic Blade

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 1,000 firebirds

Ammunition: Fusion cel

A higher tech application of harmonic technology, the Harmonic Blade was a favorite assassin's weapon of the Second Republic. It mounts a high-powered, low-frequency, sonic generator in its hilt, and when activated, it generates a coherent subsonic column of sound about 18 inches in length, forming the blade. When thrust into the vitals of an enemy it has the same organ scrambling effects as other harmonic weapons.

Harmonic Blades are deadly and tricky weapons. As with all harmonic weaponry, armor and energy shields have no effect. In addition, it is impossible to parry or block a harmonic blade, as the blade is immaterial. There is a downside, as Harmonic Blades are notoriously difficult to wield—there is no visible blade to guide the fencer, and they weigh nothing beyond their hilt. Harmonic Blades are powered by one or more fusion cels, and each cel has enough charge to run a blade continuously for one hour.

In addition to the damage rules listed above, Harmonic Blades may not be parried or blocked by physical objects.

Name	Goal	DMG	Size
Harmonic Blade	-2	4	S

Harmonic Shield and Damper Field

Tech Level: 6

Cost: Harmonic Shield: 300 firebirds, Damper Field: 700 firebirds

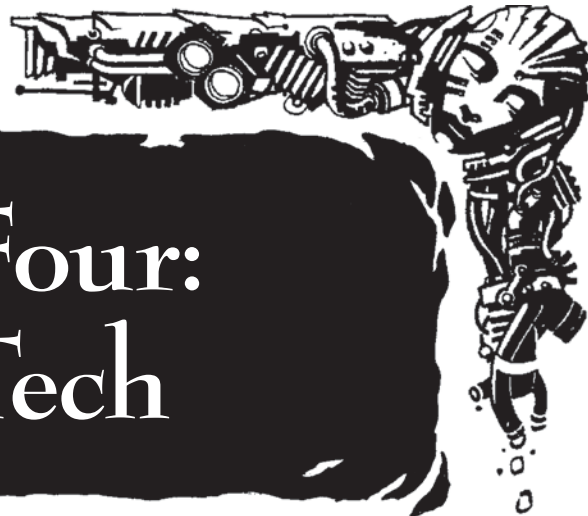
Harmonic Shields and Damper Fields are defensive devices designed to counter harmonic weapons and are legal in most places. They generate subsonic sound waves that nullify harmful sound waves. Powered by fusion cels, Harmonic Shields were produced during the Second Republic as belt-clips available in wide range of designs. When switched on, they envelop the wearer with subsonic sound waves attuned to negate the more dangerous frequencies. One fusion cel provides enough power for four hours continuous use. Although this field is protective, prolonged exposure can lead to headaches, muscle fatigue, trembling, and nausea. The original manufacturers refused to guarantee user safety when used for more than 15 minutes at a time.

A second, and rarer, device for sonic defense is the Damper Field, developed with joint research between the Tethys Internal Revenue Collection Agency and Aegis Technologies Ltd. to nullify the particular threat of slow Harmonic Mines. Although Harmonic Shields protect against slow mines, the required duration of exposure render it ineffective. The Damper Field, generated by a matte black cube small enough to sit on a coffee table, soon became a popular fixture in many influential executives' offices. A low-powered version of the Harmonic Shield (although much more tastefully styled), the Damper Field runs on fusion cels, with each cel providing a year's continuous use. Due to their lower power, Damper Fields offer no protection against standard harmonic attacks made with a harmonic weapon such as a Harmonic Gun or Harmonic Grenade.

Both forms of protection need to be attuned to their respective owners. Rumor has it that a Damper Field could be re-attuned to generate harmful subsonic waves.

Damper Fields nullify the effects of slow Harmonic Mines within their area of effect. A Harmonic Shield provides 5d of protection against harmonic attacks. Both devices are small enough to be worn with any other armor and/or energy shields.





Chapter Four: Unholy Tech

This chapter provides a compendium of some of the worst technologies to ever pervert the nature of humanity. The Church often sermonizes about these devices as demonstrations of the sins of the Second Republic, often citing them as reasons for the Fall. The Church strictly prohibits the use of Unholy Technology, as it not only endangers the individual but anyone who encounters the person in question. Confirmed abuse of these technologies consigns the individual to excommunication and soul death.

Ghost Technology

To: Mother Claudine DeFay, Bishop of the Urth Orthodox, Order of Hinayana, Avaneir, Rampart

From: The Office of the Esteemed Master Dorian Wilde, Supreme Order of Engineers, Court of Wonders, Leagueheim

Your Grace,

It has been drawn to my attention that, by your order, investigations of an Inquisitorial nature have been leveled at associates within the Order of Engineers. Specifically, raids upon the life-extension clinics and facilities in Metier, Vasilgrod, and Parlsburg have contravened the privacy of respected clients, endangering their health and continued well-being. Such activities also void the S.O.E. and Orthodox concords of 4503; the provisions contained within the concords demand an immediate renegotiation of our arrangements no more than six months from the stated incidents or all Engineer activity on Rampart will cease.

Bluntly put, Bishop, your dogs are looking in the wrong place. If you wish to find the heretical "ghost technology," look to the core worlds of the Li Halan. The Engineers purged such unspeakable practices from their ranks long ago and only the decadent pre-conversion princes of the Garden Worlds fostered such endeavors. To reiterate, ghost technology

among the Engineers is a dead art; it does not work to its specified promise and it has produced enough abominations to fuel the nightmares of a hundred generations. We have no interest in preserving it as a viable field of study.

Search in your own yard, dear Bishop, not ours. I think you will be quite surprised at the horrors you will find.

Sincerely,

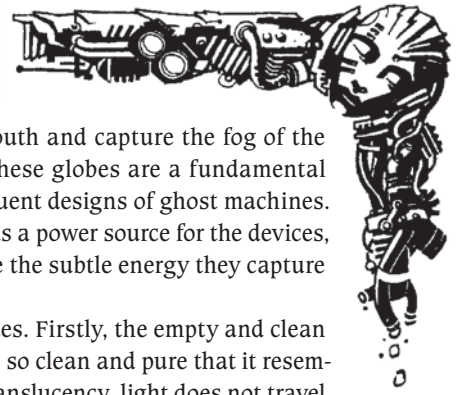
Dorian Wilde

—From the Ecclesiastical Archives, Dated Sixthmonth, Sol's Height, in the year 4983

In the Book of the Eshaton, a passage by Nicodemus describes 'lost and wayward souls' of the worlds, speaking of a terrible host of dead that are trapped in a state of unrest since their demise. In similar fashion, Brother Battle tradition speaks of fallen comrades who come back from the dead to fight beside their holy brethren. While the Orthodoxy proclaims these incidents to refer to the uprising of the end times and miracles wrought by living saints, it has inspired decidedly unorthodox beliefs regarding the dead, some bordering on heresy. Perhaps the most famous account is that of the two dead souls rescued from the Abyss by Amalthea's Miracle of the Cup.

Many students of heretical beliefs will come across the dark ways of the Manja cultists, who not only claim to speak to phantoms of ancestors past but who readily worship such haunted souls. However, they are not the only believers in spirits of the dead and shades of sentient beings who plague the living. Even the Urth Orthodoxy acknowledges the existence of the dead, as many of those versed in the holy arts of theurgy testified to the exorcism of such beings.

The technology dealing with the phenomena of 'ghosts' began in the late 2600s under the reign of Lucifer Li Halan, whose morbid fascination for the dead was one of his more notorious proclivities. Although historians are unable to prove this categorically, it is thought that House Li Halan's fascination with the dead originated from this very point



and flourished under Maugon Han Li Halan who founded the Manja cult. For a long period it was fashionable at Li Halan courts to patronize, or experiment directly, with such technologies.

Lucifer Li Halan ordered the construction of a number of devices that would grant him the power to speak with the dead. He commissioned a scientist in his employ by the name of Dr. Atruutio Zvago to look into the matter. After nearly twenty years of research into the dead and dying (some by his own instigation), Dr. Zvago produced his first device, the popular ghost box. From this initial breakthrough, more complex and profane devices emerged. The science behind them is somewhat obtuse, as they utilize a number of subtle energy fields to create what Dr. Zvago described as a 'non-corporeal energy matrix through which a subtle sentence can turn formlessness into semblance of form.' He further claimed that his devices did nothing but amplify capacities inherent to such spirits in the first place. Other scientists who analyzed these devices derided such claims, creating one famous retort by Professor Versthpa of the Delegan Institute: 'Dr. Zvago is of course quite right, his devices in fact do nothing. The only thing they seem capable of amplifying is the ability for people to suspend their disbelief on such matters.'

With the Fall of the Second Republic, all known devices were confiscated for their dangerous influence. While the Li Halan divulged the devices themselves for exoneration, the blueprints and schematics remained hidden in secret caches as legacies to future generations. Throughout its history, the House inadvertently uncovered many of these sealed caches. For the most part, and in the light of Cardano's conversion, the scions of the House promptly handed these forbidden manuscripts over to Church authorities. However, on the world of Rampart, many old Li Halan territories fell under League rule. Since Cardano's conversion, the League has uncovered at least five confirmed caches. What they might have not revealed is of great concern to church authorities. However, when Rampart fell back into Li Halan hands, the League could no longer follow up rumors related to several more caches.

In 4973, during one of the worst periods of the Emperor Wars, the Synecullum and Inquisition recovered a number of devices amongst the fallen that have been identified as ghost technology. This confirmed what the Syneculla has long suspected—that the League had secretly uncovered a number of Li Halan caches and re-developed these forbidden technologies.

Soul Glass

Tech Level: 6

Cost: Generally not available for sale. Even the rumor of this technology is enough to bring down the Inquisition in full force upon any single industry. Knowledge of this device is not common, for it smacks of the worst of demonic practices.

These small fist-sized glass spheres are the foundation of all the categories of ghost technologies. All one has to

do is hold them over the mouth and capture the fog of the final exhale of the dying. These globes are a fundamental component to all the subsequent designs of ghost machines. In some respects they serve as a power source for the devices, as they can store and release the subtle energy they capture not unlike fusion cels.

The globes have two states. Firstly, the empty and clean state, when the crystal looks so clean and pure that it resembles cast glass. Despite its translucency, light does not travel through these prisms in a nominal way. Looking through these crystals, one will see the world cast in an eerie light. Colors are muted and grim; people are cast in shadow, like edifices of their personage. Secondly, they can be found in a rather different state—the crystal is filled with a milky white coloring that moves through it as though suspended in a liquid state. Though the crystal remains solid to its core, the milky haze inside moves in an unnatural way, seeming to move and cling to sides of the crystal touched by human (or any sentient's) hands. The suspended haze floats with no concern for general physics like gravity or momentum. If one holds these crystals up to the eye, something entirely different can be seen, such as glimpses from the memory of another person. The owner of a crystal can then pore over the memories of the ghost inside, virtually reliving the ghost's experiences from a first person perspective.

The manufacture of these crystals was lost in the Fall, and this fact is happily received by the Church who excommunicates all those who would deny the souls of the dead the opportunity for final grace. However, the propagation of these crystals was widespread before the Republic, and frequently small caches of these crystals turn up on various worlds.

Traits

The crystal matrix within the Soul Glass needs only to be held close to a dying victim to capture his last breath and his soul. The globe must be held no further than a few inches from the mouth so that the breath touches it; if held further away unpredictable results and an incomplete capture might leave the soul with holes in its memory. Examining the memories of one held within the Soul Glass is not an easy thing—the soul naturally relives events in its life that have had great significance to it (such as times of strong emotion or great stress) and very likely its own death.

Some memories may be triggered by their relevance to the person holding the Soul Glass. Also, rumors persist that some psychics or theurgists are capable of bending a trapped spirit to their will. How this might be achieved is unknown, though certain dark grimoires purport to explain the process within their own twisted framework.

Mouth of Halifax

Tech Level: 6+

Cost: Of all ghost technology, these devices are probably the ones most readily accessible. Their components cost no more than 500 firebirds; it is the rarity of these devices and their schematics that increase their value. Original schematics can cost anywhere up to 1,000 firebirds, with the privilege



to make a copy being worth 300 firebirds alone. Fully functional devices can range anywhere up to 1,500 firebirds or more, depending on the nature of the technology.

The most common ghost technology device is the ghost box, or more formally known as the Mouth of Halifax. There is no single shape or design for this device and many varieties are known. Original devices were towering monstrosities of more than a person's height. The Li Halan's original devices, kept tightly in Inquisitorial archives, are typically decorated with the House floral emblem of the time and marred with deep rents and gashes. It is not known whether this was part of the original design or resulted from their use. Essentially, each device has the capacity to speak and emit the sound of a talking voice, alleged to be the voice of a deceased being.

Later models that emerged during the Republic allegedly went one step further by creating holographic projections of the person they were replicating. Of the various legends of ghostly holograms, the most notoriously was the Republican pilot known as Rhi Mehr. Folklore attributes to this personage the permanent ghostly embodiment of a holographic projector. In this state the legend attends that he existed for a period of nearly 200 years, living an eternal un-life in its form before the device was finally shut down. A number of contemporary scholars, who came across this claim, laugh defensibly at the notion, suggesting that such a feat need not require a spirit of the dead to animate it. Indeed, they say, such faculties to replicate the sensibilities and reason of man, even in an individual's likeness, is not beyond them. They insist on arguing that a distinction exists between devices utilizing pure science and devices that allege the workings of spirits and phantasms. For the Church's part, there needs be no distinction between any technologies claiming to bring back the memory of the dead, no matter the means.

However, these devices have no capacity to attune to the identity of a single restless shade. Their function is principally to be an electronic medium for such creatures to channel themselves through. They are speakers for the dead and ghost whisperers. At the end of the Republic, the devices enjoyed some small measure of infamy from pundits who sought opportunities to speak to their beloved and recently (or more distantly) departed. The authorities publicly decried these public displays of the supernatural as nothing more than complex shams, designed to entice, confuse, and bewilder gullible audiences. Such displays, they said, were no more than repetitions of pre-reflective hoaxes and frauds. Unsurprisingly, such devices are highly sought out by Manja cultists, stating that they have seen the reality behind such frauds and can tell the difference.

Traits

No single design exists, as many different models have emerged over the years. In each instance, however, one simply takes a charged Soul Glass and inserts it into the device, allowing the Mouth of Halifax to utter the voice or even project the persona of the captured shade inside.

Plasma Pump

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 300 firebirds

This device is designed with the capability to produce a substance known as ectoplasm. Mostly manufactured as a curiosity and novelty by the merchants of the Jumpweb, it has nevertheless been added to the proscribed list. Compared with the difficulty of its production, ectoplasm seems to be a mostly ineffectual substance. It is thick, foamy, and sticky to the touch. The primary novelty of this device, which keeps it a subject of Engineer fascination, is its capacity to produce a substance from nothing that returns to nothing. After an hour or two, ectoplasm evaporates into nothingness. Its second feature is that the substance is highly reactive to sentient touch. The substance remains entirely inert and goopy, but once touched, it responds as though alive, moving to accommodate the sculpting hands, facilitating the desired result. Once a shape is molded, the substance maintains this shape for as long as it exists, unless shaped again. It should further be pointed out that, once touched, it refuses to react to the touch of another sentient creature, falling to mush and slop if mishandled too much.

At first, this substance might be considered to have many useful properties, but this is not so. It is difficult to identify chemically, producing strange and often contradictory results. One manifestation of ectoplasm seems to have radically different chemical properties to any other batch produced. Some harden into shapes more resilient than steel, others are transparent and smooth, while yet others turn into a liquid or rubbery state. This random and unpredictable nature of the substance prevents it from having any truly functional capacity. With no reliable replication and its impermanence, ectoplasm will never be more than a curiosity.

Nevertheless, the root of this device in ghost technologies and the uncanny half alive nature of the substance has offended the sensibilities of the Church and it was denounced as unholy.

Traits

Each device requires the use of a shade, a single charged globe can generate up to 200 liters of ectoplasm, after which the globe must harvest another ghost.

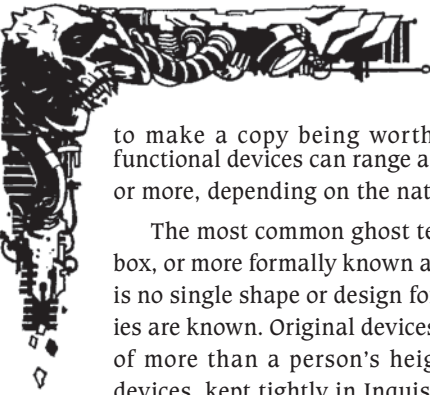
Quickening Machine

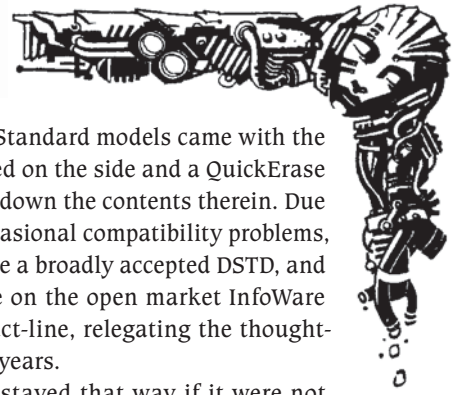
Tech Level: 7

Cost: Not for sale

Returning the dead to life is the dream or nightmare of many a researcher. Many attempts throughout history have been made, but only a few have had any significant results. One of the more successful devices was the Quickening Machine, which was in turn a derivative of other ghost technologies. This machine (only a handful exists) is about three feet tall, with the visage of twisted steel and plastic.

Its functionality is modeled directly on that of the Mouth of Halifax, as it generates strange and subtle energies to activate latent powers of ghostly presences. When turned on,





it projects these waves in such a way as to trigger a response in any recently dead body in its proximity. In the second century of the Republic, this machine gleaned some acclaim when it brought dead bodies back to life, which woke with all their memories intact. Yet, over a period of weeks, the bodies fatigued, fell apart, and eventually died. Not, however, before going on terribly destructive and often cannibalistic rampages. After these tragically failed experiments, all such machines were decommissioned and quietly taken apart.

Such tales of technological horrors parallel to the lore on modern day night crackers has not escaped Church notice. Though most husk plagues seem spontaneous, the idea of a machine that could potentially and deliberately trigger a husk plague terrifies both peasantry and Church. In 4861, one such machine resurfaced on Midian and was used by a necromancer in a psychic coven called the Vox Prior. This coven had found one of these devices and used it to inflict waves of undead horrors on nearby villages when they refused to capitulate to their demands of rulership. Not only did the coven have the power to wrest the dead from somnolence, they also exerted command over the creatures themselves.

Traits

These devices are capable of a limited form of resurrection, one that quickly decays into a nightmare. Only bodies that have been dead less than a month are able to resurrect in this fashion, and the longer they have been in that state the less time they have before they fully degenerate. Some supposedly stronger willed individuals are able to last longer before their faculties desert them and they become unfeeling, undead monsters.

Each week after death, the quickened creature must make an Ego + Focus goal roll with an accumulating penalty, hard (-2) after the first week, Demanding (-4) after the second week, Tough (-6) after the third week and so on, until he eventually succumbs to its base instincts and must be destroyed for the good of all.

Thoughtboxes

Tech Level: 7

Cost: 1,000+ firebirds (depends on contents)

The technology boom of the Second Republic spawned countless new ways to store and transfer data. Some, like dystals (data-crystals) and memo-rods caught on. Others, like DSTDs (data storage transfer drives) did not fare so well. One of the better known DSTDs was the Bio Memory Container, or BMC, now more commonly called the thoughtbox.

The thoughtbox premise was simple—a bio-engineered “hard-drive” able to contain trillions upon trillions of terabytes of data, all in a small, aesthetic package. The scientists at InfoWare, after years of work, came up with a method of replicating human memory cells and integrating them into a standard computer interface.

The standard BMC case was an oblong, metal box

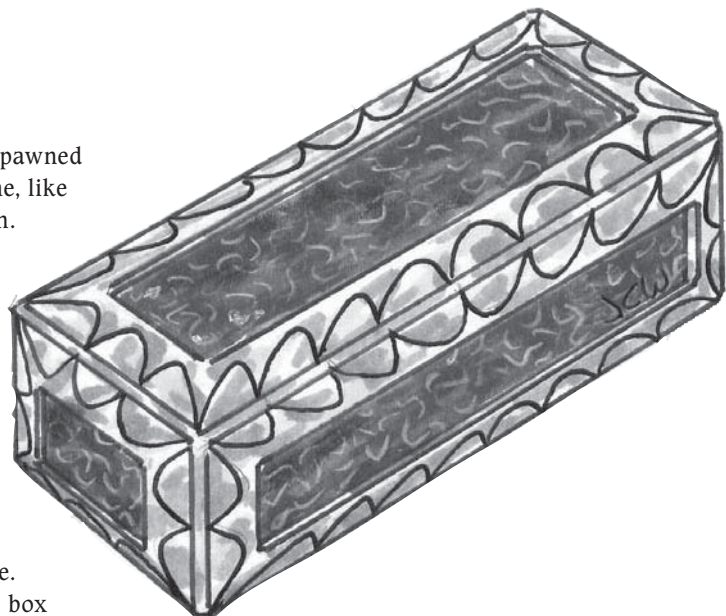
about the size of this book. Standard models came with the unit's serial number engraved on the side and a QuickErase sticker on the top for jotting down the contents therein. Due to the high price and the occasional compatibility problems, the thoughtbox never became a broadly accepted DSTD, and soon after its initial release on the open market InfoWare abandoned the whole product-line, relegating the thoughtbox to obscurity for several years.

It would probably have stayed that way if it were not for the New Horizons division of the Meditech Corporation. They created the neural pathway scanner, NPS, a device capable of mapping and copying the entire contents of a person's brain. Memories, skills, even qualities like character traits could be duplicated, stored and “re-played” for all eternity. The only thing it lacked was a storage drive with sufficient storage capacity. And what better drive than a brain surrogate itself?

Meditech made a deal with InfoWare and soon created the first “brain cartographers.” Purists claimed that it was a tool to explore the human psyche in new and different ways for the common good of society. It started innocuously enough, but, as with almost every good intention, the use and purpose quickly perverted from pure science in to something more sinister.

It quickly became all the rage. Rich nobles, actors, pop-stars, and politicians bought the brain cartographer for pure vanity. Soon, with their new home holo-theatre, they would be able to show their preferred shining moments and most favorite memories to their friends and family, endlessly. If it had ended there, the brain cartographer may have remained considered a new medium. Alas, it did not.

As the NPS gained more and more users, people found new ways to use it. First was the virtual memory drive. Now you not only could watch the memories, but actually relive and even share them with others! Places to gather and swap memories, a new fad of thoughtbox bars started cropping up everywhere. For two Republican Marks (or the Universal



Currency Units), you had a one-hour journey down memory lane, even if it was not your memory.

With this rising popularity, thoughtbox cases became intricate and diverse. You could get a BMC in any shape and any color, painted in one of countless pre-produced patterns or a custom design. With the use of amber, ivory, and even Kordethian black-gems, it wasn't unheard of for a case to cost nearly as much as the machine itself.

Unfortunately, the popularity of the devices and the sheer artistry going in to manufacturing the cases meant that the thoughtboxes rapidly became prime targets for theft—not to mention the potential gains for acquiring a rival or ex-lover or politician's thoughtbox! Thought-theft became extremely common and stolen memories flooded the black market. The technological knowledge was lost during the Fall, and most neural pathway scanners and thoughtboxes were destroyed; what devices survived the purging were proscribed by the Church under Patriarch Giullemo II. What makes these devices especially exciting to the Engineers in particular is the fact that some of them might have survived and be operational, allowing access to the memories of the Second Republic and glimpses at its forbidden knowledge. Moreover, many great minds are said to have had at least one scan before the practice fell into disuse—one of them being Dr. Darius Phavian himself.

Traits

Accessing a thoughtbox is never without potential complications. The nature of the memories stored can prove traumatic to anybody using them, as many people also recorded negative memories: the death of a loved one, crimes, violence, and others. Upon a botched Introvert + Stoic Mind roll, negative memories can lead to depression and reduces character's Extrovert (duration and severity of the reduction are determined by the gamemaster based on how traumatic the memories are and can last from hours to days).

Some Oubliette mind physicians argue that using a thoughtbox storing positive emotions is even worse. It assails the mind with deeply personal memories of falling in love, the birth of a child, or the mind-bending wonders of the Second Republic, known to cause a number of potential problems (on a botched Introvert + Stoic Mind roll). It was reported that some of these memories led users to seek for their "lost love," as they were unable to distinguish between the love of the person who had recorded the memory and their own memories of love and were seeking to find a loved one that has been dead for millennia. Another case was a bout of delusion caused by family memories; the hapless Avestite who did not resist the temptation was, although celibate, tormented by the memories of a large and happy family and began to hallucinate about his children and pregnancies.

While these are personal tragedies, reports indicate that using thoughtboxes opens up the mind for hideous temptations and has led many a user into the belief that life in the second Republic was better. It is this corrosive effect that the Church seeks to exterminate, as it infects the believers with Republicanism, and often atheism or worse delusions.

However, the fact that secrets lie hidden in the thoughtboxes continues to tempt many an unfortunate soul to gamble their sanity.

Wraith Cowl

Tech Level: 9

Cost: 10,000 firebirds or more

While the suns blazed brightly in the last two decades of the Republic, ghost technology received great acclaim as the apocalyptic years drew nigh. In the sweeping fascination with death and destruction, technologies such as these received much attention from people beleaguered with curiosity and morbid desires to know life beyond death. The Republicans held such powerful and fiendish technologies that the curtailing of their natural lives was almost ineffable.

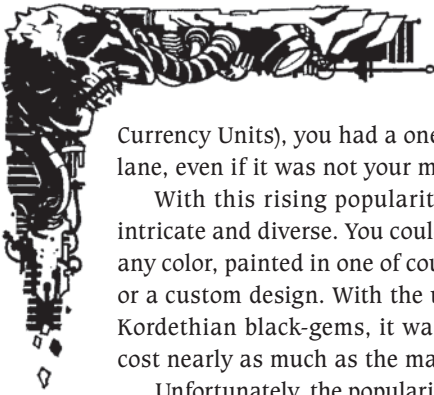
In the wake of this renewed attention, several unusual devices came to light; one of these, recovered from a Li Halan tomb on Kish, was called the Wraith Cowl. In appearance, the cowl is nothing more than a sleek black hooded cloak that absorbs light in an unnatural way and hangs with a weight that belies the thinness of its fabric. To the touch, the fabric feels synthetic, and some have likened it to synthsilk or perhaps a refined form of vinyl. Once donned, the wearer slowly fades from sight over the course of a few seconds, a truly eerie and uncanny view. The user becomes a non-corporeal being, nothing more than motes of ephemeral substance and phantasmal form. Essentially, the device claims the power to transmute its wearer into a ghost or at least into the form of a ghost.

The wearer experiences a strange euphoria while wearing this cloak, feeling detached and elevated; mundane cares and concerns drift away as the wearer literally drifts into a parallel realm. Individuals who become caught up in the use of this cloak find themselves increasingly separated from the world. This device passed through a number of different owners in the years prior to the Fall, each in turn became distracted and distant from the concerns of the mundane. The eminent doctor and psycho-physician Dr. Erik Hansman-Glass recorded this affliction and gave it the name 'Phantasmal Disassociation'; his notes even recount the case of one owner of this device who simply disappeared and was never seen again, though whether this was as a result of using this device or simply a psychotic breakdown is unknown. As a result, a great deal of local folklore exists about the Wraith Cowl, and it seems that every world now has its own version of events recalled as a warning for those who would traffic with the realm of the dead.

The Church's position on this, of course, is that such a device is merely one example of the corrupting influence of technology and should not be taken as an isolated facet of the downfall of the Republic.

Traits

When donned, the Wraith Cowl fades the wearer out of the physical world and into the parallel realm of the dead. Transition from one realm to the other is accompanied by the profound easing of mundane burdens. For the wearer,



the world becomes cast in a sepia glow, like an ancient photograph. Misty indistinct forms come and go all around the wearer but no communication is possible without the use of psychic or theurgic powers. The spirit-forms around the wearer will be those that naturally inhabit that area, though using this device during a Manja ceremony or at the place of antinomian practice will be profoundly different.

Moving within the realm of the dead is a simple matter of walking, but it feels like trying to run in a dream; there are no physical barriers nor physical concerns, and the wearer must make a Calm + Focus goal roll to recall their purpose or simply waft through the ether as a ghost without the burdens of physical responsibility. A critical failure turns the sublime experience into a nightmare as the denizens of this twilight world realize that the person is an intruder upon their world and rush forward to warn him of the dangers.

The Wraith Cowl will suck Wyrd from the wearer at a rate of 1 per minute. When all the character's Wyrd is expended, the cowl fades back in to the physical realm. If the wearer sheds the cowl while in the realm of the dead, it immediately becomes physical again, but the user does not, instead he becomes a ghost doomed to haunt the place of his folly.

Psi Devices

Psychic powers are subtle and often dark abilities. All people gifted, or cursed, with this ability find that they are able to project their thoughts onto reality. They are capable of projecting these thought forms so powerfully that they are capable of performing supernatural abilities. What follows is a compendium of devices that draw upon dangerous forms of occult power, harnessing their blasphemy within a further blasphemy of technology. Such devices pose nothing but decay and danger to the fabric of society.

"Psychotronics is a dead science, long gone with many other wonders of the Republic. Of course a few examples of that technology still exist, but we need to be able to produce these devices in greater numbers so that we can deploy greater psychic force through fewer operatives and so increase our capability in a campaign of direct action."

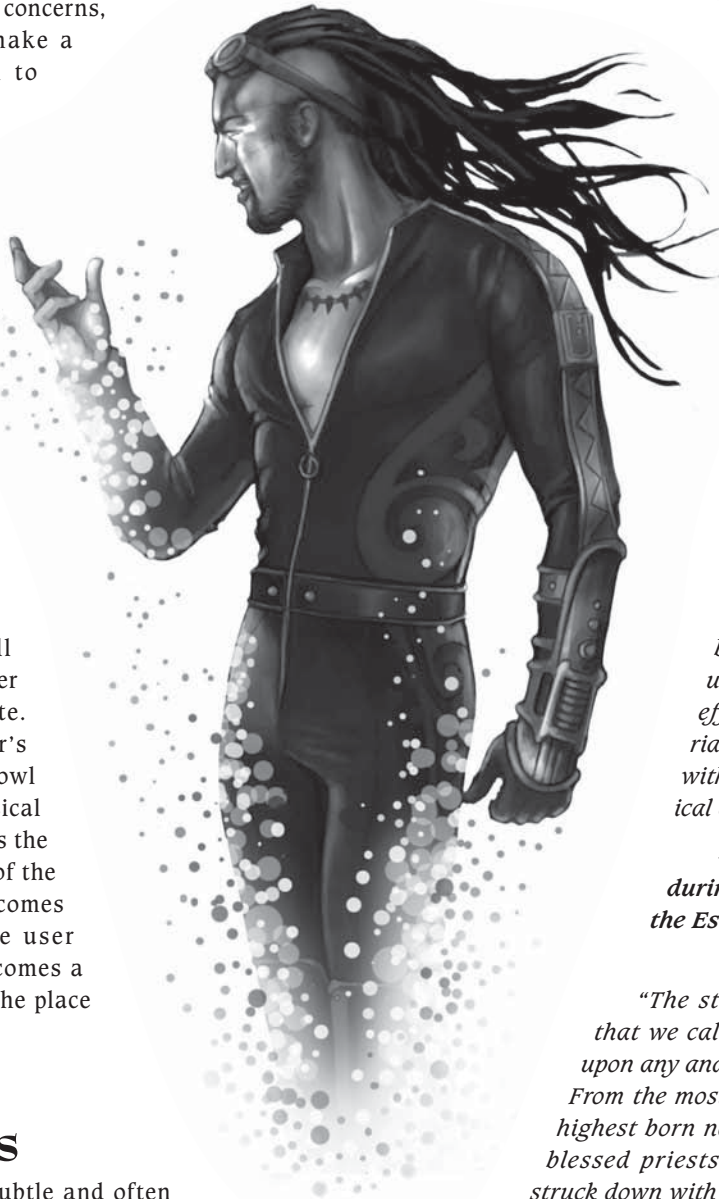
—Kordel Addington-Syme, *Excerpt from Invisible Path Coven meeting, Manitou 5001*

"We are aware that crystalline structures are the most readily able to polarize on an atomic level and align to produce the so called psychotronic lens effect. But I can reveal that my research has gone far beyond these simply physical limitations. Ideas themselves have energy and a pseudo-physicality about them that can allow them to be altered and manipulated to form lens-like effects in variant material forms, sometimes even without the need for a physical containment matrix."

—Dr Argus H. Planard, *during a conversation with the Esteemed Doramos, 3647*

"The strange and dark power that we call Psi may lay its curse upon any and without seeming cause. From the most vulgar peasant to the highest born noble and even the most blessed priests may find themselves struck down with this blasphemy against the Pancreator. The most frightening aspect of Psi is that there is no moral structure to guide their powers and these often frightened and vindictive people end up consumed by their inner demons."

—The abstract from Bishop Questor Philamon's letter to the Synecullum, *reporting on the nature of psychics*



Since the early years of the Phavian Institute it has been known that it was not just people that could display psychic ability, but that some types of naturally occurring crystals also displayed psi-like effects. Some of these a crystals could be used as lenses enhancing or retarding a trained psychic's abilities; others would deform or change in some way when brought into contact with a psychic field. The science that developed from examining these animate-inanimate psychic interactions was called Psychotronics, though that name is now all but lost amongst the pages of history books.

Psychotronics have a much darker side; not only can abilities be enhanced or retarded, but weapons can be designed to manipulate psychic thought fields and have a direct effect upon the Urge of a psychic. Though this aspect of research was never mandated as part of the Phavian Institute, it is believed that certain rogue elements made specific advances in 'Urge-tech' weapon systems during the latter years of the Emperor Wars.

Psychotronics

Tech Level: 7

Cost: 300 firebirds for psi-switches (enough for a small house), 500 firebirds for a psi-detector, 750 firebirds for a psi-counter, 1,500 firebirds for a psi-calibrator

While some psychics could manipulate matter with telekinetic skill, the work of the Phavian Institute discovered some physical substances which were readily psycho-reactive and receptive to the abilities of many different disciplines. The most common examples to survive to the modern time are the psi-switches, a tiny matrix that warps depending on the presence and interaction with a psi-field. During the Second Republic, these were curiosities installed in the homes of psychics so that they could easily manipulate lighting or other simple controls. It was quickly discovered that this same technology had other uses; materials could be designed and built that measured the degree of warping in the matrix which could be used to form a battery of psi tests to establish a candidate's potential and to calibrate training programs to the precise needs of the student.

Traits

All these devices work by the same basic principles; what changes is the presence and sensitivity of the instruments to measure the matrix deformity. In a simple psi-switch, the matrix is warped between two states (usually on and off). These devices can be operated by a psychic on an almost subconscious level and require no conscious effort or expenditure of Wyrd.

Psi-detectors: A diagnostic tool that contains matrixes calibrated to deform depending on the type of psi exhibited by the target. If the target is willing, the device can recognize and identify all the psi-paths that target possesses. If the target is unwilling he can try to resist using a Calm + Stoic Mind goal roll. If successful, he displays no psi-talents.

Psi-counters: A more sophisticated version of the psi-detector that not only identifies the paths an individual is proficient in but can give an indication of the relative strength of these talents. If the target is willing, the device can recognize and identify all the psi-paths that target possesses and gives an indication of the relative strength of these paths. If the target is unwilling, he can try to resist using a Calm + Stoic Mind goal roll. If successful, he displays no psi-talents.

Psi-calibrator: The most sophisticated version that works like a psi-counter but can make precise readings about the strengths of each psychic path. If the target is willing, the device can recognize and identify all the psi-paths that target possesses and give an accurate reading of the strength of theses paths. If the target is unwilling, he can try to resist using a Calm + Stoic Mind goal roll. If successful he displays no psi-talents. Using a psi-calibrator as a regular indicator of training progress will reduce the experience costs of new psi-powers from $2 \times$ current level to $1.5 \times$ current level.

Urge Bomb

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 500 firebirds each (but very hard to obtain)

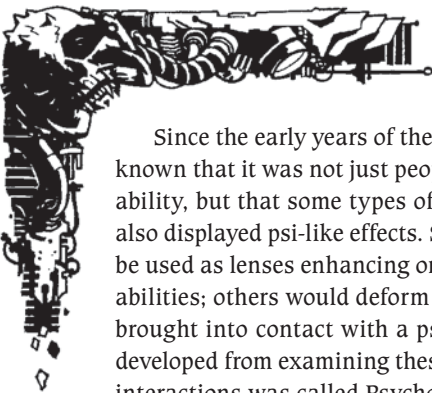
The urge bomb is a potentially horrific terror weapon if deployed against a small concentration of psychics. It is believed that the first such device was designed and built by the Invisible Path and deployed in an attack on a Favyana coven house on Manitou in 5001. The remains of the device were recovered in the aftermath of the events that sparked a war between coven members, leading to six fatalities. Rumor has it that the Hazat have purchased a number of these devices for deployment on the Kurgan frontier.

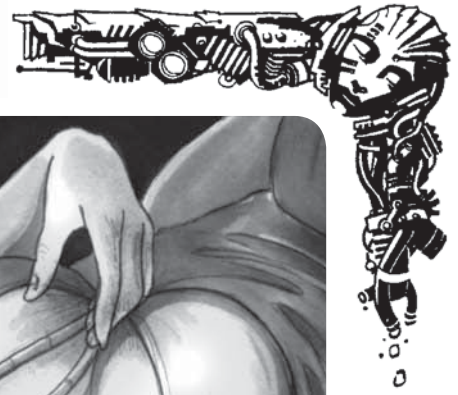
The urge bomb is not an explosive in the true sense of the word; it is purely a psychic weapon. When it goes off, any non-psychic in the area of effect will be completely unharmed and unaware of what is transpiring around them, although they may get caught up in the after effects.

Traits

When the device 'detonates,' it fills an area of about 30 meters diameter with the most hateful and urge laden psycho-electric thought fields. These will stay effective for about an hour, after which the device burns itself out and destroys its own sensitive electronics to limit what can be learned from the remains of the casing. Any psychic entering the area of effect experiences a temporary doubling of their own Urge score and the activating the dark side of the character's urge.

If the Dark Twin manifests (Urge 9) as a result, it will remain manifested after the character's Urge level returns to normal. Having an Urge of 10 or higher can lead to the spawning of multiple Dark Twins—all of whom are out to replace the character and each other.





Dream Readers and Dream Weavers

Tech Level: 6, 7, or 9

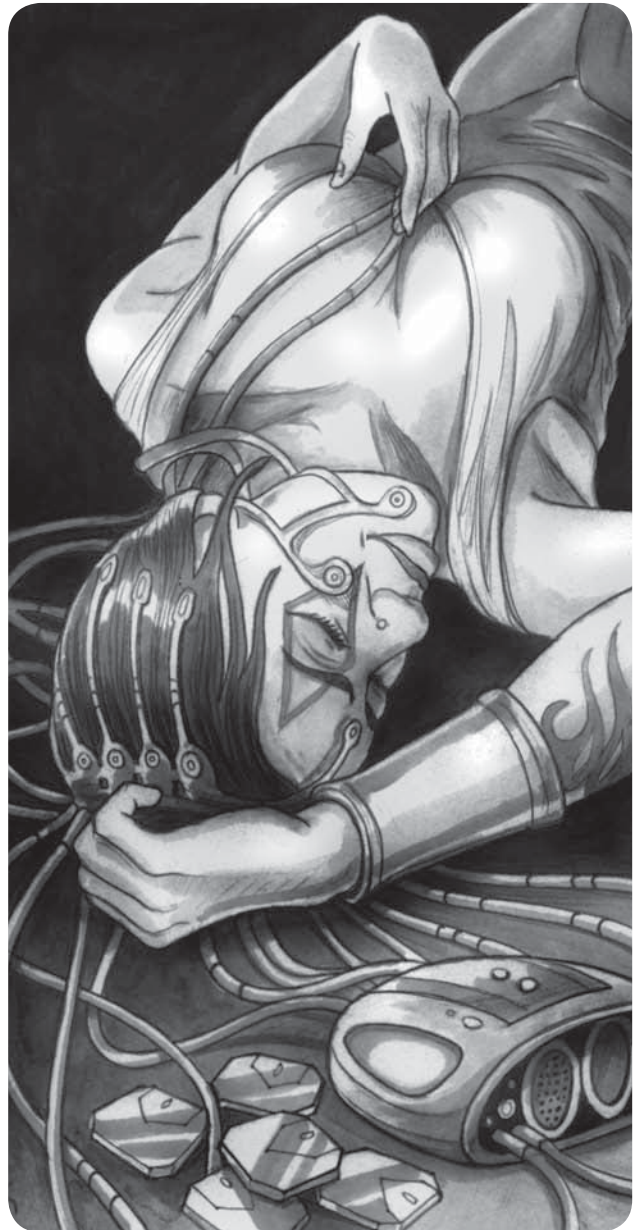
Cost: All prices are for a complete set of sensor helm, interpreter, and display unit. TL 6 (vidscreen display): 1,125 firebirds, TL 7 (holographic display): 2,115 firebirds, TL 8 (full-immersion VR suite, AI-slaved interpreter): 3,125 firebirds, TL 9 (soul shard interpreters): 10,000+ firebirds

Dream readers are the fruits of humanity's past obsession with mental sciences. By probing, reading, and interpreting the electrical impulses that are the physical evidence of the brain's activity, scientists could guess at what their subjects were thinking, or more particularly, dreaming. Subconscious impulses of a dream-state proved to be much stronger than waking thought.

The first attempts at dream reading proved predictably brutal, with scientists drilling probes into test subjects' skulls and recording stimulus and response. Researchers did not carry out all experiments of this nature on lower life forms, and more than a few aliens (and even some humans) suffered for science. The advent of super-conductor arrays allowed much more precise measurements without direct access to the brain. As the data grew, the sophistication of interpretation also increased. The original numeric readouts were replaced with vidscreens, holo-projectors, and eventually full-immersion virtual realities. After massive instant acclaim (vehemently opposed by the Church on the grounds that dream reading constituted an "invasion of essential humanity" and served as little more than fortune telling), interest in dream readers sharply declined. Sadly, in the cold light of day, dreams make little sense, even to their dreamers. Dream readers became a staple of university psychology and parapsychology departments and of little use elsewhere.

This public disinterest did not stop the intrepid researchers who continued on to the next step, known as dream weavers. The most sophisticated of these devices gave scientists access to a virtual reality simulation of ongoing dreams, but with limited effect. When monitored via separate d-readers, the induced results were at best ambiguous, and at worst, chaotic—irrespective of the quality of equipment and technical assistance. Dreamers' output, or reaction to induced dreams, varied enormously between cultures. For instance, the symbol of the lion is more respected on Hawkwood worlds than those of the Decados and so each dreamer would interpret and respond to the same stimulus in differing and often unpredictable and nonsensical ways.

Despite this, d-weavers found wider, and more sinister, uses than d-readers. Unscrupulous souls used the technology as an aid to brainwashing, torture, and interrogation. Rumors spread of intelligence agencies using dream weavers to break enemy conditioning and insert their own programming into unsuspecting moles. Extreme Church sects used the devices to force sinners to relive their guilt until—and sometimes beyond—their repentance. Corporate executives linked d-readers and d-weavers to plunge imaginative people into endless dreams of pleasure or their enemies into



endless nightmares and sold advertising when they broadcasted the results.

These machines, no matter how sophisticated, shared the same basic outlines: a sensing hood (ranging from a web of badly soldered wires to extremely soft pillows that completely covered the sleeper's head) and the interpreter (a dedicated think machine), linked in turn to the output devices: holographic projectors, vidscreens, VR simulators etc. The cheapest and nastiest set-ups relied almost completely on the skill of the operator to have any effect. The interpreter became more accurate as complexity and cost increased. The ultimate addition, however, never made its way into the public domain.

One of the last research projects of the Phavian Institute was the combination of dream readers with Urtech, using soul shards and philosophers' stones as interpreters. According to the recovered notes of August Young, an institute professor, this allowed the projection and modification



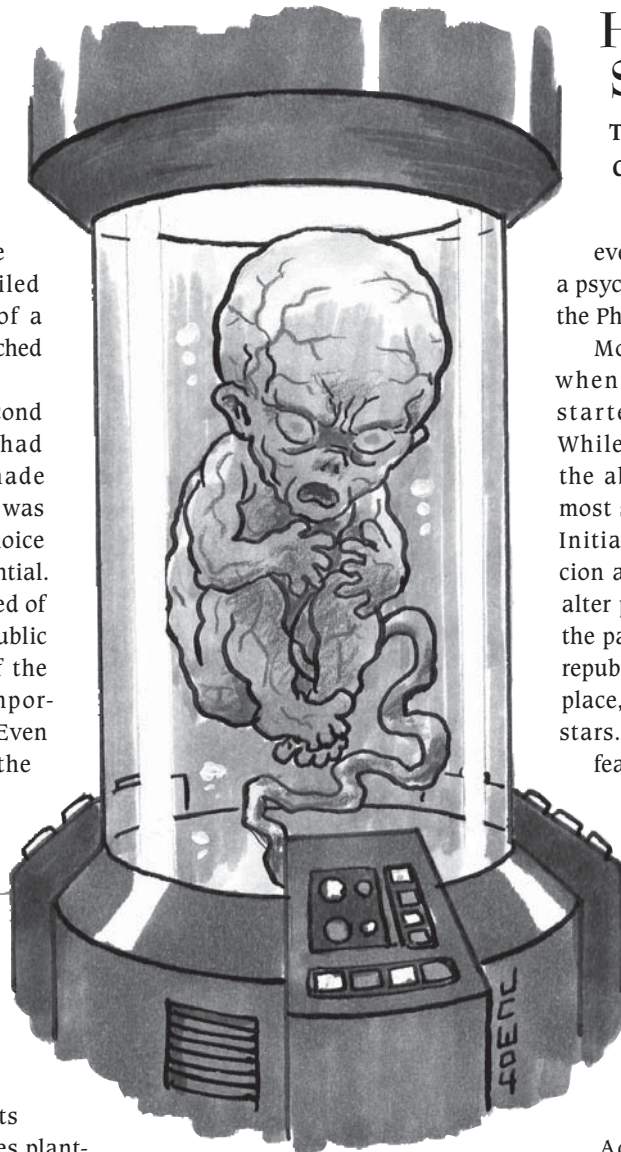
of the actual dream, not just the simulations previously achieved. The professor had no idea how or why these results were achieved, just that they were. It is perhaps fortunate the Fall came before he could complete the next stage of his research. He left detailed plans for the construction of a gigantic dream reader to be attached to the Gargoyle of Nowhere.

By the end days of the Second Republic, whole industries had grown up peddling ready-made dreams, feeding what, by then, was the borderline illicit vice of choice for the moneyed and the influential. The Church strongly disapproved of what it saw as an erosion of public morality, but in the chaos of the Fall there were far more important matters to worry about. Even so, when a sizable cache of the equipment appeared on one of the moons of Byzantium Secundus, Matriarch Adonacia had it seized and proscribed the technology in 4231.

Although proscribed, some found dream reading too useful to relinquish. Rumors have the Imperial Eye brainwashing their elite agents with Dream Weavers, sometimes planting entirely fictitious personalities into deep-cover agents. How much of this is true, and how much is Jakovian-inspired slander, is open to question, but either way the Inquisition has made no moves against the Eye. They have made stronger noises about certain Bannockburn Muster slavers—or according to the Leaguemeister, “rogue elements”—who struck up a lucrative Grimson smuggling business. Full-time dream induction is apparently the only way of keeping a cargo hold packed with a dozen Grimsons docile. The psychological implications of being kept in a repetitive dream-state for up to three months at a time is unknown, but, in the words of captured slaver ex-Private Marko Franklin, “It’s not like they’ve got great minds in the first place, innit?”

Traits

Using a dream reader or weaver successfully requires a Tech roll, modified by the tool’s Tech Level (TL6 gives +6, etc.). On rolls that the subject tries not to resist, like most attempts at healing psychological trauma, hypnosis, amnesia cures, and the like, the subject gets an opposed Ego roll. A resisting subject can use Knavery or Stoic Mind in addition.



Homo Sapiens Superior

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 7,000 to 20,000 firebirds

There is a darker side to every story and every person. For a psychic, that darker side is Urge. For the Phavian Institute, it is Hydra.

Most people reacted negatively when verifiable psychic powers started to manifest themselves. While many wished that they had the abilities showing up in people, most showed absolutely no aptitude. Initial excitement turned to suspicion and persecution. Nothing could alter preconceptions, except perhaps the passage of time. Years went by, a republic fell, a new one rose up in its place, and humanity spread over the stars. Horizons broadened, and the fear of psychics faded. Still, those lacking the gifts did not understand those who had them.

And so, they founded the Phavian Institute—to explore the uncharted regions of the mind and to uncover the deepest secrets of the subconscious.

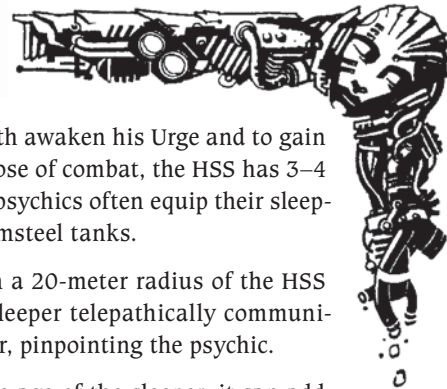
As with every science, boundaries—such as the Freedom of Thought Act—appeared. At first, the Phavian Institute abided by the rules,

but some psychics saw the laws as too rigid and too restrictive. Hydra, the black ops division of the Institute, crawled out of the darkness.

During the late 40th century, Hydra wound up under the influence of a radical faction of psychics. Its philosophy referenced a span of philosophers as ancient as Nietzsche, as well as the more modern “Higher Ethic” of Adil Ben Sorhab. Much like the Invisible Path in the 50th century, Hydra members held themselves to be superior to non-psychics—better, but not as much as they desired.

Thus, Hydra became obsessed with creating the uber-human. Through genetic manipulation and selective breeding, a new and more powerful generation of psychics emerged but still lacked perfection. Despite all the effort put into the program, the results demonstrated a meager 15 percent increase of psychic capabilities. Hydra abandoned the project, and for many years all hopes of creating the Homo Sapiens Superior were lost.

This changed abruptly in August, 3994. A man walked into the Phavian Institute Recruitment Facility on Byzantium Secundus and applied for a standard psi-aptitude test. The



results were astonishing. This man, who would become the foundation stone of the HSS research, was not an exceptional psychic himself. However, his DNA held the key to unlocking vast, untouched psi potential. Hydra quickly claimed this key. No one knew his origins or his later whereabouts—almost as if he never existed, even his name has been lost to records.

Ignorance of their host did not give Hydra pause, however; the group immediately began refining his DNA and in spring 3996, the first visible results were realized when the first of the Superiors was born. “Birth” is a subjective term—all the HSS surrogate mothers miscarried. Most of the children died within minutes of their premature births, but the stronger ones survived long enough to reach special tanks. These were the first Sleepers.

The G1 (Homo Sapiens Superior Generation One) or “sleeper,” looked like an overgrown fetus, about 60 cm long. Its head was disproportionately bigger than the rest of the body, and a thin membrane covered the creature’s eyes. To the causal observer and even most medical equipment, Sleepers appeared to be dead. Although at this stage, sexual characteristics should have been fully developed, peculiarly, the Sleeper was genderless. Sleepers were completely dependent on sustaining tanks, requiring full submersion in a fluid, which includes vitamins and basic nutrients designed to sustain life. Somehow unable to grow, these beings stayed suspended in a state of half-awareness—not dead, but never truly alive.

The second generation HSS were even larger than their predecessors and could survive without a containment tank, although still dependent on nutrient fluid showers. Around 70–80 cm long, this HSS evolved more fully—the eye membranes are gone, as is the lack of gender. Almost all Watchers were male, though the sole female Watcher was supposed to be even more powerful than its male counterparts. Their inherent ability to float about 2–3 m above the ground, combined with dreadful, ever-intent eyes, led scientists to the nickname “watcher.” Journals indicated watchers manifested psychic powers far greater in power than their vat-kept cousins.

The program is believed to have produced five generations of the creatures before the Fall, although even an approximation of the number created is impossible to guess. Recovered journals indicate that in the final days of the HSS program, a group of scientists relocated to a secure research facility known only as Cirrus Arrow. There, they hoped to continue the project without being disturbed, even by the Fall itself.

During the early Dark Ages, although the Church and the even more vigilant Inquisition tried to destroy each one of these accursed beings, several of the HSS surfaced on the black market following the Emperor Wars.

Traits

Sleepers provide numerous benefits to their psychic owners but only after the psychic successfully used the Bonding power from the path of Sympathy on it. It usually costs the psychic at least five Wyrd points to do so. Bonding a sleeper

forces a psychic to roll to both awaken his Urge and to gain 1–2 points of Urge. For purpose of combat, the HSS has 3–4 Vitality Points. That is why psychics often equip their sleepers with shields and/or ceramsteel tanks.

Warding: When someone in a 20-meter radius of the HSS uses a psychic power, the sleeper telepathically communicates with its bonded master, pinpointing the psychic.

Talisman: Depending on the age of the sleeper, it can add from +1 to +3 to the Goal Number for its bonded master’s psychic rolls. The HSS also provides a pool of one to three Wyrd points that the psychic can draw upon, as if it were a Wyrd Tabernacle. However, if the psychic drains all these points, the sleeper cannot use any of its powers until they replenish (which usually takes about six hours).

Watchers: The most powerful HSS—those that can survive without a containment tank—have an array of additional powers. Firstly, they can float about 2–3 meters above ground. Secondly, they have the following psychic powers: BrainBlast (Psyche Level 7) and Deflect (Turning Level 4). When someone uses a psychic power against it or its bonded master, the watcher automatically tries to deflect the power (Goal 13) and blast the attacking psychic (Goal 9).

Troecker’s FarSight Amplifier

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 30,000 firebirds

During the late Second Republic, the need for resources and living space reached its height. Several exploration corporations fought to dominate the market. A leader in this race, Exploratech, funded extensive research into alternative methods of exploration. At first the scientists concentrated on the automated survey technology (the Automated Explorer being the fruit of this research), but it still proved too slow.

Dr. Arvin Troecker, the head of the research division, chose a more radical path. Through back-channels he hired several rogue psychics (the Freedom of Thought Act, declared in 3894, prohibited commercial telepathy) and started the “Farseer Project.”

It took months, but finally the project saw fruition. Though it cost at least one of the psychics her sanity, Troecker’s team managed to retrieve coordinates from a jumpgate and then pinpoint another jumpgate with which to use them. Armed with this knowledge, Exploratech prepared to take over the market.

That proved its undoing. The executive board wanted too much too soon, and its frenetic activity caught the attention of the Phavian Bureau of Investigations. Exploratech closed after a number of “accidents” reduced the size of its board members and executives, and its different divisions were sold. The Farseer Project continued under the auspices of the Phavian Institute.

Troecker’s new supervisors proved even more demanding. They made subtle references to prophecies and premonitions when they told him they wanted to map as many worlds as possible. Raw psychic powers were not enough. Troecker



needed a focus, a way to amplify the energies. After years of research, he found what he was looking for—Soul Shards.

And so, the FarSight Amplifier was conceived. A cubic chamber, measuring roughly 3 meters in all dimensions, including a large seat, a crown-like transceiver, and the focal point of the device—the amplification generator, based around a single Soul Shard.

While it did little to speed up the mapping of the jump-web, it did allow psychics to increase the power of their abilities. Due to its fallibility (roughly five percent of the users suffered brain damage), the Institute only built a handful of those chambers before the Fall. One supposedly landed in the hands of the Invisible Path. The rest disappeared, believed destroyed at the hands of mobs or the Inquisition. This device needs to be powered by an agora-grade fusion generator to work.

Traits

The FarSight Amplifier adds +6 to the Goal Numbers of FarSight attempts for psychics with the Sixth Sense path, and it permits psychics without the Sixth Sense path to use FarSight. Non-psychics who try to use the device roll Extrovert + Observe. On a critical success, the user spontaneously becomes a psychic and learns the first power in the Sixth Sense Path. On a critical failure, the user suffers irreversible brain damage and collapses into a coma. On other results, nothing happens.

Psi Lens

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 1,000—5,000 firebirds

These crystalline lenses create a focal point for the subtle energies of the neuro-electric field of sentient beings, amplifying psychic power and clearing channels for its distribution and projection. Any person holding or wearing a psi lens may add +2 to all psychic power rolls. The most common method of employing a psi lens is to hold it to the center of the forehead, cited in surviving Phavian lore as the location of the pineal gland, that portion of the humanoid brain most strongly associated with psychic activity. Some psychics claim that positioning the lens at the crown of the skull can be equally effective. Owners of psi lenses often mount their lens in the desired location on a hat, headdress, helmet, or piece of jewelry (and sometimes even in the wildly elaborate hairstyles of the more affected nobility). Practitioners of the path of FarHand tend to instinctively hold the lens at arms length, aiming it at their target; when this is done in conjunction with the Throwing, Crushing, or Dueling Hand powers during combat, add +1 to the Throwing, Fight, Melee or Shoot rolls.

The majority of psi lenses are disks, from two to ten centimeters in diameter and convex on one side, composed of clear, colorless crystal, although those of later manufacture come in a wide variety of decorative shapes and colors. Psi lenses have been known to deteriorate somewhat with age and excessive use or abuse. Lenses which have been kept as heirlooms by families with strong tendencies toward

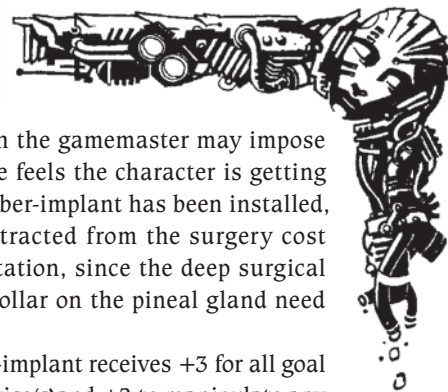


hereditary psychism tend to have milky or cloudy interiors. A lens which has been repeatedly used in very emotionally charged situations usually takes on the auric color which corresponds to that emotion. For example, one Hazat psychic, known for his short temper, often used his psi lens to BrainBlast his foes in fits of rage—that lens, now kept under lock and key deep within a Hazat household vault, is reputed to have a garish blood-red luster. Occasionally, a lens turns up with a jet-black appearance like obsidian; these are believed to have been used in Antinomian rites and are immediately confiscated by the Church to be launched into the heart of the nearest sun.

Many lenses of later manufacture were flawed in some way. This flaw may be as slight as a +1 modifier instead of the normal +2, or may cause the psychic effect to be delayed by a random amount of time, or may redirect the psychic action toward an unintended target.

When not in use, a psi lens is invisible to Wyrd vision powers but scintillates sharply when psi energy is focused within it.

The first psi lenses were developed by the Phavian luminary Dr. Angus de Lacroix from the fragments of a Soul Shard which had been destroyed in some ancient geologic upheaval on the planet Manitou. Utilizing the poorly understood “crystallmorphing” technology recently stolen from the Vau, Dr. de Lacroix was able to shape the fragments into simple utilitarian lenses which were polarized on the subatomic level, making them powerful conductors of



psychic energy. Early testing showed that the amplifying power of the lens caused increases in the clarity of telepathic transmission and extrasensory reception, as well as the strength, adjustment and fine manipulation of physical forces generated by telekinesis.

Satisfied that his invention was a safe and effective aid for personal development and the further evolution of mankind, Dr. de Lacroix personally supervised the creation of over one thousand psi lenses before meeting an untimely death in a yachting accident. The production of the lenses was continued by his research assistants, Dr. Edwin-Powys Darling and Dr. Otto Switi, two shy and retiring academics who suddenly found themselves captains of a booming industry. The psi lens became one of the major fashion fads of the late Second Republic as word-of-mouth spread and the psychologically transformative effects of the lenses were exaggerated. Production volume was stepped up, and experimentation led to alterations in lens shape and color.

It is believed that this economic pressure, coupled with Drs. Darlings and Switi's imperfect understanding of the crystalmorphing technique, resulted in a number of flawed lenses. Many tales of the "cursed family jewels" of this or that noble house probably have their origins in these flawed Psi lenses. Of those lenses that retain the traditional shape and colorlessness, an original Lacroix product may be identified by the "invisible" serial number near the rim of the lens's flat side; this number may only be read with an ultraviolet light source and 100X magnification.

Psyber-Implant

Tech Level: 8

Cost: High Tech: 2,500 firebirds; Mech: 1,500 firebirds; Think Machine: 3,000 firebirds; Volt: 2,000 firebirds (+2000 for pineal surgery)

Traits: Concealed, Expert Tech

A psyber-implant is a high-gain electrical circuit connecting the pineal gland with a mechanical time keeping device embedded somewhere in the cranial cavity, wiring the inner brain with external "contact points" on the scalp and forehead. This attunes the psychic's natural brainwaves with the artificial rhythms of technology, teaching the mind to think like a machine and thus allowing for a greater degree of interface between psychic powers and machines.

A psyber-implant is not linked to machines through any type of radio or energy transmission, and so a psychic's link with a machine cannot be jammed or intercepted by conventional technology. Contact is psychic and may only be disrupted by psychic means. Any individual device, whether a tool, weapon, vehicle, or musical instrument, may be "Bonded" to an implantee, either through intensive training or long familiarity.

There are four types of psyber-implants: High Tech, Mech, Think Machine, and Volt. Each type can only affect machines or aspects of machines of that type (e.g., using a Volt implant to interfere with the electrical ignition of an antique combustion driven vehicle). Characters may have as many different types of implants installed in their skull

as they can afford, although the gamemaster may impose a penalty on Wits rolls if he feels the character is getting too top heavy. Once one psyber-implant has been installed, 1,000 firebirds may be subtracted from the surgery cost for any subsequent implantation, since the deep surgical placement of an electrode collar on the pineal gland need not be repeated.

A psychic using a psyber-implant receives +3 for all goal rolls to affect her Bonded device(s) and +2 to manipulate any other machine of the implants type.

The psyber-implant has its origin in the cybernetic targeting and guidance systems used by fighter pilots in the early days of the Second Republic. Some pilots began to report the experience of "melding" with their vehicles, of feeling the frame and functions of the fighter as if it were their own body. Ensuing tests under simulated combat conditions showed that these particular pilots were able to push themselves and their craft beyond all the maximum parameters of their design and performance specifications. Further investigation revealed that the pilots were all latent or untrained psychics, and a fevered and secretive period of research and development followed, finally resulting in a crude prototype of the modern psyber-implant. This primitive apparatus was not a true psychic enhancer, as it was dedicated only to the telekinetic task of tripping servoswitches on prepared machines.

In the latter half of the Second Republic, public outcry arose against the manufacturers of the implants, Rockhardt Enterprises, when certain old research documentation tapes were leaked to the public. One recording showed one of the original psychic fighter pilots, Tetsuo "Ace" Jenner, who had since been immortalized as a pop icon, a fearless evolutionary pioneer, children's adventure story hero, and beloved spokesman for Rockhardt Enterprises, undergoing a tortuous 13-hour cranial vivisection. Faced with this and other massive civil rights suits from workers and test subjects, the Rockhardt arms merchants were forced to liquidate their assets.

The true psyber-implant was developed not long afterward by PsyberNet X, an interdisciplinary technologies coalition specializing in cybernetic medical prostheses and "alternatively abling" the handicapped. The implant became a genuine conduit linking man-mind with machine-mind. Some examples of PsyberNet X's successes from this period include surviving recordings of the Limbless Orchestra, the paintings of the Blind School and the romances of Zeenat Helen Saint-Trungpa, who, though imprisoned in a blasted cinder of a body by a stardrive core overcharge, nonetheless was able to publish over twenty-five novels a year by telepathically dictating them to her word processor.

Since the Fall, psyber-implants have mainly been the domain of the Engineer's Guild, who have developed highly specialized applications for psychic scientists and technicians. The intimate rapport that these gifted individuals share with their instruments tends to have an unnerving effect upon the populace at large and is at the root of many anti-tech superstitions. Outside of the Guilds, however, the primary source for psyber-implant technology is once again



the weapons merchants, and the majority of implants likely to be encountered outside of a high-tech environment are gunslingers and assassins telekinetically wielding Bonded weapons.

Traits

Below are some examples of how the different psychic paths can affect various types of tech. Note that the path of Omen is not included, as it has no direct application with regard to the psyber-implant. The range and duration for most powers are the same as their usual psychic versions, except for the Soma path, which requires that the implantee touch the machine she is affecting (unless additional Wyrd points are spent to extend the range).

Slug guns, powered armor and Diaspora-era starships are all covered by the Mech type implant (generally TL5 or less), while energy weapons, shields, and advanced starships from the Second Republic should be considered High Tech (TL7+).

FarHand

Roll: Tech + Tech Redemption, Drive or combat skill

Telekinetic manipulation can be useful with every conceivable form of technology, but the most common applications involve the Mech type implant.

Lifting Hand may be used to make a tool, device, or weapon instantly leap into the implantee's hand. Bonded objects may

be "called to hand" even when their exact whereabouts are not known (useful when rummaging through a disorganized toolbox or retrieving ones blaster from a pile of confiscated weapons). In combat, this is the equivalent of adding the implant bonus to Initiative (at the gamemaster's discretion), a Draw-and-Strike maneuver (with melee weapons), or Quick Draw (with firearms).

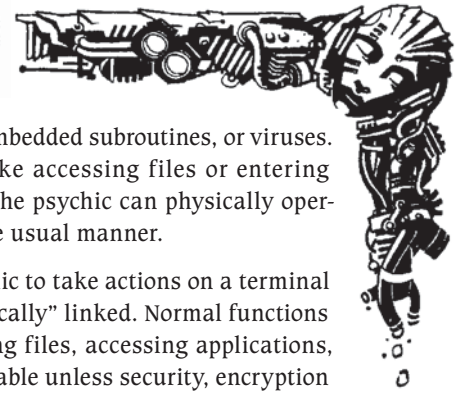
Throwing Hand may be used to guide thrown or slung missiles (but not firearm projectiles). The gamemaster may assign a penalty for extreme uses of this power. (Throwing a dart around a right angle corner, for example, is a Demanding task.)

Crushing Hand may be used to steady a weapon for precision strikes. The implant bonus can be added to the maneuver's Athletic Strike. Pierce or Snapshot.

Dueling Hand may be used to operate any single handheld device from a distance.

FarArms may be used to drive a land- or watercraft without touching the controls. This does not apply to Beastcraft. The implantee need not be on board the craft if she is familiar with its type but must have a clear view of the road or surrounding terrain. When wresting control of a craft from the normal driver, the gamemaster may require contested rolls. (Drive skill required; Mech/Volt Redemption required for bypassing controls.)





FarWall may be used with a Volt implant to conduct electrical current without wires or cables. Range is normally touch (as the psychic is conducting the current through her own body without damage or shock) but may be increased with Wyrd points to sensory (and beyond, with an appropriate Sixth Sense power). The gamemaster may require an additional targeting roll (Extrovert + Shoot) if this “lightning bolt” is to be projected accurately toward, say, a receptor socket or an enemy’s weapon. Complex modulations of electrical current such as audio, video, or think machine signals will be hopelessly scrambled unless level 3 of either Sixth Sense or Psyche (see below) can be applied also. The Volt Redemption skill is required.

AirStride allows the psyber-psychic to pilot any aircraft with which he is familiar without touching the controls. The psychic must be on board the craft and have a clear view. The Drive Aircraft skill is still required.

Demolishing Hand enables the psyber-psychic with a Volt implant to actually generate electrical energy within his body, transforming him into a walking battery. This current can be transferred to conductive materials simply by touch or can be projected short distances via FarWall (level 6, above). The Volt Redemption skill is required if this is used to power electrical equipment.

AirDance may be used to remotely pilot an aircraft. Since maintaining visual contact is a problem in the remote control of far-ranging vehicles, most implantees with this power also use Sixth Sense level 5 (below) with Bonded cameras mounted on the craft.

Psyche

Roll: Tech + Think Machine

The path of telepathy may only be applied to think machines or golems, because they are the only type of technology that possesses any sort of rudimentary “mind.” Communicating with most think machines is a simple, straightforward affair not unlike conversing with a small child; linking minds with a large data library, an expert navigation system, or an artificial intelligence, on the other hand, can be overwhelming, necessitating some Wits rolls to keep the psychic from losing herself in the vast and complex info-environment. A common pitfall, as with normal telepathy, is the language barrier; the psychic must be familiar with the targeted computers programming language in order to operate effectively. An implantee’s presence in a computer system cannot be detected through conventional security programs but only by another implantee currently targeting the same system. Artificial Intelligences can resist psychic probing with Wits (Tech Level 7) or their best Spirit characteristic (Tech Level 8).

MindSight enables an implantee to perceive all the normal functions of an active computer terminal; e.g., read open files, follow the processes of an application in use, see what is being accessed and how, etc. This does not allow the psychic to see files which have not been opened, protected

or encrypted information, embedded subroutines, or viruses. No action may be taken like accessing files or entering commands or data unless the psychic can physically operate the terminal itself in the usual manner.

MindSpeech allows a psychic to take actions on a terminal with which she is “telepathically” linked. Normal functions like viewing menus, opening files, accessing applications, and entering data are allowable unless security, encryption or other safeguards deny access.

HeadShackle empowers the psychic to override any single function currently in action, issuing a number of commands equal to his victory points plus one. The gamemaster may assume that good security software requires at least a dozen such overrides (passwords, codes, etc.) to overcome. This power may be used in addition to, or instead of, conventional “hacking” methods. (Science; Think Machine.)

BrainBlast can be used to crash any operating system targeted through MindSight. The gamemaster may make this a sustained action for larger systems, such as starship think machines. The victory points on this roll equal the number of spans before the system can be brought back on line.

Sympaticus allows an implantee to transfer data between multiple target systems, be they other think machines or human minds. If the targeted receiver is a person who does not possess an internal think machine, the implantee must make sustained Wits + Science Think Machine rolls to translate any appreciable quantity of information to be “downloaded” (the number of victory points required depends on the amount of information).

Puppetry empowers the implantee to issue any sort of system override command or rewrite any program in the targeted system, giving her total control over the system. This does not grant total knowledge of that system, however, which must be explored over time. A Tech Level 7 AI can be unravelled in under a year. Mucking about in a complex and unfamiliar system can bring wildly unexpected results at the gamemaster’s discretion.

Sixth Sense

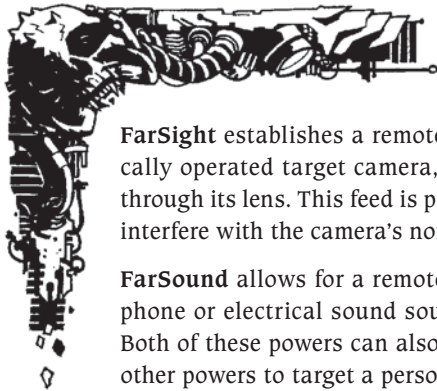
Roll: Tech + Observe

Extrasensory perception acts entirely through the Volt implant, giving the psychic the power to perceive, intercept, and manipulate the electrical “sensory” impulses of the mechanical world.

Darksense allows one to see electrical current, even through light insulation, a valuable tool in diagnosing faulty electrical systems or figuring out how an unknown device works.

Subtle Sight can be used to actually read a complex electrical signal, such as sound or video feeds; the psychic must physically touch the wire carrying the signal and, when attempting to receive radio wave transmissions, must be in physical contact with a suitable antenna.





FarSight establishes a remote video feed from any electrically operated target camera, enabling the psychic to see through its lens. This feed is psychic in nature and does not interfere with the camera's normal functioning.

FarSound allows for a remote audio feed from any microphone or electrical sound source, as with FarSight above. Both of these powers can also be used in conjunction with other powers to target a person or thing through a radio or video link. (For instance, reading the aura of someone on live television, or scanning the mind behind the voice coming out of the Squawker.)

Shared Sense transforms the implantee into a human transceiver capable of tuning into any type of broadcast communication signal and transmitting it to bonded targets. At this level no antenna is necessary to receive radio waves. The psychic may also broadcast mental sounds in the form of radio waves, making him a walking Squawker.

Senses Shock allows the psychic to broadcast a mental image or short visual sequence in the form of radio waves. Alternately, this power may be used to overload a circuit; the amount of victory points required varies with size and Quality modifier.

Soma

Roll: Tech + Vigor

The lower levels of the path of bodily control can be applied to any type of tech, but the upper levels generally concern themselves with High Tech, and energy fields in particular. The psyber-psychic must either be within the energy field radius, or must touch the field's generator or controls, or the field surface itself.

Toughening can be used to assist a device, vehicle, or weapon which is operating in extremely adverse conditions or at the limit of its performance capacity. The implantee's victory points offset any negative modifiers but do not add positive modifiers.

Strengthening enables a machine to increase its power capacity, allowing vehicles to travel faster, construction machines to lift heavier loads, or an energy shield to raise its maximum rating by an amount equal to the victory points on the activation roll (usually lasts for one span per roll).

Quickening allows a machine to operate with greater precision and speed, improving the maneuverability of a vehicle or the accuracy of a long range weapon. The implantee's victory points act as positive modifiers to such rolls.

Hardening helps tech resist direct physical damage, whether it comes from a jarring impact, internal power overloads or, in the case of Bonded items, yearly wear and tear. The implantee's victory points act as armor dice.

Sizing enables a psychic to expand or contract any contained energy field, such as a shield. Each victory point extends or withdraws the field radius by one quarter of its present length; one point would be needed to expand a dueling shield to

assault shield size, and two to expand it to battle size, while four makes room for a whole other person. Each increment of expansion reduces a shield's maximum rating by one.

Masking allows the shaping of an energy field into any specially sculpted shape. Severe distortions of a shield's surface area can cause unhealthy fluctuations in its minimum/maximum ratings. This allows a personal energy shield to be attached to nonhuman objects, such as cars or doors.

Recovering enables a machine to self-repair most basic physical damage or temporary malfunctions it has suffered, such as cracking, metal fatigue, locked gears, jams and misfires, or corrosion. The gamemaster may rule that thoroughly demolished parts or components must be replaced normally. The implantee's victory points regenerate the object's Vitality (and may improve the object's Quality modifier; gamemaster's discretion).

Slowing helps a machine run at peak energy efficiency and can be used to increase the hours of life in a fusion cel, the mileage in a tank of fuel, the number of shots in a blasters charge or the number of hits an energy shield can take (all by amounts equal to the implantee's victory points).

Closing allows for the extreme fine tuning of an energy field, like adjusting it to filter out specified gases or types of energy, reconfiguring its design and purpose, or lowering the minimum rating of a shield (one point per victory point).

Riot Controller

Tech Level: 7

Cost: 6,000 firebirds

The 40th century brought significant breakthroughs in science, some of the most astounding being the many developments in metapsychology. This new discipline combined the achievements of psychology with the more vague "art" of psychics.

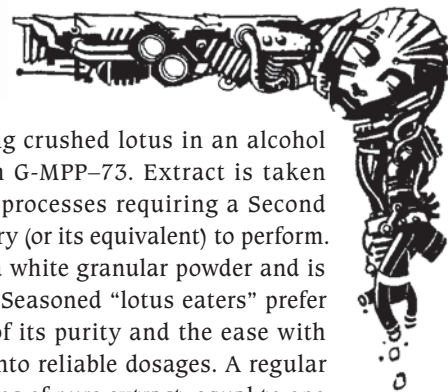
It turned out that people with the Psyche ability, particularly those who also studied psychology, could readily influence others, especially large groups of people. On Criticorum, home to much of this research, the father of the famous 'Peace Through Talks' campaign, Dr. Luis Steinhof demonstrated the practical use of metapsychology. Wherever unrest broke out, he or his students appeared and calmed down the crowd. Soon, the media caught interest in them, and so did the government.

As general unrest heightened in 3989, it became harder and harder to control the manifestations. Riots erupted all over the Known Worlds. The Second Republic needed a way to clear the air, and many hoped metapsychology was that way.

Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent that there were just too few metapsychologists, leaving Steinhof with a dilemma. The doctor could not produce metapsychologists with a wave of a magic wand, but perhaps he could recreate their effect.

For help, Dr Steinhof turned to two major corporations: the Sound Empire, a leader in the experiential music industry,





and Think-Tank Inc., creators of the new positronic brain. After a decade of costly research, their efforts created the Riot Controller. The Riot Controller resembled a metal box the size of a small book and it acted as a portable brain-wave emitter designed to imitate the brainwave patterns of a metapsychologist. The Controller, when activated, soothed negative emotions and lowered aggression levels in nearby humans, though it did not affect the alien psyche.

Unfortunately, the Riot Controller appeared on the market too late to prevent the Fall, but in 4301, the Riot Controller found a new application. Shan Dirge, a low noble of the minor house Dirge, discovered that the brainwave patterns could be reversed, creating a rage-inducing machine. Some speculate the Malignation Uprising of 4307 was the by-product of this 'Rager's' final tests.

From then on, the Riot Controller became a bestseller among the nobility and a Decados favorite. While many of these machines were destroyed during their own riots, enough survived to find occasional use during the Emperor Wars, and even now rumors spread that sinister agents of chaos employ this device as a weapon against the still-unstable Emperor.

Traits

The Rager runs on standard batteries (these hold enough charge to use the device for approximately 12 hours). Depending on the proximity to emitter, the Riot Controller subtracts 1–4 from the Goal on all Calm-based rolls and adds 1–4 to the Goal of all Passion-based rolls. An hour of exposure forces its victim to make a Calm roll or begin acting in an aggressive manner, though most users speed up the process with agent provocateurs. It does not work on aliens.

Distance	Passion Bonus/ Calm Penalty
Within 10 meters	4
10–20 meters	3
20–30 meters	2
30–40 meters	1
Beyond 40 meters	0

Zhrii-ka'a

Tech Level: 2 (to make tincture)/ 6 (to make extract) or 7 (to artificially maintain a living lotus plant)

Cost: 1 firebird per bottle of tincture or 25 mg dose of extract/ 100 for a living lotus plant

This exotic vegetable oil (also known as “lotus juice,” “psi-key,” “eye-openers,” or “shriekers”) contains a unique chemical once known to Second Republic psychopharmacologists as G-metapolyphtheratripineatide-73, or G-MPP-73, which mimics an unknown neuropeptide in most humanoid brains. Once in the brain, G-MPP-73 increases electrical conductivity, floods certain specific areas with serotonin and tryptamines, and directly stimulates the pineal gland. Lotus juice is available in two forms, tincture and extract.

Tincture is made by soaking crushed lotus in an alcohol solution which bonds with G-MPP-73. Extract is taken from the lotus by complex processes requiring a Second Republic chemistry laboratory (or its equivalent) to perform. Extract in its pure state is a white granular powder and is usually dissolved in water. Seasoned “lotus eaters” prefer the extract, both because of its purity and the ease with which it can be measured into reliable dosages. A regular dose is around 25 micrograms of pure extract, equal to one drop of extract solution.

In low level doses of 25 micrograms or less, this drug produces mild hallucinations and occasionally disorienting alterations in perception, not unlike the primitive “psychedelics” of pre-Diasporan Urth. At 50 mgs, the perceptual floodgates are flung wide open, inundating the brain with vastly increased sensory input and overloading its ability to selectively pay attention to some perceptions and ignore others. This state is functionally identical to the Sixth Sense power Sensitivity, but, due to the overload effect, the gamemaster should not allow the character under the influence to use the +3 Perception modifier unless a) the character is already a psychic with the Sensitivity power—in which case a) the power is considered automatically active (at no Wyrd cost) for the duration of the drugs effect (thus rendering the psychic vulnerable to bright lights, loud noises, a pummeling, etc); b) the character has been

Buying Tincture

Tincture is usually stocked by Charioteer medicine shows, whose brightly-colored one dose bottles are referred to as “a specialty item—ask ‘round back after the show...” The strength and quality of tincture varies widely, which makes taking large doses in this form a risky proposition. When a player character buys tincture, the gamemaster should roll a d20; this roll determines the potency of the tincture as compared to an equivalent dosage of extract. The gamemaster may decide (secretly, even!) whether to apply this roll to all bottles in a batch, or to roll individually for each one. Tincture potency may be determined with the spectro-analyzer from a NanoTech MedPak and a successful Tech + Chemistry Science roll.

Roll	Potency
1–4	25 mgs or less
5–12	25–50 mgs
13–17	50–100 mgs
18	100–500 mgs (roll again: divide by four, rounding up, and multiply by 100)
19	500–1000 mgs (roll again: divide by four, rounding up, and multiply by 100, then add 500)
20	1000+ mgs



trained in advanced meditative techniques, such as those taught by the Eskatonic Order and most covens, and makes a Wits + Focus (or Stoic Mind) roll; or c) the character is an experienced "lotus eater."

The 100 mg dose is the threshold for total pineal stimulation and the manifestation of psi energies. A non-psychic or an untrained psychic in this state is subject to more severe hallucinations which nearly always contain some important element of truth within them, usually in a symbolic form that may require some interpretation, as with dreams. A trained psychic in this state does not hallucinate, but gets a +1 modifier to all psi rolls, with an additional +1 per additional 100 mgs. This modifier applies to Urge rolls as well.

As dosage is increased to 250 mgs, the hallucinations of non-psychics may become clearer and more direct, less open to interpretation and even merging with full-blown visions, premonitions, or clairvoyant or telepathic flashes. Rare instances of telekinetic "poltergeist" activity are known to occur as well.

The overdose threshold is 500mgs; at this point the blood vessels around the pineal gland are so engorged as to constrict blood flow to other parts of the brain, resulting in stroke and other brain damage. For each hour that a character is under the influence of 500 mgs or more, the gamemaster should have them roll Endurance + Vigor, with a -1 penalty for each additional 100 mgs over 500. Failure means that the gamemaster must choose one characteristic to be permanently reduced by an amount equal to one plus the penalty on the roll.

Dosages of 700 mgs or more have been known to spontaneously awaken psi power in non-psychics (those that survive the overdose threshold). As with the sensory overload effect, advanced mental training is necessary to keep the new power under control. Without such precautions, and sometimes in spite of them, fledgling psychics tend to go quickly insane, their minds torn apart by their wild new

talent. If a character survives this state but fails a roll of Ego (or Faith, whichever is primary) + Focus (or Stoic Mind), she will develop a neurosis or even a psychosis. The player and gamemaster should work out the details.

A dose of 1,000 mgs or more invariably ends with demonic possession. Or so the Church will tell you, and there is plenty of hard evidence in their exorcists' case files to prove it. The lotus eating cults of Manitou, however, explain that this absolute degree of lotus consciousness peels back all

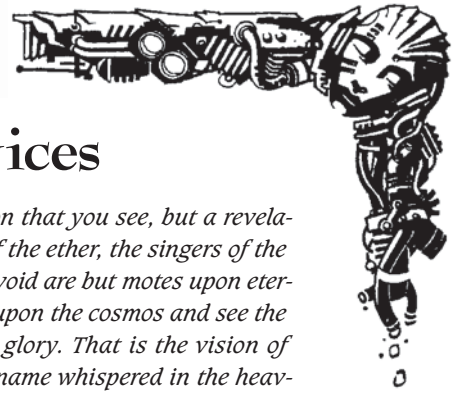
the outer layers of the personality like flower petals, exposing the innermost core of the psyche to the open air, as it were. Like most pantheistic pagans, the lotus eaters recognize a wide variety of common spiritual beings which could affect a humanoid in this vulnerable state, for both good or ill. But the wisest lotus eaters all agree that no demon can resist the sweet seductive aroma of a freshly bared soul.

Early guild colonists on the planet Manitou found themselves in a veritable paradise of beautiful and exotic flora, foliage that seemed to speak directly to the innate human love of green growing things. Of all these floral wonders, none caught the imaginations of the humans up in its spell like the beautifully iridescent Zhrii-ka'a, or Jewel-Eye Lotus. The planet's Vau protectors forbade the harvest of the lotus, hinting that it contained a power too great for humans in their present state of development to wield responsibly.

But, from deep within its natural habitat in the mist swamps, the Zhrii-ka'a sent forth sweetly scented dreams to the human mind, rising up on its stalk out of the mists of unconsciousness and unfurling its petal-lids, rolling its single sparkling "eye" to gaze upon the soul of man with the canny, knowing look of a peer. Or a friend. So, naturally, someone eventually had to grind one up and eat it. Just to see.

A great deal of folklore has since sprung up around this pioneering act by an unnamed colonist. Church history maintains that she was a lost traveler who had wandered into the





swamp unwittingly, and after several days of gradual starvation and aimless searching for a way out, finally fell upon a lotus and devoured it in hunger and desperation. Instantly her soul was ripped open and laid bare, and every manner of evil swooped down from the darkness between the stars and made its nest in her heart. From that point on she was a tortured madwoman, and her raving and howling can still be heard in the mist swamp when there is no moon in the sky. The stories one hears in the lotus eater subculture, however, tell quite a different tale. In these versions she was a skilled and driven ethnobotanist as well as a fearless neuronautical explorer, her discovery of the lotus' unique properties was no accident but the result of careful and systematic exploration and experimentation.

In either case, while the name of this person may be lost to history, her legacy of the lotus has thrived, even in its dwindling native environment where it is lovingly cultivated by a coalition of local lotus eating covens. Safe from the Inquisition and only nominally policed by the Vau, the lotus eaters are a pantheistic nature worshipping cult who regard the Zhrii-ka'a as a living sacrament, to be nurtured and cultivated with respect and profound ceremony. There are, however, fringe elements associated with the cult who occasionally manage to smuggle seeds and even dried plants to black market chemical labs outside of Manitou. Most canny observers agree that the Vau allow the lotus eaters to practice in order to study the effects of Zhrii-ka'a on humans, but the complete disappearance of smugglers caught by the Vau (not to mention the horrific rumors surrounding each disappearance) makes it clear that the Vau never intended to let the power of Zhrii-ka'a loose in the Known Worlds.

Though there are very few ecosystems outside of Manitou that will support this delicate species, the Jewel-Eye Lotus can be found in the great hydroponic corridors of the Academy Interatta, as well as some private hothouses run by free-thinking libertine nobles. Rumor tends to link the least reputable members of House Decados with the black market lotus juice trade, but little has ever been proven. Nearly all worldly and decadent noble youths have either experimented with tincture or know someone who has; mock "lotus eater" cults enjoy frequent revivals among the young and affluent, usually in the wake of a Charioteer medicine show featuring some popular minstrel ensemble facing charges of pagan heresy from the Church.

Some psychic teachers who can be contacted through the Favyana use carefully controlled amounts of extract as part of their training program; most will sell small quantities of extract to psychics whom they know and respect, but may be willing to part with more if they are in desperate need of firebirds or have heard that the Inquisition is heading their way.

Much extract traffic is controlled by certain cells of the Invisible Path, who consider it an evolutionary crucible which burns away the terminally unenlightened and spares the truly gifted ones. Young ambitious members of the Path favor the drug's power boost when challenging their elders to leadership duels.

Sathra Devices

"It is not a perversion that you see, but a revelation. We few, the pilots of the ether, the singers of the stars, the diviners of the void are but motes upon eternity. Few who dare look upon the cosmos and see the Pancreator in his naked glory. That is the vision of Sathra! Sathra! It is the name whispered in the heavens. It is the Logos."

—Testimony of the heretic Quan Lee, shortly before being razed by the tender mercies of the Temple Avesta

"Sathra ... the first words ever uttered by a human being after the first ever transition through the Jumpgate. Many more there were, who would also utter that blasphemy, for it is not the name of the Pancreator and his blessing does not fall upon those who turn their backs upon him. For only soul death and the nothingness of oblivion await such godless heretics and heathens all."

—Except from a sermon given by Canon Justin Cross, Sutek 4355

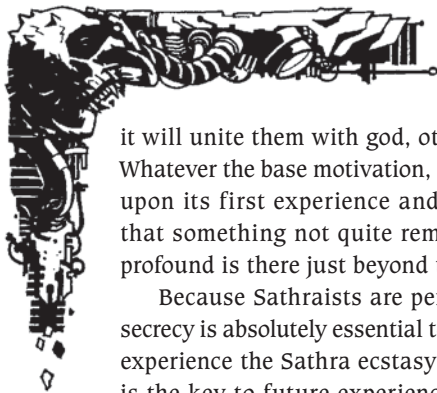
"You think me a heretic? A blasphemer? No I say, for I have looked upon the face of god and I say that it is you who have strayed from the light. You who have turned your backs upon the universe and all creation."

—Norus McGillvery, Charioteer Pilot, found guilty of Sathraism and condemned to death by cleansing flame, Kish 4531

Few words have such great power as the word 'Sathra.' Those who adhere to its vision feel it sing to them like a gentle mother, while those who have learned naught but the doctrines of the Church know that it is a fever dream of demons and damnable susurrus. The visions of Sathra have been with humanity since the first jumpgate and are the terrible price for this boon. Although its call was mastered with dampening equipment, many have attempted to pervert and undermine such protocols, even inventing new devices that enhance the effect or experiment with its lure. These devices are unholy, for they will ultimately lead their users to their downfall. To dance with Sathra is to eventually succumb to its siren call. Those who partake of this forbidden fruit are dammed in the eyes of both Church and Empire. Yet still some seek this forbidden knowledge. Some believe that it is the root of all understanding, that in that moment of jump ecstasy, outside time and space, all things can be seen and known, but upon return to the confines of the physical universe only that one word 'Sathra' can be recalled. The effect is as addictive as any psychoactive pharmacological compound, perhaps even more so.

Secret covens and dark cults grow up around those who practice Sathraism. Some are drawn to it out of belief that





it will unite them with god, others out of sheer fascination. Whatever the base motivation, such desires are washed away upon its first experience and replaced with a knowledge that something not quite remembered but fundamentally profound is there just beyond the next jump.

Because Sathraists are persecuted by almost everyone, secrecy is absolutely essential to survival. Almost anyone can experience the Sathra ecstasy once, but not getting caught is the key to future experiences. Over the centuries many devices have been created, some with the express purpose of making Sathraists' lives easier and others to help expose them or pervert the ecstasy of the Sathra moment. Far are the ends to which a Sathraist would go to obtain such a device.

Sathra Inverter

Tech Level: 8

Cost: Not for sale (prototype)

It has been rationalized that Sathraism is more akin to drug addiction than a sublime experience of the divine. Certainly, the Church is keen to convince people of the error of their ways. In conjunction with behavioral sciences, a cloister of Church technicians undertook to construct a device that shows Sathraists the error of their ways in a very real sense. Ultimately, the device never made it past the prototype stage, not because it did not work but because it would have to be placed aboard a starship with a disabled Sathra damper. The idea was to turn people away from Sathraism by choice after having a 'bad trip,' so instead of Sathra ecstasy the crew suffers sundering pain and nightmares. This device was deployed only once to test its capabilities, fitted to *Sword of the Flame*, an Inquisitorial raider. The experiment was abandoned when the ship jumped away and failed to return. Reports have subsequently emerged that this ship has been involved with piracy actions in several systems, but has not been sighted since 4765.

Traits

The Sathra inverter must be set up on starship with a disabled Sathra damper, which requires a Tech + High Tech Redemption goal roll. As per the Sathra effect (see **The Dark Between the Stars**, p. 39), the characters must make a Passion + Focus goal roll at a -6 penalty if they are not the pilot and have not experienced the Sathra effect before.

Victory Points	Effect
Failure	Unease, but no other effect
0	Upsetting, -1 on all Calm rolls for a day
1	Disconcerting, -2 on all Calm rolls for a week
2	Unnerving, -1 on all Faith rolls for a day
3	Fearful, -2 on all Faith rolls for a week
4	Terrifying, -1 on all non-combat rolls for a day

5	Dreadful, -2 on all non-combat rolls for a week
6+	Maddening, driven to the brink of madness, may gain Urge or Hubris, may obtain extra Curses, and may start to walk the dark path of antimony or worse?

Sathra Shield

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 5,000 to 20,000 firebirds, depending on size

This is a portable variant of the Sathra damper that is mandatory aboard all starships. The Sathra shield emulates the effect of the Sathra damper on a much smaller scale. Instead of protecting a whole starship, this small device will protect a single individual. It is worn much like a standard shield belt, a larger model will protect everyone with a 10m radius. Created during the First Republic to protect individual agents who were assigned to investigate the rise of the Sathra cults, these devices have been the domain of the paranoid ever since.

Despite these devices being used to prevent the Sathra effect, the Church views them with suspicion on the grounds that such machines might encourage the shutting down of Sathra dampers aboard starships. A saboteur could expose hundreds to the Sathra effect, safe in the knowledge that they would not be darkening their own soul mirrors.

Traits

These devices come in many forms. Personal shields are often hidden in belt buckles or brooches, while larger models are often built into pieces of luggage. While within the area of effect, a character will not experience the Sathra effect. If the Communion ability from the Path of Sathra is used on the wearer, he is immune to its effect.

Sathra Needle

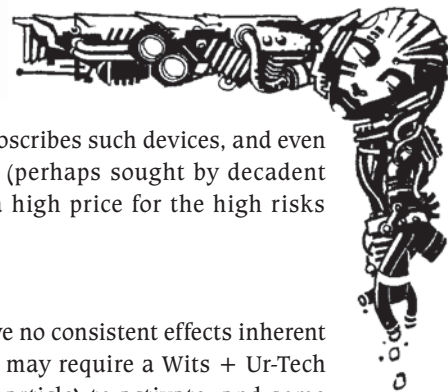
Tech Level: 7

Cost: 10,000+ firebirds

These devices are very rare and considered most unholy by the Church; being caught with one is tantamount to being a practicing Sathraist. Developed from the principles of force field mechanics and applied to a technology of the Sathra damper, the Sathra needle permits the user to manipulate the properties and dimensions of a damping field. The damping field normally forms an ovoid field that encompasses the entire starship, but with a Sathra needle, this field can be deformed and pinched inward so as to expose an area of the vessel to the Sathra effect when it jumps. The device gets its name from its cylindrical shape and from its perceived ability to pierce the damping field.

Traits

Using a Sathra needle will expose a section of the starship to the Sathra effect. The character must make a Tech + Think Machine goal roll to correctly calibrate the



device for use. Incorrect calibrations can cause all manner of problems, like exposing other areas of the starship. The Sathra needle can also be used to pierce Sathra shields and effectively render them useless.

Sathra Simulator

Tech Level: 9 if genuine—more likely 7 or 8

Cost: 2,000 to 100,000 firebirds

Legends tell of Ur-devices that give the user a true Sathra experience without the corresponding jump—or, indeed, any transport of the user. In any case, inexpensive Sathra simulators have any number of claims to them, from the relatively honest “Sathra-like” to the more grandiose claims of “suffusing the mind with a dose of real Sathra-space.”

Sathraists are always on the lookout for such devices, as they are far easier to use and hide than attempting to rig a non-Sathra-protected ship. Some Sathraists may be interested in combining effects—using a Sathra simulator inside an unprotected ship.

The Church rigorously proscribes such devices, and even an admittedly false device (perhaps sought by decadent young nobles) commands a high price for the high risks involved.

Traits

Sathra simulators have no consistent effects inherent to them. Some devices may require a Wits + Ur-Tech roll (for the genuine article) to activate, and some may require Wits + Focus to determine the intensity of the experience. The gamemaster decides the intensity and effect.

Sathra Lens

Tech Level: 8

Cost: Not for sale (only a handful were ever made, none are believed to be in the Known Worlds)

There are a few who chase the Sathra communion with a fervor that can only be matched by the Inquisition's desire to hunt these heretics to an early grave. The Questing Knights recently recovered the ledgers and records of the Sathraist Captain Alan Ukar from a vault on the lost world of Sargasso. Although none of the devices he describes in his journals have ever been discovered, the principles of such technology caused grave concern amongst the Church.

It is speculated that the euphoria of the Sathra effect is directly proportional to one's ability to perceive the infinity of the universe in all its naked glory and that by the simple application of basic mental exercises it is possible to deepen the Sathra effect and perceive more of the infinite. Ukar clearly believed that by chasing the depth of this Sathra moment, it might be possible to return with greater understanding of the connectedness of all things, to return with something more than just the word ‘Sathra’ and the feeling of revelation. His journals do not record whether he ever did return with a greater experience.

The journals describe the principles of the design of the Sathra Lens rather than its physical housing. However, Ukar speculated that such a device would be best fitted to a pilot's flight helmet to ensure the proximity to the Sathra reactive centers of the brain. This device has also been dubbed ‘Ukar's helmet’ and ‘the Ukar lens’ and at least one Questing Knight has expressed an interest in seeking out such a device.

Traits

The Sathra lens provides a +10 to the Sathraist's goal roll when determining the effects of a communion. A critical failure while using a Sathra lens could be fatal or leave the user with permanent mental scars related to their ideal of a perfect ordered universe, compulsive behaviors and phobias are most likely.



On Achieving Immortality

*"Ay Me
I hold but one sole hour to live,
Then forever I am damned to eternity
Cease thy movements, oh celestial spheres
Halt the turn of the day and deny me midnight!
Oh Pancreator's hand, reach out to make
Perpetual day; or this hour stay
For a year, a month or even meager day,
That I may repent and save my own."*

—Soliloquy of Favion, from the play "Contract with the Abyss," a moral lesson for those who would seek to unnaturally stay their lives

Since the beginning of time, people have sought ways to cheat death, and were willing to pay a high price for immortality. From the pre-Zaibatsu Taoist practices of inner alchemy to the nanite "resurrections" of the Second Republic, the search for eternal life has been a long and mostly fruitless one.

There have been some minor successes, however; the life-extension drug that allows some to live past their allotted span won the approval of the Church under the doctrine of the Merciful Technals. For every step forward, though, technology gives birth to scores of nightmares. Quickly forgotten, these failed attempts at eternal life gained the nickname "ghost technology" and have earned the enmity of Church and League alike. A list of all of the inventions that fall under this category would fill volumes, so, for classification purposes, they are divided into four types: alchemical, ephemeral, physical, and transference.

Alchemical

Upon hearing the words "alchemical arts," most people believe this refers to an occult craft. In reality, it comes from the same technology that created the Changed. The science of alchemy consists of blending alien matter into human flesh in the specific hope of obtaining a life-extending effect. This divides into two sub-fields. The first, the so-called "internal arts," consists of talented body-surgeons replacing human organs with "more efficient" alien ones. The second alchemical science, the "external arts," consists of a set of elixirs (different in formulation depending on the Engineer brewing it) that mix alien DNA with plant, mineral, or even technological (nanite) infusions.

It was the height of the Emperor Wars when the discovery of one of the most bizarre examples of internal alchemy occurred. A member of House Decados, after his assassination by Church fanatics, was discovered to have had most of his internal organs replaced with Hironem analogues. According to his journal, he was trying to tap into a universal energy known as "S'su" so that he could fuel his lifeforce with it. There is some evidence that he may

have been succeeding, as a number of aliens took up residence with him, proclaiming he was a god. There were even rumors that the assassination did not actually kill him and that his real death occurred after his autopsy, when his body was incinerated.

Far more common than the invasive "internal arts" are the alchemical "external arts." Concoctions created using this technique can be found on a number of worlds but most of these (thankfully) are simply fraudulent potions marketed by clever con artists. On occasion though, the real thing crops up.

The most common ingredients found in true alchemical elixirs come from the Vorox and Ascorbite homeworlds (and often from the Ascorbites and Vorox themselves). Elixirs of this type produce some especially gruesome side effects. Members of a sub-cult called the Sanguinary on Malignatius found themselves transformed into blood drinkers after partaking from an elixir created using an Ascorbite "queen." Another variant with a Vorox strain, ingested by a second group, possessed them with an incredible rage, which required venting in monthly murderous rampages, or their health would collapse. A third group (now dead) found the "life-sustaining" qualities of their particular elixir quite horrific: After partaking of the elixir for three years, each member developed a highly aggressive cancer, but could not die. The Inquisitors later discovered the sole member refraining from suicide, encased in a rippling fleshy cocoon. Armed with burning Ka oil, they quickly put him out of his misery.

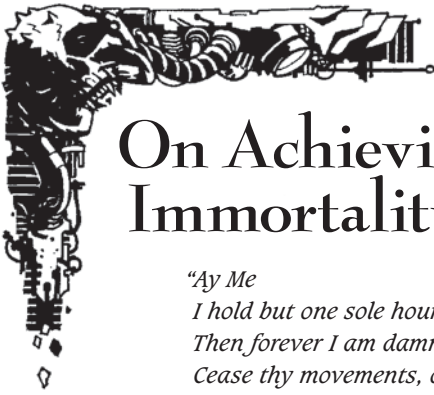
Amongst the peasantry of the Chiang Shi province it is said that the Sanguinary cult there still exists under the protection of Countess Amita Li Halan, a rumored Manja worshipper. Whether she is doing this for political reasons (one of the Sanguinary is her cousin) or simply to study the effects of their "longevity serum" is unknown.

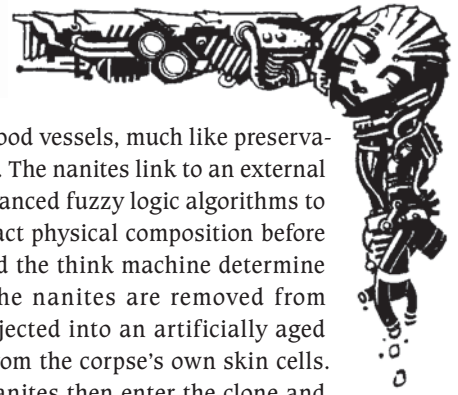
Ephemeral

Even as far back as the First Republic, some innovators sought to avoid death by transferring their personalities to a less transient frame. Attempts to implant personalities into holographic matrices and computer mainframes resulted in repeated failures—until the discovery of pygmalium. Used in the crafting of artificial intelligence systems, this mysterious element was long lauded by such groups as the CyberEvolutionaries as the key to eternal life. A number of prominent intellectuals in the beginning of the Diaspora submitted themselves to a series of experiments designed to give them immortality of the electronic kind. The victims of these experiments earned the sobriquet of ephemerals.

It became quickly obvious, even from the first experiments, that the lack of a body had a profound effect on the ephemeral, rapidly causing psychosis and promoting mental degradation. The most benign cases became gibbering wrecks within months. The worst became sociopathic monsters bent on destroying everything around them.

What distinguishes ephemerals from other victims of life extensions is their form. Unlike other processes, ephemeral





life patterns spread over a large system like a computer network or planetary communication grid. They can interact with the outside world only via holograms or other relatively insubstantial projections. This makes them no less deadly or frightening though, as any Engineer can tell you—insubstantial light can be coalesced into lasers, and electricity can be focused into a force as potent as lightning.

As humanity moved farther out into the stars, it discovered Anunnaki artifacts that performed the same function as ephemeral technology. Several explorers stumbled across devices that “separated” their souls from their bodies, trapping them in a certain location near the device. The Church later exonerated these artifacts (or recorded them as destroyed), and those whose souls were trapped within them were presumed destroyed as well.

The most common encounters of ephemerals occur on worlds that once possessed high tech, like Sutek and Rampart. The most famous incident, the Ambril haunting, is still unresolved. When a Hazat noble on Sutek wanted to restore a factory on his estates, he accidentally activated a think machine grid hooked up to an ephemeral. The ephemeral used a variety of tricks to kill more than half the staff and almost cost the nobleman his life as well before he managed to shut down the bloodthirsty machine. The actual think machine core holding the ephemeral’s pattern remains undiscovered.

One of the more unique variants on the ephemerals was discovered in 4992, when an unmanned ship entered the jumpgate at Icon. When a Li Halan crew attempted to board the ship, the ship itself came alive and tried to trap them. They discovered that the captain linked up to the ship as an ephemeral while his brain was in cryogenic stasis (his body had failed due to a fungal infection). Desperately lonely, the captain begged for the touch of another even as he was unplugged, allowing him to finally die.

Physical

Near the end of the Second Republic, advances with nano-technology, genetic mapping, and cloning made it possible to resurrect people up to three days after death. Some scientists even reported success from up to a month after final termination. They called these technological resurrections “reanimates.”

The process of technological resurrection starts with an infusion of nanites flushed into the corpse through the

body’s built-in network of blood vessels, much like preservative liquids are administered. The nanites link to an external think machine that uses advanced fuzzy logic algorithms to extrapolate the subject’s exact physical composition before death. Once the nanites and the think machine determine

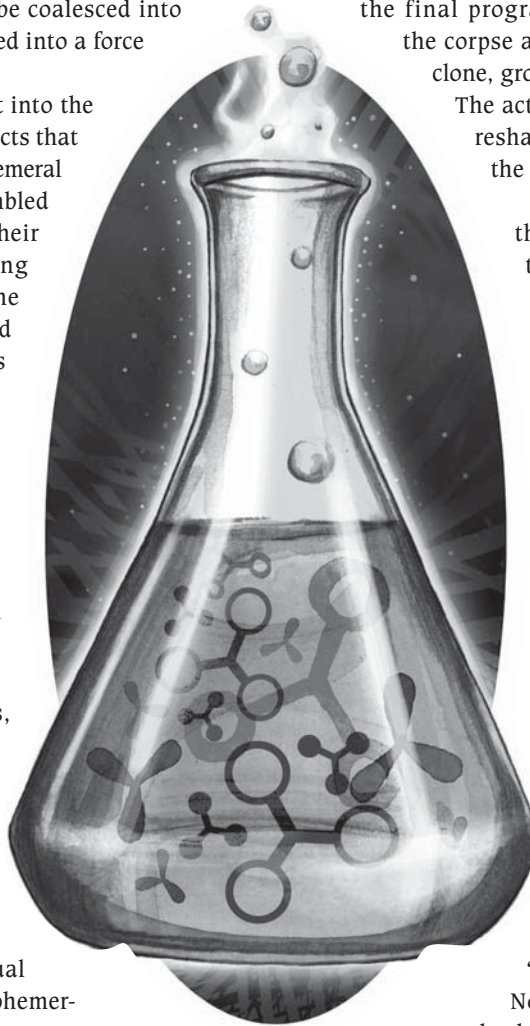
the final program, the nanites are removed from the corpse and injected into an artificially aged clone, grown from the corpse’s own skin cells. The active nanites then enter the clone and reshape it to match a “snapshot” of what the subject was like just before death.

Except for minor brain damage, this should create an exact clone of the person, a perfect resurrection, and life immortal. Technically, it should all work. The problem is that it does not. Some blame it on poor think machine programming or perhaps an improper understanding of the human anatomy. Others believe that if one claims the recipient sooner and fresher (perhaps even before his last breath) then the procedure will work. A Vau diplomat, presented with this idea of eternal life, was horrified; the Urthish translation of his shocked response revealed an almost incoherent jumble about energy fields and ninth-dimensional physics. Theorists, seizing on some notion from the half-understood words, began bombarding their rejuvenated corpses with all sorts of esoteric energy in an attempt to “get the mix right.”

Nothing ever worked. The dead did come back to life, but different. They suffered from strange fits and unearthly desires (the least offensive being a need to eat rotting things). Their memories were never quite perfect and sometimes they even possessed memories that obviously did not belong to them. Fresh infusions of formatted nanites were required every three months or the reanimate would disintegrate. Ultimately, even with the nanites, the fate of every reanimate was to burst in a fit of spontaneous combustion, burning everything around them with an unearthly flame as hot and brilliant as the sun.

During the last years of the Emperor Wars, investigators discovered a reanimate facility on Stigmata. The investigators destroyed the facilities to prevent Symbiots from gaining control over it. The person who owned and operated the facility never turned up. A decade later, reanimates were discovered still fighting in the Stigmata Garrison when a number of them combusted during combat, destroying all further evidence of the reanimates.

After a particularly horrific incident involving a high-ranking noble eating his entire family over a four-day feast, sane Engineers abandoned the entire project, destroying their



notes and equipment as well. While some remnants of the process may be buried in the archives of Leagueheim, those few who remember the horrors awakened by this attempt at living forever hope that the technique will never again see the light of day.

Transferral

The idea behind this type of immortality is to transfer a human consciousness to another host. Sometimes physically moving the brain into a different body can accomplish this. Other times, it occurs through the transmission of thought by psychic means (some artificially generated) to the new host. It is, in essence, the technological equivalent of demonic possession.

This was attempted literally hundreds of thousands of times over the past millennia by people who wanted to escape tired, decrepit old bodies or spies trying to switch identities to escape detection. Brain transplants occurred and psychics with advanced Psyche tried to switch souls, even using Vau and Anunnaki devices. In every case, the recipient's body tried to reject the outside influence. Even with immuno-suppressant drugs or powerful psi, either physically or psychologically the original owner tried to reassert himself. The best that one could hope for was a sort of painful, enforced multiple personality. The worst was the death of the body and dispersion of the possessor's energy.

Absolute failure rate certainly has not stopped people from trying, however. One famed industrialist in the last days of the Second Republic burned out a hundred bodies as his surgeons moved him from host to host. Though never confirmed, authorities believe Arnok Cabrill, assassin of the Invisible Path, to have survived his own death in similar fashion. He died when his Urge Twin caught up with his new body and burned both of them alive.

From reports on Velisimil, a number of Obun believe that there is an Ukar psychic, long thought dead, who is hopping from body to body to murder certain high-placed Hawkwoods. His intention is to destroy the traditionally friendly relationship between the Obun and their Hawkwood protectors.

Things That Will Not Die

"There is a natural order to all things; life is given, it grows and blossoms, then withers and dies as new life is born again. But there are some who cannot, will not, accept their own mortality, and so they seek a 'cure' to death. These misguided souls have failed to understand the most fundamental lesson about the Pancreator's universe. All things have their time, and that time will always end."

—Philosophus Holroid Meek, from his seminal work 'The Order of all Things', 4998

"Did not your god give us brains with which to think, minds with which to reason? So why then do

you resist the use of this gift? Surely such gifts were not given that they might be ignored or spurned, but embraced and used. The product of our minds is inspiration and innovation, and the ultimate extension of this is our technology. If I build a better plow for my field why should I not use it? Does it not glorify your god? If I can destroy disease or hunger, is that not a great thing, to relieve such sufferings, for these small things extend the lives of those who have them. Why then can I not extend my life in other ways to bring the benefits of my Pancreator given intellect to others, for I say that it is both the product and expression of his gifts."

—Self confessed heretic Jasper Oldart currently being sought by the Inquisition, exert from a speech given on Apshai, 5004

The Amaltheans teach that life is the most blessed gift that the Pancreator has bestowed upon humanity. Many over the millennia since the dawn of civilization have sought ways of extending their allotted time. Some claim to have actually achieved this most unnatural of states though usually at terrible cost. During the height of the Second Republic, it is believed that eternal life was available to those rich few who could afford such treatments, that science had finally pushed asunder the last great limitation on humanity. If that was ever true, then those secrets were long lost in the destruction of the Fall.

For those seekers of immortality in the age of the Phoenix Empire, there are many tinctures and elixirs, peddled by conmen and tricksters that claim to extend one's time or grant the 'glorious state' of everlife. Most, of course, are simply a fiction designed to extract a few firebirds from the foolish and unwary, but if the price is right, and not necessarily paid in firebirds, one's existence can be continued beyond all natural limits.

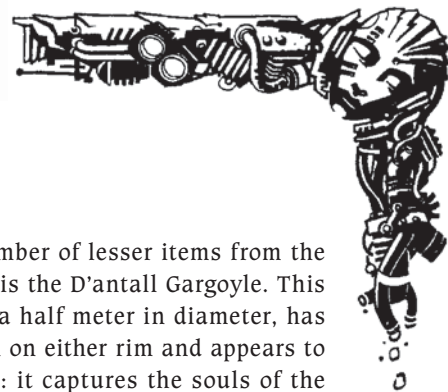
Aeterna Vita

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 100,000 firebirds

Over the ages, many have sought eternal life. If you believe some of the whispered tales of drunken spacers, then perhaps a few have found it. Long Calyre was accused of many crimes, not least of which were Sathraism and Antimony. He sought such secrets of eternal life and scoffed at Church disapproval. Finally, the Inquisition descended upon his Severus laboratory, cataloging his many sins and burning the building to the ground with holy fire. Calyre managed to evade capture, however, and his current whereabouts (after 600 years) are a subject of many dark speculations. Even now, mothers use the name of Long Calyre as a warning to their wayward children: "Be good or Long Calyre will come for you."

His notes were taken as evidence by the Inquisition, but were subsequently stolen from a vault on Pyre by a young novice of the order, Sev Toliman (excommunicated in absentia). In only a few short years a number of aeterna vita



elixirs have surfaced on the black market and their effects have been highly variable.

Sir Ivan Voskova Decados acquired one such prize but sought to test it before he would drink it for himself. He gave a drop diluted in wine to a serf, who convulsed in agony before dying and dissolving into a puddle of goo at his feet. He locked the strange brew away and has not yet been brave or foolish enough to take the mixture himself.

A curious tale comes from Istakhr, of a street urchin, Rahm, who stole from a stall in the market place and in his thirst drank down the elixir. The boy is said not to have eaten or drunk anything since that day. He is now a man but is said to have formidable powers of persuasion. Rahm is now a major player in the underworld and commands considerable respect. It is whispered that he exacts a terrible price from those who cross him and rumors persist that several of this enforcers are mindless husks.

Traits

The aeterna vita must be ingested to work properly; if too little or too much is taken, the result will not be what the character expected. If too little is taken, the cellular transformation cannot complete and the body breaks down; if too much the character is about to morph into something inhuman altogether. One dose taken once and the character must make an Endurance + Vigor goal roll. Failure confers all the curses of the new state of being without any of the benefits. Taking a second vial of the elixir will have no effect after the transformation.

Benefices: Timeless (The character no longer ages), Physical Prowess (Physical stats may be increased to a maximum of 12), Mental Prowess (Mental stats may be increased to a maximum of 12), Wyrd Regeneration (The character may spend Wyrd on a one for one basis to restore Vitality), Wyrd Sight (The character can see the Wyrd levels in the people around him, very similar to S'su Vision).

Curses: Sundered (The character loses his link to the lifeweb, he may no longer practice Theurgy or gain Wyrd except as described below), Spiritual Corruption (The character's Faith stat becomes 0), Wyrd Eater (The character must expend a Wyrd point every 24 hours), Wyrd Hunger (The character must kill sentients and eat their spiritual centre to consume what Wyrd they had, usually this is the heart).

Note that taking too much elixir results in the character turning into a creature dominated by the need to seek Wyrd. These creatures become unthinking predators and are no longer available as player characters.

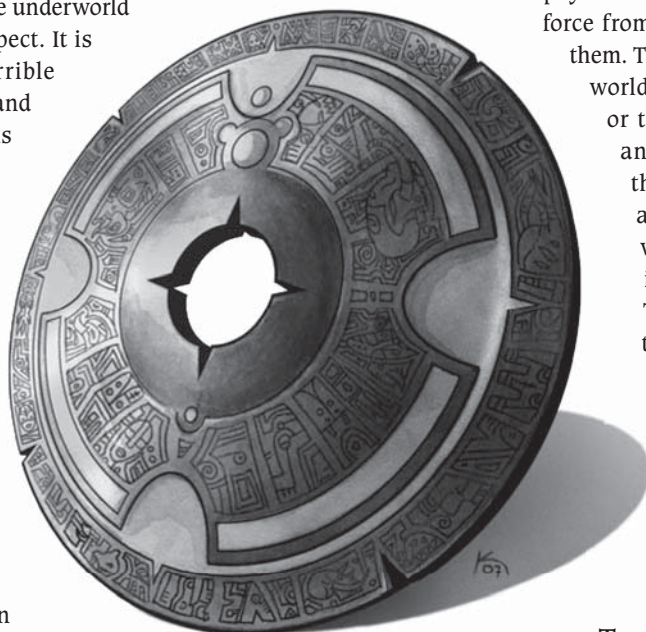
D'antall Gargoyle

Tech Level: 9

Cost: Not for sale

Concealed among a number of lesser items from the hidden world of Rimpoche is the D'antall Gargoyle. This stone disc, approximately a half meter in diameter, has ritualistic gargoyles drawn on either rim and appears to possess only one function: it captures the souls of the dying and binds them to it. Common belief holds that the expedition party that uncovered the D'antall Gargoyle met this very same fate.

Spirits bound in such fashion can manifest to the physical world, usually by draining life force from other living things around them. The apparitions' contact in the world is limited unless a psychic or theurgist is actively present and desires them to manifest; the spirits can then maintain a sort of half-life and interact with others nearby, including the psychic summoner. The strongest currently in the stone, Captain Orfeus of the Charioteers, longs violently for physical incarnation again and will do anything in his obviously limited power to achieve even that half-life.



Traits

Soul Capture: When the physical body of a sentient being ceases its life function within 10 meters of the D'antall Gargoyle, the Gargoyle begins to manifest incorporeal forms of its trapped victims that retain all the memories of the original. However, their appearances may vary, sometimes looking like the body at the time of death and at other times as a healthy version of the same.

Soul Eating: The spirits may drain 1 Wyrd per day from a living target within 10 meters; this is not cumulative. Only 1 Wyrd may be drained per person and may be contested by psychics and theurgists.

The stolen Wyrd allows the spirit to perform minor manifestations, such as moving objects about like a poltergeist or even appearing in a hazy image. Either effect lasts for one span.

Incarnation: If a psychic or a theurgist *donates* Wyrd to the spirit, it may manifest with traits equal to 5 plus the donated Wyrd. So, for example, if the theurgist donates 2 Wyrd to the spirit, it will manifest with a Strength of 7. This also lasts for one span.



Other Unholy Technology

"And thou shalt be shackled and taken from this place unto another place and that shall be a place of penance. That thy soul might be scoured clean before thou be sent to answer before thine maker. Know that thou shalt not suffer unduly, this be not the punishment thou deserve for unclean practices that are an affront to the maker. This be a cleansing that thou may present thyself before his light and beg his forgiveness. Now my brothers, purge creation clean of this infernal contraption."

—Deacon Barnabus Voltair, passing sentence on the village of Watersford, Leminkainen for the unnatural practice of auto-confessional in the absence of a parish priest, 5003

"Having investigated the absence of the parish priest, it became clear that the villages were practicing a proscribed and unholy black art of false confession. Penance given to them was lenient in my eyes, that they might be returned to grace rather than fall to the clutches of the dark."

—Deacon Barnabus Voltair, called before the Synod after complaints from House Vasalayana, concerning the Cleansing of Watersford, 5004

Technology is a necessary evil to maintain an interstellar society. The Church has long since accepted that a greater good is served by keeping the Jumbroads open and allowing its priests to bring the luminous word to those who are in need of redemption. But there are some technologies that cannot be forgiven, that the taint upon the soul from their use is beyond measure. So corrupting are these devices that they are branded unholy and great efforts are made to ensure that none come into contact with them.

Coming into contact with such technology even unknowingly can bring a heavy penance upon the unfortunate. But to traffic in such artifacts invites excommunication and purification with searing flame. Still some take such risks and foolishly believe that they have the strength of spirit to resist corruption or more rarely that they care more for the material now than the Empyrean future, for such were the Republican ideals of old.

Auto-Confessors

Tech Level: 5

Cost: 50 to 250 firebirds

The auto-confessor is little more than a standard journal think machine coupled with a verbal interface. Although more sophisticated versions exist, the system does not actually require any amount of intelligence to function adequately.

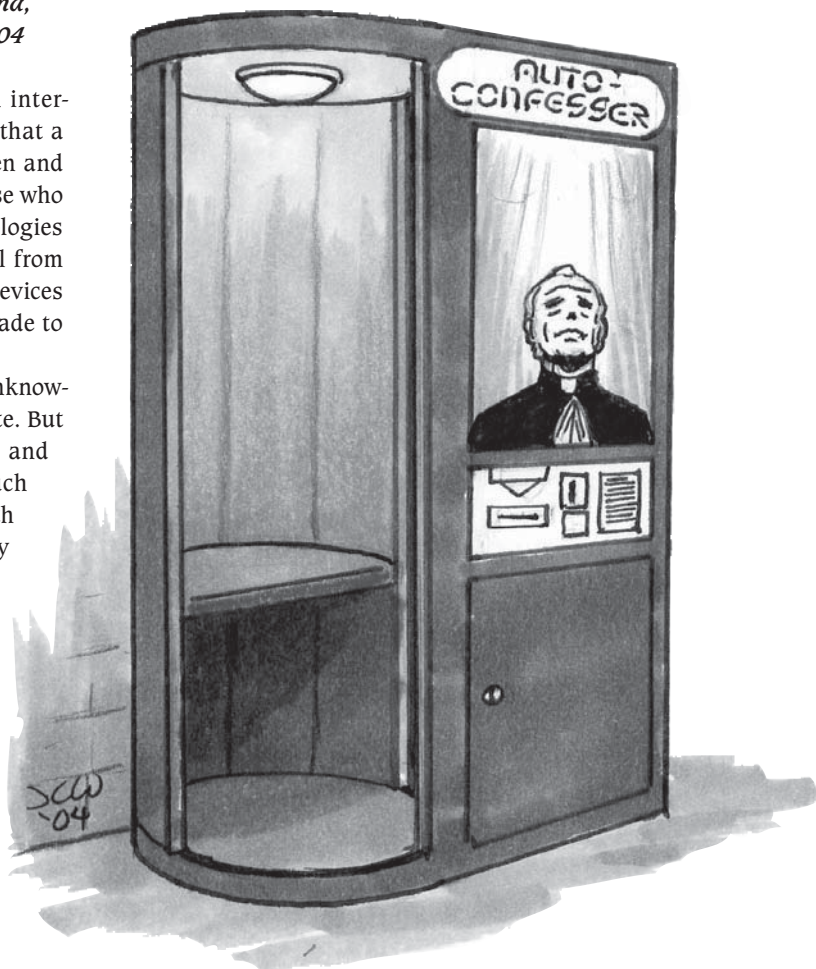
The most basic models simply check the sins against a pre-prepared list and announce the requisite penance. Actually created after the Age of Miracles as a genuine means of confession to unburden the soul, the creator of this then popular device never thought that it would ever be banned or considered offensive to people of faith.

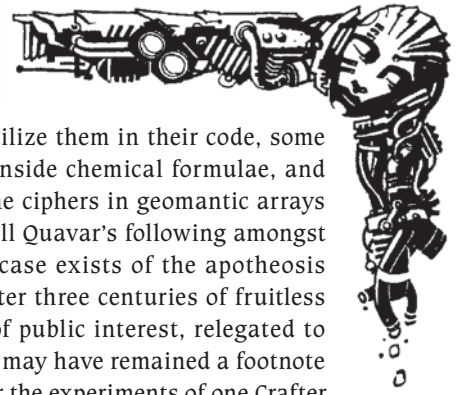
Ordinarily, the technology in this device would be considered corrupting, but its not the physical components to which the Church objects so violently. The act of confession is a sacred convent and to place such an act outside of the Church, outside even of human or the living realm into the hands of an unthinking, unfeeling machine is a terrible blasphemy. Worse, no simple machine can possess a soul of its own with which to comprehend spirituality or the spiritual needs of the penance to be bestowed. How is a machine or any being without a reflective soul-mirror to understand the spiritual needs of another? To seek penance from the damned does not redeem, it merely sinks both further into darkness.

The auto-confessor would normally pass as a simple think machine, for that is all it really is. Like all such devices they come in many forms. A few have actually been built as full confessional booths, drop a firebird in the slot and step inside.

Traits

The auto-confessors effects are entirely placebo.





The Protean Virus

Not every experiment performed by the great world shapers has been unleashed upon the world. One of the more notorious eccentric students of the work of Doramus, sought not to shape the world in the likeness of humanity, but rather shape humanity in the likeness of the world. The figure known as Quavar is considered an antiquated myth by the majority of the Eskatonic Order, partly because his character exemplifies some of the worst of their eccentricities, making it easier to link him to mythology than to accept him as one of their own. The Sanhedrin look to the legend of Quavar as a model lesson of hubris, how (in pursuit for enlightenment) one must always profess humility lest one pay its terrible price. Other scholars claim that Quavar was more than just a myth, but that he was a genius far beyond his contemporaries' understanding. Many scholars of Quavar's work point to numerous texts attributed to him, which the more conservative Eskatonics pass off as elaborate hoaxes. In any event, all number of theories persist as to the true nature of the visions that Quavar witnessed. What follows is an orthodox account of Quavar's history.

Unlike many of his peers, Quavar was not a resident of any of the outlying worlds. Instead, Quavar made his residence on the cradle of humanity, Holy Terra. The stories state that Quavar obsessed about the movement of the spheres in the heavens, being a fervent adherent to the Doctrine of the Embodied Flame, not denounced by the Church at this point in history. The fragments of his records describe visions of the Pancreator in every star, with each of its orbiting bodies as lesser reflections thereof. Quavar's work sought to find the mote of the Pancreator incarnated in every planet. A body of literature, known as the Celestial Chronicles, is a narrative account describing a dialogue between the stars as animate sentient beings on the nature of the cosmos, with the planets having a later discourse as to the significance of their various natures.

In particular, the Celestial Chronicles detail the pre-reflective mythic iconographies of the planets within Sol's orbit. A key phrase often quoted is: "So it is, that in the stay of the millennia, we twelve have retained our voice and our name and memory. Passed to us is a piece of the flame, which we bear within our avatars to illuminate the night." Quavar's texts mainly consist of complex mathematical formulae seeking to calculate ephemeral properties of the human being, such as love, courage, rage, and enigma. What resulted was a series of ciphers that Quavar apparently used to distil the essential qualities of a planetary avatar. He called each one a polemic exemplar; each considered manifestations of one pure aspect of the Pancreator. From this point onward, the Celestial Chronicles ceased to be a dialogue amongst abstract figures but an exegesis on the nature of these ciphers. They are dispositions on how the formulae can be used to transcend mortal form, and "become manifest as one of the last pure forms in the known worlds."

Various scholars have attempted to make different uses of the Quavar Ciphers: some have attempted to create think

machines or golems that utilize them in their code, some sought to construct them inside chemical formulae, and yet others took to utilize the ciphers in geomantic arrays to be meditated upon. For all Quavar's following amongst mystics, not one reported case exists of the apotheosis sought in these ciphers. After three centuries of fruitless labor, his ciphers fell out of public interest, relegated to historical curiosity. Quavar may have remained a footnote in history had it not been for the experiments of one Crafter Thaddius Roddecky.

Having acquired a series of vats from a crashed Vau transport vessel (through supposedly legal means), Thadius found himself in possession of some rather unusual Vautech. Though Roddecky considered these vats analogous to cloning vats, or perhaps suspended animation tanks, it was clear that neither of these options seemed conform with reports of Vau behavior. Accompanying these vats, Roddecky found a set of vials containing a silvery transparent liquid, filled with volumes of Vau-made nanites. Like all good Engineers, Roddecky took the opportunity to retro-engineer these devices. After several months of painstaking work, Roddecky discerned what he first thought was a clever hoax. He recognized some of the circuitry matrices built with similar function as to the artificial intelligences modeled from the Quavar Ciphers, devices he had worked on as a younger engineer in his early experiments on AI.

Inspired by this new connection, Roddecky turned up all the related documents on Quavar he could and subsequently initiated a new project based on his findings. Two months later, Quavar's laboratory received several raids from the Inquisition, after they discovered the reports of his progress. Yet, they arrived at a laboratory with its entire contents removed. All the notes on Quavar, the Vautech items, and examples of his work had disappeared, saving a single vial of the serum stuck in broken drawer.

Later analysis of the serum demonstrated a blend of second republic nanotech, stolen Vau technology and blueprints derived from Quavar's texts. The finished product was the Protean Virus, a serum designed to fundamentally change the structure of a human being, with room for highly complex variation of programming. Speculation of its function suggests that the serum's intention would be to induce the transformative effect described in Quavar's Ciphers. Perhaps most horrifyingly was the garbage compactor containing a number of human remains. Analysis of the bodies demonstrated extreme levels of organic-silicone mutation, fusing elements of tissue structure with nanite technology, a fusion of human and machine on a cellular level. The bodies, twisted and grotesque, were clearly the failed transformations. The Inquisition has put out a warrant for Roddecky's arrest.

Protean Virus

Tech Level: 8

Features: Automaintenance, Automatic Activation, Nanotech, Organic, Premium, Proscribed, Self-powered, Unightly)

Cost: Not for sale



Protean virus is the name Roddecky gave the serum. As a serum, its delivery is primarily through injection, though it is possible that other delivery mechanisms can work, such as ingesting or inhaling. Once infected with the virus, the nanites put the body in a comatose state, sheathing them in a protective silicone membrane. Like a veritable cocoon, the figure undergoes a month-long metamorphosis as their physiology is fundamentally changed. To successfully survive the metamorphosis process, the target must have a minimum Ego rating of 4.

Those who successfully transform emerge from the sheath physically changed in both ability and appearance. Due to the increased amount of silicone in their body, their features take on a slight metallic sheen (this gives the character -2 Extrovert when noticed). Apart from that, the nature of the change is variable depending on the basic transformation. To date, only three variants have become known: the Mercury, Venus, and Mars patterns. Rumors have surfaced concerning a fourth pattern referred to as the Jovian pattern, but no solid information exists about its appearance or capabilities.

Mercury Pattern (27 pts Cybernetic)

Incompatibility: 12

The features of a person transformed with a Mercury pattern virus become sleek and angular, the limbs become slightly elongated and body fat is shed. Body and hair coloration is typically pale, even white; eyes often change to be a pale grey in color.

Benefits: Movement Boost (× 2 Running), +1 Dexterity, +1 Wits, Hardened (Natural Armor: 2d)

Venus Pattern (31 pts Cybernetic)

Incompatibility: 14

Despite the name the Venus pattern may be either gender. The body takes on classical proportions and the face becomes perfectly symmetrical.

Benefits: Angelic (+3 Charm), +1 Extrovert, +1 Passion, Hardened (Natural Armor: 2d)

Mars Pattern (31 pts Cybernetic)

Incompatibility: 14

Physically one of the most varied patterns, transformations can vary from almost unnoticeable to demonic. Often the skin adopts a reddish tone and small silicone scales form on chest, shoulders and thighs. Sometimes limbs elongate, but some subjects have become hunched.

Benefits: Aggressive (+3 Fight or Melee), +1 Strength, +1 Endurance, Hardened (Natural Armor: 2d)

Stilla Salutis

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 3,000 firebirds

The scientific heights of the Second Republic brought many great discoveries to mankind. Medical advances

leaped forward, people lived longer and healthier lives, damaged limbs could be healed or replaced with cybernetic alternatives, and hereditary ailments could be eliminated. But those same sciences had a darker side, as they produced the changed—genetic splices between humans, animals, and aliens. Genetic and nanotech medications were formulated that could revive the near dead and rebuild bodies from a few small fragments.

The scientist Christian Havner is little known in the New Dark Ages, but his work has managed to survive in form of a number of documents and notes left in the memory units of think machines scattered across the Known Worlds. Havner was a pioneer in the field of xeno-transgenic medicine and sought to replicate the superior capabilities and restorative powers of the Gannok in serum form.

The process of distilling the elixir requires the harvesting of Gannok tissue, which, while highly unpleasant and painful for the subject, is not fatal. The Gannok will regenerate from the process over a period of a few days. During this time, other injuries do not heal, however. There are a few Gannok who are willing to undergo this process in return for compensation in firebirds.

The distilled fluid is a watery amber-colored liquid with a pungent odor, which must be injected into the wound to take effect. The regenerative abilities of the serum will be felt almost immediately, as the wound becomes hot and itches. The time taken for regeneration depends on how much of the patient needs to be re-grown: a finger will take about a day, an arm or leg about a week, while internal organs or large burns can be restored in a matter of only hours. Soft tissue regenerates very quickly, rebuilding bones takes much longer.

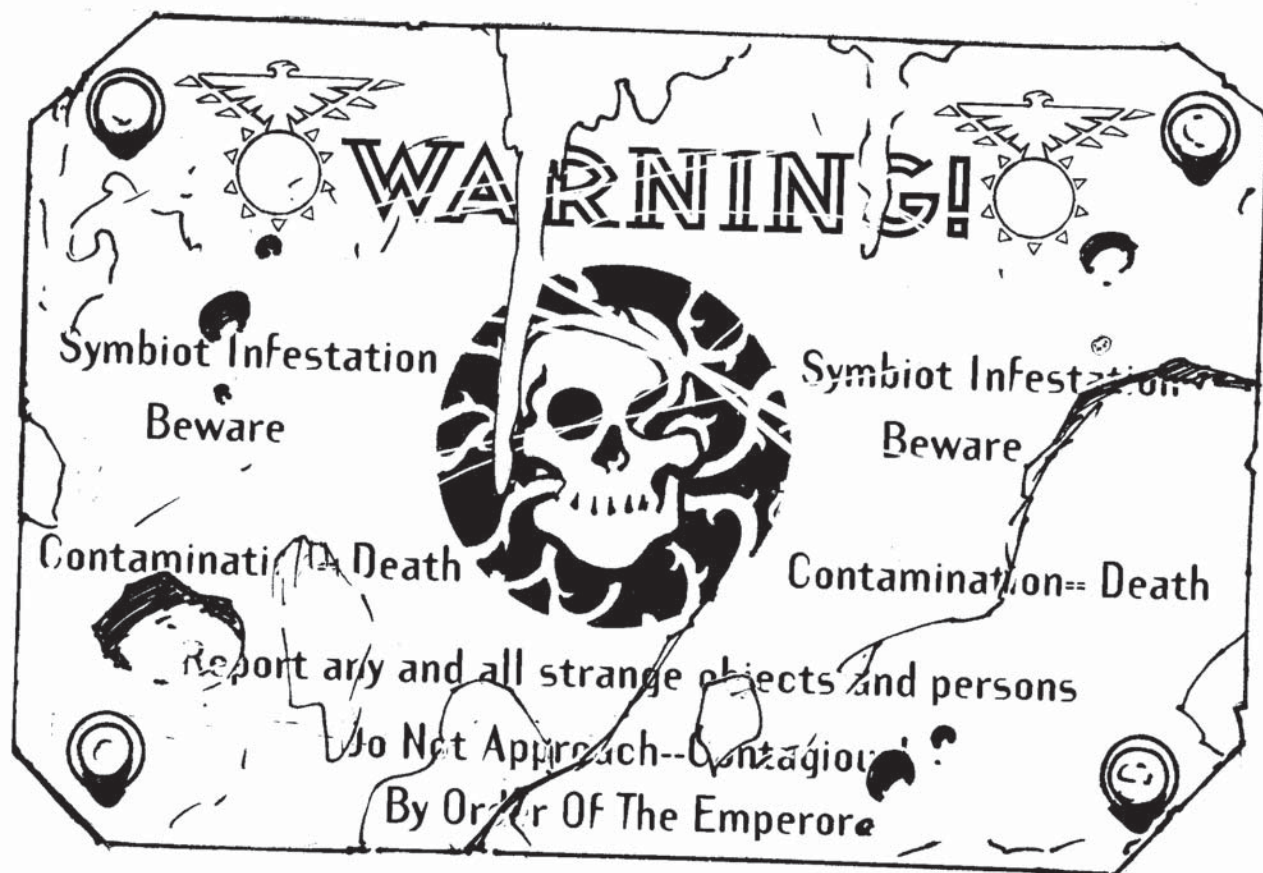
During the healing process, the patient must be kept on a high-energy food diet to ensure that the body has sufficient reserves to produce the new tissues. The healing process is not painless. Many patients require to be sedated while the agony of newly formed nerve cells courses through them.

Stilla salutis affects the patient on a genetic level, rewriting the genetic codes to permit rapid cell division and rebuilding of parts of the body. For this reason (and the combination of human and xeno-genetics), the Church finds this curative to be profane—even though the effect is temporary and the mutant cells eventually die off.

Traits

Stilla salutis is a marvelous regenerative aid. Within an hour of receiving the medication the healing process will begin, slowly at first but with increasing speed as time goes forward. Every hour, the patient must make an Endurance + Stoic Body or Stoic Mind roll, each successful roll restores one point of character's Vitality. On a failed roll, the pain of healing becomes so intense that no Vitality is gained (lost body parts continue to reform, however).

During the process, the patient becomes extremely hungry and needs to eat almost constantly (or be fed intravenously if unconscious). If the character cannot ingest enough nutrients, the regeneration process will slow down considerably, allowing the patient to making a goal roll only every 5 hours.



There are side effects to this treatment. Although most of the Gannok genetic material is purged during the healing process, it can cross over and turn the character into one of the Changed (see **Fading Suns Revised Second Edition**, p. 252). Once the healing process is complete, the character must make an Endurance + Vigor roll. If he succeeds, he smells strange for about a month after the treatment, receiving the Curse Stench (-2 Extrovert among non-Gannok). If he fails, however, he gains the Curse Voracious (-1 Charm when eating). On a critical failure he gains both Curses, these are permanent additions to the character, and the Church will now consider him to be one of the Changed.

Symbiot Tech

"I ask you this, what manner of natural creature can change its shape, its very form? Did not the Pancreator give us our shapes that we may service his will? And yet these creatures have no solid form, constantly changing, warping, and constantly blaspheming against the physical laws of the Pancreator's universe. I say these creatures are not as you or I, but perversions of the natural order of all things."

—*Deacon Ulbrech Frost of the Eskatonic Order, Bannockburn, 5002*

"Symbiots, huh? Contract didn't mention nothing bout no symbiots. PACK UP YOUR GEAR LADS, WE'RE GOING HOME."

—*Sergeant Alder Sanrik of the Muster, Bannockburn, 5002, later charged with reneging on a contract*

The Symbiots continue to be a dangerous and unknown factor, their very nature making them entirely alien to humanity. Worse still, all Symbiots started life as something else, something non-Symbiot; anyone could be the next victim of these deviant creatures.

The Stigmata Garrison has the greatest contact with Symbiots and the greatest experience of what they are capable of. Still most of the soldiers stationed there think of Symbiots as mindless ravaging monsters. Few even realize that the Symbiots actually have their own technology base, though mostly modeled on human patterns that were abandoned on Chernobog. In the soldiers' minds, the Symbiot threat is primarily one that is hand-to-hand or at least short ranged. However, a few scarce examples of their mysterious biotechnology have fallen into the hands of the Imperial Eye and other organizations.

What few examples of Symbiot technology make it to the black market for sale command high prices for those who are curious about such matters. Any Symbiot tech must be handled with extreme care, some believe that items may



be infectious and can pass along the Symbiot curse in the same manner as any other disease. Others maintain that such devices are in fact Symbiot agents waiting to activate or possess the owner. Few other pieces of technology engender such fear of the unknown.

Tanglers (Ornsaam)

Tech Level: 6

Cost: 100 firebirds each

The tangler is a peculiar type of bio-grenade than can be used to capture a target relatively intact. The device resembles a large nut similar to an acorn. There are several variations on this device but it is very hard for a non-Symbiot to identify which is which until they are actually used. A tangler is triggered by impact that causes the nutshell to crack and break apart. A number of vine-like tendrils snake out, ensnaring anyone and anything within two meters of the impact point. The tendrils also bury themselves in the ground to anchor the target in place and prevent them from escaping.

These proscribed devices are not immediately recognizable as a Symbiot tech, and are actually increasingly popular within the Findmans Guild. As tanglers react on impact, they can be buried and used as land mines.

Traits

The standard tangler is thrown by using a Dexterity + Throwing goal roll. Once the fibrous tendrils have snared an area and possibly multiple targets, they harden rapidly, drying out and can be easily set aflame. Anyone pinned by a tangler may try to break out by using a Strength + Vigor goal roll, and needs to achieve a total of 10 VPs.

A lesser-known, more dangerous version of the tangler, is the barbed or poisonous tangler. It works in the same way, but the tendrils have barbed hooks laced with toxin. Once the victim has been snared, they must make an Endurance + Vigor goal roll every round that they are snared. Each failure temporally reduces the character's Strength attribute by 1. Should it drop to 0 then the character becomes unconscious. Persistent rumors exist of other types of tanglers, some with fatal toxins or bigger areas of effect. Indeed the largest one known to date is about the size of pineapple and could be used as an anti-vehicle weapon.

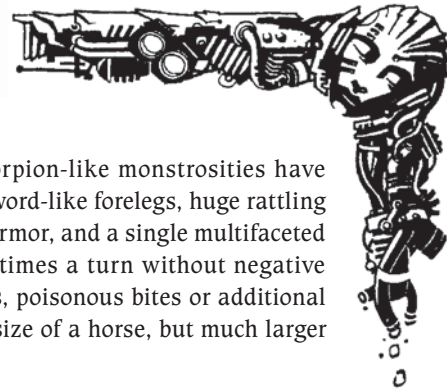
Metamorphic Camouflage (Orndor)

Tech level: 7

Cost: 5,000+ firebirds (very, very rare)

This is a highly sought-after item amongst individuals who depend on stealth. The metamorphic camouflage usually comes in the form of a cloak (though other types of garments exist). When activated, the cloak changes shape, color, and texture to break up the wearer's outline and help them to blend in. Given a few minutes, the camouflage will even start to mimic the local environment. It will produce grasses, leaf moulds, mushrooms, and even small shrubs and bushes.





Traits

The metamorphic camouflage will adapt to almost any natural environment, and operates in two distinct phases. The first phase duplicates color and texture much like a projection of an image on the flat surface of the cloak (+2 stealth goal rolls). Phase two occurs automatically once the wearer stops moving for more than a couple of minutes at which time the cloak actually begins to grow flora from its exterior surface. The longer the character remains immobile, the greater his stealth bonus (for hiding only). The camouflage gives a cumulate +1 bonus per minute spent immobile (up to a maximum of +10).

Once the character begins to move again, this process reverses, losing +1 bonus per minute until it has returned to normal or the character again stops for any length of time (whereupon the process starts again). Metamorphic camouflage is invaluable in natural terrain but can be something of a liability when trying to hide in a built-up area. The Symbiot cloth does not 'understand' non-natural substances and cannot adapt to maxicrete or terracite walls.

Xyll Warbeast

Tech Level: 5

Cost: Not for sale

Certain unscrupulous noble houses specialized in using hordes of these vicious and unholy creatures for battles during the Emperor Wars. They were extremely effective in disrupting infantry formations and sending more superstitious troops scurrying for the hills. A xyll is not ridden—it is loosed upon the enemy to enact a reign of terror.

Since the first Symbiot infestations, some people have specialized in gleaning what knowledge they can about the Symbiot shapeshifters. In the secret pay of noble houses and unburdened by moral codes, these scientists eventually tried to put some of their hard-won knowledge to use in genetic labs. The result was the xyll warbeast. This creature represents an unholy union of disparate genetic strands reweaved to bring about the creation of a horrific changed monstrosity. But this thing is only sought out by those to whom winning is everything. All other considerations—dignity, honor, one's reputation, and even basic human decency—must be overcome before the genetechs are called upon to create such a horror.

The creation of the xyll requires a human being, one who is vivisected alive and exposed to a synthetic DNA structure based on that found in battle-slain Symbiots (the only near-safe specimens). As the DNA begins to grow and replicate throughout the poor victim's cell structure, he is transformed over a number of days into one of the Changed, a genetic nightmare so abhorrent that the Church has been known to excommunicate those who create these monsters and those who would deploy them on the field of battle. The unfortunate victim of this process suffers soul death during the transformation. No remnant of its former humanity is apparent and it exists only to rend and tear. Even feeding is a secondary urge to the horrible xyll.

Traits

These eight-limbed, scorpion-like monstrosities have giant claws on their tails, sword-like forelegs, huge rattling mandibles, thick chitinous armor, and a single multifaceted eye. Most can attack three times a turn without negative modifiers. Some have wings, poisonous bites or additional senses. Most are about the size of a horse, but much larger ones have been spotted.

Body: Strength 10, Dexterity 7, Endurance 10

Mind: Wits 4, Perception 5, Tech 0

Natural Skills: Dodge 3, Fight 6, Observe 2, Vigor 6

Weapons: Forelegs 5 DMG (+1 initiative), Bite 6 DMG, Tail 8 DMG (–1 initiative)

Special Powers: Each xyll has its own special powers. Some may have wings, allowing them to hover over a battlefield, diving down to spear infantrymen with their forelegs. Others may have corrosive spittle strong enough to eat through tank armor. The gamemaster should get creative with the unique powers found among a xyll horde.

Armor: 6d (carapace)

Vitality: –10|–8|–6|–4|–2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Rebreather

Tech Level: 7

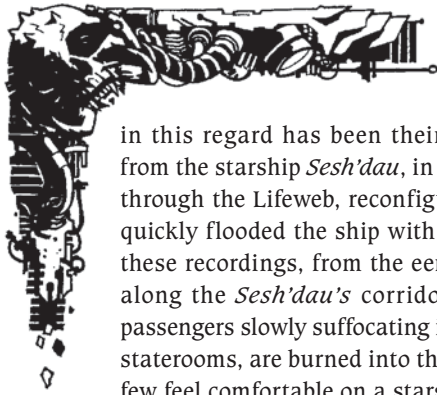
Cost: 7,000 (+3,500 for installation)

Although its usage is mainly confined to pirates, smugglers, and other renegade starships, the rebreather is nonetheless the most economically viable of all blackmarket Symbiot tech. Anyone who has set foot on a starship and drawn in a lungfull of fresh, clean, "outdoorsy" air, free of the chemical-metallic taste caused by conventional air filtering and canned oxygen, wants one. By the time of Emperor Alexius, a handful of disreputable merchants and one decadent "freethinking" noble have found themselves delivered unto the tender mercies of the Inquisition under charges of possession and use of proscribed tech.

Ships fitted with rebreathers are rarely to be found in heavily traveled systems like Byzantium Secundus or Criticorum; the risk of being discovered is simply too great. Captains of such ships tend to work around more remote systems like Pandemonium. Most rebreathers are to be found in the vicinity of Stigmata or Bannockburn, the main gateways of blackmarket Symbiot tech, but the harsh scrutiny and unending vigilance of the Stigmata Garrison and the Muster ensures that nine out of every ten rebreathers installed in these systems never make it out of the jumpgates to infect the rest of the Known Worlds. Chainer slave ships have special duties (usually the maintenance of the waste reclamation systems) reserved for smugglers not clever or fast enough to evade planetary patrols, and the Garrison considers an extended tour of duty on the Symbiot front to be a most fitting punishment for those caught trafficking in Symbiot tech.

The Church has been active in alerting the rest of the Empire to the dangers of the rebreather; particularly effective





in this regard has been their use of security recordings from the starship *Sesh'dau*, in which a lone Symbiot, acting through the Lifeweb, reconfigured the rebreather so that it quickly flooded the ship with poisonous gas. Images from these recordings, from the eerie toppling of crewmembers along the *Sesh'dau's* corridors to the agonized faces of passengers slowly suffocating in their sealed and barricaded staterooms, are burned into the minds of most citizens, and few feel comfortable on a starship that "smells too good."

Traits

The rebreather is installed in starship ventilation systems to replace costly air filtration units and oxygen tanks. It is a collapsible spongy mass of varying size (depending on the specifications of the starship) containing literally kilometers of tiny interconnected chambers lined with grassy ciliae, enabling it to act as a sort of "vegetable lung" which absorbs the waste gases exuded by humanoids and exhales oxygen. The chief advantage of the rebreather is its low maintenance requirement; it heals most damage to itself like any other bio-organism. It can be "fed," or fertilized, by simply rerouting the ship's organic waste disposal system into its root-base.

Doctor Mashlavi Hakim's Patented Guaranteed Health and Longevity Capsules

Tech Level: 8

Cost: 3 per bottle of 25 capsules

Doctor Hakim's Capsules—a boon to all mankind (and most other sentient races) and the best and surest method of fortification against all the ills to which flesh is heir... Or, an insidious poison propagating itself throughout society by preying upon the common frailties of the Known Worlds' races, promising an easy and quick cure for everything. As with any controversial medical treatment, any opinion one hears is usually dependent upon whether the person speaking is a user of the capsules or not.

Hawked as a universal panacea by Charioteer pitchmen for several centuries, Doctor Hakim's Capsules go back a long way (though not, as the label states, "Since before the Fall!"). For most of its early history, the product was just one of many ineffectual candy tablets sold by unscrupulous Charioteer medicine shows and it mostly still is. Some time after the Symbiot War came to its shaky standstill, unbelievable rumors began to filter in from all over the Known Worlds regarding Dr. Hakim's brand—the damned things were actually working! Reports of miraculous cures, amazing recoveries and unexplainable increases in pep and vigor caused the demand for the capsules to grow, shifting the primary market from ignorant peasants to the more lucrative nobility, not to mention the higher echelons of the guilds and even some of the more faithless members of the Church. Dr. Hakim's brand Capsules became the major health trend of the rich and sedentary and the price of a single bottle shot up to three firebirds.

In actual fact a new ingredient had been added to the formally harmless tablet. A technician working within Dr. Hakim's production line had previously served time as a medic on Stigmata. Using genetic material harvested from dead Symbiots on the battlefield, Raelf Aeldous Maelisch managed to formulate a new strain of gut flora that proved to have remarkable properties. Although not exactly a cure all, it certainly had a remarkable effect on disorders of the gut and bowl and seems to notability improve general health.

Traits

The capsules are large bright green pellets which, if cut open, are found to be over 90% candy coating containing an infinitesimal speck of the actual medicine near the center (if at all—Dr. Hakim's manufacturing standards are not what they used to be). This speck is actually a complex bundle of RNA, polyactive enzymes, paracrine metahormones and regulatory neuropeptides. Once the outer coating has dissolved, this "team" of "smart chemicals" disperses to settle in to the gut lining of the victim. Over a period of several days the new bacteria will systematically purge the gut and restate a new and improved set of bacteria. Any character ingesting a capsule for the first time may add one point to their Vigor for the rest of that span; repeated, regular usage can make that point permanent. This effect is not cumulative; only one point is gained no matter how many capsules are taken. In addition the character is now virtually immune to ingested toxins.

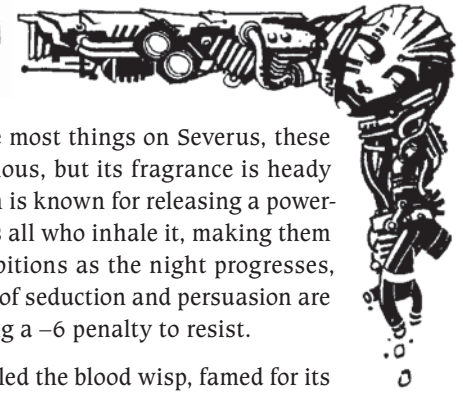
Unfortunately the bacteriological beast that is living inside of them will grow, slowly seeding genetic changes though out their bodies over a period of years. Its effects will only be noticeable as imperfections and blemishes are slowly erased from the body. The character will heal without scarring, though large-scale regeneration is not possible. The character will, over the period of several years, become one of the Changed and may actually develop other Changed traits. It can be very disconcerting to discover spines growing out of one's back or chitinous armor forming on one's arms. The exact long term effects of Dr. Hakim's are left to the gamemaster to determine.

Flowers of Gethsemane

Tech Level: 5

Cost: Not for sale

Ever since the rise of the New Dark Ages, the language of the flowers long held a strong tradition in the noble courts. Each court has distinctive codes of etiquette and mannerisms, including a few that serve as universal messages. The flowers of Gethsemane take this idea one step further; they literally imbue the flowers with the power to enact their meaning upon those around them. Unlike normal flowers, these are not merely dead ornaments worn upon the clothes; they are half flesh, half floral organisms that feed off psychic energies normally found in a typical party. Each of these flowers responds to the moods around them and will in fact release a series of human-keyed pheromones designed to manipulate the reactions of the people around them.



These flowers are a relatively modern creation, first manifesting in al-Malik courts, only to find Decados variants showing up in quick order. It would become a matter of years before each house had seduced, stolen, bribed, or otherwise acquired a stem of the original seeds and hybridized them with local flora to create new and unique varieties. In the Emperor Wars, the flowers served as emblems of prestige, each manifesting their own Houses' particular mentality and each triggering a unique series of social interactions.

However, in recent years a more insidious side of these flowers has manifested. Rumors abound that some of these flowers mutated, growing in size and stature and then drew human victims into their maw. Rumors of these attacks became extant enough to warrant inquisitorial investigation, which produced what is suspected to be Symbiot organelles inside the flower, causing the strange fusion of flesh and flower. The Inquisition has since instigated a pogrom of these flowers, but finds propagating this information to be difficult in the extreme, not the least due to noble support of these flowers and the difficulty of distinguishing between the hybrid flowers and normal flowers. However, more resourceful members of the nobility learned to harvest these flowers for their pheromones and manufacture them into a perfume. As the Church's scrutiny is causing the flowers to fall out of favor, more and more nobles choose to wear the less conspicuous perfumes. So far, the perfumes themselves are not proscribed.

Traits

What follows is a list of the most popular varieties of house flowers found in the Known Worlds and their recorded effects:

House Hawkwood's royal flower is the Delphian starflower, selected for breeding due to its blue curling petals and crystalline stamen. Its fragrance is reminiscent of a fusion of violets with a slight ruffle of ozone. Though thought to be a little odious at first, the House continues to affirm that the scent grows on you. The hybrid Gethsemane flower causes it to release a fragrance that imbues its wearer with an aura of power, making social and physical challenges against its wearer far more difficult. Anybody attempting to confront the wearer will find themselves filled with a desire to show respect and bend knee and will suffer a penalty to do otherwise. To oppose the effect of the flower the attacker must spend a point of Wyrd.

House Decados is known for the Severan jungle gloam. This flower displays a somewhat savage nature, wreathed in violently purple and black serrated petals. Decados love to wear these flowers with the barbs of its tendrils wreathed

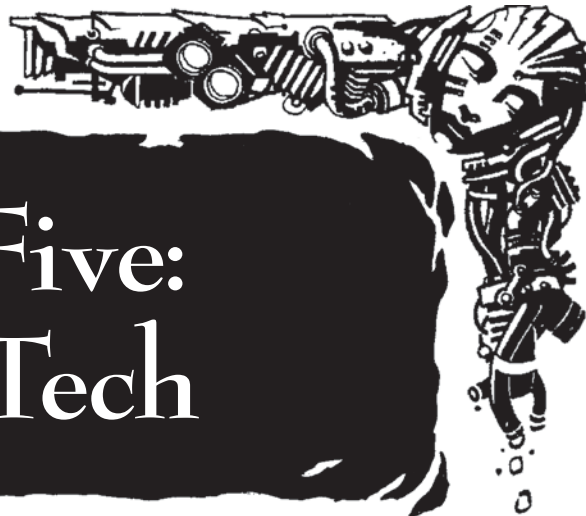
around their necks and like most things on Severus, these flowers are potentially poisonous, but its fragrance is heady and intoxicating. The gloam is known for releasing a powerful perfume that intoxicates all who inhale it, making them act with less and less inhibitions as the night progresses, attempts to resist advances of seduction and persuasion are severely hampered, receiving a -6 penalty to resist.

The Hazat bear a flower called the blood wisp, famed for its blood red petals and barbed vines. It is customary for the Hazat to wear these flowers on their sleeves or even bared arms, with the coils of thorns wrapped around, the pricks visibly digging into their flesh. These flowers are famed for their sap, a thick red ichor that is the consistency of human blood. These flowers have a tendency to leak this sap gently when cut, this giving rise to the name. When exposed to their fragrance, humans find their passions inflamed, making them prone to anger and passion. In its presence, inciting passion is done with a +6 modifier and attempts to retain calm are tenuous at best.

House Li Halan strongly favors a light purple and white flower known as the chai long orchid. This flower, contrary to customary Li Halan décor, is quite ornate but retains the typical delicacy of the House. Unlike other House flowers, this flower only releases its more potent fragrance when a petal is broken. Until then, the flower exudes a delicate scent that is barely perceptible. Once broken, however, the flower releases a deep throbbing perfume that inflames certain parts of the brain associated with religious epiphany. Once exposed, people feel a strange sense of connection with everything around them in a moment of Zen, some even receiving hallucinatory flashes of the Pancreator or the Disciples. Whilst in this state, all subjects gain a +4 modifier to Empathy checks.

House al-Malik owns the first flower developed into a Gethsemane hybrid. The flower, the golden raja, belies its potent fragrance with its simple and small golden flowers. Its true beauty lies in its stem and leaves which have the luster, malleability, and resilience of gold. House al-Malik is fond of adorning themselves with these plants that can easily retain a molded shape of a laurel crown or wreathed armbands. Its scent is oblique to all who smell it; many different observers have likened it to many different scents depending on who is perceiving it. When inhaled, the fragrance produces a mild euphoric bliss. When augmented by the hybridization, the flower's euphoric ability floods all who smell it with an overpowering ecstatic sensation, increasing nervous energy and compelling them to dance or participate in the revelries.





Chapter Five: Merciful Tech

This chapter details a number of items of technology that receive special attention by the Church, not for their depreciation of humanity's integrity, but for their beneficial use. It is the less often cited fifth category of the bull under which Merciful Tech falls, including medical technology used to alleviate the suffering of peasants and Martyrs alike. However, even these technologies have their limitations and some suffer hot contestation of the correct ways to use them. Church authorities hold that these can only be used properly by clergy, a privilege that Sanctuary Aeon seeks to consistently secure.

The Healing Arts

Feeling afflicted?

Abasia got you down?

Suffering from Boneis Eruptus?

Then you need Master Erling's Transdental Electromicide Violet Ray Chair!

Developed from lost Second Republic technologies, but now consecrated and rendered safe for your soul, this Pancreator-blessed miracle acts as a blood purifier and wonderful pain-destroying compound. The strongest and best-known cure of all pain and lameness, it relieves rheumatism, neuralgia, sciatica, lame back, lumbago, contracted muscles, toothache, sprains, and swellings.

Thanks to Master Erling's improvements, it acts as a curative for frost bites, chill blains, bruises, sore throat, and bites of animals, insects, reptiles, and aliens.

Men, are you having trouble keeping the little lady happy?

Master Erling has the answer! Also treats all female complaints, including feminine hysteria.

Feeling depressed? Blue? Lost in the dark between the stars? Thanks to secret Obun herbs and poultices, feel immediate relief!

*Good for every thing it should be good for.
Endorsed by three out of four Amaltheans. Found at
an apothecary near you.*

For external use only.

—Town Crier Announcement on Cadavus

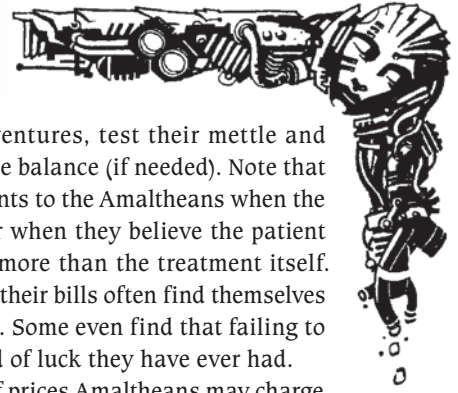
Medicine

Some people assume that just because medicine tends to soothe pain and extend lives, the Church classifies it as Merciful Tech. Little could be further from the truth. Pain plays a major role in human life, and the Church views the existence of physical suffering as further proof of the Pancreator's compassion. Just as pain provides people awareness of the evils in their bodies, so too does suffering enable them to see the evil within their own souls. While remedying people so they can continue to act in service to the Pancreator and their communities is a worthy goal, indiscriminately curing the sick or prolonging life past its natural end are frowned upon.

Thus, while dedicating oneself to bringing comfort to the sick is a virtue worthy of the highest praise, relying on technology to do so often leaves one vulnerable to charges of interfering with the Pancreator's will. The sale of elixir may be legal, but not to most serfs. In addition, no one person should ever come to rely on the drug. If the Church discovered that someone bought a large number of doses for personal use, Inquisitors might ask some uncomfortable questions about one's unwillingness to heed the Pancreator's warnings.

For this reason, most people seek traditional methods of healing. Doctors, priests, barbers, and others provide basic services. Most require little compensation, and many who go to them would say they get their money's worth. Good medical care, however, costs real firebirds and is beyond the reach of most people. Guilds, houses, and sects might provide for their own members' care, but such facilities are only found where those organizations have large memberships.





Apothecary Prices

Most Apothecaries have never heard of either the Hippocratic Oath or the Obun Pledge of Ubiquitous Care (which most Obun claim is a horrible translation from the original language in any case). As a result, if someone cannot pay for treatment, the afflicted will not get any.

Treatment	Cost
Day of Hospitalization (poor)	1 firebird
Day of Hospitalization (normal)	10 firebirds
Day of Hospitalization (good)	25 firebirds
Day of Hospitalization (excellent)	50+ firebirds
Basic Remedy (successful or not)	1 firebird
Use of Physick	25 firebirds
Extended Use of Physick	100 firebirds
Oubliette Visit	10 firebirds
Confidential Treatment	Double above prices

Sanctuary Aeon Services

The Amaltheans do not have set prices for healing. In fact, their own code requires them to provide healing to those in need regardless of their ability to pay. However, the code does not specify who is really in need, and it encourages the healers to charge something other than money. This has led some patients to claim that Sanctuary Aeon costs far more than an Apothecary—especially when the Amalthean does not want firebirds.

Amaltheans set their own prices, and usually base them on what the patient can pay or what the Amalthean needs. Gamemasters can use this as an opportunity to

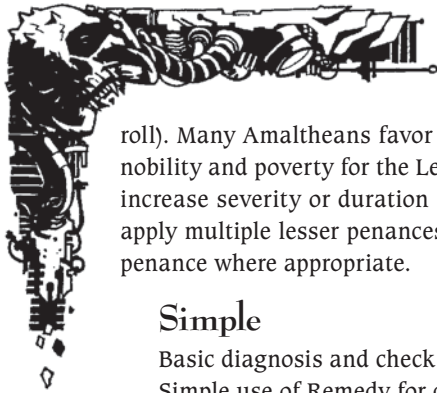
send the characters on adventures, test their mettle and resolve, or restore some game balance (if needed). Note that Apothecaries may send patients to the Amaltheans when the physick can do no good—or when they believe the patient needs a lesson in humility more than the treatment itself. Those who renege on paying their bills often find themselves cut off from Amalthean care. Some even find that failing to pay leads to the worst round of luck they have ever had.

The following are a list of prices Amaltheans may charge, but they base the cost on the patient, not the treatment. Curing a noble's cold might cost 1,000 firebirds, while treating a saint for the plague would be free. Many of these costs last for a period of time. Thus, if an Amalthean requires an Engineer to swear off the use of Think Machines, it might only be for a week. Sometimes the healer will also require that the patient not tell anyone why he is acting in these ways.

One of the most common costs is service to Sanctuary Aeon or the healer. The order always needs medical assistants, drivers, guards, translators, hospitality, repair work, and entertainment. Putting the characters in service to a healer can be an excellent source of adventure, as well as a good way for the characters to learn from her example.

Most Amaltheans are familiar with the Samaritan Papers. These are small handbooks that every novice must study to be ordained. Drafted in the early years of the Order's foundation, they draw upon Leipsofpy as a general guideline. Their intention is to provide the healers with some structure as to what penance to assign for what ministrations. In particular, confession is usually part of every bill. Healers learn to read their patients, and determine what penance would be the most appropriate for them (through an Introvert + Empathy





roll). Many Amaltheans favor penances of humility for the nobility and poverty for the League. Of course, healers may increase severity or duration of lower levels of penance or apply multiple lesser penances to use the lesson of a lower penance where appropriate.

Simple

- Basic diagnosis and check up
- Simple use of Remedy for cases of small or superficial injuries
- Basic spiritual council for emotional duress
- Purge of simple infestation (lice, mites, and fleas)

Penance

- Extended prayer
- Swearing off use of a tech item
- Find healing herbs or devices for the order
- Make a delivery for the order
- Associate with someone you usually would not
- Refuse the next fight you encounter
- Give the next poor person encountered a sum of money
- Use no occult powers
- Vow of celibacy or moderation (feasting, dancing, or sex)
- Spend no money

Moderate

- Limited use of Amalthean resources (basic salves, philters, and compacts)
- Moderate use of Remedy to heal severe or debilitating injuries
- Minor theurgical healing to heal severe or debilitating injuries
- Medium term spiritual council for psychological and emotional trauma
- Purge of chronic disease
- Bone straightening
- Dental care
- Minimal use of Physick skills
- Use of moderate technology for healing (TL4–6)

Penance

- Service to the healer
- Service to Sanctuary Aeon
- Donating a tech item to the order
- Swearing off high technology
- Regular monetary donation to a deserving group
- No dueling (those under such a charge may not tell others why)
- Give up reliance on one's energy shield
- Teach someone (a favored penance for the League)
- Learn something (spend experience on a specific skill)
- Missionary/conversion work (a favored penance for idle priests)
- Vow of poverty

Severe

- Extensive use of Amalthean resources (elixir and other rare resources)
- Extreme use of Remedy to heal life-threatening injuries
- Major theurgical healing to heal life-threatening injuries
- Long-term spiritual council for psychological and emotional trauma
- Purge of congenital illness or terminal illness
- Moderate or extended use of Physick skills
- Use of high technology in healing (TL7+)

Penance

- Joining a Church/knightly order
- Patronize a hospice
- Swearing off all technology (generally reckoned to be TL3+)
- Stay in a monastery/convent
- Help someone else cure Hubris or Urge
- Live as a serf/freeman/beggar/Mendicant monk (whichever is most appropriate)
- Forgive an enemy
- Flagellation and scourging (rare)
- Assist the Inquisition
- Vow of Silence

Charnel Houses

"Charnel houses are where the dead prey on the dead, and the leprous children of the plague defile the air with their rotten stench and choking wheeze, mausoleums whose halls are haunted by moaning night-crackers and stained scarlet by crazed vivisectionists dubbing themselves chiurgeons."

—*From Friar Amergo's Travails of Ormu*

"An interesting depiction, no doubt, though thankfully not all hospices resemble Amergo's grim picture. Certes the monasteries of the Amaltheans are sanctums of solace and light, though I daresay those odious institutions operated by the Guilds might well inspire Amergo's sort of feverish rant."

—*Bishop Xavier Holst*

In the new Dark Ages, hospitals do not exist as they have in previous eras. Providing healthcare to serfs (the mass population) is not a major concern for the ruling classes, with rare exceptions. Nobles, who are wealthy enough and concerned enough for their property, may sponsor a hospice. However, it is much more common for them to donate to Sanctuary Aeon or provide them with land that they may build a hospice or allow the League to build a charnel house. Medical technology is one of the few technologies to have survived the Fall's purges under the protection of Sanctuary Aeon and receives special exemption from the Inquisition.



Hospices are one of the few widely available medical facilities that have medical technology equivalent to that of the highest tech level of a planet. That said, many higher levels of technology cross the threshold from Merciful Tech into more restricted categories (such as viral therapy, radiotherapy and prosthetics).

A pre-reflective maxim once stated, cleanliness is next to godliness. This is true for Sanctuary Aeon. Amalthean-run hospices are the best medical facilities in the Known Worlds. These are areas of comfort and light and are extremely hygienic. Amaltheans know enough about hygiene to realize its necessity; the act of purifying these spaces is a compassionate act for them and those seeking penance. Sanctuary Aeon principally seeks to establish hospices in communities with a population above 10,000. The capabilities of that hospice entirely depend on the fief holder's relation to Sanctuary Aeon.

House Hawkwood normally furnishes Sanctuary Aeon with a building of good or excellent standard, usually in the heart of the poorest areas. Their largess gives the healers a moderate stipend with the understanding that this money will help maintain the hospice. Hawkwood hospices endeavor to mimic, as best as they can, the standards and practices of Republican hospitals, making them the closest in appearance and function to the institutions of that bygone era. Typically, the second or third scion of a family patronizes these hospices directly, often taking a high administrative role within the hospice.

House Decados provides run-down buildings close to the noble sectors. The House subtly subverts the medical care of these facilities to benefit the privilege of the elite, and they usually fall under the authority of Decados sponsored Oubliette chanel houses. These hospices have limited leeway in their prescriptions and penance, usually indicating a need for humility through service to their noble lords. They will do the minimum necessary to provide care for the poor, but patients can expect large doses of hypnotic therapy and mind-altering drugs to 'strengthen loyalty to House Decados'.

The Hazat sponsor very little in the way of civilian health care, instead encouraging Sanctuary Aeon to work on their war fronts or as aide-de-camps. However, Amaltheans in Hazat fiefs develop some of the best Remedy skills around (owing to the frequent duels and fights), and Amaltheans go on tours here exactly for this experience. Conversely, the hardy nature of the Hazat nobles and serfs, and the steady investment into hygienic infrastructure for the populations usually mean there is little in the way of endemic illnesses to treat. Because of this, Hazat hospices have some of the highest turnover of medical staff.

House Li Halan gives modest but ample areas to Sanctuary Aeon, providing they do not encroach too strongly on the Orthodox purview. Typically, Amaltheans in Li Halan sponsored hospices are more conservative than other members of their order, leaning closer to Orthodox doctrine than the average. Consequently, Li Halan hospices are far more pious than might be found elsewhere, with higher standards of care, but they have a lower tech standard than in

other areas of the Known Worlds (usually on par with the planet's average tech).

House al-Malik frequently sponsors hospices, even providing them with excellent facilities. However, they are typically found directly on al-Malik estates and decorated in House colors and with prominent pictures of the sponsor. Such décor ensures that any patient admitted knows to whom they are indebted to beyond the ministrations of Sanctuary Aeon. Such hospices are not the norm for medical treatment in al-Malik fiefs, as the House prefers to patronize League chanel houses run by the Apothecaries Guild.

Church fiefs of any standing and size possess universities. Such institutions are more than just places of learning but also provide a number of civic facilities available to the poor and underprivileged. Universities have an annex dedicated to the study of health and medicine where students and graduates care for the sick and infirm. Even though Amalthean charters often run and administer them, their mandate must conform to the doctrines of the hosting sect. In the upper echelons of these institutions, politics can be brutal when opposition of sectarian dogma dictates the allocation of medical supplies and other institutional resources. Perhaps the worst offenders are the Temple Avesti universities (far and few between as they are), which continually constrain any innovative idea or policy designed to benefit the surrounding serfs. Conversely, universities in Eskatonic territories are some of the best organized in the Known Worlds, as the Eskatonic Order collaborates with the healers to develop their understanding of what takes place during theurgical healing, often assisting with their own knowledge of somatology in an attempt to experiment and cross-pollinate disciplines.

League fiefs rarely sponsor hospices preferring to instead sponsor Guild standard chanel houses, run in collaboration with the Engineers' Guild, Apothecaries' Guild, and the Oubliette. These always meet strict levels of hygiene, set by a central standard bureaucracy, but it is clear from these policies that their primary function is to protect medical equipment from decay, valuing their expense above that of the patient. Chanel houses are expensive and cater to the League and nobility (or wealthy freemen). Less wealthy patients can receive treatment, but often at the cost of signing up for experimental procedures or via receiving limited treatment from apprentices. Sometimes such options are the only ones available for those who do not wish to attract Church attention.

In rural areas, the best medical care that is available will normally be a wisewoman (or man), whose practice with herbs, folk cures, and midwifery sets them apart from the others. Some areas are lucky enough to have a wandering Amalthean who tends to several smaller areas, or even an Orthodox priest with basic medical training. In some outlandish areas, pious serfs have learned that they can turn to the 'forest-dwelling pagans' (often Gjartins) or wandering Children of Zuran. While the forest-dwellers rarely ask for payment, they will accept gifts. The Children of Zuran will often steal anything that strikes their fancy in addition to taking payments.



Medical Tech

Following below is a small collection of medical tech that is widely found throughout the Known Worlds. Of course, local variants exist, and as the Church is less adamant about removing these, similar technologies may exist that were never catalogued.

Autoleech

Tech Level: 4

Cost: 10 firebirds

Among Serfs, the practice of leeching sick patients to cure various illnesses never completely abated. Practitioners of many traditions believe that the blood holds evil humors and that patients can only heal when these humors leave their bodies. The use of leeches for this purpose dates back millennia but saw a revival after the death of Vladimir. While the Amaltheans tried to stamp out this practice, other groups (especially Temple Avesti) encouraged it, effectively stymieing the Amalthean campaign against leeches.

Some leechers find their organic assistants too unreliable, and in 4781, Morris Kalkhoun of the Apothecaries Guild invented the autoleech. This mechanical bloodsucker mimics the living version—first anesthetizing its subject and then drawing out the blood—but it is fast, accurate, and usually sterile.

Traits

A character can attach this to a willing target with a single action or to an unwilling one with a successful Grapple attack. Every turn after it is attached, it causes one point of damage through blood loss until removed. Ripping it off its victim causes another point of damage, though it can be removed safely with a Tech + Remedy roll.

Instahair

Tech Level: 5

Cost: 10 firebirds (10 uses)

Designed as a temporary solution for people suffering baldness, this vanity spray can provide a specified hair color, texture, and length for up to 24 hours when properly applied. After that, however, the instahair begins shedding at an accelerated rate. One can provides 10 standard uses, though people living in especially cold climates have discovered that the amount in one can cover a human body. Vorox, on the other hand, tend to react badly to the substance, and upon contact they break out into a debilitating green rash.

Traits

One use gives the character +2 to Disguise rolls. Using an entire can provides +2 on Vigor rolls to resist cold. If the character can succeed on a Dex + Shoot roll against a Vorox, the Vorox must make an Endurance + Vigor roll or lose one action per turn until he succeeds at the roll. Note that even though this is a Shoot roll, the can has no range.

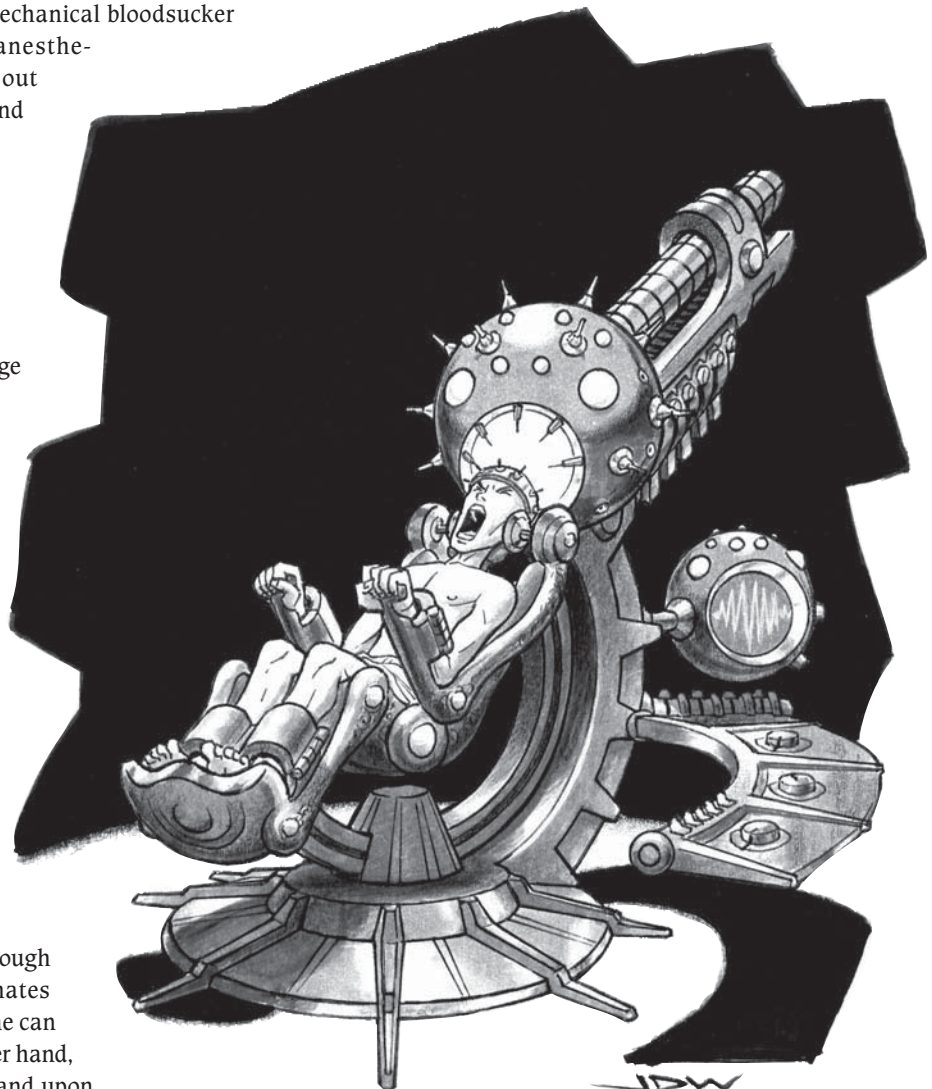
Psi Eraser Chair

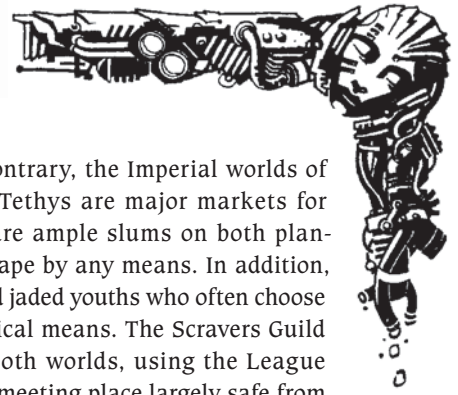
Tech Level: 8

Cost: 500,000 firebirds

The Second Republic banned capital punishment as inhumane, opting instead for life imprisonment, banishment to prison planets, personality restructurings, and the like. With psychic powers becoming more and more common, however, new and even more hideous crimes had to be dealt with, including memory theft, perception manipulation, mind-rape, and mind-murder.

The Phavian Institute could not stand idly by. With the help of its long-time business partner, Interactive Core Inc.,





it created the psi eraser chair, a form of psychic castration. The calcyon throne, nicknamed after its lead designer Eric Calcyon, used brainwashing and neural pathway burning to completely eliminate its subject's psychic abilities.

Many objected to the idea of the eraser chair, but the Senate, hard-pressed by the Orthodox Church, finally approved it in 3981. Republic judges ordered only two 'executions', one in 3986 on Criticorum, the other on Byzantium Secundus in 3997.

When the Fall came, Interactive Core had made several dozen calcyon thrones. However, the complicated technique of psychic castration was lost in the data purges. Nowadays, the Chairs are used as torture devices and for a total lobotomy of psychics. Calcyon thrones have only a minimal effect on non-psychics. Some theorize that the mind of a psychic is more sensitive. Others say that the eraser targets only specific parts of the brain, which in the case of non-psychics are simply not active.

Either way, psi users across the Known Worlds fear the throne, and for that very same reason, the Church embraces it. Still, rumors exist that some psychics have tricked it and its operators.

Traits

Six hours spent on the eraser chair permanently damages the part of the brain responsible for the psi talent, depriving the psychic of his abilities. Every six hours the operator of the eraser chair makes a Tech + Physick roll. The number of victory points equals the amount of Psi the target loses. Psychics who have developed Sathra's Path can make an opposed roll of Calm + Stoic Mind to resist this. Note that the chair has no effect on a character's Urge rating.

Drugs in the Known Worlds

Since the dawn of history, humanity tampered with its neurochemistry for a variety of purposes—spiritual, recreational, and utilitarian. Although humans have settled beyond their cradle, every Scraver knows they took their vices with them. The Diaspora was a time of rampant neuronautical exploration among the ecosystems of the new worlds. The Second Republic often turned the heights of human knowledge of chemistry and biology towards the quest for a better buzz, making it extremely easy for the masses to take refuge in the loving arms of chemically induced oblivion when civilization collapsed and life became oppressive.

Attitudes

Each noble family and power block has its own opinions on substance abuse, ranging from complete acceptance to total prohibition. However, these opinions are far from absolute; nonconformists inevitably arise when issues of mind-altering substances are discussed.

The Empire

Despite efforts to the contrary, the Imperial worlds of Byzantium Secundus and Tethys are major markets for illegal substances. There are ample slums on both planets where the poor seek escape by any means. In addition, thriving middle classes breed jaded youths who often choose to lose themselves by chemical means. The Scravers Guild runs the drug rackets on both worlds, using the League space station Cumulus as a meeting place largely safe from Imperial authority.

House Hawkwood

For the most part, the Hawkwoods are staunchly puritan where issues of drugs are concerned, denying any legitimacy to use by nobleman or commoner alike. If the House or the Church bans a substance, it is therefore morally wrong. Conversely, the Hawkwoods have few qualms of using drugs they deem legal and safe. Ravenna, the most conservative planet in the Hawkwood sphere, is famed for the preeminent quality of its tabaq snuff. Where drug use does exist, House Hawkwood cooperates closely with the Sanctuary Aeon to provide effective rehabilitation programs.

The Hawkwoods are only peripherally aware of the integral role Leminkainen plays in the drug trade of the Known Worlds. Leminkainen provides the shortest route between Aylon's production centers and the markets of Byzantium Secundus and smuggling is commonplace despite the risk of boarding by the Hawkwood fleet. However, when a smuggler's ship is in danger of being boarded in Leminkainen's orbit, many drug-runners dump the cargo into space and send it plunging planetside for local Scravers to pick it up. As a result, high-quality drugs can occasionally appear on the market for ridiculously low prices when a local peasant unexpectedly receives a "gift from above."

House Decados

Though widely regarded as reckless hedonists, the Decados' attitudes toward drugs are surprisingly complex. Though their list of permissible drugs is far longer than those of the other Houses, the Decados are no less involved in combating illegal drug use than any other power. After all, the Decados would rather see their subjects dependent on selchakah—a drug almost exclusively under their control—than looking elsewhere. But the Decados are constantly on guard for new opportunities, and some young nobles took advantage of the peace between their House and the Hazat, and now scour the uncharted jungles of Vera Cruz for new chemical experiences to supply and enjoy.

Selchakah is cheap on Severus, but its use is nearly as common on Cadiz and Cadavus where prices are much higher. Some parts of Abdera in northern Cadiz are practically run by drug-trafficking organizations, many of which are not entirely loyal to House Decados.

The Hazat

House Chauki was notoriously permissive of drug use not only by its own members but among its subjects as well. When the Hazat overthrew the Chauki, they became fiercely



opposed to any manner of illicit drug use among the lower classes. When discussing drug use by Hazat family members, attitudes toward drugs vary wildly, perhaps more than in any other House. Many Hazat are fervently opposed to any form of chemical recreation, while others appreciate the military applications of such substances. Body enhancing chemicals, including steroids, find frequent use among the Hazat.

Additionally, Hira is the only known planet outside Church control where Urthish Goqa was successfully cultivated. When refined and concentrated, Goqa is currently gaining popularity among the Castenda Hazat, many Charioteers, and the impoverished inhabitants of the slums of Aragon.

House Li Halan

With certain rare exceptions, House Li Halan's stance is one of absolute prohibition of any mood-altering substance beyond mere alcohol and that in moderation. That said, there are a few areas where the Li Halan either cannot or choose not to enforce those laws. The province of Lyonesse—the heart of the Li Halans' tech base—is allowed a degree of self-government that includes writing its own laws, and those laws allow some freedom toward the use of less powerful drugs. However, House Li Halan is ever wary of smugglers who attempt to export contraband from Lyonesse to more traditional domains.

Because of this, drug trafficking is incredibly profitable within Li Halan territory. Rampart has very few native species with any psychoactive potential, and the world is a rich market for any suppliers who dare risk capture by the Li Halan. Additionally, the pre-Cardanite Li Halan of Ungavorox were reliable customers for certain substances, particularly those native to Kordeth.

House al-Malik

The al-Malik worlds possess a wide range of legal codes dating back as far back as the Second Republic. These regulations provide great detail on which substances are illegal, under what circumstances they can be used and in what areas, but no one in the House is terribly concerned with them. By and large, the al-Malik are extremely permissive about drug use in their territory and among their family. They prefer to leave the choice up to the individual, and at the same time they see little need for detox programs. But because there is so little policing of even the most mind-altering substances, the al-Malik worlds suffer some of the worse drug-related crime rates, especially Criticorum.

Criticorum is also a manufacturing center and trade nexus for illegal drugs from across the Empire. Raw agriproducts from several neighboring worlds are processed into useable drugs on this world. Most of these are exported, but much feeds the local market. The Scravers compensate the local al-Malik well, who in exchange turn a mostly blind eye on the thriving industry.

The Church

Except for the Eskatonic Order, the Church is morally opposed to drug use, but the manner of that opposition

varies between sects. Orthodox congregations often provide drug education programs to help young parishioners avoid the seductive lure of neuro-recreation while Temple Avesti believes drug use is a sign of ethical bankruptcy, and demand a “cold turkey” approach to detoxify under threat of purging flames. Brother Battle does not often minister to the public and refuses to believe any Brothers would ever be so weak as to fall on the crutch of drug use. Many veterans of Stigmata know better, relying on any chemical that might give them an edge in battle, powerful pain relievers after battle, and any chemical to forget the horrors they have seen.

The Amaltheans provide rehabilitation programs where permitted by the Church and by local laws, but some Amalthean radicals even run underground safe havens where users can indulge. Here the Amaltheans provide medical facilities that ensure a safe dosage and prevent contamination by impurities or by disease.

The Eskatonic Order does not officially sanction drug use by its members, but neither does it actively oppose it. The Sanhedrin, which polices the Eskatonics for dangerous theurgies also watches for excessive drug use which can lead toward occult paths best left untouched even by the Order.

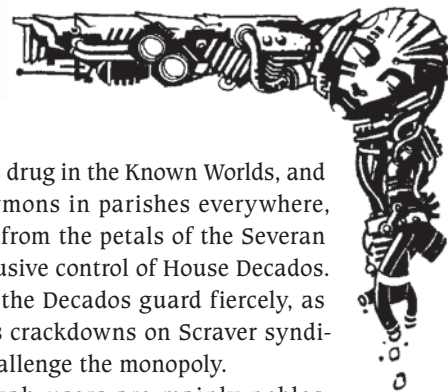
The League

The single largest drug trafficking organization in the Known Worlds is the Scravers Guild, whose domain spans almost every planet in the Empire. In particular, the DeCaprio Combine specializes in the drug trade, and it has proven almost unnaturally adept at evading law enforcement in the most securely patrolled star systems. Periodically a Charioteer hong attempts to establish itself in the drug-running business, but the Scravers do not take rivals lightly.

The League's official stance is one of support for the legal positions of the nobility and Church, however it cannot ignore the potential profits that drug trafficking provides. The Scravers are particularly resistant to any efforts to punish drug dealers under League laws. Most high-ranking Charioteers and Reeves make periodic efforts to control the traffic; they dislike the reputation it brings the League as a whole.

Many neurobiologists of the Supreme Order of Engineers take an interest in psychoanalytic substances for academic reasons, but more than a few such researchers traversed the gap between theory and practice.

Together with the Apothecaries' guild, the Engineers learned to directly stimulate the various emotion and sensation related regions of the human brain (including the pleasure centers), a practice that predates the Second Republic. This secret treatment provides the purest pleasure a human can experience without moving beyond the limits of known science. However, it is terribly addictive, and most who have dared to try it died from dehydration and exhaustion, forgetting to tend to their body's needs while lost in rapture and unwilling to give up the extreme sensations for the more mundane of real life. Those few who survived swear the practice must compare favorably with the ecstasy of Sathra.

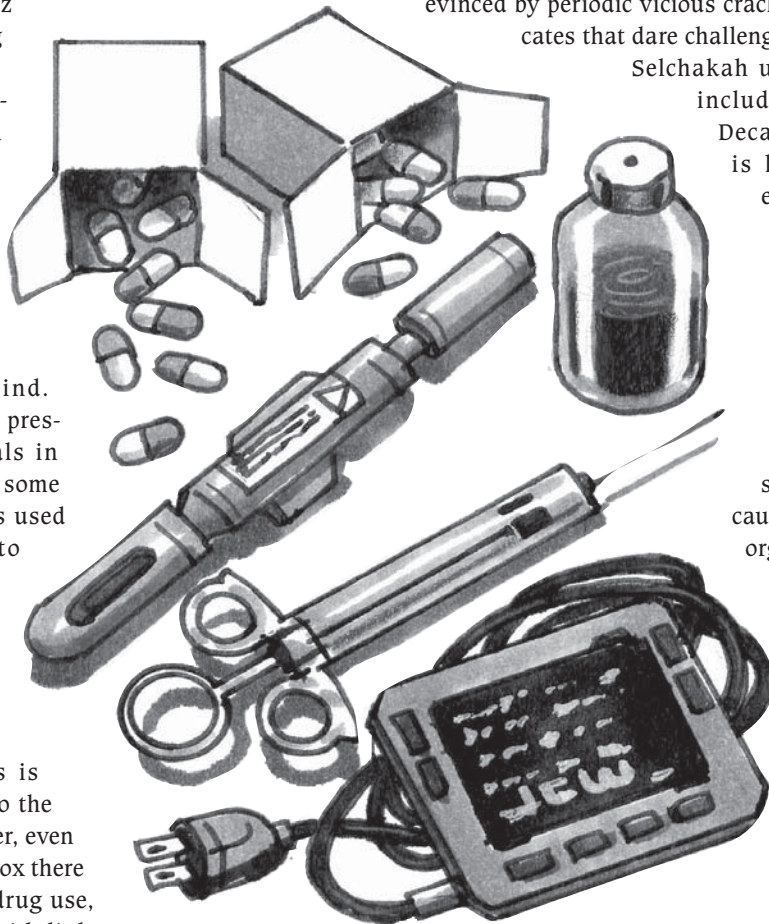


Aliens

In a human-dominated universe, aliens have been economically downtrodden for generations and as a consequence suffer disproportionately high rates of drug addiction. This is especially true among Shantor, Hironem, and Ur-Ukar living in human areas although many of the Chirikiti and Ghek'daz breeds of Etyri are drug users as well.

In traditional societies, both the Ur-Obun and the Ur-Ukar tolerate a certain level of recreational experimentation but are disgusted by practices that inflict permanent damage to either body or mind. Certain drugs are also present in religious rituals in both species, much as some ancient Terran peoples used natural substances to experience the divine in tribal rites.

The ancestral religion of the Vorox involves a certain level of drug-induced spirituality, but this is completely forbidden to the civilized Vorox. However, even among the civilized Vorox there is some underground drug use, particularly by those with links to the ferals. As for the Oro'ym and Ascorbites, no human knows.



Selchakah

Easily the most infamous drug in the Known Worlds, and the subject of countless sermons in parishes everywhere, selchakah is manufactured from the petals of the Severan opiate poppy under the exclusive control of House Decados. It is a commercial property the Decados guard fiercely, as evinced by periodic vicious crackdowns on Scraver syndicates that dare challenge the monopoly.

Selchakah users are mainly nobles, including members of House Decados for whom the drug is legal and inexpensive, especially on Severus. Among the other Houses, selchakah is moderately popular among the young, rebellious and rich. Selchakah use is uncommon amongst the Church and League, though still frequent enough to cause some concern in those organizations.

For more information on Selchakah, see **Lords of the Known Worlds**, p. 40.

Administration:

Inhaled, often mixed with other drugs. Selchakah can be injected, but that is only common on Cadiz. The Decados consider it crass.

Standard dosage: 100–200mg

Price: 3 firebirds per dose

Traits: +1 Introvert, +1 Calm, –1 Passion for a normal dose, but Calm and Introvert can increase with higher doses. The drug lasts about an hour, after which the user feels extremely lethargic and experiences –1 to Wits and Perception for three hours.

Psychoactive Substances

The Known Worlds consist of dozens of inhabited planets, hundreds of cultures, and thousands of possibilities for mind-altering effects. There are an uncounted number of life forms that might produce narcotic substances or be used in the production of them, as well as the rare remnants of the high science of the Second Republic.

The effects of drugs on the human body are a tricky affair, difficult to quantify into concrete game rules. Each drug can affect different people in different ways. Feel free to modify effects and duration to suit your story's needs, but a general rule is that drugs taken by smoke, snuff, or syringe hit the nervous system very quickly, and their effects do not last. Drugs taken orally take longer to take effect but last for extended periods.

Below are just a few examples of the variety and power of drugs in the current century:

Mrudukila

An extract from the seedling of the nauklen, a small mobile plant native to the southern jungles of Aylon, mrudukila was discovered by Ur-Ukar settlers long ago and is considered holy among some of the Aylon clans. It has since become one of the most popular illicit drugs in the Known Worlds, especially on Istakhr, Criticorum, Byzantium Secundus, and Severus. Mrudukila requires a complicated chemical process to distill, but it is possible in a small laboratory, such as might be easily hidden from authorities. On



the continent of Tamerlain on Byzantium Secundus, the mrudukila trade is an open secret in many communities, some of which have even established successful ranches that raise and breed nauklen.

Mrudukila is usually ingested orally as a tablet, but a few dedicated users seeking a longer high will take it rectally. To most users mrudukila is a simple analgesic stimulant and most often taken in a social setting at the same time as copious amounts of alcohol. However, a few psychics swear the drug can inhibit psi powers as well as Urge. However, the suppression lasts only as long as the drug's effects and Urge can worsen as the drug wears off.

Mrudukila users typically become hyperactive and sexually excited. The drug can remove the sense of one's limits, and occasional deaths occur when someone attempts a reckless physical stunt. Murder and rape are not unknown, but are usually committed by those who were unstable before taking the drug. However, in such cases the drug's come-down can be a brutal assault of guilt. Before it was hit by the Green-Plague bomb and its subsequent placement under quarantine, Criticorum's Refuge City of Yintraï had a tradition that Saint Davus was addicted to mrudukila. After a spree of drug-induced rapine his post-drug remorse was so powerful it changed him fundamentally, and he dedicated his life to the Church.

The Church uses mrudukila as part of its penitent program for the rehabilitation of psychics. However, it also strongly opposes its use for any other purpose, especially recreation. Mrudukila manufacturing and possession are universally outlawed, though enforcement varies widely. Pursuit of mrudukila traffickers is a frequent assignment for novice pilgrims of Temple Avesti.

Administration: Usually oral via tablet, but it can be taken rectally for a longer high (double duration).

Standard dosage: 100–400mg; dosages manufactured in underground laboratories vary wildly in potency and quality

Price: 5 firebirds per dose

Traits: The drug takes effect almost an hour after it is administered and grants the user +1 Vigor, –1 Calm, –1 Psi. Urge cannot be awakened while the psychic is under the influence of the drug, but the psychic can still gain Urge for the usual reasons. Furthermore, rolls to resist gaining Urge are made at a –2 penalty. The drug lasts 4 hours. Afterwards the user suffers –1 Extrovert, –2 Calm and –1 Ego for 12 hours.

Vellau

A moderate hallucinogen made from the flesh of the spider cactus, originally native to Kish. Its psychoactive properties were discovered by the pre-Cardanite Li Halan. However, the drug did not become a major part of Li Halan culture as the House was then busy experimenting with other, more esoteric substances. Instead it caught on with off-world merchants, who successfully introduced the cactus to deserts across the jumpweb.

The primary symptom of a vellau experience is lethargy, combined with an altered perception of time. Events seem to pass more slowly. At higher doses visual distortions occur: shifts in color, afterimages, and blurred auras. Some users say the drug can temporarily instill a small measure of psi power, a claim most psychics refute with great humor.

Vellau is outlawed and proscribed on most worlds. Leagueheim is the notable exception, but the cactus cannot be grown naturally on that world, so prices are comparable to those on worlds that face the opposition of the law. If the drug's culture has a heart it is on Pentateuch, which is widely credited with producing the best vellau.

Vellau is usually taken orally, but it can be inhaled or injected. The drug requires little complicated processing to produce, so it is readily found in black markets wherever the cactus can be cultivated. As such, vellau is common on many worlds, where it is the focus of weak attempts at spirituality by many otherwise unremarkable citizens.

Administration: oral via liquid, inhaled, or injected. Taken orally, the drug requires half an hour to take effect and the duration is tripled (both the high and the aftereffects). The Gjartins of Midian mix vellau into a body paint that they then wear for days or weeks, granting a constant slight buzz. However, once removed the withdrawal symptoms can last weeks.

Standard dosage: 200–300mg

Price: 1 wing per dose

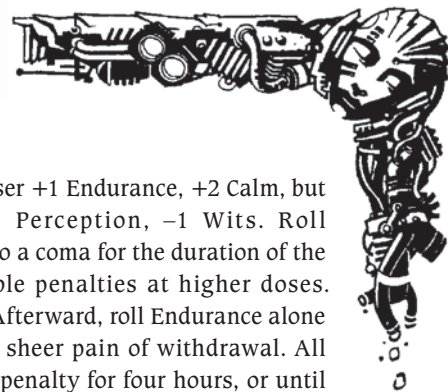
Traits: –1 to all physical characteristics, +2 Introvert, –1 Passion. Higher doses can produce a bonus to Perception as well. Possible Psi effects are up to the gamemaster. Lasts an hour, after which the user suffers a mild headache (–1 Wits) for two hours.

Demiqoqa

A creation of the Second Republic, demiqoqa is a genetically engineered strain of Urthish goqa designed for the artificial ecosystem of Leminkainen (The engineer who created it was fired and prosecuted by the Republic). Local peasants chew the leaves, which suppress appetite and provide energy for long periods of sustained work. Dried demiqoqa leaves are brewed into tea on many worlds.

With Urthish Goqa as rare as it is, the Scravers have tried for years to refine and concentrate demiqoqa as goqa once was but have never been able to compensate for the strain's genetic alterations. That secret belongs only to House Dextrite, which has a hidden refinery on its Leminkainen fief. The Dextrites concealed their knowledge and periodically introduce species-specific mutagenic viruses to hinder the Scravers' research. The Dextrites know that their Decados masters would immediately seize this monopoly should they learn of it and House Dextrite has little desire to strengthen the house that keeps it in bondage.

Administration: Oral



Standard dosage: 50 grams of leaves in a kettle of hot water

Price: 1 crest per cup

Traits: Several strong cups might provide +1 Endurance for three hours

Presuch

Extracted from the leaves of a shrub native to Bannockburn, presuch was once found mainly among the soldiers of the Muster. But in the last hundred years as military forces from across the Known Worlds gathered to fight on the Stigmata Front, presuch gained a widespread reputation as “the soldiers’ drug.” During the Emperor Wars, it could be found among armies everywhere.

As a narcotic, presuch is a powerhouse. At typical doses, it leaves its user deaf, dumb, blind, and nearly comatose, lost in a sea of peace and beauty. The effects after the high are just as potent, as every nerve ending screams with pain with each movement. Users have been known to die from overdoses as well as from the pure shock of the comedown.

In addition, presuch takes its toll on a body that uses it too regularly. It can cause long-term brain damage, uncontrollable muscle spasms, sleeping disorders, infertility, and even kidney and liver damage. Soldiers laugh, though, that if the presuch wants to kill them it will have to wait its turn.

Because of this, presuch is seldom found outside military circles. But for soldiers—especially in combat zones—the drug temporarily takes them away from their fears. As for the aftereffects, soldiers deal with them in a variety of ways. Some enjoy tormenting their fellows who are in the throes of a presuch comedown. Some swear that intense physical activity makes the comedown more bearable. Some develop medicinal remedies of dubious effectiveness.

Military penalties regarding presuch are universally harsh. Mere possession can result in severe punishment. Trafficking can lead to a firing squad. Enforcement of these codes varies by military organization; the al-Malik and Muster are the most permissive, while the Li Halan and Decados are draconian in the drug’s suppression.

Administration: Smoked or injected. Some Chemical Shock Troops jury-rig their needle vests to carry their stash, which they inject during their downtime.

Standard dosage: 50–100mg, with overdoses very common.

Price: 1 firebird per dose

Traits: Presuch grants the user +1 Endurance, +2 Calm, but inflicts –1 Dexterity, –1 Perception, –1 Wits. Roll Endurance + Vigor or fall into a coma for the duration of the drug’s effects, with possible penalties at higher doses. Effects last for 30 minutes. Afterward, roll Endurance alone or suffer a wound from the sheer pain of withdrawal. All actions are taken with a –1 penalty for four hours, or until the user takes another dose.

Yimbun

A powder ground from the dark fire sponge of Madoc, yimbun was once a common vice among the League, whose members ingested it in a variety of fashions. The dark fire sponge is a rare species, endangered by decades of over-harvesting, and the species was never successfully transplanted to any other world. Thus the drug’s price has risen until only the truly rich or thoroughly addicted bother with it anymore.

Yimbun can be injected or inhaled, but it is most commonly mixed with cheap local shisha and smoked by pipe, papers, or hookah among the wealthiest users. Taken in low doses, yimbun is a strong relaxant with mild euphoric properties. However, at higher doses (only available via injection), Yimbun’s euphoric effect becomes more pronounced. It also becomes paralytic and can even kill its users with an overdose that stops central nervous activity. Despite its rarity, yimbun is still socially accepted among most League circles. It is, however, proscribed by the Church, and so it is rarely seen away from the League’s places of power.

Administration: Injected or inhaled

Standard dosage: varies widely. 50mg is the minimum, but much higher doses are common.

Price: 10 firebirds per dose

Traits: At low doses, yimbun grants –1 Dexterity, +1 Calm, +1 Stoic Mind. Dexterity penalties increase at higher doses. At very high doses roll Endurance + Stoic Body to resist total paralysis. A botch on this roll results in a cardiac arrest—fatal without immediate medical attention. The high of the drug lasts two hours, after which the user is at –1 Endurance for two hours. If the dosage has been very high, the user also suffers –1 Passion and –2 Extrovert.



Chapter Six: Space Stations

Lord Pavarti Li Halan: Are we not but helpless in this hull? It is not an armored haven but a gilded cage of our own devising. What mad creatures would willingly place their selves in an unstable and imperfect work of human-kind, suspended in the void of night?

Baroness Selene al-Malik: Why, none other than those who hear the call of the night, the desire to fly from our worlds and bathe in the pure light of our sun. It is the kiss of the Pancreator.

Lord Pavarti Li Halan: And so I say, spurn the empty shells of metal and grime that float above the world in the dark. One cannot stand naked before the Pancreator, when one is bound in suits of synthsilks and girders of ceramsteel.

Baroness Selene al-Malik: But nay! Look to the heavens, and you will see a new star! Though the suns are fading, human ingenuity has placed new ones in the nighttime tapestry.

—Transcript of a conversation from Episode 12, Series 2 of Even Nobles Weep, reproduced here with permission of the Interstellar Media Archive, Academy Interatta, Leagueheim, romantic interlude removed at the request of Mother Genevieve Hawkwood of the Orthodoxy

Cities of the Void

Space stations provide an excellent milieu of stories for the science fiction genre. They are cosmopolitan city-states independent from the sovereign rule of any state or tyranny. Each is a complex microcosm of politics, science, logistics, and sociology of human interaction. Space is at a premium, resources are limited, tempers are worse, and nothing but ceramsteel separates its inhabitants from a frozen vacuum. Space stations in the **Fading Suns** universe are more than just paragons of science in space. They are historic shrines of an age of exploration, sources of urban legend, and a matter of controversy.

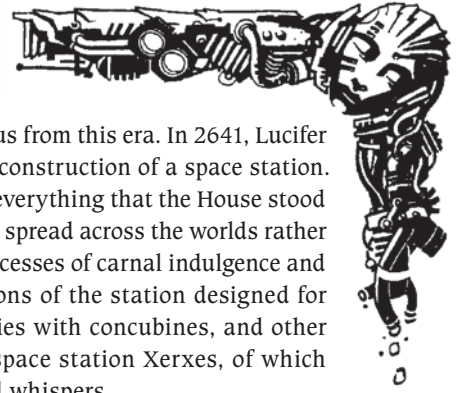
Historic Space Stations

In the late second millennium, humanity built its first ever space station. It was the first of a series of monolithic stations built on the ground in one piece and launched into space in one piece. Modular stations would replace them in a couple of decades, with several powers of the time engaging in a race to establish permanent orbital stations in the early decades of the third millennium. These stations were small research or flag-waving operations intended to be crewed by only a few astronauts. Other larger commercial space stations did not gain much purchase until the early 2100s when the First Republic colonization efforts demanded their patronage by the zaibatsu. Each planet in Holy Terra's solar system could claim the prestige of having one of these machines, and though most of them have fallen into disrepair over the millennia, many Terran museums carefully preserve fragments of their hulls.

In the years between colonization and jump capability, extra-solar colonization efforts led to the development of the infamous slow ships. None of these lumbering monstrosities exist today, as they were made obsolete when the first human starship passed through the jumpgate, though they perhaps still wander the sea of stars, lost in the void of night to this day.

Those ancient space stations that are still functional have received many patch jobs, upgrades, and renovations, but are increasingly difficult to maintain as eons of use cause severe wear and tear on fatigued material that can often not be replaced. The few remaining stations (often relegated to observatory posts) are a horrendous chaos of faulty wires, rolling blackouts, primitive artificial gravity, and dangerous malfunctions.

Perhaps the most infamous space station was the one built near Holy Terra's jumpgate. It was an incredibly expensive investment by the zaibatsu and became the major platform of research on the gate. The station, called Colossus, was twice as large as Jupiter's own station, still making it the largest in recorded history. Its unwieldy bulk was initially designed to form a massive generation ship, but with the discovery of the jumpgate it was obsolete. Rather than to abandon it, it was slowly shipped out to become the



backbone of what would become the immense 'Star Dock' orbiting close to the jumpgate. Yet, its infamy comes not from its stature, nor from its landmark usage. Although mankind had mastered travel through the jumpgate, it still held many mysteries and Colossus Station became the premier scientific installation for jumpgate research. In 2446, the scientists aboard the station determined to undertake experiments that could one day lead to humanity not only mastering the existing gate network but actually constructing its own gates. No one knows for sure what happened aboard the Colossus, but the station has not been seen or heard from since that day.

Drunken tales of spacers tell many tales about the Colossus; it has become something of a space-faring version of the Marie Celeste. Some claim to have seen it still in orbital track close to the jumpgate, while others claim to have received aid or a warning from the station that has saved them from pirates or navigational hazards. The disappearance of the Colossus has been the subject of many magic lantern productions, some based on tales of recorded (or alleged) survivors while others are simply ghost stories.

Records of space stations during the Diaspora are sketchy and incomplete. Due to the revolution of jump engines, the zaibatsu abandoned most of the resources that would go into the construction of stations in favor of colonization ships. The design of these modular ships was such that upon reaching a planet, they would convert into the initial infrastructure of the first colonies, along with the very first primitive terraforming devices. But one station

remains particularly notorious from this era. In 2641, Lucifer Li Halan commissioned the construction of a space station. Designed as the pinnacle of everything that the House stood for at the time, its reputation spread across the worlds rather quickly. Stories abound of excesses of carnal indulgence and decadence, with huge sections of the station designed for the slaughter of slaves, orgies with concubines, and other perversions. This was the space station Xerxes, of which people speak only in hushed whispers.

Little known to modern society, this station still exists. Rumored to be operational, as its power generator has idled for centuries, it sits in perfect orbit just beyond the Icon jumpgate. When House Li Halan surrendered its sinful past, Xerxes was abandoned to the dark—some say the Li Halan preferred to forget it ever existed. Anyone who could recover Xerxes could claim the station under Imperial salvage laws. The Scravers Guild, along with the Charioteers Guild, sent a number of recovery missions in the period after the Li Halan conversion, but few returned. Those that did speak of horrors and demonic hauntings. For these reasons it is not recorded in any official treatise on the system and remains unmentioned to discourage any adventurer from exploring it. Li Halan authorities lock away anyone claiming to have been aboard Xerxes as the Church has issued a ban on visiting the station.

The last space station of any particular infamy is Triumvirate Station. The Byzantium Secundus system used to contain Cumulus and Triumvirate Stations. The station now known as Diadem is in essence what remains of the



Triumvirate—a super-station all but destroyed during the Emperor Wars. The Triumvirate was historically the major defensive fortress of Byzantium Secundus, earning a reputation as the strongest station in history. There was an unspoken accord as to its sanctity with all factions treating it like neutral territory, and few people talk about the assault on the Triumvirate. House Decados had infiltrated the station, using their politics and tactics to place people in their pay in positions of power. In 4993 when Emperor Alexius was crowned, House Decados took control of the station and used its geo-synchronous orbit over the Imperial Palace to sabotage the defensive shields of the palace to hold the empire at ransom for the crown.

Alexius initiated his contingency plan. Knowing the risk that came with securing the space station, he had secreted a nuclear warhead aboard the station (more powerful fusion or antimatter warheads would have been more easily detected and they would have destroyed the entire station). In detonating this warhead, Alexius destroyed half the station, which would only later be resurrected in part as Diadem, the headquarters of the Imperial navy. This blow helped bury the Decados-Hazat alliance, killing the Hazat's finest military tacticians and several of House Decados' major intelligence officers.

Doctrine and Politics

During the wars for the consolidation of the Republic, many stations turned upon the planetary populations in acts of genocide, attempting to purge the planet of 'hostiles.' These atrocities led many to question the legitimacy of their military capabilities and, in light of the Pax Republica, political activists demanded to decommission all military stations. To save the weaponry on board, space station captains negotiated and offered to limit the use of force for defensive purposes only. This helped re-legitimize their use, meaning that during the Second Republic, and throughout the New Dark Ages, space stations remained capable of force.

As an extension of this practice, space stations developed a tradition of sanctuary and neutrality. Though used to stave off planetary invasions from hostile armadas, the customary practice is to allow any ships in distress to dock and find haven on the station. Hostiles who surrender themselves in such fashion have the status of prisoner of war. This practice of sanctuary extends to peace times as well, and space stations are often launching platforms for many a deep space rescue operation.

In the current political climate, stations retain this neutrality and are centers of commerce and science under Alexius' regime. However, the actions of House Decados and Emperor Alexius on Triumvirate Station caused much political controversy. In an attempt to shed doubt on his legitimacy, House Decados suggested that Alexius' actions were a violation of custom and tradition. However, Alexius' close ties to the Reeves Guild ensured that response was loud and resounding, pointing out that House Decados' and the Hazat's actions on Triumvirate constituted the breach of the treaty by threatening planetary structures and

populace. House Decados attempted to argue premeditation in its actions, as the Emperor had a nuclear weapon on the station. This constituted a political conundrum, though Alexius' Reeves successfully argued that his actions were performed in a self-defensive capacity in a time of war, where conventions against the deployment of these weapons were suspended.

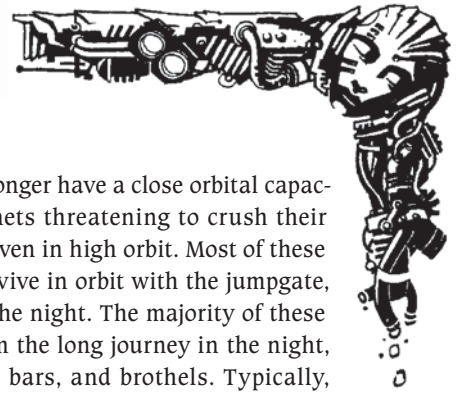
From a doctrinal point of view, space stations fall into a gray area. This is in no small part due to the political realities mentioned above. Each station maintains a high amount of autonomy from the politics of Empire and Church. Though they pay lip service to both authorities, their remoteness and strong defenses render them nearly unassailable. Their city-like infrastructure makes them ideal for withstanding a siege and breaching their defense requires a major effort by aggressors. Politically speaking, space stations have fostered a strong autonomy and upheld this as traditional neutrality in stellar conflicts. This allows them to be defiant on many of the smaller issues, including Church attitudes. Nevertheless, the Church continuously expresses concern for all inhabitants of space stations, for they are far removed from the grace of the planet's star for long periods, and the Church seeks to ensure that all space stations are fitted with a chapel and priests to minister to the souls aboard. All negotiations to this end are complicated power plays and require concessions from the Church.

The sole universal concordance on stations (politically and doctrinally speaking) is the prohibition of military-class stations. During the Emperor Wars, some Royal Houses manufactured one or two of the MKII series of space stations. They were little more than highly defended weapons platforms with mass drivers, meson canons, and antimatter warheads. These juggernauts, made in secret, imposed more terror on the space lanes than the mighty dreadnaughts, eliciting the following response from Bishop Nazari of Temple Avesti, resulting in the immediate proscription against the MKII series:

"And so not merely for the myriad worlds do the nobles war, but for the forbidden constructs of the Second Republic: the great floating metal war-spheres from which the godless hosts rained fire and ruin on defiant worlds. Perhaps the most heinous products of that lost realm's hubris, these constructs were not designed to harbor life but to deal death. Verily, I have heard innumerable accounts of hapless cities, nations, and worlds decimated by these hulking fortresses at the whim of a power-mad noble who cared not that she incinerated the very sphere she sought to possess."

— Bishop Nazari, Temple Avesti, 4963

There are two general bodies of theological thought concerning civilian space stations. The Hinayana conservatives argue that space stations are a profane replication of the Pancreator's bounty, and they refer to space stations as bulkheads, brutes, and dirty cities. One particularly famous sermon labeled them 'hulks of the void,' ripe for



being snatched away by the denizens of the Abyss that lurk between the stars. The common rhetoric employed by this faction echoes the sentiments of Patriarch Edwin's speech to the senators of the Second Republic, now preserved in the archives at Pentateuch:

"Is not the bounty of the Pancreator enough? Are we not content with an entire universe of worlds, that we must now construct artificial ones? Oh ye fools how can ye expect the Pancreator to stay His hand, when ye mock Him so? It is meant that we divorce ourselves from the world of our birth and go among the stars, such is His will, but must ye spurn the spheres ordained for habitation in favor of these orbiting metal abominations, which cannot even support human life save by technomancy?"

— Patriarch Edwin, 3655

The more liberal Mahayana put forth that space stations are in line with the virtue of Questing, stating that they take into the abyss tiny pieces of the Pancreator's grace wherever the faithful go. By braving the depth of night, they help push back the rolling darkness. Mahayana point out that in all recorded history, not a single Kraken attack has fallen on a station. To support their argument, they point towards the testimony of Captain Verspera of Space Station Cumulus, charged and tried for technosophy:

"When asked by my fellow crewmates if I would relocate to Holy Terra if given the chance, they were surprised to discover my refusal. For them, space holds the promise of unbidden terror, and the idea of standing in a floating hulk in the depth of the void is far too much to handle. Most crews do not last more than six months before the limitless darkness weighs down heavily upon them. They descry the station as an act of hubris, trying to emulate the great works of the Pancreator with the flawed sciences of humankind.

For me, there is another story. When I see these 'hulks in the void,' I see a monument, not despair. They are twinkling beacons of hope in the night, microcosms of human ingenuity, and, more importantly, they are home. I was born with the abyss of night at my feet, I grew up in environments of low to no gravity, I saw my first dawn when I was three months old as the ship I was born upon was nowhere near a sun. I have spent most of my life going from one ship to another, and every time I place my feet on terra firma I feel closed in and contained. I need to feel space around me, the stars in my eyes and the solar wind to guide my course. The void is a harsh mistress, but she is what keeps me company, and it is where I belong. I become boundless and one with the Pancreator."

—Boris Verspera, Captain of Space Station Cumulus, 4987

Way Stations

Many older stations no longer have a close orbital capacity—the gravity of the planets threatening to crush their fragile structural integrity even in high orbit. Most of these remaining stations now survive in orbit with the jumpgate, providing a way station in the night. The majority of these stations provide respite from the long journey in the night, with recreational facilities, bars, and brothels. Typically, military vessels dock here for 'shore leave.' Stations in more affluent systems combine a trading post with some residential complexes for short-term tourism. Work on these stations comes in six month rotating shifts and they are primarily staffed by Charioteers and Engineers.

Transfer Stations

Operating an interstellar economy and the bulk transportation of freight and passengers necessitated the construction in modern times of a new breed of space station. Compared to the immense structures of the Second Republic, the Transfer Station is tiny, only about five or six times the size for the freighters and other commercial traffic that they service. The bulk of interstellar freight is moved in standard cargo pods, hull bonded to large starships or hauled in great chains of canisters by Jump Tugs. These vessels, like all void and atmosphere graded hulls, cannot directly transport goods to the planet's surface where they are required.

The transfer station provides accommodations and basic services to the travelers and guildsmen who maintain the stations. In many cases they are little more than shuttle dock, hostel, and orbital customs platform. Basic repair faculties are usually available as well. Unlike the space stations of old, these modern structures are unarmed. Many lack large internal storage spaces and use surrounding space and shuttle tugs to maneuver and store cargo containers in the empty night around them. This has made an easy target for pirates and raiders in the more lawless systems. The League has so far been unsuccessful in arguing the case for arming these stations in the face of noble and Church concern that they might simply become weapons platforms. In the meantime, the League provides sentry ships where necessary and, realizing the fragility and necessity of interstellar commerce, House naval forces are often quick to respond to raiders.

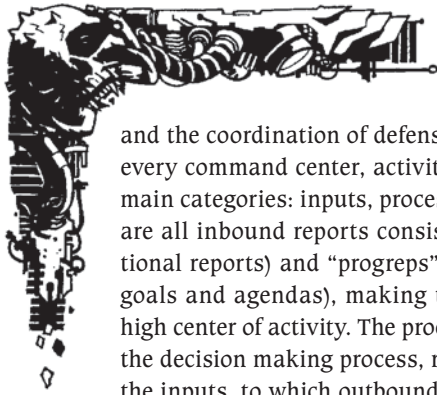
Structure of Space Stations

Space stations fall into one of three general categories: scientific, commercial, and 'operational,' the last term being a euphemism for the military stations now limited to defensive capacity. In any case, all stations support the following general features:

Command Center

The command center is the heart of any single space station. It is the center of operations, where all minutiae of information about the ship flows through. All communications and logistics for the station as a whole take place here, including issuing docking permits to incoming ships





and the coordination of defense efforts in case of attack. In every command center, activities can be divided into three main categories: inputs, processes, and outputs. The inputs are all inbound reports consisting of both “sitreps” (situational reports) and “progreps” (progress reports of specific goals and agendas), making the communications panel a high center of activity. The processing aspect centers around the decision making process, responding to the demands of the inputs, to which outbound commands are issued.

Typically, ceramsteel bulkheads and state-of-the-art security systems separate this area from the rest of the ship, and access requires special command passes or key codes. Most command centers have immediate or near access to the transport systems of the station designed for quick and easy use in case of emergency (typically with travel routes to all areas of the ship). Some of the more advanced stations even have dedicated transport tubes for station personnel only. It is a social faux pas to call the command center a bridge, as this term is associated with military usage, and thus frowned upon.

Engineering

Second in importance to the command center is engineering, where the entire core of the station, including the power plant, life support systems, and communication arrays, function. The command center controls most central engineering operations, but secondary controls run from security operations. The core components of engineering usually run throughout the station, accessible through a system of access panels, crawl tubes, and vented walkways. Inevitably, hull rats have many dens throughout the station's tubes and vents.

Security Stations

Security stations are critical on a space station, which also contains the brig. The tightly packed press of humanity makes for some strong tensions and short tempers. Security personnel have a reputation for being grouchy and short tempered. They rarely get decent sleep as there is always some form of trouble and conflict that requires their attention. Security teams work like tactical hit squads, using whatever idea and scheme will work in the situation. Most stations give their security ops a huge largess on their methods.

Observation Deck

The design of an observation deck on the station is a matter of prestige. Due to expense of station construction, the nature and quality of the observation deck denotes a fair flavor of the station. Essentially, the observation deck is a large dome of transparent material, designed to allow as little impediment between the observer and the void of space as possible.

Due to the superstitious overtones of open space, most of the Known Worlders avoid the observation deck, finding it simply unnerving. Customarily, the observation deck is a place of respite for the space jockeys and is a draw card for charioteers, space marines, and other people used to

the depths of space. On occasion, the station Oubliette will prescribe time spent in this room alone with the gravity off for therapeutic purposes.

Cargo Holds

Every station has cargo bays, with ports for loading/downloading from shuttles or small ships. Crews can attach portable hauling crates, popular on most bulk haulers, to the bays, providing the space station has external cargo space reserved for storing ship repair components (hull pieces, weapon mounts, etc.). There are usually around 30 bays, but unused bays are closed off especially on stations that see little traffic. Bays are susceptible to suffering hull breaches, which can be too expensive to repair. Every now and then, stories crop up that tell of ‘unused’ bays being used for unsavory activities, and many a cargo master can afford a more lavish retirement than his modest position would warrant. Such activities may be relatively harmless, such as storing not-quite-legal cargo, but others may involve dark cults, spies, and alien presences.

The Decks

Each station has interior, open-access decks providing cheap and temporary accommodation with one or several levels of low-priced quarters ranging from cheap hammocks in a shared bunkroom to cramped, private rooms, customs/security check level where all entrants into the stations must first go (lift tubes from the docking level lead only here, unless a security override is ordered), and an agora level (the station's central attraction, next to ship repair).

Docking Bays

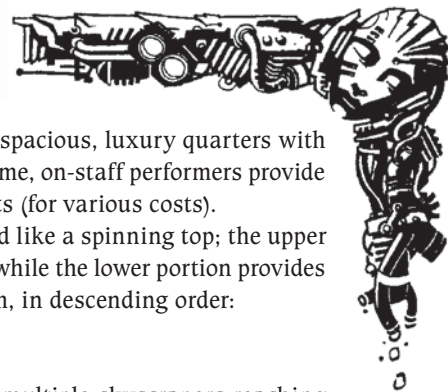
Next is the docking bay level, with several bays each of which can each accommodate a starship. A berth typically costs 200 firebirds a week (30 firebirds per day), but bribes to get work done quicker or receive preferential treatment on busy space stations can add a hefty surcharge.

Stations of Note

Space stations can inspire all kinds of adventures, and each one offers unique possibilities to gamemasters. The player characters may manage to escape the dark between the stars on a hair's breadth and find safety on one of these space stations. They may trade goods or information, or find some much-needed change of scenery and entertainment on their space travels. A few space stations are of special importance in the Known Worlds: Barter, a spaceship graveyard owned and operated by the Scravers Guild (detailed in **Weird Places**, p. 71); Cumulus Station, an independent space station in the Byzantium Secundus system; and the space city Murimuria, critically located where powerful interests meet. But there are also many others of lesser importance.

Cumulus Station

Cumulus is an independent space station in the Byzantium Secundus system—next door to the center of



Cumulus Traits

Tech Level: 6

Height: 2,000 meters

Diameter: 2,000 meters

Crew: 8,000 (currently 5,000)

Passengers: 15,000 (currently 11,000)

Cargo (Internal): 2000 tons

Cargo (External): 6000 tons

Ship Docks: 12 ships (200m or less) along central hub, 3 ships (700m or less) with tractor beams on pylons, plus space construction platforms for 4 ships

Supplies: 3 years

Sensors: Neutrino 10

Weaponry: Med Lasers × 32, Med Blasters × 20, Hvy Blasters × 8, Torpedo Launchers × 6, Lht Meson Cannons × 3, Hvy Meson Turret × 1

Armor: 6 + 6d

Shields: Standard

Vitality: 800

Imperial politics. It sits in space between the barren rocky planet Aden and the gas planet Magog (for more information, see *Byzantium Secundus*, p. 24). Cumulus is owned and operated by the Merchant League and provides the only space-based starship repair facility available to civilians (the Imperial Fleet's space station, Diadem, is reserved for military ships) in the Byzantium Secundus system. Byzantium Secundus' three land-based shipyards are each capable of repairing all lander grade ships, but atmosphere and void hulls must be repaired in space; Cumulus can accommodate such ships in docks that boast Second Republic tractor beams. While Cumulus is not as large as Diadem, it is still one of the largest operative space stations in the Known Worlds. Travelers entering the Byzantium Secundus system often sell goods on Cumulus that may be illegal on Byzantium Secundus. What exactly is considered illegal often changes on a day-to-day basis—the local Church proscribes goods seemingly on a whim. While trading these goods is still technically illegal, the Church is in no position to stop it. The occasional Inquisitor visiting is more a gesture than a threat to local trade.

Description

Cumulus is actually a Second Republic-era space city, designed to not only provide repair facilities, but supplies and entertainment for space travelers as well. Comfortable quarters are available for all classes of spacer, from shared

bunks in common rooms to spacious, luxury quarters with freshly cooked meals. Full-time, on-staff performers provide all manner of entertainments (for various costs).

The central hub is shaped like a spinning top; the upper portion hosts the main city, while the lower portion provides logistics. From top to bottom, in descending order:

The City

One external level with multiple skyscrapers reaching out toward space. An atmosphere dome covers up to three stories, while certain buildings rise above this. Here are the high- to medium-priced quarters and entertainment districts, along with the crew quarters (weekly prices range from 100 firebirds for a small apartment to 300+ firebirds for a multi-room domicile).

The highest spires are reserved for the high-paying, full-time residents, which include wealthy merchants and nobles. The space city hosts an Orthodox cathedral and a small chapel run by an independent Hesychast monk.

Large sections of the space city are untenanted. Wealthy nobles come in, purchase a building, and pay for the life support in advance and then leave, forgetting to inform the crew of their absence. Such forgotten apartments are popular havens for criminals or spies. Some vacant buildings actually host secretive squatters clever enough to siphon life support from under the Engineer's noses, but few opt for such a risky lifestyle. All buildings under the atmosphere dome have life support which cannot be cut off individually. In addition, there are barren parks throughout the dome. Only those blocks actively maintained have the hydroponics tech to grow plants.

Even with stellar profits, the station remains largely undermanned; there are simply not enough crewmembers to maintain empty quarters. Some of the buildings have remained unexplored since the station's evacuation after the Fall.

The Decks

Below the city lie the interior, open-access decks that provide accommodation for the masses. Weekly prices range from 10 crests for a hammock in a shared bunkroom to 50 crests for a cramped, private room. Next are the interior, open-access decks, housing a customs/security check level through which everybody has to pass to rent accommodation. The lift tubes from the docking level only open here. High-ranking station personnel can force a security override, which would give free access to the other levels of Cumulus. The station's agora is also located here, housing food stalls and all manner of shops set up by enterprising merchants.

Security Deck

Below the open access decks is the security centre of the station. Most of this deck is off limits, and access is strictly controlled even for security personal. Much of this deck is actually moth balled and out of service, but the deck incorporates an armory, a large brig, a small medical facility, a muster room, security stations that supplement those on the command deck, a gym, and a firing range.



Cargo Levels

Below the security level are the cargo bays, with ports for loading/downloading from shuttles or small ships. Out of the original 30 bays, only 20 are currently in use, due to lack of manpower to maintain them.

Docking Bays

Next is the docking bay level—a vast level with 12 bays—which can each accommodate starships up to 150 meters long (half that wide) or smaller. Berth prices are normal (200 firebirds a week or 30 firebirds per day). Refueling and resupply costs are normal.

Command Center

Beneath the docking bay, separated by ceramsteel bulkheads and state-of-the-art security systems, is the command center. All communications and logistics for the station as a whole take place here, and personnel issue docking permits to incoming ships and coordinates defense efforts in case of attack. Lift tubes lead from here to all areas of the ship, but a special command pass must be used. Losing that pass leads to draconian punishments and loss of rank, and forgers tampering with security passes on the station are likely to find themselves on the wrong side of an airlock.

Engineering

Cumulus' engineering follows the basic layout found on most space stations in the Known Worlds, with life support and power running through the entire core. The command center controls most central engineering operations, but there are secondary controls on the security deck. It is said that some of the station's access ways—like some of the space city buildings—have not been explored since the Fall.

The Pylons

The station has three pylons which each bear powerful—and rare—Second Republic tractor beams capable of docking super large ships (500 meters in length, far bigger than anything in service today), in addition to a shuttle bay (with Runts) and a fighter bay (each pylon has one Archangel fighter). Central corridors lead to the security deck. (Cramped crawl tubes run through the lower struts to access panels in the cargo deck. Life support is only available during scheduled maintenance.) In addition, four floating construction platforms “orbit” the station (each roughly one kilometer away). These platforms are designed for the final construction of void grade ships, usually initiated at one of the Byzantium shipyards and then transported to a platform for final work. Space suited Engineers perform all work in zero-G conditions. Multiple shuttles stand nearby to deliver the crew back to Cumulus when their shift ends, while new Runts arrive ferrying the next shift. The platforms have their own fusion energy to power tools but have no weaponry; defense is provided by Cumulus.

Dramas

Cumulus provides an ideal setting for numerous adventures, pursuits, and dangers. Its Agora and many bars provide

the perfect meeting ground for travelers seeking patrons, contracts, or jobs, both legitimate and criminal. Among the shadowy operatives of the thriving Known Worlds' espionage industry, Cumulus has received the moniker of “spy central” for the number of Imperial Eye agents dispatched here and the number of house, guild, freelance, or even Church agents who gather here to meet their contacts. Indeed, the saying goes that, “On Cumulus, a person has three eyes—the two on his head and the one shadowing him.”

Player characters can find any excuse to go here: looking for work (there are many patrons here seeking freelancers who know how to keep their mouths shut); smuggling proscribed goods (many merchants act as fences for dangerous cargo); seeking to stamp out sin (few places are as full of it as Cumulus); seeking a wandering traveler (sooner or later, every space traveler passes through Cumulus); sabotaging the station (many would pay a nice sum of firebirds to see the League's gem shattered); trying to steal its high-tech (some of Cumulus's tech is state-of-the-art); or even planning to overthrow the Empire (many who hate Alexius gather here, close yet far from Byzantium Secundus, to plot his downfall).

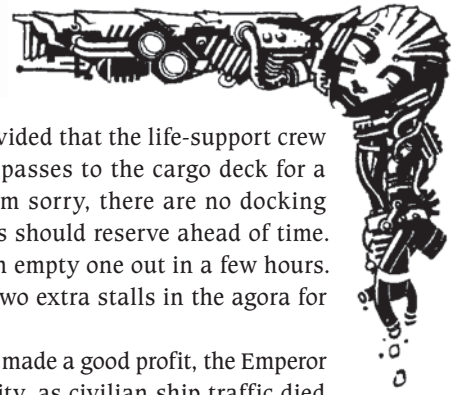
History

Cumulus was once one of the gems of the Second Republic's merchant bases. Somewhat like a late 20th-century cruise ship, Cumulus was designed as a getaway entertainment spot where anything imaginable was for sale. Ships from across Known Space docked here on their way to Byzantium Secundus, selling their surplus luxury items at a discount.

Cumulus became a rebel base during the siege of Byzantium Secundus (AD 4000), fending off attacks and providing port for injured rebel ships. Once the Ten seized the capital, however, Cumulus was evacuated; only a small, loyal skeleton crew stayed behind. The station was soon claimed by House Van Gelder, who held it for many centuries until the house fell on bad times after Vladimir's assassination. Desperate for resources, the Van Gelder traded the valuable commodity to the Merchant League in exchange for weaponry (which did them little good in the long run).

House Cameton, a minor house which had long held claim to Byzantium Secundus, raised an outcry. But few of their peers listened, for they were too busy seeking League alliances for their own schemes. Allowing the League the ownership of a then run-down space station—sure to fail entirely in a number of years—did not seem a large price to pay for their aid in other endeavors.

But while the nobles casually averted their gaze, the Church fumed, incensed that the Merchant League could now sell their wares away from the watchful eye of Byzantium's priests (the Church well knew that they did so under Van Gelder rule, but the principle of it all incensed the Archbishop of Byzantium Secundus). The Inquisition was sent in to make sure that the League understood the Church view. Under the watchful eye of now-ensconced Inquisitors, the Cumulus guilds members nonetheless went about their job of keeping the station running, building it back up from the



nearly deserted hulk it had become under Van Gelder rule.

Now the noble visitors to the station began to sweat and complained to the Archbishop, making it clear to him that such a vulgar display of force was insulting to refined sensibilities. Yet the Archbishop resisted calling back his Inquisitors. Only once it was recognized that black market crimes had increased on Byzantium Secundus did the Archbishop recognize the need for Cumulus; as onerous as it was, it relieved the pressure of crime from the throne-world itself. He called the Inquisition back, and a cold war began. It was unofficially understood that the Inquisition would bypass Cumulus as long as the Merchant League and Cumulus's resident nobility did their best to keep crime and sinful acts underground. This did not grant the station immunity by any means, just a tilt in their favor.

The Merchant League got the clue and beefed up its security forces, determined to be ever watchful for crime and sin and ferret them out before the Inquisition got wind of them. Of course, "official" crime—that run by guilds within the League—was largely exempt. Guild-approved scams were allowed, as long as they were quiet and the League was allowed a cut of the profits. This included those professions catering to the resident noble's decadent sensibilities—activities best not witnessed by the Church.

Over the years there have been overt sorties in this war by both sides: the Inquisition staging surprise raids and rounding up merchants and nobles alike, and the Merchant League refusing or purposefully botching emergency repairs for Church ships. Overall, however, Cumulus has seen business as usual for space travelers seeking proscribed goods or entertainment.

The Engineers originally administered the station, but as it became more profitable—and politically dangerous—the Reeves muscled in to take control. This began a minor feud between the two guilds, as both sought ownership and control of the station—including the lucrative profits garnered from space traffic at the center of the Known Worlds. The problem was "solved" toward the end of the Emperor Wars. The League Dean suffered lack of confidence among the guilds for his support of Alexius's bid to power. In addition, he was accused of being non-impartial concerning Cumulus (he was a Reeve, one of the parties involved in the struggle). He decided to end the issue with a short-term, politically expedient decision. He divvied Cumulus up between the five major guilds, awarding command to the Charioteers, technical logistics to the Engineers, labor contracts to the Muster, and management of the agora to the Reeves.

The Scavengers were left with no piece of the pie, but they seemed strangely unconcerned, for they had the secret support of the Dean to take over the rich agoras on Byzantium Secundus from the independent Authority Guild. While their bid has not yet succeeded, they have been more successful than they might otherwise have been.

All parties were nominally satisfied and worked well together—at first. Inevitably, friction arose, exacerbated by the tight confines. Now, each guild refuses to work with the other without favors in return. "Having temperature control problems in your stateroom, commander? I'm sure

it can be fixed quickly—provided that the life-support crew is provided 24-hour access passes to the cargo deck for a week. Never mind why." "I'm sorry, there are no docking berths available. You Reeves should reserve ahead of time. Wait a minute—I think I can empty one out in a few hours. In return for, shall we say, two extra stalls in the agora for the next month?"

While the station usually made a good profit, the Emperor Wars saw periods of inactivity, as civilian ship traffic died down. The high cost of maintaining the station during these times caused the League to devise a new method of income—they sold off portions of the space city to wealthy nobles. Miniature fiefs sprang up on Cumulus, some only a few rooms wide, others taking up multiple skyscrapers. While their noble buyers now wholly owned these fiefs, the supplies it took to maintain them did not come with the cost. Thus, the Engineers make a profit off managing the fiefs' life support systems, the Reeves sell food supplies and other goods, the Muster provides quality servants, and the Charioteers ensure that Cumulus's resident nobles have first dibs on docking ports.

When Alexius won the Empire's throne, he worried about the power the League had so close to his throne-world. Unable to act overtly to quell their power—for the League had been among his earliest supporters—he began a quiet campaign of espionage, infiltrating the Cumulus crew with Imperial Eye agents.

Now, Cumulus is a melting pot of selfish guild members, decadent nobles, disgruntled priests, weary space travelers, secretive aliens, and incognito spies.

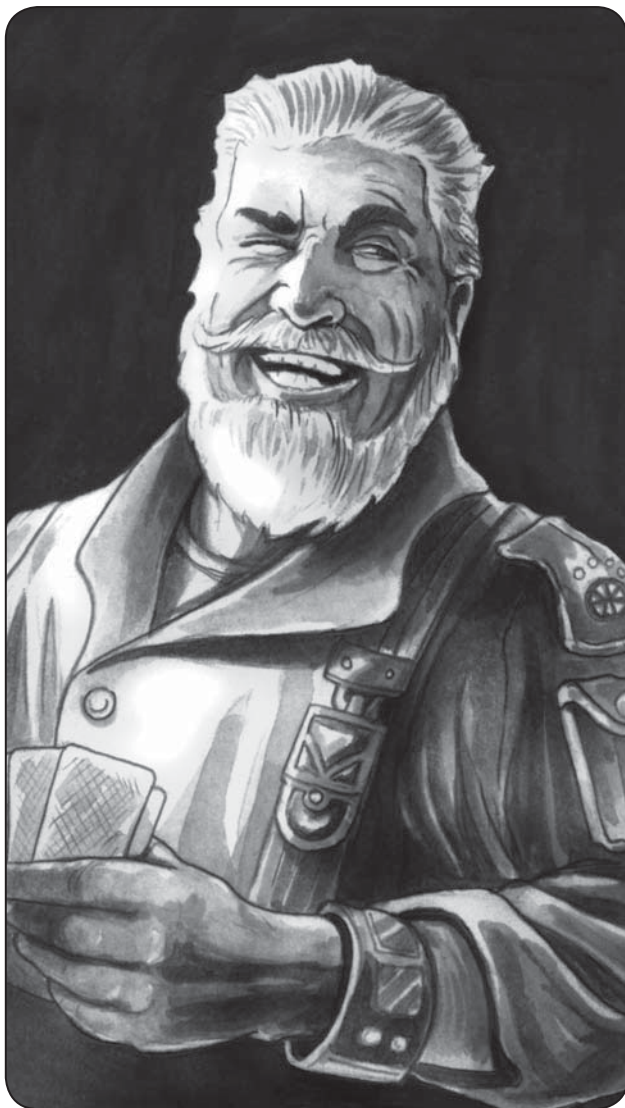
Notable Residents

Cumulus is not an easy station to map. Besides its confusing array of access corridors, its interior architecture is ever changing. Cabins and bulkheads were designed to be removed if necessary, and this has led to a continually changing series of designer quarters, as new arrivals demand cabins made-to-order for even a three-day stay.

The agora is especially fluid, as resident or renter merchants come and go, taking their portable stalls with them. While there are a number of permanent stalls, most of them run by the League itself, most independents last for a few months at the most before returning planetside (either to Byzantium Secundus, their own homeworlds, or someplace they smell money).

Besides a relatively stable crew manifest, there are some permanent renters on Cumulus. The high-priced skyscrapers are usually tenanted by nobles with little land but a lot of money (most often second or third sons or daughters who inherit money but no fiefs). Many wealthy merchants keep their permanent residences here on Cumulus, where they return between seasons of trading on distant worlds. Freelance guild members or yeomen can also be found here, using Cumulus as a base for drumming up contracts—indeed, it was an extremely popular mercenary recruiting spot during the Emperor Wars, since its proximity to Byzantium Secundus kept fights to a minimum. Many mercs still hold offices on Cumulus.





There are also many unfortunates who arrive on Cumulus but cannot afford passage off. Some of these come escaping some crime or punishment on Byzantium Secundus. Others gambled away their fortunes before booking passage off and are now stuck here. Eventually unable to afford food or lodging, they desperately beg for any job available. If they cannot find one, they risk capture by the Chainers—exchanging their freedom for passage off-station, usually to some noble's work camp on a distant world. Most of the squatters hiding in the space city are such wretches. (It is also rumored that there are unseen slaves working the engine rooms to make up for the lack of trained crewmembers.)

Captain Estiban Fargo, Commander of Cumulus Station

Fargo is an old pilot with a savvy sense of economics. He used to run Charioteer medicine shows on back worlds. Infamous for selling sinful goods, his reputation soon preceded him to certain worlds, and the League felt it was in their best interests to place this valuable guildsman out of the Church's way. His understanding of starships and trading made him a good choice to command Cumulus, one of



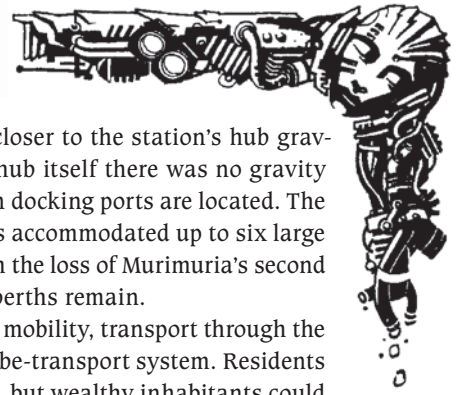
the League's premier space stations; he took formal charge in 4998. However, his lack of bureaucratic skills has cost the station some of its autonomy, as he sold increasingly more of the station to outside interests.

Crafter Greba Ixlon, Chief Engineer

A somewhat sour seeming woman, she is one of the best space station engineers in the Known Worlds (she despises her better, Crafter Erdo Sedgewick, on Diadem). She heads the sizable staff of engineers in charge of maintaining the complex station. Fellow Druzzis, chief of starship operations, answers to her.

Baroness Bashira al-Malik

This wealthy noble lives on the tallest point of the station, looking down over the space city and out across the pylons to witness the construction platforms with their antlike workers crawling across their surfaces. She is the heir to her family's estates but dreads the year she must return to manage them. She indulges in as many exotic activities as she can for now, knowing that one day her time of freedom and irresponsibility will be over.



Manager Sabot “Black Gut” Karlson

One of the most hated and feared men in the Byzantium Secundus system, he is personally responsible for the enslavement of thousands of serfs snatched from their homes and ferried to Cumulus to be sold on to new owners from every corner of known space. As a former slave himself, he despises those, who unlike himself, are not able to resist or rise from that downtrodden status. He also has interests in a number of other smuggling and contraband operations running aboard the station. For full details, see *Byzantium Secundus*, p. 72.

Hyrarn the Brown, Wandering Doomsayer

Hyrarn is a somewhat touched Hesychast monk who came to Cumulus and never left. He can be found at one time or another almost anywhere on the station (except the command deck), bellowing about the end of the universe as demons swallow the suns, extinguishing people’s “luminous souls.” He will conspiratorially inform those he takes a liking to about his visions, which include dreams about holy relics “lying forgotten on the fallow ground of Symbiot worlds.” He will even claim that certain relics lie hidden in unused areas of the station but has so far been unable to convince anyone to help him search for them (which would require breaking into cordoned off zones, some of them without active life support).

Space City Murimuria

Orbiting the planet Cadavus, the space city of Murimuria lies at a critical intersection of al-Malik, Decados, Li Halan, and Merchant League interests, wrapped in one of the oldest and most decrepit space-borne habitats still operating in the Known Worlds. Now sparsely populated and mostly inactive, Murimuria is a new and especially harsh frontier, which grows even harsher as its human population grows and expands into the station’s dark and long-dormant interior. Murimuria’s new al-Malik masters nervously watch the fleet movements of House Decados, which desperately desires the station as its own.

Description

Murimuria is a patchwork of operational failures, ancient technologies, Second Republic artifacts, and hard vacuum. Living areas are uneven in both facilities and maintenance. The most expensive residences for al-Malik and Li Halan nobles are posh, with all modern conveniences, while poor areas have only sporadic power, gravity, plumbing, and sometimes, even oxygen. This level of privation has made horrid birth deformities frequent among the station’s destitute.

Murimuria was built in the Diasporan fashion, before the development of artificial gravity from stolen Vautech. It was originally composed of two rings counter-rotating for stability and false gravity by centrifuge. One of Murimuria’s rings was destroyed centuries ago, but the station no longer requires the rotational forces.

The station’s original spin was designed so that Murimuria’s outermost rim experienced a false gravity

equivalent to that of Urth; closer to the station’s hub gravity was weaker, and at the hub itself there was no gravity at all. This is where the main docking ports are located. The original designs of the docks accommodated up to six large (Size 10) ships; however, with the loss of Murimuria’s second ring, only half the docking berths remain.

In addition to pedestrian mobility, transport through the station was by an electric tube-transport system. Residents of all classes used the tubes, but wealthy inhabitants could lease entire tube-cars for their private use. The station features a decentralized life support, dispersing air and water recycling plants throughout the station. Bulkheads separate various sections from one another to minimize damage if decompression should occur.

The station’s rim once housed most of its weapon emplacements, a few cargo bays, and docking ports for items that required constant gravity, recreational facilities and living quarters. During the Second Republic, once stolen Vautech allowed development of true artificial gravity, Murimuria lost its dependence on rotation for false gravity. House Van Gelder, the station’s owners at the time, installed repulsor plates throughout much of the station and built domed estates on the station’s rim. A few of these domes are still intact.

Over the centuries of Murimuria’s decay, most of the station systems have fallen into disrepair. Furthermore, scavengers have thoroughly pilfered the station for almost everything of value. Most of the tube transport system was salvaged for the refined metal content, while the ancient weapon emplacements and life support systems were removed and reconfigured for use on starships. Most of the station is now open to vacuum; only about one-third is still habitable, with only a fraction inhabited.

Despite the conditions, there is a colony on the station living in a rebuilt Second Republic-era dome on the rim and cautiously spreading into the interior. The settlement, called Cochine, was established centuries ago by House Li Halan and is now ruled by the al-Malik. Cochine’s technicians have had great difficulty with Murimuria’s life support systems, and a sizable amount of air and water is lost daily to the surrounding decks. Thus, the habitable portion of Murimuria is slightly larger than the actual settlement.

Murimuria has a serious infestation of vermin, fueled by its air and water leaks. In particular, Severan hull rats live and breed among the station’s tight spaces. Hull rats are exceptionally dangerous because they can hibernate for years, requiring only traces of oxygen to survive. Decades later, when a new air leak springs, the rats awaken, ravenous, and invade the inhabited parts of the station. These rats pose a serious problem to human habitation on Murimuria, particularly as Cochine continues to expand into the station’s interior.

Most of Murimuria’s weapon emplacements have long since been destroyed or cannibalized for use on passing ships, but some are still functional, maintained by members of the Prospectors Guild or by personnel from Cochine. These weapons mostly date back to the time of the station’s original construction, but there are additions



of more advanced weaponry from the Second Republic. Cochine has supplemented these defenses with additions of its own weaponry as well.

Dramas

Murimuria is a location rife with ways to introduce characters to the “big picture” of a political campaign, as well as possibilities for classic tomb raiding scenarios. The station is swarming with hull rats, but there may be things far worse in the station's interior. Since contact between most sections of the station does not exist, and local life support systems function independently, Murimuria may house dozens, if not hundreds, of secluded habitable regions. Cochine's sensor systems are almost exclusively located on the same side of the station as the settlement, and it is possible to travel to and from the station without detection. This could allow anyone from pirates and smugglers to rogue scientists to secretly inhabit some of these pockets.

At the same time, Murimuria holds a position of strategic military importance. The Cadavus system provides direct passage between Severus and Criticorum (and beyond to Byzantium Secundus), and the Decados have wanted the station either conquered or destroyed for centuries. The only other ways out of Decados space are into Li Halan territory or through De Moley, neither of which is friendly territory to House Decados. At the same time, they do not dare threaten the station directly any more; their Selchakah smuggling operations have grown too dependent on the station to risk its destruction.

Furthermore, Murimuria offers a perfect base of operations in Decados space, yet remains (mostly) free of Decados interference and the League is desperate for a legitimate foothold on Murimuria. The events of the Emperor Wars left them cut out of the station's action, except for the Prospectors Guild and a few Scravers and Charioteers. They know how much illicit material passes through Murimuria, and everyone wants a piece of the growing pie.

History

Murimuria's construction began in the early 30th century, under the auspices of the now-defunct House Cakobau. Meanwhile, Cadavus was in the throes of massive sectarian violence, of which House Cakobau wanted no part. The Cakobaus intended Murimuria as a peaceful city in space, safe from the turmoil of the planet below. It was to be a free port, an entire metropolis for merchants on their way to the markets of Criticorum and colonists heading for the rim-worlds of the Vau border.

However, when the Li Halan conquered Malignatius, it dealt Murimuria a serious blow. The Free Traders of Malignatius had been some of Murimuria's most profitable customers, and with the end of their commerce, House Cakobau fell deep into debt. The Cakobaus sold control of the station to House Van Gelder, though most of the Cakobaus continued to reside there.

Murimuria remained under Van Gelder rule for centuries, and House Cakobau ceased to exist as an independent

Murimuria Traits

Tech Level: 6

Height: 500 meters

Diameter: 2,500 meters

Shields: 6/6

Armament: Hub: Gatling Laser × 6, Hvy Laser × 3 (originally Cool, Rockets × 3; Rim: Lt Laser × 23 (originally 60), Med Laser × 11 (originally 40), Gatling Laser × 3 (originally Cool, Rockets × 19 (originally 80), Missiles × 7 (originally 30); Cochine: Hvy Blaster × 4 (2 turrets)

Sensors: Radar 5, Laser Radar 5, Densometer 5, Infrared 6

Crew: 4,000 (currently 500)

Passengers: Maximum 10,000 (currently 2,000)

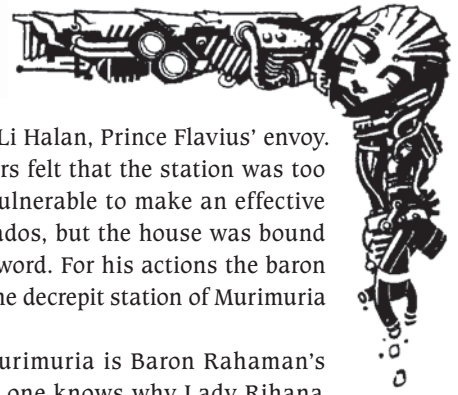
Cargo: 10,000 metric tons

Ship Docks: 3 berths (Size 10 or less; originally 6 berths) at the central hub, 5 berths (Size 6 or less) in the outer rim fighter bays (originally 40 berths), 1 ship (Size 10 or less) at Cochine

house, absorbed into House Van Gelder. The Van Gelders expanded and updated the station's facilities, and in return reaped the profits of trade with neighboring star systems. As for Cadavus, Murimuria remained mostly aloof from the planet's chaos, except for the frequent participation in its lucrative arms trade.

During the Second Republic, Murimuria developed enormously, concurrent with economic expansion taking place on Cadavus under the Bashshar Corporation. Cadavus' growing industry required Murimuria as a port for interstellar trade, and Murimuria charged high prices for that service. The Van Gelders equipped the station with repulsor plates once they became available, and this ended Murimuria's dependence on rotation for artificial gravity. Van Gelder nobles expanded Murimuria with new technologies, establishing domed estates on the station's outer hull. Furthermore, as the Second Republic waned, Murimuria once more reaped the profits of dealing weapons to the warring factions below.

Since then, Murimuria suffered three great disasters, each of which nearly destroyed the entire station. The first was the Fall of the Second Republic, when rebels from Cadavus seized the planet and closed the jumpgate. Many of the Cadavan administrators tried to flee to Murimuria but found sanctuary denied to them by frightened nobles of House Van Gelder while the rebels tried to capture or destroy the station several times. Cut off from trade, the station barely survived, relying on water from Cadavus' outer worlds to provide fusion power, oxygen, and hydroponic foodstuffs.



By the time of Cadavus' rediscovery, the station's population had dwindled to a quarter of its pre-Fall level, with almost all of its external domes destroyed by conflict or neglect. Yet Murimuria remained independent and intact for Cadavus's entire tenure as a Lost World.

The second disaster was during the wars that followed the death of Vladimir Alecto. In 4552, while the Van Gelder fleets defended their holdings on Cadiz, an al-Malik fleet under the command of Ja'far ben Sihnijah stormed the jumpgate and laid siege to Murimuria. Even so, the station might have endured until the Van Gelder forces returned. Then, from the Xanthippe moonhaven on Cadavus' moon Chons, mercenaries from that minor house infiltrated and sabotaged Murimuria's defenses at a critical moment, and the al-Malik took the station.

The greatest horror of the Siege of Murimuria was the destruction of one of the station's two rings. The Lost Ring, as now known, separated from its mate when a stray torpedo struck a connecting linkage while the station's shields were down. The explosion detonated several missile racks, and the Lost Ring's orbit destabilized. The Ring fell to the planet, its flaming wreckage streaking across the Cadavan sky until it crashed into the Medicadavan Sea. No one escaped. Treasure hunters have yet to find the remains of the Lost Ring, deep in the radioactive waters of the Medicadavan.

House al-Malik rule saw Murimuria ignored by the denizens of the planet. The Li Halan controlled Cadavus, and if the al-Malik thought about Murimuria at all, it was only as a base of operations against the Li Halan, and a vulnerable base at that. The station became a home for smugglers, criminals, and political dissidents of all kinds. The al-Malik of the day quipped that they should move Murimuria to the Criticorum system, into orbit above the Refuge City of Yintra. Then, they said, all their criminals could be in one place.

But the third and greatest disaster that struck Murimuria was the Green Death, the plague that came into the Known Worlds from Vau space in 4616. The enclosed environment of the space station, combined with the ineffective administration, provided fertile grounds for the plague. By 4622, the remaining survivors abandoned Murimuria; anyone who could flee the station had, and often took the disease with them. The station gained a reputation as cursed, and the only visitors were Scravers and Prospectors, salvaging the station's technical components.

Murimuria remained abandoned until 4688, when Regent Halvor Li Halan resettled a small part of the station to support his house's control of Cadavus. Most of these settlers emigrated from Lyonesse on Midian, with skills in high technology. They rebuilt several of the Second Republic-era domes and established a colony, which they named Cochine, its people the Cochinois. Halvor, as Theocrat of the Known Worlds, died only a few years later, but the Cochinois formed the core of Murimuria's modern population.

House al-Malik regained Murimuria late in the Emperor Wars, when the Li Halan decided that their position on the station had become untenable with the Decados conquests on Cadavus and Malignatius. Baron Rahaman al-Malik, against the wishes of his superiors, accepted the station's

surrender from Sir Marcian Li Halan, Prince Flavius' envoy. Duke Hakim and his advisors felt that the station was too weak and its position too vulnerable to make an effective stronghold against the Decados, but the house was bound to honor Baron Rahaman's word. For his actions the baron received severe reprimand: the decrepit station of Murimuria became his responsibility.

The administrator of Murimuria is Baron Rahaman's niece, the Lady Rihana. No one knows why Lady Rihana, who had only just reached the age of majority, assumed administration of Murimuria, but she has done little as the station's ruler. She spends most of her time on jumpgate travels or visiting her friend, the Countess Elena Decados on Cadavus. Various rumors say that Lady Rihana works for the Mutasih, the Jakovian Agency, the Lyonesse Survey Intelligence, or the Imperial Eye.

The real power on Murimuria rests not with the noble houses, but with the Prospectors' Guild, which has operated in the Cadavus system for centuries. The Prospectors protect Murimuria's superstructure and maintain the life support in Cochine; the colony is the largest Prospector gathering place within two jumps other than the space station Cumulus in the Byzantium Secundus system.

The main purposes of the colony on Murimuria are military and intelligence, but it naturally developed a commercial aspect as well. Prospectors from surrounding systems come to Cochine to buy supplies, trade with each other, and sell water for transport to the thirsty planet below. Cadavan merchants, most especially from Trusnikron lands, sell smoked oshogi meat to the space-born Prospectors, for whom fresh meat is a rare indulgence.

However, the heart of Murimuria's commerce comes from Decados space: the selchakah trade. The station is a major stopover for smugglers traveling between Severus and Byzantium Secundus, and further provides access to the rich markets of Criticorum. When plied with a selection of firebirds, the local al-Malik easily find other directions to look as shipments come through and can even facilitate the smugglers' passage through al-Malik space for the right price.

Notable Residents

Torn between al-Malik, Decados, and guild interests, Murimuria's fate hangs in the balance. The precarious situation gives the station an uncertain future; power struggles could quickly escalate and topple the situation towards one party or another or set the whole station at considerable risk. The kind of people who would willingly choose to live in such a precarious situation are not averse to taking risks. A great many disreputable low lives find themselves here as they follow the flow of contraband between various black market destinations.

Some inevitably remain on the station for the long term, not because they want to, but because there are few other options available to them. In the current climate of political unease and underworld maneuverings, a man can wake up poor and fall asleep wealthy; it's a matter of being available to take the right job at the right time from the right shady individual. The opposite is also true. A man's existence can





be broken or even snuffed out in the space of minutes should he be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Yet, despite the squalor, despite the hardships, there is hope.

Lady Rihana al-Malik

The current administer of the Murimuria station, though often absent, sometimes for extended periods. She is a close friend of the Countess Elena Decados, and many believe that she is an agent for one of the many intelligence interests on the station. Despite being responsible for the survival of the station, she shows a surprising disinterest in its day-to-day activities, and her traveling leaves most tasks to her long suffering eunuch chamberlain, Hod Andros.

Zoya Kianush

The name Kianush Prospect family carries with it a small measure of fame, with operation in the Cadavus, Criticorum, and Gwynneth systems, and Zoya is its Matriarch. Zoya's family is not rich, yet politically it wields a great deal of influence on Murimuria. Both the al-Malik and the League know that the continued operation of the station depends on her family's goodwill. Zoya lives in specially designed quarters in Cochine, without artificial gravity. She is nearly a century old and still healthy; her time in frequent zero gravity has extended her life, though she is no longer able to tolerate more than the slightest gravitational force.

Typhaine Delven

Descended of pure Cochinois stock, Murimuria is the only home Delven knows or desires. Delven commands Murimuria's unofficial militia, which defends the station against threats both external and internal. Her forces

have hunted Amen'ta into the very bowels of the station, and she coordinates tech redemption efforts between the Prospectors and the station's own technicians to maintain as many external weapon emplacements as possible. She is frequently antagonistic toward Murimuria's administrator, Lady Rihana, but the al-Malik tolerate her presence; members of Delven's militia are often conscripted into the al-Malik space navy, where their combat training and life-long experience in variable gravity environments make them superb starship Marauders.

Vittor Tan

A Severan merchant, Tan makes his living on Murimuria importing and breeding Severan flying asps to keep the station's hull rat population in check. None on the station particularly favor Tan, as constant association with the vicious serpents has taken its toll on his personality, which is now jumpy and irritable. Tan is a member of the Jakovian Agency, and everyone on the station knows it. While most people think that he is simply the local informant, Tan is in fact deeply involved in smuggling selchakah through the Cadavus system to Byzantium Secundus and al-Malik space.

Father Michil Nguyen

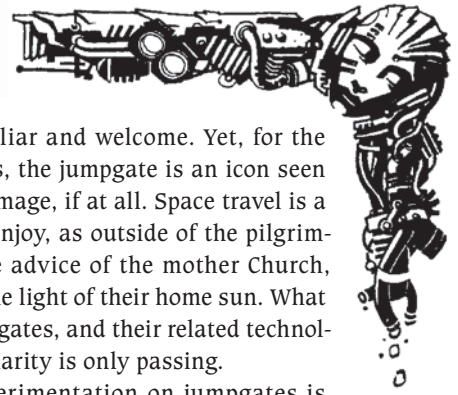
Murimuria has been Father Michil's parish for nearly three decades, almost since the day he was ordained. Born on Midian, in the province of Lyonesse, Father Michil now considers himself as native to Murimuria as the Cochinois themselves. However, Father Nguyen makes it known to all aboard the ship that he is appalled by the state of the station since the al-Malik took control: moral laxity, Ukari technicians, and a worsening hull rat problem (he does not know about the selchakah smuggling). Father Michil has begun to inveigh against the al-Malik in his sermons, and while Lady Rihana concerns grow, she fears to move against the popular priest without absolute deniability.

Jaul Messer

Messer is a native Cochinois and works as a life-support technician. However, Messer is also an agent for House Li Halan's Lyonesse Survey Intelligence, which recruited him shortly after the Li Halan surrendered Murimuria to House al-Malik. Messer acts as an informant for the LSI, but more importantly, he is engaged in a long-term campaign of sabotage against the very life-support systems that are his duty to maintain. Messer arranges leaks of air and water into areas of known hull rat infestation in order to wake them from hibernation and attract them to inhabited parts of the station. The LSI hopes to force House al-Malik to bring more troops to battle the infestations, and in doing so crack down on the station's role in the selchakah trade.

Countess Elena Decados

The beautiful Cadavan countess is a frequent visitor to Murimuria; she is a close friend of Lady Rihana, and the station also offers her the opportunity to keep in contact with some of her connections among the Charioteers. When



Elena visits, she invariably brings a sizable retinue, whose purses grease the wheels of the station's marketplaces for as long as the countess is on the station.

Gophan Noevh

Hailing from a minor Ukari clan on Criticorum, Noevh's team of Ukari technicians originally stationed themselves on Murimuria to aid in the expansion of the Cochine colony. Baron Rahaman al-Malik, uncle of Lady Rihana, arranged their placement on the station. The Ukari are able and willing to crawl into the tightest parts of the station and work for less pay than their human counterparts. Unknown to any humans, Noevh and his people have siphoned some life-support to establish a small refuge deep in the station, complete with air, water, gravity, and food stockpiles.

Jumpgates

Humanity cannot but stare in awe and wonder at these massive artifacts of the Anunnaki. They float in orbit around all inhabited worlds, gracing sentients of the universe with the ability to instantaneously travel from star system to star system. Though the technology itself (and all auxiliary technology) is most assuredly Preadamite, the Church does not treat the technology with fear but rather reverence, demonstrated by the use of the jumpcross as the symbol of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun. Jumpgates receive special exemptions from proscription that are upon most Ur artifacts. For those who travel the jumpweb, the sight

of these constructs is familiar and welcome. Yet, for the majority of Known Worlders, the jumpgate is an icon seen in person only during pilgrimage, if at all. Space travel is a privilege that the Martyrs enjoy, as outside of the pilgrimage peasants adhere to the advice of the mother Church, that they should not leave the light of their home sun. What follows is a treatise on jumpgates, and their related technologies for those whose familiarity is only passing.

In the present era, experimentation on jumpgates is highly restricted to and heavily policed by the Supreme Order of Engineers. More than one world became Lost in the New Dark Ages when the uneducated caused gate shutdowns by tampering with what they should not have. The composition of jumpgates has continually defied human researchers. The primary substance that makes up the gates is of a copper-purple hue but remains unidentified chemically, is resilient to damage (and will even scratch diamond), self-repairing, and unresponsive to extreme heat, and other energetic radiation. A few rare pieces of broken jumpgate exist; found floating around previously damaged gates, and are usually the result of impacts by celestial objects. Second Republic scientists subjected these pieces to intense scrutiny, with the leading experts of the time hypothesizing ideas such as matter compression, trans-dimensional substances, and multiphasic matter. The conventional wisdom popular during the Republic was that they were made of another state of matter more dense than solids, not naturally occurring. Deliberate attempts to damage a jumpgate, either for experimental purposes or as acts of sabotage are acts of treason against the Empire, and punished by Chauki striding the offenders. Jumpgates come in a range of different sizes and designs from system to system. Most gates are as wide in diameter as a small moon, but the size of the gate seems proportional to the size of the system and how many Astronomical Units the jumpgate orbits at. The system of Madoc (known for being exceptionally small with its jumpgate orbiting at a meager 21 AU) has a proportionally smaller jumpgate than many other systems. The correlation with size, distance, and system size instigated many other theories as to the functionality of the jumpgates. Most popularly, a scientist from Galeth VI (a border world at the height of the Republic), called Dr. Kavaro Genessa, posited a statement in 3910 that was the most popular idea of its era. Her abstract is as follows:

"The jumpgates are not devices imbued with the power of travel themselves; they do not bend or fold space as might be suspected, neither do they create wormholes or manipulate the dimensions in any of the traditional ways. Rather, they are dimensional lenses, focusing solar radiation and its gravity to change the dimensional properties of an object that passes through it. In the moment of an active jump, the ship loses its dimensional integrity and becomes an infinite construct, instantaneously being in all places and times at once—which incidentally results in the Sathra experience. Normally, an object that achieves this state has no recourse to return to a nominal state of dimension. Instead, what the jumpgate does

is provide an anchor for this object through coordinates as entered into the jumpkey."

Her dissertation goes on, drawing upon a large number of esoteric and exoteric scientific and para-scientific philosophies, models, and ideas to bring about her point. In a famous interview before the senate committee, she was queried as to why, if the object loses all dimensional constraints, it only travels through space and not through other dimensional axes, like time. Her response inadvertently triggered a wave of new research into jumpgates, "It is not that the gates lack the ability, but that we lack the coordinates. I have no doubt that, to answer the question of 'Where did the Anunnaki go?' one simply needs to rephrase the question, replacing 'where' with the word 'when.'"

System Jumps

Travel from system to system is a monopoly of the Charioteer's Guild. Though the Charioteer's Guild is not so brazen as to claim ownership of the jumpweb or the jumpgates, what they do control is knowledge of how to use them. Travel from gate to gate requires two things, a jump capable engine and the right co-ordinates. While nearly all modern star ships possess jump engines (the few that do not are designed for short distance flights or orbital station), the co-ordinates are the sole intellectual property of the Charioteer's Guild. A single exception exists to this rule, of course: non jump-capable ships are capable of jump travel simply by attaching themselves to the hull of a jump-capable ship or by stowing themselves in a hull or other storage place on the bigger ship. As a practice, the Charioteers Guild will charge a nominal fee to allow a non-jump capable ship to attach to theirs.

Upon arriving at a jumpgate, the ship will discover an assortment of ships waiting to jump. Jumpgates have two modes: an active sending mode and a passive receptive mode. While most observers may consider that the jumpgate exists in a state of idle between jumps, this is not quite true. The passive receptive state of the jumpgate is actually the default setting, though it takes time to reset the gate between active jumps (see **Fading Suns Revised Second Edition**, p. 224). The jumpgate can receive unlimited inbound jumps.

While waiting, the crews and passengers will take often advantage of a nearby waystation (see above), for recreation, trade, and relaxation. In the periods of reset, ships organize themselves into groups according to destination. The manner of organization depends on several factors. Typically, there is a whole order of politics that the Guild employs amongst themselves to determine the priority of jumps. Factors taken into consideration are current waiting periods, size of group, dignitaries in these groups, number of Charioteer captains in these groups, and bribes. The one exception is Imperial ships, which trump all of these, taking immediate priority. Fortunately for travelers, nearly every Imperial ship is equipped with a reset key (see below), allowing them to directly bypass all these politics without holding up everybody else. However, Imperial ships are always given precedent above all others, the trade ships of the Charioteers are given second priority, followed by the nobility (their best customers),

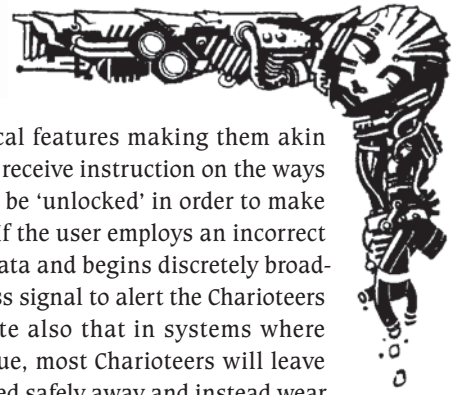
other Guildsmen, Church ships and, finally, the rest.

Once activated, the jump between gates is mono-directional. If the destination point has a line of passengers waiting to jump in the opposite direction they cannot do so until they are able to activate the jumpgate from their own side. Because in-bound ships can arrive through the gate at any time, except when it is actively sending, it is critical to maintain a clear flight path from the mouth of the gate. All outbound traffic awaiting the gate reset gather off to one side where there is no risk of collision. When opening a jumproad, there is a standard form of etiquette, partly to co-ordinate efforts of all ships involved and minimize the necessary time waiting, and partly to help enforce the control the Charioteers have over jump travel. Every outbound starship is expected to have the necessary jumpkey to access the route; the senior Charioteer overseeing the jump will verify all keys before permitting the jump to proceed. If the gate is active from this side a ship technically can make the jump without a jumpkey but this upsets the Charioteers Guild, and such ship captains who perform unkeyed jumps will quickly find themselves under sanction. As the jump itself is only open for a short time, ships line up in a horizontal fashion to allow them to jump simultaneously; this also helps to avoid collisions. The protocol is that all arrivals must continue their course in-system from the gate for not less than one hour after the jump, after which time they may change direction and double back if they wish to make a second jump. However, this system is still not entirely fool-proof and crashes can happen.

When a gate activates, there is a tangible hum of energy and the crackle of light that runs round the hoops of the gate. These last for a few minutes, giving nearby ships at least some small warning that there is an incoming jump. The space in between the hoop ripples and shimmers, and the image inside it changes. In these moments, a holographic image of the other side of the gate appears, as last seen when the connecting gate opened this jumprouete. This is not a current image of the destination but rather the final image of the send point. While this does not allow travelers to see what is happening at their destination point, it does allow travelers to confirm the destination co-ordinates.

Jumpkeys

Central to the monopoly of the Charioteers are jumpkeys. They are artfully crafted cylindrical devices that contain the jump coordinates and access codes for the jumpgate. Technically speaking, the jumpkeys are redundant technology designed to keep coordinates secure. Jump coordinates can easily be stored on any think machine, and this was the common practice during the Second Republic (one of the reasons the Charioteers Guild supported the purging of all Second Republic star ship intelligences). For the Guild, storing data is an illegal act and is brutally punished when discovered. Most gates have monitoring systems to record all coordinate broadcasts. Ships who cannot confirm Charioteer patronage will likely be boarded by force, unless they have enough political influence to pull it off (Dukes, Bishops, and



Consuls can all pull rank on this, but it is a privilege that should not be abused lest it tempt blackballing by the Guild. In these situations, the Charioteer's Guild will determine the estimated value for the licensing of their technology, administrative cost, and jump fee, and then send the bill to the recipient (the Debt Collectors of the Reeves Guild being duly notified in case of extremity).

The stored data on a jumpkey is, to a vast majority, security protocols to keep the information encrypted, using both hardware and software cryptographic techniques. In times past, jumpkeys came in a number of sizes but were subject to extensive standardization during the Second Republic. For the most part, pre-Republican keys are redundant and out-dated. While their data has often drifted, they are still valuable to those who can recover them. Most discoverers of these relics can only reliably profit from them through sale to the Guild for their standard recovery fee.

All keys, legally speaking, are the direct property of the Charioteer's Guild. Many have attempted to argue against this monopoly, but the Guild has always enforced its entitlement through a combination of legal pressure from the Reeves and outright threat delivered by the Killroys. The Guild patent is enforceable under Imperial law, requiring nobles, churchmen, and other Known Worlders to surrender their keys (in some cases heirlooms) to the Guild. It is true that a number of non-Charioteers possess keys legally. On occasion, the Charioteers might award a license to specific individuals who either pay an exorbitant fee (1,000 firebirds per year) for the privilege or find themselves at the receiving end of Killroy attention and other forms of harassment. Theoretically speaking, a key can contain more than one route, yet the Charioteers treat the idea of stacking routes in a key as an easy way to compromise its security. Multi-route keys are restricted to high-ranking members of the Guild, and rarely can outsiders convince the Guild with any viable reason that they might need multiple routes on a single key, when the Charioteers can simply charge them multiple licenses for multiple keys. Yet, the persistent rumor exists that Alexius himself owns one single black key that contains every Known World jumproute on it. This privilege, they say, comes with the cost of the enforcement of the Guild monopoly from the Imperial throne.

Jumpkey

Tech Level: 5

Cost: Not for sale; 1,000 firebirds licensing cost/year

The various jumpkey designs reflect the culture and style of the connecting systems. A key that permits jumps between Cadavus and Criticorum will likely be adorned with carvings or filigree in the florid styles of the House al-Malik and the twisted décor of House Decados. The artistic presentation of these devices is a matter of prestige, often elevated to the same craftsmanship as jewelry. Indeed, Charioteers consider Jumpkeys an item of jewelry and value, as they are effective status symbols and indicators of their rank (Charioteers receive one jumpkey per rank, with the first given to them when attaining the rank of Chief). Modern

jumpkeys possess mechanical features making them akin to puzzle-boxes. Charioteers receive instruction on the ways in which these features may be 'unlocked' in order to make the internal data available. If the user employs an incorrect method, the key purges its data and begins discretely broadcasting an emergency distress signal to alert the Charioteers of this attempted theft. Note also that in systems where black market theft is an issue, most Charioteers will leave their valuable jumpkeys locked safely away and instead wear a ring of 'dress' keys.

Ouroboroi (Reset Rings)

Tech Level: 8

Cost: Not for sale

During the later years of the Republic, scientists found a way to reset the gates between jumps. These devices, known colloquially as "reset keys," were a sub-classification of jumpkeys called Ouroboroi (singular Ouroborus). However, the nomenclature is misleading, as it implies the devices are keys in themselves. Instead, the reset device is a ring that is placed around the key when used for activation. Each ring is shaped like a miniature jumpgate, and they are sometimes worn as innocuous decorations, disguising their true purpose. The functionality of the ring is poorly understood, and surviving Republican fragments baffle Engineers with concepts like "sympathetic concordance," "sub-wave emissions," and "causal dilation." In any event, the rings cause the jumpgate to transfer the reset period onto the ring itself. This means that the ring needs to pass through the Jumpgate before it can activate again.

The Guild ended the widespread possession of these rings during the reign of Vladimir. This was in direct response to the abuse of these rings by Sathraists. Their simple tactic was to approach the gate at high speed, using the reset ring to ensure that a jump would occur to be timed to their arrival. By arriving and shooting through the jump at a speed they would be through—experiencing the Sathra Effect—and off into the distance before the other ships could engage their engines and pursue. This tactic, known as 'threading the needle,' is a very dangerous and desperate maneuver. The amount of calculation required for the precision of hitting the jump at the right place and the right time is a demonstrative example of mathematics. Even though most pilots have the capabilities, miscalculations under adverse situations are common. More than half of these attempts would result in collisions (with the gate or idle ships) or simply mistiming and shooting through the gate and into the void beyond. This was probably the more horrific of the two, as the ship that did this would have to slow down and reverse, all the while being in the darkness beyond the jumpgate. Many ships never returned.

Subsequently, these rings are mainly used by the Imperial navy and only high ranking and especially trusted Charioteers (as the Guild seems to mistrust its own lesser members when it comes to the lure of Sathra). If anything, possession of these rings is even more strictly policed than regular jumpkeys.





Chapter Seven: Church Law

The Universal Church of the Celestial Sun has held conflicting views on technology throughout its existence. Formed in an age of human expansion toward the stars, many early Church doctrines cast a favorable light on the inventive and questing spirit of humanity. This view was summed up in the Cantic of the Stars, written in honor of Brother Horatio, a follower of Paulus the Traveler.

This is a curious poem, praising the Pancreator's reflection "found in the beautiful humming of starships, and the singing of eternal electricity in the microcircuits, collapsed in the hand of human faith moving toward distant suns, the reflections of the reflection of your divine glory." This open attitude changed after the collapse of the Second Republic, when technology for the general masses of humanity became rare. With technology reserved for the nobility, Church, and guilds, the paradigm shift in attitudes toward technical innovation was reflected in Church philosophy.

By the time of Emperor Alexius' ascension, the official view of the Universal Church is best summed up in the Doctrine of Universal Inheritance. Drawn up by Patriarch Anchises the Ethical, it was a response to the Fall of the Second Republic. Many of the beliefs and practices of the later Church were influenced by this document, crafted in a transitory age. The technology-oriented viewpoint of the Second Republic was visibly shifting to the closed community orientation of the New Dark Ages. The doctrine stated that there was a Universal Hierarchy (Chain of Emanation) that codified the social and religious structures of sentient society, which were imperfect reflections of the divine order.

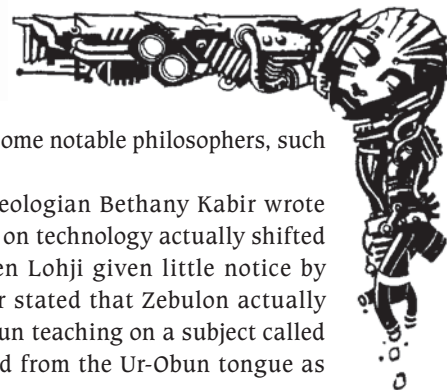
Briefly stated, Anchises and the College of Ethicals sought a more rural economy, based on tight knit community service, returning humanity to close contact with the soil (*Spiritus Terrae*). This allowed for a rebirth of spiritual feeling, reflecting from afar the Pancreator's grace. It was felt that a life hardened by physical and spiritual exertions, away from the diverting pleasures of technology, would lead to the soul's swifter reflecting of the Divine Light of the Holy Flame. The Church stated that the high consumer age, which they were just leaving, had cheapened the value of human existence. Many suffered within the materialistic Second Republic culture. Individuals felt dwarfed by a sea of tech-

nical wonders. A loss of self worth and the beginnings of existential despair followed. With the breakdown of the technology-based culture, local communities began to emerge as focal points of individual existence, and the Church hierarchy saw this as superior for spiritual salvation.

A quandary arose. The Church still needed tech to maintain communication between worlds (in some areas they justifiably feared a return to rural paganism). The Church held that its own use of technology was a necessary evil, but the Doctrine of Universal Inheritance admonished Church orders not to become enraptured with technology—the love of matter (*Amor Materiae*)—but to instead use technology as a tool "to aid and protect the faithful." While technology was not named an evil by the Doctrine of Universal Inheritance, the doctrine led to a suspicion of technology which shaped all of the Church's later attitudes toward it. The later doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs gave the moral and theological reasons for the Church's continued use of technology. Clashes with the guilds and the nobles over the Orthodox interpretation of technology use became inevitable.

After a long period of power struggle and conflict, a resolution was forged. The noble houses were placed in a role of "extreme penance"—a symbolic state of repentance for their necessary technology use. Responsible to the Church for the safeguarding of all sentient souls (human and otherwise) placed under their protection, all the noble houses agreed with this new viewpoint.

Nasim the Humanitarian, the famous historian, wrote "The cynical saw the profits of both nobles and Church in this act; only a select hierarchy would be allowed to play with the damning fires of progress." The faithful rejoiced that the order of society was preserved, and that high technology was finally safely in responsible hands. The guilds were originally exempt from the Church's grace. However, a curious article, "Bonum Brethren," proclaimed that those who were independent from the Church and nobility yet who allowed the Church the use of their skills and specialized knowledge could receive spiritual instruction and grace. This was a nod to the power of the Merchant League, for the Church needed it for space travel and technological upkeep, although this was never officially admitted.



Later, after the regency replaced Vladimir I (4550), Patriarch Nadrim proclaimed the guilds to be in extreme penance along with the nobility. He sanctioned their tech usage for political reasons (pressure to keep the peace, bribes by the guilds, etc). Later patriarchs believe that this was a flimsy document by a weak patriarch, but the guilds cling to it for moral justification when the need arises.

The Church Canon

The words and teachings of Zebulon the Prophet affected the philosophical and theological history of humanity ever after. For this reason, the Prophet's teachings on technology, as well as the Universal Church's changing attitudes on the subject, are important subjects of study.

Unfortunately, many computer-based archives of the past were lost in the Fall. Theologians viewed the era before the Diaspora as a golden age when humanity tilled the home world, "happy in their innocence" as Archbishop Vencil of Urth wrote. Church repositories hold few records of pre-Diaspora times, and these are known only to select archivists. The various writings of the Church upon technology are preserved, as well as the opinions of strong individuals who influenced the Church's direction toward this matter. Only an outline of the Church's strongest voices are presented here.

Zebulon the Prophet

The Prophet preached in a time of expanding frontiers and scientific discoveries, and he never directly attacked technology as evil. Zebulon deplored the immoral uses technology served (terraforming over previous ecosystems when it was unnecessary to sustain life, for example). While speaking out against material excess, he did praise the eternally questing spirit of the sentient races. He stated that the Pancreator had placed wanderlust and innovative qualities in the sentients to draw them closer to the divine source of the Empyrean. Proclaiming that the Pancreator was revealed within all human (some argue sentient) religious and ethical systems, he allowed for earlier attitudes about technology to influence the new Church. This doctrine, later given the name of the Pantheistic Succession, stated that Zebulon's Gospels encompassed all previous ethical and religious systems. The Church in later ages proclaimed his injunction to quest as strictly spiritual and highlighted his investitures against the ways in which technology could corrupt the spirit.

The Prophet, ironically, was not really a force in intellectual or philosophical circles in his lifetime. His message took time to reach the scattered masses of humanity. Ignored by the vapid intelligentsia of his day, Zebulon traveled to distant frontier worlds, far from the centers of civilization. While Palamedes later unified the Church, there were competing schools of thought about Zebulon. The Stellar School, a late Diaspora-era and early Second Republic school of thought, believed him to be a moral philosopher and taught a complex methodology based off some of his sayings. This school was eventually stamped out by the Church as hereti-

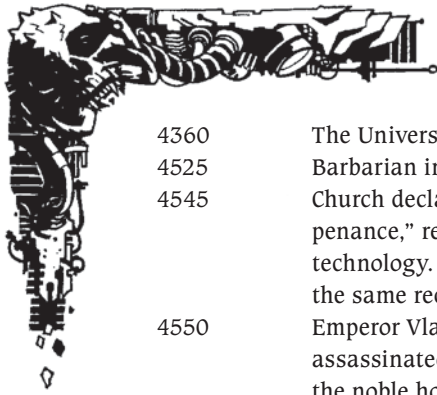
cal, although it did produce some notable philosophers, such as Quintus (2899–2957).

The Second Republic theologian Bethany Kabir wrote that the Prophet's teachings on technology actually shifted after close contact with Ven Lohji given little notice by the Universal Church. Kabir stated that Zebulon actually incorporated an early Ur-Obun teaching on a subject called *bwhengis*, loosely translated from the Ur-Obun tongue as "animafusion."

Timeline

Date	Event
2723	The Prophet sees the Holy Flame, begins teachings which result in the Omega Gospels
2850	Palamedes, a follower of Zebulon the Prophet, declares himself first Patriarch of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun
2860	Patriarch Palamedes issues his "Message to the Colonists," the Church's first statement about technology
2875	Sister Cavana writes "Blessitudes," placing a hierarchy on moral actions, among them acceptable and unacceptable applications of technology. A very influential work in the later Church
3500–4000	The Second Republic. In 3792–5(?) the debates of Archbishop William and Father Vassily raise interest. Archbishop William argues that the spirit needs more than technical innovations to find fulfillment
ca. 4000	Fall of the Second Republic. Rise of the Preceptors
4067	The Doctrine of Universal Inheritance, created by Patriarch Anchises the Ethical and the College of Ethicals, becomes Church Law. The Doctrine endorses the return of rural communities and the lessening of the urban, technical hold of the Second Republic
4223	Inheritance of Universality affirms what levels of society can use what technologies. This document is seen as a continuation of the Doctrine of Universal Inheritance. Breakdown of society into the feudal order of the New Dark Ages
4233	Preceptors declared heretical by the Patriarch
4357	The Church declares the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, which justified its use of high tech. Some (slight) concessions are given to the League and nobles in this doctrine





- 4360 The Universal Creed declared
4525 Barbarian invasions of Known Worlds
4545 Church declares nobles under "extreme
penance," recognizing their usage of
technology. The League is offered
the same recognition in 4560
4550 Emperor Vladimir crowned and
assassinated. The Regency, composing
the noble houses, League and Church, is
set up to govern the Known Worlds
4660 Church issues its list of proscriptive
technologies. Occasionally updated, it
was to be the final say on the matter
4905 During Symbiot War, the Doctrine
of Exemption Exceptional grants
technological defense against the
foes of humanity.
4965+ Religious unrest among rural pop-
ulations grows more frequent. The
schisms in the Church are brutally
suppressed. Return of the Preceptors.
4990 Obion's Beatitudes, a poem written by
a Hesychast monk, urges humanity
to look to new horizons.

Animafusion holds technology to be without given value save that placed in it by the wielder—if the wielder has mastered herself, then the technology will be animated with the user's intent. Immature or "crazed community" usage of technology promotes the bad intentions and shortsight-

edness of the user. Tools are living things, yet symbiotic with their wielders. Kabir points to Zebulon's Message to The Explorers as an example. Her work was deemed heretical after the demise of the Second Republic, but certain members of the Engineers Guild and Eskatonic Order have recently brought it to light.

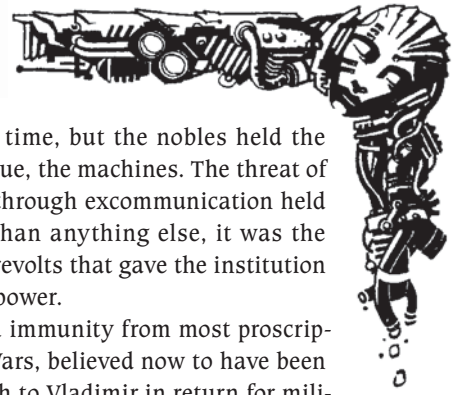
Palamedes: Father of the Church

Palamedes, the first Patriarch of the Universal Church, wrote about the need for technology to defend the outer worlds in his "Message to the Colonists" (2860), but also added an injunction about the dangers involved: "Tools serve the sentient, but there is a grave peril to the spirit when the sentient is lost in the rhythms of energy mastered by the unwise application of such energy by the few." The early Church, often defending frontier worlds, actually saw the divestiture of technology from the large combines to individual colonists as good. They urged its ethical use and application and railed against the abuses to which the First Republic put it.

Sister Cavana

Writing in her Blessitudes, her famous book written after the Ukar War (2875), this Urth Orthodox priest stated her views on the matter in her chapter on Reflected Actions: "It is apparent that, as our actions have a moral lifting toward the Emphyrean light, the consequences of our tasks have





a reflected moral quality. The Engineer, placing his skills toward the transport of medical supplies, rates higher than the pirate who uses her knowledge to prey off small communities using the Engineer's lore of superior weaponry." Sister Cavana's writings, which were very popular with the later Church, placed a hierarchy on moral actions, among them acceptable and unacceptable applications for technical inventions and methods.

Archbishop William and Father Vassily

The Second Republic was viewed by the later Church as a garden of technological evils, luring humanity from the correct path and punished by the Pancreator for its wicked worship of science. During its rise, the scientific wonders of the Second Republic swept the Church, as well as many existing institutions, under its spell. The Church became a place of ethical debate and consideration, while losing its previous zealous appeal. Some saw this as the natural outgrowth of the Prophet's teachings. It was then that the Urth Orthodoxy began to spread among those who feared that the Church was surrendering its moral center in a highly technical civilization.

The Investitures of Archbishop William, the head of the Orthodox sect, make the point that the spirit needs more than amusements and interactive consciousness expansion to fulfill itself. Much championed by the later Church, Archbishop William was then opposed by Father Vassily. Father Vassily taught that the teachings of the Prophet were often symbolic metaphors, keys that could unlock the doors to enlightenment by all levels of society, from nomadic sentients to the most urbane city dweller. Both were deeply pious men, and both debated hotly. Vassily was beloved in his time, and the leaders of the Second Republic heaped riches upon him, all of which he bestowed to various charities. Mainly remembered now for his teachings on grace, which proved influential, Vassily became the subject of Church legends. However, he is ultimately viewed as benign but mistaken against the earnest warnings of Archbishop William. Many paintings depict their arguments, usually with William the moral victor. Father Vassily is still venerated by the Amaltheans.

Patriarch Anchises the Ethical

The Doctrine of Universal Inheritance, written while the Second Republic was collapsing, paved the way for the later Church's attitudes toward technology. Anchises and the College of Ethicals endorsed the return of small rural communities and the use of the higher technologies by the Church and secular rulers.

The Church began proscribing technology soon after the Fall. Thus began a period of uneasy squabbling and hostilities between the nobles, the Church, and the League.

Only after the Church made concessions to these two groups were they "allowed" to continue their campaign against tech. Some believe that the Church could have won

against both parties given time, but the nobles held the military might and the League, the machines. The threat of damnation and soul-death through excommunication held only so much sway. More than anything else, it was the Church-influenced peasant revolts that gave the institution early (and now monolithic) power.

The nobles were granted immunity from most proscription during the Barbarian Wars, believed now to have been a concession by the patriarch to Vladimir in return for military protection of Church cathedrals, a frequent target of barbarian assault. After Vladimir's assassination (4550), the Regency was created. It was then when the Church, nobles, and League held power together that the League was finally granted their immunity from the Church's proscription on technology. By the letter of doctrine, these two powerful groups are not fully immune, for the Inquisition still has power against them, but the necessities of the Church to court elector scepters from the nobles and the League meant that the post-Vladimir patriarchs used threats judiciously and politically, rather than theologically.

Bishop Eren

Often believed to be the main force behind the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, he himself was declared a martyr by the Church when he was found dead in his study. Many believed that he had been murdered by a guild assassin, yet the records on Aragon report that "Bishop Eren died of dyspepsia, brought on by eating too many yellow apples, of which he was most fond." Bishop Eren believed that the Universal Church had a divine and moral right to use technology and defended its use by the Church. At the time, an apocalyptic movement had swept Aragon, one lead by a renegade priest, Father Joeckel, who preached that all technology was evil. Defending the Church against conditions arising locally, Bishop Eren's work soon became doctrine in the Universal Church. The Privilege of Martyrs also became a concession to the other powers, the nobles and Merchant League, acknowledging them in the hierarchy of proscribed tech users. Politics played a part in the final wording of this document, for the Church recognized that it needed the aid of both these groups.

Father Rogan

The Inheritance of Universality, released in 4223, actually specifies what levels of society could morally and legally use what technologies. It also criticized the abuses of technology by the nobles and the "Sons of the Republic" (the guilds). This document summed up the prevailing opinions of the time held by the Church hierarchy. It gave the Church theological legal ground to challenge the nobles and guilds, threatening them with Extrication (holy war) if they did not curtail their technologies to all but certain Church proscribed stellar transportation and defense against demons and "dark sentients" (the Vau).

This doctrine, considered an addition to the earlier Doctrine of Universal Inheritance, has been outdated by



successive bulls. It is a dangerous document. Only a very bold Patriarch would sanction its use, since it provides a terrible precedent against the League. If used, it could ignite the League to revolt and proclaim a Third Republic, beginning a devastating war. It is now a largely forgotten document, remembered mainly by close Orthodox advisors to the Patriarch.

Matriarch Aurelia

The Doctrine of Exemption Exceptional held that certain technologies of questionable moral application are acceptable against “exceptional incursions” proclaimed by the Church in defense of humanity. Written during the war with the Symbiots (4905), certain zealous orders have used the doctrine against infidels. The guilds often call upon this document to explain their latest (discovered) research. It is often misapplied. A lesser doctrine, The Doctrine of Temporal Exemption, states that most technologies are permissible in battling such blights as husk outbreaks. Written in response to a fearful peasantry, many Church orders gathered individuals together to go on “cleansing campaigns” against outbreaks of shambling horrors. These attacks often threatened entire communities.

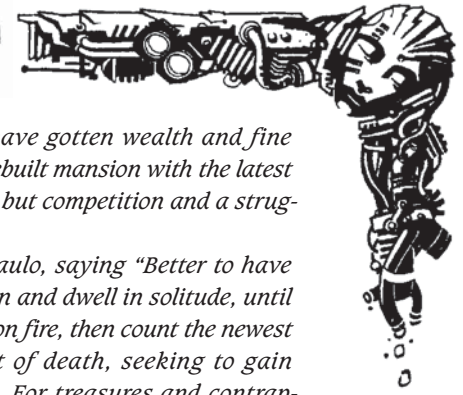
Preceptors

After the Second Republic fell, certain members of the Church decried the increasing ignorance spreading across the Known Worlds and banded together to fight against the fall of night. These mendicants went from world to world, sometimes alone, sometimes in groups, to teach the post-Fall generations about reading, writing, arithmetic, and other sciences. The Orthodoxy and the spirit of the times worked against them. Beloved by the new peasant classes but hunted by the Church and the nobles, they vanished from history in 4233 when Patriarch Gregory released a bull declaring them heretical. Yet, their legacy remained, and priests calling themselves Preceptors, often sheltered by sympathetic League members, emerged again into the light of day during the Emperor Wars. Protected for now by popular appeal, the Orthodox Church nonetheless inveighs against them as disturbers of the natural order. For more information, see the **Preceptors** chapter, p. 139.

Obion's Beatitudes

A poem written by a Hesychast monk, it has a curious injunction to “behold the night sky with awe and inquiry, and reflect on the Prophet's grasp for distant worlds.” Scoffed at by the mainstream Church, it is promoted by Emperor Alexius' allies. Obion's Beatitudes serve as propaganda for new space exploration. It is a curious poem, and one of the few that actually encourages the individual to expand outward again in quests for knowledge. Some see Obion as a holy figure, but certain elements within the Church Orthodoxy want him silenced.





Church Philosophy

The Universal Church teaches that technology belittles humanity, which is urged by the Pancreator to partake in the universal process of creation. Drawing the reflective nature of humanity into covetousness of technology dims the soul's ability to receive the Pancreator's gifts, given to bring humanity closer to the Empyrean. In the time of the Second Republic, many individuals, feeling dwarfed by the technical wonders about them, fell into existential despair. Nihilism arose, in which the individual felt powerless amidst an uncaring universe. Suicides and senseless acts of violence often accompanied the individual's loss of self worth and community.

When the Second Republic fell, the regression of society was not entirely bad. Rural communities arose. The individual became a vital member of smaller villages and towns and felt a sense of self worth again. The place of vanishing technical entertainment and work was replaced by a renewed spirituality and community service.

Gone was the abstract value of credit; a barter system emerged, and cooperative, collective production among the rural populations replaced the competition of high tech society, although money was still used by the freemen and upper classes.

Local decisions could be made by consensus. A reverence for the wisdom of the old replaced the worship of youth and beauty. Spirituality permeated everyday existence. Even the concept of time changed from linear to cyclical among the peasantry, and the year was marked by holy festivals. The extended family returned, and the dead were venerated in oral tradition.

The Church taught that every life, no matter how wealthy or poor, is equally valid. Freed from the doubting shadow of technology, the soul began to reflect again the purpose of the Pancreator. The Church believed that a life of physical and spiritual work placed an individual within the correct framework the Pancreator intended, closer to the divine purposes of creation. Stripped of base desires for power and material devices, the individual's true sense of proportion emerges. The richness of oral history, the life of the family, and the service of the individual to the community are all threatened when technosophy (love of the wisdom of technology) enters the soul. Some lines of thought paint technology as the lure of demons, designed to ensnare humanity into spiritual darkness.

The Privilege of Martyrs

The Church offers reasons for its own uses of technology, some of which originate in the Omega Gospels. In particular, Horace 16:12 offers the following justification for the doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, often used in the time of the Fading Suns:

"And the Sutekian said to Zebulon, 'But I have studied the works of holy men and found naught, for they are at variance with each other. This universe

is our mansion, and I have gotten wealth and fine things and dwell in my rebuilt mansion with the latest innovations. What is life but competition and a struggle for riches?'"

Zebulon answered Paulo, saying "Better to have all your acquisitions burn and dwell in solitude, until life awakens in you, fire on fire, then count the newest treasure with the heart of death, seeking to gain meaning by acquisition. For treasures and contraptions are but tools for the few who understand them, not baubles for which the multitudes sell their lives cheaply. Only the few know what I say, and only the parent can minister the safe and unsafe toys to a child, who is lost and easily swayed by the new season's shining objects."

The Church saw itself as the spiritually mature adult administrating to the child, who represented the general masses of humanity. Archbishop Dmitri of Urth, an ally of Bishop Eren of Aragon, wrote to his congregation, "That we take on your sins and guard over you and take upon the role of guide in this world and the next is correct. We have become as dutiful ship captains answerable to our distant Master, steering the many through the storms of life. That we use starships and weapons to guard the unguarded is just, for the Church Universal takes on the task of humanity's responsibility, given lovingly to our burdened shoulders by the holy commands of the Prophet. It is our duty to guard against the demons of the dark and keep our flock spiritually reflective, away from the trying corruption of the technical." When Bishop Eren of Aragon died, Archbishop Dmitri combined both of their writings and produced the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs.

The Privilege of Martyrs was created when several rural religious movements swept various worlds, crying for the end of all technological use. At the same time, some within the Church sought a justification for their continued use of technology. Communication between various worlds on matters of Church policy was a powerful argument for the continued use of interplanetary travel. There was a real danger in the New Dark Ages of the rural populations falling back into "vulgar paganism," which indeed happened on some worlds. Church unity and the guidance of souls were the strongest cases for the Church's privilege of using technology. It was also argued that not all innovations were bad, and that certain innovations in medicine, communication, safe power sources, and agrarian planting were in themselves good things. One had to watch for an over-dependence on these things, but there was a tolerable level, even by Church standards, where one could live one's life with some of its blessings. The other scripture often quoted and mentioned itself in the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, was Galaxia 5:8:

"It has been said that one cannot control the universe until one controls the world, and one cannot control the world unless there is calm in the community, and one cannot control the community until one



controls the dwelling, and the dwelling is chaos unless one controls the self. And this is true. For what need of armies and weapons, of the transported wealth of worlds, of homes and ownership, if one is not captain of one's soul! Better to be poor but free and master over the soul than own all the latest innovations of the market, and yet not have mastery over the self. Let those who have wisdom, ponder, and let those who understand, take heed."

Thus, the Church claimed sanctification for the Privilege of Martyrs from the Prophet (ignoring the implications the same statement gave to peasants concerning their freedom). That the Prophet perished in incidents relating to space travel also added weight to the argument. "Affliction Technologia" is the term the Church gave for their exception in using technology, voluntarily engaging technology's spiritual dangers so that the masses would not have to partake of such sin.

The Privilege of Martyrs had a spiritual sacrificial element in it. This doctrine begins:

"We, the holders of the truth which dies not, do affirm that the sacrifice of the few in the Universal Church for the many souls gathered in our care is a noble and selfless calling, that our use of technology has been granted to us by the Most Holy Prophet Zebulon in concrescence with the Pancreator, blessed be the name in worlds without end, as given to us in scripture, Galaxia 5:8 and Horace 16:12. That we, as masters temporal and spiritual in stewardship of the Pancreator as bestowed in blessed solitude by Zebulon the Prophet, having duties to defend those less spiritually called, are granted the use of the technical tools of sentient, which are denied most, and that this is a just and blessed mystery, understood as our duty spiritual for the comfort of those in our care."

The Church did not look kindly on Republican institutions. Aware of the errors of the nobility, they nonetheless thought that noble rule was superior to the Republican legislature and president, who were (the Church claims) the bribed puppets of various interstellar cartels. Representing only moneyed interests, run by pawns of technological conglomerates, the whole system was lacking in spiritual concern for the populace. Ironically, the League looks back on the representative system of the Second Republic with nostalgia for the very reasons the Church abhors it. Elected politicians represented the guilds and spoke the language of the guilds, and this they interpret as the best form of government, for the League believes that it is humanity's guiding light.

The Universal Creed

The Universal Creed, set forth after the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, reads:

"We, the holy apostolic successors of the Universal Prophet and servant of the servants of the Pancre-

ator, the shepherd and guardian of the divine law, the Church Universal of the Celestial Sun, which shall die not and lives forever beyond the reflected stars, do declare in holy congress with the College of Ethicals the following five truths, that

1. The Pancreator's emanations were created because of the love of the Pancreator for unreflected and reflected creation and the benevolence in allowing sentients to partake in the grand design.

2. The emanations were reflected perfectly in the divine personage of Zebulon the Prophet, and the system of hierarchies emanating from the Prophet to the sentients is built within the framework of the Universal Church.

3. This natural hierarchy allows for sanctified mysticism and grace of the sentients farthest from the light to be guided by the gratia infudua, those Church brethren infused with reflective grace, as guides toward the light.

4. Self-denial, contemplation, and asceticism are the graces which lead the fallen away from the darkness and toward the light. Under instruction from Church teachers to abandon the love of materialism, the wrongful and damning philosophy of the Second Republic, the sentient repentant must show aversion to technical weaponry and conveniences. For the vertical line which leads up to the divine also leads down to the demonic, and the dark powers use the love of technology to cause the sentients to stray, and to free their devouring hunger

5. They who are denied the light hunger for it, and it is the duty of all sentients to look to the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun for authority in resisting them, and so remain in the gradation of divine light until they are spiritually prepared to advance. For the Pancreator has set forth a natural hierarchy, reflected throughout all creation, which is the Order Universal. Within this reflected order the individual can find succor, aid and spiritual guidance, mirrored from the Holy Flame in the Empyrean to the Universal Church.

We declare the above to be the truth reflected in the light of the Omega Gospels, sanctified by the teachings of the Prophet Zebulon as revealed by the grace of the Pancreator who resides, universe without end."

Sectarian Creeds

Following are the various opinions about technology held by the different sects of the Universal Church. While the views are generalized, they do not speak to every individual's thoughts on the matter; these can differ greatly from the party line.



Urth Orthodox

The Church's teachings and prohibitions concerning technology must be followed. The theologians and leaders of this sect created the doctrines concerning technology use. While the views of individual priests may vary, the general opinion is that technology is a diversion from the soul's full participation in the Pancreator's universe. Only through strict adherence to the Church's moral guidelines can "the greater technologies" be utilized. Those who do not consult the Church are severely punished. Technosophy is seen as a rival to the Pancreator's desire concerning humanity, as revealed by the Prophet in the Omega Gospels. Some elements within the order see technology as tainted, and the doorway to the soul's destruction.

Brother Battle

Technology is seen as a necessary tool in the unending battle against darkness. Of all the orders, the warriors of Brother Battle are most open to its use. They hold that their members have overcome any desire for technology for its own sake through their intensive spiritual exercises. Still, the order is often accused of harboring technocratic leanings by the Urth Orthodoxy (the grave crime of the Second Republic), and the Patriarch scrutinizes it for any signs of deviation. Most Brother Battle tech belongs to the order, not its individual members. Due to the nature of the order and its members' knowledge of the Known Worlds, they have little of the prejudice and superstition concerning the topic found among the other Church orders.

Eskatonic Order

Certain writings such as the Apocrypha of Horace, shed a favorable light on scientific inquiry and invention, but the order has learned to be silent about these works. Thus, high science can be a useful tool in the quest for knowledge, but it is still a poor one when compared to the powers of the fully awakened individual mind and spirit. Self-imposed penances keep materialistic dangers to the soul at bay. Still, Eskatonics have been useful in uncovering and deciphering old Second Republic knowledge upon occasion, and older members have been known to keep artifacts found on these quests, lest they contaminate the minds of novices.

Temple Avesti

Upholding Orthodox teachings on the matter, the Avestites have been known to seek out those who have broken the Church's ban, including nobles and guild members, and to bring them to justice. The sect itself has a strict list of which weapons are sanctioned for use (flameguns are favored). Aside from the writings of Brother Narvi of Pyre, little of intellectual merit concerning technology comes from this sect. Brother Narvi's comment "Love thou your Republic toys, then thou hast burned once already" is often quoted. There is broad agreement that in battle against Church enemies, the end justifies the means. If technology must be used to slay the abusers of technology, so be it. The holy can seek penance for his sin upon the completion of his mission. Surprisingly, an interesting body of penitent

poetry, written by members of the sect, expresses some real eloquence on their love-hate relationship with technology. Yet despite their eloquence, they fully believe in the doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs.

Sanctuary Aeon

Trained to heal the mind, body, and spirit, the Amaltheans carry on traditions not found in the Urth Orthodox sect. Using technology to heal wounds and save lives is not frowned upon, although the general practice is to use the body's own energies to heal itself. Medical technology falls under the category of "merciful technals" (an ethical term implying healing aid from high tech equipment).

Many Second Republic healing practices, lost elsewhere, have been carried on by the Amaltheans. They do recognize the enigma of high technology, and are aware of the potential threat it represents. Technology is a tool which the spiritually aware alone can properly handle, for if misused, it can cause great suffering.

The danger here is in cybernetics, when an individual replaces a physical body part or organ with a cybernetically-crafted one. Many Amaltheans will not replace a body part with a cybernetic one.

The Amaltheans hold that an individual must be ethically mature enough to handle tech, and they do not believe that many nobles, Guilders, or other Church orders are spiritually advanced enough for the task. Technology falls into categories. Medical and transportation tech is good, while weapons are morally doubtful. Defensive use of weaponry is morally superior to offensive use.

Mendicant Monks

The Hesychasts are a diverse group of unaligned, independent monks. Individual opinions cover all sides of the issue, but the majorities do not deviate far from the Orthodox line. Many find either solitude or life among the peasants preferable to high tech environments. A belief in the Pancreator's natural universe causes some Hesychasts to decry the soullessness of the technical. A few have claimed that the Pancreator, being actualized in material things, is also within technology. Generally avoiding the political debates sweeping the sects and orders, they form their own opinions on the matter. These are sometimes very introspective but closer to the mark than a volume of Orthodox opinions on the subject.

Confession and Punishment

The Church takes a hard-line stance against those who produce or distribute proscribed technology or information. Contrary to the ever popular image of Inquisitors burning down factories and persecuting the heretics who traffic in soulless machines, the Church rarely acts without due consideration of the full ramifications of such an action. The triumvirate of powers, Church, Empire, and League all require a certain basic level of technical knowledge and production to serve each one's interests.

In extreme cases the Church moves against technological transgressors but must do so with care or at least the backing of one of the others it is forced to share power with. Such targets are usually unaffiliated independent operators, who cannot call for aid or protection from either the nobility or the League. When faced with the worst cases of technological excess, or the contamination of human technology with alien concepts (usually Vau or Symbiot), the Church can call down an Exoneration, which is a sanctioned destruction of a tech manufacturing base and the apprehension of the owners. The Church has considerable military might at its disposal, and Brother Battle monks and Avestites serve as its strong arm when a place of sinful technology needs to be destroyed by military means. The more zealous (and callous) priests are not above hiring an assassin to deal a decisive blow against an operation—such as the killing of the head scientist or the sponsor of the operation. In some cases the violation may be considered a local problem and local Church authorities will act without official sanction against small-scale operators. These so-called "pirate plants" are usually dealt with by inciting a peasant rabble, thereby exonerating the Church of any direct blame. In cases of official Church action against a facility, the perpetrators are brought before a tribunal to answer for their sins. This was not always the case, but increased scrutiny from the noble houses and the guilds have necessitated at least the appearance of due process prior to dispensing penance. In cases where a peasant mob was used, justice is conducted summarily by the mob as they see fit; where reasonably possible, the Church seeks to protect the peasantry from the repercussions of their actions.

The Church intelligence networks track down the users of proscribed tech. Contrary to the usual perception, this is not limited to the Temple Avesti; any sect can undertake such an investigation. In general terms, the different sects have different priorities when it comes to tracking down technology. The Amaltheans might make such an investigation if someone was manufacturing proscribed medications or misuses merciful technals. The Brother Battle often take action against the manufactures of illicit weapons. The Church has one of the best intelligence networks, due to its presence on every planet in the Known Worlds and the use of confessional and penance pleas. Often, someone's guilty conscience can reveal a plant using slave labor or a discovery by a lone hunter reported to the local priest makes its way up the Church hierarchy. Confessors, most often drawn from Temple Avesti, track the more serious abusers. Confessors have broad powers, and local Church personnel cooperate with them, since they carry the Patriarchal Seal. Since most local information lies with the local priest, he/she apprises the arriving Confessors of the current situation. Confessors may hire help or call for the assistance of Church forces, depending on the severity of the individual case.

Extracting confession by brutal methods, the Confessor offers the repentant every opportunity to confess before the Confessional Obedience begins. Abusers are usually tied naked and hung from a post, and then beaten with whip

or frap stick (shock prod) until a confession is extracted. Depending on the severity of the case, execution can be given on the spot, though this is reserved only for the serious offenders. Due to abuses in the past, the condemned now go to trial before a local Church tribunal. The tribunals administer swift justice. The harshness of the sentence usually corresponds to the seriousness of the violation and the violator's role in it. A merchant selling forbidden tech receives branding, while a maker of cheap weapons receives a death sentence.

The Church administers justice openly on most worlds. They keep a lower profile on those worlds where the League or local nobility are behind the abuses. Where noble law coincides with Church law on these matters, the condemned may have two trials. Often, they are handed over to a noble's court-appointed justices (although the Church claims the right to try any who have breached Orthodox Law). Nobles are protected under noble law and can be tried only within the dictates of this law (built over centuries through agreement between the major noble houses). In extreme cases, a noble finds herself tried by the Church. This is a dangerous precedent and seldom used. A few nobles, charged with vile, monstrous acts, find themselves thrown to the Church courts by their own families to appease an angry populace.

Some find it ironic that the Church uses technology to track down the abusers of Orthodox tech law. Due to the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, the Church sees no contradiction in this.



Glossary

Affliction Technologia: A Church term justifying Church use of high technology, specifically the voluntary use of dangerous innovations to prevent the corruption of innocents. The Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs was the result of this theological inquiry (i.e., only the sanctified few had the spiritual authority to handle high tech).

Amor Materiae: The love of matter, a Church term denoting those who have fallen from Amor Divini (love of the holy).

Animafusion: An Ur-Obun teaching (*bwhengis*) that states technology is without value until animated with the wielder's intent. A Second Republic historian argued that this teaching, coming to Zebulon via Ven Lohji the Disciple, influenced Zebulon's views on technology.

Apocrypha: Writings about Zebulon and his teachings, which claimed an authentic origin but were later revealed to be lacking genuine authenticity (e.g., the Apocrypha of Horace).

Apostate: A Church member who later rejects Zebulon the Prophet's holy teachings, and therefore, the Church (e.g., Raphael the Apostate left the Church for the Merchant League).

Approximate Reflections: According to Church teachings, machines that mimic human intelligence (e.g. think machines, golems).

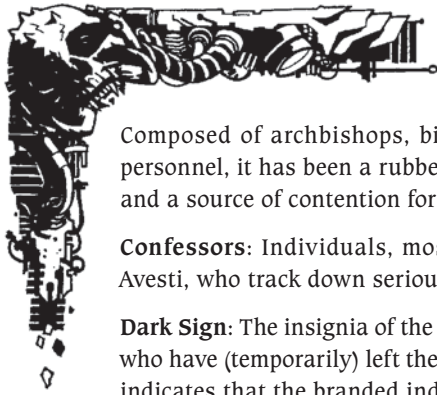
Beatitudes: The promise of the Pancreator's blessings and happiness to those who follow the Prophet's path, made in the Omega Gospels. Later, a form of Church poetry promoting the exaltation of the Pancreator's grace and creations (e.g. Obion's Beatitudes). Some scholars make a link between the Church's Beatitudes and the earlier Beatitudes of the Xian religion of the Diaspora.

Bonum Brethren: Sentients, not of the Church, nobility, or peasantry, who could receive grace and instruction from the Church, originally defined as those guild members who worked for the Church. Some have added Church serving aliens to this list.

Canticle: A sacred chant, poem, or liturgical play originally found in the Omega Gospels but later including the works of Church Founders and later holy sentients.

Chain of Emanation: Belief taught by the Church of a Universal Hierarchy, beginning with the Pancreator and emanating down through the various universes on a reflective path. This teaching attempted to justify the social and religious structure of post-Second Republic society, itself an imperfect reflection of the higher divine order. The result was a justification of the New Feudalism.

College of Ethicals: Founded in 3124 by Patriarch Eamon. Originally an advisory council on ethical and theological matters, composed of all the Church Orders. After the Second Republic, the Orthodox elements of the Church dominated the college, and it became a mouth piece for Orthodox views.



Composed of archbishops, bishops, and selected Church personnel, it has been a rubber stamp for strong patriarchs and a source of contention for reforming patriarchs.

Confessors: Individuals, most often drawn from Temple Avesti, who track down serious tech abusers.

Dark Sign: The insignia of the black star branded onto those who have (temporarily) left the Church's light. The Dark Sign indicates that the branded individual fell from the way but is not irredeemable.

Exoneration: A sanctioned destruction of a tech manufacturing base by the Church.

Necessity: Church teaching that in times of grave crisis, a local Church community can defend itself without approval from the Church hierarchy.

Extrication: A holy war called by the Church.

Gratia Infudia: Church brethren infused with the Pancreator's grace, and hence moral and spiritual teachers.

Merciful Technals: Technical equipment involved in healing. First used by the Amaltheans to describe medical equipment.

Pan-Capitalism: The overall mercantile and economic philosophy of the First Republic, as proclaimed by Second Republic and Church historians. It denotes the accumulation of capital and credit beyond all other values, and therefore was denounced by the Church.

Pantheistic Succession: The Prophet's declaration that the Pancreator was revealed within all human (some argue sentient) religious and ethical systems, and that his revelations enveloped all earlier revelations. This allowed the early Church to freely make use of earlier philosophical and theological traditions while defining and debating Church issues. Pre-reflective foundations contributed to the building of the Church.

Pre-reflective: Revelations of the Pancreator before Zebulon, which were not properly understood by the receptors. Still, some of these religious and ethical revelations influenced aspects of the early Church, including some Xianist philosophy. Pre-reflective traditions were thought to be

partially in error, yet were not condemned, as only limited (local) understanding could be made of the Pancreator's vast truth. Pre-reflective is not unreflective; the Pancreator's teachings, even if not fully understood, were partially grasped to the benefit of earlier humanity.

Sentient: Intelligent (usually tool-making) beings, gifted by the Pancreator with spirit. Term used in early Church to include all the intelligent races of the Known Worlds. Used less frequently after the New Dark Ages, when humanity became the main focus of the Church's concern.

Spiritus Terrae: Church term defining rural man's close proximity to the earth and the star of his/her birth, considered a natural part of the divine order.

Soul Dead (Animus Mortuus): A sentient who has lost its individual spirit due to various causes, most of them a gradual and willing rejection of Church teachings (e.g., the replacement of the majority of the body by cybernetics). Soul dead beings are said to be unreflective, unable to grasp or understand the Pancreator's truths as revealed by Zebulon the Prophet.

Stellar School: Late Diaspora-era and early Second Republic school of thought, which viewed Zebulon as a philosophical teacher and proclaimed him the founder of their philosophical tradition. This school was eventually stamped out by the Church as heretical.

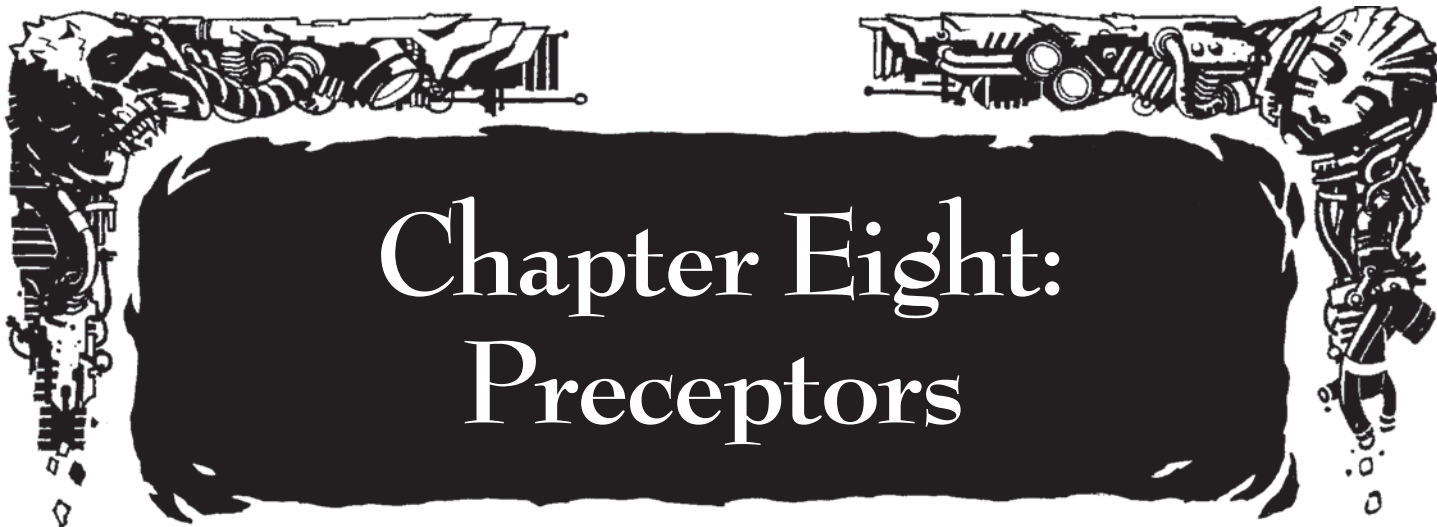
Technocracy: Church term for a government run by technocrats and those in league with them. The vile crime of the Second Republic.

Technosophy: Church term for the love of technological wisdom, a sin when it takes precedence over Church and community.

Unreflected Excoriates: The producers of forbidden writings, usually hostile to the Church or community standards.

Unreflective: Not able to grasp the reflected glory and teachings of the Pancreator as taught by Zebulon the Prophet. Generally suggests a complete collapse of moral and spiritual life (e.g., the demons who gnaw on the light of the stars are said to be unreflective beings). The Unreflective Road is the road into spiritual darkness.





Chapter Eight: Preceptors

While the Church is now renowned for its close guard over the use of technology and its often rabid enforcement of tech proscription, this has not always been the case. After the Fall, it was elements of the Church that took up the task of keeping the light of learning strong. Certain priests saw the nobility's seizure of power as detrimental to the greater good of humankind, and, rightfully fearing a descent into barbarism, ignorance, and base superstition, banded together into a cabal to do what they could to keep civilization from slipping backwards. These missionaries fanned out across the darkening planets to spread their teachings.

Most of them were from the upper classes of Republican society. They were learned and respectful of science and the fruits of industry. While many priests decried technology in that age, the Church did not have the political power to enforce a ban on scientific study, nor the popularity to enforce such a ban even among the ranks of its worshippers. The teaching missionaries visited communities across the Known Worlds, determined to keep the lores of science, literacy, and mathematics alive among the common folk.

They soon gained a name: the Preceptors, or teachers. The Church elite, busy vying for political power with the noble houses now in control of the Known Worlds, paid little attention to this small but growing sect. While they took time out from their political battles to denounce such hubris, they did little to prevent the missionaries from their work. The Preceptors became immensely popular. On many worlds, they became the only source of advanced learning as universities crumbled, shut down by the nobles while the staff was left destitute or indentured to now teach only the sons and daughters of nobility.

As the Church cemented its power, it finally turned its eye on discontents within its ranks. The inter-sectarian warfare of these years nearly destroyed the gains the bishops had fought so hard for. Only with the aid of the noble houses was the Orthodoxy able to force its dogma on all the peasants of the Known Worlds; those who were not already Orthodox were now forced to give up the sectarian beliefs of their parents. Many small sects were wiped out, their bishops tried for heresy and their worshippers forced to recant and join the Orthodoxy.

The major sects, especially those backed by certain noble houses, were able to solidify a place within Church hierarchy. While diverging from the Universal Charter of the Church, they were accepted to avoid even greater divisions within the ranks of worshippers. The Amaltheans and Brother Battle orders were allowed to maintain their flocks and chapels; to deny them was to invite outright war.

The Preceptors suffered badly from the sectarian cleansings. Hounded by fanatics and forced to stop their teachings by zealous nobles, they were eventually declared heretical by a patriarchal bull in the year 4233. The priests were forced to recant and stripped of their ordinations. Some fled, dispersing into the Known Worlds where they were aided by peasants and even the odd minor noble loyal to them. While their flame officially died, a secret order lived on and while it consisted mainly of backwater parish priests in regions forgotten or ignored by the Church at large, they quietly gathered together and delved into the lore of their ancestors. They taught their loyal parishioners, those who were trusted not to run to the local lords with information of such heresy.

While widespread learning died out and ignorance became the norm, those villagers lucky enough to live near a Preceptor parish benefited greatly, however, they knew the penalty for revealing such benefits. To their lords or visiting bishops, they were simple, dirty, unlearned serfs. But when their masters retreated to their castles and cathedrals, the shutters would be closed, the candles lit, and the family would gather to learn their letters, or read forbidden literature, stories about men free to choose their own destinies. The craftsmen would gather in the barn and the Preceptor would teach them the science of metallurgy or agriculture. When the blacksmith's swords outperformed others' weapons, or the crops produced amazing yields, the lords would compliment themselves on the loyalty and hard work of their vassals.

When the occasional local priest was revealed as a Preceptor, the penalties for all his flock were harsh. The villagers under his care would be sold into slavery and their families split up, sent to harsh work farms where their advanced learning could provide them or others little good. Certainly, the occasional lord would recognize the value of

such an efficient village and refuse to condemn it, or make a show of condemnation for the Church's benefit, all the while ensuring that the village continued to produce to high (and thus highly taxed) standards. However, such enlightened nobles were rare, and the Preceptors more often than not risked their lives and those of their parishioners. Few peasants, even knowing the risks, would refuse to harbor a Preceptor among them.

Preceptors Today

During the Emperor Wars, the Church finally lost its grip on the masses. Far too concerned with leaping into the fray himself, the Patriarch pushed his immense resources toward forcing one of the noble contenders to sign a Holy Writ declaring the supremacy of the Church over the state, the Patriarch over the Emperor. These efforts failed. Few nobles were so desperate as to sign such a death warrant on their power and way of life. Instead, Alexius offered the Church other concessions. Finally, the Patriarch, fearful that someone less friendly to the Church would gain the throne, supported Alexius's bid for power.

The cost of these struggles for the common folk was great. Their pleas for justice from the ravages of the wars went largely unheeded. Even those bishops horrified at what the commoners experienced were unable to alleviate them; the Church's coffers were fully engaged elsewhere. As war tore the Known Worlds apart and peasants perished in droves, victims of planetary assaults, bombs, intentional

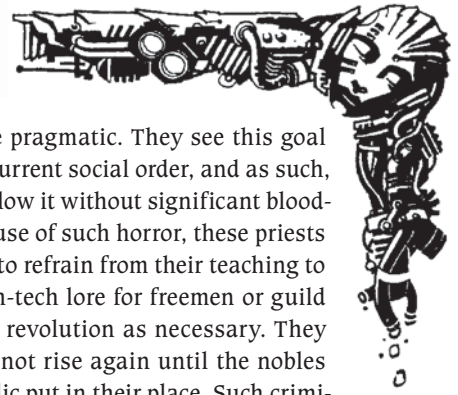
plagues, and other atrocities, the simple faith of the common folk also died.

While the Orthodoxy still maintained a hold on most peasants' beliefs, a large sector of commoners turned instead to long-dead sects for solace, for the proponents of these sects would walk among them and aid them in their trials, while the Orthodox priests were sent to the cathedrals instead to consult on tactics. The result was a vast resurgence in breakaway sects. Many old sects—and some new ones—appeared to minister to the needs of the many. Among these were the Incarnates, who claimed that the Pancreator could be reached through personal prayer, not just Church approved ceremony; the Children of Xian, an ancient sect of wanderers who exalted the religious wisdom of family members and prophets above ordained experts; and the Preceptors, the teaching missionaries.

Building on ties with the Merchant League forged during their long night of secrecy, the Preceptors appeared in force. Their priests revealed their membership in the secret order and once again began to teach openly. Their parishes, once officially Orthodox, became houses of Preceptor learning overnight.

The Church at first responded with force and threat but their resources were too stretched to fight a sectarian war on so many fronts, across so many worlds. When the Amaltheans announced support for these many new "paths to the Pancreator's grace", the Patriarch withdrew his Inquisitors. No official statement concerning these sects was made by the Orthodoxy, which pretended for now that such did not exist. All realized that the Patriarch is building





his power, gathering his allies and preparing for a move of some sort. Many believed that he could not act against all the sects at once, and so sought the Patriarch's favor, hoping for official recognition in exchange for turning against the other sects. Such traitorous opportunism fed internal divisions within the weaker sects, threatening to split them apart before they were fully formed—which may have been part of the Patriarch's plan.

For now, the Preceptors and other sects exist openly, building their flocks and waiting for the hammer to fall. In anticipation, they seek allies elsewhere such as friends in the halls of Leagueheim. Their enemies are not just in the Church, however. Many nobles resent their goals, and consider it a crime to secretly train their property, the serfs. While they are wary about moving against the popular priests openly, they plot with assassins and malcontents to convince the priests to cease their teachings.

The Vuldrok Parish

The Vuldrok barbarians of Leminkainen pose a problem for House Hawkwood and even the empire. The Church's attempts to bring them into the fold had failed—until recently. Father Gavreau, a Preceptor, opened a missionary parish on Valdalla a few years ago despite friends in Hakkonen pleading with him not to attempt such a foolhardy and suicidal outreach. Surely, the barbarians would send his head floating back across the ocean.

Instead, the Vuldrok embraced the parish, and some of the jarls now send their children to the Preceptor for education. The Vuldrok respect Gavreau for his reasoned and tempered faith, and his offer to teach even the unconverted.

The planet's Orthodox college, incensed at this audacity, ordered Gavreau to cease teaching heathens and return, where he will be spared the worst punishments as long as he consigns himself to a monastery. However, when Bran Botan vo Karm, the emperor's Ur-Obun councilor, recently visited the parish and used it as a neutral ground in his diplomatic meetings with "Killer" Karl Krostav, an influential Vuldrok warlord with whom the emperor sought an alliance, the Church quickly rescinded the order. For now, Gavreau is given leave to continue his "experiment in subtle conversion."

Preceptors across the Known Worlds heard of this victory and were emboldened although it remains to be seen if this will spark a stronger backlash from the Patriarch, or whether he is prepared to soon officially admit the sect into the Church's fold.

Teachings

Preceptors seek well-rounded wisdom. They believe a priest's best virtue is in knowing many fields of study and mastering as many of these fields as possible. This is not for personal gain, but so that the priest may then teach his wisdom to others. The more people he can teach, the better. The sect's goal is to return common lore to the people, to educate the populace to rise above barbarity.

Some members are more pragmatic. They see this goal as an obvious threat to the current social order, and as such, know the nobility will not allow it without significant bloodshed. Unwilling to be the cause of such horror, these priests try to convince their fellows to refrain from their teaching to peasants, keeping their high-tech lore for freemen or guild allies. But other priests see revolution as necessary. They believe that civilization cannot rise again until the nobles are overthrown and a Republic put in their place. Such criminal heresy is rarely stated openly, but rabble-rousers do exist in the sect, ready to inflame the masses to revolt. For now, these 'old guard' pragmatists, more familiar with wariness and caution, run the sect.

The lore available to a Preceptor is vast. Once ordained, a novitiate can request to learn under a particular priest renowned for a particular field of study. This usually requires travel to another planet or parish, for the priests are spread far apart, and their ranks are small, so priests must become knowledgeable in many fields to be able to teach this knowledge to others.

A few Engineers and other guildsmen have sought ordination into the sect of late, and they are gladly welcomed, for their lore is obviously useful. However, ordained guildsmen are still forbidden by their guild to teach guild secrets and specialty skills. Indeed, many among the Merchant League see the Preceptors as a threat to their power base, although others see them as a method of weakening and perhaps even toppling the Orthodoxy and its powerful hold on technology.

Preceptors do not recognize the Inheritance of Universality or the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs. They interpret the Prophet's words differently, saying that he never spoke against technology directly, that he only admonished people to temper its use with spiritual and moral teachings. Preceptors are not careless, though; they recognize the Inquisition's opposition and are usually careful not to ignite witchhunts. Most of their teaching to peasants takes the form of agriculture or craft lore, things helpful in their lives. Rarely do they teach high-tech skills, and then they are careful about which students they admit.

Preceptors also do not recognize the Church vows of poverty. Many of them freely gather wealth, although some old-guard members believe this is a corruption of the sect's teachings and not only threaten to bring censure down upon them but that such acts set them apart from the common folk to whom they preach.

Very few Preceptors are known to practice theurgy. They have no rites of their own; those who do practice it usually learn rites from another sect in return for teaching a lore or skill.

Teaching Costs

A teacher's fee greatly depends on what he is teaching and to whom he teaches it. Most charge more to teach nobles or their children, but give breaks to clergy seeking training. When training serfs, barter is usually accepted instead. Priests of the Preceptors sect do not charge for their teaching



per se; they instead collect tithes usually in the form of food and lodging, but many (especially younger priests) ask for money instead or in addition. Prices vary wildly, and depend on a lot of factors. A prospective student who is also a noble with title and lands may find that a preceptor charges him in the hundreds of firebirds. A runaway priest with barely the clothes on his back may find the sum merely symbolic, such as a wing or a crest. It is rare though not unheard of for a Preceptor to demand a service or issue a penance in return for training. There are preceptors that have a knack to determine how much a prospective student can pay at most and demand that sum. This has gained the Preceptors a money-grabbing reputation among their detractors. Some younger, adventurous preceptors join adventuring groups while teaching them a variety of lores and skills, and generally make excellent, knowledgeable traveling companions. Other preceptors might ask to be taught in return for their knowledge.

Ars Memoriae

The Preceptors learned a special technique, called *Ars Memoriae*, or the Art of Memory, practiced long ago on Urth. It involves methods of memorization and rote learning that allows a Preceptor to gain fluency in a wide variety of fields. The Preceptor creates in his mind a “memory cathedral”, an image of a vast cathedral or holy site. In this, he places an icon, statue, or niche to represent every important memory. Everyday, during morning and evening prayers, he meditates on this site, walking its chapels and viewing its icons, making sure all is in place. When time comes to enshrine new information, the Preceptor places a new icon in the cathedral, remembering its location in his mental geography.

Many Preceptors do not use a cathedral or a shrine but a mental pilgrimage instead that they travel in their mind, passing holy sites of miracles, healings, revelations, and other wondrous events as well as relics and symbols that correspond to a saint's life. Many choose the travels of Zebulon the Prophet as a model and fill this with their own symbols, each of which signifies something they need to remember. However, *Ars Memoriae* as practiced by the Preceptors requires the Theology skill. It is impossible without Theology to decipher the symbols and images of a cathedral and without in depth knowledge of a saint's life, all these internal symbols would mean nothing.

Whenever the Preceptor needs to retrieve a memory, he visits his cathedral or travels the route of pilgrimage with a short meditation. Not only is his immediate recall greatly honed by this practice, but his power of long-term memorization is considered uncanny by even the most genius of Engineer guilders.

New Benefice

Ars Memoriae (7 pts): The character finds it easier to learn a wide variety of mental skills. New skills can be

purchased at 1pt to learn another skill, $1.5 \times$ current rating for Science and Tech skills, and $1 \times$ for Lore skills. The Preceptor's Theology rating represents the maximum level of skill that can benefit from the reduced XP. A character with a Theology of 5 can get their experience point expenditure reduced for skills up to level 5. At higher levels, he pays the normal costs. In addition, anytime the character needs to roll to remember something, success should be automatic, or the character should at least receive a +2 bonus on the roll.

Those Who Teach: Preceptors



The simple robes of a Preceptor do little to hide her attitude: satchels with books, scrolls, or Think Machines betray her true leanings and the clinking of firebirds in her purse aids identification. But their popularity among the common folk usually protects them from the harsh criticisms of their detractors, whether Inquisitors, local lords, or old-guard guild members.

Special: Preceptors may learn any guild skill without requiring a Professional Contract.

Suggested Benefices: *Ars Memoriae*, Ordained (9 pts maximum), Riches (no maximum), Well-Traveled, Contact. A Preceptor cannot have an Expense Account.

Upbringing

Choose an Upbringing from another faction's Character History (see *Fading Suns Second Edition*, pp. 78–87; see *Fading Suns Revised Second Edition*, pp. 75–78).

Apprenticeship

Characteristics—Wits +2, Tech +1, Extrovert +2; **Skills**—Academia 2, Lore (choose favored) 2, Science (choose favored) 2, Read Urthish (2 pts), Tech Redemption (choose favored) 2 or Think Machine 2; **Blessing**—Mentor (2 pts: +2 Extrovert when teaching); **Curse**—Rebellious (+2 pts: –2 Calm around authority figures)

Early Career

Characteristics—Dexterity +1, Perception +1, Wits +3, Tech +2, Extrovert +2, Faith +1; **Skills**—Academia 2, Lore (choose favored) 2, Remedy 2, Science (choose favored) 2, Tech Redemption (choose favored) 2 or Think Machine 2, and allocate 5 points among any other Lore, Science or Tech Skills; **Benefice**—Rank (Novitiate)



Sample Character: Paulo de Hira

Raised on the edge of Fort Omala, Hira, the boy Paulo would never have dreamed of joining the Church. He was going to be a brave soldier like his father. So desperately did he desire that future that he spied on the actions of one of the many scouting patrols from the fort and was caught in a cross fire between loyalist Hazat and a group of deserters. Wounded and near death, he had no idea how he made it to the nearby farmstead. There a kindly priest, Father Joseph, attended his wounds.

When he awoke, Paulo could not feel his arm, for it had been amputated to prevent the spread of poisoning in the blood. His career as a soldier was over before it had begun. But Father Joseph took him in and showed him a different path. Over many months they labored together to build Paulo a new arm, and he was restored. The cybernetic device is now a badge of honor for him, a symbol of his gratitude to Father Joseph. In time he would follow his mentor into the service of the Church, and ultimately the friar encouraged him to seek knowledge and fortune among the stars and to see the Known Worlds for himself.

Shocked by the stance of the Orthodoxy and the intolerance of the Avesti, Paulo wanders the Known Worlds and brings his medical and technical know-how to those that can benefit the most.

Race: Human

Alliance: Preceptors

Rank: Novitiate

Quote: "This arm is a symbol of my faith, for like my soul it is not mine but it completes me."

Description: A young man with an easy pleasant smile, his hair shaved close, and a metal cybernetic left arm.

Age: 24

Equipment: Traveling Clothes

Body: Strength 4 (6), Dexterity 4, Endurance 4

Mind: Wits 8, Perception 6, Tech 7

Spirit: Extrovert 7, Introvert 1, Passion 3, Calm 1, Faith 6, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 4, Fight 4, Impress 3, Melee 3, Observe 4, Shoot 3, Sneak 4, Vigor 4

Learned Skills: Inquiry 1, Streetwise 2, Knavery 1, Academia 4, Remedy 2, Physick 2, Lore (Folk) 2, Lore (Theology) 1, Lore (Teikorc, Hira) 2, Science (Engineering) 2, Science (Cybernetics) 5, Science (Physics) 3, Craft Redemption 2, Volt Redemption 2, Mech Redemption 2, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish

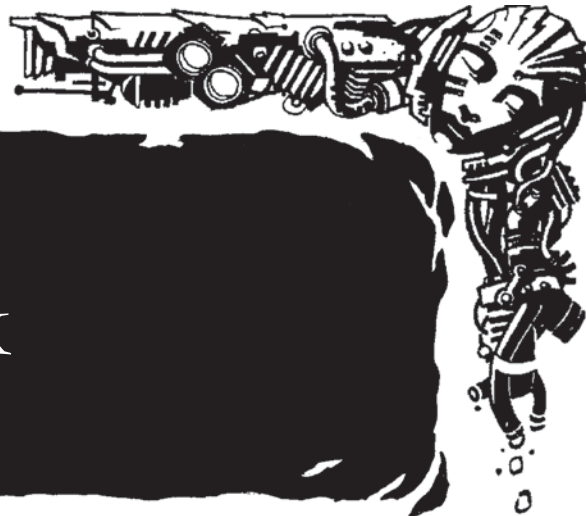
Blessings & Curses: Mentor (+2 Extrovert when teaching), Rebellious (-2 Calm against authority figures), Rank (Novitiate), Refuge (small farm on Hira), Passage Contract (Tramp Freighter)

Cybernetics: Cyberarm (Strength +2, Self-Powered, Obvious, 6 pts)

Wyrd: 3

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|O|O|O|O





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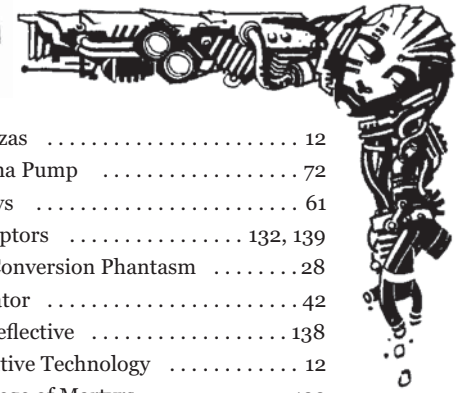
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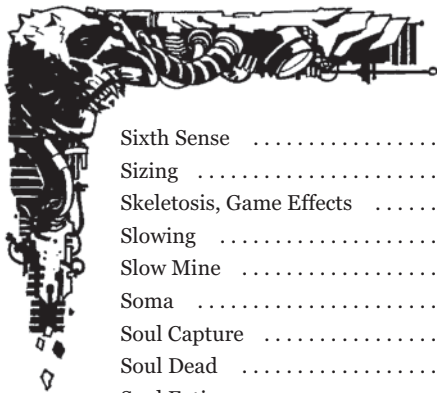
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ARCANE TECH

With the Fall of the Second Republic, Science and Technology were brought low. The Church claims that these former monuments of human genius eclipsed the grace of the Pancreator with hubris, that humanity must but worship one god and not be beholden to the false totems of reason. In the New Dark Age, few dare ignite the fires of knowledge, to shed light into the dark places humanity once walked with certainty. Visionaries are rare; branded as heretic, anarchist or republican. The Church turns ignorant eyes to more sacred visions instead. Engineers pick over the remnants of a bygone era in the hope of recovering some of that former enlightenment. Their patchwork creations—golem, appliance or thinkmachine—are all considered monstrous by the Church.

Arcane Tech catalogues some of the most bizarre and illicit technology in the **Fading Suns** universe, and includes equipment designed at every stage of human development, from the highest to the lowest: psychic devices, artifacts, weapons, and much more. A must for well-equipped technosophists everywhere. Beware the contents of this tome: for those who spurn the laws of the Church and construct demons of metal and lightning, to be called heretic and hunted by the Inquisition is the doom of all who look to the past for answers as the suns fade.



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